

**Mrs. Helen Gerisamou**  
**18 April 2000**

**Brian Shoemaker**  
**Interviewer**

(Begin Tape 1 - Side A)

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*BS: This is an oral interview with Mrs. Helen Gerisamou 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. Gerisamou's home in Beaverton, Oregon, by Brian Shoemaker on the 18th of April 2000.*

HG: My name is Helen Gerisamou, and I was born in 1925, September 24th, in a little town called Monterey City, Pennsylvania. I went to a parochial school from first grade to eighth grade, then I went to a public high school. In high school, at my freshman year, I was elected as representative to the Student Congress. My sophomore year, I was representative also as a sophomore, and then, in the third year, I was at the House of Representatives and the Senate together, and then I became the President of the Student Congress in my senior year.

*BS: Is this the House of Representatives, US House?*

HG: No, no, no.

*BS: It wasn't a visit. This was high school.*

HG: Yes. All this occurred in the Monterey City High School in Monterey City, Pennsylvania. I graduated in June, 1943. From there, I went to Washington, DC, after having taken a civil service examination for a position right after World War II began. I felt this need, personally, because my mother had adopted two children and they were both killed in Pearl Harbor. One at Scofield Barracks and the other one at Pearl Harbor, itself. And this frustrated the family and was about to tear it apart. Although there were five children, she then took on an added job of raising her sister's six children who ranged from 10 months to 10 years old because she promised her they wouldn't be separated and put in an orphanage. Those boys all served in the military service which made my mother and father feel very proud. We supported each other, me away from them for one whole year before I came back to visit them. I'd call them about every other week to let them know how things were going. When I went to the Pentagon billing \_\_\_\_\_ the first time, I was making the salary of \$1174 a year.

BS: *You began to work at the Pentagon. That was your first job. At the Pentagon. Who did you work for?*

HG: I worked for the Department of the Army and the position was as secretary doing typing and shorthand and filing and whatever else was necessary. And worked with all the military personnel.

BS: *No General Marshall?*

HG: Yes. I'll explain better later in this interview about my personal meeting with General Marshall because they were under different circumstances which one would never realize at the time. My first problem was learning military rank because when somebody would come to the office and ask for my boss, I had to look at his shoulders and see what he was wearing. I had to look at the chart and say, "Oh, he's a captain - that's two silver bars - OK." Full Colonel is the

one with the bird on it. OK, fine. The silver one, that was a Lieutenant Colonel. I got that straight. The generals are different things, they were a lot simpler - one star, two stars, etc. This became a joke but it worked and everybody was happy with it.

I was assigned to an Army Captain. He was from New Orleans, Louisiana, and Baton Rouge. The director of our program was the Dean of Men from Louisiana who was also military.

BS: *Which program was it?*

HG: I have to think of what the hell we called it.

BS: *It doesn't matter.*

HG: It was the Ordinance Section of the Department of the Army. We were asked to keep an account of ammunition spent by military men, per man, per day. This was a request that came from the Hill - the Congressional Hill - Margaret Chase Smith, whom I have admired because anyone who kept that position between armed forces and was re-elected year after year and only spent \$500 on her campaign. She's also noted as the only woman that I've ever found out in the Congress who sat there with a rose on her dress every day.

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We worked on all kinds of projects like this. And also, we were tuned in on the difference between rifles, shotguns, flame throwers, so we would know the nomenclature. Then I was transferred to another section (with) quartermaster and from there, we had personnel movements, and there we had the world ready room of the Pentagon. And that was a classified section.

During my stay in the Department of the Army, I was transferred later through a promotion, to the Department of Defense. At that time, I had established myself as a good

secretary and transcriber and I was called to many meetings. I attained the standing of top secret for the US Military and \_\_\_\_\_ secret for the British. My first encounter with foreign military personnel were with the officers who came training in the Pentagon from different countries. A language barrier presented itself. There is nothing much I could have done about that because time was of an essence. But, we somehow managed to understand each other. I stayed in that position until from June 17, 1943 to 1946. The position was abolished due to demobilization. I then transferred, got a job the very next day at War Assets Administration. I stayed at that organization from June 10, 1946 to June 7, 1947. I worked for the special agent in charge, Mr. Edward T. Goins. Headquarters were in Washington, DC. This was an organization that came into being when the war was over and we had a backload of military surplus equipment that had to come back to the States. We found out that the black market was very heavy and found out, also, that in the Port of Baltimore, there was some hanky-panky going on there and the agents got together and we went down there to take notes and we performed what is now known, commonly, as a sting operation. There were jeeps, firearms, vehicles of all kinds of military, being bought and sold, left and right, may I say at this time to countries that were not friendly with the United States. The woman who was in charge of this group had built herself quite an organization. In other words, the equipment came right off the boat at the port and suddenly disappeared. A sting operation took place and we confiscated all the equipment, all the warehouses, the countries of the Port of Entry and export under false papers and also false packaging, and they were all later taken care of by the judges. But, we broke up that one successfully.

After I stayed with them for a while and things were going along pretty fine, it came time for us to be dispersed and we all went to different organizations. I, then applied, for the first time, to a civilian job. I became secretary to Mr. H. G. Lombard. He was a patent attorney. And offices were at 14th and F Street, N.W., National Press Building, Washington, DC. From June 7, 1947 through August 21, 1950. However, at the outbreak of the Korean War, Mr. Lombard being a

Navy officer and being in reserve as a commander, was called back. I closed up the office, dismantled it, and sent all the data to a \_\_\_\_\_ Products, Inc. of Cayuga Falls, Ohio.

BS: *What was his business?*

HG: He was a patent attorney. During my time spent with Mr. Lombard, I made searches at the Patent Office for inventions and ideas and patent and trademarks. This was my first association with something known as a credit card.

(100)

It was the first one. I'm happy to say that at this age of 75, presently, even though I typed up and sent the data to the Patent Office, I have never had a credit card in my life and I don't intend to start at this age. It didn't work out that well because I could see now if I'd a known then what I know now, oh boy, I would discourage people from signing up for them.

After Mr. Lombard's departure, I was again without a job. So, I applied to the Department of Defense. I went down and took a test - civil service commission. The results of the tests were I was tops. Nobody could get promoted or assigned until I moved. The first proposition came to me as Assistant Personnel Officer at Andrews Air Force Base. I didn't think of traveling from Washington, DC, where I lived, all the way out to Andrews Air Force Base and back, so I looked for something closer. I went down to the Ben Franklin Post Office and across the street there was a building that housed personnel application people. They gave me the folder and the file and said, "Find yourself a job." I looked through it and found out there was one about three blocks from where I lived called the National Science Foundation. That organization was in the process of moving down from 2300 California Street in Washington, DC, N.W. area to the old Cosmos Club close to the White House and across the street from Lafayette Park. I stayed with them from June 14, 1954 in several different positions until I retired 12/28/1979.

BS: *Who did you work for first?*

HG: OK. I'm coming to that. The first application that was accepted was in the Division of Biology and Medicine and I worked for Dr. Louis Levin, who at that time, in the Foundation, was the only medical doctor on the staff. He was an endocrinologist. We worked well together and I was also asked to assist in the genetics, chemistry, and two other junior organizations. We had moved down from the Cosmos Club to G Street, 1800 G Street, N.W., which is about a block and a half from the White House. It seemed that this location was precisely what the Foundation wanted. Something closer to the White House and we were lucky enough to get that. There, I went from Division of Biology and Medicine to the National Science Foundation, Dr. Thomas O. Jones. At that time, we were just building up and we got people from the Navy Department which was right across the street, on Constitution Avenue.

BS: *Now this was Office of Polar Programs, or you were assigned to Tom Jones before he went there?*

HG: I was assigned to Tom Jones.

BS: *At the Office of Polar Programs.*

HG: Yes.

BS: *This was what date?*

HG: Oh. Just a minute.

BS: *I'm just curious as to when they started the Office of Polar Programs.*

HG: I came to them on August 28, 1959. I stayed with them until 12/28/79.

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BS: *Go ahead. Just keep talking.*

HG: OK. Dr. Jones asked me if I would take dictation from the men who had been down in the Antarctic and came back and I did. The first time I took dictation on the Polar Programs was from George Toney. That followed Bill Smith, Ken Moulton, Harry Francis, I'm trying to think of the other guy's name. It wasn't until sometime later that they expanded and got a couple more people on board. Mort Turner. He was Mr. Mort Turner at the time. And he handled geology. Dr. Jones had asked me to work in the science section where I'd been. We moved to another office space and I was asked to work with Jack Crowell - John P. Crowell.

BS: *How do you spell that?*

HG: C-r-o-w-e-l-l. He was the one who was going to get a vessel for the Polar Programs and that was the one that, I should say the birth of the US *El Tanin*. I was very happy and excited about handling this part of the job. Because from my desk in Washington, DC, to Maine where the ship was being \_\_\_\_ and built and whatnot, and later, it was christened, the ceremony, the declaration of the platform, the running back and forth of Dr. Crary going up there and checking out everything, poor John Crowell never left the desk.

It launched then it was time for personnel. Well, we had to go and look for personnel on the ship. There was a shake down cruise from Maine up to the Arctic area, then came down. The crew started to complain about the food. The food was ok, however, there were \_\_\_\_ desserts.

They were mad because from four desserts, they got down to two desserts a day and they didn't think that was enough. So I said to Dr. Jones, "Where will the ship be when it comes back?" I said, "You know, it would be great if we could have it down here in Washington on the Potomac River," never thinking, you know, that idea from me would go anywhere. Finally, the day came and they brought it down. We had open house. We tried to talk Dr. Jones into trying a weather balloon. Well, it was funny because the was weather fine, but the balloon wasn't ready to go. And he almost went with it. He forgot to let go. It was embarrassing, but it was funny and I says, "Well that's a good way to get rid of the boss, if you ever had to do it." But it was so comical. But the people in the staff, everybody from the Foundation, wanted to come down to see how could a little organization like the Polar Programs get a vessel. That was really one.

BS: *So Crowell planned it, and commissioned it.*

HG: It was . . .

BS: *Did he get some help from the Navy or ?*

HG: Oh yeah. Yeah. At the time, I was introduced to Davisville, Rhode Island. Never been up there, but I did meet Tom Armstrong who was our representative up there. He was the one who helped get all the equipment together for us and get it down to the Antarctic. When we moved to 1800 G Street, to a bigger office, we had more space, more programs. Dr. Crary had an office of his own and his own secretary.

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Phil Smith, likewise. Ken Wilson. George Toney, and we took on an information officer, Mr. Curt Sandved. And we hired a cartographer from the US Geological Survey, Walter R. Seelig.

We had Eddie Goodale's son-in-law, Robert Hinchliffe, who worked with projects on the *El Tanin*. Mr. Hinchliffe moved a short time later to Walnut, California. In his place, we received Colonel Merle Dawson.

BS: *And what was his job?*

HG: Colonel Dawson was a master. He could take any ship, any weight, anywhere in the world. License \_\_\_\_\_. He came to us after he had \_\_\_\_\_ evacuation in South Korea through mine infested waters. Colonel Dawson and I collaborated on an Antarctic manual - survival manual. There was one in the Polar Programs, but it was a loose-leaf binder. It was too big. Too bulky to carry around. He started with instructions of survival. Colonel Dawson and I worked on this book together and we got it down to a size that would fit in a jacket pocket which was about 6 x 8 inches. He had survival, the dos and don't s for every station we had at the time. It proved to be a very good publication.

BS: *When you were assigned to Tom Jones, he had just been assigned with the job as Director at Office of Polar Programs, is that correct?*

HG: Right.

BS: *And were you the first person assigned to him? I mean, was there anybody else in the department?*

HG: There were, but they weren't Polar Programs. They were the front office.

BS: *This was the main part of NSF, NSF proper.*

HG: Yeah.

BS: *The Head Office.*

HG: Yeah.

BS: *OK. And then Tom eventually split off and got his own division which became the Office of Polar Programs. So, you were with him before the creation of Office of Polar Programs.*

HG: Yes.

BS: *I see.*

HG: Because I had taken dictation with Libby Hunt who worked for Dr. Joyce. And they had a lot to do at Scott organization. One of the first sub-contractors was Arctic Institute of North America. They were the ones who organized the Skyline Orientation Programs which were held in Shenandoah National Park, usually about the first couple of days - maybe a week after Labor Day.

(250)

BS: *Back to Tom. Where did Tom come from? I mean, what did he do before he started the Office of Polar Programs?*

HG: I know we got Ken from the Navy. We got Curt Sandved from the Office of Information. Walter Seelig we got from geological survey because I had to write up a job sheet for him and I never wrote up one for a cartographer, a chart-maker or anybody like that. And Eddie Goodale

came from the US Weather Bureau. And he was USARP representative from Christchurch, New Zealand. And he had a secretary there, Margaret Lanyon, who stayed with Eddie for the whole time.

BS: *How many years was Eddie in Christchurch?*

HG: Every year.

BS: *Every summer season.*

HG: Every summer season.

BS: *And for how long? How many years?*

HG: Oh God. Not only summer season. When the station closed, he came to Washington, DC, to work in our office and then we went back about somewhere in August so that he had established, you know, a warehouse for the clothing because under the contract with Arctic Institute of North America, the clothing was in a warehouse and it was fixed up in bundles and brought up to the Shenandoah National Park and the last day or two of orientation, and it was given out to the guys who were going down to the Ice. And we eliminated that as part of the business because it was kind of cumbersome and if there was an exchange of the clothing, you had to tell these people that, you know, the clothing is different because you're going to be in a hut or you're going to be in a camp out in the field. And there's a difference between the summer and the winter issue. So it was much better to work it this way. We came up with a form. I asked the people if I could have someone from the Administrative Office of the National Science Foundation who did forms and publications and what not, and this worked out very well because they came up with a three page form, then we decided to cut it down to two page, and that first page would be your

information of your next-of-kin and who you are, where you are, and what not. And if you have any dependents while you will be down in the Antarctic, who will take care of them. And a very funny one, but the first one was from a geologist from a university who said, my parents will take care of my dogs. Which I thought was ironic. And all the information was on one sheet of paper, front and back. The second sheet of paper was nothing but the clothing. Now that was interesting because you would be surprised at how many people never knew what size they wore. So we had to start measuring them. And that's when we got some mannequins and we had them put out in the hallway right before you enter the office and they had a guy in a summer outfit, field outfit and a wintering over outfit.

(300)

BS: *This is at NSF?*

HG: Yeah.

BS: *Right at NSF.*

HG: At NSF. For the first week. . .

BS: *So they would know when they came in.*

HG: They knew they were in the right place.

BS: *Now who were your science officers? Mort Turner was geology, you mentioned.*

HG: Dr. Crary covered a lot . . . a lot of fields. Mort Turner became . . .

BS: *When did Crary come along? After IGY?*

HG: Yes, because he was associated with CREL and they had a big farewell to-do for Bert Crary when he left CREL and came to the Foundation. He became the Chief Scientist.

BS: *When was that he came? '60?*

HG: Yeah. About that time. And he not only took care of going down to the Antarctic. He took care of the Arctic. He took care of the people on the ships. Merle Dawson was responsible for the *El Tanin*. Took it out on mini-cruises.

BS: *Merle?*

HG: Merle Dawson. D-a-w-s-o-n.

BS: *He was the Skipper of the El Tanin?*

HG: Yep. Until they finally got, you know, they got a permanent one. Meanwhile . . .

BS: *Was that Ed Thornton?*

HG: Yeah. I think there was somebody else before him.

BS: *Did you know Ed lives here?*

HG: A foreigner that I don't recall his name.

BS: *Peter* \_\_\_\_\_.

HG: Yeah.

BS: *Peter was on the Hero.*

HG: No, he was on the *Hero*. No. Um. . . I can't think of him. But anyway, the men all had to take a tour of duty, not only down on the Ice, but they had to go on the ship too. And the *El Tanin*, I know Ken Moulton took it from Wellington, New Zealand, to Ushuaia. George Toney was on, and he sends a request to me, he says, "Don't send them too young." He said, "I have to burp them and carry them aboard the ship," he said, "when they get seasick." Charles Smitler, Bert Crary was. Bert Crary went down on the Ice almost every year.

I want to insert an incident that took place regarding Bert Crary and an embarrassment to myself because these bunch of guys never told me the background about who was coming aboard. I had to dig that out myself. So when Dr. Jones decided that we ought to have a new survival manual and so at the staff meeting, he suggested who we could talk to some old Antarctic explorers about the problems they had and if we could avoid any danger. So I suggested Dr. Crary, and everybody at the table just roared. And I didn't think that was funny. I didn't want to embarrass Dr. Crary. But I do know I embarrassed myself because then the incident come up about, well he just the best one I thought would be \_\_\_\_\_, with all the knowledge on survival and it turned out that he was out on an ice cap that broke off and everybody went to his rescue and of course, you know, the helicopters already were being back \_\_\_\_\_, you know, it was the end of the season and there was Dr. Crary and evidently the Chaplain at Our Lady of the Snows down in McMurdo station and he was more concerned with Bert's, you know, what was going to happen and how are we going to get him off the Ice and everything.

(350)

So finally, he saw that he was praying and all, and so finally the question came up as, "Well, I guess you see that you're going to die or something. You're going to ask the Almighty to help you. " So when I asked Dr. Crary, "Is this true?" And he said, "Yes." And I said, "Did you pray?" And he said, "Uh, well. . . sort of." And he said, " I was\_\_\_\_ hell, shit, hell, shit, how am I going to get off \_\_\_\_?"

BS: *He was on a piece of ice.*

HG: He was on a piece of ice. And so one of the guys that was down there was a relative of Harry Francis's. He threw this life preserver out. He got it out there, but he hit Bert Crary with it and Bert collapsed on the ice. They finally got a helicopter veteran out there to rescue him. But it was a close call.

Another time, an incident, they decided to play baseball one day and so they decided to have a baseball field made out on the ice. And everything was fine and when it got time to hit the sack, there was a terrific rumble and I found out that it cracked. The field went out and they had to gather and run to get off that particular point. I realized then what a dangerous place it was.

The Foundation made grants to colleges and universities to support research down in the Antarctic. It solved a lot of problems, but we had a lot of inquiries about how could we preserve our specimens? And I told them, "If you can't do it in the Antarctic, you will never do it any place else." At this time, the universities had chosen their people, grants were made, people were assigned ready to go down.

BS: *Did they get them together for an organizational meeting or anything?*

HG: Oh yeah.

BS: *Where was that?*

HG: Shenandoah National Park. Every year.

BS: *What was that called?*

HG: National Science Foundation Orientation Program for Polar.

BS: *And was that Skyline?*

HG: Skyline Drive, Shenandoah National Park.

BS: *OK. Now how many people went there? Everybody who went to the Ice or all the scientists?*

HG: Over 200.

BS: *Military come?*

HG: Absolutely. They were assigned places. They had cabins. We tried to keep them together so, we figured this way. Psychologically and mentally, the summer people would live in the same building with the military people, so they would know one another and in all due respects, I brought up the subject, you know, if you don't like the guy, the way he combs his hair, then find out when he takes his hat off, that he's bald-headed. You've bought the farm. So, learn to get together up at Skyline. The Orientation Program. If you can't make it up there, you sure as hell

are not going to make it down on the Ice. That goes for summer and winter and even field. So this worked out very well.

BS: *How long did they hold Skyline conferences.*

HG: We had it for two weeks and then we cut it down to one week. And we got speakers who came like Al Wade. He showed pictures and slides and what not, Tony Gaugh.

(400)

We picked some very good people that came and they were the bulk sort of - the adhesive factor that kept the whole thing together.

BS: *Did they continue these?*

HG: Every year. Like clockwork.

BS: *For how . . . for . . ever? I ask that because they were doing them in the '60s when I was there, but I returned in the '80s when I was commander and they weren't.*

HG: No, they weren't then. I don't know what we did after I left, but while I was there, we would go up.

BS: *So they through '79 then.*

HG: Oh yeah. Absolutely. Because we had it up there all the time. But then you know when the ship came along, we didn't want them to be like orphans in a storm, so we decided that Friday

would be the day when the *El Tanin* people would come up and the *Hero* people because we didn't want to have any problems in any foreign country and stressed upon them, you're going down there, No. 1, you have to be physically fit, mentally alert. OK. I was the one who scheduled the personnel for medical and physical examinations. I contacted Navy bases and military bases around. If there was an Army base in Kansas, or Wyoming, the people from the University of Wyoming would go there.

BS: *So you sent them to military bases for the physical.*

HG: For the physical examination and I talked to the doctors on the phone, wrote the letters, send them the format, told them to fill them out, \_\_\_\_\_ and everything. And their shots. From the group from each station, all the ones that would be working down at South Pole Station and McMurdo Station, Byrd Station, Eight, Cycle, there was one picked there who would be the SSL which was the Station Scientific Leader. And we picked some real good guys there. I mean their heart and soul was in it.

BS: *Who were some of these guys?*

HG: John Katzafrakas for the summer.

BS: *At which station?*

HG: South Pole.

BS: *Was that Siple?*

HG: At Siple, I'm trying to think who the heck was at Siple. Wish I had saved those lists.

BS: *It doesn't matter. I know Katzafrakas.*

HG: I'm trying to think of the young man who was . . . Jerry Kleiman.

BS: *Kleiman.*

HG: Yep. He was with the biology program out of California.

BS: *He's down at Scripps now.*

(450)

HG: Yeah. And Charlie Roberts who was a Navy officer, worked at the Weather Bureau and he was also an EMT man - Emergency Medical Technician - we had him at South Pole Station time and time again. He stayed for the summer and I think he wintered over a couple of times. From Ohio State we had Art Rundle, at Palmer Station. He stayed there, well, summer-winter-summer. Came back, went down the following year.

BS: *Was he the first?*

HG: Yeah.

BS: *That was about '64 or '65, wasn't it?*

HG: And he came back and went up to have his physical examination at Bethesda Naval Hospital in Washington, DC, and they looked at his records and everything and said, "Well,

hell, there's nothing wrong with you." Gave him a quick examination and he went down again. During that summer-winter and summer broke for a while there and so we'd give them time in Chile, or Argentina, you know, for R and R. Because at that time, you know, we had the Chileans and Argentinians who wanted to establish their station. They brought over wives, babies born there and everything. This territorial possession business cropped up again and I think the best person I worked with on that was Paul Daniels. He lived up in Maine and then he went down to Louisiana in the winter. But Paul was ambassador to several European countries. And he was also on the Board at the Organization for American States.

BS: *So you knew Paul Daniels.*

HG: Yes.

BS: *Of course, he negotiated the Antarctic Treaty.*

HG: Treaty, right. Absolutely.

BS: *But you say he came back and did he do inspections?*

HG: Oh yes.

BS: *So, he did inspect other nation's stations down in Antarctica.*

HG: Right.

BS: *Did he ever make a Russian inspection, do you know?*

HG: I don't know off-hand.

BS: *But he did do inspections of others.*

HG: We had the scientists from the Foundation, the Polar Programs, also had, you know, besides taking a tour on the ship, and going down for the summer, they would change every . . . we had a big turnaround. Because we didn't like to send them down every year, you know, the same year. Give them a break. Stay and take another station for the summer rather than wintering over. We had an exchange program with foreign scientists.

(500)

BS: *How did that work?*

HG: Excellent.

BS: *I mean, what were the mechanics of making it work. Did we make . . .*

HG: Polar Programs made it with the Russian Academy of Scientists and the National Academy of Sciences helped us. Lou D\_\_\_\_\_ at the National Academy of Sciences here in Washington, DC, got in touch with Dr. Gerasimov. He was head of the Russian Academy of Sciences. They had sent down Dr. Treshnokov.

BS: *You know what his first name was?*

HG: I can't think of his first name. It will come to me, though, I know that. You know who would know because he had a secretary and I had introduced her to Dr. Untersteiner when she

came to Washington, DC, for a visit and he prepared a barbecue or something for . . . but anyway, I think there was another Russian who came to serve when Harry Francis went over to Vostok Station, he came over at McMurdo Station.

BS: *Francis wintered over at Vostok? What year was that?*

HG: I think it was a year or so after Little America. We did the same with the Japanese. At their Station, I think it was Swoya. And we had a contact, Eddie Goodale's job at New Zealand, we had one like that with Peter Wilkener down in Ushuiaia. \_\_\_\_ took care of the troops that we sent down, you know, the scientists, the ones on the ship, the ones going to Palmer Station worked close with the American Embassy down there because we had to transfer funds.

(550)

And they, you know, there was a big controversy about the exchange of money, you know, but we got over that one very good.

(End of Tape 1 - Side A)

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(Begin Tape 1 - Side B)

HG: I don't know where Tom Jones came from, but I do know that Bert Cray came from CREL. Because they were reluctant to really let him go. But, that's how I became friends with all of the guys up at CREL like Tony Gaugh, who was my favorite.

BS: *So Bert came over from CREL and he was up in the Arctic before that.*

HG: Yes.

BS: *What was he doing up in the Arctic?*

HG: I have no idea.

BS: *And Tom. You were assigned to Tom and he was already with NSF proper.*

HG: Right.

BS: *And he was given orders to start the Office of Polar Programs in 1959.*

HG: Right. And out comes all of these people came over.

BS: *How did you get them. Did you write them letters saying, "Would you like to join NSF?"*

HG: We picked up the phone and called. They were right across the street.

BS: *Who was across the street? I mean they were at . . .*

HG: The Navy Department was right across the street and the Foundation was on Constitution Avenue.

BS: *I see.*

HG: So when we moved from the Cosmos Club, we moved to another temporary place that was up on, across from the Dunkas Hospital which is in about the same block, but we needed more space because we were up on the third floor and there was an attic. And from there we moved to Constitution Avenue.

BS: *18th and G?*

HG: No, 2000 Constitution Avenue. And from there, we got into this new building that they finished\_\_\_\_\_right across the street from the International Monetary Fund.

BS: *So you didn't have a home for a while. You kind of bounced around.*

HG: Yeah.

BS: *There was just the two of you or . . . all these guys?*

HG: All these guys, yeah.

BS: *So, they finally . . when did they move into 18th and G?*

HG: It would have to be about '57 or '58, somewhere there.

BS: *OK.*

HG: See, because when I worked at the Cosmos, the old Cosmos Club, the National Science Foundation had 109 people on one sheet of paper. That was our telephone book. We had two. . .

BS: *The entire National Science Foundation.*

HG: *That's right. We had 24 and 27 were the Polar \_\_\_\_\_.*

BS: *So, the Office of Polar Programs was formed in 1959, you say. But, and you were already at 18th and G. You were . . . OK, I understand. And so they stayed there on the sixth floor of 18th and G from then on.*

HG: *Until I retired.*

BS: *Until you retired.*

HG: *In '79.*

BS: *That's 18th and G, N.W., right?*

HG: *Um-hum.*

BS: *So, Bert, did he go into the field and do research any more after he was with the NSF staff?*

HG: *We went down to work with the guys from CREL - Tony Gaugh, went down. And then he went down in the summertime for the summer season with, we had . . . Bert Crary, Fiorenzo O\_\_\_\_\_ who came from Rutgers University, and I think there was a couple of Germans. There were five different countries there and they all raised their flags and I said to Bert, "Did you raise the American flag?" He didn't have one, so I shipped him down one. And they were there for the summer in geology. George Demoni was there and . . .*

BS: *And this was out where?*

HG: It was in one of the fields?

BS: *One of the geology field camps?*

HG: Yeah. One of the field camps because when the weather was bad, they became the best pinochle players I've ever seen. And Phil Smith, and then they'd been down on a couple of traverses over to the Russian Station and with the Russians on board and the Russians just lived on potatoes and cabbage soup. My guys didn't like that at all. So they introduced the American food to them and then they built and opened up Siple Station which was a new one.

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And there wasn't room enough - they had a big expensive program there of you know \_\_\_\_\_ scientists, but they did go and work with them on the traverses, because they lived in these vehicles, you know, across the Ice. And Merle Dawson went down there and picking the site for Siple Station, he came up with the idea that we ought to get something like an ice detector and it goes out on the front vehicle because when the Navy was down, a crevasse opened and it swallowed this tractor with the driver. Killed him. And they had to wait until the spring, summer season to get him out. But the chaplain come out there and blessed him and finally, George Toney brought the body back with him when he got off the Ice into Andrews and then we shipped it to his next of kin. But, we had to get something to detect them because Merle said you could hear it cracking and it's, you know, you just can't figure out what the weather's going to be like. The changes in it. I had some field parties. Bill Austin was in there was a couple of guys and they put snow blocks all over the tent and it damn near blew the tent off the continent, the winds came up that hard. And then at the same time, I was cussing out Eddie Bauer because he

was supposed to send me down tents and he sent the ones that leaked. And I really jumped over him when I got to meet him and he opened up all his sporting goods stores, I said, "How the hell are you ever staying in business when you don't know one tent from another?"

BS: *You mean that was before he became famous and he made tents for us in the Antarctic? He got the contract for that? Did he make the Scott tents that we use today.*

HG: Yeah. But he learned the lesson the hard way because I told him, I says, "Never, never, never, never. You put them in a damn wind tunnel and turned it up as far and as high as you can." Because we almost lost these guys.

BS: *Did you work with Joe Fletcher?*

HG: Yes.

BS: *When did Joe take over from Tom Jones? Did Tom retire? Was that it?*

HG: No, Tom went to the front office. He was in administration of Polar Programs. Joe Fletcher came in. Joe came down from the Rand Corporation up in Seattle, Washington. And Fletcher Allen before that up in the Arctic. And then also on the staff of the University of Washington in Seattle.

BS: *How was Joe? How was he different from Tom?*

HG: Well, Tom Jones made several trips down to the Antarctic, but I mean he wasn't a guy who was out there in the field working, you know? Picks and shovel stuff?

BS: *Um-hum.*

HG: As I'd tell the guys down there, I'd say, "You go down to South Pole Station and it's your turn to shovel snow. I said shovel it or you're not going to have enough water to drink or enough to take a bath in. And I said, "If enlisted men want to not take a bath for weeks and roll in the snow then, I said, fine, because they establish a Polar Club. They made a sweat station. They'd go out there stark naked, run in then go in there and take a shower and run out and that 's what the Polar club was at 98 below zero.

BS: *Jones didn't go into the field much. And Fletcher was different, huh?*

HG: Yeah.

BS: *How so?*

HG: Because he established Fletcher Island.

BS: *I understand, but how so was he when he was in the Antarctic job with the people? I mean, did he work with them in the field?*

HG: \_\_\_\_\_

BS: *So he went out and he communed with the scientists.*

HG: He did that and he ran the station to station. He went there and made a trip around all the stations and he went out to the field. That camp and that set of boys there, Bob Rutford and Jim Zumberger was a member of the National Science Board at the time, and so was Al Wade. But

Al Wade would go down with his gang every year. And he had the knowledge and the background of, you know, two different polar regions. You know the Arctic is different than the Antarctic. You could have fires in both places, but when I first learned about how quick it could catch on fire down in the Antarctic, the snow being cellular, you cannot compact it, you gotta shovel it, you gotta cut it in blocks and shovel it off. So we had those kind of, up at the orientation program, one afternoon, we'd start a fire with teepees and have the guys go down and one would do the V section like that with the ansol tanks to clear a passage to go in.

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The guy behind him didn't so much concentrate on the fire as he did on the guy in front of him. He sloshed him with ansol because, you turn around and like Ron McGregory told me, the damn fire was out, but it got through the snow where it got through there it would come up on your back and I'll be damn if I'm going to have my backsides burned. So I said, "Well Ron, we're going to have one of these demonstrations." He said, "I'm coming up." Harry Francis was up there. He did mountain climbing. He taught them how to rappel up and down and we did it with pretending somebody was in the basket and everything about it, we had to get it down. We had a mountain climbing session up there. And we had, flew up a gang from New Zealand, from their stations, and they did a search and rescue for mountain climbing too.

*BS: Well, how did Fletcher in his management technique at the Foundation, did he reorganize things after Tom Jones, in his own manner, or did he?*

HG: He made improvements. Everybody that came in that position made improvements. The only ones who didn't were the one like Ed Todd who was there after Fletcher left. And after Bob Rutherford left and they were different because Todd never went down to the Polar Programs. I mean, never went down to the Ice until he joined the Polar Programs. And I said, "You've got to

go down to see what it is." I said, "I could tell you, I could show you pictures and slides, but I said, you've gotta go down there and see it." And he did. And he stayed there for a couple of months and he came back. And so he knew because I said, you've got to get the feeling that things are not as easy. Why can't we get this here? Why can't we get this there? I had a run in with Tom Jones one day at a staff meeting. I didn't attend a staff meeting because I wasn't invited. But they were going over the budget and they were trying to cut corners as much as they could, but yet save lives. So I had a call from Tom Armstrong and he said, "You know they're building the new McMurdo Station?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Do you know," he said, " we're going to need some beds" and everything like that and I got the idea. I said, "Where could we get beds?" I said. Beds and mattresses that go with them and everything. And he says, "Well, you know," he says, the word up here is that Ford Dunnings, Massachusetts is going to close. And I said, "Fine, what have they got? Any things for sale?" and he said, "Well, you know, they're not selling them, but if we could get them, he said, we could work out a deal. All we'd have to do is pay the freight charges." So I said, "OK." So finally we went ahead and planned it and we got the bunks and we got 50 mattresses and it comes up on the bill of lading and Tom Jones calls in and says, "Helen's been shopping again." and I says, "What's the problem?" And he says "Who told you you could spend \$1900 and some dollars?" And I said, "I didn't spend \$1900 and some dollars." He says, "Well the mattresses," he says, "and the beds," he said, "are down at McMurdo Station." I said, "Yes." He said, "How'd you get 'em?" I said, "I paid \$19.95, and if you want a receipt for it, I'll give you the \$20 bucks and you can keep the change. It was just finagling, I said. You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours." He said, "Who did this?" and I said, "Me and Tom Armstrong. If you want to fire him, fine. He goes, I go too. But I said the world will know and long remember what goes on here."

BS: *Tom was in the front office?*

HG: Yeah.

BS: *Well, tell me about Rutford. Compare him to Joe Fletcher who he followed.*

HG: A younger version.

BS: *A younger version of Joe Fletcher?*

HG: No, a younger version of a Polar man. Antarctic explorer. His heart and soul. He ate that stuff.

BS: *Fletcher did. You mean he . . .*

HG: No, not Fletcher. Fletcher didn't eat the stuff.

BS: *But Rutford did.*

HG: Rutford comes in,.Before he came in , we were looking around for somebody to replace Fletcher because Fletcher went to NOAA. It bothered me because there were some promotions from within thought they ought to get it and I said, "No." I thought this because I said, "Somebody has got to have. .." I went to Dr. Crary and I said to him I said, "You know what? Do you want that job?" And he says, "No, Helen." And he says, "I don't want it." And I says, "OK, " I says. "Well, this is what I'm going to do. I think I ought to go down and talk to the Director of the National Science Foundation, the Number One man." And he and I became very good friends. I don't know how, but we did.

BS: *Who was the director then?*

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HG: Oh, Allen Waterman and I were very good friends when I first went to the Foundation. I helped him put on his kilts and what not and I held his damn backpacks when he played for the Christmas party and I said, "What are you going to do?" I said, "Do you just play these songs till you know them?" And he said, "You know, I've been studying them fine." And then all the program directors from the whole Foundation, rolled up their pants legs and did a can-can dance in the auditorium for it. But Dr. Waterman was very nice. He was a case of the mountain coming to Mohammed.

BS: *Right. So anyway, you went to him and how'd they wind up selecting Rutford? Rutford was quite young.*

HG: Yes, that was the only thing that I says, but the man's got it up here where it's needed. I said, Number one, he's well educated. Number Two, he's been on many, many runs down to the Antarctic with a field party on traverses and everything. So I said, we need somebody. Besides, I said, one thing I want is somebody there who has an earned Ph.D. like I said, Dr. Crary. Not an honorary and not a bought one, you know what I mean. He said, "Good idea." So I said, "I don't know who to pick." So then at the National Science Board, it came up and Jim Zumberg was a member of the National Science Board and before him was Connie Eldium who was head of the University of Minnesota. Conrad Eldium, when he died, Zumberg took over. Then Zumberg chose him as a National Science Foundation Board Member. So, he comes up and he had highly recommended Bob Rutford. When Rutford came in, it was a situation where you're turning in a man who was a field man and you're turning him into an administrator. But I said, "You know, if we work this together, you can be both." He said, "Is it possible?" I said, "Absolutely." I said I'd done it with a military man, and I said, when I was in the Department of Defense and I said I can do it with you. So, he said, "Well there's a lot I don't know, Helen." I said, "I'll tell you what," I

said. "We'll do these letters together," I said, "and I'll tell you what the \_\_\_\_\_ are and I'll tell you about the grants and I said you sign the letters and I'll explain it to you later." And we did this for about a year. And he got to be so good. But what Rutherford did was that he didn't want to have any closed doors. So when he came to the program, he took the doors off all the hallways coming down so he could run from one to the other without no door was going to be stopped or shut in his face. And he did this and we got along fine.

*BS: How about Rutherford and Ed Todd? What was the change? Rutherford leaves. Ed Todd comes in.*

HG: Ed Todd came from meteorology outfit down the line that didn't know beans about the Antarctic.

*BS: He was, wasn't he already with NSF?*

HG: He was with NSF, yes. But he wasn't, he had nothing to do with the Polar. The closest thing he came to Polar was there was a reorganization down there and there was a climatology department established and Dr. Jones thought it would be good if I went down there and established it for them. And I said, "I'm not going to leave my job here." I said, "I got a cushy job." And he says, "Well, we got to get this together." He says, "We're going to get a meteorologist." He says, "He's a damn smart man coming in. He's from out of the country." I say, "How far out?" And he says, "He's from Australia." I says, "Oh geez, I says, "OK." He says, "His name is Dr. Uri Radok. He's one of the twins. They're both meteorologists. Only he's a couple of minutes older than his brother and smarter." And he ran the meteorology thing for the Australians. The Australian National Antarctic Program down there - ANARE. And so Dr. Radok comes up and so he said he told him about this and well, he said, he needed some help he said and he don't know these people. I said, "We'll get our heads together," and I went down there and I talk to the secretary and, she's Italian, and I say this because she runs a very hard

shop. Kind of a female Mafia. As a matter of fact, she had a sign behind her back on the wall calling her the "Godmother."

(200)

And I trained her. They chose the members to be on their panel. I appointed them all. Indoctrinated them all. And they established a climatology department and Dr. Radok and I then sat down and he says, "If we work this well together," he says, "I have a book," he said, "on climate," and I want to get it translated." I said, "What language is it in?" He said, "It's in German." I said, "I don't know German." He says, "I know German." I said, "Fine. I'll work with you on it." We did a book. We did the drawings. All the translations. We published the book. Now the book is called, "Climate and Dynamics."

*BS: So Ed was a weather guy too. And he came to NSF.*

HG: And \_\_\_\_\_ is deep.

*BS: But he came to NSF, then he came to the Office of Polar Programs.*

HG: Right.

*BS: So, you talked about Rutherford opening all the doors so that you'd have access to everyone. What did Todd do that put his stamp on the organization, so to speak?*

HG: Todd more or less, abided by what has already been established and tried desperately hard to keep up with it and take a step or two further forward. And it was transition time again in some aspects. Universities were coming up with, well we got, instead of universities, we got

private laboratories who wanted to go down. We had scientists who were medical doctors who wanted to go down and try finding out a cure for sudden infant death syndrome and they did it with the help of Jerry Kleinman and his biology and worked with seals.

BS: *Who was that? Warren Zapold?*

HG: Who?

BS: *Was that Dr. Warren Zapold? Mass General? Dr. Warren Zapold?*

HG: No.

BS: *Pinned the things on the backs of seals?*

HG: Oh yes, yes. He pronounced his name differently. Zapold. Anyway, I couldn't figure out who you were talking about. And Jerry did some wonderful things. He asked one time, up at Skyline, he asked me about breast feeding. And I said, "You know." I said, "It's a good thing because I had a daughter. She was breast fed and I said, you know, Jerry, I get you a breast pump I said, and what you do is you get the mother seal and if can without her killing you, get some milk from her and then feed it and so he did and we fixed this thing up and he wore it like a belt and these little bottles with the breast fed milk in them and then he would kneel down in the snow and he'd get the baby to come over and suckle from the bottle. Well, the mother went out to sea because she'd been gone \_\_\_ long, you know, a couple of weeks. And so, anyway, that's, it was after that that we decided they were going to dive down there. And I says, "Look, what are you going to dive in, wet suits?" Ah, look, there's a couple of \_\_\_ there where Peter Gimble from the Macy's and Gimble's dynasty people. He didn't want to go into the business although he did get, he had a share in it, but he wasn't running it. He wanted to get into science and he was in

science and he was diving to try and raise the *Andrea Doria* that sunk off New York harbor. So he went down with a couple of guys from New York University and they did scuba diving down there. But they wanted to get down deeper. And they, Commander of Naval Support Force in Antarctica was George Reedy. He didn't like it at all. We had to convert him to it. It's not going to be all military. We're not going to be like the Argentines and the Chileans who want territorial possession. I said that's not going to happen. I said it cannot happen. And it shouldn't because then, you know, we were getting noise from mining - oil drillers, diamonds, and I said, hell we ain't going to get that. We're going down there, it's going to be a laboratory for promoting of research, basic scientific research. Not applied or clinical. And that's what because that's that the Foundations basic research, not clinical or applied. For applied, go to the National Institute of Health. And so we maintained our \_\_\_\_\_ at a small boat in the pond, but what we did was remembered. And from many, many things came from that.

BS: *Well, you worked under. . . You retired under Ed Todd. This is correct?*

HG: Yeah.

BS: *You were quite young when you retired weren't you?*

HG: 54.

BS: *54. Why did you retire that early?*

HG: Because my husband had enough points to get out. He had 85 and I had 80, so I decided, he said, "I'm going to retire," he said, "do you want to come with me," he said, "or not? He's been so tolerant."

BS: *Who did he work with?*

HG: He worked with, he was an engineer. He had a master's degree. He was taught by the President of General Electric from Schenectady, New York, who came down with the GI bill and he went and got his masters and he was the engineer who constructed the Federal Aviation Building, the NASA's Space Museum and he did the organizer of 9 different buildings that housed the State Department. They wanted them all to get together on computers and so my husband worked on that and got them all tied up into one. And he went down in the. . . as an engineer, he went down and would be gone two weeks and then come home. Change his clothes. Spend the week-end with my daughter and myself and then go back there. He was going to Dulles airport. He did a flight control tower. Built the credit union in the NASA building and also in the Federal Aviation Building.

BS: *So he worked, he was a civil servant and he worked for which agency?*

HG: Federal Aviation.

BS: *FAA. OK. I understand.*

HG: Right. And then he went and was an engineer on the subway construction under Washington DC, going into Virginia and into Maryland.

BS: *Well what did you do after you retired?*

HG: We studied the weather for the last ten years back in Arizona and decided that he was going to take the television antenna from the roof and keep walking west and he said the first one that says, "What the hell is that?" he said, "that's where we're going to stay." We went to a little town

called Ruckenberg, Arizona, named after a \_\_\_\_ was German. Came and bought up land over there, settled it and made that territory and there you have it and that's where we retired.

*BS: I see. So you spent most of your retirement years in Arizona then. And what, after your husband died, you moved here?*

HG: No. Well, we lived there five years and he had arthritis very badly and the doctor said you have to take him to a place where there are four seasons. So we had a daughter who worked, went to school in Michigan then she went to the University of Idaho and when she got through there, she went down into a civilian job running the bank at the Marine Base at California. And then they moved her husband who was working in electronics and he was transferred to Colorado and so I called her up and I said, " We're moving. Try to find us a place in Colorado." She lived in Dorton, Colorado in North \_\_\_\_ - I said fine. She found us a house. We upped and moved and my husband was hospitalized with double pneumonia and pleurisy, so I got him out of there and we moved to Colorado and he contracted cancer and died.

*BS: And so he died in Colorado.*

HG: Yep. October the 16th, 1988.

(End of Tape 1 - Side B)

**End of Interview**