Alexander Graham Bell
8 January 1847
Mabel Terry-Lewis
Interviewer

(Begin Tape 1 - Side A)

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KB: Today is Monday, April 30th, 2001, and this is Karen Brewster. I'm here with Colonel Norman Vaughan in his apartment in Anchorage, Alaska, and this is an oral history recording for the Byrd Polar Research Institute's Polar Explorers and Scientists Oral History Project. Thank you very much for participating.

NV: What was the last word you said? What kind of a project?

KB: It's an oral history project.

NV: Oral history project. Good, all right. Well, I'm very happy to participate. I think a great deal of the Ohio connection that they have supported Byrd and they have supported wanting to know all about Byrd's story and his men and I'm just enthusiastic about that. And I'm glad to know it's at one place.

KB: So, why don't we start with you telling us when and where you were born.

NV: My name is Norman Dane Vaughan. I don't use the middle name very often, but I always sign my name Norman D. Vaughan if that means anything to you. I was born in 1905, in Salem, Massachusetts, and my parents
were New England people, father having originally come . . . his forebears, rather, originally coming from Wales and my mother's forebears came from New England as far back as I can trace them. And so you have, in that combination, a very conservative man in me, I think, conservative. At least I think I am. And that is a New England trait which has stood me well and has held me back. Both. There's good qualities in being a conservative person. On the other hand, you do miss a lot sometimes. Friends don't like conservative people too much because they are held back in what they want to do, so that's just a side remark.

But, I was born there in Salem, and essentially lived my very youngest days in Salem and Hamilton, Massachusetts, which is 27 miles away. Oh, correction on the 27. It's about 10 miles away. It's 27 from Boston, but 10 miles from Salem and we went there to a house on a farm, and father owned the farm. And we farmed a living on it, actually did the work on the farm. Father was a business man and he lived and worked out of Salem in the wintertime and in the summertime he did work out of Hamilton. But it was difficult until the age of the car came into being. I can remember first moving from Salem to Hamilton and Hamilton back to Salem again with a team of horses and a hay wagon and all of our things - furniture, clothing and everything else went in that hay wagon and it was a big day for me and my brother and sister to be able to go on that wagon ride for 10 miles. Of course, we got tired and worn out and were terribly at odds at the end of the day, but we remember it very definitely as a highlight in our youth. Father drove horses. Had a driving pair at one time and would go to work and back with the horses from Salem into his work which was in Peabody, a town next to it. His business was tanning leather and he did do one good thing.

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In conversation one day with a man who was a shoemaker, they talked about ladies' nurses shoes that are white above the sole, but the sole was always brown with brown leather. And they both remarked, "Wouldn't it be fine if we had white soles?" But, of course, that's impossible. At least, father didn't think so. They just agreed that it sounded impossible. And he went home and worked on chemicals until he was able to get a dye which when tanning leather, turned the leather and all the fibers into white. And then, of course, it remained white through the life of the shoe except for the dirt you put on it. And he named the soles which he was making - shoe sole leather - he named
them Vaughan's Ivory Sole leather. And it was with that that he made a good deal of money because he had the only manu-
ufacturer that manufactured white soles and all the shoe manufacturers that made nurses shoes had to buy from him if they were going to have white soles.

And then the stock market came along in '29 and he lost everything. And the business went downhill too, because after that he wasn't as well as he was before and he didn't have any of his sons working with him at the time. He had three sons and one had stayed home, but was not interested in that business and did other things. He worked for the Marlin Firearms Co., for instance. And me, I wasn't interested in the leather business and I got into advertising and other things. And the third son was not well. He passed away early after that. Anyway, we lived as a happy family going back and forth from Salem to Hamilton until we decided, or father decided that he could insulate the home and be able to live there in the winter. And he did. And it worked out well and by rebuilding and working the farm over, we had an all year round home and gave up the Salem connection entirely.

KB: *And what year was that?*

NV: I don't know, but it was in my 12th year of life. I guess that was about . . .

KB: *1917 or so.*

NV: '17, yeah. All during this time, the war was interfering and my oldest brother who did pass away, was in the service. But, my younger brother and I were too young for that and we remained home with the family. However, at the age of 12 and 10, we both went to boarding school - Fesenken School in Fesenken and Fesenken is in Newton, West Newton, Massachusetts. And I stayed there a couple of years and then went on to Milton Academy when I was able to get in there. That was my school of memory. All things that happened happened while I was at Milton. And from Milton, I went to Harvard. I was the Class of 1929 there.

KB: *What did you study at Harvard?*
NV: Meteorology. But, I left Harvard shortly after I was there in my third year because I read in the paper that Byrd was going to the Antarctic. Up to this point, I had been interested in the out of doors, both in skiing and winter camping, which nobody else seemed to be doing then.

But, I had a friend, Edward Goodale who lived in Ipswich, a short distance from me, who was very interested in winter camping and together we did a lot of the winter camping ideas of leaving home and just spending the night out and seeing how well we felt the next morning. We were pretty young at the time. And so while at college - he was one of my roommates - I read the headlines of the paper as we were all studying in this room - we had 5 people living together - and I got the paper first. We had evening papers in those days. Now, we only have morning papers. But, in those days, we had a morning and an evening paper and the evening paper was the Boston Transcript and I read the headlines which said, "Byrd to the South Pole." Well, Admiral Byrd was then a commander, but he lived in Boston nearby and he was a hero for all of us and we just loved the things he did which was all in the flying end of the business, but it was Arctic and Transatlantic interests and so forth. But, we all thought he was great! And we knew him from that point of view and we went to his lectures when we could as young, unconnected people - unconnected with a family at all.

So, when I saw this paper that said, "Byrd to the South Pole," I said, "Lookit here, Byrd's going to the South Pole. I've got to go!" I said it that quickly. And one of the other fellows, Freddie Crockett, said, and he also lived very near us - near Goodale and me in Hamilton - they both were living actually, in Ipswich, but Hamilton and Ipswich were together as two towns, just socially. Not connected with politics in any way. And people in Hamilton knew people in Ipswich very well because we were just interwoven with our lives down there. And Crockett was there in the room when I said that, that I want to go. And, in fact, I think he was the one that said, "How can you go? You don't know Admiral Byrd." And I said, "No, I don't know him, but I've got to find a way. I'm going to go!" And all night long, I seemed to have been reading the text that went with this story of his going to the Pole which included his collecting dogs and having dog drivers go on the trip.
Well, I had been racing sled dogs already in the New England Sled Dog Club and I had a small team of mongrel dogs - they weren't good ones - and I had been one year and Goodale had also been a year with Dr. Grenfell on the Labrador-Newfoundland coast and being there in the winter, I learned to drive dogs. And so I felt qualified to put myself up as a dog driver to Admiral Byrd. Well, I went to his house the very next morning after reading that headline and there I was met at the door by a buxom maid who said I couldn't see Admiral Byrd unless I had an appointment. And I said I didn't have an appointment and she said, "Well, nobody gets by me." And she was very rough about that. She recognized me as being wet behind the ears and unfamiliar with doing what I was doing, namely trying to barge into see him.

She had been very well trained in this before hand and I turned around and walked down the steps from the door. Heard it shut behind me, and as I did I had to figure a new way. And I said, if I can't get in the front door, I've got to get in the back door. So, if I'd gone around to the back door, she'd have been there, so I wouldn't have gained a thing. So, I went down to the Boston Transcript and I found the journalist who wrote that article - his name was W. A. McDonald. And W. A. McDonald was a nice guy. He just looked at me and said, "Why should I help you?" And I said, "There's no reason you should help me. Only that if you like what I have to say and you can approve of what I say, then I'd like to have you tell that much to Byrd." "Well, what should I tell him?" "Tell him that you've met a man that is at Harvard and would give up college to go on the expedition with you in any capacity, but he would like very much to be a dog driver because he is a dog driver. You don't have, at least at the present time, you don't have any dog drivers assigned, do you?" At least by that article. So, I would do that and he doesn't have to pay for my food. I'd have to manage that. And I'd do it for a year if I had at the end of the year done well, he'd want me on the expedition. And if not, there would be absolutely no obligation.

Well, that was offering him free work for a year and so, McDonald said he'd do that and he did and I got a call from McDonald a few days later that Byrd accepted the plan. So, I left college immediately and went to where it was reported that he was going to collect his dogs. And when I got there, there was no food, no anything, no way I could do. I didn't have any money. So, I went to the only little hotel, the little inn and asked if I could be their
dishwasher. "We have a dishwasher," said the owner and I found that . . . she gave me the impression that she was just like the buxom maid at Byrd's house and I didn't want to get thrown down a second time and I had to think fast, and I said, "May I be your butler?" and she looked at me with a quizzical expression and said, "What's a butler?" I said, "Ma'am, a butler is a man who brings up the firewood. He waits on the table. He sets the table and he pushes the carpet sweeper. And he even washes the windows." And she looked at me and said, "And what do you think you're going to get for wages. I don't have money to give anybody wages for this." I said, "I just want as much as I can get because I haven't any money for food." And she said, "Well, you'll be handling the food, but I want to tell you one thing. The food is usually in platters and if you're going to serve it, you'll have to handle it - namely, handle the platter. And I want you not only at the beginning of any meal but at the end, too, you are not to take any food from the platters. And you can have only the food that is left on people's plates." And I thought of my father who insisted that we eat everything and with that program, I would have starved to death. So I thought, well, I'll do it. I'll say yes. So, I said yes I would. And the first night came along and it so happened that the dishwasher was sick and she actually never came back to work, that same dishwasher, because I did it that night at the request of the owner and the lady kept calling to say she was sick, sick, sick and I was asked each day, and finally she said, "She's not coming back. Do you want to wash dishes all the time?" And I said, "Yes."

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So, I ate what was left on people's plates, but here's how I handled it. The first night after they sat down, I was given by the owner who did the cooking, a platter of lamb, all sliced, and I held a two tine fork in my right hand and I went around the first lady at the corner of the table was a lovely lady and I said, "Ma'am, do you like roast lamb?" "Oh," she said, "I love it." I gave her just a little piece. And I went to the next man. He loved it. I gave him just a little bit. Went all around and they just had a little. And then came the carrots. Creamed carrots and mashed potatoes. Well, I served those in the same way, but I held the spoon. I never let that out of my hand. And when I got around the table, I brought that bowl of food or whatever it was and the platter of meat out to the pantry and now it was time for the second help and the lady in the kitchen had gotten the meat into the oven, brought it out so it remained hot, and I went to the lady and I said, "Did you like the lamb?" "Oh, yes," she said, "I loved it." So I gave
her a great big piece. And every body got a lot of potato and a lot of carrots and a lot of meat the second time around and they didn't eat it all and I knew that was my savior. So, they didn't know about this. I didn't tell them I would eat what they leave. You can't tell anybody that. They have to find that out themselves and so when I took the dishes out to the pantry without somebody there to wash them, I stacked up all the meat in one place and all the potatoes in another place and carrots in the other and I had more that night for a meal than I had any night in the future. Well, it worked out just great. The people soon learned what was happening and they would leave a little on the plate or they'd bring when they came, all of them were week-enders and they came and they'd bring, when they came back from home, the things that they'd bring back from home were not meat and potatoes. It was more candy and cookies and things like that that didn't satisfy a fellow that was working hard and during the day, I worked hard with the dogs.

KB: And so where was this?

NV: In Wonalancet, New Hampshire.

KB: OK. And that's where Byrd was training . . .

NV: Getting his dog team ready, or teams ready. Yeah, that's what he had us do. And as time was going on, it happened very quickly, the dogs kept coming in by train, by plane, by every kind of method - we'd get a signal to come down and meet dogs that were being held for you at the railroad station or something like that. And the pile up dogs was rapid and I needed help, so I said I needed some help and could I ask another man to come and help us. So, it was agreed that I could and Byrd was told that I was going to do that and I asked another man from Harvard, my roommate, Edward Goodale, and he came and he gambled with me and we had the same problem, we needed more help. We had 97 dogs. And we finished up with 97. We had more than that because we had some we didn't approve and had to send them back and when these two fellows came - Goodale and Crockett - we had agreed come and gamble with me that we could go with Byrd, that he'll take us and if not, we'll go back to college. So that was the gamble.
KB: *And so where did the dogs come from?*

NV: Everybody seemed to send dogs. They heard that Byrd was going and they all had sled dogs and some would send some that had not been broken. That was terrible. We needed broken sled dogs.

KB: *So it was just people from around the country volunteered.*

NV: Around the country volunteered their dogs.

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And gave them to the expedition. And, of course, I kept a record of those and if they weren't working out, we sent them back.

KB: *Was dog sledding so popular back then that lots of people had dogs?*

NV: Oh, no, not lots. But it was popular enough they had a lot of dogs sent to us for this occasion because it was publicity connected with it and people were told that we would accept their dogs if they could be donated and some were sold. Very few came as sold, though. And we had to approve before we would say to Byrd that it was all right to buy it. Because somebody would say, "I have a team and I'll send the team up to you, you approve it and then get it." And we'd tell Byrd to approve three dogs out of that team of four dogs and don't take Bill and John and Henry, or something like that.

KB: *So, what was your criteria? What made a good dog?*
NV: Well, lots of things. One that they weren't fighters, because that's hell if they're fighters. Second, that they didn't chew their harnesses when you turned your back. Third, that they had good feet meaning - it's hard to tell you in one sentence what a good foot is, but we'd look at their feet. If they didn't have good-looking feet, they didn't splay out or had some deformity to it that we thought would break down under work, then we wouldn't accept it. So, we had feet and coating, they had to have good coating. If they weren't building up a good coat, they'd freeze to death in the Antarctic. So, we had that to put up with. And we did. We put up with that and it worked out fine. And we got these three fellows up there and they also waited on the table and they pushed the carpet sweeper and washed the dishes and we all got along great.

KB: *And now what year was this?*

NV: Oh, gee, let's see. It was '25 and '26.

KB: *And it was in the wintertime or it was the whole year?*

NV: Oh, we stayed there in the summer too. Yeah, we had to feed them. We'd train them in the summer on wheels. We changed to a chassis. We only had one chassis, but we'd drive a team and then that team would come in and then another fellow would take his team out and go out and go miles on the chassis and come back and while we were doing it with dog sleds, we would weight the sleds down pretty heavy so we were lugging heavy weights which we knew we'd have to do in the Antarctic. So one day we'd go without any weight at all to give the dogs flexibility and freshness and speed and the next day, it would be heavy loads. And we lived right there with the dogs. Lived outside the house, really, in a gazebo. There was no heat in the gazebo.

KB: *So, you were getting in training too.*

NV: Oh, we were getting tough. We wanted to be as tough as we could. That was the object.
KB: *So, then how did it work out? Did Byrd agree to take all three of you?*

NV: We worked all winter and had 97 dogs ready to go and it wasn't until they were ready to go that he came up to see them and inspect them and see what equipment we had and see the boxes we were sending them in and all that sort of thing. And he came up to see us and he did, he saw us and he accepted all three of us.

KB: *And how many teams were there all together that went?*

NV: 97 dogs.

KB: *Which is how many dog drivers?*

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NV: Well, we started out with we three, four, about five drivers. And then we made dog drivers out of the rest of them because it was easy to make dog drivers with a finished team if you weren't doing anything special with the team. And we weren't doing anything special with guiding them. A new man, new to dog driving, we would give a quiet team to, and he would follow a professional man. But, we were going back and forth and back and forth to Little America where we were establishing a camp from the ship. Ship to the camp was 10 miles. Nine. Nine miles. And so once we got them started, the dogs didn't want to go off the trail. They stayed on the trail and they would go right along. Then they could go without following us. They'd be on their own independently of us. And the big thing was not to let them have fighting dogs - dogs that would get into a scrap. So, we had those. I had a part wolf in my team who was really tough when we got into a scrap because he wouldn't stop. He wouldn't stop fighting. You'd yell at him and he wouldn't stop.

KB: *So what was Admiral Byrd like?*
NV: Oh, we didn't have anything to do with Admiral Byrd then. We did that all on our own and under the guidance of a man named Walden who had been an old Alaskan dog driver himself. He was, I don't know how old a man he was, but to us he seemed very old. He probably was only 55 or 56 or something. I don't know. In his 60s maybe. That would be stretching it to say he was in his 60s. I think it was nearer 50s. And we thought of him as an old guy. I don't know what they'd think of 90. I'm 95 now.

KB: And back then when you were 22, 23 . . .

NV: That's right. It was the years of '28, '29 and '30 that we went. And I was the Class of '29 at Harvard and it so happens that even if I went back today, back to college, I would sign up as the Class of '29. Once you're in a class, you're always in a class. So I would reunite with the Class of '29 with the classmates that I had in those days.

KB: But you didn't graduate in '29.

NV: I didn't graduate, but was still a member of that class.

KB: So, how did you get from New Hampshire? Tell me the story of the expedition and how . . .

NV: Oh, to get to the expedition. Well, once we had the dogs trained and ready to go, time came along for the Byrd boats to sail out of Boston and if we'd gone on the boats out of Boston, we would have been a long time in the tropics and luck would have it that there was a Norwegian whaling boat, the Sir James Clark Ross, which was going to sail out of Norfolk, Virginia, so we went down and got on board that boat, with of course permission and an invitation. And that was a great boat to go down on because it had a big deck on which we could exercise the dogs. It was a deck on which they cut up the whales. Big flat deck on top. And the whales would be brought up onto that deck with winches by a big . . . the bow of the boat would lift up in the air and expose this chute down into the water.
The whale was brought around to the chute and chains would get hold of it and pull it right up this ramp. Right up onto the deck. And it was a tremendous operation to see that. It would take two or three winches to do it and as it was being done, there was salt water being sprayed on the ramp all the time so there was water underneath the whale as he came up. And then people would stand beside the whale as he went by them with their flensing knives and as the whale went by, they were cutting all the time. So, when the whale got up onto the deck, there were all these slices of cuts in the side of the whale's body about four to nine inches deep, according to how high you pushed the flensing knife in and according to how thick he was in blubber and they would go to get two cuts that were about a foot apart, and get a winch on one end and cut and pull it and they would cut behind it and they would pull this strip of blubber and hide right off of the carcass. And then, when they got that strip off, they would lay it on the deck, cut it up into pieces and push it over and down a shaft into the boilers and from the boilers where they rendered the oil, they would render the oil and keep the oil and put the discharged remnants back into the ocean.

KB: *What kind of whales?*

NV: Unfortunately, a lot of them were blue whales. The whale that is so prized to find now.

KB: *They're huge.*

NV: Huge. A ton a foot in length, about. The rule of thumb was a ton a foot. And there were too many blue whales killed for the good of the whale families, species, and other whales, which were called trash whales by comparison, were, I don't remember the names of them all, but there were others there and they have not been depleted in the same degree as the blue whale was.

KB: *So where did this ship take you?*
NV: The ship took us down to New Zealand and that was their base of operations, out of New Zealand and it was our base of operations that Byrd's boats went down from Boston. They sailed, and went through the Panama Canal and went to New Zealand and that's where we met them for the first time with equipment. And we loaded on those two boats and went to the Antarctic. One was a sailing boat and the other was a little small steamer. And we three dog drivers were signed on as crew members on the sailing boat and stood a regular watch with the other crewmen doing the same things - setting sails and furling it and so forth and in addition, taking care of our dogs.

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But, taking care of the dogs on the boat was hard in one way, but not very complicated because it was really cleaning up after them and being sure their crates were clean and feeding them, watering them, and we didn't exercise them much, but we let them out to exercise themselves because they would be on the end of a chain and they'd be out. We didn't run them in harness or anything like that on the boat.

KB: On the whaling boat, were you able to let them out a little bit more or . . . ?

NV: Well, on the whaling boat it was a little bit better because we had much more room. Had all that great big deck space. Yeah, we had a lot more room there. But a loose dog on a boat is not an attractive thing to the other sailors. They don't like it. The captain doesn't like it. They think they're going to empty themselves into every corner and never get cleaned up and I know they didn't like it. But we put up with it and kept them up on the deck as much as we could. And that deck was easily cleaned by us first, and then by the salt water hoses every day.

KB: So then, how long did it take to get from . . . ?

NV: Oh boy. How long? 40 days?

KB: From where?
NV: Norfolk, Virginia, to New Zealand. Forty days. No, it wasn't 40 days. Nearer 30 days. Thirty days. But it took our boats a lot longer than that. And they'd already started. We didn't see them when we overtook them, but we did overtake them on the way down.

A small note in here. I don't think it's important, but all explorers are poor. There isn't a rich one anywhere because they spent their available cash for going on their trip and buying their equipment. It wasn't given to them. And Byrd found himself in the same spot. And when the two boats - our two boats - we weren't on board then. We were on the Norwegian whaling vessel. And when they got down to the Canal, they didn't have money enough to go through the Canal. And they had used and sighted every single one of the possible sources for money and there wasn't any left. No one would give any money to pay for that boat going through the Canal. And all the big companies wouldn't. Nobody would. So, finally the business manager sent a letter or wire as we called it in those days, explaining that situation to each one of our families, members of the crew of the boat, and they were all asked to give as little as $25, just any amount you can and people responded so darn well that they had money enough to pay for the two boats going through the Panama Canal.

KB: I wondered how Byrd paid for the expedition.

NV: Well, by solicitation and going in debt. And one of the things that happened was that he had asked us all not to write a book for 25 - oh, he didn't say how long. Don't write a book 'til I want to get mine out first. Anyway, I waited 65 years. I think I waited long enough.

KB: I think so. So, what was it like when you first got to Antarctica? What were your first impressions?

NV: Oh, having gone to New Zealand and then to Antarctica? Well, the first impression was that it was a tremendous place and exciting as hell to think that here we were down there and our only knowledge of the place
was what we read in the Amundsen and Shackleton books and Scott's books and we knew Scott had lost his life
down there and we weren't boasting in any way, shape or manner or boastful about what we were doing. We just
tried to do the best we could. And so much of it was trial and error by us. There was very little precedence, so we
didn't have any good information. We were really pioneers in the program. And we got along very well. Byrd did
not lose a single man. Brought us all home alive and especially that speaks well of the leadership, that's number one.
Although a man could get drowned, he could get killed. He could anything, it wasn't his fault. It wasn't Byrd's fault,
but still, to say that no man lost his life and if you think that he had helped to save the situation, and you can say it
with great confidence and I compliment Byrd as a leader. I thought he was wonderful. He never asked us to do
anything that he wouldn't do and I was there on the poop deck of the City of New York one day and an accidental fall
of ice from the barrier went down on the other ship which was nearby and it rocked in such a way that one man fell
overboard. When he fell overboard, the water had been going from that boat right down by the City of New York and
Byrd took off his jacket and was going to jump in after him.

(500)

He had saved other people's lives before and I was right there on the poop deck and one of the men whose
hand went out and held him back said, "No, don't do that. We'll get him some other way." I don't know. I forget
now what we said we'd do, but, "Don't do that. Don't or we'll have two people to take care of." And by golly, we let
go our grasp and at the same time a lifeboat was being lowered from the other boat and getting into that water and it
was going to go down to get this fellow, Ross, in the water. He couldn't swim, but he had gotten hold of something
and it probably was ice. I don't know, but anyway, whatever he got hold of, he was holding on and he was keeping
his head up above the water and when we let go of the grip that kept Byrd back, he broke away and went right in
after him. But, he couldn't do anything, so we sent a ring after him - a boat ring. And that was easy. Ross was way
out there and Byrd was here. So they sent that out to him. Byrd realized he couldn't swim with those clothes on and
he grabbed the ring and we hauled him. He was brought in that way. But, he was real anxious to save his life and he
didn't want to change his clothes. Some other people were there by that time and forced him into it. It was cold and
the clothes were freezing on him.
KB: *What time of the year was this?*

NV: Oh, in the fall. There was a cold wind and freezing.

KB: *Well, in Antarctic, fall is still cold. And so did the other man get saved?*

NV: He did. He got saved. He was saved and brought in by that lifeboat.

(End of Tape 1 - Side A)

(Begin Tape 1 - Side B - 000)

KB: *I was wondering about the choice for the location of the Little America station.*

NV: Oh, that was interesting. We'd all been told that we were going to establish the camp on the edge of the ice. Not on the annual ice, but the old ice that had been there for years and years. And it had to be ice that was not in the estimation of the people choosing the site, going to break off and become an Antarctic iceberg because that's what happens. Great chunks of the Ross Ice Barrier break off. And recently in this calendar year, there's been one that broke off that was something like 90 miles long and 30 miles wide.

KB: *Wow.*
NV: And they're following that with great interest, the meteorologists are, to see what happens to it and how long it stays alive and if it breaks up into small icebergs or what will really happen to it. And anyway, we thought that it would be just a simple two or three miles from the boat. But, the night that we got there, five minutes after we'd landed and the excitement and the yelling was all over, everybody yelled, "Hey, we made it, we made it! We're here!" Byrd called me and asked me if I'd harness my dog team and take him back into the interior. Well, you can imagine the thrill I had being the young whipper-snapper out of college and not knowing anything about these things, I was terribly pleased that he wanted me to drive and it would turn out to be the first Antarctic dog sled driven by any American. So, I was just excited about that. I didn't realize it at the time and then Byrd said, "I'm going to take two Norwegians with us." And I said, "Fine." Sverre Strom and Bernt Balchen were the two men and they were both Norwegians. They were - as you know, all Norwegians were practically born on skis and they went along on skis and Byrd got on the sled and I carried him as a passenger.

Well, the four of us went out and we kept going and going and going and finally they selected a site for the night. And we spent the night in two tents and I was thrilled to think that I was sleeping with my Commander in the same tent. That was just wonderful for me, to think about it, but I was tired and I went right to sleep. And in the morning, we had a breakfast, the four of us. And proceeded to look for a solid piece of ice that looked solid enough for the camp. And I had absolutely nothing to do with the selection because I knew nothing about ice. But, Byrd and those two Norwegians, they said, "This looks like a place over here," and we went over and it was a place, but instead of being 3 miles from the boat, we went 9 miles from the boat. And that made a great difference because it meant that all the food and clothing and equipment had to be carried by dogsled 9 miles instead of 3.

KB: That's a long way.

NV: Oh gosh, yes! However, they staked it out and it turned out to be a good place because it lasted a number of years and it has now gone out to sea, that particular ice. But, it lasted very well and we didn't have any dangerous cracks develop in the camp while we were there. And the next morning, when Byrd announced that to the crews on the ship, they all thought it was a terrible distance back and the crews had to unload the ship. And we only had one boat at a time in there and the other boat was either reloading or refueling up at New Zealand to come down. Both
boats burned coal and we couldn't carry enough of a payload to last forever, so here we were going to be there a month, probably, at least that boat was.

(50)

And the crews would unload all the equipment out onto the ice or out onto our sleds, but before they went on the sleds, all the equipment had to go through a scale and had to go through weighing so that they knew how much was on each sled. Carolyn, I want you to come here a minute. After you finish, after you . . . And the competition grew up immediately among the dog drivers to see who could carry the most weight with their teams and it was great competition, friendly competition, and it worked out just fine. In fact, we swapped dogs around to even up the teams to make them just right so we'd have about the same quality of pulling power. And on this blackboard which was kept for the scales, you could see how each person was doing or each team was doing and that just built up a lot of competition.

And so, we had 9 miles to go and we made that trip every day - twice. In the morning, we'd wake up. We slept in tents out at Little America. We had nothing but coffee. Get on the sled, put our arms down and we were so tired that we'd go to sleep once the dogs got started on that trail. There was nothing to wake us up except the dogs stopping. The dogs kept trotting along and when they did stop, we did wake up and we were at the ship. And we'd turn the dogs around immediately with the help of the people that were at the ship. They actually manhandled the team around so that they wouldn't get fouled up in their own traces and everything and had the dogs headed back toward Little America. But, the dogs liked going toward the ship because once they got turned around, they got a snack - whale meat or something of that order and they loved that. So that was one of the reasons they never went off the trail. They kept right on the trail directly toward the ship.

KB:  *How heavy were your sleds?*

NV:  Oh, the sleds were big ones and they were heavy. We'd carry up to 1800 lbs.
KB: Wow. And how many dogs per sled?

NV: Ten. That was about the average. We always considered ten dogs was a ten dog team, but we'd drive it about nine. Nine dogs.

KB: That's a lot of weight.

NV: Oh, God. Yeah, but one thing to remember, it was flat and good going once we got started. We'd have to start them sometimes.

KB: What kind of equipment did you use? Like what were the harnesses and . . . ?

NV: We had wonderful harnesses. You're looking at a dog collar right now. See the dog collar against the wall?

KB: Oh, that leather collar?

NV: That leather collar. That's the kind of freight collar we had and the webbing behind that and it worked out just fine. It didn't give the dogs sore spots, they didn't chafe on their body anywhere and if I were going back again to do the same freighting job, I'd want the same harness and equipment because it worked out so satisfactorily.

KB: How was it different from harnesses people use now?

NV: Oh, today the harnesses have no collar to them. That's the one thing. Just the strap comes over both sides of the neck, the strap being webbing strapping. And it's not made for pulling in that same sense. It's made for pulling, but it's pulling while trotting pretty fast or galloping and it's pulling a traveling load, not a freight load. It's pulling a light weight so you put nine dogs with light weight, it's nothing for them to pull a sled. But, they have to be ready to pull and able to pull when it gets soft going, like a foot of deep snow or something like that. Oh, they have to be able to
pull and the harnesses have to be good. They can't be cheap harnesses. They can't be cheap quality in any way. They have to fit right and do right if you expect the dogs to pull for you.

(100)

KB: *Having a collar around their neck didn't hurt their neck?*

NV: Oh, it was made with a softness. You'll see the collar. Made just right so they could flex just like a horse collar. Flex underneath the collar and it won't chafe.

KB: *And what about the lines?*

NV: The lines were rope. Rope lines.

KB: *Nylon rope or...?*

NV: Didn't have that then.

KB: *Right. So what did you have instead?*

NV: Manila rope, we called it.

KB: *Yeah, OK. Also, on the Byrd Expedition, we just talked about the gear that the dogs used. But, what kind of gear were you guys using?*

NV: Oh, well, it's interesting. We had only the explorers that preceded us for a guide and we had no one that had ever been to the Antarctic to tell us anything. So, we went with essentially furs as fur clothing to keep warm. And
furs are terrible if they get wet because they freeze and get heavy and stiff and uncomfortable to wear compared to the synthetics that we have today. Our sleeping bags were caribou, raw skins that were sewed together and Eskimo tanned which is not very good and not very soft - they're still stiff. And we slept with the hair in on the sleeping bags and the moisture from our bodies would tend to go to the roots of the hair and solidify there. But, to prevent that, when we got out of the bag in the morning, we'd take the nose of the bag to the front of the tent right by the door with an open door and pump it so you could see the air that came out would turn to frost. And you could see this little frost as you were pumping the air out. So, taking cold air in to keep that ice from collecting and collecting because if you didn't do that, pretty soon you'd have a lot of ice and you'd be getting into a bag of ice which other explorers have done and almost lost their lives with that. They didn't know how to do that and we knew that and knew that we had to get that air out so that was the only way you could. The bags were too stiff and it was too cold to turn the bags inside out. You couldn't do that. That would be impossible with those stiff bags. I don't think you could do it even in the summertime. Very hard to turn that inside out.

Our footwear was a big problem. We had woolen socks because we didn't know any better and then we had a little thin sock to put on the outside of that which we called a windproof sock. And the moisture going from our foot outward would collect on the inside of that windproof sock and then we'd take that sock off and that was easy to take off our foot and it would be frozen. The water would freeze and we would turn it inside out to try to get the ice off and we'd hang it on the tent lines while we ate dinner or something like that. Had supper. And when that happened, it would be frozen and we'd come along and we'd wring it and you'd see the crystals come right from it. Do you know what those socks look like?

KB: No.

NV: I've got them right here. Right handy. You'll see them and it will revive in your mind exactly what they are. They're in my white boots.

KB: That's ok. What were their fabric?
NV: The fabric was Grenfell cloth, which is just a windproof, thin windproof cloth. It was an oversock. Any oversock would do it.

KB: *Like a vapor barrier.*

(150)

NV: Exactly. It was a vapor barrier sock. And it held the moisture from going away from your foot. It held it right in on that inside of that sock. And that was good because when you took it off, you were taking that ice out.

KB: *Then what kind of boots did you wear?*

NV: We had ski boots that were made especially for the expedition and they weren't good for any skiing except cross-country skiing. We could just go - to make turns in those boots was not a good thing because they weren't made for twisting or turning or made for flexing forward and aft.

KB: *And they were warm enough?*

NV: Made of kangaroo. This is the ski boots I'm talking about, because we were skiing right beside the dog sled every day as we went along. We had to ski.

KB: *Who made all the fur clothing?*

NV: The fur clothing was made in Nome, Alaska. And I talked with one of the ladies when I first got back who is no longer living that made some of the clothing and she remembers making it. It was interesting talking to her. She spoke English and I had a very pleasant conversation.
KB: So did you stay warm enough?

NV: Yes, I'd say oh yes, we were warm enough. You'd just put on more... and we had a fur parka to put on on the outside if we were cold. And we had pants that were khaki pants like these dungarees that I'm wearing, covered with fur on the outside. So, we had the actual pants, but the fur was on the outside sewed right to it. That works out pretty well for pants.

KB: Can you talk a little bit about the people you worked with in Antarctica.

NV: You mean the crew members?

KB: The other people on that...

NV: Oh, I certainly could. Firstly, I'll talk about Byrd. He kept his dignity at all times and we all had great respect for him. He mixed with us constantly at all the meals and was alone in his study whenever he wanted to be, which wasn't too often. And he always went on walks if the weather was possible. On these long walks, he'd take one man with him at a time and give that man a chance to explode or criticize or do anything he wanted to and say whether or not he was having a good time down there and if he wasn't or if the work was too hard or anybody else had been impossible to get along with. He was very good about that. And those long walks were looked upon with a frown on your face, when you saw somebody go out you'd say, 'My God, what's going to happen now?' I don't think people liked that very much, but he did give you that opportunity. There was no other opportunity to talk to him. So it wasn't a bad idea. It was just you hated to have things done or said that you didn't know about. I guess it's that. Because people, when they're isolated like that, like to know what's going on.

KB: How did everybody get along?

NV: Essentially, I think very well. I had a tough time with one man. He carried a gun. Did you read that?
NV: Well, I might as well tell you about it. Walden was thought to be in charge of the dogs. He was an older man and had a lot of experience in Alaska. But, he wasn't making very good decisions about different problems that came up. He didn't seem to have any ability to answer problems. Problem solving was not his forte. Well, pretty soon Byrd began to ask me this and that and the other thing and I became the one to whom Byrd addressed informal questions and naturally, Walden became upset about this without saying anything. He just became upset and finally, when winter came, and we weren't on the trail anymore and living very close at hand, this thing mounted tremendously in his mind and he finally decided there was only one way to get rid of me and that was to shoot me. Now, the Norwegians knew this. And he started to carry his gun. And I was tipped off about it and I didn't dare stay in my own bunk. I went out and I lived in a tent outside, but I moved the tent every night. Set it up at a different place, always seeing that I didn't leave any tracks behind me. Covering up my tracks behind me by walking where others had walked or a dog team had traveled or something and had to have a tent. I couldn't sleep without a tent because it was blowing wind and you'd fill your bag. So, I had a hard time for all winter, keeping away from him, because I knew that if I stepped in the camp and my own bed, it was in such a place, that it would be very easy to slip a cord around my neck and choke me right there in bed and I'd never have a chance. He wouldn't have to fire a gun. And once I heard he was carrying a gun, that put me on very much of an alert, of course. And finally, they got the gun away from him and I could breathe easier. And that's about the end of the story. He never fired it, but he was very hard to get along with, I thought, after he once made up his mind that I was taking his job away from him. And now I did take his job away from him. Byrd did agree or did act as though he had ordered it for me to be in charge. In other words, he'd call me to ask me this or ask me that and ask me if I'd get something done that he wanted done. He never would counsel Walden about it. So, Walden knew that of course. And it didn't work out very well for Walden. I'm sorry, and I was young enough not to see it. I didn't understand this was going on.
And I probably played the wrong side of any situation rather than the good side. I didn't play a cooperative action with Walden at all. I played my own action. That's a hard thing to explain. Do I explain it to you? Do you see what I mean or not? I would ignore him and not take him into conversation or anything when we were all in the group. We never spoke to each other.

KB: *I was wondering what kinds of things you did to all get along with each other?*

NV: Oh, to get along with each other, number one was to talk and tell stories and laugh and have a good time and we had a minstrel show. We put on a minstrel show and every Saturday night we all assembled around the mess hall table and listened to the radio from the WBZ in New York which was broadcast directly to us from the New York Times via the WBZ to us. And they gave us messages from our family at home. They'd telephone them and say, "How's the situation there?" And they'd say what happened. The dog died or had pups or something. And they'd get that back and say, "Norman will be interested to know that Suzie had pups," and talk about it. Just that. But, it brought us closer to home. That's one of the things that was great. And then, the nicest of all was when the polar flight was made. Byrd came over the camp very low and I said to the fellows, "Gee, why is he so low? I hope he's not going to try to land and say hello to us." We'd been away for 40 days or 50 or something more than that on our trip and he was making the polar flight. We had two missions. One, to be for him a rescue expedition should he fall and had his plane go down. And secondly, to make a geological survey of the Queen Maud Mountains when we got to it.

KB: *This was the trip with Gould.*

NV: With Gould, exactly. And when we did that, along came Byrd. It was time for him to go and he'd use us as an advance weather station and we looked at the mountains and as we looked at the mountains like that, we saw clouds one day and the next day, we didn't see any clouds and that was the day we said, "This looks like the day." We knew
he was poised to come. Four hours later, he did come. I looked, when I heard the motor, up here for the motor like
I'd go out here in the yard. I wouldn't hear one down here. I'd hear the airplane up here. I looked up there and low
and behold he was down here at the horizon. That's when I said, "I hope he's not going to land." And when he came
in over the camp, something came out of the tail of the plane. It was the size of a shoebox and it was supported by a
little parachute and I have that parachute that brought it down. Just a piece of cloth, homemade, and down came the
box and I rushed out to get the box with Goodale and Crockett and we picked it up and brought it back to Gould to
open.

(300)

And I said, "I'll bet George Tennant," meaning our cook, "has sent us some brownies," and low and behold, Gould
opened the box and there were - there were 6 of us on this trip - and there were 6 pieces of paper, one for each of us
which were messages from our families. He had sent the message to our families, "If you will send me a message,
I'll deliver it personally to your son." So, we all had a very close and intimate message from our families.

KB: That's nice.

NV: Oh, it was wonderful. And they were the 6 most southerly delivered radiograms in the world at that time.

KB: What about some of the other people that you worked with?

NV: Oh, God. Goodale and Crockett were spotless as far as my experience with them was concerned. They were
just great. We didn't agree on everything, but as far as getting along, it was just fine. I'd like to go off on any trip
with them anywhere. The Boy Scout that went with us came as a Boy Scout and came back as a man. He was great.
Paul Siple. And Paul did something else. When he got back here, he had studied so much meteorology and so much
work down there, that he went back to college and developed the wind chill factor. And whenever it's quoted in the
papers, it's quoted as the wind chill factor, but it's Paul Siple's wind chill factor would be a very adequate name for it because he developed it and he didn't have to change it at all. It's his program.

KB: Great.

NV: And so that's just one of the accomplishments. Paul was a nice fellow.

KB: What about Gould?

NV: No better. He was wonderful. When I got back and I had my first child was going to come, I sent him a wire when it was a boy and I said, "Larry, may I give my son your name?" And he wrote back immediately and said, "Yes," and I named him Gerard Gould Vaughan and then very pleasantly, although not very often, Gould and Gerry got together and they liked each other very much. So that was nice. They saw each other probably three times in their life, I guess.

KB: What about some of the other people? Any other people you worked with?

NV: Oh, God. So many, yeah. You want to know some more? There was one fellow named Victor Czegka. He was from Czechoslovakia.

(350)

KB: That's ok. I can look it up. That's ok.

NV: Victor Czegka. He was a wonderful guy, but you could not step on or get near any of his tools. His tools were just like a mother with an over abundance of love for their child. You touch the child and you touch something terrible. And he would let you use a tool if he told you how to use it. He'd let you use it if he was right there
dictating it and be sure that you didn't twist it or turn it or even a hammer, he wanted to know how you used the
hammer. He was very, very jealous of his tools. And one day, I had a dog that was bleeding badly and I had to see
him during the night. I had no place to tie him except to the leg of the lathe which was Victor Czegka's lathe in the
shop right near where I was sleeping. And I tied the dog up there. Made a place for him to lay and you never would
realize that a dog tied to the leg of a lathe could upset the lathe and the sensitivity of the lathe that it must have done
in his mind. It really didn't do a thing to the lathe, but you'd think that I had done the worst thing possible by having
brought a dog, of all things, into his life in such a way. He just hated that. He was fully a man that could do
anything. Any part of that airplane that went sour, he could make it up if we had the material and we took all kinds
of material to make it from. And there wasn't anything that Byrd wanted that he couldn't make.

KB: Wow.

NV: A great man. In fact, although he was madder than hell at me for doing that, he also invited me to be his best
man at his wedding which he had after we got back.

KB: Can you tell me a little about the Gould portion of the trip? When you went inland to the mountains.

NV: I'll tell you one thing about Gould. I should write this for somebody else that's writing a history of Gould. I've
got it on my desk to do. When we started out on this trip, Gould knew nothing about skiing and he practiced down
there in camp and you know just practicing in camp doesn't make you an all-day skier. And so he started out skiing
and did well and all we had to do was to go straight ahead. We didn't do anything else. But, he developed a blister
on the back of his heel on the side of his foot it was. Not his heel. Heel area, but side of it right in here. And it was
so large and he didn't say anything about until I saw it and I was shocked that it was so large and he'd had some
covering to it.
And that's all. And I didn't know what I was going to do for him and I finally made a donut and that worked and he got over it while he was still skiing, so that speaks well for, not the donut, but it speaks well of his physical ability.

And he went on and never a word of complaint and that was an ugly looking blister, the center of which - the outside skin had gone - the center of which was raw. Not bleeding, but raw. And it was oozing blood but not running blood. But, I dressed it each day and he'd say it was better and finally it got better. And that's one thing about him. He was just great. And he never complained about anything. If he was soaking wet, for any reason whatsoever, we'd say, all the rest of us were dry, but he wouldn't complain about it. He'd say, "Well, I'm wet. I've got to do something about it." And we'd solve the problem. And as far as humor is concerned, he used profanity in a wonderful way. And called everything the right expression in profane lingo and we all just admired him for that. And he'd call us all kinds of bad names. But, he loved us all, I think.

KB: OK. Tell me a little bit about that trip.

NV: Yes, I will. We went out daily and did our number of miles that we were supposed to, or number of hours, really, that we were supposed to make and I would read the odometer every night at 4 or 5 o'clock when we stopped. We stopped at our own clock - 4 o'clock, to make camp for the day and night and day unless it was storming which made us do it earlier or we wanted to beat the storm because we were delayed and wanted to make up a few miles, we'd go beyond that time. That was neither here nor there, but essentially, we made camp at night and had plenty of time to rest and get a good rest and we made some good mileage the next day. We were always loaded and we had a very hard situation. We started out with 49 dogs - 49 or 46. Forty-six dogs, I guess it was. And we had to use dogs for dog food. So, we had to kill them to eat them. Now we did not eat the dog meat itself. I've done that since, but not on that trip. And we had some chipped beef along and one of the fellows was very squeamish about eating the dogs, and so he was given this.
We all had chipped beef in our hoosh . . . little pieces of meat. Gould broke it out and after he said there was chipped beef, he said, "No, it was a piece of Al Smith that Norman had brought in from the carcass," Al Smith being one of the dogs that I had just killed, and a dog that everybody loved, so this fellow, O'Brien, he was really so upset that - I don't know whether he actually threw it up or whether he just said he threw up. And he wouldn't eat any more. He went out and he said, "I lost my dinner." I don't know. He may have made one spit, but he didn't regurgitate, really. Probably that was one small thing, but Gould was kindly toward us and yet a very hard working, hard driving guy.

KB: *How come you had to kill the dogs?*

NV: We planned to.

KB: *Oh, you did.*

NV: And we had to pick . . . and that was my job which was terrible. I had to pick out that individual dog that we could best get along without in each case and sometimes we'd kill four and five at a time to get it over with and then we fed the meat to the dogs and they ate it quickly and they relished it. And if you wanted to do something nice for your leader, you'd give him the tail and he'd work the tail down, open up the [feather] and eat the bone and gristle inside. Not the hair. He'd just open up the hair and get inside of the tail which couldn't be very fatty on a thin dog. So, that was one of the other things. And speaking of food, the dogs were hungry and we knew that they would eat human deposits. In fact, if they saw one fellow had gone out, they'd go out and smell and find out where it was and they'd dig it up and eat it. But, what we did was better than that. We had a tent that when we got in the tent, it was right up over my back as I'd lean like this and I had a place for my feet down here and in the center was a core of snow which we didn't shovel. So then we shoveled a ditch around and then we put the tent up over this. So Gould would sit over there, we'll say, and have all the food and he'd pass it out and we'd eat it.

(500)
And when we got through, of course, we'd pass the dishes back to him and they were all initialed so we'd get the same dishes every day and same spoons. And he'd put it away and take it out. Then, while the tent was still up, a man would go get one of his leaders and bring him in and defecate in the circle and that leader would eat it. And that gave that leader fat and they were just hungry for it. That gave them fat that we were throwing away - throwing off. It sounds awful, but that was one of the big things. I haven't heard of any other explorer doing that since, but they don't explore by dog team anymore. That's gone. And I felt at the end of our trip, I felt terrible the last day, going into Little America. I could see the towers in advance, getting closer and closer and closer and I began to feel badly. And then, finally, when I got in there, I felt terrible. And Gould said, "What's the matter?" I said, "Well, I had such a good time and it's now over." And I said, "Not only is it over, I can drive dogs any time and I can do it all my life, but do you realize that this is the end of the era of dogs in the Antarctic, because now it will be all done by helicopter or fixed wing airplane?" And he said yes, he did realize it. And I said, "Well, that makes me very sad." And I was sad for that reason. That it was the end of dog driving and then I got back and not only did automatically helicopters take the place of dog teams, but they finally made the great error of barring dogs from the ice. Now, do you know why they did that?

KB: No.

NV: Well, they did it on the statement that they thought - now remember that I said thought - that the dogs might give seals distemper. And if they did, of course, it would be terrible to have distemper go around because it's so easily spread from one to another that you could lose tremendously by having that spread around the seals. But, what they didn't look up and what they didn't know and Greenpeace kept pushing it and pushed this thing forward so badly that they voted and they barred dogs from the Antarctic forever.
They didn't use the word forever, but they barred dogs from being taken there and those dogs that were already there had to be disposed of or sent back. Well, it turns out that seals cannot get distemper from dogs because dogs have canine distemper and seals have another kind of distemper. And that's what's important. The big problem of canine distemper and the countries voted against it and they barred one of the great things and now, explorers can't use dogs. Some of them may want to, but they can't do it. And certainly in camp like at any of the camps, a dog team is a great source of enjoyment for the people that can use it, but they just won't let them have it.

(End of Tape 1 - Side B)

KB: You were talking about your trip to the Queen Maud mountains with Gould, and I was wondering how you navigated on that trip.

NV: Well, in the first place, understanding that navigation with dogs is interesting in that you can't have a dog team go straight ahead in strange territory without a lot of geeing and hawing because there's a wander that takes place with dogs, just like it does with man. Once in a great while you might find a leader that would go in a straight line, but I wouldn't know one I could trust. So, here's how the navigation was done. A man, and in our case a man who was a skier and he came from Yale - can you imagine it? - and he was there and knew how to ski well and he went out in front of our dog team and the dogs followed his trail. Now, in the front dog team was a regular compass and we'd line up the compass in the direction he was to go on and once he got out there and got lined up and Gould said, "All right, that's the distance between me and you and that's the distance you're to go and that's the direction in which you're to go," he would look down on the ski, his own ski, and there in the shovel of the ski was a piece of
wire about as long as a pencil - 8 inch wire sticking out of the shovel of the ski, up straight with a compass rose around it. Now, once he got lined up and the sun being out would throw a shadow across that compass rose. Well, he'd keep that shadow right on that spot, but he knew that in an hour, it would move over a number of degrees. So, he'd figure on that too. And in that way, he wouldn't have to stop and recheck with his regular compass that was back there on the sled. And he could be out there in front of the dog team and it laid out a very good course. And you could see how straight it was when Byrd came out in the airplane. He complimented us on running a very straight line toward the mountains.

KB: How did you deal with crevasses?

NV: Very luckily. We knew when we were getting into crevassed areas, we would rope up and we were roping up by putting a rope around us and we would never have saved a life if we'd relied solely on those ropes. We didn't have them done right. Probably would have killed us just having the ropes on. A free fall would have been safer. But, we did put ropes around us and we were roped together driving a dog team and it was difficult, but we did it. And we didn't have any drastic accident with the dogs. However, when we climbed up on one of the glaciers and were coming down, I was first in line and Mike Thorn, the skier, had gone ahead to lay the trail, and all of a sudden I looked up and saw him with both hands like this.

KB: Wow.

NV: Both arms up and that meant at all costs, don't come and turn your sled over and stop. Well now, it's not easy to turn a sled over. Particularly if the dogs are going downhill. But, with difficulty, I was able to do it. And we had a g-pole which is a pole on the front of the sled and I was pulling on that g-pole and turned the sled over and broke it. Broke the sled. And we did abandon the sled later, but that was all right. The sleds were made to go both front and back and all I broke was the front side, so we turned that sled around and were able to use it going the other way. That was fine. However, Mike was going over the trail we'd used going up the glacier, but this crack had come after
we'd done that and it was large enough - probably four feet from one side to the other - we could have jumped over or skied over.

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We could have gotten over ourselves, but the dogs could have fallen and once they fell, they'd pull others in with them and the sled too. We could have had a very drastic situation. But, we turned it over and examined it and went around it. Went around the hole that he saw, and it worked out fine. And I think he enlarged the hole with his ski poles by testing it to see if it was solid and he found it wasn't solid and it opened up. And he did a masterful job out there in front of those dogs by leading us straight and it worked.

KB: Well, it sounds like you were lucky.

NV: Oh, very. Luck plays a lot in the Arctic and in skiing or anything like this because you're dependent on so many things. The least little thing that goes wrong can upset you and put you way behind and it can be tragic, but by the same token, where it's lucky to be bad, it's also lucky to be good.

KB: Speaking of bad, what would you say were some of the hardest things on that expedition? The most difficult?

NV: With Gould?

KB: The Gould and the Byrd, the whole thing.

NV: Killing those dogs was my hardest thing I had to do. I shot them. I had my own gun. But, to take that dog out and tie him to the snow with my ice ax and have him look up at me and me point a gun at him and shoot him is a terribly hard thing to do. And while you're doing that, the other dogs know what's going on and they're all quiet and they're all looking at you. None of them sleeping. But, they wag their tails when you give them the meat, however.
KB: *And in terms of the traveling and the expedition, were there hardships?*

NV: I don't think so. I don't think we had any hardships. We were all mentally poised to be tough and we took what we had as a normal everyday action. And for that reason, we didn't have any bad trouble. And we certainly didn't come close to losing our life or anything like that as far as we know. Except you're always close to it when you're in the crevassed area. Now, since we've come back from the Antarctic, there had been some tragic things that have happened in the crevassed areas. And these were people on snowmobiles. They'd get in a situation and not be able to get out of it and they'd perform badly.

KB: *This is in the Antarctic.*

NV: Yes. One lady was in charge of an expedition down there and she had a loss of life on her trip and she was terribly criticized and lost her job and everything else and her reputation went down hill very fast, unfortunately, because she was a dandy person. This was not an American, it was another nation.

KB: *Can you talk a little bit about wintering over in Antarctica?*

NV: Sure. The daylight got less and less and less and finally it disappeared. So, now we're in total darkness and we were living under the snow. Once we were in there, it didn't make any difference if the sun was out or wasn't out. We lived about the same and as I said, we had a minstrel show to keep happy and we played a lot of games and every night, somebody had a bath because the cook gave us a bucket of suds every night and that bucket of suds went to the next man on the list.
And our names were on one of the posts that held the roof up and you'd look down and see where your name was in relationship to the man's who was taking a bath that night and you'd take this big washtub, put it out on the floor, take your clothes off and take a bath. And that's what happened with the bucket of suds every night. Somebody got it and every 42 nights, you could bank on getting a bath.

KB: *And so the station was buried under the snow?*

NV: Oh, the snow came up and covered it. Drifted over it. So, when we built the station, they were portable houses, so walls were down in sections and to build the house, we built a floor first and then we built up the sides and that was built down from the level of the snow, it was built half way down that. We dug a hole half way down. So, we started out with a roof above the snow, but soon it was drifted over.

KB: *And what did you use for heat?*

NV: Coal for the stove and we had supplementary heat in the out buildings and that was oil.

KB: *OK. Now, we've been talking all this time about the Byrd Expedition and I know that was just two years of your life. Will you tell me a little bit more about some of the other things that you did. You mentioned the Grenfell mission.*

NV: Oh, yes. My first year at college, I struggled with the work and was not passing and if I had stayed in college, I would have had to repeat my freshman year. But, I found out that if I went with Grenfell and had a good report from him, they would let me go into my sophomore year. So, I decided to do that. I decided that I'd go with them and went up in the wintertime and was assigned to work with the head dog driver of the mission station whose job, every morning, besides hospital errands that might have to be done by dog team, to go into the woods and cut wood for the mission hospital. And cutting wood in those days meant traveling back into the woods to where burnable trees existed. And it's amazing how the natives and the hospital included have cut back ten miles and there's nothing
between the hospital and 10 miles except little trees. And you go back for 10 miles, you get into cutable wood and you cut the wood and bring out a load every day. And so they finally made up two teams of dogs - the regular one and then all the other dogs were put into a second team and I drove the second team and learned how to cut wood, loaded it on the sled and bring it in myself.

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KB: Can you refresh my memory on what the Grenfell Mission was?

NV: Certainly I will. Dr. Grenfell was an Englishman. Traveled on a boat. He came over and saw the Labradors and the Newfoundlanders on their fishing boats in the harbors where he was and they all had trouble with inflamed hands or fingers. No medical equipment at all. And he saw a great way of helping.

KB: So, before the phone rang, you were talking about Dr. Grenfell and what his mission was all about.

NV: Oh, he came back the next year and decided at that time that he should establish some place on shore where these people could go and get medical aid. He didn't think of it in terms of doctors and nurses, but just first aid type of thing and that grew into his building a hospital at St. Anthony, Newfoundland, and having satellite stations connected with that hospital. So, when I went down to Newfoundland, I was assigned to the hospital first, then they, in turn, assigned me to that dog team which was working every day for the hospital, bringing in wood. And that's how I got interested and did a lot of dog driving. At the end of the winter, I was capable enough at that time, to take 18 dogs on a sled and take the doctor with his medical equipment around on a tour of the coastline where he called on every village and rendered aid to that village and then we came back. We went on about a 600 mile trip.

KB: And what year was this that you were up there?

NV: 1925.
KB: *OK. Had you done dog driving before?*

NV: I had a little team of my own, yeah. Just a home team. Just one that started out by Goodale and me taking our father's dogs and training them to pull and the only way we could get them to go was one of us to get out and call them and then they'd come and they'd pull the sled behind them. And one of us would be riding and we just got a kick out of doing it that way because that's the way we thought was the only way we could do it until . . . we couldn't get the dogs to go ahead of us. They wanted to face us and be patted. Until we got sled dogs. Then we got sled dogs and we had a little team ourselves.

KB: *What got you interested in doing dog driving?*

NV: Reading a book about the North and just how exciting it must be to have dogs pull you. That's all. Just that little bit. Must be exciting, so that went into reality when we saw that we might try it. So, we went down to the barn and we got some old rope at the barn that was very well used because it was soft and we'd use rope and make harnesses following the Eskimo way of shaping it and we shaped them that was as we saw pictures in the book and we'd put it on the dogs. It wasn't very good, but it worked.

KB: *So with Grenfell, how long were you with him?*

NV: A year. A winter and following summer. And then the following summer, after the dog driving season was over, I went on his boat called the *Strathcorner*, was the name of his boat. Grenfell came over from Europe and would come on that boat and visit all the nursing stations he'd established and establish more. Everytime he came down, he'd establish a new one. And so I would ride on that boat, seeing it done. Seeing how he operated, how he helped other people. There wasn't such a thing as money for any of his services. He just did it because he loved people and he wanted to make them better. And it taught me a lot. It taught me that you don't do things for money, you do things for love.
KB: So then after the Byrd Expedition, what did you do?

NV: I first went in the advertising business. And I worked for one of the big advertising companies for six years - N.W. Ayer and Company, N.W. Ayer and Sons . . . Son, one son.

KB: And that was in Boston?

NV: That was their Boston office. And then, one of the people that I served, one of the accounts I had asked me if I would leave Ayers and come to work for them and I did. I left the Ayers and went to work for this man in the furniture business in charge of a factory in Ashburnham, Massachusetts, which made colonial reproductions. And I did that for a few years. And that went on until I finally decided to have my own business and I got one selling chain saws. And then, after doing that, I went with Homelite, and Homelite - I forgot one phase of my life . . . God . . . I went to work before the war . . . before World War II, I was working for Homelite Company selling pumps and generators, on the road, selling pumps and generators. And then, from there, I went into the service and was immediately assigned to the Army's barrage balloon squadron which used Homelite blowers. And that put me in line with something I'd already done before. Having made the pumps and generators, it was the motor that was the same and I got along well with that program. And then later, was taken out of there and was put into search and rescue in the Air Force and had a big-time operation search and rescue because we used dog teams and all kinds of methods to rescue people and I had, at one time, 425 dogs, which I had segregated all around the Arctic with men that were trained just for those dogs, of course. Dog driving. And in the summertime, we had 8 crash boats which were PT boats converted into search and rescue boats. And of those 8 crash boats, I had one assigned in the Azores, one in Bermuda, one in Boston, one in Maine, one in Newfoundland, one in Labrador, one in Greenland - Iceland, too. All around the Atlantic. When the famous Yalta Conference came along, I had all eight boats in line from Europe back to the States so that they could be anywhere that the plane would be flying - the crash boats would be under them.
KB: Was the plane flying Roosevelt?

NV: Yes. And when it did that . . . this is a side story. I don't know if it's interesting. In order to get ready for this program, everything was so top secret, I had to let all the bases know what was coming. And when I did this, I did it by cable of course, it was stated that I was coming . . . no, I'm sorry, I've got these two rescues mixed up. Forget that. I'll go into that in just a minute because you'll ask me the same thing and I'll go right back on it.

KB: So the boats were in line for the Yalta Conference, getting that all to happen.

NV: Yeah, I had . . . it all happened successfully and so our boats didn't have to be used for any rescue work. They were just there, but that's the kind of thing we had to do to use our facilities to protect that operation. There were other facilities, of course, to keep them from going down, but in those days, you were worried about what would happen if they had to ditch. And so, I went through the British rescue school over there in Britain to see how they did it and went through that as a student.

KB: What about any rescues? Did you have to do any rescues?

NV: Oh yeah. All the time.

KB: With dogs?

NV: Well, the biggest one with dogs . . . well, yes with dogs . . . but the biggest one, the biggest rescue we made in the search and rescue group was the rescue of 27 crewmen out of 8 airplanes which landed out of fuel and lost in southern Greenland on southeast Greenland.
The dog team . . . when the plane went down, I found that Freddie Crockett, who had been with me in the Antarctic, was in Greenland and could take his dog team on a boat and go down the coastline of Greenland and get opposite to where the planes went in on the shore. You could, from the water, see the airplanes. They were 10 miles in, but where he landed was 18 miles to get to the planes because of the securest route he had to make to get there around the crevasses. And when he got there, he ordered all the men to be . . . all were living, nobody died . . . he ordered them all to come follow him single file and he turned right around and went right back over the 18 mile trip to the boat and got them out that way. So, it was a very easy rescue from that point of view. However, it was the largest rescue that had been made for getting out the most people at one time. And then then very next thing that happened was they found that a Norden bomb site had been left on one of those airplanes undestroyed because the rules had been to destroy it. And the crew had forgotten to press that button. And when they found that out, I got the word. . . the orders to go up and get that bomb off the bomber and to do it immediately because the Germans, being able to see from the water, those airplanes, they could easily go up because it was in those waters that they were harboring their active submarines that were spying on the transatlantic fleet or transatlantic commerce, so it was important to recognize that they could easily have gone ashore and walked that 18 miles and inspected those airplanes and certainly would have found this Norden bomb site. And they've never had one. Even a destroyed one, they had not gotten one that was working and they didn't know, from our intelligence, how it operated and they would have easily been able to do it had they been able to get one. So, it was a secret that they were trying to protect and they did protect it. They never got it because I got there first and got it away.

KB: *So you learned how to detonate a . . .*

NV: Oh, it was easy to detonate it.

KB: *Deactivate or whatever.*
NV: Detonate it or deactivate it is the same. By detonating it, you deactivated it. And so, the way to do that was to press a little red button that was on the outside and it had a battery mounted inside. Everything was ready to self-destruct. And they didn't do that, which was the orders that they had, but in the excitement of crashing and their own life at stake at the moment, they forgot that. And so I got that back safely and did that, not over those 18 miles. They did it over a much longer route due to the fact that we didn't want the Germans to see anybody going to those three airplanes, because if they saw a dog team going up there, they could have easily captured me by sending up a fast group. However, they didn't do it from a submarine, and we knew that the submarines were there because other intelligence had told us that. And certainly had any one of us curious people been there who would have wanted to go up and look at those airplanes anyway to see what they had and would they would have found that secret Norden bomb site which was tremendous. And so we went up and got that and brought it back. They inspected it and put it on board a plane and it went to Africa to fight.

KB: What about some of your other military experiences?

NV: What about them? What else to say?

KB: Yeah, what else did you do? What else happened?

NV: One of the things that happened was at the time of the invasion by the Germans against us at the time of . . . how could I forget this? My mind has just gone blank.

KB: A particular battle? Is that what you're . . .?

NV: Yeah, what was the big battle. What was . . . not the Marne, but the . . .
KB: *The Bulge?*

NV: Bulge. The Battle of the Bulge. At the Battle of the Bulge, I read, or learned that the wounded were being carried out on stretchers through the deep snows to motorized transportation which was not near the front. The motorized transportation couldn't get there because of the deep snow, but they did get certain roads and they were being walked out by stretcher.

(400)

But, the stretchers were being manned by German prisoners, so it was a very unhappy situation because you had 4 stretcher bearers to each stretcher, two men at a time, the other two would follow, resting their arms and then they'd take over and carry out ahead again. And you did not have four Allies there, but only had two allies on a stretcher that were walking and could take command over those four. So nothing ever happened about that, but what I suggested was that we go and do it by dog team, and as a result, I proved how we could do it here on location at Goosebay, Labrador, and then I received orders of acceptance for my plan which took 30 days to get it through the Pentagon and what was so simple was that when General Patton was asked, told about the dogs, "Do you want the dogs?" he said, "Send the dogs," that quickly, that night. We left and we had 4 airplanes to take all of 209 sled dogs and 17 drivers. And I took them all to Europe.

And on arriving at Prestwick, Scotland, I thought we were just going to spend the night and go on the next day. But, when we got there, I was accosted by a man in a derby hat and a black coat and it turned out that he was a member of the animal protective society or comparable name for protecting the immigration of animals and had the regulation of not allowing any animals to enter the British Isles without quarantine, going through the necessary health quarantine. So, here this man called up and wanted to quarantine all these animals. 209 dogs he wanted to quarantine. So, I said, "Have you ever flown in an airplane like this?" He said, "No," so I said, "Let's get aboard and I'll show you how it operates."
I'm not a pilot. I didn't know how it operated, but I got him into the front seat and I sat in the other side and, thinking back to when I left Greenland three days before, I was given a quart of whiskey which I had put in the top of my B-4 bag and I said, "Well, we can't start this unless we have a drink," and I don't drink. I've never had a drink in my life. But, I passed this bottle, open bottle to him, back and forth and I'd touch it to my lips and make believe I was taking it down. And when he'd reduced it down quite a ways, he was getting to be pretty slurry in his voice and he said, "What am I going to do?" And I said, "That's very easy. Just write in there that 209 sled dogs are RON'd at your station," which is "remained over night" at your station, and that's all you've got to say and then you can get your report done. If they want to investigate further, they can. Well, he said, "That's a good idea," so we had that all planned. And when we got out, got him off the airplane, now it was morning and we got him over to operations. All the other planes were ready. The dogs were put on board. Everything worked like clockwork and we took off. Never heard from him since.

We went right to Paris and then proceeded to the front. Now, the sad part of all of the story was the fact that it started to rain and so much rain and so much mud and so much slush that the wounded were being held up in tents and weren't even being transported. The dogs couldn't operate in that deep snow and so we actually didn't rescue a single life. But, we went through the program and I was assigned to General Patton's people, I guess you'd have to say. I don't know if it was a squadron or what. But, General Patton I knew. I had met before. He comes from the same town I lived in, Hamilton, Massachusetts, and his home was there. He lived there all his life. No, not all his life, but all of my life he'd been living there in the summertime. And I knew him quite well. And he was glad to see me and was promoting the whole thing and there was just too much snow, we couldn't operate.

And so it was an utter failure, that part was. But, that's what I was doing. That took a big chunk out of operations.

KB: How did you end up coming to Alaska?
NV: I was back in my own business in Boston and that's at the dividing line between snow to the south and no snow to the north, generally speaking. And I had a window with no snow to the north and it was a poor sale for snowmobiles.

KB: You were selling snowmobiles.

NV: Snowmobiles. It came the second winter and I had an $86,000 inventory that I had just borrowed from the bank, $86,000, I can remember it now. I paid for the snowmobiles and I sat and no snow, and no snow and no snow. And nobody bought, so it was a good chance to get rid of them at a very low cost. I didn't even make as much as it cost me on them in order to get rid of them in a hurry. I got rid of them in a hurry. Paid up the $86,000 because I got rid of a lot of stuff at the same time, and I came on to Alaska. But, it left the business that I left behind, out. It had to fold.

KB: What year was that?


KB: Why did you decide that you wanted to come to Alaska?

NV: I was a dog driver to start with and here we have the greatest concentration of dog drivers in the world. The best dog drivers. I wanted to be where they were so I could learn something. That was the real reason, plus the fact that I'd been coming up to Alaska for 18 years prior to this moment of decision, by going up as either a racer myself or as a handler for somebody else that came up to race dogs. And I was the first one to bring a team from the outside into Alaska to race.

KB: And what race was that?
NV: The National . . . the Fairbanks race called the . . .

KB: *The North American?*

NV: North American.

KB: *I don't know the full . . .*

NV: Well, North American Championship, that's the name of it.

(550)

(End of Tape 2 - Side A)

(Begin Tape 2 - Side B) - (000)

KB: *Now, we've gotten you to Alaska, so now this is a new part of your life.*

NV: When I landed in Alaska, I had put a $100 bill in between two socks that I had on one foot and I came in Bunny Boots which I had learned to use in the States and I came with old clothes. I had no good clothes at all. And the night I arrived, I wanted to spend the night somewhere, so I went to the YMCA, and I begged the YMCA guy to let me stay there. I had no other money than that $100 and of course I didn't tell him I had the $100, or he'd say, "I'll break it for you in a hurry." So, I begged him for that and in the morning, I asked to see the manager and I said, "I have no money and I begged a night's sleep in your establishment here and I want to pay you for it, but I've got to earn that money." "Well how are you going to earn it?" and I said, "I don't know, I'll do anything," and after
conferring with him a little bit, I found... I saw, rather, a snow shovel behind his desk and I said, you have a brand new snow shovel behind your desk. I suppose you're going to have it for cleaning your own sidewalks, but I'd like to have you loan it to me and I'll go out and make some money with it. So, I went out to shovel snow, and in those days, there was no plowing of the roads, sidewalks rather. They just shoveled them. And I chose restaurants. And I'd go there and I'd ask the fellow if I could shovel his sidewalk and it was at an absolutely perfect time for me because it was just little tiny walking paths in front of his establishment and he was glad to have it done. He didn't have anybody to do it and it seemed to snow every night a little bit about a couple of inches. And he always was needing a little help.

KB: *What time of year was this?*

NV: Mid-winter. I can't give you a date on it. Mid-winter. And so the first person I got to, I said, "I'll shovel for anything I can get. Certainly a cup of coffee." And I went right out. I didn't stop to get the cup of coffee. I went right out and started shoveling and he brought the coffee out to me, which I thought was great. I had only done about 10 shovelsful, but I had started in the right way. Then it turned into from coffee into a meal. And then I went to a number of these places and I got jobs shoveling their sidewalks for meals. And I did this for a while and it worked very well and when I got all through, I had 18 meals ahead and I ate every one of those 18 meals when I got on my new job. So, I did that with this other man's shovel. Took the shovel back when I stopped working on shoveling snow and went to work on my new job which I had picked up of being a janitor at the University of Alaska. And I ate every one of the 18 meals and the YMCA had been paid it's overnight boarding - not boarding but overnight rooming, and I was clear with everybody and kept on working at the university and I lived in a very meager circumstance downtown in a cellar, but I got there and I got an old junk Ford. Kept going back and forth in it. I had good friends that were mechanics and they told me what was the matter with the car when anything happened and I kept it going and got through the winter.
And started in the summer, kept right on there and did that for 6 years. About the third year or fourth . . . about the fourth year, I got this letter which said it was time for all contracts to be reviewed and I have decided that because of your age, that I'm not going to give you a renewal. Well, I hated the guy and he hated me. There's a long story about that. His name was Craeger . . . long story. And he was disliked by people and there I was working for him. And, one night he had come along and saw my car was hooked up electrically to keep the radiator from freezing and he pulled out the connection. He never said a word to me. The next day when I came back to work there was a sign that said, "No janitor will hereafter harness his car to the electrical system of the college except on the backside of the parking lot." He did it and he told people afterward that he had done that. Anyway, I had a hard time starting my car that day, as you could imagine.

And I wanted to be the best janitor they'd ever had. I worked hard at it and I finally graduated myself up into being janitor and in charge of all of the details of the stage in the theater which meant lighting and waxing the floor and taking care of the scenery and anything that needed to be done, I was in charge of it. I was having a great time and they never increased my salary. But, I had much more responsibility and I got to know everybody. And one day, Craeger, this guy, came along and said, "I see you're doing the stage out there. You're polishing the floor. Is it clean?" "Yessir." "Is it suitable for the dance group that's coming from New York who are going to dance tip toe - for toe dancers that have to have a very clean floor?" "Why, yessir it is. I'd like to have you look at it." He said, "Well, I'm not going to look at it today, I'll look at it in the future, but I want to look at it before they come and that's about 4 days from now. I'll look at it." "Well sir, I'd like to be there. I know that you always are here at 8 o'clock in the morning and if I'm here at 8 o'clock tomorrow morning, would you let me show it to you?" He said, "Yes, I will." I said, "Fine." I thanked him for promising to do that because I needed his approval. So, I got two of my friends to help me and they were ready and they came from the mess hall to the theater with two trays - one of them had eggs on the tray and the other . . . I've forgotten what the other one was, but there was some biscuits and there was some coffee and everything for me to have breakfast over at the stage. Instead of having that, I insisted that the eggs be dropped eggs. You know what they are?

KB: Poached eggs?
NV: Poached eggs. Not to be . . . to be very loose. Poached egg is soft. So, they did just that and they came over and I took them and went out on the stage and just sat there and I slipped them out onto the stage itself and I was there having my breakfast. I had eaten some toast and drinking my coffee and by God, at 8 o'clock he came in and he looked and he said, "You're eating your breakfast there." "Yessir." "I guess it's clean enough." And he turned around and walked off.

(100)

KB: *Clean enough to eat off of, huh?*

NV: Yeah, I ate it right off of the floor and I had the eggs, by that time, the yellow spread around a little bit just so it would make it look gooey and gumpy. And that worked out very well because he gave a report to my boss.

KB: *Now how'd you get from being a janitor to running in the Iditarod?*

NV: Oh, that was difficult. I kept training my team as soon as I got off work about 4 or 5 o'clock in the morning. Whenever it was that we were dismissed, six, I guess we were dismissed at six and I'd go home and start harnessing and take the dogs up to Campbell Airstrip and start driving out of there and training them in that way. And then I had them all day long in my truck, but when I was supposed to be sleeping, that was fine, I'd go to sleep. And the dogs were tied to my truck. Half of them. I had 16 dogs and 8 of them I put around the truck. The other 8 were in the truck and then I'd go out at midnight or halfway through - not midnight, mid-day - and change them. Put the dogs that were in, out and so forth. And I had them exercised that way. Kept the place clean. And had them over in the yard of the university and that worked out fine. And trained at night and then went in the race.

KB: *So when did you first run the Iditarod?*

KB: What's it like, running the Iditarod?

NV: Very stressful. Very difficult for the deprivation of sleep that you have to go through and not much fun. You do it because you want to accomplish something and you do it because you're winning if you get there. Sometimes they don't even get there. So, I didn't win every time. It was character building.

KB: How many?

NV: I was in 13.

KB: Thirteen times. So when was the last time you were in it?

NV: I think it was '84 and I was 89. I was 94 when it happened in the '89 race. Well, it was in the early '90s.

KB: So if it was so stressful and hard, why did you keep doing it?

NV: Because I didn't want to stop doing it because I loved to dog drive and I always went in with the idea of trying to have so much fun even though it was stressful. Oh, I'd go in it today if I had a dog team that could go. You have to have a dog team today that's gotta go pretty darn well. But my legs won't let me do it now because I've had heart trouble and I'm crippled, but I'm going to get over that. I'm getting over it and I'm going to get much better and I'm going to be able to fulfill my plans for 2005.

KB: Which are. . .

NV: You know about that.
KB: No.

NV: Well, I'm 95 right now and in '89, I went up the mountain.

KB: Right. I was going to ask you about that.

NV: You asked me?

KB: I will ask you about that. But you were talking about your big plans for 2005.

NV: Yes.

KB: Is that your 100th birthday?

NV: That's my 100th birthday. Now in '89, I went up that mountain. '94, I went up that mountains.

KB: Up Mount Vaughan.

(150)

NV: Yes. In '94. And now I decided that the biggest thing I could do for my 100th birthday was to climb Mt. Vaughan again, so I have asked the lead guide, Vern Tejas, and three of his associate guides and they all will go with me. And Vern Tejas is a wonderful man. Do you know him by chance?

KB: I don't know him. I know his name. I know who he is.
NV: Vern Tejas is T-e-j-a-s. And another close friend, Gordon Scott from Girdwood is going to join us . . . join the guides and we're going to try to make it. And if we can, I will be delighted, of course, to make it to the top for my 100th birthday. I never have had a drink in my life and I promised my mother some time ago that I would not drink until my 100th birthday, and so I will drink a half a glass of champagne when I get there. And I know that will make me feel great and I'll say, "Gee, I feel great. I've got to go back and live another 100 years and live it right!"

KB: Since you mentioned that '94 expedition to Mt. Vaughan, can you talk a little bit about that and what it meant to you to go back there and to climb that mountain?

NV: Well, back there, you mean . . . ?

KB: Back to Antarctica.

NV: What it will mean.

KB: No, your 1994.

NV: Oh, I never tried to climb it before. I went back in '93 and we had this airplane accident of losing a 4-engine aircraft and all of our supplies and three of our men were on board and one of them was our veterinarian. He was badly injured but he's all right now. And we lost 4 dogs. Not in the crash, but we let them all lose and we didn't catch four of them. And so that was in '93. So we went back home and got together enough people and enough money to go back again, and in '94 we went back and went to the base of the mountain and climbed to the top and of course, that was an acme of my life at the moment. The greatest thing I ever did was to get to the top of that mountain. Especially after losing that 4-engine aircraft. Well, I was just delighted with that and now, although I have heart trouble and all that sort of thing, I try to overlook that and am going to go back in 2005. But, one nice thing to say about it is that Dr. Mayer who is my heart specialist, is going to go too.
KB: *Oh, good.*

NV: And Dr. Schwarz, who is a general practitioner, is going to go.

KB: *Great.*

NV: So, I'll have two doctors on that trip.

KB: *You'll be well taken care of.*

NV: I will be very well taken care of.

KB: *Now, Admiral Byrd went back to Antarctica on other expeditions.*

NV: On a number. He had as many as 6 that he was either head of or titular head of.

KB: *And how come you didn't go back with him on any of those?*

NV: A very intelligent question. You know I was going back on the second one and I worked for a year in Boston helping him get the second expedition ready.

(200)

Worked at the Navy Yard every day and solicited for funds and for kind. And my father, God bless him, gave me good advice. I wouldn't take it again, but I did take it then. And that was, "Don't go back, Norman, because you're going to repeat what you've already done and you know how to do what you will do in the next year on this second expedition and there won't be anything in it for you at all. And I would advise against your going." So, I took his
advice and told Admiral Byrd and did that on one of these long walks together. We went out walking. And I didn't go back. And, of course, I've been very sorry in a sense that I didn't go back, but it's one of those things that I admire my father still for having given me what he thought was the right advice. And you can't blame him for that. But that is the reason I didn't go back for that one and I didn't go back on any others that followed up for the same reason. But by that time, I'd gotten into business and all kinds of responsibilities. I guess I was married by that time. I don't know. I've had three wives. Four.

KB: Carolyn's your fourth, or your third?

NV: Fourth. One, two, three, four . . .

KB: Why did you decide to go back to Antarctica and climb Mount Vaughan?

NV: Because it was there and I wanted to . . . I love the Antarctic and I wanted to see if it could be climbed. It never was climbed before. I'd never actually seen it as a mountain and say, "That's my mountain." I never saw it that way. I'd been along the base and I saw a lot of mountains like I can do here, looking out to the east. But, I never had seen that particular mountain as a single mountain entity. So, I went back to climb it because I wanted to see if I could do it. And I guess that's the reason.

KB: In any of your experiences, can you comment on the relationship between the military and civilians?

NV: Could I comment on that?

KB: Some people who have been in the Antarctic have been there in the time period when it was a Naval and civilian operation. I don't know if in any of your experiences . . .
NV: Well, you see their experience is going to a base camp and I didn't have that. I went to my own camp, so I didn't have any problem with that of having. . . seeing a different management there from one time to another. The only thing we had to do with really was the National Science Foundation and I never got along with them very well because they didn't want us to go. They were against my going from the very beginning.

KB: *Your Mt. Vaughan expedition?*

NV: Yeah. They didn't want me to go back.

KB: *How come?*

NV: Well, they said because if you go back, you're not scientific and if you go back and you have to be rescued, we've got to rescue you. We've got to do it because that's out mission and we don't want to have anybody down there that isn't under our control. And under our desires to have you there, we just don't want tourists and from the greater standpoint, you would be considered a tourist because you're not lending anything to the scientific world.

And I had to admit that, so what was I going to do? Admit that. Not. . . and I got into a hell of a (long pull?) with them.

KB: *So, how were you able to convince them to let you go?*

NV: Well, it turned out that I wanted to get permission and put in a request and the request was on the leader's desk, unapproved. And it remained that way for a long time. Finally, the appropriation for the National Science Foundation was coming up for approval and Senator Stevens said to them, "The approvals are going to come up for next week. You've had the request from one of my constituents on your desk for a year and a half and you haven't
done any good for him. I think I'll have to have an investigation of the whole National Science Foundation. Have a review." By God, you know, the next morning that request was signed and on my desk. No words said, but that was enough said.

KB:  *Pretty good.* And a lot of expeditions of people who have skied or go across Antarctica that aren't science.

NV:  Oh, I know they do now.

KB:  *But yours was one of the first?*

NV:  The.

KB:  *Oh, OK.*

NV:  You see, there's no way you can stop them. And they'd all go without saying they don't want to be rescued. But, when the time comes, if they did get in trouble, they would accept the rescue if it took place.

KB:  *And then you had the people in the plane crash needing to be rescued.*

NV:  No. Not by the National Science Foundation. We did it all ourselves. And when our doctor was there, we sent for an air evac airplane from the United States which cost $25,000.

KB:  *Was that on the '94?*

NV:  '94.

KB:  *Wow.*
NV: We had to raise that money too.

KB: I'm curious, speaking about scientists. You were on the Byrd Expedition, not as a scientist, but you helped the science.

NV: Of course I helped the science.

KB: How do I have my question worded here? How did that work?

NV: We worked hard for the scientists. We liked the individual person and we liked the science anyway. I'd do the same thing again. But, I couldn't pose as a scientific expedition because I wasn't a scientific expedition. I was just one who wanted to do it because he wanted to do it.

KB: So, how do you feel about logistic support for science?

NV: Oh, I think logistic support for science 100% should be given, of course! Everything that can be done to help scientists should be done. Anything to help tourists, secondary.

(300)

KB: When you reflect back on your life and career, what do you think are your most important accomplishments?

NV: Going on the Byrd Expedition because that's the framework for the rest of my life and the only thing you can say about the rest of my life is that I think I lived up to my motto of dreaming big and dare to fail, I'm always dreaming up schemes and I don't give up. Just like the dogs being barred from the Antarctic, I can't do anything about that, but if I had money and somebody to support me, I could go around the world to those four or five, maybe
there are more than that, countries and explain why with documentary evidence from veterinarians supported by their own country veterinarians and explain why dogs will not give canine distemper to seals and get them to withdraw that. But, I didn't have money enough to do that. Didn't have money to even start it.

KB: *What about any disappointments in your career?*


KB: *Well, what can you think of?*

NV: I'm disappointed right now that my truck that I've relied on so heavily has gone to hell. It needs a new transmission.

KB: *You know you mentioned before that you didn't go on the next Byrd expedition.*

NV: Yeah. I was disappointed in not being able to go on that expedition. That was really tough. I had a hard time with that, but I also tried to keep saying to myself, 'Father knows best.' I guess he did, but I didn't go anyway and I'm sorry, of course, but I would have gotten more out of it just because I would have pushed all the other things harder and faster. You can't help but learn a lot. Going down there is good.

KB: *What about other ones?*

NV: Other disappointments? Oh, damn. A disappointment that . . .

KB: *Instead of disappointments, maybe regrets.*

NV: Oh regrets. All right.
KB: *Does that help?*

NV: I can do that a little perhaps easier. I regret having allowed my marriages to go to pieces like they did.

(350)

I didn't appreciate all the benefits and good things that life had put before me. And it isn't until these days, right now, that I seem to be appreciating all those things. Whether that's because it's getting nearer my death, I don't know. But I did meet a man the other day who's very well respected here in Alaska. He's a native. Lives up in Galena who said to me, "Norman, are you happy since you became 90?" I said, "Yeah, I'm great!" He said, "You know, I'm very unhappy." He's 91. And I said, "Why?" And he said, "Well, nothing seems to be right." And I think he was just homesick for the traline and shooting and being unable physically to do what he wanted to do. He doesn't do what I do to try to make up for it some other way. I can't drive dog sleds, so I drive a snowmobile. I can't walk, so I use a cane. And I'm getting rid of the cane. I'm getting better, but not fast enough. So I regret that. I get over a cold quickly, but I don't seem to be able to get over my lameness quickly. Does that answer your question?

KB: *Yeah. So what factors do you think influenced your choice of careers?*

NV: Love of dogs. That influenced it to start with. Love of the outdoors. I love to be out of doors. I mean if I'm going on a trip on a boat . . . I haven't told you about this, have I?

KB: *No.*

NV: Not very long from now, I'm taking my daughter and my son out on a boat for a few days into the Bay of . . . what's the bay out of Whittier?
KB: Prince William Sound?

NV: I never can remember it. Prince William Sound, a boat down there. And I'm looking forward to that very much. More so because I'm taking them with me and also my sister would have gone. She's coming to Alaska for the commencement part of it. She would have gone but her balance isn't good enough to be on a small boat. So the doctor's not going to let her go.

KB: Sounds like a good trip though.

(400)

NV: Oh it is going to be an excellent trip. The man who is taking us is a fellow named Darbishire is his name, but he has a small boat. It takes 6 people and he is the captain, the owner, the navigator, the guide and the cook and he prides himself on cooking and people that have gone with him go over and over and over again with him.

KB: Is this a sailboat or motorboat?


KB: Great.

NV: Like a lobster fisherman.

KB: Too bad there's no lobsters out there.

NV: I know. I love lobster meat.
KB: *Me too. Can't get it here very much.*

NV: *What?*

KB: *I said you can't get it here very much.*

NV: *Oh, no. You like clams and oysters?*

KB: *I can't eat clams and oysters.*

NV: *What do they do?*

KB: *They make me sick. I'm allergic to them.*

NV: *Nauseated? How does it make you sick? Nauseated?*

KB: *I'm allergic to them. Yeah.*

NV: *I love those!*

KB: *I don't eat those. I stick to shrimp and lobster and crabs.*

NV: *I like all those too.*

KB: *So, just thinking about factors that influenced your career, how do you think Antarctica influenced?*
NV: Oh, very much so because I wanted to . . . it influenced my career because I loved the place and I see in other things the comparison between Antarctica and this other place, wherever I might be. And compare it and say how much I'd like to be down in the Antarctic rather than here. Oh yes, it's constantly in my mind, the Arctic or the Antarctic. One time I took a lady, Carolyn was with me too, and we took a lady, I should say, to the South Pole and when we came back, she said, "You know, you've given me such a good time taking me down here to the South Pole, can you take me to the North Pole?" And we said, "Yes." And so we went to the North Pole, same year.

KB: Wow. When was that?

NV: Oh, I don't know. Four years ago.

KB: Great. You mentioned your motto.

NV: "Dream big and dare to fail."

KB: I'm wondering what . . .

NV: That came to me just as I finished talking at the top of Mt. Vaughan and I gave a little speech to myself or to the mountain or to the guides or whoever. I had something to say, so I said, "Of all the people that would like to be here with me right this minute are the following," and I read out of my diary. I had already listed the number of people that I thought would like to be there then and so that's one of the things. And it was very influential to me to have said "Dream big and dare to fail," because that's what those people would have done. And so I thought of that up there, right there on the top of the mountain.
That's where I got that, "Dream big and dare to fail." I'd dreamt big things. I'd gotten there, and by golly, I'd dared to fail because if I hadn't gotten there, I would have failed and I dare to do that and I'll dare it again. I'll dare it on my 100th birthday.

KB: *Where did you get your motivation and your inspiration for things? And it may be different now than it was in other parts of your life.*

NV: Not wanting to fail. Wanting to do something that other people aren't doing. One man who wrote in a request for the Board of Regents at the University of Alaska to vote me an award said that he thought of me as a man who did things because he saw that they needed doing or . . . no . . . that other people hadn't been doing or thought that something needed to be done. That's the best answer I can give you for that.

KB: *OK. And sort of related to that is all this . . . your life has been expeditions and dog driving, and the Iditarod and all that for a lot of people would be some hard things.*

NV: Yes.

KB: *And I can imagine on the Byrd Expedition, it wasn't all fun and games.*

NV: Oh, geez no.

KB: *So, mentally, how do you get yourself through some of the tough moments?*

NV: Well, I knew that all these things were coming and that tough moments are here and that I'll have tough moments again on my 100th birthday. And I'll have tough moments even getting ready for that. I'll have tough moments trying to solicit funds and not being able to get funds that I thought were right there to come toward me,
that won't come. I'll be disappointed, of course. And that will be tough for me. Because I won't know where I'll get the replacement for those, but I'll keep on trying.

KB: *If you're on an expedition, and it's cold and things are going badly or you had to kill your dogs, how do you get through to the next day?*

(500)

NV: Well, the way to do that is to say that I'm doing that only because it's the best of other things that I have to do and killing the dogs is terrible, but if I don't kill them, I die. I've gotta eat, so I kill a dog and eat him. I was faced with that on a trip that . . . I was lost and the next day I was to kill the dog that I could most easily get along without. And I had him all slated to kill him and that night I got rescued by snowmobiles and I didn't have to kill him. But I was going to kill him. I didn't want to. He was a good dog. But, I just . . . it was a case of being disappointed and doing it because I felt I had to do it. Self protection is or selfish protection gets it across, is the best thing we have in life, isn't it? It's the most instinctive. If somebody throws a brick at this glass out here, I'm going to duck like this. I don't want to get hit with this. It's instant instinct to duck away from it.

KB: You mentioned earlier about being on a trip where you had to eat some of the dogs? What was that? Or did I not hear you correctly?

NV: No, here's what happened. At the end of an Iditarod, Jim Lanier, who is a doctor, and I had a team - joint team because he put some of his dogs in mine. At the end of that race, we came back and we had to find a place for them for the winter because we both lived in town here. We couldn't keep them. So we found a place and we were going to take our dogs to this man's house and he was going to feed them for the summer and we'd get them in the fall and have a team again. So, it was my lot to take them up there and I was going to take them in his truck which was much better than mine was. So, I went out and spent the night with him and my dogs were out at his house right here in town and in the morning, we got up and loaded them on and we didn't have room for - everybody didn't have a
crate, so we put two male dogs together. I didn't think they'd fight. They were brothers and so I left Jim's house all loaded to go to this other man's house to leave them for the summer and I wanted to stop and get some fuel.

And I heard these dogs fighting when I stopped to get fuel. I was also going to have breakfast and when I stopped to get fuel, they were arguing in a bad way and you could tell, if you know dogs or you know these dogs, whether they're arguing because they just got their back hair up or whether they really are mad and might end up in a real vicious fight where they want to kill each other. Well, I thought this might end up that way, but I knew that if I was moving in the car and shaking in the car and just moving around, it would stop them, they got quiet. And so, when I stopped in to get fuel, I stopped their fighting when the car was still and I started up again and I didn't dare to stop for breakfast and I was hungry as hell. But, I didn't dare to stop because if I went in to eat, they'd be out alone and I'd of had no way to sew up wounds or I didn't want to get into that. And so, I decided to keep on driving. And I was hungrier and hungrier and somewhere on the dashboard was a bar of chocolate like this. And I ate a bar - a big bar. And after having eaten the chocolate I thought, gee that's great, but it only whetted my appetite. I wanted to stop and I went by two or three places I would have loved to stop for breakfast where I'd had breakfast before. They were great, on the way up north here. And I didn't stop. I resisted that. But, on the seat beside me was a plastic bag with granola in it as though the granola had been taken out of the cardboard bag and just put there. I thought it was good, that we should have unloaded it back at Jim's house. We unloaded other things, but no, it was there on the seat. So, I opened it up and I was driving along and I did this and I opened it up and put in a mouthful of this and geez it was dry. And I said to myself, 'That's awful dry,' and it took all the moisture out of my mouth because all the saliva was gone now and I took another one and it was drier than hell, the second one.

So I said, 'I can't eat any more of this,' and I folded it up and sealed it. And I didn't eat any more, but I got up to this farm and delivered the dogs and he gave me a wonderful breakfast at his house and it was great. Well, I came back
to Jim's and spent the night at his house again and was going to spend the night and go on about our own business the next day, but when we came out in the morning, we decided we'd do something together - I don't know what it was - Jim was, naturally his truck . . . he got into the driver's side and I got into the other side and I said, "Jim what's this bag of granola here? Should I have taken this in for your son's gerbils?"

(End of Tape 2 - Side B)

(Begin Tape 3 - Side A)

(000)

NV: And I said, "What do you mean it won't hurt me any?" And he said, "Well, just before you took the truck, I came from the veterinarian's and I brought that bag with me from the veterinarian's and it was the remains of my dog having been cremated." And I said, "No wonder it was dry." Oh, Jesus. So I ate a little dog. He kids me about that all the time. He'll introduce me to somebody and say, "And there's the man who ate my dog."

KB: I guess eating a little dog is better than eating a little crow.

NV: Yeah! That's right. What he was going to do with his dog was spread the ashes on the Iditarod Trail. That's what he planned to do.

KB: And so when you were on an expedition, did you ever run into problems where you had to eat a dog because you ran out of food?

NV: No. We were ready to, but didn't come into that problem.
KB: That's good.

NV: Nobody that I know of did that down there.

KB: That's good. So, I was asking you about how, mentally, you get through the tough times. Like when you climbed Mt. Vaughan at age 89, there must have been moments when it was hard.

NV: Yes, it was, but I just said, "I've got to keep going." You can't stop. You've just got to keep going. I feel that way now in everything I do. I've just gotta keep going. I get lazy every once in a while and don't do it and Carolyn thinks I'm awful lazy.

KB: So, who would you say have been your mentors?

NV: That's a hard question to answer. Admiral Byrd would be the first one I'd bring out. A lot of people I admire, so I . . . I don't know who I could say were real heroes that I really worshipped or anything like that. I like so many and I've met so many big people.

KB: It doesn't even have to be a big person. People who have been your heroes or role models or have inspired you. Besides Admiral Byrd, who else might you say?

NV: That's pretty hard for me to pick out. Oh, one of them is . . . Dr. Gould is one. Certainly he is one. Certainly he is a big one.

KB: Who else? Anybody else?

NV: Bob Bartlett who was the captain of the Morissey. Capt. Bob Bartlett, Newfoundlander. I guess if you say you like what people do, I liked what Grenfell did. I think you could say he's a role model in the sense that I like what he did, namely established stations for other people. I liked that about him. So from that point of view, although I never
got to know him well, just barely well enough for him to call me Norman, that's all. I never went anywhere with him. But Byrd, I got to know very well. And Gould, of course, I knew very well. And people . . . two friends that I have . . . Goodale and Crockett that went on the Byrd Expedition, they were both tremendous people. But, their scope was small. They didn't have a big world outlook like Morissey did or Grenfell did or Byrd did. Their scope was smaller than those people.

KB: *Who was Morissey?*

NV: Captain Morissey was the captain of a boat which was . . . oh Bartlett, it was. Bob Bartlett was Captain of the *Morissey*.

KB: *Oh, I see.*

NV: That's a fishing boat.

KB: *And that was in Newfoundland.*

NV: Yes.

(50)

KB: *OK. What was it about Gould that you admired?*

NV: God, his mind was sharp. He was good on criticisms of people - both good and bad criticisms. I mean he could analyze things. Great analyst. I think those are the . . . and very friendly. And he had all kinds of courage to do the right thing. He went forward when that blister was terrible on his heel. He'd have gone until it fell off, I think.
KB: *What about Byrd?*

NV: I liked Byrd because he was a good leader and I would love to have been . . . I feel greatly blessed by being influenced by him because he represented to me a lot of good things that I like. I think that's what makes you like people, if they synchronize with your good thoughts. I think he did. He was always very generous. He wanted us to like him very much, not because he did things for us but because he tried to get the best out of us all. He wanted his men to love him and he certainly would do anything for his men. I never saw him do anything bad.

KB: *Have you applied any of those things to your own expeditions?*

NV: All. Oh yeah. Every one of them. All, if I could. Yes, I did. I try not to think of it, but I know that I was influenced by others to take a certain man on an expedition and I didn't think he'd turn out very well and he didn't. He didn't.

KB: *And what was that?*

NV: What was it? On my expedition.

KB: *Which one?*

NV: Well, the one that went down and we lost the 4-engine airplane.

KB: *1993.*

NV: ‘93.

KB: *So did that person go on the next one?*
NV: Oh, no. I don't think he wanted to either.

KB: What was it that didn't work out?

NV: With him?

KB: Yeah.

NV: I never could tell what he was thinking, whether he was with me or just blah or whether he was against me. I never knew what he'd do when my face was turned. I never heard anything about him doing anything bad, but that's the way I felt. He might. I didn't like that. I don't like to feel there are people that could be dishonest.

(100)

Oh, I know another fellow I think is a terrific guy. Robert . . . oh boy, I've got one of his books here.

KB: What's the context? What does he do?

NV: He's a minister. He gives a talk every Sunday. Oh, Dr. Fulton . . . no.

KB: Here at Anchorage?

NV: No. California. Garden City, California. He was in charge of the cathedral. Built the big glass cathedral. I'll remember it later.

KB: Maybe you'll remember it as we keep going.
NV: Yeah.

KB: *We just talked about who your mentors were. What about people who you have been a mentor to?*

NV: Oh, I couldn't name them. I think there are quite a few because they keep telling me that. They say, "You're my hero." There's one girl here that would so good . . . you might like to talk to her - Susan Ruddy. And she is the assistant to the Chancellor of the University of Alaska-Anchorage. Gorsuch. Do you know that name?

KB: *Lee Gorsuch.*

NV: Yes. Lee Gorsuch. She is his assistant and you can call his phone and get her that way. She knows pretty much about me and she calls me her hero. I don't know. There's another girl - (Marilyn) Shea. She's in the school department. Shea. And now let's give you a telephone number.

KB: *Oh, that's ok.*

NV: Well, you just can't get it out of nothing. And her husband's name. He kept his maiden name, or she kept that name and his maiden name is Jimmy Jackson - Jackson-Shea. I have that number right handy.

KB: *Have they said to you what it is that has made you their hero?*

NV: *She* has. I don't know what she said. Not anything that I can put my finger on that she said this. But, I know she said it.

KB: *OK. And then this . . .*
NV: I think it's because she doesn't think that anybody my age can do what I'm doing and I think that's it. Of going on the Serum Run, for instance. Because I've been doing the Serum Run every time we've had it and I came through with flying colors and she said, at the end, "You did it again which nobody thought you could." I mean that type of thing and I think she'd be helpful in getting a thought or two.

KB: And then this man who was calling with the e-mail, who was he?

NV: Oh, I don't know him. He was injured and he called up and said, "Because of your model, I got well and it's been over a period of time and I saw your picture and every time I get pains and stuff and I keep saying that you said to keep on going and I won't quit. So, now I'm over the problem. I can live. And I just wanted to tell you that." That only started two days ago. So it's all fresh in my mind. His name is Fischer. I'll give you his number. Carolyn said it's on her desk.

KB: OK.

NV: He's from . . . gee, I don't know where he's from. I've forgotten.

KB: Well, I'll have that e-mail from him. That would be good. You mentioned the Serum Run. That's something we haven't talked about. Tell me what that is.

NV: In 1925, Nome was stricken with an epidemic of diphtheria and they ran out of diphtheria antitoxin and they hunted everywhere. Couldn't find any except down here in a contonement in Anchorage - a military contonement, there was some.

(150)
And they got it from the military commissary down here and they now didn't have any way to get it to Nome. The doctors up there were crazy with not knowing what to do with these people, such a disease as they had there it was flying all around and no way to stop it and they didn't know whether people should be quarantined or what to do with them at that time. And so they wanted to send this up by airplane, but airplanes flew in those days, in 1925, but not one small airplane that could get in up there was in the air because they all didn't know how to run the oil system it was so cold. And the oil system - the hydraulic system was what was bad in those days. I mean it was difficult. They have it licked now and strangely enough, you know, the Russians knew how to do that and they would never give it to us - the secret to how to run the hydraulic system. So, that's neither here nor there, what they did. But anyway . . . the diptheria serum was needed in Nome. And they found that the railroad track in going back and forth to Fairbanks came nearer to Nome at Nenana than any other place. So, they decided, well, we'll send it up by train to Nenana and then let Nenana run the program from there of getting dog driver after dog driver after dog driver and there were 18 of them used in a chain reaction - what do you call it, pony express?

KB: *Relay.*

NV: Yeah, relay. 18 dog mushers were used and I have the list of those 18 if you need them that were used and they took the serum up there and got it there and saved the life of...that expedition entirely. They tried to curb it, but this was the key that curbed it and they were given great credit for it. Now a few years ago, I found out that the parents of these school children that I talked to never talk about it and the school children in one town didn't know it and yet that town sent out one of those drivers. And they weren't abreast of this wonderful gem of Alaskan history. And here was this historical thing happening and it just happened and nobody talked about it. So it's dying. So, I thought, gee if we could only re-run this every year, we'll have a chance to reach all the school children in every town and get them to relay it to their parents and over a period of time, the parents will begin talking about it and they'll get it on and we'll spread that word around again. Because when Alaska was a territory, that's when this happened.

Well, the serum got there all right and it was a great thing. It saved the lives of people and I wanted to re-enact this so that everybody would know about it. When I came down the finish line the first time I did this, an Eskimo lady all done up in her scarf sitting in a wheelchair that had been towed from her nursing home over the
rough snow streets, pulled by a rope with a boy out front. She couldn't push her wheelchair and somebody pushing behind. She wanted to see me and I thought she wanted me to sign a book or something.

(200)

And she started to cry when I kissed her on her forehead. She was a lovely looking Eskimo and I just said, "I'm glad to see you. Glad to meet you." And then she started crying and I said, "Don't cry. I'm just here to say hello." And she said, "Well, I want to tell you that in 1925, I was doomed to die. I was 2-1/2 years old. My father heard about the dogs arriving and he took me down to the hospital. I got inoculated. It saved my life and I'm here to tell you about it 73 years later." And she was just delighted. And the next year, when I came there, I had a little vile that long and gave everybody a vile that we wanted to give a sample of the serum, but it was a fake serum. But, we just had that symbol and we gave it to her and she took it in her hands - now this is the next year - and she started to cry and she said, "And this is what saved my people." So, she was reinforcing what she said the year before. And it was wonderful to have that. So, we do re-enact the story and tell it and it gets a great chance to get before those kids.

And one of the things that we've done this year and we will emphasize it more and more next year, I'm sure, is that we have a girl named Beth Queela and she is 41 years old. She wears funny looking clothes - baggy for women, baggy clothes. She prances up and down in front of those kids. They all look like that . . you know. Follow her up and down. And she talks about herself and she says, "I'm happy as hell and I'm 41 and fat and forty and I just enjoy life and you should too." She starts it off by saying, "What you young ladies in this audience probably think of is that your duty is to grow up and get married and have children and that's not your only duty. Your own duty is your character. You've got to build yourself - make yourself somebody. Don't just go on. Make yourself somebody." Then she goes on to say, "You're all faced with suicide. Not yourself, you're not faced with it yourself by any personal action, but you've heard or people or you've seen people or you know about people that are affected by this and we're all affected by it. So we want to cut this out." And she said that whenever you see somebody that acts a little strangely, go up to them and give me a hand. Shake hands and talk to them frankly about everything you want to and just show love through your hand that you care about her, that she's important or he's important to everybody else and that he must not think of suicide. So get out and go to work and save other people's lives and you'll be
building your own character too. And she's just wonderful. I want to bring her back next year and we'll go all out. She doesn't have any money herself, but we're going to bring her back and try to get her on a snowmobile and get her to go again.

KB: *For the re-enactment, you go by snowmobiles from Nenana to Nome?*

NV: With dog teams *and* snowmobiles. We have 13 dog teams and 13 snowmobiles this year. Thirty people. And there's a big crowd. And we don't want more than 30. We're going to limit it to 30 because if we have more, we'll cause too much of an impact in the towns and it won't be that successful to do that.

KB: *You go village to village.*

NV: Go village to village, right along the same route as the serum went.

(250)

KB: *And go to the schools and make presentations.*

NV: And I go to the schools every morning at 8:30 in the morning and talk, via the principal, have him introduce me and say why I'm there. And they get so they know me now. I've done this now for 5 years.

KB: *But, now the Iditarod is supposedly based on that serum run.*

NV: The which one?

KB: *The Iditarod.*
NV: Well, now wait a moment. It isn't based on the serum run as much as it was stimulated by that. There's no, the serum run doesn't come into it except stimulated because the man who really started the Iditarod learned about this, just as I've told you, and said by golly, if those dogs can do it, our dogs can too.

KB: *And that was Joe Reddington?*

NV: Joe Reddington, senior. Yeah. So it's really great.

KB: *So, the Iditarod doesn't follow the original . . .*

NV: No, it doesn't. In parts, yes. Some sections of the road is the same and we don't . . . we overlap into the Iditarod too, onto the Iditarod trail, just between some of the stations.

KB: *Something else we forgot to talk about. We forgot to talk about the search for the airplane in Greenland.*

NV: Yeah, the eight or which one?

KB: *The one under the snow.*

NV: That we got out.

KB: *Yes.*

NV: Oh, that's one of those eight that I did mention and we got that airplane out. That was quite a big affair. What we did there, we sounded down . . . firstly, we knew where they were located. I was taken up there with the idea that I could go out and spot them. But, you can't spot them because they're below the surface of drifted snow. Not . . .
the airplanes never sank a bit. They just got covered and covered and covered and covered and the reason meteorologically why they got covered and why the area was . . . I'll go into that if you want to.

Well, down the middle of Greenland, there is a ridge and the ridge is 10,000 feet high and the prevailing winds with all the snows come from west to east across this range and when they get to the range, it starts spilling and it spills onto the eastern coast of Greenland and it builds up and builds up and builds up and never goes away, it seems. On the west coast, however, it goes away and you have blank spaces there. On the east coast, you don't. And that's what built up the snow. Now when we came along, we used hot boiling water. We brought a boiler just the same as you have in the bottom of a house like this if it was heating a big house and we brought the oil and we started it up on the top of the Greenland ice cap and started melting snow, melted it and got our boiling water that way. Ran it through a hose and down a pipe that we could move. When we'd get over a place where we thought the airplane was, we ran the pipe down and we struck something. Now it had to be another meteorite or something manmade. We didn't know how it could be anything but a meteorite or the airplane itself.

(300)

And so we went down with a much wider probe now and this wider probe was called a gopher and the gopher was a big barrel and around it was copper tubing and we ran the wire over the hot water through the copper tubing. Now this was on the outside. And then we ran it into the inside of the barrel and up a hose back into the boiler again so we were getting a repeat of hot water. It went out boiling and came back hot because it didn't have a chance to stop. It got coldness through the pipes, but not enough to spoil it. Went out at 180 and came back at 140.

KB: *Not bad.*

NV: Not bad. So it meant economical fuel for us in keeping it going. And so this barrel, gopher, went down, down, down, and it melted the snow because the pipes that had the water in it were touching the snow and it went down, down, down, and it went down all the way. And it went 266 feet and it met the first airplane. 266 feet down! That was a hell of a distance. Then we went down that shaft 45 inches wide and we went down. We huddled
like this and went down and we were let down on a cable. We didn't man climb it. But, believe me when you were going down there you just felt, if that glacier moves just the least little bit it will squeeze me to death without any question. And anyway, we get down to the bottom and then we excavated a big cabin over the airplane and the first one we came to was a B-17. We knew it was a big one, but it was twisted and torn so much so that it never could fly again.

But everybody - I have to take personal credit for this I think - everybody wanted to stop except I and mostly because I didn't want to give up. But secondly, I had this argument that it you took a cubic foot of the interior of that airplane anywhere and compared it to the same cubic foot space in the P-38 which is a smaller airplane and a fighter airplane, vis-a-vis the bomber, the P-38 is going to be stronger because it's been made to go into gyrations and all kinds of maueuvers, whereas the B-17 was made to fly straight and level and come down. And it didn't have to have all the extra stresses and strains that the fighter ship had to have. And it turned out to be just that. That when we went down to the fighter ship, which was on the same level, it wasn't smashed as much. So, it was withstanding the pressure of the ice better. So, now we built a big cabin over this P-38 and then sent for P-38 mechanics here in the States to send back to Greenland. And there were only five P-38s flying in this world today and over 10,000 were made. And these mechanics came up there because they were familiar with how it was built better than anybody else. Better than our mechanics anyway.

(350)

And then we assigned our mechanics to them and the three of them ran an 8 hour shift all the time, 24 hours a day, we ran a disassembly program on that airplane and brought all the pieces to the top. Now we got the whole airplane up at the top, including engines and they were big and heavy. And we got them up at the top and now they've all been taken down to Kentucky where a man who financed the expedition has an airplane, of course, and he has a little hangar down there and his own airstrip. And that plane has been called the Glacier Girl and the Glacier Girl has been reassembled and they're going to run it up hard on the runway to see how it takes up the speed and how the engines are working and then they'll fly it soon. But not within a week or two. It'll be hopefully before the summer is over. And who's going to fly that airplane, I don't know.
KB:  Now when did this all happen? The digging it up?

NV:  They dug it up I think '82. I can get that detail if you want.

KB:  Now, that's close enough. Which decade.

NV:  Yeah. Within a decade.

KB:  Now, how was that funded?

NV:  Personally funded by going out and soliciting funds from individuals, companies and in this case, for this airplane, an individual supplied all the money. His name was . . . oh god, I don't remember his name. His assistant in building and rebuilding the plane was named Bob Cardin and his name, who had all the money, I don't remember at this moment. But let me tell you, he owns 18 southern fried chickens. And that's where the liquid cash comes from. And you see, it's that kind of a man that can spend money without hurting himself because the minute he stops spending it, he gets it in his own pocket. Whereas if he didn't have that money and it was all invested, he'd have to be selling things all the time and people don't do that.

(400)

KB:  Why did you want to go do that? Finding one of those planes?

NV:  In the first place I went and got the Norden bomb site out of it and I had a very personal interest in it. Gee, that's wonderful. Now if somebody wants to go back and get it, I want to go and help them. It's a personal feeling of trying to help do something that needs to be done to show that airplanes can be recovered from the Greenland ice
cap without great deterioration from . . . with no deterioration because it was cold. And they're not going to rust, these aluminum planes. That doesn't quite answer your question.

KB: *Well, was the expedition your idea or this man came to you?*

NV: It wasn't my idea to go rescue them, but it was my idea to take the effort to go down and get a P-38 after we'd gotten down to the B-17 and can't do anything more. They all thought gee, the P-38's going to be just like it and I said, "No, it won't be." And I was lucky because I didn't know. I said, "N-o, no. Let's not do that. Let's do it and see if we can prove to ourselves that we can't get that P-38 out there." The P-38 being a smaller airplane and very much stronger in the configuration. So I said that cubic foot and that seemed to please them. And enough encouragement came back, so they would run that gopher again and go down to there and try to excavate it and they did excavate it and it's being put together and I've seen it halfway put together and it looked good. They took all the old rivets out and put new ones in. It's going to be beautiful.

KB: *How long did it take you to get all the pieces up out of the ice.*

NV: Oh, one year.

KB: *One year?*

NV: One summer.

KB: *One summer. Wow. How have things changed in dog mushing since you started?*

NV: All the good old timers have lost their interest and now we have just new mechanics. New mechanical minded people. Mechanical minded people are not as rough with the type as the old time dog drivers who are woodsly and
down to earth and almost a dog themselves. They work with their hands and the other fellows today are working with their brains.

KB: *OK. What about in exploration and expeditions? How have things changed?*

(450)

NV: Everything's changed toward doing their exploration with airplanes. Everything is airplanes. People have forgotten there is such a thing as a dog team and would laugh at the thought that they ever would have known so little as to trust themselves to going on an exploration with a dog team. That's no good. But, they forget that you can't eat the airplane if you go down. You can eat a dog team and stay alive a little bit longer, maybe if you get rescued. They forget that.

KB: *That reminded me that not only in Antarctica have they said no dog teams, but I think in Denali, I don't think people use dog teams any more to climb the mountains.*

NV: No.

KB: *Or to get supplies to the mountains. I don't know.*

NV: I don't know if that's been barred. I don't know that. I can find that out.

KB: *No. I can find out too. I was just thinking if it was a . . . people don't seem to do it anymore.*

NV: No they don't do it anymore, but Brad Washburn knows more about Mt. McKinley than anybody here in Alaska and he'd be the one I'd ask right off.
KB: You know, I was just thinking about it. It's an example of where they don't use dogs like they used to.

NV: Oh they don't. Nobody uses dogs like they used to. There isn't any place that a dog team must be used because they can't get motorized transportation in there to do except you can't love a machine. It just won't wag it's tail for you.

KB: But now you do ride snow machines.

NV: Ride 'em. Oh, you bet. Carolyn and I did something interesting. On the first Serum Run, we took a dog team and a snowmobile. I ran the dog team one day and Carolyn ran it the next. Vice versa, we swapped around. I recommended that to others and others have tried it and successfully do it.

KB: Now you just go on snow . . .

NV: I go strictly on snow machines.

KB: I was wondering how you would describe what it is about dog driving that's so wonderful for somebody like me who's never really done it.

NV: All right. Have you done snowmobiling?

KB: Um-hum.

NV: All right. Then in a dog team, you have the love and affection of the dogs toward you which you love if you love dogs. And you also have the satisfaction of command when you tell them to go right and they do go right and it's great to say, "Gee!" and then watch the dogs go right. "Haw!" and watch them go left. That's wonderful, but efficiency.
Of course, the snowmobile is much more efficient because you can steer it and make it do what you want to without any question and it always does it. Whereas a dog team is always questionable. You have to use your love of animals and your training to bring the best out of the dogs and you have to... once you do that, you have to enjoy what you're doing. And you have a bad dog that you've made right by coaxing him and loving him and getting him to work for you and then you look at him in the team as he's trotting along and you think, "Gee, I did a great job with that dog. He responded well. It's just the love of animals that make you love the dog driving more than you do the machines. Now, there's another thing. Some people have a great, great dislike for noise. And they even have a group called Quieter Sportsmen, or quieter machines or quieter this. And of course, noise in the snowmobile business has been a big factor. And they try to get them more quiet and they have. They now have a four cycle engine instead of a two cycle engine.

KB: Oh, I didn't know that.

NV: And that is quieter to start with.

KB: Yes.

(End of Tape 3 - Side A)
KB: *My next question is how do you want people to remember you when you're not here anymore?*

NV: All right. I'd like to have them say he influenced me, like this fellow Fischer. I'd like to have them say that. Not as definite as that, but that I influenced people. That I inspired them, because that's what they say of me mostly now, when I see somebody, "Glad to see you again. I haven't seen you in ten years. Oh boy, you inspire me." That type of thing. Or, "You inspire all of us," or something like that. And they do, they say that a lot and, of course, it pleases me very much. And you get that from Marilyn Shea, I think, if you talk to her. I would call her. That will give you a good background. She's available... How long are you going to be here?

KB: *Oh, I'm leaving tomorrow.*

NV: Well, you can do it tonight or tomorrow morning. Try to get her tonight and don't be afraid to talk with her. She has plenty of time. She takes care of her own dogs, but she has time. She has Jimmy there, Jimmy Jackson. He's a great help to her. Most people, and I'd be one of them from now on, I wouldn't want a dog team where she is without a handler because a handler is so helpful. Couldn't do anything else but take care of your dogs, if you don't.

KB: *When you started with dog mushing, did you have a handler?*

NV: No. Just did it all myself.

KB: *So that's changed. More people have handlers now?*

NV: Yes, more people have handlers now than they did in the early days. They didn't have any handlers. That's right. They didn't have any at all, but people have changed because there's so much to do and so much else to do besides just taking care of your dogs. But, if you have nothing to do but take care of your dogs and drive, then you don't need a handler. But, going to races or something like that, you need a second person in the car to drive the car to go pick you up and things like that and when you're training, you may want to start in one location and stop in
another, 30 miles away. And you can't come back. So you have the truck go over there and meet you. You need a handler. You need somebody and then the smaller the team the less you need it. The larger the team, the more you need a handler. And when you take your own team away and you go alone away, you'd leave somebody at home to take care of the pups and take care of the dogs. And the most unsung heroes - I think this is worth putting down - the unsung heroes of the dog driving world are the wives who get all the burden of feeding the dogs when the husband is away, cleaning up the yard because the husband didn't take time enough to do it, watering the dogs in the morning and listening to all his complaints. And she has all the burden of unsung heroes and if a dog is sick, she's the one that stays up all night to take care of the dog. It's not he. It's she.

KB: *Did any of your wives help you with your dogs? I know Carolyn does.*

NV: Carolyn does.

KB: *But before that.*

NV: No. None of them were dog drivers.

KB: *One question that the Byrd Research Center wants to know is about documentation that you have about your career, like you have photographs. I see here you've got some of the things from Byrd.*

NV: Well do they want them? To get them?

KB: *No, it's just a question about what kinds of things you might have in your possession.*

NV: Well, I've got his very pistol, which is a big one. You'll see it right there.

KB: *Yeah, it is big.*
NV: What's that?

KB: It's a big barreled pistol.

(50)

NV: And when he was out there alone in that camp, alone, he wanted to be sure that the pilot coming out to get him would find him because that pilot went out there and there he's right over the spot, but is he here or is he there? From an airplane, it's hard to tell. But if he had that pistol, he could see a long way and I don't even know the caliber of that pistol. I should know. But, it's a big one and he had shells to put in there, but I don't. I wish I did.

KB: And you also have a diary over there that I asked you about.

NV: Now that isn't a very big thing. I don't have a diary that's worth looking at.

KB: Did you keep diaries on other trips?

NV: No.

KB: No, you've never been one to keep a diary. What about photographs?

NV: I've got lots of photographs. But I had a lot taken I never got copies of. You haven't seen my current photograph.

KB: You have all your original clothing and things from the Byrd Expedition?
NV: Oh no.

KB: No. But, those mittens though, huh?

NV: Those mittens.

KB: Oh, that's great. That's a good picture.

NV: That's a recent one.

KB: That's good.

NV: Keep that.

KB: Oh, OK. Thank you.

NV: Now I have a large picture of that, a little larger. It's about twice as large as that on an envelope.

KB: No, that's good. This has your e-mail address on it, too, which I'll use. Anyway, about documentation, it's just what kind of photos, or what kind of things you have. For some people in this project, you know for scientists, it might be all their publications or that kind of thing and so that's why that question.

NV: They never buy memorabilia, do they?

KB: I have no idea. I don't work for them so I can't comment specifically on that. They just asked me to ask the question. Now, is there anything else we should talk about that we've missed or that you want to talk about?
NV: I think the last question about what I want people to talk about would be that he inspired me because I think that's what is happening right this minute. People say that every day I go out, somebody says that.

KB: Well, certainly you've done things at an age when most people that age wouldn't be doing those things. To climb a mountain in Antarctica at age 89 is a pretty big feat.

NV: I thought it was.

KB: I think those are all my questions. Oh, I had one thing. I just forgot to ask you as you were talking, you mentioned Harvard Class of '29. Now, did you ever go back and get a degree from Harvard?

NV: No, I did not. They never recognized me like the University of Alaska.

KB: So, you told me you're getting an honorary doctorate from the University of Alaska.

NV: Um-hum.

KB: That's great!

NV: I think it's great, too.

KB: So, no college degree, but a doctorate degree.

NV: That's right. I think the story from janitor to Doctor is a pretty good story.
KB:  *Yep. I guess the other . . . I was just thinking about the Byrd Expedition and what you were saying about it, that you make it sound like everybody got along and it was all great. Was that really how it was?*

NV:  I think everybody got along, yeah. I think so. That's how it was.

(100)

KB:  *Because certainly that's not always the case in an expedition.*

NV:  No, but I gave you an example of mine and the guy with the gun.

KB:  *Right.*

NV:  That's not getting along, but you know, Byrd never knew that. That's one thing he never knew. They never told him.

KB:  *That's interesting. I've never been on an expedition like that, but my impression would be that many people in close quarters for that long, and you hear stories about other mountain climbing trips and so it sounds like a pretty unusual . . .*

NV:  Because Byrd was over in another building from the main dining room. He had to come to the dining room. We didn't go to him. He came to us to eat, so there was a little separation there. When Byrd came in, we were all in that room together. But if somebody had something bad to say, they'd say it without Byrd being there, I think.

KB:  *OK, well that's all that I had to ask unless you have anything else.*

NV:  No, I don't know. I don't have anything.
KB: *It's been a long afternoon.*

NV: Oh, I'm ready to go further.

KB: *OK, I just hope I didn't wear you out.*

NV: No, no. No, not at all. I'm ready to talk some more if you want.

KB: *Well, I think we've covered everything. Don't you?*

NV: I think so.

KB: *We didn't talk about your family. Your wives and kids.*

NV: No. We didn't talk about them. Not really much to say about them as far as the university's concerned. I don't think that will come into the picture much. None of them were Antarctic lovers or anything like that. They all liked what I did and liked looking at that mountain and saying, "How in the hell did you ever climb it?" That's Mt. Vaughan, of course. How'd you ever climb it and things like that. But, they don't say that they wished they were there doing it with me.

KB: *So, your children don't have the same bug?*

NV: No, but one of my grandchildren would love to do it. He'd love to climb. I think I told you yesterday about Grand doctor? My son has a rule in his . . . he has two. My son has two sons who have broken families and he has all their kids in his house. He's taking care of them. What a handful! This is his second going through this kid stuff twice - his own kids and then his grandchildren. I think there were 9 of them. And he's very insistent, when they
answer the phone. If I'm on the phone and I want to speak naturally not to them, I want to speak to the father or mother. So I ask is your father home? And they'll say, yes, just a minute, of course. And then they'll go get him and they can't come to him and say, "Your father's on the phone." They have to say "Grandfather's on the phone!" Very insistent about that so that they won't forget. So, now I've got to have that changed to Grand doctor.

KB:  *OK, well. Thank you very much for your time.*

NV:  How did you get out here?

KB:  *To your house?*

NV:  Yeah.

KB:  *I drove.*

NV:  Oh, you have a car.

KB:  *I have a car. Yeah.*

NV:  Good. I was going to say, I'd take you back.

KB:  *Oh, no, no, I'm fine. I'm on my own. So, I appreciate your taking the time to talk to me and participating in this project.*

(150)

NV:  Oh, God, I'm glad to do it.
(End of Interview)