Mr. Robert Dodson
24 July 2000

Brian Shoemaker
Interviewer

(Begin Tape 1 - Side A)

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BS: *This is an oral interview with Mr. Robert Dodson taken as part of the Polar Oral History Project, conducted by the American Polar Society and the Byrd Polar Archival Program of the Ohio State University on a grant provided by the National Science Foundation. The interview was conducted in Washington, DC, by Brian Shoemaker on 24 July 2000 at Mr. Dodson's home.*

Well, Mr. Dodson . . . Bob. I'd like to call you Bob. We're interested in you - the man and the environment. You got your start in the Finn Ronne expedition and there was something that went before that, I'm sure. And chronologically, if you can carry on through from that point that you think we should start, we'll get on with this and see how we do.

BD: Thank you, Brian.

BS: *You're welcome.*

BD: I suppose my first contact with anything I can remember dealing with the Antarctic was at the age of 6, 7 or 8 years old, visiting relatives or friends of relatives on Beacon Hill in Boston and I remember all the excitement and talk. I was just a kid sitting in the corner while the adults talked about Admiral Byrd. Of course he came . . . his wife was from that area, so he was of

special interest to them. But, I remembered it in the newspapers also. And that tickled my interest. Another occurrence was, I remember exactly, December the 19th or 20th, 1934, I was 8 years old. I'd been with my father who was a Naval officer in China for almost three years. We were back in San Francisco. We had a day before taking the train to go East, and we went to the park - the big park in San Francisco - and there was this *Gjoa*, the *Gjoa* - Amundsen's boat. And I remember my father telling me he had done the Northwest Passage. It's in Oslo, now, of course, but then it was in San Francisco. And I remember being so intrigued and amazed that such a small boat could have done what he described.

Then, next thing of any Antarctic connection . . . I was at school at age 13-18. . . 13-17, in New Hampshire at Phillips Exeter Academy, 1939-43, and there the instructor, who I became most attached to and I've seen a lot of him since was a fellow named Robert Bates - Bob Bates, who was already one of America's leading mountaineers. He's now the Honorary President of the American Alpine Club. And, of course, mountaineering is connected to polar matters. He comes into the picture in a moment I'll describe. Then, I was . . . I suppose the next episode, I was 16, the summer of '42, in between my junior and senior years at Exeter, and I was working as a messenger boy in the Navy Department in Washington. That was the height of the war in the summer of '42. One of the young officers in the same bull pen where I worked was a lieutenant, a Norwegian-American named Finn Ronne. I was carrying his messages for others, but as much for him as anybody, back and forth all over the department every day, so I saw a lot of him. And I got to talking with him and became more and more intrigued with this guy and what he'd done - Byrd expeditions. And he said he was planning an expedition after the war, and I said, "I'd love to go." And he didn't say no. He knew that I was a skier, that I was interested in mountaineering and that I knew Bob Bates. What he didn't know then, but it developed later - I majored in geology and I also had a pilot's license although it was of a very elementary nature. I was also, during the war, was in Naval Aviation training. The training became extended and the war ended before I was even through primary training. But, I had some aviation experience. And I kept in touch with him.

In the course of the summer, I was so excited about this guy and he was a very charming . . . anybody that knew him knew he was a very captivating, charming character. I was at home every night. My father and mother were there and my father was working, it being wartime. I don't think he took any vacation that summer. And I told him about Finn Ronne. Then, in my talks with Ronne, it developed that he was, among other things, looking for a ship.

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And one of the possibilities would be somehow to get a ship on loan from the Navy. So, I told my father about this and my father got in touch with him or Ronne got in touch with my father. I wasn't in on those discussions. And my father helped him quite a bit with that. I'm not sure how much my father helped him so much himself as he put him in touch through his network with the people who could help him.

BS: *What was your father's position? Was he in the Navy?*

BD: He was in the Bureau of Ships, as was Ronne. But, he was in a different division.

BS: *Was he a civilian or was he in uniform?*

BD: He was a career Naval officer.

BS: *He was.*

BD: Yeah. He'd been with the Asiatic Fleet from 1932-34. That's what took us to China. And he'd been on the carrier *Yorktown* as Admiral Halsey's Engineering Officer and staff. But, he left the *Yorktown* before the war began. There were about . . . well about a year before it was sunk at

Midway. So, that was a big assist for me, because that helped in getting him his ship. Put a real security on his. . . and right off, I think, before he even met my father, he said, "Sure, you keep doing these things. If you study and you get into geology or something like that. Keep up with the aviation interest, which, I didn't have a license at that time." What I meant by put security . . . with my father in the picture helping to get a ship, that, frankly, put me in a pretty solid position. But, I don't know of any of the first . . .Ronne's first roster. And he had a couple of years in advance, a roster of people and back-ups for them. And I was on that roster. I think and Jackie could maybe confirm this, I think Ronne told me that of the original roster, I was the only one. Why did the others go off? I suspect it was because they came back from the war. Almost everybody was in the war. They'd been in a wartime situation. This was a wartime situation in terms of some ___, but mostly in absences far away and they had jobs to go to, studying to get back to, wives or girlfriends. There were a lot of reasons. I think the backing out of all the numbers didn't indicate any disinclination to go. It was probably the natural outcome of somebody back from the war. But, I was eager to go. And was fortunate when I remained on the roster.

BS: *You weren't married.*

BD: I was not married. No. I was in school then. Then I was in the Navy and keeping in touch with him the two years in the Navy, much of which was college training. So, when I went out of the Navy in the fall of '45, I got out of the Navy and back into college, I didn't have much college to complete, thanks to the Navy. So, I had a very cushy time during the war. Not that I was looking for that. I was trying to . .. little diversion and I'll try to be brief about it. When I got out of school, what I wanted to do was go with the ski troops. I had three friends who went with the ski troops which then became the Tenth Mountain Division. They were eighteen and I wasn't eighteen yet. In the Army, you had to be eighteen, or at least for that branch of the Army. So, I enlisted in the Navy instead and that put me into the pre-flight and flight training. So, I was eager

to go and I remember writing to one friend who was in the Combat Division from pre-flight school saying I envied him, where he was. And he wrote a letter back and said, "Don't envy me unless you want blood and sorrow and suffering." He was killed a few weeks later.

So, I kept in touch with Ronne. I was finishing up at college. The Navy sent me to Dartmouth and I did half my time there and the rest as a civilian at Harvard. And Stephenson I met at Dartmouth. He was in and out of there. You remember Stephenson. And Trevor Lloyd, the geographer, I remember, who did quite a lot of polar, sub-polar work. Lloyd. Then, in the fall of '46 . . . by then, I knew Ronne was set to go in January of '47. I went back to my last term at Harvard. I had a big map of Antarctica on the wall - US Navy Hydrographic Office - that was about yeah-big and at least 80% of the continent was a blank on the map. It was an exciting map to me. And I was doing reading about the Antarctic. In December, Ronne called me . . . and I was in touch regularly. I'd go to Washington every few weeks to see Ronne and Jackie, I remember, in a little apartment on F Street, I think.

(100)

In December, Ronne called and said - it was both of these things happened in December. His geologist had backed out. Whoever it was, I don't know. And his aerial photographer, later, came maybe a few weeks apart. In fact, the aerial photographer, I think it was a week before Christmas, the news that he was looking. Could I? And I had access to the Harvard network, so I could go to a professor, which I did, and said, "Do you know so and so?" Anyway, I went to one of the leading geology professors at Harvard and he said, "There's a guy named Nichols at Tufts College. He's mad about the Antarctic. He hasn't been there, but he's got bookshelves on the subject. And I remember walking into Nichols' office a few days later and he pointed at those books and he said, "Gee, would I love to go. A few weeks' notice. I'll have to talk to my wife and the school." Well, the upshot was that Nichols agreed to go. And then, in the week before

Christmas, the aerial photographer crisis came and that was . . . we had little time. We were supposed to leave in January. We actually left the 26th of January.

So, I was Vice President of the Harvard Mountaineering Club, and I thought . . . the President of the club was a fellow named Bill Latady, L-a-t-a-d-y - William R. Latady. He was one great guy. It wasn't just that I thought. He proved it on the expedition, too. Kevin Walton said he was the best expeditioner of either the British or the American teams at the time, and they both had some good men. So, I called Latady and where was he? This was already at Christmas, vacation had started, I think. He was at the Harvard Mountaineering Club hut on Mt. Washington. I had to call the base - Joe Dodge at the Pinkham Notch camp at the base of the mountain and a day later, Latady must have been coming down for supplies, somebody contacted him and he called me. And I told him, and he was interested and within, I think, 48 hours, he said, "Yes," that he would come. So. . . and those were good men - Nichols and Latady.

Then, I remember . . . oh, I must have been in Washington just before Christmas. Ronne was about to go off to Texas where the ship was. I was to go in the second week of January. I was getting there a little later than the others because this was my final exams at Harvard coming up. Final in January, because it was a war mixed-up class and I happened to be graduating then. I went to the Dean at Harvard, told him the situation I was in. The exam dates were late January, and the ship would have sailed. What to do? Could I take them early? And he said, absolutely not. You can't take them early. You have to take them here when they give them and it looked pretty bleak then. I don't know if I kept pestering him or whether he reconsidered and contacted me, but a few days later, it was arranged that I could take, I'd be allowed to take the exams on the ship at the same hour they were being given at Harvard. The exams would be sent under a sealed envelope to Ronne who would get them to me at the alotted hour. Well, we got down to the dock and it was a hectic time - that week or two loading the ship. And I remember on one of the last days, before going to the pile of unopened mail that I'd been asked to get and bring to Ronne and in that pile was this registered envelope of exams which I delivered to him. The first date . . . the first was on the docks at Beaumont, I took the first. And the second one and one of them was

Chinese history. The second one, the date came when we were in the middle of the Gulf of Mexico, the Caribbean. And it was rough and I get seasick. I finally got used to it, but I wasn't feeling good. So, Ronne said, "Well, don't tell them at Harvard, but you can't with the ship rolling and the way you are, take it now. We'll give it to you when we're in the Canal. It will be quiet there." We were in the Canal, I wasn't seasick, but it was hot and we had no air conditioning. And the only private room on the ship for me was a little place for me without windows with a little fan. So, there I must have lost a cup of sweat.

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I took the exam - Balboa, I think, in the Canal zone? Is the town? The ship was about to sail and I had the exam. I didn't have any stamps - Canal zone stamps. I met a Chief Petty Officer - stranger - and said, "This is an important envelope. I don't know what it will cost, but here's five bucks," or whatever. I gave him a round amount and I said, "Would you please mail this for me? Get the stamps and put them on?" Which he did. It was a month or six weeks later, by wireless message, I heard I had graduated.

BS: *Well, congratulations! That sounds like fun.*

BD: So, that about it for prelude except some details, if you need them.

BS: *Well, let me back up a little bit. Yeah, I was going to back up to the docks at Beaumont and even before. Were you in charge of getting anything to Beaumont besides Nichols and Latady?*

BD: In a way. In a way.

BS: *You know, I mean, were there airplanes, or . . . ?*

BD: Yeah, yeah. Ronne, he came, I guess it was at Beaumont. . . he came to me and things were really in a whirl there. Everybody was doing a bit of everything. It wasn't that it was disorganized. It was just that we were so few people and there was just so much to do. And Ronne had improvised all the time and he said, "As of now, you are supply officer." Correction, correction. I'd known that before I went to Beaumont. Yeah. Because I went through some lists that he'd given me of . . . we had from the Army and the Air Force, we had the right to borrow supplies and equipment - a reasonable amount, of course - and there was the obvious, to bring anything back you could bring back. If it was lost or went through the ice or whatever, they would be tolerant about it. They were really loans, but much of it was consumable stuff - clothing, for example. And I was to go through these lists and check off two years because we might be stuck for a year. We need two years' supplies. And I can remember laboriously going through those lists. With my minimum of experience, I had to ask questions often That was one part that was real work to it, and of course, he must have edited the list in some way. The orders didn't go right from my hand, but I made out all of the . . .

BS: *Were you involved with the acquisition of the planes with the trimetrigon cameras - the Air Force planes, I guess, that were given.*

BD: No. Ticket things like that . . . I was supply officer, but not for things like that.

BS: *That was Ronne, huh?*

BD: Yeah. That was just Ronne and Latady must have had a lot of input on that. But, I do remember, when I got down to Beaumont, Ronne asked me to go to San Antonio to the base - Kelly Field?

BS: *Um-hum.*

BD: And there I sat for a couple of days getting writer's cramp and it was right that I, one of the most junior members, was doing that chore. That would have been a waste of time for Ronne or Nichols or somebody else to be sitting there by the hour, signing endless - there must have been hundreds if not a few thousand documents going through the paper work and while there, I met the two Air Force officers who had been . . . and this was all very recent, within the last few weeks before we left . . . appointed to go, given leave by the Air Force - Army Air Force, I guess it was at the time - and go with us. And I had the pleasure, instead of taking the train back - we had taken a train from Beaumont over - we flew back in the Beechcraft which was to go with us, with Lassiter and Adams. Captain Lassiter and First Lieutenant Adams.

BS: *I just take notes and I key them to the tape as we go along. It's just . . . it's not transcription, but for the transcriber, it helps and it helps me.*

BD: Yeah. You get ideas, too, as you . . .

BS: *So don't hesitate if you see me writing.*

BD: Oh, I do that kind of thing, in the middle of conversations . . . everywhere. Oh, and you probably . . . it wasn't my experience, but it was an event of the expedition that everybody knows about, that knows about the expedition - the accident we had with the airplane.

BS: *Destroyed everything but the cameras, right?*

(200)

BD: Yeah. Landed on it's back and the cameras were all right. I was out with Harry Darlington and somebody else in a pick-up truck and we were scampering all over the place. We were picking up something that needed to be put on the ship. Out on the outskirts of Beaumont, and I think at a red light or somewhere, a cop came up to him, knowing he was from the expedition, and said, "They dropped the plane." And Darlington, who was the Chief Pilot, and that's a long story . . . he wasn't the chief pilot later, but he was at the time, really, that must have been one of the worst moments of his life. He was mad as hell and we must have broken all the speed limits getting in there and there was the plane on it's back. Fortunately, it was not burned. Nobody had been hurt or killed. But, the plane flat on it's back. And apparently, the fault had been that it wasn't . . . Darlington said, and I'm sure he was right, that there shouldn't be an attempt to put it on the ship until he, Darlington, was there. So, somebody had broken that rule.

Then, in the next few weeks, Ronne went off to Washington. Ronne was very persuasive. Ronne was really a terrific organizer. An inspirer. This expedition would never have come together without Finn Ronne. He went and he may have gone . . . if he didn't go to the top, he went very near to the top, and he had the connections. General LeMay's name was mentioned often and helped him. If he didn't see LeMay, and he may well have seen LeMay himself. If he didn't, he saw one of LeMay's chief deputies who persuaded LeMay to put his signature to an order to get a substitute aircraft. That aircraft came aboard in Panama. It had been the aircraft of the, I suppose the Commanding General there, who could do without it for a few weeks till someone got another one from the States. So, we came out of that whole thing well. But, that was Ronne's doing.

BS: *That's good. But, Lassiter and Adams weren't supposed to come with you. They weren't part of the expedition.*

BD: No, until maybe at the most a month ahead of time. Yeah.

BS: *How did that change?*

BD: I don't know just how it came about. How they came into the picture. It may have been Ronne had so many contacts then with the Air Force that someone in the Air Force had said, look you want pilots? We have some. Maybe one of the pilots. Maybe one of them was there and overheard this. I don't know. But, I suppose what I do have a pretty good impression of what followed from there. Lassiter and Adams were very good pilots. They'd been together in the CBI, China-Burma-India theater. Lassiter, particularly . . . well, Adams may have been as good a pilot, but was junior to Lassiter. Didn't have as much experience. Lassiter was a phenomenal pilot. He just worked wonders. The British would testify to that, too, at the time.

BS: *What kind of pilot was Darlington?*

BD: Darlington was a good pilot, but he wasn't of the caliber of Lassiter or Adams. He hadn't had . . . he'd been flying PBYs, patrol planes most of the time. And he, I don't think he'd had the hours of experience of Lassiter and Adams and not as much combat exposure as Lassiter and Adams. But, he was a good pilot. Darlington would have been OK as a pilot - at least of OK. Darlington was more temperamental than Lassiter or Adams. Adams wasn't temperamental at all. Adams was a master at calming the waters in an argumentative situation. Adams was a real diplomat. Well, I wouldn't see him as a diplomat, may be the wrong word. He wasn't a State Department type, but he was a very wonderful guy that everybody loved and he had a good sense of humor. And Lassiter was pretty good that way too, although Lassiter had some temper. But, nothing like Harry Darlington.

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So, Harry was obviously in a bind. Harry claims that Ronne had promised him to be Chief Pilot and then double crossed him. Jackie's probably given you what Ronne's argument was.

BS: *You're on the ship and on the way through the Canal.*

BD: Yeah.

BS: *And you've got the aircraft from the base commandant and were the women aboard?*

BD: The women came - the two wives came to . . . were to come to Panama.

BS: *By ship, or . . . ?*

BD: With us. We had arrived with two women. And I think everybody thought that was great. Because the women were, the women deserve a lot of commendation in this whole story. I don't recall any direct conflict, argument, raised voices between the two women. They were very loyal to their husbands whose views were very polarized, but at the start, they seemed like the closest of friends. And at the worst, later on, they were polite, but a little cool. Quite cool to each other, but I don't remember any harsh words.

BS: *So you went from there to . . .*

BD: To Panama and then Panama to Valparaiso. That seemed logical. They could fly back from Valparaiso. And then, it must have been just before Valparaiso. It must have been a few days out. It didn't happen right in Valparaiso. There was the suggestion raised that they go to the Antarctic and I think the reason for that was, well . . . both women probably thought here's an adventure. We'll be the first women there. They probably pushed for it, but I think the biggest

reason was that Ronne was offered by the North American Newspaper Alliance, which was one of his strongest, perhaps his largest private backer, and the *New York Times* was very much part of that, he was offered, I don't know how much money - was it $10,000 which seems like nothing now, but it was a lot then. Another $10,000, maybe $20,000 . . .

BS: *I think Jackie told me $15,000.*

BD: Well, I'm sure Jackie's right on that. If the women went along, for obvious reasons, that would enhance the publicity. So, that clenched it. We had, some of us, there were 23 of us in all - some were quite happy about it. I think a bunch of us and I don't think there was anybody who disliked . . . there was the women's relations with the other men were good throughout. Nobody would not have wanted to have the women aboard because of the type of personality they were. They were more than glad to have them. But, quite a number . . . quite a number - maybe 5 or 6 - yeah, well, one third of the expedition, maybe - was quite opposed to the idea. And disappointed. Not that they weren't nice gals. But, it diluted a bit the adventure of the explorer's world. And I felt a bit that too, but I didn't feel it strongly. I didn't feel it strongly enough to say anything about it. And, finally, everybody came around to that. I don't remember any remaining bitterness about that. Within a week or so, everybody was accepting and happy. And there was the interesting view that better to have two women than one.

(300)

So, I suppose it was Jenny first. I don't recall if Jenny . . . if both of them were announced at the start, or whether it was Jackie to go first and then, maybe in the face of objection - I'm just theorizing - maybe in the face of Ronne realizing there was some resentment here, we'll have Jenny go, too. That softened it and made it easier. I don't remember exactly.

So . . . gee, I could run this out in a lot of detail. How much? I don't want to get into detail that's unnecessary, but that's an important question, of course. Oh, another important thing about that stretch between Panama and Valparaiso was the dog situation. The dogs started getting distemper.

BS: *Dogs were taken care of by whom?*

BD: Well, I was appointed in Beaumont to be in charge, was I in charge? Yeah, I was in charge with the very able help of Art Owen, the Boy Scout. Arthur Owen and I were the two dog people. But, we only learned about that in Beaumont. Maybe I had assumed that all along. But, I had nothing to do with obtaining the dogs. They came from Onalansette, New Hampshire, and some from the Northwest. One had a collar Walla Walla, Washington. He had been in a kennel up there. And so the dogs were . . . Nichols went down with the dogs from Onalansette. He rode down in the boxcar or whatever it was with them, all the way to Beaumont. Ronne says that he had inoculated - in his book, I think - that he had inoculated the dogs against distemper. My recollection had been that they were not and maybe it was just in the rush of things. Had meant to, but hadn't got around to it and they were not. But, his book says they were, and Jackie'd be the word on that again. I just assumed they had been, maybe not correctly. And, they started to get distemper and they were dying at quite a rate and we were really worried. We had originally . . . we must have had . . . I don't remember the exact number. It must have been 50, 60 at the most. More like 50 dogs. And we lost . . . well, I think we ended up with between 25 and 30. More like 30 than 25. So, we had a nucleus for two dog teams. I do remember that we could always field - we could field two good dog teams in the Antarctic without much to spare. Two dog teams - 9- dog teams, 11 in some cases. We did, in Chile, pick up a dozen or so. . . maybe 15 . . . sheep, miscellaneous dogs. Kevin, in his fax he sent me today, Kevin had gotten some things wrong with all his great reporting. And he says in here, and I marked it wrong, that they were picked up off the streets of Santiago and ridiculously used in teams in the Antarctic. I don't recall

them ever being used in a team in the Antarctic. I think we soon realized that these were close to useless. They may have a recreational reason to have been in harness a few times, but I don't remember any serious work other than a little local hauling with the paros, as we called them - Chilean dogs.

BS: *Who knew how to handle the dogs? Who'd driven dogs before?*

(350)

BD: Ronne and Darlington. Ronne and Darlington. Ronne had made some great trips with dog teams. So, those paros were taken, not off the streets of Santiago. They were purchased from sheep farms around Punta Arenas and they were a motley bunch and frankly they were of no real use. But I . . . just thinking about it today, a thought crossed my mind that hadn't before that Ronne probably realized that we had enough dogs for the two teams that we needed for down . . . we were low, but we had enough. But, how was he to know that there wasn't going to be more deaths from distemper. It turned out, I think, that there were no deaths from distemper after we were halfway to Punta Arenas from Valparaiso on the South Chile coast, when the weather got cooler. But, how was he to know? So, this was a sort of reserve. Better to have a bunch of sheep dogs than no dogs at all if the others died. But, we managed with dogs. It wasn't as bad as Kevin illustrated.

BS: *The British have to disparage everybody but the British.*

BD: And they had good dog teams. Very good dog teams.

BS: *So, you're on your way from Valparaiso to Punta Arenas. Any exciting things happen on the way? Storms?*

BD: Rough weather, but not excessively. The Roaring 40s, but no more than normal.

BS: *How long were you in Punta Arenas?*

BD: About 5 days to 7. Five, I think. We left on the . . . must have left about the 7th of March. On the way from Valparaiso to . . . oh, on the way . . . one anecdote in the Tropics. At times, we'd have flying fish come through the hawser holes and the dogs would catch them and devour them. Ship was pretty low. We didn't have lots of freeboard, low freeboard and these big hawser holes and the flying fish would come right through and the dogs would eat them. And the usual. It was a wonderful time. Well, anybody that's sailed through the Tropics. What I could tell you about that is what anybody knows whose gone . . . the phosphorescence, the sunsets, and the . . .

BS: *Did you have a crossing of the line ceremony?*

BD: We did. We had a crossing of the line. I know Peterson talked about it. He took a beating. He tried to hide over the side. And he really caught it.

BS: *Peterson did? That's interesting, because he was a Marine. He was in South Korea during the war.*

BD: Yeah. But he was an adventurer, you know.

BS: *Well, OK. You're at Punta Arenas and . . .*

BD: And going through the inland waterway, that appealed to all of us to get out of the rough water by going through the inland waterway. And it was much wilder than I think than even now

with the tourist ships that go through. These natives would come out in canoes. Couldn't speak Spanish. And I remember going through one, the Eingesturutten Glese. Very narrow defile between an island and a mainland or between two islands. And you could smell the greenery, smell the forests on each side. That was a pleasant sensation.

BS: *So you leave Punta Arenas. How was the weather across the Drake?*

(400)

BD: The weather was good, it was mild.

BS: *Drake Lake.*

BD: Yeah. It wasn't . . . well . . .

BS: *Not quite.*

BD: It was just normal ocean, which seemed calm to us. Yeah.

BS: *And so, did you sail to the tip of the peninsula or did you go direct to Marguerite Bay?*

BD: We sailed direct to Marguerite Bay. I think it took us about 5 days, the whole thing. The cruise ship did just that last January, February . . . and it took . . .

BS: *Tell me for historical purposes, was there more ice then when you sailed in or more ice last year?*

BD: More ice last year. Oh, much worse. We went right in. We were so lucky, I suppose. We hadn't seen an iceberg. We'd gone so far and hadn't seen an iceberg and I think then we saw one, then we saw two and there were a few. And then it became foggy. Fortunately, we had radar. We were probably the first, almost certainly the first ship ever in those waters with radar and that helped tremendously with the icebergs. And on the morning of the 12th of March of '47, if it wasn't fog, it was low clouds and we couldn't see very far and there were a number of icebergs around. But, then the clouds lifted and there before us, all in the sunlight, was that magnificent west wall of the peninsula. I'll never forget that. It was one terrific sight. Just as the screen of a theater opening, maybe 10, 12 miles off. And we sailed right in. Anchored right in the little bay. The _____. No trouble. We hadn't been there but a few days when Ronne announced - and we'd known that this was coming and nobody objected to it - that we were going to get our essential equipment ashore and then take the ship out and try to go south in the Marguerite Bay and lay a depot at the mouth of King George the VIth Sound. Well, we only got about a third or a half of the way there and the ice started to thicken. And, we were all aware, too, that these were absolutely uncharted waters. So, we were going at a snail's pace, throwing the line across, over the bow to get the depth. And realizing the risk if the wind shifted and I think Ronne could have gone further, but he was thinking, Gee what are we up to here? We'd better play it safe. So, we turned around. But, that certainly was the furthest south any ship had been in Marguerite Bay until that time.

I was in one of the first - several of us, three or four of us - put ashore on the first night. Three or four . . . five at the most. May have been only three. And I was one of those.

(450)

So, this was a real camping situation in the big hut that had been established by the USAS, the US Government Byrd sponsored - Byrd was a sort of unofficial chairman of it - maybe official. Although he wasn't there on part of it. Often call the Byrd Expedition was US Government, but

you know all about that. And they'd built these buildings and they were in bad shape when we arrived. The British base, and that was just a few hundred yards away and we met them, of course, when we landed. The British base, they were very apologetic for the situation. They said that it hadn't been their work. It had been . . . troubles had been caused by visiting Argentine. Maybe Chilean too, but not recently. That year had been Argentine. At least one visit by gunboat - *Punero de Mayo* was the name. And only a couple of weeks before we got there had been some of the worst damage done. Souvenir . . . well, nearly you could call it looting, it was such souvenir taking. There was inside the door, in a marker painted on the wall, in Spanish, "No roben mas" - "Don't steal any more." Some chief, or officer, had put up to get the people out of there. And doors had been left open. But, doors had been left open previous years. It was in the Issue Shack, they called it, where things were stored - the door was left open. The door was left open or a window was broken, I guess - skylight, in the machine shop and the snow comes in, ice forms and melts. We had machine tools half buried in ice. I was one of the fellows spent, with Owen, spent a week in the Issue Shack which was half the size of this room - what 10 x 6 x 8 ?- something like that. Chopping away at personal belongings. These people, in '41, they left in a hurry, you know all about that. And they left most . . . they had to fly out and leave all their goods or most of them. And so, we were uncovering chest after chest of personal belongings and other things. Chipping it out of solid ice. It was very laborious. And there was a lot of do-it-yourself fixing.

BS: *That was inside the main shed.*

BD: The main bunkhouse wasn't so affected. No, the ice hadn't got in there. It was the machine shop, and we had a science building, too. I think it was the machine shop and the Issue Shack that were mainly affected. So, it took a lot of fixing up and the crew, of which I was a member - we must have been in there for 3 of 4 weeks before people came off the ship and by . . . oh,

Jackie would probably know exactly. And the book records this too. It was probably mid-April, everybody was ashore. A month to 6 weeks after we'd come in.

(500)

BS: *Who was in that party with you?*

BD: That first party?

BS: *Um-hum.*

BD: Harry Darlington, I remember. You know, I can't remember clearly. There weren't many people. Latady, I feel sure. Latady was. Latady and I were the mountaineers and were used to camping out in the snow. This is why they sent . . . And Darlington was and oh, Arthur Owen would have been a logical one. I suppose he was one. Art and I were two of the youngest members - two of the three - there were three of us about 18, 19, 20 years old. Art and I were two of those. Ronne mentioned someplace in his book that I'd often get some of the dirtiest work because I was such a junior member. Same for Art Owen and Georges di Giorgio was the other young one. But, I think he stayed on the ship.

BS: *Di Giorgio?*

BD: Yeah. I've seen him recently.

BS: *Where'd he come from?*

BD: Chile.

BS: *How did you get him?*

BD: Ronne in Valparaiso.

BS: *His name was Ed di Giorgio?*

BD: Georges. Georges with an "s." Georges like the French spell it, with an "s" on the end. Georges. It was di Giorgio because it was an Italian-Chilean family, but he now, and I've seen him recently a couple of times. I'm in touch with him regularly. He's put it, instead of dide, his name now is DeGiorgio. I think he was tired of trying to explain the dide difference and he went to de. He lives in Montana. He'd be an interesting guy for you to see. He's a very. . . McLean and I met him for the very first time in 40+ years in the last few years and both of us were very impressed. He'd be an easy interviewee. He's a very articulate guy. Great Falls, Montana. And as the youngest, he's probably got the best memory of us all.

BS: *Oh. . . some good memories.*

BD: He's pretty sharp. Gee, have I overlooked anything? The ice froze in. . . the ship froze in sometime in May, in the first part of May. And Ronne, I remember, he astounded all of us and the British particularly, went on the first day after it froze over. I think he'd been on the ship. He was on the ship and he put on his skis and skied to shore on the new ice. In the Norwegian fjords and elsewhere, he had a lot of experience with this.

(550)

BS: *I understand he could really move on skis.*

BD: Oh, he was a terrific skier.

BS: *Cross country skier. Good shape?*

BD: Very good shape.

BS: *So, here you are the first of May. You're just getting started. Starting to get cold?*

BD: Started to get cold, yeah. We were prepared for it. We had good . . . we were well equipped with this surplus military equipment. Gee, we were lucky right at the end of the war with all that surplus equipment and there we were ready to go. That was a big assist to the expedition. Ronne made quite a point and the book says this too, how little - though he didn't state it this way - how little cash money he needed for the expedition. $50,000 at the most was all it took, because the rest was. . . so much of the hardware and the supplies - clothing, food - was on as few if any strings attached loan from the military.

BS: *Did anybody get paid? The military guys did?*

BD: Oh, I'm sure they were. Yeah, they were being paid. I was one of the few who was paid. I think one of the other scientists had some sort of pay too. I was lucky. Oh, that's why I mentioned Bob Bates at Exeter at the start. When he heard I was going on the Ronne Expedition, he got in touch with his wartime employer - he'd been a Lieutenant Colonel in the Army in the Quartermaster Corps in the unit that was designing and testing new equipment for mountain troops - ski troops in cold weather use particularly. And, in fact, tropical too maybe. And so, he had me meet - this was in Christmas week of '46 and I was in Washington - meet Colonel Lewis was the name of his Commanding Officer. And he'd gotten in contact with Lewis

and this kid, I can speak for him. And he's going to the Antarctic and he can test equipment. And so, he took me on and they gave me a GS - a low GS qualification.

(600)

BS: *What were you testing?*

BD: Quartermaster - I forget the name of the unit within the Quartermaster Corps of the Army. They had a problem, they said. Even at the low GS level.

(End of Tape 1 - Side A)

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(Begin Tape 1 - Side B)

(000)

BS: *We're doing fairly nicely at this time. We're one tape down and we don't know how many we're going to go and I think we ought to back up a little. You were just attached to the Quartermaster Corps of the Army to test equipment down there.*

BD: Infantry equipment.

BS: *Infantry equipment. Now was this clothing, or was there hardware of some kind?*

BD: Mainly clothing, tents, sleeping bags, typical mountain and polar troop equipment. Equipment, no. Not radios. Not operating hardware. No. Really, camping equipment and

clothing and food. K-rations, E-rations, C-rations. But, the Army had a problem in compensating me. They must have had me at the bottom rank - GS-1 or whatever it was or the bottom rank they were allowed to assign. And they said, if we pay you for that for the whole year just to be in the Antarctic, it will be more money than the job is worth. So, what to do? They couldn't give me a lower classification, so they simply - easy solution - we'll pay you for 6 months. You understand, it's a year's work and we're paying you for 6 months. That's fair enough. And I said, "Sure." We didn't spend anything down there. All that money I had in the bank when I came back to go to graduate school.

BS: *Did you write a report?*

BS: I wrote a report when I came back. I spent a month in Washington writing reports for the Quartermaster Equipment on the Ronne Antarctic Research Expedition. I remember, with photographs. I took a lot of pictures. Recommendations. They seemed to like it. So, I was one of the several, I suppose 5 or 6 of us had arrangements like that and were paid. Plus, the pilots - the two pilots on salary.

BS: *So, here you are starting winter. What happened next?*

BD: Oh, the beauty of the place so impressed us. You know, I'll just touch on that now. Coming in, over and over again, I was so struck by the sheer beauty and awe of the place. The poetry of the place. My diary - I don't have a copy with me - it's out in storage with my film _____. Otherwise I would have reviewed it before this meeting. My diary is full of quotations of literature, poetry, and ____ come on that would help record that impression of beauty, of adventure, of being on some lifetime experience. And all that, as the winter came on, was enhanced. And, of course, in the polar regions, as anybody's been there knows well, the sun goes sideways as much as up and down, so you have a sort of perpetual sunset effect. So, there's a

much greater chance than in these latitudes of having beautiful effects. There, in the distance, we could see from the high point of our island, a few hundred yards from the base, the mountains at Alexander Island. No one had ever been on it. There it was shimmering in the distance. Adelaide Island. People, I suppose, had been on Adelaide Island, although nobody was based on it at the time. And the excitement, too, that here we were, the most southerly people in the world, which in the winter, we were. In the summer, there had been the first of the Navy expeditions - Highjump or Windmill. Highjump, I believe.

BS: *Highjump.*

BD: Highjump. And then Windmill the next summer on the other side of the continent. So, plenty of people there in the summer. But, in the winter, we were . . . in fact, we had one. . . developed often . . . social events with the British though not from the start. But later on, we became very friendly with them. And one time, we were over at their place for dinner, and someone gave a toast to Reggie - one of their people - who happened to be at the far end of the table, which was the south. The table was running north-south - "To the most southerly bloak in the world right now," which he was.

So, as the winter came on, the ice freezes. We were - Owen and I were doing a lot of dog work - practicing with the dogs. And we were doing a lot of seal hunting to lay up seals for work during the winter in rendering the blubber into fat because it would be mixed with dog meal - we had a lot of dog meal - into bricks for the trail. That was a major winter time occupation for us. In a separate building out behind the others which we called the Blubber Shack - had been set up by the USAS people. And that Blubber Shack was the scene of many, many interesting days, watching over that oil.

(50)

BS: *What type seals?*

BD: Weddell seals. Weddell seals almost exclusively. I recall very few crab eaters, which I think are the most common in all the Antarctic. I think the crab eaters number one in population.

BS: *There's more crab eaters than all the seals in the world put together, but they're at sea. They're on the floes.*

BD: Yeah, on the edges. Weddell seals . . . yeah, 99%.

BS: *How did you kill them?*

BD: Well, at first, we used pistols. But, then we got away from pistols. When it was very cold, they could jam with the weight of the ammunition. And we just clubbed them. We hit them right over the head, then they're gone in one blow. A lot of seals . . . seal hunting. . . and hauling supplies from the ship. We'd go out to the ship, Owen and I particularly, and get bags of coal or whatever. Haul them back in the half mile or so to the base. In some cases, we'd haul water for . . . we'd haul water on dogsleds. But, we had two tractors - two Weasels - though they weren't reliable enough for long distance travel, they were useful around the base. They did a lot of the ice hauling to put into a tank and melt it down.

BS: *You have the World War II Weasels?*

BD: Yeah. World War II Weasels.

BS: *Did they have the wide track or the narrow track?*

BD: Gee, I would suspect the wide track. It looked pretty wide, yeah. Larry Fisk, who was the chief Weasel man, Larry Fisk, as you know, career Naval officer, he was distrustful of these Weasel's floating ability. And I have a picture somewhere of Larry, who was on a support trip out - the Weasels supported the dog teams for . . . well, they'd go out for not beyond a day's driving. And there he is with a dog team beside him and his Weasel had four empty gasoline drums strapped onto it's sides enough so that if it broke through the ice, he was sure it was going to float.

BS: *He hoped it would float.*

BD: With four drums I suppose it would. Plus whatever _____ he was supposed to have.

BS: *That's funny. So, you're practicing with the dogs, whipping them into teams.*

BD: Whipping them into shape. _____ a lot of work.

BS: *Did Finn Ronne help you or give you advice?*

BD: He gave us some good advice, but I don't recall any prolonged periods and some time out with us, but not any steady, prolonged time. No. But, he was busy with a lot of other things. I could appreciate that. We got a lot of good advice from the British as we got to know them. We got to be very good friends with them and they really knew the dog teams. I learned a lot from them too.

BS: *So, you socialized a lot with the British. You mentioned that . Did you ever have any cooperative work with them?*

BD: Yeah. We cooperated with them in a big way. Getting away from the winter into the spring, the operational time. But, even in the winter. We were going back and forth all the time. They'd been down there for two years - some of them - so that all sorts of little hands-on things that they knew about that we learned from them.

BS: *You learned from their mistakes, huh?*

BD: They were good at dog teams.

BS: *Who was the dog driver?*

BD: Walton. Chief Walton. They all knew. Those guys all knew about dogs. But . . . well, not all. There was a radio operator and a pilot who didn't particularly like dogs. No, not all. But, say two thirds of them were really good with dogs.

BS: *Bernie Stonehouse there?*

BD: Yep. Stonehouse was there. And the British were good, too, in equipment - in trail equipment. Dog team equipment. They were very good. Their tents were better than ours. In fact, we used their tents almost exclusively towards the end. I wouldn't say their clothing and their sleeping bags were any better than ours. Some of their clothing was impressive though. They'd done a lot of dog sledging and their experiences were useful, handling dogs. Their sleds were different from ours. They were at least as good. They had handlebars. Ours were the Alaska-type with a j-bar, it's called. A diagonal rod at the front and the driver goes here. Works well. And those were good - the USAS sleds. They were still there and we used them.

(100)

BS: *Oh, I see. You took your own, too, though.*

BD: We didn't because Ronne knew the others were there.

BS: *OK.*

BD: And the Argentines had no interest in taking sleds, I suppose, so they were there. We had to do some renovation if something were rotted out on one, we had to fix it. We did a lot of improvising. Some very impressive mechanical improvising. If a bearing would go out on a generator, we'd make a new bearing.

BS: *You know about the Antarctic expedition having to fly out and leaving the dogs on a . . . with explosion charges?*

BD: Yeah.

BS: *Did you find the remnants of all that?*

BD: We found the remnants of some of the dogs and it may have been . . . we found three or four, but weren't interesting in digging up the others.

BS: *The charges worked, though?*

BD: How well they worked . . . I don't recall inspecting a dog carcass as to the type of death. I don't recall. I see what you mean. It could be they misfired and the poor dogs starved to death. I just don't recall. I think we assumed that they worked. We did find a cache of butter - nothing to

do with the dogs - it happened to have been put in a hole in the ice up on the glacier not far from the base. How it was found, I don't know. Someone must have found a map where they stored it. These were Swift's Cloverbloom one pound blocks of butter. When they were found - I don't know if Jackie ever heard this - Ronne didn't know about it. I didn't . . . McLean, I think, found it. And we were starting the blubber operation. So, we thought, and not all this blubber was used for the dogs. Some of it . . . Ronne must have known about it because we used some of it in the kitchen, too. But, we consulted the doctor, McLean. Would this be as good as seal blubber? And he said, "Absolutely." So, it may have saved the life of 10 or 20 seals. We used a lot of seals, but we used a lot of that butter, too.

BS: *So, you used butter to manufacture dog pemmican.*

BD: My guess is that no more than 25% of all the fat was butter and the rest was seal.

BS: *Did you eat any seal yourself? Did you eat seal?*

BD: I ate it on an experimental basis a few times. The British ate it regularly. I did, however, a number of us, ate . . . during the summer months or the spring, the puppy seals. Oh, they were the . . . the young of any species are delicious to eat. Liver, hearts, kidneys, I remember particularly, of the young seals. Sounds brutal now. But, as soldiers have reported in war, you see a lot of carnage, though this wasn't human. And it's kind of curdling at first, and then you get so used to it. Completely used to it so that we'd go and kill seals without a thought. I'd find it hard to do now. And also younger people take to this kind of thing and do it more easily than older ones. Nichols, for example. He was 42 - twice my age - and I was on a 90- day trip with him alone - that's getting into the summer. He didn't . . . he said, "If you don't mind, I'd just as soon not kill the seals." I didn't mind. And now, if I had a younger person, I'd ask him to do it. I wouldn't want to do that.

BS: *Yeah. So, it's May. You're laying up stuff for the next season. What other activities did you have?*

BD: There was . . . often, we thought before hand, we'd taken a lot of books along. I only read a fraction of them. We thought we'd have all this idle time. And I remember, we had so much to do. And other activities, it was just endless - all the upkeep, the fixing of sleds, helping each other. Somebody's project who had gotten in a problem with a machine repair and needed some help and so a lot of your time was helping a buddy with his project.

(150)

And there's this . . . the story was true. Peterson, who had a lot of projects on, scientific - his weather, scientific projects - he frankly admitted this to me and maybe to others, but if he had admitted it to everybody too soon, it would have killed the purpose of it. He'd run around with a wrench in his hand, looking busy. He had to go back and get something and get back without being interrupted, he'd have this wrench in his hand. So, that worked as long as people didn't know about it. Maybe he told me about that at the end of the winter.

BS: *Yeah, he was interesting.*

BD: There was constant fixing up to do. We did a lot of fixing up in the buildings before the people moved in in May and there was, even through the winter, more to do. The practicing with the dogs, getting ice. Constantly bringing in things from the ship. We used the ship as a storehouse, so all through the time we were there, we were going back and forth to the ship.

BS: *Did you shut the ship down?*

BD: I wasn't a part of that.

BS: *I mean, did they keep fires going throughout the winter or . . . ?*

BD: Oh, no, they just left it cold. But, they had a lot of work to do in preparing it - Hassage, the engineer, and the pilots helped him, being engine related people. Those guys would be day after day out there, taping and . . .

BS: *Did Ike work?*

BD: Ha, did Ike work? Ike was a much beloved member. Yes, he worked. Oh, yes, he worked. I remember Ike. I remember Ike heaving and lending a hand in numerous situations. Yes, indeed.

BS: *Did he traverse? Did Ike traverse?*

BD: You mean on the trail?

BS: *Yes.*

BD: Not any distance. He'd go for a day. No, he didn't. He didn't camping on the trail work.

BS: *OK, here in the winter, was there any camping in the winter?*

BD: Yes, there was test camping outside. Easy to do. I'd set up the Army tents and I remember one - I have a picture of it. It was a metal . . . I was about to say steel. Tubular steel, I guess it was. Had a pole in the middle - a pyramidal tent. And after a big blizzard, that thing was bent

almost 90 degrees over. And the snow on the lee side had so compacted like cement that it pressed the whole thing in. Ripped it. So, we did that kind of testing.

BS: *Yeah.*

BD: Sleeping out in sleeping bags. That was easy stuff. I mean no hardship, no danger. But, there were trips. . . there were real trips in the winter and one of these led to the crevasses. It was decided and rightly so, mid-winter tests, to leave in about, I think it was the third week in July and go up to the plateau with dog teams to set up a meteorological station. I think it was two dog teams that went up there with maybe 6 or 7 people. Two tents. And they stayed a few days and then left Peterson and myself up there to run these tests and we were testing equipment as well. And then after that was a mishap, which we can talk about in a moment. And then when that was all over, in early August, couple of weeks later, they repeated the experiment and sent somebody up. No, I went up. I went up again, but I didn't stay a long time. I must have come back and a couple of other people stayed up there for a few more weeks without mishap in August, which was late winter. Of course, we had a real adventure on that first trip. That was our most memorable, major mid-winter experience, climbing up to the plateau.

BS: *Well, what happened? Who took you up there? Why were you there?*

BD: It was to get experience under hard conditions, in the middle of winter.

BS: *Uh-huh. Were you doing any meteorology or . . . ?*

BD: Well, meteorology was important, but I think the main reason was to harden ourselves and get ourselves out in the teeth of the worst Antarctic conditions and get some experience in that, fairly close to base. It was 30 miles at the most, from the base. So, this was . . . we were all for it.

It was a worthy experience. I wouldn't criticize Ronne for doing that. It was a good idea. So, off we went. Before hand, I know Walton had come over to me and said, "Your tents aren't . . . "

(200)

They'd had quite a bit of experience up on the plateau. We were up about 5000 feet up on the plateau. They said it can be brutal up there and you're tents can be dangerous. They were one layer tents and Ronne had done a lot of sledging in the Antarctic and he'd used one layer tents - one cloth layer - not two. All the British tents were double. So, Walton said to me, "Give me your tent." Walton was good. Walton was a handyman. Walton was mechanically gifted. He could fix anything. A sewing machine was duck soup for him. And he must have spent the greater part of the day sewing reinforcement strips along the seams on that tent. And that may have saved my life, because that tent . . . that was why we had to get out of there. That tent was coming apart, even with the reinforcements.

He also loaned me a British tent. Said, "Take this as a spare, in case you have problems." And we must have had a second American tent too, because to start, before the first people came back, we had two tents. Must have been two identical tents. And the other guys went back, before the real blizzard started, went back, so they didn't have a problem. And I had on one of the sleds that British tent and I remember halfway up the glacier, after a few hours, we were going too slow and Ronne was in the party that went back. And Ronne had said, "We're going too slow. We've got to dump some stuff." And one of the things that had to be dumped was the tent. And I remember expressing to Nelson McClarity when we were unlashing it, this is going to put us in a difficult position. However, Ronne was right. We had to dump some gear and that was a big item. So, it was a logical thing to dump. In retrospect, I think it was. And we went up and it was the usual hell of a time getting up that slope to the plateau. The British called it "Sodomy Slope." And it was a steep slope. How many degrees? Well, it was awful steep for a dog team. You had to pull with the dogs. You had to relay at times. And finally, we got up. We got up on that first

day and I remember the . . . Ronne was a good route finder, too. I remember him telling, "You gotta go this way and you gotta go . . ." He'd done a lot of dog sledging. "You don't do here, go here," and coming back, that may have saved my life, too. By Ronne's instructions to start, I knew, after Peterson had gone in, to go. . . zig zag that way and not that way. I learned that from Ronne coming up.

We came up, and of course, it was dark. This was winter. It must have been half the sledging was in the dark. It was total dark when we got to the lip of the plateau and there was one of the most beautiful, memorable experiences there I recall from the expedition. We had a great show of the southern lights which were rare where we were. We were so far from the magnetic pole. But, they were on that night and as we came over the lip, we headed south to get onto the south. We came up a glacier that required us to get to where we were going to go south, in fact, a little west of south. So, we were dog sledging right into the aurora. And I'll never forget, the silhouette of those dogs with the tails going back and forth as they do, silhouetted against the aurora, which was a sort of dark red, purple, not bright yellow so much, but different from what I'd seen in the northern lights that night, anyway. We set up our tents, and the support party - Ronne, Chuck Adams, I think was one of them, Nick Latady was one of them. It may have been only those three. The weather started to worsen. Not that night, but the next day and the day following.

(250)

And we had some strong blows. Peterson was one of them. He and I were the ones that stayed up there. We didn't get the most severe conditions, but still it was pretty windy. Peterson was asked at one point, to go out and check on the dogs. He came in some minutes later saying the dogs are all dead. Well, the dogs weren't all dead, but they were buried. They had allowed themselves to be buried as they do and they maintain these airholes. And we said, "How do you know they're dead?" "Well, they're all underground. I kicked them and they didn't come out." Well, it would

have taken a lot more than one kick to get those dogs out of those warm holes in that kind of wind. And it turned out, I don't think we lost any up there.

So, then there was a lull, after two or three days. A lull, and Ronne and the others went back. Want me to continue with his, now, while we're on it? Then, it got worse. And it must have stayed worse for at least 5 days again. I'm sorry, I don't have access to my diary. But, it wasn't more than a week, but it was at least 4 or 5 days that it was blowing very hard. Peterson had an anemometer and at times he'd crawl out. He couldn't stand up, and he got gusts of over 100 miles an hour. They may have been well over 100 miles an hour. The tent, flapping like a machine gun most of the time, day and night. And after some days, small rips started to develop and some snow was coming in. Meanwhile, what had we been doing? We tried to radio at one point and something had shorted out. I think we could receive, but we couldn't transmit. Some snow had gotten into one of the sockets or something. So, they were worried about us. Peterson and I would lie in our sleeping bags and tell each other the story of our lives - talk about food, girls, whatever. It would have been interesting to have had a recorder along. And we got to know each other pretty well. And one thing I found about him, he was just about the best guy you could have in a situation like that. He was a Marine. He was one tough Marine. He was a very courageous, tough egg. There was no . . . I don't recall any inclination to panic on the part of either of us. But, had I not such a strong person with me, I wonder how I might have reacted. It wasn't that he was telling me to be courageous. It was just the example he set. So, the interviewer last winter, said in that whole experience, you're emotions and wasn't it frightening? And I think I told him that it was frightening, but I don't recall it ever got so frightening that it affected our efficiency. I told him, we had a . . . I guess I had . . . Peterson was more subordinate to me in a way. Not really, but he had little or no experience in this kind of thing. That was another reason we had, too. . . to give people experience that hadn't had it before. And I had been in mountains and in blizzard conditions skiing, and so, he deferred to me on those questions. Where to go, how to get out, when to go? The route, and that sort of thing. What equipment to use and not to use.

And I always thought we were going to get out of this. It was only 30 miles at the most. We weren't going to be so dumb as to fall into any crevasses. I knew what crevasses looked like.

(300)

I was worried about the route. Though Ronne had showed it to us well, I wasn't that sure I'd remember it exactly, and in one case, I didn't remember it exactly, and we got into a mess of crevasses and had to . . . we had a decision as to whether to keep plugging through or go back about a half mile and lost a lot of time. Go back to where it was a known thing and try another route and we wisely did that. That sort of decision was mainly mine. Peterson said, "You know these things and I don't."

BS: What made you decide to leave? I mean, there was a certain point when, OK, we'd better not stay any longer.

BD: We'd had so many days of this that we wondered when, if at all, was it going to let up? And our tent was ripping. Otherwise, we had enough food. I had enough warmth. I must have had a warmer sleeping bag than did he. Or maybe . . . his had gotten wet. That was it. Something had spilled on it. He was not sleeping well at night. So, by the time he was weakening, tough guy as he was in spirit, he was weakening physically. And I was in pretty good shape. So, that was a concern. He had to get out of that bed and no sleep situation. The ripping tent was the main reason. So, we decided when we'd get a lull, if it looks like it's going to last, we'd make a break for it. And we did get . . . it was probably a 20 or 30 mile an hour wind and to us that was a lull. You could operate. You had no problem standing up and getting around in it. So, we . . . this was about mid-day . . . we packed up and used most of the morning to pack up and we took off. We had a smoke bomb with us. The planes would have flown to look for us had it not been for the bad weather. And this was, for them also, good enough weather to fly. We'd gone about half a

mile downhill when we heard the noise of the engine - the L-5. Darlington was the pilot. He came several times. Darlington, then Adams came too. And we let off our smoke bomb. But, as relatively calm as it was,still there was enough wind that that smoke just skirted fast along the snow with all the shadows and the sun, so . . .

BS: *What month was this?*

BD: This was late July, so there wasn't real sunlight - dusk. So, with the shadows from the . . .

BS: *Didn't have fire-type smoke where you had fire . . . ?*

BD: No. Just the smoke bomb.

BS: *Just smoke. Yeah.*

BD: So, it wasn't surprising that the pilot didn't see it. And that was too bad. We would have like to have seen one. So, down we kept going, then we ran into that situation I told you about where we really ended up in a jumble and we had to get out and we conservatively backtracked all the way to where we knew it was safe. And then, I think, one of Ronne's route findings came to me. We'll hug a certain cliff on the side, and I did that, and that was good. There were a lot of sastrugi - you know what they are.

BS: *Um-hum.*

BD: Big ones.

BS: *What are they?*

BD: Sastrugi - wind-formed ridges in the snow when the snow has become hard packed - almost of ice consistency. And the wind is so strong and laden with snow that it's like sand - erodes. So, it makes these ridges that can be 3 feet, at least 3 feet high some of them. Normally a foot or two, but some 3 feet high. The leading edge, the windward edge, like the prow of a ship, and sharp and if you're going roped up together, and one of the parties - in this case, it was Peterson - is not used to . . . it may have been the first time he was ever on a rope . . . and handling the rope and is weak and stumbling, this rope is constantly catching on the sastrugi.

(350)

We were losing a lot of time. We'd have to go back and undo the rope, back, and it was very frustrating. And under that cliff in a good space, we weren't , it appeared, to be in any crevasse danger. So, we took off the rope more than once. We'd put it on, then we'd take it off. I would say half the time, we were going without a rope, which was a no-no by the rules. But, looking back on it, I think I might have done the same in the situation. Why? Because not just a general sense of urgency. Darkness was coming. All this was in twilight. There was no sun. And we knew we going to be soon in total darkness. From our experience of the preceding days, we'd had lulls that had then ended and the blizzard would come again. And then we'd have zero visibility. And I knew that if I couldn't get . . . it was. . . there was a promontory from which, when we got there, it was maybe a couple of miles away, we could see the head of Ninnis Island - an island near the base, like a beacon. Ninnis Island was the equivalent, for a compass, the base . . .if you could get a site on the top of Ninnis Island, it was the same as the base. And I could have got a bearing and with a bearing, I felt safe. We got home, even in a white out. Even in no visibility. It was all important to get that bearing. It was all important to get to that promontory before the weather socked in. And that was more important than the rope with all the sastrugi problems. So, on we went and I'd fall down at times and Peterson fell a lot of the time. And finally, we got to a

point we got to the promontory. We got our bearing. Meanwhile, the weather was getting better, not worse. We did not know then, that this was a real clearing. It was beautiful weather the next day. In fact, during the night, it had calmed down and a quarter moon was out. We had no way of knowing all that goodness was coming. And we were beyond crevasses, we thought. It was a rest period. I was tying my shoe and he was doing something else, 15 feet away, so I wasn't _____ with time, I heard a gasp and looked around and he wasn't there. And there was . . . the little moonlight gave quite a bit of visibility and I went over there and there was this hole - crevasse. But, as I looked at it, it was an obvious bridge crevasse and anybody that had any experience with mountaineering clear as day to a mountaineer this was a big, at least 10 feet across, crevasse, going from far on the left to far on the right. The wind had been so strong in the blizzard that the surface had been eroded in many places down to bare ice and what snow patches there were, were very hard. And so the bridged over crevasse stood out all the more clearly - all snow over this thing of ice. And he'd been up to give him instructions and I guess in that respect it wasn't . . . not knowing about crevasses and what to look for . . . maybe we should have told him more about that. He didn't know and walked onto it.

(400)

So, I shouted down to him. I could dimly hear him. He was obviously alive, but in discomfort, if not pain. Turned out to be it was quite painful. I just knew he wasn't well off. He was uncomfortable, going down there. And he kept - he yelled for a knife. He said, "Give me a knife." His rucksack . . . he'd fallen face down - not head down. If he was head down, he wouldn't have lived the ten hours he was in there. Face down, he was uncomfortable enough and the strap of his pack was biting into his shoulder painfully. He wanted to cut it. So, I put a sheaf knife onto the end of my rope - 120 foot climbing rope - and I couldn't reach him with it. Now 6 or 8 feet at least of that rope was on the surface. Maybe it wasn't going straight down to him. Maybe I hadn't aimed it just right. I think, finally when he was brought out it was at least 110

feet. He was about the length of a rope down there. Couldn't reach him. Couldn't talk to him very clearly. So, I took the rope and I knotted it every 4 or 5 feet in case he could get out. If your life's at stake, you have the strength to climb out a rope to get out on the knots and that reduced the length of the rope. Then I took the skis, his skis - he hadn't had them on at the time. He'd taken them . . . he hadn't, for much of this journey I've described, much of that was without skis too, because he was falling all the time on skis. He didn't know how to ski very well. And it was so slippery. I put his skis across and I hung the rope from the. I had trail flags. I put the trail flags, oh, about . . . not a circle around it. I wasn't going across that crevasse yet. But maybe 10 feet each way. And Ronne rightly said later, as criticism, they should have been spread out 100 feet, 200 feet . . . more. Then the search parties could find him. But, I didn't think consciously. I think I was disinclined, subconsciously, to go walking along that slippery edge of that crevasse and risk going in. I put them pretty close. I had a small compass, poor compass, but I took the best bearings I could, which eventually helped in getting us into the general area. Then, I put on my skis and I backed up - it must have been some 50 feet. It was a slight slope to all this. Nine miles to base and it was all slight downhill the whole way, so easy skiing. The slope was. It wasn't easy in terms that there was so much ice that you had to edge your skis constantly to keep from falling down. And I went back and I remember that was a hard moment. And back of me, there was at least 50 feet and thinking I don't want to slip and fall here when you're on that crevasse bridge. And I got as much speed as I could and sailed across the crevasse. The pounds per square inch was far, far less with my skis than had been the case with Peterson, so there really wasn't much danger of my falling in as long as I stayed upright.

(450)

And from then on, it was very easy. Thanks to Ronne's instruction on the route, I remembered the way we came, to go this way and that way, not straight. And I had the moonlight and I was going pretty fast. It didn't take me long. I came into the back door of the bunkhouse. It was

Saturday night. The British - on Saturday nights, we always had movies. They didn't have movies, so they came over to the dinner and movies. I came into the room where they were all watching "The Buccaneers," this Caribbean pirate picture. Jean Lafitte, the pirate. "The Buccaneers" was a big movie at the time, in the 30s and 40s. The door was behind the screen. I came in the door and I must have looked like a ghost from hell. I'd been out in the open so long with the frozen - we all had the beards and the ice all over my face and clothes. And I came out into the light of the projector - that must have been quite a sight for those guys - because off it went. The lights went on. "Pete's down a crevasse." And I told them the story and the brief elements of it and they said, "Can you lead us back?" And I said, "Sure, but give me some food." So, they gave me . . . I must have eaten two steak dinners, and they loaded me up with food. By that time, the teams had been formed. And the British kindly offered . . . their dogs were readier than ours. They were using them more frequently than ours. So, they were able to put together a dog team on short notice. Two dog teams. And we went . . . but, it still took at least an hour to get the dog teams ready. Even as fast as they did it.

So, four of us went ahead to . . . the dog teams caught us up when we were about three-fourths of the way up there. And that was, I remember, Latady was on one rope. We were all roped together. Latady, Schlossback - Ike - and myself, and one other. It wasn't McLean. McLean - the British doctor went, so McLean had to stay back. You can't have both doctors off. The British doctor was a mountaineer and he was smaller than McLean for getting into crevasses. So, I remember that 9 mile walk, nylon rope, and I was at the tail end. And they were faster than me. They had more energy than me, naturally. So, I was being - it was like a rubber band with the elasticity of the nylon, being tugged along. And we got up there and we didn't find it until the dog teams arrived and I think it was at least a half hour till the dog teams arrived, at least. Maybe an hour before we found the place.

(500)

My bearings had been useful. At least I knew the general area, but it was probably at least a half mile to Amater Circle that we knew it was somewhere in there. Couldn't precisely know with the compass. And someone had the idea to look for ski tracks, but the surface was so hard, there weren't really ski tracks. The British had what they called an Aldis lamp - big powerful search light on one of the sleds and they turned that on the surface and after a while they found . . . of course, there was some light, but it was pretty faint. And they picked up scratches about every 8 or 10 feet, a little scratch where the ski had edged in the ice. No proper ski tracks, but these little scratches and we followed for maybe a couple of hundred yards these intermittent scratches and then there in the light, the flags showed up.

BS: *OK, so you found the crevasse and . . .*

BD: He went in about 6 PM. Roughly around 6 PM and we found the crevasse, I suppose, and he was in there, I said 10 hours. Is that correct? Yeah. About 4 AM, we got him out. So, we probably found it about 3 in the morning. And the British sled, which had the handlebars, so it was . . . well, the other might have worked too, but the handlebars were better with the force that came on it . . . was put across upside down across the hole, block and tackle with plenty of rope and the Aldis lamp and the mountaineering equipment. The doctor went down and we, I think we all felt it was amazing that he's probably not . . . none of us _____was uninjured. Not serious injuries. He's probably injured, maybe severely and quite possibly dead. And there were questions to Ronne, what do you want me to do with the body? from the doctor. And Ronne had said, well, just leave it there. And then we'll decide what to do. So, we were worried. And the doctor calls up, "He's alive!" Now that was great news. Then, to get him out . . . he was so stuck in there, that all of them. I, by the meanwhile, my feet were getting into bad shape from all the time I'd been in the open and I was put into one tent. The tents were warm with the stove and we had at least two tents up there, to warm the feet. So, I was out of it. I wasn't there when they were

pulling him out. I was in the tent recuperating to get my feet back in shape. They got him out with a lot of tugging.

(550)

Everybody was tugging on the line. They said he popped like a cork, finally. And up they hauled him and laid him out inside . . . as I recall there must have been another tent. Oh, maybe it was my tent. By then, my feet were OK and I was out. . . inside a warm tent and he was bruised and the doctor checked him over. Couldn't find any evidence of broken bones. Though he was sore in many places.

BS: *Was he coherent?*

BD: Not very. No. Not very. And his mind had wandered in some strange directions, too. He had assumed, finally, that I'd fallen in with him and that all hope was lost. And he was such a tough - as I said, one of the toughest guys I'd ever met. He said, he probably would have used the knife on himself. He'd have cut his wrists in a hopeless situation. And I guess he would have. So, it was lucky it didn't reach him. And he was put on one sled and I was put on another because I couldn't get my feet back in my boots. They'd swollen and I felt otherwise not bad, despite all of my time out, I still felt pretty good. I wasn't collapsed by any means, from exhaustion. My feet didn't work. I had to go on the sled. When we got a few 100 yards from the base, or maybe a quarter mile at the most, one of the runners collapsed on the British sled from the sastrugi with all this extra weight on it. And I managed to go in my stocking feet the rest of the way. But, that was no hardship. We were so close. Well, he was put in his bunk - black and blue. Aching, particularly his shoulders. And I think he was in the bunk only a couple of days and up and around, limping a little. Probably in very good shape a week later. So, he was very fortunate. We were all very fortunate.

BS: *Has anybody ever survived down a crevasse, to the best of your knowledge as a mountaineer, that long?*

(600)

BD: I hadn't heard of a crevasse fall deeper than that that anybody'd lived through. No. As far as I know, it's the deepest on record. People have been killed in much shorter falls than that. One thing that maybe helped him was that the crevasse didn't go straight down. It wiggled a bit meaning he ricochet a bit and there were intermediate snow bridges that he broke through that slowed him down a bit. Oh, going up there, the British, to get up there safely have to make an angled trip - they, maybe to save . . .

(End of Tape 1 - Side B)

(Begin Tape 2 - Side A)

(000)

BS: *This is Tape 2 of the Bob Dodson interview at his home in Washington, DC, on the . . . what's the day today?*

BD: 24th.

BS: *On the 24th of July, 2000. And we were just finishing up with the story of rescuing Pete Peterson and you were adding an anecdote and I forget what it was.*

BD: It may come back to me on the crevasse episode. We can go on and . . .

BS: *Well, anyway, the crevasse episode - that was the middle of winter? August?*

BD: Middle of the winter. It was . . . we left . . . he went into the crevasse on the 26th of July 1947 - went out the 24th, so it was 53 years ago this week.

BS: *OK. What did you do for the rest of the winter?*

BD: Well, in August, I went back. I went back with another group, back there to set up a station that would last through the winds. I don't know if we had a blizzard that bad again, but they had it bad for at least two weeks in August.

BS: *And you went back.*

BD: I went back to help set it up, then I came back shortly after that.

BS: *Who stayed there the second time?*

BD: I think Larry Fisk may have been one of them. Larry Fisk, who was a climatologist, we call him. I'm not sure of that. I think it was Fisk. The other, I don't recall. It may well have been Nelson McClary.

BS: *OK. And . . .*

BD: Then we had a lot of preparing to do because we were going to start our main southern sledge journey before the end of September and here it was getting into August. We had a lot to do. A lot of detailed preparation. You're going out for a period of, could be, as it turned out it was 90 days - around 90 days for both trips. We had two trips that went out, each of them three months long.

One other detail about the crevasse episode - the British doctor that I mentioned was sent instead of the American doctor because he was smaller and because he knew mountaineering, but also the British teams were selected when they offered at that dinner after I'd walked in for this rescue job, also because they had had a similar experience the previous year. They had a crevasse fall. It wasn't very deep, but it was really more harmful and more dangerous to the person that fell in. He suffered some slight permanent injuries as a result and there was quite an operation in getting him out. And they'd been through all that and they had to set up a procedure and practice exactly for getting people out of crevasses, so they were well prepared for it.

BS: *And what was the British doctor's name?*

BD: Dick Butson.

BS: *He still alive?*

BD: Oh yeah. I've seen him twice already this year. He lives in Ontario, retired now. And I saw him in Florida on the way back from the Antarctic last year.

BS: *Dick Butson. And he lives in Ontario.*

BD: Hamilton, Ontario.

BS: *Was he a Canadian originally?*

BD: No. British originally. Now Canadian.

BS: *Where in Ontario?*

BD: Hamilton, near Buffalo.

BS: *Near Hamilton. I know where Hamilton is.*

BD: So, I saw Art Owen and Butson together, only a half an hour apart.

BS: *OK. What was next? You were sledging.*

BD: Sledging. Well, let me mention something before that. I'll try to be economical with my time here, but we had several adventures that were close calls. One you've heard all about - the crevasse episode. Another which occurred during the winter - I think early winter - was when Nelson. We were setting up a rhombic antenna - an antenna, like all antennas, has a guideline, got wire stays, supports. I was on kitchen duty at the time and didn't see any of this. But, there was one person on each of the guys as they went up and this thing going up and up and people running backwards with their guy wires - one of them, Nelson McClary, was one of our best people, went right back over the barrier cliff - this was on the barrier ice. Walked right over this 70-80 foot cliff.

At the time he walked back over it, he had had a broken arm - a slightly broken arm a couple of weeks before. His hand - one hand, one arm, was in a cast underneath his parka. And he goes into the water. It was covered with ice, but the ice easily broke with a man's body so the impact on the ice didn't hurt him. He was lucky there were rocks all over the place. He landed where there weren't rocks. He managed to keep himself afloat with his one hand and he was another like Peterson, another tough, tough egg. Former Lieutenant in the Navy. He'd been an Executive Officer of an destroyer during the war. They threw him a line with a loop already built into it so with his one hand, he just had to put it over his head then and it tightened automatically and they hauled him up. And all that took, I suppose the whole operation took at least 20-30 minutes. So, it defied the statement I've heard before, you can't live more than 5-10 minutes in the water. He managed to live at least 20 minutes in the water, but it took him, like Peterson, a couple of days to be normal again. He was frozen through and through when they put him in his bunk and did everything for him. Of course, he was all right. It was a close call.

Another close call happened in September and were about in September anyway. The trips, the big trips to the south hadn't started yet. It was just in the last couple of weeks though, getting set to go, when as part of the base laying by aircraft, the aircraft were going and laying caches ahead for the parties and they were going across the peninsula, down to a base near Cape Keeler, it was called. One of our three - we had three aircraft - and we had a two engine Beechcraft aerial photography plane. We had a Norden Norseman cargo plane - very popular plane in the Arctic. And all these were operating on skis. But, this was a particularly good plane - cargo plane. And we had a little military cub - L-5 it was called. The Norseman went ahead, and the British had one aircraft - a cub - Auster was the make. And the British plane had to rendezvous with the American as part of the program - I wasn't part of this. I was back at base. But, I know they had to rendezvous and something went wrong with the rendezvous. The Norden got back all right and the Auster wasn't heard from - not heard from at all. We started searching and it's to Ronne's credit that he freely allocated our limited supply of gasoline to the search for those British flyers. Spent, oh the book says how much. It was a significant part of his reserve of

aviation gas. So much time went by. I think it was . . . I haven't read the book in a long time so I can't remember exactly. It was 2 weeks at the most. It was certainly more than a week. It was long enough that you wondered how the people could be alive because they had little if any survival equipment with them. Three people - Stonehouse was one of them. And what had happened is, coming from Keeler back - they had the rendezvous, so they had to get home. The weather was coming in. They thought, better get across the peninsula fast. Rather than go the direct diagonal route, go across at a low pass and get on the west side and then go north up the shore. They got across all right and then the weather got so bad that they figured we'd better land on the sea ice, batten it down and wait for the weather to improve and take off again. In landing, one of the skis hit a bergie bit - something in the ice. The plane flipped over on it's back. They were OK, but the plane was damaged so much that it had to be left there. So, they started off and I guess they walked for a good week - about 15 miles or whatever they could make in deep snow a day. I think one or . . . there weren't three sleeping bags. Maybe they had two sleeping bags. They had minimal food and they had a stove I think, so they each lost about 20 lbs. And we had . . . I think each of us in our mind thought we were just going through the motions. We've got to do it, but these guys are gone. And finally, Lassiter found them. And we found them - I have a photo. It's a bad photo, but it shows the event of their smoke bomb going off. This time he saw the smoke. He was in the Norseman, I think alone in the Norseman. He landed it on the ice with all the bergie bits and all. Pilot that he was, he put it down and he got it off again with all the load of them and back they came.

BS: *He was alone then.*

BD: Yeah. They flew that plane alone at times. I remember Adams went _____. I think he was alone.

(100)

You know, I'm not sure he was alone, so I wouldn't like to get that down as fact. I never heard of anybody else.

BS: *But he brought them all back.*

BD: He brought them all back OK. Yeah. Maybe he was alone, maybe he wasn't, I think of it now. It was a short - they knew it was going to be a search that didn't go on for very long.

BS: *So it was tit for tat. They helped you. . .*

BD: And we helped them, yeah. Those were our adventures. So, then the trail parties. We had two major trail journeys - dog team journeys. Each one was about . . . mine was exactly 90 days. I think the other was about that time too. The one I went on was a two man party - geological party, principally, so we didn't cover the distance the other one did. We were stopped for geologizing many times.

BS: *Where did you start from?*

BD: We started from Stonington Island both parties.

BS: *And you crossed the peninsula?*

BD: No the other one did. I'll cover this one first that I went on. My boss, he was the senior geologist - I was the assistant geologist, among other things. Bob Nichols was the head of the team and I was his helper and I was the chief, I was really in charge of the dogs. We started with a 13-dog team and two sleds and we came back, I think, with 9 dogs and one sled. A photo of the

start of that trip in September - two sleds in tandem and 13 dogs pulling them. A photo of that is in a corner of the Navy Museum here at the Navy Yard in Washington. There's an Antarctic section that is mainly about the Byrd expedition, but it's also about Ronne.

BS: *I've seen it.*

BD: And it's in one of those - it's a long photo there of Nichols and myself and the team. We went down, we were on sea ice the whole time. We went down the west coast of the peninsula on the Marguerite Bay sea ice, almost to the mouth of King George the VI sound and then across to the shore of Alexander Island. And then back in a sort of a roughly circular route though. We didn't get too far out towards the center of Marguerite Bay for fear of the ice breaking up. We made sort of an elliptical circular route. And that took us 90 days. Our radio broke as it had on the plateau. It received, but did not transmit. After a week or two, it broke. So, at the base, they were worried about us. They sent out planes searching and for quite a while, they couldn't find us. Then, one day they did and down came a red parachute with those welcome supplies. And they could see, we waved to them, that we were not in bad shape. That was our only contact in that whole time.

The other trip was a longer distance trip. They had two sleds. All British dogs. We'd taken the cream of the American dogs with us.

BS: *So, you combined with the British.*

BD: It was a British-American trip, American-British . . . well, it was really equal. They supplied . . . it was their tents, their dog teams, two British, two Americans. The British were Butler, the head of the British base, Ken Butler and Dougie Mason - a very good guy there - their surveyor. And the Americans were Art Owen, Arthur Owen and Walter Smith, whom we see every year whenever we go to Florida. He lives there.

BS: *I've talked to him on the phone.*

BD: Yeah. He'd be a great one for an interview. They went about 1200 miles round trip. They went at least 1200.

BS: *How far did you go? Do you know?*

BD: We went . . . oh, distance wasn't a thing for us. We spent so many days in one place, I haven't measured it out.

BS: *So, they went 1200 miles.*

BD: They went about 1200 . . . they went at least 1200 miles. They went somewhat beyond the point that USAS people had gone. They went beyond that.

BS: *They went over the . . .*

BD: Over the peninsula to Cape Keeler and the planes had laid caches there, which helped them. They helped the plane. This was an important part of their activity was providing ground controls for the aerial photographs.

(150)

The planes went well beyond them into the unknown, but their ground control was an important function. And Art Owen told me . . . Art Owen who tragically died of cancer just in May of this

year . . . he always said to me that was the highlight of his life, that trip. He loved the expedition, he loved the Antarctic.

BS: *He was excited about doing an oral history. I talked to him over a year ago.*

BD: Yeah. That's too bad.

BS: *He didn't say he had cancer. Did he know he had cancer then? It was well over a year ago, I talked to him.*

BD: We had lunch with him a year ago this month and he seemed fine.

BS: *OK. He seemed fine with me.*

BD: I think he knew . . . he had prostate trouble. He knew that. But last year, I don't think he knew that it was threatening. It all developed in the fall. It came pretty fast.

BS: *We have a copy of his diary that his family provided us.*

BD: Oh great.

BS: *Ray Brewer is from Buffalo who is my co-PI on this grant and he, of course, was anxious to get up there and see him. There is somebody else in Erie that also.*

BD: Not one of our people.

BS: *No. He was on the '39 expedition. And then we had Stan Antos from Buffalo who was on the IGY - couple of others in that area.*

BD: Yeah.

BS: *We try to get people. I got everybody off the Red Line this time. This is all on tape. Jackie Ronne, yourself, Alan Neidle who lives right over here off, oh, between here and the station - the circle. What's it they call the circle here? And Mort Rubin.*

BD: Mort Rubin. Yeah. Of our group, Adams you know about. He'd be a good one. ____, you've been to. Peterson you've been to. DeGiorgio would be a very good one. So would Adams. Equally.

BS: *Who's out in California?*

BD: Adams. Peterson.

BS: *Peterson I've got.*

BD: Chuck Hassage. He lives in the foothills of the Sierra. I haven't seen him since the expedition, but you could try. He might be a very good one. He was the chief engineer. He did a great job of keeping that machinery going on the ship and at the base.

BS: *I need a phone number for him. I can call you on these.*

BD: I've got one somewhere. Let's not forget about it. I can get you that.

BS: *OK. Well, they did 1200 miles - the Brits and the Americans. And they did some geology as well.*

BD: They did some geology. They did a lot. Mason was a very good surveyor, and they did a very good precise surveying job as they went along and of course, tied in with the aerial photographs. That was very important. And they went quite a bit into the unknown. I don't know . . . 100 miles, 200 miles? Beyond where the last party had been. And the summer months. . . gee, we got back, must have been . . . it was the last days of December. Nichols and I. And what an easy world it was from what it had been in the winter with the long light and the relative warmth. It was shirt sleeve weather on some days. We were so inured to the cold, as you know. You've been down. You go around in shirt sleeves where a person straight from here wouldn't do it at all. I have a photo of Art Owen and I think McLean digging out that butter and that wasn't mid-summer by any means. And they were bare to the waist. But, they were working so hard that it wasn't uncomfortable. Windless, sun's out.

BS: *Pete Peterson mentioned that, too. He said, "You know, I go out in the cold now and I'll be around people. I'm comfortable and they're freezing." And I find it on the tourist trips, too. I'll be out on the fan tail in a light jacket and they'll be all bundled up cold.*

BD: Yeah. So, we had some good times in the summer - January and February for me. Oh, it's worth mentioning that during that time, it was before I got back. It must have been in December. There came in a number of dog teams from the British far Northern base that was really up in the north of the peninsula at Hope Bay and that's a long way.

(200)

Hope Bay must be 600 miles at least. Well, I don't want to exaggerate. 500 at least, up the peninsula. And they had come - I think this had never been done before - they'd come down the whole peninsula, part of it on the eastern side on the Larsen Shelf Ice which was good travel, I understand. They made good time there. And then up on the plateau, and down and those who were there said it was quite a sight.

BS: *Who was heading that?*

BD: Frank Elliott. I remember his name. He was the - he wasn't chief at Hope Bay. He was one of them. And they came. Some of the Americans, McLean was one of them, were sent up to meet them about 2 or 3 days out and come back the last days with them. They said it was, with all those dog teams, and I have pictures strung out 7 or 8 dog teams, oh, it was a great sight. They said as they came down the glacier into the base, one after the other, these guys all brown and black from the sun, hoarish from the time they'd been out and the dogs having done hundreds of miles, coming in. It was something you wouldn't see much of in the future. It was truly a great moment.

BS: *Great setting.*

BD: Yeah, great moment. Well, they were around and we went on excursions with them. And another thing that goes in the category with the butter, that we never got officially permission for and I look back on it now. I think if I'd been the leader, I'd have been against it, too. Several of us had done mountaineering rock climbing, particularly one of the Britishers at our base and Elliott. Elliott was one of the best rock climbers in England. And here he had this long light and some beautiful weather at times. So, what did we do? One day, we went out without telling anybody what we were doing. We went out across Ninnis fjord where there was a . . . there were some sharp mountains and there was a pinnacle there, 800 feet high. Went right up from sea level 800

feet. Sheer at, not the first half, but the last half was really a cliff. And we got up to the top of that thing. And I can remember at the top, you could put your . . . you couldn't sit on it. You could put your chin on it and one eye could see down one side and one eye the next. And I think of it now . . . gee. No __ could run . . .

BS: Ninnis pinnacle?

BD: Yeah. I think it is called, yeah something like that.

BS: *Did Finn Ronne say something about that or did he?*

BD: Pardon?

BS: *Did he let you go off mountain climbing and rock climbing when you wanted to?*

BD: Ronne? No, the British leader wouldn't have either. Unh-huh. We were playing hookey. No, the British too. No, in retrospect that isn't . . . oh gee, that was really wild.

BS: *Did McLean climb? He's a climber too.*

BD: Yeah. He did some too. I don't recall if he was along on that. He may have been. So, we had . . . and then, one of the British team that had come down from Hope Bay was a South African named Ray Adie. A-d-i-e-. He later became head of the British Antarctic Survey. He was a young geologist at the time. So, I was sent out for about a week with him. Nichols asked me to go, just the two of us, Adie and myself, all around Ninnis fjord. And I explained the geology of Ninnis fjord to him. Compared to the winter and spring sledging, that was a breeze, mid-summer. The conditions were just so much more comfortable than what we'd known before. I have one

picture that just turned out, was a picture of myself sitting on top of - it was his sled and his dogs - sitting on top of the sled and he'd gotten off because one of their dogs had gotten out of line. They used fan hitches, which were popular with the Eskimos, but you needed a lot of training to work a fan hitch, and they were well trained. And this dog had gotten off. They had whips, 30 feet or so. Whips. They didn't touch the dog with them, but it really - they'd lay it along side with a crack and that's all you needed to get the dogs in line. And my photo, it was a black and white photo, caught him just in his full Antarctic kit, running along, and you could see the dogs in the front and the mountains behind - these peaks - and with his whip just coming forward and both his feet happened to be off the ground at the moment of the shot.

(250)

BS: *(_____the dogs)?*

BD: Adie's

BS: *Adie's*

BD: Adie's, yeah. Adie's. It's a great photo, though it's not in color. And when we left, jumping ahead a bit, when we left, and the icebreakers came. He was the only geologist there. And he stayed for that year, but subordinate to Vivian Fuchs, who came in with a British ship. We met Fuchs on our ship before he landed. It was his first visit to the Antarctic. And he and Ray Adie - Fuchs and Adie- made some great dog journeys together down King George VIth Sound the last year. I read about them only a few years ago.

BS: *He just died - Fuchs.*

BD: Fuchs? Yeah.

BS: *I met him in Cambridge.*

BD: So, that was the story of the dog team trips.

BS: *Well, what happened after that? When did you . . . did you get prepped to leave or . . . ?*

BD: We were waiting, unlike the previous year, the ice showed no signs of going out. And it was already, and Ronne having been there before had probably a better judgment of it than we did as to the chances even in January. I think it may have been probably no later than the first week of February that he was really getting worried that it might not go out. So, we did have radio contact. We were sending these radio reports back to the North American Newspaper Alliance and the *New York Times* and we were getting almost every week in the papers and the *New York Times*, these articles. I have a scrapbook of them. The *New York Times* was, I think at least once a week, was a column coming about our activity, even little things we were doing. They were all in there. So, there was quite a channel there and good radio contact. And they knew about Operation Windmill, was it? Windmill? '47-'48?

BS: *Yeah. Windmill.*

BD: And another factor entered the equation. Jenny Darlington, second woman, was pregnant - had become pregnant. And we had a doctor. We had supplies. She could have stayed another year. It was obviously highly desirable that she get out. So, between the ice and Jenny Darlington and the presence of Operation Windmill and the radio, contact was established with the American ships and two icebreakers detoured to get us. It must have been one hell of a detour. They were going from the Ross Sea, back to say California, or at least Panama. At least 1000

miles, at least a 1000 miles detour one way to come to us and they did it in, it must have been, about the third week of February. We heard the icebreakers were coming. Kevin Walton and his British team were sent out to meet them, or chose to go out to meet them and maybe he'd just come in from a trip and was best equipped for it. He went out to meet them and he tells of going almost right up to the ship which you can do on the ice. And then the dog team going along and the icebreaker following the dog team - two icebreakers. I remember, that was the strangest impression we had the whole time there. Suddenly having been alone - enjoyably alone - we loved the whole experience. It was a little bit of a spoiling effect to have all these guys - these hundreds of sailors on each one of the icebreakers coming into our little paradise. We were glad they were there. They were saving us. Still, it took some of the adventure out of it. And they got in there. Some of the sailors had ice boats or had built them and had put them together. They were out with ice boats on the ice and they came scampering all over the base. And we, as fast as we could, loaded the ship. And when the icebreakers backed up to the bow of our ship, Peterson climbed up the mast, all the way to the top and got a great picture of the two ships about to start with one about 20 feet in front of the other. And it seemed like half the crew of the icebreaker was gathered on the helicopter deck at the stern to watch the operation.

(300)

BS: *Did any of them come ashore?*

BD: Yeah. Oh yeah. They were given shore leave. They were all over the place. Then they pulled us out and they turned us loose 5 or 10 miles out. Then we ran into brash ice. Got stuck in it. And they had to come back and pull us out again. And I don't know. Somewhere along . . . oh, this process took a couple of days becoming really free. And the British ship came in at that time. It just happened to be coming in to relieve the base. It was a duplicate - a sister ship - of ours. The British had been very impressed by our ship and they'd sent reports back to Cambridge.

BS: *What was the name of their ship?*

BD: *The John Biscoe.* There have been several since that name, or at least one since. They told us right from the start they were very impressed with our ship.

BS: *What kind of a ship was it?*

BD: It was an ATA - whatever that meant - sea-going tug. It was all wood. That was a big factor. Flexible to the ice pressure. And it was very sea worthy. Diesel engine. 1200 tons, I think. 50 foot beam. Does that seem too small? Less than that. About 300 and some feet long. And it had spent the war hauling, oh, barges it was across the Pacific. A lot of low gear power. It wasn't very fast, but it had a lot of power. Built in Rockland, Maine, where they knew how to build the old schooners.

BS: *What were the icebreakers?*

BD: Icebreakers were the *Edisto* and the *Burton Island*. And I remember, I think none of us had seen a helicopter before. Or very few. I think none of us. There'd been . . . the first flight . . . I worked for a helicopter company once. The first flight of helicopters was September, 1939 when Igor Sicorsky took one up about 20 feet in Connecticut, and this was '47, '48. So, they hadn't been around long. Those helicopters had fabric covered rotors and wooden spar rotors. Would you believe it? To go up in a helicopter with wooden spars. I found out later. They didn't offer me a ride. I got some good photos though. So, then the British had come by and they spent a few hours, the two ships beside each other. Nichols briefed Fuchs on the geology,_____. And off we went and as the icebreaker pulled off, there was a loudspeaker, goodbye from them to the Ronne Expedition. "Good-bye, good luck and God help you." They weren't too impressed with

our general organization. I think we were more organized than we looked, but everything from a Navy discipline standpoint, everything was very informal. And Ike Schlossback, the skipper, quite a capable guy. We all had a lot of respect for Ike. He, and the way he dressed, the way he behaved, the way he talked, was not out of the book. In fact, in Chile, Ronne has an anecdote of one Chilean coming aboard and being a little put off by Ike's garb and demeanor and his beard and his cigar - always a cigar.

(350)

BS: *He's remembered by a lot of people.*

BD: But, we made it back. We had a good navigator. This Smith, and we needed him. We had rough weather going back. It took us, oh, it was rough.

BS: *Which port did you go into first?*

(Pause)

BS: *I'm going to ask you again. OK. You made landfall at Punta Arenas.*

BD: At Punta Arenas, but instead of coming in the way we'd gone out which was through the canals in Tierra del Fuego, we kept out to sea in the very rough weather until we were due west of the west entrance of the Strait of Magellan and I'll never forget when we turned after all that roughness, tossing and tossing around like a chip, we turned and I have a picture of it, going into the entrance of the Strait of Magellan with the wind directly behind us and it was still strong. Whitecaps everywhere. It was so stable for a while. Oh. When we got into Punta Arenas, spent a couple of days there and then retraced our steps to . . . not to Beaumont, Texas. We started from

Beaumont, Texas, because the ship was in mothballs there. That was the whole reason for Beaumont. We went back to New York and we did that because the American Geographical Society had been a sponsor of the expedition. I don't know. They gave us maybe some money, but not much. But, they had been - not the National, the American Geographical Society - it's older than the National. And they had a welcoming reception - welcoming dinner for us in New York. We had a fireboat out when we came past the Statue of Liberty. The fireboat was spraying, shooting water up into the air in celebration, and we docked, I think it was Pier 26 in Manhattan. The lower part of Manhattan. Miniscule little ship.

BS: *Did you have a pretty good reception there?*

BD: We did. We did. Although it was a shock for many of us. The culture shock. One of the people - our radio operator - Kelsey, and nobody's heard from him in 20 years. Whatever became of him, we don't know. He said he just couldn't take a place like New York. Within a matter of weeks, he had a job in Kabul, Afghanistan, which was pretty amazing. He loved the Antarctic and Kabul was better than New York for him.

BS: *So, you wrote up your results on the testing of equipment.*

BD: Yes.

BS: *Did you do that in New York?*

BD: No. This was about mid-April we landed in New York. '48. I spent most of the month of May in Washington, writing that report. And since then, I've stayed in touch probably as well as any member of the expedition. Hadn't planned it that way. Just the way it turned out. I've been in touch with the people pretty regularly, sort of networking with them.

(400)

BS: *Would you do it again?*

BD: Oh, you bet I would. Oh, that was one of the great experiences of a lifetime. It was terrific.

BS: *How did it change your life, do you think?*

BD: Oh, it didn't change my life as much as it might have. Had I gone to graduate school in geology, which I almost did - I was admitted, and I was admitted to a law school and I'm glad I didn't do that because I don't think I would have been a good lawyer. And I finally was on the wait list of the Harvard Business School where Peterson went. We were roommates there. And finally I got in at the last minute, and so I went to the Harvard Business School and I thought, oh, I'll work out some way that I'll stay in touch with the Antarctic, but it turned out to be not practical. Whereas, had I gone to graduate school in geology, then I probably would have been Antarctic related. I would have been back numerous times, I'm sure.

BS: *Have you been back?*

BD: Only twice in late '87 - December, '87 as a lecturer on the *World Discoverer* and in January to March this year on three consecutive trips for Marine Expeditions of this year 2000. And very probably going back next year.

BS: *Are you going to try and make it back to Marguerite Bay?*

BD: The ships aren't scheduled to go there.

BS: *You won't go then.*

BD: I think the last one was. So it's unlikely, however, it may be, if it can be found out from the weather reports that the ice is out and maybe they can adjust their schedule, but there's no promise of this. So, I'd say chances are less than 50-50, but maybe it's a possibility.

BS: *What do you lecture on?*

BD: Not on wildlife. There are so many people that know so much about . . . although, I did. I did, on the *World Discoverer*, I did everything. A bit on everything. I was . . . it was an American Geographical Society group and, in fact, they sent me and I had sort of my own group and we had 9 or 10 friends along, too. So, I gave many lectures there on subjects that I didn't handle this year. But, this year, history and dog teams - on the trail with dog teams. History and the story of the Ronne Expedition.

BS: *When you say history, what do you cover? The old history, modern history?*

BD: Yeah. The old history.

BS: *Do you get into the IGY?*

BD: Yeah, I get to the IGY, but more on the older history. And particularly the history of the peninsula - Gerlache, Charcot, Nordenskjold, and those.

BS: I do that too. Well, I guess we're done, aren't we?

(450)

[END OF INTERVIEW]