

**CUCM Julian P. Gudmundson**  
**February 24,2000**

**Brian Shoemaker**  
**Interviewer**

(Begin Tape 1 - Side A)

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*BS: This is an oral interview with CUCM Julian P. Gudmundson who has extensive field experience with the Navy in both the Arctic and the Antarctic. It is part of an oral history program of the American Polar Society and the Byrd Archival Program on a grant from the National Science Foundation.*

JP: I was born on a farm in Minnesota, southwestern Minnesota, back in the Depression days. I was born on August 1st, 1916, and I went to a country school after I got old enough to go to school. There was a country school that had all the eight grades in one building and had one teacher. After I graduated from the grade school, I went on to high school and I graduated from high school in 1934 and you couldn't get any jobs back there in the Depression days, so I always had a notion I'd like to join the Navy, so I went, oh, about a 100 miles to the nearest recruiting station to take the test and I passed everything except the color blind test. I'm color blind, I couldn't pass the test and you had to be perfect in those days because they had more men volunteer than they could take, so I go back to the farm and worked around the farm for years and then I worked with a construction company and in 1937, I met a woman by the name of Dorothy Bunning and we fell in love and we eloped to Watertown, South Dakota, and were married on April 16th, 1938. And I continued my construction work. I worked on the building of the Army camps across the country and finally we got to California and all the camps had been built, so I got a job in a carpenter shop at Douglas Aircraft in Los Angeles.

And one night, we were listening to the radio - this was in 1943 - and they put out a call for construction workers. They were forming a new branch of the Navy. It was called the Navy CBs - Construction Battalion. And they got the CB from the "c" of construction and "b" of battalion. And I was sent to Virginia. . . I was accepted, and I was sent to Williamsburg, Virginia, to Camp Perry, for Seabee training and we had our boot training done, then we were sent to Gulf Port, Mississippi, and after I trained at Gulf Port, we went aboard an LST and we headed for the Pacific. And they never told us where we were going. We went through the southern route, through Bora Bora, Pago Pago, and New Caledonia and New Hebrides. And finally we landed on Guadalcanal. And I spent my whole time on Guadalcanal. I was there when the war ended and on the day they signed the armistice on the ship in the harbor up at Tokyo, we went aboard that old Navy ship and headed back for San Francisco. And after we got to San Francisco, I went home for leave and after leave, I got discharged from the Navy and I went back into construction and in 1951, I got a call asking me if I would like to go back into the Navy, because they needed Seabees for the construction again. So I went and enlisted again and I was sent to Norfolk and joined the Seabee Battalion - MCB6 - and we went to Argentia and Bermuda and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and then when I got back from Cuba, I was assigned to a Naval Beach Group School in Bloomford, Virginia, to be an instructor.

(50)

And when I was at the school, they put out a call for Operation Deepfreezes. And I went in and put my request in for joining Operation Deepfreeze, and went to take my physical examination and they had the Navy physical you had to pass and you had to be perfect and there was that colors and I flunked that again. And I thought that's an awful thing to stop, I didn't think it bothered me on construction. So there was a captain there I knew, could call his name. I went to him several times and asked him if they couldn't forget about that colorblindness and finally one day, I went in there, and I said, "Captain, there's two colors down on the ice. The snow is

white and the buildings are international orange and I can tell the difference." And he banged the table with his fist and he said, "I guess the only way I'll get rid of you is if you go," so he wrote "Qualified."

So that's the way I got my start on the Antarctic trips. I went up to Davisville, Rhode Island.

BS: *I've got a question. Did you go to the Arctic first?*

JG: Yeah. After I went up to Rhode Island, I joined the Deepfreeze II and they sent a group of us to the Arctic. We went up to Thule and joined the engineers and they had a camp on the edge of the ice cap there, and we went out on the ice cap and practiced blasting crevasses, opening and closing them with bulldozers and we went up and . . . we had our wanigans. We went on a trip, we were supposed to go out about 200 miles on the ice and these wanigans were like a trailer house on a sled. And we'd go pulling them and we'd go so far and then we'd stop for different times and we were instructed, every time you stop, back up so you'd have slack in your hitch because there'd be enough heat generated from the sled runners rolling over the ice that they'd freeze whenever you'd stop, so we would back up like they said and when we'd start out again, it would break all the runners free and we could continue.

After we finished the training, we went back to Davisville, Rhode Island, and joined the Deepfreeze II unit and then we headed for Antarctica. We flew from Davisville, Rhode Island, and with stops at San Francisco and Hawaii and then on to the islands and finally into Christchurch. And then at Christchurch, New Zealand, we went aboard the icebreaker, *Glacier*, and we went into the ice aboard the *Glacier*.

BS: *Was that Glacier's first trip to the ice?*

JG: No, I think it had been there.

BS: *This was the second year.*

JG: Yeah. So we broke through the ice and we had several cargo ships, in line with the tanker and the ice would form around the tanker and freeze them in once in a while and the icebreaker would have to go back and circle around this tanker and break it loose and then we'd go on in and finally we got to McMurdo Sound and we unloaded there. Part of the battalion stayed there and I went with a group to Little America. We took a cargo ship to Little America. I can't remember the name of it, but we unloaded at Little America and there was a group that built part of the camp the year before and our group finished the construction there and took on more cargo and time was short, so we unloaded everything on the ice and then the ship left and we had the rows marked with the red flags because we knew they'd be covered with snow. And we had these flags and we could find the one if we went back out looking for the cargo. And we spent the whole winter hauling cargo. We'd go out with the bulldozer and dig the snow away from the boxes and haul it back to camp. And part of our detachment went over to Byrd and they hauled much of the material over on a sled to Byrd and they constructed that. Well, then they came back and we all headed back to Rhode Island.

(100)

When I first joined Operation Deepfreeze, I was a chief builder. The rate was BUC for chief builder. Then I went up one rate - it was C8 and then I went up to C9 and then I was BUCM and then they changed it around and made it CUCM and it's kind of backwards in explaining what CUCM - it means Master Chief Construction Man. And that was the final rate that they kept all the rest of the time that I was in the Navy.

After we got back to Rhode Island, I was assigned to a recruiting station in St. Paul, Minnesota. And I was there 25 months and I got a call from a detailer and he asked me, "Are you

in good health? Any broken bones or anything?" I said, "No, I'm in good health." And he says, "Great. Their blaster is sick and couldn't do the blasting for the nuclear power plant, so you're the only qualified one that's available. So, today I'm going to send you a set of orders for Antarctica again." So I went down to the Antarctic for Deepfreeze '61, then I came back again for . . . did all the blasting for the nuclear power plant - there were several pits that had to be blasted into the mountainside where the reactor was put and we also blasted enough for another reactor that would be built later on because they couldn't blast near a reactor that was there. So we dug four pits for the reactor. And then the next year, I went back and with Mobile Construction Battalion I and we did the construction of the nuclear power plant at the McMurdo Sound and also put up some tanks.

*BS: Let me back you up a little bit to Little America. Tell me something about life at Little America when you wintered over. What was it like? Were you down underground? Under the surface of the snow?*

JG: Yes, we were under the surface of the snow at Little America. It's always blowing snow across the land there, the ice in Antarctica. And the minute you put some obstacle, it starts coming in and we were completely covered and our smokestack, we had to extend them farther and farther up through the snow. And I had the ionosphere camera on the two-story height so that never did get covered. But, we had to shovel the snow off some of these buildings to keep them from collapsing and at the Pole Station itself, that was getting collapsed so bad, we had to go in there and remake some of those buildings and put in extra reinforcement around them to support the roofs. And we built an electric generator there. And it was a terrible job. And cold . . . it was so cold there at the Pole.

*BS: This was which year at the Pole?*

JG: At the Pole, let's see. . .that was in 1963 - Deepfreeze '63.

BS: *Back to Little America, did you meet Dick Chappel there?*

(150)

JG: Yes, I met him there and I helped him to work on the ham station there because I was a licensed ham operator and Dick wanted to be able to operate the ham station, so I helped him all I could. And there was a Russian scientist there, too, by the name of Rostagorev and he used to like to talk to his friends over at Mirny, so I sent many messages across from Little America to Mirny Station and this Rostagorev. When he got back to Russia, he would contact me several times. I operated a radio station in St. Paul, and he contacted me there once and wanted to know if I would forward a message down to Antarctica to his friends there, so I kept in contact with this Russian scientist for several years.

BS: *What was his specialty?*

JG: I don't remember what it was now. I don't remember.

BS: *How was the food in the winter and year round?*

JG: It was tremendous. It was the best food you ever had. In fact, the Navy sent their cooks to a special school before they went down there to teach them how to make as good a meal as they could and another thing. Any time - we worked on two 12 hour shifts there - and any time you were hungry and wanted something to eat, you could go in and make yourself a steak or anything else. And we ate twice the amount that normally a person would eat because the cold weather would make you need that because it sapped your energy so.

BS: *What was the coldest temperature?*

JG: The coldest temperature at Little America was around 80 degrees below and I took one crew into the Pole and it was 50 degrees below zero when we got in there - this was in the summer, the beginning of the summer - and the warmest day that I was at the Pole, it was 14 degrees below zero.

BS: *At Little America, did you get down into any of the former camps from Little America I through IV?*

JG: No, never did, never got to any of the others.

BS: *Did you see any antennas and stuff sticking up from the other ones?*

JG: No, no.

BS: *So they were all snowed over by then. How did you unload the ships there?*

JG: I was a blaster there and the ice shelf was very irregular and my job, before the ships came in, was to go out and make a straight ice shelf so they could come right up to the ice shelf and they could hoist with their booms, all the equipment up on the ice shelf. And the way I did that was with shaped charges. The shaped charges sent the beam right straight down, the blast right straight down and lots of times you can use that, put a shaped charge on metal and blow a hole in metal, but I put them in a whole row down along this irregular ice shelf and set them all off and it just broke off a straight ice shelf just like you'd take an ice pick, you know, and you pick ice,

break ice. This was just like using many ice picks and all of a sudden then it just broke off that shelf just as nice and straight as could be.

BS: *Nice smooth pier.*

JG: Right.

BS: *Did you put (bollards) in it?*

JG: No.

BS: *How did you tie the ship up?*

JG: Well, I guess we did. We put a like a railroad tie down into the snow. You could call it a makeshift bollard, yeah, that's the way we did the thing.

BS: *And then you used ship cranes to off load?*

(200)

JG: The ship cranes unloaded it and everything onto the sleds and then we took the sleds over just about a quarter mile away and unloaded them right on the ice so the ship had to get out in a hurry because the storms came so bad and so fast that we knew that we wouldn't be able to have time to unload everything because Little America was about a mile and a half in and we didn't have enough sleds to haul it all that far as fast as they were unloading it, so we just unloaded it right by the ships there and spent most of the winter coming out and digging it out and taking it back to the camp.

BS: *Did you have any of the ice- front breaking off unexpectedly?*

JG: Yes, I pretty nearly went to sea with it, too, because I was right across . . . we were in a little bay and they wanted the point taken off so they would have a little more room to turn around and in Dick Chappel's book it shows me running and that ice shelf breaking off and the man on the icebreaker there was calling over the PA system as loud as he could, "Run, run" to me. The ice was breaking and a whole chunk broke off and I was just fortunate to be able to jump over the place where it hinged and broke off there and like I said, it's in this book, it's Dick Chappel's where I was running.

BS: *What did you have to do with the scientists? Did you support any of them or work with any of them?*

JG: Well, we would spend some of their watches like on the ionosphere and stuff, you know, and they couldn't be there 24 hours a day and we'd set the cameras for the ionosphere. Really, the Australians would come on, we'd help them on that. And I, being a typist and a ham radio operator, we were radio or weather central for all of the stations and so all the stations would send their weather in by numbers. So, I'd go and help and I'd sit there for about an hour just plugging in, the cipher hitting number, number, numbers, which meant nothing to me, but the weather people - that was their code.

BS: *How did the men in general interface with the scientists? Did they get along good as a team? Scientists come from a very esoteric world and these sailors come from a very practical world.*

JG: Well, we got along very well there and we were . . . back in Rhode Island we were gone over very thoroughly. They sent four psychiatrists up to go over us and they only missed one man at our place. Everyone got along swell except this one man. And this woman was interviewing me one day and she asked me a lot of questions, seemed silly to me, but it made sense to her, I guess. And we were in a small room together and the door was open and she asked me, she said, "You know, if I went over and closed that door, would you try to rape me?" I said, "Well, you can find out if you go over and close that door." And she kind of looked at me and then continued and I guess that had been enough answer for her because I was accepted.

BS: *So, you had one person that the psychiatrist missed in authorizing them to winter-over.*

JG: Yes. He didn't get along with anyone.

BS: *Dick Chappel. Dick was a young Boy Scout that was selected to come down. How did he fit in?*

(250)

JG: He fit in . . . well, he was a very pleasant young man and he was always willing to help. When he asked me to help him on the radio, he was just really conscientious and learned to do that ham radio and you heard him on this here and he got to operate it and did a fine job on that.

Another thing, when Admiral Byrd died . . . you know, he was supposed to come down with us, too. We trained under him back in Rhode Island.

BS: *So you met Admiral Byrd.*

JG: Yes. And my crew built the Admiral Byrd Memorial Chapel there. And Chappel . . . I had the biggest beard there, so he had me sit up in the choir seats and I couldn't figure out why he wanted me to go up there. So, I went there and what he wanted to do, he put my picture in his book because I had the biggest beard in Little America.

BS: *So, they had a chapel for Admiral Byrd at Little America.*

JG: Yeah. Memorial Chapel for him, right.

BS: *Yes. And when . . . tell me about your experience with Admiral Byrd. Did you get to talk to him extensively?*

JG: Well, it was back in Rhode Island that we got to talk to him because gave us instructions about the ice and what we should do and what we shouldn't do and everything else. And he gave a kind of lecture from the stage and then afterwards, he mingled with the crowd. . . just any questions anyone had, he'd wander around with the group that was in there listening to him.

BS: *Did you get to talk to him on a personal one-on-one?*

JG: Oh yes, yes.

BS: *What was that experience like?*

JG: Well, that was really a thrill because ever since I was young, I admired Admiral Byrd and read all about the stories of him going over there by himself in the isolation and all that and I thought that was tremendous that a man could do something like that.

BS: *And then you wintered over and it tightened the camaraderie with him.*

JG: Yeah, right.

BS: *I volunteered to winter over for some reason. Tell me about what happened. You were down in Antarctica when he died, correct?*

JG: Yes.

BS: *How did that hit the camp?*

JG: Everyone felt very badly about it, you know, like they had lost a friend because he was so friendly to us back in the States there, and like I mentioned, he'd talk to us all as he gave us all the instructions and he was just like one of us. You felt he was one of us, the way he treated us there.

BS: *Had a special service for him there?*

JG: Yes.

BS: *Did you have a chaplain winter with you?*

JG: Yes.

BS: *Was he Catholic? Protestant?*

JG: We had a Protestant. His name was Zoller. He wintered with us and the Catholic chaplain was over at McMurdo.

BS: *Then you built the chapel, after you built the chapel in the name of Admiral Byrd or you already had a chapel?*

JG: No, we built one.

BS: *After he died.*

JG: Yes.

BS: *OK. And that was done.*

JG: Yeah.

BS: *Were you the leading chief?*

JG: Yes.

BS: *So you managed the building of the first Byrd Chapel.*

JG: Right.

BS: *Well, good.*

JG: One day I was on the radio and I got a call that was put out and the Air Force was making their initial flight with their Boeing Jet Tanker, they were flying over the North Pole, and General Griswold was aboard and he was on the ham radio there and, of course, they asked for a call, and everybody that was calling there wanted to talk to him.

(300)

So I thought I didn't have much of a chance being clear down in Antarctica so I put in a call, I said, "Call K5-(I forget what it is now)" and I said, " This is KC4USA from Little America," and he came back and said, "Is this KC4USA putting in a call?" And I said, "Yes." He said, "Well, we'd like to talk to you." This is historic movement, pole to pole," and then he said to all the other callers, "Please stand by, after we finish with Little America, I'll take you one by one." But, Gilsner from *National Geographic* was aboard too, so he came on the radio and General Griswold said, "We're taping this." And I said to myself, "You big dummy. You got the tape recorder and you didn't push the button right away." So, I got it right here on one of these tapes and all that pole to pole call talking to the initial run of the Boeing Jet Tanker with General Griswold aboard and Gilbert Gilsner of *National Geographic*. And they had some other operators there, too, which came to talk . . . I don't know, "This is Joe, and this is so-and-so. . . " Some of the workers on the plane, I guess. He let them talk to us.

BS: *What was your personal call sign?*

JG: K0OEE.

BS: *K0OEE. Where did the Gulf Oscar Oscar Uniform Delta Yankee come from?*

JG: Yeah, you asked me that. I didn't get the . . .

BS: *That's what Paul Dalrymple passed to me.*

JG: I don't know. I didn't, well, I suppose I'd say that sometimes when they couldn't get the name, like part of this message I was talking to my son back there before Chappel came on. This ionosphere was really rough there. It was tearing us up and sometimes you would give your name like that, so that's what he was maybe referring to.

BS: *Yes. That's what he was referring to when he told me to ask you that. OK. Let's move on. You went home after you wintered over. Right away or at the end of the summer? You came down one summer, you wintered and then you were there part of the next summer. Or after sunrise.*

JG: No, I went home and I got orders to Naval Recruiting Station at St. Paul, Minnesota.

BS: *OK. And you were there how long?*

JG: I was there 25 months until, I mentioned that earlier, until I got the orders, they called and said is there anything wrong with you? Any broken bones? And things like that and they took me off the recruiting. I still had two years to go. And they didn't have any experienced blasters for Antarctica.

(350)

BS: *You were senior chief then?*

JG: No, I was the chief then.

BS: *Chief, then. You were the chief the first time you went and wintered over. Leading chief. That's Little America.*

JG: Right.

BS: *OK. For the start of IGY. Right? OK. That's a milestone.*

JG: Getting back to that blasting, when I got down there, they had sent a bunch of TNT from the magazine in Pearl Harbor. I don't know how long it had been in there and it was leaking out of the box of this damn TNT and it was so dangerous, I was afraid somebody would get killed with it. So I took all that behind the mountain there at McMurdo and I blew the thing up and sent for new stuff called Palatol. And Palatol is just like, what's that grain you eat? And when you drill a hole in the ice there and you've got the volcanic ash. . . there'd be a layer of volcanic ash and then there'd be some snow and then some more volcanic ash. And the drill bit would make heat there on the volcanic ash and the snow would kind of melt there and there would be irregular holes there, so you couldn't put dynamite or anything pushed down there. This palatol, you could pour and it would just take the shape of any holes and then you'd take dynamite at the top of the whole thing with the charge in it and set that off and that would send the Palatol off and you'd have a blasted hole that way.

BS: *And you had to blast a deep pit under what was to be the nuclear reactor?*

JG: Yeah. It was in the hillside.

BS: *Yes. Observation Hill.*

JG: Yeah. Observation Hill, so up. . . and the top was about 30 feet and they came out to nothing in the hillside.

BS: *You were basically making a step to put a building on.*

JG: Yeah. And the reactor went into there and then they poured rocks, crushed rocks. We had a rock crusher down there and we crushed rocks right a little ways from where our nuclear power plant was. We hauled that in and we poured that around it. Of course, there was around the reactor there was a kind of a shield and they poured like bee-bees around it then to keep out the radiation. Then they poured crushed rock around the thing to fill in the holes. And then the sad thing about it, the reactor sprung a leak into that rock and it was very little radiation and it was not really enough to hurt anyone, but the order, you know, that you cannot contaminate anything in Antarctica. So they had to shut the nuclear power plant down and they had to take all this rock and ship it back to the States and put it into one of these sites where they have radioactive materials.

(400)

When they were blasting and evidently over the years that island was built with the volcanic ash, then snow and then some more volcanic ash would come, and then snow and it was very irregular to blast sometimes. And I made one blast and a big chunk of the lava went up on the snow channels that was headed right straight for camp - McMurdo - on the base there. Well, the crews had been in one of the shops there where they had their machinery and for a lunch break and they had just left it and there were a couple of guys left in there and this rock came arching over and went through the roof, hit one of the pieces of machinery, bounced off the floor and hit one guy in the knee and, not too hard, it didn't hurt him. And it could have killed some people if they had been in there yet. So, they had an investigation to see if I had done something wrong up

there and they had several days checking everything out. And I was cleared. They said that this wasn't my fault. It was just a freak of one shoot there in the snow, that this one rock blew instead of this way, it went backwards.

BS: *Looking at it?*

JG: Right.

BS: *Did you winter over when you came back to McMurdo that year?*

JG: No, I just wintered over that one time.

BS: *One time. OK. So you had how many more seasons on the ice when you came . . . you had Little America, then you came back to McMurdo and how many seasons did you have after that?*

JG: Six.

BS: *Six. Total of 7 with Little America.*

JG: Right.

BS: *OK. So you came back as the Chief Blaster for the nuclear plant and how many seasons? Two together there?*

JG: Yes. I went down with MCB1 the following season to build it.

BS: *So you built the nuclear power plant. The building or did you move in the reactors too?*

JG: Everything.

BS: *You were in charge of construction.*

JG: No, I was the operation chief and I was in charge of some of the operations there, but I was the leading chief there too.

BS: *You were the leading chief at that time. In McMurdo?*

JG: Um-hum. Of MCB.

BS: *MCB, yeah. OK. Which year, which Deepfreezes were those?*

(450)

JG: Well, let's see. There were Deepfreezes in '61 and '62. And then '63, I went to the Pole.

BS: *Deepfreeze '61, Deepfreeze '62 at McMurdo.*

JG: '61 was doing the blasting and '62 was the construction.

BS: *OK. Tell me about the construction. How did the nuclear power plant . . . it's quite an historic event having a nuclear power plant. We'll never have another one there. How was it specially constructed? How is that different from the other buildings at McMurdo?*

JG: Well, you had to have the support for the generators, so you had to have a pit and a framework that the generators would be sitting on. And everything was engineered so they had the openings where they figured they should be and they had the paddles and everything all set up for the interior offices, everything, were all prefabricated. And then when the generators came in, they were slid into place and lifted over the place with the support for the generators.

BS: *Any Army with you?*

JG: I don't recall any on that operation.

BS: *I asked the question because it's an Army reactor type plant for a field reactor.*

JG: No, we went out to Wyoming, a crew, before we went down to build the plant and they were building a small plant there and we practiced out there before we went down for the construction of that.

BS: *When you went down in Deepfreeze '61, did you go down by ship or did you fly in?*

JG: Flew.

BS: *Did you fly in from then on?*

JG: Yes.

BS: *Did you go out by ship at all?*

JG: The year that I blasted, I went out by ship because that was the last transportation out, so I went on a New Zealand ship into Christchurch.

BS: *Which ship was that?*

JG: It was a tanker. I can't think of the name of it then.

BS: *Fuel tanker? Did it tank up? Did it tank McMurdo?*

(500)

JG: It evidently did, yeah.

BS: *OK. You don't know the name of that tanker.*

JG: No. I don't.

BS: *OK. It wasn't the Maumee.*

JG: No, I can't tell.

BS: *OK. Tell me about the life in McMurdo as compared to Little America. What was life like in Deepfreeze '61 and '62?*

JG: Well, one of the main differences was that you had melting at McMurdo and the vehicles running around in this melted permafrost there so it would be running down the streets and was quite messy at times there in McMurdo.

BS: *Good food?*

JG: Good food, right.

BS: *Little America. How many men were at Little America?*

JG: I think there were about 50 of us there.

BS: *And at McMurdo. How many were at McMurdo? Aviators, everyone.*

JG: Oh, there'd be hundreds there. I don't know overall how many there'd be. But, there was quite a large group of men there.

BS: *OK. And did they all get along together. Were there rival factions? Or just good camaraderie between aviators and Seabees and the ship drivers and the scientists?*

JG: Everything went along pretty well except there was an Air Force and some officers for this on one of the operations, I forget which one it was, and they had a young officer and he didn't have any common sense there and the captain of the base, I can't recall his name now, was kidding me about this guy and this officer went out to Mt. Erebus there and there was a kind of a crevasse there and he went crawling in that crevasse and it had a little shelf and he got so far in there and he got scared and he couldn't go ahead and he couldn't back up, so he had to get the camp people to go out there and rescue him and the captain in charge of the camp, I can't recall his name, and he used to talk to me quite a bit, you know, because I was the leading chief then too, and he asked me, he said, "Can't you take care of that damn idiot?" I'll never forget that.

(550)

BS: *You were put in charge of Air Force officers.*

JG: Yeah.

BS: *They didn't teach them. OK. When you relieved the winter-overs, did you come in on first flight and relieve the winter-overs or did you come in later?*

JG: At the station?

BS: *Yes.*

JG: Usually we did, yes.

BS: *Did they get them out of town right after the summer season started, or did they keep them over through the summer.*

JG: No, it was pretty soon.

BS: *Any problems that you know of during the winters, like you talked about the one fella that had problems at Little America?*

JG: *Not that I know of, not being down there over the winters, I haven't heard any reports on them of anything like that.*

(End of Tape 1 - Side A)

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(Begin Tape 1 - Side B)

BS: *Deepfreeze '63 you were at the South Pole, correct?*

JG: Right. I was with MCB-8 and the Pole had been crushed and a lot of the buildings were not safe to be in, so we went and got a lot of snow off some of the buildings that were being crushed and we put in heavy timbers in place across the top of the buildings for strong beams to support in case we had more snow later on. At Byrd they had these snow blowers and they could dig a beautiful trench and then put arches over that and then didn't have to worry about getting crushed. But, we couldn't get a big snow blower into the Pole. There were some small tractors there. So, we dug a trench with bulldozer and we took arches and put them over this trench that we dug with the tractor and put buildings under these arches so they wouldn't get crushed like the old wooden ones that were out there before. And it was pretty doggone cold when we built the new generator building there too. They needed . . . their generator was worn out and so we put in a whole new building there. A bigger one for the new generator, so we installed that.

BS: *So you rebuilt the whole station?*

JG: Right.

BS: *So this was the first rebuilding of the South Pole.*

JG: Right. Yeah. And at the Pole, we had a football game there with the scientists. That was the first pole football game, I guess, and we had a big guy we called Moose Merino and big 200 pounder and boy he plowed through those guys. We beat them 6-0.

BS: *Were you in bunny boots?*

JG: Yeah. Of course, then, I didn't play. I was 46 years old at the time and it was no place for a 46 year old to be at 10,000 feet. In cold weather. It was 50 below. The AP, the Associated Press, even wrote that thing up about that football game. And when I was at the Pole, Lowell Thomas came there and I'd run a ham radio contact back to the States, I don't know to whom anymore, but it was really a thrill to sit back and after I got them connected to the States, to listen to that voice I'd heard over the TV and radio for years.

BS: *Sitting right next to you.*

JG: Yeah.

BS: *Was he . . . Admiral Reedy brought him there?*

JG: I think so. I'm not sure.

BS: *So you were there when they flew the flights from South Africa across the Pole to McMurdo. Was it that year?*

JG: I don't recall that.

BS: *The reason I ask is that Lowell Thomas was on that flight.*

JG: Oh, is that right?

BS: *So, do you remember what kind of planes were they flying to Pole then?*

JG: They were flying these 121s with skis. Was that . . . a cargo plane? Wasn't that a 121?

BS: *The C-130s, you mean?*

JG: The ones that they. . . the cargo planes that they used all over.

BS: *Yeah. C-130.*

JG: C-130, yeah.

(50)

BS: *Do you remember what kind of science were they doing at South Pole?*

JG: I don't know about that.

BS: *Any astronomy?*

JG: Oh yes, yes. You know when they came into the Pole with C-130s, they would not stop when they'd bring in cargo and they'd . . . as they got there they'd raise their nose up and they'd open their back door and they had these rollers and the cargo and they'd cut them loose and they'd let the stuff go bing, bing, bing and when they got to the end of the runway, they had to haul the cargo out and we'd have to go and drag it off. And they flew in with the helicopters too. And the first helicopters every to in to the Pole and they hauled them back in the C-130s.

BS: *That's the Army helicopters?*

JG: Yes.

BS: *Do you recall the name of a Martin Pomerantz as a scientist that was there?*

JG: No, I don't, no. We even had some drops there at the pole, too by the Air Force with the skimmers and it was bad weather and so that's one reason they sent them in because it was fogged in, there was snow, white out you know, so it was an eery feeling to hear those plop, plop, plopping when they were coming. You'd think they'd hit the station with all those drops, you know. But, everything went well.

BS: *What'd they drop? You mean they streamed them.*

JG: Yeah.

BS: *Any parachute drops?*

JG: No. Pretty near all streamers. I think early in the operations there was a Caterpillar parachuted. They had one of those small ones and the thing didn't open and it hit the snow and I think went down about 30 feet. What they had done was at the end of the season, you know, put all the mail in there and all the guys were looking forward to the mail so there was some heavy digging out there. Caterpillar out there so they could get their mail.

BS: *So they got the Cat out.*

JG: Yeah.

BS: *That's funny. So, how many seasons did it take you to rebuild the first rebuilding of the South Pole?*

JG: Just the one season.

BS: *Just that one season. And do you know how long that station held up before they replaced it?*

JG: No. I don't recall. I guess they replaced it with that dome. I don't recall the year that they did that.

BS: *That was '72, they opened it, anyway. It's being replaced now. New complex on stilts. Now that takes us through Deepfreeze '63. You came back three more times, three more seasons.*

JG: Yeah. I went on Deepfreeze '68 and '69 with the same outfits from Davisville, that is the Construction Battalion Unit 201 and that was just regular construction there, upkeep for the camp, and we built some of those north fuel tanks and things like that. We had two years of work for our group there, so we went in '68 and '69.

BS: *You were leading chief?*

JG: Yeah.

BS: *For 201?*

JG: Right.

BS: *That was CBU-201?*

JG: Yes. I was a Master Chief at that time, so I . . .

BS: *And you finished Building 155? The big chow hall?*

JG: Yeah.

BS: *And barracks?*

JG: Yeah.

BS: *So you were in charge of opening up 155, I guess, moving everyone in there? What other facilities did you build there at McMurdo?*

(100)

JG: Some warehouses and some more tanks. Those fuel tanks, seemed like we never had enough fuel tanks.

BS: *You mean the big ones up on the hill.*

JG: Yeah.

BS: *That surrounded the camp.*

JG: You know, were you down there when that tanker was crushed and it's when they had that big storm and the tank went out to sea and disappeared?

BS: *The AG? No. I wasn't. I know about it. Were you there?*

JG: Yeah.

BS: *That was, when was that? Deepfreeze '61 or '62?*

JG: I can't remember which one it was now. It went out to sea and nobody ever saw it again.

BS: *Do you know. . . that was the YOG, I believe.*

JG: Yeah, I think so.

BS: *So it was blown to sea in a storm. And where was it anchored prior to that?*

JG: Right by Hut Point.

BS: *In the winter quarters bay or on the other side?*

JG: On the winter quarters bay, yeah.

BS: *And that was during a storm in what, April, March?*

JG: Yeah, I think it must have been around April, yeah.

BS: *Was it full of oil?*

JG: No. It was about crushed. It had been a derelict there for years. It just crushed it.

BS: *So, it had been sitting there and they didn't know what to do with it and eventually the ice pushed it up against the shore and crushed it. But then it blew out to sea. Must have sunk in the storm.*

JG: Evidently .

BS: *Probably farther off McMurdo Sound?*

JG: Most likely.

BS: *Most likely didn't get out of the Sound, yeah. Did you see it happening?*

JG: No. No.

BS: *It's an interesting event. Do you know who . . . I assume it was after everyone left and it was the winter over group saw it go.*

JG: Could be. Yes.

BS: *Do you know who was any of the winter overs then?*

JG: No, I don't. No.

BS: *That's interesting. No fuel spilled.*

JG: No.

BS: *OK. That's Deepfreeze '68 and '69. Tell me about life in the camp in the summer. Did you have any personnel problems? Drinking problems? Was there too much drinking or too little to do for the men? Did they need recreation?*

JG: No, I never knew really of any problems. The only problem we had was at Little America when I wintered over. We had one young kid there that was pretty well loaded a good share of the time there, but at McMurdo, just some normal drinking. The guys would go to the bar in the evening, and stuff but no one would really get plastered or obnoxious or anything like that because, when you had 12 hour shifts, they were usually . . .

BS: *OK. After Deepfreeze '69, you went back to the Ice again and what unit were you attached to and what was your job?*

JG: I went with COMNAVSUPPOR ANTARCTICA and I was the Master Chief for that unit and I could never quite understand why they selected me for a Master Chief when the Antarctic is more of an Air outfit than CB, but I guess they needed a Master Chief of command, so I went down in '69 and that was the first time I ever went down with women. We had women aboard that outfit and . . .

BS: *First year they had women down there?*

JG: That I was with.

BS: *And which year was that?*

JG: In '75.

BS: *And they had women military.*

(150)

JG: Women military.

BS: *Seabees?*

JG: No, no.. They were just regular Navy.

BS: *Admin and personnel?*

JG: Right. And that was the first time I really ran into a problem with the personnel, there was one woman and she was malingering and stuff and she kept saying, "I can't go out today," and everything else and I kept track of her and she had the excuse that she was having her period. And I kept track of this and the last time, the fourth time, I called her in because they had complained about her malingering, and I said, "You know, I think I'm going to turn you in to, " what's this program, the wonders of the world? "because you're the first person who I've ever seen that could have four periods in one month." And she admitted that she was trying to escape getting up and having to go outside.

BS: *How many women were there down there at that time?*

JG: Oh, I don't know. There were several women. I can't recall the exact number of them right now.

BS: *Were there women scientists?*

JG: Oh yes, yeah.

BS: *They were older? Older than the women sailors?*

JG: Oh yes, yeah.

BS: *Do you remember any of the women scientists?*

JG: No.

BS: *Mary Alice McWhinnie?*

JG: No. I never had any contact with them.

BS: *The first two were nuns.*

JG: Oh, is that right?

BS: *They were scientists, but they were nuns. The first two to winter. Sisters. Did you have any problems with the men vis-a-vis women? Any competition? Any fights? Any nice stories? Did you have any marriages out of all that?*

JG: No. The only problem I had was with this one woman. Everyone else seemed to get along well and when we got back to Port Hueneme, I retired from the Navy and I had one of the first color retirements. All the photos, movie and stills, were all in color and it was on the Grand Parade there at Port Hueneme and I couldn't believe what a fantastic send-off it was for me. I think it was about 8 Master Chiefs or side-boys for me when I went off and furnished a car for my wife and my son flew in from Minnesota and he was there too. And I really appreciated having a retirement like that and this Captain Howe that I'd worked with three different times, he was up at San Francisco at the time and I requested him to be the speaker there, so they flew him in for the speaker, main speaker for the retirement.

BS: *So you retired from the Naval Support Force Antarctica when you retired from the Navy.*

JG: Yes.

BS: *Well, that's a wonderful career. Who was your relief as command Master Chief and what year was that you retired, by the way?*

JG: In '76. The . . .

BS: *It wasn't Paul Berkheimer, was it?*

(200)

JG: No.

BS: *You knew Paul.*

JG: No, I didn't know him either. It was September, '76, that I retired. COMNAVSUPPOR.

BS: *Well, you had a good career. Thirty how many years?*

JG: 30 years.

BS: *Thirty years on the nose. And you spent a tremendous amount of time in the polar regions amongst other things. Do you have any high points that you recall that really made it special?*

JG: The high point, I think, in my career, was being selected for the White House Staff. I think that's one of the top assignments for a military person, being on the White House Staff. And I was up at Camp David most of the time and would go down to the White House sometimes. We'd take a crew down and do a little fixing or something like that. And all the people you met there and being invited for dinner down at the White House, my wife and I, you just can't believe that things like that are happening to you.

BS: *You met the President?*

JG: Oh yes.

BS: *Who was the President?*

JG: Lyndon B. Johnson.

BS: *OK.*

JG: And he used to bring a pastor up with him to Camp David and have church services there and after the services, Lady Bird would come out and just like at a little country church, she'd stand out and talk - all of the dependents are invited up to the church service when they have a service. . . and she would stand out there and talk with all the wives afterwards and it was just like a small country town and I just couldn't get over that. And all the women folks were just thrilled to death, you know, that they could have a chance to talk to Lady Bird Johnson.

BS: *So you went from the Chapel at Camp David, down to Antarctica, to the Chapel of the Snows later on for services.*

JG: Yeah. We lived right down below. . . Camp David is right on the hilltop and they had housing in a circle there, and all the people who were working up at Camp David lived in the housing at the bottom of the hill there. And it was so interesting too. All the people that would come up there - ambassadors and cabinet members, and then we'd have people, you know, the European hierarchy come there. It was always going on and we had several vehicles there and because one of the guests of the President would like to see the countryside. So, we'd have to have drivers to drive them around and we had several of the stewards up there that we had to use sometimes for driving and our cars are all stick shifts and they didn't know how to drive them so we had to take them out on the road and train them how to handle a stick shift car. And one thing on most military commands, you know, you have the number of the car on the side like this. Well, so we didn't attract attention, all our cars had Pennsylvania license plates on them and under the hood was the number of the car, so that when we'd take it in for gas, they'd raise the hood, or for repair or something, we had the number of the car. But there was nothing showed on the exterior. You'd see the car drive up and down the streets in the area and you have thought it was just a regular car.

(250)

BS: *So, have any regrets about your Navy career? Any disappointments?*

JG: No. Not really. Like I mentioned earlier, I was in high school. I wanted in the Navy. I don't know why I had an urge for the Navy. Didn't have an urge for the Army, the Marines, or anything else. I always wanted to be in the Navy and when I finally got into them, I was really happy and satisfied.

BS: *I asked you about Admiral Byrd. I forgot to ask you about Admiral Dufek. Did you meet Admiral Dufek?*

JG: Oh yes.

BS: *What did you think of him?*

JG: Oh, he was a nice person. I think of Admiral Tyree, too, that came up, before he left, when I was blasting for the nuclear power plant and he congratulated the whole crew because we were just within hours of finishing this project and he congratulated us for good work on the job. That \_\_\_ well that an Admiral would come up there and do that to us.

BS: *Tyree was a good man.*

JG: Yes.

BS: *So, then you went to South Pole the next year. And that was when Admiral Tyree had left and Reedy took over. Did you meet Admiral Reedy?*

JG: No, I don't think I ever did meet him.

BS: *Then who, how did you go out? You flew out in C-130s, or you flew out when you flew back to Christchurch? That wasn't clear in my mind.*

JG: No, we usually went in 124s.

BS: *124s? The Air Force. Big Air Force plane.*

JG: Yeah. Double deckers, aren't they.

BS: *Yeah. Well, they're still were using them. Flying off the blue ice. OK. Did you have anything to do with the Blue Ice down there? Any of the runway construction?*

JG: No.

BS: *You never did. OK. Well, did you know Larry Gould?*

JG: Yes, he was President of a College in Minnesota. I think it was Carleton College, and me being a Minnesotan, I liked to talk to him about Minnesota. So we'd sit down and things about Minnesota and eat.

BS: *When was he down there? When was that?*

JG: I can't recall right now. There were so many times I was down there. I just can't recall which one.

BS: *Probably came down a number of times.*

JG: Yeah.

BS: *During IGY? Did he come?*

JG: Yeah.

BS: *Yeah. He was President of IGY. Tell me about his personality.*

JG: Oh, I enjoyed him. I thought he had a wonderful personality.

BS: *Flamboyant?*

JG: Yes.

BS: *Good leader?*

JG: I would say he was, yeah.

BS: *Good scientist? Set a good standard.*

JG: Right.

BS: *He was a Byrd Man. Byrd's Chief Scientist. That's what these guys called themselves. Many have said that the Byrd Men, the Goulds and the others who were with Byrd, Paul Siple. You met Paul Siple.*

JG: Yes.

BS: *How did you interface with Paul?*

(300)

JG: Well, before we went down it was very seldom, but when I was charge of the recruiting station in St. Paul, Minnesota, he came to Minnesota to give a speech, so I went over to where he gave the speech and I bought his book, so I took the book along and he autographed it and I have my book over there now on the table there that he autographed for me.

BS: *You see him in Antarctica?*

JG: No.

BS: *You didn't meet him in Antarctica. Did you meet Eddie Goodale?*

JG: Yes, oh yes. I think I rode down one time with him.

BS: *He was working for the staff. Another Byrd Man. They say that our programs today were an outgrowth of the Byrd Expedition. How do you feel about that?*

JG: Well, I'd agree with that.

BS: *You could feel the presence.*

JG: Yeah.

BS: *I'm trying to think. Dr. Jim Zumberge? Did you meet him?*

JG: Yes. He used to be a piano player.

BS: *He was a piano player?*

JG: Yep.

BS: *Are you a piano player?*

JG: No.

BS: *And he played the piano in the where, the club?*

JG: Yeah.

BS: *Where? At Little America.*

JG: Yeah.

BS: *Did you have anything to do with the traverse where they brought the Cats from Little America over to McMurdo?*

JG: No.

BS: *They had a traverse that brought them along.*

JG: No.

BS: *When did Dick Chappel leave? Did he leave after the . . . you wintered over with Dick Chappel, correct?*

JG: That's right

BS: *And you all left after the winter or did he stay on for the summer?*

JG: No, I think he left the same time. About the time that we did.

BS: *I see. And he went off to college.*

JG: Yep.

BS: *OK, well I think that pretty well does it. You've had a wonderful career and met some interesting people and I'm sure that you set a standard for the young men that worked for you too.*

JG: Oh, thank you.

BS: *And it certainly shows. And I appreciate you contributing to this. So, with that, we'll just terminate this.*

JG: To have a man like Captain Howe select me three times, so it makes you think that you were pleasing someone that they want you in three different places. You must be doing a satisfactory job.

BS: *More than satisfactory.*

**END OF INTERVIEW**