Bernard G. Koether

20 October 2002

Brian Shoemaker & Jeff Rubin

Interviewers

(Begin Tape 1A)

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BS: *This is an oral history interview with Ben Koether, taken as part of the Polar Oral History Project of the American Polar Society and the Byrd Polar Research Center on a grant provided by the National Science Foundation. The interview was conducted by Brian Shoemaker and Jeff Rubin at the Glacier Society Headquarters in Stratford, Connecticut, on the 20th of October, 2002.*

OK, Ben, it's good of you to have us down here at your office. Jeff Rubin is here with us as well. We're interested in you. We want to know what your make up is, what took you to Antarctica, and most people do it chronologically, and then how it affected your life afterwards. Obviously, with the Glacier Society, there's something there that has some connections with your past. So, you take it from there. I'll ask questions. Jeff can ask questions, too, and I'm sure we'll have a good interview.

BK: Well, who knows where life starts? I was born in Detroit, and my family moved to Philadelphia and then to New York, all during World War II. During the war, we lived in New Rochelle. I can remember being in the front yard and hearing the beginning and the end of the

war – routine. Then, we moved to Pelham, New York, right around the end of the war. Somewhere in that period of time, around ’45, ’46, ’47, my father joined the yacht club, (Huguenot Yacht Club, New Rochelle, NY) and I got into the sailing class with another young boy named Jack Erhard. (John A. Erhard, Jr.). If you look at the *Glacier web site,* you’ll see that he’s my number 2 guy, (that in the Royal Navy vernacular).

BS: *Real quick, I didn’t ask you how old you are.*

BK: Oh, I’m not very old at all. I guess that makes me 65.

BS: *Sixty-five. I’m 65.*

BK: Born January 23rd, 1937, downtown Detroit – Motown is my hometown. Warren County hospital. So, anyway, I got into the sailing class and they taught us sailing in a little 10’ boat called a penguin. I guess maybe that’s when my Antarctic career began, sailing a penguin. And I matriculated from that boat. I sailed all kinds of boats and we did the racing at Larchmont Yacht Club and all the hot trophies up and down Long Island Sound. We had a lot of fun.

At that time, City Island was still a very big base for building yachts and commercial vessels, they built tug boats & mine sweepers there. I’m not sure exactly the last year they built mine sweepers, but I suspect it was either just prior to or around the Korean War – Minneford Yard Yard, City Island, NY, and there was another one I can’t think of the name right now. And a hundred years before that they had all the clipper ships there, (City Island). So, that’s where I grew up. I learned a lot about sailing in small boats and big boats. I started reading everything I could about the sea. I read all the Hornblower Series books and I read a lot of sea history. And I don’t know how I got into this. I went to my library and I have Scott’s last expedition, 2 Vols. I think the first book that I actually read was *Northward Ho, The Last Voyage of the Karlick*, by Captain Bartlett and Hale. So, I read all these books and read *Into the Frozen South*, by Scott

Marr, the British Boy Scout. So, I had read all these adventure stories and sailing stories and I wanted to go sailing.

So, we would sail over to City Island, (In one of our small boats) and anchored there, at City Island at that time was the *Atlantic* – the vessel that had the speed record for sailing across the Atlantic.

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And she was a derelict and we'd row out there in a dinghy and climb up and walk around the deck. Basically, somebody dragged that off and tried to salvage it and probably went broke and it was cut up into pieces. That vessel was never saved. But her scantlings were very light because she was built as a racing boat. So, she didn't have a lot of longevity in her. Anyway, we sailed around and looked at other boats and one day around '52 or '53, there's the picture up on the bulkhead there,(*referring to a photo on my office wall of the VEMA, Ex-Hussar, Designed by Cox & Stevens and built in 1923 by Burmeister & Wain in Copenhagen for E. F. Hutton and his wife Marjorie Merriweather Post, the 585-ton luxury yacht Hussar had an iron-hull and was at its time the epitome of maritime luxus and glamour in its class.[1] In 1934 Hutton had built the Hussar (II) (later Sea Cloud), an even larger yacht than his first Hussar, and thus sold the yacht to the shipping magnate Georg Ungar Vetlesen who renamed it Vema for his wife Maude….VEMA is stillsailing commercially today under another name*). This three masted schooner was anchored off City Island, and we watched that for a while and said, "Now there's a good looking ship. I think I'd like to sail away on that." So, I stole, (unauthorized borrow, it was returned) a rowboat and I rowed out to the ship, tied up along side the gangway and climbed up on the ship and walked all around. Couldn't find anybody for a long time, and finally, some mate

comes up and says, “What are you doing here?” I said, “I’m looking for a job sailing.” He said, “You’re too young. Go home.”

BS: *How old were you?*

BK: I was 13 or 14. Anyway, I went home. The story of that ship – the ship was the *Vema* – 220 foot topsail schooner built in Denmark. Designed by, I believe it was designed by Cox and Stevens. I’m sure it was Cox and Stevens. Anyway, she had a riveted iron hull and riveted iron masts and all marlin rigging and heavy canvas. Barbara Hutton, (*I was mistaken with the name, I now think she owned it* at *that time*) built the ship in the ‘20s and when World War II came along, she was transferred to the US Navy as a picket vessel and after the war, she was transferred to King’s Point as a training vessel. King’s Point ran it for up to around ’52, when she was sold to a private person named Captain Lou Kennedy. And Captain Lou Kennedy had just finished a year or two, I don’t remember exactly, contract for delivering supplies for the US Navy to Thule (Greenland) and his ship was the *Bear*.

BS: *He had the Bear?*

BK: He had the *Bear*.

BS: *He was Coast Guard?*

BK: No, he was an American citizen living in Nova Scotia.

BS: *Oh, I’ve got you. This was after the war, then, because the Bear was re-outfitted during the war and used in Greenland.*

BK: Right. This would be somewhere between 1949, ’50, ’51, ’52. Lou Kennedy purchased the *Bear* and ran it as a supply ship for whoever . . . I don’t know if it was the Canadian or US Military, but, anyway, he ran it up to Thule. And when the *Vema* came on the market, he sold the *Bear* and he bought the *Vema*.

So, the year after I rode out and asked for the job, I got the job. I believe that was 1953. I went looking for the log book this morning and there was too much going on at home. I couldn't find it. So, it turns out that Lou Kennedy's father lived next door to me. Talk about coincidence. Lived next door to my father. When the message came back to the father that the (this) kid was on board the ship and wanted two go together (join the crew)… and the first thing you know, I got a commitment to sail on the ship the following year and I did, and we sailed that ship under contract – charter – to Lamont-Dougherty Observatory.

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And Kennedy ran the *Vema* for I believe three years, and Bruce Eason and Jim Ewing and others were aboard the ship. And on the trip that I went, we sailed the ship from New York – there's the picture there, sailing down the Hudson River. That picture there with the black hull was when Barbara Hutton owned it, fully rigged, 1920s. This picture here is when Lou Kennedy painted the hull white, top masts were removed and I suppose actually the King's Point probably took the top masts down. But, anyway, that's it sailing down the Hudson River and I'm at the helm. I believe that's the summer of 1953, I think it is. Anyway, we sailed that down the Hudson River, out to the mid-Atlantic following the Hudson Canyon and we went over toward the Azores and then we went up to Nova Scotia, Labrador, Bell Island, back south towards Bermuda, tangled with a hurricane out there and then we sailed back to New York City.

BS: *Did you do work over the Mid-Atlantic ridge there? Ewing and Eason were deeply involved in the charting of that.*

BK: That's exactly what we were doing and I have in my chart table a copy of the chart – the track of that ship for that voyage. Terrific people. Anyway, we had about 26 scientists on board. That number sticks in my mind, I don't know why.

BS: *That was the summer of 1953?*

BK: June to October. I don't remember when we got back. September, maybe, sometime.

BS: *What was your job?*

BK: What was my job? We only had six men sailing that ship – Captain, Mate and a Boatswain, and three kids. That was the crew. Four on four off, six days a week and when you weren't on watch, if it was during 7 to 5, you had to do ship's work –chip paint, whatever. Sunday, you got a day of rest. And we had really good chow. Salted, all you could eat, salted cod, salted pork, dehydrated potatoes and dried eggs. No refrigeration.

BS: *So, you were rubbing elbows with some of the greats in the polar research program and that was 1953.*

BK: Yeah. So, we had the Lincoln Lab people there. We had – I'll never forget, here's a rack,(electronics cabinet) beautiful yacht. And they butchered it all up. Scientists threw all their gear in there and here's this warehouse rack with all the electronics in it with a big sign on it saying, "Danger – 10,000 volts." It was all completely open. It had a big drum in there going around and had all the sonar stuff over the side and it's going , "Bing, bing, bing," sparks flying on the paper and everybody's in there fiddling with it. That was the first prototype of a precision depth recorder.

BS: *Now you carry it in under your arm.*

BK: Yeah. Also, we had a magnetometer and we stopped and we did coring, we had plankton nets, and Nanson bottles. We did the whole nine yards.

*A **Nansen bottle** is a device for obtaining samples of seawater at a specific depth. It was designed in 1910 by the early 20th-century explorer and oceanographer Fridtjof Nansen and further developed by Shale Niskin.*

The bottle, more precisely a metal or plastic cylinder, is lowered on a cable into the ocean, and when it has reached the required depth, a brass weight called a "messenger" is dropped down the cable. When the weight reaches the bottle, the impact tips the bottle upside down and trips a spring-loaded valve at the end, trapping the water sample inside. The bottle and sample are then retrieved by hauling in the cable.

A second messenger can be arranged to be released by the inverting mechanism, and slide down the cable until it reaches another Nansen bottle. By fixing a sequence of bottles and messengers at intervals along the cable, a series of samples at increasing depth can be taken.

The sea temperature at the water sampling depth is recorded by means of a ***reversing thermometer*** *fixed to the Nansen bottle. This is a mercury thermometer with a constriction in its capillary tube which, when the thermometer is inverted, causes the thread to break and trap the mercury, fixing the temperature reading. Since water pressure at depth will compress the thermometer walls and affect the indicated temperature, the thermometer is protected by a rigid enclosure. A non-protected thermometer is paired with the protected one, and comparison of the two temperature readings allows both temperature and pressure at the sampling point to be determined.*

The Nansen bottle has largely been superseded by the ***Niskin bottle*** *and now is no longer under manufacture, though it still sees use.*

[edit] Niskin bottle

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Now, I was really working for the Captain. My job was to sail the ship, but when I wasn't sailing the ship, I was playing with the scientists. And we had a great time. One of the key exercises they did and of course, at that time I had no idea of what was going on, we had these long trailing hydrophones and magnetometers strung off the stern of the ship and up on top of the coach roof on the fantail were boxes of TNT. And we'd go along very slowly under sail, no engines, or the engine turning very slowly, and every so many intervals, Ewing and Hezeen,

Bruce Charles Heezen *(April 11, 1924 – June 21, 1977) was an American geologist. He is most famous as being the leader of a team from Columbia University which mapped the Mid-Atlantic Ridge during the 1950s.*

He was born in Vinton, Iowa, and in 1947 received his B.A. from the University of Iowa (although the Smithsonian and others often mistakenly refer to Iowa State University); in 1952

he received his M.A. from Columbia University, and in 1957 his Ph.D. Heezen died in 1977 during a research cruise to study the Mid-Atlantic Ridge near Iceland aboard the NR-1 submarine.[1]

Heezen interpreted his early work on the mid-Atlantic ridge as supporting S. Warren Carey's Expanding Earth Theory which had been developed in the 1950s.[2]

The Oceanographic Survey Ship USNS Bruce C. Heezen was christened in honor of him in 1999.[3]

or whoever else was there at the time, stood up there with these 2 lb. charges of TNT with a match and you'd hold it over your shoulder and some guy's got a chronometer stop watch and you count down, "Light it, throw it," and you'd throw the TNT over the side. Well, I had no idea what we were doing, until I was reading somebody's book a couple of years ago – one of the submarine warfare books – and that summer they had submarines planted all over the North Atlantic and the Mediterranean and they were listening. Everybody had a predetermined schedule of dropping something, so the other guy could listen to it. So, that's what was going on. So, it was oceanographic work and it was all being paid for by the Navy, one way or the other.

BS: *So, the Navy was the funder of this group.*

BK: Navy or ONR, who knows where the money came from? I don't even know if NSF was around at that time.

BS: *Well, they were around, but they weren't involved in polar research. Not until 1960.*

BK: So, the oceanographic work was being done and it was very crude. It was the early years and they were making things as we threw them over the side and were trying to figure out what was going on. The *Vema* continued after I left in that role under Lou Kennedy maybe one or two more trips and then Columbia bought the vessel from Lou Kennedy. And eventually, the Navy repowered that ship and put a new bottom on it. And that ship is still sailing today as a private vessel in the Caribbean.

BS: *What's the name of it?*

BK: Well, they've changed the name and I can't tell you the name, but I know who owns it. It's owned by Captain Mike Burke and it sails under the charter called the Barefoot Cruises. If you look in any of the magazines, you'll see Barefoot . . . Remember two years ago when the ship sank with all hands in the Caribbean? They had a hurricane over in Hondurus? That was one of his ships. He's got 5 or 6 of these. They put a whole new second deck on the *Vema* with a coach roof. That's all decked over. After Lamont-Dougherty or the Navy bought the *Vema* from Lou Kennedy, that, (*pointing to picture of myself at the helm of an* open *bridge deck on Vema*) was totally enclosed as a pilot house and that's when the new engines were put in and all that stuff. So, that ship was sold by Columbia University/Lamont-Dougherty about 1975ish. And I got wind of it, and I tried to buy it and restore it as a yacht. And well, everybody thought I was a lunatic. If they could go back and have that opportunity again today, I would be swamped with offers for money because that's such a valuable historic ship.

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But, in those days, the only classic sailing ship around was the *Eagle*. That's the only one. But, right after that, at the end of the '70s, this rebirth of historic sailing ships began and a lot of them are now sailing. But, not the *Vema*. The *Vema* is still sailing, but it's a commercial yacht.

I remember when we sailed out of New York harbor, it was my first watch and it was late in the afternoon and I came on watch at 4 o'clock. We were halfway down the Ambrose Channel, so I go up to take the wheel and the Mate says to me, the pilot's there, and the mate says, "Before you come on watch, son, go get me a cup of coffee in the galley, fill it half full and then when you go by the Captain's cabin, you'll see a little wooden keg there with a handle on it. Just take that, (*half full coffee cup*) and top off the coffee and bring it up to the bridge." So, I did

that. And I came up to the bridge and the Mate takes the coffee and says, "Ummm, good. Well done, son." And he hands me over the cup and he says, "Now drink this to prove you're a good sailor." It was half rum. And then I took the wheel and the pilot says something like, "Son, steer sou'west by west a quarter west." Jesus. What the hell does that mean? And I looked at the Mate and I say, "Huh?" He points at the compass which was the old fashion compass, all divided up in eights, and he points at one of these little triangles and says, "That's the one." Of course, I had to learn how to read a compass in the old north-south, south by half and a quarter. Anyway, I had to learn that with the pilot sitting there looking over my shoulder. Probably two hours after that, my stomach started to roll. We hit the swell of the Atlantic.

BS: *So, you were 16 that summer.*

BK: No, I think I was 15 that summer. Don't think I could drive yet. Of the boys in the crew, we were mixed between 14 and 15 because my birthday is in January. I was probably 16 in January.

BS: *Did they pay you?*

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BK: Yeah. I got my pay stubs from Columbia from Lamont. I got a dollar a day, and all I could eat. And cigarettes for 7 cents a pack. And when we got up into the Grand Banks with the Portuguese and we put the dorries over the side, we would row over to the Portuguese vessels and trade cartons of cigarettes for flagons of wine. It was a good time.

*The **dory** is a small, shallow-draft boat, about five to seven metres (15 to 22 feet) long. It is a lightweight and versatile boat with high sides, a flat bottom and sharp bows. They are easy to build because of their simple lines. For centuries, dories have been used for commercial fishing, both in coastal waters and in the open sea. Variant spellings are **doree** and **dori**. The British Royal Navy spells it **dorey** (OED).*

BS: *That was your first cruise and how far north did you get?*

BK: I'd have to get a chart out, but we went to Bell Island and we went some other place above that and I'd have to look, I don't think I know the names of the places. But, I remember Bell Island.

Anyway, on the way back the guys were saying, "What are you going to do?" At that time, my nickname was "BG" and I said, "Oh, I'm going to make a career out of sailing." They (Scientists and engineers from Lamont & Lincoln Labs) said, "Oh no, you've got to go to (*University*) school." And so I got talked into going to college. I got into Brown University and if it hadn't been for those guys from MIT and Columbia leaning on me, I probably wouldn't have ever gone to college.

BS: *Did they encourage you in any other stuff?*

BK: Oh yeah. Because when I found out about the ship (*referring to Vema at* anchor) and the story leaked back around to the people who lived next door, obviously they came to my father and my father put the deal together with the Captain.

BS: *The kids that went with you were from the neighborhood?*

BK: No. One was the Captain's son. And the other kid was from Nova Scotia. I was the only American. The rest were all Canadians. It was a Canadian crew, all from Nova Scotia.

BS: *What did you major in in college?*

BK: I started off in engineering and I switched to economics and business and then I took Navy ROTC.

BS: *You got commissioned out of college?*

BK: Yep.

BS: *I'm surprised after working with Ewing and Eason that you didn't become an oceanographer.*

BK: Well, I thought about that and I'd actually talked about going to Bowdoin and different places and I was convinced by everybody that I knew in business that you couldn't make a living being an oceanographer. There wasn't enough money and everybody's hand to mouth. So, I decided I'd go to school and become a businessman. Anyway, I got to my senior year and I knew I had to get an assignment from the Navy and I was very concerned that I get a good assignment. And I guess I had a good relationship with my commanding officer. At the time, I thought I didn't have any relationship at all, but it was Commander Crozier. And all the people at the NROTC staff, of course, had been through World War II and the NROTC program was all geared around World War II history and technology and experiences. So, I went to the commander and I said, "What kind of a job might I get as my first assignment as an Ensign?" He said, "Well, let me tell you. The *el primo* job last year was to be officer-in-charge of the O club in Hawaii." And I said, "God, what a horrible, what a horrible thing to happen!" To me that would be like going to Fort Leavenworth. Everybody else at Brown thought that was THE thing to get.

(300)

And I said to him, "No, no. I need a real adventure sailing job." So, he said he thought I should write a letter to BUPERS. I said, "What's BUPERS?" So, he told me where to write and I wrote and sent my resume and I sent one of these pictures of me up in the rigging on the *Vema,* and the guy at the assignment desk looked at the resume and he wrote me back a letter and said, "I can give you one of two. Pick the one you want." One was to go on the *Compass Island,* between New York and Bermuda, doing the inertial navigation (*An **Inertial Navigation System** (INS) is a navigation aid that uses a computer and motion sensors (accelerometers) to continuously calculate via dead reckoning the position, orientation, and velocity (direction and speed of*

movement) of a moving object without the need for external references. Other terms used to refer to inertial navigation systems or closely related devices include ***inertial*** **guidance system**, **inertial reference platform**, and many other variations.) development system and the satellite support for the missile program and the other was to go to the Antarctic on the *Glacier*. There was no contest.

BS: *What year was this?*

BK: This was 1959.

BS: *You graduated in '59?*

BK: Yes. I think graduation day was the 30th of May. So, the guy who was at the assignment desk was P.W. Porter, Jr., who became the Captain, so he gave me a choice. He didn't say he was going to be Captain of the *Glacier*. That wasn't in the memo, just these two ships are available. Which one do you want? And I chose the *Glacier*. And when I walked across the quarter deck and went into the Exec's cabin and signed the papers, I never even realized that Porter was the same guy who had signed the letter. I just wasn't paying any attention. So, that was it.

BS: *So, he picked you, more or less.*

BK: More or less.

BS: *And then he became Skipper. Did he know he was going to become the Skipper?*

BK: Yes. I think he did.

BS: *He'd probably already been screened. They do that years in advance. So, he was in a nice position to pick some good officers for his ship.*

BK: He hand-chose every officer on that ship. And only enlisted men were volunteers. Any man who didn't want to go, didn't go. And he rotated some people off. But, we really had a very, very

good group of people. I think about my Navy experiences and every other experience, I think we had an outstanding group. So, that was how I got to the *Glacier*.

BS: *And where did you report in?*

BK: I reported to South Boston Navy Yard. I graduated about the 30th of May. I think I reported aboard about 10 days later. So, the first part of June, I was on board the ship.

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We were in South Boston at what they called the South Boston Annex. She'd been in dry dock because she had . . . we were due for underway training, so let's say we were probably in the Boston Navy Yard from the middle of June to the middle of July. And at some point, we sailed down to Newport. We did some training at Newport and they sent me to, (*Navigation Rules of the Road*) school in Newport and then we sailed to Gitmo for underway training.

BS: *Gitmo is . . . ?*

BK: Guantanemo.

BS: *Guantanemo Bay.*

BK: At that time, the job you get when you first report aboard is you're the first lieutenant gunnery officer. So, I go to Gitmo and here's a ship that spends 9 months of the year in the ice chasing penguins. So, they said we've got to get an E and shoot. And we had a twin 5" 38 forward and two twin 3" 50s and a Mark whatever it was, gunfire director. . . I got myself into that box and we started trying to shove shells out of that cannon and I got to tell you, it was Looney tune, trolley time. We did terrible the first day. We could hardly get a round out of the barrel. I got my ass chewed out so bad. The Exec called me out and I'll never forget that. He called me into his cabin and he said, "That's the most miserable example of gunnery that Gitmo has ever seen. Get your shit together or you're going to be off the ship." So, I got the enlisted

men and the chiefs together and we sat down and I said, "Well, guys, we're not doing really well. This is not going to be good for our careers. We need to figure out how to get these shells in and out of the guns on time." I'll never forget, though. We had a meeting on the fantail and I got up on top of the big towing winch and I talked to them all and I said, "I really need your help guys. We've got to figure this thing out. We'll practice tomorrow and then we'll go back for the final exam on whatever the hell day it was." So, we did it and we got them pumping. We hit the sleds and the drones and shot everything down and we got our E and everybody was happy. So, we drank all the rum we could at 10 cents a drink at the O club. It was good.

Then we came back to New York and visited New York City. We loaded up at Bayonne at the ammunition dump. We went into Brooklyn Navy Yard. We did all that the first summer, so we moved around a lot.

(400)

And then the man who had been the navigator was transferred. There was this little tactical error when we went into Bayonne. The channel is very narrow and the tide is really tricky and the *Glacier* draws 30 feet. And the channel is 30 feet. If you get on the edge of the channel, you can get stuck, and we did. And so he left a couple weeks after that. He was transferred.

BS: *Did you turn all the engines on and put it in reverse and plow out of there or did you have to get towed out?*

BK: Well, we waited for the tide to change and the tug pushed a little and we were not hard aground.

BS: *It's like being in the ice.*

BK: Yeah. Well, everybody gets upset because you pull all that mud into the engines. Anyway, it was not a big deal, but the navigator left. So, the Exec at lunch one day says, "All the officers come to the ward room at 1400. The Captain wants to address the ward room." So, I'm the junior officer. I've only been on board, what, 60 days? So, I'm sitting at the last chair at the table over by the porthole and everybody's smoking a cigarette, having a coffee. The Captain comes in and sits at the head of the table and says, "Well, we're going to the Antarctic, we're going to be gone 9 months and we're going to do this, that and the other. We're going to sail in uncharted water. And I need to pick a navigator." Well, I said, "That's no issue. It ain't going to be me. I've only been on this ship 60 days. You've got to pick one of these lieutenants – probably a guy from Annapolis." So, I tuned out of the conversation and went for some more coffee. Smoked a cigarette and at the end of the conversation, the Captain says, OK and he left. Then there was this big commotion at the table. "Oh Geez, I don't want that job. Did you see what happened to the last guy he got sacked?" "Oh, you get . . . this captain's a son-of-a-bitch, I don't want anything to do with that guy."

BS: *Was this Porter, now?*

BK: Yeah, it was Porter. Oh, man, you should have seen these guys. They were ashen. They were shaking at the table. I'll never forget it. And of course I've got no problem because I'm not in the running, so you guys sweat it out. And this conversation went on for a week. And I just laughed. I went around polishing my brass gun and cleaning the shells and working up on the quarterdeck and just ignoring life because I knew NO way were they going to consider me. So, the Exec calls and says, "Captain's coming down today at 1300 after lunch and he's going to tell us what's next." So, oh, the commotion on board all morning long. The guys were all upset about

it. “You’re going to be navigator! You got it!” “No, no, no, I don’t have it” And I kept saying, “Well, it ain’t gonna be me, so have a nice day guys.”

(450)

And the captain comes in, sits down, has a cup of coffee, takes about 10 seconds – the captain spoke continuously – and he puffed his cigarette and did his formalities and then he said very calmly, “Mr. Koether, I think you’d better report to the bridge. We leave in two days for the Antarctic and I need to have all the courses and stuff worked out.” And my heart stopped. I went ashen and I don’t think I could breathe for days. Somebody said, “Well, what was it like being the navigator?” and I always like to tell everybody, I said, “Have you ever had diarrhea for two years?” So, that was it. I went up to the bridge, got the Chief who was a wonderful guy, wonderful guy. He was the Navy’s best. He had served on the *Iowa* all through World War II and a bunch of other ships and he was not only an extremely good quartermaster, he was a wonderful human being.

BS: *What was his name?*

BK: His name was Z.T. Edwards. And he was a gentleman and he was later fleeted up. He became an officer, I forget what his rank was, but he got to Lieutenant or higher – Lieutenant Commander, I’m not sure what it was. But, anyway, he was a gentleman of the finest caliber. Great guy. We had an extremely good relationship. We had the finest group of quartermasters that you could ever imagine. They were just superb people. We had a good time.

BS: *Go to navigation school?*

BK: No.

BS: *Had you navigated on the Vema?*

BK: I had never done celestial navigation. I just did my job. No, I had the helm and I had to read the taffrail log, (A **Taffrail** is the aftermost railing around the stern of a ship, often, but not always, ornately carved. A taffrail log is an object dragged from the stern of the vessel to calculate the *vessel's speed through the water*.) and fill out the watch book. We were a thin crew.

We had only two guys on watch.

BS: *Ever use a sextant?*

BK: No.

BS: *So, this was all new to you.*

BK: Yeah. So, they sent me to . . . well, of course, you had that, (*Theory of Celestial Navigation*) at Brown in ROTC. You had to take celestial, but I had all the charting and the piloting. All that stuff. I'd been through the power squadron, piloting school and I'd been sailing yachts up and down the east coast and stuff so I knew coastal navigation inside and out, but no celestial and they sent me to Rules of the Road school at Newport and we jumped off.

(500)

So, I took what I knew from Brown and the chiefs and the other guys and we did it. A lot of work doing all that stuff manually. Now you just punch one button on a pocket GPS and you've got it.

BS: *What do you think was behind the Captain Porter's decision in choosing you?*

BK: I haven't the foggiest idea.

BS: *I know.*

BK: You know?

BS: *Yeah. He didn't trust any of the others.*

BK: Could be. I just . . .

BS: *The best job you can give is the CO of the ship. If you don't give it to the right guy, you can almost kiss your career goodbye. And he knew – I don't care what your rank is - that about 9 out of 10 guys can't navigate. They don't have a sense of . . . they don't have in their minds that if the sun's there now . . .*

BK: Well, you're right. I never thought about it then, but kind of thinking back I now know who the other members of the ward room were. I was the only person on that command who did not stay in the Navy. Of course, I'd tell them I'm the only guy still in. I'm still on active duty. The rest of you bums are retired.

BS: *You've got yourself a ship.*

BK: Yeah.

BS: *You now own it.*

BK: I own it.

BS: *Yeah. We're leading up to that, aren't we?*

BK: But, I think that, of course, he knew me through the instructors at Brown. Porter had been the instructor at Brown the year before I got to Brown, so he knew the staff that relieved him at Brown and, of course, they knew the students, so actually, Porter left Brown the year before I came there as a freshman, so he had the goods on me. And I never really appreciated that, but I knew what the other guys were like and well . . .

BS: *Looking back on it, would you have nominated any one of those guys to be navigator? Would you want them to be your navigator?*

(550)

BK: Not if I had another option.

BS: *See my point?*

BK: Because I know how I live and operate a ship and how I run my life. I'm on watch all the time. I never shut down 7 by 24. A good navigator is on watch all the time. You're never off watch. So, I was the only guy who had years of sailing experience in small boats and ships so I was a natural to it. You've got to be at sea for a number of years before you have all that built into your gyro.

BS: *Some guys never get it. And some pilots never got it. I couldn't trust them.*

BK: There's a certain innate sense that goes with that. So, anyway, I have to tell you that Z.T. Edwards and, I can't remember the other guy's name now, the whole group – there was about a dozen guys. Well, we were navigating down to the Ice and one of the first things when we got on the Ice, we had to pull the pit log up. So, the ice was pretty thin. We got a course and were chunking along, so we'd dial in the speed on the DRT and then the ice starts getting heavy, and you get diverted and your course is swinging all over the place. I said to the Chief, "You know, we have to maintain a good DR. What have you been doing?" And he said, "Well, the last guy used to just dial it in. He'd put in his course and the speed and that was it."

(600)

And I said, "Well, don't you think it would be a lot better if we had a guy stationed on the bow throwing wood chips over with a stop watch and doing navigation the way we used to on old sailing ships before we had pit logs and all of that? And just watch the compass and write the bearing down and keep a log so you've got a guy every three minutes marking the bearing and the speed?" "Great idea," he says. "I like that." So, we had all the time quartermaster on the bow and the stern with a stop watch and a pile of woodchips and a guy on the compass writing down the manual bearings and plotting it in the DR and every ziggle-zaggle, we had the details. Then,

when we would meet the other ships and they would say where they were and we would have to tell them how to correct their position, they would say, "Well, how come you think you're right?" And we'd bring them over and show them the log. "Wow, that's a lot of work."

BS: *Keeps you from going aground.*

BK: Well, we want to know where we are.

(End of Tape 1A)

(Begin Tape 1B)

(000)

BS: *Tell me how you got down to the Ice.*

BK: We went South.

BS: *You went south. Which way? Through Panama canal?*

BK: Well, yeah. Panama Canal to the Marquesas, then to Pango-Pango and then to Christchurch. This was October or November of 1959. Byrd went down in '56, right?

BS: *1955-56. Was Stephen Wilson on it?*

BK: What did he do?

BS: *He was the science coordinator.*

BK: No, the science coordinator we had was Phil Smith. He was the lead NSF representative on board.

BS: *Oh, he was on the ship?*

BK: Yeah. He was a civilian. He was NSF. He joined the ship, I think, in the Ice. I've got all the log books here. I think that we sailed the ship down and he flew into McMurdo and came onto the ship. But then he was on the ship that year unless he flew off occasionally. He was there all the time. He was there from our period in McMurdo. That year, 1959, I believe, the ice was very

heavy and there were two breakers in there. There was a Windclass ahead of us – the ATKA – and I think we got into the channel and got the fuel hose hooked up to pump some diesel the day before they, (*McMurdo Base*) ran out of fuel.

BS: ATKA ?

BK: Or the *Glacier*. We had to get the channel in close enough to connect there. (*ARNEB was with us and we moored her after the channel was completed*) I wasn't really privy to the fact that the station was running low on oil, but Porter told me a couple of years ago that we got fuel to them within hours of when they (*McMurdo would have*) ran out. So then from there, we went to Little America.

BS: *Let me back you up a little bit. You left Christchurch. Rough water across the roaring 40s, 50s, 60s?*

BK: I don't remember that it was rough, but I have a cast iron stomach. The *Glacier* would roll, but it would never phase me. There would be half the people sick all of the time and I was just be-bopping around. The Captain and I never got sick, never . . . so I don't remember that that first trip down was particularly rough. I'm sure we had some rough weather. So, we got down there and we did our thing at McMurdo and then we went to Little America.

BS: *So you went straight from Christchurch to McMurdo?*

BK: Right.

BS: *Backed and ram.*

BK: Backed and ram, back and forth with the ATKA .

BS: *Parallel?*

BK: No. We took turns. The ATKA was ahead the channel in some distance, and then we went ahead lead and the ATKA worked behind to take the broken ice, swept it out so it didn't keep

piling up. I don't think we ever broke in parallel. Anyway, I think it was fairly routine. We broke blades. Normal stuff. Went to New Zealand, got new blades. And then we went to Little America. And they were evacuating Little America. She was moving towards the ice and we went in there and salvaged everything we could. I remember going down in the cave with my chief and the Army was there with their over the ground CATS and their sleds. I can show you this. I've got all those slides on my computer. We had a great time. And I don't remember how long we were there. We left there and we headed for the Bellingshausen Sea.

BS: *That was a history-making voyage, was it not?*

BK: Yep. We had . . .

BS: *This must have been about 1960.*

BK: Now, we're in the third week of January and the *Burton Island* was the other icebreaker. We went in there two different times, so I'm getting senile, forgetting everything. Anyway, I believe it was the *Burton Island* the first year. And part of that time, the *Arneb* was with us. I don't remember when we broke away, but Captain McDonald was the Commodore, and I remember at that time that the Commodore's cabin was on 0-1 level in the front of the ship's office. The Coast Guard changed that. What used to be the Commodore's cabin, (*USN configuration)* under the Coast Guard that was radio, electronics and crypto. But, I remember having a meeting in there with McDonald and Phil Smith and the science foundation. I don't remember what other scientists were there – Porter, and the Captain and navigator from the other ships . And McDonald had the chart up on the wall and said, "We want to get to the Bellingshausen. This is my last command. I'm going to retire. Navy's never been able to get there. Let's get there."

BS: *Pep talk.*

BK: Pep talk. So, we had a British guy on board. Brian Roberts.

BS: *Brian Roberts, OK.*

BK: And we had a Chilean on board, and an Argentinean on board. I remember all these guys. And I had a chart that somebody had prepared for me. It was beautiful. It had the overlay tracks of every ship that had ever sailed between McMurdo and Palmer across that, including the Belgian and the Russians who were frozen in. All those tracks.

BS: *I want to inject something here. Brian Roberts later was the British negotiator for the Antarctic Treaty.*

BK: So, we spent a lot of time with these guys going over the US sailing directions and the British sailing directions and all the charts and since I was the Commodore's navigator, if you will, I had to pick the attack plan and the Commodore said, "Let's go there," and I said "We'll, be there next week. No problem." And we did. We sailed right in. Open water.

(100)

You've never seen those pictures, huh? We sailed right in to Landfall Peak, right on the tip of Thurston Island. Put the choppers up and the boats over the side, mapped the coastline, put a couple of theodolite, (*A theodolite (IPA: /θiːɒdəlaɪt/) is an instrument for measuring both horizontal and vertical angles, as used in triangulation networks.* ***...)*** stations up on the land and triangulated it and did radar mapping and photography and all that stuff. That was an exciting time.

BS: *It was open water.*

BK: Open water.

JR: *Didn't Captain McDonald write about that for National Geographic?*

BK: Yeah. His article in National Geographic. He flew over in a helicopter with some particular group of people and got his picture taken there in front of the escarpment near Landfall Peak and that was it. We were sailing around there and after that I remember, we went there twice, I think it was the first year, anyway . . . the wind changed direction as it does down there, you know. So, after sailing around in open water for a period of time, the next thing you know, we're under solid ice and with every engine on the line going like hell, we couldn't make ten feet. And there were a lot of upset people. We were on the way to becoming another Shackleton.

BS: *You mean you were locked in.*

BK: We were beset. So, we were stuck a couple of days. I don't remember exactly. I went to the Captain and said, "It seems to me, Sir, that maybe we should put in the log that we're beset." He said, "Mr. Koether, while I'm Captain of this ship, we are never beset. We are cruising and maneuvering independently as before."

BS: *Was this Porter or McDonald?*

BK: Porter. I never spoke to McDonald. Only twice. During the staff meeting at the beginning when we went in and the staff meeting when we went out, and one other time. One other time when we were going down the coastline. He was up there with his party and all the scientists and all the diplomats and all the visitors and I couldn't see out of the pilot house. Couldn't navigate. And I was a little upset and under a little bit of stress and of course, everybody's wearing fur hats and parkas and you couldn't tell if the guy was an Admiral or a ship's cook. There were so many people up there with cameras. And I went out of the pilot house and I yelled, get your blankety-blank, and I used every word that I could think of, off my bridge. And then when they started coming by, I saw it was Commodore McDonald. I thought, "Oh my God. This is the end of my

career." And Porter came right over and he said, "Don't worry, you did the right thing. Safety of the ship is first. Get all the tourists off the bridge. You did the right thing."

BS: *McDonald did, too.*

BK: Yeah. He was gone. But, those were the three times I spoke to McDonald. Except that we had a liberty part on the Ice one time that was a sort of off-book thing.

BS: *You can drink on the Ice.*

BK: Yeah. we did a lot of drinking on the Ice and he did a lot of drinking and I was appointed to be the mess boy. I think it was New Years Eve. And we took the Weasel and we went someplace. God only knows where it was, over towards the New Zealand camp. And there was a special party. I took the booze over along with the chopper pilot. There's a picture of us in the Weasel. We were the delivery boys.

(150)

And so I guess I had a fairly good repport. I'd forgotten all about this until I saw one of the officers here at a reunion and I just remembered this now, that evidently somebody – it was either the Commodore, it must have been the Commodore, or somebody from Dufek's staff – anyway, they liked to play the piano and evidently we were well lubricated and I was sitting at the piano with the guys singing and slapping them on the back and pouring his drinks and having a great old time and the rest of the *Glacier* ward room was appalled at my behavior with the Commodore and the Admiral's staff. We were just having fun. When I met them this last summer they all told me they thought I was going to be court martial for your behavior with the Commodore's staff. And I said, "We were all having fun!"

BS: *They like the sailors and everybody to be comfortable*.

BK: Yeah. So, I'm easy. I get easy very quickly.

BS: *So, here you are beset.*

BK: So, we're beset and the Captain says we're underway. So, I would go to the log book and I have to put out the SITREP, and so I had to move the decimal point or the zero a tenth of a degree and I did that for three, four or five days, whatever, maneuvering independently as before. And some clerk in Washington filed it until after 4 or 5 days, somebody with some degree of intelligence happened to compare the SITREPS and realized that there was a decimal point game going on and we were not cruising independently as before at all, we were stuck. And we had on board the prototype,.. for the one-off… whatever, single side band radio which was a cabinet about three feet wide and six feet high – whatever the minimum height was just to get through the passageway – 5 feet high. It had a telephone (*handset*) instead of an earphone and a mike. It had a telephone and nobody ever used it and then I guess the bell or the light went off or whatever and there was a telephone call because this is now February the 15th of 1961, and Kennedy has just been sworn into office on the 23rd of January, more or less, right? So, Kennedy's been in office three or four weeks and the naval attaché to the president gets wind of the fact that there's a ship stuck and he gets on the phone and wants to know what the hell is going on. I'm sure he used a little expletive. I did not have my ear to the phone the first time, so I don't know exactly, or whatever . . . And people were a little upset. And they started going through the calculations. Do we have enough food and fuel on board and what's going to happen if you can't get out? Well, we didn't have enough food and fuel. Have to keep 375 men going. So, they talked about an overland traverse, meet up with the Army and this and that and all these different notions.

BS: *This is with the White House.*

BK: Yeah, well . . . whoever was on the other end of the phone, but I'm sure it came from DOD someplace. But, I was told it was Kennedy's Naval attaché on the phone.

(200)

BS: *So they were helping you plan your contingency.*

BK: Yeah. And Ross Hatch or Winton – have you talked to Matt Winton?

BS: *I don't know either one of those guys.*

BK: Well, Winton was the Exec and he lives in Jamestown, Rhode Island. And Ross Hatch lives in Virginia, outside of Washington somewhere. Ross is very active in the *Glacier*. Winton is not active at all.

BS: *Ross Hatch?*

BK: Yeah, Ross Hatch. Capt. Ross Hatch was an Annapolis graduate. I think he's three years older than I am. His last command was the *Belknap*.

(*USS Belknap (CG-26) - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*

USS Belknap (DLG-26/CG-26), named for Rear Admiral George Eugene Belknap USN (1832-1903), was the lead ship of her class of guided missile cruisers in the ***..)***

He rebuilt the *Belknap*. He didn't destroy it. He rebuilt it. And then he retired and he had some liaison job between Johns Hopkins and the Navy Advance Missile Laboratory. He's still somewhat active in that.

BS: *Well, anyway, you're still stuck and the White House is . . .*

BK: Yeah, and we didn't have enough equipment to walk out. We didn't have enough to stay. So, any plan they came up with was an iffy situation. So, I like to tell the story, it seemed appropriate that the Commodore would call a meeting and say that we've got to get out of here. What the hell are you doing about this navigation. And my reply was, "Well, Commodore. You

said you wanted to get in, and I got you in, but when you gave me the order you never said anything about getting out. I'll have to rethink this." The truth of the matter is that I went down to my cabin and I contemplated on the subject for a long time and I said to myself, "There's only one way to get out and that's to get the wind to blow the ice out. So, I sat there and prayed for three days for a wind shift. And in three days, I got what I prayed for. I prayed for 125 mph wind from due south and that's exactly what we got.

BS: *Who did you pray to? God? Christian God?*

BK: I prayed to God and there's just only one God. I mean I happened to have a Christian Bible, but I had my St. Christopher medal on my desk and I've always had a St. Christopher medal everywhere I went on all my boats.

BS: *You're Catholic, eh?*

BK: No, no. I'm Episcopalian, but that's Catholic. I believe in the saying that believing is receiving and if you believe hard enough and you pray hard enough, you will get what you want or what you need.

BS: *What direction did the wind come from?*

BK: From the South. When we quit logging it or trying to estimate what the wind was, there was a blizzard and we couldn't see anything. I don't know if all the gear froze. I don't remember. I would say it was a good 125 knot wind anyway.

(250)

The ice was all gone. We had the ships lashed together with mooring and wire and we had the starboard screw on our ship and the port screw on the other ship turning and we had our bows into the ice. We couldn't hold position. The ships were blown apart.

We couldn't keep them together.

BS: *Parted the cables?*

BK: Parted the cables and away we went. And it lasted for quite a while – a day and a half or whatever. Anyway, when it finally blew out, we got out on deck and chipped all the ice off and there was no ice in sight and we sailed away.

BS: *You had the ice freeze.*

BK: Yeah, there was ice all over the superstructure.

BS: *And it was you and the Burton Island.*

BK: I believe it was the *Burton Island.*

BS: *Where'd you go?*

BK: After that?

JR: *I remember reading that someone on that cruise coined the phrase "phantom coast."*

BK: Well, the phantom coast was there before we got there, I think. I don't know who coined the phrase. It might have been McDonald, it might have been Byrd. I was thrust into that situation and I didn't have a lot of time. I was focused on doing my job and I wasn't spending a lot of time socially with the rest of the crew. I was focused on serving the Captain and that was it. I had my quartermaster and the Captain and I had no time for anybody else. So, my knowledge about what was happening on the ship and around and the social life was very limited. Now Hatch, the Exec and Hatch and myself had the three cabins on the main deck together on the starboard side and Hatch had a lot of time, more time to converse and he kept a more detailed log. So, he might have a little better slant on the romantic part of the story. I don't remember anything about the Eights coast or the phantom coast at all. Thurston Island and the Eights coast were written on the chart. It was actually called Thurston Peninsula on the original

chart, so the rest of that rhetoric I really don't know anything about. I read it in McDonald's article, so who gave it that name, I really don't know.

BS: *So, you got out of there. Back to Little America?*

BK: No, no. The first year we got Little America out, and the second year we actually saw an iceberg with part of the camp hanging out of the side of it. Now, the second year, what was the year that we went to get Fuchs? Was it the first year or the second year?

BS: *I think Fuchs came in 1959. 1960, he came into McMurdo.*

BK: So, when we were in the Bellingshausen the first year, I think that's when we were called to rescue Fuchs and the second year when we were stuck, we just went home. But, the first year – when Fuchs sent out the Mayday . . .

(300)

BS: *Now you're talking when Fuchs was on the ship and they were stuck.*

BK: Yeah. When we went to get the KISTA DAHN.

(*Kista Dan *1953-57 - Australian Antarctic Division
Built at Aalborg Vaerft in 1952 by the Danish firm J Lauritzen Lines, the Kista Dan *was an experiment in many ways. With a welded ice breaker hull and a* ***...)***

Was that in '61? Or in '60? But, anyway, we were at Thurston Island when the Mayday came in from Fuchs and from the Argentinean, the *General San Martine*. The *San Martine*, actually, was up on a rock and she had a hole in her. She'd been holed.

BS: *San Martine was the . . .*

BK: Was the Argentinean icebreaker. She was kind of like a wind class. Not that she was really in any danger of sinking because she had enough compartments, but she did have a hole in her.

She did take some water. But, she was pinned up and my recollection is that that would be 1961 because the same storm, when that storm came up from the south, the same storm that freed us up from the ice, piled the ice up on the peninsula and pushed Fuchs and the *General San Martine* up against the beach. And so we went north and around and had to come back down and break through to them and we got to the *San Martine*.

BS: *This was over on the peninsula?*

BK: Yeah. They were coming out from – what's the name of the British . . . ? Stonington?

BS: *Stonington Island, yeah. They were in Marguerite Bay?*

BK: Marguerite Bay. And Fuchs was really buried. He was SOL. I mean to tell you, the ice around him was 20-30 feet of ice. He was not ever going to go nowhere. We had a hard time pushing through that stuff. It was very heavy. And Porter was driving the ship hard to get through there and Fuchs was trying to con us. He was trying to tell Porter how to run the ship. Porter didn't like that. Fuchs was worried that as we came to break the ice, we were going to put a hole in the *KISTA DAHN*. But then he was telling us to come save him, but you know , , , don't push too hard. Well, that's ridiculous. You've got to break to get to him. Anyway, we got there. We did a circle around him and put a wire on him and started to tow him out of there.

BS: *Funny he didn't write about any of that stuff.*

BK: He didn't write anything about being stuck and being saved.

BS: *He only writes about hero stuff.*

(350)

BK: Right. This was not part of the journey and the trek, the official trek was over. This was going home and he doesn't want to tell anybody he almost died on the way home, almost lost the whole thing. So, he could just leave that out, which he did.

BS: *So, here you are in Marguerite Bay and you get Fuchs out. Did he bawl you out?*

BK: Yeah, they came alongside after we got the ship into some free water. He came over and all the cigarettes and booze went back and forth and the normal stuff and then Fuchs transferred to the *Glacier*. He sailed with the *Glacier*. Porter wanted to get home. He wanted to get to Buenos Aires and get home. And Fuchs wanted to stop in the Falklands. And so, he called ahead and got it set up to go to the Falklands. So, we went into Port Stanley on the way home. Now, we did have a number of rough trips across the roaring 40s and 50s, but I believe that the worst trip was, I don't think Porter hit his head that year when Fuchs was aboard. I think it was the year before when we came up from Buenos Aires. We were in a huge gale for about 3 or 4 days and we hove to and I remember the Chief and I trying to write in the logs how high the waves were. And at that time, you go to the old outage. There was a theory in there that it was impossible to have a wave higher than 60 feet. So, we would put in the book, 60 feet. And I remember talking to the Chief and saying, "It seems like these waves are a lot bigger than 60 feet." I'm watching the ___meter and the ___meter is going up 60, 80,100 feet. He disagreed, but I'm sure we were in 80 foot waves. We would go down and the Captain – this is confidential, he said you can't write this until after he's dead – the Captain said nobody can go to the crow's nest.

(400)

So, when the Captain was in his cabin, I went up to the crow's nest and when the ship would go down, you couldn't see across the top of the wave. So, we were heeling over. The biggest roll we took was 68 degrees, and it was pretty bad. And everybody was lashed in their bunk except the minimum watch in the engine room and the bridge watch. And one of those nights, Porter was thrown out of his bunk and hit his head on the bulkhead or whatever and hit the buzzer and we went down there and there was blood all over the cabin. I mean everybody thought he was dead

or going to die. Dr. Filowitz who was the ship's doctor who lives up here in Hartford, Stanley Filowitz, I saw him for the first time at my house this summer. We had a party at my house. He came down. Actually, he doesn't live in Hartford any more. He has a summer home in Westbrook and he lives in Florida. He's retired. Stanley was a GP and he retired and had a bout with cancer. When I first was approached to do this *Glacier* thing and I started getting the list of officers and I started calling around, Filowitz's wife told me that he had cancer and the nurse told me that he had cancer and it took me a long time to get him on the phone. He was ready to take the final count. He didn't think he was going to make it. He's fine now.

BS: *What did he have?*

BK: Some lymphoma.

BS: *Well anyway, you got Filowitz attending Porter.*

BK: Filowitz and the corpsman wedged themselves in the threshold of the door to the cabin back to back with their legs intertwined with the Captain in his lap and he stitched up the captain's head.

BS: *Laid it open, huh?*

BK: Oh, he was really laid open. I have a photograph somewhere of the captain with his head all bandaged up and smoking a cigarette in the bunk. So, he was officially relieved of command for, I don't know, 24-36 hours, and Winton took command of the ship – Matt Winton. Matt Winton almost never came to the bridge. He did the administration, ran everything down below and the Captain ran the bridge. They had a very tight command relationship. Got along very well. Everything on the ship ran very smoothly.

BS: *He relieved him for a couple of days.*

(450)

BK: Yeah. So, Winton took command, came up and sat in the Captain's chair and we rode out the storm and when the waves were down deep enough, we bore off and away we went. You know, it's interesting. I've only laid to three times in my career at sea. First on the *Vema* off of Bermuda in a hurricane, and the second time on my sailboat. I had a 50 foot sailboat. I did that off of Bermuda. The *Vema* was in September and the *Aldebran*, which was my boat, was like the first or second of November, and then on the *Glacier*, it was off the Horn there in March. Three times. I've got some movies. I took 16mm movies and some slides of it. But, the movies and slides can never relate the terror of that storm.

From there, we went up to the Falklands. Went into Port Stanley. Fuchs had arranged the official entry and the governor threw the port open. We were the first US Naval vessel to enter the port since the end of World War II. The town went berserk. I think the crew did too.

BS: *Stanley's a party town. They've got more pubs per capita than Ireland, don't they, Jeff?*

Jeff: They've got a share.

BS: *Did they have the Globe then? Remember the Globe?*

BK: What I remember was that there was one pub and it was typical English with mahogany panel walls, a little bar, a guy wearing a black jacket and white shirt and tie and a towel over his arm, very proper. And we went in and we had our draft beer or neat scotch, one or the other, or gin. I'll never drink that horrible drink. I hate gin. I don't know how anybody can drink that foul mixture. The British seem to like it. Then after the afternoon of shopping and I bought a sealskin cap, we went over to the governor's house for cocktails – reception – that white house that sits at the end of the road there that the Argentina's occupied. Boy, when that Argentinean invasion came, everything came back. We went over there. Had a nice time with the governor. He had a charming wife. Lovely antiques. What I remember about that visit was that I admired all the

beautiful marine antiques that were scattered all over the house and I had a marine antique collection. And I had a couple of drinks in me so I was trying to chum some of the antiques off of them.

(500)

BS: *Belonged to the government, I imagine.*

BK: I suppose. I don't know. We had a good time. Beautiful stuff. To die for. Then we went to Buenos Aires and to Rio. Buenos Aires was good. Rio was better. And I think it was on the first year, in 1960 on the way home and there were floods in Brazil and Eisenhower diverted us. Yeah, that would have been in 1960. And we went in there and flew in blankets and food and I think we even left the LCVPs there. And that's when Porter was flying the Bell up the river by ___ and there was a telegraph wire or power line or something across the river. The pilot didn't see it, rotor hit it, flipped the chopper over, down she went into the drink. And everybody got out, but we lost the chopper.

BS: *Wow. That's really lucky.*

BK: That's really lucky. If you read all that literature somewhere I've got an article we wrote that says there's an angel watching over us and I believe that we had an angel with this crew of the ship. We lost a chopper at Thurston Island, too. It blew a piston and it went into the snow. They blew the piston when the plane was flying in the right direction and the right angle. She just sat right down in the soft snow and the fire went out and everybody got out. And the other chopper was right behind and picked everybody up. The one from the other ship.

(550)

And then we had the shore party that was ashore when that hurricane came up and Brian Roberts and the other 5 or 6 men when the tent caught on fire and we got all those guys out alive. Then

we lost the chopper in the river there. Those are pretty good odds. Lose two choppers and a shore party and you don't lose anybody. That was miraculous. So, I believe in these angels. They led me in to Thurston and they got me out and these angels have been around ever since and all during this resurrection of the ship, little things will happen that are just spectacular. Like, I went out to your first meeting, Brian, and met Vaughn.

BS: *Norman Vaughn.*

BK: Norman. I'd never met Norman. Didn't know anything about him. And we were chatting and I asked him to autograph a book and he opened it up and he said, "Well, who will I autograph it to?" I said, autograph it to my wife, Joan Goodale. And he said, "Goodale. Where's she from?" I said, "From Boston." Oh, well, he told me about Eddie Goodale. That's her cousin. So, I had never known anything about the Goodale connection and neither did my wife.

BS: *Was Eddie in Christchurch? Working out of Christchurch when you went through?*

BK: No. Because Eddie had been there the year – well, Eddie was there in 1956 with Byrd. I have a photograph with all of them there. But, he may have been around later on, but I didn't know anything about him. She had never known anything about that side of the family. So, that's just one of the things. Just in our travels, we'll bump into somebody like Charlie Stetson. I bumped into him and he'd been up in Labrador working with the Grenfell Foundation and all that kind of stuff and he served on our board until he passed away just a couple of months ago. And now, we're in the process of getting Yale University to come on board with us as an official thing. It's not completely done yet, but we've got a medical team from Yale and four people from the Yale business school volunteering to help us put our business plan together.

(End of Tape 1B)

(Begin Tape 2A)

(000)

BS: *This is Tape 2 of the Koether interview, taken at Koether's office for the Glacier Society on the 20th of October, 2002. How many trips did you make on the Glacier to Antarctica?*

BK: I made two trips. Two round trips.

BS: *That was your entire career in the Navy?*

BK: That was my entire Navy career. I was committed to be a career officer and I was all signed up. I was supposed to go to whatever ship it was – a new guided missile – one of the best ships the Navy had. We were coming out of the ice in May of '61, so I'm serving as the navigator and the crypto officer. And we were headed for the Windward Passage on, I think it was June the 6th, or June the 5th. That date mean anything to you?

BS: *1961.*

BK: Yeah.

BS: *June 5th?*

BK: Bay of Pigs.

BS: *Bay of Pigs, oh. OK.*

BK: Nobody on my ship remembers this. Nobody, except me. This is how well the Navy has everybody trained. We got an operational immediate top-secret message. I could not break the code. Chief could not break the code. The Exec could not break the code. So, did you ever serve as a Crypto Officer?

BS: *No. I had somebody do it.*

BK: So you know what the sentence is if you can't break the code? Right? Not good. You're supposed to break the code and take action within, I forget what the . . . . So, this is the end of my career, right? Then, when I got to Boston, I got an immediate promotion and the Navy got an

immediate resignation. I said I don't need to spend the rest of my life with this bullshit. That was it. I went civilian. On the spot. And I've told that story a couple of times and in not very, I think it was the last two years, I met a guy who said that he had met somebody else with the exact same experience. He had told that same story. Same day, same time, same station.

BS: *You never stayed in the Reserves?*

BK: No, because I got out and I got a job, I got married and my first job was in South Dakota and there were no Navy Reserve stations anywhere in South Dakota. So, I just said, I don't know how I could do both. I'm really sorry I didn't, but I guess in the end of the day, it doesn't make any difference. I'm just missing a pension because I stayed at sea sailing boats and kept a commercial license and now, look at me, I'm back at it 7 by 24, so . . .

BS: *You retired now from the business?*

BK: I'm still the chairman of the company here that hosts us, yes, but I spend all my time on the *Glacier* – 100%.

BS: *You don't make decisions. You go to Board meetings?*

BK: I go to Board meetings. The man who runs the company sits in that office over there and I listen until he closes the door.

BS: *What's the name of the company?*

BK: The name of the company is Fast.

BS: *What's the business?*

BK: We build digital process control computers – special purpose stuff.

BS: *OK, I ask a lot of people and yours is quite obvious, what did your experience on the Ice do for you? How has that affected your life since?*

(50)

BK: Oh, I would say that other than my marriage, it's probably the most significant event of my life. And maybe starting the company. But, I would say that, you know, well I don't know where it begins and ends. It's a continuum, you know. Maybe the *Vema* was the most significant event, because that's where I met all the guys, the scientists that got me interested in science and, obviously I had an interest in the sea, but they got me to go to college, and that got me in the Navy, and that got me to the Antarctic and then, the Navy screw-up made the decision for me that I should have my own ship, if you will. So, I got out of the Navy and got an MBA and in three years, or four years, I started this business. So, I built this company from . . . started it in my garage with my wife and built it up to, you know, by today's . . . by the dot com-ers, this is a nothing except that we build things here and we service customers in over 100 countries and . . .

BS: *And you still exist.*

BK: And we still exist.

BS: *Sell stock or personally held?*

BK: It's all personally held, all personal family held. My son is working here, along with all these other people. We have an office in London, an office in South Africa, and an office in Tokyo, so I spent the last what ? . . I've had this company for 34 years now, I think it is. And I've spent 85% of my time traveling internationally on the road all the time. So, I'm used to working 7 by 24. Never stop and I still do. I just changed . . . when that Chief called me up and invited me to the beer party, and I saw all the guys from the ship that I hadn't seen since . . . I think it was 39 years.

BS: *What Chief?*

BK: It was Chief Quartermaster James Tinch, and I had not known James Tinch. He was the Quartermaster plank owner on the *Glacier*. He turned it over to Edwards, who I served with.

Unfortunately, Edwards passed away, so I never saw him again. But, Tinch knew Edwards very, very well and evidently had spent a number of years trying to find me, and finally got to me. And Tinch was very dedicated to the ship, along with Chief McConnell, who was the chief engineman, and Chief Feeney, who was the supply guy. Those three Chiefs organized and got the crew membership together and put on the reunion. And at the end of the reunion, this (excuse the expression) son-of-a-bitch Tinch, he gets up in front of everybody and he says, "It's a great reunion! We're going to have another reunion in two years, and it'll be in St. Louis. And we have one last piece of business. The board of directors of the crew association have had a meeting and we've appointed Ben Koether to save the *Glacier*." I was sitting next to the Captain at the time and I said, "No, no, no. Hey, Jim, they cut that ship up. It's razor blades. I know all about that. They trashed it back in the late '80s." He said, "No!" He reached into his pocket and he pulled out a photograph. A whole stack of photographs. He said, "We were on the ship two months ago, and we took all these pictures." I said, "Go to Hell." You know, I'll be damned. I said, "Well, OK, that's fine Chief, but I'm going to retire. I bought myself a Harley-Davidson and I'm going to ride out in the West and I got my tent in the saddlebag and I'm going to ride the Blue Ridge Trail and I'm outta here."

The Chief said, "Oh no, you're not. You owe it to the crew of the ship." So, this went back and forth, back and forth, and I tell you Brian, this son-of-a-bitch was unrelenting. I mean he would call me at dawn, he'd call me in the afternoon, he'd call me in the office here. And he would send me memorabilia and you know, he was just a tenacious son-of-a-bitch.

(100)

And so one morning, I'm at home and this was just when the internet was starting and I click on my mail and there is a color photograph of me on the bridge with a sextant. Oh, now I

see, you're really "getting" to me. So, I like to tell a story when I'm making a speech and I'm trying to keep the audience on edge. I throw in a few one-liners, but my wife gets very upset with me. I always tell everybody that I was still going to say no, but then the Chief called up and said, "We have your wife's e-mail address and we've got more pictures!" Then, I said, "Yes." That makes a good story when you're talking to sailors, but it's not really true. So, anyway . . . I did say to the Chief, I said, "OK, look. You really feel strongly about this. So, I tell you what I'll do. I'll get a professional group of men who know ships and surveying and stuff and we'll go out to the ship. Make a deal with me. If we survey the ship and we determine that it's not salvageable, will you leave me alone?" He said, "Absolutely." So, then started the long process of how do we get permission to go see the ship? And so I called the Coast Guard. And they said, "Oh, we don't own the ship. We gave it to the Navy." So, I call the Navy and they say, "We don't own the ship. We gave it to the Coast Guard." So, this triangle went around for quite a while.

BS: *This was after it was Suisun Bay?*

BK: Oh, yes, she had been there for years. And I called the Maritime Administration and they said, "No, we don't own it. We're a caretaker." So, I went from the Navy to the Coast Guard, to the Maritime and nobody owns it. Typical. I called congressmen, I called . . . wore my finger to the bone. This took months.

BS: *What year was this?*

BK: Three and a half years ago. Where are we?

BS: *1999?*

BK: They called me, I think it was in August, and then the first reunion I went to was probably end of September, October. No, maybe it was '98, because now we're into '99, so it really began in '99. Yeah, it was the fall of '98.

BS: At *the reunion.*

BK: Yeah. And then we got aboard the ship in the spring of ’99. So, we went through the NAVSEA people that are in charge of the historic Navy ships like the *Intrepid* and the *Kennedy* and all that sort of stuff and the NAVSEA program is a program where the Navy has joint ownership of the vessel and it’s more to appear and you can’t do anything unless the Navy says it’s OK. I didn’t want any part of that. And then, Brian, you told me about your episode and I picked up the copies of correspondence with Gloria Corvallo and I chased her down and I went through this Navy/Coast Guard thing and I finally got to the Secretary of the Navy’s office and I forget the name of the Captain, but there was a captain up there and his job was, or one of his jobs anyway, was to control the inactive fleet roster. And I spent a lot of time on the phone with him. And he said, “We don’t give ships away. The Navy doesn’t give ships away. You can’t have the ship.” And I said, “Captain, you and I are going to spend a lot of time on the phone and when we’re all done, before you retire, you’re going to sign the ship over to me. I know that may sound very brash, but we’re going to go through a process together. You’re going to get to know me and you’re going to have plenty of time to check me out.

(150)

So, when you’re all done, you’re going to feel very good that I’ve given you this opportunity to save this great asset for America. And this is going to be probably the most significant thing you ever do in your career and you don’t have much time left. You have to understand that I can drill down and I can get very deep and I’ll know as much about you as you’ll know about me when the process is all done.”

BS: *This was . . . what was his name? (Capt Gary Hall, USN)*

BK: I don't remember. I have to go dig in my archives. It was so long, this battle has been so long. So, then I got to the Chief of this Captain in Washington. I spent a lot of time on the phone with the Chief and I told him the whole story and I said, "You've got to help me, Chief. This is for the enlisted men. For everybody who served. So, here's the way we're going to play this. Every time the Captain comes across through the front gate, you'll know about it. Give me his daily routine. Where he goes, the whole deal. And then you call me when he sits at his desk. Call me and I'll call him. I want to keep the heat on the Captain, and I want to be in front of his face every time he turns around." He said, "OK." So we worked that. And for four months, this captain . . . I got to know his wife, and his kids, his whole career path and he would hit his desk and the phone would ring and I would say, "Good morning, Captain. Ben Koether." And we went through this. It went on for a long time.

Now this is a true story. One day I went down to have a cup of coffee in the kitchen with my wife and she said, "You're spending an awful lot of time on this ship and not enough time on the business and I'm concerned. I don't think you're making any progress." I said, "Oh . . . well . . . I think we are, but it's slow." She said, "Well, if you don't take care of it, I will!" And that was kind of a flip remark that she was making because she wouldn't really do anything, but it gave me a great idea. So, I went back and I got on the phone and I called the Captain. It had occurred to me that there was a story that would make very good fodder for the Captain and the Secretary of Defense. And I said, "Captain, we've been spending a lot of time in this dialogue and by now you've had a chance to check out me, check out the board of directors, all the other officers and the guys from Annapolis who are involved and the politicians, and you ought to know that if we get this ship, the Navy's going to be very proud and this ship is going to be 4.0 and everything's going to be great and nobody's going to be unhappy. I tell you what. You're

coming up very close to retirement and I'm getting pretty old. I don't have a lot of time left. And my wife said to me this morning that if I couldn't get this ship, she would. God, do you know what that would do to my life? My life would be miserable, if my wife could get the ship that I can't get, that would be humiliating. You wouldn't want to do that to me. Let me just tell you a story about my wife. I'm not a very important guy. I'm just a little business man. I travel around and spend all my time on the road flying around the world and one day I was in Europe. Hadn't seen my wife in weeks, so I called in the office and I said, "I'd like to talk to my wife." And the girl says, "Well, you can't talk to her because she's not here." I said, "Well, where is she?" "Well, she's in Washington." "Oh. Well, where is she?" "Well, I'll give you the phone number, but I don't think you can get through to her – 202/ something 1400," and you know what that number is.

(200)

That's the White House. So, I dial the White House and the girl says, "White House," and I said, "I want to speak to Mrs. Koether," and she says, "Well, you can't," so I said, "Why not? She's my wife." "Well, she's in a private lunch with Admiral Zumwalt and President Reagan." I said, "Oh, OK. I'll talk to her when she's finished with those guys." I said, "Captain, you gotta help me, because I don't have the power. I was never invited to the White House to have dinner with the President and Zumwalt, but can you imagine what my life's going to be like?" He said, "I tell you what. Yeah, I can appreciate your situation. Why don't you give me a couple of days, see if we can't move this?" Two days later, he called me. He said, "I got good news for you. The Secretary of the Navy has signed the title of the ship over to the Secretary of Transportation. It's now your problem. It's your opportunity. We're off the hook. The Coast Guard's off the hook. Everybody's off the hook. You have to go to Congress and get a bill

through Congress and if you can do that, the ship's yours. Have a nice day." I said, "Captain, have a great retirement. I'll see you later. Bye." And that was it. I felt we had it. All I had to do was go to Congress. I felt like that would be pretty easy and it wasn't too bad. We got the bill in and Clinton signed it two years ago almost today. And the bill said, you've got 24 months to remove the ship and we're going to do it in 24 months and a week or two.

BS: *What's the date?*

BK: We think it's the 18th of November. It's not 100% certain. Monday the 18th. We seem to be floating in on that day.

BS: *And that overrun is OK as far as the bill . . .*

BK: Yes. Well, there's been 8 million details to line up, but this last week, we got about $50,000 or so, maybe more - $70,000 of donations.

BS: *You got the gunwale spec on it?*

BK: Pardon?

BS: *The gunwales that they cut off?*

BK: Oh, yeah. I have everything here. The ships's log office is over here. (*in my office*) I've got every document on the ship.

(Phone rings. This is the Admiral. "Yes, Maam." . . . .

(Interview continues)

So, last week, we got six new 8 inch, 600 foot mooring lines. We got two tugs. We got a pilot.

BS: *Navy?*

BK: Private. Private tugs. Navy has no more tugs. The Navy sold all their tugs, decommissioned them, with the exception of one. They've just re-commissioned a tug for a secret operation – maybe it's not so secret but, missile defense program.

(250)

Anyway, Navy got out of the tug business, so we got two private tugs. All that stuff. We have three things left to do. We need to sign the lease on the pier, which we're having a little trouble with the city and a number of people. But, I already told the city, I said, "Whether we sign the lease or not, you're on notice. I'm bringing the ship in." I don't care if I've got a lease. Possession's 9/10th of the law. I'm occupying the space we've all agreed to verbally and that's what I intend to do.

BS: *And you're going to put it where?*

BK: Berth 10, Mare Island. And then we'll have the power . . .

BS: *Navy yard any more?*

BK: No, it's the City of Vallejo. But, it's the most incredible, screwed up, ohhh, it's a nightmare of bureaucracy, incompetency and stupidity. It's sick. Makes your stomach turn. Anyway, we're going to Pier 10 where we'll have shore power, sewer, water. We wanted to have a crane and barge, but it looks like there's going to be no crane. So, unless something falls out of the track, I leave here to go to Florida. I'm going from there out to the ship. I'll be on the ship about the 9th, 10th or 11th is a holiday. I'll be on the ship the 12th, four days getting ready to go. And then, if everything falls in place, we'll move on the 18th, and if not, we'll stay there until everybody agrees to move. It's subject to the pilot and the tugs. We need final Coast Guard approval. That's another piece of red tape. And this week, I have to pick . . . I've got three insurance bids. I have to pick a bid and send the check in. That's it.

BS: *So, you've been tied up with the Glacier off and on since 1959. You're lucky that your Skipper and Exec are still kicking around.*

BK: We've got the Skipper, the Exec, the operations officer.

BS: *They're all in this area?*

BK: Engineering officer. Between Newport and Washington. And the guy who put the most into it is the operations guy, Hatch. He's making a very substantial effort and then a number of enlisted men. The Chiefs are all pretty much too old to do other than telephone support, but there are some other guys from the crew who were third class or second class men who have come out of the woodwork and they're working on the ship. And a lot of Coast Guard guys who are much younger working on it. And we've got some Seabees. We got a couple pilots. A couple of VX-6 pilots out there.

BS: *Any helicopter pilots on the ship?*

BK: No. They were fixed wing pilots out of . . . flew the McMurdo run from Christchurch. And I've got to look in the database. He lives up in Connecticut. He flew TWA. Retired from TWA. Flew 747s.

(300)

From the beginning, if you want to say the beginning when we made the attack on Washington and we surrounded the Hill, when we put the bill in to Congress, we really had three active volunteers – myself and two other guys. Since that time, we now have the volunteer list of people who have either said they will work on the ship when the ship gets to the pier, or they will take a responsibility for a task from their home or here in the office - a total of 225 people. And out of the total of 225, some number around 50 or so have been aboard the ship, maybe 60, I don't know. And probably out of that group is a core of 20 or 15 who have been there repeatedly, day after day, week after week.

BS: *That's where you are now.*

BK: Yep. So, then, beginning next month when we're at the pier, the first watch section is being manned by an enlisted guy who is on the board of trustees of the Navy Memorial. He's already left in his motor home. He's driving out. So he'll spend the next 12 to 14 weeks on the ship straight through. And then we've got a guy coming from London who is a scientist who spent two or three years at Stonington.

BS: *Bernie? Stonehouse?*

BK: Not Stonehouse. He's part of the clique, but Bernie's too old to go down there and work on the ship.

BS: *Grand old man of the Antarctic. He's still going back and forth. He began in '46.*

BK: You're kidding. Is that right?

BS: *He was there when the Ronne Expedition was there with it when they cracked the Oster? You remember that? He was on that Oster. He discovered the Emperor Penguin rookery. That's where they all helped to pull those guys out of the crevasse. Traverser. . .*

BK Keith Holmes.

BS: *Holmes? Don't know him.*

BK: Here's the guys from England who are on our board now. Andrew Bellard, David Burkitt, Peter Fuchs, John Leis…., Keith Holmes, Terry Shaw, Clifford Bank, Cookie Cameron - he's the representative for the Falkland Islands. Alexander Shackleton, Bob Rutherford, Julian Dobbs, Bob Edwins, William Mills, Keith Richards and Stonehouse.

BS: *Rutherford. Different guy than Bob Rutford?*

BK: Yeah.

BS: *Because you know Bob Rutford.*

BK: He the guy from Texas?

BS: *Yeah, University of Texas. He was Chairman of the Polar Research Board. He's currently the head of SCAR. He's on my board for these tapes.*

(350)

BK: OK. Keith Holmes.

BS: *He's coming to work on the ship, huh?*

BK: Yeah. He's already been there. Keith and his wife, Christine, are from . . . Christine is from New Zealand. I get mixed up if Keith came from New Zealand or met his wife in New Zealand, but anyway, he's a geologist. And he was down there at Stonington for x number of years. And then he went to work privately in oil exploration and he's worked all over the world including Russia. He's retired and he's at Oxford University. Anyway, he's been on the ship already for two weeks and he's coming over with his wife and they're going to get a place at Berkeley and he'll put in three months on the ship. He's smart and he's strong as an ox. Mid 60s. I'll be 66 and he's . . . I don't think he's 55 yet. Don't know. Whatever he is, he's a good 10 or 15 years physically younger and active than I am and I'm a pretty active guy for my age. Anyway, we have other guys. So, we'll have a new telephone switch going on the ship shortly and we'll be in command of the ship. And our next two major hurdles are raising the money and dancing with the big bear – Coast Guard inspection. That's a huge, almost, people will tell you, an impenetrable task. But, we will make love to the Coast Guard and we will surround them the way we did the Navy.

BS: *You've got access to the US Government Surplus Property?*

BK Yeah, but there's just not much there. Clinton gave everything that was in the surplus to the Balkans. And they cleaned it like a whistle. That was the year that we were getting ready to do this. We got our first approval to go in there. I called the first guy up and he said, "Well, you

should have been here two months ago. Because everything that we had, anything of value, we were told to just ship it to Bosnia." So, we really have found nothing of value except a couple of surplus boats. Granted, there may be some more stuff there if we had more time and more hands. But, we had marked generators, but before we could get the political strings pulled – it's very complicated, even though we are legally . . . I've got guys with badges issued and everything else. After you tag and identify stuff – to go through the red tape here in Connecticut to get possession is a huge struggle.

(400)

Almost not worth it by the time you get through the paperwork. And then Connecticut tries to tax us for everything we get. We have to pay Connecticut a fee. It's like a hostage. So, we're getting very flimsy support from the State of Connecticut. Anyway, we're getting tremendous support from our Congressmen and our two Senators in terms of the bill, but our challenge now is to raise the big money to refurbish the ship. If we complete this attempt to get Yale to carry the flag for us intellectually and put a consortium of Cambridge, Oxford, Yale, URI, MIT, Woods Hole, Lamont, Scripps, University of Alaska.

BS: *And Ohio State.*

BK: Oh, I forgot Ohio State.

BS: *They're really the biggest polar one. University of Washington's pretty big, too. University of Colorado.*

BK: Anyway, so we need to get that infrastructure put together and the reason we asked Yale to lead the effort is because of it's proximity to us, No 1, and because of the politics. Also, because of their connection with the Grenfeld.

BS: *Dartmouth?*

BK: Oh, yeah. We'd throw Dartmouth in there, too. Our problem is resource. We're so limited. I only have one assistant who is a part-time person – student here, part-time. Everything else is volunteer, so the stress on the administration is heavy. But, we need to get funding because we know we're going to need a permanent staff, shore staff. Even if we are successful in getting 100% volunteer crew - Mercy Ships out of Texas run all their medical vessels with 100% volunteers, so the model has proven it can be done. The challenge is that Mercy Ships may not be operating all their ships with an American flag registry. Our challenge is going to be to get either a supplemental bill through Congress providing a harbor of refuge for the Coast Guard, if you will – we need a classification to put us in and right now we don't fit into any class. And everybody in the Coast Guard is probably saying, "If you want to get that ship inspected as say a passenger vessel, forget it. You can't do it." If we try to get it classed as a UNOLS vessel which seems like the reasonable category to put it into.

(450)

The UNOLS vessels have no passengers. Everybody on a UNOLS vessel is a crew member. So, we have to set this up that everybody who's on board is a member, a crew member, a society member. Nobody is a passenger. Everybody is a member. But, even with that, it may require Congress to open up the current inspection regulations to give us a place for the Coast Guard to go without discomfort because these guys are sworn to enforce a code of regulations. And they readily admit that there's not a Navy or Coast Guard ship afloat that would meet any of those regulations. So, we're in that conundrum. We know that the ship made 39 trips to the Pole. It could be seaworthy. It could go again. But, the Coast Guard is going to say, prima facia, no it can't because it doesn't meet some code. So, we're going to have to get Congress to assist us. So, that's the challenge.

BS: *Well, I think it's been a super interview. It's different than any other interview I've done in that yours is a current story.*

BK: This is the beginning. The story is yet to come.

BS: *Well, the neat thing about doing an oral history of you today is that it's digitized and in the archive we can update it any time. And we can have the original on file and back up what we're doing with the original - in fact that's what we're doing. Getting the original before it's edited, on file along with the edit later on. So, it looks like we'll probably have to update yours periodically.*

BK: Well, I expect you're going to be on board and you'll get it with the sound of the crushing ice in the background.

Now think about this. Here's the voyage that I want to make. Whether this should be part of our tape or part of our conversation, I'll leave it up to you. But, I would like to sail the ship from San Francisco to a shipyard. We don't care where it is. We can go down to Mexico and get a lot of stuff done inexpensively. We can do it in San Diego. We can do it in Vancouver. Get the ship underway, ready to operate. And we go to Alaska. The medical team from Yale is led by Dr. David Laffell. David is a Canadian citizen. He's a graduate of McGill. He's the head of the cancer research hospital at Yale. He's a very nice person. He's a teaching, practicing surgeon. He's published a book. He's working on a television series where he wants to do tele-medicine on TV. And I know he's good because he's operated on me. He wants to lead a team and he's got four guys he's chosen as his team, to rebuild the *Glacier's* medical facility and make it state of the art. So, we go into the Arctic and offer medical care to the indigenous people in the Arctic and at the same time, collect medical research on skin cancers, anything that's related to sun and ozone and whatever.

(500)

While we're doing that, we'd like to have other scientific disciplines and the people from England that I'm trying to get into this particularly are the people from Oxford, and the University of London who are currently the leaders in the study and collection of data in the classification of mitochondrial DNA and I don't know if you know about mitochondrial DNA – that's the female. Try to collect some more samples of human and animal mitochondrial DNA and see if we can develop any kind of a database that matches up against the core samples and the climate changes and so forth to try to get a better handle on the history of the Arctic and the animal life and the plant life and the temperature changes and the environmental changes, so that's part of that.

And then we would like to do, with our geologists, continue to do all the basic kind of earth sciences and we would like to support the investigation of the geology that's related to the petroleum resources and the impact it's had and what potential remains for that and we would also like to do investigations of heavy metal and where that fits in the food chain and what we can find out about that. And then my preferred voyage, and I would be prepared to spend an extensive period of time around Alaska - a few years – I have good genes. My father's 96 and he's still driving. Just bought a new car because he figures he'll be driving for 10 more years. So, we've spent some time around Alaska and enough to cover all our political support with either Senator Stevens, or the University of Alaska or whoever. Then, everybody thinks I'm going to sail the Northwest Passage, but I'd really rather go the Northeast Passage which everybody says I can't do.

BS: *Can I suggest something?*

BK: Sure.

BS: *Ever heard of the Nansen Drift?*

BK: Yes.

BS: *Not Nansen's Drift, but Nansen Drift experiment. Norway-United States-Canada. Others were involved but those were the big three. They had a whole series of experiments in about 1980 designed to go, but the Russians didn't like the idea. Now there are two other programs like that. But, you might be able to resurrect the Nansen Drift. Then you get the whole science community.*

BK: Well, I was asked if I would be prepared to do that and I said, "Listen, I'm the good-looking' girl on the corner with long legs and a short skirt. You just pay me the money and I'll do whatever you want. That's my style." You want to go up there for two years, I'm happy. I've got plenty of time left.

(End of Tape 2A)

(Begin Tape 2B)

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BK: I'd like to sail from Alaska, west along the Russian coast and be the first American flag vessel on the surface into Murmansk since the end of World War II, friendship trip to Russia. I think that would be spectacular. And I think we have some pretty good connections in Houston. And I think with our international science community and the right cue up and the right time, right now the world's a little politically fragile at the moment, but this gale will blow by and I'm absolutely convinced that the depth of the friendship with Russia will be very strong and very firm and Putin is going to be around for a while and we can work this thing and we can sail into Murmansk and it would just be fabulous. They were our allies forever and ever. It was only that one megalomaniac they had there.

BS: *I think you've got some great possibilities here.*

BK: I spoke at the Arctic Research Commission a year ago January. This last month I spoke at the Icebreaker Coordinating Committee and we're working this political thing slowly and trying to look reasonable and prove that we're successful. Now, when we get the ship to the pier, now we're a 501 educational C-3. We're completely separate from the government. Now, I can go back and lobby independently and ask for a bill through Congress for funding, a bill through Congress to give me a pigeonhole for licensing special class, special one-off ship. I can go and ask the Navy to give me some support or I can ask Homeland Defense. We're already working the foundations. We're working that hard. But, we need a kick-off. We need to hit one deep-heeled foundation or entrepreneur who wants to put some money down or we need to have a bill in Congress or some constituencies. We need 10 million dollars. Boom. Our goal – our budget right now that we've estimated is 26 million to be underway – to have the ship staffed and operational. We may be low. We'll find that out when we get into the shipyard. We need to find out what the ship's hull condition is. What needs to be changed. And then we have to work on the inspection. So, those two things we'll have in the next 6 months. We'll start to have a very good handle on it. And then the timeline is a question of velocity of money. So, one of the proposals is that the *Glacier* was built to be a convoy command vessel. Shouldn't Homeland Defense fund putting a ship back on the line so she could be a coastal command emergency hospital? Not a bad idea. 9-11 we had four top-of-the-line Navy ships in port for what was it? A month or so? A carrier and all those escort vessels. A hospital ship? The *Glacier,* configured as a command ship with a hospital running could have covered New York City. Could have saved the US Navy more money than they spent. Trade off. So, we need to build a constituency to spin that story.

And then there's the pure science aspect. So, we need to get enough people out there to say, "This makes sense." Let the Foundation run the vessel and do long-term science. A year, two or three in the Arctic. Make the good will cruise across Russia. Come back here and sit on the east coast and be an emergency ambulance while it goes up and down doing whatever.

What I learned at the Icebreaker Coordinating Committee is that the Coast Guard is going to take one of the Polars off line. So, if they take it off line next year, we've got two icebreakers - one for the North, one for the South and nothing for the east coast.

BS: *The last year, the year the Glacier was to be decommissioned, the Polar Sea, for the umpteenth time, broke down and could not break the channel into McMurdo to get the supply ship in. The Glacier was to be decommissioned. They turned her around and broke the channel into McMurdo for the umpteenth time. It never failed. The Polar Sea and the Polar Star had both failed several times. They're electronic nightmares. They're all electronic controls. The Polar Sea was a little better, but the Polar Star was a piece of crap.*

BK: So, here's the deal. I'm at the Icebreaker Coordinating Committee and the Coast Guard announced that they're going to put the ship up for 9 months. And we know that 9 months will be 15. And do you know what they're asking for? 335 million. To refit it. They're going to put a whole new power plant in the Polar Sea.

Which one came first?

BS: *Polar Star.*

BK: So, the Polar Star. they want to rebuild the engine room.

BS: *What would a new vessel cost?*

BK: 500. Maybe more. So far, everything that we've laid down for a goal for the *Glacier* – we've hit every one. My goal is to have food and drink on board within 90 days. I've got to pay

for the electricity and I've got to get the ventilation going and I've got to worry about harassment from supervisory organizations. But, we are going to be an operating vessel manned by a volunteer crew. So, OSHA has no jurisdiction legally and neither does any other entity. The only entity that has any jurisdiction is the Coast Guard and they can, depending on who the people are and what their attitude is and how we help them, can be a challenge and it requires skillful people locally to make sure that we have very good relations and don't embarrass anybody. We're sailing uncharted waters with heavy ice. We've been there before!

My goal is to move into the Captain's cabin and set up operations.

BS: *Who's going to be your navigator?!*

BK: Brian, I will consider my job well done and I'm ready to stand down if I get the ship in operating condition with a science team aboard. I want a new side-scan sonar. It's on the hull. It's like a phased radar . . .

BS: *How does it operate on the ice?*

BK: It doesn't always operate on the ice, but the State Dept. needs topographical bottom maps for this new international treaty with the UN for mineral rights underneath the sea floor off the coast. We're running up against the deadline and we don't have enough equipment at sea to do the survey. So, we're going to lose our rights because we haven't got the survey bottom. So I said, "Put it on." And I'm told, "Jesus, that costs two or three million dollars," and I said, "That's chump change. Put it on the list. Three million." "Well, the *Healy*'s got it and they can't get it to work." And I said, "Well, that's the *Healy*. Who makes it?" "Simrad." I said, "Fine. It's a Danish company. No problem. I'll put Simrad on it and I 'll guarantee it will work." That's my skill set. I know how to make things happen.

BS: *I know, it's more personality than anything else.*

BK: It is true that the men who have been in the military . . . there are two kinds of guys. It may be true of all disciplines in life. There are those who like to, let's say, break ice, invent, change the paradigm, operate outside the box, whatever expression you want to use, who are risk takers, who like challenges and then there are those who hide under the blanket of security, or the chain of command or the paper and there's a whole lot of them in the Coast Guard, because the Coast Guard's mission is to enforce regulations, so the Coast Guard has a high preponderance of that. There's also a pretty good population inside the Navy, the Marine Corps, the Army, the Air Force, OSHA, NSF, whatever, but there may be less in the Navy than there is in the Coast Guard because the Navy has an attack mission. Higher priorities. The Coast Guard's is defense. The Navy's offense. So, there may be some of that. But, if you read the literature, and I'm not nearly as schooled as you two are, but you can read complaints of Skipper's of Navy ships, surface and submarines who are poor at attacking the ice because they grew up making sure that their vessel never ran into anything and now they're told to run it into something and that goes . . . you know.

BS: *What I found with the Polar Sea and the Polar Star, aside from how bad they were, there were guys who made that thing work and it all came down to the Skipper. Fix what's wrong and fire your men up to make it happen. If you rely on technology and it fails, usually it's the guys that made it fail, not the technology.*

BK: Couldn't agree with you more.

BS: *You can by-pass the technology and you can still break down.*

BK: I've sailed with people in Europe and Denmark and Sweden and all over the damn place. I'll show you my last command, you'll like this. Maiden voyage, largest sailing ship ever built. Did a trans-Atlantic on her.

BS: *When was that?*

BK: Two years ago.

BS: *What's the name of it?*

BK: Royal Clipper.

BS: *Royal Clipper. Where was she built?*

BK: The hull was built in Poland, the rigging was built in Russia and the ship was finished in the Netherlands.

BS: *Who owns it?*

BK: A Swede who lives in Monaco.

BS: *A private individual.*

BK: Yeah.

BS: *Wow*.

BK: The Captain was German, the First Mate was Ukranian – Russian submariner. And then we had other mates from the Netherlands, Belgium or Holland.

BS: *That's a clipper ship, right?*

BK: Yeah.

BS: *Where are the masts from?*

BK: Poland.

BS: *Are you sure? They're not Douglas fir?*

BK: No, no, they're steel. All the rigging is steel. It's all electro-hydraulic. Three of us trimmed that whole ship.

BS: *Can you lay a mast down to repair it?*

BK: No.

BS: *I would think if it were metal, you could. And they run down to the keel?*

BK: Yeah. They're 200' high. 500' long.

BS: *Maybe he'd help you.*

BK: No, no he wouldn't. We were on this half-way across the Atlantic when the *Kursk* went down. And all of the deck hands were Russians- submariners and one officer. And I had my satellite telephone and my laptop and I'd dial in and I get a lot of information that comes to me – I don't ask where it comes from, it just shows up on my computer. I got a picture of all the crew members of the *Kursk*, their biographies and a whole description of the technology of the torpedo and why it blew up. And the political argument within the Russian chain of command when the Navy didn't want to put the torpedo on and the politicians wanted it and the whole thing. All this came in from somewhere back there and I had all this on the table and I called all the Russians up on the bridge and said, "Go read my laptop."

Completely changed their personality. It was like I was a king after that.

We've got a lot of work to do and whatever you can do to help us get started to get this money would be good because we're going to start tonight when I go to see this Congressman at 4 o'clock.

BS: Well, then, let's just cut the interview off here.

(End of Intervew).