

## **Captain Albert Raithel**

**28 October 2001**

**Brian Shoemaker**

**Interviewer**

**(Begin Tape 1A)**

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**BS:** *This is an oral interview with Captain Albert Raithel, 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 at Captain Raithel's home in Fairfax, Virginia, on the 28<sup>th</sup> of October 2001.*

*Well, Al, I'll just start off by saying it's a pleasure to be here and we're interested in you as a man from wherever you want to start, if you can let us know in a chronological sense. What brought you to the Antarctic? It may begin when you were a kid or it might begin sometime later, but whatever it was, and your educational background – a little bit about the Academy and just bring that forward into your polar experience. And we want to hear what you've done since. So . . .*

AR: Well, I was born in York, Nebraska, on the north fork of the Platte River on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, 1929.

**BS:** *My god, I'm a 4<sup>th</sup> of July kid – 1937.*

AR: I lived various places until 1935, when my father was transferred to Miami, Florida. He was the second narcotic agent in the United States and he was the agent in charge of the south Florida office. During the latter part of the 1930s, he flew with the Coast Guard, mainly on patrols up and down the Florida Keys and my early days were spent around aviation. Almost every week-end we were at Dinner Key watching the flying boats, either watching my Dad fly or watching Pan American. Most of the kids I grew up with's father either flew for Pan American or worked for the company, or Eastern Airlines. So, when a lot of kids were doing a lot of different things, I was involved with aviation. My father told me early on that if I keep my mouth shut and keep my eyes open, I could see a lot of things and learn a lot of things and if someone wanted to talk to me, they'd make the first move.

**BS:** *Your Dad was your inspiration.*

AR: My Dad was my inspiration. The latter part of the 1930s, the United States was getting ready to go south again and our *Weekly Readers* at school had a lot of good information about what had happened on the second Byrd Expedition, what was planned for the third Byrd Expedition which subsequently became the

Antarctic Service Expedition. I was very, very interested in this. I had always had an interest in the world and faraway places, and very fortunately, I knew people that had travelled, and this piqued my curiosity.

Subsequently, the war came along and my Boy Scout leader got drafted and we were pretty much left in the lurch in May, 1942. But, thanks to the Battle of Midway, the loss of the *Lexington* and *Yorktown*, a lot of naval aviation personnel were without ships and they came back to Miami as instructors. And all of a sudden, the whole complex of Troop 47 changed. We had the first Air Scout Troop in Miami, and all our leaders were naval aviators. And as a result of this, I was pretty well sold on the idea that I wanted to go into Naval aviation, and I subsequently did just that by way of the Naval Academy.

We moved to San Antonio, Texas, in 1944, and I graduated from Thomas [Churchin?] High School there in 1947 – immediately went to the Naval Academy. Graduated in 1951, immediately went to Korea, on the carrier *Sicily*. Came back from the Korean tour and went to flight training. Graduated from flight training in February of 1953, and subsequently was assigned to Patrol Squadron 45 in the Panama Canal Zone, flying PBMs and later P5Ms.

During this period of time, the United States as a follow-on to the efforts that had gone on during Operation Highjump, started planning for possible future operations in the Antarctic.

**BS:** *What year was that?*

AR: That was about 1954. I think they actually went down on the first survey, preliminary to Deepfreeze. I had kept up to date pretty much on Antarctic operations during Highjump and the subsequent operations . . .

**BS:** *You were at the Academy then . . .*

AR: I was at the Academy, and I followed that. I followed Captain Ronne's expedition down to Stonington Island, and I also kept up a correspondence with a Colonel Burt Balkan, head of the 10<sup>th</sup> Rescue Squadron at that time. They were flying Ptarmigan flights up to the Pole.

**BS:** *He was a part of Operation Ptarmigan?*

AR: Right. As Commander of the 10<sup>th</sup> Air Rescue Squadron. I wrote him in May, 1950, and requested permission to make a polar flight with him, and got a very wonderful letter back saying, "Please do. We don't know much about the Navy up here, but we'll certainly be glad to host you."

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Unfortunately, by the time that I got leave that would allow me to do that, the Korean War had started and I was unable to go into the Alaskan theater because they had blocked all transportation in there.

**BS:** *So, you knew Balkan as being Byrd's pilot at the South Pole?*

AR: That's correct.

**BS:** *Had you followed Admiral Byrd's exploits – I know you're pretty young for the first two expeditions, but did you read about them?*

**AR:** I read everything that I could find about the Antarctic as a kid and subsequently. While I was in Panama, the Navy put out a request for volunteers for Operation Deepfreeze and I applied for the privilege of going south. My application was subsequently misplaced in \_\_\_\_\_ 11 in Jacksonville, and put in someone's hold box where it remained until we dug it out in about August of 1955. By this time, of course, the squadron had formed and they were getting ready to mount up to go south.

**BS:** *Let me back you up a little bit. I've interviewed others, but I'm curious – when the Navy asked for volunteers, was this a Navy from CNO?*

**AR:** DCNO Air.

**BS:** *DCNO Air.*

**AR:** DCNO Air Op 05 in those days was the Aviation Detail Office. BUPERS did not detail aviators.

**BS:** *So it was DCNO5? ... Op 05?*

**AR:** OP 54.

**BS:** *OK. OP 54.*

**AR:** Was the Aviation Detail Office. 05 was DCNO Air.

**BS:** *Still is...or was when I got out. But I don't know what it is now.*

AR: I think it's N88 now.

**BS:** *So, OP54 in the Pentagon.*

AR: In the Pentagon.

**BS:** *Did Dufek and company get their oar in the water on picking people? Did they get approval or rejection authority?*

AR: Absolutely. Absolutely. When you talk to Ed Ward, he'll give you the background. Ed Ward was the originating commanding officer of VX6. He literally put it into commission.

**BS:** *He picked the pilots.*

(100)

AR: And he started it off and subsequently people that came there, pretty much had gotten involved in the process and were able to pick people that they knew as known qualities. So, the calibre of personnel was very, very high. Subsequently, I found out that I hadn't been selected because my application hadn't even gotten there. And I talked my commanding officer into going to Washington in order to plead my case.

**BS:** *You were stationed where then?*

AR: I was stationed at Coco Solo in the Panama Canal Zone and I took a P5M up to Norfolk, subsequently hopped a flight and arrived in Washington on a Saturday. I went to Task Force 43 headquarters which at that time was in the old Post Office

Building in Washington. And went up to the offices where I was met by Captain Dick Black, who at that time was base operations officer for Task Force 43.

**BS:** *He was black shoe, though.*

AR: He was black shoe. He happened to have the duty that day was the reason he was there.

**BS:** *Was he a captain then?*

AR: He was a captain. And after talking with him for a while, he picked up the phone and called Admiral Dufek who asked for the whole history of my proposed involvement and subsequently said, "Thank you very much for coming up here. You can expect orders within about 6 weeks." And certainly in 6 weeks, I had orders.

**BS:** *Back up a little. I think you told me earlier that when they tried to get a hold of Dufek, he was heading out of town to go to a daughter's wedding.*

AR: That's correct.

**BS:** *And he took the time to delay a little bit just to . . .*

AR: Well, I don't think really delaying, but he didn't have too much time left before . . .

**BS:** *But, he made a quick decision. He made a personal decision.*

AR: He made a quick decision after talking with Captain Black, and subsequently, I received the orders. Dick Black came through the Panama Canal on the *Edisto*,

going south on Operation Deepfreeze I. Came in on the ship [sea low?] and I had the pleasure of spending 24 hours with him. He stayed with us down there.

**BS:** *You went back to Panama.*

AR: Oh yes.

**BS:** *So, they came through on the Edisto?*

AR: They came through on the Edisto.

**BS:** *And you hosted Dick Black.*

AR: Down there.

**BS:** *What were you? A lieutenant?*

AR: I was a junior grade lieutenant. And he stayed with us at our quarters and we drove him across the Isthmus to pick up the ship. I also gave him a cannon ball that had been fired on Fort San Lorenzo down there by the squadron under Sir Edward Vernon that kind of fit in with his background. His ancestor, Captain Blackburn had been one of Washington's staff officers. Mt. Vernon is named for Admiral Sir Edward Vernon.

**BS:** *Oh, is that right.*

AR: And Lawrence Washington had been on the expedition, so the cannon ball fit in and to this day, that cannon ball is the gateway at Rippon Lodge which was his family home, next to Mt. Vernon.

**BS:** *Dick's family home?*

AR: Right.

**BS:** *Avisa? Do you know where she is?*

AR: She is dead and the house has been sold to Prince William County.

**BS:** *Dick, I know, when she committed him was pretty bad with Alzheimer's, and I talked to her and that's the last I heard. So she's died.*

AR: She has died. And the girls sold the house to Prince William County.

(150)

**BS:** *So, here they are going through Panama and you met Dick Black there.*

AR: Right. I also saw the YOGs running down. Don Nash from VX6 was riding the YOG 70, and was not too happy about this.

**BS:** *Who was that? Don Nash?*

AR: Don Nash.

**BS:** *Who was Don Nash?*

AR: He was one of our helicopter pilots.

**BS:** *Did you meet Dusty Blades?*

AR: Oh, J.U. Blades, I knew well. Yes.

**BS:** *I've interview him. I've known Dusty for years. He was one of the original O5. He had one of those YOGs. I don't know which one.*

AR: Well, they only had two of them. They had the 34 and 70.

**BS:** *Yeah. He must have been 34 then. So, Nash was CO of 34?*

AR: He was ONC. He was just riding it. They had just been stuck on there.

**BS:** *Dusty's was actually propelled, but they wanted to get it down there faster, so they towed it with the Glacier. So, he actually drove it from Christchurch to the Ice. But, the other one was towed down all the way. Interesting.*

AR: In March, 1956, I was detached from Patrol Squadron 45, and reported to VX6 at Naval Air Station, Patuxent River, Maryland. The first thing that happened . . . the Commanding Officer, told me *please* don't buy a house. We had just found that that we were being thrown out of Pax River and were going to Quonset Point and we'll find you a place to live in the meantime, but don't go setting down any roots here.

**BS:** *Were you married?*

AR: Oh yes. Married, had two children. Daughter, Charlotte, who at that time was a little over three and a son, Larry, a year and a half. And a wife, Toddie.

We still had one P2V2N. The squadron had just lost a P2V2N down in the Venezuelan jungles – jacked over from Charlie Otey. And fortunately everybody got out of that one. So, we had one bird left and Jack Torbert and I did some training that before that went to Alameda for overhaul.

**BS:** *Had you flown P2Vs?*

AR: I had been flying flying boats. I had not flown a land plane off a runway for about three and a half years.

**BS:** *But, you never flew a P2V.*

AR: Had never flown a P2V. Very familiar with the engines, of course, since they were the same engines that we had on the P5M.

**BS:** *Where did you get checked out?*

AR: I got checked out in the squadron.

**BS:** *Tell me about the P2Vs that they used down there. I'm interested . . . you're the first P2V pilot I've talked to. You could operate them on skis or wheels?*

AR: Yes.

**BS:** *Could you take off on wheels and land on skis?*

AR: Oh yeah.

**BS:** *How did you do that? Did you pull the skis up?*

AR: Assuming you were on a runway to start off with, when you took off, you put the skis down on the wheels so the skis came below the wheels. Once they were down, then you could cycle the landing gear and bring it up.

**BS:** *That's when you were parked?*

AR: Oh no. That's when you're airborne. Because you're on the runway, you took off on wheels.

**BS:** *Where were the skis when you took off?*

AR: The skis were about 10 or 11 inches above the bottom of the wheels. There was a cut-out.

**BS:** *The skis were permanently mounted, is that correct?*

AR: The skis were on an arm that allowed them to rotate to the down position.

**BS:** *But, when you raised the gear and brought the wheels up . . .*

AR: You had to put the skis down before you could raise the wheels.

**BS:** *I gotcha. When you were airborne. You take off, you're on wheels. And you want to raise the wheels.*

AR: You cycle the skis first in the down position.

**BS:** *And then you raise the wheels.*

AR: And then you raise the whole landing gear.

**BS:** *OK, and the skis came up against the fuselage?*

AR: Well, they came up into the nacelles.

**BS:** *Into the nacelles, that's what I mean. I understand better now how it works.*

*The gear are raised a little above the wheels when you take off on hard ice at McMurdo and then you land in the field, you can put the skis down. But, it's quite interesting that you take off on wheels and once you're airborne, you have to lower the skis and then raise the wheels, or raise the whole landing gear.*

AR: And the sequence coming down is the same thing. If you're going to land on the runway, you put the gear down and when the gear is down and locked, then you depressurize the hydraulic system and you raise the skis on the wheels,

**BS:** *So the skis come down first when you go to land and you've got to raise them in order to land on wheels.*

**AR:** That's correct. If you're going to land on skis, you depressurize.

**BS:** *You depressurize but you leave the skis down.*

**AR:** The reason you do that is they have what they call a rigor strut which is the hydraulic cylinder at the tail end of the ski and the job of that was to keep a parallelogram so that the skis remained in the same plane as the bottom of the aircraft. You didn't want the skis tipping nose down or nose up. And that insured, hopefully, that that would happen. Contract was let with Lockheed Service Corporation out in Ontario, California, and to convert four aircraft. And Jack Torbert was chosen as the plane commander of one. Charlie Otey was the plane commander of the second, and throughout the summer of 1956, we periodically went out and spent time in Ontario to watch them actually building the aircraft. We did this because this was the only source of knowledge for maintenance purposes as to what was going on. The documentation was very, very late in coming.

**BS:** *These were the only ski-equipped P2Vs in the world.*

**AR:** Along with the P2V2M, which was the original one built during the Highjump operations and subsequently used . . . it was not used on Highjump. It wasn't ready on time.

**BS:** *So, it was first built for Highjump.*

AR: It was built for Highjump. At the time that they did that, it was right early in Highjump I and there was a plan to go ahead with Highjump II. However, Highjump II never materialized. The Navy had decreased to the point where, and the budgets had decreased to where they couldn't do it. But, we ended up with two aircraft. These aircraft were subsequently used on Operation Skijump in the Arctic. So, both aircraft had been to the North Pole.

**BS:** *This is all news to me. The first ski-equipped P2V was for Highjump.*

AR: As a result of Highjump, yes.

**BS:** *How many did they build?*

AR: They built two.

**BS:** *First two ski-equipped. Subsequently, Ed Ward used them up there?*

AR: Ed Ward didn't use them, but his operation did. He had an R4D detachment and Jack Coley, C-o-l-e-y, was commander of one of the P2Vs and I'm not sure of the other. Somewhere I have that record, but I can't recall it right off.

**BS:** *That's really interesting. Now, tell me, Torbert, Otey or Coley, are they kicking around?*

AR: Torbert's dead. Otey's dead and Coley's dead.

**BS:** *OK.*

AR: The two co-pilots from the first year were myself and Stan Hantos, who was a Marine.

**BS:** *Stan we've interviewed. He's pretty weak, but we got a great diary from him.*

**AR:** I don't know how much he actually flew down there. I don't remember seeing him while I was on the ice. I saw Jack Torbert, but I think Hantos may have stayed down there.

**BS:** *When he first joined the Polar Society – he heard about us late – he called me and he was . . . this was 5, 6 years ago, and he was so enthusiastic and he just bubbled over. He was so happy to find something, and he seemed to go pretty fast. He's still alive, I'm quite sure, but he's not communicative.*

**AR:** We were the two co-pilots of the two P2Vs. Subsequently, we went to Ontario. Jack Torbert was supposed to get [bureau?] number 434, which was the first aircraft and they made their first flight on the 17<sup>th</sup> of October, 1956. This was the same day that the fly-in took place to the Ice, the initial fly-in. It was the same day, actually I think it was the 16<sup>th</sup>. At any rate, when we called back subsequent to our problems, we found out that 466 had crashed at McMurdo. That happened the same time that Lockheed conducted the first flight on 434, and ended up on the lake bed out at Edwards Air Force Base, belly up. They had problems with the skis.

**BS:** *So, the 17<sup>th</sup> of October, that's the date that the bird flying from Christchurch crashed, killed . . .*

AR: It may have been the 16<sup>th</sup> down there. We found out about it when we called in to report our problem.

**BS:** That's the one that crashed at Edwards Air Force Base.

AR: That's correct. At that time, that was Jack Torbert's airplane.

**BS:** *Who was killed in the airplane on the Ice?*

AR: I believe Mars was killed, Ray Hudden was killed. I'm trying to think of the pilot's name. I know it. I've just . . . I can tell you in about one second here.

(300)

**BS:** *So, you were at Lockheed when this crash happened.*

AR: We were at Lockheed.

**BS:** *Now who crashed the bird at Edwards Air Force Base?*

AR: John Christenson, who was chief test pilot for Lockheed.

**BS:** *Oh, I see, Lockheed crashed it.*

AR: This was actually the first flight on that aircraft.

**BS:** *So, you didn't have any P2Vs at all then.*

AR: No ski planes. The squadron had a P2V7 that they gave us for check out.

And we subsequently used that for not only training, but for transportation back and forth.

**BS:** *So, there were no ski planes, but you took a P2V – did you take it to the Ice?*

AR: Oh no. No, no. We took nothing but ski planes to the Ice.

**BS:** *So, you're still at Quonset then.*

AR: We're still at Quonset. We're trying to get an airplane so we can get south.

**BS:** *With one P2V on wheels to play with.*

AR: That's right.

**BS:** *OK. I understand. So, what happened?*

AR: So, subsequently, they pressed on with 436, which was the second aircraft which had been assigned to us and Jack Torbert decided he wanted to get to the Ice and so he took, he was senior to us, so he took the airplane and headed south in early December. Subsequently, Lockheed finished up 434, and they had a series of 18 test flights that they had planned to conduct on this airplane before they turned it over to us.

**BS:** *So, you and Otey took the . . .*

AR: Otey and I took 434, which was actually the second airplane to be delivered. And we watched what was going on at Lockheed and it was obvious that they didn't have the picture that we were desperately trying to get south so we could get the equipment and the people into the Pole. And Lockheed just didn't seem to be in any big hurry on this. So after the second Lockheed flight, we said, "We'll take it." So we signed for the aircraft, made a quick run back to the east coast, picked up all our survival gear and cold weather gear and headed south. We arrived in New Zealand just as the C-124s evacuated the Ice because the runway was melting.

**BS:** *What time of year was that?*

AR: This was in December, 1956. It started re-freezing around Christmas time and they figured well, as soon as the weather's good, we'll go south. So, finally, after a couple of false starts, we headed south on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of January, 1957, and made McMurdo south.

(350)

**BS:** *That's when you first hit the Ice, huh?*

AR: That's correct.

**BS:** *What did you think when yo got there?*

AR: Looked just like I figured it would.

**BS:** *Was it a clear day?*

AR: No. Wasn't too bad. There were some storms coming and at that time, they were desperate to get the ships unloaded. The ships were about 6 or 7 miles out from the station at McMurdo and so they kept the D-8 tractors and the ATACO sleds going right around the clock in order to get things off the ships, and off of the ice so that they would be available.

**BS:** *Did they unload the ships onto the sea ice?*

AR: Unloaded onto the sea ice and onto the sleds and took them back in. They were afraid to break in any closer because the ice had started turning rotten about that time when they had the big melt in early December.

**BS:** *So, here you are and the ice hasn't gone out and they're trying to unload the ships through Deepfreeze.*

**AR:** Right. The C-124 still had not come back because the ice was still fairly rotten. Fortunately, we were using the skiway, and our ice was in better shape, but we didn't have the 40-360 engines dropping oil all over the place that the Air Force did punching holes in the ice for us. So, Jack Torbert and his crew and Charlie and I made ready to go to the Pole on the 7<sup>th</sup> of January.

**BS:** *Had Torbert been down there already?*

**AR:** Oh, he got down there in early January, or excuse me, early December.

**BS:** *That was the first P2V.*

**AR:** That was the first P2V, right. He'd already made several trips to the Pole.

**BS:** *So you got ready to go with him.*

**AR:** Right. Well, on the way in, we had had prop governor problems. We had a runaway propeller coming by Cape Adair and got that under control. We changed governors when we got down there. Fortunately we had one. And we loaded the aircraft as best we could. And of course, our job at that time was to carry in as much food as possible because they weren't sure about those C-124s coming back in. And they were trying to get everything that they needed to keep the South Pole station going for the whole year. They were getting pretty close. We still had several of the scientists to go with us and we had a lot of food to go down there.

So, the way we loaded the aircraft, we balanced things as best we could. We'd been told that the aircraft were restricted to 78,200 lbs. And if you looked at the aircraft – if you filled the aircraft completely with fuel – we had a single bomb bay tank as well as our normal large tip tanks and our internal fuel, before we put any people, before we put the jado bottles, and before we put the hydraulic fluid on there, we were already overgrossed. And we kept asking Lockheed, “What’s going to break?” and Lockheed refused to tell us. From a legal standpoint, they couldn’t tell us what was going to break. So, this didn’t help us too much.

We decided that we would balance things as best we could and the way the aircraft was configured, we had 16 jado bottles, we had four on either side of the fuselage and eight on the bottom. We also carried 16 jado bottles internally for use up at the Pole. And the jado bottles were about 157 lbs each. So, that was a pretty fair hunk of weight. The jado bottles were located after the wing and on the aft fuselage. We filled the bow up completely in the nose tunnel and put whatever else we had in the back end. We carried our one scientist, Willy Hoff, up on the flight deck.

**BS:** *Willy Hoff? He was going to winter at the Pole?*

**AR:** He was going to winter at the Pole. He was the last of the wintering over group for the Pole.

**BS:** *What did he do?*

AR: I think he was a gravity physicist.

**BS:** Geophysicist . . .

AR: Jack Torbert took off first and as soon as we got the radio report that he'd landed at the Pole, we took off and subsequently, he turned around and came back. We got about halfway up the Beardmore glacier and had a runaway prop. So, rather than take a chance of getting stuck up on the plateau, we turned around and came back to McMurdo. Arrived back there right after Torbert did. And we worked all night and got the prop working again and subsequently took off the next day and made the run up there.

**BS:** *What day was that?*

AR: That was the 8<sup>th</sup> of January, 1957.

**BS:** *And you made it to Pole.*

AR: We made it OK.

**BS:** *Who made the landing?*

AR: Charlie did.

**BS:** *Charlie?*

AR: Charlie made all the landings on the skis until we got back to New Zealand and then I subsequently made all the landings all the way home on them. He checked me out all the way back.

(450)

**BS:** *Let me back up a little bit. I want to know about the engines on the P2V.*

AR: The engine was a Wright-R 3350-32W. It was an excellent engine, pulled about 3700 horsepower, was a compounded engine and used water injection.

**BS:** *You had two of them.*

AR: We had two of them. We also had two J-34 turbo jets, but we used these only for take-off and standby for landings.

**BS:** *Turbo jets, huh?*

AR: Right. And they burned aviation gas just like everything else. We didn't carry special fuel for them.

**BS:** *Only for take-off and landing. They burned too much.*

AR: Right. For landing, we just put them in idle just in the event that something happened, we didn't lose an engine, it would give us . . . We had something that most P2Vs did not have. We had an auxiliary power unit, so we could actually, if we had to, we could fly on just the jets alone because we could get our electrical power from the auxiliary power unit. The aircraft were configured with 90,000 BTU heaters built into the nacelles, working through the firewall. And we never diluted oil. What we did, we had big banjo fittings that fit around the propeller shaft that closed off the front of the nacelles, the firewall closed off the backend.

**BS:** *And you just pumped heat.*

AR: We just pumped heat in there.

**BS:** *You could operate basically in as cold a weather as they had. What's the coldest you operated in?*

AR: The coldest was airborne and it was about -50 or so. We hit a very, very cold spot down toward the glaciers coming out. At the Pole itself, it was rather warm – probably 18 or 20 degrees. It wasn't cold at all while we were there. McMurdo, of course, had been sitting right on the 32 degree line and part of our problem down there, we didn't have the bunny boots. We were in the old felt boots at that time and my goodness, you put that into a hole and pull it out and you had an ice boot. That created real problems.

**BS:** *Took them a long time to get rid of those because they had them in the mid-60s there.*

AR: It was fine as long as things were dry.

**BS:** *How many landings did you guys make into the South Pole?*

AR: Just one.

**BS:** *Just one. Only one trip to South Pole.*

AR: Right. Let me back up just a little because we had a potentially traumatic event on our initial take-off on the 7<sup>th</sup>. The take-off appeared to be normal. We broke ground right about where we figured we would and we started thinking about getting the skis up, getting the landing gear up, clean up the airplane, and the nose very gradually just started up. And it kept going up. And we were trying to

get the nose steadied and at the same time figured going through our sequence with the skis because this was a long sequence on these skis to get them down and then get them up. The nose kept coming up and we were sitting there – we had four feet on the yoke and the yoke was on the instrument panel and the nose was still coming up. We subsequently got the gear raised and when we did, it moved that 11,000 lbs. about 5 feet forward and got us back in the controlability range. Our angle of climb-out was such that Doc Harris, our flight surgeon, had literally started out with a Weasel with a crash crew because they knew we were going to go in on the far end of the strip.

**BS:** *Who was your plane captain?*

**AR:** Don Thomas was our plane captain at the time. Don was a first class mech. In every respect he was a first class mech – a super guy.

**BS:** *Was he ADR?*

**AR:** ADR1 – Don Thomas. Our radioman was Buzz Hudson, who had his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday at the South Pole, and our navigator was Tech Sargeant Ed Stribling – not Stribling, Stribling was one of the others . . . I'll think of it in just a second.

**BS:** *USMC, right?*

**AR:** Right. At any rate, we got the aircraft under control, headed on up there and Jack Torbert came back on down. We were actually acting as search and rescue aircraft for each other is what it was. He subsequently landed back at McMurdo.

We unloaded everything at the Pole. The crew at the Pole helped us load the 16 jado bottles. They were 157 lbs each and you can imagine that at sea level that was pretty good, but at 2 miles altitude, man we were up there huffing and puffing, I'll tell you. I've got a good picture somewhere of Paul Siple with his shoulder under one of these things helping us out there.

**BS:** *I was going to ask you if you met Paul Siple at the Pole.*

AR: Oh, I knew Paul well.

**BS:** *You did?*

AR: Knew him well.

**BS:** *When did he die? He was quite young.*

AR: Paul died, oh goodness, I'd say about ten years ago.

**BS:** *I'm going to take Ruth out to lunch here this week-end.*

AR: Please do. She goes to all the Boy Scout activities. She was a guest at my youngest grandson's Eagle Scout ceremony.

**BS:** *Oh, wow. I was a Scoutmaster for 8 years in San Diego and I'm still on the Scout speakers bureau. Haven't been called to speak for a long time.*

AR: My involvement, really, with Admiral Byrd, was as much through the Boy Scouts and through Paul Siple as almost anything else. That made things interesting.

**BS:** *Tell me about that. That's important – your involvement with the Boy Scouts and Admiral Byrd. Was that before you went to the Ice?*

**AR:** Oh yeah. That was back when I was . . . it wasn't a direct involvement with either one of them, but of course, Paul Siple was writing articles about being the Boy Scout with Byrd and everything and then when he went back as base commander on the third expedition – Antarctic Service Expedition to Little America – we followed that along with everything else. So, this just peaked my curiosity and made me that much more interested.

**BS:** *You were a Boy Scout.*

**AR:** I was a Boy Scout.

**BS:** *Eagle Scout?*

**AR:** Eagle Scout, yessir.

**BS:** *My troop folded when I was a scout. I never forgot. My dad didn't stand up to be troop leader. Not any of the Dad's did and the guy who had done it for a long time got transferred. I never forgot that, so I became a scout leader before I even had a son. The guys get involved through their sons. Had a wonderful time. I think it's the greatest program going and the national campaign for raising money – what do they call it? The joint drive to dump the scouts because they wouldn't let queers in? I thought that was awful, but as it turned out, the Scouts are taking in more money than ever because a lot of people that gave it through the combined*

*federal campaign said, "Screw you guys. I'm giving it directly to the Scouts." So, the Girl Scouts are really pushing hard right now. That's good. Awful good advertising they're getting. So, you were interested in Paul Siple and the scouting program.*

AR: That's right. The first time that I actually met him was at the South Pole.

BS: *Siple.*

AR: Right.

BS: *And you knew him subsequently here. I'll be talking about that towards the end because you're both kind of done, gone and you're here. OK. Here you've flown back. You're at McMurdo. Where did you live at McMurdo?*

AR: We lived at Boys' Town. There was a Quonset hut down, oh way down on the south end of Main Street.

BS: *J-1?*

AR: I can't even tell you. It was just . . .

BS: *It had to be J-1. I lived in J-1 in '66.*

**(End of Tape 1A)**

**(Begin Tape 1B)**

(000)

BS: *This is Side 2 of Tape 1 of the Raithel interview.*

AR: Charlie Otey and I were both in Boys' Town. Charlie was in the back of the hut with Doc Harris. Doc Harris was our flight surgeon at the time and I don't know what his connection was, but he and one of the cooks were good friends and this particular cook was the guy that made the pepperoni. He used to make pepperoni sticks down there. And invariably, Doc Harris would end up with a dozen or so pepperoni sticks. And if you were on his good side, you'd get a stick of pepperoni.

The temperature was quite layered in the hut. In the upper bunk, Doc Harris didn't wear any clothes at all. We were very comfortable wearing our normal clothes in the lower bunk. And if you put anything on the floor, it would freeze. I don't really remember very much other than the fact that we had hardly enough water to drink down there, mainly because anything that could move was pulling sleds back and forth with supplies rather than out digging snow for the snow melter.

The next evolution was to get a group of people back to Washington for congressional hearings – Commander Whitney of Task Force 43 staff was leading the group going back for that. And Jack Torbert was chosen to take them back. We would stay on the Ice and Jack would take them up to New Zealand and he'd come back. Jack took off on this flight back to New Zealand and shortly after take-off, before he got his landing gear up, one of his skis tipped and went full nose down,

slammed back into the fuel selectors in the back of his wing and he made an emergency landing back at McMurdo. Fortunately, he was able to control the landing enough that he didn't completely wreck the ski on there. It turned out that the rigor strut which was the pressurized cylinder at the back of the strut had overextended and actually sheared the 6 barrel bolts that held it to the rear spar of the wing. Of course, we suspected that if that was happening on his airplane, it was probably happening on ours, too, and so we opened up the wing and found out that 5 of our 6 bolts had sheared. We scrambled around and got some more bolts. They weren't the correct ones, but they at least held us for one flight, we hoped. And on the 13<sup>th</sup>, we evacuated both aircraft back to Christchurch.

**BS:** *Thirteenth of?*

AR: January. So, we were on the Ice a total of 10 days. Ten days and three flights – the first one being a test flight/ice reconnaissance. The second one being our first attempt at the Pole and the third one being our polar flight.

**BS:** *What type of maintenance support did you have? Did you have engines, replacements? You sparked my interest when you said these bolts were sheared and you didn't have replacements.*

AR: Well, we didn't have hardly anything down there that was peculiar to the ski system because everything that had been built was on the airplanes.

**BS:** *How about pre-heaters and stuff like that?*

AR: We didn't really need . . .

**BS:** *Not at that time of year.*

AR: They had the regular pre-heaters and everything down there. They were using them on the R4Ds. With our integral heaters, we didn't have a need for that for the engines. So, we didn't really have a problem.

**BS:** *Well, you could light off your BTUs and warm the engines before you lit them off.*

AR: Oh, absolutely.

**BS:** *What a neat thing. You could probably have ducked over and warmed the planes next to you, couldn't you?*

AR: Almost. We actually never started an engine until it was up to temperature – the cylinders were up to operating temperature.

**BS:** *Did you drain the oil?*

AR: No. Didn't drain oil. We did have electric coil heaters in the APU oil sump.

**BS:** *OK. You're back in Christchurch.*

(50)

AR: We're back in Christchurch and, of course, the aircraft are hard down until they can get us some bits and pieces. They hadn't forecast that they were going to need these, so they didn't have anything on hand and they actually had to go out and contract for them. They did this in pretty good fashion, but there wasn't

anything happening for a while. We didn't fly for about a month down there because we couldn't.

**BS:** *Back in Chichi for a month, huh?*

AR: Yeah, well, we actually had more than a month down there because once we got back in commission, it was too late to fly down. By that time, the R4s had gone into the Pole once or twice more in February, and had delivered the last of the necessary equipment down there. And so, our job was to prepare, as best we could, based on problems we'd had and on forecast operations, to start planning for Deepfreeze III. And we did some lessons learned. We had a tech rep from Lockheed that really was probably less help than anyone there. He really didn't know the P2V7. He'd been with the Dutch on P2V5s and had come back. I guess they'd asked for volunteers and he says, "Oh, I'll go." His name was Frank Damiano, but in the squadron he was known as "Frank damned if I know." And I think probably we expected more of him than we should have. But, we were having so many problems that there were just a lot more problems than there were solutions.

As you'll find out, Admiral Dufek effectively was commanding officer of the squadron on Deepfreeze II. Captain Cordonair and Ed Ward were kind of relegated to the doing whatever the Admiral said and we just didn't see very much of them. Not through any fault of their own or ours, but it was just the way things

worked. The Air Force in New Zealand was billeted over at a small Royal New Zealand logistics base and VX6 was at Central Flying School at RNZAF Wigram, which is a pretty neat place to be. Everything was grass out there. Of course, it was on shale and it would literally jar your eye teeth, it was so rough. So, for any flights of any consequence of heavy weight, we hopped over to Harewood Field and actually operated off the runway for flights going south and north.

We did a fair amount of flying in New Zealand once we got the aircraft back in commission. And we used that as a training period. We figured that we'd probably have more actual time for training there than when we got back to the States because they would want to overhaul the aircraft and everything. So we did that. We learned as much about the planes as possible, preparing for the next year. And subsequently, we had the R5Ds were also back at Christchurch. So, we had a fair sized detachment. We had 4 aircraft.

**BS:** *His two R5Ds were there, too?*

**AR:** We had two R5Ds, as well as the two P2Vs. The R5Ds had been flown out of the Ice in December along with the C-124s when the ice runway started coming to pieces.

**BS:** *Tell me, did they have a permanent Det at Christchurch then for running . . . Everybody moved out at the end of the year.*

(100)

AR: Task Force 43 had a small Det there which was the nucleus for . . . they were the support force, and that was under Trigger Hawkes. Captain Trigger Hawkes.

**BS:** *The Admiral had a staff building there and all that, didn't he?*

AR: Right, right. We very seldom saw their people except socially. We occasionally saw them socially. But, we were pretty well taken care of communication-wise by the New Zealand Air Force. We didn't have much in the way of requirements other than fuel.

**BS:** *How'd you get along with the New Zealand people? Or how'd they get along with you?*

AR: Oh, absolutely magnificent. Couldn't have been nicer. People in those days and I suspect even today, I was down there last in '92, and certainly the old-timers still remember that had it not been for the Navy and Marine Corps, they would probably have been part of the greater co-prosperity sphere of Japan and they remembered this, unlike a lot of people around the world that conveniently forget things. We had a large number of weddings in the squadron the year I was down there.

**BS:** *I got married there.*

AR: Hey, not all bad. Danny Slowinski, I guess, was the only officer that was married down there during that period. But, it was a magnificent group of people. Magnificent group of people to work with, to live with.

**BS:** *So, anyway you're there for another month and a half. About the end of February you left . . .*

**AR:** Right. Started heading back.

**BS:** *OK. Any problems going home?*

**AR:** No problems going home. The aircraft operated well. We all ended up going to Monterey overnight so Jack Torbert could sell a horse.

**BS:** *So you landed where? At Oakland or . . . ?*

**AR:** We landed at Alameda and then flew down to Monterey.

**BS:** *OK.*

**AR:** Subsequently, we came back by way of Dallas, said hello to my folks as we went through, and then right back on to Quonset Point. Jack Torbert made one or two stops on the way back. We'd been back I guess about 5 or 6 days and people had started dispersing on leave. My family was down in Florida and I'd gone down to pick them up and I got a telephone call from Charlie. He said, "Al, you're orders are here. Mine are, too." So, this is what the hell? I was supposed to be there for at least two years. We had done some pretty fair personnel planning at the time. I was personnel officer of the squadron, and we had really kind of combed through the fleet to find the people that we wanted, the people that were qualified in different types of aircraft, that had maintenance qualifications, equipment qualifications, and a decision had been made during the time we were on the Ice to transfer Aviation

Detailing from Op54 DCNOAir to the Bureau of Naval Personnel. And BUPERS had a firm policy that no one stays on sea duty no more than 4 years. Well, I had just come off a three year tour when I went to VX6, and here I'm sitting there having completed 4 years. And along with 13 or 14 people in the squadron, we very unexpectedly got orders which really screwed things up for Deepfreeze III, because . . .

**BS:** *These were officers you are talking about?*

**AR:** These were all officers. These were people that had been hand picked for various jobs and for various type of aircraft and all of a sudden, we're off and running. And so, this made the squadron really scramble to find replacements in time to get them ordered in and trained and off on the track to go on.

(150)

**BS:** *Tell me about Explorers' Club Flag No. 170.*

**AR:** I came into the Explorers' Club as result of exploration work that I'd done in the Galapagos Island in 1953 with the Office of Naval Research, and when Dick Black found that I was in a P2V group going south, he suggested to Admiral Byrd that that might be a good way to get the Explorers' Club flag to the South Pole. To my knowledge, the Explorers' Club flag had never been to the South Pole on the surface at that time. And I requested and was given Flag 170 to take south specifically to take it to the Pole, which we did on the 8<sup>th</sup> of January, 1957.

**BS:** *Did Byrd give it to you?*

AR: No, I think the Club gave it to us at the time,

**BS:** *OK. Did you meet Admiral Byrd?*

AR: Oh yes. I had met Admiral Byrd on several occasions.

**BS:** *Where? At Explorers' Club?*

AR: I met him in Washington a couple of times. I don't think I ever met him at the Club. I think it was always in Washington. And I met him specifically through Dick Black.

**BS:** *So, Byrd . . . he never dropped one at South Pole, did he?*

AR: To my knowledge, he didn't.

**BS:** *I don't even know if he carried one to the South Pole.*

AR: I don't know.

**BS:** *He dropped US flags.*

AR: Never saw any pictures of it.

**BS:** *But, Paul Siple was there already. He never took one?*

AR: Paul Siple . . . no he didn't take one. As a matter of fact, he took the picture that you've seen of Flag 170 there. He was the photographer for that.

**BS:** *That's real exploration! So you took the Club to the Pole at the behest of Byrd.*

AR: Admiral Byrd subsequently died about a month and a half after we got back from Deepfreeze II.

**BS:** *Yeah, he died in about April, didn't he?*

AR: April, '57.

**BS:** *And you delivered the flag there on . . . ?*

AR: The 8<sup>th</sup> of January, 1957.

**BS:** *Did Siple keep it or did you bring it back?*

AR: Oh no. I brought it back to the Club.

**BS:** *We were talking about your getting back home and getting surprise orders.*

AR: Got surprise orders to the Naval Academy and subsequently, spent two years as communication officer at the Naval Academy.

**BS:** *And what year was this?*

AR: I was there from 1957-59. I was ordered to post-graduate school in '59, graduated in '61 with a degree in meteorology. However, the course that we took was what subsequently became air ocean environment. It was about 44% oceanography, 56% meteorology. The difference being I wrote my thesis on meteorology.

**BS:** *Wow. You and I are born on the same date. I graduated there in '71 with a degree in what they called environmental, but it was oceanography/meteorology. Same division.*

AR: I left there in 1961, and reported to *USS Hornet* as meteorologist/oceanographer OD, ship's aircraft driver.

**BS:** *Ship's aircraft driver? What did you have to fly?*

AR: We had TF. In those days, we had about 25 aviators on the ship, however there were only 7 of us that would fly the TF because it had a hook on it. We had a lot of people that either hadn't ever qualified aboard a carrier or not flown off a carrier since World War II.

**BS:** *What's TF?*

AR: TF was the same as the S2. Tracker. It was our logistic aircraft. Wonderful flying. Really enjoyed it.

**BS:** *But, you were there as a meteorologist.*

AR: Right.

**BS:** *Did you change your designator?*

AR: No, sir. Absolutely not.

**BS:** *I didn't either.*

AR: I had no desire whatsoever to become a . . .

**BS:** *I didn't either. I went to Point Barrow . . .*

AR: My problem was, once I got aboard there, I was 6 years away from the squadron by the time that I left the ship. And I was kind of desperate to get a good fleet squadron and I lucked out. I was assigned to Patrol Squadron 28.

**BS:** 19...?

**AR:** '63.

**BS:** VP...

**AR:** 28. Hawaii. At the last minute, they changed my orders to ride the troop transport out there to Long Beach, and I reported aboard the *Loraline IV* on their premier voyage. Took the family out to Hawaii on the *Loraline*.

**BS:** *What time were you there? When did you get there?*

**AR:** We got there in December of '63, having gone through the Rag during the summer and fall. I was in Warner Springs up at survival school when Kennedy was killed and they didn't tell us about it until Sunday morning. We were in the black boxes actually when he was assassinated.

**BS:** *I did all that.*

**AR:** Subsequently, I spent a fair amount of time on Midway Island, Canton Island and Johnson Island, chasing Russian missile tests. We deployed to Iwakuni, Japan, in May of 1964, and were operating out of Iwakuni, when Maddux and Turner \_\_\_\_\_ were attacked up in the Gulf of Tonkin. The night they were attacked, we got a telephone call at 2 o'clock in the morning to head south and by 4 o'clock in the morning, we were airborne with eight aircraft headed to Sangley Point in the Philippines, and subsequently operated down there until the end of September. We

set a record of some sort with the 8 aircraft. We had 2,008 hours in the month of August, 1964. And we were an accident waiting for a place to happen.

**BS:** *I know you must have been pretty tired.*

**AR:** We were literally dead on our feet.

**BS:** *What kind of aircraft?*

**AR:** P2s. VP 42 was down with us and it was terrible to have happened, but fortunately the accident happened to them rather than us. They flew on into the water.

**BS:** *Tired?*

**AR:** Then all of a sudden, some of the senior people started realizing what they'd been doing to us down there and backed off. And subsequently things got a little calmer.

They pulled us back a month early and we transitioned to P3s. We weren't allowed to fly our own aircraft on TRANSPAC out to Hawaii until we got 100 hours as plane commanders. And so, VP 22 very kindly flew back and picked up our crews periodically to come back home for a week-end – things of this sort. And we reported back to Barber's Point with about 50 hours each. Well, subsequently, the next week, we got orders to go to Midway and chase the Russian missile ships and we were flying 15-1/2, 16 hour patrols out there. Still didn't have

100 hours in the aircraft, but that didn't seem to bother anyone. Deployed again with VP22 for a three week short deployment to augment them.

**BS:** *When was this?*

AR: This was in '65, and then subsequently, deployed again to Sangley Point, in 1965, and the squadron was deployed when I left it in January of '66. I came back to Washington on the P3 Project and was Patrol Aircraft Plans officer for the Navy. I spent two years back here.

**BS:** *Where were you?*

AR: I was at DM4, Chief Naval Material Anti-submarine Warfare Systems Project.

**BS:** *What did you do after that?*

AR: I left there in March, 1968, reported to the Rag, and went through the Rag in P3Bs, reported to Patrol Squadron 47 as XO and then later, CO. Deployed to Sangley Point, Cam Rahn Bay

**BS:** *VP 47. Where were they based?*

AR: Well, we reported to Moffett Field. Deployment based the first year out of Sangley Point.

**BS:** *Now, you were a CO what years?*

AR: This was 1969-70. And we had detachments in Cam Rahn Bay and Udipelt?, Thailand, those years. And in May, of 1970, I detached and reported to the Industrial College in Washington. We became industrialized.

**BS:** *I went to the War College.*

AR: Excellent. Excellent college.

**BS:** *If I did it again, I'd prefer ICAP. I believe in the beans and the bullets.*

*Eisenhower won World War II in Europe with understanding beans and bullets. He held back Patton, he held back Montgomery because they had outrun their supplies just like Rommel did. Ike understood it. So, here you are at ICAP What did you study at ICAP?*

AR: Everybody studied the same thing. We studied the military industrial complex. Studied management. Those were the days when political correctness starting raising it's ugly head and they had all the touchy feely transcendental meditation and things of this sort as management techniques. You know, get everybody out and sit around the circle and let all the managers . . . a bunch of tom-foolery that we weren't buying. I remember, I was in a GW program that was pushing this sort of thing and so it was the old story, if the professor says something, you give it back to him and you know what the answer is, he honestly probably knows what the answer is, but you give him what he wants. I thought the program was outstanding, I thought the faculty was outstanding, and I subsequently left there

and went to the Joint Staff with the best job in the Joint Staff for a Navy man, at least. I was in current operations J-3, I had the Atlantic Command Branch.

**BS:** *Joint Staff at . . .*

AR: JCS. The Pentagon.

**BS:** *Loved it, huh?*

AR: I really did.

**BS:** *How long were you there?*

AR: Three years.

**BS:** *I went to Deepfreeze. I was supposed to go Op 943 to be the space officer for Bill Ramsey. Oh, he was disappointed because he kept that billet open for me to finish the college, but then this opportunity came up. Joint Staff . . .*

AR: I went to the Joint Staff. As a result of a mix-up in budgeting, the joint staff ran out of travel money in June of 1973. There had been an inordinate amount of travel that year and I had a meeting in London that I had to attend as the United States delegate to the NATO training conference at the end of June. And there wasn't any money.

**BS:** *You were a Captain then?*

AR: I was a Captain.

**BS:** *When did you make Captain?*

AR: Made it in '72. And I went in to see my boss and I said, "Boss, I need to be in London (and I gave him the date) and I also have some other things I need to do while I'm over there, and there's no travel money. And so, officially, I can't travel over there and fulfill this requirement. However, I'd like to make a deal with you." (This was an Air Force General I was working for at the time.) He said, "Sounds interesting. Go ahead." "Well, I know we've got a rule that says you can't have more than 14 days consecutive leave while you're on the Joint Staff. I need 19 days, and here's why." And I outlined what I intended to do and said, "Somehow there's going to be a meeting in London and it's going to take place between these 4 days and I'm just going to happen to be over there on leave." And since I'm on leave, I can go to this thing, no problem at all. And no travel money. I'm going to stay on leave.

**BS:** *During the conference.*

AR: Yeah.

**BS:** *I thought you couldn't do more than 14 days.*

AR: That's why I had to get a dispensation for 19 days.

**BS:** *What did you do – like 8 days leave, conference . . . ?*

AR: No. if there had been money to pay for it, but as long as I was there, they were going to have to pay me, officially. But, just to make it semi-legal, I said, "I'll be happy to go there on leave. I've got no problem at all." But, when I came back

from the Antarctic back in 1957, I got a call in early June, at the Naval Academy from Dick Black. And he said, “Al, I have a problem. I have the Executive Officer of the Belgian Antarctic Expedition in town and he’s getting all sorts of good information to help them as they map out their expedition for the IGY. And we need someone to talk air operations and there’s no one around town at the present time. Do you think that your boss would allow you to come over here and spend four or five days?” I said I would sure ask him, so I did. I was working for Admiral Bill Smith\_\_ at the time. And he said “Hey, gangbusters! Sure! We’ll send you over there.” So, they sent me over to Task Force 43 for a week and I worked with Xavier deMaere just going over their operations and making miscellaneous suggestions as to how they might go about things to make it easy on them. One thing I suggested was instead of getting some American airplane, that they get an Auster for their small liaison airplane. The whole idea being that if they got one built in South Africa, that was directly in line with where they were going to be and anyone going south could stop and pick up parts for them. Well, subsequently it turned out that they needed a lot of parts and that was a good suggestion.

**BS:** *Xavier deMaere. Was he the head of it?*

**AR:** He was Executive Officer. Subsequently, after he got back from the Ice, he kept sending me Christmas cards every year saying, “Oh you must come over and visit,” and the Navy kept sending me back to the Pacific and finally, in 1973, I saw

an opportunity. And so I said, what I want to do when I go over to Europe, I'll go over on space A and I'm planning to go to Belgium and I'll plan to go to Belgium after I get through in London because I want to make sure I'm in London to be there for the conference. I subsequently did that, but while we were in Belgium visiting the deMaeres, I called my old boss from the Pacific when I had my command tour, who was Vice Admiral Charlie Minter.

**BS:** *I know Admiral Minter. Charlie Minter was my post-graduate school buddy.*

**AR:** Oh, OK. Young Charlie.

**BS:** *Young Charlie. He became a minister.*

**AR:** He certainly did. He became a new tribes missionary. Went to Papua, New Guinea.

**BS:** *He did!? My wife was a missionary in Papua, New Guinea. I didn't know Charlie went there. I knew he became a minister though. Well, anyway, here you are with Admiral Minter.*

**AR:** So, in our conversation he said, "Al, gosh, you'd probably like duty over here." I said, "I probably would, Admiral. What do you have to do to get a tour of duty over here?"

**BS:** *He's at NATO?*

**AR:** He's at NATO. He was the Vice Chairman of the NATO Military Committee.

He said it would probably help if the Vice Admiral asked for you. And I said, “Would you do that?” And he said, “I will.” And so he did, and sure enough, again, about six weeks I ended up with another set of orders. And when I left the Joint Staff, I reported to the NATO Military Committee for four wonderful years in Brussels. I initially went as the Navy member of the Military Committee Special Study Group.

**BS:** *And this is because you knew an Antarctic and you went over to see him – Xavier deMaere, and . . .*

AR: Talked to my old boss.

**BS:** *And you happened to go in to see Admiral Minter.*

AR: Just called him

**BS:** *Called him to say, “Hey, I’m in town. How you doin’? Want coffee?”*

AR: Yeah, I was just literally going through town.

**BS:** *Oh, you talked on the phone?*

AR: We talked on the phone.

**BS:** *You never even saw him.*

AR: No. Didn’t even see him.

**BS:** *So, he asked for you and you spent four years at Brussels.*

AR: I sure did.

**BS:** *At NATO.*

AR: NATO headquarters.

**BS:** *Did you have much to do with the Belgian Antarctic program after that?*

AR: Nope.

**BS:** *They kind of dropped out.*

AR: Not a thing.

**BS:** *They had a base during IGY, then they pulled out. They're still on the Antarctic Treaty Committee and all that.*

AR: So, that's how I got to Belgium.

**BS:** *I met more people through contacts in Deepfreeze than I did in my whole Navy career put together. Half of Congress.*

AR: When I left Belgium again, I had been doing a lot of work with SACLANT and I came back my last tour of duty in the Pentagon was the United States Liaison Officer to SACLAN. I was on the SACLANT Staff, but actually was liaison to SACLAN, originally in Washington. So,

**BS:** *Go over that again. This was afterward, you went to SACLANT?*

AR: That's right.

**BS:** *So, you went to Belgium. You were there until '77?*

AR: 1978.

**BS:** *OK.*

AR: Came back here. Actually was assigned to SYNCLANT staff J-33, but I was resident in Washington and was liaison for both SYNCLANT and SACLANT in Washington. I had an office in SACLANT also, but my exec was down there.

**BS:** *Interesting. That's kind of neat. You retired from that?*

AR: I retired from that. I had an idea I was going to Florida, but I didn't.

**BS:** *And you retired in 1980 or so?*

AR: 1981.

**BS:** *How many years?*

AR: Thirty years and one month.

**BS:** *Would you do it again?*

AR: Nope. I don't think I'd do it again. I couldn't possibly do what I did. If I could re-do what I did, I probably would.

**BS:** *That's kind of what I was asking.*

AR: But, I have absolutely no regrets. There are a couple of things that happened to me at various times that I thought, oh, bad turn . . . but it turned out, it was a good turn.

**BS:** *Have you had any subsequent involvement with Polar folks?*

AR: Not really, other than . . . oh, I keep track of what's going on down there.

**BS:** *Siple lunch, Antarctic Society.*

AR: Oh, occasionally I go to Antarctic Society, yeah. Keep track of Polly Pinhale. Polly and I are both on the steering committee of the Washington Explorers' Club.

**BS:** *Polly's a good buddy.*

AR: She's a nice, nice lady.

**BS:** *Well, you retired from the Navy. What date?*

AR: The 30<sup>th</sup> of June, 1981.

**BS:** *And you're a member of the Antarctic Society here in Washington, the American Polar Society, Explorers' Club, you follow Antarctic . . . you follow Arctic events?*

AR: Not too much. Really, I haven't seen very much recently. I followed some of the submarine tracking up there.

**BS:** *In your VP Navy, did you get to the Arctic?*

AR: Got up there one time.

**BS:** *Where? Adack?*

AR: No, as a matter of fact, I operated out of Fairbanks. I had one mission. I had to fly up into the Arctic Ocean and drop two buoys. And I flew up there, found an open lead, dropped two buoys, and came back.

**BS:** *And that was the end of that.*

AR: That's right.

**BS:** *Fly to Adack?*

AR: Never got to Adack. I had a cousin in VP43 flying PBVs was lost in August, 1942, turned up missing up there on a flight. My son spent six months at Adack, but I've never been there.

**BS:** *Well, you won't get there now, at least not with the Navy. Well, this has been an outstanding interview. It's really interesting, the P2s. They had some accidents down there. They had that one flying, then they had that one out of Wilkes Station. You know anything about that one?*

AR: Uh, bomb bay tank came loose on take-off, and exploded.

**BS:** *Ed Sail who was one of the premiere scientists was killed on that one.*

AR: 434, our old airplane, had an engine fire down there on Deepfreeze III. However, they got that down OK. But, it was subsequently lost at Ontario, California. They had the same situation that arose on the first flight. The skis went vertical, but it was on the landing and they held off dropping their gear until the last minute and with these things barndoored, there's no way in the world that thing would fly. Broke it's back on landing. There are some good pictures of this.

**BS:** *Well, sounds like we ought to just terminate this. It's been a good interview.*

**(End of Interview)**

