

GRAHAM BLYTH

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Interviewer (Q): Dora Scott | C-I-B | Antarctic Legacy Project | Stellenbosch University
Respondent (A): Mr Graham Blyth | Assistant Meteorologist | SANAE 27 | 1986

Q This is an oral history interview with Graham Blyth at his home in Claremont. It is the 22nd of November 2011. So tell me, what was your team number and year?

A We were team SANAE 27 and it was 1986.

Q At Antarctica?

A At SANAE base.

Q And you were the assistant meteorologist?

A I was the assistant meteorologist and I decided to spend most of my spare time doing photography and I ran the dark room.

Q Okay, good. Now, how did it happen that you applied to go?

Q When I was about 5, I discovered that there was a place called the Antarctic and that there were teams that went down and since the age of about 5 I became obsessed with the Antarctic. In 1980, eventually I met a guy that had just come back from the Antarctic.

A Who was that?

Q I couldn't tell you - haven't the foggiest idea. Anyway, I said to him: "How did you go and how can I go?" He said: "Phone Tannie Van Staden in Pretoria," and gave me Tannie Van Staden's number and the next morning I phoned Tannie van Staden. She said: "Well I'll send you some forms." So she sent me some forms and I filled them all in and sent them back to her and it was too late in the year and they said: "They've already got the team, it's full, so I can't go." So I said: "OK, I'll apply next year again." So I applied the following year and I still didn't get in and then I applied the following year and then I could get in but I had started studying. I studied chemistry and polymer science. I said: "No, I need to stop now. I don't want to stop studying, so I will give it a gap." And then I finished - at the end of 1984 I finished studying and I applied again. I didn't hear from them the Department of Transport and I thought: "Oh no." The 15th of September 1985 I got a fax - not a fax, telegram underneath my door at home saying: "If you are still interested, report to Pretoria on Monday." So needless to say I was there in two days flat and I did all the tests. I came back, threw up my job, packed up my house and two weeks later I was back in Pretoria starting the first of October, doing all the training. So I was the last one in the team.

A My goodness.

Q So that's how I landed my... to go. So it was magic.

A Great. So you said your interest started when you were 5 years old?

Q Yes.

A How did you find out? Was it media?

Q It must have been something in an article or in National Geographic most likely or something. And I just was fascinated by it. So right through my school career my orals and all the things we had to write about, you know, "What is your dream when you are big" and all those things were always about the Antarctic. All my mates used to say: "We know what you are going to talk about at the end for your exams". "We know what you are going to write about in your exams." So it was just a fascination of the place and I don't know why. I think it was the adventure-streak in it as well the adventure part, doing something that's a bit different, something that's more difficult than the norm, because our family has a history of adventure stuff.

A Oh?

Q So my cousin is a guy called Chay Blyth. He is the first guy to row across the Atlantic. He was the first guy to sail the wrong way around, single-handedly, non-stop around the world. So at a lot of the races he is now Sir Chay Blyth. So he's become, they knighted him because of all the research and the work that he did in sailing. My brother is Mike. He is an adventure pilot. So he flies around the world and he does all crazy things in tiny little aircraft. So he holds a lot of flying world records for this crazy stuff he

does.

Q You said you were the last person to arrive at the team?

A In the team, yes. Correct.

Q What preparations did you have to do?

A The first thing that they made us do was two days of psychological tests where they threw us all in a room together and they were like really mean to us and they asked us crazy questions.

Q Like what?

A The most difficult question was... We hadn't even met each other, we knew one or two of the guys, but we hadn't basically met the whole team. It was the first day we had met the whole team. We sat around the table and the psychologist said: "Pick somebody that you don't want on the team with you that you don't want to go, you know, have with you." and so we all said: "Well, that is unfair. We don't know each other!" He said: "No. Pick somebody and then you have to explain why." So it was very difficult. He said: "just do it, think of something." And it went around the table and of course, when it got to me I said Jeff was our leader, I said: "I don't want Jeff to go, because I am jealous, because I applied to be the leader and I'm not. So I'm jealous of Jeff. So, jealousy, I don't... I want Jeff to go so then maybe I can become the leader. And so they went around and Hendrik sat next to me and he said: "I don't want Graham to go with me." And they said: "Why?" He said: "Because he speaks English. He is English speaking." We weren't allowed to comment. We had to keep quiet. So anyway, it went around and I thought: "Okay, well that's fine. So at teatime I said to him: "Are you serious? I'm not the only English speaking person here." He said: "Yea, but you were the closest to me. You were sitting next to me and I don't want English speaking people. So I said: "On the basis of what? And he said: "Well, Afrikaans people are more superior to English speaking people and we, from my parents, my grandparents, we just don't mix with English speaking people." It was quite interesting. I knew from when I was at boarding school, the English and Afrikaans kids used to fight like crazy. It was like war half the time. And I just thought, this is a bit rough, you know. If I'm stuck with him somewhere and he's saying: "Die, bugger, because you are English speaking". And we left it. I mean, we all became friends and halfway through the year, we had an incident where we nearly perished. And in that time he said to me: "You know what, I've come to realise that English speaking people and Afrikaans speaking people are all the same, and I've learnt a whole lot by being here and I never knew that we were all the same type of people." So it was quite an interesting revelation, I suppose, in how English and Afrikaans people see each other. Or used to, depends on where you came from. So that was the most difficult. So it was all the psychological. And it was also the questions, like: "Who will you miss the most?" and "What happens if you left your girlfriend behind?" and "How are you going to deal with your sexual being as a young male? How are you going to feel about food and close proximity and no privacy?" So all those things were dealt with. Or tried to be if they were dealt or spoken about.

Q Mentioned?

A Mentioned, ja. And then of course we did things like fire-fighting, first-aid, cooking, rock climbing. We did various courses on that, two or three days, four days at a time with all of those, plus lots of information about the Antarctic. And then in between that I went to Irene weather research station to go and actually try and study what I'm going to do. So that is really the codes and things. In those three months before I left that's what we did.

Q Do you think the team preparation specifically we'll get to your own preparation now, do you think that helped? The fire-fighting, rock-climbing, those things.

A It definitely did, because they specifically put us in to fairly difficult situations sometimes or pressurised us and have a slight competition. Like in cooking there was like a competition. Or when we went fire-fighting, we all went through the same stuff. You couldn't say, "well, it's not my turn to go through the smoke." They physically put us through proper scenarios where you're blindfolded and you're on an oxygen mask and now you must find your way out of a building so that whenever you've got team stuff like that, yes, it does build the camaraderie and it does build up the trust between each other, because you suddenly realise you can't do it on your own, you need somebody to feed you the rope, or you need somebody to pass you something or stay behind while you do something else. So from that point of view, I think it was very necessary. The only thing that there was a problem with was in the one lot of psychology tests, it was the older guy I can't remember what his name was who was a proper psychologist, he was fine, or a psychiatrist, I don't know if he was...

Q Was it Oubaas Jooste?

- A** Could have been, it sounds familiar, yes. And then they gave us a whole session with a young lady who was probably about 19. And I said to her: "What do you know about life?" You know, our average age was like 25 and I mean I was the second eldest - I was 29. We went from, 21 were the youngest to 31 was the eldest. And a 19 year old psychologist who wasn't even finished who was trying to tell us things about, you know, how we were going to handle ourselves and what we were going to do and we were going, "Please lovey. You haven't learnt anything about life. You're not going to teach us anything." And half of us had been to the army. So that already put us, you know that we knew what it was like to have tough times. We knew what it was like to have no privacy. We knew what it was like to, if it was your turn to do something, you just do it.
- Q** Do you think the preparation you, well, the experiences that you had in the army prepared you for the Antarctic?
- A** Definitely. The guys who had been to the army, you could see very quickly when it was hard times or really hard physical work or things that weren't so nice that they just got on and did it. The younger guys were not too sure about it and, "I must first have a look into my computer and..."
- Q** Why hadn't they gone to the army? I thought it was...
- A** They were too young. They hadn't been to the army yet.
- Q** Oh, so they had, they would still have to go on their return from the Antarctic?
- A** No. The army wasn't compulsory then.
- Q** Okay.
- A** I don't know when compulsory army training stopped, so the guys never had to go.
- Q** But it was compulsory when you went?
- A** When I went it was still compulsory.
- Q** That was when exactly?
- A** I went in 1974 and '75. I did two years in the army.
- Q** So, just tell me a bit more about the preparations you had to do. Well, what they taught you at Irene when you went there for the meteorological training.
- A** Okay, Irene was really learning about all the weather charts, how to record all the different things and remember, we didn't have satellite and we didn't have email and anything else and it was all done in Morse code. So what we did is we prepared all the data in books - handwritten tables, and then that was given to the radio guys who would then translate it onto a ticker tape and then that was then what was that called - telex.
- Q** Yes?
- A** ... It was then telexed to Pretoria via a ticker tape the information every six hours. So in Irene they really taught us how to do the balloons, how to set them up, how to track them on the radio tracker, how to assemble that information, how to record the information, and then learn all about the visual things. Now obviously in Pretoria you can't do visual observations for snow and snowfall and all the other things, but they taught you about it and they gave us books and we wrote tests on that basic information.
- Q** And was it sufficient?
- A** For me I think it was. Mark was had already studied for three years as a meteorologist. He was with us, so we were basically his assistants. So we were to do stuff he had to check. The first few months at SANAE he used to check all our stuff, because he knew how to do it properly. After a while we knew what we had to do on our daily routines.
- Q** Okay. So let's talk a bit about the journey there. Did you go on the Agulhas?
- A** We went on the Agulhas, so we had the PWD guys. We had some geologists that were going down for the duration to go to Grunehogna to go and to the stones and the takeover.
- Q** Who was the captain?
- A** Leith. Captain Leith was the captain. And so we left on the third of January 1986...
- Q** It's very late.
- A** Second or third of January, I think, I can't remember. It will be in my diary somewhere, so I can confirm those. So it was nine days going down.
- Q** What kind of a captain was Bill Leith?

A Everyone had said to him that he was very strict, but very good. He knew his ship and he knew the people and he knew how to handle everything. So by just listening to the others that knew him, it instilled a level of calm, because you're going through rough waters, you're going through ice and things and a lot of us didn't really know besides research and books and things. And of course that was before computers so you couldn't google stuff. You know you had to find a book, read the book, you know, or go to the library. So the few interactions we had with captain Leith was very good, but I think he ran a tight ship, which I think you have to if you want to run a research vessel and you've got young kids kids, you know - 20, if that's a kid, to old hands to your Steve doors the guys, you know that have been on the ship a long time. So it was a nice mix, but it was a fantastic trip down, besides being terribly seasick.

Q Really?

A Yes. Those first three days when we left it was a howling South Easter. Six hours later, I mean, everybody was green. It was really not nice. But then after about three days you get your sea legs and then you wake up and you go: "you know what? This is fine. It can do it as it likes." So it was magic.

Q Did you have any interesting experience or were there any interesting events that happened on the journey down?

A The only one. The first one was some of the really rough seas in the 50's in the latitude, 50's, ja

A Only one, the first one was some of the really, really rough seas in the fifties - in the latitude fifties - ja. Where the, I mean, that boat is like a tiny little speck in those waves. You know, when you get on the boat you think: ah this is a big ship but then you're out to sea you realise it's a tiny little cork that floats in the sea. So that was quite exciting in the really rough seas and then we also got stuck in the pack ice a bit. So that was quite nice. So you had to reverse and go forward and back and break through and of course, you know, everybody said: "Don't worry, Leith knows what he's doing, so don't panic"; Cause the first thing, cause I remember reading all the Antarctic books of, you know, all the people getting stuck in the ice and like Shackleton and those guys and so you think what's going to happen, but its-its fine. So ja, I don't think there was great excitement but it was magic because it was the first time you'd experience it. So that was really, really nice.

Q Ok. What were your first thoughts on arrival at SANAE, at the ice-shelf?

A When, before we actually got on to the ice-shelf, there was five days of off-loading. So what we did is, we stayed on the ship for the first three or four days to off-load because we couldn't park the ship near the ice-shelf. That didn't work. So what we did is we stayed 200 m off the ice-shelf maybe - I don't know - half a kilometre and then we had the two puma helicopters...

Q Is it still a military-?

A Yes, there was still an air force that flew there, the puma's - I can't even remember some of the guys - it will be in my diary some of the guy's names. And, so then we flew all the stuff off the ship. So in the beginning we worked quite hard on the ship, packing all the stuff up and then eventually they took us and put us at the shore, on the ice-shelf and we had to off-load but they flew us back to the ship every day. We didn't, we weren't allowed to go to the main base yet.

Q So, did the previous team, did the members stand there and assist you with the off-loading?

A They, they, not the previous team, the only thing they did is they came with their sledges and we packed the sledges and all they did is they just drove the sledges to and from the base because we were thirteen kilometres from the edge of the base to the base...

Q Okay so it could be done in a few hours?

A No, it took us about six days to off-load the ship.

Q Ja, but I mean, transporting everything to the base because they just went to and fro.

A They just went backwards and forwards with the caterpillar, we had one small caterpillar - a little D-4 - that tugged along three sledges behind it.

Q Oh my goodness.

A So it was a slow process. They used to go and then like six hours later, they would come back again and do another load. And we just literary work 24/7 just to off-load the ship. So the initially thing on the ice, you know, you're there and you're going to work physically hard. You're off-loading tones and tones of stuff, and drums and poles and big steel plates and thousands of...

A "Koskassies", little wooden boxes that everything gets packed in. So your experience was what is this Antarctic experience all about? All I am doing is working like a slave off-loading, but while you are waiting for the choppers to do each sortie, it was still fun. You got your food brought to you and you

realise how cold it is and that your hands freeze and you know the ice melts. It wasn't so that cold in those few days, the coldest was probably minus ten. The average was about minus seven. So we thought: "No, it's not so bad", and you are working hard. And, while we were there, we found the old trans-Antarctic base.

Q Really?

A So we got into the trans-Antarctic base.

Q So was that, sorry, was that Norway's station?

A No, that was the guys that crossed the, that was, what was his name? They crossed the Antarctic...

Q Fuchs.

A Fuchs. Yes, So Vivian Fuchs. We found that base that they built and got actually into it. And I took some photographs of that which are in that box somewhere.

Q Fantastic. How far was that from the ice-shelf?

A That was right near the edge of the ice-shelf. It was, that's long gone. The following year that had already broken off into the sea, so we were probably the last team to ever see that base.

Q Okay.

A Like a little wooden box that their guys started off in, crazy stuff. And then you go: Okay, is this how the people lived? This is interesting.

Q Is this now what I am in for?

A Laughs

Q So when you finally finished off-loading, who stayed on the ship? The crew stayed on the ship?

A The crew stayed on the ship and then we all got flown. We all got into one chopper or two choppers - I can't remember - and they said: "Right, now we are going to take you to the base." So you get to the base and it's like: Where are you? All your bags get thrown out of the chopper and some of the stuff was already there with the sledges. And I'm thinking, where is the base? And you have all these air vents and things and the base is deep underneath. You're going deep underneath, where? So it was interesting going down into these little tunnels. It had a certain smell to it because obviously, you know...

Q Human habitation?

A Human habitation and everything. From being working outside, on the ice, where it's fresh and everything; Suddenly you realise: I am going to share this tiny little room with another guy during takeover. So the guy I took over from, his nickname was Shakes. I wonder what his real name was.

Q So was he also a meteorologist?

A He was also the meteorologist, assistant meteorologist. So you share a room that's like four foot wide and seven foot long and two of you live in that with all your stuff. All of a sudden you realise you're in a strange place and then eventually you wander around trying to work out where you are in this rabbit maze, rabbit-warren that you're in, steel tunnels. And I eventually found a dining room and the lounge and on the board, on the white board, it was written: Dinner tonight Graham and Shakes. And 'cause I just arrived on the base, I've been in the base for an hour, and I thought: Oh, look at that there's another guy called Graham. Then about an hour later, somebody came looking for me and said: Who's Graham? And I said: "It's me", and he said: You better get into the kitchen, pal. You and Shakes are going to make food for seventy people.

Q Oh!

A It was our team, the old team, the PWD-team, all the chopper guys, the takeover guys, the geologists. So there were seventy people in that base.

Q Waiting for dinner?

A Waiting for dinner. So eventually, then I had to find Shakes, because I didn't know who Shakes was. Then I eventually found Shakes. And I said to him: "Are you Shakes? I'm Graham. Did you see we're making dinner tonight?" And he said: "Right. So what are we going to do?" He said was just going to do a mixed grill because we're just going to keep cooking. 'Cause they're going to keep coming in and out for the next three hours. So we just made steak and chops and sausage and egg and potato-salad and I can't remember. We just kept cooking for hours.

Q Hours and hours. Did you have to clean up afterwards as well?

A And then we had to clean up. So anyway that was...

Q first arrival.

A A rude introduction for me into the base. laughs Anyway, it was fun.

- Q** Did you spend a lot of time with the outgoing team?
- A** Not that much time, the sort of kept to themselves because it was like we were an invasion of their space and we were the new boys on the block. So you found that on dinner time you would chat with each other but then they would use to go hide away or go walkabout or often you didn't even know where half of them were. So obviously the guy that I took over from Shakes; Shakes had to teach me how to do the weather, balloons, where all the stuff was. So during your work time I was with him all the time, or most of the time but after about four days with him, he said: No, you know how to do it, I'm going and go sleep or I'm going to go do something...
- Q** Do something else.
- A** Do something else, call me if you need me, come find me if you need me. So which was fine.
- Q** Did they give you any advice about the circumstances? In not only on the job you had to do but also on different things? About how the base is run?
- A** Ja, you do that cause you often, dinner supper time, normally we try to get all 15 old and 15 new, we try to get together and say: how are we going to do this? What is the best way to do that? Why do you do it like this? Don't you think if we do it like that? And they say: "Wait until winter time; It is not going to work if you do it like that." So that was the best sort of conversation time on finding out, and there was always some guys that were really, really keen to show you the stuff and there were other guys that were just totally disinterested. All they wanted to do was go home. They didn't even want to talk to you. Which is, I suppose, is fine. If they were happy there or not happy there. I mean, their leader there was a guy called Steve...
- Q** I will be able to...
- A** Fourie, absolutely fantastic guy. Just like, you just think: where do they find such nice guys. And so he helped a hell of a lot and he was very keen to show you everything in detail. You know, call me alltime.
- Q** Do you think his enthusiasm sort of helped lift the team moral for you guys?
- A** Yes, his enthusiasm was amazing. Mark Bookstein was another one who was very keen, Steve - whatever his name was - he was the leader. They were really incredible guys; You are just going: Wow, this is really amazing. And there are just one or two guys who'd just say: This place is disgusting, this place is... I don't like it here and things. And I am going: If you don't like it here, what are you doing here? You volunteered to come here. Don't pull up you lip. In life you always get that; you get guys that are excited to do stuff and you get guys that are just a pain.
- Q** You didn't have any dogs?
- A** No, the dogs ceased about four to five years before us, I think. About 1980 were the last time they had dogs there, if I remember correctly.
- Q** So now the outgoing team had left?
- A** Yes.
- Q** And you'd now settled in? Tell me bit about your, a day in the life of the assistant meteorologist. They're a team.
- A** They're a team. Because there were three of us, what we decided to do was work 24 hours' non-stop and then 48 hours off. Because we couldn't work out how to do it and the old team recommended, and said why don't you do that? In 48 hours, you can sleep, you can cook, you can go walk about, you can play cards, you can drink, and you can do whatever you like. So we adapted that, that principle to 24 hours on and 48 hours off, because there were three of us. That was easy. So your first shift started I think six in the morning, we worked six until six. So you'd first do all your weather readings from inside the base in the office. In there were some of the instruments that gave you wind speed, wind direction, temperature outside. Then you go outside and to check the Stephenson screen, where all the instruments are. Then every 12 hours, you did a balloon, so you'd do two balloons in your shift. And then every three hours you had to do do all your readings. You did your manual, mechanical-electronic readings - I won't call them computers, cause there weren't computers there - electronic readings. And then you physically had to go outside and do observations. See you would go outside, open the hatch and say: okay, this is my visibility, that ishow many, three-eight clouds - clouds are measured in parts of eight - so it's either one eight, two eights or eight-eights or zero out of eight. You would do that, you do any strange things like lunar halo or a solar halo, ice particles, what is the visibility, how far you can see, the height of the cloud, that was all done visually. Which was recorded in the books, and then every three hour - in between the three hours - once you'd finished writing it up you would probably have an hour for yourself. You would go sleep a bit or you would go and make something to eat, chat with the other guys, so that. That was great, in your 24 hours and I learnt very

quickly that you didn't actually need to sleep in 24 hours. You'd just get used to it, you know. This is what it is. In summer-time it is easy because the sun shines all the time. So you would go outside with the sun shine, so your brain thinks it's still day-time so you don't have to sleep. And the only disadvantage is that I suffered very badly from big-eye or midwinter insomnia. So I eventually stop sleeping, literally totally.

Q Wow!

A And...

Q During the winter?

A It started before winter, but then it got progressively worse. And it stayed like that for probably ten years after my return from the Antarctic. I mean the doctor kept on saying: You're going to die, as a human you cannot...

Q Go without sleep?

A Go without sleep. I used to go typically four days, five days with no sleep. No sleep. And then I would, he, would give me a drug - I think it was Valium or whatever he gave me, or morphine or I don't know what he gave me - and I would sleep for four hours and I would be awake for three days or four days. And eventually he said to me: "I don't believe you because you can't, you have to die". And I said: "Why don't you come and monitor me." So what he did was he monitored me with sleep charts and then eventually he did blood - put a butterfly in me - drew blood all the time because in that, in your blood, you can see if you're sleeping or not. Because of the oxygen and the red and the white or something. He said: "You're not sleeping!" And I told him I am not sleeping. What I sometimes what I do is I lie down and rest because my body is tired but I don't sleep in the time that I rest.

Q Don't shut down.

A I don't shut down, so that became a huge issue for many years afterwards. That didn't go away when I came back to South Africa. It stayed. I just go for days without sleep. Now to me in the Antarctic that was magic because I didn't want to sleep in the Antarctic. Because I was going to waste my time, because I wanted to do.

Q See?

A And see everything in every second of the year that I was going to be there. So to me it was an advantage. Sometimes when I did want to sleep but something was happening I would go: No, you're not going to sleep now, there's something else more exciting. So to me it was an advantage. We had other guys like Mark Steyn. I mean, Mark used to sleep for twenty hours. In his 48 hour shift, he used to sleep for twenty hours.

Q Wow.

A And I would go: what a waste of time. You know, you can't come back here easily again. Why do you want to sleep? Sleep when you're dead, sleep when you old.

Q So what were the challenges of living in the Antarctic?

A In the Antarctic and/or the base?

Q Both?

A Both. I think one of the challenges what you realise quite quickly, that you're in a place that you're not used to. You know home here in the city we worry about banks and work hours and our phones and various other things. Now all of those things disappear. Now you worry: do I have enough clothes on, am I going get back to the base, is the wind going to blow me away if you're out. How am I going to defrost my food? I've got food with me but its frozen solid like a piece of concrete. I can't eat this. So all of a sudden those things start kicking in and fortunately, having been in the army and I spent a year in the Angolan-war. So where I survived, how I fend for myself. A lot of that was useful. I wasn't frightened because times were hard. So that was a nice part, but a difficult part. And in the base, fortunately I am not, I don't mind people. I don't have a privacy problem if I am in an area like that; also I suppose of the army and all my years at the boarding school; but learning to live in a tunnel, in tiny rooms with no privacy. You know public loo's that are open. If you're showering and everyone else is doing their clothes and things. There is no private privacy; there is no privacy in any form whatsoever. The only privacy you could ever have was if you walked away from the base. Which I sometimes did. I needed time out and then I would just walk two kilometres. Walk and I would go lie on the ice and be by myself for a few hours. I didn't have a problem with that, a lot of the guys did battle with it and you can see they get highly tense. And they just want to murder one another, literary. Our biggest problem - I don't know if the name Steve Hatfill has come up in any of your research?

Q Not yet, no.

A Okay. Steve Hatfill and this is my experience of Steve Hatfill, so if this is against me one day, well then it is my opinion and my view of Steve Hatfill. Steve Hatfill was the doctor. He was an American guy who arrived out of the blue and he was our doctor. And before we left, we sort of thought he was quite a strange guy. He was rather eccentric but we thought: you know what he's an American so whatever.

Q Must be it.

A Must be it. We'll bear with him and he was fine during the three months before we left. A little bit strange and some of the guys didn't quite like him because maybe his attitude and he seemed to know everything. You know, you could talk about a radio, and he knew about a radio. You could talk about medical, he could talk about that. You talk about flying; he would know everything, and people normally don't like people that know everything. I just thought, maybe he is an intelligent guy, you know, whatever and I left it.

On the way down, we were on the ship and we were sitting in the pub. We had been on the boat for about a week, so it was nearing the Antarctic. And he befriended himself with all the pilots, with the chopper pilots. He just was like bee to honey with these guys. And he used to talk about his flying. So I sat and listened one day and I said to him one day: "What do you mean flying?" He said: "No, I was a jet pilot in the Vietnam war. I said: "Wow, that's amazing", and he said: "We flew in the jet and I fought over China and I actually got shot down over the China sea." He sort of turned around and he said: "There's my scar", and I landed and the plane crashed and I landed and this whole thing. And he was telling the pilots. Then the pilots started questioning him about flying. He said: "No, I understand the instruments." Eventually Buks, the one engineer, Buks said: "Wow, this guy is amazing. He knows all the instrumentations about the jets and he knows all the instrumentation on the choppers and how to fly."

I sat there for a while and I am like this, my brain opens and I hunt for information. I said to him: "Steve how old are you?", and he said: "I am thirty." I was twenty-nine and he was thirty. I said: "And you were in the Vietnam war?" He said: "Yes." I said: "That means you were a jet pilot about the age of six." Everybody turned around and looked at him and he got up and he walked out. And they said: "My God, he's not. He's not a pilot. He couldn't have been." If he's thirty, Vietnam war was 1960 - whatever it was - he must have started training, cause it was five years to be a jet pilot, four to five, four years the really good guys, five years the standard training period for jet pilots - I know that. That means he started when he was like four or five; he started as a jet pilot in the United States Air force.

NO! And everybody said there's something wrong with that guy, something's not above board with him but we don't know; he know so much about flying, we couldn't catch him on one thing. I thought: you know what maybe he is just looking for attention. Maybe he knows, maybe his father flew something. I'll give him the benefit of the doubt. He hasn't done anything to me. And as the year progressed, more and more of that stuff came out. Then all of the sudden he was head of the SS or SAS in the Rhodesian army and he was a, he was all these incredible characters and I'm going: Hmm, okay whatever.

And then Wim, the other guy; Wim was the youngest guy and he and I were the meteorologists. The junior meteorologists. Wim and I, every time there was two minutes, we were outside exploring. We were like the two wild explorers. Every opportunity we were out somewhere and then we organised a team to go abseiling off the edge of the ice-shelf on to the ice-sea. Which of course, we had signed a thing in the Antarctic thing we were not allowed to do that but we South African boys. So Wim and I taught ourselves how to climb, we did everything and when we got everything sorted, we eventually said to the guys one day: "We are going to go down to the edge of the ice-shelf. We have checked, we've got four days of good weather. We are going to go down, we are going to abseil." Of course the leader said: "You're not allowed to!" So I said: "Don't follow me." Then Steve said: "Why didn't you invite me?" I said: "Well I'm inviting you." "Why didn't you involve me?" I said: "Well I'm involving you now." "Ah but you must remember, I was a climbing instructor in the Rhodesian Army and I was a special parabat." And I said: "Come with us." So he did. When we got to the edge of the ice-shelf, Wim and I started preparing all the ropes and we set up all the safety equipment and everything.

And I said: "Right, here is a 'will and sit' harness" - it's like a harness that you put on, it's your basic piece of climbing equipment - I said: "Here is one for you, there, there and there." We checked them all. There is Steve falling all over the place. I went up to him and said: What's your problem? He said: "I don't know how to put this on" and I thought: Okay, so you're not a climbing instructor. So then I helped him put it on. Then he had this huge hunting knife attached to his leg. I said: "What do you got that knife here for?" He said: "You never going know what we're going to find down there." I said: "There's nothing down there, Steven." "No, I have to take it with me". So I said: "Okay, whatever. Take it with you." Then when we started to going down over the edge of the ice-shelf. We had to do it in a specific way because the ice is very brittle on the edge. So when you climb over you have to be very slow and gentle so the ice doesn't break on top of you.

He comes and sort of goes: "Ahhh!", and he does the big abseiling number. He gets to the bottom and we have endless troubles with this guy. Long story short, we eventually at the end of the day comes, a storms starts coming in. I said: "Guys, now we have to move it, now we have to move it back." We had left the caterpillar about a kilometre from the edge of the ice-shelf away from the crevices. We've left the caterpillar running, because you always leave it running. If you turn it of you can't start it again. And the sledge and some sleeping bags and some extra food, so that when we got back we'd have stuff and then we can go back to the base which was 12 kilometres away and so started: Dave you go first and then Mark Alex you go up next. You guys go up to the caterpillar so long, we going to follow you because the visibility was still fine, you'll find it. Then Rob and Steve and I were at the bottom. Wim was at the top and Hendrik the Afrikaans guy. He was at the top already, waiting for us at the top of the rope. And then we had this huge fight with Steve. And he said: "We mustn't tell him what to do, he is a climbing professional." I said: "Well then go! Go up the rope yourself, I won't help you."

Eventually I lost my cool with him and I said to him: "Well then you must stay down here and die because I am going up and I have got people on top that I am responsible for." And Rob said: "He will wait a bit." Hours went by and the storm got worse and Rob and Steve were still at the bottom. Visibility down to null. Huge storm. I thought: You know what - I had Wim and Hendrik with me at the top - I said: "Guys, we're going to have to dig in now." I knew the storms were typically ten days. I knew, okay that is the end of our lives. We had nothing with us. So we took one ice pick out, we had two ice picks rope security line secure points. So I took one out and of course you're lying like this on the snow because the wind is pumping. You got no - you face is full of ice.

We started digging, we took it in turns. We locked our arms into each other so we wouldn't get blown away. And we started digging into the ice. It was like minus 30 so the ice is like as hard as this table. We lay there for hours and hours and hours, digging this hole. Just to keep ourselves busy. Eventually we had a sort of a hole that we could get in and what we did is the three of us lay there. I had one hand holding unto the rope because I told Rob: When he comes up, he must tug on the rope so that I know he is coming up so that I can wait for him. So I had one hand on the spare rope and then we dug in, we lay in this hole. Every hour we would swop, one in the middle, so the three of us would lay spoon like this. Then the middle guy would get out on the other side and then we would swop like this and keep each other awake. No Rob, no Steve, no Rob, no Steve.

Early the next morning, eventually I feel the rope tight and here comes Rob. I said: "Where Steve?" He Rob says: "I've left him to die, he can die down there. We had this huge fight, he threw away his crampons and he cut the rope with his knife." That's a sin. He says: "He can die there." So I said: "Well, we can't leave him." Fortunately the weather started clearing during the day. I said to Wim: "Wim, were going to find this guy." We send the other guys back to the caterpillar. They drove closer; we got a sleeping bag out. I put on an extra set of clothes, so that I could swop my clothes with Steve. Sent two ropes down and a cable ladder. We eventually found Steve. He had, on the side of the cliff there was a little crevasse in the side and he had gotten into the crevasse. It was near the bottom - after throwing all his stuff away and cutting the rope and all the stuff. So we said: Well thats your problem.

When we got to him, Wim and I went down to him. He was already in his first stage of hypothermia so he was a bit delirious. He said to us, in training: "If somebody suffers from hypothermia don't be nice to them, be hard with them. Smack him, smack him awake, frighten him because that's how you get the body going." It's a bit like this electric thing, when people have heart-attacks - this electrical shock

thing. You basically shock them. Steve and Wim used to fight all the time, argue. So Wim said to me: "I can't wait." And he did, he clouted the guy. Eventually Steve came by; of course he was, clothes were all frozen and everything. Hanging on the rope, we sort of got him out. Took off most of his clothes, I took off my set of clothes and put him into clothes and loaded them into the sleeping bag. Now his clothes were dry. We stuffed him into the sleeping bag to warm him up and force fed him some chocolate little chocolate bars. Just force fed him like two slabs of chocolate and eventually he came by and then I was angry. I was angry with him and I said to him: "Steve!" Then he started saying: "Ah, I'm fine. Leave me." And I said: "I'm not leaving you. So I am counting to three. Here's the cable ladder. I know you can't use the rope. Here's the cable ladder; climb up this ladder. I'm counting to three and if you're not moving by three I'm leaving you here". I go to two and he was up on the ladder. As he came up over the top, all the guys were there to help him and he said: "So much for the movie", and he staggered off. So when I came out "What did you tell him?" So I just said: "No he said, I didn't tell him anything. I just, I was going to leave him to die if he doesn't move his arse." I said to him: "Why?" "No", "when he came over the top, he said: "So much for the movie"."

What's that about. We eventually got all our stuff out and we go our way to the base and of course everyone is like panic-mad because we didn't return. We didn't have radio contact or anything. Steve just disappeared. Later that night we made supper and we all sat around and told what had happened. They said: "Where is Steven?" I said: "I don't really care where Steven is." Eventually he came back and he stuck his head in and he said: "Whoever helped save my life, thank you." He closed and went back to his room. Everybody said: "Where did the thing come from "So much for the movie"? Then Dawid said: "Oh, I know what it's from." And I said: "What?" He said: "Every night when I come through to do my research - I come through at three o' clock in the morning because that is when I record my stuff - Steve is watching Rambo." So what he did is he became Rambo. That's why he had the knife.

Two days later I come through at midnight or three o' clock in the morning to do my obs, my weather reading; He's Steven in the dining room, sitting on the fridge-freezer thing, he'd cut his whole arm open with his knife. With his big knife. I said: "What the hell are you doing?!" He said: "No I'm practicing you know like Rambo; he has to stitch himself up you know. I am just practicing to stitch myself up." Well I was thinking: this guy is not a well bunny. By then nobody wanted to do anything with him because everyone had sassed this guy out and he just lived in his room. When we hurt ourselves, you know we had all done medical first-aid. So we all just looked after ourselves. And one day, we had not seen Steve for like a month - he just hid away, and I eventually thought you know what; I am going and talk to this guy. He hasn't hurt me. I don't like him. He hasn't hurt me.

So I went in and I said "I come chat to you. How are you doing?" He said: "No, I'm fine, you know. I want to leave this place. I said to him: "Steve, tell me something. Did you really study medicine?" He said: "I did." I said: "Where?" "No, in the Rhodesian Army." I said: "Okay." On the top shelf are all these medical journals. Each journal is like a thousand pages thick. I don't know if you've seen them but there is about twenty of them. So I point to all of them. "All those journals up there, is that what you studied?" He said: "Yip." I said: "No, but those are journals. Those are reference journals." He said: "No, I've studied them all." I said: "What do you mean?" He said: "Well, I had to." I said: "Can I test you?" He said: "Ja." So I take out book three and I let it open on page 700. Now I'm sitting, I'm going: "Steve, what is cyclohexane-butane methane?" Some long chemical. He said: "Oh that was a drug invented in 1942 by Du Pont and is administrated in 2 milligram lots. Typically used and sold under the name of so-and-so. Not to be given to pregnant women and will be used for the curing of so-and-so. I'm going: he clearly read this. Where's the mirror. I take another book, another one. I could ask him anything. He read them out. Then I realised this is a scary guy cause to do that. He knew everything that I asked him. Obviously what he had done, he'd read a book about flying, he'd read a book about anything and he knew; in absolute fine-fine detail.

Q A really good memory.

A A very good memory but scary. And just to finish with, there were two things that you know Steve. We say it was a team of fourteen plus one. He became an outsider. When the new team arrived, a lot of the guys stayed in the emergency base because the emergency base was then operational. The one that we lifted. So the PWD-guys and the chopper pilots they all stayed there and Steve was never to be seen. He befriended the pilots again. Then we discovered all the meat was disappearing; All the fresh beef, all the new fillets of steak. Every day there was like a whole box missing. We're going; there

are not thieves in this place. There are no dogs in this place, where is the meat going. So we called a meeting. The doctors are meant to be in charge of the food, so Steve theoretically was in charge of the food. Of course he was there and all the other new guys.

He was big "bek" and he was saying: "I've had to look after this whole team for the whole year and I've had to see to all of this." And were all going: Right. "And this, we going to find the thief of this meat. We are going, this is not on. You cannot have theft going on." I'm going: Jiss Steve, your big "bek". I said to Wim: "Come with me." So we went, we hid on one of the "stellasies". One of the, we had like a container or a platform, where all the grease and the bolts and nuts were kept. I said: "Come, come, come spend the night with me." So we snuck out. Now the new team was already doing the weather obs, so we didn't have to do weather obs. So we went and we lay there. Lo and behold - two or three o' clock in the morning - there comes a character out of the base carrying a black plastic bag over his shoulder. Photographed, "click-click-click." Go back. Next night, "click-click." 'Cause you could make biltong in three days because it was so dry and you hung it in where the heaters were. The most beautiful biltong in three days. What he was doing, he was making biltong for the pilots and befriending them. So he was stealing the meat. So then we called another meeting. Now nobody knew what Wim and I were up to. So we called another meeting and Leith was there; Captain Leith was there cause we said: "This is a serious meeting. There's theft going on. We want everybody in this meeting, PWD, pilots, ship's crew, everybody. So went to the emergency base and we had this huge meeting. And I said: "Right, this is the - I sort of initiated it. So we got, and our leader, Jeff Ryan. I said to Jeff: "Call this meeting. I want to tell, I want to show you what's happening." "No, but you can't do that." I said: "Call it." So Jeff called the meeting. He was the leader so he could and he said: "I want to hear about the theft story." Of course, Steve started bucking. I said: "Steve, please keep quiet." I took all the photographs out and I said: "Here are all the times on them. Who is that?" Leith said: "Come here." Leith put him on the chopper, flew him to the base, I flew him to the ship and locked him up. 'Cause the guys wanted to kill him, because he was accusing all of us of stealing. There was near death there. Anyway, so they took him to the ship and locked him up. Apparently there is a secure room next to the captain cabin for such incidences.

Q And he was never seen again. Until.

A Never saw him again. When the ship got to Cape Town they escorted him off the ship. Along the way, Oppies - who was our diesel-mech - he said: "I'm go and haul him out of that room and I'm throwing him overboard." And he was serious because he and Oppies always fought as well. He Steve used to accuse Oppies for all this stuff. That was a very interesting personality scenario that we all learned about. And to finish the Steve Hatfill; Years later I was not living here, I was living futher down the road. Years later - I'm going back probably 15 years ago - I get a knock on the door, my front door one night at seven o' clock in the evening. Two American guys, suits, at the door. I said to them: "Yes?" They showed their cards and we are with the American, what is it? American cops, CIA?

Q FBI.

A FBI. "FBI, can we come in." I'm going: "FBI for what." He said: "Were you in the Antarctic?" I said: "Okay, that's a code-word. You can come in." And I said: "Yes, can I help you?" And they said: "Do you know Steve Hatfill?" I said: "Yes. He was our leader, no, our doctor on the team." Read that. You know the anthrax killings in America.

Q Yes.

A That was him, Steven. So they said: "Right, we want all your photographs. We want all this. Where's proof of who this guy was and did he have a girlfriend called Julie." Whatever her name was, Julie I think. I said: "Yes." They said that? "Yes" And that? "Yes" That? "Yes"

Q When was this? In the early...when were the anthrax killings? I'm sure the ones I know about were after 9/11.

A No. There was, early. First ones, where there was some very strange ones 15 years ago. And they said to me this is who we are and I said well: "All I can tell you are what I know about him. I have no other detail about him. I don't know where he lives and I don't know where he lived before. And I just know, this, this and this. Here are photographs of him; here are photographs of the team. It's all I can tell you. So they spent an evening with me, which was a bit mind blowing but if you Google Steve Hatfill, you will find that he was head of military. He was head of Antarctic research and he put together the base. And you must see the stuff the guy writes about. He was so good.

The last we had he works for the chemical warfare for the United States Military. That's how he got, he was working for them. That's how he got the anthrax. They then accused him of that. He was so sharp that he got out of that and he sued the government for, I think, five million dollars or fifty million dollars. Cause his brain; he is so meticulous that, you know. You'd probably find that he studied law in a week. So that when he landed up in court. There were a lot of stuff in the High Court in America with him and everything. I mean there's a lot of stuff about him. Scary-scary-scary character. And when you read it. You're an outsider, you don't know anything about Steve, you think: wow, this guy is like amazing. But knowing and of course the FBI, when they were with me, they said: "You know, was he in the Rhodesian Army?" I said: "Yes". And they said: "We've already been there. There's no trace of him in any of the medical records. There's no trace of him. The names that he mentioned, there's no mention of him ever in the Rhodesian army in any form whatsoever." So he was never in the Rhodesia. He never studied medicine in Rhodesia because he would have a file. You know, how you get your medical certificate.

Q Yes?

A So he invented all those things in all that time.

Q My goodness.

A So every now and again. Mark Alex, he works for the Washington Post or the New York post or the New York Times. Every now and again he gets information and he emails us and he says: "Check the latest on our mate." And then you open a site or something; You go: Oh my goodness, what's he up to now.

Q Wow!

A So that was quite an interesting experience for all of us.

Q Yes?

A Towards the end it became scary because we did not know what he was going to do.

Q Course!

A But fortunately he Steven just hid away because he realised that, you know, all 15 of us weren't going to let him do anything to us. I mean he had some serious fights with the guys. I know he broke a bottle once and held it in Oppies face. Oppies nearly killed him.

Q Course!

A I said: "You don't do a thing like this in the base like this, please. If were street fighting somewhere, you can do what you like to me but otherwise I'm going to kill you. You do that, break another bottle in front of me, I'll kill you." So they used to fight and Oppies was big and strong. You didn't mess with him.

Q So the team dynamics generally was that was that...

A The 14 of us were absolutely amazing. It's still amazing. We still email each other. We still correspond. A few years ago we all got together, excepting him. Wherever the guys were around the world, they all flew here and we spend the weekend together for our twentieth anniversary I think it was leaving the Antarctic.

Q Oh brilliant

A Or 21, I can't remember if it was 21 years. So we all went to Addo Park in Port Elizabeth and we all met there for the weekend. We booked like four, five bungalows. All our family and everything. It was absolutely brilliant. And everybody put an effort in and came from four corners of the world to have a weekend together.

Q So except for the. Okay, would you say that his presence and his activities was the main source of tension?

A He was the only source of tension. The others were just silly things like: Oh you burnt the food and, you know: Why were you late? Weren't you meant to start at something? But that was normal stuff that you would have in any circumstance where you have people together. We actually got on incredibly well as a team and other guys that go to know us, like new team and the older team, just said: "You guys." And we also had reports for Pretoria, from Tannie van Staden; Watching our correspondence, said: "We have never had a team where all 14 of you" - we won't, we'll exclude our crazy guy - "got on so well with such good camaraderie and such good correspondence to our knowledge, that we have ever seen in a team." We often heard that and that was really, really magic. Guys that got to know us later on, just said: "You guys were just amazing as a team."

Q Ah, that's fantastic.

- A** Ja, so my Antarctic experience - thank heavens - turned out to be...
- Q** Positive?
- A** Positive. You know, having dreamt of it my whole life, this is what I want to do, and this is what I want to do. To this date it is still my best year of my life by far. And although Steve was a funny character, it was interesting. It gave it another dynamic. It kept the 14 of us closer together and as a better team. I heard a lot of the other teams they sort of broke into like survivor. Three of them, and four of them and two of them and we didn't have that at all. Never ever, ever, ever.
- Q** A common enemy.
- A** Ja, we had one common enemy and he just hid away. We didn't have to put up with him.
- Q** Now what made living there worthwhile?
- A** The worthwhile, was the experience. Just learning all those new things for me. Just learning about things I never learned about in my life. You know the programmes and the scientific programs. Being in the Antarctic. Learning to live with other guys, you know. Most, all of us generally had the same objective, you know. I was a volunteer. So we weren't forced to go like we were forced to go into the army. The army was very different in that way because you were forced to go. Here we all wanted to go. So everyone with a common goal of: this is where we want to be, this is what we want to experience, and this is what we want to learn about. So that was, the power from that was really magical and very powerful. Ja, and fulfilling a dream, for me was the most amazing thing because who fulfils his dream really. I want to go to the moon; do you really fulfill it? No. You know, I want to be the first one on Everest. Can you do it? No, you can't do that. So there are very few people who get the opportunity to really fulfill a real dream. Not a sort of a passing thought but a real-real dream. And it has always been a real-real dream for me.
- Q** Yes, that fantastic and then you had the opportunity to go back. Did you?
- A** No, I didn't go. I could have later on but then I decided not to because I thought my year was so good and my experience was so good. If I went back and I had a bad experience; that would have killed it. So if I went back, I would go back for a short time to do photography and just to get the feel but I am not too sure if I would go back for another year. Unless it was a really different type of expedition. That's like when Braam now said he's going to do the Antarctic challenge, the "pole" run. As soon as I heard about that - I know Braam - so of course phoned him. I said: "Braam, Braam, I want to help you." So wherever people are involved in the Antarctic, I want to help. I want to help, I want to feed, I want to give because it is my way of reliving it and sharing my passion. My dreams.
- Q** Okay, great. What did you do for entertainment when you were not in those 48 hours that you had?
- A** Everybody did different things. I spent if the weather was good, I was outside. Either photographing, or walking or going down to the edge of the ice-shelf or helping the guys outside because that is part of the Antarctic experience. When the weather was lousy we had a snooker table. We had darts. We had videos - DVD's weren't invented then.
- Q** Did you have videos or did you have the 16 mm films?
- A** We had 16 mm film and some videos. But on Saturday night we used to have 16 mm movies. This old thing running which was great and all these old silly movies. We had that and of course far too much drinking of alcohol. If it was someone's birthday, it's...
- Q** There is always an event.
- A** Far too much drinking, ja. Nobody, nobody got out of hand or anything with drinking, you know. If you really got drunk, the guy would just lie down or put him in a chair and just leave him. We had no violent characters, thank heavens, with alcohol cause I think you do get men that get violent with alcohol. Everyone just got silly and you know; drinking challenges and things. And then, I spend a lot of time in the dark room because I processed everybody's slides and I processed all the black and whites for everybody. So I loved that in the dark room. And then cooking was; so every 15th day was your day to cook. Every 15th day was your day to provide water. Which was digging snow outside, throwing snow down into the smelter. And every 15th, the day you made water was the day that you did washing. Your own personal washing and the dishes. So you had a cooking day. Cooking day from three o' clock onwards the kitchen was yours. No one was allowed to interfere. So you could cook whatever you wanted to, to for the team. Be as fancy as your like or as normal as you like. Sorry, it's 14. Steve never participated, it's 14th day. When he did in the beginning he would just take a whole lot of cans of baked beans. He would put them on the counter and put a can opener and say: "There, there's your supper", and he would walk away again. So we said: "Please don't come to supper. We're not interested." He used to sneak in when we were all sleeping or not around. He would just come

through and get something and go back to his room. So.

Q Midwinter.

A Midwinter. We started about two days before hand. Midwinter preparations. So we started deciding, we all made presents for each other. So that was mine whatever that little thing was. So everybody got nominated. You make a present for you, you make for you, you make for you and everyone either made a photograph or we carved something or we - I can't remember what I did, who did I make for? I think I made for Ryno. I can't remember what I made for Ryno. Ag, we made stuff. Found stuff, then made, sowed stuff. I think I sowed a cover for a tripod for one of the guys. To carry. Little gifts were made for everybody. Before we left, Jeff had organised with our parents or friends or lovers or whatever to put presents. So he had also had a whole box full of presents for us. That he produced, a on our birthday. Said: "Ah, check what your mother and your sister and your girlfriend gave me for your birthday. And out come some letters and little presents and things. And the same with Midwinter. We did a whole menu and then we started cooking and food preparations and started painting stuff for the walls. We all took down a suit, a jacket and a tie. In my slideshow you'll see there's a picture of all of us in Midwinter. Lots of drinking, because all the radio, all the base is shut down. All of the bases. All the inter-base communication then stop. So everybody stops for that. We didn't have to worry about sending weather or anything. We just said it's party time. So it's literally 24 hours of just...

Q Madness.

A It's just silly. And we put on shows and we put on acts and we did skits and we told jokes and everyone had to make up a poem. Everybody had to, so it was like a whole long thing. It wasn't just dinner. It was all sorts of things we did.

Q Yes, that sounds fantastic.

A That was just magic.

Q And Christmas?

A Christmas we were on the ship coming back. We went just after Christmas, we left and coming back we had Christmas on the ship. I cannot really remember Christmas on the ship. I must have done stuff I didn't know.

Q So it was actually a fairly short year considering.

A So I was away for 12 and half months in total.

Q Ja, most people are away for 14.

A Or it was 13. I must look on the dates. Maybe I did leave before Christmas; I can't remember when we left. Might have been between Christmas and New Year, I can't remember.

Q Possible.

A I mean the only main party on the ship is when you cross the Antarctic circle. Going down, you get initiated and coming back you just have a party.

Q What was that like the initiation on the ship?

A It was great fun. It was a nice day so of course we all had to dress up. We had a tug-of-war and we played volley ball and then we had competitions and you had stuff where they hid stuff in a bowl of flour and you had to put your face in beaten egg and then your face in the flour. Ag, all this boy silly things.

Q So there weren't any women.

A There were two women on board with us going down. Can't remember what their names were. They were doing some research; I can't remember. It will be in my diary.

Q Who was the DEA official you had to work with. Was it perhaps Dirk van Schalkwyk?

A Dirk van Schalkwyk. "Druk" we used to call him. Dirk van Schalkwyk; his nickname was "Druk".

Q Why?

A I don't know. It was just "Druk", Dirk spelled "Druk". The other way around. Dirk van Schalkwyk, we just called him "Druk".

Q And what was the interaction with the DEA officials like?

A He was very nice. The "dominee" that went with us was a bit strange. He was a bit over the top because you know; none of us were over religious. Interesting, Jeff Ryan, our leader, was a Methodist minister and he gave that up. He said it was too hard work getting nowhere; just listening to people's hassles and when this position came up, he applied. And Jeff was the most unbelievably brilliant guy ever; as a leader, as a person, as a friend, as a everything. He was very naive to life because his

parents, his father was a minister and when he finished, he went straight into the ministry. So he knew nothing about life out there and hard times. He was amazed, listening to where we all come from. You know, I had a funny past and Oppies was a recce in the army. He was really a rough character. The interaction like Hendrik, saying he doesn't want anyone English including Jeff was English. So Jeff just said: "I didn't know there were people like this existed." Course then he never went back to being a minister. He just said I can never go back. What I have learned now about life, about people, I could never go back to do what I was doing. So Jeff was just absolutely the best guy we could have ever, ever wished for as a leader.

Q Now the DEA officials Indiscernible.

A Oh the DEA, yes. Dirk was a very nice guy because he'd been a few times I think. He knew what the buzz was. He knew how the people interacted and things. So he was a really good guy to have. And we all liked him and he liked everybody. He was just one of those guys that was just good to have him there.

Q Now, what was it like with the women on the ship?

A They were actually. Remember we were going down. It didn't really matter. You know, it wasn't we'd been away for a year. They were just there. They were two very quiet girls. They just kept to themselves most of the time. One of them was doing research on, you know, wherever she's sitting, doing her stuff, writing stuff and whatever. They were both quiet non-jolling girls. You know, they weren't interested in drinking and partying. They used to come and sit with us every now and again but they were not party girls at all. They were very sweet and very nice. They weren't any hassle because, remember, we were all excited about going and everything. Coming back, I think there were any girls on the ship on our way back, as far as I remember. I don't think so.

Q Tell me about all the trips you had when you went outside?

A Okay.

Q When you went; you said you went to Grunehogna.

A Went to Grunehogna twice. We went before winter time to take. O no, it was after winter. After winter was our first trip where we had to take diesel for the helicopters and provisions for the geologists. So all the stuff was left at our base and they said: "Sometime, when the weather starts clearing, you guys do a trip take. Three sledges of diesel for the caterpillar and for running the generators and a sledge worth of for the choppers. And this and that, and there are some equipment that must go down. Get a trip organised. So I was on that first trip. Which was great, except when we got caught in a really bad storm halfway.

Q How far is it from the base?

A 250 kilometres. Took us nine days.

Q Oh, my goodness.

A Nine days to do 250 kilometres. You work that one out. Four of the middle days, four and a half of the middle days we got stuck in the most horrendous storm.

Q So you had to cope?

A So we just lived in our tents. We had two tents and the caboose, which was a little caravan on the sledge. And there were seven of us. We just buttoned down. Of course we had to keep filling the caterpillar. I've written some story somewhere about, one of the things I've written about. One of the times I'm doing the caterpillar. 'Cause we had to take the cat off the sledges and turn all the sledges into the storm and then after the storm try to hook them all up again and keep going. But the cat had to stay idling. If the cat died, it wouldn't start. Ja, it was someone's responsibility all the time to make sure there was enough diesel and it was idling fine. So that trip going there was quite difficult because you know, the storm was crazy. You were spending four days, sharing a tent. That's eating, ablution, everything, 'cause you couldn't get out of the tent. So there you also learn a bit about guys but by then, you know, that time of the year it was September, October. So then really we knew about each other and everything.

Q Were there any geologist on your team? Who stayed there?

A No. Remember, the ship hadn't come down yet so all we were doing was taking stuff for the geologist.

Q For the next team?

A For the next team. And when we got there. Before we left there they said: "Don't worry about taking food because the previous year they had put a new food store up thats fully kitted with food. So just take for the trip. There's enough food for you guys there. So when we got to the base, we said: "Well,

we can't find the food store." So we radioed back to SANAE and said: "Won't you radio back to Pretoria and find out where the food store is that they keep telling us about." So eventually they come and say: "No, you've got all the buildings and it's the end one." We said: "Well what's the end one? No, the end one is the bedroom." "No, the one next to the bedroom" I said: "No, there isn't one." "No, there has to be one." It had blown away in the storm. So we eventually went there when the weather cleared and the four poles were there in the deck. There was nothing left, some bits of food were lying there and that was it.

Q Oh dear.

A I took photographs of it and oh, we lived off Pro Nutro and fruit sticks, I think, while we were there.

Q And then of course you had to make the journey back.

A Then we had to make the journey back. So we just took Pro Nutro and fruit sticks.

Q So you had enough supplies?

A There were some stuff we salvaged and it was fine. We didn't die. So then we had to tell them. So they had to organise that when the ship came down to bring stuff to build a new store again.

Q And supply it?

A And supply it again. So thank heavens we had gone. And then when the ship was there in December, they need another team to go down, to go and take the stuff. So I volunteered for that trip as well. I was lucky; I got two trips into Grunehogna. The second trip easy. We had good weather and it was three days we were there. We were there for a week a think and then three days back again. So the second trip was easy; the first trip was the exciting part getting there.

Q Of course.

A Of course you do not have GPS or anything. Everything is done with a compass. So you take turns in going in front of the caterpillar and take readings with the compass on you face - like this. And find you way to Grunehogna with a compass, not by any other means. So it was quite; If you think, if the storms bad, we can miss Grunehogna by one kilometre. We'll keep going forever. Fortunately we didn't have that problem. We got closer; we already had pictures of what to look for in the mountains. We said: "Okay, that's East End over there and that's Jekselen ?. We must, just this side of Jekselen?. So we must just keep going. There's the mountain." It's amazing, you see the mountain and you think: Ah, that's not so far. Another two days go by and you are still not there yet because the Cat only moved at walking speed.

Q Yes, of course.

A So often you would just get off and walk next to the Cat when you got tired and let the Cat chug along by itself.

Q And any other trips? You now told me about the abseiling.

A So those were the two trips to Grunehogna. One trip at Grunehogna, we went down and we broke into a crevasse. And I did a whole, I put some ropes into the crevasse and then I went back to get the other guys and we did this whole climbing through this crevasse. Which is a photographer's dream. It's quite scary, though. These tiny little ledges of ice with Australia on the bottom there. I don't know where the crevasse goes down to. So that was one trip and then at Grunehogna, lots of climbing, lots of walking. Miles and miles, days on end of just walking in the mountains. And then from the base we went to the edge of the ice-shelf to the bhukta quite often. Either just on skidoes. We'd go down, we'd go and climb down or we'd just go down. I often just used to go out with say Rob and say we would go and do photography for the day. Just to photograph the icebergs and the penguins and stuff and come back again. So probably six, seven maybe more trips to the edge of the ice. And probably about four trips down onto the ice-shelf, when the ice was stable enough. And just 24 36 hours just walking. Photographing, walking, photographing, walking and come back again.

Q So you tried to get out as much as possible?

A I did. When I wasn't in the dark room and the weather was fine, I was out. Even if it was just walking close to the base or taking photographs of the cables or I just wanted be out. Not that I didn't like the base. It was just, I am here. I want to capture every possible thing that my eyes can see and that I can feel and taste. Then I also did a trip into the old base.

Q Oh, yes. That would be SANAE II.

A SANAE II, which we broke into. And when the ship left, they said: "You'll never find it." And they mustn't tell me that. So I spent about a week and I eventually worked out where the base was. And I eventually found a little stick in the snow and I said: "This is two kilometres; this is the right distance. I am going to dig here." So I went back, I got a spade, came and I dug and I dug and I dug. Probably

about so deep. And I found the hatch. I dug the hatch out and then I went in. And then I went back to the other guys, some of the other guys. Got Wim first. Wim and I always did everything together. I said: "Come. Come check what I've done." And then I got lots of black-and-white and colour pictures of that base.

Q Inside SANAE II.

A Inside the base.

Q Was there anything interesting left?

A Ag, most certainly squash. You couldn't get into some of the places 'cause it had really collapsed completely but you know, all these beams squashing right down. Electronic stuff and food and all the beds and all the stuff were just left. 'Cause it was just; how do you take it out?

Q Course.

A But all squashed. Some places you're like lying on your stomach wiggling between the beams, you know. Creaking all the time. That was interesting. Then we found but we could not get into it - the Norwegian SANAE one.

Q Wow.

A We found that entrance, but we could not get into it. That was, I'm trying to think where that was. All we did was found where it was, but that totally was long gone. So that was all my explorations out. But often just walking, just go for a long walk with guy. We just say: "Let's take a sledge and let's pull it and just walk somewhere. Just take some food and a spare sleeping bag in case the weather turns. Let's go."

Q Was that the attitude of most of the guys?

A Hmm.

Q Not really, no?

A Wim, Rob and myself were always outside. Mark Alex, the one radio op, he didn't have to go outside, and he wouldn't. Mark Steyn, he would do his work and that was outside. Hendrik; the other guys were happy to be in the base. You know, when the weather was a bit iffy, they would go: "Nay". Whereas, the only time I never went out is when I physically couldn't get out. We were the only team, up until that point, who had never missed a balloon in the entire year.

Q Wow.

A Some previous years they had missed balloons or they couldn't do it. Even in the most horrific storms, we let a balloon go and tracked it. So when we left at the end of '86, when we came back to give our books back.

Q To report back.

A To Irene. They said: "You know what? You are the only team to date that has never missed one single balloon. So that was quite nice.

Q Of course.

A And then, also in one of our books. It was of them I did. That's probably why I kept one of these. Is that to date, we also had the best altitude for a balloon. I can't remember what the height was, before it burst. And it so happened to be one of mine. So that was also a record because they monitor. 'Cause when the balloon breaks, you track it with a satellite dish.

Q Yes.

A Motors and engines turning it and as it bursts it obviously falls. So you can see the height of the balloon and then suddenly it comes down. You measure the top height where it burst and we also held, that point though, the - not the world - SANAE record of the highest balloon. So we had two records. One, we never missed one and we also had the altitude record for a balloon. Which was nice.

Q That's fantastic. Did you have a lot of communication with other teams, other bases? For example the German base?

A We had in the beginning a little bit with Gorg von Neumeyer base. That wasn't that regular and I didn't operate in the radio rooms. I didn't know. And then we had quite a lot of stuff with Dakshin Gangroti - the Indian base. The guys played chess with them for a while.

Q My goodness.

A So we had the board on the wall and then we had sticky pieces of paper. And then we used to play chess with them. I don't know, I didn't play chess. I don't play chess.

Q Other people.

A Other guys did. And then halfway through the year we got an instruction from the government to say

were not allowed to communicate with the Indians anymore because of some political something or other. We went: "Leave us." And they said: "You communicate, we catch you. You're in trouble. Stop the communication with India base." I don't know what it was about, I wasn't involved in politics but it was halfway through the year. So then our chess board became my photographic board.

Q Ah, I see.

A So then I started pinning all my pictures on the wall of the team and of stuff we were doing and stuff.

Q So did your radio operator then have to tell the Indians: "Sorry can't do it."

A Ja. They just said there was something from the government that we mustn't play chess with you. So I think the weather stuff that they sent or certain scientific stuff they had to send to some bases, I don't know. But I know our chats had to stop.

Q Did they ever say anything about the Russians? Did you have communication with the Russians?

A Ja we did. We did with in the beginning for a little bit as well but not very much. Apparently their systems, their radios and that were like from the first world war. You know, they had huge problems with their equipment and their radios and with all their. Typically sort of early Russian stuff. Everything from the second world war was dumped there. Cause it was easy for them because they came from minus forty Russia.

Q So they adapted easier.

A Novolazrevskaya - the base - Novolazrevskaya was the other base. So we had so comms later on with them in the beginning and I don't know what comms with regard to scientific stuff. Most of our stuff just went straight to Pretoria.

Q Did you ever have any communications with other, either Marion or Gough?

A I think there was some but also remember we were on telex most of the time and it would take us three days to get radio comms. Radio comms were link up as well. So you had to link up with Cape Town radio, Cape Town radio was linked to Pretoria radio, Pretoria radio through Telkom or whatever it was. So comms was just a nightmare. Halfway through the year, I stopped my letters, my phone calls as well. You were allowed every second week, you were allowed six minutes, I think, with your family or something. No, I just stopped. It was just too frustrating.

Q Yes, of course.

A Cause Pretoria radio would then phone your mother, well my mother for example. Then they would phone and say: "Be close to your phone between nine and twelve on Sunday morning. Your son's going to phone you." Pat would start and sort of Saturday afternoon, because we had valve set radios. He would start setting up the radios, getting it going. And then from six o' clock on the morning it was noise. Okay, no. We have a mag storm, sorry no radio comms today. Of course then you think, okay well I'm not going to talk today. That would go on and on and on and eventually you would get through. You would get through. It was something, something, "over". "Mom, I am fine, over. How are you? I am so glad they fit. What did you say, over? I'm so glad they fit", and then you would hear something else. "Yes, its minus 20 today", and then she would say: "Well so is the dog." And you're going, you think you know what: we don't even hear each other, what is the point of this. I just stopped. I thought this is more frustrating than anything else. And so the phone calls just got less and less and less. The telexes you were allowed to send a hundred and forty words a week, I think. Or second week. A hundred and forty word telex you could type out. So there were about three or four telex machines in that place. So you would just type out a letter.

Q And the radio operator would then...

A The radio operator would then - if he had good enough comms - he would put in the ticker-tape and it would go through and break halfway and they wouldn't get it. Then the telexes that came to you would be printed out and stuck on the wall.

Q So there was no privacy.

A There was not privacy. So it was like: "Oh, I see your girlfriend's got a new boyfriend, you know. Oh leave me, you know. There it says there she's not interested in you anymore." And the same in the radio ops. When we are all sitting in the radio room and you're talking to your girlfriend and they are all sitting there with you because we're all waiting for the signals and your turn and everything. So everyone sat there and waited.

Q Listen to everyone else's-

A So you know what, whatever. So there was not privacy at all. In any form whatsoever.

Q And the communication with South Africa was not very good either.

A It was terrible. So it was the old valve radios. When Dave used to spend half his life fixing the valve radios to make them work. So no, for two, three weeks we would not have any communication whatsoever at all with South Africa. None. No telex, no radio, no nothing. Not even Morse code. Sometimes Patrick knew Morse code. The Morse code signal he could send out sometimes because that went out on a totally different frequency and a different way. So when certain stuff had to be done, he would send it in Morse code. You would hear him sitting in there clicking. Patrick busy with Morse Code. And he would send through, I don't know, a report or something.

Q Now what was the highlight of your stay there?

A There different ones. One was spending time with the emperor penguins on the ice-shelf. Just to get them in arms reach of you and that they are not frightened of you. They just want to be with you; being so close to nature. Cause that was from a nature perspective of another living thing was really good. And the first trip to Grunehogna was another one, going from away from the normal base. The expedition on the way. Getting caught in the storm. Getting to the base. Climbing the mountains because I used to climb every day. When the weather was fine, I used to climb to the top of the mountains. Going climbing and just having the whole world below you. Seeing forever. Those were just times that I can feel, can taste in my mouth. Most of the highlights had to do with nature, not with the team guys. That was a continual learning curve with other guys. I'd been in boarding school. I'd been in the army for two years, so being with a bunch of guys wasn't that different for me. A smaller environment but just being out and being able to climb to the top of a mountain and the colours and the crevasse for example. There's nothing on this planet that can describe that and I think, as far as nature is concerned, to top it all was watching the Aurora. On the still nights, minus 45 and your outside. These colours patterns that move across the sky. You cannot - I even get goose bumps now - you cannot, you cannot imagine what it looks like and the other thing because when the Aurora happens there's a lot of activity in the air in the ionosphere. I think part of watching it is the energy in the air that you feel as a human.

Q That's interesting.

A Often people saw: "Ja, but it's just colours." I say: "No, you actually have to stand there, it's minus 45, and you're so cold because you've been out there standing still for three, four hours, waiting for the Aurora. When you see it your whole body is energised and you just know that this is definitely the most amazing thing that you ever going to see and experience in your life. I think out of all of them, watching the Aurora and feeling it around you, has take the most amazing thing I have ever felt in my life.

Q This is during winter?

A It's in winter time, yes. Cause it only happens when it's very dark and I've got one slide which is one that I send to - and those are slides that are not digital, so you can't crook that - is the moon coming up with the Aurora at the same time. Somebody said to me you can't have that because the light is different and everything. I said: "There it is. I've got three or four slides showing you the moon coming up and the Aurora at the same time." That's why they put one of them in that Rolex thing. They just said it's one of the rarest photo's they've ever seen with the moon and the Aurora. So that was just, I was just standing there going: Please, this is like heaven. That is still very vivid in my mind. That experience of the Aurora. Stunning, stunning, stunning.

Q What were the low points?

A Hmm. Low points for myself; a little bit of when I use to get really tired from no sleeping and I started not being myself. That I found sometime in the beginning difficult to cope within myself. Eventually I learnt how to cope with it and it was fine. I just accepted it. Once I had accepted it, it was fine. So I found that. A low point was having to come back. I didn't what to come back. I wanted to spend another year because it takes you a year to find out about the place and about yourself. Then you have to end it and I am thinking: I am not finished yet.

Q Why didn't you stay?

A Because they didn't allow it at that time. They said only one year at a time and they didn't allow it two years running. They said it wasn't good for people and the relationship and settling back into society. I said to them: "Well I've got news for you", but anyway we were not allowed. But I would have given anything to stay for a second year. I battled to let go when it was time to come back. I always remember that was like I don't what to come back, I don't want to come back, I what nothing to go back to. I've lived on my own my whole life. I mean, not my whole life but up to that point I basically always lived on my own. Being on my own I didn't have any, I didn't have anything special to come

back to. Antarctic was my special life so why come back. Low times, I suppose when the guys used to, I wouldn't say fight with each other, but disagree with each other. I don't like violence of any form whatsoever. So when guys got angry with each other, I didn't like that. I don't do violence in any form. It gets to the core of my body and I don't like it. So when the guys used to really get cross with each other, I just like: oh please don't fight, please just go, you go, go, go. But I didn't really have any really big low point that was like really depression or. I think some of the other guys might have. Some of the guys got really lonely and had like Mark Alex, I think, at one point just said: "I can't be here anymore and this is like too depressing." Ja well, if you don't go out you are going to find it depressing. You must do stuff.

Q So how do you think the interaction with the other team members' influence your experience?

A Generally very well. I think of the guys, you know the one half of us had all been to the army. So they all knew how to deal how to deal with young men guys in a difficult scenario or in a confined environment. So the interaction with most of the guys was easy when it came to, you know, how you're feeling or can we do something or let's do this together. We knew the old: "Een, twee, drie, trek!" You know, when you're moving something. So that automatically kicked in. When we had to do something really difficult or had to go and pick something up or the bulldozer wouldn't start. It was a case of, you didn't even have to call for the guys, they would automatically just say: "How are we going to do the together." So that interaction was really nice or if you were battling with something to say: "I can't do this on my own. Won't you help me?" There was never a: "Oh, what's wrong with you?" I was always: "Ja, let's make sure it happens, let make sure it gets done."

The interaction was a lot more positive than my experience for example in the army where you were forced to do stuff and it is your problem. You know, don't call me and I'm not going volunteer for anything. In the army you landed up with some characters that you really didn't want to be with, you know. Just people you that don't even believe are alive on this planet, that have strange outlooks to life or as I say violent or whatever. I don't want to think about it. That's why I think we were very fortunate as a team. We didn't have anyone besides Steve that was an outsider or that didn't want to be a team player or help or have fun or. No one criticised anyone because Hendrik was very Afrikaans in the beginning and no one attacked him for that. They just said: "You know what, that's just how it is." No one made fun of Jeff because he was a minister. No one made fun of that didn't drink; we just left him. You don't drink alcohol, you don't drink or drink a little. There was no nagging or making people feel an outsider or insecure of anything. Maybe we were just very lucky that we didn't have bad stuff happening that we came back and said: "Sherbet you know, that was really lousy that happened." Maybe we were just exceptionally lucky.

Q What was the most boring part about you time there?

A The most boring part? I didn't really have boring parts. I suppose when I was planning to do something and a storm would come up and I couldn't do something. I'd plan to do a trip out or I'd prepared all my cameras and said: "Right, tomorrow I have decided I'm going to do something" and I couldn't and I have to be sitting in the base and play snooker or something. I'm not good games person. I don't play cards. I don't play games with people. I just never have. So then I would go find a book and I'm not a big reader. I did read then. So I learned to read. So I took this book and go read. I just was never bored. If I had nothing to do, I'd go find something to do. I'd go sit with Dawid. I'd say: "Dawid, how do you programme work? Show me how your computer works and what are you doing?" You know. So if I had one minute, I would go find something to do. Either with somebody or I would go. I made my own clothes. At one point I said: "There's a sewing machine there. If I can make a thing like this for my hands", right. I would go sow stuff. Anything, go help the guys cook. We had one very funny story. When it was somebody's birthday - we were about certain interactions with people and how their brains work and going from Steve on one field to Dawid - Dawid was, I think had three degrees from Potch University. He is now busy with his PhD in nuclear physics or something. He also studied theology and was a minister and then gave that up. He studied his whole life, but he was an Afrikaans guy, very Afrikaans. Lived in Potch his whole life.

Q There the Potch "kassie"?

A A Potch "kassie", ja. I mean, Potchie was, Dawid was 24 - I think - had two degrees. When Dawid was there, just to tell a funny story, he still believed to fall pregnant you prayed. A woman would pray to god and she would then fall pregnant. He knew nothing else. That was the only thing we joked about. We said to him: "Come on Dawid. You must know, you know, a little bit about." He would say: "No,

that's the way it is." Anyway by the end of the year, we'd explain enough to him but anyway. So Dawid's turn was to make a cake. Whenever it was someone's birthday, you said okay it's your, everyone had a turn to make a cake for the other guy. So Dawid had to make a cake for André - André was the one who didn't drink - and so I said to Dawid: "Ja, I know you're not so good with the cake stuff. Let me help you." So I went through, I said: "This is what you got. Here's the recipe", the recipe he used to call it. "Here's the recipe and here's the flour and all the stuff. And you do that and you do that and everything. So I said I must go and do my obs. When I finish my obs I'll come back. Two hours later I come back. Now it's nearly tea-time and there's Dawid but he's now got his calculator. He's got a protractor. He's got a slide-rule. He's got all sorts of, he's got all his mathematical stuff is out now there and he's not made the cake yet. I said: "Dawid, what is your problem?" "No", he says: "This recipe is very strange." I said: "What is it?" He says: "This recipe says I must mix all this ingredients and pour it into a round cake tin but we've only got a square cake tin. So I'm trying to calculate how we must mix these ingredients to put into a square cake tin and not in a round cake tin." "I think Dawid it really doesn't matter. Just mix it and put it in the square cake tin." "Ja, but it won't be the same." I said: "I promise you it will be the same." He was trying to scientifically calculate how to mix flour and eggs and water to go into a square cake tin from a round cake tin. That was Dawid. The most fabulous character but he's brain would. We were building the igloo. We go there and he suddenly stops and I said to him: "What's, what are you? Come." He was calculating in his head the angle of the spade and if he hit the spade with the ice and the ice density of one point one six, the temperature of the ice at minus 32.9. If the spade and the angle of the spade and the metal. He was doing this whole scientific thing in his head. I said to him: "Dawid, the ice doesn't care. Just cut the block." "Ja, but if he cut it now-." "Dawid, cut the block!" And it was always, you know; We loved Dawid and us, to this day we love him but his brain was so different from all of ours. We were just, you know: "Open it, open it." He would go: "But if I open it like this, it won't be the same as opening like that because there-." "Dawid, just open it." So things like, you know, interactions like that was just invaluable. It was just lovely.

Q Of course. It gives it colour.

A Ja.

Q Now what kind of things did you eat?

A In the beginning, shortly after the ship had left, we still had veggies and we still had all the normal foods. And as that dwindled. As the fresh vegetables died in a week and the fruit and that. Then you go to the; we actually had a problem with our food. In the beginning it was fine and everybody sort of got on with. Obviously it's frozen vegetables and all the meat; we had all the meat packed out so it was meat and vegetables. Smash powdered potato. Then tin food. A lot of the tin food, because you are eating from the year before. You know, you're not eating the food that you brought; you're eating the previous year. So all your food is more than a year old that you're eating.

Q Expiration date.

A We didn't care about that but what happened is a lot of the tin stuff had separated. Because it had been frozen so hard for so long. You'd open into a tin of peas and it wouldn't be peas; it would be mush. So a lot of the tin stuff wasn't nice anymore. We then discovered that halfway through the year we ran out of vegetables, out of frozen veg.

Q O dear.

A Then we discovered we had forty-six cases of dried parsley. You know, bottles Robertson's parsley. We had forty-six "koskassies" of dried parsley.

Q Why?

A I don't know. Because some guy in Pretoria at wherever, who used to put our food together. He had probably no idea where we were going. Had no idea what food things worked. We had six bottles of tomato sauce for the year. Needless to say there was war over the tomato sauce. Then we discovered, after about the third bottle, that there we only three to go. So we used to just have rice, rice and pasta and meat. The veggies went out. I think Steve, not Steve...umm Jeff, Jeff started to have problems with his joints. They said it was a type of scurvy because he wasn't having enough of other food.

Q Yes.

A He was unlucky. We were all fine. So you would make a stew. You would find, you know, you'd make a big pot of stew for the guys. Or curry and rice and things like that. We had enough flour to make our own bread. We had enough flour to make bread for the year, so that was fine. We always had bread and tins of tuna. So breakfast would be, you'd make porridge or something. Which was fine, porridge was fine. Lunch would be bread. Whoever would make bread? Oppies was the best bread-maker. We

always got him to make bread for us. And bread and say tinned tuna would be lunch. And then supper time, you'd try and find stuff. Dehydrated vegetables, we still had some frozen dehydrated vegetables. It was like... terrible stuff, but anyway. What was the other thing we didn't have enough of I think? Tomato sauce, I think. Chutney was the other one. We had war on chutney as well. There was like six bottles for the whole year. Something ridiculous but forty-six "koskassies" of dried parsley. So we moaned "bedonnerd" about that.

Q Of course.

A So you just learned, you know. You just say: "Well, that's what it is, so that's what it is." You just make do. You just try and make it as nice as you can. Tinned fruit there was enough. Tinned fruit started separating a bit but "ag" you'd eat it anyway. You'd open ideal milk or something and make custard.

Q Did you have custard?

A No, we didn't because you needed milk for custard.

Q Did you have milk?

A Oh, we used to make our own milk, powdered milk. We didn't have long-life milk. We had powered milk. We use to make up Nestlé... Nestlé powdered milk is what we used. You just get used to it. I think a lot of the nice things just ran out half way through the year. There just wasn't enough of it. I know Steve, I mean Jeff, wrote quite a nasty report about the food.

Q Yes.

A Fortunately we warned the team that was coming because I said to Jeff, we're going to have to write a letter to Pretoria, tell them there: "Look, there isn't this, there wasn't enough of that." And so Jeff, we all sat together and compiled a list that we radioed through to Pretoria and just said: "Please, please, please. No more parsley." We had that was just one. All the other dried spices, we had cases and cases of this stuff but the parsley was the biggest joke. We eventually, we found - there might have been others - but we found forty-six "koskassies" full of dried parsley bottles. It was just like pathetic.

Q They are probably still using it.

A I don't know.

Q How many do you go through a year?

A I don't know. One bottle a month maybe for sprinkling on a bit of food. There really must have been a hundred and twenty bottles in each "koskassie". So ja, we had a few fights and eventually, you know, Jeff just said: "Listen, this is the story. On a birthday we'll bring a bottle of that out. No more otherwise." There were a few things like that.

Q No, you have to manage it.

A Wim loved tomato sauce. He wanted tomato sauce with every meal. Of course there was war with Wim all the way. He would say: "I'm here. There is tomato sauce left. I'm going to have it." They're saying: "Wim, you don't understand." You know, and then there will be like real arguments and tongue lashings at each other.

Q Of course.

A Eventually, you just go: "There they are. Eat them all now and then there's none. There were two ways of doing it. Finish them all tonight then there is nothing, so stop arguing. Or you can keep that for Midwinter, that for your birthday and that for your birthday. What do you want to do? We just resolved it like that. As the year goes by and you start thinking: oh, a nice yogurt would be nice. A bowl of fresh fruit salad. Those were the things I started dreaming about. Salad and yogurt and fresh - there were enough meat and vegetable, enough meat and chicken and stuff. So that was fine. We didn't run out of that.

Q Ja, nothing else. Now, were there any events of historical significance that had happened either in South Africa or elsewhere that you can recall during that time you were away?

A The one, the only one that was historical with us, was the meteor. The ..

Q Halley's comet?

A Halley's comet. That's why it's on our...

Q Ah, I see.

A That's what happened in our year.

Q That's why it's on our logo.

A That's why it's on our logo. It was Halley's comet, 1986. I don't know whenever that was. That was the one we all got excited about. I can't remember you know. I just, I personally semi-shut myself off from the rest of the world. My family. Everything was just like some other place, some other planet. It was

just irrelevant. Everything was just. I'm here now. This is where I'm now. I don't care about the rest of the world. So I can't remember anything of significance in 1986 while I was away besides Halley's comet. It is the only thing that I remember. And something about the soccer; Germany won some soccer thing.

Q The World Cup?

A Ja, something like that, I think Germany. Ryno went out of his mind because he was the only German guy on our team. Something to do, I can't remember. Something to do with the soccer.

Q How did you hear about it? Was it just radio?

A Through the radio. They would get radio links of so-and-so winning, so-and-so is whatever.

Q Did any of the guys follow any of the sport?

A Ryno followed soccer where he could. There was no huge thing that if they didn't find out they would die because they didn't hear what happened with the score. I never sense any of that from any of the guys.

Q Okay.

A Rob a bit. Rob was a Springbok oarsman rower. So Rob often used to find out how South Africa is doing in some international sport or something. So Rob used to follow rowing a little bit. That was because he was a Springbok oarsman, so that was in his interest.

Q Did any of you ever talk about politics or religion or any of those sorts of taboo subjects?

A Religion we often spoke about; I think also because Jeff was a minister. So we often use to, that used to come out. They were really nice conversations. Because it wasn't all of us. He would tell from his side. We would tell from our side. Politics, not that much. Every now and again around a dinner table someone would say something. Then we would have a political debate about something but it never got wild or kill each other or things like that. Religion was quite often and we teased Jeff sometimes but in a warm way about that. We'd say: "Don't worry Jeff, you're on God's side. You probably have a direct phone; you can just like phone him because you have a line with him. So why don't you just check what the weather is doing." The guys that wanted to on Sundays; if they wanted to go and sit somewhere and like, André and Dawid and Jeff. They often use to say: "Oh ja, on Sunday we are going to sit and talk about the bible or something" and they would go and sit somewhere and do it. That was cool. Say I want to listen to this what you are talking about. So they did that and on Sundays if you felt like saying grace then, you know if: "Jeff, you want to say grace tonight. Come on let's say grace, come on." Those that wanted to participate, fine. Those that didn't, fine.

Q Okay.

A No one made any scene about it. No one fought about religion and whatever. Which was nice.

Q Did you ever think that women or people from other races would form part of the teams?

A We often discussed that, about. The first one was about women. My background and my growing up, I never discriminated against who could do what. So I always said: "Why aren't there women on the team?" Half through the year I realised that it wouldn't be a good idea in the existing base. With regards to how we worked. Lack of privacy. I'm not saying all women wouldn't cope with it. I think very, very few women would cope with that. The new base is fine because there are separate bathrooms and there are separate rooms and you can have four women and they would all be on one side. I also think that there will definitely be hassles and fights with regards to. Someone's going to fall in love with one of them and she's gonna fall in love with the other oaks. Or two or three or whatever or whatever however you are and that would work for a while. And might break up. I think from a personal interaction male-female sexually whatever, I think would cause a huge problem. I can only talk about the base that I was in.

Q No, of course.

A The room was a piece of cardboard between each wall. If there was and anything happened. I mean the thought of it. You're going: no, I don't want to go down there.

Q No.

A Times like when we got caught in the storm for those four days or something. Seven of us were in a caboose. You know, the caboose is made for four people. Seven of us are there. Half of us standing, half of us lying down. You ate; you did your toilet and everything. You couldn't open the door for four days. I remember speaking to some women once about it and they said: "Ja, your sexist", and I said: "Okay, no I am not. Let me paint this picture for you." I said: "We got caught in that storm, in the caboose for four days, and you have your periods. Are you happy? Will you cope with that? Now you have to get out and you have to dig and use all the strength that you have to pick up those cables.

You're lying in and it's your turn to go out, tie yourself to a rope and dig for those cables that weigh - that even I cannot pick them up." I said: "Will you do that?", and they were like this: not sure and I said: "That's the point." I said: "If there were people and there were women that could handle all that. Magic! But it's not easy, the way our base was run. Remember, I think, our government also selected guys that preferably had been at the army. That could look after themselves. We weren't allowed to be married. You had to be single. All this stuff. It was like the army in another place, actually. So it wouldn't have worked. With regards to colour, black, white. We were still in the old regime, so we didn't think about it. We had one black guy, coloured guy - who was training to be a meteorologist - on the ship with us. He was a hell of a nice guy. I think he still works for the department of metrology, whatever you call it.

Q Weather service?

A Weather service, whatever they call themselves. We never actually thought about it. We weren't exposed to that. We'd all come from backgrounds where we didn't interact with blacks or non-whites. We didn't think about it.

Q So it was just that inconceivable.

A It was just the way it was. There were fifteen guys and you didn't think about who we were. Here were just fifteen volunteers. They didn't go to school with us; there were no blacks at school with us. There were no blacks in the army with us. It was just the way it was. Now I am glad they are interacting. I mean, I don't know who's is on the team now but I am sure they are male, female, black, white, coloured, green, pink. Which is the way it should be. I know some of the other bases, when we spoke to them, they were male and female. Like in a German base there were two women and one of them was the doctor. I am just trying to think. In a scenario like that you've got one woman who might be the doctor and all the men getting fine later on. You know, what would be the interaction. I just think you would have serious hassles, I think. Unless you were really screened. I know women, men, go climb Everest together but that is not for a year.

Q No.

A I know that the women see to themselves. They are either on hormone replacement things that they don't, while their out for three to four months climbing Everest; They don't have their periods and things like that. Which you can't in places like this, it's just not possible. So you know that's two or three months that your climbing Everest or that your, I read a book recently, they are walking without a beard. What is it? "To the poles without a beard". The women just said: "You men can do it. I can also do it." Brilliant. So yes women are capable of doing anything that a guy can do 99.9 percent. No, and I am sure it's maybe physical strength sometimes is against them but I am sure there are some strong women too. It that the right sort of person to have on a team. I don't know. I'm not a psychologist in analysing who should or shouldn't. I just know the way we lived, it wouldn't have been suitable. No, I am glad there weren't women on our team, me personally. I wouldn't have liked that.

Q You had the beard growing contests.

A We had the beard growing contest. Oppies won. He had the big red beard like this. He had to beat it. Ryno had three little whiskers; he didn't even have to shave his little whiskers. I tell you one thing. I think the beard and the long hair was a bad idea. It was such a nuisance but it was the scene, it's what you did. If I went back now for anything, I think I'll shave myself. Every second day I would take the electric razor and keep it short. It was a nuisance. Stuck in your ice. You had to wash it. We change as we get older. I was a hippy, so I was like far out. It's cool man.

Q Now, let's move forward a few years. Tell me how you got involved with the building of the SANAE base.

A My company supplies fiberglass and resin and adhesives and fiberglass technology. And I went to dinner one night for the guy - he was working for the department of Spornet, Transnet, whatever it is called - and he said: "Oh, you know we are going to build-", or either I heard about it because anything to do with the Antarctic, I want to know about it. I'll find it. I either heard about it and I was at dinner with this guy and he said: "Oh, I've just been appointed, in charge of building the new base." I said: "Call me, call me!" So the next day I went to go visit him and he said: "Right, were going to start building the base." Oh, Hennie Stassen-

Q The architect

A The architect; he was with us and I often chatted with him and said: "If you ever build a base, please phone me." So he did, he phoned me. He said: "Were going to build a fiberglass base. Please help." So I helped with the technology. When we built the panels here in Salt river, they said: "We're going to

vacuum bag the panels. It's the process of making the panels." And I said: "Well I'm a vacuum bag specialist." So I trained all the people and I set up all the facilities here in Salt river. Well I helped set them up. I didn't do it myself but I helped set up the whole way of doing it. To run the base and then I supplied some of the material for the base as well. So right from the beginning I was in there every day supplying. I was like a fly, you know, always in everything. Wanting to be involved. Ja, so right from day one I was involved with the base. With Hennie Stassen and testing the materials and all sorts of things.

Q Were you involved with the colour casting?

Q Well they had to cast. If I understand it, they had to cast it.

A Gel coat colours? Yes I was. They came to me. Well I didn't choose the colours but then we told them how to apply the gel coat and everything. Then shortly thereafter, I believe, they said: "Oh no, the colours need to be changed. How do we change them?" So they came to me and said: "How do we change the gel coat colours?", and I said: "You can't." I said: "If we can find a paint that you can paint at minus 20, then maybe. But you can do nothing about it. Gel coat is part of the product. It's part of the skin. It's not a painted skin. It's part of the structure; so you can't change it. I don't know. Have they ever changed it? I don't know.

Q They do paint it every few years at great costs.

A Yes, I said to them: "The only way you going to do it is painting it. You'd have to get one of the paint specialists to make paint that will dry and cure in whatever low temperatures." I've got access now to very good paint technology that would probably work down there. Then I didn't.

Q Of course.

A Now I would probably have. So I just laughed. I remember still bringing up the subject about the colours when we started the base. Somebody said something about why is it this colour. I said: "Well." First somebody said because is its visible from the air. I said: "No, but these are the old South African colours. Is that a clever idea?" They said: "Yes, we have to." "Well," I said, "keep that in mind if you choose this; you're stuck with it." And I remember that debate. I don't know with who with, maybe with Hennie and maybe some other guys. I don't remember, a long time ago. I said: "Okay, this is the colours you choose. Then who am I to argue. Let's do it."

Q How long were you involved in that project?

A Right until they packed it on the ship.

Q A few months? Years?

A No, it was like a whole year we built those panels. And then we partly assembled them again in Salt River as we made them here in Salt River, as we made with part assembled. Then we disassembled and then. But I would have loved to have gone down to help put it up but ah.

Q It was a long process.

A It was a long process and I was running my own business and I just couldn't leave. They said we got enough PWD guys.

Q What was your interaction like with the PWD guys?

A Down there?

Q Ja, down there and also here?

A Here was great because you know we all had a common thing and it was the guys working. Not all the guys that were working here, we're going to go down because this was a lot of the Transnet guys that have been involved. A lot of outsiders had been involved as well. PWD guys generally. One thing that amazed me was how hard they worked. Those guys worked. They were just relentless and they, even when the weather was not workable, they used to go out and work. The few that we did were just really nice guys. And...

Q Were these the guys now building the panel?

A No, building the base down there. Building the new diesel shed and helping us lift the base. Lift the air tunnel.

Q So that was now when you went down.

A When we went down in the beginning.

Q Okay.

A Also a lot of the same guys came back at the end of the year to help build stuff again.

Q Maintenance.

A Maintenance team. I just always thought: jis, these guys work. I know they get paid better than we

did. We just got - what did I get? R2000 for the year, I think. Like R400, R300 a month. I would have gone for free. Whereas they worked and they got pay for overtime and a weigh allowance. So they made nice money in the six weeks they were away. So I understand one motivation. Most of the guys were such "lekker" guys. I mean, those two team photos, I said: "Guys, we're going to take photos of you guys." "Please, come, come, come." So I always got their support and things like that. If you worked with them they were fine but if you like: "Ah, I can't. My hand's sore. I've a cold." Then they had no time for you. So the interaction I had with them then and down here, I was always just amazed how good they were. Just dedicated guys. None of them were like: "Uh, I don't feel like work." I never met any of those types of guys.

Q I assume they didn't last very long.

A I don't. I think they got bullied out quite quickly if they weren't prepared to run up their sleeves and to do the Antarctic work as it was called. It was great.

Q Did they ever get the opportunity to go out a bit exploring? Or were they just work?

A Very, very little. I don't remember any of them - maybe little bits - but they never got time off. I think they were there five weeks to work and that's what they did. They had very little time off.

Q And they worked 12 hours a day?

A Longer sometimes. If the weather was good, they just worked because they knew if a storm came up it would, for three days they couldn't work. So when the weather was good, they just worked. Come out anytime. The guys are still cutting and digging and moving and - "Aren't you guys tired?" "Ja, we are but we have to get this done before the next storm comes." "Ja, okay."

Q It is the end of your year and you know that the ship is arriving a few weeks. Describe those last few weeks.

A Last few weeks. Suddenly it's like somebody is going to come and invade your space. All of a sudden you're starting to pack up your stuff and it's like: "Do I really have to pack this up, do I really want this with me and should I leave it for somebody else. Oh, I've got lots of wine left; I think I must drink a whole lot of wine now. I'm not leaving it for somebody else. I'm going to finish my wine in the next three weeks." And you start cleaning up the base and you start doing stuff and you know it's a mix of - some of the guys are like really excited. They say: "Ah, we can't wait for the ship." I'm going: "Hope the ship doesn't arrive. I'm happy to stay here for another three or four or five months if possible." So it was quite interesting that one of us or few of us wanted to stay and some of the guys wanted to go back. The worse was when the chopper arrived and the first bunch of guys came in and they all smelled different. They were like, who are these people. And they are just like: "Stay away from me!"

Q Did you get a cold?

A Did I get a cold? I'm sure I got a cold. I think everybody got sick, cold, flu, and cough, whatever within days of the guys arriving. It was amazing. Just so quickly. Also in the beginning of the year, you know, some guys had colds and flu and within the first few weeks everyone got better and that was it. Another strange thing I found out down there. I had hurt myself a few times. So during the year your antibodies probably reduces a lot, or goes down or become less or whatever you say because if you cut yourself it doesn't heal. Normally if I cut myself here within two days it's gone. There three weeks go by, the wound still hasn't closed yet because your body's saying: well, there's no germs here so why must I now form a scab and close. That was a thing I found frustrating. If you hurt yourself, you're so angry because you knew you'd have an open wound for weeks. Whereas here, you put a plaster on for the first night and the next day, you know, there's a scab and two days later, you hand's skin is fixed. So that was a thing that I didn't like about, that I found interesting in the beginning. You cut yourself and think tomorrow it will be fine and tomorrow it is still bleeding and you're going: why am I doing this?

Q So you went back on the Agulhas again.

A Back on the Agulhas again.

Q Leith was still the captain?

A Leith was still the captain.

Q What did you do on the return journey?

A I think a lot of drinking. Party crossing the Antarctic circle obviously. And ja, just sitting with the others: the geologists and the other ship's crew. Just chatting and talking and taking photographs. The trip back, although it was only six days - five and a half days - it felt like one day. I wasn't seasick, very few of us were seasick, so we went to all the meals and you sit around the lunch table for hours talking. You know, where previously you didn't worry about it. By then it was a lot more sociable and

remember this and remember that.

Q Inside jokes.

A Ja, all the inside jokes and stuff. The trip back was very short. The one thing I do remember is coming in to table bay like three o' clock in the morning park out there, besides Robben Island. A few of us went onto the heli-deck. The sun came up. I've actually got the slide. The sun slowly came up. You saw table mountain- we weren't allowed into the harbour until 8 o' clock - and there we were just and a few of us just stood on the deck. We didn't talk to each other. We didn't even stand next to each other. It was just like thinking: now what? Now how's our life going to change now? What's going to happen now?, where have I been? Am I going to manage? I remember just standing there on the deck. Pink sky coming in, rays of the sun on the Table Mountain. Thinking: You know, I'm not ready to come back yet. Then once your there and everybody's at the harbour and the jetty and there's all the champagne and friends and - you forget about it again.

Q So what was you arrival like?

A It was great. My mum was there. My sisters were there. My girlfriend was there. My mates were there. Trevor was there and Brian was there. Ja, it was just: Woa! There was this noise and can we go. "Where's your stuff?" And you're going: "I don't want to tell you. There so many things, I don't know what to say." We all went to Zerbans. I don't think it's existing. In the Garden Centre there was a coffee shop. We all went to Zerbans. It was a morning and I said: "I want a bowl of salad this big!" They brought me this bowl of salad like for ten people. I said: "Don't any of you touch my salad. It's mine." And they all laughed at me. Said: "You've been salad deprived." I said: "Shut up. My salad."

Q So what did you notice about South Africa on your return. Well, just on the arrival.

A How noisy it was. How busy it was. How close everything is. You know that everything is on top of one another. That the roads are narrow. That the house is small. People are next to you all the time. It was nearly claustrophobic in a sort of a way because it was just all these things and noise and traffic and time. It took me a while to get used to that. I think on holiday after a week. I went to Knysna and went camping. "Geez, I can't do this." And then the work that I was doing before. I was a senior technologist at Woolworths. They heard that I was back and they said: "We want you back." I said: "Give me a few weeks, please. I'll be back." So I fortunately, I didn't have to go job hunting. Woolworths head hunted me and said: "We want you back, please."

Q Good. Fantastic.

A So I just got thrown into my old job and in two months it was like: have I been away?

Q I can well imagine

A Ja.

Q Now what is it that you miss about the ice?

A Tranquillity. Sense of adventure. Like when you walking and even I do it now. I do motorbike adventuring on my own. I do these wild trips into the desert and things on my own. I feel most alive when I'm pushing the limits. Where it is dangerous or things like that. Like going into that crevasse and being on this little ledge with a ice pick. Thinking: if this ledge breaks, I don't know where I'm going to go to. The adrenaline of excitement. I miss that because the Antarctic - I always say to people: in life you have little peaks of excitement. Then you go to the Antarctic and you have this big peak and what I do, what I battle with now is. I want to feel that big peak again and that's why I do motor biking because I want adventure. I miss the adventure. Being able to say I'm not working now. I can actually go and adventure. I can climb out of that hatch and I can go and walk or I can say to Rob: "Come we go to the edge of the ice-shelf. Let's go and abseil off the edge with the sea below us. Knowing that if anything goes wrong, you can actually lose your life. Or walking on the ice, ice pack on the sea ice. I mean, I fell into a crevice once then, through the ice, into the sea and that's just like. Makes you so alive.

So I miss the openness, the sense of adventure, to fend for you all the time. Always having to think, every time you go out the door, saying: "Am I gonna be alive. Do I have safety stuff with me? Am I aware of the weather am I? Have I, do I have things in my head how to survive. Whereas here, you get in your car and you drive to work and you go to the shops and you go to the bank and it's like boring stuff. There's no adventure in day to day life. That I look for. I admit. Also the interaction with the guys. I don't mind with the guys but I'm a solo person most of my, big chunk of my life. So if there's nobody around me, I'm happy on my own. You know, that's why I do trips on my own for example. Very happy to do that. I don't get lonely and I don't get scared. If I get scared then thats the feeling I

want. That makes any sense, maybe, maybe not. I don't know. Some people don't understand why I do this. That's what I do.

Q Describe it. Describe the ice.

A Describe the ice?

Q Or your experience.

A Visually or feeling wise. Both even?

Q Both.

A Visually the pristineness of the pureness of the ice. And I say the ice meaning the iceberg or the snow, the drift snow. It could be the wind blowing across, that is has such immense feeling and colour. People always think it's just white. Snow is not white. Ice is not white. There are so many colours in that. Also if you're going to like Grunehogna and you going to the, into the wind scoop. The ice is blue. It is royal blue. So the whiteness, it is not only white. I think the purity and the pristineness of the area. That it's so untouched and so pure in so many ways is what really turns me on. Also that it changes so quickly. Within a split - within one minute, it can become so vicious and the wind blowing and the snow particles. And then also the visibility. Photographers dream. All the different colours. When the moon's at a different angle. The sun, or the sky, is reflecting the red clouds onto the ice. And I think for me because I live into it, it is not just visual. It's a feeling because you feel the cold. I've got a photograph upstairs on the wall. It's a cold photograph. It was so cold that day. If you look at the photograph, it's cold. So I try and, for me it's cold. It is a very cold photograph but it's. That's what you feel. So it was just a mix of that, visually it became a feeling that I can close my eyes and I can feel the colours nearly. I don't how else to describe it but that's the part I really liked and that it changed so quickly and so often.

Q What kind of questions did the people ask you when they heard that you've been to the Antarctic?

A Often the silly, not the silly one - I always say there's no such thing as a silly question - how cold is cold? Didn't you get cold? Well it is a cold place. It is the coldest place on earth, it's the windiest place on earth and it's the driest place on earth. So yes, there are times that you get very cold but you can't say: "Well, I'm cold now. I'm gonna stop. I'm going inside." If you out on, in the tent, like go to Grunehogna. There is no place to get warm. So you deal with it. People always ask you: "How cold is cold?" I said: "Well, a freezer is minus 18. So try and double that at minus 36. That was a normal temperature in winter time. Try and work that out." Going: "Hmm, that's one way of putting it." People ask you: "What did you miss most?" You know, like food wise it was fresh food that I obviously missed most.

People ask you: "What did you do about... you know, you were a male. What about sex, you know?" You say: "Well, there are two ways to look at that." I would be honest like I would tell anyone that would ask me the question. 'Cause everybody asks you that question. They'd say: "You were fifteen guys." I'd say: "Ja, but there were fifteen guys, but in the army there were 400 guys. There were no gay guys with us so that's not a problem." And I said: "There are two aspects; one is that you are so busy, that you are in a different environment. Your body adapts and saying: I'm in a survival mode." I never thought about - I won't say never - very seldom you think about sex or about where you girlfriend was. Because you were in a different environment, your brain, your hormones, everything changes. When you're surviving and lying there thinking are you going to die. You're not thinking hell, Geez, sex would be nice now. I mean, I don't know. You wouldn't. And if you're like all males and females, if you're healthy, you sort yourself out. As I said to one woman: "I've got a good right hand and I've got a left hand." And she was I said: "You asked the question and that's what you wanted to hear. Now you've heard it. Don't go gasping like me at that." And she said: "Ja, I suppose so." I said: "What do you expect?" I said: "Because your body is different it doesn't become an issue. With me it didn't. I don't think anybody else did either." I know every now and again we'll be sitting watching a movie or it's Saturday night and we'd be drinking. Someone would say: "So what do you think your girlfriend is doing now. You think she's with another guy?" We'd say: "Shut up, shut up. Don't say that." So there were a lot of jokes about that. He'd say: "I wonder if she's with a nice guy tonight because she's missing you. What do you think she's doing?" I'd go: "Don't go there."

There was always the jokes. Then of course, coming back to like Dawid, saying that a women prays to fall pregnant. Then suddenly you realise you have to explain to an adult about how humans work. About how the male and the female. And in the beginning he just refused to believe us. It was so

funny. He would just say no. So there was some, I called it a blue movie, it wasn't porno. It was a gentle blue movie. Somebody had one and there was a video there and we said: "Dawid, come and look at this." And he was going ... I said: "That's how you do it." He said: "No, that's just, those are just actors. Those are actors for the movie. That's not how it really works." "I've got news for you." I said: "That's how it really works." So of course, when we met for our reunion, he's got three kids. So I said: "Dawid, did you find out? You must have because you've got three children. You must have found out, right." He says: "Ag, leave me, man. Leave me, man." You know. You don't think of things like that. So it went down well. Say Dawid, in all seriousness, this is how it works. That's how this and that. He would say: "No." I'd say: "Ask Jeff. He's a Methodist minister. He's there to help people. You ask Jeff what he says." "Ja, but God won't allow me to do this." I said: "No, God does allow you to do that. You know different belief. If it's only when you marry, that's always fine. You don't mind when it is or what your belief is or what you religious connotation is. Choose." Then you get guys like David and you know David was just plain and simple. He was just down to earth. He'd be sitting and saying: "Jis, I'm sexually frustrated. Excuse me, I just want to go to my room for a while. I'll be back just now." And he'll come back and say: "Ah that feels a lot better now. Where were we now?" I'd say: "David man!" He'd say: "What?" "Can't take you anywhere." So he would laugh.

Q What would you say was the most common misconception about Antarctica?

A That's a difficult question. Haven't thought of that one.

Q Because if you read into what the kind of things people ask you.

A That it is too cold to - if you talk most people, they'd just say: "I'll never manage in the cold, it's just too cold." I just say: "Ja, but you wear clothes. You wear warm clothes. You're in a place they-" I said: "How do you think the Russians live and people in Alaska? You adapt to where you are." Most people would just say: "Ah, I could never do it. Too cold. I could never do that." A lot of people would say that living in close proximity is not good. They would never be able to live with that. Some people would say: "O, I would never be able to live without my partner." I wouldn't be able to be in the same place with the same people for such a long time. Those were the main things people would say they wouldn't cope. Wouldn't cope with no privacy. I wouldn't cope without my partner. I wouldn't cope with a cold, all the time, all the time, all the time, all the time. It wasn't cold all the time. I said: "When you're in your room, our base was kept to plus 16. We just found, that was a nice temperature we got used to. So you're sitting in shorts and a T-shirt in the lounge. The passage is minus 40 but you just walk quickly down the passage to you room. You don't linger in the passage at minus 40. So those were the only things that I've seen. Just the normal human things that people don't get.

Q Did they ask you questions about the polar bears?

A O yes, you do have about the polar bears and what other - and did you see polar bears. You say no, that's the other pole. So yes you get funny things about people but if you don't read or if it is not of your interested, they just think it is a polar icecap and therefore there are polar bears and there's this and there's that. Seals, the Weddell seals. We had the penguins: the Emperor and the Adelie penguins. We had some of the birds: the skua, the petrel and the albatross. Obviously when we were going down we saw the albatross. That's amazing to see. Off he'd go, comes back, cross the ship, cross. He never flaps his wings. An hour later he's still...

Q Floating.

A He's just going over the crest of the waves like this, ah! It's so amazing.

Q You did not have that much interaction with the animals, though. Was it only at the coast?

A Only at the coast were the penguins. We tried; we even had a pet penguin that took to us one day. Elwood the penguin. We came down, there were a few penguins, we started walking. The one penguin decided he's going to spend the day with us. We were on the ice for about twenty hours. He spent the entire time with us, in between us.

Q Wow.

A And then we went back to the edge and then we had to get back up again. And when the last guy was going up the rope. Geez, this penguin let us have it. Screamed and performed. Like where are you guys going. It was so cute, man. I've got quite a few pictures of Elwood. There's one there of André and Elwood. André was lying down and Elwood came right up to him and was listening. André was talking to him and he was like turning his head like, what was this now. So cute, man. I mean that and just. They are not scared of you and they are so beautiful. The seals, we found a few seals on the ice but they just lie there and they don't smell so good. Old "vrot" fish smell.

Q Lovely. Now why do you think South Africa has a base on the ice?

A Well, they have a base for the - a Because were in the treaty. I think we were the second or the third country to be signed into the treaty in 19 whenever it was, 1961 or whatever, I can't remember.

Q '59.

A '59, close to that. And to stay in the treaty, as far as I know, you have to have scientific research continued 365 days of the year. You have to have it permanently manned. At least one base. The part that I like is that there is no warfare or anything in the Antarctic. All countries are allowed to share the information that they get and knowing a little bit about geology and geography and all these things is that, a lot of the upper air atmosphere - the Aurora, magnetic, even now sound. I know the German base has got quite a very strong programme running on sound pollution. If you think of so many million cell phones, radio, satellite, TV, aeroplanes talking to each other. Those are all through signals. You can convert those signals into audible sound or whistling. What the companies do, a lot of research is now. If there is a new cell phone company or like the American military - they're very big - they saying I want frequencies that I can transmit very clearly that I know have no interaction. We, a lot of that happen through the two polar areas.

Q Yes.

A They will have guys doing research and saying here are frequencies that don't work well, here's a gap between two frequencies that you can choose that frequencies. I don't know enough about but I know that is very important research that they are doing.

Q Was that the kind of thing as well that the Potch "kassie" did.

A The Potch "kassie" was doing whistlers. Obviously it's not as advanced as now because we didn't have satellites and things and other ways of measuring that. The German base - when we went there - we went there for a day when we were down there. Gorg von Neuymeyer, they had a programme on upper air pollution. Proper pollution that they were running. I don't know how they were doing it. They had a programme running on that. So I think the positive spin-off is that there's a neutral zone, let's hope it stays that way, and that there's good scientific stuff going on. And those that go down there to have scientific work done and to have an Antarctic experience, just has to be the best of both worlds.

Q What do you think is the worth of the base?

A I suppose there are different ways. Politically I think it is worthwhile because you're in the Antarctic treaty. So from a political Antarctic treaty point of view, I think it is very important to say that South Africa is a global player. Worth in as far as research is concerned, I think there is a lot of research that can happen there and nowhere else. That's just not available. That you just can't. So I think those that want to that type of research, I think it is invaluable, and then I think there is other research that happens like personnel; personnel personal interaction research. I don't know if they send psychologist down ever to say I'm just going suss this people out for a year and I want to do my PhD or thesis or whatever on. I know the American base does that. Scott-Amundsen base, they often have psychologists and I know they often send people that are going to space, NASA. They send people there for a year. There are certain aspects of living in confined spaces are similar. I don't know where the similarity is but I can sometimes imagine it. So I think it's scientifically, politically cost wise. I don't know what it costs anymore. I think I know it's a hell of a lot of money but then I look at politicians spending on fixing their houses. Zuma, R11 million rand to put a new fence around his house. I've a serious problem with that. So I think if the base, you know, costs us a billion rand a year to look after whatever, I'm going: "You know what, compared to all the other stuff. It's not big money." It's worthwhile money because it is at least positive. It produces good people. It produces good research. The research is open and available, theoretically open and available to other people and to other countries. I think it has a lot of good to it.

Q I wanted to ask you how the awareness was regarding the environmental concerns.

A I don't think it was as good as it should have been. All the stuff that we could burn, we used to burn. We used to dig a big hole and burn it. Some of the stuff came back but in the beginning when we arrived I was horrified but they said: "That's the way we do it." Everything goes buried. They just took it three kilometres away from the base, they scraped a great big hole and all the empty drums and all the waste, everything, was dumped and closed up. I'm going: "And now? What happens to it now?" "No, in fifty years' time this will be an iceberg because we're on a glacier. It will just fall into the sea and disappear." I'm going: "Disappear where?" "Wherever." I'm going: "Hmm". I didn't like that part too much. I said I understand that certain metals can rust but all those drums have got a cup full of oil left in them, a cup full of diesel. That drum is going to leak or whatever. Now I'm going: "Okay, do I turn a

blind eye or what do I do about it?" So the only thing I did is I said: "Guys, what we have to try and do is try and burn as much as we can and yes, it does go up in smoke but probably the lesser of the evils maybe. I don't know where we are; far away enough that you know that smoke will be blown away and dissipate back into the ice. I don't know, you know, I'm not a scientist in that field." But I was a little bit horrified in the beginning. I know now, they're meant to bring it all back with them but we...I still...humans are just bad for this planet. Plain and simple.

Q So they didn't give you any talks or pamphlets or any information.

A Not that I know of. They just said, you know, this is how you do it. That's how you keep the base clean. All the daily rubbish gets put into a compactor. You compact it into a block and you take it out and then once a week or once a month, once a month. They taught us to do that. They said this is how you do it. They showed you the compactor and this is how you burn the stuff. You take it all and you burn everything. When it stops burning, two days later. You come and you fill it up again. You bulldoze it close, so it doesn't blow away or that the birds or whatever doesn't come there. And were going: "Okay." So that's how you do it, do it. Army-army thinking. Do that, even if you don't believe it. You know, go and kill people. I don't believe it. Well you're in the army, go and do it. I'm going: "Ja, okay. I'll do it." So yes, it did worry me but I didn't know what else to do with it. I had no other solution because I didn't know. Now I know but then I didn't.

Q What do you think of tourism in Antarctica?

A Tourism in Antarctica. There are two sides that I think of. There are a lot of people that have got a genuine interest in other places in the world. Like I want to go to South America still. I've been to most other places because the world is there and I'm only alive once. I want to see as much of the world as I can. A lot of people are fascinated by the Antarctic, so I don't have a problem with that. I think a lot of people make a lot of money out of it which welcome to the real world. The part that would worry me is that where you have tourism, and I just think of being the Namib deserts. I've been to the deserts in America; I've been to lots of places. Where there're people they mess up the environment. There's pollution, there is waste, there's certain places like in the desert, you know, they have these bakkies that drive over the desert. Those bakkie tracks will be there for another three hundred years. You've messed it up.

I think there are certain parts that I think, you know, you might be disturbing the wild life. You know penguin or something. Now all of a sudden, all these people going through and they say: "Don't feed the penguins." I guarantee you every second person gives the penguin something to eat or whatever. That part worries me. I can't stop it but where there's money and there's greed, people will allow anything or turn a blind eye to anything. Tourism in Antarctic is okay. I just think that it should be seriously, seriously enforced and controlled with regards to the environment, wildlife, pollution. Leaving a footprint behind where you know you can't erase the foot print. You know, where it is on snow and the snow is going to blow tomorrow and it's gone, it's fine but I'm sure there are places where once you've touched it. It's like that.

Q Forever

A Forever, ja. I just hope that the people that are doing the tourism, are very savvy about where they are going and what impact tourism will leave, you know, probably find them both. There are some that are very conscious about it and others that are saying: "You know what, I am making a lot of money. I don't actually care. I think like anything, humans are like that. I see it in other pristine place like in the desert, or like in a cave. People going in and break off the stalactites. I say: "You know, that's taken ten thousand years to grow and you break it off. Can I stick it through your head, you know."

Q Is there anything else you think we should know? That you would like to tell us?

A I always think if you have the opportunity; if anyone has the opportunity to for an Antarctic experience with the right motivation. They should try and go. I mustn't be for financial gain. It mustn't be for, I must be to learn about the planet or to bring some positiveness to people or to the place or to science or to nature or to whatever. Ja, my experience, we were lucky with the team but having Steve there and how he was selected. He shouldn't have got through. It was a, we all said: "How the hell did he get through", but he was so clever. He just plain and simple bullshitted his way through everything. I mean they even gave him a medical exam to make sure. He passed with flying colours. So we knew that all the doctors go through that screening process. So we thought, well he got through that and later on we found out why. He probably just the night before read up about, I know the one day he had to fill

some teeth. The night before he probably just read up how to fill teeth and he did it. I don't know who he did it on or where but he was 1 Mil(1 Mil Hospital Voortrekkerhoogte). Oh, the other nice thing, the testing. Before we went down, we went to the MMI, MM, MMI, where they do these strange test on you - besides the physical tests which is, they see how fit you are, which was easy for me. I was very fit then. Where they put you in a black room and you have to like see where the red lights are, where the sounds are. Apparently it's the same kind of tests that the jet pilots do.

Q Oh.

A To see how fast you reaction are and how you see things and how you hear things and how your ears and eyes and hands coordinate and stuff like that. That I found fascinating. I can't even remember. What was it? MMI, that's all I remember. Was it MMI? Whatever it, military, medical military institute or something. All the pilots sitting there in the passageway, waiting for their turn to go through to have their eyes tested, their ears and reflexes tested and stuff. We had a day at MMI doing all sorts of wonderful things. "Why are you doing this?" "Just do it." Colours, you know, colour recognition through these funny books and they go: "What did you see?" Okay, now change the light, "What did you see now?" You know, all those, I knew. I didn't know anything about psychology in those days. I said: "Okay, whatever. I'll just do my best. I want to go, so I'll do my best."

Q Do whatever they tell you.

A Ja, I would have gone and done dishes for a year, if I had to. Just to go down there. Seriously, If I'd just been a dish boy, I would have said: "Cool." I'll wash dishes everyday just to be there.

Q What did you do afterwards, when you came back?

A When I got back I went back to Woolworths and I was a senior technologist for Woolworths doing all their packaging and their designs and stuff like that. So I went straight back to their but then I spent a lot more time spending time away. Weekends and climbing and camping and adventure riding and. So that definitely put me on another level as far as – Geez, there's nature out here. I did a lot more than I did before. I worked for them for a few years. I went overseas for a - touring around America for a year. Just wandering around, having a look what America was about? Came back and then worked for a high Tec company in the Strand called Aerodyne. Worked for them for three or four years and then started my own business. In March I would have had my business for twenty years. So that's why I get involved in the Antarctic bases and all the guys know me now and all those things and I've got all the technology. I've been there and I said: "I've been there. I know what it's like. Why this won't work and why that will work." Been there, done that.

Q How do you think your Antarctic experience influenced basically the years following and the rest of your life?

A I thing it influenced a lot, quite a lot in far as that there is a world out there. That for me not to be scared to do stuff. I'll try a lot of things. I'm not scared to do anything. So it gives you the courage to say: "You know what I survived there. I got caught in the storm. I got this, that, whatever. I think it definitely gives you courage to look at life and not be scared. To adventure or to go to other countries. Taught me a lot about people. You don't always have to believe people at face value, like we did with Steve. That was the biggest lesson but also learned that I'd always been a loner prior to that. I never trusted people and now all of a sudden to be in a position to saying: "I have to trust you, Dave or I have to trust you, André, to make sure that rope doesn't come undone while I'm hanging on it." To put your life in someone's hands. Knowing you can actually do that. So for me that was also a positive thing. People do look after each other and people do have feelings for each other. Ja, a sense of adventure. You know that sense of adventure keeps you alive. You mustn't stagnate and I'm still like that. I'd do anything not to work. I just want to adventure. I just want to see the world. It's all I dream of. I try to as much as possible. I've got two kids, ones just finished school yesterday. I've got another one that's got another two, three years to go. Eight, nine, ten. So I can't really go too far until they're finished. Then I'll go. Then I'll be on my bicycle again as they say.

Q Lovely.

A So that's all I can think of and you've heard a snippet of my - how I saw it at any rate.

Q Thank you very much.

A You're very welcome. Anytime.