

## BRIAN JOHN HUNTLEY

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**Interviewer (Q):** Lize-Marie van der Watt | History Department | Stellenbosch University  
**Respondent (A):** Brian John Huntley | Biologist | Marion 22 | 1965

**Q:** Now I will start off by tracing your own background. How did you become involved with Marion Island?

**A:** I was studying at the University of Natal in 1964 and I missed a lecture, but apparently during the lecture Professor Bayer, who was my professor of Botany, had read a letter to the botany students saying that Professor Van Zinderen Bakker was planning a trip to Marion Island and he was looking for a botanist for it at the time. I wasn't there but at the end of the afternoon when I arrived at the practical, one of my friends there said "Hey, Brian, you might be interested in this, go and speak to Professor Bayer", which I did and he gave me the details and I wrote off to Professor Van Zinderen Bakker and then on whatever day it was in September I got a letter from van Zinderen Bakker saying that this is what it is about, you know, would I be interested in an application and I can't remember exactly when my participation was confirmed. You know, it was sort of in about October or so, so I was actually in third year in university so I decided, well forget about honours for the moment, because I was going to go and do honours, and Edward van Zinderen Bakker, the son, came down to Pietermaritzburg for an ornithological conference and we met and chatted and then I went up to Bloemfontein, soon after finishing the end of year exams, and visited there with van Zinderen Bakker and the son for a day or two. Then we left on the 29th or so of December. But I remember when I was in Bloemfontein, I think it was when there was an attempt on Verwoerd's life, was that in December or November 1964, at the show grounds, I might be confusing things, but just remember, the significant thing was we couldn't get a drink at the pub [laughs] because there was some political reason when I was up there, or it might have been because it was Bloemfontein...

**Q:** From which port did you leave?

**A:** Cape Town. We came down, in my diary, if you read the diary, you know the first several pages about arrangements and the fact that the Department of Public Works who were supposed to supply us with equipment and have the equipment ready, and clothing...

**Q:** Professor Van Zinderen Bakker's tent, he had...

**A:** *Ja*, he had bought some tents. *Ja* he bought, we had tents and sleeping bags that he had bought, but otherwise the PWD or Department of Transport, not PWD, I think it was the Department of Transport didn't have our equipment, you know, our clothing, our boots and our jackets and our etc.

**Q:** Were they supposed to issue you with different clothes they issued the team?

**A:** No, it was just the standard team stuff but they didn't have it and they didn't have the size and they didn't... And the team also didn't have real field gear, they were more, sort of... But as I say, you will find all that detailed in my diary.

**Q:** Where did van Zinderen Bakker get all the funding from?

**A:** He got it from CSIR. Van Zinderen Bakker had, I can't remember when he actually came to South-Africa from Holland, probably in the 50's or something and he had clearly established himself as quite a respected scientist and he got a grant from CSIR which at the time was R30 000 to cover all the costs of the expedition other than the ship getting down there and other than accommodation and meals and that, so he got a grant of, I am pretty sure it was R30 000 for the whole two year expedition.

**Q:** I got the idea that van Zinderen Bakker was also at some time a Dutch consul for...

- A:** *Ja*, he was honorary consul for the Netherlands in Bloemfontein.
- Q:** Did that mean he was politically well connected to actually get permission to send you guys to Marion?
- A:** No I don't think... I mean he was quite apolitical and there are many anecdotes which I haven't included in my diary but one of them was that we... One evening, at dinner, we were sitting around the dinner table and something came up and I could clearly sense that van Zinderen Bakker was not comfortable with the South-African government, or at least the Nazi sympathies of some parts of the government, so he told us a long story about how during the war he had hid the bicycle of somebody, I am not sure whether it was a Jewish person, but it was somebody who was not in with the Nazi's and he had hidden this bicycle in the roof of their house and he went on a little bit about it, you know. Basically saying, look, I was part of the resistance without being, you know, saying I was in the resistance. He was saying he was totally unsympathetic with the Nazi's and I thought, well, you know, this is getting sort of, we never talked politics around, but I think he was just wanting to make a statement to everybody that he wants to have nothing to do with that type of thing and so I don't think he had connections at all in South-Africa from the point of view of being connected with the government I think when Wilhelm Verwoerd, completely independent light, to be in the team, van Zinderen Bakker was sort of, I suppose, surprised, this is a good scientist, prime minister, but in fact I think he was completely happy with the decision because Wilhelm was a really good worker, I mean he was completely, there was never any sort of, kind of, attitude from him, that you know, my father is the prime minister, I can do what I want. And in a way he facilitated some arrangements just being on the expedition. But I think van Zinderen Bakker's decision to appoint him as a geologist was completely independent, he just decided, well, he is a volcanologist, we need a volcanologist, he's the guy. Support for the expedition was purely on the basis that van Zinderen Bakker was a paleologist, paleo-scientist of international standing and CSIR said; "Ok, this scientist, he has got a good proposal, let's support him."
- Q:** At that stage, do you think they needed to get official permission to visit Marion Island, convincing the Department of Transport to check you guys down on the ship?
- A:** *Ja*, I think so. There was no sort of sense that there was any special arrangements made other than that they had to be accommodated, on the island at that time was a wonderful base and it was really nicely designed, it had lots of space, it wasn't as though there was this massive crush of people there that cities seem to have today where everybody's got to get their bookings made and what not. I think the money was there from the CSIR and Van Zinderen Bakker got up and, you know, made the plans and did it.
- Q:** So how did they prepare you guys for going down? Did you get to chat to people who were there? Van Zinderen Bakker has been there...
- A:** No, this was one of the remarkable things that I, I mean going back after 40 years or so and seeing science base and the science programs, and I realise how ill-prepared I was, I mean, to go to a place like that and our equipment simple compared to what is available now, in that, there's notes on my recent visit, you can see there I sort of described the differences, how things have changed, but no, I remember, I saw Professor Bayer and I said I am going on this expedition, what advice can you give me? There were two bits of advice. One from him and one from another person. Bayer said, oh well, you know, it sort of amazed me at the time, he said you only need basic equipment, you've got to go and just, what comes in useful, to have your pliers and hammer and this and that and some *bloudraad* and so you know. As it turned out, I used bits of wire [laughs] and you know, *handgemaakte goed* that I did. Van Zinderen Bakker had some very sophisticated equipment which we bought and used, but, in fact, it was the simple things that worked. The other advice that I was given...
- Q:** You didn't have duct tape by then...
- A:** It was the same sort of thing, duct tape, "n bietjie bloudraad en 'n tang en maak dinge reg', you know, that is many years in the bush and 'bloudraad en 'n tang' has got me out of a lot of

difficult situations. It was old John Poynton, who was a professor in Zoology, who said that I should take for reading Darwin's Voyage of the Beagle. Unfortunately I couldn't get a copy and afterwards I just thought it would have been such a fantastic book to have there.

**Q:** Have you read it then?

**A:** *Ja*, absolutely. I would recommend to anybody, any young scientist going to the island to read the journal, there are various editions, you know, but there, you can get various...

**Q:** So what reading materials did you take?

**A:** I had quite a reasonable library of appropriate, basic, standard references, but I mean, at that time there wasn't a big literature on the sub-Antarctic, in fact there was very little but I have a couple of papers of some of the earlier work on Macquarie and Gough, Zhongshan, but it was very limited. Some books on the Scottish Highland vegetation and Norway, you know the sort of more, the Northern Arctic areas, but there was very little relevant literature, or Sub-Antarctic literature, there was none, there was nothing on Marion Island for instance.

**Q:** So how did you know about Marion Island before you applied for this expedition?

**A:** In 1957, when I was at high school, they had the International Geophysical year by AGY, I must have done a project on it at school, you noticed the little school project, so I was aware and you know the trans-Antarctic expedition Sir Hillary and Fuchs was on, so I had known of the Antarctic and so I suppose I had a little bit of a sense for, there is this place but no real knowledge of what it was about.

**Q:** Who were the people involved in organising the trip from South-Africa's side, it was van Zinderen Bakker and...

**A:** ...and the Department of Transport at that time.

**Q:** Can you remember who the contact person at the Department of Transport was?

**A:** No, I had very little to do with those arrangements, you know, I just basically arrived in Cape Town with my *bagasie* and I had two little boxes of some things and that's it.

**Q:** Did you meet the expedition party before? Most of them.

**A:** No I think no. I had met Van Zinderen Bakker and Edwards in Bloemfontein before, and then, that was it. I mean, we met here in Cape Town as we boarded the ship.

**Q:** And this was the RSA?

**A:** *Ja*.

**Q:** How was the journey down?

**A:** For me it was okay, but perhaps if you read the first ten pages of my diary you will see I give a description of it so I mean compared to the Agulhas it was a much smaller, bouncier definitely considerably less comfortable ship but it was okay, but most of us in fact were pretty sick.

**Q:** Have you had maritime experience before that?

**A:** No, other than just sailing on the Castle ship along the coast.

**Q:** On the Castle Union the Castle...

**A:** *Ja*.

**Q:** So have you sailed on open seas?

**A:** *Ja*.

**Q:** So you had a vague idea of...

**A:** *Ja*, a five day trip on the Castle liner...

**Q:** ...and do you think the others on the vessel had experience...

**A:** I think some of them. I think they might have had the same similar sort of experience but the fact was that 90% of them got totally sick and some of them just never reappeared when we got to the island.

**Q:** At that time Captain McNish already took over...

**A:** *Ja*, he was the captain and Funk was the first officer.

**Q:** Did you have any interaction with them?

**A:** *Ja*, because we kind of had pretty free reign on the ship, we just went to who we wanted to, it was a small ship you know, it was much smaller than the *Agulhas*. There was a team when we went down; there was the SANAE team, because we went in December, so the SANAE members, and then the expedition members.

**Q:** So the ship went past Marion, by Marion Island to SANAE.

**A:** *Ja*, that's right.

**Q:** Did the SANAE members also went on shore on Marion for a little while or not?

**A:** One or two of them, they were doing, they had this instrument called a tellurometer which was for measuring the distance very accurately, so it was a South-African invention, and so they needed to measure a base line between two points, two fixed points so you get a precise measurement, and so there was a chap on the ship going to Antarctica who had a tellurometer, his name is probably in my diary and then he and Otto Langenegger, who was the surveyor, and Wilhelm Verwoerd went off to do that, but I think most of the Antarctic folks stayed on the ship.

**Q:** In terms of what you did on the ship, did you spend time counting seabirds or looking out for whales or...

**A:** Not counting, we were doing, basically just looking if there were whales. It was very, interestingly, Eduard, who was the ornithologist, was so sick he never came upstairs and what's his name old, Neville Fuller who was the marine biologist, he was even more sick and I was the only biologist that went up on the deck most of the time on our way down and I didn't know the seabirds at all and so we didn't do any scientific measurements when I went down.

**Q:** At that time, I am making an assumption now but you would not exactly see the whales as they are now. As a tourist sees...

**A:** No we didn't see. *Ja*, I remarked on this in my diary, we saw no whales and there was this trip, I went in November, *ja* it was November and we saw a lot of whales, to begin with we saw quite a few whales and it was notable that we didn't see whales on our way down. We did see a whaling fleet come in to between Marion and Prince Edward one night which was probably, but that was much later, when we were on the island for many months.

**Q:** Because whaling was not banned by that time.

**A:** No. I don't know if it was, but it was in 1964, and it's not been banned yet?

**Q:** Not in South-Africa.

**A:** Okay.

**Q:** ...We have finally signed the various treaties, but...

**A:** Okay, but I remarked on the fact that we saw no whales there, we saw killer whales around the island, you know.

**Q:** Quite interesting, but there was an awareness of whales as something to look out for?

**A:** *Ja, ja* sure, we were looking at albatrosses and what else and sea life.

**Q:** If you can very shortly describe McNish?

**A:** McNish was quite a serious, he was quite serious sort of, I remember when after being there 15 months when I went back onto the ship he greeted me very warmly and, you know, let me feel welcome and really friendly and I found he was obviously quite a kind of, serious guy and I remarked on our New Year's eve party on the ship going down that it was quite a, you know, it wasn't a wild party, it was quite an orderly sort of party, you must have seen that, but one incident I remember well, and when we were landing on prince Edward Island...

**Q:** You landed on Prince Edward Island as Well?

**A:** *Ja*, in March 1965. We had these rubber inflatable rafts and we had just a small little outboard motor which would push it onto the coast and it was all quite tricky. And McNish was up on

deck and I was on the rubber raft with a couple of other people, and Funk was on the little outboard motorboat. And McNish was trying to tell Funk that he should go this way or that way or something, and Funk shouted up at him and said, "I am the captain of this boat and you will shut-up!", [laughs] and McNish said, "Yes sir," you know, because the rule was, when you are on the boat, it doesn't matter what size boat, whoever is the senior person on the boat, he is the person that is in charge of the boat. And Funk just told him to shut up! [laughs]. And Funk was quite a funky guy he had lots of, sort of, he was always swearing, everything was the f-word, but he more sort of a character. McNish was quite more serious about it.

**Q:** It must have been interesting in that context of South-Africa at that time to have somebody who peppers his language that much, exact, almost in light, stunning.

**A:** *Ja.*

**Q:** Okay so did you and the team, were they obviously warned before that you were coming, the team that was on Marion at the time.

**A:** I mean, they had several months' knowledge that we were going to come.

**Q:** What was the welcome like?

**A:** Very good *ja*. You know he described that too in detail, the officer in charge there, what was his name, Von Ludwig, anyway, he was a mathematician or physicist or something, you know, he was the head of the team, and they were a great group, they were really they did everything they could to help us and make us feel welcome and let us get on with our work, it was great, really, you know, again I keep on referring to my diary, I've been reading. I made a lot of comments about our welcoming and how considerate they were and also how disciplined they were. The base was kept spotlessly clean, people did their duties of cooking and cleaning and everything, and the team had a lot of respect for Von Ludwig.

**Q:** Did they give you about the environment you had to work in?

**A:** Not much, most of them hadn't been far from the base at all, but several of them joined us, and helped us carrying equipment around and coming out in the field with us. The medical orderly, who was from the army medical core, Louwtjie de Beer, he came on several trips with us and helped us carry extra packs and stuff. *Ou Louwtjie ja.*

**Q:** So he was a medical orderly from the army, did he actually perform any surgery on anyone?

**A:** Let me tell you a story about him. I asked Louwtjie how it was that he ended up on Marion Island, so he said, "Brian, it was like this", he was actually the driver for the surgeon general of the army. The surgeon general whose name you will be able to find, I think it was a Jewish name. He was driving the surgeon general to some function and the surgeon general said to him, "You know, Louwtjie, you look really depressed, what is the problem?" and he said "Well, you know, sir, I've had a divorce and I got no money and it is very difficult and I just need to find a better job." So he said, "There is this Marion Island, and you can go down as the medical orderly..." [laughs]

**Q:** Almost like the Metkassies... [laughs]

**A:** So he went on and he was our medical orderly, you know.

**Q:** But nobody died or broke something or...

**A:** No, but he could only give you some Panado or...

**Q:** So when a new team arrived? A new team arrived in April?

**A:** *Ja*, March, April.

**Q:** And then you guys have already been on the island...

**A:** For three months, *ja*.

**Q:** Were you expected to tell the new team or...

**A:** Not really, some of them had been on the islands or Antarctica before, so there were sufficient, there was some young chaps, Fred Clements, who else was young, there were a couple of the younger, you know, Fred was about my age, I was the youngest there, but no, they more or less

knew the ropes, but I think the team leader, Sciocatti, he had been on Gough before. Most of the older guys had been on one or other of the bases.

**Q:** Is it they who brought a parrot?

**A:** I think Sciocatti brought a parrot, a green parrot; it's an Amazon green *ja*, Grietjie.

**Q:** Could Grietjie talk?

**A:** No, she couldn't which was a disappointment to us, we tried to teach the parrot but it never learned to speak.

**Q:** And other kinds of animals?

**A:** We had Oubaas, the dog, but he was already there and he left in 1965 in March.

**Q:** *Ja*, didn't van Zinderen Bakker...

**A:** *Ja*, Van Zinderen Bakker took him back *ja*.

**Q:** New chickens, did they bring new chickens and sheep?

**A:** *Ja* they came with chickens and sheep and things like that... They didn't bring more when in; we took chickens and sheep in December. They didn't send any more in March/April.

**Q:** Did the sheep breed at all...?

**A:** No they were *hamels*. Do you call them *hamels*?

**Q:** *Ja*, and the chickens?

**A:** *Ja*. They laid eggs some of them, but we had lots of eggs in a kind of a gel or something. *Ja* we had plenty of eggs, lots of eggs. And there were some just for eating. They had done a bit of egg laying but not much.

**Q:** But there were never little chicks. And the chickens were they at all nice?

**A:** *Ja* we ate lots of them, *ja*!

**Q:** If you ate lots of them there must have been a lot of chickens!

**A:** Well, you see, it was interesting, I would stew a roast leg of lamb every Sunday at least, or two legs of lamb, somehow I ended up doing a lot of, we slaughtered the sheep and I seemed to do quite well with the lamb legs and then for a birthday or something like that we would slaughter half a dozen chickens or something. There were quite a lot, they didn't last, I don't remember how long into the year they lasted, because we had no reasons, we didn't have any groceries, we had potatoes, and onions and apples lasted quite a long time, and cheese quite a few months and then it was just other rations...

**Q:** Bully beef, tuna?

**A:** *Ja*, I don't think we had tuna, I think we might have had things like canned sardines or something like that, you know...

**Q:** Other species you might have brought from South-Africa. Did you try to plant tomatoes?

**A:** O, they had done that previously, but I think at that stage we were deciding that we shouldn't bring in any alien, you know, on Marion Island's soil...

**Q:** So at that stage you were already...

**A:** *Ja*, it was probably at that stage that was decided that there shouldn't be any more introductions; Van Zinderen Bakker was quite strong on that.

**Q:** Did you try to eat any of the stuff on the island itself?

**A:** Yes, we experimented with cocoa and cabbage and mayonnaise and it wasn't so good. And eggs, Macaroni eggs...

**Q:** I heard that the penguin eggs are really quite rare.

**A:** *Ja*, it was more like a lobster actually, more like *kreef*, we didn't really get into eating it because we weren't really experimental I suppose in terms of... *Ja*, there was nothing else we tried to eat.

**Q:** Did you have guns on the base?

**A:** Ja, I think we did, ja, there was, because they had a 303 there, they tried to shoot a killer whale.

**Q:** Why would they want to do that?

**A:** Because they were just bored. They even made a big kind of harpoon, to try and harpoon a killer whale.

**Q:** What were the plans to do after this?

**A:** No, they'd go and take shots at killer whales every, I do not know why they had a 303 on the island, or whose it was. I think it was on the island the office in charge had a rifle...

**Q:** But in terms of the skua's, I heard previous teams were warned about the skua's.

**A:** Ja, we were too and at first I didn't believe that they would attack but we soon found out that they were very territorial, they do come and dive bomb you, Have you been there during the...

**Q:** No.

**A:** During the breeding season, when they got chicks on the nest they do dive bomb you, and most of us got *klapped* once or twice.

**Q:** So you went to shore with dinghies all the time and got...

**A:** Ja, and then they had the landing stage, they'd lower this landing stage down so it acts as a jump-off for the rubber inflatable raft but then the equipment was pulled up on a crane.

**Q:** And how did you go about the work, did you have a set plan beforehand? What was your specific, what were you supposed to do?

**A:** Well I was to do the vegetation map of the island, not a vegetation map, a description of the vegetation and the plants and the survey of the plants and collecting all the species, so I suppose within the first week or two we started working out a plan of operation, but Van Zinderen Bakker more or less let me get on with things. I had done some botanical survey before that. I had experience in botanical survey and so I just got on with the job. Just worked *aanmekaar*. It was non-stop for 15 months, so it wasn't like Saturdays and Sundays off, I just worked. When there was good weather we worked in the field and if the weather was really too bad to go out, which was quite a lot of the time, then we would do work in the laboratory. We had a lot of laboratory work to do so...

**Q:** When you went out, how long did you go out most of the time?

**A:** Usually not more than about three or four days, sometimes five days, but we couldn't carry... You see there were no huts, we had to carry our tents, our food, everything we had to carry with us, so we'd have packs of about up to 70 pounds, and that would be 30 kilo's or so, so going across the mires and swamps was quite difficult. We didn't have... hard... we had to find places to camp; it wasn't a case of there being fixed routes or fixed camps or so.

**Q:** Can you remember finding out that you can sink in the mud?

**A:** Oh ja. We all sank quite regularly. You eventually get the feel, but it was wetter and much boggy at that stage than it is today.

**Q:** So you would say they left...

**A:** Ja in that little report I made commentary on that. You see I suggest that it might not necessarily be because it might be two things. One is that there are better known paths and secondly you are carrying much lighter loads than we carried and so, if you carry a heavy load you would easily sink in, but if you just. Today they are carrying small loads; they can easily cross the bogs.

**Q:** Did you know you will have to be that fit?

**A:** Well, you get island fit, ja. You become very fit because you're walking virtually every second. I used to go up Junior's kop two or three times a week because they had a weather station on the top of it, and I had to go up there and down early in the morning.

- Q:** And when you did get in to base, and you did have a couple of hours free time. What did you do?
- A:** Well we'd either play snooker or read, listened to music, play darts, there were a few things, and then we had reel to reel films that we had, we had 12 films for the year, so some of those we saw a lot of times, some we broke, so we enjoyed it. On Saturdays we watched.
- Q:** Did you have a midwinter party at that stage?
- A:** *Ja* we did, but it wasn't anything as there was on Antarctica. *Ja* we had quite a few parties, people's birthdays and that.
- Q:** And your communication with SANAE and Gough? Did you have any?
- A:** Very little.
- Q:** Did you guys get the same amount of telegram time or telex time?
- A:** We had 200 words a month I think.
- Q:** But it was the same as for the team.
- A:** *Ja*. And then we had additionally once a month a call to Van Zinderen Bakker because he was there for the three months and then for the rest of the year, for the other 12 months we had once a month just to talk with him about work.
- Q:** Did you always just talk about work or did he sometimes give you news from South-Africa?
- A:** Not that much, I don't remember, we didn't have radio reception. No we didn't have a radio.
- Q:** So how did you get news from South-Africa?
- A:** We must have had radio because I remember when it was the Rhodesian UDI, we heard about that and we discussed it a lot, but I don't, funny thing I can't remember, but we did have a radio set up for one channel. There was what they called at the time a single side band which was, you know the HAM radio, the amateur radio, so I spoke with my folks on my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday using the HAM radio.
- Q:** So you celebrated your 21<sup>st</sup> on the island?
- A:** *Ja, ja*.
- Q:** Did they do something special for you?
- A:** *Ja* we had quite a good party *ja*.
- Q:** Quite a good party. Did they make a gift?
- A:** I guess there must have been something. I really don't remember too much about it.
- Q:** You mentioned that you discussed the UDI. What things did you discuss? I mean if you had conversations was there something in particular that came up quite a lot?
- A:** We used to talk quite a lot and even used the slang of the various movies we watched and we avoided politics and religion. There was quite a lot of joking and sort of an internal language, little expressions coming out of the movies we watched.
- Q:** A lot of private jokes.
- A:** *Ja*, around that.
- Q:** Women? Did you speak about women at all?
- A:** Not very, we used to at least, it was on one occasion, we had one chap, old Ferdi Cronje, he was a hell of a nice guy but a little bit slow, and we told him that it was true that if you went and kissed one of the love-seals on her lips, she could turn into a princess, [laughs] he made a big story about that, which we tried to convince, but no I don't think it was too much talking about women...
- Q:** Did you have pictures from magazines and stuff like that?
- A:** In the radio shack there were some Playboy images, but otherwise, but otherwise, *ja*, can you imagine...



- Q:** Okay, if possible can you describe a little bit of your interaction with animals on the island. Animals being a lot tamer than you are used to.
- A:** I am not sure whether they are less tame, but they are extremely tame there, you just will walk amongst the penguins...
- Q:** I don't know if tame is the right word to use. Less probably evolutionary used to humans or scared of humans.
- A:** *Ja*. I think most of them were completely ignorant of humans so that walking amongst the penguins especially on the more remote parts of the island which is anywhere more than about a kilometre from the base, they were very puzzled by this other sort of penguin coming through them and they saw you as another sort of penguin and tried to chase you. No they were extremely unfazed by humans really.
- Q:** So was it sometimes that you tried to make some of them into pets or feed them...
- A:** Oh we had a Paddy, you know that Sheathbill, we had a tame Sheathbill, a chick was abandoned, I don't know what happened, but I brought him in, we had him in the kitchen and the others started objecting when this paddy used to go and have a bath in the basin...
- Q:** Did the Paddy have a name?
- A:** I don't know what we called him?
- Q:** Were they called Paddies back then?
- A:** *Ja* Sheathbills were also called paddies, and I actually think he ended up in the Bloemfontein Zoo because we brought back penguins and seals and stuff for the zoos.
- Q:** Did you have to catch them yourselves?
- A:** No, one relief sent a zookeeper from the National Zoo to Marion, and I think both reliefs in 1965 and 1966, I think they caught a lot, I have forgotten it but I described how many it was to a lot of folk.
- V** Who helped load them?
- A:** Oh it was just some of the boat crew, speaking of which.
- Q:** The boat crew, were they coloured or white?
- A:** They were mostly coloured.
- Q:** So they also all came ashore.
- A:** Well, only insofar as they had to help offloading, but most of the offloading on the island was done by the team. They didn't have any people off the ship, so the people that were on the ship's crew were only allowed on the ships.
- Q:** Did you have any interaction with them on the ships?
- A:** Not much, I remember there was one stabbing or something like that among the crew but...
- Q:** A stabbing while you were on the ship...
- A:** *Ja*.
- Q:** Picking up a stab wound. [laughs]
- A:** *Ja*, I was just there...
- Q:** So it was just a kind of a rumour between those two guys, it probably happens.
- A:** *Ja* I know, it happened but it didn't...
- Q:** Nobody got killed...
- A:** Nobody got killed, no.
- Q:** Were they allowed to drink, the ship's crew?
- A:** I don't know. I doubt it.
- Q:** And were you guys allowed to drink on the ship?

- A:** We must have been, *ja* we could buy, as it is today, in fact it was of course much cheaper and, whisky was like R3 for a bottle.
- Q:** Where the gin is less expensive than the tonic...
- A:** It was extremely cheap on the ship.
- Q:** Did they also have a bar kind of on the ship...?
- A:** I can't remember how it worked but we had a supply of beer and wine and whisky and hard tack on the island, every team member got so many bottles of whiskey for the year that we got.
- Q:** And who was in charge of seeing that those things were rationed or not really?
- A:** Well the officer in charge, was really, well the guy in charge of the meds station.
- Q:** In terms, back to your field work and the interaction with animals and so on, what impact did the Marion-specific environment have on your research if any?
- A:** Well, I mean, mainly in terms of just the weather it was just so difficult to do fieldwork a lot of the time and the distances to carry your things to the other side of the island or up to the top. You know, much more time was spent on just survival and getting places, than actually spent on doing field work. That was different, now you can walk down to Kildalkey and start working and come back. And you have got a dry bed and everything.
- Q:** *Ja.*
- A:** You work from sunrise to sunset, you have got nothing else to worry about. We spent a lot of the time just carrying our equipment into the field, going there and having our tent blown down and not having sufficient food. Things like that.
- Q:** And in terms of radio communication with base, did you guys take radios along?
- A:** We had a radio but it didn't work, this huge thing – it weighed 30 pounds. It was a big, awkward, horrible thing
- Q:** So you rather left it at the base after a while?
- A:** No we took it on a first trip around the island, and after the first day it wasn't operational, it was only line of sight. So...
- Q:** Oh *ja* and when it's raining most of the time, it must not have been helpful at all.
- A:** *Ja.*
- Q:** And when you were going around the island, were there still some of the sealers' huts still standing, so that you could actually stay in them?
- A:** No, no. They were there and they had stuff in them, but they were just dilapidated and wet, and smelly. And you know the seals, I mean penguins had sort of taken occupation of them.
- Q:** Did you take anything out of the houses to the base, or...?
- A:** No, I think one of the guys, it might have been Loci de Beer, he took a rifle, well there was a rifle there. But I'm not even sure what happened to it eventually. But otherwise no, there were some pots and pans, and bottles. But we didn't really do anything with them.
- Q:** Did you realise that those things were once used by sealers. Were you aware of the sealers, and the shipwrecks?
- A:** *Ja, ja.* No, we knew. There were old marshes in the pathway here, I read that, So we knew. I mean he had given quite a good account of things, so we knew of the history of the place.
- Q:** And the Solglimt could you see a lot of the Solglimt?
- A:** *Ja*, you could. Not much of it, but you could see it.
- Q:** And the little settlement that was built there, were there still some walls standing?

- A:** I don't remember that at Ship's Cove, there was down at Sealers' Cave and a couple of the places I described.
- Q:** Why did you do laboratory work on the island itself?
- A:** Well, all sorts of analysis of plant material and collecting plankton from the lakes, and you know the pH and the connectivity of the water. Quite a range of measurements which would seem to extremely simple today, but the equipment that we had was simple. So you know, quite a range, and micro-climate readings of the temperature at different levels and different places. And had some Azurella cushions on the outside you know, and all sorts...
- Q:** Bring any lab work back home?
- A:** Soils for analysis, and some plant material but most of the stuff I did when I got back home was, was analysing the soils and just writing up the...
- Q:** The data?
- A:** Yes.
- Q:** Did you realise by that time that you will do your Masters on this?
- A:** *Ja*, I think the intention was that I will write up for a Masters.
- Q:** Who was your supervisor?
- A:** I didn't really have a supervisor. I wrote up and I handed it in when I was finished, stupidly, to the University of Pretoria. Because they would not allow me to use it for a PhD, whereas at in Natal they said I could have used it for a PhD.
- Q:** So did you do a PhD later on?
- A:** No I didn't. I started and then I went to Angola.
- Q:** As often happens [laughs].
- A:** *Ja* it was strange, I'd say that Van Zinderen Bakker was essentially sort a supervisor. But we differed in our approach to vegetation survey; he was using a European approach, while I was using a more sort of American Australian South African approach. So we agreed to differ on our, he wanted me to do it in a particular way, and I didn't see it as the right way to do it.
- Q:** What was the major difference between your approaches?
- A:** Well the, the European, they call it the Brown-Blanche approach, what they do, you see. They look at a piece of *veld*. Then they say, well in this area we will list all the species, and we will say whether they are this or that, abundant, or whatever it is. Then select certain species in that which they will call indicator species or constant species. They have got a number of terms, which is fine when you've got quite a lot of species to work with. But on Marion 23 or 24 species, so it is not the species that is important, but how well that species is doing. So that individual species you will find on the island, but it is how you differentiate communities or associations of groupings of plants. It is more about the relative performance or health or vitality of the plant in the sight. Than about what species it is or what grouping of species. So it was technically and philosophically different approach. And the approach that he wanted to use, you could use if you knew the names of all the mosses. But we had no names for the mosses. It was impractical for me. Later on, about 10 years later, a Hollander – Gärmen, he came out and because he had by that time all the mosses that I collected identified, and he also came from that school of approach.
- Q:** *Ja*.
- A:** He could do a phytosociological account. They use all these funny terms which are very difficult for non-phytosociologists to understand. But it was a good account, he did a great job, one could do it if you knew all these types of mosses.
- Q:** Did you get the opportunity to describe any the mosses yourself?
- A:** No I didn't any of the descriptions, not of the species. I described the vegetation.
- Q:** Not the species?

- A:** No. We didn't find any species on the Island that were new to science, not of the flowering plants. Of mosses and likes they found a few that were not previously described. But the plants that I were working with. I found about 5 species that hadn't been known for Marion Island before but not new to science.
- Q:** In the process of doing the biological survey, I understand that one of the goals was also to do a general geological survey of the island and that involved naming.
- A:** You mean the survey of the island? *Ja*, that was Otto Langenegger who did that with Verwoerd.
- Q:** Did he sometimes ask your input in terms of that?
- A:** Not really. Sometimes we would discuss things a little bit, but it was mainly just Verwoerd who did the naming of the different *koppies* and what not.
- Q:** Any of them named after you?
- A:** Yes there is a Brian *koppie* somewhere.
- Q:** Did you go visit when you were there?
- A:** I actually, never, I never climbed it. It's on the West coast, North-coast, and I went past, below it a couple of times. In fact I only knew it was the one when the map came out.
- Q:** At that time, what ideas was there around conservation?
- A:** I think, we were certainly, we were all, those of us on the scientific team was very conscious of the importance of it as a nature reserve. But there was a fairly relaxed attitude from the med-staff, like they were shooting at elephant seals and killer whales. There was no proper management of waste management, it would just go into the sea and float around the coast. *Ja* the waste management was pretty relaxed.
- Q:** Is it something you see in retrospect, or something you noticed while you were there?
- A:** I don't think, so much, while I was there, I did, you know, comment on it, but what are you going to do with it, all the *koskassies* and everything, if you didn't use them to make a *braai*, then just *gooi* them in the sea. There was no environmental policy really, it was just a case of people not killing birds and animals, but otherwise it wasn't, and the things people didn't move around the base they would just throw on the base. So there wasn't really the worry that...
- Q:** So there no rules that you had to abide to in terms of environment?
- A:** No, but I think, I am sure if you looked at the various documents at the time, it would say this is regarded as a nature reserve and you are to treat it as such.
- Q:** *Ja*.
- A:** But there weren't any. But I mean now they have got so many documents and management plans and all that stuff, now there is nothing like that happening.
- Q:** When you were there doing the surveying work, etc. Did you ever get lost?
- A:** In the very first trip around the island, one of the guys got lost, but only for a night, and then the next day, fortunately, we were just about finished going around the island at Repetto Hill, before Repetto Hill it was Azurella Kop. It was misty and clouded and he wasn't keeping up with us, but he was determined to keep up and when we stopped on one occasion, he continued and we didn't know that he was ahead of us. But the next day he was up at about [Pew Crag], I think it's called [Pew Crag] now, but we had to had lost track of him, but he looked back and he saw the base camp, and he got back.
- Q:** Oh okay. Were there anytime a notion that the environment is dangerous?
- A:** *Ja* I suppose so, I mean we were cautious on the cliffs, *ja* it was just sort of a natural reaction to the place.

**Q:** But you wouldn't say that you had the idea that this is the most dangerous place you have ever been?

**A:** No, I don't think so. It wasn't that we were nervous, we were... I used to; we had none of this stuff of signing in and signing out. We would go off, Eddie and I, just by ourselves. So we would go off, we would briefly just say that we expecting to be back in 3 days or 5 days or whatever. But there was no way...

**Q:** Basically just telling people when you will be back.

**A:** *Ja.*

**Q:** Then challenges in terms of the working environment on Marion island?

**A:** Well the main thing was the cold and the wet. And the wind and the rain, and getting your hands, you know... We didn't have good raingear, there is no goretex, nothing like that. So you had a sort of plastic rain clothes that would get torn. And I remember the thing I felt most sort of uncomfortable with, was cracked hands you know, and never healing, the cracks and the scratches.

**Q:** So you had a lot of problems with gloves and gear?

**A:** *Ja.* Initially we had leather boots, just ordinary high-ankled leather boots. Which were totally useless because they would just get wet and the leather would break up. And then we found that there were gumboots on the island for the PWD crew I suppose, and we then ordered gumboots. So in April of '65, we got gumboots. But we didn't have decent socks, and we didn't have decent rain clothes and we had these Norwegian jerseys that very heavy, and not really that, very woolly and heavy. So we didn't have gortex or all the fancy gear that the folks now have.

**Q:** But that technology wasn't really invented yet. Do you think the people who, for instance [indiscernible McCleary] got different gear?

**A:** No. No. I think it was standard. I think it was standard. I mean we did not have any of these things like digital cameras...

**Q:** *Ja.*

**A:** ...or internet, or computers or laptops or GPS's or any of this.

**Q:** How did you navigate because using a compass on Marion isn't always easy with the rocks around?

**A:** *Ja*, so we really just walked until we came to something we recognized.

**Q:** So did you get any training beforehand of navigation or...

**A:** No. No.

**Q:** ...any of these kinds of things?

**A:** No. Absolutely nothing.

**Q:** Did you know something about it before? That you learned from boy scouts before, or...?

**A:** No. I've done a lot of sort of hiking, tracking in the Drakensberg and Zululand, and the various game reserves, but *ja* I have done a lot of exploration up in the Ongoye Forest and in Zululand. So I have done a lot of living and camping and walking by myself.

**Q:** This was just in your undergrad year...

**A:** *Ja-ja.*

**Q:** So you did a lot of fieldwork in your undergraduate year....

**A:** *Ja-Ja.*

**Q:** ...in those years.

**A:** *Ja*, all over Zululand.

**Q:** Interesting

**A:** *Ja-ja.*

- Q:** Was there anyone with you who did not know about navigation at all?
- A:** We had no navigation training.
- Q:** *Ja.*
- A:** So it was sort of the case of just walking, you know?
- Q:** Just finding.
- A:** *Ja. Ja.*
- Q:** What would you say was something you particularly enjoyed about here at Marion?
- A:** Just everything, everything. It is fantastic.
- Q:** It is...
- A:** It is particularly the beauty of the place you know, and the phenomena of all these animals you know? They were so tamed and completely new here working in the tandem, the tandem environment, it was just fantastic. It was just a totally new experience. It is because, I mean growing up in Zululand and ja.
- Q:** [laugh]
- A:** It was just so different. It was just.
- Q:** Did you have a cold winter at Marion?
- A:** It was cold, it was I mean the winters there go what down two degrees...
- Q:** *Ja.*
- A:** ...Three degrees. It is cold, but it was only bitterly cold up on the mountain.
- Q:** The snow...
- A:** And *ja*, the snow. And there is getting wind and the snow.
- Q:** *Ja.*
- A:** Just getting wet and the cold driving through you.
- Q:** Did you at all play in the snow?
- A:** Not much because it did not really snow that much down on the low, you know around the base. In the winter there would be snow and we'd build a snowman, that sort of thing. No there was not that much snow down there. Up on the top there was quite a lot of snow.
- Q:** Two years ago, or was it last year during takeover the construction site, there was a lot of snow down at the base.
- A:** *Ja.*
- Q:** But it was very warm in terms of previous years?
- A:** No it was not particularly cold.
- Q:** When you had to leave, you obviously knew that the ship will be coming some time the month either in the week and a day. Was there anything you had to prepare or finish? Can you remember specifically saying goodbye to people or the island itself?
- A:** Well the thing is that we knew more or less when the ship was coming, but they kept on changing the dates, so in my diary I described some of the... not for me, I was happy to stay longer. The *MET* guys were counting, Charlie he was in the army. He was counting how many days, and *ja*.
- Q:** Was he married?
- A:** No. I don't think so, he is divorced I guess. I don't remember.
- Q:** Okay...
- A:** But the thing was that when we left we... In that last... When the ship came down for the relief, for the takeover, we went to Prince Edward. So we sort of, kind of half left Marion and with to Prince Edward for about four, five days, and then left more or less from Prince Edward off.
- Q:** Okay.

- A:** So we didn't really have that much of a farewell thing, because it was all over the place, you know? And we were not quite sure when we were going or when the ship comes, are we leaving today or *ja*. So it was a bit sort of, it was not a...
- Q:** One of those hurry up and wait situations?
- A:** Exactly.
- Q:** When you came back to South Africa, what was the first couple of weeks like in South Africa...?
- A:** Well the funny thing was that I had grown, I hadn't grown a beard and I had grown, my hair was really long, extremely long.
- Q:** Yes.
- A:** As you can see on this photos, and we arrived on Van Riebeeck's Day, on the 6<sup>th</sup> of April. All the shops and everything were closed. I couldn't go and have a haircut, but it was interesting because I had six penguins, that I somehow had to look after
- Q:** Yes?
- A:** So we had them in a box in the ship and we arrived on the morning of April the 6<sup>th</sup>. I had to now get these penguins to the airport to fly to Durban so they can go to the aquarium. But now I had this long hair, and I said to some of the crew member, you are now staying on the ship? And they said, yes they are staying on the ship. And I give you water and you feed these penguins? *Ja*, no they will do it, and I say okay, I must now go and organize a truck or something to load the penguins onto it to take them to the airport. Somehow I can't remember how but I got a *bakkie* and we got a box of these six rock hopper penguins which was you know about a meter by a meter. And these guys, the crew had not done what they said. They had not fed or watered them. So when I came back some hours later they were dehydrated....
- Q:** Yes.
- A:** And I had to get a bottle of water and take sips of water and spit it in the penguin's mouth you know, because they couldn't. Anyway so I got them hydrated and loaded up the box. I don't know how I got the box off the ship, maybe the driver helped me... And then I went out to the airport. And I arrived at the airport and of course I was in curiosity because people didn't wear long hair like this you see? I was probably not kind of dressed as though I was traveling, you know? And I had to go and speak to the airways check-in counter and I said, look I need to send penguins to Durban.
- Q:** [laugh]
- A:** And they thought this was, you know? Fortunately they put these six penguins in a crate and they need to go to Durban. So eventually they understood and they had to go on a special flight that was pressurised because it is a small kind of plane to Cape Town, George, Port Elizabeth, Durban, were not properly pressurised in the hold, the cabins were but not the hold, eventually they got to Durban and they survived.
- Q:** Wow.
- A:** And then my folks come down to pick me up and they were staying in a fancy hotel and I remember going down to breakfast and everybody looking at me and, you know, kind of thinking this is real bloody bleak...  
Yes.
- A:** ...and kind of regarded as real unwashed mass. Anyways, and then on the 7<sup>th</sup> I went into Adderley Street to look for a haircut. And I was walking down the street and these little kids, about five year olds walk up to me and they said, "ma, ma dis Jesus!" And I went into this barbershop, and this guy look at me really kind of a real dirty look, but he couldn't turn me away and I sat down and I said, he thought I am one of those other people. To begin with he was really pissed off that I was coming into his barbershop. And then I think I just went back to Durban for a week's break or something, and then started writing up the....
- Q:** Why didn't you have to hand in the dissertation or Masters at Bloemfontein?

- A:** Quite frankly I think, the Free State was not highly respected. I wasn't sure where I was going to...well because my original plan was go back to University Natal, and then I could get a bursary to do my Honours in Pretoria.
- Q:** Okay.
- A:** So, I went to Pretoria and during my Honours year I registered, you see I had to do my Honours before I could hand in a thesis.
- Q:** So...
- A:** So it was more practical reasons.
- Q:** It was how it worked
- A:** Yes, how it worked out.
- Q:** Then, did you then stay involved with the islands or did you...
- A:** No.
- Q:** ...Just go to Angola and...
- A:** Then I went up to the northern Transvaal to some game reserves up there for two years. Well I did the Honours here and then my Masters, all happening in parallel. And then I went up to Northern Transvaal and then when I was up in the Northern Transvaal in 1970, and got an offer of a job in Angola. So we went in 1971 and stayed there till '75.
- Q:** 1971 to 1975?
- A:** *Ja.*
- Q:** And when did you become involved with the islands again?
- A:** And then I when I came back I was with CSIR, when did I go back first? Well, in '69. I made a short trip to Marion. I wanted to go and do some measurements as relevant questions, you know? And I went down on a trip, very quick, it must have been, I can't imagine why it was so short? Maybe I only had two days on the island.
- Q:** Was it on the RSA?
- A:** *Ja* I think it was probably on the RSA, but then when I went down again 87, I think we went on one of the navy ships or some other ship, I can't remember it wasn't the RSA or Agulhas.
- Q:** But how did you got involved then with the EIA?
- A:** Because of the...I was...because of they needed the botanist , and I did the EIA work elsewhere in Namibia and Mozambique, I don't know, they could have asked Valdon Smith or somebody like that, but I was appointed. But I was short term.
- Q:** But did they approach you or did you apply?
- A:** I can't remember. I think CSIR was asked to coordinate the EIA. And Bolt Heymann or whatever his name was, Heymann. He was a vice president of the CSIR. He was a physicist. He was asked to chair the group and then we had a Liebenberg who was private engineer, Liebenberg and Stander, very nice gentleman, and we had our...ag I can't remember the team, You have got a copy, Erasmus, was his name Erasmus? From...he was from University of Port Elizabeth a zoologist, and myself, and we had an airport engineer and an aircraft, they had sort of technical staff and Condi who was the zoologist.
- Q:** Yes.
- A:** He was one of the guys who worked with the seals.
- Q:** Yes, but the CSIR was approached by I suppose the government?
- A:** *Ja. Ja.*
- Q:** By the department of...
- A:** Transport. *Ja, ja* it would be an environment because Bill Visagie was the DG of environmental affairs, under the DG at the time or the deputy DG at that time, he became DG. He came down as well from Pretoria. I am not sure where, it is probably Struisbaai or one of these nice coastal places.
- Q:** Okay I will...
- A:** Bill Visagie.
- Q:** Probably Willem Visagie.



**A:** I think he is originally from Zambia, Afrikaans family. He grown up, or at least spend some of his time outside of South Africa.

**Q:** So you were asked to do the EIA?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** What information did they give you beforehand?

**A:** Well really just the terms of reference. It was fairly detailed but not a great deal, no, I think old Heymann, you must try and track him down .he was probably 10 years older than me. I suspect he knew what was going on.

**Q:** Okay.

**A:** There was never any discussion of any military significance. It was all, and what I found, improbable...

**Q:** Yes.

**A:** ...was to be able to rescue any team member that was injured or not well, and you know? It is different now cost building a 707 air runway. They could send the SA down; they could just have the RSA hanging out there, the cost of building a kilometre and a half runway in the South Antarctic. I mean that is a, you know? The economics of it just didn't make any sense at all.

**Q:** So what were you told what to... Why did they asked for an EIA in the first place? What were you told to do?

**A:** Well, because it had already been proclaimed as a nature reserve or had any checked area's status or not. The feeling was, okay environment affairs they have got these, they might have had EIA legislation by that time, but basically in this case... Look, this is a sensitive environment if... And the Antarctic, I mean it was in terms of obligations under SCAR... I think it was probably some... You know there was quite a lot of conservation policy by that time. So it was really in terms I guess, I mean the simple thing would be that the government did not want to get embarrassed by an international outcry...

**Q:** Yes.

**A:** At the building of an airport in a sensitive sub Antarctic place. So they said, okay, let us do it the right way and I think that they were also concerned about the economics and the safety, because we had a sort of an airport safety officer in the team and he was one of the first to say this is a too dangerous spot to land a big plane...

**Q:** Yes.

**A:** Because the runway is not going to be safe... Winds, the you know, gales... And everything... It takes two or three hours to get there... You get there, there is this sort of turbulence...

**Q:** The wind there is something else.

**A:** I think the EIA environmental components was probably a very minor consideration. What was the consideration was safety and the economic feasibility and financial cost and then probably further on the list is the environment is important and sensitive.

**Q:** Yes.

**A:** But they never, you will see in the report there was the press statement you know, they were saying well the recommendation not to go ahead with the project.

**Q:** But were you under any pressure from the government to lean towards certain...

**A:** No, no. I didn't ever feel, but there wasn't. The team that we had there, you know, we had regular sort of discussions around what we were finding and where we were going. And there was never anybody on the team that was trying to push the discussion to one way or another.

**Q:** But was there rumours at the back of your mind that it might be for military purposes?

**A:** There might have been, *ja*. I think there might have been some sort of speculation or discussion.

**Q:** Yes.

**A:** But it wasn't as though it was anything... It was foremost in our thinking...

**Q:** Okay. In terms of your work, what did you physically go do?

**A:** I did a legislation map of the area. It was the whole area involved, the affected area, and the sensitivity analysis of specialised vegetation types or birding areas or you know any particular special environmental facet of it that we should be concerned about. And where, if there was going to be... A road would have had to be built from Transvaal Cove to the site which was down on Stoney Ridge, or down on Kerguelen Rise. We looked at Long Ridge and Stoney Ridge and Kerguelen Rise and I think Stoney Ridge was the chosen site. And then we had to suggest a suitable route for the road because they had to be transporting thousands of tons of cement and steel and everything else.

**Q:** Sounds like a bit of a doomed project from the start if you look from hindsight. But who were the major players pushing for the runway, can you remember any individuals?

**A:** No there is a book.

**Q:** Who was behind it?

**A:** There is a book, have you seen that book on the South Africa's Nuclear program. I remember seeing it at Exclusive Books over the last three or four years.

**Q:** Okay.

**A:** And there was a chapter, at least a chapter dealing with this testing range and the whole kind of politics. But it was not visible. I was too much of a junior.

**Q:** It wasn't really visible. You didn't have sort of just visits from the intelligence service or the...

**A:** No.

**Q:** Or anything involved.

**A:** But it wasn't long, it was like a week or 10 days, I can't remember, it was really tight. We had a helicopter; they took those aerial photographs of the area.

**Q:** Yes.

**A:** So I could map from reasonable aerial photographs which I actually printed and that was on site. It was really good.

**Q:** And can you remember that if there was public attention given to this, press, or anyone asking about it?

**A:** It's not a great deal... It was fairly... I wouldn't say hush-hush... But it wasn't sort of... You need to go to newspapers around the time of the press release and in the report you will get the date of when the press release went out... But you know...

**Q:** Yes.

**A:** ...It wasn't like it was a high...

**Q:** But there wasn't... What I want to know is was there any public knowledge before the EIA was done?

**A:** There wasn't...

**Q:** Like okay, there is going to be an EIA and...

**A:** No. I don't know. I think it was pretty kind of...

**Q:** Sort of down-played?

**A:** I guess so. I just don't know.

**Q:** Do you remember who was in charge of the EIA?

**A:** Wasn't it Heymann? H-E-Y-M-A-N-N? What was it? Gerhard Heymann or something?

**Q:** I know some Heymann's. It is not such a common surname. During that week did you guys live on the base?

**A:** Live on the base. *Ja*.

**Q:** Did you at all consult the team members there, and whether they would like an airport?

**A:** We probably might have. I don't really...

**Q:** People actually overwintered, and you saw the addition...

- A:** I don't, I mean being there for 18 months I didn't have anything that was needed...
- Q:** But did you notice a difference there between when you were there in '86 and when you were there now?
- A:** Other than the invasive species, the plants had spread quite a lot, *ja*. I don't know one or two of the species, particularly the Sagem, had spread a lot. But otherwise I don't remember feeling that there was a change. But gradually. *Ja*.
- Q:** But did you think there was more of a change since '86 to now?
- A:** Yes. But it is always...
- Q:** It is difficult today because now we have changes...
- A:** You know, there is so many factors involved. But I took photographs, I was measuring growth in some of the photos. But they have not been answered yet of the photos before and after. But those which are natural processes
- Q:** But when you were on the island in 1986 nobody mentioned anything about covert Israeli operation or Russian ships or anything?
- A:** No.
- Q:** To that extent?
- A:** No.
- Q:** Were you, I mean then I was one year old.
- A:** *Ja*.
- Q:** Was there any awareness in South Africa in general, the South African nuclear capabilities?
- A:** I think that we knew there was a lot of nuclear research going on, but it was... Because I mean where I used to have my [indiscernible] in 1966, 67. 1967 in Pretoria I was staying in Majella. Well, I wasn't, I was staying in Park Street and I used to go to the Majella Hotel, Schoeman Street I think, for meals, for dinners. And my table mates who were also from the University of Natal, they were all working at Valindaba very hush-hush research. That was now in 1966. Now whether that was just general nuclear research, or whether they were working on something that could develop further, I don't know. That was 20 years before the time.
- Q:** Can you remember back in 1964... Now when you are speaking of hush-hush, did you have to sign any contract that limited pictures, or memoirs or diaries that you...
- A:** No.
- Q:** May publish or may not publish.
- A:** No.
- Q:** So you didn't find anything...
- A:** No in terms of the science program. We would not go rushing off publishing or you know, report anything in a book. That irritated me because I would have preferred to publish in international journals.
- Q:** Yes,
- A:** But I mean the...
- Q:** There was nothing in terms of private photos or...
- A:** No, at one stage...
- Q:** When you went down now in 2010?
- A:** No.
- Q:** How did the media hear of it?
- A:** Well I think you sign these things of conservations and *ja*.
- Q:** *Ja*. Do you know how the media wanted to interview you?
- A:** Now?
- Q:** Was it the IR...?
- A:** It might have been, they might have spoken to Hennie Smith I think?

**Q:** Okay.

**A:** At the last moment Hennie said “Ah, Brian, they want to interview you.”

**Q:** [laugh] And in terms of your trip in 2010. I don’t think you expected you would see the island again, or did you?

**A:** Well I always... No, I... You know, several years ago I asked to go down on a relief of DEA, and agencies you know... The DEA is so bloody useless.

**Q:** [laugh]

**A:** Then I wrote to old Augustine? What is his name?

**Q:** Valentine.

**A:** Valentine about three years ago, and to say I never really got a response and I spoke to DG a couple of years ago, and *ja*, they never really did anything.

**Q:** *Ja*.

**A:** And then I spoke to Steve, and Steve said, look you know, and basically I was waiting the entire time, because I mean when I was CEO of SANBI.

**Q:** *Ja*.

**A:** But I wasn’t in a hurry. I was keen to go down.

**Q:** For what reason?

**A:** To go and see what changes, what is happening there you now? I mean I went to Angola regularly, and I enjoyed it.

**Q:** So if the opportunity arose you would go again?

**A:** *Ja*.

**Q:** And you would go looking for an opportunity?

**A:** *Ja*. That is right.

**Q:** And when you saw Marion Island again, was there any kind of feeling, emotion that you would attach to the island?

**A:** Not really. I am not a sort of a, somebody that gets worked up about these things.

**Q:** *Ja*.

**A:** I mean I left Angola with 10 000 refugees not expecting to leave the country, it takes about three weeks to get to the border. Difficult conditions and when I get to the border I get very emotional, but I took a job in Pretoria and stayed there. I mean, it was fantastic. It is wonderful, I mean it is not like a homecoming or something.

**Q:** Okay.

**A:** But *ja* I was pleased to find it was being well looked after.

**Q:** Okay so the time you went down was 1996 and the time you went down in 2010 was also...

**A:** *Ja*.

**Q:** Did they make any change in the atmosphere of the island?

**A:** I think it was good. It was nice to find that *ja*. You know in 65 there was always even probably until 85 women would not go there. They were not allowed to go there.

**Q:** *Ja*.

**A:** And I was really impressed with the energy and the commitment of all the teams now, not sort of complaining about climbing these bloody mountains and the rain and what not.

**Q:** *Ja*.

**A:** You know there was sort of the stereotype of women and I even find when I was down there and Anne came down with as big pack on her back, and she was a stubborn girl, you know. And it wasn’t that she was waiting around for somebody to go with her and help her. She went on her own. I mean all the women there are...

**Q:** Yes.

- A:** You can see they are doing their job just as a man does as the workers.
- Q:** *Ja.*
- A:** And I think it makes it much more comfortable. I thought it was good. *Ja.*
- Q:** Normal.
- A:** *Ja.* They all got on well together with what one sees of course you know? There is no more for them to be stressed between men and women.
- Q:** And back in 1964 when you went down, did you ever discuss the possibility that women might not go, or that you miss women or that...
- A:** Well, all in all we did not discuss missing...
- Q:** Was it even a wish or a debate that women would go there?
- A:** The paradigm was to go down there.
- Q:** Black people weren't even there. They did not even feature.
- A:** *Ja*, so it wasn't *ja*.
- Q:** So there is not something you would say you particularly noticed that's different about the island?
- A:** Well I did notice, these young women doing men's work around, they are not looking around for some man to carry the bags or...
- Q:** Gentleman. The new base?
- A:** I think it is a bit of overkill as with all things architects, they don't listen to the clients.
- Q:** *Ja.* I got very angry when I left Marion in 65. I wrote a memo saying they have to do something about our, the drying of our clothes. It was small, almost like the size of a toilet, you know?
- A:** Yes.
- Q:** Like an average size bathroom with paraffin heaters, and these paraffin heaters would just flare up...
- A:** Fires...
- Q:** And that is, was waiting for what would happen, but they didn't take any notice of you know our commence. And I would have thought an architect would have spoken to people about the idea of the base. It is like a sealed unit, so you can't you know get any fresh air form outside.
- Q:** Yes.
- A:** They should have known they could have little, even if it was still fan lights or something...
- Q:** Yes.
- A:** So you can get fresh air in, and then divide it sort of a unit before each session and the normal session. But now the keep the whole upgrade of the base for the sake of a dozen or two dozen people.
- Q:** *Ja*, I don't know. Why they have such facilities for what reasons...
- A:** *Ja.* A big statement.
- Q:** And all kinds of... Okay would you say that your years at Marion, you guys weren't team members, you were there for other reasons, nevertheless would you say that that year changed your approach?
- A:** *Ja*, it certainly, it was good for my career. And for personal reasons it was just fantastic. I did not change anything about my thinking or believe system or anything. It was just an experience, it was fantastic. Which was good?
- Q:** What would you say is the value
- A:** I would say to get jobs done and work independently, getting self-confidence, I could have, I mean when you look at the bigger picture, the sort of intellectual sources that are available and

technological resources, could have done ten times much in that area, but it is on the other hand it would not have been as much of an adventure...

**Q:** Yes.

**A:** Because the stuff is all there.

**Q:** And one last thing. For interest sake, what was Oubaas like?

**A:** He was okay. [laugh]

**Q:** I mean was he a friendly dog?

**A:** He was okay. He was a friendly, lazy, friendly, fattish dog.

**Q:** What did he eat?

**A:** Everything, everything. [laugh] whatever he, he was a bit overfed, can't remember but meatballs and bully beef and eggs and bacon you know? Whatever. Chocolates, chocolates! He used eat a slab of a chocolate at a time. *Ja*, he was spoiled.

**Q:** Did you get to meet Betsie Verwoerd or Prime Minister in the process?

**A:** No. no.

**A:** I have met... I think I have met him and his wife briefly at some point. I haven't had contact with them since then, we might have some correspondence earlier on.

**Q:** Would you recommend a young scientist in parliament or social, especially in psychology to spend a year on an island like that? Does it mean anything for them?

**A:** *Ja*. I think if, I would say that today a young scientist should definite at least have two weeks training in technology areas that you can use there before you get there you know? GPS, the satellite imagery, all the new things for micro recording, all the instrumentation use before you go there. Maybe today it is fairly normal kinds of training you know the courses?

**Q:** Yes.

**A:** But I think it is a fantastic thing for anybody to go and spend a year on that island, but they must not get locked into. It is great that some people who are like Valdson and Steve and the sealguy Marthan and others, it is great that there are some people there that sort of continue. But I think it can be limiting if you get locked into a career island research.

**Q:** Yes.

**A:** Because that's not really where the future is for scientist But there is room for scientists and specialists, and it is great to be there, and for the average person, I would, I am glad that I broke away from it and my only regret is when I sent my MSc thesis to a big guru on that type of work it was at Duke university he said look wouldn't you like to come and do a PhD and I sort of though I am not going to and that is one of the things I regret, if I would have got my PhD at Duke, that would have been a really academic career and how tranquil it would have been

**Q:** So you also have a policy and management.

**A:** *Ja*, institutional. I mean it would have been very good for my CV to have gone there, and it was a wonderful opportunity, because he was at the time an Antarctic Alpha tandem work it would have been good but *ja*, I think for any young scientist, male, female spending there would be excellent, that type of thing.

**Q:** So, it is also the field work and not just the laboratory work?

**A:** Yes. I think my one worry would be, I need to get beyond just counting seals you know, and counting whale seals but excellent monitoring. Steve has brought an extremely sophisticated experimental science which is really good for the island.

**Q:** Yes.

**A:** He is like a step ahead for the rest of the game.

**Q:** *Ja*.

**A:** But is still some need for fairly basic natural history work there which I thinking terms of their science strategy, they might think about that. I have discussed it with Steve and, *ja*, he agrees, it is a very difficult system to get into the funding cycle...

**Q:** That is what I wanted to say, the funding for simple natural history

**A:** Well, it is not so...

- Q:** Encounter global warming.
- A:** It is more the philosophical side of; it is a Darwinian perspective. I think one need to put more into it. Because now it has become very technological and very statistical , but it is not somebody sitting down here and thinking how does this stuff work, and there are some scientists at UCT and other places that bring a different spectrum to the research, but it is not a serious issue.
- Q:** In terms of tourism, how would you think about tourism at Marion Island?
- A:** Don't think it is going to work there because firstly the other options are so much more attractive in South America. Going to the south you know, Argentina. You can fly to the place, and you can do the Drake passage...
- Q:** Yes.
- A:** What is it? Magellan passage.
- Q:** *Ja.*
- A:** You can do all that stuff in a five day package and then you fly home, for Marion you have got to fly into Cape Town, you have to take a five day boat trip, and not a tourist boat, and then you get there and you go and have a a helicopter to shore, and then you got to take a walk, maybe down to Tripod to Ships Cove and then what next? You can't, and the tourists that can afford to do that kind of trip...
- Q:** Yes.
- A:** Are not going to be able to wander down to Tripod or to Ships Cove on a quick afternoon. So the market is I am sure are too small and too limited. So they got a facility for 50 tourists or something. The tourists in any case will not sleep on the island; they will sleep on the ship, because they have got five star accommodation...
- Q:** *Ja.*
- A:** ...on the ship and they have got the comfort of their... So I don't think it is a tourist destination.
- Q:** Would you have any ethical or conservation issue?
- A:** Not really because I think Ships Cove and Tripod which are the two tourist destinations are really quite compromised in terms of...When I counted the number of albatrosses, the wandering albatrosses between Tripod and the base camp ... I counted 72 wandering albatrosses between...
- Q:** *Ja.*
- A:** I mean I am sure there is nothing like that human disturbance you know? And I think that human disturbance would be quite a problem.