

LINDA CLOKIE

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Interviewer (Q): Dora Scott | Antarctica Research Project | C-I-B | Stellenbosch University

Respondent (A): Linda Clokie | Environmental Officer ;Birder |Marion 62; 64; 67| 2005; 2008; 2010

Q: So tell me, what were your team numbers and the years that you went to Marion?

A: My first year was 2005, 2006. I was working at the missionary, Port Elizabeth. So, my first trip was eight years sabbatical.

Q: Oh.

A: So, having worked with captive animals for twenty five years it was just fantastic to have the opportunity to go down, and I went down with MCM(Marine Coastal Management). But when I came back, obviously I had to work again for the Government for another year and I just somehow didn't get it right. So, my first year was 2005, 2006. I worked for a year at the oceanarium and then I had a year to think about it. And I knew what I wanted to do. So, I was back again in 2008, 2009 that is M65 and then this one, M67 we've just completed, so 2010, 2011.

Q: Okay, brilliant. So, the first one was then M64.

A: M62.

Q: Okay, brilliant. So, you were on Marion and what exactly did you do on the island? Were you with MCN the whole time?

A: Yes, I liked the project very much, it's not... It's census mainly.

Q: The birds of the island.

A: Basically doing all the censussing of the birds on the island and the wonderful thing about it is, the data goes through to international Comm engine and obviously we are getting facts back. So we can say there were 2 million Rockhopper penguins that were breeding in the southern ocean of that year and that I like that idea so it's not hands-on. Yes, we do things like stomach-pump the birds sometimes to find out what they have been eating when they arrive on the island, but mostly it is weighing animals or observing and I am very comfortable with that.

Q: Brilliant. How did it happen that you went for the first time for the sabbatical?

A: It was... Alicia and Johan were actually in PE staying with me. And while we were there... You know, people always say to me, you should go to Marion Island all the way through but I was working with the dolphins. There was no way I was going to leave my babies. And things were not going well at the oceanarium and Johan was actually the one. He was sitting one evening and he said to me; "You should go to Marion", and I had really thought about it, but they stayed with me that night. I remember walking into the room the morning saying: "That's it! That's exactly what I am going to do!" And that was really how it happened.

Q: So, did you have an interest in Marion Island at all before?

A: Well, obviously working in Port Elizabeth we were getting a lot of the elephant seals. I mean, at one stage we had ended up with three, four elephant seals there. We do have Southern Arctic fur seals there. Rehabilitating them. Really going back into the '80s, when I think about it. The one year we had a Southern Arctic fur seal that came up there. We rehabilitated it. We then put it on the Agulhas and were taking back down to be released. Now that is long before there was anything like diseases that people worried about. We still sent it with a bucket of fish. They actually went towards Gough and they released it. I spoke to someone who was on that trip.

Q: My goodness.

A: So, yes obviously. To me that is the closest place to Marion Island. Obviously animals have come up there. And yes, I've known about... And we talk about it, I mean, always in our conversations at

the oceanarium because we had a Southern Arctic fur seal there that came in 1987 and she had a massive shark bite on her and they said to me put her down and I said no. And I kept her alive and eventually, I mean she is still alive today. She is 30 years old. '87, yes, she came in as a yearling. So, she's blind, she doesn't see but the fact is that she doesn't have to worry about anything because she's got her food and obviously, I mean, she is talked about. She's marvellous. You can take her out with people.

Q: She contains...?

A: She works with her whiskers. She follows you with her whiskers. They have these wonderful whiskers. So, she is just been great for Marion Island and I always wanted to put a Marion Island Exhibit, which is what I wanted to do when we came back at the museum but it was, trying getting permits to get stuff back and it was... So, I just give lots of talks, lots of talks. That's the least that we can do.

Q: Brilliant. What did you know about the island before you went?

A: I knew about the islands. I knew it was... I didn't realise how harsh it was and also having worked with animals in captivity you're deemed to be a little hugger, you know. I am very, I mean I am passionate about the animals and I am there for the animals. I am not there for anything else other than the animals. And for me there is absolutely nothing better than spending a year there to see the animals arrive, find their partners, breed, go back to sea, moult... It's, for me, it's... I can never get enough of that.

Q: Describe the team preparations for the year, for the first team. The first time that you went. The preparations, especially the team preparations that you had to do.

A: Well, the first team that I was in was quite a strange team because we were still doing our training in Pretoria and we went... Our team leader had been chosen. I can't remember what his name was off hand, which is probably a good thing, but we arrived in Pretoria, and he fetched us from Johannesburg Airport and we went camping in the Magaliesberg. We did abseiling. We did all sorts of things.

Q: Was that a SANAE thing or did you do it as a team?

A: Well, he organised it. How he managed to organise it all, I am not sure. So, the team training was very good with the fire-fighting and all, but this was an extra. So, we all had to go out there and do a kind of a survival because he wanted everybody to sleep outside under the stars – which we did and then we went back and we had a week or so just to pack up and get down to Cape Town. And I remember him phoning. It was a Saturday morning. I was leaving the Saturday afternoon because the Agulhas was sailing and he asked me if he can borrow some money and I said, "Well look, I mean we're all doing last minute things. I am going to be in Cape Town, I'll see you tomorrow and if there is any money left over I will certainly." But unbeknown to me because this only came out afterwards, he had phoned one or two other team members and he had actually borrowed. So anyway, when we get... On Monday, we're waiting downstairs in the coffee shop like we were told to and he doesn't arrive. Eventually at about 9 o'clock we go upstairs and Henry Valentine was saying "Where have you been? What have you been doing?" But anyway, our team leader had run away. We had no team leader.

Q: Oh.

A: So, they gave him until the next day at 12 o'clock. Nobody could get hold of him and he was gone. So we had one team member short.

Q: What was his role?

A: He was the senior metkassie, but he was the team leader. We were told to listen to everything he said because we had a very new team. Nobody has been there before, except for Jan. I think he was there for a few months as the cat hunter. So nobody knew the island and *ja*, that was it, but he stole all our money. All our money for our clothes, all our money for alcohol. He told us to put it into his account which we had all done and then he just disappeared. Oh, that was a huge performance.

Q: Oh my goodness.

- A:** That was quite a huge performance. So, Shorty Terblanche had just come back from Gough, I mean from SANAE. Literally still had his tools packed and he was in our team.
- Q:** Oh, so he just passed the boat. Goodness.
- A:** *Ja*, well, two days to go. He had to go get all the supplies. *Ja*, that was my first year. That was my preparation.
- Q:** My goodness.
- A:** The second year was all in Cape Town and that was funny because we had to do cooking lessons and they... It was in the township. I don't know if anyone's told you about it. That was horrific.
- Q:** Really? Was it?
- A:** Yes, cockroaches running all over the place. It was horrific. And he had fresh onions and all these things and we said: "You know, we can't cook with those."
- Q:** No point in showing you.
- A:** No point in even showing us. So, that was also quite an interesting one but this last one was very good. The cooking. And they've got nice venues now. And Cape Town is just nice. I think personally from my point of view there are a number of things that I would like to see done from the Field Assistant's point of view.
- Q:** Like what?
- A:** Well, first of all, there's a lot of people that don't deal with animals before they go there. They don't know anything about animals. I think more time should be spent with people and the animals may be in captivity so they, to get to know what the seals are like beforehand, ringing birds, properly trained. I think a lot more should be done with the behaviour of the animals. They just, they need to go to that seal and they don't care. They just walk through whether they shoot the king penguins all over the place. I found there could be a lot extra work done of that kind of thing. I think it's a behavioural side that needs to be looked at because scientists don't think like that, I am not a scientist. I am an animal behaviourist. So, that is always, I mean whenever we are with the animals or I am with the animals I am trying to make their life as normal as possible. And I think more people should be taught that. I really do believe we should be given a course or something or someone to just talk to people, and be aware because they only aware of the seals. They are not going to see a vagrant bird, maybe you're lucky, but make them more aware of everything about that is going on. Maybe a little more interaction, let the sealers go out with the birders, the birders and the sealers and the *goggos*. I would really recommend that. Having done three trips now I am still quite horrified. At the end of the year you still get people walking on *Azurella* plants and people in teams that are putting flagpoles in *Azurella* plants. Now I find that is not acceptable but it's because they haven't been briefed properly. You know looking at a picture is very different to the real thing. So, I really do believe that a lot more shall... I mean, we're there for the animals, we're there for the plants, it belongs to them. We're just visitors there and we don't really learn much from it, I mean there's so much you can gain from it. I mean, how all the animals move tells you so many things. But that's another story.
- Q:** Did you have to do preparations specifically for your job as a birder?
- A:** No, not really. I've been doing it all for a long time. Obviously we have to make the animals... We want stomach-samples and in the old days we just killed the animals to get stomach-samples – this was done – and nowadays we pump them full of water and we make them regurgitate. Now obviously the animal that is coming in for rehab, we are doing the opposite. We're pumping them full of water to make them keep down because they were in such a bad condition. The years from catching the animals and dealing with the animals, no, no for me...
- Q:** There's nothing really...
- A:** It's different because it's, I mean what you see is really harsh and really cruel. Little chicks taken out by GP's (Giant Petrels) and pulled apart and I mean you see some really, really cruel things. But it's life and I think that watching all those things, it just puts everything into perspective. What these animals actually have to go through to be able to survive. How they do it without one word spoken. How 350 000 birds walk out of the ocean in four weeks and they have been gone for 6

months and they all know how to wharf out there. I just go wow it's amazing, amazing, yes.

Q: Let's talk about the journey, the journeys there. Everything about the Agulhas and do you remember who the captains were?

A: Gavin obviously and there was, the other young captain. No, I can't remember who the captains are, offhand. They are just asked to please drive safely.

Q: Can you relate any interesting events or such things on the journeys?

A: Yes, coming back in the old days, we never had a come-off. A very bad thing to have on the island, this come-off. I would be very happy to see it go.

Q: How so?

A: Oh, the down draft on that it is just not right. And the animals especially the elephant seals and they are very good at looking up you know because they are get most of their life 400 metres below, so they are always looking up. And they see this and when you fly you can see the seals running and the disturbance to the king penguins because I've sat there and watched when they are flying over how no one is on the ground watching because that's what I do and it's, its... Look, you can fly in the sky and is fine but that is too big and too loud. The smaller helicopters are much better and hopefully, hopefully they get smaller than that. So, anyway, what you saying, is yes in the old days we never had a come-off and we had the helicopters inside the hangers and we used to braai on our last night, like now. Tonight. We were braaiing at the top there and socialising and really it was fun. The one time when we were going back, 2006. There was all this phosphorus on the water. It was green and it just came alive it was just magnificent. It was like an aurora in the water.

Q: Brilliant.

A: Yes, and they're waiting for the lights. I think we were all sitting all night waiting for the lights.

Q: The lights from the coast?

A: Yes. And you see a car and you go "Oh no!" And then you wake up in the morning and you see the smog and you go, "Oh no, no, no."

Q: It's a surprise that's going to wait for us tomorrow. So, what were your first thoughts on arriving at Marion?

A: First time?

Q: And obviously subsequent times as well.

A: Oh no, it's such an experience for me. It's really for me a place that I belong. I have found that I am the happiest there, than I've... Yes, I really am happy there. I've always had a job that has been exercise you know, with the dolphins I was diving with them all the time. So exercise has always been my job and I really like to push myself to the limit. So, been out there, I know, I walk out there in the morning and so many times I think what would I rather be doing right now and I can never think of anything. I'm just, comfortable, yes.

Q: Do you usually spend time with the rest of the team or do you immediately start going to the field?

A: Me? When I go back?

Q: Yes.

A: Now, well I can go straight into the field. I mean it's really what I want to do, but yes, they go around and show all the things again and we just discuss what they found because I was there before and, no. I think the hardest part about take-over is in that time of the year I remember my first one not really knowing much about the island. We never had GPSs in those days or never used them and we, the most of the time, you know, you couldn't see anything. You just couldn't see because it was either misty or ice pellets or the weather was so bad but now this is the first time a take-over that we could had. We took those 2 birds around the island in fantastic weather, I mean really not Marion weather at all and it makes such a difference. Because for the first time when you arrive there you get a whole view of the island. I mean most of the time you don't know where

you are or what's you doing or where you going. So, yes, and I think it's easy for me to kind of train them because I'll make them all walk with a map you know. This is all the things that I missed when I went for the first time that Nobody told me about. So, it's very easy. And now obviously there's all the coordinates and everything. They just need to... They can just walk there now.

Q: So they don't need to spend much time then. Well, sort of, the training that you give them...

Q: Well, it's most, everything is documented there. Yes... Everything is documented there now. So, with different colonies, and new things and unusual and we've got started now with all the animal injuries, especially the penguins that you see. We're doing seal penguin probation, you know, at Good Hope Bay and you could do hours studying and just watching and observing there. Ag, a little extra thing you know, little extra things. You've got to keep yourself busy.

Q: Of course. What sort of things did the outgoing team tell you? Personal things or....

A: In my first year?

Q: Yes well, all of the years.

A: Well, for the rest of them, they knew me because I was kind of there before and then when I wasn't here for that year that I... The girl that was here was one of my, in fact Jared who was my partner in 2008 was one of my students at the oceanarium. And Michelle was also one of my... They came as my kids, you know, yes. So, it's been quite nice. You know continuity and all the time I've been there I know what is going on here anyway. So, it's just become late the last about 6 years has really been all about Marion. In fact, the very first time I came and I had these two people who didn't really work that well together you know now that does happen. And I remember this gull was walking up to me. It was the first time seeing an albatross, and I remember walking up and this bird was standing up there and ta-ta-ta. Shucks, there's got to be another to do this, you know. And we were walking over again, over an Azurella and he says: "You walk this way till you feel the wind change direction and then you go that way," and I went, "Yes". That was kind of training that was given. So, I, the first year I had many, many scary times. At one stage getting lost here and many times I thought I am was going to have a heart attack because I could see base and then I go down and up. It was getting dark and I have already been up to Snork. I got lost, I just carried on I mean, I really thought I was going to have a heart attack. **Q**ery scared. I love this island it brings out, that's why I love the dolphins as well. It brings out all these emotions. It can all happen in one day. Bam. Like scared, happy, yay, this is fantastic. It all just happens in one day.

Q: That's true. Ok, let's talk about life at the base. Although I know you don't spend so much time on the base as you like in the field the field. Ok. Describe the life of a birder.

A: Well, I've been a birder. One good thing about being a birder is, birds come and go. So we are working with a whole lot of different species throughout the year. As one bird is arriving, then he start's nesting, then the next one is going to arrive. So you're working with different animals all the time. So, it's never boring. It's never boring and the more you out there the more you're going to see. So, like now when you start off, I mean, you're new on the island. You are unfit for these people now. We need to go out to the Gentoo Penguins. The ships go, I mean every day we must go out there and you know it gets dark at 5 o'clock and the animals only arrive on the island about that time. So you've got to run back to base. So you get fit very quickly. That's this time of the year and then of course it just gets more and more and by the time December comes you got your Rockhoppers, you've got your mackies, you've got the MGP's. You've got everything is nesting at the same time. So it is a nice gentle introduction to it, not a very good time of the year but... And then of course you watch the wonderful animals doing all these things and the most beautiful chicks. Uh! And then August arrives and the skuas arrive and then one day they he will take out sixteen chicks and you just got to watch it. Document it and these little chicks are getting so well and then, one skua...
Slaughtered.

- A:** Yes, now I know all the skuas because they have all been banded. I know all the skuas and all the colonies and then it's... It's always for me something new to found out. Like there was one skua there with three lots there this year and one had two eyes. And we found out from our monitory colony which is where they operate because you have always have a skua operating one colony and we did not even have one chick survive. From a hundred and two nestling, one dump the whole lot. Yes.
- Q:** That is awful.
- A:** Yes, yes, so next year we checked it out and we see if there's more skuas around, but the one had two eyes. Now that is also odd. So, there's always some sad things going on.
- Q:** When did you become an Environmental Officer? Was it only for this year?
- A:** And 2008 as well.
- Q:** Ok, 2008 as well. So we'll talk about that in a moment. What are the challenges living on the island?
- A:** For me it's the weather. The biggest challenge I have. It's, it's very... I think with the new base – which is absolutely fantastic – you're going to have lots of problems with people getting cabin fever. Not wanting to go out. And you know what happens when people don't go out? Eventually they get too nervous to go out. And it happens. I've seen it happen many times. You just got to get out there. I mean, that's where you going to see what you want to see. That's going to be... Yes they've made it very nice and cosy, I must say. It's a lovely base.
- Q:** What makes living on the island worthwhile?
- A:** Well, the animals, obviously I just watching the whole cycle there, and the animals. Don't ever forget I also live in my PWD hut down there on the island.
- Q:** Oh, of course. So you don't actually live in the base.
- A:** I do, well, I mean I do live in the base, yes. I go and study down there whenever I can because it's just, I've been studying there for two years now. It's just colder, it's a... I can hear animals. Oh no, I am old. I am not a kid anymore and I've been on my own for so long and having people next to me is... I am a loner. Oh yes, ja. I really don't mind my own company. You learn how to look after yourself. It's funny how that does it to you because now I am never bored. Always find something to do. It just teaches you another way. But you also become a little bit of an outcast. And now when I get home, everybody wants to see you when you're around. Next thing I know I find myself in a corner of a garden or something. Just alone. It does make you a bit strange.
- Q:** Now the three teams. Could you compare the team dynamic - in a way?
- A:** I think this year we had a lot like of challenges because we had to move base. Look at me. You know like, the older I get the younger the teams get so it's like being a mom a lot of the time. I don't really get fussed over but I mean I am always there and I am drinking with them. I don't get, it's because there's always, you know little... I have no clue about the gossip. I hear that through the grapevine normally a week or so later. It doesn't interest me that is not why I go there. I am always there. So, ja I really don't have a problem with that. It's just like you're living past each other. You chat to each other but I am not there to be your best friend. I am not going to Marion Island to make friends. You will be my friend because obviously our goal is the same but I, it's....
- Q:** Fair enough. So what did you do for entertainment? Relaxation?
- A:** I normally, this is also why I like my PWD hut. I am in the field till late. I normally get up and go at about 10 o'clock so that I can be back later. Then I'll eat my supper, and then I go and have my beer and my cigarette and I punch my data. And I cannot do that in base, because there is nowhere where I can sit with a computer and do that. It's another reason why I like it down there. I've got a nice chair, it's the same old desk that I've been working on and that is where I do a lot of that. Sometimes I work till 1, 2 in the morning. And I find that I'll go through everything, everything. And I found, this bird, like these albatrosses, I can go back in all the data and I can find out he used to be married to this one and now he is with that one. And *ja*, that is what I do. I find myself in all the stories all the time with the animals.

- Q:** The electricity, did you have electricity in that little...
- A:** Yes, but there's no internet or anything like that. The first year I had it. But yes, it is ice cold. Nobody wants to come and visit you. It is freezing down there. I don't turn the heaters on.
- Q:** You just like the solitude?
- A:** No, I like it, I don't know, don't know what it is. I wanted... It's just the noises. You wake up, I can hear the elephant seals, I can hear the Rockhopper penguins. You know at the base you don't hear any of that because there is a constant noise. I mean, you do that at home. I mean, that's...
- Q:** That's true. Did you have any interaction or any communication at all with the other bases? With Gough, SANAE?
- A:** Not this year, no. But before we've had darts games against SANAE, over Skype, and other teams.
- Q:** International teams? When you say other teams?
- A:** No, we were here in 2008. We often played darts against SANAE, the base. The people at the base there, through Skype. And they always used to win because they always cheated. There it is.
- Q:** And you never cheated? And did you... It was a busy year for you with the moving of the base but also the building of the base. How was your interaction like? The teams' interaction especially with the PWD guys?
- A:** When are you talking about, at the beginning or now? Because both of the years...?
- Q:** How it change over the years?
- A:** I think really what for me is quite sad, I know the dynamics of what went into building that because we were there when it was just... I was here in 2005 and they only just started. I remember being there at 10 o'clock with the snow falling, putting a roof on and the cranes falling over and people were just freezing to death out there and it was hard work. And then people will come in this year and now we must move into base and they just moan about it and they don't know what actually went into... I mean if you think about the logistics of trying to build a base like that where everything has to be measured up, made in South Africa, shipped here, helicoptered onto the island in a crate undone agh, it doesn't fit. Now what do you do. You've got to make a plan and so nothing can't expect. It's perfect as it is, I mean, you can't... So, I think that it must always be in people's heads. You know the logistics of what we did do, putting that place together. Obviously very sad to see the old base go, but it's time. Pulling it down going to be a nightmare. I'm just worried about all the animals around there and picking up stuff, oh , I get goose bumps even thinking about it. Because animals pick up things, nesting material, whatever the case may be and somebody is going to have to be on that 24/7. As old Penny is always around. The timing, the timing, the trimming is going to have to be right.
- Q:** So, did you have a lot of interaction with the guys while building the base?
- A:** Well, I mean especially in the old days when we were first in 2005, obviously we were all living in the base together and no, I mean they're my friends. I've known them for a long time.
- Q:** Can you recall any incident particular pleasant incidents that you experienced while living on the island. Even though you weren't living in the base, but sort of with the people. The team members?
- A:** With the PWD people. Oh yes, we had fun all the time. Oh no, constantly having fun.
- Q:** What do you do?
- A:** Oh man, we sit and have a drink or play games. This team watched lots of movies. Other teams, I mean, we were playing games, lots of games and yes, I don't know. You just find things to do. We had such a nice movie house, you know. The one's that didn't smoke were there, well the ones that didn't smoke and did smoke were there, and two movies were always going so it was always... Though it wasn't really that much interaction or so with the chatting. But we played games before. In the old base there are all the old games. And of course we had all these dressing up parties...

People's birthdays. Ja , it's good fun.

Q: How do you think the dynamic changed from the old base to the new base?

A: I think. So many times walk around, you don't see anyone. You know there you were always bumping in someone. If you walk down the passage. If you walk to the base, you walk in the passage someone was around. But the new base... Everybody's got their door closed which we had to do because of the mice. It looks like a hotel. So yes, your privacy is I think is far here, but again the walls are so thin you could chat to your friend through the wall. It's just, you know it's for a year. It's fantastic, I mean you've got no idea how nice this is. I mean, if they had never built this nice base, I mean, for future teams to come down.

Q: How do you think the way people will work, engage with one another... Do you think it's changing, is it going to change with this new base being so different and being so large?

A: It is because there is so many things to do as well. I mean you've got the gym. You can go and work in the lab, you're here, everything. Although in the lab it's really nice now that we're all together so that everybody is working so that you can chat doing stats or doing stomach samples or, normally we've all got that kind of thing, work to do at the same time of the year but for your just... Yes, you can walk around and looking for someone but with the PA system obviously you can pull them all out of their little holes. So you just call them.

Q: Are there any incidents that you recall that rather, that weren't that great? In terms of team interaction. Do you... People not getting along? That kind of thing?

A: Look, I don't really myself turned off. But I know I had a little bit of a to-do with someone because their MDC Officer and because I also think I can talk about it, that I don't care. It was a, the comms, you know, in the huts. And because we had a radio tech that never once went round to look at any of the radios. And of course the comms got worse and worse all the time which obviously is putting our lives in danger. And then he would insist that we did comms twice a day which is absolutely flipping ridiculous, and then he wants to send out search parties at lunch time which is also even more ridiculous, meanwhile all we were getting was a radio you couldn't pick up at all. So, I... And everybody was talking about it, be because there was always a new plan and a new this. And then we got extra things we had to carry. I just said to him, "You must get out to the flipping huts. That's your job," and that he couldn't... It became a bit of a nasty thing. Eventually he did put his bag on his back and went down now that he ever had. And then yes, we then commended him on that but, I just think... Yes for me that was the worst part. Ja, I don't like that, I don't think he did his job properly, so, that, I can't handle it.

Q: So, your job as an environmental officer, what did it entail?

A: We strain the alien plants, obviously look at all the ice parts, making sure people turn their lights off and picking up things in the fields. And yes, just always... And especially now, we put up some new conservation rules together for the new base and I was also getting stuff together for field etiquette, you know like people. I mean there should be something else I just remembered. People don't know how to walk around a burrow. I mean have anyone ever told you how to walk around to burrow?

Q: No.

A: You see these things are not in there and this is what I am trying slowly to put in there. How to be around animals. It all boils down to the same thing all the time. I really like to put out a handbook or something together for them. But still, when you're working with animals it's all done by example. You cannot read out of a book, that won't work for the animal, no. So that would be my aim here.

Q: Yes.

A: More?

Q: Almost done, almost done. So, how was life working with DEA. They were here a lot, especially now, the last team? The officials from the last year? They didn't give you any problems there?

A: No. No I don't...

- Q:** How was moving base?
- A:** Oh, hard work. *Joh*, because those labs, everything is been in there for years and years and years. But we were the first to move. It's, just get this done. So, we were the first actually to move in there.
- Q:** Describe Marion. Anyway you like.
- A:** I think Marion Island is probably one of the most character-building experiences one can ever have. I think when I watch, especially the younger people now, come and how they blossom, they absolutely blossom. You know, it teaches you to be brave, it teaches you self-confidence. It gives it back at you. I mean, you have to work at getting all these things but I just like... I just wish more people could, could find themselves, you know, I think people found themselves there. You have to, otherwise you're going to go coo coo. And you spend a lot of time on your own. So what would I, how would I, for me it's just heaven on earth. I just love it there. It's hard work. It's really hard work.
- Q:** What do you think are general misconceptions about the island?
- A:** I don't think people, what I say, the first time I said to someone I'm going to Marion Island they thought I was going to get married in Ireland. They, people don't know. And maybe it's good that they don't know because otherwise more, you know they are going to come and poke and prod the animals more, more what they do anyway. I mean already in my time I have seen how the animal numbers have dropped. The areas where the humans are and when like takeover comes they just "*whah*" on those animals. That side of the island compared to the other side of the island to the animals, it's like chalk and cheese. Just in the time that I have seen. So... I just think it's a very good kept secret. I don't know. I just feel that the right people should be here, you know. A lot of people just come for the money. A lot of people just... Most of them are working on their bit of an own project. That's the difference. See that's, for me, I have a little problem with that. See this how me, me, me. Those people are not going to put in as much compassion or whatever it is, for anything.
- Q:** So they're only working on their own project?
- A:** Their own project.
- Q:** Why do you think it's important? Or do you think it's important that South Africa has a base on Marion?
- A:** Listen, we won't to talk about science. I have a big problem with science. In the fact that I am not a scientist. Yes, I notice all these things and do all these things, but yes, everything is for me. I must write a paper. This one is going to try and just to say something about that paper and some of them are the biggest load of hogwash you have ever heard in your life before. I want to ask all those scientist, especially the ones who are poking and prodding the birds and things. What are those animals going to gain from it? You tell me, what those animals living on this island are going to gain from what you're doing. And I still have not had an answer. Now that's what I have a problem with. If they can tell me, they're doing disease control, I say that's fine. We can do disease control but what are you going to do about it if there is an outbreak? And they cannot tell me anything. Now I don't think it's right. Why should those animals have to suffer and maybe you should turn it off now.
- Q:** Is there anything else you like to add about your time on Marion or your experiences there?
- A:** No, I really just feel that anybody who has the opportunity, not to go for a take-over. That's really not what it's all about. I did and it doesn't interest me in the least. To actually go and live and breathe the island for a year. It is such a privilege. And if you go down there for a year and you can't see that, then... Some people don't... A lot of people don't...
- Q:** Thanks.
- A:** Yes.