

## DUDLEY ROWSWELL

**Date:** 9 September 2011  
**Venue:** Somerset West  
**Interviewer (Q):** Dora Scott | Antarctic Legacy Project | C-I-B | Stellenbosch University  
**Respondent (A):** Dudley Rowswell | Meteorologist | Gough 18; SANAE 15; Marion 33 | 1972; 1974; 1976

- Q: So you have been to Gough, Marion and SANAE.
- A: Right.
- Q: And what were your team numbers?
- A: I was at Marion 33, at Gough 18 and SANAE 15.
- Q: OK. Which years were those?
- A: It was 1972 at Gough Island, 1973-74 at the Antarctic and 1976-77 at Marion Island.
- Q: Great. So you went to Gough Island first?
- A: Ja.
- Q: And how did it happen that you went?
- A: Well I was in the Weather Bureau and I was looking for adventure, and I'd been on the weather ships and my colleague said, you know "Do you know about the islands?", and I applied and accepted.
- Q: Great, so you were the meteorologist?
- A: Ja.
- Q: So did you know anything about the island or the Antarctic before you went.
- A: Nothing. I knew nothing, my folks didn't know anything. It was a surprise.
- Q: When you heard the word 'island', what exactly did you think?
- A: Well, I thought it was just a manned base. I'd heard a bit about it from the guys at the office who'd also been down to different remote places and I was just looking for adventure.
- Q: The team preparations for Gough Island specifically, what exactly did that entail?
- A: We were put together for a training session in Pretoria. We did cookery, we did fire-fighting, first aid...and then we also had time at the Weather Bureau upper air station where we learnt a bit of the work that we needed at Gough Island, which I'd actually knew already from my work in the Weather Service.
- Q: OK. And how did that differ from your preparation for SANAE and for Marion?
- A: Well it was my first one, so I...the cooking was new venture and fire-fighting I'd never done. But it generally, for the Antarctic I didn't go through much preparation at all, because it was straight from Gough Island. But ja, it was very easy-going.
- Q: OK. So there wasn't any real difference?
- A: No...
- Q: So you went for the cooking lessons at...
- A: At the Department of Food Technology, I think in Pretoria.
- Q: They also sent you there.
- A: I've actually got a photo of it.
- Q: Oh really?
- A: Ja.
- Q: Brilliant.
- A: It was in the newspaper in Pretoria.
- Q: Did you have to make any preparations specifically for your job as meteorologist on any of these places?
- A: For Marion Island I was the Senior Met Technician and they did grill me a bit more. I had to have the responsibility and know the work properly. And I was just...I also had experience on Gough Island and the Antarctic before I went to Marion, so I had lots of experience and I was quite well prepared.
- Q: And the equipment that you used, was it sort of similar at all the bases?
- A: No, well we had new upper-air equipment on Marion which we didn't have on the other two. And we got training on that before we went. In Pretoria. Irene.
- Q: Yes. Now the journey there. You said you went down on the RSA?

A: Yes

Q: What was that like?

A: Well it was a great trip. You know, going to Gough, you stay above the frontal systems and it was quite easy going. And of course, first day I always got sick. So you know, then you acclimatise and it was great sailing. It took about four days and ja...that was...I loved the adventure and the challenge.

Q: And the journey down to the Antarctic and to Marion?

A: Ja well, the Antarctic was a twelve day trip and it was far more, sort of, different, 'cause you go through the Roaring 40s and the Furious 50s, you hit the ice and you've got a rendezvous with ice bergs, and trying to find a [indiscernible] to dock the ship. And you also get initiated at 66 degrees South, when you cross it...

Q: King Neptune.

A: Ja, so you, you're well initiated going down to the Antarctic. But ja, it's got that special remembrance, you know, of going to the Antarctic. And Marion, which is 47 degrees South...we hit some very bad weather going to Marion and we nearly went in reverse at some stages. It was really hard going.

Q: But by that time I'm sure you were familiar with the ship.

A: Yes, no I knew the old RSA rolling slowly along.

Q: And on all of the three journeys, the Captain and First Mate, you said it McNish Captain?

A: McNish was the captain of the Gough and the Antarctic and then Captain Funk took over for Marion.

Q: And what were those two like?

A: They...well they were in charge of the ship and you got to know them and you were allowed to, free run of the whole ship. We used to be up the masts and all over the place. It was great. You know, you make what you want to make of it. And I really enjoyed it.

Q: We've heard lots of interesting stories about Funk, about how when they arrive, when the ships arrive at Marion and people have to get on the dinghies as well, and how he'd sort of say "jump!"...

A: "When I say 'yump', you yump!"

Q: That's the one!

A: Ja. And he could swear nicely to. He used the F-word quite a lot. And when we actually came into harbour coming back from Marion Island, he shouted a command to the engine room to full reverse to broadside next to the quay and the guy went full ahead. And the ship banged into the quay. So that was a memorable thing with old Captain Funk and he went hysterical, you know.

Q: On the journey down...

A: To?

Q: To Gough, to Marion and to SANAE, what did you do?

A: You generally try and acclimatise to the ship, 'cause you've got to get used to it. It has a twist in it. And you get sick, and you spend quite a bit of time in the first day or two on your bunk. And then you get out and you start going to the Smoke Hole. Which is...buy some drinks and you chat and drink. And if the weather's nice we sat on the hatches and tanned on the hatches. Ja, so you just keep yourself busy. We even did some skipping and that on the heavy deck of the ship.

Q: So did you have much interaction with the crew, or not really?

A: Maybe the First Mate and the diningroom staff and the Captain, you generally have a good sort of connection to. But going down to Gough Island, we took a bull down on the heavy deck.

Q: A bull?

A: A bull, which was for Tristan de Cunha.

Q: Oh my goodness.

A: So that was one passenger which we, you don't normally take down.

Q: Did anything interesting happen on any of the journeys down, can you recall? Like the bull, anything else?

A: Well, we brought penguins back. The Department had a quota of penguins they could bring back and we brought back penguins from Gough Island. A whole lot of rockhoppers. From the Antarctic we brought back all the huskies. We were supposed to clear out all the huskies from the Antarctic, but some still sneaked back. But generally it was, you know, looking forward to seeing Table Mountain again, and family and that.

Q: Were the penguins for the zoos?

A: Ja.

Q: OK. Tell me a bit about Tristan Island.

- A: Well we...from our trip down we got to know a few of the people who were going to do a contract area on Tristan. So we knew the doctor and the padre. And during the takeover period we actually went to Tristan and...'cause they have a hold for Tristan as well as for Gough. And so the hold was all their possession...
- Q: Supplies...
- A: Food and all their clothing and everything that was sent down, 'cause they worked on mail orders from Tristan. And we stayed at the doctor's place. And very interesting culture on Tristan of about seven families, and inter-mixing. And we went up on top of the volcano that erupted in '61 and it's smouldering and warm, with sulphur fumes coming out. We went to the potato patches where the women normally work while the men do the crayfish catching. And it was very interesting. I actually took some nice photos of how they live there and spin their own wool. They all wear a similar type clothing, 'cause they get the same mail orders, you know. And it was a plum colour which was in fashion in 1972 and I'll never forget it.
- Q: Did you...how many days do you spend on Tristan?
- A: About three or four.
- Q: Did you interact much with the locals?
- A: Yes. We walked around and we saw Mr Plod the policeman and we saw the administrator and we went and saw the padre, because his daughter...his daughter was going to come back to South Africa. But somebody, another girl, was going back to England because they've got ties with England as well, because it's a British island. So we interacted with a lot of people. Ja, it was very interesting.
- Q: And now, tell me, what were your first thoughts on arriving at Gough and Marion and SANAE? Let's start with Gough.
- A: It was just a huge adventure. I looked forward from the start, and any way that I could enjoy myself and make the most of it. That was my whole idea of going down, to make the most of it. And alright, you make a bit of money, which is nice. And you get all the clothes and the chocolates and your booze and cigarettes. If you don't smoke, you get it in film money. And I'd just bought a camera, so I was keen to start some photography. You're away from family, you're away from girlfriends. You're just going, doing your thing and it was a great break. 'Cause I'd originally just been in the Air Force for eleven months. So it was nice to break away from South Africa.
- Q: And when you saw the ice for the first time, what did you think?
- A: The...
- Q: The ice.
- A: The ice. That was great, you know. I really enjoyed it. It was something different and I just got into the system of being on ice, you know. You've got to just adjust yourself, that's all you've got to do. And we had one chap who, stepping onto the ice, wanted to go home again because he thought he couldn't take it. But he couldn't go home because he was the only guy with Morse code, so... you know. But I really enjoyed it.
- Q: And Marion, I'm sure by that time you'd heard a lot about Marion.
- A: Marion, it was actually a bit depressing, because it's not such a nice island. [Laughs] It is...well, we measured 330 days of rain. It had 3000 mm and it's generally cloudy and cold. Compared to Gough, Gough was a gorgeous island, as my mother-in-law would say.
- Q: So you preferred Gough?
- A: Gough was beautiful. But the Antarctic was unique, you know. It was really unique.
- Q: Did you spend lot of time with the out-going teams?
- A: Well, I knew some of the chaps who were on the other team. And you don't really spend much time, because it's sort of very tense time when you have takeover periods, because there's a lot of friction between teams, and what the old team is the macho guys who know everything and you are the pleb who comes in and you've got to listen by their sort of standards until they're gone and you have your own standards. It took...there was quite a bit of friction. I remember on Marion Island, just with the Public Works Department. The guy wanted to sort me out because I made...I was cooking that day and I made sort of savoury tarts. And he said that there was less bacon and cheese on their savoury tart than on the other one. And he wanted to have a fight over this, you know. The tension is so...
- Q: Wow...tangible.
- A: Tense, ja. During takeover period guys away from their wives for a period due to the Public Works Department and the other team wants to get home and they're just tired of being on the island. So there

are some tense times.

Q: And then this was the same for all three places?

A: I didn't find it so much on Gough Island. Maybe because we spent the time off Gough going to Tristan during takeover period.

Q: Oh, I see.

A: And the Antarctic, it was also...you're too closely confined in that base and we were in the old base, so it was under 8 m of snow, so...

Q: SANAE III?

A: You are in confined areas.

Q: Was that, sorry, was that double group being SANAE II then?

A: Ja, I'm not quite sure...

Q: Yes, no it would have been.

A: SANAE II, ja, I think so. 'Cause we could still go into the old base.

Q: The first, SANAE I, yes. No 'cause if I recall SANAE III was built in the early 80s.

A: Oh that was a round, was it the round one?

Q: I think so, I'm not sure. And obviously the new one was built in the 90s. Did the outgoing teams, what sort of kind of things would they tell you? Did they give you advice, did they leave you instructions?

A: Not...They didn't leave much at all, because they were going home. They have...you could see they didn't care what they looked like. They wore their jerseys they'd worn the whole year. You know, it was in the base, it...they'd look like rogues, you know, sort of tramps, type thing. And with their long hair, you know. Everybody grows their hair when they're down there. But there wasn't that much interaction. They might just sit behind and watch films all the time, because we got a lot of full-length films that one could put on the projector.

Q: Would that, those be the 16 mm?

A: Ja.

Q: Can you remember the names of the films, just for interest's sake?

A: I actually got them in the diary, how many times I used to see them.

Q: Oh really, oh good. No, we'll definitely take a look at those, brilliant. And you said this is pretty much the same for all three places?

A: Ja. On Gough Island you didn't get so many films as the Antarctic, because you weren't so many people. We were only seven at Gough, we were 24 on the Antarctic, but eight went into the field.

Q: Oh the geologists?

A: Ja, the geologists, land surveyor and mechanic.

Q: Now, describe a life in the day of a meteorologist on these three places.

A: Well, you get up at 11 'o clock in the morning. This is at the Antarctic. 'Cause there's no day or night there. You're in the base, you don't know when it's day and when it's night unless you look at a watch. Then you get up at 11 o'clock and you have like breakfast-lunch, and if you're on skivvy duty then you've got to go and fill the snow smelter and do some cleaning up in the base and the kitchen. And then you get into work, you do three hourly readings and then you...somebody is responsible for supper because you have a cooking turn and the skivvy also cleans up the kitchen after the cook...the guy's cooking turn. And then you sort of get into sort of evening mode and you're playing darts or snooker. Or there's chance for a party, you know, if there's something to celebrate, you celebrate it. If the weather's nice you go out, run with the huskies. We often went for a run with the huskies behind a sledge, the dog sledge. Ja, you keep yourself busy. Some guys just played the guitar. Then in the evening you might watch a film after the supper, or you go and play snooker or go into your room. And then you've got your balloon ascent around midnight. And then you do the balloon ascent and then you go and have a snack in the kitchen afterwards. Open a tin of viennas or something for a snack. And then you go to bed around 3 o'clock. That's the normal routine of a day. But getting back to these viennas, the guys used to change the labels on the tins, so that you didn't think...you didn't know it was viennas. They'd put like peas on a vienna tin so that the viennas wouldn't get eaten...

Q: They would be the only ones knowing.

A: They would know. But these things got done. You bartered your mixers and beers for skivvy turns and cooking turns, 'cause you didn't...money was useless down there. And this used to carry on all the time.

Q: OK. And at the other bases?

A: The other bases...because you had light at normal times and you were on top of the ground, you normally... on Marion and Gough we had more regular readings and two balloon ascents a day. And also used to congregate in the kitchens a lot and drink coffee and make nice bread and sometimes play table tennis or go for long walks. We did a lot of walking. On Marion I walked around the island once. You often go and look at the birds, lots of birdlife down on the coast at Kildalkey, a lot of birds down there. And Tony Williams was doing a lot of research on king penguins and I used to pop down to his little beach where he had his...it was a plastic water tank which he converted into a house. And go and visit him down there or just go for a walk if the weather permitted. Otherwise you played snooker and darts in the base.

Q: So, the more social activities or the after-hour activities would have been a more social interaction between teams...

A: Yes.

Q: ...rather than just...

A: Ja, you don't normally do things on your own. You sort of go as a group and it's safer too.

Q: Ja. And did you also have the thing of having dinner each evening, the team together?

A: Ja.

Q: And at all three bases?

A: Ja. You had the evening meal was together and 'cause you had a cook who had to prepared it. And normally it had to be prepared by a certain time.

Q: OK. Now tell me, what are the challenges of living on these remote places?

A: The biggest challenge is getting on with your colleagues. If you don't get on with your colleagues then you've got a problem. That is the biggest. You've got to understand the other's point of view. And everybody's got their own culture and you've got to recognise that and try and accept what they're like or where they've come from.

Q: Yes, I can well imagine it. Especially being in such a confined place.

A: There was quite a big rift between English and Afrikaans at the time.

Q: Really? Where? At all three places? Or at...

A: Ja.

Q: Really? OK. So how did you manage to overcome it? Or did you just sort of walk around it?

A: No, you accept, you just accept who they are and...well, I'm very easy, I can get on quite easily. But some couldn't. We had this one guy who was quite religious. He used to play his Gé Korsten on a Sunday morning. Liefing, you know. And we would...Mike and I, we were quite English and we used to try and get in earlier than him and put in this rock band from Woodstock and put that on...

Q: Jimi Hendrix, no?

A: Hey?

Q: No, I'm guessing. Jimmy Hendricks?

A: No it wasn't Jimi Hendrix, it was ten years after. The What. It was before your time, too. But it was quite a noisy band. And this guy wanted his...you know, it was those days when Sunday was a very subdued day and you had to...

Q: And this was where? At SANAE?

A: No, Gough Island. At SANAE it was far more, very easy-going. There wasn't any sort of domination or anything. But the groups formed of cultural backgrounds.

Q: I suppose it's bound to happen.

A: Ja, and Marion was also similar.

Q: The interaction. OK, any other challenges? You said that's the biggest challenge, but...

A: OK, there is the work. Not so much the work challenge. OK, I was senior on Marion Island and I had to challenge to try and motivate my technician to do his work and to be more responsible for his own work. And also I had to do a lot of the radio skits, because the radio operator wasn't able to due to his drink problem.

Q: How do you keep motivated during each day and every day?

A: How do you?

Q: How do you keep motivated?

A: Well...

Q: To continue doing your work in these remote places with no-one really to check on you.

A: Ja, that's a very difficult question to ask. OK, I do have my religion behind me, and I was continuously sort

of, with thoughts of somebody looking after me all the time. And that got me through a lot and gave me the wisdom to understand all these things.

Q: Now what made living on these places worthwhile?

A: Adventure. Ja, it was really a great adventure. And that's all I went for, is the sort of adventure of a different life, people and birdlife and, you know, it was just something else which somebody in South Africa wouldn't be able to experience.

Q: Now did you, especially on Gough and on Marion, did you have a lot of interaction with the animals? Interesting animal experiences?

A: I used to go and walk around and enjoy the animals and birdlife a lot and photograph them and...ja, I didn't do any sort of research into them, but I enjoyed the animals a lot. And I enjoyed killing mice.

Q: Oh, did you? How did you go about doing that?

A: With mouse traps. Ja, Gough was really a problem with mice. And we used to set up mouse traps all over the place using bacon. And they used to actually gnaw through our insulated panels between the rooms. Everything had to be kept in a tin with a sealed lid, otherwise the mice would be in. Ja, it was really a bad situation.

Q: And did you have the same problem on Marion?

A: I don't know if we had...no, not really. No, we didn't.

Q: And did you see a lot of the cats on Marion Island?

A: No you didn't, don't see them. They're in the black lava and they sit down...I think I've got one slide of a cat in the wild.

Q: So they weren't...

A: They weren't visible.

Q: Ja, OK. So even walking around you were lucky if you saw one.

A: Ja.

Q: But did you see evidence of them?

A: Well you saw lots of dead night birds. The prions, the shearwaters, lots of skeletons lying around.

Q: Did anyone in your team ever just shoot the cats or work with the cats? Or was that mostly what Marthan did?

A: No. Well, Marthan had these...well there was another guy, what was his name? Blonde hair, he used to run marathons. He used to do nature conservation. Sometimes you'd go for a walk with them and they would look for the cats and catch...set their cages up and you'd go and see what their work was about. Like I used to go with the ornithologists and the weighing of the different birds. The albatrosses and the penguins, and go out on the ledges. It was interesting to go and see how their work worked.

Q: And on Gough Island, did you get an opportunity to go out with the other researchers as well?

A: There weren't researchers. There weren't any researchers. Only during our takeover period, Neil Farrell and two other chaps came onto the island during the takeover. And they sort of did a survey on what animals and birds were on the island.

Q: OK, so when you walked around on Gough specifically it was just for your own curiosity and adventure.

A: Ja, and you enjoy the animals and birds. 'Cause we only had rockhopper penguins on Gough and we didn't have so many of the albatrosses. We had the sooty and the yellow-nosed, and then the wandering on top of the mountains. We didn't have the wandering near the base because of the difference in climate.

Q: Did you ever spend a night outside on Gough, in a tent?

A: Ja, quite a few times we went out. Especially when we were at the old base.

Q: And the huts on Marion, also?

A: Ja we went. Ja, I'll never forget our first night, morning, breakfast. I went round with a few other chaps and we had curry for breakfast. And I'll never forget that.

Q: So you did actually walk around the island?

A: Ja.

Q: Great, that's fantastic. What was that like, seeing the different sides of the island?

A: It was amazingly different types of topography. And...'cause you go past Boulder, I can't remember all the names of the areas...

Q: Boulder Beach, Archway...

A: Ja, right on the other side of the island, there's also...where the little volcanic cone is...

Q: It's not Bullard?

A: There's also that very rocky area which you have to clamber across for quite a long period, I'd have to get...

Q: Santa Rosa, no? Devil's Footprint, Santa Rosa? No, that's where the black lava is.

A: Santa Rosa...ja, I remember that. I'd have to...

Q: But it...we can go and look it up. The team mates and the team dynamics for the different teams, how did that work? You talked a little bit about that, about the split between the Afrikaans, the more Afrikaans guys and English guys...

A: Ja no, there was definite break-ups and groups forming of guys with similar background. Especially on SANAE when we were a number of people in the base. And guys tend to do this.

Q: And did the tension ever erupt? Was there sort of interpersonal fights between team mates?

A: There was fist-throwing...

Q: Really? Was this on SANAE specifically?

A: It's also when people can't handle their drink or they get aggressive after a drink and they lay into other people or they take it out on furniture, with axes. [Laughs] We were...just ask Dirk van Schalkwyk about SANAE 15. Anyway, and then somebody fumigated the base with some bad gas. SANAE base. And we had to evacuate.

Q: Why?

A: Because you, because we couldn't breathe. It was...

Q: But why did he fumigate the place?

A: I don't know who did it or if it was a prank or not. And then there were accusations. We all went out onto the snow surface and accusations were thrown around and they were blaming this young guy who was quite a cocky guy from Potch University, Bernie Bowers (?). And there was a fist thrown there. And we couldn't go back into the base until the gas had subsided.

Q: And it's not like it's the most fantastically ventilated place.

A: No, you can't ventilate it, you know. You have to wait, so we were out there a long time. But Rowswell was ready. He had his diary and he had his chocolates with him.

Q: Oh good, good, good. Wow, that's...

A: Ja, no...

Q: And on the other places, were there any similar incidents?

A: Well, there was nearly a fight in our...tensions erupt and these guys wanted to fight each other and I spent nearly about three hours with these guys trying to calm them down and tell them to act responsibly and to do their job, and it...you not going to gain anything if you give the first fist blow. And...

Q: Where was this?

A: On Marion. In the living quarters. And these guys just wouldn't...they just wanted to fly into each other. And I was trying to calm the situation. But it's difficult. Especially when you get these guys from Public Works Department, and they might have a short...

Q: Fuse.

A: Fuse, ja.

Q: Tell me a bit about why were the Public Works guys there?

A: They were to maintain the base.

Q: So they were not...they didn't have a presence there during the year?

A: No, it was during a takeover.

Q: OK so it would have been a stressful situation anyway, and then having these men with short fuses...

A: Ja.

Q: OK, that makes sense.

A: Ja, no it was quite bad, and I don't know, I probably captured it on my page-a-day diary.

Q: Can you at all remember who the most responsible people were? You said Dirk van Schalkwyk was the Head?

A: This was a general section. Dirk was there, O'Brien, Trompie O'Brien, was he? And Gustav Nel and Van Rensburg, he was in charge.

Q: OK.

A: That's just the general section. That's who we used to work through, when I was down...

Q: Midwinter. What did you do for midwinter?

A: We streaked.

Q: Did you? Where on the ice? On the island?

A: On the ice. 100 m streak.

Q: Who won?

A: No, we didn't...there were four of us.

Q: OK.

A: Ja, from gosh...where you come out of the ice-skag...

Q: Yes, no I know where...

A: It was the end ones, we sprinted...

Q: Oh, so you sprinted the length of the base?

A: Ja

Q: Obviously, 'cause it being under the ice, OK.

A: And then we dressed up for a great dinner. With jackets and ties...

Q: Sort of a formal dinner?

A: Ja it was a formal dinner. Fantastic spread.

Q: And on the islands?

A: Islands? We didn't celebrate some much midwinter on Gough. At Marion we did. Gough was more around Christmas, ja. 'Cause we arrived in October and we were collected in October. So Christmas was quite a big thing for us on Gough. I've actually got all my...all the greetings from throughout the Antarctic, which they sent to you, you know, all of.. midwinter greetings.

Q: OK, fantastic. So what sort of kind of interaction did you have with the international bases on SANAE?

A: We used to contact the Russians by Morse.

Q: Did you play chess with them?

A: Some of the guys did, ja. And McMurdoch Sound we communicated with and Halley Bay, it's the English base on the Antarctic Peninsula.

Q: OK, and while you were on the islands, did you have any interaction with any other bases around?

A: No, we were on ham radio, ZT9 Golf Charlie was our call-sign. And we spoke to people all over the world.

Q: Fantastic.

A: Mike, he was the radio technician. And him and myself used to enjoy it.

Q: I can well imagine, ja. Describe the means of communication with South Africa specifically.

A: What?

Q: The communication with South Africa specifically. You said you had Morse code and the ham radio...

A: OK.

Q: Telexes as well?

A: Official communication was by telex. And there were about three schedules per day via Olifantsfontein and Derdepoort near Pretoria. And we used to send all our information and we could have 150 words a day and receive 150 words private. No, that was a week, I think, but we used to break that. And then we had telephone calls once a month of 10 minutes. Other than that, there was very little...you know, it wasn't that we had cell phones and satellite communication. It was very basic. And it was more of a frustration to phone somebody, because it was delayed talk. And sometimes the comms weren't good, so it was really difficult.

Q: And were there people listening in as well? Would have been, maybe. The operator...

A: Not really your colleagues, you don't worry about that. You're in a little, in the what-its-name hut, radio...

Q: Radio comms, I think, ja, makes sense. OK. During your time there did you have any visits from any ships or helicopters?

A: Ja, we had an angel come and visit us.

Q: An angel?

A: No the Preachers Navy came and they dropped a padre by...from the helicopter and he landed on our roof.

Q: This is on Gough?

A: Mmm.

Q: Mmm. OK.

A: 'Cause they patrol the islands for crayfish poachers. And they brought a whole lot of nice things for us and



Playboy magazines and...

Q: Ag well...

A: Ja, so it was a nice visit. And then we also had crayfish. Julian Gaggins (?) and the Tristania. They were like, crayfish trawlers and factory ships. They came round to Gough quite a bit, so we could also get parcels and letters through them 'cause they come from Cape Town. And on Marion we had the Protea came down to bring the helicopter to drop cats off. And we went and had lunch...

Q: Wait, which cats?

A: The cats which were injected with cat flu.

Q: Ah yes, OK, got it. Sorry, you said you...

A: Ja and then we had lunch with the captain. He took all the senior staff over to the Protea and we had lunch with the captain the day after my birthday. So I had to quickly stabilise...

Q: Recover.

A: Recover, ja.

Q: How did you get from the ship to the bases? Did you... on Gough Island, did you use a helicopter?

A: No, on Gough we used a pontoon.

Q: A pontoon?

A: It's a big blown-up thing, you all sit on the pontoon and then it goes under a crane and the crane lifts you up in a net and you get dropped onto the, sort of, the landing part.

Q: OK. And on SANAE, how did you get to the base?

A: SANAE we went with, OK, the ship parks along next to the booter and then you...they put a thing onto the ice and you climb on and you walk far away to the sort of stable ice and then you go with a Caterpillar...

Q: Cat train.

A: Ja.

Q: And Marion?

A: Marion you also went from a...no. On Marion you went off onto Boulder Beach. They dropped you on...there's like a...

Q: So did they still have that rising catwalk?

A: Ja.

Q: No, these days they use the helicopters.

A: Oh ja.

Q: Are there any incidents specifically that you recall with fondness that happened at any of these places?

A: Any incidents?

Q: Any incidents of interest, or that sort of...pleasant experiences specifically?

A: Well a lot of pleasant were...walking and exploring the islands, finding caves, going to old bases. You know, I love challenges. But I had two unfortunate incidents on Gough Island when I burnt my arm with a Primus stove. The whole arm was badly...all the skin came off and ja, I walked around the base for about 30 times in pain, trying to...pain killers wouldn't work and the medic helped and he put a plastic skin on and after three weeks it healed. And so that was a very nasty incident. Right down to my fingers, it was all off. And..

Q: The other one?

A: The other one was...we were playing tennikoit in the quad of Gough base. We made this tennikoit out of wire and bandage round it, you know, it's these ring things. And I badly twisted my ankle on playing on uneven ground. And that put me out for quite a long time 'cause I could only walk on a flat surface. And so it restricted me a lot from doing anything. But other than that, on the Antarctic I had no, allright two memorable times were going into the field and into the mountains with the Cat train and taking supplies for the geological and survey team in Grüne Hogne. 'Cause I went for six weeks and then, I think it was three or four weeks.

Q: How long did they stay there?

A: They stay there for the year. They go...they leave the base normally in about February and then overwinter in Grüne Hogne and then come back before the ship comes.

Q: Wow, so they didn't really partake in base life at all?

A: No.

Q: How many did...?

A: There were eight of them who were in that team. And we went in and we went right up to Pyramidden

(?) and also had a bit of a holiday as well as stocking their supplies. And that was also a great trip. And I experienced then also a huge snowstorm. We had to put...stay in our tents for a couple of days and not get out and not know how the guy in the next tent was. Whereas our leader was in the next tent and the tent collapsed with the snowstorm and the snow on top of him. So you know, you've got to stay in that tent without going anywhere. You can't go to the loo, you've only got your food in your tent. And he lived on chocolate for that period. And we, Chris Lambrecht, he, I don't know if he's still at Pringle Bay, he was a mechanic. And we had our food and we could deal with our normal situations inside the tent. That was also quite an experience, 'cause it was minus 30-odd degrees outside, and I wrote my diary in the tent. I had to heat my ball point up to be able to write the diary and I kept that with me all the time. Ja, it was very unusual and a great experience.

Q: Fantastic. What did you eat?

A: Well, at our cookery course, they wanted us to sort of have a good routine and fresh food at regular intervals. And not just tinned food. We took a lot of meat down, and we had different cookery routines at the different places. And we did have meat on a regular basis. And you know, there was no fresh vegetables or potatoes or anything like that. It was all Smash or rice, and tinned vegetables. Or dehydrated vegetables which we could then cook up. But, you were very restricted in what you could cook there. It was generally just out of tins. Potatoes were in tins, all, everything in tins or dehydrated.

Q: How did the cooking routines differ?

A: I can't remember. I know that...I think on the island you did a week at a time. And the Antarctic I think it was daily changeover. And I had the experience of making bread on Gough Island and got it down to a fine art. And I cooked...did all the bread baking...a lot of bread baking on the Antarctic and all the bread baking on Marion Island. So, I was very easy with cooking, I still do a lot of cooking. But it was very easy time for the doctor, he was very bored. So he'd look for customers to do anything with and you might see in that book if you can interpret it the right way. [Laughs] I'm not going to go into details. Nobody got badly injured, or nobody died while we were at the Antarctic, 'cause there have been deaths and wind scoops and that. Nobody had any dangerous illnesses or appendicitis like there have been in previous teams.

Q: While you were away, did anything of significance happen in South Africa that you would have...that you heard of afterwards?

A: We missed the mini-skirt.

Q: Oh really?

A: No, well while...news...well it was...you normally have girlfriends or you have a wife or a fiancé when you go down. When I went down to Gough I had no fixed girlfriend. I had friends, Jenny and her sister were good friends. Then a friend of her brother's wanted to communicate with me. She actually phoned me on the ship through Cape Radio and wanted to have a relationship.

Q: A long-distance one.

A: So when I'm on Gough Island, she suddenly breaks this up, this so-called relationship, because she's got engaged to another guy when I was down there. And so that was a bit hard to take, 'cause suddenly she's there and then she's not. But other than that I learned from that experience to have lots of girlfriends before I went down to the next one. And you might have one left in the end. Or two left. 'Cause it's nice to have somebody you can communicate with.

Q: Of course.

A: That's quite a situation on these islands. If you've got no letters coming in, you do feel it. You need communication from South Africa. And this one guy, he actually stays in Durbanville, Jasper Woon, he had the situation, he didn't get much post at all. And the ship came and he didn't get post. And ja, it wasn't so nice. But, ja, I had plenty of friends when I went to Antarctica...

Q: And Marion?

A: And Marion, ja. And also, I don't know if you've heard of Juba Malherbe?

Q: Oh, Juba, yes.

A: She had "Ver in die wêreld". And I actually all the messages that I received I've still got on a cassette tape.

Q: Oh really, oh my goodness.

A: And one used to value that programme. I think it was on Sundays at 12 o'clock or half past 12, "Ver in die wêreld". And she used to have that show. And there used to be other girls who took over when she was on leave. And actually through that show I got to know Sonja Herold and we became friends. And ja, she stayed at our place in Middelburg and Stutterheim.

Q: Wow.

A: It's just things that happen, you know, because of the situation you're in.

Q: Yes, because, "Ver in die wêreld" basically entails that they would send messages to the radio station and play it and you would hear it in the Antarctic and on the islands.

A: Ja.

Q: What was the most difficult thing about the years spent there? And for each individual place?

A: I don't know. I had solutions to everything. I generally, I didn't really have any problems, except this one situation with that girlfriend and...suddenly deciding to get married to this other guy. And then when I got back she'd changed over to Jehovah or what's it? The Seventh Day Adventists. And, ja...so that was that. You know. OK.

Q: Please describe Gough Island for me.

A: Well, it's about eight kilos long and three, four kilos wide. It is very mountainous and very lush. It has beautiful vegetation and beautiful sceneries. Island trees, greenery, lots of greenery and ferns all over the place. But Gough Island at fifteen hundred foot relates to Marion on sea level. That's what I related between Gough and Marion. The difference? One is south of the inter-tropical convergence, and one is a highland. And that is why Gough, the albatross breed up on top, and on Marion the albatross breed on the coast. And ja, that is a really amazing island, Gough. It's really hard walking, it's really difficult to walk on.

Q: And Antarctica?

A: Oh, that was just amazing. You know, I can always picture myself with Chris Lambrecht walking across the ice from the skuurgebied. That's where the continent and the ice shelf meet, [indiscernible] was the place. And we're walking there with rope tied between us, with a stick and hearing a battlefield underneath us. Its crevasses opening and closing. It was the most amazing feeling I've ever felt. It was really something else, walking across, 'cause the Caterpillar was far behind, so you didn't hear the Caterpillar. And you were just walking on your own in, sort of, desert. It's really...

Q: Did you, you didn't use the dogs to go inland, to go visit the geologists? You used the Caterpillar?

A: No, the dogs might have gone along as pets. I think [indiscernible] that was the doctor's dog went along. And ja, he just went along for the ride.

Q: Great. And describe Marion.

A: Marion is a very barren...it's grey and black lava. Grass. And dead grass. It is very barren and boggy compared to Gough Island. You know, I...the only thing that keeps one interest in Marion is the different birdlife, the different...the elephant, sea elephant which you didn't have on Gough, you only had the fur seal. And then, the different other birds, 'cause we didn't have the, that white one. What's that? Paddy, ja. We didn't have the paddy, we had skuas on Gough and the sea gulls. Ja, I...it didn't really...if I went to all three again I would have started on Marion and then maybe done Gough and then done the Antarctic. Because the Antarctic is something else. You know, going into the mountains. It is really a different world.

Q: Did you, while you were walking around Marion Island, ever encounter any sealers' artefacts or anything they might have left there?

A: Ja, well you've got the pots, that's all.

Q: You didn't see anything else?

A: No.

Q: Now you're on your way back. So please describe the last couple of weeks on the bases, knowing that you're on your way back to South Africa.

A: What are you going to do first? Ja well, you've had communication with your parents and your friends, and you try and plan something. Well I actually proposed to Jenny when I was on Marion Island, so...and we got back and we got engaged.

Q: That is brilliant.

A: We all lived happily ever after. [Laughs]

Q: Well, you have!

A: Ja, but, ja you actually look forward to what you're going to do when you get back. 'Cause OK, I went...'cause I didn't like Pretoria at all, that's why I went to the islands. And when I finished the islands, I went and did my studies in Pretoria. 'Cause I just didn't like Pretoria and the 'short back and sides' people. You know, I had long, longish hair all the time since I left school, so...

Q: So did you also have...you were talking earlier about the experiences when you arrive as a new team and you get some animosity from the old team. Did you then also in turn have animosity towards the new

team coming in? When you were now...

- A: Well, it was funny, because on the Antarctic, in the new team was my friend who was with me on Gough...
- Q: Oh, OK.
- A: So we got on well. And...ja, no, I don't know. I didn't really have any problems. There was just some problems with the general section people, because of the problems that had been brought about by the general section on [indiscernible]. And certain things happened during takeover period which they wanted to nail me for, but we sorted that out afterwards.
- Q: OK. And the way back was also on the RSA?
- A: Ja.
- Q: Did you do anything specific on the return journey you can recall? Was it just more of the same?
- A: We had a beard competition when we left.
- Q: Oh really?
- A: Ja, and...
- Q: All three places?
- A: No. Only when we came back from the Antarctic.
- Q: OK.
- A: And we...it was nice to go in close to Bouvet and we could see the island and, like the ice cap on top of the island. It's like a cake with this icing on top. And just look forward to getting back. 'Cause from the Antarctic...oh yes. Well I had time at home with the husky, and...
- Q: Oh did you bring a husky back?
- A: Ja.
- Q: As a pet?
- A: Ja. No, that's that little husky I brought back.
- Q: Oh of course, ja.
- A: And...bit of time at home, 'cause I've just been about two years away from South Africa. And then I also bought some property and went up to Alexander Bay on sort of relief, up to Alex Bay with my long hair. And I was super fit in those days...
- Q: I can well imagine.
- A: It was amazing. And these people from Alexander Bay, they saw "hierdie donnerse mal Engelsman" and...
- Q: The long hair...
- A: The long hair. And I used to run out to the weather station, you know, the office, and play...
- Q: Table tennis?
- A: No, muurbal. Squash.
- Q: Squash.
- A: I could play for about two hours, I could never get tired. I was so fit, and these people didn't understand this guy. And then I came back, and then I went on training to go to Marion Island.
- Q: When you got back, how was South Africa different in any way? Can you recall anything that specifically had changed that you'd noticed?
- A: The only I noticed was I got a bit claustrophobic in some...travelling in some streets with, you know, lots of trees on the sides. I was used to open space, you know. That got me a bit. But, ja, it was getting used to traffic. OK, it wasn't like we are today, it was '70s. Ja, but it was getting used to lots of other people and women. But, ja I soon clicked in, it's just a matter of clicking in to, back to when you left.
- Q: Describe your arrival, when you...at the harbour. Did you arrive at Cape Town harbour all three times?
- A: Ja.
- Q: What was it like arriving back? Bands and music and family and waving people...
- A: No, no. Well, there were...family was there every time. From the Antarctic, the parents were there and I'm not sure which girlfriend was there. And for Marion, Jenny was at the harbour with my folks and my brother. And my aunt always came along. But ja, it was great. I'm not so emotional with things like that. I'm back.
- Q: It's now back to doing something else.
- A: Ja, it's just fitting in to the way of life.
- Q: What do you miss about the islands and Antarctica? If you miss anything at all.

- A: The difference. You live in a different world, you do things differently, and you're not controlled by time and routines, so much. You do things when you want to. But, ja, it's really different. OK, you do have your routine of cooking and that type of thing, but you don't live in the real world. It's in another type of world where you...your own destiny, type of thing, you know. You don't...it's difficult to explain. You're not responsible to anybody. You are responsible for your work, but you live your life the way you want to do it. And what you put in is what you get out.
- Q: Yes. What sort of questions, when people hear you've been to these places, what questions do they ask you?
- A: Did you enjoy it? You know. What...How many people were there?
- Q: Do people have sort of misconceptions about the islands and Antarctica?
- A: Well, I normally tell them before they ask the questions. 'Cause I sort of bubble with, you know, it's an experience which you really enjoy to share with other people, because I got a lot out of it and I'm not sorry for anything I did in the experience. It was how the situation was why I did certain things. But, ja no, I'm actually giving a talk up at Vonke House in April next year. My mother-in-law's asked me to give a talk to the ladies. I'll be showing slides and talking about it. So, ja, I normally take over, you know. I don't let them ask questions, I just tell them about it. Because I've got lots to share and it's nice to share it, 'cause a lot of people don't get to experience or get that chance to have this experience.
- Q: Why do you think South Africa has the bases there?
- A: Well, the Antarctic was strategic, and they wanted to be involved with the science of the Antarctic. And it's a very good place for intercepting a lot of information from the sun, through the geo-magnetic lines. You get a lot of aurorae, whistlers, micro-pulsations and cosmic radiation. They all come in at the poles, and is better monitored there. And that's why South Africa's got numerous universities who've got their projects at these places. For the weather observations, I think it is helping now, 'cause we're such a small world, for forecasting, flights and travelling around the Antarctic. But Gough and Marion were put there for filling in a synoptic chart of South Africa. And Gough is a good warning site for frontal systems coming to South Africa. Whereas Marion's got, when the fronts leave South Africa. But it all fits into the global weather pattern system.
- Q: So you, would you think that that is one of the benefits of having the bases there?
- A: A huge benefit is the weather systems. But the Antarctic is more on scientific grounds.
- Q: What do you think of tourism in these places? Do you think it's a good idea, it should happen? Or do you think it should be...remain...it should remain closed?
- A: Ja, the...if the tourist had to go onto these islands, they would damage it a lot. It would really be affected and I...you know, as much as I would like other people to experience what I experienced, I would rather have them see slide shows or see these things. 'Cause it's a very sensitive environment for a lot of these plants and bird species and animals. But I don't think tourism would be good on Marion and Gough. The Antarctic, I don't think it would be as bad...affect what is there, so much, because there is very little animal and birdlife. And they wouldn't want to stay down there very long. They would only go in the summer when there's sunshine. But, ja, it's...well they do go to some areas of the Antarctic. But the islands are too sensitive for tourism. Unless they were kept at the base, you know. A special facility at the base on catwalks.
- Q: In quarantine.
- A: Not...well, ja, you know. They wouldn't be allowed out unless they were flown around the island. But even that...helicopters would affect the bird life.
- Q: It does.
- A: 'Cause somebody was doing it. A UCT student. She's doing her PhD on the effects of helicopters on...is it the albatross? 'Cause I was at my daughter's graduation and there was this girl who did this...ja. So it can affect the very sensitive situation on the islands.
- Q: Why did you decide to go to all three?
- A: Because I'd been to one. I wanted to go to another one. And I wanted to do all three. It was...it wasn't to break any record. It was just that I loved adventure.
- Q: Why did you prefer Gough? Am I right in saying that you preferred Gough from the three?
- A: No, I preferred Gough to Marion, because it was far more beautiful and...ja, the walking was also far more of a challenge than Marion. And, OK the Antarctic was completely different. It was a unique island place, where you can walk for...we went ten kilos out on the dog sledge and you see nothing, and you turn around and come back. And you can go in your shorts and a short-sleeved shirt. And you can run and just keep on running. And turn the dogs and come back, and then you're running into a wind and then

you feel the cold. It's so different. It's like a desert, that...it's a cold desert.

Q: Great, thank you very much. Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about your experiences, today?

A: Not really. But, you know, anybody who has the chance must go if they enjoy nature. It's a wonderful experience for anybody. And people, if you let it slip, don't worry about studies, don't worry about women or men... We were only men in our days, and only whites which has changed a lot since, but you've got to put those things behind you. I didn't waste four, four and half, five years. I actually gained so much experience. And you can't swop that experience for anything else.

Q: Great. Thank you very much.

A: Pleasure.