

JOHN BRITTON

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Place: Marion Island

Interviewer (Q): Dora Scott | Antarctic Legacy Project, C-I-B | Stellenbosch University

Respondent (A): John Britton | Marion | Operations Engineer

A: I'm the engineer in charge of the operation.

Q: Okay. Now tell me about the operation ...

A: Well, I'm the engineer in charge of the operation – basically, I look after the logistics – the running of the whole operation here and on the ship – and also I'm the licensed engineer on the Bell 212.

Q: Okay.

A: So I look after the Bell 212 and fly as a third crew member; and also, if the case might be, where like the engineer the from cam office is not here, I fly as third crew member there when we do cargo or passengers.

Q: Okay, so do you fly at all, or are you more ... ?

A: I'm in engineering; yes. No, I don't fly, no.

Q: Okay, so you're more of a support ... ?

A: Ja; support, Ja.

Q: So how many trips have you done to ... ?

A: I don't know. I can't remember! I'm being honest with you: I cannot remember.

Q: Okay, but you've been to all three – you've been to SANAE and Marion and Gough?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Brilliant. And how many years have you been involved?

A: This is my 11th year.

A: I was in the military, yes. But not in South Africa; in Rhodesia, as it was then.

Q: Okay.

A: But I left before ... I left in 1977, before it became Zimbabwe as such, but I stayed up there for ... until it became Zimbabwe. So I went through Southern Rhodesia, Rhodesia, Zimbabwe-Rhodesia and Zimbabwe.

Q: Oh! And were you already qualified as an engineer then?

A: Yes. I started ... I was in the air force 12 years.

Q: South African Air Force?

A: Rhodesian Air Force; yes.

Q: So you lend support to the pilots and the helicopter that fly down ... well, that come down to Marion, to do ... at Marion and Gough and SANAE, to do transport of passengers and cargo and that kind of thing?

A: Yes, that's correct.

Q: Good. Now how did it happen that you became involved with the SANAP program?

A: I was working out of Cape Town International, our main base, and I was in the component workshop. And then there was talk of it closing down. So I got the offer of going to our Waterfront base, which used to fly passengers around, sightseeing and all that. So I thought, well, if I go down there, at least I got have a foot in the door. So I moved down there. I was down there about 3 years, 3 and half years, something like that, and in 1999, the boss came to me and said we got the Antarctic contract.

Q: Brilliant! And what company was that?

A: That was Court Helicopters in those days.

Q: Oh, okay.

A: Yes. And we've just been going since then.

Q: Brilliant!

A: Yes.

Q: When you arrive, what do you do then? I know the first few days are very, very busy for the helicopter crew. What does it entail exactly?

A: Well, mainly, we get everyone together; let them know what's going on. And those that haven't been here, we go around all the various things – how the fuel is pumped, how the external power starts on the aircraft, how we're going to handle passengers. And then once we get going, everyone must just lend a hand. I just keep an eye on the way things are running. If things are right, nothing wrong, I just mention it to the person, or persons; if we can change something for the better, we do. But generally the operation is very stereo, especially on the ship. There's only one way to do it. There's no really ... There's not a lot of variations on the ship. Here at Marion, of course it can vary, being on the land. So, that's basically what happens. And once we get all the passengers gone, then the cargo gets going, and then either we relocate to the island – which we've done now – or we've also spent time on the ship, but they found that, being on the ship, times tend to be that that the sea is rough and you can't get off, and vice versa – that the sea is fine and then the land is

bad; you know, the weather's bad on the land. So, they opt we're here; rather we stay on the land.

Q: Now what do you do when you're on land, after you've finished working?

A: After we finished working? Well, basically DVD ... ! There's not a helluva lot here! DVDs, read – whenever I come with the ships, I read quite a lot; I don't read at home at all. And we just ... we go round to the pub now and again.

Q: Hang around?

A: Yes, hang around.

Q: Do you get a lot of opportunity to go walking?

A: No. The guys went walking the other day. But if it's engineering wise – those are what we call technical assistance – they're not here, it's not a bid deal, but the engineering wise, no. The guys will rather stay close by, you know, in case they're needed here.

Q: Because are you mostly on standby anyway?

A: You're on standby during the day, yes; anything can go on.

Q: Now, before you came down to Marion and Gough and SANAE, what did you know about the places?

A: The very first time I don't think I knew anything about ... well, Antarctic. We went down the first trip we went down, we went down on a Russian ship.

Q: Oh?

A: You know? And I mean, my first thoughts were, what clothes do I take? Does the fuel freeze? What do you do about fuel? You know, things like that. Marion I didn't know much about. But once we got here and the operation got going, it was fairly straightforward. And again, the same with Gough: it was also very straightforward. But it's a ... Marion and Gough are what I call working trips. SANAE is more ... we're more of search and rescue standby, although we do do a fair bit of flying, but not as much as we do on the islands.

Q: Yes, because you tend to fly around the islands ... that kind of thing?

A: Yes. We do more flying here than there.

Q: And do you think your time working on SANAE first, sort of prepared you for working with the others?

A: Yes, I think SANAE is a very good ... call it training school, because of the cold and the different weather. Marion's the same. I mean, it's not as cold, but the weather here varies so much. We've flown around the corner here and we had to turn around

and come back; you know, that's how, that's how the weather can be. It looks good from here, but on the other side it's not good; not good, no. No.

Q: Yes, on the other side of the mountain it's a completely different story. And did you have any experience with ice ... ?

A: Previously? No. No, not at all.

Q: So you've all gained it ...?

A: Not other than being in Switzerland on leave! That was about it!

Q: Now describe your preparations you need to do before you come on a trip like this.

A: Well, again logistics: any any spares we need; any consumables, like, for example, rags, oil, stuff like that – torch batteries, DVDs, black DVDs; stuff like that; printing ink for the printers ... I look into all that. The aircraft – we find out how many hours we're going probably fly and we try to do a servicing up to that amount of hours, so we have the least to do here; nothing big comes up here – we're not really at a big facility, where we can get stuff readily through DHL or anyone like that!

Q: So do you generally fly parts down along as spares?

A: No. We bring all of our own stuff. What we haven't got, then we don't have – that's basically it. So you got to really look into all the bits and pieces that ...

Q: You've really got to prepare, otherwise you're going to end ... ?

A: Yes, that's it.

Q: I've heard stories of a plane sort of breaking down, or at least a chopper breaking down, and then having to wait a long while for things ...

A: Yes, in Antarctic, I think the one ... two helicopters ended up spending a year there, stuck in the ice somehow.

A: Luckily, here, we've been lucky ... and also, we've got a decent facility here to work in. So ...

Q: It's a brilliant hangar that you've got here.

A: Yes; no, this place has been really sorted out. It's beautiful, yes.

Q: How is the new hangar compared to the old one?

A: I didn't know the old one. The older one is actually the middle, where we're sitting now.

Q: Oh, really?!

A: This part, through the middle, it was the old hangar; yes.

Q: Oh, did they build it over ... ?

- A:** Yes, they left it ... The middle hangar here could only take one helicopter.
- Q:** Oh, I see.
- A:** In other words, what they've done, is just build over the whole thing and make two hangars out of it; yes.
- Q:** Now the ship journey down ... You said your first trip was on a Russian ship?
- A:** A Russian ship, yes.
- Q:** And then? Was it just the Agulhas from then?
- A:** Yes. We came down on the fregat the first year; then the second year we went down on the Agulhas, and back on the Lance – which was a Norwegian ship.
- Q:** Why?
- A:** Because we were seconded to the Norwegians, that trip.
- Q:** Oh?
- A:** Yes. The first trip, we were seconded to the Finnish base; to the Fins. The second trip, we were seconded to the Norwegians, so we went down on the Agulhas. We got off at the Norwegian DML – Droning Queen Maud Land; they took the helicopter off by crane; put her on the ice; put the blades back on, and off we went. And then we had a very interesting trip.
- Q:** What did you do?
- A:** Well, we worked a lot with two professors with seals. They were doing a lot of surveys on Leopard seals, because there were ... they didn't know the movement of Leopard seals. And it just was a very, very interesting trip. And I mean, the Norwegians that they had there, they were also diving under the ice, getting the all the various little noonoo's and bits and pieces off there, for research. And just ... Yes, it was just an interesting trip. And everything ... We actually stayed on the ice, in two huts, for seven days – myself and the pilot, and the two professors. And then at 11 o' clock, we'd take off and fly out, see where we could find a Leopard seal or something, land on the ice floe. They were darted, measured; take blood samples – whatever needed to be ... whatever professors do with seals, here! And then they would inject them again obviously, make sure that it was alright; it went back into the water and off we'd go again. And we'd get back about 3 in the afternoon, and there we are. That was the day; but very, very interesting.
- Q:** Now, generally on the sea journeys down, what do you do?
- A:** Read. I read a lot. I always find some little bits and pieces ... I've always got something to do; always make a point of that. I mean, all the time I've been here, I don't think I've ever been bored yet.

- Q:** Has anything of interest ever happened on any of the trips down, to any of the bases?
- A:** Not on the ship, but the one year we were on Marion, and at about 10 at night, they recalled us back to the ship: pack all your kit quickly, there's a ship in distress, or a yacht in distress.
- A:** So we relocated from here on to the ship and off we went, because they still had to sail for two days to get there.
- A:** So once they got close enough, off we went in the Bell 212 towards the yacht. We took Gavin, who's now the present captain – he was the chief mate – and the medic, Tom; a guy by the name of Tom, a paramedic. We got close there; we hoisted them down into the water and they swam to the yacht, both of them; got on the yacht – because there'd been quite a lot of injuries there ... Well, there were 3 people on there, and one guy had cracked his hip or broken his hip; the other guy had a mean scar on his head – I'd never seen a scar like that in my life; it was ugly; and the lady that was on there was quite bruised from being beaten around. One guy went overboard; he was washed overboard and his raft went after him, so they were hoping that maybe the raft had, blow itself up and he'd caught that. Anyway, they got the people back on, and the yacht they just left to float off. And then the following day, we did a big group search of a big area with the two helicopters and the ship doing a criss-cross, so we covered the whole area, but I'm sorry to say we never found anything. I suppose after that period of time it was ...
- Q:** Too late.
- A:** You know, the storm they went through was really, really bad; yes.
- Q:** Now, your first thoughts when you arrived at the islands ... Because you've now explained a bit about SANAE, but ...
- A:** For the very first time?
- Q:** Yes.
- A:** It was interesting; it's just ... It was a lot of work, and I just found it an interesting island; just interesting to be at, because it was work again. As I say, it's ... When we came to the island, we walked to Ship's Cove, which I'll never go to again, because I sank up to my knees in bog! It was a bit of a letdown, in that way. But we walked to Trypot and been around; seen the seals. The whole place is just interesting. It's kind of ... it's historic. It's just a nice 'olde world' type thing. But I enjoyed the island. And then the first time when we were supposed to stay on the island, I was a bit hesitant. I thought I don't want to stay here, really; it's kind of ... But once I got to stay here, I've actually enjoyed it. I actually really enjoyed staying on the island, I must admit.

You're not restricted, as you are on ship. As much as you're on the ship, at least here you can walk around. We have got little radios with us, which we call our 'Micky Mouse' radios – it's just radios between our group, so if you are required, they can always get a hold of you, you know. It's quite easy.

Q: If there's need ... And Gough, did you get to stay on Gough as well?

A: No, Gough is too small. There's only one helipad on Gough and there's only ... The base is very small there. I think the complement of people is only 8 there. It may only be 10 or so here at times, but ... And there's no huts or anything around the island at all. Gough is just ... you just go and work, that's it. And then ... Normally, they do what they want to do, and then you go you have to the buoy runs; so you end up staying on the ship again, but it's okay. It's not a ... A lot of it is a mindset. You've got to put your mind to it that I'm there for 35 days, and that's it. There's no ways I'm hopping on a train and going home. So, you know, you've just got to keep yourself busy, or just keep your mind on doing what you've got to do. If you want to sleep every day, well, then sleep. It's up to you.

Q: Yes, when you've finished work, you must do something ...

A: Yes, entirely.

Q: Okay. Now, what do you enjoy about your work with SANAE and the islands?

A: I just enjoy ... I enjoy aircraft. I enjoy helicopter and I enjoy working on them. I enjoy the work. I enjoy some of the people we meet. I enjoy the group of guys that we get together, you know. And it ... The whole beauty ... The thing is, you don't **have** to go if they go the bar; you don't have to go down, and no one sort of says anything to you, you know, kind of 'why weren't you there?' If you don't want to go, you don't have to go. It's up to you. I just enjoy the work.

Q: Brilliant. And what's the worst thing, the most challenging thing about working in ... ?

A: I think preparation when we're at home, because I'm sort of the only engineer that's doing the running around. And you know, when you're running around, you're also ... you're trying to service the helicopter; trying to get spares together ... Then something else comes up and you've got to divert ... Like last time: we had to ... the helicopter from our ship's service base was unserviceable, so they had to use our helicopter – I call it "our" helicopter, because it's always with us on the island. So now that's gone away now, now you're kind of ... how many hours are they going to fly? When it comes back, what more work do I have to do? You know, it's kind of a bit unnerving. But it all comes together, you know; eventually it all comes together.

Q: Briefly describe the team that comes down, that you work with?

A: The team is, they guys that are here, they vary. I must admit, we've had guys that we would rather not have on here, but the company's giving everyone a turn, you know, which is fair enough. The guys, I think, are fairly compatible. The pilots we get on with, they're good pilots; they fly well. Engineering, everyone gets on with everything. You know, the guys ... if they need a hand on the Kamov or the 212, the guys are always willing to help, you know. The two technical assistants we've got here, they're both aircraft experienced. I'd say they've worked with aircraft – they've not worked *on* aircraft; worked *with* aircraft. So it's quite good, that we haven't got a person, like we had on SANAE last time, who'd never worked on an aircraft in his life; kind of had never seen a helicopter; you know, he was kind of brought to me at the last minute, because our one chap that we had here, he got a job with the SA Express, so at the last minute, he left, which was a pity.

Q: And you had to replace him?

A: Yes. It's something that you've got to have people that are compatible and who can get on with each other. That's the main thing. And it seems to ... In all the years, I must admit, it seems to have worked. We seem to get on well together, yes.

Q: And now speaking about getting on with people, you've spent a lot of time ... had to do a lot of trips down with the construction workers ...

A: (Yes.)

Q: How was that?

A: It was good. I like the PWD. I've got a lot of time for them. I think they're amazing people. I mean, look at the work they've done.

Q: Yes, that's true.

A: I mean really, you know. And I've seen the base come up from ground level ... and the hassles they had – I just cannot believe how many hassles they had. And whoever were the people bringing in the construction stuff in from – they need a boot up the butt, I tell you, because there were some real *faux pas* on there. But they just get on with it; they just get on with it. And they work long hours; I mean, they work really long hours. But they're always the same, they're always there; they always greet you; they always seem to be smiling. They're a good bunch of people, yes.

Q: And the different team members? 'Cause obviously you've had a lot of trips down over many years ... many teams.

A: Yes. It's only certain team members that sort of mix with us or bother with us. And it's probably people we've seen a lot of times. We get some of them, they just don't bother with us, you know – we're nothing to do with them and they're nothing to do

with us. Rather, they come on the helicopter; we drop them off, we pick them up ... that's it; finish and done with, yes.

Q: And you don't see them again really?

A: Yes.

Q: Now you said that you've seen the base rise from the ground up. How do you think the two bases, the old base on Marion and the new one, compare?

A: Well, the new one is very modern. I mean, it's something like out of space wars, you know ... *Star Wars*. The old base had a lot of character. I actually had a walk through it the other day, and it's quite weird, because there's nothing in there now; it's quite empty. But it still holds a lot of memories in there. I mean, the rooms were so small and ... It just was nice.

Q: You had an opportunity to stay there?

A: Yes, yes. I stayed there three times; I stayed in the old base three times, yes.

Q: Where did you stay? Sandton Squatters? seaview?

A: No, there's seaview and no seaview ... And we stayed in no seaview, which is the other side!

Q: Oh yes, I think that's Sandton?

A: No, seaview and no seaview. No. You look at the radio room, in other words 'no seaview'. Yes, at Squatters ... it was nice. The new base is very nice. Again, we're not staying there; we're staying at the hangar. This hangar is sort of our base now and it's actually very, very nice. We're self-contained. We're right here if ... when flying is on and all that. So ...

Q: This is also the E-Base, right?

A: That's correct. This is the emergency base.

Q: Okay. Now, what events do you recall that have happened during your time? Any incidents that happened in your involvement with the program? You told me sort of a bit about the yacht ...

A: Yes, we had that yacht rescue ... Antarctic, the one year we went down, they just no sooner fly some people onto the South African base, and they ... some guy hopped on a skidoo and zoomed off to do whatever he was doing; went over the edge of a cliff and fell 150 m to his death. There was that, which was very sad. What the circumstances were, again, I don't know. I heard he had not good eyesight, but again, he should never have been on a skidoo, because you're meant to do a course before you ... you know, competency, before you do. The other time, we went down ... Well, we were coming back from Gough and one of the guys had been killed there

while they were climbing. Some ice or something hit him on the head. Johan Jamneck – he was a weather guy; a very, very nice guy. I knew him on Marion, when he was here for the year; he was a really, incredibly nice person, so that was quite sad. Not that we had anything to do with it, but we had to fly the body back the body to the Norwegian base; to catch the plane home as such.

Q: Okay.

A: Otherwise, not much. Incident wise, Antarctic has been very tame compared to those two; yes.

Q: And when you go to SANAE, you actually stay in the SANAE base?

A: Yes, we stay in the main base; yes.

Q: So the base is big enough? You don't have to stay on the ship while you're there?

A: No, they've got two hangars there. It's ... Well, you can't stay on the ship and work at SANAE base, because from our ... from the South African bukta it's 45 minutes flying, and now it's down to South Africa ... Now we go to the German base, bukta, and that's like an hour or something, so, you know, we have to stay there; yes.

Q: So at least you can stay there. Now, what is it like ... Could you compare the different bases and how it is living in them – SANAE and Marion and ...

A: Yes. SANAE's also got two enormous hangars, which is nice. The aircraft can go in; the Kamov cannot go; it's too tall.

Q: Oh?

A: It's just one of those things. It wasn't built for that, you know? SANAE's nice; I mean, you can walk around in shorts and slops and T-shirts inside – it's about 18, 19°.

Q: Oh?

A: If you're working in the hangar and the door's open a bit or it's a windy day or something, you'll get cold. You've got to wear cold weather gear. The accommodation is very nice. They've got a couple of chefs down there; the food is good. The people are good. There's a nice library. There's a very big DVD room there, which they've got a big screen on.

Q: Oh, wow!

A: That's quite nice. So when you watch, it's like a proper movie. It's very nice. Marion, again, I prefer, because it's a bit more active. You're more ... You could be to yourself as well; you can go for a walk or if you need, be with someone. Antarctic, you could go for a walk as well, but you need to be with someone – you've got to sign out; you've got to know where you're going. And the weather can close in within half an hour, an hour. So you know ...

- Q:** And did you ever get an opportunity to walk around on Gough?
- A:** No. Gough, we've only ever been to the helipad. All the times I've been there, I've only ever flown one person into the interior as such, but we've flown to Inaccessible Island ...
- Q:** Oh?
- A:** That was interesting. We actually flew and dropped some people on top. They were cutting out some of the alien grass. And it was very beautiful up there – some lovely waterfalls and pools and things up there.
- Q:** Oh wow!
- A:** Yes. But otherwise, not much. Tristan da Cunha of course ...
- Q:** Yes ...
- A:** When you're there, that's a very interesting place to have a walk around.
- Q:** Tell me about Tristan.
- A:** Tristan's nice. The graveyard's very interesting, because, I know it sounds silly, but the graves date back to, you know, quite far back and things like that. Nice sheep ... It's always beautiful and green, because it's got crappy weather, like in England, you know. Quite a rugged looking area. You can also walk up to the volcano that went off in 1961. It still sort of ... you can still smell the sulphur there.
- Q:** Really? Oh my goodness. And the people? What are the... ?
- A:** The people ... *Ag*, I didn't mix much with the people; I only knew one of two of them, but they're sort of very to themselves. I think they, you'll probably find they're very shy people, because they're in a community, and that's it. The dogs even look very different to the rest of the dogs in the world, I think!
- A:** They've also got one, only one, bus stop.
- Q:** Oh, really?
- A:** Yes. And there's never a bus anyway! Everyone goes and has a photo by the bus stop.
- Q:** Yes ... And they have cars and ... ?
- A:** Yes, they've got cars and everything. We dropped a Citi Golf off the one year, and that night they pranged it! That was ... ! It's still sitting there, yes. They've got quite a nice little superette there, but everything's in pounds, of course; so if you haven't got pounds ... You know, if you've got to pay in rand, you going to pay through the nose. They've got ... They make some beautiful wool jerseys and stuff like that.
- Q:** Oh?

A: They make them ... because of all the sheep they've got. And a lot of the sheep are actually wild. They live up on in the hills. They actually go up and shoot them.

Q: Wow!

A: They can't just catch them. There are domestic and there are wild ones, yes.

A: And around the island ... it's very interesting; very rugged. Yes.

Q: And did you do a lot of fishing when you were there?

A: I didn't; I'm not a fisherman.

Q: Oh, you're not a fisherman?

A: But I enjoy watching the guys coming in, bringing in what they bring. And the guys brought in quite a lot of stuff, I must admit. One year ... Last year, I believe, wasn't so good. I didn't go last year.

Q: Okay, no; Barries told me about the fishing. That's why I'm asking.

A: Yes.

Q: How is it like working with the DEA through ... well, it used to be DEAT, but DEA now ... through the whole term? The SANAP program?

A: Also DEA I get along well with. There's a good bunch of people amongst there as well, you know. They've got to know me over the years; they got to know us over the years. And I get on very well with them. Never a problem, I must admit; no. Not at all.

Q: Now can you think of any historical events that you missed while you were either at SANAE or Gough, or here at Marion?

A: Any ... ?

Q: Any historical events ...

A: Not really ... I can't think of ... no.

Q: Nothing?

A: No, I don't think so; no.

Q: Okay. Now why do you think having bases in Antarctica and on Marion and on Gough is important?

A: I don't know why they've got a base on the Antarctic, to be quite honest; because I don't really know what the hell they do there. I still try to figure it out. I know it sounds silly, but I don't know what they do there. I know, besides like [Jen] looks for bugs and things under rocks and stuff, you know, okay fine. But what other people do, I don't know. It's actually a bit beyond me. I don't know. Marion: *ja* okay; there's

more to it. I mean, there's more animal life; there's more say plant life and everything, obviously compared to the Antarctic. So there's a lot more to do here. So yes, I think this is, this is the place for research if they're doing it, and also being our South African weather station, I think ...

Q: And Gough?

A: Gough ... I don't know. As I say, we've only ever flown one party inland, so I don't really know what they do there. And we've not been on the land long enough to talk to people. You don't ... I don't know.

Q: And now, what are the most common misconceptions about ... and South Africa , at least, about the bases, and SANAE and Marion and Gough?

A: Well, I think, when you tell them you're going to Antarctic, they all ... 'ooh, that's lovely; that's super!' And I think the one girlie in our stores asked me to bring her back something from one of the shops ... So they don't actually realise that there is nothing there. You know, I mean, they talk about the Antarctic, and they don't realise that there's nothing; nothing there. And the distances between most of the bases, with the exception of the German and the Norwegian base, are so great that you just can't go and nip off to get there. Marion Island ... of course, they think it's all girls in grass skirts and hula-hula and everything, you know ...

Q: Yes, because they hear "island" ...

A: And that kind of thing, you know. Again, they don't realise that the weather's ... As you've seen yourself, the weather, over a couple of days, can be completely different. And also the weather in one day: we've had four weathers in one day, you know. So they don't realise that.

Q: Gough?

A: I don't think people really know about Gough.

Q: Yes.

A: I'll be honest with you. Marion is probably the most common that they know about. Gough ... some of the guys know about – probably our stores guys, because we deal with them. But if other people ... I don't know. I didn't know about Gough in the beginning either; I hadn't a clue. I hadn't the faintest where we were.

Q: Okay, so you ...?

A: Yes, now I know; yes! That's basically it.

Q: Good. Describe Antarctica, Marion and Gough.

A: Antarctica is just ... it's all white. Now it's sounds stupid. The first thing I thought about a map of Antarctic was just a big sheet of white paper, you know. Obviously

not ... It's very interesting when you get amongst the mountains that ... because it just breaks up that pure whiteness the whole time. No animals of course, except penguins; and seals, if you're dealing with seals, but that's right by the coast. Certain places we have been, with the Fins, we went to a place called [Svea]. It's actually very beautiful; it's a big blue ice area with a big plateau, which from there on you actually heads towards ... to the South Pole.

Q: Oh wow!

A: But it's actually very beautiful, and the rocks there are just so different. I don't know much about rocks, but ... Even I said to one of the geologists, and he agrees with me. He said that they really are fantastic. And also the Finnish base of course is up on a, up on a hill; it's about 500 m up on a hill, so that's quite interesting, and you're really like in the bush. You know, you really are. And also, right next to that, there's also quite a high uphill, and the one geologist said that the rocks they found there are the same as they found in Natal.

Q: Really?!

A: Yes. So that was quite interesting to hear that; yes. Marion ... I like Marion; again, because it's more down to earth. There's more greenery. There's ... okay, no trees, but there's greenery and there's a bit more life here. Things happen here. And Gough again; again, they have got trees. We have been to some of the beaches there to have a look at seals and that, but you know, once you've been, you've been there, done that. And that's it. Gough is not an interesting island. Nice looking, but not interesting, no.

Q: Is there anything else that you'd like to add about your involvement with the SANAP program and your flights ... ?

A: No, not really. I just ... I like working on them; I like to work it. I like coming to Marion; I like going to Gough. As I say, it's a working, working trip. That's the main thing. SANAE's fine; yes. Okay, but we've got to do it; you've got to do it.

A: And again, going to SANAE, you know, you get people there that are really ... cannot handle the cold, and that's it. And I really feel for them. I won't say that I'm great on cold, but I know in Cape Town, if it's a hot day, I really ... I really ... I'm shitting off, I tell you! I really do. And that's it; yes.

Q: Fantastic. Thank you very much!