

Antarctic Deep Freeze Oral History Project
Interview with Conrad "Gus" Shinn, LCDR, USN (Ret.)
conducted on May 11, 1999, by Dian O. Belanger

DOB: Today is the 11th of May, 1999. I'm Dian Belanger and I'm speaking with Gus Shinn about his experiences as a pilot during Operation Deep Freeze.

Good morning, Gus, and thanks for talking with me.

GS: Good morning, Dian. It's a pleasure to see you.

DOB: I'd like you to begin, Gus, by telling me just briefly something about your background. I'm interested in where you grew up, where you went to school, what you decided to do with your life, and in particular anything from all of that that might suggest you'd end up flying in a place as exotic as Antarctica.

GS: Well, I was born in North Carolina, 1922, in a small textile town. Actually there were three towns: Leaksville, Spray, and Draper. We worked in the mills. My father was a YMCA secretary. We lived right across the street. In that day, the peons lived at the bottom of the hill, and as they moved on up they had running water in the houses. My father lived near the top of the hill across from the YMCA.

I always wanted to fly. Lindbergh was my hero, Wiley Post, Frank Hawks, that group. In order to be able to fly we had to go to school in aeronautical engineering during that day. So I went to North Carolina State College in aeronautical engineering, and it became obvious that the war was coming along, so I became a civilian student, student pilot training. From there the war came, and so it was.

DOB: You were in the war then, in World War II.

GS: Yes.

DOB: As a pilot?

GS: Yes. One of the steps into the Antarctic operation was my flying out of Honolulu in VR-11; we went down to Manus Island in the Solomons Group. The executive officer was an officer by the name of Trigger Hawkes, and I got to know Trigger. We talked about all sorts of things. When the war was over, we both came back to Washington, and I wanted to be doing something else. So he came over and asked me if I'd like to do something different, and I did and he said, "Well, I'll see what's going on." A few months later he came by and said, "Do you want to go to Antarctica?" I said, "Sure." So the orders were cut; that's the way it happened.

DOB: Why did you want to go to Antarctica?

GS: Just to get out of doing the usual things every day. During the war we were busy all the time. After the war they didn't really know what to do with us. I went to Anacostia

where we sat in the ready-room when not flying. The duties weren't demanding, so I just wanted to go.

DOB: Well, do you think that that was why the Operation Highjump was organized for Antarctica, to give people something to do?

GS: Well, they had a lot of equipment not being used. I do think that was a problem. They had the *Philippine Sea* sitting in Norfolk. She needed a shakedown cruise, and that's what we went down on. We loaded the R4Ds on the carrier, and we flew off the carrier when we were some hours away from Little America.

DOB: Okay. How much did you know about Antarctica before you went there?

GS: Very little. Almost no one knew about Antarctica then. I think I'd heard of Scott and Mawson and those people. There was very little known about Antarctica then; it was just a place to go. We were a group of pilots with orders and away we went.

DOB: And you got to the ice on a carrier?

GS: We flew off the carrier and landed on the ice at Little America. We made flights out of Little America for about a month. When the time came to go, we parked the airplanes on the ice and jumped aboard an icebreaker and sailed north.

DOB: And left the planes.

GS: Left the airplanes.

DOB: And what happened to them?

GS: Well, several years later an expedition went down called Windmill, I believe, and they saw parts of the airplanes sticking out of the ice shelf. The area had broken out; part of it had gone to sea and part of it was still there. So it had broken off right on our flight line.

DOB: They didn't use any aircraft carriers during Deep Freeze or anytime later, did they?

GS: No.

DOB: Why not?

GS: Well, I don't think it would've been practical. We could fly down to be land based, and the carrier would've been inadequate, really, because they would've had to stay outside the ice pack. We could not operate using transport aircraft from carriers.

DOB: I see. So they didn't get very close.

GS: You mean the *Philippine Sea*, the ship we flew from? Perhaps four hundred miles or so. We launched outside the ice pack.

DOB: Wouldn't it be awfully hard to . . . no. I was going to say to take off and land on a carrier—

GS: We couldn't do it. We could only take off.

DOB: Oh.

GS: It had never been done before with aircraft the size of our R4Ds. We were the first. Remember when Doolittle flew off the *Hornet*? It was the first time I think the B-25s had ever flown off. He couldn't come back any more than we could've come back to the *Phil Sea*.

DOB: So the idea was you would not attempt to recover the planes.

GS: That's right. The idea is that we were on a one-way flight.

DOB: And you'd hope somebody would be there to take you home. Okay. What kind of planes did you have in Operation Highjump?

GS: Oh, in Highjump. We had R4Ds, the military version of the commercial type DC-3. And you know, there were two other groups—the East Group and the West Group—of seaplanes. They had PBMs. They were operating off seaplane tenders.

DOB: What's a PBM?

GS: Well, it's a patrol bomber built by Martin—PBM. One of those crashed down there during that operation.

DOB: I read that Highjump was the first time that helicopters were used in Antarctica.

GS: I guess so, but they really weren't used very much because they couldn't do anything. They were so crippled with lack of power. I think they got into the air, but not much else.

DOB: The helicopters are very important now.

GS: Oh, absolutely.

DOB: What's the difference?

GS: Sixty years of development. Helicopters were just in their infancy then. They were not useful.

DOB: Okay. And that was the first time that large wheeled and ski-equipped aircraft were launched from a carrier and landed on the ice.

GS: Yes, I think so.

DOB: Now Byrd had planes on the ice but they were brought by ship. Is that right?

GS: In his earlier expeditions he had Ford trimotor and twin Beechcraft and single-engine aircraft. It was quite marvelous the way he took them down and lifted them off and got them going. He did a good job.

DOB: What was your particular responsibility in Operation Highjump?

GS: Pilot. Just to fly.

DOB: What kind of missions?

GS: We flew photographic missions.

DOB: Tell me how that works.

GS: Well, we had what they call the trimetrogon camera system. It shot out the sides at an angle and also straight down, and the cameras were synchronized. Ostensibly, you're supposed to be able to make maps from these shots, but that wasn't possible because we didn't know where we were most of the time. You had to operate from a known position, a benchmark. Because we didn't really know where we were and the navigation was so unsatisfactory, we got a lot of pictures to look at.

DOB: What were they pictures of?

GS: Ice and snow and water and mountains—the continent. The idea was to map the continent, but we couldn't do it. The equipment wasn't sufficient.

DOB: Were those not used in Operation Windmill? They went back and found some points of reference and—

GS: I can't say to that. I heard that they tried that, but that would be a very tricky business to tie in our photographs with something after the fact, because we didn't know where we were starting from. It was a tricky business.

DOB: Well, there are boxes and boxes and boxes of those photographs at the Archives.

GS: Have you seen some?

DOB: Not in detail.

GS: I pulled a bunch of those in '47 from the photographic lab at Anacostia, and they are good pictures. But where are you, you don't know.

DOB: Were those cameras, did they operate automatically so that you would just take a photograph every so often?

GS: Yes, when you turned them on they started taking pictures at a certain interval, the three were synchronized. They'd all have to take a picture at the same time.

DOB: So you'd get a panorama—

GS: Panorama, yes.

DOB: And how often? Like every few minutes or every half—

GS: I wouldn't have any idea, but I imagine in a matter of seconds. It would have to be.

DOB: So then you'd have to fly a particular route?

GS: I suppose ideally you'd be flying a true course and a constant altitude. But the problem was that the continent is quite high down there, and the equipment just wouldn't go up high enough to fly a constant track and altitude. It was not good. They did the best they could. Now you have the satellites and they can do it.

DOB: Yes. How far inland did you go?

GS: Oh, we were past the South Pole, I suppose a thousand miles, something like that.

DOB: Did you spend more time on the coastal areas?

GS: No, we spent most time over the continent. Operations would draw a track for us. It'd be a triangle pattern. We'd go out and make a leg and come back, and that would be it.

DOB: When you look back on that Highjump experience—

GS: It was great.

DOB: —what stands out in your mind about it?

GS: Well, you think about the takeoff from the carrier. Any sort of problem, you'd land in the water, you know, and that's pretty—that's the finish.

DOB: How many planes did take off from the ship?

GS: Six.

DOB: Six. And they all made it?

GS: Yes, with varying degrees of difficulty and so forth.

DOB: It must be difficult to get up enough speed.

GS: I think one of the Marines had some engine trouble. Actually, takeoff was simple because I think we had about thirty-five knots over the deck. The airplanes took off in a couple hundred feet. A couple of fuselage lengths maybe. No problem.

DOB: What else? Well, something that was particularly satisfying or that you were proud of or was funny or . . . ?

GS: Well, the operations officer, who was Trigger Hawkes, had a leading part in Highjump and also in Deep Freeze. It was all put together so quickly, there was no time for training. I think it was in November he said, "Take an airplane, get a set of skis and go up someplace and test these skis. See if they'll work." So we were ready to deploy, and they didn't know whether or not the skis would really work or not.

DOB: So you didn't have a chance to test them.

GS: I did, but he just said, "Take the airplane or take the keys to the car and go." We went up to Edmonton, Alberta, and we did the test work up there. We took some of the American Ski Company representatives from Minneapolis with us. We did some tests and proved the skis would work, and came back and said, "Yes, they'll work."

DOB: And did they when you got there?

GS: Oh yes, they worked. Admiral Byrd was very concerned about whether they would work or not and whether the airplane would get off the carrier. He used to have me down in his stateroom for dinners, and he said, "You really think you're going to get off? You really think so?"

DOB: And you did.

GS: No problem.

DOB: Now is this a combination ski and wheel?

GS: In that day it was a combination. Sorry you don't have a picture of it.

DOB: I do, I think. But describe it for me.

GS: The ski hung off the axle of the wheel, and there was a manual mechanism that permitted raising and lowering the ski in relation to the wheel. Taking off from a carrier, we raised the ski in relation to the wheel and took off on wheels. When we got to Little America, we landed in that position, and then we took the wheels off and operated as a pure ski. It was manageable, but it wasn't a good deal.

Later on in Deep Freeze, instead of manually lifting the ski in relation to the wheel, we had a hydraulic system. So from the cockpit you'd flip a lever that would lower the ski in relation to the wheel. If you wanted to land on the ice runway, we would raise the ski and land on the McMurdo Bay ice. If we wanted to use the ski strip, we'd just lower the ski in relation to the wheel and land on skis. So all our work on the continent was done with the ski down position.

DOB: And the pictures that I've seen show the wheel kind of at an indentation in the ski. Is that how they were then, too?

GS: Yes.

DOB: Okay. You mentioned that there was very little planning time for Operation Highjump.

GS: Practically none.

DOB: What problems resulted from that?

GS: Well, I suppose it's supply problems and logistics and . . . all the problems of getting a bunch of pilots together and sending them out in the same direction, because I'm not sure now where all the pilots came from or how qualified they were. No pilot had had any time on ski; I was the only one. And I was only experienced slightly because of my escapade in Edmonton. So everybody, with the exception of myself, when they landed on the ice shelf at Little America, this was their first experience. So you can imagine the problems.

DOB: Oh my. How many pilots were there?

GS: I would be guessing, but about eighteen including pilot navigators. All our navigators were also pilots.

DOB: I see. Well, the logistics of maintaining this huge force—and it was the biggest one we ever sent down there—must have been amazing. You had to keep nearly five thousand people alive and comfortable in a climate and an environment that contributes nothing to health. How did that work?

GS: Well, most of it was seaborne. You had, I think it was, two supply ships, and you had the command ship, which was the *Mount Olympus*. It was a wartime ship. It was used for communications; it had all this stuff on it. And I believe those are the only three ships

that made it down. We had a submarine, the submarine *Sennet*, I believe. The conning tower was damaged in the ice and had to go back home. It was before the day of the atomic submarine.

But with the exception of the people who were on the ice and that were supporting the air operation, everyone else was on the water. They went back early. They didn't stay down but just a short period, several weeks. By the time we left, the icebreaker had to come in and get us. The icebreaker was on a shakedown cruise—the icebreaker *Burton Island*. So she just nosed up against the ice and we jumped aboard and we shoved off.

DOB: So how long were you there altogether . . . about?

GS: I did bring my logbook.

[Pause in recording]

GS: We were on the ice about a month from the time we landed till the time we were lifted off by the icebreaker.

DOB: So the whole operation was only a month?

GS: On the ice, yes. I think that's reasonably accurate.

DOB: Okay. But most of the people who were down there were living on the ship?

GS: Yes. Only those people who needed to be on the ice were on the ice.

DOB: And they were in tents?

GS: Yes. There are pictures of that that you should see. There were maybe forty tents all in a pattern. And that's where we were.

DOB: So there was no attempt to make more permanent housing?

GS: No. Not like the Byrd stations of previous years that were still there under the ice when we got there in Highjump.

DOB: Did you go and see them?

GS: Yes. We went down through a ventilator and saw the old stoves and the old food—the living quarters. It's a typical thing that people do.

DOB: What was the purpose of Highjump?

GS: Gee, I don't know. [Chuckles] I think a bunch of people just wanted to do something. I don't know what the official line would be on that.

DOB: Well, they talked about Arctic training and—

GS: And cold-weather training. But American forces had already had training in the Arctic in Greenland and Iceland and Newfoundland. I don't know. I think it was just an excuse to do something.

DOB: Well, all right. But then moving on from that, between Operation Windmill—which followed Highjump, and that ended in 1948—and 1955 when Operation Deep Freeze began, there was nothing going on down there, and that's an equal puzzle for me.

GS: Well, there was nothing going on on the American side—the United States. There was plenty going on in the Argentine and Chile; I think they had stations down there permanently even then. And I'm not sure about the English and I'm not sure about the Australians. But we didn't have anything going.

DOB: Why not, do you think?

GS: I just don't think the operation in the Arctic and the Antarctic was popular in the U.S. government, for whatever reason.

DOB: Any speculation why?

GS: Yes. It wasn't a feature of combat. The Navy has a tilt toward warships and fighter planes, and they denigrate cargo ships and aircraft lifters and all this stuff. It's not romantic; it's not sexy.

DOB: Interesting. Adm. Richard Byrd, then, was in charge of Operation Highjump.

GS: Right.

DOB: Or at least he had technical control over it.

GS: Well, he did seem to control that operation. Do you have the name of the other admiral there?

DOB: Cruzen.

GS: Yes, Cruzen. He was behind the scenes, but at any time when Admiral Byrd was aboard, he was out front with PR. So perhaps Admiral Cruzen was—and I'm sure he was a man behind the scenes, and Admiral Byrd was necessary.

DOB: What was he necessary for?

GS: To give it the right élan, you know, panache. I knew Admiral Byrd rather well.

DOB: Tell me about him.

GS: Did you see the thing that TV did on him recently? It may have been a PBS program.

DOB: I saw part of one.

GS: It was right on. It wasn't hero worship. It told it like it was. I cheered and I called up someone who knew Admiral Byrd and they said, "Finally they got it right." So if they just play that back, they will know the real Admiral Byrd.

He lived in the days of flying to Paris, he was competing with Lindbergh, and except for a day or two, why Byrd may have been the one to do it first. They were all up there at Long Island.

Admiral Byrd was a PR man. He had to be because he lived in the day of the scarf, the riding breeches, and the high laced boots. He was a terrific guy. Handsome. He had this PR thing that he needed to get money. He had to get money to go down to Antarctica on the first couple of cruises. Only on the last one was the Navy interested, because they were faced with war and the operations of the Germans in Antarctica. So that was the only reason that we were interested.

He was very enthusiastic about everything. As an explorer he blew everything up. We were on a flight when far in the distance we could see something, a smudge, a cloud. "Oh!

It's a mountain range! It's another mountain range!" I said, "Admiral, I don't know what it is." "Put it in the map!" We were flying with a flat map. We didn't know where anything was, so he wanted to draw in a mountain range. If a mountain range got drawn in, it wasn't there, of course.

But he was a very courageous man. He was on the first R4D off the carrier. So he was courageous. But he was also a very fearful man. We had him once on a flight; Captain Hawkes was the skipper and I was the copilot. We had fuselage tanks to supplement the wing tanks, and the skipper told me to turn the fuselage tanks on so we would start using fuel out of those tanks. Somehow the flexible fuel line from the tank to the engines had become disconnected, and when I turned the valve to transfer fuel through these lines, the fuel came gushing out all over the cabin. The poor guy just went berserk. He started screaming, "We're going to blow up! We're going to blow up!" He started running back and forth.

DOB: He lost his cool.

GS: That's the only time I saw him hysterical. The radioman was there right by the fuel, and of course had there been a spark, it could explode. Somebody finally said, "Well, sit down and shut up, Admiral." And he did.

DOB: Really. Who would do that?

GS: I don't really know. It was one of those things; things happen. I always remember that, but I admired Byrd. He was necessary for the operation. Without him, it wouldn't have gone. He was very much respected.

DOB: What do you think of attempts by various people to discredit his claims to have flown over the pole, either one of them?

GS: I'm interested because of my own work down there. I agree that he probably didn't fly over the North Pole. Floyd Bennett didn't think he did; all I know is what I read. But it doesn't appear that he did from Spitsbergen.

DOB: How about the South Pole?

GS: I think he did. He had Bernt Balchen with him. I think he did. I don't think Bernt would cover for him. But that's only an opinion, you know, for what it's worth. But it wouldn't have been an easy flight for that trimotor Ford at that altitude. He deserves a lot of credit.

DOB: You mentioned Adm. Richard Cruzen as being behind the scenes. He was the commander of Task Force 68 of the Atlantic Fleet. He had charge of carrying out the project in technical control. How well do you think he did?

GS: Well, without any long-term planning, from my own viewpoint I think he did well. You never saw him. You saw him doing photo opportunities. I had a couple of pictures of him.

DOB: What opportunities?

GS: You never saw him except when there was a photo opportunity.

DOB: Oh, photo. Okay.

GS: Yes. He was always behind the scenes. I think his flagship was the *Mount Olympus*. That's the ship I came back on out of Wellington. We went into Wellington on the icebreaker and out of Wellington to Washington, D.C. on the *Mount Olympus*. We never saw him. He may have stayed all the time in his stateroom, I just don't know.

DOB: Do you have any sense of how he and Byrd got along?

GS: I never asked myself that question. I never saw them together, let's put it that way, except when they got off the ship together in Washington at the Navy yard. The ship docked at the Navy yard, and they were met by Secretary Forrestal and others. They looked at our penguins and thought they were cute.

DOB: What penguins?

GS: We brought back a bunch of penguins.

DOB: What for?

GS: For the zoo.

DOB: National Zoo?

GS: Yes. They probably didn't live long. We brought back some emperor penguins, a whole bunch of them. And the men had to feed them which was a real dirty job, a real mess.

DOB: Would they have liked the warm weather?

GS: No, no. We lost some of them going through the tropics. We weren't equipped to do that. But now, you know, they go down and bring them back in a climate-controlled aircraft and everything is great. There've been some changes.

DOB: I want to get to that, too. How successful do you think Operation Highjump was?

GS: It depends on what their mission was. I can't imagine any mission that was successful except that we only lost a couple of men in a crash, and if you say, well, you're successful if you don't lose many people

In the military, at least in Highjump and Deep Freeze, we have a short memory, and we have people going down doing things, accomplishing things, but nobody remembers. An anecdote to that was that I was very closely involved with the R4D operation in Deep Freeze. They thought I knew what I was talking about because I was successful in Highjump. Only one other person from Highjump was in Deep Freeze, and that was Captain Hawkes.

But there's no memory of what happens, what did we learn. The train of thought there was that I wrote an operating manual of R4D procedures under heavy loads with skis at high altitude and all these other factors that you need to know if you're going to do that. Well, all this was original. I just sat down and worked it out; typed it up. And when I left I gave it to the operations group.

When we went on the reunion in '75, this is twenty years later, some of the young, eager pilots who were still operating R4Ds were introduced to me and they said, "Oh, you're the guy." He said, "Hey, your operating procedure, I found a copy back in the drawer someplace and I read it. It was so great!" And I said, "Yes, how are you operating those things now?" They were making the same mistakes that we made twenty years ago, and I said, "Why didn't you read the book?" "We don't use it."

DOB: He read it and thought it was great but they don't use it.

GS: Well, he was a j.g.—he was a nothing, but he was fascinated by this operating procedure that I had drawn up because we had made all the mistakes already, for goodness sakes. The little things.

DOB: Like what?

GS: How to heat your engines in cold weather, for instance.

DOB: How should you?

GS: In the R4D-8s you just stuck the heating tube into a section of the engine. You could cover the engine, you can do all sorts of things to the engine up front, use a lot of heat and a lot of time, but unless you heat several parts at the proper time, don't start the engine. So we learned. But they didn't read the book.

DOB: What other wise lessons were in there?

GS: The technique of stopping if you're on the ice runway using wheels (skis retracted) and for some reason you lose directional control; just put your skis down. It gives you more friction. Well, any pilot is going to learn that eventually, but why not learn it before you make a mistake and slide off into a snowbank and damage an aircraft?

There's a thousand little things. For instance, we sent people down as aircraft commanders who had never been on ice. The 109th Air National Guard out of New York who has taken over the airlift, the C-130 ski, requires hundreds of hours of experience in the north and the south before they will qualify a pilot as command pilot. And that's reasonable. They still make mistakes, but that's the way it goes.

DOB: Well, there would have been nobody available at that time with that kind of experience.

GS: Well, we could've sent people—if we didn't have a hurry-up operation, we could have sent people to Greenland and had them operate for a season up there, operating out of Bluie West One. The New Zealanders do that. When they lay on an operation, they send down trained people. That was our big criticism. People came in and they weren't particularly proficient pilots, they didn't particularly want to fly—

DOB: Really. Well, anything else we should say about Operation Highjump?

GS: It was fun. No, I don't really understand why they did it and what the benefits were. I think it was all lost.

DOB: Why a loss?

GS: Because of the short memory span, the Navy, as we talked before, has never recognized the benefit of cold-weather operation because people are sent there who are at the end of their promotion career. Now people of my seniority, I know only one who was promoted from lieutenant commander to commander. But a number of my copilots were promoted from j.g. up through commander to captain. So there was a group in there, people who served during World War II, were sent to the Antarctic because they were not eligible for promotion. The junior officers weren't smeared with the same brush; they could move on up. You know Raithel don't you?

DOB: I've met him.

GS: My Deep Freeze copilot, Ken Kenney—a good pilot, later went through test pilot school—was skipper of a heavy attack squadron. He made captain. A number of them through there were successful. I think Bob Streich made captain. But all of them were j.g.'s or golden nuggets, they called them. If an outfit doesn't have prestige and get the proper energetic and capable senior officers, it's not a respectable group. It doesn't ring in the Pentagon, if you know what I mean.

DOB: Even with Admiral Byrd attached to it.

GS: Admiral Byrd's passé. He was still respected in Highjump as he was in maybe 1940, but by Deep Freeze he was sick, near death, he didn't take part. I think the only part he took in Deep Freeze I was a social function in Wellington. I went there, the first time I'd seen him since '47, and he was very sick. I think he went down on the ship—and that's another story. He wasn't respected by that time. He was ignored. And he died in '57, I think?

DOB: Yes, March.

GS: The system didn't respect the veterans, the people who knew what they were doing, they didn't. The detail office—you know how the detail office works?

DOB: Tell me.

GS: Well, you come up for a new tour of duty, and back in that day the guys sat around a desk and decided where you were going to be sent to. Well, my time came up when I left Deep Freeze. I went up to detail office to talk to them to see if I could talk them into sending me where I wanted to go. I walked in and he said, "Gus Shinn. Man, we were talking about you. We've got your request right here." And he said, "You are the only man we've ever known who got a medal in one hand and an unsatisfactory fitness report in the other." They thought that was funny. That's what could happen to people in an outfit like that; that's what happened to me.

DOB: Explain.

GS: Well, this is in Deep Freeze III now. There was a commander ordered to the squadron as CO, and for some reason he didn't like me. People came to me and said, "What's this guy got against you? Where were you all together before?" I said, "I don't even know the fellow." Apparently he did some work in the north with P2Vs on skis on the Fletcher Ice Island; and his work wasn't exactly successful. I'd had time in the Antarctic and I had been lucky. Lucky—that's what I would call it.

One day we were on the flight line and he was getting these four new P2V-7s that I didn't think would be of benefit to the squadron. And so he said, "Shinn, what do you think of my P2Vs?" He is a very imposing six-foot-three, hundred-and-ninety-pound man, a graduate of test pilot school, should be tops. I said, "Well, Captain, I wouldn't have told you this, but since you asked me I'll tell you. Leave those airplanes in the hangar when we deploy." That was big trouble from then on.

DOB: A bad mistake.

GS: And so I ended up with an unsatisfactory fitness report, which finished me off. Now people who achieved things in the Antarctic didn't get credit for it. The awards they gave were given a couple of years later when nobody cared. The Air Force, when you did something down there, gave an award when you stepped off the airplane. Now that was something. They sent an Army guy up to the South Pole, he jumped out of a C-124 with a parachute. He got a DFC upon landing.

[End Side A, Tape 1]

[Begin Side B, Tape 1]

GS: But that's an example. I guess I'm a nitpicker. To give you an insight, I retired in '63, and during that period Douglas Aircraft had a factory in Charlotte, North Carolina. I have a sister in that area. Intelligent, well educated, knows all the right people. And someone asked her, "Didn't your brother do something in the Antarctic?" And she said, "Yes." And said, "Well, the people in Charlotte with Douglas Aircraft"—see, we flew a Douglas DC-3—"they want to give him a dinner." "Oh, that would be great."

Well, they called a little bit later from Douglas in Charlotte, and said in effect that what you had told us is a hoax. She says, "How could it be?" And so they checked it out. See, they didn't want to have a dinner for someone who ended up—you know, those things do happen. So they had called the Navy at the Pentagon and asked them if there was such a person and if he had made the South Pole landing. They said they'd get back to them and they did, and they said, "No. We have no record of it."

Now this is not hearsay, and this is my whole point. No matter what we did, we didn't get credit. We flew alongside the Air Force. When the Air Force did something, it was noted. The Air Force headquarters back in Charleston sent out a letter, you know, a dispatch. "Congratulations!" Nothing from the Navy.

DOB: How do you account for that?

GS: The lack of interest . . . the lack of interest. We weren't a fighter plane. If we had been an atomic submarine or a fighter plane, it's simply that we were written down, that's all.

We had Captain Cordiner in Deep Freeze II. We talk about him on the tape that you have. He was so out of place. He was an intellectual. He could've only been sent to command Deep Freeze II if they weren't interested. This man was just marking time to the end of his time in the Navy. He went from that command to senior military officer at Georgia Tech. Well, that is not a job to be promoted from. He was finished. So they sent their end people down to Antarctica, and no winners. And what might have happened in later years when the volunteer service was terminated, I don't know. So the picture may have changed completely. I can only speak from my first three years.

DOB: Okay. Let me go back and bring us to those. After Operation Highjump, as I mentioned there were many years where there was no Navy experience in Antarctica. What did you do during that interval?

GS: Between Highjump—

DOB: Yes, and Deep Freeze.

GS: Oh, Highjump and Deep Freeze. Well, I'd gone to Highjump from Anacostia where we were in Operations where we furnished transportation for the VIPs. The VIPs were all over in the Pentagon. I've got a logbook full of flights I made and I had the VIPs' names, Admiral so-and-so, Admiral so-and-so, Secretary so-and-so, we flew the friends of President Truman around.

Back in that day it wasn't like it is today. Truman's airplane was a DC-4, an R5D, down at NAS Patuxent. It was just an airplane sitting at Patuxent. And we had a fleet of airplanes assigned at Anacostia. We flew everybody around, including the Secretary of Defense. I did that until . . . well, I wanted to go to Berlin Airlift in '48, and the boss said, "Well, you're doing so much work here"—and I was usually high-time pilot in any outfit I went to and I was high-time pilot in Anacostia—

DOB: What does that mean?

GS: It means I flew more than anybody else.

DOB: Why?

GS: I wanted to. I was living in the BOQ, and they knew that if anytime they had a flight that came up that nobody else wanted, call Shinn. I wanted to go to the Berlin Airlift in early

'48, and the boss said, "Well, I need you to stay on until I can see my way free to let you go." Well in the spring of '49, he said, "Go." So I got orders to the airlift, went down to Patuxent, and we checked out. We had a system down there that simulated the airlift routes. I was ready to go off for Berlin. And of course by that time the airlift had phased down. They were cutting back, and I think the middle to late part of May or something it was all finished. So they changed my orders to a squadron in London and North Africa, and I went over there sometime in May of '49. I have it all in my logs.

And then when I got over there, I became the personal pilot to the senior admiral of the Navy, Commander in Chief of the Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean, and he had the command of all that area out to the Persian Gulf and all along North Africa and Morocco and northern Europe. It included all the areas outside the Russian sphere. So I did that till about December of '51. A great tour, wonderful. And while I had that, we flew ambassadors, foreign admirals, foreign diplomats, and we had diplomatic clearance. We went anywhere we wanted.

DOB: It must've been fun.

GS: It was. It was great.

DOB: Then what?

GS: Then in '52, I went to the Navy line school in Monterey. That was to teach me about the other parts of the Navy. That was for a year. And in '53 I was assigned to Pensacola at the Naval Air Station, Corry Field. And by '54 I was ready to be transferred again; I went through the helicopter training with Con Jaburg, another Deep Freeze pilot. I was assigned to a couple of anti-submarine squadrons, Key West and then to North Carolina. And then this Deep Freeze thing came up.

DOB: So how did you learn about that?

GS: I don't know. Well, when they're looking for volunteers the message goes out to personnel at each station asking for people who want to join up.

DOB: And why would you want to go back?

GS: Oh, it's a challenge. I was flying helicopters, and it was an anti-submarine helicopter squadron. We hover and drop a sensing device on a cable. It goes down in the water, and the operator in the back of the helicopter tries to detect the magnetic attraction of the submarine hull. The most frustrating thing in the world, sitting there. Ah! So I would've been wanting to go to Antarctica even though had I had a good job, and that was one of the worst. That's another story. But as soon as I heard that, I borrowed an airplane and ran up to Washington and went in to see my buddy, Trigger Hawkes. And he said, "Sure." I believe I was the first pilot chosen for that operation.

DOB: So you were in it in Deep Freeze I.

GS: Yes.

DOB: And so when and how did you get back to the ice?

GS: Well, in Deep Freeze I we had the R4Ds and the Albatrosses. You know the Albatross? I'll show you a picture of it. We flew out of Dunedin, New Zealand, in company with two R5Ds and two P2Vs. The weather was terrible. We flew halfway, but we didn't have enough gas to continue.

Long overwater flights back in that day, there were times when you couldn't get all the way, and so in your navigational duties you kept a chart of the fuel consumption versus the time elapsed versus what you predict the wind will be versus the predicted fuel consumption. There's a point that determines the fuel state, if what you've got ain't enough, then you have to turn around and go back. We call it the equal time point, or the point of no return. Once you get past that point, you're committed. We were approaching that point.

Frankie—you mentioned Frankiewicz—was in the adjoining airplane. There was simply not enough gas. We could've landed at the northernmost point of our route, Cape Adare. Do you know that?

DOB: Yes.

GS: We could've landed in a bay up there, but no one knew what the conditions were. And so the boss said return. And that was in Deep Freeze I.

DOB: So that must've been frustrating.

GS: Well, it was, but I was used to long overwater flights and I know that's a possibility. I wouldn't want to go on with those conditions because the winds are so strong down there.

DOB: And the other planes were bigger? The ones that made it?

GS: Yes. The two R5Ds made it successfully, and the two P2Vs made it. They made some good flights, did some good work.

DOB: So were you then ready to go again the next year?

GS: Oh yes. We came back from New Zealand and had our planes overhauled and re-equipped and back again, Deep Freeze II.

DOB: But you never—

GS: We didn't make headway.

[Interruption]

DOB: —thing I've been curious about as a follow-up to turning around those four R4Ds going from New Zealand, why you didn't try again in, say, another couple of days.

GS: Well, everything was so late in Deep Freeze I. Do you know when the first group flew in, what date that was?

DOB: I don't remember.

GS: I've got it over there. But it was in December.

DOB: Oh, okay.

GS: The icebreaker hadn't gotten in, the ice was heavy, and the operation was very, very late. It was only a modified sort of thing. The planes that did fly down made several flights and then flew back to New Zealand. The surface ships did the big job there. They had to offload all the equipment for that season and all the stuff for the Byrd station and some stuff for the South Pole.

So the air mission was very truncated, and maybe it was a good thing we didn't get there because the Albatrosses were very limited. They were critical. They could've been lost. That was very apparent. It was apparent to us before they went, but I don't know who or what decided they should go initially, because they weren't really adapted for it. The only saving grace is they had a hull. If they'd have gone down, they could've floated, maybe, for a while. But it was a very bad choice. When they got them back to the States they were finished.

DOB: They never went back to the Antarctic.

GS: No. But in our case we got some additional fuel in the fuselage. See, all this basic work is figured somewhere in Operations in the Pentagon. If they'd have sat down with an old R4D pilot and said, "How much is it going to take to get us from here to there," he could've looked at a wind profile, he could've said, "X tanks internally," and that would have been the answer. But I don't know how they came up with it. But you go with what you have, we went, we didn't have it. That's all there is to it.

DOB: Well, then in the next year when you did go, did you have additional tanks—

GS: Yes.

DOB: —or did you just have better weather or—

GS: No, they had additional tanks.

DOB: Okay.

GS: There was no problem the second year. And without the Albatross we didn't have that consideration. Did they have two more R4Ds? Did they have four R4Ds for Deep Freeze II? I think so.

DOB: There . . . let's see. Admiral Dufek got down on the 16th of October with Hank Jorda in an R5D.

GS: That was Deep Freeze II.

DOB: Deep Freeze II on October 16th. And then the next day there were six more planes to follow, and that was four R4Ds and a P2V and an R5D. And you were then still you were piloting another R4D.

GS: Yes.

DOB: Okay. Your flight then on that time was not too bad?

GS: Yes, the weather was bad. Let me see now. I think—

DOB: Let me set this up so that we're on the same page. Ed Ward was flying the R5D, and he talked about a hair-raising fourteen hours in the air, and fighting to a landing in bad weather, and only when he got there to see that the P2V had crashed just minutes before him and pilots were killed and so on.

GS: We were in the same group. They were faster than we were so they got there sooner.

DOB: Tell me about your flight. Did you have problems with the weather and icing and all of that stuff?

GS: My flight didn't have much trouble. Frankie was over there off the wing most of the time. One of the other pilots, one of the good guys, Roy Curtis, was behind me. Frankie was on my wing, or I was on his wing, however you want to say it. Curtis was back a ways and was having electrical trouble.

When you fly into areas of high magnetic attraction, the magnetic compass becomes useless so we have an electric compass. You set the electric compass and make sure that it's working right before you take sunlines and so forth. But if you can't see the sun, you may have some precession, so he had trouble.

So we were talking and he said he was having a problem. He didn't know where he was. I had the skipper with me, who was my copilot, and I had conserved my fuel all the way—you never know when you're going to need an extra drop—I asked the skipper if I could try something to help Roy.

DOB: Who was the skipper?

GS: Captain Cordiner. A wonderful, sweet guy. Not a pilot, but just a sweet, wonderful intellectual who shouldn't be sitting over there. I had Curtis, who was back behind me someplace, have his radioman set up a frequency and I set up the same frequency. He would key his radio and I would get a directional signal and we'd use that system, and we got together. He was well off to the west. He would've landed over in Mawson Land if he'd kept going. To do that, I had reversed course so we came in like so, and that extended my flight. I think I was eighteen point four hours in the air. I've got it in my logbook. But that was the longest flight.

Then he and I went on in together and the weather was bad, and Ward was right ahead of us. The P2V had already crashed. Ward was between us and the P2V that crashed. Ward almost flew into Mt. Erebus; there was panic in the cabin. He had the newspaper person aboard, and the newspaper person tried to jump out of the airplane because they very nearly crashed into the mountain. You know an Air New Zealand DC-10 did crash into Erebus. Well, the DC-10 was making the same mistake that Ward did. He came in low. We knew as we came into McMurdo the last thing I saw was Cape Adare, and so I climbed to a safe altitude. I wasn't going to approach below the altitude of the mountains. So I went in high. We had a nondirectional beacon out there at McMurdo and so the R4Ds let down on that. Ward went in under it, tried to sneak in, and he almost crashed. I later heard that GCA was operating. I don't remember that.

DOB: But lived to tell it.

GS: We didn't think much of that. He's a very nice person. Hank Jorda was good.

DOB: What do you think about when you're flying for eighteen hours and it's cold and dark and wet down there?

GS: Well, in this case we had what we call poopie suits on, rubber survival suits. You get in them, you're zipped from down here to up here, you roll it up and zip again. To relieve yourself is really difficult. We were always teasing Captain Cordiner because he could go for hours and hours without going to the head. I made it up with the plane captain that every time the skipper turned around we'd hand him a cup of coffee. We were going to make him go. I don't recall whether we ever did make him go or not.

But you don't think about what's down there until it's all over. Now when I see on TV some of those seas of forty- and fifty-foot waves, I question our sanity. But you don't think about it.

DOB: Is that a conscious decision not to?

GS: I don't know. I think it's training. It's just training. In all the years of flying, and I had about fifteen thousand hours which is high time in the Navy, I never had a catastrophic failure, an engine failure or systems failure. Luck, and I tried to have a good crew, and we tried to check things before we got in the air. Many pilots have more than their share of engine failures, hydraulic failures, and other problems. I was really lucky.

DOB: What options did you have? What kind of backup plans if you had to ditch over the Southern Ocean or something?

GS: Well, there's no plan. You'd be dead. I thought about how I would try to land across the swell or into the swell or down the swell. You couldn't. It's just the end, that's all. Once you accept that fact, there's no problem.

DOB: Were all four R4Ds flying within sight of each other?

GS: No. By the time we got to McMurdo we were all scattered. The one I picked up, Curtis, was reasonably close to me, I think. But as we approached the McMurdo area, the weather was very bad; a blizzard was blowing. So we just did what we did.

DOB: You didn't see the continent when you were over it?

GS: No. We didn't worry about that. We knew how high the mountains were in our immediate area, so we stayed above that, flying a track reasonably sure of where we were until we got over the nondirectional beacon.

But the conditions, we did have icing, we had prop icing, but that's normal. There's lots of moisture down there.

DOB: Did you know that the P2V had crashed by the time you got there?

GS: We may have. But had we known it, it wouldn't have registered. We didn't think the P2Vs were well-manned. I can't tell you what I felt at the time except that it was expected.

To give you a little vignette here, I usually end up in Training and Operations in the places I went in the Navy because that's what I did. I was good at that. And then Deep Freeze, Deep Freeze I and II and III, I ended up in Operations. In all those instances, we had a number of pilots who weren't competent and they weren't current. We had all these airplanes that we had to put people in and send them out. There was no time for training. I took the roster and I tried to put the best-trained and most current pilots in command and scatter the rest of them around the best I could.

We had an executive officer who came in to see me. I'd arranged the crews for all the airplanes—the R5s, the Albatrosses, the R4s—and I'd put myself in an R5D because I was highly experienced in R5Ds. He looked at this and he said, "That's my R5D." I explained to him, as I explained to you, why that wasn't so. I said, "Colonel, you're not

current." I don't think he'd ever flown an R5D except maybe as a passenger. I said, "I'm trying to put the most experienced people in the left-hand seat, and this is the way it's going to be." He was a colonel, and he says, "That's my airplane." I said, "I'm sorry, Colonel, but it can't be that way." He stomped out of the office. The next day he came in and he said, "You're a supply officer now, Shinn." "Yes, sir." So I became a supply officer—assistant supply officer. He moved me. That was his R5D.

DOB: Who was this?

GS: Colonel Kolp. He died of diabetes ten years ago or so. That's the story of Deep Freeze. It so happened that he had a copilot who knew how to fly the airplane. But in the interim period, he made an ass of himself because he made terrible approaches, bad landings. We talked about "he chilled the spectators." It was terrible. He was one of the early aviators, and no doubt he was a great marine fighter pilot, but he quit learning when he was twenty-five or so. He was a nice fellow, good drinking, a boozier, a good man about town, but he just wasn't an Antarctic pilot. And it was my idea that the most experienced people should be doing the flying. But that didn't work; that didn't go.

DOB: What kind of help was there for you on the ground when you made that first landing at McMurdo?

GS: In McMurdo? Oh, it was efficient. Canham, Dave Canham. He was the first man I saw in Antarctica, and he was in charge of ground base operations, flight lines; he was operating the Weasel. He put us in a Weasel and took us up on the hill. A wonderful man, and I knew him during that period and then on into Deep Freeze III, I believe—II or III. But he wasn't in that group long. I knew him when he went to Washington, I believe, from Deep Freeze, didn't he? He had something to do in Washington because he bought a house up there. So he was one of the goodies. And he died early, didn't he?

DOB: Yes, he's gone.

GS: So I don't have any criticism of ground support. I mean those guys busted their butts. They were great.

DOB: Well, tell me about flying over Antarctica. The challenges that are the most significant. What makes it different?

GS: Well, a lot of times you didn't know where you were, and the winds are high. I had the admiral—before we went to the pole, the admiral wanted to look at some places up in the Executive Range of mountains. When we flew a flight like that we had our JATO hanging on the fuselage. You know how that works?

DOB: Yes.

GS: But in order to fire the JATO, you have to arm it. You have to go back in the back and there's an electrical panel with umpteen little switches. So all of them have to be on. So in this case I figured I might just need those things if he got me up in a canyon someplace and we had a wind shear.

So we were looking up near Beardmore and another glacier up there. All of a sudden the airplane quit flying. We got in a shear—you've heard of wind shears. Well you're flying, and the wind quickly changes like a hundred miles an hour. We were probably only going a hundred and twenty. The airplane simply falls out of the sky, and we weren't high at the time. This was nearly a disaster. As we started to fall, the wing rolled, and I fired all the JATOs at once. It was like a helicopter.

[Interruption]

GS: As the airplane fell out of the sky—because that's what it did, it just quit flying—I had a premonition that I might get into something like that, so we fired all the JATO. We had a firing button right on the yoke. Nineteen JATOs fired all at once, and we were right on the ice. The wing rolled and the wingtip touched the ice. I'm sure it added to the deafening blast of the JATO firing. We were close enough to the surface to send up a huge balloon of ice crystals. The passengers must have been terrified. But we flew out. So that was a close one. That was a close one. But other people had a lot of them down there that they didn't walk away from, you know. The accident rate was high down there.

DOB: Well, let me talk about that. How bad were the losses of equipment and lives?

GS: We were terribly lucky. I think as far as airplanes lost, for the type of squadron we were, it was probably a record for non-wartime conditions. I recall in Deep Freeze I, I think I can remember two Otters lost and a helicopter lost and a P2V lost. There may have been others. That's right off the top of my head.

DOB: What kind of expectation of loss would the Navy have for an operation like this?

GS: I don't think they could equate it. I think they would've been as far off as they were in the Gulf escapade. They had no idea. But they were terribly lucky that they didn't lose—Ward's plane was lucky. Oh man. Well, the P2V they lost in the Orinoco Valley, Orinoco River there in the delta—

DOB: The one that was trying to rescue the people who had been lost on the Otter.

GS: Yes. Now that airplane was one of the worst manned aircraft of the Navy. We all talk now about what happened, you know. The copilot, whom I knew well, believes it ran out of gas. It landed in the Orinoco River system there and didn't kill anybody. The fuselage cracked, Ray Hudman fell out of the fuselage, and they all lived to tell about it. Lockheed's very interested—that's the manufacturer—they talked about going back down and getting the engines and finding out what happened, but they never did it. But we

think it ran out of gas. Bad fuel management. So that was at least four machines that first year.

DOB: Ed Ward said that once a plane goes down to Antarctica it's just kind of written off.

GS: Of course, yes. Sure. But it didn't have to be that way. The story I'm telling you is the story of 20 percent deadbeats, and . . . Oh man. I'd have to work my percentages, but you had a few on the top. Some young, good pilots who had only had a tour of duty in P2Vs since they got their wings. Like this Len Munker? One of the good ones. And several others whose names don't come quickly. They're in the book. They could've handled it. We were at the age of about thirty-five years old, and a lot of the people really didn't like to fly, Dian.

DOB: Pilots?

GS: They didn't like to fly . . . when they got to that age. They liked to go home. They liked happy hour. They were married. They had families. They had no business being down there. And those are the people who at one time maybe were good pilots, but no longer. They spent too much time in the personnel office. That's where promotions are. You go to the parties, you meet the captains' wives and all this business. That's where the promotions are. Those guys were the people who could write their own ticket.

DOB: What makes a good pilot good?

GS: A sense of confidence which is tempered with a certain uncertainty.

DOB: Explain.

GS: Well, in other words, a superior pilot is a pilot that never has to exercise his superiority. If you have to exercise great airmanship more than once, you know, like I survived down there, then you're flying on the edge and that's not good. You really shouldn't have to be superior to do these things—just competent.

That's another thing. When people have flown for fifteen years or so, the assumption is that they know how to fly. It may be that they were just very lucky, or that they had a competent copilot who took over and flew them out of it. The system won't admit that they've made an error about keeping this man on flying status for so long, so he remains on flying status. If he were a young pilot, a j.g. or an ensign, they would kick him out because obviously he's not proficient.

DOB: What particular skills do you need?

GS: It's hand-eye coordination, a certain amount of confidence, a challenge, and a sense of limitation. You know, in the Navy we have an instrument card. If you have this

qualification you get a white card or a green card. A green card meant that you could go down to Operations and could sign your clearance no matter what the weather was. It means you're a good pilot. You're so competent, you're so efficient.

But when I was on duty at an air station signing clearances, some pilot would sign his own—the field is closed and he would say, "Oh, I've got a green card," I'd say, "Yes, but do you want to use it?" It means a sense of proportion and limitation. It ought to mean more good judgment. Is my judgment good. And I would say that's a mark of a good pilot—good judgment.

I used to fly at Anacostia, and when President Truman's poker buddies wanted to go back to Kansas City and the weather was really terrible, we used to call Eastern Airlines' weather department and we'd say, "We've got some people here who must get to Kansas City. Would you fly them?" Sometimes they said no. And when they said no, I said, "I can't fly."

DOB: A little prudence perhaps.

GS: Prudence, yes. But where prudence is most necessary is when you have the admiral and his staff aboard and they want to get to Cairo at 0700, the door was supposed to open and the steps go down at 0700. You're in London and you've got to tell the admiral that you don't want to take off from Heathrow. That's judgment. But when you can do that, you've matured. You don't want a pilot that says, "I'll fly it through anything."

DOB: Well, back on the ice now, within a couple of weeks of arriving there Admiral Dufek began assembling a crew to attempt the first landing at the South Pole.

GS: You make it sound all official and planned.

DOB: Well, I'm going to ask you about that.

GS: Our skipper, Captain Cordiner, was my copilot all the way—from Quonset Point he rode the right seat all the way down to McMurdo. He acted as copilot, and if things were sticky, the weather and so forth, I would always defer to him. I told him what the situation would be. I said, "How about it, Captain?" His reply, "You're the boss. It's your decision."

In Antarctica we did the preliminary flights. We set up the gas station at the end of Beardmore Glacier so we could refuel. We didn't know who would be the crew for the South Pole. Nobody said much about it. I didn't think much about it. If I'd thought about the captain having flown with me all the way, I would have said, "Well, maybe it's going to be the skipper." But on the last flight we had before the South Pole flight, as we were going back to McMurdo, he turned to me and said, "It's your crew." He didn't say what he would do, and we didn't know when it was going to be. We'd set up the refueling station, the weather was good, and we—

[End Side B, Tape 1]

[Begin Side A, Tape 2]

GS: So it had been a long, long day, and we got back to McMurdo. I remember we were in the bunk about two or three o'clock in the morning, and somebody came into the barracks and said, "You're going to South Pole at 0800" or something. We chuckled because we thought that was what we called a whiskey decision. The senior officers who lived next door would get together and have their drinks and come down with some order that really didn't make sense. In this case we didn't think it did because we were bushed, tired to death. But that's the way it was, and we all dragged our butts down to the ice that morning and took off.

DOB: Why was it then? Because of the weather?

GS: I can't imagine—you could say that, but part of the secrecy was that the admiral didn't want Paul Siple to make the flight.

DOB: Why?

GS: Because he would have to share some of the glory. See, Paul Siple was part of the Byrd faction. There's two factions and I was in between them. I didn't want to be in either one. They made this decision real late at night when Paul Siple wasn't in the sleeping hut, and so he didn't know it, and they didn't tell the newspaper people. So when the airplane was ready to take off, there were no newspaper people and there was no Paul Siple. I don't know personally what they did with him, whether they sent him down to get breakfast or whatever it was, but he wasn't in it, and he never told me. I was a friend of Paul's and I thought he should go.

But the other ringer was the big fight in the hut, the other hut, about who would be in the cockpit with me. Captain Cordiner had earned the right. He had been a copilot for a hundred hours or so, so he felt that he should be. The admiral tells it—this is word-of-mouth now—the admiral says he could either go as a passenger in the back or he cannot go at all, and the copilot would be Trigger Hawkes, Captain Hawkes, who has a long history of planning. He was in Highjump, we were in Highjump together, he was my mentor. He chose me for the first pilot in Highjump, and I was the first pilot in Deep Freeze. I get this from people who were on the staff, so I'm assuming that's correct. But I suspect it was because we were good buddies. Cigar-smoking guys.

The admiral put him in the right seat. He hadn't been in an airplane to fly and to operate it in a long time. He had flown some copilot with Harvey Speed on the way down, but he'd gotten tired of that and had given up his seat. So my buddy Trigger was in the right side, and I had a good plane captain who could do all the duties of a copilot. He was standing between the seats lifting the gear, lifting the flaps.

Captain Cordiner was livid. If there'd been any firearms, they might've been used. He was really livid. I felt for him because he had earned his seat. He was an active member of the squadron, and Captain Hawkes was more or less consulting, advising, not active, but he went.

DOB: But a buddy of Dufek.

GS: I suppose. It couldn't be justified and nobody tried to justify it. The sequel to that, when we came back on the ship from the ice to New Zealand, he stood on the deck of the *Curtiss* and threw his library of Antarctica into the water.

DOB: Cordiner?

GS: Yes. He was a wild man. And this was, you know, a couple of months later. We went down on the 30-31st of October of '56 and this was the spring of '57, and he was still firing.

DOB: Well now, would you have been the junior of the three?

GS: Oh yes. Oh yes.

DOB: So that was quite a statement that you got to fly the plane and not one of them copiloting each other.

GS: Well, they wanted to get to McMurdo safely. If I had a command like that now, although I'm seventy-seven, let's say I was back to fifty, I certainly wouldn't have thought I could have effectively and competently managed to fly the South Pole flight.

DOB: So they looked to you, and one of them had to ride as a passenger.

GS: Well, my success and my failure is due to the same thing. I have the virtue of my faults. If you ask me a question, I'll tell you what I think. I won't tell you what I want you to hear or what I think you want to hear, I'll just tell you. And that works for senior officers. I've always had a lot of senior officers as bosses. I get along with them famously, but I don't get along with the officer immediately above me because I don't placate him—I serve the admiral. And that's the way it was.

DOB: Well, let's talk about that flight. So you left on no sleep, and—

GS: And the radioman forgot his code book. You know, there's a code book and it helps them write messages quickly. I think we might've gotten in the air and he came up and says, "I didn't bring my code book." And I said, "Well, by damn you'd better remember the codes then." He did!

DOB: You had an Air Force Globemaster that went along with you. That would've been a wheeled aircraft that could not have landed.

GS: No, no. It operated off the ice, off the ice runway at McMurdo.

DOB: So what actual support would it have been for you besides the comfort of company?

GS: None.

DOB: Why did it go?

GS: Symbolic. The Air Force wants to get on it, inter-service rivalry, all that. It was PR. The Air Force, they're great, man. They know their stuff.

DOB: Well, what's the most challenging or worrisome thing about landing at the Pole? How did you get prepared mentally and otherwise for this, if you did?

GS: Well, I remember taking a shower before we went up. It's just a matter of getting off the ice. You're going to land.

DOB: You didn't worry about landing.

GS: Oh, you're going to land once you put the gear down. You don't have enough power to stay in the air—you're going to land. But the problem was, can you get off? That was the point. And that was the point.

DOB: Was the surface like you anticipated it? Was it hard? Soft?

GS: Well, nobody knew. But I just thought, well, Scott and Amundsen were there with the skis and dogs, so it'd be all right.

DOB: Was it rough?

GS: It was moderately rough, but not to the point where the sastrugi was detrimental to operating. The point is you didn't have enough power to move. The normal power wouldn't move you. So Captain Hawkes said, "Well, how are you going to fire your JATO?" I says, "I don't know. We just have to find out how it works." They were out on the ice for forty-five minutes or so and things would've gotten cold.

DOB: But you left the engines running?

GS: Oh yes. We never stopped those engines.

DOB: How cold was it?

GS: Like minus sixty-five or something like that, which, you know, is cold, but you're equipped for it. But if you're going from a protected environment and living in beds and things like

that, and then you go to minus sixty-five with a chill factor of minus seventy or eighty, you're not going to survive long. It's not like what they do now with the good clothes and the survival gear and their navigation.

We had enough JATO thrust to get off, barely. Everything iced up; we were engulfed in a cloud of ice. Have you ever seen the pictures? We were iced in in the cockpit on the ground. We couldn't see a thing; it was really tricky. You'd never want to do it again because the instruments, the vacuum instruments in the cockpit were so cold that everything was so sluggish. You couldn't get a dependable reading on anything. Probably the air speed indicator was the only thing reliable, maybe. The risk is that you can't get the gear up or the flaps up because the hydraulics freeze. So if you were thinking about doing that now, you'd say no, we won't do that.

DOB: What would you have done? Not gone?

GS: Well, it should've been left until—you mean if you'd done it sensibly? You'd have probably sent the Air Force with their C-124s and airdropped the Seabees, put up a little base and waited till the temperature got to be minus forty or thirty so that you'd have a chance to survive. No chance of survival there . . . particularly for the admiral. He had a bad case of pneumonia when he got back.

DOB: So how did you get off? It's very high and it's very cold.

GS: Yes, very high, about ninety-two, three hundred feet, and push full throttle, nothing happens, so you just start punching off the JATO till you fire them all. I just watched the instruments and tried to fly off. That's the way it happened.

DOB: You did get off.

GS: Yes. We got off.

DOB: Did you think you would?

GS: I don't think I thought about it.

DOB: I mean once you've spent the JATO, it's gone.

GS: That's right.

DOB: And you did spend it all.

GS: So I just flew the air speed. But Navy pilots—that's a good thing about Navy pilots because they're always flying air speed when taking off from a carrier and right out into the dark, nothing! You fly air speed and attitude. No big deal as long as you've got the air speed.

DOB: Did you?

GS: Oh yes. We had the air speed. Not much, but enough.

DOB: I read that, what was it, like sixty knots or something?

GS: That's plenty fast if you can maintain that with the right attitude and don't fly back into the surface, it's no big deal. Lots of dangerous flights down there were done before and since.

DOB: You make it sound like, ah well.

GS: Well, I'll tell you, I was trained for it. I thought, you know, I've trained, I've had good training in airline pilot school in those airplanes, I felt competent, I felt confident.

DOB: What would you have done if you had not been able to take off?

GS: We would've been there.

DOB: Were you prepared with survival gear and—

GS: Oh, we had some. You'll enjoy that tape when you listen to Munker talk about his survival gear. We didn't have anything that was competent, sufficient, no. Our feet would've frozen first, hands and nose.

DOB: Would the, say, the Air Force plane dropped you supplies?

GS: They would've tried to do something, but if you come out of a protected environment and a few hours later you find yourself in that environment, if they had been able to drop something within, say a mile or two of you, you wouldn't have been able to get over to it. We weren't really Antarctic creatures. We were just people from a subtropical area. We weren't acclimatized, so to speak.

DOB: Well, when Dick Bowers went there with his crew, they had trained all winter so that they were prepared to walk out.

GS: No, they couldn't have walked out.

DOB: But you're telling me you wouldn't have even made that effort.

GS: They had trouble walking six miles. He was a grand guy, and he ran a good ship. I flew him in on that flight, and then I flew in the next group. I made about seventeen South Pole flights. They did a real great job. They were enthusiastic, they were young, and they knew what they were doing. I really admire the Seabees. They were great.

I flew Paul Siple and Dick Tuck in when they took over the South Pole station. We just had taken off from the Pole, and we got a message that you just departed—what's the official name?

DOB: Amundsen-Scott?

GS: Yes. They say, "You just"—that was the first transmission of the name of the station, except it wasn't a station then. It was just—

DOB: Somebody's high hope, huh?

GS: Yes.

DOB: Well, what did Siple think having not been able to go on that first flight?

GS: You know, he never told me.

DOB: And Dick Bowers discouraged him from going at the beginning when he went as well.

GS: Well that was proper. There was no room for Siple with the Seabees. He would've been an extra load. Just as sometime we had to carry extra loads that shouldn't go. Dick was right. There was a job to be done. Then we flew in Siple when they were ready to commission the South Pole station.

But Siple and Bowers would've had a conflict. Siple knew everything. A nice man, and his wife, Ruth, is a nice person. I've talked to her on the phone and I talked to them when they were in Australia and wrote to them and all this stuff. But he was the old school. He was the Eagle Scout. Do you know the present guy up there who was an Eagle Scout? Dickie Chappell.

DOB: Yes.

GS: We called him Little Dickie Chappell when he was down there. He's done well, hasn't he?

DOB: Yes. I've met him.

GS: If you see him or talk to him, ask him if he remembers me.

DOB: Oh, I'm sure he would. Well, what was different landing, say, the second time at the Pole?

GS: Well, it was much warmer. I've forgotten what the temperature was, but maybe minus forty degrees. When we got back from the first flight I said, "It's too cold. It's too cold for the equipment, it's too cold to operate." If you get up there, you can't operate. Real

Norwegians who know that weather could, I guess, but not us. We weren't equipped for that.

So when we went back up, it was relatively easy. I landed first at what we thought was close to the South Pole. It was about six miles, I think Dick said. And then Roy Curtis landed just beside of me. We both were sitting on the ice together like a couple of mud hens.

DOB: Oh, you had two planes at once.

GS: Yes. From then on we tried to fly two planes each trip.

DOB: For support for each other.

GS: Yes.

DOB: Well, what else should we know about those pioneering flights?

[Pause in recording]

GS: Where are we?

DOB: Well, we were talking about the subsequent flights to the Pole and—

GS: They were all without incident except that sometimes there would be ice fog and what do you call that snowy condition? I'm losing my nomenclature. A whiteout. Some of the guys crashed over the subsequent years doing that. The problem was that you're at such a high altitude with a low performance aircraft. If you get yourself in a position nose up, and you anticipate landing, you crash. Several of them crashed like that killing some people.

In Deep Freeze III I had a copilot named Woody Allen. He was a young pilot, and these young pilots were good. Like going to the Pole, I would just set him up on the track and my navigator would be tracking this—there's fifty-five-gallon drums down off the end of the runway, and you can see it on the radar. And so I'd just tell my copilot what air speed to hold, and I would handle the power and I would hold enough power to control the rate of descent, and he could just fly that thing right into the ice and never quiver. Older pilots seem to flinch.

I have a little anecdote I can tell you you might be interested in. It was after Highjump. Let's see, how old are you?

DOB: Fifty-seven.

GS: Well, this happened somewhere between '57 and '58, and you might get a kick out of researching it and see what the Air Force says. I was at Anacostia and we had a real good

skipper named Capt. Bobby Morris. The Air Force lost a plane on the Iceland ice cap—it's around seventy-three hundred feet—and they couldn't figure out how to get them off. They tried to jerk them off with gliders, they dropped some gliders and tried to jerk them off. Finally they ended up with perhaps thirteen people. Since I'd been on Highjump I figured I could pull off a rescue at seventy-three hundred feet!

Captain Morris was meeting every morning at the Pentagon with these Air Force people trying to figure out how to get their people. The Navy was sending a Jeep carrier out of Norfolk with helicopters to try to pick them off the ice. Of course they couldn't do it at seventy-three hundred feet with those old helicopters in '47-48. So I told the captain, I said, "I think I can do that." And he said, "Well, write me out a plan and I'll present it the next morning." They met at nine o'clock every morning. So the next day he called me up and said, "Shinn, they accepted your plan. Pack your bag and orders are being cut." "Okay. Good."

A little bit later he says, "Well, there's been a glitch. The Air Force says they can't see a Navy pilot rescuing their Air Force people. What they want to do is use your plan to fly these people off." They got a lieutenant colonel who flew my plan, flew them off. He got a DFC when he landed. But before he went up there, the Navy was sending their carrier, so the captain said, "Well, I'll tell you, if you want to we'll let you ride up there on the carrier." I said, "No, Captain, that's worthless."

So that's an insight into that. No matter what, the Navy can't be allowed to pull the Air Force's peanuts out of the fire. Isn't that amazing?

DOB: Inter-service rivalry is real, is it not?

GS: Oh yes.

DOB: How do you decide where to land when there is no landing strip, for example at the South Pole? How do you choose your spot?

GS: Well, in that area we know now that there are no crevasses. At that time we didn't know. In my case I circled several times over what we thought was the South Pole and tried to figure out which way the wind had blown, the structure of the sastrugi, and whether we should land down sastrugi, up sastrugi, or across sastrugi. It's a judgment call. When you get into the dangerous areas where you have dips and flows and crinkles, you know there are crevasses.

The Air National Guard dropped one into a crevasse this last season, a C-130. One of the Deep Freeze II pilots, who was a super airman, working out of Little America for Byrd Station supporting the traverse party with fuel and supplies, had a lot of close calls when he'd land near crevasse fields.

You wouldn't know, but you'd pick up shadows. It depends on the sun, what the sun angle is. If the sun is low, you can pick up the angles. You can see a pattern. If the sun is high, you may be able to land right in the midst of them and never know it. That's a consideration, but we didn't spend much time thinking about it. You don't want to, really.

DOB: When you landed with Bowers and that crew, you were I think he said eight miles away from the Pole.

GS: I've heard six.

DOB: Do you think that when you landed with Dufek that you were really there?

GS: Oh, the way we did navigation then, and we'd only fly up there in clear weather—do you understand sunline navigation? The sun is over here and you're flying to the South Pole. And so the navigator, once he gets on the plateau, knows where he is when he's at the top of Beardmore. That's where we went up, Beardmore. He starts taking sunlines—observations of the sun. Like right through here, if we took that sunline, it would be a line like this on the map. So as you move to the Pole, he tries to predict his ground speed, his drift, and using the sunlines, all those, and at some point says we're at the South Pole.

DOB: Okay.

GS: And he was a good navigator—one of the best. I'm sure we were close to it. The Air Force was way over yonder someplace. They were completely out of sight. They thought it was over there. They didn't have a good navigator.

DOB: Who was your navigator?

GS: My navigator? Dick Swadener, later Captain USN (retired). He died a couple of years ago of pancreatic cancer. A real loss. And his brother was at the disestablishment of VXE-6.

DOB: Yes.

GS: Did you meet him?

DOB: Yes.

GS: How is he?

DOB: Fine.

GS: I'm going to have to talk to him. Anyway, Dick was wonderful.

DOB: Well, today much larger airplanes land routinely at the Pole.

GS: Oh sure, sure.

DOB: What's different?

GS: Power. Power. Anyway, a combination of dead reckoning, sunlines, and time, you say this is the South Pole. Let's say we're a thousand feet above the surface. You can't just land right there. So you circle or you make a pattern and you're working out the surface conditions. And no doubt I didn't land exactly there. More than once I tried, in my head, to figure out a pattern where I could come back to the same point. The only way to do it would be to drop a smoke bomb, and we didn't have any. But that would've been the way to do it. Say that's the point, drop that one, we'll land right there. But it was the best we could do under the conditions of the time.

DOB: Close enough.

GS: When you're on top of a sheet, where does it matter?

DOB: Right. Okay. How many JATO bottles could an airplane carry? What's the limiting factor on that?

GS: The limiting factor, I imagine, would be the space available on the fuselage. I keep forgetting how many we had, but it's about nineteen. I always had to go out and count them there. But nineteen . . . be about—the P2V had X numbers, I don't know, and I think the R5D had a few JATO bottles, eight, something like that. But memory escapes me.

DOB: So it wasn't the weight so much as just the actual surface area.

GS: Yes, space available on the fuselage.

DOB: And then you dump the JATO bottles.

GS: Yes. You just pulled a lever, a cable which opened up all the clamps. And you tried to do that where they wouldn't hit anybody—the unexploded bombs.

DOB: And so they are still there someplace.

GS: I'm sure. I'm sure.

DOB: Do they use JATO anymore today?

GS: I imagine they use it on the C-130 when they land out there in the boondocks far away from everything with higher altitudes. I'm sure they need it.

DOB: I'm wondering if the environmental concerns would be different today.

GS: Oh, I'm sure. Well, they don't have to drop the bottles. With the C-130 you just retain the bottles. But in our case, the bottles themselves were too heavy once we fired them. We were critical, very critical. Everything was critical in that day. Attitude and altitude and air speed, weight and balance. We hardly stayed in the air, Dian.

DOB: What's the worst kind of weather to fly in?

GS: Icing, because you don't stay in it long. You won't be flying.

DOB: What makes that happen?

GS: Well, it changes the shape of the wing. That's the principal thing. And also it gets on the propellers. For the jets, I don't think their turbines would ice up. Maybe they've got de-icers, but the wings, I suppose, on the jets are either heated wings or they don't have an icing problem because of the altitude. But I can only speak of my day. The surface icing was critical.

DOB: And what made icing in some conditions and not others?

GS: Well, it's what they call—it's two ways. It's supercooled air that's moist and it doesn't freeze until something agitates it, and as soon as it's agitated, it freezes. And then there's the other kind, the most common kind that you get when a frontal area is flown into where it's a warm layer of air above and a cold layer below, and the rain falls out of the warm area into the cold area and freezes. And that's the dangerous kind, because if you're icing up high, it means that you can probably descend and warm up. But if you're already low and the water's falling out of that warm surface into the cold, there's no place you can go.

I'd had these poker-playing friends of President Truman, and they got through playing poker at about three o'clock in the morning one time and they wanted to go to Kansas City.

So they call me out, and it was freezing rain all along the route, and Eastern wasn't flying that night. We were flying a Lockheed Lodestar—you know what they are?

DOB: No.

GS: Do you remember what the plane Amelia Earhart flew? It's about twice that big. The same sort of thing. Since there's very little air traffic, we didn't have to hold, we could fly right up to altitude. So they let us go out of Anacostia. We went right on up above the freezing zone into the warm air; went on over to Kansas City. Instead of letting us go right straight in for a landing, which I asked for, they told us to hold north of the airport like at seventeen hundred feet. We went into icing. I said, "We're either going to make a control landing or crash landing." So they said, "Go straight in," because nobody was around. So we got in just about the time the airplane quit flying. We were really iced up.

So icing is dangerous. And of course turbulence is, too, but you can avoid turbulence normally.

DOB: What about whiteout in the Antarctic?

GS: Well, you better fly instruments. It'll fool you, because if you don't fly your instruments, you'll see a house up there someplace. You know a house is not supposed to be up there, but you try to believe it, you want to believe it. Whiteouts are dangerous; cause a lot of trouble.

DOB: Did you have a lot of personal problems with that?

GS: Maybe the ground people had more trouble with that than the aviation people did. It just didn't bother me much. It's like a fog.

DOB: Well, let's just talk a little bit about the experience in general.

GS: Been great.

DOB: You have referred to whiskey decisions, and I'm interested in what you knew about and thought about liquor policy and liquor use on the ice.

GS: Well, I'm the wrong one to ask because I grew up in a Protestant family where the teetotalers were decent people and the low outcasts were alcoholics. There was no gradation between a nice drink or a nice cocktail. There was none of that. You were either a drunkard or you were a teetotaler. My mother always said, "I'd rather see you dead than drunk," and she meant it. No doubt about it.

Well, my attitude is not the same, but I know alcohol caused a lot of trouble in Antarctica. There were guys fighting in the mess hall; my plane captain got beaten up in one of those things. I had no problem with moderation and relaxation, all that sort of thing, but
What did the other folks say about that?

DOB: Oh, their attitudes are all over the map.

GS: Well, it's like a lot of laws that we—we used to say there'll be nos in the Navy, like there'll be no this, there'll be no that, we were talking about be-nos. I just don't think an open whiskey bottle in the Antarctic is a good thing. I had a rule for all my crews. Don't ever show up under the influence of alcohol. Don't ever. And to the best of my knowledge, if they did, they hid it very well and they continued to do their job. The only man who ever showed up drunk, I grounded. I put him off the airplane and left him there. There's just no room for that. People do fly drunk in those conditions, and it's covered over.

DOB: Is that more of a problem in a place like Antarctica?

GS: Well, I sure have seen—are you recording?

DOB: Yes.

GS: I've seen a lot of people who drink to excess and get in an airplane who shouldn't have and who *knew* they shouldn't have. Had there been an accident, it would've been a terrible, terrible exposé. A tailhook-type thing. But I think now all that's changed. Back then, it was funny. I mean people smile—a roommate of mine would be in at sunup and he wouldn't know where his car was. They would find his car down the road up against a fence. Nobody ever said anything. It was funny. I don't think they do that now. I think it's serious. It was serious then. When we had double-deckers, bunks, I always got the top bunk because I didn't want them vomiting on me. It's that sort of problem. It's happy hour, it's drinking parties.

I remember in Bermuda on a flight we were in the O Club having dinner, evening meal. The exec got in a fistfight with the commanding officer right there in the O Club, whacking at each other, down on the floor in their whites. Nobody said anything. People grinned and laughed and joked, there's no big deal. I don't care for that.

An antidote to the anecdote, I was with my admiral in Naples. There was a big party for all the Italian social group. I was there because the admiral says, "I want you to be there." So I was there. I was drinking water or orange juice or something, and some of his staff members came up and said, "Here, be a man. Have a" whatever. And I said, "No thanks." And so the admiral came up and he said, "Quit bothering my pilot."

[Interruption]

GS: My boss, Vice Adm. Carney, CINCSOUTH, NATO, said, "If I want to go somewhere in a half an hour, an hour, tomorrow, he's sober. I like a sober pilot, so leave him alone."

DOB: Which brings me to another issue. In a place like Antarctica where it was very crowded, what are the main problems of living in close quarters day after day with the same people?

GS: The tape here will tell you something about that. It's difficult. That's why I never wanted to winter over because I wouldn't have any incentive to do that. Here again, you're faced with a problem of people who volunteer. This is a good subject, this volunteering. Why people volunteer. Where are they going. What do they do.

We had a senior officer at Little America in Deep Freeze I. He went in his room and he rarely came out. He didn't shave, he didn't bathe, he was a problem. People get angry with one another. There were a few mental cases. Have there been any psychiatric reports? Are you—

DOB: I'm working on them.

GS: Okay. Names? Are you open to names?

DOB: Not now, no.

GS: Okay. But we had—

DOB: Oh, you mean you want to tell me?

GS: Well, I don't know what's going to be done with this material.

DOB: It will be in the public domain.

GS: Well, if you have access to the psychiatric reports, you will know about whom I'm speaking. But as far as I know, all three operations—I, II, and III—had distinct cases of mental illness. They were incapacitated for air duty or for ground duty, and I'd hate to appear before a committee and say, "We want you to elucidate on these things," because it would be very difficult.

But there's always been a problem and the personnel selection has never been careful as far as I know. We had a psychiatrist doctor down there who was a case himself. Have you read about him?

DOB: Who?

GS: The name escapes me but he was a big, heavy fellow . . . Hedblom. Does this sound familiar to you?

DOB: Yes.

GS: Well, he passed the psychiatric tests for people who were volunteers. He was really a joke. It was sad. But we had some really great people down there. People like Harvey Speed, an R4D pilot, Roy Curtis, Bob Epperley, some of the ground personnel that I didn't know well but who were real towers of strength. Like your friend Dick Bowers and his Seabee guys. These terrific guys. And then they had some real scum.

DOB: Whom we won't name? Okay. Were you ever truly scared for your life?

GS: Not really. I don't think you can tolerate that sort of fear and continue to do your job. The event when the airplane rolled and we fired, after it's all over saying, "By George, that was close." But every aviator has those things where you have such a near miss that . . . is so close. You probably have them riding in an airliner, too, but you just don't happen to know about it.

DOB: What are you proudest of from your Antarctic experience?

GS: I would guess if I were going to have a tombstone I would put on it, "He tells it like it is." There's just no substitute for honesty and integrity.

[End Side A, Tape 2]

[Begin Side B, Tape 2]

DOB: So you said you told it like it is.

GS: Yes, and what pleases me as I was telling you, the telephone calls from old shipmates—over at the air station people come to the PX and the commissary whom I may not have seen in forty years, and they say, "You're Gus Shinn!" I may or may not remember—I say, "Well, how did you know me?" He'd say, "I'd know you anywhere. Know you anywhere." And then they'd tell me about a flight we'd flown together.

One fellow I saw here a while back, I think John Jackson, he said, "When they assigned me to you,"—he was going to be my plane captain for the admiral flying the Convair—he said, "I was scared to death. I heard you were really a tough pilot, a tough boss." And I just let him talk. But he said, "I found out you weren't. You just expected me to do my job. And I just loved it." And he remembered me forty years later. And *that* is a compliment. That's great.

DOB: Is there anything you'd do differently if you could do it again?

GS: You mean in career?

DOB: In Antarctica.

GS: No. No, I did my best. I had good crews. The few crew members who weren't competent I got relieved from duty. In the flight down with Cordiner in Deep Freeze II we had some very bad weather—weather that wasn't predicted—and I usually check my navigators after a while. If it's a fifteen-hour flight I check my navigator after two or three hours to see what his work looks like. I'm not a competent navigator, but I can figure out when the work is done right.

I checked his charts; they didn't look right. So I started doing the drift work and the wind calculations. I figured that he was so far off course that we were in danger of not getting to where we were going, so I questioned him. He went back and recalculated, and yes, he'd made some mistakes. But now he wanted me to make a big correction. Now if his second correction is not right either, that meant that we were going to be, again, wrong.

So I went up and talked to Cordiner. I said, "This is what's happened, and he wants me to turn way over here. But I don't think that's right. I'm going to just go straight south. What do you think?" He said, "You're the boss." I said, "Straight south." And I just sent the navigator back to sit down.

Four or five hours later we looked out and there was Cape Adare. I said, "That's Cape Adare. That's where we're going." I said to the captain, "He's not ever going to navigate for me again." The captain said, "You're right." And he didn't. We got to the ice, the man was grounded. As far as I know he never navigated with VX-6 again. I suppose he thought I was hard, but he could've lost us.

DOB: Well, all of this that you did on the ice was to prepare for the International Geophysical Year.

GS: We were supporting it, yes.

DOB: How did all these scientists and Navy people get along? All the military ones?

GS: The scientists got along well with people like me and with the other people I have mentioned like Harvey Speed and Roy Curtis, Bob Epperley, but we busted our butt to get them to where they were going, when they wanted to go, irrespective of some of the problems they did create. The command structure was fighting with the scientists all the time. I'd be interested to know what they say, the scientists say. What do they say? Can you tell me?

DOB: I don't want to do that in *your* interview, but I'll tell you later.

GS: Because I sometimes wonder. I mean I did a lot of bull sessions with these scientists, especially in Byrd Station where we all sat around and talked and talked and talked. I'll give you an example. It was Deep Freeze III, and Dalrymple and the other scientists were planning for Deep Freeze IV; they wanted to know how far out they could venture. They wanted to know how much logistics would be required, and nobody would give them any information. The skipper wouldn't discuss it with them. So I just sat down with them and drew up a body of logistical requirements, the number of pilots, added number of aircraft, number of gallons of gasoline, JATO, the whole thing. With this packet we can do this. If you don't want to do that much, then we cut it back. And I gave it to them. That was my mistake. They checked with the skipper, and he raised hell. How dare I go over his head and give these scientists information that would help them do their jobs? That was not my responsibility. I thought I was being smart, you know, and helping. If they wanted to make a long flight and I was in a position to do it, I would lay it on. I would take them out and do it. We saw some mountains on one flight that hadn't been seen since Ellsworth.

DOB: Were you at Byrd Station a long time in Deep Freeze II?

GS: I'd just go out there occasionally and fly from there to the Pole and around. Do you remember the dogs episode at the South Pole?

DOB: Which?

GS: Bunny Fuchs and Hillary were at the Pole with the dogs and they decided to kill the dogs up there. Then the PR back home got going and said, "They can't kill the dogs." So I was at Byrd Station, I got a message to take a load of JATO and go to the South Pole and pick up the dogs and take them to McMurdo. Well on the way up to Pole Station, I developed an oil leak in the engine so we had to land out there on the plateau [at the forty-five- hundred-foot level], and the landing gear collapsed when we did that. So somebody else had to go up there and get the dogs—we didn't get the dogs. But that's another story.

The gear collapsed because the airplane was so heavy. That was the trouble with these airplanes that we had because we were overloading. We sent back a message regarding parts we needed to rebuild the gear and the equipment. Ray Hall flew the parts to our remote area. We repaired the plane and flew it back to McMurdo.

DOB: You would've then spent two summers in Antarctica in Deep Freeze II and III. I haven't asked you specifically about Deep Freeze III. Is there anything that I should know about that particular summer?

GS: Well, yes, that's when I really made the skipper mad, this last one.

DOB: The skipper was . . . ?

GS: Comdr. Coley. He had been told by the admiral not to go up to the Pole too early. Too early was when we went up before. Well, he had the impression that he had to be down there to make all first flights. You know, when you made a first flight that was a great thing. The first one to do this, the first one to do that.

Prior to that, we had flown into New Zealand with the R4D-8s, which were fresh out of maintenance at Jacksonville, Florida. They had been poorly overhauled, and all of them had troubles, but mine had particular troubles with the compass system, the electrical system. When we got to New Zealand out of the states, all the aircraft were up for maintenance, we all reported our maintenance requirements. The skipper knew about mine, but he didn't order the maintenance officer to correct the discrepancies as described in my log book.

It came time to fly into Antarctica, and we had a pilots meeting the night before the fly-in. He had each aircraft commander give a report on the condition of his airplane. I got up and I said, "My airplane's not ready to fly." And he says, "Why not?" and I told him. He says, "Well, you'll fly in anyway." I said, "Captain, I will not. If you want this airplane to fly in, you'll have to have somebody else to do it." I said this in an all-squadron meeting with all the crews. I mean this is not smart. This is not smart, but he had already given me the bad fitness report. I couldn't fly in, but he wouldn't accept my word that the airplane was not capable, it was not serviced. He ordered the maintenance officer to fly

with me on the flight to check what I said to be true. Of course he did, and he confirmed what I had said.

The other aircraft flew away next morning to Antarctica, and Frankiewicz flew away when he shouldn't have. He had troubles—he had carburetor troubles. And when he got on the ice, he needed a couple new carburetors. Had he stayed in New Zealand, it would've been much easier. But the skipper flew away. The skipper flew to South Pole too early.

He was trying to take off and he lost an engine. Oh my. Now he wants a new engine, and it's difficult because Frankie's airplane is the only one that can go with that engine. Did he ever tell you this?

DOB: No.

GS: It's good. Well, the big engine that the P2V uses can barely slip inside this R4D-8. Frankie starts up to the Pole with it, he gets halfway up Beardmore and his engine fails—one of his engines fails. He's able to get this airplane turned back around and landed at our little fueling station there. He must've done a good job. So the captain starts sending me dispatches, "Fly south." He puts a legal officer researching how he can court-martial me. He must've sent a number of messages. Each time I'd send him back a message why I couldn't come.

When the aircraft was ready, we flew into McMurdo. I took the engine to the Pole for the P2V-7, offloaded the engine, very difficult by hand. Then he came out to where we were working in the slipstream of the airplane and says, "Load the old engine into your plane and fly it out."

DOB: Why?

GS: Good question. We had to manhandle that engine into that airplane, we had to fly it back to McMurdo, the engine was put off on the ice and it sank to the bottom of McMurdo. We thought he was trying to kill us. Had the airplane had any trouble on takeoff or going back over the plateau, we would have not been able to handle it. You may say I'm a bit of a nut, but other people had a similar idea. Had you ever heard that story before?

DOB: No. I may have, but incredible.

GS: Yes.

DOB: We haven't talked much about your impression of the ice and the continent itself and I ask—

GS: Oh, wonderful! Wunderbar! Gorgeous! I first saw it in '47. I was much more impressionable then. The cloud formations were striking, the blackness of the underside, the blues of the ice, the mountains, the fact that you're there almost alone. Just overpowering. Just gorgeous.

DOB: I've asked everyone that if you were an artist and could paint on one canvas the essence of Antarctica, what would he paint. Are you describing that to me now?

GS: I guess . . . I saw most of the mountains of West Antarctica, the Hallett canyons, the ones out at Pensacola Range, the Executive Range. But maybe the Executive Range from McMurdo—flying McMurdo—I hope you do that, and I hope they don't fly too high but if you fly too high you lose the beauty. They're only about thirteen thousand feet, something like that. But out of McMurdo you have Discovery Mountain right over here. It looks like it's right there, but it's sixty miles over there. You have the black and your white mountains that you fly up between. You have mountains on down to the south for three hundred miles before you go up Beardmore, named by the English discoverers. The beauty part about that is they look different every time you see them because the chances are the sun will be different. You know the sun goes around like that, and if you're not careful you won't know where you are. The texture of the ice in that area—it's coming down off the plateau—is rugged and it's rough. Oh man. Do other people—

DOB: Oh yes. It's amazing.

GS: Oh, the blues and the reds of the mountains, the blacks. Oh.

DOB: Great beauty.

GS: Oh! Exquisite! Exquisite, and of course Erebus and Terror there. Oh, just gorgeous. My number one satisfaction is becoming a naval aviator. I was most proud of that. I guess being known for my Antarctica exploit is what I'm most pleased with. What I'm most displeased with are some of the people who were put in command of those operations. They were lacking. They were people who flew well in the ready room and in the bar, but who should never have been allowed off the hill. Have you heard that term?

DOB: Yes.

GS: Off the hill? Well, up on the hill is where the whiskey decisions are made. I've never talked like this with anybody because I didn't have an outlet, but I've often wanted people to know what went on in that operation.

DOB: Well, Paul Siple wrote that when somebody goes to the ice that their character and personality have a profound change if they stay there for a while. Do you agree with that?

GS: Yes.

DOB: And did that happen to you?

GS: I don't really know. I didn't get up on the hill, I stayed down on the line in the cockpit. [Chuckles] Yes, but there were some people who shouldn't have been there who, once they got on the ice, were frightened because they were in the unknown and they were really not confident of the challenge. Well, if you ask me do I want to go back today, no, because it's not there anymore. I've seen it from the air—I mean pictures of it from the air. It's modern. Civilians are there.

DOB: It's not a frontier anymore.

GS: Well, the equipment is up to the job, Dian. Ours wasn't. We were struggling, and that's the challenge. That's part of the fun. Now they have twin-jet helicopters you can fly to the Pole, they've got C-141s and C-5s, and no problem, bowling alleys. But what I call my old buddy . . . oh, the guy that flew the first airplane in Antarctica? The Australian? You know who I'm talking about? Well he was down there for Deep Freeze II or III. Sir Hubert Wilkins.

DOB: Oh, right.

GS: Well, I can tell you a story after this one, but this one really hurts. Admiral Dufek was very jealous of anybody getting any credit for anything. And our crew didn't get any credit. The medal that was recommended for me was given to him. But when Sir Hubert came to McMurdo, for whatever reason I don't know, but he wasn't put in VIP quarters. He was put in quarters with us in a double-decker bunk. And he was in a top double-deck bunk in the back. But I'd read about Sir Hubert when I was a child, and I knew him. I'd seen that typical picture of him with his pipe, so I got buddy-buddy with him. I wasn't allowed to take him on a flight. That was verboten. He would lie back on his bunk with his corn cob pipe and read books. He wasn't persona grata to the admiral.

One day he happened to make a remark to newspaper people, of whom we had some, that we hadn't learned a thing since he was in Antarctica in 1927, I think it was. We're still at the same grubby old camp, the same dirty, muddy streets in the summertime, and boy, the admiral heard that and they sent that man to Cape Hallett. You know they've got a little station up there?

DOB: Yes.

GS: And so they took that poor man away from us, my buddy, and sent him up there and kept him up there until the operation was over. That was my friend, Sir Hubert. And when I look back on it, I thought of him as being an old man, but he wasn't. He was like fifty-something then. You know, I looked at him through the eyes of a thirty-five-year-old as being old. But he was so lovable. And then later on I saw him when he was in Canada. He was on a lecture tour up there. Noah Barber has written a couple of good books, if you read him. Do you know a Noah Barber book? Do you?

DOB: I'll look it up.

GS: He's got some of my exploits in there. He tells it how it is and about Sir Hillary. Hillary was a baddie and Bunny was a good one.

[Interruption]

DOB: Did you finish that story? I didn't mean to have you be interrupted. I guess we did. My last question for you is what haven't I asked that I should have?

GS: Well, off the top of my head I can't think because I don't think in these lines very often, and it's surprising to me that I can think of them at all. But I have one more anecdote for you.

I retired in '63 and I was invited back to Antarctica, so I went up to Washington to get it lined up. Admiral . . . who was the admiral then? In charge?

DOB: In '63? I don't think I know.

GS: The guy just died. He was out there at the reunion, I think. Anyway—

DOB: Reedy.

GS: They were going to send me down to Antarctica, and I was with the admiral and his chief of staff, and he looked over to the chief of staff and he said, "Cut orders for this man and send him down." Well, I never got orders. I went back up to Washington and I went in to see Dr. James Mooney. Did you ever meet Dr. Mooney? He was a civilian in charge of the whole program. And he said, "Well, gee, I thought you had—." "No."

So he put me on a flight of VIPs to go down. We got to New Zealand and the chief of staff visited me and he said, "What are you doing here?" So I told him, and he said, "Nah, the admiral said you can't go." We had some newspaper people aboard so they said, "We'll see what's going on." So they went on down to the ice and they talked to the admiral and they said, "Why wasn't Shinn allowed to go down there?" And he said, "Well, he's in the employ of some foreign interest, and they're trying to do something or get something, and so that's why he was excluded." So they came back and told me, and I said, "Lord, mercy, that's the craziest thing I ever heard of." And I said, "Are you going to write it up?" They had said they were going to do an exposé, but now said, "No, if we do that, we'll never be invited back." So they didn't. But that's a sequel.

DOB: Well, we must go, but thank you so much. It's been a wonderful morning.

GS: Well, it has, and once we got started, golly. As I say, there's a million of those things out there. A million.

DOB: Maybe we can talk again sometime. Thank you so much.

GS: It's always a consideration using names like that. I'm telling the truth, even though you say the truth may lie someplace else.

DOB: [Chuckles] Thank you, Gus.

[End of interview]