

## **INTERVIEW BETWEEN MISS M A MARTIN (BAS) AND MR FRANK ELLIOTT**

**7 OCTOBER 1997**

A.M.: Mr Elliott, if we could start when you joined FIDS in 1946. What had you been doing beforehand?

F.E.: I was employed by the Indian Civil Service, serving in India, and was involved in the supply of equipment for the Japanese war. At the time, or just before I joined FIDS, I was in leave in England and I was invited through Sir James Wordie to join FIDS.

A.M.: Did you know Sir James?

F.E.: No, I didn't know him, but I was climbing and very friendly with Ted Priott. Ted Priott knew Sir James Wordie and, in fact, I believe served on the same committee for the British Mountaineering Council with him and Sir James Wordie invited Ted and myself to consider joining FIDS. Eventually, I went up to the Colonial Office for an interview and I accepted the appointment.

A.M.: So the appointment was based on your mountaineering experience?

F.E.: Yes. At the time, apparently, they had surveyors and geologists down there, but no-one really properly knew about mountaineering techniques for crossing mountain country.

A.M.: And what were your duties and roles to be, then. What, essentially, was your role

when you went down there?

F.E. I was appointed as a sort of general hand and base leader at Hope Bay.

A.M.: And was that the first place that you went to - Hope Bay? Was that the first place you went?

F.E. No. A number of us went out in the *Lafonia* from England to the Falkland Islands and we were there for some weeks, staying at the Monstar Hotel and during that time we did quite a bit of climbing in the Falklands and walking around. Then, just about that time, there were problems at Deception Island. They had been off the air since about August and there was some concern that something drastic may have happened to them. So when the *Trepassey* arrived from Labrador, myself and Dick Burd were sent down to see what had happened at Deception Island and from there we had to set up a new base at the Argentine Islands. The idea at the Argentine Islands was to take over the old British Graham Land Expedition hut. However, when we got there we had to disappear in a tidal wave. Some time later Sir James Wordie came down and I rode him round in a dory looking for a new site but we couldn't find anywhere that was better than the original site where the British Graham Land Expedition hut was. So, I think it was the *Fitzroy*, we went north and from Deception Island brought back a lot of timber and other materials and myself and Dick Burd and we just stopped. We had collected from Port Lockroy - that was closed down at the time - and started to build a hut there, and we built a hut which I believe was occupied for the next year. After that was completed, I moved to Hope Bay as Base Leader there, taking over from Vic Russell. A dory is a rowing boat; I think it originates in Newfoundland. They were

used up there in the sealing industry. The *Trepassey* which was captained by a Captain Birden, a Newfoundlander and they were all Newfoundland crew, pretty tough sealers/sailors. The ship had no bilge keels and rolled very badly. We eventually arrived at Deception Island after a pretty rough voyage and it was quite frightening when we got there - there was no-one around, what appeared to be the remains of the old whalers hut where they lived had gone, and in spite of blowing the ship=s siren, we couldn=t get any response from the shore. But eventually, one man did come out and when we went ashore eventually, we found the four of them were all quite well, although in a pretty awful state, as they had lost everything, literally everything, was all in one hut. All their equipment, their food, their clothes and everything in one hut and they had lived more or less without anything for that time.

A.M.: You were then posted to Hope Bay?

F.E.: Yes, that was after completing the hut at Argentine Islands. I went to Hope Bay and took over from Vic Russell. He came out as base leader and I went in as base leader and our main plan for that year was to sledge from Hope Bay, right down the Weddell Sea and over then over the ?Printer? Peninsula to Marguerite Bay. Now this journey had never been done previously; the furthest that anyone had got south, I think, was Nordenskjold in about 1900 and he got just past Snow Hill Island. This section that he wasn=t able to pass was a pretty awful area with last year=s coming down from the mainland onto the sea and they had piled up to as much as a thousand feet above sea level, so it was quite an awful and difficult area to cross, it needed mountaineering techniques. We also had one or two mishaps with dogs in crevasses, but I was able to

descend and we rescued them all without mishap and I used mountaineering techniques, abseiling down and returning climbing up using prussik slings. This was really the only way one could get up. Otherwise people tried to pull you up, the rope just sank into the snow and you came to a dead stop. Yes, the main purpose of that journey was survey and we had to do geology as well, if that was possible, but in fact Ray Adie was the geologist and it wasn't very practical. It was necessary to keep away from the coast, about five or ten miles off the coast, so Ray wasn't able to get to the rocks very often. This was a bit very frustrating to him, but no doubt he made up for it later on when he went to Marguerite Bay and did nothing but geological work.

A.M.: How long did the trip actually take?

F.E. Yes, it probably took about seventy days, I think. But I'm not quite sure of that. And this was a journey, we sledged as far as Three Slice Nunatak and there we were met by a party from Marguerite Bay, who led us over the plateau. They had marked the route over through the glaciers over to Marguerite Bay. At Marguerite Bay, we rendezvoused with the Base E party and had quite an exciting time, two or three weeks= mountaineering with the Harvard Mountaineering Club. Their two members were serving with the Americans and our Climbing Club members.

A.M.: So this was the Finn Ronne Group?

F.E.: Yes, this was the Finn Ronne Expedition, but the two people we climbed with, one was a geologist and the other was a surveyor. We did some quite interesting peaks that

had never been climbed before.

A.M.: Which one? And from there, did you then travel overland all the way back to Hope Bay?

F.E.: No. I came back to Hope Bay on one of the Survey=s ships to start my second year there.

A.M. And what was Hope Bay like? What was the base itself like?

F.E. Well, the base was originally established by Operation Tabarin and by the time I took over, it was completely under snow. All you could see were the few chimneys sticking out the top. Every day in bad weather we had to dig out the entrance and this was done by opening a door inwards and shovelling all the snow into the hut, then gradually making our way out and shovelling it all out again. This had to be done almost every day at Hope Bay. Life was pretty tough there really.

A.M. And what sort of work went on there? What sort of science was going on at the time?

F.E. Well we had the usual meteorology, every three hours throughout the twentyfour, with our chief contact at Port Stanley to send in the reports, they were done right through the twentyfour hours. We were doing geology, survey was the most important thing at that time. Dr Bill Sladen was doing a study of the Adelie Penguin. He did a very interesting study of the life cycle of the Adelie. He was also doing some medical research work at the time as well. And also, he did a photographic record of work and

life at the base, which I think was rather destroyed in the end with the fire.

A.M.: There was quite a lot of science going on anyway. And did you feel when you were there that you were there for the science or was it really a political reason?

F.E.: I would say it was mainly political, but in order to prove our point politically we had to work on survey and geology and development generally.

A.M.: And did you have many visitors?

F.E. No, no visitors at Hope Bay and it was almost impossible to get there for most of the year. In fact, when they eventually tried to rescue us they made nine attempts to get two of us after the fire.

A.M. So you were pretty cut off. Did you have radio contact with anyone?

F.E.: Yes, we had radio contact 24 hours a day. Every three hours we had contact with Port Stanley for the weather reports and we had our chief contact with Marguerite Bay and the other bases.

A.M. It was a long way away.

F.E. Yes.

A.M. Can you tell me about your other Survey trips and your other Survey work? You were involved in surveying the southern coast of James Ross Island?

F.E. Yes, one of my party went and did that - Brian Jefford - and two or three others went and did that area. One of the journeys they did without me.

A.M. And were they surveying all round the Peninsula as well?

F.E. Yes, all on the Weddell Sea side. We didn't do very much on the other side because up to that time, nobody had ever crossed the Trinity Peninsula. But at one stage I was asked by the Colonial Office, by cipher, to investigate a Chilean base at the Danco Coast and we then made the first crossing of the Peninsula, it was quite a mountaineering feat, but we went down and looked at the base and delivered the usual note of protest about Crown Land and received a similar one from them about Chilean Land.

A.M. But it was all very amicable?

F.E. Yes, we had quite a friendly rendezvous. We stayed there a few days with them and then came back again overland. It's interesting - at that stage we lost a dog on the Danco Coast and we were never to get it back again. It just disappeared. But some three or four months later, one of the dog minders at Hope Bay was feeding the dogs and this missing dog came rubbing up against him. It had found its way right back across the Peninsula on its own and somehow managed to find itself food.

When we had any problems, either of us, we would discuss it together by radio, by our

tea. For instance, when Pawson was missing from Admiralty Bay, we discussed ways and means of trying to rescue him.

A.M. Which is a long way from Hope Bay.

F.E. Yes. I was going to organise sledges and take a dinghy over there, in case they had got on an island and the ice had gone out, which in fact was what did happen. They were alright, though. They eventually got back again.

Several hundred miles south of there we were doing a survey and we normally had contact from the sledge party to the base. We used to pass a weather report each day and I would take any messages that would come through from the Governor of the Falkland Islands. Quite suddenly, they went off the air. We didn't think much about it, because we thought it was just a question of either the radio equipment had gone wrong temporarily or a generator had gone out of action. We knew they had duplicates, so it would come in again. But this went on for about four days and I decided in the end that our best plan was to dump some of our heavy equipment and return, as fast as possible, back to Hope Bay. We made a pretty quick journey back again, doing sometimes 25 miles a day, and when we were approaching the base at Hope Bay, everything seemed to be alright, but as we got nearer we found, instead of chimneys sticking to the snow, there was just a black hole in the snow and there was nobody there at all. Eventually, I left the other members of the party at the base and I decided to go over to the penguin rookery to see if anyone was over there. I thought they might all be camping over there. That was Dick Burd, Michael Green and Bill Sladen. But when I got to the penguin rookery, I only found Sladen there, who was

pretty distraught and upset and he told me what had happened.

A.M. And what had happened?

F.E. Well, the base had burnt down, completely burnt down, and Michael Green, the geologist, and Dick Burd, who was based at Argentine the previous year lost their lives. We don't know how it happened, but in my report to Port Stanley, I suggested it was because they were using petrol engines and somehow the petrol had got on fire and they had been unable to contain the fire because of the very strong winds we had there. We had winds gusting up to 120 mph quite often at Hope Bay. There was a funnel down the glacier and it just built up the wind speed.

A.M. So you were left to camp out?

F.E. Yes, we camped out for the rest of the time. That was no hardship. After all, we were normally camping, something like 200-250 days a year anyway, on our sledge journeys, so this was no hardship. And we had enough food, because the food in the Nissen hut - we had a very old Nissen hut that was under snow - hadn't been touched. But another emergency supply of food, which was over a quarter of a mile away, burning timbers from the hut had ignited that and burnt everything down - exploded the tins. But we were alright, we had plenty of food, no problem. And we spent our time doing odd jobs around the tent - cooking, and the odd book we had to read. And we did quite a bit of mountaineering then. We ascended some of the local peaks round there, which gave everybody something to do, to pass the time on. Eventually, the

ship, the *John Biscoe*, tried to get in and made nine attempts before it eventually reached us.

A.M. Had you been able to contact other parties?

F.E. Yes, in my second year we had some American radio receiver transmitters, hand-operated, the generator was hand-operated, which were excellent. And even with those we were able to contact Port Stanley. We used those in my second year on the trail as well. When we were sledging, we contacted the bases and sent our weather reports in and so on, using this American equipment.

A.M. Which you had to wind?

F.E. Yes, you used two hands on it and wound it. One wound and the other one did the transmitting, or receiving.

A.M. Then, at relief time, was it the *Biscoe* that arrived?

F.E. Yes, the *Biscoe* eventually arrived and took us off.

A.M. And on the *Biscoe*, I believe Bob Moss arrived?

F.E. Yes, Bob Moss actually came out with me on the *Lafonia*, when we first went out to the Falklands. At that time they were making the film *Scott of the Antarctic* and he was on the team.

A.M. As camera-man, photographer?

F.E. Yes, he was a camera-man.

A.M. And from Hope Bay you then went back to Stanley?

F.E. Yes, I seem to remember I went round a few of the bases first and then went back to Stanley. I should have returned them to England, but Sir Miles Clifford, the Governor, asked me to stay another year and he asked me to accompany him on his round of the dependencies, all the bases, on one of the ships, which I did. We visited all of bases and South Georgia.

A.M. And what was the purpose of that? Simply to make sure things were working?

F.E. Well, Sir Miles Clifford was very interested in everything that went on in the Antarctic and it was policy in the colonies for the Governor to go round from time to time to inspect the installations, bases and so on. This is not only done in the Falkland Islands Dependencies, but in all the territories.

A.M. So, was the Governor in charge of FIDS at that point?

F.E. Oh yes, yes, things were a bit easier in many ways. At that time, the whaling industry was very affluent. We had a very, very big revenue from the whaling industry and this was controlled by the Governor of the Falkland Islands, and all this money went into running the Survey. So, Colonial Office didn't have the say they had later on when it

became grant-aid. We made our own programmes, which were eventually approved by Colonial Office. I suppose Colonial Office gave us the general idea of what had to be done in the way of developing and then we put our programme of work in each year.

A.M. So, basically, in those early days it was financed by the whaling?

F.E. It was all financed by the whaling, yes.

A.M. Do you know how long that went on for?

F.E. Oh, it went on for several years. The whaling gradually diminished. When I first went South, there were three whaling companies operating in South Georgia and there were more people employed in South Georgia than lived on the Falkland Islands. And there was all the income tax, which came in from all these men working there, and all the revenue on whale oil, so much per barrel on whale oil.

A.M. And these were Norwegians?

F.E. There were two Norwegian companies and an Argentine company. Obviously, the policy was laid down, probably by Foreign Office through Colonial Office, to the Governor and he had to plan his programme of work to comply with that policy.

A.M. So did he work with scientists to decide what science was going on?

F.E. No, the scientific side as opposed to survey was mostly done by the Scientific Bureau, they would advise us on that, advised Colonial Office anyway and Colonial Office would say. But there wasn't very much priority on scientific work those days. We had to get a map of the place, that was the important thing.

A.M. So your main concern was surveying?

F.E. Yes. It had to be. I mean, you can't really do anything until you've got a map.

A.M. The Scientific Bureau was based in London at that time?

F.E. Yes, it was. It think it was Sanctuary Buildings in London.

A.M. And Fuchs was running it?

F.E. Fuchs was eventually in charge. When he came back from Marguerite Bay, he was in charge of the Bureau. He had no say at all in the administrative side of it. This was entirely the Governor and Colonel Butler and then myself, we administered the whole of FIDS through the Governor.

A.M. And this was in your position as Secretary for FIDS?

A.M. And when did you become Secretary?

F.E. I eventually came back to England in 1949 and I was married and then Ena and myself

sailed out to the Falklands and I took over then as Assistant Secretary FIDS and there was some query at the time. It was either a question of me going to South Georgia as Resident Magistrate there, or taking over as Secretary of FIDS. Well, we felt it was in our personal interests of being in the Falklands rather than in an isolated community, and we asked for the Falkland Islands. My main work there was to organise the store and equipment for the bases. Up to that time, nothing very concrete had ever been done. Originally, it was Operation Tabarin and everything was done by the services. Then it changed over and for two years it was a very hit and miss business, stores. The Base Leader made a list of what he wanted next year, but as he was going out he wasn't very conscientious about it and we had always a last minute rush of running round Port Stanley, trying to find a pound of sugar or half a pound of tea and sending to England by air for some bit of equipment that had been forgotten. So, I set about organising something a little more efficient and I produced what I called, at that time, standard lists. Now, these had lists of all the equipment and all the stores - everything necessary that was held on a base. And there were three columns - column A was the standard issue; column B was the stock at the time of stock-taking, that was the end of the year; and column C was the amount required to bring it up to column A. So column B plus column C equalled column A. Now, this had a formula so that it could be varied for certain bases - a place like Marguerite Bay, they needed two years' supply in case the ship couldn't get in, or a larger base with more men, and so on. Certain bases had sledging equipment standard lists and camping equipment standard lists, whereas the ordinary met bases didn't. Now, with the food there was four columns - one was the man year ration. Now, if there were five men on base you multiplied this first column by five. And the stocks you held at the time were put in

column A, the next column, and if you say, worked out you need a thousand pounds of sugar, there would be a thousand pounds in column A; column B would be the stock at the time, that might be four hundred pounds, so six hundred would be the amount required to bring it up to the full quota for the year. And this was done with every single item that was required at a base. They were long lists, very comprehensive, but this had a very big advantage. We were setting up new bases at that time, quite a few, and all you had to do was take all the standard lists and order everything. You didn't have to worry about thinking about what was required, you just sent the Crown Agents the standard list.

A.M.: Did the orders come from Britain?

F.E. The orders all came to the Falkland Islands. We made all the orders, we had a big order department; we had staff; we took over the Council Chambers in Government House and that was our stores department, and we ordered everything from there. Nothing was ordered from Britain at all, except specialised scientific equipment, which we couldn't do anyway because we didn't know anything about it. The stores and equipment all came from London and this was handled, at that stage, by the Crown Agents. They became our agents and that's how we got everything and either myself or Ken Butler went to the Crown Agents every year and we had the FIDS office in London and we assisted in the ordering of the stores and seeing manufacturers' developments of anoraks and equipment and so on. We were involved in all that. And also on the appointments board. We were responsible for appointing, really. We had the last say in who was appointed, because we weren't always

interested in the man with the highest qualifications, but whether a man was suitable for serving in Antarctica. Whether he would pack up after the first month or so. And, in fact, during the time that I was recruiting we only had, I think, about one person in the whole lot that was not a success. Whereas the Australians and the French had very big throw-outs, very big numbers thrown out.

When I was appointed originally, the Crown Agents didn't handle any of this. It was all done by just a group of people in England. I don't know quite who it was that did the ordering and so on. I say, it was pretty haphazard and we were always short of materials and stores and so on. And the appointing was not done by Crown Agents. I was appointed by Colonial Office, not by Crown Agents. So everything was ordered from Port Stanley and all the orders were submitted to Crown Agents in London and they just went ahead and ordered everything. If there were any queries, then they got in contact with FIDS office and either myself or Ken Butler or whoever was there at the time, would investigate and advise them on what to do about it.

A.M.: What was your relationship with the Scientific Bureau at that time?

F.E: Well it was good, no problems with them. But we had very little to do with them apart from getting scientific equipment from them or ordering for them, in some cases, and sending it down. And they at that time also gave special instructions to scientists, like geologists and so on, they brought them up to date with the background geology and also the scientists when they came back to England, the geologists for instance, when they had done a year or two years, they went and worked up the results at the Bureau

under Fuchs. I suppose there were perhaps twenty people involved with FIDS at that time. Apart from the administrative staff, there was the met staff under Gordon Howkins and the radiosonde staff under McNaughton and some radio staff as well, very few radio, it was mostly done by the Falkland Islanders, but we had the odd man who used to go in and help them out sometimes.

A.M.: And as FIDS= Secretary, did you then go down around the Antarctic bases again?

F.E.: Yes, I went down again, I think twice or three times. I usually, if I could, let John Green go down, he was keen to go down. He became my assistant eventually and he used to go down. But I did go down a number of times. In fact the last time I made the attempt to go down, we got a hole in the ship and had to return.

A.M.: Which ship was that?

F.E.: I don=t know, it may have been the *Biscoe* or *Shackleton*, I can=t remember. I have a feeling it was the old *Biscoe* and not the new one. Yes, it was the old *Biscoe*. We hit something and the ship started leaking through the propeller shaft and they had quite a job to keep it pumped free.

A.M.: Did you have to go back to Stanley?

F.E.: Well, they went back to Stanley but they weren=t able to do it there and it had then to go to Montevideo to the dry docks. I was in London at the time and I went with the marine consultants and the Crown Agents to Sweden, to look at – it wasn't the

*Shackleton* at the time – to look at the ship to see if it was suitable for our needs. It wasn't completely suitable but the marine engineers thought it would be possible to alter the holds, redesign them, to give us the accommodation, which was done. It was quite an interesting ship, because it was the first time I knew anything about variable pitch propeller.

A.M.: Which was what?

F.E.: Well, this was the blades of the propeller can be put either to bring the ship forward or to take it backwards, or to just go round without - feathered - so they didn't move the ship at all, and this was quite useful in many things. If you got into ice, you could feather the propeller and it would go round and chop up the ice. Quite useful and you could manoeuvre the ship from the crow's nest. All the controls were up at the crow's nest and you could work the ship from there and when you were in the crow's nest you could see right over the prow of the ship, see what was the proportion of ice floes and growlers and so on. And quickly you could bring the propeller round the other way and it would come into reverse quickly, without reversing the engines or anything.

A.M.: What had the ship been used for before?

F.E.: It was used for the Greenland, I think it was iron ore trade, so it had quite big holds but not much accommodation in the way of crew. That's why we had to have extra accommodation put on it.

A.M.: And was any science done from the *Shackleton*?

F.E.: Oh yes, quite a lot of science, yes. I can't remember quite what, but they did quite a bit of sounding and that sort of thing. The Captain who took over first of all, he didn't like this. He was an old fashioned captain and he didn't like this feathered propeller at all and didn't use it very much. But then we got Norman Brown, who was originally the First-Mate and he took over and he was very go-ahead and they made extremely good use of it. One of the ships got on fire at Marguerite Bay, I think it was the *Trepassey* got on fire and was quite badly damaged. In fact, the whole of the deck house was loose.

A.M.: In danger of dropping off?

F.E.: If we had gone to sea with it like that, it would have just shot off into the sea. But we had a very good First Officer on the ship. He was a Newfoundlander. He took cables right under the ship and fastened it on, fastened the deck house on; and we eventually sailed to Deception Island and they got timbers from there and managed to make a temporary repair and eventually went up to Port Stanley and Montevideo again for a sort of refit on the dry docks.

A.M.: So the ship was actually strapped together?

F.E. Yes, tied together with cables. The *Fitzroy* was down in Marguerite Bay at the same

time and she came alongside to use the hoses on it, to try and put the fire out. But all the pumps froze up, so she couldn't pump water on it and eventually this chap Stone, he organised a relay of buckets of water, sea water, and passed them from hand to hand and managed to get the fire out, under control.

A.M. Because the *Trepassey* was a wooden ship?

F.E. Yes, a wooden ship, she was sheathed with green heart. Green heart is a very hard timber which hardens by abrasion, so the more you rub on ice the harder it gets, and all the old whalers and sailors and, in fact, I think the *Discovery* as well, were sheathed in green heart.

A.M. So they were stronger?

F.E. Yes, very strong. Britain claimed the whole of Antarctica, the huge sector that is South Georgia, South Shetlands, South Orkneys and the Graham Land Peninsula, right down to the Pole, a huge wedge-shaped sector. But overlapping this sector, the Chileans had a big area which they claimed, and the Argentines more or less claimed the whole lot. And both these nations set up bases in different parts of Antarctica. From time to time, protests were delivered, mostly by the captains of the ships, our ships, to these bases, but from what I saw of the Argentines and Chileans, they literally did nothing at all, apart perhaps from the odd met report, but that's all they did. They didn't do any development in the way of survey or geology or anything.

One thing might be interesting. I was sent down, eventually, I don't know quite what stage it was, to re-establish Hope Bay. Now the reason we had to re-establish it was because the Argentines had established a base there. Now we got down there with a new base hut, all the equipment and everything, one loaded in the scow, and started to cross the shore and we were fired upon by the Argentines and Dr Marsh and myself - Dr Marsh was going to be base leader and I was Secretary FIDS - became the first people in Antarctica to be under fire. And that's in history today, I'll get that book out in a minute. No, the dealings I had with them were quite friendly, they were most helpful. For instance, I needed a little attention to one of my teeth when I was South and they flew me by helicopter from the base to the *Birden Island*, the icebreaker, and attended to the tooth and brought me back again. And we had good relations with the climbing people of the expedition. Ken Butler, of course, had a lot of problems originally with the Americans. Because the American hut, which had been there for some years at Stonington Island, it had been locked up and all the stores covered in weather-proof sheets and so on. But it had all been ransacked and opened up. And they said the British had done it originally. But I think it was proved later that the Chileans had been there.

A.M. And you finally left the Survey in 1958? Why? Had you had enough by then?

F.E.: Not really, no. The main reason was that we had then a daughter, she was seven years old and we didn't particularly want her to go to boarding school in England, as we were away from home all the time abroad. So we asked for a transfer from the Falkland Islands. Because, obviously, at seven she had got to more or less the end of

the schooling in the Falkland Islands. It wasn't particularly good there at that time.

And I was offered several Territories and eventually I accepted Swaziland, which had a good English medium school and it was quite a healthy territory and one of the last Territories that got independence in Africa, in fact. It was a very interesting country.

AM.: You went out as what?

F.E.: I went out originally to re-organise the Secretariat, to bring up the filing system and other things. And when that was done, they brought a regular manager out from England, an Englishman, and I took over as Registrar General because there was a big development plan there and we were registering companies and patents, trade marks and births, marriages and deaths, and revealing the laws and so on, and I took over doing all that. And I remained as Registrar General for Swaziland until I retired.

A.M.: On leaving FIDS the following January, you were awarded the MBE? What was that in recognition of?

F.E.: Well my work generally with FIDS. First of all as Assistant Secretary FIDS and then as Secretary FIDS. When, eventually, Colonel Butler left, he went to South Georgia as the magistrate there - you probably know that do you? - no? And he had a housekeeper there. He wasn't married, or divorced, I'm not quite sure which, but he had a housekeeper and eventually he married the housekeeper. And he eventually left government service and took on as Vice-President of the Argentine Whaling Company, and we saw him once or twice after that in Montevideo, and then I lost touch with him. Whether he is still alive, I just don't know. He was quite a character -

Ken Butler. He did a very fine journey before Fuchs. When I arrived at Marguerite Bay, after sledging down, he was away on a long journey. He had sledged over to Three Slice Nunatak and then right down the Weddell Sea. He had done five or six hundred miles with the Americans, using some American equipment, but mostly our equipment, our tents and dogs and so on. The American equipment and dogs were no good at all. And he had American aircraft support on this journey. And when he came back again I talked to him quite a lot and he had in mind that he would go to the Pole, using that method, with sledging and aircraft support. But eventually Fuchs decided to do it another way and Fuchs took over. Ken Butler was rather pushed out, I think. Eventually, the international Trans-Antarctic did it with that method. They used just light weight sledges and dogs and aircraft support, all the way across. They did it right across right from Graham Land, right across to the McMurdo Sound.

A.M. And what of the dogs that you had at Hope Bay?

F.E. Yes, we had a lot of dogs at Hope Bay. We had over two hundred. And we did supply dogs to the French expedition, Andre Leotard came down and we gave them a lot of dogs. We also supplied some dogs to the Australian expedition. Now, our dogs were rather different to Marguerite Bay. Most of the Marguerite Bay dogs were obtained from Greenland and they were a long-haired dog. Now, we found in practice these weren't very satisfactory because the accumulation of ice on the dog's fur sometimes even pulled their fur off their backs. But our dogs mostly came from the north west mountains of Newfoundland. They were short-haired dogs and they were much larger, they weighed up to 120-130 lbs. But they stood up to very cold temperatures, I sledged, right through the winter, we were quite new this, winter sledging. We sledged

right through the winter and we had sometimes 80° of frost, but the dogs didn't seem to bother very much, even under those temperatures.

A.M.: Why did Hope Bay have so many dogs?

F.E.: We were a sort of breeding base. We had a dog breeder there and did very well with him, a chap called Dick Wallin, who looked after the breeding, and we did very well. But we needed quite a lot. Don't forget, we were out in the field all the time, right through the winter.

A.M.: So how many in a team?

F.E.: Well, we had up to eleven in a team. Now, things were a little bit different at Marguerite Bay. When Marguerite Bay started, Sledging Commander Bingham, was the base leader, and he had his sledging experience up in Greenland, and he used Greenland dogs and that's probably why he went up to Greenland to get these dogs. And they used a fan trace. Now, we used the tandem trace, which was the one the North West Mounties used and we found these very much better because, with the fan trace you've got to have someone in front, in fact Marguerite Bay did, they had someone in front all the time, for the dogs to follow. We were able to control the dogs by word of mouth completely. Eventually, when Ken Butler took over, he took over the tandem trace as well, he started using tandem trace. They dropped the Greenland method. The Greenland method was fine for up in Greenland, but they were hunting seal on the sea ice and it was necessary to spread the dogs out to stop the load being in

all one place. Because the ice was quite thin very often, they had to dig a hole for the ice, to fish, so it was quite thin. So they used this fan trace, because it was to their advantage not to get dogs through the ice. But the North West Mounties, they used the tandem because they could wend their way between trees with a tandem. They didn't get one dog lashed up round the tree.

A.M.: And do you think having dogs on base is a great advantage to everyone there?

F.E. Oh yes. I think almost without exception, everybody thought a lot about the dogs. We all really admired the dogs. In fact, there is a poem in that book of Pawson's there about Yap with my leader, the leader of my dogs. I've had a lot of teams and each man at the base had a team and my aim as a base leader was to get everybody else sledging. And I achieved this. Everybody had over 200 days sledging, I think it was, or over 200 miles sledging each year.

A.M.: And people when they first came down, was it simply a matter of having to learn the ropes?

F.E. Yes, I mean I didn't know anything sledging, but I was quite lucky going to Hope Bay in many ways because there was a man there, Captain Taylor, who I met recently at Hattersley-Smith's. He's dead now though. He'd served with the North West Mounties and was used to dogs and he introduced their methods of sledging. So I was able to take over a technique that was proved over the years and we improved our camping techniques. John Francis, the surveyor, he had already had a year down there

when I got there, and he knew quite a bit about it and I added a bit more to it with my mountaineering and camping experience in ice conditions.

A.M.: Do you know where the use of pyramid tents came from? Why were pyramid-shaped tents used?

F.E.: Well, I don't know who designed them originally, but they're a very wonderful tent. They were a bit, in many ways, like the mountaineering tents. They had an inner and an outer tent with four poles, one in each corner that falls between the two inner and outer. And the inner tent had a flap going inside the tent, all the way round. And the outer tent had a flap on the outside, going all the way round on the outside. Well, you were able to pile snow all the way round on the outside flap and also, your sledge boxes, things like dog pemmican, which weighed forty pounds, piled those all the way round. And they would keep the tent down in the most vicious gales when we had gales of over 130 recorded wind speeds. And they stood up to that.

A.M.: Can I take you back to the work you did, the survey that you did down the East Coast and at Stonington? Was that when you were laying ground surveys, ground controls for the American Survey?

F.E.: No, it was all ground control, it was all done by, the distance by sledge wheel and by direct reckoning. We made an astro fix every fifty miles when it was possible and corrected our traverse and generally kept some 5-10 miles from the coast and on each point, obvious point, we'd tried to get three bearings, both horizontal and vertical. We used the Indian clinometer for the vertical ones and either theodolite or compass

for the horizontal ones.

A.M.: How did you feel when you were out there, absolutely miles from where anyone had ever been?

F.E.: Well, being younger and being used to mountains and open spaces - I had also travelled in the Himalayas quite a bit - it just seemed normal to me, nothing in it. It was just a holiday as far as I was concerned.

A.M.: You weren't involved in laying ground control for the Finn Ronne – for the air photographs?

F.E.: No, I don't think they did very much of that, the Ronne anyway. It was all done later on by Huntings Air Survey. Incidentally, the man who was flying, Lewis, has just died recently, with Sir Miles Clifford. He was a grand person to work for. He's dead now. Hattersley-Smith and myself went to a funeral, but he was most helpful to me, gave all the backing necessary.