

This Is Tommy Thompson.

Recorded at Ardrossan, Ayrshire on the first of October 2009 by Chris Eldon Lee.

Transcribed by John W. Blunn 18<sup>th</sup>. November 2009.

Tommy Thompson Disc One of Three.

Thompson. William Harvey Thompson

Disc 1 track1. [0:00:18.3] Lee. *Can I guess where Tommy came from?*

**Thompson.** Absolutely [chuckle] the moment, it's different now. The locals here call me Wull. W, U, double L, because they know that I, basically I was a Willy. That's when they are being affectionate.

Lee. Yeah.

**Thompson.** Yeah.

Disc1 track 1 [0:00:42.2] Lee. *Where and when were you born? Tommy.*

**Thompson.** Born in Airdrie, Lanarkshire, and that was in 1922, and my mother was beautiful. Small but very beautiful, and had a great singing voice. My father was good at fishing, a good shot, but he enjoyed drinking, very much indeed.

Disc 1 track 1 [00:01:22.6] Lee. *Did you take after him?*

**Thompson.** [chuckle] No, no, I have a whisky every night about 8 o'clock and I enjoy it.

Disc 1 track1 [0:01:35.9] Lee. *And when is your Birthday?*

**Thompson.** Thirteen, September 1922.

Disc 1 track 1 [0:01:43}Lee. *So you are now eighty.....?*

**Thompson.** Sss Eight...

Lee. Eighty seven.

**Thompson.** Eighty seven

Lee. Just.

**Thompson.** Just yeah.

Lee. Just eighty seven. Ok, great.

Disc 1 Track 1 [0:01:53.8] Lee *What sort of schooling did you have? Were you a public school boy? Or a...*

**Thompson** [chuckle] Oh no. Never. No, I went to the local school and it was a quite a big primary school. It was the kind of thing where youngsters came to school sometimes wet through, and in the winter they came through, bare foot, and those are. [pause] They did what they called then, tying in for winter, and they would be sown-in in their underclothes and ???[incomprehensible] it's cold that would start, and they would stay in all winter, like that, and it was an area where there was a lot of unemployment at that time, but the kind of thing that would happen, there would be a cry in the school, 'Send for his sister', there had been an accident. [chuckle]. And so there would be, some one would rush and get the sister, so [pause] but it was interesting.

Disc 1 track 1 [0:03:24] Lee. *What was your first connection with aviation?*

**Thompson.** Seeing [pause] we thought it was the mail plane, flying north, from the south, once a day, at about two thousand feet, and that was it, and then there was the Alan Cobhams Flying Circus. Coming to a farmers field about three or four ???[incomprehensible] no about three or four miles away, and another friend mind and I would ran out to this place. He had the five shillings because his mother loved him. I didn't have the five shillings. But it was interesting, and they would come in over the hedge, with flicking the switches that were outside the cock, cock, cockpit. On and off to adjust the height, but there's no, in most of these characters then, this was how they, they did it, and it was so exciting, smelling the fuel, and the flicking of the switches and just getting in over the hedge.

Disc 1 track 1 [0:04:50] Lee *What were the switches doing?*

**Thompson.** They were just switching it off.

Lee. The fuel supply.

**Thompson.** No, no, no, just switching the engine, engine off.

Al Wearden. For gliding.

**Thompson.** Yeah, just very quickly, as they get near the hedge, adjusting it that way.

Disc1 track2 [0:05.18] Lee *What sort of plane was it?*

**Thompson.** No idea [laughter] no.

Disc1 track2 [0:05:24] Lee *Do you think that stayed in your memory and that's why you ended up flying?*

**Thompson.** No. No I never thought I would, because in the beginning ???[Incomprehensible] I went into the Fleet Air Arm, the only reason I went in, I was at University and hated it, because everything was going on in the wide world, every where. And the war was on. Glasgow was being bombed and so on, and instead of

going into the University, I went into the nearest [pause] Well it was an air and navel uniform, set up to entice youngsters to come in and so it was the first one I saw. So I went in and he said, he was a, a senior character and he said to me 'What are you going to do son?' and I said I'd like to join the Navy. And he would say 'the Navy's a big place you know. You can do all sorts of things from being an Admiral, to being a Chef'. And I says 'I don't know'. He said 'What do you do now.' I said, 'I go to University.' He said, 'Did you ever think of the Fleet Air Arm?' I said, 'No.' He said 'Well think about it, because they are looking for people in the Fleet Air Arm now, they want pilots mainly'. So I said, 'Oh! I would like to do that', and he said, 'alright,' and he took all the details down, and he said it will, it will be a wee while before you hear. And so that's how I got into the Fleet Air Arm.

Disc1 track 2 [0:07:33] Lee *So you didn't want to be a pilot particularly, it just happened?*

**Thompson.** It just happened. Yeah. I just, I couldn't even drive a car [laughter]. Yeah.

Disc1 track 2 [0:07:48] Lee. *So what happened in the Fleet Air Arm? Where did you find yourself?*

**Thompson.** Well I went down to the south of England. No before that I immediately asked my father, who was manager of a big, erm, a big place, that was at that time turning out a lot of metal in the finished product, and I said, 'get me a job' So I had a job until, until they called me up, and I went down to the south and that was interesting because there were twenty of us who being looked at that day and I came near the end because. Am I talking too fast.

Lee. Fine, that was just fine.

**Thompson.** I came near the end because they said Thompson's'. And I was growing very quickly then and I had tired, elbows up to here. And all the characters who were there were from special schools, owned places in the south of England, and they just looked at me. One person was brought in for his interview by chauffeur driven Rolls. It was this kind of thing. So they all chatted to each other and they paid no attention to me whatsoever. So I had one or two magazines in, I just flicked through them, and, and when it was my turn nobody passed and I thought there was no chance of me having this, and someone said, who designed houses and things like this, he said some one, one of these characters who looked like Admirals took a matchbox out of his pocket and put it down on the table and he said to me, 'Tell me all the stresses on that matchbox'. Now, so I said. No I should have stopped there.

Lee. No, no don't stop, never stop.

**Thompson.** I went on upstairs and surely enough there was three people with lots of gold braid and they said, 'Good morning Mr. Thompson'. I had never been called Mr. before. So they said 'What do you do?' and I said I go to University.

Disc 1 track 3 [0:11:00] Lee. *What were you reading, studying?*

**Thompson.** English. But in those days you had to have, to go to university then you had to have Latin and you had to have English. A pass at English but it was, you had to start with that.

Lee. So you told these three chaps you were at University.

**Thompson.** Yeah. That was one of the first things they said was 'Right' and they gave me a maths question. And I wasn't very good at Maths because the senior teacher at ???[incomprehensible], at the Academy, had said 'Did you think you were going to pass?' I said 'No', he said 'Neither did I', but they gave me one that I could do. They said 'Fine'. Then they said 'Can you drive a car', and I said 'No'. 'Do I know anything about car engines, and I said 'No'. Oh! 'Can you tell me which side, in the Far East, the big place is now in the Navy in Singapore, what side is it?' Well, I guessed, because I thought it must be out of main main???[incomprehensible] Japanese working at that time. So, so they said 'Good'. 'What are your hobbies?' and I said, 'Fishing and shooting' and because I had read all these magazines that my father had and they said 'Oh!', lit up then, and they said, 'What kind of shooting do you like doing? Do you like walking up or do you like waiting behind the butts'. Well in my kind of background there was no one behind the butts shooting. So I said 'Walking up', 'and why do you like walking up?' and I said, 'Well you see more of the countryside yourself. You see the people who work on farms and so on and you also see the animals in their real places'. So they said 'Good' 'Now how about fishing?' and I said 'Well, mainly dry fly, and yes, mainly dry fly and some sinking'. And they said 'Good'. And they said 'Have you caught, picked up a salmon yet?' and I said 'not yet, but I hope to'. So they were quite pleased at all this nonsense really because I had kept and used worms for my fishing, like most people. And they said 'Right would you step, wait outside for a minute' So I waited outside and then they rang a bell and I went in. 'Ah yes, yes as you've got maths we would like you to become an observer' and I thought I. I would much rather be a pilot. 'Why is that?' 'Because , although I am very good at maths, I don't much enjoy it'. So they looked at each other and they said 'You can become a pilot'. And that was it.

Lee. That was in 1940?

**Thompson.** 41.

Lee. 41, and so you did come to learn to be a pilot.

**Thompson.** Yes.

Lee. And you did fly.

**Thompson.** Yes.

Disc 1 track 4 [0:15:36] Lee. *Where were you in action?*

**Thompson.** Mainly, in action, convoy work in the Atlantics and Russian convoys. We were, my group of pilots, we were in one of the small escort carriers, so it was rough. But we did a lot of it, and we became very good at it. And I didn't know until after the war, was that we were considered a crack escort carrier, could fly when it was snow,

when a lot of the ships, the aircraft carriers, who couldn't, work and land on. So that was after the war, I didn't know that then.

Disc 1 track 4 [0:15:36:4] Lee. *Was there a significant event in your time at the Fleet Air Arm?*

**Thompson.** Yes there was one, which was sad. It, it started off in the Outer Hebrides. In, [pause] this is where, I'm sorry. In Stornoway I met a young woman there and she was attractive and so on. We went out into Stornoway, into a pub there, all the local people there, and one came up and one came up and said 'What's the name of your bonny wee lassie?' So I said 'Jean' so then they sang songs about Jean for so on, and then she was boosted to the North West because she was a Cipher Officer in the RAF. And then she rang me one day and said well will you come up to Aberdeen. And I thought great and went up, but she was going to marry someone else. So I came back and then we were sent down to Benbecula and we, one morning I was on the dawn patrol. Look from Benbecula to and refuelled at [pause]

Wearden. Stornoway?

**Thompson.** Stornoway Yeah, refuelled there, yeah. And I went down to get into my aircraft was another young lad and he had got into my aircraft by mistake and was warming it up, and I said, 'OK we will change over when we get to Stornoway, and refuel and I will get with B for Baker. So I waved him off, and he went off and was never seen again. Went off into the darkness, and in my aircraft, so when I got there, to Stornoway, and found that this happen, and there was a tremendous gale getting up and all the, all the squadron were alighted to go out and find where this lad was. But before as we were taxiing out, there were, everyone was recalled, because in a Swordfish, was, biplane, you know, they were all over the place. Everyone turned round and went back. But this was my aircraft, and I felt responsible, and I said to my

[Not continuous between track 4 and 5]

**Thompson.** ???[incomprehensible] you didn't hear that did you? And they said, 'What, what'. He didn't, he pretended he didn't hear. So went out and the gale was tremendous.

Lee. You ignored the instructions.

**Thompson.** Oh! Absolutely, and we went up and down the, the coast and some of ???[incomprehensible], some of the coast, the ???[incomprehensible], the waves were higher than I was flying at. When the ???[incomprehensible] see these tremendous cliffs. But we went all the places we could find. We even found other aircraft that had crashed and he was a young lad, only 21 from Edinburgh and [sigh] that was it. That was, that was a very hurting part of my life. And of course I very soon forgot about the young lady because this was tougher, this was reality.

Disc 1 track 5 [0:21:25] Lee. *Did you suspect mechanical failure?*

**Thompson.** Yeah.

Lee. Yeah.

**Thompson.** Yeah, and the thing is you would be flying in the darkness, and if he had man, mechanical failure he would, he wouldn't know exactly where the sea was. But you see I was err, I was ???[incomprehensible] by that time. I was quite an experienced pilot. I, I wanted to be there at the end of the war, so what I did I, anyone who, see was ???[incomprehensible] get somebody extra to do, who would do it, I would always volunteer and I knew that I had to, I became the best one in the squadron. And I had picked up all sorts of odd things, and one thing that I had picked up was that at the, the observers let out the, now [pause]

Wearden. The radio aerial.

**Thompson.** They [pause]

Wearden. They pulled the wire out. The radio.

**Thompson.** Something. No it wasn't the radio itself, it was the, they had, they could let out, now what would you pick up?

Lee. Soundings?

**Thompson.** Pardon?

Lee. Soundings?

**Thompson.** No, no pick up the, the radio wave.

Wearden. ???[inaudible] No you put an aerial down.

**Thompson.** That's it, yeah. I had picked up that there was an aerial, and the aerial that wen, went behind for two hundred feet, and I knew that the observers let that out 200 feet and then held the other end inside his cockpit. He could tell me when that touched the water and now I would know I was at fifty feet. Therefore I felt guilty, double guilty even if it had been dark I would know that I was fifty feet, and I would come down knowing where I was and hitting the water I might have a chance but this lad had know chance at all. So.

Disc1 track 5 [0:24:17}Lee. *And there's no wreckage found?*

**Thompson.** The, the air gunners body was washed up on the sea, but nobody else.

Disc 1 track 5 [0:24:31] Lee *Did that change you a little in your life?Your thinking about life and death. Did you perhaps feel as though you were living on borrowed time?, or [pause] did you treat...*

**Thompson.** No, no.

Lee. No.

**Thompson.** No ???[inaudible] it, I just felt guilty. I felt I was responsible in some way.

Lee. Because you let him go.

**Thompson.** I let him go. And err I, we had been quite close together, because he came from Edinburgh and I came from Airdrie.

Wearden. And it was your plane.

**Thompson.** And it was my plane.

Disc 1 track 6 [0:25:08] Lee. *I am wondering if it changed your attitude towards anything? Were you more careful in the future? Were you more, was life more precious to you as a result of this?*

**Thompson.** No. It, I mean, I was probably the only person in the Fleet Air Arm to do a loop in a Swordfish [Laughter].

Lee. Without falling out.

**Thompson.** And with my full crew aboard. And I did it err.

Lee. Why? When?

**Thompson.** I just felt like it. [laughter]. No, I felt, always everything would be alright.

Wearden. Yeah.

**Thompson** Yeah, and I, I became a good pilot.

Disc 1 track 6 [0:26:08] Lee. *Were you in the Hands of God?*

**Thompson.** No.

Lee. No.

**Thompson.** No. I knew that, after the war, my Mother, my father died when I was being trained in Canada, and my Mother with one or two other relatives preyed for me, every err, once a week. And an Aunt did something, that I didn't know again, until well on in the war. She knew that, she was a nurse, and during her, during her nursing she had brought forward a child who had a caul. Which is something like skin right over the whole head. And she knew that a person who had the caul would never die in the sea. Now she got this caul and put it in something that protected it, and kept me, and I had to wear this, and, but after the war I had to give it back to her so that someone would have it.

Lee. You wore it on your head.

**Thompson.** No, no, no.

Lee. On your body somewhere.

**Thompson.** Yeah. like putting in a pocket.

Lee. So it was like a talisman.

**Thompson.** Yeah it was, although it didn't think of it as such.

Disc 1 track 6 {0:28:00] Lee. *Do you think now that it helped?*

**Thompson.** I think probably. What may have helped, because a lot of my relatives were very keen Christians and, and still are. I mean one of the things that I will give someone from this happening year he is, he is tried to convert me, each time we met, whatever. But he had been very ill most of his childhood and couldn't go abroad, couldn't join anything. So, but I was his hero. And he, he even wrote a copy of my aircraft. So, so, yes, it wasn't part of me feeling this at all, because when I finished with the Fleet Air Arm I was called in to the person who was in charge of this, this whole aerodrome, and he had been also out doing, he was one of the experts as he was on Mackintyre. One of the experts on the, on the Convoy work, and he called me in and I thought My God! What have I done, because he came in charge of this without having done any flying at all. He taught himself to fly every aircraft that came in here, he could fly, and if anyone came off on one of the runways onto the grass, he would put them in and tear them to ribbons. So I said, 'What have I done?' and he said 'Thompson, we have just got your release papers. Now what I would like to do, I would like to recommend you, for a full, grown up person in, in the Navy, and I almost smiled as I said, 'this is very kind of you indeed, and I am most honoured Sir, but there is a big world out there, and please I want to go and see it'. And that was it. Everyone who, nearly everyone in the squadron went and became regulars.

Disc 1 track 7 [0:31:18] Lee. *How did you take to flying? Was it something you loved?*

**Thompson.** Well I, I found it was easy, I found I had very good judgement. That landing, sometimes I would land on deck when it was quite, quite difficult and we could be, we could be getting a rise and fall of , I was told, of up to fifty feet. And that meant that the deck could be coming up and hitting you, or it would go down, and just as you was touching down, and that would then, it could trouble, a lot of trouble. But, yeah, apparently I was quite good at it.

Disc 1 track 7 [0:32:22.3] Lee. *So how did you get the job in the Antarctic? Tommy. What happened?*

**Thompson.** Well, what happened was, I, at the end of the, all the fighting in Europe. I was given the job of being in charge of a Fleet Air Arm section, that was being taken to Holland to say thank you for what they had done during the war. And I was, I flew out a Swordfish. Some of them flew out the Fleet Air Arm equivalent of the best pilot during the war, for shooting down the aircraft, and a kind of man in between. And so, we flew into Holland and then we had to come to Amsterdam, and I asked the Chief Petty Officer to take the aircraft by road, because there was no place I could land

there. So he did this, and took, the aircraft by road. But what he did was, unfortunately, when he came to, that was difficult, he would chop a tree down, which was illegal then because everyone had, were not allowed to cut trees because everyone was short of wood. And if there was a bridge across, he would knock the sides out and take. And when I heard all this, I felt we can't do this coming, so what I did then I went and saw the Chief of Police and the Royal and the person in Charge of the whole of the Air and said please, would you stop, on Sunday, all the traffic on the main road, for half an hour, and of course they were so delighted about, about the British then, they said, 'Sure' and in fact they did that. We put them, they stopped the main road on Sunday morning for half an hour. And the night before we took our aircraft and parked on the side of the road, and then we took off to our next place, which is the capital.

Wearden. *The Hague?*

**Thompson.** Pardon?

Wearden. *The Hague?*

**Thompson.** No, not the, the...

Lee. Amsterdam

**Thompson.** Amsterdam, yeah. We flew back to there, and that was it.

Disc 1 track 8 [0:36:04] Lee. *But how did that lead to you getting a job in the Antarctic?*

**Thompson.** Oh! Huh, yeah well that was a strange thing [chuckle]. What happened then was I went home, and when I was released and someone had said to me, he had, I got on very well with this character when I was in Holland. And he went off and looked at all sorts of things going on at that time. And he, he said you look after the business end at this rather ???[incomprehensible] and when after the war if you don't know what you're going to do, think of me, give me a call. So, I had been given a job in South America, 'cause I couldn't get to South America because there were a lot of people. I couldn't even make my way there, because a lot of people who were real seamen, didn't have a job, and I couldn't get a job. So I rang this character up and..

Lee *Who was it?*

**Thompson.** Pardon?

Lee. *What was his name?*

**Thompson.** He was in the, in this. He was in my squadron, he was a fighter pilot.

Lee. Ok.

**Thompson.** And we, we just knew each other very well, and err....

Lee. So you rang him up.

**Thompson.** No, no I tried, I tried to go to , to erm, to go to South America, where he was running a big company.

Lee. Oh I see.

**Thompson.** I knew he was going back to that after the war, and but I couldn't get to him. And I tried to get by getting to Canada and making my way down, but there was no chance. So I rang up this person and he said to me, 'now I have a friend of mine who is a, a doctor. And he is not going to be a doctor the way he wants to be. He's not going to be this nonsense about ???[incomprehensible] everything's got to be paid for and this kind of thing. The Government's going to run it and so on. He's not having nonsense like that, but he wants to run a business. It's going to deal with erm, keeping the rats down in London. He's going to ???[incomprehensible], he's going to give err. ???[incomprehensible]. He might like the look of you, and you run, help you run the company. So I went down to see this character and he was, he was a real character. He ???[incomprehensible] spittle, spitting, spitting and blood. ???[incomprehensible] had, had a quite a few strong words for the Government, and now he said, 'this a, this is a job. I am going, I am going to start this business up, it's going to look at rat, rat catching. It's going to look at people who have any, any problems in their houses of ???[incomprehensible] kind of not just rats, rat catching, bugs, and stuff like that, and we're going, we've got a contact that, ???[incomprehensible] former use as a naval place, and you're going to go there. And were going to get rid of all the bugs and nonsenses'. And, 'Right what do you think about that?' I had nothing to do, so I became mainly a rat catcher. It was interesting erm, and at that time I had very little money and it meant that I often spent the night in a chair, in the, in one of the clubs. And err, and then go out rat catching and so on. But it was, it was really very interesting in the sense that I would go out, to one of the great places in London when Princess Elizabeth was working was, was dancing there. But we had to wait until she and the guests went home, and I would be there with a real little mac rat catcher with two little dogs and he would say, 'Right we'll go quietly one of these side roads,' and we'd wait and then when everyone was gone we would go in and all the lights would go out, and then gradually we could hear the rats coming in. They would come in and squeal with delight and when he, the rat catcher reckoned it was right, by then the two little dogs, Jack Russels of course, and I had a point 22 rifle firing short, and he had one as well, firing short. And he would say, 'Right' and he would put on all the lights and the rats would go every where, and we would shoot with this, these guns as they were short, couldn't do any harm, except to the rats. And the little rat catcher dogs would be in amongst them [growling noises], well and I think I told you one story I don't know whether some people believed that one.

Disc 1 track 9 [0:43:21.4] Lee. *What I need to know Tommy, is how you came to work in the Antarctic?*

**Thompson.** Because, and a friend of his who was in this, this erm club, he was someone who came in, and he knew this doctor very well, and I was introduced to him, 'and by the way', the doctor said, 'Oh Tommy, Tommy was in the Fleet Air Arm' and, and I said, 'Well I am not flying now,' and he said, this friend said, 'well we have got thousands of fly, ???[incomprehensible] enemy. I want some people to

go down to the Antarctic, but we have got thousands of people who can fly'. And he said, 'There is no point in you applying, but still apply'. So I applied and somehow, maybe I had been flying in, quite well, in difficult conditions, but they got my name.

Disc1 track 9 [0:44:48] Lee. *Did you have to go for an interview?*

**Thompson.** Not really, not really, but they wouldn't allow me to fly. I couldn't fly the aircraft in this country. Wasn't allowed.

Lee. *Because?*

Thompson. I could, I could be, I could, I could fly the air craft but not fly it. I could be in it and someone else would fly it. For I wasn't allowed to fly. But was given to permission that the Governor of the Falkland Islands would allow me to fly in the Antarctic.

Lee. *Right, so the only place you could fly was in the Antarctic.*

**Thompson.** Yeah and also, I hadn't flown on anything on skis, ever, so...

Lee. *So it was Miles Clifford who*

**Thompson.** Yes

Lee. *...who gave you permission.*

**Thompson.** Yeah.

Disc 1 track 10 [0:45:49] Lee. *Ok, Alright, And so tell me about the Antarctic. How did you get there? and when?*

**Thompson.** Yes, yes, I had to join the ship that was going out there.

Lee. *The Trepassey?*

**Thompson.** The *Trepassey* and, and I, when I saw the *Trepassey* alongside, I thought, having being used to bigger ships, tiny.

Lee. *This was in 1946 wasn't it?*

**Thompson.** Yes

Lee. *And you sailed, and I gather you had fun and games on the way South*

**Thompson.** Yeah, yeah.

Lee. *Do you want to tell me about that is in Brazil?*

**Thompson.** Yes, yes it was in Brazil.

Lee. *What happened?*

**Thompson.** The thing is, well what really happened was, there were three of us going down to the Antarctic. And one of them was a Doctor and one of the was a wireless operator, and we had a lot of slash from the crew because the ship was over-crowded really because they would, they would have to be used a lot in the Antarctic for building and unloading and this kind of thing. And, and the *Trepassey* was quite small and it meant that the, also the ship carried more gear than it ought to have, and it was fly, the tail end was awash all the way down. And the Skipper. We were supposed to have cigarettes and the odd whisky. Now the skipper closed it down, and so he wasn't a great person for us ???[inaudible]. And the three of us agreed that when we reached *Pernambuco* that we would go ashore, and saw the consul there, and you know get something put down, that the place was going to be more interesting shall we say. We went ashore that evening because it wasn't going to sail until midday the next day, and we thought we could see something ashore, and we did met an Ameri, no well a Brazillian , but he had been in America a lot, and he said, 'I 'll show you the place round', And he did, and we got back aboard about midnight, but rather full of whisky, but the next morning I said, 'Right we will go ashore and see the, this consul.' And the, the first one said, and he one who was going to be keeping everyone in touch. I said, He said, 'I'm ill I can't go'. And the doctor said, 'Oh I've got to look after him then haven't I?' Now I wasn't a Thompson for nothing so well I'll go. I went and I saw the Consul, and he was someone who had been, not, he hadn't seen much of the world. And he was a consul in *Pernambuco*. So he said, 'Ha! if you don't fly on the ship, you, I have got to let it go, you haven't got a visa, anything for Brazil, you are going to prison, and if you go into prison, prison is not very good and it's relations that come and keep you alive. And you will be there until the first British ship goes back to the UK. One that comes into *Pernambuco* . I just said, 'Right, that's what we'll do.' And I was taken back to the ship, my gear was taken off and I was going to be marched off to prison, when someone else came along and said, 'He's got to be going, going to the Consul.' So when I got back, I entered the Consul, there was the Captain, and I thought, laddie, funny, and the Consul said, 'Now really, if you don't sail on this I can let it sail.' I knew then that something had to be done. And I said, 'Fine what can be done then, because all I want is, I don't nee, I don't need all this slash from the crew and we just want our cigarettes.' And he said, 'Granted.'

Disc 1 track 11 [0:51:58] Wearden. *And the whisky?*

**Thompson.** No, no whisky, but I was quite happy. So I was allowed to go back, and my kit that was by the side, was taken on board, and then we went on to our first stop which was,

Wearden. *Montevideo?*

**Thompson.** Montevideo.

Wearden. From ???[inaudible] down to Montevideo.

**Thompson.** Well the thing was when we got to Montevideo, I wasn't. They, the two other people who were going, were a bit ashamed of themselves.

Wearden. *That was Terry Randal and Doc Butson?*

**Thompson.** No, no it was someone who, who didn't in fact go in the end. So there you are.

Disc 1 track 11 [0:52:55] Lee. *So you arrived, down to Stonington wasn't it? Is that right?*

**Thompson.** Yes.

Lee. *And there was a plane on board the Trepassey.*

**Thompson.** Yes. One thing that I wanted to say. Going to *Marguerite Bay* from doing all the other places, it was the, it was the last bit of the journey. It was almost flat calm and the strange feeling going to *Marguerite Bay*, the ship felt to be, to be stationary, and the whole landscape strange and unreal was rolling past. It felt we were stationary. That's it, it just felt that way. So, that's that.

Disc 1 track 11 [0:54:03] Lee. *Let's talk a bit about the plane that you went down with. This is Ice Cold Katy. First of all, how, what, tell me about the Plane what was she?*

**Thompson.** Yes it was an Auster and, it, I'd said here I hadn't flown it before, my, the person who was there, as an engineer,

Wearden. *David Jones*

**Thompson.** Yes, he was a great character and he, and one or two others, helped the pair of us to assemble and build a hanger for it. There was virtually no, the first flight I did was about 7000 feet up on the Plateau. To look for two teams, that were coming, back, and take their, all their pack ???[inaudible] land by, that had been landed by the two ships. And we landed a little way away from the dogs, but it didn't frighten them, and that was really the only main flight we did. We did a couple of flights after that, but there was too much moisture in the air and the propeller iced-up quite quickly. And then eventually when the Americans came, they had the whole thing in the aircraft line and they had a two-engined, a two-engined aircraft, [pause] anyway they had, they had the three aircraft. One about the size of an Auster. That was a L 5, which was in fact an Army thing that did that kind of work with the Army, and the had this twin, [cough] twin engine which was going to take all the detail that could be flown, flown down in that light down for anything that was on the ground. And make a record of it, and then the, the other one was the, the one, the Canadian one.

Disc 1 track 12 [0:57:04] Lee. *But Ice Cold Katy was a British Auster, is that correct?*

**Thompson.** Yeah, yeah

Lee. *Tell me about your, tell me about that plane that you flew. Was it good to fly?*

**Thompson.** Easy to fly, yeah easy to fly, and the, when it really started flying was when we lost it, quite frankly. We, the Americans said that they would like us, because we had two excellent people on the ground, who could go ahead, fly ahead

with me, find a good place to land, that's suitable from a distance for the first, for the first American jobs to put down depots for the big journey South. And I went, I took off with, Reg who's a most experienced....

Wearden. *Reg Freeman*

**Thompson.** Yeah, most experienced, and he was going to. I would fly, and we had Bernard,

Wearden. *Stonehouse.*

**Thompson.** Bernard Stonehouse was somebody else.

Lee. *This is on the 15<sup>th</sup> September 1947*

**Thompson** Yeah, and so we, we took off and then we were told that the Americans weren't ready, and it was about two hours later before they got off, and that Reg had taken me to where would be a good area, and the idea of my going ahead was that because I was a light aircraft, the more experienced one of the two, that I could come in, it would, it would look light, but I could come in very gently, and land, and if that whiteness was soft snow, I could take off again, and that was wrong. But we came into the right distance and so on, and we went down, and it was gentle, and it was beautiful so we stopped. And then eventually, we heard the American aircraft, and we released the red smoke flare. And it ran like blood across the white, and it flew on.

Lee *They didn't see it*

**Thompson.** Didn't see it. We found out later that one person who was look-out was the Captain of the ship, and he is, his eye-sight was not good, but he was the Captain of the ship, and he begged and begged to on the first flight. But He still didn't see. We just, we make that assumption because that red flare was huge.

Disc 1 track 13 [0:60:27] Lee. *I read in the, which said, he was blind in one eye.*

**Thompson.** Yeah

Lee. *Is that correct?*

**Thompson.** Well, that's, that's.

Lee *You've heard the story.*

**Thompson.** Yeah.

Lee. *But you don't know if it is true.*

**Thompson.** I don't know, we just, we didn't ask at the time. We knew that he was one flying, we didn't ask at the time. Anyway, what happened? Do you want to finish that bit?

Lee. *Please carry on*

**Thompson.** Yes. Well we waited, and waited, and we decided that we had to start the engine up before it got too cold and we did that, and again the aircraft flying, and we had to get over the, the plateau which, probably is about 6000 feet?

Wearden. *Yes*

**Thompson.** So I thought I want a bit more than this, so that, there could be down-drafts or whatever. So I was getting up to about I suppose a good 6500 feet and I felt, I kept looking and looking, and this, the amount of ground speed was becoming less and less and less.

Lee. *You were into a head-wind.*

**Thompson.** Yes, yes. It looked as if, from my judgements, it looked as if there was something coming from the other side. Was hitting 'bout six hun... and coming up like that and I thought, what's the next thing you are going to do? There's no point me trying to get through to the base. So I let the aircraft move slowly round to the left, thinking in terms of finding a glacier because there's lot. If see, I see a good glacier I can go down to the other side. The same side as the base and land there.

Disc 2 of 3

**Thompson.** So I've just seen a glacier that looks a possibility and it seemed wide and was curving round slightly, and so I made for this and followed it down. But as, as I followed it down it, it began to get dark, and then it began to snow, and I had to be very careful, because as it curved round, it was coming up on my left-hand side as well. So, and as it snowed, the engine was taking some snow in, and it was going, every now and then going, Phut, Phut, Phut, Phut, Phut. And at this stage someone's being sick in the back, and the other one was being very quiet, and I wasn't telling them anything because I didn't know anything. Anyway we followed this down and it got darker and darker until it seems as if we were just able to see vertically, because I, I knew that this happened vertically in mist and stuff like, that you could see vertically but you can't see ahead. But then the big snag was, as we left the glacier behind, I found by looking vertically that there were tabular ice bergs that had been frozen in from the year before. And I thought there's not going to be somewhere too easily, so I thought, what I'll do now I'll keep looking vertically, and still above the level of the ice-bergs, until I think I've gone a fair way, going right out without seeing one, and when I got to that stage, I turned round and went for the same time backwards where I'd gone, and then turned again and went where I had been trying to find, and I came in, and the aircraft was brilliant, and it slowly sank down and touched down. But unfortunately something that I hadn't seen, but quite a small bit of projecting ice, turned, pulled the wheel over and the, the aircraft went quiet slowly over, on to it's back

Lee. *So the ski got caught on a, a lump,*

**Thompson.** Yeah.

Lee. *and it flipped slowly*

**Thompson.** Slowly, yeah.

Disc 2 track 1 [ 0:03:56] Lee *What were your, what was your thinking at that moment? Do you remember?*

**Thompson.** Well, I suppose really, what one thinks as a pilot is a broken aircraft. That's the first thing that comes. And you don't feel very good, and that, that was it.

Lee. *Did you think it was it for you?*

**Thompson.** Oh no, no, no, no, no.

Lee. *The plane landed upside down.*

**Thompson.** No, no well,

Lee. *It flipped over.*

**Thompson.** Yeah, over.

Lee. *and came to a rest upside down. So the plane construction was strong enough not to crush you?*

**Thompson.** Yeah, except the combination of everything, my not able to have found a completely sound place to land on, the bit of ice that I hadn't seen. And the plane, yeah the plane was good. No, just me I suppose.

Lee. *What just bad luck isn't it really?*

**Thompson.** Yeah.

Disc 2 track 2 [0:05:28.8] Lee *Why weren't you injured?*

**Thompson.** Because it went over gently.

Wearden. *Yeah, you were all strapped in.*

**Thompson** Yeah, so it....

Lee *But you were wearing a, I understand you were wearing a harness that had been devised by David Jones.*

**Thompson.** Maybe, I don't know. Never thought about it.

Lee. *But you were held upside down by the harness. Is that correct? Were you? you were wearing belts, seat belts.*

**Thompson.** Never thought of it that way because you kind of tumble over. Those seat belts, or anything like that is designed to hold it upside down so you kind of tumble over out of what ever is there so never even thought about that.

Lee. *In, in the inquiry, the notes about the inquiry does mention that it was, it was the harnesses that saved you from being injured. These were designed by David Jones your engineer.*

**Thompson.** Yes

Lee. *and you were wearing them?*

**Thompson.** Oh yes, but, yeah, yeah. [Pauses]

Lee. *I think it actually it's going to be in the , here we are, the public inq, the public inquiry, [pause] 'course I can't find it now, but never mind. [pause]. Doesn't matter. [Pause]*

Lee. *What happened next? There you were and the plane was crashed and it was presumably written off?*

**Thompson.** Well, not written off in the sense, in much of the sense, because it wasn't a kind, that kind of crash. It was much of a slower thing, so if we had been picked up straight away we could have done something about it, but the first thing I said remember snowing. Reg said, straight away, there is no point in our trying to stay with the plane because snow and snow and snow, we will never be seen. We will be covered up in no time at all. And it was agreed, the three of us agreed, that we would set up a tent and next day we would set, set out for home. Now it was a simple as that.

Disc 2 track 2 [0:08:35.5]. Lee *The crash was quite late in the evening, wasn't it?*

**Thompson.** Oh yes.

Lee. *Getting dark*

**Thompson.** Oh yes

Lee. *So you camped the night,*

**Thompson.** *Yeah*

Lee. *without any serious injury.*

**Thompson.** Without any injury. I think that would be, [pause], yeah

Lee. *And the next day you decided to do what?*

**Thompson.** Well, we, the first thing we decided was, even before putting up, what did we have, and we had virtually nothing, because the Americans had all the stuff.

Lee *The clothes, they had the food*

**Thompson.** They had everything. They had, we had a one-man tent, and they had all the gear, setting up everything, but because they weren't there we just had a one-man tent and one sleeping bag between us.

Lee. *Between three. So what did you do?*

**Thompson.** Yeah, with inner and outer. So we what we did we used the inner was one and the outer was the other. Underneath and on top for the first night and for ever.

Lee. *And then you started walking, walking home.*

**Thompson.** Yes the next, the next morning we started walking, and we saw that the cloud was right down the cliff, cliff faces. And so. And Reg says he roughly knew where to go. We will stay out from these ice cliff faces in case there's anything falling down and so on and we will go roughly North.

Lee. *Along the coast.*

**Thompson.** Yeah

Lee. *Yeah, on sea-ice?*

**Thompson.** Yes.

Lee. Yeah.

Wearden. *Reg was a surveyor so he should have known where they were.*

Disc 2 track 3 [0:10:54]. Lee. *Ok. Did anyone come looking for you?*

Thompson. Well we, we guessed they would, but they would, we guessed they would on the other side.

Lee. *And they did come looking for you.*

**Thompson.** Oh yes, well that's how we, they found us, because they were, [cough] the aircraft was looking for us, thinking we were either on the other side or dead. And, and in fact they thought we were dead, but they [cough] threw every sole they had. This is the, the, the last bit. We had a sin, a sound, a very faint sound, and we looked at each other, but we daren't think, and eventually we saw the aircraft a long way away, curling up, to gain height to go over the plateau, and we had a red smoke flare, and the other two were desperate, set it off, get it going, and I said, 'No! we'll wait until I think the pilot in one of his turns, might be looking in our direction.' And that's what I did, and that's what happened. So....

Lee. *So they were spiralling upwards to go across to the other side away from you?*

Wearden. *They would be looking the other way.*

**Thompson.** Yeah. So I had to wait till I thought was the right moment when they would be looking ahead in, in his, in one of his turns.

Lee. *So this is the American team?*

**Thompson.** Yes, ???[inaudible]Lassiter.

Lee. *And their flying conditions weren't terribly good is that correct?*

**Thompson.** Well I, I, no. We were on sea-ice, and we knew what we were on, but when I, I saw this in one report that there were adverse conditions. Not, not...

Lee. *Not true.*

**Thompson.** Not really, I mean, Jim Lassiter wouldn'tt have landed if it had been. He landed with a lovely swoosh. Yeah.

Wearden. *You found a seal when you were walking back?*

**Thompson.** Yes, that was quite funny. When we were walking back at one stage, we were, we had one container of food, and we were only having about, the tiniest bit to keep us going. Couple of little bits each day, and we saw a seal ahead, and Reg had an ice-axe, and he went creeping up on this seal with his ice-axe, and then he came back and he said, 'I don't feel strong enough to do this,' because if I couldn't make a mess of this it will be the damndest blow, blow of all. In a flash. So, I felt very angry, not with Reg. but about breaking up the aircraft, about this damned seal, about whatever, so, 'Give me the so and so axe.' I said, and I went rushing out and nearly took it's head off, and then was exhausted. So the other two came up, and they opened it up, and Reg decided, it was a good idea just to keep the liver, and then by this time I had recovered, and then I said, 'Right, I'll have a bit of this seal.' So I had a bit of this seal flesh, and ate it, and it tasted like, now what's that soup that's so dark and horrid.

Wearden. *Mulligatawny.*

**Thompson.** Mulligatawny. It tasted like Mulligatawny soup. And that was it.

Lee. *Raw?*

**Thompson.** Raw.

Disc 2 track 4 [0:16:05]. Lee. *Were you suffering a lot on that journey? Tiredness? Hunger?*

**Thompson.** Yeah, The, the thing that nearly did us, I don't know how the others felt, but [pause], anyway I can remember quite clearly about by the fourth or fifth day a storm got up, and it was a fantastic storm, and it raged for three days, and this one-man tent was coming in on us. We could feel it coming in and then one. There was a moment when I felt the sea-ice tremble under me, and it almost felt wet, and then suddenly, I mean I felt then that, this is it. I was, I felt it was going, going down, but suddenly it stopped. Not completely, and I pushed out the side of the tent, and it was

night, and it was nearly a full moon, and the wind was still fairly strong, and there were bits of snow, ice, but mainly bits of... I can see it now, it's a very thin, splintered cloud going across the face of, face of the full moon, and I pushed up the others. And said, 'We must get going, we must get going,' and we did, and that was the worst moment, the feeling of, yeah.

Disc 2 Track 4 [0:18:45]. Lee. *So there were some bad days and, and the Americans kept looking for you even though the weather had deteriorated.*

**Thompson.** I don't know, I don't know how they did it, but the, the time when we moved then, when we saw them, moving that partic, one particular plane was going the other way. And I, I think they were. See they also had that, that tremendous, tremendous gale so they couldn't fly. But the bit that was most wonderful, was the day after we were picked up, another gale got up, and blew the whole damn thing about, out, out.

Lee. *The ice?*

**Thompson** Yes so we would have gone with it.

Lee. *So, in, in the report it says no praise can be too high for Lassiter and Adams who flew during the eight days in what only can be described as the impossible. That's correct?*

**Thompson.** I am sure it would have been because they, they were pilots too.

Lee. *And just going back to the previous point about the safety harness. The Sutton type safety harness which Jones had fitted to the pilots and co-pilots seats avoid, saved Stonehouse and I from any injury. It's supposed to be you that wrote this. I think in 1947. So there was some sort of, there was some sort of safety harness which held you in place.*

**Thompson.** Probably, as we say, when you're un, when you've anything on, the fact was that they were uninjured in any way

Lee. *Looking back at that episode, quite serious episode, the, what went wrong was the Norseman delaying it's fight to meet you. Was that right? Before the accident happened.*

**Thompson.** Yeah, I would say that the fact that the Americans didn't come and the, the aircraft, my aircraft was flying, it had plenty of fuel, but there was no nonsense at all we, we were asked to wait and we did wait, and I didn't look at this and say I'm short of fuel I must get back. It was fine and the fact that they, that they couldn't come.

Disc 2 track 5 [0:21:50]. Lee. *Did you ever get to the bottom of why they didn't turn up earlier?*

**Thompson.** No.

Wearden. *Three hours late in turning up it says in here.*

Lee. *Yeah but why were? You know of how that, why they were...?*

**Thompson.** I asked no one. The simple reason that Jim Lassiter came and picked us up.

Lee. *Right so you were very grateful.*

**Thompson,** Yeah.

Disc 2 track 5 [0:22:14]. Lee. *There was a problem with the frequencies. You couldn't talk to the American pilots, was that correct?*

**Thompson.** Yeah, we didn't have. Once we were over the other side...

Lee. *Of the..*

**Thompson.** Of the plateau, it wasn't working at all.

Lee. *Right so you were out of range, radio range.*

**Thompson.** Yes well we had, shall we say, six thousand feet of blockage between us.

Lee. *So It wasn't the frequency that was wrong, it was the fact that you just couldn't get a signal. I see. OK. Right. Did that change your attitude towards flying?*

**Thompson.** Yeah.

Lee. In what way?

**Thompson.** [pause] I said to Jim Lassiter, 'This is my last flight. I am not going to fly again.' And he Jim Lassiter said, 'well you don't come and listen then Tommy, are you willing to come back on this flight?' [Laughter].

Lee. *Did you ever pilot a plane again?*

**Thompson.** Yes. When I was, nearing my, my time, in the, yes en, en ending my time at all. See I ended up in flying, not in flying, in being. I think this might be a good time to stop, yeah.

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Lee. *Are you ready to resume? Tommy.*

**Thompson.** Sure.

Lee. *How did Ice Cold Katy get her name?*

**Thompson.** It was Bernard, who gave...

Lee. *Bernard Stonehouse.*

**Thompson.** Yes, who gived the name. It, I think it was, it was in a film, or I'm not sure, but he says....

Wearden. *It was the ambulance in, 'Ice Cold in Alex.'*

Lee. *Ambulance?*

Wearden. *The Ambulance in 'Ice Cold in Alex, in Alex'...*

**Thompson.** That's it.

Wearden. *... was called Ice Cold Katy.*

Lee. *It was on TV just the other day.*

Wearden. *Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.*

**Thompson.** I didn't know that.

Wearden. *Yeah, it was the ambulance that was called 'Ice Cold Katy'*

**Thompson.** Yeah, yeah.

Lee. *Sixty two years later, Tommy, you learn something.* [laughter].

**Thompson.** [chuckle] Oh, every day, yeah.

Lee. *I, I, I appreciate her life-span was quite short in the Antarctic, but do you reckon she was a good plane.*

**Thompson.** I do.

Lee. *What was good about her?*

**Thompson.** It was a bit, we didn't give her a full life, which was a great shame, but the little I used her, with, she was absolutely great. Dave Jones the engineer had to do a bit of work on her, especially on the skis, because she. Dave knew nothing about skis and I had never flown [cough] on skis, but we worked out that we ought to have, when we're landing down on the ice, that we ought to have the tip a little bit raised up. So we put a bit of bungee on the tip of each ski so that when we came down it landed like that, not like that.

Lee. *So that the tail did not dig in.*

**Thompson.** Yeah, and really I was, what little I did, I was very happy with it indeed, yeah.

Disc 3 track 1 [0:02:11.9] Lee. *There was a problem with the tail-wheel wasn't there?*

**Thompson.** Didn't do enough to find one, to be honest.

Lee. *Did the tail-wheel not tend to get clogged up with snow?*

**Thompson.** No, because we did not do enough, really we did very little. Before the big, before the big long trips South, we did practically nothing at all because the ice wasn't right.

Lee. *Yeah and what did, was she blown around a bit horizon, sideways was she, was she susceptible to sidewinds?*

**Thompson.** No, but, and we found the little we used her, we could see that occasionally she was taking up-drafts most steadily indeed she would, you would feel this, like that. It wouldn't be sort of like that it went..

Lee. *She soared.*

**Thompson.** She soared absolutely. Yeah, yeah.

Lee. *Was she cold, hot, comfortable?*

**Thompson.** Comfortable, yeah.

Lee. *When you were deciding what, on the day that she did flip over eventually and you were deciding what to do, just talk me through what was going through your mind when you realised the other plane the ???[incomprehensible] was not going to come, and you were heading back to Stonnington, and you began to run into difficulties. Just, just talk me through that process how you, what your thinking was at the time?*

**Thompson.** Well my thinking was, right we've got the aircraft started up, and could have been other-wise, and set off, and climbed, and climbed, and climbed, and then I kept noticing that although we seemed to be climbing, the movement forward wasn't anything like good enough, and that I had a moment to think to myself, I'm not going to get back to base going this way. The only possible way is by turning slightly to the left, and as I turn, look for a way down by the glacier, and that's what happened. It meant I suppose, it was little bit like flying onboard ship That you felt that you could bring your whole life-time, and your whole thoughts into your doing this moment, and it is the moment that you are doing now, that counts forever, and this is what I felt as I did on the Carrier. I felt that this, I didn't think about Bernard, I didn't think about Reg I only thought of this moment that I am flying now. No more.

Disc 3 track 2[0:05:54]. Lee. *So you were very aware it this was a critical moment?*

**Thompson.** Oh, absolutely, but it didn't make me critical. In the sense that it didn't make me, duh, duh, duh, duh....

Lee. You weren't panicking.

Thompson. Yeah I was, I wasn't even thinking what I would do next. I was re, reverting to this point of reacting absolutely from my experience of the past all right to that tiny point, it was exactly the same, and writing my own story for myself and my family, it was then that I realised what I had been doing, but that's what it had been, but it wasn't a kind of conscious, doing I had better do this, or what. None.

Lee. *Were you frightened?*

**Thompson. Sorry?**

Lee *Were you frightened?*

**Thompson.** No, no, no it was what I was doing, it's what I had to do. The. It put a limp in my throat, I must admit, when I saw the, the, the glaciers, bits of this stuff that were stuck in the, in front of me, well and underneath me, floating in the, not even floating but solid lumps behind me as I went over this. That, that made me heap, but then it was answering to the situation. I knew that I had to go further away where those were not, because of the... If I had been gone, gone in directly into them, it would have killed the three of us.

Disc 3 Track 2 [0:07:52]. Lee *So, you flew over a piece of ground to see if it was clear, then you went back the other way and then you flew over it again to land. Now is this something that you had been trained to do? or did you work it out on the spot?*

**Thompson.** Oh, no. I hadn't been trained to do anything but on, on the spot I just knew what I had to do. I didn't....

Lee. *Something told you.*

**Thompson.** Yeah, well you, you're an experienced pilot and you come up to any situation it tells you what your experience, is the right thing to do. See, I had the same thing happen to me in, during training, when we formed up as a group, with a, with a very experienced pilot, and I was his number two, and he took off, and I in my number two position took off close to him, and about two hundred feet up I lost the engine, completely. Wooshst like that. On the right-hand side, were high power cables and the ???[inaudible] they, directly set down. On the left-hand side I would be maybe one hundred and fifty feet up, not high enough up to get into the wind that was coming that way, but I decided that I couldn't go right into the power cables straightaway. I couldn't go into the turn, but what I could do is slide sideways into the wind as far as it could go and when we got half-way through and while being a Swordfish it was a fixed undercarriage it wiped the sides off, the undercarriage off. It meant that my two passengers in the back, was go, well they were going sideways they jumped out immediately, and the engine rolled off, and all I did to make sure everything that I switched, everything off. So that ???[incomprehensible] and that was it. So, as when you're an experienced pilot you do what's, you feel, immediately, and you don't work it out.

Disc 3 track 3 [0:10:36]. Lee. *You, you had a tricky moment with 'Ice Cold Katy' just before hadn't you when she did, did you not brush a wing tip against the ground at one point?*

**Thompson.** No, no it was just the, the one me that I took up, up onto the Plateau to meet the two oncoming people coming back, when I came back to land at the top of the slope, there should have been one or two members of the group come out and hold the wings, and they didn't.

Lee. *And so you, you were on the ground already when the plane tipped?*

**Thompson.** No. Well I was on the ground when it, and it started to slide, it because was almost glare-ice at that point. It, it started to slide sideways, and again I had to make a decision because the cliff was not far away. So I shouted to Dave, who was with me, 'Get on that side of the ski,' and he knew what I meant straightaway and he opened the door, got out and leant on that side, so that, that ski dug in, dug in at the side and I gave it a burst of, a, a burst of throttle and that was it.

Lee. *Ok, good thank you very much indeed. Whatever happened to the plane.*

**Thompson.** What happened to, at that moment?

Lee. *No, no in, in the end.*

**Thompson.** It went, it would go out with the, with the ice, just after, remember I said...

Lee. *So it was never reclaimed?*

**Thompson.** Oh, no, no.

Wearden. *Bottom of the sea somewhere in 'Marguerite Bay' area.*

Lee. *They, they built a hanger for her, for her didn't they at 'Stonington' I gather that was an interesting experience?*

**Thompson.** It was, because the, the group of the people who were there the year before, would tell us where the worse, the worst winds would come from, and might mess up the whole of the ???[incomprehensible] so couldn't even get the aircraft out, but, so we took his advice, and that, that would have been alright as it happened.

Lee *But when you were building the hanger there was a, I gather there were problems with measurements?*

**Thompson.** Not sure about that.

Lee. *Ok. Ok. The wood that was, the wood that was supplied to build the hanger with, was too short. Is that correct?*

**Thompson.** If so I don't remember. Really, because we, we made a very serviceable hanger out of it.

Wearden *.That was there for quite a long time I think was that hanger. You, you had a dog try to eat the hanger at one point*

Lee. Yes, *tell us about that.*

**Thompson.** No, didn't know, I can't, can't remember that one.

Wearden. *. It got shut in the hanger over-night, by mistake apparently.*

**Thompson.** I'd forgotten that one, but the one, the one dog one which was, I found very interesting, Dove, Dave had a dog he was very fond of. Now this dog was old and had the same kind of fairly. Have you met Dave at all? Dave was a Yorkshire man with a kind of fairly big, square face, and this dog was quite like him, and Dave took to him and played with him and messed about, but he was no good as a sledge dog, it was too old, but Dave wanted badly that this Dog should have sex with a bitch, because he wasn't going to get it for future reasons or anything else, and he was on about this for such a long time that, in fact they gave in to him, a nervous. This dog tacked onto a bitch, who wasn't wanting anything to do with it. But they, as dogs do, they were locked together, and all the other dogs who were there were roaring their heads off and going at their chains to try and get away themselves, but it was very funny. That that little bit.

Disc 3 track 4[0:15:36.9]. Lee. *How did you get on with the Americans? Tommy.*

**Thompson.** Well, there apart from, the boss man...

Wearden. Finn Ronne

**Thompson.** .... Yeah, because he had all sorts of tales about how, how people had messed up their base, and of course they were the ones who messed it up. Messed up, mess up altogether, because they had left windows open when they left finally. Finally they left doors open. When the snow was thick on the ground, they would take trash out and tip it on top of the snow, with a result when summer came they had the whole trash still there, and so on. So, but apart from him the Americans were great. They did all sorts of stupid things.

Lee. *Such as?*

**Thompson.** Such as when the gale blew, the couple up on the top, they walked down to the base with their skis over their shoulder, knowing that whole bit of, of area was full of crevasses. That kind of thing, and of course that's, that's when one of them fell down.

Lee. *Were you involved in the rescue of that man. Was it Peterson?*

**Thompson.** Well, I was there, and I volunteered, because I tend to volunteer for everything, just because for the experience. I volunteered but Butson was chosen because he was the smallest man that was there on the spot, and he also had the done a little bit of climbing, and he was the obvious man for it, He wasn't the obvious man for me, later, shall I mention this one ?

Wearden. *We'll come to this later as we go on.*

Lee. *Do it now if you like.*

**Thompson.** Well, at one time, as you know, we, we didn't have anyone as a chef, we had to do our own cooking and I was chef this particular day, and I was in the kitchen and someone had gallons of boiling water on the Esse, and as he turned round he turned it down over my feet, and all that happened to me was this terrible pain. and I fell down and curled up, and the next thing I knew, happened when we waken, when I waken I was in my bunk, and the, the Butson was standing beside me and he said to me, 'I'm very sorry Tommy, but you've got.....', what did I say it was?

Wearden. *Epilepsy*

**Thompson,** Epilepsy. Really, and I said, 'Oh God! What does this mean?' and he said, 'It means that eventually, you would be one of these people who....,' and he gave me the whole thing, that I wouldn't be, I would go off my head and be screaming and rounding and all this kind of thing. The thing we imagine that epilepsy ???[inaudible]. Well that I mean, that shattered me as you can imagine, and very ss, very soon, hours, I decided I wasn't going home, that I was, I had this most beautiful woman, and I had only I had pr....I asked to mar, her marriage, before I even held her hand, and she was bright and clever and funny, and every, everything that I would have liked to have been, and I wasn't going to be going home to her to be one of those. She knew I was going to, at that moment, knew - I was going to the Antarctic, and we had only met on maybe only half a dozen occasions in a family affair, and anyway it was getting close, and I burst out, and I said to what I felt about it, and she said, 'Why did it take you so long?', because she had felt the same thing.

Lee. *You'd got no choice had you really.*

**Thompson.** No, so that was it, and anyway I could not go back to this, wonderful woman and be one of those horrible characters.

Lee. *Epileptic.*

**Thompson.** Yeah, epilepsy right at the far end because this is what the doctor said was me, as I was coming to. Right at the far end, and I made up my mind I would go into South America somewhere and disappear, and she would be desperate, and she would eventually get over it, and meet someone else, and that was it so...

Disc 3 track 5 [0:21:57]. Lee. *This, this diagnosis was based on somebody else pouring hot water over your feet?*

**Thompson.** Yeah

Lee. *Did you not question?*

**Thompson.** Well I could, couldn't question

Lee. *Why not?*

**Thompson.** Because he was a doctor, and I thought he was , we thought, I thought doctors then... and I hadn't....

Wearden. *Be wrong.*

**Thompson.** And eventually it happened, and I went back to Stanley, and I saw the doctor there. He said, 'Tell me exactly what had happened,' and he said, 'No possibility, no possibility, but when you get back to UK see a specialist.' That, I mean I could have kissed him then, as you could imagine.

Lee. *And what could you have done to Butson?*

**Thompson .** Well, the thing was I had a chat with the Governor.

Lee. Clifford.

Thompson. Yeah, and I said to him, 'Look, out there in Antarctica, Butson was an absolute hero.' I couldn't, even if I had someone else say anything, I couldn't make him not a hero there. I said back in Stanley, he was a hero then, and with everyone that was out there in America he was a hero, because he went down a crevasse.

Lee. To rescue Peterson.

Thompson. Yeah, so I said, 'I think it would be better if I said nothing about this,' and kept it to myself, and this is why I have not communicated with any of his people since then. I have left Butson to be the hero that he was. Which he was, and then why I broke this rule, was I've got a lot of relatives in America and Canada and people were getting in touch with me outside the family, and say, 'You're Tommy Thompson,' and put a picture up, and this that and the next thing. I thought right, I am going to say now to anyone who ask me what happened and I will tell them that I never had epilepsy. I've never had it since, though ???[incomprehensible] anything like it and that's...

Disc 3 track 5 [0:24:52]. Lee. *When, when did you decide to break your silence on that subject?*

**Thompson.** Mainly when people in America were getting really interested in Antarctica, and you know that they had ???[inaudible] they would find me somewhere, and, and then they would, kept sending email to me, or what ever.

Lee. *So we're talking about ten years or so. In the last ten years?*

**Thompson.** Oh less than that really.

Wearden. *This was Joe Stewart. Interviewed you, you on the telly for, for his history.*

Lee. *Did you ever tell Butson that his diagnosis was contradicted.*

**Thompson.** No, I did...

Wearden. *He has been dead a long time now.*

Lee. *Oh has he.*

**Thompson.** I told no one else.

Lee. *I've got here a memo from Butson banning you from flying. Written two weeks after the only plane you had crashed.*

**Thompson.** Yeah, I heard this one.

Wearden. *Which was a bit pointless*

**Thompson.** It is pointless. I wouldn't say anything now, I mean, I've been in touch with a lot of people now. For instance the, the naval character who wrote, that wrote the book.

Wearden. *John Myers*

**Thompson.** He said, 'What did you tell Butson afterwards.' I said, 'Nothing.'

Disc 3 track 6 [0:26:26]. Lee. *We were talking about the Americans, Tommy. I've never seen a picture of Jenny Darlington, describe her to me. You have a glint in your eye.*

**Thompson.** Oh yes. She was an absolute stunner a complete stunner, and she had everything about her that a woman should have. Except that ???[incomprehensible] man has, and a lot more, but she was, she had a lovely, she smiled a lot, and her eyes were always smiling too. When you talked to her she was earnest, she believed you, what you were saying and so on like that. She was that kind of person you don't meet very often, and her husband was quite different. He was quite tall and strong, and very manly, but he was a character too, and he said, all the Americans liked to visit us especially at tea-time.

Wearden. *Smoke ho.*

**Thompson.** Because the things that we were good at, that they didn't have. Baking bread, scones and stuff like that and they come they would often come over and one person came over. He was Jenny's husband, and he casually mentioned that he could hypnotise people. Now the person who was boss at the time, was Ken Butler, and he was a big man as well, and he said nobody could do this to me, because he was a senior officer in the Army, during the war, so is it one evening he came across, and he got the lights to go out, and a cup of candles, sit and lit on the table, and Darlington just said, 'Right, right sit down everyone, and keep quiet,' and he said to Ken, 'Keep the blue light, the blue light, the blue light, the green light, the green light, the green light.' Did that for a little while, and then he said to Ken, 'Stand up.' So Ken stood up. 'Sit down.' Ken sat down, and then he went Chut! Chut! and Ken says, 'Come on then where's all this? When is this, all this going to happen then?' and we all laughed

and said, 'It has.' Ken was not very, too happy at that, but he, he was under the touch of this. The candles, yeah, but it was.

Disc 3 track 7 [0:30:07]. *I gather Jenny had some jewellery in the Antarctic.*

**Thompson.** A lot, a lot, which she produced at what is the most important night in, in the Antarctic, which was of course...

Wearden. *Mid-winter.*

**Thompson.** ...mid-winter, and I happened to be the Chef for the mid-winter set up, and that was some draw, because I had to bake a huge cake. I had to, we had navel rum, and I got a clean bucket and put at least, I think a colour, gallon of neat rum and some, couple of bottles of orange juice, and then sat it on the Esse cooker, and got it steaming hot, and the, most of the Americans were there, and it was a lovely time, and Jenny was there.

Lee. *She, she came to the British party. They all did.*

**Thompson.** Yeah, yeah.

Wearden. *Were the, were the Americans dry? Were they dry on their base?*

**Thompson.** I, I don't think so. I think they was supposedly dry, but a few of them made...

Wearden. *Yeah, yeah, yeah, but there wasn't, there wasn't that much alcohol.*

**Thompson.** No, no.

Wearden. *I can see the attraction now.*

**Thompson.** [laughter] Yeah

Lee. *Anyway, she looked a picture, did she, in this jewellery?*

**Thompson.** I don't know. Well there were, but I didn't have any.

Lee. *No, she looked a picture? She looked a picture in the jewellery?*

**Thompson.** Oh I'm sure, I'm sure she did, but the thing was I was so busy doing what was needed, but yeah, she, she was a beautiful person to have anywhere.

Disc 3 track 7[0:32:02]. Lee. *Am I right in thinking Christmas pudding was one of your specialities?*

Wearden. *This was out in the field.*

**Thompson.** Was it?

Wearden. *Out in the field you made some, home-made Christmas pudding, when you went to meet the Hope Bay party?*

**Thompson.** Oh yes, was that what, yeah.

Wearden. *It, it was, it reacted quite harshly to the Christmas pudding, to everybody.*

**Thompson.** Isn't that strange? I had forgotten all that. Forgotten that. I mean can, I can

Wearden. *But that was quite a thing when you saw the Plateau party from Hope Bay coming down. When you come out to guide them in.*

**Thompson.** Oh yeah. The thing is, that, they. We met up on the other side at a certain Nunatak

Wearden. Yeah, yeah. *Three-slice nunatak?*

**Thompson.** Ah maybe, anyway it was a particular one, and there, there was. The person that came. The first thing we noticed about the Hope Bay, was their dogs were huge in comparison with ours. No doubt about that. I don't know why it should be, but they were huge. They could put their paws up on your shoulders. Ours were working dogs right down, heads down, great. There was someone from, called Matt Choyce from Hope Bay, and the first thing he said to me was, [whistle] 'Taxi, taxi.' [laughter] and I said, 'Why are you say, why are you saying that.' And he said, 'Well if a taxi comes I know I really am mad.' [laughter]

Lee. *This was the big, multi-stage party was it? From Hope Bay down to Stonington, in the year you were there and you went out to meet them.*

**Thompson.** We went over the top and down the other side to meet them.

Disc 3 track 7 [0:34:07]. Lee. *Can you describe that encounter?*

**Thompson.** Well it was, it was my meeting, in real terms, with glaciers, and the great depths that can go down with, and it, it was a wonderful experience because it meant we had to get across this, and therefore go across glacier country and we, we therefore slipped into crevasses and dogs would pull us out, and so on, but when you looked down and saw it wasn't just a crack. There were little castles down there that would change, with cracks and little bits sticking up, and then depths going down, double. Colours from blues to greens, to white clear-ice, but it was different from one what you could have imagined. Until you fell down you couldn't help but look, at first, you had to look, and the dogs were wonderful. So that was the first thing I noticed on that trip and the, the other thing I noticed how when we were on the type, the hole type bit it-self, before we went down, we always travelled by night, because in day-time, if there are, are. Even at that time, even if there are glaciers, they will be at their softest in day-time. So you tend to travel by night which there's plenty of sun anyway, light anyway, plenty of that and, and sometimes when you, you would sleep a bit, but other times you would watch and you could see these great thunder, roaring, belting, coming down other parts, of the whole vista, and they would be, seem to be going

very, very slowly, but in fact they were going at very great speeds, and they seem to froth at the edges as they came, come nearer and nearer their ending, and that was a wonderful experience, and the, the sound was tremendous. Those were the things that stuck out in my...

Disc 3 track 8 [0:37:19]. Lee. *Shall we move to the Falklands? Or do you have any more supplementaries?*

Wearden. *Yeah, we could move on to the Falklands, yeah.*

Lee. *You left the Antarctic on the Biscoe, and the ship was not alone, was that right? There was some American ships with it?*

**Thompson.** Yes, in the, in the sense that we both got out at the same time, because there happened to be an American ice-breaker not all that far away, and it was going to happen that all the American lot, and our lot, were going to be in for another winter.

Lee. *This would be autumn of forty. This would be sort of May, April, May forty eight. Approximately.*

**Thompson.** Yes.

Wearden. *It might have been a bit earlier than that. There was the Port of Beaumont, there was the Biscoe, and I don't know which ice-breaker it was.*

**Thompson.** No I can't remember.

Wearden. *It's on that picture isn't it, but I'm not sure which ice-breaker it was.*

Lee. *Was, was the, was the relief smooth? An easy job, easy?*

**Thompson.** Oh yes, yeah. I mean obviously I was desperate to get back to my wife.

Lee. *You stopped at the Falklands on the way home didn't you?*

**Thompson.** That was wonderful, wonderful in a way.

Lee. *That's when you got the positive diagnosis. The good diagnosis, but what else were you doing on the Falklands.*

**Thompson.** Well again, Miles Clifford was very kind to me, and he said, 'Will you come and stay at Government House.' As I said, 'Well I can't,' because I had promised that my companion on going, we shared a tent, a young consl ???[phoenetic] cons lad, who lived locally, he came with us as a handyman, and we shared a tent the other side, and I had promised him that any time I spent in the Falklands I would do, be with his parents, because they were very poor, and if they put me up, it would give them money that they wouldn't have had. So I pleased [cough] and made this boy to Miles Clifford and he said, 'Sure, that's fine, do just that,' and then he said, 'I would like you to go.' He told me the position about women

and particularly out of the ordinary part, around the ???[incomprehensible], and the thing was, that they had to come in to have a baby, some time before the baby was born, because the only way they could get in was on horse-back, and lots of things happened during that period. So he said, 'I would like to get a small aircraft to do that job, and I would like you to go out, to the various stations, and find the possibilities.

Disc 3 track 9 [0:40:44]. Lee. *A landing strip?*

**Thompson.** That kind of thing, Yeah, and that was why I went by horse, on horse-back, and of course the thing that always helps was that something different. The first thing that happened to me was that the horses were late, and this, the one we were going to go to first, was in darkness long before we got there, and I said to the, to the guide that was taking me. 'How are the horse going to know?' and he said, 'They know without any trouble, they won't put a foot wrong.' So that was something, and occasionally, and I think once we swam a river. With the feet up and the. Another time, I saw one of the peripatetic teachers and had a chat with them the one that goes giving kids back, music and everything. I went to one place, and I always stayed with the boss man, and I was sitting by a peat fire one evening, and in came the wife, and she was in a beautiful dressing gown, no not a dressing...

Lee. *Not a*

**Thompson.** Evening, no an evening dress and she sat on the other side of the peat fire and she chatted a bit, and then she put a hand down, and pulled out a tin of pipe-tobacco, and she, it was the kind of pipe tobacco that are all squiggly bits and you, and she took it out and put some on her finger and took one of those Rizlas, you know, paper, and rolled herself a cigarette, and lit it. Then she handed the tin across to me. Now being a naval type I knew how to do this so we sat and chatted then, until her husband came down, smoking pipe tobacco in that way. So that was unusual. Another one was, the son was home, and he had come from one of the schools that, very classy schools in, in South America

Wearden. *In Montevideo, the British School in Montevideo.*

**Thompson.** And he said, you want to, you want after all day on a horse, you'll want to have a bath. So he took me up into this big room, and there was a bath in the centre, and he took all his clothes off and had a bath. Now this wasn't used to this kind of thing, for me, even after all those years in the Navy. So I was then obliged to take all my clothes and get this, in this bath, and that was another thing. The last thing, I had to go to Pebble Island, and Pebble Island of course, being an island I was took over by boat, and we went by this boat, came into the quay and got out and there was a group of men waiting. Now the actual place I had to go to was about five miles away so I had to take a horse, and they brought this horse along, and it was beautiful. You have never seen such a shining, it had been. Oh it was fantastic and I thought, me on this? 'Yes, yes, this is your horse.' So I got on. The horses I'd no trouble with because they had soft Spanish saddles, and I got on no problem, and then they let it go, and it was going home, and it just went like the clappers, and of course, I had just ordinary shoes on, and they were the big gritty, metal, long things coming up here, and before I got to the other end the blood was running down into my shoe, and this was their idea of a joke, and they told me afterwards that horse won the Governors Cup the year before.

Wearden. *The Stanley Races.*

**Thompson.** Yeah, but anyway, these ones.

Disc 3 track 10 [0:46:16]. Lee. *Were the, were the landing strips ever created?*

**Thompson.** Yes one or two were. One or two were used in the war, between.

Lee. *The Falklands war?*

**Thompson.** Yeah, and that gave me no. That made me feel horrible, but basically every sum, every single one of them were almost the same. There was, at shearing time, when sheep were brought in to their home base, their little feet always went into the same place year after year after, and it was no problem seeing where that was, and I brought back to the Governor details. How long I measured it, because I took a big tape measure, I took a compass and things like that, and put in detail of all of them out at every place, and it was all no, no problem.

Lee. *This is Clifford and John Huckle's plan to, to be able to run the Falkland Islands air service wasn't it?*

**Thompson.** I suppose. I don't, I didn't know anything about that.

Wearden. *No, no because it was in the future. I think John, it was, when he was flying in the Falklands, it was all float planes, but yeah, he was. Tommy was the fore-runner with the Beaver.*

Lee. *Is there anything else you have on the...*

Wearden. *Well the, the ice-breaker was the Burton Island and it was February 1948*

**Thompson.** To end, if this an appropriate moment, I don't know, but eventually I went into teaching, and apparently I was, I was quite a good teacher, and there, there was a, just after the war in the early fifties, there was that big exhibition in London.

Lee. *Yes 1951*

**Thompson.** Yeah.

Wearden. *The great, the British, the British Empire Ex, Exhibition, wasn't it?*

**Thompson.** Was it I can't remember

Wearden. *The British Em, the British Empire Exhibition.*

**Thompson.** Yeah, anyway I was a teacher, and in my first school, and I had to take some kids into London from Harwich to see the bits and pieces, and sure enough there was a bit about the Antarctic with huskies. Now I recognised one of those huskies and it was John Tonkins leader dog was brilliant, absolutely brilliant as a leader. It didn't

matter what, whether it was milk white, out, white-out, the got, this dog would get on the correct course.

Lee. *Name?*

**Thompson.** Sorry?

Disc 3 Track 10 [0:49:22]. Lee. *The dogs' name?*

**Thompson.** Darkie, and John would say, would go out and ruffle his ears, and say, 'Darkie you old bastard.' That's his exact words now as soon as I saw this dog I said, in a quiet, soft voice, the way that John did things, I would say 'Hello Darkie you old bastard,' and he got up [sigh] I came forward, an old dog by then, and then his tail very slowly, and I, I felt horrible. I felt that I had betrayed him by making him think that this was his master of a life-time ago. I better carry, carrying on with this one now. Then I, I became eventually, because I was quite good as a head, became a, eventually, my, they, the. What do you call them?

Lee. *Inspector*

**Thompson.** Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools and it was near the six, six month before I retired, this young man joined the Inspectorate and he said to me, 'What school did you once teach in,' and I said, 'Harwich,' and he said, 'Do you know that I was one of the kids?' And that meant a lot to me, as you can imagine

Wearden. *It was Darkie, He, Vivian Fuchs took over John Tonkin's dog team. So Darkie became his lead dog. So that's how he ended up back in the UK. And then he went to live with Fuchsie in Cambridge.*

Disc 3 track 11 [0:51:44]. Lee. *Did you meet Fuchs?*

**Thompson.** No.

Wearden. *Well, you would pass in the night. He'd be coming ashore as you were going to the ship, same as John ??? [inaudible] but he wasn't particularly know then. He was just a chap who taking over from Butler as Base Commander.*

Lee. *Looking back on your life, how important was that Antarctic episode to you? [pause] Do you think it shaped you in any way?*

**Thompson.** One knows not, how one is shapen by. I think it did in some ways, but I put it down to. Yes, yes it, it had a different thing. It happened to a different thing from what I, what happened to me, and what happened to a lot of other people. Most people who go to Antarctica come back and say, 'This is the greatest thing that's ever happened to me. I will, I will go again. I must go again.' It didn't happen to me that way, but it shaped my life in many ways. [pause]

Lee. *How do you mean? For example?*

**Thompson.** Yeah, I'm trying to find a bit, a bit I wrote down. [pause] I think one thing that it did really tell me, that I was a peoples' man. You know that people were more important than anything else to me, and, and therefore that's why, although I hadn't thought it then. Right at the beginning I knew, I wanted to get out into the big world and meet people in different circumstances. [pause] I thought I'd written that down. No, but basically that was it. As we went out from the Falklands and I saw that the rest of Marguerite Bay disappear in the distance, it wasn't with, like seems to hit most people. This is, this it like Kevin Walton he was the kind of person who would want to explore all his life, but particularly anything to do with Antarctica. I didn't feel that. I felt that I am going away from this. I am going back to where there are people, and I know that I felt that.

Disc 3 track 12 [0:55:33]. Lee. *So you missed people?*

**Thompson.** I di, I did. I didn't miss individuals. I mean that all the others...

Wearden. Apart from ???[inaudible]

**Thompson.** Huh no, the thing is, all the others down there out with me were all individual people, right, and I, I knew very great deal about them, and ???[incomprehensible] two people who, like Douggie and Reg, Surveyors. They had a lovely way of looking at life. Don Thom, John Tonkin.

Wearden. *He was a bit of a hero was John Tonkin, wasn't he?*

**Thompson.** Absolutely, and afterwards as well. He was a, a hero in North Africa in the war, and yet he had a softest, gentle voice and he had always time for you. Kevin Walton, he, because he was one of these people who wanted desperately to be wanted in that he wanted to be, but he was careless. He was the kind of person who, two thumbs together was always the thing that happened, or he would want to get up in the middle of the, the night, go clonking out in his shoes, and then when he got back into his bunk, he would throw the mud onto the floor, and if he didn't, and if he hit something soft, he would say, 'When is it going to happen?' You know. So, so you, these all individuals, and were close to me. I felt that close to, and the young lad he was wonderful.

Wearden. *Bernard.*

**Thompson.** No, no the, they. The press, he kept in contact with the world they took.

Wearden. *Oh Terry Randall, because he was a really good operator, wasn't he?*

**Thompson.** Yes, but the thing was he had a something I had never seen before. He was able to use his key both ways. So he got twice the speed out of it, so de, de, de, de, di, di, di, di, like that, and a lot of people hated him at the other end because he's too, too qu, too quick, and Doc, he was odd. I mean forget what he did with me. He would come up to a group talking, and suddenly one of the group would say, 'Oh God Doc!' He made the most awful smells, and he would say, 'Oh sorry,' and creep away. So everyone had their, their thing about, and Bernard. Bernard in fact was an absolute

expert at some ap, aspects of ???[inaudible]. Absolutely expert. I was good at some things, but he was excellent.

Wearden. *He's still very fit is Bernard, he's still very fit.*

Lee. *So, did you then miss what we might call greater humanity? Did you miss crowds?*

**Thompson.** No.

Disc 3 track 12 [0:59:21]. Lee. *Did you miss, what was it, what was it that you missed when you were in the Antarctic, about people? You had individuals, but you didn't have a, a larger population. Was that what you missed? You said you were a people, you discovered you were a people's person.*

**Thompson.** Yes, in a sense that, you always know that there are people around you are living purposeful, or not purposeful life, but there are people that are doing something like living, whereas in the Antarctic you couldn't do that you were working for one purpose, and fine, and that purpo, purpose may stay you for ever and ever but in, in, in the big wide world, in a year I, I've made a lot of peep. I've been here for three, four years. For seven years now, and a lot of people shout to me across the street, or come out and say, 'Hi Wull,' 'cause that's what they call me, some people, and it's that feeling that there are people moving about. I met someone this morning, and the first thing he said to me was, he's about 78. He says, 'I've got to go to hospital,' and he pulls his hat out, tells me what's wrong. The doctor thinks he's loosing blood inside his gut, and that's, that kind of thing and that's why...

Lee. *So I'm trying to get to the bottom of this, Tommy. So let me just try this one then, see if you agree with this. You found the Antarctic limiting, in terms of the range of people you could communicate with?*

**Thompson.** No, no it's not that ???[inaudible] it's a general feeling that out there there is. Can I give you one example?

Lee. *Yes Please.*

**Thompson.** When, when I went to Malaya and I became Head, Head. Very quickly I became Head of a small school, which grew in size to about two hundred, with eight teachers, and I became very interested in all sorts of things there, including the aborigines, and I was taken out to an aboriginal development, but it wasn't a real aboriginal one, it was a mixture. So I asked if I could be taken into a real part of the jungle. Now it was during the, the war that was going on with Britain and the Chinese desperadoes, were in the, in the jungle, and therefore little places in the jungle landing strips. You asked earlier if I had flown again, and here's one, and they, the pilots didn't like going in there they hated it because it was so small, and the wrong. The trees were right close up to the landing strip, but I asked the right people because I knew the, how the army worked it. The army works things in a certain way and if you go to the right people, at the right time. So I asked about this, they got permission that myself and someone else could go in to the deep jungle and be landed for several days, and this was wonderful, and the pilots hated it, and we went in, and from the

landing strip we went in, and there were the real. They were great. Of course, it was a, for two or three minutes you. Their breasts were always bare and they just er, but they were nice and friendly, and so we got to know them a bit and they asked, they indicated they wanted to have a big day, a big evening rather, and they brought, and they brought in log, logs from everywhere and they had a big fire, and as we went, I, I went, my ca, companion he was afra, afraid really, but I wondered around in the light of this, and the first thing I saw was a young woman, about twelve, and there was a soft light shining, and she was combing her hair, and it was a bamboo comb, and as she combed slowly down, her breasts rose and fell, as I hurried away. I didn't want her to see me looking, and then we had the, the big, before the big fire. Sorry we were at the big fire. The big fire happened and they did all sorts of things put on for us. They had something that was almost like West Indian. A young woman and a young man very close together but not touching, no touching, and the girl would be saying things to him, 'Who was that I saw you with behind the long-house last night,' and this kind of thing. Abrade him for whatever, and he would go, move backwards slowly not saying anything, and then she would stop, and he would move forward slowly and he would abrade [chiming noises from mobile phone?] That's me, that's Nan, and it, it was something special, and then there would be singing, and the bamboo chompers would be going, and be somebody was just a stringle, single bit of wire. A single bit of wire, and play on that, and then they would have a couple of people with panang, sharp panangs pretending to kill each other, and just miss by fractions, and so I said to, to my companion, 'We will pretend to do something,' and we did. We rolled about in the dust, and fiddled about, and that was cheered, and then the, as things, the fire died down, and we went off to our various mosquito nets, they all came, patted us on the shoulder smiling and so on, and I went under the net and everything became quiet, and yet I could feel the drum, the jungle falling in on us, and surrounding us. That's, that was, that was a part of meeting people in different surroundings and different ideas, et cetera. That the, all this doesn't work in the Antarctic. Does that answer your question?

*Lee. Thank you Tommy*