

## GEORGE KISTRUCK

Edited transcript of a recording of George Kistruck interviewed by Chris Eldon Lee at the Marguerite Bay Reunion at Bowness-on-Windermere on 6th November 2009. BAS Archives reference AD6/24/1/058. Transcribed by Dawn Sutcliffe on 20th December 2014.

---

[Part 1 0:00:00] Lee: This is George Kistruck. Recorded at the Marguerite Bay Reunion at Bowness-on-Windermere by Chris Eldon Lee on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2009.

Kistruck: George Kistruck. 17<sup>th</sup> February 1942 [born] in Bearsden which is a suburb of Glasgow.

[Part 1 0:00:19] Lee: What was your father?

Kistruck: He was a mechanical engineer. He worked for James Howden who built equipment for the ship building industry mostly, but also for power stations.

[Part 1 0:00:31] Lee: What sort of education did you have? Public school or Private school?

Kistruck: Both. I originally went to Kelvinside Academy in Glasgow until I was 13. I then went to Tonbridge School in Kent until I finished school and then went onto University.

[Part 1 0:00:54] Lee: To study?

Kistruck: Engineering and also Geography. I went to Cambridge and I did a part1 Engineering and decided to do a part2 in Geography for rather discreditable reasons but they came out well for Antarctica.

[Part 1 0:01:10] Lee: Can you remember your first awareness that there was a place called the Antarctic?

Kistruck: Yes, it was during my first year. The first time it really mattered that this is what the Antarctic is was my first year at University when the BAS roadshow came round as it did to all the Universities. There was this wonderful film of setting up Fossil Bluff and Otters<sup>1</sup> landing on George VI Sound and things, and the realisation dawning that 'hey these are real people. I could be there doing that.' They weren't heroes from a bygone age that you just read about in books.

---

<sup>1</sup> Twin Otter aircraft used as part of BAS Antarctic operations

[Part 1 0:01:48] Lee: Was this John Smith's film?

Kistruck: Yes, I think it must have been. It was a long time ago and I've seen John Smith's film much more recently than that but it does look very familiar.

[Part 1 0:01:57] Lee: So you hadn't read any of the stories as a child or...

Kistruck: To say I had read none of them would be putting it too far, I had read some of them along with a huge great continuum of other explorers and adventurous type stories but I hadn't concentrated on Antarctica particularly until then.

[Part 1 0:02:17] Lee: Just describe [inaudible]. You saw this film, somebody must have spoken.

Kistruck: Yes, it was Sir Vivian Fuchs himself actually came round on that particular occasion. And I can't remember detail of it but what I can remember is, as I've said before, the sudden realisation 'Hey, I could do that and I think I would rather like it. It looks good fun and the sort of thing that I could do'. Apart from the film itself I don't remember very much at all about what else was said at that meeting.

[Part 1 0:02:50] Lee: What do you remember about the selection process, the interview and so on?

Kistruck: It was very informal was one thing I remember about it. I was very comfortable with it. I was surprised to be considered as a potential glaciologist because as an engineer with surveying experience, beyond the engineering surveying, I had assumed that I would actually be put onto map making down the peninsula which is where most civil engineers who went to BAS ended up. I was surprised when Bill Sloman said 'with your background you could be a glaciologist'. And it was with a little bit of difficulty that I restrained myself from saying 'Oh, what's a glaciologist then?' [laughs] But I didn't and that worked and so I went to Cambridge where Charles Swithinbank was just recently established as Chief of BAS Glaciology and he and Gordon Robin, Director of the Scott Polar Research Institute, interviewed me. And those two guys had both known each other very well on the Norwegian/British/Swedish Antarctic Expedition of the 1950's so they knew what life on an Antarctic remote outpost base was like. I was surprised the sort of things, particularly Charles Swithinbank wanted to know. Didn't seem to be much about glaciology or surveying or hard sums or anything like that, but much more practical mechanics type

engineering. He was interested in the fact that I used to run old motorbikes and managed to keep them going. I'd been on the Cambridge Spitzbergen Expedition at the end of my time in Cambridge and that had involved me in quite a lot of nasty tedious fiddly work keeping outboard motors going in bad conditions and also coping with skis on melting glaciers and things like that. This all seemed to work and I got offered the job and very glad that I was.

[Part 1 0:04:54] Lee: Was there any sense that they were sussing you out psychologically as well?

Kistruck: I was never aware of that and that did puzzle me a bit. Bill Sloman was legendary in his ability to spot a Fid at 200 metres. The only time I wondered if I might have been psychoanalysed, as it were, was when I had to go for my medical at a hospital in Chelsea somewhere. I had to go and provide samples of this and that and be checked over by a doctor. And that was an unusual medical I thought, not that I had been for medicals very often, because he asked me to help him do things. 'You hold this and I'll put this stick in to see if you've got any sugar in your urine' and that sort of thing. Usually doctors are very protective about that sort of thing and don't want you to get involved. But it was no problem and I was quite happy to get involved and did it all. And I thought afterwards that actually maybe he was seeing how I reacted to that. And years later I challenged Bill Sloman on this and he said 'No, no, no, nothing like that, no absolutely not, good heavens no. What an idea'. So all I can say is I was and am completely unaware of any psychological testing that was done, but I've got to say that if there was any, I think it was extraordinarily successful in the community of people who ended up on the BAS bases.

[Part 1 0:06:17] Lee: How big a gap was there between being selected and being despatched south?

Kistruck: In my case it was nearly a year, because Charles was certainly very keen to get me signed up with BAS as soon as possible which as I recall was at least 6 months before the first ship would sail that autumn. This was in 1967 that I was applying and I actually went south in the autumn of 1968. Before that I think I started work for BAS at the Scott Polar Research Institute in the beginning of June but I had been recruited before that, it was well back into the end of 1967.

[Part 1 0:07:05] Lee: Was it clear at that point what you would be doing and where you would be going?

Kistruck: Not to me it wasn't. I think Charles had a gleam in his eye but he wouldn't expect to explain that to me in detail just because, hey, I didn't even know what glaciology was and he did know that. That wasn't the problem because he was going to train me and so I got lots of stuff to read. It was like actually being post graduate at a University again with a director of studies and supervisions and tutorials and things. So I had the run of the library at SPRI<sup>2</sup> and that was terrific because it didn't have to be technical things I read all the time. There were all these other books about Nansen and Arctic Canada and things like that and I was getting paid for it Wow! [laughs] And I went on a course in Sweden to learn the nuts and bolts of glaciology, drilling holes in ice, using dyes and that sort of thing.

[Part 1 0:07:55] Lee: So by the time you sailed you were a Glaciologist?

Kistruck: Yes I was. I was certainly a reasonably competent apprentice Glaciologist I would suppose.

[Part 1 0:08:05] Lee: But you didn't know where you were going? You didn't know you were going to Fossil Bluff?

Kistruck: No, I knew that the intention was that I would go to Fossil Bluff in my second winter provided it could be resupplied in time. But I was expecting that I would spend my first winter at Adelaide Island. So yes I did know that amount. But I also knew that I had to go to Halley Bay on the way to pick up the glacial kit and Senior Glaciologist Andy Wager on the way across from Halley Bay to Adelaide Island. Adelaide was going to be the centre of BAS Glaciology from then on.

[Part 1 0:08:40] Lee: So you went by ship to Halley?

Kistruck: Yes. That was the *Perla Dan*.

[Part 1 0:08:45] Lee: And flew from there...

Kistruck: No, then from Halley the ship turned round having relieved the base and came back to the Falkland Islands where I then got off with all the glacial kit and stuff that had to go on south; and transhipped first of all to the *Shackleton* which was there at the time, and we'd just set off from Stanley and were heading south and all of a sudden Deception Island<sup>3</sup> blew up and so we were sitting in the fiddle<sup>4</sup> on the *Bransfield*

---

<sup>2</sup> Scott Polar Research Institute

<sup>3</sup> Deception Island experienced volcanic eruptions during 1967-1969

wondering why the hell we were going so fast. The ship was reeling about in heavy sea and crockery was smashing and all that kind of thing. It turned out that the captain had got the radio signal from BAS saying 'Get to Deception Island as fast as you can, there's trouble down there'. So we did come down to Deception Island and picked up the people who had been bombed out by the volcano. And after that I transferred to the *John Biscoe* and went down south to Adelaide on the *John Biscoe*.

[Part 1 0:09:43] Lee: So the captain of the ship didn't tell you why you were being diverted?

Kistruck: No, not to begin with. But things like that very soon come out. Diverted, it wasn't exactly a diversion. The *Bransfield* was due to head down towards the Antarctic Peninsula bases anyway, it's just the urgency was greatly increased and so we noticed the behaviour of the ship yes.

[Part 1 0:10:08] Lee: What met your eyes when you arrived at Deception?

Kistruck: It looked very dirty compared with the rest of the Antarctic environment. We had seen superb clean snowscapes at South Georgia and at Halley Bay. We called in at Signy and we'd been to other places, so by then you get to know what Antarctica looks like, the Antarctic Islands, and Deception didn't look like that anymore; although I'm sure once it used to, because of all the ash and stuff from the volcano that had been blown out onto it.

[Part 1 0:10:45] Lee: Was the eruption still going?

Kistruck: Not really, there was still a bit of steam puffing out from crevices here and there but we didn't go very close to it. But what I also remember very well is the devastation of the BAS area there. This river of lava has smashed straight through the middle of the biggest of the huts that were there and gone onto the beach. And there was a tractor, a Ferguson tractor, which had been buried up to the top of its bonnet in this stuff and it was certainly a scene of desolation as far as that was concerned. The remains of the old whaling station there had also been tossed about like matchsticks and that was impressive.

---

<sup>4</sup> Nautical term, the iron framework or cover forming a hatch on deck over the engine- or the fire-room of a steamer.

[Part 1 0:11:30] Lee: What were your feelings when you saw that? Were you concerned, or frightened, or amazed?

Kistruck: Interested I would say. No I wasn't particularly concerned and certainly not frightened. It didn't seem to be frightening at all. Yes interested, and I was lucky, I was actually allowed to go ashore which most of the Fids weren't. The reason was I was considered to have done a favour to Professor King, he was a passenger on the *Perla Dan* from one of the South African Universities, I don't know which. He was a Glaciologist and Geologist and at Halley Bay we had actually dug an ice pit and he had helped do that and he thought this was great fun. So he was going to be allowed to go ashore to see the remains of this eruption so he thought I would like to go along as well. I always remember being knocked up by the king Fid on the ship at the time at about half past seven in the morning, quite an unreasonable time on a day when you had nothing to do, saying 'you can get up, you're going ashore'. I said 'I'm not, why should I?' 'Because so and so says it'. 'Well who the hell's he?' [laughs] And there was Professor King standing outside the door of the cabin hearing all of this. So I quickly shut up and went and enjoyed it.

[Part 1 0:12:46] Lee: How were the chaps who were coming aboard?

Kistruck: They had recovered by then. I think they had been fairly distressed at the time that they got picked up by the helicopters from the *Pilato Pardo*. But they were picked up and taken to the Chilean ship, and then to the *[John] Biscoe*, and then they came on board the *Bransfield* and went home I think, I couldn't actually commit to that.

[Part 1 0:13:12] Lee: You describe very eloquently your first encounter with seasoned Fids as opposed to pristine brand new Fids. This would be at Halley Bay?

Kistruck: Yes, at Halley Bay. That was one of the defining experiences of my Antarctic time, definitely. The *Perla Dan* had come in on quite a nice sunny day with floating sea ice there, fast ice leading up to the shelf ice in the distance about a mile and a half away I suppose that year. And there were a lot of Fids there from the base waiting to welcome the ship in so she moored up bows on initially to the fast ice, and threw a rope ladder down over the bow. These creatures swarmed up the ladder over the bulwarks<sup>5</sup> and down onto the deck and started beetling down towards the fiddley at the stern of the ship, and I looked at them in just absolute amazement. They were filthy! They were ragged, scarecrows,

---

<sup>5</sup> An extension of the ships sides above the level of the deck

hair all over the place; beards ragged as anything. They went straight into the fiddle as if they owned it and demanded fried eggs in huge numbers! Fortunately the cook on the *Perla Dan* knew exactly what was going to happen and he'd been asking us for help transporting eggs out of the chilled store so he had great racks of eggs. In each rack there were at least 12 by 15 eggs, and he got us to bring about 6 of these racks out of the cold store ready to fry up eggs for the Fids when they came. And he just produced a continuous stream of fried eggs out of the galley and they ate them!! [laughs]. 'God, am I going to be like that in a year's time?' But of course I was [laughs].

[Part 1 0:14:55] Lee: Did it put you off?

Kistruck: No it didn't. Again it was a matter of great interest. This is such a new world. I didn't come here to be sort of put off by what I find. Interestingly you've got to position yourself into it and see how you fit. I do remember that.

[Part 1 0:15:13] Lee: So you made your way down the west side of the peninsula?

Kistruck: Yes that's right.

[Part 1 0:15:16] Lee: To get to Fossil Bluff. Did you call anywhere on the way?

Kistruck: We called at Argentine islands. We'd been to Deception Island. From Argentine Island as it was then called, Faraday more recently, we then went to Adelaide Island and then I disembarked. From Adelaide Island, yes you then had to fly to Fossil Bluff so it was a matter of discovering well, what are we actually going to do? Because by the time I got aboard the *John Biscoe* and was getting closer to Adelaide Island, it then became clear that the possibility had been discussed of putting a wintering party into Fossil Bluff that winter, the winter of 1969, the Antarctic winter of 1969. I thought fine, why not? No problem with that if it can be done. It looked as if it should be done reasonably comfortably because we got to Adelaide Island sometime in January I would think, and the ships were going away in March, so there should have been plenty of time to complete the resupply of Fossil Bluff and get the wintering party in all properly equipped and ready to go. That would have been fine. But there were also problems with the air unit that year, that they had had a nasty adventure, well it started before that actually.

[Part 1 0:16:39] Kistruck: The previous season, the single aircraft that was flying, Pilatus Porter<sup>6</sup>, had crashed up on the Antarctic Peninsula, and had to be abandoned and so the people who were on board at the time, which was the last half of a sledge party that had been at Fossil Bluff plus the pilot and an airmech[air mechanic] had some awkward decisions about what they were then going to do. The choice that they made, obviously in consultation with BAS and ‘Uncle Tom Cobley and All’, was to go back to Fossil Bluff and spend the winter there which they did. One of the prime tasks of the air unit when they arrived back at Adelaide in 1968 was to get them out again which they did, and to salvage the engine from the Pilatus Porter up there on that plateau because it was still valuable, which they did. During the course of all this flying about, at one stage they ended up on the wrong side of the Antarctic Peninsula, on the Larsen Ice Shelf, and it was quite a serious logistical operation to actually get them back again, which involved the Navy, *Endurance*’s helicopters and all sorts of things. So as a result of that there was a moratorium on flying for quite some time while that was all investigated. Then when flying started again it was declared that there had to be a second aircraft serviceable to come to the rescue if necessary. What then happened was that this second aircraft, which was a single engine petrol driven Otter, it managed to crash near Stonington Island off one of the glaciers up there, no hurt to anybody on board and they all walked out without too much difficulty, but no second aircraft anymore. So what’s going to happen about getting the people who are still in Fossil Bluff for the summer meteorology, they’ve got to be brought out or are they going to spend the winter? Or is the wintering party as now planned; is that going to go in there? The result was in the end, yes, the wintering party is going to go in there; 2 geologists, 2 glaciologists and the people who are there at the moment which is a Met man and an air mechanic and I think there must have been somebody else. Anyway they were going to come out and so that would then be the winter established, a twin Otter would fly away and we would get on with it.

[Part 1 0:19:06] Lee: That sounds like a lot of indecision. Was that sort of typical of the time?

Kistruck: I don’t think it was indecision exactly, it was the fact that circumstances change so quickly that you have to make new decisions and each decision you make is conditioned by quite a lot of things any of which can go wrong. Again, Antarctica is like that and I’m sure it still is. So it looks as if you’re dithering and not making up your mind

---

<sup>6</sup> The **Pilatus PC-6 Porter** is a single-engine short take-off and landing utility aircraft



but actually you are, but you're having to review that decision very quickly because something fundamental has changed, therefore your decision may have to as well. And to try to bulldoze it through as if nothing had changed would be very dangerous.

[Part 1 0:19:43] Lee: What were your first impressions of your little red home in the south?

Kistruck: Ah yes, I had managed to go there on a look-see trip and I'd actually seen it. It had a tremendous comfortable atmosphere and we were made welcome by the guys who were there at the time. We were given tea and they toasted scones and that sort of thing. And I thought well this is pretty good actually. You can live comfortably down here as well as doing all this hard tedious work all the time. It was a nice compact layout. You could see everything that you needed there. There was a nice view. I loved the place actually and I really wanted to go there and spend two winters, and I really did even after the first visit. At one stage it didn't look as if I was going to get in there that winter, and that was disappointing. I wanted to go.

[Part 1 0:20:43] Lee: Did you have any say about who the other 3 guys would be?

Kistruck: No. How that decision was made I don't know either. I think that the intention was it was to be a glaciology field base and so other people needed to be there as well. The geology programme was also interested in having people spend the winter there. Somehow the case was made that 4 scientists, provided they had a reasonable amount of common sense and nous, could manage without specialist mechanical or mountaineering type support or radio operator support either for that matter. It just about was true. I think we were very unlucky with some of the mechanical problems that we had during the first autumn down there and we got through those alright in the end.

[Part 1 0:21:36] Lee: So for the record the other 3 guys were?

Kistruck: Andy Wager, glaciologist: Mike Elliott, geologist and Mike Bell, geologist. So Mike Bell was in his first year. Mike Elliott had spent a year at Adelaide the previous year.

[Part 1 0:21:55] Lee: And you all got on famously?

Kistruck: Yea, I think we got on by and large astonishingly well because 4 people cooped up in small premises like that; you're bound to grate on each other's nerves a bit, and coming from different interests and backgrounds there are bound to be times when somebody reacts in a

way that somebody else doesn't expect. I think Andy Wager felt the burden of command lay rather heavily on his shoulders at times and this showed. The rest of us knew that and did what we could most of the time to accommodate it. To say we never had differences of opinion would be ridiculous, yes we did. But I think we were lucky that the way we managed to resolve them was always peaceful. We never had angry words exchanged in high voices.

[Part 1 0:22:50] Lee: Were there any mental or social tricks you had to employ, or you found to employ that you used to diffuse any bubbling situations?

Kistruck: Knee jerk reaction to that question, there are two things that come to mind immediately when you say that. One was that just before I had gone down to Antarctica I had a recurring dislocated shoulder and I had it operated on in a London hospital during which time I was introduced, by an Australian nurse, to a book called *Let's Talk Strine* which was from the Sydney Morning Herald and it was a 'how do you talk Australian' by the Australians themselves. I liked this and I'd brought it and there was a follow on as well. And then the New Zealanders produced another one called *New Zild and how to speak it*. I had these 3 books and I took them down to Fossil Bluff with me. I taught the others this strange lingo and we used to use it actually. We used to talk in *Strine* quite a lot, from time to time. And that was a good diffuser of things. You could say something in a fake Australian accent and get away with it that you might not have got away with at other times. [laughs] So that was one good thing. The other thing I was going to say was I was once accused to my intense irritation by Andy of talking too much. And I thought 'right I'll show you guys, I don't talk too much'. I made the resolve that for the next 24 hours I was not going to open a conversation with anybody. I would respond politely and I would do everything else and I would contribute to a conversation but not initiate new directions in it, and just see if anybody noticed the difference. The first point is, they didn't. But the second point is it was actually extremely difficult. To do that, without giving the impression that you were fed up, grumpy, just about to go off your trolley or whatever. So bursts of song and belches and things like that were very good for expressing general sort of satisfaction with life without introducing the subject as something of conversation. So things like that, I think everybody found one way or another of overcoming hurdles.

[Part 1 0:25:05] Lee: Were you ever aware of any privations or was life actually quite cosy?

Kistruck: Both. We were aware of privations because the last supply flight in only just got off the ground. It was really touch and go as to whether

the wintering party would be properly established. On about the last day when the plane had been waiting for a week to get us in, and it had to go back via South America at the end of the season; on the last day, the weather just improved enough to get it going. So they dug it out up on the air strip and the poor thing, we loaded it all up with the last load. It was huge. This was in Adelaide. And of course by the time we had dug it out the thing wouldn't move so we had to try to get it to taxi and lopping boxes out so half the stuff that we'd loaded up because we'd needed it came out. That's where a lot of the glacial equipment ended up in Adelaide that winter. But in the end we did get off the ground, and when we arrived at Fossil Bluff a lot of the luxuries and things that were on the standard ration for Fids bases weren't there, and we had very little booze for instance, we only had 23 cans of beer and about 9 bottles of spirits to last us the whole year. It sounds quite a lot but it isn't for 4 people. So what we did was we actually rationed it. We said OK we'll have one tot of spirits a week on Saturday nights when on base in the winter. We'll save all the beer for mid-winters day and drink the lot at one go, and that's what we did, so yes it was privation in a way. But on the other hand your Saturday night tot became a very valuable social cohesive occasion. Very nice! The second year we had plenty of everything and it wasn't the same, it really was not. There was no shortage of drink if we wanted it but you've got to be sensible in a place like that and not over indulge. And so you didn't feel the same cohesion in drinking it together.

[Part 1 0:27:00] Lee: Shall we talk a bit about the work you were doing?

Kistruck: I suppose we'd better [laughs]

[Part 1 0:27:05] Lee: Both sides of the thing are very important. You mention in your very kindly composed notes that glaciology was regarded as a bit of a Cinderella subject?

Kistruck: Well only because it had been, that's my opinion by the way so I'm happy to be quoted on it as my opinion not that it was official anywhere. Just because all the glacial work had been done as an offshoot of geology, and to most geologists ice is not rock, although it does come within the definition I am told. So therefore, the Geology Department never really took glaciology particularly seriously. Then Charles Swithinbank was appointed, professional, very experienced, eminent Glaciologist, and that changed things.

[Part 1 0:27:57] Lee: So what did you set about doing?

Kistruck: We had 4 main programme areas to work at and the most important one was that we were within about 2 years of the end of a thing called the International Hydrological Decade where Britain had been noticeable for not really contributing a great deal to this, certainly glaciologically. One of the things which the International Hydrological Decade wanted done was to study a whole string of glaciers from the Alaskan Rockies right the way down through South America, through the Andes and down onto the Antarctic Peninsula as far south as we could go. To do local studies of a glacier there, so they could compare what was happening in different latitudes at more or less the same longitude in the world. The first thing to do was to find a suitable glacier that we could study so it had to be defined that you had edges all the way round so that snow that fell in it that you measured had definitely fallen there and not somewhere else and flowed in from the outside. Then to measure it, 'is this getting bigger or smaller? Is it moving, if so how fast?' that sort of thing. Because the feeling was that 90% of the world's fresh water is down there in Antarctica, it's rather important even in 1970, to know if there's getting to be more or less of it, and that was before Global Warming had ever been mentioned or thought of to any extent. So that was the first thing; to find a local glacier, survey it carefully, put a load of stakes in and continue to survey those 4 times a year particularly for accumulation or ablation<sup>7</sup> but also maybe for movement too over a longer period. That was the first thing.

[Part 1 0:29:41] Kistruck: The second was to study the floating ice shelves around Alexander Island particularly the one in George VI Sound. Also there were some on the west side of Alexander Island which if we could get to them, and we didn't know whether we could or not, but if we could they would be useful to know what's happening to those, how are they deforming. Just a slight aside, it was that sort of thing that made me a good candidate for the glaciologist work that had to be done there because I knew about Three Dimensional Stress Dynamics as an engineer and I knew about Strain Gauges. What we were basically doing with these ice shelf measurements was putting in enormous strain gauges on the surface to see in what direction and how much it was deforming. The great thing about the floating ice shelves is you know what is happening at the bottom; there's water down there, there's no friction stopping them flowing. So the flow that you measure on the surface, you know it's being caused by features which you can observe and go away and examine if you need to. So that was the floating ice shelves, and that involved setting streams of stakes across George VI Sound in 5 different places; several different places anyway, it might have been

---

<sup>7</sup> Ablation of a glacier refers to the net loss in ice mass due to melting, evaporation, ice calving etc.

only 4 different places, and measuring them from time to time, then trying to get to these other ice shelves to do the same thing on those, just put in strain gauge rosettes there.

[Part 1 0:31:07] Kistruck: The next thing was to make an estimate of the average annual air temperature over the area we were in. This surprisingly involved drilling holes in the ice rather than sticking thermometers up in the sky, because somebody had found out that a very good rule of thumb is that if you measure the temperature 10 metres down below the surface of a glacier, the temperature down there is very close to the annual mean. It's a doddle. Instead of having to take all sorts of temperatures at different times of year and work out the average, drill down 10 metres and take the temperature there and you've done it, move on somewhere else. So that way you can get a lot of good information. The trouble with that was, drilling a 10 metre hole doesn't sound much, but if you've got to do it by hand. Think about that a bit. It's actually not quite as easy [laughs] and takes quite a long time and is hard work. And of course the big drill that would do that was one of the things that got thrown off the aeroplane on the last flight out from Adelaide, so we couldn't do any of that in my first year. But we did some in my second, yes.

[Part 1 0:32:20] Lee: And there was another element of course?

Kistruck: The other element was radio echo sounding of the ice shelves and this actually matched up with the other two bits of survey that Scott Polar Research Institute had for the last several years in 1968 been experimenting with, pinging radar signals off glaciers and getting a reflection from the top and the bottom. And that worked provided you got the radar frequency right, you could get quite a good running trace of the profile of a glacier, both surface and the under surface of it. So to match that up with the way the surface was deforming in plan on the map was important.

[Part 1 0:33:01] Lee: Was this good solid reliable science? Was it all a bit seat of the pants?

Kistruck: Oh no, all those things are good reliable science and were the foundation of the data stream which BAS now enjoys. They've got a very good continuous sequence of glaciological and geological and all sorts of other information going back to the 1950's. Yes it's solid science. Although I've made it sound very amateurish perhaps because that's the sort of way I tackle it, because after all I wasn't a professional glaciologist. No, the science that came out of it was and is important, and the study of the local glacier which we called Spartan

Coomb [phonetic] but I think it's been renamed since then, that was the forerunner of much more detailed studies which came along later which do concern climate change and global warming.

[Part 1 0:33:55] Lee: It says in your citation, your Fuchs medal, that you were perhaps unwittingly laying the foundations for that discovery later on. Is that something you'd considered?

Kistruck: Yea we were very surprised actually with some of the things we found about the behaviour

[Part 1 0:34:09] Lee: At the time?

Kistruck: At the time with what we found on George VI Sound ice sheet which basically is an L shape so like a mirror image of an L, the long upright goes northwards, and then the bottom bit pokes out westwards down the bottom of Alexander Island. There's a huge ice stream coming off the Antarctic continent down there at the corner, the elbow of it you would think, and so it's obvious isn't it, that the ice is flowing northwards up one arm and westwards down the other. Well, we were doing our first detailed measurements up about three quarters of the way up the northern arm and put in a measurement scheme; and first of all we found we were trying to measure a base line and we found that just in the course of a few days one end had moved, damn it, so we had to go and do it again. That was surprising and particularly the direction it was moving in was incredible, because it wasn't moving north or south, it was moving actually pretty well due west straight into the coast of Alexander Island from the Antarctic Peninsula on the mainland only 20 miles away. A few glaciers were coming down there, and they're quite big ones, you can see them; but the fact that the ice in the shelf on the George VI sound was actually moving pretty well due west across the sound, and then where was it going? Well just when it got right to the edge you could see pressure was building up and it was within the last few 100 metres turning right and heading north and gradually melting away. That was one amazing thing.

[Part 1 0:35:40] Kistruck: And secondly was the amount of melting which went on in the summer time. You couldn't travel on the surface because of huge lakes of slush, and they were partly caused by rock dust blowing off the mountains which were sedimentary on the Alexander Island side, so quite soft and they crumble away, and the dust blows onto the ice surface, the snow surface, and then when the sun comes out down there this stuff melts in and so you get an awful lot of water lying around in the late summer there. And again we were really quite startled with

that. That's where the reference in the citation that we went to measure the stakes again and they'd all melted out, that was why. We'd drilled them in 2 metres that was the standard depth we drilled the stakes. We put in a 4 metre stake drilled to half its depth, and it just melted. It all turned to slush and the thing blew over in the first bit of wind that came along.

[Part 1 0:36:38] Lee: Did you put two and two together at all? Did you come to any conclusions about what was going on and why and where it might lead?

Kistruck: No is the simple answer to that. I'm sorry but we didn't. We just thought 'that's amazing isn't it? Well we better drill them a bit deeper next time'. Because we did want to know the amount by which this had happened. The fact you know that you'd left in the book 193cm of the stake was protruding when last seen and when you came back it was lying flat on its side if you could find it, well ok so what!

[Part 1 0:37:15] Lee: So when the papers about Global Warming were published was there a special moment in your mind? Did it all fit into place? Were you surprised to read those documents?

Kistruck: Yes I was. I was very sceptical about it until one day quite recently. It was only a handful of years ago, I went on a visit to BAS headquarters in Cambridge for one of the BAS club reunions and the glaciologists there were talking about the huge long ice core they'd drilled out of somewhere or other, and where they could actually see from the gas contained in the bubbles in the ice what the air temperature had been up to 500/1000 years ago. They could show quite clearly that what's going on at the moment is definitely a periodic change, it's not unprecedented, but the rate at which it's happening was unprecedented. So I then came to the conclusion yes ok, there really is something going on. This isn't just a fluctuation of the sort which has been happening many, many times in the past during the history of the earth.

[Part 1 0:38:21] Lee: So you actually were still quite reluctant to tie that research that was being announced in the mid 90's I think it was, with your experiences back in the late 60's?

Kistruck: Yes and I've got to say that it was very gratifying to get that citation but the thing about foretelling Global Warming, that's not right actually [laughs] I didn't claim that and I wouldn't.

[Part 2 0:00:00] Lee: Tell me about the field trips you were doing? What were they like?

Kistruck: Oh yes they were very exciting to begin with. One of the things was not having a professional mechanic with us we weren't supposed to use the muskeg tractors that lived on the Fossil Bluff base because they were fairly serious pieces of machinery. You needed more than just 'I can get my car started in the morning' knowledge in order to operate them properly. Fortunately Andy Wager, having spent his first year at Halley Bay, he was very friendly with the Black Gang<sup>8</sup> there, had spent a lot of time with the mechanics and was interested in that and had watched them and knew quite a lot about the way they ran their muskegs and other tractors at Halley Bay. I had, as Charles Swithinbank found out, reasonable competence with petrol engines and mechanical things in general, although I was a civil engineer rather than a mechanical one. And between the two of us we reckoned that we would be able to cope alright with Motor Toboggans and Fox Tracks, which are like a lawn mower engine on a (...) They're forerunners of skidoos, but much more primitive. We thought we would manage with those ok. So that was the idea. So the glacial team had 2 Fox Tracks and the idea was we would take the geologists into their base area for the autumn to do their work and then we would get on with glaciology. Of course we only had 1 Fox Track because the other had to be left behind at Adelaide so that was a bit difficult. Can 1 Fox Track take 4 people with sledges anywhere sensible? Well, we don't know, let's try. The answer was, in those conditions, no it can't! We had significant problems with the drive chain breaking and things, so we had to come humiliatingly back to base having duly rigged a difficult repair.

[Part 2 0:01:49] Kistruck: We asked for permission to use the muskegs because this clearly wasn't going to be a goer. After some hesitation this was given, and there were two field muskegs on the base which were allowed to go off the base rather than just up to the air strip to get loads from the aeroplane, one of which was having its tracks repaired and that hadn't been finished by the time the season ended. So we had one that we could use. Mike Bell had in his spare time been working on finishing the repair to the tractor, the other one, and fortunately he just about got it finished by the time that we then started off again. So we took the muskeg out and we knew that it was going to be difficult to restart this beast in the mornings. Petrol engine, goes down to minus 30 or below very easily out there but we knew, and Andy Wager knew particularly, that what you can do is petrol dilution; you dilute the oil in the sump with petrol and then run the engine for a bit, not too long, just to get it

---

<sup>8</sup> The 'Black (Hand) Gang' were made up of diesel mechanics, tractor drivers and close friends at Halley Bay



mixed in, and then in the morning the oil is nice and thin, it's not like jelly which otherwise it is. Also we knew that batteries are a bit dodgy when it's as cold as that, so we had carefully taken a backup generator with us, I think we called it 'Briggs & Stratton' from the engine that ran it. We set off with the muskeg and with a man hauling sledge as a kind of life boat in case the worst really came to the worst, and with some spare batteries, but they had to be kept warm so they've got to be in the cab of the muskeg or in a tent. It was a real nuisance dealing with the batteries because you park up for the night and you've got to take the batteries out and into the tent to keep them warm. Then in the morning when you want to restart again, you've got to get the batteries out and hooked up and everything and get the engine whirring before anything else can happen.

[Part 2 0:03:43] Kistruck: So we did that, we did a reasonable mileage the first day in the end, the four of us; and the muskeg wouldn't start. The batteries were knackered; we had feared that this might be the case so let's charge them up. The Briggs & Stratton wouldn't work, we could start it but it wouldn't charge. We couldn't find out why. What the heck was the matter with it? We took the thing to bits and had absolutely no idea. So, what are we going to do? The only thing we can do is walk back to the base pulling this little sledge behind us; it's 25 miles, it's going to take us at least 2 days, because we're not very good at man hauling. It's not like Captain Scott and his fit men! So that's what we did. It took us 3 days and we arrived at the base pretty well exhausted and we then had to think what are we going to do? What we could do, fortunately, was take the other muskeg out to rescue the first one. But before we could do that, what was the matter with the Briggs & Stratton? We had another Briggs & Stratton, we tried that, and it wouldn't work either!! This is ridiculous! What are these gremlins up to? Oh dear, reading my diaries back again since then! And the Fox Track was having weird problems as well apart from the chain driver that was having problems. Basically in the end just when it was getting really quite dark and the winter was setting in, 2 of them, Andy and Mike Elliott did go out with the other muskeg and they managed to start the other one, because we had another device called a Herman Nelson heater which had been used for the petrol engine aircraft in the old days. It was one of these kept at the Bluff in case a single engine Otter turned up and had to stay some time and needed to start its engine again. So we could take that with us on the sledge and it was the one thing that never ever failed us was the Herman Nelson. It had some special methylated spirit device that you could actually pre heat it as a petrol engine to get the petrol to evaporate so that the engine would start and it never failed, that was great. So we took that with us both times actually but it didn't start the

muskeg the first time. But it did the second time so they brought it back again and that was us for the winter. Meanwhile we were trying to do what we could with the Fox Track to get that duly rigged so it could work, we eventually did manage to do that and try and find what was wrong with the Briggs & Stratton's. We never did find out. Having stripped and re assembled them several times all of a sudden it went and then the other one did too. What did we do, we will never ever know. One of the Antarctic's mysteries.

[Part 2 0:06:26] Lee: And you had a famous adventure with the generator at the base as well?

Kistruck: Yes, that was another of the gremlins that we had. There was a nice little *Petter* diesel generator there which provided 250V for base power. It was not very powerful, but it was enough to run the base very nicely and charge the batteries for muskegs and everything. This had also been giving trouble and had needed repairing. The diesel mechanics from Adelaide hadn't been able to get to it and the air mechanic, John Walsh, who had been on the base over the previous winter from the Pilatus Porter incident, he had managed to keep the diesel going but according to the Diesel mechs John Walsh's approach was not right. He was trying to tune the thing like you can with a carburettor when its running and you just can't they said.

[Part 2 0:07:21] Kistruck: But anyway as part of the servicing of this thing and trying to keep it going I'd been doing some work on it and we had one of these long handled spanners that I foolishly left on the casing, it was an air cooled diesel, on the casing of the air duct. Started the engine up and that was fine it worked and rattle, rattle, rattle, to my horror I see this spanner just disappearing into the air intake [laughs] for the cooling air. Of course it wacked into the air veins on the fly wheel and graunched into a halt. A cloud of noise and sparks! I thought 'oh my God, now what?' And of course the casing was all riven as well with objects sticking into it from the inside. Having taken the casing off it was actually quite encouraging. There was surprisingly little damage to the engine itself but 2 of the veins had been broken off the fly wheel. By bashing the casing back into shape and repositioning it and starting up the engine again, the engine ran alright, but of course it would because this was just a cooling air problem. But it was hunting from side to side like this because it was unbalanced now. I wasn't happy about it running like that for a long time. I thought other damage is likely to ensue and got on the radio to various people in the area who might know better than that and they all said 'Well, we don't know either until we can actually come and have a look at it'. So we decided on the base that we wouldn't use that apart from just a very brief spell at midwinter which

we did. So again privations and cosiness, we didn't have mains power, we did have 12 volts supply wired into the base. There were 12 volt lamps here and there that you could switch on and off. We did have the Briggs & Stratton's working by now so we could recharge the 12 volt batteries. And we used Tilley lamps<sup>9</sup> and so again it was actually cosy although going back to what you said privations too.

[Part 2 0:09:20] Lee: It's interesting isn't it that one tiny moment can change the whole scenario for the year.

Kistruck: Yea absolutely. And you think such a stupid thing to do and yet so easily done and the consequences throw a huge long shadow stretching for months.

[Part 2 0:09:38] Lee: Because of the isolation?

Kistruck: Yes, that's right yes.

[Part 2 0:09:41] Lee: So winter was upon you and your first mid-winter, was that memorable?

Kistruck: Oh it was yes, that was great because we did drink all the beer for instance and we had a menu and we invented things to eat, and made a cake. There was a model of Fossil Bluff that somebody had made in previous visits made out of old tins and things, nicely painted. So we stuck that on our mid-winters cake and took photographs of it [laughs]. Very memorable!

[Part 2 0:10:12] Lee: How did you pass the time?

Kistruck: Well that didn't seem to be a problem. I reckoned actually towards the end of the winter we were quite capable of sleeping 14 hours out of the 24 without thinking anything about it. Your processes do slow down there's no doubt and during the rest of the time... we read things, we wrote things, we tinkered around with geology or glaciology and the kit needed for doing that. There's always maintenance work that you need to do. Or you're preparing how you're going to record this stuff, writing up note books and that sort of thing. We didn't listen to the radio very much. We didn't have a portable radio at Fossil Bluff in my first year. The radio schedules were very interesting and we used to try to actually talk to Halley Bay and to a South African station right over the other side of Antarctica. With the ionosphere moving about during

---

<sup>9</sup> Small kerosene lamps

the winter time sometimes we found that on the frequencies which our radios could use, we could actually get our signals bouncing across and talk to these people and that was very interesting. So we had a sort of weekly schedule with the South African guys at Borger Base and for several weeks on the trot we were able to meet it. It's just one thing in a week but it's something you think about during the rest of the week and talk about.

[Part 2 0:11:44] Lee: Were you hearing anything from the rest of the planet?

Kistruck: Precious little. No, our news was local news. It was what are the other sledge parties planning to do? Even during the winter the Stonington sledges were out most of the time. Adelaide sent sledge parties into the field as well. So that was always interesting. There was discussion about what the field programmes of next summer were going to involve; who was going to go where and how that would interlock. Some of that involved us laying depots for them in the spring so that was important. We had to think how we were going to do that sort of thing. Time went by congenially enough. We had decided that we would do synoptic weather observations between 9am and midnight just to give us a 24 structure to the day. I personally think that was quite valuable although not everybody in subsequent years went on doing that I don't think. Certainly we did that both years that I was there partly for that reason.

[Part 2 0:12:47] Lee: Did it matter that you didn't know what was happening elsewhere in the world?

Kistruck: No it didn't actually. I don't think we worried about that at all. One thing that we used to quite gloatingly calculate from time to time: 'Supposing there's a nuclear Armageddon in the northern hemisphere, we can survive longer than anybody else whatsoever!' We figured out that we could actually last for 10 years down there without really seriously starving to death. Because there was an enormous dump of dog food there which is actually edible by humans and that had been depoted in the past by dog sledging parties and a lot of it did get used during the next two summers. But certainly that first winter there was tons of the stuff there, and we had a lot of basic food on the base, although the luxuries hadn't come in on the resupply. There were boxes and boxes of food there and that was the sort of thing that we did talk a little bit about and 'what would we do? Sea levels might rise. We'd have to build a boat out of something. Where would we go anyway?' 'Oh shut up, that doesn't matter!' Things like that. We were aware of

the Americans landing on the moon but only just. Yes, ok that's interesting. Meanwhile we've got some things to do down here.

[Part 2 0:14:09] Lee: Did your discussions about that kind of thing stretch as far as whether you'd want to carry on living for 10 years?

Kistruck: Only to the extent of saying well at the end of that time what would we want to do and so would we therefore have wanted to get to that stage. Yes, it was all pretty light hearted. I don't think anybody took it seriously.

[Part 2 0:14:30] Lee: When the weather improved again and you were back in the field, you were actually treading virgin territory weren't you?

Kistruck: Some of the time, yes. That was tremendously stimulating. The first bit of that that I did was Andy Wager and I went down to the bottom end of George VI sound which is where the elbow in the L shape I was talking about before is. There are 3 very conspicuous nunataks<sup>10</sup> down there; bits of rock showing out surrounded by snow fields all around them. You can see them from a long, long, long way away and they had only, as far as I know, once been visited before. So we went in there and that was the base point for one of our strings of markers across George VI sound. That was the southernmost one that we did. Yea, tremendously exciting to drive in there with your Fox Track. Can we go all the way or are we going to have to walk? Actually to get up to the rock on all of these and look and see, because we knew there was a depot there of some kind with a message from the previous party that had been there, we didn't actually find that. To know that probably only a couple of people had ever been here before: great! And then later on sledging in the interior of Alexander Island, that was my second year, we certainly went to places that hadn't been trodden by human foot ever before. We knew a bit what to expect from aerial photographs and there had been expeditions before. The Ronne expedition<sup>11</sup> to Stonington Island had been down there and also Fuchs and Adie<sup>12</sup> had made a great long trip that went a long way south. In the interior of Alexander Island to come round a corner as it were, round one of these nunataks and see a complete new vista as if somebody had just got a black paint brush and gone splat, splat, splat, and dotted lumps of black all over the white. Those were other

---

<sup>10</sup> Exposed often rocky element of a ridge, mountain or peak which is not covered with ice or snow, within an ice field or glacier.

<sup>11</sup> The Ronne Antarctic Research Expedition of 1947-48

<sup>12</sup> Adie and Fuchs made numerous journeys in the area including a 220 mile crossing of Alexander Island and a 90 day journey of 1000+ miles to Eklund Island, south of Alexander Island.

nunataks that you could visit or not dependant on what it was you were trying to do. Yes it was a wonderful feeling that definitely.

[Part 2 0:16:33] Lee: Can you elaborate, you said ‘Great, treading on land that nobody else had been to’. Can you elaborate on the word ‘great’? Did your heart race? Did you feel like an explorer? Did you feel like a man on the moon?

Kistruck: I suppose give those three options I felt most like an explorer, but I knew that I wasn’t really.

[Part 2 0:16:53] Lee: Did you want to choose a fourth option?

Kistruck: [laughs] I think I felt like an amateur in the presence of something immense. I think that’s how I would describe it, yes.

[Part 2 0:17:07] Lee: Would you like to elaborate on the word ‘immense’? Were you impressed in a spiritual way by the Antarctic landscape?

Kistruck: I suppose so, not being a particularly spiritual person, that wouldn’t have been the word that I thought of at the time

[Part 2 0:17:25] Lee: What would be the word?

Kistruck: [pause] It would be some sort of word that means inducing contemplation. Something like that. I certainly was moved to contemplate the vast scale of the scenery and my tiny miniscule part in it; even how small the whole party, the whole of BAS and FIDS and everything was in the scale of things down there. And that makes you feel humble in a way, which I now from my venerable age I assert is definitely a good thing for young men to be made to feel humble (laughs).

[Part 2 0:18:05] Lee: Someone once said to me at one of these interviews, that if God exists, he would almost certainly choose to be in the Antarctic.

Kistruck: Yes. I can sympathise with that. You certainly felt in the presence of something which you rarely get the chance to experience so clearly in what we call a civilised environment.

[Part 2 0:18:27] Lee: Your predecessor Cliff Pearce describes Fossil Bluff as the ‘Silent Sound’. How did you cope with the silence?

Kistruck: I loved it. It's not actually as silent as all that. But it was very nice to go out of the base in the winter time in the dark, ok yes, not really too far away, and you could see the lighted windows there and there's always silence around you if there's no wind. But actually it's not quite silent. That to me is the thing about silence, is that it's almost never complete and it's the little bits of incompleteness that make the experience. You can hear something and you know it's a long way away and it's not loud but you can hear it. That's the experience. And suddenly kuwoopf [phonetic] a great big ice crack has appeared somewhere 20 miles away, but you've heard it. That happens quite often with a floating ice shelf in George VI Sound. So you do hear crunches and bangs. There was a glacier flowing straight past the base at Fossil Bluff. You could step out and down 20 paces and you were on it and that gives you crunches and groans from time to time. Even when there's no wind it's seldom absolutely quiet and if you've got a generator running, you can hear that from a long way away.

[Part 2 0:19:49] Lee: Much wildlife in the winter?

Kistruck: Oh no, pretty well none, I would say, wildlife at all. When you do find it, it's really very dramatic down there. Your 250 miles from the sea, 200 anyway, less than that now, but in those days it was. So there's not much reason for anything to go down there. Some snowy petrels used to go down there. I think they nest on cliffs and sometimes their seen nesting even further south on Alexander Island. But you don't see them much. An experience I always remember is that they're white birds with black beak, black eyes, black claws, and everything else is snowy white. We were travelling in a real white out, not the sort of white out that people talk about in the Highlands, which means sort of fog and clag, but a real white out where there's a low sun, overcast sky and no contrast and you get no sense of scale but you can see for miles. So you can see objects although you've got no idea how near or how far away they are or how big. And suddenly in these conditions these black things were moving in the air around us in what is an absolutely static landscape. You can't focus your eyes on them because you don't know how far away they are or anything they're not moving predictably. In the end your eyes lock on and you realise that what you're seeing are the eyes and beak and claws of 4 of these snowy petrels that are flying around. That was a most weird experience, what they thought they were doing and why they were there, who knows. That was one bit of wildlife. Almost the only other one that I can remember was meeting a penguin, an Adelie penguin one day, plodging south down the sound, 150 miles from the sea heading south all on his own. Where is he going? Again it's startling; you think is this a person? You see him in

the distance, something walking along and then you realise it's a penguin and you think 'oh great, fresh meat!' And then you think 'poor thing'. He's obviously being called by something. Let him get on with it, and so we did.

[Part 2 0:22:01] Lee: Did you miss company in that respect: If it was just the four of you for weeks and weeks and months on end?

Kistruck: I suppose we did but it's the sort of thing that you're mentally prepared for. You know that you're going to be just a foursome; your mind is set with that expectation, and so certainly in my case it didn't rankle too much. You can talk to people on the radio, people you know at Adelaide, Stonington and so on, and so there is the village affect that there are people down the street that you can talk to even though they are actually 200 miles away. There was a feeling of community greater than just the four of us there in the Bluff.

[Part 2 0:22:46] Lee: What was the effect of the village affect? Here we are 40 odd years later at a hotel in Bowness-on-Windermere and all the people who have been down there are gathering together here for a reunion. You said in the papers that you felt that there was a sense of a village atmosphere about the Marguerite Bay; Fossil Bluff technically isn't Marguerite Bay, but it's on the Marguerite Bay (...)

Kistruck: It counts yes.

[Part 2 0:23:16] Lee: So what was special about that? Why is it still important 40 years later?

Kistruck: Why it's still important goodness knows, but I think it was a virtual village. To me that's the term I would use for it. That people do know what each other are doing and expect to help each other and be helped by them. And that's the Fids experience anyway on a base, exactly the same thing; people expect to have to help other people doing something completely alien to themselves, but never mind, you're going to help them. If necessary you would expect them to help you with no questions asked. And that expands out over the virtual village is my explanation. You know that you can rely on these other people. People that you've got that sort of relationship with you value, you tend to want to just keep in touch with them. It's not that you think you'll ever have to help them again or ever need them to help you, but just the bond has been forged and it's there. Obviously in some cases it weakens faster than others and some it maybe even strengthens over time, but that's what forms it. Why it's valuable, that's just basic human nature I would say.



[Part 2 0:24:22] Lee: You picked up a Fuchs medal in the year 2000

Kistruck: Oh yes

[Part 2 0:24:26] Lee: [inaudible] I think the bit we can rely upon is the fact that you did get this Fuchs medal 30 years after your time in the Antarctic, and you're the only person to get it who wasn't actually a serving Fid at the time or a serving BAS member?

Kistruck: I believe that's true yes. Or a recently ceased serving Fid, yes. That hadn't occurred to me at the time until Pete Clarkson said that.

[Part 2 0:24:53] Lee: What was the first inkling you got that you might be up for this?

Kistruck: I think I got a phone call from...now who did I get it from? [pause] I honestly can't remember who the phone call was from. It was either from Pete Clarkson himself or it might have been from my friend Malky McCrea, I think he was one of the people who nominated me for it and I think he might have warned me that it looked as if it was going to go through. I can't remember that unfortunately how I first knew that.

[Part 2 0:25:22] Lee: Can you remember how you felt about it when you heard the rumour?

Kistruck: I was absolutely astonished. I thought 'Good heavens, that is incredible'. Part of the incredulity I suppose is because of the fact that I didn't work for BAS and hadn't for a long time so why would I be awarded this? But it wasn't just that, it was much more that I really didn't and don't think that I stack up against many of the other people who've been awarded the Fuchs medal in the past. Some of the things that they have done and their experience has been far more contributory to BAS and its aims than what I did I think.

[Part 2 0:25:57] Lee: It's largely for the reunion work your doing isn't it? You must think the reunions are important.

Kistruck: I do think the reunions are important to me certainly. It seems that they're important to other people as well, so therefore I was prepared to organise them. When the previous pair of organisers of these reunions decided they'd had enough of it and were proposing just to stop doing it. I didn't think that was a good idea so stepped in along with Adrian Apps to make sure they kept going. So he and I ran it for another 10 years ending up with the cruise to Marguerite Bay in 2000. At which

time I thought ‘I think I’ve done enough of this really, if somebody else likes to take it over so much the better’ But that seemed to be enough and so the Fuchs medal turned up as a result. Well it seemed to be mostly a result of those 2 things. Yes, services to Fids after they finished serving on bases most of the time.

[Part 2 0:27:03] Lee: So tell me about going south again 30 years later. How did it feel?

Kistruck: It was just a continuous 3 week party. It was just wonderful. The conviviality of the group of passengers that came together for that, and the fact that we were able to get down into Marguerite Bay again and enjoy that part of the experience and see Deception Island and many other places, was again to me and I think to everybody who went, was tremendously valuable. Big disappointment that we couldn’t get into Stonington Island. Personally I had a big disappointment that I didn’t think that I actually handled that situation very well with the expedition leader at the time, or with the captain of the ship. So that to me is actually far more of a disappointment than the fact that we didn’t actually get to Stonington, but I hope that nobody else was particularly aware of that at the time or later. But I still do feel ‘could do better George’.

[Part 2 0:28:07] Lee: Do you want to elaborate on that one?

Kistruck: Well, yes, ok I don’t want to sort of throw historical hand grenades at people. But I was particularly incensed that when we had been invited to moor up at Adelaide, which was a rare privilege, sorry at Rothera; rare privilege that most cruise ships weren’t asked to do that, we were and we would have loved it. The base was ready for us and prepared. The captain of the ship declined to do that on the grounds that his chart didn’t show enough hold fast points, only two. We knew that there were not just four, but five actually and we had with us on board at the time, a hydrographer, who had with him the latest admiralty charts showing quite clearly these hold fast points. Rothera is only a radio call away, ask them! If you’re not prepared to take their word for it, send your first officer ashore in a zodiac and do an inspection. Don’t just say no. And he said ‘No, I’m not going to do that’. Consequently, it was very inconvenient for us as passengers, and I was quite indignant about that and said so at the time in a way which really upset the expedition leader.

[Part 2 0:29:31] Lee: A Canadian?

Kistruck: Yes, a Canadian Shane. He was really upset about that and he wanted to summon me in front of the captain. Well I wanted to go and see the captain anyway and that actually, once I'd explained things to him a bit, he wouldn't budge on mooring at Adelaide [Rothera]. But he did explain some of his problems which were that he didn't have a bow thruster; his minimum steerage way was 4 knots; if he hit some of these bits of ice that we'd been complaining he wouldn't go into at that speed, he's going to do serious damage, and his sister ship which does have a bow thruster and did have reversible pitch propellers, had got stuck in ice up at the north end of Adelaide Island 6 weeks previously and had to be very expensively rescued by an Argentine ice breaker, costing his Russian company lots and lots of valuable foreign currency. So he wasn't prepared to do that. I could understand that but what's that got to do with not mooring up at Adelaide [Rothera]. I could understand his reluctance to go through the ice which a lot of the Fids hadn't understood well, I could pass that on. But Shane, thereafter, treated me almost as a mutineer and I thought that was a pity.

[Part 2 0:30:46] Lee: Do you think that disagreement then had an impact on the decision not to go into Stonington later? Had the trust gone?

Kistruck: No, no I don't think so. In fact I think this was after that anyway. I'd have to check but I think that was afterwards.

[Part 2 0:31:04] Lee: It was a huge success that trip George wasn't it?

Kistruck: For me it was and I think everybody who went on it thought so too.

[Part 2 0:31:13] Lee: I know I did and I was a mere non Fid passenger. I hope the episode outside Rothera didn't bitter the pill completely.

Kistruck: No, no not at all. I have very happy memories. It was just a fantastic party that went on afterwards when we got together 6 weeks later at a hotel to show all our slides. It was as if we'd seen each other yesterday. Everybody was yacking away, chat, chat.

[Part 2 0:31:41] Lee: We have one minute left. How did you react to the state of the Antarctic?

Kistruck: During that trip I think the thing that astonished me most was actually to see aerial photographs of Fossil Bluff and how much the ice and the glacier had melted away. That was just absolutely extraordinary. I'd

heard of things like the Wordie Ice Shelf<sup>13</sup> melting; yea well I never thought much of that anyway. George VI Sound is melting back; well that's not surprising, it does that from time to time. But Fossil Bluff, that's my home! Where do you get water from now? It's all dust and rock and everything. Yes, that was really a blow to the heart I thought. And the fact that people don't live there anymore is very sad as well. It was such a comfy home.

[Part 2 0:32:35] Lee: George, thank you very much.

Kistruck: Most welcome.

[Part 2 0:32:40]

<ENDS>

#### Possible Extracts:

- The BAS selection process [Part 1 0:02:50]
- Being diverted to Deception Island when it blew [Part 1 0:09:43]
- The amusing first encounter with Fids [Part 1 0:13:12]
- The moratorium on flying in Antarctica and the story behind it [Part 1 0:16:39]
- Psychological tricks to diffuse situations on base [Part 1 0:22:50]
- The way of life at Fossil Bluff [Part 1 0:25:05]
- The 4 main areas of glaciological work at Fossil Bluff [Part 1 0:27:57]
- Surprising behaviour of the ice at George VI Sound [Part 1 0:34:09]
- Field trips and problems encountered [Part 2 0:00:00]
- Mishap with the generator [Part 2 0:06:26]
- Treading virgin territory at George VI Sound [Part 2 0:14:30]
- The village affect between bases [Part 2 0:22:46]
- Being awarded the Fuchs medal in the year 2000 [Part 2 0:24:22]
- The reunion cruise to Marguerite Bay in 2000 [Part 2 0:27:03]

---

<sup>13</sup> The Wordie Ice Shelf is a glacier projecting as an ice shelf into Marguerite Bay