

Alan Precious and Julian Taylor.

Edited transcript of interview with Alan Precious and Julian Taylor recorded together at Sanford in Cumbria by Chris Eldon-Lee on 28th October, 2010. (BAS Ref: AD6/24/1/93). Transcribed by Neil MacPherson on 18 December, 2014.

[Part 1 0:00:00] Lee: This is Alan Precious and Julian Taylor recorded together at Sandford in Cumbria by Chris Eldon-Lee on the 28th October, 2010. Alan Precious and Julian Taylor, Part 1.

Alan Precious, 11th March 1926. Escrick, near York.

[Part 1 0:00:26] Lee: So these days you're now...?

Precious: 84.

[Part 1 0:00:33] Lee: You don't look it. [Laughter].

Precious: You shouldn't say things like that.

[Part 1 0:00:40] Lee: What was your first inkling of the Antarctic? Can you remember your first contact?

Precious: My first interest, I think obviously I'd heard about Scott and so on, as a schoolboy but my first real interest began when I was a soldier in Palestine and we had a library which someone or other looked after and changed books every now and then. And one of these books that I picked up was Edward Wilson's, one of his books, which I read and later on I got a copy of it and it was very interesting to me, his life and the Antarctic. I never thought I would go there myself.

[Part 1 01:42] Lee: What turns the 'I'll-never-get-there' into the reality of being able to get there?

Precious: This happened: I was working in Harrogate in the Post Office Savings Bank and reading the... I think the *Daily Express*, one day, or one paper like that, there was an advertisement calling for young men to go to the Falkland Islands Dependencies as meteorologists. I think it said that. So I wrote off a letter applying. I wasn't a meteorologist but I was always very interested in the weather. I'd been skiing in Norway and North Yorkshire and done a bit of elementary rock-climbing. And from the advertisement, it looked to me as though the Antarctic wasn't mentioned and it looked to me as though it was islands around the Falklands where a dozen or fewer young men made weather observations and spent the rest of their time looking after themselves cooking and sewing and so on. I think it said somewhere or other there was a good library of books. So that appealed to me.

[Part 1 0:03:22] Lee: So you applied?

Precious: I applied, yes.

[Part 1 0:03:24] Lee: And got an interview?

Precious: I got an interview and I went to London, interviewed by three people, one of whom I think was Frank Elliot. I'm not sure who the other two people were but it was connected of

course with the Crown Agents and so presumably one of these people was from the Crown Agents. Had the interview, went home, forgot all about it and suddenly one day I think my boss at the Savings Bank received a telegram asking if Precious still wanted to go or something like that. [Laughter]. I said 'Yes' and I was given leave on "approved employment" [Laughter], which meant that they'd got rid of me for a period and I could come back.

[Part 1 04:36] Lee: So they wanted you back?

Precious: Yes. I hadn't resigned and they hadn't sacked me.

[Part 1 0:04:44] Lee: Julian, let's turn to you. So if you'd like to give me your name, place and date of birth.

Taylor: Name Julian Taylor, I'm younger than Alan. I think it's 21st June 1929. I was born at Chaman¹ on the Pakistan and Afghan border where my parents [were] both doctors.

[Part 1 0:05:02] Lee: Did you live for a long time there or did you come home more or less straight away?

Taylor: We were??? [Inaudible] until I was six and I was interned to boarding school like kids were from the Empire.

[Part 1 0:05:15] Lee: And what was your first inkling that there might be a place called the Antarctic?

Taylor: About 15 or 16 I was completely turned on by Gino Watkins' book, written by Scott, the other Scott, and I read that avidly when I was 15 or 16. I was brought up in the Lake District and I was rock climbing rather badly and things, so it was a fairly natural thing for me to think about the Antarctic.

[Part 1 0:05:39] Lee: Were you sailing? In the Lakes, were you sailing?

Taylor: Fell walking, sailing a little bit. We were latter day... My mother was a doctor, we just liked to roam the hills. Four of us kids just roamed wildly and wildly.

[Part 1 0:05:56] Lee: Did you make any effort to get to the Antarctic or did it happen by accident?

Taylor: Then I went to the army and I was a disgraceful soldier but I did get my red beret. Was it 2/6d a day or 2/6d a week?

Precious: I think it was... It was certainly an extra 2/6d we got, yes.

Taylor: Then obviously university. I was climbing adequately well and I can't remember quite how, but they wanted a person to change the food [dog food]. I used to go to the Scott Polar for lectures and as you know in my memo, I was interviewed by Bunny Fuchs the day before who said: 'What are you doing here?' and I said: 'I'm off to the Antarctic', and he said: 'I'm interviewing you tomorrow'. [Laughter].

[Part 1 0:06:48] Lee: Did he admire your spunk?

¹ Capital of the Qilla Abdullah District of Balochistan, Pakistan.

Taylor: He was a very nice man. He and Ray Adie were very good to me that summer term. They lent me Darkie², Ray Adie lent me his dog whip. I was allowed to take Bunny's dog on my bicycle. I liked them and so presumably they didn't dislike me.

[Part 1 0:07:09] Lee: There's a bit missing from the story because at some point you must have thought to yourself 'I'd like to go to the Antarctic' and I'm wondering how that cropped up?

Taylor: It was April in my final year I think when they were searching around for someone to change the dog food. I'd gone to the Scott Polar probably two or three times a year because I liked the lectures. I felt it was no different from staying in Westmoreland.

[Part 1 0:07:39]: Lee: And you were skilled or qualified to consider the dog nutrition because of what? What had you done to...For them to hire you, so to speak?

Taylor: I read Zoology, ??? [Inaudible] I got a First because I could pass exams but I'm not clever. I was quite a good climber, so it was a fair natural appointment looked at from the other side and I'd been to Iceland and Lapland chasing birds in my student days. I don't think there were many other applicants.

[Part 1 0:08:10] Lee: You'd been actually to Iceland with Peter Scott, hadn't you?

Taylor: No, but I'd done a lot of rock collecting with Peter Scott and I went to Iceland between his two journeys and I knew him fairly well, yeah. That bit in the book's wrong.

[Part 1 0:08:27] Lee: Ok, fair enough. This is Ellery Anderson's book.

Taylor: Yes. It's OK, I knew Peter Scott well and I'd collected geese for him, that sort of thing.

[Part 1 0:08:34] Lee: So how did you two gentlemen meet?

Precious: We met on the *Biscoe* going down, I should think. That would be the first... I don't think I met any other Fid until we actually got on board the...

Taylor: That's right. We didn't have a pre-school meeting.

Precious: I remember somehow or other we were all gathered together on the quay, waiting to go onto the *Biscoe* and someone took a photograph, I don't know whether from a newspaper or what and we were all herded together and that's probably our first meeting.

[Part 1 0:09:21] Lee: At Southampton in late 1953?

Precious: Yes.

Taylor: September or October. September.

Precious: September I should think.

[Part 1 0:09:31] Lee: Had you not had any training at all before you went?

Precious: Oh, I had had meteorological training at the RAF school at...

[Part 1 0:09:44] Lee: Stanmore?

² Fuchs's husky in Cambridge.

Precious: Stanmore, that's right, yeah. A month's training in meteorology there.

[Part 1 0:09:51] Lee: Had either of you had any training to deal with the conditions in the Antarctic?

Precious: Oh, I don't think so, no.

Taylor: A dog whip, Ray Adie. [Laughter]. Just narrowly, I spent a lot of time and I can't remember whether in the term time or just afterwards. Must have been term time, going to the research establishments about the dog food and Bovril and going round the factories and getting good advice from very, very experienced nutritionalists, preparing myself.

[Part 1 0:10:23] Lee: So where did this concern about the dog food arise then? Was it FIDS, had FIDS come to a conclusion that the dog food wasn't good enough or...?

Taylor: I don't know. Clearly the TAE was on the cards and the dog food, which had been unchanged since '33,'34,'35, was thought to be inadequate. Whether people like Frank Elliot had complained I don't know. Colin Bertram was then around the SPRI certainly was conscious the dog food needed changing but I don't know where the spur for my appointment as dog physiologist, which sounds pretty stupid in your passport, came from. I don't know.

[Part 1 0:11:02] Lee: But the work was commissioned, it wasn't your idea?

Taylor: The dog food [work] was commissioned. The other two, the changing the breeding which came later, and measuring the work output were my ideas.

[Part 1 0:11:18] Lee: You brought those to the interview, did you, as suggestions?

Taylor: Certainly when later we went to the... Yes, during the summer I'd done a lot of work and I was made to write a précis for the Governor called Arthur...?

Precious: Yes.

[Part 1 0:11:37] Lee: Falkland's Governor.

Taylor: I've got that. I'd put those three projects together by November, let's call it '53. Nutrition, not the breeding. I don't think I'd got the breeding but the work output because I came down with some very sophisticated electrical equipment to measure the work output built by Saunders Roe. And that I think was completely my own idea, I claim it anyhow. [Laughter].

Precious: Just one thing about the *Biscoe* that we went down on. She was not registered to carry passengers, so we all had to be enrolled as supernumerary seamen and we got paid a shilling a day or something for that.

[Part 1 0:12:19] Lee: And did you have to work your passage?

Precious: We had to scrub decks and things like that, yes. Paint ship, but we did that anyway on the other ships as well. But it was not an expedition boat it was a... We were sailors.

Taylor: Very good master, Captain Johnson.

[Part 1 0:12:39]: Lee: Bill Johnson?

Precious: Bill Johnson.

Taylor: Bill Johnson, very good Master, Merchant Marine, not Captain. Very good navigator but a very good, humane... dealing with us silly boys.

[Part 1 0:12:50] Lee: What was your thinking about him, Alan?

Precious: Oh, I thought he was a great man, yes and he had the sense of humour, I know that. There was one... I don't know whether he had everyone, but sometimes he had people in to lunch, Julian, one or two people?

Taylor: I don't remember that.

Precious: I seem to remember going to that and he was joking with Chief Engineer and so on...

Taylor: Digger.

Precious: Yes, Digger. Oh, I know what he was saying: 'What are they having for food today on the bases?' [Laughter] And I don't know whether the??? [Inaudible] made a suitable reply to that. He used to be keen on his exercise every day, walking up and down so many times, didn't he Julian?

Taylor: I got to know later Tom Woodfield – have you interviewed?

[Part 1 0:13:55] Lee: He has been interviewed, yes.

Taylor: A nice man too.

[Part 1 0:13:59] Lee: Did Bill Johnson like his booze?

Precious: I don't know, don't know really.

Taylor: He certainly didn't drink too much.

Precious: I wouldn't have thought he was a great drinker, no.

Taylor: Very surprised if he was. Northern Irish, as you know. Good Master of a merchant ship.

Precious: He was known as 'Kelly', did you know that? Because he'd been employed on Kelly's coal boats which ploughed between Liverpool and Belfast.

[Part 1 0:14:39] Lee: What was... Were there any eventful moments in your journey south?

Precious: Not sure... We did a crossing of the line ceremony...

Taylor: Crossing of the line ceremony.

Precious: ... where we all had to be captured and painted and so on and plunged into a pool of water. [Laughter].

Taylor: It was a happy...

Precious: It was a very good thing, yes.

Taylor: Chipping decks in the sun.

Precious: No, the things I remember are seeing dolphins coming alongside the ship and flying fish. We called at Cape Verde Islands on the way down and then to Montevideo. We didn't go ashore in the Cape Verdes, we stood off and boats came alongside with bananas and things, didn't they? Very nice.

[Part 1 0:15:38] Lee: What was your first view then of the Antarctic, when you first began to see, first began to sense that you were getting close to it?

Precious: Yes, I think the first sort of inkling was seeing big flocks of cape pigeons and other sea birds flying along near the sea and then the first sighting we had of a rock and so on was Deception Island which looked as if we were going straight for a blank rock cliff until we went through the narrow bellows opening into the Whalers' Bay. After that I'm not sure. There were ice-covered hills around but a lot of black, blackish sand.

Taylor: Deception was a ghastly place to look at. Then tell the story about the...

[Part 1 0:16:43] Lee: You had an unfortunate job to do, didn't you, there?

Taylor: The death...

Precious: Yes. While we were there a man shot himself. I think he'd been the Base Leader and something he'd received in the mail had upset him and he shot himself somewhere near the base hut. And Captain Johnson and his officers and some Fids, the Deputy Base Leader and so on, held or were holding an inquest or court of inquiry and in the midst of them doing that, a little cabin boy from the *Biscoe* called 'Hatch', young 'Hatch', was wandering about in the base hut and came upon the Very light pistol which all the bases had one for sending Very light signals and either unthinkingly or accidentally pulled the trigger and of course the gun went off with a loud report whilst this inquiry was still going on.

Taylor: And nearly set the house on fire.

Precious: He set the ceiling on fire, yes. [Laughter].

Taylor: We were digging a grave.

Precious: We were outside digging a grave in the hard, frozen soil, not getting very deep down and someone had the bright idea of lighting a fire and they got a lot of old packing cases and lit a fire in this little bit of grave that we'd managed to dig. It didn't melt very much of the soil but it did produce water from the ice, so each time after that we dug in a pick axe, we got splashed with dirty water, our faces got covered in dirty water, which made for merriment all round when somebody got splashed.

Taylor: I think the interesting thing it didn't affect us at all, did it, the chap who'd killed himself.

Precious: No, it did not strike us as a tragedy which obviously it was. I think we were too young and inexperienced to consider what it might have meant.

Taylor: I think that's right.

[Part 1 0:19:26] Lee: Did you sense a pall over the base, though, psychologically?

Precious: I don't know. I think we didn't see all that many of the base members. Do you remember seeing very many?

Taylor: No. We weren't there very long – a few days.

Precious: Most of them I think were probably leaving to go to other bases and there were new people coming in who'd not yet taken over.

Taylor: Psychologically it was a non-event.

Precious: Yes, to us it was, yes.

[Part 1 0:20:04] Lee: Then you travelled further south and ended up at Hope Bay.

Precious: We went next, I think we went next to Admiralty Bay. Did we take on... No, we didn't take dogs on from there but we delivered mail. That was our main reason for going and probably to take one or two people off who were going elsewhere. Then we went to Hope Bay.

Taylor: And then we had lots of admiration for the Falkland Islands crew, the sailors on board were magnificent.

Precious: Yes, they were, yes they were.

[Part 1 0:20:46] Lee: How did they demonstrate that? Did something happen that they coped with really well?

Precious: Just that they seemed to be able to handle the boats and the ... What did they call the thing?

Taylor: Scow.

Precious: The scows, yes... motorboats.

Taylor: Great big heavy scow weighing five tons, a single derrick. They were just very, very good and when the derrick snapped, they clambered up the derrick by themselves.

Precious: And doing the unloading of the ship and so on.

Taylor: Brilliant seamen.

Precious: Very good, yeah.

[Part 1 0:21:13] Lee: What were your first duties at Hope Bay, I guess you had to do some building, didn't you?

Precious: We took on board, I think, yes we must have taken on board probably from Admiralty Bay, Johnny Raymond, who was a great carpenter. He went with us to Hope Bay and we already had on board, I would imagine, timber sections and loose timber and lots of rapid setting cement.

Taylor: Comondu cement?

Precious: Fondu. Yes, that was it. We had gallons and gallons of that stuff in tins which all had to be transported up to the hut along with the food stores, the coal and everything. And we began fairly soon, Johnny began fairly soon to build the sledge workshop which was an extension of the main hut and I helped certainly with that with mixing cement and with whatever else they wanted anyone to do, I helped quite a lot, quite a bit with that. It was an

apprenticeship for me in building work because I'd never... One of the terms he used was... We put these cement pillars down and then laid walks of timber across and then other things of timber across them which had to be nailed in and this particular type of nailing was called stitching because it went in diagonally, which was a new term for me. [Laughter].

[Part 1 0:23:09] Lee: So were you not sleeping in the hut at that point?

Taylor: I had it easy. I think before we went to Hope Bay, I was landed at Joinville Island.

Precious: You came into Hope Bay and then went immediately to Joinville Island.

Taylor: So I was let off all this re-building and spent six weeks or two months on Joinville.

Precious: Yes, you were introduced to dog sledging on Joinville with Ken Blaiklock and David Stratton.

Taylor: And John Standring. I had it easy. So my first six weeks, two months were sledging.

[Part 1 0:23:48] Lee: Was that sledging, did it have a purpose? What were you collecting?

Taylor: Joinville Island hadn't been surveyed although Shackleton had got close to it and our main aim was to collect all the rocks there - I don't know why - and make a complete map. It was summertime and we had a leisurely journey we went to every single rock [outcrop] where John Standring collected the rocks and two very, very... They had just done a long journey, David and Ken were brilliant handlers of dogs. But we had it easy, it was summertime, we sledged a bit, we played bridge, had some food, chatted. Just easy summertime.

[Part 1 0:24:23] Lee: Was the rock collecting to do with the plate tectonic theory?

Taylor: Looking back on it and later we clearly were measuring the north pole on the rocks, on the long journeys because I recalled, Alan, very clearly that when I was taught geology at University the plate tectonics wasn't accepted as a theory. But I now believe that Ray Adie, although he is not given credit for it, spotted it was likely. So we were certainly collecting rocks and later measuring the magnetic orientation of the rock in situ. Whether we did Joinville, I don't know.

[Part 1 0:24:59] Lee: How did you take to sledging?

Taylor: Loved it. Loved it, easy! [Laughter] Is that right?

Precious: Yes. It is surprisingly easy.

[Part 1 0:25:08] Lee: Had you had much experience with dogs before you went south?

Taylor: Only kick??? [phonetic] dogs, like hunting fell hounds with ??? [Inaudible] not with husky, no. But they were fun, they were just lovely, happy dogs. It's very easy, particularly when you were trained by Ken and David.

[Part 1 0:25:29] Lee: Did you end up with your own team?

Taylor: Ken left me his own team. That's not quite true, but I was the only person who officially had a dedicated team.

[Part 1 0:25:38] Lee: Oh, so they were mixing and matching, were they, and you were swapping teams.

Taylor: I don't really know. My team wasn't really the best individual dogs at all. Brindle [Phonetic] was a runt of a dog who snored a bit, do you remember? And there was another dog who they thought was a bitch. But I was the only person who was meant to have the *Number Ones*.

Precious: Really anybody could drive any team, couldn't they? As you say, you had *Number Ones* but I think most other people weren't allotted a team, they took whatever there was.

Taylor: That was the very interesting thing, particularly Bill Anderson. We were all expected to sledge. You didn't have the best team, the best tent. It was very much a communal thing, we all...

Precious: And there were some occasions when two people went out, went over to Duse Bay and so on and they took whichever team there might be.

Taylor: Which doesn't lead to the best dog driving but it's very good for morale.

[Part 1 0:26:50] Lee: So presumably the dogs had to respond to the same instructions, did they?

Taylor: Yes.

Precious: Yes. But you probably picked up, the instructions in BAS are different from Greenland. [Laughter]. Going north and south, left and right, they've transfigured somewhere along the line.

[Part 1 0:27:05] Lee: Oh, really?

Taylor: Have you heard that story?

[Part 1 0:27:08] Lee: No, I hadn't.

Precious: There is I think quite a bit of difference in dog leaders.

Taylor: Yes but, Alan, just if I may, what I was referring to is quite good. We used to say left 'irra' and right 'owk, owk' [Phonetic] and in Greenland it's the opposite way around. Somewhere either in the thirties or in the fifties the people who like Bingham knew about dogs forgot which was left and right.

Precious: Must have been in the thirties, wasn't it?

Taylor: Probably the thirties.

Precious: 'Cos I think a lot of our history background came from Bingham, didn't it?

Taylor: Bingham, but he might have got muddled up, only like you and me.

[Part 1 0:27:55] Lee: But it worked?

Precious: No, but individual leading dogs I think could be quite different.

Taylor: It varied a lot.

Precious: We had a dog at Halley Bay called Kate and she was a magnificent leader. She never went wrong but I've known other leaders who wouldn't respond immediately, would take a long time to do...And how you get over that I'm not quite sure.

Taylor: Patience.

Precious: Maybe, yeah.

[Part 1 0:28:31] Lee: You, Alan, your first work with dogs was actually shifting stores, wasn't it?

Precious: Yes.

[Part 1 0:28:36] Lee: To get the stores up to the hut. That must have been fairly tough, I would have thought.

Precious: It was good, it was good training. Probably I didn't realise it, but it was good training and it was good instruction for me to show that the dogs could do that, do things like that and we used to bring up quite big loads of boxes and so on or sacks of coal and turn round at the top and then go straight back and bring another load up. So we had the hard work bit coming up to the hut and then a jolly ride back with the dogs enjoying the run going back down to the beach again.

Taylor: May I ask, did you find that technically difficult learning to drive dogs or was it someone helped you or the dogs taught you?

Precious: Well someone taught me, obviously. Usually it was Brian. Mostly I remember it was Brian Kemp teaching me at that time and he was a very easy, good going teacher and it's a simple business really and you just get used to it with a bit of surprise [that] the dogs take any notice of you. Occasionally they get into a tangle or a bite, don't they? You get an odd dog who's got it in for somebody and starts off to want to fight and you've got to stop them.

Taylor: This is my main impression as opposed to the written stuff. We found dog sledging with huskies easy. Clearly they made mistakes and we'd get a bit fed up but we found it easy.

Precious: It is, it is, yes.

Taylor: Does that sound stupid?

[Part 1 0:30:30] Lee: You're the first people to make it that blatant.

Precious: I think so. Occasionally you could want them to have a bit more power and get a bit more move-on but I think they do occasionally get a bit bored and they may need something to... They may need just a rest and then go on again.

Taylor: Occasionally a bit bolshie in their own way but, no, we all found... I mean the think[ing] that huskies are difficult dogs is crazy, they're easy dogs. And the think[ing] dog sledging you've got to learn 200 years and go with Hansen (sic?) and Amundsen, we found wrong. We just all sledged.

Precious: One of the things that was a little bit of a surprise, but you soon get used to it, is that I think I did one trip with Ken Blaiklock up to the first depot and one of the dogs started to defecate and wanted to stop and you're not allowed to let them stop. So you have to keep going and do the business on the run which I hadn't even thought about before. [Laughter].

Taylor: Ken was a master at driving but what I find was that none of us knew how good we were compared to other people. You had no idea who was good with dogs or bad with dogs. But it was easy, we loved it.

[Part 1 0:32:09] Lee: You're giving the impression these dogs were always obedient.

Taylor: They were, yeah, 99%.

Precious: Most of the time.

Taylor: 95%.

Precious: You couldn't trust them, you had to watch them, you know, at a stop, hadn't you?

Taylor: I'm going to elaborate a little bit. I loved sledging on frozen ice where you had to zigzag. And I had quite a good leader. Spark was quite a good leader, not a top class leader – that was Yap or Kate - and you could steer him within a foot exactly, and he was 20 yards ahead, which way to go and the dogs would go. So the sledge would go, rather like driving a HGV. But no problem at all. You just enjoyed [yourself] and then the second year – do you mind if I just go on?

[Part 1 0:32:55] Lee: No, No, please.

Taylor: I was with Slim Willis in Duse Bay and my record shows I did 190 miles by myself. And I think what I'd done, I must have taken my dog team out with whale meat for testing and taken a dog team out nine, nine miles, killed a seal or collected some coals and come back and it wasn't an event, it was like going for bicycle ride. Does that sound...?

Precious: Yeah, yes.

Taylor: You obviously tethered the dogs, presumably I put a spike in. I must have killed a seal. The dogs laid down. I presumably with a hook put the seal on and maybe two seals or even three onto the sledge. But it wasn't difficult.

Precious: Well I did a bit of sealing in Duse Bay. I don't know whether I did any with you, Julian, when I was there but I think with Ian Clarke because we were very short of seal at Hope Bay and Ian and I went out and got as many as we could and dragged them in to bottom of Last Hill and then they were taken across to Hope Bay which relieved the situation for a bit.

Taylor: I didn't know that, I was probably on Joinville.

Precious: But on a further occasion, Ian and I and someone else hitched up most of the dogs – I don't know how many they were, 48 dogs or something – on to a sledge and took them all over to where the seals were in Duse Bay.

Taylor: It's very interesting this. We've both never done this conversation before but how we all... the dogs took to us, let's put it that way.

[Part 1 0:34:50] Lee: You say you had 48 dogs on one sledge.

Precious: I think it was 48, yes. There'd be a record.

Taylor: With two people.

[Part 1 0:34:57] Lee: Yeah, and you were taking them to Duse Bay to pick up seals or...

Precious: No, to feed, well to feed them there.

[Part 1 0:35:04] Lee: So you shot the seals for them?

Precious: Or they were already there, we had already shot them. We hadn't anything left at Hope Bay.

Taylor: I must have been on Joinville.

Precious: No I think it was probably a bit later than that, I'm not sure. Otherwise we'd had to feed them on pemmican which would soon run out.

Taylor: Run out, and it's not a good food.

[Part 1 0:35:28] Lee: This is a cue for Julian then. Come on, Julian, tell us a bit about your work on dog diet and how you went about assessing the success of pemmican.

Taylor: Just on dog diet, it wasn't very difficult. As a student at Cambridge you were very well taught. You probably saw, three of my lecturers were Nobel Prize winners and I liked my lectures. I always went to lectures, I was fascinated. There was a massive work [had gone on] before I went. A person called Professor Worden at Huntingdon who ran the thing that people are now discrediting and there was the something Dunn laboratory ??? [Inaudible] credited and there was a very wise woman called Woodison [Phonetic], something Woodison, Dame something Woodison who'd been in Buchenwald, who advised me. So I had marvelous teaching before I went south and I knew the food was wrong and I knew Bovril were making a profit of second-rate seal meat. So I knew there was something very wrong with the diet and I went round with all the ... It wasn't very difficult, it's almost 'O' Level stuff today.

[Part 1 0:36:33] Lee: How was the bad diet affecting the dogs?

Taylor: We didn't know, but clearly later we found they were having protein poisoning in their urea, massive urea poisoning and they were getting ulcers in their mouth which I don't think we now remember why. But it was a second-rate food, Bovril pemmican and Bovril disappeared. It was clearly not good beef, it was washed out beef from Argentine. There was no vitamin supplements fed. That hadn't been changed for 40 years. There were a lot of stories of dogs getting deprived and running down on bases. It was inadequate, so my main aim was to show it was inadequate, urea poisoning, vitamin, and then change the diet which I must have done by telex or something. So the first year we got a whale meat, we got a first nutrican down and I think the second year a different thing. But I was given complete trust by Bunny Fuchs to suggest the diet change, add the carbohydrate, add vitamins, take away quite a lot of the protein, try and get the fat absorption sorted out. It wasn't really very difficult.

[Part 1 0:37:46] Lee: What techniques were you using to measure the dogs, the way the dogs were dealing with the food they were getting? I think you were gathering urine, were you?

Taylor: Oh no, I certainly tested the urine and showed an awful lot of nitrogen was coming out.

[Part 1 0:37:57] Lee: How do you collect dogs' urine?

Precious: Easy.

Taylor: Easy, it freezes, it freezes.

Precious: Julian... [Laughter] Originally Ron Mottershead³ and I built... [Laughter] I don't know what you would call it, a dog's urinal.

Taylor: Yes.[Laughter]. For me or was it just generally?

Precious: For you, for you, Julian. And we did it with sheet metal, a sort of big square funnel with a grid on top and the dogs were supposed to stand on the grid [Laughter]...

Taylor: Completely forgotten this [Laughter].

Precious: ... and do a wee-wee, which would be collected underneath in a suitable vessel and we would give that to Julian. Only the dogs wouldn't cooperate.

Taylor: And you complained bitterly when I boiled the faeces. [Laughter]

[Part 1 0:38:58] Lee: Hang on, we'll come to that in a minute. So, let's deal with number one first.

Precious: The next thing for collecting urine was to hang around with a bucket of some kind [Laughter] and when they cocked their leg up at the base hut corner, you collected it as it came out and gave it to Julian.

Taylor: This is most interesting, how we worked together, it was very much a team thing.

Precious: Yes, it was.

Taylor: And in the second year, very impressed, Derek Clarke was in charge of the puppies.

Precious: Yes he was.

Taylor: And we all shared the duties. It was very interesting.

[Part 1 0:39:31] Lee: It does sound a bit hit and miss, your tactics, but I guess it worked. They gave you enough urine to work with, did they?

Taylor: It wasn't hit and miss, it was precise. [Laughter]. But you could get frozen urine, it was not difficult.

[Part 1 0:39:45] Lee: Yes.

Taylor: If the microphone's not off, it's much more difficult to collect urine from one's wife when you're looking after her. [Laughter].

[Part 1 0:39:57] Lee: There were some casualties in the pursuit of your knowledge, weren't there? You did find yourself having to slaughter some dogs.

Taylor: Could you repeat the question, please?

[Part 1 0:40:06] Lee: Did you have to slaughter some dogs in order to conduct your research?

Taylor: No, but we did kill dogs.

Precious: There some dogs born who were runts.

³ Meteorologist, Hope Bay, 1954.

Taylor: And Kiltie, one of my lovely dogs who got glaucoma of the eye, we shot.

Precious: Yes.

Taylor: Yap we didn't shoot but certainly we selected the pups. Derek was very... Derek says he will drown the dogs, which was very noble of him. We were very selective in the second year.

[Part 1 0:40:40] Lee: You talked about the doctor, I've forgotten for a second, name Manby? The doctor injecting their pups?

Precious: Massey.

Taylor: I'd forgotten that.

[Part 1 0:40:56] Lee: What I meant was, there's reference in your dog papers, your research papers, to the fact that you were studying the stomach contents of dogs that had been killed.

Taylor: I'd forgotten that. I was fairly thorough. The actual absorption of the solid was very bad indeed and I was conscious of that and I was measuring either the wet faeces or the stomach contents.

[Part 1 0:41:20] Lee: Yes, you mentioned collecting the faeces as well. Was that a pleasant job?

Taylor: They objected when I boiled it, but it was caked, I didn't mind.

[Part 1 0:41:26] Lee: The rest of the Fids objected?

Taylor: It made a smell in the hut.

Precious: I don't think so. Again, it was there, wasn't it, the stuff was there?

Taylor: We were all cooperating.

Precious: If you wanted it from a particular dog, you waited until you...

Taylor: I got it. It was very much collective, I wasn't treated like a silly scientist.

Precious: I think we had some old cooking trays. [Laughter]. Old aluminum cooking trays to collect it in.

Taylor: Yeah. It was a collaborative effort.

[Part 1 0:42:02] Lee: How did you go about composing the new dog food? You had it put together from a menu, didn't you?

Taylor: I decreased the protein, I increased the carbohydrate. I changed from beef to whale meat which was much cheaper, added milk powder, presumably faxed or radioed it back to Fuchs who talked to Allan... Professor Worden and the Dunn Institute. They trusted me. I must have recommended in the first year and probably in the second year changed it slightly.

[Part 1 0:42:46] Lee: Was it still manufactured by Bovril?

Taylor: No, no, we changed straight away to Bob Martin's, called nutrican. My successors improved it. But I think the great trust we were given by the Head Office. We weren't fighting for changes. I think they just accepted our advice.

Precious: Yeah.

[Part 1 0:43:03] Lee: And this was the food that was given to the dogs on the TAE.

Taylor: As far as I know, they used the first lot of nutrican which appears to have improved a bit, and the second lot, which was after the TAE, improved a bit more. But you never quite know.

[Part 1 0:43:19] Lee: But it was a positive result anyway.

Taylor: So they say. We think it was better. Yeah, it was certainly better.

[Part 1 0:43:26] Lee: You of course were doing meteorology on your one month's training, weren't you Alan? I wonder how those early observations went. Were you nervous?

Precious: No, I don't think so. Obviously you can read a thermometer and it only reads one figure. You put it down on an observation sheet. The more difficult part to get right was the clouds. How to look at the clouds, how to classify them and how to estimate their height. I don't know whether today's meteorologists do the same kind of thing but, purely on observation, we also learned how to send up pilot balloons as we called them, which gave us wind speeds at upper levels. Those balloons we had to follow through a theodolite and at Hope Bay we had a little shed where the theodolite was in a hatch in the roof and we had a telephone set, telephoning back to whoever was inside the hut giving him the readings and he would plot the courses of the balloons. So I would say it's a fairly straightforward business once you get used to it. And I imagine... Well, a certain amount of the same kind of thing goes on today probably by the Met Office and by other people who send in reports to the Met Office.

[Part 1 0:45:26] Lee: Can you remember any extremes you were measuring?

Precious: Not...

Taylor: Wind speed, what was the [fastest] wind speed ever recorded?

Precious: Oh, the wind speeds were sometimes over 100 knots at the base and they used to hit the base very suddenly sometimes and they would blow for, what, 24 hours, sometimes a bit longer.

Taylor: It was very windy at times. I suspect... I've looked at the records and it was well above 100.

Precious: Often above 100 and sometimes we would be experiencing these strong winds at Hope Bay whilst at Duse Bay, they would be in comparative calm. So I think it gave the more experienced meteorologists a clue that this was an orographic⁴ wind.

Taylor: I can't use long words... [Laughter].

⁴ Occurs when air mass is forced from a lower to higher elevation, by, e.g., mountain terrain.

Precious: I'm not sure whether 'orographic' is the right term – related to the shape of topographic...

Taylor: Came down where we [stayed]. It was a windy base.

Precious: Yes.

Taylor: And you lashed everything down, sledges down.

Precious: If you didn't, things got blown away, yes.

[Part 1 0:46:57] Lee: Was the hut lashed down as well?

Taylor: Yes.

Precious: Oh the hut was permanently lashed down, yes, with wire, cable and of course we had to go outside whilst this was going on to read the thermometers and I think someone got lost doing one of these... I'm not sure now [who].

Taylor: Bill Anderson. [Laughter].

Precious: It might be in his books. [Laughter].

Precious: But someone did get lost for a long time but...

Taylor: Luckily we didn't have a fire. A fire would have wrecked the place in 10 minutes.

Precious: Yes we are lucky because we did use oil lanterns didn't we?

Taylor: Yes.

Precious: Paraffin oil lanterns, which could easily blow over and start a fire.

Taylor: It was a very windy place.

[Part 1 0:47:52] Lee: What kind of precautions did you take to avoid fire?

Precious: Well we just had buckets of sand here and there.

Taylor: We didn't have a fire drill ever.

Precious: No, we didn't. Fire extinguishers and one or two buckets of sand as far as I remember.

Taylor: We weren't very good on health and safety. [Laughter].

[Part 1 0:48:13] Lee: Did you have a night watch?

Precious: There was always a met man who stoked up the fires to keep the hut warm during the night and of course did the observations every three hours.

Taylor: I think what's coming over is for both of us how easy we found it, not difficult. The whole thing of taking met observations or driving dogs. It was a cushy life.

Precious: Yes. I think some people, Joe Lewis and some others were radio hams and they were allowed to use the radio and so they did some radio hamming on night duty but I didn't

touch the radio. I know what I did used to do during the night. I used to make myself scrambled eggs [Laughter] with egg powder.

Taylor: I probably didn't do nights, did I, because I wasn't a met man.

Precious: No, so you didn't have scrambled eggs. [Laughter].

Taylor: But this is what's different from so many of the stories. It wasn't a difficult life.

[Part 1 0:49:29] Lee: But you did do some quite long journeys which presumably weren't comfortable all the time?

Precious: One thing about the winds. When they eventually stopped the dogs would give a tremendous howl. Do you remember that, Julian?

Taylor: Yes, yes.

Precious: And it was a beautiful sound, terrific, 80 dogs howling.

Taylor: Just on disasters. Let's do the three disasters. I lost my tent which is in Milne's [Phonetic] book, probably stupidly. According to my diary, it was 10.30 a.m., there was daylight and I think it was April.

[Part 1 0:50:13] Lee: Was this where a piece of ice broke the bamboo pole?

Taylor: So the book... I've got very little recollection. Certainly the tent went and certainly Slim Willis and I were dressed ready for the tent to go. We crawled for 10 minutes, 20 minutes, 30 minutes. You couldn't see a thing, so the wind must have been 80, 90, 100 mph. You were on your hands and knees, you couldn't see your feet. So it was clearly very windy.

[Part 1 0:50:39] Lee: Where were you crawling to, Julian?

Taylor: Probably we knew where the other tent was and Slim and I bumped into each other but you couldn't begin to stand up and we were lucky to... But we didn't bother about it, that was the really interesting thing. You didn't blame me but that was clearly quite a close shave if you looked at it. And then a year before that or the same year, Alan was sledging with two other people...

Precious: The year before.

Taylor:...the year before, when the dogs drowned. I was in the hut at Duse Bay and I heard the howl and we went out next morning, Ken and I, to pull the sledge out. Alan saved John's life. You've heard that?

[Part 1 0:51:26] Lee: No, please, please. Alan, tell me your version and then Julian can add the bits you're too noble to mention.

Precious: We set off from Hope Bay probably about nine o'clock in the morning, got over to Duse Bay and we were going to head over to the hut where Julian was. This was my first experience of sea ice. I'd done sledging around the base and so on. This was my first experience of sea ice and we met a tremendous jumble of ice and we would go for a few hundred yards and then be stopped. Whichever way we turned there was something blocking our way. So we had to hack our way through walls of ice and find a route and go up little hills and then drop down into tank trap things, knock our way out. And we were doing this for what seemed to be hours on end.

Taylor: Three or four hours.

Precious: Four hours I would think, and it looked as though we might have to pitch camp and carry on next day.

Taylor: It was getting dusk.

Precious: This was something that the others didn't want to do. Certainly I was the new boy, I didn't know whether I wanted to do it or not. But we came out of this jumble on to a stretch of flat ice heading towards View Point, ??? [Inaudible] Strait. I was apprehensive about this new ice but, again, I was the new boy, the others were experienced.

[Part 1 0:53:22] Lee: Why were you apprehensive?

Precious: I didn't think it looked particularly safe, to be honest with you. It was slushy, it was slushy. Anyhow, John Standring and I had the leading sledge. Joe was following, by himself, with the second sledge which had a slightly heavier load than the one that we had. We set off heading towards Duse Bay...

Taylor: To View Point.

Precious: To View Point, I'm sorry, yes. We'd gone about three, two and a half to three hundred yards when the sledge suddenly broke through into water and came to a sudden halt. We tried to get the dogs to pull it out but it was too much of a dead weight, they wouldn't pull it. It also – the sledge – didn't drop on an even keel. It was slanted, farther in under water at John's side of the sledge, the left hand side, less so on my side. John, as it stopped, immediately threw off his skis which was not a good thing to do but what he was hoping to do was to go forward and get the dogs moving but, once he'd taken his skis off he was putting more pressure on the ice and he sank through it a couple of times up to his waist in water. And the dogs suddenly wanted to go to the left towards the open sea. I'm not sure why they would want to do that.

[Part 1 0:55:33] Either I think there was a seal swimming about and that attracted them, or they were getting the scent of dogs at View Point and wanted to go straight towards them. Anyhow they were pulling strongly to the left. Each time they gave a pull, the sledge dug further underneath the slushy ice. John, as I say, went through the ice several times. He got round the front of the sledge on to the more firm ice where I was but he was still breaking through. I threw him my sheath knife and told him to crawl, get down on the ice and crawl and he did that. Without my knife he couldn't go forward because he wasn't getting any grip, he was just floundering backwards and forwards, but with my knife he was able to come towards me. We shouted at Joe who was still at the beginning of the ice. His sledge had gone straight through as soon as he got on to this ice, his sledge had gone straight through. There was no reply from him, we couldn't hear him. He couldn't hear us, obviously couldn't hear us, we must have been too far away for him to hear.

[Part 1 0:57:06] I started to ski back towards Joe and John Standring crawled, pushing before him a pup tent. I was carrying the other pup tent with me on skis and I got to Joe and he was releasing his dogs, he was able to release his dogs. We both tried to pull the sledge with his climbing rope, tried to pull it back on to the firm ice. Couldn't move it, so we set off, caught up with John, we got off this dodgy ice back into the jumbled ice that we had been traveling through all day and we walked though that to View Point. Although it was dark, there was no moon, but it was brilliant starlight and we could see where we were going. As we went along,

two or three dogs caught up with us and so we walked to View Point hut. I don't know what time we would get there, Julian?

Taylor: Probably 8.30. You had three hours, four hours walking.

Precious: I've no idea.

Taylor: Had we gone to bed?

Precious: I think you had gone to bed, yes. Yes 'cos and he got up Ken Powell was the other... Ken was in bed and he got up and made some tea and Julian dressed Johnny Standring's hands which were blistered with frostbite. Do you remember that, Julian?

Taylor: Very much so.

Precious: You put some riboflavin...

Taylor: Can I pick up the story now, Alan?

Precious: Mmm.

Taylor: They arrived at the hut. It was quarter to eleven at night. Ken and I had heard a shout or squeal three or four before. We clearly heard the dogs drowning. We didn't recollect... We guessed you'd camped or something and went to bed. Let's assume we turned the light out and suddenly these three very, very wet... John was completely soaked and his hand... I don't know if you've read Scott's book, there's a picture of Scott's last journeys. Well, John's hands were much worse than that. We should have taken a photograph.

Precious: Yes.

Taylor: My recollection is I spent the whole night with John's hand under my armpit. We probably had the cold stove – the hut was this sort of size...

Precious: Quite small.

Taylor: Quite small. John was in a pretty bad way.

Precious: Yes he was. Apart from the fact that his hands were frozen, he was absolutely wet through.

Taylor: We must have undressed him and put him in a sleeping bag or something and I think we didn't take much notice of Joe and you, you were quite happy to look after yourselves.

Precious: We were wet through crawling about but not anything like... We weren't wet through as John Standring.

Taylor: And we probably made you cocoa on the stove?

Precious: Yes, you certainly did, yes, we had something.

[Part 1 1:00:38] Lee: The dogs that drowned, what happened? Were they pulled under by the sledge?

Precious: No, we missed out that little bit. I gave John Standring my knife and he cut the main trace with them on. All the nine dogs were tied together and as soon as they were released they ran off straight into the water.

Taylor: They were all drowned. None survived.

Precious: They obviously were drowned, we could hear them howling in the water.

Taylor: Joe was a very able swimmer. Joe we think came from a water polo team in Tilsley, released his dogs individually.

Precious: His sledge was not under water and the dogs were not under water. They hadn't put their feet through or anything like that. In fact, I'm not sure whether I helped when I got back to release the odd one, I'm not sure. Obviously they were just standing around. They weren't keen on going anywhere else.

Taylor: All nine dogs were saved in the second team.

Precious: Yes.

Taylor: So we lost one complete team.

[Part 1 1:01:56] Lee: And that team died because they were tied together. Had they tried to go in different directions, I guess?

Precious: I think... I've got some notes about this which I have sent you a copy, I think. I'm not sure if they'd been released singly whether it would have made any difference. They were intent on going that way, to the left, towards the sea and I think once they were in the sea they wouldn't have got out of it because each time they would have tried to get on to this ice, it would have given way.

Taylor: It was very thin.

Precious: I think in fact that some of them were trying to do that but they were not all making the same effort at the same time, they were pulling in different directions.

Taylor: But anyhow, the night was a pretty gloomy night I'm sure but they got warm anyhow. And then Ken and I went out the next day and picked up the second sledge.

Precious: You were able to get the second sledge. You were also able to retrieve my camera from our sledge. There was no chance of you getting it out.

Taylor: The sledge?

Precious: Mmm.

Taylor: So we found the second sledge. Interesting.

Precious: You did. And we could even see it... Later on I remember walking up to Cheeserings, as it's called, and look out into the sea and the sledge was still there in a frozen waste.

Taylor: Ken was quite a close run thing.

[Part 1 1:03:37] Lee: Let's stop and take a short break.

[Part 2 0:00:00] Lee: This is Alan Precious and Julian Taylor recorded together at Sandford in Cumbria by Chris Eldon-Lee on the 28th October, 2010. Alan Precious and Julian Taylor, Part 2.

[Part 2 0:00:17] Lee: There was a third disaster you wanted to mention, Julian.

Taylor: We mentioned how I stupidly lost my tent, we crawled round the snow, and we mentioned how we managed to drown nine dogs. Just to show how stupid we can be but also how confident we can be - because we knew we could pitch tents, with a rope over [them] we often used to sledge round quite happily in 30/40 knot winds knowing we could pitch the tent quite easily, so we were quite used to sledging in windy conditions, 30/40mph with drift. Once coming back to Hope Bay, I was the lead sledge and I'd written down in my little note book [for] the milometer that I had to turn left down to the base when let's call it 39510 was on the cyclometer. I wrote this down in my little notebook in my left hand pocket and I suspect the vis [-ibility] was five yards. I couldn't see much of the dogs and the wind was behind me and Norman Leppard was the sledge behind and so every 100 metres, 200 metres, 300 metres I used to stop and write down the record in the little black book and after I had done this three or four times, Norman came furiously up to me: 'Julian, you're going far too far!', and I had written down the same reading in my little black book and hadn't noticed the cyclometer had stuck and if I'd gone another quarter mile or half mile I'd have gone straight over the ice cliff at the end. So I think that illustrates a) we were confident sledging in fairly nasty conditions, but how stupid you can be by not reading - there's my notebook, I've still got it - identical readings, one after another, and I didn't notice they were the same records. That illustrates stupidity.

[Part 2 0:02:07] Lee: A fatal technical hitch.

Taylor: Fatal technical hitch.

[Part 2 0:02:11] Lee: In '55, you got a new Base Commander, Bill Ellery Anderson. Was there a culture change at that point? Did he come in with new ideas and new ways of doing things?

Precious: I think to a certain extent, yes, that is true. I don't know what we quite expected because we did hear some of these broadcasts that Bill was making for the BBC *Expedition South*, in which we heard interviews with the Fids who were coming down, new Fids, and Julian and I, I think we weren't keen on having anyone come in, were we?

Taylor: We were very clear both years that we didn't like the intrusion of foreigners from another planet but I don't think we were against Bill, we were against publicity.

Precious: Yes, I think that was it, yes. We weren't quite sure what we were going to get because this broadcasting of what was happening was new to us, we didn't...

Taylor: Feel comfortable with it.

[Part 2 0:03:32] Lee: How good were the programmes?

Precious: I should think they were probably very good. I would imagine that people back home would enjoy listening to them. We, I think, heard the later ones as they came further south, one or two, and it was obviously of some interest to us that new people were coming but we didn't necessarily want them to come, did we, in a way. It was an intrusion on our family, if you like, it seemed to be...

Taylor: Jumping a little bit, I think Bill was a very good Base Leader. He was obviously a very brave man, he'd obviously rescued hundreds of people from Korean lines or something. He was very good at making us all work together. He talked stupid in his book, he exaggerated badly in his book but I think as a Base Leader, if he hadn't written that book, he'd go down very well.

Precious: I think he, I don't know whether it's in his book or not, but I seem to remember him using the phrase 'Man Management'. He'd been trained in 'Man Management' as an army officer.

[Part 2 0:04:48] Lee: Was that '55?

Precious: I don't know but obviously he had it. Well, there was no doubt he was good at that.

Taylor: In his book he's very good at complimenting his colleagues.

[Part 2 0:05:03] Lee: Did you feel as though you were being 'managed' then compared to previous years?

Precious: I don't think so, no, no.

Taylor: He was a good organizer.

Precious: That's right. We possibly felt that the whole base was better organized and you didn't have any doubts about what you were supposed to be doing.

Taylor: But he wasn't a domineering figure.

Precious: No, no.

[Part 2 0:05:34] Lee: How come the book is so at variance with what you remember?

Precious: I think there seems to be a bit of, I don't know whether histrionics is the right word, but of making an adventure or a drama out of something that wasn't necessarily a drama.

Taylor: I think we came up with the three near disasters we've had, we didn't think of the dramas. We just thought they were mistakes.

Precious: Yes, that's right.

Taylor: The book dramatises things we wouldn't have dramatized.

Precious: That's right. I suppose he's not by any means alone in this. A lot of books do the same thing or try to do the same thing and so you get someone who's been involved in whatever it is that's being written about says: 'Well it didn't really happen like that'.

Taylor: Climbing books exaggerate. [Laughter].

Precious: Yes.

[Part 2 0:06:54] Lee: It's an occupational hazard.

Taylor: Yes. We didn't like the book.

Precious: If I could turn to one incident which people have ragged me about and that is the cake throwing incident. [Laughter] I think in Bill's book it's meant to... He says something

like: 'Even calm Alan Precious lost his temper and threw a cake at Dick Kenney⁵. It didn't happen like that at all really and if you can get hold of a copy of the *Halley Comet* for 1961 the true story is in there. I wrote an article in there and what happened is that we had morning smoko at what, 11 o'clock? Dick, God bless his heart, was a... - what shall I say – punctilious.

Taylor: Yes.

[Part 2 0:08:15] Lee: Dick who?

Precious: Dick Kenney, and he took to the habit of when it was 11 o'clock looking at his wristwatch and said: 'Smoko should be here by now' and, if anybody was late, he would pronounce: 'Five minutes late'. I observed this and when it came my turn to do morning smoko, I came in two minutes before 11, Dick looked at his watch and he said: 'Two minutes early'. And so I threw the fruitcake at him. [Laughter]

Taylor: Good naturedly.

Precious: Good naturedly. I immediately had a feeling of remorse because I hadn't realized the cake burst into a thousand fragments and scattered all over his bed [Laughter]. Also, it was still slightly warm and it steamed up his glasses. [Laughter]. He couldn't see, so I helped him to clean his glasses and to clean all the debris off his bed.

Taylor: It was ridiculous, he was the cleanest person in the hut.

[Part 2 0:09:51] Lee: And so there was no smoko that day.

Precious: Sorry.

[Part 2 0:09:54] Lee: There was no smoko that day?

Precious: I had a back up, [Laughter] back up cake, a chocolate cake. Sometime afterwards, Dick said to me: 'That was the best thing that could have happened to me'.

[Part 2 0:10:14] Lee: What did he mean by that?

Precious: I think he meant that he wouldn't be so punctilious of his comrades.

Taylor: It's a very good story, isn't it, a beautiful story, of how tensions in retrospect [were] put into complete change. A friendly story rather than a vicious story.

Precious: I think you were out at the time, weren't you Julian?

Taylor: I don't know. I lost my marbles years ago.

Precious: I've a feeling that Bill Turner wasn't there, the Base Leader or I might not have done it.

[Part 2 0:10:55] Lee: That was in the year '54?

Precious: Yes.

Taylor: We were probably on that...

⁵ Surveyor, Hope Bay, '54 and '55.

Precious: Yes, you were probably over there.

[Part 2 0:11:00] Lee: So let's talk about your trips. Am I right in thinking that it was Julian who did most of the sledging under Ellery Anderson?

Taylor: In Kevin's book, it doesn't mention that I think we did the longest unsupported journey from Hope Bay. Certainly in mileage it was longer than the wonderful journey that Frank Elliot did???[Inaudible] down to Stonington. That was 700 miles. I think our journey was 900 miles, it was a little bit longer than the [ones the] previous two years before.

[Part 2 0:11:30] Lee: That was you. But did you go on that, Alan, that trip?

Precious: No.

Taylor: That was four of us: Murdo Tait, lively lighthouseman; Norman Leppard, the good surveyor who I sledged with a lot; Bill and myself. We certainly crossed the Antarctic Peninsula and found a way up to Stonington and it was three months.

Precious: I went on the depot laying journey to Cape Longing with Paul and Bill Anderson and Norman Leppard.

[Part 2 0:12:03] Lee: That was laying depots for the big...

Precious: Yes, in preparation for the later track.

[Part 2 0:12:07] Lee: The one episode, assuming it's relatively true in *Expedition South*, is the wildlife you found on the way, the unexpected wildlife, and I guess you both experienced this?

Precious: Yes, we both saw this.

Taylor: ???[Inaudible] those two stories I wrote up for the Zoological Society. Joe or you saw them first, the whales, it was an incredible sight.

[Part 2 0:12:32] Lee: Tell me the story Alan, and then perhaps Julian you can tell me your version.

Precious: Well I'm not sure about that. We saw an odd whale on its own, 'way over to the left of us.

Taylor: 70 miles from base.

Precious: To James Ross Island.

[Part 2 0:12:54] Lee: You were travelling on sea ice, which was extensive.

Taylor: Solid and beautiful.

[Part 2 0:12:59] Lee: Then there's a hole in the sea ice.

Precious: There was quite a tiny hole here. I had one of the dogs gone off, I forget which one it was.

Taylor: Were you with Paul, were you?

Precious: I was with Bill Anderson at that time and this dog shot off toward the sea, of course, and I went after it and eventually it came back and we stuck it on. But I thought how odd it was to see the whale sticking its head through and snorting. But then, as we got further along past Red Island there was quite a big open pool with a number of whales and seals.

Taylor: Later, I saw it. My recollection is in my paper to the Zoological Society is there were 200 whales.

Precious: You saw them three times there, didn't you?

Taylor: Quite a lot.

Precious: Because you went down specifically to look at them...

Taylor: And certainly later the full half page of the *Daily Express*, which was one of the better photographs, so clearly it was a very unusual sight.

Precious: Fairly unusual, I think, because I have seen the same thing at Admiralty Bay.

Taylor: You've seen the same, have you?

Precious: With minke whales.

Taylor: There's a record in Greenland too but I didn't know about Admiralty Bay but certainly...

Precious: There were a number of small holes, then a fairly big one with a number...

Taylor: I didn't know that. My recollection is there were three to four football pitch size holes, the main hole later with two hundred whales in it of which the most were minke and there were I think even 60 killer whales and one bottle nosed whale. And as the hole got smaller we set up the whale patting club. So there's not many people who've joined the live whale patting club.

Precious: I'm not a member, Julian.

Precious: You're not a member of that! [Laughter].

[Part 2 0:15:00] Lee: Could we just go back a little bit then, you come across these holes in the ice and there's whales in the holes in the ice, and we're talking about a long way from the open sea.

Taylor: 60 miles, I think.

[Part 2 0:15:09] Lee: OK, and these whales are simply trying to stay alive, is that right, by breathing through holes?

Taylor: We don't know, we don't know. My own guess is that they all 90 miles ???[Inaudible] they can find little air holes through the sea [ice].

Precious: Here and there.

Taylor: Here and there, and escape, but it was a long way and gradually the holes got smaller and smaller until they were smaller than this room and we were patting first the minkes. We tried to touch the killers and I think we did touch the killers. I've got a photograph of a ski

stick touching a killer. Certainly some of us joined the live whale patting club and I'm pretty sure we also touched killers putting their nose up. So it was an unusual record and I've got nice photographs. You've probably seen some.

[Part 2 0:16:00] Lee: And the whales were fairly relaxed about all this, were they?

Taylor: They're beautiful things.

Precious: They are beautiful things. I think they must be used to it to a certain extent. It's not an occasional phenomenon, is it? It's something that must happen.

Taylor: Not the patting but they were beautiful. The rorquals, they're 40 foot long.

Precious: Yes.

Taylor: You could see their nostrils opening and closing within milliseconds as they came just under the ice which was a foot thick, two foot thick. Their precision swimming is millimeters controlled like divers in the Olympics. Fascinating sight.

Precious: But I think it must be something that occurs reasonably often down [there].

Taylor: I didn't know that. I knew there was one record, and not quite as dramatic, of Greenland but a lower ???[Inaudible] the Admiralty Bay.

Precious: Whether it's happened and people haven't bothered observing it...

Taylor: Alan, because I was lucky enough to come back and write my stuff at Cambridge, I wrote up this story in a scientific way for all of us. It's fairly well recorded in proceedings of the Zoological Society.

[Part 2 0:17:20] Lee: Seeing it for the first time, though, what was your reaction?

Precious: Well, I thought it was something new, something I hadn't seen before – whales.

Taylor: It was spectacular.

Precious: The only whales I'd seen before were at South Georgia being cut to pieces on the plan⁶.

Taylor: They were spectacular to see these great big noses six to eight feet up and swimming so beautifully. It was a spectacular...

Precious: And so many, so crowded together.

Taylor: It was much better than anything David Attenborough puts on that screen.

[Part 2 0:17:57] Lee: Reading the book, you get the impression that there are killer whales and seals in the same hole.

Precious: Yes there were seals there.

Taylor: Entirely separately in some senses. There were 3000 crabeater seals around which 95% died [of] virus starvation. But there were also seals in the pools and I don't think we ever saw a killer attack them.

⁶ The area on a whaling station used for the primary processing of the whales.

Precious: No.

[Part 2 0:18:23] Lee: Again, Anderson talked about the seals being very calm and cool and relaxed in the company of their natural predator.

Taylor: I think we never saw...

Precious: No, no.

Taylor: There weren't many seals in the water, mainly it was the whales in the water.

Precious: Most of the whales wouldn't bother with the seals, would they? Only the killers.

Taylor: And I think there were 60 killers.

[Part 2 0:18:54] Lee: But they weren't killing?

Taylor: I don't think we ever saw them killing.

[Part 2 0:18:57] Lee: Discussing that place, did you ever come to any conclusions as to, or even any theories as to why they were being so non-aggressive?

Precious: I am wondering – were there still a few penguins? Do you remember that, Julian?

Taylor: Not many.

Precious: I don't think there would be many, no.

[Part 2 0:19:19] Lee: You would have thought in those circumstances that killer whales would have a feast.

Taylor: You're well aware that there's no authenticated record that I know of, that killer whales actually attack man. It's very rare, the stories that come down from ...

[Part 2 0:19:32] Lee: Yeah, but this would have been going on whether you were there or not, so I'm just wondering...

Taylor: I know.

Precious: Usually one sees pictures of killer whales catching penguins and skinning them in one go. What other food do they have besides penguins? Do they eat fish?

Taylor: There's a big debate going on 'Do killer whales go for ordinary whales?' There's odd records they do. Of sperm whales, big whales... There's big debate about that.

Precious: Some of the bigger whales have scars.

Taylor: Bad scars.

Precious: Yes, yeah.

Taylor: But the main food is small.

Precious: And I think some of the seals do have scars.

Taylor: And they kill a lot of seals.

[Part 2 0:20:15] Lee: Did you think about why it was that they weren't attacking?

Taylor: We just enjoyed the spectacle.

Precious: It didn't occur to me to. I think perhaps the time when I went out there weren't so many. There were a few but they were mainly minke.

Taylor: It was a spectacular sight. Good for marvelous photographs, you've probably seen some of them.

Precious: Most unexpected.

[Part 2 0:20:50] Lee: What about all these crabeater seals that were dying in their thousands?

Taylor: 3000 dying and 95% death which is a colossal number. I later collected samples to go back to the Department of Veterinary Sciences in Cambridge who couldn't isolate it, whether it was a virus or whether it was starvation. It clearly was a disease, maybe aggravated by starvation. My own guess is that there's much more disease in wild animals than we realize, like grey squirrels to red squirrels, and it was a lethal viral disease, almost lethal viral disease, not man made. Completely unexpected but a real crash from disease in a natural population is my guess.

[Part 2 0:21:36] Lee: I'm surprised that viruses survive at those low temperatures.

Precious: Don't know about that.

Taylor: Don't know. Hadn't thought of that. You're better educated than I am.

[Part 2 0:21:46] Lee: No, I'm not. Man was fairly disease free in the Antarctic, wasn't he?

Precious: I think so, yes.

Taylor: Yes, but disease is a funny thing. It's difficult to think about disease like cancer and things. Our knowledge of disease is pretty limited, we don't understand diseases.

Precious: We did pick up colds sometimes when a ship came in, didn't we?

Taylor: Yes, yes, we were disease free. It was a spectacular sight. Both of them were, the death of the crabeaters and, separately related, the killer whales and the minkes.

[Part 2 0:22:26] Lee: How did you finally make it across the Peninsula?

Taylor: My memory's clear and I've got all my notebooks but I can't be bothered to read them. Bill exaggerates the coming back on the long journey, the ice breaking up and ???[Inaudible]. He writes quite well about how coming back the sledge skidded down and Murdo Tait had to stop the sledge going down. We might have gone over an ice cliff. I think that was true but writing up about how the whole bay was breaking up and we had to go over the back of Duse Bay, I think it's exaggeration. It wasn't a big deal. We just had to get round the water and over the top.

[Part 2 0:23:14] Lee: But you were actually at the episode where the sledges looked as though they were going to go over the edge.

Taylor: I remember that fairly clearly.

[Part 2 0:23:21] Lee: You were there at the time.

Taylor: I was there at the time.

[Part 2 0:23:23] Lee: The dogs wouldn't respond. What was the story?

Taylor: It's very hard to remember, isn't it? I think they got it roughly right. One sledge team was going far too fast and we hadn't got control of the roped sledge and Murdo had to run across to stop the thing slewing the dogs around. Below us the cliff got steeper and there was a crevasse of 10 foot, 20 foot, maybe 50 foot. It would have been a nasty accident. Whether it would have been a fatal accident, I don't know. But it's a good story. We never talked about it. You probably never heard about it until you read the book.

Precious: No.

[Part 2 0:24:10] Lee: What were you doing whilst the Base Commander and Julian and his colleagues were away for so long, Alan, what were you doing back at base?

Precious: Carrying on with the meteorology and I had been given the job of, what shall I call it, keeping the larder stocked from the supplies of food that we had. We had a food store outside and the larder next to the kitchen had to be kept up to date with tins of sugar and so on, herrings, tinned bacon.

Taylor: Good, the butter was good.

Precious: Yes, the butter, dried vegetables which I brought in from the store hut outside. And I had to do the requisition for the next year. You know, one of these lists of food, how much we'd got and how much more we would want and so on. Quartermaster, that's the word I'm thinking of.

Taylor: I don't think there was any antipathy that we were sledging and you were at base, was there? I don't think there was.

Precious: I don't think so, no. No, we were doing what we understood what we'd been employed for and the fact that sometimes we went out on sledges doing things was incidental, really. No, keeping the base going whilst other people were away was what we were there for. The dogs remaining, of which there would still have been about 40-odd, wouldn't there?

Taylor: Yes.

Precious: We had to feed every other day. Chopping up seals to feed them with and sawing them with a cross-cut saw, that kind of thing, took us through the day really. The radio operator had to send out the met observations every four hours, I think it was, wasn't it? So the diesel mechanic or someone had to look after the diesel [generator] and keep it topped up with oil. Things like that. Various jobs really.

[Part 2 0:27:05] Lee: Was there any feeling that you wished you were on the sledge rather than back at base?

Precious: I don't know. Whenever I was out sledging, I was enjoying that and if I couldn't go on this particular trip, I knew about it and that was it. Obviously to me at the time, Norm had to go because he was the surveyor, that was partly the reason why anybody was going sledging. Julian was studying the dogs, he had to go. John Standing, or whoever, geologizing and another met man, I suppose, to do the met on the sledge journeys.

Taylor: This is where the book is so wrong. It was a very contented, happy year.

Precious: Yes.

Taylor: It gives the wrong impression, that poor man.

[Part 2 0:28:10] Lee: One question I should have asked you a few minutes ago. You've both patted whales, what's it like?

Precious: I actually didn't. No, I saw them but we hadn't got round to patting them [Laughter] until...

Taylor: Well you see you only wait until the thing comes close and you pat it, and you join the whale patter's club.

[Part 2 0:28:30] Lee: Was there a particular sensation or feeling of man touching another intelligent being?

Taylor: Yes, yes. It never occurred as to be dangerous that the whale might break the ice up or the killer might jump us, it was just like patting a wild dog.

[Part 2 0:28:47] Lee: There's another little episode, Julian, on your trip down King Oscar, the second cove, I believe, on the 7th October at Exasperation Inlet when you went through a snow bridge, is that correct?

Taylor: Yes, but we all did. We were all scared stiff of crevasses and we were very meticulous after the John Standring [incident] in using ice axes when sledging. But sledges did go through crevasses and we didn't like it at all because they were deep and nasty. And clearly the book says that my sledge went through a crevasse and I unloaded it, which I suspect is true. I certainly stayed on skis, I wouldn't have dreamt of getting off skis because you spread your load. It's clearly true, I liked driving my dogs, I liked my leader, Spark, and ???[Inaudible] the bit that I said to my Spark 'Gee up and get off the crevasse fast!', we did. But it wasn't all that dramatic, it was just the thing you had to do. It's a good story.

[Part 2 0:30:02] Lee: Well the book says it was impossible for anybody to go and help you because the snow bridge was so fragile.

Taylor: I've no idea.

[Part 2 0:30:08] Lee: The *Number Ones* started fighting amongst themselves.

Taylor: Right, I've got no recollection without consulting my diaries. It's a good story. It was just routine, getting out of a little bit of trouble.

[Part 2 0:30:25] Lee: Was fatigue a problem on these long stretches, on these long trips, mental fatigue?

Taylor: Physical fatigue of the dogs was a problem. They lost a third of their body weight a lot. I had a dog we had to carry on the sledge who nearly died with physical fatigue. Looking back, we should have fed them more pemmican. I was trying to measure the pemmican. It was fairly boring, there wasn't much to see on these long sledging things. Looking back, Bill Anderson should have swapped the four of us around. A little bit boring but not worse than most Latin lessons. [Laughter].

[Part 2 0:31:09] Lee: More dangerous than Latin.

Taylor: It didn't feel dangerous. We just had to sledge like driving a motorcar down the motorway. Driving a motorcar is dangerous.

[Part 2 0:3:21] Lee: Were there highs and lows? Alright, there was boredom and there was danger but was there also elation at times?

Taylor: We enjoyed sledging, we enjoyed driving dogs well. When they went well, it was super.

[Part 2 0:31:37] Lee: OK. You found rather an unusual fossil, again according to the book.

Taylor: The first year, Ron Mottershead, who taught bottle washing at girls' school in Manchester, was a very good amateur geologist, very good amateur geologist, and certainly he and I for one reason in the autumn were sledging fairly close to base and we came across a fossil that he said straight away was a plesiosaur, which it was which is a fish-eating dinosaur and he knew it was, straight away. To celebrate, we had half a bar of chocolate. I think it was the first plesiosaur found in the Antarctic.

[Part 2 0:32:19] Lee: It wasn't the whole creature, was it?

Taylor: Just the vertebrae, but he knew straight away. A skilled laboratory technician, awful word, but he knew his geology. He'd probably get an outside degree in geology nowadays. Brilliant. So we knew what we'd found and we knew it was quite exciting.

[Part 2 0:32:37] Lee: How did you get on with your Argentinean neighbours?

Precious: On the whole very well, very well indeed. We often had visits from them. They were very friendly in the main. I think they had two establishments there. They had a naval establishment and an army [one] with a Lieutenant Colonel in charge of the army who was called Colonel Castro. I think probably, to be fair, he was a little distant and I have the feeling that not all his men were absolutely keen on him. [Laughter]. The others mostly I thought were a splendid lot of people, both the army-navy and the civilian – they had some civilian meteorologists and surveyors and I liked them very much, to be honest with you. They used to occasionally invite as many of us as were able to go down for a dinner or supper. They had a big refrigerator and had a lot of Argentine beef and I think they had one or two live sheep at one time which they killed and barbecued. I'm not sure that we ever formally invited them up to Hope Bay but they were free to come up more or less as they wanted and they did in odd numbers now and again. They would spend some time with us talking. Also, they gave us some pictures. Do you remember those, Julian?

Taylor: Just, yes.

Precious: ... which one or other had painted. I can remember one which was called *Homo Antarcticus* which was a man swathed in anorak and with a big beard and I'm not sure whether the other was a photograph or what - no, a painting. The man in the second year, Major Gonzales, was a good amateur painter. He gave us quite a nice painting which was up on the wall. And also we were given a load of pennants of Argentine football teams. [Laughter], which we put up as well, didn't we?

Taylor: Yes.

[Part 2 0:35:36] Lee: Were they better resourced than you were?

Precious: In some ways, perhaps. They didn't have such good dogs.

Taylor: Or sledges. Our sledging equipment was miles, miles better.

Precious: Yes. Some of their dogs I think were...

Taylor: Were hopeless.

Precious: Yes. Did they have some Swiss mountain dogs?

Taylor: Yes. I'm going to interrupt a second. Our basic sledging equipment was very, very good.

Precious: Yes.

Taylor: We trusted it. Maybe old fashioned but it was marvelous.

Precious: Yes. Theirs was not very good. Their sledges weren't particularly good at all, were they?

Taylor: No. Their dogs were hopeless.

Precious: And the dogs were not very good. They did have skidoos, yes, which could pull a decent load but I'm not quite sure how far they could go.

Taylor: They ran 60 miles, 70 miles, I think.

Precious: Yes, yes. They did a number of journeys. I don't know how far they went, I've no idea.

Taylor: Not very far. But their food was good.

Precious: Their food was good and they had the habit of planting a refugio here and there. I don't know how many they had altogether and the refuges were named after... I'm not sure whether they were named after Argentine dictators. The one that Major Gonzales put up he gave the name *Christe Redento*, instead of an Argentine dictator.

Taylor: And you stayed in one with Paul Massey.

Precious: Yes, Paul Massey and I stayed overnight in one because Paul thought it would save putting up the tent. We stayed overnight and it wasn't as comfortable as sleeping in the tent. I suppose the heating ought to have been on a long time because the walls were all covered in hoar frost but it was alright. We used some of their food and stuff which of course we'd tell them about later.

[Part 2 0:38:01] Lee: Their were some statues, weren't there, of Peron?

Precious: There was a statue of Eva Peron. Yes there was.

[Part 2 0:38:09] Lee: Came to a sticky end.

Precious: Sorry?

[Part 2 0:38:11] Lee: Did it meet a sticky end?

Precious: It was taken down, certainly.

Taylor: Later.

Precious: Later.

Taylor: He was deposed after we left. I was in Buenos Aires when he was deposed.

Precious: Joe Lewis and I were invited down one day and I was very friendly with... They had an Air Force Liaison Officer...

Taylor: Who flew Meteors.

Precious: He was a Gloucester Meteor pilot. He was very friendly with me, a little bit younger than me. Anyway, we were invited down on this particular day which happened to be Argentine's national day, *Vente Cinco de Mayo*, I'm not sure. We didn't realize that Joe and I were standing in a row next to this Flight Lieutenant and all the others and the Argentine national anthem was played and we were photographed all together. [Laughter]. Can't say I didn't enjoy it, I did enjoy it really.

[Part 2 0:39:36] Lee: Did you get to see the famous, interesting film?

Precious: Oh, they made a film.

[Part 2 0:39:43] Lee: Oh, right. That's not the one I'm thinking of, but go on.

Precious: No, I don't think I ever saw the film. I might have seen a bit of it at some time, some where but during the making of it, they hadn't any... They filmed a scene where the hero, who's name may come back to me. The hero and his team were sledging along through a blizzard and in order to produce a blizzard they had an old aeroplane fuselage with an engine in, which they started up and threw tons of snow flakes, soap flakes, sorry. [Laughter]

[Part 2 0:40:35] Lee: Soap flakes?

Precious: Soap flakes, and this produced a blizzard [Laughter] for them to go through. Also, I do remember one thing. They had an actor there, a comedian. Well, I don't know if he was an official actor but when we went down there, part of their house was a lean-to roof and this chap, again whose name I just can't remember, did an act of being shot and falling on this lean-to roof and rolling down and off the edge. [Laughter]. The main actor on the film was a famous Argentine actor and he had a sort of Spanish Christian name and an Irish surname.

Taylor: That's right.

Precious: Just won't come to me at the moment. It was quite an interesting period when they did that.

[Part 2 0:41:55] Lee: Yours weren't the only experiments that were going on, as I understand, Julian. Paul Massey was doing some human physiology experiments, is that right?

Taylor: Yes. [Laughter].

Precious: Well, he was doing fat thickness.

Taylor: And putting our fingers in a wretched little blow piece.

[Part 2 0:42:12] Lee: Tell me about that, Julian. What do you remember?

Taylor: Paul Massey was a very nice man, very kind man, with a good bedside manner and he wanted an MD, and he was clearly measuring for his MD our reaction to cold. I didn't take a

great interest in his theoretical work but we all had calipers to measure how fat or thin we were pinching our...

Precious: You used to get a hold of your stomach just about there and measure it, what, every month, was it?

Taylor: Really, I can't remember.

Precious: I think about every month.

Taylor: And the we had to put our finger in a thing like a...

Precious: Yes, he had a freezing fan in the window, didn't he?

Taylor: Yes.

Precious: And a hole where we had to stick our fingers in until we felt it was frozen, I think, was it?

Taylor: Till it was cold.

Precious: Till it was cold.

Taylor: I don't remember if we were allowed to take it out or not.

Precious: At some point either he was able to read it or he took a reading of it when we pulled it out, I'm not quite sure.

Taylor: So we all had to stick our fingers in this thing. [Laughter].

Precious: And there was one other thing and that was he measured fingernail growth. I don't know whether before he came, no after he went back he did the same business on a group of firemen in Birmingham. When I was at Admiralty Bay, I did a year's fingernail growth for him as well and what he deduced from it all, I don't know.

Taylor: Did we differ?

Precious: We differed greatly.

Taylor: Individually, between one person and another.

Precious: Yes. Dick Kenney's didn't grow very much; Joe Lewis's grew the fastest of anybody's.

Taylor: Joe was a toughie.

Precious: And mine grew something like a bit.

Taylor: Going on a little bit, you're well aware Paul rowed very well. There were two very strong men on the base, Lofty Worswick and Paul Massey. Both very, very strong men and Paul could move like a really good athlete, could move like a ballet dancer. He was an elegant man to watch. Joe wasn't, but later I went to his wedding and I was the only wimp there and there was the whole of the previous Cambridge crew, rowing crew, all looking like Paul Massey [or] Steve Redgrave. When they all sat down the pew in the church bent. [Laughter] I was about half the weight of any of them. It was quite dramatic seeing these enormous, powerful men all together. But Paul, he and Lofty were very strong men.

Precious: Lofty was very strong and very tall. He was reputed to have bent a road sign in Port Stanley, one that said, I don't know, 'Bend' or something like that, [Laughter] so he bent it. He also was on the base at Admiralty Bay as Base Leader and Roger Banks was there, was quite a small man, and Lofty could pick him up and tuck him under his arm and carry him along.

[Part 2 0:45:44] Lee: Just going to finish off these finger experiments. Now Derek Clarke remembers having to put his finger between two rulers afterwards, once they'd been frozen. What's your memory?

Precious: It's possible. I know certainly about the measurement because all you did there was that you had a ruler and cut across the top of the lunula⁷ with a knife, made a cut across. Yes, most people didn't like it [Laughter] and then of course the next month you could measure how much had grown and do another cut.

[Part 2 0:46:31] Lee: So Mr Massey was very popular, was he?

Precious: I think so.

Taylor: Nice man.

Precious: We all thought it was in the interests of science.

Taylor: He was a very nice man. If we had any doubt about Bill Anderson being bossy, which we didn't, Paul would have calmed us down.

[Part 2 0:46:50] Lee: The book talks about a couple of instances where the dogs attacked men. Anderson himself was attacked on one occasion and then Leppard was attacked as well and again I don't know, reading the book, whether those are exaggerations.

Taylor: Bill was a... Must be careful. Bill should have been on skis, he should never have gone down that crevasse. The dogs didn't hurt him on his head at all. It's a vast[ly] exaggerated story.

Precious: They would crowd round him to see what it was.

Taylor: I saw him to days later, there was nothing...

Precious: An experience I had was that, I think when I was feeding the dog, a dog grabbed hold of my hand, which was in a glove. As soon as it realized it was my hand, it let go. So I don't think they'd really attack you.

[Part 2 0:47:48] Lee: He thinks that they attacked because they thought he was a seal below ground level.

Precious: They may have thought it for a minute or two, they would soon realize that it wasn't.

Taylor: My guess is that none of us were badly cut and we used to jump in with soft shoes into a dog fight and they relaxed.

Precious: Yes, that's right.

⁷ Crescent shaped white-ish area of the bed of a finger- or toe-nail.

Taylor: None of us were attacked by a dog and that's two years and 90 dogs.

Precious: If you went near them and banged on the ground with a shovel or something like that, they'd realize...

Taylor: I mean if they got their muzzle grip [of] my hand, they'd never have bitten me.

Precious: Yes, they gripped mine and let go, 'cos they knew it wasn't something...

[Part 2 0:48:30] Lee: So there's another instance in the book where Leppard is attacked. The book says that you were very sympathetic towards Norman Leppard.

Taylor: I liked him, he was my sledging companion but he wasn't hurt. I mean, my wife has been much worse bitten by a dog in Turkey than any of us were by huskies.

[Part 2 0:48:52] Lee: How difficult was it to keep clean?

Precious: We didn't feel dirty, I don't think, did we, except when we were out sledging. Certainly, by the time we got back we had a certain amount of body odour.

Taylor: And our underpants had to be burnt. [Laughter].

Precious: And we were glad to have a bath.

Taylor: I'm not a very clean person, but I'm clean.

[Part 2 0:49:20] Lee: Were bath nights complicated?

Precious: We were allotted one bath night a week and usually we arranged for a second man, after you'd finished, someone else could go in whilst the water was still warm. And that occurred at all the bases I was at.

Taylor: We didn't have a washing machine, or did we have washing machines?

Precious: We didn't at Hope Bay, did we?

Taylor: I don't think so.

Precious: We had one at Admiralty Bay and certainly at Halley Bay.

Taylor: Did we ever wash our clothes?

Precious: We must have washed them a bit but I can't recall it. If we did, we never hung any outside, did we?

Taylor: I can't remember any inside.

Precious: Unless we put them on top of the cooker.

Taylor: Did we wash, shave?

Precious: We didn't shave much, no.

Taylor: We didn't wash much.

Precious: We ??? [Inaudible]our teeth.

[Part 2 0:50:22] Lee: The book suggests that you used lavender bags to combat B.O., body odour.

Precious: I never had one.

Taylor: The main smell, coming back from a journey, was paint. An incredible feeling of paint coming to the hut. Not new paint, just paint, varnish and paint and things.

[Part 2 0:50:43] Lee: What sorts of things did you talk about, or perhaps I should say what sorts of things did you not talk about?

Precious: Do you mean when we were sledging or...

[Part 2 0:50:53] Lee: Either sledging back at base. Were there certain subjects you turned to?

Precious: Sometimes I think there might have been a book that more than one of us had read and we had bits of discussion about that. I remember, I don't know whether we had it on the base or not, probably we did, *The Cruel Sea*.

Taylor: Yes.

Precious: Sometimes quotations came out from that. Someone would shout 'Blow 2' or something like that, [Laughter] which was I think something to do with depth charges, wasn't it?

Taylor: We had a few LP records we played.

Precious: Yes, we had LP records.

Taylor: I was given by my girlfriend who I still see Edwardian record, but you can remember the second line.

Precious: Oh, er..,

Taylor: [Sings] Don't tell my mother I'm living in sin,

Precious: [Also singing] Don't tell the old folks, no.

Taylor: Don't tell my mother I breakfast on gin,
She'll never survive the blow.

Precious: Try and keep little Nellie from harm

Don't let her go to them clubs in Soho

Keep her from nightclubs and tell her from me

What can become of a night at the Metropole

See what it done for me.

[Laughter and applause]

Precious: Beside an empty barrel...

Taylor: We had about six records.

Precious: Beside an empty barrel, upon a foreign shore, there stands the wreck of a human man, a human man no more.

Taylor: It was a great record. She⁸ came down, you may have met her, she came down to see us off.

Precious: Yes.

Taylor: I still see her.

Precious: Another record that we had, John Barber, the first radio operator, before he came on FIDS, had been in Germany, doing what?

Taylor: As a soldier of some sort.

Precious: As a soldier of [the] army of occupation, and he brought down *The Merry Widow*.

Taylor: Yes.

Precious: And we used to play that quite often and I think we got quite used to some of those...

[Part 2 0:53:18] Lee: Are you singing some of those as well, are you?

Taylor: Dick Kenney who was a choral chorister at Wells, did he have his own music?

Precious: I'm not sure whether he...

Taylor: I can't think of any.

Precious: No, he must have been deprived of music, particularly. No instrument there for him to play.

Taylor: He didn't have a banjo or guitar.

Precious: He didn't have a banjo or recorder or anything like that.

Taylor: He didn't really have a person who sang easily.

Precious: No, no. He needed the rest of a choir, didn't he?

Taylor: Yes.

Precious: And of course he was an organist, that was his business in Wells Cathedral.

Taylor: We played cards a bit.

Precious: We played cards quite a bit. This other game, Julian, you were mentioning earlier on?

Taylor: Cribbage, cribbage.

Precious: Cribbage, is it, where we put matchsticks in little holes. Julian and two or three others played bridge. Joe; Ken Powell, I think; possibly John Standing.

⁸ Taylor's girlfriend.

Taylor: Yes. He played bridge that first year. Did we play for money, I'm not sure?

Precious: We played for something or other, probably the chocolate rationing which Dick Kenney always referred to as 'nutty'. He brought down his own stock of 'Mars Bars' as well which kept him going quite a long time.

[Part 2 0:54:53] Lee: We must wrap this in a moment, but did you have a sense that you were there for a purpose beyond the scientific things you were doing? Were you aware that you were also a political statement?

Precious: Perhaps. I think we must have done to a certain extent, yes. Yes, we must have done because the year before we went there, there had been shots fired at Hope Bay. It would be when Ken Blaiklock and George Marsh were sent in. That's right. Which I think was some kind of mistake on the Argentine's part, I'm not sure.

Taylor: Not sure.

[Part 2 0:55:48] Lee: Over-enthusiasm, I think it was.

Precious: Yes.

Taylor: They must have resented us quite a lot, it's really close to Argentina and Chile.

Precious: I don't know whether they... The thing is, well, I don't know if you look back at the history, it goes back to the Papal Bull, doesn't it, that gives Argentina everything east or west of whatever meridian it was, I can't remember. Whether that included Hope Bay at the time or not, I'm not sure.

[Part 2 0:56:27] Lee: Let me just finish, if we may, for this evening, Julian, with the story of the telegram you sent to your mother.

Taylor: The story is true. We lived just south of Kendal in a village called Stainton. We lived in a nice house. I think it had electricity, outside loos, we called the 'Lily House' and I had to clean it out which was an unpleasant job, and my mother was the local doctor and the telegrams were printed fax things and at the end of my first year, I got a message, like we all did, 'What did I want next year?' We were very happy, and so I sent back the obvious thing: 'Cigarettes, whisky and wild, wild women'.

[Part 2 0:57:07] Lee: To your mother?

Taylor: To my mother. And the village postmistress who read all the cables obviously and... Do you remember Tommy Farr, the boxer, he nearly beat Joe Louis? The village postmistress was a great fan of Tommy Farr and she took 10 days to take the telegram, in the fax form, across to my mother and said: 'Doctor, I'm sorry but your son has gone mad'. [Laughter] And I think the story is true. But she never sent [cigarettes etc.] me. My mother failed me. I think the story is true.

[Part 2 0:57:43] Lee: Let's leave it there for this evening, if we may. Thanks very much indeed.

Precious: Thank you.

Taylor: Thank you.

- **Points of interest:**
- **[Part 1 0:16:43]: Suicide at Deception at time of ship's arrival.**
- **[Part 1 0:24:23]: Possible FIDS contribution to plate tectonic theory.**
- **[Part 1 0:28:36]: Finding sledging with dogs easy and enjoyable.**
- **[Part 1 0:36:33]: Bad diet that poisoned dogs and had to be improved.**
- **[Part 1 0:37:57]: Hilarious attempts to develop urinal for dogs.**
- **[Part 1 0:50:13]: Three disasters – collapsed tent; dog team drowned; sledge almost over a cliff.**
- **[Part 2 0:03:32]: Unease on the base about BBC programmes and exaggeration in *Expedition South*.**
- **[Part 2 0:06:54]: The great cake throwing incident.**
- **[Part 2 0:12:32]: Hundreds of whales and seals in holes in the sea ice.**
- **[Part 2 0:14:30]: The birth of the 'Whale Patting Club'.**
- **[Part 2 0:20:50]: Thousands of dying crabeater seals.**
- **[Part 2 0:31:37]: Finding a dinosaur fossil.**
- **[Part 2 0:46:50]: Exaggerated tales of huskies attacking men.**
- **[Part 2 0:54:53]: International incident at Hope Bay.**