

AV8: Vivian Fuchs Oral History Summary

Recorded at Sir Vivian Fuchs home, Barton Road, Cambridge. Interviewed by Charles Swithinbank (CS)

Track 1: 30.6.1998. [00.00.40] Description of VF's childhood. His mother was English and his father was German; father spent the war in a prison camp on the Isle of Man. [00.03.10] Memories of the 1914-18 War; father's money was sequestrated and they relied on the charity of family. [00.06.45] Description of early education at Ashton prep school during the war and on to Brighton College in 1922. [00.09.50] Description of studies at the University of Cambridge reading geology, zoology and botany at St. Johns college; interest in climbing college buildings; mention that Wordie was his tutor; interest in exploring. [00.15.45] Description of Greenland expedition, 1929; geology; climbing Petermann Peak; mention of Frank Debenham and his headless fish story. [00.18.23] Description of expeditions to Africa including Kenya and Uganda with Dr. Worthington and Tanzania with L.S.B. Leakey; geology of the Olduvai [Oldupai] Gorge to help date human remains and tools; mention that his interest is in the natural history of remote places rather than local population. [00.22.00] Description of logistics of working in Africa; comments on hiring porters; comments on relationship Africans had with the British and Indians; mention of Idi Amin. [00.25.40] Description of VF's research on the geomorphology of the Lake Albert [Mwitanzige] / Lake Edward [Rutanzige] region which helped to explain why Crocodiles lived in Lake Mwitanzige but not Lake Rutanzige. [00.28.35] Description of geological fieldwork on the Olduvai and Njorowa Gorge expedition, 1931-33; mention of Hans Reck. [00.29.40] Description of his father; anecdote about not learning German as a child. [00.32.50] Description of writing up results of African fieldwork, 1930's, including his PhD on the Geology of Lake Rudolf [Turkana] Basin, Kenya; mention of Lake Rukwa. [00.34.00] Description of his first wife Joyce Connell's (JC) travels in Africa whilst he was working at Lake Rudolf; first woman to climb Mount Baker [Kiyanja] in the Rwenzori mountains; JC well-travelled before they met. [00.38.00] Description of his love of cars; first car was an Austin 7. [00.39.34] Anecdote about his nickname "Bunny". [00.40.07] Description of the loss of Lake Rudolf expedition members Martin and Dyson; VF's near accident on the lake. [00.45.05] Description of driving home from Nairobi to London. [00.46.30] CS comment that VF's wife did not go on the Suguta Valley and Lake Rukwa Expedition, 1937-38 leading to discussion about women in Antarctica including comments on physiology and issues with mixing the sexes. [00.49.20] Description of the relative value of his African expeditions. [00.50.40] Parents attitude to his academic work. [00.51.40] Description of joining the Army in 1939 and being sent to West Africa; story about part of the division temporarily deserting; VF's return to staff college at Camberley via sea¹. [00.57.54] Description of landing in France shortly after D-Day; travels east to Brussels then on to set up civil administration in Schleswig-Holstein; memories of the war and the administrative skills it taught him. [01.06.30] Description of VF's young family and looking for work after the war; relationship with Lancelot Fleming; Colonial Office offering him leadership of FIDS (Falkland Islands Dependency Survey). [01.08.56 Break - cut to blue background] [01.13.32 ENDS].

Track 2: 02.07.1998. [00.00.45] Description of VF's wartime work from September 1943 preparing for D-Day; he landed D-Day +2; followed the tanks, setting up civil administration in Belgium, Holland and on to Schleswig-Holstein in May 1945; return England October 1946. [00.05.00] Description of joining FIDS after the war; mention of operation Tabarin and Lancelot Fleming; [00.06.20] Relationships with Wordie, Fleming and Leakey. [00.07.28] Comments on the young age of Post-War British Antarctic expedition members compared to other countries. [00.10.00] Description of Colonial Office attitudes to FIDS after 1947; government wanted to disband FIDS but VF was able to convince them to keep it running and secured a larger budget. [00.11.55] Description of the ship John Biscoe, which VF travelled to Antarctica on, December 1947; mention of the mutual exchange of protest notes between British, Argentine and Chilean bases; comment on the reason for the number of British bases and their

¹ [00.52.40] BREAK – old notes

staffing; anecdote about navigating with a school atlas; mention of the US Ice breaker Burton Island and the Americans on Stonington Island. [00.18.00] Description of leading FIDS bases and logistics of Antarctic sledging journeys; comments on radio communication and switching staff from a military style of command to a civilian one. [00.23.30] Comments on working with dogs; mention of the leader 'Darkie'. [00.24.40] Description of a risky expedition over sea ice to see Emperor Penguins on the Dion Islands. [00.26.05] Description of an unexpected year of Antarctic work in 1948/49; mention of 'The Lost 11' and his wife Joyce. [00.28.40] Description of planning the Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic Expedition (CTAE); mention of Ray Adie, Miles Clifford, Noel Odell inadvertently leaking news to the New Zealand Press; Brian Roberts, Colin Bertram, and Larry Kirwan's opposition to the plan; meeting Winston Churchill and Commonwealth financing. [00.35.05] Description of the CTAE office in London and his assistant Eleanor Honeywell; mention of Kirwan and Sir James Marshall-Cornwall questioning his leadership; anecdote about Prince Philip. [00.39.00] Description of the start of the expedition; mention of the Theron and difficulty reaching the Filchner Ice shelf; mention of difficulties the advance party had establishing Shackleton base; mention of VF's return on the Magga Dan and difficulties traversing Recovery Glacier; discussion with CS regarding the route he chose. [00.44.15] Description of competition to reach the pole being made up by the press; mention that Edmund Hilary and the Americans had advised him to postpone his crossing but the team decided to proceed; discussion of inaccuracies in the CTAE seismic data. [00.48.00] Memories of meeting Finn Ronne and visiting his base. [00.50.00] Description of joining NERC (Natural Environment Research Council) in the early days of the organisation's formation. [00.51.15] Comments on impact of the Antarctic Treaty on BAS (British Antarctic Survey). [00.52.25] Comments on visiting the American operation in 1961 and comparison with British operations. [00.54.35] Comments on FIDS lives lost in the Antarctic and VF's management style. [00.56.30] Comments on marrying Eleanor Honeywell; working with NERC; his retirement from BAS in 1973; committee work with the British Association for the Advancement of Science and the Royal Geographical Society; anecdote about how he ran BAS. [01.00.15] Comments on supporting Ranulph Fiennes' Transglobe expedition. [01.01.08] Comments on Mass tourism in the Antarctic and fear that the environment will be destroyed if commercial companies are allowed to expand their operations. [01.02.50 - break to silent shots of CS interviewing VF] [01.04.37 - CS Introduction to camera, questions and silent shots] [01.12.49] END.