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John Kelly

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Rasmuson Library at the University of Alaska in Fairbanks, Alaska

Karen Brewster, interviewer

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John Kelley continues to talk about T3. He said they took the twin otter and landed at the Russian ice station. They brought back gifts from the Russians. They went out to T3. It was hazardous to land. It was summer. In October they sent the twin otter out to see T3. It was headed to Wrangell Island. The crew decided to land on T3. They put a battery into the buoy. They raised several American flags. They tracked T3 for several years. It was headed up to the North Pole and eventually went down by Greenland. This was in 1980-81. They landed in late 1979. Kelly said there was an interesting book called Ice islands about mainly the Arliss islands.

Brewster asked if there was anything else he wanted to talk about. Kelley said they supported a lot of projects. His interest in acoustics developed. There was a commander named Bill Ellison from MIT. He started his own company. Kelley asked about using acoustics to look for the presence of bowhead whales. There was an interest at that time concerning development and bowhead whales. They took equipment out and heard the whales. It developed into a proposal for the OCSEPT program. They called it Project Whales and involved about a million dollars. They published the report on Project Whales. The acoustics developed from there. The Borough Department of Wildlife Management used acoustics for whale census. When he came back to the university he developed a course in bioacoustics. He taught his last course of bioacoustics right before he retired. There was a lot of oil development on the coast and they felt they needed a science advisor to review a lot of the reports. They set up a science advisory committee and he chaired it. The BLM established the NSSI (North Slope Science Initiative). They mandated to have a science technical advisory panel and he was the first chair.

Brewster said his time in Barrow had a great influence on him and the connection with the Native community. Kelley said that is right. He wished he could have done more in a more organized way with the rural students. Not just in Barrow but throughout Alaska. He said the university does a good job. He talked about Sue McHenry. Brewster asked him if there were things he wished he had done differently. Kelley said not really. He thought he would have taken up anything with zeal. He feels satisfied with the path he has taken. Brewster asked about his contribution. Kelley said his love for science. He would hope that some of his research is valuable. He said it is part of a building block. He said most people contribute bit by bit. He said it has been satisfying and he has no regret.

Brewster asked what hasn't worked as far as the university is concerned. Kelley said you don't expect it to be all kudos and easy money. He thinks it works best if they can fix the things that go

wrong. He said they have looked at the laboratory when space was a problem. They were moved around quite a bit which was irritating. He said he did the same thing at Barrow. He said you just make it work. He said they would have loved to have had ship days. They had to go looking for money. He spent time in Japan and they had could count on using a ship when they needed it. He said the universities in Japan are now cut loose from the government and have to look for other places for support. He said BP supported some of his research. Brewster talked about conflict of interest. Kelley said it depends. If it gets controversial it can be negative. They did look at trace metals and organics. He said when he was at NSF he was able to fund a chemist in Oregon. They were doing work on ozone. The researcher also went to the Chemical Manufacturing Association for funding, too. Kelley talked about the conflict with this arrangement. He said from the scientific point of view he stays away from this. It is easier to remain neutral as an academic.