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Admiral McMillian

Terris Moore

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Terris Moore interviews Admiral McMillian about his equipment and technique on the Polar Expedition. Terris Moore wanted the information for his work to lighten equipment for soldiers. Terris Moore asked about sleeping in their clothing without sleeping bags. Admiral McMillian said he didn't know about any other expedition who also slept this way. They didn't really need the piece of canvas they could sleep right on the snow. He talked about using the polar bear skin and using polar bear pants. Nothing ever comes through skin. Terris Moore asked him about a substitute for polar bear skin. Admiral McMillian said the warmest clothing he could find for his 1915-17 trip he ended up throwing away because the condensation from the body turns into ice. This does not happen with clothing made out of fur. They would use union suits under his furs. Terris Moore said Steffanson would use only fur clothing and no textile clothing underneath. Admiral McMillian said they used woolen underclothes. If they were working hard they would over heat and perspire. At night they would shiver with the wet clothes under the furs. They sewed on their underwear when they left the ship. They knew they weren't going to undress. Terris Moore asked about rations. Admiral McMillian said he thought they had the perfect food. They ate eight ounces of pemmican in the morning and at night and crackers and condensed milk. They also had hot tea. He thought it was the perfect food for the trip. Terris Moore asked about the secrets of the success of their trip. Admiral McMillian said they used six ounces of alcohol for fuel for three men for the day. They were in divisions of three men. Each division would build a snow house. Terris Moore asked about being in 50-60 degrees below zero and answering the call of nature. Admiral McMillian said the union suits helped, but they were still out in the blowing snow. He said the most disagreeable part of the trip was untangling the traces of the dogs. Terris Moore asked if there was a complete collection of polar clothes. Admiral McMillian said his clothing was in a museum in town. He said the Eskimos make their clothing every year. He said any Eskimo woman could make the clothing that he used on his expedition. There may be a problem getting the polar bear skin. They use the seal flipper skin for the soles of the boots. Admiral McMillian said Byrd had the Eskimos make his clothing in 1925. He talked about the types of materials the Eskimos like to trade. Terris Moore asked about growing a beard. Admiral McMillian said they did not grow beards and Perry told them to clip their hair short. This prevented the moisture from their breath congealing on their face. Terris asked about using tents. Admiral McMillian said they built a house every night and it took them an hour to build. He said all the moisture from your breath clings to the inside of the tent in long feathers. When it started to get warm they used tents. Terris asked him about traction with their shoes. Admiral Mcmillian said they

could walk better with a soft soled shoe. You use the muscles of the feet to grip the ice. Terris Moore asked about preparing his clothes to sleep without a sleeping bag. Admiral McMillian said sometimes they used the Eskimo sleeping boot. They would pull them on over their regular boots. They would take the grass out of the boot to dry every night. They used sheep skin stockings. They came up to the top of the calf. They used fox tails to make a fur ring and pulled them on over their knees. They also had on their polar skin pants. They had parkas on that they tied together at the crotch. They could pull their arms out of the sleeves and close to their body. They put their mittens into their empty sleeves. They put one of the sleeves over their face. There was arctic fox around the face. Terris Moore asked about how long they could sleep. Admiral McMillian said they slept seven or eight hours. They were only cold when they were perspiring during the day. They had a round hole in the top of their snow house for air. Terris Moore asked if they couldn't build a snow house what would they do. Admiral McMillian said they dug into a snow bank to make a snow cave and then blocked up the hole. Terris Moore asked about body heat melting the snow. Admiral McMillian said with furs they didn't melt the snow. Terris asked about the Eskimos using polar bear skin pants. Admiral McMillian said the polar bear skin is very durable while caribou skin is fragile and it breaks. Terris asked him about using modern equipment for traveling. Admiral McMillian said that you can't go over the polar sea with a motor vehicle on the ice. He said he was the first to use motorized vehicles in the north. He used a Ford snowmobile in 1927. He talked about the problem of using motorized vehicles because of the pressure ridges and the thin ice of the leads. He talked about the advantages of using a snow house. He said you had to find the suitable kind of snow. When it is compacted by the wind it is like handling a block of wood. He thought all men going to the north should be able to build a snow house. He found that alcohol wouldn't burn at -60 so they had to use paper to get the fire going.