

David Hunter

Worked with EO	from 1977 to 1983
Age on joining EO	25
Nationality	British
Role at EO	Driver, Manager EOK
Expeditions/Brief Encounters etc. led or taken	Three Asias. Took out the first raft and helped Tony, Al Townsing and Watters set up EOK in 78. Four Africas. Along with Rein Kamar, took the first truck into Rhodesia/Zimbabwe after the cease fire.
Why did you want to work for EO?	Life in the Royal Marine Commandos wasn't exciting enough.....
Occupation before joining EO	Arctic Commando, Glasgow City Bus Driver, Van Driver, Security Guard on Cash, Fisherman, Candle Maker, Ganger...
Occupation after leaving EO	Paper for Print - Sales, then Distribution and finally Operations. Finally I was fitting kitchens and bathrooms prior to retirement
Now living in	Argyll and Bute - Scotland

Then photo(s)	Now photo(s)

Memories or anecdotes

Recruitment

When I was in the Royal Marines, I'd always had an idea that some of the skills gained there may be transferable to something travel related (without having to carry a rifle). But really had no idea what shape that might take.

A year or so after I left, (1976) I was driving a truck outside Glasgow and picked up a young bloke who was hitching South. Paul Cunnington explained that he was off to join Encounter Overland, a London-based expedition company. They specialised in small group travel on trans-continental journeys – 'overlanding' it was called. It sounded great and he said that I was just the kind of material they looked for; how he might know this I have no idea.

So I made some enquiries and a year later was called to an interview at a posh hotel in Knightsbridge. That day EO was interviewing three hundred blokes for just four jobs! My heart sank and confidence was low.

Tony stood to deliver an introduction – he was about 35 then, devilishly handsome and oh-so charismatic! Obviously the kind of bloke who should have been a Marines officer (when few were).

He made a presentation about the company and showed "the" movie that had been made of the first South America trip – you know, I saw that movie a million times later and can still hear those damn pan pipes!

We then had to stand in four separate queues to be interviewed by ALJ, John Clark, Rob Rumball and Bill Wallace. I was still feeling somewhat down about my prospects as all the candidates seemed much more "worldly", but my spirits rose when I found myself standing behind this American guy who was being interviewed by Bill.

"How do you feel about the mechanics? Confident you can deal with this aspect of the job?"
 "No problem" says the American hopeful "Mechanics is only monkey see monkey do anyway."

I'll never forget Bill's face - and I started to feel a bit better after that.

No decisions were communicated to us that day but I was not totally despondent on my return to Glasgow.

Two weeks went by until an invitation arrived to a second interview – this one was for a long weekend, starting in the workshops in Bedford and taking us to Dorset.

Thirty of us turned up for that and I decided to enjoy the weekend and try to be as natural as possible given the selection going on. A bunch of people from the company were there, including a couple of girls (Linda and Angela) from the office. They turned out to be quite influential in the process.

ALJ's background was as an army officer, as was Martin's, and it showed in the way the selection/elimination process was handled and in the tests that were set – all good fun on the surface but assessed very seriously.

We took turns at driving en route and our efforts were assessed by Rob Rumball. On arrival we undertook normal camping tasks, setting camp, cooking, building fires, maintaining the vehicle, all the time interacting with the candidates and the staff. Driving tests included a vehicle obstacle course and reversing with a trailer (at which ALJ was rubbish!) Rob left his notes lying and we all had a look at what he had said about our driving!

I was conscious of the scrutiny all the time - mind you, I still wouldn't cook!

We were asked to make oral presentations to the group. The subjects of these were culled from our applications and then slightly twisted; I remember "A Truck Driver's Guide to Wine", while my own topic was "A Glasgow Bus Driver in Arctic Norway."

Sunday afternoon, we were driving back to London and stopped at a pub where everyone was bought a drink.

Tony stood: "Thanks all for coming. I know that lots of you could do the job but we have only four places. Here are the four names."

When I heard my name I could feel the blood drain from my head (never felt that before). I tried to keep my expression neutral - but could see Linda Banks watching me and smiling a little knowingly.

When I was dropped off somewhere around St John's Wood I could finally let it out – I whooped, danced and punched the air in delight (never did that before either!)

Thus did I set off on a career of six years (of which more later ...)