

NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
VOICES ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
NOAA HERITAGE AND THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE

AN INTERVIEW WITH ROY CRABTREE
FOR THE
NOAA 50th ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY
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Molly Graham: This begins an oral history interview with Dr. Roy Crabtree for the NOAA 50th Oral History Project. The date is Friday, January 8, 2021. The interviewer is Molly Graham. This is a remote interview with Dr. Crabtree in St. Petersburg, Florida. I'm in Scarborough, Maine. If you could start by saying when and where you were born.

Roy Crabtree: I was born in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, on October 8, 1954.

MG: Can you tell me a little bit about your family history, starting on your mother's side?

RC: Yes. My mother and my father's family are from the Raleigh, North Carolina, Chapel Hill area. My mother was born, I think, in 1926 in Raleigh. Her parents, my grandparents, lived in Raleigh. My mother was an only child. Her grandparents lived in Raleigh until they passed away. She had a family of – well, she had several aunts. Her mother's sisters, who lived in a house, never married. There were three of them, sometimes four, that lived in a house in Chapel Hill right downtown. When they passed away and sold the house, it later became a place called The Residence, which is a pretty well-known restaurant in Chapel Hill right now. That was our family house, where I bet I spent every Christmas of my life there for the first twelve, thirteen years of my life.

MG: Do you know what brought your mother's family to that area in the first place and where they immigrated from?

RC: No. Their family was from that general area – Statesboro, North Carolina area, but when you start getting to my great grandparents and all, the records get kind of sketchy. My father's family was from the Raleigh area as well. My father had a brother who went to work for the oil industry and moved to Baton Rouge. He's since passed away. Well, both of my parents have passed away, too. My father grew up in Raleigh. His parents, of course, lived through the Great Depression and hard times. His father, I don't think, had probably more than an eighth or ninth-grade education, and he worked hard manual labor all of his life. But he really valued education. So my father went on to earn a PhD at the University of North Carolina in English and was an English professor for his career. His brother got a degree at North Carolina State and was a chemical engineer for Exxon.

MG: What year was your father born?

PC: I want to say 1926. He died two years ago and was ninety-three. Both of my parents became of age during World War II. When my father turned eighteen, he had an uncle, who was in the Air Force, and his uncle strongly advised him to go join the Navy. Because if you don't, you're going to be drafted and go into the infantry. You'd be better off in the Navy. So he did join the Navy. He was stationed on an aircraft carrier in the Pacific, the *Monterey*. I think the first time he ever really traveled or went anywhere was when he was a kid in the Navy. He spent his hitch in the Pacific on the aircraft carrier. Then he came back home, went to college on the GI Bill, and married my mother. They were high school sweethearts. So they got married right after the war ended and moved to Chapel Hill, where he was an undergraduate. She had just graduated from the University of North Carolina. Then I was born. I was born in Chapel Hill while my father was in graduate school. We lived there until I was about five or six years old.

Then my father took a job at Furman University, which is in Greenville, South Carolina, and we moved there. He worked at Furman his entire career and became the vice president in charge of academic affairs at Furman. I have two brothers and a sister, and we grew up about a mile and a half outside the Furman University campus. We all went to college at Furman because it was a private school, and one of the perks faculty got was their kids could go there tuition-free. So we all were Furman University graduates.

MG: Did either of your parents share stories about what it was like to grow up during the Great Depression?

RC: Well, my parents were just little babies at that time, so they don't have any real memories of it. Particularly my father's side grew up with not a lot in the house. But I heard stories from my grandfathers and grandmothers about how hard times were. I know my grandfather on my father's side had to travel around a lot looking for work and doing various things and never really had any money or anything. So they lived in a small two-bedroom, one-bath house in downtown Raleigh. My mother's father went to work for the state of North Carolina. He was a college graduate who had gone to the University of North Carolina. He went to work for the state of North Carolina and finished his career there doing that.

MG: Did your father ever share stories from his service in World War II?

RC: Yes. Generally speaking, on the aircraft carrier, he said you had a bed, you had three meals every day. They did see some action, where planes were dropping bombs and things, but he was never injured or suffered from any of that. Somehow, while he was out at sea on the aircraft carrier, he thought a lot about what he wanted to do with his life. My father was kind of a renaissance man. He was very cultured, refined very into the arts. He sang. He decided he wanted to be an English professor; he taught Shakespeare and loved the theater. The story goes, he decided that's what he wanted to do when he was in the Navy. He came back and did all of it. So he had a pretty remarkable life. My mother was a wonderful woman, was a housewife most of her life, raising the four of us. She had some physical problems later in her life; she went blind. She broke her leg and had a lot of problems with her knee. Then the last couple of years of her life, she had a stroke and couldn't talk anymore. So that was all rather sad. But, generally speaking, they both had wonderful lives, traveled, and spent a lot of time in Europe and saw the world.

MG: When would they do the traveling? Was that while you were young or in their retirement years?

RC: They traveled a little bit when I was young. My father started teaching a fall semester in England. He would teach a Shakespeare class in Stratford-upon-Avon. He did that every year for, I'm going to say, fourteen or fifteen years or more. When he was an academic dean at Furman, he did a lot of traveling to various places. They would go over there every year, and he would teach his Shakespeare class in Stratford.

MG: Do you know where his interest in Shakespeare came from? Would he share that interest with you while you were growing up?

RC: I don't know, specifically. I guess he just loved the language and loved the plays. He really loved the theater. I remember seeing my dad perform in a couple of plays and things over the years. He sang. He loved opera and all that. He was the choir director at a church when I was a kid and doing those kinds of things. That was just what he loved. He loved the arts, all of that. So he was that kind of fellow.

MG: Neat. Can you talk to me about your experience growing up? What are some of your earliest childhood memories?

RC: Well, I guess some of the things that steered me to where I wound up. My grandfather on my mother's side had a lot of interest in nature and those kinds of things, but he loved to fish. So he started taking me fishing when I was a kid. There was a lake near our house when I was growing up, and I would ride my bike over there and fish for bass in the afternoons. So I became very interested in fishing when I was a little boy. Then somewhere along the way, someone gave me an aquarium. I always had an aquarium, kept fish, and those kinds of things. Then, at various stages, I would have snakes in the house and all of that. I was into all of those kinds of things. I remember, one night, I had caught a snake and put it in a pillowcase. That's how you carry him around. I went and threw the pillowcase on my bed. It was a non-venomous snake. Anyway, I went and picked up the pillowcase, and the snake was gone. There was a little hole in the corner. So I had to go into the family room and tell my mother and father that there was a snake loose in the house, and my mother just went flying upstairs. Sure enough, I found it. It was in the room [inaudible]. Anyway, I got real interested in that. That led to my interest in fish and fisheries. I guess my career took a really bizarre path to get to where I am. But that's what steered me that way.

MG: Yes, I'm interested in hearing all of that because I don't have a lot of details before your time with NOAA [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration]. But first, remind me when your family made the move to Greenville?

RC: Well, I was probably six years old, so it would have been 1960, '61, somewhere along those years. I did all of my grade schools in Greenville. So it would have been then.

MG: You were six years old.

RC: Yes, five or six.

MG: Can you describe the neighborhood you lived in and the community where it was?

RC: Well, there were a couple of neighborhoods. When we first moved there, we rented a house in the downtown area of Greenville, which I don't remember very much about. I've been back into the neighborhood and things. I remember there were a couple of neighbors who had swimming pools, and we'd go swim there. We lived there – I don't know – maybe one, two years, and then we bought a house a few miles from there in Greenville. We lived there for six, seven, eight years. It was on a street called Cyrus Court. It was a dead-end cul-de-sac, which was nice. We lived there until all of my siblings were born. When we first went to Greenville,

Furman University was a downtown campus in downtown Greenville. But not long after we got there, they built a new campus that was out towards Travelers Rest and more out of town. When the campus relocated there, eventually, my father bought a lot in a neighborhood and built a house there. That's where we then moved, and he lived there until he was too old to live there anymore and went to a retirement home. Interestingly, because my father was a Shakespearean, the neighborhood we moved to was called Stratford forest. Our address, the street we lived on, was Hathaway Circle. All of the streets in Stratford forests were named after Shakespearean kinds of places. Anyway, that was more rural with larger lots. It was a real college community. Most of the families there at that time had some affiliation with Furman University. That's really where I grew up.

MG: Being in a college community, can you talk a little bit about the political atmosphere during the 1960's? You were a little on the young side, but what was your awareness of the civil rights movement and the anti-war protests, things like that?

RC: Well, it was the deep south. So it was very racist. The schools were segregated. That was the way it was. My parents were very enlightened. They didn't engage in any of that sort of thing. But the neighborhoods, everything was completely segregated at that time. Then, when I was in – back in those days, we didn't have a middle school. So, where I grew up, we had an elementary school and high school. You went to high school in the seventh grade. They were relatively small schools. I think, probably when I was in the tenth grade or so, they integrated the schools. I was fine with it all, but a lot of people weren't. So that was just something you dealt with. I remember the rioting that went on. I remember Martin Luther King. I remember what people would say about Martin Luther King, which was not flattering, that you would hear from the talk, but never any of that did I hear from my parents at all. So I was fortunate with that. I remember the Vietnam War and the protests in the '60s very well. I, like a lot of my generation, was very much opposed to the war in Vietnam, and I grew my hair down to my shoulders when I was in high school and was as radical, I guess, as anybody. I remember registering for the draft when I turned eighteen. But at that point, we were basically pulling out of the war, and they weren't sending more people over. So I don't even really remember what my draft number was. But my older brother was two and a half, three years older than me. I remember when his draft number came up, and he was fortunate that he got a good number. So none of us were drafted and ever went to the war. But I remember all of the hoopla and the protests with it. But living where I was, you didn't really see any of it other than on television. So we were kind of insulated. Back then, we had three stations. One of them you can barely see a lot of times, so it wasn't news all the time like it is today.

MG: Tell me a little bit about the schools you attended, the subjects you were interested in, and any teachers that stand out to you.

RC: Well, I went to Travelers Rest Elementary School and Travelers Rest High School, which were pretty small schools. South Carolina wasn't known for the quality of public schools. I was, at that point, interested in biology and those kinds of things. I had a couple of biology teachers who were relatively young, and I thought they were pretty good. I enjoyed that. I enjoyed dissecting animals and all of that. But a lot of the classes I took were pretty terrible. I didn't apply myself, really. I was a goof-off, I guess I'd say, in high school. I would say I was a

harmless goof-off. I wasn't out getting in trouble or doing anything like that. I can remember getting so far behind in, I think it was, Latin when I was in high school that I was afraid I was going to flunk and my father was going to have a fit at me. Anyway, not a whole lot stands out so much in terms of my high school years.

MG: Did you know you wanted to study biology in college?

RC: Yes. I went to college. I don't know why, but I was pretty set on what I wanted to do. I was going to be a biology major. I was going to go to graduate school, get a degree, and I was going to be a college professor, I thought. So I did part of that. I went to college and was a biology major. I studied hard in college and applied myself because the classes were a whole lot better. I was interested in a lot of it. I spent four years at Furman, graduated in – let's see. I started in 1972. I graduated in 1976. I got married to my first wife, who I'd known in high school, and applied to graduate schools. I got into a few schools, but the one that offered me an assistantship was the University of South Carolina. So I started in the School of Marine Science at the University of South Carolina in 1977 and got a master's degree from the University of South Carolina. I finished there in – I guess it was 1978. All the work I'd done there – it was mostly an estuarine program, so you were working in the estuaries of South Carolina. I had it in my head that I wanted to go to sea and go out on oceanographic vessels and do some of that. I guess it seemed like a romantic notion. So when I finished the master's program, I applied to the Virginia Institute of Marine Science [VIMS], and I got accepted and got an assistantship. I went up there, and they had an NSF [National Science Foundation] grant and some other grants to do deep-sea work. So I did my dissertation work on deep-sea fishes and spent a lot of time out in the middle of the ocean while I was up there,

MG: This was for your PhD?

RC: Yes.

MG: Just backing up a little bit. Were you happy to go to Furman University, or had you considered other colleges?

RC: No, I was fine with it. I didn't consider any other colleges. I'm not sure. I think my father would have said, "Well, you better get a scholarship if you want to go somewhere else." But it really never came up. I was Furman-indoctrinated. We went to Furman basketball games and all of that. I worked on the Furman maintenance crew summers while I was in high school and after I went to college. So Furman was in my blood, and I never really considered going anywhere else until I went to graduate school.

MG: Did you live at home and commute to school, or did you stay on campus?

RC: I stayed on campus and stayed in one of the dorms.

MG: Can you talk to me about campus life and what you remember doing for fun?

RC: Well, we did a lot of athletic activities. My favorite thing was I loved to play basketball. I wasn't particularly good at it. I would go to the gym and play basketball as much as I could. We played intramural basketball and things like that. I enjoyed that. At that time, Furman had a pretty good basketball team. We were actually ranked in the top twenty in the nation. So going to basketball games and all of that was a big thing. We did the usual college stuff. Furman was a Baptist college, at least at that time, so there was theoretically no drinking on campus, and there were no campus bars, but we worked around that in a variety of ways. We did the usual – sit around drinking beer – kinds of things.

MG: Can you talk a little bit about the biology curriculum and the classes you took there?

RC: It was pretty basic stuff – basic biology, molecular, cellular, physiology. I took an embryology course, genetics, that usual kind of stuff. But I did also take a field botany course once from this old professor, Dr. Leland Rogers. I liked him. He would take us – every class almost, we'd go out in the woods somewhere, and he'd identify every plant there was and tell you about it. So that was interesting. Then a couple of us designed a self-study class, where we were going to go out in parts of South Carolina and sample freshwater streams and things and identify what we caught. I wouldn't say it was research because it was pretty disorganized. But we did a little sampling and this and that. I learned how to identify fish and those kinds of things. I enjoyed that.

MG: You went on to the University of South Carolina. Can you say again why you chose that program?

RC: Well, as I recall, I applied to the University of Georgia, the University of South Carolina, Florida State [University], and the University of North Carolina. I didn't get into North Carolina or Florida State. I got into Georgia, but they didn't offer me any financial aid, and it was going to be out-of-state tuition. I got into the University of South Carolina, and they offered me a tuition waiver and a teaching assistantship. I didn't have any money. Student loans just weren't something you really thought about back in those days. So that's where I went.

MG: Tell me about the teaching assistantship.

RC: So South Carolina was one of the few schools around that actually had an undergraduate marine science program. So the teaching assistants were basically the lab instructors. We would do the labs for the students. Most of us in the graduate program had teaching assistantships. Course professors would set up various labs where you would look at animals and do this and that. It would be our job to go in there and do it and grade the tests and those kinds of things. We did some occasional field trips and things like that. They were undergraduates mostly that we dealt with.

MG: At this point, were you hoping to continue teaching? Was this experience solidifying that goal for you?

RC: Yes. I think that's what I figured I would do when I went on. I enjoyed teaching and dealing with students. So that was still my plan at that point. I didn't really do any meaningful

research at the University of South Carolina. I got the degree, and I got some experience doing things. Like I said, I applied to VIMS mostly because I wanted to go to sea. When I got to VIMS, it was an eye-opener. VIMS was a crazy place back in those days. There were a lot of guys in graduate school who I think went to graduate school to avoid the draft to some extent, so there were some real characters when I went to VIMS, and it was a much bigger program than the University of South Carolina. Anyway, it had lots of students and a lot of people that I still know and are still around in the field. I did spend a lot of time out at sea. We'd go out on these research vessels for thirty days or so. I trawled, pulling bottom trawls in some of the deepest waters in the Atlantic Ocean. So I did a lot of that. But I got a little disillusioned because I wasn't happy with the coursework and some of the guidance and instruction that I got. I felt like I learned more from my fellow graduate students than anyone else. I did teach for a semester at Virginia Commonwealth University right before I graduated. But the other thing that had happened over the course of my graduate career is I got more and more interested in fishing, and I became a big fisherman on the Outer Banks of North Carolina. I bought a Jeep, and I would drive down there and drive all over the beaches and camp in the back of my jeep and surf fish. Then I got to be really enthusiastic about fishing in the Florida Keys for bonefish and tarpon. I bought a boat, actually, while I was up at VIMS. When I graduated from VIMS and got my PhD, my wife at the time and I decided, "Screw this," and we moved to the Florida Keys and moved to Islamorada, Florida. I proclaimed myself to be a backcountry fishing guide. Anyway, we lived down there for, I guess, four and a half, almost five years. It was a financial struggle, but I did learn to fish and learned the water. There was a guy who lived across the – the Keys are a funny place because you'll have a relatively inexpensive house on a dry lot. Then right across the street will be the houses on the water, and they'll be million-dollar homes. So the guy lived across the street from me, a guy named Charlie McCarthy. He was a retired veterinarian, and he loved to fish. So he and I would go out fishing every morning together when I was trying to get some sort of guiding business going. We'd go fish for tarpon and bonefish every morning, come back in, and drink Bloody Marys. We became pretty good friends. Charlie had been fishing down there since the 1950's, so he was pretty tied into a lot of the community. He introduced me to one of the guides down there, who was a fellow named Hank Brown. Hank Brown was probably one of the top-rated fishing guides in Islamorada. Hank figured out – he got to know me, and we hit it off pretty well. He found out I had a college degree. I didn't tell anybody I had graduate degrees. Hank, at that time, was the secretary of the Florida Keys Fishing Guides Association. So he told me, "Okay, now you're going to be the secretary of the Florida Keys Fishing Guides Association," and brought me a file cabinet and said, "You got to do all these things. I don't want to do it anymore." So I said, "Okay, I'll do it." When that happened, Hank started teaching me how to fish. Hank started booking me and giving me business. Hank was really what kept me afloat and kept me in business down there. So I was the secretary of the Florida Keys Fishing Guides Association. It was during my years in the Florida Keys that I went to my first meeting of the Florida Marine Fisheries Commission. They were talking about regulations for redfish at that time, and I became very interested in what was going on with fisheries and things. I remember watching the commissioner sit up there and thinking, "You know, I'd like to do that, be one of those guys up there making these decisions." That was really where I first got active in fisheries management a little bit. The first time I ever testified at a fisheries meeting, I testified on behalf of the Florida Keys Fishing Guides Association. So I was a constituent testifying to the management agency at that point. At any rate, it was a crazy thing to do, and a lot of people thought I was throwing my career away when I finished graduate

school and just took off to the Keys. But I got through it somehow. So I'd lived in Islamorada for, I don't know, four, four and a half years. And a guy I'd gone to graduate school with who worked for the Florida Department of Natural Resources here in St. Petersburg – the Florida Marine Research Institute, although it wasn't called that at the time. He called me up and said there was a job up here, that they wanted to hire a tarpon biologist, and did I know anybody who was interested. Well, it had turned out that while I was in the Keys, one of my old professors at the University of South Carolina had contacted me. He had a graduate student, a fellow named Ned Cyr, who wanted to do a thesis on tarpon age and growth, and they needed fish. Could I help him get some fish? So I said, "Yeah, come on down. We can go to some of the tournaments and work on the fish they bring in." So I was doing that. At any rate, when I applied for the job here in St. Pete with the state, I could say I'm already doing some tarpon research working with these guys at the University of South Carolina. Anyway, I can remember driving up from Islamorada in my old banged-up pickup truck. It used to overheat a lot because one of the radiators was leaking. I remember I would stop on Alligator Alley [section of Interstate 75 in Florida] and go down to the slough, get a bucket of water, and refill the radiator. But I came up here and interviewed for the job. I got the job. My wife and I moved up here to St. Pete in 1988. I, very soon after that, got divorced. But I've lived here in St. Pete ever since, with the exception of one stretch of a year and a half when I moved to Tallahassee. So I worked for the state of Florida as a biologist, working on mostly recreational fish species. I ultimately became a senior research scientist there, and I remarried. It was a great job; I could do pretty much anything I wanted, and it was fun. The trouble was the pay was terrible. The state salaries just were hard. So my wife had twins. My twin girls are twenty-four now, so they're all grown, but we were pretty broke at the time. I had a friend who had left the state and gone to work for NMFS [National Marine Fisheries Service] at the regional office, which was here in St. Petersburg. I knew that NMFS paid considerably better than the state. So they had a job opening, and I talked to him about it. I applied for the job. This would have been '98, and it was in the last part of the Clinton Administration. So I got the job, and I came to work for the National Marine Fisheries Service at the regional office and was a plan coordinator. The money was better. I didn't like the work. It was very bureaucratic. I never got to travel, and I was stuck in a little office. At that time, the regional administrator [RA] was Andy Kemmerer, who has since passed away. The big issue was the red snapper. The big issue in the Gulf is always red snapper; it seems like. I ended up being the plan coordinator for red snapper things. But really, when I first got to the regional office, they didn't give me much to do. They just gave me a copy of the Magnuson Act and said, "Here's your office." So I was kind of bored. But anyway, I knew red snapper was the big thing, and I had done stock assessments and had a lot of background in that kind of work. So I decided to make myself an expert on red snapper and all of the assessments and everything that's been done. I just sat in my office and studied all this stuff. Well, Andy Kemmerer got moved up to Silver Spring and became the head of the habitat direction, and we were going to get a new regional administrator coming in. That turned out to be Bill Hogarth. Bill Hogarth came in and was probably there about a year, but I got to know Bill very well. Bill and I hit it off extremely well. Because I had invested all that time in red snapper, when Bill had questions about, "What does this mean? What's this," I was able to answer him. So Bill moved me up a little bit in the regional office and got me involved in some of the council meetings and those kinds of things. Penny Dalton was the assistant administrator for Fisheries at that time. I think Andy Rosenberg was the deputy. Andy left, and so they wanted Bill to come up to Silver Spring and be the deputy assistant administrator. So he did.

About this time, the Florida Marine Fisheries Commission had merged with the Florida Freshwater Fish Commission and formed the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. There was a guy who had been the executive director for the old Florida Marine Fisheries Commission named Russ Nelson. He had been around a long time, and I knew him. Russ became the director of Marine Fisheries for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission. I remember one day, I was at a meeting somewhere, and some of the guys started talking about [how] they had gotten all these pornographic emails from Russ Nelson, and what in the world was going on? There was a whole lot of attention in the newspapers and everything about it. Well, it turned out, Russ hadn't sent those emails; somebody had hacked into his computer somehow. There's a lot of guesswork about who did that, and I think I know who was involved in that, but I won't say because I'm not sure. At any rate, he didn't send it, but there was a big investigation because it was all in the papers. He had been a very polarizing figure, and the commercial fishing industry in Florida hated him. So they went for blood. It turned out that even though he hadn't sent those emails, he had been surfing – the internet was new back then. He had been surfing some adult sites on his work computer during work hours. So he was fired. So I talked to Bill Hogarth, and I said, "Well, I'm going to apply for Russ Nelson's job to be the Florida state director." Bill said, "Well, I hate to lose you. I'll offer as much as I can to keep you here." But Bill wasn't in St. Pete anymore anyway, at that point. Anyway, I went ahead and applied for that job, and I got it. So I moved to Tallahassee, and I lived there and was the director of Florida Marine Fisheries. So I was a voting member of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council and a voting member of the South Atlantic Council. I was the Florida Commissioner on the Gulf States Commission and Atlantic States Commission. So it was pretty heady stuff for me. Now I was one of those guys sitting up at the table at these meetings. While I was the director of Marine Fisheries in Florida, Bill Hogarth became the Assistant Administrator [AA] for Fisheries in the [George W.] Bush administration. I think I went to Tallahassee in about 2000, right at the beginning of the Bush Administration. I'll never forget on 9/11 when all of that happened. It had been a very quiet summer, in terms of news, up until September the 11th. But there had been a series of shark attacks. There was a fatal shark attack in Florida. There was one off of the coast of North Carolina, and there were a couple of others. I actually think there was a fatal one in Florida and one other one up in the Panhandle. The media had jumped all over what's going on with sharks, and everybody was throwing out their reasons. So the Florida Legislature decided they were going to have a hearing about sharks, and so I was going to go testify to the Florida Legislative Committee on sharks. Some people were blaming it on too many sharks, so the shark longline guys said, "Turn us loose, and we'll solve the problem for you." People had all kinds of crazy notions about it. Anyway, the morning I go to testify before the Florida committee about sharks, I'm giving my spiel, and I noticed some staffers came in and were talking to the members. I noticed nobody's paying any attention to me anymore. The chairman gavelled and said, "We have to evacuate the building." He didn't say why. That's it. I remember thinking, "Well, I'm off the hook, then." Well, that was 9/11. We evacuated the building because that's what everybody did that morning. I went back to my office and saw the World Trade Center in flames on television. Anyway, since Bill had become the assistant administrator for Fisheries, that meant the RA position in the Southeast region was open, and they finally advertised it. I had preferred living in St. Pete over Tallahassee. Again, there was a big pay difference between what the NMFS RA made and what the director in Florida made. So I applied for the RA job, got it, and moved back to St. Pete – I think that would have been

January of 2003 – as regional administrator. That was my job until about a week ago when I retired.

MG: Well, there's a number of things I want to go back to and follow up on. When you finished college, was there a year in between going back for graduate school? How did you spend that year? Am I correct on the timeline?

RC: No, I finished college and pretty much worked in the summer and then went straight to Columbia and started graduate school. Then, when I finished graduate school in Columbia, I went up the next fall and started in VIMS. I wish I had taken a little more time off back then. I think I needed it. I probably needed to grow up a little bit. I think it would have been good for me to think a little bit more about what I was going [to do]. I almost committed professional suicide when I bailed out of everything and moved down to the Keys because I wasn't publishing anything or doing anything. I just was lucky that it worked out. Over the years, as I became a manager, one of the famous things fishermen say to you is, "Well, you don't know what it's like to make a living on the water." And I was always able to say, "That's not true. I do know what it's like. I did it. I ran a charter operation in the Keys for these years." That really served me well over the years. But it was kind of a crazy thing to do. I was pretty lucky that things just kind of fell in place for me the way they did.

MG: Yes. I want to ask you a little bit more about that. But first, can you tell me more about the VIMS program? Can you explain its connection to the College of William & Mary? Also, you described it as "crazy," and I wondered what you meant.

RC: So it is the School of Marine Science for the College of William & Mary in Williamsburg. But the VIMS campus is actually at Gloucester point, so about twenty miles, fifteen miles outside of Williamsburg. At that time, there wasn't much else out there, just the VIMS campus. People would go to VIMS and stay there for a long time. We worked pretty hard, and we published papers, but it was a party atmosphere with a lot of drinking. It got to where it was who can be more outrageous than the others. I won't name names, but there were some faculty members who seemed to egg that stuff on. I don't know. It was an interesting time. I don't think it was all that constructive necessarily for me. But it was a Wild West. That was back in the days, too, where you could get away with a lot of that kind of thing that you can never do anymore. We would go over to the William & Mary campus and go to parties and things like that and drive back. The kind of things you think about now doing that – you just would never do it now, but back then, it was what we all did. So it was just that kind of thing. You were out in the sticks, and you lived down in the sticks.

MG: Did being married help buffer you from these crazy times?

RC: It probably did, but that and moving to the Keys and all that took a toll on my marriage, and that ended at that point. But if I had been single, yes, I would have probably – who knows?

MG: Can you just say a little bit more about your experience on the research vessels out in the Atlantic? How long would you go out, and what were you looking at?

RC: Well, we did a lot of work on the *Columbus Iselin*. At that time, VIMS actually had a – I think was a hundred-and-twenty-foot vessel called the *Virginian Sea*. We used that some, but it had a tendency to break down, and nothing much worked on it. So the best vessel we used was the *Columbus Iselin*. We did a lot of work sampling around the Bahama Islands in the Exuma Sound, Tongue of the Ocean, and then we did some work out in the Sargasso Sea. Usually, they would be thirty-day cruises. For example, if you were going out in the Sargasso Sea, it'd take you four or five days to get out there. Then, we were doing trawls sometimes at three, four, five-thousand meters depth. So it would take you eight hours to do one tow. There were a lot of empty hours out there. I went out on a Navy vessel once, *the Bartlett*, and I think it was another thirty-day cruise that we did in the Caribbean Sea. I got on the boat in Puerto Rico and got off the boat in Curacao. I flew from Curacao to Grand Turk Island and got right back on another boat, the *Columbus Iselin*, and did a second thirty-day leg. I had my sea legs at that point. It was interesting. We trawled up a lot of stuff that no one had ever seen before and things, but a lot of empty hours while you're waiting on the wire to go out and the wire to go down. I think the last cruise I was on, we were out in the Sargasso Sea, and we snapped the wire on the boat. So that was like, "Oh, well. We're done. Can't touch bottom." They didn't have extra wire on board because we lost so much. So it's five-day steam and back home. So you did a lot of time reading and things like that and writing papers because we were trying to do that. But I got enough time at sea that I never really had the urge to do a lot of it again, although I have gone to sea subsequent to that. I went to sea some when I was working for Florida. I also went out on a vessel called the – I think it was the *Anton Dohrn*, which was a German research vessel, a big one, about three-hundred-foot. I got on that in Woods Hole, and we trawled up and down the East Coast and went back in. So I saw a lot of interesting things, and it was a good experience.

MG: Can you say a little bit about what inspired the move to the Florida Keys and how you established yourself there? Did you know anybody?

RC: Well, I had been fishing down there some. I guess I just loved it. I was a little tired of academics and all that. I wanted to do something where you did something, and you saw the results right away. I wanted to really learn the water. I don't know. So I just hitched up this boat and went down there. My wife got a job, and we had a little bit of money. I just would get on my boat every morning and go back. The water is really complicated down there. You're back in the Everglades. It's shallow. It takes a while to learn it, and it's easy to get lost and turned around, but I'd go out on the water every day, learning the area. I had a couple of neighbors who fished a lot, and I fished with them some. At the marina where I kept my boat, I got to know a couple of the younger guides down there, and we'd fish a little bit. But I was sort of starving, and I needed more bookings. It really wasn't until I got to know Hank Brown and got engaged with Hank that I was getting all the bookings – enough that I could scrape by. Of course, you're a young kid at that point, and you feel like you're indestructible, but you didn't have any health insurance or anything; you didn't have any money. It was very physically demanding work. It's hot. I don't know if you know anything about bonefish and tarpon, but it's basically an eighteen-foot boat, so it's a little boat, and it has this platform on top of the motor that you stand down. You're fishing in water that's one or two feet deep, generally speaking. You pull the boat around with a customer [who] stands on the front of the boat. You see the fish, and he casts to them. So it's physically demanding, hot work. But it can be a lot of fun. It was just an incredible place. I can remember fishing ninety straight days, once every

single day. That really wore you out and. You were at the mercy of the weather, all of that. So it was a neat experience. I'm glad I did it. It was a unique thing. I realized that this is a young man's game. People, when I announced I was retiring, asked me, "Are you going to go back down to the Keys and start guiding again?" I'm like, "No, no way. I couldn't do that anymore." So this was before the internet. So I would put an ad in *Florida Sportsman* magazine and things. I had my little Captain Roy Crabtree fishing card. But mostly, you got customers by the older established guys who were booked all the time. They would get more bookings than they could book, so they'd kick some of their overflow business to you.

MG: Were your customers mainly tourists?

RC: Yes, most of them were from somewhere else. A lot of them were pretty well-to-do, well-off guys. And some of them would come down and fish four or five days in a row with you. Some of them would book you for the same week and days year in and year out. We had tournaments. We had some tarpon tournaments and bonefish tournaments, and you'd book people at those.

RC: Were there ways in which your biology background and knowledge assisted or influenced your role as a guide?

RC: I don't know. You knew a little bit more about some things than the average guy would. So when you're out your customers – I mean, you're out on a boat all day with, a lot of times, just one person, sometimes two. So you're shooting the breeze all day long. You could talk about those kinds of things. But generally speaking, people didn't know that I had a PhD, and I didn't tell anybody because I didn't want that at that point. Towards the end, some of them did. When I applied for the tarpon biologist job, they did. But in terms of actually knowing how to fish or catching the fish, no, there was nothing you learned in school that was going to help you with any of that. That was more local knowledge and just learning how to do it.

MG: You talked a little bit about Hank Brown and how he was your entrée into your next step. You can say more about that and how he changed your career path?

RC: Well, he didn't want to be secretary of the Guides Association anymore because he didn't want to fool with it, so he made me secretary. That meant I got to know all the other guides. That was helpful because then more people would send me bookings and give me tips on what's going on with fish. Just, generally speaking, the fact that Hank took me under his wing, I was accepted by everyone because they were pretty standoffish, and they were suspicious of young guys just showing up and trying to be guides. I guess I became like that after I'd been down there a few years myself. Interesting story. So when I went down there, Ronald Reagan was President, and George Bush, the elder, was vice president. Well, George Bush, Sr. was a huge fisherman, and he loved to come down to the Keys. He always fished with the same guy, George (Hummel?), who was a pretty old guy and didn't really guide anymore back then. But (Hummel?) would go to Hank, say, "Okay, Vice President Bush is coming down with a bunch of people. We need this many guide boats to fish them." Well, Hank got me and said, "You're going to fish with the Vice President's party." And so I did. We had the Secret Service guys come out and search our boats and look all at them. Then, we ran out to this pre-decided place

back in Florida Bay, and then the Vice President and his buddies came out on a big cigarette boat and got on our boats. I fished with Nick Brady, who was the Secretary of the Treasury at the time; Alan Simpson, who was a Senator from Wyoming; and a couple of other guys. I did that twice, once when Bush was vice president and once when he was President. And after I did it, I got a picture mailed to me. George Bush had gotten on my boat to make a phone call. They'd set up a satellite dish and everything. So I have this picture of me sitting on my boat with George Bush standing beside me, talking on the phone, and he signed it and everything. So that's my neatest guiding story.

MG: Was it an opportunity to bend their ear about some of the issues you saw on the water?

RC: At that time, there was an issue that seagrass was dying off in Everglades National Park, and we didn't feel like it was getting the attention it needed. So what you did at lunchtime is we'd pull all the boats together and stake them out. We had sandwiches and stuff, and we'd all sit there and eat. Well, when we did that, the superintendent of Everglades National Park ran out to have lunch with the – I think he was the President then. I remember Hank Brown starts talking about, "Mr. President, we're really concerned. All the seagrass is dying back here." I remember he said, "If these were trees dying in Yellowstone Park, it'd be a huge national deal. But because it's here and it's in the water, nobody seems to give a damn about it." I remember I thought the superintendent of Everglades National Park – he turned white. I thought he was going to fall off the boat when Hank said that. So it got some attention. I don't know that it ever – the whole thing with replumbing the Everglades got a lot of attention, but it's still kind of a mess probably to this day. But it was interesting. Some of those guys – Alan Simpson was known for having a real sense of humor, and he was a hoot out on the boat. We had a pretty good day fishing, caught a lot of tarpon, so it was a good time.

MG: Earlier, you mentioned an experience testifying in front of a fisheries council. I wasn't sure which one and what your testimony was about.

RC: It was the Florida Marine Fisheries Commission, and it was about redfish, which had closed down at the time. This was in the midst of a lot of concerns about the health of red drum stock. This was when Paul Prudhomme was doing the blackened redfish [craze?]. Anyway, the state had closed down the fishery. I don't remember what the specific issue was, although it was redfish. We were pretty conservative in terms of what we wanted as guides and management because most of our customers came from out of state and other places, and they wanted to catch fish, but they didn't really care about eating them. So we were happy to catch and release fish. We just wanted lots of fish. Anyway, the guides decided someone needed to go up and testify. Somehow – I don't remember how – I got the nod to go up there and do it. So me and a woman I know, who worked for one of the organizations down there, drove up somewhere and went to the commission meeting. And then, I testified and came back. It must have been somewhere in the – I'm guessing it was in the Miami, South Florida area because we drove to it. I don't remember that we spent a night. I think we just drove up and talked.

MG: Tell me more about the graduate student you were working with on the tarpon research and the objective there? What was the research on?

RC: Well, the main part of that was to look at trying to age tarp and figure out how old they get. So you take these bones called otoliths out of their skull and cut sections in them. They have rings, kind of like tree rings, and you try to count them and come up with ages. So he was working on a PhD, and did his dissertation on tarpon, and graduated. Ned Cyr went on to become the director of the Office of Science and Technology in Silver Spring for NMFS. He did that for a few years. I think he retired about a year ago. But Ned and I spent a lot of time together. We got a couple of grants along the way. We got one from the New York Zoological Society to do tarpon work in Costa Rica. Through my fishing guide connections, I had gotten to know a guy named Bill Barnes who owned Casa Mar fishing lodge in Costa Rica on the Caribbean coast. Ned and I had drinks with Bill Barnes one night; we got along well with him. So Bill told us, "Well, if you can get to San Jose, I'll get you into the lodge and give you free room and board and a guide." So we used our grant to pay for the airfare and all of that, and then we'd go to Casa Mar. We basically would go tarpon fishing, catch tarpon, and then bring them back into the dock and dissect them. It was great. The food was good. The bar was always open; it was free. We enjoyed Bill, and you stayed in these little cabins around this lodge. It was a beautiful place. Monkeys all over everywhere. I think we went down there – I don't know – four or five times over a period of a couple of years. We published a couple of papers on tarpon biology in Costa Rica. I got to know some people in Costa Rica, [including] one young kid who was doing and interested in tarpon research, and I periodically get emails from him even to this day.

MG: Is this the research that got you to your first role at NMFS? Or was that the Florida Marine Research Institute?

RC: Yes, that was all work that was done while I was at the Florida Marine Research Institute. I think when I got the job with NMFS, I don't think they cared what kind of research I was doing; they just wanted someone that had a background in biology and science and knew something about fisheries. My biggest advantage when I got the job at NMFS is I knew some of the people who were at NMFS and were doing the interviews and making the hiring decision. The regional office was here in St. Petersburg. So there were a number of people at NMFS at that time who started their careers working for the state and then moved to NMFS because the money's better. After I became Regional Administrator, I continued that long tradition of cherry-picking the best people that the state had and bringing them over to NMFS by offering them a lot more money, basically. So the regional office has a considerable number of people on the staff who, at one time, worked for the state of Florida.

MG: Can you talk a little bit about when you left briefly to work for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission?

RC: Yes.

MG: What about that position appealed to you?

RC: I felt like it was a step up and a big move up in my career. It was a division director, so I got a pay raise out of it. At the regional office, I was a staffer doing work with the council. When I took this job, I became a member of the council. So I went from being just a staffer to

being a director. It was high profile. I mean, Florida's a big state, big fisheries, and to be the director – so it's a high-profile job, and that was what I wanted. So I felt like staying where I was at the regional office. There weren't a lot of ways to move up; somebody had to retire. I, at that time, didn't see that I would ever become Regional Administrator. But I knew that if I just stayed where I was at the regional office, that I just wasn't going to get that kind of experience. So I'm a big believer that if you want to move up in your career, you need to be able to move around and be willing to go to get one of those jobs. If you just wait for it to come to you, you're going to be waiting a long time. Anyway, that was what led to that.

MG: Can you say a little bit about the work you did in that position in Tallahassee?

RC: Well, mostly, you were involved in a few things. One, you were on the Gulf and the South Atlantic Councils. So you were a voting member of these federal councils. So you were involved in federal fisheries management. But you also had a state commission, which I think was seven commissioners that you worked for, basically. So you had to write the briefing documents and guide their decision-making. I had to go to the commission meetings and make all the presentations. I had a staff of forty-some people, I guess, maybe. So you spent most of your time preparing for or going to commission meetings. Then you also had to deal with the Florida Legislature. So I got a lot of experience dealing with that kind of thing, which I had never done before. I remember my first meeting of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission – shark feeding and sharks. This was the summer of the shark attacks; it was right up before [September 11th]. So we had a commission meeting. Shark feeding had become a big deal because there had been these attacks, and there were some operators in South Florida where they were going out with divers and feeding sharks. A lot of people were upset about that. So here I come in, the new guy, new director, and that's the first issue I've got to deal with on the agenda. I've got to get up and talk about it. I remember when I got up in front of the commission, I think there were three or four different TV crews there. So I got up after my introduction before this commission for the first time and all these television cameras and a packed house – there must have been a hundred-and-fifty, two-hundred people there. But it all went well. I enjoyed it. I enjoyed the commission meetings and all that. It was exciting at that time for me.

MG: What was your relationship with fishermen at the time? Would they attend these meetings?

RC: Yes, they would attend the meetings. We'd have big crowds sometimes. They would attend council meetings, and we'd have big crowds at council meetings. I knew a lot of them, particularly the recreational guys, because of my background with the state doing research and my fishing days, but there was real bad blood with the commercial fishing industry when I went up there. Part of that was because Florida had passed a – it was a referendum that was held to ban gill nets in state waters, and it passed. It was very controversial, and it put a lot of gillnet guys out of business. Anyway, there was a lot of bad blood and a lot of resentment. I wanted to try and improve that situation with the commercial guys. They really didn't trust the state at all. I don't know that I made a whole lot of headway. I was only there a year and a half, but I remember being really amazed at how bad the atmosphere of those guys was. When I came down to be regional administrator, I tried to work with everybody and be balanced in the whole thing. There's clearly a place for commercial fishing, and there's a place for recreational fishing

and charter boat fishing. A lot of the recreational guys came from the attitude of we should get rid of commercial fishing. We don't let them hunt for buffalo or turkey anymore, and they shouldn't be able to commercial fish. I never agreed with any of that. So that was always the – probably one of the most difficult parts of fisheries is trying to balance dealing with those three sectors and to try to avoid being seen as favoring one or the other. That's a really tricky thing. But over the years, you get to know all of these people, and you get to know all the fishing groups and folks. You get to know them very well because you go to council meetings and commission meetings, and you're staying all together in a hotel, at least before all this COVID stuff. So I made a lot of friends over the years with that.

MG: You talked about how your testimony about sharks was interrupted on 9/11. But what was the point you were going to make? What were you planning to talk about there?

RC: Well, the gist of it was yes, there had been a couple of shark attacks. But statistically, the odds of you getting attacked by a shark are far less than the odds of your getting struck by lightning and certainly less than the odds of you getting killed in an automobile accident. The main reason the trend in shark attacks may be going up a little bit is not because there are more sharks; it's because there are more people in the water. Secondly, sharks are federally managed, so the state has a limited amount that we can do, but shark populations were not at high levels at that time. They had been overfished for years. It was funny; after 9/11, nobody cared about sharks anymore, and that was the end of that. So you get these slow news cycles, and people just fixate on it.

MG: Before I dive into your time as regional administrator, is there anything I've forgotten to cover so far?

RC: Nothing I can specifically think of, no.

MG: I did want to ask about starting your family and what it was like to have twins.

RC: [laughter] So I have three daughters. I had an older daughter by my first marriage. She's thirty-one now, I think, and the twins are [twenty-four]. So there's about a six-year, seven-year difference between them. Well, having twins is a challenge. Number one is my wife – having twins, the woman's body doesn't like that. So it's a challenge just to go through with it. Then, of course, once they're born – and our girls were five pounds or so. They weren't tiny. It was a lot of work and a lot of challenges. My wife basically stopped working at that point. You get up in the middle of the night, you feed one a bottle, and then you put her down, and then you wake up the other one, give her a bottle. You take shifts, and you do it. Now my kids are all grown. My older daughter is married and lives in Atlanta, and I'm a grandfather. I have a granddaughter. One of the twins lives in Nashville and is engaged and getting married. The other one is here in St. Pete, works in a veterinary clinic, and is thinking of going to veterinary school. The twins both had a strong interest in animals and biology. One of the twins was a biology major. My wife now was a biology major and actually worked – I met her working for the state. She worked for the state of Florida doing fish work at the time, too. Kids keep you busy, but they're all good kids.

MG: Good. Can you say what your scope of work was when you became the regional administrator and what your duties were?

RC: Well, the regional office had a staff that varied between a hundred and a hundred-thirty, forty people. You are responsible for working with three fishery management councils: the Gulf Council, South Atlantic, and the Caribbean Council. You're a voting member of all three, so you spend a lot of time going to council meetings. So the Gulf Council meets five times a year, the South Atlantic four, and the Caribbean three. So I covered twelve council meetings a year. I make this claim about me professionally. I claim that I have attended more federal fishery management councils as a voting member than any other person alive. I challenge anyone to dispute that and show me someone who can beat my record. So you have to know a wide range of issues and people, and you deal with a lot of council members. You deal with five Gulf states, four South Atlantic states, and Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands. Then we have a lot of protected resource issues: sea turtles, marine mammals, sturgeons, and all of those. We have to do biological opinions and ESA [Endangered Species Act] consultations and listing type decisions on a whole host of protected resources issues. So we devote a great deal of time to working with the Army Corps of Engineers on dredging projects and things like that to try and reduce takes and impacts. Those probably take the lion's share of your time. Then, you've got all the activities of tracking catches and opening and closing fisheries. But I would say the most challenging part of it all is the science underpinning what we do. There's a tremendous amount of uncertainty in the science that we have. One thing I've found over the years is people hate uncertainty. They especially hate it when you're doing something that's going to cost them money or prevent them from doing something. They want you to be absolutely certain. They don't like it when they see that you're not. A lot of things you're guided towards, the more uncertainty, the more precautionary you're supposed to be. Well, that's like a lead balloon when you talk to fishermen about it. They, in fact, see it the opposite. So that's been a difficult thing. I've often argued that "Look, you can't just say the more uncertain your information is, the more conservative and precautionary you have to be." If you take that attitude, we wouldn't even have fishing in the US Caribbean because there's virtually no science down there. No one lives that way in your personal life. If you thought something might happen, but you were really uncertain about it, you would make little shifts in directions, but you wouldn't do a complete about-face and turn your life around with that. You'd want to see a little more certainty. So that always troubled me over the years. The other real challenge has been dealing with recreational fishermen, and particularly estimating the magnitude of the recreational catch. That's been a huge struggle. It's a huge struggle, even to this day, and there's just a total lack of confidence in the fishing public that our science makes sense or that we have any clue how many fish they're catching. That's just a long-standing struggle. So we tried to put up a lot of – we tried to do a lot of outreach. When I first came to the regional [office], we devoted virtually no money or time to outreach. I tried to change that as much as I could. We tried to put in place some education programs. So we have a thing called the Marine Resource Education Program. We actually worked with the Gulf of Maine Institute to do it. I brought that into the Southeast, and we've done that. We have workshops where fishermen come in, and we teach them about how to do a stock assessment, how does all this work, what's the Magnuson Act? That was all rewarding. I think that has a lot of benefits because it opens some eyes for people. That's one of the programs that I've told people that I'd like to remain involved with. But I've always felt like we, as an agency, need to do a better job of explaining what we're doing to people in ways they

can understand. So I started doing at council meetings these question and answer sessions, where one evening at the council meeting, I would let them quiz me for an hour and a half, two hours about anything they wanted to. I got pretty big crowds to show up [to] them. I think the fishermen appreciated it. There were only one or two where I had to shut them down because they were getting out of hand. In one [inaudible], we were about to have a fight breakout. Anyway, I did that in the Gulf and in the South Atlantic for a long time.

MG: Can you say how the council meetings work and what gets voted on?

RC: Well, you do fishery management plans and amendments. You write a document that evaluates a number of alternatives and analyzes what the impacts are going to be. Then you basically follow Robert's Rules of Order. You go in, and you sit around a big table with microphones in front of everybody. You elect a chairman, and the chairman runs the meeting. You have committees, and you make motions and vote on these things. Then you take public comment and send things out for public hearings, come back in, make final decisions, and then submit it to the secretary. A lot of things you do are easy, not controversial. Other things you do get huge amounts of attention are very controversial. The councils can be deeply divided. Sometimes you might be the – it might be decided by a one-vote margin. Sometimes, you get hauled up to the Hill to explain what you're doing on things. I remember – god, what was the guy? David Vitter. Do you remember him? Senator from Louisiana. He got tied up in that (Mayflower?) madam thing. Then he came back, and he ran for governor and lost. Anyway, he was tied in with the recreational guys. He had my cell phone number. I remember I actually had to plug his name into my cell phone, so I wouldn't inadvertently answer one of his calls. But it is weird the amount of attention you could sometimes get from a member of Congress in some of these things. Almost invariably, it was bad. You didn't want them paying that much attention to these.

MG: What was his issue? What was he trying to get you on the phone for?

RC: He wanted to basically reallocate fish away from the commercial guys to the rec. It was red snapper, and that's gotten far more attention from members of Congress over the years than anything else in the Gulf of Mexico. So you get a lot of tough issues, and the Gulf Council has seventeen voting members. So you'd spend a lot of time counting votes and try to figure out what can you do, what can you get done, and what compromises do you have to make to get enough votes to pass something? So there's a lot of horse-trading in all that goes on.

MG: Can you talk a little bit about the red snapper issue and why it's been so controversial?

RC: Well, red snapper was overfished. The stock assessments kept showing that it's overfished, and we needed to cut the quotas. The council didn't want to cut the quotas. So there were a lot of lawsuits. There was a language in the Magnuson Act specific to red snapper. One part of the Magnuson Act said that we had to have a recreational quota, and we had to close the recreational fishery when the quota was caught. Well, that sounds easy, but it's not because of the way the recreational catch statistics are pulled together. There's about a two-and-a-half-month time lag between when fish are caught and when you get the catch estimate. So it's hard to know when they've caught the quota. You had to make a lot of projections. Anyway, we got sued and lost,

and the judge said, “You aren’t doing enough to end overfishing and rebuild red snapper.” So the season got really short. What happened is the states decided that they weren’t going to play anymore, and they weren’t going to go along. So they started to open up the season in state waters. Then it was kind of all unraveled. The federal season just shrunk down to nothing because all the fish were being caught in state waters. Well, they really weren’t being caught in state waters. They were being poached in federal waters. But it’s hard to catch them at it or do anything about it. Anyway, it all kind of came to a head a few years back when the [Donald] Trump administration came in. Wilbur Ross decided, “To hell with all this,” and just opened the fishery up for a whole bunch of days. We got sued and lost, but at that point, we sort of turned some of the management over to the states. But no one ever really believed the assessment, and it turns out, there were a lot of reasons not to believe the stock assessment. Some of the new information indicates the population is quite a bit bigger than what we thought. The other thing that made red snapper a challenge is there is a bycatch of juvenile red snapper in shrimp trawls. So it dragged the shrimp fishery into it, and that’s where we came up with requirements for bycatch reduction devices and things. So it was just a complicated fishery with a lot of fights and allocation decisions. But the thing that made it most difficult was the political meddling by the US Congress. Every time this stuff gets politicized, it just makes it way more difficult. Aside from that, they taste pretty good, but I don’t like them. They’re no fun at all to fish for. I don’t know why the hell anybody cares so much about red snapper.

MG: How come they’re not fun to fish for?

RC: Because you go out, you ride a long way offshore, and then you sit there in a boat with a bunch of weight and a hook with bait on it. You drop it down to the bottom, and then you sit there until something grabs it, and then you reel it up. There’s no sport in that, not to me, but I’m biased.

MG: Well, I want to hear about your biases.

RC: The kind of fishing I enjoyed was what we did down in the Keys, where you were out in very shallow water, and you could see the fish. When you go bonefishing, when they root in the bottom, their tails stick up out of the water. We fish for them with fly rods, and you throw a little piece of chicken feather in front of them and try to get them to bite it. They were very spooky, and it was quite challenging. You had to be really quiet and make a good cast. That, to me, was fun fishing. In offshore fishing for grouper and snapper, there’s a big thing with the fish get air embolisms when you bring them up; the air in their swim bladder expands, and it can kill. I used to joke to people and said, “You know, that’s all foreign to me. Almost all the fish I’ve ever caught, I caught in three feet of water.”

MG: Can you describe the structure of the regional office? I think some people confuse it with the Science Center. So can you say what your purview is and how it fits in organizationally?

RC: Yes. So years ago, the science center was under the regional administrator, and the science center director would work for the regional administrator, and the regional office would be under the regional administrator. After Hogarth became AA, somewhere along that time, because of some political stuff, they split the science out of the US Fish and Wildlife Service and put it into

USGS [United States Geological Survey]. There was some worry about something like that happening to the Fisheries Service. So they wanted to achieve some sort of independence between the managers and the science people. So they split the – they moved the regional centers out from under the regional office, and they established a chief scientist position in Silver Spring. So now the science center directors answer to the chief scientists, and the regional administrators answer to the deputy AA, and then everybody answers to the AA. I never was a big fan of that arrangement, although I understand why it's done. So when I became regional administrator, that had just happened. So the centers were never under me as regional administrator. The science center is headquartered in Miami, and the region has always been here in St. Petersburg. Depending on who's in the positions and things, you can get along really well and work very closely together. Or sometimes, you can have a lot of head butting that goes on. In recent years, the relationship between the center and the region has been really good. So the center does the stock assessments and all of those kinds of things. Then, we take that information and make management decisions.

MG: When you first arrived, what were some of the major programs taking place, and how they changed over time?

RC: Well, red snapper was always a big issue, and grouper became a really big deal right after I became Regional Administrator. I remember 2005-2006 maybe, we closed down the commercial grouper fishery for the first time because they had caught their quota of red grouper. That meant no more grouper sandwiches. So it got a lot of television and press attention and things. So we needed to find a better way to deal with some of these quota closures that were happening. It was really bad in red snapper, where the quotas would be caught up really quickly. The market would be flooded with fish, and then the fishery would be closed down. So they tried putting limits on how many pounds you can catch in a single trip. We tried having these mini-seasons with red snapper. We got to where it was open the first ten days of the month and had trip limits. But it really didn't work well at all. Where we ended up going was setting up an individual fishing quota program, IFQ. In that, you identify who the commercial fishermen who are going to be in the fishery are, and then you look at their historical portion of the catch they had. They essentially are awarded shares. We basically set up accounts for everybody. So fishermen knew going in how many pounds they were going to be allowed to catch over the course of the year. But they could go catch them whenever they felt like it. That was a big improvement because it meant that the product was available year-round, and we weren't flooding the market anymore. We had had safety at sea issues before because the weather would be terrible, but they'd feel like they had to fish before the quota was caught, and it took care of that. So I always thought it was a good program. They never went over their quota, and they were making more money [than the price?]. It became controversial because the shares they owned could be traded and sold. So that meant their shares took on market value. That didn't sit well with some people because they said we were monetizing the fishery. Well, commercial fishing is a business. But what happened is some of these guys who own shares quit fishing at all, and they started leasing their quota out to other guys. A lot of people just philosophically didn't like that, particularly a lot of recreational guys decided they didn't like it. So that became a controversial thing. I remember when the [Barack] Obama Administration came in, and Jane Lubchenco became head of NOAA. She was real big on catch share programs, IFQs, basically. She came in and made a hard press on having more of those programs. Boy, it just alienated the

fishermen to it and made it almost impossible to do any of them anymore. But they're good programs, but people are still troubled by the fact that they have monetary value and are traded. I think that probably we should have set some of them up differently than we did. But once you get these things in place for a long time, it's not easy to make changes without disrupting things. Anyway, those were some of the challenges when I came in that we dealt with. Then I think some of the challenges of when I left right now that they're still working on – one is estimating recreational catches, and there's a big push for electronic reporting of catches, particularly by charter boats. That's going to happen this year, and we'll see how well that works. Then there's still issues with states and states' rights and how many red snappers they should be allowed to catch. That just never seems to go away?

MG: As regional administrator, were you also overseeing internal issues such as personnel, budget challenges, or things like that?

RC: There's never enough money to do all the things you wanted to do. There always are personnel issues and challenges. Then you have things that just come out of nowhere, like the oil spill, remember? Back in 2010, that just took over everything that I did for a period of time. So the regional office has grown. Most all of the leadership in the regional office are people who were hired on my watch after I got here. It takes a lot of years to build a real good team of people there. You always have to deal with some of the inflexibility of the federal system and hiring and what you can and what you can't do. A lot of lawsuits over the years. A lot of controversy. I once had a Facebook page called "Demand Roy Crabtree's Resignation." I'm pretty proud because it had 1300 likes when it died. There was once a website called roycrabtree.com that was really nasty. My brother is a computer guy, and he wrote a program that hit it so many times it shut it down over the years. But you get all those things. Sam Rauch used to joke about how in the – I think this would have been around 2008, 2010 – how he would get petitions to fire me all the time, all that kind of stuff. So that's a weird experience that you don't have in life. But when you take one of these jobs, you sort of become a public figure, I guess, and you get attacked and beat up over things. I guess some people don't get used to it. But if you're going to be in one of these jobs for long, you get a pretty thick skin and just learn to roll with it.

MG: The first time you saw a site like that, how did it make you feel?

RC: I just laughed at some of it and never let it get to me so much. There's a cartoon on YouTube with me as one of the characters in it, an interview with Roy Crabtree. It's these little cartoon characters. It's kind of funny, I think. I think it has forty-thousand views now. I actually use it when I talk to undergraduate classes about fisheries management sometimes because it's funny. So I don't know. It can be a drag when you're getting just beat on all the time, but that's fisheries for you. If you're in the Gulf of Mexico, or if you're in New England, you're going to be in some big controversies and fights, and you're going to have unhappy campers.

MG: It seemed like a lot of the criticism was really around the red snapper issue.

RC: Yes. That and red grouper and gag. Those were the more controversial fisheries in the Gulf. Now, there were other controversies, like turtles and shrimp trawls and turtle excluder devices [TEDs], but those controversies were confined to the commercial fishing industry largely. The thing about this controversy with recreational fishermen is now you're talking tens of thousands of people. Whereas, usually with a commercial fishery, you're talking hundreds of vessels and things smaller [inaudible]. But still, when you get in a room full of those guys, and you're making them do things that cost them a lot of money, they can be pretty contentious.

MG: You mentioned the turtle excluder devices, and I wanted to ask you about that. But first, I want to check-in and see if you need a break.

RC: Yes. I would like just a few minutes.

MG: Sure. Let's take a quick break. I'll just pause this and close my screen.

RC: I'll be back in five.

[TAPE PAUSED]

MG: I wanted to ask about the introduction of the turtle excluder devices. Could you give me a little background or context for the devices?

RC: Yes. Well, number one, I give Andy Kemmerer, who was my predecessor as RA – he really carried the load on putting in the first TED requirements. It was hugely controversial. So the shrimp trolls go out, and they pull these nets. They'll pull them for two, three hours, and they catch turtles and drown them. It was the largest source of turtle mortality in fisheries, and something had to change, or the shrimp industry wasn't going to continue to exist as we know it. There were a lot of shrimp trawlers in the Gulf of Mexico, still are. But it was open access. A lot of states like Louisiana just had a ton of shrimp boats. So something had to happen to reduce the number of takes going on in shrimp trawls because you had Kemp's ridley, which is an endangered species, and loggerhead turtles were the main ones, which is a threatened species. Anyway, the solution they came up with was the turtle excluder devices, TED. Basically, it's a metal frame that goes in the back of the net with a hole either in the top or the bottom of the net. The shrimp go through the bars on the frame, and the turtles hit the frame and go out through the bottom or the top. They work pretty well. But there was a lot of resistance from the shrimp industry to do it. But the requirement did go into place, at least for otter trawls that you had to use TEDs. When I came in, that was the law; the TED requirement was in place, but there were problems with it. One of which is that it exempted skimmer trawls, which are a widely-used smaller type of trawl and more in shallow water and state waters, particularly in Louisiana. The other problem was that the TEDs we were using – the openings in the nets were too small, and so large loggerheads couldn't get out, and that was a concern. So when I first became regional administrator, the issue was we were requiring larger openings in the nets. The industry's complaint with TEDs has always been about shrimp loss. They would claim that some of the shrimp get out through the holes, and some shrimp do get out through the holes, but it's a relatively small amount. But there was a lot of arguing about how many shrimp are getting out and how exactly the TEDs should be configured. I won't say they're complicated, but to make

them work, right, they have to be – the angles on the bars and things have to be just so, and there are a lot of rules about the hole in the net. You can put a flap of mesh across the net to keep shrimp from getting out, but there are a lot of rules about all of that that are pretty complicated. So there are a lot of compliance issues with TED. It takes a lot of law enforcement to check them. You get guys that sometimes would sew up the TED, so nothing gets out, and you'd catch them on that. Then, they came up to where they could sew the TED up, but they had a zipline on it. So if the law enforcement came, they could yank it out real quick. Then, one problem you'd have is a lot of the people doing law enforcement were Coast Guard. They take a lot of training to understand how to tell if a TED is legal or not. It's easy to tell if there's a TED there or not there, but making sure the angles and everything are just so takes a good bit of training. With the Coast Guard, these guys come in, and then they get transferred. So they're in, they're out, and it's a constant kind of thing. A lot of the enforcement's done by state law enforcement agencies. So a lot of training and all that's done, and we probably never really had the budget we ought to have to do an adequate job of it. Then, the last controversy was to require TEDs in skimmer trawls. We started working on that six, seven years ago. There were lawsuits and things. So we put out a proposed rule to require TEDs in skimmer trawls. We also, at the time we did that, put a lot of observers out on skimmer trawl boats to see more about what they're catching. We come to find out that they are, in fact, catching a lot of Kemp's ridley turtles, but they're little; they're like saucer-sized turtles. The TEDs we have aren't going to work for them because they'll go through the bars in the TED, and they won't get out. So we didn't go through with the requirement then. We had to redesign the TED and come up with a skimmer trawl TED, which took a few years. They did come up with one, and we put a requirement in place, I guess, last year. I think effective sometime in April, we're going to require TEDs in skimmer trawls, but only certain size vessels. The Trump Administration wanted to reduce the economic impacts of the rules, so they essentially exempted, I think, any vessel less than forty feet in length. So the joke was all the skimmer trawl vessels in Louisiana are going to get a chainsaw and cut the front of the boat off and fiberglass it up so that they're under forty-foot. So that's going to be a big challenge when that goes in place because I expect the shrimp industry won't be prepared and won't be ready, and it'll be another mess. But it was hugely controversial, but I'd say overall, it was a great success. Turtle populations are in much better shape. They go out and count nests on the beach. That's the index of abundance you use for these turtles. The populations and the numbers of nests they're seeing are much higher than they were in the past. I think a lot of that is because of the success of TED regulations, not entirely because it used to be people ate turtles. But TEDs are certainly a big part of that. But there are always a lot of discussions of controversies about how many turtles should there be and at what point are they no longer listed. I read an interesting paper the other day, where a guy had looked back at some accounts from a hundred years ago off the east coast of Florida. Back a hundred years ago, Florida was kind of a wild place. People ate sea turtles and sea turtle eggs. One of the guys in there was talking about how much black bear predation there was on sea turtle nests. He estimated that they ate virtually every nest that was on the beach. For him to go out and get eggs, the biggest problem was beating the black bears to it. I thought, "Well, who would have ever thought about that?" Now the black bears are gone. They're not eating the eggs anymore. So it makes you wonder what was the population like way back in time before we changed everything. I don't know. But the message of that was, it could be a lot of things you never thought about. But really, Andy Kemmerer went through the TED wars, and a lot of that was before my time, but it's always a

controversy. Virtually anytime you do anything with sea turtles, you can count on that there's going to be lawsuits filed that you're going to have to deal with.

MG: Wasn't it a shrimper who first designed the TED?

RC: Well, there were several shippers who I think were involved in TED designs, and a lot of those TED frames have names that are named after some of the shrimpers and things. We set up a testing protocol, where you can design a TED, and then there's a protocol you go through to test it and see how it works. Then it can be certified as a TED because we recognized that in different circumstances, different bottoms, different waters, different types of TEDs may work better, and we're better off to have a variety of different types of TEDs. So we had this gear team in Pascagoula, Mississippi, that did a lot of that work, and they'd go out to test the turtles – we used to have – I guess we still do. In Galveston, they had a turtle hatchery where they'd hatch out and had turtles in it. One way they'd test the TEDs is they'd go out with divers and a captive turtle. They'd turn it loose at the mouth of the net, and then somebody would be hanging at the net at the TED and catch it when it came out. Because if you just went out and waited until you just happened to catch a sea turtle, it's too unproductive. So they'd use these captive turtles, and then a lot of the industry would say, "Well, that's no good. Those turtles are trained. They don't behave like a wild turtle." You hear all kinds of things.

MG: Yes, I had read about Sinkey Boone, who needed a jellyfish excluder device.

RC: Sinkey Boone. I think he was in Georgia, as I recall. I've heard the name. I don't know that I've ever met Sinkey Boone. But there was a (Kulon?) TED, and there were quite a few TEDs that had guys' names associated with them. You'd go to a meeting of shrimpers, and it's a lot of gray-haired guys when you pull them in together who have been at it a long time. It was the most valuable commercial fishery in the US at times and certainly the most valuable commercial fishery down here. But what happened was fuel prices went up, and a lot of the countries in Asia started farming shrimp. So shrimp prices became a global commodity as they went way down, and fuel prices went up. It really put a lot of economic stress on the shrimp industry. A lot of guys got out of the business and quit. So there's a much smaller fleet now than there was at one time. Well, we had way too many shrimp boats at one time. Then, when Hurricane Katrina came through, it washed a lot of boats away that never came back in it. Then, when I came in, I'm pretty sure we came up with the first permit requirement for shrimping. Then, we later made it a limited access permit to try and cap how many shrimpers there are.

MG: You mentioned Hurricane Katrina. So I wanted to ask a little bit about how hurricanes like Katrina and the coastal erosion that occurs impact your work.

RC: When Katrina came through – I remember about a week after Katrina, we got on one of the hurricane hunter airplanes. They were in Tampa. So we booked one of those and flew to Louisiana and then flew, I don't know, two-hundred feet. We flew down the coast to Alabama and came back. It was just astonishing to see all the damage. Parts of Mississippi were just leveled from it. You would see shrimp boats just all over everywhere, high and dry, just all over the place. I remember going into New Orleans right after Katrina, and there was just nobody there. So mostly, one of our big roles with hurricanes is always that there'll be a fishery disaster

request from the governor, and then the secretary will declare a fishery failure and disaster. Then typically, Congress will appropriate money to go out. Then, in a lot of cases, like Katrina, multiple states were involved. So there had to be a decision made – okay, Congress has given us this many million dollars. Who gets what? A lot of times, Congress doesn't want to write that down anywhere. But they'll tell you, "Here's what who gets." Then, you have to work with the states to develop spending plans and what you're going to do with it. Generally, those funds would come into the regional office budget, and then we would administer the grants that would go out to the states. We've done all too many of those over the years, especially in recent years, when it just seems like one after another. But I remember, back with Katrina, we had Katrina, and Ike, and Fran. We really had a flurry of hurricanes – Wilma – that came through in there. But that's part of dealing with this stuff in the Southeast. We're in an area that is going to get hit. Parts of the northern Gulf of Mexico, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas are just right in hurricane alley, and they get hit pretty hard and pretty regularly. But it's spooky to watch the trend we seem to be saying with the hurricanes getting more powerful and bigger. You wonder how some of these coastal communities are going to survive if they just get basically wiped out every now and then. At some point, it's going to get prohibitively expensive to buy insurance and things. So that's just one of the big challenges coming – that sea-level rise and a lot of these coastal communities are at risk. I don't know if you've ever spent much time in Louisiana, but it's a different place. The amount of marsh is just amazing. Then you'll see these little isolated communities just miles from anywhere out in the marsh. You realize that these folks that lived out there, they've been out there for generations, and they have their own kind of culture and language. There's really not much else for him to do. You're either going to fish, or you're going to work on the oil rigs, or you're going to leave. There's not much else out there. You still see that with particularly Louisiana and a little bit with North Carolina, which also has a long old tradition of commercial fishing. You see these isolated communities and people whose families have been in this for generations and generations. It's interesting.

MG: Yes, I agree. Earlier, you mentioned the BP oil spill. So I'm curious if you could talk in a little bit more detail about that event and its aftermath.

RC: Yes. Well, when we realized the magnitude of what we were seeing, the first concern was human health. So we ended up closing huge areas to fishing. At one time, we had most of the Gulf of Mexico closed. But it was really difficult to know where to close and where the oil was. I remember I would come into my office every morning, and I would be presented with these maps of what might be oil, but no one was really sure of it. I would get on the phone to John Oliver pretty much every morning and talk about: "Do we need to close some more area? What do we need to do?" Of course, it was all getting huge attention from the media, and we did the initial closures with an emergency rule. But it became quickly apparent that we had to find some expedited way to decide we were going to close something. So we came up with a process that allowed us to close things quickly, and then we ended up – because it went on for so long, we ended up with a large part of the Gulf closed. Then the question, when they stopped the oil from coming out, is when do we open? How do we know if it's safe to open? Where do we open? That was tough to know. We came up with all these sampling protocols, but some of them required so much sampling activity that you didn't see how it's ever going to happen. So I remember they brought on John Stein, who was at the Northwest [Fisheries] Science Center, [who] became the director, and moved him down to Pascagoula because he had a lot of

knowledge of toxicology and all those kinds of things. [They] set up sampling and testing. Then it was a matter of setting up all these grids, and vessels go out and catch fish and shrimp and things. Then you test them at various labs for the chemicals that come from the oil. We ultimately opened it all back up. But there's always been controversies about the long-term impacts and human health. A lot of the fishing fleet, of course, was shut down. So a lot of them went to work for the oil company going out and skimming up oil in skimmers and all of that. But it was hugely stressful on the fishing industry. I knew some fishermen who didn't survive it. It was a heartbreaking thing to watch happen and what it did to people. Then there was a lot of emergency relief in grants that went out for all of that. Then, of course, this whole restoration program with loads of dollars and all the work that came out of that. I think that the oil spill happened in May, I want to say, and I remember, it seemed like the next six months that was just all we did was the oil spill; it was all you thought about. That meant that all kinds of other work we were supposed to be doing just was set at a lower priority and wasn't getting done because people are getting juggled around to deal with the oil spill. So it really set us behind on a lot of things. That was about the time, I think, when Magnuson had just been reauthorized. We had to put in place all these annual catch limit requirements, and there were strict timelines on it. I remember, years after we did that, we would go back and look at some of the stuff we put in place, and it was like, "How in the world did we do that? That doesn't make any sense at all? How could we have been that dumb?" Then I think that's because we were so behind because of the oil spill that we just were rushing all this stuff through, and no one had time to check it all. So some crazy things happened that probably shouldn't have. But it was a stressful period. Although I would say it was stressful for me, it wasn't anything stressful for me like it was for the people who lived up there and had to deal with it all. But in terms of fish populations and red snapper, I mean, we never saw their populations crash or go down as a result of all this. In fact, getting fishermen out of the water probably benefited some of them. But it did kill a lot of sea turtles and a lot of Kemp's ridley turtles. One of the things I had hoped to get done when I was at the regional office is I wanted to look at down-listing Kemp's ridley from endangered to threatened, but that pretty much got shot down by the oil spill, and we were never able to get that done. So not a time any of us would want to relive, I don't think.

MG: Can you say a little bit about how your career evolved since then to retirement? What are some other issues or events that we're missing?

RC: Well, over the last several years, there were some things we focused on and wanted to get done. One, we had a lot of issues with the Army Corps of Engineers and workload. That was creating a lot of stress and a lot of political attention. So we spent a lot of time working with the Army Corps of Engineers to try to get us all more on the same page about how to do things and how to work more efficiently. I think we made a lot of progress with that and got in a much better place with the Corps in terms of doing consultations. Then, the other thing that – I don't know, four or five years ago, the director of the Southeast Fishery Science Center retired. So we had to go through the process of hiring a new science center director, and I participated in that. Then I wanted to try and make some solid steps on improving the things between the regional office and the science center and the way we work together, and I think we made a lot of progress on those two things. I also feel like we've been able, over the years, to bring in a lot of really good talented people into the regional office. I felt like when I retired that I had a really outstanding group of people there who were more than capable of taking the reigns and keeping

the whole thing going. When you spend so many years at something, you want to feel like they're going to be in good shape. Of course, all the stress of COVID and going to all the virtual meetings made it all difficult. My whole last year of work practically was spent sitting right here a lot of the time, like this. I always had envisioned that I would have my last council meeting and all of that. Well, my last council meetings were all Zoom meetings. When we went on telework back in March, I had people on my staff that I've worked so closely with for over fifteen years or more, and some of them I haven't seen in person since then. It's just hard for me. I would have never imagined when we went on telework that by the time I see some of these people in person again, I'll be retired. So, for me, it's just been a weird way to end a career. In some ways, it's been easier, though, because I wasn't traveling anymore, and I've been home all the time anyway. Now it's like the same thing. I just don't do all these calls anymore, and I don't have to worry about red snapper. So I think it would have been more abrupt and a much bigger transition had I been out on the road and traveling and doing all that. But all in all, it was an interesting career. I'm fortunate to have done it and met all the great people I have over the years.

MG: I'm wondering if you can reflect a little bit on NOAA as an agency. This project is to document its history over the last fifty years.

RC: Well, for me, NOAA has been a great place to work. So I've been happy with NOAA. I found that life as a state director was much more political than it's been at NOAA. I have, on very few occasions, felt like anybody was telling me, "You got to do this. You can't do that." Mostly, they let us figure things out and make the decisions. Now, the last few years have been much more political than any I saw in my career, and not in a good way. But generally speaking, I've been happy with NOAA. The federal system has got its problems. It's hard to hire people, and there are all kinds of rules and this and that, and it can get overly bureaucratic at times. But I don't really have any complaints or regrets about NOAA. I think the biggest trouble we have is, we're just asked to do way too much, but no one wants to foot the bill to do it well. But no one's willing to say, "Stop doing this and stop doing that." So that's the challenge. You get spread too thin, and then you're not able to do as good a job on things that you really think the job deserves. But I don't know that that's going to change because I think the budget situation is probably not going to improve a whole lot.

MG: When you look back on your career, are there other stories that stand out to you or memories you have?

RC: Nothing specifically. Most of the memories you have are people and meetings and folks that you've known and worked with for so long. Some of them are still around, and some folks have passed on. Boy, twenty-plus years of going to council meetings is a lot of people, a lot of members. So, just a lot of friends, a lot of good times that we had, and a lot of places I've been. It seems like I've been just about everywhere on the coast of the Southeast. I've been all over the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. I don't know. Most of the stories that stand out, I think, have already probably talked about.

MG: I wanted to ask what your plans are now that you're retired, once the pandemic is behind us.

RC: Well, traveling, and I have places I want to go, but that's all shut down for now. So now I'm just relaxing, working around the house, and taking it easy. But once the COVID situation gets more normal, I've got family I'd like to visit. We have some trips that we'd like to do – Europe and things. I'd like to go skiing another time or two before I'm too old to do it. So mostly that. I enjoy playing guitar. I've played guitar for a long, long time. I can spend a good chunk of my day just sitting and doing that. So that's the main thing – watch my kids grow up and grandchildren. I don't plan to go anywhere. So my plan is to stay here in St. Pete. People asked me if I'm going to go out and go fishing. I imagine I will. But at the moment, I've had my fill of fisheries for a while, and I'm trying not to think about that kind of thing. But I imagine I'll go fishing some more. I've had a lot of people offer to take me fishing, so I expect I will.

MG: Good. Well, is there anything else I forgot to ask about?

RC: I don't think so. I've just wandered around some. Anyway, I hope you got some stuff that's useful to you.

MG: Yes, this has been really interesting. I'm so glad we got a chance to talk and meet today.

RC: Did you talk to Jim Balsiger yet? Is he on your list?

MG: He's on my list for this later this month.

RC: Good. He's the oldest human being at NOAA, so you should talk to him.

MG: [laughter] Good to know. Every interview has been a lot of fun, and I get to learn more and more about the agency.

RC: All right. Well, good luck to you. Don't freeze up there in Maine.

MG: I'll try not to. Thank you so much, Dr. Crabtree. It was so nice to meet you.

RC: Nice to meet you. Have a happy New Year. Bye.

MG: You too.

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Reviewed by Molly Graham 4/2/2021

Reviewed by Roy Crabtree 5/26/2021

Reviewed by Molly Graham 5/31/2021