

NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
VOICES ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
NOAA HERITAGE AND THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE

AN INTERVIEW WITH
JOHN K. CALLAHAN, Jr.

FOR THE
NOAA 50TH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY
MOLLY GRAHAM

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TRANSCRIPT BY
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Molly Graham: This begins an oral history interview with Captain John K. Callahan, Jr. for the NOAA 50th Oral History Project. The interviewer is Molly Graham. This is our second interview session. The date is June 24, 2021. It's a remote interview with Captain Callahan in Coupeville, Washington. I'm in Scarborough, Maine. I wanted to pick up with anything we may have missed last time. You were starting to tell me a story about your father.

John Callahan. Yeah. When I was around two years old, (I couldn't remember this the last time we spoke, but I've just been reminded by one of my family members) we were living in West New York, New Jersey, and Dad was working at – I'm pretty sure it was one of the Ford plants where he was a union rep, and they were trying to organize. There was a movement by management to cause a rift between white and Black workers. They were trying to keep them divided. My dad, at that time, was trying to do the [union] organization work. So he struck up a friendship with one of the leaders of the Black community and had him over for dinner. This was 1946. I was born in '44. I heard stories from my family later on about how, like I said, he tried to be friends with and make inroads so that everybody would be united. Some of the stuff that happened was really weird. My mother and dad went to a dance one time. Some of the people that didn't want to have this connection between whites and Blacks sent some people up to ask my mother to dance, figuring that my dad would say, "No, she is not going to dance with a Black man," and all that sort of stuff. My dad just said, "Why are you asking me? Ask her whether or not she wants to dance. She gets to decide for herself." They were doing that kind of stuff to split the workers. So he was very active in [union organizing]. They did end up with union representation. So that was good. The other thing that came up after I had spoken to you was you asked me if I remember anything else about my early childhood. One of the things that I remembered was I had two paper routes when I was twelve and thirteen. We lived in West New York, New Jersey. I had a paper route with the *Hudson Dispatch*, I think, at 6:15 in the morning or six o'clock in the morning. Then I had the *Jersey Journal* at four o'clock in the afternoon. The reason I had the two paper routes was dad had made a deal with me. I wanted to go to camp. So the deal was if you wanted to go to camp, you had to earn the money, which I did. I got sent to camp based on the money I earned as a newspaper deliverer. Then, later on, I found out that he had taken the money {I earned} and put it in the bank, and gave it me later. So it [earning the money] was just to teach me a lesson.

MG: What kind of camp did you attend? Was this a summer camp?

JC: Summer camp. It was run by the Knights of Columbus. Two weeks [of] canoeing and hiking and doing all sorts of camp stuff. It was outside the city, which was really the idea, to get you into the woods and stuff.

MG: Did you enjoy that experience?

JC: I did, very much. I learned a couple of lessons. One of them was don't get involved in a boxing match if you don't know what you're doing. For each activity you did you got these little merit badges. It was a little patch that said "Camp Columbus" on it. If you played basketball or you rode or canoed or whatever, you'd get a little patch. One of my roommates in the little tent we were staying at was from Jersey City, and apparently, his father or family had sent him for boxing lessons. They [the Camp] had a boxing tournament and a boxing merit badge. So, he

wanted to know if I would come and be his partner in the boxing match. I said, “Sure, why not?” That was a mistake. [laughter] I knew nothing about boxing. This kid just wiped me out. I got the little merit badge, but that was it. I enjoyed it [the Camp].

MG: When you told the story about the Black worker and his family coming to your house and the discrimination they faced, I wondered if your family ever experienced something similar. The Klu Klux Klan and anti-Catholicism were still very present in the middle of the twentieth century, even in New Jersey. Was that an experience your parents or grandparents had?

JC: Let me think for a second. I don’t recall anything. Actually, I don’t recall anything of that nature about being Catholic. I do know that when we lived in that neighborhood in West New York, New Jersey, it was Irish and Italians, and they were all Catholic. So, no, I don’t recall anything like that. I’ll tell you a story, and this may not be appropriate, so it’ll have to get edited out.

MG: Would you like me to turn off the recorder?

JC: No, it’s just embarrassing to me. This is why I remember this – because I recently spoke to my sister, and she said, “Well, don’t you remember.” Apparently, I was just learning how to talk. One of my favorite phrases was “boogie man.” My father had invited this guy over for dinner. We lived in a three-room apartment in West New York, New Jersey. There was the little dining room/kitchen combination; there was a living room and the bedroom. So apparently, they were in the kitchen. My dad’s trying to make friends with this guy and convince him that they shouldn’t be enemies and all that sort of stuff. I came out, as a kid, just learning how to speak. For the first time, I left “man” off the phrase, and I walked into the kitchen and said, “Hi, boogie.” My father and mother went, “Aah.” But this guy just started laughing. He really thought it was funny. In a way, it broke the ice. The dinner proceeded, and they became friends. Kids do things that are really stupid. When it shows up, what the heck. The other thing I wanted to tell you about my dad was – and I forgot about this. We didn’t have money at all when we were living in West New York, New Jersey, and he was, as I said, working as a salesman in various areas. I can remember him actually trying to make extra money by rolling – I think it was like Roloids – a fifty-gallon wooden drum with these little Tums things. He was sitting there at night, rolling these things into little packages to be sold. The other thing that I had remembered about him – because he was always trying to make some extra money to support the family, was I wanted a football. I asked for a football, and my dad went out – my mother told me this later -my dad went out and worked at night, painting some guy’s shop to get the money to buy a football. When he bought the football, he bought me a white football. It wasn’t the standard color. He thought that was a great thing. I looked at that thing and said “A white one? Who wants a white football?” My mother grabbed me later and said, “You know, your father worked all night to get that. You need to go back and talk to your dad about that.” I felt so small after that. When I was a kid, one time, I got behind the steering wheel of one of the neighbor’s car parked on the street, {and} managed to release the emergency brake. The car, on a hill, rolled down and hit somebody’s car. We couldn’t afford to get that fixed, so I spent time with my dad in a junkyard, pulling parts off of cars and coming back and repairing the car. I was hungry on the way home. I told him I was hungry, and we stopped in {a diner}, and he got me a hot dog. But he just had money for the hot dog. Rather than have any food for himself, he had a cup of

coffee. So anyway, those are the kinds of things that popped up after our initial interview. It was like, “Oh, I remember that.” I hadn’t thought about that stuff in years.

MG: Your dad sounds like such a hard worker, and that he was a good role model for you.

JC: Exceptionally so. As I’ve been thinking about my relationship with him and this interview, actually, I started to recognize some things that became traits with me that I didn’t realize. Everything my father became involved in, he ended up as president of. He joined the Knights of Columbus; the next thing, you know, he was the Grand Knight. He joined this, and they would elect him president and all that. I’m looking back at my career. I did the same kind of stuff. I joined the CYO [Catholic Youth Organization], and next, I’m the president of the CYO. I joined the Altar Boy Society, and I’m the president of the Altar Boys. I didn’t realize that until we were speaking that I come from a line of people that like to get involved in organizations.

MG: I can’t remember if you said this last time, but did he live long enough to see all your accomplishments?

JC: No. He did see – yes, he did. I would have liked [for] him to have lived a little bit longer to see some of the stuff that I ended up doing, particularly the command of the very large vessels and stuff. But he saw me graduate [from] law school. He saw me when I was the executive officer of the *Peirce*. He was able to advise me on a couple of things. He did get to see that stuff. He was very proud of me. Interestingly enough, and I think this might be something that was prevalent at that time – I don’t know that dads ever were demonstratively affectionate, telling their sons that they love them or anything like that. I always thought that I wasn’t going to live up to his expectations. I would come in with a ninety in a subject or something, and he would say something like, “You can do better than that.” He wanted to push me to go further and further. And when I got further and further, it wasn’t like this big thing at the end saying, “Well, I love you, son; you did so good.” It was just like, “Okay, good. Now let’s move to the next thing.” After he died, I went to the Knights of Columbus Hall in Washington Township. It was a memorial service for him. A lot of his friends were coming up and telling me what he used to say about me. It was the first time that I had ever heard this, and my mother chirped in the same way. “He never told you this stuff, but he told everybody else.” “I’m so proud of my son. I love him” – and all that sort of stuff. But he was not very demonstrative with me about it. When I wanted to go to law school – actually, when I graduated college, he told me that he would pay for law school if I would go right then and there. I said, “No, I was going to go on my own...” I ended up in the Coast and Geodetic Survey. When I finished my first assignment, he again said, “I’m very proud of you for making your own way with your own money. My offer still stands. If you want to go to law school, get out now and go to law school.” I said, “Well, actually, they’re going to make it so that I get assigned to an area where I can go to law school at night. I will take care of the money. You don’t have to do that.” When I finished law school, again, he was just so proud – and that he did tell me. He said, “You did it all on your own.” Then, with a little twinkle in his eye, he said, “It would have been easier if you let me pay for it.” [laughter]

MG: You mentioned that you recently visited your sister. I was curious about your relationship growing up. Were you close to your sister?

JC: Yes. I don't think I was the best brother in the world, but she was definitely the best sister. When we lived in West New York, New Jersey, like I said, it was a tough neighborhood. I would have to walk her to school and back. There were bullies and tough kids on the blocks that were looking for trouble, and they'd try and pick a fight. Of course, I would oblige them once in a while. I would like to not get involved in it, but I wasn't going to be called a coward. They'd say something about my mother and father, and that would really tick me off. I would get involved periodically in one of these fights. I remember one time, this one guy – he was a bully, one to be feared. We got into it. All of a sudden, my sister, who was standing there, dropped her schoolbooks and came at this person like a windmill with her arms flailing, screaming. This guy just – "Ahh" – took off. [laughter] More than once, she did that. It was like, "Wait a minute. I'm being bailed out by my sister, who is five years younger than me. Come on." I was her "(Nonnie)." If she would get a cookie from someplace, she'd want one for her "(Nonnie)." Me, on the other hand, I'd eat both cookies. [laughter] My mother told me that when we were younger, once in a while, I'd trip her just to see what happens because her face got all screwed up when she hit the ground. I think about that now – oh, God. Did I actually do that stuff? As our lives went on, we became very, very close. To this day, we talk at least once a week or every two weeks. She's coming out [here]. My wife and I are having her come out this August, and we're going to take her to Hawaii. Her husband died last year. We went back and helped with that. This will be her first trip. So we're very close, which is really good for her kids. She has two kids. They see the relationship that Ann Marie and I have, and they have modeled their relationship likewise. They're very close, which is really nice.

MG: Good. That's nice to hear. What was there anything else up to the point of graduating high school that we skipped over last time?

JC: No. I could probably end up talking about my parents and my dad and the family for the rest of the interview. We should probably move on. [laughter]

MG: What was it like for you to be the first in your family to go to college? Did you feel a certain kind of pressure?

JC: Wow. That was a good question. Not when I went. It was kind of ordained that I was going to go to college. It wasn't like, "Well, John, do you want to go to college?" It was, "You're going to college." Once I got there, though, and started experiencing the college – I don't want to say college life, but it was different than high school, and it was a lot more demanding intellectually. Then I started to feel some pressure. At one point, I think I had gotten down to a 1.8 average in my sophomore year at Fort Schuyler. They call that the third-class year. I got put on probation. The pressure of being on probation and failing out of school was huge because I knew how it would affect my parents – it was kind of a wake-up call. I remember going into my faculty advisor, a guy named Norm Wennegal. At Fort Schuyler, as an engineer, you didn't have electives; everything was mapped out for you. You took anywhere from sixteen to eighteen credits on a semester basis. It was all hard stuff. When I say hard stuff, it wasn't any fluff courses. It was like physics and math and mechanical engineering, all stuff like that. Then you got one elective. I had English composition. At any rate, I had failed a course that resulted in me getting a 1.8 average. So I went into [see] Norm Wennegal, my

advisor, and I said, "Look, I want to double up next semester and take an additional course so that I can get back on track." He said, "Well, that would be twenty-one credits in the semester. Based on your scholastic record, you're not going to be able to do that. I said, "Well, I would like to try it." [He said] "It's your funeral." [laughter] So I took twenty-one credits, and I made the Dean's List, and I stayed up there until I graduated [from] school. I was up above a 3.0 average. It was a big-time turnaround. I know that the turnaround was not anything internal; it was more that I didn't want to disappoint my family because they think highly of me, and they think I can do a good job, etcetera.

MG: Why were your grades suffering in the first place? Was it because these subjects were so complex?

JC: No, I was lazy. I was too involved in social activity. I mean, there were no girls at this place, so it wasn't like we dated every night or anything. But guys would hang out in the canteen and bullshit and watch television, whatever. In high school, I was very good at cramming for exams. I would cram right before the exam. It used to drive my sister insane because she had to work so hard to get her grades, and I would get these great grades and move on. Well, at Fort Schuyler, you had to stand a Watch. We lived on a ship. Talk about a lesson to be learned. First of all, in the high school I went to, I was more into the liberal arts. Chemistry and math were something that I had to put up with, and I didn't understand. I did not have good teachers in any of those areas. So, the basics for math were missing. Yet, of course, if you're going to be an engineer, well, you've got to have some good math skills. I realized that I was going to be struggling with some of that stuff. But I again figured, "Well, that's okay. I'm just going to cram at the last minute, and I'll make this." I had a lot of classmates that were willing to help, me study right before the exams and stuff. So, back to living on the ship, we had to stand a Watch. The ship's boiler provided us heat. That's where we lived, on the ship. So your Watch as an engineer, as a fourth classman or a third classman, was to be in the engine room, and you spent four hours standing in front of a gauge that had water in it that went up and down, and you had to make sure it [the gauge] was right in the middle. Once an hour, you walked around the space to make sure that there was nothing really wrong. Then, you got off [Watch] and then went back to your regular school day, etcetera. Well, this [the Watch] went along night and day. All of a sudden, I got called in before one of the exams, and I was told that "By the way, you have the mid to four Watch tonight." I thought I was going to have all this time to study; all of a sudden, I was up to four o'clock in the morning, and you weren't supposed to be doing anything but attending to your [Watch] duties. Well, that put me in a real bind to the extent that I remember going into the math exam, and I had worked every one of these problems with a classmate or two classmates who were helping. I had worked every one of them. I figured, "Okay." I sat down, and my mind went blank; I was just too tired. I had crammed to the point where I couldn't do anything. I failed. In fact, I failed that course. That was a lesson about – don't wait until the last minute. That helped a bit. But I still managed, in the first couple of years, to just get by. I was going to go with my buddies and, like I said, sit in the canteen and yak-yak, play games, whatever. It didn't involve studying. That was the problem. Then, when I got slapped in the head with, "Well, we're going to throw you out if you don't improve," it was like, "I can't do this anymore. I can't do this waiting for the last second." That's what happened.

MG: It's great you were able to turn things around.

JC: Yes, I was. It was nice. In fact, when I went to law school, I ended up within the top five or whatever percent of the class I was in. I was on law review. I had the Delta Theta Phi legal fraternity scholarship pin. When I did my master's degree at Marymount, I consistently got very, very high grades. Of course, I think that's probably true for most people in a master's program. [laughter] You always get A's and B's. But at any rate, I had learned my lesson. It was like, "No, I've got to sit here and concentrate on stuff." You can't run around being a playboy.

MG: Can you tell me a little bit more about the degree? Was it engineering or marine engineering?

JC: Yes. What I have is a B.E. [Bachelor of Engineering], which is a step above a Bachelor of Science. It's a Bachelor of Engineering, Marine Naval Architecture. What it basically amounts to is a Bachelor of Science, which would most equate to mechanical engineering. Then you have another forty credits of marine-related subjects, which – for example, we made three cruises in between our [scholastic] years up to senior year. We would actually take the training ship, and we'd go to Europe for two or three months. You would take two days of watch-standing, two days of what they call M and R, maintenance and repair, where you go around and fix things, and then two days of class. I forget what you got; maybe ten or twelve [credit] hours a summer. As I said, you had to take somewhere around eighteen credits every semester. So I took courses, for example, in boilers, which you're not going to find a course in any mechanical engineering school for boilers. But in marine parlance, they're important. They were important subjects – naval architecture. Not many schools do naval architecture. So those extra courses ended up with you getting certified [with] a Bachelor of Engineering. So that's what it was.

MG: Can you say what naval architecture entails?

JC: Designing and building ships. It's architecture; only it's applied to the marine industry. For example, if you wanted to design a ship, you have to account for stability, how much cargo it could carry, what kind of a propulsion system you need to get it from point A to point B, and then actually design the framing of the ship. That would be in the naval architecture area.

MG: I was curious where the interest in this degree came from? What experience with or on ships had you had previously?

JC: None. [laughter] None. Dad took me over to show me Fort Schuyler. It was a great deal for him because it was not going to cost him anything. At the time, I think for [an] out-of-state student, it was something like four or five hundred dollars a year. You had an expense for uniforms the first year, but other than that, it was pretty much free. Dad had been told and done some checking with friends [who said] that one of the service academies would be great because you get a free education. After that education, then you could go to law school because the question was – I could get accepted and did get accepted into pre-law school programs at various colleges, but [it was] very expensive. So this was an alternative. The idea was, well, how about going to West Point or to Annapolis. Dad, again, being involved in politics, somehow, I ended up with whatever the letter was that you needed to have from a political person to take the test

for Annapolis and West Point. Mine was from Adlai Stevenson. The problem was we had waited too long rather in the school year. I would have to wait a whole year before I could take those tests to get into those schools. He [Dad] was advised by some friends, “Well, why don’t you go to the Merchant Marine Academy, to the Federal one or the State one, and you can spend a year there, find out if you really like that kind of a system. If you don’t want to go to one of the academies, you can just finish out at that thing [school]. If you do, you’ll have a marine license; you can get a commission in one of the services, and you can stand to make a lot of money, particularly if you went to sea.” So that combined to have us go over and take a look at Fort Schuyler. I saw the uniforms; I thought that was pretty cool. “Okay, that’s where I’ll go. Fine.” I didn’t have a lot of responsibility for my own life at that point. I was just going on with what the recommendations were. That’s how I ended up there.

MG: It just popped into my head that maybe this career path suited you because it’s well structured. There’s a hierarchy and a chain of command.

JC: Absolutely. Absolutely. Yes, actually, that is very accurate. Actually, that’s been the case for most of my life. I thrive in systems where I know what the rules are. Where there are no rules and people are just doing whatever they want to do, or they don’t follow the rules, it’s upsetting to me.

MG: What was the connection to Adlai Stevenson?

JC: [My dad] was a Democratic committeeman and being in the county organizing and stuff. As I mentioned, he was the Democratic Mayor of Washington Township, New Jersey. I’m trying to think. It must have been Kennedy. I might have mentioned this to you, but there was a convention in Chicago, I think. Every time they would show Mayor [Richard J.] Daley on TV, my father would be in the row right behind him. I don’t know how that happened. It was like, “That’s my dad! That’s my dad!” He knew people. I don’t know how it happened {sitting behind Mayor Daley}, but it happened.

MG: Stevenson was appointed Ambassador to Sweden the same year you entered Fort Schuyler, so it must have looked like an impressive letter.

JC: I didn’t have Stephenson’s letter for that. I just needed to apply [with] my high school grades and fill out the application, and that’s what I did. There was no letter from Stevenson for that. Stevenson’s letter would have been to allow me to take the test for Annapolis and West Point the following year.

MG: Okay. Were you commissioned as an officer at Fort Schuyler? Was it in the Merchant Marine or Navy?

JC: Yes. I don’t know if this is accurate or not – I think it is – but you were technically part of the New York State Navy at Fort Schuyler. You didn’t know New York had one? Oh, they do. Anyway, the training ship was the *Empire State IV*, and it was [in the] New York State Navy. By the way, the guy who is in charge of Fort Schuyler right now is a guy named Admiral [Michael A.] Alfultis. Anyway, he’s a Coast Guard Academy graduate, but he didn’t make

Admiral in the Coast Guard, but he has the title “Admiral” because he’s an admiral in the New York State Navy. Anyway, where were we? So I was not a commissioned officer during my time at Fort Schuyler; none of us were. We were just cadets. As cadets, we had to take naval science courses. My recollection is that those naval science courses, that all of the students at Fort Schuyler were required to take, paid for some of the tuition. The rest was somehow taken care of by New York State. If you passed the naval science courses, and you passed your other courses at Fort Schuyler, you ended up graduating with a marine license, either engineering or deck, which entitled you to be a merchant marine officer, and you could sail in the Merchant Marine and make Merchant Marine wages, which were substantial compared to other areas that people would be eligible for graduating school [other colleges]. Also, if you had passed all the naval [science] courses, you could be offered commissions in the Navy or the Marines. We might have had one guy going into the Air Force. With the Navy thing, which was the big one, you would be a Naval Reserve Officer. You would sail on merchant vessels as a civilian, but you had a Naval Reserve commission. You would do your Naval Reserve weekends if you were ashore and stay in the Naval Reserve. So, where were we on the questions?

MG: I just was curious if you were commissioned upon graduation and if you went into the Reserves afterward.

JC: Yes. When you graduated, if you were going to be offered a commission, you took a physical, and then you were sworn in. I took the physical. I was waiting for the results of the physical to come back, and I was going to become a Naval Reserve Officer. I, in fact, had signed up on ammunition ships to go to Vietnam. I didn’t want to be drafted into the Army. I thought that was not something I wanted to do. Vietnam was hot and heavy at that time, and so I didn’t want to be drafted. When I immediately got out of college, while I was waiting for this physical approval, I had to take one extra course in order to graduate. So, for six months or whatever it was, I worked downtown in New York as a marine engineer/naval architect for M. Rosenblatt & Son, and that gave me a status where I wouldn’t be drafted from there. I was waiting for my Naval Reserve commission to come in, and while I was waiting for that to come in, I had signed up for a future trip on an MSC (Military Sealift Command) trip to Vietnam. They were paying good money – of course they would for sailing on ammunition ships, which I look back at now – that was really stupid. (laughter) Anyway, the Navy, in its infinite wisdom, kept screwing around with the records to get this thing [the physical] approved. Meanwhile, one of the guys that I was working with was a former naval lieutenant. He was also a Fort Schuyler guy. He was going to go down and interview with the Captain who ran the Coast and Geodetic Survey office in New York City for the position of marine engineer with the Coast and Geodetic Survey. They were building new, automated vessels, and they wanted college-trained engineers to go down and work on these vessels. He was going to become the first marine engineer commissioned officer. He went down for the interview, and we went down at lunch. He [had] asked me would I like to come along and grab some lunch because we used to eat lunch together. I went to the interview with him, and I sat in the back of the room. Captain Miller J. Tonkil – I think his name was – interviewed the guy and said, “We cannot give you advanced status.” Because the my friend said, “I want to come in at least as a lieutenant. I’ve got a kid and a wife, and I can’t do it on an ensign salary.” [Capt.] Tonkil said, “We don’t have the authority to do that. We’re not going to be able to do that. Thank you very much.” We started to walk out, and [Capt.] Tonkil said to me, “Wait a minute. What about you? Are you a marine engineer?” I

said, “Yeah.” “So, how about you?” I said, “Well, tell me more about it.” He told me that it was like being in the service. You’re a commissioned officer; you get the same benefits and all that sort of stuff.” I went home, talked to my parents about it, and said, “Sounds like a neat thing.” The fact that I would be the first marine engineer, and I’d be working with high tech stuff – the first automated engine room that MARAD [United States Maritime Administration] was designing for the oceanographic vessels and stuff. It just sounded really neat. So I called him [Capt. Tonkil] up and said, “Yeah, I’ll do it.” Two weeks later, I raised my hand at the New York field office with my parents present, got sworn in as an ensign in the Coast and Geodetic Survey, and then went home and prepared to get my stuff together because I was going to report for the building of the USC&GS Ship *Oceanographer* in Jacksonville, Florida. I had to stop in Washington, DC, to meet all of the people that wanted to introduce themselves to me, or me to them. The head of the Coast Geodetic Survey; a guy named Harris B. Stewart, who was the chief scientist at the time; and the guy that was in charge of ship construction, Capt.[later Admiral Allen L.] Powell. I was going to drive down to DC, go around, and shake people’s hands, and then immediately report to the ship that was being built. As that process started, I got a letter from the United States Navy saying, “Congratulations. You are an ensign in the United States Navy.” I had to write back and say, “I’m an ensign all right, but not in the Navy.” That’s how I got to be a commissioned officer.

MG: So you did not end up on an ammunition ship?

JC: No, I didn’t end up on an ammunition ship. That ship sailed because I didn’t have a Naval Reserve commission. If I sailed on the ship, I would be eligible to be drafted as soon as the ship came back to port – off to the Army. I didn’t want to have that happen. I wasn’t going to be drafted, but I didn’t know if I’d be drafted or not. But that possibility was not something that I wanted to take a chance on. I might have mentioned to you before that one of the things that my dad was telling me was, “This is not something that you want to be doing. You don’t want to be involved in this war. This is not a good war.” To him, World War Two and the Korean War, where you clearly had good guys and bad guys, in his mind, was one thing, but this was not something that he thought I should get involved in.

MG: What were your feelings about Vietnam at the time?

JC: Well, I think like a lot of other young guys, I wanted to, quote, “do my part.” Then, I was getting this conflicting opinion from my dad, whom I respected immensely. So it wasn’t very hard to choose which way I wanted to go. As a Naval Reserve Officer, I would not be drafted; I would be sailing on merchant ships, doing my Merchant Marine thing, and making money, by the way. I wouldn’t be slogging through the jungles of Vietnam with a rifle in my hand. I don’t know how to explain this. If I had gotten drafted, it would have been okay. I would have, quote, “done my part.” In fact, later on, after I became a USC&GS [later ESSA and then NOAA] officer, there were a couple of instances. I’m trying to think of where it was. It might have been the latter part of the war when we were looking to get USC&GS Corps involvement. The reason we didn’t get involved in the beginning was Admiral Don Jones, who I ended up working for, had told me that they didn’t want to send any Coast Survey officers to assist the Navy and Army like they usually did because they had gotten word from the Veterans Administration [VA] that we were not considered veterans. If anything happened, you [the Corps Officers] wouldn’t get

the same veterans benefits that any other serviceman got. Eventually we addressed that, and we had a piece of legislation passed, and I was actually very involved in that. It gave us parity with other veterans in the definition of a “Veteran” that’s in the [US] Code right now. We are now considered veterans for purposes of VA benefits. There were a number of us that signed a letter and asked to be transferred [to the Navy] to do something and be part of it. It got turned down, but that happened more than once. In the Middle East, when that started again, a number of people volunteered to go, but the higher-ups didn’t want to do it.

MG: When did this take place, the efforts to get parity for NOAA servicepeople?

JC: That would be prior to 1972 because I was in law school. I was working at the Office of the General Counsel. I believe I was president of the Association of Commissioned Officers [Commissioned Officers Association], and we hired a lobbyist, actually, to work on our behalf. I still remember this. We had a party. It was, I believe, the beginning of December. It must have been a Christmas party. We had spent a lot of time briefing congressmen, writing all sorts of laudatory things about the USC&GS/ESSA/NOAA Commissioned Corps and its history in World War II and predecessor organizations, etc., and the value of USC&GS/ESSA/NOAA Corps to the military. We had scientific expertise that we concentrated on, like chart making and stuff that didn’t exist really anywhere else. We got nowhere. The bill was not going to come up, and it was going to die. I remember being at this party, and I talked to Admiral [Henry Arnold] Karo. He came to the party. He asked me how things were going, and I said, “It’s not going. We can’t get this thing busted out of committee to get a vote on it.” He just kind of [said], “Hmm.” Then, apparently, within the next couple of days, he went down and had a conversation with the Senator from the State of Washington, [Henry] “Scoop” Jackson. I guess he knew the Senator. There was some kind of connection; I don’t know what it was. Admiral Karo, by the way, was a really, really great, politically astute guy. I can remember him – I heard about this, and I read some of it. He was testifying, and there were some concerns about the amount of money that was being spent on the fleet building program, the *Oceanographer*, *Discoverer*, and all that. He just kept saying, “Yes, Mr. Congressman, but she’s going to do such a wonderful job for this country.” He just kept that same big smile. “Yes, but she’s going to do a great job.” At the hearing, whoever wanted to make their point got to make their point. Meanwhile, they got the money. All of a sudden, this bill got busted out, got voted on, and was passed. I don’t know how that happened, but I know he had a conversation with “Scoop” Jackson, and *boom*, it was done. So, a big lesson.

MG: Yes. Backing up just a little bit, is there anything we’re missing from your time at Fort Schuyler? I was curious about the faculty. Were they all former military?

JC: Boy, they were all over the place. They had a lot of guys; most of them all, with very few exceptions, were former merchant mariners. Others, like Norm Wennegal, I don’t know if he sailed or not, but he was the resident expert in boilers, and he wrote a book on it. One of the guys, Professor Zubaly, was a Webb Institute graduate, and I don’t know if he ever sailed, but he was a leading guy in naval architecture. Then, the rest were a bunch of guys that were various disciplines and we had a couple of former graduates, actually. One guy was the youngest chief engineer in history or something. He graduated, immediately went onto a ship, stayed on the ship until he got his required time, got off the ship long enough to take his next license exam,

went back on the ship, did the same thing again, and all of a sudden, became like our nation's youngest chief engineer. He had an incredible philosophy. It was like, you do that, you get your credentials, and then you have to put yourself in a position where you're going to meet the right people. He would go to museums and art shows, where he met his wife. They got married and [were] very well off. He just kept telling us, "This is what you got to do." We had those guys. And I'm trying to think of who some of the other professors were. There were a number of former naval officers that were on staff they called them staff duty officers. They looked after the regiment. We had one guy, Lieutenant Colonel Serry, who was from the Army. Lieutenant Commander Ducat was a World War II Destroyer Captain. And a couple of other guys that had been in the Navy that were – I don't know what their background was, but they were former naval officers. So, it was a mix.

MG: I was curious to hear a little bit more about these training cruises. Where would you go? What were you doing? Did you have any time to explore?

JC: Oh, yes. What separated, in my mind and my classmates minds (I'm involved right now in organizing the 56th reunion, so I've been talking to a lot of classmates), we all agree that one of the major differentiators between our college education and other college educations were the cruises for a couple of reasons. Number one, when we got out – for example, when I reported to my first ship, it wasn't the first time I'd seen an engine room. It was not the first time I'd stood watch in an engine room. It was not the first time that I pulled a motor apart or any of that stuff. I had done that on a ship and so [had] a lot of other people. I've got a friend of mine here in the state of Washington; he got a marine engineering degree from some other school and never had been on a ship. It was like we had some practical experience. The second thing was that we, as a group, had to bond together [with] the upperclassmen; you had to get along with them, or you learned very quickly that if they wanted to get you, they could get you. You'd end up being thrown out of school on demerits. So you learned to get along with people, which is a huge life lesson. Then we got to go for, like I said, three months. We would go to various ports in Europe, usually five of them. Our first cruise, my first port of call, was Malaga, Spain. I just found a letter I wrote to my parents and my sister on that cruise, by the way. I wish I could pull this thing out. Maybe the next time we talk, I will have it in front of me. It's really funny. Anyway, you would get maybe four or five days in a port, and they would arrange tours. If you had the money, you could take a tour. That year, I went to Ireland, Spain, I think we went to Rotterdam, maybe Oslo, Norway – five different ports. Like I said, you got five days in each Port, roughly. One or two of those days, you would be on watch. Then you'd have some other days where you could just walk around and find out what was going on. I remember taking a tour, one tour of Paris and another one to Rome, which was really, really neat. Then, you'd cruise to the next port and back to that same schedule of two days watch standing, two days of class, two days of M&R [maintenance and repair]. Let's see. How old was I? Seventeen or eighteen years when I went to college. At that age, I got to go to Europe three times. This was 1962, 1963 and 1964; people just didn't get to do that. My dad wrote a letter that I found. I might have mentioned this to you. It starts off with, "We're fine. By the way, you're doing things that I could only dream of." My parents never got to go to Europe until I took them years and years later to Ireland. It was like people didn't do that, and we got to do it. So that was really cool.

MG: You lived through some really interesting moments in history while you were in college. So I was curious how these things influenced you and how they were discussed on campus. I'm thinking about the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Bay of Pigs invasion, and then Kennedy's assassination, in particular.

JC: Yes. We had an Admiral's inspection on Saturday and had the radio on, listening to the radio station while we were cleaning the room. By then, we had moved into the dorms. The admiral's inspection was white glove; they'd come into your room and check out the springs on the bed and make sure there was no dust and that kind of stuff. So, everybody cleaned quite a bit [on Friday]. Then, all of a sudden, we heard the news that Kennedy had been shot. It was like, Oh, my god. What's going on?" When it first came over, it didn't say he was dead. Then, within a very relatively short period of time – I can't remember how long, maybe half an hour or something – it was like, "The President is dead." I can't remember who the news guy was [Walter Cronkite], but I can still hear his voice. "The President is dead." At the end of the Admiral's inspection, you got out for the weekend and had to be back [on campus] Sunday night. I was dating a girl in Queens. I remember going over and spending the entire weekend just sitting in front of the TV, watching all the stuff about Kennedy. This song just kept playing over and over – "Somewhere Beyond the Sea." It was like something ended there. Your innocence just ended. It was like, "Whoa, this is crazy," he was such a vibrant man. There really was a Camelot atmosphere. We got back to school on Monday. The entire regiment was just devastated, absolutely devastated. There was nothing about Republicans, Democrats, none of that crap. It was: the President is dead. The other stuff paled by comparison. Bay of Pigs. Wow. That was not a good thing. What really happened there? Blah, blah, blah. But that assassination just defined an entire generation.

MG: What was that next week on campus and in the country?

JC: My recollection is we went through the motions of going to school and attending classes. But every spare moment was pretty much either discussing it or talking about it or listening to the news reports as to what happened because it wasn't too long after that what's-his-name got killed, the guy that was the assassin [Lee Harvey Oswald]. This was a long-playing drama, and so everybody was, again, glued to the radio. At night, they had a TV in one of the rec rooms down below. It [the assassination] was just the conversation amongst everybody. I don't recall any other conversations going on. Everybody was just entangled in this thing. It was very strange. It was very strange. Then, as time went on it, it ameliorated a little bit. It was still fresh in your memory, but you realized you have exams, we've got to do things – life continued. Wow. Jackie Kennedy at the gravesite, the torch, and the little kid saluting when his father goes by – I can still feel it.

MG: Were you watching when everything else unfolded when Lee Harvey Oswald was taken into custody and killed on television by Jack Ruby? It must have been such a chaotic time.

JC: I didn't see the actual assassination. We didn't have a lot of TV. We had radios in our room, but if you wanted to watch TV, you had to go down to the Company rec. room. So, I never saw that. I saw the reruns of it. But again, something would pop, and all of a sudden, everybody would be talking – "I heard this on the radio, blah, blah, blah." That was weird.

Effects later on – when I was teaching a course in Dallas, I made it a point to go to the book [repository] to see for myself what was this like. It was like, “Whoa,” totally different. Physically seeing the layout was just enlightening, very enlightening, and the grassy knoll and all that sort of stuff. Then, later on, when I was playing in the Washington Scottish Pipe Band in Washington, DC, I got to play a party for the Kennedys, and Jackie showed up. I got to actually meet her.

MG: What was that like for you? What would she like in person?

JC: She was smaller in stature than I had imagined, very thin. She was older. I don’t know if this was before or after [Aristotle] Onassis died, but just a very pleasant person and clearly the focus of the entire party when she came in. Really nice.

MG: You mentioned working at that architecture firm for just a little bit. Can you describe what that was like and how long you were there?

JC: Oh, yes. I was there for about six to eight months. I didn’t have a security clearance at that point. I was working on piping systems. I had a draftsman’s desk in front of me at a forty-five-degree angle, and they would give me a piping system for something, and then I would check it out. By checking it out, I would make sure there were the correct number of valves. Then I had to do calculations to determine what the flow of water or substance would be in the particular lines. Then when I got finished checking it, I would take it, and I would send it to another guy, who would double-check my work. Then it would go to the head of the section, the piping section, and that would be it. Well, again, we had some practical experience. This company, M. Rosenblatt & Son, had a lot of work, and they needed people. They hired, in fact, a couple of us from Fort Schuyler that were waiting, finishing up this one course. We all went to work there. Then, they still needed people, so they hired some other people from some other naval architecture firm [from] Massachusetts or somewhere. They asked me to design a piping system for a boiler, and they told me it was a class A boiler; it had two boiler fronts. I followed the specifications, and I designed this piping system to carry fuel oil to the burners for the boiler. Now, if you can picture this: three large portholes, one on top of the other, separated by three or four feet. In the middle of each of these little porthole kinds of things is a hole, and in that hole, you stick in a long tube, steel tube, fuel oil in, and on the end of the tube, there are valves on either side, and they connect to the fuel oil system. You have an inlet and then an outlet. So the oil comes up, you open up the valve on the inlet side, and it goes in through the burner and fires the boiler. Then there’s return pressure that takes any excess oil that’s in there and goes into the return line. You have to have a valve to open on the supply side and one on the return. At the top, you have to have a valve that will separate the return line pressure from the supply line pressure. What you end up with is one valve on the supply line side for each of these burners, one on each of the burners on the downside, and one in the middle to shut it off and make sure that the [line] pressures are separated. Then, one large valve at the very bottom [entry] and one large valve on the other side, so you can shut the whole thing off. So I designed this thing this way. Then I gave my drawing to this guy from Massachusetts, who was supposed to be a marine engineer kind of guy. I gave it to him, and I got called into the head manager’s office. I think he was from Norway originally, so he spoke with a little bit of accent. He starts reading me the riot act about, “This is wrong. Why’d you do this?” Literally screaming. I [said], “Show me what

you're talking about." The guy [the manager] showed me the diagram, and all the valves were missing. I said, "I didn't do that." This guy that had reviewed this thing to see if there was something wrong, he was supposed to outline it with a red crayon marker and then ship it back to me. [Instead], he just changed it, never shipped it back to me, and submitted the drawing. So I said, "I didn't do that. I designed it. I mean, I've used them [A type boilers]. I know what you're supposed to do." He [the manager] said, "Well, who reviewed this?" I said, "Well, this guy [from Massachusetts]" So they called him in. The guy said, "Oh, yeah, I saw these valves, and they looked duplicative. I saved so much money by not having these valves." I turned to the guy, and I said, "Have you ever seen a boiler?" [laughter]. The guy who was the head of the section said to me, "You can get out now," and I walked out. Well, no, I didn't leave at that point. The guy [manager] starts reaming this other guy, screaming at him, just like he had been screaming at me. All of a sudden, he [the guy from Massachusetts] starts crying. This guy starts crying. This is a college graduate, and he's being screamed at by somebody. This guy starts bawling and crying. The guy [manager] tells me, "You should leave now." So I go outside. The thing was that he [the guy from Massachusetts] had never seen a boiler. He didn't do the right thing. That was one of the first times that I realized what kind of an education I had at Fort Schuyler. Because for four years, people had been screaming at me, telling me I'm doing something right or wrong. After a while, you wait for them to finish, and then you say what you're going to say. You don't argue with them or anything like that. You just let it go by. I realized, "Well, that's one lesson that I learned." The other thing was that they had me designing a piping system that was supposed to go on to an Army Corps of Engineers dredge and another one for an ammunition ship, a Navy ammunition ship. The dredge was not too much of a problem, but the ammunition ship was classified. I didn't have a clearance. I went up to the head of the section, and I said, "Can you tell me please how much water is supposed to be flowing through here when this thing goes through the bulkhead? I have to design the pipe size to make sure it'll carry the right pressure and water." He said, "Just go design it. You don't need to know that." I said, "I have to know that." He said, "No, you're not classified. Just go ahead and design it. Then we'll figure out the actual size later." That was interesting.

MG: You're making a point about the benefit of real-world application, having done these hands-on things at Fort Schuyler before you go off into the real world.

JC: Yes, big time. Big time. Like I said, I had actually operated in the engine room and changed those burners out. When an old steamship – when the captain, or whoever is driving the ship, says, "Full astern" or "full ahead," you have to have burner tips that will put out a lot of oil into the boiler to get the required heat to get the steam to drive the turbine. When you're maneuvering at slower speeds, you have to have smaller tips because you don't want that much oil going in there. It's not something that you can adjust the flow of oil. You would adjust it by physically changing these burner tubes. When they're actually maneuvering, like close to a pier, they'll come down, and they'll say, "Two-thirds astern." So we got to have a lot of oil going in. Well, if you had the smaller burners in, you take these two valves, you spin them real quick, shut them off, you pull this thing out, somebody else has got the correct burner size onto one of these tubes. You grab that, you slam it in, spin these things again, and it locks in, and then you hit the other valve, and in goes the oil, and you hopefully get the right steam pressure, which is one of the reasons, by the way, that engineers would know whether or not there was anybody experienced on the bridge because an inexperienced officer on the bridge on a steamship – and,

by the way, sometimes a diesel boat as well – may change speeds so quickly, thinking that they’re going to get something done really quickly. So they’ll go, “One-third ahead, one-third back, one-third ahead.” You can’t get stuff changed that quickly. [laughter] So you’re just watching this [Engine Order Telegraph] going *ching, ching, ching*, and nothing’s happening. You learn that from actually physically doing it. For example, when I started driving ships, I realized that you can’t take the speed control and jam it ahead and then put it back and make these very, very short changes to the speed of the engines because nothing’s going to happen down there. The engines aren’t going to respond that fast.

MG: Would you use this experience and what you learned at the architecture firm in your later career with ESSA [Environmental Science Services Administration] and NOAA?

JC: Yes. When we were building the *Oceanographer*, I got to work with some of the shipyard people, who were designing the same kinds of systems. I had the same kind of language to talk to them about. That was amazing, by the way. That was an amazing experience, and I’ll tell you why. The engineers that were assigned to the *Oceanographer* and *Discoverer* were basically civilian engineers that had come off other ships that were being laid up. They were what we called “hawsepipe engineers”. They learned from being an oiler and then worked their way up. They weren’t college trained or anything. Quite frankly, you didn’t really have to be college-trained in their day; you just got it by experience. But that worked against them to the extent that they didn’t have a background in designing a flow system. They didn’t have any background in instrumentation or electrical diagrams and stuff like that. The chief electrician might have, but not the engineers. All of that experience that I had was important– When I was at the shipyard, I could go to the engineer, who was designing this system, and say something like, “Tell me, how do you do this, or how do you do that?” Then, he would show me on a diagram. “Oh, okay.” And then, every once in a while, I might say something like, “Well, what about if this happens?” They enjoyed talking to me about it because they knew that I had some kind of background in it. I wasn’t as good as they were, obviously. They took me under their wing. The bottom line was, by the time we got the ship, I knew the ship systems backward and forwards, where a lot of the other engineers did not. In fact, for the first – I don’t know how many – trips on the *Oceanographer*, I was the person that lit the plant off because – I don’t want to say that the chief engineer didn’t know how to do it, but he didn’t do it. He would say, “You go ahead and do it, John.” So, I would light the thing [plant] off. The only reason that happened – and this is my opinion, and this is my recollection- the only reason that happened was because these civilian engineers that we had on our ships didn’t want to interact with the contract engineers that were building the ship. There was kind of a gulf there, and they would say “Just give us the ship and the diagrams, and we’ll figure it out.” It was not a good situation. So, to answer your question, that experience gave me a commonality with the people that designed and were building the ship that allowed me then to become friends with them. They, in turn, taught me stuff that they weren’t giving other people because the other people weren’t interested. Did that make sense what I just said?

MG: Yes, yes. I want to shift gears now and talk about your entree into the Coast and Geodetic Survey. Was it under the umbrella of ESSA at this point?

JC: Yes. I was a Coast and Geodetic Survey officer in ESSA. I think it was Reorganization Plan number 2 in 1965 that created ESSA and Reorganization Plan number 4 in 1970 that created NOAA if I recall. We went from ESSA to NOAA.

MG: Did you do your training right away?

JC: No. [laughter] Like I said, I was the first [Commissioned Officer] marine engineer that they ever had. I was sworn in New York. I drove down to the ship and started working on ship construction. When the *Oceanographer* was finally turned over to Coast Survey, we took the ship up to Baltimore to get computers fitted. Then, the ship came down to Washington, DC, to be commissioned by Lyndon Johnson. It was about that time that somebody said, “You haven’t been to training class yet.” [laughter] All the officers have to go to training class. I had been to Fort Schuyler. I knew how to wear a uniform. I knew what the military protocols were. They just [thought], “This guy’s not going to be doing hydrography. So let him go [without going to training Class].” But somebody in Headquarters said, “No, you need to go to training class”. So I left the *Oceanographer*, and I went for three months to training class. When I came out of the training class, I ended up going to the *Discoverer* and finished up building her. The same thing – took the trip up to the coast, and then we went to South America and Africa on our first major cruise.

MG: So the *Oceanographer* was the first ship you were on?

JC: Yes, it was.

MG: Would you return to it later on after training, or was that the only time period you served on the *Oceanographer*?

JC: That was the only time period that I served on the *Oceanographer*. When I came out of training class, my recollection [is] I went to the *Discoverer*. Then I didn’t serve aboard the *Oceanographer* again until I was Captain.

MG: And you were a plank owner on the *Oceanographer*.

JC: Yes. That means you made the initial voyage, which I did. I made the initial voyage of the *Discoverer* as well. I became a plank owner on both.

MG: Neat. Can you talk about that initial voyage? What was the ship’s assignment? Where were you going?

JC: Yes, we were going from Jacksonville, Florida, up to Baltimore to get computers installed and other survey equipment. I was a watch engineer. I was the third assistant engineer. The trip up was – I was going to say unremarkable, but I want to make sure I don’t confuse the two ships because both made the same trips from Jacksonville up to Baltimore. Like I said, I think it was pretty much unremarkable. I’m getting one of these instances confused. I’ll have to check with somebody. It must have been the *Discoverer*. We had the UNIVAC 1218 computer on both vessels. Interestingly enough, they bought these things years ahead of time, and they stuck them

in a warehouse because the ships were delayed in building. It [the warehouse] was not climate controlled. By the time they got these computers installed, and I think they had like sixteen megabytes of data total, [there were] a lot of water problems. In fact, I was told by one of the representatives that they initially had mercury-wetted relays like you'd have on a thermostat in your home, where, as you change the angle, the little mercury drop goes down and makes a connection and turns the thing on. Well, obviously, that's not going to work on a ship, right? Because if the ship rolls back and forth, these little mercury-wetted things are going to click, click, click. They had to change those out and make them wire-wrapped. As I said, they'd been in a warehouse for a couple of years – and there were a lot of problems getting things up and running. We had a guy from – I think it was – GE [General Electric Company] that was supposed to be providing contractor support to get these things up and running. His name was George Valiukonis. We were going up around Cape Hatteras, and we hit some not really super bad weather. It wasn't flat calm, for sure. George had a heart attack. Wow. I've got to call somebody and find out which trip this was. But when I got off watch, obviously, the ship slowed down, and I couldn't understand why. When I got off watch, I went up, and Joe Dropp, as I recall, had been doing mouth-to-mouth resuscitation on the guy – and nothing. We had put out a call for medical assistance. We got a reply back. "This is the United States Navy. Please identify yourself." "This is Coast and Geodetic Survey ship *Discoverer*. We request medical assistance. Do you have a doctor on board?" There's just dead silence. And then the thing comes back, - I'm hearing this secondhand, by the way- "Vessel so-and-so, identify yourself." [ans] "We're the Coast and Geodetic Survey ship – blah, blah, blah – and we need blah, blah, blah." "Identify yourself." The captain gets on [imitates grumbling]. They [Navy] said, "Prepare to be boarded." All of a sudden, the sky lights up. It was an aircraft carrier out there with a bunch of Navy ships doing these maneuvers. They were dark, and all of a sudden, all these lights come on. It's like a city lights up. This boat comes over with a doctor and an armed party. They come on board. The doctor goes back and pronounces the guy dead, and then they leave. Apparently, what happened was there was nothing in the Navy books, *Jane's Fighting Ships* and the rest of it –our ships were not in there because they were brand new, hadn't even been commissioned yet. You take a look at the *Discoverer*, the profile with all of the antenna and all that sort of stuff, and you can understand why the Navy was a little bit concerned about who are these guys. So that was the initial trip. It was fun.

MG: Were you disappointed to leave the *Oceanographer* to go to training? The *Oceanographer* was first, right? I think I'm a little confused.

JC: Yes, I was. I didn't understand why I had to go to training. If that's what they wanted, then that's what it was. They wanted me to, because of the experience I had with the *Oceanographer*, they wanted me on the *Discoverer* to help get the *Discoverer* out of the shipyard. The *Oceanographer* and the *Discoverer* are – you said you're confused. Let me confuse you a little bit more. Both ships were being built at the same time. The hull number 001 was for *Oceanographer*, and 002 was for *Discoverer*. I don't know if those are the actual numbers. They had a fire in the *Oceanographer* hull, and it warped some of the metal, so it had to be redone. Meanwhile, the shipyard needed to get one of the ships out by a certain date because that's what they'd agreed to. So, they switched the names [on the hull] so that the next ship, the one that was most advanced in building, would be the first one to come out. The *Discoverer* hull really is the [original] *Oceanographer* hull and vice versa.

MG: They're sister ships. Can you say what that means?

JC: They're identical. Everything was identical. That's essentially what a sister ship is. The shipyard also was building at the time three Class two vessels: *Fairweather*, *Rainier*, and *Mount Mitchell*. Then there were two other vessels that were partially done: MacArthur and – I can't remember the name of the other one [the Davidson] – in a small shipyard up some river, and they went bankrupt. They towed down those two hulls to Aerojet-General, which was the name of the shipyard, and finished them up.

MG: What was your training experience like? Was that at Kings Point?

JC: No. At the time that I did the initial officer training, it was in Norfolk, Virginia, on the Elizabeth River at the Atlantic Marine Center. I think there were thirty one people in my training class. It was huge. They were trying to ramp up and get a lot more officers in. In my training class, we had some really unique kinds of guys, people with meteorology degrees, oceanographic degrees. One guy invented a tidal buoy that would generate electricity as it went up and down. One of my roommates – I had [three] roommates; two were Fort Schuyler graduates from a year after me, and the other guy was a guy from South Dakota. His name is Lowell Genzlinger, and he came from a town called Lucas with thirteen people in it. The first time he ever saw an ocean was when I took him to the Atlantic Ocean to visit my parents. They had a place they had rented for a couple of weeks in Point Pleasant, New Jersey. The first time, he'd seen an ocean. Anyway, Lowell was some kind of a civil engineer. By the way, he ended up flying our P-3 Hurricane Hunters and became a really accomplished pilot – an incredible career, by the way. So, there were thirty one of us. At some point, and I haven't figured this out – I think I came across this the other day. I don't know if you can see this or not. [shows picture of training class officers]

MG: Is that your training class?

JC: That was part of my training class. We had thirty one people. These were the ones that were sent to be on the *Oceanographer* for its commissioning to act as ushers. I and some of these people [officers] went up and acted as ushers and helped out with the commissioning of the *Oceanographer*. That was interesting.

Part of it [the training class] was, for me, interesting to the extent that they made you do a hydrographic project. I had to learn about chisel point pencils and how to construct a boat sheet, and then go out in a boat and take soundings and print them on this boat sheet that you made. It was very interesting from the standpoint of you learned that the width of the chisel point pencil translates on a particular chart projection as it could be as much as six feet or whatever the width of the lead is. You don't think about that stuff unless you're in the chart-making business. Then we had small boat handling, where you took these launches, and you went out, and you did these little surveys. We took a trip to Jamestown, up the river. I think I was the only one in the class that was already commissioned because I had been commissioned in New York. So, in a way, I was like the senior guy in the class. Whenever they choose up teams for – Team A is going to do this project, and Team B is going to do something, I'd end up as one of the leaders of the teams.

From that standpoint, it was interesting. From another standpoint, for how to wear a uniform and that kind of stuff, I knew all that stuff. At some point, the training officer said, "Well, we're taking one of the launches up to Jamestown. Why don't you go check the engines out on it?" I went out and worked on some diesel engines while they were doing that [uniform maintenance].

Again, we did a hydro project in the Elizabeth River. We mapped right outside the area of the Atlantic Marine Center. Poor Lowell. Everybody got to be in charge of the launch for a day or whatever. Lowell gets [to be] in charge of the launch for a day, and he finds the only piling that no other training class had ever found in the Elizabeth River. [laughter] I remember the boat being pulled out of the water next to the pier at AMC with a davit. There's this propeller, and it's just bent. Lowell is standing there, looking at it. [He's] never seen an ocean; the first day, he's in charge of a boat, he finds the only piling. I think we were the 21st training class. All these other training classes had done the same survey and didn't find it.

MG: Was he chewed out for that?

JC: No, not at all. He hadn't done anything wrong. In fact, when you're doing hydrography, that happens. You find stuff and boats get damaged. In fact, when we were at Tristan da Cunha on the *Discoverer*, I was put in charge of the launches. Out of six launches, by the end of the first day, all of them were broke. We had to run into a little cove and they had no real harbor. When the waves would go out, the boats would hit the ground and bend stuff up. We had to get that stuff offloaded in a matter of days, so we just hauled boats back and fixed them up and started all over again, knowing that if you're at the wrong time in the tide, you could very easily end up with the boats being damaged again. In fact, we ended up asking the islanders at Tristan da Cunha if we could hire them. They had big longboats, that they used for lobstering, to help us move some of the stuff in because our boats couldn't do it. Anyway, he didn't get in trouble at all.

MG: His name is familiar to me. I think you've mentioned him before. Did he stay with NOAA for his whole career?

JC: He did. When he retired as a captain, he went to fly for NCAR [National Center for Atmospheric Research], which is an environmental group out of Boulder. They did the same kind of weather research the P-3 Orion [and] OAR [Oceanic and Atmospheric Research] did in NOAA. He flew all around the world with them as well. Then he retired from them – I don't know how many years ago, but quite a lot later. I've always told people that for a guy who had never seen an ocean before, he probably flew around the globe more times than I passed telephone poles. Also, by the way, he was on a satellite triangulation party, and he was at Seychelles and down in Brazil, doing satellite triangulation. He also spent at least one tour on the *Pathfinder* as a deck officer after we got out of training class. He was one of the few guys that got to go through the Panama Canal at the time. He got out of training class, went to the *Pathfinder*, and then later was on the crew that took the *Rainier* and the *Fairweather* through the Panama Canal. Not bad duty.

MG: How did you get your next assignment on the *Discoverer*?

JC: Like I said, they wanted my expertise. I think they wanted my expertise to help get the *Discoverer* out. Since that was the second Class 1, and it had the computerized engine room system, which is what they hired me for in first place – once that was complete, then I sailed with her, and we made the initial cruise to South America and Africa to study continental drift. We stopped at Tristan da Cunha, which is a live volcano about halfway between Africa and South America. When we finished that, I think it was shortly thereafter, I got transferred to Rockville to the ship's construction staff. Of course, they were still constructing ships, one of which was the *Researcher*. I worked as a ship construction guy for – I don't know how long that was – a year, maybe. Meanwhile, I had gotten accepted into law school. I accepted. I went to the powers that be, and I said, "I'd like to go to full-time training in law school." They said, "We don't have lawyers." One of the guys in the General Counsel's office, a guy named Hugh Dolan, thought that it would be great to have a [commissioned officer] lawyer because there was a guy [lawyer] named Aaron Shalowitz, who wrote two volumes, *Shore and Sea Boundaries*. He was a Coast Survey employee. Those volumes were quoted, and are still quoted, by the Supreme Court as the end-all for boundary law. Anyway, they said, "We don't have commissioned officer lawyers; we never had a commissioned officer lawyer." In fact, a guy named Paul Chernoff, who was a commissioned officer, had asked for the same thing years before, and they turned him down. He got out of the Corps. By the way, he became a lawyer and then a judge in Maryland. I met the guy years later. I said to them, "Well, I really want to do a law thing, so I'm just going to have to resign." Admiral Powell, or Captain Powell at the time, was in charge of the ship construction group. He was a proponent of having commissioned officer marine engineers on ships. That was being fought by the civilians on board and some of the officers. Some of the senior officers didn't think they should have commissioned officers in the engine room. He had been a big supporter of the commissioned officer program for engineers. He said, "I'll tell you what. How about you go up to New York. We will assign you to New York, to the field office there, and you will work [there]." I had told the organization that there was a professor at Fort Schuyler that was really into automation, and we ought to take that CERC [Central Engine Room Control] system that we had on the two Class 1 vessels and have them take a look at that up there because we were having a lot of problems with sensors. He was working on a system whereby you could, from the data you collected, determine when and how much maintenance would be necessary. You could schedule it ahead of time. They were doing that on airplanes at the time. They had almost justified a computer for each airplane just to be able to predict when these engines needed to be serviced. I had suggested they do that. He said, "Well, we'll assign you to the New York field office. Then you can work at the Maritime College with this professor and do the CERC system stuff, and you can go to law school at night." So, I got accepted to Fordham [for] night school. I went to the New York field office as my assignment. I lived at home with my parents in Washington Township. I would work during the day from eight o'clock until about four or five o'clock downtown. Once in a while, I'd actually go out to Fort Schuyler and work with the professor out there. The rest of it was by telephone and stuff. Then I would hop on a subway, and I would go up to Fordham Law School, which was up in Lincoln Center. I'd go to class to about 9:30; then I'd take the train down to Port Authority, take a bus over to Washington Township – that took an hour – be home around eleven o'clock, and get up the next morning and leave for work again around 6:30. So that was a real grind. I paid for it with the GI Bill benefits they had an educational program [for officers] in the service at the time. I got a couple hundred bucks a month for that. I don't know whether or not I got – yes, I think that was it. What [Capt] Powell told me was, "See how you like it. If you don't like law at the

end of the day or the end of the year, well, whatever. If you do, let's see what else we can do." [laughter] So I did that. It was very physically demanding, to the extent that, at one point, I went to a doctor, and I said, "I don't know what's going on, but I feel dizzy." He asked me what my schedule was, and I told him. He said, "Here, you need to take these things." I forget what it was – some kind of pill to make you relax. "Too much stress." I ended up finishing that year. I did finish the Central Engine Room Control project. We did some testing, which was neat. In fact, I got an award for that. Then they said, "All right. Come back down to the ship construction group again." They said, "How did you like law school?" "I love it." They said, "Okay, well, you can go again at night. If you have courses that are related to what we're doing, then we can pay for that. Once in a while, if you need a couple hours to do homework during the day, we'll make sure you get a little bit of time." I ended up going to Catholic University School of Law, and I did that for two and a half years. I wasn't honest with them. I told the Coast and Geodetic Survey that I was going to school part-time, and I told Catholic University that I was working part-time. In reality, I was doing both full-time. [laughter] So I finished that up in two and a half years.

MG: There's a number of things I want to go back to and ask you more about, especially your time on the *Discoverer*. But I'm wondering if now's a good time to stop for today.

JC: That'd be great.

MG: So we can pick up there next time.

JC: I hope this is not too boring.

MG: No, this is really fascinating. You're doing such a good job describing this time period and all of your duties. I'll follow up with some more detailed questions when we get together the next time.

JC: Perfect. Thank you.

MG: Let me turn off the recording, and then we can figure out our next date.

JC: Good.

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