

NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
VOICES ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
NOAA HERITAGE AND THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE

AN INTERVIEW WITH
CAPT. JOHN K. CALLAHAN, JR. NOAA

FOR THE
NOAA 50TH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED 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 sixth session. The date is August 19, 2021. It's a remote interview with Capt. Callahan in Coupeville, Washington, and I'm in Scarborough, Maine. I just wanted to pick up with what role you were in towards the end of the 1980s and getting into the '90s. Was that when you joined the Office of the NOAA Corps?

John Callahan: Yeah, the '80s and '90s. It was 1988, I think, when I took Command of the *Oceanographer*. I was on the *Oceanographer* for about a year, and then I shifted over to the *Discoverer* and finished that up in '89, then moved into the Deputy Director of the Marine Center position. I wrote down here someplace what the timeframe was. From 1989 to 1992, I was at the Pacific Marine Center as the Deputy Director. From '92 to '93, a Special Assistant to the Director of the Pacific Marine Center, which was essentially a holding pattern for me prior to, eventually, my retirement.

MG: Backing up a little bit to the Pacific Marine Center, were you working with Eddie Bernard at that point?

JC: Eddie was one of the scientists at the PMEL [Pacific Marine Environmental Laboratory]. He was a former NOAA [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration] commissioned officer. So, I knew him. I did not work with him on a daily basis or anything. He was at PMEL.

MG: I was getting my acronyms mixed up. Where was the Pacific Marine Center located?

JC: The Pacific Marine Center was on Lake Union in Seattle, and the Pacific Marine Environmental Lab was out at Sandpoint on Lake Washington – two different facilities. They were probably separated by maybe ten miles or something. The ship's base, the Pacific Marine Center, is where all the ships obviously docked. The PMEL is where all the scientists essentially worked. There was a lot of commuting, if you will, between the PMEL and the Pacific Marine Center, particularly when you were staging for a project. Stuff would be delivered or trucked into the Pacific Marine Center, loaded up on the vessels, and then off you go on your mission, whatever it happened to be. Did we discuss the assignment I had as the Deputy for the [Director of the] NOAA Corps?

MG: No. That's what I wanted to get into. I wasn't sure what happened first.

JC: What happened was I went to the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, which we discussed, right?

MG: Yes.

JC: Upon graduation from the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, I was assigned to Admiral [Francis] Moran's office as his Deputy. He was the Director of the NOAA Corps at the time. I had that assignment from '86 through '88, roughly, a little less than two years. That was a very exciting time, very exciting time. I got to handle all sorts of different issues on his behalf, represented him in a number of areas. One of them, of which I have a picture I just came across

the other day was the Combined Federal Campaign. They always took somebody in the Department of Commerce, and they made them the head of the Combined Federal Campaign. They made him [Admiral Moran] the head. So, guess who got to do it? [laughter] At the end of it, I remember, there was some kind of a drawing, and I held out a hat. He took his hand and pulled a number out of the hat. Somebody took a picture of it. I came across that picture recently, and he wrote on the picture, "If I get caught with my hands in the till again, you're fired." [laughter] Very clever guy. Very fun. The NOAA Corps under him took a marked turn if you will. It was a very exciting time. He was the kind of guy [who] when you worked for him, he gave you free rein to do whatever you needed to do, and he listened very carefully to what you had to say. Let me back up. There were times when something would pop up. He was a no-nonsense kind of guy. He really was. He would have an immediate reaction to something. In fact, every once in a while, people would refer to his management style as ready, fire, aim. What I considered my role to be at that point was to, if something like that came up, I would listen to what his reaction was. His reaction, by the way, was usually a hundred percent on. Sometimes I would come back to him a little bit later and maybe suggest some alternative ways to do the same thing, and he would listen. So, it was a nice pairing. Anyway, some of the things that I did in that job – as I mentioned, I represented him on a number of different interagency committees. I started rewriting the Coast and Geodetic Survey regulations, particularly the Disciplinary Chapter for the NOAA Corps. I rewrote the whole thing based on input from the civilian sector, as well as the Conduct-Unbecoming-an-Officer precedents in the military. I can actually remember when I got transferred to the West Coast to take Command of the *Oceanographer*; I had the last draft, if you will, of my work on the Disciplinary Chapter with me, finished up a few odds and ends, and sent it back to him at that point. Later on, after he reviewed the initial drafts – of course, I was on a ship at that point – I believe he ended up turning it over to one of the other commissioned officers, who had gotten a law degree, a guy named Jack Moakley. Jack made some changes, cleaned it up a little bit, and it got published. It was the first time the NOAA Corps really had a bunch of regulations that they could look to, as opposed to these old Coast and Geodetic Survey regulations, which were way, way out of date. Very good regulations, by the way. But as you would imagine, in the '30s and '40, things were not very detailed; it was just little recitations of some of the statutory authority, etcetera, and not a whole lot of detail. The regulations that we published had all sorts of detail in them, so we could create different disciplinary boards, do investigations as necessary, and then make sure that the officer that was involved in anything like that had certain rights and was able to avail themselves of that. I thought that was kind of a major thing to do. We also started a physical fitness program for officers, which we'd never had before, where every year, you had to do the same kind of calisthenics and physical conditioning that the other services did. You had to run a mile and a half in so many minutes or swim so much in a certain amount of time. That actually had some real interesting benefits to people because one officer that I remember, when he got involved in that program, he had to go to a doctor and get a clearance to do the exercise. They found some really bad stuff [medical] on him, and they were able to correct it. He would have not done that unless he had been involved in that program. Of course, there were some of the more senior officers who were not thrilled with the idea that they had to go run a mile and a half every year. Let's see. What else?

MG: You said that Admiral Moran made a lot of changes to the NOAA Corps during that time. I think I read he added some aviation units. What were these other changes you referred to?

JC: Yes. He got involved in – he was a helicopter pilot, by the way, and was still actively flying. I can remember one time going out and meeting him at a particular airfield where he was being briefed on one of our new aircraft by the current pilots and taking it up and down. I believe he flew, as a demonstration, the Secretary of Commerce around. Anyway, he had a vision of a Commissioned Corps that was an elite bunch of engineers and scientists, that also operated planes and ships, which is a little different than, in my estimation anyway, the prior philosophy, which was developed by default, I guess, wherein we were becoming more ship drivers, and airplane operators, as opposed to a combination of ship drivers and engineer/scientists. We had gone – the Corps seemed to vacillate between what they wanted the commissioned officers to do. He provided direction. You were going to not only be a engineer/scientist, but you were also going to be a uniformed service commissioned officer. On the other hand, as a commissioned officer, you're also going to be a engineer/scientist; you had to have some kind of disciplinary expertise. He provided direction to do that. There was some reorganization, as I recall, particularly the air wing, people being able to have a career path, if you will, starting out with some of the smaller aircraft and working our way up to the Hurricane Hunters. He moved the Hurricane Hunters into a particular facility in Florida. Later on, they moved to an Air Force Base up near Tampa and had a very nice facility. He made sure that they all had whatever they needed to do their jobs, started a lot of interactions with other services and other components of the government that needed services that NOAA might provide. He looked at and was – I don't want to say instrumental, but certainly in charge of the whole thing – getting helicopters to actually work off some of our Fisheries vessels. We developed relationships with the Coast Guard and other uniformed services. What else? Again, he made sure that officers had career paths, things that they could look forward to doing, and knew exactly what it was that they were supposed to do. He was a leader. There are an awful lot of people that I came across in the Commissioned Corps that were very, very nice guys and had some degree of expertise in whatever their fields were, but there were very few people that were actual leaders. John Bossler was a leader. Moran was a leader. Moran was the kind of guy that you would get behind. He would give you some direction, and you'd take it willingly – one of the nicer guys to work for. He had a vision. Some of these people did not. For example, under Admiral Moran, we became much closely involved with the other uniformed services. I remember going down one time [to the Pentagon] – we were going to get involved in war games. If you look back at the history of the Commissioned Corps, we were, at a number of different points, involved with our sister services, if you will. Some of the people that I worked for initially when I was an ensign served during the Second World War. They were in the Marines and the Army as Coast Survey officers because their particular talents were desired by the other armed services; their expertise was very valued. Over time, the Commissioned Corps changed, and it was no longer just geodesists and hydrographers. There were now other disciplines in the Commissioned Corps. One of the questions was, what do these officers do in relationship [serving with] with other uniformed services? What are their functions? One of the things that got developed was a plan, if you will, such that each officer would have a billet that they were capable of transferring to [in another Uniformed Service. For example, meteorologists, which obviously, the Commissioned Corps didn't have in the 1940's, meteorologists would go to the Air Force. Guys like myself that were more nautically involved would probably go to the Navy. Geodesists would go to the Army Artillery or the Marines. We had an officer, Fred Jeffries [later RADM. Jeffries], who was stationed at Fort Sill and worked with the Army and trained people in geodetic matters. At one

point, as I mentioned, I was assigned to the Coast Guard as a liaison to see how we could work with them better. The relationships with the other armed services needed to be a little bit more clearly defined. We took some efforts to make sure that we still had value to the other armed services if we were needed. One of the things that we wanted to do was to get involved in planning with the other armed services so that if anything ever actually did happen, everybody would know where they were supposed to go and what they were supposed to do. The armed services would know what kind of officers they had at their disposal and what kind of equipment and expertise was available. So, we got involved in playing a war game. Admiral Moran sent me down to the Pentagon, and I was going to be the Corps representative, if you will, of NOAA for this particular war game. I remember being down there, and they started the game. Now, in a war game, what happens is it's compressed into a two or three-day period of time, but, on the ground, if you will, in planning this thing, it would be more like this has happened over two or three weeks. They just compress everything. And so, everything's going to be moving very, very fast. Things that would normally in the real world take one or two weeks or a couple of months get compressed down into a few hours and a day or so. At the end of two or three days [of war games], you've fought the entire war. I remember sitting in a room, and they gave us a particular situation. They needed some information. A number of our ships, the hydrographic ships, in particular, could provide that kind of information. This was the use essentially of a NOAA asset in a war game, which was great because that's theoretically what's supposed to happen. If there is a war, then the NOAA Corps and their equipment is available when the President signs off on the emergency order. So, they needed to know what ships were available in this particular location, how quickly they could get there, etcetera. Well, normally, I could go to a phone bank, call up Admiral Moran and whoever else needs to be called, and say, "Okay, they want to know what ship is available, what the capability is, etcetera." The problem was we didn't have any secure phone lines. In order to get the answer, I had to hop in my car, drive up the George Washington Parkway to Rockville, Maryland, run up to Admiral Moran's office and say, "They want two of our ships. I want to tell him which ones." He says, "Well, they're not my ships. We've got to get permission from Admiral Townsend." I went across the street, up to his [RADM Townsend] floor, and said, "We're involved in a war game. They want to have these ships." He says, "Well, I haven't been consulted on this." I said, "It's a war game." "Well, I should have been consulted. What are the other options?" I said, "Sir, they just want a simple answer, a yes or a no." Anyway, after a long period of time, he finally consented to it, right? I hop in the car, back down to the Pentagon. By then, a number of hours have gone by. That entire scenario is over and done with. Lessons learned, right? We had no [secure] communications between the armed services and the NOAA Corps office and/or the National Oceans Survey, who was in charge of all the ship stuff. Admiral Moran said, "Okay. We'll solve that problem." So we got STU phones, S-T-U, I think it is. They were the telephones that you insert a key in, and you could talk securely. If we wanted to talk to somebody at the Pentagon, we could do so on a secure line. We had them installed in Admiral Moran's office and over at the National Ocean Service offices. The next time we were going to play any kind of war games or needed any kind of secure communications with any of the other services, we had them. Those are the kinds of things that he was open to, and we were able to get accomplished.

MG: Who was the other deputy Director during his time? You were deputy Director for two years, but Moran was Director for three or four years.

JC: The guy that relieved me was – his name is on the tip of my tongue right now. His brother ended up as an Admiral. I'll have to come back to it. Yeager. His last name is Yeager. Unfortunately, I can't remember his first name now. It escapes me right now [his first name was Dave]. He was the guy that relieved me when I went off to the *Oceanographer*.

MG: Was the Deputy Director position an assignment?

JC: It was an assignment. It was a billet. They had made up a billet system so that there were X number of billets that needed to be filled, and we had X number of officers. This was one of the attempts to bring some order to officer assignments, as opposed to just somebody calling up and saying, "Gee, I need a body. Send me an officer, will you please? We'll find a job for them." Some of that had been going on under the prior Directors of the NOAA Corps, particularly Admiral Nygren, who would do that frequently. This was an actual billet. The Assignment Board normally handles going through and filling billets. When you get to that level, though, the person who is looking for a deputy or an assistant, whatever you want to call him, is pretty much going to have a very large say as to who gets selected, particularly if he's the Director of the NOAA Corps; it's going to be whoever he wants.

MG: Was the Director position a political appointment selected by the current administration?

JC: It was not a political appointment to the extent that it would be changed with a new administration. As a commissioned officer, he was not subject to that. It was political, to the extent that whoever the Director of NOAA was, at the time, the Administrator rather, and his immediate political appointee people would certainly have a say as to who was going to be selected as Director of the NOAA Corps. But once that decision was made, then the [NOAA Corps] person was there and not subject to being removed just because the administration had changed.

MG: You talked a little bit about the relationship with the sister forces. How did that dynamic with the Corps evolve over time? How have other Directors managed that relationship?

JC: Interesting question. Very interesting question. As I mentioned, the armed services, particularly the Army and the Navy, had long-standing relationships with the NOAA Corps and its predecessor organizations, going back to [Ferdinand Rudolph] Hassler when he founded this entire chain of events. He had Army and Navy officers that were assigned to the Coast Survey. They would spend a few years as Coast Survey officers or officers assigned to the Coast Survey. Then they would go back to the Army or the Navy, whatever the services they were from. At some point in the history – I believe it was just prior to World War I – they had done away with having military officers assigned to the Coast Survey. My reading of the history at that time was that they pretty much thought that they probably didn't need commissioned officers to do that kind of work. They could get civilian employees to do that and develop whatever expertise was necessary. When World War I came along, they realized that that didn't really work too well because the civilians were not uniform, and they couldn't be ordered to go here and do that. As a result, because of the need that was evidenced in the First World War, it became apparent that they needed to have a cadre of officers that were experts at geodetic and hydrographic matters and serving at the beck and call of the armed services if they needed them. The Commissioned

Corps was born essentially in 1916. The relationship between the services at that point – the Coast Survey was in the Department of Treasury. It wasn't till 1930 or so that the Department of Commerce was founded. Up until that point, commissioned officers that were involved with the Coast Survey were in the Treasury Department, where, by the way, the Coast Guard was under a different name at the time – Revenue Cutter Service. So when World War II came along, the officers of the Coast Survey, in the Department of Commerce now, were assigned and transferred to various armed services. There was a small cadre of officers that were left as officers in the Coast Survey, churning out the charts in Washington, DC, and I guess whatever geodetic work needed to be done in the States. But many of the officers were transferred to the Army and the Navy and did various kinds of services that were needed by the armed services. We even transferred equipment to the extent that the *Surveyor*, I think, was one of the ships that was attached to a landing force somewhere in the Pacific. So, there were instances in which both ships and men were transferred to the services. The guy that I worked for initially, Captain [Allen L.] Powell, who later became Admiral Powell, I believe he was in the Marine Corps in World War II. Captain [William] Deane, the first Commanding officer of the *Discoverer* when I was on board, was, I think, assigned to the Navy. I personally met a number of these guys that served in World War II – distinguished service, by the way, not just small stuff. I also came across the fact when I had researched one time that we had a couple of commissioned officers – one or two commissioned officers in the Philippines when it was taken over by the Japanese, and I believe they were killed. The fact that there were only a hundred and fifty commission officers at the time made us one of the highest casualty rate services ever involved because we had lost two guys, which was comparatively percentage-wise, a lot. Anyway, all these guys were very much tuned in to being uniformed officers, and they understood what was needed, and the contacts that they had made in the Navy and the Army, etcetera, also knew of their value. In fact, researching a number of issues that I came across regarding this stuff for the Commissioned Corps, I was able to interact with some old service guys from the Navy and the Army, who knew immediately who we were, what we were, and what we did. Then you start getting involved in something like the Korean War, which we had very little to do with. It was not a declared war. For our officers to be involved with the [armed] services, the President was supposed to sign a declaration of war, and that immediately made us and our equipment available to the other services legally. Since there was no declaration of war in the Korean conflict, then there was no legal mechanism for them to get at us and our equipment. I don't know. I wasn't in the Corps at that time, but I suspect that there were a number of officers that were willing volunteers to do whatever was necessary. But again, that never happened because of this failure to declare this as a war – same thing with Vietnam. Vietnam was not a declared war. So, again, that mechanism was not there to transfer officers and equipment over to the other armed services. I do know that there were a number of officers that had gotten together and volunteered to do anything that was required. We thought we should have a part to play in that; we should do whatever part should have been done. It was at that time that I discovered that one of the reasons that we weren't going to do it was because the our Admiral said that according to the way they we're reading the statutes, we didn't qualify for VA benefits. It had been some kind of a ruling by the Veterans Administration; we [as NOAA officers] didn't qualify as veterans anymore. He didn't want to have any of our people exposed – I think it was Admiral Jones at the time. He didn't want any of our people exposed to whatever danger would be involved [without Veterans benefits]. That was when I first got involved, and that was the impetus, for me anyway, to work on that legislation that declared us as veterans for all purposes, for veterans benefits – kind of remove that obstacle.

As far as having to declare war to get us transferred to other services, that's a different problem, but at least that one we could handle. We did get that piece of legislation passed. So now, NOAA Corps Services qualifies officers for veteran benefits – we were defined as veterans. At that time, there were a couple of different camps, if you will; there were a number of people that thought that we shouldn't be in Vietnam and were very vocal about our involvement. There were other people that were more of the traditionalists, if you will, that would support the military and what they were doing. It was a very tumultuous time in society. I remember, when I went to training class, I was a little bit shocked that a lot of my classmates were there just to get out of the draft, that they had no intention of going anywhere beyond the two-year requirement. When I broached this with one of the training officers, [I] said, "Why are we recruiting people that have, in the beginning, stated that they had no desire to be a uniformed officer? They just were doing this to get out of the draft." He said, "Well, once they get in and they learn what we're about and what we do, they'll change their minds." So, there was a divergence, if you will. There were officers that were coming in because they wanted to have a career. They understood it was a uniformed service career, and they were very happy with that. Then there were others that were just going to be in for the minimum amount of time, satisfy their service obligation, and then get out. A lot of those people did stay for awhile, but they certainly didn't lose their predilection, if you will, to be "non-uniform". You had some officers that were very much into wearing uniforms and doing the same kinds of things that other uniformed service officers did, and others that thought, "No, we should be just scientists" or whatever their discipline was, "and uniforms are just a necessary evil we'll put up with." That same philosophy, again, I think, was found at the higher civilian levels in NOAA. There were a lot of people that did not like the idea of a uniformed service. There were very active attempts to do away with the Commissioned Corps. With that as a background, as I came up through the ranks, there were some efforts made to increase the number of contacts that we had with the other uniformed services to keep up the knowledge that the other uniformed services had as to what our capabilities were because, theoretically, we could be transferred over. For example we would send people to Fort Sill as geodetic instructors in the artillery. As I said, Admiral Jeffries, when he was Commander, I think, was stationed down there. I remember one of our guys, Capt. Keith, worked with the Army on developing some kind of a device to rapidly sight-in artillery. It could be used by people that didn't have a lot of geodetic knowledge. He actually demonstrated it. [laughter] I remember this story. They went to some artillery range, and some General was there and wanted to know how this thing worked. So, Capt. Keith showed him – *zip, zip, zip boom*. You can target this thing very quickly. The General said something about, "Well, you're a geodesist. You know how this works. How's this going to work in the field with people that really don't know this stuff?" He told the general, "Do you have any of your aides here?" He said, "Yeah." "Are they geodesists?" "No." "Well, give me one of them." He took the aide, took him aside, gave twenty minutes to a half an hour demonstrating how to do it, and then had the aide do it, and it worked fine. The General [said], "Thank you." [laughter] Anyway, we had those kinds of efforts, if you will. I got sent – it was how I ended up at the Industrial College of the Armed Forces. We wanted to have one of our officers go periodically through the Industrial College so they made contacts with the other services and let them know what our capabilities were, etcetera. To that extent, my tenure at the Industrial College of the Armed Forces was, I thought, very successful because, by the time we finished that year, everybody in my class knew everything they needed to know about NOAA and what our capabilities were. We had another billet, if you will, at one of the other armed services schools, the Navy Postgraduate School. We

had a guy down there as an instructor. We had a couple of people that were assigned to – we jokingly called them finishing schools. The Army has one; the Navy has one. You study management stuff. I can't remember the names of the schools right now. But we'd have officers periodically go to them. Admiral Evelyn Fields was one of the officers that got assigned to one of those schools. Again, there were more contacts [made]. When Admiral Moran came in, it was clear that he was a uniform service supporter, as opposed to some of the other people. These contacts [with other uniformed services] became a little bit stronger, and our visibility became a little bit more. At one point, we even sent one of our ships – the Mount Mitchell to Kuwait under Rich Permenter; he was Captain. In my estimation, we went from – when I joined – being half people that were supporters of uniformed services and a number of people that were not in it for that, just wanted to not be drafted, to people that were cognizant of the fact that we had a value to the military, and that we needed to be connected with them. We needed to have the expertise that they needed and be cognizant of the fact that we are a uniformed service. That happened under Admiral Moran. When I left the Corps, that effort continued. I don't know if I have discussed it. Did I tell you about the recommendations that I had made regarding the Coast Guard?

MG: You talked about being a liaison with the Coast Guard.

JC: Part of that was to see if there was some way that we should join up with the Coast Guard. My recommendation was yes. Well, that didn't come about, as I understand it, because the Coast Guard was willing to take the Corps and the ships, but NOAA was not willing to fork over the money. Nonetheless, the Coast Guard started taking over our pay. Our pay right now is from the Coast Guard Center. We now are training officers at the Coast Guard Academy, not as Coast Guard officers, but we're using facilities there, joint facilities. I think the officers in the present NOAA Corps are a lot more tuned in to a military bearing if you will, and the necessity of maintaining a uniformed structure. Which – side comment – a uniformed structure, particularly when you're operating ships, is a necessity. That's why you wear a uniform. When something happens, people turn around, and they look for the person with the uniform on. The more gold and ribbons they have, the more they attribute the fact that this person must know what they're doing. Sometimes that's not true. [laughter] But that's why you have uniformed people. You get on a passenger ship, for example. Is there any reason for them to have a uniform? I mean, you're not going to bear arms or anything. No, but it tells everybody that these people have a certain degree of competence and that they have a certain discipline. It's the discipline part that comes into play when you're going to sea. There was a famous ship disaster up in the New York area in which a merchant vessel caught fire, and a lot of people died. One of the reasons they died was that the crew didn't do anything; they fended for themselves. It wasn't women and children [first]. It was, "Me first." I think it was called the *Morro Castle* if I'm not mistaken. As a result of that disaster, that was one of the reasons that was cited for having these Maritime Academies, where you train people as uniformed officers because you wanted the discipline on [merchant] ships, so that when they're carrying passengers, in particular, if something happens, these people are disciplined enough to put the passengers in front of themselves which is theoretically what uniformed people are supposed to do – their job first, and their own safety second.

MG: During the Vietnam era, was there a deluge of applications to the Corps from folks who saw this as an alternative to military service?

JC: I don't have any information on the amount of applicants. I do know that with the formation of the ESSA [Environmental Science Services Administration] Corps, and then later, the NOAA Corps, the role of the Coast Survey was greatly expanded, at least from an officer's standpoint. They went from a hundred-and-fifty-something – they wanted to go to four-hundred officers, which was a lot of officers comparatively, over doubled what the actual size was at the time. We had, I think, thirty-one officers in my training class, and there were a number of training classes that year that had way over twenty – might have been one that was up to forty. The recruiting efforts obviously had produced a number of applicants so that they could fill those classes. As I said, my impression was that a lot of them were using the NOAA Corps, or the ESSA Corps at the time, as an alternative to being drafted. Their choices were either to find jobs related to the defense community that would exempt you from the draft or be subject to the draft, in which case, you take your chances where you're going to go. If you can serve your country in the ESSA and NOAA Corps and spend two years, that would be certainly an acceptable alternative. For that reason, I don't think they had a problem filling up any of the classes to tell you the truth.

MG: Was there anything else you wanted to say about this time period when you served as Deputy Director?

JC: I really appreciated working for Admiral Moran. There were times when he didn't say much, but when he did speak, you should listen. I remember getting a fitness report from him. Fitness reports were very important in terms of what's going to happen for the rest of your career when you're in competition with other people for the next whatever. Usually, when you write a fitness report, they want you to cite some areas for improvement. His comment under that was, "John doesn't tolerate fools very well." [laughter] I thought to myself, "That's dead-on." [laughter] If I've got to improve something, that would be the area for me to look at because I don't tolerate [fools]. So, a very enjoyable time. I thought that I had been able to contribute in a major way to the developments that were going on in the NOAA Corps. I was very, very proud of that. I really enjoyed that time.

MG: And then you went to sea. Was this in 1990?

JC: 1988. I got transferred to Command the *Oceanographer*. I relieved Captain Jeffries, who later became Admiral Jeffries. I had the *Oceanographer* for about a year. The *Oceanographer*, of course, was the first ship I was ever assigned to. So, twenty-two years later, I was back as the Commanding officer, which was an interesting set of events because I probably knew more about the ship than most people. There were a couple of guys that had been on the ship for over twenty years. When I was an ensign, they were ordinary seamen or whatever, and now they were Chief Boatswain and Chief Engineer. In fact, the Chief Engineer, Jack Fugio, was an oiler, I think, in the engine room, or a Junior Engineer when I was the Third Assistant Engineer. So, for a while, he was working for me in the engineering area. There were a couple of guys – like Chief Halama, who was the Chief Boatswain – had been around. It was really special to be back twenty-two years later, and now I'm not an Ensign. Now, I'm the Captain. [laughter] They enjoyed it. I thought they did anyway.

MG: Where were you going? What was the nature of the work the ship was doing?

JC: Wow. The first trip we made, as I recall, was up into the Bering Sea. We were following cod or halibut. It must have been cod. At any rate, they don't nest in a particular area; they lay their eggs in clouds, and the clouds drift around. The question was: Where is this resource [the cod] coming from? Is it attached somehow to land, and therefore a country can claim it? Or is it something that just floats around in the ocean, and nobody has any claims to it? Of course, up in the Alaska area – The big question was where do these things go and where they come from, particularly in the Bering Sea, where you have a lot of American fishermen, and you got a lot of Russian fishermen all fighting for the same, essentially, resource. So, we went up to the Bering Sea. That was interesting – some rough weather up there, which sometimes is, like I said, interesting. We were stopped at one point in the Aleutian chain. I'm trying to think of the name of the port now[Dutch Harbor]. What I remember about it was we got in, and we tied up at the pier. Then got a notification that we had to move from that pier to a different one. A lot of people had gone ashore, but we had plenty of people to move the ship, not a problem. I got up to the bridge. I think it was the Field Ops Officer – and asked him to take it away. The way I used to do that was, I would be on the bridge. I would have the XO [Executive Officer] on the bridge. Then I would have one of the officers driving the ship with the XO supervising. If something were to go wrong, and the XO didn't handle it, then I would take the conn [control] and hopefully resolve the situation. Anyway, we pulled away from the pier, and Jack Fugio, the Chief Engineer – I had told him we're going to be moving, so get the engines lit off and all that. [laughter] We backed out, and all of a sudden, the wind picked up, and then the area that we were supposed to go to, on that pier, the wind was blowing straight off the pier. I'm not lying. We had gusts up to sixty knots, sometimes seventy knot, gusts coming off the pier. Very difficult. The Field Ops Officer made a pass at it [docking]. You should come in with the bow towards the pier, and then you turn just a little bit, and then hopefully, you get your bowline on and push the ship in. Of course, as soon as you start to turn in, you're going to get blown away by the wind, which happened. The Field Ops Officer said he didn't feel like he should be doing that the docking. So, I took it. [laughter] I came in the first time; I saw the way the wind blew us out. I backed out and tried again. This time, I came in, and I put the nose right on the pier. Then, I really had the bow thruster going and pushing the thing onto the pier. I had the Boatswain, Chief Halama, throw that line out so that we get that bowline on. [When we] got the bow line on, I started to try and muscle the ship in with the bow thruster still going at full bore, and rudders hard over, with one engine going back, and then another going forward and trying to muscle that ass end in. Watching the bow line – because, with that kind of sail area on that ship, you don't want that bowline to part and hurt somebody. To make a long story short, we got next to the pier. As I said, the gusts could go up to sixty, seventy knots. That was a wild one – more like fifty or so. But every once in a while, they dropped down a little bit. So at one of those little points, where the wind dropped down a little, we apparently got around, and got the stern line on, and we doubled up all lines at which point, the Chief Engineer comes up on the bridge and says, "Captain, I got that last engine ready to go now." [laughter] Apparently, I didn't have all the engine power that I thought I had. [laughter] No wonder that damn thing was a little difficult to maneuver. I thought it was the wind and stuff. He didn't have all the engines on. I should have known that. Being an engineer, I should have figured it out myself. At any rate, that was that project. Then, we took off, and we went south down a longitudinal line, and we serviced

weather buoys, these large floating things that would get six months' worth of data transmitted to satellites – big huge things. I actually went aboard one of them to change out some of the instrumentation. I went with the ETs to become a “Certified” Buoy Rider. That's what we used to call that – Buoy Riders. You stand on those things, and you work on the instrumentation – really, really interesting. They're in thousands of feet of water held down by railroad anchors. The instruments themselves measure wind, temperature, salinity, and that kind of stuff. They're there for a long period of time. I say a long period a number of years. Every once in a while, somebody's got to go out and service those things. That's what we did. We went down – I'm trying to make sure that I have these things correct. We went down that way. We stopped at American Samoa. By the way, we left that February, March, or something; we didn't come back until November. We went down past the equator, and then we went down to Antarctica. We did some water observations, salinity, and water casts of that, as well as meteorological experiments to find out whether or not trace elements were found in the water. In other words, freon is something that man has made. It's only been around since the 1940s. If you trace freon and the depth of freon in the water, that is a trace element, and you can say other elements might be found at these levels and polluting the ocean essentially. I remember one of the findings was that we expected it – now, I can't think of the actual numbers, but it was something like we expected to see freon in the first ten meters, and it was something like forty meters, they found it. It was a lot more prevalent, and the stuff was mixing a lot faster than the scientists had thought. We were also taking readings having to do with El Nino and that phenomena. We turned around from Antarctica, and we went to Tahiti, again, doing some more pollution studies, weather studies, atmospheric studies. Sometimes, it's difficult to convince people that it's necessary to have drills, safety drills. A number of the scientists were – they weren't non-supportive; it's just that they didn't want to interrupt what they were doing and go sit in a wardroom for a while, while everybody runs around and sees whether or not the life preservers are there. It's like being on an airplane; the person gets up and demonstrates stuff, and everybody would like to do something else. Anyway, one of the things that I was big on was to make sure that people took these things seriously. But a couple of things happened. One of the things was the scientists had to muster in the wardroom – most of them did. I asked for a couple of volunteers from the scientific party and then put a mask on them that was blacked out so you couldn't see anything. Once the masks were on, I asked them, “Can you see anything?” “No.” “Okay, fine. Find your way to the lifeboat right now.” That is a hell of an exercise because people realize, all of a sudden, “Oops.” [laughter] “Why do we have to do this?” Well, you're below deck or anywhere in a room without a porthole or a light, and something happens, this is exactly what's going to happen. You're going to have to find your way to the lifeboat, and you may not be able to see. It [that exercise] made a big difference. It made a real big difference. Anybody that we put through that exercise, it was like, “Whoops. There is a reason we do this.” By the way, once you do that exercise yourself, you never get on a ship where you don't start looking at where the exits are. They was a Coast Guard vessel that this exercise came from, by the way, as a result of sinking. It was a training vessel, and it had some kind of an accident. I think it was in the Chesapeake. A lot of people [were] killed because they couldn't get out. The lights went out, and they couldn't find their way out. So, that [exercise] was interesting. The second one [drill] was you have to have man-overboard drills. What you do is you throw something over, and then the ship maneuvers, and you try and get as close as you can to the “person” in the water. You have to make sure that you can see the person theoretically when they go overboard. We had this little dummy, which we made up, and we would throw the dummy over. Then, the junior officer or

whoever was driving the ship, you'd tell them, "All right. Man overboard!" So, they'd go and do a Williamson Turn or whatever. I had learned on hydrographic vessels that you can actually, in good weather, you can actually turn a ship that has a bow thruster and twin screws – you can turn that thing around faster and get back on course, quicker than the standard Williamson turn, which is a big loop. So, we were practicing that. We would do the Williamson turns, and then I'd ask them to do these other turns where you just throw the rudder hard over, use the bow thruster, two engines, etc. One of the scientific – oh, the other thing was generally everybody knew it was going to happen. We would announce: "At one o'clock this afternoon, we're going to have man-overboard drills." [Imitates groaning]. I decided, "That's not realistic." I came up with the idea of just going up to the bridge, where the little dummy was and throwing it over, and then yell "man overboard!, this is a drill." [laughter] I forgot that the chief scientist had an experiment going on the bow, where he had these air collectors. The idea was that the air collector was out in front of the ship so that as we were going along, it was collecting air that was on the ocean without any kind of pollution from the ship whatsoever. I forgot to tell him we were doing the drill. I threw the thing over the side, and yelled, "Man overboard. This is a drill." The next thing I know, the chief scientist – I see him running like hell to get to the bow, to get this instrument that he had, to shut it down before anything happened to the data that he had. [laughter] Whoops. My bad. I then made it a policy that if I'm doing man-overboard drills, I will tell the chief scientist. Nobody else has to know, but he has to know. We came back, and we ended up going through the Panama Canal. That was very interesting because some of my classmates from the Industrial College of the Armed Forces were stationed in Panama. We had them for dinner aboard the vessel. We had a whole bunch of dignitaries from the State Department and Panamanian dignitaries on board for the dinner, which was really nice because all the junior officers got to put on their white uniforms, which they didn't understand why they had in the first place and attend a dinner with all these dignitaries. We heard at that dinner tales of [Manuel] Noriega and what was going on in Panama at the time, which was a real eye-opener for people. We then went out to the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, stopped in Puerto Rico, where a guy that I went to law school with in the Coast Guard was now the Commanding officer of that base [Paul Blaney]. Funny how things work and you keep meeting these people. He later became a Coast Admiral and was [put] in Command of the Coast Guard District in Seattle when I lived here. Again, an old law school buddy. So, we went out to the Mid-Atlantic Ridge. As we were going, by the way, we always had our sonar going and mapping the areas that we were traversing. [We] came back through the Panama Canal, stopped at the canal. I forget the name of the city at the time, but we had liberty for people. It was there that I finally got to practice international law. Three of the crew members were walking off a curb on the joint base – Panamanian forces and US forces. At that time, we were still involved in Panama. We were going to be turning it over. That we knew. But at that point, it was still an American base and a Panamanian base. In fact, the Panama Canal is one of the few areas legally where you have to turn your ship over to a pilot. For the entire time that I was on the *Oceanographer*, we never "dinked" the side on a the pier. We never hit it. Then we turned the ship over to the pilot. The pilot then put the butt end of the ship up against the pier a little bit too hard – *bong!*

MG: Can I just interrupt? I'm sorry. Was this before the invasion of Panama in December of 1989 or after?

JC: Before. Yes. Noriega was still in power. These three crew members were walking off the curb, and a limo came around and brushed right next to them. It was Noriega. He didn't like the fact that these *gringos* had gotten that close to his car, apparently. I wasn't there. I heard two stories. One is that they walked half a block and then were accosted by the police after a phone call had been made, saying, "Who are these people? Why were they close to my car?" The other story was that immediately, there was a bunch of Noriega's guys that put these guys up against the wall with machine guns, arrested them, put them in a local jail, and kept them incommunicado with guys all night walking up and down, questioning them, brandishing firearms, scaring the hell out of these guys. We found out about it later. Working through the ship's agent, we contacted, obviously, the State Department and tried to find out what the heck was going on. We found out they were being arraigned in court the following morning, and we would see them then at the arraignment. I went with the ship's agent to the arraignment, and I was supposed to – I told them I was an attorney, and I'd like to do whatever I can to get this thing squared away. So, we're sitting in this courtroom, and I have to describe this. It was amazing. It was like being in a scene from *Casablanca* – no air conditioning, cement walls going up on either side, and then little windows, big, huge circular fans going around very slowly, and wooden benches. The judge is setting up on the dais behind a desk. He was a wizened old man with white hair, very thin, wearing a white suit and a white shirt with a tie. I remember looking at his neck, and the neck was two or three sizes too small for that shirt. He was listening to a Spanish family up near the bar that separated the judge and the populace, arguing about something, and he was intently listening. In front of him was a woman court reporter who is typing on a mechanical typewriter. They were finishing up with this family, whatever that dispute was. Then they bring these guys [our crewmembers] in. I've got to tell you; they were scared little puppies. Like I said, hardly any sleep at all. They'd been threatened all night. They're out walking around, and the next thing you know, they're in jail, and nobody knows why. I was looking for a way to put them at ease, if I could, to make them understand that "It's okay, guys. We're here." When they came in, I asked them – I said, "You guys okay?" "Yeah, captain. We're all right. We're okay." "Are you sure now?" "Yeah." I said, "Well, we're here, and we're going to represent you. We'll get this thing straightened out. You know I'm a lawyer, right?" "Yeah, yeah." "Okay." I turn around, faced front, and then I turned back. I said, "By the way, you guys all have wills?" [laughter] Well, the expression on their face – at least one of them I remember, in particular, was like – and then he started laughing like hell because he realized it was a joke, which is exactly what I was looking for. I wanted something to break the ice. So then we started the proceedings. I had this little speech, and the ship's agent was going to translate into Spanish. I said, "Your Honor, these gentlemen are from my ship." All of a sudden, *whoosh*, the judge cuts me off and says something. I turn around, and the agent says, "He says you don't understand." I said, "Huh? So, I should change my words and say this differently?" I start to [say] something differently and get cut off again. He [the judge] says, "You don't understand." I said, "I don't understand should I start again." "No, you don't understand." He [the ship's agent] goes up to the judge. The judge talked with him. The agent comes back, and he says, "The judge says that he has had a phone call, and something has to be done." It was like, "Ah," the light went on. He [the judge] had gotten a phone call from Noriega's people saying that these guys have got to be punished; otherwise, [it would look like] the police arrested people for no reason. There has to be a reason. I told the ship's agent [to tell the judge], "Your Honor, suppose we pay a fine, and I get my ship out of here immediately." Yes, he said that was okay. It was two hundred dollars, something like that, a minimum amount

of money. I paid a two-hundred-dollar fine. We got these [guys] back to the ship. We were scheduled to sail at four o'clock anyway. I moved the sailing up an hour or two. Most of the people had come back to the ship. Normally, you post the sailing an hour before the ship sails. Most of the people were back early anyway because things were not good in that area at that time. In fact, it was not that long after that Noriega, I think, was deposed. At any rate, we sailed. We had to take a pilot on board. As we're going out, the weather starts kicking up. The pilot seems to be a little bit more concerned about him getting off the ship onto the pilot boat, as opposed to where the ship was supposed to be [in the channel]. All of a sudden, we're drifting to the right of the channel substantially. I mentioned it to him, and I said, "You're drifting right." He looked – "Yeah." He said to the quartermaster, "Go left five degrees or five-degree rudder," and I knew five degrees was not going to do it, not on that ship. I wasn't supposed to do this, but I countermanded him. I told the quartermaster, "Come left twenty degrees rudder." Then, I explained it to the pilot. I said, "This ship doesn't do anything with five degrees rudder, not for the speed we're doing right now." Sure enough, we came back in. He turns around, looks at me, and says, "Well, you seem to know what you're doing. I'm going to get off now." [laughter] And he did. He called the pilot over, he got off, and we spent the last half a mile or something like that navigating ourselves, which we were happy to do. That night, I wrote in the night orders to the crew, "When you're making the rounds, be very careful. We have international criminals on board." Years later, I'm retired; the *Oceanographer* is now docked. Somebody bought it, and it's docked in Ballard, [WA]. I'm now married. I tell my wife, "That was the ship that I used to have." We stopped by to see if I could get on board. There was nobody on board, and the gangway was not guarded. We walked on board and yelled, "Hello." We went up to the captain's cabin. Nobody. My wife was looking around. I said, "Yeah, that was my desk." She opened the drawer, and she found the Night Orders book. She said, "What's this?" I said, "Oh, my God." That's my old Night Orders book. I thought they removed all this stuff because the ship has been out of service and was being used as a breakwater for a marina over in Lake Washington for a couple of years. Now, this guy's had it for a year or so. "That's really weird." She opens it up to a page, and it says, "Beware we international criminals aboard." She says, "What's this all about?" So, I had to tell her the whole story. That was my foray into international law. I could say, "Well, I practiced international law."

MG: Those men must have been so relieved.

JC: Yes, yes. They were very – in fact, I just spoke to one of these guys – one of the guy's best friends I have remained in contact with and talked to him a few weeks ago. He was recalling the incident. In fact, that's where I got this story about these guys who were actually immediately accosted by these submachine gun-carrying policemen. Let's see. What else? We must have made at least one trip to Hawaii on the *Oceanographer* because the smartest thing I ever did was [take] a week's leave and gave [the *Oceanographer*] to my Executive Officer and let him be the Captain for a trip. It must have been – maybe it was two weeks. When I came back, I had a new Executive Officer. When I say "new," I don't mean a new person. I mean, his appreciation of what it was like to be in charge had greatly expanded. When you're a junior officer, I think it's very easy to not actually criticize but to think, "Well, I would do it [this way]. Why is he doing this?" You can find a lot of reasons why things should be done differently. When he was the guy that was in charge, he found out very quickly that there was nobody else to call. Normally, as the Executive Officer, you call the Captain, "Captain, there's something going on, or you

should do something.” There is no one to call when he’s the Captain. That gives you a degree of knowledge about what’s going on that you don’t have until you’ve actually been in the position. He told me that later. He said, “Thank you for having me do that.” The guy was the greatest XO in the world. He really was a phenomenal guy. We started a qualification test for the officers. I found out that a lot of the officers had never had the opportunity to drive. Only the XO and the Field Operations Officer had docked the ship. The NOAA Corps had made up these workbooks for people to get qualified on various ships. You got qualified first as an Officer of the Deck, and then you got qualified as a Senior Watch Officer of the Deck. If you were a Senior Watch Officer of the Deck, that meant that you had to be able to dock and undock the ship and stuff like that. Generally, on Class I vessels, not everybody got to drive because there were twelve officers and a big ship. At any rate, I don’t know what other Captains did, but they didn’t have people that were Senior Watch Officers— usually, it was the top four guys who would be able to maneuver the ship; nobody else would be qualified that way. We started this program. In addition to their workbook, I had everybody in my cabin, and we would have an interview. The interview would be something like, “All right. You’ve gone through the fire-fighting system and all that. Where’s the emergency shutoff valve for such and such? It [the valve] was right on the officers’ quarter’s entrance to the engine room. It’s like the response would be, “Oh, didn’t know about that one.” So, there was some educational little thing that we would stick in there. Then, we’d start asking questions – or I would – “Suppose you’re on a pier, where you’re the Officer of the Deck, and a guy comes whipping down the pier on a motorcycle and goes off into the water. What do you do?” It was like, “What?” By the way, I don’t remember whether I came up with that or the XO came up with that particular scenario. What we were looking for was what was the thinking process that the officer was going to use. Were they going to tear off their clothes and jump in the water and try and save them? Which would be really not a good thing to do. Are you going to call 911? What kind of thing are you going to do? Of course, we want them to think. This little booklet they had about what you do here and what you do there didn’t tell us what their thinking capability was. In the very beginning, when I did this, [I ran into] a little bit of resistance. Then, after we had qualified the first four guys – me, the XO, the Field Operations officer, and the next officer in line – there were four of us now. The next [officer] that came in, all four of us got to ask questions. If this guy qualified, then he got to sit at the table and ask questions to the next officer. Those questions to their buddies were even harder. [laughter] By the time we got to the end of the wardroom, the number thirteen or fourteen guy would come; thirteen people were sitting at the table ready to fire questions at him in order to get him qualified. When I got off the ship, every officer on that ship had docked and undocked that vessel and was capable of it. It was fun. We had a lot of fun with that.

MG: That’s great. I wanted to ask if there were any rituals on board for crossing the equator?

JC: Oh, yes. Things calmed down from when I [first] went across. They still had the garbage chute. They still had getting yourself greased up, and they still had the Royal Baby. You had to kiss the Royal Baby’s greasy stomach and all sorts of stuff like that. Yes, it was a big deal. They found new and exciting ways to create mischief. You had the pollywogs [the uninitiated], and the pollywogs would try and do stuff to the shellbacks [the “veterans”], and the shellbacks would retaliate – they’d been around. There was a lot going on. The one that really impressed me, by the way, was on the *Discoverer*. I’m pretty sure. Sometimes I get the two mixed up. But one of the things that they had done was they had a metal grate. You [the pollywogs] went

through a whole bunch of things, and you were blindfolded, with greasy things touching your hair and all that sort of stuff. Then they sat you down on this grate, and they handed you two wires. You're blindfolded. They start talking. "Is the battery hooked up?" They had a deck grinder, which is a motorized grinder that takes off scale and rust from steel decks. This thing spins around with these little cutters on it. They had this big conversation about, "Make sure that the batteries are hooked up. Then a guy takes the grinder, and he hits this metal plate that you're sitting on. Well, there's a vibration, and there's a hell of a sound. That's it. For the person sitting there, they think they're going to get electrocuted. It's like, "Whoa. That's new." I've never seen that one before." A lot of this stuff changed, particularly when we had women on board. It became more of a rite of passage than a hazing kind of a thing. When I went through it, it was more of a hazing kind of thing. You got whacked on the butt with a paddle going through a grease shoot, that kind of stuff. But they changed it up. On the *Oceanographer*, we had a big party afterward on the fantail. The chief steward made up – we had these giant fifty-gallon drums that had been cut in half to make barbecues out of. He barbecued steak and chicken out on the fantail and had a lot of music. The pollywogs had to entertain the shellbacks. People did crazy dances and stuff like that. It was fun.

MG: What were your impressions of Antarctica? What was it like to be down there?

JC: My impression was basically – I only saw the ocean. We didn't get anywhere near land. It was very, very rough. We sat there at one point, and we just sat there for a day, getting tossed around, waiting for the weather to calm down enough that we could get a CTD [Conductivity, Temperature, and Depth] in the water, this big piece of equipment with these water bottles on it, so we could get some samples of the water. Putting that kind of heavy equipment over the side in any kind of rough sea is rough enough, but this was really rough. We just sat there and sat there. I remember going to the quartermaster. He was the guy that made sure that we filed weather reports every day – it was either four or six hours, I forget which. We would get faxes back from the National Weather Service, and whoever else was putting out data for the Pacific. [Meanwhile] I'm trying to make up my mind as to how long we're going to stay there because, at some point, we either have to call it quits, or we stick around just a little bit longer to see if we can't get some data. So, I'm interested in what's the weather forecast going to be, and what the conditions are, and what they're expected to do, blah, blah, blah. Well, come to find out that some of the maps that they're providing us have only one data point indicating that they have an observation from one data source in the area. We looked at that, and the chief quartermaster looked at that and says, "That's us." [laughter] We were the only people down there, and we were sending in these weather reports. Then, five, six hours later, they'd send our own data back to us as the weather forecast. "Wait a minute. That was six hours ago at least. And that was us." We hung out for a day, and we finally decided, "Okay, we've got to stop this." Everybody was very happy that we turned around and headed for Tahiti.

MG: Was that your last stop on your way home?

JC: I don't know if it was the last stop. It was certainly the stop that everybody was looking towards. [laughter] There's a [latitudinal] circle in the Antarctic that you can go through. If you crossed that, you became a "blue nose" or something. We were fifty miles from it, and I really wanted to get us past that so that everybody could say that they had done that. But the scientists

wanted to get home; they wanted to get back to Tahiti and do some observations on the way. So, we didn't do it. We turned around and headed for Tahiti.

MG: When did you get your next assignment? What was that?

JC: Well, my next assignment was the *Discoverer*. What happened was they laid the *Oceanographer* up. They said that they needed to save money. They're going to lay the *Oceanographer* up because it was too expensive to run. It required too many repairs. But they would keep the *Discoverer* running, and they would transfer me over to the *Discoverer* because that Captain was due to be relieved. I would take over as Captain of the *Discoverer*, and a lot of the crew from the *Oceanographer* would come with me, which, at some point, created some problems for the people that were on the *Discoverer* at the time. So, it was an assignment to a new ship as the Commanding officer i.e., the *Discoverer*. In reality, the ships were parked next to each other at the pier. I walked from one over to the other, and that was my next assignment, the *Discoverer*. This whole thing about laying the *Oceanographer* up was – in my opinion, there were a number of people that wanted money that NOAA had to be given to what they called the UNOLS [University-National Oceanographic Laboratory System] fleet – university ships and stuff. I personally believe that the choice was made to do that, as opposed to do whatever repairs were necessary on the *Oceanographer* and keep it going. There were some people that thought that university ships ought to be doing this kind of research, not necessarily government vessels. That's conjecture on my part. I wasn't at any of these meetings. That's what it looked like to me. When I became the Deputy of the Marine Center, following my tour aboard the *Discoverer* – the *Oceanographer* was still tied up there. We had a number of people that were from other ships, had gotten back to Seattle for medical purposes, training, whatever, including some people from the *Discoverer* as well as the old *Oceanographer*. We were using it [the *Oceanographer*] as a hotel to put people up so you wouldn't have to rent at a local hotel or motel. A couple of the engineers that I knew from when I had them on the *Oceanographer* were real go-getters if you will. There was another guy that came from – one of the California Maritime Academy guys. Anyway, they were saying, "Look, why don't we use this as a training [exercise]? We can start rebuilding pumps. We can do whatever." In fact, they rebuilt an engine on the *Oceanographer* using spare parts. I wrote a letter to the Director at the time and said, "Why don't we use this as an opportunity to do Blue/Gold crews, where you have one crew that lives aboard the vessel and does maintenance and stuff and gets their leave and medical and training and all that, and then goes back to the *Discoverer*. Then the people on the *Discoverer* would come back to the *Oceanographer* [to do maintenance and training etc.]. That got nowhere. Meanwhile, we kept refurbishing stuff with these crew guys, using spare parts. When they finished rebuilding the engine, they came in, and they told me, "The engine's rebuilt. Everything's fine. Power plant's good." I told Admiral Spear, who I was working for – I said, "I want to take the *Oceanographer* out, turn it around, and put the other side against the pier. That'll give us an opportunity as well to test out the engines." We had tested them next to the pier. I said, "By the way, that'll show everybody that this ship is ready to go." I had the engines warmed up, ready to go, and I got a phone call from the Marine Center. Admiral Spear had been called up by someone in DC and told not to do that. The reason – later on, I found out – was that apparently, the marine engineers at the Marine Center had put in a request for something like eight million dollars to be able to put the *Oceanographer* back in the service. According to them, it was on its last legs, couldn't run,

and they needed at least eight million dollars to do that. We had the damn thing running. They wouldn't let us take it out. So, so much for that.

MG: Well, I know we're about at time. Did you want to say anything else about your second stint on the *Discoverer*? Or do you want to pick up with that next time?

JC: Yes. Why don't we pick up on the *Discoverer* the next time? I'll see if I can remember some of the names. For the life of me, I can't think of the name of that place up in Unalaska [Dutch Harbor]—very, very famous.

MG: It will come back to you as soon as we hang up.

JC: Naturally.

MG: Well, thank you for your time today. I'll look forward to the next time. Enjoy all your travels and seeing your family.

JC: Well, thank you very much. I look forward to seeing you again.

MG: All right. Thank you, Capt. Callahan. Talk to you soon.

JC: Bye.

MG: Bye-bye.

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Reviewed by Molly Graham 12/17/2021

Reviewed by John K. Callahan, Jr. 3/6/2022

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