

Molly Graham: This begins an oral history interview with Craig McLean for the NOAA 50th Oral History Project. Today's date is August 23, 2022. The interviewer is Molly Graham. It's a remote interview with Mr. McLean in Olney, Maryland, and I'm in Scarborough, Maine. We talked a little bit about your time at Rutgers last time. You shared some stories about the classes you were taking and some events on campus. I wanted to hear more about your time at Rutgers before we move on. Did you continue to play music while you were in college?

Craig McLean: I did. We had a charming fellow – his name was Jim Anderson – who today owns a pub, hotel, whiskey bar, and restaurant in Scotland, but he was a trombonist and very effervescent personality, very outgoing. Jim got me hooked up with a couple of guys. We had a little band going on for a little while. We were playing oldies. That was fun because nobody was playing oldies in those days. But then I also played in what was more a Southern rock-style band. That seemed to be popular in fraternities. The funny part about that, at least to me, was we weren't really disco aficionados. Disco was too simple. Most musicians didn't like disco. It was commercial. It made a lot of money. It allowed people to dance. So here we are playing these fraternity houses with Marshall Tucker and Allman Brothers and that type of music. You could watch all the guys standing on one side of the room with their beer mugs right up under their chin and the ladies over on the other side of the room, and there's not a lot of interaction. So one weekend, one of the fellows in the band – his brother, who was playing professionally in New York City said, “Hey, I'll come down. I'll hear you guys.” So he comes by, and he brings his guitar. He's not going to play Marshall [Tucker]. He can play those leads. He was really good. He could play anything. But he starts out with a disco riff, and the ladies' eyes lit up. The guys are kind of like, “Hmm.” You still have the boys on one side, the girls on the other, like junior high school. When he started playing some of this disco stuff and we started to join in with him, everybody's dancing. It was amazing. It was an absolute – what shall I say? It was a moment in time where you realized maybe this disco stuff's not all bad. People had a lot more fun because of it. That was a hoot for us. So, yeah, I played for a little bit in college and enjoyed that quite a bit.

MG: Did you continue to be involved in sports? Did you play sports at Rutgers?

CM: I wasn't good enough to play. I played intramural, but I wasn't good enough for any of the recognized sports. In fact, I learned to skate pretty late in my junior high school days. We had a high school hockey club. We didn't have a team because there was no league in my county. But I showed up at the Rutgers hockey team, got on the ice once, and realized how so far behind these fellows I was that I just said, “Guys, thanks for your patience. I'm out of here.” [laughter] They didn't have to tell me; I knew it. But I focused instead on the marine sciences. I started in a laboratory that was – well, first, let me go back a little bit. So, freshman year is just all the general courses. But I became aware sophomore year of a Coastal Studies Institute that Rutgers has and still survives today. Dr. (Norm Psuty) is out at Sandy Hook, where the lab is located now. At the time, it was on the campus, on Busch campus at Rutgers, but it was a nascent marine science program. I think a lot of the faculty that had marine interests very much wanted to see more marine subjects developed. As a coastal state with great revenue generated on the coast, [for] many reasons – the fisheries of New Jersey, all of that – it made a lot of sense. But an outside panel, which I was not close to – I just heard this third hand from some of the graduate students. An outside panel came in to review Rutgers for the potential at that time and

said that the program was too small to do much of anything other than sequentially build it bigger and bigger and bigger. Of course, today, I'm delighted to go down and see Scott Glenn and company down on the Cook Campus, where there's a robust Rutgers oceanography program. Scott Glenn today – a friend, a colleague, a very well respected master, professor of the year many times. He's a distinguished professor at Rutgers today. I see what it grew into, but it grew patiently, slowly, and very competently. There were some great people that came into the program. While small, I went and knocked on the door, and I met this gentleman who was Dr. [Allahverdi] Farmanfarmaian, and I'm going to probably fail to recall the correct spelling of his name. Dr. Farmanfarmaian – all one word, not a first name [and] last name – had a rather tough reputation. He was distantly personable. Maybe that's a polite way to say it. Not too many people wanted to work for him. He was tough. I'm working for him, basically just cleaning tanks in a freshwater prawn experiment. That was as close as I could get to it. Little did I know that the lady who was leading another laboratory in that complex, Dr. Carol Litchfield, observed my patience working for a man who was reputed to be very challenging. When I took her course, I needed her permission to take her marine microbiology course. I can't remember the sequence, but I was allowed to take it early because it was an advanced-level course. I think I was taking general micro at the time. She allowed me to take the two simultaneously. She felt sufficiently persuaded to invite me to join her laboratory as an undergraduate. It was through Dr. Litchfield that I got great counsel career-wise, but also an opportunity to sail on my first NOAA ship when I was a junior. I sailed as a junior and also as a senior, and I was on research cruises, which was a dream. I never knew how I was going to wind up doing that, but it happened. I'd been out diving offshore plenty, but to be on a research cruise was a gift. I owe a lot to her because she didn't have to take the time, care, or concern about one of many undergraduates traipsing through. So that was my first exposure to NOAA ships. I saw those guys on deck and up on the bridge with this khaki uniform. I had no idea what the NOAA Corps was. I just was happy to be there doing marine microbiology.

MG: Was this something you did this summer after your sophomore year?

CM: The cruise was during the academic year. So it was during the course of the academic year. During those summers, I was working in a boatyard and also working in a dive shop. I'm trying to remember what year I started working in the dive shop. But it was right about that time that I started working there. And then, from the dive shop, I got commercial diving jobs that I was able to do.

MG: Well, tell me more about that ship. Was this the *George Kelez*?

CM: *George B. Kelez*, K-E-L-E-Z. It has long since been retired. Like many NOAA ships, it was a used federal ship that was transferred to NOAA. It was a World War II generation ship that the crew used to joke – on the cruises that I was on, they joked about it, saying that it was the twin to a ship that was used to film a humorous World War II farcical sort of thing called the *Wackiest Ship in the Army*. That was the joke. But it was a capable vessel for the work that it was challenged to do and ably captained by one of the finest gentlemen I've ever met, Captain Clarence Tignor, T-I-G-N-O-R. I stayed friends with Captain Tignor throughout my NOAA career simply because he remembered me as that kid who came out with the Rutgers science team. The ship was focused mostly on the New York Bight. All of the pollution coming down

the Hudson River, six hundred million gallons of raw sewage a day getting washed out into the ocean until sometime in the late '70s, early '80s, a sewage treatment plant was built on the Upper West Side. But the concern was the ocean dumping. There was a near-shore twelve-mile dump site called Cholera Bank. During the cholera epidemic – and I guess it was around about the time of the influenza epidemic, the people who succumbed to cholera were taken out and the bodies were just dumped. Whatever preparation was done to the bodies, I have no knowledge. But the Cholera Bank was named that, as the history related to me, because that's where the people were interred, if you will, or at least just dumped, so we were told. Then there also was the 106-Mile Dump Site, which the EPA [Environmental Protection Agency] was monitoring and managing. This ship was studying the activities of both. But it mostly was a focus on the New York Bight.

MG: What was your awareness of NOAA as an agency before this experience?

CM: I couldn't honestly say that I knew anything about NOAA at that point in time. I learned about NOAA in college through Dr. Litchfield and then the experience on the ship. NOAA was a covert op [operation] as far as I was concerned, and I didn't really know anything about it. I had heard of the Coast and Geodetic Survey. You're very much aware of the history and evolution to become the National Ocean Service. Today, the term Coast Survey has been reunited with the agency. But I only knew that because of my dad, and my dad was involved in boating, and the nautical charts came from the Coast and Geodetic Survey. But I didn't know that that body was part of NOAA. Of course, at this point in time, Molly, I'm now [in the] later '70s. NOAA was only established in 1970. So it was a young agency and still working out the relationship between those component parts that came from other parts of government and two new ones, the satellite service [National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service] and then Oceans and Atmospheric Research, which I eventually wound up in.

MG: What was your interaction with the Corps members on board?

CM: Distant and respectful. I was so low on the totem pole that I just felt, "Do the best you can at the job that you were given and lay low." So the officers were congenial. The captain was a gentleman, but he was way up there at the godly level. I interacted more with the crew members. Several of the crew members – one of them I'm still friends with today. He's retired, but he was on the deck. His name is Felix (Frattalotta?). Felix is of Philippine birth and spent much of his youth in the Philippines, then came through the United States Navy, to the States and NOAA. Felix calls me every September to remind me of a reunion, and maybe this year, I'll be able to get to it. I've never been able to join those reunions because of my work, but maybe now I can. But I interacted with the crew more than anything else. They were very capable. They were interested in helping us to get our work done. A few of them smiled favorably on this rookie guy who was there to learn as much as he could. The rest of the Rutgers group that I was with [was] small in number, but they were very well experienced. They knew what they were doing. I learned from them and also from the crew.

MG: Was it clear that this experience or exposure would shape or impact your career path or at least show you what was possible in terms of what you could do on a boat?

CM: Absolutely. It really lit the fire for me to figure out how I do more of this. This is neat stuff. But the stuff that was neat was what was going on on deck and in the laboratories. I really didn't have any vision or exposure. I never was on the bridge of the ship, to the best of my recollection. I didn't have any idea what the NOAA Corps officers did. I just knew that the work of the ship was something that really motivated me, interested me, and I was very proud to have been able to make those cruises. I remember sharing that experience with my friends back on campus at Rutgers.

MG: Would you have similar opportunities in your college career to be on cruises like this? While at Rutgers, did you get to go on another cruise?

CM: I think I made three cruises. They were two weeks each. So that was a chunk of the semester. It was a demonstrated commitment, both of my professor to say, "Yes, you ought to do this," and also that it's what I wanted to do. I enjoyed doing it. I was a dorm counselor at the time, a preceptor, as Rutgers calls them. So I had to get the approval of my dorm supervisor to make sure that my absence would be covered by others, that sort of thing, and then make up for that absence by covering weekends and days of duty that others had. But it very definitely lit a fire for me. That experience really did.

MG: Were each of those cruises onboard the *George Kelez*?

CM: They were all on the *George Kelez*. The *George Kelez* sailed out of Floyd Bennett Field in New York – you're probably familiar with it – just in the shadow of the landing approach to Kennedy airport. To the best of my knowledge, it was administratively homeported somewhere else, but that was the practical port with a small trailer for the port captain and for the business of the ship that could be conducted shoreside. So, it was really a small operation.

MG: Would you continue to take classes with Dr. Litchfield?

CM: The only class I was able to take with Dr. Litchfield was that marine microbiology course because then I was off into biochemistry and cell physiology and those sorts of courses. She was focusing more and more on graduate-level courses. So I continued to work in her lab my junior and senior year, and I had a small piece of one of the many projects that she was running. She was gracious enough to include me as a co-author on one of the papers, and it was describing antibiotic resistance of bacteria in the New York bight on the assumption that the wastewater is delivering pharmacological elements to the marine environment and what effect these antibiotics have on the marine environment because there are some nasty bugs in the ocean. We generally think that if you have a cut, just put your hand in salt water, and everything will be well. Well, the salt is good, but not so in the case of some of the bugs that are in there.

MG: What were some of the other classes that you were taking outside of marine biology and zoology?

CM: I was pretty much a nerd. I even took some electives as science courses. But I took two semesters of music theory, and it very quickly exhausted my musical abilities because I didn't play the keyboard. I was a drummer. I had taken music theory in high school, and I was a

woodwind guy in my early years. I played the clarinet and saxophone. I might have told you a little bit of that. But the drums were what really motivated me. But I wanted to understand music, so I took music theory. It was either one or two semesters at Rutgers, but very quickly, I ran out of running room; it was way ahead of me. So, I enjoyed it. I was enriched by it. I took a geography course about the Caribbean. That was later rewarding when I was on a ship that was assigned to do Caribbean work. Just knowing a little bit about the culture and the people – I later had marvelous experiences in Haiti and in the Virgin Islands and other places. But I'm trying to remember. What else did I take that wasn't science? Not a lot is coming to mind because I even took other science courses as my electives. It was a BA [Bachelor of Arts] degree that I had. Some people say I have a lot of BS, right? But it was a BA that I had. Rutgers didn't have a Bachelor of Science in those subjects. It was a Bachelor of Arts as a liberal arts school. But you could obviously major in science. I was quite content with the experience there. It's a great institution, and it's grown to be even greater. They flattered me years later, as I was made one of the two-hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary fellows. In fact, I've got my fellow medal. Let me see if you can see it. See right above the *Titanic*, right there. That's my medal.

MG: Yes. That's a good spot for it.

CM: Yeah, absolutely.

MG: This was a few years before the federated system at Rutgers. Were you mostly taking your classes on the main campus in New Brunswick?

CM: Freshman year, I was split between New Brunswick and Busch. Sophomore year, I requested and got a dorm on Busch because all my classes were going to be on Busch campus except maybe one back on the main campus. Then I also went over to Cook. I can't remember whether it was sophomore or junior year. I could look these up for you if you want, Molly. I could pull my transcripts up. But I went to Cook for ichthyology and another course in fisheries management. Much to my delight, Ken Able and Churchill Grimes were the two professors who were dealing with those two courses. They could teach either. They were just so good. I later ran into Churchill when he was hired by NOAA to be a laboratory director out on the West Coast in, I believe it was, the Santa Rosa Laboratory of the National Marine Fisheries Service [NMFS]. So here was a professor of mine that I later ran into in the course of my career while I was at NOAA. That was a lot of fun.

MG: It's interesting how many little previews you're getting of your later career in your early life.

CM: Yes, absolutely. Absolutely. I don't think things were preordained or anything like that. But I realized that these were the sparks that lit the fire to say, somehow, I'm going to figure out how to get there. These were elemental steps in getting there. Later in my career, this is after the threat of elimination of the NOAA Corps, where I was pretty much involved in that as a lawyer for the NOAA Corps, and the creation of the Ocean Exploration Program, where I was asked to be the first director, a fellow who was senior to me had said, "I would like to work for you someday." That hit me like a ton of bricks. The other thing he said was, "Do you realize you've been training all your life for this job?" That was the director of Ocean Exploration. I

had to stop and pause and think about that and realize, “Yeah, unwittingly, I was training for this all my life.” I just felt very proud to have the opportunity to be there. But yeah, each of these was a spark that lit it. The diving of New Jersey, the wreck diving, and then we branched out. There's plenty to see in New Jersey, but then getting up into Long Islands, where the steamship *Oregon*, a passenger steamer, the SS *San Diego*, and many other shipwrecks, the German U-boats up and down the coast; we hit them. That was a whole other side of what I saw in the technology of the underwater world. From fourteen, fifteen on, I was hooked. I had to find a way to be able to do that.

MG: Yeah, I'm curious you were thinking about your next steps and what you wanted to do after you graduated from Rutgers.

CM: A very honest conversation with Dr. Litchfield. As I believe I recall saying, she was not my official advisor, but she was my advisor. I sat down with her after she had signed these letters of recommendation to graduate programs, and this you'll get a kick out of – a program in ichthyology, a program in marine microbiology, and a program in cetaceans. One of the pieces I left out was I've always been a whale fan and subsequently wound up with a permit from NOAA National Marine Fisheries to be diving with whales. That was on what is today Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary. Back then, it was just offshore Cape Cod on Stellwagen Bank. Yeah. Thoughts are just blasting through my mind now as I recollect those events. I just looked for any possible way that I could get into this game, if you will. Dr. Litchfield had the smarts – I think I would be able to do this, too, today – to look at a young person who just wanted to do so much everywhere on oceans and say – what she said to me was, “You have not figured out what you really want to do yet. You're still in that broad category. And I think you will enjoy being a generalist rather than diving deep into any one of these areas of expertise. You could do it if you want to.” I remember her saying, “You could do it if you want to, but you're going to get bored.” It's not you. So, she never gave me a personality profile. But she was just smart enough, alert enough, aware enough to basically read people, and she was so right. She was so right. Because if I had gone into, let's say, ichthyology and down the corridor of studying the cod population, I would be in a very different place today than the career that I was able to have because of the diversity of the NOAA Corps because of just how I chose to address my role in NOAA, which was to be loyal to the agency mission first, not necessarily the service, although, during the period of threatened elimination, I think I was quite loyal to the service [and] nearly got fired for it, but it was an adventure. Dr. Litchfield said, “Have you thought about the NOAA Corps?” Then, in that conversation, after being on the ship several times [for] three cruises, I started to think, “Oh, so that's what those guys do,” and “What do they do when they're not on the ship?” I got to know a little bit more and a little bit more. But then post-Rutgers – I don't know if you're ready to jump to this, but post-Rutgers, with Dr. Litchfield's advice to take my time, figure out what you want to do, I got involved in the humpback whale diving off of Cape Cod. I worked full time in diving, both at the retail – as I like to say, selling snorkels – and then also with some commercial work, diving into dirty waters in and around New Jersey, New York, Philadelphia, up and down the East Coast. It was through this marine mammal permit, dealing with NOAA, to learn a little bit more about what NOAA was – I had to deal with a chap named (then) Lieutenant Gary Barone. I didn't really understand. He's a lieutenant of what? Then I connect – “Oh, yes, that's right, the NOAA Corps.” So that's what somebody does shoreside to administer the marine mammal permit program. That's what Gary was doing. Gary became a friend – another fellow

musician, great guy. But it was connecting those dots to figure out what the NOAA Corps really was. So then, I found a position once again through a NOAA person who I met that was putting people as marine mammal observers out on NOAA ships. So, this is in my year between joining the NOAA Corps and graduating from college. I did a bunch of these things all in sequence, and I was just, like a piece of plankton, trying to find the right current to get moved forward and up in. So, I took a position with the Manomet Bird Observatory in Manomet, Massachusetts. Manomet had a contract with the National Marine Fisheries Service/NOAA to put observers on NOAA ships to identify seabirds and whales. At that point in time, there were quite a few people who knew seabirds well. Birders have always been very popularly supported and well-trained. There weren't a lot of whale people. But I had been doing this humpback stuff. I dove with fin whales, minke whales, and humpback whales. Through that, I learned a little bit more – a lot of reading – about other types of whales. So when I got to my interview to be considered as an at-sea observer, which was getting me back on NOAA ships, and holy smokes, this would be really interesting and exciting, I go through a slideshow, and I have to identify the birds. To me, everything was a seagull or a tern. I had no idea what these birds were. So this very, very wonderful fellow named Mike Payne, Dr. Mike Payne, handed me a Peterson's guide and said, "Just familiarize yourself with this stuff." But on the whales, I was smoking it. I got the blows down. Just show me the blow; I can tell you the whale, that sort of thing. He said, "We don't have as many whale people. So you're going to come on board. Don't worry so much about the birds. Learn as you go. But we need you on whales." "Okay, fine." So now I'm on the NOAA ship *Albatross* and the NOAA ship *Delaware*. Actually, the sequence was reversed. The very first cruise I had was [on] the NOAA ship *Delaware*. The only way to get a bunk on the *Delaware* [on] this particular cruise was to stand a fisheries watch, as well as the watch on the bridge, looking for whales doing fifteen-minute transects back-to-back. So, instead of the normal four (hours on) and eight (hours off), I was working sixteen and four. No, I'm sorry. It was six and six they were doing, not four and eight. They're doing six hours on, six hours off. So, I would do six hours of whale observations and a few seabirds. Then six hours on the fishing deck, and then six hours more. So it was great exposure. I rode on adrenaline. Interestingly, I had a roommate there, a bunkmate, who was one of the very few African American scientists involved in that brand of science at the time. Gosh, I'm trying to remember his last name. He was a wonderful fellow. Harold was his first name. We just got along fine. We had marvelous conversations about his life versus my life and such. But the other thing was, I met two NOAA Corps recruiters on those series of cruises I did on the *Delaware* and the *Albatross* – homeport, Woods Hole, Mass. So there too – oh my gosh, this is Mecca. This is where it all starts. This is where Bob Ballard is. This is where all this work comes from. Later, Bob Ballard becomes – I consider him a personal friend, and he expressed to me that he feels the same. Life is amazing, right? So pages in *National Geographic* are right there in front of me now in Woods Hole. So these two NOAA Corps guys – one was Michael Henderson and the other was Alan Bunn. They, on each of those two ships, tried to recruit me to the NOAA Corps. Both of them have a wicked sense of humor, Henderson more so. Bunn is encouraging me as to how exciting the work is at NOAA. Henderson spends the ten days I was with him telling me why I don't want to join the NOAA Corps. His humorous sort of way is if you can stand all of this stuff, you need to join. So then, I filed an application after that experience and was accepted and commissioned in the NOAA Corps.

MG: Is it unusual for members of the NOAA Corps to have this exposure and experience on NOAA ships previously? It seems like you just got a great introduction before you officially joined.

CM: Molly, I wouldn't say it's unusual. There are others that have had the experience of being, for example, an intern at a laboratory as I was on the *Kelez*. But I think because of the prominence of advanced education in NOAA Corps applicants today, they're aware of NOAA at an intricate level from the policy side or the science side. So there's greater knowledge in the applicants to the NOAA Corps today than I ever had. I do think it was a little unusual. What also was unusual that both Mike Henderson and Alan Bunn recognized was how wet I was. This is a guy who's in the water all the time diving, and some of the diving I had done there was quite different than what the NOAA Diving Program was doing. I don't think the NOAA Diving Program would let you penetrate inside of a submarine that is sunken and swim around in there, especially with the kind of equipment we were using. So I did have a different background. When I got to the NOAA training, I was able to see that I definitely did have a different background. A lot of folks were theoretically enriched, but just the practicality – when it came time for somebody to jump over the side and be a live man overboard dummy, I was the obvious pick. Maybe they were trying to get rid of me early, but I was the obvious pick.

MG: When you say you would dive with whales, how do you do that? What are you observing?

CM: The original purpose we had, myself and another fellow named Steve Morello – and Steve was just a regular guy, just a sweet, regular guy. We both were interested in whales, and I met Steve through the dive shop that I was working in. Steve didn't do any of the commercial work. There were other guys that I did that commercial work with. But Steve and I, sitting up one night, said, “This is an urban center we live in.” Steve was working in Paterson at the time at a hospital as a carpenter at the hospital. I'm working in this dive thing, and I'm doing some dirty diving, I'm doing the shipwreck diving, and I'm interested in whales. There are whales right offshore. And we've got kids in Newark, in Paterson, in New York City, in the Bronx, in Passaic. They don't know that there are whales right offshore. So we tried to put together a small little film. Steve knew people who knew people, and some guys from NBC on the weekends came out and did some filming. We put this little video thing together. We went to a couple of classrooms – more than a couple. We visited schools and showed it around. But it was that experience that got us connected with a head boat. So this head boat had really shifted from fishing to whale watching, and it was a full-time whale-watching boat. It was about an eighty-foot large head boat. We made an arrangement with this Captain Jerry Costa, who lived in Provincetown and his family up there. He had been a scallop fisherman and done very well scalloping. Then he bought the head boat while he continued to have other guys run the scalloper. He just loved going out and seeing the whales. When we presented ourselves by first chartering his boat to bring a group of people from New Jersey up to see the whales, I can't remember who approached who, but it was probably Jerry who said, “Well, why don't you guys just keep coming up here? It's great having you on board doing what you're doing. And you ride for free.” So we did. What we were doing was we teamed up with Dr. Stormy Mayo, who is based in Provincetown, and he had a couple of other colleagues. David Matilla is another one who worked for Stormy. They had a long-term monitoring program of the whales on Stellwagen. They basically identified the whales by the scar pattern on the flukes. When the

whale would dive, you would get the signature of the whale on the scar pattern on the flukes. But they pointed out that we're not sure, male or female – we're not sure the gender construct of this population of about thirty-eight to forty whales until a mom shows up with a calf next season. So is there a way we can figure it out? There was a guy out in Alaska who had determined that if you get in the water and you observe the whale diving, as the whale dives, you can determine male or female. There's a genital bulge on the male – there's none on the female – and you could then determine as you tie your surface photograph to the sounding whale. So you need a team shooting on the surface and then correlating that to the whale. So we, in a nominal way, very nominal way, I'm sure, helped them construct a little bit more of a gender-based profile of it. But it was a blast. I think it helped in a small way to raise the visibility of the whales to the point where there was concern that there'd be too many boats out looking at the whales. You don't want thirty-eight whale watching boats looking at thirty-eight whales, but the Marine Fisheries Service, I think, did a very fine job in – certainly gracious to accommodate us, a couple of young knuckleheads, being able to do what we did. The school visits were a lot of fun. That taught me that I really liked explaining this stuff to groups of people, adults, and kids. But basically, that's the work that we were doing. We started just trying to do general education and awareness of these whale populations that are right off the coast. Then we got into something that was a little bit more of a technical contribution to understanding the population of those whales.

MG: Who were you employed by during that time?

CM: I was working for the diving company at that time. We were doing this on our time. I would take days off, weekends, and we'd pay for it ourselves.

MG: Tell me a little bit about your Corps training. It was 1981 when you joined.

CM: Yes. We were at the Merchant Marine Academy, the US Merchant Marine Academy up in Kings Point, New York, a very fine institution that produces excellent graduates; some of them joined the NOAA Corps. A fine chap named Don Cruz was on my first ship, and he had gone through the full four-year program at Kings Point. I just went through the abbreviated NOAA course at Kings Point, which was – I forget now – four months, I guess. We trained just enough to be able to get to a ship and then make a contribution on the ship. But we were a little wild. We had some fun while we were there at Kings Point. There were worse classes who did worse things at Kings Point than mine. I later became acquainted with that when I was a lawyer for the NOAA Corps and had to intervene in someone's misbehavior. We just had a lot of fun. We learned a lot. We went on cruises on what was a surplus salvage tug. That was the vessel that Kings Point had at the time for training; it was called the *Kings Pointer*. We made trips up to Woods Hole. We made trips in and around New York, Kill Van Kull, Arthur Kill – those were the areas with Dutch names that surround Staten Island. I didn't have to try hard to do well. There were guys who were more – what shall I say? – the humorists or more of the Eddie Haskell role than I had, but I was a bit of a joker. I remember being called into the commanding officer's office, and we were concluding our training there. He said, "McLean, you're lining up to be first in the class. But I'm not sure that your attitude is supporting that recognition." What I had done that I think tripped him over the edge was there's something called flemish in the way that you treat line, the flemish presentation of a line, which is basically the art of just a mariner's

coiling in an appropriate way, the art of line handling. So in my final exam for seamanship, I see flemish, and I'm thinking, "Oh, I can't resist this one." I knew all the answers. I had, at that point, the 99. I figured I could lose one point. So I wrote, "Flemish, of or pertaining to sputum." That set him off the edge. He calls me in. Away we go. My recollection of the conversation was I just listened attentively. I didn't want to lose being first in the class. But I said, "I came here to do two things. One is to do as well as I can, and my grades reflect that. The other was to have as much fun as I can. And the fact that we're having this conversation proves that I've gotten both of those objectives accomplished. So you have to do what you have to do, and I fully understand and respect that." Thirty feet behind me as I sit here is the first-in-class graduate award from the Corps. I split it, though. He did take a pound, and it didn't bother me. But I was the co-awardee of first-in-class with a guy named Russell Richards. Oh, goodness sake. Russ now still works for NOAA as a civilian. Every time I go out to the Pacific Marine Environmental Lab, he's in charge of IT [information technology] out there. I always see Russ. We always have a smile for each other, just reminiscing about our days in training. But the training was sufficiently rigorous. It was good preparation for NOAA Corps. Today, the NOAA Corps trains at the United States Coast Guard Academy. That is excellent preparation for the NOAA Corps. The distinction I draw is not in the quality of the education at the Merchant Marine Academy versus the Coast Guard Academy. But it's the way that NOAA has chosen to address what type of training is most appropriate for producing a competent Corps officer who, once liberated from the training academy, you then get to your ship and really start learning. You're really starting to learn how to assume the authority or the responsibility that's given to you. You have to earn it. It doesn't just come because you're the officer of the deck.

MG: Was the Corps co-ed at this point?

CM: Yes. Yes. We had several female officers who were on board with us. I'm just trying to count the numbers. I think we had three women in our class of roughly fifteen.

MG: At this point, were you preparing for a career with the Corps?

CM: I was willing to try it out. Remember that 1981 was not too far past the Vietnam era, where service aptitude was not richly applauded in the general public. I saw the regimentation that the cadets had to live under in a uniformed service academy. And I thought, "Let's see how this goes." But the moment I got to my ship, I just thought, "Oh, my gosh, this is it." This is for me. This is what I want to do. But I didn't have the ambition of staying for twenty-five years. I thought, "I'll stay until it's not fun anymore." That was really it. "I'll stay until it's not fun anymore." And it never stopped being fun.

MG: Before I ask about your first assignment, I have in my notes that Admiral Moran called you. Was this before you entered training? What was the connection there?

CM: Admiral Moran's call to me to become a lawyer was well into my career.

MG: Oh, okay.

CM: I didn't know any senior NOAA Corps officers other than Captain Tignor, who I believe was a commander at the time. I didn't really have any real insight on a NOAA career from anyone who was experienced other than Mike Henderson and Alan Bunn. But then, when I got there, the commanding officer was a tough guy but squared away. He knew what he was doing very well. He was a graduate of the New York State Maritime Academy, which is just across the river from Kings Point. There's a great rivalry between Fort Schuyler and Kings Point graduates.

MG: How does that rivalry manifest itself?

CM: It's kind of tough. The Kings Pointers are more – what shall I say? – generally accommodating in their maritime skills. The Schuyler grads, they're New Yorkers, they've got a tough edge, and they want to let you know it. I think one night we did a night mystery move where we painted a buoy on the bridge wing of the *Kings Pointer* after one of our classmates ran a buoy over in training. There was another thing we got in trouble for. Of course, there's a Schuyler grad who's the head of the NOAA element, right? So discipline was certain, I guess, is the best way to put it. Myself and Phil Kenul, who retired as a one-star admiral in the NOAA Corps – we were roommates. We just decided that it was appropriate to appropriate a park bench from the city of Great Neck. We had it in our room for the majority of our period of training. I guess the word got out because we needed another place to sit. So we borrowed this park bench from the city of Great Neck. I'm supposing that somebody could see that more as an act of theft, but we always had intended to return it, which we did to the city of Great Neck because we were found out, and we had to load it back out into Kenul's truck and put it back where we had found it. The formal experience was positive all the way around. It taught me how to sail. It's important to know how the wind affects a power vessel, but we learned it by sailing. That's the first time I'd ever been on a sailboat. It always had been powerboats for me. It was a good education.

MG: So, what was your very first assignment?

CM: Very first assignment was on the NOAA ship Mount Mitchell. The Mount Mitchell was at the time in San Juan, Puerto Rico; it had just arrived. The amount of time that I had since my graduation from the NOAA training and reporting to the ship gave me a Christmas break. It was no hardship to get approval to have a Christmas break before I went off to my first ship. So I arrived very early January. The ship was in Puerto Rico, and we commenced survey work in Puerto Rico. Survey work as a junior officer newly arrived, you're more of an observer before they actually give you anything that you can harm anyone else with, including control of the ship. So I was then a junior officer of the watch and a junior officer on the survey launches because we did both; we surveyed with the ship and the ship's transducer measuring deeper ocean depths, and then four survey launches could be deployed during the course of daylight hours because there was no radar on those launches at the time, and it was all just visual safety. We would survey with the launches in the inshore areas. The experience was enriching up to the point of frustration, where I observed that NOAA, not being exceptionally resourced – I didn't understand it quite at this level, but in retrospect, I see it. They had a person write one body of software and a different person write another body of software. And those two bodies of software effectively did the same thing but through different methods of fixing the position of the ship or of the vessel. The commands were so dissimilar; it just blew my mind that to do the

same operation, using one software, you had to do it this way, and another doing it that way. That started to plant the seed in my mind, where – I began with the internalized phrase of, “What are those knuckleheads doing up there?” Right? Couldn't somebody see that this is very inefficient and just makes it easier to introduce error? Well, that “What are those knuckleheads doing up there?” constantly stayed with me in my career to the point where I'd always ask myself, “Now I'm one of those knuckleheads. What am I doing to show that I can understand what that new ensign is doing in her or his job out in the field?” So eventually, it was time on the clock. How long has this person been here? Can we then certify them as a junior officer of the watch rather than just an observer, a pilot protoplasm planted on the bridge? And I then started to get into the navigation skills, the ship handling skills. I had a wonderful commanding officer named Austin Yeager. Austin is unfortunately passed on now. Of consequence, he had a slightly younger brother, whose name was Dave Yeager. I eventually worked for Dave. But Dave's wife was one of the ladies murdered recently in the church shooting down in Alabama. It was part of the string of gun violence and all. I think our whole community is already sensitized to gun violence, but that really shocked the community thoroughly. But Captain Yeager was a real gentleman. He would show interest in how you were progressing and how you were doing. We had an executive officer on board there named Commander Lew Lapine, and Lewie, as he liked to be known – Lewie Lapine – retired and went down to be the geodesist for the state of South Carolina. I think Lewie is fully retired now. But Lewie is still around. It's always a fun time to see him. He just was a great guy. He wanted to make sure that we all shared a laugh, but we also worked really hard and got our work done. I had a run-in one time with a guy – I won't name him. I don't even know where he is today. But I'm a junior officer, and I show up to take the watch. I don't have my hat on. It's nighttime, it's midnight, and I'm relieving. I'm coming up to take the watch. Fast forward. There was a dispute as to whether I was wearing a hat or not. Being from New Jersey, I said, “Okay, I'll go down and look for that hat, and I'm not coming back until I find it.” This guy said, “That's darn good. I expect you to do that.” So I went back to sleep. I could have gotten thrown out for that. I went back to sleep. Then, the quartermaster comes down and wakes me up. He says, “Hey, the watch is about ready to change again. And old-what's-his-name is up there, hopping mad at you.” So I come up. I'm stretching. I'm yawning – the whole deal. Like, “Oh, boy, I've been looking for that hat.” Fast forward. Lewie finds out about it – the executive officer – and he pulls me into his office. I'm thinking, “Oh, boy, here it goes.” He said, “If that guy ever tries to make his own rules and choose to apply them at any point in time, you wake me up.” So he didn't quite say I did the right thing, but he was on my side of the dispute. It was a hard-working ship. A lot of the talent came out of the US Navy. A lot of the deckhands, deck force, survey technicians were all veterans. We also had three of – what my recollection serves as – the most beautiful, physically attractive women working on that ship. They worked harder than any guy on the ship, period, full stop. They were the demonstration to me of how women have to struggle to work harder. We had a difficult assignment in Haiti, where we went ashore. I was part of the shore party to do a reconnaissance to figure out where we were going to offload and land a rather large generator that took six of us to lift from a moving shifting launch, to plant it on the hard ancient coral shoreline of limestone. It wasn't even a beach. It was a lip, just a steep drop, and you had to pull right up next to it with the launch and get the generator up and over. Much to the regret of the individual who sent the message, and it was not me, the word was, “We need some beef on shore here because this is going to be a heavy lift. Keep the women on the ship,” or something to that effect. At the end of the day, when we came back – I was an EMT [Emergency Medical Technician] as well at that

time, and I had to patch up guys with deep gouges from falling on this really sharp rock and all that sort of stuff. So we're coming back looking like the walking wounded with blood sustaining through bandages and whatnot. Including me. These three ladies were on the deck with bathrobes and pillows in their midsection. One had a newspaper rolled up under her arm. Another one held out a pipe. I don't know where she found a man's smoking pipe, but she had a pipe. They did exactly what was necessary to prove the ridiculous nature of the way they were being treated. But they did it with grace and humor. I will always remember and respect them for the way that they dealt with that. But how unfair it was because there were plenty of components of that evolution that they would have done equal or better work than some of the guys who were a little drifty, I'd say, at points in time.

MG: In one of the last conversations I had with Captain Callahan, he talked about how the Corps adjusted to women and how they didn't have equipment that always fit the women. But because some of the women were smaller, they could get into crevices and areas that the men couldn't. There were just some obvious accommodations to make that hadn't been considered before, like making a bathroom unisex instead of just for men.

CM: To his credit, John, I think – I'm trying to place the time. John came in and gave us the legal lecture at Kings Point. John is a few years senior to me in his experience. We both come from the same county in New Jersey, Bergen County. I liked him when I saw that, but he had this reputation which he enjoyed developing of being – “Watch out for Captain Callahan.” But I love John. He's great. He just sent me a box of NOAA memorabilia. He was downsizing. He said, “I want you to have this stuff.” And I really appreciated that. But I think John was very much a part of reminding the Corps in his role as a lawyer inside the NOAA Corps that we have obligations, legal obligations, to be treating the women officers with the same level of accommodation and respect as we do the traditional male officers. In what may not have been an obvious way to everyone, I think John had a lot to do with making sure that there was comfortable accommodation of women. One of the first women in the Corps was an African American, Rear Admiral Evelyn Fields. I hope you might have had a chance to engage with Evelyn.

MG: Not yet. But I would love to.

CM: Yeah, Evelyn, I'm sure, would be able to offer marvelous insight. Evelyn was one of the first women, and Pam Chelgren was, I think, the first woman admitted to the Corps. I got to meet Pam – I didn't really serve with her. But through training evolutions, I was with Pam. I was very impressed with her as I was impressed with all the women that came into the Corps.

MG: How long were you down in the Caribbean?

CM: The first shot was Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. That pretty much took, I think, our first year. Then, the second year – I had two years on the *Mitchell*. The second year, we started up in Maine. No, sorry. We started on the eastern shore of Delmarva Peninsula. Then, we went up to Maine in Penobscot Bay, which was just a biological awakening. It was marvelous. The seals were pupping, the birds were roosting, and here we are, traipsing through this fine, pristine area where it's really the only season where you can get a lot of work done. But it just struck me

that here we are, having to go ashore, find those brass survey discs, put a theodolite or put a short-range receiver on top for navigation. Wouldn't there be a slightly better time for us to do this instead of worrying about stepping on birds' nests and whatnot? That's where I first became familiar with the term defecation bombing. Where a bird will come down, make a dive and drop some bombs on you if you were getting close to their nest. I thought, "Don't we have people in NOAA that know more about this stuff than we do as ocean surveyors? Maybe we can be talking to each other." These little things planted in my brain really came back to help me later in my career to say, "How do we do it better?" But Penobscot Bay was just fabulous. Just a wonderful, wonderful marine environment. We charted a few shipwrecks that the locals knew were there, but the chart was never informed that it was there. Another anecdote from the Penobscot Bay survey was that the Pilots Association – the pilots that would take lumber-carrying chips up to the mouth of the Penobscot, load lumber, then come on out – apparently had raised concerns that there were soundings on the chart that they were avoiding that they don't believe are there – shoal soundings. So it was harder for them to make the maneuvers out in the channel because of the shoal soundings. I remember asking the captain when he was explaining the mission to us – and the Operations Officer, Roger Parsons, who was just a wonderful guy, [who] passed on, unfortunately – if they don't go over these soundings, how do they know they're not there? Right? Because if they're saying that they have to avoid them, and they don't believe them to be there, what is their basis of belief? It just didn't make sense to me. It was, "Okay, McLean. You're an ensign. You're not paid to think about this stuff. We're tasked to do it. We're going to go do it to the best of our abilities, and up we went. Okay, so we go up. Every one of those soundings was from, if I remember correctly, a 1920s survey, which was not an electronic sounding; it was basically wire drag or doing – actually, it was the earliest generation of electronic soundings. Every one of those soundings was true and belonged on that chart. So the work of the early surveyors, even dating to the early 1900s, where some of those soundings remained, those Coast and Geodetic Survey officers and surveyors knew what they were doing. They were very, very good at what they did. Of course, up there, it's rock. Not a lot of sand. Sand shifts. Rock doesn't move unless it's a geo-active area, which it's not. So it was pretty reinforcing that the heritage of the organization was something to be proud of. But then, down to Haiti. We had, if I remember right, ten days to get ready for Haiti. There was a survey that was to have been conducted by a Navy survey vessel because it was extraterritorial; it was outside the country. But that ship, near the end of their project in the Pacific, had run aground, and the ship had to be repaired. So the Navy asked NOAA if we could do that work because they sensed a time urgency to understand, for political stability reasons, can we get ships into Port-au-Prince and where in different parts of Haiti if we had to. So we went down and did that, and my God, what an experience that was. The warmth of heart that I saw in the Haitian people was stirring. The poverty that I saw in the Haitian people was stirring – people with pants but worn out in all places where you would want to cover oneself. I run out of words. We arrived in Haiti. We arrived in Port-au-Prince. After the trip down, we had a few things to take care of. We were delivering some medical supplies to a relief organization. So we were able to transport them down. I'm not sure that that was on the books. But we were contacted locally in Norfolk by a church-based and civic organization. So we were able to help them out. But then we had some downtime, and I went walking through Port-au-Prince. I'd never seen anything like that before. It was overwhelming. I came back, and I sketched just what was in my mind. And it basically was this, Molly. It was a figure, really small with a hand out like this, hoping that I can provide them with something. Because I was Caucasian, I was assumed to be obviously not from there

but very wealthy. It was an experience of many heart-rendering moments, really heartbreaking moments. We got into some very remote parts of Haiti in order to do our work. I did get put ashore for about ten days. I think it was ten days. I was there by myself. We were running short of guys. One fellow's dad had passed; he had to go home for the funeral. Another guy had a different problem. So we were running out of bodies. So I'm ashore in a tent in this little cove on an island offshore Haiti. I didn't know what to make of the neighborhood because there was nobody in the neighborhood. I wake up in the middle of the night, and I see this shadow, like two legs standing adjacent to my tent, and the moonlight is illuminating the shadow. So just like every *Rambo* hero, I adjust myself, grab a knife, then come bolting out of the tent, doing a forward roll, try not to stab myself, and I stand up. There I see the pants that I had left on top of the tent the night before to dry, sitting on top of the tent looking, for all of my imagination, like somebody standing over my tent. I met these two Haitian fishermen who were living part of their week in that cove. They would fish by day, just catch enough, bring it to market, buy rice for their family, walk further, give the rice to their family, and then come back to the cove. They were two brothers. I spent Thanksgiving there with them. I had military meals. We still had C-rations, which were Korean War vintage, but that's what we had. We had those and also the meals-ready-to-eat [MREs]. I'm ripping it loose. Turkey for everyone, right? So the three of us are having this turkey dinner. We cannot speak the same language. I can speak a bit of Spanish. Their Creole had a little bit of Spanish, but it wasn't quite there. The one guy runs back down to this little cave site that they were living in, fishing out of their dugouts. He comes back with a cloth that had peanuts in it. I was introduced to him as Mac, but his pronunciation was "Mach." I'll always remember this. He says, "Mac, Mac. Pistache Pistache." So he wanted to contribute to this grand, glorious meal, not knowing why we were having it. To me, it was Thanksgiving. To them, it was just, "Hey, this is pretty good." It touched my heart. It touched my heart that what little these guys had – and he's the guy I'm speaking of whose pants did not fully cover him – they wanted to share. So I get on the radio when the ship's coming back after the ten days – the ship disappeared. I couldn't talk to the ship for the better part of ten days. So the ship comes back. I said, "Guys, rally up some clothing. Let's get some goods here. Let's see what we could bring to these to these folks." Then we later found a village that was adjacent to the area, same sort of thing, mud floors, basically mud huts and thatched roofing. People were eking out a living there. Some amazing things I saw there. It just warms my heart but it also disappointed me that as close as Haiti is to so much of the developed world that Haiti still struggles, and Haiti still struggles today. We gave them clothes and shelf-safe milk.

MG: Was this an area that you would come back to or spend more time in later in your life?

CM: I think I only went to Haiti one more time. It was an unofficial trip. But I'll share another humorous anecdote of Haiti. When I was promoted from ensign to junior grade lieutenant, which is a big deal – you're finally a human being when you're no longer an ensign. You've not arrived yet, but you're at least working your way up. I took an entire paycheck and took it to the Royal Haitian hotel, and said, "What can you do for this amount of money?" Because I wanted to throw, as we call it, a wet-down party for the whole crew. A few of the people at the embassy came down, too. "Well, we'll let you talk to our catering director." This story could go on long, so I'll fast-forward it, Molly. There was a gentleman of Sicilian ethnicity and national origin who was quartered in this hotel. I can't remember his name, but it was a very Italian name. He looks at me and says, "You look Italian." I said, "Well, my mother is Italian. But really, she's

Sicilian.” He says, “I’m Sicilian.” So the next thing I know, we got all sorts of stuff being added to what my funds were going to buy. So, what is he doing down there? Most assuredly, he was the drug guy. He was there because Haiti was, as an impoverished country, a transshipment location. So whatever the guy’s name is – I don’t know – Mr. (Scungilli?), let’s call him. One of our guys, during the course of my party, is in attempting to engage in some extracurricular romantic activity, and he’s being shaken down by the Tonton Macoute secret police. So they’ve got him in a hallway with machine guns on him. I get called out. The party’s over at this point, and I took a room at the hotel. I come out, and I look, and here’s old Jim. I got the boys with the machine guns on him. I say, “Wait a minute.” I just mentioned Mr. (Scungilli’s?) name. Because he told me, “If anything happens, that you need anything, you come and get me.” So I’m knocking on his door. I can’t remember the hour, but I know it was really late. He puts his bathrobe on, puts his slippers on, and he says, “So, tell me what’s going on.” I give him the lowdown. He goes down there, and he slaps the guy who’s holding a machine gun. My guy is released. He turns to me, and he says something like, “Just get him out of here and get him back to the ship.” Then, he chews these guys out, and they left. That’s when I realized the juice that this man had, and I could only surmise what his role was down there. But to my recollection, I believe that the hotel did, in fact, compression collapse during the last earthquake. It’s just part of the sorrow that, to me, surrounds Haiti.

MG: When you would go to different countries, were there courses in cultural awareness to help prepare you ahead of time?

CM: No, we were winging it. What I have to say about the heart and the intellect of the crew was that – it was heartfelt. One of our fellows who was a senior surveyor – it touched his heart where a lady was trying to hand him her baby, thinking that the baby would have a better life where we came from than staying in Haiti. It was culturally enriching. I remember being fascinated. I think it was because one of the James Bond movies had an aspect of Vodou culture in it, and I became fascinated. I read a book by a fellow who today is a National Geographic Explorer; the book is called *The Serpent and the Rainbow*. A pretty trashy movie was made [of] it that didn’t give honor to the work that he had done. Wade Davis was the name of the author. Wade went to Haiti and tried to get deep inside the Vodou culture to understand it. His origin was to try and figure out medically what makes a zombie. How do you bring somebody to rise up again when they have been clinically declared dead? New York City doctors were seeing that happen, and they wanted to figure out what’s really going on here. So they hired Wade. He went down there, did it, wrote the book, etc. So that really sparked my interest in the Vodou culture. Not that I’m a Vodou practitioner, but I find it amazing that the Vodou deities have a strong parallel to the saints of the Catholic Church, which every religion in succession – Christianity did this – conveniently incorporates the pagan in order to have Christmas near the solstice. All that stuff. You know it. I went and found a Vodou ceremony. Actually, the guy who was habitually our cab driver, but he really was Tonton Macoute. We busted him. Nonetheless, he still became our cab driver. He took myself and another crew member, a female crew member [who] had interest in it as well. We’re at this Vodou ceremony. The people were going on all night. One gentleman was dressed in – if you remember those tennis sweaters that are white with a maroon and blue stripe. He’s dressed well, that way and with his daughter, and other people who obviously had no means to speak of, but everyone together in the Vodou ceremony. The drums are going for about an hour. All this stuff happens. I’ll spare you the details of the slaughter of a

steer, I guess is the best way to put it – an emaciated steer. But once it breaks, now it's time for everybody to drink the blood. We had already shipped the guy off for eating rare meat in a Port-au-Prince restaurant; he had an intestinal parasite. So I looked at my counterpart, and I said, “We're not drinking this stuff. We're out of here.” So we gracefully made our way to escape and get back down the hill. I think we wound up finding the same cab driver. But it was an interesting experience to see that translation of religion. Most assuredly, the people who were there, who were very welcoming of us – we were the only non-Haitians that were there. When they get done there, they go to church on Sunday. This was a Saturday night, and then they're going to church on Sunday. So as one man told me there, the encyclopedia will tell you that Haiti is ninety-five percent Catholic, or some similar number, but it's also a hundred percent Vodou. It was a social power of administering justice. If you had a grievance, you didn't go to the court; you went to the local Vodou houngan, and that person would decide what is the fate of the transgressor. Totally blew my mind. Read Wade's book.

MG: Yeah, that's interesting. It's something I don't know a whole lot about, but maybe I'll do some more research now. That book sounds so interesting.

CM: It's well-written. Wade Davis has had a remarkably successful career on his own, but then also working with Geographic as an explorer in residence. Neat guy.

MG: Was your next assignment a shore duty?

CM: My next assignment was shore duty. Admiral Taggart, who was the director of the NOAA Corps at the time, later explained to me that he saw some measure of aptitude in my demeanor that would have me succeeding if I were assigned to an assistant administrator. So I was assigned to a wonderful man named Bill Gordon, who was the director of the National Marine Fisheries Service, the Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, and his deputy, James Douglas. Jim was an elegant – I say this in the most complimentary way – aristocratic, cultured gentleman of Southern Virginia. So, here's Jim, and then there's Bill Gordon, who is a New Englander, a let's-just-get-the-job-done sort of guy, and had the whole agency in the top of his head. It thrilled me to work in that environment because I was back to what interested me in those ichthyology and fishery management courses and in zoology. So, I'm in this world now. Admiral Taggart gave me the unique responsibility as a junior grade lieutenant of being the Fisheries Service NOAA Corps representative on the assignment board. So here I am, dealing with assignments all the way up to the commander level. Captains were dealt with separately. But I was given a responsibility that I was really surprised to get because there were more senior officers than I. But because I was sitting in the assistant administrator's office, the feeling was okay, you're there, and you have the access, and you can find the best assignments for these officers. I learned a lot about the fisheries management world, which I never had known. I was immediately adopted by two wonderful ladies, one who still works at NOAA, a lady named Jan Charity. The other lady is named Shirley Smith. They were local DC folks who came to work for their federal government [and] put every ounce of their soul and pride into the success of the agency. They were not born to be fisheries managers; they were there, and they took care of me, adopted me, and made sure that I had a nice easy transition into the shoreside Washington DC work. I remember walking to work. This building was just above Georgetown, [on] the border of Georgetown and Glover Park if you know the neighborhood. Georgetown's a hot, happening,

hip place. But just above it, it gets a little bit quieter, and you get pretty close to the National Cathedral and the Naval Observatory. I could walk to work. I come to work on Columbus Day. There are no cars in the parking lot. It didn't even occur to me that it was Columbus Day. But I just walked in, signed in, went up to my floor, and there's Bill Gordon working. He says, "What are you doing here today?" "I'm coming to work. But where is everyone?" He says, "It's Columbus Day." "Oh. We get Columbus Day off?" He said, "Didn't you -?" I said, "No, we never got any days off on the ship. Every day is a day, right? You work Christmas. You work New Year's. You work whatever, and you apply for leave." But I didn't know we had the day off. So we spent the day working together and had a wonderful, productive time. But that's how green I was in terms of what the federal working system was about. Shirley and Jan were wonderful to help me navigate that. But then Bill and Jim were just wonderful mentors to guide me in how to function successfully, not just in the federal service. They were senior executives, and I was learning from senior executives how they did their job. That stayed with me and helped to make me successful in the subsequent jobs that I had.

MG: That's really important because it does seem to be that there are rules to the road in terms of how you navigate relationships with colleagues at NOAA and how to connect to different offices and people. That sounds important. Was this the first time you had spent significant time in DC?

CM: Yes, I was just a family visitor to it otherwise. My brother did a year in DC working on the Hill. I would just come down to spend a weekend occasionally. But I didn't know DC very well. So it was my view to DC.

MG: When you had these assignments, what kinds of assignments were they? Can you give me some examples?

CM: In that job? In that position?

MG: Yes.

CM: It ranged from being an analytical supporter to the deputy or to the assistant administrator. I had an assignment to contribute to producing a Caribbean marine regional profile. It was dealing with the transition of artisanal fisheries to more commercially scaled and exploiting fisheries. But we had a profile on each of the Caribbean nations that we put together as an information resource. I was asked to take a look – my first assignment. Yeah, this tells a little bit about Bill Gordon. My first assignment, what I was brought in there to do was help to develop an automated information system to deliver facts and figures on a computer screen to the assistant administrator, to have every complex fishery management plan available at his fingertips and the information and who were the constituents, and so many different things, including the science. So I'm looking at this and being the New Jersey guy, I cut through it, and I looked at it, and I thought, "I don't think William G. Gordon needs this. And it's going to be expensive." He's got the agency in the top of his head and the palm of his hand. He knows everything about this. This is an expenditure that the IT [information technology] guys – and we didn't really have IT guys then. We had guys who had done some computer stuff and then came to work doing computer work, and computers were certainly much slower and less capable than

today. I was not sold on it, yet I was supposed to then be his right hand and the guy who operates this thing. So they're taking me along with them – the IT guys – to these conferences and learning about all these different systems and whatnot. So Bill Gordon asked me to sit down and tell him what I'm learning and how close I am to being ready. And I said, "Well, I'm sorry to say, I don't think you need this thing. I think it's a boondoggle that's padding that group's budget and opportunity. You know more about this agency than we will ever be able to put into a system like that and readily recall it. So, I guess, since that's what I was sent here to do, maybe you need to send me somewhere else. I don't want to waste your time getting into this." He said, "Well, if you can give me that level of honesty, I can use you many places. So you're here. You got a home here. And away we go." I think somewhere along the line, although he never said it, and he's passed on now, Admiral Taggart said, "There's a reason I picked you for that assignment." It also was a time, Molly, where there was friction between the National Marine Fisheries Service and the NOAA Corps. The NOAA Corps and the NOAA fleet were nested in the [National] Ocean Service because of the Coast and Geodetic Survey roots at the time. There was no independent OMAO, Office of Marine and Aviation Operations. So there was a lot of animus still in the culture of NOAA itself as the Corps was evolving to serve the Fisheries Service, and the Fisheries folks did not like the Corps. "You stole our ships, and now they're managed by NOS. And we don't have control over them. The ships are our lifeblood. You are no good." That's probably the closest experience I can say I have ever had to an overt prejudice, not by my color of skin, not by my facial features, but by the uniform that I wore. And it was palpable. Gordon never bought into it. He was super. Douglas never bought into it. The headquarters didn't. But the field and some of the players that were in the programs definitely expressed that animus towards us. I found, as much as I could say, in our brethren in America who endure such prejudices, but far greater than anything I could say ever felt. I just had a taste of it like a grain of salt on your tongue. But you deal with it, you don't fight it, and you just try and show them that you're better than that. I think that, in a small way, helped me understand when I got into other serious or senior leadership positions, how we deal with something that we never were taught to talk about in government – "Never talk about it. Don't raise it. Don't bring it up." Race. Fast forward. It wasn't until George Floyd that we just deliberately dove into race that I think we became a much more comfortable organization. Still haven't fixed all those problems. But that animus towards the NOAA Corps was something that I think Admiral Taggart also thought that I could deal with for whatever reason.

MG: Yeah. I'm aware of how difficult those conversations can be and how it often delays getting things done. How did that friction resolve itself? Did it take time? Did someone try to develop those relationships strategically?

CM: I think it was leadership and time. With time, people realized that we weren't a bunch of knuckleheads. Also, senior leaders like Bill Gordon and his eventual successor, Rollie Schmitt, a wonderful guy, wonderful leader, who was a Marine – Rollie was a Marine in Vietnam during the Tet Offensive. Rollie understood uniform. He understood integrity and service. So as leaders came into the community, particularly at the head of the Fisheries Service, their leadership tone trickled down, and it cooled the jets of the outspoken, and frankly, some of the outspoken retired out, and things got calmer when their replacements arrived.

MG: I've heard about this from some of the Weather Service folks, but were you seeing the tension between the old-timers who may have been with the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries before NOAA was formed and the new-timers?

CM: Oh, very much so, Molly. It's astounding to see the same thing play out in, for example, Homeland Security. It takes a decade for the homogenization to normalize. When it starts normalizing is your starting point. But you're already now ten years into it because it's all filled with competition and hatred because you're getting more money than I am. "Even if my budget's bigger, you don't deserve what you're getting. I deserve it". All that stuff – the cultures. Even today, the cultures are different. But today, because of some very strong leadership at NOAA from Kathy Sullivan, Conrad Lautenbacher, people like Rollie Schmitt, the walls have melted. Lautenbacher started using the phrase, "One NOAA" – take the one NOAA approach. Being the man that he is, he was often credited with creating that simple phrase. But he pointed out that no, it was the PCO, the program coordination officers; each line contributes a person to help assist the administrator. It was the program coordination officers during his tenure who said, "Hey, why don't we come up with –?" He accepted it, adopted it, and really bought into it. But it took a deliberate dose of leadership. We continue to – I wouldn't say struggle, but we continue to deal with the competition between line organizations because the institutional pride of, gosh, nearly two-hundred-year-old organizations that are now then compressed into one, plus two newbies, the satellite and research components, it's competitive for lean dollars. I think there are three levels. At the executive level, you hope you get the best behavior. I think we function very well today at NOAA at the executive level, working together [and] finding ways to work better together. At the performance end – I'm deliberately avoiding the use of the term "the lower end," but the less compensated but the real producers of the work of the agency – they'll work with anyone just to get the job done. They'll nuzzle up, link arms, and say, "Let's do this together," and find a way to get it done. The problem we have is in the competitive level of the program managers, senior program managers, who want to – to use a phrase that a former NOAA Chief of Staff, Scott Rayder, used often – plant their flag and have it fly higher than yours. It's more ego motivation, believing that my boss is going to smile more favorably on me if I show that I zinged the other guy out of his or her resources. It wasn't until people like Louis Uccellini, and I got together, where there had been a long-standing conflict between the Weather Service and Oceans and Atmospheric Research, that Louis and I decided we were going to do well together. He's a personal friend today. We meet on Sundays for coffee and pastries today. We showed, at our level, that we're fine. So why aren't you fine at your level? It really had an effect. It was strong leadership that brought NOAA together. That lasted a long time. I think, in retrospect, we had to wait for the old guard to retire out and take their animus and, I'd even say, hatred with them. Then the new folks would just say, "Well, let's give these folks a chance. Let's see what they could do for us." It all worked out much better.

MG: I often wonder if it coincided with the introduction of more advanced technologies and computer technologies, and some people just felt their skills were obsolete in terms of adapting to these new technologies.

CM: I think it happened at a lot of levels. Some of the crusty old-timers, if you will, realized that it's passing them by. I remember watching a guy on the ship who, when we went through a gender equality training session, sat in the back of the room, obviously displaying his disinterest.

This was a fleet guy, a ship crewman. He said, “So I can't do this, and I can't do that, and I can't do this.” The instructor said, “No, you're violating the law if you do those things.” He said, “Oh. All right. I'm done.” He retired. That was it. Good. Thank you. Thank you for your service. But time has passed you by. So a lot of those guys, yeah, time had passed them by. But also, we won some people over. We won people over who would tell us later, “Honestly, I didn't receive you well. I didn't want to receive you well, but you won me over because of the way that your colleagues have worked together and advanced the state” whether it was NOAA Corps being assimilated, or whether it was one line organization working with another line. When NOAA administrators started to applaud multiline contributions, well, okay, there's the coin of the realm. Let's get it done. We think that tribalism is the key to success, and my tribe will triumph over yours, forgetting that you got so many other tribes on the outside of the fence, right? But it wasn't until that leadership element asserted itself that we really saw the agency turnaround.

MG: What years did you spend with Bill Gordon? I'm curious, what were the major issues at NMFS during that time?

CM: I was with Bill from '83 to '85, somewhere around there. I'm getting confused now. I'm going to have to look these up to give you a little bit more definitive detail on my work. I apologize. I should have that in front of me. I was with Bill for about two and a half years. Bill was a man who stood up for his beliefs. He didn't particularly get along with the next administrator after John Byrne. Dr. John Byrne was the administrator when I was there. I'll share an anecdote with you about Dr. Byrne, who's just a wonderful, wonderful man. But Bill and Tony Calio, who came in as the next administrator, did not get along on fisheries issues. Calio, under the Reagan administration, was trying to promote a political situation. And Bill was right and ready to stand up for the science and the biology that said, “Don't do it. You're going to overfish.” That was, I think, a rather routine conflict that went on between the two of them. Eventually, you wake up in the morning, and then you're told, “Okay, I'm replacing you as assistant administrator. You're going to work for me,” is what Calio did with Bill Gordon. But I worked with Bill, and I saw a man who had a wonderful way with people, understood the importance of the job, and how to do the job right. I was just able to peek over the threshold of the window to see in the room what's really going on. Subsequently, I had an assignment with Rollie Schmitt when he was the assistant administrator for Fisheries, and I was in the room with Rollie, and I saw so much more about how that's done. Once again, Rollie – same way. It's about the law. It's about managing the fishery the right way, not overfishing, etc. So I worked with Bill and the issues at the time were Turtle Excluder Devices or TEDs. That was a ruckus of activity. There were tires slashed in the Gulf of Mexico belonging to the Fisheries enforcement agents or even the laboratories. There was a lot of ire over these changing rules. The fishers were looking at this – “We never had to use these before. What's the problem? Maybe I catch a turtle. Maybe I don't.” But the law required us to do something. So that was a major issue. The other one, Molly, that was really starting to germinate was limited entry, where there's a finite number of permits, and you could sell those permits as your quota. You could buy quota, etc. It's the system we have today. It was beginning to be talked about, but it was quickly dissed, if you will, by the Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee, MAFAC. It was recognized internally as, “Oh my God, that's a bridge too far. We're just trying to end overfishing.” Because during the '70s, the United States had over-capitalized in the fishers as we threw the foreigners out. We

pushed the foreigners out of our EEZ [exclusive economic zone]. Though there were some joint ventures remaining, where American boats would catch and then sell at sea to foreign vessels, the fishing community basically said, “Why can't we have our own industry that does it all?” So there was an over-capitalization. At that point in time, there was a program that would underwrite the loan to a fisherman to get a bigger and better boat. Then when I came back with Rollie, we were – ”Hey, we're over-capitalized. We have to reduce the capitalization.” So I watched it go up, and I watched it ramp back down. But Gordon was very congenial, obviously insightful. He'd been the regional administrator of fisheries up in New England, which is where all the action was. Alaska was slowly coming up, but it was all about New England at that point in time. He would sit with me and just give me a little bit of guidance as to why we're doing what we're doing. But I still didn't have the self-confidence to put all of me out front in front of Bill. I think I held myself back and could have actually done more there. I was too intimidated by the rank distance, which I was always mindful of later in my career, where I would invite a Sea Grant fellow or the correspondence control secretariat – “Come on in and tell me what I'm doing wrong. Help me do this. Help me figure this out better.” But Gordon was excellent to work with. I felt that he didn't get a fair shake the way that he was dealt with by the political system, but I later experienced that myself during the Trump administration.

MG: Was your next assignment the tour with the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement?

CM: Yes, yes. I then went to the Office of Law Enforcement. Probably the greatest achievement I accomplished there was meeting my wife because she was working in the Office of Law Enforcement. Am I missing something timewise? No, I'm not. So I'm at the Office of Law Enforcement. The major project that we had there was satellite monitoring of driftnet fishing. I was part of a small team that was required to identify the technology and then work diplomatically to get the Taiwanese, Japanese, and South Korean fishing boats ready to be equipped with satellite tracking. Of course, that was the first wave of the type of monitoring that we use routinely today, both domestically and internationally. It was tough because each of those three countries was not going to do it if the other two didn't. We had to work unilaterally and multilaterally with each of those countries in order to get a comfortable understanding of how we were going to get that done. It was hard. But it taught me a lot about diplomacy as well. In one event, diplomatically – I was too deep in the organization to get a plane ticket to go on some of the foreign trips, but when those nations would come, I was part of the delegation. At one point in time, there was a Coast Guard cutter named the *Morgenthau* that had affixed a satellite tracking device on it. You could turn on your computers – pretty primitive at the time – and you could see where in the world was the *Morgenthau*. I believe a Taiwanese ship had been fishing for salmon in or near our EEZ – driftnet fishing – and that was the concern because it was compromising the health of the fishery in Alaska, unregulated harvest, basically. The *Morgenthau* chased – they can't shoot at the boat, but they chased the boat all the way across the Pacific Ocean to its home port in Taiwan and just stood off at the twelve mile limit or so – I forget the details. So, during the course of this negotiation, the Taiwanese rep says, “Your technology is unproven.” So I raised my hand to be recognized, and the head of delegation recognizes me. I said, “I'd like to address the gentleman's observation of the proof of the technology. Coast Guard cutter *Morgenthau*, being affixed with this technology, seemed to have no problem at all tracking as it made its way across the entire Pacific Ocean, chasing your boat that had violated our sovereignty.” The room gets really hushed and quiet. No one responds to

my comment, and they move on to the next subject. Then at the break, the head of delegation, who I later worked with in my career, came up to me and said, “Usually, we’re not that direct on the tabletop. Maybe a hallway conversation, but just cool it. Okay?” “Oh, okay. I’m from New Jersey. That’s how we negotiate.” So I was constantly learning. But the law enforcement experience also brought me to work with the US Navy Special Warfare Development Group [NSWDG], which is also known as SEAL Team Six. We had an arrangement that the law enforcement folks worked through – now I’m jumping ahead to the next assignment, but I’ll discern that for you in a second. The law enforcement group arranged with US Customs to get for free surplus boats and equipment because customs seizures from drug guys were pretty rampant. Now, what do we do with this property? The federal agency needs it. We’ll sign it over. So we wound up with a couple of what we called go-fast boats, basically offshore racing boats. We wound up using those with the SEALs. But it was from my assignment in Fisheries Law Enforcement that I knew a network of Fisheries agents who are great guys, and their hearts and their passion to do the right thing for conservation was what led them to that career. It wasn’t like, “Hey, I’m interested in law enforcement. Maybe I’ll go over here.” They were conservationists that were really trying to use the law to do the right thing. So, we’re getting ready to have an exercise at a Navy facility. Basically, we were breaking into the Navy bases to see how good the domestic security was. It taught me something yet again about NOAA. Actually, I’m jumping ahead to the assignment I had after law enforcement. That was in the – what did we call it? – Special Projects Office of the NOAA Corps. That’s where I worked for David Yeager, who was the brother of my first CO [commanding officer]. I’ll finish with the Office of Law Enforcement. We pretty much did the satellite tracking sufficiently. I was asked by the NOAA Diving program if I could participate in helping to train the Secret Service detail and work with the Dan Quayle family on scuba training. The Secret Service came to NOAA because NOAA was the civilian diving operation, even though it was run by uniforms, as opposed to the Navy, where the Secret Service thought that the program was directed more towards seventeen, eighteen-year-olds, young burly men who would be barked at by thirty-year-old burly men, and not too good for the Quayle family with their young daughter and two sons, etc. So I was involved in that training evolution. Then I also took the Secret Service guys down to train in mixed gas for nitrox so they could stay longer than their protectee. That was an adventure in itself. Tons of stories. Getting pulled over by a North Carolina State Trooper because we were doing eighty miles an hour until the black Suburbans with the blue and red flashing lights pulled in behind us. The sheriff looks up, and he says, “Those boys with you?” I said, “Yes, sir. They are.” Suddenly, instead of being a bad guy speeding, he says, “You all need an escort?” [laughter] That was fun. That was a blast. But it was through Fisheries Enforcement then that I was somewhat appealing to this Special Projects Group, where we continued to take the Quayle family and the Secret Service team on some of their diving holidays. They were few in number, but there was a lot of prep time. Then also the SEAL experience. I did other special projects in there for a while.

MG: Can you explain the background or connection? Is it just NMFS that has an Office of Law Enforcement?

CM: Yes, and they help the Sanctuary System, Molly, the National Sanctuary System has regulations that can be prosecuted, but often, they have a state counterpart deputized to do it.

But the Office for Law Enforcement, if that relationship doesn't exist, the National Marine Fisheries Service Office of Law Enforcement will enforce the sanctuary regulations as well.

MG: I don't want to skip over the story of how you met your wife. What was she doing in the office then?

CM: Jo Ann was an administrative officer for the national program. She stayed in that position and eventually retired as a GS-14, as the administrative officer for the national program. When I met her, she was a secretary to the director and then worked her way into higher positions. She had some wonderful directors there that were trying to encourage her to go in the route of being a fisheries enforcement agent. They offered to send her down to the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, which comes up again when I was dealing with the SEALs. But she was a single mom with her daughter and just can't go be an agent with family limitations in such a way. We met there but didn't really start to develop an affinity for each other until I had gone off to law school, which was several assignments later. I think just two assignments later. Oh, yeah. I forgot another amazing journey. While I was at the Fisheries Law Enforcement, towards the end of my scheduled assignment, Admiral Moran called me up again – no, this is the first call I got from Admiral Moran. There were three meaningful calls with Admiral Moran, who was a tough sort of guy. He was a character. And John Callahan probably gave you a little bit about Billy Moran. If I could digress, I first met Bill Moran when I was working for Bill Gordon. One of the things Bill said was, “You might want to go down and join the NOAA Fish Fry. It's a lot of fun. There's just good people. You'll meet a lot of people, and it's a good way for you to get acquainted.” So I'm standing there. I'm a volunteer. I immediately volunteered for what I saw was one of the less desirable jobs – cooking the fish. I'm standing there all night, flinging fish. As I get to flinging fish, there's this guy next to me. He was working at the time for John Byrne as the military senior aid to the NOAA administrator. I said, “Hi, I'm Craig.” He says, “Hi, I'm Billy, Billy Moran.” He knew who I was, but I didn't know who he was. I didn't know who the senior officers were. Then, at the end of the night, after we're swapping stories and whatnot, he says, “Well, since we're both in the Corps.” Whoa. He's in the Corps? That was an amazing moment. Then when I was the assignment coordinator, Moran wanted to do something to pull a guy out of an assignment. It was actually my old recruiter Alan Bunn. The Fisheries Service – back to the Fisheries Service and the NOAA Corps – was not dealing in a favorable way with Bunn. I forget what the issue was. Pay for training, something like that. The admiral was going to pull him out of there. I explained to the admiral I thought that wasn't a good idea. So Junior Grade Lieutenant McLean telling two-star Admiral Moran, “Sir, that's not a good idea, and here's why.” There was a long pause on the phone. He said, “Okay, you've convinced me. We'll leave Bunn where he is. But do keep an eye on this for me, and I'm going to rely on you to do so.” “Yes, sir.” Then Moran calls me up – fast-forward – and he says, “I've got an assignment you might like, but you have to go to Russia for three or so months, and you're going to put together a group of NOAA officers that will assist in bringing a sail training vessel from Odesa,” the Odesa that's being bombed today, “over to Baltimore. It's going to be Operation Sail 1990, US-Soviet Operation Sail.” I said, “I'm in.” He said, “Well, you're going to want to take some time. Talk to your family.” I said, “Yep, done. Talked to my family. Don't worry about it. I'm in. I'm there.” So I went. We had a three-month journey from Odesa to Baltimore on a Soviet tall ship. The Soviets knew that the wall was coming down. They could smell and taste freedom. It was only '91 that the wall literally came down. So it was a very interesting time to be there and

with them. We were in Bermuda at one point, and a hurricane was coming. So we had to leave St. George's in Bermuda to get at sea and ride it out at sea. You can't stay in port, as you know, Molly. So middle of the night, we're bashing around, and the ship is performing marvelously well. Under sail, the diesel was on in case we needed it, but we basically were just sailing. We had a foresail out, and we had a mizzen aft. As the head would fall off with the wind, the tail would come behind it. So, it just kept us right into the wind. So the captain, leans over to me, and he says – I'm just a lieutenant at the time – “So what do you think of this ship? How's it performing?” I said, “Well, Captain, I think the ship's performing very well, and you're obviously a master at this, but wasn't Lech Walesa and the boys in Poland and Gdansk responsible for building this vessel?” He says, “Yes, they were.” I said, “They weren't too fond of you guys, were they?” He says, “Oh, no, that was the big labor movement.” Molly, forgive me, but what I said was, “Well, I think you and I better hope that Lech the boys didn't leave out a weld or two just to piss you off.” He ripped out into uproarious laughter. He just thought that was the funniest thing. He says, “When we get off watch, you must come down to the cabin, and we must drink to Lech Walesa.” [laughter] That's the kind of trip it was. He was a dyed-in-the-wool communist supporter. Much of the rest of the officers that we dealt with were ready to see the openness, the freedom, and such. The chief engineer had a puppy who was taken from its mom at the beginning of the cruise. The puppy is now three weeks old. We made sure the puppy got the shots that were needed to in order to come ashore eventually in New York City because I stayed on until New York. The ship went to Baltimore then to New York. I got a taxi cab, and we put the chief and Gilda, which was the puppy's name, in the taxi cab, and Gilda experienced grass for the first time in Central Park, New York City. We all loved it. We all thought that was great. But that was an assignment – I took a hiatus from the Law Enforcement assignment to go to Russia. I spent about three weeks in Russia. Then we boarded the ship in Odesa and then came over in three months. It was yet again another bit of diplomatic training for me. We had one of our NOAA officers who would not drink the vodka because it was not allowed on our ships. I tried to encourage him, “Well, it is allowed on these ships, and you're insulting our hosts by not partaking. You don't have to get ripped, and I don't get ripped, but you got to think about that.” This poor fellow didn't go with it, and he was isolated by the Russians quite obviously. But we had a female officer, Commander (then lieutenant) Joanne Flanders, with us and another lieutenant then, Tim Wright. Well, eventually, commander. We were all lieutenants at the time. But I knew Tim, and I knew Joanne. The guy who was not the participant, if you will, I had never worked with before. So he was a dark horse as far as I was concerned. But the admiral said, “Yeah, we're going to give this guy a shot.” But the three of us got along just wonderfully, and we got along wonderfully with the Russians. So then I came back. Then I went to Special Projects. At Special Projects, that's when I got assigned to work with the SEAL team using the fast boats and all, breaking into Navy bases. That taught me the confidence of an exceptional organization. We know by reading newspapers and books, you can't get much better than what these fellows do in order to do their work. When called upon, away they go. They invite me, a guy from the Chicago Police Department, a guy from the New York diving squad – they invite outsiders to come in and be part of their exercises in order to see what new ideas you bring to them. What hit me off immediately with these guys – because, once again, if I get in a new environment, pretty much as outspoken as I am, my mouth's closed [and] my ears are open. They said, “We want to get into this one particular Navy base. We'd love to get inside, but we can't go right to the heart of where this is. So we need a boat, but not one of the boats we're going to use in the drill.” So I called up at the Federal Law Enforcement

Training Center, one of the agents that I had worked with when I was at Law Enforcement, and I said, “Hey, we need a boat. What have you got?” “Well, we got one of these, one of those, one of these, and we also have Customs boats.” I said, “Oh, great. Customs boats. Can you get us a Customs boat and a couple of Customs uniforms?” “Yeah, sure. Where do we meet you?” *Boom*, away we go. So now I got the SEALs dressed in Customs uniforms, and we're cruising around inside of this area that only by another federal agency could you gain access to. We certainly couldn't get into look at it surreptitiously ourselves. The guys just thought that was the greatest scam. Thereafter, they kept asking for me, and I had a ball with them. Very impressive group of guys. But by having the openness to ask outside eyes to come in and look at their operation and help refine it, it was the opposite of what I saw in NOAA. It was the opposite of what I saw, in particular, in the NOAA Corps. It was, “Put up a wall. Don't tell them we're doing this because they may tell us to stop.” That, yet again, [was] another impactful learning moment for me. That and also the Secret Service, who had plenty of dive-qualified guys in their ranks. But to come to NOAA to have the administrative propriety and top cover saying, “Hey, we went to the agency that does this. The NOAA Diving manual is the authority.” So it was fun, but it impacted me in terms of how I would then respond later in my career.

MG: We'll probably wrap it up in a minute or two, but were there other special projects that you were assigned to?

CM: They were anecdotal and, I think, minuscule compared to – as well as the time that was spent – being ready to go and deploy with the Secret Service when the Quayle family was enjoying a vacation, which they're obviously entitled to, and then also the occasional jaunts with the SEALs. But the rest of the time was kind of day-by-day. There's a problem in the fleet. Can you help solve it? It was more of a hole filler from the administrative side. I didn't have to deploy during the course of that time. And then from there, If I'm [not] mistaken, it was time to go to law school.

MG: I also had in my notes that you were the operations officer on the *Albatross*. Was this earlier?

CM: Yeah, I forgot about that. I forgot about that. I was operations, and then I flected up to executive officer [XO]. That was Moran again. Admiral Moran said, “I'm going to send you out as ops. If you do okay, I'll fleet you up, and you'll be the XO.” So, second sea tour, XO on a Fisheries vessel, was, to me, quite flattering. That was a great opportunity. I loved it. I loved the seafaring. I love getting up there and getting bashed around on Georges Bank. I just had amazing ship-handling and mariner-based experiences up there. And just a great dedicated crew, most of whom had worked as commercial fishermen and then came over to work with us. But I learned a ton up there about ships and ship handling because the weather compelled it. When I was on the *Mount Mitchell*, if the weather was rough, you can't survey, so you had to port. In the *Albatross*, if the weather's rough, we ride it out unless it's going to be a full hurricane-force wind. But a gale was nothing, just, “Okay, we probably can't work.” So you put the bow into it, and you just ride it out. I remember coming into Governors Island at night at three o'clock in the morning. There was a big snowstorm going on, and we just realized we can't get anything else done here. So we headed on into Governors Island. There was already a NOAA ship in there, the *Whiting*, tied up, and they're looking pristine and magical. We've got rust on our ship. As

soon as we tie up, the *Whiting* guys are coming over – now it's about four o'clock in the morning – giving us grief over the fact that we've got rust all over the ship. So I got wind of this, and I was the exec. at the time. I went over, and I said, “Yeah, you guys are looking mighty nice here, well-painted, well-appointed, a nice showboat. Looking nice.” They said, “Yeah, yeah. You guys have a little rust showing there.” I said, “Oh, yeah, but you got to remember, you got to go to sea in order to get rust. So you guys are looking just marvelous.” My guys said nothing more. We all went back, had a coffee, and then they thanked me for sticking up for them. But it was a great seafaring experience.

MG: Yes. It sounds like a fun one, too. I think you said in your notes that there was a water skiing competition that you were a judge of. There was a man-overboard drill, and I think you were the man overboard.

CM: That was me. Yeah, I did it twice in my career. We did it once at Kings Point up in Long Island Sound. I decided that this was the way to go. Only the captain knew that I was going to do it. I learned it in Kings Point – the faces are very different when there's a real person in the water as opposed to just an orange float with a flag on it. I had a wetsuit, a really thin tropical wetsuit, underneath my jumpsuit. I got up at about – my recollection is really early morning. The sun was up and [at] sufficient degrees of elevation that you didn't have to worry about not being seen. But I took a can of smoke, the emergency smoke, flippers, a mask, and my video camera with me. It wasn't obvious to the guys that I had all that stuff with me as I just walked out on the deck, said good morning, took one step up on a bollard, one step on the rail, and just over the side, I went. As I'm going, I turned back to look at the ship, and I could see one guy with his mouth open, just pointing at me in disbelief. As soon as I hit the water, I turned the video camera on. I couldn't even put my flippers on at that point in time. But I just kicked to hold the video camera up as high as I could. It was amazing how quickly that ship got small and disappeared as each successive wave interrupted visibility. So we used that later as a training video to show people how quickly you are lost at sea even if someone sees you go over the side. As it was, the ship did the classic, what is called, a Williamson turn, which is taught in training to come back on an exact reciprocal course. Even with that, they were not headed toward me. I don't know what they saw. The captain never lost sight of me. I felt confident. But that's why I brought the smoke. So I popped the smoke. I can see everybody; they're all pointing like, “Yeah, he's over there. He's over there.” Then the smoke goes off, and then all these arms start going, “Yeah, no, he's over there.” But they had me back on board in eight minutes. I felt very confident in their skill and training. I wouldn't have jumped into the water if I didn't believe in it. But it was so much more motivating to have a real person. If we're going to put a real person in, and it's my idea, I'm not going to ask someone else to do it. I'll do it myself. And it was fun. Now, if they didn't get me, it was a long swim home.

MG: [laughter] Around this time, wasn't there an actual emergency onboard? I think I read that, in 1986, someone had passed out due to a faulty something-or-other, and then he was rescued. Some of the crew members were awarded a medal. Does this ring a bell?

CM: Absolutely. That was on the *Albatross*. That was just before I got there. Dean Smehil was the executive officer that I replaced upon his rotation. Dean and Third Assistant Engineer Dan Perry, who was one of the divers as well, who I did a lot of diving with on the *Albatross* – Dean

and Dan were the ones who rescued the person who basically was asphyxiating. They knew not to go in the space without the breathing apparatus because it was the lack of a breathing apparatus that caused this individual to lose consciousness. So Dean and Dan had done that, and that I believe had happened just before I got there. It definitely was not while I was on board. I was not a part of any of that, but those are the guys. I crawled in the space that they had to go in in order to pull this guy out. With the breathing apparatus, that was not easy. Those guys were heroes. They deserved the gold medal.

MG: Yes, it sounds like it. I have one last question because I know we're over time. Somewhere, I saw a picture I think you had taken from a storm while you were on the *Albatross*. It was from the *Albatross* of the *Delaware II*. So I wanted to ask about conditions at sea and storms. You touched on that a little bit already.

CM: I think to really get to the seafaring chops, if you will, you have to go up to Alaska on the *Miller Freeman*. That ship has now been retired and replaced. Or you had to be up in New England on the *Delaware* or the *Albatross*. There are storms everywhere, but the continuous nature of storms – the unique event is calm weather. You're always in stormy and rough weather working in those environments. My captain Frank Arbusto on the *Albatross* – when I got up there, he made it clear, “We don't run from weather. If we did, we'd never get anything done. We'd be just spending our time in transit. So unless it's a real smoker coming at you, we stay.” And Frank taught me a lot. Frank is an excellent mariner. In his retirement, he's run vessels on the Potomac. Now he's down at a maritime museum in Southern Maryland. I look forward to seeing him. I haven't caught up with him yet, but I want to see him now that I'm retired. But the seafaring nature of making sure you're looking out for the people first because the motion of the ship can hurt the people, not just getting washed overboard. But in the bumps, people get thrown out of [their bunks]. I got thrown out of my bunk one night. It's tough, and you have to be careful to safeguard the people from the harms of the ship. And also then keep the ship safe. But we took – I think it was – a forty-two-degree roll one time, which is pretty significant. I remember hanging on. I'm on the starboard side of the *Albatross* as XO, and Frank is on the port side, right near the captain's chair, which only the captain would sit in. But we were standing, holding on to the dogs of the watertight door to the bridge. As the ship took that one big roll, I'm now basically above Frank, looking down at him. Frank just smiles, and he says, “Don't let go,” because I would have been jolting right down on top of him. It taught me that you always have to show the face of confidence because if you don't – and I don't think any of us were remarkably confident in some of those environments. But if you don't show that face of confidence, the people you're responsible for will get shaken, and they will then not perform to their optimum because they're now more worried about what might happen rather than what they need to do. But these are excellent mariners who did fine work. I don't think we ever had a really scary call. The ship had great stability. It was a beautiful ship. Unlike the ships we built today, it had a beautiful sheer and camber, so it shed the water nicely and just had beautiful lines. I loved the *Albatross*. It was a great assignment.

MG: Good. Well, we'll take a break for today, if that's all right, and pick up with your next assignment next time.

CM: I'm going to refresh myself and get my list in front of me, so I'm not leaving these gaps for you, Molly. But I look forward to that. Just let me know what works good for you. I'm away the early part of September. We have a trip to Fiji of all places.

MG: Wow.

CM: So, headed out diving, and then I'm back for the rest of the month. I don't think I have any travel after that. We're settling down for the fall.

MG: Okay. Well, I'll want to hear about your trip to Fiji. So if I don't get to you before that, then we can plan to talk afterward.

CM: Sounds fine.

MG: I'll email you my availability for the next week or so.

CM: Excellent. Excellent. Sounds fine, Molly. Thank you.

MG: So nice to talk to you again.

CM: Great to see you. Take care

MG: Bye-bye.

-----END OF INTERVIEW-----

Reviewed by Molly Graham 11/2/2022
Reviewed by Craig McLean 11/19/2022
Reviewed by Molly Graham 1/7/2023