

Molly Graham: This begins an oral history interview with Craig McLean for the NOAA 50th Oral History Project. Today's date is September 1, 2022. The interviewer is Molly Graham. It's a remote interview with Mr. McLean in Olney, Maryland, and I'm in Scarborough, Maine. There were a few things that you brought up last time that I wanted to ask a couple of follow-up questions about. Then we'll pick up with your time on the *Gordon Gunter*.

Craig McLean: Okay.

MG: I was reading back over last session's transcript. You were talking about the whale work you did after college with Steve Morello. I looked him up, and I think he lives in Berwick, Maine, which is nearby.

CM: He could be up in Maine now. Steve did become a natural history photographer. He was pretty good. If he has New Jersey roots, that's probably Steve. But I lost touch with him. In fact, very reminiscently, my brother and I drove out to Provincetown two days ago to just walk about there. I hadn't been there in about twenty-five years. Parts of that town have grown up a lot, including the maritime space. But the downtown is still pretty much the same and has the same charisma that it always had. I was thinking of Steve while I was up there since you and I had been talking about him. Yeah, that may well be Steve.

MG: Oh, interesting. This is just a sidebar. But I've been processing a collection of interviews with folks from Provincetown who lived there at the turn of the 19th century. So they're talking about what the city looked like over a hundred years ago.

CM: I'll mention something interesting that they might know of, which is that I went to check on the mooring belonging to the whale-watching boat that we were working on. It was the winter mooring. It was set off of the wharves. If my memory serves me now, I don't remember clearly where the breakwater was or if there was a breakwater then. I think there might have been. I can't remember where the location was, but the mooring, I think, was outside the breakwater. When I dove down there – check on the chain, check on the cement clump that's down there – there were antique bottles left and right. I don't know if I told you that last time, but it was a situation where you just fill up a mesh bag full of bottles and bring them up to the surface. So we called the town historic preservation officer, who then called the state historic preservation officer. They looked over what we had, and they said, “We'd like one of these and one of those, but you can keep the rest. Go ahead.” So we wound up with a good few – in fact, some of them are sitting behind me on the shelf. But it was the garbage dump of the time. Yesterday's garbage dump is today's historic record – clay pipes smoked down, so the long stems were nipped down, but all sorts of things were there. So too the whaling history there as well – we saw whale bones on the bottom, which were probably just hauled offshore, not too far, a couple hundred yards, and then just dumped as the city dump. That was pretty interesting for me.

MG: Yeah. Speaking of whales, you mentioned the work you did with Dr. Mayo. Also, in your notes, you mentioned Dave Matilla and Jean Kenyon. Do I have those names correct?

CM: Yes. Gene and Dave worked for Stormy Mayo, who's still up in Provincetown. He still does his work with the Dolphin Fleet of whale-watching folks. They're a commercial firm, but he's got a long-standing arrangement with them, which benefits everyone. I think Jean and Dave both went on to work at NOAA. I think Jean wound up in Hawaii, and Dave – I'm not sure where he was. But Dave showed a lot of grace because when I went down to Puerto Rico, on my first ship assignment, on the *Mount Mitchell*, I structured a whale observing project and protocol. Even though the ship is going to map the bottom in a hydrographic survey mission because we were going to be looking at and counting the whales, we had to take the precautionary step of having a marine mammal permit in case we interfered or harassed a whale. Interestingly, I don't think we would have had to have the permit in order to do the survey work but because we declared we were going to count and observe the whales while surveying, we needed the permit. The population down in the Mona Passage of Puerto Rico and [the] Dominican [Republic] is the same population that comes up north. Unfortunately for us, we didn't see a whole lot of whales down there. It was a little windy. It's harder to see them in such an environment. But Dave, because he knew me, was very gracious and said, "Yeah, sure. I'll extend my permit to your activity down there," and the Fisheries Service was happy with it. So we were all above board.

MG: I know that Dave Matilla and Dr. Mayo worked on whale entanglements in the 1980s. Was that on your radar? Where were you at NOAA during that time?

CM: I was gone by then. I was away from Provincetown and Dave and Dr. Mayo. So, I think, if memory serves me correct, they really started the entanglement network up in the Cape Cod area. They were the first call. Because there was no sanctuary up there. The Fisheries Service was closest in Woods Hole. I think they really led the way in a lot of the techniques that are used today – the knife on a long pole that's carefully manipulated in order to cut the entanglement but not harm the whale. But I wasn't involved in that.

MG: Now we can get back to where we left off, which I think was in 1988 or '89 when you were a captain on the *Gordon Gunter*.

CM: In '88, '89 I was the on the *Albatross* out of Woods Hole – I was the executive officer. That was in the late-80s. Then the *Gordon Gunter* was – gosh, I got a flag sitting up here and could tell me the dates right here. So I was on the *Gunter* from '98 to 2000. '98 to 2000. So, I'm skipping a bunch. So I went from the *Mount Mitchell* – first sea tour – to the Fisheries assistant administrator's office, to the *Albatross IV* as operations and then executive officer, sailing around Georges Bank. We did one trip south – actually, we did two trips south to replace a ship that had a damaged propeller shaft, NOAA ship, the *Researcher*. We went down near the equator. We were about fourteen degrees north. That was called a (STACS?) cruise. I'm trying to remember what (STACS?) stood for. Subtropical Atlantic Climate Studies. But basically, we were looking at the age of seawater. The seawater that was at the surface would have tritium – same as in our glow in the dark watches and also Freon. If the water down below had tritium or Freon, that water had been at the surface to absorb those gasses sometime after World War II when those compounds were put in use. So in terms of the geological aging, that was a very capable way of looking at what layer of water had been at the surface some time ago in the past, at that point, roughly fifty years. So that led to the meridional overturning circulation assessments that are currently alive today. We're looking at those very closely for climate

change. Looking at that overturning was back then, and now the question is whether it's slowing. Back then, it was just to determine what is the overturning rate and what is the age of seawater since being at the surface. Interestingly, the little old *Albatross* did that project under budget and under time, yet the scientists, because they were used to using a much larger ship, they thought, "Oh my gosh, are we ever going to get this done, this little bitty ship here." And that's where we did the waterskiing on the Mid-Atlantic ridge and a few other things just to keep the crew morale up. I loved the Albatross and crew, and made some life long friends among the scientists. After that, then for me was the Office of Law Enforcement, and then the Special Projects Office, which is where I had some side work with the Navy and the Secret Service. Then off to law school. Then I came back as a lawyer, worked as a lawyer in several different law offices for NOAA, including during the 104th Congress, when Newt Gingrich literally had the elephants parading up on Capitol Hill, and they had the big contracts with America. Great political gesture. It was the first time Republicans controlled Congress in a long time. There then followed quite a vigorous attack on administrative law and environmental law, going after environmental law through the administrative law avenue. That was a real education for me to be in the legislative counsel's office during that time. Also, I rotated. Much to my delight, I was able to rotate one year in each of several law offices, in Enforcement, in the Ocean Service, Sanctuaries, and Fisheries and in Legislative Counsel office. Then the fleet – Admiral [William] Stubblefield called me up and said, "I need you. The NOAA Corps is proposed for elimination. We need to put our heads together." That's when I started working for Admiral Stubblefield. He fired me for four hours, and then he brought me back on board. I was a little too aggressive. Then the back to the National Marine Fisheries Service. I was there as a – what was I – a counsel to the director of the Fisheries Service. That was Rolland Schmitten at the time. That actually was a strategy that Rollie and Admiral Stubblefield had put together, Admiral Stubblefield recognizing how aggressive I was at helping the NOAA Corps and my attitude that I'm in it for the win now; I don't worry about later. He was smart enough to worry about later and realized that the reputation that I was establishing in the fight to keep the NOAA Corps alive was probably not the one that I wanted to live with. So Rollie then said, "Send him over here, and I'll just smooth this guy out," and Rollie did a wonderful job of sandblasting and sanding off my rough edges that I had refined during the course of fighting the predominant view of getting rid of the NOAA fleet and the NOAA Corps. Then after that Fisheries assignment, off to the *Gordon Gunter*, where I was commanding officer, and I'll pick up there. We started with this used Navy ship; it was part of the T-hyphen-A-G-O-S or T-AGOS class vessels. The Navy had surplused these vessels because they had a new design that could do the work that these vessels were originally designed for. The new design could do it much more efficiently. I think we were also closing in on the time where the peace dividend at the end of the Cold War was coming up to the point where the focus was not as keen on underwater sound and detecting submarines. So, we received these vessels. The one that was designated for our Fisheries work was the *Relentless*, and interestingly, some fellows that were in the crew thought that the ship could keep that name because it matched their perception of my personality. It was named after Gordon Gunter. And Dr. Gunter – we'll leave the tape running on this, but I have to say that my recollection is that members of Dr. Gunter's family told me of what his history was all about during the Civil Rights Act, coming from the depths of Mississippi as majority Caucasian. And there's some question as to how proud we should be, so far as civil rights are concerned, with the name of Dr. Gunter on that ship. I know that the fleet looked into it subsequently and didn't come up with anything conclusive. But that's a reality that I think we have to continue to be

aware of. So the 1964 Civil Rights Act – there are many people in the majority South who didn't like seeing that act passed. So nonetheless, there we are, and we have a ship that's named after someone who may well have had such negative activity in that pursuit. So Dr. Gunter, at the time, was still alive, and he was confined to a wheelchair. I'm not recalling his ailments, but we have photographs that have Rollie Schmitt, myself, Senator [Trent] Lott. In fact, I think I pulled some of those out. I'll look for him as I'm talking. But the experience down there was, for me – I think I told you – yeah, here it is – I had asked to be sent to Mississippi instead of Hawaii. Because, after all the “Save the NOAA Corps” stuff, the admiral in effect said, “McLean, we're going to let you just unwind and chill. Go out to Hawaii and go be Hawaiian.” I said, “No, I want to go to Pascagoula because we're getting a new ship for the home port, where the Senate Majority Leader lives.” So I recovered this [photograph]. This is obviously me in the uniform. That's Bill Daley, who was the Secretary of Commerce; Trent Lott, the Senate Majority Leader; and then Jim Baker, right here, who you probably know and have asked questions as to where was his heart on the elimination of the Corps. He was kind of between a rock and a hard place, where he was Al Gore's advocate and some have suggested possibly even ghostwriter for one of Gore's environmental books. But they were reasonably, at a professional level, close. So Admiral Stubblefield said, “Well, okay. I'll send you to Pascagoula.” During the commissioning ceremony that that photograph represents, Senator Lott comes up to me, leans over, and he says into my ear, “Now, don't let these people down here push you around. You do what you need for that ship.” And I'm thinking, “That's exactly why I wanted to be here.” I appreciated that he had support for that notion. We outfitted the ship up in New York City in a shipyard that was marginal at best. That shipyard also got the contract to work on the NOAA ship, *Ron Brown*, which was rather new at the time. There, actually, I believe, was a question of arson by the shipyard on the *Ron Brown*. There was a federal case. I was deposed, as was the CO [commanding officer], Dave Peterson. You may know Dave. So there was a fire in the shipyard. It was pretty quickly extinguished because the New York City Fire Department is that good. But the bridge of the *Ron Brown* burned. Of course, all the electronics are up there, and the wiring harnesses all go to the bridge. So it was a big deal. It was, curiously, a lot more work for the shipyard. So there was an investigation, and I don't recall how it was ultimately settled. But we had two NOAA ships in there at the time. We sailed. Went to work as the *Relentless*, did some whale surveys, and it was an ideal platform for whale work because it's an acoustically quieted ship. All of today's Fisheries ships are acoustically quieted, and that class of ships, when we got them over from the Navy, showed us that there was a value in doing that. It took one more variable out of the equation, which is to what degree the ships and also the whales respond to the presence of a vessel. By taking the vibrations out, that at least reduced a variable. So we went down and went to work in Pascagoula. We had a rather curious welcome in Pascagoula. We didn't expect a band. We didn't expect flowers. But we thought at least somebody would be there to catch the lines for us. But we came steaming up the Pascagoula River. There's nobody there but some poor fisheries biologist who was coming in on the weekend in order to do some of his work, and we just hollered out, “Hey, can you catch the lines for us?” So that was our arrival in Pascagoula. The ship was still the *Relentless* when it arrived there. Of course, as you know, it's bad luck to rename a ship. So right next to the laboratory was a park, and at the park, you could bring your cooler or whatever beverage you chose. So we had an exorcism ceremony that the executive officer, Lieutenant Commander Scott Kuester, and I co-led. We conducted the exorcism of the *Relentless* in order to have the ship ready to be renamed and christened the *Gordon Gunter*, which took place right there in Pascagoula. Off we went. We did more whale

work. We did plankton. We were working with the dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico, which is that anoxic result of over-nitrification coming down the Mississippi, and we did a fair – well, we did our portion of the shrimp surveys and the groundfish surveys in the Gulf of Mexico. We did have some hurricane interactions. We had hurricane Georges with the soft G that came and ran right over Pascagoula. That was very distressing for the crew. I really felt for them because they wanted to be home with their families to deal with this hurricane as it passed right over home, but our primary responsibility was to keep the ship safe and secure and out of harm's way. So we were out in the western Gulf, dodging the hurricane. We had quite a bit of weather during my time. I began to think of myself as an unintentional hurricane magnet because we kept getting these storms popping up in and around us. But I really enjoyed the crew. I enjoyed the people, the culture, the food. We were in New Orleans during that tour. We started with a shipyard in New York. Then we renamed the ship. Then we refitted the ship in New Orleans and had the ship fully outfitted and outrigged for everything that the Gulf community needed the ship to do. That gave me a wonderful opportunity to be in New Orleans, but that generated an acquaintance with a wonderful guy. I was invited along with the XO, Scott Kuester to Mardi Gras. While we're in the shipyard, a police car pulls up, and an officer comes out. Our deck crew was great. They told the police officer, "You can't come aboard with a gun. Leave the gun here." So those were our rules. So a policeman comes aboard, and he presents the Mayor of Gretna's invitation to Mardi Gras. So I contact the mayor's office, and I ask, "Where should we be when?" The answer was, "When do you want to come?" I didn't know much about Mardi Gras. I thought Fat Tuesday was the day. The mayor's office explained, "No, no, it's ten days or whatever. It's a whole week, at least. We'd like you to be in the reviewing stand with the mayor." "Oh, geez. Can't do that. I can come one day, and I'd love to." So we did. We went down on Fat Tuesday. The parade was there. It was lovely because it was the true spirit of Mardi Gras. It's all about the kids and the thrill for the kids. It's not about the silliness that takes place across the river on Bourbon Street. The mayor then says, "Come on home for dinner. Join us for dinner." I'm thinking that maybe I'll be there with dozens and dozens of people. This is the small town of Gretna, which is just south of New Orleans on the other side of the river. It's the town that the shipyard was in. So we arrived there at the mayor's house, which was a comfortably modest house, and his mom, his wife – I don't think his kids were there. Yeah, his kids were there – and Scott and I, my XO. That's it. It's just us. We're there for dinner. During the course of dinner, his mom grabs my hand and she says, "Excuse me, could you join me for a minute?" She walks me into a small room off to the side, where a beautiful oil portrait was hanging on the wall of a man in a choker white naval uniform, and the insignia was that of the Dental Corps. That was her husband. Her husband had been a Navy dentist, but I looked at that image, and I saw myself with absolutely no change of detail. That man, apparently, he and I – that's why the mayor's mom pulled me in there and said, "You have to see this." She said that afterward. She just walked into the room and held my hand. She looked up at the portrait. I looked up at the portrait, and I was dumbfounded. And thereafter, the mayor and I have always had this friendship where we say we're brothers. We're absolutely brothers. I was stunned. I had no words. I met my double, and it was in the life of this man who had been deceased. The mayor and I stayed friends. When it came time for Katrina recovery, when New Orleans was wiped, and Gretna was wiped, and everything was wiped there, there were all sorts of difficulties. I arranged so that we could use a field that he had in his town as a heliport. NOAA and other helicopters were coming in to drop supplies off and then transship them up over the bridge, the Crescent City Connection. I wouldn't otherwise have had that contact, and I was able

to help him with – I was able to help NOAA with our component of the response activities, which was mostly the oil spill folks, the Office of Response and Restoration.

MG: In what capacity were you in at that point when Katrina happened?

CM: Katrina happened while I was serving in uniform as the Deputy Assistant Administrator for the National Ocean Service. I was totally volunteering because I just happened to have Mayor Ronnie Harris's phone number, and somebody in NOAA called me up and said, "Hey, McLean, you were down in the Gulf. What do you know down there?" And then somebody just called me up, and I said, "I've got Ronnie Harris's number. I'll call Mayor Harris, and I'm sure that field could be ready for you in six hours." And it was. But Mayor Harris appreciated it because it helped Gretna. It helped his small town because he was able to get things moved in. People had medical needs – medical supplies and whatnot. So it all worked out nicely. And God bless him. He later sends me this beautiful framed certificate with a medallion on it, commemorating the support for his small town during Hurricane Katrina. So meanwhile, another one of my colleagues/good friends – I had mentioned earlier – Alan Bunn, who was one of the recruiters that encouraged me to join the NOAA Corps. Alan lived in Texas at this time and loaded up his personally-owned motorhome with gasoline, diesel, food – everything he could – water, and just started driving east towards Pascagoula because he knew that that would be an appropriate place. We had a ship base there. Everything was converging on New Orleans in great confusion. So Alan drove on through there. Alan was a point of information for the people who were doing response, and he was part of that.

MG: That's great. Craig, I want to make sure we don't skip over that critical series of events you mentioned earlier, starting with law school. Can you just set the scene for me? How did that opportunity come up? Tell me a little bit about your decision-making process.

CM: Admiral Bill Moran called me up and set up that that whole thing. [He said], "I could train a ship driver to be a lawyer, but not a lawyer to be a ship driver. I need a lawyer. We need some lawyers here." We had lawyers. Captain John Callahan was one, and John was getting pretty senior to be working as a lawyer; he had more senior management responsibilities, as I later did in my career. We had one other lawyer inside the NOAA Corps, that was Jack Moakley. Jack, unfortunately, passed away from what I believe was brain cancer. But Jack had been a lawyer, as well, but he, too, was getting a little bit more senior. So the admiral asked me if I'd be interested in one of two assignments. One was the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary manager. The other one was, "I need a lawyer. I'll send you to law school." It took me a millisecond. Although, prior to that conversation, I'd never given serious thought about law school being part of my career track. I'm a ship guy. I'm an underwater guy. I'm a diver and all that. So, in an instant, I could realize the career opportunity. And I said, "Yes, sir, I'll be your guy. Law school." I think it took another year, if not two years, when I was in the Special Projects Office for that to come to fruition. He sent me to school once I finished the other details of those interim assignments. I started at the University of Bridgeport. I got into a DC school, I got into Bridgeport, and I think there was one other school that was willing to take me. But I realized after talking to people, including my brother, who was in what one would refer to as big law – he was in a major firm. His point was unless you go into big law or a real walnut-paneled law office, it doesn't matter what school you go to. Go for the quality of the education and the

convenience. So I picked Bridgeport. It was a small school. It was near a lot of the diving that I wanted to be doing while I was going to school. A bit of that convenience drove me there instead of staying in DC. So I went to the University of Bridgeport. Interestingly, the school was going under. It was a privately-held school, and their finances were in bad shape. And Reverend [Sun Myung] Moon wanted to buy the school. So, the dean of the school – I believe his first name was Terence – Dean Benbow, B-E-N-B-O-W – Dean Benbow was not going to allow somebody of as varied a reputation as the Reverend Moon's church to own his law school. So Dean Benbow arranged with Quinnipiac College, which is now Quinnipiac University, in Hamden, Connecticut, to buy the law school. During the course of my education and that of my colleagues, the school started to do things like turn off the heat in the building. I remember many times studying with my winter jacket on as my classmates did. At one point in time – I can't remember the details, but I do remember the event – there was an attempted eviction of the law school from the property because Dean Benbow was not following the direction of the corporate body that wanted to sell the whole university to the sponsorship of Reverend Moon's church, or Reverend Moon's finances. I don't know the details. I don't recall the details. But I do remember I had a rather inelegant quote in the *New York Times* because we, the students, surrounded Dean Benbow's office in order to stop the service of whatever process was endeavored in order to commence this eviction and closing the school. And the Dean refused to do it, and he showed great character. My remark to the *Times* was something along the lines of, "This guy's solid." I don't know. It wasn't my best line. Nonetheless, I really appreciated the leadership that he showed to stand up for something that he believed in. So administratively, then, the school was owned by Quinnipiac shortly thereafter. I never set foot in Quinnipiac until a week ago, Molly. I was driving up to New Hampshire, and the route was taking me past Hamden, and I thought, "I'll go see the law school I'm part of now." I write them a check every year because they really had character. It's a private school. They had standards. If a student met a certain level of academic proficiency, that student was given free tuition. I apparently met that standard. So I got the notice. I went to the financial assistance office. I explained to them that I'm here at the sponsorship of the United States government and maybe there's a student who has a greater need and would not get the education but for this assistance. They said, "Nope, these are our rules, and you passed that threshold. So we'll relieve the government of the burden of paying your tuition. You're in." So I enjoyed the next two years there. I went summers as well so that I could maximize the credits that I had. I did learn that I was capable of taking enough credits that I could have been done in two years, but the American Bar Association [ABA], which the school is certified by ABA, won't allow anything less than two years and a half of residency, or two years and one semester of summer. It took me two and a half years. Then, I finished. So my time then was up at Quinnipiac/Bridgeport. I still had several credits to take, so I enrolled in Georgetown, who took me quickly. I studied admiralty and maritime law, national security law, and international agreements at Georgetown, but my degree is from Quinnipiac University. I finished third in my class, which surprised me. I didn't think I had done that well. I did far better in the bar exam than – I was in the top four percent in the bar exam, which I also didn't think I would do. So I really enjoyed law school. It was a study of more than common sense. It was a study of what's right and how can you make the argument to fashion what is right. I really enjoyed it. So then, when I came back to my full-time duty assignment after the two years – I did Georgetown part-time at night. It gave me immense appreciation and respect for anyone who takes a law degree part-time. At that point, I was already through the really hard courses. It was enriching my mind in subjects that I was very

motivated in. I just soaked it up. It was easy. But for someone working full-time doing the entirety of law school at night, I have immense respect for the people who do that. So my graduation came in May even though I administratively concluded my legal education in the end of the fall semester, which would have been the previous winter. Took the bar exam either January, February, or somewhere in there. Once the results were back, by the time May rolled around, I was actually in a federal district court, as second chair, trying a case with an assistant US attorney while my law school graduation was going on. So I couldn't go to graduation because I was practicing law. That irony just made me chuckle. But in retrospect, I look back, and there are a few friends that I had during the course of study that I wished I could have celebrated that rite of passage, if you will. But I was right into it. There was a wonderful man named Jim Brennan. And Jim was the senior NOAA lawyer. Everyone above Jim was politically appointed, but he was the assistant general counsel for NOAA. The general counsel is a political appointee. And Jim graciously aligned for me a rotation through so many different slices of the legal offices in NOAA. I went to enforcement and litigation. That's why I was involved in trying a case. It's probably one of the few cases that I've been involved in trying. Otherwise, the work was a lot different. It was regulatory activity or reviewing or recommending policy – that sort of thing. So, I went through enforcement and litigation. Those are the Fisheries enforcement cases, and Coast Guard fisheries cases, once made, we prosecuted. The next stop for me was counsel with the National Ocean Service, where I was mostly working with the Sanctuary program and natural resource law. Then I went to legislative council and worked there for a year. That's when the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress, with Newt Gingrich as the Speaker of the House, had a rather aggressive stance against environmental law. So that was a challenging time. I was really impressed with the elegance of the writing of the attorneys at the Justice Department. It mightily impressed me with how good the lawyers were at the Justice Department. Then I was at Fisheries. It was wonderful because the lady who was the head of the Fisheries Law Division, Margaret Hayes, or Maggie, as she is fond of being known – Maggie, I had worked with when I first came ashore in my first land assignment. So I knew a lot of these people, again, and it was wonderful to have a newly defined relationship but still the same personal rapport. Shortly after that, I got recalled by the admiral to come and work on the NOAA Corps preservation. That was a sticky wicket because the commander-in-chief is saying, as he pronounced in a White House Rose Garden speech, “We don't need the NOAA Corps. We have the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines.” I think I mentioned to you that I then wrote an article for the U.S. Naval Institute's *Proceedings*, which is a professional journal for maritime and, in particular, naval officers. The title was chosen not by me but was chosen by the editors – “White House Torpedoes NOAA Corps.” I remember we had a government shutdown at the time. The mail came in. In fact, I helped go get the mail from the mailroom because uniformed officers and political appointees were the only ones who were there, except for one or two vital positions. Mr. Brennan's position as assistant general counsel, the senior career lawyer, was determined to be vital and needed to be there. Today, we call them essential personnel. But back then, we had different terms. So Jim Brennan takes a look at his subscription to *Proceedings* of the Naval Institute. I hadn't seen the article published yet, but I knew darn well what was in it because I wrote it. He said, “Oh, boy. I'm going to have to go and show Dr. Baker this article, so it doesn't surprise him or with someone else showing it to him.” So Jim goes down to see Dr. Baker. Dr. Baker calls me into his office. There was great question as to what authority I had to write that article. I explained to him how I felt that, first of all, I did it in my personal capacity. Secondly, it's in a journal that has a rich exchange of views across the



professional maritime community and service members. And thirdly, I felt that the Constitution duly accorded me the right to express myself and to have that expression shared with others who might or might not be of like mind. We didn't necessarily agree on that, but that's where we left it. So it was very gratifying to me in the picture that I showed you, Molly, where Dr. Baker, myself, others were cutting a cake to celebrate the Commissioning of the *Gordon Gunter*. When it was all over, the NOAA Corps survival battle was over, Dr. Baker, when I introduced him at the podium, leaned up to me so that only I could hear him, and he said, "You fought a good fight. You won. Well done." He patted me on the back. After that, I have always been a huge fan of Jim Baker. I just thought what a gentleman he was that we had to disagree based on where we were. Where you sit depends on where you stand, I guess. But I appreciated his grace. I also appreciated Admiral Stubblefield's grace because Admiral Stubblefield took – and I'll use these terms – this crotch-kicking New Jersey newbie lawyer. For me, nothing was off the bench, right? Just go after everyone who's trying to put us under. Admiral Stubblefield's concern was that by being too aggressive, both he and I could get booted and sent to Adak, Alaska, and there we would sit, and someone else would come in, and there would go the NOAA fleet. His influence on me is something that I will always be appreciative of, as I am of the influence of Rollie Schmitt to help me recover with a reputation that's more of what I'm perhaps known for today than otherwise. I was remarkably aggressive. I went after everyone that was trying to get us, even to the point where – I don't know that I'm embarrassed to say it now because this was warfare, but we had an event that featured Rear Admiral Evelyn Fields, who at the time was, I think, a captain – I can't remember. I think Evelyn was a captain. But she was then the deputy assistant administrator for the Ocean Service. It was the first time in a long time that we had an officer in such an elevated senior executive position. There was much flamboyance. It was women's month, and there were women's programs. We had a woman who was the deputy undersecretary, which was political at the time. She was featuring not just Evelyn but other women that were on the podium. So being the guy that I am, I get up to the microphone to ask a question when it's a free for all, and I commended NOAA as an agency and its leadership on celebrating women who are remarkably accomplished and a fine example of the NOAA Corps, a vital service to the nation's needs. "So, could you please tell us what progress you're making now on eliminating that service?" In the auditorium, you could hear the rush of people who were gasping, like, "Did this guy really say what we think he said?" I just stood there, stonewall looking right straight up at the deputy undersecretary. Basically, my gambit was, "You're standing for this. So explain yourself to the rank and file." I mean, politics does this to people; you're stuck in that situation, but I wasn't going to give anybody a bye simply on the grace of the fact that politics found you in this position. You may not have woken up in the morning thinking this was the smartest thing to do, but you're enforcing it. So give it. Tell us. What's up? So, no real answer came back. "Oh, we tremendously value the NOAA Corps." It's the answer that anybody would give if they were put in that difficult situation. But I did that aplenty. Finally, I realized that we were in a good position when I had a chance to meet with Senator [Fritz] Hollings for another reason, and I mentioned – it was a social event that was on the Hill, not that I was in the social circle at that point in my career to be meeting with senators, but it was an open forum, and I sought out an opportunity to have an exchange with the senator and ask him, "How did he see this coming out?" He put his hand on my shoulder, God bless him, and he said, "Commander, don't you worry about this. I'm not going to let anything happen to that little old NOAA Corps." I will always remember that line. And he did. He stood up for it, cleared the

decks, got us squared away. He was very powerful. He was in both the appropriations and the authorizing side of our being, and he did great work. And many others did, too, of course.

MG: He's closely aligned with NOAA. There's the Hollings Scholarship.

CM: Oh, yes. He had been quite a fan. In fact, Senator Hollings was at the root of NOAA when it was formed and very much one of the legislative voices that took the Stratton Commission report and looked at how we were going to authorize and implement the activities that related to NOAA. He always had been a stalwart ocean supporter. In fact, Molly, the Sant Ocean Hall in the Smithsonian was originally thought to be named the Hollings Ocean Hall until the Sant family came in with remarkable resources, some, I think, twenty million dollars, or maybe even more, to underwrite the balance of the Ocean Hall. But the first tranche of that money came through my budget when I was running the ocean exploration program. The program was brand new, and I was called by both the Hill and OMB [Office of Management and Budget]. "How will you treat this money if we give it to you for this purpose?" No tax. Send it right over, right? Sometimes programs take a cut for tax if you find new money, but I just thought that was wonderful if we could get an ocean hall on the mall – long overdue – and, gosh, have it named after Senator Hollings, that would be great, but there it went.

MG: What years were you in law school?

CM: I was in law school '91 to '93. I graduated in December of '93.

MG: Where were you living at the time?

CM: Beautiful Fairfield, Connecticut. Bridgeport was a little bit of a rough-and-tumble town. In fact, Molly, on this recent trip, I just went up to New England. I should have stopped in to see you. But on this trip up north, I stopped in Bridgeport to see what it looked like today. But looking around Bridgeport, it was very reminiscent and made me realize it was a very different town then. Today, the city was getting ready to celebrate, I guess – when was it when I was up there? Last weekend, they had a Bridgeport summer picnic, summer fair, big stage getting set up, and the PA [public address] system, and all of the hard road equipment was being brought in – porta-potties, everything for everyone. Never had that when I was there. Bridgeport was in tough shape there. I remember living in Fairfield. I had a two-bedroom condo that I rented. One bedroom was my study/lounge. And then I lived in the other one. It wasn't a big place. Early on at Bridgeport, I stopped at a stop sign, looking at traffic, and a police car is behind me. I didn't stop because the police car was behind me; I just stopped because there was a stop sign. The fellow turns on his lights, pulls me over, gets out of the car, and says, "I don't need to see any ID. I'm just asking you why you stopped." I said, "Well, I go to school at the law school, and I'm on my way home, heading to Fairfield." He says, "You don't stop here. Just drive through. If you stop, you're a target." "Whoa. Okay." So that was the Bridgeport experience at the time. But I realized, yeah, the school was kind of out there on an island, and the school, because it was losing money, had been shutting down, and there really wasn't much else going there. But there was one man there, who my walk around the building just this past week reminded me of, and his name was Al. I can't remember his last name. Al had done some time in jail; I didn't know it at the time. He ran a hotdog cart that was right outside the law school. I

went outside to see Al. A little secret: I love hotdogs. So I go out to see Al, and I'm looking at this guy is trying to make it work in the middle of all of this. So I struck up a conversation with him. After a while, he told me his story and how he wound up being incarcerated. His halfway program pretty much was running this hotdog cart. The guy had a heart, and he had a good mind. He just made bad decisions as a kid. So I went in, and I got my whole crew because in the school, you're in groups, and there are different sections, academic sections. So I told my whole section, "Hey, you got to hear this story. There's a man outside who..." I go through the whole thing, and I said, "And I expect every one of you guys to be out there buying hotdogs every lunchtime." And we did, particularly a core group of us. In the rain, we'd go out. Al would be out in the rain; I'm in the rain, getting Al's hotdogs. Came the winter of the second year, and Al says, "I'd really like to invite you over to my house for dinner." He had a spaghetti dinner for us. He was selling the cart, and he was going on to computer school to pursue a career in IT [information technology]. My heart just warmed to realize that, yeah, there are paths that our society can create for people to do better for themselves, and it really helps if you can get a small group of people to support someone toward that end. And all the law students loved Al. He's probably in Manhattan today and teaching other young kids how to find the right road. But I felt so good about that.

MG: Your cohort probably contributed to his tuition.

CM: Absolutely, absolutely. And we missed the hotdogs when Al was gone. [laughter]

MG: What was your association with NOAA during the time you were in law school? Was this considered an assignment, or were you still doing some work for NOAA?

CM: It was an assignment. We have something in our regulations that other services have as well, which is called full-time university training. So I was put in full-time university training. Other NOAA Corps officers had been given that administrative opportunity and financial assistance as the service pays your salary and sends you to school. There's then a service obligation that's owed, so many months of service for one month of full-time university training. I looked at that, and I thought, "My God, this is great. Unless I screw up, this is my guarantee of staying employed and staying in the service." So it was a wonderful opportunity. But other officers have gone for PhDs in oceanography or other types of more traditionally relevant NOAA courses, but because of the NOAA Corps and the admiral's recognition of a need for a lawyer, he later made the remark to me that it's a damn good thing I sent you to law school because we really needed you with the elimination situation. But my association with the Corps was rather limited there other than checking in every couple of months, really. Then, I had to send my grades along – my grade report – to my sponsor, which was the NOAA Corps director, so he knew that I was doing okay there. One project did start to develop there, which was a lot of fun, but I believe then I was contacted by John Broadwater, who was the sanctuary manager for the Monitor National Marine Sanctuary, and we started to congeal the plan for the NOAA divers that would eventually be out on the *Monitor*, using open circuit – in other words, tanks of compressed gas on one's back, but mixed gas – helium, nitrogen, oxygen. Then I became part of that dive team with John, and I think I told you, I was just down in Newport News, Virginia, celebrating the 20th year reunion with the Navy divers. Some of that started while I was still in law school and then once I got to my law office. Also, my ship in the background, right there – that's the

*Titanic*. While I was in law school, I was preparing a law review article on historic shipwreck law. In my research for the article on shipwreck salvage and the rights of salvors versus historic preservation, I came to realize that there had been an authorization in law that charged NOAA to negotiate a treaty along with the State Department's assistance with those nations that had the technological feasibility to reach the *Titanic*, and it was called the Titanic Memorial Act. So I called up Jim Brennan. I explained to him what I was doing, and he was happy to hear I was on the law review and invited to write an article because that was an academic charm, I guess. He said, "I'm not really familiar with that law, so he checked around, and he wound up connecting me with a fellow named Ole – O-L-E – Varmer – V-A-R-M-E-R. Ole was working on the historic shipwreck aspects of the Florida Keys and the treasure salvage community in the Florida Keys as NOAA was trying to create and sustain a National Marine Sanctuary throughout the Florida Keys. There was a bit of consternation there because pre-existing salvage rights had been granted by federal district courts to Mel Fisher and other very prominent treasure salvage recovery operations. But yet, environmental preservation was the challenge. Ole was well-versed in that. So I'm talking to Ole on the phone – never met him before. He didn't know who I was either – and I explained, "So here we are – shipwreck preservation, and you're the guy." Ole was great. He said, "Well, now *we're* the guys; it's you and me." So we went on, and Ole and I became fast friends. He eventually became the frontman in our blues band. He started the band and invited me in. But Ole has been doing shipwreck law ever since the Florida Keys days, and that's how I met him. So that started during law school, and I would not have stumbled on that aspect of shipwreck exploration and discovery in my career. To me, it was always just to dive, get inside, swim around, look at it, and really make it out and back. But that gave a whole new aspect of the marine policy side for us, and NOAA has been recognized as a leader in that area through the Sanctuary program. And then, when I started as the director to start off the Ocean Exploration Program, I made sure that we had a handsome marine archaeology program in it. I eventually wound up encouraging Jeremy Weirich, who was a lieutenant at the time, Junior Grade Lieutenant Jeremy Weirich, to come over and work for me at Ocean Exploration. He was a marine archaeologist, a hydrographer, and a maritime academy grad. One of the last things I did when I left NOAA in retirement was sign the hiring of Jeremy Weirich as the director of the Ocean Exploration Program. So, he came back. So it's all about relationships and knowing who's who.

MG: Yes, I wanted to know if you were able to focus your coursework at law school on areas that were related or would benefit your work at NOAA.

CM: Yes. In particular, when I took my last semester at Georgetown Law Center, I took Maritime and Admiralty law, International Agreements, and Oceans Law and Policy which was mostly the Law of the Sea Convention. In Georgetown I studied under a professor named John Norton Moore, who is a negotiator of the Law of the Sea Treaty, and knows admiralty quite well. I learned from one of the masters, and he was there at Georgetown. The courses that I took in Quinnipiac/Bridgeport were the basic courses that you need to pass the bar, and the enrichment courses were – I would have liked them to be a little bit more addressing, for example, fisheries law or natural resource laws, sanctuaries act, anti-pollution, and dumping. Schools like Vermont [and] Oregon feature those much more prominently. At the time, there wasn't a whole lot, but those were the schools to go to for that. But I thought a little bit more narrowly; if I'm going to

be doing broad law, I'll be fine here. So it wasn't narrowly tailored until I got to Georgetown. Then I think it was a real enrichment.

MG: Do any professors from law school stand out to you?

CM: I just left a note for one of the two professors that do stand out. The one was Professor Bill Dunlap. But I wrote him a note. He was the constitutional law professor. He wasn't the champion of drama. In fact, if anything, he was understated. So when he came into class, and we were talking about free speech, and he started unbuttoning his shirt – he wasn't a very formally appearing guy. We had plenty who would only teach with – some a three-piece suit and a tie, some a tie and jacket and never unbuttoned the jacket. But Professor Bill Dunlap started unbuttoning his shirt, and as he opened it, it was the most absolute obscenity that you would ever see written. He unveiled the shirt right at the point in time when he was describing how, in the case we were studying, there were certain parameters of expression that are, in fact, allowed or not allowed. But then he pointed to his shirt, and he said, “And in this environment, this one is,” and that was the conclusion of the lecture. But I thought the professors were fantastic. So Professor Dunlap for constitutional law was excellent. There was another professor, who I didn't have, who had written quite a treatise on constitutional law – Professor [Martin] Margulies. But I really appreciated Bill Dunlap. We wound up taking Professor Dunlap on my boat, which I had bought when I was up there. We took him over to Block Island for his birthday. And that was a memorable event. So I just wrote him a note when I was up there last week, reminding him of that event. I got a nice response from him relating to his pride in me as a former student and my activities after Hurricane Dorian. He's now an emeritus. He's no longer full-time. So he probably is not there that often. There were one or two other professors. There was Professor Ferrari, Mary Ferrari, who had, I believe, clerked at the Supreme Court, and she has written since textbooks and hornbooks on tax law. So she was really a tax person. In fact, yes, she was a clerk to the majority author on Richard Nixon's tax case. Nixon's position was like “Don't bother me. I'm the president. Don't have to pay taxes.” Sorry, not the way the law works. Professor Ferrari was very much involved in drafting that decision. She gave me advice on bar exams. As I was preparing to conclude my studies, she said, “By the way, what Bar do you plan to take?” because she knew I was federal. I said, “Well, I was thinking of New York.” She said, “Well, New York is a really tough one and has unique exigencies that are only found in New York. Why do you want to take New York?” I said, “Well, just to see how smart I am. I can prove to myself that I'm good?” She said, “You're going federal. Just take the standard common law, which can be anywhere. Pennsylvania is a fine state that's local. You could just drive up and take the bar.” So I did. So I'm a member of the Pennsylvania Bar. I'm stale, though. I haven't kept up my continuing legal education credits. I did for a long time, but I haven't as of these days.

MG: Did you have a chance to confer with Captain Callahan as you prepared or while you were in school to see what his experience was like and pick his brain a bit?

CM: I wish I did. But I didn't know him as well then to the point of comfort. He was in that rarefied air. I was discussing this with some other NOAA retired officers who made the same observation. John is a beautiful, warm, wonderful human being. John did not want to be vulnerable to be seen as that when he was on active duty. So other than the courteous, distant –

“Yes, Captain Callahan, I'm looking forward to engaging in the study of law.” “Okay, McLean, good luck to you.” But today, he and I have just wonderful exchanges. But I think that was a piece of John. He did not want to reveal that warm heart that he's really got.

MG: Yeah, he's wonderful. Do you remember what the case was that you were trying when you missed graduation? What was it about?

CM: It was about – this was really interesting to me. Turtle excluder devices [TEDs], in order to narrow the opening and provide an exit for turtles that would be captured in shrimp trawls, was very contentious. There was a fellow running around who wasn't a lawyer but who actually, if I remember correctly, might have even been a truck driver, who got involved with the shrimping community and just told them, “Don't worry about TEDs. Forget about it. It's unenforceable.” It wasn't really clear what basis this fellow had to be routing his opinion, in credibility, in that view. But he was saying what people wanted to hear. So some of the shrimpers were believing him. The case that I was involved in was, what do we do about this guy who is telling people the wrong thing and inviting them to be censured and fined by the government, believing that it's not going to be a problem? So we were in district court. I'm trying to remember. I think the defense was actually – we were charging the person, and we were also trying to deal with this individual who was offering inappropriate advice and encouraging illegal behavior and a person who had been charged for not using a turtle excluder device. I'm probably going to get the cases all mixed up, but I don't remember the name of the defense attorney. I remember one line in the court which just absolutely floored me. There was a pretty transparent realization that not everyone was being honest with the judge. The government didn't have that problem because we know you only have one way in and one way out, and you need to be straight ahead with the judge, and the Assistant US Attorney [AUSA] I was working with was very inspiring. I wish I could remember the lady's name. But I remember the judge offering a comment in an aside that we had, where both parties met with the judge. So we weren't at the formal table to pound the gavel in the hearing. But it was the judge meeting with both parties. The judge looks over at the defense representative there. He says to the lawyer, “Now let's just call him ‘Harry’, there you go again, Harry, stretching that truth.” The truth we were dealing with was an outright lie. Was the light red, or was it green? Right? That was my memory of how does law possibly differ by geography? I kept on thinking – I don't know. I think now, just to go back to the stories we've been telling, what if my friend Al was in front of that same deep South judge? Right? Where would that have come out? But that always stays with me, the idea that – “Now ‘Harry’, don't you go stretching the truth.” It was just a complete lie. It was a complete fabrication. In fact, I pulled the trick at that point in time, where I pulled out a recorder for our settlement discussion before the judge came in the room. I said, “Surely, you won't mind if we record this” because the AUSA had told me, “Watch out for this guy. He is a practitioner of untruths.” So I carried that, put it out, and he got all upset. He said, “You put that thing away. Put that thing away.” So, I put it away. I didn't turn it off, but I put it away. So when it came time for him to say, “No, I didn't say that,” and the AUSA is saying, “No, you did say that,” and the judge [said], “Now ‘Harry’, there you go stretching the truth” – it was the theater of it all, and I thought, “Law is better than this. Law should be higher than this, but this is the reality.” I was able to remind him, “Well, you told me to put it away, but I didn't shut it off. I have it on tape. Judge, would you like to hear the tape?” And that's when the judge says, “Now, ‘Harry’.” Anyway, that's where I was during graduation.

MG: What would have been the motivation for this truck driver or whomever it was to mislead the commercial fishermen?

CM: I don't know if he had family relations. He might have fished previously himself and then went off into trucking. I don't remember. But this chap was a community voice and probably an anti-rule sort of guy – Libertarian, let me do my thing, stay out of my life. He wound up getting voice at a public meeting, and it just kind of reinforced – people would go back to him and say, “Well, what do you think I should do here? What do you think I should do there?” He was effectively giving people guidance that otherwise a lawyer should have been sought for. But nonetheless, out he went. It was a contentious time. You had both extremes. You had a sweet lady who was actually knitting clothes and sweaters for turtles. That was one extreme of the public's view. On the other extreme was, “Hey, don't worry about this stuff. It's going to be unenforceable anyway. Just go fishing the way you want to go fishing.” But I remember one of the attorneys characterizing the fellow as, “He drives a truck. What does he know about this stuff?”

MG: We have a collection in the Voices Oral History Archives about turtle excluder devices. It's a really interesting collection of interviews with marine biologists, managers, and fishermen. They all interpret this regulation differently based on their own experiences. Was there anything you wanted to say in your subsequent gigs with law enforcement in Fisheries or with the legislative council in the Sanctuary program?

CM: Yeah. I guess, once again, the spectrum of things that you wind up working on. First of all, as a new lawyer, I had a lot of stuff that nobody else wanted. One instance, you have to go after people who owe the government money and the dunning exercise, to badger debtors to the government. In one instance, I had a guy who was crying on the phone and pleading that his mom was ill and all this sort of stuff. I just smelled a rat there. He wouldn't send me his financials. Everything he touched was in a separate corporation. I knew he had extensive real estate holdings and multiple boats, and he couldn't pay this nominal fee. As many dear friends as I have, who are Irish, he had a very thick Irish brogue. Enough of my homework was done that I wound up contacting the FBI, suggesting that they might want to forensically examine his finances for some extracurricular activity, and it turned out that he was funneling money to – the latest of my understanding – the IRA [Irish Republican Army]. That turned out to be a bit of a lead for the FBI. An alternative to that was I phoned a number up in Maine; a very delicate voice answered the phone, and I asked if I could speak to Captain so-and-so and a whisper of “Hold on, please.” And then another voice comes on, a more mature female voice. I was calling the captain for his fine – to pay his fine. He had slipped and fallen leaving his dinghy to get on the lobster boat, hit his head, and died of – I could only guess what – brain bleed, whatever, but he was deceased. I happened to be calling on the one-year anniversary of his death, and his spouse picked up the phone. That was the first voice I spoke to. Then, I think it was her mom who came on. I explained, “I'm really sorry. I understand your circumstances. If you could please give me the family doctor's name and number, I'll be happy to call the doctor, and I can conclude this matter with just some closure with the doctor, and I'll not bother you again. I'm very sorry for your loss.” So you got one guy who's lying through his teeth, crying on the phone. You got someone else who is in distress because of the anniversary, and I'm realizing each of

these is a signature of life in a very complicated agency and that we're trying to regulate appropriately so that people can make a good living for themselves, their families, and feed people with seafood. So the complexity of all this was something that I was always reminded of, and I wouldn't have gotten that view at a Fisheries Management Council meeting. All you hear are angry people. If everyone's angry – the conservation side and the exploitation side – if everyone's angry equally, you think, “Maybe I'm at the right place. I'm in the middle.” But then you have to start looking at the facts and figures. Is the health of the fishery population at risk, etc.? On the ocean side, I did have some engagements which were – no, I'm jumping ahead of myself. I was at Sanctuaries by this time. But on the ocean side, getting acquainted with shipwreck law through law school and then working on the *Titanic* work – and Ole Varmer really worked and delivered the treaty that did protect the *Titanic*, and I give him high marks for that. He brought that home. Yeah. I think then it was the “save the NOAA Corps” thing that really took most of our time, or most of my time at that point in my career.

MG: Talk me through that. What was the first harbinger of a threat for the NOAA Corps? You mentioned President Clinton's speech in the Rose Garden and the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress. Can you walk me through that time in a little bit more detail?

CM: When Clinton and Gore got elected for their second term, it was a close-run election. The ultimate resolution was it was pretty hard to tell the parties apart. The party platforms were very similar. But one that Clinton's opponents had was we need to shrink the size of government. We need to right-size the government. So, having won a bit more narrowly than they were comfortable with, I guess, the Clinton administration said, “Well, let's take a look at government. What do we have that we don't need?” I think it was called Reinventing Government. That was what it was called. Al Gore was the champion and had been delegated by President Clinton to take up this and take a look at the executive branch. So my feisty admiral, who had phoned me up and invited me to go to Russia but then also go to law school – my feisty admiral had many run-ins with the then Inspector General. So it was no surprise to us that the Commerce Department was asked, “What parts of government do we not need? Where could we shrink government and save budget money?” The Commerce Department put the word out to all of their bureaus, including the Inspector General. So the inspector general came back and said, “I don't like the NOAA Corps. I don't like the NOAA fleet. While you're at it, let's not modernize the National Weather Service (with the radars that we today enjoy, the big golf balls, the WSR-88-Ds0, and let's get out of the business of Fisheries Seafood Inspection.” So those were the four things that the Inspector General put forward, and they were incorporated into Vice President Gore's reinvention of government, which led to the Rose Garden speech that named the service. If you find a copy – I looked at the copy I have, and it's more of a photograph of the page. But if you find the copy of the article I wrote, I conclude by saying that obviously, the truths of this matter are so different than what was let on in the Rose Garden that clearly the President and his staff have been poorly advised, and they need to do a thorough amount of research before doing something as drastic as getting rid of a service. So let's slow this thing down and look at the facts. That's how we got there – Reinvention of Government. Then, at various points in time, we attended different Reinvention of Government town hall meetings and sessions and the like. It began to become apparent because we were so loud, vocal, and when somebody puts a suggestion box in front of you and nobody tells you that you can't write more than one suggestion, and we wrote a litany of suggestions – myself and two other fellows just stuffed the



box about the NOAA Corps and the NOAA fleet issue and the value, etc. I got a call the next day from OMB, the Office of Management and Budget, and the person who was responsible for the government reform that Gore had asked for, said, "There was quite a response to this issue at the town hall meeting yesterday. So, what can you tell me about the issue?" I told him about the issue. "Well, we'll look further at it." But I think the momentum had already been built at that point that no mid-level staff person was going to reverse this. So then, Dr. Baker had chartered or commissioned a financial review of the NOAA Corps by Arthur Andersen, the accounting firm. Arthur Andersen came back and said, "Basically, this is a political choice. This isn't a financial decision. Long term, you pay out to uniform service. Short term, you pay out to the overtime and the salary of wage-grade or civilian employees. But there's no cost savings. The government bill in total is going to be the same if you look out over time. So it's cost-awash. It's a policy decision." Got it. We were not allowed to disseminate that study. We were not allowed to distribute that study. Well, in my view, the public paid for it; the public needs to know about it. So, to me, the clearest access to the public was Secretary Ron Brown. So I managed through working with different folks that I knew in different places – how can I get to see Secretary Brown? So one of his security guys told me, "Well, if you approach him on the street, I'll have to shoot you. But if you come in on Friday, at three o'clock, there's a line of people getting their thirty-year photographs with the secretary." I have that photograph, and it's just around the corner from me; it's me and Secretary Brown. But I waited in the back, as I was told, and the chap said, "Once that door opens, you're on your own. I've got no cover for you, but you just go on in. Do what you feel you need to do." He knew what I was there for. I needed to tell the secretary, "We have this issue. I'm sure you know of it." But as soon as I walked in – I had my lieutenant commander stripes on. Ron Brown, dignified gentleman as he was, had been in the Army as a judge advocate. He was a lawyer for the Army. So he knew rank, and he knew time and grade, and he looks down at my sleeve, he looks at my face, and says, "Well, commander, you sure don't look like you've had thirty years in." And I said, "No, sir, I haven't. But I'd sure like to have the opportunity to serve you for up to thirty years, but this proposed elimination is getting in our way, and there's no financial basis for it. We have a study that proves it." He said, "I would love to see that study. I haven't heard of this." "Well, sir, I happen to have a copy right here." *Boom.* There it is for Ron Brown. So, I get in trouble for doing that, too. But nonetheless, now Secretary Brown sees that there was a report. Why wasn't this report furnished? It's, to a certain degree, exculpatory of the notion that the NOAA fleet is unnecessary because of its expense and duplication, all that stuff. So that's another example of the tactics that I resorted to in order to be the guy that needed rehabilitation once I got out of that assignment. But then Secretary Brown started looking at it, and with great misfortune and sorrow, he was killed shortly after that in a plane crash. So his deputy then – and I'm trying to remember this man's name, who was just a nice, earnest fellow – came over from the DC government. I believe it was Robert Mallet. But he picked it up and said, "Yeah, this isn't right. We need to reverse this." So then there began to be voices inside of the executive branch at a high enough level – deputy secretary of commerce – who were sympathetic to the Corps, the fleet, seafood inspection, Weather Service modernization, and we had sympathetic voices in Congress. So when you now have that mixing together, someone went – and I don't know who, but somebody went to the White House and basically said, "Give this one up. It's a loser. Don't get painted with this one." And they didn't. Later Secretary (then Senator) John Kerry, Senator Holling, Jack Reed from Rhode Island, Alaska's Senator Stevens and congressman Don Young, who just passed away – been there forever – a handful of other guys. Sam Farr was another one. But

Senator [Ted] Stevens as well – Stevens and Hollings were in agreement, even though they were opposite political parties. They saw ocean issues very much the same. So they all got together and said, “Yeah, this is a non-starter. Let's move on to the next problem we have and just be done with this.” Then, it was over.

MG: How close did we come to losing the Corps?

CM: Very close. One of the responsibilities that I had with CDR Jack Moakley, Captain Jerry Stanley, Captain Bud Christman – we were charged to write a NOAA Corps Disestablishment Act. Basically, the only other time in US history that a service had been uncreated was when parts of the Uniformed Public Health Service were civilianized at the creation of EPA [Environmental Protection Agency], and some of the uniform positions were then civilianized. We looked objectively at the rights and entitlements that were provided to those officers as they made – and I believe for those officers they made the choice, do I stay in uniform, or do I go civilian and convert to a general schedule? We imported those types of allowances and the like, but it was not very well received. I did another dirty thing there then. We were due to submit that draft by close of business on a Friday. We were to have a meeting with the administrator that Monday. I just didn't want to miss an opportunity to keep jabbing the beast writ large – the government beast, not a single person – who was pursuing this. So we got it in about three o'clock on a Friday before close of business, and our meeting was early on Monday. So I started off the meeting asking if – since I was to brief and answer questions as one of the principal authors of this draft bill and a report on the whole disestablishment – it was the draft language and then a report that described why did we choose to include what we did. So I started in addressing the Administrator by recognizing there was quite a voluminous package delivered before the deadline, but given something as important as this to us and as important as the dissolving and disestablishing a service, I would have every confidence that the administrator had the time to read it thoroughly and be prepared to ask us questions. But in the event that that wasn't able to happen, would you like me to brief what's in it? I thereby extracted the millio-ounce of embarrassment to the administrator that, no, he hadn't read it over the weekend and needed the briefing on it. That was me at the time. I just wouldn't miss an opportunity to pounce and just keep pounding. I don't know that any of that changed anything. I think it was done on the merits and the fact that there were no financial savings, but I just wasn't going to give up. And I had threats. I was called in very graciously by then NOAA's general counsel, Terry Garcia, politically appointed. Terry's a wonderful man. I was enamored with Terry. Terry looks like Tom Hanks, particularly earlier in his life, when he came to NOAA. As a young NOAA lawyer, Terry called all the lawyers in the DC area together to meet us. He walks in, and the first thing he says is, “Good morning.” And the second thing he said was, “I'm not Tom Hanks,” and it just cracked everyone up and made everyone feel really relaxed. He had the approach basically saying, “You folks are the experts. I'm just here to help guide you and let you be successful in your job.” So right away, I liked Terry. I had done Terry what he thought was a favor. There was a very difficult assignment that nobody wanted because they thought it was a career killer. And I said, “I'm your guy. I'll go ahead and do it.” He said, “Nobody in their right mind wants to do this. Why do you want it?” And I said, “I'm not your youngest, but I'm your newest lawyer,” because I had gone to school mid-career. “Sooner or later, it's going to wind up in my lap because nobody else wants it, so I might as well go into it with my eyes open and a little bit of enthusiasm. I'm your guy. I'm ready to go do this job.” And so I took that. He came

back to me, and during the NOAA Corps elimination, he asked to see me. I went up to his office, and he said, “You’ve got to know” – in fact, I think these were his words – “there’s a lot of people around here who don’t want to see you have a seat when the music stops. So watch your back and think twice about what you’re doing.” My answer back to him was, “The service sent me to law school not so I could have a wonderful legal career in my retirement, but apparently, we need this now, and I have to keep doing what I’m doing. But I really appreciate that you have given me this heads up.” And that was Terry; he was a straight-ahead guy. I felt very bad for him. He got a wonderful job at National Geographic. He was in charge of exploration at National Geographic, and we did wonderful things together while he was there after his NOAA tenure. But then Terry got nominated to be deputy secretary of commerce in the early Obama administration, which would have been wonderful to have him there. Politics being politics, the Senate wouldn’t let Terry’s nomination come forward. So he sat in limbo for just far too long. He didn’t deserve that treatment. Great guy. Great guy. Still involved in the ocean community today, and he’s just a wonderful human being.

MG: What was the assignment that would have been the career killer?

CM: Off the machine?

MG: Sure. [Recording paused.] I interviewed Rear Admiral Samuel DeBow. He talked about this time period and said there were some tragic events that happened, but that helped prove the Corps’ mettle. The TWA crash was an awful event but an opportunity to show the Corps’ capabilities.

CM: Yes. Sam did the right thing at the right time. He was out there with his ship. The event happened, and Sam didn’t phone anybody up. He just said, “Let’s go, and let’s see what we can do.” They went immediately to work and started surveying and were able to provide subsequent recovery efforts with the map of the wreck site. Sam did the right thing. That’s Sam. He just went off hard charge, and let’s go get it. He did it well. Now, Sam, if I remember correctly when the NOAA Corps elimination was happening, Sam left the Corps and went to a private sector survey firm, and he was one of many who did that, not sure what was going to happen. Sam had the talent to be highly desirable to come on back in the Corps with a wide open door when things were a little bit more stable. But we lost a lot of officers who went, fearing that, “Hey, I’ve got a family to feed. If this thing goes bad, better I plan where I’m going to go, than have to run around at the eleventh hour.” No harm to Sam or the others who left. But a funny story about that period of time was – and you know Bill Stubblefield, and you’ve interviewed him, so you can imagine Admiral Stubblefield under stress. He has a roomful of us. There were, I think, four or five of us. One of them you interviewed, but I need not name that person. “Okay,” Admiral Stubblefield starts, “I brought you folks in because I believe you’re going to help us put the best case forward for the NOAA Corps. So Person A, the first thing I want you to do is to be working on X and Y.” “Sorry, Admiral, no. I got this really challenging assignment. I don’t think I have time to be able to do that.” You can see the admiral sigh, deflated, like, “Okay, I brought you in for that purpose.” The next person – “Okay, I need you to be doing this.” And that person says, “Oh, Admiral, I don’t have time for that. I’m sorry.” Then he looks at me. So, I’m the third one up, as memory serves. I’m the third one up, and Bud Christman was the fourth one up. Bud didn’t have a chance to speak yet. The Admiral looked at me, and he

said, “I need you to do the financial analysis on the cost of the NOAA Corps versus replacements.” This is before Arthur Andersen came up. At great risk to myself, I said, “Admiral, I'm not your guy.” That’s as far as I got. Right? Because now I was another refutation of his request for us to help save the service. He then got mad, and I said, “Admiral, wait. Whoa, whoa. I'm not a mathlete,” and I pointed over to Bud, who's really good with numbers. I said, “He's your guy to be doing the financial analysis. I can sell ice to an Eskimo. I need to be your mouthpiece when you're not comfortable speaking. I'll do that. That's what I could do well.” Bill Stubblefield being Bill Stubblefield, quickly took back his position of anger, did some very quick analysis, and realized – I know the tape’s running, but I'll say it – “McLean's a real good bullshitter, and Christman is great with the numbers and can do this forensic accounting.” That's how we got started. So the other two left. I think the third fellow in the room might have been Gerry Stanley. And Gerry was just, “Yes, sir. I'm all in. I'm on this for you.” Gerry was prior Navy, transferred into the NOAA Corps, retired as a captain. Pretty much the three of us – Bud, Gerry, myself, and then Jack Moakley when he could come down from his duty station, which was at Fisheries up in Woods Hole. Jack would help us out just to do some reviews of things and also help with the Disestablishment Act, but we became the core group on the defense. I guess I'll say that was definitely one of the legal highlights for me of arguing against the commander-in-chief, doing it lawfully, and not compromising the rule or roles that I had. So anything we had to say that was public could easily be watched and discerned publicly. Anything that we had to say privately was done just within the executive branch. Now the stuff that Sam did, the strength and the vitality of the Corps – [we] also engaged the spouses. I think back then – sign of the times – we called it the ACO [Association of Commissioned Officers ] Wives Club. I think we’re a little bit more progressive today, but the spouses went up on the Hill, and they were talking about everything from the patent unfairness of just flippantly shutting down a service to highlighting what it was that the Corps did. There were actually some very, very good pieces that were produced by then the ROA, the Reserve Officers Association. We went after two veterans groups, and I went down to meet them with several others. I didn't know these groups existed, so people introduced me to them. It wasn't my bright idea. Once we sat down with them – TROA [The Retired Officers Association], T-R-O-A, which is today MOAA [Military Officers Association of America], M-O-A-A. Colonel Steve Strobridge, a retired Air Force lawyer, was their point person for this issue. Today at MOAA, a NOAA officer in retirement sits on their board. Admiral Stubblefield created the seat, and he was the first one to sit on their board. Also there is ROA, the Reserve Officers Association. We met a guy there – Captain Fred Becker who was just an absolute firecracker. He was a retired Navy man. In his retirement, he went to work for the Reserve Officers Association. Both TROA then and the Reserve Officers Association realized if you could do this to the little old NOAA Corps, what's going to happen to the other services and their benefits? So they jumped in with both feet, and they were fantastic. This Navy man, Fred Becker, rang up every member of Congress that had a substantial number of retirees in their district. He explained to me what his narration was, and I didn't want to go with him because, even if I took leave, it was not appropriate for me to be there when he was doing his – what I'll call – creative shakedown. “How confident are you in reelection?” “How concerned would you be if you lost all the votes of military members in your districts?” “Oh, my God, I need the military votes.” “Good. You need to be on the right side of this issue, and it is this.” He was great. He was great. He went on to work as a lobbyist for another portfolio and another firm, representing national credit unions. But he was a great asset and really put the Congress-side

attention on this. So the TWA 800 was certainly something to say, “See, if we didn't have this asset, where would we be?” The people who challenged the Corps said, “Well, those things exist commercially.” I got to say, in an interesting way, a very close personal friend of mine, who had a commercial company at the time, did the recovery for the Navy of those parts and pieces and was very capable of doing the same sort of thing. But the fact that NOAA is out there on the water already there, you don't have to dial us up. We're already there, capable of doing this stuff, and doing it with excellent precision. Sam's people were given the briefings to the Navy divers daily on the high-resolution images of what was on the bottom, to the point where – well, it could get gruesome, but you basically still had people in seats underwater. These Navy divers went down and did their courageous work in order to provide remains for the families of those who lost their loved ones. But those high-res images were very important.

MG: When the threat of elimination was behind you, was this then an opportunity to reprioritize and do some strategic planning? What assurances did you have that this wouldn't happen again?

CM: Typically, when something flops politically, and it's labeled as a loser, you have a pretty good degree of confidence that you can go on. But one of the concerns that I saw was that the NOAA Corps institutionally didn't have the self-confidence to take long strides and emerge from this. We institutionally, in my opinion, kept looking at our shadow. I think we're now approaching the time when Admiral Stubblefield retired, and then subsequent directors were very afraid of this happening again. But I always had the belief that it's going to take decades for this thing to come back if we learned the lessons from this, which were to be more assertive about what we were doing. Whereas in the days before, what Sam's ship – I think it was the *Rude*. What Sam's ship did with, “Hey, we're there. Let's jump out and do it.” Later, Shep Smith, who eventually went into the same job that Sam had as the director of the Coast Survey – Shep was down in the Gulf working on something totally different, and along came *Deepwater Horizon*. Shep went blazing over with his ship in order to do some surveying and figure out where's this oil plume and how do we help. He didn't get any approval to do it. He just did it. We normally would do those things quietly. But we learned the lesson to be a little bit more in volume to tell the public what we're doing, how we're doing it, why we're doing it, and let the public conclude as they will that this is great stuff. This is meritorious stuff. So we realized that we needed to be much more publicly visible. Unfortunately, NOAA has never been sufficiently resourced to have a very broad public information and awareness instrument as NASA does. But interestingly, our language and authorization for public education and awareness is very much the same as NASA has; we just don't have the appropriation for it.

MG: After this time, did you go to the Sanctuary program?

CM: Right after the elimination, I went to the Fisheries Service for my second tour in the office of the assistant administrator. I was more of a counsel to Rollie Schmitt. We were dealing with reauthorizations of the Magnuson Act. We were dealing with – I guess TEDs were always with us – marine mammal issues, fishing. Fishing was evolving towards limited entry and quota-based fishing, individually transferable quotas. So we wound up working very substantively on the Magnuson Act itself. It was Rollie's design to let me be seen as something other than the junkyard dog that's kicking everybody where you shouldn't kick them. I enjoyed that. I learned a lot from Rollie, just an amazing gentleman who always had grace under fire. It's no surprise

when I did learn that Rollie had been a Marine in the Tet Offensive, and he was a long-range reconnaissance Marine, which is grizzly tough stuff. Here's Rollie today as the kindest resource manager who worked for both Democratic and Republican administrations and did a wonderful job for both because he just stayed right where he should, which is to be doing the right thing under the law. I learned a lot from Rollie on style points as well and gained a great personal friend who is still a friend today. From that second tour, it was off to the *Gordon Gunter*.

MG: Was it you or Bill Stubblefield who returned to Vietnam with Rollie Schmitten? I have a note about that.

CM: Bill might have gone. Bill probably did go. No, I didn't go. I didn't do much international travel with Rollie because it was expensive. I did domestic travel with him to certain meetings. But Rollie wisely would pick – obviously picked Bill Stubblefield to go on something like that to show the diversity of NOAA's offerings and such. But it probably would have been the international affairs staff that went with him on his trade delegation to Vietnam. I did invite Rollie when I was at Ocean Exploration, and he was in his international job then as the assistant secretary for international affairs. This is Rollie Schmitten. I asked him if he would want to go and make some dives in the Gulf of Mexico to see what was going on there as it related to Mexico, as it related to Cuba, etc. He was just thrilled, and we got Rollie down in the submersible, and he was able to make some dives. I think that familiarization opportunities are something that we're often bashful about. So many other services and other agencies do it freely and frequently. But once again, we were hiding behind rocks. "Gosh, should we? Would we go ahead and do this?" Out of that fear of elimination, that cloud stayed over us for a long, long time. I personally felt very confident that we don't need to be crawling and hiding and whispering. Let's just get out and be proud, not arrogant, but just be proud of what we do and let it show. So, slowly but surely, I think the Corps has wound up doing that. I am personally a little concerned right now [that] we may be headed back in the other direction, and that's something I was always attentive to up until – well, I still am in retirement. I hope to be able to continue to offer advice on how we could be doing a little bit better.

MG: It seemed like you were always guided by principle instead of playing nice. I am curious. Were you worried about your reputation or how it might impact your career opportunities?

CM: I was. In fact, a really good counselor, I'll call him, maybe not a mentor because our engagements were so infrequent, but a senior NOAA Corps officer gave me some advice. He noted a character that we both knew, who was reputed as a brilliant guy, did good work, but he was abrasive, and people didn't want to work with him because he was abrasive. The very kind counsel that was given to me by that senior officer as we were coming really to the apex of this issue was, "You don't want to be known like Joe Blow. Be careful for yourself. We're going to win this. Just ease up." I thought about that, and I've got to say I didn't have the maturity to look in the mirror and say, "Yeah, they're not going to see me like Joe Blow." No, people would, and Rollie saw it, and Bill Stubblefield saw it, and so did this other officer, and I'm sure many others did, too. There's plenty of people who will cheer you from the sidelines when you're running down right into the fire as long as you're the guy that's going to be putting it out. But you may not come out of the fire, and people will still cheer as you're running toward it. My wife was always worried that I would be thrown out of the service, looking for work and how do

we feed the family. I had this naive confidence that you push. I don't know if you heard me mention Roger Parsons's name. Roger was my first operations officer on the *Mount Mitchell*. Subsequently, we stayed friends because we just were very like-minded. But Roger once offered the characterization that no matter what environment I was in, I would push right up to the edge of the cliff and then step back and not go over the cliff. My whole career, I've been able to see where the cliff was. Maybe I've pushed too hard. Maybe, in some cases, I didn't push enough – few, if any. But in some cases, I maybe pushed too hard, but I always seemed to see where the cliff was and to stop before I went over the cliff. I don't know whether that's street smarts or what. There are many names for it. But I always seemed to be able to navigate myself even when I was a little too self-assured that I didn't realize how many people I was – I shouldn't say that. I didn't care how many people I was aggravating in the way that I was pursuing the preservation of the NOAA Corps because, to me, the ultimate goal was to keep the NOAA Corps alive.

MG: You mentioned Bill Stubblefield fired you for four hours. What were the circumstances around that?

CM: I was always being warned by Bill that I was getting too aggressive. As you know, he's a gentleman from Tennessee. I'm from New Jersey, and you can label me any way you want to. But probably gentleman – maybe today people would say that about me. “Hey, McLean's a tough guy; watch out for him.” So the admiral was always trying to calm me down and call me down. His fear was that – and I didn't know it at the time, but he has since later explained to me that Jim Baker had told him, “Bill, you do what you've got to do, but just don't make it so visible that I have to take action to call you down.” So, Admiral Stubblefield knew, and I didn't know that Jim Baker was trying to, in his own way, be gentlemanly about it. The first inkling I had of that was when Baker, at the commissioning of the ship, told me, “Hey, nice job.” But later, I can't remember exactly what I did. I forget. It was quite possibly when I nominated our NOAA Administrator, Jim Baker, for a Commerce Department Gold Award for having the forethought and wisdom to generate the Arthur Andersen study. I was trying to force the study report into the light of day. Little did I know, that nomination then showed up on Dr. Baker's desk, and he was in an animated and aggravated way about seeing that. Because I figured, if it's a subject of award, people are going to want to see it, and it's a Commerce Department award. So, that didn't work. So I went to Ron Brown directly for a photograph. At that point in time, I'm sure there was a communication between – yeah, there was a communication between Baker and Admiral Stubblefield. And Baker said, “I don't want to see that guy around here. He is not allowed in this building.” So effectively, I was banned from going to my duty station, which was in the Herbert C. Hoover Building, Department of Commerce headquarters. I was getting on a plane to go to Boulder for something. Admiral Stubblefield reminded me of this when I was speaking on his behalf at an event where he was the Citizen of the Year in the county he and Bonnie live in, just earlier this year. He recalled I was going to Boulder, and when my plane was taking off, he had written the email that said, “All right, that's it, McLean, you've crossed the line. You're done. I can't have you working with me. You're causing more harm than good.” Then, apparently, he thought about it. I think he and I had an intervening conversation, but his recollection was that by the time I landed, he had sent a subsequent message, “Never mind my last [email]. Just keep coming to work.” But what I did when Dr. Baker was so angered at me that he didn't want to see me in that building was I asked Admiral Stubblefield, “When is my

discipline hearing? Because I'm being punished for something, I'd like to know what I'm being punished for. What rule did I violate? How can I prepare a defense or a response? Without that knowledge, how could punishment be exacted on me prior to an adjudication?" I think there was a component of that that appealed to Admiral Stubblefield's logic, as well. It is also Constitutional, but nonetheless, it appealed to his logic as well. We really forced people into a very uncomfortable position because, politically, they had to take that position. I felt not politically, but rightfully, we're going to take our position.

MG: Forgive me for getting muddled up. Your next assignment was on the *Gunter*, or did you spend time in the Sanctuary program first?

CM: It was the *Gunter*. I was on *Gunter*. For me, the role there was to make sure that this new resource – even though it was a used ship from the Navy, it was a new resource at a time when we – NOAA – were requesting new ship construction. If we didn't utilize this transferred ship well, we would not be helping our case as to why the investment in new ships would be worthy. My concern was that we were replacing with the *Gunter* at 224 feet, a ship that was 127 feet long and had very limited capacity compared to the *Gunter*. So if we just replaced what the previous ship – which was called the *Chapman* – if we just replaced what the *Chapman* was doing, we're wasting fuel, we're wasting space, we're wasting money because obviously, a 127-foot ship could do the job. So what are we going to be doing better and more of in a 224-foot and four times the tonnage ship? I knew the lab, and I knew the proclivities and the enthusiasm of the lab for their likings which was status quo. I was concerned that the lab alone would be driving the bus on the ship design and such instead of a collaborative between fleet expertise, operators' expertise, and then also the fishery science expertise. That was reaffirmed for me by Senator Lott when he said, "Don't let these guys push you around." So it was that value. That's why I wanted to go to *Gunter* rather than to Hawaii. I felt that there was a higher value than an "attaboy" for McLean getting to go to Hawaii. Some people looked at Hawaii as not an attaboy; it was an arduous assignment because maybe you had family separation or whatever else. But for me, it was that value of how we use the ships. Getting there, we had some pretty honest debates with the Fisheries lab. But in the end, we wound up with a good ship. We wound up with a balanced approach to it. Here, we're just recovering from the near elimination of the NOAA Corps, and there was kind of a propensity to say, "Yeah, whatever the scientists want, let them have it." I'll tell you one that may surprise you because you're a mariner. Ferries have duck door bows that can open and close. There was a group of scientists that wanted to have the bow of that ship cut open and to have it hinge and have a catwalk come down, so they could get out on the catwalk and then take tissue samples from dolphins as they might ride the bow wave. Well, meritorious for the sample, but you're not cutting a hole in the bow of my ship. That is not going to happen. That is a weakness that, if not properly maintained, puts the safety of the ship and the lives of the – all that stuff. So there were those sorts of things that came up and had to be dealt with, I'll say,

MG: Was there an alternative proposed?

CM: Well, we executed the alternative. We put a small boat over the side, and it was much more highly maneuverable. We could get not just around dolphins, but we could get around whales because whales don't ride a bow wave. It was a much more suitable alternative that was much safer for the ship. Every time we went crashing into a wave in a storm, I kept thinking,



how confident would I be if we had that gasket and a hole in the bow with a moveable door? That one was more of an easy win. Actually, in the long run, we had a wonderful relationship with the scientists once we established the new order of how things were going to be. For example, in tying up in Pascagoula, Mississippi, there's a railroad line that is immediately upstream of the port where we would tie the ship up. The *Gunter* was going to go closest to and extend beyond the wharf towards that railroad bridge. I had a concern on what tides we would arrive in. For the previous smaller ship and heretofore, everybody had been just comfortable with the idea since the beginning, "Yeah, we come in when we come in." I said, "We're going to be mindful of the tides when we come in because if we lose power or if the engine control does something we don't want it to do" – which is a very low probability but losing power is not a low probability. The electrical system on that ship had many times failed us, including in the eyes of a hurricane. So that's another story. But I said, "If we lose power, I want to be able to stop this ship within an anchor's length of that railroad bridge because I don't want to be the guy that takes out the entire Southeast commercial transport of goods by knocking that bridge." That was a big deal. But I said, "Hey, fine, appeal it to the admiral if you want, but that's where I am. It's safety first for the people and for the surrounding community. I know it's inconvenient for you that we may get in at eleven o'clock in the morning instead of seven o'clock or first light but live with it. That bridge is a hazard, and we're tying up way too close to it. We have no other place to go. Put me downriver? Okay, we could do something different. I got plenty of time to drop the anchor and not hit that bridge." So we did that. And people were unhappy. And McLean was a bad guy because he won't let us come in at first light when we're used to coming in, but I just didn't think it was safe with that new ship. That's the sort of stuff that we had to deal with.

MG: You mentioned Trent Lott. His name has come up in a lot of the NOAA 50<sup>th</sup> oral history interviews. I'm curious about his relationship with NOAA and your personal and professional impressions of him if those were different.

CM: Well, I didn't know him very well personally, but he was not an unfamiliar face for us down in the Pascagoula area because his home was in Pascagoula. His relatives worked at the lab in a wholly legitimate merit-based employment prospect. They earned the position, and they were very good at what they did. His outlook for Pascagoula was passionate – it was his home – and for the fishers and really everything that dealt with the marine world, Marine Fisheries, and the ships. He was generally a supportive advocate for what the agency needed. He would stand up for his shrimpers if he thought they were getting a bad deal. But I remembered him as partisan, but nowhere near what partisan is today. Today, it's like a cult. But back then, it was, "Yeah, I got to hang with my team, but there are some Democrats I could work with. Let's find a good way to help the fishers in the Gulf." It was interesting to me that Senator Lott was always against the Law of the Sea, the United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea, and it was generally the conservative approach – "Nope, we don't go there. We don't want it." When in fact, Ronald Reagan eventually approved it, and then it had to go through advice and consent of the Senate, and you could never get it in the Senate. It became the punching bag of the Senate. "If you wanted to put a couple of votes to not bring it up, I'll swap you those votes for corn subsidies; I know you want corn. So okay, you vote against law of the sea." It became the punching bag. And Senator Lott was against law of the sea. Then, a few years later, when he had retired from the Senate and was working for a lobbying institute, that lobbying institute was

wisely pursued by a client who knew that Senator Lott had been against it, and they were for the law of the sea. John Kerry was leading the administration effort to try and get the law of the sea passed. So I was part of that team that was visiting Capitol Hill. Senator Kerry paved the way, but then I'd go with the Navy, Coast Guard, and State Department, and we talked about the merits. I ran into him at one of these events with Senator Lott. And I said, "Sir, I'm really glad to see you on the right side of this issue now." He said, "Well, some things change." I just left it at that, but in my mind, I'm thinking the only thing that's changed is who you're working for because the issue never changed. Again, there's no benefit in my trying to call the man out for where he is on these issues. Everyone knows where they are on issues and why, including today, as to whether or not the President was duly elected or not. There are some citizens who are deluded by their national leaders, but none of the national leaders are deluded. They're doing it all for reasons beyond merit. That was a reality. I understood that about Senator Lott. I had the luxury of not having to worry about that stuff. I could just say, "I drive ships and want to do them the best and safest way." My life is far less complicated than yours.

MG: You could say that for a time. Things would get complicated later on.

CM: Oh, things got much [more] complicated later on. [laughter] But back then, that's where it was. I was just thrilled to have the senator come to our commissioning ceremony. We bought a nice plaque that we gave to him so he could give it to us. That's the way these things work. It was all a good event.

MG: This will be my last question, and then we can wrap up for today. At this point, were you married? How were you negotiating the travel and the assignments with your family life?

CM: At this point, I was married. My stepdaughter was going to be, I believe, a junior and a senior – her last two years [in high school]. I thought, "Tough time to be relocating." So, I'll say we commuted, but I didn't get home very much at all. My wife and stepdaughter came down for the commissioning ceremony. They were there for a few other things. But one of the highlights [of] the commissioning ceremony for me was that when we left New York to bring the ship down, asked the guy to catch the lines – the poor fellow was just strolling by – my dad had just concluded major surgery. He had lung cancer. He had one of his lungs removed, and he could not travel. All his friends from his World War II ship knew what my dad's health situation was because they stayed in touch and only got together after the fiftieth anniversary of World War II; then they all gathered for reunions. I had been invited to some of the reunions because I helped them organize one or two of them, and it was a thrill for me to do so. I looked up, and I saw – I still get emotional thinking of this – the faces of four of these guys. My dad couldn't be there, but they chose to be there. So when we were touring the ship after the event of the ceremony, these four fellows were – I said, "Come on. Come with us. Come with us." And there's Secretary Daley. There's Jim Baker. There's all the staff that surrounds them if they're going to move anywhere. We get on the bridge of the ship. I put a dividing line between Secretary Daley from Chicago and all the others. I said, "Would you guys just make way here for these distinguished gentlemen?" I brought my dad's shipmates up. I introduced one of the gentlemen first, who was from Chicago. It turns out that he and Daley went to the same high school but at very different times. I noted who they were and why they were there. In fact, I think I did that

from the podium. But then to do that up on the bridge – and Daley was absolutely wonderful and embraced these fellows. It just meant so much to me that they came because my dad couldn't.

MG: Yeah, I had wondered about that. It struck me when you told me about how your dad would take you to watch the ships come in, and now you get to be on one of these ships coming in. Did you continue to connect with him about that?

CM: Thank goodness for email because, in the early days, you didn't have communication. You had single sideband radio, high-frequency radio, and you couldn't make a radiotelephone call without losing your whole pay check. It was amazingly expensive, and usually only for deaths and births to interrupt the ship's routine to do that. But with email, which I had the benefit of during the *Gordon Gunter* tour, my dad and I would write. I have them in a file right here. He's gone now, but that's one of the fondest memories I have of him where we would just iterate on – for a small slice – just how's our day going. He wanted to follow what we were doing very closely, and he did.

MG: He must have been so proud.

CM: I'm confident that he was. I'm confident that he was.

MG: Well, we're out of time for today. We have another session and a half in us if you're up for it. Forgive me for taking up so much of your time.

CM: I'm enjoying this because you're bringing back memories, Molly, that I have chosen not to focus on just in the press of hurry-up-and-retire-now-get-out-and-do-whatever-we're-doing. This is very reflective for me. So I really appreciate it.

MG: Good.

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Reviewed by Molly Graham 11/16/2022

Reviewed by Craig McLean 11/24/2022

Reviewed by Molly Graham 1/7/2022