

Molly Graham: [00:05] This begins an oral history interview with Commander Pamela Chelgren-Koterba on March 29, 2023, for the NOAA Heritage Oral History Project. The interviewer is Molly Graham. It's a remote interview with Commander Chelgren-Koterba in Bellingham, Washington, and I'm in Scarborough, Maine. Well, Pam, can we start at the beginning? I'll have you say when and where you were born.

Pamela Chelgren-Koterba: [00:33] Annapolis in 1950. Two of the seven kids in my family actually were born in Annapolis. My younger sister Jan was born there as well.

MG: [00:48] I'm curious about your family history, and then we'll pick back up in Annapolis and trace all your moves. Can you start on your mother's side of the family? Your mother and grandmother sounded like interesting women.

PCK: [00:59] Yeah. Actually, both of my parents were from the Midwest, and although they were not born in the state of Minnesota, that's where they met each other, I think, in high school. My mom was born in Fargo, and my dad was born in – now, I'm going to forget. Wisconsin, Wisconsin, Wisconsin. What's the town on the other side of the state border from –?

MG: [01:29] Superior?

PCK: [01:30] Yeah. He was born, I believe, in Superior. My mom's parents, Florence and Louis – Grandpa was a dentist, and Grandma started out as an elementary school teacher in some of the poorer neighborhoods in Minneapolis. But she was also a pianist. At some point, she did play with the Minneapolis Philharmonic. I don't think she was a regular. But she did play with them at least once. My mom had two siblings, my Aunt Jane and Uncle Buddy – Robert, I think. Buddy went blind at the age of one or something. My grandma changed her focus from elementary school teaching to education for the visually handicapped. She actually made a bunch of – moved the field ahead, as far as knowledge about visually handicapped people and was the head of a department at San Francisco State that set the tone for education for the visually handicapped around the country. They used to think that if you were visually impaired, you needed to not use your eyesight in order to save it, and they called it sight saving or some nonsense like that. She proved that that wasn't accurate by compiling the studies that were out there and showing that you actually improve your ability to use your eyes by using them properly – good lighting and all that. My mom was studying to be, apparently, an opera singer when she and my dad got serious. She did give that up. For her lifetime occupation, she was a homemaker. But given there were seven kids, that was probably a good thing. [laughter] My dad had been putting himself through college in Minneapolis when it looked like there was going to be some active conflict in Europe and the Pacific. Even though he had gone through a couple of years of college, he applied to and was accepted to the Naval Academy. He graduated from the Naval Academy in 1947. He missed World War II. He was out at sea as an engineering duty officer for part of the Korean War. But the Navy sent him to MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology] to get a masters in aeronautical engineering; they wanted him for missile design and such. We moved around every two or two or three years. [laughter] I went to seven different schools. I am counting the K to 12. And then, I applied to [and] was accepted at the University of California Berkeley. I was one of very few women in the engineering school. Half a percent of the College of Engineering at Berkeley were women when I went there. It was a very odd

experience sitting in classrooms that had hundreds of people in them – of course, I used to sit up front. I was walking down the hallway in one of the department buildings with a couple of classmates when one of my physics professors said, “Hi, Pam.” And it was one of those really big lecture classes. I was shocked. My classmate said, “Oh, come on. You’re the only woman sitting in the front row, number one. Number two, the only other women in the class are not only way back in the audience, but you were also the only Caucasian woman.” We did have a fair number of Asians from primarily Hong Kong that did attend the university. I was like, “Well, okay, I understand now.”

MG: [06:56] That is something I want to ask you more about, and then I want to go back and ask you a few more questions about your family and growing up. Were you more comfortable sitting in the front row? I wasn’t sure if, in some of the pictures I saw of you in the front of the classroom, it was purposeful to show that, yes, we have women in this class or program.

PCK: [07:12] No, I wasn't told to sit there. I've always been a very competitive person, so to make sure I didn't miss anything, I'd sit in the front row. Yeah, that was my own choice.

MG: [07:29] Backing up a bit, where does your family hail from? Which generation immigrated over if they came from outside of the United States?

PCK: [07:38] My paternal grandmother's heritage was – I mean, they were around during Civil War time. They'd been in the Midwest. My paternal grandfather was an immigrant from Sweden. Chelgren, apparently, in Sweden, is spelled K-J-E-L-L-G-R-E-N [and] means children of the soil. Bunch of farmers. [laughter] He died early on. My grandma had three kids: my dad, Uncle David, and Aunt Jan. She pretty much raised them on her own, although she did get married later on as well. On Mother's side, my grandpa – his parents came from Norway, and their original name was (Lune?). They didn't want to send their kids to school in the United States with a name like (Lune?), so they anglicized it to Henderson. [laughter] Hmm. Anyway. Whereas my grandma [was] Scotch Irish. I'm not sure how many generations back they came over. Gormley was her maiden name.

MG: [09:34] Did you get to know or spend time with any of your grandparents?

PCK: [09:40] Much more Grandma and Grandpa Henderson. Actually, during one of my dad's transfers, we stayed at my grandparents' house in San Francisco and then later on in Santa Cruz. When Grandma retired, from SF State, they moved to Santa Cruz. I started college right in the midst of one of my dad's transfers, so they dropped me off. They moved from Oxnard, where I just graduated high school to the DC area. They drove north and dropped me off at Santa Cruz. [laughter] My aunt was living in San Francisco at the time. She went down and picked me up from my grandparents' house and brought me over to the campus. My aunt, I was really close to during college. Prior to moving into campus housing, I got a lot closer to my maternal grandparents – a lot more close to them.

MG: [10:59] What were family gatherings like? Was there lots of music and singing going on?

PCK: [11:05] No. [laughter] Well, okay. One of the things I remember about our family – internal family – was Sunday, after we went to church, we’d come home, and that would be the most formal dinner. My parents would put on records, either classical records or show tunes from different musicals and stuff. As far as family reunion kind of things, I can only remember one family reunion that we went to, but otherwise, we would stop at my grandparents' house during these numerous transfers. Mostly, the singing that I remember growing up was part of the church choir. My mom was always very interested in us having a music background. Not only was there a focus on school and doing well in school, but it was important to them that we have some music background as well. I think most of us participated with the church choirs. My general recollection was. But also, when we were ten years old – well, when we were nine years old, we would start piano lessons. When we were ten years old, we got to pick an instrument, although my older sister Kris didn't get to pick one. She got my mom's violin, whether she wanted it or not. But all the rest of us kids, when we were ten, we got to select another instrument besides piano. Piano was supposed to be the basic. But as far as standing around a piano or anything like that, no, no. We used to – if we were out camping, there'd be singing around the campfire, but not in the home. Church choir, school band, or orchestra – that's where the music took place.

MG: [13:34] In your notes, I think you said your mother wanted to be an opera singer, so I was curious if she was singing around the house.

PCK: [13:42] No, no, she was pretty busy. Seven kids. As a matter of fact, one of the tales my aunt told – because it just was kind of remarkable to her. She only had one child. Apparently, we stopped by to visit my aunt, who was married at the time and, like I said, had one child. At certain points, my mom would go around and go, “Kris, Jeff, Pam, Jan, Karen, Scott, Rod,” the only way to make sure that not only are all of the kids accounted for but she knew who was missing if somebody was missing because invariably, with seven kids, there was somebody getting into trouble. [laughter] There was the occasional issue, accident, or whatever with the kids. And again, with seven kids, it's remarkable that we didn't get into more trouble than we did. I mean, there was an accident where my older brother was on roller skates, and one of my sisters was pulling him with a bicycle in front of the community recreation building that had a complete glass front to it. She was going around, around, and around. She was going faster. He was going faster. We know where this is going. Anyway, yeah, he went through the glass. Run back to the house. It must have been on a weekend because my dad took him to the emergency room at Walter Reed. This is back in the DC area. It was remarkable that we were able to actually survive our growing-up phase with as many as there were.

MG: [15:51] Yes, I can't imagine. I wanted to ask what prompted your mother's family to move from Fargo, North Dakota, to the Minneapolis area.

PCK: [16:01] Yeah, I actually don't know.

MG: [16:04] I was curious about your uncle. What caused his blindness at such a young age?

PCK: [16:10] I'm not sure that I was ever told.

MG: [16:19] Okay. It sounds like your grandmother was quite an advocate for the visually impaired. Would this have been around the same time that Helen Keller was doing her advocacy work? I was curious what was going on in the field of disability rights at this time.

PCK: [16:38] I think Helen Keller was actually earlier. My grandma was about education. She wanted to make sure that Buddy had every advantage and could be as independent as he could. He obviously could read Braille. Obviously could make it around with his walking stick. He would memorize a room. He would get really upset if you moved the furniture without telling him. He did die when he was going to college. He had problems getting to sleep. Back in those years, they didn't have sleeping pills. This is, I think, during World War II. He had a bottle of ether that he would use to get to sleep. He would use it to get himself in a bit of a state and then put the cap back on. Well, one night, he didn't put the cap back on, and he suffocated in his room. That was obviously pretty traumatizing.

MG: [18:14] I'm so sorry for your family. You didn't get to know him then.

PCK: [18:22] Oh, no. No, no. I heard her tales about Uncle Buddy, mostly with regard to all the things he could do while being blind. Both he and my aunt were concert masters at their universities. My mom obviously was with the choir. But she played violin as well. When my grandparents passed on, I was helping my aunt clear out their home before putting it on sale. She was named as executor. She gave me Grandma's hope chest. I was like, "What the heck is that?" She said, "Well, back in the years that grandma was growing up, you needed a hope chest of all the linens and stuff for when you got married. You need to accumulate that kind of stuff." I was like, "Oh, wonderful." I thought it was definitely culturally different from today. My aunt gave me the hope chest, and I was restoring it – it had black lacquer – and taking everything out and stuff. I think I threw away the really ancient linens that were in there. But I saw this pocket watch. I opened it up, and it had all these little dots on it. I went, "Oh, this is Uncle Buddy's watch." I mentioned it to my aunt, and she was like, "Oh my god. Buddy's watch." I knew I wasn't keeping it. It was not for me.

MG: [20:30] It was a special memento for her.

PCK: [20:32] Very incredible. She remembered that watch.

MG: [20:39] Do you know how your parents met? Was your dad in that area anyway for school?

PCK: [20:24] Well, they were both at the university. I don't know exactly. I think they met at a social event that my mother, my aunt, and my dad were at. But I don't really know any of the details.

MG: [21:12] What do you know about their early married life? Where did they first live?

PCK: [21:17] Well, they actually got married in the chapel in Annapolis. It's very formal. I might even have pictures from that. I'm not sure. I did a family photo project, where I took all the pictures that my dad was storing, and I got them digitized. A lot of pictures were of distant relatives; I have no idea who these people are. But a lot of them I did know. Did I have copies

of their wedding? I think I did. I could look and see. But those are very formal affairs at the academy. Then, his first posting – let me see. I think Jeff was born in Long Beach, so that would have been a ship he was assigned to. And then, he was teaching at the academy, and that's where Jan and I were born. See, I do it by where the kids were born. Karen was born in Boston, and that was when they had him getting his master's. Scott was also born in the Los Angeles area. That must have been the last sea assignment. After the sixth kid, they stopped sending him to sea. Kind of inverted. And then, from there, we did stay about six months with my grandparents in San Francisco, and then he got transferred to White Sands. White Sands has a missile range in the middle of a desert, probably about – I don't know – ten miles from the White Sands monument or more. But definitely, way back in those times, very desolate. I mean, the first town of any size is El Paso. That was a weekend full-day trip. He was running the computer center there that documented the data on the missile tests they did. He did remark that the computer center he was responsible for occupied a full building, and he held up one of the fancier, at the time, Hewlett Packard little calculators [and said], “This calculator has as much computing power as the whole building that I was responsible for.” Those computers were tube vacuum tubes rather than silicon wafers chips. But he did remark about that. And then we went from White Sands – that was where I was in kindergarten – to the DC area. We lived in Kensington, Maryland. Then from there, we stopped by Santa Cruz again and then we lived in Oxnard. At the time, my dad was responsible for developing the little computing devices inside the missiles that, when you shoot it, you need to be doing a number of different calculations. He was on the team that was – or leading the team that was developing the little computing devices onboard those missiles to do the resolution to be able to have the missile go where you wanted it to – three different devices. Then we got transferred to Puget Sound Naval Shipyard in Bremerton. He was the combat systems superintendent, again still dealing with missiles and such. And then we went back to Point Mugu, which was actually the location where he was working previously. At that time, he was redesigning those three computing devices to all be inside one device. At the end of that assignment in Point Mugu – Oxnard, for me, where I graduated high school – the family went back to DC, and they dropped me off in Santa Cruz, like I was mentioning. He was responsible for some sort of vessel design department. When he was there in that department – because that was his last assignment – one of the guys inside NOAA's engineering office OMOA – one of the people on my dad's team there, as a GS employee, did end up over at the NOAA engineering department for ship design. The guy did tell me tales about my dad. [laughter] That was pretty interesting.

MG: [27:17] And who was that? What was that connection?

PCK: [27:20] Oh, gosh. I would have no record. I'm sure he's long retired. I'm not good with names. As a matter of fact, one of the things that used to irritate my two younger brothers is sometimes I call Scott "Rod" and Rod "Scott." That was irritating to both of them. I'm not good with names at all. For some reason, I think his first name was Fred, but that's about as far as you're going to be able to take it for me. Then my parents retired – or my dad retired, and they moved eventually to Port Orchard and had a house on Long Lake over in Port Orchard.

MG: [28:17] Is that in Oregon?

PCK: [28:18] No, Port Orchard is across the Sinclair Inlet from Bremerton.

MG: [28:26] In Washington State.

PCK: [28:27] Yeah, so Kitsap County.

MG: [28:34] Your father's work on the Anti-Air Warfare Ship Acquisition Project came up a couple of times in my research. Where was he doing that?

PCK: [28:41] Well, that would have been associated with most of those assignments, like the ones down in Southern California, and, of course, integrating it with the other shipboard stuff. That was Bremerton. Yeah, a lot of his career was associated with that, even the missile range. Throughout his career, he was progressing in various locations for designing and having built the sensors or whatever was associated with keeping those things on track.

MG: [29:31] Would he discuss with you or your siblings the work he was doing?

PCK: [29:36] Gosh, no. In those years? No. You left work at work. The most he ever got into that – and it really shocked me. I was on my first sea tour – the second ship of my first sea tour, the *Fairweather*. For some reason, I was over in the area, and we dropped in at my mom and dad's place. I had two other junior officers with me. He just talked a little bit about the attitude of junior officers [JO] versus senior officers, and he says – and there's a lot of jargon – “We JOs always understood that intelligence is the inverse square of rank.” [laughter] We looked at each other, like, “Oh my god, he retired as a captain.” I thought it was the most outrageous thing I'd ever heard any retired officer say – “inverse square of rank.” [laughter]

MG: [30:47] What do you think he meant by that?

PCK: [30:51] An ensign is the first step. As you progress in rank, your intelligence goes down as the inverse square of rank. It's mathematical. Because he knew that the three of us that were sitting there all [had] an engineering background. Math is pretty simple. So, the inverse square. If you take the number sixteen inverse square, it would go four, and then two, and then 1.414, right? Inverse square of rank by way of example. [laughter] We thought that was pretty funny. He also said to me, personally, that it was important to keep your romantic life separate from the office. I thought this was not good advice at all. I would say it differently – that you need to separate your romantic life from work, that you need to not have any romantic relationships tied directly to your immediate work environment. That's a really difficult thing to say to a woman whose – most of your career is in a very male-dominated field, number one. Number two, a lot of times, you don't have time for a whole lot of extracurricular activities. The only people you really have any social relationships with in the early years, generally, are people at work. Yes, it's dangerous to have romantic relationships with people at work. The more useful thing to do, particularly if you're in a remote location, like onboard a ship or in a remote field assignment, is to develop more on the nature of familial relationships; you treat them like you would a brother. Like you wouldn't let your little brother get away with crap, you don't let your coworkers get away with crap. But you do it in a – what would you say? I know there's a word for it. [laughter] What did I say? Actually, I think I wrote that.

MG: [33:28] I think you said familiar.

PCK: [33:31] An affectionate way. So, familial relationships. You don't need hostility in these circumstances. But if people are misbehaving, you do need – there are times you don't need to address it, and there are times you do. When you do address it, address it like they were a brother of yours, and you're going to be correcting them in an affectionate way. Professional but affectionate. I actually gave that advice to this one junior officer that was heading out on a ship that was going to be away for the better part of a year from Seattle.

MG: [34:22] I think you're describing something that many women encounter in the workforce and in their daily lives, just navigating how to interact with male colleagues. You don't want to be too nice and be considered a pushover, and you don't want to be too firm and be considered something else. It's a hard balance to navigate, and I think you articulated that nicely.

PCK: [34:41] Well, honestly, if you're ashore in an office setting – even though officers don't work nine to five – you work as much as the job demands – you do have an opportunity for extracurricular activities, and it's an office setting, and the guys there also have extracurricular activities. For the most part, you can rely on having a professional demeanor. That is really the key. But if things arise, then yeah, you need to be firm but professional. When you're in a remote location, either on a ship or remote field assignment, it's imperative that it also includes being a familial relationship when needed. When you're having to address something, firm but affectionate, I think, is the key. Firm and professional, but affectionate because in a remote location, that's an absolute killer to get into a hostile – and I've been in those circumstances, and it's unpleasant. [laughter]

MG: [36:01] Yeah, I imagine there were lots of different and difficult dynamics on the boat. Maybe we'll talk more about that when we get there. But something you just said about this was romantic relationships can be dangerous on board. What did you mean by that?

PCK: [36:18] Actually, I talked to a woman – after I retired from NOAA, I went to work for Alyeska Pipeline Service Company. There was a woman [who] was the first pump station supervisor. I think that's what they called it. First female pump station – whatever they called it – supervisor, I think. She did admit that she had a romantic relationship with one of the more senior people at the station and said, “If you engage in those kinds of relationships, you are at the mercy of your relationship or your work environment.” It can be advantageous, particularly if it's a kind of backward, cultural kind of setting, which the oil industry remote locations can be. Then the relationship can be protective. If there are other employees there that are giving you grief, knowing that you have a romantic relationship with a senior person can be protective and give you some room to operate. But you're at the mercy of that relationship. That's what's dangerous about it. I thought she described that really well. When she said that, I was like, “Oh, yeah, absolutely.” It's dangerous to have those kinds of relationships. I do know that – I've seen some settings where it was beneficial because of the attitudes of some of the guys in that setting. I'm not specifically addressing NOAA. I'm just saying, in general, particularly in a remote location. You literally are at the mercy of that relationship. If they're treating you professionally as well as romantically, that's fine. If things get awry, your whole work setting is messed up. My dad saying “keep it separate” is certainly the more cautious or conservative way to go. But

I've seen it work to a woman's advantage, particularly in an initially hostile environment to women. I thought she was very astute in what she said about that.

MG: [39:17] Did any of your other siblings join any uniformed service?

PCK: [39:21] Well, of course, my older brother did. He graduated high school during the Vietnam War. It wasn't like it was his choice. So he did his – I don't know – two or three years or whatever it was. If you sign up and don't ask for a specialty – some of the guys were done in two years. But if you ask for a specialty, you do three or four or something. He did whatever he had to do. It was in a combat area in a non-combat position, but he was the only other sibling that had time in the service.

MG: [40:10] Interesting. I had wondered if your father had pushed or nudged any of you in that direction.

PCK: [40:16] Not going into the service particularly. But I do have another sibling that's another engineer. My dad tried to push my older brother into that. It didn't take. He wasn't going to be doing that. But my youngest brother is an engineer.

MG: [40:43] Well, tell me more about growing up with seven siblings and what that was. Even the logistics of it, I'm curious about.

PCK: [40:51] [laughter] One of the phenomena that when you're inside it, you don't notice it quite as much, but a high school girlfriend saw us on the ferry, and she immediately recognized us as “The Chelgrens,” the gang of Chelgrens. It was a gang in that regard because we moved around so much that the people that you were closest with growing up, particularly until we got to graduating high school, were other family members. I used to hang out with my older brother and my younger sisters. Of course, we tried to ditch the two youngest boys at the time because they were just too young. Mom would [say], “Take them along.” “Grrr.” They were definitely the people we hung around, played with, and all that kind of stuff. Didn't exclude fighting. Kids do fight from time to time. Of course, most of our housing, with seven kids, two bedrooms had two girls each, and one bedroom, early on, had all three boys. And then it got to a point where we were able to have a large enough house that Jeff got his own room. You were definitely close because you were sharing the bedroom. We used to have chores, although some of the chores were gender-based. Jeff always got mowing the lawn. [laughter] But the other chores – kitchen duty got rotated through as far as cleanup. My mom did all the cooking. The cleanup got rotated through – washing, then drying, and putting away. My dad joked, “Why should I get a dishwasher? I have seven.” My mom didn't let him get away with that, ultimately. So, cleaning the bathrooms, all that got rotated. Every Saturday was laundry day. You would take your sheets, put the top sheet on the bottom, take the bottom sheet, and it would go into the laundry room. That was a whole production. And grocery shopping – didn't always bring the kids along. But if you did, you were pushing a cart. We were going around the commissary loading up on two weeks' worth of food typically. We'd get to the checkout, and there'd be two or three carts going through. My parents could never have afforded to have seven kids currently. My mom and dad had all seven of us by the time my dad was – well, he made Lieutenant at White Sands. It goes ensign, lieutenant JG, lieutenant. During that time, my dad went from lieutenant JG to



lieutenant. No way he could do that. But he ultimately, like I said, retired as a captain, and he was in the captain rank when he was back for his last assignment. When I graduated high school, he was still a commander. All seven kids were still at home when we went down to Point Mugu, but Kris started community college, and Jeff got drafted during that time down there. That's when we started leaving the house. When they retired to Port Orchard, like I said, at that house on Long Lake, my dad took me down to the basement. They'd segregated all of the possessions that we had left behind. They said, "Here, take this." [laughter] With seven kids, you didn't want to have all of the stuff, memories, and mementos from the kids growing up. I [had] to figure out where to put all that stuff because at the time, I was on a ship, so I had to figure out where to put it.

MG: [47:07] It sounds like there were times when your dad was out to sea or away on assignment. Would he be away from the house for a while?

PCK: [47:15] Well, the last sea assignment he had, I was [in] preschool, so I don't recall.

MG: [47:28] I was curious if your mom had any help at home.

PCK: [47:33] Oh, no. I think the only help she got at all was immediately after birth, my maternal grandmother would attempt to make it wherever she was to assist her for a month or whatever. But that was it. No maid service. But my grandparents did try to help as much as they could. As a matter of fact – Jeff was born when my dad was assigned to Mare Island Naval Shipyard in San Francisco. This is pretty remarkable. There were two California assignments, but the first one was actually up in the San Francisco Bay Area. My grandpa, when he retired from dentistry, liked to play around with real estate. Apparently, had a property in the Palo Alto area that was, at the time, still semi-rural. It was actually a farmhouse. There were neighbors close by because they were breaking up the farms at that point, developing the area. But there was no phone in the house. My dad would drive every weekday from essentially Palo Alto to Mare Island. If you're familiar at all with the San Francisco Bay area, there's no way you could do that nowadays. He'd go across on the Dumbarton Bridge, all the way up what now is 880, but at the time, I'm not sure what the status of the freeway system was, to Mare Island and back every day. Every day. It's just remarkable. When Scott or Jan – I forget. Again, this had been a farm. They managed to find a small outbuilding that had farm stuff in it. My mom's turning around, missing a kid, missing a kid. I think it was Jan. She's looking around the property and finds Jan inside that little outbuilding, eating something that was purple. It was chicken dewormer. My mom didn't know what it was, and there was no phone in the house. What are you going to do? They only had the one car. She went running over to a neighbor's house to ask for help to get Jan into the hospital to see what was what, to actually have to identify what the kid got into by the color of the chemical. [laughter]

MG: [51:00] Was she okay?

PCK: [51:02] Oh, sure. They pumped her stomach. You didn't want it to be in the kid for a terribly long period of time – de-wormer for chickens. But my mom literally had to run a quarter mile away, or whatever it was, to get someplace to make a call to get help getting Jan to the emergency room.

MG: [51:27] Oh my gosh.

PCK: [51:31] Remember, upbringings in the early middle '50s were not like upbringings nowadays. The safety attitude we have nowadays is completely different. I mean, just think of it; the cars didn't have seatbelts. The very first maker of a car that puts seatbelts in routinely was Volvo. But there were no seatbelts. I can remember that my mom used to smoke in the car while we were on those long-distance trips. And obviously, she smoked in the house. I didn't even smell the cigarette smoke in my clothes until I'd been at college, close to a year before I even started to smell it. That's how inoculated I was to cigarette smoke. It was a different safety attitude. They weren't being casual. That was the way things were. Literally, a different upbringing. When we were living in Kensington, we were on a street – like I said, at the top of the street and a little bit over is where that recreation hall was. But there was a pretty good hill, and it went up to the elementary school. We all got strap-on roller skates. In those years, you had little leather straps, and they were adjustable for the different shoe sizes. We'd go up to the top of the street – you go up part way up the street and then go zooming down as far as you're brave enough to go, and you go up further, and further, and further. I do have scars on my knees from where I fell down. But all the kids did that. We weren't injury prone per se, but we would fall down and skin ourselves. We'd come back, and Mom would clean us up. Back then, they used iodine. That was what you put on scrapes and such and then a band-aid. But we would go around the neighborhood, and we'd bicycle around as well. When we were in Oxnard the first time, we bicycled from where we were living up to – oh, shoot. Now I forget the name of it. Anyway, it was the Ventura County basin on the south side because Oxnard is on the south side, up a rural road (Potrero Road) to “Hidden Valley” – a relatively steep grade into farmland. I mean, nowadays, would you let your kids as a group by themselves go on a trip on a weekend – ? We were gone from home for probably six hours. Right? No cell phones, remember. But you let your kids do that kind of stuff. I can't think of any parent that would let their kids as a group go off by themselves on bicycles like that. It was a different – literally, it was a different world. I grew up in that kind of setting. I always loved adventures like that. When I was in college, looking at what job I was going to get with my engineering degree, and I had the interview with NOAA, the guy explained it was for nautical chart surveying. And in college, I belonged to the sailing club, so I knew what a nautical chart was. I thought that was fascinating, number one. And number two, the officers were involved in actually conducting those surveys. I thought that was fascinating. The other thing was when I was sitting with – what was his first name? – Bob Smart – he was the recruiter, and he went through and explained about [how] you go through an officer training class, then you go to a sea assignment, then you go ashore in a field that's consistent with your degree, typically. He then explained a few more things and said, “Do you have any questions?” I said, “Well, my number one question is am I going to be able to go to sea?” He says, “That isn't quite how most of the recruits phrase that question.” [laughter] We had a lot of officers coming in that were satisfying their selective service requirement, and they were trying to get out of having to go to sea. It was pretty funny – “get to go to sea.” He said, “Absolutely.” [laughter] Anyway, because I was looking forward to the adventure of it.

MG: [57:24] Well, what other stories stand out from your younger years, all the moves and all the places you lived, which are all unique places along the coast or in the desert?

PCK: [57:35] Well, one of the other things that was really interesting is my parents were very focused on – when we had family vacations – because we went as a group. We'd be going to a campground – that included visiting national parks. We visited a lot of national parks. I remember this one time when my paternal grandmother, Grandma Dixon, accompanied us when my dad was assigned there at White Sands. We went over to Carlsbad Caverns, and we were merciless, apparently. My Grandma Dixon [was] getting dragged around by these kids in the caves. She was not really in any kind of physical shape. But I remember probably my mom admonishing us for dragging grandma around. The poor woman. But we did visit a lot of national parks. Mount Rainier, at the time, did have an ice cave back in those years when we were living in the Bremerton area. Yellowstone. We saw Old Faithful and all that. Always campgrounds. Always setting up tents. Lake Ozette [which] is in the current Olympics National Park. At the time, it was much smaller; there was no Olympic National Park. I can remember we parked at the north end of Lake Ozette, and then my dad shuttled us around to the little campsite, and we had to make a couple of trips because it was just an eighteen-foot open ski boat. I can remember in the morning getting up and seeing the lake looking essentially like this anchorage looks [Commander Pamela Chelgren is referring to her Zoom background] and Dad pulling us around the lake. And when you get outside the wake of the boat, it felt like cutting through glass. It was just so beautiful. Yeah, our family vacations were adventurous. Dad liked to take us waterskiing. When I was in Southern California, we were going on lakes up-country by Ojai and so on. But when it was in the Bremerton area, besides taking us on lakes, at one point, he did take us out on the Hood Canal. I can remember we had gone across the canal. We were coming back, and I was the one being pulled on the return trip going across the Hood Canal. It was literally a matter of, well, we need to get back to the campsite. It was rough. The ambition, when you were waterskiing, a lot of times on the lakes, is to drop one of the skis and single ski/slalom ski, right? I absolutely had no intention of dropping a ski because it was just so rough, and I was just hanging on. My whole focus was on not falling rather than doing the regular getting outside the wake and so on. And it was cold. It was very cold. Back in those years, there was no wetsuit wearing, and the flotation device – I don't know if you've ever seen them – was just a foam belt. That's completely inadequate for a water skier just to wear a foam belt, but that was all that was needed.

MG: [1:02:03] It sounds like a lot has changed.

PCK: [1:02:05] Yes, yeah. This one time that we were camping up at Priest Lake in Idaho, I can remember that – we used to be able to use the Navy's Morale, [Welfare, and] Rec [Recreation] Center. We had a rowboat with us from there. And a couple of us took it, flipped it upside down, and then we were like a semi-surface submarine walking around just off the beach. We'd do all sorts of fun stuff like that on vacations.

MG: [1:02:53] You're quoted somewhere talking about all the moving, and you say, "Moving is exciting. I get a real warm feeling looking at an empty, barren room when the furniture has been taken away or driving down a superhighway at night. It's the excitement of a new place." I was curious if that feeling stayed with you throughout your life.

PCK: [1:03:12] There was an excitement about – or just the warm feeling, like you say, at the start of my career. I remembered it at the start of my career. But one of the things that – of

course, if you're responsible for the move, it's different. [laughter] Eventually, moving was not exciting; moving was just something you did, but it wasn't exciting. I didn't consider it to be as much of a pain as I know some of the other officers felt, but it was no longer exciting. One of the things my parents also instituted with my grandparents was when we were ten years old; we got to go out and spend a month or two at my maternal grandparents' house in Santa Cruz. And back then, it was the Boeing 707 that you were on. The experience of the flight was absolutely amazing. You're walking up those steps [that] they push up to the side of the plane. I loved airplane flying and taking flights until, for my job, I had to do it a lot, and then the thrill was gone. [laughter] Particularly when you're having connecting flights and making the connections and things [are] just going awry. The one thing that took having any pleasure out of airplane travel was when, post-NOAA, post-Alyeska, I had been working as an on-call employee for a couple of oil spill response companies. I was on one of the Incident Command Post staff at the *Deepwater Horizon*. I was flying back and forth every ten days. No, every week. That's right. It was taking me a day and a half in each direction. Three days of the week were taken up with travel. I only got four days at home, essentially. There were two connections that I had to make because I was flying out of Bellingham to Seattle, Seattle to typically Houston, [and] Houston to Mobile, Alabama. I just hated it. I just hated it. The thrill was gone with regard to plane travel. I don't like it.

MG: [1:06:29] Yeah, that doesn't sound pleasant.

PCK: [1:06:33] No. [laughter]

MG: [1:06:34] Something else in my notes is that you played in the school band and would welcome Navy ships arriving in Port. Where would that have been? I think you said something about how it was exciting and fun to go aboard the ships.

PCK: [1:06:46] Really? When did I say that?

MG: [1:06:51] This article was published about your joining the corps.

PCK; [1:05:59] Well, the only place we would have welcomed ships would have been in Bremerton. Well, that was a number of years ago because I don't even remember doing that now. [laughter] One of the things you're going to be able to put up with as well is sometimes your memory isn't quite what it used to be. I'm blaming it on my age. I'm also blaming it on – I did have an accident in 2000, a pretty serious accident, four and a half weeks in the hospital. And honestly, I lost some memory as a result of that.

MG: [1:07:46] Well, I hope I'm never interviewed because I can't remember anything. Also, you're doing great. You've told so many wonderful stories. So far, this has been so interesting. Tell me a little bit about your last few years of high school, the things you were getting interested in, and how you were thinking about your next steps at that point. Somewhere in my notes, I have that you only wanted to attend Berkeley. I was curious how you were thinking about your college experience.

PCK: [1:08:18] The decision about Berkeley I made when I was in my senior year. My junior year, we were still in Bremerton. Actually, my dad had a bit of a choice about the timing of that transfer. He actually had them delay the transfer for a year because, apparently, I was a lot more outgoing than Jeff or Jan, and he didn't want the impact of having the last year in school fall on them. He held up the transfer for a year. I actually graduated from Channel Islands High School. It was the first year of the operation of that school. Everybody was new. They separated the south end of the Oxnard area from the center and northern area. The other folks stayed at Oxnard High School, and a bunch of folks – some of them were very upset as well – in my senior year were at this school that was a brand-new school. But when I was going through my last year in high school, there was a lot of stuff in the news about Berkeley. [laughter] I also looked at the description of the programs and the various universities, and Berkeley was highly reputed for its engineering college as well as the math department. I mean, nationally recognized. I hadn't made up my mind to go into engineering per se, but I knew it was going to be some math-related degree. In my senior year, I was the only woman in the physics class. Still, at the time, when I was in those earlier years in high school, women did not go to auto shop, woodshop, or any of those kinds of things. Had I been allowed, I would have gone to that. But we had to do home ec [economics]. The cooking I was okay with because I do like to eat. But the sewing, I had zero interest in. I was an honor student and a National Honor Society awardee. In the home ec class, when I made – first, you make an apron. Yippee. Anybody can do that. But then I was supposed to make a blouse and skirt combination from a pattern. And literally, I had no interest in it. I didn't have an eye for doing a straight line. The instructor, the teacher, gave me what I call a pity D on the articles of clothing and a C for my – no, it was a pity D for the articles [of clothing], but she still gave me a B for the class because I was an honor student. Then my mom sees this, and she said, “Well, you could have done better, but it's acceptable.” And I said, “I'm not wearing that. No way. I'm not wearing that.” [laughter]

MG: [1:12:36] And you weren't knocked out of the top ten of your class.

PCK: [1:12:42] I think I was third in my class. I think, graduating from high school, I had a – oh, I can't remember. I think it was 3.84, but I don't know that I trust that number. I can remember, also – because when I was down at the Channel Islands, of course, it was my last year, and it was physics, college prep math, [and] we used to have social studies during those years. I started off in their band, but their band was so horrible; I dropped it and took German instead. My flute playing with the earlier school – it was actually a competitive school. We marched in the Seafair Parade. This band wasn't – anyway, so I dropped it. Oh, not German. I [took] Spanish because I felt the need. There were enough people speaking a language I couldn't understand. In my classes, there were cliques, and I didn't particularly pay attention to them. Because I was only going to be there for a year. I didn't know these people. They didn't know me. I honestly didn't care what they thought of me. But there was this one other student. She was going around talking to all the women in our class who were college-bound, telling them that they really had no business going to college because they really were only going to college to get their MRS. That was the saying at the time. And I said, “Well, now, wait a minute. I resent that remark.” She said, “Oh, I'm not talking about you. You're different.” I went, “Is this a good thing or a bad thing?” [laughter] I guess, amongst other things – because I really didn't care about the cliques. I really didn't care about anybody at the school because I was only going to be there during the school year, and then off I go to college. She didn't consider that I was

amenable to persuasion anyway. There were other women in my class that were very accomplished. None of them were interested in physics, but they were going to go to college. That was an interesting interaction.

MG: [1:15:33] I'm surprised to hear that because this was around the time of the Women's Movement.

PCK [1:15:48] It might have been the start of it. But see, military bases are not known for being progressive. The communities that they're in, generally, are not known for being progressive. Generally, I was in a very sheltered environment. There were very few minority students, if any, at all in my classes. It wasn't until that last year that I had a number of minority students in social studies because we had a Hispanic population in Oxnard. But very sheltered – very sheltered upbringing.

MG: [1:16:44] Were you successful in learning foreign languages because you won an achievement award in foreign languages? I read that somewhere.

PCK: [1:16:54] I have no recollection. I have no recollection of that. Really? I don't remember that.

MG: [1:17:00] Maybe your Wikipedia wasn't quite up to date.

PCK: [1:17:05] No, because I did correct that. I looked at it recently. It shouldn't have said anything about language.

MG: [1:17:12] I'll track down my source. Did you receive a scholarship to attend Berkeley?

PCK: [1:17:21] Yes. I had a Cal State scholarship that was based on grade point, maintaining a particular grade point, and your family's income versus their obligations – how many kids. Even though at the time that I applied, my dad was a commander, seven kids put us in the – “She's worthy.” Between my grade point and that – for my last year in college, my grade point didn't support that, so I lost the scholarship in my senior year, but my dad was very happy to have some of my college education be paid for by the state of California.

MG: [1:18:12] Before we talk about your time at Berkeley, what are we missing up to this point? I was curious if there were teachers that were particularly influential growing up or other moments that we've missed. A lot was going on in the country during this time.

PCK: [1:18:29] Yeah. Again, not in a typically progressive environment for me, so I didn't have any strong opinions about the war. I didn't have any strong opinions about women's roles, except as it started to impact me. Racial – I had zero opinion about any of that. It was a very sheltered upbringing looking back on it. Literally, my focus was on my education and doing fun recreational activities – all the camping that we used to do, water skiing, and snow skiing. The other thing that we did do as far as social/recreation – in the various communities, my mom would find a church that she liked, and – what do they call those? Youth organizations. Some of the youth organizations would sponsor different kinds of activities, and the one in Bremerton

sponsored a group of us to go up to Snoqualmie. And that's quite a trip. We would meet in the parking lot there at the church and spend the day – however many kids wanted to go – go up to Snoqualmie Summit. Or, as we used to call it, Sno-crummy. The higher the elevation, the better, and they're at one of the lower elevations. My dad did take us to Hurricane Ridge one time. At the time, it was not developed. We were climbing up the hill and skiing down as opposed to a normal ski resort. So, skiing, waterskiing, snow skiing, camping, bicycling, like I said, parks. [We] didn't do a lot of museums. I guess that would have been way beyond the patience level of a kid. And amusement parks, when they would come around – not the parks like they have them nowadays, but the county fairs and that kind of thing. Loved to ride those more exciting rides at the time. With my balance issues now, I would never go near them. [laughter] But I used to love that. My parents did take us one time to Disneyland back when you could do that with seven kids. Interestingly enough, my high school sponsored a graduation night – after the graduation ceremony and then you have your graduation party – at Disneyland. They used to do that. I don't know if they still do or not, but I loved that. I thought that was great.

MG: [1:22:02] Yes, sounds fun. So, coming to Berkeley, was that eye-opening for you or an adjustment because the campus was such a politically active spot?

PCK: [1:22:15] Right. Yeah. Well, first of all, when you were mentioning that was the only place I was considering, that's true because I thought, with my grade point, that I'd be a shoo-in because I did look at the different campuses. It's one thing to get admitted to the university, but to be admitted to a particular campus was another hurdle. When I was talking – I worked with my counselor to get everything squared away on that and got really high SAT scores. Well, not scores. Math, I absolutely did the best on that. But English, I had to take some sort of – there was some derogatory term for it. English was my very first thing at the beginning of my first quarter. But what's a derogatory term for somebody who's not smart? Dumb?

Frank Koterba: [1:23:30] Remedial?

PCK: [1:23:31] Remedial. I had to write a paper to show I could write. Well, I have had successive bosses that didn't think that I really should have passed that. [laughter]

FK: [1:23:53] Well, your dialect is engineer.

MG: [1:23:57] You speak engineer fluently.

PCK: [1:24:00] Right, right. I am an engineer. But they had a college day in the spring. I mean, everybody was supposed to be applying in the winter. There was a representative from the University of California there at it. I mentioned that I haven't heard anything back yet. The guy asked me, “What's your grade point? What are your SAT scores?” And I told him, and he went, “Huh. There's something wrong here.” And so he checked into it, and apparently, something had gotten misplaced or held awry or whatever. But for asking him that question on the college day, I don't know; it might have been even worse. So he got it sorted out. I was admitted, first, to the College of – the math department was in Letters and Science or something because I hadn't specified engineering. When I got there, the first thing I wanted to do was to transfer to the

College of Engineering. After I wrote my essay that showed I could write, they said, “Yeah, okay, we can take you in. And oh, by the way, had you applied for engineering college – that's what you were going to major in – you would have had to have shown a drafting class on your high school [transcript].” Nobody warned me about this. They said, “But you don't have to worry about it.” Yeah, because of my grade point and my SAT scores, I just assumed that – and I didn't realize it was a problem until that guy was shocked and got it broken free.

MG: [1:26:09] Wasn't there another hiccup with your residency? The rest of your family was getting ready to move back to DC.

PCK: [1:26:17] No. Well, see, my dad maintained the family residency at my grandparents' address in Santa Cruz. Because of that, he was a California resident. And that's the only reason I qualified for that Cal State scholarship and those other factors. Had he not maintained the family residence at my grandparents' house, then no, we wouldn't have qualified as in-state, nor would I've gotten that scholarship. Once they moved, there was not an issue until he retired, and he retired after I joined the NOAA Corps. Actually, no, he would have lost his California residency when my grandparents died. My grandpa died in 1969, I think. At that point, my dad would have lost his California residency, or a year later, or whatever.

MG: [1:27:38] And it didn't impact your scholarship.

PCK: [1:27:41] Apparently not. I have no recollection. [laughter]

MG: [1:27:45] Tell me a little bit about that first year at Berkeley. What was campus life like and the classes you were taking?

PCK: [1:27:53] Like I said, I transferred over to engineering. There was at least one engineering class. There was a computer class that was – you could have taken this computer class, either in the math department or engineering department. I took it in the engineering department – same computer class. Back in those years, we used paper punch cards for putting the programs together, and you used the old IBM 360s for punching the cards to create the cards. And then, you'd have these long boxes that had – well, at first, you could rubber-band them, but eventually, you were putting them in a long, little cardboard box, handing it over to the desk for them to run. For that class, I can remember the turnaround times. You had different priorities for who you were. If you were in a first-level programming class, pretty low priority. If you're a grad student running a project, a pretty high priority. But the wait times – handing those programs over – they could be eight hours. If you made any mistake, what would happen is when they finally got around to running your stack, they'd hand it back to you – whatever term it was for a failed run. But I realized that if I turned my card deck in, as a first-year student, freshman student, the requirement at the time was I had to be living in a dormitory, and those dormitories had curfews. By the time I was a junior, I'd moved out into an apartment that I shared with other students. But in the first two years, the first year, I had a curfew. Well, the curfew is ten o'clock. The short-run times are after ten. [laughter] This was not good. I'd get there at nine o'clock and ask them what the turnaround time was. If I thought I could do it, I'd stay there and get my run done. If not, I'd have to come back the next day. And when my aunt found out, she said, “You're doing what? You're walking across the Berkeley campus at nine o'clock at night by yourself?” I was



very flippant. I said, “If anybody wants to attack me, they have to outrun me.” Well, I was naïve. I was naïve about that. At the time, I even – one of the weekends – my aunt really flipped out when I did this – I hitchhiked around to go and see Point Reyes or wherever it was. And she was livid. She said, “If you need taxi money, if you need bus money, you come to me. Never should you ever hitchhike.” I was hitchhiking with another student, a guy. I thought that made it safe. [laughter] She was so upset with me. My maturity got influenced a lot more by my aunt than anything else.

MG: [1:32:04] She sounds like an important figure in your life. Tell me more about her and her life.

PCK: [1:32:12] She didn't initially finish college. She got married just before her senior year, I think. She and my Uncle Dan – he was working for an aeronautical firm, one of the big ones, I forget [which]. What's a big aeronautical firm? Not Boeing.

MG: [1:32:41] Lockheed Martin?

PCK: [1:32:43] Yeah.

FK: [1:32:44] Douglas?

PCK: [1:32:45] Yeah. Lockheed Martin or Douglas – whatever. She, in those years, was not encouraged to work. [laughter] She was politically active. An after her divorce, she went back and got her Bachelor's, then most of the way to a Master's. Some weekends, I would ride the bus over to where she lived. At the time, she was living close to Lake Merced Park in San Francisco. I'd just hang out with her. When different political things were going on, she'd yell at the TV. I was like, “Whoa, this is not the adult behavior I was used to.” But she was really engaged. She worked on the campaign of Helen Gahagan Douglas [who] was running opposite Richard Nixon. There was some sort of smear campaign he put out about her. It was a growing-up period for my aunt in that regard. Richard Nixon was never – she was never fond of that guy. But I can remember she used to even throw things at the TV. I was like, “Whoa, this is pretty amazing.” She would talk about different events in her life and different relationships in her life. It was very cosmopolitan and not anything like what I was taught as far as adult relationships and so on. In my later years in high school, I'd catch rides over there when she moved up to Marin County. She'd give me a little bit of advice about the guys that I was showing up with, particularly the first couple of years. I was hanging out with another engineering student that I treated just as a friend, a platonic friend. She was like, “Pam, he doesn't see you that way.” And I said, “Well, I've never given them any indication, and I've told him numerous times that he's only a friend.” She says, “Yeah, but you really shouldn't. You may say that, but you got to understand he doesn't hear that. He doesn't take that to heart.” She'd give me relationship advice unsolicited [which] made me stop and think. She was also politically active even after she moved up to Marin County, which is a lot more conservative than San Francisco itself. But that was a maturing time for me, just watching how she reacted to and behaved – on relationships, on politics, and so on. There was one of my college professors – he wrote the high school definitive book on chemistry. [George] Pimentel came in after the results of the election came in – well, shoot. The election had to have been in my first quarter, November of '68. And

Richard Nixon won. He is up there at the front, and he is so discombobulated. He says, “You got to understand. Give me a little patience here after last night's election.” I never ever heard a teacher outside of social studies talk about politics ever. This was a chemistry professor. I was like, “Whoa.” [laughter] That was amazing. Yeah. The lecture was in what they call One PSL, Physical Science Lecture Hall, that holds 150 students. He’s saying to the class ... I didn't feel overwhelmed by being in those kinds of settings because, actually, at times in high school – I can remember both in junior high and high school, every once in a while, I’d get A's and B's, A's, and B's, A's and B's. The teacher would invariably put on my report card, “Doing well, but could do better.” And I hated that. One of the reasons I wanted to go to Berkeley is I wanted to be lost in the crowd. I didn’t want to see any of this “doing well but can do better?” nonsense. [laughter]

MG: [1:38:36] You mentioned the election of 1968. What did the Berkeley campus look like the next morning after Nixon was elected?

PCK: [1:38:45] Not as much for that, but generally, there were anti-war demonstrations. One of the things that I used to tell people after I graduated is going to Berkeley made me savvy about how to behave around riots. You needed to be able to find back ways into campus. You didn't go through Sproul Plaza when you were going to class because that was just absurd. That's where all the activity was, number one. And number two, a lot of the students whose parents had given them good cameras, like a Canon camera or whatever, there was a competitive sport activity called “watching the riots and taking pictures.” So it wasn't about participating in the riot. For the students, it was taking pictures. The vast majority of people that were protesting during those events were not students at the university; they were activists that had come there and some street people to use the campus setting to protest. The students that were there were primarily engaging in that student activity called “watching the riots and taking pictures.” One guy mentioned, as a demonstration of that, that he had been out taking pictures with his expensive camera that his parents gave him when the police turned around and were running their way with tear gas canisters. He tripped and dropped his camera. And he said that it was absolutely impressive that the street person behind him didn't break stride at all, came down, grabbed the camera, and ran off in a different direction. All the students knew that if you were close to one of those settings, you wore some sort of handkerchief that had egg white on it. That was a way to cut down on the effects that you felt. I can remember going into class the morning after one of those events. I came into this – because the campus had some green space in it. I was coming through one of those green space areas that was kind of a low-lying one. There hadn't been much wind, and I'm like, “Whoa,” tears and everything else. But it was all about finding back ways into campus. When they did have a student-organized – they were going to have a walkout, so we go into our engineering class, we're sitting there, and the professor's trying to be responsive. He's saying, “Well, okay, so I just want to find out from you guys. Where do you stand on the student walkout?” And one guy grumbles, “My parents paid gosh-darn” – didn't use that language – “good money for this, and we expect you to conduct the lecture.” And the other students in the class they're all going, “Yeah, we paid good money for this class.” That was the engineering attitude for the walkouts, and so on. I wasn't going to miss class. Anyway, different attitudes. Whereas when I was off-campus in the apartment with classmates, they walked out. They did. They didn't attend class. And I'm like, “Well, okay, whatever.” I am. In my first year, my roommate was an Asian American. She was going to school to eventually

become a pharmacist. That was what her degree was going to eventually be. I think initially, there – what is that? Now I can't remember the name. It doesn't matter, I guess, the marriage of chemistry and biology.

FK: [1:43:48] Biochemistry.

PCK: [1:43:50] That's right. She was going to go on to get a degree that worked towards what was needed for a pharmacist. She would either go home over to San Francisco, or her mom would come over to get her laundry every week. I was doing my own laundry. But some Asian American families are very protective of their young, and her mom was. Her mom did not speak a lot of English. They would converse in Cantonese, the two of them. My first two years in college were [living with] an Asian American. When I went to an apartment [in] my junior year, there were two of her friends that were looking for an apartment. In my junior year, I shared an apartment with two Asian Americans. When that discussion of that walkout took place, or the activities that were going on on-campus, the two Asian American ladies were talking with each other; a lot of times, they'd say rather derogatory terms for a white person or a Black person in Cantonese, and they'd use that term whatever or was. Or they'd say, "This white guy, this white guy." We're sitting around, eating dinner, and it's "white guy" this and "white guy" that. I'm like, "Well, wait a minute, folks. What about me?" And they said, "Oh, well, we don't view you as white. We view you as beige." Is this a good thing? I don't know. Anyway, I loved the cooking that one of those two ladies could do – Asian cooking. She was very, very good at it. She would serve traditional Chinese food. I can remember this one time I was eating something, and I bit down on something, and it was fresh ginger. I was like, "Whoa." Okay. Now I know if it's this kind of ivory color, and it's been sliced into little rectangles, don't eat it. Thanks for that. Anyway, I remember her talking about me being beige. "Well, you're not white; you're beige." But I would also – again, I grew up frugal in a family like mine. If we had any leftovers, I would put them in an old cottage cheese container and take them with me to school to eat for lunch. That included steamed eggs and fried rice, which are both considered, at least in their culture, to be throwaway dishes, right? Kind of like fries. They were ashamed that I was taking that with me to campus to eat as my lunch. They didn't want me to let anybody else see it. [laughter]

MG: [1:47:41] It sounds like you had many interesting cultural conversations and experiences at Berkeley. I'm curious to hear more about the curriculum and the classes you were taking. Maybe that's where we can pick up next time. I'm aware that we're a little low on time for today.

PCK: [1:47:57] Time for kid logistics.

MG: [1:48:00] Yes. When we pick up next time, I'll ask you more about the classes you were taking, your degree, and then, of course, joining the NOAA Corps.

PCK: [1:48:27] What day were you thinking of?

MG: [1:48:30] Let me pause the recording so that we can take a look at our calendars.

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Reviewed by Molly Graham 7/15/2023  
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