

Molly Graham: [00:00] This begins an oral history interview with Pam Chelgren-Koterba for the NOAA Heritage Oral History Project on April 18, 2023. The interviewer is Molly Graham. It's a remote interview with Pam in Bellingham, Washington, and I'm in Scarborough, Maine. Pam, last time, we talked about some of your sea and land assignments with the Coast Pilot. We left off talking about your second sea assignment on the Peirce, and then you talked about going to the Pacific Marine Center. Can you remind me when this was?

Pamela Chelgren-Koterba: [00:35] I left the Peirce – let me look at my little calendar. You're going to be able to grab that from there. I wasn't going to do it by month. I'll do it by season. But I left the Peirce in the summer of '79 for an assignment that started between the summer and fall of '79 in Seattle. I had a girlfriend who was another officer getting transferred at the same time from [the] East Coast to West Coast. We traveled together. She had a Datsun 240-Z, and I had a little Honda station wagon. [laughter] I was dragging my Hobie Cat. I was very much underpowered compared to her. Her field party – she had a survey field party that she was the chief of. I drove my Hobie Cat from the ship in Norfolk down to Florida, where her field party was. We engaged in a little race there. [laughter] Everybody else out there– the Hobie Cats – were a little bit kind of askance at the amount of wind, but Kathy and I were loving it. I can't remember if we capsized or not, but it wasn't something I worried about. I didn't mind capsizing even a Hobie Cat, and they're kind of difficult to get back up. But she and I did manage to do okay in the race. I don't think we came in first. But there were a lot of others out there that were really spilling a lot of wind. As a matter of fact, I think we were up on one hull, and she was out on the trapeze. Another gust came, and it threw her into the mainsail. That meant that we capsized. That was my recollection anyway, but we were able to get it back up and continue on.

MG: [02:57] Where was this race taking place?

PCK: [03:00] Florida has a very large intercoastal waterway. My recollection is it was something like the Banana River. Anyway, it was in the intercoastal waterway system. I don't remember exactly where she was operating at the time. I think that was in the Cape Canaveral area. As a matter of fact, it wasn't the first time I met up with her on that assignment. She was surveying a little bit further north because they were opening a Naval Sub base in St. Simon, Georgia, right across the border from Florida. Her field party was supposed to be doing the survey in the area to support the submarine traffic. She was able to get all of the inside work done. She couldn't get the outside work done because of the weather, and all they gave her were small boats. She wanted to borrow one of our Jensens. We had thirty-foot aluminum turbo diesel Jensen survey launchers. I asked the captain. He said, "Well, ask the chief boatswain and the chief engineer. If they're okay, I'm okay." So, we did that. She flew down with two members of her party, and they drove it back up to wherever they were stationed at the north end of Florida. When they were done with it, I and two of our crew flew up and drove it back down the intercoastal waterway. It was kind of fun. When I finished that assignment, Kathy and I drove across country and stopped at various motels along the way. You're supposed to make six hundred miles a day. That's what they give you time for. [laughter] It's a long day. The only time I passed her was when we were coming out of the Rocky Mountains into Provo. It was snowing. She slowed down, being the cautious, good-judgment kind of person. I, on the other hand, took advantage of the circumstances and the weight behind me and managed to pass her. That was not the wisest thing I've ever done. But we ended up in Seattle. I ended up selling her

the boat because, in Seattle, after I'd been there a couple of months, I bought a twenty-nine-foot sailboat that was meant to be a cruising sailboat. She bought the Hobie Cat. In Seattle, my assignment was to perform what they call a pre-processing review. It's kind of like an initial QC [quality control] check on the surveys coming off the ships. There wasn't time for me to do each and every survey coming off the ship. I kind of kept tabs with the junior officers [JO] and the survey techs on the ships. If there was somebody that wasn't quite paying attention to the standards we were supposed to abide by, that was the survey that I reviewed. [laughter] I didn't do every survey.

MG; [06:48] What would happen if it needed more corrections?

PCK: [06:55] What I would do is, there were procedures and standards that we were supposed to abide by, but I actually took those, and because of my engineering background, I assessed what the actual impact on the survey was because ultimately, our surveys need to meet IHO standards, International Hydrographic Office, standards to comply with that for nautical charting. What that amounts to is, first of all, the surveys are done at twice the scale of the chart, so you got a little bit of wiggle room. Things that are floating, you get a millimeter and a half horizontally, and depth variance of one percent at the scale of the survey. If it didn't exceed that, then we'd just write them a little – “Oh, by the way, you shouldn't have done this, but we're accepting the survey.” I never rejected any of the surveys. But there were a couple – not an insurmountable number – that I had to send back under my boss's signature – “You really shouldn't have done this, but we're accepting the survey.” At the same time that I was doing that, we were holding – on the West Coast, we were holding the hydrographic survey training that I had done in Norfolk. I was the assistant training officer. I loved that – taking these junior officers out and showing them the ropes. They gave us one of the Pacific Marine Center's spare Jensens out of the pool of Jensens that were assigned for the ships on the West Coast. That was my activity while I was there. The other thing that I don't think I really mentioned probably became obvious when I was talking about what I was doing in each of these locales. But since my college life, I had a pretty much ongoing interest in boating, primarily sailing. When I was on the Peirce, I bought that – well, actually, prior to that, at the tail end of my Coast Pilot assignment, I bought that Hobie Cat from a Coast Guard officer and pretty much took it out for the most part with this lady that was a wife of one of the other officers. She and I would go out to the Chesapeake Bay [laughter] and sail around out there. I traded my Hobie Cat in for – you can get a marine mortgage on – a bluewater cruising boat, and I would take that out in Puget Sound. I loved to take people out on about. At one point, that same lady Kathy and I – I got qualified as a diver on the West Coast. We took my sailboat up to the San Juan Islands and did some just cruising around but also diving in particular locations. I'll never forget; we came into Friday Harbor after having dove on whatever it was we dove on. The place that you could refill the tanks was at a hardware store up the street. We took our tanks up there, and we were still wearing our dry suits because it was cold and rainy. We got the tanks refilled. And then we walked back, and there was a sandwich shop along the way. We walked in there in our dry suits. The guy behind the counter says, “Is there something you need to tell us about water levels?” [laughter] Anyway, we finished cruising and came back. But I'd take my family – I had local family – and I'd take other NOAA people out on the boat. I had one bad judgment call coming back down on that trip that Kathy and I were on. We wanted to anchor up for the night, just the south end of the Port Townsend Canal. I drove until I could see that the slope come up because there was a big tide

flat there. Then I turned right around and went back. On the echosounder, I could see it dropping off. Then I had her throw the anchor out, and I put a good amount of scope out because you're supposed to. Well, I was doing that on a high tide, and so in the morning, we both wake up immediately when we can hear this scrape, scrape, scrape, scrape. We're like, "Oh my gosh." So, I jumped up, turned the engine on, and it was too late. We were stuck. We had to wait out the tide until it got to be another high tide to be able to get off. We were running back and forth to the beach, getting any piece of wood to try to brace the boat. The lower the water level got – I could hear the dishes breaking inside. I was living on the boat at the time. So that was not a good thing. I was just so – *ugh* – upset with myself. Here, this guy comes walking out from the beach on the tide flats, and he says, "What are you guys doing?" [laughter] I'm just so upset with myself. I won't say anything. I'm just steaming. And Kathy says, "Well, we got caught by the tides." And the guy says "What's a tide?" [laughter] Anyway.

MG: [13:18] Did your coworkers at the PMC give you a hard time about that?

PCK: [13:24] I didn't spread the news around. [laughter]

MG: [13:28] Good call.

PCK: Yeah, really. We had some sailing adventures with my boat. I did, in my next assignment, get Kathy and one of the quartermasters off one of those ships to help me take it down to San Francisco from Seattle. Like I said, I lived aboard it in Seattle primarily, and then when I went down to San Francisco, I wanted my boat. The government won't move a boat for you, by the way. It was really necessary that I take it down myself. We did that. The sailboat had a one-lunger diesel engine Bukh Pilot-10. [imitates engine] [laughter] We did prepare for the trip. I pulled out all the nautical charts, read the Coast Pilot, and we planned the trip. There was a fair portion of it that was under power because we did it in August. But when we came into San Francisco, Tamalpais Bay and Point Reyes is just north of it, and when we got abeam of Point Reyes, it started to get really foggy because August in the San Francisco area is primarily known for the offshore fog bank, that gets blown in by the afternoon winds. Inside the bay, it might be clear most of the day, but offshore, there's that fog bank. Well, we anchored up on the south side there. Drake's Bay, I think that was called, on the south side. We figured we'd go in the next day. Well, we woke up, and it was just as foggy as it was the previous day. So I said, "Well, let's give it one more day because we're ahead of schedule." When we woke up the next morning, it was just as foggy. You're like, "Oh, man." On the radio, we could hear that the local traffic was using us as a landmark. I said, "We're out of here." A sailboat like that – all I had was – the quartermaster had brought his little RDF – radio direction finder – box and the fathometer. I didn't have any other navigation. Well, we had the charts, but that's all visual. We had the echo sounder and his RDF. I said, "Okay, we're going to navigate by depth." So from where we were, the third crewmember stood on the bow with the horn. He was sounding the horn every two minutes, Kathy was standing by the echosounder, giving me the depths, and I was driving the boat. We were just going to head in. As soon as we hit – they locally call it Potato Patch Shoal. A cargo ship from Northern California lost its cargo of potatoes in the early part of the century – also called Four Fathom Bank. Anyway, as soon as the depths started coming up, I turned to port until it dropped off again. And entered Bonita Channel. We just use the depths to

navigate by – and when we came out under the Golden Gate, then the fog had lifted in that immediate area. It was just gorgeous. Just gorgeous.

MG: [17:30] Was your next assignment in San Francisco?

PCK: [17:33] Well, that was the reason because my next assignment, going from the – where am I? Yeah. The late fall of '81 to June of '84, I was the chief of the Pacific Hydrographic Party, which was at the time in Redwood City. Our only move – the Pacific Hydro Mobile Field Party was moved way down to Palo Alto from Redwood City. It was as far as we made [it] because we were surveying the South Bay. We had a jet-propelled aluminum boat; I think it was a Jensen. We had smaller boats, whalers and such, and two office trailers, a decent-sized one and a little one. I was there, like I said, from late '81 to the summer of '84. When I was there, I had a junior officer and three GS employees. I'd be in the office, doing processing and taking care of administrative stuff. I only went out very infrequently. I was also one of the two divers. The other officer and I were certified NOAA divers. That's where I discovered that some of my dives that I'd done over the years had done some damage to my ears because one of the things we were doing as part of the survey was validating or disproving submerged stuff. The only way you can get stuff off the charts is you have to be very, very thorough, pretty rigorous. We were doing circle searches. We'd have a hundred-foot line, and my JO would be out of the end. He was in better shape than I was. I would be at the midpoint, and we'd have it either tied off or attached to a weight at the center of our circle search. Most of the diving that I did in San Francisco was zero visibility. You have to have a good sense of what's "up" in zero vis. I discovered on a particular dive after I'd been doing it for a while that I no longer had that. I had what they call alternobaric vertigo. I was going down to do the circle search. As I was going down and clearing my ears or attempting to clear my ears, I couldn't tell which way was up. This was an activity that we had scheduled around the tides and currents and our schedule for other things. I was like, "Oh, man. Do I go back up and have to try to descend again?" I figured, "Oh, to heck with it." I just pushed all the air out of my buoyancy vest, sank to the bottom, and sat there until the sense of vertigo went away. We did the circle search just fine and disproved that there were any objects there and then came back up. On another dive, as a matter of curiosity, one of the things we do is compare our work with prior surveys. Up in this one locale, a stake was found, a piece of wood. It didn't merit being called a piling; it was skinnier than that. We did our circle search, and – son-of-a-gun – we found it. It was pretty rotten, and it was just a stake. What does my junior officer do? He's a pretty hefty guy. He comes over to the thing, and he literally pulls it out of the bottom. I was like, "What? What are you doing?" And then I thought, "Well, of course, we don't want a hazard in the water, and then we can say we found it, and we destroyed it." But my immediate reaction was kind of funny. Anyway, on this one dive where I had vertigo, I was concerned enough that I went over to – there was a Navy hospital up in the Oakland Hills, and I went over there. The ENT [ear, nose, and throat] doctor said, "Well, what you're describing does sound like you've had some inner ear or middle ear damage. And to be honest with you, there's not a whole lot we can do about it. We could do exploratory surgery, but that in and of itself can be damaging." [laughter] I was a lieutenant commander at the time, so he knew I was an officer. I was there in uniform. He said, "If you can give this activity up," because some people in some of their job titles, you'd be out of the service if that was the case. And I said, "Oh yeah, I can give it up." [laughter] He says, "I would just recommend that you not do any more scuba diving."

MG: [23:41] Was that the end of your diving experience?

PCK: [23:45] You'd think so, wouldn't you? Anyway, [laughter] I still loved the proficiency diving. I'm kind of a lesson in why it's good to have good safety judgment. Maybe not the best. Maybe not the best. I was there at that assignment for – that was until the summer of '84, June of '84. In the fall/winter of '83, I met my husband in a seminar that he and I were both in. I found out he had a yacht repair business. Well, I had a yacht, so I invited him out sailing. He was crewing on Quarter Tonner's at the time – racing. I thought, "Whoa, this will be good." We went out. I had been classically trained, and so I set up on a close reach. He said, "Do you mind if I play with the trim?" I said, "Oh, yeah, by all means." A little tweak here, a little tweak there, we picked up a knot and a half – I was in love. [laughter] We did get married in June of '84. He was willing to move with me. I said, well, "The government doesn't move boyfriends' stuff. If we're going to do this, we got to get married." This conversation was taking place in the Pam Pam restaurant in San Francisco. He continues to swear that he was outnumbered three to one. We scheduled our wedding ceremony for June. After the ceremony, we had only a day and a half down in Monterey for our honeymoon. He swears that it was really a "huh" more than a honeymoon. Then we drove across country because I had been assigned yet again. The next assignment was back east in the Associate Administrator for NOS's [National Ocean Service] strategic planning office. Remember, my degree is in engineering, and one of the things that people sometimes joke about is that you don't want to rely on whatever papers or things that are drafted by engineers. It can be difficult. But I learned a lot. I represented NOS and its priorities in some of the NOAA-wide fleet allocation meetings, which could be kind of a knock-down-drag-out if you're not careful. I also was approached when we were back there by another lady in the Commerce offices. She had half a dozen girlfriends that wanted to rent a Friendship. The Friendship sailboats – have you ever seen those? They have a wishbone boom, so it's even easier tacking these things than a regular sailboat. She had a crewing background, but none of these other ladies had any sailing background. I talked to her about her background. I said, "Okay, well, I'm willing to skipper it. But I am going to skipper it, so when I give directions, the other ladies need to understand that they need to follow them for safety reasons." So we did. We rented the boat. We got there late. It was out of Annapolis. Got there late on a Friday afternoon or whatever. It was hot. It was the summer. We just pulled off the dock because they didn't want to stay there overnight. Wanted to get underway to do something. I wasn't going to sail across the Chesapeake at night, though. I thought that was too ambitious for them. We anchored up. Some of them wanted to sleep on deck. I said, "Okay, well, we're going to tie you off." So, on each one that wanted to sleep up there, I had them tie their wrist, and then I attached a couple of them to the mast, a couple of them to other hard objects on the deck, whatever was convenient. I said, "That's so if you go over, we have a line to at least know where you are." They didn't object. We went over to St. Michael's and anchored up there for lunch onshore at one of the oyster houses, came back, and then sailed back across. That was a fun experience. Anyway, I represented NOS's priorities at some of these NOAA-wide meetings. There was this one – the admiral – yeah, he was the admiral in charge of the fleet at the time and was in an office in our other NOAA offices. I think it was still over in Rockville. I don't think they'd moved yet. I came over to talk with him about something. It gets to be lunchtime. He says, "Well, I'm going to eat my lunch now." I said, "Oh, okay." Well, Frank had been working at a seafood distributor company in Alexandria. The admiral pulls out his sandwich, and I pull out

my lunch, and I go, “Oh, lobster tails.” [laughter] He said, “What?” I said, “Well, I’ve got two. Would you like one?” “Oh, I couldn’t.” “No, seriously, I’ve got two. You want one?” “Well, I couldn’t.” “Really? You sure?” “Okay.” [laughter] It didn’t take that much convincing. Anyway, I was in that office from the fall of ‘84 to the summer of ’86.

MG: [31:01] Who were you working with and under? I’m curious about what the nature of this work was like.

PCK: [31:05] Well, strategic planning. One of the tasks they gave me was to write up an assessment of how much of the work on the East Coast and Gulf Coast could be done by a mobile field party instead of a ship. Ships are a lot more expensive than a mobile field party. I did the assessment based on how much of the work was inside versus outside and how far away it was from the coast as far as being able to support a mobile field party because you have to have infrastructure there. If there’s no infrastructure, kind of like Alaska’s coast. In many of the places, you really do need a ship if you’re having manned operations there. I did that assessment by having volumes of the Coast Pilot, the charts, and all that, and just going through and working this up. Then I turned it in. That was the kind of project they would give me. From there, I went out to the *Discoverer* as the Ops Officer. Before each of these times going back to sea, they would put us through the refresher training at Kings Point. Be that as it may, I was on the *Discoverer*, and we had oceanographic and meteorological cruises for the scientists. I would work directly with the scientists on their needs. We also did, on our own, some multibeam surveys. I actually have – if I turn off my background, you can see the survey of Monterey Canyon. [Editor’s Note: Pam is pointing out the survey sheet on the opposite wall of her office.] Actually, over there’s the – I wonder if I can do that easily. Can I do that easily? My background. Blur my background. Choose – here we go. This is where I can turn it off.

MG: [33:29] I see, yes.

PCK: [33:30] It’s kind of hard to see, but the really steep, really steep slopes on the order of magnitude of the Grand Canyon, only it’s underwater. Similarly, the bathymetric map that they made out of it. [Editor’s Note: Pam is pointing to the bathy map mounted on another wall in her office.] My husband’s screen is in the way, but you can see it goes from here up to there. We did the offshore work on the *Discoverer*, and the *Davidson* did the nearshore work. That was the only project that we did on our own. The rest of them were scientists that were onboard.

MG: [34:27] Was that on the West Coast?

PCK: [34:31] The *Discoverer* was a West Coast-based ship out of the Pacific Marine Center. We did some bathymetric multibeam surveys off the Washington coast, and then we went down to California. The technique – actually, a technique I learned when I was in advance of when I was on the *Peirce*, I learned from a very experienced officer that when you’re driving a vessel that big, and you need to make a sharp turn, and you’re a twin screw, if you drop your inboard screw – inboard for the turn – you will turn quicker, and you can apply more rudder, which turns you even faster. It doesn’t cause you to heel as much. We were doing that on our East Coast surveys, so you wouldn’t have to do a modified Williamson Turn in order to start the next line. When I was on the *Peirce*, they had a little contest going to see how quickly they could make

those turns. Well, I applied that. That was on a – I think the *Peirce* was 163 feet or something like that. The *Discoverer* was 303. It's a big ship. If you were to reverse that screw, that's called a *Destroyer* turn. But we didn't do that; we just brought the inboard screw to not being propelled and came about. But multi beams, one of the things they need to do – this is getting a little technical. There's the beam that's going straight down, but the ones that come out to the side, the beams actually get bent at the different water layers. It's called ray bending. If you've ever done diving, the surface layers may – or you might have experienced this in an inland lake. The surface waters may be warm, but you get to a certain level, and *boom*, all of a sudden, that is cold. Well, that's where the ray bending takes place. We'd have to do a very precise Niskin cast and XBTs, the [expendable] bathythermographs, to characterize the water, so it'd account for the ray bending. Even though we worked that out – because we were doing patch tests to calibrate the system – if you came about really sharply like that, you've got your pitch, you got your roll, and you got your yaw. The pitch and the roll are being accounted for with an accelerometer that's onboard the vessel. But the yaw is being accounted for with your gyro compass. Well, we had a commercial gyro compass like most cargo vessels have. The Navy's got a completely different kind of gyrocompass, [an] order of magnitude more accurate. You got to let the poor thing settle out. We were doing our patch test, and it wasn't settled out. We had to stop doing those really sharp turns because it was just ruining the patch test. And then secondly, I had to have – my engineering background only came into play occasionally during my career. But one of them was when I was trying to resolve some of the discrepancies with the multibeam. In high school, you learn trig, and [in] college is when you have to do the three-dimensional trig. I was trying to resolve the correctors in my head about the roll versus the pitch versus the yaw. I was getting too confused. [laughter] So I turned to a junior officer, an ensign [who] had just graduated as a physics major. I went, "So, Ron, when we're ..." [laughter] He would go, "Oh, no, it's not like that. It's like this." I go, "Oh, okay." That's what happens when you don't use this stuff regularly. You have to depend on the youngsters that just graduated to be able to work some of this stuff out.

MG: [39:46] How long were you on the *Discoverer* for?

PCK: [39:48] I was on the *Discoverer* from the fall of '86 to the summer of '88. When I showed up – the other thing I did when I was in San Francisco and so I had had it with me during the East Coast and then on the *Discoverer* – I had a motorcycle, a BMW motorcycle. As a matter of fact, when I made that cross-country trip, I was by myself on my motorcycle. I'd get these strange looks when they realized it was a woman riding by herself on a motorcycle. I had the whole trip – back in those years, I did the TripTiks from AAA and worked out the plan. I'd ride for an hour and a half, stop at a rest area, stretch my legs, ride for another hour and a half, stop for a meal, ride for an hour and a half, stop, stretch legs, another hour – I could get in at least six hours of riding. If I still felt spunky after supper, I might ride another hour and a half, but no more than that. And then literally using the TripTiks to figure out where to stay. But I did get some strange looks [laughter] when I was on – it was all interstate. I didn't go off the interstate because I was having to make the timeline. Making that timeline of six hundred miles a day on a motorcycle every day, I ended up using a little bit of leave en route.

MG: [41:34] Where would you keep your motorcycle?

PCK: [41:38] They let me keep it. I lived on the ship. That was the other I forgot to say. When I showed up on the ship and checked in, I parked my bike on the base there and walked down. They had me already on the roster for standing the OOD watches, officer-of-the-day watches, there in Seattle, but they have not yet gotten me a bunk. It was like, “Wait a minute. I'm already on the watch list. But you don't have a stateroom for me yet.” I said, “This doesn't work for me.” They just assumed that I would be living ashore. Uh-uh. Frank was still on the East Coast. I wasn't going to get a place to live. They sorted that out pretty quickly.

MG: [42:40] During that time, were you able to go to the East Coast to visit Frank? It's a long stretch of time to be apart.

PCK: [42:46] Oh, no. He came west. He came west occasionally. We figured out – when I finally finished with my career – no, when I got off the ship, we figured out that we had been geographic bachelors more than co-habs. It took the better part of my shore assignment when he had moved west for us to actually get up to fifty percent. The life of a married couple where one gets moved around a bunch.

MG: [43:31] Early in your relationship, what were those conversations like about what to expect and how to negotiate the distance?

PCK: [43:38] Well, I told him. I said, “What you're signing up for here is I move every two to three years, and I'll have a sea assignment where I will not be around.” He was going for his – when I met him, he had the yacht repair business. He sold that. And then, when we moved to the East Coast, he was going for a master's in business administration. Previously in his life, he had been going for a master's in art. He didn't quite finish. He needed to do a dissertation. So he's the proud owner of two almost masters, ABT, all but thesis. [laughter] He was very busy with not only coursework but he was employed. Like I said, on the East Coast, it was the seafood company for the majority of the time, although he did get a job working in a lab at the University of Maryland. It was an astronomic lab. And then, when he came out west, he ended up working for a commercial real estate developer. Boy, he made some good money there. [laughter] Then he had his own energy conservation business. He was converting multifamily buildings from old standard incandescent lights to more modern lights, pitching those conversions to the building owners. He had a business doing that. He was occupied with the various jobs that he had. When I was out at sea, I would call in. When I was ashore, I'd make periodic calls. We'd talked with each other at least a couple of times a week, except when I was on the Discoverer; we were only ashore one time in a month for about five days. Unfortunately, on that ship, when I was doing the – besides doing the stuff on the West Coast, those two surveys that we did on the West Coast in Washington and California, we did a project for the Navy that did extend out to the Western Pacific, and we put into Guam. We'd been out to sea for a month. My phone call wasn't the first place that I stopped. It was a payphone inside a bar. I was talking and maybe not completely coherent when I screamed, “Oh my god, look at the size of that bug.” It was a palmetto bug, or a roach. It was Barney's Beach Hut. One of the things the locals said was Barney's Beach Hut was one of the few structures that was improved by Hurricane (Typhoon) Dan. Anyway, sailors ashore. We had that work for the Navy. And that was where, when we put into Guam, I had that little tale about diving on the Japanese Zero wreck. As evidenced by my not-good judgment, [laughter] I still continued to dive. But that was almost my



last dive. The only dive I made after the Japanese Zero was after I'd gotten off the ship. When I got off the ship, my husband and I bought a floating home in Seattle. About a year into our ownership of it, he dropped something – the lid to the barbecue. I convinced the guys out at the dive office to lend me a tank. In zero visibility diving, I picked it up. As long as I was down there – it wasn't quite zero vis. It was maybe half a foot, so you had to stick your face really close. I also found a little five-pound hammer; the handle was the only thing sticking out. Given I'd found that, Frank said, “Well, I've lost a lot of mechanical pencils.” I went, “Forget it.” [laughter] Not in the ooze down there. Anyway, I'm jumping ahead. I'm jumping ahead. The *Discoverer* – mostly scientific cruises. We even were doing cruises on the vents, those hydrothermal vents, and we'd do Tow-yo's with our sensors. It was a camera sled that had a bunch of other equipment on it. And the trick was that if you saw something shallow or coming up, you needed to get the tow line in. Well, if you're bringing the tow line in, that's getting it to the object quicker. It was always a bit of a challenge. Occasionally, the camera tow would come up with stuff in the frame. This one time, it was just this wonderful big hunk of pillow basalt. Nobody else wanted it, so it's up in my living room. [laughter] Working in the deep ocean can be interesting because when you get off the shelf, you're generally in – I'm going to get my units of measure off. I should have looked this up. But let's just say for the point of illustration that it's two thousand fathoms, about six thousand-ish meters. But when you're working in that deep of water, some of those areas that are seismically active may have things that are shallower than that. On my very first ship, the *Oceanographer*, the captain had it in his night orders – the captain writes for when everybody else is going to bed in the middle of the night. We were in some waters that had been not really well-sounded by anybody, so a lot of blank space. He had in his night orders that in these two thousand fathoms (six thousand meters), if the water soundings lessened to three hundred fathoms (a thousand meters), we were to get him up. If he wasn't up there by the time it hit one hundred, we were to bring back the engines. I looked at that, and I was like, “Whoa. Really?” [laughter] I didn't think there was any likelihood of that. But in the middle of the night, when I came up to pick up the watch at 4:00 a.m. – you stay in four on, eight off. At 4:00 a.m., I came up, and they were still at half speed. It came up to, let's just say, fifty fathoms before it went back down. Holy mackerel. You occasionally do come across these things because the ocean isn't completely mapped. They have that active project to try and do it. I think they're calling it [Seabed] 2030. We were looking at these hydrothermal vents not for the purpose of that, but rather, they were investigating characterizing the waters down there, what kind of heat load they were putting out, and what the materials were that were coming out. We'd some sampling nearby, and the cameras that were there – the Alvin was on a Woods Hole ship next to us. The Alvin was going down; they were looking at the stuff down there. They had these big old spider crabs, really long-legged white things, and big tubular worms and such. Anyway, it was pretty fascinating to see some of the footage. But we were just there as the platform. On those other surveys, the multibeam surveys, it was our project. You get a lot more engagement from your officers on the ones where they're involved. But some of the junior officers can be ambitious, even though it may not be their specialty. [laughter] They may be getting interested for semi-strange reasons. We were doing core sampling in some of the areas. The scientists only needed a certain amount of those cores, and there'd be a lot of mud left over. Well, one junior officer figured that was pretty cool. He saved up the leftover mud out in the – I think in the – Oceo [oceanographic] lab, and near the end of the project cruise, they had a mud fight. [laughter] This is too much. We really enjoy having younger people aboard when some of us get too staid. That was really demonstrated on the Navy project. The person that was

the lead scientist was a lieutenant commander. She was actually the wife of one of our officers. But a lot of the crew were young, not just petty officers, but also non-rates. I mean, youngsters. I mean, folks less than twenty years old. We had to tell her to tell them there was no running up and down the passageways. We didn't have this kind of problem with our maritime wage union employees; nobody was going to be running anywhere. That was not a behavior we had to concern ourselves with. But with these youngsters ... in one sense, it was really fun or interesting to have to worry about that. I'm kind of bopping around between sea tours here.

MG: [55:56] That's okay. I wanted to ask if you ever had a chance to dive in the Alvin.

PCK: [56:02] Oh, no, no. No, no. I think one or two people from the scientific party got to do that. No, those people that were doing the dives came with the Woods Hole ship. So, no, that would not have been something that would have – they would not have offered that to an officer on a ship. There were way too many scientists. To be honest, the scientists, these folks, their real work is the data. A lot more justified for them to go down than us.

MG: [56:48] At this point, when you're on the Discoverer, you're nearly two decades into your career. What changes were you seeing in terms of the culture on board and how women were being treated?

PCK: [57:01] Well, like I was saying earlier, I was the only one on the *Oceanographer*. When I went to the *Fairweather*, I had a roommate, so there were two of us. As I left the ship, they started getting women in the crew. When I was on the Peirce, to begin with, we had one woman on board, and a fair portion of our crew were good old boys from North Carolina. She was not having a good time. I had a heart-to-heart with her when she left. I didn't closely relate myself with her because I was the Ops Officer. I had a roommate, and she was a Lieutenant JG at the time because she had been aboard already for a while. I even had to be careful how I related to her because I was in her chain of command. I really couldn't be all that friendly and interactive with that single crew member. She was in the survey department. She said, "It's not possible to endure the kind of isolation and occasional bad interactions by yourself. This just doesn't work." I talked to the boatswain, the chief engineer, and the chief survey tech and said, "Look, I'm going to advise the executive officer that the next hiring that we do this winter, that they have it be two women." The skipper said, "Yeah, no problem." The XO said, "Wait, why do you think that?" I said, "Well, because she's having a hard time. Interactions can be unpleasant if you're by yourself and really isolated. And there's really nobody for her to talk with." The XO says, "But she can always talk to me." I said, "Come on, she needs a woman to talk to." Now, remember, okay, this is the late '70s. The term that we used at the time was MCP, male chauvinist pig. Do you remember that term? And he says, "Well, you think I'm an MCP." I said, "Now look," and I gave his name. "Now, I just assume in my interactions with guys that they are MCPs. And then, when they don't behave that way, I'm pleasantly surprised." Anyway, both the boson and the chief engineer were fine with it. They said, "Look, we want people that are untrained so we can train them the way we want to for the different positions." I made a point of making sure they had at least two. When I was back to sea again – even though my assignment was the ops officer or what they call field ops – FOO – if the XO was off the ship, I was the acting XO as well as the FOO. When that happened on one of the project legs, I had an instance where there were two women in the steward's department who engaged in a fight. As XO, you have to take

care of discipline. I called them into my office separately to get what the deal was. One of them was kind of a sneaky, covert, play-people-against-each-other kind of person. Not saying that she asked for it, but she was not a straightforward person. The other one was a little bully – was not the person to do that to. So, she punched her. [To] the sneaky one, I just said, “Look, you need to get along. You're not going to have any disciplinary action levied against you, but you need to get along. I'm going to be relaying that to the XO when he gets back that you need to improve your interpersonal skills and be more positive with your workmates.” But when the bully came in and sat down, she kept explaining how this other woman had misbehaved around her, and really, she just had no choice but to – I said, “No. I don't care what it is. I don't care how it came about. You do not lay hands on anybody. That is an absolute.” She got it. [laughter] I said the minimum disciplinary action is this and such, a letter in your file, and so on, so the XO has justification if we see anything further. I'm not saying I agree or disagree with you, but you do not lay hands on anybody under any circumstances. So, that was that. You had all of the joys of having the different genders. [laughter] That was my last sea assignment, the *Discoverer*. And that was in – I got off the ship in '88. It was the one that used my technical skills as well as supervisory skills the most. But I still had another seven years in NOAA after that.

MG: [1:03:30] What was next for you?

PCK: [1:03:33] First, I went ashore to – on both of our coasts, we have a Pacific Hydrographic Processing Branch that does the initial processing that I'd been in previously as that reviewer, and now I was the chief. I was the second-line supervisor at that point. Frank was happy because he had a wife ashore. We were able to get up above fifty percent living together. I was doing second-line supervisory stuff and interacting with the folks higher up. I don't know that I'd been to hydrographic conferences before, but I did, at that point, attend one or two hydrographic conferences on behalf of NOAA's Office of Coast Survey. I didn't give any papers at those, but I did attend those conferences. I gave papers at our little regional ops officer workshops. We called them FOO workshops, plus they had the chiefs of party. I explained at one of these workshops how we used the knowledge of our North Carolinians to do an otter trawl to look for those wrecks and other obstructions. That spread the knowledge around. At official conferences, I was just representing NOAA. I was with that branch for a little less than three years. With my continuing interest in being on the water, besides having a houseboat, we also bought a rowing shell. We put it up in the eaves of the porch of the houseboat, so you could just lower it into the water and go rowing around on Lake Union. Frank and I both loved doing that. He remembers being out there with our little – I think it was called an Aero rowing shell when the University of Washington Rowing Team – nine person – went by. [laughter] “Keep out of the way.” Or coming over close to the Lake Washington Ship Canal with the salmon runs taking place. As you're rowing, you hear this splashing, and you know it's salmon that are coming into the lake. I continued to get my boating fix or on-water fix even after leaving the ship. I did make the occasional trip back east to talk with folks in headquarters. But not all that often. Like I said, that was a little under three years. From there, I got assigned to – I was mentioning HAZMAT [hazardous materials]. It's in NOS. It's in an office that does assessments and such. At the time, we called it the HAZMAT branch. When I was transferred, I drove back. I was there just shy of four years, and I was working at USCG Headquarters, although the assignment itself was NOAA because NOAA supplied scientific support coordinators [SSCs]. They had an Office in Coast Guard Headquarters. It was headed by Jean Schnider. She's a Ph.D.

oceanographer. She is retired now. She's down one county – no, two counties away from me – and we had a couple of civilian employees. We did headquarters work to support the SSCs, who worked in the local Coast Guard district offices. At the time when I went back there in late '91, the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 [OPA 90] had just been passed, and there was a lot of regulation writing. I got to participate in regulation writing. Yipee! [laughter] And I attended a couple of international oil spill conferences and gave a paper at one of them that I was the secondary writer on with a guy from US Fish and Wildlife. At the time, I was a Commander. My other commissioned officer buddies decided it was time for me to be on the Officer Personnel Board. I got to review applicant resumes for coming into the NOAA Corps. I wasn't on the Assignment Board. That would have been even more crazy. [laughter] I was really impressed with the people that were applying. I thought to myself, "Gosh, if I'd been applying now, I wonder if I would have made it." There were just a lot of really well-qualified people that were applying.

MG: [1:09:39] This was a shift in your career, this focus on oil spills and working for HAZMAT. How did you prepare for or adjust to this next chapter?

PCK: [1:09:50] [laughter] In fact, when I was nearing the end of my Pacific Hydro Branch time, I thought I'd gone as far as I was interested in going with the nautical chart surveying program. I was looking around, and the guys that were right above my office at the NOAA Sandpoint facility was the HAZMAT branch. Their headquarters actually are in Seattle. The positions elsewhere in the country are satellite positions, including the one at the Coast Guard headquarters that I was with. I just thought, "Gee, that would be interesting." [laughter] So what did I do? They had a science oil spills class I attended that they offered to the Coast Guard to train up their people and other newbie NOAA people. It was that and a firehose amount of information coming at me. Each specialty has their acronyms, but oil spill response can be really terrible that way, and to have them used as a verb. There's a safety regulation called HAZWOPER [Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response]. It's written in OSHA, and it's the training that you have to have if you're doing emergency response where there's a risk from HAZMAT. It's Hazardous Waste Operations – HAZWOPER. [laughter] They talk about being HAZWOPER-ed. But it was replete with all these acronyms. That was the biggest hurdle. I found it fascinating. My degree was in bioengineering. Yeah, I did have to take a lot of the pre-med flunk-out courses in college, so this stuff wasn't completely foreign to me, but it had been – let me see. By the time I did it, it had been nineteen years. [laughter] Oh, goodness. I just needed to learn very quickly. My boss was very supportive. She solicited from the Coast Guard and got a Commandant Letter of Commendation for me during that assignment. She wasn't so thrilled with my writing, as I said. She'd grumble about working with engineers, about their inability to write. Well, her mom was an English teacher. Even though she's an oceanographer, she was very much schooled in the right way to write, which she accused me of having no idea about. She was right. I really, really enjoyed that, doing the briefings and so on. During the regulation writing, the main one, the National Contingency Plan regulation, didn't actually get issued until 1994, even though the law was passed in 1990. Most of the other regulations had already been written. But near the very beginning of the reg writing, the EPA [Environmental Protection Agency] folks were going to write the regulations such that – now, the EPA is the lead federal agency for oil and HAZMAT spills ashore, the Coast Guard in the marine environment, and they generally separate it at the first bridge that crosses the waterway.

Supposedly equal partners in the activity are the natural resource trustees, and they're responsible for whatever their trustee responsibility species are. Right? So the National Marine Fisheries get the fish, but they also get the sea lions, whales, all that kind of stuff. Interestingly enough, sea otters belong to the Fish and Wildlife Service. Don't ask me why. Anyway, natural resource trustees are with what they call the services. You've got the National Marine Fisheries Service [and] the Fish and Wildlife Service. EPA was going to write the regulations such that they were going to be in charge of the natural resource responsibilities. The people in those two services – and Jean herself, I'm sure – went to their office of secretaries in Interior and Commerce, going, “Uh-uh, don't let them get away with it.” The people in the Secretary's office worked with EPA, and it took them two years to back away from that. [laughter] It was fun to watch that, a little bit of squabbling, but that was a lot more sedate than what I've seen in recent years amongst the poor agency people. I was there for just shy of four years. Like I said, my boss wrote me up for – got an award out of it. Then I retired after – that was '95 – almost twenty-three years. It was ten and a half months.

MG: [1:16:17] Was any of the training or work you were doing around water spills and oil pollution in response to the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill?

PCK: [1:16:31] Oh, yeah. The Oil Pollution Act of 1990 was a direct result of the *Exxon Valdez*. Direct result. They did have – prior to OPA-90, they did have Clean Water Act regulations. But with the Oil Pollution Act and the implementing regulations, they made all of the maritime traffic have to obtain insurance coverage. Because there was always a problem with some of the foreign trade in finding out who the owner was. It also made clear, as far as the oil spill response, that that would be done in a unified command, where you'd have the fed, the state, and perhaps the locals. But the responsible party was responsible for the cleanup that these other folks were overseeing. As one of my bosses in the industry said, “We propose; they dispose.” It's more efficient to have the oil spill cleanup companies plan and carry out the cleanup. Most oil companies have contractors, and these are people that are trained in and do response for oil spill and hazardous material responses. They're the ones who mostly, generally – the ones you want to have do the cleanup. You don't have the government do the clean itself. EPA is very straightforward about that, as well. They always hire contractors. What do they call them? Not smart contractors. STARS. That's it. STARS [Streamlined Technology Acquisition Resource for Services] contractors. All the companies that are doing oil spill response in marine waters that have equipment had to get licensed under – or get their permits under the Coast Guard as well. They call them OSROs, oil spill response organizations. We learned all of that. There's a different attitude amongst the different communities. You can generally assume that if you're working with an EPA person, they're going to make you do a plan that is as thorough as they require on a remediation site, where you've had plenty of time to work it out. Whereas the Coast Guard, when they're involved, it's *boom, boom, boom*, just enough to be able to assure the safety of your personnel and be as efficient as you possibly [can] on short call mobilization. So, a lot of times, different attitudes from the federal agency in charge. It is a unified command, though, so I've been – well, that would be post-career. I'll mention that when you ask about post-career stuff.

MG: [1:20:04] Yes, we'll get to that. But I wanted to get into your final years at NOAA. What went into your decision to retire at that point?

PCK: [1:20:13] Well, I was passed over the second time. Realistically, when I looked around NOAA to see, there was a time when I was Lieutenant Commander that if I had been actively interested in improving NOAA's programs technologically, I would have pursued an advanced degree. I thought about it, and I went, "Ehh." That was a decision point. You make yourself a lot less promotable if you don't have an advanced degree. To be honest, if they had kept me on in HAZMAT if I transitioned over to be a civilian employee with them, that would have been great, but they didn't have a need for that. With regard to nautical chart surveying or a nautical charting program, for me, the thrill was gone. It is an important safety responsibility that NOAA has. But at the time, I felt kind of played out. When I got passed over the first time, [it] was when I was a lieutenant commander to commander, and then when I was passed over the second time at commander – wait a minute, how did that work? I can't remember. In any case, when I was passed over – I guess it was the second time at Commander to go to Captain that I was passed over – I wasn't all that regretful about it. I thought I'd had a fair chunk of time. I was ready to move on. I didn't really have anything specific in mind except I thought I would like to work. Given my most recent experience was in oil spill response at the national level, I was hoping to get a job with a company that did oil spill response. When that second pass over happened, the next thing that Commissioned Personnel did in their communication with me was to state what their proposed retirement date was for me. I think my boss negotiated that a little bit. It was settled on as being May of '95. Afterwards, I wanted to continue working. I didn't know exactly what company or in what capacity, but in oil spill response.

MG: [1:23:06] You got out of an interesting time because the next few years were challenging for the NOAA Corps as they were being threatened with elimination. What was your awareness of that?

PCK: [1:23:19] Well, I wrote my congressman. [laughter] That was about the extent of it, I'm afraid. All I could do is watch from afar. But there was a letter-writing campaign. I did write my congressman. All I could do was pretty much just observe what was going on. I was living in Seattle at the time. When they would hold different events that retired people were welcome at, I think I was attending. But it was only – let me see. I retired in '95. I only had a year and a couple of months before I left the state, and during that time, I was job hunting. The oil spill response business was very much a growth field in the early '90s to mid-'90s. About the mid-'90s, it started settling out because the requirements that the regulations had imposed on the industry they needed to have satisfied by then – almost by then. I think some of the implementation dates were in the late '90s. I was pretty much job hunting, living in our house on the houseboat, and then that girlfriend of mine had the job I'd had previously at the Pacific Hydro branch. She wanted to contract out the Coast Pilot 9 field inspection for the Coast Pilot 9 Eastern half. Once you get to the Aleutians in Western Alaska, it's a different Coast Pilot. She was primarily interested in the Cook Inlet, so I did the Cook Inlet for her. That took up part of my spring and summer. By that time, I'd had a job offer from Alyeska Pipeline and accepted their job. In late 1996, I accepted the job, and we moved up to Alaska. Well, I moved up to Alaska. Frank was prepping our houseboat for sale. He was still in Seattle. But I moved to Alaska. It was the beginning of November, I think, that I moved up there. Of course, there was already snow on the ground. I was in temporary housing at one of the hotels. Piles of snow all over the place. I had a rental car, to begin with. I can remember in the middle of the night, the

first week I was there, hearing the snow machines running up and down the road in the middle of the night. I'm like, "Oh my gosh, what am I getting myself in for here?" [laughter] Population of Valdez at the time was four thousand. I never lived in a town that small, except when I was growing up. Remember the White Sands Missile Range base. That was that small. But this was the smallest I'd lived anywhere for forever. But the money was good, the boss was great, and I was moving up there in a multifaceted position. I was the coordinator for the major spill drills. The other thing that came in with OPA 90 was the requirement for the different spill drills. Every year, we'd hold a really big drill. Our owner companies and owner shippers would use us to have their requirements for an area drill. Even though most people only did these things once every three years, we were doing them every year. I was the drill coordinator, Incident Command System [ICS] trainer, and Incident Management Team coordinator. I'd solicit numbers from the local offices that served the Ship Escort/Response Vessel office, plus across the port was the Valdez Marine Terminal. I'd solicit people from both locales to staff the Incident Management Team. I told them it was like that "[Hotel] California" song: you can check in, but you can never check out. Once I had my paws on you, you were going to be either the primary or an alternate on the staff for the Incident Management Team.

MG: [1:28:54] Were there oil spills that you worked on in this role during this time?

PCK: [1:29:05] Let me see. Seems like a lot of drills. A lot of drills. With Windy Bay, where was I? [Editor's Note: On August 4, 2001, the fishing vessel Windy Bay struck a known rock near Olsen Island in Prince William Sound, Alaska. Despite carrying 35,000 gallons of diesel fuel, the ship sank rapidly, fortunately without any casualties. Following the incident, a response operation was promptly launched, led by the US Coast Guard, in collaboration with the vessel's owner, response contractor Chadux, and the contractor for the US Coast Guard, Alyeska/SERVS.] I wasn't in town for the Windy Bay. We had a little one at the terminal, but I don't think they asked for my help with that. I don't think I was involved in any spills per se. I can't recall any. I think towards the end of the Windy Bay, I came in to help. Oh, no. The one I did work on was the Ballast Water Treatment Facility. As these tankers are taking on oil – when you're running a big ship like that, if bad weather is coming up, you may end up putting seawater in your cargo holds to provide additional stability. Okay, now what do you do with it when you get into port? They would pump off the ballast water at the Ballast Water Treatment Facility. A lot of seawater with a little bit of oil, right? They'd put it through these treatment steps. The last step was – you had to get approval. Their whole system had to get approval from multiple federal and state agencies, and they wanted to do this one improvement. Because the agencies thought it was working okay, they did not approve the improvement. It turned out, in really, really cold weather, that the last step, which required – they had these media balls; they look like little wiffle balls. At this one little step, they would move them around with air, blow air, and evaporate off the last of the oil because they'd already gotten most of it in previous steps. Well, that last step, on a particularly cold day, blew out some of those media balls that had a little bit of oil on them. It was the winter. Of course, it's the winter. That's why it's cold. Somebody spotted the sheen. I was in the Planning Section as a technical spec because there's a thing you can do – if all you have is a sheen, you can estimate the quantity of that sheen by its color. If it's brown, that's a native color of whatever. If it becomes rainbow, it's an order of magnitude thinner. If it's silver, it's, yet again, an order of magnitude thinner. What I did was I set up a spreadsheet with logarithmic calculations. The guys that were doing the overflights came back

with their drawing of what it was on a nautical chart, and so we estimated the area extension of brown, rainbow, and silver. Like I said, I had this spreadsheet, I did the calculation, and I said, "Okay, well, I estimate it as being fifty gallons." So, the ADEC, the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, folks that were there – this one guy says, "Well, I want to see your calculations." I said, "Here, this is the spreadsheet right here." And he says, "Well, I dispute that. I don't think it was eight feet wide. I think it was five feet wide." I said, "Okay, now, let's have a little bit of background about this. This stuff's only good to the nearest order of magnitude. I'm saying it's fifty gallons, but it could be five; it could be five hundred. That's how good this estimate is." [laughter] He went, "Oh." I said, "Run my numbers. Look at my calculations." "No, that's okay." I couldn't talk anybody into going in – nobody, not even my coworkers. Nobody was going to check my math. I'm like, "Can I get anybody?" "No." That was the only spill response I worked on up there, and it was literally as a tech spec. The other ones happened where I was either out of town or something. But the Ballast Water – and wouldn't you know, it was for my technical expertise. That was background that I got when I was working with HAZMAT. I was up there for just shy of ten years. We availed ourselves [to] have the opportunity to buy a used boat in the summer [and] do a lot of cross-country skiing in the winter. That eight-hundred-mile pipeline may be considered to be an oil delivery system, but it's also a great cross-country skiing trail and some hiking. But hiking, you have to be pretty cautious about, amongst other things. You always had at least three people in the group. If they're old hands, they all know that you make noise when you're on the trail because you don't want to frighten a grizzly. They don't call them grizzlies up there. They call them brown bears; there are brown bears and black bears. There are behaviors associated with each, and how you behave does change a little bit depending on whether it's a brown bear or a black bear. Similarly, with moose, they are dumb. They don't have great eyesight. And you can anger them quite easily. You got to be careful. The month before I flew up there to start work, there was an idiot that went to a convenience store like a 7/11 – I don't know if it was a 711 – in Anchorage. He was trying to leave the convenience store, and there was a huge moose standing right outside. The idiot went to bluff charge the moose. No, no, no. It just stomped him and killed him. You don't do that kind of stupid stuff.

MG: [1:36:30] Oh my gosh.

PCK: [1:36:31] There's a lot of ways that you can needlessly die up there. Even taking precautions, there are ways that you could die. But that's a stupid way to die. I worked in that capacity doing the training for ICS, getting the team, and coordinating the drills for close to ten years. I also tracked the different exercises because we also had equipment exercises. The response operations guys would tell me what they did, and I'd make sure that we got as much credit for it as we could so that my regulatory reports that went to the agencies would give an encapsulation of all of this. But on personal time, my husband and I did a fair amount of boating, including fishing. My husband likes to fly fish. There was a pink salmon derby, a silver salmon derby, and a halibut derby. On the silver salmon derby – because we had pink and silvers that came out of the hatcheries, then they ran out to sea, and then they came back. He won one of the Silver Salmon Derby using a fly rod caught – it was a 20.2-pound silver salmon. He got the first place in a silver salmon derby, which was worth ten thousand dollars, I think it was, which I immediately – when he says, "That means I can buy a lot of stuff," I said, "Now wait a minute, how much money we've been spending on this stuff?" I accumulated our



financial information in Quicken, and I said, “We spent about ten thousand dollars on all these things, so it's really just paying that off.” Anyway, we used to do a fair amount of boating in the summer. This one time, I took out this one girlfriend that was with the Coast Guard. She had a young petty officer that was visiting in town, so he was aboard as well, as well as her son. We're fishing in the narrows for silvers and trolling. Trolling is the preferred method for silver salmon, or any salmon for that matter. We're trolling, and we had four lines out because we had five people on board. Of course, one of them was a youngster. In any case, four lines out, and fish on – okay, one's coming in, and they're using the net and all that. And double – another one, so he's using the net and getting that. Then, Agneta says, “We have a fish.” Frank yells, “That's your problem.” I think it was the Coastie that caught it – the visitor. Agneta grabs a milk crate that we have on board, and she puts it in the water and brings it back on board. [laughter] We loved to take people out. It was great. This other time, we were out there fishing. When you see a friend go by, you call on channel sixteen, right? So Jerry's calling us and saying, “Doing any good?” That's the first thing. You call on sixteen, you switch, and answer on one of the channels in the high sixties or low seventies. It's an open frequency, so everybody's hearing it. Jerry calls us on sixteen, switch, and answer whatever channel it was. He says, “Doing any good?” I said, “Well, we're doing okay.” Up there, you don't even go home until you've limited out because it's so reliable. I said, “But we've had every weekend out here for the last month and a half, and we're really getting behind on our errands at home and taking care of stuff at home. But Frank really doesn't want to do any of that while the season's on.” All of a sudden, over the radio, everybody is chiming in. “I agree with Frank. When it's the season, you fish. You could take care of any of that over the winter.” After about half a dozen of these, I say, “Obviously, this is not the place to have this conversation.” [laughter] That was pretty funny. But anyway, yeah. That was the only spill. A lot of work. Keeping track of stuff. A lot of boating, hiking, and cross-country skiing. And then it turned out [that] while I was living up there, my mom passed on in 1999, and my dad died in 2000. We went down to the service; it was in June, I think. I was really down in the dumps. Frank said, “Well, let's go out on the water.” I think the *Rainier* had been in recently, and they had talked about the Nellie Juan Glacier and how beautiful it was. That's over in western Prince William Sound. And I said, “Well, let's go on over there.” So we did. Anchored up right outside the ice flows in Derickson Bay and walked down the beach. I couldn't see the glacier from –from where we landed, it was low water, and I couldn't see the glacier. There was a sixty-five-foot granite cliff that had five to ten-foot steps in it. I was in a bit of a funk and not really in a safety frame of mind. I climbed up with a camera to the top of the sixty-five-foot cliff. I did get a couple of pictures of the Nellie Juan Glacier from up there, turned around, had the knapsack back on my back to come down, and up near the very top – it might have been the first step or the second – I lost my balance and went ass over teakettle all the way down. Frank said the last thing that happened was I went down like that, bump on my head. But sixty-five feet, pretty much. He came running over. “How are you?” [imitates groaning] He knew he was going to have to get help. We had walked down the beach. The dinghy was back half a mile away, and the radio was aboard the boat right offshore. The tide was coming in, so he grabbed my jacket and my float coat, and he pulled me up on the top of the pile of rocks, ran down, got aboard the boat, and put out a mayday. The mayday was heard by some charter boats, including a charter boat that was just kind of hanging out. There were these NOLS [National Outdoor Leadership School] instructors, these outdoor leadership things. The instructor says, “You guys are all EMTs [Emergency Medical Technicians], right?” They said, “Yeah.” And he said, “Get aboard.” Anyway, within, I guess, twenty, thirty minutes, we

had two boats and half a dozen people working on me. One of them was an emergency room nurse, and the helicopter was heading in because one of the other people that heard was a Coast Guard Auxiliarist that was out on the water. He made a mayday relay to the Coast Guard because Frank's radio transmission was not heard by the Coast Guard, not in the western part of Prince William Sound. That guy made a mayday relay, and they heard it in Valdez and called the – there was a helicopter that was stationed during the summer in Cordova to cover Prince William Sound; otherwise, all they have in Prince William Sound is one buoy tender and two small boat stations. The helicopter had been putting down from one flight. The blades hadn't even stopped turning when the Valdez office called them, and they just spun right back up again and headed my way. They heard from the Valdez office – because what the Auxiliarist told them was that I'd fallen off a cliff. They were getting their rappelling gear ready. They didn't know they didn't need it, but they landed, and this was all within about forty minutes or whatever of my fall. He comes over immediately and starts assigning this, starts assigning that, asks me questions, and so on, and puts trauma pants on me to slow down the internal bleeding [which] is what he's worried about. He asked Frank, "Are you coming?" Frank says, "No, no, I got to take the boat back." Because I'd still been responding to questions, apparently. I don't remember any of this anyway. Frank says, "Where're the keys?" I said, "They're in my pocket." The poor rescue swimmer is trying to – he can't get at them. He says, "That's your problem. We're out of here." One of the charter boat guys helped him jump the engine to get the boat started. But they flew from Derickson Bay over into Anchorage to the top of Providence Hospital and landed there. The nurse that came up to the roof landing – the first thing he did at the helipad was deflate the trauma pants. The rescue swimmer was like, "Holy crap." He didn't trust this guy. He accompanied me down to the emergency room, where they did initial emergency surgery to stop the bleeding. They just kept finding bleeders and doing whatever they do – I don't know what they do – to get them to stop bleeding. But they also put in an external fixator. It's like four pieces of rod going in either side of the pelvic girdle with an X on top to hold it in place. It's really meant merely to hold your pelvic girdle stationary while they figure out what else to do because two days later, they did the nine-hour surgery. I have a strap with seventeen pins that are holding my pelvic girdle together and a big old carriage bolt through one of the acetabulums. It was a close call. The surgeon said that a fall like that with injuries like that in the parking lot of the hospital was likely fifty percent fatal. The fact that it happened down in Prince William Sound was really remarkable that I survived. The things that happened, going on behind the scenes after that – Frank made a call from Derickson – no, somebody else called. I think when they were bringing me into the hospital, they notified my company. When Frank made it across Prince William Sound, and he was coming into the Valdez small boat harbor area, he called the harbormaster and asked for assistance. He says, "I'm going to need some line handlers. I got nobody else on board, and it's been a rather bad day." And they said, "Oh, no, they want you to go to the SERVS small boat dock." He went, "Oh, okay." So he took our boat to the small boat dock that's part of the SERVS dock. The guys just took his lines right there. They took care of him and then drove them over to the Valdez Airport, where another employee, Bruce Harding, who had a little Cessna – because the last plane had already gone for the day – flew him into Anchorage on the smaller airport – I think it's called [Merrill] Field – where another employee from Alyeska, Jane, was waiting for him to drive him to the hospital. When he got to the hospital, Steve and Donna Newcomer, a married couple that we knew in Valdez that had gotten transferred into Anchorage was waiting in the emergency room for me. So Frank wasn't by himself when he finally got there. The surgeon came in, and apparently, he was like, "Well, she

died then, and we brought her back, and then she died then. And then when she almost died then, and then we did ...”. It was a half a dozen times [inaudible] – I don't know about half a dozen. Maybe four times or whatever. But every time, Steve and Donna Newcomer were both Alyeska employees. They took care of him. They put me in the ICU [intensive care unit], and I was there for two days until they could do the longer surgery. And then a week after that, they did – I broke my pelvis in four places, both heels and ankles, a nondisplaced C-seven fracture, my elbow, and I bludgeoned open my left leg in the calf, where it opened up to the knee. A week after the primary surgery, they did plastic surgery. I was four and a half weeks in the hospital. Other Alyeska employees that were friends let [Frank] sleep in their spare bedrooms or on the floor or whatever when he came in to see me. It was, like I said, four and a half weeks in the hospital. I was three months in a wheelchair and a year and a half in physical rehab. What I have remaining is an ugly-looking scar on my left calf, interesting scars on my abdomen, and I have a “drop foot” because I broke the peroneal nerve on the right. That’s something I have to contend with because I don't have any real significant functionality in that ankle. I can push down and a limited amount of left and right. But when I recovered enough after a couple of years to try to do some cross-country skiing, we went up on this one slope. Okay, so I'm doing snowplows, and I was like, “Well, this is such a perfect slope. I should be able to stem christie.” No. I could turn in one direction, but your ankle has to be able to turn into the hill, right? I did one of those *Laugh-In* routines – that guy on the tricycle that falls over. Every time I tried to turn to the left, over I'd go. I never recovered anything on that “drop foot” phenomenon on the right. I have an air cast I occasionally wear when my ankle's giving me trouble and compression socks when I have to stand for too long, like in front of the classroom.

MG: [1:55:35] It's an incredible story. You're so lucky to be alive, in one piece, and not paralyzed.

PCK: [1:55:43] Well, there were a couple of things – I gave you earlier examples when my safety judgment was not the best. That was the worst possible example of how bad it can be if you're not behaving safely. It is a miracle that I'm alive. It's true. Frank, the local boaters, the Coast Guard, and the hospital staff are the reasons that I'm alive.

MG: [1:56:21] Yeah, thank goodness. In what ways do you think this accident has changed you or maybe changed your attitude?

PCK: [1:56:31] Boy, I tell you. When I did wake up, I had a whole appreciation for living because, literally, I had been in such a funk. My dad died within a year of my mom. It just woke me up. It really did wake me up. Also, it changed my safety attitude; things that I might have allowed to go on or things I might have done that I won't do now. Both of those things – appreciation for living and my safety attitude. But people shouldn't have to go through that to get an appreciation for living. But I do owe my life to my husband, those local boaters, the Coast Guard, and the hospital. Yeah.

MG: [1:57:36] Yeah, it sounds like the recovery was a challenge and that it took you a long time to get back on your feet.

PCK: [1:57:43] Yeah. You remember those regulatory reports that I was writing for the agencies? They said, "We're not going to worry about it being on time. Whenever she can get around to it is just fine." I also had people – remember, population four thousand. I went into the one little health food store that was there after – I was using a walker at the time. The woman says, "I remember where I was when I heard about your accident." I had dozens of people tell me that. I was like, "Whoa." "I remember where I was." I followed all of the instructions for what to do, what not to do, and how to behave. They had me on pretty heavy drugs. They had that – was it called an epidural when they stick it into your spine? It had been in there long enough that they actually needed to move it. [laughter] So the attention to detail that you get in an ICU is different than the wards. When I was moved to the ward, the level is lower because they were taking care of a lot more people. The nurse that was supposed to be assisting the anesthesiologist was the ward nurse. Frank was standing by. He would come in just about every day. He was standing over in the corner, and they were doing their prep, and then he does what does with the old epidural needle, etc. He's prepping to do the new one. The nurse says, "I can't take this," and she walks out. The anesthesiologist was like ... He says to Frank, "Get over here." [laughter] He walks him through prepping him and what a sterile field is, and you can't bend over and pick stuff up. So Frank assisted in getting the rest of that. He also would regularly bring me food for the nurses at the stations so that they'd remember him and remember me and hopefully improve the relationship. They loved seeing him, of course. [laughter] But, yeah, it was four and a half weeks in the hospital. Then, when we went back to the house, our major contractor for our company had put a ramp in at our front porch. We had a two-bedroom house, a log house, and they'd opened up the doorway to accommodate the interior doorway because the exterior doorway was fine, but the interior doorway was too narrow to accommodate a wheelchair. They'd opened it up, and it was just wall-board. And then into the bathroom as well. I would go from the bed to the wheelchair to the bathroom. And then Frank set up a little desk for me, so that within about – oh, I don't know – a week of being home or something like that, my boss had a work computer put there. He said, "I just need you to log on, spend a couple of hours, and we'll have you back essentially on the roster," so that I wouldn't have to have unpaid leave. [laughter] That was really nice as well. And I'd get those reports to the agencies eventually. I started to go to work relatively early. Work was also a two-story building, and there was an elevator. After a couple of days of that, one of my coworkers said, "Look, you should do this from home. You're set up to do it at home. Elevators aren't available in an emergency, and I'm not going to carry your sorry ass from the second floor, so you need to work from home." But man, being on those – I had a fentanyl patch for months while I was home. It was a patch. I wasn't taking it; there was a patch. But now all this controversy about – but they're all pills. Literally, I was on multiple drugs. I did have oxycontin for breakthrough pain, they called it, and whenever we would drive to Anchorage to go to a physical therapist, that elevation change would cause my – oh, the pain would start going off, so I'd be taking the oxycontin per prescription. If you're on those kinds of meds, your emotions can be a little wonky as well. They've gotten to the point where they're allowing me to also teach ICS-100. I'm there in the main downstairs room and at SERVS. Normally, the guys that show up at these – guys and gals – they're in the operations departments. One of the things they're not enthused about is training on a management system. Can you imagine how uninspiring that would normally be? I'm opening up the session, and I got – I don't know – a dozen, a dozen and a half employees there. We always start everything off – every meeting, every training session – with a safety minute. I'm sitting there, and I stand up, and I go, "And this is what happens if you don't comply

with safety protocols.” But again, I am so weepy from the drugs that I start crying. [laughter] I've never had such an attentive audience for an ICS class in my life. They were very attentive because they were worried I was going to keel over, I think. But in any case, I did get back to doing duties, even though I was a bit emotional at times. I worked there through the middle of 2006.

MG: [2:05:04] What an ordeal.

PCK: [2:05:06] What's that?

MG: [2:05:07] What an ordeal that must have been.

PCK: [2:05:09] Well, better than the alternative, of course. Once I was able to, once I was down to just a cane, I started going out in the boat again. I didn't do it when I was still in a walker, but I did when I was down to just a cane. I'd have to put my leg up because it would swell up on me, and all the blood circulation isn't as good on that side. This one time, we were over in western Prince William Sound fishing for reds – sockeyes. We're up at the head of the Eshamy Lagoon, this beautiful little spot. Frank's out with his fly-fishing stuff. We'd gotten off our boat and rowed ashore. He's going up on the boulders and stuff. I'm standing on shore trying to cast with just a spinning rod, but I couldn't take it for more than about ten minutes. I said, “Frank, I really need to sit down.” He said, “Okay, okay.” He puts me back in the dinghy. He takes the bow line and puts it around a boulder. He doesn't tie it off; he just puts it around a boulder. I'm sitting there fishing, and he's doing okay; he's catching every once in a while. Well, all of a sudden, I have a fish on. That fish drags me and the dinghy off the beach. [laughter] I'm reeling it in, reeling it in. Get it up to the side of the boat – well, I got one hand for the rod. I don't have the net with me. He says, “Well, put your hand in his mouth.” I said, “What? I'm not going to put my hand in there.” And the fish takes another run. I bring him back in, and I'm getting pulled further and further away. [laughter] But after the second time of him making another run, he's off. Yeah, that fish was going to take me out to sea. [laughter] When we did take friends out when I was in good enough shape to go out, we would go out to a particular place in the southern part of Prince William Sound. It's in a body of water where Orca [Bay?] comes into Prince William Sound. When the major water flows come in [and] going out, there's a northbound [inaudible] that's going up the sound, another one that's going east on Orca Bay. At the forty-fathom line, i.e., 240 feet, it was just the perfect spot for getting fish to come in from either –fish that were headed for either direction. We'd use our chum bucket, pick up the fish entrails from the cleaning station, and put them in the bucket. The bucket gets tied off down there right close to the anchor, so it's right there on the bottom, and it brings the fish in. So, we'd anchor – we had about three hundred feet of anchor rode with the chain and the line. You bet we had a windlass. [laughter] One day, I caught the first fish of the day. It was over a hundred pounds. We estimated it as 120. I got out of the way. I think there were a total of six of us, I think, on board. I went up to the bow, and everybody else is fishing. They're all catching their fish because, like I said, you got to limit out – and it's two halibut a day. So we're going to stay there until everybody caught their two. It was getting towards the end when, all of a sudden, I have another fish on. I had been fishing from the bow at that point, and yet I still managed to get another one. Son of a gun, it was another 120-pounder. [laughter] We took pictures of it. Later that summer, Frank caught one that we estimated was 180 pounds, at which point Frank said,

“Anything past about eighty, we're going to let go in the future because those are the breeding females.” Then we never caught one over eighty after that. But we loved taking people out. When the NOAA ships would come in, we'd invite them to go out with us if it was fishing season, which it generally was – some folks from the Coast Guard base and just other friends of ours. This one time that we were coming in with halibut, and it had been far enough into the season of halibut fishing that our freezer was getting stocked up. The coworker, his mother-in-law, was visiting. She had gone to our local grocery store, which eventually got bought by Safeway. It was another name; it was an Alaska grocery chain. She wanted to buy some fish. The guy at the meat counter just looked at her, like, “What are you lazy?” They don't bring fish into Valdez to sell. When he complained about that – when Frank and I were coming back in, Frank called him up; he said, “So, Paul, how much did you want?” And Paul says, “Well, how much do I need for six people?” And he says, “Well, just come down to the cleaning station; we can figure it out.” [laughter] Paul joked that he liked to do fishing that way. A lot of people that would come to Valdez from outside – I don't know what you call them in Maine – but when they come in from out of the area, in Alaska, they call it “coming from outside.” They would bring up their forty or sixty-quart coolers to put their fish in that they're going to take home with them. They generally have them blast-frozen at EZ freeze when they're doing that. But it'd be too heavy, and they'd find out from the airline folks how much it was going to cost. They start pulling fish out. Paul was there to pick somebody up. This one person kept pulling stuff out. He says to the airline employee, “You want it?” He [said], “I got plenty.” He turns around – “Anybody want any salmon?” [laughter] He says, “That's the way I like to do fishing.” [laughter] I wouldn't have traded it for the world, almost ten years in Alaska, and all the activities we had. We even got to watch a couple of dog mushing races up-country. DeeDee Jonrowe was pretty popular back then. You had to be careful with your film cameras, though. Well, not just film cameras, but the lenses themselves. You kept everything inside your parka because – well, you probably experience this up north. When it gets really cold, if you go from the inside of a house temperature to subzero temperature, it will fog up the lens. Plus, it takes down the batteries immediately in cold temperatures. You're like this [Pam places her right arm as if it was inside a jacket] until they're right on you, and then you bring it out and take a picture. But we were able to watch some of the Copper Basin 300 [races] – hundreds of miles. That was quite the experience as well.

MG: [2:14:12] In 2006, you retired from Alyeska.

PCK: [2:14:16] Yeah.

MG: [2:14:16] Did you move back to the Seattle area at that point?

PCK: [2:14:19] Here. We moved here. The last year that we were up there, we were looking because periodically, the oil companies have retirement/resignation programs with benefits packages to entice you. [laughter] So, I took advantage. We knew one was going to be coming up, so we started searching for something on the order of a two-three bedroom house in an area where you weren't jam-packed with everybody. We first looked in the Port Angeles/Port Townsend area. Then in Port Ludlow. We were doing our searches on the Windermere website. They didn't have a broad-based website back at the time, and you had to go to a particular realtor. Windermere had the best consolidation – and didn't do the search criteria properly and saw all

this stuff here in Bellingham and also over [in] Glen Haven, and we went, “Whoa.” For the same kind of house and the same kind of neighborhood, it was fifty-thousand dollars less for the house. We were looking in the wrong place. We started looking in Bellingham and Glen Haven and decided on the Sudden Valley neighborhood and made a bid on this house. We're the first owners of this house. Then I put my name in with a couple of those – not the OSROs, but the IMT companies, incident management team companies. The only thing that I've done for pay since moving to Bellingham has been either drills or spills, and I have done spills. I was ultimately the Planning Section Chief on the *Cosco Busan* in San Francisco. To start with, I was the Resource Unit Leader. Then, on the *Deepwater Horizon*, there were three command posts there, as well as an Area Command. In the Mobile command post, I was first the ICS instructor and Documentation Unit Lead, and hurricane planner, and then just the Documentation Unit Lead on the *Deepwater Horizon's* Mobile Alabama Command Post. But I got real tired of airplane travel real fast because they wanted me week on/week off, which meant I really had ten days/four days. I really didn't have a week on/week off with all the connections. I was an Incident Commander on some small spill drills up here in the Pacific Northwest, as well as some medium-sized drills where you had a hundred people in the command post. I played a number of different positions such that, in fact, I got myself credentialed with the Coast Guard as a Coast Guard Auxiliarist, as a Type II Planning Section Chief. It expired in '21, and I didn't re-up it. In my volunteering, with the Coast Guard Auxiliary, and with the Coast Guard Auxiliary, I hold a couple of different staff positions. Right now, I'm the Flotilla Commander with my flotilla. I can't find anybody else to replace me. I have some staff offices – I do Navigation Services at the district level, as I'm the chart updating person at the national level. And then I was a coxswain – and I just let that one go this winter – for my on-water stuff. I was a coxswain from 2008 – well, 2007 for crew, 2008 until just now. But mostly, I'm more interested now in getting back into the navigation chart issues now that we're going electronic, and there are some issues for recreational boats on what's a suitable product to use. There's a webinar tomorrow I'll be attending with my complaints list. Anyway, I'm mostly with the Auxiliary. Now, besides the Flotilla Commander, I also lead the effort to do public education on boating safety. [laughter] And then, like I said, the navigation services stuff. I also volunteer with a local scholarship board which awards college scholarships for students going in engineering and science disciplines – Puget Sound Engineering and Science Scholarship Fund. Besides being an applicant reviewer, I am also their Treasurer.

MG: [2:19:26] How were you and all these different efforts you're still engaged in impacted by the COVID pandemic?

PCK: [2:19:35] [laughter] The tail end of February, I got COVID. I've been double-shotted, double-boosted. My husband attended a little fly-fishing event, where a third of the people after the event came down with COVID, and then he so nicely gave it to me. He was only down for a day and a half. I was down for a week and a half. But it's allowed me to get good with using Zoom, and we're even doing our public ed classes via Zoom. When we have our flotilla meetings, we hold them in a hybrid fashion. So people can either come to the Coast Guard station during that one evening in the month that we do this and take over their training room, or they can attend via Zoom. Initially, when we got locked down, it took a little time to come up to speed with Zoom. Then, I'd say we were about halfway back, but it's impacted the flotilla. The flotilla used to be known for its fellowship activities and its sense of fellowship. And my people

aren't into that anymore. The people that were really supportive of fellowship have either retired or resigned. The others are just happy doing the programs that they want to do, like vessel safety checks and some of the on-water patrols and stuff. They're not all that interested or ambitious about doing fellowship-type events. It's kind of sad in that regard. But it just happened in a way that we lost that. Are we ever going to get it back? I hope so. But yeah, we ended up – there were some pretty rigorous rules the Coast Guard had us operating under. We had to take certain training, of course, be masked, [and] get permission for each and every activity that was in person. They've loosened most of that since then. It still kind of impacts us. Leftover impacts. Yeah.

MG: [2:22:17] Pam, I'm getting to the end of my questions, but I did want to ask you to reflect on your career with NOAA and what it's like for you to be the first woman in the Commissioned Corps. I recently watched your panel with the women of NOAA, and I was curious about what it was like for you to hear stories from the women that you've paved the way for.

PCK: [2:22:36] Well, I was really excited to see them and see how things were for them. I really like the fact that, for the most part, they don't see as much hesitation or occasionally hostile kind of things that I came across. But as I said in that panel, persistence was one personality quality that really served me well and obviously isn't quite as vital to be part of your personality as it was with me and some of the other early women. So, maintaining that sense of professionalism and being persistent and just dogged. I remember advising this one junior officer when she came in. She was a very beautiful woman. I said, "You're going to have trouble on the ship unless you can relate to these guys like they are your younger or older brothers. And like you wouldn't let your brother get away with crap, you don't let them get away with crap. But you do it in a loving way. Maintaining your professionalism as well." I said, "But you can't merely be professional, not on a ship and not in a remote location. You do have to have a little bit closer relationship." That was a hard lesson I learned. I thought I could merely be professional, and it really required a little bit more than that. It's very encouraging to see that the need for that has lessened, and it hasn't necessarily lessened in the other services from what I see in the news, but NOAA brings in people that are technically bent or technologically bent. It's a different part of the population. Although the crew, the maritime wage union crew, might be in that other kind of category, normally. They've been exposed enough that it has had an effect because you're drawing from a pool of people that aren't exactly modern thinkers. [laughter] But it's much less so a problem, of course, on the shore assignments. But gosh, I feel for some of the women in the other services. Oh my gosh. But it's very encouraging to see that things have gone the way that is for the NOAA women.

MG: [2:25:40] Is there anything else you want to add to the record or things that we forgot to address?

PCK: [2:25:46] Let me see. What was the other thing? There was something I had I just wanted to make sure I mentioned. I think that pretty much covers – yeah. Unfortunately, as far as putting pay to my boating life, even though that was a huge draw for me in college and on, I seem to have an ongoing sinus infection, and it's ruined my sense of balance. When the sinus infection is bad, I really don't have a decent balance, and I need to not be on a boat. And when it's okay, I can be on a boat, but there's no predicting. Sad, but true. I have to give that up,



number one. Number two, as a youngster in my early twenties, I really didn't pay safety attention to this body in a manner that would have supported it at the age I am now. One more thing after the other that I get to contend with, but as they say, any day above the sod is a good day. There are things that happened to me as a result of the actions I took and the behavior that I exhibited that – well, I wouldn't have been up that cliff, right? It was a stupid thing to do. Frank just knew he wouldn't be able to talk me out of it. There were other things I did that were stupid. I think I mentioned being in that little dinghy underneath the ship's stern as an illustration point. I wasn't paying enough attention to keep myself far enough away. There were other things like that. You're playing the numbers. As we used to say in safety training, it's a pyramid, and it's almost a ten-to-one. For every hundred near misses, you have ten minor accidents and one significant accident. I should have done it further – one-tenth, you have a fatality. It's guaranteed. Even though everybody says things like, “Well, I never wore a seatbelt when I was growing up.” Well, yeah, and we had a higher fatality statistics rate in the population as a result of that. It really isn't a nanny attitude; it really is safety-based. I would say that my appreciation of the pyramid nature of that – that, in fact, so many times of doing this, you're pretty much guaranteed a lesser number; ten percent of it being minor, ten percent of that being significant, and ten percent of that being fatalities. You're playing the numbers. It's not that you can't get away with it. Ultimately, you can't get away with it. It's part of our culture. It's part of our “get-er-done” culture. I am kind of a lesson of that.

MG: [2:29:34] I'm going to make sure my daughter listens to your interview. Pam, this has just been such a fun conversation. You're a very impressive person. I'm really glad we finally got to meet, talk, and collect your story.

PCK: [2:29:48] Oh, you're very welcome. You're very welcome. I have a bad habit of telling too many sea stories, so I'm sure my husband appreciates somebody else being willing to listen to all of it.

MG: [2:30:01] I can't believe I get to do this for a living. It's a real privilege. I'm going to pause the recording, and I'll just talk to you about the next steps real quick. Thank you so much for all your time and all your sea stories.

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Reviewed by Molly Graham 7/24/2023

Reviewed by Pamela Chelgren-Koterba 8/3/2023

Reviewed by Molly Graham 8/4/2023