

Molly Graham: This begins an oral history interview with Captain Sam Baker for the NOAA Heritage Oral History Project. The date is October 24, 2023. The interviewer is Molly Graham. I'm in Scarborough, Maine, and Captain Baker is in Scottsdale, Arizona. Well, I want to start at the very beginning. Can you tell me when and where you were born?

Sam Baker: I was born in a little southern town of Clarksdale, Mississippi, which is about sixty-five miles south of Memphis and about seven miles from the Mississippi River. All flatland.

MG: I'm curious how your family came to this area. Can you trace your family history starting on your mother's side?

SB: My mother's parents' passports to this country listed Switzerland, but I think that was just merely a stop from where they were. They arrived in New York City and took the train to Louisville, Kentucky, because my grandfather, my mother's father, had a brother there. My grandfather went into business. I don't know what it was. My mother was born there in about 1890. She had three sisters and two brothers. They moved from Louisville to Hot Springs, Arkansas. And then they moved over to Clarksdale. Why they moved to Clarksdale, I'm not sure. My mother didn't go to but 10th grade into high school because her father thought that it was enough education and that she needed to learn a skill. She became a seamstress and a very good one, not only for women but for men as well. My father came over to this country from Lithuania when he was fifteen. He had two uncles living in this country in Dyersburg, Tennessee. When you were a big kid and getting up into the age, the Russian army used to go and conscript you, and you never came home because you never lived. They got rid of you. He came to this country. Dad said he had a forty-four chest and a twenty-eight weight. He said they hired a young girl to teach him English. But he said she was so good-looking we didn't get much accomplished. Anyway, he was there for a year. Then he went over to see his uncle Simon Fishman in Tribune, Kansas, which is the westernmost agricultural part of Kansas. Uncle Simon was a wheat farmer. Dad was there for about a year. He was probably seventeen, eighteen now. He didn't like being out in a little town in a farming district. So he went to see his half-brother, Harry Baker, living in Clarksdale, and he moved to Clarksdale. In those days, you had to know about the logistics around Clarksdale. There were no roads. What roads were there were dirt. Or if there were primary roads, they were gravel that they hauled in by wagon loads. They opened the boards holding the gravel. When you traveled on it, the rocks moved with you. When he was learning to drive, he hit the brakes on gravel, and he ended up in the ditch. And he said, "That's it, I'm not going to drive anymore."

Anyway, in those days, the railroads came from Memphis going south and from Clarksdale going east to Tutwiler and Greenwood. To have a business, you had to be located either on the railroad or in the little town. The Jewish people catered to the Black people. The town was rather wealthy at the time because there were large cotton farmers who lived out in the area or lived in town with their family. There were some very nice stores; they called them department stores. In those days, it was easy to have a little store with your relative, and there were a lot of related people that came to live in the town. You had a little store – your brother or your cousin, and there were a lot of related people that came to town.

Let me diverge now as to how the Jews came to Clarksdale. Max Kaufman from Lithuania, a little town where my father was born, came to America. He didn't speak much English, but he was a tailor. I guess in New York City, in Ellis Island, they said, "What are you?" and he said, "A tailor." They said, "Landrey's department store in Clarksdale, Mississippi, needs a tailor." They must have written a sign in English on it, "Direct me to Clarksdale, Mississippi." He ended up there, and he went to work for Landrey's department store. He was a good tailor, and they liked him. He saved his money. After a year or so, he sent for Max Friedman back in Lithuania, who was his friend. Max came, and he didn't have a skill. They put a pack on his back – he was going to walk to in the fields with some cloth, sewing needles, thread, bobbins, and scissors, whatever the people needed. He just took off and walked because there was no transportation. He sold the goods, and I guess he slept in the barns at night or got a meal every now and then. He carried some food with him. Then, he came back to town on Friday night. After a while, he had enough money that he and Max Kaufman went into a feed store and a coal store that sold coal by the bag. Max got successful. Then they sent for my Uncle Harry. Then he came over; they put Max's pack on Uncle Harry, and he did the same thing. When all three of them had enough money together, my Uncle Harry opened a store, and he married my Aunt Nellie, who was the best businesswoman in town.

When my father came to Clarksdale, he had a place to stay. I guess my Uncle Harry and Aunt Nellie gave him merchandise to open a small store in the town of Dublin, Mississippi. My Aunt Nellie's sister was my mother. They got married, and my mother moved to Dublin. They had a house. My mother hired a little young Black girl named Emma, about fourteen or fifteen. Emma didn't know how to read or write, didn't know how to cook or sew. My mother taught her all that. Emma became the best cook in town. She surpassed my mother. Being Jewish, my mother kept kosher on Passover. Emma used to say, "Miss (Ida?), you say the prayers; I'll do the cooking." [laughter] She stayed with us forty-seven years. She buried my aunt. She buried my mother. She buried my father [and] my uncle. We rented out the house and built Emma a special kitchen on the back of the house. She only left after she got older, and her grandchildren in Flint, Michigan, sent for her. She said she wanted to go there [and] spend the rest of her life, and so she left.

Now, my mother had – by the time I was born, my father and a partner had a very large cotton farm of about three thousand acres. They had about half of that in cotton. Now, you have to remember that in those days, there were no tractors; everything was by the mule. You signed a contract with a family, and you wanted them to have children because you wanted each family to have about seven acres of cotton, which they could plant and they can tend to, and you didn't need anybody else to help them. You furnished all of their food, clothing, and medical expenses. Then, at the end of the year, you had a 50/50 or 60/40; you settled up, and they paid for all the merchandise that they received. So my mother was in business to supply Dad's farm with all the dry goods, the clothing, the shoes, undergarments, and blankets. My mother, after I was born – I didn't really get to know my mother until the Depression because, as a little kid, I was asleep when she went to work in the store, and she didn't get home until I was in bed already. So, Emma was my nanny.

I remember I had scarlet fever at four, and they isolated me with my mother in the bedroom. It was at Christmastime because every night, my dad would bring me home some firecrackers. I

had a shoe box, and in those days, they came in a little package about three inches wide, about an inch thick, and about three inches high. There were about twenty or twenty-five firecrackers in a package. I would take them apart so I had individual firecrackers. He bought me Roman candles. I remember after I got well – it was about New Year's. We went out on the front porch, and I had my own fireworks, celebrating. Now, Scarlet Fever affected the young boys in town. (Harden Carter?) had it, and he ended up with a heart murmur. The little (Hamm?) boy that I was friendly with died from it. I was lucky to live through it.

The next thing I remember is I was going to school. Emma took me across Cuyahoga Street. Then, I was at West Second Street, which was the only paved street in the residential area. She watched as I crossed, and then there was no street for me to cross on my way to school. I went in the afternoon class, and Mrs. Folsom was my teacher. I was a short kid, and she looked like she was as tall as the ceiling. I remember coming home from the first day of school, Emma waiting for me on the other side of West Second. I said, “Emma, I don't need you anymore. I can go by myself. I'm a big boy.” [laughter] She still watched me. I remember going into first grade. In third grade, I won the flashcard multiplication. We used to flash it, and it'd be two of us, and we'd answer it. I went home that night, and I beat my dad, who was very good at math. I really felt big then. I was a very adventurous kid.

I remember the Depression changed a lot of things. My mother lost her store. My dad lost the farm. My parents lost the house. It was the first time I'd ever seen my mother cry when the attorney said, “You don't own the house anymore.” She said, “I'm not going to move.” They agreed to pay twenty-five dollars a month until she paid it off. She did before she died. Tom Davis, next door, got a job delivering *The Commercial Appeal* from Memphis. He said, “Sammy, do you want my paper route with the Clarksdale paper, *Clarksdale Daily Register*?” And I said yes. He had 125 papers a day to deliver six days a week. The newspaper said I was too young to be a paperboy. I would work for them, and they paid me a dollar and a half a week to deliver the papers six days a week. The papers weighed almost as much as I did on Friday when there was a big circular there. I gave all my money to my mother to help out because money was tight. I got my bicycle from Tom; it was a Sears Roebuck. I paid six dollars for the bike. I gave him fifty cents a month until I paid it off. After a year, I became a paperboy. That means that I bought the newspaper from the company for six cents and sold them for fifteen cents a week. So, I made nine cents. On customers that I collected money from, I paid the newspaper four cents, and so I made eleven cents. I made a lot of money for a kid, and I still gave it to my mother until I got a little older. Then, I started buying some things.

I did very well in school, but I was a left-hander, and they switched me to right in about the fourth grade. They hit my right hand with a ruler and said, “Put it in the other hand.” It had an adverse effect; I developed cross-dominance, I had dyslexia, and to this day, I oftentimes misquote the numbers. I have to check my numbers twice to make sure they're right. I didn't stutter as King Edward when they switched him over. That was Queen Elizabeth's father. He became a stutterer. But it caused me to have trouble reading. In those days, Molly, we didn't teach phonics. They taught sight-say; you see the word apple, you say the word apple, and you had to memorize it. Later on, you could memorize it to how it was spelled, but you said sight-say. A very bad way of learning to read, except the three-letter words – Apple, ape, and other things. Well, in sixth grade, my mother said, “I think you need to join the band and play a

musical instrument.” My second sister, Judy, when she was my age, started playing the violin. I went there, and Professor Kouman was the bandmaster. He looked at my lips and everything, and he said, “You should play a clarinet.” Well, the cost was six dollars. We had money from the paper route, so I bought a used clarinet for six dollars, and I started taking lessons with him, and I joined the band. There were two bands. One was a band of just beginners, and the other band was – when you were in ninth grade, you automatically went to the band. I had a lot of other things to do. I never practiced enough. He used to say, “Sam, if you would just practice, you could be so good.” Later on in life, I found out he told that to everybody. [laughter] But we had some very good players. One of the French horn players a year below me eventually got a job with the New York Symphony.

In high school, I didn't do well in English. I failed English in the ninth grade. I didn't find out some things about myself until three months after I was married. And Janet said to me, “Sambo, you don't hear correctly. You don't hear how the words are pronounced. How could you spell something if you can't hear it?” I began to work on that. We tried to figure out why. Maybe it was because down South, we spoke very slowly, and we didn't perhaps enunciate the words correctly. That was a possibility. I'm not going to blame the switching of my left to right on that. But she also said that I was colorblind. She said, “You can buy your uniforms. I want to buy all your clothes from now on.” And she did. She was a wonderful, wonderful woman for that. I've always said, Molly, God's greatest gift to man is a loving wife, and I'll say that for the rest of my life.

Well, I finished high school, and I got a job driving Mr. Bloom on his bread truck. Mr. Bloom imported – he had a truck that went to Memphis every day and brought back Memphis bread because we had a Wonder Bread bakery in town, and that was the most popular bread in town. He also imported a lot of cakes in competition to Hostess cakes. I drove his truck all summer. It was very nice driving because in the afternoon – after about a month, he said, “You do the afternoon route. I want a nap.” It was nice because you could eat anything on the truck as long as you kept the empty container that he could send in for credit. At the end of the summer, I only had ninety dollars. I told my mother, “I don't have enough money to go to school. I'll work a year.” She said, “No. They can take your money. They cannot take your education. We'll find a way.” Well, I was originally going to Ole Miss [University of Mississippi], which was only an hour's drive from home. During scouting, I became an Eagle Scout, one of our Scout Masters was an engineer with the Corps of Engineer's office in town. The office was established in 1927 when the levee near us broke, and they built a new levee. I told him I was going to Ole Miss, and he said, “No, go to State because it has a better engineering school.”

You didn't have to register to go to school; you just showed up. I showed up at school. I registered, and it was \$144. I said, “I only have about eighty dollars to give you.” They said, “When will you give the rest of it?” I said, “When Dad settles up in December.” They said, “Okay. You need a job?” I said, “Yes.” They said, “You can work down at the stadium forty hours a month for twenty-five cents an hour.” That was ten dollars. Well, I bought my books, and registration gave you laundry, a dormitory room, and football tickets for the first semester. I don't recall paying for the second semester, so it may have been a whole year. But Mississippi State only had 2,200 people there – students – at the time. There were about twenty-five girls. We bought (chit-books?), little books about it about three inches long and wide, and it was five

cent tear-offs and ten cents and – I don't think fifteen, but twenty-five. You go down the cafeteria line; entrees were probably ten cents, vegetables were a nickel, milk was a nickel, and I ate on twenty dollars a month. My job was half of my food bill.

Our job down at the stadium was to roll ankle wraps and pass out candy after the players came back and to go out on the field and see if the coach needed any special things done. Well, the man running the stadium was a World War II Army master sergeant, and they called him "Sarge." He [was] a big guy with a big belly, and he chewed tobacco. There were four nice Black men who did all the work. They just gave me the job to give me some money. Sarge chewed tobacco, and he said to me, "Blackie" – he called me Blackie because my hair was so black. He said, "Blackie, you'll never be a man until you chew tobacco." All the Black men standing behind him shook their heads, "No, no." [laughter] Finally, one day, I gave in, and I said, "Alright, Sarge, I'll try it." So he gave me a wad, and I chewed it for about two seconds. I spit it out and said, "Sarge, I'll never be a man because I can't chew it." All the Black men started laughing.

Well, I got to know all the football players. In those days, the linemen, the heavy linemen, only weighed 190 pounds. I only weighed 120 when I went off to school. I weighed 140 when the school year was over. The county hired young men to check the cotton acreage. They would give you a map, and you had to go and see that that particular area was cotton, or corn, or soybeans, or whatever. I went to the county agent, Mr. Barnes, and I said, "Mr. Barnes, can I [inaudible] cotton this summer?" He said, "Sammy, I'm sorry, but enough people already have registered to take the exam." So, I said, "Well, can I take the exam in case somebody fails? Then you can have me." He said, "Alright." I taught my roommate how to do surveying for the exam. We took it, and I scored first, and he scored second. Some of the guys failed, and so we got a job. We needed a car. My family didn't have a car. My dad had a little truck. But I couldn't use that because he needed it. He had a friend at the Ford agency, a mechanic, and he had a 1934 Ford with suicide doors. The doors opened this way from the front. It had a V-8 engine, and it ran. It had two bucket seats but no backseat. It was transportation. That's all I needed. Dad paid for it. It was \$160. He put four new tires on there for twenty dollars. Gas was twelve cents a gallon. He had to give me money because I didn't get paid until, I think, about two weeks afterward. I worked six days a week for five dollars a day. Five dollars was my expenses for the week. I could buy a can of sardines for a nickel and a box of crackers for a nickel, and that was my lunch. Sometimes, the farmers would ask me if I wanted to have lunch with them, and it was always a pleasure because they ate well. I remember distinctly one farmer went out with me in the morning, about 10 o'clock. He said, "Sammy, it's just too hot for me. Come into the house for noon, and we'll have lunch." When I got in there, he had a two-door refrigerator that he had opened. He put a seat right in the center and closed the doors around him. That's the way I found him when I went for lunch. One farmer was a great guy. He had a house that was very colonial. His grandfather was the governor of Mississippi. His wife had antiques. He showed me their downstairs, and we ate out on the porch. It was a magnificent lunch. I made lots of friends. I had one problem. Later on, towards the end of the area, after we'd surveyed, the office determined how much cotton they had planted over their allotment. Everybody got into the program because if you're in the program and didn't plant more cotton than the government told you to, they would guarantee you a price for your cotton. So naturally, everybody got in because they never knew what the price of cotton would be. You didn't have to

sell to the government, but if you could not sell it outside, you could take the government's subsidy. The largest farmer in the county had to plow up two point-something acres of cotton. I had one Black farmer who had to plow up about a quarter of an acre. The cotton was chest-high. I felt so bad. He had so few acres to plow. He said, "If that's what the government says, that's what I do." Then I went over to this other farmer. You have to understand the [inaudible] was so flat, there were drainage swales running through. There were little creeks, and then there were big areas where cypress trees were growing, and there were little lakes. That's where the fishing was. There were trees, and the sun would shade the land. Every maybe ten to twenty feet, there would be a cotton plant, and the cotton would be about knee high. It wasn't going to make any cotton. I went to this farmer, and I found this area, and we had to take a little of his good cotton, but maybe just a row or two. He said, "Okay, I'll have it cut up. I'll plow it up by Wednesday. I came there Wednesday, and it was not done. He said, "Oh, Sammy, it's not going to make any cotton. Why do I have to plow?" I said, "I'm sorry, sir, but the regulations say this. Here it is." It wasn't plowed up. I showed it to him. "You have to plow it up." "Okay, come Saturday, and I'll plow it up." Well, I came back Saturday, and it wasn't plied up. The rules say I could only go three times. I asked my dad what to do. And he said, "No, Sammy. This is your problem. You have to solve it. I'm not part of it." Well, I was angered over it the whole weekend. Monday morning, I went into the county agent's office, Mr. Barnes. We sat down, and I explained it to him. He said, "Okay, Sammy, what would you want to do?" I said, "Well, I have no choice. If I'm going to be fair to all the others who plowed up, I have to put him out of the program. Well, to do that would cost him about \$12,000." So he said, "Well, if that's what you want to do, sign this form." And so I signed it. This farmer had not been in the county agent's office for years. But when he called him up and told him he was out of the program, he came the next day. He offered to pay me personally to come [inaudible] it up. I said, "No, I can't go out again. He did plow it up, and he got back in the program.

I made enough money that summer to go to school for the next year. It was a great job. I took the car to school when I went. Molly, after two weeks, I had to take it home. You found all kinds of excuses to go downtown to do something instead of studying, and it was just a divergence, and I couldn't afford it. So I took it home and sold it. The car had a bad front end. If you hit the curb too hard, it would turn the wheels this way. You had to go back and hit it the other way just to bring it up to bring it back to normal. I sold it to a farmer for \$150. He said, "Son, you ought to learn how to negotiate. I would have paid you more money if you would have asked for it." I said, "I'm satisfied with that." About a week later, my dad wrote me and said, "The farmer wants to talk to you. He said the car's got problems." Well, I had him drive it. When I saw him, I said, "You drove the car." He said, "Yeah, but I didn't know about the front end." I said, "Well, just hit it the other way." I never heard from him again.

Pearl Harbor happened in December. I had a friend in our engineering class – there were twenty-one of us in our class – whose brother was a Captain in the Marine Corps [and] came through school to recruit us. I asked him if I could join. He said yes. I got the papers [and] went home during Spring Break. My mother was dying of colon cancer. I went down to Jackson to get a birth certificate. I found out my name was not Samuel Baker. My name was Leonard Samuel Baker. My mother didn't know it. My father didn't know it. My godfather didn't know it. How? They don't know. But being Jewish and born on Saturday, you couldn't name the child until the Sabbath was over. Somebody must have put in "Leonard." Anyway, I went to join the Marine

Corps, and the sergeant there said, "Son, you want to join the Marine Corps, and you don't know your own name." He was right. I had to get all the forms changed. I remember my mother signing the form because I was only nineteen, and I had to be twenty-one. I went back and joined. I went back to school, and they didn't call me. I graduated. I thought the Marines was going to be rough, so I better be strong. So, I started weightlifting. I got to the point [where] I could [inaudible] pick up and raise it above your head. I could lift 142 pounds above my head; that's what I weighed. But nobody told me to run. The Marine Corps ran. They didn't lift weights. I reported to boot camp, and they told [me] to bring a little suitcase, and I did. We arrived in Atlanta. I'd never been more than 150 miles from home. I got on a train in Memphis and overnight to Atlanta, got there too late, and they put us up in a hotel. I met some other people in our class from the West Coast. We got to Parris Island about noon. We went in and filled out a label and took off everything we owned, put it in the suitcase, sealed it, and they shipped it home. We took our toilet articles, walked in, put them on the shelf, took a shower, and the sergeant said, "Now, go take another one." We took another shower. When we came out, he said, "Now, you're clean when you come in the Marine Corps. Stay clean." Then we went into this room, and they started giving us clothes, then to another room, and they fitted us with shoes. They gave us a duffel bag, and we walked over to our barracks, and we were given beds alphabetically. I had the lower one, and Beaty, my bunk mate, had the upper one. Then we went over to the mess hall and had lunch and dinner. That night, we were all writing letters home about what we experienced. A master sergeant was our drill instructor, and then the corporal kept us at night. He hollered, "Attention." We all stood up. He said, "I want you to come into my room one at a time." I went in and said, "Baker, sir." He said, "Baker, do you smoke?" "No, sir." Then, "There's a smoker Friday night. You go. They'll give you two packs of cigarettes." And you'll come back and put them on my desk. He had a pile like that on his desk. [laughter]

We were private first class because we were officer candidates. There was a man from the University of Chicago. His name was (Gunch?). We were having breakfast the next morning. They gave us a box of cereal and a little bitty thing of milk, about half a cup. He poured it over, and it didn't even cover his cereal. So, he told the server, who was a private, "I'd like another milk, please." The private said, "The sergeant said only one per person." So (Gunch?) says, "You see this stripe?" I outrank you, don't I?" He said, "Yes, sir." He said, "Give me a milk." He gave it to him, and he went and told the sergeant. The sergeant came over. He said, "Who's the weissenheimer?" (Gunch?) stood up and said, "I am." He said, "I don't have enough milk to cover the cereal." The sergeant said, "That's all they allowed us." So our sergeant came over and said, "What's going on?" He explained it. He said, "Okay. My squad will clean up the mess hall Friday night for inspection Saturday morning." We loved it. We ate him out of the house and home. He had oranges and apples we had never had. So, after the inspection, our sergeant asked the mess sergeant, "You want us next week?" He said, "No, I can't afford you." [laughter]

We finished at Parris Island [and] went to Quantico. I got my commission. Then, we went to what is called officer training. They told us how to be an officer. And one day, the *maitre d'* from the Waldorf Astoria came to us. For a whole day, he taught us how to be a gentleman. He set up the table with forks – more forks than just one – and spoons. He taught us how to hold a chair. They had a young lady to show us how to push the chair to the table when a lady was

sitting in it, how to start the forks and the spoons from the outer going in, and how to address people. I thought that was very nice. I scored very highly on the general classification test. I scored 142. You had to score 110 to go to officers' training. Some of them didn't pass, and they took it over. Everybody else was assigned. Nine of us were supposed to go to MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology] for a year of electrical engineering and become radar officers. Radar was very new then. But at the last minute, they changed, so they sent me to Camp Lejeune for engineering training, then to Camp Pendleton, and then to Hawaii. I was seasick before we got out of sight of land in San Diego, and I could eat a cracker and keep it down by the time we got to Hawaii. From Hawaii, we were there for seven days. A jeep driver came by and said, "Lieutenant, you have to be down at the ship at one o'clock; your platoon is arriving." Well, I was a fresh second lieutenant. "I'm getting a platoon?" "Yes, sir." He took me to the ship, and a sailor came down and got all my luggage. I went up and saluted the officer of the day, and he said, "Lieutenant, your platoon is going to arrive at one o'clock. The sailor will show you where your bunk is. I suggest you go to the officers' mess, have lunch, and be ready." At one o'clock, I was down there, Molly. I was only five feet ten and a half. But I was six feet tall, standing there waiting for my platoon. Up drives a bus with bars on it. Bars on the bus? Out come two marine sergeants, about six-four; they weighed about 250. Their shirts had been tapered. They could have played linebacker for any professional football team. They had side arms – pistols – on. They had pistols on. They saluted me and said, "Sir, your platoon is here." Out from that bus came twelve of the motley-ist-looking crew you ever saw. They were from the brig. They had been given a choice: either go to combat and get an honorable discharge, or we're going to discharge you dishonorably. They were young kids that had been able to get beer or whiskey for the first time. They had gotten drunk, they cursed, they fought. I can't tell you what I told them. It wouldn't be right. But I told them, "You've had your last chance. I'm not going to fool with you. Nobody aboard this ship knows that you are from the brig. I want you to go aboard. I want you to take a shower, get in your best uniform, and if you tell them you're from the brig, that's your business, not mine. Every night, we're going to meet on the hatch for the number at seven o'clock. If you're not there, you go to the brig." Molly, I had no trouble with them at all. I got to Guam. I said goodbye to them. At Guam, they assigned me to the engineering battalion working on the airfield, which is now called Northfield. The Army was building the runway. We were in charge of the taxiways and the ramps to the hangars. It was the best job I ever had. At Camp Lejeune, I'd gotten on a tractor pulling a scraper. I got so I could do it very well. So, at Guam, I was driving in a Jeep out there. I see this guy, and I said to him, "Sergeant, let me climb up there. I'd like to do it for you." He says, "You know how to do this?" I said, "Sure. I learned at Camp Lejeune." And so I did it, made a couple of runs. It was a big blade, and you scraped your [inaudible]. Then, when you got a load, you lifted the blade, and then you ran over to where you were, and then you dropped the blade, so you had just a little – about a two-inch layer of [inaudible] laying out. You did this, and then a heavy roller came over and rolled it. Then you wet it, and you rolled it again. When they finished Molly, it was almost as hard as concrete. So, they didn't need [inaudible] on it. Ten days later, the jeep driver comes up, and he says, "Lieutenant, Baker?" I said, "Yes?" He said, "You have to be at the airport at noon." I said, "Where am I going?" He said, "Sir, I'm just the messenger." At noon, we get aboard a plane. Once we're aboard, I said, "Where are we going?" "You're going to Guadalcanal. We've got to make a stop en route." When we stopped, they had no food aboard. When we landed on this remote island, we went to the officer's club and got something to eat. Came back. All our luggage was on the tarmac. Why? Somebody had

commandeered our airplane. We were there for two weeks, and then we'd commandeered somebody's airplane. They flew us to Guadalcanal to join the 6th Marines. They assigned me to the Pioneer Battalion, which is the engineering battalion. They assigned me to C Company, Third Battalion, Third Platoon. Lieutenant (Harnes?) was the platoon leader. I was his assistant, but he never showed up. I met him, and I don't know where he was. Out of default, I took the platoon over. We ran, and we did maneuvers and everything. Of course, since I was the only one there, I had to censor the mail. When I was there, I played a lot of poker because there's nothing else to do. I met a Lieutenant (Stingley?) from Oklahoma, and I said, "(Stingley?), tell me something that will keep me from being such a greenhorn when we land." And he said, "Sam, take care of your troops when you can. When you can't, they'll take care of you." That was a philosophy I used, and it was a great philosophy. When we landed in Okinawa, they [inaudible] the beaches. We advanced two miles inland, came back, set up camp. The Army "ducks" [DUKW] came and gave us a radio. We were in business, and we unloaded ships for the rest of our time there. Went back to Guam. When the war was over, so many senior officers had left. I had just been promoted to First Lieutenant. I was the second senior officer in our battalion of four hundred. And when we went to China – Tsingtao – they commandeered a house for us. There was a colonel. He had his bedroom. The doctor from the Navy, a two-striper, and I shared the second bedroom. Third bedroom was shared by three officers from the battalion. We had a lot of young officers. I established a school. Our troops went – twelve classrooms upstairs, twelve downstairs with a cafeteria. We hired Chinese to do all the labor and the cooking. We all had charge of unloading the docks, which was a deep-water port. A battleship could come in there; it was so deep. I was there. The colonel said to me, shortly after we were there, "Sam, you see me for breakfast, you see me for lunch, and for dinner, if you got anything you wanted to discuss, that's the time. Goodbye." I don't know where he went. I never saw him. So, I ran the battalion. Great experience in leadership. In March, I got a telegram that I was returning to the States for discharge. I had applied for a permanent commission when we were on Guam, and Colonel (Shaw?) said, "I don't think you'll have any problem." But when all the people – the war was over so quickly. Many officers didn't know what they wanted to do with their lives, so they opted to stay in. I asked Colonel (Schmidt?) if I could stay until April. He said, "Sure." In April, I caught a Navy troop transport back to the States. I went home, and then I went to Washington, and my [inaudible] got me an appointment with somebody in the Marine Corps and went, sat down, and told me, "There's nothing you can do. They decided you didn't qualify; somebody else did." So I said – smart kid – "Well, if you don't want me, I don't want you. I'll resign." The colonel said, "Lieutenant, that's not the way it works. We'll tell you when you can leave." I was staying with a cousin there in Washington. She said, "What are you going to do?" I said, "I'm just going to loaf. I'm going back to school this fall on the GI Bill and get my master's degree." She said, "No, you're not going to loaf. Go down and get a job." There was a local house that said, "Jobs for veterans." I went in, and they said, "What are you?" I said, "Civil engineer." He said, "Commerce building there. Go to the southwest corner, second floor. Ask for ...". I'll think of his name in a minute. I went there, went to the second floor, and asked for Casey Jones. He said, "I'll give you a grade two professional right now. And maybe it's a three. When can you come?" I said, "Well, my discharge for my leave is on July the 4th. But I'll leave home July the 1st, and I'll get here the 2nd." I got double pay, and they sent me to Boston. I arrived when they had a big parade for a politician who was just coming home from jail. We did safety surveys of airports first in Boston, then Hartford, Albany, Buffalo. I got to Cleveland; I needed somebody to show me how to clean the instrument. I

never cleaned an instrument. They sent up Lieutenant Command Pierce from the Coast Survey Corps. He was the great-great-great-grandson of President Pierce. Charlie Pierce. In those days, Molly, you didn't have motels. You had hotels, which were downtown, and they were expensive. We would go to the Chamber of Commerce. They had people who wanted to rent rooms in their homes, and we were staying in a lovely home. I got a Commander Pierce a room. He smoked and never took the ashes off, and they dropped. This woman had a dozen ashtrays in his room. He said to me, "Sam, why don't you join our corps?" He told me about it. When he went back, he sent me papers, and I signed up. I got an immediate response that they accepted me, and I had to take a reduction in salary because deck officers didn't make as much as a P-2. I stayed on the airport survey party. My last job before reporting to a ship was in Washington, doing the national airport – it was called at those days. I went to the Marine Corps to resign because you can't have two commissions. I went before a brigadier general. He said, "I'll give you a captain's rating today." I said, "General, the Marine Corps did this to me. The Coast Survey gave me a mission, and I can't turn them down." I reported to Pensacola to the ship, [*Hydrographer*], under Captain Fred. L. Peacock, who was known to be very, very rough on deck officers and junior officers. I reported there in August. September the 1st, when my commission was going to be, he brought the ship into port so that he swore me in. He had the launch go ashore and deposit it in the mailbox so that he could get it done on September the 1st. He was a stickler for protocol. Going back out, the seas were very rough. I was on the bridge. The *Hydrographer* was the first diesel-electric ship ever built in the United States. It was supposed to be so long, but when the Depression came, they cut thirty feet out of the center of it and put it together, and that was our ship. The pistons on that eight-cylinder diesel that had 200 horsepower were this big, as big as a number ten can. It started by putting air in the cylinder in one cylinder to make the cylinder work so that the others could fire and start. It was a Cleveland diesel engine. I remember the engineer was a nice guy.

Anyway, going out, it got too rough. There was a cut coming into Pensacola. [inaudible] (Latham?) was the executive officer. He was on the bridge, and he asked permission from Captain Peacock to turn around and come back in, and he gave permission. There was a wheel that you had to crank to put the power of the electricity to the shaft, single shaft. Commander (Latham?) said, "Sam, count the waves. Let me know which one's the biggest." Surprisingly enough, after a few times, the seventh wave was always the biggest. He said, "Okay, now we're going to slow down. I'll tell you right after the seventh wave to crank it up to maximum speed." So we did, but there was not much power. We slowly turned. By the time we got to the next seventh wave, we were broadside to the wave. We turned over about thirty-four degrees. They had this little thing on the wall. I was holding on to keep from sliding to the back of the wall. And [inaudible] (Latham?) said, "Oh, God. Oh, God, come back. Come back. Let her come back. Don't sink." We finally righted, and everything in the ship was now off – dishes cracked, everything went, people were [inaudible] wall. It was one of my nine lives I used that day. I stayed with the [*Hydrographer*]. Then, Captain John Bowie, who was a distant relative of the colonial Bowie that the King of England had given twelve hundred acres of land and formed the town of Bowie, Maryland. John was a descendant. We had – I think it was a [inaudible]. It was a private yacht that had been given to the Coast Survey, I guess, during the Depression. We were doing Coastal Surveys, where we went from town to town along the coast and recorded what was available – engine repairs, fuel, groceries, and so forth – medical. We wrote it up, and so people traveling along the coast always wanted one. We were parked in St. Petersburg. Right

next door was Augie Busch's yacht from the Anheuser-Busch beer. He used to entertain. Although he had the baseball team from St. Louis, he had entertained a lot of the Yankee players. I remember standing there within two feet of Joe DiMaggio. He was on Augie Busch's yacht. I was standing there on the [inaudible], looking at him. I remember Augie Busch came out, took the bottle of beer from Joe DiMaggio, and threw it in the water. He said, "You don't ever expose beer to sunlight." [laughter] Poor Mr. Busch must be turning over in his grave now to see all the beer at the baseball games.

We left there, and we went to Cedar Keys. Mr. Sheaffer from the Sheaffer pen – you don't know about it now, but Schaefer was one of the leading ink pens. His pilot came over and said to Captain Bowie, "We don't have any charts from now on from Cedar Keys to New Orleans to get on the Mississippi River to take Mr. Sheaffer back up to [inaudible], I think it is. Captain Bowie said, "Oh, I've got extra charts. I'll give it to you." When he did, Mr. Sheaffer invited Captain Bowie and me over. Captain Bowie was a commander. But he invited us over [to] his yacht. It was a beautiful thing. I put my Sheaffer pen right in the front so he could see the dot. When we were there, he gave Captain Bowie a pen and pencil set, but he didn't give me anything.

Well, when I was on the *Hydrographer*, I had to go to New Orleans to have a pilonidal cyst removed, and during the operation, I turned yellow. They thought I had liver trouble, and I had to get a liver test every three months. After a while, I said to them, "This is affecting my career. Send me to the best hospital." While I was on the [inaudible], they ordered me to Baltimore, to the Public Health Hospital, which was also connected to Johns Hopkins. I remember Dr. [inaudible] was a four-striper. He said that after the test, "You're a very sick boy." I said, "Well, Doctor, I feel so good." He said, "That's the trouble. You're very sick." I said, "Well, what are you going to do?" He said, "You got two choices. One, I can send you home for six months. And if your blood work doesn't change, we retire you." I said, "I'm only an ensign. How can I live on that?" I said, "What's the second option?" "Let us go in, take a piece of your liver, and examine it. Then we'll know what's going on." I said, "Okay, but let my sister come up here. I want her here when we have the exam." So (Alma?) flew up. They did the exam. She went home. I took a (spinal?), and I watched him do the operation because the light had a mirror in the center, and the lights were all around. I watched them put their hand in, and I could feel it around it. They took a piece of liver, and I told the surgeon that was going to do the work – he was a lieutenant commander – I said, "Make sure you take out my appendix. It's right next door to the liver." I said, "I don't want the appendix to act up when I'm out at sea, and [it's an] emergency." When I woke up, I said, "Did you take my appendix?" He said, "No, you've been under for two hours, and they didn't want you to be under anymore." I said, "Damn you, now if I get an appendix [issue], I have to do it all over again." So ten days later, ten of them come in with these long white hospital coats. I said, "Oh, God, I got cancer." And I said, "Dr. [inaudible]. Doctor, what's wrong?" He said, "We don't know." I got indignant. I said, "What do you mean, you don't know? You took a piece of my liver." I went through all of that for nothing. He said, "We don't know. Your liver is perfect." So I said to him, "Well, what do I do?" He said, "Well, we're going to send you home for two weeks to recover from the operation. Then you go back to light duty for a while, and then regular duty." I asked his assistant what restrictions. He said, "Like what?" I said, "What should I eat?" He said, "Don't eat fried foods. Cut down on that." [RECORDING PAUSED] We did hydrographic work on Long Island Sound and then went back to North Norfolk, Virginia. I was there when the *Missouri* battleship ran

aground. Captain Heaton was the director at Norfolk. When they had the trial of the grounding, he told us younger officers to go to the trial because we never had anything like that. As a side note, I made friends with Ensign (Penney Starke?) when he came in. I said we're going to go calling on Captain [inaudible], which is something we did years ago. We don't do it anymore. He said, "Oh, we're just going to spend a lousy number of hours." So we got over there to Captain [inaudible] house. We sat down, and he said, "I guess you think you're going to spend a couple of dull hours with me." We left there at seven o'clock after Mrs. [inaudible] served us dinner. It was a delight. He gave us a lot of stories about the old Coast Survey.

I got to go back to my first ship, the *Hydrographer*. The junior officer – the officers' mess usually had a very big occasion for Thanksgiving and Christmas aboard ship. After the war, the *Hydrographer* [was] loaded with officers because they all had gone in rank over the years, but no ships [inaudible]. Commander – I'm trying to thank – (Gracie?), (Penny Martin?) – there were two officers' wives – I'll remember in a little bit – asked me, "Sam, what's the menu for Thanksgiving dinner?" I had gone over with the steward, and we had the traditional Thanksgiving dinner. They said, "What are you going to serve for cocktails?" I said, "Oh, you mean shrimp cocktails or fruit cocktails?" They said, "No, what about Manhattans and martinis?" I said, "Do you want those?" "Yes." "Okay." "So, have you got this [inaudible] with the captain?" The captain was Captain Fred. L. Peacock, as I told you. They said, "You better go up and get it cleared with the captain." Now, they had kept straight faces. (Gracie Latham?) – Commander (Latham?) was the exec [executive officer]. I went up there, and I showed the captain the menu. He said, "It's very nice, Sam." And then I said, "What would you like for cocktails?" And he said, "What cocktails?" I said, "What about Manhattan or martini?" Well, Captain Peacock was a short man, and he stood up. An hour later, I left his cabin. When I came down into the wardroom, Gracie and Penny were laughing so much they were on the floor. They had set me up really good. I never got over that. Every time I saw them, they always brought it up.

In Norfolk, I was there for a couple of months. Then, they sent me to Washington to learn how to make maps from aerial photography. I was enjoying it and learning a lot. One day, the secretary came over and said, "Ensign Baker, Captain Roberts wants to see you." I went up to see him. He was the one who designed and built the Roberts Tide Gauge. He said, "Sam, do you have a fear of flying?" I said, "No, sir." He said, "Then you're working for me." I said, "What are we going to do?" "I can't tell you. Go see (Gephardt?)." That was his assistant. I said, "(Gephardt?), what are we going to do?" "I can't tell you. Sit down and fill out these forms." It was a mess of forms – Top Secret. Two weeks later, he called me in and told me what we were going to do. It was a top-secret project jointly between the Coast Survey and the Air Force. It required flying [inaudible] space two hundred miles apart from the North Pole to the equator and out in the oceans about halfway to Hawaii and about halfway to Europe but not as far to Africa. The Air Force had taken a B-29 and stripped it of all of the various metals. We had taken the backend and equipped it. I had five geophysicists as a crew member. I joined it in Oklahoma City. We did some flight testing and came back to Washington with the data. They said, "Okay, you can fly." We went to Eielson Air Force Base, which is just south of Fairbanks. We had a magnetics observatory at Fairbanks. We contacted them, and we flew from – out of Eielson, we flew eight, ten, twelve hours. We had a 3500-gallon gas tank in the rear bomb bay of this B-29. That was equivalent to the entire bomb load that they took off from the Marianas

when they were bombing Japan. And that was just in the rear bomb bay. The front bomb bay, they boarded over, and we put our luggage there. Once we got something under our belt, we flew from Fairbanks to Keflavik, Iceland. It was about a twelve-hour flight, and there was about a ten-hour difference in time. That was our route for the summer; we went back and forth. Then, in the winter, we came down and stationed at [McClellan?] in Sacramento. We flew from there to Puerto Rico, to Bermuda, and out over the Pacific. We had one horrible flight to Bermuda. We had found a landing, and the requirements were that you had to change the engine. There was no facility there. They had to fly in everything. We had to stay in Bermuda in February two weeks. We were forced to stay there. Wasn't that bad? [laughter] Then, we went to Alaska in the summer of '51, and we started out – same thing. Now, we're going to Keflavik, Iceland. On the 21st of August 1951, we were going to have the longest flight we'd ever been on. Every tank was loaded, the 3500-gallon tank was topped off, and we parked the plane near the runway so we wouldn't use fuel to get over there. Everything was alright. We're running down the runway, and halfway down the runway, the pilot says to an engineer, "Give me the turbo." He says, "You've had it from the beginning." He said, "Oh ..." – S-word. He was going too fast to stop it [and] too slow to fly. We ran off the end of the runway, two thousand feet of grass, and dropped towards the sea. Luckily, we only dropped half of the twenty feet, and we were flying. I was on the left side [inaudible]. I could see the prop wash from the plane moving the water. You can hold your breath a long time. Finally, we got enough altitude to turn. We went to England and the North Pole. Shortly after the Pole, we lost an engine. I ran up to the – there was a little tube between the rear and the front compartment over the bomb bays. I ran up there and said, "Ace, what's my option?" Because I was in charge of the project. They were providing the platform. He says, "I think I can land you at Point Barrow, which is twelve hundred miles away, but I can't get you off; it's too short." I said, "What about [inaudible]." He said, "No, nobody will take it. It's a gravel runway." I said, "What's my other option?" He said, "If we can get over the Brooks Range, maybe we can make Fairbanks. That's another seven hundred miles." I said, "Okay, give me a call when we get ready to get to Point Barrow." He said, "Sam, tell your people if we have to go down before we get to Point Barrow, don't bail out. They'll never find you. Stick with the plane." I got up there. We went over the Brooks Range. We went down to 7500 feet. And then the engineer said, "Cutting number three." I said, "What's wrong?" He said, "It's running hot. We don't want it to explode like number three did." Now we had one and four, and we had seven hundred miles to go. They had never done a flight that far with just two engines. About fifty miles from Fairbanks, two F-80s from Elmendorf parked themselves on our wings. They were so close, Molly, and so steady, I could have recognized you in the cockpit. And they said, "What's wrong, Fly Boy? Your rubber bands break?" Well, the pilot had been in that seat for almost a day, and he cursed them. The controller from Fairbanks said, "I'll have no cursing on the airways. We have smoke on the runway from a forest fire. You have to make a GCA approach," which is ground-controlled [approach]. The pilot said, "I can't do it. I cannot climb if I lose altitude." Well, they kept fighting that back and forth. I didn't realize the pilot needed to keep his altitude because if one engine went out, he could die from that high-altitude, pick-up speed, and it would decrease the number of emergency sites. When we were diving to go in for the landing, the engineer called out number four. We landed with one engine. We'd been in the air twenty-three hours and forty-seven minutes. We couldn't even taxi off of the runway; they had to tow us off. I got out of the plane, went over to the ground, got on my hands and knees, and kissed the earth because I never thought I'd be able to do it again. Seven days later, with four new engines, we were in the air. I

left the program in January of '62 and joined Woodcock's survey crew because I came back from – in November, I went home. Dad was being operated [on] for colon cancer, same as my mother, same results. He was going to live about six months. I decided I wanted to stay home with Dad. So, I went back. There was a Captain Rittenberg that I knew. I told him my story. He said, "Sam, we don't want you to quit. Let's go see [the] admiral." So we went in to see the admiral. He said, "Sam, my father was dying of the same thing when I was captain of the ship in Alaska. I couldn't go home. But I'm going to let you have as much leave as possible. When you run out of leave, I'll create a job in your hometown." How can you leave a family like that? I joined Woodcock's survey party with instructions that I could get leave at any time. We were there at Hinton, West Virginia. Then we moved to Iron Mountain, Michigan. I went home for a week, and then we moved to Wisconsin. I went home. I could see the end was coming, and I stayed home for about two weeks. I called Captain (Hoskinson?), and I said, "My last day of leave is tomorrow." He said, "Don't worry. I just advanced you ten days." Your family wouldn't treat you any better than that.

Woodcock's party disbanded. They sent me to Commander (Matheson's?) party in – I keep forgetting the names – Kansas, western Kansas, and I did surveying work for him. And then, since I didn't have any leave, they all took off for Christmas. I stayed home. We were going to Alaska for a whole summer surveying on the Yukon River. We did, and I had to determine what we needed and so forth. A little short note. You couldn't have everybody cook, so we had to have meals. When we got to Seattle, I advertised for a camp cook. I got a lot of replies and interviews one morning at the hotel. There were guys dressed like bums. One guy dressed in a nice outfit. He had impeccable information. He was a chef at a hotel in Spokane. I selected him, and I said, "Give me a shopping list." He came back with a tremendous shopping list. I said, "Okay, here's a voucher. Go buy all the merchandise." We had a charter plane leaving Seattle Friday night and delivered to the airport and so forth. Everything got well. Molly, we got down to Circle City on the Yukon. The first morning, we served sandwiches because we didn't have anything set up. Monday morning, I went down to the bank – to the mess tent early. He's got a cookbook out. I said, "What's this?" He said, "Lieutenant, I've never cooked before in my life." I said, "But all these references you had?" He said, "That's a friend of mine in the hotel in Spokane." "Well, what am I going to do?" So, I helped him out. I said, "You know how to make coffee?" I said, "Yes." I said, "Okay." I taught him how to break an egg and fry eggs and bacon. We got by there. I said, "Serve sandwiches for lunch." He studied how to cook a roast. In Circle City, they had ice caves where you could store your merchandise, and we stored it there. He got out a couple of roasts. We made roasts. At the end of the season, he was the best chef you could find for camp work. After that, we came home and went to Mountain View, Arkansas. There was an article in the paper about an airplane; a B-29 crashed in Sacramento, and Major [Bruce] Acebedo was there, and I lost a good friend. [Editor's Note: On April 5, 1952, Boeing WB-29 Superfortress, registration 44-87756, assigned to the 55th Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron, Air Weather Service, crashed about three miles short of the runway at McClellan AFB, Northeast of Sacramento, California. The aircraft, returning from a nineteen-hour weather reconnaissance mission, experienced a propeller failure during the final approach, leading to the loss of control and the loss of all ten crew members on board.] Then they assigned me to a survey party to take over from Lieutenant Commander – why am I having trouble? His brother was in the service, too. I'll remember. Anyway, I was there for a few days, took over the party, and moved from there to Sacramento. There, I met Janet. I moved from there over to

Nevada and then back to [inaudible] California, and then up to Lodi. From Lodi, we moved to Port Jefferson in Washington, and I asked Janet to marry me on the way up. We got married in August. Then we moved over to Washington, and to Hawthorne, Nevada, and then to Waldron, Arkansas. In Waldron, Arkansas, there was no trailer court. I went to the city administrator, and I said, "Do you have any in the land?" He said, "Yes." I said, "Do you have water, electricity, and sewer nearby?" He says, "Yes." We sent two guys to Fort Smith, Arkansas. We bought all of the four-inch stove pipe we could find, and we brought it back. That was our sewer pipe. We had a jeep, and we had a plow. We plowed the sewer lines and the shovels – we opened them up. We parked the trailers, and they all had sewer. We had a water pipe that we had on the survey crew, and we had electric poles and lining. I pulled the lever, and we had electricity, sewer, and water. The people there were so intrigued. We had an open house one night, one Sunday. The people going through our trailer said, "This is better than our home." Janet and I had a forty-foot Spartan, and it was eight feet wide. We had a living room, a little dining area, kitchen with gas – I had gas heat and gas cooking. We had ten gallons of water for on the road. We had a shower and a bathtub – wasn't very big, but it was a bathtub. You could hold your knees up, and we had a queen-sized bed with storage underneath. There, I had that until we got transferred to the *Pathfinder*, and we moved the trailer from Spokane to Seattle. I was on the *Pathfinder* from '57 to '58, '58 to '59. Then I joined Commander (Seaborg?) on a smaller ship, a wooden vessel. We went to Alaska on the inland side. Fourth of July, we were in Whittier, and Janet came up. Sally was born in Seattle on Thursday. I left there on Tuesday to go to Alaska on the *Pathfinder*. On Friday morning, when I came down for breakfast, everybody said, "Good morning, Papa." I didn't know what – they knew it was a daughter before I did. I got a chance to call over, and we got to Ketchikan on Friday. I had some experiences. When we got to Dutch Harbor, we got word we had to establish some DEW [Distant Early Warning Line] sites on the mainland. I was the only officer [inaudible] surveying experience recently. I had to go ashore to establish it. We built some wooden stands aboard ship, and I taught two young sailors how to record and how to keep light. The morning we were going to shore, it was pretty rough. I said to the bosun, "This is pretty rough, isn't it?" He said, "Lieutenant, we'll put you ashore, and you won't even get your feet wet." They loaded us in the lifeboats and eased us back through the [inaudible]. We got ashore alright. We did all our work. We came back about 4:30. There was no way in the world they were going to pick us up. They said, "There's a Coast Guard station about seven miles south of you. If you hurry up, you might get there before dark." Well, the three of us walked through the brush for a long while, and then we saw some trails, which were animal trails or human trails. We got there just as they were finishing up their dinner. We walked in. Molly, they thought they had seen ghosts because there was nobody on the island but them. Their jaws dropped. Their eyes got big. Finally, one guy saw my insignia and said, "Attention." I said, "At ease." They put us up. They gave us food. They gave us some clean underwear to wear for nighttime, and they washed [inaudible] up and gave it to us the next night. We were there for four days and three nights. They finally were able to extract us by launch on the Coast Guard pier. It was a difficult job.

Then, the second year was a bad year. Captain Quinn had lung cancer. All we had was a dental X-ray machine, but the doctors and the dentist took half-lungs – one X-ray on the left, one on the right. They sent it to Seattle Public Health Hospital for them to acknowledge that it was cancer. They wrote back, "We can't do it. Give us a full x-ray." They ran out of [inaudible], and the captain had to go ashore. I took him ashore, where the Coast Guard landed a seaplane. It was a

tearful departure to see your skipper go ashore. Commander (Rittenberg?) – no. Well, anyway, the Commander took over as captain. We all moved up one. Captain Quinn was on the dock when we got there. He had had his operation, and he died the following spring. At the end of the season, in '59, I was assigned to San Diego to help finish building the ship *Oceanographer*.

MG: Was it the *Surveyor*?

SB: The *Surveyor*. You're right, Molly. I was a fieldwork officer. I was the third officer. Commander (Matheson?), my old triangulation officer, was there. Commander (Seaborg?), who I just served under, was exec. And I was a fieldwork officer. I had to order everything that we needed on the ship for the season. The shipbuilding was a mess, but we finally got it. We went out and had the sea trials for the shipyard, and we passed. Then, we went out for the sea trials for the Coast Survey. San Diego has a cut from the city harbor down to where you go out to the ocean. We were on that cut. It was lunchtime. We were all in the wardroom. Captain Johnson was on the bridge. And then we got a call: "Chief engineer to the steering room. Chief engineer to the steering room." So I ran up to the bridge, and I said, "What's wrong?" They said, "We have no steerage," and we were headed for the beach. Captain Johnson said, "I knew I should have stayed retired." [inaudible] measuring the depth, and we got to nine feet, and we finally stopped. What had happened is that the shipyard had hooked up the electric and the hydraulic steering, opposing each other, so the bar finally broke. They fixed that. We left San Diego and went to Seattle. There was a little mishap there. When the water out of the locks came out, it caught the ship and moved us against a steel frame. We dented the ship a little bit. Then Captain Johnson left, and Captain (Matheson?) took over. We went to Seattle. We went up to Alaska and out to Dutch Harbor. We were going to use this special equipment for locating the ship about a hundred and fifty miles offshore in the Bering Sea to do some hydro. We got opposition to the shore installations, and we sent those to Washington so they could do the mapping – make a map of the area where we were going to survey. We got back word it would be two weeks before they could ship it because they had an overload. I said to the captain, "What are we going to do for two weeks? We don't have a projection." He said, "What do you think we could do?" And I said, "Well, I think I can make a projection in three days." I had crew members that had never measured a meter bar. We had a meter bar aboard. We started on this, and it took a lot of triangulation to select a position on our projection where we were going to do it. We had the sheet there, and we made the projection. I selected the point, and we did the computations. We didn't have any things that would go – the [inaudible] wouldn't stick, and you measure your distance, and you transfer them. There are two pricks. We went to the carpenter shop, and we made one. We made it so we could make it longer. The plotting room was just enough space, so we established it. We finally finished the projection in three days, and then we tried it. The system wouldn't work, and we had to cancel that project for the summer. They sent us up to try to go as far north as we could. Then we came back to Seattle, and I flew back to San Diego and moved my family to Cape Canaveral. I was there for three years. One of the best duties I had. I was in charge of the survey crew that had responsibilities for locating all of the tracking devices. We had to put all of them on the grid. We had stations north and south on the islands. I had one all the way down to Aruba and one over in South Africa, but I never got to South Africa. We had to measure – they were going to put in a new tracking device. We had to measure a ten-thousand-meter line to the most accurate measurements that we could make. We got six fifty-meter [inaudible] from the Bureau of Standards. Commander Powell had been there before me.

They did some preliminary work on some design of the tractor, towing the tapes [inaudible]. We established the stations and covered them with Styrofoam to keep them from moving during the heat of the day. And we did all our work at night after the sun went down. We measured the distance between the two ten-thousand-meter places. We found the Bureau of Standards had made an error in one of our tapes. They denied it until we sent the tape back. They acknowledged the fact that everything else was within standards. When we finished, it was the most accurate ten-thousand-meter distance in the world.

From there, I went to the ship *Explorer* in Norfolk in [the] fall of '63 and joined them in January '64. Marvin Paulson was the exec. I had a younger – trying to think of his name. He made Admiral as a junior officer. I keep forgetting these names. Anyway, we went to Puerto Rico. It was the worst ship that I'd ever been on for any Coast Survey. It was dirty. It was rusty. I don't know why. The towels off the floor in many of the places. It was just a disgrace to be there. I had always prided myself on bringing my family down to the ship before, but I never took them to the *Explorer* because it wasn't right. It was because the skipper thought if he ran a cheap ship, they would give him an office job when he finished at the *Explorer*, but they retired him. When I became exec, Marvin Paulson became the skipper, and we were very pleased. I was making a list of things that had to be done and getting prices for it, and we were up to about thirty thousand dollars. I got a call from Captain Conley, who said, "Sam, your orders to the *Pioneer* in Oakland had been on the admiral's desk for too long, and I didn't want you to get caught short." I called Admiral Karo's office – that was Monday – and asked if I could have a meeting with him on Tuesday. He agreed. I had a one o'clock appointment, so I flew to Norfolk, and I was at his office at one. I went in, and I explained that Marvin was only going to be there for a year, and I would get skipper of the ship. He said, "No, we need a strong exec. on a *Pathfinder* in Oakland," and he would not agree to that. I fearlessly said, "Would you accept a twenty-year retirement?" And he said, "No, not until after the season." We moved to Seattle, moved from Norfolk to – wait a minute, [let me] finish it. After that, I said, "Admiral, the *Explorer* is the worst ship that you got in the fleet," and I told him about it. He called in Admiral Tyson. He said, "Admiral, can you go down? Sam said this ship is so bad. Can you go down?" He said, "I can go down Thursday." Thursday morning, he arrived about ten o'clock, and we took him to the captain's quarters. He put his coat away, and we took him on a tour. He never said a word until we got to the officers' lounge. He said, "Who in the world colored these chairs like that?" He said, "That's the first thing I want changed." Well, the junior officers had asked me – "Commander, can we have a session with the admiral?" I said, "Sure, I'll ask him. It's up to him. But you got to make sure that you get the best benefit out of it." They said, "How do you do that?" I said, "Well, some of you are going to have two questions, some no questions. So, write all the questions down on a little three-by-five card [and] pass them around. It's not necessarily your question. The admiral will sit at the end of the table. Have one man on his left or right, which is controlling the session. When some people are speaking too long, you got a man in the back to wave them off to stop it. So you can get through. Give the admiral a pad of paper and lots of sharp pencils." After lunch, I took the admiral down there, introduced him to the officers, and came back in an hour. Walking back to the captain's cabin, he said, "Sam, that's the best group of junior officers I've ever seen. Look at the questions I've got to answer." I never [told] him that I'd set it up.

Then I left and went to the *Pioneer*, took over, and we left. Our job was to run the sounding lines from the Aleutians to Hawaii, and we did it for two weeks. Then, we were in Hawaii for a few days. Then we came back to San Francisco. Dr. White and Harley Nygren came out, and they had a meeting. That's when they told that they were going to join the Coast Survey and the Weather Bureau and it's going to be ESSA [Environmental Science Services Administration]. Shortly after that, Admiral Tyson came out, and he announced that the ship was going to be laid up. They were going to transfer all the personnel to other ships and were going to sell the ship. He said, "Sam ...". He had promised me that I'd be a captain [on] my ship. He said, "I'm going to tell you, you're not going to get a ship, but we're going to make it such that you will get to be captain without having a ship because this happened, and you were scheduled to take over." I asked him if I could stay until the children finished school. He said, "Sure." We advertised for the ship to be sold. We had lots of people come. I didn't realize that they were looking for old items because the ship, the *Pioneer*, was a seaplane tender built in '42, and it had a lot of items that antique people wanted to keep. The [inaudible] was beautiful; it was all brass. It was sold to a company in [the] LA area. They were going to [tear] it down, cut the ship open, and take out the four diesel engines they had with motors on them and ship them to Italy for a power plant for a small town. They left, and I went over to the San Francisco office. They sent me down to Los Angeles to check on a special buoy that they had planted out in the ocean. I was there for a couple of weeks. The motel where I was staying was right next to a pet shop. My daughter had told us about an iguana that her science teacher in school had in class, and they could pet him and everything else. I went to the pet shop on the day I was going to go home. They just got in some baby iguana. I bought one and took it home. We raised Herman until he was about four feet long, and she gave him to the Washington Zoo.

We came to Washington, and my first duty was with the Weather Bureau, now ESSA, doing publicity. I did that for a year. Then, I was assigned as head of the Geodesy Division of the Coast Survey – NOS [National Ocean Service] now. The Coast Survey no longer existed. I'm sure you know that the Coast and Geodetic Survey is the oldest scientific organization in America. In '76, we put a plaque on the Rockefeller estate in Tarrytown, New York, and at the Hirshhorn estate in Connecticut. I met Mr. Hirshhorn and became a friend of his. He showed me so much of his art in his home. We went to the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington many times. In Washington, when I took over the Geodesy Division, Don Rice was head of astrophysics [Gravity and Astronomy Branch], B. K. Meade was head of triangulation, Charlie Whitten was the chief scientist, and we had another man, [Norman] Braaten – I think it was – in charge of the Leveling [Branch]. The second day, I called them all into my office. I had a small table there, and we all fit around it. I said to them, "If I stopped today, go to school, and studied just one of your subjects, at the end of my career, I wouldn't know as much as you do. Why should I do it? You do your job, and I'll do everything else except what you want to do. You're the experts. You want personnel? Give it to me. Don't worry about it. You're going to need money? Come to me. If you need space, come to me. You want supplies, come to me. That's my job." And Charlie Whitten said, "Sam, do you really believe that? Is this really what you're going to do?" I said, "Absolutely." He said, "Then you'll have lots of success. Everybody else tries to tell us what to do." We had great success. The next thing I said [was], "I want a list of young professionals who want to go to college and get advanced degrees." We sent people to Ohio State. We sent people to Purdue. When I left, forty-five percent of our professional staff had advanced degrees. Before we went there, back in the 1900s, the Coast Survey used to have

the leadership in the world in triangulation and geodesy. We lost it. I couldn't bring it back completely, but I could start, and that was a start. And then, I had a friend, Joe Berg, in the National Academy of Science. I went to Joe, and I said, "Joe, if I give you the money, will you bring over some of the top scientists from Europe to lecture here in my organization?" He said, "Sure." I searched around, and I found two of them. They were awfully glad to come because we paid their fare; all they had to do was bring the fare for their family. We gave them a great salary. The reason we had to go through the National Academy of Sciences is because the government says any appropriated funds – you have to let an American have the job first. If they don't want it, then you can have some foreigners. But no American would let a job like that go by; they would do it. Well, we had it for two years in a row. We started with lectures in our group, and the Army Map Service found out about it. They started coming. Before long, we needed a bigger audience. Before the first summer was over, we had overcrowded people coming to the lectures. He lectured once a week. During the week, he visited with the young geodesists, asking them questions, answering their questions, and talking to the others. It was a great transfer of knowledge. It continued after I was no longer there. The reason I left I want to keep confidential. I'll tell you why I left it confidential.

MG: Sure. Let me turn off the recording, then.

SB: Wait a minute. I decided I would retire, and I chose January the first as the date. I had a retirement party. I had a job before I retired. So, it was good. I had a good life after it. Now, if you turn off the recorder, I'll tell you some confidential stuff. [RECORDING PAUSED] When I was in the office, Charlie Whitten and Captain [Larry] Swanson came over to my house to interview Janet as to whether or not she would agree to me joining the Cosmos Club. Why? Because the women couldn't come through the front door. They had to go through the side door. But we'd been there many times, and that didn't bother Janet or Mrs. Swanson at all. They agreed, my name was put up, and I was accepted. I was put on the house committee. It was a great club. I used to go down there for lunch sometimes when I was downtown. They had what is known as the house table; it was just a table seating about eight people. If you didn't know anybody, you sat at the house table. You met foreigners who would come there because our hotel rooms were so much cheaper than downtown, and many of these people were on a limited budget. You met him, and you met their support. I joined, and Janet and I used to go there for dinner at times. I was there when they voted on letting women in. I kept up my membership even after I moved out here to Arizona for a couple of years. Then when I wasn't going back enough to really know what was what about the club, I left. But the club was started, I think, before the Civil War. One of the early members was [John Wesley] Powell, who went down the Colorado River in a boat, and Alexander Graham Bell joined after the club was formed. [Gilbert Hovey] Grosvenor, who created the *National Geographic*, [inaudible], and they had a geographic room there with a copy of every [National] *Geographic* magazine ever produced from day one on. A number of the Coast Surveyors were there. The rule was they are a leader in their field. I felt honored to have been nominated and to accept it. Let's go off recording. [RECORDING PAUSED.]

I went to Brookhaven Labs for four years. They ran out of money, I said, "I'll go home," and they said, "Oh, no, you have tenure." And I said, "What's tenure?" They said, "We can't fire you." I said, "What am I going to do?" "Well, we'll find something for you to do." I said, "If I

stay, two men that need the jobs will have to quit.” I went home, and my executive officer with the ship – what was his name? Anyway, he called me up, and he said, Sam, I have a job for your thing. I went to talk to him, and I didn’t like it. I saw what was what. Then, Charlie Trimble from Trimble Navigation was going to show his instrument or talk about it at the Maryland State Land Surveyors Association. I drove over there that night, and I talked to Charlie Trimble. I went home and told Janet it was the greatest invention since the light bulb. She said, “Do you want to go to work for him?” I said, “Yes, I’d like to go to work for [him].” She said, “Okay.” So Charlie Trimble made me the first GPS salesman. I had an agreement with Jim Collins, and he had a partner. I had seventy-five percent of the company; they had twenty-five. We’re called Satellite Surveying Systems. I didn’t realize it was SSS, which was a very bad name in Germany and World War II.

Anyway, a unit sold for fifty thousand apiece. They weighed forty-five pounds. The antenna weighed fifteen. Took you six hours to get a fix because there were only three satellites. You had to buy three of them before I’d sell them to you because you put two on known sites [and] one on the unknown to get the GPS of the unknown site. That’s \$150,000. I had orders for as many as Charlie Trimble could make. He couldn’t keep up with the demand. In a year’s time, I did a little over three million dollars worth of business. And Charlie said to me, “Sam, I want to split the company up into districts now. I want to give you Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, West Virginia, DC, Virginia, and North Carolina to start with.” I said, “What about the federal government?” “No, we’re going to keep that.” I said, “Charlie, if they’ve got problems, who are they going to come to?” He said, “Well, we’ll work it out.” I went home and talked to Janet. She said, “Sambo, you’ve been working too long. Why don’t you retire?” And so I did. I don’t know. I kept in touch with some of the people at the Coast Survey and some with Trimble. A few years later, John Chance, who I knew in Lafayette, Louisiana, called me. I had given Charlie a lot of good advice. He said, “Sam, would you be a consultant? We just bid on the new accelerator that the federal government wants to build in Texas.” So I was a consultant for him. That’s the best job I had. I only worked three days out of eighteen months. Charlie was impressed with me because, Molly, I went to visit him when I went to Louisiana to talk to the state surveyors. I forgot to tell you, as Director of NGS, National Geodetic Survey, I created the State Advisory Program, which is still in existence today. I just recently went to a dinner party with one of them. When I went to visit John Chance’s operation in Lafayette, one of his senior members took me around and showed me all of his records. They had it in the concrete block building with a wooden roof on it and file cabinets. And I said to him, “Bob, if you have a fire in his building, or if you have a flood, you’ve lost a lot of your records. What are you going to do?” He said that he had never thought about that. So, they discussed it. And they said, “What to do?” I said, “Well, you’ve got Lafayette College here. This summer, why don’t you hire some of the kids [to] get this system where you photograph the records and put it on tape?” And they did it. When I went back a couple of years later, he had built a two-million-dollar headquarters. He met Janet and I at the door. He said to me, “Sam, come here. I want to show you something.” We went in a room, and that was a big computer screen. And he said, “Put your finger on the Gulf of Mexico,” and I did and immediately popped up the coordinates of the port. He said, “Thanks to you, this is what we’ve got now.” He said, “I don’t care if they stop doing anything. We’ve got our ports down.” He was a great friend.

When I was at Cape Canaveral, I used to read to the children because when I went downrange to check on my employees, Janet used to read to them. When I came back, the children said, “No, Daddy, you tell us a story.” Well, when I was about ten, we grew a lot of dill in our backyard because my dad had lots of [inaudible] brought from the farm. They had big worms about as big as your index finger. I would wait until they looked like they were as big as they were going to and pick them up. They were mean-looking, and I put them in a shoe box and give them dill leaves until they went into the pupa stage. They would spin a cocoon, seal themselves up, and then they would hatch into butterflies. Then, I’d take them outside. They [had] wet wings. You would hold them on your finger. You take them outside until they dry, and then they fly away. Never came back. [inaudible] the story [of] Herman, the worm. I just told it to them. When my granddaughter was born, I had a computer. Michael, her father, said, “Dad, why don’t you write *Herman The Worm* up?” So, I did. Sally was in the PR business. She got it copyrighted, and then we found a publisher, and we got it printed. At [age] ninety-five, I distributed it. Why? Because the reading scores of American youth are dismal. If you can’t read, how can you advance in your studies? And if you can’t read, how are we going to be the leader of the world? I took it upon myself to try to get one child to learn to read better, and maybe that would multiply. I wrote *Oscar the Mouse* because when I was a youngster, I had a white rat given to me. Now, you can’t write a book about rats because rats have a bad name. But mice are all right because they’re in the laboratory. I changed it to a mouse. She was the nicest, cleanest pet you ever had. She [was] always cleaning herself. And when you put new paper in there, she would abandon her old nest and go to the new paper. She somehow got out of her cage. Mother wouldn’t let me bring her in the house, so I had to keep her outside. She got out of her cage, and she came back about four days later. A little time after that, she had four little black and white rats. My parents had just told me how this happened. They had the birds and the bees much earlier than they thought they were going to be. When I thought of writing about my pet rat, I changed it to mouse. It’s been accepted very nicely. Now, we have the third book, *Oscar Goes to the Vet*, because he has a disease you and I have both had, maybe many times. He has EBT: eyes bigger than the tummy. We hope that it’s going to be a big success. We just got delivery of the books, and we’re going to launch it on the second of November, here at the V. Then, it will be available for everybody.

Why am I able to live this long? Well, we had a 100th anniversary in the Year ’17 in Washington. Harley Nygren was on the stage as the oldest. He wasn’t. He knew it, and I knew it. He told me when I arrived there – he said, “I told them you were the oldest, but they said it would take too much [inaudible] to change the program and all.” But I made a mistake, Molly. I should have stood up during the meeting and said, “Point of order,” and should have said that.

MG: Well, we’re correcting the record now.

SB: Thank you. My mother died at fifty-two, my father at sixty-five, my older sister at forty-two, my little sister at eighty, all of colon cancer or the results of colon cancer. My second sister, Julia Belle, died last November at 103. She had one colonoscopy, and she said, “That’s it. No more.” I had X-rays until the doctor said, “Sam, you’re going to kill yourself with X-rays.” And then the colonoscopy came in. I had it upper and lower. My two children have had it. They found polyps in my son but not in my daughter. I’ve had polyps. The last one I had was at ninety-nine. They said that’s the last. I don’t think anybody has the answer to why you live long.

Perhaps it's stress. Our marriage had it. She moved seven times [during] the first year of marriage. Three of them without a trailer. Then we bought our house trailer, and that was a story in its own. It was supposed to be delivered to Hawthorne, Nevada. But when we came back from Christmas leave, they notified us we were leaving immediately from Hawthorn to Waldron, Arkansas. I called up this trailer company in Tulsa, and I said, "Don't deliver it here. We'll pick it up in Tula." Janet and I went there in a truck, and it wasn't ready. We had no clothes, nothing but the clothes we were wearing. We had to find a motel room. We had to buy sweaters because it was cold. We had to buy toothbrushes. The next morning, we picked it up. They gave us everything that they could. I had never towed a trailer before. I had a little boat trailer. But this is one that blocks your view: a forty-foot trailer and a twenty-foot truck. You were at the limit. We got out on the highway, and we got behind an old farmer in a pickup truck driving about thirty miles an hour. I was afraid to pass him because I didn't know how I would know when to move back. I guess I worried him off the road. Then, we got behind somebody, and he was slower than the first one. I said to Janet, "Well, I'll just have to judge it." I passed him, and that guy was all right. But coming over, we went across a one-lane bridge. We saw a kid standing there; he waved us down. He said, "Are you coming back?" And I said, "Yes." He said, "Well, if you want me to stop the traffic, stop on the other side and honk your horn, and I'll come out and stop the traffic." [laughter] We got to the bridge, I honked the horn, he came over, he came out [and] stopped the traffic. We got to Waldron. As I told you earlier, we had no trailer court. As a chief of party, I rented two motel rooms. We made it a man's restroom and a woman's restroom. The trailer – I had them specially built. I didn't want kerosene. I had gas heat [and] gas on the stove. I had them put a ten-gallon tank up high so that it was in the system so that we could flush the toilet, which took about a gallon. We had a ten-gallon holding tank down below where the sewer line was. Janet and I stopped for lunch with our trailer everywhere we went. We had lunch, and we had the toilet to use. We had a basin to wash our hands. Sally spent the first six months there – of her life. I left on Tuesday. The reason we didn't have a house is that we were looking, but I got a fever that went up to 104 degrees, and then it would come down. I was in the hospital for two weeks. Then, we didn't have time. Janet decided to stay in the trailer. It was a nice trailer. She and Sally – it was all right for them. When I came back, we found an apartment within about ten days of my return.

I've had a wonderful career, Molly. If somebody could have said to me when I was younger, "Map out a career," I could have never mapped out one like this. I feel, somehow, in the Marine Corps, that I was separate. They treated me – Colonel Shaw – his name was Sam Shaw – came to me. I saw him more than I saw my platoon leader. When I went to him on Guam – well, I guess I could tell you. [laughter] We stole the general's ice machine on Okinawa and took it back to Guam. Made one ton a day. I didn't steal it until I asked Colonel Shaw, "If I get into trouble, you'll come to my aid?" He said yes, but he didn't know what I was stealing. I had to borrow a crane and a truck from somebody we had unloaded. I knew where he was, and he kept it quiet. We took it back to Guam. We were getting ready to put it in operation, and Colonel Shaw comes over to me, a second lieutenant. He says, "Sam, we can't operate the ice machine. There's an All-Points Bulletin out in all the Pacific to look for it." I said, "What are we going to do?" He said, "I know an old timer in the Sixth Marine Division. Let me go talk to him." At lunch, he came over to my table. He said, "Sam, the colonel said he had given us three hundred pounds of ice a day. Is that enough?" A lieutenant colonel is asking a second lieutenant if it's enough. I

said, "Sure." I didn't know. But we had ice for our club and for our mess. All three messes – the men, the MCs, and the officers.

Then, when we went to Tsingtao, we had a new commanding officer, but as a first lieutenant – just made first lieutenant – I was the second highest-ranking officer in the battalion of four hundred people. We had a house in China that they took over. I told you about the Colonel saying – so, I figured everything went well for me in life. After I retired, I had a great life. The only bad feature was Daddy died so early. But she [Janet] always told me, Molly, "I want to die first. I don't want to be alone without you." I think she reduced a lot of the stress. When we got married in Sacramento, the rabbi said, "I'm only going to give you one bit of advice. Only one of you can be mad at a time." And it worked. He really did.

MG: That's good advice.

SB: It was. We only had one real argument that was about money and the lack of money. I said to myself, "What difference does it make? Let her have her way." She used to take the stress off. No discussions about anything that was bad until after I'd had my dinner, and we were sitting down and relaxing. She used to tell the children, "You can't talk to Daddy about anything bad until after dinner." And it worked. She was always – Sambo was first. Let me tell you a little thing that you would enjoy because you're a woman. In Washington, when I was director of NGS, I had many must-attend social events. We were supposed to go to the Bethesda Naval Hospital officer's club that night. I came home, and she wasn't dressed. I said, "Honey, you know we have to be there tonight." "I don't have anything to wear." I said, "But you knew we were going. You have to be ready." She said, "I don't have a dress." She had showed me a house dress a couple of nights before that was a big print – white with flowers all over. It was long. It was sleeveless. I have a picture of it with us there. It's the best picture of our marriage. I said, "Why don't you wear that?" She said, "It's a nineteen-dollar dress. It's a house dress." I said, "But it looked good on you." So, she wore it. She got so many compliments. She came to me and she said, "What do I do? Everybody wants to know where I got it. I can't tell them it's a nineteen-dollar house dress." I said, "Tell them your sister sent it to you." [laughter] That's the things that make a wonderful marriage. We stayed married even after I taught her to drive.

MG: She didn't drive away.

SM: Molly, we were on our way from Las Vegas to Memphis for her to meet my family. We stopped the night. We were in Hawthorne. We stopped the night in Las Vegas, and we're having dinner. I said to Janet, "Do you know who that man is sitting at the next table?" I made a mistake by not inviting him over. She says, "No." I said, "That's ...". Oh, he had such a smooth voice. Heck, I can't remember. His daughter was a singer. Anyway, she said, "He's Black?" I said, "Yes." She said, "I thought he was white; his voice is so ...". Nat King Cole. Yes. His daughter was a singer. It was a mistake on our part. But when I went home, Molly, to introduce Janet to Emma, she was cooking turnip greens and cornbread. I never liked turnip greens; she used to hide them in my cornbread or in mashed potatoes, and I always find them. She said, "Miss Janet, you want to try them?" And Janet said, "Yes." She took a bite. Emma said, "You're going to make Mr. Sammy a good wife. You don't like them either." [laughter] The children loved Emma. We'd go to Clarksdale to see family and visit the graveyard. The

children would say, "Where's Emma? Where's Emma?" She took care of the kids. She always said, "You bring them to me. I'll take them." They were just lovely. We all loved Emma. It was a great life. Now, I have to try to make this earth a little bit better earth than when I found it. I've used up all my nine lives. I had a great career in the Coast Survey with NOAA. I hope you have a wonderful time. If I'm still alive when you get this all down, I would dearly love to be able to get a copy.

MG: Of course. I'm wondering if you're available to do another session. I didn't want to interrupt you, but I have a number of more specific questions to ask you about your life. So, if you're available for another session, perhaps we could do that next time.

SB: You don't have time now.

MG: Well, I think it would take longer than the time I have. I want to go back to the very beginning.

SB: Okay. All right. You call me anytime.

MG: How about I send you an email with some dates? I want to go back and ask you some follow-up questions.

SB: But now I'm wondering, am I taking up too much of your time?

MG: Not at all. You have given me so much to ask more about. I didn't want to get you off track by interrupting. But now that you've taken me from tip to tail, we can explore things in more detail.

SB: Are you getting information about the Coast Survey and NOAA as a whole, or are you concentrating on people?

MG: A little bit of both.

SB: Because every ship had a season's report. Are you aware of that?

MG: Yes.

SB: Okay. All right. And you know there were a lot of manuals produced years ago. Let me tell you a little story. I came back to Washington in July. When they were downtown at the Commerce Building, they used to go to one of the parks for the Fourth of July celebration, not on the fourth, but all the office would go. I was there at a time. Casey Jones said, "Captain Adams wants you to ride with us down to the park." Well, at that time, they had a single photograph, and then Captain Ritter, I guess it was, had developed a nine-lens camera. You'll hear that if you get more information. We got in, and Captain Adams had an Essex, the car with the suicide doors. We're driving, and he says to me, "Which is better, the single lens or the nine-lens camera?" I'm in the front seat with him. I said, "Captain, I can't tell you. We don't have both of them at the same time. He said, "That's not what I asked you. I asked you which is the best, the

nine-lens or the single lens.” We had this argument all the way. When we got to the park, Casey Jones found me alone. He came up. He says, “Don't you dare change your mind about photographs, or he'll eat you alive.” But I had a lot of conversations with Captain Adams afterward. After I retired, I had Captain Rittenberg and Captain Swanson out for dinner when we had our home in Maryland, in Potomac. But when the Admiral said we'll make a job in your hometown, I would be with the Coast Survey for the rest of my life. Nobody does that to you anymore.

MG: A lot has changed.

SB: Yes, it has.

MG: Captain Baker, it has been a pleasure to meet you and hear your story. I'll look forward to when we can do this again.

SB: All right. Thank you, Molly. You have a great day. Tell me a little bit about your background.

MG: Sure. I will. Let me just stop the recording real quick.

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

Transcribed by Molly Graham 12/18/2023

Reviewed by Molly Graham 12/19/2023

Reviewed by Sam Baker 1/8/2024

Reviewed by Molly Graham 2/13/2024