

Molly Graham: This begins an oral history interview with Captain Sam Baker for the NOAA Heritage Oral History Project. Today's date is November 8, 2023. The interviewer is Molly Graham. It's a remote interview with Captain Baker in Scottsdale, Arizona, and I'm in Scarborough, Maine. I'd like to start by having you tell me more about your first assignment with the Coast Survey. You were doing airport safety survey work. What did that entail? Where was that being done?

Sam Baker: There were no safety surveys done on airports. The Coast Survey was producing aeronautical charts. Every pilot, every plane coming in for a landing in the commercial [inaudible] had a chart on board to show you the instructions and how you were to approach and all. We went out and put our instruments on the end of the runway, put the glide path and the instrument, and made a 360-degree turn. Everything that was above the flight line, we had to go out and identify it on a photograph. Then they went back to the office, and they did that. I had three people with me. Oftentimes, we had to delay because that runway was busy. But we'd wait until the winds changed, and they used another runway, and we put the instruments down again. Sometimes, we went a little bit past the runway, and the airport asked the pilots to make [inaudible] avoid us. As I said, we went to Boston, to Hartford, to Albany, to Buffalo to Cleveland, to Toledo, to Detroit, and Ypsilanti [inaudible], and then we went to Louisville, and that was all we did in that half of year. Then we started down at Vero Beach and went from there to Daytona Beach, and then to – didn't go to Jacksonville – went to Savannah, Charleston, and then up to Washington DC. As I said before, it was in Cleveland when I asked the office to send somebody around to show me how to lubricate the instrument because it was getting stiff. Commander Pierce came out. That's when he told me about the Coast Survey, this commissioned service. I immediately applied. I think it was about four or five weeks that they notified me that I had been accepted. And then I had to – I was reduced from a professional grade to a deck officer. They don't use that terminology anymore. I was a deck officer until September 1, 1947, when Captain [inaudible] Peacock swore me in as an ensign in the Coast Survey. Of course, I had to give up my commission in the Marine Corps because you can't hold two commissions.

MG: And your first assignment was on the *Hydrographer*.

SB: That was Captain Peacock, and he was relieved by Captain Anderson. Then I went with Commander Bowie, who later became Captain Bowie. I told you his ancestors were deeded twelve hundred acres of land, which is now Bowie, Maryland. Captain Bowie had no children. He had been married for a year. I used to be ready to go. We'd eat breakfast, and I'd be ready to go. He said, "Sam, let's wait until I get my weather report. I don't want any ...". This is on a bright sunny day. He was a good skipper. Then, I told you about trying to get a handle on what was happening to me medically. They sent me to Baltimore, and I told you about that. They sent me to Long Island. Rutkowski was the skipper of a small boat, but it was a drag boat, where they put a line out and two ships dragged. The wire was down at the bottom, supported by little floating buoys. They set it at a certain depth. As they pulled it – both of the boats – if an obstruction occurred, all the buoys would line up in a line, and they would pinpoint where it was. Then you went over, searched it, and found out the height. These boats were so small they didn't have but one stateroom. I had to live ashore. On Long Island, I found a room in a house with a young couple. They had purchased an old Chris-Craft yacht and were refurbishing it. The first

thing they had to do was take off all the varnish on their main deck, sand it, and then repaint it. Molly, they worked all summer on that. I remember about the first or second of September, it was ready to go to sea. We went out for a ride. In a month or so, they were going to have to put up on the blocks because winter was coming. But they enjoyed it. From there, I was sent to Norfolk, still on board the ships – two of them. I don't remember the name, but the Coast Survey history will have it. I had an apartment. I was working down at the Norfolk office doing a boat sheet of our work. There was a nice crew there. Then, in January, I was transferred to the Washington office to learn how to make maps out of aerial photography. As I said, I was working there, and Captain Roberts sent for me. I told you about my stint working with the top-secret project. Then I worked with Woodcock, and then I went to work with Matheson. We went up to Alaska. We came back from Alaska. We went [inaudible] Arkansas. Then, I got my own survey party. I relieved (Lawrence?) Taylor. His brother was on the *Hydrographer* with me. I had that party from January of ['54] to February '57; I had it for three years. Then, I was on the *Pathfinder*.

MG: Before you talk about the *Pathfinder*, can you just say more about these field triangulation parties you were managing? What was the work like? What were you doing?

SB: Well, the office would send out a reconnaissance man, and he would locate – they tell them what to do there. It was frameworks of triangles and polygons going all the way up to cover the US, and surveyors could then, if they needed a precise position, go there for the starting point. It was also used to supply the geological survey with these control points, so they could [inaudible] the mapping of the section mapping that they got. Every now and then, you had to measure a baseline with steel tapes calibrated by the Bureau of Standards to make sure that your error hadn't found itself in your calculations. We measured about one a year. One year, we measured two. When I got assigned to Commander Matheson's [inaudible], we measured a baseline on the railroad. Actually, the rail itself. It was unique. Something new. I don't remember whether I told you – I think I did tell you about on the *Hydrographer*, for the first job was doing a wire – we had wire on board, and we measured our distance with the wire instead of – yeah, I told you that. When they [inaudible] went home for Christmas, I had no leave, so I stayed there, and I made up – I calculated what we would need for a new project in Alaska. That was a wonderful project. We didn't do a lot of work, but what we accomplished in the six months, I think, was remarkable.

MG: When you were working on the triangulation parties those three years, where were you based?

SB: Well, we moved every six to eight weeks. Five men would build a tower 120 feet – inner tower and outer tower – in an eight-hour day. It was unique. They jacked up the back of one truck that was a hub that they would take the lugs off and put this hub on, which was nothing more than a round extension from the wheel. They jacked the wheel up. If you run the truck at a slow speed, that wheel would turn. They would put a tackle up on the tower, bring it down, wrap it around there, and lift it. He put enough coils around that drum, it would grab it and lift up the weight. They were able to lift all that up with no one lifting it. The truck did it. They were remarkable. They dug a whole three to four feet deep to bury the anchors. Oftentimes, the steel was out there when they arrived, laid down in the way it would – every section was thirteen feet.

The base was there. Then the next section – 120, 103, and then the ninety-foot, and so forth. They were all laid out so that the man on the ground didn't have a lot of things to do. He could just go there, pick it up, and lift it up to the people. They were the builders. Then you came with the observers. At night, there were two men who would go there: the observer and then a recorder. Then you had a lightkeeper on the station or you had another instrument on the station. The outer tower went up ten feet above the inner tower, and you had a light played up there where they could show lights. The lights were such that you could put one on top of the other, and they would center the bulb; it was centered over the [inaudible]. If you had observed the station and it showed two or three lights, you could do that. We were in Waldron, Arkansas, and (Walt Bilby?), the son of the man who was given credit for designing the tower, was doing some lightkeeper. He was my field foreman. He came back and told me an interesting story. We had a four-foot stand that we put down, and sometimes, you could see the towers from just the four-foot stand. He showed this light, and he left it because he had to tend two lights at one time. He got word from the tower that that one light had been moved. It went out. He drove back there, and the light was burning but pointing in a different direction. He pointed it in the right direction and went back. Later on, it moved again. When he got there, there were two men. One of them said, "See, I told you. If I move that light, this man will come." [laughter]

I was bunkmates with Captain (Thayer Bryant?), who had a long career in the Coast Survey. (Thayer?) was telling me he was in Kentucky doing triangulation, and the people there didn't trust him because they thought they were federal agents. They warned him where he was staying he ought to carry a rifle with him. He said, "I can't do that." I said, "How did you get to be a friend of them?" He said, "I asked them one night, where can I buy some whiskey?" They said, "You want to buy Whiskey?" He said, "Sure, I like a drink every Saturday." They gave him a drink, and from that point on, he didn't have to worry about anything. You know the stories they tell. I had a wonderful crew. When I took over from Lawrence Taylor, I moved into the office trailer, and everybody followed me. They said, "Chief, I want a raise." "Well," I said to them – I called them all outside. I said, "I can't give you a raise until I can justify that you are doing a better job." But one of the things I did, I said to Harry (Romine?), who was the number one observer, "You're going to turn your duties over to (Gibby?), and he's going to be the number one observer. You'll come into the office to learn computing." He says, "I don't want to do it, chief." I said, "Harry, I don't have any space in my party for somebody who only does one thing. You got to be able to multitask." I said, "It's not hard to do." When I was with Commander Matheson, his computer did everything first order, which took about forty-five minutes. Where you could do it third order, you could do it in ten minutes. It was a laborious [inaudible] because if we needed it in a hurry, we had to sit there and wait for it. Finally, I said to Commander Matheson, "Why don't we teach him to ...?" He said, "Sam, he does it alright. He's been doing it for years. Don't bother him." Harry went in there, and about three weeks later – what was his name? (Goosemyer?). I had to send him up to a neighbor base to do some triangulation. They wanted some control put in. Harry (Romine?) had to take over. I helped him out. Before long, he became a computer. Once he did, I put him back out there and brought (Gibby?) into the office to teach him how to compute. (Gibby?) eventually turned up to be a chief of party. That was my feeling.

When I was at Cape Canaveral, the first time I went down range, everybody was sitting – the observer was working; the rest of them were sitting around. I had school that fall. The last two

weeks of the year, we brought them in – the first of December to the middle of December – and then they all went on leave. We taught them everything we could teach them. One man said he didn't want to learn, so I immediately called the office and said I had no use for him because life is not such that you can get by doing just one thing. You've got to be a multitasker to get along. You're more valuable to an organization if you multitask than you are if you're a single-task person. I saw the development of these people. Once you taught people to multitask, then they look for other things to do. It got them interested in knowing what's what. There was an observer that we taught to compute. Six months later, he got a job with the California Highway Department. Another in my party, eventually, after I left, moved over to the Highway Department because they had more skills than just observing. We moved from Waldron, Arkansas, to Hot Springs, and then we moved over to Winnemucca, Nevada, and then over – I'm trying to think of the name – closer to Salt Lake City. Then we moved over to Oregon for a short stint, and then we went to Spokane for the winter, which was a mistake, but the office said that was the only place they had for us. I was relieved by – I keep forgetting. Anyway, he delayed the release. We didn't get the [inaudible] in time to buy a house. Janet had to stay in the trailer for a period of time.

MG: When you were working, would she travel with you?

SB: Yes. When we bought a trailer in Waldron, Arkansas, that was a reason I had to insist that she learn to drive because I towed the trailer, and she drove behind me. As I said, the trailer was equipped for us to cook lunch. The bathroom was available because we had water storage. There was a book you could buy, and we bought it for the office so we could notify everybody when you were going from Waldron, Arkansas, to Winnemucca, Nevada. We told all the trailer camps along the way so they could stop for the night. We encouraged them to drive about three hundred to 350 [miles] a day. And you could tow the trailer. Now, remember, Molly, we only had two-lane roads. We tried to average about 350 miles a day. That was about seven hours on the road. Many of them did it more than that so that they could get – they wanted to get to the [inaudible] station so they could get a good trailer park. In Winnemucca, the electrical line was a long trailer park, and I was on the end of the line. My lights would blink many times during the day until I got them to put three lines down and 220 instead of 110. But there was good camaraderie between members of the survey crew. They took care of one another. They helped one another.

Joanne and Bernie – he was the only Mormon – Harrison. Bernie Harrison. They had a very small trailer, and they had a little son. I don't know how they did it, but they did. Joanne and Janet became very good friends because Joanne liked classical music, and so did Janet. Bernie went to Ethiopia when Don Jones took a party to Ethiopia to establish control, and that was probably in '55 or '56. Bernie told me – when he came back, he told me a story. He said the helicopters landed him out in the middle of nowhere for him to keep light on the station. The man had a rock that he was trying to sharpen his hoe for his garden. Bernie had a file in his pack, so he took it out and showed the man how to do it. He gave it to the man, and he did it. He was so happy he gave his boy to Bernie as a gift for the file. Bernie said, "I didn't know how to reject it." He finally did. Bernie ended up opening up a trailer court somewhere in New Mexico. I think it was south of the capital. I had two (Kelley's) on my crew: Ed (Kelley?), who was an observer, and Walt (Kelley?), who was a foreman for a while. That's all over with; GPS

destroyed it. Didn't destroy it, but it was a better system, so they gave it up. They built a tower in Ohio – I'm trying to think of the name of the town – that they dedicated to the builders because I think that's where Walt – that's where [inaudible] the first building came from. It's up there today. It's visible.

When I had the consulting job with Teledyne in Senegal, I called on all the old-timers, and they all came and built towers in Senegal. There was a lot of comradeship in every part of the Coast Survey. Aboard ships, any of the old-timers had been there for years. I never got to be skipper, but I was the exec [executive] on the *Pioneer*. The old-timers always were protecting everybody else. It was a big family. As I told you, on the *Hydrographer*, they had a big Thanksgiving and Christmas dinner there. The crew could bring all their friends, and the officers had their mess. The petty officers had their mess. Everybody had their own party. It was nice. We didn't have that on the *Pathfinder*. I don't think the *Explorer* had it either. I never was on the *Pioneer* long enough to have it because we had a Christmas party there for the junior officers who didn't go home. The Coast Survey was a good organization, and there was a lot of friendship. People helped you to do everything that you had to do. As I told you earlier, my biggest complaint was that the skippers did not give us junior officers a chance to bring the ship into port or to take it out to sea. I found that disturbing. But that was the way it was. I think that the Coast Survey had a heart. I told you about how they treated me. No other organization in the world, I don't think, would have done that except the father-son relationship. How could you do anything but love an organization that had so much love for you? As a junior officer coming in after the war, there were so many senior officers. There was an abundance of senior officers. Many of them took me in as a son. Although many of them had gone through some difficult times with skippers, I never found that to be so. Maybe the organization had mellowed during the war years.

MG: The organization has been around for such a long time. And you were there during what's known as its golden age in terms of advancements in geodetic operations. Was that something you were aware of at the time? Were you getting a sense of this groundswell of support for these technologies and advancements?

SB: I don't think we were aware of it at the time. Only when I got to Washington and saw the birth of the computer and its effect on operations and met these young people who were so knowledgeable, had gone to college, and learned about geodetic science did the old-timers feel that they had been bypassed. Time and tides wait for no one. The old-timers were willing to share their knowledge and were very willing to step aside for the new technology. I don't think there was any resistance. Since [we] last talked, I had a Zoom meeting with John Bossler and Bernie Chovitz. It was nice to reconnect. I'd spoken to John over the phone a number of times, but to talk to Bernie – and Bernie's ninety-five or will be ninety-five. He's been around a long time, too. He came over from the Army Map Service when Helmut Schmid came over with his group. I didn't have a lot of contact with Bernie, but we were friends. I didn't take a lot of technical control. I was pretty much watching and giving the control to the people there. When I sent all those people off to get their advanced degrees, they came back anxious to put it into play, to bring in the new work and do away with the old. Those who had been to school were more than happy to accept the new way because there was advancement. Anybody who [wasn't] ready for advancement should get out of the way. You can see what has happened to this world.

We've sent people to the moon. Now, look at the Webb mirror satellite that's up there, and they transmit – they've got thousands of little satellites up in the sky. When I went to Ben Gurion University in Israel, I was there the day that their satellite that had been launched by a rocket from India got their first reception. The satellite was the size of a cornflake box. Can you imagine that? I said, “Why so small?” They said it was costing an awful lot to get that weight. You weigh it by kilograms. They go the first response back. It was as though it was the Fourth of July. They were celebrating. Everybody was running in and out of the office – “You did it, you did it.” [laughter] Technology is so great, and results are so powerful to push you for the next thing to do. You build on success.

MG: I have in my notes that you were with the field triangulation party until 1957, and then you reported to the ship *Pathfinder* in 1959.

SB: No, '57. I was there '57 and '58. In '59, I went with the small ship that (Seaburg?) was captain of.

MG: I found a picture of the *Pathfinder's* wardroom online. I'll send it to you. You're in it, and you're sitting next to Harley Nygren, Francis Quinn, Dr. Peterson, and Marvin Paulson. If I showed you that picture, would you remember that moment?

SB: I think I have it. I think I have it, but you can send it on email.

MG: I will. It was an interesting picture because this was so long ago, and those are people I have heard so much about through these interviews.

SB: Some of them stayed in the Corps a long time. Some of the junior officers have stayed in – [Chris] Andreasen, I think, is – no, he wasn't there. He was on the *Explorer*. Have you interviewed Andreasen?

MB: No, but he's someone I've been in touch with and would love to talk to more.

SB: Can you go off the record?

MG: Sure. [RECORDING PAUSED] You had talked to me quite a bit about your time on the *Surveyor*. What I was interested to learn more about was that this ship marked the beginning of an effort to modernize the Coast and Geodetic Survey and make it more capable of these worldwide explorations and operations. It had a helicopter landing pad on it.

SB: No. Not the original *Surveyor*. That was added later. The thing that Dr. Harris was so enthused about was the laboratory space, but during the time I was there, they were never equipped. I took Nansen bottle casts on the *Surveyor*. I told you where I hurt my back. We put it in bottles, and we stored them until we got back to Seattle, and the University of Washington did all the analysis. Dr. Harris's dreams were nice, and they would have been nice to have done it. But I had a different approach. As I told you, I told [inaudible] twelve knots was obsolete because, Molly, if you have a laboratory aboard, it means you have to have technicians and operators. That adds to the crew. When the ship is underway, everybody is paid, whether they're

working or not. You don't get oceanographic samples right away. You have to go to your station. Going from station to station at twelve knots takes forever. We got samples. The ship was modern. It had new equipment. It was a nice ship. They had adequate quarters. It was a new ship. It was our first big ship since 1942. That was eighteen years. It was an advancement. [laughter] There was a lot of political action there because President Nixon was President, and his good friend was the president of National Steel. The people in Seattle who bid on it say that they could never build it for the price they said they were going to build it. And they did get a couple million dollars added to the price. It was a problem building it. National Steel had never built a ship; they built barges. They brought over a crew of shipbuilders from Ireland to build a ship. The ship lasted a long time. It was structurally sound, and it was [inaudible]. What else is on your list? I've taken up so much of your time.

MG: No, that's okay. I wanted to hear more about your time at Cape Canaveral and what that was like for you personally and professionally.

SB: Well, it was my first post duty, as I called it. I had never been on a post before to live. Every base you go in is a post. We were among Air Force and Army. Not very many Navy people there. The social life was absolutely fantastic. We were invited to cocktail parties and to dinners two or three times a week. When I was down range, Janet had to refuse them because I wasn't there. It was a social – when we got there, we were informed we have to get calling cards because when you go to the place, you left – there was a little dish by the door. When you entered, you left your calling card there. Many of the people were young officers and young scientists. Young scientists there were given the same rank and privileges as officers. At every party, they were there because they were part of the team. I inherited a very good group of people. I took over command. As I told you, I had school to teach them how to know what was what. We worked in different locations out in the Bahamas. We were down at all the tracking sites down south. We didn't go north for the tracking sites. I guess they had other controls for that. Working with the Air Force, they were most helpful. All you had to do was say I need to send five men and equipment to such and such. "What day you want to go?" And they arranged it. Flying out of Patrick Air Force Base. And down range, if you needed to move them, they were always – if there was an airport there, they moved you when you wanted to. There was cooperation-plus. We met all of our goals. The Air Force knew they could call on us for anything they needed that we were capable of doing. The comradeship was – as I told you earlier, everybody was trying their damndest to do the best they could as fast as they could because everybody wanted the program to succeed. I would have stayed there for the rest of my career and never asked for a promotion because it was so great. They had rules. The rules were that you cannot accept any meals from any contractor. You could not accept any gift from any contractor. I think I told you I had to return a nice Swiss watch, and [inaudible] never forgave me for that. He always brought it up. "You could have kept my watch." Perhaps, if I'd been under the table, it could have been done, but I wasn't that way.

You had a feeling that what little you contributed was a contribution to our space program. That was the ultimate goal to contribute to the accomplishment. And I think we did. We showed them a lot of things that they didn't know. I was disappointed in the two rocket scientists that they brought over with [Operation] Paperclip from Germany. [Editor's Note: Operation Paperclip was a secret program conducted by the United States after World War II. It aimed to

recruit and bring German scientists, engineers, and technicians, many of whom had been involved in Nazi Germany's scientific and military programs, to work for the United States. The goal was to gain expertise in various fields, especially rocket technology and other advanced scientific areas, to bolster American research and development. The operation was officially approved in 1947 and played a significant role in shaping the post-war technological landscape. Scientists such as Wernher von Braun, who had been instrumental in the development of the V-2 rocket for Germany, were among those brought to the United States under Operation Paperclip.] That was my opinion. I didn't voice it officially. My first officer in the Coast Survey went to Washington and took over the geodesy division in 1960, and then Noble Martin came on. Noble and I were shipmates on the *Hydrographer*, my first assignment. He was the second officer I met in the Coast Survey. Admiral Pierce was the first. When I reported to Pensacola, nobody was there. The ship was out at sea, but I was given Noble's telephone number, and I contacted him. I helped him put up the signals on the shoreline for the *Hydrographer* to use for the calibration of their work with the taut wire. Noble was in charge. He was at the headquarters. He let me run the show the way I wanted to. I saw him about once a week. We would socialize about once a month. I think I told you my sister saved all my letters. In one letter, I wrote that we had thirty-five people over for cocktails. I said, "I think some people didn't show up." Whiskey was very cheap, a dollar and a half a bottle if you could buy it downrange, and the customs officers were very lenient about that. Many of the Army crew over there at the Cape – the headquarters were in the house next door – always came over and said, "Commander, you want some more whiskey? I'm going down range. I'll be back." Beefeater Gin was a dollar and a half, so we always bought it. I still have some in my whiskey cart right now. I still have some Crown Royal that I brought from Cape Canaveral. I don't know. Does whiskey go bad? They tell me it doesn't, so perhaps it's all right.

MG: What years were you at Cape Canaveral?

SB: I was there from December of '59 to '63. We left there late in December, right after Christmas, because we celebrated Christmas at Cape Canaveral and then went up to Norfolk.

MG: This was the early stage of the aerospace program. This was around the time when John F. Kennedy promised the moonwalk. Do you remember this as an exciting time? Were there any memorable missions?

SB: No, because we just put the azimuth in the guidance system, and they took off. We met with the Air Force. It must have been about – I know we met. I think we had them stay over a few days in the second week. They wanted to build Titan Missile silos, and they wanted to be able to put the azimuth in the guidance system. To do that, you had to observe the Polaris, get the true north, and preserve it. They wanted to establish the station with just two benchmarks. We insisted that they have four benchmarks because if one moved, how would you know it? It was the cost of many a couple hundred dollars per site. They argued over that, and I insisted. I said, "I'd never approve it. If you want my approval, I'll never approve it." That much for the safety of the missile's flight to make sure you had the right azimuth in the guidance system. They eventually did it, but I don't know why they were so stubborn. We had briefings, Molly. They had a very good system. Let's say flight number one is going to take off, and we set a date of April the first. Well, they'd start back in January. Everybody that had a part of that would be



listed. Then, over here, going to the right, they had the dates every week. You had to put when you needed time on the missile in that space. It was a critical line. They could then draw a line as to how much – what was critical in order to advance the program. Every week, we got an update, and it showed a critical path. I thought that was a wonderful way of doing it. Nowadays, with computers, it's done. But we all got our critical path [inaudible] once a week. Monday morning, we were given it. If we had changes to make, we had to make our changes and make sure they got it. We won the Caro Award the year I was down there. That was the second Caro Award. I won the Caro Award [in] my triangulation party. As I think I told you, I'm so proud of the fact that we started the Junior Officer of the Year Award when I was on the – what was it called? – the office assignment committee. It's still in existence today. It has a new name, but it's still in existence. That was good. I have 99.9% good thoughts about the Coast Survey. As I expressed, I am disappointed I never made admiral because I felt I was more qualified than some of them that were made admiral. But life is not perfect.

MG: From Cape Canaveral, you went to Norfolk.

SB: Yes.

MG: Was that when you were assigned to the *Explorer*?

SB: Yes.

MG: I think you've talked a bit about the *Explorer*. Was there anything we were missing from that assignment?

SB: No, except there was the dirtiest ship I'd ever been on. Captain [inaudible] was the captain. I'd forgotten his name. I prided myself on – once I got married, I prided myself [on bringing] my family down to the ship. Janet was aboard the *Pathfinder* many, many times, and I brought Sally down there with us. As I told you, once we left port in Seattle – first ship, first assignment on the *Pathfinder* – I kept finding these little notes mixed in with my clothing and all. Did I tell you about the hundred-dollar bill? I think I did.

MG: That rings a bell.

MG: Okay. I used to put my hand in the pocket, and there would be notes from Janet – "Sambo, I love you. JKB." She was such a wonderful person. There was such a comradeship. I remember Mrs. Johnson, Frank Johnson's wife. She was such a lovely woman, always meeting with the young wives and doing what she could for them.

MG: I think the officers' wives are part of this story, too. They must have sacrificed a lot as well, traveling around, missing you so much, and being responsible for all the things at home.

SB: It takes a special person to be an officer's wife in the service. We moved a few times. Some of the army officers' wives would tell me, "I moved every year. My husband got transferred to this post, and they went to school, and then he got transferred to another post, and then he went to War College." Being a brat is a label that they should probably wear. I feel so

lucky being able to have had my careers, first in the Marines, then in the Coast Survey, and then in civilian life, and all the things that happened to me. It's wonderful memories. And that's all we have left.

MG: Yeah. It sounds like you've seen so much of the world through your work.

SB: All at government expense. Well, I never got to Australia, but I can live without some things.

MG: Well, it's not too late, either.

SB: Oh, no. No, no. It'd take a lot for me to get on the plane again. Well, when do you think you'll have this done? In a year or so?

MG: No, I only have a few more questions, and then we can wrap up. I was curious about the transition from ESSA [Environmental Science Services Administration] to NOAA towards the end of your career and what that was like for you and your colleagues.

SB: Just a name change. That was all. No real big happenings.

MG: We talked a little bit about your decision to retire. I'm curious to hear more about your life after the Coast Survey. You talked about your work in GPS sales, but I'm actually curious to hear about your work as a children's book author now.

SB: Well, when I retired, I didn't do anything from the [inaudible]. Once I decided to retire, once they brought in my placement, I went up, and I was supposed to be on the admiral's staff, but I didn't do anything. They gave me an office, and that was it. Once I left, I became a consultant to Teledyne, and I worked pretty much a full day work for them every day until we went to Africa. That would have been a nice project. You don't control all of your life. When I went home, Brookhaven said, "We need you full-time or not at all," it was a decision to make. I wasn't going to go there for a month or two. I believe in loyalty, and I figured I had devoted four years there. I would have stayed there, except they ran out of money. Being retired, period, was good. We did a lot of things. We had a chance to reconnect with friends that we'd made over the years. The service dictates where you're going. You don't have a choice. We had a chance to dictate where we wanted to go and what we wanted to do. We were up in years. In '85, I was sixty-three; Janet was sixty. You have to think differently about what you do. We enjoyed the winter out here and the summer in Maryland. I enjoyed working in landscaping the house there and reuniting with friends that we had in the neighborhood, although they looked at you in a different way once you started being a snowbird to the West. But the winters were just too much. Here, I was president of the association where we moved to when we bought a house. It was enjoyable, and I learned about HOAs [homeowner associations]. It was a different type of employee. But the world moves on whether you're there or not. And either you ride with it, or you get out of the way. Now I'm writing children's books because – you got a little child, and when they smile at you, it melts you. It really does. It's so sad to see these little children in the war zone. [Editor's Note: Captain Baker is referring to the ongoing 2023 Israel– Hamas war, which is marked by intense hostilities between Israel and the militant group Hamas in the Gaza

Strip, resulting in widespread violence, casualties, and extensive damage to infrastructure.] I didn't see it, but I've heard what happened to little children. They are not guilty of anything, so why should they be punished? You sometimes wonder about God. How did he create such people? How did he create such occasions where we have so much war and so little love? But maybe if you teach love in the book and the children read it, maybe it will make a difference, not in my lifetime but in their lifetime. I know that's a powerful wish, but what else can we do?

MG: I'm so impressed by your books. Not only are they lovely and fun to read, but they feature multi-cultural and multi-ethnic families. They have themes of inclusivity, which I just think are so important to teach at a young age.

SB: Now, you didn't get the new book, did you?

MG: Which one's the new one?

SB: *Oscar Goes to the Vet.*

MG: I think we do have that one. We've read a couple of them, and they all pass the Charley test, which is once they're over, she wants to read it again.

SB: [laughter] Did Sally send you the coloring book?

MG: Yes.

SB: That will keep her busy for a while. Well, what else do you want to know, Molly? I'm an open book.

MB: My last question is about your own family. Tell me about your children and your grandchildren.

SB: Well, I had two, Michael and Sally. Sally didn't get married until late in life. She and David are married and live in Gilbert, which is about a thirty-minute drive from here. Sally is hounding me – well, not hounding. How do you say? Invisible prodding to give up driving. “I’ll take you. I’ll take you.” I said, “Honey, it’s thirty minutes from your house to here.” “That’s all right.” She takes me a lot of places, but I drove to the Memorial Cemetery. He was my friend, not hers. And she would have to drive. For lunch yesterday, I drove to Terravita Country Club, about a twenty-minute drive on a four-lane highway. I got there early because I wanted a handicapped parking place. I think I got someplace I got to go today. Tomorrow, I go to the eye doctor. Tomorrow, I drive to the doctor for the eye doctor after lunch. It's not a big deal. You just drive slowly. Monday, going to the funeral, I almost had an accident. We were stopped. I got the green light to turn left, and a car on the right comes out. I missed her by inches. She was at fault. Just darted out. I guess she was in a hurry and she felt that the traffic was stopped. Reflexes, again, Molly. Stepped on the break and stopped it. I have a good life. I had lunch yesterday with the mayor of Cave Creek. [inaudible] invited over for dinner one night – a nice young man. I guess he's in his seventies. He's had his career. The mayor has no salary. The little town has 3700 people in ten square miles. No salary. They have no real estate tax.

They got all their money from sales tax. Their budget is fifteen million dollars a year. They do alright. He said, "I have a lot of fun doing it."

MG: Where is Michael? Where does he live?

SB: He lives in Waldorf, Maryland. This is his second marriage. She's African American. His daughter is Mickey (Michale?) – Michael and Gale's names together. She's a very bright little girl, and she'll be five in December. Michael's first daughter is thirty-two years old, and she's a teacher in Maryland. Michael and his first wife adopted a Russian boy, and he had an auto accident, and he's not well. I don't have much contact with them because their mother turned them against us. But I'm here if they want to make contact. They know how to reach me. Life is not all roses, Molly. It's not all roses. There are some brickbats thrown at you at times. You just have to dodge them and go on.

MG: Well, this has been such a special conversation and experience for me to get to know you. Is there anything else you wanted to put on the record? Anything else I haven't asked you about?

SB: Well, I don't know.

MG: It's not hard to do this again. If you think of something you want to include, we can always get back on Zoom and continue.

SB: You're going to cut and paste because I've given you so much.

MG: Yes, I'll transcribe our conversations, and you can edit those as you see fit. I'm happy to help with that process.

SB: Thank you so much for all your patience and guidance.

MG: Well, I'm so grateful for you, your time, and your service. This has been such a treat to get to know you this way. Thank you.

SB: Thank you so much.

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Transcribed by Molly Graham 1/10/2024

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