Charlene Damitio

Rough Draft

Owen Siler
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Skidaway Island, Georgia

SG: Today is Friday, the 4th day of November, 1988, and I am visiting Owen Siler at his home on Skidaway Island, near Savannah, Georgia. Si, it's yours.

OS: Well, the first experience that I think about frequently is the procurement of that Falcon jet airplane, because Chet Bender briefed me thoroughly on the problems that had existed with replacement of the old A2-16, and his efforts to get a replacement. Of course, he had leased a couple of different jet airplanes for several months and tried out jet airplanes in the Coast Guard environment, and it looked for quite some time as if we should simply go on our military procurement to the other departments and buy the T-39 made by Rockwell and modify it as became necessary. But Congressman John Murphy of New York who was the chairman of the Coast Guard Sub- (sounds a little like "sub") committee at that time was dead set against it. He wanted to make certain that we fully considered the Falcon 20 which was provided to the United States by Falcon jet of Teterborough, New Jersey, to make it an American product. And so he insisted that we go through competitive procurements to see if the Falcon didn't qualify. And we went on the first of a two-step procedure to see what airplanes could qualify and we got some interesting responses. Lockheed came in with their four jet small airplane and T-39 didn't ask to be considered at all which surprised us somewhat. Falcon jet and a German airplane which was too big, and actually it would probably have been a great airplane for a full replacement of the A2-16, but it was rather apparent that we didn't need a full replacement and it being a much bigger, heavier airplane, was going to cost a lot more

unless we thought perhaps the Germans would subsidize this procurement just to buy in. They qualified as far as the airplane itself was concerned. Lockheed would qualify with a complete redesign of their airplane to go from four engines to two. Their four-engine plane would stall if it was required to fly at low speeds which was one of our criteria, and the Falcon jet qualified pretty well. So we went through the procedures of saying how much does it cost. The Germans didn't provide a cost, the Lockheed people didn't provide a cost, and the Falcon jet was almost completely free. So then we had to look at it very carefully and say, "Now does this qualify as an American product, or is it sufficiently important that we can have the Secretary make the determination that it is essential that we buy a foreign product for the NATO offsets and that sort of thing. And we finally, by making certain that the Falcon jet was going to be modified substantially with the drop hatch in the bottom of the airplane, the search windows in the side of the airplanes, and the basic hardware for eventually what we hoped to be a special radar and television pod (sounded like "pod") where it would hang under a wing, all of that was to be done in Little Rock, Arkansas. We would have all the electronics put in in Little Rock, and all the electronics was provided by Collins, an American company. The engines would be put on in Little Rock, and the engines were to be made by Garrett, which is done in Arizona. One of the criteria that we had established right from the first was that it had to meet FAA requirements for flight safety. But we said it had to be either our FAA or an equivalent organization if it happened to be a foreign airplane because we knew that the Germans and the French were interested in it, and the Falcon jet of course is made by a French company. So, this proposal was that the Falcon jet will be made in France, flown in France, with the French engines on it with minimum electronics and

simply pass their FAA test. Once it passed the test, then the wings were to be taken off, the engines were to be taken off, the electronics would be flown to the United States in a Pan American C-130 which added to the American product, an aspect being a Pan American airplane. With all those considerations, and then as I said, the engines would be taken off in France, we would replace them with American engines in the United States. All these modifications made it an American product. So we didn't have to go through the "Buy American" question. We made the determination that Falcon met our criteria, was the lowest priced airplane, and we thought we were ready to sign the contract, and, of course, we had to be reviewed by the transportation acquisitions group which is known as TSORT and that takes a long time, and finally we set a date for the signing of the contract. And the president of the Falcon jet was coming in from Teterborough, the vice-president of Garrett was coming in from Arizona, the vice-president of Collins was coming in from, I think, Los Angeles, and just about the time we set that date, Falcon said, "You know, we can save the Coast Guard a lot of money and save ourselves a lot of money, if instead of taking the wings off the airplane and taking the engines off, we'll simply leave the engines on and fly the jet in that condition all the way to Little Rock. Well, then we had to recompute whether it was still an American product when we didn't use the PanAm jet. I think at that point it probably came in with about a 50.03 percentage American, but anyway it did come in more than 50% American in this new configuration. But it was reviewed and reviewed and reviewed in the Office of the Secretary and his associates and we got the word that we should go ahead with the contract signing and all these people arrived in my outer office and I got up to a time when I was to sign the contract, Buzz, my secretary or my aide, said, "Have them come

in," and at that point the telephone rang from the Secretary's Office, the direct line. I picked up the phone and it was Bill Coleman himself on the phone, and he says, "Si, is there anything more that we don't know about this airplane?" Of course as far as I knew there wasn't anything more, and so I said, "No Sir, I don't believe so." He said well then go ahead and sign the contract. Well, if he'd said, "No, don't' sign it," with all these people lined up in front of me, I don't know what we would have done. But anyway, we went ahead and signed the contract, and I know that the Falcon has had all sorts of engines problems since then, but that's an American product. And if it hadn't been for all the chicken (sounds like "chicken") tests for making certain that the engines would fly after flying through flocks of starlings, why we would have gotten past that. As far as the electronics on it are concerned, I understand that that stuff is really marvelous and really helpful in our searches, and I'm sure because of beefing up the engine that it would not have worked as a replacement for the A2-16 if it hadn't been for how well the electronics worked.

Another very important aspect of my term as Commandant was I think the implementation of the 200-mile fishing law. We had the experience several years earlier of extending the fishery limitation from the three-mile limit out to twelve miles, because the Bartlett Law which was passed back in I guess the early 60s, and I was Chief of Search and Rescue in Alaska at that time, and we had a lot of Russian and Japanese and Korean fishing vessels fishing in the Gulf of Alaska and the Bering Sea. We extended our surveillance of the fishing vessels out to twelve miles at that time and asked for and got the augmentation of our forces by C-130s to just locate the vessels the first day and then we'd go back a second day at low altitude and determine precisely what they were

fishing for and what country they represented. So we had some experience in it at that time. I think the biggest disappointment that I had was in the wisdom of the administration. We were only allowed to increase our ship fleet by one ship, which turned out to be the UNIMAK (sounds like "*Unimac*"). Bringing it out of mothballs and when we got it out of mothballs and made one trip, it was obvious that it needed six more months of overhaul before it was worth doing anything more with, so we really didn't do as well in the fleet of the Coast Guard at that time as I thought we should have.

SG: What year was this?

OS: The law was passed in 1976 as I recall, in April, and the day that the law became effective, I made a flight in a C-130 out of Cape Cod, and we took Congressman _____ (~~not sure what it sounds like, maybe~~, "Biazi" [phonic]) with us on the trip, and that particular day we saw about five Russian vessels fishing on the Grand Banks, and we saw only two American vessels at all in the area. The two American vessels probably were about 60 to 70 feet long, and the Russian vessels were big 400-foot vessels, factory vessels and catchers. And then, we had seen a situation only far more so in Alaska because pollock is a very common fish in Alaska, and it is very useful to the Japanese and the Russians. And the United States doesn't use pollock much at all, so most of the fishing in Alaskan waters is for salmon and cod in waters much closer to land, so the vessels are quite small by comparison with the Russian vessels which are out for a long period of time with huge factory vessels and pretty good size catching vessels. The catching vessels are about 200 to 300 feet long while the factory vessels are 400 to 500 feet long. It is an impressive operation scene in Alaska.

But we got significant augmentation of our C-130 fleet, particularly in Alaska, for the one vessel and we shipped it to some of our 378s to the west coast so that they could make the continuous patrols in Alaska, but until that time there had been very little in the way of controls in Alaska for the surface patrol. We had things like the YOCONA (sounds like "*Okona*") coming up on patrol, you can't do an awful lot, while the 378 was able to cover a lot more area, and we had helicopters on the vessels which made a big difference in the ability to check particularly on the type of fish. Then we started putting the NOAA people, the National Marine Fishing Service inspectors on our ships to make it possible for them to examine exactly what kind of records they were keeping, what kind of fish they were catching, and whether they are throwing back the types of fish that were prohibited. So it went into effect rather quickly, and I think rather well on the whole, but I think at the same time there were some interesting operations in the first month when we had at least four violations by Russian vessels, and the system of determining exactly what to do had been pretty well refined by that time. After the (sounds like "Seamen's versus _____?") case, of course we had a State Department liaison man in the Coast Guard headquarters, we had a Coast Guard man in the State Department working in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Marine Affairs, and if a violation occurred, we got on the phone immediately and described it to the State Department. The State Department would usually tell us whether there was any apparent diplomatic objection to seizing the vessel, and if there were no objections, then we would send a message back, and they would seize the vessel, frequently escort it into port, and at that point go through the seizure process and to the Justice Department and very

frequently, almost in every case, the country of registry would really buy it back. It amounted to a huge fine usually, but the procedure is actually seizure and buying it back.

SG: How long does this process take from the report of the violation, the processing through Coast Guard headquarters, the State Department, back to say, "Okay, seize it." How long does that take?

OS: It would be usually a couple of hours. Now, at times it takes longer than that, and in the first few days, because it was a new law, the State Department would not give us clearance to seize anything and in those cases, I think the Secretary of State was on a trip or some such thing, the Under Secretary or the Deputy Secretary was making the determinations, and he would not make the determination without notifying the White House. President Carter felt certain that those Russian vessels really didn't want to do these nasty things, so he said let them go with a warning for the first three times. Finally on the fourth one, he said go ahead and seize it, and we got clearance back. I think in that case it probably took 12 to 18 hours, and in all that time our vessel was standing by the Russian vessel. In this case, we escorted the vessel into Boston Harbor and the entire cargo was transferred off, and the vessel was bought back by the Russians and they went back to sea. In cases of that sort, we know from conferences with the Russians, the Master (sounds like "Master") no longer serves as a Master. When he goes back to sea, he's a mate and no more. So, they learned their lesson rather quickly, but it took awhile to bring it out. We had some other interesting seizures. The Spanish violated their permits for fishing of squid off of _____, and, you know, no one in the United States is much interested in squid, but we had permitted them to fish for a certain quantity of squid in a couple of areas, and they violated it, and we seized it and they paid

some fines. I always felt a little sorry for the Spanish, but that was the law, so they did pay their fine. The Japanese and the Koreans I think are a little more common violators these days than any other country because the Russians have pulled off more, and the Japanese are desperate enough for seafood that they grind up into fish meal and that they make into food. And actually you know they're catching the fish under the permits now, sending it to Japan, and selling it back to the United States. So the Japanese are very great fisherman in Alaskan waters up to the maximum of their permits. And so it becomes an important diplomatic tool for us to permit fishing in Alaskan waters.

Another interesting thing that I got involved with was the development of the specifications for the new helicopter, the replacement of the H-52. I did not sign the contract for that. It was signed sometime after I retired, but I did work for a significant period of time on the requirements for that helicopter. We looked at what we had been doing with the H-52s and how often they had landed in the water, and whether it would be necessary to land ~~in~~ on the water, if we had twin engines, and what kind of electronics they needed, what radar and so on. I think that we came out pretty well in the specifications. I don't think that we expected that the procurement was going to come out the way it did with another French airplane. We had seen what SIKORSKI (sounds like "Sakorsky") had developed in the way of the H-76. And it was a very well developed helicopter and we had a lot of luck with Sikorsky airplanes, both the H-52 and the H-53 were at that time Sikorsky helicopters, and we had the HO4S and the HO3S, all of them Sikorsky, and so we, I think we leaned a little bit towards Sikorsky. And I'm sure their helicopter would have done the job for us. But, when it came to the final contract period which was, as I say, after I retired, why it turned out we bought another

French helicopter which is pretty small but I've flown in it here in Savannah and the electronics make it again a very capable helicopter. And again we have problems with the engines on it, the same way as we do with the Falcon. And, if we can ever solve the engine problems, I think we have two good airplanes that were developed during the time that I was Commandant.

One of the other airplane developments that was interesting and a bit frustrating was the concept of ____ (sounds like "Air-Eye") which was to be hung under the wing of the Falcon, and they said that it would be very simple to take this very complicated electronic package, which was to have infrared detection, side-looking radar, I think ultraviolet detection, and ____ (sounds like "gated") TV. And all of this was to be used under the wing of the aircraft, and then there would be a recorder in the passenger compartment where the operator would be able to watch it and record what they saw, and if there was anything they needed evidence on, why it would be recorded to the time, the location. It was a great package, and this was going to be possible to move it from one airplane to the other in about 30 minutes. It now turns out that it will take approximately a day and a half to move it from one airplane to the next, and instead of being operational, I think that we are in the test phase with the very first one. So, I've been retired ten years—that's how slow some of the procurements go. I think if it ever becomes fully operational, it will still be a very useful tool, but it sure took forever. We are turning to a different type of procurement which I thought was interesting, the 270 was developed during that period of time, and we went through the contracting phase which was also interesting. We started looking at the old 327s and knew that they had to be replaced. It was a wonderful ship for an unusually long period of time. But they were

old, they were built with rivet construction, and that is just not the type of operation we could even maintain if we pulled all those rivets, and said we were going to replace them, I don't think there is a riveter around anymore. It's all welding. So, we had that as a problem, and of course the propulsion system was great for its period, but everything today is simpler than that unless they are looking for extremely high speed which the destroyers have with extremely high pressure steam, and gas turbine is an alternative but it gets more complicated. So we looked at propulsion systems and we looked at the size we needed. We made a complete survey of what the fishing vessels around the world were like since we at that time apparently had as one of our major projects the enforcement of not only the 200-mile fishery law, but our 200-mile economic zone which we felt was right near the horizon. And we found that if we made 20 to 22 knots, we could take care of seizing or chasing any fishing vessels that were either on the boards or planned for the near future. And in order to get that much speed, we could do it with two engines, two diesel engines, which would be fairly simple to maintain and we didn't need four engines. And if we put in four engines, we immediately added a great deal of weight to that, and a great deal of cost to that, and a great deal of fuel-carrying requirements. And as soon as you have two more engines, you've got to have the people to maintain them, and as soon as you have those people to maintain them, you have to add the cooks, the people that provide the hotel services and administration services. So, we wanted to have a simple ship. We also looked at the 210, and called in all the COs that we could contact easily and said, "What's wrong with the 210?" They all said, "Well, it's a little small, it's a little rough riding." So we added some as high—we started looking at something like a 240-footer, and stabilization on it, and due to that, we were still a little

too small for a helicopter operation and a helicopter hangar which one of the big problems with the 210 was that if you had a helicopter aboard, it was exposed to the elements, and so we said, definitely less, let's have a hanger. So we looked at all these tradeoffs and came up with the 270 footer, and I think as far as our things to consider at that time, we came out pretty well. So the people today are saying, "Well, you can't apprehend a drug runner." Well, there isn't any cutter left that can apprehend a drug runner. And even if you catch up with some of these drug runners who have cigarette boats, if you caught them with a high-speed vessel like a destroyer or an FFT (or FFG?) or something of that sort, you'd still have to get in a small boat and go over to it, and the only way to hold it there is to put guns on it, and so I think that probably we came out pretty well with the size and the configuration of the 270.

SG: The 270s _____?

OS: That's right. Contracting with that vessel became interesting because we advertised for bids and the low bid by a considerable margin was _____(sounds like "Vorsala" [phonic]) in Finland. Here we were with one French airplane and the possibility of another French helicopter at that time, and thinking about a Finnish vessel, and the bid was submitted was, as I say, significantly lower than the other companies in the United States. We had hoped that we would get more competition for the ships in the United States, but the great majority of companies that build naval vessels were pretty well taken up with naval vessels and the commercial builders were going out of business right and left, so we finally had not too much competition in the United States. The primary bidder on the first four we contracted for was Tacoma Boat in Tacoma. But Tacoma Boat was really struggling. They were near bankruptcy. The said they wanted to reopen an old

yard in Tacoma, and that they would build our vessels there. And here we were with another bid from Finland that was I think something like six million dollars, I can't recall the figures now, but it seems to me it was close to six million dollars per ship less than Tacoma Boat. The way that they were going to reduce the cost had to do with electronics, and the electronics were to be provided by the Italian General Electric Company, and in order for us to even go out on bid, we had to provide quite a lot of information that got near the classified area. But we didn't make the bid package classified and Vorsala, of course, builds ships for Sweden and Norway, but they also build all of the Russian ice breakers. They had Russians in the yard all the time. So we had some reservations about whether we wanted to go with Vorsala for this kind of a ship because it would have some wartime capabilities. We went to the Defense Department, the State Department, the Labor Department, the Commerce Department, and said, "What's your reaction to this? Commerce said, "Well the tradeoffs are great. The Fins are buying the Boeing 727s and the commercial tradeoff just sounds great. The State Department said the same sort of thing. The Labor Department said, "Well, we wish we could keep the American shipyards busy but apparently the American shipyards aren't that much in need of your ship if they didn't bid any better than that. And the Defense Department said, "Whoops! We're not sure here." If they didn't require certain publications, it might be all right, but in order for them to do the whole thing in the electronics package, we think that they would need hands on material that is classified. So they kept shifting it from office to office. The Defense Department wouldn't give us a reply, and so we kept pushing them and waiting to make our bid acceptable and all the time wondering if in order to do this we would have to have the Secretary make the

determination that we could not buy American. Finally, the Fins came in and said, "We think we made a small mistake in the electronic package, and we'd like to submit a different price on your electronics." And, at that point, we said, "Sorry about that. If we give you the bid, you would have to deliver it at the price that you bid it initially, because that was your bid and that's the way it has to be. The alternative is to withdraw your bid." And they did. So that solved our problem> Then we went to Tacoma and said, "Are you sure that you can build this boat?" And, of course, they did build the first four and then we got into the problems of where any add-ons would be built, and we had some questions in our mind about whether the change of the yard—I was retired at that point, so I am not sure of all that went on, but whether add-ons could be identical, and one of the things we got that we wanted was to be able to train our people in one place and have them trained for all of the entire class, rather than having each ship a tiny bit different. And we would have, I think, had first choice everything identical built in the same yard and that way it would be exactly the same. But with some of the prices that Mr. Director in his yard up in Newport came up with, why I think that the later ones are apparently turning rather well. After I retired, I got into another question which had to do with the electronic package—the command and control module. And I thought that was interesting because Litton wanted to propose a different package, again significantly lower in price than Sperry was building, and made the proposal informally, and said we can formalize this. We're convinced it would save you a lot of money, and we would like to take this a little further since it is now going to be built in an entirely new yard. And Director preferred that too. I think he had some relations with Litton that would have been favorable. Well, they hired me as a consultant and I talked to various places

and even talked to the Commandant about the possibility of doing this and saving money. And he talked to his contracting people and then called me on the phone and says, "Si, forget it. If I go to Congress and ask for a modification of the entire contract situation because we no longer need to have the Sperry equipment, my belief is that we will not get the number of ships we want, that they will be too anxious to change the whole thing, rather that just part of it." The upshot was I made both Sperry and Litton mad at me because of the fact that Litton didn't get what it wanted and Sperry knew I was talking to the other people who had contacted for me to work with them. I had worked at one time on the proposal of the Sperry phase for the software for the ships, and couldn't believe that the software wouldn't be developed by the same people who developed hardware. And unfortunately, it turned out differently and I don't know that the software works today. So that was an interesting aspect of the 270s.

Another interesting thing that occurred while I was Commandant was we sent the first women to the Academy, so they were in the class of 1980. And at the time we sent them there, we said, "They won't go to sea." And, of course, the women that went to the Academy under those circumstances were not too happy with the idea, but they accepted it and just hoped that something would change, which, of course, it did. And we changed it at the time that Brock Adams made the graduation speech at the Academy in 1976. And he announced that women would be going to sea. And there was a loud cheer from the women at the Academy and of all their families. I always felt that we probably should, before we sent women to sea, have a very careful examination of the total impact, the family impact, and that sort of thing. So that was my real reservation about sending women to sea. And, even today, I just read in Naval Institute last night that the Marine

Corps is having problems with the fact that if women are assigned without regard to what their unit is doing, such as in the Marine Support Unit on a transport, and all of a sudden war is declared, and here these women are someplace near a combat zone. You immediately have to pull them off, you have to find replacements, which makes for a real problem with the Marine Corps, and I think that it perhaps creates a problem with us if we ever are transferred to the Navy again and the Navy regulations take effect, and we therefore have to pull the women off our ships, then we don't have a trained team anymore. Admiral Yost has told the Secretary of the Navy he doesn't plan to go along on wartime. The Navy, I think, has problems with that concept because when a Coast Guard ship goes to readiness training, and if a woman's voice is on, nobody has to guess twice about the kind of ship that is. So, there is still a problem with sending women to sea, I believe, but they certainly have done a very fine job. The first time that I visited a ship that had women aboard, well let me go back before that. Before we accepted the first women at sea, we brought two women into the Coast Guard headquarters to appear at a press conference with the Secretary. And I asked the two of them to this press conference and the Secretary, the women's civil rights officer--the head civil right's officer for DOT was a woman at that time. She was there. This Ensign and a Boatswain Mate bosmate, I think, Second Class, appeared with the Secretary. And we all said a few words, or were visible to the press, and then after the Secretary was through, he left and the press conference generally adjourned. But the two Coast Guard women were available for the press to badger them with questions. And they were more interested in the enlisted woman than they were in the officer. Which was, I thought, a little bit interesting. But it turned out that the enlisted woman had been the officer in charge of a 41-footer in San

Francisco in a couple of interesting incidents, one of which had to do with they were going out to some sort of a rescue and they were in a position close to a beach. And they observed someone apparently swimming in the nude. And the male members of her crew, said, "Let's go over and take a closer look." And she said, "No, we've got this mission to take care of." So, off they went, and she overruled, and the newspaper people were interested in the fact that she, as the officer in charge of the boat, was able to control that situation the way she should. And I think she also had a decoration of some sort for rescuing in the San Francisco area.

The woman ensign had a great history to be assigned at sea. Her father was a contract skipper moving boats from the New York area down to the West Indies year after year and back again in the spring. I mean the springtime. And she went along as a crew member for years. So she was a very well experienced seaman. And she was assigned, both these two were assigned to the MORGENTHAU (sounds like "Mormonlaw") in San Francisco. And when I first went out to inspect the ship, it was obvious that they were doing very, very well. The ship, when it went out on its first Alaska patrol, had water problems. Its two evaporators broke down and so they were on water hours the entire Alaska patrol, something like four months. And someone made arrangements for the women to get showers at Dutch Harbor, and I guess it was that woman officer that I had met who observed that only the women were going over for showers. And she said, "Where are the men going?" And someone said, "We only made the arrangements for the women." She said, "We're all members of the crew." So they all stopped. But she was qualified for everything that she could have been qualified for by the time the first trip to Alaska was over.

SG: Now let me ask you a little more about her. This was prior to '78? So the first class entered the Academy in 1976. She was not in the Academy then.

OS: No, she was not in the Academy then.

SG: Commissioned, or _____?

OS: She was an OCS graduate and had been assigned in Portsmith before Virginia.

SG: _____.

OS: And there were two officers assigned, both of them ensigns. The other was an OSC graduate assigned directly from OCS, while she had been assigned to the Marine Safety Office in Portsmith before. They made that first trip to Alaska, and I don't know how many other such trips, all with very good results. In fact, I thought that the CO on one of the ships probably, as I recall, is now Rear Admiral Allen Reed who was the CO on the east coast ship, said that the results with women aboard were even better than they anticipated because no man wanted a woman to show him up and no woman was there for anything except to show that, "Damn it, she was as good as anybody else." So the entire crew did better. And he said that they also found that the language on the mess deck was a whole lot better than it had ever been before.

When I went out to the west coast sometime after that to visit the ship, and by this time she had made—the officer that I was speaking of—had made Lieutenant Junior Grade. I found that she had been, well she said that she understood that JGs rated a room by themselves as ensigns. She had bunked with the other woman officers. But JGs rated a room by themselves. Well, the only way that JGs could have rooms by themselves was if they shared a head. And I thought that it was interesting that she, as the senior woman officer aboard, had to share the head with a male black officer. Which I thought was the

ultimate _____. The other interesting thing I found on that ship was, of course, we had not modified the compartment on the ship, as we put this first group of enlisted officers aboard. The women enlisted personnel simply took over a compartment that had its own head. And I inspected the quarters to see what difference there was between the women quarters and the male quarters, and the only real difference that you could see with a quick inspection was that the urinal in the head was a place where they kept a potted plant. One other thing about sending women to sea when Brock Adams made the announcement at the graduation that we were going to be sending women to sea, the press coverage ran it quickly, and I went from there to Newport and spoke to the people at the Naval War College, and my procedure there was usually a very quick briefing with slides about, "This Is The Coast Guard," and then open it to questions. And there are always enough people who are informed about the Coast Guard that it starts off with some interesting questions, and then some simple curiosity questions as well. But I found that the question and answer format went very well at the Naval War College and the National War College, and at the Naval War College, when I opened the floor to questions, I think one of the very first questions was from a woman Commander who wanted to know how she could transfer to the Coast Guard?

SG: When did you graduate, and what was your first assignment?

OS: Well, I graduated in 1943, I was the class of 44, and my first assignment was to the Navy Transport _____. Of course, _____ was best known for Douglas and _____ being on the ship, and I think that everyone on the ship was very proud of that. They still get together every two years and have a reunion of the ship's crew. And we had several of the ship's officers have made Admiral, and, of course, the

CO that they are all particularly proud of is L. W. Perkins who died just a few years ago, and he made those reunions faithfully as long as he was alive. Chet Richmond was a junior officer on it. Elmer Pierce was. And I was. I can't think of any others who made Admiral who were on the ship, but we made the initial invasion of Bougainville while I was on ship, and then shortly after that we came back to the States and did training in San Diego for quite a long time. I was in San Diego for over a year. I then asked for a transfer hopefully to one of these new gunboats that I heard about—the 255s. And instead my orders came to the *Bayfield* which was another transport. And I was told by the Exec of the Ligate to see if I could get my orders changed as I went through Alameda with _____ section there. So I knew Hadley Evans quite well. He had been at the Academy quite a lot of the time that I was in _____ and so I contacted him, and he said, "Boy, we would like to have you on the 255s." So he sent a message to headquarters, and, of course, the first personnel messages in those days were deferred traffic, and I don't know if the first message ever got to Coast Guard headquarters, but the day that I was called and told that transportation would be ready for me to go out to find the *Bayfield* in the Pacific the next day, I got in touch with him again and he said, "Let me send a priority message." And, so he broke all the rules and sent a priority message asking to change my orders to send me to a 255, and he got me into that, but it was approved provided he could provide someone else who was similarly qualified. He said, "That's like finding icebergs in the middle of July on the sidewalk of New York." So I went to the *Bayfield*. And on the *Bayfield* I made the initial invasion of Northern _____ (sounds like "Honchu"), and then I sharpened my navigation skills by being navigator, we brought troops back from Japan, Korea, Saipan, and _____

back to, well to California and to Seattle on the trip. And then we turned the *Bayfield* over to the Navy and I went on team. And, well, in between I was at the Alameda Training Center for a short time as personnel officer. At that time, I learned the quick signature. I signed stacks of the old personnel accident form, the 1599, must have been a foot high at times. I think the main reason we had a personnel officer was because they needed those forms signed. But anyway, we decommissioned Alameda on the first of July, I think it was in 1945.

SG: Was that the Separation Center?

OS: Well, no this was the _____ Section and the Recruit Training Center. And, of course, we didn't need recruits. We had more than we needed by far. So we closed the Alameda Training Center, and the _____ section was no longer needed. The Separation Center had been someplace else in San Francisco itself. So the whole thing was decommissioned in the first of July of 1946. Of course, that was the time when we all reverted in rank and so on. I went back to JG again and sometime in June I went to the *Taney* which had now arrived in Alameda. And so I simply moved across the dock and went to the *Taney*. And I had my first big problem with pay at that time, which everyone has I guess, sometime in their career. I went to sea, got my _____ (sounds like "Fogey", as I had been in at that point I guess four years. In those days it was three years. So I got my Fogey the 9th of June, 1946. I reverted to JG the first of July, and anyway—Oh, there was a pay increase. A base increase, no increase in rental allowance. So, there were quite a few changes to my pay, and it wasn't recognized until a year later that I was being overpaid by my rental allowance. I was still getting lieutenant rental allowance for the year. They took it out as fast as possible out of the

two paychecks that I got the first of July and the first of August of 1947. By that time I was in flight training down in Corpus Christi, and the first one really hit hard. I had just moved from Long Beach to Corpus Christi and hadn't gotten my travel pay yet. Boy, at that point, if my wife had pushed much harder, I think I would have been a civilian. But I went from the *Taney* to flight training, and then—fortunately, the second time that the pay was cut, which was I think $180 each time, which was more than I collected, so my pay was—I walked in to get my pay on the first of July of '47 at the Navy Pay Office and they said, "We don't have a paycheck for you." So I had to exist on savings for the next two weeks or so, which was pretty hard to do in those days because you didn't draw much pay anyway. But then they took out the rest of the overpayment that they knew of for six months. The other pay record had to be sent to headquarters for it. So I guess it was $90 cut in the first pay, and that was more than I got. They took the rest of that out of the pay in two weeks. So I was living on either savings or partial savings for quite some time, and then the first of August, they took out the other $90 in one fell swoop. But by that time, I had gotten flight pay So I wasn't hurt as bad the second time. But I went from flight training to Port Angeles, Washington. Oh, incidentally, about flight training. When I went to flight training, I received orders to Pensacola, but temporary duty in Corpus Christi, Texas, which meant I couldn't take my household effects except, you know, the express-type things, and so we had a small baby at that time, and living with just things out of a suitcase and so on was a little difficult for the time I went to Corpus Christi for five months, and then to Pensacola for two-and-a-half months which was my permanent assignment. Then to Jacksonville for a month and then back to Corpus Christi again on temporary duty. All the temporary duty except for 2-12 months

in Pensacola, and there was a railroad strike in those days at that time, so I couldn't get my things shipped to Pensacola anyway. I lived for over a month of the two-and-a-half months that I was in Pensacola without my household effects anyway. And, finally, after living with them for about six weeks, we put them back in storage and went on to temporary duty to Jacksonville and back to Corpus Christi, and finally saw our things again in Port Angeles, Washington after being in flight training for over a year. I was in Port Angeles and thought that was a very good first station. Hawaii was—

SG: Who was your CO in Port Angeles?

OS: I had three COs during the time I was there. Bill Snyder when I first arrived, and I remember he qualified me the first time in _____. In that day he was the official pilot of course because I was not yet qualified. He was checking me. There was Snyder, Siler, and our passenger was Schlieker from the District Office. Now, if that didn't throw us a for a loss. We went out to Quillayute Rescue Station off the Pacific Coast and Quillayute had a nice air station from World War II. So there we were, the three of us, and I am sure the people in Quillayute didn't know which was which with names like that. But Bill Snyder was the first CO, and then he was relieved by Charlie Tighe, and then he was transferred and R. R. Johnson came, I guess the last six months I was there. And then I went from there to Hawaii and learned to fly four-engine planes in Hawaii and lots of transport flying which I guess qualified me for transport which I did the next five years in Washington when I was flying Admiral Richmond around in the Mach 404.

SG: Did you ever hear of anyone that was flying VIPs and landed in the wrong airport?

OS: At the wrong airport? No. I don't think we ever came close to that.

SG: I heard a yarn and I won't say who it was, but he was flying the Secretary and it was night and there were two airports in _____, and they touched down at the first one and just as they were touching down they realized it was the wrong one, so they took off and landed at _____. The Secretary afterwards said, "When you guys want to fly touch and go, do it on your own time."

OS: No, but I landed at airports that I didn't intend to when I first started out because of weather. One time we were in a stack in New York and it was a big stack. Weather was really lousy. I go out to Kennedy now. We were going to employ Floyd Bennett and had to make GCA at Floyd Bennett. Weather was below minimum, but we, I had the best qualifications you could get, so we made two approaches to Floyd Bennett, and we could see the field as we flew over it, but we could never see enough of it ahead of time to make the landing. And so after two approaches, the approach control said, "Would you like to try over here at Idle Wild? The weather is a little bit better." And it was, I think, at minimum, before I left, so we made ILS approach to Idle Wild. Admiral Richmond was to make a speech at noontime, and we were trying to get him there in time for that. And we left Scotland, in those days the lightship was the marker beacon to start either at the approach to Floyd Bennett or to Idle Wild. When we left Scotland, it was at minimum, and they kept taking constant weather readings at Idle Wild, and they said, "It's gone below the visibility requirements to land here now," when we were almost into the middle of the runway marker. And then they said a second or two later, "It's gone back up to half a mile," so we made it. We tried during the day to move back to Floyd Bennett because it was a little bit easier to get to there from downtown. Admiral

Richmond stayed in town overnight. And we could see Floyd Bennett under the fog, it had lifted that much, and we asked for clearance to take off in _____ above the clouds just to stay off the deck, and so we had to land it at Floyd Bennett, and the y said, "No, you'll have to go back up to minimum altitude and work your way down through the stack and come back in." And when the fog came back down so low that I remember a _____ taxied up at take-off and his taillight was one of those rotating collision-type lights, was on the top of the tail of that _____, and it disappeared in the fog while it was still on the runway. That's when we canceled our request for clearance and went back and stayed overnight at Idle Wild. I can't remember any other times when we even ended up at the wrong field, but there was one, the last time that I ever went to, ever flew the plane to graduation at the Academy, Admiral _____ (sounds like "Fecular") was the speaker that time, I remember, and Admiral _____ (sounds like "Eamey") was the Superintendent of the Academy. Of course, he had been an aviator and he knew quite a lot about clearances, and we filed for _____ (sounds like "Grotten") airport with an alternate of someplace in Western New York. And he got on the phone down to us at the terminal in Washington, and said, "What do you mean by filing for western New York? That's farther away than Washington. Drive right now if it's that bad." "Admiral, we don't really intend to do that. We think that we can make an approach to either Quonset Point or Providence using them as alternates, but legally we can't use them as alternates. So he said, "Okay," but I could see his fingers going crossed right then. We got up to Grotten and called down and asked what their weather was, and it was obvious we shouldn't even make an attempt to land at Grotten, so we went over to Quonset and made our approach there and

got down on a GC air approach to 100 feet, and I was reaching for the throttle to go around when my co-pilot said, "I have the approach light." So we got in, and I can remember other times when we got in at minimum, but it was a fun tour of duty. Lots of places that I never would have seen otherwise. And I saw an awful lot of Coast Guard units which I think served me extremely well in later years because I had seen these places and knew a little bit about the environment. I think Admiral _____ (sounds like "Peas or Keyes") was a little bit at a disadvantage in that regard. He made it a point to visit as many Coast Guard units as he could, while I had seen all these units a good many years before, but at least I knew what the area was like and knew if the airfield was on a hillside or was down to the water or something of that sort. But he didn't have that exposure earlier.

I think that one of the very funniest incidents that had to do with my—Admiral Richmond reminded me of it many, many years later. After he had been retired for several years, he said he had never forgotten the first flight that I ever made as "the" pilot of the 404. I had gone through a training syllabus there at Washington National and then at the end of the syllabus, Bill Jenkins and I made a trip together without the third pilot, the other pilot that Bill Jenkins usually took. We made a trip to California and up to Seattle and back to Washington. Then, at the end of that, Bill said, "Well now you've seen how we do it on a trip, and you've gone through the syllabus, it's yours." So, Loren Perry was the man who was at the air station there at Arlington National Airport, and so he and I took the plane with me as the pilot, and we went to Cleveland for the christening of the *George M. Humphrey*. At that time, it was going to be the biggest ore carrier on the Great Lakes. And, of course, Mr. Humphrey at this point was Secretary of the

Treasury, our big boss. He went out, either earlier or was going a different way; so he was not on the plane, but Mrs. Humphrey was, and H. Chapman Rose," the Assistant Secretary of the _____ of the Coast Guard, Admiral and Mrs. Richmond, and I don't know how many other Admirals in the Coast Guard, and at the last minute, the plane of the Postmaster General, Summerfield, I think it was, taxied out, was going to be one of the planes from Humphrey's Company up in Cleveland, taxied out to the end of the runway and the engines wouldn't check out. So they taxied back, and they called ahead of time and asked if the Postmaster General could go on our plane, too. So we changed VIP signals and said now we have a cabinet-level officer aboard. So we went up to Cleveland and the weather was pretty bad at Cleveland Hopkins Airport, and it was the first time that I had made a landing with VIPs aboard. On the trip before, Bill had made all the landings. But I made lots of landings in the training syllabus, but this was the first time that I made an actual _____ down to minimums and then converted over and made the landing. The Mark 404, unless you had _____fins cranked in at the last minute, it was very difficult to pull the nose up, and I hadn't found that out yet. So I landed nose_____ first, and bounced practically the entire length of the runway, do-doop, do-doop, do-doop. Anyway, Admiral Richmond never forgot it. Years and years later, he reminded me of that. There were other times that he could have reminded me of, like the time I backed it into the garage at the Academy with the Congressional Visitors, Congressional Board of Visitors aboard, but he didn't remember that, I guess, as well as that first landing.

SG: You said you taxied it into the garage?

OS: Yes. We only had the two markers, and one of the markers was in overhaul, and at the last minute, Secretary, Humphrey said he wanted to go someplace, so the plane that we had scheduled to go to the Academy for the Congressional Board of Visitors wasn't available, but we had these R5Vs down in Elizabeth City, it had been Secretary Snyder's airplane, it was VIP configured, so two pilots from Elizabeth City brought it up to Washington, and I was qualified for having flown it for two years out of Hawaii, and I kept myself qualified all the time, and we took it to Europe regularly, whenever we went. So I became the pilot. We went up to New London with the Congressional Board of Visitors aboard, and, of course, we had, I think, the Assistant Secretary and either Gill Flews or Dave _____ (sounds like "Camp" or "Kent") was I think on the plane. And, of course we had Admiral Richmond, Willie Tenner, and so we had again a pretty good load of VIPs. At the last minute, knowing that they'd be tied up all day, I asked Admiral Richmond if I could take my son up and show him the Academy. He said, "Yes, sure." When Russ heard about this, he said, "Look, could you take Little Russ, too?" So I had the two kids, and I went up to New London, everything went fine. We taxied in and the R5V of course has a longer span fin than the Mark 404. I was taxiing into the terminal and all of a sudden Bob Hanna, who was the aviator at the Academy at that time stuck out into the taxi way and gave me the emergency stop signal. I couldn't figure out what this was. But I put the brakes on pretty hard, but not hard enough. The wing tip hit the garage, it was the old fire garage next to the end of the terminal about six feet in from the end of the wing, and swerved around a little bit, and we weren't able to get the regular landing up to get the passengers out, but we got the passengers out using the airplane's ladder and Bob said he'd take care of things and the kids for awhile, while I took care of

things there at the airport. We pushed the airplane back and then moved well over to the other side of the taxi way, and my co-pilot from Elizabeth City said, "Let's take it up and fly it to see how it performs, to see if it is alright. Before we do that, "Let's go over and put it in a parking spot and take a good look at it." So we taxied around and I taxied it into the position to park it without leaning _____ board, and the centrifugal force sloshed the gasoline over there into that wingtip and sloshed the gasoline right out of the wingtip, so it was obvious that we had a hole in the front end of the wingtip. If we had gotten airborne we could have exploded, so I was glad we hadn't taken it up to try it out. That night, the other plane was available, so the Mark 404 came up, picked us up, and I returned as a passenger rather than the pilot, and when we got home, no one had called my wife to tell her that something went wrong. I'm sure that they figured that she didn't need to hear it except from me. And so when we walked in, she said to my son, "Well, how was the day?" "And he said, "Daddy goofed." But I was flying again in the Mark the next month, and the Frankie Tenner was one of the passengers. He was Chief of Operations at that time. And he came, as we taxied away from the terminal there in Washington, he came running up to the cockpit and said, "Star, I understand you have trouble with fast-moving fire houses. Noticed these fast-moving boarding ladders around here, someone with a taxi was towing a boarding ladder from one of the terminals to another, and that was Frankie.

Just to cover one more chronological event, I did go to Corpus Christi, Texas, I was CO there for three years and it was a great assignment. We didn't have many airplanes there, three HC-16s, but the relationships with Navy commands there were about all that you could expect. We had very close working relationships with the

Operations Department. We were the Search and Rescue people for the Air Command there, and all of the Gulf of Mexico. It is interesting that one of the proposals that we made while I was there was that the CO of the air station being a commander of a Corpus Christi group, including the units to the south at Port Isabel and the one at Port _____, and the one at Port O'Connor which is pretty isolated but the aviation units could get in a while lot easier than the CO over at Galveston. And Admiral Olson was the District Commander at the time, and he said no, that he didn't think it was a good idea for the aviator down in Corpus Christi to be the group commander of those units, and that's what's happened today. Those units are all under the Corpus Christi group command who is the air station CO. So, I guess I was ahead of my time or something there on that one. We went through Hurricane Karla, which was a very bad one at that time, and all of the telephone communications were gone from even the City of Corpus Christi out to the aid stations, but we managed to keep communications to the Coast Guard because we had the tail of one of our A2-16s sticking out of the hangar that we occupied, and we had radio communications right into New Orleans. So we could handle all of the communications we needed to. I went from there to Juneau, and I remember when I received my orders. I hadn't gotten them yet, Bill Harner called me from Alaska and said, "I see your coming here to Juneau." And I didn't know anything about it at that point. I hadn't gotten any orders. They were still in the District Office. And he said, "Don't think it's the end of the world for you, this is great." Of course, Bill went to Anchorage from there and still lives part of the time in Anchorage. So he likes Alaska, and it was certainly not the end of the world by any means. But it was not my favorite

assignment either. I am not a hunter; I am not a fisherman. And so, Juneau is just a little hick town.

SG: When did you last see it?

OS: The last time I saw it was when I was Commandant, and, of course, it has changed a lot.

SG: It's no longer a little hick town.

OS: Believe me, in 1962 it was. And there was one decent hotel in town which was the old Baronov Hotel and there was another hotel down the street, but if you had any choice, you would always take the Baronov. And as far as eating places in town, you went across to Douglas to Mike's Place. We were fortunate in that my predecessor in the SAR job found a house for us to live in because you didn't find places to live in very easily at all in Juneau. And the place he found was 2-1/2 miles out of town, so we had out own water supply which was a well, not the creek, but usually people used the creek water. The man who had built this house was in the Fish & Wildlife Service, and he knew how often the wildlife used those creeks for things other than drinking, so he had his own well. They had to go down 200 feet or so in order to get enough water—other than just real surface water. And at 200 feet they got a gallon a minute which, when you think of your total day's supply, that's plenty. But when you pump 200 gallons, then you have to wait a day for the pump to pump anymore. And if you flush the john, and use a dishwasher and a washing machine, you're out of luck. And then the pump gets air bound and overheats and it was under the house and the landlady warned us that if it overheated too much, this could start a fire. So my wife worried about the water all the time we were there. And we enjoyed the spring and summer a whole lot more than the

winter because then we could use some of the creek water to augment our supply. While I was in Alaska, we went through the Anchorage earthquake. That was a very interesting time because they called me as the Chief of Search and Rescue several times before we even knew that an earthquake had occurred. We just knew we had lost communications to everything up to the north, and we received a radio message from the States which was in, let me think a minute, Cordova, and about his second message, it was supposed to be in status Charlie, maintenance status. But then it got underway, and then the second message said it was aground in something like 25 feet of water, according to the chart, and almost impossible. But under the conditions there, when the water sucked out and then was followed by the tidal wave, why we understood later what went on. Of course, we had water in the hangar about six feet deep in Kodiak. And then operations for several days afterward looking for people in trouble, and fortunately there were very few people who had any trouble in the isolated locations. We did lose one Coast Guard man at St. Elias Light. He had been off duty, and he and another person stationed there had gone out climbing that Sail Rock that's off Cape St. Elias. And the earthquake shook them off and this one fellow broke his leg and so the other man went back and got help. They went out with a Stokes litter and put him in that to take him back to the light and the tidal wave came in and drowned the man who had the broken leg. He was the only serviceman who was lost in the earthquake.

We had some very other interesting operations. We had a Northwest Airlines plane crash from apparently something like 29,000 feet. It went straight in, everyone guessed it was an overspeeding propeller, and it was loaded with dependents headed for Alaska and Japan. I was assigned to Annette, which was the closest place to be the SAR

Mission coordinator, and during the night, a Japanese freighter steamed through the area with bits of debris and pieces of human bodies and luggage. But the biggest piece of a human body that was found was a thigh bone that was about 12 inches long stuck in a seat cushion. Had another big airplane that went down, but it was able to be controlled and it landed in the bay—what was our LORAN station near Sitka?—Anyway, it was right off the LORAN station, and the LORAN station small boats were able to assist in the evacuation of that. We started enforcing the 12-miles fishing law while I was there, and I coordinated the operation of the C-130s and the District airplanes as we did that operation. All of the vessel schedules I had to coordinate because the only vessels we had were the _____ (sounds like "Storace") and the buoy tenders and two 95 footers. But in order to cover a search and rescue, we had to make certain that the buoy tenders were available for SAR. So aides to navigation always had to coordinate with me to make certain that we were able to provide the logistics to the light stations and the search and rescue coverage. So that was a fascinating assignment as far as duty was concerned.

One of the particularly interesting things that had to do with Alaska but in a way it was triggered by Cuba. It had to do with a message we got one night that called for us to maintain surveillance of the entire Gulf of Alaska and the Bering Sea and keep close track of all Russian fishing vessels that were anyplace in either of those bodies of water. I looked at it and scratched my head, called my boss, Adrian Werner, and said we better take a close look at this. He took a look and said, "We'd better call the Admiral." So we got both Admiral Shields and Chief of Staff, _____, in and said, "This is going to be very, very difficult for us to maintain surveillance of all the Russian fishing vessels up

there. I wonder if Headquarters has any idea how many vessels we're talking about and how big this area is." Somebody said, "In order to do that, we've got to have at least six C-130s." Someone else said, "Put that in the message." So I drafted the message and said we are going to need six C-130s to carry out their orders and when we finished the message the Admiral signed off on it. We sent the message to Headquarters, and we all went home and figured, "Boy, did we put Headquarters in their place. They're going to have to modify this in some way." Well, the next morning when I got to work there was a message saying, "A C-130 is on its way from San Francisco." So, Adrian called me in and said, "Si, we're going to have C-130s. You're going to Kodiak and coordinate them from there." So I called my wife and said, "Pack my bag; I'm going to be gone. I'm not sure how long," because the message initially had not said how long we were going to have to do this. Of course, the idea probably was that if Russia was going to go to war over the Cuban missile crisis, they would pull their fishing vessels out of Alaska. And so if we knew that they were still there, we guessed, that there was no threat to the United States—or no threat to Alaska anyway. I called my wife and said, "Pack my bag; I'm not sure how long I'll be gone, but I'll be home in a few minutes to change into my aviation greens and I'm leaving. "How long you going to be gone?" "I have no idea." "Where you going?" "I have no—I can't tell you." So anyway, I went out to the airport and caught a commercial plane to Cordova, and then I met the Coast Guard plane in Cordova, and we flew from there over to Kodiak and I was impressed with the ability of that C-130 to find the Russian airplanes. We were above 30,000 feet I know, but I don't remember what altitude. But we could count the Russian fishing vessels in the Gulf of Alaska with no problem at all. We landed in Kodiak and Bob Hammond met me at the plane and

said, "Si, you and I are going up to see the Navy Admiral now." I said, "What's the trouble?" He said, "Only one thing. He hasn't the slightest idea why you're here and neither do I." So we went up and told the Navy Admiral, who was Admiral (_____ sounds like "Kudis"), told him what we knew of the operation, and about that time we got a message saying that a plane was coming in from Hawaii to Kodiak to do the same thing. The only trouble was it arrived with two engines feathered when it arrived. One engine was repairable without too much difficulty, but the other one had to be replaced. So a third C-130 came from Hawaii with an engine for the second one, and the first plane from San Francisco went out on a patrol the next day to find Russian fishing vessels and during that day, the first incident off Cuba occurred, although we didn't know it at the time. In Alaska, we didn't get TV news or anything else of that sort. So when the first missile shipment occurred, why the whole thing was called off and by the time that the first C-130 got back from its patrol, Bob Hammond and I were at the club having drinks and dinner. So it was a _____ that he thought, but it sure had us going for awhile.

Then I went from Alaska to Miami to get into another _____ with Castro during that time, saying anybody who wants to leave Cuba can. So we had the first Cuban exodus during that time. And I remember one time, Butch Thayer and a man from the State Department, Assistant Secretary of State for Latin American Affairs, and a man from USIA, and I'm not sure if there was anyone else or not, wanted to take a flight in an A2-16 and see exactly what was going on out there. So we laid out a flight that was going from Miami to some of the offshore keys where we—(telephone interruption). I was speaking about this flight that we scheduled to various offshore islands and keys in

the Bahamas there and then we were going from there to Key West, and I don't think we made any of those places that we said we were going to get on the schedule except Key West to let them off because we had so many operations that went on and they were able to see precisely what was going on instead of just generally what was going on. We flew over a vessel in trouble and were able to bring someone in the Coast Guard to that vessel. We flew over the _____ that was on patrol out there with a helicopter operating from it. We watched a helicopter hoisting people off of a boat that was in trouble, and it was as far as they were concerned precisely what they wanted only it wasn't staged, it was there. That was exactly what they wanted, even though we didn't do what was on the official schedule. While I was in Miami, I was still not helicopter qualified. I had told Headquarters when I was offered an opportunity to go to helicopter training once before that I could see no reason to go helicopter training at that time. I'm not sure but I think it was when I was in Corpus Christi and we had no helicopters. It turned out that I went to Alaska where at that time we had no helicopters except the bells that went on the icebreakers and the _____ (sounds like the "Storace") and then I went from there to Miami. And in Miami I said, "I think I should go to helicopter training, but I don't think I'm every going to be really operationally involved, so I want to be sent through the fast course that I know the Navy has for their more senior officers." I think Joe McClelland was in Officer Personnel at the time. He called me a few days afterward and said, 'The Navy, the don't have such a course." Well, I knew that they did because I talked to Navy people who had been through that course. But what they did apparently was send them officially to the regular course and then cut it short. And they wouldn't admit that they had such a thing available. So I said, "Well then just forget it. I

won't go to helicopter training." And I took the book on the H-52 engines and studied it thoroughly, and then I said, "Now, I would like someone to take me up and demonstrate everything that is in the flight syllabus so that I am acquainted with it but not closely familiar with it and not operationally qualified. So I took about four flights and went through the complete syllabus just experiencing everything that was in the flight syllabus and the last flight that I made, I was with a different pilot than the one who had been with me on most of the flights, and he was a more junior officer. The one who had made most of the flights was acting Operations Officer that day, and so he stayed on the ground and stayed in the Operations Office. When we came back, he said—and I happened to overhear—"Well, how did the Captain do on the flight today?" And he said, "Pretty well, but I don't think he's qualified to be an aircraft commander quite yet." So I must have done all right. But that was just about the last time that I have done very much helicopter flying except in the air when I was Commandant I flew again in the _____ (sounds like "Liam") area from one location to another in the air, but I didn't try to make the landing, and here in Savannah in the last couple of months I have flown once in the H-65 which is very impressive. But again, I wouldn't think of trying to land that one with two engines instead of one. There's a lot more to watch in the instrument panel.

Then, I went from there to the National War College and it was interesting. I had been talking about applying for the National War College and I knew Bill Cast had gone, and he was Operations at that time, and so I asked Bill what was necessary to go to the National War College, and he said nothing that he knew of except perhaps an application, but he said I really don't know that that is really necessary—they just consider you. So I hadn't gone around to writing an application, and my wife was talking to another, well, it

was the wife of, Peggy Reynolds, the wife of Dick Reynolds, and Dick was Chief of Staff at that time. And Peggy said to Betty, "I understand Si is going to the National War College. And I said, "Well did you say something to Peggy about the fact that I wanted to go, or something of that sort, so that she is drawing a conclusion from the fact that I talked to Bill and said I wanted to go?" And then we went to a party at a yacht club, both couples, and Peggy said something to me that she understood I was going, and I couldn't figure out what was going on. And then Dick came along and Peggy turned to Dick and said, "Isn't it true that Si is going to the National War College?" He said, "Yes, the orders are on my desk." He hadn't bothered to call me and let me know. Anyway, I got the orders and went to the National War College, and I would have been unhappy about leaving Miami at that time because I hadn't been CO for I think not quite a year at that time, and if it had been anything but the National War College, I would have been unhappy about leaving Miami at that time. But the National War College was a wonderful experience and when I was leaving there, my wife asked Commandant of the National War College if he wouldn't please fail me so I could do it again. But I made a trip to South America which was fascinating and very informative, and because of that a few years later, Betty and I made a trip to South American on Military-Space-Available, and enjoyed it—I think partly because I became a member of the Panama Canal Company Board of Directors when I was Commandant, and that was again a wonderful experience. And I was there when we turned the territory over to the Panamanians, although the operations were still officially ours.

SG: Your term of office as Commandant was 1974-1978?

OS: Yes. And then I continued on the Canal Company Board of Directors until it was turned over to the Panamanians, when was it, 1980, I think. In October. I went to Headquarters after that for four years after the National War College and was selected for Rear Admiral and went out to St. Louis as the District Commander. As a brand new Admiral I wasn't about to say I'd like to go anyplace, but simply said wherever I happened to be assigned, and St. Louis was a fascinating assignment because of the fact that it is so different. And I think that it served me well to have that because one of the controversies that the Coast Guard was involved in while I was Commandant was the question of whether the locks and dam at 26 which is just north of St. Louis should be replaced and what size locks and so on. And there also was a controversy that had to do with the abolishment of the towing industry advisory committee and I was able to take a position because I knew something about it, although the Coast Guard was not able to prevail on that. Mr. Carter's administration said that we should do away with all advisory committees that there were unless they were provided for by law. In spite of the fact that we said it is very helpful to the Coast Guard, it doesn't cost the Coast Guard anything, everybody who participates in it pays their own way, they still said do away with it. So it wasn't until it was reestablished by law after I was retired that it was put back into effect. We didn't have any airplanes in St. Louis but we did use Coast Guard helicopters a few times. I borrowed one from Chicago one time to fly along the Ohio River. I made an inspection of the LORAN station in Indiana and then went up the river to Pittsburgh by helicopter and visited those Coast Guard units along the Ohio and then we had a _____ barge stuck in the dam at Louisville around Easter time one year and we borrowed an H-3 from St. Pete in order to lift some things out of the dam and the area of

the barge, and at other times I would use Army airplanes. In fact, I flew the Army airplanes when I was there. I found that the Army Aviation Systems Command was only about two blocks away, and I frequently ate lunch there with the General and said, "Do you suppose training flights could be arranged to that I could get to some of these Coast Guard units a little more easily than trying to arrange commercial transportation or drive?" And they not only provided the airplane, but they provided a safety pilot and I usually flew. In fact, I think there was only one flight that I made when I was doing that kind of thing, but someone flew other than me. And that was when the Lieutenant Colonel really needed his flight time, but most of the time I would fly the airplane. I remember one time, I went to Louisville, Owensborough, and Paduca and visited seven Coast Guard units all in one day and was home before 6 o'clock in the evening. And you just couldn't have done that with anything except your own transportation. I think I flew a little Beach Craft Baron on that flight. They only had two kinds of airplanes, Beach Craft Baron and the Beach Craft Queen Air, and they were both pretty simple to fly—and not too expensive. So I think that something of that sort really would be helpful to the Second District Commander.

SG: Why you're on the subject of the Second District, outline the physical geographic dimensions of that area.

OS: It goes up to the Canadian border, up the Mississippi all the way to the northern end of Minnesota, and up to the west it takes in Wyoming and Colorado, Oklahoma, Arkansas. It has responsibilities in Louisiana down to, well it's the Mississippi side, so that you get down to, let me think a minute, Vicksburg and—I can't think of the name of the other city in Mississippi. But

SG: Naches.

OS: Yes, Naches and Vicksburg. And Greenville, Mississippi, is in the District. That's across from Arkansas. And some of the real problems are in the Arkansas area. And, of course, you've got the entire Arkansas River now that goes clear up to Tulsa Oklahoma.

SG: Such as the head of navigation?

OS: Yes. And the other direction it takes in a little bit of Alabama, Huntsville is in the District.

SG: That's because of the Tennessee River?

OS: Yes. All of Tennessee and Kentucky, West Virginia, a little bit of Pennsylvania, part of Ohio, the lower part of Ohio. Cincinnati is in the District because of the Ohio. Part of Indiana and part of Illinois, again the river part except the Illinois River goes right into Chicago, and so there is a split there. Then, part of Wisconsin because the Great Lakes are on one side, the rivers are on the other. And so it's by far the biggest land District except for Alaska which is so big. I guess it's probably bigger than Alaska, too. When you put all these in. And the interesting thing there is that we don't talk knots and nautical miles. Everything is statute miles and miles per hour. There is practically no Search & Rescue. When I went there, there was one Search & Rescue unit which was the station in Louisville, Kentucky, that was on a houseboat, and we turned that houseboat over to the City of Louisville, and it is now the head of their Marine Police. We still have a station, we have boats I should say, associated with the Marine Safety Office in Louisville, but that is all now.

SG: They had one in Cincinatti.

OS: There's a Marine Safety Office there. No rescue station though.

SG: We had a boat there in the summertime in 1951 and 1952, and I think 1953. Yah, 52, 53.

OS: Well, the Marine Safety Offices do some search and rescue. In fact, the depot in St. Louis does quite a lot of search and rescue, the people who fall overboard from _____ in the vicinity of St. Louis. But there is no Search & Rescue Units per se. The only one when I arrived was that one. The Coast Guard Auxiliary does quite a lot of patrolling for search and rescue, and unfortunately there is not enough realization of how dangerous the river can be. A lot of people go right across the bow of a huge tow, when obviously the people in the wheelhouse of a tow boat can't see what these little guys are doing. And, if they ever lose an engine, they're in deep trouble, probably under the tow.

SG: I was stationed in Cincinnati, and just to remark on the same thing you just mentioned, I don't recall the particular reason for this occasion, but I was just on board one of the river boats, I think it was a Coast Guard Auxiliary affair, and we were headed downstream. My son was on board, and he was 13, 14, something like that at the time, and several of us were in the pilot house yaking away, but close to the block. My son came in, "Daddy," as the story was going on. I said, "Just a minute." He came back a few moments later, "Dad." "Just a minute, Fred." The third time he came in, "Okay, what is it?" He said, "Look." And we looked and the bow of the barge was hanging over us. That ended the story.

OS: There have been big changes in the river area since I was out there. I was given a life subscription to the Waterways Journal when I left, so I still get the Waterways

time for me to go to that, but not much before. And I went down to the Commandant's Office, and they said the Secretary's Office just called, they want you at 6 o'clock now instead of 5 o'clock. So I called Betty, and she was staying at Fort Myer that week for me to be on the Selection Board, and I told her that I would be a little late, and she said, "Well, Jesus, the Army General who was out at St. Louis that you used to have lunch with is here, and I ran into his wife, and we are going to have cocktails with them." And I said, "Well, I'm not quite sure when I will get there because I do have this appointment." Well, when I got there I met with the Secretary and Deputy Secretary and had been told that I was to be the Commandant and I was ready to say at that point, "And I know what qualifications the Vice-Commandant should have, and it should be Ed Perry." So anyway, I said I had not spoken to him about it obviously, but I did talk to him the next day and got that squared away. But by the time I got to the Army General's quarters that night, Betty and I were both on Cloud Nine and so the first people who knew that I was going to be Commandant, as far as I know, outside the Coast Guard, that is the Commandant and the Vice-Commandant, was the Army General and his wife.

SG: You have time for three or four more words if you . . .

OS: