

DEECE THOMPSON

S: Today is the 28th of April, 1990, and we're visiting Deece Thompson at his home in Bloomington, North Carolina. He has agreed to search his memory and tell us some of the adventures that he's had in the Coast Guard.

D: Welcome to my backyard Sam, and hope the noise doesn't bother us too much, we're doing a little renovation on the house...

I was not a youngster who always wanted to be in the Coast Guard. I knew very little about it until I was a senior in high school and I saw that the only way I was going to get off to college was to find myself a scholarship. I wasn't the smartest guy in the world, but I did play some ball and I had some work experience, so I took the exam for the academy in Cleveland, Ohio. I have some fond memories of the night before the exam, that probably helped me score better than I would have if I hadn't been out having a good time. I was 229 going out of 230 going into the class, so they went through a few rejects and finally tapped me out. I had about three days to report. It was four years of a lot of fun, a lot of work.

The Eagle was just in Bloomington, as one of ten cities that she was visiting in the east coast for the 200th anniversary of the Coast Guard about a week ago, and that brought back a lot of memories.

S: What class were you?

D: I was the class of 1952. Trained on the Eagle. We went to Europe twice, once in '49 and once in '51. The Eagle was still quite a curiosity in '49 when we sailed into London. London was still rebuilding in those days and made an impression on me and I think the rest of my colleagues, how badly Britain had been brutalized by the bombing. We went to La Harve and saw some of the Continent then.

S: La Harve was flat at that time?

D: Had had some really serious damage there. On down to Casa Blanca on the first trip, North Africa, the Canaries, Azores on the back, so we really had an introduction to the world. I was raised in Erie Pennsylvania; not a lot of salt water up in that area.

First duty assignment I had was the cutter Bib up in Boston on BIBB weather patrol, a famous cutter. Interesting make up of the crew, there were 28 some odd officers on the ward room and very few regular officers on board. It was a period where we had brought in a lot of reserve officers and it was a lot of fun, a mixed crew in terms of their motivation and understanding of the Coast Guard, so it was a great introduction. We had kind of a nutty skipper, who is deceased now, but we thought we were reliving the Caine Mutiny for awhile there. He was affectionately known as Popcorn Martin, James A. Martin, and had quite a history. He was anxiously waiting to be promoted; I don't believe it happened. We had some very unusual setting of the C detail. The first sea time we got underway, after I got on board, we were was sitting in a ward room and noticed that the dock started to go past the portholes. No special C detail- the old man, a quarter master and one of his favorite ensigns were getting the ship underway.

S: This was the period the Korean War was going on, that would account for the build up of the reserves?

D: Exactly. They came through OCS but really didn't have an extensive course and were wide eyed about what was going on aboard the ship. They brought a lot of different, interesting aspects into the wardroom. We had a Turkish salesman, our ops boss was a fellow who had been a phi beta kappa and ran a general store in Vermont. He converted our exchange into quite a going operation. We were having one cent sales and all kinds of marketing things they were doing on the outside.

Recollections... standard ocean weather patrol. I do remember getting underway one time going to Inghan for ammunition and having the ship run aground. He was another one of these- I don't want anybody up on deck, I'll take the ship down myself- and we lurched to a stop. The navigator and I were having coffee in the wardroom, and we

Inghan

tried to get up on the bridge to see what was going on and the old man said we weren't aground and we didn't belong up there. He wiggled it off, ultimately, but it was interesting. Our navigator, who I later relieved, was really a professional, and I remember him carefully laying out the courses to get the ocean space, and the old man would come up and change our course five degrees, so we'd end up circling around and coming in from the opposite direction, kind of surprising the cutter we were getting ready to relieve.

Weather patrol in those days was a lot of time out, little time in, and a lot of encounters with the weather men themselves, the weather recorders. They were crossing the dock from one ship to another. They spent a lot of time at sea and one could say they were a little eccentric. Great card sharks for the most part.

We were in Bermuda on a medical evacuation and I decided to take a motor bike ride and ended up going downhill, missing a turn, and going off a cliff. That was my introduction into aviation, I guess. The bicycle and I left the ground about 30 feet above a cemetery. I broke my back and got medivaced out of Bermuda to Westover Air force base in Massachusetts . They brought me into the public health hospital there, which was just a cut above a snakepit. They were on a real low budget and I spend about twelve weeks in a cast there. I was lucky compared to shipmates in the ward who had serious problems. They didn't have a recovery room, so all of us were laying in the ward with various orthopedic problems. They'd grab one poor devil and take him up for an operation and roll him back under anesthesia and he'd come out of it hollering and screaming and the poor devil in the bed next to him was scheduled to have the same operation the next day.

Shortly thereafter, I was transferred to the cutter Andrew Scoggin. On the Bib, I had been communicator and navigator and I went to the Andrew Scoggin for my engineering training, She was home ported in Miami. The story was she didn't go anywhere until she actually she started to make weather patrol. The McCullugh's hull went bad about that time, so they pulled the Andrew Scoggin off the cushy duty she'd had down there and put her on weather patrol.

S: Who was your CO?

D: Randolph Ridgely the third, Jeff Ridgely, a character. I was always blessed to be assigned to ships with characters. The XO was a fellow who later had a general court marshal, not when he was on the Andrew Scoggin, when he was over on a cutter in St. Petersburg. Jeff Ridgely was quite a skipper it was alleged; I'll put it that way.

He and his wife would have a rift periodically and he'd sound recall and we'd all go to sea for a couple of days unscheduled. One time, his wife was sitting at the pier as we came in and there were no line handlers there, so Ridgely belted from the bridge "Aletha, pick up the damn line" and she made a gesture to the bridge. It got a big round of applause from all hands, except the CO.

It was a good ship, we had a lot of fun. I was a student engineer and that was an experience. There was a great engineer, Hutchins. I can't recall his first name. He came up through the ranks, started out as a coal passer on one of the old up and down reciprocating steamers.

S: Before you leave Jeff Ridgely, I'm going to have to tell you a story. Jeff went to the Andrew Scoggin from St. Louis where he had been in personnel and he and I exchanged indignities. After he went to the Andrew Scoggin, I acquired one of the very first refillable water pistols, but this one had been doctored, and when you aimed it shot backwards. I filled it full of stinking perfume and mailed it to him. He later told me that he examined it with great care, he knew it came from me, so he was suspicious. But he didn't see anything wrong with it, so he reached up and rang the bell for his steward, and as the Filipino entered the cabin, Jeff pulled the trigger and shot himself.

D: He was a very colorful CO, the Lipton Cup Races were run down off Florida and we were the regatta ship. I was in the engine room at the time, so I wasn't allowed up on deck to see all the things that were going on and he was having a tea and whatever party in the cabin for some of the race committee. The local television station was broadcasting the event. He had TV in his cabin, and there weren't that many TVs in 1953. I was down in the engine room minding my business, trying to keep the steam going and I got a call to send the electronics officer up to the

cabin, the TV was screwed up. I was the electronics officer, among other things. So I stormed up there with a flashlight in my pocket, looking like I knew what I was doing. When I got there he told me to look at that TV! I said the one in the ward room was working just great. He said I don't give a GD, just fix it! About this time, he decided that it was getting too warm in the cabin and we had a sort of chiller air conditioner. So the technician and I were laying behind this TV and I had no idea how to fix it and the old man was ranting and raving and apologizing to his guests for the heat. The chief said- you ought to get out here on the deck, it's nice and cool, at which point we were both excused.

I could see the handwriting on the wall in those days, that I'd be going to sea for a long long time, or Loran, one of the two. Career planning in those days was not well understood. I put in for either civil engineering or flight training, both of those were opportunities to go ashore and maybe get some additional education. He put down that we had enough engineers trying to keep the plant repaired, what we needed was some more crazy people in aviation. That's sort of the way he endorsed my orders. So I ended up going to flight training. He was, I suppose, a role model for a young guy and he gave me some good advice before I went to Pensacola. My primary was Pensacola and the all weather and sea planes in Corpus Christi.

My first duty station was San Diego. It was great, and again, just a marvelous crew, both the ward room and the guys in the hangar. Warren Seeger was the CO, somewhat of a contrast to Jeff Ridgely in the sense of color, but the rest of the room made up for it. In those days they had officers who came in from the Navy and quite a mixture of aircraft. We had PBMs, UFs, HO4s helicopters- it kind of looked like a used airplane lot. Good flying.

S: Had you been qualified in helicopters also?

D: No, I didn't get to do that until I came back from Alaska in 1960. In those days to get into helicopters, you had to be on board and convince the CO that you were a guy he could use in helicopters, and certainly they weren't going to give it to any of us young guys coming right out of

flight training. It was a plum of the Coast Guard- helicopter school. You had to work your way up.

An interesting sidelight on that, and it didn't happen on the San Diego, it happened when we moved to the city. Some friends of mine, Sam Wilson and Bill Black, they were about the same level in terms of seniority and time on boar and both dark haired guys. The skipper was asked who goes to helicopter school next. He looked out his window and saw Sam Wilson going by, but got him mixed up and said- let's send Black. So Bill Black went ahead of Wilson and Wilson got so mad, he went home and bleached his hair with peroxide and came back blond the next day.

So when I was in San Diego, I just flew the PBMs and UFs and the JRFs that we had there. A lot of trips down to Mexico. Great flying with some constraints on our operation from the district office. It was sort of an <sup>f</sup>us and they<sup>s</sup>situation in those days between the operating units end and the district staff. We had a captain for a district commander. John Roundtree. I know that because I got an administrative letter of admonition from the district commander and his name was on the bottom. They either got you promoted or fired, and in my case, it didn't hurt.

We had a kind of technique where we would go south to Baha to do medical evacuations for the tuna fleet or Americans that were <sup>f</sup>down there on their yachts and had problems. We invariably had to get permission from the district to make the offshore landing. We could go down and evaluate the scene and make the judgment, but the district had to say yes or no. If you could get the air boss of the district, it was usually the search and rescue boss, in on the decision, it usually went well. But sometimes he was cut out of the pattern, and then you had a couple of staffers there who maybe had no aviation experience at all deciding whether or not you could land and it was very frustrating, particularly if it was kind of an urgent medical. The technique was ongoing there that if you got down on the scene and made a decision that you were going to land, you'd send a message saying that you would land at a certain time unless otherwise directed, and then when the transmission came back, we'd say they were fading, really garbled and

we'd call them again when we were airborne. Then go ahead and make the landing.

We had some marvelous seaplane pilots there. We did some training on the seaplanes. Muddy Waters was our Ops boss and Muddy was trying to emulate what McDermott had done in the offshore seaplane training business. I was fortunate enough to be one of those selected as one of the junior guys. He wanted a spectrum of pilots, experienced and those just out of flight training. So we went out and splashed around a lot and filmed it.

We didn't have video cameras, just still cameras and the old 8 millimeters. We'd go out on an 83 footer and try to position ourselves so we could get footage of the aircraft just as it was touching down. It was important to have the attitude and the swell. We weren't given any training in photography. So I had the opportunity to do some filming on the first run and there were dozens of good offshore landings out there. If you were a licensed pilot, you could go ahead and use this airplane, and if you bent it, they'd forgive you. The guys had a great time dropping them in the ocean and I was out there helping to film it. Muddy called a pilots meeting and we went to the training room to see this marvelous film, and it didn't look like anything because we didn't have the correct lens. So the guys who were out there running at risk were very disappointed.

S: And of course there was a considerable time between the event and the return of the film.

D: Oh yes. It's incredible when you look back at those days, the limitations that one had on spending. Even to make a long distance phone you had to get it approved ahead of time. On the other side of the coin, you might spend thousands of dollars on a part and nobody ever questioned it.

San Diego is a great place to learn to fly in the Coast Guard. We didn't have a lot of standardization in those days, so you had a little book in your flight suit: I'm flying with so and so and he likes the flaps dropped on the take off, except at night, etc. Every pilot had a little bit different technique. I'm happy to say that over the thirty odd years I

was involved in aviation there, things got more standardized. You didn't have to know the technique of the one in the seat next to you. But as non-standard as the pilots were, they were damn good.

S: I've heard that one of the good things about Coast Guard aviators who graduated from Pensacola as compared to their Navy classmates, after a year or two on station, the Coast Guard pilot knew how to fly half a dozen aircraft and the Navy pilot was assigned to one type.

D: They knew their airplanes real well; there's no question that you can become super-knowledgeable on one type of aircraft. But I agree with you, the sport is knowing that at two in the morning when you're putting your flight boots on, you don't know what airplane you're getting in. Some of the controls were standard, but in the seaplane business, there was a lot of crew coordination. The game was when they rang the gong, when we were ready to launch something, everybody jumped up from whatever they were doing and ran to an airplane. You fired up all the airplanes and then they called them back if they didn't need them all. Two aircraft commanders didn't want to get in an PBM at the same time; one would go with one of us young guys. We had bicycles, so the race went to the swiftest or the guy who had his bike parked closest.

It was great, but not terribly safe when you look back on it. We had to taxi across Lindbergh field there, and sometimes the gus locks would still be unconnected from the flight control. You could get the engine going without taking the control gus locks off. Good sport. Good flying and very satisfying.

I left there and went to maintenance school at Schnute Airforce Base in Illinois, about twenty miles north of the University of Illinois. It was the airforce's aviation and training command and that's where we learned how to take engines apart and do diagnostics on reciprocating engine problems and aircraft systems. It was a very good school, about nine months long. Flew B25s while I was there, that's what they had for proficiency training. A lot of guys coming in from the airforce had flown those, so I ended up being an instructor pilot in a B25. I don't remember if I even had a handbook, it was a pretty simple airplane.



Finished that course and went to Annette, Alaska. We had an air detachment there. As a matter of fact, Sam, I know I've flown you around up there. That was sporty flying.

S: Who was your CO?

D: Ted McQuinn<sup>?</sup>y. Rufus Drury<sup>?</sup> was the XO . Again, it was just a collection of sports up there, most of us ended up really enjoying the tour. It wasn't a place people put in for, but the ones that got there enjoyed it.

S: You know the inside passage from Washington up to Alaska is very deep water and is said the reason it's so deep, it's Coast Guard people ordered to Alaska digging their heels in and those same people ordered out of Alaska dig their heels in again.

D: Actually, I had asked for an extension while I was up there because I had a set of orders to go to helicopter school and then go to Miami as an engineer. So I went to Annette as the engineering officer up there, maintenance officer. It was like bushflying. We lived in Quonsets, and I had three kids and another was born up there. No hospitals and no stores. Groceries came from Ketchikan; you ordered them by mail and they came over by buoy tender and if the weather was rough, you got wet groceries and if you forgot to order something, the next run was in two weeks. A lot of sharing going on up there.

D: Did you live in lower slobovia?

D: We lived in the Quonset huts up there by Tangas Bay.

S: Yes- lower Slobovia.

D: Actually it was kind of neat. We paid ground rent to the Indians, a nominal fee as I recall, and in order to keep the quonsets upgraded they had a system where you would be reimbursed by the guy who moved in after you for half of the improvements that you made. It was pretty

savvy- don't know who thought it up. So if you didn't like where a wall was, you just knocked it down and put it somewhere else. Very livable. Where they put the drain for the clothes washer, you drilled a hole in the floor and ran it right down in the musk keg. The whole thing was built on musk kegs.

They had elevated roadways. We cooperated with the FAA (CAA in those days) They operated the airport and provided the road graders and all that. The best mechanic I had was made warrant officer later on- just an incredibly sharp aviation mechanic and one of the few propeller mechanics I had up there. He was also the only guy who knew how to repair the rock crusher. So half the time he was loaned over to the FAA to keep the rock crushers going. It was always raining up there so if you didn't continue to top off the roads, the small stuff eroded and you ended up driving over sharp mini-boulders. Tough on tires.

Good flying and, knock on wood, we didn't kill anybody while I was up there. The place had a history of accidents because of the terrain and the weather. We had some real close calls. We saw a lot of accidents all around. Pretty violent lifestyle with the loggers and the fishermen and the bars. I carried Indians with half a hatchet in their heads. They always seemed to get in trouble after Ellis airline quit flying.

<sup>2/54</sup> We got into the back country quite a bit. We carried groceries up to Yakatat, serviced the Loran stations there. Went into Cordova a fair amount. The scenic beauty up there is just incredible, when you can see. When you can't, it's pretty tough flying. A lot of icing up there. We did some icing surveys. Put a probe out on the leading edge of the U16 wing trying to measure the ice buildup and the effect of the de-icing. Problems could be encountered if you started it too soon on the wrong kind of ice. You could just develop a pocket underneath the ice and then you were hurting because the airflow was disturbed. It was interesting. People who flew up there learned a lot and paid attention, otherwise you were just a shiny piece of aluminum on the side of a mountain along with the rest of them.

There was great sport fishing and I was one of the fortunate guys that got to go to Arctic survival school. They didn't send many, couldn't afford to. Didn't have any Arctic survival clothing, for one thing. We showed up in our greens up at Fairbanks and they felt sorry for us and

turned us loose in their clothing locker and we outfitted ourselves like everybody else and then went out and learned how to survive. Very great training, although we didn't happen to fly over the Arctic that much. We needed warmer weather coastal survival, but nonetheless we got good training. I learned how to start a fire with belly button fuzz and flint. Great hunting stories if nothing else. After coming back to the station, I helped with the training trips. That gave me a chance to go fishing for dolly varden and trout and hunting and whatever, all under the title of survival training. It was great. You built up a lot of camaraderie. And you really did need to know how to survive. We'd fly in, put a crew over the side, come back in a couple of days if the weather was good, if it wasn't, a couple more days. Being the engineer, you worked on keeping the airplanes flying.. If you lose an engine up there, you could be in trouble.

After that, I went to Miami. On the way I went to helicopter school for training, which was a real plum. I took my sweet time there. My instructor pilot was a Navy lieutenant who had flown on and off Coast Guard icebreakers, so he had a soft spot in his heart for Coast Guard pilots. We were both golfers and so I progressed through the course, but certainly didn't set any records on speed.

Got to Miami and I was the engineer there. Super assignment for a young lieutenant. We were flying day and night. It was the busiest station in terms of maximum number of flight hours a pilot could get, between the search and rescue flying and the maintenance testing, a lot of flight time.

S: Who was your CO that time?

D: Tex Williams and that ended up with Muddy Waters. And John Dougherty was the XO for awhile. Some superb pilots down there. Bob Colt, Dick Young and Omar Coles. Omar was a piece of work. A guy who had a red sportscar that he parked by the seaplane ramp. We were in San Diego together, and when we had duty Friday night, he was ready to go Saturday morning. He got all slicked up and that car was ready to go to the road rally.

One Saturday morning the car was out in front of the ops center right by the seawall ready to go and we had him paged to the other end to sign some paperwork. We rolled his car back into another hangar out of sight, took a bunch of OBA cannisters, punched holes in them, threw them off the seawall and they were laying on the bottom making bubbles. Omar came back and said- where's my car? Everybody was pointing at these bubbles coming out of the water. He dove in. Sort of a gotcha.

Miami was just a great tour; I can tell you stories about flying down there. I came out of Alaska in 1960 so I was in Miami from '60-'62, an engineer down there. If I look in my log book, I marvel at how much flying we were doing. I had an excuse to check out every airplane: I had to fix them, so I needed to know how to fly them. That was the fortunate part of being in aviation at that time, before it got too standardized. We flew everything on the ramp.

I really didn't know that much about helicopters. In fact, we lost one in Salem, on a vibration it came apart. Very tragic. Everybody at that point became very conscious of the vibration of these helicopters. We had one down there, the 1304. which was on hot-dog floats, the only one of its kind in the Coast Guard. It was really an amphibious helicopter. It didn't have a lot of power and performance.

Anyway, after we lost that ship in Salem, people started feeling these new vibrations. I'm about two months out of flight training in helicopters and I know squat about this. I'd go flying and I didn't feel anything or smell anything. As long a nose I have, it wasn't that effective. I didn't know what to do, so I called and talked to a vibration engineer and he said I needed a reed vibrometer, so we went and bought one. It comes in a nice box and the box was the key to the confidence. I took that box out with me into the helicopter, unpacked this reed vibrometer, calibrated it, fired up the helicopter, touched the gear, the magpole and the stick, wrote some numbers down on my clipboard, took off, flew away, came back, wrote down that the vibrometer didn't suggest anything abnormal. Guys flew it after that, didn't feel any more vibrations. A lot of psychological input to how much vibration makes you feel uncomfortable.

I enjoyed myself in Miami, and got dispatch orders to go to start up the air detachment in Los Angeles. It had been promised for a long time and then all of sudden, Congress gave headquarters some money. I happened to be TDY when we got the orders, I was flying in the Bahamas. We had a once a year pre- hurricane survey trip. Bahamian weather was important to the people in Miami who were doing the hurricane forecasting, so the Coast Guard would fly over there and pick up the British telecommunication system people. We'd fly to the out islands, pull the aircraft up on the beach and these guys would go ashore to work on the andamomoeters and wind indicating machines and radios. We'd have soup and a bottle of beer and wait for these guys to get back and fly to the next island. It was great. They were picking up out tab, so we had box lunches every day and had a great time. And again, learned a little more about seaplane flying, getting into places. How deep is that clear water? If it's not deep enough, we're in trouble. Learned some techniques for evaluating how deep or shallow it might be.

S: By the color of the water?

D: Actually had a technique where we'd throw out a message block with a streamer on it. We'd weigh the thing down so it would sink and depending on how vertical the streamer looked- it was a judgment thing. We'd take one of the locals along and he promised us it would be deep, but you wouldn't want to bet your career on those guys. Anyway, I got dispatch orders while I was doing that to go to help start up the detachment in Los Angeles.

S: Was that your first command?

D: No actually, I was an engineer out there; I didn't get a command for about twenty years . When I came in, the guys who had commands had them since they were lieutenants. There was the old guard in there. It seems like they started out as COs and we had to work our way up.

From Los Angeles, I went to Purdue University for graduate school in industrial administration. A year's sabbatical, six kids, and thirteen years out of undergraduate school and I'm trying to compete with these

youngsters. I hung in there. Their problem was that they were real studious in the fall and winter and in the springtime, they started noticing all these attractive young ladies. I had it up on them; I started noticing them as soon as I got on the campus, so I wasn't diverted in the spring and just kind of blundered on through.

I finished up okay and went to Elisabeth city, the air station, ARSC. They were putting a new computer in down there, going from the card days to the computer days. They used that computer to put the production line on a critical path after the CPM network. It was really a giant step forward in terms of production control and managing the aircraft overhaul process. The guys on the production line had a tendency to resist, but we won them over and it turned out to be very helpful in terms of scheduling the aircraft, getting them out on time, cost runs, and just kind of coming into the twentieth century with production management techniques. Did some production test flying there and had my only accident. It really was a ground accident. Taxied over a manhole cover and it cracked and one of the wheels fell in. Also commissioned a new heliport when I was down there, the Hereford International Heliport. - RP

One night we took an airplane out for a test flight. It was one that had been stripped and we were putting it back together. We needed to take it up to Norfolk and check the electronics. This was a H52 helicopter. Flew out there, did our electronics work and the weather closed in at Norfolk, came back toward the city and the weather started closing in there. We didn't have a lot of fuel, didn't figure on being up for very long. Made a pass or two at Elisabeth City and couldn't get down, so we went back up and it looked like whole world was closing in. We saw some lights, highway 17, and followed that. Saw one light looked like it was a clearing, so that's where we went. Came down, hovered and landed next to this big farm light. Turned out to be a pig farm, so we landed between these two huge pig buildings. The stench was overwhelming, but we were on the ground.

Here we were in our flights suits, they had a knife on the side, and walked around to this farm house and rang the doorbell. A guy comes to the door holding up his pajama pants, no shirt on, looking over his shoulder. We said- excuse me sir, we just landed our helicopter in your

backyard and we'd like to use your phone. He told us where the phone was. He was watching "I Love Lucy." It's not every night a guy lands a helicopter in your backyard.

I called the base and told them we were down okay on the ground, down at Hereford International Heliport. They said- where's that? I said we just commissioned it- a bend in the road at a farmhouse- send a vehicle down for us. And they did. So they sent this kid from Brooklyn down in a truck and he got there and said- what's that smell?

We were back the next day and flew it out. It turned out the guy who was holding his pajamas up, his wife had taken all his clothes to the laundromat. She came back and we were standing out by the road waiting to flag down the Coast Guard car. It was really foggy. We saw this car coming and were jumping up and down waving at it, she saw us in her headlights, turned around, called the sheriff, said there was some crazy people on the road.

From there I got shanghaied to Washington, my first tour. Aeronautical engineering division. Started out branch chief and ended up as chief of aviation engineering.

S: How long were you at headquarters?

D: 1970-74. The first chief engineer when I went there was Lawrence Finks and then Jim Cloon came in. He's down in Astoria. Great guy. He really didn't take to headquarters that well, he was there about a year and that promoted me up into the job and I guess I was commander and ended up making captain there. Then I escaped and went off to San Diego as CO. Two great years out there. That's gotta be the high point of anybody's career.

S: It's okay to be the vice president, but it sure is great to be the president.

D: It is. And I was never XO. I was engineer and at the air stations you've got all the people working for you and you're acting exec a lot of times, so I was spared the XO rung on the ladder and got to enjoy two years CO.

Got out of there and sent up to Longbeach as chief of operation on the 11th district for two years, chief of staff for one year after that.

S: Is that when you were picked up for flag?

D: Yes. I was picked up for flag in 1979. Bob Price was the district commander for the first two years and then he went back to New York, and Howie Parker was my district commander for a year. Howie had been chief of staff and moved along as CO. They both were great guys to work for.

Then I went back to Washington as chief engineer in the office of engineering from 79 -81, the first time they'd had an airedale as chief engineer. I tried to introduce them to some aviation concepts. We had gone to computerized maintenance in aviation; we were expected to be out front in techniques. We stole them from the airforce and big services. Whatever looked good we adapted. We had a leg up on the naval side.

I went from chief engineer to chief of operations at headquarters for one year. A little unusual for an engineer, but I considered myself more of an operator than a bonified engineer. I was a maintenance engineer and that's an aspect of engineering that needed some attention. Everybody likes to design new things, but somebody's got to fix them. We tried to put out emphasis on that in the period I was there.

Operations was an exciting place to be in headquarters, it's one of the better jobs. You have a feel for what's going on and get to talk to the boss more directly when there's a crisis, don't have to go through all the normal wickets. I always thought chief of staff was a dumb job. Two years later I ended up getting shipped back as chief of staff. But I left Washington and went to take the district of Miami. I relieved Ben Stabele, was a super guy and had done a find job and the district was running at a high tempo. We had a drug problem going on and the Haitian migrant interdiction program, which I helped start when I was in Washington- how we were going to keep those poor devils from escaping Haiti and flooding the southeast US. The economy couldn't stand any more Haitians down there, between the Cuban exodus and influx of Haitians, all the social services were maxed out and the temperament of the people was they'd had enough. The Haitian migrant interdiction



thing became a notorious program. We treated those illegal migrants with great dignity. Sometimes it was a heartbreak to catch them three miles off landing in Miami and take them all the way back to Haiti. They sometimes used their life savings to escape to the gold lined streets of Miami only to be caught and turned back. But it wasn't our choice on whether we wanted to enforce that law and it will be debated for a long time, I think. Our sailors took it well and did a good job.

At that time, when I relieved Ben Stabile as commander, we were one of the agencies that were supporting the South Florida Task Force which vice president Bush started in the spring of 1982. He came down and read a manifesto of some sixteen things that the federal government was going to do to help south Florida: Never allow another Cuban exodus, choke off drugs, stop the influx of aliens- a whole laundry list and pretty tough to implement. Shortly after I was there, I became the coordinator for the South Florida Task Force.. Me and Charley

AP Rinkoiritze, who had been a professional law enforcement officer and the first coordinator for Bush's task force. So he got it off and running and I relieved him. I spend my time from '80 - '84 in Miami as commander of the southern Coast Guard district and the vice president's coordinator for the South Florida Task Force Because that was going so well relative to what was happening in other parts of the country, there was a political clamor from West Coast and Gulf States and Atlantic States: okay Washington, you've done this for Florida- how about us? An Organization called the National Narcotics Border Interdiction System was created and I became the coordinator for southeast Florida and really that was almost a mirror image of the South Florida Task Force. So I really had three hats and three offices and spent my time going from one to the other. Had a great staff of coast guard officers in the district while I was off doing the other two jobs. My chief of staff and chief of operations both made flag officer from those jobs. They were two superb guys- AL Breed and Bill Cline, who is now going to be the new commandant. We had a great team and that permitted me to be out doing the vice president's work and still be looking after the commandant's work.

All the other law enforcement agency guys seemed to have nice cars to get around in. Mrs. Dole was secretary and she was a very frugal lady and they were downsizing our cars to Chevettes. At the same time I

was supposed to be getting additional personal protection, wearing a flak vest because there were some threats because of the drugs. I decided I should get a car like those other guys, so I called a guy who owed me one from the border patrol, and he asked what kind I wanted. Something nice and big. They ended up grabbing a green Lincoln continental with a sunroof and brought the keys up to me in the district office. I didn't want a ceremony.

Admiral Gracey came down on a flight, we were going to Panama and I jumped on board with him and when he came back I had to do the howdies at the airport until he left. I also had a commitment to go somewhere , so the driver said he could hide the car behind a hangar. I said- don't hide it, bring it out here- and I stood up in the front seat, standing like Rommel. As the commandant's airplane fired up, I saluted. We got some recognition for the Coast Guard in that job. It helped bring the Coast Guard into the public eye as not just law enforcement people but an organization that has a command structure and the people to manage it.

Left there and got dragged to Washington as chief of staff. Not much to say about that job, a lot of paper. For an operational person and a guy who loves to fly and be out with the people, it wasn't my favorite job. There was a good commandant and a vice, good people to work with. I had no complaints with the Coast Guard headquarters people at all. But the department of transportation bureaucrats up there, I don't want to way too much about it except that we were subjected to indignities from young staffers that really tested your patience.

I managed to escape there, made third star and went to New York and finished up there as area commander and commander of maritime defense zone Atlantic, which is a recent command added to the area. So I went there first as third coast guard district and they ended up folding that and cutting it in half, dividing it between the first and fifth districts, so no longer a third district. It was a way of cutting down the overhead. So I ended up with everything east of the Rockies. A great window on what's happening in the Coast Guard. The organization runs itself pretty well, I think, whoever created the Coast Guard years ago put in the right instructions. My job was kind of a cheerleader to tell

people in the public and political sector how great our people were doing and to pump up our people- hang in there and we'll try to get you a pay raise. Very rewarding work and I retired after 36 years.

I ended up with a fair amount of hardware. Four distinguished service medals, three coast guard and one department of defense. The department of defense was awarded to me by Vice President Bush for our effort in working for the department of defense in the drug interdiction and the maritime defense. Ended up getting a legion of merit from the Navy as well as the Coast Guard. But those particular citations, when you look at what they say, describe the excellence of the organization that I was working with. No one gets a medal saying they did it all themselves. Anything that was ever awarded to me was really recognition of the people who put it together and I just happened to be occupying the chair at the time. This isn't modesty, it's really a declaration that the service had its own momentum and it's a magnificent organization and if you're privileged to get in a position where you can get out front and lead the parade, it's great. But if you're in the middle or the end of the parade, you're still an important part of it and we need to tell our people that over and over again. We have a tendency to lose sight of who really makes things happen.

I just remember having a heck of a lot of fun; wouldn't trade it for anything. Twenty-one different moves, I think. I still love aviation, can't seem to get it out of my blood. I managed a private airport in the Bahamas. Now I'm working as a director of a strategic development firm here in the telecommunications world and they have an airplane I get to fly, so I'm pretty happy doing that. Nothing's forever, I keep looking around. I may end up doing what you're doing, looking at the scenery of this great country. I've flown over it a lot.

I appreciate you're coming over and I hope that some day somebody will sit you down with a camera.

S: My daughter has said that she wants to do the questioning there, and that's fine. I've already made a contribution to it by transcribing some movies that I took back in '36-'37 and '41 and over in Korea in '46. Next, she'll ask me her questions but in the meantime, I want to get as many other people on tape as I can. I'm sure most people in the wardroom