

Ric Cueroni  
Admiral USCG

S: Today is Sunday the eighth day of April, 1990 and I'm visiting Ric Cueroni at his new, unfinished home in Panama City Florida. Ric has family present and is enjoying retirement. Ric tell us what you care to tell us about your career in the service.

R: First of all, my name Ric. Everyone in the Coast Guard knows me by that name. When I went to the Coast Guard Academy, I was Rit. The three of us who hung around together in high school all were named Richard. One was Dick and I hated that name. One was Rich and I didn't like that, because they called him Richie. We needed a name for me. We were walking by a drugstore one day and there was a sign for all purpose Rit dye, and I said that's my nickname- Rit. I went through part of the Academy with that name and then, of course Beth came along, and she didn't like Rit, so I became Ric and have been ever since.

Beth was the one responsible for my even attending the Coast Guard Academy. I was going to the University of Hartford and I fell in love with her as an eighteen year old and also wasn't too serious about college; I was going because that was the thing to do. One of my classmates at the University was interested in the Coast Guard Academy and said I really ought to go there, it was a great school. It was fifty miles down the road. My dad was in the construction business and it looked like we were going to move so I decided to go down and take the exam. This classmate and I hitchhiked to New London, took the exam and spend two days running around in New London. I went back and forgot about it; figured I had flunked, it was a terrible examination. My classmate was going to the University of Connecticut and he quit school. When I saw him next he said- we'll be going to the Academy so I didn't want to waste my time between now and July. We both got into the Coast Guard Academy. I was 225 and he was 226 getting in. He stayed for three and a half years.

S: Tell me about the exam- was it true/false?

R: No it was like SATs, but the Coast Guard's own exam made by the Educational Testing Service at Princeton. I don't know what the degree of difficulty was as compared to SAT, but at that time, the Coast Guard felt comfortable having their own exam.

My time at the Academy shaped me. Certainly there were people who influenced me. The Eef Revards of the world who helped me. Doble who scratched his head all the time. Nelson Intwin was my football coach, a wonderful gentleman and lifelong friend. He taught me that one part of life was having a goal.

One time we were playing up at Amherst, I was a swab freshman, and I was playing second string defense. You really want to get into the game. Lo and behold my time came. A guy from the Academy let a pass get over his head, so old Niche was very excited and said- get in there boy. I got in and the quarterback rolled out to his right and I was playing left defensive safety. I can still see it to this day. He faked a pass and I was on the end and there was no way I was going to let him get behind me. He caught the ball under his arm and started to run, so I went out and tackled him and heard this roar go up. He'd thrown the ball to the end who was now in the end zone and we lost the game.

I wasn't feeling very well and on Monday I had a call from the tactics officer asking me to come down. W.F. Bill Adams; we called him Wiffy for short, and it wasn't a term of endearment. I stood in front of his desk and he said- what did we teach you in the mess hall?. To put this in perspective, the game was on Saturday and this was Monday. I didn't know- thought we were playing twenty questions. Finally he said out of a football team of 33 men in Amherst on Saturday, I was the only one who had his elbows on the table during dinner. I thought he was jesting. I had just lost the football game. I didn't eat. I felt terrible. I guess I did have my head down and my arms on the table. But he was serious. I put myself on report five demerits and I went back to my room and there was a second classman whom nobody really liked going through my chiffonier. As I walked in, he told me to get the wrinkles out of my dungarees before putting them in the chiffonier. I looked at him and said- go to hell . Then I stormed out to Wiffy's office and told him I wanted to resign. He said- how old are you? I said I was nineteen. He said- do you have your parents permission? He knew I didn't. I asked

for permission to make a phone call. He said not granted. I was doubly frustrated, didn't know what to do and asked for permission to leave. He said on the way he said go to the office and put myself on report because the star was askew on my cap.

The next thing I knew Nitch was calling for me, sat me down, and gave me some fatherly advice and obviously I stayed. Although I did call my mother when I could and asked her to send me a telegram saying I could resign. I carried it with me until I was 21 years old. Anyway, that was the Academy experience.

I spend twelve of my 36 years in the Coast Guard at sea on seven different ships and, perhaps this is a record, I've had four commands at sea and never have I had one that was old, I put every one of my commands into commission. Two 95 footers and a 210, the Dependable at Panama City and Polar Sea. That's kind of a distinction, I guess. I don't know whether that's easier or harder, I do know that the first time you go to sea with a brand new crew and ship like Polar Sea there's an unknown factor.

S: Remember Norm Vinsky?

R: I remember, but Norm had stars on his pocket when he did that and I was not so fortunate. A new ship has a lot of advantages and disadvantages, but I enjoyed those tours. I also learned more about being a sailor up in Alaska on a buoy tender than I did anywhere else in my career.

S: When were you there?

R: I was there in 1957-8 on Bittersweet. Barney Colcourse was my CO and I learned an awful lot from him.

We had Kodiak Island and Shelicoff straits and up the Peninsula and around the corner and halfway up the chain. As you know, a terrific operating area. You get every imaginable and unimaginable event that can occur. Barney was a super CO. He let me do everything that I could do and yet was very understanding. The only time he ever got mad at me was when we stopped somewhere, Sand Point perhaps, and he let the guys out to have a little liberty and they got rambunkuous. He'd tell me- your crew is in trouble- go get them. We had a good relationship. He was

one of those people who influenced me. He had been one of my instructors too. As so often happens, people you went to the Academy with, when you were a cadet and they were officers and you didn't like them at all, when you serve with them, you find out they're some of the nicest people you ever met. Bob Boardman was another example. He was my tactics officer and my first exec on the Yakitat. Bob was a super XO and is one of my closest friends today.

Lo and behold, I went back to the Coast Guard Academy in 1959, after my first six years at sea, as a company officer. Frank Leemy had just come into the Coast Guard Academy and he had made some very dramatic changes, and changes that were needed. He was a disciplinarian, authoritative. I was scared to death of the man. But I respected him and I look back at that tour with a great deal of fondness, because he was the right man at the right time at the Coast Guard Academy. That was the case with a lot of them that were there. Willard Smith was the Commandant of Cadets and later became Commandant. Bill Jenkins was the Assistant Commandant of Cadets and later became a District Commander. "A" company was Jim Rowan, who was Vice Commandant of the Coast Guard. "B" Company was George Wagner who retired as a Captain. "C" Company was Jack Costello, who retired at three stars. "D" Company was Sid Vaughn, at two stars. "E" company was Paul Youst who presently is the Commandant. And I had "F" Company. They had just started it and I came in a little late. So it was a group of characters that Leemy had put together who did quite well as the years went on.

S: Willard Smith remarks about the Company Officers Program and speaks of it with great pride.

R: And I think rightfully so. Willard Smith was Leemy's right hand man and had a lot of latitude in what we did. What I liked about the program was that all of us had been in a command positions before we arrived at the Academy. We all had no collateral duties, other than coaching. We had one hundred cadets and spent a lot of time with them. It didn't take very long before you knew the cadets very well. We

watched them academically, adaptability wise and socially at a very influential time in their lives.

When I went back as Superintendent, I left there in 1962 and went back in 1986, I expected the Officers Program would have progressed and matured. Instead, I was disappointed, I found it had gone backwards somewhat. There were more collateral duties for Company Officers, They had more cadets in their companies and less to do with each individual cadet. And besides that, there were young men and women who had not had much experience in the Coast Guard. They were younger than those of us who had come back. We'd come back with six to eight years of service, they'd come back with three to four years. Immaturity really hurt the program. One of the first things I did when I took over as Superintendent was to tell the personnel that I wanted only Company Officers who had some experience as Commanding Officers. The incumbents were not very happy with that, obviously, because it was a very strong signal that the Superintendent was not happy with them. The Commandant of Cadets had gotten somewhat detached from the cadet corps when I got back there.

S: There was another change taking place at about the same time, with the company officers. Leemy did not want the class games to continue. He wanted the company games

R: He did some very innovative and interesting things. I'd forgotten the inter-company program as opposed to the inter-class program, because it has fluctuated back and forth through the years. But the whole idea was to bring the company together. The first class was actually in charge of the cadet corps, so having inter-company athletics was a very important breakdown of the class thing. You never could break down that class thing totally, but it certainly de-emphasized it and broke up the animosity between classes.

I came out of Alaska, had orders as the deputy group commander in New London. Well, there I was, I loved going to sea and that's what I wanted to do and here I was going to shore. I picked up my car, went up to the district office and by now Winslow Baxton was Chief of Personnel in the Thirteenth District. He said I had a change of orders, I was going

to the Coast Guard Academy. They'd just created another company and I was going as a Company Officer. I didn't know what a Company Officer was.

When I got to New London, I bought a house. Jim Rowan was a classmate and good friend, so we bought in his neighborhood. It cost \$17,800 and was just five minutes from the Academy. Bought a new set of blues, had to have all the stripes because Leemy was death on gold that wasn't shiny. Even put my garters on, and reported in. Mind you we'd moved into our house and by this time and I had three children. I reported in and they said the Admiral would see me. I walked into his room, to his desk. He wasn't a great big man, nothing distinguishing about Frank Leemy, other than his eyes. I stood there in front of his desk and he asked if I wanted to be there. I said I did. He said if I didn't (reaching for the phone) he'd see that I left. Here I'd just bought a house with all the money I had in the world. That was the way I started off with Frank Leemy.

But he did start the inter-company program. The other thing he did was fire Nelson as the coach which had us somewhat chagrined because this was our coach and it wasn't fair. Of course, the Superintendent can do whatever he wants to do: in my wisdom now I've changed my attitude. Still, the way it was done was not the best. John Fornay should have called Nelson and told him he was fired, but instead he found out through the press and that's not a good way to treat somebody who's been there a long time.

Then the rumor started that Otto Grahm was coming to the Coast Guard Academy. Otto was the hottest professional football player there was at that time and I thought that was crazy- what for? Sid Vaughn was on the athletic board and I bet him 25 cents that Otto wouldn't come. The day Otto arrived, I had to give Sid the quarter. A wonderful move, bringing in somebody who I think the world of, and had just the right attitude about athletics. If you've ever done anything with Otto competitively, you know he's a winner. He doesn't like to lose, but yet he's not obnoxious. A lot of people ask me what he's like. I say you have a picture of an all-American- that's Otto. He even had Wheaties down in his cellar. Of course Otto brought the team respect.

Then Leemy got sick, had a heart problem, and retired early and along came Steven Hadley Evans. What a difference in two people. When Evans came in the Academy, he came up the arcade between Saterlee and Hamilton Hall. He'd come from Hawaii and he had on his summer tropicals- I think we had khakis- and the next thing I knew he'd stuck his hand out and asked what my handle was. I said handle? He said- what do they call you? Our relationship was a relaxed one. Whoever was pulling the strings on assignments, it was good for the Academy. When Leemy was in, a strict disciplinarian, running things almost by fear, and then Hadley- Mr. Cool- loved everybody and everybody loved him. He'd stop his car and ask you to stop by quarters for a Bourbon. An admiral asking a lieutenant- quite a shock. And it wasn't just me; it was anybody. He loved to have people around him.

In thinking about the two gentlemen who obviously influenced me... there was a book written in the early sixties by Lovall. The name of the book is "Neither Athens nor Sparta." It's about the four military academies, and it covers Leemy and Evans. Leemy was the representative of Sparta, and obviously in a military Academy, you have to have Spartan ideals. Hadley Evans was a scholar. He was the Athenian, so to speak. and came there at just the right time. It was very serendipitous. The two of them together strengthened and influenced me. Little did I know that a number of years later, I would be there as a Superintendent. The ghosts of those two gentlemen were with me during my tour as Superintendent.

When I left Academy, I wanted to go back to sea. I enjoyed the tour, but three years on the beach was enough. I called headquarters and they said I couldn't go to sea; I'd had too much sea duty. I couldn't believe it. They said for my career I needed to go ashore. I'd never been in the district, had nine years service, was about to make Lieutenant Commander. They sent me to New York as Assistant Personnel Officer. I didn't want to go.

So all of a sudden one day the Commandant's bulletin came out and said: Wanted- someone to go to Haiti as a Liaison Officer. I asked Beth if she'd like to do that and she said she would so I put in for it. By this time Bill Ellis was Commandant of Cadets, relieved Willard Smith, and when I put my letter in he called me on the intercom and said: do

you know what the hell you're doing? I said I thought I did. He said alright. Next thing I got a call from the Superintendent to go to his office. I went, and Hadley Evans asked why I wanted to go there? What did I know about Haiti? I said I'd read all these stories, was hearing about communism and despots and I was interested and wanted to expose my family to something like that. Hadley picked up the phone and within a week a had informal orders to Haiti. I needed to learn French, so I went to Al Lawrence who was Dean at the time and asked him where I should go to get some French lessons. He told me to go see Tony Buron. I thought he was kidding, but he wasn't. So I went to see Tony. He asked if I was serious about learning French, or if I'd screw around like I did when I was a kid. I swore I was serious and became totally immersed in the French language for the next four months. He got up in a faculty meeting just before I left and told the Dean I was the best French student he ever had.

So we went off to Haiti. Arrived at the Port of Prince on Friday the 13 in July of 1962. Relieved John Milbower, another fine Coast Guard officer who was loved by the Haitians. They had a party for John when he left.

Haiti was an experience, but it only lasted a year before I was persona non grata and out of Haiti with all of my marine counterparts for meddling in the internal affairs of a foreign country, which we did. I could spend the next six hours telling you stories of Haiti. Suffice it to say that I was with the Marines- there were two Coast Guard people and 72 Marines. My CO was Robert Dobbs Himmel, very famous in the Marine Corps as a writer. Wrote "Soldiers of the Sea" and "The Naval Officers Guide." A little fellow, a Yale graduate, mustache. Called the Commandant General Shupe a little farmer boy- that's why he was in Haiti.

One funny story about Haiti. We had one Navy commander on the staff. We were part of a Naval advisory group, this commander and myself. All the Haitian Naval Coast Guard had was a 95 footer, which by the way had been my first command. They had an old buoy tender. It was a rag-tag kind of operation, one that when you walked into their Naval base, you thought you'd arrived in heaven because you were now going to make over this country. You learned very quickly that caste



systems and non-democracies do things a little bit different, but you still had all that enthusiasm. And then we broke off diplomatic relations and things went from bad to worse to the point where my family was evacuated with less than twelve hours notice, another demonstration of how great the Coast Guard is.

The Navy commander was a nice guy, but a little bit stuffy. I would write letters and he would change words and sometimes the Colonel would change them back to what I had written. So one day the Colonel called us both in, he was an outstanding writer as you would expect, and he asked who wrote a letter. The commander said he did. He said it was horrible letter, then asked me to see what I could do with it. He said: put your fine Italian hand to it. So I did. The commander was livid and I had to go back and live with this guy. He was my boss, not really, but he was the commander and I was a lieutenant and we're living and working in the same office.

The Commander stewed and stewed. Behind the Colonel's desk he had the Marine Corps and Coast Guard emblems. The Navy emblem was over the door so nobody could see it when they came in the office. Finally the Commander, he was mad enough, went in there one day and said: Colonel, you have the Marine Corps and Coast Guard emblems up there- the Navy emblem is not there- I'd like to know why? Himmel raised himself up to his 5'6" height and said: Commander- you don't know anything about history do you? Do you know what the forerunner of the Coast Guard was? The Revenue Marine. And once you're a Marine commander, you're always a Marine. The commander kind of slinked out.

I had taken a Haitian ship up to Miami. My job was twofold and one was to insure that guns would not be smuggled down to the ship and then taken to Haiti, because we weren't allowing any weapons. So I was playing both sides because I was also the champion of the Haitians in Miami.

I went up to the District Commander's office, I.J. Stevens, and asked if I could see the District Commander, but the Chief of Staff wasn't about to let me get in there. I told him I just wanted to pay my respects because I was coming from Haiti and was attached to the Seventh District. He wasn't convinced, so I said I did have some business with the

District Commander. Reluctantly he let me in. I told Admiral Stevens what I was doing and he just took one look at me and buzzed for his intelligence officer, Garth Klisby. I told them the Haitians were going to smuggle some guns and I was there to make sure any word I got from them got back to the Naval intelligence people and the CIA and FBI. Their eyes were getting wider and wider wondering who I was. After I convinced them I really was for real, the Colonel said if there was anything they could do for me I shouldn't hesitate to ask. He told the Commander to give me any help I needed. Having said that, he told me that if I got in trouble, I wasn't in the Coast Guard.

As it turned out, we had strange goings on and the Haitian Consul General was driving the truck with the guns coming down to the dock. Diplomatic immunity. Clever. I didn't even know this myself, that there were agents all around. I was on the ship. Then the Consul got out of the truck and walked onto the ship. The agents seized the truck and got all the weapons. There was some confusion about what things were being said to whom and where and when, so I sat down and drafted up a message to go back to the embassy, but I had no way of sending it. So I went up to the District and told them I had to get this out of there and they sent it. When I got back to Haiti about a week later, the ambassador called me in and said: let me tell you how timely your message was. A half an hour after I received it, I got a call to go to the palace to see the President because of the harassment and I was at least able to give him the same story that you gave at the other end. So the Coast Guard came through again for me.

I was so mad about the way the Haitians ran the ship. Papadok, The son of Jean Claude. We used to call him the l'idiot, in Francais. There are stories I can tell you about trying to fix leaking manifolds with Duko cement. We had a list on the ship as we were heading off the coast of Cuba coming up the old Bahama Channel. The list kept getting greater and greater. I suggested to the Captain that we get the list off. He said that's just what he was going to do. I waited a couple more hours and there was more list. I went to the Captain again and he told me So and So had lost his leg last week. He was great at changing the conversation around. He said he lost his leg and we left him in Port of Prince. He got his foot caught in a line as we as we were tying up and it

just cut it off. I asked what that had to do with the list on the ship. He said he was the only one who knew how to ballast and shift tanks. This was the old Tanwanda, not unfamiliar to what we have, a net tender, so I went down and used my student engineering training and took the list out. That's just one of the things that happened. The radar knob came off in my hand. They didn't even have an Allen wrench on board.

I got back to Port of Prince and made my report. I said we should take the ship away from him because we had lent it to him. So Himmel said write the letter. So I wrote the letter. He called me and said it wasn't strong enough so I worked on it some more and took it up to him and he said it still wasn't strong enough. I said every single fact is in that letter and he said: Ric, never let facts get in the way of the point you're trying to make. Quite a man.

That was my Haitian experience. I went to staff college from there, learned how to be a staffer and that was very fortunate for me. From there went to San Francisco and worked for a Rear Admiral by the name of Bender. We were trying to put together a new search and rescue exercise. The thing we used to do out in Hawaii was sick. I wrote a couple letters for him. He called me in one day and asked if I'd written the letters. I said yes, sir. He said they were the finest letters he'd ever seen and he was not a man to give compliments. When I went out I was walking on air.

Went from there to the Dependable in Panama City as CO and then my first tour in Washington. After seventeen years in the Coast Guard, I was very happy to stay at sea. Lo and behold I got up there and ended up as Bender's Special Assistant. I was told later on I was not recommended for the job by the people that were doing the searching because I had no picture in my file. But Bender knew who I was and I'm sure it was because of that letter writing episode with him that he selected me. I then had four years of being Bender's Special Assistant and also when Owen Sater came in. It was an interesting time in the Coast Guard. The Department of Transportation had been created in 1967 and Willard Smith had to deal with that. ~~Chuck~~<sup>Chet</sup> Bender came in in 1970. The relationship with the department was hot and cold, lukewarm at times.

In 1969, there was a lot of talk about NOAH forming an ocean agency and the Coast Guard being a part of it. Warren Magnuson and Hollings were the two senators who were driving that one. There was no more work for the ocean station vessels in the early 1970s and there was the trauma of losing all of our ships. I was there while that was going on, certainly not making policy, but sitting in the room while it was being made. The reserve program was about to die. I remember going up to visit a congressman with the commandant. He got chewed out and I was amazed that this congressman had the audacity to chew out a commandant in the Coast Guard. Years later, I found out this was pretty routine.

Augmentation came along at that time and that's what saved the Reserve. It was people on the outside who had political influence and wanted to save the Coast Guard reserve. There were big things going on in the environment like the water pollution control act came in and the Coast Guard started getting involved in those missions. OMB, a brand new title for the bureau of budget, wanted to phase out Loran because we were going to have satellites in a few years. Bender and then young captain Jim Gracey, who was CPA, put on a brilliant performance for the Office of Telecommunications in not a friendly environment. I remember Bender coming back from that meeting and calling in Snapper Pierson, who was Chief and telling him to get together with somebody and develop a low cost receiver that the fishermen could afford to buy. Within a couple of years they had \$3000 and saved the Loran sea program. What a great thing. Our fisherman and people who use the waters would have been up the creek if we had dropped those programs. Those were the kinds of things that I watched. And I watched the relationship with the Department and they never understood us and I think to this day, the Department of Transportation doesn't understand the Coast Guard. That's when I concluded that we were in the wrong place and I have voiced that opinion a number of times. Where we belong is something else again.

Uniforms. You remember Bender Blues? Bill Stewart, who is retired over in Mobile, and I were the backroom boys for Bender. We did a lot of things that Bender never knew about and it's probably just as well. I knew everything that was going across the secretary's desk because I had

made friends with most of the secretaries upstairs. Very little was a surprise to us. He never asked where we got our information. The Bender Blues was a very emotional issue for all of us. It went on and on. The Flag Conference was at headquarters and Bender got up and asked for our opinion of the blues. I'd gone down the elevator with a couple of admirals, who shall remain nameless, who expressed an opinion very much against Bender blues, but when they had the opportunity to say something to the Commandant, they didn't. Year later I got to know one a little bit better, and I asked him about it. He said it would have been fruitless, the man's mind was made up. And he was right, Bender had made up his mind before he became Commandant that that was the one thing he was going to do. We got so tired of answering letters in the back room and finally there was an Alumni Association meeting there in Washington. The CO and I used to write Bender's speeches, so Bill and I suggested to him that his first announcement should be that we were going to have Bender blues from now on. He was hesitant, but we told him they were just waiting for him to say it. He got up and made the announcement and the place broke into applause. He came back and he was bouncing; most of the time he kind of shuffled. I knew him pretty well; I watched his every motion and emotion. He told us that was good advice and that they really liked the blues. Whether they liked it or not, the debate was over. ~~Ted~~<sup>Clay</sup> Bender was the one who changed the old areas from western and eastern to Atlantic and Pacific. And he made the Chief of Staff the number one guy in headquarters. It was a reorganization of the Coast Guard That eventually had significant impact.

S: The recommendation for three stars at San Francisco and New York was made by Allen Limbeck way back.

R: I didn't know that. It must have been the early '60s. But Bender was the one who put it in motion. In those days every time you had an Admiral selected, he had to appear before a Committee of Congress and they used to have a statement. I used to write the statements and I can almost still remember how. You had to try to justify it, put down some words, use a little bit of blarney.

Bender had a way of smiling- I never said this to him- but he looked like a dolphin when he smiled. It was a very friendly smile. I'll tell you another Bender story. He had a heart attack and things were kind of touchy. His days were getting longer and longer and I never left until after the boss did. So one night, it was Friday, he came out the door and was obviously very tired. This was a massive double door and his aide was carrying two briefcases. I told him I'd see him on Monday, Lord willing. He nodded, went out the door, took about three steps, stopped, turned around and said, "I'll be here." And he gave me that smile.

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the subject better than I do. He said he was making policy he would read it. I wrote something one day about the Navy and the Coast Guard and I found myself on my soapbox about the Commandant and the Coast Guard and its relationship with the Navy and we ought to be up there fighting. Well, Bender called me in and said he didn't like it. I told him it was the best part of the speech and he said he didn't like it at all. He said I shouldn't try to put him in the same position in government as the Chief of Naval operations. He said he had his own niche and could speak with authority about certain things which were within the Coast Guard prerogatives but he had no business speaking about Naval affairs. I always remembered that, and he was absolutely right. You don't go taking the CNO's prerogatives. But I was a young commander writing and it sounded good.

I made a mistake one day and he called me in. It was right after I arrived. He asked me something and I told him what I thought was the answer. He took his pencil out; he used to write very deliberately. I felt good and walked out and went back to my desk. It was my habit to check and make sure I was right and I was wrong. You talk about a sinking feeling. Bill Stewart spotted it immediately, saw this change come over me and asked what was wrong. I told him I'd given the boss bad advice. He asked what I would do and I told him I'd go back in and tell him I was wrong. He said that was good, so I went in. You could go in Bender's office, but if he was writing, you had to wait until he finished his thought. He wasn't a fast writer, he was a printer. Sometimes you'd be standing at attention for what seemed like an inordinate amount of time. And I was sweating because I had to tell him I'd made a mistake.

You don't make too many mistakes and continue to work for the Commandant. Finally, he looked up and I told him I'd given him bad information. I gave him the correct information and he said: fine, thank you. The interview was over and I left the room. Another lesson: what was the big deal? No sense in his chewing me out over that. Nobody was killed. But when you've worked for people who have chewed you out over a little mistake- I wasn't sure how this man would react.

When Sodder came in as the Commandant it was somewhat of a surprise. It went on for a long time and Joe McClellam was the favorite. Bender, all the time I worked for him, never came into my office. Otto came in the back room and I almost dropped dead. An entirely different personality. He asked if I would stay on and work for him for a year. I said I would be delighted, but I wanted to get back to sea. He said there was just one ground rule- if he and I had a disagreement, one of us would have to leave. I understand that one. It was a great year with the Sodders and we became good friends and Beth and Betty became friends.

I spent a year on sabbatical the Industrial College of the Armed Forces. I had some advice from some folks that that would be good for my career at that point. I had made four stripes that summer and I went to ICAP for a year. It was delightful and I found out how much I had absorbed through the years about national policies, for example law at sea. I'd gotten totally immersed in that during the Bender time. I was on the periphery, but I wrote speeches and such. I wrote a paper without any references at all and the professor called me in and told me it was much more in depth than he ever expected me to write at this level. He said I knew more about it than he did. I didn't realize how much knowledge I had. Which, by the way, is characteristic of Coast Guard officers when it comes to things legal in the international arena. Compared to our counterparts in the other services, our people are really quite good. Thank the lord, because they are many times making decisions which have international implications.

Went on to Seattle, then to the Polar Sea, and got my command. The Polar Sea was an interesting but frustrating time. When I had my 95 footer, I had a young seaman apprentice come on board and he was a very sharp young man who went on to sonar school. I lost track of him for awhile and the next thing I knew he was at Officers Candidate School

and when I arrived in Seattle, he was Commanding Officer of Port Angeles air station. Rick Hill. He just died last year. So I wouldn't let anybody land on my deck on Polar Sea the first time except Ric Hill. I greeted him on flight deck.

We had a problem with the polar class. We were known as building 11 in Seattle and Polar Star was building 10. It was an interesting time and you always learn something about yourself when you're at sea, in command. After two years, I felt kind of cheated, because I'd only made one trip to the Arctic in winter. So I'd asked for an extension and they gave it to me. We had a change in Commandants and we had some unhappy flags that retired. There was a change in orders and Admiral Larkin came to the Thirteenth and the first thing he did was cancel my orders of extension in the Polar Sea and I went up as Chief of Operations relieving Al Manning, who had just made flag. I got involved in what I called the Indian Wars, the salmon fisheries problems.

S: Judge Bolt's decision.

R: Yes. That was an interesting time from an operational standpoint and it was probably the first experience being personally involved with real political problems. I'd seen it as Commandants Assistant, but never was involved, except in Haiti, but that was minor league politics.

The one thing that impressed me the most about the whole Bolt decision was the respect the fishermen had for the Coast Guard. Bolt's decision said the treaty Indians in Washington State were entitled to fish in common, and he defined in common to mean 50 % of the fisheries in the whole northwest area belonged to the treaty Indians. That was exclusive of fish for sustenance and ceremonies. That meant they had to close areas to white fishermen and non-treaty Indians. It was a madhouse and we had some serious incidents. Thank the Lord nobody was killed. The reason the Coast Guard got involved in it was because Brock Adams was secretary of the Department of Transportation and was from that area. They had had one of their Marine Fisheries people use a shot gun on a fisherman. He panicked and fired and shot him in the face. The state of Washington said their constitution didn't allow them



to do this kind of thing and enforce fisheries laws from federal judges, so the Coast Guard took over.

We would send our 41 footers. You talk about going into harm's way. I never served in combat, you I can't imagine it was any more difficult than a first class petty officer taking a 41 footer and running it deliberately between two armed fishermen. Even worse, because you're not in armed conflict, you don't have a weapon. They called us all kinds of names, did all kinds of things, ramming boats occasionally, but they never shot at us. They basically had respect for the Coast Guard that had gone on for years. It came to us from the life saving side the Coast Guard, the humanitarian side. I joined the Coast Guard, at least after I got to know what it was about, because I liked the idea of serving people. I think most of us do that when you think about it. So I guess I dragged my feet when the emphasis became military.

I was selected for Flag when I was there, in 1980. I can tell you from having sat on board after board and being Chief of Personnel for three years, that it's mainly luck. There are fifteen names on the table and they pick some. Any one of the fifteen could be the next Commandant. We all know what that process is like. But I never even expected to be considered that year. That was my 26th year, they weren't picking anybody in that area. To get the call from Jack Hayes that night was, as Bill Ray said: Ric, you and I never had to go through that. I'm always grateful to Charlie Larkin and people like that who were my mentors through the years and happened to be on my board. I remember Bill Ellis telling me one time when I asked him what his chances were of making flag and he said three votes. That's about what it comes down to.

After that I made a quick stop in New York for a year as Chief of staff, because I was the one in the hole. So I didn't put my star on until January of 1981. It wasn't bad a Chief of Personnel. Bill Stewart was my old friend. It was a job I wanted and I guess nobody else wanted it so they gave it to me.

It was a good example of how the eighties were so turbulent. Jack Hayes had become Commandant, Bob Scarborough was the Vice Commandant. I arrived at headquarters in May of 1981 and the first thing that the Commandant said to me was that we had to gear up; we

were going to take on about 15,000 more people. Hayes was going through this thing with Neil Gooshman, who was then Secretary of Transportation. Carter had just left and Jack had had a meeting with Carter and everything looked rosy. But within five weeks, my orders were to cut the Coast Guard by 5,000. It was just incredible how the circumstances changed. And the most difficult job was trying to manage in a negative growth situation. One of the things that I did, over the objections of some of my staff, was I delegated the authority for discharging the dirtballs as we called them to the commanding officers of units. I sat in headquarters and they said I was going to be sorry, have lawsuits, they were the only people who could make these decisions. We had to get rid of 2000 right away and there was no way in hell to tell the COs to decide what 2000 people were going to leave. I'd been a CO and I knew I had four or five guys I would love to get rid of. So we did it and we never had one case of appeal.

S: You put this right on the ships?

R: Yes. I've been told that's the best thing I did in the Coast Guard. It came about not because I had designed it but because it was one of the only things you could do and again shows that if you have faith in your people in the Coast Guard, they do a great job. When you give them authority, very rarely do they violate it.

I started a program to get black officers into the Coast Guard by using predominately black colleges. It was a good deal- we took those who were in science courses at the end of their junior year and we put them through boot camp and then they became SAs their last year of school. We paid them SA time to go to school- a scholarship of sorts. It was short-lived, primarily because some of my staff wasn't for it. We ended up taking around nine people from some school in Virginia, but they flunked swimming and that sort of thing. I'm glad to see that program's back now. In 1963 when we had legislation and went to the best qualified system, it worked fine. And then we went to a no growth situation in the Coast Guard and now the pressure is starting to get on the system. I went around the Coast Guard and said promotions were going to slow and there's nothing we can do about it. I can manage the

program within certain limitations and there were two options: do you wish me to increase the size of the promotion zone which will then decrease the opportunity for promotion or do you want do you want me to decrease the size and keep the opportunity for promotion the same. That means instead of coming up in ten years, you'll come up in twelve years for Lieutenant Commander. Almost overwhelming everybody I talked to said the former and they'd take their chances. Well you know what's happened- it put tremendous pressure on the officer evaluation system. They're using a reporting index which I never was very comfortable with. Bob Scarborough had come up with a new system of officer evaluation before I became Chief of Personnel which was a little bit too far out to be accepted. He gave it to me and we did some modifications and put together a performance evaluation system. It was a lot of time and agony and it didn't last because the officer corps decided it was too much paperwork. It was a performance evaluation system where you had to call people in and fill out forms and it was cumbersome. Jim Gracey became Commandant and asked me to stay on as Chief of Personnel and he and I personally worked on the present system. I'd go home every weekend and write down all the characteristics and traits and define them and he'd do the same and we'd meet in his office and go through each one. The system we have now is one that Gracey, Cueroni, and Nick Allen, who was our Captain, with some modifications. I've tried to tell the Chief of Personnel now that they need to get off of it because with no growth, you just can't sustain that kind of system. You've got to go back to telling people: bite the bullet- promotions are going to be delayed. It's happened before, it will happen again. When your opportunity for promotion to Captain is 26%, there's something wrong. You've got fantastically good Commanders and one out of two is going to make Captain. There's no system in the world that will tolerate that. It lends itself to all kinds of inequities. You can't get people to enlist and you're going to be in trouble if they don't.

Problems in training were starting to come up at this time because we were framing renovation and modernization programs. The 378s came up about that time and we were putting all this technical equipment on it that required now for schooling, instead of 23 weeks, 58 weeks for the flier control technicians. Hell, we didn't have a pool of

people large enough to put people through that kind of schooling. The MDZ had come about, maritime defense zone concept. Tremendous pressures were being put on the training system. People started to advocate a Chief of Training separate from the Chief of personnel. I opposed. I think eventually it will come to that. Now they have two deputies, one for personnel and one for training, but under one flag, which is probably good. They're too interrelated to break part, I think.

Reagan took over and I will be convinced until the day I die that one agenda items was to get rid of the Coast Guard. Privatization is the answer to Republicans. Jack Hayes was the Commandant. He was appointed by a Democrat, now the Republicans were in office and they didn't trust Jack. They had a hatchet man that they sent over from the White House. He was a deputy, a guy named Darrel Trent, and I think his job was to do away with the Coast Guard. He tried all kinds of things. Jack Hayes always had been a risk taker. He had no credibility because he was a Democrat. We don't think in those terms. We are apolitical, or used to be. I don't think you can be anymore. Someone on the Reagan transition team said the Coast Guard should align themselves with the Navy if it expected to stay around because they were only going to put money into defense, not the Coast Guard. What the fellow meant, in retrospect, was that they were going to take fifteen to sixteen thousand people out of the Coast Guard to the Navy and the rest were going. But Jack read it the way the all of us did and he moved the Coast Guard closer to the Navy with the maritime defense zoning. It was a paper tiger. You remember the old coastal defense zones and what the Navy thinks of them, about the same as amphibious forces. They're never going to put a lot of money or effort or time or good people into that. Jack was a warrior. He had ribbons from Viet Nam. He could go over to the Chief of Naval Operations and sit down because they spoke the same language. Now here comes Jim Gracey as the Commandant, but he's not a warrior by even the wildest stretch of the imagination. A new CNO comes, both have egos and they don't like each other. Don't have anything to do with each other. Gracey had been appointed by the Republican administration so he's on the team, but what they want is somebody to just do what they tell him and keep his mouth shut. Well Jim always was persuasive in his lifetime and he felt that he could persuade people

that his way was the right one. But you can't persuade people when they're not willing to be persuaded. So during Jim Gracey's time, it was a very frustrating period. The other thing about Jim, he was kind of a school teacher in many ways, by that I mean he always rewrote your letters and he would hold court. He would bring a stack of letters written by the staff into his morning briefings which would go on interminably. These were letters that he'd gone over during the night that he didn't like and he'd rewritten them. That gets old after while. He was still CPA, he couldn't release himself from being that type and that's too bad because he had an awful lot going for him. He could have been one of the really great Commandants and, in my opinion, was not. And he let his wife get too involved. Mrs. Gracey was part of the team, and we resented that. Sure, the District Commander's wife would go out and do things and the officer's wife was involved with her little group, but never into policy making. He talked about the Coast Guard family all the time and it got to be a little wearisome to listen to that. Management by doing it yourself, some of us used to say. It was his style of managing things. Jim really suffered, in my opinion, from not having a lot of command experience. A great staff, but command was not one of his fortes. I could see it, although we remained good friends. He gave me the Seventh District, which was a hell of an assignment. He gave me a Distinguished Service Medal when I left that tour of duty. That's about as high a medal as you can get in the Coast Guard and I'm thankful to him for that. It wasn't that Jim and I didn't get along, it's just my observations, being as objective as I could be looking from where I was and based on experiences that I'd had in the past.

I'll tell a story about school. Right after Jim became the Commandant, and by the way, he was a unanimous selection of the Flag Corps we were so delighted to have Jim Gracey as the Commandant. There wasn't one dissenter in the group. He was walking into the most harmonious situation of any Commandant in my memory. But he walked in and the Coast Guard Captain would call everyone to attention and there were fifteen flag officers sitting around the table He'd announce: gentlemen, the Commandant of the Coast Guard. I let this go on for a while, and Jim used to say if we guys had anything we wanted to say, please come and tell him. So I went and knocked on his door and

I said I'd known him a long time. He was now the Commandant, so it was a different relationship, but I asked him why he had people announce his coming as the Commandant of the Coast Guard among the board of directors? We all know who you are. He said- thank you, we'll stop that. Then I told him that he'd done something uncharacteristic that morning by cutting off one of his flag officers. He obviously got mad at what he said and CPA was written on his forehead. If you do that too often, nobody around that table is going to tell you anything, I said. He said thank you and that if he ever did that, I should stick my head in his door and say- Boss you did it. A little while later, I did stick my head in and that was the last time.

One of the things that was going on in this no growth situation, all through that first term of Reagan there was a lot of talk about disbanding departments, organizations, public health was in trouble, the Coast Guard was in trouble, NOAH was in trouble. One Admiral had made some contacts with some folks at NOAH about professional type things, engineering and such, and they got talking about what the future held for NOAH and unbeknowst to me, they got to talking about moving NOAH into the Coast Guard. I was going along the same road through friendships with some NOAH folks. I had a couple of meetings in town, serriptiously, with one of the NOAH Admirals through a mutual acquaintance. Being Chief of Personnel, I knew what the Coast Guard situation was and I had concluded that we could take in a group of professional NOAH people, those in uniform who were the oceanographers and seagoing types into the Coast Guard. I thought it was big plus for both organizations. This one particular NOAH Admiral said they were going to die and they would rather be in a professional organization like the Coast Guard and have some ships to use. I just happened to find this out so we discussed it and we thought it was a great idea and decided that we should throw it around the table at the flag meeting and see what happened. The reaction was not very good on the part of the Commandant and Vice Commandant. Maybe we didn't present it very well, but we were called in later by the Vice Commandant and told to cease and desist any attempts to get the NOAH corps into the Coast Guard and we dropped it right then and there. I still think it was the way to go and could be done.

Let me jump ahead to the summer before last, during the '88 campaign, Bush and Dukakis. I tried to get both parties to listen to what I had to say about what I thought ought to happen in the Coast Guard, because people within the party would approach people on that question. I happened to be in New London in a high visibility position and they knew I knew Bush. I said: What you really ought to do is go back to 1969 and take a look at what was going on in government and Senate Resolution 222. It's time for the US to rediscover the oceans. I had to explain to them what that meant. You do away with the Department of Transportation, it's a failure. 1967-1988 the main objective was to write the National Transportation Policy and it can't be done. So when you find out that after twenty years you can't do something right, you abandon it. Write it off as a mistake. All that's happened is it's interfered politically with the FAA and they have no business being politically involved. It's the number one safety agency in the world with the most at stake. Get them back their independence. Take those 70,000 people out of the department, take the 38 thousand people in the Coast Guard, what have you got left? A few agencies who administer trust funds. You can give a monkey two pounds of bananas and it can administer trust funds. So now you create the department of Oceans. You take the Coast Guard as the lead agency, you take NOAA, you take parts of the Corps of Engineers, parts of EPA, parts of the Interior, put those all in a group and now they have a single purpose and that is to utilize the ocean resources and to ensure that the environment is protected.

S: You have fisheries, you have minerals- exploration and exploitation, research vessels, and you could have law enforcement.

R: Yes, it's all there and to me it makes sense. I've never told anybody this, but the Dukakis people came back to see me twice. There was one fellow from the Massachusetts office who was very interested in what I had to tell him and I started to get worried. Here I am a COAST GUARD officer and I said you can have this idea, do with it what you want, but I don't want to be associated with it. I was doing this as a citizen. Even though neither group picked up on it, I still think it's the way to go.

Thinking back on it, I don't know if we could have taken NOAH in during Gracey's time, but he certainly made it clear to us that he was not interested in getting other parts of government into the Coast Guard.

S: Several times, you have used the initials CPA, would you define that?

R: I don't know if you can define CPA. It's a branch of the Chief of Staff's office which is programs analysis. The single most important group of Captains, Commanders and Lieutenant Commanders in the Coast Guard. Those folks have more power than Admirals or Program Directors or Managers. They have oversight responsibility on all the programs and advise the Chief of Staff on which programs are being done right, which are being done wrong, and which could be done differently. And of course every one could be done better as far as CPA is concerned. I think CPA has too much power and erodes the power of Program Director and Manager. When you do that, human nature being what it is, it's like having 24 people sign off on a letter, everybody says- I'm not going to look at it because the guy next to me is. The Program Directors, who are fairly bright, they got to be flags, when they get overruled by a Lieutenant Commander, who has spent eight years in the Coast Guard, unless they're very strong, just sit back and say the hell with it. These guys get relationships with Program Managers and they transcend company lines, instead of going through Chief of Staff, they go directly to their friends who's in ocean programs, or law enforcement, or personnel. What I used to do a couple times a week, I'd ask the Chief of CPA to come up to my office when I was Personnel Director and I'd bare my soul to him. Tell him all the problems I had and could he help me solve them. And he always did.

S: Where is the Inspector General, or do we still have one?

R: We don't have an Inspector General per se. We have audit responsibilities that now come under the chief of staff, comptroller is what it used to be. But inspections are the responsibilities of District Commanders, and I think it's wrong. The first recommendation I ever made as flag officer, I suggested to Jack Hayes that we create an office of



Inspector General. I also said the same thing to Gracey and I gave up with Youse. But we really need an IG, badly.

S: The present system is the boss inspects himself.

R: And that's how you get certain things that are embarrassing. The Department of Transportation hotline is kind of made up for part of that. Anybody can call up the hotline and say Admiral So and So is doing such and such and you should investigate it. Three times I've been investigated for misuse of government funds. Each time they've spent more time than they should have investigating me and there were no problems. But if somebody gets mad at you and says they should check on you for some reason, you need to keep good records.

When the time came to leave headquarters, Jim Gracey asked me where I wanted to go and I said where the action is -Miami. I felt it was quite an honor to be selected to go to the fastest moving district in the Coast Guard, then I found out nobody else wanted to go. That was a very interesting job. Deece Thompson had been there before me and I think the world of Deece. He juggled three hats: District Commander, head of the Task Force on crime in south Florida and the third one, the most cantankerous of the three, was the Southeast Regional Director of the National Narcotics Border Interdiction System, which was the one working directly for Bush. There were really three districts involved at the time- the Eleventh, the Eighth and the Seventh. The seventh, because of the geography, had most of the action. The eighth had less. The eleventh was happenstance.

I remember sitting down with the Commandant and Vice Commandant before I went down there. Deece had had some problems with the area commander. Bill Stewart had had some problems with the area commander. The area was New York, but you don't work for him with those two hats, you only work for him with one hat and only under certain conditions. But he's sitting up there and you're using all his resources. So all the guy is doing he's a support commander. So you've got a three star support commander for a two star and you know how those things are. So I asked Jim Gracey how to handle it, what kind of relationship should I have with Paul Youse. He said just make it clear to

Paul that he's your boss as District Commander under those regulatory things and otherwise you don't work for him.

I told Paul that. We had grown up together and had respect for each other. He was in the class of '51 and I was in '53, but we had served together four different times. A bright guy. The thing was politically charged. The south Florida Task Force, after I took over, I more or less dropped that one, because that was US attorneys working with the Marshals and the FBI and I felt out of place in that environment. I abandoned that one and nobody ever said anything about it. Other than my contact with the people of Miami in that role and that is where I decided to put most of my efforts. Deece had left me an infrastructure that was there and ready to move. I called my Coast Guard staff in after being there about four weeks and said I saw what we were doing in the drug interdiction thing and I didn't like it. These guys knew where I am all the time, and I never knew where they were. We're in check points in the border control and I said that was a great defensive stand to have, but I wanted to do something that occasionally will put them on the guessing side.

Steve Duker was my Chief of Operations, He'd been to CPA before, very bright young man and a very grainy personality. But we all have an ego and I could handle it. And John Vagel was my Chief of Law Enforcement and I'd known him for years. I gave them two weeks to come up with a program to put me on the offensive. Two weeks later they came up and handed my this packet and they fully expected I would take it home and read it over the weekend and bring it back with a lot of questions. I read the first paragraph the mission statement, and scanned through the objectives and plan of action. I said: fine we'll do it, but we can't do it by ourselves. So I picked up the phone and called Paul Youse the in New York. I told him Steve Duker would be on his doorstep Monday morning and he would brief him on an operation I wanted done. Steve went up to New York and briefed Paul. He'd been Paul's CPA when he was Chief of Staff. Paul called me back within an hour and said-you've got everything you want- let's go. So we went to Washington and we briefed the Vice President's staff on this Coast Guard operation and they thought it was so good they said let's make this three pronged and get everybody involved and made it the VP's thing. What was Wagon

Wheel, a Coast Guard operation, became Hattrick, because it's three pronged and was now under the auspices of the Vice President. And it made things easier in some respects, because I needed 54 portable transceivers and the only ones who had them was the Army and all I had to do was pick up the phone. That kind of leverage was very convenient. made a trip through the Caribbean, went to Panama, Jamaica, Venezuela, Columbia, Antigua, Martinique, the Dutch West Indies and got all these people on the bandwagon to help with this operation. I had a State Department guy with me. We had the money to give them for fuel. And we did this all in a matter of weeks. Launched this operation. It was a ninety day operation, starting in October. I went to the hospital for a colon cancer operation about that time. My staff did the whole thing while I was gone. I got out and went back to work too soon. I know that now, but at the time, they couldn't hold me back. I thought they needed me, which is really bull, they don't need you. They just need you to hold the bag, not anything else. We had some pretty good intelligence and the narcotics people said these Americanos, they go off for Christmas, they'll go home. We had scheduled this through Christmas.

Was it a success? Yes, it was. How do you measure the success? Well, I don't like this way, but you measure it by how much marijuana you get. We got 1500 tons burned on the beaches of Columbia because they couldn't put it in the boats to get it up. You can do that once. It took a tremendous toll on people. We had people from all over the Coast Guard filling in while the Seventh District Coast Guard people were at sea. We had Coast Guard people on Navy ships. COs wouldn't close contacts because they didn't want to get any closer than five miles. I had young JGs who were being put on report by Navy captains of ships. I had Coast Guard officers coming in saying that the Navy ought to be ashamed of itself. I got put on report by the Department of State for entering into an agreement with a foreign country. That was funny- let me tell that story.

S: There's someone else who'd made some agreements that didn't have the authority.

R: Yes, I know, but this was above board as far I was concerned. It was not against the will of the Congress.. Down in Columbia, that's where we got things rolling. Paul Youse came with me. We took the Commandants airplane and Paul was along more or less as an observer, because he recognized it was my show. We went out on one of the 378s- the Dallas- and I had this three star Colombian Admiral come on board and we had lunch. After lunch we talked and I asked if I had his support. He was interested in gun running. He asked if we ever saw any guns when we searched the boats. He was interested because they had people smuggling guns into the country. A legitimate interest. I said I had authority to stop US vessels if they were carrying any contraband intended for the US, but if they had a Panamanian flag and were carrying guns, I couldn't do anything about it. I told him if I did run into that, I would delay, get the word to him and he could come out. He said he'd like that. He said I could come into his territorial waters if I was chasing druggies and I could shoot them. We about choked. And he said we shouldn't go to Bogota. I said I didn't have to go to Bogota. I stuck up my hand and told him it was a deal. We shook hands and I didn't think any more about it.

Somehow or other the word got out and we did have a Navy ship chase one of the guys in and I wouldn't let him shoot, obviously, and this Admiral was not too happy about that. But the word got out to the state department in Bogota that they saw a US Navy ship in territorial waters of Columbia without asking permission to go in. They started inquiring and found out that Admiral So and SO had said it was okay and it was Cueroni on the other end. This official letter came back through the Department of Transportation and Jim Gracey put an endorsement on it. It was mild, a slap on the hand, but then it went through Paul Youse who was in New York and was there at the meeting. A little tongue and cheek and it never amounted to anything, except that you try to expedite and get something done and other people are going to stand on principle. It reared its ugly head again in the Bahamas about a year later.

We finished Hattrick and everybody was totally exhausted. It was a success of sorts, but I concluded that it just wasn't worth the effort, not under the conditions under which we were doing it. We put a 66 page after-action report in less than 30 days in a district that was already

overworked. I did something because I knew my boss. I sent it to 6601 Camden Drive, Chevy Chase, the Commandant's headquarters. I knew that as soon as Jim Gracey got that, he'd stay up all night reading it. And he did. He called me in the next morning, and he was so excited. He was not in favor of this to start with and he grumbled to me about keeping his boys out over Christmas. Jim was just turned on about this whole thing and said we were going to do it again. I told him he didn't read the recommendations. You know we're still doing it on a permanent basis now. We're still running that same kind of operation where we go out and repulse. And the returns have diminished. But that was hailed as a success. I talked the Vice President into coming down to Miami and handing out some awards, in fact he gave one to Paul for his support. Of course, that was a big hit.

The next thing we did, well Customs decided they weren't going to play. The Customs is so jealous of the Coast Guard. They pulled every trick in the book. DEA wouldn't do anything with us. The FBI refused to work with us. I put the Commissioner of Customs on report to the Vice President of the US because he didn't do anything we wanted. The guy had political power. It got so bad that every time there was a press release, Customs or DEA would call me and want to know why the Coast Guards name was in the press release. It was very frustrating.

The other thing is the 1986 campaign started and the Democrats started to go after Bush for his do-nothing drug interdiction. So we got a lot of publicity and did a lot of testifying at hearings. I took a lot of what I would consider abuse from Congressmen who were holding hearings in Miami at ten o'clock on Wednesday mornings, This was, of course, December- February, not July or August. They'd come down on Wednesday, hold the hearings on Thursday, stay for the weekend and go back on Monday. The first witness would be the governor of Florida, a Democrat. The next witness would be the governor of Texas, a Democrat. Etc. So the whole morning this guy is standing up in front of the Democratic Chairman of the Committee, usually Glen English or Deconcini, who's a jerk, and just lambaste us while we're sitting there with no way to ever get back. Then you go out for lunch and you read the Miami paper's headlines. At two o'clock you reconvene, now who do you think is in the room at two o'clock? You guessed it. The Vice

President's man who is going to testify. Nobody else. They start out unofficially by saying: Admiral you're doing a fine job- we're just so proud of you folks down here, and you're just not getting any cooperation and so on. You make your statement, answer your questions and go home. And that's how public opinion is formed. Nobody's is interested in what's really happening- it's all political. Then who shows up? The GAO. Now they're going to investigate the National Narcotics Border Interdiction System. Who puts them up to this? Election year? Glen English from Oklahoma, who's making a good thing out of this. A non-descript, unknown Congressman who's now getting on Good Morning America every morning. And of course so did we. We ended up on Good Morning America, CBS Reports, The Today Show, Ted Koppel, because we were news.

S: I didn't catch any of those programs, but heard from several of my friends and colleagues about your appearance and how competent and capable you were.

R: That's good to hear. The only feedback I had was from my family, and of course, they're prejudiced. Most Coast Guard people don't get the opportunity to do this kind of thing, and the first time you go up against somebody like a McNeil Lehrer or a Ted Koppel or even somebody like Hartman on Good Morning America, there's a hostility there. I don't think it's intentional, but this is their way of doing things.

It can be disconcerting, the first time I was on Good Morning America, it was seven in the morning, I was sitting on a stool in a hallway in the ABC studio in Miami. I had no monitor and a camera with a red light on it. I had an earphone on which I could hear David Hartman. I didn't know if I was on or off camera. He was talking to me and the red light never went off. I had a little experience by then and knew I could relax when the light was off. He was very nasty. He asked me what percentage of drugs coming into the country we were apprehending. I told him I didn't know. He said I must have some idea and I said I didn't. I saw on the tape later, he sort of shifted his weight like he was getting exasperated with this jerk who doesn't know what he's doing. He asked the question again and I said: David, when they

start shipping me copies of their invoices, then I can tell you. That was the end of that interview. It came across quite well; I was just matter of fact, but it did take the wind out of his sails.

I was on with Forest Sawyer on the CBS Morning show, the morning Challenger blew up. It was cold on the set and we had electric heaters throwing heat underneath the chairs. Marie Shriver and Forest Sawyer set me up. While I was getting all dolled up to go on, they were showing a tape. They had some DEA and Customs people who were talking about the failure of the Vice President's Task Force and a local cop came along and talked about how the Feds weren't doing anything right. I caught the last of it as I was going on the set. I sat down with him and we were on the air and I was looking at myself on the monitor and he's going on for what seemed like ten minutes about all the negative things. And then he made a mistake. He turned to me and said: Admiral right or wrong? And I never let him have the stage back. Because by that time, I'd had quite a bit of experience with better guys than him and I just kept talking.

Vice president Bush called me later. Right after the show, I had flown across over to Tampa for a memorial, delivered some words and then I was flying to a meeting with the Vice President. When I got back to the group at St. Pete there was a note to call. Driving out to the Tampa airport, sitting in the back of the car, I looked out and saw Challenger blow up. I'm on my way to a meeting in Washington DC with the Vice President of the US and Attorney General of the US, cabinet heads. I wasn't the only one going, there were a bunch of us. I called my office in Miami and it was the only time in my career that I ever felt the guys wanted me. So I called the Vice President's office and by that time he was somewhere else and I gave him the message that I wouldn't be at the meeting that afternoon. I'd never had that experience- standing up a person of that stature, but I felt I should be in Miami.

It was the best thing I ever did. When I got back there, things were in absolute turmoil. Joe Kile was our group commander up at Canaveral and he was in the blockhouse when the Challenger blew up and you really ought to have him on tape to tell the story. He told me that when it blew up, everybody just stood there in total disbelief. Nobody did anything. There were generals, directors, he looked around the room and

nobody was taking charge and he finally said the national search and rescue is in effect, the Coast Guard's in charge. I left Joe in charge up at the Cape and sent my public affairs officer up. That was probably one of the most brilliant things I've ever done in my life because when I flew up there the morning after and we landed on that 15000 foot runway, the Coast Guard was in charge. Joe called me at home and said he was having a problem with the airforce. They didn't like the fact that a Coast Guard commander was getting in to see the director while all this turmoil was going on. I went up there to expressly tell the NASA guy, Dr. Webb, that Kale was my man and he was really in charge of what was going on. He was very capable.

When I got there, they wouldn't let me in because they were having a meeting. They kept telling me Webb was busy and I waited for about ten minutes. Then I said if he wasn't going to see me, I was going back to Miami. There was a civilian in the office who heard what I said. He went into the office and next thing Dr. Webb came out and welcomed me with open arms. The other guy hadn't even told him I was there. I went in and sat down. There were a bunch of astronauts sitting around the table and a big model of the Challenger and they were discussing what was going on. Webb was very kind and started bringing me up to speed. He said they were just discussing where to go from there. He said I was in charge of search and salvage and it was imperative that they get the rockets back because they thought the problem was there. I told him I wasn't in charge of salvage but that we would be there as long as there was a need, but we needed to make arrangements to get the Navy people in there. with equipment. The number one priority was getting the people and by that time we were picking up pieces, floating. We had notebooks and shattered helmets, that kind of thing, and not making any announcement to the press. So I told them it was my experience in dealing with disasters and search and rescue that it's always best to tell what's going on to the press because they're going to find out one way or the other. We've got certain indications and pieces of material. He said they'd decided they wouldn't out of respect to the next of kin. I said that was their prerogative, but every time one of my cutters comes in the middle of the night and drops things off, the press knows what's going on. One of the astronauts asked why we didn't code all of our telephone



and traffic. I said- Come on, you're a newspaper reporter and boom- it goes up- right? By sending a public information officer up there, it was again fortuitous for the Coast Guard, because NASA unbeknownst to any of us, immediately put a muzzle on all contact between the Cape and NASA people. There were over 30 public information specialists from NASA on the Cape. Look how they handle things and they're better than anybody in the world and somebody in Washington put the muzzle on them. They were so frustrated, they were feeding my guy everything they had and every morning, every night, you saw Jim on national news. The other thing we did was control who went where. So when we had the press they went in a Coast Guard helicopter and they always wanted to know where the Coast Guard ship was first. And then they went around where the Navy was.

People were saying how it was marvelous we were getting all this publicity and I tried to explain to them it was all calculated. We are so naive when it comes to public information. This young man was very good at it. A few weeks later, I was in Washington, and I had a meeting and Ed Meece was there. I went up to say hello to him, after I'd been with him a couple of times in different places, and he said they missed me at the meeting last week. He said the Vice President had told them why I wasn't there and that I was right where you should be. I was glad to hear that.

The relationships with foreign governments is interesting. Rules of engagement in Cuba- I could go on and on with stories of what I consider to be, not incompetence, but certainly reticence and reluctance on the part of Department of State people to do things with any kind of strength of government.

S: I get the impression that every individual looks behind him to make sure that his butt is covered.

R: Pretty much so. And I suppose you can't blame them because their performance system works like that. If you ever get to that position, that's exactly what the Coast Guard people will do, rather than take the chance.

Let me tell a good story that happened in Miami. I'd been there three days and just before I was ready to go home, a message came in from the governor's office raising hell about an inter coastal waterway bridge and intimated the Coast Guard wasn't doing its job. I was the new kid on the block and this wasn't one that Deece had briefed me on it as being a particular problem. So I called my Chief of Operations and Chief of Staff, and Chief Lawyer. The Chief of Operations was not there, but his bridge kid was there, a JG not long out of the Coast Guard Academy. Five hundred bridges regulated by the Coast Guard in the state of Florida. I asked him why this had come to where it was. What I concluded was, trying to be good Samaritans, the Coast Guard had gotten itself between the county government and the developer. They had no business being there, but they were trying to resolve the problem because people couldn't get their boats out. The bridge was down and nobody would fix it because nobody said they owned it. In my most authoritative voice, I told them to go back to their offices and draw up a message and this is what I want to say. I put the pressure on deliberately to show them who was boss. Soon they all came traipsing back to my office, handed me the message, I read it and it said exactly what I wanted to say. I looked around the room one last time to see if anybody had any problems. No one except the JG- he was staring at me. I asked him if he had a problem. He said he wouldn't send that message. I ripped up the message, threw it in the waste basket and said: thank you I'm going home. On the way out of the office, I told this young man he had a lot of balls. The Captains slunk out of there. The fun part of this story is by Monday morning, I'm sure everybody knew this JG had taken on the Admiral. The crowning glory was a few months later, his boss wanted to tell me what this JG did. When I was going over his fitness report, he told me I'd left something out- here's what the Admiral told me.

The guy left the service and went to law school. I talked him into ~~staying~~ staying in the reserve and I hope he will. A fine young man and we've got a lot of people like that. A lot of folks in the Coast Guard who are not afraid to stand up. Just so you do it in a non- offensive way. The only ones you hear about are the sour grapes. The ones who call names instead of using a certain amount of diplomacy. All of us are jerks

sometimes and need somebody to say- have you thought about it this way?

While I was there, the problem between the District Command and the Air Command was starting to get more serious. To the point where Admiral Youse finally sent a message saying that he was going to take command of the ships that were in Seventh District waters doing certain things. I asked him why he was doing that. Was he unhappy with the way I was operating my forces? He said no. Why are you not chopping it to me, which we have done traditionally? He said the area had resources which I didn't. I asked what? I had all the intelligence resources. I had access to the Vice President's office. I had introduced Paul into the organization. He said he was doing it under the maritime defense zone guys. Finally he sent a message that was kind of the last straw for me. I thought Paul was wrong, so I called and told him he didn't have the authority to do that and I was going to call the Commandant and tell him that. I work for him, not you. So I called the Vice Commandant, and they called Paul and me into Washington and we sat down and had a little tete de tete. They asked the Area Commander why he was involved and he said he needed to coordinate between districts. I didn't have any problem with that. If I needed resources for the Seventh, I'd go to him and ask for them. And he could do the same. The Commandant told the Area Commander to leave the District Commander alone. He's doing what he's supposed to do and he works for the Vice President.

This had been boiling before my watch; it was inevitable it would come to a head. Maybe it was because we were such good friends at one point that it became uncomfortable to be together. Then we were both interviewed for the job as Commandant, along with Deece and Jack Costello and Vince LaBeal. I had no desire to be Commandant. Never had. I made a public declaration and I wasn't even going to go for the interview. I was still recovering from colon cancer. They had given me less than five years. We have a son who has leukemia. He was in remission at the time and relapsed twice. I felt it was time that we stay together. Beth was the one who talked me into going. She said she hoped and prayed I wouldn't get it, but I needed to go because she didn't want to hear me bitching about the Commandant a year down the road. She put it in perspective, so I went up to the interview. I was totally relaxed

with Mrs. Dole. I told her how I would run the Coast Guard and why I didn't trust her and the Department.. I felt good when I came home. I also knew that I wasn't going to be the commandant.

When Paul was announced I congratulated him. He knew the only place I wanted to go was the Academy but wasn't sure he wanted to send me there, because I had to take a loyalty oath to the Commandant. That really boiled me. I asked if he was intimating that I hadn't been loyal to the Commandant. He didn't answer. He said he'd call me back in a few hours. Beth and I sat down and decided to go to Panama City. I'd had a great career and no regrets. He's the boss, wants to pick his team. He can do what he wants. He called me back and said he'd penciled me in to New London. I asked what that meant. He said I was going to the Coast Guard Academy. But I kept stewing about his remark- I'm saying this for the first time publicly. I finally couldn't stand it any longer and by this time Jim Rowan had been announced as Vice Commandant.. We are the closest friends, and have been since Academy days. I called Jim and asked if he could arrange a meeting with Paul. Obviously he had a problem with me and either we were going to clear the air or I was leaving. So I flew up to New York. It was winter time. I took a prisoner in one of our airplanes. It was freezing cold. I had lunch with Paul and said to him I couldn't work for him he had any doubts about my loyalty. . We talked about it and he said he wanted me to go to New London very much and I agreed, but told him he shouldn't have any apprehensions and he should rest assured that I would never do anything to embarrass him or the Coast Guard. When we got up to leave, he said he was glad I did what I did, but he could never have done it, if the shoe were on the other foot.

You can go along year after year in your career and one little happens between two good friends and the only thing you can do at that point is to face it head on. He never bothered me in New London and I did nothing to embarrass him in the Coast Guard. And it was a dream for me to end my career in the place where I started. Who could want any more than that? To have had the kind of assignments I've had. I think I mentioned by Leemy and Evans and what I wanted to see at the Academy was Athens and Sparta not at odds, but working cooperatively. Because they really complement each other. But we were polarized and

we had fiefdoms everywhere. The Dean was doing one thing, the Commandant of Cadets something else. Through the years, I had an advantage because as Chief of Personnel the Academy is under your jurisdiction, so I knew a lot of the things that were going on, so when I arrived there two years later, I had a good idea. I thought that the Academy had become really dehumanized. I never did, even as a cadet like the hazing and harassment that goes on. A certain amount of it is fine, there's a lesson to be learned, but it goes beyond that.

S: Did you ever have to squat over a bayonet?

R: Yes. They don't do that anymore, if they do, they get thrown out. But what is that about? You hate the guy that did it and you hate him ten years down the road. Crazy. From the stand point of what an effort you make to get the best of American youth into that Academy and then try to run them off. You take second classmen and with the blessing of the administration, tear the kids down and make him into their image. A nineteen year old and a seventeen year old. When I talk to cadets like that, they just think it's crazy. What's wrong with the Admiral? What I did was, the first summer I told the ensigns the way I wanted things done and they didn't do it my way. At the end of the summer, I called them all in and told them how unhappy I was with them and they'd never been talked to like that.. Then I realized after they left it was stupid- what did I expect? They're only first classmen with stripes. They'd come up under that other environment. They didn't know what I was talking about. So we started working on the next summer program right away and I brought Lieutenants in who had experience in command and they ran the summer program. The second classmen hated it, fought them all the way. At the same time, we introduced the policy of leadership program, which Ed Nelson, my predecessor had really started. Positive motivation towards getting people to do things. I'd sit down and talk to some first class cadets and say if you start on Sunday with fourth classmen and scream and yell and get to Friday- you can get there- but if its Sunday night and you tell them where you want to be Friday- now they have something to work towards and you know where your goal is. We did make some make some strides and the reports

I'm getting now are that this summer was one of the best they've had, as far as the kids learning things and being motivated. And it's carrying over into the academic arena. The only way I know of to get serious about teaching leadership is to put it in the academic curriculum. The dean has the academic curriculum and with all the accreditation processes in all the colleges and universities, he's got tremendous leverage over the superintendent. So I borrowed something from the Air Force Academy. They had the same problem up there. What they did was to take the leadership program, put it under the Commandant of Cadets work where it should be and he taught it for credit. The Dean came around right away. I did the same thing. The Dean and the Commandant of Cadets sat down and said we can work this out. So now they teach leadership all four years in the classroom for credit. They'd never done that in the forty years I'd been around Coast Guard. The program I think it working. The jury's still out.

S: Seems to me we had about ten days, two weeks between the finish of our academics and first class and graduation and that's when we got all these odd little things. We even got taught about sex.

R: I heard someone say once- where you stand depends on where you sat and it's so true in life. The things that I enjoyed tremendously, both as a cadet and a company officer was athletic teams and winning. I played on the first unbeaten football team Coast Guard ever had. I helped coach the second one, when Otto Gramm was the coach. When I went back to the Academy, I changed the objectives of the athletic programs. I said the objective of this program is to be competitive. There ain't nothing wrong with winning. We can do it within the confines our academic requirements and within our entrance requirements. We're not going to take kids in to play football, but there's no reason to say that we can't expect to go out and beat Amherst and Trinity and Wesley and all the other schools on a fifty- fifty basis. My first football season there, the kids were struggling and Norwich came down- that's always a traditional rival. The score was seven to seven at the half. The second half, our guys quit. The only time I'd ever seen a Coast Guard football team just lay down. We got massacred and I was steaming.

S: And the next year it was nineteen to nothing.

R: And we won. I went down to the locker room to talk to the kids. A new coach. They didn't know what to expect. So I stood up on a chair and I tried to be as calm as I could. I said I wanted to share something with them- Coast Guard athletic teams are proud teams and every one of us in the stands watching them play is proud of them, but I'm not proud of you because you quit and I don't like quitters and the Coast Guard doesn't want quitters. You could have heard a pin drop and that's all I said and I left. They didn't lose another game for fourteen games. I won't take credit for all that, but I just felt it was time for me to say something. And you could see the school pride raise up when you have competitive teams. They had the third best team in our history where ten to one we won the ECAC championship my last year there.

I mentioned that the company officers had been overtaken by events through the years, had many collateral duties and they didn't know their kids. They were coming there after three or four years instead of seven or eight and it was not working out very well. Frank Leemy called me in and said here are your orders. I'll never forget it. He did this to all of us commanders in the cadet company. I'd had command and six years at sea and been exec. I knew what he meant. I went back and within the framework of the regulations, I commanded my cadet company, in my own style. Paul Youse next door commanded in his style. You still had a Coast Guard Academy but there were all sorts of styles of leadership. I called the company officers in and said the same thing: your orders are to command a cadet company. Some understood, but most of them didn't. I talked to the cadets and they said about one commanding officer that he was a disciplinarian and nothing else. The company officers were up in the cadet wings. One of the first things we did was get the hell out of there. Went down to the front hall and let the cadets be up in the barracks and held the first class responsible. A company commander came in and said something went wrong. If I didn't like his rationale or excuse- bam- you hit him. Now the company officers were up in the areas- big brothers on top. I didn't like that way of doing things.

S: Does the company officer have the authority to demote or remove the Cadet Commander, Lieutenants and so on?

R: No, but they were doing it as a form of punishment. And the first class cadets started to do the same thing. Things would happen and you'd call the cadet officers over and talk about them. You can't do that as a Captain or an Admiral- what makes them think the Coast Guard is going to tolerate them doing it as cadets? Are you questioning my authority? Yes, I am. You don't have that authority. There's nothing more dangerous than someone who thinks he has authority.

The other thing is my style of management has always been management by walking around. Some people at the Academy resented that, others thought it was great. I'd show up in the paint shop one day. You can tell whether or not you're accepted- if they've got a coffee cup for you down there. I'd also pop in and sit in the back of a classroom. The professors thought it was a bit disconcerting, but you find out some interesting things. If some of the cadets are sipping from their Coke cans and some of them are half sleeping and the professor is just going on- wait a minute. But sir, that's not my job. My job is to teach. I'm an academic. When we hired you it says here you were to carry out regulations. Hadn't done it for years. Still not doing it. Those are the kinds of things you find out by walking around.

I had experience in Miami with public affairs and such, so right after I got there, I called in my public affairs officer and said I want the Coast Guard Academy in the news every day. The press, television, radio- every single day I want something. I don't care if it's bad. He just looked at me- Paul Prousy- in almost disbelief and said no one had ever requested that before. I also told him that he had total access to my office. Everything I knew, he was going to know. They did this in Miami. It was wonderful- we had publicity like you wouldn't believe. Brought Walter Cronkite and Alex Halley in for the bon voyage to Australia on the national news. They gave Alex Halley an honorary doctorate last year- the first one the Coast Guard has ever given.

S: Did the vice president do that?



R: Yes, I had George Bush do that. We were lucky, we had Reagan and Bush there and Jimmy Carter spent the day with us. Invited Nixon, but he wouldn't come. We tried to make things interesting. Had the press in and I went all over the country talking about the Coast Guard Academy to chambers of commerce. People don't know anything about the Coast Guard Academy. Paul did an absolutely superb job in public affairs. Again, it's just a demonstration of the kind of people we have in the Coast Guard- give them a job, give them the tools, and they'll go do it.

S: I have an observation to make here. Last year I drove into the Academy grounds. I spend about an hour in the area. The car was identified with the sticker.

R: And no salutes.

S: Once. Three people walking together facing me. One looked a second time and threw a salute. And I saw so many just strolling around.

R: Yes, there' s no formations, except for fourth class. That went out many years ago. The only time I made them walk in formation was when there was an official event. The saluting thing- all of the cars who drive through the Academy have stickers. It isn't like when you and I were there and the only cars we saw were officers and their wives. There's not the requirement that there used to be for saluting every car. Now, they always saluted me- I never had any problem. But when I was a cadet, this is what we did. They go up to chapel in the morning and get absolutely furious when then come walking in late to church. The first and second class come in in civilian clothes. That would have been unheard of. And it really isn't bad. What's wrong with civilian clothes for first and second class? I get mad when I see cadets walking in the arcade, because we couldn't walk in the arcade between Saterlee and Hamilton. I feel like opening up my window and yelling at them. But that's okay now.

S: I've got another question for you- I believe it was on you watch that two first cadets were graduated and given their commission probably in January or February, well ahead of their classmates. It was in the Bulletin. They had completed all their academic work and they were commissioned and sent to the fleet.

R: Not on my watch. We had a program called "extender status", which I didn't like and tried to minimize. But you could extend a person beyond graduation if he or she didn't meet the total requirements for graduation. Then they'd take a course in the summer time and in the next semester, and when that's finished, they'd graduate. But not ahead of their class, six months behind.

S: Well, then it is possible that the people I'm thinking of were in that program. If it was mentioned in the article, it entirely escaped me.

R: That's the only program I know of that would do that. Ellen Cheval, who may graduate this year, was in the class of '88 and she was driving back to the Academy from Jacksonville and a lady cut across route 95 and hit her. She was in a coma for many months and she's back as a cadet, on the sailing team, doing quite well, I'm told. But she started out with third grade, sixth grade, and she may graduate this year.

I did one other thing there that I'm really very proud of and that was the Alcohol Awareness Program. I was not very happy with the way the Academy was totally ignoring alcohol as a problem. No marijuana or narcotics, but alcohol, and the cadets were absolutely smashed. Saturday nights every time the siren went off, I prayed that it wasn't a cadet. I didn't know what to do about it. I took care of enlisted officers, but what about the cadets? There were no rules, and I had written the rules when I was Chief of Personnel.

So I finally decided that the next time a cadet was in trouble with alcohol that I was going to send him to rehab. As it turned out, the first kid who got in trouble, it was a class one offense, a sexual assault. He broke into a female cadet's room and was in bed with her when she threw him out. Beyond that, he was black and she was white. He was on

the football team. I could not have had a more horrible case. We only have a handful of blacks and they're not trusted by the rest of the community and of course they don't trust the white community. They're all good kids individually. I asked the doctors to do an evaluation on him and concluded that he was an alcoholic. His defense was that he blacked out. All cadets give that as a defense. He had too much to drink and just happened to walk into her room. Well, there's two rooms of females and fifty rooms of males- come on. His mother and father were both alcoholics.

So I called the kid in and said besides being disappointed with him and his actions, I was going to throw him out of the Academy, that was a foregone conclusion. But, if he enrolled in alcohol rehabilitation and successfully completed it, I'd let him go to sea as a third class quartermaster. If he spend a year on a ship of my choosing and performed successfully and his CO wrote me a letter saying he thinks he should be a cadet, I'd take him back. He agreed. So I put him on a buoy tender and told the CO to watch him all the time. He spent a year there.

When the word got out around the cadet corps what I'd done- the first thing that came was "nigger lover" The next thing that came back was "sexist." He attacked a female and I was going to let this guy off. The third thing was- we thought he was nuts, now we know he's nuts. Why is he involved anyway? The cadets were just furious. Well, the kid's going to graduate this year from the Academy. I think that's great. He was a leader as a black kid. He was a leader, not as a black. I brought him back as second class, right where he was.

The next one I sent to rehear, the circumstances were much better. He was the son of a Coast Guard Captain. Rolled a car over. Blood alcohol content was about .21 Come to find out that this kid had had a couple of alcohol-related incidents. One of my doctors over at the clinic knew about this, but didn't want to say anything because he thought we'd throw him out. This kid almost killed himself and might have killed other people and it was covered up because he might have been thrown out. What people will do and think.

We made a couple mistakes with this young man because I didn't personally call his father and tell him he was in the hospital. So I called his father and apologized to him. This kid was a first classman and it

was coming up on Christmas, so I told him if he spent the three weeks of his Christmas leave in rehab and came back, he could go on with his class. So he did. His father, who was furious with us to start with, thanked me for what we'd done.

Now comes the dilemma- the kid graduates- what do you do? Do you write a letter to the captain of his new ship and say he's an alcoholic because part of the rehab program is to go to AA. I wrestled with that one for a long time. Finally, I wrote a personal private letter to the CO, which seemed like the logical thing to do. I said give the kid a break. If you believe that alcoholism is a disease, which I do, and he's gone through hell, than help him, don't hold it against him. I never got any acknowledgment except a letter thanking me for letting him know and I hope that he didn't tell anybody and I hope the young man is doing fine. His father is in a very responsible position in the Coast Guard. Now it's routine. Of course, the immediate reaction is any time a kid gets in trouble, he says he's an alcoholic. I just felt that we have a responsibility to those kids, whether they're cadets or not. I suppose the jury's out on that one. We'll see.

S: Well, you have quite an investment there. I think in our day, we figured it cost the government about \$50,000 per year per cadet.

R: Really? It's about 180,000 for four years, but that doesn't count the Eagle.

S: A little while ago you said that there are no formations, marching and such. We marched and had formations in front of Chase Hall barracks. Classes were down in McAlister Hall. Walter Rather was our section leader at this time and he had one year of service left. It's just before colors and we're down there and just as we started up the steps, attention colors, and the formation - and they ran right in. Walter said: halt you bastards- attention to colors. One of those that has never been forgotten in that class.

R: When you think about it, we took one curriculum, so sections Four A and B and C are all put in the same courses. That's long gone. You have seven majors at the Coast Guard Academy. Different classmen are in

R: I hope others will because I think it's important. Let me just say one other thing I did at the Coast Guard Academy that's starting to bear some fruit. I'm very much interested in history- if you've ever been to West Point, around the Marines, history is very important to those folks. We have a history and a heritage in the Coast Guard. It's not people falling on the battle fields, but it's there. It's people risking their lives to go out and rescue people. We've started to do things for the environment. People are working in the merchant marine safety programs. There's an awful lot in the history of the Coast Guard that's never been appreciated. We didn't even teach a history class in the Coast Guard. We do now.

I got the Smithsonian to lend me a bust of Alexander Hamilton, from the estate. It's priceless, I had to sign my life away to get it. Some wonderful parents of cadets, now officers, Mr. and Mrs. Mike Wagner from Virginia, donated the case and I've got it sitting in the alumni room with Hamilton's words which I carried with me for almost thirty years about what is expected of a revenue service officer. His advice is: always treat your fellow man with respect- remember- they are free citizens. And how appropriate those words are today, when we're in the drug interdiction business.

The other thing I did was as a result of Doc Shields widow who wanted to do something. That beautiful chandelier is her gift. We have a hall of graduates on the walls now. I did that. And my class, by the way, paid for that.

And now, the cadets have picked up on it. Just this past week they got the Hopely Eaton's commission displayed. Hallelujah. Steve Howe, Barry Howe's son, class of '45, is a company officer and got interested. The cadets are doing that kind of research. Classes have come to me and want to contribute statues. The class of '64 is going to contribute a bust of Chase for an entryway. That kind of thing is very important. That's why I'm so delighted that you've started doing this. You're part of this. Someday, somebody will say thank you Sam.