

WARREN MITCHELL
Captain, Retired
September 25, 1989
Port Angeles, Washington

SG: Today is Monday, the 25th of September, 1989, and I am visiting Warren Mitchell at his home in Port Angeles. It has been a beautiful day up until a few minutes ago, and then the fog set in. So, we'll trade off rather than the view outside. Warren, tell us about your Coast Guard life.

you'd
WM: Well, I suppose, the first place to start is how I got in the Coast Guard. In 1942, I was a senior in college and ~~went up~~, I was going to teach school. ~~I wanted to get a teaching job, and~~ finally someone was going to hire me. They said, "What's your draft number?" I said, "Gee, I don't know. I just registered a couple of months ago." They said, "Well, ~~you~~ better check on that." I checked, and I think I was about No. 9 to be drafted in the county. I had heard on the radio the Coast Guard wanted college graduates for Reserve Officer's Training, so I put in for that. I didn't hear from them for quite a while. Finally I got a little notice from the Draft Board to come get my physical. I didn't want to go in the Army, ^{when} so my dad was a rural letter-carrier in Iowa, ~~so when he got back from carrying the mail at noon, I was going to take the car and go down to Des Moines, Iowa, and enlist in the Coast Guard. I figured maybe I could get OCS in there, and that day I got a notice to report to Chicago for an interview, and so I ended up going in the Coast Guard Reserve Academy, spent four months there and was commissioned on December 20, 1942.~~

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From there, I requested the West Coast or Alaska, so they sent me off to Seattle for further assignment. I checked into the District and some of the guys from our class did go to Alaska on board ship, but they gave me a choice of two jobs—one in the District working in communications (I guess with codes) ~~and that~~, or go to Astoria, Oregon, and I picked Astoria. I learned a lot. My first year, of course, you're pretty green when you start out, and one of my primary duties mostly was working with the Coast Guard Auxiliary and Temporary Reserve. Those days, they were taking a lot of Auxiliaries as Temporary Reserves, in fact, I think they ended up doing all Harbor Patrol before the war was over. One day I was sitting there, the personnel officer I guess, or administrative officer, he said, "Hey, Mitch, I got a notice here. They want Lieutenant JGs for flight training. How about putting in for it?" I said, "Oh, gee, I don't know." He said, "I'll write you up an application." Pretty soon, he said, "Well, they require a year of sea duty. Well, I'll ask for a waiver on that." He wrote the letter up for me to go to flight training, and I guess I got a good endorsement CO, and I ended up going to flight training. This was in January, 1944. So I spent a year in Astoria and went to flight training in Dallas.

Well, this might be something of interest. I reported into Alameda--for further assignment my orders read. I reported in there, and gave my orders, and spent almost a week there. They would give interviews, I guess, what I could do aboard ship and all this. So I guess they thought I was going aboard ship. And, I think, it was each Friday, evidently, I don't know who it was, the personnel officer or someone, called everyone in

and said, "I'm going to assign you to a ship." He got in and this officer, looked him over, and he said, "Report here for further assignment by Headquarters." "Jesus Christ," he says, "Hey Chief, get in here." And the Chief came in and he said, "Look, we got to find out where this guy's going. Headquarters." So, here it is Friday, and on the next day, Saturday, I think it was around 10 or 11 o'clock, a big muster, and for some reason or another they had me as JG head of a whole bunch of officers. And a guy walked up to me, he said, "Here, find these three guys and have them report to Personnel immediately." I was one of them; there was two others. This was Saturday about noon, and orders to report to Dallas by Monday at 8 o'clock for flight training. Here we're still out—but we had a car there. We had a friend that was on board ship there. We left in my car. "Here, take this car and sell it." And we jumped on a train and headed for Dallas. I think I reported in about an hour late, but we got there. And went to flight training at Dallas and then went to Pensacola. Boy, in those days, getting a place to live was pretty rough. There in Dallas, some lady shared her home with us. She was an old maid, at least I thought she was old then. She was pretty young really. But I lived in the house with her. And then went to Pensacola, and from there, after flight training, went to Elizabeth City, North Carolina, and after I was there about six months, we got checked out in an airplane. They sent me in charge of two crews out at St. Simons Island, Georgia. We were on a rescue crew down there for awhile. They had rescue units all up and down the coast with a PBY and a couple crews. And, at the end of that, the war finally ended it, and I decided I would get out and go back to teaching school. So I did get out of the Coast Guard and went back to Iowa and taught high school one semester. The Coast Guard wrote me, said I'd been selected to go back to the Coast Guard if I'd like to. They were really short of aviators and wanted to know if I wanted to come. Well, we had a little trouble with—the salary wasn't too good even with the wife and I both teaching, so I went back into the Coast Guard in January 1947. They sent me to San Diego. Joe Lawrence, the CO and the wife came there, but I think about a year later, Donald MacDiarmid (29), who everyone in aviation knows, reported there as CO, and I had some good times with him.

SG: He's one of the well-known characters.

WM: He's well known, you said it—a character. But one of the funny things I remember about flying with Mac—he had a PBM-5A, that's amphibious PMB, which the Navy was trying to test out for offshore landings and he wanted every pilot to fly it, experience it, you know the more experience—so one day, he was going out and had a, I think it was Life Magazine photographer with us, the day that I went out, to take pictures. Pretty smooth. Really wasn't very rough, and he wanted this guy to get pictures of the airplane in rough water, so he went up by Point Loma, where there was a few breakers coming in, and this thing had reverse pitch, which was new to us too, and he said, well, he turned around and heading out, he said, I was his co-pilot, he said, "Mitch, you stand up there and look back. Make sure I don't back into the beach." So here I am standing up there looking back, and this photographer, he had a hatch near the top back where he was up there and going to take pictures. Next thing I knew, I looked around and I saw a big breaker coming. Came right over the plane, me, took my earphones. I was just soaking wet standing up there, and here's Mac, he's looking up there. He says, "Jesus

Christ. I should have given you a periscope." The water went through the engine. The cockpit was all wet. He said, "Well, we better go home." We took off, flew it back to base. Most guys probably wouldn't have flown it, but he did. But I learned a lot about flying there. We had a lot of good pilots there, and I went from there to Argentina, Newfoundland. If you want to learn flying, that's where the weather is good. In fact, when I reported in, Jack Henthorn (32) was CO, and he had orders to leave in about--. He left about a week after I got there. He said, "Mitch, it's all yours. Good luck." When I went up there I was a JG, but I think I ended up as Exec, and Oscar Weed (35) came there and we spent a couple good years with Oscar. We had a good time—that's when Oscar and Arlene was there together, she took good care of the dog. Then, from there, we went to Traverse City, Michigan, and I was there just two years. The first year with Al Woerker (38), the second year, Chet Bender (36), who eventually made Commandant, came there as CO. I was the Exec. This might be interesting. From then on, we spent I think about eight years with the Benders. It seemed like from there I went to Arlington, Virginia. About six months later, he came to Headquarters. So we were together; in fact, they lived with us in our house, I thought it was a couple, three weeks--he says it was about a month--in Washington looking for a place to live. When I left there, I went to Barber's Point, about six months later, he came to Barber's Point. So we were together I think at least eight years in a row there. We got to be real good friends.

SG: Did he turn in his wings while--?]

WM: Yah. When he was in Hawaii, he quit and went aboard, they put him aboard a ship there, and after he boarded ship, in fact one day he invited me down for lunch, and we had lunch together, and he said, "Mitch, I wish you'd get orders because I would like to know where I'm going." Because he had been following me about—but we kind of parted ways then and then when he made Admiral, I called him, I said, "I don't think you'll be following me around anymore." Then from Barber's Point, we made a lot of West Pac trips out there. Good flying out there.

SG: What do you mean by wet back?

WM: West Pac, West Pacific, hauling supplies out to all the LORAN stations out there. Being Operations the first year, I think it was every third trip, we made an R&R to Hong Kong. I kind of picked those trips so I could make the Hong Kong trip be an Operations. Ended up as Exec there under Bill Chapline (42), and then from there I went to New Orleans as SAR officer. And that was my first District staff job, and I learned a lot there.

SG: Who was your District Commander?

WM: Let's see, Carl Olsen (28) was District Commander when I went there. Yah, C.B. Olsen. He was a good District Commander. And let's see. Who relieved him? Craik (32). Jim Craik. But I left not too long after he got there. Chief of Staff was, let's see, I can picture him now. Can't remember. He was out in Hawaii I think, Operation something, and then we had another Chief of Staff who made Admiral. His first job, I think District Commander--St. Louis. He ended up in the area—he left the area just

before I left there. I can't think of his name now. I hope he doesn't see this, because I don't remember him.

SG: Well, we're talking about events 40 years ago.

WM: Yah, right. And then from there, I got assigned as commanding officer of the air station here in Port Angeles, and that is where I first knew Port Angeles. Port Angeles is a good Coast Guard town. It really is, and being CO here, you're a big frog in a little puddle, so to speak. They put you into everything, and we knew a lot of the people here and stayed friends here for years, and that's why I guess why we ended up coming back here. From here, I went to Boston as a SAR officer. And ended up--spent a year there in Operations before I left there. Then, from there I went to Area Operations in the Eastern area, called Atlantic area now, I think. At Governor's Island. We had one of those big old quarters there. By that time, our youngest son went off to college that year and we had one of those big quarters with about five or six bedrooms—just the two of us. We'd come home from work and couldn't find each other in the house. Admiral Whalen (33) was District Commander then and Area Operations. And then Ben Engel (38) relieved him before I left there. He was from New York. I went to Juneau, Alaska, as Operations. Jim Palmer (41) was District Commander up there when I went up there. In fact, he was there both years I was there—Operations a year and then Chief of Staff a year. At the end of my second year, I got a little letter from the Commandant that said, "You are hereby retired." I had my 30 years in. So that was the end of my Coast Guard career.

I did stay in Alaska for about a year and worked for the Lieutenant Governor up there a little bit, then transferred to the Department of Labor and worked a while, but I quit my job to work for Eagan's campaign, and he lost the campaign by a few votes, and, of course, then you're out of a job, so we left there and I haven't been back.

SG: What year was it Eagan was running for his second--?

WM: Well, let's see, that was 19—let's see, I retired in July 1973, so it had to have been the fall of 1974, I think, when the election was—and he lost—I think they had a couple of recounts and lost by about 70 votes I think, something like that.

SG: I met him at Glacier Bay. He was pressing the flesh, and I was, of course, on the *Discovery* at the time. And as the Governor came down the ramp to board his seaplane, I spoke to him. I told him that I had seen him on his initial appearance when he rang the bell announcing statehood back in, that was 1959, January of 1959, and then he left immediately after this brief ceremony and flew down to Seattle and entered the hospital to repair some damage that had been created during an operation.

WM: He was really a nice guy. He would walk down the street and say hi to you. In fact, working for him, every once in awhile he'd invite you over the mansion for lunch, I went over there two or three times for lunch with him. He was a good governor, I thought.

SG: Just one of the boys, as far as the public was concerned. Everyone was his friend.

WM: Yah. I was just trying to think, maybe some of the other comical things that might have happened. I was just looking last night, I remembered speaking to MacDiarmid down in San Diego. One day, I don't know whether he was trying to break a record or what, but he had arranged with the Ocean Station, was it November, half way to Hawaii, I think it was November. He was going to fly out there and have a SAR drill with them—with a PBM. And, so, we took off, I think about 11 o'clock at night. There was, let's see, Mac, I was next senior then, and then Henry Castle (phonetic spelling), George Thometz was with us. I think there were four pilots went. But anyway, I was looking last night, that flight was 23.9 hours on that flight. We used to take off, we used jet-assisted take off because we were really loaded. He had that thing loaded with gas every place he could, and as he took off, he'd get up, he'd pull the RPM, power—we were just kind of staggering through the air because he was saving gas and all. He didn't care whether we got there in a hurry. But anyway, we got to Ocean Station the next morning and did the SAR drill and then San Francisco wanted to search for barge. I think we searched for about four hours, about someplace between November in San Francisco, and went back to San Francisco to refuel. So, I think it was about between 20-21 hours from take off until we landed in San Francisco. And then we refueled and went back to San Diego. The whole flight was 23.9.

Chet Richmond (41), now Admiral Richmond, was our engineering officer at the time. He says, "Captain, I don't think that left engine will run that long. It uses too much oil. I think you'll run out of oil before you go that many hours." He said, "Okay, throw on five gallons of oil. We'll land and put it in. He was going to land on shore pins and oil if he had to. And he would have, if needed. So, after about 15 hours, he had us really watch the oil pressure in that ace, he says, "If it starts down, let me know how it landed," he says. This PBM-5A they talk about, I think they finally sank it. I think George Thometz was flying it at the time. He dipped the wing and it sank it, I guess. We were just down to San Diego to an aviation reunion recently, and someone was talking about that. He started sinking, says, "Abandon Ship,"—so it sank. That was the end of that one.

I understand that at one time there was a big argument between—I don't know much about this except what I hear—he and Bill Chapline—whether the PBM or the JRF could land the shortest in distance. And I forget which is which, but I think Mac was flying the JRF, it was a little smaller airplane, and Chapline claimed he could land a PBY just as short. So they decided they would try it. They were going to do it up at Long Beach Airport because, I guess, San Diego—that big hill you come down, you can't do it, so they were going to go up to Long Beach and do this. And I guess Mac won, which you can expect him to. He really stalled that thing out. I guess he lost a tail wheel doing it, but, boy he wasn't afraid to do anything in those airplanes. But he was a good pilot, I tell you. Once in awhile I think he took some unnecessary chances, but he never seemed to get into any serious trouble.

Another, going back to MacDiarmid again, one time, he and the District had a little trouble about fuel money. They wouldn't get him all the aviation fuel he wanted to burn, so he had to cut down on flying; he didn't like that, so he got together with someone up on San Francisco air station. They said, "We get all the fuel we want up here." So, he had a PBM just come out of check, and he sent myself and I think three other pilots. He said, "Take this airplane up to San Francisco, fly it into check, bring it back full of fuel." In other words, burn San Francisco's fuel. So we got up there and I

think one night we flew all night trying to fly this thing and making landings at 2 o'clock in the morning in the harbor there at San Francisco. So we burned up all their fuel. We filled up all the tank, and took it back home. So, a little extra fuel for him.

SG: You didn't carry any spare drums, huh?

WM: No, just fueled the airplane tanks. The PBM had wing tanks, had tanks down in the hull, then they had bomb bay tanks, where the bomb bays—so they could carry a lot of fuel. We got a little bit of trouble coming back in, you know, the PBM seaplane you had to come up and taxi up and get a front-end orbit, had to get a hook and hook onto this buoy, and then they turned around and towed it up the ramp. That plane was so heavy you couldn't hardly turn it or anything. It came up to buoy, and the ordinance man missed the buoy and gave it a little left power to go—right engine--to go left, and it just wouldn't go. So we put it up on the beach. I think I did.

SG: Wheels down, or no?

WM: No. They didn't have wheels. The PBM was a seaplane, no wheels until you get onto this buoy, then they bring the wheels out and put them on. I think the tide was on its way out. We had to wait quite awhile before we could get it off the beach. We got it off finally, no real damage. But boy that thing just acted entirely different on the water being that heavy.

We made a lot of trips from San Diego down off Mexico to pick up injured fishermen and all that, so we did quite a little rough water landings there in the San Diego area which our commanding officer, MacDiarmid, really liked that rough water stuff. I learned to handle the airplane pretty good in rough water there.

SG: Didn't Mac do a lot of experimental landing, and then eventually established that the best way to land at sea was along the crest rather than trying to get on the back of the swell?

WM: Yes. He knew, you know he experimented with a lot of that and found out what they would do. In fact when we had that PBM, as I'd said, the day wasn't very rough. He put it off shore and taxied in a big circle to show you what it would do going into the swell, down the swell, across the swell, how much the difference was. Because--it was a little rough, but he could handle it pretty well. All it would take, you'd see that swell coming, you're going to hit that swell, you didn't want to pull back, you wanted to push forward because you want to hit that swell as it goes up, you know, hit that swell, push forward, kind of goes through the swell. He knew what to do. I learned a lot from him.

SG: I had just one experience with MacDiarmid, and it was right here at Port Angeles in 1941. He was CO here, and I had a project assignment as a so-called Chemical Warfare instructor. And I had to put people through a three-day, this was officers, District Officers, through a three-day program of gas mask drills, smoke, and all the rest of it—tear gas. And Mac had gone through with his troops. When it was all over, he invited me to go for a ride. And for years I thought it was Oscar Weed who was in the

background, was trying to tell me, uh uh. But Oscar denies it. It must have been somebody else who a—and Mac took off with me as his passenger, and we went up into the hills here, and there was a gap in the hills. And apparently that was one of his favorite stunts--was to fly through there with not too much clearance on the wing tips and, it didn't bother me because he's sitting in front of me. And then I saw him at his retirement.

WM: Where was he when he retired?

SG: Well, he was back east I believe. But he came here, and stayed here for a day or two. I was on the *Winona* at that time. And within that short period of time, a farewell party was organized, and it took over the--what's the club there on the corner?

WM: The Elks?

SG: The Elks Club. Took over the Elks Club. And there must have been, oh a couple of hundred people there on that very short notice. Old Mac was in his glory. He had one big cigar right after another, puffing away.

WM: He loved some of the gals, he used to love to argue with them. He'd get someone that's really religious, he'd really try to hit on them, I think he did it just to agitate them.

SG: He definitely was one of our Coast Guard characters.

WM: Yah. I spent 3-1/2 years at San Diego and 3-1/2 on Barber's Point. Otherwise, the majority of my tours were two years. But that was really an enjoyable period there in San Diego. Really my first duty air station after the war. We stood duty every third night, and then—we had a duty one night, standby one night, and we got one night off. So, there's really not much time to yourself so you could do anything, but, like you never had a complete weekend. You either had the duty or standby one day of the weekend. So what some of the officers would do would trade just so we could have a Saturday and Sunday off.

SG: That would happen also on the ships with the—where either the CO or the XO had to approve.

WM: Yah, so make sure in case they have to get underway, why, and this standby was primarily if they got called out and they needed someone to standby for the new crew. But so my longest tours were good stations at San Diego and Hawaii.

SG: Did you have the opportunity to do much flying while you were in Juneau?

WM: No, I didn't fly while I was in Juneau.

SG: Had you turned in your wings?

WM: No, still got flight pay but they didn't make you fly. Toward the end, in fact, just about the time I retired, they quit paying flight pay to aviators on staff duty. In fact, I think I lost one month's flight pay. But there for several years, decided it was cheaper to pay your flight pay than to go out and burn \$1,000 worth of gas to pay you \$200 flight pay, so they didn't make you fly if you were on staff duty--for awhile there. I think they took after the Navy was doing the same thing, so the Coast Guard took that up. So I didn't—but see when I was in Boston, I had to fly there for my flight-time part of the time, and then I think from New York and Juneau, I didn't fly. Still got flight pay.

SG: The air station at Annette Island had been closed when you were up there, then?

WM: No. It was still open.

SG: Had Sitka been--?

WM: No. Sitka, we were working on opening one at Sitka when I was in the District, but no it wasn't open yet. See I retired in July 1973, and I don't know if the air station in--the Sitka really just when they started, I'm not sure. Probably wasn't too long after that.

SG: It was either 1974 or 1975.

WM: Yah. Because we were working on it, I know, given the site location.

SG: Yah, it was that pulp mill that the Japanese bought, and they wanted to be able to fly in. So several of the islands were connected together and made a nice long runway.

WM: Yah. In fact, when I was up there they didn't have a bridge across to the airport island. Probably about then when they put the bridge across.

SG: Lots of changes in a few years.

WM: But, when I went to Boston, I had, let's see. Well, Bill Childress (33) ended up being District Commander up there. I was his SAR officer. Like when I first went up there, I figured he didn't, I don't know whether he was testing me or what, I don't think he liked me very well. Of course, he had to go up to Newburyport to the Coast Guard anniversary, and he wanted me to write his speech for him. Well, I thought maybe he didn't like me if he was going to make things like that. And I had a little help from Public Information, and with the information I wrote the speech for him, and some of the information, he'd come up, "Where'd you get this?" I got the book and showed him, but I guess he liked it all right. So we got to be real good friends after that, and he liked me, so--In fact, we visited them a couple of times after they retired.

SG: Yah. The numbers are being reduced.

WM: They sure are. Well, I can't think of, I'll try to think of some of the funny—I'm sure there are some others that--.

SG: Alright. I'll give you another minute, and I'll shut this off.

WARREN MITCHELL
September 25, 1989
Port Angeles, Washington

Captain, Retired

SG: Today is Monday, the 25th of September, 1989, and I am visiting Warren Mitchell at his home in Port Angeles. It has been a beautiful day up until a few minutes ago, and then the fog set in. So, we'll trade off rather than the view outside. Warren, tell us about your Coast Guard life.

WM: Well, I suppose, the first place to start is how I got in the Coast Guard. In 1942, I was a senior in college and went up, I was going to teach school. I wanted to get a teaching job, and finally someone was going to hire me. They said, "What's your draft number?" I said, "Gee, I don't know. I just registered a couple of months ago." They said, "Well, you better check on that." I checked, and I think I was about No. 9 to be drafted in the county. I had heard on the radio the Coast Guard wanted college graduates for Reserve Officer's Training so I put in for that. I didn't hear from them for quite a while. Finally I got a little notice from the Draft Board to come get my physical. I didn't want to go in the Army, so my dad was a rural letter carrier in Iowa, so when he got back from carrying the mail at noon, I was going to take the car and go down to Des Moines, Iowa, and enlist in the Coast Guard. I figured maybe I could get OSC in there, and that day I got a notice to report to Chicago for an interview and so I ended up going in the Coast Guard Reserve Academy, spent four months there and was commissioned on December 20, 1942.

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SG: He's one of the well-known characters.

WM: He's well known, you said it—a character. But one of the funny things I remember about flying with Mac--he had a PBM-5A, that's amphibious PMB, which the Navy was trying to test out for offshore landings and he wanted every pilot to fly it, experience it, you know the more experience—so one day, he was going out and had a, I think it was Life Magazine photographer with us, the day that I went out, to take pictures. Pretty smooth. Really wasn't very rough, and he wanted this guy to get pictures of the airplane in rough water, so he went up by Point Loma, where there was a few breakers coming in, and this thing had reverse pitch, which was new to us too, and he said, well, he turned around and heading out, he said, I was his co-pilot, he said, "Mitch, you stand up there and look back. Make sure I don't back into the beach." So here I am standing up there looking back, and this photographer, he had a hatch near the top back where he was up there and going to take pictures. Next thing I knew, I looked around and I saw a big breaker coming. Came right over the plane, me, took my earphones. I was just soaking wet standing up there, and here's Mac, he's looking up there. He says, "Jesus Christ. I should have given you a periscope." The water went through the engine. The cockpit was all wet. He said, "Well, we better go home." We took off, flew it back to base. Most guys probably wouldn't have flown it, but he did. But I learned a lot about

flying there. We had a lot of good pilots there, and I went from there to Argentina, Newfoundland. If you want to learn flying, that's where the weather is good. In fact, when I reported in, Jack Henthorn⁽³²⁾ was CO, and he had orders to leave in about-- He left about a week after I got there. He said, "Mitch, it's all yours. Good luck." When I went up there I was a JG, but I think I ended up as Exec, and Oscar WHEEL⁽³⁵⁾ (sounds like Wheat, Weed, or Reed) came there and we spent a couple good years with Oscar. We had a good time—that's when Oscar and Arlene was there together, she took good care of the dog. Then, from there, we went to Traverse City, Michigan, and I was there just two years. The first year with Al Worke⁽³⁸⁾, the second year, Chet Bender⁽³⁶⁾, who eventually made Commandant, came there as CO. I was the Exec. This might be interesting. From then on, we spent I think about eight years with the Benders. It seemed like from there I went to Arlington, Virginia. About six months later, he came to Headquarters. So we were together; in fact, they lived with us in our house, I thought it was a couple, three weeks-- he says it was about a month--in Washington looking for a place to live. When I left there, I went to Barber's Point, about six months later, he came to Barber's Point. So we were together I think at least eight years in a row there. We got to be real good friends.

SG: Did he turn in his wings while--?]

WM: Yah. When he was in Hawaii, he quit and went aboard, they put him aboard a ship there, and after he boarded ship, in fact one day he invited me down for lunch, and we had lunch together, and he said, "Mitch, I wish you'd get orders because I would like to know where I'm going." Because he had been following me about—but we kind of parted ways then and then when he made Admiral, I called him, I said, "I don't think you'll be following me around anymore."

Then from Barber's Point, we made a lot of West Pac trips out there. Good flying out there.

SG: What do you mean by wet back?

WM: West Pac, West Pacific, hauling supplies out to all the LORAN stations out there. Being Operations the first year, I think it was every third trip, we made an R&R to Hong Kong. I kind of picked those trips so I could make the Hong Kong trip be an Operations. Ended up as Exec there under Bill Chapline^(K2) and then from there I went to New Orleans as SAR officer. And that was my first District staff job, and I learned a lot there.

SG: Who was your District Commander?

WM: Let's see, Carl Olson^{OLSON (28)} was District Commander when I went there. Yah, C.V.^B

Olson. He was a good District Commander. And let's see. Who relieved him? Craig^{CRAIG (32)}

Jim Craig. But I left not too long after he got there. Chief of Staff was, let's see, I can picture him now. Can't remember. He was out in Hawaii I think, Operation something, and then we had another Chief of Staff who made Admiral. His first job, I think District Commander--St. Louis. He ended up in the area—he left the area just before I left there. I can't think of his name now. I hope he doesn't see this, because I don't remember him.

SG: Well, we're talking about events 40 years ago.

WM: Yah, right. And then from there, I got assigned as commanding officer of the air station here in Port Angeles, and that is where I first knew Port Angeles. Port Angeles is a good Coast Guard town. It really is, and being CO here, you're a big frog in a little puddle, so to speak. They put you into everything, and we knew a lot of the people here and stayed friends here for years, and that's why I guess why we ended up coming back

here. From here, I went to Boston as a SAR officer. And ended up--spent a year there in Operations before I left there. Then, from there I went to Area Operations in the Eastern area, called Atlantic area now, I think. At Governor's Island. We had one of those big old quarters there. By that time, our youngest son went off to college that year and we had one of those big quarters with about five or six bedrooms—just the two of us. We'd come home from work and couldn't find each other in the house. Admiral ^{WHALEN (37)} Wayland was District Commander then and Area Operations. And then Ben Engel ⁽³⁸⁾ relieved him before I left there. He was from New York. I went to Juneau, Alaska, as Operations. Jim Palmer ⁽⁴¹⁾ was District Commander up there when I went up there. In fact, he was there both years I was there—Operations a year and then Chief of Staff a year. At the end of my second year, I got a little letter from the Commandant that said, "You are hereby retired." I had my 30 years in. So that was the end of my Coast Guard career.

I did stay in Alaska for about a year and worked for the Lieutenant Governor up there a little bit, then transferred to the Department of Labor and worked a while, but I quit my job to work for Eagan's campaign, and he lost the campaign by a few votes, and, of course, then you're out of a job, so we left there and I haven't been back.

SG: What year was it Eagan was running for his second--?

WM: Well, let's see, that was 19—let's see, I retired in July 1973, so it had to have been the fall of 1974, I think, when the election was—and he lost—I think they had a couple of recounts and lost by about 70 votes I think, something like that.

SG: I met him at Glacier Bay. He was pressing the flesh, and I was, of course, on the *Discovery* at the time. And as the Governor came down the ramp to board his seaplane, I

spoke to him. I told him that I had seen him on his initial appearance when he rang the bell announcing statehood back in, that was 1959, January of 1959, and then he left immediately after this brief ceremony and flew down to Seattle and entered the hospital to repair some damage that had been created ^{during an operation. and SG}. He was really a nice guy. He would walk down the street and say hi to you. In fact, working for him, every once in awhile he'd invite you over the mansion for lunch, I went over there two or three times for lunch with him. He was a good governor, I thought.

SG: ~~Just~~ Just one of the boys, as far as the public was concerned. Every one was his friend.

WM: Yah. I was just trying to think, maybe some of the other comical things that might have happened. I was just looking last night, I remembered speaking to ^{Max Diarmid} McDermott down in San Diego. One day, I don't know whether he was trying to break a record or what, but he had arranged with the Ocean Station, was it November, half way to Hawaii, I think it was November. He was going to fly out there and have a SAR drill with them—with a PBM. And, so, we took off, I think about 11 o'clock at night. There was, let's see, Mac, I was next senior then, and then Henry Castle, George Tometz ^{[phonic] h} was with us. I think there were four pilots went. But anyway, I was looking last night, that flight was 23.9 hours on that flight. We used to take off, we used jet-assisted take off because we were really loaded. He had that thing loaded with gas every place he could, and as he took off, he'd get up, he'd pull the RPM, power—we were just kind of staggering through the air because he was saving gas and all. He didn't care whether we got there in a hurry. But anyway, we got to Ocean Station the next morning and did the SAR drill and then San Francisco wanted to search for barge. I think we searched for

about four hours, about someplace between November in San Francisco, and went back to San Francisco to refuel. So, I think it was about between 20-21 hours from take off until we landed in San Francisco. And then we refueled and went back to San Diego. The whole flight was 23.9.

Chet Richmond, ⁽⁴¹⁾ now Admiral Richmond, was our engineering officer at the time. He says, "Captain, I don't think that left engine will run that long. It uses too much oil. I think you'll run out of oil before you go that many hours." He said, "Okay, throw on five gallons of oil. We'll land and put it in _____ ~~the~~ he was going to land on _____ (sounds like "shore pins and oil") if he had to. And he would have, if needed. So, after about 15 hours, he had us really watch the oil pressure in that ace, he says, "If it starts down, let me know how it landed," he says. This PBM-5A they talk about, I think they finally sank it. I think George Tometz was flying it at the time. He dipped the wing and it sank it, I guess. We were just down to San Diego to an aviation reunion recently, and someone was talking about that. He started sinking, says, "Abandon Ship,"—so it sank. That was the end of that one.

I understand that at one time there was a big argument between—I don't know much about this except what I hear—he and Bill Chapline—whether the PBM or the JRF could land the shortest in distance. And I forget which is which, but I think Mac was flying the JRF, it was a little smaller airplane, and Chapline claimed he could land a PBY just as short. So they decided they would try it. They were going to do it up at Long Beach Airport because, I guess, San Diego--that big hill you come down, you can't do it,

so they were going to go up to Long Beach and do this. And I guess Mac won, which you can expect him to. He really stalled that thing out. I guess he lost a tail wheel doing it, but, boy he wasn't afraid to do anything in those airplanes. But he was a good pilot, I tell you. Once in awhile I think he took some unnecessary chances, but he never seemed to get into any serious trouble.

Another, going back to McDermott again, one time, he and the District had a little trouble about fuel money. They wouldn't get him all the aviation fuel he wanted to burn, so he had to cut down on flying; he didn't like that, so he got together with someone up on San Francisco air station. They said, "We get all the fuel we want up here." So, he had a PBM just come out of check, and he sent myself and I think three other pilots. He said, "Take this airplane up to San Francisco, fly it into check, bring it back full of fuel." In other words, burn San Francisco's fuel. So we got up there and I think one night we flew all night trying to fly this thing and making landings at 2 o'clock in the morning in the harbor there at San Francisco. So we burned up all their fuel. We filled up all the tank, and took it back home. So, a little extra fuel for him.

SG: You didn't carry any spare drums, huh?

WM: No, just fueled the airplane tanks. The PBM had wing tanks, had tanks down in the hull, then they had bomb bay tanks, where the bomb bays—so they could carry a lot of fuel. We got a little bit of trouble coming back in, you know, the PBM seaplane you had to come up and taxi up and get a front-end orbit, had to get a hook and hook onto this buoy, and then they turned around and towed it up the ramp. That plane was so heavy you couldn't hardly turn it or anything. It came up to buoy, and the ordinance man

missed the buoy and gave it a little left power to go—right engine--to go left, and it just wouldn't go. So we put it up on the beach. I think I did.

SG: Wheels down, or no?

WM: No. They didn't have wheels. The PBM was a seaplane, no wheels until you get onto this buoy, then they bring the wheels out and put them on. I think the tide was on its way out. We had to wait quite awhile before we could get it off the beach. We got it off finally, no real damage. But boy that thing just acted entirely different on the water being that heavy.

We made a lot of trips from San Diego down off Mexico to pick up injured fishermen and all that, so we did quite a little rough water landings there in the San Diego area which our commanding officer, McDermott, really liked that rough water stuff. I learned to handle the airplane pretty good in rough water there.

SG: Didn't Mac do a lot of experimental landing, and then eventually established that the best way to land at sea was along the crest rather than trying to get on the back of the swell?

WM: Yes. He knew, you know he experimented with a lot of that and found out what they would do. In fact when we had that PBM, as I'd said, the day wasn't very rough. He put it up on staff off shore and taxied in a big circle to show you what it would do going into the swell, down the swell, across the swell, how much the difference was. Because--it was a little rough, but he could handle it pretty well. All it would take, you'd see that swell coming, you're going to hit that swell, you didn't want to pull back, you wanted to push forward because you want to hit that swell as it goes up, you know, hit

that swell, push forward, kind of goes through the swell. He knew what to do. I learned a lot from him.

SG: I had just one experience with McDermott, and it was right here at Port Angeles in 1941. He was CO here, and I had a project assignment as a so-called Chemical Warfare instructor. And I had to put people through a three-day, this was officers, District Officers, through a three-day program of gas mask drills, smoke, and all the rest of it—tear gas. And Mac had gone through with his troops. When it was all over, he invited me to go for a ride. And for years I thought it was Oscar ^WReed who was in the background, was trying to tell me, uh uh. But Oscar denies it. It must have been somebody else who a—and Mac took off with me as his passenger, and we went up into the hills here, and there was a gap in the hills. And apparently that was one of his favorite stunts--was to fly through there with not too much clearance on the wing tips and, it didn't bother me because he's sitting in front of me. And then I saw him at his retirement.

WM: Where was he when he retired?

SG: Well, he was back east I believe. But he came here, and stayed here for a day or two. I was on the *Winona* at that time. And within that short period of time, a farewell party was organized, and it took over the--what's the club there on the corner?

WM: The Elks?

SG: The Elks Club. Took over the Elks Club. And there must have been, oh a couple of hundred people there on that very short notice. Old Mac was in his glory. He had one big cigar right after another, puffing away.

WM: He loved some of the gals, he used to love to argue with them. He'd get someone that's really religious, he'd really try to hit on them, I think he did it just to agitate them.

SG: He definitely was one of our Coast Guard characters.

WM: Yah. I spent 3-1/2 years at San Diego and 3-1/2 on Barber's Point. Otherwise, the majority of my tours were two years. But that was really an enjoyable period there in San Diego. Really my first duty air station after the war. We stood duty every third night, and then—we had a duty one night, standby one night, and we got one night off. So, there's really not much time to yourself so you could do anything, but, like you never had a complete weekend. You either had the duty or standby one day of the weekend. So what some of the officers would do would trade just so we could have a Saturday and Sunday off.

SG: That would happen also on the ships with the—where either the CO or the XO had to approve.

WM: Yah, so make sure in case they have to get underway, why, and this standby was primarily if they got called out and they needed someone to standby for the new crew. But so my longest tours were good stations at San Diego and Hawaii.

SG: Did you have the opportunity to do much flying while you were in Juneau?

WM: No, I didn't fly while I was in Juneau.

SG: Had you turned in your wings?

WM: No, still got flight pay but they didn't make you fly. Toward the end, in fact, just about the time I retired, they quit paying flight pay to aviators on staff duty. In fact, I think I lost one month's flight pay. But there for several years, decided it was cheaper to pay your flight pay than to go out and burn \$1,000 worth of gas to pay you \$200 flight

pay, so they didn't make you fly if you were on staff duty--for awhile there. I think they took after the Navy was doing the same thing, so the Coast Guard took that up. So I didn't—but see when I was in Boston, I had to fly there for my flight-time part of the time, and then I think from New York and Juneau, I didn't fly. Still got flight pay.

SG: The air station at the MANNETTE Island (sounds like "net") had been closed when you were up there, then?

WM: No. It was still open.

SG: Had Sitka been--?

WM: No. Sitka, we were working on opening one at Sitka when I was in the District, but no it wasn't open yet. See I retired in July 1973, and I don't know if the air station in--the Sitka really just when they started, I'm not sure. Probably wasn't too long after that.

SG: It was either 1974 or 1975.

WM: Yah. Because we were working on it, I know, given the site location.

SG: Yah, it was that pulp mill that the Japanese bought, and they wanted to be able to fly in. So several of the islands were connected together and made a nice long runway.

WM: Yah. In fact, when I was up there they didn't have a bridge across to the airport island. Probably about then when they put the bridge across.

SG: Lots of changes in a few years.

WM: But, when I went to Boston, I had, let's see. Well, Bill Childress⁽³³⁾ ended up being District Commander up there. I was his SAR officer. Like when I first went up there, I figured he didn't, I don't know whether he was testing me or what, I don't think he liked me very well. Of course, he had to go up to Newburyport to the Coast Guard

anniversary, and he wanted me to write his speech for him. Well, I thought maybe he didn't like me if he was going to make things like that. And I had a little help from Public Information, and with the information I wrote the speech for him, and some of the information, he'd come up, "Where'd you get this?" I got the book and showed him, but I guess he liked it all right. So we got to be real good friends after that, and he liked me, so—In fact, we visited them a couple of times after they retired.

SG: Yah. The numbers are being reduced.

WM: They sure are. Well, I can't think of, I'll try to think of some of the funny—I'm sure there are some others that--.

SG: Alright. I'll give you another minute, and I'll shut this off.