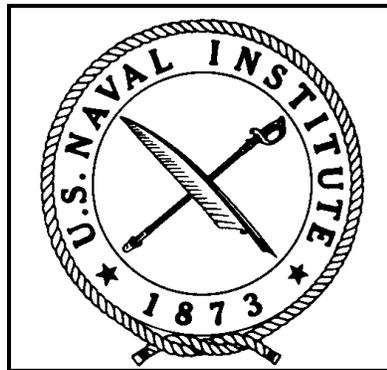


THE REMINISCENCES OF
Admiral James S. Gracey
U.S. Coast Guard (Retired)



INTERVIEWED BY
Paul Stillwell

U.S. Naval Institute • Annapolis, Maryland

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Preface

This volume represents the continuation of a tradition established years ago by my predecessor, Dr. John T. Mason, of including retired Coast Guard Commandants in the Naval Institute program. Admiral Gracey was eager to be interviewed for an oral history as a means of getting his recollections of the service—and his great enthusiasm for both the Coast Guard and Coast Guardsmen—on the record for the benefit of history.

Gracey's 41 years in uniform spanned the period from the end of World War II to the era of Ronald Reagan's presidency. In that time he learned about going to sea on board the square riggers *Danmark* and *Eagle*, and he later practiced his seagoing craft in the cutter *Barataria* and in command of the buoy tender *Mariposa*. The transcript includes descriptions of such *Mariposa* experiences as breaking ice in the Hudson River, racing pell-mell down Manhattan's East River, and colliding with a lighthouse.

It was, however, in billets ashore that he made his greatest contributions to the service. Part of his development included postgraduate education at the Harvard Business School, and he often applied lessons learned there to the benefit of the Coast Guard. Throughout his career he stressed the importance of communication and interpersonal relations.

Admiral Gracey's mental outlook is characterized by what we now refer to as "thinking outside the box." He was loath to accept the approach that something should be done a certain way because it always had been. He enjoyed finding creative solutions to problems. An early example was the process of converting Governors Island, in New York Harbor, from an Army fort to a Coast Guard base in the mid-1960s. Later he had a long tour as chief of the Programs Office in Coast Guard Headquarters. He headed a stable of young chargers who found new ways to decide among competing priorities for funding. And they found ways to laugh with each other.

As a flag officer Gracey was Coast Guard Chief of Staff, commanded the Ninth Coast Guard District and both the Pacific and Atlantic Areas, and finally served as Commandant in the 1980s. Throughout that time he and his wife Randy reached out to members of the service as the "Coast Guard Family." They made it a point of pride that

the nation has five military services and time and again taught others to “count to five.” In all these endeavors they sought to make the service an inclusive one so that its members shared their pride. They are unabashed cheerleaders, ready at all times to lead a rendition of “Semper Paratus.” This account is filled with story after story of their contacts with Coast Guardsmen. The transcript is also a reflection of the Gracey style; it frequently reveals his philosophy in dealing with people and issues—and his sense of humor. The memoir also contains word portraits of dozens of individuals with whom he dealt over the years.

In the creation of this record, grateful appreciation goes to George Van, a Navy and Marine Corps veteran who did the initial transcription of the interviews. Admiral Gracey made hundreds of changes and additions to both the verbatim and edited transcripts. That is a reflection of his life-long concern about taking great care with both written and spoken words and his reputation for thoroughness to the nth degree. I have done some further editing in the interests of accuracy, smoothness, and clarity. Included, for the sake of continuity, was the moving of some material to other locations than the original sequence in the verbatim interview transcripts. In addition, I have inserted footnotes to provide further information.

Dr. Robert Browning, the Coast Guard’s official historian, initiated this project by contracting with the Naval Institute to conduct the oral history. Subsequently, Bob and his associates, Scott Price and Chris Havern, supplied a great deal of information that was useful in the preparation for the interviews and in the completion of the finished product. Their contributions to the project have been extremely valuable.

Finally, the Naval Institute expresses its gratitude to the Tawani Foundations and the Pritzker Military Library for their generous financial support of the oral history program that produced this memoir.

Paul Stillwell
Director, History Division
U.S. Naval Institute
April 2004

ADMIRAL JAMES S. GRACEY

U.S. COAST GUARD (RETIRED)

James Steele Gracey is the son of Mr. Ernest J. and Mrs. Edna S. Gracey. Born on 24 August 1927 in Newton, Massachusetts, he graduated from Needham High School in Needham, Massachusetts. Winning an appointment as a cadet on 12 July 1945, he graduated from the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, New London, Connecticut, with a B.S. Degree in Engineering and a commission as Ensign on 3 June 1949. During his four years as a cadet, he served as the Battalion Commander, captain of the baseball team, and a member of both the soccer and rifle teams. On graduation day he was awarded the prizes for the Most Proficient in Practical and Theoretical Seamanship and Proficiency in Tactics and Drills.

He remained at the Academy temporarily as Instructor in the Tactics Department until September 1949. He was then assigned as Deck Officer on the 311-foot ocean station vessel *Barataria* (WAVP-381) based at Portland, Maine. During the summer and fall of 1951, he attended the Provost Marshal General School at the former Coast Guard Training Detachment, Camp Gordon, Georgia; the Coast Guard Explosives Loading Supervisors School at Port Chicago, California; and the Illinois Institute of Technology Course on Fire Protection Engineering.

From September 1951 to April 1953, he was stationed at the Captain of the Port Office, Boston, Massachusetts, where he was the Dangerous Cargo and Vessel Movements Officer. He also served collateral duty as Cadet Procurement Officer for Northern New England. Between March and May 1953 he attended the Loran Indoctrination School at Coast Guard Training Station, Groton, Connecticut. After completing the course he commanded the Loran Transmitting Station, Ocean Cape, Yakutat, Alaska, for one year.

He then returned to the Academy for a brief assignment as Assistant Tactics Officer and Baseball Coach from June to September 1954. During the following two years he was a student at the Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration, where he received an MBA in June 1956. As part of his work at Harvard, he spent the summer of 1955 in Industry Training at Norton Company, Worcester, Massachusetts.

From July 1956 to July 1960, he served at Coast Guard Headquarters, Washington, D.C., as a Branch Chief in the Supply Division. During the following two years he commanded the buoy tender *Mariposa* (WAGL-397) out of New London, Connecticut. The ship serviced aids to navigation along the seacoast of Connecticut and Long Island and broke ice on the Hudson River

From September 1962 to April 1965, he served as Comptroller, Second Coast Guard District, St. Louis, Missouri, with collateral duties that included Cadet Procurement in Kansas and Missouri. He then transferred to the Third Coast Guard District staff in New York to serve as Assistant Project Officer for the conversion of Fort Jay, Governors Island from an Army post to a Coast Guard facility. His duties included developing the

organization for the host command and planning all the Island's "humanities." For that duty he was awarded the Secretary of Treasury Commendation for Achievement Ribbon. From March 1966 to June 1969, he was Executive Officer of the Coast Guard Base at Governors Island for which he received a Coast Guard Letter of Commendation. His special duties during that period included community relations with the large island population and labor relations, including negotiating contracts with several different unions.

Deep selected for the rank of Captain, he returned to Headquarters in July 1969 to assume the post of Chief, Programs Division under the Chief of Staff. For outstanding meritorious achievement in those duties, he received the Meritorious Service Medal in 1973. Among other accomplishments he was cited for formulating planning, programming, and budgeting procedures and for developing a computer program for analyzing and translating resource requirements into a printout display to aid the analytical processes in budget planning.

Following his nomination to flag rank by the President on 17 January 1974, and the approval of the Senate, Captain Gracey was transferred to Portsmouth, Virginia, in June 1974 to become Chief of Staff, Fifth Coast Guard District. He was promoted to Rear Admiral from 1 October 1974. At that time he assumed duties of Commander, Ninth Coast Guard District, Cleveland, Ohio, which covers Coast Guard operations in the Great Lakes region. For that tour of duty he was awarded the Legion of Merit in 1977.

In addition to his duties as District Commander, Admiral Gracey served as Chairman of the Cleveland Federal Executive Board, Chairman of the Great Lakes Basin Commission's Standing Committee on Transportation and as Vice Chairman of the Winter Navigation Board. His other accomplishments included resolving long-standing issues regarding Great Lake Pilotage and negotiating for the Secretary of Transportation a new agreement with Canada regarding those issues.

Transferred again to Headquarters in August 1977, Admiral Gracey assumed the post of Chief of Staff of the U. S. Coast Guard. For his performance in this assignment he was awarded a second Legion of Merit.

Promotion to Vice Admiral came when Admiral Gracey accepted command of the Coast Guard Pacific Area and Twelfth Coast Guard District in San Francisco on 1 July 1978. In San Francisco he also served as Regional Emergency Transportation Coordinator, Chairman of Department of Transportation's Regional Hazardous Materials Working Group, Chairman of the Minority Business Opportunity Committee of the San Francisco Federal Executive Board, and a Trustee of United Way.

After his tour as Commander of the Pacific Area, he transferred to Commander, Atlantic Area and Commander, Third Coast Guard District. On 28 May 1982, he assumed the post of Commandant of the Coast Guard with the rank of Admiral.

During his tour as Commandant Admiral Gracey successfully maintained the service through difficult budget battles each year and successfully fought attempts to privatize many U.S. Coast Guard functions, including a Congressional attempt to privatize search and rescue. He also directed the service when the Atlantic Strike Team battled a Virginia fire, the largest in history. Making sure the Coast Guard was on the cutting edge of technology, new units were added to the fleet, including more 270-footers, 110-foot patrol boats, and HU-25A Falcons. He also upgraded much of the existing fleet.

Under Gracey, the Coast Guard maintained its position as a national defense force. The Coast Guard supported the U.S. military operations including the 1983 invasion of Grenada. The 1984 implementation of the Maritime Defense Zone Concept caused Gracey to remark that, "It puts us on the map with a specifically assigned duty ahead of time," thus assuring the service's military capabilities and mission requirements.

His tenure as Commandant ended when he was relieved on 30 May 1986 by Admiral Paul A. Yost, Jr. Following his retirement from active duty, Admiral Gracey has been involved in a variety of pursuits, including serving as an instructor in the National Defense University's Capstone Program for newly promoted flag and general officers of the U.S. Armed Force.

Deed of Gift

The U.S. Naval Institute is hereby authorized to make available to individuals, libraries, and other repositories of its choosing the tapes and/or transcripts of 12 oral history interviews concerning the life and naval career of the undersigned. The Naval Institute may also, at its discretion, use the material in electronic/digital format, including posting on the Internet. The U.S. Coast Guard may also, at its discretion, use the material in electronic/digital format, including posting on the Internet. The interviews were recorded on 21 February 2001, 28 February 2001, 9 May 2001, 15 May 2001, 5 June 2001, 6 July 2001, 25 July 2001, 1 August 2001, 7 August 2001, 22 August 2001, 18 September 2001, and 26 September 2001, in collaboration with Paul Stillwell for the U.S. Naval Institute.

The undersigned does hereby release and assign to the U.S. Naval Institute the rights and title to these interviews, with the exception that the undersigned retains the right to use the material for his own purposes, as he sees fit. The copyright in both the oral and transcribed versions shall be the sole property of the U.S. Naval Institute. The tape recordings of the interviews are and will remain the property of the U.S. Naval Institute.

Signed and sealed this _____ day of _____ 2002.

James S. Gracey
Admiral, U.S. Coast Guard (Retired)

Interview Number 1 with Admiral James S. Gracey, U.S. Coast Guard (Retired)

Place: Admiral Gracey's home in Arlington, Virginia

Date: Wednesday, 21 February 2001

Interviewer: Paul Stillwell

Paul Stillwell: Admiral, it's a genuine pleasure to meet you this morning and to get acquainted. Why don't we start at the beginning with when and where you were born and something about your parents, please?

Admiral Gracey: You too, Paul. Well, I was actually born in Newton, Massachusetts, though I only stayed there as long as my mother was in the hospital, and then we went to the neighboring town of Needham, Massachusetts, which is where I grew up. That created a bit of a problem when I became the Commandant, because the town of Newton wanted to have a parade. They wanted to have a big celebration because I'd become the Commandant, and I had "come from Newton."* I thanked them very much but suggested they might want to talk to the people in Needham first. Newton had me five days, and Needham had me for the next 21 years. Needham is still my "hometown."

My parents originated in West Hartford and Hartford, Connecticut. My dad was a marine insurance man in Boston. Shortly after they went to Boston was when I was born in 1927. My mother was an interesting lady. We kept learning more and more about her as we got older. As a young woman she was secretary for the executive vice president of the Travelers Insurance Company. She had a car in 1921 or so. She canoed on the Connecticut River with my dad, who courted with a banjo, and so on.

Paul Stillwell: And Hartford's the insurance capital of the country.

Admiral Gracey: Indeed. Everybody was always a little agog at this history of Mom, because she believed that once she started having children, her place was to be home. She never drove a car, didn't travel, except to Connecticut, until after we were all well

* Admiral Gracey became Commandant of the Coast Guard in 1982.

established out of the nest. She was the most loyal fan of all of us, no matter what we were involved in. She may never have thought about hockey, but if we were into hockey, my mother was into hockey. My dad was the same way.

My dad's experience in the marine insurance field opened up my eyes a lot and gave me a good foundation later on. When I got to be Commandant, people would ask me why I felt so strongly about fishing vessel safety. Our fishing vessel safety record in this country was and is awful. It's one of the most dangerous industries around. I grew up, listening almost every night at the dinner table, to one tale or another about Marblehead fishermen, New Bedford fishermen, Gloucester fishermen, and something that had happened to them that my dad was aware of. And then there was the movie *Captains Courageous*.^{*} Later on I got involved in some rescue work of my own with them and watched and agonized over what was going on out there.

Neither of my parents went to college. My dad was a sergeant in the Connecticut National Guard for a while. Very proud of that. Had very bad eyes.

Paul Stillwell: Was he in World War I?

Admiral Gracey: No, he was too young at that time. We kind of bounced between the wars. He was born in 1902, they both were, and so in World War I they were too young, and in World War II they were too old. So, no, he served in between the wars in the National Guard. Was a banjo player and a piano player and had a good sense of fun and enjoyed sports, as did my mother. I have two brothers. Jerry, six years younger than I, went on to Bowdoin and pitched on their baseball team. He was a Fulbright Scholar in London and, after time in the Army, went to Harvard Law School and was an attorney in Hartford. He is now retired. Colin is eight years younger than I; he was the real athlete of the family. He had aspirations, and he was actually playing with the Dodgers in what you might call their "farm system."[†]

Paul Stillwell: Which was huge.

^{*} *Captains Courageous*, the dramatization of a Rudyard Kipling novel about the sea and fishermen, was a 1937 film that starred Freddie Bartholomew and Spencer Tracy.

[†] The Brooklyn Dodgers were one of the most successful major league teams of the 1940s and 1950s.

Admiral Gracey: Yes, but he wasn't in their professional program. He was captain of the Yale baseball team, which is big stuff. He got to lean on the same fence and have the same picture taken that George Bush did when he was Yale's captain; that's George Bush, Sr.* Colin was a catcher. Whenever the Dodgers came to Boston while he was in high school, he would go in and catch batting practice with them. He and Gil Hodges got to be "buddies." Then when he was at Yale he went to Edmundston, New Brunswick, in the summer. He worked at a lumber company that hired a bunch of college kids. He played in a local baseball league, on a team that had Dodger coaches. The other teams also had pro coaches.

After Yale he had an ROTC obligation.† During his tour with the Navy he decided he wanted to be an Episcopal minister. Went to Harvard Divinity. He is now a chaplain at Northeastern University. He's a great athlete and a fascinating believer in causes and standing up for what is right.

On the shore of Long Island Sound is the town of Clinton, Connecticut. It is 30 miles west of New London, about halfway between New London and New Haven. My grandfather bought two small cottages there and built another—a two-story affair, the old kind with the garages underneath. I remember his building it, so it had to be about 1930. I was probably three years old when he was doing it. That was our place to go in the summer, but Dad only had two weeks off, the last two weeks in August—when the snapper blues were running. We always took those two weeks at the beach, and it took several hours to get there in those days. You had no interstates or anything.

We went right past the front of the Coast Guard Academy on the way down the road to Clinton from Boston.‡ I don't think it was an accident that we went that way. As a matter of fact, thinking back on it, I suspect my father planned the route with that in mind. Off of Clinton Beach there's an island, a harbor of refuge called Duck Island Roads. It's about three miles from shore. There's a small island with big, long breakwaters, some buoys, and a couple of small lights. I used to watch the old buoy

* George H. W. Bush served as President of the United States from 20 January 1989 to 20 January 1993. After serving as a Navy pilot in World War II Bush attended Yale University and graduated in 1948.

† ROTC—reserve officers' training corps.

‡ The Coast Guard Academy is in New London, Connecticut.

tender come and work those things. I'd row my family rowboat three miles out and watch the tender work the aids. I kind of built in my head, I think, that what I wanted to be a part of things like that.

Paul Stillwell: How early in your life would you say that developed?

Admiral Gracey: Well, I can't put a finger on it. It just was by the time I got to be old enough to where it was something to think about, I mean to be serious about. It was just the way it was going to be. I remember overhearing my parents talking one night, saying, "We don't know how we're going to get Jim to college." Because of the Depression, they weren't really rich.* I remember thinking, "Well, I could go to the Coast Guard Academy." But I wanted to anyway, so that wasn't a great sacrifice.

Paul Stillwell: Did your father work steadily through the Depression?

Admiral Gracey: Yes. Again, he was in the marine insurance business, and, of course, fishing—and shipping—had to go on. And he was in inland and ocean marine, so that involved trucking as well as the offshore things. We were not hit hard by the Depression. We weren't rich by any means, but we were comfortable, and we had food, and my dad was working.

But we did go down to Connecticut, and that was a very special part of our year. I now own the old cottage. It's now our family place, and it's been our family place for a long time. It leans over about 15 degrees from the 1938 hurricane. It's across the road from the beach and backs up on a beautiful three-mile-long wetland. Runs east and west, beautiful sunsets, great birds—and the monarch butterflies pass through every year on their amazing trip south. The 1938 hurricane washed the beach across the road and under the cottage. It put a huge deposit of beach sand out into the wetland behind our cottage and the one next to it. We had this marvelous playground our entire lifetime. I can't tell

* Following the crash of the New York Stock Exchange in late October 1929, the United States was plunged into the Great Depression, from which it did not recover until the nation geared up for World War II at the beginning of the 1940s. The Depression was marked by high unemployment and many business failures.

you how many baseball games, horseshoe games—you name it—have been played on that sandbar over the years. The people next door had kids that grew up with me, and their kids grew up with our kids, and now the grandchildren are doing the same.

Paul Stillwell: Well, speaking of baseball, you were both a player and a fan. Please talk about that.

Admiral Gracey: I'm a fan of all sports, but baseball is it. I grew up, of course, in the Ted Williams era, the Bobby Doerr era, all of that in Fenway Park.* And then there were the Boston Braves for a time. For a while they were the Bees, then they were the Braves, but they were there, too, and they were all accessible without too much trouble from our little town of Needham—about 14 miles west of Boston. I went to Fenway Park at every opportunity. My dad would take me. I think probably the first game he took me I was seven years old or so. I can't remember, but I was a kid.

I did play. I captained our high school baseball team, and I captained the team at the Coast Guard Academy. I alleged to be a pitcher. Everybody laughs when I say that. In fact, I had a fun experience that flowed from that. In 1978 I was the Coast Guard Chief of Staff, and I had been invited up to the Coast Guard Academy to a dining-in for the first class cadets. It had been announced that I was going to be promoted to vice admiral and be Commander of the Coast Guard's Pacific Area. The Academy's Assistant Superintendent, later an admiral but at the time a captain, had been one of my teammates on the baseball team, a fellow by the name of Sid Vaughn.† A wonderful athlete in his own right. But irreverence has always followed me around. I relish it, I love it. I tend to be irreverent myself—respectfully, of course. But he introduced me to the Corps of Cadets as who I was and about to be Commander Pacific Area. He said, "Admiral Gracey was one of our great baseball players at the academy. He was a great pitcher. He had two pitches, a fastball and a slow ball. The difference between them was, with the fastball you could only read the label once on the way to the plate." The cadets loved it, of course, and the banter that followed.

* Fenway Park has been the home of the Boston Red Sox since 1912.

† Captain Sidney B. Vaughn, Jr., USCG, a graduate of the academy's class of 1950.

But, yes, I pitched on the baseball team. I played soccer, and I shot on the rifle team at the Academy. I've always been a fan of all kinds of sports. Later on, as I went around different places in the service, I would bowl on an office bowling team or the unit bowling team and always got involved in the softball games and golf tournaments. I kind of backed away on basketball because I really wasn't a very good basketball player. The only reason I played on the high school team was they needed five guys on the floor. I loved it, but I wasn't very good. Years later I did coach a church team of teenagers to a league championship. In Needham, hockey was our big sport. We had a state championship hockey team.

Paul Stillwell: What do you remember about academics as you were coming along in grade school, high school?

Admiral Gracey: I remember I did very well. Things came relatively easy to me, and I wasn't afraid to ask questions if I didn't understand. Preparing for the Coast Guard Academy exam I had wonderful help from a high school mathematics teacher whose name was Miss Fessenden, otherwise known as "Fezzie." It was a small town, small school, with teachers that had been around forever. They took real interest in people in the school. They had a college prep program. I've forgotten what they called it, but there were those who were aiming toward college and those who weren't. It was a good program, well founded.

I gave one of the teachers heart failure I think. Her name was Miss Dodge, and she taught English. She was known to us as Daisy. At graduation four of us made speeches. And we practiced and practiced and practiced with all the gestures and proper pacing. On the night of graduation my parents were in the audience, and it was my turn to speak. Daisy was in the audience with the script. I got about a paragraph and a half into it and I forgot it. Absolutely forgot it. But I drew a short breath and went on. I delivered an ad-lib speech, and poor Miss Dodge had a heart failure trying to find out where I was in the script. I was making a speech she'd never heard before. [Laughter]

Paul Stillwell: There was a lesson in that too.

Admiral Gracey: Yes, God love her. Which lesson is that? Keep talking?

Paul Stillwell: No. The lesson is “Don’t memorize it word for word, just the main points.”

Admiral Gracey: Yes. I’ve always done better ad-libbing. I know how to read a speech, but it’s not a good way to go if you can help it. I don’t know what more I can tell you about the academics at Needham High School except that I got a good academic foundation. The grammar school system was good in Needham too. It was a bedroom community for business people in Boston primarily, although there was a section of town where a lot of people who worked in the textile mills in Newton lived, so they were more working class if you will. I hate that term “working class.”

Paul Stillwell: Blue collar.

Admiral Gracey: Blue collar. Thank you. But it was a great town. As a matter of fact, we’ve just had our 55th high school reunion. Without realizing it, we did a marvelous job of perpetuating our class, because when the rest of us left town we left behind the town undertaker, the town banker, the town collector of “personal news,” and the town insurance man. They have kind of kept us all together, and it’s been wonderful. The town just last year built a new road up to the high school. For our 55th anniversary reunion, my classmates, bless them, persuaded the town to name it “Admiral Gracey Drive.” So there is now Admiral Gracey Drive up to the old high school where we all went. They kept it as a total surprise to me, and that was special.

Paul Stillwell: What a wonderful gesture.

Admiral Gracey: Oh, it breaks you up, you know. But they had so much fun about it. My wife Randy knew about it, and bless her, she kept getting calls from those guys, and I

should have guessed there was something up.* But I thought they were arranging for one part of the program or another. I had no idea that something like this was going on. You wouldn't think of that. I wouldn't think of that anyway, and didn't, so they were absolutely enthralled at my astonishment when they announced it at our reunion clambake and said I was to cut the ribbon the next day. They gave me a duplicate of the street sign. Randy decided that if it was going to be called Admiral Gracey Drive it had to be a one-way street. [Laughter] So they had a little fun with that. I asked why it wasn't called "Admiral Gracey Way." They said they thought of that, but nobody wanted anything to do with Admiral Gracey's ways. [Laughter] Anyway, that's special.

Paul Stillwell: How much of a factor was religion in your family as you were growing up?

Admiral Gracey: We kids went to Sunday school regularly, an Episcopal family. My folks were not churchgoers. They were great believers in things religious and following the Ten Commandments and all that sort of thing and living the right kind of life, but they didn't go to church. I was an acolyte. I helped with the communion service, and I did that later on at the Coast Guard Academy. As a cadet, I would go to the chapel and help the chaplain with services. At one point one of my classmates and I gave serious thought as to whether we really wanted to stay in the Coast Guard, or did we want to leave and become ministers. We decided that the idea of trying to write a sermon every week would be more than we could handle. And we didn't really want to do that anyway. My wife's family was Baptist, and they were very active in their Baptist church in Needham. It was a part of our life, but yet it wasn't a matter of going to church suppers and all that sort of activity. Nowadays Randy and I are up to our ears in it in a Methodist church here in Arlington, but that's a whole other subject.

Paul Stillwell: What values would you say that your parents imparted to you and your siblings?

* Mrs. Gracey's maiden name was Dorcas Randall Neal. Her nickname comes from her middle name.

Admiral Gracey: Hard work. When it's time to do your schoolwork, it's time to do your schoolwork. And something other than topnotch is not acceptable. Modesty, of course. I think being kind to people. They were nice warm human beings, although not great socialites. Neighborhood friends, business friends, but low key. Later on, when I was stationed in Boston, I found that Dad had a lunch bunch, and I got invited to have lunch with them regularly. They were all insurance people. He did more of that than my mother did. Another value or attribute was the ability to laugh at a situation, a sense of humor. There's a time to be tough, and there's a time to face up to situations with humor. I'm not sure anybody ever taught that. It just was the way it was. We had great fun laughing at silly situations. We spent a lot of time laughing in our house I remember.

Paul Stillwell: We internalize a lot of things that come as examples rather than sermons.

Admiral Gracey: Yes, that's it exactly. One that pops to my head is there was a gentleman lived across the street whose name was Morandi Bartlett. Mr. Bartlett was a bit of a grouch—and rightfully so, I think. Because I was teaching my two little brothers about baseball, and we played out in the street a lot with a tennis ball. We had a bad habit of hitting the tennis ball off Morandi's roof, and he didn't like that very much. Spike Jones came out with a record called, "Pass the Biscuits Mirandy."^{*} My mother heard it one time. I remember our old Victrola was right by the front door. I can't believe them. These memories are coming back. She opened the front door wide, turned this record up as loud as she could, so across the street is blasting, "Pass the Biscuits Mirandy." Well, [Laughter] cruel I guess, but at the time we thought it was very funny. Mr. Bartlett's offense was that he had said cross words to Mom's kids. I mentioned her strong and unalterable loyalty.

Paul Stillwell: That tune was played on a record player in the clubhouse for the 1942 St. Louis Cardinals. They credit that with winning the World Series.

^{*} Lindley Murray (1911-1965) played professionally under the name Spike Jones. He was leader of a band called the City Slickers that created humorous novelty songs with offbeat instruments and sound effects.

Admiral Gracey: Really? Really? No, I did not know that, Paul. I hadn't heard that before. Well, Mom would be proud. Music was a big part of our life. As I said, my dad played some, but we had an old Victrola, and he would bring home records. We had a pile of the popular records, some of them Spike Jones, some of them big-band hits of the time, and he was a great listener. We listened to them, and we had kids' records that we played over and over. In fact, my children and my grandchildren played them till you can't hear them anymore, but they were fun kind of stuff. So that was a part of it too.

Paul Stillwell: How would you describe the sense of discipline in the home?

Admiral Gracey: Tough. Yeah. You probably guessed that was going to be the answer. [Laughter] Yeah. It was not abusive, but it was tough, and when the rules were laid down, they were laid down. Although we laughed over the years over one ongoing "offense." My mother was a great cookie baker, and she had a giant cookie jar in the kitchen. It was china, ceramic. Our goal in life was to go through the kitchen, get the lid off, and get a cookie out without my mother hearing that "clank" somewhere in the house. You couldn't do it. [Laughter] Nobody ever succeeded that we know of. And the voice would come from somewhere, "Put the cookie back." The idea was if you want a cookie, come ask for it.

Paul Stillwell: But it was a game.

Admiral Gracey: The idea was see if you could beat Mom, of course. But that was kind of the way it was. We obviously raised dander from time to time, as I guess all kids do. We laughed a lot. Another game was to set Dad laughing. He never laughed out loud, but, oh, how he laughed. Made all the rest of us go even more.

Paul Stillwell: What sort of hobbies did you have?

Admiral Gracey: Collecting. I also played the trombone. I had a scrapbook of sports events, especially baseball. I would cut out the box scores and stories every day. I had

reams and reams of baseball cards, of course, and just read and read newspaper stuff about sports. Really, I think sports were my big hobby. I did a little model building but not much. And I was in the Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts for a little bit. I was, I think, a Star scout or something like that, but it really wasn't my cup of tea.

Paul Stillwell: Did you enjoy outdoor type things beyond the sandbar playing?

Admiral Gracey: No. Well, outdoor, yeah, but not Boy Scout—

Paul Stillwell: Not camping and hiking.

Admiral Gracey: Right. Camping. Being in a tent on a rainy night was not my idea of a fun thing to do. It just didn't turn me on. I was a fat little kid, and that didn't help any. I slimmed out about the time I got to junior high, I think. But I was kind of roly-poly, and that didn't work well either. So I never enjoyed it. I tried to help with Boy Scout units later on when my kids were up in age, and I did in one church or another where we were, where I could. But I drew the line at camping. I was not going to do that. I still don't enjoy it.

Paul Stillwell: I read in one of your Coast Guard speeches yesterday about the importance to Coast Guardsmen of being fit and trim.

Admiral Gracey: Absolutely. I stressed it, but I didn't think we should prescribe how to get there. I set the end result . . . no need to be miserable while reaching it. But, as a kid—well, I wasn't thinking about fitness, certainly not from camping and hiking. I was into sports. I played baseball at school. We played baseball in the street. We played baseball on the nearby playground. We played soccer. We played rough-and-tumble football on somebody's front lawn. We played ice hockey on "The Reservoir" and "Pickles Pond." It just was the way to do it. I skied, quote-quote, but just on my local golf course hills. That was in the old days when you just put your foot through a strap

and went down the hill on a board. I wasn't into really skiing. But I was active, and my brothers were both active.

Paul Stillwell: Did you get out into the country farther than these trips to Connecticut? For instance, did you get into the Midwest or beyond?

Admiral Gracey: Until I went to the Coast Guard Academy I had never been west of New Haven, Connecticut. My dad drove around New England with his business, and I'd been to Nashua, New Hampshire, one time with him. No, I really hadn't. It was pretty localized. It was Needham and down to Connecticut and back again. I went to church camp in New Hampshire a couple of summers—played a lot of baseball there but hated the mountain-climbing trips. The trips to Connecticut included going to West Hartford for Christmas and Thanksgiving—to be with my grandparents and three aunts and uncles.

Paul Stillwell: Well, society as a whole was not nearly so mobile then as now.

Admiral Gracey: That's true. That's true. This is not traveling like you're talking about, but we had a marvelous train in town called the Needham Local. It ran from Boston to Needham—14 miles or so. It went into South Station in Boston, where they had a theater showing continuous short features. And it was not very far from the RKO Theater where the big bands played.* There would be a movie and then the matinee performance. I played trombone in a dance band in high school, the Modernaires. We would go in. We'd leave class a little early on particular afternoons with the blessing of the music director. Not necessarily with the blessing of Daisy Dodge, who knows? But we would go in to listen to the bands and ride the train.

Incidentally, on that Needham local our stop was called Birds Hill. The immediate stop before that was West Roxbury. When I was the Commandant of the Coast Guard, General P. X. Kelley was the Commandant of the Marine Corps.† P. X. Kelley came from West Roxbury. I came from Birds Hill. What are the odds that you're

* RKO was one of the major movie studios of the period.

† General Paul X. Kelley, USMC, served as Commandant of the Marine Corps from 1 July 1983 to 30 June 1987.

going to have two service chiefs at the same time from adjoining stops on the Needham Local? Not likely. [Laughter] P. X. and I used to have a little fun with that idea.

Paul Stillwell: Did Glenn Miller get up there? He was based in New Haven in the war.

Admiral Gracey: Yes, he did. I saw Glenn Miller play, Duke Ellington, Woody Herman, Tommy Dorsey, Benny Goodman, Harry James, and more.* Wonderful memories. One that always leaps to mind is the Ellington band playing “Mood Indigo” with a marvelous sax solo from Johnny Hodges in a blue spotlight. Of course, there was Herman’s “Woodchoppers’ Ball,” Tommy Dorsey’s “Indian Love Song”—and all of Miller’s hits. I shouldn’t have started on that list.

Paul Stillwell: Well, speaking of Ellington, was race a consideration at all as you were growing up?† How much consciousness did you have of it as a problem?

Admiral Gracey: It was a problem, but I have to explain why. There were no blacks in Needham. If there had been, I suspect they wouldn’t have been welcome. It would have been a problem. So I had no experience with black schoolmates, etc. It just wasn’t on my scope. But I had been led to believe, as I was growing up—and I have no idea how this got into my head—that black people tended not to be clean. That you needed to be careful, and certainly you didn’t want to touch one. I’m ashamed to tell you that.

There were no blacks at the Coast Guard Academy when I was there. My first assignment as an ensign was the cutter *Barataria* out of Portland, Maine. We were doing weather patrol. I was the gunnery officer, and among my gunner’s mates was a black petty officer named Doug Murell. My style even then was to greet people openly and shake hands. I did it with Petty Officer Murell, but it was with great difficulty the first time. I really had to force myself to shake hands because of this thing that I had in my head. I’m embarrassed to say that but not so embarrassed that I haven’t told people about

* These individuals were leaders of what were known as “big bands” and symbolized the popular music of the era.

† Edward Kennedy “Duke” Ellington (1899-1974) was a noted American bandleader and composer. He was black.

it throughout my career as an example of how things can be absolutely wrong. Old myths and habits get built in, and we need to put them away. Doug was one of the finest petty officers I've ever known. He was also a great basketball player, and we had a ship's basketball team. We played together. We played baseball together on the ship's baseball team. My wife and I exchanged Christmas cards with the Murells for several years after we both had transferred to other places. I hold him in high esteem to this day.

Paul Stillwell: And this is the way that prejudices are overcome.

Admiral Gracey: Well, it was there. I never again had a problem, but I had to get over that one time. It was obviously a memorable event. I've been telling you about it, and I've told all kinds of people about it over the years. I'm not sure they've all understood what I was saying, but I needed to say it anyway.

Paul Stillwell: It's a matter of cultural conditioning.

Admiral Gracey: Yes, I think that's exactly right.

Paul Stillwell: How much reading did you do when you were young?

Admiral Gracey: I didn't do much. If things caught my sense, I would read them, but I wasn't an in-depth reader. In fact, I cheated on book reports. When we had to do book reports in school I would go to the library, and I'd read an excerpt of it from somewhere, or I would skim it and then report on it.

Paul Stillwell: They had the *Classics Illustrated* comic books when I was in school.
[Laughter]

Admiral Gracey: Oh, well, we didn't have those, but I was not an avid reader. Sports pages in the newspaper I read from top to bottom. I could tell you every word that was in

them, that sort of thing. And, of course, miscellaneous assignments at school you did what you had to do, but it was with great effort.

Paul Stillwell: How much did you keep up with current events in the wider world?

Admiral Gracey: Not very much. I think it was a pretty isolated upbringing. Things patriotic were very important in our house, and we loved America and all of that kind of stuff. I was thinking about that this morning as I was trying to think about my childhood, figuring you were going to ask me. I was thinking I remember exactly where I was when I heard that Pearl Harbor had been bombed.* I was playing touch football on a Sunday afternoon in the neighboring street. I was aware that there was a war going on. I can't tell you how much I knew about it, though. I'm not sure how much a lot of people in America knew about what was going on in Europe, but I remember about Dunkirk and that.

But in terms of politics in the country I remember a National Recovery Act parade through our little town of Needham—torch light and all that sort of thing.† I remember my parents listening on the radio with great disgust at some of this, because they were not exactly great fans of FDR and his followers, as was true, I think, of almost everybody in the town of Needham. It was a big Republican town then. Current events, world affairs and that sort of thing were not big. Later on, I really got into keeping abreast of the country and the world. I believed it was important to know about it to understand our country and understand who we are, the Coast Guard, and how we helped it. But I also got big time involved in extending the Coast Guard internationally. We'll talk about that later. As a kid I started tuning in when I was selected to go to Massachusetts Boys State.

Paul Stillwell: How much awareness did you have of Boston as a Navy town?

* A force of some 350 fighters, dive-bombers, and torpedo planes attacked U.S. military installations on the island of Oahu, Hawaii, on Sunday, 7 December 1941. The principal focus of attack was the collection of American warships at the naval base at Pearl Harbor. The U.S. Congress declared war on Japan the following day.

† The National Recovery Act was one of the Depression relief measures instituted during the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR), who became President in March 1933.

Admiral Gracey: Oh, well you couldn't be around and not be aware of Boston as a Navy town, of course, and then there was the *Constitution*.*

Paul Stillwell: And a very active shipyard there as well.

Admiral Gracey: Indeed. Boston Navy Yard was big time. Dad worked at an office very near the Customhouse, which was right in downtown Boston, so when I went in with him we would see that. You couldn't go in the Navy yard—well, we didn't unless we had a reason—but we did go in and go aboard the *Constitution*. I hope I'm not getting my time periods mixed up, but I think I've got that right. We were aware that the Navy was there big time. My dad being an old Army man, of course, he took me to the Harvard-Army football game, which boggles my mind to this day. He had nothing to do with Harvard, nothing to do with West Point, but he was a sergeant in the Connecticut National Guard, and maybe he was trying to hook me on academies. I don't know. [Laughter] But my dad would do things like that periodically. That's all I can tell you.

Paul Stillwell: Did you take any steps when you were in high school specifically to prepare for the Coast Guard Academy?

Admiral Gracey: Only to prepare for the exam. As you know, the Coast Guard Academy didn't have congressional appointments. It was a national competitive exam. Now we're using the SAT test, but ours are still not congressional appointments.† In those days it was a specially done exam for the Coast Guard. There was really no way to prepare for it except just make sure you had your mathematics and your English, your writing skills honed up. I was a good student. I was a straight-A student. If I came home with a B my mother would wonder, "What have you been doing? Loafing?" You know, it was not quite in that tone of voice, but I remember it that way.

* USS *Constitution*, a wood-hull frigate launched in 1797, gained fame in the War of 1812 as "Old Ironsides." To this day she is maintained at Boston as a commissioned ship of the U.S. Navy.

† SAT—Scholastic Aptitude Test.

Paul Stillwell: Well, there are or certainly were in that era for the Naval Academy and Military Academy specific cram schools that prepped from old tests. I take it you had none of that.

Admiral Gracey: I didn't. I had some Academy classmates who had done that sort of thing. Yeah, that's right. Bullis here in the Washington area is one I think that I remember hearing people talk about and a couple of others.* No, I just went to school. As a matter of fact, the day I took the exam I was convinced that I had really blown it. No way. I went home, no way. And so, later, when I hadn't heard from the Academy, I went in to Boston to enlist in the Coast Guard, to go the Coast Guard Academy Prep School in Groton, Connecticut.

Paul Stillwell: What year was that?

Admiral Gracey: Well, it would have been 1945. They had a prep school program, and I went to enlist in the Coast Guard so I could do that. The Coast Guard District Office was on the ninth floor of the Customhouse in Boston, and the elevator was broken. It was a hot day. I walked up eight flights of stairs, went through some routine, and they started to take my physical.

My blood pressure was coming right out the top of my head. And they said, "Go get some lunch and come back." So I walked down eight flights of stairs, walked two hot blocks, convinced myself that a good hamburger and a hot cup of coffee were just what I needed, because I thought coffee was a sedative. I wasn't too bright. Did that, went back, walked up the eight flights of stairs and almost exploded the blood pressure machine. The guy said, "Get out of here. There's no way you can get in here. Come and try some other day. See if you can get your blood pressure down."

I went home, and that afternoon I had the telegram from the Coast Guard Academy saying, "Congratulations. Report." And it turned out to be the next day for a

* William F. Bullis resigned his commission upon graduation from the Naval Academy in June 1924. He served as a second lieutenant in the Army, 1924-26, and subsequently earned a master's degree from George Washington University. In 1930 he founded The Bullis School in Washington, D.C., as a preparatory school for the service academies.

physical at Brighton Marine Hospital in Boston. Well, now I was convinced I had high blood pressure, right? And something I wanted all my life was in my hand. But, my God, I had just had this awful experience. I went to the Public Health Hospital the next morning, and all they had to do was take out the blood-pressure device, and I could just feel it coming right out my ears, ka-boom, ka-boom, ka-boom. The doctor, bless his heart, said, “I think you’re a little excited about this.”

And I said, “Yeah,” and I told him about the day before.

He said, “Take this book home. It’s the worst book I’ve ever read. Plan to read it at bedtime. Take three of these pills and be back here at 6:00 o’clock tomorrow morning.”

I did, and I passed the blood-pressure test. So I got into the Academy. But then when they came at me with the machine when I got there the old blood pressure went ka-boom, ka-boom again. I was invited to leave about November of the first year. Now, I had dazzled everybody on the cadet cruise that summer. I had been top man in seamanship, top man in swab class academics, all of that, but here was this medical thing.* So the Commandant of Cadets called me into his office and said, “We have to ask you to sign this. This is your resignation.”

I said, “I’ll do that. Tomorrow is Thanksgiving. Can I go home for the day, it’s just in Boston, and see my family doctor?” He let me do that, and the family doctor wrote a note saying he’d known me forever, and I never had a blood pressure problem. So they decided they would do a series of tests over a period of time. I would go to sickbay every morning and have my blood pressure taken for a period of a couple of weeks.

There was a wonderful first classman whom I told about this.† I was a swab, of course. At his own risk he said, “You sleep in. We’ll skip the morning routine. You don’t have to go rowing this morning. Skip it. You sleep in. Get over there and get your blood pressure right.” And I did and it gradually came down.

But, you know, for years after that the only way I could convince myself I could pass a physical was, while waiting to have my blood pressure taken, I would memorize

* Coast Guard Academy cadets in their first year are known as “swabs;” the indoctrination period is “swab summer.”

† A first classman is in his final year at the academy.

the back of the physical fitness record. When I went in to be tested, I would look out the window and I would recite it. The guy would say, “What are you doing?”

I said, “I’m reciting the back of the physical fitness record. Take my blood pressure.” [Laughter] And gradually—now it’s no problem. Once I learned that I could beat it, I had low blood pressure—if anything.

Paul Stillwell: But the first classman’s kindness there was a factor as well.

Admiral Gracey: And he was one of those upperclassmen who terrorized everybody. In fact, I had steamed up his room. All first classmen had what they called their “Quartermaster,” a swab they picked who came in and turned on the heat in the morning and ran errands. Everybody had one. I was his. But part of the deal was that if you were going to have to be a servant, you also had to get them once in a while. So you soaked down a bath towel, turned on the radiator full bore, and put this bath towel on it. The steam-filled room to which they awoke was not welcome. And I had done that a couple of days before. No, I mean, what he did was special. I didn’t ask him. It was just something he said to do, and I said, “That’s not right, I can’t.”

He said, “Do it. It’s an order.”

Paul Stillwell: What was this kind gentleman’s name?

Admiral Gracey: Barry How.* He retired as a captain, and we worked together many years later. He lives down in Portsmouth, Virginia. I don’t know whether he would remember this or not. We shot on the rifle team together too. Barry was a tough guy, but Barry did that for me, and I am forever grateful.

Paul Stillwell: Do you remember the exact moment of swearing in and how your summer started?

* Cadet Archibald Barwell How II, USCG, class of 1947.

Admiral Gracey: I remember how my summer started in that we had the beach cottage that was close, and so we went down there for a week before I went over to report in. The real starting was walking in the South Gate all by myself. Dad pushed me out the door and said, “Go get ’em,” and I did. I don’t remember the swearing in.

I remember there being a hassle about uniforms and haircuts and finding your room and meeting your roommates and all that. I remember Swab Summer as physical fitness agony running up and down the bleachers and doing kinds of things that I just hadn’t. I’d been involved in sports and that sort of thing, but I wasn’t a workout type of guy, and I wasn’t a runner, that sort of thing. But I remember that as being tough. I remember the cruise on the *Danmark* as a very special event. *Danmark* is still sailing. It’s a Danish full-rigged ship that was loaned to the Coast Guard during World War II as a training ship for the Academy. The academics were new stuff, of course, navigation and so forth.

If you say, “V-J Day” to anyone in the class of ’49, he will say exactly what I’m about to say to you, which is—well, first I’ll tell you that it was an afternoon late in Swab Summer, and we were doing navigation projects in our rooms.* We had our charts, and we were getting ready for class. An announcement came over the PA system, which said, “Now hear this. The war is over. Resume study hour.” [Laughter] Just like that. And we were all looking out the window. The whole town of New London was going ape, and we were staying in there looking out the window and then back to plotting our course through Long Island Sound. I sailed in the schooner *Atlantic*, which was a beautiful old schooner. It had set the transatlantic sailing record many, many years before. We had her, and we had *Danmark*, and I sailed in both of them. Of course, we stayed pretty much inside Long Island Sound and protected waters eastward.

Paul Stillwell: Well, please tell me about those sailing experiences.

Admiral Gracey: Oh, *Danmark* was marvelous. Before I talk about that, though, I have to tell you about *Atlantic*. We got caught in a heavy fog and the bell broke. When

* V-J Day—Victory over Japan Day, marked the end of the war in the Pacific on 15 August 1945. Because of the time difference it was 14 August in the United States when combat ended.

anchored in fog, the Rules of the Road require you to ring your ship's bell at regular intervals. That's so you don't get nailed by somebody coming through. So we hung a bunch of pans from the galley up forward and banged them with a hammer. That was our fog bell. We had no radar. We had a guy up at the top of the mast trying to look over the fog.

We got to Martha's Vineyard, and the crew had liberty. Not us. In the crew was a colorful and lovable old Norwegian chief boatswain's mate known as Juggy, for reasons that will be obvious. When the ship's boat brought him back, he had a wine bottle in one hand and a huge fish in the other. He stood up and walked clean off the wrong side of the boat into the bay. Came up, didn't lose his hat, his fish, or anything, and we pulled him aboard. Juggy went down below, got into his bunk while it was still triced up, and started blowing his boatswain's pipe yelling for the captain to, "Get this thing on an even keel."

Well, I remember that as a funny experience at the time, but I've talked about it later on when I had a policy aimed at curbing the excess drinking that was going on in the Coast Guard. We didn't need that sort of thing. He was a lovable old guy, but he was a danger to himself and to everybody else.

Paul Stillwell: But that was the culture and accepted at that time.

Admiral Gracey: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely.

My first ship was *Barataria*, in Portland, Maine. We moored at State Pier, and right at the head of the pier was the Blue Moon Café. I can remember being on watch and seeing guys come out of the Blue Moon, walk straight as a die across the street and under a roofed-over section of the pier. They came out where the gangway to the ship was. All of a sudden, they appeared to be drunk as skunks. That's what they were supposed to be to be salty. If you weren't drunk, you weren't a real sailor. They were not drunk. Some were, of course, but they didn't walk straight after coming out of the Blue Moon.

I remember coming back from our long weather patrols that were 45 days or more. The crew got liberty. The officers stayed aboard to do the mail and stuff that

junior officers had to do while our wives drank coffee and waited for us. Driving up the street toward home, we would see some of our guys were already getting thrown out of one of the bars uptown. So, yes, it was the culture. It was a colorful culture, but it wasn't one I wanted to see.

Paul Stillwell: In the Navy that exaggeration of one's condition was known as "smoke-stacking."

Admiral Gracey: Smoke-stacking, okay. That's a term I've not heard before. Another story. Sorry about this.

Paul Stillwell: Don't be sorry. [Laughter]

Admiral Gracey: A young seaman came up to me one night when I was in-port OOD, and he asked if he could go work on his car. And I said, "Are you off duty, Allen?"

"Yes, sir."

"But you're in the duty section."

"Yes."

"Okay." Three weeks later we found him in Buffalo, New York. His defense was that's where his car was. [Laughter]

Paul Stillwell: This was a *Barataria* man?

Admiral Gracey: This was a *Barataria* man, yes. I'll tell you more about *Barataria* people too. Don't let me forget to tell you about the boatswain's mate on *Barataria*.

But back to the *Danmark*. Sailing on *Danmark* was a marvelous experience. The captain and the first officer and a couple of junior officers were Danish, but all the rest of the people were Coast Guardsmen. The captain's name was Hansen.* His first officer was a Mr. Langevad. There was another officer named Rohmer, and there was Mr. Nielsen. I remember them well. Nielsen had a high-pitched voice. His assignment was

* Captain Knud L. Hansen was master of the *Danmark* from 1937 until 1964.

the mizzen, the after mast. I can hear him now, yelling, “Mizzen men, mizzen men.” One of Mr. Rohmer’s jobs was to get cadets to climb the rigging. When you first went aboard *Danmark*, you had to climb up to the top of the mast and down the other side. Now, I don’t know whether you’ve ever climbed the rigging of a full-rigged ship, but it gets your full attention—especially the first time.

Paul Stillwell: No.

Admiral Gracey: You’ve got these marvelous nice solid cable stays. Stretched between are really flimsy-looking pieces of rope called ratlines. They are where your weight is when you go aloft. The word is, “Don’t hang onto the ratlines. Hang on tight to the stays because those ratlines break.” *There’s* a confidence builder. And we’re going to go up in the air 150 feet. Later we would scramble around at various points up there. But that first day, just up and over. On the way, at platforms, we had to hang with our backs to the deck, climbing backwards and up over onto the platforms. Then we were going to go up to the next one. It was scary, but exciting. Some of the people didn’t want to do it. Some were terrified. Mr. Rohmer would take a belaying pin out of the fife rail, and he would go over and hit a stay just below a guy’s feet and say, very firmly, “You *vill* go up.” And he’d go right up behind him, hitting the stay to keep him moving. Then he would find another reluctant or terrified soul and do it again. We all remember Mr. Rohmer saying, “You *vill* go up.”

Captain Hansen was a masterful tall ship skipper. He demonstrated “tricks” right out of the old school of sailing masters. We were all convinced he also had a girlfriend in every port on Long Island Sound. Mr. Langevad was a first-class gentleman. We all loved him. My sail station was on the foremast. That was his domain.

Many years later, when I was Commandant of the Coast Guard, *Danmark* was coming to Washington. I’m the only Commandant that trained in both *Danmark* and *Eagle*. Jack Hayes, my predecessor, had gone from New London by the time we got

Eagle, and Paul Yost, who came after me, wasn't there when *Danmark* was there.* *Danmark* was coming to town, so I wanted to have a special affair for them out at the Commandant's quarters. We hosted the Danish ambassador and all the officers from *Danmark*. I was able to get in touch with Mr. Langevad through his daughter in New York, telling him that we were going to do this and asking if there was any possible way he could come and join us. Well, it turned out that he had been trying to join the ship somewhere anyway, so he came over. He came and spent an evening with us at our quarters. In the back we had a shaded patio and broad set of stairs into the house. The two of us stood out on the steps—like a stage—and told *Danmark* and cadet stories for a long time, but everybody was just eating it up. It was a marvelous evening, and he was a marvelous fellow.

Paul Stillwell: Probably one of the most enjoyable days you had as Commandant.

Admiral Gracey: I had a lot of enjoyable days as Commandant, but I've got to tell you, this one was very special. And that memory, you know, goes on. Later on I had some involvement with the Norwegian tall ship *Christian Radich* as well. That was when I was a rear admiral with my first flag job as Commander Ninth Coast Guard District headquartered in Cleveland. *Christian Radich* was going to come into the Great Lakes to celebrate America's 200th anniversary. It was also the 100th anniversary of Great Lakes lifesaving. I got with the Norwegian consul general in Cleveland and persuaded him to get his government to divert *Christian Radich* to Grand Haven, Michigan, in time for the annual Coast Guard Festival there. What a hit it was. Three years later, in San Francisco, I helped make arrangements for them to make another port call.

Paul Stillwell: What do you see as the value of sail training for Coast Guard cadets?

* Admiral John B. Hayes, USCG, served as Commandant of the Coast Guard from 1 June 1978 to 28 May 1982. He was a member of the Coast Guard Academy class of 1947, which graduated on 5 June 1946. Admiral Paul A. Yost Jr., USCG, served as Commandant of the Coast Guard from 30 May 1986 to 31 May 1990. He was in the academy class of 1951. His oral history is in the Naval Institute collection.

Admiral Gracey: I'm sure there are real sail-training pros who could go into it more authentically than I can. It's a gutsy thing to go aloft and work up there. In those days we didn't have safety belts or anything. You went out on the yardarm. You went up high. You got faith in yourself, but it also taught that what you did you couldn't do alone. We were using heavy canvas sails. The only way to get them up was to lean over the yardarm, put the yardarm into your belly, reach down as far as you could, gather a handful of sail, and then, in synch with the others out there with you, put it under your belly. Then, all together you would go do it again, and again, and again. When you leaned over, your feet were on what was called a footrope. It would go right out straight behind you. So you were hanging there on your heels really, and your belly. When you pulled the sail up, the footrope would swing back under the yardarm. There were people way the heck up at the top, on the royals. If you were tall at all, it was your knees, not your belly, that were at the level of the yard. That was really dangerous, so they put shorter people up there. You learned that you could do things you never dreamed of, and you learned the importance of teamwork.

Of course, a sailing ship is at the mercy of wind and wave. With sail training you learn to read the wind and the waves, and you pay close attention to the weather. A square-rigged ship is limited in how it can sail, how close to the wind and so forth. There was no roar of engines, none of that—just sea and weather sounds and feel. It gave you a great sense of the magnitude of what you are coping with when you are at sea: the wind, the waves, the sounds, the smells. Sleeping in a hammock I don't recommend, especially if you're a person who sleeps on his side. That was not one of the great things about sail training. They don't do that anymore anyway. They've got bunks. But it's mostly that business about learning how subject your ship is to the elements. If you're in a search-and-rescue situation, you have some feel that the object of the search isn't going to be where they said they were when they called you. We know that, and now we have computer programs and all that, but sail training helps it to make sense—and even helps in planning how to do a better job on scene.

We did a lot of pulling boat drill. A pulling boat was propelled by oars by a crew of eight or ten or so. Of course, in those days, even on the major ships like *Barataria*, there were pulling boats. You rowed out on man-overboard drills. Another story there

too. But I have a great recollection from *Danmark*. There were three short cruises for the new class during the summer. The first one took football players, soccer players, and cross-country runners so they could get back and start practicing. So we had a ship full of big, strong guys. The captain liked to create a realistic man-overboard drill periodically by throwing something over the side and calling, “Man overboard.” Then he liked to get under way on engines and let the boat crew catch him after picking up the “man” in the water. We were all brand-new swabs.

On this particular day the coxswain of the boat was one who had no water experience at all. This guy was standing at the sweep oar facing aft. The correct way is to hold the sweep oar under your arm and stand facing forward. You just steer with this big oar. He hadn’t quite got that idea. He was standing looking aft, looking over his shoulder, trying to hold the oar in front of him. He tried to head off and catch the ship, and he went right under the bow. The captain backed down hard, and the ship shuddered. I was aboard the ship at the time getting ready to grab a line and run away with it after the boat had hooked on the falls. So I was in position to see what happened next.

Our coxswain took his crew out, took dead aim, and came back toward the ship. The ship was now going astern, so this time the boat went under the stern. Captain Hansen said, in a loud Danish voice we all remember, “Yesus Christ, close the galley door. He’s coming in there next.” [Laughter] So he stopped the ship dead in the water. The boat went back out, and the coxswain headed for the ship. No bow or stern this time. He was heading right for amidships. The ship wasn’t moving. Those big, strong guys were really rowing. I don’t know how they ever got so good—lots of practice that day, I guess. That boat was fairly jumping out of the water, and the coxswain never said a word. Smashed right into the side of the ship going full stroke. We all looked over the side. There were bodies lying in the bottom of the boat, and the oars were all floating away. The coxswain was up forward somewhere, because he got propelled when they hit. He went home shortly after we returned to port. It was all good—and memorable—experience.

We had no machinery to weigh anchor. We hoisted it by walking around the capstan, pushing against big wooden beams that extended from it. The captain sailed up the river and through the drawbridge in New London, backed sails to stop the ship, and

sent a boat to the pier carrying a mooring line. Then we on the capstan went to work warping the ship to the dock. He never once ran the engines. What a performance. What a seamanship demo.

We were on that cruise in *Danmark*. It had been a rainy weekend, and we were in City Island, New York. It was a beautiful Sunday morning, and we were up there letting out the sails to dry. A boat had gone in to the beach to get the newspaper. When it came back, there was great excitement. That was the day we learned the United States had bombed Hiroshima.* And then, of course, there was all the news about the atom bomb and all the testing. It finally got to the newspapers. But I remember being up on the yardarm, the foremast main yard, number-three guy out to starboard, and I remember watching that boat come back and hearing all that excitement down on deck. “What’s going on?”

“We’ve just bombed the Japanese with a major bomb, a super bomb.” I learned about the start of the nuclear age while working on the yardarm of a square-rigger.

Paul Stillwell: How would you compare the *Eagle* experience with *Danmark*?

Admiral Gracey: Well, by the time I got to sail in *Eagle* I was a second classman, so I’d been on cruises; I’d been around.† Everything was written in English. Well, no, as a matter of fact some of the tags on it were still in German because we hadn’t changed them all. But it was our officers, our style. It was a different ship. But, you know, we sailed to Europe in it and so forth, and the experience was as good or better. As a matter of fact, probably better in the sense that we got more adventure, we got more high-seas sailing. We didn’t do that in *Danmark*.

Paul Stillwell: Any special memories from liberty ports that you made during those cruises?

* In the first combat use of atomic bombs, U.S. B-29 bombers hit Hiroshima, on the island of Honshu, on 6 August 1945 and Nagasaki, on Kyushu, on 9 August.

† USCGC *Eagle* (WIX-327) is a 295-foot-long, 1,816-ton, three-masted bark used for sail training by the Coast Guard Academy. She was built in Hamburg, Germany, in the mid-1930s as the training ship *Horst Wessel* for the German Navy. She was transferred to the United States in January 1946 as part of German reparations in the aftermath of World War II and commissioned by the Coast Guard that year.

Admiral Gracey: Nothing special. I was in London. We were at Shadwell Basin in London, which was a bombed-out part of the port. I got mononucleosis somewhere along the way, so I was sick as a dog. One of my classmates had relatives in Liverpool. I went there with him to visit, and I remember they were overjoyed. The war was over, and they were having hard times. But here was their nephew from the States, and he was now a U.S. Coast Guard cadet. He and his good friend had come all the way here to visit, and they were going to treat us well. They must have used every food stamp they had.* We had corned beef hash with a duck egg on top. To this moment I can visualize and almost get ill thinking of that picture of that pile of corned beef hash and that duck egg, but I knew what they had done to provide it, so I ate it. I remember being in and around London as a special place. Later on, as Commandant, I went over there to meetings of the International Maritime Organization and Randy and I got to know and love London and England.

The cadet cruise had a good stop in the Azores. I remember being driven around by a taxi driver who had come from New Bedford, Massachusetts, before World War II. He was a Portuguese-American fisherman who had gone back to visit his mother. The war started when he was there, and he couldn't get back to the States. He'd been in the Azores all the time. Here were some American cadets. Nothing would do but that he was going to drive us all over the island, and, of course, he wanted to talk about the Red Sox. [Laughter] Can you believe that? He wanted to talk about the Red Sox, and he had heard nothing, of course. He'd been there with no baseball news whatever. The cruise also went to Tenerife in the Canary Islands.

We came back by way of Bermuda. I remember lying on my belly in Bermuda on a hot, hot, hot night, down in the engine room cleaning out the oil sump, I think. We also cleaned soot out of boiler tubes and were covered with the stuff. Everybody else was on liberty having a good time. We were in the duty section, and we got to clean the engine room, and that was a hot, miserable, tough job.

Paul Stillwell: Did you get ashore in Bermuda at all?

* The British went through severe food rationing during and after World War II.

Admiral Gracey: No, I don't remember it. I remember being dazzled by the color of the water. But, no, I didn't. In Europe most of the guys went to Paris, and they had a wonderful time, but my friend Sid Wallace, now rear admiral (retired), and I went to Liverpool.* We agreed we wouldn't have traded that experience for anything. I just wish I hadn't been sick.

Paul Stillwell: What memories do you have of Admiral Wallace as a cadet?

Admiral Gracey: We were good friends. He was the fellow I mentioned that gave some thought to leaving for the ministry. We talked seriously at one point if we might want to do that. It was because we were on a cadet cruise in the Great Lakes our third-class year. It still wasn't safe to go to Europe, they didn't think. Europe wasn't ready for us, so we split our cruise. Half of it was on the Great Lakes in *Mackinaw*, our icebreaker up there. Half was in a 255-foot cutter called *Sebago*, and that was not a pleasant experience. We had a captain that did crazy things with us in lifeboats, like dropping us. He thought the best way to launch the boats quickly was get them over the side and then drop them from several feet above the surface. That was a jarring experience.

But in *Mackinaw* we stopped at Mackinac Island, and Sid and I went to church at a local place and got taken to lunch at the Grand Hotel by the local minister and his wife. That got us thinking. Many years later, I showed up out there in the Great Lakes as the Ninth District Commander. I went to a lot of different places, and I told the story of having been on the cadet cruise in 1946 up there. I said, "We had wonderful dances and so forth." Then I would always look around and say, "If any of you were there that night, shut up." [Laughter] That always went over big, but nobody ever came and fessed up that had been around there 28 years earlier. The *Mackinaw* cruise was a grand experience. We went through the Soo Locks. We learned about ore boats and really a very special culture that is the Great Lakes maritime. So when I went back as the Ninth District Commander I was not totally green. I had at least been there, and it was interesting. Who would have thought way back when riding *Mackinaw* in those places

* Rear Admiral Sidney A. Wallace, USCG (Ret.). Wallace and Gracey were academy classmates.

that you would go back and how much of it would come back and register as something you'd done, someplace you'd been?

Paul Stillwell: Any memories of *Mackinaw* as a ship?

Admiral Gracey: Just huge, and I had a memory of thinking that my career was going to end because one day I'd been late for morning formation. I'd really been busting my tail. We'd been going, going, going, and I had the night watch, and I was sleeping hard when reveille blew. I'd overslept, and I'd been late for formation. The next night I was asleep, and the 0400 watch was up, getting ready to go. I was aware that there was movement, and I thought they were getting ready to go to regular muster, and I was going to be late again. I leapt out of my sack, and they had to tackle me from going running up the ladder to go out and report. It was 4:00 o'clock in the morning. "No, no, no, Jim. No, no. Not yet."

But I also remember making a comment about a pump called the handy billy. It was a smallish, allegedly portable gasoline-driven pump. Our job at fire drill was to get it up onto the fantail and rig it up for pumping water. That was my first introduction to a handy billy. It was not really very handy, and we were trying to get it up a narrow ladder onto the deck. I remember commenting in a rather loud tone that this was "not very blankety-blank *handy*."

Then I heard a voice say, "[Growl], that will do Mr. Gracey. Just bring it up here. We don't need any comments while you go. No editorials, Mr. Gracey."

Paul Stillwell: Now, whose voice was that?

Admiral Gracey: That was a lieutenant by the name of Ed Scheiderer.* He was a tactics officer at the Academy. Later he was the Chief of Staff of Coast Guard Headquarters and retired as a rear admiral. I worked for him then, which I'll tell you about when we get to that part. What goes around comes around. In fact, I reminded him of it one day, and he said, "Yeah, you haven't changed at all, have you? You're still editorializing."

* Lieutenant Edward D. Scheiderer, USCG.

[Laughter] His later comment was around '70-'71, when we had taken a real hit on the budgetary mark from OMB and then DoT.*

Anyway back to the *Mackinaw*. We almost lost a couple of classmates because *Mackinaw* stopped in Milwaukee and had a tour of a brewery and lots of free beer. A couple of them overdid it, and we almost lost them. But cooler heads prevailed that they'd been kind of set up by this. If you don't want young guys to drink, don't take them to a brewery where they get all the free beer they can drink. They should know better, but they didn't.

The second half of our summer cruise was in *Sebago*. We did the Caribbean. We did Antigua, Puerto Rico, San Juan, the Bahamas. Went to the Virgin Islands.

Paul Stillwell: So you were on the *Mackinaw* and *Sebago* in '46.

Admiral Gracey: Yes. We crossed midway. In the second-class summer we didn't take a long cruise. We did the short cruise with the new class, and we helped to break in the new class back at the barracks. We also went to Elizabeth City and got acquainted with our airplanes. We flew in the old B-17, which USCG called the PB-1G.† That was our long-range search airplane at the time. We flew in those and a couple of smaller ones, and we actually got to fly them a little. We didn't have a totally free hand, but anyway we did that, and that was a good experience. Then the first class year we went in *Eagle* and *Campbell* to Europe and so forth.

Paul Stillwell: This was all very broadening, considering your background.

Admiral Gracey: Oh, well, you know. Yes. I think the first time I went west of New Haven was when the soccer team went to West Point for a game, then later on to the Naval Academy and so forth. And those were it. We did go to New Haven for one last "wartime" schedule football game with Yale in '45. That was a joke.

* OMB—Office of Management and Budget; DoT—Department of Transportation.

† Boeing's B-17 Flying Fortress was one of the principal bombers employed by the U.S. Army Air Forces throughout World War II.

We had a red-hot football team at the Academy during the war, as all the academies did. We beat Brown and others. A man in my hometown, Needham, really wanted me to go Brown, not the Coast Guard Academy. He persuaded me to go down to Brown with him and see a football game, Brown being in Providence, Rhode Island. Okay. Well the idiot took me to the Coast Guard-Brown football game, and that wasn't what he really had in mind. If he really had in mind persuading me *not* to go to the Coast Guard Academy, that wasn't the right thing to do, especially since the Academy beat the pants off Brown. But then the war ended, and everybody got back to college.

But we played Yale, and the cadet corps went to New Haven and the Yale Bowl. Going back to the buses that were to take us back to New London, we were riding on the open trolley cars that they had in New Haven, and people were heating up pennies and throwing them at us. We were in uniform, and the war was over. We were fair game. I remember getting on the bus, and as we were riding home we passed an apple cider place, and I said, "Oh, I love apple cider. Stop and let's get some apple cider." I announced that I loved apple cider so much I could drink the whole jug. And everybody said, "Without getting off the bus?"

I said, "Right." So I had this jug, and I had to finish it before we got in the South Gate at the Academy. I drank on this thing, and they finally took mercy on me when they did stop the bus and everybody got off. They likened as how I could do that, but I still had to finish this jug. I got down to about a half an inch of cider left in the bottom of that jug, and the bus was coming up the hill to the Academy, and everybody was cheering because they all had money on my success or failure at that point. I couldn't do it. I couldn't get it in me. I had a date that night with a gal from Conn College, and we went to the movies. She saw the movie, and I spent the whole night in the head. [Laughter]

But, you know, the reaction of the people in New Haven was interesting, even that close after the war. Of course, a lot of them were guys who'd been in the war, had been in the services I'm sure. The war had ended. This would have been—oh, this would have been the autumn. Gee, the war had just ended. V-J Day had just been.

Paul Stillwell: Your cider story reminds of the egg-eating contest in the Paul Newman movie, *Cool Hand Luke*.

Admiral Gracey: Oh, yes. Not dissimilar.

Paul Stillwell: Was there any deliberate program of attrition or weeding out that you sensed at the Academy? Was there a sense of, “We’re going to separate the wheat from the chaff and just keep the ones that are really good”?

Admiral Gracey: Oh, well, it’s all part of the program. It isn’t all academics. There were some guys who were academic geniuses, but there was no way they were ever going to make it. You had the seamanship courses and the things like that, and then you had—I’ve forgotten what they’re called—adaptability or something like that. There were aptitudes. There were some things you got graded in, and the officers kind of freewheeled on that. I thought maybe you meant were we weeding out Jewish cadets. We didn’t have any black cadets. And I’m not sure about that. I was never convinced that there wasn’t some of that going on. But I don’t know. Some of our professors were still carryovers from during the war. These were people who had come to teach there during the war and had put on a uniform in the Coast Guard Reserve. Some of them were very good, and some of them were not so very good.

Paul Stillwell: How well did you do in the academics?

Admiral Gracey: I did very well. I think I graduated third or fourth in the class. At that time we only had a battalion, and I was the Cadet Battalion Commander with the permanent set. They had three trial runs, and then for the last six months there was one guy, and I was the one.

Big thrill of leading the Coast Guard Academy Cadet Corps past Harry Truman on his inaugural, carrying my sword.* Typical Jim Gracey trick. By gosh, if you’re supposed to carry a sword a certain way, you’re going to carry it that way. Right? The fact that you couldn’t do that very long without your arm going numb didn’t dawn on me

* Harry S. Truman was President of the United States from 12 April 1945 to 20 January 1953. He succeeded to the office after the death of Franklin Roosevelt and then was elected in his own right in 1948. He was inaugurated on 20 January 1949.

in time. Mine went dead. As we came down Pennsylvania Avenue and I got ready to give “Eyes left,” I was convinced I was going to either throw the sword in the air or plunge it into the pavement, because I had no feeling in my arm at all. So concerned about it I’m not sure I ever really saw Harry. I didn’t drop the sword, though.

I talked to you about my family. I had an aunt and an uncle from Hartford who were characters, and they were travelers. When they heard that I was going to do this parade bit—oh, by the way, my dad said, “If Jim becomes the Cadet Battalion Commander, I’ll buy a television set so we can watch the parade,” and he did. But, anyway, I had no idea Aunt Louise and Uncle Ralph were going to Washington. I was leading the cadet corps up 15th Street past the Treasury Department, up the hill. There’s a tough turn at the end of E Street and Pennsylvania to go up the hill. Pennsylvania actually goes up and around Treasury there. But it’s tough to make that turn and keep your line and then look good going up the hill, and I was really concentrating on that. Then I heard in the crowd, “There he is, Ralph. Hello, Jimmy.” I looked for a manhole that I could dive in. I wanted to die. [Laughter] Nobody else knew it but me, but I knew it. Later I loved it—that they came.

Paul Stillwell: On what basis were you chosen for that honor?

Admiral Gracey: Who knows? Well, I had been one of the three trial guys, and while I was I took a kind of different tack on trying to get the Cadet Corps squared away. Rather than being a hard-nosed disciplinarian, I tried to get people to do things the right way because it was the right thing to do. There was a third-class cadet who was a great cartoonist, and we had a series of cartoons. We would have the cartoon of the week. For example, one said, “Liberty’s great. Let’s all make the party.” It showed a big, long liberty party. My first-class classmates—who didn’t have to make liberty parties—were all over my case about it: “What are you going to do? Are you going to have us all make liberty parties?”

“Come on, you guys. You don’t have to go to liberty parties.” But I did a bunch of that sort of thing. I don’t know whether that was it or what. I guess they just liked my

style or liked the things I did, and academically I was doing well and my aptitude—whatever they called the leadership mark—was always pretty good.

Paul Stillwell: Who made the choice? Was it your peers or the officers?

Admiral Gracey: Oh, no. No, no, not the peers. It was the Commandant of Cadets and the Superintendent and the Tactics Officer, I'm sure.* Later on, every company had its own tactics officer assigned. We didn't. We had one overall tactics officer and the Commandant of Cadets. Maybe it was because the Commandant of Cadets was a baseball fan, and I was team co-captain. He and his wife were great baseball fans and came to all our games no matter where they were. If I wasn't pitching, I'd be coaching third base, and I'd go over and chat with them. No, I'd like to think it was because I did a variety of things that caught their fancy. Who knows?

[Interruption for change of tape]

Paul Stillwell: Just after the other tape ended you mentioned your nickname from the parade ground. We should get that on the tape.

Admiral Gracey: Well, yes. My nickname was Mumbles. My predecessor, the battalion commander the year before me in the class of '48, was a fellow by the name of Wayne Caldwell, who retired as a vice admiral.† Wayne was a great big strapping guy and had a voice like a foghorn. When Wayne gave commands on the parade ground, there was no doubt what was being said. I followed that, and I think a couple of the others who had preceded me in the temporary slates were probably good boomers too. I thought I was bellowing, but my name was Mumbles.

Paul Stillwell: How would you assess the quality of the education you got at the Coast Guard Academy?

* Rear Admiral Wilfred N. Derby, USCG, served as Superintendent of the Coast Guard Academy from August 1947 to August 1950.

† Cadet Wayne E. Caldwell, USCG.

Admiral Gracey: Superb. Not only in the academic side of it but the interpersonal relationships and doing it under somewhat of duress. You know, there are people who talk about going to an Academy: “Boy, that’s a good deal. You get a free education.” It ain’t free. I mean, it may be free in dollars, but you pay for it. It is hard work. You’re on the go all the time. It used to be. I don’t know how it is today, and I have no reason to think it’s different today, but philosophies change, things change. But we couldn’t have food in our room. We had to turn the light out at 10:00 o’clock every night, and if you were involved in sports you spent the whole afternoon at that. You ate your dinner, and then you went to work, but you had to be done by 10:00. Most people had good flashlights that they used under the blanket after the lights were out if they wanted to do anything at all, those who were trying to keep up.

Some of the professors were better than others. Some were line officers who had been brought in and were naturally good teachers. Some were not, but they were keeping one step ahead of us in the subject matter one way or another. I thought it was good, but I did think one thing that was missing was a course on human relations. After I left, and for years afterwards, I kept pleading to add leadership and human relations.

Paul Stillwell: Certain techniques you can learn.

Admiral Gracey: Yes—and just the importance of the interpersonal relations. I think there was sometimes a tendency toward elitism. I didn’t feel we learned much about the Coast Guard itself. A little bit when you went on a cruise, but that was an artificial atmosphere. It was great to understand how a ship runs and navigation and really be there and feel the waves. That was wonderful. I wouldn’t change that. But we didn’t really know about what the Coast Guard did. I have felt that that was missing. I don’t know whether they’re getting it now or not.

I do know that as the Commandant when I went up to graduations, after they got sworn in I would make a little pitch. It was a very short talk, because there was usually the President of the United States or somebody waiting to speak. But I couldn’t let the opportunity go by. I refused to go away without saying to them, “Congratulations on

completing your apprenticeship. Now you're going out into the real world, and you're going to start learning how to be a leader. You are going to start now learning how to be a Coast Guard officer." And I would charge them all to learn from the very best teachers there are in the world, namely the enlisted personnel of the United States Coast Guard. And I charged them all with taking care of the men and women of the Coast Guard. Make sure they took care of them and listened to them and so forth. Learn from them. That part got missed, I think, in our time.

Paul Stillwell: Is that what you mean by elitism?

Admiral Gracey: It was elitism in the sense that what went on inside the fence in New London was all they knew about the Coast Guard. That was their world, but it wasn't the real world of the Coast Guard. It was a very significant place, and the people who were there, a lot of them, were old pros from which we could learn a lot. One of our seamanship instructors was Captain Miles Imlay, who had been the flotilla commander for all our landing craft at D-Day in World War II.* He was a salt of the first order. He took command of *Eagle*. There was a guy you could learn a lot about and from. But we didn't ever talk very much about his experience. He never stood on the stage and told us about it. That was not to be done, and I don't think it's being done much now.

We don't use our retired people well. It's just that there are a lot of people who know a lot, who have seen a lot, who know the meaning of the saying, "What goes around comes around," who know where we came from and helped to build the Coast Guard into what it is today. My impression is we're doing a better job of it. This is not to critique the Academy today. You asked me about what it was like back in the late '40s. It was a great learning experience. It was a great interpersonal experience. It was hard work. It was constant and 24 hours a day. Well, we get 20 hours a day or something.

You know, we learned about pulling boats. We rowed up the river and back every morning, and that's good stuff. I mean, that was great. Physical fitness, running

* Captain Miles H. Imlay, USCG, served as commander of LCI Flotilla Ten and as deputy commander of Assault Group O-1 for Omaha Beach when the Allies invaded Normandy, France, on 6 June 1944.

down there, getting into those things, race up to the Navy Sub Base and back down again, get out and pull them up, come up, take a shower, and try to get done in time to go and eat breakfast so that you could whatever.* And there were lots of fun things that went on. Lots of traditions like yelling, “Fire in the paint locker” while we were eating. Bang, bang, bang on the water pitcher, and some upperclassmen would say, “Fire in the paint locker.” We would all dive under the table. The name of the game was take a pat of butter with you when you went down so you could get some upperclassman’s shoes with the butter before you came back up. They could never get them shined, and they’d have to go get a new pair of shoes. Well, it was all part of the atmosphere. And thinking back on it, it was a great experience.

Paul Stillwell: Well, the butter on the shoe is part of the beat the system if you can. That’s the steaming up of the room. Were there other examples of that?

Admiral Gracey: I’m sure there were. They don’t pop into my head right away. There was hazing that went on during the meals. If you said something that displeased an upperclassman, you would “shove off,” meaning you continued in a sitting position but without a chair. That’s hard to do for very long. I don’t care what kind of shape you’re in. Some of it would go on too long. Most of the time the upperclassmen would keep an eye on you and would step in.

It depended on whose table you were at. I happened to luck out. You had to tell jokes, and if they didn’t like your joke you had to shove off. Your classmates at the table all had to laugh whether they understood the joke or not. They were supposed to laugh uproariously at any joke that was ever told by a classmate and all that kind of thing. But I thought I was brought up in a household where table manners were important and so forth. I learned a lot, just in the process of eating at the Academy, of manners and inter-social kinds of things. So it was good experience.

Paul Stillwell: Was there hazing at other times besides mealtimes?

* Navy Sub Base—Naval Submarine Base New London, which is actually on the Groton side of the Thames River.

Admiral Gracey: Well, yes. They had what they called “flying fives.” If at the morning inspection you had displeased somebody, why, the flying fives were five minutes before every formation you had to run back and forth between various rooms. Or you would do a “rifle workout,” pushups with a rifle, that kind of thing. Of course, whenever an upperclassman yelled something out of his doorway all the fourth classmen had to have an answer. Some examples:

“What’s the use?”

“Ain’t no use, sir.”

“How long is a Chinaman?”

“Yes, sir.” (Because you’re answering a question)

“How’s [pronounced “house”] the awning.”

“Aye, aye, sir.” (Because you’re responding to an order)

“How long you been in the Coast Guard, Mister?” has a long answer. I can still repeat it.

Paul Stillwell: Well, these can provide opportunities for cruelty for those who are so inclined.

Admiral Gracey: Exactly, and there were some people who were actually good officer material, but I’m sure were driven out of the Academy by it. And there were a couple of them that just couldn’t handle it. They were run to death, but they weren’t going to give up. They just couldn’t do it. And there was some extremism. So if it’s gone away it’s good. But there was some fun about it too. You know, you went down the middle of the hall, you did square corners, you did all that kind of stuff and that’s okay.

Paul Stillwell: Were there officers whom you would describe as role models while you were a cadet?

Admiral Gracey: Well, yes. Captain Imlay was one. He was a little gruff. He had a kind of a bulldog appearance. That caused me some embarrassment one day. An old

English bulldog had been adopted by us after he showed up in our class recreation room. Each class had a rec room. Well, the first class had their own. The swabs didn't have one, but the second and third class had one together.* Anyway, the bulldog showed up, and we named him Miles because he kind of looked like Captain Imlay. And Miles just hung around. Miles was an ugly old dog. One day we were all waiting to get into seamanship class, and the bulldog showed up. And I said, "Miles, what the hell are you doing here?" [Laughter]

The answer was, "[Growl sound], I've come to teach the class, Mr. Gracey." [Laughter]

I said, "S-s-sir, I was t-t-talking to the dog."

He said, "Are you telling me the dog is named after me, Mr. Gracey?"

"Not after you, sir. We just thought it was a good name."

"Right." [Laughter]

Gosh, that's a good question. Bob Boardman was our class advisor for a while, and we came to care for him a lot.† A lot of the classes had good people who were their advisors. Some tried to beat the system by picking somebody they thought would be politically good for them but not necessarily agree with them. We tried that, and it was a big mistake. We picked a guy who was in an untenable position, and there was no way he could be good to us because that wasn't his job. We wanted him to favor us, and that didn't work. That was a dumb thing to do.

Paul Stillwell: Well, sometimes there are the officers who have a little bit of a sadistic streak and will deliberately try to catch cadets in missteps.

Admiral Gracey: Yeah, I'm sure that went on. There were instructors who were good at their trade and were good people. One was Lieutenant Ray Perry.‡ I'm reluctant to start naming names because I'm going to leave out some people that I really don't want to leave out, and I would have to go back and really think that one through. Suffice it to say there were. Yeah, there were some that we looked to and some people would look at

* The second class corresponded to the junior year of college and the third class to the sophomore year.

† Lieutenant (junior grade) Robert C. Boardman, USCG.

‡ Lieutenant Raymond J. Perry, USCG.

people for different reasons. Carl Olsen was good.* I liked his style. He was a good-looking guy. He was an aviator, and he and his wife were great baseball fans. Never missed one of our games. We had two tactics officers that were really tough on us, and we didn't particularly care for them, but as far as I was concerned they were fine. But a role model? I don't think so.

Paul Stillwell: In the Naval Academy of that era the system of education, if you would call it that, meant memorizing what was in the book and being able to reproduce it in class and on tests. Was there something similar at the Coast Guard Academy?

Admiral Gracey: Yeah. Yeah, it worked out pretty much that way. There were people who were a lot smarter than I who couldn't take an exam worth doodly-squat. I had a roommate, retired as vice admiral, Chuck Larkin.† He just understood engineering and he, bless his heart, would explain things to me. I didn't always get it, but when I got to the exam I got it. He didn't necessarily take exams that well. So I did better on these things than he did. I've always given him credit for this, and we've got a kind of a running thing. He was my best man when I got married, and I would have been his if I hadn't been at sea at the time. And he's godparent of one of our kids and vice versa. You know, it's that kind of a deal.

But there was a lot of that, especially in the technical kinds of things. It was could you remember formulas? Could you bone up and remember it, and I could do it. A month later I might have some of it, but I wouldn't have it all, whereas guys like Chuck just knew it.

We were talking about professors and teachers. There was one, a fellow by the name of Red Carlson.‡ He was an old-timer, had been a cadet at the Academy. On a cadet cruise in Europe something had gone awry. Somebody stole something from a store in the Netherlands, and the classmates who were there at the time knew about it but wouldn't tell who it was. Red was one of those guys, and they all got kicked out.

* Captain Carl B. Olsen, USCG.

† Cadet Charles E. Larkin, Jr., USCG. As a rear admiral, Larkin served as Superintendent of the Coast Guard Academy from July 1981 to June 1982.

‡ Captain Arnold E. Carlson, USCG (Ret.).

Nobody would squeal on the guy, and the guy didn't have the guts to come up and say, "I did it," so that his classmates didn't have to leave. Red then went on and joined the Coast Guard and retired as a senior captain, much beloved. Was a colorful character. He taught literature and history, and he had a big deep voice and he would say, "Gentlemen, I read a marvelous book this weekend, and it's pure pornography. I recommend it in the highest terms." [Laughter] Or, "Only proper way, only proper way," was another expression of his.

When I was the Commandant, Randy and I would have a Christmas party for retirees in the area. Filled our Commandant's Quarters to overflowing. A grand, warm affair. We always invited Red to come. He lived in the boonies in Maryland. He would come, and he hadn't changed a bit. It was just great. Salty guy. He was absolutely marvelous when he got on *Eagle*. Man, he was a salt of the first order. Yeah, there's a guy, an example.

Paul Stillwell: Was there anything that might be known as an honor code or honor concept at that time?

Admiral Gracey: Oh, yeah. You know, I say, "Oh, yeah," and there was, and I just accepted it, but I don't know that I could tell you what it was called. It just was there were certain ways you lived and certain things you did.

Paul Stillwell: Sounds as if it wasn't codified.

Admiral Gracey: I'm not sure it was, come to think of it. Maybe it was just passed down. We all understood it. The upperclassmen drilled it into us, and we had a little book that we got when we got there. What was it called? *Running Lights*, I think. A little booklet, pocket-sized, that we got when we got there and it had all these things like, "How long you been in the Coast Guard, Mister?" so you could learn all those answers. But it had a lot of other stuff and tradition.

Paul Stillwell: The counterpart is called *Reef Points* at the Naval Academy.

Admiral Gracey: Yeah. *Running Lights* is right. Same idea. I'm sure they've all got them. And I'm sure it had some code, some things about rules of behavior. But I don't remember one being codified.

Paul Stillwell: One of the things that later grew up as a scandal at the Naval Academy was a section that took a test early would pass on the information to a section taking it later. Was that commonplace or done at all?

Admiral Gracey: Well, I have a hunch, but I never heard of it. But part of that would be that we were so small that there weren't a series of people taking them.

Paul Stillwell: I see.

Admiral Gracey: We only had a 160 people in our class when we started, and by the time the war ended and we got into second and third class year we were way down. We only graduated 57 and 55 commissioned. I just don't remember hearing about cheating going on. I'm sure that's not to say we weren't about that sort of thing or were above it, and there's a couple of guys I can think that might have done it.

Paul Stillwell: Why such a small percentage of those entering wound up graduating?

Admiral Gracey: Well, for one thing we were pretty tough, but for another the war ended, and a lot of the people who had come just because they wanted someplace to be with the war going on didn't want to be there anymore, and they went away. Some stayed as much as a couple of years but decided that wasn't really what they wanted to do.

When we had our 50th reunion, in 1999, we worked really hard at contacting as many of those people as we could and pressed them to come back to the reunion. If they couldn't, at least we had what we called the *Golden Tide Rips*, for the 50th year. *Tide*

Rips is our regular yearbook. Everybody wrote two pages. I think you could write 1,500 words about yourself and put in a couple of pictures, whatever you wanted to write about.

We really encouraged those guys to contribute to that. A lot of them did. It's amazing how many of them went on to be doctors and lawyers and, you know, very successful people. And almost to a man they attributed a big part of it to the Coast Guard Academy. Even the ones that only stayed six months. That it somehow kicked them in the butt, shook them up, and got them pointed somewhere. It may not have been to the Coast Guard, but it was somewhere. Then when we had the reunion a lot of them came. It was very special. You know, some of them were only around for a year, and then they went away. Fifty years later they came back.

One had been a close buddy, Red Ketcham. He is a professor of the U.S. Constitution at Syracuse University, now retired. But he goes all over the world teaching about the United States Constitution. His name is Ralph, but I know him as Red. Red was a left-handed pitcher, and we used to talk about who had the worst junk ball because we both threw junk. And also we had a fierce ping-pong competition that lasted for the two years that he was at the Academy or the time we had. He was at the reunion, and we had a wonderful time. Later I was able to arrange for him and his daughter to make a trip aboard *Eagle* when they did their OpSail run to Canada. The Ketchams have Canadian relatives, and they wanted to see them.

Paul Stillwell: Now, you say they wanted to be there because of the war. Are you saying that they wanted to avoid the draft?

Admiral Gracey: Well, yeah, I suppose that's so. Like the guys that went into the V-12, are you going to say they were trying to avoid the draft? Maybe. Guys that went into the ROTC programs, that it? It was a place to go, and they wanted to be in the Coast Guard, and they wanted to be Coast Guard officers. If this war was going to go on, they wanted to do it in the Coast Guard, I guess, if they'd given that any thought. Here was a place they could have a run at. They didn't have to have a congressional appointment.

* V-12 was a Naval Reserve officer training program in which individuals received naval instruction at the same time they worked toward bachelor's degrees. The program, which was held at civilian colleges and universities, took about two years.

And let's do that and see how it goes. People have said to me, "How did you know you were interested in a Coast Guard career?" I didn't know I was interested in a Coast Guard career. In fact, I never gave it any thought. What I wanted was to go to the Coast Guard Academy. That was my end. I had wanted that since I was nine years old or so.

Paul Stillwell: And that's as far as the plan went.

Admiral Gracey: I didn't think about the fact that there was something that came after the Coast Guard Academy. Then, of course, the war came along and, "Hey, you know, I'm going to go into some service. I'm 17 years old, and there's a class starting. I'll be 18 in August. I'm finishing my senior year, and I'm finishing high school and, of course, I'm going to give it a try." And what do you know, I made it. But I was going to enlist in the Coast Guard if I couldn't. We had several classmates who came from enlisted ranks in the Coast Guard and other services.

Paul Stillwell: Did you have the three-year curriculum when you first entered that got lengthened to four?

Admiral Gracey: No, not for us. Admiral Hayes, my predecessor as the Commandant, was in the last of the three-year classes. His was the class of '47, but he graduated in '46. And then the class of '48 people were first classmen for two years. We always told them that made them even more insufferable than they were to start with. You know, that's an ongoing thingamabob.

Paul Stillwell: But did you know when you entered that it was going to be four years?

Admiral Gracey: Oh, I didn't really give it any thought. I don't think I even knew there were three-year classes until I got there. In fact, I can remember there being a bulletin board with a list of graduates that year. It was 1945. Why was it called the class of 1946? I remember seeing that and saying to somebody, "How come all those guys in the class of '46 are acting like they've just graduated?"

“Well, they have. They cut it to three years.”

“Ooh.” Like I said, I just wanted to go in the gate and put on the uniform. I wanted to be a Coast Guard Academy Cadet.

Paul Stillwell: Any other highlights to remember from your sports activities there? Did your pitches get any faster?

Admiral Gracey: No. Well, it was those pitches that Captain Vaughn was talking about. But I had good control, and I won a few games. At our reunion that junk pitcher I talked about earlier, Red Ketcham, and I figured we'd set a record. There was a guy named Walt Dropo. Does that name mean anything to you?

Paul Stillwell: He was the first baseman for the Red Sox.

Admiral Gracey: Exactly.

Paul Stillwell: Rookie of the year, 1950.

Admiral Gracey: Exactly. He and his brothers were playing at the University of Connecticut.

Paul Stillwell: He was from Moosup, Connecticut.

Admiral Gracey: You do remember Walt Dropo. Well, I remember all that, but I remember something else, too, which is that with the bases loaded I threw him a pitch that I suspect is still rolling, [Laughter] although it probably got into Long Island Sound. Man, he hit that ball. And then on his next trip to the plate Red had relieved me as the pitcher, and he also threw Dropo a grand slam home run. So we figured that we've got something going here, succeeding times at the bat Dropo hit grand slams off two of us. Anyway, yeah, I won some games. We had a good time doing it.

There was an old-time coach at the Academy, Nels Nitchman, known to all as “Nitch.”* He was a professional coach of all sports. Had been at Union College and then came to the Coast Guard Academy back in the ’30s. Nitch was a marvelous guy, one of a kind. Didn’t coach baseball when I was there. There was another fellow by the name of Paul Foye that coached.† When we went to games we went in private automobiles. The Coast Guard didn’t have a bus, so we all piled into automobiles, and coaches and other people drove us to the games.

Nitch would go along, and he would sit in the shade of a tree out along the third base line somewhere. About the second inning he’d come back and say, “Well, here’s their signals.” And he’d been out there stealing all their signals. He was just a pro at this kind of stuff. I remember that well. The same Captain Vaughn that I’m telling you about was a fine athlete—and a character. We were really getting beaten up at the University of Rhode Island. Coach Foye would not sit with us. I mean, we were playing so badly he went and sat—to our great joy—in some poison ivy back behind the fence. [Laughter] But at one point a fellow hit a fly to left field. There was a runner on third base. Sid Vaughn was playing third base. He went up and grabbed the runner by the belt and walked around in front of him and said, “Don’t run. Don’t run. He’s got an arm like a cannon. Don’t run.” Cadets like that story too. But we got beaten, I don’t know, 20-3 or something. It was awful. But most of the time we had a good time playing and we won a few games. We played our home games at a minor league park in downtown New London.

Paul Stillwell: And that also contributed to camaraderie.

Admiral Gracey: Oh, indeed. You know we still laugh about that sort of thing. Soccer was another story. We’d always had a pretty good soccer program coached by a professor of French named Gaston Buron, known affectionately by spelling it backwards as Notsag Norub.‡ [Laughter] You see we were an irreverent group. But the year that I

* Lieutenant Commander Nelson W. Nitchman, USCGR.

† Lieutenant Paul F. Foye, USCGR.

‡ Lieutenant Gaston N. Buron, USCGR.

got there he decided he didn't want to coach anymore. During the war we had a group of people to teach physical ed. Jack Dempsey was one who joined the Coast Guard.*

Anyway, there was a fellow by the name of Billy Taylor who had been a professional boxer, and he came to the Coast Guard. He was part of the physical ed program. They made him the soccer coach. And on the first day he said to us, "I don't know anything about soccer. Never played the stupid game. I don't know anything about it, but I know about conditioning, and you guys are going to be running when the other team is right down on their knees." And so we would go to soccer practice, and the first thing we would do was run part of the cross-country course. Then we'd kick the ball a little bit, until the bugle sounded and we'd go across the street and go to chow, and that was the end of it. But he was right. At the end of all the games we were fresh as daisies and running like mad. The other team had the ball and all the goals of course. [Laughter] It was an embarrassing experience. That lasted a couple of years, and they gave up on the soccer.

Later on, soccer got to be a big program at the Academy, and they had New England champion teams and really did very well, but much later on. In fact, Charlie Larkin's son, Jim, was one of their great soccer players.

The rifle team was an interesting experience. It was fiercely competitive intercollegiately, and we had a good team. We were nationally ranked. We were tops in New England. Our big teams to beat were Army and Navy, of course, which we did on occasion. We also shot in an industrial league in town. We'd go out at night and go out to someplace and shoot against a bunch of guys who were using scopes and straps, and we were doing the NRA rules of no scopes.† Nothing, just iron sights and shoot. And we did well. We won.

Paul Stillwell: Is that a combination of native ability and skill?

Admiral Gracey: I had never shot a rifle in my life until I got there. I think so, and steadiness. Some of it's the idea of squeezing the trigger. You got coached a little bit.

* Jack Dempsey, who had been heavyweight boxing champion from 1919 to 1926, was commissioned as a Coast Guard Reserve officer in World War II.

† NRA—National Rifle Association.

But one of my classmates was an all-American. He was really good. A fellow by the name of Arne Soreng.* Yeah, I think it's a combination of that and we would shoot on an indoor 50-foot range. You know, it's .22 caliber and that kind of thing. But it was very competitive. We had a pistol team that did the same. We got to travel. I had some good experiences on those travels.

Paul Stillwell: Any that you'd like to relate?

Admiral Gracey: I'm not sure I want to record it for history. Well, the details don't need to be too gaudy, but we fired at the Naval Academy one Saturday afternoon. And for some strange reason we didn't have to be back to New London until Sunday. And so there was a first class cadet and a third class cadet and I. They were coming down to Washington. They said, "Have you ever been to Washington?" I hadn't. I had never been to Annapolis before, let alone Washington. "So come on down, and we'll get a hotel room, and we'll grab a train tomorrow and go on back." And these were teammates. And so we did and we came down to D.C.

Well, the hotel the USO sent us to only had one room—for two people—but the first classman and I were about the same size.† So he said, "I'll go in and then I'll come out and you can go in and pretend you're me, and we'll get three of us in that room." This was early in 1946, so the town was booming and there were lots of dances. Every hotel had a dance and the women, military women and nurses and the guys and so forth. I had never had a drink in my life and didn't believe in it. I drank some beer that night, and didn't particularly care for it, but I drank some. I drank a lot of Coke.

We agreed that if we got separated we'd just go back to the hotel and say, "The other guy has the key. Can I go to the room?" After a while I just didn't want to do the dance hopping anymore, so I went out and went to a movie. But I had had all that stuff to drink, and I needed a head break. Don't ask me why I didn't go in the theater, but I didn't. I went out and there was a cab, and I asked him if he could take me back to the hotel. He said, "Sure. Have you ever been in this town before?"

* Cadet Arne J. Soreng, USCG.

† USO—United Services Organization is a group of U.S. civilians who put on entertainment programs for service personnel and provide hospitality for them in many parts of the world.

And I said, “No.”

And he said, “Well, I’ll give you a ride.”

I said, “I can’t afford it,” meaning I haven’t got the time. I’ve got to get back to a head.

He said, “No, no, no. On me. On me.” So he took me all over the city. It was wonderful. I had a wonderful tour of Washington, but I was in agony—and too young and embarrassed to tell him my troubles. Finally back to the hotel. Went to the desk and used the line. “The other guy’s in there.” He said, “There’s two people up there, but you can go up if you want. I’ll call them.” And I went up. I was dancing a jig in the hall, and they were not answering the telephone. And I was at a point of no return. And there was a fire escape right there. I was on the fourth floor. So I went out on the fire escape. They are for emergencies after all. And there was a tin roof four floors below. Lights started going on around the hotel. This long arm reached out of our hotel room and grabbed me, and a voice said, “Get in here, you idiot.”

Well, I told the coach of the rifle team about that afterwards, and for years, even after I got out of there and was fairly senior he’d say, “Tell me about the night you were on the fire escape.” [Laughter]

Small world? Just this past week I was talking to a guy who said, “I have a very close friend who was in the Coast Guard. We come from the same small town in Idaho. His name is George Thomas.”

I said, “Was he kind of my size? Would he be about three or four years older than me?”

He said, “Yeah.”

George Thomas was the guy that yanked me into the room off the fire escape. Well, that’s not one of my prouder moments, but it has created great levity amongst my friends over the years as some of the silly things that one does.

Paul Stillwell: We were talking about the competitiveness of the shooting. Would you describe yourself as a competitive person?

Admiral Gracey: Oh, right up to the eyeballs. I am a competitor from the word “Go.” Even when I was teaching my son to play ping-pong and, earlier, my young brothers, I wouldn’t spot them points. I’d just say, “Let’s see how close you can come.” I’m not proud of that, but that’s the way it was. Later on I got them so they would accept shots to start off ahead. I loved to compete at anything, sports and you name it. I just want to compete. I’m not a betting person. I don’t like to bet. I just want to get in there. See who can tell the best story. See who can make the best shot on the golf course. Let’s putt a few. Let’s putt from here and see how many we can get in. You know, let’s have a little putting contest, whatever. I just enjoy it, but I’m not big on putting money down on a golf game. I don’t care to do that. For me it’s enough to just compete.

Paul Stillwell: Does this go so far as hating to lose?

Admiral Gracey: No. No. Losing just means, well, I want to go again. I remember one time I was trying out for the junior high school baseball team. I was going to pitch. And I was new in the junior high, seventh grade. There was a list on the bulletin board of the people who were to report for uniforms, and my name was not on the list. I thought, “Oh, that can’t be.” I went in and drew a uniform anyway. Put it on and went out on the field. The coach never said anything, but I noticed my name was on the list the next day. I guess he figured if I wanted to play that bad and wanted to compete that hard he wanted me. I went on and wound up being the captain of the team and stuff like that. I just do that. The things I’m involved in I want them to be the best there is, and I want to do the best I can.

Paul Stillwell: But that story’s a good tip-off on your personality.

Admiral Gracey: What, about going and taking the uniform anyway? Well, yeah, it probably is.

Paul Stillwell: How would you remember the town of New London from the late 1940s, from those times you got out into it?

Admiral Gracey: I remember it with fondness. The railroad station particularly we saw a lot, of course. Well, not a lot but you came and went from there. The downtown area, there was a restaurant that I used to go to on Saturday night. It was a Chinese place called the Palace Restaurant. They had great steaks there. Why you would go to a Chinese restaurant for steak I don't know, but I did. That I did it regularly led to a very special event in my life with my father. At one point something wasn't going well in my life at the Academy. I can't remember what it was, but I was really disturbed. And I don't know whether it was the blood pressure thing. It should have been past that. No, it was later than that. I can't remember.

But I was eating dinner this one Saturday night in the Palace Restaurant, and I looked up, and there was my father. He had said to my mother, "Jim's troubled about something. I think I'm going to hop the train and go down there and see if I can find him at the Palace Restaurant. That's where he usually is on Saturday night, and I'm going to see if I can find him, and we'll have a steak together." And he did, and we did have a steak together. Later on he went up to the Academy with me, and the officer of the day said, "Yeah, we've got an empty room. Your father can stay here tonight if he wants to." So he did and then took the train back the next day.

Paul Stillwell: Were you in fact troubled?

Admiral Gracey: Well, I can't remember why he came now. There had to be something, but I can't remember what. Maybe he just thought I was worrying about exams or something. I really don't know. I can't remember being seriously troubled there, but obviously there must have been times when I was. There must have been times when something wasn't going quite the way I wanted it to or I hadn't done as well in something as I wanted to. Who knows what did it? Talking to my brother just the other day, I found out that when he was at Yale my dad did the same thing. Took the train down and had lunch with him unexpectedly, and the same kind of a deal. And it wasn't anything major. It was just my dad thought that maybe it would be a good time for him and me to have a

conversation, and I can't even remember what we talked about. I just remember the event.

Paul Stillwell: Maybe it was just a morale boost.

Admiral Gracey: Yeah, it may have been for him. It certainly was for me. [Laughter] Could be. He lived really vicariously through my Coast Guard career. In fact, after I went to Harvard Business School his partners really wanted him to press me to get out of the Coast Guard and come be a partner in the firm. He came to me, and he said, "You know where I stand in this, but I want to convey this offer to you from the company.

I said, "Dad, why don't you tell them that I am in the insurance business? If I don't save them, you'll pay them. Tell them I'm in the marine insurance business. And I thank them very much. If my job stops being fun I'll consider the offer."

Paul Stillwell: He probably brightened up.

Admiral Gracey: Oh, he loved it. He absolutely loved it, because he didn't want me to get out of the Coast Guard. He lived vicariously through that. And later on he and my next older brother came down to a basketball game, and we had dinner and then went to the game. So they had done that a couple of times. That was the second time. And maybe it wasn't trouble. Maybe it was just he decided he'd come down and have dinner with me. It had been a while since we'd talked. Maybe I'd lost a girlfriend. I can't remember what it was. Whatever it was, it wasn't major.

Paul Stillwell: Did you write regular letters home during that time?

Admiral Gracey: No, I was a telephoner. And at this point I wish I had because it would be nice to have them. In our family we've always used the telephone a lot. In fact, even when they would be at the beach not very far away I would call, but we didn't have a telephone in the cottage. There was a local little store called Hubbard's General Store. It was about 500 yards down the road. I'd call, and they'd answer the pay phone, and Mrs.

Hubbard, bless her heart, would walk down and tell the folks that I'd called. I'd arrange a time for them to call me back. And I'd be at the pay phone in the barracks or something. So we used the phone a lot, but I regret not having written more. I'd love to be able to read some letters now.

One other experience I had was seeing the *Hindenburg* fly over, low along the coast, blocking out the sky.* Apropos of nothing, but as a little kid I can remember racing home—from Hubbard's Store, of course—to call my folks' attention to the fact that, "The *Hindenburg* is—look, look." Well, of course, they were already looking. You couldn't miss it.

In New London there was a place called the College Diner that catered to cadets. It was right at the foot of the hill. There was another place across the street that made the best grinders in the world. You know what a grinder is? A grinder is a sub or hero, but it's a New London-style sandwich with its own combination of oil and pepper and an aroma all its own. It was an aroma that unfortunately could not be shielded no matter how you tried to hide the grinder in your closet with the idea of eating it after taps. [Laughter] But we all tried. And most of the ODs I think just accepted that that was going to happen.† That's what they said later on in years.

Paul Stillwell: What do you remember of your social life?

Admiral Gracey: Oh, for one thing fourth-class cadets got to start off their social year by going to a dance at Connecticut College for Women, now just Conn College. The dance was known affectionately—by cadets—as the "Pig Push." [Laughter] I don't know whether the Conn College women knew about that. What we did was form up in platoons and march up to Connecticut College. Each platoon was assigned a dormitory. You would go into the dorm one cadet at a time, and there would be a tray of jewelry sitting on a table in the hall. You would select one, take it into a room full of women,

* The German *Hindenburg* was one of the largest airships ever built. Completed in 1936, it was 812 feet long and 135 feet in diameter. It created an international sensation on 6 May 1937 when it exploded and burned while approaching its mooring at the naval air station in Lakehurst, New Jersey. That event ended regular airship service between the United States and Germany.

† OD—officer of the day.

and hold it up. The owner was your date for the evening. Lots of giggles. Can you imagine?

Paul Stillwell: This assures randomness.

Admiral Gracey: Oh, it does that. Well, you know, there were people who went on and married the women they met that night. There were others who could hardly wait for the night to be over. I met a gal that I dated a few times just because you had to go to the dance. In those days they had a formal every month, and Swabs had to attend with a date. It forced the hand of fourth classmen, of course, to get involved in the social mores. That was one of the mandatories. The owner of my jewelry selection was the woman I was dating the night I drank all the cider, but she came back anyway. Then there was the daughter of a warrant officer that I dated for a while.

Social life was kind of like that and going down to the College Diner and having a hamburger and coming back up, with two or three of the guys playing the pinball machine down there. We did that a lot. It wasn't very big time. I don't remember any other kinds of events. There would be some occasions when we would be invited—oh, there was always the case of the admiral's daughter that had to go to the dance. I remember Rear Admiral Pine's daughter, Joan.* And Joan was a lovely gal, but she was the admiral's daughter. And there was somebody in the class had to date the admiral's daughter, and we drew straws, you know. It had to be awful for her. Awful. I never drew the straw, so it was okay. No, that's about the limit of my social life. It was mostly around the academy and playing ball with the guys or shooting pool or ping-pong in the rec room. I was talking about competing.

Paul Stillwell: Did you meet your future wife during that period?

Admiral Gracey: No, I knew my future wife. We went to high school together. She moved into Needham from Boston when we were in the sixth grade. Made a big splash

* Rear Admiral James Pine, USCG, served as Superintendent of the Coast Guard Academy from July 1940 to July 1947.

because she arrived with pigtails and a brand-new yellow bicycle, with balloon tires. I remember it well. And she made a big splash in Needham. We walked to school together. We were buddies. I think I was talking about, “Let’s get rid of the middle man,” because we were double dating with other people. She went off to Middlebury College, and I went to New London. We went home for the Christmas holidays and decided to heck with the middleman: “Let’s you and I date. Let’s see where this goes.” And, well, here we are many years later. That’s where I met her—in the sixth grade in Needham

The beauty of that is that you are well-known creatures. You think there are no surprises. There are still surprises. But one thing is you can’t say, “I was a big hero. I did this, that, and the other thing.” She says, “Don’t tell me, buddy. I was there.” [Laughter] And vice versa. And we have these other friends, and so that goes on. So our high school situation was a good one. But we didn’t get to date very much, and this didn’t really get serious until Coast Guard Academy second-class year when I asked her if she’d take my miniature.* And she said, “Yeah, well, on a trial basis,” or something like that. I’ve forgotten what it was. [Laughter] Something to keep me humble, she’s always said. She’d always tell people at various events in the Coast Guard that her job was to keep me humble, and I would always announce that she was a failure, and everybody would agree with that. [Laughter]

Paul Stillwell: So if your marriage is like most, the trial is still going on.

Admiral Gracey: Oh, yes, oh, yes. Yeah, yeah.

Paul Stillwell: Are there any things about your time as a cadet that I should have asked but haven’t?

Admiral Gracey: I can’t think what they might have been. We talked about the time on the ships. We talked about rowing. We talked about the sports. Class work, I was probably a pain in the butt to some people. I don’t know the description, but I’m a

* This refers to a miniature version of his academy class ring.

believer that if it says, “Tear along the dotted line” I wouldn’t dream of tearing it anyplace else. But there are those that say, “I don’t care. Break it open,” you know. And sometimes I think probably I press a little hard in that direction.

Paul Stillwell: Did you have some kind of a disciplinary function as the leader of the cadets?

Admiral Gracey: Well, only in the sense that if things weren’t going the way the officers wanted them to go, if rooms weren’t being kept properly and the state of dress wasn’t up, the grooming standards weren’t up to snuff, then, yeah, it was our job, my job and the battalion staff’s job, to see that it happened, but that was hard to do. So that was one place where I did step in. I got chewed on for a couple of days because things weren’t going really the way they should, so I started a program of saying, “The battalion staff is going to inspect two wings in the barracks every day.” The senior first classmen were supposed to do that, but it wasn’t happening. So we were going to at random inspect two wings in the barracks every day, and we were going to inspect one platoon every day, somebody from the battalion staff. And we were going to nail it right, I mean were going right down the line.

I had a classmate, a fellow by the name of Tom Hawkins, who left after 20 years, great belligerent fullback on the football team.* Great friend of both Randy’s and mine. Tom said, “Gracey, you set one foot into my wing, and I’ll never inspect it again.”

And I said, “I’ll be there tomorrow morning.” And I did and he didn’t. It was just that way, but we were the closest of friends. And I did do those things.

As a Swab I was a cadet bugler. Didn’t tell you about being the cadet bugler. How could I forget that? Had played the trombone as a kid. Been pretty good at it. Did some solo performances. My high school music director-bandmaster, I was his pet. In parades he’d take a firm grip on my right elbow to steer us down the field, and I kept saying, “Mr. Fisher, I’m playing a trombone. I need to bend my elbow. If I can’t move the elbow, I can’t play the notes.”

* Cadet Thomas E. Hawkins, USCG.

Anyway, at the Academy if you were a cadet bugler, there were some things you didn't have to do. There were some dirty details that you—that wasn't the word, but details that you didn't have to get involved in, and I thought, "Okay, I know how to blow a brass instrument." So I said I'd be a bugler and I practiced it. But every so often I'd have a bad day. One night I was blowing tattoo.* And I just couldn't do it. I just couldn't get it out. Finally I said into the microphone, "Oh, hell, tattoo." [Laughter] That cost me 25 demerits and liberty for a month. I was prone to do things like that from time to time.

Paul Stillwell: As the battalion commander did you have more of a relationship with the superintendent than most cadets?

Admiral Gracey: No, not really. Not really. I mean, if there was to be a relationship I had it. I would be the one, but, no. Our Superintendent at the time I was the Battalion Commander, Admiral Derby, was also a great baseball fan, so in fact there was a relationship.† We didn't have a baseball field. We played on an old abandoned lot across the street. It had a stone wall around the outside where you could really hurt yourself if you went after a fly ball. So he decided it was only fitting that we should take this baseball program seriously, because whenever we had a game we had to play in the little minor league park downtown and so forth. So his solution was that for physical fitness programs, the phys ed periods, the people taking phys ed would go down and make little ones out of big ones with sledge hammers and pickaxes. They would bust up rocks and fill and grade and create a baseball diamond, which made us baseball players absolutely hated by everybody. But he did it, and he liked to come down and take a little batting practice. I could throw the ball over the plate, and he liked that.

Paul Stillwell: And it wasn't too fast. [Laughter]

Admiral Gracey: No, it wasn't. [Laughter] He didn't have to worry about not seeing it. That's for sure. That's right. Those kinds of things. There was a marvelous trainer, a

* Tattoo is a bugle call sounded shortly before taps as a signal to prepare to turn in.

† Rear Admiral Wilfred N. Derby, USCG, served as Superintendent of the Coast Guard Academy from August 1947 to August 1950.

chief petty officer named Chief Steele. It comes to mind because I just saw this week that he's died. We all knew him as Chiefy. He was a chief pharmacist's mate, but he was the trainer for all the teams. If it was your day to pitch, you got a rubdown. If you were going to be the reliever, you got a rubdown. He did everything and he was much beloved. A special part of the memory is this guy, and he had great relationships, especially with the football players where he spent more time than any, and they just idolized the guy.

Paul Stillwell: Well, are we ready to bring you up to graduation then?

Admiral Gracey: Yeah, I guess we're up to graduation.

Paul Stillwell: Well, please tell me about that.

Admiral Gracey: Well, I really blew it at graduation. I, of course, led the Corps of Cadets and, I think, the Assistant Secretary of Treasury took the review. That part of it went well. I don't remember anything at all about the graduation ceremony itself. After it I was so excited about getting done and getting going that I could hardly wait to put on my own shoulder boards, forgetting that my wife to be was standing outside waiting to put my shoulder boards on. I think my mother said a word about that. It wasn't really a good thing to do, and I felt awful. So I took the boards off and had Randy put them back on. Randy, dear Randy, said it was fine and she understood. But I felt bad about that.

Two weeks later we got married in Massachusetts, in Needham, after Randy graduated from Middlebury College. She was the president of her class at Middlebury. They went on strike on graduation day because a couple of their classmates had been told they couldn't graduate because they came in too late to their dorm. And so the whole class went on strike. We were all sitting in the audience waiting for the ceremony to start. It was 90 degrees in the sun, and it was awful. Finally they got around to doing it. They reached a compromise of some sort. A couple days later we got married and went off on a relatively short honeymoon up to a little cottage-like country place Randy's family had in Maine.

After that we went back to New London. I stayed at the Academy during that summer. There were two others, Tom Hawkins and John Wesler.* Our job was to help break in the new class. Randy and I had an apartment just outside the North Gate. Tom and John shared an apartment downtown.

Oh, there's a story. I went home one day, and on the kitchen table was a big bunch of currants still on the branches. You know what I mean by a currant? A red berry on a bush? And I said, "Where did those come from? What are we going to do with those?"

Randy said, "I don't know, but this poor little urchin came to the door, and he said he was supporting his parents, and I had to buy them." The next day we were up on "The Hill" at the Academy for dinner at the house of the Commandant of Cadets, Captain Olsen. He was at sea in *Eagle*, but his wife had invited us to come up for dinner. We were standing out in the back yard having a drink before dinner, and Randy looked over in the next yard where the Maintenance Officer lived, and she said, "There's the little urchin that sold me the currants." It was the son of an officer who later became Vice Commandant of the Coast Guard, now Vice Admiral retired, Tom Sargent.† We told that story for years. Tom and Lucy Sargent absolutely loved it.

In fact, when Tom retired they asked me to come back from Portsmouth, Virginia, to emcee his retirement luncheon. As a surprise Vice Admiral Sargent's sons came in from far away. One of them was this kid. So I told the story about the young "urchin," and I got about halfway into it and Lucy knew where I was going. She said, "Is that urchin here?"

I said, "Yeah, that urchin is right out back. I don't know whether he's got any currants or not." [Laughter]

But relationships go on and the Coast Guard is wonderful in the way you make a contact like that and something else happens.

Paul Stillwell: Well, that's one of the benefits of the Coast Guard being a relatively small service.

* Ensign Thomas E. Hawkins, USCG; Ensign John E. Wesler, USCG.

† Vice Admiral Thomas R. Sargent III, USCG (Ret.). He was a lieutenant commander while serving at the Coast Guard Academy in the late 1940s.

Admiral Gracey: Exactly. Yeah. You know people, and your paths cross or you hear about them. After we finished that tour of summer duty, I went to *Barataria*.^{*} But *Barataria* was not in Portland, Maine, where we thought she was. We went to Boston to report in, and they told us that *Barataria* was in the Coast Guard Yard in Curtis Bay, Maryland.[†] But we'd sent all our stuff by Railway Express to Portland. So I got blessings to go to Portland, spend one day, get our stuff, and then head for the shipyard. We did, and that was an interesting experience. In Curtis Bay we lived in a little cabin on a deserted resort beach. It being September, after Labor Day, we had the place all to ourselves.

Paul Stillwell: How did you get that assignment? Did you draw lots or something?

Admiral Gracey: No, we just got it. I was assigned there. I don't remember asking for that particular place. It may have been that I said I'd like to be in the First District, because my parents and my brothers were there and Randy's parents were there, and Portland, Maine seemed like a good place.[‡] That may have been. Probably we did. I can't remember. I do remember that we were the only class in history that had its graduation leave charged off as regular leave, because for some reason or other Coast Guard Headquarters decided that no class should just have 15 days' leave unaccountable. So we had 15 days leave, but it counted as regular leave. We all started off with only 15 days to go for that year. We all survived, but we thought we'd been violated, and I still think we were violated. I understand we were the only class to have that imposed on us. And we never got it back.

Paul Stillwell: We tend to remember injustices more than the benefits we get.

* USS *Barataria* (AVP-33), a *Barnegat*-class small seaplane tender, was commissioned by the Navy 13 August 1944. She was 311 feet long, 41 feet in the beam, had a maximum draft of 13 feet, 6 inches, and displaced 1,733 tons. Her designed speed was 18.2 knots. She was armed with one 5-inch gun. She was decommissioned as a Navy ship on 24 July 1946 and subsequently transferred to the Coast Guard, which commissioned her as USCGC *Barataria* (WAVP-381) on 1 August 1949. She served mostly on ocean station patrol duty until decommissioned 29 August 1969.

[†] The Coast Guard Yard is on the outskirts of Baltimore.

[‡] The First Coast Guard District comprises New England states and seaward.

Admiral Gracey: I suppose. Well, these are minor injustices. It wasn't funny then. The Class of '49 prides itself on being "different." That just added to our list. We went off to sea, and our oldest child was born while I was at sea in *Barataria*. That was an interesting tour of duty.

Paul Stillwell: Well, please tell me about the ship and your specific duties.

Admiral Gracey: The ship was a 311-foot seaplane tender. Gosh, I can't remember how many of them the Coast Guard was given by the Navy—10 or 12 maybe. They were built to lie to in a lagoon somewhere. Had lots of shop space and tank capacity. We could carry a lot of fuel and water.

Paul Stillwell: These were the AVPs?

Admiral Gracey: Yes, though once they became Coast Guard ships they were WAVPs, W being the designator for USCG ships of a given type. Thin-skinned, flat-bottom, not designed to ride around in the North Atlantic Ocean in the wintertime. But they were good ships, and they could stay out forever because they had all those fuel and water tanks, and they had great maintenance shops. They were okay except when it got really rough. Then they would pound something fierce.

On my first weather patrol we were at Station Charlie, which was out in the middle of the North Atlantic. The end of a hurricane came through. I was awed by the height of the seas. I knew the height of eye of the bridge, because you have to know that to use sextants and do celestial navigation. As an OOD, you had to take star fixes, sun lines, and so forth. So I knew our bridge was 30-some feet above the water. I was standing there and looking up at a steep angle at the crest of the waves that were coming in. I thought, "My God. You know, that's a lot of water." I'd been around semi-hurricanes and stuff in Long Island Sound and on cadet cruises, and I'd been across the ocean in *Eagle* and so forth. But that WAVP would come up, and I can feel it now. It would ride up and it would come down—whammo—and the whole superstructure

would sashay back and forth. And, of course, with that flat bottom and thin skin and you would think, “Oh, man, I hope we make it.” I wasn’t really frightened, but it got your attention. I loved it. And I love telling about it.

Paul Stillwell: Took a little getting used to.

Admiral Gracey: Yeah, and green water was coming up over the bridge, you know, and it was tough.* She would hold her own, and she was a good ship in that regard.

But *Barataria* had a wonderful crew. I mentioned earlier about the chief boatswain’s mate. But let me set this up a bit first. After our 50th reunion at the Academy one of my classmates thought we ought to really pump up our contributions to the Coast Guard Academy Alumni Association, because, as many said “Who we are is clearly a result of having been to the Coast Guard Academy.”

I’ve made a good contribution to them for years, also to the Coast Guard Foundation and also to Coast Guard Mutual Assistance. So it’s not exactly that I’m neglecting the Coast Guard, but I said, “Well, wait a minute now. Yeah, I won’t suggest that the Coast Guard Academy was not an important part of my life. It was obviously very important. But I’m not going to say that everything I am is because I was once a cadet. Some great teachers got to me after that. I used to tell the cadets at graduation, “Now you’re going to start learning how to be a Coast Guard officer and some wonderful, down-to-earth people are going to help you.” In the ensuing conversation I said something about, “As the chief boatswain’s mate told me on the forecastle . . .”

And our class secretary, an enlisted man before coming to the Academy, said, “What did he say?” My special detail was on the forecastle, along with a chief boatswain’s mate and several others. He ran the forecastle. But I was a brand-new officer with the idea that officers were in charge. Commands were coming from the bridge through the telephone talker. I thought, “I’m the one that’s supposed to give commands. So I stepped in and gave some orders. After about twice the chief said, “Mr. Gracey, could we have a little chat?”

“Sure, Chief.”

* Green water means the ship has been taking solid ocean water over the bow, not just sea spray.

He said, “You’re the senior man, and you can call this any way you want.” But he said, “I’ve seen lots of things happen. I’ve seen the bridge make big mistakes and turn everything into mud, and I had to fix it. I’ve done it. I know how to do it. Things happen up here, and they happen fast. I’ve seen it all happen. Nothing’s going to be new to me very much. Of course, you can do it if you want, but my suggestion is why don’t you stand over by the 5-inch mount and be the safety observer. Let me see if I can’t show you how things go up here?”

I said, “What a great suggestion, Chief. [Laughter] What a great suggestion.” I learned a lot from that man.

And then, of course, I was the gunnery officer, and the chief gunner’s mate said, “You really want to learn? You want to be gunnery officer in name only and sign the reports, or would you like to learn about these things.”

I said, “I’d love to learn about it.” So he set out to teach me the workings of a 5-inch mount and a 40-millimeter, and about ammunition and how it all works and a few other colorful tricks that gunner’s mates know. The two of them called me separately—when would it have been? Some significant time many, many years later. Their messages were the same: “I guess it’s a good thing I got to you early.” [Laughter] That kind of stuff has been happening to me my whole career. I couldn’t begin to tell you how many things I learned from young and old pros. Even the young seaman with his car in Buffalo taught me the importance of asking the right questions.

We had a kind of an unhappy experience in *Barataria* on the way home from one of our patrols. First of all, we had a skipper who would not turn around if the weather was heavy. We always got to our ocean station early. That, of course, meant sailing early. But we never got relieved early. If the weather was bad when we were to be relieved, we always prayed the wind and seas would be westerly so continuing to head into them would take us home. The skipper would not turn. He would wait until the weather moderated, and then he would make a turn. The effect was we sometimes were three and four days longer on station, headed off in some direction away from home, and then we had that much longer to get home. And by the time the relief ship is on the horizon you want to head home.

Well, we were heading home from a 45-day patrol when that B-29 crashed off of Bermuda.* There were two alternate places where people said they thought they had seen flares. We were headed for one of the positions when the men on watch saw a flare in the other direction. The OOD told the captain, and the captain said, “No, we’re not going over there.”†

The OOD said, “But we saw a flare.”

“Go to where you were headed first.” So we did, and the next day the survivors were discovered. A Coast Guard PB-1G found people in a raft at the alternate position.

Paul Stillwell: The direction you had not gone.

Admiral Gracey: Yes. The op commander wanted to know who had medical personnel. We had a doctor aboard. We had cleaned out all the freezers to take care of bodies. We were all set to do whatever had to be done because there were 20-some people on this plane, I think. The officer of the deck picked up the phone to answer, and the skipper said, “Don’t answer.” He didn’t want to be involved in it. There were other ships around, and the net effect was a destroyer went and picked them up, sailed into Bermuda with great triumph, and made *Life* magazine.

Our crew got nothing except being eight days late getting home. Morale was bad, as you can imagine. They wanted to be a part of it. We had been sailing around, sending up balloons, getting beat up in rough weather, and talking to airplanes for 45 days. Here was a chance to do something. Well, the skipper was a bit timid. He just didn’t want to be involved in it. Another lesson. It was a lesson I didn’t need to learn. I already knew that one.

Paul Stillwell: Doesn’t set a great example for the crew.

Admiral Gracey: No, but it was a good crew.

* On 16 November 1949, an Air Force B-29 bomber en route to Britain with 20 men on board crashed at sea northeast of Bermuda. The Canadian destroyer *Haida* rescued 18 survivors. Two of the men on board were lost. See “B-29s Have a Bad Week,” *Life*, 28 November 1949, pages 30-31

† OOD—officer of the deck.

When we were not on patrol, we had search and rescue standby. One time we were sent to Buzzard's Bay at Cape Cod to blow up a derelict barge. But the captain really didn't want to be involved in dynamiting that hulk.

We hung on for three days. We would look at it for a while, do some drills, and then decide it was too late. Go to Menemsha Bight and anchor for the night—and repeat it all again the next day. Finally, on the third day, the hulk had sunk all by itself. But we convinced the CO we really ought to put down an explosive to be sure it wasn't lurking below the surface as a menace to navigation. We found it on the bottom. Put down a charge and killed a lot of fish. The wreck was gone. That was typical.

We tried to do our gunnery. Had orders to Newport for gunnery exercises, but we'd never fired our 5-inch/38. I was the gunnery officer. We'd never fired it. I kept saying at sea, "Captain, the crew at least need to know what it sounds like." I think he was afraid of it. Didn't want to do it.

But we did fire. I talked the skipper into doing one exercise at sea. We built a small raft and put it over the side with a radar reflector on it. Since we had never fired the 5-inch gun, the CO was leery of it. He had us clear everybody out of the forward part of the ship, except one first class gunner's mate in the mount. Finally we convinced him it was okay to shoot. You know, you can see a 5-inch projectile come out of the barrel, and we saw it. But there was no splash. Instead of putting in 2,600 yards range, the gunner's mate had set up 26 degrees of elevation. We had fired the thing clean over the horizon, of course. The captain was watching for the splash and didn't see one, so he decided the round was stuck in the barrel. Nothing would convince him that we had all seen it fly. We had near pandemonium until the gunner's mate came to the bridge and assured the CO that the gun bore was empty. If you needed teaching about how not to do it, that was it.

Believe it or not, the ship was squared away, and it did its job reasonably well, those things it was willing to attempt. I wasn't unhappy when I got transferred from there.

Paul Stillwell: Did the captain teach you any useful lessons? Positive? You're smiling but saying nothing.

Admiral Gracey: Yes, I know, this is not on television, is it? Silence doesn't work on tape. That's right. I have to tell you I can't think of it except, you know, being careful is probably a good idea, and there are risks to putting a ship like that broadside to heavy seas under way

We did some man-overboard drills in our pulling boats, and they worked out fine. He was good about setting the right pace to get the boat in the water. And he let us do sea-painter drill with our ship's boats.* I was good at that. It was something I just knew how to do—a natural inclination. But it was tough for some, and they needed practice. The captain was good about that and about letting the boats row away from the ship, so the crew got good at rowing.

I had a funny adventure one day. We got about a mile away from the ship, which was up between Greenland and Iceland. All of a sudden there was water coming up into the boat between the feet of the plug man. I was the coxswain of the boat. The plug man looked down at this water, looked up at me, and said, "Mr. Gracey, the plug came out."

I said, "I noticed that, Ferguson. What do you think we ought to do about it?"

He thought for a minute, and he said, "Put it back?" Question mark.

I said, "Well, let's not be hasty. I mean, we're a democratic society. Let's have a vote. Is there anybody in the boat that would vote against putting the plug back in?" Nobody did, so I said, "Ferguson, put the plug in." [Laughter] Well, I've used that story many times to illustrate a point or two. You may have read it if you read a couple of my speeches.

Paul Stillwell: I did. In one version you said he even held it up proudly.

Admiral Gracey: That's right. The plug man. I forgot that. Yes, he did. It was still on the lanyard. I've used it to make a point *and* have some fun: "If you've got a problem, don't just talk about it. Do something." Talking about it is fine while you're doing it, but some things you've just got to solve and then talk about it. But we got back safely, and it

* A sea painter is a line used for towing a ship's boat alongside when the ship is under way.

was okay. The guys in the boat, of course, told this story, but nobody was going to tell the old man about it. I don't think he ever heard about it. He was a nice man, by the way

His wife was special. Here's something about the time. In those days a crewman could not have an allotment for his wife. He had to be paid in cash. We would go to sea for 45 days, and the guys would get paid in cash. But while they were out there the crew's families often ran out of money. The captain's wife and my wife Randy would buy sacks of potatoes. And they would go around to all the crew's families and give them potatoes to eat, and maybe some bread and other things, but just basics so they could keep eating until the ship got in. Dumb system, not allowing dependents to get money. That was another real part of our learning experience. This one was about things that happen to families left behind when ships deploy.

Paul Stillwell: What was the mission of the ship during those long patrols?

Admiral Gracey: It was called Weather Patrol, and we were an "Ocean Station Vessel." In the North Atlantic, and some in the Pacific, too, but most North Atlantic, there were 10-mile-square "stations" marked off in alphabetic grids of one-mile squares. One station was between Labrador and Greenland. One was between Greenland and Iceland. It was on the great circle track the transoceanic aircraft took. There was also one down off of Bermuda, and there was one just out past the Grand Banks. We had men from the Weather Service aboard. They sent out radio-sonde balloons and got weather data. That helped overflying aircraft, but more importantly, it also facilitated forecasts for Europe. Some of this started during World War II.

For the aircraft, we had a beacon that would tell in Morse code what square of the grid we were in. O-S, Oboe-Sierra was "on station." That was the middle of the grid. But you couldn't stay there. If the weather was heavy you had to head into the sea, and you had to do other things that required moving, so you'd send out this signal to tell them exactly where you were—sort of a mid-ocean electronic, moving lighthouse. As they flew over they would check in. And it was always fun to talk to the crews. I'd been bragging in the wardroom about how I could handle Spanish, how I was a great high school Spanish talker. Right. One night the watch woke me because they had a plane

whose crew was talking Spanish instead of the usual English, broken or otherwise. So I went up and talked Spanish to him. We weren't getting anywhere, and finally we figured out he was talking Portuguese. I was talking Spanish. Anyway, we'd talk to them formally, then chat and compare notes, get news from home and all that, and they'd go on their way. But on at least one occasion one of them had to ditch near a cutter out there on ocean station. The plane was the Bermuda Sky Queen.* It was a seaplane. One of our 327-foot cutters went and got them all off. We were out about 45 days.

Paul Stillwell: And that program finally lasted till the '70s when there were satellites and much more reliable aircraft.

Admiral Gracey: Yeah. Actually it went away when it did for a less exotic reason. I can almost tell you the day it went away. In fact, I'm not sure but what it was the time we were having all that laughter that bothered the Chief of Staff. The laughter wasn't because of the OSVs.† It was while I was in the Programs Division and we got an OMB budget hit that was going to cut the Coast Guard down to about two-thirds of the size it was. It was clear we couldn't get there by just chipping away at programs. You couldn't just take the same Coast Guard and squeeze everything down a little bit and get to the mark. You had to look clearly at something that was major. You had to change the nature of the Coast Guard somehow. We pointed out to the Commandant, and all, that Ocean Stations was a program that was about to die anyway. You really didn't need it anymore. It was an anachronism. The aircraft were eminently capable of getting across the ocean by themselves. We didn't have satellites yet, but you had far better weather observation capability, and you had more people out there and far more capable aircraft. And these ships had been around much too long anyway.

* On the night of 13-14 October 1947, a Boeing 314 Clipper flying boat, the Bermuda Sky Queen, was flying from England to the United States. The plane encountered 100-mile-an-hour headwinds after it had gone too far to turn back and didn't have enough fuel to reach the United States. The pilot decided to ditch at sea in the North Atlantic at Ocean Station Charlie, near the Coast Guard cutter *Bibb* (WPG-31). The cutter sent out boats that rescued all 62 passengers and seven crewmen from the aircraft. The cutter then sank the plane with 40-millimeter gunfire.

† OSV—ocean station vessel.

Paul Stillwell: Was this Admiral Bender at this point?

Admiral Gracey: Yes, it would have been Admiral Bender.* I was there for a little while with Admiral Smith, but I think it was Admiral Bender. So we just cut out the Ocean Station Vessel program, “Weather Patrol.” It was time for it to die anyway, and that was the biggest chunk we took to meet the mark and avoid destroying the Coast Guard. Now, one problem with that was, of course, it took a whole bunch of seagoing billets out of the Coast Guard, because we decommissioned several of our largest ships. We believed that if you’re going to have expertise in rescue work and merchant marine safety work and all that, you’ve got to understand what it’s like to go to sea in a ship. So we really didn’t want to make that huge move. But push came to shove; it was indefensible to keep that program. So that’s when we got rid of the OSVs. Some of them went to the Navy for target practice. Some of them went to Vietnam. I can’t remember who they went to. That was the end of the Coast Guard Cutter *Barataria*.

Paul Stillwell: Well, we’re right near the end of the tape. Any valedictory remarks for today?

Admiral Gracey: I’m looking to see if you’ve got a cauliflower ear yet. No.

Paul Stillwell: You’ll have to try a lot harder than you have so far. [Laughter]

Admiral Gracey: Okay. You’ve been down this road, Paul. I can tell. No, I don’t think so. I think that I’ve bounced around a little bit. One story reminds me of another one and tie-ins with later on. We’re going to get a couple more of those when we get into my buoy-tending experience and so forth. Well, it’s been all through my career that something here reminds me of something there.

* Admiral Chester R. Bender, USCG, served as Commandant of the Coast Guard from 1 June 1970 to 31 May 1974.

You asked me about traits. One of my traits is that I love to try something new. I love to see a problem, define it, and then try to find a way to solve it. A new way if possible, something that's different, a way to do it better. Like my wife says, "If it's going to be Admiral Gracey Drive, it better be a one-way street." She doesn't really mean that in that sense—that's a good joke, but I do listen and I work closely with teammates or others where we're trying to find a common ground. But I love to go with whatever group I'm in, and let's try to find a new way. That's what we were laughing about in that session I was talking about, why we had a lot of fun with the Programs Division when I was there, because we kept trying to find different ways to get things done. Let's stop right there, because we'll talk—you asked for closing remarks, and I'm full of stories and I apologize. It's been a great day, Paul, and I love it. And thank you. I'm enjoying this immensely.

Paul Stillwell: Me too. I look forward to the next one.

Admiral Gracey: Oh, you're great. Thank you.

Interview Number 2 with Admiral James S. Gracey, U.S. Coast Guard (Retired)

Place: Admiral Gracey's home in Arlington, Virginia

Date: Wednesday, 28 February 2001

Interviewer: Paul Stillwell

Paul Stillwell: Admiral, a pleasure to see you again on a bright sunny day.

Admiral Gracey: You, too, Paul. Got to be baseball season any day now.

Paul Stillwell: It soon will.

We talked last time about your experience as an ensign on board *Barataria*, and you have some additional things you wanted to add in please.

Admiral Gracey: Yes, there was one in particular. I thought about *Barataria* experience and a lot of little things showed up, but there was one in particular that I wanted to share with you. There were only four watch-standing officers aboard, and at times there were even less than that, so we were often standing port-and-starboard watches. But as an ensign I had a lot of duties. I was the gunnery officer, I was the communications officer, I ran the PX, you know, all that sort of thing.

But I was always fascinated going into our radio room. We had, gee, I don't know, maybe three or four watch standers at a time, and they were monitoring multitudes of frequencies. And I used to tease them, because they would have earphones on, and they would have speakers in front of them. In those days it was all CW, Morse code, dah-dit-dah-dit-dah-dah.* They had two frequencies coming into each ear, so that's four coming into their head. Then they had three more frequencies coming over the speaker system, so they were monitoring seven different frequencies, all in Morse code and not heavy fisted like I would send it but speed keys and all that sort of thing.

They would be typing away, and I used to say them periodically, "You guys,

* CW, or continuous wave, referred to a type of radio wave interrupted into the dots and dashes of the Morse code for the purpose of communication.

you're not kidding me. I know you've got seven frequencies there. You're making it up. You can't possibly be getting stuff off all those different frequencies. Nobody can do that." And they would always give me a rejoinder. I had great admiration for those men. The talent that took, just the ability to do that. And they could recognize people who had sent to them before because of the style on the key they were hearing, and they would recognize another Coast Guardsman somewhere, or they could recognize certain ships that they had been communicating with. They just knew it. When they heard it, they knew what it was or who it was, and they didn't even have to wait for the call sign.

Paul Stillwell: "Fist" was the term for that touch on the key.

Admiral Gracey: "Fist" is exactly the right term, yes. Some were a lot lighter and faster than others. You've heard stories like this before, of course. As a communication officer I had the misfortune to lose a classified publication. I ransacked the comms office trying to find it. It was a simple one-page mimeographed kind of thing that came in periodically, but it was classified. And it was frowned upon—to say the least—to lose a classified publication. I concluded that I must have burned it by mistake while destroying superseded documents. Later on I was to get a punitive letter of some sort for my file.

It just happened that the man who succeeded me on the ship worked his way down in a pile of plain paper that was set aside for scratch work and notes and so forth. Apparently what had happened was the ship rolled, and that pile slid over on top of the missing pub. I picked up that one-page pub and slid it right back in the pile with the blank paper. About the time the dreaded punitive letter was to take effect, the publication showed up. It hadn't been lost at all. It had just been buried in this pile. Well, I lost a lot of sleep over that, as you can imagine.

I was starting out on my career, my first assignment, and I had already been transferred to the next place that we'll be talking about. But trauma. It was not helped any by the fact that one day we couldn't open the safe where the pubs were kept and couldn't make the combination work. My predecessor in the job and everybody else on the ship tried the combination, but for some reason or other it wouldn't work. So we had

to learn how to bust into the safe by drilling through the knob on the dial. All in all, my commanding officer decided that he liked it better when I was the gunnery officer.

Paul Stillwell: Was your warning letter rescinded when this resurfaced?

Admiral Gracey: Yes. Yes, with some words about, “Maybe you shouldn’t stack things next to sliding piles of paper,” or “Maybe on a ship that’s rolling in the North Atlantic, it’s not good idea to have a pile of paper that can fly around anyway.” Whatever, but it was gone.

I can remember that one of the jobs we took on that I didn’t talk about the other day, besides gathering atmospheric data, was collecting sea samples. We were looking for plankton and miscellaneous creatures that float around, the organisms that the whales and so forth eat.

We had a group of folks that decided they missed going to church on Sunday, so we created an ersatz church service on the fantail on Sunday mornings. The engineering officer was a fellow from Kentucky who was great on the harmonica, and he taught me how to play the washboard and a slap bass with a tin can and a stick. We got a little country music and played a few hymns with it on Sunday morning. And one or the other of us would talk, and we’d say a prayer or two and get back to work. Later on, the Chief of Chaplains was interested in that story. We didn’t have a chaplain aboard, but there were people who felt that they wanted to do that.

Paul Stillwell: Who was that Chief of Chaplains?

Admiral Gracey: Rear Admiral Ross Trower.* That’s much later, and as a matter of fact I don’t think he heard that story until after I’d retired. But he expressed an interest in it.

I can remember going into Argentina, Newfoundland. That was a jumping-off stop for our north patrols. I don’t think I really know all there is to know, far from it, about Argentina except that was a place that we always stopped going and coming from our

* Rear Admiral Ross H. Trower, CHC, USN, served as the Navy's Chief of Chaplains from June 1979 to August 1983

ocean stations between Greenland and Newfoundland and another one over between Greenland and Iceland.

Paul Stillwell: It had been a Navy convoy support base.

Admiral Gracey: Big time, that's right. That was its principal purpose, but, of course, when we went in there, there were no convoys. There were all kinds of facilities for recreation and just getting ashore and having a different kind of a meal or whatever. But I can remember going in there. I remember two approaching landmarks, two rounded mountains that were affectionately known as "Mae West."* And I remember going through fog like I'd never seen. I had grown up on Long Island Sound, and fog in July is really big time in Long Island Sound, and I thought I had understood about fog. But trying to go through the fog on the Grand Banks and approaching Newfoundland, especially during iceberg season, was not a great and exciting thing to do. But it was great and exciting in the sense that it was different, and you knew it gave you a purpose.

Paul Stillwell: How sophisticated was your radar?

Admiral Gracey: Gosh, I'm talking 1949, so compared to today, zilch.

Paul Stillwell: But better than no radar at all.

Admiral Gracey: Oh, yeah. [Laughter] I think we came to the conclusion or would have come to the conclusion that any radar was better than none at all.

Paul Stillwell: Did you have a height-finding radar to monitor these planes going across?

Admiral Gracey: We had an air-search radar. I don't know what it did in altitude. I just remembered there was one, but I can't remember the details of it, to tell you the truth. We were primarily communicating with them rather than watching them in the sense that

* Mae West was a buxom actress who had a long career in show business.

we do today. I can't remember. I remember the big antenna on the top of the mast, but I don't remember how sophisticated it was. We usually had Navy cast-off equipment. We had a 5-inch/38 gun. I mentioned the other day that we only fired it a couple of times. We had a quad 40-millimeter mount, and I remember on cadet cruise being involved with a 40-millimeter gun.

I found a 40-millimeter hard on the ears and nerves. In the heat of battle I can't imagine what it must be like because I found it awful. It doesn't fire in any rhythm. It's a raucous loud report unlike a 5-inch gun's nice mellow boom. But it's a boom, and you know it's coming, and it's one shot. With the quad 40 there are four guns, and they're firing out of sync. You can't ever quite get braced for when the next one's going to go, and they're going fast. And you're trying to get the clips in place if you're the loader or passer. I remember a sense of almost—hysteria is not the right word. I can't think of a word that describes the feeling, but I had the same sense of that in *Barataria* as well.

Paul Stillwell: Uneasy perhaps?

Admiral Gracey: Not really uneasy—more like frantic. It's just that you're trying to do these things, and there's this mount and the noise is very fierce. And I don't remember wearing earplugs, maybe because we needed to hear whatever commands there were. I can't remember it. But I just remember that there were four of them, and they were going off at odd intervals, and it just would drive you to distraction.

Paul Stillwell: I presume not enough to prevent you from doing the job.

Admiral Gracey: Oh, no, no. No, no. No, no. No, no. I'm not suggesting a psychotic failure here. I think I'm probably being overly dramatic in describing this. Suffice it to say I hated the 40-millimeter mount. I loved the 5-inch mount. I hated the 40-millimeter mount, and that's because I found it an unpleasant experience.

Paul Stillwell: What do you remember about your role both in gunnery and in radio as a division officer to the enlisted men?

Admiral Gracey: I remember the gunnery department only had four people. There was a chief, a first class, and a second class gunner's mate—and a fire control tech named Bob Farwell. I talked about Doug Murell the other day. Herschel Longmeier was the first class. The chief was a fellow by the name of Henry Smith. He was a consummate pro, a colorful character and a patient teacher. He called me up during my flag years from down in Mississippi somewhere. He and the chief boatswain's mate who suggested I let him run the forecastle and that I be a safety observer. They both got in touch with me, and they likened as how it was a good thing they got to me early. [Laughter] And I absolutely loved that. I mean, it's just marvelous that they would both do that.

The communications gang, of course, had the radiomen, and we were standing multiple people on watch because the ship, essentially, was a communications center out there, among other things. And they were all marvelous people. Discipline was not a problem. They were the ones that I spent most of my two years working with. I became the communications officer late in the game, but, of course, having been an officer of the deck and having been one of four officers—sometimes three officers aboard in the watch-standing category—I got to know the communications people and had frequent occasion to be in the radio room. I remember the relationships as warm, somewhat informal. I felt they were very open with me and welcoming. I played sports with some of them. My memory is one of a very pleasant experience with a group of people whose talents I absolutely marveled at.

Paul Stillwell: When you were Commandant you placed great emphasis on the Coast Guard family. I wonder how you would compare that with the sense of concern for families around 1949-50.

Admiral Gracey: Well, I told you the other day about my wife buying potatoes with the captain's wife. The sense of family was there. I grew up in a very warm and close family, and family was important to me. I've always thought that leadership involves concern for your people. All leaders are concerned, and it can be in different ways, but I've always tended to be a little more informal about it and to extend it beyond the

individual, the military person, and to his wife and kids if they were available around. I don't think the Coast Guard cared for the families very much back then. We didn't think of the hardships we created. Pay was in cash to the husband. You couldn't have an allotment, so families got no money while the man was at sea. If we had rules that didn't let them get money to buy food, obviously we weren't thinking too much about them.

Paul Stillwell: The concern was not institutionalized.

Admiral Gracey: It certainly wasn't. And it was more on some ships than others. There were some ships that would make a point of not sailing before they had to but sailing on time and getting to the station on time but not getting there early. We always sailed early, which cut off a day of home liberty, and we were 45 days out, 45 days in, so one day at home meant a lot, especially since the crew was standing watches—I don't think we did port and starboard. I think we had a three-watch rotation in port. The families were unhappy about our sailing early and often coming home late. We took our time about leaving station, and we came home at a sedate pace to save fuel. That was economically very responsible, but the families weren't happy about it, nor was the crew

Paul Stillwell: Did you also leave early in order to save fuel?

Admiral Gracey: No. We left early so we'd be absolutely certain that we relieved on time. And often the other ship was very happy. We made the families of the other ships happy because we always relieved a day early.

Paul Stillwell: And this also would reflect your skipper's sense of caution.

Admiral Gracey: Well, yes. Yes. That's exactly what it was, and that was his way of doing business. And I've made the man sound like an ogre. He was not an ogre. He was the nicest guy you could ever want to meet. It was just that those things didn't register.

Paul Stillwell: Well, you told me before we started that that caution also extended to not much ship-handling experience for the junior officers.

Admiral Gracey: That's right, that's right. I can't even remember whether the exec had handled the ship. My impression was that it was always the skipper that was handling the ship. And certainly not us junior officers.

Paul Stillwell: How reliable were the mechanical systems in the ship?

Admiral Gracey: Really quite good. I don't recall any great failures. Later on, when I commanded a buoy tender, we had a radar set that drove us crazy, but I'll get to that later. I don't have any sense of problems; the engineering plant was running well. The guns, everything and all that sort of thing, the fire control—all that sort of thing was working fine. I don't have any memory of problems at all.

Paul Stillwell: Anything else from that ship to discuss?

Admiral Gracey: No. I think I've overdone that ship. That was my first one, so a lot of these little things come back as you think about them.

Paul Stillwell: After that you went to Camp Gordon, Georgia. What did that involve?

Admiral Gracey: It was 1951. You know, the Korean War had started, and the Coast Guard's World War II port security duties were coming back.* That included supervising loading explosives and that sort of thing, monitoring them. Camp Gordon, Georgia, was the home of the Provost Marshal General's School of the Army, so we had a series of classes of 20, maybe 30 officers, both Coast Guard Reserve and regular. This included us young ensigns and new jaygees, and some older Reserve officers, most of whom were

* The Korean War began on 25 June 1950, when six North Korean infantry divisions and three border constabulary brigades invaded South Korea. In New York that same day the United Nations Security Council adopted a resolution condemning the invasion.

policemen in private life.* Lieutenant commanders primarily, but they were all in these classes. We went to Camp Gordon (now Fort Gordon), in Augusta, Georgia, for three months. And we learned how to be military policemen, with the idea that this was going to be directed on into the port security business. I was on the way to duty in the COTP—Captain of the Port—office in Boston, that being the overseer of the port-security program.

At Camp Gordon we had lectures from some very colorful Army officers, and we had great fun with some of their abuse of the English language. I can remember one who always said, “Yurp,” instead of “Europe.” And we had a classmate who was great with cartoons, and whenever somebody picked up one of these abuses of the language he would pass a slip to Clancy, and Clancy would ultimately convert it to part of a giant cartoon *mélange*. That was great, we had fun, but we learned a lot. We did exercises breaking into a house where a crime was being committed. They had a setup with a stage, and on the stage was a crime scene. You and a partner would go over and stand outside the door, and they would play very loudly a tape of screaming and horror and gunshots going on inside. Then a light would go on as a signal for your team to go in. Your job was to go in and take control of the scene. There were a couple of Army men and women role-playing on the stage inside.

Your job was to get it under control, get these people disarmed, and make sure you’d searched it all. But meanwhile the teams that had already done it were there like a theater audience. They were out there watching. It was great adventure and very realistic, and they did a marvelous job of heating you up to a fever pitch and then projecting you into the scene. And here we are, you know, Coast Guard officers. What do we know? But it was a great experience. They did a lot of that. We did a lot of weapons training of course, mostly .45 caliber—that sort of thing. That program went on for three months.

One interesting thing for us was that Camp Gordon is on Tobacco Road. If you remember *Tobacco Road* in the book by that name it’s pretty poor country, and that’s

* Jaygee—lieutenant (junior grade).

where Camp Gordon was.* And at that time in Augusta there was the big buildup going on for the Korean War by the Army. There was also the Savannah River Dam project. That was going to be an atomic energy plant. There was no place to live in town. We reported in, and I parked Randy and our six-month-old child and our two-year-old cocker spaniel in a trailer. I went out and reported in. At the trailer Randy learned there was no water. You had to walk a half a mile to get water. There was no way to get cool in this thing. It was at 100 degrees. When I got back from reporting in, my family was in a state of despair.

We'd just moved from Portland, Maine, in May. I cemented my relationship with my wife by saying, "I don't care what it costs. We're going to an air-conditioned motel," which we did for one night, and that was the end of the week of reporting. I was on an ensign's pay in 1951. It was not much money. We finally found a small house. One place we looked at was an old house that they'd divided up into small apartments, and ours was going to be what used to be the dining room, and then there was a pantry out back. It consisted of a galvanized washtub with a hose out the bottom and cold water and a hotplate. And everybody that came and went from the downstairs had to go through our bedroom. And they wanted to rent that at some exorbitant price. We didn't do that. The housing situation was really bad. All we could afford to eat was Chun King Chinese dinner out of the commissary. No aspersions on Chun King, but if we never see another Chun King Chinese dinner it's going to be too soon. [Laughter] I mean, that's all we could afford, and Randy washed my uniforms in the bathtub, and it was kind of dumb. But it was a good experience.

Paul Stillwell: Were there only Coast Guardsmen with you in these courses?

Admiral Gracey: Our particular courses were just for the Coast Guard, and they were aimed at giving us the port kind of thing, i.e., those things that we'd use for moving traffic through ports and looking for sabotage and other kinds of evil. Mostly they were showing us how to take control of a situation in a civil community. And we also had

* Tobacco Road was once hard-packed sand that connected local farmers to a port on the Savannah River. Author Erskine Caldwell's 1932 novel *Tobacco Road* told the story of poor farmer Jeeter Lester and his family.

enlisted classes as well. Some of those guys would go down and direct traffic in downtown Augusta for practice.

Famous story of one of our guys who was doing all right and had gotten control of the situation in the traffic scene and just had everything sorted out and going in an orderly way. A very pregnant woman walked off the curb against the traffic, the wrong way. Our hero stopped the traffic and kept her from getting hurt but earned everlasting fame by saying, “Dammit, Lady. You can get knocked *down* too.” [Laughter] His officer supervisor from the Army really had to scold him for saying such a thing to the private citizenry but could hardly wait to get back and tell us the story. [Laughter]

Paul Stillwell: Why would the Coast Guard be involved in domestic disputes? Why would that not be civilian police?

Admiral Gracey: Remember, we were being trained in Army’s Provost Marshal (MP) techniques. The situation of the exercise wasn’t necessarily domestic. I did say it was in a house, but it could have been any kind of room inside the door. The important thing was that it was a crime scene, and there had been a robbery and violence going on. There were a variety of things, and we were supposed to sort out what it was when we got in there. I think the idea was just to give you the feel for going into a scene where there’s chaos.

A similar kind of experience came at my next stop on this training tour: Treasure Island in San Francisco, where Navy ran a fire-fighting school.* As part of that training we went into a burning mock-up engine room. They would set fire to a compartment, and you’d go in behind the fire hose. The whole idea was, “You can do this. You *can* do this, and you can survive it. In fact, you can do a lot of good, and it isn’t as horrible as you think it’s going to be.” I think the idea here was to give you a couple of shots at this, and then you realize, “Hey, these things happen, and you are capable of going in there and getting it calmed down and taking control.” I think that’s what it was essentially.

* Treasure Island is a man-made island in San Francisco Bay, located between San Francisco and Oakland. It served as the site of a world's fair in 1939-40, then was converted for use as a Navy base during and after World War II.

It's like the road home. It's always shorter than the road there, because you've been there once.

Paul Stillwell: It's a matter of conditioning.

Admiral Gracey: Yeah, that's a good word.

Paul Stillwell: Did they also get into the substance of the law, that is, what kind of jurisdiction you might have, what your police powers were?

Admiral Gracey: Not in depth, but yes. I've been talking about the basics of the cop-on-the-beat kind of thing, but they also did get into that. Of course, we had some Coast Guard-specific kind of lectures with Coast Guard people who lectured about the various wartime-specific and espionage laws. I can't remember the name now, but the laws that we were enforcing did cover port security and the authority of the Coast Guard COTP. What the nature of the problem was and how we'd gone about it in World War II. Everybody had Coast Guard port security cards that gave them permission to enter and leave a given installation and all that sort of thing. It was the basic grounding—taking somebody that had never been involved before and going forth into the port security world in a “Here we are again with another wartime situation.” The Coast Guard Reserve officers, who were almost all professional policemen, of course, came in with having the police background. Many of them had done this sort of thing during World War II, so they brought some in-house experience that was helpful.

Paul Stillwell: Did the charter stop at the waterline, or could you go on board ships and enforce things?

Admiral Gracey: The Coast Guard's authority is *very* broad, made even more so by the Magnuson Act and other such authorities.* Remember, we were at war when I was in

* The Magnuson Act, named for Senator Warren Magnuson of the state of Washington, became law in 1976. It established the U.S. 200-nautical-mile limit and, in essence, gave each other maritime nation a 200-nautical-mile exclusive economic zone.

Boston, 1951-53. We did go on board ships. When I finally got to Boston to take over my job, I was boarding ships coming into the port. I would go out to meet them with a small team of Coast Guard people. The ships we were boarding had made stops behind the Iron Curtain.* They were mostly Swedish ships. I remember Swedish-American Lines particularly as a line whose ships I seemed to be boarding a lot. We would go out to meet them with a boarding party, and what we were doing obviously was looking to see if in the cargo there was any possibility of somebody smuggling an atom bomb or something like that.

It was always an interesting experience, because we went in a small 110-foot tugboat, boarding up a wooden ladder that leaned against the side of these ships in the Boston outer harbor, where it's anything but flat calm. And going up the wooden ladder, of course, I was wearing a .45, and it always seemed to be in the wintertime, so I had heavy clothes on. Even though our Coast Guard tug skippers were experts at staying close to ships being boarded, I have a vivid memory of the ships regularly coming together and going apart, and that ladder moving up and down the side of the hull. The crews were always very welcoming, thank heavens. They always helped us aboard.

Paul Stillwell: Jacob's ladders?

Admiral Gracey: No, they weren't Jacob's ladders. What we used was a plain ordinary wooden ladder that went from the bridge of the tug up against the side of the ship we were boarding. You got halfway up, and you were over a span of water. It was a fairly dangerous operation, but I don't remember anybody getting dunked, and I don't remember having life jackets. Far from it—I wore dress blues. But the crew was always helpful coming aboard. The captains of the ships were always very welcoming. I was a pipe smoker, and invariably they would want me to come up to the cabin. While the gang that was with me were inspecting the ship, the captain wanted to talk about the United States and what was going on and always insisted on sharing some pipe tobacco with me.

* During the Cold War a figurative Iron Curtain divided Communist bloc nations from those in the Free World.

Paul Stillwell: I take it English was the common language for these transactions.

Admiral Gracey: Yes, yes. Indeed it was. I learned later on, as the Commandant, that the business language of Sweden is English, even within Sweden. But, yeah, it was. I've departed here. Have we heard enough about Camp Gordon? Have you got another question you'd like to ask?

Paul Stillwell: Well, one thing I was wondering about was there any reluctance on the part of these Coast Guard Reservists about going back on active duty for the war.

Admiral Gracey: I heard none. No. My impression was they were hot to trot. They really wanted to do it. They had enjoyed the experience. Some of them were more understanding about those of us who didn't have police experience than others, but we had a great relationship, at least in the class I was in. They were people that I've remained friends with through years. And the whole group was that way. We were close. We were all in this thing together, and we were suffering this, various levels of—I might say abuse, but it wasn't abuse. The Army was fine with us, but some of them were a little impatient with the fact that, "Why am I wasting my time on Coast Guard officers?" Well, they were, and we understood their reluctance. But they did their job, and we learned what we needed to learn. Some of them were better about it than others, because they were human beings.

Paul Stillwell: Did they have to modify their MP curriculum any for the maritime nature of your work?

Admiral Gracey: No, I don't think they did. I don't have any sense of that at all. I wasn't involved when they were creating the curriculum, and maybe it was, and I didn't know it. But I didn't sense that.

Paul Stillwell: Did you get some excitement going through all this training?

Admiral Gracey: I'm not sure "excitement" is the word I would use. No, it was wonderful. The living was awful, but then we went on from there. But what we were learning (a) there was a war going on; (b) you had a sense that it was going to contribute to where you were going to go next. It was all totally different from anything, certainly anything I'd ever heard before. Now, the Coast Guard Reserve officers/policemen and so forth had been there before, and they were able to say to us, "Well, it doesn't always work that way, fellows."

Paul Stillwell: Which was useful.

Admiral Gracey: Oh. Hey, as recently as for the last 13 years I've been a Senior Fellow in the Capstone Program. That's a course at National Defense University for new flag and general officers of all the services, and that's what we seem to be, this small stable of four-stars. That's our role. One of them is to say, "It doesn't always go that way, fellows." But our role is to be sure these new senior leaders are going out with some good insights into what their jobs will be like.

No, no, it was very valuable to have those training periods under my belt. What did I know about loading explosives or fire protection? I can remember a time when one or another of us young guys would say, "Get a life. I mean, give these guys a break." [Laughter] But our teasing was all done in a sense of fun. It was exciting in the sense of getting something new, that it was a significant kind of thing, and that you were in fact going to put it to use when you finished this series of three short training periods—military police work, explosives loading and safety, and fire protection engineering.

My next training stint was at Port Chicago, which is in Concord, California. It's a naval magazine. It exploded in World War II, right after the Coast Guard Captain of the Port—as a matter of fact, the same guy for whom I was going to work in Boston, Captain P. B. Cronk—had pulled his explosive loading supervisors teams out because the practices in the loading that were going on at the Concord were so horrendous.* The story is that he couldn't get anybody to pay any attention, and he said to the Navy

* Captain Paul B. Cronk, USCG. He was a commander in 1944 when he was at Port Chicago.

command, “This is so dangerous that if you haven’t changed this by midnight tonight I’m taking my forces out.” And it didn’t change. They didn’t pay any attention, and he did pull all of the Coast Guard people out of the job, and very shortly thereafter they blew the place sky high. It just was a bad scene.*

Paul Stillwell: That’s been dramatized in a book and a movie and especially poignant because of mainly black sailors being killed.

Admiral Gracey: Being in the loading gangs. That’s exactly right. While there we stayed in a barracks that was right near the waterfront. Right by the corner of our building, in fact the corner in which we slept at night, were railroad car after railroad car full of explosives coming by, and they were within feet of the building. One didn’t lay awake at night worrying about it, because one was exhausted at that point, but you were aware that this had happened there and could happen again. We watched them do loading for Korea.

We went down to Treasure Island in San Francisco and went through their fire-fighting school and that sort of thing. That was a great experience, and it was the same mix of senior warrant officers and reserve officers and us young guys. And then I went from there to Illinois Institute of Technology on the south side of Chicago, where we studied fire protection engineering for several weeks. I was in the railroad station in Chicago the day Bobby Thomson hit his home run.[†] I remember hearing it over the radio.

Paul Stillwell: October 3, 1951.

* On the night of 17 July 1944, 320 individuals, 202 of whom were black ammunition handlers, were killed when two merchant ships, the *Quinalt Victory* and the *E. A. Bryan*, exploded while being loaded with munitions at Port Chicago, California, about 40 miles northeast of San Francisco. A number of the ammunition handlers were subsequently court-martialed because of their reluctance to go back to work. See Robert L. Allen, *The Port Chicago Mutiny* (New York: Warner Books, Inc., 1989).

[†] On Wednesday, 3 October 1951, the Brooklyn Dodgers and New York Giants were in the third and final game of a playoff series to decide the National League pennant. In the bottom of the ninth inning of the game, played in New York’s Polo Grounds, Bobby Thomson of the Giants hit a three-run home run to give his team a 5-4 victory.

Admiral Gracey: Exactly. Bingo. About the only specific thing I really remember about being at Illinois Tech is that if you were coming back at night you called ahead. When you got off the el or whatever, you called to the school, and they would come out and meet you with a security officer. It was a tough part of town. But it was there. Then I went to Boston.

Paul Stillwell: What was the purpose of the training at Port Chicago?

Admiral Gracey: To prepare us for one of our jobs, which was to supervise the loading of explosives. I had several occasions to do that in Newport, Rhode Island, where there would be a ship loading explosives. And we supervised it. The law required that we oversee and make sure the safety rules were followed. There were very strict regulations about how it had to be stowed, what kinds of stuff you could stow next to what kind. What could be topside, what couldn't be topside, what had to be topside.

Paul Stillwell: Sheathing and dunnage?

Admiral Gracey: Oh, the whole nine yards. And, as a matter of fact, I remember supervising one that was headed for Iceland. And I realized on the way back to Boston in my car that I had not hewed exactly to the letter of the law in where I had allowed something to be stowed on deck. It was a minor matter, but it really upset me that I had let this happen, so I went immediately to Captain Cronk. Captain Cronk was a crusty hard-bitten old Coast Guard officer, and I told him that I had done this. And he said, "Well, let's see. The ship has sailed. It's wintertime. They won't suffer too long if they get blown into the water." [Laughter] All of which was grinding me right down about to my knees. And he let me swing with that one for a couple of days, and then he called me in, and he said, "That goes on all the time, Mr. Gracey. It's a very minor oversight, but I'm glad you were aware that it was an oversight. And I think maybe you learned your lesson."

I said, "Yes, sir. I don't care how cold it is or how long they're going to survive. They ain't going to go in the water because I made a mistake." I got the message.

Paul Stillwell: Had proper safety precautions been instituted at Port Chicago in the wake of the explosion?

Admiral Gracey: I think so, Paul. I think so. We watched them load a couple of ships, and at that point we were still getting up to speed on what was right and what was wrong. Apparently in the wartime thing they had—didn't they have a mutiny? No, the mutiny was after the explosion wasn't it, I think.

Paul Stillwell: Well, the black sailors didn't call it a mutiny. They just said they didn't want to be assigned to that particular type of duty again.

Admiral Gracey: That's right and I shouldn't use the word mutiny, because I don't think anybody ever established it was that. They just stopped—maybe a strike. Whatever it was, they weren't going to do more loading. But apparently they were getting careless with the loading. At the time of the explosion, they had been dropping whole pallets full of ammo loose into the holds and then picking them up, and it just was apparently a nightmare. I don't know all the details, but our instructors were very conscious of it and talked about it a lot. They showed us movie after movie about it, and they explained when we were watching that, "This is how we do it, and this is how it should have been done before but it wasn't, and we're being very meticulous about it. And the San Francisco Coast Guard people were watching it close too.

Paul Stillwell: Did you see any residual evidence of the damage there?

Admiral Gracey: I don't remember that, no, and I always thought that was funny, but now I can't remember when it blew.

Paul Stillwell: Nineteen forty-four.

Admiral Gracey: Forty-four. So this would have been seven years later. No, I never did see any signs of the damage. I had occasion to go back to Concord for one thing or another when I was Commander Pacific Area out there, and I don't remember any. They had fine buildings, and they were in good shape. The barracks that we slept in must have been blown up the day of the explosion, and it was fine and comfortable and relatively new. I'm sure there had to have been a major rebuilding.

Back in Boston, I was the Dangerous Cargo Officer and the Vessel Traffic Officer, and my job was to get in touch with the shipping companies in town and find out what kinds of dangerous cargo they were bringing in and where it was going to be off-loaded. And I developed a system. I thought that we were leaving too much to hit or miss, so I developed a system of calling every shipping company every day and got to know the people there, and they would tell me what we needed to know so we could keep the port safe. We'd have nice chats about who won the ball game last night, but I'd also learn what was coming and what wasn't. They were very obliging, and when there were changes they would call and let me know. It was a system that I worked up. The skipper sent it into Washington, and ultimately it was used throughout the Coast Guard. That's an example of my zeal I spoke of earlier—my desire to find a better way to do things.

One of my tasks was to walk the piers, especially in East Boston, where most of this loading was going on, and check to make sure the dangerous cargo was separated and to look to see how it was being handled. A lot of what was in those enclosed warehouse piers was basic material like burlap, for example, which was a fire hazard. I noticed that in every one of those warehouses on the piers that I went to there would be a section of white wall, then there would be a girder, and then another section of white wall. And painted in large black letters on the wall in the first section was the word nosmo, N-O-S-M-O. And in the next one was the word K-I-N-G. I thought, "Well, Nosmo King must be the big wheel that runs these things."

One day I noted that here was a lot of flammable stuff around here, but there seemed to be no particular warnings about smoking or fire hazards. And I asked one of the people I was with about that, and he said, "Is there anything wrong with that sign up there on the wall?" I looked at it, and, of course, what it said was "NO SMOKING." But they didn't separate between the "no" and the "smo," and so it came out NOSMO KING.

[Laughter] Well, my family periodically chides me about Nosmo King to this day. It pops immediately to my head when I talk about inspecting piers in South Boston.

Paul Stillwell: Well, you mentioned your pipe smoking on board ship. You kept that up for many years, didn't you?

Admiral Gracey: Yes, I did. I smoked a pipe until after I retired, much to the dismay of many people I'm sure. There are those who like a pipe and those who don't, and mine apparently was not terribly pleasant to smell. I stopped when Randy and I were living for a short time in a small apartment, and I thought, "Boy, this secondary effect here is really big time." Furthermore, it had gotten to be such a habit that I hardly ever smoked tobacco. I was down to lighting empty pipes. I mean, it was just something I did with my hands. And so I stopped. December 31 of 1986 I stopped, and I haven't smoked since. I've kept some pipes and tobacco around in case of emergency need, but I've never had to use them.

Paul Stillwell: Well, I noticed a pipe in your hand in a number of pictures when you were Commandant.

Admiral Gracey: Yeah, that's right, and I did have it with me all the time. I would have a morning staff conference where we'd get an operational briefing as to what was going on around the world, and then the various office chiefs would talk about whatever they wanted to talk about. We would make decisions or not as warranted, and often we would just communicate. And we got into the no-smoking era, cutting down on smoking. But there were a couple of other pipe smokers in the group, so what we agreed was the meeting would start at 8:30 and I've forgotten what time we set, 10:00 o'clock I think. At 10:00 we could start smoking. But those of us who were smoking recognized where we were, and we would be a little slow about lighting up. But, yeah, I smoked it a lot. I'd be smoking in the car on the way to some kind of an event. And I'd either hand off this red hot pipe to my aide, bless his heart, or I would hold it in my left hand with the

stem up the sleeve and keep it there and then go about my business. I'm embarrassed to say that, but, yeah, I was addicted to pipe smoking.

Paul Stillwell: Did you notice any difference in health when you quit?

Admiral Gracey: Well, I noticed that I could smell things better, and, yeah, I had a kind of a rash on the roof of my mouth, and it went away. I noticed that—but for a little while I developed a heart arrhythmia. It went away. I had told the doctor that I had this periodically, and he said, "Sometime when it shows up call me." And we were living just down the street from Coast Guard Headquarters after I'd retired, and I called him up one day and I said, "It's going, Doc. Do you want to listen?" So I went over, and he did and he put a recorder thing on my chest and had me wear it for three or four days and find out just what the tie-in was. Part of it was too much caffeine. Part of it had been the smoking. A change of life-style, and it was a cold-turkey change. I just stopped. The arrhythmia didn't last long. Over the years I've had a little bit here and there but really nothing.

At one point I told our doctor at Coast Guard Headquarters that when I got up to make a speech I always had a kind of a pounding in my heart. So he gave me some medication to do away with that. I took it just one time, and I thought, "I don't think so." Another doctor said, "That's called stage fright. And it isn't fright. It's just you get primed to do your thing—even great actors have it. It's just you're pumped up. You're going to—"

And I said, "Well, yeah. I stand on my feet and I say, 'Good evening, ladies and gentlemen,' and that's the end of it." I mean, it was just getting ready. And I said to the first doctor, "Hey, I don't want to be laid back when I stand up there. I want to be laid back, but I want to be laid back on purpose. I don't want to be cooled off or slowed down." So that was the end of that medication nonsense. I still have my heart pound when I'm getting ready to speak to an audience.

Paul Stillwell: There's a little self-consciousness until you get into it and get going.

Admiral Gracey: Well, it's a case of wanting to do it well, you know, and if it's a new experience or a new audience—I'll tell you one experience I had that was very difficult. When I was Commandant I went to make a speech to a large audience, and they didn't have a head table that night. All the tables were on the floor, and you spoke from a podium. This was at the annual Coast Guard Auxiliary National Conference, so I was with part of the Coast Guard Family. I mean, a lot of those people I knew personally, but they all know me, and, you know, I had great love for the entire Coast Guard family—and still do. So it was a friendly audience.

But they sat me with my back to the audience, so I was looking toward the stage, and there were preliminary speakers and all that sort of thing, and so it was right for me to be facing them. That was a courteous thing to do. I didn't have to turn around when they were talking. But when it was my turn to get up and speak, I found myself being ill at ease. And I realized that, without even thinking about it, when you're at a head table if you're going to be a speaker you know where people are. You know where the table is that's having a good time, where the people are that you recognize—whatever. You get a sense for it, and when you get to certain parts of your speech you look at people anyway, and you want to build them in. You know where they are. And this was like I was seeing this crowd for the first time. It was difficult. I made a point always after that of saying, "Don't ever do that to me again. If you're going to sit me on the floor, let me sit where I'm looking at the people because I've got to see them. I've got to know who they are." Funny experience, a long way from Boston and the piers.

Paul Stillwell: But illuminating nonetheless.

Admiral Gracey: Nonetheless. Right.

Paul Stillwell: What else do you recall about implementing the Coast Guard regulations in this port?

Admiral Gracey: I don't have any specific kinds of recollections. I remember it as a great experience. I remember enjoying the contacts with the people in the various

shipping companies. We had no crises that I can recall. There was some flap about the port security card admission kind of rules, and people thought we were holding them back, but that was normal. No, I have nothing I can shed on that.

Paul Stillwell: Was there any heightened sense of security because it was wartime?

Admiral Gracey: Oh, well that's the whole idea. Yeah. That was one of the reasons we focused on dangerous cargo. I mentioned I was the dangerous-cargo officer, and I created a system to track it. I was the guy who monitored what was coming, when was it coming and where was it going, and where was it coming from. I think there was the feeling that this stuff had been coming into Boston forever anyway. But now if somebody wanted to do some mischief, we're in a wartime situation—not the same as World War II, of course—but if somebody wanted to do some mischief, those would be the places they would look to do it. A major fire could do great harm, perhaps not so much to the war effort but to the port of Boston, and that was a big port. And we were trying very hard to keep all the ports open and moving freely.

Paul Stillwell: Did the Navy provide its own security for the shipyards?

Admiral Gracey: Oh sure. We were working private shipyards, the waterfront facilities, that kind of thing.

Paul Stillwell: What about concern about pollution of the water? Was that anywhere near what it is today?

Admiral Gracey: Zippo. Even though there was the Refuse Act, a law that had been passed way back, I can't tell you when, but it was way before this. It was a law against dumping stuff in the water. But, no. If there were gross examples of it, I guess it had been enforced, but later on when I got into the Programs Division at Coast Guard Headquarters, I was aware of that law, but there was a growing concern in the country about the state of the water. Part of my job was to put together our priorities for budgets

every year to recommend to the Commandant. I think it was the first or second year there I came up with the title, “People, Plant and Pollution” as the things we were going to focus on. No, when I was in Boston from ’51 to ’53 there wasn’t much concern for the environment that was visible.

Paul Stillwell: I remember when I was on board ship in the ’60s I saw placards posted on the bridge, and that was about the extent of the concern.

Admiral Gracey: Yeah, yeah. Well, you weren’t going to pump oil into the bay or anything like that, I guess, but it did happen, and then people weren’t terribly concerned about it. I mean, the oceans and the rivers were the places that you put stuff when you wanted to get rid of it. All the mills and, every mill in New England, you know, you go downstream from the mill, and the water was green and purple and whatever color was going on in there. That was true all over. And the same thing was true at air stations. You would do whatever you did with engines, and then you would take the residue and you’d go out back and pour it in the sand.

We paid the piper for that up in the state of Michigan. These are things coming later on, but the people who lived in Traverse City, Michigan, were very unhappy because they were getting some chemicals in the wells as they built houses closer to the Coast Guard Air Station. That was an air station that we took over from the Navy. They had been dumping oil out back for years. Nobody thought anything about it. It was done everywhere. But it had worked its way through to the water underground, and we had a major, major legal flap about that, and the Coast Guard had to pay ultimately. This came to a head just in my first months as the Commandant, so I got to go to my old friends in the Ninth District and help pay for their wells.

Paul Stillwell: Well, and it was practice just that a ship’s sewage system would be pumped overboard.

Admiral Gracey: Oh, sure. Oh, yeah. That was another one that I got into. In the Ninth Coast Guard District there was great concern about the extent of treatment of sewage

being pumped overboard on ships, the lake carriers, the ore boats in the Great Lakes. And “boat” is the correct term. They’re 1,000-foot ships, but they’re called boats. I made a speech in Detroit one day, which did not exactly win me a lot of fans. But I pointed out that if you took every one of these ore boats and put them in one place all pumping overboard at the same time, it would be the equivalent of a community of about 11,000 people. Whereas the boats don’t all meet in one place, and they are all over the Great Lakes. I said it isn’t a great idea to have it there, and we’re working to lessen the effect, but there are far greater problems than the pollution from the ships.

All the major cities on the Great Lakes were pumping their sewage into the lake. My point was, “I’ve not been bought out by the shipping companies here. They’re going to have the treatment facilities, but I really think, people here at this conference, you are focusing in the wrong place. If you really want to clean up the Great Lakes, you ought to focus on the big cities and the other plants that are pumping all their stuff into the lake.”

Paul Stillwell: Put it in perspective. Did you get to spend much time with your parents when you were on duty there?

Admiral Gracey: In Boston, yes. Let’s see if I can do this arithmetic right. In 1951 my 1935 brother would have been 16. That’s when he was catching for the Brooklyn Dodgers when they came to town. So if I had the opportunity I would go to Braves Field and watch my brother catch batting practice, and he’d get us a seat in the box.* We also drove down from Portland, Maine, a couple of times to do that. And, of course, the folks were there. My dad was in the marine insurance business in Boston, and here all of a sudden I was working on keeping his port secure and all that kind of stuff. So I would periodically have lunch with Dad and his partners, and they liked having me tell about what the Coast Guard was doing.

Dad was living vicariously through his son in the Coast Guard and loving every minute of it, and I was thoroughly enjoying getting to know his partners, a couple or three really nice older gentlemen. They were all older than I, of course. And getting out to

* The Braves made their home in Boston through the end of the 1952 baseball season. Prior to the 1953 season the franchise moved to Milwaukee.

Needham. We lived in the town of Wakefield, which is up on the northwest side of Boston, and my folks lived in our old family home, which was in Needham, just 15 miles out on the west side. Our middle child was born in Needham Hospital. Our first child was born while I was at sea in *Barataria*. The pay clerk aboard decided there was no doubt about what to name the kid. We didn't know if it was going to be a boy or a girl obviously, but he decided, no doubt about it, if it was going to be a boy his name had to be Stacy Gracey. [Laughter] It *was* a boy, and we named him Kevin and nicknamed him Kip. But our second child, our older daughter, was born while I was in the COTP business in Boston. And I had a collateral assignment, which was to do cadet procurement in Maine and New Hampshire and Vermont. And so I would go traveling off to those places and tell the story of the Coast Guard Academy and so forth.

Paul Stillwell: To the high school students?

Admiral Gracey: High school students. But one of the few days I was in town over a period of a couple of months—you know, I'd be in for a day or two and then back out again and be in on the weekends—my wife prematurely—by prematurely I mean a few days earlier than we'd expected—had her water break. We were in Wakefield, and it's a pretty good spin down to Needham. We made it in record time and deposited the mother and daughter, and all was well. So Cheryl was born in Needham. Of course, my mother as a grandmother was wonderful. But in the hurry to get to the hospital our son's favorite stuffed animal—"Meow," the cat—got left behind, and there was great trauma come bedtime. I think I told you a little bit about my mother the other day, a very special lady. She manufactured—on the spot—a substitute that got the kid to go to sleep that night. And then he wasn't quite sure which one he wanted more. [Laughter] Anyway, yeah, we got to see the family, and we got to do a lot of family things together, and it was a good period.

Paul Stillwell: I can see why this would be a source of immense pride for your dad.

Admiral Gracey: Yeah. Oh, yeah. And my mother, but for her it was different. “Hey, you know, my kid’s doing it. That’s good.” That was my mother’s attitude. I think it was my dad’s, too, but he got to put me on display periodically, and we talked sports. They were all Red Sox fans and Braves fans. But they never drank when I was there.

Later on I went back to Boston to go to Harvard Business School, and we lived near Needham in South Natick. Dad came to dinner one night when Mom was in Connecticut. Now, my folks didn’t drink, but they always had this big corner of one their sideboards in the dining room that had bottles of wine and some Scotch and stuff in it, but that was just things that Dad had gotten for Christmas presents. Dad came to dinner. Mom was down in Hartford visiting her father and sister. He brought a bottle of Scotch. And we said, “Thank you very much, Dad,” and put it up on the shelf because we weren’t going to drink if Dad didn’t drink. Well, sometime shortly thereafter I went to lunch with him, and he very blatantly ordered, “I think I’ll have some Scotch,” of the particular brand that he’d brought to the house. “Would you like some of that, Jim?”

And I said, “Dad, you rascal. Here you were, you were free, and you wanted us to open the bottle and have a glass of Scotch before dinner.”

He said, “Yes.” Well, anyway. I really do wander, don’t I?

Paul Stillwell: What else do you have to say about the Boston period?

Admiral Gracey: I’m not sure there’s much more I can add. I think we did some good work with the ships, and we didn’t have any disasters and being in Boston, of course, that was my hometown, and that was a good place to be. Oh, I do remember one event. I had a car that we’d bought when we were in Georgia, and it had Georgia plates on it. We lived out in Wakefield, up north of Boston. One day we had a really bad snowstorm. And we were right across the street from the town bus barn where they kept their trucks and all that stuff.

I had a long driveway, and I’d shoveled my way out of the driveway, because I was going to have to drive to work. And here’s this Georgia car sitting there, and they had plowed down the road and they’d plowed up a big pile of snow. So I was there plucking away at this snow pile with my car with the Georgia plates on it sitting right

next to me just ready to go into the street. And this snowplow came up, beeped the horn loudly at me, swept in, and plowed the snow away. I was in uniform. Plowed the snow away, backed up and said, “There, you Cracker. Go back to Georgia where you belong.” [Laughter] I didn’t tell him I was from Needham. And I got plowed out every time after that. I was not going to tell him I was from a town 20 miles away and grew up in that part of the world.

Paul Stillwell: There’s no point in sharing unnecessary information. [Laughter]

Admiral Gracey: My boss, Captain Cronk, and his wife announced one Sunday morning that they were coming to call. We’d been down to spend Saturday with the folks, which we often did, and spent the night, and then we’d come back Sunday morning. We had left kind of on the spur of the moment on Saturday, and the house was a shambles. The phone rang, and it was Captain Cronk. He was coming to return the call. We’d called on him. You know, that used to be done with the calling cards and all that. Doesn’t seem to be done anymore.

Paul Stillwell: I don’t think so.

Admiral Gracey: Anyway, he announced that he was coming to call. Not only that, he was just down the street. I mean, we were in big trouble. We had an old coal furnace, and I’d been out back shaking ashes. I had on an old leather jacket and so forth—properly dressed for shaking ashes but not for receiving a return call from my commanding officer. My wife called out to me and said, “The Cronks are coming.”

I said, “How soon?”

“Twenty minutes.” [Laughter] We gathered all the stuff, put it in the bathtub, pulled the shower curtain across, took stuff down in the cellar. I had a leather jacket on, and I took it and pulled that off. After they went home it took me almost ten days to find that leather jacket. For some reason or other I’d hung it on a nail under the cellar stairs. But I tell that story only because it indicates—I don’t know whether everybody would do that, but to us it was important. We wanted to be proper. We wanted to welcome them

properly, and they had given us no notice, which was a rotten thing to do. But we wanted it to go off well, and we wanted them to think that we were a proper Coast Guard officer and wife in a proper Coast Guard family. It was pandemonium for a while, but it came off just peaches and cream. Everything was fine.

Paul Stillwell: And the ritual also included leaving calling cards during your visit.

Admiral Gracey: Oh, yes. Oh, indeed, yes. Indeed, yes, and you had to take the right number and all of that sort of thing. Oh, yes.

Paul Stillwell: Many people look back on that with some fondness, that it was a useful custom for getting to know people other than in the duty setting.

Admiral Gracey: It worked very well for us. When we paid our call on them, it was great. On the job he was scary—I mean, he was a tough, crusty old seadog, and for a brand shiny new—was I a jaygee by then? I guess I must have been, but brand shiny new something, and his young bride, this was impressive. And you wanted to do it right. Well, we got there, and he had forgotten to tell his wife we were coming. We arranged the call through him. He'd forgotten to tell her. She was in the kitchen canning peaches. I had the cards in my hand, but there was no place to put them down. You know, you always found imaginative places to put the cards down, because some people had the quote proper unquote tray in the front hall and some people didn't.

But she said, "Come on out here in the kitchen." And we went out in the kitchen. She said, "Too hot out here. Take your coat off." And she said, "Paul, something you forgot to tell me [laughter] about these nice people coming to call tonight?"

He said, "[Sound of growling]."

And she said, "Well, that's all right. Maybe they can help us peel the peaches." We went on from there, and it was a wonderful friendly warm visit. And I found that there was a different side to the man. Randy became very fond of this lady, and we got to know them. So it's a good example of what you're talking about. Yeah.

Paul Stillwell: Well, are you ready to move on to Alaska now?

Admiral Gracey: Time for Alaska.

Paul Stillwell: Did you have to go through a training period before that duty?

Admiral Gracey: I did. I don't remember how long it was, but it was a short course at the Coast Guard Training Station in Groton, Connecticut. We learned about Loran and got some leadership lessons but mostly about Loran and what it was all about.* Loran stations were all in remote parts of world, in the Timbuktus.

Paul Stillwell: Why is that?

Admiral Gracey: Well, because the nature of those particular Loran stations, Loran A, was that they had to be on a coast with no interference anywhere around. And to set up the pattern, because Loran achieves its navigation capability by the receiver on a ship measuring the time difference between receiving signals from two Loran stations. There is a hyperbolic line around each station anywhere along which you'll have the same time difference. Then you take a reading from another pair of stations whose line of position crosses your first reading. It's like star lines or lines of sight of any kind, only these are radio lines. Where they cross is allegedly the position. I say allegedly because the accuracy was a mile and a half or something like that. But, hey, a heck of a lot better than before. And if you could get a third one to come in, which in most places you couldn't, then you were even better.

Paul Stillwell: Then you had a fix.

Admiral Gracey: Yeah. But that's why the stations were located where they were. Each chain had three stations. My station was in Yakutat, Alaska, at Ocean Cape. It's just

* Loran (long-range aid to navigation) is a system of electronic navigation that involves the reception of pulse signals transmitted simultaneously by paired stations ashore.

about where the coast of Alaska starts to curve to the west as you're going north. It's above Juneau, almost up to Cordova. Then there was one at Spruce Cape in Kodiak. I can't remember where the third one was. Anyway, it created a kind of a triangle, and that covered the Gulf of Alaska. So at Groton we learned about being out there by yourself. Some of the stations were more isolated than others. Some of them in the Philippines, for example, were in the middle of a Philippine community. Some of them had limited quarters.

Kodiak was a family station. Your wife could go. At Yakutat, my predecessor had his wife living in a little shack that they'd towed out next to the station from the logging camp, but it wasn't a family station. So my wife Randy and I decided she and the kids would move down to another town outside Boston, nearer to our families. I got to Yakutat and found out that (a) this guy had his wife there, and (b) Randy and the kids could have come with me. She was several months pregnant at the time.

But one of the local fishermen had a house that sat on the edge of a cliff overlooking Yakutat Bay, across the bay from the old cannery that was there. He went out for the winter and offered to rent his house to us for \$30.00 a month. And it had inside plumbing as long as you poured water into the back of the tank, i.e., it was always inside plumbing, but that's how you flushed it. He had a magnificent system of rain barrels—five of them on an entry deck, and five more in an attic. The attic ones collected rain. They were connected by garden hoses. When they filled up, they flowed into the ones downstairs, and when you wanted water to refill the ones in the attic, you just pumped it up there by an old-fashioned hand pump. When all were full, the overflow from all of them would go down into a huge vat underneath the house; it sat below the front of the house on the edge of a cliff, a wooden vat.

That was wonderful until the first freeze, at which point the garden hoses full of water froze up. And the only way to get water was to chop it by a hatchet out of the vat. Every morning we'd fill a galvanized washtub with ice and bring it up. We had a little oil stove. We'd melt the ice, and that was our water for the day.

Anyway, Randy and the two and two-thirds kids came up in October. She was six months pregnant at the time. In December she flew down to Juneau to have the baby.

There were two flights a week to Juneau. Randy flew down a few days before a date we had arranged with a doctor. We had some Coast Guard friends there: Lieutenant Commander, later Rear Admiral, and Mrs. Jim Moreau.* Randy stayed with them. We'd known them in Portland, Maine, and a little bit in New London. Jim took Randy to the hospital. It turned out that we had scheduled to have the birth induced so that she could have the birth on a date certain and then come back to Yakutat. On the scheduled day, it turned out that she woke up early in the morning in actual labor. If we hadn't done that, then I would have had to deliver the baby in Yakutat.

There was an Alaska Native Service nurse in Yakutat who said, "Don't worry. All you need is newspaper and silver nitrite, and we'll take care of it."

And I had a corpsman who said, "Don't worry, Skipper. I did a lot of them in the Philippines."

I told them both, "Thanks, you guys, but if you don't mind I'm going to ship my wife to the hospital." Anyway, interestingly enough, the following month Donna Moreau, who was also pregnant, started labor at the same time of day as Randy had. Jim drove her to the hospital and checked her in, and the nurse said, "My God, he's here with another one." [Laughter]

But that all worked well for us, and Randy came back to Yakutat four days later with a brand-new baby to join our one-year-old and three-year-old. We would go to the station on weekends. We had this big rotary snowplow that somebody'd bought for us, because they get 27 feet of snow in Yakutat. But it doesn't all fall in one night. But they got a plow that would go through 27 feet of snow, thinking of the big drifts in the Rocky Mountains and that sort of thing. The roads were all winding roads that went through the trees so they couldn't be seen from the air by the Japanese in World War II. Our Quonset huts that we lived in were World War II-type military. And this plow thing—it was all you could do to maneuver it. There was no power steering, and you had to keep raising and lowering the rotor so you wouldn't spit up a pine tree or something. But we would load into that thing, hang the diapers onto the outside, and we'd go out to the station and spend the weekend out there. We'd get a hot meal that Randy didn't have to cook, and she did the laundry in a machine instead of in our little kitchen sink, using our

* Lieutenant Commander James W. Moreau, USCG.

hard-earned daily water. And we'd put the baby to bed in a bureau drawer like Kayo Mullins in the old cartoons—pull out the top drawer and put the kid in there.* It was a great experience.

I had a great bunch of troops. They were a very colorful bunch. The Korean War was going full bore, and one of them had enlisted in the Coast Guard because he didn't want to be drafted. He was a college graduate, but he didn't want to go to OCS.† He just wanted to get in and get out and get it over with. His name was Gunnar Jarre. Wonderful guy—from Wyoming. They were all great guys. Gunnar would go to bed every night and wake up every morning saying at the top of his lungs, "I hate this damn place." And that was—everybody knew that was reveille and that was taps that Gunnar was announcing. He was a good worker and a good shipmate.

We had to be prepared for war and for tidal waves. What do you do? We didn't have any heavy equipment at all. They finally brought us a Caterpillar bulldozer from Kodiak. It had no blade, of course. The only thing I could think to do for a tidal wave was to park that thing in the front of the station—on the ocean side. We had a big decision meeting. Shall we park it in the front and break the wave, or shall we park it in back and try to catch part of the station before it gets washed into the lake that was out back? We had to be prepared to repel invaders too. So we developed places to hide. You understand there were only 13 of us, and we were not exactly heavily armed—a couple shotguns and a couple .45s.

We had brown bears that came around regularly, bald eagles that would roost in the tree outside your window. The lake I talked about was right on the flyway for every conceivable bird that went up and down the coast, and they all landed in that lake. Periodically there would be a visiting ship and somebody—one officer in particular—would want to go hunting. And I would say, "Well, stand on that bridge down there, and we'll go up by the lake and clap our hands and they'll all fly over. Pick out the one you want, because there's everything there." And they could have reached up and grabbed one by the leg as it went over, you know, and there would be this great blazing away, and

* Kayo Mullins was a character in the newspaper comic strip "Moon Mullins," by Frank Willard and Ferd Johnson, that ran from 1923 to 1961. It was about a family of lovable lowlifes.

† OCS—Officer Candidate School.

there would be nothing but feathers. We would tease this guy about, “You’re supposed to be a great hunter.”

Somebody at the 17th District Office in Juneau decided they were going to save money by delivering our fuel in a Coast Guard vessel instead of buying it from the oil company in Yakutat. That decision caused us a lot of extra work and hazard. Chevron, or whatever its predecessor was called, had three big oil tanks on the road behind our house in town. They would fuel fishing vessels, the cannery, planes at the airport, and our Loran Station. They had a tank truck they used to deliver the fuel for the station. We had two huge diesel engines that drove our generators. We used a lot of fuel to produce the broadcast power we needed.

Ed Voss, the Chevron man, would come out periodically and eat some fresh-baked pie with a cup of coffee while he topped us off, and that would be the end of it. Well, somebody decided that was costing too much. We could get fuel at a bargain in Kodiak, and an ice-capable Coast Guard cutter, *Storis*, or one of the buoy tenders would bring fuel down. To get the fuel over the road to the station the district got two small airport-type trailers—the little, lightweight jobbers used to move fuel on paved runways. They carried 500 gallons. We were to load them from the ships and then tow them the several winding-through-the-woods miles to the station, where we could only unload them by gravity drain. It’s a wonder we didn’t kill somebody. To get the ships back to sea we were driving 24 hours a day. The guys were so tired they couldn’t stand up. The trailers were wobbling all over the place. The roads weren’t paved or anything. They were narrow, winding, deep-pot-holed dirt roads that were designed to be hidden from the Japanese.

This went on for two or three times, and I wrote a rather stern letter to the district saying, “This is silly. I don’t know how much you’re saving, but we’re going to kill somebody here. And we’ve got a man here, Ed Voss, who makes his living by delivering oil to here and out to the airport to the airplanes. Why don’t we let him come out here and pump it like he always has, and let’s be done with it?” Well, cooler heads prevailed, and they let it go back to the old system. That bright idea was a real morale buster while it continued. We dreaded having the next ship come.

Paul Stillwell: How large was the crew of men you had working for you?

Admiral Gracey: Thirteen, mostly electronics techs. I had one second class petty officer—a marvelous big black fellow. Mac was a character. We were trying to do some “landscaping.” I had decided a good thing to do would be to get some soil, and we’d plant something out in front of the station. This was virgin territory. I mean, the layer of soil was maybe an inch thick, and so you had to go and scrape it off and put it in the truck and bring it back and cover over the spaces that we had lined with three logs. That meant going into the woods, and, of course, there were the big brown bears, and we would always take a shotgun. One day it was Mac’s turn to “ride shotgun.” And he said to me, “Mr. Gracey, I want you to understand one thing here. If one of those big brown fellows shows up, there’s to be none of this hero stuff. It’s every man for himself.” [Laughter] He said, “I don’t think I want a gun. Just give me a shovel. I can dig a hole and push him in it faster than I can shoot that gun.” Well, we all had a lot of fun with that, but it was something you had to be careful of, and we always carried a rifle when we went into the woods.

There was an old Fish and Wildlife Service man in the area. He had been in the “horse cavalry.” His recommended way to deal with the big brown bears was to stand still, because you couldn’t outrun them, and you couldn’t out-climb them. He said, “Let them come right up to you and when they get real close, spit at them.”

And I said, “That’s great. Where am I going to get the spit? I mean, I’m standing there, and a big brown bear is coming right up to me? I’ve got to tell you, dry mouth is going to be what I’m suffering from at that point.” [Laughter] I never had to put it to a test.

One night I was coming back to the station from town. We’d had a shipload of supplies come in, and I had gone into town to get a load. I’d taken my three-year-old son with me in the Jeep, and we’d loaded it up with frozen food for the station while the corpsman was taking care of my daughter. It was while my wife was down in Juneau having the baby, as a matter of fact. And I said, “You know, you guys keep going with what you’re doing. I’ll bring back a load of stuff. I’ve got to go in and check in at the post office.” We had a little post office there in town and a cannery.

Anyway, I was driving back, and it was late, and it was time for supper. We often drove up the beach because it was really hard packed, beautiful sand, and the road was awful. So I went down and got onto the beach, but it was dark, and I got a little too close to the water, and I got stuck in the soft sand. There was no point in my spinning the wheels; I knew that was just going to bury it deeper. There was nothing to do but get to the station. So I grabbed my son under my arm, and we headed for the station. I climbed over some piles of tree-sized driftwood to get into the road, because the hard road was going to be easier running on than soft sand. And my poor son, he had no idea. He thought his old man had gone mad.

And I ran—I think it had to be a mile and a half, two miles, to the station. I came bursting in the door, and I was saying, “The Jeep’s stuck in the sand. It’s got all the food in it.” The corpsman was feeding my daughter. My one-year-old daughter was there being the queen of the May. And all hands raced out, jumped onto the Cat. It was the first time in its entire life that old thing ever started on the first crank. Out on the beach they went; everybody piled all on top of this thing. We got there, put a towline on the Jeep, and pulled it out just as the water was right up to the floorboards. We saved it. Big adventure. I mean that was one of the highlights of the year. That thing started. “We got it. Yea!!”

Paul Stillwell: You mentioned you had an engineman. Was this for an emergency diesel generator if the power went out?

Admiral Gracey: We had no power but what we generated. He and a couple others kept the plant running. Then we had a small emergency generator to provide station power in an emergency. The big diesels provided the principal power for generating the signal, you see.

Paul Stillwell: I see.

Admiral Gracey: You were radiating your navigation signal, and it had to go out, get off those antennae with some power, so this was producing the signal power, and it would

vibrate the whole station. We actually had two Quonset huts. One was where we lived and slept and had a galley and a recreation room. And then that went through a passageway to the engine room and then from there was a garage and on the other side were all the electronic spaces where the watch standers were with all the transmitter gear and all that sort of thing. We had several ETs who stood watches, and we had one cook, one corpsman, two engineers, and a damage controlman.*

Paul Stillwell: Were you the only officer?

Admiral Gracey: Yes, I was a jaygee at the time. Chief Gilbert was my number-two guy. He was an ET.

We had interesting relationships with the people in Yakutat. My predecessor had forbidden any of them—these are all, as I say, mostly Tlingit Indians—from coming onto the station, and relationships really weren't very good. They were nice, sometimes heavy drinking, people.

There was a river south of town called the Situk River, big fishing territory. In the old days they had a railroad car that looked like it was out of the movie *Dodge City*. It had been replaced by an old 4-by-4 truck whose wheels had been replaced by railroad wheels. It was absolutely marvelous. It was the Yakutat and Southern Railway, which went just from this little town of Yakutat down to the Situk River. It consisted of just one "train"—that truck. And it was really narrow gauge. At one point some Air Force guys came down from Anchorage. They wanted to go fishing in the Situk, so they took a handcar down the railroad to go fishing. En route they came around a salmonberry bush and met that truck coming back. And they had a collision. We called it "The Great Train Wreck of the Yakutat and Southern Railway." Nobody got seriously hurt. A couple of broken arms and stuff, but it was great to report to the District Commander in Juneau that we had a train wreck on the Yakutat and Southern.

The cannery people would load the trucks with fish, haul them to Yakutat, and deadhead back. On Friday the fishermen were loaded on top of the fish for a weekend at home. Sunday afternoon they were taken back. By Sunday afternoon many of them

* ETs—electronics technicians.

would be pretty well out of it from having had too much to drink all weekend long. They'd go down, and they'd fish all week, and then they'd come back and drink a lot. They owed their life to the cannery store, as the song goes.

As a way of improving town/Coast Guard relations I challenged the local postmaster, John Williams, to a softball game on a Sunday afternoon. It got to be a regular thing. It was quite a colorful event. After the game they'd load the men on this truck and take them down to the Situk. Many didn't know nor care what was happening.

My predecessor had his wife living at the station, and he or she was concerned about folks coming out, so they just banned it. I thought that wasn't a great idea, and so we started inviting them to come out to the movies at night. We would have films, of course, being an "overseas" unit—Alaskans don't like to have you say that you're overseas there. Later, as the Commandant, I used to argue that parts of Alaska and all of Hawaii had to be part of our sea-shore-overseas rotation, because if you are of a bent that you like to get in the car and drive home and see grandma on Thanksgiving you couldn't do it from there, certainly not from Yakutat. Anyway, that's yet another thing.

But we had the films, and I invited the people to come out. There was a logging camp in town, and we would invite the loggers to come out too. Well, that was a two-way street. The loggers did more for keeping our trucks and engines going than we could do ourselves. And every time they came out they wanted to get a hot shower. And they would always bring hams and all the stuff that they—I mean, they ate like kings at this logging camp, as you can imagine. And in return they saw a movie, and they got to use our shower.

Our 17th District Chief of Operations came out one day and couldn't get back to Juneau. It was too late to get back into Juneau, so he spent the night with us. After supper I forgot to tell him about this onslaught of people that were going to show up at movie time. All of a sudden the back door of the rec hall opened up, and in came this parade of native Indian folk and the loggers and one thing and another. He said, "Gracey, what the hell's going on here?"

I said, "Well, Captain, they've come to enjoy the movie."

He said, "Well, I'm not sure that that's permitted."

I said, “Well, the option is for us to be out here alone, and it’s a lever. If I find a bunch of trash along the road out here somebody’s not been taking good care, or something’s been going on, I drop in the post office and I say, ‘John, we may have to cut out the movies. People are dropping trash along beside the road.’ And before I get in the truck and get back there, there’ll be people out there picking up the trash. And we have a very cooperative relationship. They invite our guys in to dances and various holiday events, and it’s just a good way to go.” And he accepted it. But the look on his face was marvelous when these guys started coming in. [Laughter]

And we used that lever. Whenever any of our guys had a little time off and went down by the logging camp, why, the cooks—they had two wonderful old Irish lady cooks—would have them in. They loved those young Coast Guardsmen, and they would feed them till they couldn’t walk. The fishing was good down there, and they had a boat we could use. Sharing with them at the station was just a good thing to do.

There was a murder in town. This was while Alaska was still a territory, so being a U.S. Coast Guard officer there, I was everything.* I was the U.S. Marshal, I was the Fish and Wildlife agent, I was the Coast Guard officer, I was the Public Health officer. You name it, I was it.

Paul Stillwell: Customs, Immigration.

Admiral Gracey: You name it. If it had to do with the United States Government, I was it. There was a murder in town, and Paul, the local police chief, and I had gotten to be pretty good friends. I’ve forgotten now how we solved it, but we solved it. Twenty-five years later, I was there with all the District Commanders from Pac Area.† We had had a meeting in Kodiak, and then we were flying back to Juneau, going right over Yakutat. I thought they really ought to stop in and see Yakutat, so we did.

The station was soon to be closed, so we went out to see it and meet the crew. The troops, of course, loved having the area commander and all his admirals and their

* On 3 January 1959, President Dwight Eisenhower signed the official declaration that made Alaska the 49th state. The new American flag featured seven rows of seven stars each.

† Pac Area—the Pacific Area is one of the two major geographical subdivisions of the Coast Guard. As a vice admiral Gracey served as Commander Pacific Area from 1978 to 1981.

ladies there, even though it was a rainy day. They had prepared a little party—complete with a decorated cake that said, “Welcome Back” for me and Randy.

I had been telling the flags, as had Randy, about when she came up to Yakutat in October. She had missed spring and summer, but I’d been telling her about the wild strawberries growing out front of the station and the whole thing. So when it was time for the 17th District to host one of our periodic meetings, I said to the Rear Admiral Duin, the District Commander up there, “Look, I want to schedule this when the wild strawberries are available out front. We’re coming some time. You tell me a time, and we’ll schedule it then.”* So we did.

By the time we got there it was pouring rain. Randy and I went out to pick strawberries and were joined by the other flags. The flag officers were all out in the front picking wild strawberries. And the crew was standing in the window with their noses pressed at the glass: “Look at those idiots out there in the rain picking those strawberries.”

On the way back to the airport we went into Yakutat. There had been one general store in town, and it was still there. The admirals were walking around, and I’d been telling these stories about Yakutat in the old days. I showed them the house we’d lived in 25 years before. They were finding some of these stories a little hard to believe when around a pile of beer cases came the old police chief, Paul. He looked up, saw me standing there, and he said, “Lieutenant, what are you doing here?” [Laughter] And we had a big greeting, you know.

And I said, “Paul, tell them about the murder.”

He said, “Oh, yeah, it was wonderful. We were wonderful. We went after him in there, and the lieutenant here now, he had some good ideas, and we checked out blah-blah-blah-blah-blah-blah.” I looked at those disbelieving guys, and I smiled smugly. That was kind of fun.

At one point during my Yakutat tenure the Navy was towing a personnel barge to Seattle from Kodiak. It broke loose in a storm, and it ran aground at the Situk River. They decided they had to get it out of there. And they brought equipment in, and they darkened the skies with airplanes. Here was all this stuff in the town. I was just the local

* Rear Admiral Robert A. Duin, USCG.

lieutenant, and they brought in some senior salvage officers. They took over the airport, and I was standing there saying, “Could I be of any help?”

“No.” They didn’t say, “Get out of here, son. You’re bothering us,” but the message was clear.

So I related this. The guys at the station wanted to know, “What can we do? How can we help?”

I said, “I don’t think they want our help.” They weren’t terribly happy about that. So we went on with life, and the Navy went to work. First they built a Quonset hut and had a beer hall for the Navy troops. Our guys weren’t allowed in. It was all done just so. But after many, many months of trying, they gave up. They couldn’t get it out. So my friend, Paul, went to work. He had a small boat, and he did seal hunting with it. He went to the Navy one day and said, “For a price I’ll get that barge out of there.”

The Navy said, “What’s your price?” and he told them. And they said, well, that was a lot of money, but it was a lot less than it was going to cost them. And, “We don’t think you can do it anyway, but if you can get it out fine.” So we all knew this was coming off.

One afternoon we saw Paul’s boat pom-pom-pom-pom down the coast. And the next morning one of our guys had been out front of the station. He came running in, said, “Paul’s got the barge. Paul’s got the barge.” And up the coast was coming Paul towing the barge, pom-pom-pom-pom. Well, he knew exactly when the tide was going to be right.

The Navy didn’t think to ask this guy. They were pulling on it all the time when it wasn’t going to work right, and instead of asking one of us who might have said, “Why don’t you ask Paul? He knows all about this stuff.” [Laughter] No, no. They didn’t want to be bothered with that. And so my whole crew was out on the beach jumping up and down like a bunch of idiots cheering, “Yea, Paul. Yea, Paul.”

When I moved off the station and into the house when Randy came up, we could no longer keep beer at the station. I was allowed to keep enough for one night’s ration. So we moved all the beer to our rented house, and every day I would bring out some beer to drink that night. We had case upon case at our house. One Saturday night one of the young men had been at a party in town. They ran out of beer at the party, so he said, “I

know where I can get some,” and he kicked in the door to the entrance porch to our house. We were out at the station, and he knew that. And he took some beer. He was a big hero and all that stuff with the locals.

When Randy and the kids and I got back on Monday, it was obvious that somebody had stolen some beer. Not much, some. So I went down to the post office and said, “John, we’ve got a problem here. Somebody broke into my house.”

He said, “Let me see what I can find out. Why don’t you stop in later this afternoon, and maybe I’ll know something.” I went in later in the afternoon, and he told me exactly what had happened, and knew exactly who did it and the whole thing. Now we had the guy at the station who had committed this crime. This was a young fireman, a juvenile delinquent. He’d been in trouble every place. They’d finally shanghaied him to Alaska. He was a lovable delinquent, but he was a delinquent, and he did dumb things. Of course, the thing to do was to have a court-martial.

I decided that I would have a summary court. I would find him guilty, and I would throw the book at him, including 60 days in the federal jail in Juneau, which I understood was like five years anyplace else. It was a bad place at the time. But my doing that would preclude the 17th District from taking any action. If they got their hands on it, they were going to give him one of the biggies, because breaking and entering, et. al., are serious crimes, unless you happened to be there, unless you happened to know the circumstances. And I didn’t want to ruin this kid’s life over that kind of juvenile delinquent thing.

Paul Stillwell: And you didn’t want to overlook it either.

Admiral Gracey: I *couldn’t* overlook it. I had no intention of overlooking it, and it was too much for just a captain’s mast—non-judicial punishment. Well, I decided on the summary court. I did a lot of boning in the Uniform Code of Military Justice, and I decided that would work, so I did it.* I held a court, and I did in fact give him the works—threw everything at him that I could. He went down and did time in the jail, lost

* Following the unification of the U.S. armed forces in 1947, a new Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) was enacted for all the services and put into effect on 31 May 1951.

pay—a bunch of things. But, because I held the court-martial, limited in power though it was, and found him guilty, no one else could try him again on those charges. A special or general court could impose punitive discharges that would have ruined his life over a prank. I wanted to block that.

I got summoned down to Juneau, to the 17th District Office, saying, “You get on the next airplane and get down here.” When I arrived, I reported to the Chief of Personnel. We’d had pretty good relations, but when I stuck out my hand, he wouldn’t even touch me. He said, “Come with me.” So I went into the old man’s office, and there were the District Legal Officer and the District Commander and the District Chief of Staff and the District Chief of Personnel and Lieutenant (junior grade) Gracey. The District Commander, who in those days was a captain, said, “Mr. Gracey, what the hell are you doing?”

I said, “I did what I did so that you couldn’t.”

And he said, “Would you care to explain that?” And I did explain it as I just have to you. He looked at me and he said, “I’ll be damned. Get your butt back to Yakutat and don’t let me hear any more from you.” [Laughter] The Personnel Officer and the Legal Officer were some kind of angry. It took 15 years before that legal officer would speak to me. I mean, he was so angry that I had done that. I was kind of proud of myself. I thought it was a very clever move, and I think the District Commander did too.

Paul Stillwell: You followed all the legal steps.

Admiral Gracey: I did everything. I did it all, and I used the system to cut them out, and I said, “I did it because you would have given him punishment that would have ruined his life, and he doesn’t deserve to have it.”

Well, he did his jail term, and then they assigned him to the Coast Guard cutter *Storis*. And *Storis* came into Yakutat to provide fuel and logistics. I wasn’t aware he was in *Storis*. And the word came back, “Jerry’s at your house.”

I thought, “Oh, boy. I know him. He’s a good kid, but, you know, he’s been in jail for 60 days, and I threw the book at him and marched him out of here with everything but tar and feathers.” So I went to the house. I drove into town and went up to the house.

There was Jerry with Randy and the kids. He had used all the pay he could summon and went out and bought toys for my kids and a present for my wife. And he was sitting on the floor in the living room playing with the toys and my kids. And I thought, very smugly, “Well done, LTJG Gracey. Well done.” [Laughter] He went on, and the last I knew he got out and went back to Nebraska and went to college and everything was fine.

Paul Stillwell: So that was his way of saying, “Thank you.”

Admiral Gracey: Yeah. I think that’s what it was. That’s the way I read it. He had nothing to gain at that point. It was all gone. He wasn’t buying anything from it. Somebody must have got to him to explain to him what was going on and why it was coming out that way. Whatever it was, I think it was a nice start.

Paul Stillwell: Well, if you threw the book at him, how much worse would it have been for the district to be involved?

Admiral Gracey: The worst part would have been a bad conduct discharge or a dishonorable. That’s the part I was worried about and with his record of misdemeanors, I mean captain’s masts, that’s why he came to me in the first place. Shanghai him to Yakutat and get him out of here because he’s done all these little things. They were all mischief things. And with that going on with this, sure as God made little green apples, he was going to get a bad conduct discharge. That was going to ruin his life, and he didn’t deserve it. Maybe he deserved it, but I didn’t want him to have it, because I didn’t think he was a bad guy. So I had a way to prevent it, and I did. But I remember the look on that District Commander’s face. Incredulous but kind of with a twinkle in his eyes he said, “Get out of here. Go back to Yakutat.”

Paul Stillwell: Well, you’ve talked about this isolated situation. Was that a problem for morale or cabin fever or what have you?

Admiral Gracey: Sometimes, sometimes, although we had a good bunch of guys, and they were only there a year. We had some fun. We had a cook who was a bum and couldn't cook either, although he was a hell of a pitcher on the baseball team, but he wasn't worth much anyway else. We got him out of there, and we got a good cook, and things turned around overnight practically. We always ate together. I insisted that we sit down and all eat together, and I ate, of course, with them. And we had lots of laughs.

We got angry at things. We had Mickey Mouse imposed on us—we thought it was Mickey Mouse because we were out there. Why do we need to do this or that? But we did, and they ultimately understood it. They were just nice young guys—same as me. One of them was absolutely in love with Doris Day and had every Doris Day record there ever was and every Doris Day movie that we could ever find we'd watch six times during the week. And he was a kid from Kansas. They were just good men. We had a guy from downtown New York who was a New Yorker right up to his ears. It was good-natured kidding all the time. It was good. But they missed being home.

I wasn't sure how to do Christmas. What we did was wait until they'd watched the movie and all but the watchstanders had turned in. I drove out because Randy was in town with the kids. She'd made up a stocking for each one of them with a bunch of stuff that we could order from Montgomery Ward. Little stuff, you know, some of the joke stuff. Each one had something little but nice. I went out, and I managed to sneak in the back door of the station and hung two stockings on every door because there were two guys in every room. And some of them were the guys on watch who obviously—I couldn't figure out how I was going to surprise them. It would be hanging on their door when they'd come back. And that was good.

You know, that was Randy's idea. She was always coming out with that kind of thing, and that made them feel good. And then, of course, nothing would do but what we'd bring our kids out and have Christmas dinner with them out at the station, which we would have done anyway, but we wanted Christmas morning with our kids by ourselves. We always made that family time and shared the rest of the day.

Yakutat was an interesting place. There was a lot to do, and I made some work. Everybody I know that had a Loran station made work. One guy paved French Frigate Shoals, just poured concrete all over it because he needed something to keep the troops

busy. We planted the trees I spoke of and dragged in logs and set them up and filled it up with dirt and planted stuff in there. At Halloween time we got with the little kids in town. We'd have them come out and see a movie. And you know what? Those little Tlingit Indian kids wanted to see the cowboy and Indian movies, [laughter] and they always cheered for the cowboys.

Paul Stillwell: Interesting.

Admiral Gracey: Yeah, which I thought was absolutely fascinating. So we had a Thanksgiving party for them. We had a Christmas party. And this guy that I was telling you about—that I did the court-martial thing on—one of the things about him was he was always the lead guy in going into these events. He'd spend part of his money and take it to the kids at school to buy stuff, candy for them or something. And he was always the guy that was doing the most work in arranging one of those parties. I suppose today some cynic would say, "Yeah, well, he was probably going to molest the kids." Oh, no way, you know. So I think we kind of built a community relationship that was good.

There were three or four FAA people that were at the airport, and we got to know them quite well, and we built them in periodically.* But mostly it was just us and the people in the town and the logging camp. We were all out here together. We never had a tidal wave. We had a couple of warnings and drove the tractor out back. We decided out back was best because when we floated by we might grab onto it.

Paul Stillwell: How bleak was the weather in the winter?

Admiral Gracey: Interesting. The weather in the winter was either gorgeous or awful, but when it was gorgeous it was cold as sin. Our little shack sat on a rise looking out over Yakutat Bay. There was a mountain, Mount St. Elias, I think it was. If you could see it, then put on your extra long johns because it was going to be cold that day. It was going to be 30 below or 20 below. If you couldn't see it, it was going to be zero. I mean, it was just like that. It would snow, and it would snow a lot. So this rotary plow—I,

* FAA—Federal Aviation Administration.

mean, it could go through anything, and we'd just plow out the road. It was fun because as it went along it was spitting snow off to the side in a steady stream. You'd get so you could aim it a little bit and try to hit bushes and things.

There were ducks in a brook that ran along beside the road that cut across open land that went over to the forest where the station was. And if you ever managed to sneak up on one of those guys and it tried to fly, you could hit it with a snow stream and knock it down if you got it just right. I spent a lot of time driving that snowplow. There would be some stormy weather but not bad. In the summertime it was gorgeous, just gorgeous. It wasn't light all night, but almost all night because we were really up pretty far north. I think we were the farthest north station in Alaska, because we were up where the coastline bends down. But it was a good experience.

Paul Stillwell: You talked about the watch standers. What did they do? Just keep the gear going?

Admiral Gracey: Yeah. Well, you had to be very meticulous. The timing of the signals was essential, and they had to be sure (1) that the power level of the signal was right, (2) that it was going out on the proper timing, properly coded. I can't remember the details of what they did. Mostly their focus was on making sure the equipment kept working and that the signal we were sending out was correct, proper strength, properly timed, proper frequency, so that it would match up. We were called a slave station, and our signal would match up with a master, and work from there. Above all, STAY ON THE AIR!

Paul Stillwell: How high a reliability level did you have on that?

Admiral Gracey: Oh, very high. The percentages were way up. I don't remember any failures. I don't remember any downtime. There may have been small periods, but I don't remember any, nothing major. The engines kept running, great big Fairbanks-Morse diesels. And the engineers kept them running. The senior man was a first class engineman named Hagerty. He was an interesting guy. His philosophy was, "Don't

force it. Get a bigger hammer.” [Laughter] Which we used to tease him about, but he kept those engines running.

Paul Stillwell: Was this because there was not a commercial power supply?

Admiral Gracey: There was no commercial power. The cannery had power, and the cannery produced power for the people in town. In fact, our house had power that came around on a wire nailed to trees around the bay, and every time the wind would blow, the lights would go on and off. And the airport had its own power. But this power at Ocean Cape came from ourselves, which made the fuel thing a little antsy. You know, you could just call up Ed Voss and say, “Ed, we’re getting a little low. Bring us some fuel,” fine. But if we had to wait till a Coast Guard ship got there, things were spread out over several rugged miles, and that got hairy sometimes. We had to be self-sufficient.

Paul Stillwell: But you knew people were out there on ships depending on you.

Admiral Gracey: Well, yeah, the wonderful thing about it was the troops understood this. They knew why we were there. It wasn’t the favorite place in the world, although for the hunters and fishermen, the guys that wanted to hunt and fish, it was fine. They didn’t have a heck of a lot of time to do that, fishing more than hunting. But they understood that there were people out there that were relying on these signals. And, of course, it was—well, this would have been 1953. Korea was still going on, right?

Paul Stillwell: You got there a couple of months before the war ended.*

Admiral Gracey: Yeah. But we knew there were people there. But the thing was there were all kinds of fishermen out in the Gulf of Alaska that were using the signals, you know. It wasn’t just military and commercial ships. But the crew understood why they were there, and when new guys would come in everybody would sit down and tell them

* On 27 July 1953 negotiators for the United Nations and the Communist North Koreans signed an armistice agreement at Panmunjom, Korea, to end the Korean War. It took effect at 10:00 that same date.

why we were there. Tell them all the great movies they were going to see six times, etc. Yeah, they had a good attitude about it—irreverent.

I think I've learned over the years—I've always tended to be a little irreverent, but I've always tended to feel it's important to do the job right and do it right the first time, because if you don't, the second time and third time it just gets harder and harder. So I've been kind of insistent on that, a stickler, but I think I mentioned the other day I wouldn't dream of tearing open a box anywhere but along the dotted line. Well, I didn't used to anyway. A bit of irreverence has always been my style. My family was irreverent. I've been irreverent. And the troops picked up on being irreverent.

Paul Stillwell: But that attitude or climate flows from the top, and I would suspect that the morale improved when you replaced a predecessor who drew that solid line between the station and the community.

Admiral Gracey: Well, I really don't know because, of course, I wasn't around before. He was gone by the time I got there. But, interestingly, just the other day in looking through some papers in preparation for talking to you, I came across a picture that he sent me. We passed in the night kind of thing in 1953. In 1979, 26 years later, I got in the mail from St. Louis a clipping. He's in the clipping service of some sort in St. Louis, and there was a picture of me playing a trombone, sitting in with the Coast Guard band in Alameda. He saw this and said, "Oh, I've got to send this to Jim." But in the meantime we didn't have much to do with each other. You know, periodically there would be a Christmas card or something. Didn't really know each other very well. But obviously, he was a thoughtful guy, and I really don't know what that station was like before. But I knew people who would have sold their soul to go home. You know, Gunnar, "I hate this place." But Gunnar was also the first one to get involved in anything we were doing, had the greatest of fun. It was almost as if he felt his regular pronouncements were something he was supposed to do.

Paul Stillwell: Anything more on that station?

Admiral Gracey: No, I think not.

Paul Stillwell: Well, then you came back home in a sense to the Academy. Please tell me about that.

Admiral Gracey: Right. I came home, and my orders were to teach chemistry and coach baseball. That was the good news and the bad, or the bad news and the good. [Laughter] The thought of coaching baseball absolutely thrilled me, of course. Now, I wasn't going to be the head coach, but I would be working with my old coach, Paul Foye, and that was great to contemplate.

The day I arrived the message was to go down to Professor Hoag's house.* Professor Hoag was to be my boss. He was a Coast Guard Reserve officer. Before the war he had been in Chicago working on the cyclotron that split the atom.† Physics was his primary thing, but he was head of the Science Department. And he was a colorful character. He did lectures that were absolutely marvelous. He illustrated a chain reaction for us by setting up on the stage at the auditorium at the Academy a whole stage full of mousetraps, each with a ping-pong ball on it. I have no idea how long it must have taken him to get that done, but at the right point in his lecture about chain reactions he took a ping-pong ball and threw it into the middle. And of course one started, then three, then five and then the whole place erupted in ping-pong balls. He got an ovation from the Cadet Corps. [Laughter]

Another of his lectures was developed around a phrase the class still uses: "Rotating bodies act in strange ways." In it he would illustrate what happens with gyroscopes and a variety of things that rotate. Anyway, the word was that I should go to his house. Well, I wasn't quite expecting that, but I went down to New London to his house, and there was great pandemonium going on. It turned out that his daughter was being married the following day to a Coast Guard officer. All the preparations were

* Captain Jerry B. Hoag, USCGR, was chairman of the Coast Guard Academy's Science Department. He later retired in 1960 after spending 20 years as a member of the faculty.

† In 1942 physicist Enrico Fermi's team produced the first sustained nuclear reaction at the University of Chicago.

going on and this is all madness. And he said, calmly, “Oh, good to see you. Come on in.”

He sat me down in the living room on a sofa, and he was explaining to me the proper way to lecture at a blackboard. “Don’t turn your back on the class. You’ve got to hold the chalk in this hand,” and all this. And all around us all these wedding preparations were going on. I thought, “Oh, gosh. I’m not sure I’m going to make this.” But it was just wonderful, and, you know, he wanted to get going. He was happy that I was there and wanted to get going.

We set out to buy a house, because we were going to be there for four years. I set out to coach baseball. I had some fun with inspecting the barracks for the new guys. On Saturday mornings they would have an inspection, and the band would play. The Coast Guard Band played out on the quadrangle while we were inspecting the rooms of the new cadets.

I used to take a piece of soap and write “dirty mirror” on the mirrors instead of giving them demerits, because it was harder to wash the soap off the mirror. Then they had to explain to their upper classman the next day how come there was still soap on the mirror. I got into a room one day, and the band had been playing the preliminaries of “The William Tell Overture.” You know, the quiet before the storm and all that. And as I walked into the room I said, “Ah, William Tell Overture.”

And this cadet says, “That’s not ‘The William Tell Overture,’ sir.”

I said, “You want to bet?”

And he said, “Yes, sir.”

I said, “How about 15 demerits to none, no matter what I find?”

He said, “You’re on, sir.” And he no sooner got the words out of his mouth than out came the unmistakable part of the overture. [Laughter] Poor guy, and I went around and I inspected and did the whole thing and wrote on his mirror, “Don’t bet unless you’re sure.” [Laughter] And went out. I didn’t give him the 15 demerits. [Laughter] But I thought, “He was so sure.” It was a good experience.

The Deputy Superintendent of the Coast Guard Academy was one of their all-time star athletes, and he was very interested in the whole baseball program. But when my orders got changed to go to Harvard Business School, he was angry—

introduced me to the Superintendent as “a smart guy who’s too good to stay with us.” It hurt. Fortunately, the change came on the very day we were going to pass papers on the house. We didn’t do it. I think I mentioned that my grandfather built a beach cottage on Long Island Sound about 30 miles from the academy, and that’s where we were living. So we stayed there for a couple months. We did not buy a house. We went to Boston instead of teaching and coaching in New London.

Paul Stillwell: Well, this paper says you were assistant tactics officer. Is that the code word for chemistry?

Admiral Gracey: No, no. No, no. [Laughter] Thank you for the reminder. Assistant Tactics Officer is the guy that oversees the cadet corps and inspects the platoons. It was an emerging philosophy at the time. Now every company has a tactics officer of their own. And, yeah, that was my summer job—to work for the Tactics Officer. I never got around to teaching any chemistry. That was going to come in the fall, and Professor Hoag was schooling me on how to do it and giving me books to read about chemistry. And I was thinking, “Please, if there’s a merciful God in heaven, let it be baseball and seamanship or baseball and English or something, but not chemistry or physics or mathematics.”

Paul Stillwell: And the merciful God pulled you out before that happened.

Admiral Gracey: Yeah, but I never got back. I always thought that I would have a chance to go back and be a part of that, and I wasn’t. And it’s okay. Certainly my career was fine, but I do miss that, because I loved being around the cadets, although they didn’t think so later on for a while. I’ll explain that later.

Paul Stillwell: Well, it’s a different perspective. You had seen it before only from the cadet side of the fence. How was it during that summer when you were looking from the other side of the fence?

Admiral Gracey: Well, of course, that's probably not a good time to judge because you were dealing with the brand-new Swabs who were just trying to find out how to get to the mess hall, although some of them were going out on the ship for the summer cruise. And then there were the second classmen who stayed to kind of oversee their coming in. So I didn't get a good chance to look. But it was interesting, having been there and having been not too many years since I had been there as a cadet. I think I remember thinking that things do change, that the philosophies, mores, outlook changes. This was a whole different kind of a thing.

A lot of the people who were there when I was a cadet were products of World War II or came in immediately afterwards. These guys were several years down the pike, especially the new ones coming in. They were there for different reasons, although the Korean War had been going on. I didn't sense there was a lot of that, of coming in, although the draft was there, and there were probably some that were avoiding the draft. I don't remember spending much time thinking about that. Your job was different, and you wanted to say periodically, "Don't pull that that one on me, man. I've done that myself."

Well, I did have one experience just a few years back, which I found absolutely fascinating. Remember, as a Cadet, I was the Cadet Corps Battalion Commander. I was the senior guy in the Corps.

Paul Stillwell: Thus your paralyzed arm from holding the sword at Truman's inauguration.

Admiral Gracey: Exactly. I was walking down the hall to go to the head one night after everybody had turned in, and I got squirted by a water pistol from out of a transom. Each of the rooms had a transom up over the door that opened up. I got shot by a water pistol as I was going by. But I kept right on walking and went about my business and never said anything to anybody. About five years ago I was at a social function of some kind, and a guy came up to me. He said, "I can't stand it. It's been skeety-leven years," however many it was. "Didn't you feel the water that got you?" [Laughter]

I said, "Yeah, but I wasn't going to give you guys the benefit of a reaction."

Paul Stillwell: You weren't going to give them the satisfaction.

Admiral Gracey: The satisfaction, exactly what I mean, yes. I wasn't going to give them the satisfaction. And he said, "You know? I can't tell you how that drove us crazy." [Laughter] God, you know, this was a grown man. He was probably 66 years old, and all these years later he said, "The classmates and I said, 'That guy's not human.'" [Laughter]

Paul Stillwell: Who was the malefactor?

Admiral Gracey: You know, I can't remember his name now. [Laughter] But he was only two or three years behind, at most three years behind me, but a Swab wouldn't have done it. I think it was probably a third classman and so two years behind me. It would have been probably the class of '51

Paul Stillwell: This was when you were battalion commander?

Admiral Gracey: Yes. I started to tell it thinking it was when I was an officer, but it wouldn't have been because I was going down to the head, and so it had to be when I was the battalion commander.

But it was a good experience to be back there as an officer. I think I would have enjoyed staying; I always thought about it but never got assigned there again. I enjoyed what coaching I got done, and by then the baseball diamond had become a proper field. Admiral Derby had started by getting—I mentioned the phys ed classes went down and made little rocks out of big ones so that we could have a baseball field. It was in place, and I got to play a little bit with the new guys, and that was fun. Then we went to Harvard.

Paul Stillwell: How did that come about? Presumably you hadn't planned just to stay just a few months at the Academy.

Admiral Gracey: No, no. A couple of years before there had been a directive out about postgraduate education, and you could apply. See, the Coast Guard believes in postgraduate education. I don't know what the numbers were then, but when I was the Commandant it was over 80%, over 85%, I think, of the officer corps had postgraduate education. We really believe in that. And so this directive came out from Coast Guard Headquarters—it was while I was in *Barataria*—asking if you'd like to go to postgraduate education. And I said, “Yeah, I'd like to get into merchant marine safety, or perhaps Harvard Business School.” I think my motivation there was that that was going to keep me in the Boston area, because I'd not given much thought to business or anything. But I was running exchanges. I thought I was getting to be pretty hotshot at all this big-business stuff.

Paul Stillwell: What would have been the percentage that got postgraduate education at that time in the '50s?

Admiral Gracey: I wish I knew. I can't tell you the percentage in those days, Paul. I know that at the Harvard Business School there were four people in my class. But we had a lot of people going to engineering schools. MIT had a lot.* There were people going to public administration schools, and that really got big later on. Some went to the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, particularly as that got developed. As Harvard got more expensive, they started sending them to Monterey instead. There were other business schools: Stanford, Penn, Wharton School. Law school was big time, of course, with the Coast Guard in the legal business, what with law enforcement and regulatory missions. There were always a lot of people going there. Supply schools and the like. But I don't know the percentage. Aviation, of course, and those kinds of training, but that was not “postgraduate degree” education per se.

Paul Stillwell: Would you guess it was less than the 80 to 85% back then?

* MIT—Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Admiral Gracey: Oh, I think so. I think it was less. I think we built into that level later. Yes. We were willing to spend the money. Found out it was worth spending the money.

Paul Stillwell: Your classmate Sid Wallace being one who became a lawyer.

Admiral Gracey: Yes. Yes. And they have all contributed one way or another to the Coast Guard, you know, because we're a general duty outfit. Some of them had specialties like Sid, the lawyers and the merchant marine safety types, but in between times they go and do a regular job. I say a regular job. They're all regular jobs, but you know, go to sea, run the ship fly the airplane, etc.

Paul Stillwell: Well, he was an aviator also.

Admiral Gracey: Yes, he was. Right. That's exactly right.

Paul Stillwell: Did you have to meet the Harvard University admissions standards?

Admiral Gracey: Yes. Yes, we had to apply. Oh. You asked me earlier about how it happened. I had applied for this, and then all of a sudden it came up. Coast Guard Headquarters figured out that I wasn't in Yakutat anymore, and I was going somewhere, and here was a class forming. Now we're getting some people. Let's grab him. I guess. I don't know. But anyway the orders came and I went.

I did have to meet the Harvard Business School standards. I'm sure I filled out an application or a form of some kind. And I reported in to the Professor of Naval Science at Harvard. They had a naval officer who ran the ROTC and did all of the programs for people coming in. In my class we had a couple of Marines. There were people from all the services. We were mixed in with middle-manager type people coming in out of industry and some people coming fresh out of undergraduate school. Those guys were a bit at a disadvantage, because they'd had no experience in the real world at all. Sometimes that was better than those who had specialized experience—some of the

experience some people had had and tried to apply didn't work. But the class as a whole was a mix.

My class—the class of '56—was divided into seven or eight sections of about a hundred and some people each. We sat in an amphitheater-type classroom. There were no electives in your first year. I'm talking 1954 now, but I don't have any reason to think it's changed much. Everybody took the same courses. Second year you had a couple of electives. You had some that were prescribed, and you had some chance to decide which way you wanted to push your emphasis.

But it was all done on the case method. You'd read a story about a company or a situation, and then you would talk about it. And you'd learn as much from each other as you did from the professor. But the first class I went to made me doubt. The night before we had this story about this nice little company, and they had a problem of some sort. Well, it wasn't even clear they had a problem. That was part of the question. Did they have a problem?

But the professor came in. Said, "I'm Professor Surface." He taught a course called AdPrac, "Administrative Practices." He came, and he sat cross-legged on the table at the bottom of the amphitheater in front of the blackboard and said, "Would anybody like to talk about what you read last night?" And an hour and 20 minutes later he said, "Well, tomorrow I'd like you to read this case." And I thought—"That's *it*!?" I mean, the rest of the time he just pointed to people, and I thought, "The government's really getting gypped here. I mean, we're paying good money. He's supposed to be teaching us. And what's he going to do? Just sit down there all the time?" Well, I learned that I could learn a lot from what my classmates had to say in bouncing opinions off each other. And being who I am, of course, I couldn't stay out of the fray. But eventually the professors would get down, and they would lead the discussion in the direction that illustrated the point that they wanted to make out of the case being discussed. If there were technical points, they would explain them. It was a good system. Later I realized I had gained concentrated and broadened experience.

Paul Stillwell: Do you remember any case, how it taught you something?

Admiral Gracey: Well, I remember two in particular. One was, some guy had the really weird idea that you could sell milk in a cardboard carton.*

Paul Stillwell: That is bizarre.

Admiral Gracey: And I wrote an eloquent paper as to how nobody, but *nobody*, would ever buy milk in a cardboard carton. To the credit of the school I think I got almost the top mark you can get. The professor said, “You’re dead wrong, but you did a hell of a job of defending it.” [Laughter] And the point was there’s no right and wrong. Time may prove there’s a right or wrong, but they’re not looking for right or wrong. They’re looking for how you analyzed it, what was your thought process, what did you look at as alternatives, all that kind of thing.

The other case was, would anybody ever buy a phonograph album they hadn’t listened to first? Would you go into a grocery store and just pick up an LP that was wrapped in plastic that you couldn’t listen to first and make sure it was what you wanted and so forth?† Because in those days all record stores had a little booth you went into and played the record. I argued that wouldn’t work either. I was wrong on both of them. But what it taught me, I guess, was that there are a lot of different sides to these questions, and you’ve got to look at all the angles, and sometimes it’s not going to be right but at least think about it.

Paul Stillwell: And the innovators sometimes understand something that defies conventional logic of the time.

Admiral Gracey: Well, right, or somebody’s got an insight that you don’t have, or maybe they’ve gone out and talked to some people, or maybe they know that it’s worth a try. Maybe people don’t want to be bothered with having the glass bottles that break. You know, who knows what? It’s also possible, of course, that there’s a disabling “hiccup” they have missed.

* At the time milk was customarily sold in glass bottles.

† LP—long-playing phonograph record.

Another interesting exchange I remember was when I was in a course called Business Responsibilities in the American Society. The professor was an old-timer, and he was talking about the importance of making a profit and what that meant. And I said, “I’m a Coast Guard officer. How should I listen to the discussion of making a profit?”

He said, “Young man, you can make a profit in the government. Anytime you do one more thing than you did yesterday for the same amount of money, you’ve made a profit. Or anytime you do the same thing you did yesterday but you can do it for less money you’ve made a profit for the taxpayers. Don’t ever forget that.” Obviously I didn’t.

I read something just the other day. I had it in the speech, as a matter of fact, that I made later on when I was the Commandant. I remembered that—that you can make a profit here. I’ve always argued that the Coast Guard is one of the United States of America’s greatest profit-producing organizations. When I was the Commandant, we were returning in terms of the value of lives saved, lives and property saved—just through search and rescue—something on the order of three or four times our total annual appropriation. And I would argue in my speeches, “Ladies and gentlemen, I submit that’s profit.” We understand that if for the same amount of money you can do more things you’ve got to be a little careful about that, because you can really lay it on the backs of your troops. There’s got to be a point where you can say, “That’s all we’re going to produce for this amount of money. You’ve got to give us some more.” But, anyway, I remembered what that professor had said 30 years earlier.

Paul Stillwell: You talk about saving lives and property. How do you quantify the value of a life?

Admiral Gracey: Great. Good question. I was very controversial with that approach. But I said “There are lots of people in this country who are making a living by betting the odds against this. It’s called life insurance actuaries” And there were people who had done studies about what a given person can produce in a lifetime, and what it costs, the social costs of a death, loss in the family. You’ve got insurance costs, you’ve got burial costs. You know, you can build all this in, and there were people who had done some

studies of this, and then there were actuarial tables. So I said, “Hey, you can argue if you want. Just pick a number. If you want to argue with a smaller number, that’s all right because maybe our three times the return will only be two and a half. That’s not bad either. That’s a 250% return on the taxpayers’ investment. I’ll take that any day.” And that was kind of the tack I took with it. There were numbers available, but the idea was controversial. Nobody wanted to say, “John Smith’s life is worth X thousand dollars.” And I would have to go to great lengths to say, “I’m not talking about John Smith. I’m just saying in general this is what it costs our society to lose a person. This is what a person can contribute in a lifetime, and this is what it costs to lose him.” And take it from there.

Paul Stillwell: Did the Coast Guard specify any particular curriculum at Harvard?

Admiral Gracey: No. In year one Harvard did. All of us took the same courses. Most were basics of the business world. In the first year we dealt with the essentials but not in-depth work in the more technical aspects. We had courses in human relations, administrative practices, control, which was accounting and that sort of business. We looked at marketing and production and engineering practices and business investment and the use and acquisition of funds. I can’t remember all the names, nor am I positive they were all in the first year, but I’m close.

In year two we had choices. I chose to concentrate on matters I thought would help me do my job as a Coast Guard officer. There was a course called “Transportation Problems in the U.S.” At that point, 1955, we weren’t in the Department of Transportation. In fact, we were about 12 years from that move, and it certainly wasn’t being discussed that I knew of, but I thought, “Boy, the Coast Guard is in the transportation business in terms of marine transportation.” I had served in the port security business. I knew we were worried about the ports, and the railroads and trucks serving them. And, of course, that’s all the arguments that later on led to the Department of Transportation. But in my own head I found that interesting. There was a Professor Baker, who was a national figure in this field when we were in the program, and I wanted to take it.

There was another course called “Collective Bargaining.” It had to do with labor unions and relationships with them and it was taught by a professor named Ben Seleckman, who had been present at the “Battle of the Bridge” in Detroit, which involved the Ford Company and labor unions, and the trouble in the minefields in Colorado.* He’d been around in all those events and the major turmoil of the development of labor/management relations.

It sounded to me and it proved to be a business of applied human relations. These are two opposing forces. How do you get them together? How do you get them to understand each other’s position? What are those positions, and how do you deal with it? If you’ve got to deal with a group of people, how do you do that? You know you’re coming from a different direction, or you’ve got to try to persuade them to accept something you know they don’t want to accept to begin with.

A lot of the subjects were just one-semester courses. ”Collective Bargaining” went all year long, and I took both parts of it, and I just loved it.

There was a course called “Human Relations” that seemed to be pointing right at my chosen career. I loved it. And then they required you to take one called “Manufacturing” taught by a manufacturing engineer kind of guy so we could understand what the manufacturing process is all about. And a class about marketing. So those were the ones I took in the second year. But the ones I chose were in the human relations, interpersonal relations, and transportation fields.

Paul Stillwell: Had the idea of inter-modal transportation grown up by that time?†

Admiral Gracey: I don’t remember what its state of development was. Here I’m talking 1955 now. Some of it obviously was there. I was coming at it from the point of view of

* In 1937 union leaders of the United Auto Workers were successful in obtaining contracts with several automakers but encountered stiff resistance from the Ford Motor Company. Union leaders staged a public demonstration near Ford’s River Rouge plant on 26 May 1937. The demonstration occurred at the Miller Road Overpass adjacent to the Ford factory. Thugs employed by the Ford Company savagely attacked and injured union organizers led by Walter Reuther. The event came to be known as the Battle of the Overpass. The brutality of the attacks swung public opinion toward the unions, and three years later Ford signed a contract with the UAW.

† Inter-modal shipping developed with the idea of containerized cargo that could be moved by ships, trucks, or trains without being repackaged. Containers can move intact from one mode of transportation to another.

how the course was going to be helpful. At that point it was clear to me that I was a Coast Guard officer as long as the Coast Guard could stand it. And I saw some opportunities to be involved in some of this. I'd seen some of it through the port security, the Captain of the Port work, and when I had that tour in Boston, and watched the various modes. You know, the trains coming and I'd been with the trains going, loading the ships in Port Chicago. I'd seen some of that firsthand. And, of course, I'd been interested in all kinds of air transportation from both *Barataria* and from my Loran station. And these were kind of fringe interest points, but nonetheless they had been a factor in what I had done and what I could see coming. So that's why I got involved. I can't tell you when inter-modal became a big stuff. My dad, I think I mentioned, was in inland and ocean marine insurance, so that not only was he insuring fishing vessels and ships, but he was also insuring trucks and cargo and there was a lot of that going on. So I heard a lot about that, too, in my house growing up.

Paul Stillwell: Seems to me it was about 1958 that containerization things got going with Malcom McLean.*

Admiral Gracey: Yeah, that's probably right.

Paul Stillwell: So you were still in the break-bulk and stevedore era.

Admiral Gracey: Oh, yeah, yeah. But there was a bit about rivers. We spent a lot of time talking about the rivers, river transportation. Later on I went to the Second Coast Guard District—the western rivers district headquartered in St Louis—and, of course, I had the occasion to watch river transportation big time. And there was some about the Great Lakes but not a lot. Mostly it was a lot about highways. Weren't we building the interstate system at that point?

Paul Stillwell: It was just coming in, yes.

* Malcom McLean in 1934 founded McLean Trucking Company, which became one of the largest in the country in its field. In 1955 he introduced containerized shipping of cargo through Sea-Land Service.

Admiral Gracey: Yeah. So it was a fascinating field. I was kind of taken by the barges and the ships and the tie-in between. “Okay, you’ve got it into port. Now, how are you going to get it to who wants it?” Yes, containerization was starting to come in, only there was the business of taking and loading the whole end of the truck on a railroad train and taking it across country. There were a lot of those kinds of things. At this point in my life I get mixed up as to what came to me then or later on when I was the Ninth Coast Guard District Commander, on the Great Lakes, and was arguing vociferously about the benefits of moving stuff by boat and ship and barge, as opposed to moving it by railroad trains or certainly by trucks in terms of economy. And how much you could move in each and at what cost.

Paul Stillwell: Are there any of your cohorts in those classes that you especially remember?

Admiral Gracey: I rode in a carpool with two Marines. They were interesting characters and we were good friends. One of them had been a roommate of Jimmy Carter’s at the Naval Academy, but I never heard that until Carter became President and in his first radio speech on a Saturday made a reference to his old roommate, Blu Middleton.* And I said, “That’s Colonel Middleton.” [Laughter] And I called him up, and sure enough. But that was years later, of course. No, there are people who stood out because of just who they were. There was a Norwegian fellow who later was big in shipping as Norwegians are wont to do. His name is Ingmar Hvistendahl, and he was an interesting character. Another one came from Switzerland. His name was Egon Zhender. He created a company bearing his name that is probably one of the world’s greatest executive search firms. There was an Irishman named T. J. Dermott Dumphy, who was, I mean he was a real Irishman. And he became a very successful entrepreneur.

It’s interesting to watch how the people have gone forth, and most of them have done very well. Interesting to me, though, was our 25th HBS anniversary. Each year

* James E. "Jimmy" Carter, Jr., a Naval Academy graduate in the class of 1947, served as President of the United States from 20 January 1977 to 20 January 1981. His classmate, Austin Burt Middleton, Jr., eventually retired as lieutenant colonel in the Marine Corps.

HBS features the 25th Anniversary Class in the reunion issue of the “Harvard Business School Bulletin.” And my picture was on the front cover of the reunion issue in 1981. They were really taken by the fact that I was a vice admiral, and I was Commander, Coast Guard Pacific Area. A writer called me in San Francisco and asked if he could come out and do an interview. And I said, “Sure, but why me?”

He said, “Well, you’ve been reasonably successful, don’t you think?”

I said, “Well, yeah.”

He said, “We’ve got lots of businessmen. How about if I come out and do a story on you?” In the meantime it turned out that I got orders to move from being Commander Pacific Area to being Commander Atlantic Area. So he wrote an article, called it “Coast to Coast Guard,” [Laughter] and did a nice job of picking up the nature of it.

The picture he chose for the front cover of the HBS Bulletin was one of which I’m very fond. It was of me standing at a Coast Guard pier with a collection of Coast Guard vessels behind me. In fact, the following year I went to Washington to be interviewed by Secretary Drew Lewis.* I was one of the candidates for Commandant. We sat on a sofa in his office, and on his coffee table was a copy of the HBS Bulletin with my picture on it. I had not paid any attention to his background. I didn’t realize he was one class ahead of me at Harvard Business School. And somebody had dug up or picked up the magazine and had dropped it on his desk. He said, “Can you explain this?” [Laughter] And we went from there.

We had shared the HBS experience. In those days the routine was standard for all. For example, every other week you had a four-hour exam on Saturday morning. And it was always a case study. On the interim weeks you had a “Written Analysis of a Case”—called “WAC”. They broke you up into study groups of six people that would work on the case all week long, and you had to turn in the written WAC by 1900 on Saturday. And you had a maximum number of words, not a minimum. I mean, you could not go over X number of words, and it was usually 1,500-2,000. I mean, it wasn’t very much. And you had to analyze the case, argue your point, and get it in in that prescribed number of words. I don’t know how other people did it, but in our little house

* Andrew L. Lewis, Jr., served as Secretary of Transportation from 23 January 1981 to 1 February 1983.

I would go into the bedroom, block out all the noise from the three children in the other room by playing classical music up loud. At least it was organized noise.

Then on Friday it got to be crunch time. The paper had to be postmarked by midnight on Saturday night or dropped in a slot on the campus by a certain hour. Friday night consisted of Randy putting the kids to bed and then coming in and our agonizing over how we could chop down all this deathless prose I had put down on paper and my arguing to the death that I can't possibly take that out of there. And she was saying, "You've got to take it out of there." [Laughter] God, it would be 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning before we'd go to bed. And then you had to type it smooth and get it in on time.

I lived pretty far out, and there was a local post office that after a while got to understand that we had this obligation. If we went to the back door, they would take our envelope and postmark it. I think there was probably more than one occasion that we were over the midnight line, but they got it right anyway. The zero hour on the campus was great. There was this great crowd that gathered around the infamous slot. And here would come the professor down to collect all the papers that had been dropped into the box. And this great mob of classmates hanging around after dropping off their papers would mill around waiting for someone to yell, "Wait," and come running out of a dorm over here. And the crowd would form around the professor and hold him back while creating a lane for this guy racing to get his report into the slot. [Laughter] It was a wonderful scene.

But then they would have four-hour exams on the alternate Saturday mornings, and you would go into a classroom, and you'd have a case and you'd have a typewriter, and you'd do it up brown and turn it in. It was really pretty intense. I tried to think over the years, "Was there any one time when I could tell you something I learned on any given day?" The one thing I can remember is that a debit is an entry on the left hand side of the page. [Laughter] And even now I'm not sure that's right, but, yeah, I think it is. But I sure did learn a hell of a lot.

Paul Stillwell: I think part of what you learned was a methodology.

Admiral Gracey: Not so much method as approach—and experience. One thing you learned was that it is rare that you get a clearly go/no-go situation, yes-or-no situation. Rarely is it like that. I do remember somebody defining an executive as one who makes irrevocable decisions based on insufficient information. [Laughter] And that’s right. Boy, I know that over the years afterwards. And, yeah, there was that, plus that other people around you have some smarts too. And they’ve got something to contribute. You haven’t got all the ideas. Yours may be better than theirs, but that remains to be seen.

Then there are certain other things too: looking at alternatives, identifying the problem. What is the problem? I used to say to my staff, “And who owns the problem? Whose problem is it?” I used to say to my guys while I was the Commandant, and we’d be in the staff briefing haggling over some big problem, trying to get a handle on some issue, “Wait a minute. Whose problem is this? Do we own this problem? Do we have to solve this problem? Or are we going to adopt it because we like it a lot?”

And that was a useful tack to take. It helped. In the Programs Division, where I served when I was a captain, it got to be that somebody would always say, “Wait a minute now. Like the boss says, do we own this problem? Have we got to solve this problem?” So these are all things that kind of came out of my HBS experience. But I can’t talk in terms of a “trade school” in terms of accounting ability or anything like that. I think some people did get that because their electives were concentrated in those areas. I didn’t want to do that. I wanted to do the broader things, and I wanted to do the human things. Got into some talking about how to talk to somebody, talk through a problem. If you can get them to talk about their situation, sometimes it leads to a solution.

Almost first crack out of the barrel after I left there I was in Coast Guard Headquarters, and I was the section chief of a small section whose job was to convert the Coast Guard Supply System to the the new Federal Cataloging and Standards System, and they were doing MilSpecs and Mil Standards and all that sort of thing.* I was there because the Office of Personnel decided that, having been to a business school I must be a supply man, you know. And that’s okay. It was an interesting job, and it was fascinating what I got exposed to.

* MilSpecs—military specifications.

During the course of my job, Lillian, one of the little old ladies in the office, complained about the light on her desk. Her immediate boss came to me and said, “Lillian’s got this problem.”

And I said, “So buy her a new light. Get her a light.” So he got her another light. She still was complaining about the light on her desk. So after about three tries—it got brighter and brighter—she still complained, and so I said, “Let’s go have a cup of coffee somewhere.” We went into another room and sat down, and I said, “Now, what’s happening here? What is it?”

She said, “Well.”

I said, “We keep buying you brighter lights.”

She said, “It’s not that. I need daylight.”

And I said, “Are you saying you’d like to have a desk by the window?”

She said, “Yes.”

And I said, “The desks by the windows are where the supervisors sit and the more senior people.”

She said, “Right.”

And I said, “You would like to be promoted and would like to be a more senior person. Is that right?”

You know, we were talking and she was telling me. And she said, “That’s right.”

So then I explained to her why it couldn’t be, that we couldn’t fire those people: “They’re your lifetime friends, and they’re there and they are all people who’ve been there forever.” And I said, “Which one of your old friends would you like me to fire tomorrow so that you can sit by the window?”

And she said, “Well, I wouldn’t want any of that.”

And I said, “Where will we put your desk?”

“Oh, I guess you’re right.”

So I said, “Okay. Is there anything else you’d like? Are you comfortable with that?”

She said, “Yes.”

“Is there anything else you’d like?”

She said, “Yes, get those damned bright lights off my desk.” [Laughter] “I’m going blind.” [Laughter] Well, you know. Here it is, this is now 45 years later, but I remember it because it was such a glaring example of exactly the kind of thing that happens in human relationships. At HBS we used to talk about listening. “Don’t just listen to the words. Listen to what a person is actually saying”

Paul Stillwell: This happened at Coast Guard Headquarters?

Admiral Gracey: Coast Guard Headquarters, which is where I went after Harvard.

Paul Stillwell: Was there a sense of fellowship and camaraderie amongst the NROTC group people that you were with?

Admiral Gracey: No. We didn’t get involved with them at all. The NROTC people were undergraduates, and they were across the river at Harvard College. The military people who were with me were, well, I made lieutenant while I was there. But there were a couple of lieutenant colonels and majors. We didn’t see the NROTC at all.

Between years we had no classes in the summer. Since I was there at Coast Guard sufferance, the Coast Guard decided that I should do some industry training. I was assigned to a company called the Norton Company in Worcester, Massachusetts. They made abrasive products and refractory materials. that would stand heat and all that stuff. But at this point they were making mostly abrasive products. I spent the summer working in their national sales department. There were four guys, two gals, a boss, and I. They took me under their wing and let me participate, and we did miscellaneous stuff besides work—the usual office social things.

But in the course of watching their operation, it occurred to me that their distribution system for their retail products didn’t make sense. It didn’t make sense to me. So I spoke to the boss, and he said, “Why don’t you write it up and tell us what you see about it?”

I said, “Well, you know, I don’t have any marketing background.”

He said, “I know that. Sometimes it helps to look at it cold.” So I did, and they adopted my suggestions, and years later they were still using the system that I developed that summer. That made me very proud. But it was just something that they’d been using forever, and nobody had ever said, “Why are you doing that?” And it occurred to me to say, “What’s that for?”

I’d ask the different guys and, they said, “Gee, we don’t know. Why don’t you ask Steve?”

I did, and he said, “I don’t know. Why don’t you figure out a better way?” So that was a good experience. On my last day they were going to have a big going-away luncheon for me, and a hurricane came through Worcester and drowned all of New England. And I had to go way up to the north part of the state to get home. Just to get from Worcester to Natick. It was bad, but bless their hearts, they all stayed for my send-off lunch.

Paul Stillwell: But this fits in with what you were saying about yourself last time, that you have this propensity to look forward—or, as they say now—think outside the box.

Admiral Gracey: Well, to look around anyway, and ask questions, and listen carefully to the answers or non-answers. As some people would say, “Tinker.” [Laughter] A lot of people probably have said, “Tinker.” Yeah, I always keep thinking there’s got to be a better way to do this. And sometimes it seems to me better, and it turns out maybe it isn’t better, but at the time it seems to me. Yeah, I’m always doing that. We’ve already talked today about the business in Boston of coming up with COTP offices having a Vessel Movement Officer. I organized that so I could tie ship arrivals and departures in with our inspections and stuff. That was just something that I thought worked, and other people liked it enough to set it up throughout the Coast Guard.

Paul Stillwell: Well, maybe not always. You were defending the status quo on milk bottles.

Admiral Gracey: Yes. [Laughter] Well, you see, that's right. That's right. And somebody else had a better idea. Now, there are some who will tell you that I will argue any side of an argument that you want. You say, "Yes," I'll argue "No," and I'll have a good time about it. But I like to think that in the end, if we're both really trying to get a solution, that in the end we will have brought out all the X's and O's. One of the things, and I can't remember whether I picked it up from this Collective Bargaining course at Harvard or whether it's just something I thought of or read somewhere. But it's a way to solve a disagreement with two groups, and I tried this on labor unions, and it worked. I tried it in Canada when, as Commander Ninth Coast Guard District, I was negotiating about Great Lakes pilotage there. Well, we're going to get to all that later. But I would say to my Canadian counterpart, "You take my side and argue for it. I'll take your side. I'll see if I can't prove that you're right, and you see if you can't prove that I'm right. No cheating now. You've got to go at it."

And if you get them in the right mood, you've got a guy standing there fighting to the death, grabbing a guy across the table by the necktie arguing on a point that he never believed in in the first place. But if you get it going right and then after a while you say, "Okay. Now we've got that all sorted out and everything's out. Now, let's go back to where we were and see if we can't put it together." More times than not, it goes right together, because they realize that there's something on the other side. It's a good technique I have used it a lot over the years.

Paul Stillwell: Well, we were speaking about executive techniques. I remember reading one from Eisenhower, who said, "You have to have the realization that you can't do it all by yourself. You have to accept staff work that maybe takes a different approach than you would have but still solves the problem."*

Admiral Gracey: Indeed. Indeed. If you insist on your very own way all the time, sometimes you stifle your people and their thinking. However, it is also important that the boss keep in mind that he gets paid more, so he needs to make hard decisions. I used

* Dwight D. Eisenhower served as President of the United States from 20 January 1953 to 20 January 1961. During World War II he had been Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force for the invasion of Europe.

to press my people to disagree with me if they thought I was wrong—but, say, there were ten of them at a meeting, I reminded them that in the final analysis I had 11 votes to their one vote each. They understood what I was saying and we had some great, imaginative and productive discussions of issues, alternatives, solutions, etc.

Paul Stillwell: What do you remember about the campus atmosphere at Harvard?

Admiral Gracey: Well, the Business School is all I can tell you about. The school was divided into sections, i.e., the classes. Mine was Section F, a hundred and some people to a section. And they did most everything together. Even to this day the *Harvard Business School Bulletin* is published quarterly I guess, and each section has its own class person and secretary; it's all published by sections. And they did most everything together. They were very different people from different climates.

I was out of it some because I lived out of town, in the first house we'd ever bought. We bought because we couldn't afford the rents, and we got the house for \$9,500. It was in Natick, 20 miles or so west of Boston. There were two Marines out there, too, so we car-pooled. We stayed around campus for the study groups in the evening. Sometimes we would meet out of town somewhere. But, being out of town we missed out on a lot of the socializing. Plus, you know, if you're a married guy with kids, you're not going to be involved in some of the fun kinds of things, the socializing, just sitting around drinking beer or whatever that would go on.

There were a lot of married couples in the older guys, especially those who came from middle management. A lot of them lived in and around Cambridge. And they did a lot of socializing that was good. If there was any anti-military stuff going on, it wasn't apparent to me at that time or at that place. In fact, we were part of the class, part of the section, respected for who we were, what we'd been, what we did. But also we were expected to and did respect the things that they'd done in industry and business. We didn't wear uniforms to class. And everything was by first name. I mean, there was no rank. Nobody called anybody president or commander or anything like that. My recall is that there was a great spirit of fun, like the business about the professor on the night of the hand-in of the written cases. And people had a lot of respect for each other.

Paul Stillwell: Was business ethics part of it?

Admiral Gracey: Yes, big time. When I was telling about the courses we had, I think I failed to mention Business Responsibility in the American Society. That was big on ethics. There were a couple of particular courses that dwelt on ethics. I've been to about three or four reunions over the years, and that's always been something they wanted to talk about. They'd all gone out into their chosen fields, and they were growing into whatever they had chosen to go out and get rich at. A lot of them got rich. Some of them just went out and did something else.

Like one guy in my study group. He was an older man. He had to be 55 years old. He owned a paint store in Seattle and decided that he wanted to find out if there wasn't some better way to run it. So he came to HBS. He had a lot of experience. He was an interesting guy. His view of what was a good thing to do with your time was different than somebody else's. So it was an interesting mix of age groups and married and unmarried and college kids coming fresh off the campus and those who had after-college experience. I don't remember organized social events particularly. I just don't remember any. When there was something going on we participated in it, but they were mostly just groups of people who decided they'd get together, or your section people would, or maybe the carpool would get together somewhere.

Paul Stillwell: Well, we're near the end of the tape. Any final thoughts on Harvard to wrap that up?

Admiral Gracey: It was a great experience. I wouldn't want to have missed it except maybe to have coached baseball in New London. [Laughter] But, no, it was wonderful, and it stood me in good stead, but I could not possibly on any given day tell you how I had used something specific that I had learned. It was just concentrated experience is how it works, and I was grateful that I had gotten picked for it.

Paul Stillwell: Thank you for another fine interview.

Admiral Gracey: Yes, sir.

Interview Number 3 with Admiral James S. Gracey, U.S. Coast Guard (Retired)

Place: Admiral Gracey's home in Arlington, Virginia

Date: Wednesday, 9 May 2001

Interviewer: Paul Stillwell

Paul Stillwell: Admiral, it's wonderful to see you again after a hiatus of more than two months while we've been on various trips and illnesses and what have you.

Admiral Gracey: You too, Paul. Seems like an awful long time.

Paul Stillwell: Well, we're back at it, and the last time we concluded with your time at the Harvard Business School, and you spent some time with the Norton Company. Then you went to Coast Guard Headquarters and got into a supply branch. How did that come about? Was that a natural outgrowth of the Harvard experience?

Admiral Gracey: Well, I had a discussion about that with the Commandant at the time. I had this assignment to work in the Supply Division, and after a little while he called me in and asked me if that was the right way to go. I said, "Harvard Business School isn't really into this kind of nitty-gritty. You know, they're talking broader management kinds of things. I mean, I'm happy to be doing it, but Harvard Business School is not into the bean-counting kind of thing."

Paul Stillwell: Was this Admiral Richmond?*

Admiral Gracey: Yeah, it would have been Admiral Richmond, as a matter of fact. It would have been 1956. I ultimately had two jobs in that division. For the first two years I was Chief, Cataloging and Standards Branch, and it turned out to be a very interesting job. The new Federal Cataloging Program had been created, and they'd created federal

* Vice Admiral Alfred C. Richmond, USCG, became Commandant of the Coast Guard on 1 June 1954. He was reappointed to a second four-year term in 1958. On 1 June 1960 he was promoted to four-star admiral. He ended his term as Commandant on 31 May 1962.

stock numbers, and they were going to have Military Specifications and Military Standards, and they were going to revolutionize and standardize the supply system. In the Cataloging and Standards Branch it was one big room with cubicles formed by file cabinets. My so-called personal office consisted of a one-person, file-cabinet-formed cubicle. There were about eight people in the branch, all civilians, all old-timers. I can't say old pros at this business, because it was a brand-new business, but they'd been with the Coast Guard forever, and they were a wonderful bunch of folks.

Paul Stillwell: What system had been used prior to adoption of the federal stock numbers?

Admiral Gracey: I really don't know, because I didn't get into it too thoroughly. Every agency had its own stock numbers and its own way of describing things, and it was hard to change. It was entirely possible that each of the services had a barn full of something somewhere all the same, but they all had different numbers, so they didn't know the other guys had them. I think they were trying to get rid of that, stop doing that. Everything was to have a federal stock number on it, and there was a required format for the stock numbers.

And then came the MilSpecs—Military Specifications. Things were all to be described in a standardized way—colors of materials, for instance. For the American flag, the color that everybody had was called “national flag blue” or “old glory blue” or something like that. That went away because it was too dark, and you couldn't dye it in the new nylon material that was being used on American flags. So now you had a lighter blue, more like a royal blue, and so you had to build that into every U.S. flag you bought. And it made a difference whether you were buying wool flags, as a lot of people did, or nylon and wool combinations or just plain nylon. And the federal government was going to just plain polyesters of some sort.

But that changed everything. You couldn't dye things so well into that material. You could dye solid colors but not complex patterns. That meant that flags like our Coast Guard Standard, you know, the big white one, the parade flag that has a lot of lettering and so forth. It has “United States Coast Guard” spelled on it and the coat of

arms, like the Coast Guard Emblem. That means you could no longer just dye that into the banner. You had to sew each of those pieces on individually. Dye a swatch and then cut it and sew it. I got into that sort of thing, and I became the heraldic expert for the Coast Guard. I was the only guy that knew anything about heraldry in the Coast Guard I think—probably the only one who cared—because that’s what we had to do.

We had to describe the Coast Guard uniform buttons and get them all standard, and there was a certain way to do it. You had to write it out in proper format and get approval. Then what you bought had to fit the MilSpec and MilStandard. In the course of that work, I got involved with the heraldic people in the Pentagon. And I crossed swords with a senior Coast Guard captain, Quentin Walsh.* He was the military aide to the Assistant Secretary of Treasury for Coast Guard Affairs. He was a crusty old-timer, and he learned one day that I was responsible for changing the color of the American flags we stocked and not only that, but the color of the Coast Guard Ensign was changing.

And I received a marvelous telephone call. This voice said, “Gracey, do I know you?”

I said, “No, sir, but I have a hunch you’re going to pretty soon.” [Laughter]

“Don’t get smart with me. Well, who gave you the authority to emasculate the American flag?”

So I explained to him, and he huffed and puffed, and then he wanted to know about the Coast Guard Ensign. “How come the eagle is holding the arrows in its wrong claws?”

I said, “You’re looking at the flag from the rear, sir.”

He said, “Well, what are you giving me?”

“No, a flag has front and back just like a coin, and if you have the hoist on the left, then you’re looking at the front. If you have the hoist on the right, you’re looking at the flag from behind. And somehow it looks like the eagle is holding with the wrong claws, and like you’ve got the eagle looking in the wrong direction above you blah-blah-blah.” He went away sputtering. We had a very stormy telephone call, but this was it on

* Captain Quentin R. Walsh, USCG. In June 1944, as a commander, Walsh was a hero in the American capture of a German-held fort. See “The Capture of Cherbourg” in Paul Stillwell, *Assault on Normandy: First-Person Accounts from the Sea Services* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1994).

that subject. There were other calls, but this one kind of set the parameters. He didn't like the changes but realized he was—and we were—stuck with the new system and its impacts. Colorful guy—famous in other arenas for reactions of the kind I got.

Paul Stillwell: So there was some standardization of heraldry between the Department of Defense and the Coast Guard?

Admiral Gracey: Throughout government, really. It was designed to be a total government standardization. And we got into that standard approach in writing up the military specifications for things. It was a very complex and time-consuming process.

Paul Stillwell: Who had provided the impetus for this standardization?

Admiral Gracey: Well, you know, when I started describing this I was going to try to talk about where it started, but I don't remember whether it came out of GSA or whether it came out of the Pentagon with the idea that they wanted to standardize amongst the forces, post Korea.* I can't think of who would have been the Secretary of Defense at the time. It was before McNamara.

Paul Stillwell: Charles Wilson.†

Admiral Gracey: It would have been Wilson? Yeah, good for you.

In the course of this I did have several opportunities to use some of the things I had studied at Harvard, though I had focused on the human aspect, human relations and applied human relations—as in negotiating and interpersonal relationships and that kind of thing. Like my story about the lady that wanted a new light on her desk.

I tell about these things because I think it's an interesting example of how things work with civilian and military people working together, especially when you've got a young Coast Guard military guy working in this office that had never had anything but

* GSA—General Services Administration.

† Charles E. Wilson served as Secretary of Defense from 28 January 1953 to 8 October 1957.

civilian old-timers. I loved those people. But they were old hands. They'd been around for a long time, and they'd never had any immediate military supervisor before. The relationships sometimes got a little tricky.

Paul Stillwell: Human factors.

Admiral Gracey: Wonderful. Absolutely wonderful.

Paul Stillwell: This was your first exposure to the culture at Coast Guard Headquarters. Can you give me kind of an overview of what the place was like?

Admiral Gracey: Yes. Well, this is from the point of view of a brand-new lieutenant sitting down in this one room, you understand.

Paul Stillwell: But you saw the big cheeses walking around.

Admiral Gracey: Not very often from where I was. In the next session, my other two years were a variation on this, and that job gave me a little better view. First of all, we were in the old Southern Railway Building, which was right next to the District Building on E Street, right by where the buses lined up. It was a very old building, and at night rats ran around the floors. It was not air-conditioned. The admirals had window units. Period. I guess the operations watch center—we called it “Flag Plot”—had some kind of coverage. It was really bad. I'll talk more about that later.

But it was Coast Guard Headquarters. That, by the way, is a point to note. Coast Guard “Headquarters” is the name of a specific command—the one that houses the Commandant, et. al., in Washington, D.C. The term is not used for any other place or unit.

It was a lot of person-to-person relationships. A lot of folks had been there a long time. Younger officers were mostly the middle grade. There weren't very many young guys around that I remember. I think that's about all I can tell you. I don't

remember much. The flags and other seniors weren't very visible—at least where I was and in what I was doing.

Paul Stillwell: Well, I wonder. We're used to the present Coast Guard headquarters and kind of the sterility of it and the boxy building, lots of glass, but probably fairly impersonal. How do you compare the current one with what you remember from the 1950s?

Admiral Gracey: [Sigh] Well, as a matter of fact, my memory of Coast Guard Headquarters comes mostly from later years—while I was running the Programs Division, while I was Chief of Staff, and later as Commandant. I don't think of those times as boxy and sterile, the terms you're using. To me they were times of warm interpersonal relationships. When I was a flag officer we all ate lunch together. The flags had their Flag Mess, and we had wonderful conversations, we let down our hair, and we didn't talk business per se. We pulled people's chains, and we had fun. I'm sure there were people who felt put upon in the building, but I didn't want it to be so. I wanted a warm, open, positive atmosphere where people felt good about themselves and the Coast Guard.

Going back to the old days. People were behind a lot of closed doors. The air-conditioning was window units—for seniors only—and in an air-conditioned office everything had to be closed up. You couldn't walk into any place. And that's not to say we don't have closed doors now, but I sense that there's more of walk in and out kind of thing. People were in carpools, and we had a tiny little parking lot. You came in one by one, and you parked bumper to bumper, door to door. First-in, first-out kind of thing. You came in one end and out the other. You were there until all in front of you left. That led to interesting social patterns at quitting time—and great pressure to be on time for departure. The whole code of car-pool ethics, regimens, codes of conduct was fascinating and was formed by that silly, tiny parking lot. So it was a dingy, dirty old building, with antique space and facilities, but it was Coast Guard Headquarters.

One thought that I came away from this with—and I'll flesh it out a little more when we got a little further along—was that every young officer should have a tour of

duty at Headquarters. Everyone should, because it gave you an opportunity to see how and why things happened. Then you had some sense of who it was that was creating the things that came out to the field that young officers tend to think are pure nonsense. “How did we ever get to that point?” You learned there are real people there—and that very little is really etched in concrete.

Paul Stillwell: There might be a rationale. [Laughter]

Admiral Gracey: There is often a rationale behind it. Not only that, but the people that are doing it are not absolute idiots. But young officers, at least in those days, tended to feel that way. Communication was harder. You didn’t have e-mail, and you didn’t have the great house organs we have today. The *Commandant’s Bulletin* was three pages of black and white paper listing assignments, period. You didn’t have the information thing that the Coast Guard magazine is today. We converted to a slick pub on my watch, and it’s now gotten to be a really fine publication, I think. It comes out every other month.

Paul Stillwell: You didn’t have the imparting of philosophy.

Admiral Gracey: Not en masse. That’s right. You got one on one with the people you dealt with, and if you were lucky enough to be dealing directly with bosses you could get into philosophy, but there were a lot of people who were just down there in the trenches. They never saw a boss. They saw their own boss, but their own boss might be a couple notches down the chain. You could be a Section Chief and be pretty far down on the chain. And then the people that worked for you were even further down.

Paul Stillwell: You said they were mostly mid- and senior-grade officers there. How did you as a lieutenant get thrown into that?

Admiral Gracey: Well, I did say that about there being mostly mid and senior grades, and I think I had the sense of that at the time—but I think now that’s not a correct statement. I rode in a carpool with peers or near peers. I think there were a lot of

old-timers for civilians. I'm sure there were some younger ones, but the ones where I was working were old-timers. It was an interesting atmosphere and, of course, to anybody in my position "The Commandant" was God. And when he asked my opinion about Harvard Business School and how it applied and so forth, I was impressed by that. I don't know whether I awed the Commandant or not, but he awed me just by asking.

I spent two years doing the cataloging and standards job, and then I moved upstairs, literally, to the Inventory Control Section. They controlled the inventory of the Coast Guard Supply System. We had Supply Depots, and we had Aids to Navigation Depots, and we had them all over the country. We had Coast Guard Supply Center, Brooklyn, New York, as our central point, and it was supplemented by Coast Guard Aviation Supply Center, later called the Coast Guard Aviation Repair and Supply Center, Elizabeth City, North Carolina.

Again, I lose track of the sequences of some of these things. But periodically we would have trouble in a given place and this old-time civilian, Louie Steinfeld, would step in and make changes. For example, Louie decreed one day that he had solved all the problems in the Coast Guard Supply Depot, St. Louis, because he had gone out there and taken down the sign. In effect, he had painted out the word "Supply," so it was now Coast Guard Depot, St Louis, and that made it different because it meant it was working under the Coast Guard Industrial Accounting system instead of the revolving Coast Guard Supply Fund. We got into industrial accounting because we were doing industrial work—preparing and repairing buoys, for example. The supply system bought chain and flashers and lamp changers and engine parts, and you name it. I didn't have the slightest idea what it was about. But I, all of a sudden, was the king. I was now managing this supply system.

Paul Stillwell: Was there any computer availability?

Admiral Gracey: No. No, we're talking about the beginning of the old IBM card business, the electronic accounting machines.

Paul Stillwell: Punch cards.

Admiral Gracey: The punch cards. And the people who were in this Inventory Control Section did a lot by hand. There was a group that handled what they called Headquarters-Controlled Material. That was like buoys and stuff that was big and valuable, and we at Headquarters were going to decide where they were going to go. And there were other people who bought all the miscellaneous little things that came through the supply system. They were up a short flight of stairs from the rest of our office—in a little loft where it was dark and hot. And these people sat at their desks with big long rulers and printouts, and they would move their ruler down one line item at a time, size it up, and write a number. And that was how you ordered your supplies. I thought that was fantastic that they could do that.

I also thought it might be edifying to have them learn what some of that stuff was. So I arranged to show them some movies of the Coast Guard. I don't mean the Hollywood type, but some that we had—training films and public relations films. I would get all the folks together in the little auditorium we had at HQ, and we'd run the film. Periodically I would stop the film and say, "See that thing he's holding in his right hand? That's stock number dah-dah-dah-dah-dah-dah. And you see what he's doing with it? That piece of paper, that's called a chart. And the charts are stock numbers dah-dah-dah-dah-dah. And this is where we get them, dah-dah-dah-dah, from the Hydrographic Office, dah-dah-dah-dah."

Paul Stillwell: So it was no longer an abstraction.

Admiral Gracey: Right. And I just tried this one day thinking, "It might be helpful." The reaction was absolutely marvelous. I mean, the people, all of a sudden said, "Oh, all this is coming to life. We're beginning to see what we're doing. When can we see the next movie?"

I said, "Well, we'll get one ASAP." I can't remember whether it was weekly or bi-weekly but as long as the films lasted, and then we'd go back over them. "Anybody want to go back and see if your memory is right? You got this picture?" It was something I just stumbled on. It worked out very nicely.

Paul Stillwell: Did you ever take them out to visit ships or stations?

Admiral Gracey: No, never did, and it would have been good to do. It just never occurred to me. It would have been great.

Paul Stillwell: Did you have some way of acquiring usage data so you would have a sense of how many of an item were used in a given time?

Admiral Gracey: That's what they were doing with the rulers. They had a printout of stock levels, amounts shipped, on order, etc. Somehow they would make sense of it. They had figured this was what we were supposed to have, based on what our usage was. The people somehow knew how to decide about the reorder point or when to overrule the machines. They went through a little thing in their head. It was a fascinating process. I'm indicating what it meant to me. You talk about the development of a young officer.

I walked into that place, and I was awed. I knew the guy that had run it before, a fellow by the name of Vince Wernig, and he'd been transferred, so I was now coming up in the world.* I was now the inventory manager. But it wasn't all glory—no air-conditioning. This office of mine was on the south side of this ancient building on the fifth or sixth floor. The noonday sun beat in that place something fierce, so the windows were all open and we had fans. I couldn't persuade the people to have fans all pointed in one direction so the air would circulate. They had to oscillate. That meant that every time the fan came by you, you had to hold everything down. And the job was by nature tons of pieces of paper, and every so often you wouldn't get to hold it down quick enough or you'd reach for the telephone and the fan would go by and some key piece of paper would go out the window. You'd have to go down in the parking lot to get it. Productivity was not great. [Laughter] The people on the north side of the building were much more productive than the people on the south side. [Laughter]

One of the things that came very much to my mind in later years was that the guy that ought to get the all-time forever award for productivity is the guy that invented

* Lieutenant Commander Vincent J. Wernig, USCG.

air-conditioning, because all of a sudden you could work. We had sweaty palm prints all over. It was really bad.

But—to get back to my learning—I walked into the office, and I was relatively fresh out of Harvard Business School, and I was being shown around the Headquarters Controlled-Material branch. The chief of the section, an old-time civilian, was showing me this piece of paper with lots of numbers on it, and it meant absolutely nothing to me. I was thinking, “God, I’ve got to say something. I’ve got to ask him a question. I’ve got to say something intelligent here.” So I looked and at the end of each row was a column with a letter in it. And I thought, “Gee, I wonder what those code letters are.” So I said, “Joe, what are these code letters out here at the end?”

And Joe said, “That says ‘See page 2.’” [Laughter]

Paul Stillwell: In other words, if you read them vertically down the page.

Admiral Gracey: If you read down the page it said sure enough “S-E-E blank P-A-G-E blank T-W-O,” and the next one said, “T-H-R-E-E.” [Laughter] Well, I felt a little stupid, and they all had a wonderful laugh over it. Periodically I would deliberately bring it up again so that they would remember that their boss was an idiot, and he could use a lot of help.

Paul Stillwell: How did you match the ordering of these items up with the available money in the budget?

Admiral Gracey: It was run through the Coast Guard Supply Fund—a revolving fund that was not subject to the budget process.

Paul Stillwell: Well, wasn’t there an appropriation that covered supplies?

Admiral Gracey: Yes, for the accounts getting the items, but the Supply Fund itself was not appropriated. It was self-perpetuating. The unit would be charged when items were ordered, like cases of toilet paper or whatever it was. The cost would come out of their

OE (Operating Expense) funds. My folks doing this were talking about how much was going to go into stock at the supply depot. It was a revolving fund. In other words, what it bought was sold, and the money came back in, and they bought some more. I'm sure somebody somewhere was making sure there was enough money to replenish or to increase the amounts or whatever. My people were just making decisions as to quantities. What do we need to replenish? What should we draw down? What do we shift to if we're not going to use those anymore, which ones won't we order anymore, that kind of thing.

The HQCM (Headquarters-Controlled Material) was the big high-cost stuff. It didn't include buoys. I decided that a great thing to do would be to get control of buoys, too, because we had people ordering buoys out of the Coast Guard Yard. And you're talking about a 9- by 32-foot lighted buoy, a 38-foot whistle buoy, or something. You're talking about a major piece of hardware, and there's a lot of money invested in that. People were ordering them, but nobody had any idea whether maybe there was one sitting on a dock a hundred miles away. So I directed that we put them under HQCM, and we had to approve when anybody ordered a major buoy.

Paul Stillwell: Was there some existing inventory of buoys?

Admiral Gracey: There was an inventory, but it was done depot by depot and district by district. If a buoy was needed but didn't show in the local inventory, a new one would be ordered. Meanwhile, there were often several elsewhere in the Coast Guard. One guy didn't know what the other guy had, and CG Headquarters didn't know what it all was, or one district didn't know what the next district had. I thought it would be good to have buoys controlled by HQ like other major, expensive items. So I persuaded the Supply Division boss and the Comptroller to put out a mandate creating such a system. The following year I went to command of a buoy tender, and I thought that idea that looked so good to me at HQ was the stupidest thing that anybody had ever done. [Laughter] I wrote a letter to that effect, and we went back to where we had been—with some adjustments.

Paul Stillwell: Why was it stupid from the other perspective?

Admiral Gracey: Because it was totally unmanageable. I mean, a buoy tender needs a buoy. It hasn't got time to wait for Headquarters to decide it can have it. I mean, there's a buoy missing or damaged. Somebody just ran into a buoy. You've got to get one from somebody and put it in place. Your job is to keep aids to navigation in place and working: to keep the ships running, to keep the channels marked. As CO of *Mariposa* I was coming from the buoy tender skipper's point of view, not from the supply manager's point of view.

Paul Stillwell: I think that qualifies as poetic justice.

Admiral Gracey: And a good learning example of the old adage, "How you stand depends on where you sit." I wrote a letter all by the proper chain of command. But I wrote it to Headquarters, and I wrote a side note to a couple of the people that I'd gotten to know there as I learned my way around, and said, "Hey, I'm embarrassed, but this was my idea and it's a dumb idea. And I think you ought to rescind it."

Nobody came out and said, "Gracey says we ought to rescind this, so we're going to do it," but it lasted about six months, and it went away. It was dumb.

While I was there I had a collateral duty as Treasurer, Headquarters Trust Fund, a pool of money that came into Headquarters from the profits from Coast Guard exchanges. It was used for the kinds of things you couldn't do with appropriated money or wouldn't have. For example, each flag officer had an Extraordinary Expense Fund—XXF for short—that he used for official entertaining and doing the things that the flags were supposed to do.

Paul Stillwell: Typically the Navy uses that money for welfare and recreation of the troops.

Admiral Gracey: We did that too. The XXF was only a small piece of the Trust Fund, and later on it got much more refined. When I was Treasurer, the Headquarters Trust

Fund was just getting going. My job was to go and visit the admiral who oversaw all that periodically and keep the books and make sure it was all being properly used. One day a SPAR, YN2 Betty Splaine—one of the few SPARs then on active duty—came to me and asked for some money for a Christmas party for the enlisted people at Headquarters.* They didn't have any money. She asked if there was any hope of getting some money out of the Trust Fund. They'd been refused and refused. I said, "I can't imagine why you're being refused and refused. Let me go talk to the admiral."

So I did and he said, "Of course." She had said she'd like \$50.00. He said, "Give them \$200.00. Tell them to have a hell of a party." [Laughter]

Paul Stillwell: Which admiral was this?

Admiral Gracey: Rear Admiral Ross, I think it was.[†] Petty Officer Splaine was dumbfounded, and to this day Betty is a dear friend. She would go around and say, "This is Lieutenant Commander Gracey. He got us some money back in ought eleven." [Laughter] She's long since retired from the Coast Guard as a chief warrant officer, but she's always been a champion for Coast Guard women. She's active on the Board of the Women In Service for America Monument project at Arlington Cemetery.

I mentioned that officers should have a tour at Headquarters early in their careers, because then you know how things happen, you know who the people are, you know secretaries, you know who you can call back to when you're out in the field. Now, that seems funny for a lieutenant commander to do, but, hey, sometimes you need to know. Wherever you are, you need information, and you're not comfortable with it. I just think it's too bad when every so often I hear of somebody who's gotten all the way to captain and has never been at Headquarters.

Paul Stillwell: Did you have cases in which the usage on some item was extraordinarily

* SPAR, meaning a Coast Guard woman, is a term originated in World War II by Captain Dorothy Stratton, USCGR, the first director of the SPARs. It is a contraction of the Coast Guard's motto and its meaning, "Semper Paratus, Always Ready." Stratton's oral history is in the Naval Institute collection. YN2 is the abbreviation for yeoman second class.

[†] Rear Admiral Richard W. Ross, USCG.

high or extraordinarily low and you would pull the string to find out why?

Admiral Gracey: Yes. Sure, but I can't think of an example at the moment of one of those, but, yes, we did, Paul. I hate to use the term, but there was literally one little old lady who wore tennis shoes [laughter] who worked up there in that Inventory Control loft. But they did this inventory review thing, for a long time. They had trigger numbers; for each item there was an alarm figure. Then there was a supervisor who would look and ultimately it might or might not come to me, or it would go back to whatever the part of the Coast Guard—for instance, if it was an aids to navigation item it would go to the Aids to Navigation Division and say, "You know, what's with this, and are you still using it?" And you'd find out they'd discontinued it or they were doing something else, or they'd had a period of breakage and they needed it. "Oh, my gosh. I didn't realize we were using them that fast. We'd better go to the manufacturer and find out what's wrong." That kind of stuff, yeah, we could do that, and my people did it.

Paul Stillwell: How did you get new items into the system?

Admiral Gracey: That had to originate with the office overseeing the part of operations where it was used. We weren't using the term "Program Office" at that point. When we got into the PPB—Planning, Programming, and Budgeting—system later on we got to having Program Directors and Program Managers. When I was in Inventory Control, they were just called Office Chiefs and Division Chiefs. But the operating people, the people who were the users, would say, "We need this, that or the other thing," or "This one is obsolete," or whatever. I can't remember exactly the process by which it worked out, but ultimately it came down to the fact that we were controlling the inventory, but we weren't buying the material. That was being done somewhere else in the system. Much of it was coming through the Supply Center in Brooklyn. That was where the buying and warehousing and shipping were going on. That was the big center of the system, and they shipped to the Supply Depots. We were kind of doing the inventory level reviewing and the line item reviewing. Now, why it was separate I don't know.

Paul Stillwell: Well, you talked about this government-wide standardization. There must have been some items that were Coast Guard only. How did they get into the system?

Admiral Gracey: Well, that's essentially what we were working on in Cataloging and Standards. We didn't need to get involved in the ones that were available elsewhere—from the Navy, for example. A pair of black shoes was a pair of black shoes, and we really didn't need to stock them. The Navy and others ultimately—I can't remember whether they started it right then or it came later on, but they would have what they called Single Managers. One service would look out for petroleum products, and another service would look out for clothing, and that's become even more so in later years when everybody wears black shoes. So I think it's the Army buys the shoes and that kind of stuff. But to the extent that there was that across-the-board usage, then there would be a standard stock number that identified a given item no matter who stocked it. That was the whole idea of the thing. We were working on those things that are peculiar to the Coast Guard. That got tricky with military specifications. We didn't get into military standards so much. They were broader in scope—an-overview kind of a thing—but military specifications involved writing up the specs for a particular item, a button for a Coast Guard uniform, a Coast Guard officer's cap device.

Paul Stillwell: A flag.

Admiral Gracey: A flag. A lamp changer for a buoy, things like that that only we used or only we did anything with. And we would ultimately get the specs written and then do the buying using the MilSpec. For a long time both the old and new stock numbers were floating around. It was very confusing for a while. There were some mandates as to how soon this had to be done so that it didn't dribble on forever. But there was nobody ever that came close to meeting those time mandates. It became clear that this was a horrendously difficult task. You could use—I've forgotten the term now—interim stock number, something like that. There was a way that you could pin it, because the system wouldn't accept anything but a number that was in their format. So there was a way for you to create a number that was yours, and the coding would identify it as an item the

Coast Guard had injected into the system. But it would be in the proper format so that the various system machinery would take it, and we could get going with buying and stocking, etc. It was a horrendously complex process that had my poor little Cataloging and Standards Branch churning away.

Paul Stillwell: What was life like living in Washington? It was certainly a lot less congested then now.

Admiral Gracey: Well, yeah, it was, although the multi-vehicle access was not what it is now. Now, granted, as we built the superhighways we just moved the congestion further out. We lived in Rockville. We went to Rockville, because we had occasion to go back and forth to New England once in a while. That gave us a 30-mile head start. Montgomery County had a great reputation for schools, and we had three kids in school and a variety of other reasons to go there—but there were no big roads. They were starting to upgrade. There's a road out there called Veirs Mill Road that we used a lot. It's now multiple-lane, but in those days it was two lanes. And then you'd use Wisconsin Avenue and all that. I-270 has come in, but there was nothing, no indication of that then. It was a long commute. We became good at finding different ways to go to work, and it depended on who the carpool driver was that day. And everybody carpoled. You couldn't park in the little lot at HQ unless you were in a carpool.

Paul Stillwell: That's a pretty substantial daily price to pay for a 30-mile head start to New England.

Admiral Gracey: Well, actually that was only part of it. Part of it was we liked the reputation of Montgomery County schools. They were good, and our kids loved it. It was a good experience for them. And Rockville at the time was a little county seat. It was not the big metropolis it is today. And it was wonderful place to live. But it was a fairly long haul, and living in Virginia wasn't all that great because you had what they called the "mixing bowl." You know, they've got the Springfield mixing bowl now, but

in those days the mixing bowl was right here at Shirley Highway and right at the Pentagon.

All this stuff, Shirley Highway and Route 1 and all came together in Arlington, and you had one bridge. I wanted no part of relying on that one bridge to come and go, and Coast Guard Headquarters was in the District. So being in Rockville I could also take a car partway—to Carter Barron by Rock Creek Park—and park, and there were buses that ran from there and stopped right outside the door at Headquarters. And so you had alternate means of transportation. For our purposes it was fine. We also lived in a very small house. Couldn't afford to be where we are now. When we came back in '69 what we paid for our house in Rockville we could have paid for the house we're living in today. And I'd be rich as Croesus because I wouldn't have had all those mortgages I've been paying all those years. And it would have been good, but we didn't know, and we were happy with Maryland, and the kids were happy with Maryland, and that was good. But it was a lot of commuting.

We lived in Rockville, Maryland, from '56 to '60. When we came back in '69 we bought a different house in Rockville. And, you know, in the Coast Guard you bought and sold your own house, because there was no government housing anywhere. We lived there from '69 to '74 when I was working in the Programs Division. Later on one year we lived in the same house when I was Chief of Staff in '77. So we spent ten years in Rockville, and then later on for four years as the Commandant we lived in Chevy Chase, so it was all Maryland. But in those ten years when I was driving myself I figured out one time I spent 3.1 man-years just driving—based on how long I took every day and the long hours I worked. The Programs Division was seven days a week. I went into the office every day and stayed late.

Paul Stillwell: That's substantial.

Admiral Gracey: That's a lot.

Paul Stillwell: Did your family have a chance to take advantage of the cultural opportunities and so forth in the Washington area?

Admiral Gracey: Oh, yeah, sure. Everything from the Gaithersburg Firemen's Parade on Labor Day weekend to the Fourth of July fireworks in D.C. We'd always go in and sit in the grass right beside Washington Monument, and you could pick your spot back then. It wasn't near as crowded as it is today.

Paul Stillwell: Smithsonian.

Admiral Gracey: Oh, sure. And the zoo. We would picnic often in Rock Creek Park, and we loved doing that. And being out where we were in Montgomery County, part of the cultural thing was all the farms out there. You could go two miles, and you'd be standing at a fence and pet a pig, a cow, a sheep or whatever you wanted to. I mean, it was all there, and the vet that saw our dog was really a country vet that would rather work on horses and cows. He really didn't want to pay much attention to our cocker spaniel. It was that kind of a country setting, and the schools were excellent. We had a small Presbyterian Church that we belonged to. Many years later we went back and the kids said, "I don't remember it was so tiny," because they were little kids when we'd been there before. And the pew was up by their eyeballs. They came back as teenagers and college age, and the pews had shrunk.

Paul Stillwell: That's typically the reaction when you go to your elementary school years later.

Admiral Gracey: Exactly. I got involved with that church. I was a Deacon and Financial Secretary of the church, and we were involved in a bunch of stuff in town. Next time around I coached the church basketball team in a teen league, and we won the championship. Despite being in Washington I don't remember that we ever took the kids up to go into Congress. I think they probably did it with their school groups, but we didn't. Of course, when visiting firemen came to town we would always take them in to see all the various things. That's when we got to visit a lot of the places ourselves. It was a wonderful experience.

Paul Stillwell: And possibly you got to Griffith Stadium when the Red Sox were playing?

Admiral Gracey: Indeed we did. Ted Williams was still playing, and he was my childhood hero. I had a friend who was as big a Red Sox fan as I was. We would go in there of an evening or an afternoon, and you could always get a seat. Later on I read a marvelous piece of paper about how great it was to go to a ball game in Griffith Stadium because you could sit anywhere you wanted and you could feed the birds on either side of you while you were watching the game. [Laughter] Good fun. Good fun.

Paul Stillwell: Well, that period in the 1950s was a time of racial transformation in the country with the Supreme Court ruling and Little Rock school desegregation.* Did you see any impact of that in D.C. and around the area?

Admiral Gracey: The answer is no. I don't remember it being a particular issue in Rockville. That doesn't mean it wasn't. Clearly it had to be. But the D.C. side of it, I don't remember it. Our kids were very young then. I was coaching in a Cub Scout League. They were, you know, the runts. But our son on his first day down at the school came home and we said, "How did it go?"

He said, "Fine, but I didn't see the purple man."

And we said, "Purple man?" So we explored it a little bit, and found that somebody had told him that the janitor was a colored man. Purple was the color in his mind. We've told that story later to our black friends and other groups as to perceptions people have.

Paul Stillwell: Sure.

* *Brown v. Board of Education* was a landmark civil rights case in which the U.S. Supreme Court voted 9-0 in 1954 to end segregation by law of public schools. In the autumn of 1957 Governor Orval Faubus of Arkansas attempted to block integration of the high school in Little Rock. President Dwight D. Eisenhower called in National Guard troops to enforce the integration order.

Admiral Gracey: It just happened that we'd been in Portland, Maine. We did have a stint in Georgia, but he was just a baby then. For some reason or other the term "colored man" to him was—well, he was seven months old when we were in Georgia, so none of that was rubbing off.

Paul Stillwell: But that's a perfectly understandable reaction on his part.

Admiral Gracey: Oh, yes. I mean, the first color that popped into his head was purple. And so we explained it to him, and all was well. I mean, you know, it was no big deal.

Paul Stillwell: This is how we learn various things.

Admiral Gracey: Indeed. Yeah. But, no, I don't remember much about the racial impacts in D.C. then. We, of course, as adults were aware of what was going on and all of that business down South, but our course with the kids was that people are people, no matter what color their skin.

Paul Stillwell: Speaking of learning, did you do things during that period to develop yourself professionally or to keep abreast of Coast Guard things?

Admiral Gracey: Well, of course, working in Headquarters and riding in a carpool, I mean, we were abreast of everything, only because it was carpool gossip. And, again, I hope I've got the timing right, and I'm not sure I have. There was some legislation that was enacted in 1963, the Kerrins legislation.* I think that was later, about personnel matters and officer promotions, etc. We were going to a best qualified rather than a fully qualified promotion system, but I think that was later on. I remember it was a topic of great discussion. But we read *The Washington Post*. We had television, but we didn't watch it very much. We had a lot of other things going on.

* The legislation was named for Rear Admiral Joseph A. Kerrins, USCG (Ret.), who had retired from active duty in 1961.

I didn't go back and do any nighttime schooling. I had just finished Harvard, and that had been pretty intense. So then I boned up on what was coming, and I would always bring a bag of stuff home that I had to read to try to catch up on where I was supposed to be in all the things I was supposed to be expert at. But there was not the great exchange of information about where Coast Guard was going. The Commandants didn't communicate much. There was no annual State of the Coast Guard speech as there has been for well over 20 years now. There were none of those kinds of things that we did regularly later on. The *Commandant's Bulletin*, as I said, was really an assignment sheet and a few how-to's, but it was not anywhere near what it has grown into. There wasn't anywhere near the sense of the Coast Guard being any more than just a piece of the Department of Treasury. At least I didn't have it. I'm sure it was there somewhere, and I'm sure the Commandants were wrestling with whatever problems Commandants wrestled with then. As I said, I was involved with the church, and I got ordained quote-quote, so I did some studying for that and things like that, and I was busy learning my job and finding ways to do it better.

Paul Stillwell: What do you mean by ordained quote-quote?

Admiral Gracey: Well, that was a laying on of hands, because I was a Presbyterian Deacon. That's the number-two level in a Presbyterian Church, behind the Elders. I had not been a Presbyterian before. I'd been an Episcopalian. We wanted the kids to be church-ed, and the Rockville Presbyterian Church was nearby, and we liked the pastor and we liked the people. It was a small church, a country church, really, even though it was in the middle of Rockville Maryland,

Paul Stillwell: So did that give you some kind of lay-leader role?

Admiral Gracey: Well, to be the Financial Secretary I had to be a Deacon. The Presbyterian Church is divided. The Elders are the ones who "have the path to God" and make all the big policy decisions, and the Deacons are the ones that do the work. For example, I counted the money each week, and in the process of counting each week

incidentally I dutifully looked for coins my kids didn't have in their coin collections. I would put a dollar bill in to replace them. Slowed down the counting process a little bit. But I kept the books, and we did estimates for the budget requirements, and we sent out reports and that kind of thing. But then every year we would have the annual meeting of the Elders and the Deacons, and there would be a great expounding of grand plans for the church, and I would say, "We don't have the money for that."

The Elders' answer was, "The Lord will provide."

And this smart-aleck young Coast Guard officer said, "The Lord ain't writing the checks. [Laughter] I'm writing the checks, and I'm telling you I've done a study of this. You've got all these pledges, but you're only going to get X percent, and the amount you're planning on is not going to come."

"The Lord will provide." And you know, the Lord provided every year. Every year.

I'd go back the following year, and they'd say, "You told us this last year."

I said, "I know, I know, I know, but I've got to tell you." [Laughter] So we were involved in a lot of that sort of thing.

Paul Stillwell: If it's any consolation I am in a church now in which that same situation comes up every year.

Admiral Gracey: Is it really? [Laughter] Well, I think I am, too, as a matter of fact.

Paul Stillwell: In later years the Coast Guard did specific things to establish its identity such as the Coast Guard slash and a different uniform. Back in the '50s the uniform was very similar to that of the Navy. Was there an identity problem then?

Admiral Gracey: Yes, yes. We thought so. Some of us worried about it more than others. Some wanted there to be identity between the Navy and the Coast Guard. But, of course, the only difference was the sleeve devices—shield or star—and cap devices. There were other minor insignia differences, but basically those were the only differences between the two uniforms, and we wore a standard Navy officer's uniform. On the street

people just assumed we were all in the Navy. The average citizen didn't look at whether there was a shield on the sleeve—and didn't know they should. The Navy had other corps devices on their sleeves, and you were just in another Navy corps but you're not wearing a star, therefore you're not a line officer, so you don't matter.

I remember well when we were starting off with the Coast Guard slash—what was to become a major identifier—copied in format by coastguards all over the world.* And that whole idea of going into having some identity so that when there was a picture taken of an operation somewhere the name “Coast Guard” on the side of the ship and the slash were self-explanatory. That was a brilliant thing. It was decided on Admiral Roland's watch, I think.† I do know one thing for sure. The first place to have a sign with Coast Guard stripe on it was Governors Island in July 1966. We'll come to talk about my role at Governors Island later. But that whole image thing was really important

Paul Stillwell: Well, do you have anything else to talk about from Coast Guard Headquarters in the '50s?

Admiral Gracey: No, I think not. I think not.

Paul Stillwell: Well, then you went to the *Mariposa* at New London.

Admiral Gracey: I did. In 1960 I had orders to *Spar* in Bristol, Rhode Island, as exec. I was to make lieutenant commander on the first of July, and somebody figured out at the 11th hour that I shouldn't be an exec on a buoy tender when I was a lieutenant commander. *Mariposa* in New London had an opening coming up, so I would go there instead.‡

* In the early 1960s the industrial design firm of Raymond Loewy/Williams Snaith, Inc., redesigned the exterior and interior of John F. Kennedy's presidential plane. That led to the firm recommending that the Coast Guard adopt a symbol or mark that would be easily distinguished. The resulting design was a wide red bar to the right of a narrow blue bar, both canted at 64 degrees. In the center of the red bar was a Coast Guard emblem. By April 1967 the slash was in use throughout the Coast Guard.

† Admiral Edwin J. Roland, USCG, served as Commandant of the Coast Guard from 1 June 1962 to 1 June 1966. His oral history is in the Naval Institute collection.

‡ USCGC *Mariposa* (WAGL-397), an *Iris*-class coastwise tender, was commissioned 1 July 1944. She was 180 feet long, 37 feet in the beam, had a maximum draft of 13 feet, 11 inches, and displaced 1,025 tons. Her maximum sustained speed was 13.5 knots. She was armed with one 3-inch gun.

It was on moving day. The kids didn't want to leave. They were really happy right there in Rockville. But we conned them into "Boo, Washington, Yea, Bristol," because it was going to be a great place to be, and it was going to be closer to our shore cottage in Connecticut and closer to Gram in Boston and all kinds of reasons. So they were all hot to trot. Then here came the phone call from a neighbor saying, "They want to talk to you at Headquarters."

I called in, and they said, "Tell the moving van to stop in New London. You're going to take over *Mariposa* instead." Well, you know, whoopee. I was delighted. So all the way up the road it was, "Boo, Bristol, Yea, New London." We had to con the kids. [Laughter] But it all worked.

Yeah, I took over. I'd never been on a buoy tender. I'd been on the beach for some time. After *Barataria*, I'd had Boston COTP and the Loran station and the Harvard Business School time and four years in Headquarters. It had been nine years. We did a couple of runs while I watched them work buoys, and they used a system of working buoys that made no sense to me. I'll talk more about that later.

Paul Stillwell: Was this a turnover with your predecessor?

Admiral Gracey: Yeah, yeah. They just took me out and showed me how they did it. I, of course, had been studying the Aids to Navigation Manual and looking at movies and talking to anybody I could find that knew anything about it. We had a change of command on a Friday. This was in the mid-to-late summer.

Two days later, on Sunday night, a hurricane was headed our way—due Monday morning. Well, the ship that was in our berth in New London in the 1938 hurricane wound up on the New Haven Railroad tracks. I remember that well, because I lived in New England, and my father was a marine insurance man and was out on the road the night of the storm. I was really taken by the picture of that ship on the tracks in New London. I thought, "I've waited a long time for this command. I'm not going to let this ship wind up on the New Haven Railroad tracks." Besides it's not a responsible thing to do.

So Sunday night I called the crew back at about 9:00 o'clock. I told them the hurricane was due early in the morning, and we were going to sail. We were going to meet the hurricane out in Long Island Sound where we could do something about it. We weren't going to lie helpless there at the dock. So I had them all go and call their wives and tell them everything was going to be all right, but that's the way it was going to be. Now, I wish I'd had a movie camera so I could have taken a picture of the faces on the crew when I told them. I was this guy who'd been on the beach for nine years, never been on a buoy tender in my life, and I was going to take them to sea in a hurricane the first day on the job. The looks on their faces were marvelous.

Paul Stillwell: As in, "He must be crazy."

Admiral Gracey: Exactly, exactly. I mean, "What is this man thinking of? He's going to do that to us?" So in the morning we sailed. We went and hid in the lee of Long Island. We got plenty of wind and got heavy seas, but we were able to cope with them, and they didn't have much chance to build up. And I knew Long Island Sound pretty well.

When we came back the next morning our dock had been absolutely clobbered, absolutely clobbered. And we were fine. So then because it had been so bad, we got in a concentrated period of going out and replacing the buoys, resetting them, working them, getting to know how to do that and ship handling and all that stuff. It gave me an opportunity to demonstrate that I understood how to handle a ship. Don't ask me why. It's just one of those things I knew how to do. I could do it. Always had been good at it and with handling boats. I wasn't going to do it all, but I persuaded them to let me do a little bit because I needed to get my hand in, and then I'd hand off to the OOD or the exec. So that was a good thing, but at first the crew wasn't sure that "Sail-into-a-hurricane" was a good way to start.

The following year, incidentally, we had another hurricane show up, and I told them "same-o, same-o, but we're not quite sure about where this one is going to go." So I went out on the dock, and I made a chalk mark on the black hull of the ship. And I said, "When the ship gets up so that chalk mark is even with the top of the piling, we're going to go. Single up all the lines. Get the engines ready. When it's there, we'll go." And we

had this great group of people who had frequent occasions to go out and look and see where the chalk mark was. And that chalk mark came up and it came up and it came up. It got just a hair below the top of the piling, and it just hung there and hung there and hung there, and then it started down. There was this huge cheer from the dock. [Laughter]

Paul Stillwell: I bet when you got back to that torn-up dock the first time, though, that your esteem had gone way up in the view of the crew.

Admiral Gracey: Well, I would assume so. Gave me a chance to show that I wasn't a total idiot and that I could understand about things on the water and so forth. Yeah, I think so. And then the opportunity in the next several days to go out and make it all right, put all the things back. We worked hard, but we gave them some pride in how fast we got our area of responsibility back to normal. We did it in a way that got it done—quickly and right.

I wanted to experiment with some new techniques. I watched them work the system. They were using what was called a "fore-and-aft" system—meaning the buoy was parallel to the hull when we picked it out of the water. You would pick the buoy up, way up in the air on the end of the boom, and you'd bring it over the rail, and then you'd lay it down on the buoy deck. Well, that meant you had tons and tons of buoy up there on the end of that boom, and some were 9 feet in diameter and 38 or 32 feet long. Some shorter ones were 26 feet long and 8 feet in diameter. These were huge things that we were working with, and when they got up on the end of that boom, I mean they were swinging around up there. The net effect was you absolutely couldn't do it safely unless the sea was nearly flat calm.

I had read somewhere that one way to do it is what they call "cross-deck." Get the buoy perpendicular to the hull. Bring it in the buoy port, keep it low, drag it across the deck, and if you need to turn it, turn it, but otherwise just let it hang over the edges. Who cares? But while you're getting it aboard, it's never up there dangling in space. It's always down low. You've got lines on it to control it. And I shifted to that. The New London Group Commander had been the skipper of *Mariposa*. He was an old

Lighthouse Service guy. He could hardly bear to speak to me ever again, because I had changed the system he had adopted years before. What did I know? I was just a fresh kid. Read a book somewhere. But we did that and got a lot more work done faster because we didn't have to wait for calmer conditions.

I also experimented with backing into the sea while working a buoy. If we really had to work a buoy in heavy weather for one reason or another, we could back into the sea. It kept the ship pretty stable, the buoy ports were sheltered a bit because the stern was taking the weather, and with our cross-decking we could work in a lot of pretty bad weather without endangering the crew. My concern was with that huge weight swinging around in the air that somebody was going to get hurt bad.

Paul Stillwell: Wouldn't it affect the stability of the ship being up high?

Admiral Gracey: To a certain extent, but tenders are built with lots of stability in mind. They could handle it. I wasn't worried about that so much. You know, you're trying to keep control of the thing with guys holding onto taglines, and there's a lot of weight. And if there was any kind of seaway at all—I didn't know what was going to happen, but you're right, you'd move the center of gravity way the heck up, and I was uncomfortable with it, so we changed it.

Paul Stillwell: So safety was your main concern?

Admiral Gracey: Yeah. Safety and productivity, because we could work these things in almost any weather. If we had a day scheduled to go down Long Island Sound and do some buoys, we didn't have to lay over down there three or four days waiting for it to get calm. We could go do it and come home again, or we could go do it and do another one, so there was productivity as well as safety, and I tried to explain this to everybody as we went along. We did more in a given period, and we did it better. And the crew spent less time waiting for Mother Nature to accommodate with gentle weather. I had a chief boatswain's mate who had some reservations about the new things. I think he was with me but I was never totally sure.

Last week in San Francisco—and here we’re jumping again—I did my annual presentation of the Admiral Gracey Award. This year it went to a chief gunner’s mate. The award is for professionalism and devotion to duty. One of his functions is as a “Career Development Advisor.” He’s done a bunch of other things, but in process of presenting the award I said, “I understand the term ‘Career Development Advisor.’ My first career development advisor was a chief boatswain’s mate when I was a brand-new ensign in *Barataria*.” And I told you the story about being up on the special sea detail on the forecastle and the boatswain’s mate suggesting that I take advantage of his experience. So I told the audience that that BMC was my first career development advisor. [Laughter]

Paul Stillwell: Was your method of tending the buoys adopted by other ships?

Admiral Gracey: Oh, I think other ships were using it. It was not original with me, but it had never been done that way in *Mariposa*.

Paul Stillwell: You were violating that age-old law, “We’ve always done it this way.”

Admiral Gracey: Yeah. Well, and it had been done by the Lighthouse Service guy, see, and the Lighthouse Service guy certainly understood the best way to do it. And maybe it was the best way with different kinds of buoys. I just didn’t happen to think so. All things being equal, cross-deck took a little longer, but you could do it almost anytime, and I felt more comfortable with it.

We had a number of experiences. One was on the Connecticut River. Every spring the buoys are taken out of the lower end of the Connecticut River so the shad fishermen can catch shad for shad roe, and not snare their nets in the buoys. The old Lighthouse Service buoy tender *Hawthorn* was the one that usually did it, because she had much shallower draft than we.* But she was, as my crew used to say, grounded on her own coffee grounds over there across the dock. That’s not fair, but she was an old—

* USCGC *Hawthorn* (WAGL-215) was commissioned 28 December 1921 and eventually decommissioned 24 July 1964.

more like ancient—ship, and they were having problems. And it was springtime. It was time to go. So I said we'd do it.

So we went down to the Connecticut River and sent a boat upriver ahead of us taking soundings. We got several buoys out, and there was one more to go. The soundings were showing we were pretty close to running out of having enough water. But the boat crew reported the bottom was soft and one thing and another, so we inched our way up until the boat got a line on the buoy so we could drag it back to where we could get a hold of it with the boom and pull it out. We got the last one, and it was time to go home. I started a slow turn, but the springtime water running down the Connecticut River grabbed our bow and swung us around, and as it did we plowed up a big bank of mud downstream from us. So there we were, right in the middle of the channel, pressed against the new bank by the current. We didn't want to run the engines too hard because we were going to get all that muck in the sea strainers. So I sent a message to the Third District office saying that we'd discovered a shoal in the middle of the Connecticut River, but not to worry because it was well marked for the next couple of hours—by us. [Laughter]

Paul Stillwell: You were the buoy.

Admiral Gracey: We were marking it. And I sent to Group New London, and asked them to send a 95-footer to help.* We had them put a strain on our stern to break the suction so we could turn down river and sail out. Things you learn.

Paul Stillwell: Groundings are not well looked upon. Was there any retribution for this?

Admiral Gracey: No, because I didn't really ground. On one side of the ship we had 40 feet of water. On the other side we had three feet because the current was scouring the mud out, just the water action. They knew it was risky for us to go in there, but they really wanted those buoys out. The only problem was that there was such pressure against that bank or shoal. We weren't really aground. There was plenty of water under

* This is a reference to a 95-foot-long Coast Guard patrol boat.

the keel. We were just being pushed up against this mud bank, and we couldn't break the suction until that night. Once the 95-footer put a strain on us and pulled our stern away, it was not a problem. The boat crew did a superb job getting all those buoys out—and in corralling that last one for us

Paul Stillwell: I see. How well suited was *Mariposa* as a seagoing ship?

Admiral Gracey: Oh, good. That's why I didn't hesitate to take her out in the hurricane. She and her sister ships were operating up in Greenland in World War II, and they were doing all kinds of stuff at sea. They are good sea ships. They're also good icebreaking ships. Damned good ships, the 180-foot C-class. And I'm telling you some of these stories because they illustrate some of the kinds of things that were going on in the Coast Guard, the kind of operations we were doing.

But, anyway, one of the things we were doing was replenishing lighthouses. Many of them around Long Island Sound were still manned, so we were provisioning and refueling and providing water primarily. We'd lie off with hoses, and there was a way to get them into the beach and then sink them. You'd fill them full of air so they would float, and the ship's boat would take them in to the beach and drag them up to wherever they had to get connected. Then when you started to pump they would sink to the bottom. You'd lie off until it was done, and then you'd fill them full of air again and up they would come.

Some of the refueling, even then, was coal—delivered in burlap bags—by hand up ladders and breakwaters and hillsides. Likewise, many of the buoys in Long Island Sound were still powered by acetylene gas. The lights were acetylene lights, not electric. They were just coming into the electric era. In fact, we finished electrifying Long Island Sound, that is, converting the buoys from acetylene to electric. They used huge battery racks that would fit in the same hole that the big acetylene tanks did. That conversion work was all being done in New York at our industrial base called Base, St. George on Staten Island. We'd change out a certain number of buoys and then go down to New York to take back the acetylene buoys we had pulled out and bring back some converted electric ones and repeat the cycle.

I got to be known at the base in New York as Captain Midnight. We would come in after dark when they'd all gone home, and we would leave before they all came back. We would help ourselves to any chain, sinkers, anything we could find that was going to help us get the job done. We'd take a little extra along with us when we sailed. After a while I noticed that anything we might need was laid out on the dock where we could get at it so we didn't have to steal it. I'm making it sound more awful than it was, but it was just that we needed this stuff to get the job done, and if the paperwork hadn't gone through or whatever, we took it. We figured that they'd find something else somewhere. The New York ships were all right there. We were out in the hinterlands, and we needed this stuff. If you're going to put a buoy out, you've got to have a sinker for it, a big concrete sinker. But, as I say, I was known as Captain Midnight.

Paul Stillwell: Well, this was literally midnight requisitioning. [Laughter]

Admiral Gracey: We would get in late. It was an all-day run from New London. We'd go down through the west end of Long Island Sound and down under the Throgs Neck Bridge and around Hell's Gate and down the East River. I remember the first time we were going down there the tide was ebbing, and that meant you were going to ride the tide down through the Hell's Gate. The old warrant officer aboard, Wayne Kangas, said to me, "We usually like to do this when we're stemming the tide, but we need to get this stuff done. I know you wanted to get here today, so I'm going to make a suggestion to you." (This was more career development advice.) He said, "We've got our best guy [a second class petty officer] on the wheel. I suggest we just stand out here on the wing, and you take a firm grip on your grommet, and he'll get us down there."*

Paul Stillwell: How strong was the current?

Admiral Gracey: I can't tell you how fast it ran. It was five or six knots, something like that, but the channel bends. It's a kind of an S-bend, and if you're running with it you've got to have your engines running, because you need that for the steerage. You can't be

* Chief Boatswain Wayne Kangas, USCG.

totally relying on the current, but then the helmsman has to know how to take that current and keep you off FDR Drive on the starboard side as you go down. I know this much. We were going so fast down there that we were splashing water up on the cars on the road. [Laughter] I've got to tell you it was exciting. And there was dead silence on the whole ship, and the only thing I could hear was the whirring of the wheel inside as the helmsman spun it and his grunting from the effort. And he'd spin that wheel hard to port and back again. We got there.

Paul Stillwell: And every few minutes somebody would take a breath?

Admiral Gracey: Yes. (Gasp) And, you know, you just hoped to hell there wasn't a tugboat with a barge full of stuff coming up the river or something that you were going to have to maneuver around, but we made it. After a while we learned to plan the day we were going to go to New York a little better so that we'd hit the tide right. You know, you learn that stuff a little better, but it was doable, and that helmsman, I'll call him Petty Officer A-----, was with us. Interesting story about him. He was a second class quartermaster. He was good at that. I had total faith in that guy. He was one crackerjack petty officer. And later on, when we were breaking ice up the Hudson River, we had narrow channels, and the whole idea was to break vessels loose and then get them with some open water so they could follow you. So you would break close alongside to take the suction off, and then you'd swing in right along their bow to loosen the ice ahead. So you would have to swing your stern right in front of them.

You'd call over to the master of the ship you were breaking out and say, "Now, you be churning, because when we come in front, we want you ready to follow." And when it came to that, I would always have Petty Officer A----- as the helmsman. I'd say, "This is what we're going to do, and I'll say 'Now' because I can see it out here, but I'll tell you when, but you know how to do it." He did know how to do it, and he was super.

I finished that tour of duty. Got to St. Louis, which we'll come to, of course. One day I came to the office, and there he was, standing in civilian clothes. I said, "A-----, are you being transferred? Where are you going?."

He said, "No, sir, I'm out of the Coast Guard."

“Why?”

He said, “I’m homosexual, and they won’t let me stay in.”

And I thought, “What a waste! What an awful waste!” I mean, there was no one better at his trade than this man. He was one superb petty officer, one superb helmsman, one superb sailor, one superb Coast Guardsman. He always looked good, acted good, perfect, and it just was my first real introduction to the stupidity of the whole business sometimes of making decisions. But I’m talking 1963, so apparently his homosexuality had come out sometime after I’d left the ship, and he’d been invited to leave.

The point I want to make is that I thought it was a terrible waste to lose such a fine man, a fine petty officer, talented guy, good leader, solely because of his sexual orientation. And I still feel that way—that the quality of the man or woman and the quality of his or her capability should not be judged on that basis. I want it clear that I’m opposed to losing good people because of that or any other—I guess I’ve got to be careful about including every other thing but other kinds of things that affect our judgments about individuals without really taking into account the individuals, the people themselves.

Paul Stillwell: What is your view on the current “Don’t ask, don’t tell” regime?*

Admiral Gracey: Well, I guess I understand how we got there. I think—or hope—it was a stab at making sexuality a non-issue. But the fact of the matter is I don’t think it’s working that way, and I think it puts a burden on those who are gay. And I think we’re losing some good people. I think there are extremists, as there all in all kinds of things in some of the movements. I’m reluctant to get into specifics, because I’m not sure I’ve studied them well enough. I guess some of them are too extreme. Some of them go too far on both sides, but I think “Don’t ask, don’t tell” sounds okay, but my understanding is that it’s not working the way we thought it would. And what it’s really doing is as soon as somebody does ask or does tell, we don’t ignore it or tell units what to do. And

* Soon after the advent of the administration of President Bill Clinton in 1993 came a new policy with regard to gays and lesbians in the military services. The policy does not openly condone homosexuality in the services; it maintains the traditional prohibition. Its "Don't ask, don't tell" provision indicates that the armed services will react only in response to overt evidence of homosexual activity.

we say, “Ah, ha. We just found out. You told. You’re out of here.” And I think that’s a mistake.

Paul Stillwell: Would it be your view that sexual orientation should not be an issue at all in who serves in the military?

Admiral Gracey: That’s my view. I feel that way. If one hetero or gay decides to be a predator of some sort, then get him or her out because they’re predators—not because of why they’re predators. I just don’t think you can automatically assume that a gay person is going to be a predator or create problems in the barracks or whatever. Some of them don’t want to cause problems. I mean, my example was the fellow I told you about. His being gay really had nothing to do with anything to do with the Coast Guard. Somehow the word got out that he was homosexual, and he was ousted. That’s a long time ago, of course, but I just don’t think it ought to be.

Paul Stillwell: In an earlier era in the U.S. military it was treated even more harshly—as a crime.

Admiral Gracey: Well, yes. I haven’t looked in the courts-martial manual for a long time. I guess it probably still is. I don’t want to attack that. I’ve already made more of an issue of this than I think I needed to, but I just wanted to make clear that I have some real reservations about turning away people for reasons which oftentimes—in my opinion—don’t hold any water. You need to look at the individual.

Paul Stillwell: You’re saying that the reason’s unrelated to job performance.

Admiral Gracey: Exactly, exactly. And you cannot make presumptions. I mean, everybody’s had the bad jokes in the locker room and the locker room showers forever. And it’s got nothing to do with anything except young people being young people, I think. And that’s silly. End of that.

Apropos of nothing except one more story about the times in *Mariposa*. Fog was a big problem in Long Island Sound. Dense fog in July is always bad, and you couldn't see your hand in front of your face, and our radar wasn't real great. On one occasion we were returning to New London at night. We were trying to feel our way back in, and I kept thinking, "God, we're in this dense fog, and we ought to be hearing the foghorn at Race Rock," the lighthouse right at the eastern entrance to Long Island Sound.

We were well within hearing range of the lighthouse, and we were taking soundings. We had a radar that wasn't working at the time, and so we were feeling our way back into port. Finally we called New London and said, "We're out here. We've got this radar problem. We think we're where we ought to be hearing the fog signal from Race Rock Light, but we can't hear it. What's happening? Help us. Is there something wrong?"

Well, it turned out that Race Rock wasn't in the fog, and they had no idea that there was dense, dense fog a mile away. I can't imagine why they didn't know it, but they didn't, and they weren't sounding the signal. That was the night when the radar kept blowing fuses. We'd turn it on long enough to try to get an image and turn it off before the fuse blew. We'd make a quick sketch on the screen so we'd get some idea where we were. We were on our last fuse. We were doing it by soundings and dead reckoning.* It was near our home turf, but nonetheless it was pretty scary. We were confident we knew where we were, but not hearing Race Rock gave us significant second thoughts.

Paul Stillwell: Were you too close to shore for Loran to be that helpful?

Admiral Gracey: That's a good question. We were in pilotage waters, and our Loran wasn't great. In any event Loran A wasn't like Loran C later. The accuracy was something like 1½ miles. A line of position was all we were going to get, and we weren't going to get a fix that we could rely on, because we were tiptoeing into tight waters. We were running in along the shore of Fishers Island, and we should have been far enough off to be safe. We were not taking any chances. We must have been checking against

* Dead reckoning (short for deduced reckoning) is a method of navigation whereby one plots a direction and amount of progress from the last well-determined position. The result, known as the DR position, amounts to the best estimate of one's actual position at a given time.

Loran. We worked some buoys in the area and knew there were some pretty touchy reefs and shoals and knew that we never relied on Loran for a line of position of accuracy enough to set a buoy, so I doubt we would have put too much faith in it that night.

One of the things we did in that period was go out and guard the Air Force's radar towers, called "Texas Towers."^{*} There was the Texas Tower that collapsed off the New Jersey coast. Does that term "Texas Tower" mean anything to you?

Paul Stillwell: I've heard the term.

Admiral Gracey: The Air Force had radar towers offshore for obvious purposes, it being 1960-61. After that one collapsed off of New Jersey the decree was whenever the wind was forecast to be above 55 miles an hour the Air Force took their people off, and the Coast Guard went out and made sure nobody went on, particularly Russian ships.[†] We had a 3-inch gun, which we were not allowed to unlimber. What we did if we saw somebody approaching was to put a spotlight on the gun to let them know we had one. But when the Air Force evacuated, we went out there and milled around smartly until the weather abated. By definition, whenever we got that job the weather was terrible.

The tower that we got to go to about three times was the one off of Nantucket. It gets a little hairy off of Nantucket when there's a storm going, especially with the tides and the current creating a kind of rotary pattern. I can remember one occasion—the first time we went out—everybody on the ship was sick except the warrant boatswain, me, and a warrant officer down in the engine room. The ship was rolling like crazy. The warrant boatswain said, "You getting a little hungry, Skipper? Would you like a little chow?"

I said, "Yeah."

^{*} This was during the height of the Cold War, and the purpose of the Texas Towers was to provide advance radar warning of approaching Soviet bombers armed with nuclear weapons. The towers rose 65 feet above the surface of the ocean and resembled offshore oil platforms. They were manned by Air Force and civilian crews and were serviced by helicopter.

[†] Texas Tower Number 4 was in the deepest water, 185 feet, of any of the towers. On the night of 15 January 1961, TT-4 was struck by a storm that included winds up to 85 miles per hour and waves up to 35 feet high. At 7:20 P.M. the first of the three legs broke, followed shortly by the other two. The platform sank to the bottom of the ocean. All on board were lost: 14 Air Force men and 14 civilian repair personnel. See the Naval Institute oral history of Admiral Paul A. Yost, Jr., USCG (Ret.).

He said, “I’ll go down and fix us something,” and he came back up with two slices of bread, a slab of onion, and butter an inch thick. [Laughter] Best meal I’ve ever eaten, it tasted so good, and instant coffee. Well, we did it, and after a couple days it calmed down, and it was clear as a bell. The crew came back to the tower. So I said to our watch on the bridge “Look, I’ve been standing up here for two nights. I’m going down and get some sleep.” And as I left the bridge I said, “Don’t hit anything. Ha ha.” Thirty miles visibility. Clear as a bell. Nothing there. And our radar at that point was working.

I went down, and I had just gotten to sleep, and I heard the engines slow. And then I heard bump, bump, bump. So my heart went into my mouth, and I raced up to the bridge. I can still see the face on that young ensign who was the OOD. He said, “It was a whale, Captain. It was a whale.”

I said, “How did you hit a whale?” Well, this whale was out there playing around, and he thought that big black hull was mama or something. I don’t know. It kept playing around, and they tried to avoid it, and they couldn’t, and we hit the whale. She was okay. She sounded off there and went away. But I can remember the feeling of what I felt, what I thought had happened when I woke to that obvious slowing and collision noise. It’s nowhere near the same thing, but I remember the quotation of the skipper of the submarine that hit a ship while surfacing recently when he said, “My God, what was that?” or something.*

On the way out on one occasion we were working our way through the fog when we had a near collision. We were heading out to guard the tower and had a near collision with a ship that was coming in. Low in the water. It was right at dusk. Our radar was again not working very well, and we damned near hit this guy. And our cook started spitting up blood. He was sick. And the radar wasn’t working. So I called New York and said, “I think the tower’s going to go unguarded. I’ve got real problems here. I’ve got a sick crewman. We’re going through heavily traveled waters, and we can’t see where we are. We can’t see what’s going on.” It was one of those days with driving

* On 9 February 2001 the nuclear-powered attack submarine USS *Greeneville* (SSN-772) surfaced off Hawaii and in the process collided with the *Ehime Maru*, a Japanese fisheries research and training vessel. Nine Japanese aboard the *Ehime Maru* died when the vessel sank following the collision. The commanding officer of the submarine was Commander Scott D. Waddle, USN.

snow across. “On balance I think the risk to the tower is not worth the risk to my crew, and I’m taking them home.” Nobody said, “Don’t.”

We broke ice up the Hudson River two winters. Had a couple of really bad winters. What they used to do was send one of our 110-foot harbor tugs and a 180-footer up the river as a team. We and *Firebush*, out of New York, would alternate a couple of weeks at a time. This particular winter it got so bad that we wound up with all four of us up there plus *Westwind*, an old polar icebreaker that was back in port. But she was too big really to be much help. She was oftentimes more trouble than she was worth, because they just couldn’t maneuver her well in the kind of area we were operating in.

To make it easier to do, I cut a turning circle at West Point so that we could come up or down the river a way, swing around at West Point, and go back because you’d lose a lot of time backing and filling to get turned around in the channel. And it seemed to me that every time I was in my turning circle the Commander, Atlantic Area from New York would fly over. It got to be a joke. About the fourth time he sent a message saying, “When you tie up tonight, call me up.”

So I went to a railroad station upriver and called him he up, and he said, “Gracey, are you doing anything but going around in that circle down there?” [Laughter] That was Admiral Roland.*

I said, “Admiral, you know I am because you flew up the river and you saw that there were ships moving, and you saw there was channel broken, so you knew I’d been up there.”

He said, “Yeah, but I couldn’t resist.” He said, “Why don’t you tell me when you’re going to be in the circle, and I won’t fly over then”

I said, “Why don’t you tell me when you’re flying and I won’t be there, Admiral [Laughter] It’s easier to do it that way.” It was okay.

We did a lot of good stuff. One of the different things we did was to deliver some generators to a lighthouse that had lost her power. The blizzard at the time of the Kennedy Inauguration down here in D.C. hit the Hudson River too.† We had watched the inauguration on TV from a lumber company dock in Poughkeepsie, and then when

* Rear Admiral Edwin J. Roland, USCG, served from 1960 to 1962 in the dual post of Commander Eastern Area and Commander Third Coast Guard District, New York.

† President John F. Kennedy was inaugurated 20 January 1961.

the weather abated a little bit we went up river to the light. To get the generators on the light we actually ran the bow of the ship right up onto the rock, slowly. You could do it because if you're breaking your way through ice, then the ice controls your forward speed. That was one of the things I learned. If you've got enough power to move through the ice, then you can do things like this because when you take the power off, you stop. The problem isn't one of going too far. The problem is going at all when you're in ice. So we could nose it right up there, and then we could use the boom to put the generators on the lighthouse. So we tried out a new technique.

Another one was when it came time that things were starting to loosen up a little bit. Instead of breaking it loose upriver and watch it pile up downstream, I would sail downstream and break the ice loose and let it go downstream so the up-river mess had someplace to go. That, for some reason or other, seemed to be something nobody had thought of. I don't know why. We would zigzag back and forth from bank to bank and just try to cut it loose so it could flow out and not create a bunch of jams at river bends, etc. We also broke open some side channels so that the ice could flow out of the main channel. Coming around a bend the ice jams at the corners. By giving it a way to go straight ahead, we avoided a jam. Ice you have broken becomes chopped ice boulders. It has no way to float away into clear water. It just creates piles of broken ice that are going nowhere. At least if you keep it broken up and keep the pressure off, ships can get through.

A lot of things I experimented with there. Interestingly enough, later on when I was the Ninth District Commander in the Great Lakes, the question was, "Can you keep traffic moving after our usual December shut-down of Great Lakes shipping?" I was vice chairman of The Winter Navigation Board, and there was an experiment as to whether we could keep the ore boats running all winter long. I used a lot of the techniques I'd tried on *Mariposa*. I met with our skippers. We talked about a lot of these techniques that we did use that hadn't been used before. We felt we could and we did keep the ore boats going. They later on found out that trying to run through the winter was not a good idea. It was much too expensive. We'll talk about that later.

We had a fleet of Spanish ships that were running light to Albany, where they were loading grain. But they were old ships, grossly underpowered, and they had

committed to going up there and getting this stuff in the middle of this winter. And meanwhile Albany was about to have a brownout because they couldn't get oil to them. And the oil tank barges couldn't get there, and so we would throw towlines on them and drag them through the hot spots. We'd tell them, "You keep going as long as you can and call. We'll be back in a few hours, and we'll tow you some more." And we'd go back and drag another guy up the river until he could go on his own. And these Spaniards, we just kind of said, "Hey, I'm sorry, but you're going to have to be late picking up your grain, because we've got people living in Albany that are about to go out of power." We had a little flap, but it was okay. My people used those techniques later on in the Great Lakes as well.

I mentioned I hit a lighthouse with *Mariposa*. I had decided that this business of delivering water and oil to lighthouses was fine as long as you were off the beaten path, but doing New London Ledge Light was anything but off the beaten path. It is a big square lighthouse, sits out there right in the middle of the entrance to New London Harbor. You ran hoses there and backed away while you were pumping. The submarines coming and going from the Sub Base and the Fishers Island ferry kept going over our hoses, and it wasn't a great feeling. So I waited until a day when the wind and the tide were just right and I thought, "We'll just lay up alongside the light. It's got a nice concrete deck down there, and we'll just lay up alongside and avoid having to float the hoses and all that."

Made two mistakes. One, I didn't put the fenders on the lighthouse. I put them on the ship, which meant that the crew had to try to position the fenders during a changing evolution. Never again. Put the fenders on the object that's not moving. I thought we were just going to lay right alongside. Second was I didn't have my best hitter knocking the wedge loose on the anchor chain, and he missed. That gave it just enough delay that when the anchor hit we swung back on an angle instead of flat alongside. And we hit the side of the hull against a square concrete corner. There was a kid peeling spuds on the mess deck, and there was this loud crunch. And the deck came up under his feet, and he looked out the porthole and there was a brick wall outside the port. [Laughter] He came running out on deck throwing potatoes as he came. We tried it again, and it worked the second time.

I still thought it was a good idea, so we pulled the anchor and went back and did it again, and we did the fueling in about one third the time that we normally did, but we had a large dent in the side of the ship. Got back that night, and I called the Third District Office and told them that I'd collided with a lighthouse. On the phone was an old Lighthouse Service captain that was Chief, Aids to Navigation Division. There was a long silence followed by profanity and, "What the hell?" He envisioned my charging up Long Island Sound at a full 12 knots and colliding with a lighthouse. So I told him the story of what I'd done and that I did it a second time and it worked and probably would do it again if the conditions were right. He said, "Jesus Christ, Gracey. Why do you do these things?" [Laughter]

I said, "Well—"

Paul Stillwell: Seemed like a good idea at the time.

Admiral Gracey: Seemed like a good idea, and there were some advantages and one thing and another. And, as a matter of fact, I got a pretty good fitness report—probably because I made his life interesting.

We had a merchant ship go aground at Watch Hill. That's a lighthouse right on the Rhode Island-Connecticut border. There's a big long reef out front. We were called on a Sunday night and told there was a ship aground. The pilot thought he was aground at Race Rock. That's 10 miles further west. Similar red and white light characteristic, but he didn't know where he was. He's a guy that had made the run from Boston to New York hundreds of times, an old pilot. Went down to get something to eat, came up, saw the red and white light, had lost track of time, gave the order to turn in. And he just plain thought he was going through The Race into Long Island Sound. Instead he drove it right up onto the rocks at Watch Hill. There were no tugboats around or anything that could go. Time was of the essence, because it was just before high tide.

I got half the crew back, and we warmed up the engines as we went. I thought if we could get a line on him we might get him off. I didn't realize how he'd gotten there. I thought he'd just hit the reef going by. But he'd gone straight in and swung. We got a line on him but couldn't get him off. Instead, we were swinging on the tether formed by

that towline. We were coming in so close to the beach I could hear surf breaking. We were rudder bound. The line on him held our stern so the rudder couldn't work. The stern couldn't turn, and the ship was just slowly swinging on the end of the hawser. The tide was swinging us right in against the beach. The chief boatswain's mate and the warrant and the exec and I decided unanimously it was probably a good idea to get the hell out of there. And so we slipped the tow rope. It was exciting.

Paul Stillwell: You don't want to have two ships with a problem then.

Admiral Gracey: That's right, that's right. I had, again the 95-footer from New London out there helping us, and they had brought the line over to us from the merchant ship so we didn't have to get too close to the rocks. But it just wasn't working. And the grounded ship was there for several weeks, as a matter of fact, by the time they got him off.

Well, that's the flavor of the bean as regards *Mariposa*. My experience with young watch officers was interesting. We always had a mix of Coast Guard Academy ensigns and Coast Guard OCS ensigns.* They were all fine people, but when the Academy ensigns were on watch, I didn't relax much. They had learned piloting in the classroom using the same charts we were sailing with in our area of ops. They felt they knew it all. And having been on cadet cruises, they felt fully qualified. They had done this. At the Academy they'd sailed these waters, they'd done the piloting, they'd done it on the charts in class, and there was a tendency to think they knew it. The OCS guys knew they didn't know it. They knew they were greenhorns. They knew they'd been to OCS, and their experience was really very limited. So I knew they would call me. I couldn't be sure the CGA guys would, and sometimes they didn't when they should have. Sometimes they were—not careless, really, but overly confident.

Like one day I was out on the wing of the bridge, and we were setting out through The Race and I was looking over at Race Rock, which is, obviously, in a fixed position. We were headed 45 degrees to the right of Race Rock, but Race Rock was staying right on a line with a stanchion over which I was looking.

* OCS—Officer Candidate School.

Paul Stillwell: Steady bearing.

Admiral Gracey: Steady bearing, bad sign. If she stays steady, you're going to hit her sure as anything. And so I called over the OOD—one of the Academy men—and I said, “Jack, how are we going to do on Race Rock?”

“Oh,” he says, “Fine. I plotted it.”

I said, “Good. I'm going down for a cup of coffee, and I want you to stand right where I'm standing and I want you to look at Race Rock. You just keep looking at Race Rock. And then when I come back you can tell me what you think.” I came back, and I said, “What do you think, Jack?”

He said, “I think we're going to hit right under that window on the north side.”

I said, “Yes. What do you think we ought to do?”

“Well, maybe changing course would be a good idea.”

I said, “What a wonderful thought, Jack. Thank you for that.” [Laughter] Well, he was so confident that he had charted it right and the whole thing, and it was one of those experiences that I had had often and it made me uneasy. Even in staff jobs the idea, “I know what the system says. I know what your paper says. What do your eyeballs say? What do your ears say? What are you hearing? What are you seeing? What are you sensing? Because there are going to be oftentimes the other stuff may prove you wrong. But start off trusting your senses first, and if they raise an alarm at least look to see whether it's warranted.”

One night I was standing on the Poughkeepsie Lumber Company dock in a driving snowstorm when I called my wife. To check in we used to tie up at various piers up and down the river. They all welcomed us, and they all had a telephone on the side of the shed or something. So I called home to see how we were doing. Randy said, “Our orders are in.”

I said, “Oh, great. Where are we going?”

“St. Louis.”

And I can remember thinking, “Wow. I thought we'd been doing a pretty good job up here. And they're sending me to St. Louis.” And I was kind of disappointed. I

had other things in mind. But it turned out to be a great assignment. I wouldn't have missed it for anything.

Paul Stillwell: Well, I have a few other questions in the meantime.

Admiral Gracey: Yeah, go ahead. I saw you making some notes. That's good.

Paul Stillwell: As the skipper of the *Mariposa*, what was your chain of command? For whom did you work, and how much did you communicate up the chain?

Admiral Gracey: I worked for the Aids to Navigation Division of the Third Coast Guard District, which was in New York. Commander, Group New London didn't have command authority over me. He ran the small boats, the rescue stations, that kind of thing, and the lighthouses. We had to coordinate with him a lot, because it was his people we were supporting. But, no, I reported to the A-to-N Division.

Now, we got some support, disappointingly little support, from the Coast Guard Academy. We were in New London after all, and we *were* Coast Guard. I was upset, to the point where I was moved to go and complain because our people weren't getting the right time of day if they needed medical care at the Academy Hospital. And I complained to the CGA Assistant Superintendent about that. I just didn't think we were getting the right time of day. I didn't think it was fair. Personal relationships with people I knew there were fine. In fact, that's where I first got to know Otto Graham. We played cards with him and his wife, Beverly, while we were there. Those kinds of things were fine. But officially we were kind of *persona non grata*. The admiral didn't care to come down to see us. There was no official reason he should. He had no responsibility for us. We didn't use his piers. But the troops would have liked someplace in the New London sun.

Paul Stillwell: Just because you didn't belong to them.

Admiral Gracey: Yeah. They were focused on what was inside the fence at the Academy. And I could understand that, but we were in New London, and we were operating, and we were busting our tail. And the *Mariposa* kids, when they needed to see a doctor, or their families did, I thought they ought to get proper care. I guess it was unreasonable to think they ought to get the same care as the cadets, but I did. This was a thing that wore on me over the years.

Paul Stillwell: Were you able to improve that situation?

Admiral Gracey: Yeah. You know, as is often the case, the boss doesn't understand what's happening. It wasn't a firm policy. It was just they were fully occupied with cadets inside the fence or the cadets at the academy, and that's what they were there for. And I understand that. But *Mariposa* and *Owasco* were the two ships that were tied up in town, and we were the Coast Guard and they were a Coast Guard medical facility. Where were we going to go, up to the Navy Sub Base? I mean, we could do that, but. And there was the Coast Guard Training Center in Groton that we could use, but it was just that I thought the Coast Guard Academy ought to recognize the operating units. I thought it would have been a good idea. It would have been good for the cadets to get to see one of the operating people once in a while. Maybe even come down and see a unit, perhaps go out and watch us work some buoys. Later on I worked on making that happen.

If I were doing it back again today, I would probably try to arrange to have some cadets go out with us and watch and get a sense of just how good *Mariposa* was and how good those people were and how hard they worked. They could see how the things they learned about ship handling and all that were just a matter of nature for the crew of a buoy tender. That oftentimes the ship would come in and tie up, and there would never be a word said. And there would be no word said on telephones or anything else. The man on the bridge doing the conning would stand on the wing of the bridge. And if it was time for number-two mooring line, he would just give the hand signal to the number-two guy, and everybody knew what his job was. There would be an occasional command made aloud if necessary, or things weren't going the way you wanted them to

go, then you would do that. The point being these were pros, experts. They knew what they were doing. They did it every day. They knew how. And I wish I'd thought to invite cadets out to watch. If I could go back again and do it, I would. One learns a lot over years.

Paul Stillwell: Well, did the medical situation loosen up once you made an issue of it?

Admiral Gracey: To a certain extent, yes.

Paul Stillwell: We were talking about your chain of command. How much latitude did you have in where you would operate? How specifically were you controlled?

Admiral Gracey: I had almost complete latitude. Periodically there would be something in particular they wanted us to do. They wanted us to patrol something, guard the Towers, take a SAR case, whatever, and we would get orders to do that.* And we were assigned search-and-rescue standby. There would be periods when we were on two-hour standby. Then there would be periods when we were in availability, meaning we weren't going to get called. Tear the engines down. You've got 30 days to do whatever you need to do. Or there would be six-hour standby, but those kinds of schedules came out of the Third District, and you knew that was it.

But in terms of what buoys we were going to work on a given day, or what lights to replenish, I would just tell them we were going to sail: "This is what we are going to do. We've got a deck load. We're coming to New York for replacements." And they'd tell us when they'd be available.

One of the sailings was unique. It came time ultimately to get rid of those acetylene bottles that had been used to power the buoys. The District told us to take them out to a dumping ground offshore, an assigned area, and dump them. That was a pretty tricky operation, because, as you can imagine, an acetylene bottle is pretty heavy stuff. These I'm talking about were six feet, seven feet tall, and we're talking big industrial

* SAR—search and rescue.

things designed to be lowered into a buoy and banged around in there for a matter of months.

We stacked them all up on deck and then took them out to the designated area and rolled them overboard one at a time. You had to wait and time it with the roll of the ship so that as the ship rolled you'd get one bottle right to the edge, and then you'd hold onto it. Then, just the next time the ship rolled, you'd push the bottle overboard. It was a marvelous operation. We had to pick a day when the weather was right, so there was just enough sea to have you rolling but not so much that it was going to be extreme and get away from you. The chief and the deck force did a marvelous job of setting up. So those kinds of things would come out from the Third District. But in terms of, "I'm going out today to check buoys. I'm going out to replenish Faulkner Island Light or whatever," that was my decision.

Paul Stillwell: You got a framework, and then you could operate within that frame.

Admiral Gracey: Yeah. I had an assigned territory. Once in a while, one of the other ships would be laid up for a reason, and they'd ask us to go down and work their area too. And, of course, the icebreaking assignments all came out of the District. They told us when to go.

Paul Stillwell: What were the satisfactions of command at sea? You were the man in charge.

Admiral Gracey: Oh, yes. Well, just going to sea and doing the kind of work that a buoy tender does was marvelous. It wasn't just a case of sailing on the open sea. That's wonderful, but the ship handling in close waters, in and out, breaking the ice, doing those things was wonderful.

The relationships with the crew, the fact of—you know, I was a young guy at the time. In 1960 I was 33 years old. But they were wonderful people, and I had a chance to get to know them. I can remember saying to the cook—and I think back on it I can't believe I did this. But we had this absolutely marvelous cook, an Italian from New York.

He put tomatoes in the clam chowder—that's Manhattan clam chowder—and I'm a New Englander. The second time we had clam chowder, it was marvelous. I went into the galley and I said, "Cookie, you prepare the best food of any I've ever eaten, with the possible exception of my wife or my mother. But if you ever put another tomato in the clam chowder, I'm going to keelhaul you." [Laughter] So the wardroom clam chowder never had tomatoes in it. I don't know what they had on the mess deck.

We had one guy who was a juvenile delinquent. He just didn't understand that rules are rules. We finally decided that the best thing for him would be to let him spend a few days at the Navy's brig in Brooklyn, because he couldn't seem to get the message from us.

We had a second class gunner's mate who was a tough nut. I had him take Seaman R. to Brooklyn to turn him in. And I think just having that experience had almost as much effect on the tough old gunner's mate as it did on the guy that was inside. [Laughter] He was really dazzled by what happened when you were brought to the Navy brig to be incarcerated. The gunner's mate escort came back, and his eyes were still blinking when he got back to New London. He said, "Wow. That's a tough place." And he was from the old school, where things were really rough. The prisoner got stripped down right off the bat, and it went from there. The young man came back to the ship when he was through, and he had received the message. I don't recommend that was the way to solve problems, but we had tried everything else we could think of—persuasion, education—and nothing worked.

Paul Stillwell: Undoubtedly had an effect on more than just that man. It had an effect on everybody in the ship.

Admiral Gracey: Yes, yes. I'm glad you said that, because that's exactly right. I wouldn't even for a minute suggest that it's a good idea to send one of your crew off to prison once in a while to get everybody in line, because it's not my style, and it's not the way I believe in doing things. But this guy was just bad news from the get-go, and we were spending more time on him than he warranted. That was our only solution. We

tried it. I'd used up all the captain's masts routine and all that stuff, and none of that worked. So, anyway, for him the brig worked.

We had a few of those kinds of problems, and I got to see some of that. But mostly it was the warmth. I was lying in my bunk after a tough time of icebreaking, and we were tied up to that lumberyard dock I mentioned in Poughkeepsie, New York. The crew had had liberty. And you remember the music, "Please, General Custer, I don't want to go?" It was a popular song back in the '60s.

Paul Stillwell: No, I don't.

Admiral Gracey: Well the words were: "Please, General Custer, we don't want to go." Anyway, I was in my bunk, and it was midnight. The troops had been on liberty, and I heard loud singing: "Please, Captain Gracey, we don't want to go." And they were standing there on the buoy deck serenading my cabin. [Laughter] Well, I mean, that was wonderful stuff. We had our trauma, but mostly it was to get the work done, and they were good spirited. The ship did produce, and the ship looked good. It was maintained well. The crew was proud of itself and of *Mariposa*.

They loved us in the Third District office in terms of the naval engineering, because our ship was always well maintained. If we said we needed something, they knew we needed it, because we wouldn't ask for it if we didn't. Had a good reputation. It had always had a good reputation, and it was kind of one of those things. You know, you get a reputation, and everybody wants to continue it. There's enough carryover that it goes.

Yeah, having command with you being responsible, that's great. And having a captain's mast, I had a couple of those.* You know, it was all part of the whole thing of the mystique of being in command at sea, but you had good people to help you, and it was a wonderful experience. When you're out there, you're the one that's got to say, "Hey, I know we're supposed to go to the Texas Tower, but my crew's in danger here, and I'm taking them home." If there were lives at stake out there, that would be

* Captain's mast is a sort of court in which the commanding officer of a unit listens to requests, awards non-judicial punishment, or issues commendations. Most often captain's mast is used for punishment of lesser offenses than those that merit courts-martial

something else. We'd go. But there was nothing but a hunk of metal out there and some equipment. We'll get to it tomorrow. We're not going today. That kind of decision, if you can make it. Or, "It's pretty tricky here. Let's spend the night here, and we'll get in there tomorrow morning bright and early," or, "We'll go down late tonight, and you guys can all have liberty. Get back here at 5:00 o'clock in the morning because we're sailing at 0530. Be here. In the meantime, have fun and behave yourselves." You could do that kind of stuff.

Paul Stillwell: And you were the father figure for a bunch of people.

Admiral Gracey: Well, I guess although a young father at that time, but, yeah.

Paul Stillwell: But you were the ultimate one they had in that situation.

Admiral Gracey: Well, that's right. That's right, and the fact that I've always loved it. I've always loved it when the troops will sing, "Please, Captain Gracey, we don't want to go." Or I remember one night we were trying to work a buoy that was up close to a rock, and it was a bad night. The wind was blowing in one direction, and the sea was coming from another, and we had an 8-foot buoy. If you ride up on a 9-footer it'll hold you off, but an 8-footer will just go right underneath. That just was the way with the old 8x26s. And this night it was not going well. One of the OODs was working on it. Sometimes when we were out really endangering the ship I would say, "Hey, I get paid for this. I'll do this one."

Mostly I tried to let the OODs or the exec do it. The two execs I had during my tenure tended to be paper men, not on-the-bridge men, so I let it be me and the OOD, and the XOs took care of stuff below. But on this night the OOD was having a tough time because, as I say, all the conditions were wrong. We couldn't get up to this buoy, and we kept getting set down on it, and then we would ride over the top of it. We had a seaman on board whose name was Booty. Booty was a character. Booty was the brunt of everybody's jokes, but he loved it. He asked for it. It was dark, and the wind was blowing, and the rain was falling. This buoy went underneath the ship for the third time

and came up the other side. The chief boatswain's mate yelled up to the bridge and said, "Captain, Booty says he thinks there might be water in the lantern."

I said, "That occurred to me, Chief. Tell Booty that's a good observation. Maybe we ought to try something different." But, you know, that he would call that up and relieve some of the tension was very special to me. It meant we had an atmosphere where he felt he could do that and it would be okay.

Paul Stillwell: How large was the crew?

Admiral Gracey: About 45, something like that. Let's see, we had a warrant boatswain, the chief warrant engineer, two ensigns, a lieutenant exec, and me. Four chiefs I think, something like that.

Paul Stillwell: Did you have diesels for propulsion?

Admiral Gracey: Diesel. The ship was built in 1945 or thereabouts. You know, even when I got there, the ship was 15 years old. The Coast Guard still has a couple but they're being replaced. We rehabbed them. On my watch as the Commandant we did some major rehabs on them. In fact, just recently they decommissioned *Mariposa* in Seattle. I got the decommissioning program from a captain in the 13th District Office. He and I had worked together when he was a lieutenant commander and I was in PacArea. And, in fact, I saw him just the other day in Washington. He's now been transferred down to San Francisco. But he sent me the program and said, "I thought this might bring back some memories." Did it ever. After I retired a *Mariposa* skipper sent me a copy of an old "Night Order Book" of mine that he had found in the cabin. I wrote some deathless prose in those night orders, sometimes light "poetry," sometimes other things to set a tone and get my message out. So he had come found this, and he sent it to me, I don't know, five or ten years ago. He said, "I came across this, and I thought you might like to have it."

Paul Stillwell: I'd say the government got its money's worth out of that ship.

Admiral Gracey: Oh, yeah. Well, it did. They were great ships—the whole class of them. They were really good.

Paul Stillwell: You mentioned the name Otto Graham.* What more can you tell me about him?

Admiral Gracey: Well, at one point when I was in Coast Guard Headquarters, and I think it had to be that first time in the late '50s, the Commandant was considering hiring Otto Graham to be the football coach at the academy.† He invited two officers from each pay grade up to his office, because he wanted to consult as to what we thought would be the reaction of the officer corps if they hired Otto Graham. They wanted to up the ante in terms of visibility of the academy. For a variety of reasons they thought it would be a good idea. And so the Commandant personally asked our opinions.

My thought was, “Otto Graham is a big name, but that’s not going to be as big a name for kids X years from now in terms of enticing them to New London. I guess as it turned out, I was not right about that, or at least the people didn’t agree with me. I didn’t argue strongly. I just thought that was one thing to think about. They were considering Otto because they thought he would draw kids.

In the process of hiring him they had to really torpedo Coach Nels Nitchman—a guy who had been a multiple-sport coach there for a long time. And they did it without talking to Nitch first. The first he knew of it it was a done deal. They wanted him to go down to Cape May Recruit Training Center to run their athletics. He wouldn’t do it. He’d been in New London for years. He was known to and respected by small-college coaches all over New England and beyond. So they made him the Intramural Programs coach. That was the tough part of it. Otto was fine. Otto fit in well. He clashed periodically, I think, with some of the Academy Superintendents or whatever. When I

* Otto E. Graham, Jr., was quarterback for Northwestern University during World War II and later quarterback for the Cleveland Browns, 1946-55. He was elected to both college and pro football halls of fame. He was head football coach and athletic director at the Coast Guard Academy, 1959-66; head coach of the Washington Redskins, 1966-68, and athletic director of the Coast Guard Academy, 1970-85.

† Admiral Alfred C. Richmond was then the Commandant.

would go up there as the Commandant, he'd come and sit with me, and we'd talk about what was going on. We didn't become bosom pals, but we were friends. He was always outgoing and friendly. I first met him and Beverly when I was CO of *Mariposa*.

Paul Stillwell: Did his fame help impress the football players, or did it achieve the desired effect?

Admiral Gracey: You know, I've not really thought about that over the years. I'm not sure it did. Among other things he left the Academy to coach the Washington Redskins. He had a good kicker at the academy, and he brought the kicker with him. And I think a lot of people felt wounded by that. He'd had a Naval ROTC background, I think, at Northwestern, and he started out as a commander but was soon a captain. And that bothered some people. But it was the way you were going to get somebody that was of that caliber. You know, you had to pay him something.

Then he came to the Redskins for a while, and I thought Coast Guard people felt betrayed at that point. I've never really talked to a lot of people about it that much. I'm not sure that I'm giving you an accurate picture of the whole thing, but it's only my opinion. He went back to New London when the Redskins stint didn't work out. He was well thought of, and I'm sure the kids felt great. You know, having a Hall-of-Famer as your football coach or head of athletics is not too shabby.

We went to the Second District office in St. Louis after *Mariposa*, and there was an interesting Otto Graham tie-in there. While I was in St. Louis President Kennedy said, "How come we don't have any black cadets?" The Commandant got the message and directed that we get some. So I was sent out to find blacks that were potential Coast Guard Cadet material in Missouri and Kansas. My full-time job was as Second District Comptroller. Otto got in touch with me and he said, "A quarterback wouldn't be too bad either, Jim. Black or white, find me a quarterback." Well, I didn't find him a quarterback, and I didn't find very many black Coast Guard Academy candidates either.

Everywhere I went I got the same answers. The school principal would say it was a good year for black women, but it was not a good year for black men. I didn't quite understand that. They said, "Any black kid here who can meet your criteria for the

Coast Guard Academy can write his ticket anywhere, especially if he's also a good athlete." And furthermore their response was, "Anybody in Kansas or Missouri who wants to go to a military academy will go to the Air Force Academy. Chances are you're going to be hard pressed to find a black kid of your intellectual criteria with athletic ability who's going to go back to New London and go to sea for a living." And that was pretty well true. It was hard. I talked to all kinds of people, but I'm not aware that anybody even asked for application papers. I talked to the guidance counselors and the whole thing, and they were all very sympathetic, but that was the end. But, anyway, Otto said, "Find me a quarterback while you're at it."

Paul Stillwell: In a way we might compare his hiring to the Coast Guard slash. It was another way of getting identity for the Coast Guard.

Admiral Gracey: Yes, and it was all in the same period, wasn't it? Yes, good point.

Paul Stillwell: You've talked about dealing with the buoys. What were the mechanics of tending buoys? What specifically did you do, and what facilities did you have on board to work them?

Admiral Gracey: To service a buoy you've got to get to it and control it so it's safe for your people to climb on it or so you can hoist it aboard. First thing is to come alongside the buoy as gently as you can. Nothing upsets the buoy gang more than having a relatively routine servicing turn into a major repair job because you hit the buoy too hard and smashed the lantern or something. That's especially true if you hit it while backing away after the servicing is done. The lantern on a buoy has a certain characteristic. It'll flash in a certain way, so you have a specifically designed flasher that can be set for each buoy. You've got lights that rotate on a small mechanism, and every third time, say, it'll go on or it'll stay on for a longer period or whatever. And you have lamp changers so that when one burns out up comes a fresh one. Those have to be replaced periodically, or something will go wrong and you have to either fix it or—most of time we just replaced it and fixed it after we got it aboard.

And then the batteries had to be recharged. You didn't recharge the batteries per se. You took a whole rack out of the buoy and put it on deck and put a whole fresh rack in, and then you took the rack back to the Coast Guard Depot in New London, and they would recharge them there. You're coming alongside the buoy and you maneuver the ship up close so that you can get hold of it with a boat hook and grapple it in alongside so you can get a line on it. Then you haul it up to the side of the ship. Often you would try to pick it up a little bit out of the water and lash it in to the side of the ship so that it moved with the ship. Then you put people aboard, and they clambered up the tower to the light mechanism in the lantern. All hands on the buoy deck wore lifejackets and hard hats and safety shoes. Working on the buoy deck is a tough and risky job.

You know, the caging on these things is eight or ten feet high. They're up in the air, and they're working in a seaway. Sometimes if a buoy had to be cleaned you would bring it aboard. You'd scrape the barnacles off the bottom and do all that kind of stuff. Or if they were going back in to be repainted, you'd clean the gunk off at sea. That's why you get them aboard where you can work on the part that's been immersed. And if a buoy was off station, you would try to get a hold of it and see if you could drag it back on station. That was okay if the sinker would go along with the whole thing. Sometimes it wouldn't go, and you'd have to pick up the buoy and pick the sinker off the bottom and maneuver until you were in exactly the right place by taking very careful sights. Nowadays it's all simple. You've got bow thrusters that move the ship sideways and stern thrusters and the precise GPS navigation.* We had a single propeller and a big barn-door rudder, and I've got to tell you—ship handling on one of those ships is the most fun in the world. You knew they were going to back to port like all single-screw ships do—and back into the wind. And then people would use sextant angles if they could. You'd take an angle with a sextant on certain objects that you could see.

Paul Stillwell: To verify the position.

* GPS—Global Positioning System, a satellite-based navigation system that provides terminals on earth with their geographic positions.

Admiral Gracey: To line up the position with another. You'd maneuver the ship until the people on the sextant and alidade said, "Mark-mark." Then you'd give the signal to drop the sinker—hopefully right over its spot and hope you'd put it right on the charted station. If you didn't make it, then you'd go back and try it again, depending on how far off you were and the nature of why the buoy was there in the first place,.

One of the things I suggested then, and I have suggested in other aspects since then, was, "Folks, let's do it right the first time, because if you don't do it right the first time this whole thing is going to turn to mud. And if we really don't do it right, we're going to drop it, and we're going to go back and start all over. We're going to go off a way and turn and do our approach and everything all over again, because once you've got the sinker on the bottom in the wrong place if you try to fix the position, make better what you didn't do quite right, all hell will break loose. It's not a sin to do something wrong. It's hard work. It's tough maneuvering. But if you don't do it right and try to 'tinker' it into place, it's going to get tougher."

The same is true in some of the kinds of things you do elsewhere—in the paperwork, projects you're trying to sell, things you're trying to do, political maneuvering—those kinds of things you've done over the years. Let's do it right the first time and not have to go back and try to fix it, because that always seems to get sticky. I used to cite the buoy tender work as a good example of the importance of trying to get it right the first time.

Paul Stillwell: What sort of shop facilities did you have for working the buoys?

Admiral Gracey: Not much. There was electronics space, and there was a machining capability but just for the minor fix-ups. Anything major had to be taken into New London and worked at the Depot or really major work had to go down to Base St. George in New York. But there was an electric shop, and there were pros working on the electrical gear, and we could do some painting. We had welding capability, that kind of stuff. We painted lighthouses. That was one of the things we called an "all-hands evolution." We'd anchor off, and the crew would go ashore, and they would bust their

hump for a day or two. We always had great steaks for them when they came back at night—and no tomatoes in the clam chowder. [Laughter]

Paul Stillwell: What was family life like in New London?

Admiral Gracey: It was okay. We lived north of New London in Uncasville, where we bought a small house. It was on the edge of a place called Fort Shantok State Park, most of which is now the Mohegan Sun Casino—run by the Mohegan Indians. School was interesting. We were living in a community of lower-middle income younger people. There were a lot of people from the Sub Base and Electric Boat Company.* It was a housing development that had been built down there. We had a lot of good friends. It was a good area.

Our church experience wasn't great. The minister was crazy. [Laughter] He really was crazy. Made us gun-shy about ever going and having anything to do with the Methodist Church again. This was our first experience with it, and this guy didn't do them proud. He was a postman and a minister. He was also a zealot on the subject of Protestant versus Catholic. The Catholic Church had built a parochial school, and they built it big for the future. The town didn't have enough classroom spaces, so the Catholic Church offered them the use of their extra classrooms. The mayor accepted. And our minister went down to the mayor's office to object. They got into a hot debate over this whole thing, and our man of the cloth grabbed and pushed the mayor, saying "How dare you proselytize my children and put my Methodist children at risk?!"—you know, this crazy stuff. That was just an example. The guy was a nut. But it was okay. There were other parts of the church that were good. We made out fine. We were there a couple of years.

Paul Stillwell: Well, I've just about exhausted my questions on *Mariposa*. Anything else to add on?

* The Electric Boat Division of the General Dynamics Corporation is a long-time submarine building yard in Groton, Connecticut.

Admiral Gracey: I think we've done *Mariposa* quite well.

Paul Stillwell: Well this is probably a convenient breaking point rather than just getting started on St. Louis.

Admiral Gracey: Yes, even though I know we're going into your home turf here.*

Paul Stillwell: That's right. I look forward to that the next time.

Admiral Gracey: All right.

* The interviewer grew up in Southwest Missouri and later lived in St. Louis.

Interview Number 4 with Admiral James S. Gracey, U.S. Coast Guard (Retired)

Place: Admiral Gracey's home in Arlington, Virginia

Date: Tuesday, 15 May 2001

Interviewer: Paul Stillwell

Paul Stillwell: Well, it's a beautiful mid-May morning to resume the story of your life. We had talked last time about your command of the buoy tender. If you could resume and catch up with any additional items you need from that, please.

Admiral Gracey: Okay. Well, good morning on this beautiful day, Paul.

Before I even go back to *Mariposa* there's one thought from my time at Harvard Business School. I mentioned the old-timer professor who was talking about profit. He said that anytime you can continue to produce the same amount for less money, you've made a profit for the government. I never really consciously sat down and said, "What can I do to make this happen?" But, as I think back on it, that was a kind of a factor. Plus I guess I'm an advocate of the idea that there's got to be something different that we can do that will make things happen better or make people happier while they're doing it or whatever. As we talk, I hope those things will show up as part of my philosophy.

Paul Stillwell: Do you think the thought he articulated was something that the Coast Guard routinely did, or was that counter to the standard operating procedure?

Admiral Gracey: Thinking back on it, I don't think it was counter to the culture. But in the 1950s, we were going into a new era. There were those who'd been around forever, and if it was good enough for Hopley Eaton—the first Coast Guard officer—it was good enough for them. That was kind of the phrase that the young bucks used to describe the senior officers' approach. The young bucks were the lieutenant commanders, and when I was one, I was right in there. The lieutenant commanders (a) they're a smart bunch of guys and gals, and (b) they really do know the right way to do everything. Or at least if you don't believe it, just ask them. Or ride in a carpool and listen.

I say that lovingly. It's just a fact, and so there are always those people. I suspect there was some of that, but we always had a money crunch, so how do we get the job done? And nobody was willing to just do whatever it seemed like the money would pay for. You could always see that there was more that we could do, and that has kind of grown exponentially over the last 20 years or so or more.

Paul Stillwell: But don't you have to overcome that ingrained idea that, "We've always done it this way, so this must be a good way, this must be the right way"?

Admiral Gracey: You did then. And to a certain extent you do now, because if somebody creates a new way to do something or has settled in and he's found it works for him, there's probably a tendency to grab on it and hang on tight. I always would urge my staff to tell me, "If what I just said doesn't make sense, tell me so. Tell me if you think we're doing it wrong. I want to hear it." Or in the course of a discussion if somebody says, "That's all well and good, sir, but—" I was not at all afraid or unwilling to say, "Damn, that's a good idea. I never thought of that." I'm not playing Goody-goody Jimmy here, but there are some who can do it and some who can't. And so there is a certain amount of that. But this was just a 1955 thought that registered with me.

Back to *Mariposa*. There are a couple of things I thought about after I talked last week. I talked about breaking ice up the Hudson River. There's plenty of channel up the Hudson River, but there's a deepwater channel, and the river pilots knew where the deepwater channel was. I don't know that it was classified top secret, but they did not advertise how they found the deepwater channel. But since we were breaking ice so that they and their ships could get up the river, they did in fact share with us their steering directions, such things as "Come left until the yellow barn is in line with the pine tree next to the white house up on the hill." That was great until and unless somebody happened to paint the barn before the first time you got there so you couldn't find the yellow barn. But it was just full of that kind of thing, which was colorful as hell. They even knew the name of the person that owned the barn, you know. Or "Come left on Mrs. O'Grady's chimney." Well, where is Mrs. O'Grady's chimney? But it was very helpful, and we used those to steer by.

Paul Stillwell: I've even heard sometimes barking dogs incorporated in those types directions. [Laughter]

Admiral Gracey: Yes, because there was a dog that would always bark, yeah, when they saw the ship. That's right. There was one particularly bad place at the Bear Mountain Bridge where you went through the bridge and right straight at—stop using my hands. It doesn't help much on audiotape. Straight ahead was the obvious way to go, only it wasn't the obvious. I mean, there was this nice wide river, and there was this nice wide expanse of water. There was a buoy up there, but it got hidden in the ice and snow sometimes. And the right way to go was "Take a hard right as soon as you go through the bridge and follow the shoreline around, because that is a rocky shallow water place."

Some years later, in the early '70s, another buoy tender was breaking ice up there. The captain went below for lunch, and he forgot to warn the young officer who had the conn about that particular place, and he drove the ship right up on the rocks. Some of the ice was pretty heavy, and you had to slug your way through or back and hit it. When assisting a tug pushing a barge, we would often just throw a line on the barge and drag them. Tell the tug, "Now, you start pushing, and as soon as I get there I'm going to put this line on, and I don't want you guys hanging back. You push, we'll pull. We're going to get there, but you've got to do it on my signals."

I mentioned my quartermaster friend that was so brilliant on the helm that came to trouble later on. I could always count on him. I'd say, "Now," and he would swing that thing in there, and we'd get the line over on that sucker and tow it on through, but that was pretty tough going.

Sometimes the ice was so bad that we all stopped for the night. I mean, we didn't want to do it after dark, and so we would just stop wherever we were and get a good, quiet night's sleep. If the ice was right, we could visit with the pilot, and on more than one occasion the pilot's wife would meet him on the bank somewhere. One time the pilot said he was getting tired of eating that Spanish food on that ship, and his wife came down and brought him some dinner that he could take back aboard. Sometimes we did it when alone and too far from a port.

But in the morning, of course, then you'd be frozen in solid, and it was a little hard to shake loose. We would take some buoy sinkers and put them up on the end of the boom and swing the boom back and forth, and it would rock the ship. We would break loose, and then we could go from there. The first time I saw that being done, it was kind of an interesting process. The sinkers are pretty heavy stuff, and usually—when working buoys—we just lifted them a little bit over the side to hang them in the chain stopper and then dropped them. But in this case we got them up there so that it would apply a rolling moment to the ship. I think we tested the boom a little, but it was the standard way to go. It's a process that I don't think our polar icebreakers have to face. Or if they do, they don't have the boom to do it with, but they do have pumping systems that rock them.

Paul Stillwell: They've got that internal rocking system.

Admiral Gracey: Exactly. They can move water or liquids back and forth to get that effect, but we didn't have that so we used the boom and a sinker instead.

Paul Stillwell: That's kind of like sally ship. [Laughter]

Admiral Gracey: It was deucedly hard to avoid breaking the propeller. We only had one propeller, and the ice particularly was bad. You were breaking through brash, these huge chunks of ice that had already been broken in the track. In backing and filling to turn to go back to break a vessel loose, you'd have to pass down each side of the ship you were working with. So that meant you had to turn around somewhere unless you were at West Point. I mentioned the turning circle at West Point. That was fine if you were anywhere near it, but most of the time you weren't. That meant you were backing into the ice or stopping and starting the propeller, and you'd get a chunk of ice in there.

We would always come back with maybe part of one blade left over or something. On one occasion they were so badly broken that we had to limp out and go down to Brooklyn and go in the shipyard and get a new propeller put on. That was an interesting experience all by itself, because we went into—gosh, I can't remember the name of the basin now in Brooklyn, down in the old shipyard section of Brooklyn.

Paul Stillwell: New York Naval Shipyard?

Admiral Gracey: No, no, no. This was a private yard. I think it was the Ira Bushey Shipyard—in the Red Hook section of Brooklyn. The shipyard must have been the low bidder, so they were the only ones that had space at the time. We went into an old wooden, moss-covered, seaweed-slimy dry dock.

Each year we would go to the Coast Guard Yard in Baltimore after the ice season and get a new screw and all that stuff and get primed up for the next year. And when you went into dry dock at the Coast Guard Yard it involved everybody they had. There was this marvelous modern dry dock, and they had a sighting device, and everybody on the ship had to stand still. Then they would say, “Ten men move to the right,” and it would be all this kind of thing. Get it just so, and then they would pump it out.

We went into this place in Brooklyn, and there was no such tower up there that you could see. There was nobody watching it. A couple of old guys came down the dock, a fat guy and a skinny guy. They were real old-timers, and one of them had a long bamboo pole. They stood on the dock, and he would flop the bamboo pole down on the dock and he’d say, “Not yet.” And then one of them got aboard. The skinny guy got aboard, and he noticed we had hamburgers for lunch. So he would be feeding the seagulls with the hamburgers. The fat guy would periodically lay the bamboo down, and the guy would say, “Not yet,” and feed a few more seagulls. Meanwhile, we were all milling around and watching with absolute fascination. [Laughter] We were moving into the dock slowly and working the lines. Finally he looked at it. He flapped the pole down one time and said, “That’s good enough. Pump her out.” And that was it.

Paul Stillwell: There was no transit, no precise equipment. [Laughter]

Admiral Gracey: None of that. And it turned out that we had popped some welds in the stern section and had water inside the skin of the ship. When we got into the dry dock, that water froze and cracked some of the hull section itself. So by the time we got done

we had quite a job, and we were not popular with the guys that had to go up the river and relieve us while we did that. But it was an interesting experience.

There was a tanker from Finland that came up the river every so often, and, of course, the Finns are in and out of ice all the time. When we heard they were coming we would just find a place to park out of the track and cheer them as they went by, and then we would follow them along. [Laughter]

We talked about mooring the ship and the way that this team worked. There wasn't a lot of noise, and there weren't a lot of commands being yelled around. People just knew what was going to happen, and they watched for the right time. Mooring was all by silent hand signals. Once in a while you might have to call out or call an alert to something. But most of the time it would be a point to a line or just use hand signals when coming in alongside another ship. We did that with *Westwind* up in Albany; it was marvelous because we came up, turned in the river, pulled up alongside.* There was not a sound. Right up alongside. Except for the chief who said, "Throw us a line, will you?"

Westwind at that point was in terrible condition, and we were always very proud of what we looked like. One of the people on deck—I think it was my friend, the chief, as a matter of fact—said, "Careful, Skipper. We don't want any of that dirty white paint on us." [Laughter] Fortunately, we were forgiven by the people on the other ship.

During that period when the ship was in Baltimore, in the Coast Guard Yard, I took a little leave and went home. We began to build a wall out of big old moss-covered rocks that we could find in the woods. I got a little careless picking one up and dinged my back something fierce. And I really did a good job of it, to the point where I was kind of out of it for the whole time. While we were building the stone wall, Randy said, "You have a good eye. You tell me where to put the stones, and I'll put them." So I was lolling on the front lawn while she was putting the rocks in the wall; I was the envy of the neighborhood.

I had an old '53 Chevrolet that I drove back and forth to the ship, and it gobbled oil. When it came time to go back, I had my dress khakis on, and I was going down to catch a train to Baltimore. I was leaning over putting oil in to keep it alive until I got

* USCGC *Westwind* (WAGB-281) was a "Wind"-class icebreaker commissioned by the Coast Guard on 18 September 1944. She belonged to the Soviet Union from 1945 to 1951 before returning to U.S. duty. She served until decommissioned on 29 February 1988.

back. And I sneezed while leaning over. I don't know. Have you ever had a bad back? If you have, don't sneeze while leaning over.

Paul Stillwell: And pouring oil.

Admiral Gracey: Well, you can't brace anything. That's one of the more miserable railroad rides I've ever had in my life. It's just a part of Jim's life. I lived with that for many years off and on. I think that catches me up.

I want to mention the fact that we had a marvelous engineering crew on *Mariposa*. The whole crew was good, but the engineers were particularly good. We had some old Cooper-Bessemer engines in it. It was a diesel-electric kind of a drive so that you could control it from the bridge, and it just purred like a top. We did some interesting things in some shallow water like the trip up the Connecticut River I told about. And they were always good about letting me know when it was starting to get a little silt into the filters, maybe it was time to not go further. But they just worked hard. They kept those engines running, and the people in the district office in the naval engineering branch just absolutely loved us. So that if we said we had a problem, that meant we really did have a problem, and they were going to help us fix it.

Paul Stillwell: Could you talk a little about the yard at Curtis Bay and how that supported your ship and the Coast Guard in general?

Admiral Gracey: Oh, yes. The Coast Guard Yard at Curtis Bay remains an interesting operation. It's changed a little bit over the years, but they did a variety of things. They built buoys. They built smaller boats. I think the whole 40-foot fleet was built there. I'm not sure about that. But they built miscellaneous kinds of things. They did overhaul work on the larger ships, annual availability or bi-annual availability, meaning the ship was available from the operating schedule to go in. It was done with civilian personnel at the yard primarily, although the command was military, and there were military officers there.

It was a training ground for our people who were our up-and-coming naval engineers, people who had been to MIT or one of the engineering schools, and they would go there. Ultimately some of them spun off into the merchant marine safety business keeping merchant ships safe.

There was a supply function that they had. They have a lot of parts for some of our older engines. Later on we worked to make it a Coast Guard Ships' Parts Supply Center. But we didn't have very much standardization in our vessels, so that it wasn't like the Navy where you had X ships all with the same engine and the same parts would work. We had some of those. We had classes of ships. We had the 327-foot old steam-driven ships. They were the last of the steam operation, and everybody else was going to diesel in the Coast Guard. They were wonderful, wonderful ships. They were built in the late '30s. But they were still running, and they had to be supported, and they had to have people that knew how to handle steam equipment and all that sort of thing. It was a marvelous operation.

There was some debate over the years as to whether going to Curtis Bay was really a good thing to do from the point of view of economy, because the ship had to sail from wherever it was to the yard. West Coast ships obviously didn't come east. Mostly it was the East Coast ships. I guess some from the Gulf of Mexico came around. Our 255-foot class, our 327-foot class, later the 378s and the 210s, and the buoy tender fleets would go there periodically. There was a lot of debate as to whether it was a good program or not. Periodically it would be threatened, and somebody would try to close it.

Sometimes it would be the Congress. Barbara Mikulski has saved that yard more times than—almost as many years as she is old, bless her heart.* Or there would be somebody that would save it. But within the Coast Guard there were those who thought it was absolutely the right thing to do. I was one of those. There were those who thought, "No, we ought to close it and just go commercial." But I think it has served us well in a wide variety of ways. There are things that the Coast Guard requires that are unique, and they had people working there who may have built the first ones. There were

* Barbara A. Mikulski, a Democrat from Maryland, served in the House of Representatives from 3 January 1977 to 3 January 1987; she has been a member of the Senate since 3 January 1987. Senator Mikulski was born 20 July 1936.

a lot of old-timers there. A lot of second-generation people work there, as I remember it, and they just really cared about the Coast Guard.

Paul Stillwell: It's a repository of expertise.

Admiral Gracey: Oh, indeed. Good words. Yeah, exactly. Thank you. Exactly what it was, and I'm sure like any operation of that type that probably there were some inefficiencies along the way and so forth, but it wasn't because they didn't care.

One of my favorite leadership stories of all is not very complimentary to the leader, but it comes out of there. There was a captain who shall remain nameless but in the old days was quite a martinet. He had very strong views about what kind of clothing people should wear around the Coast Guard Yard. And particularly off-duty dungarees were not even to be heard of. His famous quote is, "There I was on a beautiful Sunday morning, minding my own business, and I looked up and what did I see? Two men in dungarees." Well, that particular quotation has been used over and over in a variety of situations. It had nothing to do with anything except in talking about the Coast Guard Yard I always think of that captain, who was famous for having made that statement and lived a life accordingly.

Paul Stillwell: And most veteran Coast Guardsmen will probably know his name.

Admiral Gracey: They will. They will. I think they will. Anyway, enough of that rambling.

We had a house in Uncasville outside of New London, but we had no luck in selling it. So we drove to St. Louis with the idea we were going to rent a house. Farmed the kids out with our sister-in-law in New Jersey and went out there. And we couldn't find a house to rent. So we started shopping around for sale ads that sounded desperate, thinking they might rent one to us. We came across a little old 100-year-old house with a stone foundation on a hillside in this marvelous little town of Webster Groves. We succumbed, and we put down a contract to buy it. Now we were the proud owners of two houses. I was a lieutenant commander in 1962, and we could ill afford two houses.

But we went back. We moved. The moving-van driver came and said, “I’ll be at your house out there on Labor Day with the furniture in the moving van.” In the Coast Guard the experience of moving around if you were married and had a family was typical because you didn’t have government housing. There were a couple of places that had some, but in the ’60s we didn’t have very much. So you were on your own, and you either rented or you bought and sold. We opted to buy and sell.

When we first came back from Alaska, we bought for \$9,000 or something, money that one of our parents loaned us. We sold that for \$11,000. We came to Washington and bought one for \$12,000 and sold it for \$13,000. It was kind of that kind of a deal. We would do just enough to it so we could sell it up a little bit and afford the next place, and, of course, the family was getting bigger so we needed more. Anyway, the moving van came to Uncasville. The fellow who came to move us this time was from a van line I won’t name, one of the biggies. He arrived wearing his cowboy hat and his cowboy boots and the typical mustache that is usually portrayed on a villain in the movies. I will tell you now we wound up loving this guy. He was absolutely marvelous. But he walked in, and the first thing he said was, “Howdy. Can I use your telephone?” He was on the phone, and he was reporting that he’d just turned over a van full of stuff and burned it. [Laughter] And he was coming to take all our worldly goods.

Paul Stillwell: Didn’t exactly inspire confidence.

Admiral Gracey: And then as he pulled away with all our worldly goods he said, “Now, I’m going to be there on the Saturday before Labor Day. And I’ll be there. If you call the company looking for me, they won’t know where I am, because I’m going to make a few side trips on the way.” [Laughter] “But trust me,” he said and drove away.

I’ll get back to that in a minute, but I have to tell you that we now had an empty house, and we were scrubbing it before leaving for Missouri.

We heard this great uproar out on the front sidewalk, and it was a woman coming up the sidewalk saying, “Don’t push me. I don’t need to see it.”

The real estate man said, “You really ought to look inside before you—”

“I don’t need to,” she said. “I don’t need to.” It turned out that her first name was Gracie—not her last name, you understand. She said she was in the office and the realtor said, “Is the Gracey place sold?” and she said, “Gracie, Gracie. I’ll buy it.” And that’s the kind of person she was. She insisted she was going to buy it. She looked at it and said, “I told you I didn’t need to look at it. It’s fine. I’ll buy it.”

They said, “When can we pass papers?”

She said, “Well, when are you leaving?”

We said, “We really ought to leave tomorrow morning. Is that possible?”

The real estate man blanched and said, “Uh, probably.”

She said, “Good. I’ll be there.” So we waited, and she was a little late coming. She came in with a big paper bag in her hand. Went through the process. Came time for her to give him a check. She opened the paper bag, and it was all full of money. [Laughter]

Paul Stillwell: You’re making this up. [Laughter]

Admiral Gracey: I tell you, I’m not making this up. This is a true story. [Laughter] She shook this money out on the table, and she said, “These young people are traveling. They’ll need some money.” And she had maybe \$3,500, \$4,000 in \$10.00 bills. [Laughter] She’d been to the bank.

The real estate guy said, “Well I can’t do that.” And she looked at him, and she said, “Oh,” and she started scraping the money off the table. [Laughter]

I said, “Well, we probably could use \$300.00 or \$400.00 to help us get there.”

I looked at the agent, and he said, “Oh, yeah. We could work that out.” And she pushed it all back on the table again. [Laughter] So, anyway, we sold the house.

Well, by gosh, the mover arrived only about five minutes later than he said he would. His unloading crew was three old-timers that he’d found fishing down by the riverfront in St. Louis. This house in Webster Groves was up a sloping driveway, and then you had to go upstairs to the front floor. And then inside it had a switchback staircase that went up to the second floor, very narrow—son-of-a-gun for movers, and it was hot. You know St. Louis, and it was a hot September day. Bill the driver said, “Rest

yourselves, guys. Don't overdo it now, because we've got to save ourselves for the piano." We didn't own a piano, but he kept these guys going all day long. We went off and got them some food, as we always did. But he kept them going all day long. Talk about leadership. Telling them to save themselves for the piano. When they got far enough back in the truck so that it was obvious there was no piano there, they practically ran the rest of the afternoon. They were so happy to find out there was no piano on the truck. Brilliant.

Paul Stillwell: Great psychology.

Admiral Gracey: It was brilliant. As it came time for him to drive away, he was in the cab, and we were thanking him. The airbrakes went "Boom" as they let out, and he started down the road. Then he stopped, got out, ran back, and he was all apologies because he had gone away while we were still talking. And apropos of nothing except this was a real gentleman of the road, but you had to wait and find out that he was a real gentleman of the road.

My job in St. Louis was with the Second Coast Guard District, which no longer exists. Its responsibility was the Western river system, which encompassed 21 states, because it went way up into Minnesota and over east into Ohio and Kentucky and West Virginia and out west into Oklahoma and all of those states. I never realized just how much there was. Everyone knows the Mississippi River, but there's all the feeders and the Ohio, and at that time the Tennessee system was done, but the Tombigbee connection down to Mobile was being done.

Paul Stillwell: Did it encompass the Missouri River and its tributaries?

Admiral Gracey: Yes, all the rivers of the Western system. With the Red River, the White River, and the Arkansas in shape, places in Oklahoma and Kansas were coming in as active ports. At the time the through port with the greatest tonnage of any port in the country was Cincinnati, Ohio. And it was chemicals, and it was coal, and it was all this kind of stuff that was moving on the barge system on the river.

Yes, the Missouri River was opened. The Army Corps of Engineers had been developing it so that it was stabilized, and it could carry commercial traffic. And then they opened it while I was there. I was the Second Coast Guard District Comptroller. I was worried about supply systems and pay and all that kind of stuff and miscellaneous duties. But it was a small office, and I was interested in all this other stuff. And I had friends that were involved in that part of it, so I got to be aware of what was going on.

One thing I thought was fascinating was after they had turned the Missouri River over to us, we started marking it with buoys, but the channel wasn't totally stabilized. They had a bunch of posts along the waterway with boxes on them. Tows coming up the river would pull over, and inside the box were little chartlets that told them where the channel was today or this week or whatever.

The Second Coast Guard District manufactured all the river buoys for the whole country for all the Coast Guard. And they were always getting hit, of course, by barges or whatever. Somebody's bright idea was to fill them full of foam, and then at least we would retrieve them and patch the dent and put them back, as opposed to sinking and having the whole bottom littered with buoys. It was a big operation.

My job as the District Comptroller included supply and pay and all the financial sorts of things, everything that a comptroller would do. One of the things I noticed, apropos of what I was talking about earlier and also my concern about people, was the system to reimburse the folks who traveled, and there was a lot of traveling on business in the district. It took 13 days to pay them reimbursement for the travel after their claim came in. But it was always 13 days. It wasn't some days 13 and some days five or some days 13 and sometimes 20. It was always 13 days.

So I said to the section chief, "If you can do it in 13 days, that means that we're keeping up. We're just keeping up ten days behind. So I want us to do it in three days. We're going to get there by this weekend, and next weekend we're going to work all weekend long until we get it down to three. Then we're going to keep it current just like we are now, only we're going to do it in three days instead of 13." They weren't sure at first, but that was so popular everybody loved them, and so they were very happy. But it was just the work.

This was the beginning of the minority contracting stuff in the country with President Kennedy. And, of course, we were doing a lot of contracting with our buying of these buoys for the whole service, and we did have a supply depot there. A representative came out from Coast Guard Headquarters, a lieutenant, and his job was to tell us how the program was going to work, and to make sure we had the word. We tried to convince him that we had the word, but his duty was to tell us, and so we understood that. But we had some fun with it, because he had the rules in his hat.

Paul Stillwell: You mean literally?

Admiral Gracey: Literally in his hat. He had papers. And when you asked him a question, he would take his hat off. I wish I could describe this on tape, but he would doff his cap, and he'd leaf through the pages. For the next two years I was there, whenever anybody asked anybody a poser of a question they would go through the motions of taking off the hat and leafing through the pages while they thought up the answer.

Next we sent him down to Memphis, where we were just about to award the annual contract for building the buoys. We warned him that this was an unusual guy in an unusual situation. He went there, and here was this absolutely empty steelyard, manufacturing yard. This guy didn't have any employees. The lieutenant got with the owner and said, "How do you do this?"

He said, "Well, I don't have any employees."

"Well, how do you fulfill the contract?"

He said, "When I have a contract, I get employees. And I do what I have to do, and there's no point in keeping a lot of people around when I don't have any work for them to do."

This representative from Washington said, "Well, how do you decide whether you're going to hire—" I've forgotten the words he used, but black or white would be current terminology I guess.

This fellow said, "I go down to the hiring hall, and I say, 'What's the cheapest?' And they tell me what's the cheapest.'" And he said, "I buy the cheapest ones. I don't

hire anything out here but black fellows. They're the cheapest, and they do good work. And so I don't have any minority contracting problems." [Laughter] This was his answer. Well, that's kind of the way it worked.

The representative from Washington was somewhat undone by this whole experience. Obviously it's not that simple. This was a gross kind of a situation. But we were very much involved.

There was some shipyard work, and there were a lot of things going on in my part of the world through the supply and the comptrollership. We had people spread out all over the district, of course, with buoy tenders and merchant marine safety detachments. And at that time we were beginning the Recreational Boating Safety Program, and we had Boating Safety Detachments spread on all the lakes and impoundments and so forth. As long as they crossed the state line, that made them federal water, which we had to explain to people.

Paul Stillwell: Was there a specific minority set-aside provision in these guidelines?

Admiral Gracey: Yes, I'm sure there was. I had a supply officer who was a crackerjack. You know, he was a lieutenant.

And there were a couple of other things I was trying to remember that we were into, and I tried to find his phone number the other night to call him up to—I don't even know where he is at the moment but, yeah, I'm sure there were. Speaking of him, by the way, we had a wonderful softball team. And we had a very athletic district office. We had bowling leagues, and we had a softball league. He played third base on the softball team. We used to play up on the hill. What's the name of the hill that Yogi Berra came from?*

Paul Stillwell: Well, it's known as The Hill.

Admiral Gracey: The Hill, right?

* Lawrence P. "Yogi" Berra was a Hall of Fame catcher for the New York Yankees from 1947 to 1963. He served in the U.S. Navy in World War II.

Paul Stillwell: South St. Louis.

Admiral Gracey: Yeah. Well, we played up there at night, and he was playing third base, wore glasses and got hit right in the face one night with a line drive. I was playing first base. Our hearts went into our mouths, but he was okay. Cut all around the eyes, but nothing in the eyes themselves. But I had to fill out an accident report on this thing, and we had a pretty aggressive safety program going throughout the Coast Guard. When things like this happened, you filled out a report, and you described what you'd done to prevent it from happening in the future. I didn't win the love of the chief of staff of the district when I said, "What I recommended that we do in the future is I've counseled Mr. Honke to play deeper."^{*} [Laughter] Either that or hold his glove up in front of his face.

I build these things in, because I think it's kind of the color of the organization at the time and indicates some of the kinds of people and things. Well, I'm sure everybody had similar experiences, but in this particular place our district commander was an avid, avid golfer. And when he wanted to play golf, he wanted to play golf. So we had a golf alert. We had three guys with the golf duty every day, and they carried their clubs to work. And it rotated, because you had your work to do besides this. A couple of days a week he'd go to the personnel officer and say, "Charlie, I want to play golf today."

Charlie would look at his roster and go down and say, "Okay, we've got it." That happened about one day a week, sometimes two.

Paul Stillwell: Who was the district commander?

Admiral Gracey: Captain O. C. B. Wev, known as Pete.[†] And he insisted on being called "Commodore," because he was in command of a lot of ships and so he was the commodore. But it was a captain's billet. And the chief of staff's job was a captain's job. Later on the district commander billet became a flag job, and Rear Admiral Al

^{*} Lieutenant Francis J. Honke, USCG.

[†] Captain Oscar C. B. Wev, USCG.

Carpenter came in as the first Second District Commander as a flag.^{*} It should have been a flag job. I mean, the influence was big.

The Cuban Missile Crisis occurred during this period, and one of our functions was the big reserve contingent.[†] You can imagine with all these states there were a lot of reservists. We had, among other things, standing contracts in various coastal areas where they would be housed if they got called up. Things had been a little tense, and so we looked at this every year, and we had an exercise. I had been sent off to do cadet procurement in Kansas and Missouri, so I told my classmates at the 50th reunion a couple of years ago I missed the Cuban Missile Crisis because I was in Mexico. I was in Mexico, Missouri.

They were building the Arch at the time, and there was great speculation.[‡] The name of the game was they were going to spring it apart and put the last piece in. We all had such great wonder that we wanted to be there when they did, because there were those of us who were betting that it was going to spring out like a bar of soap. Obviously it didn't. The district commander was invited to a nighttime talk show at Stan Musial's restaurant.[§] Stan and Biggie's was it?

Paul Stillwell: Exactly that.

Admiral Gracey: He really wasn't comfortable with being on a radio talk show, and it worked down that I was to do that. Randy and I got to go and have dinner, and then we were on the radio. And the big issue of the night was getting the battleship *Missouri* up

^{*} Rear Admiral Albert J. Carpenter, USCG.

[†] The Cuban Missile Crisis was triggered in mid-October 1962, when a U.S. reconnaissance plane photographed a Soviet nuclear missile site in Cuba and the presence of Soviet bombers. On 22 October President John F. Kennedy went on national television to announce a naval quarantine of Cuba, to be implemented on 24 October. On 28 October Premier Nikita Khrushchev of the Soviet Union notified President Kennedy that he was ordering the withdrawal of Soviet bombers and missiles from Cuba.

[‡] On 28 October 1965 the final section went into place to complete construction of the 630-foot-tall Gateway Arch on the bank of the Mississippi River. It commemorates the role of St. Louis as the Gateway to the West.

[§] Stan Musial, who is in the Baseball Hall of Fame, was a first baseman and outfielder for the St. Louis Cardinals from 1941 to 1963.

the river where it rightfully belonged so it could tie up in St. Louis.* And I did my best to explain that that wasn't likely to happen.

Paul Stillwell: Some bridges at Memphis and other places would prevent that.

Admiral Gracey: Yes, and a few channels. Yes, there are a lot of things that make it unlikely that that was going to happen. I can't remember the name of the talk show host, but that was a big issue at the time that it was going to happen.

Paul Stillwell: Probably KMOX. That's the big station there.

Admiral Gracey: I think that's probably right, yeah.

Paul Stillwell: Another contemporaneous event we must mention is that the Cardinals won the World Series in 1964.

Admiral Gracey: I'm even going to go into it, because I made a note of that, and I know you know who I'm quoting: "The Cardinals win the pennant. The Cardinals win the pennant." Harry Caray. Who was it, Pittsburgh, that backed out that year?

Paul Stillwell: Philadelphia.

Admiral Gracey: Philadelphia. We stayed awake half the night listening to the ball games while the Cardinals—they were playing somebody else, and, you know, finally they won it all. Yes, I remember that, big time.

Paul Stillwell: I had the lowest grades of my entire collegiate career that semester, because I was listening to those games too. [Laughter]

* The battleship *Missouri* (BB-63) was the site of the Japanese signing of surrender documents in Tokyo Bay on 2 September 1945.

Admiral Gracey: I can believe it. Well, we went to ball games downtown. It was always interesting to walk from the ballpark back to where you'd parked after a game on a hot summer night. The people would be sitting on the steps of their houses, and the bricks just glowed heat. You just realized what a tough thing it was.

Webster Groves was a part of a program, or maybe it was our church, I can't remember, of bringing some inner-city kids out to the outside so they could get a taste of grass and trees and whatever. I remember we had a bunch of kids that came to our house. We've always been big on birdbaths and that kind of thing, and we had this big birdbath. These kids were absolutely fascinated by the fact that the birds came and took baths in this birdbath. You know, that's something that we all take for granted, and they just had never seen a bird take a bath before, and they were absolutely fascinated by the birdbath. It was wonderful to have the opportunity to do that.

Randy went to Webster College and took some courses in special education. Later on, when we got back to Washington, she went to Maryland and got her master's degree in that. But she did some substitute teaching and so forth, which stood her in good stead when we got to New York.

One of the things that was fascinating for me to watch was—having grown up around Long Island Sound as a kid and on the East Coast, where you might see a towboat pulling one or two barges—was to see what they called a tow, which was really a push, going up the river with 25, 30 barges loaded to the gills. And coming down. Even more watching them come down the river with the current. The seamanship that was exhibited by those people—riverman-ship or whatever, I don't know what they called it. I became aware then that you think of seamanship as people who go to sea and go to the saltwater sea in ships. There's every bit as much skill, in fact some cases more, being exhibited by the people that were moving the things on those rivers. And the tonnage of cargo that was moving. Stuff that I'm sure there were equivalents somewhere, but this was every day, one right after the other, coming up and down the river.

Paul Stillwell: And they go through locks at Alton, Illinois, and so forth.

Admiral Gracey: All the locks, that's right. It just really made an impression on me and to think where this went. It wasn't my job to go out. Except when I was cadet procuring, I was one of the inside people. But if we had some time, we would go and try to get out and look at some of the units and visit them, just because we were interested in the places they were. I think that's about it for St. Louis.

Paul Stillwell: How large a group of people constituted the staff?

Admiral Gracey: Probably a couple hundred. It was in the Federal Building, then the new Federal Building.

Paul Stillwell: Was there a sense of the camaraderie that one feels in a ship?

Admiral Gracey: Oh, yeah. Really very good, and thank you for mentioning that. There was great camaraderie, and a lot of the Coast Guard Reservists in the area joined in, and the Coast Guard Auxiliarists joined in. But the great camaraderie between the civilian and military on the staff. It was relatively small. There were probably more civilians than military, as a matter of fact. We had a small officers' club down at the base where the supply depot was and where we built the buoys and where we overhauled things and where they manufactured. They foamed the buoys and that kind of thing.

We had a liquor locker properly run by the exchange program, and we had a small exchange down there. The liquor locker did a land-office business because Scott Air Force Base was in dry territory over in Illinois. They came and bought liquor by the truckload out of our liquor locker, and we had marvelous money coming into the exchange through this. So we not only had a good social system in St. Louis, but, of course, we farmed it out to the units throughout the district for sporting gear and whatever kinds of things they could use. It was a pretty good source.

But we had some wonderful parties and some wonderful dinners, and we did a lot of social things. We'd go to the ball game together, and, as I said, we had a bowling league and we had a softball league and we had a golf league and we did a lot of athletic

activities. Yeah, pretty good, and we were exchanging Christmas cards with some of the civilians on the staff for a long time and military guys, of course.

I had just been in Headquarters, where people were intense in their pursuit of things. And here this was the Second District, and it shouldn't have been laid back, but it was. The merchant marine safety program was big stuff out there—you know, trying to keep these things from blowing up or running into each other or make sure that proficient people were running them, all the things merchant marine safety programs do. But there was a certain low key about it, and there were some of the things that happened like the couple I've described here that were a little bit odd. Some of us thought, "What are we doing here?"

There was one particular officer, and he and I used to have fun with this. He had a good sense of humor. I think I have a sense of humor. And we would have fun laughing about who could tell the other one the first thing about what happened to him today and, "Guess what the chief of staff said to me today?" or whatever.

There was a movie on the television one night, and it was a predecessor of the TV series "F Troop." It was the cavalry at a small fort. Only this was a full-length movie, and there was this hotshot young lieutenant out of West Point. Things weren't working very well for him, and he was really kind of inept. One day he stumbled out of the fort, walked out through the gate, plopped down in the shade of a tree, and said, "How can this be happening to a great officer like me?" [Laughter] I said to Randy—don't ask me why we were watching it, but we were watching it, and I said to Randy, "Oh, I've got to see Howie Parker in the morning."*

Howie said to Alice, "I can hardly wait to see Jim in the morning." We walked down the hall and we said, simultaneously, "How can this be happening to great officers like us?" [Laughter] And it was so ridiculous.

You know, really nothing was happening, but we just found these things funny and the oddball kinds of things that we had to deal with. It was a great experience. When I got assigned there I thought, "What have I done to deserve this?" I think I said that. We loved Webster Groves. We loved the people. Except for Alaska, it was the first time we'd ever been across the Mississippi River, so we experienced a different mindset

* Lieutenant Commander Harold W. Parker, Jr., USCG.

than there was in New England and the East. And the work was important. What they were doing was significant and grossly underrated in the rest of the Coast Guard. I thought people just didn't understand what was going on out there, and I thought that was too bad. It was great experience.

Paul Stillwell: Any more observations on the commodore and chief of staff?

Admiral Gracey: Well, there was a tendency to analyze things rather finely on the part of the chief of staff. He was the chief of operations first, and then he moved up. But we used to refer to "slicing mouse turds with razor blades." [Laughter] Was that an expression you've ever heard before?

Paul Stillwell: Something along those lines.

Admiral Gracey: Yeah. But then we got a new one, and, by God, he was not slicing them, he was dicing them was the common phraseology. [Laughter] And they were fine. They were fine officers. They'd done their thing. They were old-timers. But to us we wanted to run free a little more. We thought there was more that could be done and that there was a little bit of reluctance to take any chances or stand up and be counted. And this always happens.

You know, we were lieutenant commanders at the time. And, like I said about lieutenant commanders, they always know everything that's best. The Army calls them iron majors I think. They're an essential part of the organization. And there's a certain pattern here. We thought that we needed a little room to spread. They could be a little more aggressive about doing what we were doing. I'm not sure whether we were right or wrong, but that was the feeling.

Paul Stillwell: Well, the mouse turd comment suggests there was not that much to do, and they were making a big deal out of a little.

Admiral Gracey: Well, yeah. Either that, or if you came in with a suggestion it really got finely cut up. At least one had flag aspirations, I think, and that was getting in the way a little bit or was disappointed that he hadn't had flag. One of them was just a delightful gentleman who came from a long line of Coast Guard fathers and grandfathers, and he and his wife were just absolutely delightful people. They were in a different category, but there he was, and he was in the system.

Paul Stillwell: Who was he?

Admiral Gracey: Captain Eugene Coffin.* A wonderful, wonderful guy and his wife, Molly. I think it was Molly. They were delightful people. Captain Glenn Rollins succeeded him as chief of staff.† He was an operations guy through and through. It really bothered him to be in the Second District. He wanted to be sailing ships on the high seas, and it was difficult for him.

Paul Stillwell: Any comments on the contributions of the reservists and the members of the auxiliary?

Admiral Gracey: My personal relationship with the auxiliary was not terribly extensive at the time. I know they were there, and I know they participated. The reservists, we had two or three of them. One of them was a great outfielder and could hit the softball a mile I remember. But he worked in the Reserve Programs Division, and it was a very active reserve program. Their contributions in those days were essentially drill days. They weren't filling in. They were preparing for war. They had their weekend drills, and they did that sort of thing, but they did participate in the social kinds of things. The ones that were assigned on active duty to the office participated in the sporting leagues and things like that. But the role of the Coast Guard Auxiliary in those days was not what it is now. That got changed in a period that's coming down while I was in the Programs Division in the early '70s, or began the start of that change.

* Captain Eugene A. Coffin, Jr., USCG.

† Captain Glenn L. Rollins, USCG.

Paul Stillwell: Okay. In 1965 you moved on.

Admiral Gracey: Yeah, in 1965 the word was out that they were going to move Coast Guard activities in New York to Fort Jay on Governors Island. The housing situation in New York was really bad. People were commuting three hours to get to work, and we had the Third Coast Guard District office in downtown Manhattan in the Custom House. We had a number of ships—tenders, tugs, high-endurance cutters—at St. George Base, the old Lighthouse Service base right by the ferry terminal on Staten Island. That base was a very busy place. We had an aviation supply center in Elizabeth City, North Carolina, but *the* supply center was in Brooklyn. And so the Third District and Headquarters decided they needed to try to find some housing.

Secretary of Defense McNamara had decreed that Governors Island, which was First Army headquarters, was to go away, because it was too expensive.* I was working in St. Louis while all this is going on, so I was getting it by what my classmates in Headquarters were telling me and one thing and another. Some folks with great vision decided that this was a good way to solve the Coast Guard space problem, and we could use that very well, but how were we ever going to explain it? We have all this extra space.

Well, the way we would explain it was we would transfer the Coast Guard Training Center from Groton, Connecticut, to Governors Island. The machinations of all that I was not privy to, except that after the fact I got some of the feel of some of the things that went on. But it was a trade in that regard. It was approved, and then they set out. They were going to have a small staff that was going to be there to take over, and it was going to consist of a captain, a lieutenant commander and two lieutenants, three engineers and another guy. The other guy was me.

I had been in Washington for a training business of some kind for the comptrollers. I had heard that this was coming, and I said, “Look, I’ve got three kids.

* Robert S. McNamara served as Secretary of Defense from 21 January 1961 to 29 February 1968. Governors Island comprises 173 acres of land in Upper New York Bay, south of Manhattan Island. Dutch settlers brought it from Native Americans 1637. It later became the residence of the British colonial governor and as a result was named Governors Island in 1698.

They're going to be in junior high school. I've got two daughters. I've seen the movie *Blackboard Jungle*. I don't want any part of being in New York City with my kids for this program," because kids of that age went to school in Manhattan and on Staten Island.*

On the island there was a grade school. I was talking to the Comptroller of the Coast Guard, later the Chief of Staff of the Coast Guard, Admiral Scheiderer, and he said, "I'm not sure you're going to have that option."[†]

I said, "Well, I hope so."

I went back, and the Assistant Chief of Personnel was Captain Ellis, who been the rifle coach at the academy when I was there.[‡] He called me up and said, "You're going to get some orders to go to New York."

I said, "Oh, boy." And I told him.

He said, "We really need you there." Well, those are always the right words to say to me. [Laughter]

So we decided, "Well, what the heck? It's April. I've got to go now. We don't want the kids to pull out of school in St. Louis. We'll sell the house, and we'll stay there, and then Randy can come. And meanwhile I'll size up and we'll figure out how we're going to handle all this." We'd heard that a lot of the Army families tended to send their children to private schools, rather than to the New York City school system. So that's what we were going to do. Lord knows how we were ever going to afford it, but we were going to do it.

I got there and I reported in, and I'll talk more about that in a minute, but I was milling around smartly at an Army happy hour or something. I got talking to a few of the people and asked them, "Why did you send your kids to private school?"

They said, "Well, because the New York school system is too demanding."

So I went to the telephone and called Randy and said, "Don't worry. Never mind. Never mind. The reason is not all the things we thought. The reason is the school system

* *Blackboard Jungle* was a 1955 movie about a decent middle-aged man who taught in an unruly high school filled with thugs. Stars of the film included Glenn Ford, Anne Francis, Sidney Poitier, and Vic Morrow.

[†] Captain Edward D. Scheiderer, USCG.

[‡] Captain William B. Ellis, USCG.

is too hard. We're not worried about that." So that took that load off our backs.

Paul Stillwell: That was probably the biggest load you had.

Admiral Gracey: It was. It was. Not knowing what the heck was going on was another one, but it was. Captain Art Pfeiffer was the skipper.* He was an engineer par excellence. He's now dead, bless his heart. Wonderful man. I'd known him when I was a cadet. All the cadets knew him and his wife Betty, and they were wonderful people. Art's whole life was numbers. I mean, you'd ask him how his golf game was and he was an avid golfer. He'd say, "The golf game, well, on the third hole my drive was 6.83 degrees to the right." Then there were two civil engineers, Jim Watt and Dwight Ramsay.† Had two chief petty officers, a chief yeoman and a chief storekeeper, and one gofer, seaman, who was also a draftsman. That was it.

I was the only one of us who was living on the island. They were all in the New York area to begin with, so they were all living someplace else. I was assigned to a nurses' BOQ.‡ [Laughter] I had a room that had been a broom closet or some other small room. To get into the room I literally had to climb over the end of the bed to get across to where the closet was. There were a small tiny little desk and a sink, but to go to the shower or go to the head I had to go down the hall. It was an interesting experience.

Later on I got transferred to another one where I had more space, but it was right across the street from Castle Williams, which was an old Civil War fort. The Army used it as a maximum-security prison. That's where they sent the bad guys from all over Europe and all the First Army. I was on the side of the building right across the street from the prison, and the guards whiled away their evening hours by throwing a rubber ball against the wall. All night long it was "Squonk, squonk, squonk." [Laughter] I shared a head with some of the temporary Coast Guard people who were then starting to come in. It was one of these deals with the head between two rooms.

Anyway, my job was to develop an organization, to figure out how to hire the civilian people, to arrange a schedule for the takeover of the police department, and to

* Captain Arthur Pfeiffer, USCG.

† Lieutenant James Watt, USCG; Lieutenant Commander Dwight T. Ramsay, USCG.

‡ BOQ—bachelor officers' quarters.

replace the Army MPs.* We were going to have to have some Coast Guard people trained and become SPs.† To arrange to take over the exchange, the commissary, the bowling alley, the motor pool—all of that sort of thing. I was involved with everything except building. The other three guys were designing some new piers that needed to be built and probably some additional housing, and they wanted to build a new school. The school on the island wasn't going to be big enough.

Paul Stillwell: How many people were you intending to accommodate?

Admiral Gracey: About 10% of the Coast Guard. As a matter of fact, I think ultimately they figured—counting the families and the kids—it was going to be something like 6,000 people. More than the Army had there, at that point anyway. We were to spend a year with the Army. That was in April of '65, and we were going to take over on July 1 of '66. Well, you talk about a hog in mud. I mean, nobody in the Coast Guard had any idea how to do anything like this. We had the academy, and we had training centers, and we had a big air station at Elizabeth City, but in terms of a major place like this we had no experience.

People from headquarters would come up, and they would be contemplating how we were going to tear down Castle Williams to make more space. To which I would respond, “Sir, if you'll forgive me it's a historical landmark. You can't tear it down.” So those people kind of quickly went away. That was kind of the reaction on the first visit: “Well, we can make a lot more space here.”

Castle Williams was an old fortress that had been paired up with Castle Clinton in the Battery of Manhattan to protect the East River. It was round and made of stone—multi-foot-thick walls—and armed with giant Rodman guns. We inherited this spacious building, and we decided we ought to do something with it. We converted it to a recreation center. We never did figure out what to do with the solitary-confinement cells, except they were great storage places. Hard to get into. I mean, if you had something you wanted to really protect, lock it up in there. But for hobby shops and that sort of

* MPs—military policemen.

† SPs—shore patrolmen.

things it really worked out quite well. Over a period of time we converted the sinister old place into a place that was fun to go and interesting, of course, because of the history. The kids got to be in there, and we could talk about the wars and the forts. During the Civil War they had prisoners of war in there.

Oh, they had a nice hospital there too. So we had to build up a medical group, and we had to outfit a dentist establishment. We had a fine officers' club and what we made a CPO club, and there was an enlisted men's club and a theater.* It was a small city. And, as I say, it was me and these other three guys and the chief storekeeper I siced on the Army, and the chief yeoman kind of helped us think about personnel things and all that kind of stuff.

The chief storekeeper, a fellow by the name of Bill Tillot, was a marvelous character in that he knew exactly how to do this. He was the kind of a guy that was very competent professionally but also very competent socially. He was exactly the right guy. He was also a politician of the "How can I maneuver things?" variety, and we needed that badly. There was a lieutenant general who lived in the admiral's—then general's—house.† But there was also a one-star, General Corley, and General Corley was not going to let this happen.‡ If the Army was going to be pushed off this island, there was going to be a scorched-earth policy. The Coast Guard was going to get nothing.

They stripped the club. They took steam tables out of the officers' club. I mean, what was anybody going to do with a steam table? They were going to ship them to Fort Meade, because that's where they were going.§ All the stuff had to go through the Army's surplus property place in Brooklyn. My friend, Chief Tillot, would learn when there was a truck going, and he would get to the drivers of the truck, give them the directions to our supply center, have the paperwork all made up. When they got to the supply center, the people at the supply center would hand the paperwork over, and they'd unload all the stuff that was supposed to go to the Army surplus. They'd unload it at the Coast Guard's Brooklyn Supply Center. [Laughter] It was a marvelous kind of maneuver; relationships were wonderful.

* CPO—chief petty officer.

† Lieutenant General Thomas W. Dunn, USA, Commanding General, First Army.

‡ Brigadier General John T. Corley, USA, Chief of Staff, First Army, 1964-66.

§ Fort Meade is in Maryland, outside of Washington, D.C.

Paul Stillwell: Didn't the Army catch on after a while?

Admiral Gracey: Well, nobody cared. The only guy that cared about it was General Corley, and all he wanted to do was see it gone.

Paul Stillwell: He assumed it was going where it was supposed to.

Admiral Gracey: It was on the truck and off of here. That's all he cared about, I guess. And the other people all thought that was a silly thing to do anyway. Should have been left in place. (A) it was a lot of extra work for them, and (B) why not leave it alone and let them use it? We've built this place up. Why do we want to tear it down? So it wasn't a total scorched earth, but there were some things. But we managed to do that a lot. Some of it was less underhanded and more open that I arranged with the colonel who was in charge of all this stuff to do that. His civilian assistant, Bob Palermo, ultimately came to the Coast Guard. He was the special assistant to our Base Commanding Officer, and I was the exec of the base after we got it going.

Paul Stillwell: Presumably the trucks later ran the other way and brought the stuff back.

Admiral Gracey: Yes, yes, yes, yes. Some of it we really didn't want, but you couldn't screen it on the ferryboat while it was going across. Oh, and that's another thing. We had to, of course, hire the ferry crews, and now it was the Coast Guard hiring them. I became a hero to the civilian employees of the Army through no fault of my own. They were really being squeezed to put in for a RIF, a reduction in force, and fill out their papers. They were going to be transferred to Picatinny Arsenal in New Jersey and miscellaneous other places, and they were all going to lose their jobs and some of them had worked there 20 years, 25 years. They were primarily in the public works force.

I got them all down in the basement of a building one morning. I said, "I can't promise you anything. But you know we've got to run this place. And why would we run with anybody but you who know how to run it? But I'm a lieutenant commander.

You know that I don't hold a lot of sway. But I am telling you common sense tells me and I'm recommending and the commanding officer, Captain Pfeiffer, agrees and so does the admiral here, that there's no point of trying to go out and build up a whole new force. So you've got to do it on trust, because I can't give you any paper that says you've got a job until it's gone through Congress and all of that. But if you can hang on, we'd love to have you."

Well, they all thought that I'd arranged to save their jobs. I suppose I did in the sense that I talked them out of going away. But it was marvelous, because later on we had some negotiations with the employees' union. This was the AFGE, American Federation of Government Employees. I think that's who it was. A fellow had come up from Washington, and we were having this negotiation, and I was doing it. The captain didn't want to be involved in that, and I didn't want him to because I was having a wonderful time. We were giving and taking, and then were a couple of points where I said, "We can't do it that way. We just cannot do it that way." And this guy was hardballing it.

One of the public works employees was a mason that I used to talk to when I'd see him out on the street. They were people that you would see, and we had this relationship. He said, "Frank, it's time for lunch."

Frank said, "It's only 11:00—"

"It's time for lunch." [Laughter] Frank got the message and they all went to lunch.

I said, "What time shall we get back together?"

"Oh, 1:00 o'clock."

"Okay."

When we came back in, I said, "Now, we were talking about—"

And Frank said, "I don't think we need to talk about that anymore. We'll go your route." I later on learned, of course, that these guys got Frank outside and said, "Hey, if Commander Gracey says that's the way it's got to be, that's the way it's got to be. Don't mess around with him."

Paul Stillwell: You had earned a lot of loyalty.

Admiral Gracey: I had. They gave me a lot of loyalty. Whether I'd earned it or not, I don't know. But it was probably just because we'd had an open relationship. I used to ride a bicycle around the base, and periodically some guy would jump out from behind a wall and yell something at me in Italian, and I'd yell back and not have the slightest idea what I was yelling but it was, "Hey, a fromage," he'd say. "Hey, a fromage." I think it something like, "Hey, Cheese, I think it what it meant. [Laughter] And it just kept going that way.

When it was put to a test these guys would come under, but they weren't reluctant to say, "We don't think that's a good idea." Particularly this fellow that we'd hired, Bob Palermo. Bob was really marvelous at saying, "The Army tried that, and you're going to get burned if you try it." Well, I can't even remember what that would have been.

One of the things we learned was that when you live on an island like that, your life is governed in 15-minute segments because that's when the ferryboat goes, except at night when it goes in 30-minute segments. Another thing we learned was something we probably knew, but that people will put up with almost anything if they just know why. And that applied to people sitting in line waiting for the ferryboat that hadn't come yet. Well, a truck would get stuck trying to get on it on the other side, or who knows what would cause it to be late?

So we just would have our SPs walk up and down the line and say, "The 6:00 o'clock is probably not going to go until 6:15 or 6:30. We've got this and that going on the other side." People who didn't care whether they went then or not would pull out of line and go home.

People who did would say, "Oh, hell," and get out and go into the gedunk stand and buy a cup of coffee. And we used that in a lot of places. If people know what's going on, they can handle it. Signs of the times—early on we hired Ken Zorn, a guy from Fort Hamilton, as a recreation director, because we had this huge island with all these families on it.

Ken was a wheeler-dealer. He had all kinds of great ideas. Early on we arranged with Harry James to come and play a concert at the theater.* And he wanted to come. I wasn't sure how it was going to work out, but, hey, a chance to hear Harry James. So I said, "Okay, providing you will agree to play for a dance for the enlisted folks afterwards. We'll have a concert in the theater, and we'll charge for that. And we'll reimburse you for that. But as part of the package you'll play for a dance for the enlisted people next door." It used to be a Red Cross hall. Now it was our enlisted club. And they agreed to do that.

It was an interesting experience. We took Harry James to dinner at the club, and all he wanted was a pitcher of gin. [Laughter] And that's all. Every time I saw him all night long he was drinking what looked like a glass of water, but I knew it wasn't. And he gave the most marvelous concert, but there were only about 100 people there, because it was money and, "How come we've got to pay?" So those of us who went were all trying to make up for the ones that weren't there, and we were standing and cheering because it was a wonderful concert. He played all the old standards. Afterward he had the good grace to say, "Well, I have to say that this probably one of my smaller audiences but certainly one of the most enthusiastic." Good experience.

Paul Stillwell: Did you have some architect or designer develop a master plan for the island and how it would be developed?

Admiral Gracey: Yes, we did, and essentially we realized we needed more housing, so we built two high-rise apartment buildings. We built a new school and a new dining hall. We refused to call it a mess hall. One of the things that we insisted on was that it could be modern design, but it had to blend with the standard Army design of the period. The island had quite a history. Originally it was much smaller than it is today, but if you can visualize it, think of a circle with a kind of a triangle off the end. It's an exaggerated way

* Trumpeter Harry James was one of the most popular bandleaders during the swing era in the early 1940s and continued to play for many years after that. He was also noteworthy as a loyal fan of the St. Louis Cardinals and for being married to movie star Betty Grable.

of describing it, but the roundish part was the original island. The rest of it is all fill from when they dug the Brooklyn-Battery Tunnel.*

The Army had a chance at that time to make an access from the tunnel to the island. They likened as to how they didn't want that. They wanted to control access by saying, "You come on the ferry, or you don't come." It was an old and expensive decision. That ultimately cost the Coast Guard the island, because they felt they couldn't afford to pay the cost of the ferries anymore. But for years the Army ran the ferries, we ran the ferries. We had it for 30 years, and though some of us tended to cry about losing it, it would also remind us to think that 30 years ain't bad.†

There was a proposal while we were there that we could save the cost of running the ferries by building a bridge from Brooklyn to Governors Island, over the Buttermilk Channel, but cooler heads prevailed. It was going to be a horrendously expensive and disruptive nightmare. I remember getting involved in having some people work out what the traffic pattern was going to be like in Brooklyn when you started having off-ramps from this bridge. Likewise, they found out where it was going to have to land and where the traffic patterns were going to go on Governors Island. We were going to have one giant cloverleaf in the parts of the island that were historical and meaningful, and where people lived and the trees grew. It was not a great idea.

Paul Stillwell: So that was your cost/benefit analysis.

Admiral Gracey: Cost/benefit analysis was part of it.

One of the first long-term aviation flights—I think it was from Albany down river—landed there. There's a monument there to that. There's a huge building. It was called Building 400. It stands kind of in the middle at the end of that triangle and then that long extended flat place, which was filled ground. Then this building goes up four or five stories and has a tall cupola on top of it. It's a beautiful building. It was a troop barracks. We used it as schoolrooms, and we put our vessel traffic center in there and a couple of other things. But the Army built it, as I understand it, practically overnight

* The Brooklyn Battery Tunnel, which opened in 1950, connects southwestern Brooklyn with the Wall Street area of Manhattan.

† The Coast Guard was on Governors Island from 1966 to 1997.

because there was talk about that island becoming what is now LaGuardia Airport, and the Army said, “Not on our island you ain’t.” In whatever era this would have been, they built this huge building overnight right in the middle so there was no way you could land on that island with an airplane.* [Laughter] Although while we were there they did some experiments with the short takeoff and landing and vertical takeoff and landing, and over a period of time they did a number of experiments.

The Army used to play polo out there a lot. I kept running into people in the city who say they know Governors Island. “How do you know Governors Island?”

“Well, my parents used to take me out there on a Sunday afternoon to see a polo game, and the Army had horses out there and played polo.” We didn’t.

It didn’t get built until after I left, but we set up a contract with Brunswick to build us a new bowling alley. And we persuaded Burger King to come. I think we were one of the first to have one of those chains on the base. But one thing I do know is that at the time it was the only Burger King in the world that served beer, because the idea was, “You’re going to be the food server for a bowling alley. And people that are going to bowl have got to have pizza and beer as well as your hamburgers. So if you want the job, you’re going to have to figure out a way to serve beer.” They wanted the job.

At first they said, “Why should we do that, because it’s only 6,000 people?”

I said, “Yes, but you’re not talking about a farm community of 6,000 people. You’re talking about 6,000 young military people with little kids, all of whom eat hamburger.”

Paul Stillwell: And a captive audience.

Admiral Gracey: And a captive audience with no place else to go. Exactly. And he said, “Well, I think you’ve got a point there.” [Laughter] So through a variety of ways we persuaded them to do that. I can’t remember now whether they loaned us the money or we paid something ahead of time. I’ve forgotten exactly how the finance was worked. It was done legitimately and with the blessing of higher ups, but it was that kind of thing.

* Work began 9 September 1937 for a new airport on Flushing Bay, in the New York borough of Queens. On 2 December 1939 the facility opened to commercial traffic as New York Municipal Airport-LaGuardia Field. In 1947 it became LaGuardia Airport, its current name.

We took over to run the commissary, and a lot of the people that had been coming there forever kept right on coming out on weekends to shop. But one thing I did that was kind of out of the box, I thought. We have a lot of small units like boat stations, things like that, in the New York area, that were within driving distance of the commissary. For non-appropriated-funds things, like the exchanges and so forth, we tend to do things the Navy's way when we can so that we'll blend in if we ever get to have that happen. And what the Navy does is add a percentage on the prices of everything to cover the overhead. The Army doesn't do that. They put what it costs on it, and then they charge you a fee at the end, or they did at that time.

I said, "What happens if our guys from the units, we give them a special card. They come in; they go around with the shopping basket. They buy what they need for their unit, the cook does or whatever. When he gets to end he fills out a chit, only we don't charge him the fixed fee. He gets it for cost, and we know what the cost is because it's right there in front of him. How about we do that?" There was a lot of backing and filling on that, but the powers-that-be finally agreed we could do that. Well, I was up there while I was the Commandant, and there was a guy in there with his shopping basket, and I said, "Are you from Shinnecock or someplace like that?"

He said, "Yes, I am, sir. We're doing our weekly shopping here."

I said, "Do you just fill out or how does it work?" And it was just the way we thought. So it's always nice to find out something that you'd done out of the box that's lasted.

We did a similar thing with clothing items. They could come into the clothing store and buy. And we set that up. And later on as the Commandant—I'll talk more about this—but we had a mail-in shopping system for clothing. People from all over the country could get mail-order stuff. That worked out pretty well. The exchange was a similar kind of a situation. We had a gas station and service station. We finally got piers built. Got our ships over there. Moved them over from Staten Island.

Paul Stillwell: Where do Coast Guard cutters normally get logistic support, supplies, and so forth?

Admiral Gracey: Sometimes from local wholesalers. Sometimes from a DoD supplier if they're in a major port.* It really depends on where they are and whether the item needed is jointly available. If there are major wholesalers, or if there are defense provisioning units, warehouses and that sort of thing that are selling to DoD units, they would get their food there. I talked about my command in Yakutat, Alaska, getting supplies from ships that brought stuff down from the Navy Supply Depot in Kodiak or from commercial ships coming usually from Seattle. Mostly our food came in via Coast Guard cutter, and we got supplied that way. On Governors Island, all our materials came by truck, via the ferry.

Paul Stillwell: What if the cutters need military items like ammunition or spare parts for electronics? Where do those come from?

Admiral Gracey: Well, they come primarily through the Navy supply system. All our operating units, really, the major ones, the ships and so forth, it's all done through the Navy system. Ammunition, for example, in New York they went down to Earle, New Jersey, where there was a big Navy ammunition pier. And that's where they got their supplies. If they were going to the Coast Guard Yard—or any shipyard—they went to Earle and off-loaded. When I had the *Mariposa* and we were going to Curtis Bay for some work in the yard, we had to off-load our ammunition.

Conveniently, I went from Governors Island to Coast Guard Headquarters, where I was Chief of the Programs Division, and we were planning on things that we really ought to spend money on. I came fresh with some thoughts about what Governors Island needed to make it a proper place so there were a few buildings that got built. I was in a position to argue that it was a good idea.

We built a base for the industrial work. That was where they repaired the buoys, they sandblasted them and painted them and fixed the light changers and all those things I talked about we did on a small scale in New London. That was the big thing for the district. All those buoys I talked about bringing into New York to St. George, they now brought them to Governors Island. That end of the island became industrial, except for a

* DoD—Department of Defense.

small park which we insisted stay as it was so that we could have picnics and stuff down there because it was the end of the island. It looked right over to the Statue of Liberty and all the ships coming and going. We couldn't let that get away. There were some houses down there, and it was called Foghorn Alley because the light at the end of the island had a hideous foghorn.

Paul Stillwell: Not conducive for sleeping, I wouldn't imagine.

Admiral Gracey: Well, I'm told that after a while you just got so you understood it was there. In fact, there was a gong buoy at the other end of the island. It was right in the channel, right across the road from Quarters One, which was named "General's House." This was one of those things that clanged. It wasn't lighted. It just was a sound, so that if you got too close it warned you by the sound. And they are raucous, clanking, banging things. They are awful. When you try to relieve one, it deafens you by the time you get it on to the ship and put a damper on it. The Army tried. Every general there ever was complained to the Coast Guard about that thing and wanted it out of there, because it was right across from his bedroom window.

And the Coast Guard said, "No way. No way. It marks a dangerous channel."

Their people were saying to me, "You S.O.B.s. The day after your admiral moves into that house, that gong's coming out of there."

I said, "No way. No way." Well, it was *two* days after. [Laughter]

Paul Stillwell: Who was the admiral?

Admiral Gracey: I think Admiral Alger was the first one.*

Paul Stillwell: So there was another way to provide maritime safety?

* Rear Admiral James A. Alger, Jr., USCG.

Admiral Gracey: Yes. [Laughter] You just move it out, and they can swing a little wider around that bend. And it doesn't have to be quite so loud or we can put a lighted one there. Do something that's quiet. [Laughter]

On the island we had an operating base. The Captain of The Port's office was there, and all his small patrol boats for the harbor and the harbor tugs were all down there. Everything we had was there on the island, and it was wonderful in the sense that the kids who lived there could see dad—and in those days it was dad.* They could walk to work with him and see him go on the ship. On the day a ship was coming in or going out, the grammar school would let the kids go out and meet it. Because they were all Coast Guard kids and, hey, one of our ships is coming in, one of the biggies. And it was a part of it.

Halloween was wonderful, because you didn't have to worry about anybody putting razor blades in apples or all of those terrible things that were happening other places. We absolutely loved Halloween. Randy would dress up like a scarecrow. I mean, she really was stuffed up with straw coming out the top of her head, and she would sit down and lean against one of the posts and not move a muscle. The kids would come up and go by and say, "Ooh" and "Ahh" and "Look at this. Look at that. Wow, what a wonderful doll." And as they started to walk away she'd say, "Hello." [Laughter] Well, and later on she played the Easter rabbit. For the Easter egg roll she was the Easter Bunny.

It was a wonderful, wonderful kind of a healthy, wholesome family atmosphere. We had two chapels, a Catholic chapel and a Protestant chapel, and later we set up a space for Jewish worship. They were a very important part of our life. The Protestant chapel was owned by Trinity Episcopal Church in lower Manhattan, Trinity being the church that had been given a bunch of land in there by Queen Anne, I think it was. And they had built on the island a beautiful stone chapel, St. Cornelius the Centurion. The chapel was full of artifacts. There was one flag that had been flown by the British regiment that had been there before the Revolution; it was still hanging in there preserved. Early on the British used to row out from Manhattan to hold services for the troops. That was real devotion.

* That was before the era in which mothers were permitted to remain on active duty.

Paul Stillwell: Why would they do that?

Admiral Gracey: They wanted to soldiers out there to have religion their way, I guess. Why else build the chapel?

Paul Stillwell: So that was missionary work from Manhattan.

Admiral Gracey: In a way, I guess it was. In our time Trinity owned the chapel, and provided generous support, including the choir and music. Their only deal was they insisted that it have an Episcopal chaplain. Well, the Navy likened as how they would try, but they couldn't guarantee. But they did find one first crack out of the barrel.

The district office, of course, ultimately moved over. The people came in a little bit at a time. Randy and I—we were the first family to actually move into sets of quarters, and they were wonderful big old four- or five-story duplexes. But big roomy 14-foot ceilings and, gosh, they were marvelous, in an area called Nolan Park. Then there were some on the other side. They were called Colonels' Row. We changed it to Captains' Row. And the parade ground was a sometime parade ground and an all-the-time nine-hole golf course.

We had a guesthouse that had been built before World War I, an old wooden thing, but it was wonderful. Ran like a motel. Ultimately we persuaded Super 8 to come in and build one. At one point we had an arrangement concerning this building that ultimately became the motel. An architect provided some plans for us. It was to replace the guesthouse right at the end of the parade ground, and it was going to be a BEQ, bachelor enlisted quarters, or maybe just bachelor quarters in general. I can't remember that. Also, it was going to be for visitors—like a motel—and it was going to be eight stories. They had this wonderful picture of this building sitting there just blending in with everything and the trees growing up over the top of it. And I was saying, "Wait a minute. How many trees have you got there that are going to be eight stories high? There may be some. But it's going to dominate."

Well, they said, “No, no. It won’t dominate.” So I went out one Sunday morning with my camera and I paced off the distances from the chief of staff’s house, chief of operations’ house, and the two chapels—the key places around the building-to-be. I paced off the distances from them to the building site. Then I paced equivalent distances from our existing high-rise apartment buildings, which were eight stories high—exactly the same number as this proposed building. And I took pictures. I laid them over the pictures from the various houses—to show the effect of putting that huge proposed building at the site. It also showed how distorted the architect’s renderings were. I showed the captain what I’d done and he said, “Yeah, I think we need to tell the boss about this.”

So we went to the chief of staff, and I said, “This is the view from your house now. This is the view after we build that building right there.” And here was this wall going clean up out of sight, because, you know, somebody was playing games with the way they drew the trees. Well, I succeeded in torpedoing that project, and it was a while before we got somebody to come in and build one properly. But it would have been a giant. Just would have ruined the island. Or at least I thought so, and I managed to persuade some other people.

Paul Stillwell: Two of your children had to catch the ferryboats every day to go to school?

Admiral Gracey: The ones going to Staten Island. Started off with just my son, then my older daughter. I don’t think my younger daughter got there. She was in junior high. The junior high kids went by bus from the island. They would get on a bus, and the bus would drive them up to the Simon Baruch School at East 21st Street. The kids would go there on the bus, and then the bus would meet them and drive them back onto the ferry.

During the school day—at lunchtime—they could go off the schoolyard. They walked around in the neighborhood and the streets, and it was wonderful. And we’re not particularly permissive parents. They were together. They were with other kids. There were all kinds of interesting shops, antique stores, pet shops, and all kinds of stuff that they could go look at and loved to do.

Had a little bit of a tangle with the principal of the school. The kids came home one day and said something. The gist of it was that when the Governors Island bus arrived, all the kids on it had to go into the school. But the other kids—the local kids—could stay outside. I said, “Well, that must have just been something today.”

They said, “No, this has been going on all week long.”

So I called the principal and asked for a meeting. And I went up and met with him. I was being pretty ratey at this point, but the captain was happy to have me doing this stuff.* I thought it was my job, and I was the community guy. So I went up and met with him, and he said, “It’s a way to keep the children out of trouble.”

I said, “I think it’s a wonderful idea. When the kids get to school, they come in, and you lock the doors behind them if that’s the way you want to do it. Just don’t do it only for the kids whose parents wear brass buttons. Don’t you dare do that. You do what you want to do, but do it with everybody. Don’t you single our kids out for that.” And he huffed and puffed a little bit and likened as how he guessed he could see where I was coming from, and so they didn’t have to do that anymore. Well, the word got around that I had told him, “Don’t you dare do that our kids whose parents wear brass buttons.”

Paul Stillwell: That’s a line that catches one’s attention.

Admiral Gracey: Well, you know, I’ve had to use that on a couple of other occasions, too, over the years because there’s a tendency to single out a group. And their thought was, “Well, they’re out there on the island. They don’t understand the city, and we don’t trust them.”

Paul Stillwell: Give them a chance.

Admiral Gracey: “If they don’t deserve trust, let them prove they don’t deserve it. I happen to think you’re wrong, and I happen to think they’re not all cut out of the same piece of cloth any more than any of these other kids that live in these nice apartment

* The term “ratey” is often used in connection with cadets and midshipmen at service academies speaking up to their seniors. It means presumptuous or impertinent.

houses here. They're kids and they're in your school, and, yes, you're responsible for them, but you're responsible for all of them." It worked. I'm beating it to death. But it worked.

As people came to live on Governors Island we would have welcoming affairs, and we had a group of people designated as a sort of "welcome wagon" group. Randy and some others worked together with some enlisted wives, some officers' wives. They would greet people, and they had a little welcome package we'd give new people. I would have meetings with the wives once every two weeks. It was once a week at the beginning. We'd go into the theater, and they could ask questions. There were a lot of complaints, a lot of not understanding how the system worked. Things weren't what they thought they were going to be, or something hadn't been turned on yet, and we just were trying to make people be happy. So I would meet with them and we would listen.

I tried to explain, and I heard a lot of things I wasn't aware of. Gradually, one by one, we filled in a comptroller, a public works officer, an operations boss for the ferries and the police, and a personnel chief. After every meeting I'd go talk to these staff people and say, "I'm going to come back, and I want at least one thing off that list done this afternoon." That word got out, and everybody would vie to be the one that "their wish" that day. We wouldn't let the rest of them die, but I wanted to show I had paid attention and we were going to respond.

One night I got a call at home. It seems that all the washing machines in the high-rise apartment building were broken. And we had said, "No cannibalizing the washing machines. We're going to buy new ones. Don't cannibalize the washing machines." And the women went on strike. [Laughter] And I had a young ensign who had a degree in civic planning from somewhere, I don't know where. He had the duty that night, and he called up, and he said this was going on. And I said, "Have you been down there yet?"

"I'm calling from there."

I said, "Well, why don't you just tell them that we're working the best we can and we're sorry but try to live through it. We're going to buy new machines."

He said, "Sir, I d-d-don't t-t-think I c-c-can g-g-get away with that. They're very angry down here."

I said, “How angry are they?”

He said, “They’re so angry that they’ve all piled all their clothes in one pile. Nobody knows whose clothes are whose. They’ve just got this mountain of dirty clothes down here.” [Laughter]

So I said, “I’ll be right down.” And I went down and I said, “What’s the problem here?”

“Well, nothing’s running.”

I said, “So why don’t you fix it?”

“Well, we can’t fix it.”

I looked around and I said, “Mrs. Brown, isn’t your husband a gunner’s mate?”

“Yes, he is.”

“Has he got a toolbox?”

“Yes, he has.”

“I’ll bet he knows how fix this one. I’ll bet if he took some parts out of that machine and put it in this one—”

“That’s cannibalizing.”

“I understand what that is. Does he know how to cannibalize, do you think? Do you think he might be able to do that?”

“Probably so.”

“Is he upstairs right now?”

“Yeah, he is. He’s as mad as I am.”

I said, “Why don’t you tell him to exercise it on the machine.” And there was another woman there, and I said, “Your husband is a machinist’s mate, I think. Why don’t you see if those two guys can’t come down here and get a couple of these machines running?” Well, they did. They did the laundry. They got two of them running. They ran. We speeded up the contract and replaced them. But it was an interesting experience, and, of course, then I was a good guy. I’d been a bad guy. We’d taken a stupid stance, no cannibalizing. Well, what we didn’t want was a bunch of honky-tonk people who didn’t know what they were doing tearing the machines apart and then we were going to have nothing. Here I could see two old pros, and the situation was bad enough that

without any authority to ask to them to do it, I could just say, “Please, ask your husbands to come down and get these things running.”

Paul Stillwell: Did you explain to them why you were modifying the policy?

Admiral Gracey: Oh, well, sure. I said, “Hey, we’ve got a situation here, and obviously it was what none of us expected. We thought we could keep them limping along until we could get the new ones, but obviously we couldn’t. Obviously it was a bad policy. I’d like to tell you that all the policies we’ve made or going to make are always going to be good ones, but you already know that’s not true so let’s get on with that one. But there’s an old Turkish saying, ‘No matter how far you’ve gone down the wrong road, turn back.’ [Laughter] Well, we’re turning back.”

Paul Stillwell: How then did they figure out which clothes were theirs?

Admiral Gracey: Somebody asked that. I said, “I don’t want to know that. You piled them; you sort them. I’m just going to tell you the policy is now revised, and at least for tonight you can cannibalize and get those machines running.”

Paul Stillwell: They got your attention.

Admiral Gracey: They got it. They got it.

Paul Stillwell: That’s a great story. Got any more?

Admiral Gracey: They’re all going to pop out, and by next time we sit down I’m probably going to have 18 more to tell you.

Paul Stillwell: Was your job during the whole time that of phasing this in? Did it ever get to be a settled, going concern?

Admiral Gracey: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. That was most of the first year while we were taking over from the Army, and, of course, we were in the process of merging. Our SPs were working with the MPs, and all those kinds of things were going and the Army was pulling out. There was a period when they were essentially gone and we were not quite up to speed yet. I had four great guys who came in to take over the pieces of coordinating of our taking over with the different sections.

As I said, the comptroller worked with the commissaries and exchanges, and we had a personnel guy who took care of people coming in. It was the housing officer who had to take care of getting all these people into places and assigning them and making sure they understood the rules and all that. And then getting a public works force. We got the blessing on that relatively soon after I had had the meeting with the people. They were all going to stay, and they just kept right on working and so did the repair work and all of that. They were grateful to be there, and they busted their humps to make it right. That doesn't mean they always fixed it when they should, but they tried.

And we started building up social kinds of things, and, as I said, we had greeters. Then the chief petty officers' club got rolling, so that was a place for the chief petty officers and their families to gather, and it was down near one of the housing areas. And we had the enlisted club, and in here somewhere we had the Harry James dance. And the movies were all first-run movies. They were being run the same time they were being run uptown at night, and it cost 25 cents to go in the theater or something like that, so there were things to do.

The bowling alley got full use. It was an interesting bowling alley. You had to really know it well, because there was not a level place on any lane, and you just had to know depending on what lane you were on where it was going to bend. So you couldn't count on it just going down straight. It was the same for everybody. We had some wonderful times. The leagues were mixed. We had unit teams. We had some officer teams, some enlisted teams, whatever people wanted to do to form a team. And then we had the holidays. We had holiday events. The church services were in the chapel; we had good chaplains, and they were building up the programs. It was good.

The schools were there. Of course the kids in school. I mentioned Randy. She started doing some substitute teaching for special ed. She would work with the kids who

were having a little trouble. And that was interesting. They now say spouses, but the wives' participation was absolutely marvelous. Some more than others obviously, but Randy got into it with both feet, as she is wont to do with various events, bless her heart.

And there was another couple, Jean and John Austin.* John was Chief of the Third District Personnel Division. After a couple years he was reassigned to Vietnam. That meant Jean couldn't live there anymore, so she went to their home in Sault Ste. Marie, but their son was finishing up his senior year in high school. He and Kip, our son, were great buddies, so Brock came and lived with us for a year at the house. As I said later on, after the first month I learned to put a padlock on the refrigerator. Otherwise, I couldn't afford to have him around the house. Great kids. But that was going on all over the place.

It's not to say everybody was happy. There were people who hated the place. There were people who referred to it as "The Rock." They'd come out of Kansas or someplace. Here they were on this rock, and it was confining. You couldn't get off unless you went on the ferryboat, and the ferryboat did keep running except for a couple of hours in the middle of the night. But you had to wait for it. If you were uptown and you came down and you just missed it, then you had to wait 15 minutes for the next boat. We had a nice waiting room over there on the Manhattan side, and we tried to dress it up and make it pleasant to wait in, but nonetheless you had to do it, and there were people who were very unhappy with that.

We had one Coast Guard captain in particular and some others who were very unhappy about having Coast Guard enlisted men telling them where to park, where to drive, how fast to go, giving them a ticket. They didn't like that at all. No matter how much we tried to tell them, "Hey, you know, this is the way it is. This is our police force, and these are our rules." Of course, I was a commander, and I was telling this to this captain, and he was so angry he didn't want to hear it. We are very good friends today, but in those times I represented what made him very cross.

So there were people like that, because they'd never had any experience with this. You know, we had the sunset cannon. We had taps. The bugles played. We had a loudspeaker system, and the bugle calls played all over the island. We just kept right on

* Captain John M. Austin, USCG.

doing that. And the kids got to observe colors. They played the “Star-Spangled Banner” or played colors, and the kids would all stop. They’d stop their game, they’d get off their bikes and stand and face the flag. Wonderful to watch, just wonderful. And the teachers in school were regular New York City schoolteachers. They were great. It was a good family situation.

Oh, I mentioned the labor business. We had some labor negotiations with the ferry crews. It was a little sticky, but we finally managed to work that one out. They kind of had us over a barrel. All they had to do was stop running the boat, and that was the end of that, except we had a few sailors around that were willing to take it on, and they hadn’t considered that threat.

“Well, how could you do that?”

“Well, we own it.”

“Well, yeah, but it’s against the rules.”

“Yeah, but we’re the ones that regulate. We really don’t want to go where this conversation is going. Let’s solve the problem. Never mind the threats and counterthreats. Can we do that and get on with it?” And we did and it worked out fine. I mentioned taking a course in collective bargaining at Harvard while I was there. All of a sudden, I was grateful I had done that, although I think it was just applied human relations. It’s the way you would work out a disagreement with anybody.

Paul Stillwell: What was the financial arrangement for housing? People did not receive a housing allowance if they lived in these base houses?

Admiral Gracey: That’s right. In effect, what most people don’t understand is that if you live in government housing you pay rent. The rent is whatever your housing allowance is. Yeah, that’s the way it was.

Paul Stillwell: So if somebody chose not to live in this, he had the alternative of paying what the New York City going rates were, which were probably exorbitant.

Admiral Gracey: Yeah. People didn't have to live out there. Some of the air station people chose not to, because over to Brooklyn Air Station it was kind of a far piece. But there were some who did. The cost of living in the city was kind of steep. We had a rental-housing program. I can't remember exactly when that came in. We started renting houses for people, but I'm not sure whether that was going on then or not. A lot of people just liked the convenience of being on Governors Island and not having to worry. The cars were there, the commissary, the exchange. Everything was right there, and as you rode across on the ferry it was a marvelous.

At first you fussed and fumed about the ferryboat. And it was always a fuss and fume because it seemed like a matter of fact that no matter from how far or how near you were coming, you always missed the ferry by five minutes. It didn't matter. No matter how you tried to fake it out, you always missed it by five minutes. Once you got aboard, there was nothing to do except sit down or sit in your car if you wanted to, but most people got out and walked up forward or sat up on the—there were some seats up topside—and just watched New York Harbor go by. Watched the sunset behind the Statue of Liberty. I mean, people pay hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of dollars for this, and you got to do it for, depending on how skillful the skipper of the ferryboat was that day, sometimes five minutes, sometimes 25, depending on whether he could make the slip or not. Most of them were very good.

Well, like maybe ten minutes of forced confinement. Take a deep breath, and if you have had a bad day in the city don't worry about it. Here's our island out here. I'm biased on the subject, as you gather, and my whole family including my 50-year-old son cried when they heard that we were giving up the island. It was very special. And we're not the only ones.

Paul Stillwell: Well, probably those first inhabitants felt kind of a pioneering spirit that was useful.

Admiral Gracey: Exactly. Well, we called ourselves pioneers, as a matter of fact. We wanted to put a nautical flavor on the place and there's a Coast Guard painter named Wsczinsky, or something like that, who painted Coast Guard scenery. Ships, airplanes,

lighthouses, whatever. I don't remember how we got ahold of him, but anyway we said, "We will pay your board and keep, and we'll give you a studio. Paint us some pictures that we can hang around to replace the tanks and whatever."

He set to work. I watched him through the crack in the curtain in his window one night in this big building that we had some offices in. It was essentially an empty building. Later on it was a classroom building. But one of the big rooms downstairs he was working in. He'd have six easels set up. And he'd get a little daub of some particular color and he'd put a little on this one, a little on that one, a little on that one. By the time he was done he had these wonderful pictures. There was one I remember that was the talk of most of the officers, because it was in the officers' club.

It was a beautiful, gracious old club in what they called the South Battery. It had been a battery of the fort originally, and they had built this officers' club out of the building that was there. You could walk out on the patio and look over the East River and all the ships coming and going. It was wonderful. But there was this big wide stairway, and that came in and kind of did a little snaky turn and then went upstairs. And there was this big wall space, and he hung a huge canvas on this wall. All framed, of course. And it was every Coast Guard ship and airplane there ever was, going in opposite directions, coming around the bend by Castle Williams. There was Castle Williams, and there was Manhattan over behind it in the distance, and all these ships are going in this channel. I remember standing there one day, and somebody said, "Why are you gazing at that?"

I said, "Because in a minute there's going to be the damndest collision out there they ever saw. Those guys are all going to come around the bend, and they're all going to plow into each other." It was a fantasy, but it caught everybody's eye. Everybody's eye. He did some beautiful work. He did some not-so-beautiful work. But we nauticalized that place practically overnight, and he stayed around with us for a couple of years.

The Army was afraid that we were going to throw away every memory of the Army around there. And I said, "Well, you certainly can't insist that we continue to call that house General's House since it's now got an admiral living in it. We'll have a brass plaque inside with the names of all the generals who lived there, along with now all the

admirals who have succeeded them, and will succeed them from here on out. But we're not going to call it General's House. It's going to become Admiral's House, just as it's going to become Captains' Row and not Colonels' Row. And you can certainly understand that."

"Yeah, how about Nolan Park. That was named after an Army officer."

"Nolan Park is Nolan Park. Why would we change that?" And so early on there was a great deal of fear that we were going to come in and just clean house and turn everything nautical. If we put in new streets, we sometimes put Coast Guard names on them, but over a period of time we probably did it more than we did at the beginning. But we did assure them.

When it came time for the actual takeover, one nettling problem remained to be solved. The Army had a huge red sign over the ferry slip that said "Governors Island, Fort Jay, U.S. Army." This was at the time that the idea of the new Coast Guard slash was in the works.

I said to my skipper, "You've got to talk to the admiral. We've got to get that thing down."

"Well, in due time," he said.

I said, "Come on, Captain. No, no. Not in due time."

"Well, it hasn't been approved for putting up yet."

So I said, "I bet we could get approval." And I used my Who-Do-You-Talk-To-At-Headquarters experience that I mentioned before. I called up some colleagues and said, "If you got a request for this, would you be able to put it through? We really ought to put a Coast Guard sign up there. We'll change the angle of the slash if you don't like it. Just let us put it up there." It was late in June 1966, and the transfer ceremony was scheduled for 1 July. We were down to three days or something like that. I've forgotten all the machinations, but the bottom line was we got the okay from HQ to put up a sign in the soon-to-be-official format. I convinced them we *had* to have the sign, and it had to be in the new format with the slash and all. Then we got to the Army Public Works people that we were going to hire. They were great people—happy to stay and do their jobs with us and most anxious to accommodate and do well for us. So they went to work in one of their shops and overnight painted our sign. It probably wasn't quite up to final specs, but

it was close enough. It had our CG stripe on it and it said, "United States Coast Guard." And it was the right colors. The ceremony marking the change of ownership of the island took place as scheduled, and on the very next morning people coming to work on the Governors Island ferry saw that beautiful new United States Coast Guard sign proudly announcing who the new owners were. That was the first one of the new sign format that was mounted anywhere. Right at one minute past midnight that sign went up.

The change of command, by the way, was a wondrous thing. At the north end of this island is the old Fort Jay. It was this star-shaped fort with a moat around it. No water in it, just a grass moat, but it was a moat. It was a bona fide War of 1812 fort. That's where the flagpole was, and there were Rodman guns. A Rodman gun is a big, big iron cannon six feet long, something like that, and they weren't rifled. They just plain fired big cannon balls, but they were all over the place. That's what they had on them. Some had been taken away to the artillery museum, and we'd persuaded them to leave some for us. It was a fort, and we wanted to have cannons on it.

When we had the sunset salute, for example, and all that, we didn't fire the cannon. What we did was put a firecracker down inside, and it made a loud enough bang. It went Kaboom, because it was an echo chamber. We had it on the PA system, and you could hear it. Well, on the day of the change of command, that's where we held it. There was a drawbridge that went out to this fort across the moat, and right there was a kind of a circle. It was tree shaded, and it was a good spot, and so that's where everybody assembled for the change of command.

The Army had people there dressed in every uniform that had ever been on that island, going back to before the Revolution. Lord Jeffrey Amherst was out there and others, some wonderful old names from out there. The ceremony went on fine, and then it came time to lower the flag. The Army would haul down its flag and we'd haul up ours and do all of that sort of thing, and they were going to fire one last salute. So they decided they would do it proper. They would load this gun. Not with a cannon ball, just with gunpowder, and they would do it properly. It got to be saluting time, and it went KABOOM!! followed by the sound of tinkling glass in the windows all around the office buildings all around. They broke the glass, and they set fire to the grass in the moat. So

this was followed by the fire engines roaring up to the scene. [Laughter] It was one of the grandest finales there ever was. [Laughter] But we got it done.

I think it was the first year that we owned the place, the city of New York decided it was going to have a marvelous Fourth of July celebration with fireworks and laser displays from barges in the harbor, and they were going to shoot off the fireworks. We just made it a splendid place.

The harbor was essentially cleared, and all up and down the coast of the shoreline on both sides were a programmed laser display and fireworks. And a couple of the major radio stations in town were synchronizing music that was being broadcast and played in sync with the fireworks. And we were broadcasting it over the PA system on the island. A couple of these barges were anchored not very far off the island, far enough so that we weren't going to set fire to anything on the island if the wind was in the wrong direction, but enough so that they were there and you could kind of see a little bit of what was going on. It was another one of those special evening occasions, as was our annual Fourth of August Coast Guard picnic and games.

And we had the Coast Guard picnic of all time on Governors Island, because all 6,000 people would come out to eat the food and play the games and little kids and old kids and the whole business. At one point we even had ourselves a small band that we had created on the island. That was an aspiration we had that really didn't go very far. We decided we were pushing the envelope on that one. But no big deal. That was one I thought of. The Fourth of July is another marvelous part of being on the island.

One time the King of Norway came to visit us. We had since put the fire out in the moat and all that, and this was some time later on. We were now the full and proud owners of the place. The King came on the ferry, and, of course, we had an honor platoon all lined up. And all the school kids came. Randy was in back with the little kids behind a cyclone fence. We had to stop golf, because if you hit a bad shot on the particular hole that came along that line it would come off, bounce in the street, and go into the harbor. And we didn't want anybody beaming the King of Norway with a golf ball, so we stopped golf while this was going on. The kids were all gathered so they could see the King, and they were very upset because they couldn't see the King, because the King wore a naval uniform. [Laughter] He came and he reviewed the troops.

Paul Stillwell: Was this King Olav?

Admiral Gracey: King Olav.* And one little kid yelled out, “Where’s the King?” It was silent, of course, and this voice rang out. Somebody had told one of the teachers—and I’m not sure but what it might have been Randy—that if the kids get rambunctious, you just grab them by the soft part of the back of the arm. Just hold on, and it won’t hurt them, but it’ll get the message that, “Shhh.” So there was a little bit of, “Where’s the King?” and all this going on, and so somebody took one little kid by the arm. As I say, I think that might have been Randy, but anyway she did, and this little kid yelled out, “Hey, leggo of my meat.” [Laughter]

Anyway, the big thing about the King’s arrival was when we fired the 21-gun salute from the saluting battery. There was a saluting battery up at Fort Jay, besides the Rodman gun that was mostly for show. As a matter of fact, I think the firecracker that we fired at sunsets was in one of the saluting guns. Anyway, there were two saluting guns, and they were firing the 21-gun salute. I was standing in our office. The base commander’s office was right there, and the captain, of course, was out. He was a participant in the ceremony, and I was just looking out the window watching this thing and seeing how it went, and I only heard 20 shots. I raced out the front door and jumped in the car, screamed around, and ran up to the gun mounts.

As I came down the path, the guys saw me coming. They said, “Twenty-one, Commander. Honest, we had a hang-fire and they both went at once.” [Laughter] “We got 21 empties here.”

I said, “I’ll take your word for it. Give me one of the empties.” And they did. We had a State Department rep there, and he was dying a thousand deaths that we’d only fired 20 guns. The King didn’t know it. I mean, I doubt he was counting. If he was, he was smart enough to recognize that there was something improper here. Anyway, after some time we were able to get by that fact that there were 21 and everything was okay, but we polished this round and mounted it in the office with a plaque that said, “This is the shot that was not heard round the world.” [Laughter] But the King did his thing and

* Olav V was King of Norway from 21 September 1957 until his death on 17 January 1991.

it was splendid to see him come off the ferry. He went around the island and the whole thing, and he was very taken by it all. And then he went away again.

At one point we had a funeral. The commanding officer of one of our ships, Captain Jay Dayton, had a heart attack one night and died.* It was Thursday of a long holiday weekend.

The first chaplain we had was a fellow by the name of Sam Hardman, Navy chaplain.† The Chief of Chaplains arranged to send Sam to us. Sam was a commander, had been a chaplain for a long time. Still substitutes down in Alabama as a chaplain down there or as a minister. He was a tiny little guy, and the Chief of Chaplains called him his “Itty-bitty Buddy,” but Sam had been transferred.‡ We had no Protestant chaplain. The Catholic chaplain could not be found in time to help us. We had a guy that just died. His wife wanted to have the funeral at the chapel, which we were happy to hear. So I got in touch with Chaplain Hardman. He’d been assigned to an aircraft carrier in Norfolk. I think it was *John F. Kennedy*. He went and talked to the skipper.

The skipper said, “We can’t have them go without a chaplain, and I need a little flight time.” So he packed Sam in the back of his jet and flew him to New York. We had the grandest funeral there ever was. We got a Navy band from the New York area. We had a bell tolling each a minute, and a cannon fired periodically. They marched down to the chapel. Everybody got into the chapel, and then after the service the band didn’t play. They just marched with the rolling drum.

This whole procession came down from the chapel, which was a pretty good hike, a quarter of a mile maybe, slowly down around to the ferry ramp. We stopped the ferries. Warned everybody ahead of time we were going to do that. And we had this one empty ferry. The hearse drove down and onto the ferry, just the hearse, with the drums rolling. Then they played some kind of a piece. And with just that and a small honor guard the ferry sailed. Well, I’ve got to tell you. It shakes me up to tell you about it, because

* Captain Jay Parmalee Dayton, USCG, commanding officer of the high endurance cutter *Dallas* (WHEC-716) died Thursday, 4 July 1968, in his quarters on Governors Island. For the perspective of an individual who was one of the *Dallas*’s junior officers at the time, see the Naval Institute oral history of Rear Admiral Richard W. Schneider, USCGR (Ret.).

† Commander Samuel R. Hardman, CHC, USN.

‡ Rear Admiral James W. Kelly, CHC, USN, served as the Navy's Chief of Chaplains from July 1965 to June 1970.

Captain Dayton had to feel like he really got the right send-off. I mean, it was really moving and beautifully done. During the in-church part of it the Trinity choir sang. Everybody was in dress whites, and it was just very splendid.

We used the island in a lot of different ways. We used it for training. I mentioned the recreation director, Ken Zorn. The United States basketball team wanted a place to practice, and we had this great gymnasium in the top floor of that building I was telling you about that was built overnight, building 400, and it had a wonderful basketball court in there.

Paul Stillwell: Was this for the Olympics?

Admiral Gracey: No, this was not the Olympic team. It was a U.S. amateur team, and they were playing some international something. I don't think it was the Olympics. Anyway, they wanted a place to practice, and then Ken said, "Well, I know just the place. I'll talk to the exec, and I'll bet you can come out and practice at Governors Island." It sounded good to me. Well they were so grateful, and they were sponsored by New York's Downtown Athletic Club.

They were so grateful that on the night of the Heisman Trophy dinner—this was the year Steve Spurrier was the winner—I got an invitation to go.* Actually, two invitations came and Ken Zorn came in to me, and he said, "I've got two invitations to go the Heisman Trophy dinner."

I said, "Wonderful."

He said, "One for me and one for you."

I said, "No, no. Not me. The captain. I'm XO. He's the man."

He said, "I don't think the captain wants to go."

So I said, "Well, let me talk to him."

I went in and I said, "Skipper, how about the Heisman dinner?"

He said, "What is the Heisman dinner?"

* Steve Spurrier, quarterback of the University of Florida Gators, was chosen in 1966 as recipient of the Heisman Trophy, which signifies the top player each year in college football.

I explained it to him and he said, “Well, let me think about it. Ask me tomorrow.”

Came back the next day, and I asked him, and he said, “What did you say it was again?”

I said, “Why don’t you not worry about it, Captain? I’ll take this one off your hands.” So I told Ken we’d go. Didn’t hear anything. That was a month ahead of time or something like that. Didn’t hear anything until getting a telegram the day before the dinner. I went to the Downtown Athletic Club, and I went to the desk and I checked in. All the people were checking in for the dinner, and this woman said, “Oh, well, no, sir. Your credential is blue. You go up to the second floor.” So I went up to the second floor and I was riding in the elevator with Red Smith, Curt Gowdy, all the big sports people I recognized.*

I checked in, and she said, “Oh, yes, sir, Commander. It’s nice to see you. Go up to the penthouse. Mr. Spurrier will be up there,” and so forth.

I thought, “I didn’t realize everybody did that.” Well, everybody didn’t do that. So I put on my identifying ribbon, and I went up there. I was milling around, and people were saying, “What’s your sport?”

I said, “Baseball.” I mean, what the hell? They didn’t need to know that it was Coast Guard Academy, right? [Laughter] And I had a great talk with the Penn State football coach, Joe Paterno.[†] He asked me and I told him. We talked baseball for a while and one thing and another, and I met Spurrier and all these guys.

Then it came time to go down to dinner, and I was looking around and not seeing any Coast Guard people. I knew that the admiral was coming. He wasn’t anywhere there, and I didn’t see some of the captains that told me they were coming. Went down to dinner, and I was sitting with the father of the Notre Dame winner of the prior year. I’ll think of it. And the commissioner of football at the time was Pete Rozelle.

* Walter “Red” Smith was a syndicated newspaper columnist; Curt Gowdy was a play-by-play TV and radio announcer.

[†] Joseph V. Paterno has been the football head coach since 1966 at Pennsylvania State University. His teams won national championships in 1982 and 1986. In 2001 he surpassed Bear Bryant’s record for most games won by a Division I-A coach in college football history.

Paul Stillwell: Was John Huarte the Notre Dame player?

Admiral Gracey: Huarte, thank you, John Huarte's father, and Pete Rozelle on the other side, and we had this wonderful prime rib dinner. The conversation was great. Then we got up and we went down, and I still didn't see any of the Coast Guard people that I knew were going to be there. I got to the hall, and I was standing in line when this guy came to me and said, "Sir, you don't need to stand in line. You've got a chair in there." So I went in, and, sure enough, there was my name on the back of a chair. I looked down the list of honored guests, and there were Garagiola, Gowdy, Gracey.* I was thinking, "Oh." In the back was Zorn. Zorn didn't come either. Well, apparently he'd worked this out somehow that because we'd arranged for them to have the basketball floor, then we ought to get a nice place at this ceremony. And so I was sitting there like in about the fifth row. I was one of the honored guests. And it was a wonderful experience. Afterwards I found out that they were broadcasting it on a PA system to the people downstairs who had had hot dogs and beans. [Laughter]

Paul Stillwell: Including the admiral?

Admiral Gracey: Including the admiral. I met one of my very good friends, senior guy at the time, and I said, "Where have you been?"

He said, "Where have you been, you rascal?" [Laughter]

I said, "I'm not going to tell you where I've been. [Laughter] Tell me about your experience."

He said, "It wasn't great. It was crowded. We had hot dogs and beans, and we got to listen to it on the PA system. Now tell me about yours."

I said, "No. Some other day I'll tell you about where I've been, and I'll tell you about the prime rib I ate with Pete Rozelle." [Laughter] Anyway, it was a great

* Joseph H. Garagiola, a former catcher for the St. Louis Cardinals, was by 1966 a television sports announcer. Curtis Gowdy announced Boston Red Sox games from 1951 to 1966, when he left to begin a ten-year tenure as play-by-play announcer for NBC's baseball game of the week.

experience, and I don't know whether the admiral ever knew about it or not. But these kinds of things kept happening.

At one point a person jumped into the river upstream and was swimming down. This was an escapee from one of the prisons. He tried to swim into the ferry terminal, and we kind of got him corralled.

Paul Stillwell: Was this Rikers Island?

Admiral Gracey: I don't know whether it would be from Rikers, because that's a long way. It may be wrong that he was escaping from the prison. He may have been from a boat. But anyway he was in the water. Our boats were trying to pick him up, and he was having none of it. Well, maybe somebody just saw him in the water. I can't remember exactly how that worked. But they tried to throw him a lifesaving ring, and he wouldn't accept it. Finally they came up close and whacked him over the head with a boat hook, with the stick end of it just enough to stun him so they could drag him out of the water and save his life. I got to watch all that out of my office window. I mean, there was no end to the excitement that was going on.

Paul Stillwell: Do you remember the great blackout of 1965?*

Admiral Gracey: Oh, indeed, indeed. Thank you, thank you. Yes, and a blizzard besides. Yeah, the blackout, we were on the island at the time. The island, of course, went dark like everything else did, but it was absolutely spectacular to stand out there and see Manhattan black. That was '65, wasn't it, so the Army owned the problem at the time, and we could just enjoy the darkness.

Paul Stillwell: There was apparently quite a birth surge nine months later.

Admiral Gracey: Well, I'd heard that that was so, yeah.

* On the afternoon of 9 November 1965 approximately 80,000-square miles of the Northeast, a total of eight states, went into darkness as an electrical conductor line failed. New York City lost power at 5:28.

Well, of course, being on the island was a marvelous place in all kinds of weather. Periodically they would have a deep, really deep fog. And I can remember a couple of those really foggy nights when it wasn't terribly cold. It wouldn't be cold because if there was fog the air would be warm over the cold water. And we could go out and walk the island. Most ships would be at anchor. Those under way would be sounding their foghorns. Those at anchor would be ringing their bells. And these sounds were carrying through the fog, and it was just magnificent.

And we had a blizzard. Shortly after we owned the place we had a blizzard. I mean, a real blizzard. We'd not trained for a blizzard. [Laughter] Well, what do you do with the snow? We were blowing it over the wall into the water. People were saying, "You can't do that. You're polluting the harbor." Well, hey, New York Harbor at this point, they're not worrying too much about pollution and certainly not from fresh-blown snow. And we were okay, but we had mountains of snow. [Laughter] Weren't familiar enough with the equipment. The equipment was old. Some of it wasn't really terribly functional. But our public works gang and our own new crew leaders running it, and, of course, it was at night so a lot of them weren't on duty. So we got a lot of Coast Guard people that knew how to drive trucks and all that kind of stuff, and we drafted everybody and anybody that would go with equipment and shovels galore. We got it done, but it was exciting for a while.

Paul Stillwell: Did you go to the World's Fair in Flushing Meadows? That was in '64 and '65.

Admiral Gracey: Yeah, we did go to the World's Fair. We went there from St. Louis the year before I knew I was going to Governors Island. And we camped. That was not a great idea because we'd never done it before, so one should try one of those things first. One night Randy and I tied the kids in the tent. We went and sat by a fire quite a distance away so we didn't have to listen. But, yeah, we went to the World's Fair. We visited my folks in New England and then came back to the Fair and then drove back to St. Louis. Great experience. They loved it.

My youngest daughter at one point got off the bus before us. We were riding back to the parking lot, and the bus stopped and our daughter got off, and we just happened to look out the back window and there was our daughter, third grade I guess, looking at the bus and waving sadly to us, “Bye-bye,” as the bus pulled away. “Stop the bus.” [Laughter] No, that was good.

Well, we had another experience. Those were the days when the Coast Guard tended to be forgotten if there was something military going on. As a matter of fact, that was still going on even as late as when I was the Commandant, a couple of events. But Bob Hope put on a big show at Madison Square Garden. The Coast Guard people were by far the most numerous military people in the audience, because everybody else had pulled out of town or gone somewhere else, and the Coast Guard was the big outfit in town. And he said thank you to all the services, and they played a medley of all the service songs but not the Coast Guard and not “Semper Paratus.”

So I looked around to see if the admiral or any of the seniors were going to down, and nobody did. So at halftime I went down and found Hope’s manager and said, “You know, Bob is down here. You know he’s devoted to all the services, and I don’t have any reason to think he’s got anything against the Coast Guard. I think his script didn’t have us in it and I think he would feel terribly.”

He said, “Oh, he will. I’ll talk to him and he’ll fix it.” But he never did. I can see Bob saying, “Are you kidding me? I’m not going up there and ruin my script just to say that or to admit we made a mistake.” Whatever. It was okay. But the people felt, “Why us?”

Paul Stillwell: It was probably a feeling you had before and after that too.

Admiral Gracey: Indeed. We’ve had it many times over the years, but sometimes you’re in a position to do something about it and sometimes you’re not, and it’s okay. It’s a rare event these days. Oftentimes it’s the other way around. We’re in and somebody else is out. I don’t want anybody out. There’s five of us.

Paul Stillwell: Did the *Eagle* ever come by?

Admiral Gracey: I don't remember *Eagle* ever coming to Governors Island. That's a good question, and I don't remember her ever coming. Now, why wouldn't she? I guess she wouldn't because the crowds of people would want to get there. It would be overwhelming for the ferry system and for the island. Although after the first year or so we had an Invite-the-Public-out-to-the-Island Day. Come out and see Governors Island. See what's out here and meet your Coast Guard. I don't think we did it on Coast Guard Day but around Coast Guard Day. Maybe it was Armed Forces Day. It's one of those events.

People would come, and the various groups would have a gedunk stand where they'd be selling memorabilia about the Coast Guard, and they all had prepared different kinds of food for them. It was an outing to the island. We billed it as not unlike the old days when people used to come out to watch the polo game: "Well, we're not playing polo, but we're nice folks. Come on out and see us and see what the island is all about." A lot of them could see it but didn't really understand what's there.

We didn't just put that sign up I mentioned; almost the next day we started on a bigger one. There was a big long warehouse building that people saw on the Staten Island ferry as they sailed by. We painted "U.S. Coast Guard" in giant letters with a stripe on the side of that barn, so we did our best to make a mark in the city, and I think we succeeded.

Paul Stillwell: When did the Atlantic Area headquarters get to Governors Island?

Admiral Gracey: Oh, they were right in. They'd been in New York all along. Within the first six or eight months, maybe even less than that, they came over. They let us get it settled down a bit, and we had a lot of modification of the offices. We wanted to fix up the quarters for the admiral, and we were doing different things. It was going to be an operations center for us, as opposed to more of an administrative center for the First Army. So we had to put in our operations center with its communications equipment and all of that kind of stuff. And we had to run "in duplicate" for a while to make sure we could handle it before we shut down the Custom House operation.

The Captain of the Port office was at a building in Battery Park, and it was right next to the ferry terminal. We did shut him down there and moved him to Governors Island, but we kept that for our merchant marine safety people and offices. It was accessible to the ferries and so forth. But the boat capacity was too small for the Captain of the Port anyway, and we had a huge one that we built out at Governors Island. So we had to get it ready, and that took a while. I think certainly within the first year. And as they were ready they came, but there were some offices didn't want to move out there at all because it was too convenient being in the city. They could walk to some of the things they did and rightfully so, because in those days the whole maritime industry of the United States was focused in the Battery in Manhattan. That's not so anymore. They've moved all kinds of other places, but in those days that was maritime territory, and so it was a good place to be. But they came eventually.

The Coast Guard did another thing while we were on Governors Island. I can't remember exactly what year, but we made our change away from the traditional "Dixie cup" hat in that '65 to '69 period. I remember it well, because it caused great angst to our people assigned to be Governors Island SPs.

Paul Stillwell: The Navy change happened about 1971.*

Admiral Gracey: Somewhere earlier than that the Coast Guard went to the old kind of "flat hat," only it was white instead of blue. It was like a cap with no visor on it.

Paul Stillwell: I don't remember the Navy doing that.

Admiral Gracey: Well the Coast Guard did it, and it didn't last very long. Do you remember the old blue flat hat?

* On 14 June 1971 Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr., USN, Chief of Naval Operations, announced that enlisted personnel in the pay grades of E-6 and below would be converting over a period of time to a more officer-like blue uniform. Included would be jacket, tie, white shirt, creased trousers, and a cap with a visor. On 1 August 1977 the Navy announced that the uniforms for personnel below chief petty officer would return to the bell-bottom trousers, jumpers, and white hats that had been traditional prior to 1971.

Paul Stillwell: Yes.

Admiral Gracey: And it had the name of the ship on it?

Paul Stillwell: Like the Donald Duck hat.

Admiral Gracey: Exactly. And I say exactly because at that point we were trying to run Governors Island, and we had replaced the Army. The Army had gone and the MPs were now SPs—Coast Guardsmen. And those poor guys showed up with the “Donald Duck” hats on this island with 6,000 people on it, a lot of families, a lot of teenagers who were living there and riding the ferry over to go to school on Staten Island and stuff. And don’t you know that those poor Coast Guard SPs really took it. I mean, people were quacking at them from every direction and it was embarrassing. The troops really hated it; I was delighted when that got changed.

Paul Stillwell: I had one of those hats in my first seabag when I enlisted in the Navy.

Admiral Gracey: Did you? What, as a blue flat hat?

Paul Stillwell: Yes.

Admiral Gracey: Yeah. Somehow the blue flat hat wasn’t too bad, but the white one was Donald Duck like, you know, and there was that level of irreverence.

Paul Stillwell: Anything more on Governor’s Island? And if not you can make some notes for the next time.

Admiral Gracey: Yes, I will, Paul, because I’m going to talk to Randy and refresh my memory. There were all kinds of events that took place, and we’ll want to share them. But in terms of it being an entity and a part of the Coast Guard and an operating part of

the Coast Guard, we got all that done. I left in '69. I went in there as a lieutenant commander and left as a deep-selected captain, so that wasn't too bad.

Paul Stillwell: Not bad at all. [Laughter]

Admiral Gracey: Well, it was a great opportunity. You know, it was a great opportunity. I could just flap my wings and fly, and I had bosses that were willing to have me do that. I mentioned Captain Pfeiffer and the numbers. There were a lot of places we were going through to sell our cause. We came down to Headquarters to tell people what it was about. There was a lot of talk about Governors Island, but the people didn't understand it, so we would be invited down for various occasions to come down and talk about it, or we'd go over to brief the admiral in the city and that kind of stuff. The captain really wasn't comfortable doing that sort of thing, but I was Mr. Big Mouth, as you know, and I loved it.

But, as you've detected, I couldn't flip off a bunch of numbers off the top of my head. I loved working with them. I was good with numbers, but in terms of remembering them, not necessarily. So we would go along, and we'd get to the right point, and I'd pause, Captain Pfeiffer would throw out the number, and I'd keep right on going. And after a while people noticed it and, "Here comes Mr. Glib and Mr. Numbers." [Laughter] But we did it well. It was smooth. I had to take a look at him, and he'd do the number. If it needed explaining he'd explain it a little bit, and then as soon as he'd slow I knew exactly when he was going to slow down, and I'd pick up and keep right going. And it worked out very well.

Early on, when there were just the five of us there in the Fort Jay Project Staff, I was living on the island all alone. I mean, Randy and the kids weren't there yet. I got some graph paper and, I sat in my office and made PERT charts as to all the things that we needed to do.* For example, we needed an island newspaper. And I just kind of halfheartedly or half-jokingly I said, "Oh, we need a newspaper. Let's call it the *Governors Island Gazette*." Well, to the day it closed the *GIG* was it. Everybody waited

* PERT—Program Evaluation Review Technique, a system of milestones for tracking the progress of a program against its schedule.

every Friday for the *GIG* to arrive, because it had all the hot news as to what was going on, what were the events, what were the social things. You know, what was being sold, classifieds. It had all the stuff that you have in a little unit newspaper, but it was always known as the *GIG*. Some people didn't even know how it got to be called the *GIG*.

I mentioned the Bob Hope bit. The Friday after that event we published the *GIG* with a blank front page, except for down in the very corner we had—and this was at my direction—“The above represents all the words that were printable after Mr. Hope failed to mention the Coast Guard last Friday night.” [Laughter] We sent him a copy. We never got an answer. You asked me one time if I was aggressive. Was that the word you used? No. Belligerent? No.

Paul Stillwell: I don't recall.

Admiral Gracey: Whatever it was, meaning, “Was I prone to fight back?” Well, yes I am. The only reason an Irishman thinks to step back is to get better leverage. [Laughter] And they were doing bodily harm to my Coast Guard, and you don't do that. Now I got sidetracked.

Oh, the PERT charts. So I made up one of these overall and then one for each of the divisions that we were creating, and all the things that we were going to have to do in the kind of the sequence that I saw that we were going to have to do them. I put it together, and, by God, that's what we followed. I did it in two or three nights working—well, longer than that I guess. Many years later the Coast Guard took Kodiak, Alaska, from the Navy and the question was, “How do we go about this? You've had some experience organizing a place like this and it's a similar kind of situation. The Navy's got this big thing, and now they're going away. What do we do?”

I dug around in my trunk, and I found the PERT charts. I made copies and I said, “Well, these won't exactly apply to Kodiak, but it'll give you an idea of the kinds of things that worked for us on Governors Island.” And the people who put it on tell me they followed it pretty closely. Well, where do you get a chance to do this sort of thing normally, you know?

Paul Stillwell: Well, that tour was a fertile field for somebody who liked to operate outside the box. You could create your own boxes.

Admiral Gracey: Exactly. Exactly right, yeah. It did. It worked well that way.

Paul Stillwell: Well, it's probably a convenient stopping point.

Admiral Gracey: Okay.

Paul Stillwell: I look forward to the next one.

Admiral Gracey: Me too.

Interview Number 5 with Admiral James S. Gracey, U.S. Coast Guard (Retired)

Date: Tuesday, 5 June 2001

Place: Admiral Gracey's home in Arlington, Virginia

Interviewer: Paul Stillwell

Paul Stillwell: Admiral, the last time I was here we talked about your service as executive officer at Governors Island when that became a Coast Guard facility. Do you have any things to catch up with from the last interview?

Admiral Gracey: Well, thanks for asking. I thought back through what we had talked about—happenings and events that would help give a flavor of the time.

It was a time of new initiative for the Coast Guard, of course. We'd never had anything like this place. The Army was used to running them, and here was this huge base and Fort Jay and all the accompanying things. And in the process we moved a bunch of training activities in from Groton. We converted a hospital to a barracks and created a smaller outpatient clinic for our own medical use. We created a first-class dental clinic, bringing in all new equipment.

Paul Stillwell: Had the Army not had some provision for dental services?

Admiral Gracey: Yes, they did, but, as in many other things, they took their equipment with them. I talked about how my chief petty officer got around General Corley's scorched-earth policy.

Paul Stillwell: Well, you said that he was unhappy about leaving. Was it just that per se, or was it something about the Coast Guard that made him unhappy?

Admiral Gracey: No. Well, I don't know that. I think it was just that he was a First Army man, and they had been there forever. When McNamara said, "Out of there. We

don't need it anymore," that made a lot of the old-timers very unhappy. It was a great place. I don't blame them for being unhappy about losing it.

Paul Stillwell: So whoever showed up, they were going to be unhappy.

Admiral Gracey: I think so. But it certainly did not help that we were not part of DoD. In 1965 "jointness" was not a word that was commonly used, at least not at my level.

I didn't talk about the Governors Island crime statistics, and I don't know that this is the kind of place we want to do that, but it's interesting. One Sunday I was reading the magazine section of I think it was the Chicago newspaper. They had done a study of the daily police blotter in some precinct station in the city of Chicago to see the kinds of crimes, proportions of them that were experienced. I was dumbfounded, and I said to the skipper, "Jeez, this sounds like our own daily blotter here on the island." There were traffic violations, and somebody would beat up somebody. There would be a fight. We were a community of normal activity of various bizarre natures, but it was kind of interesting to note that we really were real people, and real things happened. You've got a whole community, and you've got a bunch of families living together, and some of them are happy, some aren't. Some love it, some don't. Some love each other, some don't. But by and large just the whole nature of that place was very special for me and Randy and the kids, "crime" statistics notwithstanding.

Paul Stillwell: You talked about closing down the Army prison. What happened then to wayward Coast Guardsmen?

Admiral Gracey: Oh, well, really, wayward Coast Guardsmen had always gone to Navy brigs. We didn't have much of the major kind of problem that we're talking about with the First Army's prison. We had always used the Navy brig in Brooklyn. In an earlier interview, when I was talking about *Mariposa* I mentioned the young man we sent to that brig in Brooklyn.

One last thing, I think. When we left, the Public Works people gave us a giant wooden plug like a bathtub plug with a huge piece of chain on it, and that was "The Plug

for Governors Island." It was an old tradition that to become a real Governors Islander—an insider, a key person—you had to know where to find The Plug that kept the island "afloat." They always said they knew where the plug was and had been keeping it a secret from me all these years, but they thought now we were entitled to take a replica with us. Being there was a wonderful, wonderful experience.

We left Governors Island in the summer of 1969, after I had been deep-selected for O-6.*

Paul Stillwell: That had to be a very satisfying feeling.

Admiral Gracey: Well, it was nice. It was nice.

Paul Stillwell: How deep? How early?

Admiral Gracey: I don't know. A year maybe. The Coast Guard had just started doing some deep selecting the year before. The reaction in the officer corps to starting the practice was interesting. One of the more senior officers deep-selected the first year was on Governors Island, and his peers were angry at him. I never understood that. I mean, he didn't do it. He wasn't on the board that decided it. He did his job, and somebody said, "We think he ought to be rewarded for that. We think he's ready to move ahead faster." But it was new to the Coast Guard, and the reaction was surprising to me. Of course, being on Governors Island, where you had 10% of the Coast Guard right there, you had a pretty good flavor of what was going on when these things happened.

Paul Stillwell: And a closed community.

Admiral Gracey: Yes, but a good cross section of the Coast Guard. And that officer is, remains, a nice guy, a good guy, a good man. But, boy, he was persona non grata for a

* O-6 is the pay grade for a captain in the Navy or Coast Guard and for a colonel in the Army, Marine Corps, or Air Force.

while among some of his peers. Maybe I was too stupid to understand it was happening to me the following year. I didn't sense that.

Paul Stillwell: Well, based on your experience since then and the perspective you got from being Commandant, do you think deep selection is a good thing?

Admiral Gracey: Yes.

Paul Stillwell: Why?

Admiral Gracey: Oh, because (a) it's an incentive, and (b) the officer corps is chock-a-block full of good people. But if you've got a person who really seems to stand out for one reason or another, has done so in a variety of places he's been, things he's done, maybe you want this person to move ahead a little faster. It's a recognition of quality, and it also is an opportunity to get people that have some special things to offer into places where they can use them more quickly. It's regularly used nowadays, and I've had some people that worked for me that have been deep-selected, and I was delighted that they were. It doesn't always work. I can't tell you why it doesn't always, but sometimes it doesn't turn out to have been the right thing to do.

Paul Stillwell: A potential downside is that if a person keeps getting selected early he or she may have less total time in a Coast Guard career. Run through the series of ranks earlier.

Admiral Gracey: Well, no, he won't have less total time. He will just have more time at higher levels. I was selected for flag in '74, my 25th year. At that point, for the Coast Guard, that was very early. The other services were quicker than that. But the point is that I was—in effect—deep-selected twice. In '66 I made commander. In '69 I was selected for captain and '74 for rear admiral. I climbed fairly quickly. The Commandant

at the time was Chet Bender.* He's dead now, but I loved him dearly, as I think everybody did. Admiral Bender said, "My God, this man could be a flag officer for 11 years." After I retired from being Commandant I pointed out to him that I'd been a flag officer for 12 years. [Laughter] He said, "I know. I know. It's awful long." [Laughter] But let's say somebody is deep-selected but doesn't get promoted to flag. Well, he's still going to go to 30. He may just have more time at senior rank. The up-or-out thing takes effect at 30. Either make flag or you have to retire.

Paul Stillwell: I see what you're saying. I can give you an example of a shortened career in the Navy. Admiral Zumwalt got selected as the youngest CNO ever at that point.† So he had only about a 32-year career as a commissioned officer, whereas if there had been a more normal tenure he could have served longer.

Admiral Gracey: Well, yeah, that's because he went to the top and couldn't stay around. Well, I guess he could have. People have been known to go from there to other jobs. MacArthur went from Chief of Staff of the Army to do some other things.‡

Paul Stillwell: No rules apply to MacArthur.

Admiral Gracey: That's right. [Laughter] Bad example. For us Admiral Siler was selected for Commandant at a pretty early age and did four years and retired.§ I had four years as Pacific Area Commander and Atlantic Area Commander before I got selected to be the Commandant. That was great experience for me, and it was wonderful, but it also extended my career to beyond the limit. But as Commandant I was serving at the pleasure of the President. I actually went beyond the maximum. I went to 37 years when

* Admiral Chester R. Bender, USCG, served as Commandant of the Coast Guard from 1 June 1970 to 31 May 1974. His oral history is in the Naval Institute collection.

† Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr., USN, served as Chief of Naval Operations from 1 July 1970 to 29 June 1974. His oral history is in the Naval Institute collection. He became CNO when he was 49 years old.

‡ General Douglas MacArthur, USA, served as Army Chief of Staff from 21 November 1930 to 1 October 1935. He later commanded the Philippine Army until being recalled to U.S. service in 1941 and subsequently held command billets until 1951, when he was in his 70s.

§ Admiral Owen W. Siler, USCG, served as Commandant of the Coast Guard from 31 May 1974 to 1 June 1978. He was 56 when he retired.

36 was max in the Coast Guard. So it depends on where you are at the time and whatever.

Paul Stillwell: So this problem—if it's a problem—is going to apply to only a very few people.

Admiral Gracey: Oh, I would think so. We can only have one Commandant at a time, although there are those who don't think that's true. [Laughter] Mostly they're lieutenant commanders, you understand. And I've made that jibe before. I just want the record to show that I love lieutenant commanders, and I think their help makes this outfit great. They are the key of a lot of the stuff that makes an outfit run. I have a speech I make periodically when invited, and I talk about how I felt when I got to be a lieutenant commander and some crazy things I did and made a fool of myself because I was so overwhelmed at being a lieutenant commander. I thought, "Well, this is great," and it was great. It's a marvelous rank. The words "lieutenant commander" just roll off one's tongue.

Paul Stillwell: There was once an article titled, "Young Studs, Old Fuds, and Lieutenant Commanders."

Admiral Gracey: Good title. Since I retired, I've been a Senior Fellow for the Capstone Program, which is a course for new admirals and generals. In that time I've heard a lot of talk about "iron majors." That's a term that the Marine Corps and the Army use a lot. For us the lieutenant commanders are in that category. They're all iron majors, the ones you know. It's a universal trait because at that rank you are coming of age. You have broken through the juniors, and you haven't quite got to the seniors. You're a bright guy or bright gal with lots of good ideas, and you want to show them. And, like all youngsters, you think the old folks don't really know what the hell they're doing, sometimes.

Paul Stillwell: Well, on to Washington.

Admiral Gracey: The job I moved into in Washington was Chief, Programs Division, called CPA. The C part was for the Commandant. I was on the Commandant's staff, and PA was "program analysis." It was a captain's job. I was still a commander, selected for captain, but I was waiting for a number to show up.* The function of this office kind of developed over the years. Basically it was to look at the programs that the Coast Guard was going to pursue, the "What is it?" aspect of what's going to be in the budget. Look at priorities, where we need to put our money.

There was the Budget Division, and the Chief Budget Officer was the one who put the numbers in the slots and made it all come out. He put the budget together in prescribed format and all of those kinds of things. The CPA job was to review what the Coast Guard had been doing, see how it was going, look at what problems were there, analyze to see what programs needed our money, set priorities, and make recommendations to the Commandant on how to form the budget. Somewhere in the middle of all that, we worked with the budget people, and the numbers would go in. I insisted we not get bogged down in "how much" until we had a clear idea of "what" and "why." Armed with those decisions, we could use cost figures and personnel figures to determine "how much" and "where." Part of it also had to do with personnel strength. Not where does John Jones go, not that part of personnel, but in terms of strengths and structures—the kinds and numbers of people we needed to do the work we'd been talking about in the programs.

Paul Stillwell: Was personnel strength something that was not mandated by Congress?

Admiral Gracey: Well, each year you had to get the level you wanted approved, and that was a part of the budget that was presented. This is the number of officers, the number of enlisted, and so forth that we want to have, and, of course, the pay factor comes into play there. It's all in the authorization and appropriation process in Congress, where it gets

* The lineal list for Coast Guard officers has a specific number of individuals permitted in the higher ranks. An officer who is selected for promotion is not actually promoted until a vacancy occurs on the list for the next rank.

approved after it's been through Coast Guard's programming and budgeting, the Transportation Department, OMB, and then ultimately the President, of course.*

Paul Stillwell: So your job was to establish a target that you hoped to persuade Congress to approve?

Admiral Gracey: Well, we had to persuade DoT and OMB first. And it wasn't a target; it was a whole collection of targets and line items. And it was tied in with the programs.

My staff was relatively small. And it started out a little differently than it wound up. You're not going to be surprised if I tell you I changed a few things. [Laughter] The great manipulator, I guess. I don't know. I just thought there were ways to do it better. We ultimately wound up with a staff of about five or six lieutenant commander-level people. I think that we had one lieutenant, and we had a couple of commanders, and my exec was a commander. I was a captain. And these were really bright hotshot guys. They were not handpicked by me. I would like to say at this point that I never, ever picked anybody by name for any job with me anywhere. Well, I did—ultimately. I picked my Vice Commandant. And obviously when I was going in to be the Commandant later on, the Vice Commandant and I decided where we wanted the admirals to go. There were two that were to be promoted to vice admiral, and I picked those and got them approved.

Paul Stillwell: That was part of your job.

Admiral Gracey: What I mean about not ever picking staff people is I would not say, "I want John Smith. I don't care what he's doing. I want him to be with me."

Paul Stillwell: You didn't feather your nest.

Admiral Gracey: Well, yeah, I just didn't believe in it. My thought was, "I will tell you guys doing personnel assignments what I need in terms of capability. You find them for

* OMB—Office of Management and Budget.

me. That's your job. My job is to know what I need. I'll tell you what kind of quality we need to get the job done. You provide it, and I'll take it from there." And I've always prided myself on getting it done with the people that were sent to me. Sometimes the ones you get aren't the ones you want, but if you could get them to do the job, good for you. I was always kind of proud of the process, and Personnel always did well in whom they picked. Some were real surprises to me, but they served well. So we had this team of really good people. They knew the programs better than the program people did, to the point where the admirals—the Program Directors—would call on my guys to come and explain their programs to them. They were good.

When I took over CPA, I can't even remember now what the structure was, but I do know that every year everybody—each Program Manager and Program Director—would put in what they called their resource requirements: what they wanted us to buy, what they wanted us to spend, how many more airplanes they wanted, how many more ships, boats, what we needed to build, how many more people—all those kinds of things. And those documents were great tomes. Each one of them was an inch and a half, two inches thick, rife with deathless prose, as you can imagine.

Paul Stillwell: How much computer support did you have for this?

Admiral Gracey: Zero. Ultimately I'm going to get to where we got an electric typewriter and what a difference it made in our program. Computer assist came along, but at the beginning of my watch we didn't have it.

These Resource Requirements submissions were impossible to read. And there was a whole pile of them. The whole Coast Guard was here, and everybody had his own pet thing. Anybody that wanted to put something in could put it in, and nobody ever said, "No, don't send that in." Just everything came. There was this huge pile of paper, and you really couldn't do much with it that was meaningful. And I felt that decisions that you could make were not really meaningful, because you didn't have the real nitty-gritty of what you needed for alternatives and the like. So almost literally one weekend I sat down at home and devised what we called an RCP, a Resource Change Proposal, in a new format. And the format was four pages. It was a form with spaces in which you had

to work. For example, on the first page was a block of about three inches long and page wide in which you described the problem you wanted to solve with the resources you were asking for. You couldn't describe the problem in any more words than that. Outside that didn't count—no continuations. You had to describe the problem in that space. And then you had to talk about who was to be the overseer.

Paul Stillwell: Did you in any sense model yours after the DoD setup, McNamara's PPBS?*

Admiral Gracey: No. I picked up on the PPB, but we were very different. I have to tell you I can't even remember what the DoD setup was. I knew what we needed and how our approach would work. We had the Plans Evaluation Division, Program Analysis Division, and Budget Division—CPE, CPA, and CBU—all reporting to the Chief of Staff. CPE worked on long-range stuff. We were short-range planning and programming. But CPA really was pretty much the big dog. When we went into program budgeting, we said that the Office Chiefs, the admirals, were going to be called Program Directors. Then each program would have a boss called Program Manager. The programs were Search and Rescue, Aids to Navigation, Law Enforcement, Polar Icebreaking, Domestic Icebreaking, Bridge Administration, Commercial Vessel Safety, Recreational Boating Safety, Law Enforcement, Military Readiness, and Reserve Training—all the things the Coast Guard did. And we soon got into Environmental Protection big time.

Each one of those was a program, and each one had its own set of problems and things it needed. You described the problem in the space I designed—one problem to an RCP. Then you had space to describe four alternative actions to deal with the problem. Each one would have limited space in which to say how much money, how many people, and so forth. And then you would tell the various support elements impacted and the nature of the impact. To describe the impact for each you had one inch of space. What is the impact on personnel training? What is the impact on the supply system? What is the

* PPBS—Planning, Programming and Budgeting System, which was started in January 1961 by Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara. For details, see Gordon G. Riggle, "Looking to the Long Run," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, September 1980, pages 60-65.

impact on engineering capabilities to support this after we've got it built? I broke out maybe half a dozen of these things.

Finally, at the end, you had a 2-inch space in which you could say anything you wanted to say. You could wax eloquent to your heart's content, but you had to limit it to that space. Well, this hit the street with a great bang. You can imagine the reactions: "Impossible, you can't do that," and so forth. So I quoted Voltaire: "I apologize for the length of this letter. I didn't have time to write a short one." I think it was Voltaire that said that. If it wasn't, it was Gracey.

Paul Stillwell: Or Mark Twain.

Admiral Gracey: Well, somebody. [Laughter] I blamed it on Voltaire. But they got the idea, and I had the support of the Chief of Staff, my boss, and up the line. The Assistant Commandant and Commandant thought it was interesting to see what would happen. The Chief of Staff was the guy who had been living with the old system.

Paul Stillwell: Who was he?

Admiral Gracey: Admiral Scheiderer.*

Anyway, we started down the new path, and it had a wonderful effect. Now we could get a grip on the various issues and problems. We could review these things. We could look at them. We could balance them. For some people we had to go to them and say, "Look. Come on. You can do it better. That's not the problem. The problem isn't that you haven't got enough money. Or the problem isn't that you need 30 people instead of 20. The problem is there's something you're supposed to be doing, and you can't get it done because it's a manpower intensive—whatever. Don't describe your problem in terms of numbers of dollars and people. That's to be determined."

One of the rules I had in the Programs Division was that the word "dollar" was revoked. We never said the word "dollar" until we had a particular RCP lined up the way we thought it ought to go to solve the problem. Then we would find out how much it was

* Rear Admiral Edward D. Scheiderer, USCG.

going to cost. Then we could start peeling back. We could maybe split one, or maybe just drop some off the bottom, whatever. But I didn't want to get tangled up in dollars at the beginning. That also was hard for people outside the shop to get a handle on, because they said they were talking dollars. You're going to talk dollars ultimately, but right now we're talking about what the problem is that you're trying to solve. And we are trying to be sure we're attacking the real problem with the best alternative.

We then came to a system called Determinations. It was a separate piece of paper that was just devoted to problem statements from each Program Manager. They were one-liners, literally, that said what the problems were. Then we would meet with each Program Manager to be sure we understood, and that the Commandant would understand but not be buried in eloquence. They were very exciting sessions. But my six guys were wonderful.

Paul Stillwell: Did your shop establish a priority list of all these various problems?

Admiral Gracey: Yeah, a recommended priority list. We were obviously not the ultimate deciders, although everybody was convinced we were. And probably we were up to a point, because our bosses had faith in us. This stuff we were producing and that we were coaxing the program people to produce was in a form that would let us make an understandable statement to the boss. Then he could readily see what it was, because each problem, alternative solutions, impacts and costs were succinctly stated and presented in standardized format.

Paul Stillwell: And you probably had some special pleadings in these sessions that you've mentioned with the managers.

Admiral Gracey: Oh, a few special pleadings. You can bet on that. That's the understatement of the year. Before my sessions with Program Managers, my people, the "reviewers," would meet with each Program Manager's staff, and there would be a great give and take ahead of time. In our sessions within CPA the reviewers were the ones that pled the case. We would all get into it. I mean, we would get into table pounding in

there. We would go into what we called the “Round Room.” It was called the Round Room because of an acquisition I made one Saturday when I was working at our office in the DoT Building.*

The room that we had to work in for our within-CPA meetings contained a big, long rectangular table. So there were people at the ends and one thing and another. I was walking down the hall, and there, sitting outside a room, were two semicircular table sections. There was a carpeted hallway. I didn’t have to carry them. They were heavy. I towed them onto the elevator and down to our floor and back to our office. Then I took the rectangular tables down and dragged them out into the hall and around the corner where people couldn’t see them. I then set up the semicircular sections into a round table just right for eight people. When it was time to confer on Monday we had a round table. The reviewers became known as the “Knights of the Round Table”—among other kinds of things they got called. But we sat around that table, and nobody had a dominant position. One of the best little moves I ever made. I understand the name “Round Room” exists to this day—32 years later.

I’ve often wished we’d had recordings of some of the conversations. I remember one time when we were working really hard on trying to deal with the OMB budget mark. It always came back on Thanksgiving eve, and it was to be in by Monday, which meant we had Thanksgiving off, and then we went to work on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. There was really head-knocking to solve the problem: “How are we going to get from where we should be down to where they said we can be?”

Fortunately, these guys all had marvelous senses of humor and a sense of the bizarre—one of the qualities I had told Personnel I wanted in people assigned to be CPA reviewers. And in the heat of something really getting dynamic somebody would say, “I’ve got an idea. Why don’t we—?” And it would drive everybody into gales of laughter because, “Yeah, I can imagine so-and-so approving of that,” and then we’d all laugh some more.

So I got summoned into my boss’s office. That was Rear Admiral Ed Scheiderer. His office was right on the other side of the wall of the Round Room, and he said, “Are you guys ever going to get to work in there?”

* DoT—Department of Transportation.

I said, “What do you mean?”

He said, “There’s entirely too much laughter coming through the wall.”

I said, “You’ve got two choices. You can have laughter, or you can have sobbing. We don’t think sobbing solves much, and we found out laughter works very well. Why don’t you put in your earplugs? When we stop laughing you can start worrying.” Well, I went back and told the story, and that was greeted with loud gales of laughter. That’ll give you a sense of what kind of group it was.

Later on, I saw an issue of the *New Yorker* magazine. On its cover was a picture of the roof of a Cape Cod cottage with the shingles on the roof and all. On the ridgepole was a whole bunch of seagulls sitting shoulder to shoulder and all looking in one direction. Except at one end there was a space about two seagulls wide, and this one seagull was separated and looking in the other direction. And guess who I identified us with. [Laughter] I ripped the cover off the magazine, brought it in in the morning, tacked it up on the wall, and said, “There we are, guys. We’re seeing something they don’t see. Or at least we’re looking for it. And that’s what makes us good.”

Well, that got to be our trademark. We created the Order of the Seagull. They still present it to people who leave. When I left, my people had the graphic arts people make a huge pastel copy of the seagull picture. I took it with me everywhere I served after that. I have it hanging in my home office now. It really caught the flavor of what we were after. Visitors to my offices made some interesting comments and saw some different things in that picture over the years.

Paul Stillwell: Well, I would think that you would get quite a bit of gnashing of teeth and wailing from the conventional seagulls when you imposed this new system.

Admiral Gracey: You did get a lot of that. In fact, there was a bit of gnashing that became famous. I won’t quote verbatim, but it came at one of the review meetings from one of the Program Managers who was a bit of a character and a captain whom everybody admired and loved. He said, in response to some answer that I gave, “It’s hard to do that when you’re getting a baseball bat rammed up your you-know all the time.” [Laughter] Well, that got a stomping, standing applause, because we were tough.

We held the line that, “This is the way it’s got to be. If you guys can show us another way that works in the current climate, show us.”

Now, we wouldn’t have one of these review meetings until we’d been through a long period of back and forth between a given reviewer and the people of the program staff. After that the whole CPA team would kick it around. We’d say, “Go back and see if they can’t work out something here. Give us some quality assessment here.” But you always had to make some tough decisions. Then we would get to these overall sessions. They got tense sometimes, but we’d have some laughter there, too, because people understood what it was all about and where we were coming from. But there were always people that were angry.

At one point a Program Manager had come up with a great idea—that we were going to fly pollution equipment out to the scene of a ship in trouble and drop the items to the ship’s crew. And we were going to pay a large amount of money to package and rig this stuff so that we could drop it. It was a very popular scheme, but the question we asked was, “What are you going to do with it after you drop it? Are you going to land it on the ship?”

“Oh, you can’t do that.”

“Is it going to be in the water?”

“Of course.”

“Who’s going to get it out of the water?”

“Well, the people on the ship.”

“How are they going to get there? First of all, it’s in distress—usually heavy weather. Second, most of them don’t have boats they can put over to go get items in the water, even if the conditions would allow it.”

“Well, one of the things will be that there’s going to be a Coast Guard ship on the way, and when it gets there it’ll retrieve the gear.”

I said, “If we’re probably going to have to wait until a ship gets there, why don’t you just load the stuff on the Coast Guard ship in the first place and take it? Then you don’t have to fish it out of the water. You don’t have to go find where it’s bobbing around.”

“Oh, yeah, well we could do that.”

And one of my guys said, “What if we had a sled that we could tow along behind? Load it up with the pumps and tank bags, and if the problem is within accessible distance we could tow it.” So we built a bunch of sleds instead of the very expensive droppable packages. The sleds served other purposes in the meantime.

It’s that kind of stuff that would come out. Saved a lot of money. A lot of money. I don’t know how many tens of millions of dollars we saved with that sled versus parachute analysis. The original idea was imaginative and very glamorous. We were told, “Oh, you can’t stop it now. It’s been published in *Time* magazine.”

I said, “Well, we shouldn’t have published it in *Time* magazine, I guess.” And the Commandant agreed that it was too bad, but we had to back off. Anyway, it was an exciting exchange, and this kind of stuff went on all the time.

First you would do the new budget. At the same time you’d be reviewing the budget year you were operating in, and you’d be looking down the pike four or five years to try to see where you’re going with that. One of the things we did was press for reality regarding personnel structures in the budget. Don’t just talk about numbers of people, but what kinds, what pay grades, etc. Everybody always wanted second class petty officers. Never mind any seamen, no third class. They had to be second class or first class petty officers for everything. That’s just not possible to get all at once or to use well. So we looked into analyses of pay grades and skills *really* needed

I think I’ve devoted enough time to RCPs, but they were the foundation of our whole PPB system. And to my joy it had staying power. I think it was about three years ago I was asked to sit down with the current CPA bunch, who were having a day-long off-site conference over here at Fort Myer.* They asked me to come over and tell them a little bit about the history of it. That’s when I learned that their meeting room is still called the Round Room, and the seagull on the roof remains pertinent.

Paul Stillwell: It was at that period that DoD was getting reduced funding because Congress was tired of the Vietnam War. What was the level of Coast Guard funding at that point?

* Fort Myer, an Army post, is in Northern Virginia, adjacent to Arlington National Cemetery.

Admiral Gracey: One other thing I'm going to tell about. One year we got hit with a 35% cut in the Coast Guard. Over one-third cut, and we were hard up to start with. How do you cope with that? Well, we went through our analysis process. And I persuaded the Commandant that there was no point in talking about trying to pare down individual line items or programs. You know, close one station here, one station there. Let's start by saying, "We now have a Coast Guard that's two-thirds as big as it used to be. And it's all a brand-new world for us. Nobody ever thought of it before, but now we're going to have a different Coast Guard. What's it going to look like? What's going to be in it?"

He was kind of intrigued by that approach, and so that's what we did. We started to build a new Coast Guard that was two-thirds as big as the old one, and one of the things that was not in it anymore was the OSV program—ocean-station vessels, weather ships.*

Paul Stillwell: This was on Admiral Bender's watch?

Admiral Gracey: Yes, under Admiral Bender. I had one year with Admiral Smith and four years with Admiral Bender.[†] I had five years in CPA. And there's a story that goes with that, too, as there's a story with everything, Paul. That was the end of the Ocean-Station Program. We didn't need it anymore. Aircraft could now fly to Europe or Asia safely and without mid-ocean help. One of the things that kept the OSV program going—like when I was doing it in 1949 in *Barataria*—was that the planes needed a navigation fix going across, they needed the weather data, and they needed somebody out there in case they didn't make it. They were flying the Constellations or something like that, the propeller aircraft.

But in the early '70s, when we first started looking at this, you could fly across the ocean. You didn't need that safety net. There was other navigation capability. The planes were far more capable. Yes, it was useful. Yes, an extra benefit to the Coast

* The program was terminated in June 1974, except for Ocean Station Hotel, which monitored Gulf Stream currents north of Cape Hatteras. See Michael R. Adams, "Ocean Weather Hotel: A Stormy Address," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, April 1975, pages 100-102.

[†] Admiral Willard J. Smith, USCG, served as Commandant of the Coast Guard from 1 June 1966 to 31 May 1970. His oral history is in the Naval Institute collection.

Guard was that it gave us seagoing capability and seagoing experience, and it gave us a fleet of big ships—the high-endurance cutters. And that was the hard part to let go. People thought that was the end of the Coast Guard as a seagoing organization. Vietnam was going on at the time. Many of these ships wound up in the Vietnamese Navy or something like that. But that was a way we could make that huge cut and keep essentially the rest of the Coast Guard running. There were other cuts. We cut stations and one thing and another and made some pieces smaller, some activities smaller. But the OSVs were the lion's share of the cut that was made, and we got at it from the rationale I described. Another helpful factor was that ICAO, International Civil Aviation Organization, requirement for the program was slated to disappear in a couple years. They had to be persuaded, because aircraft of many nations were relying on our OSVs

Paul Stillwell: You had started off from a programmatic approach and then only later applied the dollars. At what point did you get into negotiations with OMB?

Admiral Gracey: Well, what we did first, of course, was all amongst ourselves. Then we went through the Department of Transportation. And the Department would review our proposal and decide how it would fit into their plans. A lot of people had great hopes that creating the Department of Transportation would be good for us because it was assumed they would understand capital investments and all that sort of thing better than Treasury had.* But DoT also had grant programs and highway programs and all those kinds of things that really took big-time political priority over what the Coast Guard might need.

Incidentally, I was overjoyed recently—this is 2001—when for the first time that I can remember a Secretary of Transportation in speaking publicly referred to himself as the Secretary of the Coast Guard. I read that, and I've heard it in person since. If I'd been in the audience I probably would have run up and given Secretary Norm Mineta a hug.† I tried and tried and tried to get various Transportation Secretaries to say, "I'm the

* The Coast Guard shifted from its previous home in the Treasury Department to the newly created Department of Transportation in 1967.

† Norman Y. Mineta became Secretary of Transportation in January 2001. The Coast Guard shifted out of his purview in 2003 when it became part of the new Department of Homeland Security.

Secretary of the Coast Guard.” I tried particularly to get Secretary Dole to do it.* She would have been the first woman to be Secretary of one of our Armed Forces

“Well, I’m not. I’m the Secretary of Transportation.”

“I know.” [Laughter]

“I know and you know, but it wouldn’t hurt those guys and gals out there to hear that you are their Secretary too.”

Back to my days in CPA. DoT would react, and we would meet and haggle. Then they’d come back with the DoT mark, and we’d appeal, and ultimately they would make a decision. That would be what went to OMB. Then OMB would have hearings and make a decision. That’s when the annual Thanksgiving weekend work-fest and re-make took place. Sometimes we got the Secretary to appeal for us. Usually not. And all the while the working-level folk would be churning around at CG HQ. Ultimately it would get into the President’s budget that went to the Hill.†

Paul Stillwell: Where did the mandate come from to cut by a third?

Admiral Gracey: You know, I’m sorry to tell you I can’t remember. It had to be OMB, but I can’t remember why or what was motivating it. I can’t even remember the year for sure. I certainly remember the event. The budget request for the Coast Guard starts off with what we need, then changes to what the Department will let us have, and then finally changes to what OMB lets us have. That goes to the Hill. Our budget had three faces before it got to Congress: USCG’s, DoT’s, and OMB’s.

More about that in a minute, but I’ve just thought of a sidebar about the fun we mixed with the very hard and good work my CPA people did. You were talking about relationships with the Program people in Headquarters. Randy read somewhere that if you talk to plants they really respond. And I had a barren office. So I took a schefflera down to the office, a fairly sizable plant, and put it in the office window. We called it Shirley, Shirley the Schefflera. People would come into the office and I would say, “Have you met Shirley? Shirley likes us to talk to her. Look how she’s dragging. Why

* Elizabeth Hanford Dole was Secretary of Transportation from 7 February 1983 to 30 September 30 1987.

† "The Hill" refers to Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., that is, the U.S. Congress.

don't you say hello to Shirley?" I tried it out on my friends first, but pretty soon the word got out that when you go into Gracey's office you've got to talk to that stupid plant. [Laughter] And every time a new guy would come, the CPA humorists would be gathered outside the door to see what happened when I introduced the visitor to the plant. [Laughter] Well, after a while that got to be a joke, and I mean everybody understood it was in fun. They would first talk to the plant—even stroke its leaves. Shirley thrived. Was still around when I was Commandant—a tree by then.

Back to the "Three-Part List." So this budget request was in three levels. And I worked a lot with the congressional committee people, because I had it, and they wanted to know what was coming. They wanted to be prepared. One day the senior staffer for the Chairman of the CG Authorization Committee came down to my office to talk and get briefed. I thought I was in big trouble when that happened, because usually I was summoned up to his office. But he came in, Ernie Corrado, and he said, "The trouble is you guys don't ever ask for enough. Why the hell don't you ask for more?"*

I said, "You haven't the slightest idea what we ask for. You don't know what we ask for. You don't even know that it's been rinsed three times."

He said, "What do you mean by that?" and I told him.

In fact, I had a piece of paper with it all laid out in columns and I said, "See?"

He said, "Give me that paper."

I said, "No way. No way. I'll tell you what, though. If the Chairman of the House Committee said, 'Could you guys create something like this for us?' I'll bet the Commandant would have to say, 'Yes.'"

That very afternoon we got a letter from the Chairman to the Commandant saying, "I would like to have a list that shows what you initially asked for, what the Department approved, and what OMB approved in the final budget of all the line items and the dollar value."

And the poor Commandant hemmed and hawed, and I explained, "This is my fault, but I think it's a golden opportunity."

And so he said, "Well, I don't guess there's much we can do about it. They asked for it, so tell them, 'Yes.'"

* Ernest J. Corrado, counsel to the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee.

I said, “I think you’ll be very happy.” The last I knew when I was visiting with the current CPA crew a couple of years ago, it is still a practice that one of the things Congress does, first crack out of the barrel, is to send a letter saying, “Show us your Three-Part List.” It became known as the “Three-Part List.” Drove the Department of Transportation crazy. They said, “You guys are off the reservation.”

Our Chairman said, “Show us.” What am I going to do? I can’t ignore the Congress. You don’t want me to be in contempt of Congress. [Laughter]

Paul Stillwell: You’re so innocent. [Laughter] How much effect did your Harvard training and experience have when you were doing this function?

Admiral Gracey: It’s hard to say. I’m not sure. Obviously it had to help. I mean, you know in the discussion of cases at Harvard we would talk about defining the problem and looking at the impacts, and all the kinds of things which I ultimately spun out into the RCP. But I can remember at one point somebody from—I think it was GAO—came down and wanted the Commandant to explain how our system worked. And this was when Admiral Smith was the Commandant, my first year that we had started this new approach.

So we made up a flip chart, and we showed the process to be a circular kind of business where you define the problem, find alternatives, cost them out, select one, go for it. Then you review how it’s going. If it’s not doing what you expected, that wasn’t the best choice. You’ve got to do something else. Find some other alternatives. You know the process, but it was all a circle. And I said, “This is nothing more than the standard business of seeing a problem and deciding how to get at it. We’re doing it within the government’s system, but the basics are the same. First we’re sorting out what the problems are and which ones warrant attention most.”

He was quite taken by that and said, “Well, that sounds different than I understood it. That sounds pretty good.” So we were happy. We kept going. So the Business School obviously made a contribution there.

One thing, incidentally, that was controversial was Research and Development. Our R&D program needed some help. There were a bunch of things the Coast Guard

needed to work on. But I insisted that it was possible to subject R&D proposals to the same kind of analysis as the others, as AC&I, which is building ships, building buildings, or our operating expense, OE. “No, no, no, you can’t do that. You can’t do cost-effectiveness for R&D,” said the R&D Program people and others.

I said, “You can do cost-effectiveness in the sense that you tell me what the benefits are if we succeed. And you tell me what the risk is that we will or will not succeed. And you pick any number you want. You just tell me what you think the risk is going to be and what is going to be the benefit, and then tell me how much you plan to spend, at what risk, to get how much benefit. If you’re going to spend \$400,000 and the benefit is going to be \$20,000, don’t even talk to me. It’s got nothing to do with cost-effectiveness. I guess it does, but that’s not what we’re talking about. We’re talking about putting the limited amount of R&D money we’re going to have on those things which have the greatest promise for reaping great benefits for the service, and hopefully at some level of risk that we’re willing to take. If you tell me that you have this great benefit but the chances are like 2% that you’ll ever figure out how to do it, well, maybe we ought to weigh that against some other way to use our money.” Well, they never liked it, but we insisted on doing it that way.

Paul Stillwell: Do you remember any specific R&D projects that might have applied to?

Admiral Gracey: No. I wish I could.

Paul Stillwell: Were vessel traffic systems beyond the R&D stage at that point?

Admiral Gracey: VTS was certainly an area where we could use some of the things that we were working on, so they were being funded, and they were looking at different kinds of ways to approach the problem. There was radar, low-light-level television, sensors and computer displays, and communications—various ways to see what was going on and how to display it. That was an ongoing business. The VTS was always in there. It was high priority at the time.

There was one incident—it was famous in those days—that involved a two-star Program Director tangling with poor little old us in CPA. The PD was Rear Admiral Mike Benkert, who was the Chief, Office of Merchant Marine Safety.* A world-class individual who was Mr. Merchant Marine Safety. He was also Mr. Outlandish Character. He was aware of the submarines that were being developed for deepwater work, and he wanted to buy one for the Merchant Marine Safety program to experiment with. The “Yellow Submarine,” it was called and he was going to buy one. I never did figure out whether he was putting it in the RCP just to put us to the test or whether it was for real. But it was an annual event that the Yellow Submarine always showed up on the wish list and with beautiful—but succinct—problem descriptions. But we never bought a Yellow Submarine. Even R&D couldn’t figure out how to fund it.

Paul Stillwell: What possible application would it have?

Admiral Gracey: Well, he thought that if there was a sunken vessel we could go down and look at it, that we could work underneath ships without putting them in dry dock. And ultimately we got to do some of those kinds of things with robots. But he thought it was a good idea to take people down. They could see what was down there, and if there was a wreck they could go look at it and get some idea of how it got there or maybe you could even use it to find a sunken vessel. Some of them were hard to find. Interesting idea—but not for the Coast Guard—not then.

But Mike was Mike, and he would always come into my office. Most of the flags sent their staffs. Mike always came himself. We were known quantities to each other, and a friendship of respect was growing. He was in New York at the Marine Safety Office when I was doing Governors Island, and he lived on the island. And he said [imitation of growling voice]: “I lived through that Gracey era out there. I know what it’s like to deal with him.” And he would come into CPA and make a loud pronouncement about his submarine—to the joy of my troops, who loved hearing their captain getting berated by that particular rear admiral. When I was selected for flag rank he was the first to congratulate me—with a hug!

* Rear Admiral William M. Benkert, USCG.

R&D was working on the pollution cleanup stuff. And VHF radio.* The VHF radio system was being developed at that time so we could set up our network of VHF all along the coast so people in trouble could call and could be heard. There would be receivers that would pick up their calls all along the coast. And that was as part of the R&D at the time. I wish I could find one of the old budgets and dig it out and refresh my memory on what some of them were, but obviously I can't. The Vietnam operations were still under way, and that had to be considered, but our part of that was being funded largely by the Navy.

I used slogans each year to promote our needs and keep us on track. We would put together the budget and coin a gimmick to help stress our priorities. The first year I said, "Admiral, this year we're calling our recommended budget focus, "People, Plant and Pollution." We're going to work on things to make life for our people better. We're going to work on improving our plant. Our physical plant is not in good shape. And pollution is one of our good things to target. We have always had the Refuse Act. That's been long in existence. People are beginning to be concerned about pollution. And I think we ought to get a head start on it because it's coming. Water pollution is getting national concern. And it's part of our job. We need to focus on how we're going to cope with it." This was before the Water Quality Act and all of that.†

He said, "Sounds good to me," so we went forth with the People, Plant, and Pollution Budget. It was a catch phrase. You could get the focus. A couple of years later we went up with one called Defense, Drugs, and Dependability. We're going to concentrate on our defense capability, our ability to fight the drug war and making sure out equipment could be maintained and was dependable. Congressman Gerry Studds from Cape Cod, our chairman, sent back a letter that said, "I would like to add a fourth D. I would like to see one called Dinghy and Dory Doom Denial." [Laughter] i.e., search and rescue.‡ Come to think of it, that occurred when I was Commandant. That came

* VHF—very high frequency.

† Growing public awareness and concern for controlling water pollution led to enactment of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments of 1972. As amended in 1977, this law became commonly known as the Clean Water Act.

‡ Gerry E. Studds, Democrat from Massachusetts, served in the House of Representatives from 3 January 1973 to 3 January 1997). He was chairman, Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries, 1993-1994.

direct to me personally, and he wouldn't have done that when I was in CPA. So I'm a little off station here on that. Doesn't change the fun of it though.

That was a marvelous five-year period in CPA, marvelous for me anyway. But it was a time of interesting things happening. I mentioned the fact that the Ocean-Station Vessel Program went away. It was also the time when we started to build the polar icebreakers, that is what we call the Polar class, *Polar Star* and *Polar Sea*.^{*} The big decision on that was between being nuclear powered or fossil fuel. The Russians were going nuclear. I'm amazed that I can't remember the name of the Russian one that we talked so much about, but they were using nuclear for their icebreakers, and they were operating all over the polar regions, and that was supposed to be the way to go. But it was going to be horrendously expensive, and we really needed two ships.

I don't want to sound like Navy Secretary John Lehman with his 600 ships with our two, but we needed two polar icebreakers to replace the old Wind class.[†] The Winds were fine ships, but they were designed to patrol along the edge of the polar regions. They weren't designed to get deep into polar ice.

Paul Stillwell: And they were old.

Admiral Gracey: And they were old.[‡] We did have some newer ones. We got *Edisto* and *Glacier* from the Navy when we totally took over U.S. polar icebreaking operations, and *Glacier* kept going for a while. Some of the Winds had gone away and come back again, that sort of thing. Ultimately the decision was to go for fossil fuel. We could use the gas-turbine kind of an approach for high power if we needed it. And that went over to OMB, and it bounced in the infamous Thanksgiving mark. They said, "No way." Well, we really needed those icebreakers—needed them not only for resupply as in Thule, Greenland, and there was a lot of work going on in Antarctica at the time, but for

^{*} The icebreaker *Polar Star* (WAGB-10) was commissioned 17 January 1976 and the *Polar Sea* (WAGB-11) on 26 September 1976. Each ship is 399 feet long, 84 feet in the beam, and has a full-load displacement of 13,190 tons. For details, see R. G. Moore, "The Polar Icebreakers: Breaking Through at Last," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, December 1979, pages 115-119.

[†] John F. Lehman, Jr., served as Secretary of the Navy from 5 February 1981 to 10 April 1987. His long-stated goal of building the U.S. Navy to 600 ships was not realized during his tenure, and the size of the fleet has declined steadily ever since.

[‡] The Wind-class 269-foot-long icebreakers had been commissioned during World War II.

scientific work. We planned some scientific spaces into the new ones. Not as much as we've got in *Healy*, the new one, which is a marvelous floating lab in combination with all the other kinds of things we do with our polar icebreakers.* But, anyway, we had scientific space designed in, and we needed that.

I'm proud of having drafted an appeal, which has got to set the all-time record for brevity. I wrote a letter for the Commandant's signature to the President. He appealed right to the President. Some might find that hard to believe, but it was one that we weren't winning, and we really felt deeply about it. And the essence was, "Mr. President, the choice is very simple. Do you want the United States to have a presence in the Polar Regions alongside the U.S.S.R. or not? If you do, let us build the ships."

Paul Stillwell: Was this when Nixon was President?†

Admiral Gracey: Yes, it would have been Nixon. Anyway, it succeeded, and we got the money, and we built the ships. I'm really proud of that brief masterpiece of cool logic. You want to be in the polar regions? Just as simple as that—build them. I thought it was marvelous that the Commandant—and it had to be Bender, I think—was willing to sign that, because the great temptation in a letter like that is to go to great deathless prose and bleed all over the carpet.

Paul Stillwell: Another icebreaking thing during that period, the commercial tanker *Manhattan* was strengthened to go up through the so-called Northwest Passage.‡ How much Coast Guard involvement was there with that?

* The icebreaker *Healy* (WAGB-20) was placed in active commission on 21 August 2000. She is 460 feet long, 94 feet in the beam, has a maximum draft of 32 feet, and a top speed of 12.5 knots. Her full-load displacement is 17,710 tons.

† Richard M. Nixon was President of the United States from 20 January 1969 until his resignation from office on 9 August 1974.

‡ In August and September 1969 the SS *Manhattan*, a combination tanker/icebreaker made a round trip via the Northwest Passage to test the feasibility of year-round tanker operations between the U.S. East Coast and Alaska. The ship repeated the voyage in July-August 1970. Later, the development of the Alaska Pipeline became the means of delivery of Alaskan oil to the lower 48 states.

Admiral Gracey: Oh, a lot, because it was accompanied by a couple of icebreakers. It was very successful. They did it. I don't think anybody ever decided it was a good way to go, but it showed it could be done. The Coast Guard was involved big time.

During Admiral Bender's commandancy, the Navy announced it was pulling out of Kodiak, Alaska. They were shutting down their 17th District office in Kodiak. We were flying C-130s out of the Naval Air Station there, and we had a couple of ships tied up in Kodiak.* The question was, "What are we going to do when the Navy goes?" Besides our C-130s we had *Storis* and a 180 there, a communications station and a Loran A station at Spruce Cape.

And the suggestion was, "Why can't we do what we did at Governors Island? Why don't we take it over, run it, make it a Coast Guard Air Station and Base? We need it big time. There's going to be more and more activity up there. We're going to be getting into the fisheries enforcement and so forth. And we've got to have a place to fly our C-130s. We can base them out of Hawaii, or we can base them out of Elmendorf Air Force Base at Anchorage, but we will lose all kinds of productive flying time just getting to the scene let alone flying around after we get on scene and we need that time."

So my hotshots and I, with lots of input from others in the building, worked out an analysis on why we really ought to take over Kodiak. The Commandant flew up to Kodiak to visit and see the place. A couple other people and I went with him. And it was a bit awesome. The Navy facilities were spread all over the place and pretty barren. And the Navy hadn't been keeping it up very well, because they knew they were getting out of there. But I had a chance all the way up and back to do a little selling and talking as we went, and it was pretty clear that we ought to make the move.

Me and my big mouth—as we landed in Kodiak I saw a big white wooden star up on the mountainside. And I commented to the Navy people, "Well, it won't be too long till we'll convert that to a shield."

One of them said, "I don't think so. That's where one of our aircraft hit the mountain and killed everybody aboard." He said, "I don't think you want to change that."

* The Lockheed C-130 Hercules is a cargo aircraft powered by four turboprops. It was developed for the Air Force in the 1950s and has since been adapted for use as well by the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard.

I said, “No, I think I should have asked first, obviously.” Now, that was just a couple of young guys standing on the side talking, but the star is still on the mountainside the last I knew.

The decision was finally made that we were going to go for it. I talked earlier about the Kodiak Project staff teeing off their planning from the PERT charts I’d made for Governors Island. When I offered them to the team I said, “You’re going to have to call the Base newspaper the *Kodiak Gazette*. You can’t call it the *Governors Island Gazette*.” [Laughter] “But other than that why don’t you see if the charts can help? I’m sure that a lot of it won’t apply. You’re not going to be running ferryboats and stuff like that, but at least it’ll give you a running start.” Later they told me it was a part of the planning process, and I was pleased with that.

But our taking Kodiak was a good decision. We’ll get to this when I get to talking about my Commandant years, but some years later there was a proposal that we change all that and move all our operations to Dutch Harbor. This was, as I say, in the ’80s. And I’ll talk about that when we get there. Not a good idea, but it took a little friendly persuasion to head it off. Logic, deathless logic is what it took. [Laughter]

Paul Stillwell: If only people could see those things the way you saw them.

Admiral Gracey: Well, simple facts help sometimes.

Another thing that came up in that period that made a big change was a new approach to funding field units. It involved what we called OG-30. It’s the money that goes to the operating unit to paint, repair. It’s the day-to-day, run-the-place money.

Paul Stillwell: Is fuel part of it?

Admiral Gracey: I don’t think so, but I can’t really remember the details. It was a part of the operating expense appropriations. My suggestion was, “Why don’t we come up with some kind of a way to let the people on scene be the masters of their own destiny? Why don’t we let the chief petty officer that’s running a station somewhere decide whether this

is the year to paint the building, or maybe it's the year to put in new downspouts, or maybe it's the year to pave where the trailer sits under his boats? Whatever.”

“Oh, you can't do that,” said the engineers. “They'll all pine-panel their offices.”

“Well, they're only going to pine-panel them once. And they're not going to pine-panel them every year. I don't believe they're going to do that anyway. Some of them may not like pine paneling. But you can come up with a cost-reporting system that determines and reports a variance. You can say to them, ‘Here's your pot of money. We think you ought to split it in about these proportions for maintenance and replacements and utilities—categories of things.’ And then you can look at the report and see how they decided to use their money. If somebody's got a huge variance on a portion that you think ought to have been 20% devoted to fixing up the interior spaces and some guy spent 90%, then you may want to go check and see if he pine-paneled everything. But you won't need to do that very often, and I bet you're not going to have a problem.”

The engineers really were opposed to it, because they had always reviewed everything that a unit did. It was the culture. That's not an anti-engineers statement. It was just the way it was done and always had been. ECV, Civil Engineering, looked at the buildings. ENE, Naval Engineering, looked at the ships. But I sold the idea. The Commandant bought it, and we put into place.

The end result, of course, is that it turned out that units had more money than they thought they had, and they did things with it that really needed to be done. And, yeah, they pine-paneled a couple of offices, and they pine-paneled some rec rooms, and the troops loved it and were very happy. And I was saying, “Hey, what price are you going to pay for happy troops? Too bad we didn't think of pine-paneling the rec room a long time ago, but the chief knew, didn't he? So come on.”

Paul Stillwell: Just letting people be able to control their own destiny is so important.

Admiral Gracey: Well, it made them cost and value and priority conscious. It made them focus on what *they* saw was needed most. Nowadays we would call it empowerment, I guess. But the OG-30 move was a huge change at the time I'm talking about—a truly major revolution in how Coast Guard operating funds were spent. It was a

case of saying, “Yeah, we trust you.” I would say, “You trust this guy to order his troops out in a blinding snowstorm and risk their lives to go save somebody, but you don’t trust him to decide whether he ought to put new windows in the rec room? Come on. Come on.” Anyway, we did it, and I think it’s extant. It’s still there.

Family housing was a big problem. The Coast Guard didn’t have housing. At some of our units like lighthouses, there would be a keeper’s quarters and that sort of thing, but we didn’t have family housing as a rule. Governors Island had it when we got there, of course. And some of the stuff that I saw and learned on Governors Island was now spinning off, because I was into this CPA job after my Governors Island tour. We incidentally got money for a new public works shop and an industrial center at Governors Island after I got to CPA, because I knew what we could do with it.

Somewhere in here—I can’t believe this is really true because it is so common now—but I really believe in my heart that I coined the phrase “People are our most important resource.” I don’t remember hearing it ahead of time, but I wrote it in the Commandant’s statement to the Congress that I drafted in 1969. I used to bang away at it, and he said it publicly, and it was reported in the press.

Now, whether other people picked up on it, or maybe I’d heard it from someone else, I don’t know. Anyway, I beat the poor man to death with it: “We’ve got to take care of our troops and their families. We’re sticking them out in the middle of nowhere. They’re in resort areas or isolated areas. They’re trying to find a place to live. And they’re on horrendous hours. If we could get the families somewhere near to where they work, then these guys could go home for lunch. They could whatever. They could have some semblance of family life, and the families would be a part of what was going on.” All the arguments for why, especially in our smaller units. So we had some success with housing, and gradually every year it would be a part of our AC&I program, and it got accepted by DoT and Congress as something we were going to do every year—buy/build some housing.

Then we went into a rental program, where we would rent houses for people in certain areas where we couldn’t afford to buy. And then we went into looking at buying development houses instead of contracting to build ourselves. Somebody would build them, we would buy them, not on a contract for us, but there would be a developer, and

he was building some houses, and we wanted to house some people. We would buy a section of it. But we would try to avoid buying all together. We didn't want, all down one street to be Coast Guard families. That would be Coast Guard Street. We had the houses we owned spread around in the development so that our people got mixed in with the public, and they had some semblance of normal living. We wanted our families and their kids to mix. The public got to know us, and we got to know them.

This had been part of my experience on Governors Island, where I'd had the famous bus episode because our kids who came in the gull-gray bus were treated different than the kids who walked to school in Manhattan. No, no, no. We don't need that.

Oh, a role for women. It took off more and more later on, but I really believed that there was a role for women in the Coast Guard. I just really believed that we ought to have women doing everything they could. We weren't bound by the rules of the law that the DoD agencies were about women in combat, and I just thought that we ought to get women active in the Coast Guard. And we ought to get them so that, ultimately, they could do anything anybody else could do. I pushed hard for that.

It seemed like the first reaction of everyone was what we called the bathroom/bedroom syndrome. "Where will they sleep? Where will they go to the bathroom?" Oh, come on. We'll figure it out, and if there's no possible solution to that problem we won't put women there. Or maybe we'll put women there and no men."

Oh, that was, "Oh, no, no, no. You can't do that."

And then there was the Coast Guard Reserve. We needed to put them into realistic training and helping with our peacetime work. This started toward the end of Admiral Smith's watch. Vice Admiral Paul Trimble led the charge.* There was a press by Congress to get rid of the Coast Guard Reserve. "Why do you guys need a Reserve?" said Congress. And the administration was into it also, "Do away with the Coast Guard Reserve. You don't need it. The war is over."

Admiral Trimble came up with the idea, "Well, we really do need them because we need help, and we'll put them to work instead of doing drills." The congressional

* Vice Admiral Paul E. Trimble, USCG, served as Assistant Commandant of the Coast Guard, 1966-70.

angle was, “They’re wasting their time sitting in the classroom somewhere, and they call it a drill day. They’re doing the same thing they did last month and last year.”

Paul Stillwell: Some truth to that.

Admiral Gracey: Yes. So the Trimble approach was, “Why don’t we put them to work in doing the work of the regular Coast Guard?” And he asked me to see what I could do about putting together that package and selling it. It was a great idea, but the Reserve leadership, the Chief, Office of Reserve at the time absolutely hated the idea, and so did a lot of the old-time Reservists. They saw it as, “Well, that’s the end of the Coast Guard Reserve.” Of course, the counter argument was, “I don’t believe that’s going to be the end. It’s a whole new lease on life. But if you keep going the way you’re going, the Coast Guard Reserve is out of here.”

Paul Stillwell: The end of it was guaranteed.

Admiral Gracey: Yeah, yeah. What the Assistant Commandant was doing was heading this off at the pass by saying, “We can certainly use those people. They can help us on weekends, and they can help us at other times.” And, of course, since then we’ve really developed the program and got into the “One-Family” routine big time. And now they’re actually operating at the unit, and they don’t have drills. They go away to their assigned station and all that sort of thing. But at that time it was just, “You’re not going to drill. You’re going to go do the Coast Guard’s work at the Coast Guard Station or wherever you can help.” It came into place, and at that point we had a whole new version of the Reserve Training Program. That all got started in that time I was in CPA.

It was an interesting five years to be sitting where I was. And, of course, one of the most interesting things was Bender Blue.* Admiral Bender said, “I want a unique

* Up to that time, Coast Guard blues were really black rather than blue and closely resembled the uniforms worn by Navy officers and chief petty officers. Admiral Bender brought in new uniforms that were essentially royal blue in color and obviously distinct from Navy uniforms. In addition, the blouses for the new uniforms were single-breasted instead of double-breasted, and the shirts worn with Bender Blue were specified as light blue rather than the white shirts worn by Navy personnel.

uniform.” Well, don’t you think that was controversial?

Paul Stillwell: Yes. [Laughter]

Admiral Gracey: I’ve got to tell you. I’m a Virgo, and I understand that means my favorite color is blue and my Academy class ring is a shade of blue which very closely resembles the color of the Coast Guard uniform today. Of course, I had the class ring long before we had Bender Blue. And I absolutely love the color he chose. [Laughter] And I liked the single-breasted style. A lot of people didn’t. But he had the courage of his convictions. By gosh, he was determined. The only thing I wish is that we’d also changed the mess jacket, the dinner-dress blue. Changing the uniform involved, of course, some major programming decisions. How were we going to pay for it? We couldn’t do it all at once. There had to be a phase in. There were going to be people who were finishing up their time. It wasn’t right to ask them to buy a new uniform. We had to build stock for the enlisted people. Lots of accommodations to work out.

So we decided to ease into it and have an optional period where you could use up the old blues and buy into the new ones, and those who liked the new ones, of course, bought into them the first chance they had. Everybody had spent some money on some uniforms, and they were trying to use it up. Nobody was getting rich in those days. But it was Admiral Bender’s personal move. I never did find out what inspired it or whatever, but I think it was genius.

Nowadays Air Force and the Coast Guard blues are very close together in shade, but for a while they were not. Our blue was a different blue. Later on, when I got to San Francisco as the Pacific Area Commander, Admiral Bender one day said, “I have a uniform here. It was the original Bender Blue. It’s the one I wore.” It was made for him by the outfit in Natick, Massachusetts, that does uniforms and tests fabrics and all that. He told them what he wanted, and they made him one. And he said, “I didn’t wear it very much, and you’re about my size. How about if I give it to you?”

Well, it fit just fine. I changed the striping to vice admiral, and I wore it off and on. Restriped it again when I was the Commandant. Just before I retired I had a little ceremony with the people that run the Coast Guard Museum, and I said, “I’d like to

present you with the original Bender Blue. It's been worn by two Commandants, and I think it ought to be hanging someplace." I have no idea where it is today. [Laughter] I hadn't thought about it for a long time.

Paul Stillwell: What else can you say about him as a person, his working style, his personality, your relationship?

Admiral Gracey: Admiral Bender. Wonderful man, droll sense of humor, very stubborn, was an aviator, had a great twinkle in his eye, which I didn't see at first. One of my classmates, later Rear Admiral Bill Stewart, was working as his Executive Assistant, and he said, "You're not watching. You're worried about selling programs. Watch him."* Even today, you say "Chet Bender" to Bill, and he beams. He thought Chet could walk on water, and he just really thought he was one of the world's great individuals. Me too. I got so I just loved the guy.

Admiral Bender hated acronyms. I had an Academy classmate working up in the Department of Transportation, and he was absolutely determined that we didn't know what the hell we were talking about when it came to politics, programs, and budgets. He had the hot skinny. He was going to come down and tell the Coast Guard how to run our program, etc. He wanted an appointment with the Commandant, and here were his credentials.

I said, "See the Assistant Commandant. But I'll tell you one thing. When you go in there to brief Admiral Bender, don't give him all this acronym gobbledy-gook you've been giving us. He'll throw you right out on your ear."

"Oh, yeah, well. We'll see."

In the first three sentences he had six acronyms, and Admiral Bender out of the clear blue sky made up one. He said, "What do you think about the DIRPLANK." I don't know what it was. You know, pick one. Some acronym.

And, of course, my friend was struck dumb because he'd never heard this one. He hadn't heard it because nobody had ever heard it. Admiral Bender had made it up

* Captain William H. Stewart, USCG, administrative aide to the Commandant.

right on the spot. And my friend got all flustered and red and said, “I have to confess, Admiral, I don’t know what that means.”

Admiral Bender said, “Now you know how I feel. I haven’t got the slightest idea what you’ve said to me in the previous two paragraphs. And why don’t you go away and come back sometime when you can talk to me in plain language?” [Laughter] And we all left. Of course, that was another time when there was great laughter in the Round Room when I reported to them what had happened to our arch critic. We all loved that story. Well, Admiral Bender would do that sort of thing.

He was a gentleman’s gentleman. He was accepted. He was receptive to some of our new ideas, you know, the OG-30 and some of the things we were throwing at him which changed our way of doing business. And everybody thought Chet Bender would be pretty set in his ways: “Boy, if it was good enough for Alexander Hamilton it was good enough for him,” and that was just not the case at all.*

His wife, Molly, was a good old Irish gal—a wonderful teammate. Much beloved. I forget where he met her. He’d flown out of Traverse City, Michigan, in his youth, and I’m not sure whether he met Molly there or not, but they made a big thing about her Irishness, and she was a character. Obviously I have great affection for the man—and his lady. His Assistant Commandant was Vice Admiral Tom Sargent.† He was special too—a great pair to work for.

I was going to talk a little bit about this later on, but I’ll move it up now just because we’re talking about Admiral Bender. I was coming up on the end of my fourth and last year at CGHQ. One day Admiral Bender walked down to my office. That was different—he usually called me down to his office. And he said, “What plans do you have for next year?”

This was Admiral Bender in my office, so I was thinking, “Oh, boy. I’m in trouble here.”

I said, “Well, you know, my wife says I married her under false pretenses. Marry a Coast Guardsman and see the world, and we’ve never been out of the U.S. And there’s

* Alexander Hamilton was the Secretary of the Treasury when the Revenue Cutter Service, forerunner of the Coast Guard, was established in 1790.

† Vice Admiral Thomas R. Sargent III, USCG, was Assistant Commandant of the Coast Guard, 1970-74.

a captain's job in London, Activities Europe, and she would love it if I had that job. And I have never asked for a specific job before, but I'd love to have that job."

He said, "Well, I'd kind of hoped you'd stay around for my last year. We're a good team. I wish you would stay." He said, "I'll tell you what. If you'll agree to stay another year, I'll promise you London next year. Okay?"

"Wonderful."

I went home that night. I said to Randy, "Good news and bad. Good news, we're going to London. Bad news, next year."

"Well, okay."

The following year he called me into his office, and he said to me, "Where was it you wanted to go?"

I said, "Now, Admiral, don't do that to me."

He said, "I know. I promised you London." Then he reached in his desk, and he pulled out a box with two stars in it, and he said, "I'm sorry. I can't understand it. Nobody can understand it. But the Flag Board selected you for flag, and there's no flag billet in London. It's a great mistake, but we're stuck with it." [Laughter]

Paul Stillwell: Twinkle in the eye.

Admiral Gracey: You bet!! Typical. Well, what do you do, you know? Whoopee. I went home that night, and I didn't say anything to Randy. I went upstairs, and I put the box on her pillow underneath the bedspread. Bedtime we went up. She pulled the spread back, and there was this box. She picked it up, looked at the stars in it, looked at me, and she said, "Well, there goes London." [Laughter] But that's the way he would do it.

A couple of other things occurred in my CPA time in the early '70s. One was there was a need for more and better offshore weather information. And so we worked on putting out weather buoys. This was in conjunction with NOAA, which came after an outfit with the initials ESSA.* In fact, the captain who ran our Budget Division when I

* NOAA—National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. In 1965 the Environmental Science Services Administration (ESSA) had been created; it consolidated the Coast and Geodetic Survey and the Weather Bureau.

was running CPA was a fellow by the name of Bill Fitzgerald.* When there was talk about our going to a new Coast Guard uniform, he said, “I know what it’s going to be. It’s going to be a sweatshirt with ESSA on the front,” because there was talk that we were going to be merged, and we were going to disappear in this great political organization and so forth.

But NOAA was created in this time, and then we put out weather buoys.† We worked out an arrangement where one of our cutters would work with them on the Gulf coast out of Mississippi. And they set up a unit down there. And for a while it was a combined Coast Guard and NOAA unit. I don’t remember exactly where it went to from there. That’s another new kind of a thing that happened in this period.

And then, of course, there was Watergate.‡ I had lived with going to meetings representing the Coast Guard where we would be told, “You will do this whether you like it or not.” Besides the Coast Guard, there would be several different agencies in the room, depending on the subject of the day. There would always be some kind of a mandate that was coming down. And, “You will do this, or your Commandant will get a telephone call and the voice will say, ‘This is Bob Haldeman. You will do this.’ And your Commandant will say, ‘Yes, sir.’”§ And I can remember coming back from such a meeting being very put out.

Or we would get a letter from Erlichman on White House stationery.** It sounded like it was an edict from the President of the United States. And it bothered me. I didn’t get it, but I would see it because it often involved something affecting one of our programs. And I thought, “Boy, that’s not right. I didn’t vote for those guys. I don’t know anybody that did,” and I probably didn’t have a full understanding of how White House staffs worked at the time. I was certainly getting an education. But there was a certain dominating arrogance about those two guys. I had told Randy about it before, so

* Captain William H. Fitzgerald, Jr., USCG.

† On 3 October 1970, NOAA was established under the Department of Commerce.

‡ In June 1972 operatives working indirectly for the Committee to Re-elect the President broke into the headquarters of the Democratic National Committee in the Watergate complex in Washington, D.C. The resulting cover-up led to the August 1974 resignation of President Richard Nixon.

§ H. Robert Haldeman was President Nixon’s chief of staff from 1969 until his resignation in 1973. He was convicted of conspiracy and obstruction of justice in connection with the Watergate cover-up

** John D. Erlichman was President Nixon’s chief domestic advisor from 1969 until his resignation in 1973. He was convicted of conspiracy and obstruction of justice in connection with the Watergate cover-up

when Watergate broke, she said, “Kind of like you’ve been telling me about, right?”

And I said, “Bingo. I mean there it is. These guys don’t get it. They don’t understand those are real live human beings out there that are working and trying to make the government work. They aren’t a bunch of dirty guys trying to undermine anybody.” All that Watergate stuff was going on while I was finishing up my tenure, and we were very much aware of it. It affected a lot of things that could be done. It was an ugly time.

Paul Stillwell: Do you have any examples of problems that came about as a result?

Admiral Gracey: No, I wish I could remember something specific.

Paul Stillwell: That was also the time of the oil embargo and rapid increase in fuel cost. Did that have an impact on the Coast Guard?*

Admiral Gracey: I remember that for those of who commuted by automobile it was a problem. It had to have an impact, but I just don’t remember it. In the last few years there have been cutbacks in current Coast Guard operations because of fuel costs and so forth. I don’t remember that we did that in the ’70s just because of fuel cost. Doesn’t mean we didn’t. I just don’t remember it at the moment. I was talking about relationships with Congress and there was one other kind of an experience I wanted to share with you. Senator Long was from Louisiana.†

Paul Stillwell: Huey’s son.‡

Admiral Gracey: Huey’s son. He wanted to be briefed before the Senate hearings, Senate Commerce Committee, our oversight committee. They were always a lot more

* In the winter of 1973-74 OPEC, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, initiated an embargo on delivery of Middle East oil to the West. The result was a dramatic jump in oil prices and long lines of cars at U.S. gasoline pumps in early 1974.

† Russell B. Long, a Democrat from Louisiana, served in the U.S. Senate from 31 December 1948 until his retirement on 3 January 1987. He was chairman of the Senate Finance Committee from 1965 to 1980.

‡ Huey P. Long, a Democrat, served as Governor of Louisiana from 1928 to 1932 and as a U.S. Senator from that state from 1932 until his assassination in 1935. He was known for his demagoguery and his dictatorial control of the state through his political machine.

structured. I mean, they were different than the House of Representatives. Anyway, Senator Long said he'd like to be briefed on what the Coast Guard budget was all about. I was the guy that knew it, so the Flags would say, "Why don't you go talk to the senator?" [Laughter]

I remember the first time I went. I was taken down to an office in the basement of the Capitol, room number so-and-so, and I went and knocked on the door. After a little while the door opened a crack, and there was the senator in his stocking feet. He'd been taking a nap. The room was dark. "Ah," he said. "Come on in, Captain." He sat me down on a sofa, and he went and sat at his desk. Put his feet up on the desk and, "Now, tell me what you've got this time." You know, that kind of thing.

The phone would ring, and he'd answer and talk openly about Senate business or to one of his constituents. I remember that particular year there'd been a tanker that had run aground in Tampa Bay. He was talking to somebody on the phone about this whole event. After he was through, he said, "Captain, I keep telling those people over there in Florida, they shouldn't let those dirty old tankers in there to Tampa. They ought to send those dirty old tankers over to Louisiana. We know how to deal with those dirty old tankers. They shouldn't let them in there." [Laughter] It was wonderful. His solution to that oil spill in Tampa Bay was, well, we expect to get tankers in Louisiana. Send the tankers to Louisiana.

Paul Stillwell: I regret that the eventual transcript of this interview won't be able to reflect your imitation of his accent. [Laughter]

Admiral Gracey: I'm sorry about that. [Laughter] It's all part of the story. [Laughter] And I was a pretty young guy at the time. This was all wonderful stuff for me. It was heady business. Congressman Walter B. Jones was very interested in us.* Later he was Chairman of our House oversight committee. I got a chance to talk to him and the various people on the committee, the staffers and so forth, and it was fascinating to see

* Walter B. Jones, Sr., a Democrat from North Carolina, served in the House of Representatives from 5 February 1966 to 15 September 1992. He was chairman, Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries from 1981 to 1992.

how that part of the world turned. It was great to have a hand in creating it all. It was a great five years, but it was five.

Oh, by the way. About that plant “Shirley,” what I didn’t tell you is that after I got to be the Commandant Shirley the Schefflera showed up in the front office. That was 12 years after she made her debut in my CPA office. She had moved to the Chief of Staff’s office and ultimately into the Commandant’s. [Laughter]

Paul Stillwell: That was a veteran plant by that time.

Admiral Gracey: Yeah, it was a veteran plant.

Paul Stillwell: One individual who was in Headquarters during your CPA tour was Admiral Perry.* He was the Coast Guard Chief of Staff before Admiral Scheiderer. What do you recall about him?

Admiral Gracey: Well, Admiral Perry was a very experienced, very skillful engineer. He was a smart man. He was a colorful man. He was a good man. He didn’t always suffer fools gladly.

Paul Stillwell: Apparently seldom. [Laughter]

Admiral Gracey: Seldom. But I want to give the devil his due. When he was the Chief of Staff, I had just come from Governors Island. I knew how Governors Island worked, and there were some things going that the Captain of the Port up there wanted to do. I thought it was the wrong way to go, based on my experience at Governors Island.

Admiral Perry agreed entirely with the COTP in New York. I persuaded Admiral Perry to tell the captain in New York that he couldn’t do what he wanted to do because blah-blah-blah. It had to do with who was to provide support for the COTP facilities—the Base or COTP itself. I argued for the Base, because that was how we had organized the place, and the COTP making the request was noted for not wanting any “help” from

* Rear Admiral Ellis L. Perry, USCG.

anybody. Later, it became obvious that I was wrong. It really turned to mud. Admiral Perry never said a word. He backed it. He told the captain up there that this was the way it was going to be. After a short while I wrote a memo to Admiral Perry and said, “I was wrong. That’s not the right way to go. I’m sorry I got you into that trap, but I think it’s time to let go. If it’s all right with you, I’m going to take you right out of it. I’m just going to write on your behalf and say, ‘We’ve decided to change it and blah-blah-blah.’”

I got back a note from him that said, “I always like a man who understands when he’s wrong, admits it, and gets on with doing what’s right.” And it’s a note that I prize, because I think that’s the right way to go and obviously it was my style and that’s the answer.

Admiral Perry hated briefings that were wastes of time. He hated briefings that especially were talking about new equipment or trying to get ready for some budgetary situation, whatever, where there was a bunch of baloney being peddled. It wasted his time, and he didn’t want to hear it. He loved to hear a nice logical argument. He was open to new ideas, providing they didn’t conflict too much with his own. [Laughter] And that’s not fair to say, because he would listen, but he didn’t want a lot of baloney to go with it.

I talked about the small group of hotshot lieutenant commanders I had in the Programs Division. Marvelous sense of humor, and we had a lot of fun. We would always laugh about what point in a briefing Admiral Perry would say, “Horse shit.”

And so we started timing it. We always delegated one of our members who was going to be in the briefing, because it was his subject matter, to have a stopwatch. When the briefer said, “Good morning, Admiral,” we would start the watch. Then we kept time. When the admiral said, “Horse shit,” the first time, we stopped the watch. The all-time record was 20 seconds. We had a briefer who was a very competent officer, but he didn’t act like it, and he was known affectionately as “Big Stoop.”

We said, “Don’t go in there and start telling Admiral Perry that this is the greatest thing since sliced bread, because he doesn’t believe that. And furthermore he doesn’t want you to tell him it’s the greatest. He doesn’t like superlatives. He wants you to give him the facts and tell him what decision you want him to make or if it’s info, just tell him what the info is. Don’t embellish it.”

His opening line was, “Good morning, Admiral Perry. I’m here to tell you today about one of the greatest opportunities to come our way since the something or other.”

“Horse shit.” [Laughter] And that totally undid Big Stoop, and the briefing ended in about five minutes.

My guys got him outside and said, “We told you. [Laughter] Now, we’ll schedule it again, and if you can’t refrain, get somebody who can.” And they did, and he came, and they did the briefing correctly and we didn’t get to set any new records. But the subject of the briefing wasn’t the greatest thing, and it was a bad idea, and Admiral Perry said, “I don’t think so, gentlemen. I think you’re on the wrong track,” and that was the end of that. But they stayed away from unwanted and undeserved superlatives.

Somewhere I think Admiral Siler said that one of the reasons he picked Admiral Perry to be the Assistant Commandant was because of his calm demeanor. Well, he was calm all right—except when aroused. [Laughter]

Paul Stillwell: You wanted to talk about automation.

Admiral Gracey: Yes. I spoke of the process we followed in dealing with the RCPs and all that, and how complicated it had been with the piles of paper. We simplified it a lot, but trying to wrestle with priorities and adjusting decisions got cumbersome. Nowadays you can cut and paste before printing, and it’s a piece of cake. You can sort, and all of those kinds of things are routine. In the first year or two that I was in CPA we were working with EAM printouts and hand-typed sheets. You had to literally cut it so each line item was a separate strip so you could sort it and change it around as you made decisions during your process. You had to do strips of paper. And we had what we called the “fishbone.” It was a collection of strips of paper all laid down and moved around to the satisfaction of all the reviewers. They had wrestled with it and fought it, and finally had the one that they were going to let me look at. And they would take this very long piece of Scotch tape, and they’d run it down the middle of all these pieces of paper laid out in the order of recommended priority, and then they would come into my office dangling this fishbone.

Or if it had been like the Thanksgiving marking session my Exec would say, “You know, there’s really no point of you coming in here. I’ll bring it out to you Saturday night, and Monday morning you can tell us how you feel about it, or Sunday afternoon or whatever you want to do. But there’s no point in you being here while we’re wrestling this paper. We’d rather fight it out with you not here, and then you won’t be biased by all of our viewpoints. You’ll see the end result fresh, and then you can plug in your own views.” So he would come to my house with this thing blowing in the wind, you know. Perish forbid that one of these slips of paper should come off. And the secretaries would type a lot of this stuff, on manual typewriters.

Paul Stillwell: Didn’t even have an electric typewriter?

Admiral Gracey: Well, not at first. And then the electric typewriters showed up, and all of a sudden if our two secretaries made a mistake they could fix it, whereas with the manual thing if you made a mistake you were dead. If you had made it way down toward the end and you made a big mistake then you had to go do it all over again. As the typists got toward the end of a page, you could just see the fingers start to tense up. [Laughter] I mean, it was marvelous. I could always tell how close they were to the end of the page by whether their fingers were flying or whether they were going boom, boom, boom. Just too bad this isn’t a videotape. But the electric typewriters gave them great freedom. The net effect was that the quality of work was much better, as was the quickness with which we got it, and could go into the next phase. You know, “Ginger, run this one off for us while we do this and let us a take a look at it.” And “whrrrrr,” there’d it’d be back again.

I talked about the personnel structure and figuring out what kinds of people, how many of different grades we needed and specialties and all that kind of stuff. How in the world they ever did that without automation of some sort is beyond me, but they did it. They did it through poring over great piles of paper. Well, I talked earlier about when I was running the Inventory Control Section, and they all had these big rulers and pads of paper. There was some automation—the punch cards and stuff—but it didn’t have the

quickness that you could get when you got into the computer. It really made a big difference in the quality of our work and how responsive we could be.

I mentioned that Admiral Bender announced that through some great error in the system I'd been selected for flag. And I was the standby guy, the extra man. There were going to be four vacancies, and I was the fifth guy. I was pretty junior.

The plan was for me to go to the Fifth Coast Guard District in Portsmouth, Virginia, where I would be the District Chief of Staff for a year. Then Admiral Bullard would retire, and I would just take over from him as Commander Fifth CG District.* As I described to people later, I gave my kids each a doll with some pins and said, "Okay, don't hurt anybody. Don't make anybody sick. Just a little disgruntlement or early retirement will be fine." Because when somebody retired I would get the slot and go.

I went down to Portsmouth and worked for Rear Admiral Ross Bullard. But about the middle of September Rear Admiral Heckman in the Ninth District, the Great Lakes district, had a job opportunity in Saudi Arabia or something that he wanted to take, and he up and retired.† Surprised everyone.

Paul Stillwell: So the pins in the doll worked. [Laughter] You're nodding yes.

Admiral Gracey: Yes, I'm nodding yes. The pins in the doll obviously worked. I became a Rear Admiral and Commander Ninth CG District on the first of October 1974. So, instead of the first of July of 1975 I ascended into great royalty sooner than I thought.

Admiral Bullard was one of a kind. He had never, I don't think, ever had a tour of duty at CG Headquarters in however many years he'd been an officer of the Coast Guard. He had commanded the Eighth Coast Guard District. He was now commanding the Fifth. He was really out of the old school. When a ship would come to Portsmouth, he expected a call from the commanding officer, and the commanding officer would call because the word was out that's the way it was to be done. But not only that. The Admiral would put on his full dress blues and his sword and return the call that very day.

* Rear Admiral Ross P. Bullard, USCG.

† Rear Admiral Albert A. Heckman, USCG.

Paul Stillwell: This really is old school.

Admiral Gracey: This is old school.

Paul Stillwell: Alexander Hamilton would be proud.

Admiral Gracey: Yes. He just believed there was a right way and a wrong way to do things. We were in the Federal Building in Portsmouth, and he could see the flagpole at the Navy yard, so he knew whether the flag officer there was aboard or not. We had a radio antenna on top of the building, and we rigged it up so that we could fly *our* admiral's flag from the very top of the building, because then his flag would be higher than the one at the Navy yard. [Laughter]

He kept in his desk drawer a list of every flag officer that was in the area. When his secretary said, "Admiral So-and-so is on the phone," he'd pull out his list, look to see if the admiral on the phone was senior to him or not. If he was not senior to him he'd say, "Is the admiral on the phone?"

"No."

"Well, get him on the phone." If Bullard was the junior, he would pick up. I mean, that was just the way it was supposed to be. He was brusque, but he was kind of lovable about the whole thing. Everybody loved him and his wife, Allie. But things weren't going very well between him and me. There was a little tenseness.

Paul Stillwell: Because you were not from the old school.

Admiral Gracey: Well, it wasn't that. I will tell you about it in a minute. But one other thing first. Sometimes there would be a day with two parades or two events, and he couldn't get to them both. And I'd say, "Shall I go to the other one?"

He said, "No, just Flags in this town." Well, that may have been true, I don't know, and I didn't know whether it was that or whether it was me. I don't think it was me. I mean, they want an admiral. They don't want some captain. [Laughter] Okay. He didn't say those exact words, but the message was clear.

I went in one day after a couple weeks on the job and I said, “Admiral, let me try something on you. Can I be frank with you?”

“Of course.”

So I shut the door, sat down, and said, “When you heard I was coming down here to be your Chief of Staff, you thought, ‘My God, he’s already made flag. He’s going to coast for a year until I get out of here. Two, when he’s not busy coasting because he’s already made flag, he’s going to be changing everything so it’ll be his way when I retire. And then he won’t have to live with my way. He’s going to do it his way, and he’s going to be changing everything.’” I said, “How am I doing so far?”

He said, “Two for two isn’t bad.” [Laughter]

I said, “Admiral, I know how to do the job I’m assigned. I’m assigned to be your Chief of Staff. And I’m going to be the best damned Chief of Staff you ever had. I’m pretty good. That’s why I have been selected for flag. I know how to work, and I know how to run an organization, and I know how to run it your way. So you’re going to have the best Chief of Staff you ever saw. And, secondly, I have no desire to try to change things. I wouldn’t have the slightest idea how to do that. I’ve never been stationed in the Fifth District before. I’m going to try to learn about it, and while I’m learning I may come back and tell a couple of things that you might not know about that I saw while I was there, or maybe I’ll hear some things that you forgot to tell me and you know about them and I don’t. But I’m going to do that, and I’m going to learn the Fifth District, and I’m going to learn the staff and I’m going to learn your way because you’re an old pro. I’d like to know all that. I’m just a young squirt here. What do you think?”

He said, “Sounds pretty good. Let’s give it a go.” [Laughter] Well, we parted the very best of friends. He and his wife and Randy and I got to be good friends, and he was a big Jim Gracey supporter the rest of the way. When I got various promotions, he was almost always one of the first I heard from. But his reaction to my early and one-on-one analysis was marvelous.

Paul Stillwell: That was a crucial meeting.

Admiral Gracey: You bet. I wasn't quite sure whether it was a smart thing to do, but I've always been one who believed that, hey, talking about it is the best way to get it out in the open and if it blows up, it blows up, and then we'll settle it from there. But I didn't think it would. If I was wrong, then I needed to know I was wrong, and I could go from there. But we had a good relationship.

I did get around and visit, get around the District. I spent a lot of time doing that. There was a way we were deciding on rescue priorities. It was all new to me, but it didn't make sense to me. I asked about it, and it turned out that it didn't make sense to them either. They just had never thought about it. I wish I could remember more detail. I shouldn't bring up things like that and leave them hanging in midair. It wasn't earthshaking, but it gave me a chance to say, "See, Admiral?" I didn't say that, but, you know, it was a chance to show that I could do things his way. And we would arrange for the courtesy calls and all of that sort of thing. It was good experience.

But then in September the word came that Admiral Heckman in Cleveland was going to go away and that I was going to have that job. They were going to let me go to the Ninth District as a one-star. And that was great. And I'll talk about the Great Lakes. I spent three years there, and that was another wonderful experience. We rented a house that two of the former District Commanders had rented in Lakewood. It was in an interesting section of town, down a private road right near the cliffs of Lake Erie, on the west side of Cleveland. And we rented that house in October. It just happened to be available. How or why it was available in October is beyond me, but the woman who owned it had owned it before, and she had just put a brand-new furnace in it. And we were pleased with that.

After the first year Headquarters decided there was enough money in the Coast Guard budget for the Ninth District Commander to have a house. So I said, "Why don't we buy the one I'm living in? I'm the third District Commander who's lived in it, and we've all found it eminently satisfactory. It's convenient to downtown, etc., etc. So the Coast Guard did buy the house.

But there was more to the tour than that. We got into winter navigation experimentation working with the Winter Navigation Board. I was on the Great Lakes

Basin Commission. I was the Head of the Transportation Committee on that. I was Chairman of the Federal Executive Board of Cleveland.

Paul Stillwell: Well, we can get into those maybe next time.

Admiral Gracey: Right.

Paul Stillwell: I wonder on Admiral Bullard. The things that you've described as old-school characteristics strike me mostly as matters of style.

Admiral Gracey: Yes.

Paul Stillwell: What was his approach on substantive issues?

Admiral Gracey: If he hadn't heard of it before, he was suspicious, but he listened. You had to convince him there was a good reason to change what he'd been doing or what he knew was the way. It shouldn't be just because Jim Gracey didn't happen to like it or something. Maybe it would be changing times, maybe it would be in a different place, maybe the customer would be different, whatever. There weren't a lot of big things. I was trying not to make very many huge changes even if I could have thought of them. But he listened.

He was reluctant, but as an illustration he had a speech to make to a Coast Guard Auxiliary group. And he wanted it to be just right. We all wanted to make it just right. For days ahead of time I'd go into the office, and he had a legal pad and he was writing and writing and writing. I thought, "Boy. It'll be a great speech, but it's going to be the longest one there ever was." He was copying Washington's Farewell to His Troops—or one of those famous speeches. I can't remember which one it was. He copied it verbatim, and he delivered it verbatim. I was dumbfounded when I sat in the audience and listened to what he was doing. I thought he was writing a speech, and he was going to have lengthy quotes or something to illustrate it. I had no indication when I was in his office that he was copying anything.

Paul Stillwell: Did he attribute it to the original source?

Admiral Gracey: He did, and as he said it was always a speech he admired—and it fit in a certain way because, you know, this was going to be his last year with the people under his command. He was into his final year. This was going to be the last time he'd meet with this particular group. And in a way he was saying, "Good-bye," or whatever, the same way as Washington. He did it in Washington's words, and he brought it off. You know, they loved him for it. And I thought, "I don't think I could do that." [Laughter]

Paul Stillwell: That really is old school.

Admiral Gracey: He's dead now, bless his heart, but my three months with him were a different experience. Oh, I also didn't tell you a couple other things that bothered him. One was the OG-30 business—giving the money to the field units to use as they felt most important. Another was what we were doing with port security. We got into the port security business big time and set up a new rating of Port Securityman. We also got environmental cleanup money and all that. Those things did bodily harm to his approach to running his District his way because, "How come you're telling my guys that I can't say anything about how they spend their money?" This was before I had been assigned to him—when I was in CPA. He'd be in CG Headquarters for something and would make a point of letting me know that he didn't approve of me or anybody that worked for me. And furthermore it was a stupid idea.

Paul Stillwell: No wonder he had those ideas when you showed up.

Admiral Gracey: And then the poor guy found out I was coming down to be his Chief of Staff. He was always very gentlemanly. I mean, he was the gentleman to the nth degree, but when he disapproved, there was no doubt that you had been cut off at the knees. I mean, he just didn't approve of that business with OG-30. I was monkeying around with his authority. I couldn't hide behind the Commandant. He knew where it came from.

Either that or Bender said, “Don’t talk to me. It was Gracey’s idea.” But I don’t really believe that. It didn’t happen very often, but enough times so that I was well aware that Admiral Bullard did not approve of some of the stuff that we had put into place when I was back in Washington. Anyway it all worked out fine. It was an interesting experience being his Chief of Staff.

Paul Stillwell: You said one of the things you told him is that you might be able to get out and find things that he didn’t know about. Were there such cases?

Admiral Gracey: Yeah, but they were little things. There was something going on at Still Pond Station. They had a boat that was sick, and they were trying to make it better but they couldn’t. They didn’t know how. They didn’t have the right people in the crew to make it better, and they didn’t want to spend the money, or they’d already used up their money. I could tell him about that. It was just that it happened to be a particular circumstance. But there would be things like that that I’d pick up on a tour or could tell him that somebody said something or other. And he would answer. “No, no, no. That’s not the way it works out there. They just haven’t been there long enough to understand how that town works.” You know, that type of thing. “Well, those kind of fishermen do things that way.” Those would be his answers. He would have that in-depth knowledge, and I would learn about it from him.

Once he found out I was interested in hearing what he had to say, he was more than happy to teach me. He never did suggest for me to go and return the courtesy call for him, and I was grateful for that because I didn’t happen to agree with his approach. I thought that was probably a bit overboard. But to him it was important. I’m trying to remember when it was we started building the new Base over at Craney Island in Portsmouth. That had to be in this time frame somewhere, but it hadn’t come into place yet.

I can’t remember what the era was that we were doing that. I was involved in getting the money sometime. That was a big operation that we were taking over, and we were going to move all the ships across the bay from where they were. They were tied up right at the foot of his domain, and it was going to separate him from his fleet and all that.

That sounds sarcastic. I don't mean it that way. He liked having the buoy tenders and stuff that were there, but we were going to put big ships into Portsmouth too. They weren't going to be tied up over at the Navy yard. They were going to be tied up at our own new Base, Portsmouth.

I can't remember whether it was just in the talking stage or whether we were in the doing stage. He was aware of it, and for a while he wasn't quite sure it was a great idea. It took a long drive to get there from the District Office. You had to go a long way around to get there. He didn't have government quarters. He had his own house. Later on we bought quarters for all the district commanders. The one in Portsmouth was about the last one we bought.

Paul Stillwell: Any other postscripts on things we've discussed today?

Admiral Gracey: No, I can't think of them, Paul.

Paul Stillwell: Well, we'll wind it up on that note. Thank you.

Admiral Gracey: Okay. All right.

Interview Number 6 with Admiral James S. Gracey, U.S. Coast Guard (Retired)

Date: Friday, 6 July 2001

Place: Admiral Gracey's home in Arlington, Virginia

Interviewer: Paul Stillwell

Paul Stillwell: Here we are a couple days after celebrating the 225th anniversary of the nation's independence and ready to resume with the narrative on your career. Admiral, any catch-up to do from previous sessions?

Admiral Gracey: After the Programs Division, which is where I had spent five years before I was selected for flag, I went to the Fifth District in Norfolk for three months as the Chief of Staff. When the admiral in Cleveland kindly retired early, I got to put on my stars sooner than the year wait I had expected. In those days we started out wearing two stars even though we were at one-star pay grade. That really bothered everybody that only wore one in the same pay grade—the Army, Air force, and Marines.

I don't remember whether I talked about going up to the Hill to testify with the Commandant at a time when there was a big demonstration on the steps of the Capitol. This would have been about 1970-71, somewhere in there.

Paul Stillwell: I don't recall that.

Admiral Gracey: There was a big anti-Vietnam war demonstration outside the Capitol. We finished our testimony, and we came out of the exit under the east Capitol steps where the demonstrators were. There's a drive-through there for cars, but our cars had not come. We'd finished at a different time than was expected. The car that was coming to pick up the Commandant was there, but the others weren't, and there were several of us. I could see a government car that was out across the parking area.

In those days, of course, you could drive right up in front of the Capitol.* I was a captain. And I said, "I'll go check and see if he can run some of us back and how much

* In recent years, because of the threat of attack by terrorists, access to the Capitol is much more restricted.

room he has.” Otherwise, we were kind of staying out of sight. We didn’t want to stir up the crowd. We were all in uniform, of course, and there were admirals and other senior people, and we just didn’t want to stir up a rumpus. I went out to the car and asked the driver if he could take us back to Coast Guard Headquarters, and he said, “Sure.” I can’t even remember who he was a driver for at this point, but it was a government car, and he said he’d be happy to. I said, “How many seats you got?” and he said, “Two.” So I turned around and held my hand up and signaled with two fingers: “We have two seats.” The two fingers formed a vee. To everybody on the Capitol steps that Coast Guard captain was standing out in the middle of the parking lot giving them the Vee.

Paul Stillwell: Which was called the peace sign at that time.

Admiral Gracey: The peace sign, yes. It came out that I turned around, and my signal back to the CG passengers was the peace sign. Got a standing ovation from everybody on the steps, of course. [Laughter] As I was walking back to where my colleagues were, shrinking out of sight, a TV newsman came up with his cameraman and said, “Captain, do that again, will you? I missed it the first time.” I didn’t oblige him. Two of the party got back to Headquarters in that car. The rest hid from the crowd until our own car came.

During my time in CPA I tried to have some fun, tried to de-formalize, de-officialize communication. I used stick figure cartoons. If I got word back that something had really gone very well, I would draw a stick figure of a guy with his chest puffed out and his buttons flying off, and I’d initial it. When I left, I learned that one of the guys had been collecting these things. They gave me a montage of the various stick figures that I’d produced over five years’ time. We had fun. I used to write doggerel poems that seemed to fit the situation. Later on, even as the Commandant or a District and Area Commander, I would send out Christmas messages in doggerel poetry or I’d say, “Go easy at the wassail bowl.” In the Ninth District one time I had my Christmas message saying, “Go easy at the wassail bowl,” and several people in the field called up the Command Master Chief and said, “What the hell is a wassail bowl?” [Laughter] Apropos of nothing.

Paul Stillwell: Do you have any examples of these doggerel poems, or maybe you could dredge some of them up?

Admiral Gracey: Yes, I do, and I will do that for the next time and I'll share some of them with you. I think that's exhausted CPA. So now we're into the Ninth District, I think.

Paul Stillwell: You talked about your brief tenure as chief of staff in the Fifth District and how you convinced the admiral that you were indeed loyal to him and going along with his program. But that was only a short tour of duty.

Admiral Gracey: Yes, it was. It turned out to be just three months—almost to the day. Besides the experience of learning about a new part of the Coast Guard—for me—it was an interesting time. It was a historic time for the country because of the Watergate flap in D.C., which was *the* topic of conversation and news.

The Ninth District was a three-year tour. I had done a cadet cruise in *Mackinaw* on the Great Lakes, so I had a speaking acquaintance with that area, but that was all. Of course, I had a lot of speaking engagements at one yacht club or another around the area. If it had been at a place where we'd stopped as cadets in *Mackinaw*, I would look around the room and say, "We were here at such-and-such a time, and if any of you women were here that night, please keep quiet." [Laughter] And every so often one of them would giggle and say, "I was here." [Laughter] The Ninth District was different in a lot of ways, and their work significant. First of all, the Great Lakes are a fascinating part of the country. At the time, 1974 to '77, when I was there, water quality was a big concern.

Paul Stillwell: They said you could set Lake Erie on fire.

Admiral Gracey: Well, that was actually the Cuyahoga River, but there were all those rumors around. There was apparently a story that at one point there'd been some stuff on the surface of the water in the Cuyahoga River in Cleveland, and it had caught fire, but that was before I got there. But there was a lot of concern about the water quality in the

lakes, and here's all this fresh water and a giant resource. But people were treating it with the same kind of abuse they were treating the oceans and rivers, but for the lakes there was no place for it to go away. It was there, you know. As I used to say, "The tide only goes one direction here, and that's out, but it goes out very slowly, and most of it tends to hang around." So that was a point of concern.

Another was the lake carrier industry, moving the ore and coal on what they call boats, ore boats. Ore boats were 700-800 feet long, later up to 1,000 feet, giant vessels—a marvelous industry with a great tradition. And they had their Canadian counterpart. The Lake Carriers Association represented all the U.S. companies, and their counterpart was the Dominion Marine Association in Canada, which also had several vessels. There were a number of opportunities to interact with them in terms of merchant marine safety. I'll talk more about these later on

Winter navigation was a big factor in life and productivity up there. There was a Winter Navigation Study that had been commissioned. It was just starting up. I was the vice chairman of the Winter Navigation Board. The head of the Corps of Engineers in Chicago, Brigadier General Bob Moore, was chairman. And the idea was to see if we couldn't extend the navigating season on the Great Lakes past the usual December shutdown. We wanted to see what was possible, and we got into that big time. Remember, I had some experience figuring out new ways to clear ice in the Hudson River. I thought maybe we could use some of that experience to devise ways to clear ice out of parts of the Great Lakes, though the Great Lakes are a lot different than the Hudson River. We did ultimately use some of the same techniques. And—with the shipping industry, et. al.—we set out to see if we could run all winter long.

We had two demonstration seasons, and we did in fact run all year in some areas. Great hardship on the Coast Guard crews. I'll go into more detail. Suffice it to say that was another big ongoing factor. The Great Lakes Basin Commission was looking at the water quality, and we were into that big time. There were all kinds of trade associations.

Ships coming in from outside the Lakes were called "salties." They carried normal cargoes, and they had to have a pilot aboard. Lakers didn't. The labor unions were a big factor for the Great Lakes Pilots. The American pilots were unionized. The Canadian pilots were government employees. And the idea was that there was an

agreement in place that we were going to share. And the governing word was “equitable.” The American pilots thought that meant 12% for the Canadians and 88% for them, because seven out of eight “salties” were going to American ports. The Canadian pilots thought “equitable” meant 50-50. That was a big debate going on when I arrived. There was been a series of high-level government meetings going on—cabinet officer to cabinet officer. There had been a couple before I came aboard. As Commander, Ninth CG District in those days, I “owned” the Great Lakes pilots. That is, I was responsible for U.S. pilotage on the Great Lakes, and I had a former Great Lakes pilot named Skip Skoogan who was really the man in charge on my staff. I can’t remember his exact title at the moment.

Paul Stillwell: Did you have some sort of jurisdiction over them? Did you have operational control?

Admiral Gracey: No, I didn’t have operational control, but we had the coordination of them. I can’t remember the documentation that went along with this, but they were subject to our oversight and coordination. And if there were disciplinary actions to be taken for some failure of one thing and another, then we got into that. It was more a coordinating and oversight role.

Paul Stillwell: Was it sort of like the way the FAA works with the airlines?

Admiral Gracey: You know, we’re going back 30 years here. I don’t know how FAA works with the airlines. I sat in on those international meetings. There were three Pilotage Districts on the U.S. side. District 1 was the St. Lawrence River Pilots, District 2 was the middle lakes, and District 3 was Lake Superior and Lake Huron. Each of them had a very strong leader, and they were very strong union people in their own right. They were not happy with the way things were going, and the Canadians were not happy because they didn’t think they were getting their fair share of the business. So I went to a couple of the high-level, inter-government meetings, and they really didn’t accomplish very much. We would talk for a while. Then we’d go out and have a long lunch and

have a great good time together. Everybody on both sides of the Lakes enjoyed each other until it was time to talk business, and then they hated each other. They didn't really, but you'd think they did. They wouldn't really accomplish very much at those sub-cabinet level meetings. The only thing they'd agree to was when they were going to have the next meeting.

Paul Stillwell: Whose authority was it to decide what proportion of business went to which nation?

Admiral Gracey: It was in an international agreement, which had been signed some time before. And this series of meetings was to take another look at that and try to reach some new agreement. The Deputy Secretary of Transportation, Mr. John Barnum, was our man sitting in these things with the Minister of Transport from Canada.* I suggested to him, "Why don't you back away from the government-level thing? Let me deal with Ran Quail." Ran was overseeing the pilotage for the Canadian side. Later on he was the Commissioner of the Canadian Coast Guard. "Why don't you let Ran and me get together and see if we can work out something, just the two of us? And when we think we've got something, I'll come to you, and he'll go to his man in Canada, and if you seniors can accept it, then we'll try it out."

He said, "Well, okay. If that'll work, good. Anything to get this resolved." So I got into it, and Ran and I would meet in a hotel room in Toronto. I'd come home and Randy would say, "Where are the bruises?" We were wonderful good friends, but, man, I can be a hard negotiator, and so could Ran, and we had some really tough-talking sessions. But we worked out a plan. Now that I'm here, I've forgotten exactly the details of it, and I'll have to try to research that for you. But we worked out a plan that we thought would be feasible—and sellable to the unions. We'd get away from the world "equitable." We wouldn't use "equitable." We would find words that were definable and could be understood, and we would do it based on ports of destination.

* John W. Barnum was Deputy Secretary of Transportation from 30 May 1973 to 20 January 1977; he served as Acting Secretary of Transportation from 2 February 1975 to 6 March 1975.

We would change the ports assigned to the pilots. Some ports had been all U.S. pilots, and some ports had been all Canadian pilots. We would move those designations around so that the geographical balance of use would change. So would the economical balance, but it wouldn't go to 50-50, because the work wasn't 50-50. But everybody could make a decent living, and it was a system that would make sense. We thought it was pretty good, and I brought it in to present it to Deputy Secretary of Transportation Barnum. But before that I had found a way to talk to him on the phone to keep him posted. I found that if I called him at 7:00 o'clock in the morning at his office his secretary wouldn't be there yet, so she couldn't hold me out. She wouldn't anyway later on, but he'd get busy, but he'd be in the office alone at 0700.

So I'd be on the way to a meeting in Toledo or someplace, not a pilotage meeting. I mean, I was going to meetings all the time. Airports, I was flying all over the Great Lakes. Driving all over the region. I would stop at a roadside place, and I'd call him up to give him a feedback on what was going on with pilotage. It got to the point where, when he answered his phone, I'd just say, "It's me."

He'd say, "Where the hell are you today? What phone booth are you in today?"

[Laughter] I'd say, "You won't believe it, but today I'm in Skowhegan," or some darn thing. But, anyway, I went in to present what Ran and I had agreed on. I had a briefcase, and I had two of these little dinner table flags. I had an American flag and a Canadian flag. And I presented both sides of the argument to Barnum and his people. When I was talking the Canadian argument, I'd put the Canadian flag up. When I was through I'd put it in the briefcase and take the American flag out. And that went on about ten minutes. He said, "Enough with the flags already." [Laughter]

I said, "Hey, listen. There's a lot of similarity to what we're both saying here, which is good. We're talking, but you've got to know who's talking here, or you aren't going to understand why we're where we are."

He said, "All right. But see if you can show the American flag for a little longer before you put up the Canadian one." [Laughter]

Anyway, they accepted it, and so we got together with the unions and over a period of time sold the new plan. And it worked. Working that out went on for, gee, I

think two out of the three years I was there, but it did work, and it was the kind of work I got to do a lot of in the Great Lakes.

Paul Stillwell: Has that settlement essentially prevailed since then?

Admiral Gracey: It did for a long time. I think sometime after I retired they decided that the Great Lakes pilotage work ought to be done out of Washington, that the Chief, Office of Merchant Marine Safety in Coast Guard Headquarters ought to oversee the pilotage, not the District Commander out there. I don't know why they made that change. I thought it was good the way it was. We were there. At the various maritime events the pilots' leaders were always there, so you could talk with them. The office of one of the Pilotage districts was located in Cleveland. And I made a point of getting with them, and it was the kind of thing where you could build relationships.

I mentioned that when I was in CPA I had come up with this picture of a seagull sitting on the roof of a cottage. That came off *The New Yorker* magazine. A whole bunch of them were sitting in a row and then on the end looking in the other direction separated was one seagull. And I used to say, "Hey, that's us. We're looking for a different answer." One time I was getting ready for a union meeting, and I said, "I'll go out and get some coffee for you guys," When I came back, they were all standing around the seagull picture. And one guy said, "There's Local 73. There's Local 99. There's Local 102. That one on the end is Local 6. They never go along with anybody." [Laughter]

I said, "Hey. Let me tell you my view of that seagull." And we'd go from there, and you could do that if you were there—on scene—a known quantity. You can't do that out of Washington. Let me finish up with the pilots. They did a great job, but they were a salty bunch of people who'd been around forever. You say "salty," and you think of the sailors on the ocean. There's not much salt up there, but, boy, those guys on the Great Lakes were every bit as salty as you can imagine. And those people were working under tough conditions. As I said earlier, their pilotage was for the saltwater vessels, but the salties were practically all foreign-flag ships. U.S.-flagged ships weren't doing much business there. And, of course, weather conditions were often atrocious. At that time

there was a big push to get more salties coming in and increase that trade coming through the St. Lawrence Seaway and into the ports, Detroit, Chicago, Cleveland, and so forth.*

Paul Stillwell: That was really the rationale for the St. Lawrence Seaway.

Admiral Gracey: It was indeed. And the pilots were dependent on that trade, and their job was to bring them to port safely. At one point in all of this there was an objection. The longshoremen—union comrades of the pilots—were taking exception to something. I can't remember what it was now, but it was at the port of Erie, Pennsylvania. It wasn't blocked. It was just that the pilots wouldn't cross the picket line. It was a stevedores' picket line, but they wouldn't cross it. There was a Russian ship in Erie that wanted to sail. And the port director of Erie wanted all kinds of ships to come and go, because he had cargo sitting on the dock. Of course, that was part of what the picket line was all about. The pilots would bring a ship into Erie. They would cross the line going ashore, going home, but they wouldn't cross it to go back to the ship to take it out.

And so, of course, the Erie port director called me as the District Commander and said, "Hey, I need help. What can you do here?" And so I talked to the union people, and this was the ILA, International Longshoremen's Association. The pilots belonged to it as well. Pretty powerful union. But through the various comings and goings in the Great Lakes area I had gotten to know their overall regional boss, and we were pretty good friends.

So I called him up and I said, "I'm going to let this guy go without a pilot. It's a short run over to the Welland Canal. Your friends the Canadians will take him from there. The weather is perfect. The captain has made the trip something like 15 times. He knows the water. I'm going to authorize it. But I wanted you to hear it from me."[†]

He said, "Oh, God, Jim. You know I'm going to have to send you a nasty message."

* On 26 June 1959 President Dwight D. Eisenhower of the United States and Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain joined in ceremonies at St. Lambert, Canada, near Montreal, that marked the official opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway, a man-made project to connect the St. Lawrence River with the Great Lakes.

[†] The Welland Ship Canal connects Lake Ontario with Lake Erie and bypasses Niagara Falls. It can accommodate the largest Great Lakes ships.

I said, “I understand that. Send away. I’m going to tell him to do it.” And we had a few pleasantries about golf and a couple of other things and went on about our business. He did send a very nasty message, I let the ship go, and everything worked out fine.

But there was a pilot in Duluth who was a known curmudgeon anyway. He had a whole bunch of big posters made up, which he mounted in every bar in Duluth and everywhere else he could find. It was edged in black and contained the names of the big traitors of American history. And there was Benedict Arnold, and there were all these guys. And there was some name he put on me. How can I forget that? Anyway, there was Admiral Gracey with all the other traitors. And he wrote a letter to every senator from all the Great Lakes states—that’s 16 senators—telling about the Erie situation and that my sword should be broken over my head and my buttons stripped off. Oh, man, I really got it from this guy. But most everybody thought the poster was pretty funny, and I survived it all right.

But it was the kind of thing that you could bring off, because you knew the people, you knew the situation, and we did it carefully. We went and found out what the skipper’s capabilities were, what the weather was, assured ourselves that he could make a safe voyage. And it was an interesting part of the time. And I for years and years and years kept in touch with many people who were pilots when I was up there.

Paul Stillwell: Did your action break the deadlock?

Admiral Gracey: Essentially that was it, yes. Essentially they figured out that I was going to let ships go if they were qualified, and ultimately that led to a settlement of that particular disagreement. As always, it takes time for those things to get written down. The pilots agreed that they would at least be selective in where they would and wouldn’t cross the picket line. They weren’t going to try to tie up all the trade in the Great Lakes, for one thing. And I think it worked out. I can’t remember the details. I didn’t get into that part of the case.

One of my jobs was to sit on the International Joint Commission as a Department of Transportation representative. The IJC was an organization created many, many years

before. The Canadians and U.S. representatives would talk about things between Canada and the United States in the Great Lakes area. I would sit in with them and listen and tell them what was going on, and so would my counterpart from Canada. Not Ran Quail. He was the pilotage man. There was another man, Commodore George Leask, who was running the Canadian Coast Guard Region comparable to our Ninth Coast Guard District.

At one point the U.S. Coast Guard was flying pollution surveillance flights. The Canadians were flying down one side of the international border, and we were flying down the other side. We were looking for pollution in all the lakes, but we had two flights. So I suggested to the Canadian people, “Why don’t we divide up? We’ll take one lake. You take a lake, and we’ll each just do a whole lake. We’ll tell you what we see, and you tell us what you see.”

George Leask thought that was a good idea, but we both agreed we had to check it out with our State Departments. And I did. I called our Political Advisor—the Commandant’s adviser on international matters—a State Department ambassador-level person. I called our International Affairs staff at Coast Guard Headquarters about this. I said that we ought to check this out with the State Department and get their okay, then let me know if it’s okay. And the word came back, “Yeah, it’s okay.”

So we set up a big signing ceremony at a meeting of the International Joint Commission in Windsor, Ontario. We had a leather-bound agreement. I signed it, and my counterpart signed it. Everything was fine until I went back to Headquarters for a meeting, and I met Ben Dixon, the PolAd, walking down the hall with a bunch of folders under his arm. I said, “What’s up, Ben?”

He said, “I’m keeping you out of jail, young man.” [Laughter]

I said, “What have I done?”

He said, “You’ve signed an international agreement, and you’re not allowed to do that.”

I said, “We cleared it with the State Department.”

He said, “But you cleared it with the Canada Desk. You didn’t clear it with the Treaty Desk.”

“I didn’t think of it as a treaty.”

“Well,” he said, “you know—” Part of it was he was pulling my chain, but we did have some sorting out to do. We got it cleared up, and we signed it, and we did in fact carry out the surveillance flight plan I suggested. We weren’t looking for enemy armament or anything like that. We were looking for oil spills or chemicals—stuff that was polluting the water.

Paul Stillwell: So he did in fact keep you out of jail.

Admiral Gracey: He kept me out of jail. He did indeed keep me out of jail. [Laughter] Bless his heart, he’s dead now, but to his dying day I think he wasn’t going to let me forget it that he was single-handedly responsible for my freedom.

Paul Stillwell: After you’d assumed plenipotentiary power. [Laughter]

To go a little farther on your issue with extending the season, there was a particularly brutal winter, 1976-77. How did you deal with that?

Admiral Gracey: Yes, those were the two years when we kept shipping going. But the worst one was the ’76-’77 winter.* Essentially we did it by getting the ore companies to play by my rules and then throwing everything we had into the project. I said to the various companies and to Lake Carriers Association in general, “You don’t sail until I tell you you can sail. And when I tell you, you do sail. What we’re going to do is this: we’re going to figure out when’s a good time, and we’re going to get the track as open as we can. We’re going to really knock ourselves out to get it open, but while it’s open you’ve got to go through it. If you don’t go through it and you think tomorrow morning will be okay, it won’t be okay. It’ll all be plugged up again.”

At this time of year we were not breaking ice, per se. We were chewing up ice boulders in areas like the St. Mary’s River, which winds down from Sault Ste. Marie—the Soo—to Lake Huron and Lake Michigan. I used some of the ideas of clearing that I worked out when I was on the Hudson River, getting on the lower end, figure out where

* See Captain Lawrence A. White, USCG, “The Most Bitter Winter,” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, May 1978, pages 158-169.

the wind is, break it up, churn it, get it out of there, loosen it up. Then we would run along with them to keep things as loose as possible. We managed to keep them going, but it was a killer on the Coast Guard crews. Several of our ships were deployed from their homeports for long periods

Paul Stillwell: Did you form convoys?

Admiral Gracey: Yes, to the extent that we could, and they were willing to go with it. They didn't try to extend the season after that demo period. They figured out it really wasn't worth it. It was too hard on their people for a variety of reasons, and it was hard on their equipment. I mean, trying to drive through heavy ice really is tough on the ship or a boat, whatever you want to call it. They could always do okay within Lake Michigan. There would be some ice, but Lake Michigan really didn't freeze over. Erie sometimes would totally freeze over. Ontario was academic, because ore carriers didn't go there anyway. What we were really trying to do was get the ore boats down to Detroit and Toledo and into Lake Michigan, through the Soo Locks and down. That's the big part of it.

Around Christmas time I said to the Lake Carriers Association, "Look, you guys are going to have to tie up, because my troops have got to have some rest. And we're going to take"—I've forgotten, a week or something like that. "We'll keep breaking it just to keep it so it won't get set in, ten days of set. We'll keep breaking, but we can't keep going the way we've been." We had a couple of icebreakers out of Cleveland and Buffalo. We tied them up down in Toledo and hired a bus. Drove the people back home for Christmas. Locked up the ships and went home and came back and went at it again, and they were all hot to trot.

We had to get tough with shipping on a variety of things. I'll refresh my memory on this other one in a minute, but you always had the problem of the guys that wanted to start running too soon in the spring. This winter navigation program applied to the Great Lakes ore and coal carriers, the big ones. We tried to keep the tankers going as best we could too. People were concerned about that, and we did work with them, because there were places like Detroit that badly needed oil by tanker.

What we found was that the oil companies or the towing companies that were pushing the tank barges weren't sending out their best and most powerful tugs, because what the heck, the Coast Guard was out there to do it. I tried to persuade them to give it their best shot, but they were reluctant to beat up their vessels any more than necessary. The St. Clair River—down from Lake Huron into Lake St. Clair—and the Detroit River—from Lake St. Clair past Detroit to Lake Erie—were really tough. I really worked on the oil companies to beef up their tows. No luck. So I told the skippers of our icebreakers to broadcast on public frequencies, plain language, “We’re having trouble out here, because such-and-such an oil company has sent its underpowered tug again.” [Laughter]

“And when you report back to the Group Commander in Detroit I want you to do it on those frequencies and I want you to do it plain language.”

There was a great deal of public hue and cry against the oil companies, and one of them called me up and said, “You’re tough. That’s dirty pool. All right, all right. We’ll—” And again I would say, “We can’t do it all. We need your help, and you’ve got the capability.”

In the springtime there would be underpowered vessels that would try to go out before the channels were clear enough for them to make it. There was one company that ran cement boats that were seriously underpowered. They could hardly get through the water, let alone through ice. And I put out the word that, “This is no drill. We cannot have you out there. This is a bad year. Don’t go out until we tell you it’s all right. I’m sorry it’s going to impact on your getting the jump on your competitors or whatever, but if you get stuck in the ice with vessels—” and we put out the characteristics, power-to-length ratios and so forth that would indicate whether they had the ability to get through. We knew what it was for all the vessels. “And if you’ve got a vessel that has less than this capability, don’t send them out. If you do and they get stuck, you’d better be prepared to fly food to them, because we’re not going to bring them home. We’ve got other things we’ve got to do, and you’ve been warned.”

I remember one company that always wanted to get out early to get moving their concrete. I even remember the name of the vessel. We called it “Crappo,” but the right name was *Crapo*. [Laughter] And finally it was put to a test. We set a length-to-power

ratio as a formula for what ships might have enough power to get through ice on their own. It was a matter of being able to deal with the kind of ice situations they would face—without calling us for help. And this was general for all the Great Lakes. I said, “We’ll tell you when it’s safe to go. If you decide you’re going to go before that time and you get out there and you get stuck, you’d better have somebody that can come bring you food and water because we’re not going to do it.”

Nobody believed we wouldn’t send an icebreaker in such a situation until we had one that got stuck. It was the *Crapo*. We let them sit there for a few days, and then we finally shook him loose and sent him back into the port he came from. He hadn’t gotten very far away. If they want to hire somebody and somebody wants to do it, they will. But the point had to be made, and we did it.

Paul Stillwell: You’d have to have a certain thickness of skin to do these things. I mean, you couldn’t be sensitive to every criticism, because you were bound to get a lot.

Admiral Gracey: Well, you knew you were going to get them, but you were doing the right thing. And you would think it out ahead of time. There was a bigger goal that you had, and you had limits to your capability, and we weren’t claiming that we didn’t have enough money. We weren’t claiming lack of budgetary support or anything like that. It was just, “We’ve got so many ships, and on most winters they’re going to be fine. But every winter in April it’s going to be really hard. You know that you’ve got the winter’s holdup, and ice is breaking loose and jamming narrow waterways, etc.”

In the old days you would stop running in December, and you’d start running again sometime in late April. Well, the thaw would come who knows when, but the thaw doesn’t relieve the problem right away. The thaw actually makes it worse in some places, because the stuff breaks loose upstream and comes down and piles up. “And it’s been there. You guys have been going through this forever. We’re trying to fix it so you don’t have to go through it, but there are limits to where we can be.”

I took a number of stands that were potentially unpopular, but I thought they were right, and if you can plead your case, why, you’ll get a few people to go with you. And if

you're totally wrong, well, the old Turkish saying, "No matter how far you've gone down the wrong road, turn back." [Laughter] And I wasn't reluctant to say, "By gosh, you're right, and we didn't think of that," or "I wish you'd mentioned that," or "You did mention it, but I didn't pay attention." I wasn't afraid of saying things like that.

Paul Stillwell: Are there any specific cases that you recall of that, where you had to pull back on something you'd decided?

Admiral Gracey: If I say "No" it's going to make it sound like I was right all the time. [Laughter] Most of the pulling back got done within our own conference room, where I would have some wild idea, and one of the guys on the staff would say, "Sir, you don't really mean that," or, "Have you thought about this, that or the other thing?" And, no, good point, I hadn't thought about that.

Paul Stillwell: You need people like that.

Admiral Gracey: Right, but you also have to set a climate where they will be comfortable doing it. In the first speech I made to every staff and every time we got a new guy on the staff, I would say, "There are lots of ways you can help get the things done that we want to do here. And there's lot of ways you can help me personally, and one of them is, if I'm wrong, tell me I'm wrong. I may not agree that I'm wrong, and we'll have a talk about it, but it'll be a gentlemanly talk depending on the level to which each of gets aroused, but it'll be a gentlemanly talk, and I will respect you for having done that. More than I would if you sat there thinking it and didn't tell me." And most of the time my guys were pretty good about that.

You were saying, "Would people speak up when I had taken a strong stance?" I tried to work so that the public would do that. And later on I'll talk about San Francisco, where we had a series of meetings with the maritime industry, because there were a number of things they were concerned about involving the Coast Guard, things that weren't coming out the way they thought they should. There was also concern about shipping lanes offshore and a few other things. I always tried to get people to participate.

We'd have a meeting, and the whole idea was to get people to sit down with a cup of coffee and talk: "Let's just talk. We're not going to blow down anything. Just talk. Let's get it all out, and then we'll wrestle around with it afterwards and see how we can mesh it all together, but let's find out where we all are."

I tried to do that with the public as well as labor groups and industry groups and the like. And even in bigger things. I went to Detroit one time when I was District Commander, and they were having a big meeting about water quality in the Great Lakes. There were two concerns. One was oil shipments in ice, and the other was pollution from ships, sewage treatment. I, as the Ninth District Commander and the guy that was overseeing all this stuff, was invited to make a speech. My speech took the lines of, "(1) You're really focusing too much of your attention on the sewage plants on the ships. They have treatment now. But if you took every ship in the Great Lakes and tied them together in one place and told them to all flush their heads at once it would be like a community of something like 12,000 people or less. Meanwhile, Buffalo, Milwaukee— [and I listed a whole bunch of cities] are all pumping their sewage into the lakes. Why are you wasting your time on the ships? Now, it isn't a waste of time, and I don't mean the shipping community shouldn't be helping. We're working with them, and this is coming, and the Lake Carriers are very good about getting the treatment plants on their ships and so forth. But you're focusing in the wrong place, assuming we want to get an overall improvement of water quality in the Great Lakes. And the other thing is I can make an argument that it's safer to move oil when the lakes are frozen than when they're not."

There was rumbling in the audience. I said, "Well, we've had some oil spills. Two of them were because tank barges broke loose in a storm and hit a breakwater. Well, if the lake is ice-covered, there won't be any waves, and they can't break loose and get dashed against the breakwater, because there's a big cushion of ice against it. And in any event the problem in ice is to move a tanker or barge at all, let alone have it get out of control. The ice keeps it controlled, so you're not going to have accidents like the storm situation. And if the vessels are properly built, and we can look to see that they are, you're not going to have the ice punching holes in them. And then there was always the thought that if they do happen to punch a hole the oil is going to be on top of the ice."

And if it isn't on top of the ice and it's in the water, the water's so cold it's going to make little oil balls, and it's all going to sink to the bottom. Whereas if you're in nice warm water in July it's all going to wash up on the beach. Now, I don't want to stand here and tell you that I advocate that we don't ever move oil except in wintertime, but I'm suggesting to you that it is not per se hazardous to do it."

Paul Stillwell: Some mitigating factors.

Admiral Gracey: "There are other things you've got to look at, and you've got to understand what you're dealing with." And then I would take questions, and I would give fairly blunt answers. Factual—not blunt.

Paul Stillwell: Straightforward.

Admiral Gracey: Straightforward. That's a good term for my style. The icebreaking techniques I think I talked about. At the end of that winter of '76-'77, I designed a keepsake with a logo of "Great Lakes Ice Fighter, Winter of '76-'77." It was one of those small marble paperweights, and the logo was a round brass plate with a silhouette of the Great Lakes on it. And it had the words "Great Lakes Ice Fighter." I bought one of those for every person on every Coast Guard ship that broke ice in the winter. I went from ship to ship and personally handed one to each person. Told them, "Thank you," and got my jollies doing this. I felt good about it. But they had done just such a wonderful job, and I could have sent out a funny message saying, "Thank you," or a serious message saying, "Thank you," but I wanted to look each one of them in the eye and say, "Thank you."

Paul Stillwell: Here's your hockey puck.

Admiral Gracey: Not much good as a hockey puck. The white marble base was square. [Laughter] Three or four years later I was PacArea Commander, and I'd gone to the Rose Festival in Portland, Oregon. I was walking up the dock in uniform with Randy and

the Port Director for Portland and his wife, who were our hosts at the Festival. They invite Navy and Coast Guard Flag Officers and ships, and it's a great event. They have local dignitaries act as hosts.

This guy came up to us. He had long red hair and a beard, and he had a black eye. He was wearing a lumberjack shirt, and he said, "Admiral Gracey. Remember me?"

And I was thinking, "I'm not sure I really want to." But I said, "Well I'm not sure I recognize you."

He said, "I was one of your Great Lakes Ice Fighters." He said, "You gave me one of those paperweights."

And I said, "Oh, wow, wonderful. Where are you now?"

"Well I'm here."

"What are you doing?"

"I'm a wrestler."

"Okay. Very interesting."

He said, "I'm a wrestler. Do you want to see me take a dive?" And I thought he meant wrestling. [Laughter]

I said, "No, no, no."

And he said, "No, I don't mean in wrestling." And he stood up on the railing of the pier and he said, "Watch." And he did a swan dive into the river. Came up, and he shouted, "I did it for Admiral Gracey." By now we had drawn a crowd. You see, there was this big carnival kind of an event going on the waterfront right next to where we were. And he climbed out of the water and came up and said, "How was that?"

I said, "That was a great dive."

He said, "Want to see another one?"

I said, "No, that's okay."

He said, "Watch this one. And, poom, into the water he went. He came up, and he shouted even louder, "I did it *again* for Admiral Gracey." And there was a kind of a lower section where there was a yacht tied up. By now we had drawn a big crowd, and we also had a couple of policemen. I went down on the lower dock to greet this guy coming out of the water, and the cops came down and said, "Would you like us to take over here, Admiral?"

I said, “No, no, no. This is an old friend and shipmate. He just wants to show me some of his new talents in his new career, and I think he’s probably used up all his diving for today. Don’t you think so, Joe?”

And Joe said, “Well you’ve seen my two best ones.” [Laughter]

But it was that Great Lakes Ice-Fighter thing and people said, “What’s that all about?” so I explained it.

Paul Stillwell: But there were probably many other people who felt that way and just never had that kind of an opportunity for feedback.

Admiral Gracey: It happens to me all the time. I was at the Army-Navy Club the other day having lunch, and a whole bunch of Coast Guard people had come in for a going-away party for somebody. So I went over just to say hello. There was a young fellow sitting at the head of the table, and I went up and shook his hand and introduced myself. He said, “You don’t need to introduce yourself, sir. I was at Loran Station, Middletown, California, when you came up to visit, and you were the Pacific Area Commander. In fact, we sat down and had a nice long chat about how things were going.”

I said, “Oh, sure.” You know, you see a face and you say, “I know this person from somewhere, but I don’t know where.” He wasn’t in uniform. He was in civvies. And this happens all the time. It’s wonderful. It really is because people will remember anyway, but the fact is that they do. I suppose I only see the ones who have a happy memory. The other ones where the contact wasn’t good probably won’t talk to me. I get my jollies out of these encounters

Paul Stillwell: Right.

Admiral Gracey: I was just reading a paper last night that I’d written in New York, which we’ll talk about later on. In it I said, “The Coast Guard’s probably going to get in your knickers from time and time.” And I thought, “Well, that’s pretty casual language,”

but that was kind of the way I tried to write and communicate. I wanted to break down barriers or get around them.

In the Ninth Coast Guard District there are a lot of small units. By small I mean lifeboat stations, 20 men, 30 men—men and women now, but in those days it was all men. And we had a District Inspector. We had an inspection program, and the inspection team would go out and take a thorough look at a unit. And then there would be a long period of exchange. They'd find things wrong and would write back to the unit. The unit was supposed to say how they were going to fix it. Then there would be a big back and forth, back and forth, and I would never really find out what happened or how things were out there—what they needed or how they were doing.

I was never getting any inspection reports back. Nothing was happening. So I created what I called my "Inspection Philosophy." I used it there and in all of my subsequent command positions. Gracey's Inspection Philosophy was this very simply. To the Inspectors it said, "Look, we're going to start out there with the assumption that there is not a single person there who does not want to do well and do right. There's nobody out there who does not want to do that. So if it's not coming out that way, then we're going to assume it's one of the following three things: They don't know what to do, they don't know how to do it, or they don't have the tools to do it—hardware, software, equipment, training.

"Your job, when you find something that isn't going well or going right, is to figure out which one of those three things it is. Whenever you find something wrong, I want you to tell me in the report which one of those three things you found. If he doesn't know what to do, we'll tell him. If he doesn't know how to do it, we'll teach him. If he doesn't have the right gear, we'll either buy it or change. Easy. Easy. No reason we can't get that done two weeks after you get back. So let's do it."

Paul Stillwell: This is the philosophy that a staff is to support the other commands, not beat them over the head.

Admiral Gracey: Exactly. That's right. I found that approach very helpful in my own thinking—even to the Coast Guard as a whole later on in various situations. Which one

of those things pertains? Obviously, sometimes there is a combination. He not only doesn't know, but if he did know he wouldn't know how to do it—those kinds of things. But we expect something to happen, and it's not. So I sent the inspectors out with that mandate, and all of a sudden there wasn't this big warfare over inspections. "Inspector" wasn't a dirty word. I tried to put out the word about the new look in inspections. When I was on my visits I said, "Now, you're all going to laugh when I tell you the inspector's job is to help you. You've all got a long history, and you don't believe that."

Paul Stillwell: They've heard that before.

Admiral Gracey: "You've heard it before. This is going to be better for you than it is for us or whatever."

Paul Stillwell: [Laughter]

Admiral Gracey: "Just stay cool because this is how we're going to run," and I told them. "Now, your job is you've got to be prepared. If it isn't going well at your unit, you've got to be prepared to tell the inspector which one of those things is causing the problem. If it's something you don't know about, obviously you can't tell him, but you just found out. Now, tell him whether you know how or not." So I was pleased about that, and it worked out well, and they began to have trust. And then I did it in the 12th District, and I tried to sell it at Headquarters. It was a little bit different deal there. The total inspection program changed along the way, but the philosophy, the way of dealing with the field and with the subordinate units was the thing that I was trying to push.

Paul Stillwell: How large a staff did you have in Cleveland to perform these various responsibilities?

Admiral Gracey: Gee, I don't know. There were about three in the inspection business. But for the whole District Office, maybe 100 or more. I don't know. It was fairly large, because we were covering a lot of territory. In those days all the engineering, Civil and

Naval Engineering, was done in the District Office, and the Merchant Marine Safety staff was really big because the Ninth is a big merchant marine district. And we had aids to navigation all over the place and then we had the pilotage group added on. And I would guess maybe 100 to 150 people.

Another thing I remember about Cleveland is that Secretary Coleman came out there, and we had a couple of really fine visits with him.* One time he was the Guest of Honor at the annual dinner for what they called the Fifty Club. These were the presidents of 50 major corporations whose headquarters were in Cleveland, and they dined at the Union Club in Cleveland. Secretary Coleman's front woman was really good at her job. I mean, she was wonderful. But they said that she had to go in the back door. And the Secretary said, "If she comes in the back door, I go in no door. Do you want me to talk tonight? My representative walks in the front door." They backed down, and she was the first woman ever to walk in the front door of the Union Club. And there weren't a heck of a lot of blacks in there either. He did it well.

Secretary Coleman was nobody's pushover. He was good at what he did, and he had a marvelous sense of humor and a marvelous way of the right and wrong of things. But he was, "Don't push me around, fellows, or any of my people."

Paul Stillwell: Did you have some responsibility with regard to the commercial shipbuilding on the lakes such as George Steinbrenner's operation and others?†

Admiral Gracey: Yes, the Merchant Marine Safety people did their usual inspection during construction, licensing of personnel and that sort of thing. There had always been an ongoing pretty good relationship between the M-people and the Lake Carriers. And over the years the District Commanders—some of us more than others—had always had a relationship with the Lake Carriers Association and the individual companies, most of which were headquartered in Cleveland. These were big shipping companies. In Cleveland there was a lot of social interchange and some politicking too.

* William T. Coleman, Jr., served as Secretary of Transportation from 7 March 1975 to 20 January 1977.

† George M. Steinbrenner III is the long-time chairman of the board of the American Ship Building Company. He is more widely known to the public as the owner of the New York Yankees baseball team.

The head of the Lake Carrier Association when I was there was former Coast Guard Assistant Commandant Paul Trimble, Vice Admiral Paul Trimble, who was a long-time friend. I'd worked for him a couple times over the years. I called him up when I first got to Cleveland and said, "Hi, Admiral."

He said, "No, no, Jim. No, no. I'm Paul. Out here I'm Paul, and you're Admiral."

I said, "Yeah, right. [Laughter] And I appreciate that, and it will be Paul." And it was Paul. But he knew that we understood that he had the Coast Guard background, but it wasn't abused—ever. He knew me and my approach, and he respected my position. There was never any hint of conflict of interest.

As an example, at one point I was concerned about two things. I was concerned about the vessels going too fast down a couple of selected waterways. I was also concerned they weren't securing their hatches properly, because that was one of the things our investigators thought might have contributed to the *Edmund Fitzgerald* sinking.* I kind of took a tight line on that one, and I talked with Paul ahead of time and said, "Look, this is how I see this. You can either get your guys to do it voluntarily, or I'm going to use my Coast Guard authority, and we're going to slow them down, and we're going to check on dogging the hatches."†

It happened that in Duluth we had a Marine Inspection Office, MIO, right at the mouth of the harbor. The OCMI, Officer in Charge of Marine Inspection, could look out his window and see whether the hatches were dogged or not when they went out. Dogging the ore boat hatches is a big job. It isn't just like closing a dog on a normal hatch. It's big and time consuming and hard work.

But we were concerned. I was getting feedback that there might have been some laxity, so I passed it on. And he argued a little bit that I really didn't understand the situation, and I said, "I have no doubt that I don't fully understand. But my experts are

* The SS *Edmund Fitzgerald* displaced 13,632 tons and was 729 feet long. In 1958, when first launched, she was the largest carrier on the Great Lakes, and remained so until 1971. In 1964 she was the first ship on the Great Lakes to carry more than a million tons of ore through the Soo Locks. On 10 November 1975, while battling heavy weather, the ship sank in Lake Superior. All 29 crew members died. Gordon Lightfoot's song "The Wreck of the *Edmund Fitzgerald*" (1976, Moose Music, Ltd.) is a tribute to this shipwreck and the men who lost their lives

† In this context a dog is a metal fitting used to close a hatch or watertight door. Typically it takes a number of dogs per hatch to provide the necessary watertight seal.

telling me what they see, and I'm concerned. So we're going to take this approach. And it would be better if you did it than if I imposed it."

He said, "Well, I should have known you were going to say that anyway." [Laughter] But it was all very friendly, you know, and business was done that way—not just between the Association and us but among the companies themselves.

The lake carriers would sit down over lunch, and by the time one and another got through talking they would have traded off a shipload of coal for two shiploads of ore. Or one of them would have a scheduling problem with a boat, and so another company would run a load for him to meet his schedule, and he would give it back later on. It was all done either on a napkin or just by word of mouth over lunch.

I mean, it was a really very different. It's an incredible industry and it was all done very loose, very open. Your word's as good as bond, and it always happened the way they agreed; it always had, and it probably always will. They were proud of that. They did get to a point where things were getting a little tight. The competition got hard when the steel industry started hurting, but this was after I left. I understand that some of that freedom to swap off loads and so forth was a little harder to come by, because people needed the money, and if they had the contract they wanted the money for it. That's probably not a good way to say it, but that was generally the situation. I'm told that some of that kind of old tradition of loose, over-the-table, over-lunch working things out tended to go away, but it had been around forever, and it was a wonderful way to do business.

Paul Stillwell: Well, that's probably where the bean counters exerted greater authority.

Admiral Gracey: Well, plus the companies. You know, some of the companies were taken over by bigger companies and that sort of thing. They were big, very powerful companies. Lots of money in them, of course. Bethlehem was one of the operators, but there were some that had names like Cleveland Cliffs and Ogleby-Norton and companies like that had been running forever. George Steinbrenner's father had a fleet up there, and that's where the Steinbrenner money came from, I think—that and shipbuilding.

You asked me about the Steinbrenner shipbuilding. Yeah, we did inspect, although during the time I was there, very early on, he essentially closed up his yard in Lorain, Ohio, which was his last one remaining in the Great Lakes area. He went to Tampa. After I retired from the Coast Guard many years later I was on that Tampa Ship Board of Directors, as well as the Board of The American Ship Building Co., owned by George Steinbrenner. I got familiar with Tampa. But in Wisconsin there were two or three good shipbuilding companies, big companies.

There weren't an awful lot of the really big ore boats being built, although there were some 1,000-footers. The idea of building the 1,000-footers was that by carrying more on one trip there would be fewer trips, and they would cut down the amount of ore inventory sitting on a dock somewhere. But it was expensive to run them, and they were just too big. It was tough getting them up and down the winding St. Mary's River when it was just water. When it was iced up it was next to impossible. I mean, you couldn't bend them in the middle. You know, an 800-footer was bad enough, let alone a 1,000-footer. The extra 200 feet made a big difference.

Paul Stillwell: What sanctions did you have available if the owners were recalcitrant on things like that speed limitation or the problem with the hatches?

Admiral Gracey: I can't remember the right terms for citations that the merchant marine safety people and the COTP, Captain of the Port, could impose. There were penalties that could be involved, but I don't remember what they were. Most of the time it never came to be. Most of the time all you had to do was say, "I'm going to—" and they'd say, "No, no," and we didn't want to get to that.

One of the things I started to talk about earlier, was how the winter navigation business really disrupted the lives of the ship crews. They had always worked from April to December. And then January, February, March, and most of April—usually it was early May or late April—they went to Florida or someplace.

Well, now the ships were running all winter, some of them, and the families were all discombobulated. The wives absolutely hated it. I mean, this lifestyle was something that had been going on for a very long time, and that was just the way it was going to be.

And all of sudden they couldn't do that anymore. Now all the companies changed the routine. There were only a couple of companies that really got involved, and I can't remember which ones they were now—Bethlehem was one. But it was a big change. They always had a big party in December after shipping stopped and another big party and back to work in the spring. And all of a sudden what had always been a wonderful big old celebratory bash in December was a nothing. I mean, what's the big deal? We're all going right back to work again, and it changed the philosophies. It was interesting how that one little decision—how you could see the impact all throughout the industry.

Paul Stillwell: Well, has it now gone back to the way it had been previously?

Admiral Gracey: I don't know what they're running now, but I understand they gave up on this all-winter thing, because it was hard on the ships, hard on the people, cost a lot of money. It was hard on the Coast Guard crews that had to break the ice and keep them moving. In an emergency you could run most winters. But let's face it. This was so you wouldn't have to have an inventory sitting on the dock over the winter. Now, that's money, of course, big time, and I wouldn't downplay the significance of that to one of the companies, but you've got to look at the whole picture.

We wouldn't be involved in the decision. We could say, "Look, we're not prepared to give you that kind of support in another winter." I said, "Yeah, for an experiment we'll do it," and we did it for two winters. But I think the Coast Guard might very well say in another winter, "No, we can't do that. We've got to lick our wounds here over the winter and be ready to go in the spring."

Among other things, you have to take all the aids to navigation out before ice season, but you also have to leave them in as long as there are salties still on the lakes getting ready to go out the St. Lawrence Seaway. And they try to stretch the season as long as they can. The whole idea is to start by pulling the non-critical aids first, then time the critical ones so you follow the last saltie out, plucking the buoys as you go. One thing for sure: a ship owner does not want his vessel spending four months idle at a dock in a Great Lakes port somewhere.

It gets to be an interesting affair in the fall, and then, of course, in the spring you've got to get the buoys back in as soon as there's a chance that one of the salties can come up the St. Lawrence River—and the lakers can start too. And you're always playing it against Mother Nature, because ultimately God's the one that's going to decide when the ice leaves. Bottom line, USCG, United States Coast “God.”

I mentioned the Great Lakes Basin Commission. Very active group. I chaired the Standing Committee on Transportation for this group, and I held a number of transportation seminars. The idea was to talk about transportation issues in the Great Lakes region—identify them and possible solutions. The Basin Commission looked into a whole bunch of stuff about environmental work, water quality, dealing with spills, preventing environmental damage, and all that kind of thing. It was an interesting to be involved with them, and the interpersonal relationships were good.

There were a number of other groups that were promoting trade. There was the Great Lakes Commission; others had names that were very close to each other but not quite. I tried to participate in those myself, and we had representatives designated for each of them.

One of the things I did that I'm very proud of was to create an Education Enrichment School for Coast Guard people. It occurred to me early on that there was a big incidence of minor infractions—of people with a long list of disciplinary problems, but they were all little things. A guy didn't get to where he was supposed to be at a specified time or whatever. And I had this vision of people who couldn't read very well. They'd go to morning muster, and somebody would say, “We're going to do something-or-other, something-or-other, something-or-other. Go read it on the bulletin board.”

John Smith would go down to the bulletin board and start letter-by-letter sounding out each word. If he didn't have reading skills he would be trying to read it, and somebody'd come and, “Smitty, get out of the way.” And they'd push him away, and he'd finally quit trying. The net effect was he'd say, “Oh, to hell with it,” or do what little bit he'd been able to cover. And he wouldn't wind up doing the right thing, and then he'd be in trouble. So I inquired about that with our many unit commanding officers, and they said, “Yeah, there is a lot of that.”

Paul Stillwell: How could that be? How could these people get into the Coast Guard without reading ability?

Admiral Gracey: Well, they could read—some. They all had high school diplomas, but some of the high schools aren't great. The Coast Guard never went away from requiring a diploma. You had to be a high school graduate. But it just was that they didn't have reading skills, they couldn't write very well. The three R's—"Reading, Riting and Rithmetic"—and we found they couldn't do arithmetic. So we created what I called the Educational Enrichment School at Coast Guard Air Station, Traverse City, Michigan. We hired two teachers. I can't tell you where I managed to get the money to do this, but we did it. I felt it was important enough to use some of our operating expense money.

We would bring in about ten at a time, some small number, and they would be at the school for several weeks. They would do just plain reading, writing, and arithmetic. Some people called it "dummy school." I became aware of that early on when some unfortunate soul at our morning staff meeting made reference to the "dummy school." I went up in flames and came down smoldering and said, "No, no, no, no, no. Where are you getting that?"

"Oh, that's what it's called around the District—the 'dummy school.'"

I said, "I will keelhaul the first person that says 'dummy school' in front of me again. It's the Educational Enrichment School—with capital letters. How are we going to change that image? Well, one of the things we're going to do to change it is we're going to say to the people who go it, 'You go to the Educational Enrichment School and pass it successfully, and we will get you to a CG petty officer school. We will do our level best. And if you can't we'll find other ways to help. We will also have graduations and generate the idea that it's a privilege to get picked to go there.'" Some of them couldn't do the whole nine yards, but when they went back to their units they at least had the basics. And the COs reported that the level of disciplinary problems went right off the table. It went right down to next to nothing. That Enrichment School idea worked.

Somehow the word got out that this wasn't a "dummy school." This was an "opportunity school." This was for people who through no fault of their own hadn't gotten the right kind of education, and we were going to give it to them. And we were

going to give it to them in a place where they could get it and have it and use it afterwards, and it was going to be to the Coast Guard's benefit and to theirs.

Paul Stillwell: And to society at large.

Admiral Gracey: And to society at large. Now, whether I ever drove the “dummy school” term out of use I don't know, but it never got used in front of me again because I really came down hard on that one. That's not where we are. It worked very well, and it kept going. Then when I got to be Commandant I set up a similar thing at Cape May boot camp. If a boot had this problem we would push back his boot training. We added a week or a couple of weeks to his boot camp and did this special Education Enrichment part. And then we let him go join up with the rest of them. So he had a couple of extra weeks' training. He joined, enlisted, the whole thing, but if it was clear that this was a person who needed this kind of help, he or she would get it. We set that up at Cape May for the whole U.S. Coast Guard. I assume it went away in the Ninth District at that time, but I don't know. It stayed while I was around anyway, and it stayed while I was the Atlantic Area Commander later on. It was a good program. I was proud of that.

The Coast Guard Festival at Grand Haven, Michigan. The people of Grand Haven call themselves Coast Guard City, USA. Everybody up in that part of the world has a festival. I mean, whatever is your interest. Holland, Michigan, has the Tulip Festival. Somebody else has a Pumpkin Festival. Traverse City has a Cherry Festival.

Grand Haven has a Coast Guard Festival. It's a weeklong deal. It got started because the Coast Guard Cutter *Escanaba* had been stationed in Grand Haven before World War II. In the early days of the war build-up they pulled *Escanaba* out of Grand Haven and sent her into the Atlantic. She was torpedoed with only two survivors in the North Atlantic up near Greenland.* Somewhere along the way the people of Grand Haven decided they'd have a memorial service. The whole town was involved. Maybe half the people in town were related to somebody on that ship or a descendent. Later

* USCGC *Escanaba* (WPG-77), a Tribal-class cutter, was commissioned on 23 November 1932. She was 165 feet long, 36 feet in the beam, and had a mean draft of 13.7 feet. She had a maximum speed of 15.5. The cutter sank on 13 June 1943 while escorting a North Atlantic convoy bound from Greenland to Canada. Since no German submarines were in the area, the loss has been attributed to a mine.

they decided they would have a picnic to go with it. One thing led to another, and it got to be the Coast Guard Festival. Big, big deal. They'd go from a huge parade to musical fireworks at a big fountain across the river from the pier. All week long was something, including a Miss Coast Guard pageant. Local citizenry, not USCG people.

Interesting to me was that one of the men lost in *Escanaba* had been a semi-boyhood hero of mine. He came from my hometown—Needham, Massachusetts, and you guessed it, he played on the high school baseball team when I was a kid, a fellow by the name of Jimmy Davis. I'd hang around, and Jimmy would hit me a few fungos and toss the ball, or I could walk up and he'd talk to me. He was a nice guy, and he was being nice to this kid. I wasn't that much younger than he but enough so that it meant something.

Here I got to the Coast Guard Festival, and what do you know? One of the two survivors would come to the Festival each year, and he and Jimmy had been in the same section or something on the ship. But I could tell that story of my also having a personal tie to *Escanaba* to the crowd.

It was a good event. Never rained, they said. The first year we went, it poured. [Laughter] Shoes melted. They would have a parade where the "luminaries" would sit up in the backs of open convertibles. Randy and I would sit up in the back and wave to the crowd, a huge crowd. On that downpour day the spectators were all inside plastic bags. We were sitting out there getting drowned. [Laughter] Randy was loving every minute of it. So was I.

Paul Stillwell: How much search and rescue work did you have in that district?

Admiral Gracey: The search part of it was not the same as in a coastal area where they could be anywhere in thousands of miles. That's not a true statement. If you have some idea where they are down, you have ways to calculate roughly where you think they ought to be, and we do a great job of finding them. But we did have a Coast Guard Air Station at Traverse City, Michigan, a former naval air station. And we had one in Detroit, and we had a naval air station in Chicago at Glenview. But we didn't have one in Cleveland or east of there. Detroit covered Lake Erie and Lake Ontario. We had

helicopters and fixed wing, HH-52s and HU-16s, amphibians. A lot of rescue work. A lot of work with small boat stuff. They were all over the place.

Except for the *Edmund Fitzgerald* I can't remember another major sinking on my watch. Mostly it was small boats or sailing yachts that were lost, or somebody would collide with a breakwater or another vessel. And, of course, the weather really gets nasty. I mean, the weather will go from flat calm to 30-foot seas in nothing flat, because it's all piled up. You get into Lake Erie, and the wind will pile up the water. They call it the Seish Effect. If the wind blows from the west, the water level will rise in the east. Lake Erie is kind of like a bathtub. It'll tend to slosh back and forth. It's incredible, but it's something you have to learn to deal with.

Aids to navigation was a big operation. We had several buoy tenders. They were also icebreakers.

Paul Stillwell: Do you want to talk specifically about the *Edmund Fitzgerald* case?

Admiral Gracey: Yes, I do. I was going to give a flavor of a couple of other things first. Let me just tell you a smiler while we're on miscellany. We had closed one of our stations on Lake Michigan. We decided to turn it into a boating safety training center for the Auxiliary. An opening ceremony was set up. They had television cameras and the press and the whole nine yards, and, of course, there had to be a ribbon cutting. We had a big turnout of locals. It was in St. Joseph, Michigan, and I was to cut the ribbon with a sword.

Now, I've seen people try to cut ribbons with scissors. It doesn't work very well. And I knew the sword was not going to work at all. But the cameras were on. I said, "Whoa. Turn off the cameras. Turn them off." And they dutifully turned them off. I said, "Anybody got scissors?" No scissors, so I reached in my pocket. I got out my little Swiss Army knife scissors, and I cut the ribbon. Then I held it together, and I got the sword and I said, "Are you ready? Roll 'em." And they rolled them. I swung the sword and let go of the ribbon at just the right time. The picture they put out got that sword halfway through that ribbon and it looks like I had sliced that ribbon clean—with the sword.

Paul Stillwell: Of course, your sword doesn't have a sharp edge.

Admiral Gracey: No, no. You can't slice anything with it. I mean, all you've got to do is watch somebody that's trying to cut a cake with a sword. I mean, you can't even cut a cake, let alone a ribbon. [Laughter] Oh, well, anyway.

Edmund Fitzgerald. What can I tell you? It was a wild storm in November, and November's a terrible month on the Great Lakes. It just gets awful. I was at home, and the phone rang, and it was the District Operations Center calling. He said, "The *Edmund Fitzgerald*"—and that was a ship that people had talked about. It was one of the good ones. They said, "The *Edmund Fitzgerald* is missing. There's another laker out there, and he's been working with him, running on a parallel course—in sight. But they disappeared. They don't know whether they've had a power failure or what."* They weren't getting any response. There was no radar signal; there was nothing. And I thought, "Oh, boy. So who's out there? What's available? What have we got?"

Well, we had harbor tugs and smaller vessels. The harbor tugs were 110-footers, built for work in harbors and protected waters. There were a number of salties in the general area, and there were a couple of other lakers. We had two vessels. One of them was in maintenance availability, and they were working on the engines. And I said, "Get back to me as soon as you know something else."

At that point the "machinery" whips into action. The Group Commander in Sault Ste. Marie was the operational commander, because it was his operational area and his vessels. But the District Op Center was on it too. In a later call I directed that we not send our tugs out, because it was clear that there was nobody to save, that the vessel was gone. I mean, there were no radar signals. There were no lights. There was nothing. There was no indication of any kind. Clearly, the vessel had sunk. Why it had sunk, how it went down so fast we had no idea, but it did.

So we were in a body search situation at best. At that point you're talking about even if people had gotten off they would have been in the water for an hour or two hours.

* On 9 November 1975 the *Edmund Fitzgerald* had departed from Superior, Wisconsin, with about 26,000 tons of ore bound for Detroit. Shortly after leaving, the ore carrier made contact with the *Arthur M. Anderson* bound, on a similar route, for Gary Indiana, via the Soo Locks and Lake Michigan.

November, Lake Superior, they were all going to be dead. If we sent our harbor tugs out, I was afraid we were going to wind up with one or two more ships lost, because they just weren't capable of that kind of weather. They were harbor tugs, geared for protected water. And there were other people out there searching. Obviously nothing was ever found, and we later on released the other ore boat to come on in and get into shelter, because it was a bad night. And we did some searching by air and so forth the next day, but there was nothing. I think there were a couple of pieces of debris ultimately found, but there was no indication of any people.

Ultimately we found the hull with Navy help. They brought up one of their specialized submersible cameras and so forth, and they found that there was a sandy bottom, and *Edmund Fitzgerald* was sitting down there. We started to do the investigation that we always did for sinkings—which was a normal routine, but, of course, it was a big thing, as it should have been with a major disaster, a major ship loss, but also major human disaster.

There were some hearings held ultimately, and I was subjected to some questions about why I had taken the stance about not sending our 110-foot tugs—specifically directing that they not go. And I explained it. I think it was Congressman Ruppe of Michigan who held the hearing.* I explained my position, and that was kind of the end of that. I never really had any serious question about that, and it was pretty clear that there was—I mean, it was obvious. You had an experienced skipper on the laker. The captain of the *Edmund Fitzgerald* said where he was the waves were getting higher and higher. The other captain was only a couple of miles away, and he didn't notice any waves getting higher and higher. Well, it seemed clear to me that *Edmund Fitzgerald* was getting lower and lower, and that is what we ultimately concluded.

My words are not going to be proper language, I suspect, for the nature of the investigation. I was interested in it, but the technical sides of it were all done in proper fashion by the Coast Guard Merchant Marine Safety people. But my Merchant Marine Safety Division boss on the district staff, a fellow by the name of Captain Jim Wilson, was involved in the investigation.† When we finally found the wreck and got pictures of

* Philip E. Ruppe, a Republican from Michigan, served in the House of Representatives from 3 January 1967 to 3 January 1979.

† Captain James A. Wilson, USCG.

it, he and one of his colleagues on the investigating team said, “It looks like another picture we’ve seen.” They finally decided they were thinking of an airplane crash near Portland, Oregon. There’d been pictures in the paper, and they said it looked just like that. Nose buried in the ground. Center section twisted and the tail inverted and separated. It was exactly the same way with *Edmund Fitzgerald*.

From that they said, “You know, that thing drove itself right into the bottom. It went right on down at that angle, hit the bottom, and the propeller and the engines were still running. They just tried to drive it further. It couldn’t, and the torque twisted the mid-section apart and separated and upside down.” Nobody aboard ever had a chance to go anywhere. Later on they concluded that the hatch covers may have been the cause. Water was coming in somewhere, and they concluded it was around the hatch covers, because there were hatch cover pieces, hatch dogs, that had not been broken. They were just lying there loose clearly. And a lot of the cargo had spilled out when it turned over.

So it wasn’t that the hatch covers broke loose because of the force of turning over. They just were loose. And when it turned over the ore came out. And I don’t know how all those pieces of the puzzle were fitted together, but those were all factors that I remember people talking about. The bottom line was that in that bad storm they’d been taking water over the deck all the way, which they normally did when they were loaded low. It had been going into those hatches, and there was no way to discern that there was water in there. They figured it got to the point where, as the ship pitched, this water would move. And it finally got to the point where it moved forward, and it didn’t move back, and then moved forward some more. Ultimately the weight just put the bow down to where it couldn’t recover from pitching, and the screws just drove the boat to the bottom.

Paul Stillwell: So it was free surface effect?

Admiral Gracey: Well, it wouldn’t be free surface, because the water would be mixed in with the ore, which was what they call taconite, which is little pellets. The water would be in there, but it wouldn’t have a truly “free surface.” It was just a case of the weight of

water putting the boat down by the bow deeper and deeper until it just couldn't recover from one last pitch.

Paul Stillwell: The hull itself was not breached prior to going into the bottom?

Admiral Gracey: There was no indication that it was. There were a lot of people who said he was too close to some island and some shoal, and they felt he probably hit that and shoaled. The investigators could find no indication of that. Nor was there any indication that they could make that he was that far off course. And it happened all of a sudden—with no word from *Fitzgerald's* bridge as there surely would have been had he grounded. One minute *Fitzgerald's* lights were there, the next they were gone. But the engine apparently had still been running. The investigators concluded it had to be still running, because it didn't just go down as a sinking vessel would do. It had been driven. They looked at the angle, and they calculated that it had to have hit the bottom going at a certain speed. So it was an ugly and sad event, but some things came out of it that were beneficial, I guess.

Paul Stillwell: I'm surprised that the master wouldn't have an awareness that his ship was getting waterlogged.

Admiral Gracey: Well, I think it was so severe a storm that he just thought that the seas were getting higher. He'd been fighting this thing all the way. He made a decision early on that they were going to run for it into Whitefish Bay. He was only a couple of miles away. If he'd gotten into Whitefish Bay he would have been in the lee, and he would have been okay. There were a couple of other decisions they made, navigating decisions. He was running with the other laker, and he had said to this other master, "Look, something's not right. Stay with me." I guess this eventuality never occurred to him. The books that have been written about the loss and about the people on it are heartbreaking.* There's always the guy who didn't go because of something, and therefore his life was

* Frederick Stonehouse, *The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald* (Au Train, Michigan: Avery Color Studios, 1977).

saved and the other one who went because it was a great opportunity, and he'd always wanted to ride a ship, and that was the wrong one to ride. You get all that kind of story.

Paul Stillwell: How did this pass into folklore territory?

Admiral Gracey: Well, Gordon Lightfoot helped that, of course. He took quick advantage of the event and came out with his record. Is that what you mean by folklore? “The Wreck of the *Edmund Fitzgerald*?”

Paul Stillwell: Right.

Admiral Gracey: Well, it caught everybody's fancy.

Paul Stillwell: The fact that there were no survivors, would that be part of it?

Admiral Gracey: Oh, sure. I mean, we're not talking about a 100-foot or a 200-foot ship. We're talking about a major vessel. And it just happened so quickly—you know, it's there, and it's not there, and on the Great Lakes everybody, people around the water on the Great Lakes see these ore boats going, the lake carriers going by and everybody thinks of them as solid as rocks. There have been several other major losses over the years. There was one in Lake Huron years before—also in November.* That was a horrible situation too. I think that one broke up. That was some years before *Fitzgerald*.

Paul Stillwell: So there was a very real reason for you to enforce tightened hatch closings.

Admiral Gracey: Yeah. Well, there was the thought that this might be a factor, and I just said to OCMI, Duluth, “Take a look as those guys sail by and tell me what you see.”

* On 29 November 1966 the SS *Daniel J. Morrell* sank in Lake Huron, killing the 28 crew members.

He said, “What I see is a lot of them are going out with hatches not yet dogged. And what they do after they get out there I don’t know.” So that was one of the factors. How are we doing?

Paul Stillwell: We’ve still got some tape left.

Admiral Gracey: All right, another smiler. I was invited to the Army-Navy Club of Grand Rapids to speak. I asked, “Why should I go to the Army-Navy Club at Grand Rapids?” Because President Ford is a member.* That was a pretty good reason. The President of the United States was a member of this club, and they wanted me to come. And they’d been in business for 75 years, and they’d never had a Coast Guard admiral speak to them. I said, “Well that’s even better than the President of the United States being a member. So okay, I’ll come. Tell me what do you know about the Army-Navy Club of Grand Rapids?”

“Well, for one thing, they’ve been in business all these years, and they’ve never raised the dues, and they’re very proud of that.” And there were some other factors, but they were just great supporters of the Armed Services, and it was time they got educated about the fifth one.

So I went, and I had all kinds of one-liners about not changing the dues. I mean, I had some really good material that I dreamed up. I thought it was good material. Would you believe that in the business meeting before I spoke that night they changed the dues? [Laughter] Seventy-five years they’d never changed it or whatever it was, and that night they changed them. Well, talk about having material. [Laughter] I had a wonderful time. I think they did.

A little old lady made it special. I was standing talking to some people afterwards and this little old lady—literally in tennis shoes—came up. I was standing there talking, and I felt this tugging at my sleeve. I looked down, and she said, “Admiral, I’ve been coming to these dinners for 50 years. This is the first time I didn’t fall asleep

* Gerald R. Ford, who had previously been a Congressman from Michigan, served as President of the United States from 9 August 1974 to 20 January 1977.

after dinner.” [Laughter] I bent down and gave her kiss on the cheek. I said, “Oh, you have made my night. You have made my night.”

But Grand Rapids, as I say, was the President’s home. President Ford came to the Cherry Festival in Traverse City. It was the first time I had a feeling for what it was like to have a President come to an event. His people took over our Air Station. First they flew in his car, and they flew in all the secret service people and all the support vehicles and all the communications, and the whole nine yards. And we had to pull all our airplanes out and park them out in the weather, and the Ford contingent took over. He was in the parade, and it was a big event. But it was really kind of zoom in, zoom out again. I don’t remember ever—I must have gotten to say “Hello” to the man, but I don’t remember it. I walked with Senator Levin.* We were in cars, and I said, “Sir, how do you feel about walking?”

He said, “I love to walk. Let’s do that.” So we walked, and that was good. But I just remembered another experience about what it took to have a President come to an event.

Back to Cleveland. Law enforcement. Weapons. Remind me, I’ll talk about the Federal Executive Board too. The name of the game was that our boat crews weren’t allowed to have weapons. Our boarding parties people doing law enforcement patrols were not allowed to carry weapons anywhere in the Coast Guard. I wasn’t comfortable with that. One night we had three men in a 41-footer off of Detroit, in Lake St. Clair. They saw a boat coming over from Canada with no running lights. So they stopped him and went up to him, and the guys in the boat pulled guns on our crew. I guess our guys had their lights off, too, but anyway they stopped them and identified themselves, and these people in the boat coming from Canada pulled guns on them.

One of our crew who had been down below when this all started went and got a mop, a swab. Went up on deck in the dark with the swab handle in his hands and said, “Drop ’em,” and they did. When I heard about this, I said, “We’re never going to do this again. There’s no way I’m going to send those guys out there on this kind of duty without having the ability to defend themselves. We’ll give them training and all that

* Carl Levin, a Democrat from Michigan, was a member, Detroit city council 1969-1973; president, Detroit city council 1974-1977; elected as a Democrat to the United States Senate in 1978 and reelected in 1984, 1990, 1996, and again in 2002 for the term ending 3 January 2009.

stuff. We'll assume they need it, and we'll give them the training, but we're going to allow our people to be armed."

I went to Headquarters and I said to Commandant Owen Siler, "I know what your policy is, but unless you order me not to, I'm going to arm our crews. This is what happened, and I don't want it to ever happen again. We are dealing on a foreign border here. Granted it's Canada, and I don't plan to start a war with Canada, but the bad guys coming over from Canada don't worry about that."^{*} So we armed them. There was some great concern about how the yacht clubs would react to having people board them with guns when we were doing safety inspections and stuff. So I went on a speaking campaign to the yacht clubs there.

I did the same thing in the 12th District when I got there. And I said, "Here's the situation. This is what's happening. My people have no intention of using their weapons, but they're out there facing all kinds of peril, and they are helpless in that sense. And I don't want that to be." So I said, "They're going to come aboard your boat, and they're going to have a pistol on their hip. Please understand why. People don't want it to be, but it's going to be, and my troops are going to be protected." There was not a single time that I made that speech that I didn't get a standing ovation when I finished. Not once. So I thought, "Okay." There's always some guy who's going to be unhappy because a cop came aboard with a gun. But people see cops carrying guns all the time. Ultimately the policy got changed, but I flew solo on that one for about three years—under two Commandants. I made it policy for the whole Coast Guard.

Paul Stillwell: Who would be the people that would be the threat? Were these smugglers that had the weapons?

Admiral Gracey: Yeah. Those guys were running drugs, and I'm talking '74-'75. I won't say it was early on in the drug business, but we were becoming aware of this, and they were running drugs over from Canada.

^{*} Admiral Owen W. Siler, USCG, served as Commandant of the Coast Guard from 31 May 1974 to 1 June 1978.

I made another “statement” too. I had a \$2.00 payday one day in cash. There was a small town in Northern Michigan that shall remain nameless. They didn’t like the idea that we had black people in our boat crews there. They didn’t have signs that said, “Whites only,” but there was no doubt they weren’t happy about having blacks assigned to that Coast Guard Station in their town. We were trying to get some housing for our families. For one thing, people wouldn’t rent houses to us. So I said, “I’ll tell you what, Mr. Mayor. I don’t think you fully appreciate the significance of having those people in your community.”

Paul Stillwell: The economic impact.

Admiral Gracey: The economic impact. He said, “Well, I think we do.”

I said, “Do you think your people in the town do?”

He said, “Well, I think they do.”

I said, “I’ll tell you what. I think I’m going to demonstrate that. I’m going to see if I can’t arrange things so one day you’re going to find a lot of \$2.00 bills showing up in your stores. Have you seen a \$2.00 bill lately, Mr. Mayor?”

“No, I haven’t.”

“You’re going to see nothing but, because we’re going to have a \$2.00 payday. We’re going to pay people in cash.” Now, I wondered how I could bring this off.

He said, “Well, that’ll be interesting.”

I said, “Yes, it will.”

We had one \$2.00 payday, and he called me up he said, “I got the message. [Laughter] And so has the community. They all wonder, ‘Where are all these damned \$2.00 bills coming from?’”

I said, “Well, they don’t say ‘Semper Paratus’ on the back, but they might. And you’ve only got 25 guys down there, but they’re getting paid, and they’re spending their money right in your town. And you ought to treat them a little better than you are.” So it worked.

Interview Number 7 with Admiral James Gracey, U.S. Coast Guard (Retired)

Date: Wednesday, 25 July 2001

Place: Admiral Gracey's home in Arlington, Virginia

Interviewer: Paul Stillwell

Paul Stillwell: Admiral, we'll resume today with your discussion of the Ninth Coast Guard District, and I think you also want to talk about your philosophy as a flag officer.

Admiral Gracey: Well, my first flag job was as a District Commander, which was great good fortune for me. I had good luck in my earlier assignments too. I had an extra-long tour of duty—five years, instead of the usual four—working at putting together the Coast Guard's priorities and looking at the whole “Coast Guard World” with that group of topnotch junior officers I talked about in The Programs Analysis Division at Headquarters. So I went out to the field with a pretty good foundation of what was going on, what the priorities were, what the needs were out there. And I had a feel for how to weigh them against the overall Coast Guard situation.

Somewhere in there, I thought about, “Who am I? How do I want to approach this business?” I jotted down some of my thoughts back then, and I think it might be useful in explaining some of the ways I approached things from that time on—during my junior flag years and ultimately as the Commandant.

I realized, in going back and looking at letters I wrote, papers that came later on, and things that I did, that there was a lot of continuity in approach and response. I hate to say I never changed. Obviously, you change every day. You get new experiences, you work with different people, and you learn new things. But basically my approach was pretty consistent. Every time I started to ask, “Where are we going here?” it seemed to come out with the same words. [Laughter] I always wanted to make things better and to stress the good about the Coast Guard. In fact, later on, when I became Commandant, there was a great deal of concern about the negatives and one thing and another, what was going to happen with our relations with DoT and with the Reagan Administration trying to privatize the Coast Guard and all that.

I had two theme songs. One was "Accentuate the Positive; Eliminate the Negative." The other one was a takeoff on some words of a popular song.* I said it this way: "You don't tug on Superman's cape, you don't spit into the wind. You don't pull the mask off the old Lone Ranger, and you don't mess around with Big Jim." I was trying to put at ease those who—for some reason—seemed concerned that I might not stand up for USCG against certain Reagan Administration politicians. But I thought: "Be positive. Be liberal with commendation and compliments for things that are done, and get praise delivered in a timely fashion. And say 'thank you' a lot."

A great frustration of mine was how to get an award presented NOW [banging sound of hand hitting table]. I thought we could correct failures by stressing successes. We had a lot of successes. And if we had criticisms, understand where they were coming from, understand the background and profit from them, and do something about them. I thought it was important to be visible, available, interested, involved for Coast Guard people, for the public, particularly in maritime affairs, but in all aspects because the Coast Guard does go way beyond the marine realm.

I thought it was important to be open and direct. I always had an open-door policy. I'd consult with everybody that had a stake in what was happening. That used to drive people crazy, because sometimes I'm sure I over-consulted, but I thought it was important to do that. And that includes public involvement. There were times and events where I thought I should step in and try to influence the way things were going, not just with the Coast Guard but perhaps with other government agencies or public bodies.

For example, in the Great Lakes we had an occasion where the Canadians were having a problem one winter getting oil into one of their northern ports. The Soo Locks were closed, and the Canadians were about to run out of oil, and they were trying to persuade the Corps of Engineers to open the locks. I stepped in and had a hand in persuading the Corps that there were ways we could help them and we should get it done. Let's help the Canadians get their oil to where they need it. Then I backed away again. I

* The song "You Don't Mess Around with Jim," written and performed by Jim Croce, was one of the top 100 hits of the year 1972.

found I had enough swat as a Coast Guard District Commander, and later on as a three-star or as the Commandant, that I could do that sort of thing—mediation or influencing action—if I was careful about it and if I didn't overdo it.

I thought personal leadership was important. I wanted to expand the Coast Guard presence and its visibility, its influence, its ability to contribute. That's one of the things I always thought was important, that the Coast Guard had so much more to offer than was realized. During my tenure later in the Capstone program, and as the Commandant, I pressed the idea that the Coast Guard is a card that ought to be played regularly: "We bring to the table things we do every day that you big guys in the Pentagon could probably do, but you may or may not have the tools and experience and training that come from our ongoing missions. Why don't you step back and let us take care of that part, and then you get on with sailing your battle groups and whatever?"

Paul Stillwell: The things that they do best.

Admiral Gracey: Yeah. You do what you do, and let us do what we do in support of that or as a part of it. These days, of course, that idea has finally been accepted. We're there. We're in Bosnia, we're in the Gulf, we're in all those places and we're participating. Now we're a notional. We're just part of it. This is the Coast Guard's piece, and it goes.

I wanted to improve service to the public in our responsiveness, and above all I wanted to improve the human relations with all our people. I wanted them all to have a sense of value, sense of importance, self-esteem. I wanted an atmosphere of mutual understanding. I really thought it was important for us to be proud of ourselves, and sometimes we didn't communicate or convey that, and we should have. "Stand tall" was a term I used a lot. Certainly not original with me, but we needed to be proud of ourselves, and we didn't need to be timid about saying we're proud of ourselves. A little pat on the back for each other is a great way to go.

Then I thought of training, using our resources better, outthinking problems. Think out a problem and solve it through using our heads. And then finally I wanted to add a spark to everything we do. Put some pizzazz in it, as the saying goes. And get some joy from what we do. Have some fun. Laugh and smile. Be human. And so, as

we go through these interviews, you've probably already picked up some of that, but that's kind of who I am and how I went about my Coast Guard life. I don't think it changed very much over the years.

Paul Stillwell: Well, these really sound like manifestations of your personality.

Admiral Gracey: Well, yes. I hope so. [Laughter] I wanted to be that way, and I did work at it, and I did press a little hard.

The other day we talked about a number of things in the Ninth District. In Cleveland we worked a lot with Canada, and I think I talked about that. And we had some mid-continent Loran business going. The Winter Navigation demonstration project, with the icebreaking—for three straight years we kept them running. People said it was easy the first year, but nobody ever said that about the second and third ones, and I think it was not really all that easy the first year. And we had six major oil spills. One was when a barge broke loose in a storm on Lake Michigan and hit a breakwater.

The most spectacular—in the sense of raising the most public ire and concern and expense—occurred on the St. Lawrence River on 23 June 1976 in the Thousand Islands area. A tanker, *Nepco 140*, owned by Oswego Barge Corporation, got out of the channel while coming upstream and hit a rock. Instead of dropping the hook and calling us, he kept going toward an anchorage. On the way he hit another rock. When we got word, I sent my Chief, Environmental Protection, Commander Charles Corbett, to the scene.* He called back the next morning and said, “Admiral, they call this the Thousand Islands. Believe it. There are a thousand, and every one of them has oil on it.” Not only that, but it was coming up on July Fourth, and people had been putting their boats in the water for the summer. Every boat had oil on it too. And, to make matters still worse, the water level in the river was high, so the containment boom was overwhelmed, and every rock was being painted with an oil-colored stripe that would show above the waterline when

* Commander Charles R. Corbett, USCG.

the river dropped to normal. We were able to protect sensitive wildlife and marsh areas though.

I won't belabor you with tales of the myriad public meetings we had with angry citizens. As I said, the whole event was indeed an ugly and unhappy spectacle. But we weathered it somehow, got clean-up contractors and our own crews to work, and managed to protect sensitive breeding areas and waterfowl and somehow get things reasonably clean. The local congressman became a fan, because he appreciated what we were doing and also welcomed our taking the heat off his back at the various meetings. One was the mayor, who came to Washington with a group of townsfolk to berate the congressman because we hadn't acted fast enough on behalf of his shoreline. I interceded and asked the mayor if, during a major snowstorm, he was able to get all the streets cleaned the first day. He said, "Of course not."

I said, "Why is that, Mr. Mayor?"

To my joy he said, "Because we don't have enough men and equipment to do everything at once. We have to do the highest-priority areas first." As soon as he said it, he realized he had been had—and so did his party. I restrained myself from saying, "Bingo!" and managed a statesmanlike comment of some sort that showed how we were in the same kind of a fix in trying to get at all the oil at once. They left quietly, and the congressman practically kissed me on both cheeks.

Our congressional relationships in general were good and so forth. But I think that's enough of the flavor of the bean.

One of the things that I did in Cleveland I don't think we did talk about is that I was Chairman of the Federal Executive Board. That was always a one-year bit, but my time as chairman was the year that they extended the fiscal year from July to October, so I had an extra three months, and it was just a wonderful experience.* I was also the Chairman of the Emergency Dismissal Committee. That is, if we're going to have bad weather and we're not going to come to work, I got the call at 5:00 o'clock in the morning regarding making the announcement. Or if it was so bad we needed to send people home from work early—and it often got bad in Cleveland in the wintertime, as you can imagine. I was also Chairman of the Combined Federal Campaign, so these

* In 1976 the U.S. Government changed the beginning of its fiscal year from 1 July to 1 October.

were sidebar things that kept me involved, and I was Vice Chairman of the Winter Navigation Board.

At that time the U.S. had a lot of Basin Commissions, looking into water quality and the environmental issues in river systems and lakes. There was a Great Lakes Basin Commission that looked at that sort of thing, and I was a DoT alternate on that. They created a Committee on Transportation, which I chaired for them, and I ran several seminars. I think I talked about that. But they were looking at the effects of all forms of transportation, on the environmental situation and the condition of the water in the Great Lakes. So we got involved in that too.

I talked about my involvement with the International Joint Commission between Canada and the U.S. about the flurry caused when I signed an agreement about shared oil-spill surveillance operations with Canada. There was a support committee of what they called a Water Quality Board, and I was involved in that.

We had a bi-annual Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Seaway Port Development and Shipper Conference, and we sponsored that in concert with the U.S. Director of the St. Lawrence Seaway. I led it and made speeches at it and so forth. I was a member of the Board of Visitors of the Great Lakes Maritime Academy, which was at University of Michigan in Traverse City. There was a ton of social events to participate in. There was a Great Lakes Commission, which was different from the Great Lakes Basin Commission. I mean, there were all these different people looking at the Great Lakes in 18 ways. And the Lake Carrier Association, which represented the ore boats for the U.S. and the Dominion Marine, which did it for Canada. Then there was the Interlake Yachting Association; they had a lot of meetings; I participated selectively in that, and obviously got to do a lot of speaking. But, best of all, I got to visit a lot of Coast Guard units.

So it was a busy three years, and I loved it. I've reviewed some of the things we got accomplished. I talked of the pilotage situation; we brought peace to that. There had been a continuing warfare, and I ironed that one out. That took some personal involvement. Had a lot of ongoing involvement with pilots.

Paul Stillwell: Since we last talked, I found a picture in our files that showed you and the Commandant, Admiral Siler, at a maritime festival. Were events like that typical?

Admiral Gracey: Yes. Thank you for that. I was interested to look at that picture, as a matter of fact. That's the Grand Haven Coast Guard Festival. There are festivals all over the place in the summer in that part of the world, particularly in Michigan. There's the Pumpkin Festival, there's the Paul Bunyan Festival, there's the Tulip Festival, there's the Cherry Festival—each in its season. The cherries in Traverse City in late summer, the tulips in Holland, Michigan, imagine that, in early spring. And Paul Bunyan was in Alpena, and I guess that's where Paul Bunyan came from or his ox did. And the Pumpkin Festival was down in Ohio someplace.

Wonderful thing—each of these events had a person who was kind of Mr. Festival. He was their outside run-it man. They would all come to each other's festivals. The guy from the Pumpkin Festival was marvelous. He was 5-foot-6 and round, and he always wore an orange coat. Looked like a pumpkin. I mean, he was a marvelous guy from the Pumpkin Festival.

The Coast Guard Festival was a weeklong, activity-filled event. It stemmed from the fact that they for years had the Coast Guard cutter *Escanaba* home-ported in Grand Haven. We talked about that last time. Ultimately, the people there called it "Coast Guard City, USA." As you enter town there's one of our old lifeboats on the side of the road. That's the "You're now in Coast Guard City, USA" mark. And they really do it. I mean, it's a big-time affair. Admiral Siler was the Commandant in that picture, and I was the Ninth District Commander. And, as I remember the picture, we were talking to the director of the band, then Lieutenant (junior grade) Lew Buckley.* He's now a commander and soon to be captain.

The festival was a weeklong affair. On Saturdays there was always a big parade, and they told me it never rains at that parade. Well, of course, you know that meant it was going to rain on our very first one, and I think it was the one that Si came to. It

* Lieutenant (junior grade) Lewis J. Buckley, USCG. When he became director of the Coast Guard Band in June 1975, the 27-year-old Buckley became the youngest director of a major U.S. service band since John Philip Sousa. Buckley still holds the position.

poured. I mean to tell you, people along the side of the streets were all sitting with plastic bags over their heads. We were all sitting up in the back of open cars because they'd get these old convertibles, and we would just sit up in the back like a movie star or a king. You'd give the royal wave and all that kind of stuff. Let the record show that Admiral Gracey is doing the royal wave. [Laughter] Anyway, the soles melted off Randy's shoes. We got soaked, but everybody loved it, and we had a marvelous time. It was a warm rain. Who cares? We'd been wet before. Then they would have fireworks, and all week long there would be demonstrations and memorial services.

At one point in the bicentennial year, 1976, the Norwegian full-rigged training ship *Christian Radich* was going to be in the Great Lakes. They could do it because they were a bit smaller than *Eagle*. *Eagle* could not get into the Great Lakes. Grand Haven really wanted to get *Christian Radich* to come to the Coast Guard festival. And the Norwegians said, "Well, we really can't do that. We've got a schedule set up, and we've got ports waiting for us, and we can't afford to do that."

I talked earlier about getting involved personally. Here's an example. I went and talked to the Norwegian consul-general in Cleveland. He was an American citizen hired by the Norwegian Government. I explained the situation and said, "You know, why don't you see what you can do? It's not only the bicentennial of the country. It's the centennial of the Lifesaving Service—now the Coast Guard—in the Great Lakes. We've been here 100 years." He did, and the people of the *Christian Radich* likened as how they could shift things around and spend a couple of days in Grand Haven.

Well, Grand Haven thought they'd died and gone to heaven. I was a hero of the first order. I didn't hide my light under a bushel. I didn't say that I hadn't had anything to do with their changing their minds. The skipper of the ship was a wonderful guy. He was a character of the first order. He had done all kinds of heroic stuff in Norway during the war. He just wrapped everybody in town around his little finger, and it was just a wonderful experience. They later on came to San Francisco, and I got to sail with them in San Francisco as well.

Paul Stillwell: And I presume that that ship was in the country because of the OpSail gathering on July Fourth.*

Admiral Gracey: Yes, yes, and of course this was August 4. Grand Haven always held the Coast Guard Festival on the weekend of August 4, which is Coast Guard Day, in commemoration of when Alexander Hamilton created the Revenue Cutter Service in 1790.

Our Public Affairs people in the Ninth District office in Cleveland put together and published an absolutely marvelous 97-page paperback book about the history of the Coast Guard and its predecessors on the Great Lakes. It was rife with photos and maps and was entitled "Guardians of the Eighth Sea: A History of the U.S. Coast Guard on the Great Lakes." The author was Photo Journalist First Class T. Michael O'Brien, USCG. His boss in the office was Chief Petty Officer David L. Cipra, USCG. We distributed a *lot* of copies.

I understand Dave Cipra died of a heart attack at a relatively early age. He was a heck of a writer and a very imaginative guy who was good at telling the Coast Guard story and selling it. So was Mike O'Brien, who is out of the Coast Guard now but still writing, I'm told.

Congressional relations were big in the Ninth District because Mr. Phil Ruppe, who had been chairman of our subcommittee, was very active, as was Mr. Oberstar, who is still in the Congress.† We had closed a couple of stations, and they saw to it that they got reopened, especially Mr. Oberstar.

Paul Stillwell: He's from Minnesota, isn't he?

Admiral Gracey: Yes, yes, he is from Minnesota and we had a station called North Superior. It was on the north shore of Lake Superior, maybe 60 miles from Duluth. I had

* The United States welcomed a number of tall sailing ships from various nations to New York City on 4 July 1776.

† Philip E. Ruppe, a Republican from Michigan. James L. Oberstar, a Democrat from Minnesota, has served in the U.S. House of Representatives from 3 January 1975 to the present.

been instrumental in getting it closed while I was in the Programs Division. Obviously it was a Coast Guard effort, but we had to find money somewhere, and they had a caseload of about six a year. It wasn't one of the big stations. We managed to get the closing through, but the following year Mr. Oberstar had put in a budget item to direct that North Superior Station be reopened. So I thought, "Well, hey, we might as well lose gracefully here. Mr. Oberstar wants it open. The Congress says it's going to be open, and we will have an opening. We will recommission this Station, and we will express great gratitude that it's opened again."

Paul Stillwell: Might as well put a positive spin on it.

Admiral Gracey: Well, of course. So we contacted one of the local regional high school bands and asked if they would come and play. And, yes, they would be happy to. I said, "But you've got to learn 'Semper Paratus.' You've got to play 'Semper Paratus.'"

"Well, we don't know that."

"I'll send you the music." And we did. Incidentally I have here with me a copy of the music for "Semper Paratus." Starting when I was in Cleveland and throughout my flag career—though I didn't do it so much as the Commandant—I handed out copies of that song to people and got them to sing it. Randy always had several copies of "Semper Paratus" in her purse. If we were at a dinner or something with strangers, we had those printed up and we had them on the table, and I would always say, "Now, we want you to learn the words of our song. We're going to all stand up and we're going to sing 'Semper Paratus' and the band's going to help us," if there was a band there. "And here they are. Now you're here tonight, so you're a part of us. I want you all to sing." I even did that at the Waldorf-Astoria with about 800 people who had paid \$400.00 a plate to salute the Coast Guard and contribute money to the Coast Guard Foundation. They sang lustily, and we applauded them. Anyway, I do divert.

We had a big celebration at the reopening of the Station, North Superior. It was a beautiful day, and we invited people to come from all over. Mr. Oberstar was there, and I told him that I had said to the band, “You can play, but you’ve got to learn ‘Semper Paratus.’” We all sat out on the lawn of the Station, started the ceremony, and the band played “Victory at Sea.”* It was awful. I mean, it was *awful*. I looked at Mr. Oberstar and he looked at me, and we both shrugged and went on with the ceremony. We made our little speeches and one thing and another appropriately. I said how grateful we were, and he complimented the Coast Guard, and we did all the right things.

Then it was time for “Semper Paratus.” The bandmaster stood up proudly in front of his music stand, rapped it with his baton, and turned to me and said, “Are you ready, Admiral?”

I said, “I’m ready.” Those kids had learned “Semper Paratus.” They played the most upbeat, swinging version of “Semper Paratus” you have ever heard. It had the whole crowd standing, because they had heard all the previous stuff. They had the whole crowd standing on their feet. Oberstar was clapping me on the back with a big smile. It was just a wonderful experience.

Paul Stillwell: Your day was made.

Admiral Gracey: Ah, it was wonderful. So we did it. We put a positive spin on it. Later on, when I was the Commandant, Mr. Oberstar would invite me up to have lunch with him regularly, and we always talked about the day we heard “Semper Paratus.”

Relationships with the St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation had not always been good, and I worked on upgrading that, and we got that in place.

I talked about the *Edmund Fitzgerald* sinking earlier, but one other thing I didn’t talk about was that the following winter we suggested putting Coast Guard ship riders on the lake carriers as the bad weather came on. Some of the people on the lakers were

* “Victory at Sea” was a 26-episode television series produced in the early 1950s by NBC. It was famous for its music score, eloquent narration, and combat footage of World War II. The composer was Richard Rodgers, who was involved in a great many Broadway shows.

concerned about their safety, and their families were concerned. So we worked with the Lake Carriers Association and said, “How about if we put some marine safety people to ride them, checking emergency procedures and one thing and another let it be known that we’re doing that in a positive way that is not critical?” I was concerned that this might appear demeaning to companies of the Lake Carriers Association and their crews.

Paul Stillwell: That would be an understandable reaction.

Admiral Gracey: It certainly would. It certainly would. And so we worked very closely. We offered our help to them. The head of the Lake Carrier Association was a former Assistant Commandant of the Coast Guard, Vice Admiral Paul Trimble. He and I conferred. Then he went to his people and they said they’d like to do that. So we did a ship rider program, and they were checking alarms, inspecting for critical stuff.

And we did a special upgrading of our heavy-weather SAR readiness, where we had all our vessels ready. We would have a seagoing buoy tender on standby if there was a case, rather than rely on harbor tugs. Normally in November these tenders would be getting ready for icebreaking and hauling out buoys. If the conditions warranted, we’d put them on special standby so that they could participate if there was a case. Just trying to ease the concerns after the *Fitzgerald* sinking.

Paul Stillwell: Well, just to speculate, do you think that that would have helped the *Edmund Fitzgerald* situation?

Admiral Gracey: Well, maybe if there’d been a ship rider, he might have noted if in fact the hatches were not properly battened, and we think that was the cause. If that was the case, then presumably they would have caught that, and they would have alerted the skipper or whatever. Whatever it was, our having a ship available wasn’t going to make any difference because *Fitzgerald* went down very quickly. Clearly, it just dove. It wasn’t a case of bobbing around and ultimately sinking or maybe people in boats and us getting to them, because we’re talking November in Lake Superior. Lake Superior is

known as “Gitchee Goomee,” meaning “The Water That Does Not Give Up Its Dead.” I mean, it’s so cold you’re sunk.

Paul Stillwell: Well, and you said the screws drove the ship into the bottom.

Admiral Gracey: Exactly. Exactly. The ship went down. Nobody got off. There were some life jackets and things. They thought that maybe people had tried, but there was never any indication that any got out, nor were there any bodies found. I’m sure they were all inside the ship. They would have been all buttoned up, because it was such bad weather. They had ability to go back and forth inside, under cover, from the pilothouse to the living quarters.

Paul Stillwell: Well, since I last talked to you I saw a documentary about that on the History Channel, and it was very consistent with the account that you had given.

Admiral Gracey: That’s good. Yeah, I saw the same one. It wouldn’t have made any difference, except if they’d had riders, and they had seen it developing, but nobody would have ever thought to suggest riders. I mean, these are very professional crews. Who knows what the circumstances were that it didn’t get done? It’s very hard. We think of dogging a hatch. You throw a bar, and you dog the hatch. That’s not the way it is with these things.

Paul Stillwell: There were dozens of them along the edges of the hatches.

Admiral Gracey: Yeah, and that’s a major operation. I mean, they’re turned down with specially designed wrenches and all this kind of stuff. And there are skeety-leven dogs on every hatch, and there’s skeety-leven, skeety-12 hatches so it’s a big job. (“Skeety-leven” and “skeety-12” are Jim Gracey terms; they have no official U.S Coast Guard or Great Lakes shipping meaning.) And the weather was bad, and maybe they did it partway and thought that was good enough. Who knows? Who knows? We’ll never know how come.

Paul Stillwell: Maybe partway was their standard procedure.

Admiral Gracey: Yeah, well, I became concerned about that. That's why I asked the Officer in Charge of Marine Inspection (OCMI) in Duluth to check periodically as the boats left to see if the hatches were dogged. He did and he said, "No, they're not being done." Then I talked again to Paul Trimble, the head of the Lake Carrier Association, and told him what we were seeing. I asked that he take steps within the Association to do something about it, or I was going to. He said, "Well, why don't you let us take care of it, Admiral?" [Laughter]

I said, "Okay, Paul." [Laughter] But we understood each other, and I was sure they would change without more official action. And I knew the OCMI would keep checking.

Paul Stillwell: Well, that way you don't embarrass the people.

Admiral Gracey: Exactly, and we didn't want to do that. My approach was to talk about it and follow up but let the responsible people do their thing. The reason I talked about it earlier was to convey where I was coming from in all this. I thought it was important. With the mandate approach, you could get what you wanted to get done, but maybe the next time you wouldn't hear about it, or you wouldn't get it done. It would be harder. What I wanted to do was open up communication and get these things done, and I didn't care whether they did it or we did it. I just thought it was important that it get done, and we had ways to check, and nobody had ever thought to use that way of checking. And the *Fitzgerald* disaster made it so we did. I'm not critical that we hadn't thought of it. Who would think of it? I mean, you don't check the hatches on every ship that goes to sea all over the world or all over the country. You assume that they're going to check their own hatches. It's their responsibility.

Paul Stillwell: Right.

Admiral Gracey: Especially in heavy weather, you know.

I had worked hard at building up relationships and telling the congresspeople what we were doing, why we were doing it. If they wrote and asked questions or had a problem, my position with our staff was, “Don’t get uppity. Don’t get your back up because somebody’s criticizing. Just give the man an answer. You give him one, and we don’t have to back down. Just give him a straightforward answer explaining what we did and why we did it. If we were wrong, say, ‘Oops, we’ll fix it.’ If we weren’t wrong, say, ‘This is why we did it, and we’re going to do it again if it happens.’” And we never got so much as a second word back.

In fact, after a while from one congressman I would get one of these letters, and there’d be a little note paper-clipped to it saying, “Jim, give me another one of your good answers, will you? I’ve got to get something out for this,” or whatever. And it worked.

Last time I talked about our Educational Enrichment School. I got involved in another area of training for the enlisted personnel. After looking at a number of boards of investigation of small-boat accidents, it occurred to me that our boat coxswains weren’t familiar with how to handle a sailing vessel, and sailing vessels don’t behave like power boats. So we created a Boat Coxswain Training Program to teach them about sailboats. How to sail, what a sailboat does, what it does and doesn’t do, that it’s designed to go through the water without much holding it back, whereas the power boat has this big propeller driving it and all of that sort of thing. And we had a big drop in the number of times where a coxswain didn’t react correctly. He was trying to do the right thing, but he didn’t really know what the right thing was for a sailboat.

The Great Lakes is a big merchant marine district because of the lake carriers and the salties coming and going. A saltie is obviously an oceangoing freight vessel, a cargo vessel. I worked very hard at getting Coast Guard headquarters to let Great Lakes business be done at the site of the Great Lakes District Commander, namely Cleveland. If we needed help from Washington, we wouldn’t hesitate to ask, but let us have a go at it. Fortunately, the Chief of the Officer of Merchant Marine Safety at that time was Admiral Mike Benkert, whom I knew very well.* He was more than willing to have us

* Rear Admiral William M. Benkert, USCG.

do this and backed us. I don't know whether Admiral Siler realized he was doing it or not; maybe Admiral Benkert just did it anyway.

Paul Stillwell: Admiral Siler spoke very highly of Benkert in his oral history.

Admiral Gracey: Yeah, well, everybody that knew Mike Benkert speaks very highly of him. He's a wonderful guy, but you talk about—I'm sorry that you never got a chance to do a history on that man, because he was a real diamond in the rough. The first time I ever met him I was in his office in New York, where he was OCMI. He was a captain. I was a commander, the XO over at Governors Island. I went over to his office in Battery Park. He kind of waved me in to sit down, and he said, "I've got a phone call here. I'll be with you in a minute." He always had a little cigar he was chewing on. He said, "Have a cup of coffee."

So I sat down, and he was really giving this guy on the phone a ration. I didn't know who it was, but I mean to tell you, he was dumping all over this guy: "What do you mean we can't do that? You know better. That's a lot of baloney."

When he finished, I said, "Wow, who was that?" Oh, it was the Chairman of the Board of U.S. Lines or some big executive. [Laughter] And they all loved him. I mean, that was Mike Benkert. But he also was a real pro, and when he said it, you could take it to the bank. People all over the world loved him. I mean, he was just internationally renowned and a great person.

Our people in the Ninth District got so they were thinking "Can do" and they did. Let's see if I've got anything that I have missed here.

Well, talking about marine safety, we had some marine industry seminars. We had a serious hazard in the St. Clair River. That's the river that runs from Detroit up through Lake St. Clair toward Lake Huron. They had some shoaling on the Canadian side that had reduced the channel to a point where you could only go one way through there, and even that was tricky. Canada had the responsibility to dredge it, but Canada had no place to dispose of what they dredged. We worked with them for a long time trying to figure out a way that we could get this settled so we could have two-way traffic in there, because that was a real bottleneck and a real safety hazard if these people tried to

force the issue on who was going to go through when. Water levels were down. Shoaling was getting up. It was getting to be a real problem. So I went to the Army Corps of Engineers.

The head of the Corps of Engineers was in Chicago. We knew each other. I was the Vice Chairman of the Winter Navigation Board; he was the Chairman. I worked with him and persuaded him to get the U.S. to offer some space. I suggested, “Why don’t we let them use one of our disposal sites?”

He said, “Well, not a bad idea, just on an interim basis.” They did, and they got it dredged, and we solved the problem.

And then we got in a big hassle about unmanned engine rooms on ships, and I worked with the union on getting that one resolved.

Okay, that’s the end of Cleveland.

Interview Number 8 with Admiral James Gracey, U.S. Coast Guard (Retired)

Date: Wednesday, August 1, 2001

Place: Admiral Gracey's home in Arlington, Virginia

Interviewer: Paul Stillwell

Paul Stillwell: Admiral, we move now to the year 1977 as you went back to Headquarters and became Chief of Staff of the Coast Guard. Admiral Siler was then the Commandant.* Please resume the narrative.

Admiral Gracey: All right. Thank you. Yes, I did return to CG Headquarters, after a wonderful change of command and loving sendoff in Cleveland. Folks were very nice to us when we left, and we did go to Washington to take up duties as Chief of Staff of the Coast Guard. It's a combination job. He runs CG Headquarters, the Chief of Staff of Headquarters and of the Headquarters staff. But he also—at that time, anyway—as the number three for the whole Coast Guard, was overseer of planning and budgeting and coordinating and working with the District and Area Commanders. They reported directly to the Commandant or Vice Commandant, but the Chief of Staff was in a position, or at least I thought he should be in a position to help, and I made it come out that way.

People in other services are accustomed to think of their service Chief of Staff as the boss—number one. In the Coast Guard he's not. In 1977 it was a two-star job. I held it as a one-star. It has since been made a three-star job, which it should have been all along. It's a huge job. One of the first things I had to do was to get to know the people in the Department of Transportation, because I was going to be having a lot of contact with them. I needed to know them and have them know me. So I spent quite a bit of time on that.

I was lucky to have as my Deputy Chief of Staff then Captain, later Rear Admiral Bill Stewart—CG Academy classmate and buddy supreme.† We had carpooled together over the years and one thing and another. We shared senses of the ridiculous, alarming

* Admiral Owen W. Siler, USCG, served as Commandant of the Coast Guard from 31 May 1974 to 1 June 1978. His oral history is in the Naval Institute collection.

† Captain William H. Stewart, USCG.

the two women who were my secretary and his secretary, because they thought that the dignity of the office had totally departed when we took over.

One of the first things we did was to get to know the people working for us and set a new tone. We had daily meetings of the Division Chiefs that constituted the Office of the Chief of Staff. They were the people who oversaw the Program Analysis, Budget, Plans Evaluation, and Administrative Management Divisions, the Safety Director for the Coast Guard, Commanding Officer of CG Headquarters, and a couple of other miscellaneous positions.

Paul Stillwell: Public affairs was probably in there somewhere.

Admiral Gracey: No, Public Affairs was not. Should have been but was not. It was under another Office Chief. I changed the way we used Public Affairs, but I should have reorganized. They have done that now, and Coast Guard public affairs show the benefit. We got it started in that direction, but my successors picked up on it, and it's where it should have been. We treated it more as public information rather than public relations, and therefore we were not sufficiently aggressive. I tried to aggressivize it when I got to be the Commandant, but it was not in the right place to succeed.

Paul Stillwell: So it was more in a reactive mode back then?

Admiral Gracey: Not totally, but more than it should have been. It was to provide information, answer questions, seek speaking opportunities and chances to tell our story—deal with newspapers and that sort of thing but not with the idea of advertising. Not advertising per se. I hate the term “good gray rock,” but that's what we were through most of my younger years. Some of us did a lot more chest-beating than others. We do our job. Be proud of it. The word “pride” was under-utilized. I used it internally and externally. We all used it internally. “Brag” was a four-letter word in some quarters. Being a “cheerleader” was not always looked upon with favor—worthy. I had taken the speak-out tack personally in Cleveland—and continued it in speeches and papers—pressing the idea, “Be proud of your Coast Guard. This is what we do for you and USA.”

But for years USCG didn't do that. The Public Affairs Division was not a part of the Chief of Staff's organization in 1977.

Anyway, we met daily, and we were setting about to change the course of how some things would go. The building was organized with flag officers being called Office Chiefs. Now they're called Assistant Commandants or/and Directors. In those days an Office Chief was a rear admiral, and he had Division Chiefs who worked for him. And some of the Division Chiefs around the building were also Program Managers for the programs of our program budgeting system and our version of PPB. Short-range Aids-to-Navigation, Search-and-Rescue, Law Enforcement, and so on were the programs. A Division Chief's title might not necessarily include the words of the name of the program he managed. Some didn't manage a program, per se—for example, Chief, Civil Engineering Division. In our hierarchy Division Chiefs had seniority right behind the Office Chiefs.

Within G-CCS—the symbol for the Office of the Chief of Staff—our people had review responsibilities that sometimes created some tensions. And among the other Divisions there tended to be a little pushing and shoving from time to time as support and operating people vied for whatever, and they tromped on each other's bunions periodically. I was trying very hard to make it a co-op arrangement and get rid of that. So we in CCS got so that instead of being mad at people, we would have some fun with what was going on. And focus on co-operative productivity—corny term, but that was where we were trying to go.

Paul Stillwell: But some of that dynamic tension is useful.

Admiral Gracey: Oh, it is, exactly. And I'm not suggesting that we shouldn't have it, but it doesn't need to be vitriolic.

Paul Stillwell: Right.

Admiral Gracey: In fact, if it can be in a spirit of fun—"You rascal, you're doing it to me again," and take it from that approach. "Okay, now since you are determined I'm going

to do it to you again, let's figure out a way that at least it won't be too painful for you or for me." So we would talk about that sort of thing at those CCS morning staff meetings. And by way of illustrating the nature of the relationship I was happy we had, I went out one morning, and on the conference room door was a sign in the style of the "No left turn" sign. You know, there's the symbol, and then there's a red stripe diagonally across it. The sign was of a guy kicking an animal, and the caption was, "Don't kick the aardvarks."

So we named ourselves "The Aardvarks" and went from there. Our traditional secretaries were appalled at the fact that we would do that. The dignity was gone totally when their Admiral and his Captains were referring to themselves as aardvarks. But we had a good time with that. I wanted to make this thing cohesive and warm and personal, and I spent a lot of time trying to do that with the Office Chiefs and with the District Commanders to walk and talk. What is it? Walk the walk and talk the talk or whatever that dynamic is. Mutual understanding, get it right, do some painless but completed staff work.

Some of the material coming in for the Commandant was unnecessary. There were a lot of things going for Commandant decisions that didn't need Commandant decisions. He was overloaded as it was. They were things that if we could just get people to talk to each other in a right tone we could resolve the issue. Some of them were big ones and needed to go to the Commandant, but they were the ones that ought to go there, and I wanted to get him time to deal with them.

Paul Stillwell: So did you assume a gatekeeper function that hadn't existed in that office previously?

Admiral Gracey: No, not in the sense of a gatekeeper as to who could see him and who couldn't but more in the sense of dealing with issues. If there are issues out there, let's be sure that we wrestle them to the ground and have a solution. Either present to the old man a solution that he can live with—a laid-out issue which he can see readily and decide. "Completed staff work" was the term in vogue, but I didn't particularly like it, because I think it used to get misused or overused. But, yeah, I guess I was the

gatekeeper in the sense of being an intermediary, if you will, in disputes between engineers and operators, for example: “Let’s see if we can’t work out how we’re going to do this.”

Yeah, I tried to head a few things off at the pass, to help the Commandant and Vice Commandant be able to focus on the stuff they needed to. Of course, there always was the fact that most of the people just didn’t march in to see the Commandant or the Vice Commandant anyway. They always checked with the Chief of Staff first, the people that were in the building. Our CCS really had a lot of impact—or swat. Not necessarily the Office Chiefs, but usually they did too. It was a matter of courtesy and understanding how the operation worked. There’s no point of the Chief of Staff going to war with the other flags. That was doing nobody any good. But also to try to act on behalf of the District Commanders if they had a problem to see if I couldn’t get it worked out without it having to go all the way up to the top.

Paul Stillwell: Did you meet regularly with Admiral Perry and Admiral Siler to get a sense of what types of things they wanted to deal with and what they didn’t want to?

Admiral Gracey: Yes, but I had a pretty good feel for that anyway. I had known Admiral Perry.* I talked earlier about having worked for him when he was the Chief of Staff and I had CPA. I had a good feeling for where he came from. And I had been working for Admiral Siler for three years. But I’d been out in Cleveland, and he’d been in Washington, so I really didn’t know him all that well. So, yeah, we had to spend some time to get a sense of where they were coming from or trying to go to. It wasn’t a case of formal meetings. Their door was open to me, and I was sitting right next door. And I would go in and chat about one thing or another to get a feel for their thoughts. And if I was doing something and they didn’t like the way it was going, they didn’t hesitate to let me know about that. We had a good working relationship, very open. My sense was they were happy to have me go this route with the Office Chiefs so that they could deal in more depth with some of the more significant quote political unquote issues that were going on.

* Vice Admiral Ellis L. Perry, USCG, served as Vice Commandant of the Coast Guard from 1974 to 1978.

Paul Stillwell: Do you have any examples of the types of things you would deal with, as opposed to the ones you would send up the line?

Admiral Gracey: Well, for example, I was concerned about our safety investigations, accident investigations. We had a CG Safety Program. We put out information on unsafe practices and all that, but it was clear to me that our approach needed a change. For example, when there was an aviation accident the aviators had a system. They called it a mishap, and they had a mishap board. I've forgotten the exact term of art. But, anyway, the event was referred to as a mishap, and the mishap board looked into it. It was a fact-finding board. They wanted to know what happened. Nothing that was said at the mishap investigation could be used later in a formal board of investigation. It was strictly to find out what happened, why did it happen. Not whose fault was it, but how did it happen. How did we get into this situation—how did this thing happen to occur? *Then* we could decide how to prevent it in the future.

Paul Stillwell: Did that in effect give immunity for later actions?

Admiral Gracey: It didn't give them immunity except that whatever was said in the mishap board stayed there. The record of that could not be taken into a board of investigation and used. If it was that serious, that's when the attorneys showed up, and we got into a board of investigation for a possible disciplinary action and, you know, the long green table and all of that kind of stuff.* They really had two separate channels. We didn't have that for shipboard accidents or shoreside accidents. And the consequence was there were a lot of things whose cause we never really learned. There were things happening, and we really didn't know why they were happening. We really couldn't get to it. People were not going to talk, because they were going to get nailed to the wall perhaps if they did.

* "Long green table" is a slang term for an investigation in the wake of a mishap. By tradition such proceedings are conducted at a table covered by a green tablecloth.

I thought that was a significant issue that had come up, and I just worked it through. I told my bosses what I was doing, but we worked it through, and we set up a new system of going the mishap board route for seagoing and other accidents as well. When it was done, the Commandant and Vice Commandant blessed it so it would have the Commandant's name on it, not mine. But they didn't get into the middle of that sort of thing. Now, that was a change of course that we were injecting. I told them what we were doing, but I carried the ball all the way to the final okay. It was a significant change in how U.S. Coast Guard did its internal business.

I'm trying to think of a specific case. A situation where the Office of Personnel was stuck with its numbers of people or people of certain pay grades and an operator wanted or needed more or needed different kinds. Or there would be a program under way, and the personnel people would take one tack and the operators another, or if it was new equipment or construction the engineers would get into the middle.

There was often a case where each person had his own turf to protect. That's a negative phrase, but what I mean is they were—you know, the personnel man was doing his personnel thing, and the engineer was doing his engineer thing. You would want them to be blended, but sometimes they weren't blended, because each one felt strongly that he was going down the right track and had a higher priority.

Years before, when I was in the Programs shop, I had designed what we called the Resource Change Proposal—RCP. It was the key instrument for making changes in funding, budgeting, etc. If you wanted something new, you wanted money spent, you defined the problem. You gave alternatives, but you also had to say in words which would fit into one inch of space what was going to be the impact on engineering, on support and the various support aspects, depending on where it was coming from. And so I would try to get in the middle and get those guys to talk to each other or talk to me. You understand, we all knew each other. Some of the Division Chiefs were Coast Guard Academy classmates. Some of them had been contemporaries. Nobody was terribly senior or terribly junior.

You know, that's kind of the way the Coast Guard runs. You come up. I did get a kind of an early start at Flag, but the effect of that meant that when I got to this CCS job a lot of the people who were Division Chiefs and Deputy Office Chiefs were

contemporaries. So we could get them to talk to each other. That's essentially it. I'm sorry I can't give you a specific. One may pop into my head.

Paul Stillwell: Did Admiral Siler prefer to be given options on an issue or really to have a solution presented to him?

Admiral Gracey: I think he liked to have us go in and say, "This is what we worked out. Can you live with this? Can you accept it? Whatever." With Admiral Perry it depended on the issue. He would often say, "What other things did you look at?"

In presenting that kind of a case, I would usually say, "This is the issue. This is what we recommend. These are the other things we looked at, but we rejected them because—" And so I really gave it to him that way anyway. I wouldn't just send in a routine piece of paper. As you have noticed, I really believe in the importance of discussion. "TBP" means "talk before paper." I did act as the gatekeeper on the garbage that was going to the Commandant in writing. I mean, everywhere I went I really felt strongly about the written word. It needs to be plain language, simple and short. Say what you've got to say. Do it in words of one syllable. Trotted out the old Fog Index. Do you remember the Fog Index?

Paul Stillwell: Vaguely.

Admiral Gracey: You take a sample of 100 words out of a writing. Count the number of words of three syllables or more. Then count the average number of words per sentence. You'd take those two things, add them together and multiply them by 0.4. Don't ask me why, but the answer would be a number, which was equivalent to the number of years of education somebody would need to read and readily understand the passage. Sounds crazy, but, by gosh, it worked. You'd get a piece of writing you couldn't handle, and you would sit down and put a period over here and another period over here and you change "trajectory" to "course" and a few other things like that, and all of a sudden its readable.

And at the time *The Reader's Digest* was using a factor of six or seven, I think, and hence *The Reader's Digest* was widely read. Everybody could read it. We employed

the Fog Index from time to time so papers could be read and understood. I have always been a nut on this subject. I just said, “You guys have got to write in plain English. We’ve got to tell people what it is we do or what we want. If you want to communicate with the public—or effectively to each other—you’ve got to talk to them in plain language.” So I worked on that, and that was one way I did serve as gatekeeper for the Commandant and Vice Commandant,

It’s a blessing, but it’s also an awful thing in that I can look at a piece of paper, and if there’s a misspelling on it, I’ll see it. I don’t have to go looking for it. It leaps right off the page at me, or if there’s a grammatical error. I said, “No, no, I don’t want to see it.” But there it was. And I wasn’t going to send it forward with that sort of thing in there. I would comment to one of the 10 or 12 people who had initials on the yellow clearance copy and ask, “Didn’t any of you guys see this?”

“Yeah, but we didn’t think it was worth changing.”

And my answer was, “Do you think the Commandant ought to change it? Come on.” Somebody up the clearance road—the first guy that sees it—ought to fix it. And so we worked on that. I mean, that’s trivia kind of stuff, but on the other hand I think by the time we got done we had people talking to each other, and they understood what they were saying and writing. I thought it was important. I did it every place I went; I just felt it was important to do.

Paul Stillwell: But there are also horror stories where the fifth person in the review chain changes “happy” to “glad,” and the seventh person changes “glad” back to “happy.”
[Laughter]

Admiral Gracey: Oh, yeah. But I’m not talking about that kind of thing. I’m not talking about editing the words. If you think the words don’t say what should be said, then that’s a case for conversation with the writer. But if there’s a word which is clearly, clearly misspelled or there’s been a typo and half a sentence has been left out and it’s obvious it has been, you may know what it was supposed to be, and everybody along the line knows what it was supposed to be, but it isn’t there. The reader out in the hinterlands may not know it, and sometimes the papers I’m talking about were directives that were going to

prescribe how the whole service was to operate or behave—or whatever. So that didn't have to go on too long, because after a while the word got out that the boss was going to do this, and people took more care with it. I felt then and I still do that sloppy communication sends a message of less-than-quality work—hence of a less-than-quality organization behind it.

When I went to Harvard Business School, there was old professor there who said that the single most effective communication and coordination device ever created was the yellow copy on official correspondence that had the signature blocks at the bottom of the page. His view was that at a glance the man who was ultimately supposed to sign this could see who had looked at it and agreed with it. And you didn't have to have a long list of names or anything. You could just scan across. But he was first to acknowledge that that was often overdone in its practice, but nonetheless was effective and valuable. I remember being astounded at hearing that, and yet over the years I think he was right. At one point we tried doing away with having that copy, and the first thing that anybody said was, "Wait a minute. Who's seen this?"

Paul Stillwell: I wonder if that's still practiced in today's electronic age.

Admiral Gracey: I suspect not. I suspect not. I don't know how they're doing it with e-mail today. I eschewed having a computer in my office. If I'd gone on a couple more years, I guess I would have had one on the credenza behind my desk as my successor, Admiral Yost, did—probably the day he walked in.* I wasn't familiar enough with how all that was working. I was—and still am—a firm believer in the spoken word. You know, I'm talking '86, and that's—

Paul Stillwell: Eons ago in computer age.

Admiral Gracey: Well, eons in computer age. But it wasn't that. A lot of people were using them. I just didn't want to shift to that kind of communication. I understand later

* Admiral Paul A. Yost Jr., USCG, served as Commandant of the Coast Guard from 30 May 1986 to 31 May 1990. His oral history is in the Naval Institute collection.

on that the people in the outer office who were trying to keep track of what was going on for the Commandant absolutely went insane, because there was so much e-mail coming in and there was no control on it, and it was just backed up and backed up. Things that wouldn't happen if you were doing it in the old way. I'm not suggesting the old way is better. But, no, the answer is, I didn't use the computer system. I liked to talk to people. I liked to look at them when I was talking to them, and I liked them to look at me when I was talking. I never said, "Read my lips," but they understood that that was there. By the same token, I wanted them to see me smile, and I wanted to see them smile. And I just thought conversation was by far the better way to go. Inefficient, I'm sure, but damned effective sometimes. It shouldn't be an either-or situation.

Paul Stillwell: I think 1986 was the year we got the first PC at the Naval Institute.

Admiral Gracey: Was it? Okay, well that's encouraging. I mean, thank you, Paul. [Laughter] I know that I bought a computer right after I retired, but it was, gee, thinking back on it, it was pretty basic.

Paul Stillwell: I had a 286K.

Admiral Gracey: Oh, God, I didn't know anything about that. Mine was a brand my daughter had used for some writing she was doing, and essentially what I wanted it for was word processing. I wasn't into calculating. Later on I got into that.

Paul Stillwell: Do you have any stories that would illustrate the working styles and personalities of Admiral Perry and Admiral Siler? You had one previously about the briefings and Admiral Perry's impatience. What else do you remember?

Admiral Gracey: There was one exchange I remember that pleased me, but it's not the kind of thing you're asking about, I don't think. For a few months I had been really working on getting people on the staff so they felt better about themselves. I'm making it sound like a horror story when it started, and it wasn't. But there was some friction. I

had worked hard at trying to get rid of that. Our Flag Mess was right outside my office door, and right outside Admiral Perry's office door in the old building. One day he said to me, "Flag mess is a lot better populated these days."

I said, "Yeah, I think maybe people enjoy coming in here more than they used to."

He said, "That's a pretty good sign, isn't it?"

I said, "Yeah. Well, that's a good sign for me, because that's what I've been working at."

And he gave me his patented Ed Perry half smile, half smirk that communicated, "So I noticed."

Vice Admiral Perry had a marvelous sense of humor. He could laugh at himself. He could laugh at other people. I've mentioned in my comments before about Admiral Mike Benkert.

Paul Stillwell: Yes.

Admiral Gracey: A world-class colorful character. There's a story about Mike and the Flag Mess. He loved oyster stew, absolutely loved oyster stew. We would have it on Fridays. Mike would always volunteer to be the Mess Treasurer, even though he was one of the more senior rear admirals around, because he wanted to determine what we were going to eat. And he always got to be served first so that he could make sure the food was right. So when he got the oyster stew, he would go in that tureen and he'd take his ladle and he'd go right down to the bottom, and he'd come up with oysters. Put it in his bowl. More oysters.

I cut in Admiral Perry that I was going to do this. One Friday I got with the Subsistence Specialists in the mess, and I said, "Look, when you serve Admiral Benkert have no oysters in the bowl—none. Keep the oysters in reserve out here in the pantry. Give him a bowl of just stew." So they came in as usual, faces straight as anything. Nobody knew this was going to happen except me and Ed Perry. They went to Mike Benkert, and they served him from this tureen of just oyster broth. Mike took his usual big scoop and came up with nothing but broth. And he looked around. After two tries he figured out what was going on. And by that time everybody had figured what was

going on. We had a wonderful time. But Ed loved that. I mean, he absolutely loved that sort of thing, and yet he could be just as gruff and tough as you want.

Admiral Siler was reserved in his approach. He had a good sense of humor. He enjoyed fun things that were going on. I think he and Admiral Perry had worked out that he was going to be Mr. Outside, and Admiral Perry was going to be Mr. Inside. So most of our contact was with Admiral Perry. I saw Admiral Siler regularly, and we talked, but at the moment I can't dredge up an event. I know a term of art that Admiral Perry felt very strongly about and I suspect Admiral Siler did, too, was the term "Little Commandant." He referred to people in Headquarters who thought that because they worked on the Commandant's staff that made them what he called Little Commandants. They were individuals who would impose that Little Commandant role on people in the field, and he and I and a number of us despised that.

So knowing that that was another factor in my approach with going out and working with the District and Area Commanders and working with the staff on "Let's have a spoonful of sugar to help the medicine go down." If we've got to say "no," let's not stuff it down their throats. Let's have positives. You know, all of the kinds of things that we've talked about in a number of places. I wanted no defensive replies. If we made a mistake, okay we made a mistake. I wanted our replies out of Headquarters back to the field and outside the Coast Guard to be positive and confident and stand tall, statesmanlike stuff and you know we can do that. We know how to do that. I used to say, "Hey, it can't bother me. I know 286 recipes for eating crow, and one more isn't going to hurt me any. I know how to eat crow. You can eat crow with class. You just put a proper sauce on it. It'll taste fine. And if after you've eaten it, you decide you really shouldn't have eaten it, well, you can always chalk it up to experience."

Paul Stillwell: I interviewed Admiral Siler last year, which was 25 years after he was Commandant, so he's not the same person. But he did not strike me as a stuff-it-down-the-throat type individual.

Admiral Gracey: No way. No way. That's right. Si is a gentleman's gentleman. Wanted things worked out. He was not reluctant to take a new course, but I don't know

that he was a rock-the-boat-for-the-sake-of-rocking-the-boat person. Oh, no, you're right about that. One of the ways I used to look at paper going in to the Commandant or Vice Commandant was what I called the "average-ape test." I would be the average ape. If I can read it and understand it, probably most anybody can, and this is the tack I took. I represented the Commandant, and hence Vice Admiral Perry as well, I guess, at a number of events.

Oh, the Coast Guard Foundation, which was the CG Academy Foundation then, built a Visitors' Center up in New London, and they were going to dedicate it with formal ceremonies and parades and all that stuff. I can't remember whether they couldn't go or didn't want to go, but I went up and represented the Commandant at that. As a sidelight the Chairman of the Foundation then was G. William Miller, later President Carter's Secretary of Treasury.* We had met in Cleveland one day, but this was my first chance to spend time with him. He and his wife are now close friends of ours.

There was an organization called Oceans '77. It was 1977, and there was a lot of looking at the state of oceans, the well-being, the health of, the quality of the oceans and the things that live in them and so forth. There was a series of national and in some respects worldwide conferences to have panel sessions and seminars for three or four days on the state of the oceans and where we are. It was pretty big stuff, and the big Oceans '77 conference was in California. I went out representing the Commandant, and I made a Coast Guard speech and presented a paper and sat on a panel.

I did that also when there was an Ocean Policy Seminar in Nassau. Then Congressman John Breaux went down and a couple of others and I went down and represented the Coast Guard. Had a wonderful time going to a gambling casino with Congressman Breaux.† There's an experience. [Laughter] My wife and I and his wife and a number of other people in Nassau went. We worked hard in the daytime, and then we ate a lot and went to the casinos at night for a couple of nights, and he's a wonderful man. I'm pleased to see him doing as he is these days. That's not politically oriented.

* G. William Miller served as Secretary of the Treasury from 6 August 1979 to 20 January 1981. He graduated in 1945 from the Coast Guard Academy with a B.S. in marine engineering and served until 1949 as a Coast Guard officer.

† John B. Breaux, a Democrat from Louisiana, served in the U.S. House of Representatives from 30 September 1972 to 3 January 1987; since that time he has been a member of the U.S. Senate.

I'm thinking about John Breaux, the man. I like him. I like his style. I think he's got a lot to offer.

Paul Stillwell: Well, and it's an issue he's genuinely interested in.

Admiral Gracey: I talked earlier about when I was in CPA going up to Senator Long's office in the Capitol to brief him. I remember him saying, "Captain, I keep telling those people over there in Florida they shouldn't let those dirty tankers in there. They ought to send those dirty tankers over to Louisiana. We'll handle them. Just keep their beaches nice and clean and pure. Let us handle the oil." [Laughter] That philosophy was different from what I heard at those various Oceans Conferences.

Facility planning was an issue that we worked on quite a bit. There was a need to get realistic. There are more ways to get things done without ruffling the public, and I remember one that I was proud of at the time. We wanted to put a Loran monitor at the site of a lighthouse up in Maine, at Marshall Point.* It was a historic lighthouse, and we were going to put a tower and a Loran station and the whole bit up in there. Since we'd automated, the light was no longer an operating light, but to all the people who lived around there it was a landmark. Well, our Long Range Aids to Navigation people were determined it was the only possible place we could put the monitor that would work. So I suggested, "Could we put it inside the building? Could we put the tower inside the old light tower?" Mostly we were a monitoring station. We weren't a transmitting station. "Could we just gut it, so that on the outside it would look like it always had, but on the inside we would have a Loran monitor station going?"

"Yeah, we could probably do that." So we did that, and that was the end of the problem. Some of our facility planning was not realistic in the sense that we were never going to get the kind of money to do what we envisioned. And you're going to ask me for a specific example, and I can't give you one.

Paul Stillwell: The tendency is always to say, "We'll take care of that in the out years."

* Marshall Point Lighthouse is at Port Clyde, Maine, overlooking the Atlantic Ocean on one side and Muscongus Bay on the other.

Admiral Gracey: Yeah, yeah, that's right. Or, we'll get the money somehow. Once they find out what a wonderful idea it is, they'll provide the money. Get realistic here. The Department of Transportation was reorganizing, because they'd been criticized by the Congress for the fact that it had gotten way too big. When DoT was created in 1967, it was intended that it would be just a small body that was going to be a nucleus around which all the various transportation agencies would gather.

Paul Stillwell: It would be a coordinating outfit?

Admiral Gracey: Pretty much, yeah. And it would be very small, and the agencies were going to stay as they were.

Paul Stillwell: That's the way the Department of Defense was intended originally also.

Admiral Gracey: I didn't realize that. Well, the same thing happened to DoT that happened to DoD. Politics being what it is, and large amounts of money being what they are, it just didn't come out that way, and they were very heavily criticized by Congress.

Their solution to that was to take one whole part of their organization and call it by a different name. Leave it in the same place, right in the same rooms, everything else in the office, but to spin off the R&D function. I can't remember now the new name of what they called this administration, but it was no longer a part of the Office of the Secretary of Transportation. Like all the other agencies, we were big in research and development work. So we got caught up in this reorganization and how it was going to affect us and our R&D. I spent quite a bit of time on that. Ultimately it really was more impact on other people than on us in the terms of the end result, but we got caught up in the transition.

When you start reorganizing a parent organization, it has spin-off effects on the others. One of the things I was trying to do in concert with our R&D Office Chief and his people was to be sure we didn't get our program swallowed up in all of this, that we didn't lose what we had. There was some thought that when they spun off they would

take all the R&D from all the different organizations, and it would go into that new organization. And we thought it was very important that we keep our own ability to address the issues that were Coast Guard issues.

Paul Stillwell: Was this kind of a shell game to deceive on how big the organization really was?

Admiral Gracey: I've been talking for some time now about using plain talk and, yeah, in my opinion it was. In my opinion it was an obvious shell game. But Congress didn't bat an eyelash, and in fact they complimented the Secretary for his fine work on reducing the size of the Department. I couldn't see it, but, you know, in our own halls we all talked about it, but, you know, what the heck. We weren't able to do anything about it.

Equal opportunity was an issue that I cared a lot about, and there was a lot of press for minority hiring and equal opportunity sort of thing.

Paul Stillwell: That was the time of the "Roots" phenomenon also, Alex Haley's miniseries.*

Admiral Gracey: That's true. That's true. And that may have been a factor. All I know is that I cared a lot about it. Years before, my brother Colin, Episcopal minister, chaplain at Northeastern University, got involved. He wound up in jail down South because to the young, brand-new Episcopal minister, the Bishop of Massachusetts had said, "Yeah, go on down there and help them," and he and a few others demonstrated. They liberated a park down in North Carolina or South Carolina. He wound up in jail, and it kind of brought it all home to roost. My family and I were simpatico with the concept anyway, but here was our brother that was really caught up in it; he was in jail. We heard his story,

* Alex Haley served in the Coast Guard as an enlisted journalist and retired as a chief petty officer. He subsequently had a civilian career as a writer and produced the Pulitzer Prize-winning book *Roots* that traced his lineage back to the days of slavery and to his ancestors in Africa. The initial telecast of the dramatization of the story was in early 1977 and drew 130 million viewers, making it the most-watched miniseries of all time. The cutter USCGC *Alex Haley* (WMEC-39) is named in the author's honor.

and it brought it into keen focus. Anyway, it was very much in my mind, so I kind of took a lead on pushing my equal opportunity view and program.

I personally wrote what I call my "Human Relations Policy Statement." It was pretty plain. It wasn't the usual legalistic kind of thing. It was, "This is how I want everybody to feel about themselves and about each other," and that sort of thing. And so we spent quite a bit of time on that. We had meetings with different groups where I could throw the weight of the Office of the Chief of Staff behind it, and personally because I believed in it.

Paul Stillwell: Did you have any evidence of how well or ill it was implemented in the field?

Admiral Gracey: This one was for Headquarters because I "owned it" at the time. HQ and the people in it were one of my responsibilities. That's where my domain ran as far as personnel direction is concerned. I could say, "This is what I expect to happen in the staff at Headquarters," because I was the Chief of Staff. When I got to San Francisco I did it again, and we'll talk more about that later. Then I did it in New York for LantArea, and when I got to be the Commandant I did it for the entire Coast Guard. And people began to pick up on it.

For the people who were in the Equal Opportunity business, where their GS rating was such and such in this field, my words were too informal, too straightforward. They weren't quoting the law. They were quoting what I thought we ought to do. It was called a Human Relations Policy, because that's what it's all about—human beings working and living with other human beings. I wanted everybody to feel good about themselves and feel welcome and that sort of thing. And I wanted us to see that there were opportunities for everybody, regardless of where they came from; I used those kinds of words. But most of the "equal opportunity" statements were fairly cut and dried. Often they sounded like they came out of a can somewhere, I thought. That's probably unfair to the writers, but making it happen just to fit a law was different than making it happen because it was the right thing to do. So I spent quite a bit of time on trying to put across my particular approach.

Paul Stillwell: And there were probably some people who were reluctant to move in that direction and thought you were too strident.

Admiral Gracey: I'm really sorry to hear you suggest that the words might have seemed strident—at least not my understanding of the word, meaning harsh or loud or shrill. I meant them to be firm and positive but not in a tone I would think of as strident. Persistent and different. Not hanging on legalistic requirements, but stating expectation based on comfort and propriety. I'm sure some thought I was reaching out too far. I'm not sure that I heard from all of those, but I knew they were there. It didn't change my determination to have an effect on interpersonal relations in the Coast Guard.

Paul Stillwell: It wasn't politically wise for them to speak up.

Admiral Gracey: I sure hope that wasn't the case, though being realistic I'm sure some thought it might be so, just because “that's the way it is with bosses—you must never ruffle their feathers.” I can't remember dumping on someone who questioned me. It wasn't—and isn't—my style. I had worked very hard at getting people to feel free to talk, to tell me if they thought I was wrong. In fact, I urged them to speak out. We had many meetings on the subject, and in most of them people were pretty outspoken: “Why do you feel that way? How come?” I talked about experiences and things I had heard as a kid in Massachusetts and things I had seen and learned over the years.

Paul Stillwell: Your experience on board the *Mariposa*.

Admiral Gracey: Well, actually my experience on board *Barataria*, with one of my gunner's mates. Yes, I talked about that, didn't I? And yet finding out that it was all wrong, but nonetheless you know some of it persisted. I hope I went to some length earlier on when I talked about all this to say that mine was not a bigoted family. Theirs was not a belligerent or anti-somebody kind of attitude. It was not intended to be

harmful. I'm not even sure they were aware of the impact of a couple things they said early on in my life.

Paul Stillwell: Well, you portrayed it almost like a health issue.

Admiral Gracey: Well, yeah, it came out that way. That's right. Thank you for reminding me of that. Well, enough of that. I worked on correcting attitudes—making relations positive.

Paul Stillwell: What about gender equity? Did you get into that?

Admiral Gracey: Oh, big time. Big time. Thank you. Yeah, somewhere in here we're going to talk about women on the ships, and at that point we had succeeded in getting women into the Coast Guard, and women going to the Coast Guard Academy. I can't remember when that exactly started.

Paul Stillwell: Well, the other service academies started in 1976.

Admiral Gracey: I guess it was while I was in Cleveland that we started. I know that somewhere in there my predecessor, Admiral Hayes, had made an interesting statement at a New London graduation ceremony about that being the last class of men only.* That wasn't quite the way he said it, but anyway. But we did take a lead in having women serve in a full range of jobs, and this was a place that Admiral Siler and I did not agree. I think you wouldn't have to tweak Admiral Siler too hard to find out that he was not in favor of women going to sea especially, and flying airplanes. I don't think so. He, I suspect, wasn't really too wild about having women in the uniform, but I don't know that.

Paul Stillwell: I'd say it's something he accepted rather than promoted.

* Admiral John B. Hayes, USCG, was Commandant of the Coast Guard from 1 June 1978 to 28 May 1982. The first women entered the Coast Guard Academy as cadets in 1976 and graduated in 1980. Thus the class of 1979 was the last to be all male.

Admiral Gracey: That's a good way to say it. But in this period we got into a question of what to do when in joint ops with the Navy. We had women on the ships, and the ships were going to refresher training with the Navy, and the Navy insisted that the women be taken off the ships. I can't remember whether it started here or started earlier, but it certainly was a factor while I was in the Chief of Staff's job. I can remember arguing vociferously that we should not take the women off: "We can't do that to them. They are a bona fide part of the crew, and if the Navy doesn't like it, tough luck." I'm saying this, and now I can't remember where we actually went, because I know that Admiral Siler was not buying my view. He didn't agree with that. He felt that it wasn't something he wanted to buck the Navy about. It's too bad we had to do it. We had a body of Reservists standing by to go replace the women on the ships at RefTra.

I think we did go that route for a while. When a ship was going to RefTra, we stuck those guys on in place of the women and took the women off. I just thought it was a terrible policy—unfair to the women and unfair to the ship to have to go RefTra with a bunch of new and unknown members of their hopefully well-practiced and unified crew. The Navy also felt strongly, and I will talk more later about my annual debate with Secretary Lehman about exercises and women.* So it wasn't totally resolved. But, yeah, the gender factor was there—big time. I was very strong on the subject and pressed it at every opportunity. When I would have meetings with the folks on equal opportunity and my Human Relations Policy thing, I built gender as well as race and ethnicity into it.

This is kind of a spinoff, but our talk of gender reminds me of it. In Washington we had a Coast Guard Officers' Wives Club, now called Spouses' Club. They would have the Blue and White Ball every year. And they had a big one over at Andrews Air Force Base.† And they asked me, the Chief of Staff, to be the MC. Since it was a Wives' Club event, I thought the sponsor should do it, but they wanted me to be the MC. Something that Randy and I have noticed over the years is that you go to an event, and the MC introducing people will say, in introducing the head table, "And here's Admiral James Gracey and his lovely wife, Randy."

* John F. Lehman, Jr., served as Secretary of the Navy from 5 February 1981 to 10 April 1987.

† Andrews Air Force Base is located approximately ten miles southeast of Washington, D.C., in Prince George's County, Maryland.

Randy would say, “It’s kind of like saying, ‘And his dog Spot.’” So we let it be known—the word got out through aides and through us—that you don’t say, “And his lovely wife, Randy.” We created a whole string of disasters, because MCs couldn’t figure out what to say if they couldn’t say, “And his lovely wife, Randy.” [Laughter]

Paul Stillwell: You certainly don’t want him to say, “And his dog, Randy.” [Laughter]

Admiral Gracey: No, no, no, no. Well, after a while we got some pretty clever ones, and we’d look at each other and we’d high-five. The aide would have planted something, and we had a lot of fun with it. So on this particular night when I was the MC, the Secretary of Transportation was there and the Deputy Secretary and other dignitaries, and, of course, the Commandant and the Vice Commandant. And I introduced them, but because it was a Wives Club affair previous Masters of Ceremonies had always introduced the wives. So I said, “And here is Betty Adams, and her handsome husband, Brock.”* [Laughter] About the first time I did that, there was this silence in the room, and people looked up, and then I did the second one and they got the message. And I’ve forgotten what I said. I think when I introduced Mrs. Perry I said, “And here’s Dotty Perry and her grumpy husband, Ed.” [Laughter] Well, we had a good time with it. [Laughter] But it was another example of my interest and approach to the gender kind of thing.

We created what we called a Women’s Day at headquarters, and we had a sponsor, and a speaker came. The first annual Women’s Day came when I was Chief of Staff with my encouragement and support. We talked about women’s issues and one thing and another at CG Headquarters. More later about the gender factor.

One interesting thing that happened while I was CCS caused some controversy. The Department of Transportation decided that there should be an exercise facility on the roof of the Nassif Building, where DoT was located, and that the Coast Guard was going to own it. We were going to provide the people to run this thing and so forth. But they weren’t going to provide any money or any people or any billets. That got to be a bit of a sticky wicket. We did, in fact, wind up with an exercise facility on the roof, but we got

* Brockman Adams served as Secretary of Transportation from 23 January 1977 to 22 July 1979.

our licks in on the way—hopefully with some budget make-up later. I don't think it ever came.

I talked about the R&D reorganization in the department. I took us back to my old tack on R&D budgeting—that you can in fact look at the possibilities of success and weigh them against cost, and you can in fact look at the potential cost benefits and the risk of failure and whether it's worth investing the kind of money being requested. What's the likelihood of success and all that. And we went back to that kind of analysis.

We got involved in a decision to move the Pacific Strike Team. The Coast Guard Strike Teams were oil cleanup experts. We had what we called a Strike Force. It consisted of three teams: one on the East Coast, one on the West Coast, and one on the Gulf Coast. Later on we reduced it to two. But the Pacific Strike Team was moved to Sacramento from Hamilton Air Force Base because our PacArea C-130s were going to be at McClelland AFB in Sacramento.* And we had gear that could be loaded on a C-130.

And we created a Capital Acquisition Plan. It'll never measure up to the current Deepwater Plan, but what we were trying to do was look out into the future.† Look at the value of our plant. What have we got? What are we going to need to continue? When it dies, we'll let it die. What should we kill? And how much money do we need on an annual basis to sustain that? We came up with a number that was hundreds of millions per year and tried to sell it. We didn't have a lot of luck with that, but at least we got started down the road. We knew what the figure was, and we kept it updated every year and kept pressing to start funding our future.

Paul Stillwell: When you moved into that job was shortly after the Carter Administration had taken office.‡ Did you notice any differences in emphasis or tone as a result?

* The Lockheed C-130 Hercules is a cargo aircraft powered by four turboprops. It was developed for the Air Force in the 1950s and has since been adapted for use as well by the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard. The plane has a maximum cruising speed of 357 miles per hour and a maximum takeoff weight of 135,000 pounds.

† The Coast Guard describes its Integrated Deepwater System Program as “not just new ships and aircraft but an integrated approach to upgrading existing assets while transitioning to newer, more capable platforms.”

‡ James E. Carter, Jr., who had graduated from the Naval Academy in the class of 1947, served as President of the United States from 20 January 1977 to 20 January 1981.

Admiral Gracey: I'm thinking back on it. I think that I was commenting that there had been an increase in interest in equal opportunity and that sort of thing, and I don't know whether it was just that I'd always been interested. I have opined that that may have been part of it, that I was interested, and here was an opportunity to do something more. But I'm sure that some of that came from President Carter.

In terms of the military aspect and so forth, no, I had no sense of that. The Coast Guard was on a pretty level course at that point. We were trying to do things with the money we had. There were no great giant strides forward in terms of big new hardware or any of that, though our polar icebreakers were arriving and all that with them. I don't remember particular differences in emphasis. I remember when I got to San Francisco, which we'll talk about later, that President Carter and Mrs. Carter came out to San Francisco, and we welcomed them and spent some time with Rosalyn and so forth. But in terms of the impact, I felt it a lot when I got to Bombay the day after they took over the embassy in Teheran, but that was something else. We'll get to that later.

Paul Stillwell: Did you have any observations on Mrs. Adams's husband, Brock, as the Secretary?

Admiral Gracey: Yeah, My impression was that he was not too well checked out on the Coast Guard and really wasn't that interested. If it had to do with the Pacific Northwest, that was good enough for Brock, I think. He and his assistant, Alan Butchman, were nice guys, but they really had never run an organization of any size.* They had come out of running a congressional office. He represented Washington.† They had come from the Hill, and he really had no experience at all in running a major highly capitalized collection of organizations like he had with DoT. The net effect was that they did some fooling around with reorganization. I had never thought of it until this minute, but that might explain why they were able to pull off the bit about peeling off the R&D, calling it

* Alan A. Butchman was Deputy Secretary of Transportation from 4 January 1977 to 22 July 1979.

† Adams, a Democrat from the state of Washington, served in the House of Representatives from 3 January 1965, until his resignation on 22 January 1977 to become Secretary of Transportation. He later served in the Senate from 3 January 1987 to 3 January 3, 1993.

by a new name and saying, “There. See, we’ve trimmed it down.” Maybe he knew that was going to work on the Hill. I don’t know.

Paul Stillwell: Professional courtesy from Congress?

Admiral Gracey: Or maybe just understood the safe thought processes up there. I don’t want to badmouth the man. I don’t mean to do that. I didn’t have all that much personal contact with him. I was out in the field. He had only been in there a few months when I came in to do the Chief of Staff job, because he came in ’77 with President Carter. I don’t think he ever got out to Cleveland.

I got to know Secretary Adams some in the course of the process of selecting the next Commandant when Admiral Siler was getting ready to retire. He’d been Commandant for three years while I was in Cleveland, and then I came to D.C. So I had this one year with him and Admiral Perry, which I was happy to have because it was a special experience. And that’s a positive expression: “special experience.” I had interviews with Secretary Adams and Deputy Secretary Butchman. I don’t know how many people they interviewed. I think it came down to Admiral Hayes and me.

Paul Stillwell: Were you a two-star by that time?

Admiral Gracey: No. I never was a two-star. The only time I ever was a two-star on record was when I was driving between San Francisco and New York. I gave up my three stars when I left the job in San Francisco, and I put them back on again when I took over in New York. I think in between times I was two-star, but I don’t think I ever was. I went from one to three.

My interview with Secretary Adams had a lot to do with something that was going on on the Mississippi River at the time and a couple of other things. We really didn’t talk about me very much, where I was coming from, and what I thought and any of that. Then, when I went to see Alan Butchman, I was surprised to learn neither he nor the Secretary really knew anything about what I had done in the Ninth District. At Vice Admiral Perry’s request I had written a couple of rundowns of my work in ’76 and ’77.

I wrote a description of the Great Lakes—the area and what was happening there and our relationships with the public and industry. I wrote a couple of in-depth letters as to what had been going on up there and the extent of my involvement and the kinds of things that we had changed and done for the better. My troops up there really did a wonderful job. And if I do say so myself, I did a good job. And nobody denied that. That wasn't the question. And I've never been reluctant to hide my light under a bushel.

So I wrote it out, and I know a couple of the other Commandant candidates did as well. When I got to Deputy Secretary Butchman, his questions made me wonder if he'd ever seen these things. Did he have any idea of what I had done in the Ninth District, and what the District had accomplished under my command and what I personally had done? They'd never seen my letters. They had no idea. There was no paper written. Nothing ever went forward. I was unhappy about that. So I told them that there was a lot. And I never did find out why the letters didn't go forward, but they didn't. So I thought, "Gosh, is that what the interviews are all about? Is that all there is?" But that's a 25-year-later memory. The selection process went on and on and on and on.

Let me go back to the bit about the letters. I have no reason to believe that Admiral Siler and Admiral Perry were trying to shoot me down. Quite the contrary. I mean, I was a one-star, for gosh sakes. I'd done good work. I'd served them well. I'd served the Coast Guard well. I served myself well. I have no reason to believe that they weren't Jim Gracey fans as well as anybody. So if I have created the impression that I felt like I was being torpedoed or something, no, no, no, no, no.

But, anyway, the process went on and on and on and on. I worked till 6:00, 6:30 every night, and it got to the point where every time the phone rang I'd think, "Well, this is it. I'm going to find out now where I am." About 10:00 o'clock one night Si called me at home and said, "There's two things I want to tell you. One is that the Secretary has selected somebody else," but he wouldn't tell me who. I knew who. "Number two," he said, "you'll be pleased to know that he's directed that you be given three stars." Well, yea, Brock, but okay. Randy and I went to bed. We lay awake talking and one thing and another on into the wee small hours of the night, and finally I said, "What the hell am I doing here? I'm a one-star. I've just been told I'm going to have three stars. There are

people who would sell their soul to have one. Why am I lying here going through this post mortem?”

Paul Stillwell: So your initial reaction must have been letdown.

Admiral Gracey: I was let down, because, like the baseball uniform in junior high, I can do that okay. I'd had the jobs, and I walked out of Cleveland with great fanfare and all that. I had done a lot of visible stuff up there and at Headquarters. So I thought I had a shot. Anyway I said what I just said, and Randy said, “Well I wondered when you'd figure that out, you idiot. Let's go to sleep.” [Laughter] And we rolled over and went to sleep, and that was the end of that. And a few other times I'm sure I huffed and puffed a little bit, but that was really, I mean it was dumb. I wouldn't have missed those three years in San Francisco and that one year in New York after that for anything.

Paul Stillwell: Famous saying, “Be careful what you wish for.”

Admiral Gracey: Bingo. Exactly right. They were great. I had a wonderful experience that has just recently come back to me. There's a woman whose name is Betty Splaine.* She is a retired chief warrant officer I told you about earlier. After Jack Hayes's selection had been announced I was at a Reserve Officers' Association luncheon and sitting with Betty. She said, “I wanted you to be the Commandant. I said three Hail Marys.”

I said, “Betty, that's the problem. Three Hail Marys, three stars, Betty. Next time do it right.” And we had a lot of fun with that. You know, we laughed about it a lot

Four years later I was in New York. It was announced that I was going to be the Commandant. The following morning in overnight mail came a package, and in the package was a T-shirt. On the front of the T-shirt is “Hail, Mary. Hail, Mary. Hail, Mary. Hail, Mary.” Love it. Well, just the other day I was at a ceremony over at Arlington Cemetery at The Women in the Military Service for America Memorial. They have a model of the new Coast Guard Cutter *SPAR*, a big ship model that had been

* Chief Warrant Officer Elizabeth F. Splaine, USCG (Ret.).

donated by the Coast Guard to be in the SPAR section of the memorial. And Betty was there and we got laughing about “Hail, Mary. Hail, Mary.” Apropos of nothing.

I consider myself very lucky to have had that opportunity to be a finalist in the 1978 selection process. But at first I thought, “Ugh.” [Laughter] And I’d be silly not to. I’m not the first guy that felt that way, I suspect. I don’t think there are many who have had a directive to go from one to three stars. I got out of town without too much damage.

We drove across country to San Francisco. Had a marvelous trip, along with our old dog and old cat who had never taken a long trip in a car before. We went by way of San Antonio to see our daughter, and we visited a few places along the way that we hadn’t ever been before because we’d never been to the West Coast except to fly to Seattle and on up to Yakutat, Alaska.

Had a little adventure somewhere in west Texas at 0600 when our cat escaped and was racing around people’s backyards with us in hot pursuit. It’s a wonder we didn’t get shot. When we caught the cat, she was the one that was lucky to avoid physical abuse.

Incidentally there was a direction that I was to have three stars, but there was no direction as to which CG Area I would command. Having had my New York experience, I thought I might go back to Governors Island. But Admiral Hayes said, “I think you ought to go to San Francisco.”

I said, “I don’t have any West Coast experience.”

And he said, “Bingo.” [Laughter] And furthermore I needed to say it, but I knew it and thought about it. The other new vice admiral was to be Vice Admiral Bob Price, and he is a big merchant marine safety person.* That’s been his business, dealing with the merchant marine over the years, and New York, of course, was the center of the maritime industry at that time. So it was good thing for him to go there. We were supposed to go two and two, with him retiring after two years and me moving to New York, but Admiral Price stayed three and I stayed three in San Francisco, so it was three and one. That worked out just fine.

We arrived in San Francisco eventually, stayed with the Army at the Presidio, where we could not have our pets. Another thing our pets had not done was to stay in a kennel or whatever. There’ll be a small point to this story. We had read somewhere that

* Vice Admiral Robert I. Price, USCG.

one thing to make pets comfortable is to let them feel at home. Take along a blanket or something they're familiar with in the car, and then they'll feel comfortable. Well, we had a puff that we kept folded on the end of our bed, and it was gold colored satin, satiny. You know, a puff is a soft throw for the bed. And every time we would go out anywhere we'd come back and the dog would be on one end and the cat would be on the other. So we figured, "What the heck. Put it in the car. We'll take it."

Well, when we got to the kennel on the morning I was to report in at the 12th District, I went in there, and here was this waiting room full of people. I went up to the vet, and I was checking in, and I'm sure what everybody heard me say was, "Please, sir, may my doggie have his blanket?" That isn't what I said, but I'm sure that's the way it was heard. And I was wearing my new vice admiral suit for the very first time officially. I mean, I was shiny gold. Okay. And everything that was said in that waiting room was heard by everybody there—about eight or ten people.

And the vet said, "Well, whatever turns you on, Admiral." [Laughter]

So I went out and came back in. Here I was, in my vice admiral suit, and I came in with this gold satin puff over my arm for my dog. And he said, "Well, that certainly is a blanket." [Laughter] And as I was leaving, this guy came up to me, stuck out his hand, and said, "Admiral, I'm Scotts Beech. I'm a member of the Fine Arts Society here in San Francisco, and I want to get to know you. You've got class." [Laughter] Well, later on I found out that Scott had class of his own. He's an interesting guy. I felt a little stupid, but the people in the waiting room loved it.

Later that morning Randy had an adventure too. That was her first day in town as well. We had stayed at a motel south of town the night before because of the pets. We'd never been there. She got on a bus out at the Presidio, and she said to the bus driver, "I'm brand new in town. Tell me where I should get off the bus." And he said, "I will." He took her down to Union Square, which is right in the heart of downtown San Francisco. She got off the bus, and there was a guy in a rabbit suit standing on the corner playing a trombone. She said, "I think I'm going to like this city." And it went on from there. We tell the story about our first day, but we absolutely loved that city, we loved where we lived, we loved the whole aspect of getting to know the West Coast and what goes on in the Pacific Ocean and around the Pacific Basin and in the other CG Districts

out there. Those were three wonderful years for us, and we loved every minute of it. And I will get more specific.

Paul Stillwell: Did you eventually get the pets back?

Admiral Gracey: We eventually got the pets back after our change of command when the Wagners moved out and we could move in. Vice Admiral Red Wagner was my predecessor.* After they moved out of the Area Commander's Quarters on Yerba Buena Island a week or so later, we got the pets back, and they were fine.

Our change of command ceremony was held at Coast Guard Base, San Francisco, which is on Yerba Buena Island. It was an interesting event for two reasons. One, the pictures all made us look terribly unhappy, because somebody had put fresh white paint on the platform they'd built. The other day I found a note in my journal for that day saying, "Don't ever do this again." They had freshly painted the inside of this platform that had a railing across the front. And they had painted it white enamel, and this ceremony was at 11:00 o'clock in the morning, and the sun glared off that white enamel. None of us had sunglasses on, so in the pictures we've all got this real weird look on our faces because we're squinting. I said, "Geez, do a flat gray, do something. Don't ever do that again."

But in the course of the change of command we went through the usuals, read the orders, and all that. Admiral Wagner had been my CO on Governors Island. I was a commander at the time, and he was a senior captain, about to make Flag. But here I was relieving him some years later on Yerba Buena at San Francisco. He turned around to Admiral Hayes, saluted properly, and said, "Sir, I have been properly relieved, and I want you to know there's been a terrible mistake." [Laughter] The three of us were convulsed in laughter, and, of course, the people out front had no idea what he said. But what are those three idiots doing up there? What's so funny? Of course, knowing Red as I do, I think he only partially meant it as a joke, but in any event—

Paul Stillwell: And what was your response to that?

* Vice Admiral Austin C. Wagner, USCG.

Admiral Gracey: I was so busy laughing I didn't make one. I had already relieved him, and I thought if anybody was going to tell the story it had to be Admiral Hayes. I've told it many times since then. We loved it, and people kept wondering what was so funny. Of course, we told them afterwards and they all loved it.

So there we were, and at last we were in quarters. The quarters on Yerba Buena are a hundred-and-some-odd-year-old lighthouse keeper's house. It faces right down San Francisco Bay. It's on an island midway between San Francisco and Oakland. The bridge from San Francisco to Oakland tunnels through the top of this island called Yerba Buena. This section with the lighthouse is on the very southern tip of the island. The light warns ships away from the cliff.

Before the bridge was built, it was all ferry traffic back and forth, and they were still carrying some railroad cars and things by ferries across when we were there. The ships coming into Oakland—the major container port in San Francisco Bay—all came in under the Oakland Bay Bridge, around our point. So there was a lighthouse built into the cliff. The house sat up at the top of a long sloping yard, maybe 100 yards long, and this lighthouse was set into a cliff at the bottom of the yard about 50 feet above the water. And it was an operating lighthouse. Our new home, Quarters A, was this old lightkeeper's house. Outside our little dining room window was San Francisco; everything to the west was on one side and on the other side was all of the East Bay and Oakland and all. Out front was the entire Bay to the south. I mean, it just was beautiful. And there were fruit trees all over the place that were planted when the keepers had to be self-sufficient. It was just a lovely place to live.

Admiral Nimitz's house, where he lived until he died, was down at the bottom of the hill from us, with a lot of other Navy property.* The Coast Guard owned the southern piece, and there were two other sets of quarters for what were then the 12th District Chief of Staff and the Pacific Area Deputy Commander. We loved it, and we loved being there. It was such a beautiful place we thought it important to let a lot of people come and enjoy it, so we did a lot of entertaining that brought out the Coast Guard people and

* Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, USN, served as Commander in Chief Pacific Fleet and Pacific Ocean Areas, 1941-45. He died 20 February 1966.

others, like public and industry officials and the foreign people from the many consulates in town. We really worked with the Coast Guard retired community a lot and brought them out and, of course, the large number of visiting firemen.

Congressman Mario Biaggi came to San Francisco to make a speech, and I invited him to the Quarters for lunch.* He was Chairman of the Coast Guard Oversight Committee at the time. After lunch he said, “I’d like to enjoy your garden for a little bit.”

I said, “Put your feet up out there, Mr. Chairman. You’ll really like it out there.” He liked it so much he went sound asleep, and his staff was reluctant to wake him up, because he’d not been very well. So they were two hours late leaving town, because he had this wonderful nap in our garden.

But people loved coming out there, and we wanted to use it that way. In talking to Coast Guard people or the U.S. public about the various government houses we lived in, we always said, “It’s your house. It’s our home at the moment, but it’s your house.”

One day we had a knock on the door, and there was an old-timer who introduced himself as Walter Fanning. He explained to Randy that he was the grandson of one of the early lightkeepers and had been born in the front room upstairs. He wondered if he could come in and look. Randy, of course, welcomed him, and they toured and chatted. From that first visit came many more, and we learned a lot of history. Walter and his family became good friends. We exchange Christmas cards to this day, and he later on was a part of a group that renovated East Brother Light in San Francisco Bay. They paid for its upkeep by running a bed and breakfast operation with the group. And then Walter got involved in renovating a lightship. He’s a wonderful character. Just had his 90th birthday and is still going strong.

I’m into the house stories. I’ll tell house stories for a while, because there was a series of special things that happened while we were there. On the sheltered east side of the island, at the foot of another cliff beside our house, was CG Base, YBI. The Commander, CG Group San Francisco was there and a 180-foot buoy tender and our 82-footers and all the 41-footers that operated in the Bay. And, of course, there were always helicopters flying over from the CG Air Station at San Francisco airport. We

* Mario Biaggi, a Democrat from New York, served in the House of Representatives from 3 January 1969 until his resignation on 5 August 1988.

coined the phrase, “Family at work.” Whenever one of us of the household heard or saw a Coast Guard helo, boat, or ship, he or she would yell, “Family at work,” and everybody that was within earshot ran out in the front yard and waved. The crews got to expect it, so we got waves or other signals back. We have used it ever since. See a USCG ship or plane on TV, you call “Family at work” and others come to see what it’s about.

We had four high-endurance cutters based in Oakland at a Navy Pier right across from Jack London Square. Nowadays they moor at Coast Guard Island—nee Government Island—in Alameda. They sailed on Alaska Patrols—AlPat—or off to work with the Navy or whatever they were going to do. They always came out of Oakland, and they sailed past our lighthouse. I thought it would be fun to signal as they went by, so for a while I went out at night and tried doing Morse code signals with a flashlight if one of our cutters was coming by. That didn’t work too well. I got hold of an old bridge signal light from a ship that was being decommissioned and had that mounted down by the lighthouse. I sent slowly, and they responded the same. Later I learned they would get their least skilled signalman to go up there, because I was slow enough they could handle it and could practice on me.

We also had a flagpole down near the lighthouse. It had a yardarm where I flew my three-star flag. We would use small yachting signal flags as another way to send messages to the cutters. We would send plain language using the individual alphabet flags. And we’d say things like, “Welcome home,” or “Hurry back,” or “Good hunting.” One of the skippers called me up at the office after they got in and said, “That was a marvelous hoist you sent us today. As near as we could figure from the General Signal Book, you said, ‘Sail smartly to sea and prepare for nuclear war.’” [Laughter]

Paul Stillwell: I suppose that’s always a danger on these “do-it-yourself” projects.

Admiral Gracey: Well, one hopes that the source will be considered. [Laughter] And fortunately it was, and I was delighted that he would tell me about it, and they obviously had a good laugh at my expense, and I thought, “Hey, you can’t do any better than that.”

We also had two large canvas banners made. One said, “Welcome home” and the other said, “Hurry back” in large letters. It got to the point whenever a ship was coming

in, we'd be out there with the appropriate banner. But sometimes they came at odd hours or we were somewhere else. So one night there was a ship due in at 5:00 in the morning, and we had every intention of being out there when they came. But, just in case, we thought, "Why don't we go down and drive some nails into the railing at the lighthouse and just hang the banner there. In case we don't make it, why, there'll be something there to let them know we didn't forget them.

So we were down there at the lighthouse at about—I think it was something like 1:00 o'clock in the morning that we thought of this. So we were down there with a hammer and nails, and one of the 41-footers from Base YBI was going out on its harbor patrol. They came around the cliff below the light, and they heard bang-bang-bang up there by the lighthouse. So they shined their spotlight up to see what was going on, and there were the Admiral and his Lady standing there with a hammer. We waved, and the light on the boat went out very quickly, and the boat went away very fast. [Laughter] I remember one time one of the cutters gave me passing honors as they came in. They saw us there and gave us passing honors, and that was nice. That wasn't why we were doing it. We just wanted them to know we were watching and we cared.

I started keeping a daily journal. And, as I promised, I won't read it. But I'm absolutely amazed when I look back. I knew I was busy, but wow. How great. Got off on a dead run. I mean, we relieved one day and I was flying to Seattle the next day and doing changes of commands and speeches and all this kind of stuff and meetings. It went on for three solid years.

The first change of command I went to was at Petaluma Training Center, and then we went on from there up to the 13th District, where a new 13th District Commander was coming on line. In fact, it was Rear Admiral Chuck Larkin, an Academy classmate and my best man when Randy and I were married.* We went up for the change and Rear Admiral Glenn Thompson's retirement.† We flew in a C-130 with the band from CG Recruit Training Center, Alameda, California. The band consisted of just recruits. They were only at the Boot Camp eight or nine weeks, something like that, but that Band

* Rear Admiral Charles E. Larkin, USCG. Admiral Larkin was later the Ancient Albatross, that is, the active duty Coast Guard officer with the earliest designation as a naval aviator. He held that distinction from 5 September 1979 to 31 July 1984.

† Rear Admiral Glenn O. Thompson, USCG.

regularly won awards all up and down the West Coast—a marvelous commentary on the musical systems in the schools in this country. The Bandmaster, Chief Musician George King, was a lot of fun and they went along on this trip and an honor guard too.

On the way home the plane commander asked Randy if she'd like to come up front and see what it was like in the cockpit. She took about two seconds to say a vigorous "Sure." So they put her into the flight engineer's seat. That was the first of several such events for her. She did it so much over the next three years that when we left at the end of my tour, Air Station Sacramento gave her Flight Engineer's Wings.

But on this first trip, while she was up there, we got word that there was a disoriented guy in a small boat. He didn't know where he was, and nobody else knew where he was, but they had an idea. This was my second day on the job, and we participated in a search. The Coast Guard C-130s are wonderful, because they have big search windows put into the sides so you can sit and search by eye. Nice view. Lousy way to have to search, but our crews were very good at it.

Later on I tried hard and long as the Commandant to get surface search radar of some sort for our C-130s. They had nothing. One of the things I swore I was going to do as Commandant—and told everybody in the Coast Guard I was going to do—was get proper search radar on the C-130's. I wanted to get away from total reliance on the Mark 1, Mod 1 eyeball. Didn't succeed.

Anyway, back to the search with us aboard. They found the guy in about ten minutes, got him oriented, and we came on home.

Paul Stillwell: Where was that geographically?

Admiral Gracey: Up off of Eureka, California. It was about halfway back or a little more than that. It was in and out fog down there, and the guy just got headed in the wrong direction and couldn't get oriented, but we found him. I can't remember now how we communicated with him, but somehow we got him reoriented and headed in the right direction. One of our surface units went out to meet him and make sure he got in okay.

San Francisco was big on foreign consuls general. They prided themselves on having more consulates than any city in the world except Hamburg. When Hamburg

would catch up, San Francisco would find some remote little country somewhere to have a consulate—and vice versa. But they were really active. I mean, you could go out every night to one consulate or another with one social function or another, and they were wonderful people. We participated a lot in that.

The relationships we developed were helpful on several occasions when we had business regarding their home countries. One event that I remember particularly was when Tito died.* The Yugoslavian consulate got a new Consul General. He came to my office to pay a call, and we had a wonderful visit. A few days later Tito died. So I went up to the Yugoslav Consulate and signed their official death book. Well, my goodness, I was amazed by the reaction. It was something wonderful I had done. The Consul General was very emotional about the fact that I'd gone up to sign the book and all. It just seemed like the right thing to do to me. It certainly cemented our relationship.

The Norwegian Consul General and his wife became lifelong friends. His name was Per Proitz. He wound up being Norwegian Ambassador to Brazil and then went back to Norway. We kept in touch. They spent a couple days with us on Governors Island when they were on the way back to Brazil from Oslo one time. Once when I was doing USCG business in Oslo, Sonja was on home leave, and she met us at the airport and took Randy off for a day together while I did my thing and before we flew back to Göteborg, Sweden, where I was attending the Quadrennial International Lifeboat Conference. I mentioned earlier about arranging for the Norwegian tall ship *Christian Radich* to come to the Grand Haven Coast Guard Festival while she was in the Great Lakes. She also came to San Francisco with the same captain. We helped with that too

We did a lot of foreign traveling, and the consuls were helpful to us. We visited Japan, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Singapore, India, Indonesia, Australia, and New Zealand, and the consulates helped us to make contacts in country. It was a good arrangement and very pleasant. They used to tease about the Soviet Consul General, who rarely attended the social events. The line went, "Where is X tonight? He's on his roof counting ships again."

* In 1945 Josip Broz Tito established a Communist government in Yugoslavia. He broke ties with the Soviet Union in 1948. He remained the nation's ruler until his death in May 1980.

Paul Stillwell: How does the area commander's job differ in scope from a district commander's?

Admiral Gracey: That was one of the factors that I spent some time on, and we'll talk about it a little bit later. The Area Commander is an overseer. He owns the long-range assets. He owns the C-130s. He owns the high-endurance cutters, WHECs, operationally. The Districts support them. We had two WHECs in Seattle, four in Oakland, two in Honolulu; all were our 378-foot class. We had C-130s in Hawaii, Sacramento, and Kodiak. The area command arranges training with the Navy. They coordinate inter-District operational activities. They deal on some of the international levels that go beyond District boundaries. I ran the overall drug program for the Pacific. The District Commanders had pieces of it.

One of the things I spent a lot of time working on with the Area staffs was, "Don't get in the District Commanders' knickers. Let them do their thing and be supportive of them." I can remember one time saying to one of the District Commanders after we'd had a big discussion because my staff didn't agree with what he wanted. I said, "Okay. It's your baby. We'll do our best to get you what you think you need." So basically that's where it is.

In those days I was also Commander 12th CG District, and I was also the DoT's Regional Emergency Transportation Coordinator, RETCO, for that Federal Region. I'll talk about that anon.

The business of three stars and two stars created an embarrassing but fun event one morning. I went to an early morning breakfast at the Presidio shortly after we got on the job. I got up and went downstairs and fumbled around in the front hall closet and found a coat that didn't have a cleaner's bag on it, put it on, and went to the event. I was standing around, and a lot of people were coming in, and they kept saying, pointedly, "Good morning, good morning, *Rear Admiral Gracey*."

I finally said to Randy, "What are they saying?"

She said, "Look at your sleeves, you dummy." I had put on a rear admiral's uniform that I hadn't restriped. Of course, the Coast Guard one stars and the two stars wore the same insignia in those days. I just had this hanging in the closet waiting to be

restriped and I just reached in the closet in the dark and put it on. Went off, and Randy didn't say anything. My driver didn't say anything. Nobody said anything till somebody looked at me and said, "Good morning, *Rear* Admiral Gracey."

Paul Stillwell: This is a little surprising, because I would have thought the standard greeting would be, "Good morning, Admiral Gracey," no matter how many stripes you had.

Admiral Gracey: That's right, but they were sticking it to me—in fun—because of the goof they could see I had made. And most knew I had just become a Vice Admiral when I got to San Francisco a couple weeks before.

Paul Stillwell: I've done something analogous, but the ranks were lower in my case. [Laughter]

Admiral Gracey: Were they? [Laughter] Interestingly enough, that afternoon I was having lunch with several CG Academy classmates who had retired or were living in the area. We would get together periodically. Had about a half a dozen of them that day. I told them the story, and one of them said, "Yeah, we should all have the problem of an old unused rear admiral's suit hanging around in the closet. [Laughter]

Paul Stillwell: So how much operational responsibility was there, as opposed to administrative, in that job?

Admiral Gracey: Well, essentially the Area Commander job is all operational. That's it. Operational in the sense of scheduling the Alaska Patrol, which ships are going to go when, and refresher training with the Navy. The 12th District staff would direct the operation of the buoy tender when it was doing standard aids-to-navigation work in its assigned area. And the work of the 41-footers and the 82-footers—that was all District work unless we deployed them on an overall drug operation or something like that.

I took a lot of interest in the vessel traffic lanes offshore, because there was concern about collisions. There was also concern about oil rigs, drilling, and I worked a lot with the maritime industry on the West Coast to try to work out some traffic lanes that went beyond my 12th District borders but that were under PacArea oversight. If a District asset was needed for a case that involved waters of two Districts—or more assets than one District could provide, PacArea area got in the act.

It's been a while since I sat down to think about the Area Commander's designated responsibilities. There's probably some I'm missing, but as an example, in the drug business we decided that a good thing to do would be to track them all the way from their departure points. Stopping the smuggling on the West Coast is a far different thing than it is in the East. On the East and Gulf Coasts you have the choke points down in the Caribbean. Coming up from South America to the U.S., you've got to pass between those islands and Mexico somewhere. There are narrow stretches, and you can corral them. They're not going to go way out and around, because that's not economical. So you've got places where you can narrow the search .

You don't have any of that on the West Coast. So we deployed C-130s to Howard Air Force Base in Panama, and they flew out of there down along the Ecuador coast and up along the north of Panama looking for ships that we thought fit a profile. When we found one, we'd tag it. We made a couple of pretty big busts, based on the fact that we found those guys early, we trailed them, found out where they were going. We lost one of them and then found him again and then lost him and found him a third time and nailed him as they were up off the coast of the State of Washington.

One we hadn't been trailing showed up off of Monterey, California, maybe 10 miles out, and there were a lot of small vessels that were running back and forth out of Monterey to this full-sized ship. They were coming out and going back. And we couldn't think of any reason why unless they were picking up payloads. So we ran a C-130 out there, and started circling the ship. That ended the running back and forth to Monterey. Then we scrambled a 378 high-endurance cutter to go out there. At about the time the high-endurance cutter came over the horizon the druggies scuttled the ship. The people aboard went off in lifeboats.

It was a nice day, and it was getting on toward night. It was forecast to be a nice night, and it wasn't too windy. It wasn't too cold. It wasn't too rough. So we decided we'd just let them stay there in the boats overnight. They weren't going anywhere, and they were going to be all right. If the wind blew up, we'd go get them. But meanwhile we just laid back off the horizon so they knew we were there. They weren't going anywhere, but they sure as heck were going to have a long night. They might be more humble in the morning when we picked them up. We sent a couple of 82-footers to go out with the 378 to do the actual picking up of these guys. The 82-footer skippers said the people in the lifeboats were very docile when we got them. [Laughter] Well, that was a PacArea operation.

The cruise ship *Prinsendam* caught fire up off the Canadian coast.* And that was a PacArea operation. Admiral Hayes, I know, talked about that as an event of his Commandant years, and it was. But it was my guys in the PacArea that coordinated the rescue. I've always said, "If you're going to burn your ship, burn it within helicopter range of a couple of airfields, and you'll be in good shape. We also had a couple of high-endurance cutters that were on Alaska Patrol. Got them down there. And we got a break on the weather, and we got everybody off. There were 500 and some odd people and the crew, and nobody so much as sprained an ankle I don't think. But the ship was a total loss. Those kinds of things we would get involved in.

Paul Stillwell: Did you have an operational center somewhere that was manned around the clock?

Admiral Gracey: Yes, indeed!

Paul Stillwell: Where was that?

* On 4 October 1980 the 427-foot-long Holland America Line cruise ship *Prinsendam* experienced fire and flooding in an engine room while 120 miles south of Yakutat, Alaska. When the fire got out of control, the passengers and crew were forced to get into lifeboats. The people in the lifeboats were rescued by the Coast Guard cutter *Boutwell* (WHEC-719) and the commercial tanker *Williamsburgh*. Nearly a week later the *Prinsendam* sank.

Admiral Gracey: That was in San Francisco. It was in the Federal Building, where our offices were at the time. Yeah, that was the "OpCen." They also worked with the AMVER program, the merchant ships that tell us where they are. We called on them a couple of times, and they coordinated with other rescue centers in Hawaii and other countries' rescue centers around the Pacific Basin depending on what was going on. That was done out of this center. I've forgotten now how we distinguished between Area and District in that particular arena, but it was not a problem. Everybody knew. I guess it was the San Francisco Rescue Center, and it was run by District and Area people—always with Area oversight

We ran the Loran program too. The 12th District ran the individual stations we had at Middletown, California, and in Nevada, but PacArea was the overseer for the chains and made sure that the Loran Navigation Program worked and was properly supported and that sort of thing.

Paul Stillwell: Who ran the vessel traffic systems?

Admiral Gracey: There was only one. That was in San Francisco, so it was run by the 12th District. The Areas oversee large operations using multi-District resources. Later on, when I get to New York, I'll talk about the Haitian migration-interdiction bit. It was close working with the Districts, because they're the ones that are going to provide direction for the operating resources in a given situation. They're going to provide the support for them. And there has to be ongoing contact. Every so often, though, we would wind up with an Area getting too much into the nitty-gritty of a particular District.

Fleet readiness was a PacArea program. WMCCS, the Worldwide Command and Control System. I pressed for us on the Area part to use that for our own assessment of our readiness. Some of it wasn't applicable for the Coast Guard the way it was set up, so I had a couple of our people on the PacArea staff develop ways to make WMCCS Coast Guard oriented using factors pertinent for our units and types of ops.

The levels of readiness would be different than for a cruiser or a naval vessel. Ours were warships, too, but the readiness info we were looking for involved things like: Was the unit ready to go to sea and stay there for a time? Was its training up for doing

the boardings it was going to do on fisheries patrol? Was it in shape for the kind of deployment we were talking about? All of those kinds of things we needed to look at. A lot of them were the same as for the Navy, and we could use them. It was very helpful to use them as a guide, but it was like pulling teeth for a while to get people to be willing to look at those things and say, “Yes, that’s useful to us.” They liked their own system, and that’s okay. But we used WMCCS info too and PacArea did that.

Paul Stillwell: Did you have pretty much a management-by-exception approach on operations, that you would deal only with the out-of-ordinary cases?

Admiral Gracey: Me personally, you mean?

Paul Stillwell: Yes.

Admiral Gracey: Well, essentially, yes. If there was a drug bust coming down or there was going to be a boarding, I got called. I got called even when I was the Commandant, because there would have to be what we called a “Statement of no Objection.” The ultimate decision was the commanding officer’s. But before he could exercise his discretion, he had to have us check all the way up the line and in Washington, ultimately over to the Department of Justice and State Department and the White House, “We don’t have any objection to you doing that.” It took some doing to get that whittled down to where it could be handled quickly. Earlier our poor guys had been sitting out there for three days waiting to board somebody. That was a bad scene, and we got rid of that. But mostly it was, “Just tell me what’s going on, and if you need a decision from me let me know. Otherwise just keep me posted.” I certainly wasn’t going to get into telling them how to make a rescue or how to respond or what airplanes to send.

Paul Stillwell: Did you have any fisheries enforcement cases during that period?

Admiral Gracey: Well, a lot of them, yeah. And we had a fishing kind of a problem that had nothing to do with the Alaska Patrol. It had to do with the Indians up on the

California coast. But to go back, yeah, the Alaska Patrol was going on as a regular thing, and I just don't remember any particulars that were outstanding. As I thumb through my journal, I'm sure I'll find a couple and I'll remember to have them outlined for you the next time, but I didn't see any in the first year. Except I have mentioned earlier that I started off on a dead run in that San Francisco job.

After I had come back from those two command changes, we got caught up in a big flap that was going on up at the Klamath River up in Northern California, where there were campers and sport fishermen there, and they wanted to catch the salmon. The Indians wanted to catch the salmon their way and claimed a traditional right to the fish. There was a big hurrah going on with the Indians interfering with the campers, the recreational fishermen, and cutting their nets and one thing or another, and the recreational fishermen were bollixing up the Indians getting their own fish.

Congressman Clausen got involved, and over a period of several months we had a major flap.* I had to get in there and try to get an answer. I got to be a peacemaker. We had a boat offshore, and the sport fishermen wanted our boat to go in and get involved in arresting people and all that stuff in the river. And all of the various and sundry agencies that were involved in this said, "No, we don't want any on-water enforcement. That's not going to help anything." And I couldn't see how it was going to help anything. We were going to get into a mess. Our position was that our boat was there to save lives.

This was a real dangerous place at the mouth of the Klamath. They called it the Gut that came out of this river into the open ocean, and it was really ugly. And I said, "We're there to save you, save lives, one thing and another." It ultimately went beyond that. But I had a really good first class petty officer up there who had experience in the area. This was a seasonal job, and he was running the team. And he came down to talk to me and explain to me. Now, this would be a District thing because it was in the 12th Coast Guard District waters. I mean it's still me, Jim Gracey, making the decisions while wearing two hats. And yes, sometimes one of my hats disagreed with the other.

But our man on scene talked about his views on how to do this and his relationships with people and whether he was going to be armed or not armed. And he

* Donald H. Clausen, a Republican from California, served in the House of Representatives from 22 January 1963 to 3 January 1983.

was convincing. He had ways and knew how to do it and he could handle it. And I said, “Go for it. You’ve got it, and the marching orders are that you’ll get backed.” I explained that to the Congressman, and he didn’t think that was a wonderful idea that I was going to turn it over to a first class petty officer. To one of his staff I said, “You know, there are first class petty officers, and there are first class petty officers. They’re all good, but this one really knows what he’s talking about, and he’s respected on both sides. The sheriffs respect him. Everybody up there respects this guy, and he’s got the cool to handle it. He knows how to hang back. They can’t ruffle his feathers. He’s proven that. But he’s also proven that he can stand tall and say, ‘You, get on the beach.’ And they will get on the beach.” I’m sure I’ll think of some more pieces of that one because I hadn’t planned to talk about that today, but that was one of them. How are we doing on time?

Paul Stillwell: We’re running down toward the end of this tape.

Admiral Gracey: Are we? Let me tell you about Alameda Training Center, which was in my area. That was what we called a “Headquarters Unit,” meaning it was run from Washington, but it was in my geographical area and the Commanding Officer, the first one when I got there, was a Coast Guard Academy classmate named Paul Meyer.* Paul was one of God’s nice people. Sadly, he died shortly after he retired and was buried in San Francisco while I was there. But I told earlier about this wondrous Band and the wondrous bandmaster at Alameda. They found out that I liked the “National Emblem March,” because it has a great trombone part. Once they found that out, anytime I showed up anywhere they were playing they’d stop and start playing “National Emblem.” It was wonderful fun. And I showed you a picture last week of sitting in with them.

At the Armed Forces Day parade in San Francisco one year I was going to be the Grand Marshal, and the word came back to me that there were only going to be four bands in the parade, because it was to be downtown in the financial district and the buildings would make it too noisy if we had more bands. The band that wasn’t going to be there was the Coast Guard band. I said, “Wait a minute. Can those guys be serious?”

* Captain Paul W. Meyer, USCG.

The parade Grand Marshal has three stars and a Coast Guard cap device, and they're telling me the Coast Guard's band isn't going to march?" I said, "No. You tell them that I agree that four bands is the right number. The Coast Guard Band and any three others they choose to pick." We had five bands. [Laughter]

The Marines had an annual five-mile run, and one year they invited the Coast Guard recruits to participate. Captain Meyer talked to his phys ed man and asked if he could put together a platoon of runners from the recruits. The phys-ed coach said he would try. It had to be a platoon, because the Marine run was designed for platoons. Imagine that. The winner was the platoon with the lowest total time.

Well, I called up Paul one day and said, "How we doing?"

Paul said, "The coach says he's got them up to four miles, and they'll fake it for the fifth mile." So on the day of the event these guys were in their recruit sweatsuits and their low sneakers. They went over to Treasure Island, and they were standing around their old beat-up gray bus—the best the Coast Guard could muster.*

Then up drove this big shiny green bus with "United States Marine Corps" on it, and out of it came a platoon of Marines in scarlet and gold running suits and running shoes. They formed up across from our recruits and started doing clap straddles. Right behind them was another nice shiny bus with a bunch of Marines. They were in fatigues with blackface and their combat gear, and they come out, and they also started doing clap straddles. And as they were doing clap straddles, they were going, "Kill, kill, kill, kill."

For the Coast Guard the "group leadership factor" took over among this platoon of recruits. Somehow they wound up facing the two platoons of Marines and also started doing clap straddles. Only as they did, they chanted, "Save, save, save, save"

The race started. The Alameda phys-ed coach had told his people, "You fast guys, don't run away from the others and you slow guys, keep up. Stay together." They didn't have to run as a platoon, but he thought it was the best way for our guys to have a chance. What do you know. At the end, here came the platoon of Coast Guard recruits, running together and chanting "Save, save, save" as they crossed the finish line. They won the race.

* Treasure Island is a man-made island in San Francisco Bay, located between San Francisco and Oakland. It served as the site of a world's fair in 1939-40, then was converted for use as a Navy base during and after World War II.

That Marine race went on for many years. I don't know whether it's still going. But the Coast Guard won it almost every year. It got to a point six or seven years later where the Coast Guard's Pacific Area commander called me in Washington to tell me the Marine general would not award the winners' medal to the Coast Guard platoon because he said, "You guys are bringing ringers in here. You couldn't possibly win this every year if you weren't bringing ringers in." They were all recruits. I mean, you can't recruit a ringer, but it was interesting.

Interview Number 9 with Admiral James S. Gracey, U.S. Coast Guard (Retired)

Date: Tuesday, 7 August 2001

Place: Admiral Gracey's home in Arlington, Virginia

Interviewer: Paul Stillwell

Paul Stillwell: Admiral, in our last interview you talked about recruit training at Alameda. Do you have anything to add on that?

Admiral Gracey: One special Alameda experience involved my wife, Randy. Each week they had a graduation event for the boots.* There were many women in the graduating group, and Randy was invited to make a speech and review the troops. I wish I could read her speech to you. It would bring tears to your eyes. It was beautiful. The essence was, "You've done it now. You're in the 'Coast Guard Family.'" You're going to be driving across country, and you're going to see a little red slash on the bumper of a car ahead of you. You're going to speed up to see which one of 'The Family' it is. Is it one you know?" It was well done.

Paul Stillwell: How well did gender integration work at boot camp?

Admiral Gracey: Very well. We did have some problems elsewhere in the district. We had a couple of rape incidents, not between Coast Guard people, but we had a watchstander down at our base at Treasure Island who got involved in a rape situation with a Navy person. It wasn't date rape, because she was on watch, but he had come to stand watch with her. When she got off watch she said, "Good night," and went to bed and he hung around in the corridor. She came out to go to the head, and he raped her.

We had a couple of things like that to the point where I went to some considerable length to set up some rape counseling ability. We just didn't have it. What to do in rape situations, post-event counseling by chaplains and medical people for the victim, avoidance precautions. Protecting evidence, gathering evidence so that we could get the

* "Boot" is a slang term for a newly enlisted Coast Guardsman. Recruit training is known as boot camp.

culprit, and a string of things like that. The Public Health Service was very cooperative with us, as were the Navy chaplains. At that point we didn't have a full Coast Guard Chaplain program. We did have a chaplain at the training center in Alameda. Later, when I got to be the Commandant, we started the program. Admiral Hayes had thought it was a good idea, and the first Navy chaplain to be the Chaplain of the Coast Guard, reporting directly to the Commandant, was assigned to me. From there we built the entire current program. Now every Coast Guard District has one, and Navy Reserve chaplains who serve as Coast Guard chaplains. They wear Coast Guard uniforms. It's great and popular with the chaplains, I'm told.

Paul Stillwell: What had been the situation for chaplains before that?

Admiral Gracey: We just used Navy chaplains that happened to be nearby when a special need arose. Assigned to the Coast Guard there was one at the Coast Guard Academy and at CG Training Centers essentially. We didn't have one at CG Headquarters. We didn't have them in district offices. We didn't have them in area offices. I think it amounted to three or four in the Coast Guard, and they were at training commands. Starting in 1966 we did have two assigned to Governors Island. Later there were more.

Paul Stillwell: I just really found out about this a couple of years ago. I went to a Coast Guard ship commissioning, and there were a bunch of chaplains, and they were in Coast Guard uniforms except for the cap device. That was still Navy, and I didn't know what the Coast Guard did before that.

Admiral Gracey: Just this past Sunday—I'm talking to you just after Coast Guard Day in 2001—we had our third annual Coast Guard Day Memorial Service at one of the local chapels. We had it at Fort Myer this time. I was talking to a couple of the Coast Guard chaplains. They told me they and their colleagues love being assigned to the Coast Guard.

In 1981 I was again stationed on Governors Island—this time as Commander, Atlantic Area and Third CG District. I knew the Coast Guard chaplain there, of course, had good relations. He was transferred to head the Navy Chaplain School in Newport and

invited me up to talk to the classes about what it's like to be a Coast Guardsman and about the Coast Guard and how the chaplains were important to us. That was before Chaplain Eddy Moran, our first Chaplain of the Coast Guard, created the great program for us. It is the program we have today in essence. They were very receptive to my talks. Asked all kinds of questions. Apparently it's still going strong.

The Coast Guard people are doing stressful stuff all the time. The families are under stress, because a guy goes out in a boat in the middle of the night in weather that nobody in his right mind would dream of going out in because somebody yelled for help. The families know they're out, but they don't know what's going on. And we have the disasters like the TWA crash and things like that.* I mean, that's a horrendous experience, because they're picking body parts out of the water, and they just have no idea what they're getting to.

In fact, just this year the receiver of the Admiral Gracey Award at the Coast Guard Foundation's Annual Awards Dinner in San Francisco is a chief petty officer who's a career development advisor, but he also counsels people regarding the stressful missions and the horrors they will face. He told about at the time of the Alaska Air crash, told about how the skipper of one of the CG patrol boats in the body search had been at the TWA crash and was now in California.† They were going out to this one, and they were one of the first boats under way.

Halfway to the scene he stopped the boat, got all the crew together, 10 or 12 people, and told them what to expect. He said, "Now, don't think you're going to go out there and find somebody in a life jacket yelling for help, or even maybe alive. You're not going to find that." And he described what they were going to find. One of his bits of counsel was, "You're going to be angry, you're going to be sick, you're going to throw up, and you're going to cry. And it's all going to be okay. You'll make it. That's the way it is. Just understand that's what going to happen when you get there."

* On the evening of 17 July 1996, at the beginning of flight 800, a TWA jetliner bound for Paris with 229 people on board exploded in midair just after taking off from New York's John F. Kennedy Airport and plunged into the Atlantic Ocean south of Moriches Inlet. All on board were killed.

† Alaska Airlines flight 261 crashed into the Pacific Ocean on 31 January 2000, about 20 miles northwest of Los Angeles International Airport. Eighty-four passengers and five crew members were on board the MD-83 jetliner that was bound from Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, to San Francisco at the time of the crash.

Paul Stillwell: And that was enormously helpful, I'm sure.

Admiral Gracey: Oh, I was so impressed when I heard that he had done that. How unfortunate for him that he had to do it twice, but how fortunate that they had that experience for that crew to fall back on. I was really impressed by that.

Paul Stillwell: One of the biggest fears is of the unknown.

Admiral Gracey: Exactly, exactly. You know, you can cope with almost anything if you've just got some idea what's coming. Most of the time we cope with anything even when we don't, but it helps. So the Coast Guard Chaplain Program is working very well, and I will talk a little bit more when we get to my Commandant years, because there were a couple of fun things that happened early on.

In San Francisco the Pacific Area command and the 12th CG District command combined—that whole Pacific Coast—was an active area. Lots of events, lots of politics kinds of things. Lots of visits by congressmen. President and Mrs. Carter came, and the Secretary of Transportation, Neal Goldschmidt, was there.* There was a lot of involvement up and down the coast with that sort of thing and speeches up the ying-yang. I made a lot of speeches. I loved making them, and it gave me an opportunity to talk about the Coast Guard but also to press for some things that I thought were important about the state of the merchant marine in the United States and the state of safety and some of that sort of thing.

Paul Stillwell: How much contact did you have with President Carter?

Admiral Gracey: Not very much. More with Rosalynn. The President shook a few hands when he arrived but had very little interaction with our people. He and his party came and went from Coast Guard Air Station, San Francisco, but he was whisked quickly into a car and off to where he was making a speech of some kind. Rosalynn stayed around and answered questions, met with the press, was charming to meet, and she and my wife

* Neil E. Goldschmidt served as Secretary of Transportation from 15 August 1979 to 20 January 1981.

spent some time together. We were the hosts, and I was the senior guy. He understood about vice admirals and he was nice enough to be gracious, and she was particularly gracious. But they weren't there to visit us, and we were pretty much part of the scenery.

Paul Stillwell: I expect a lot of those occasions are just going through the motions for the President.

Admiral Gracey: Probably so. If he's flying all that way to make a speech he's got some reason to do it. But I was anxious that the Coast Guard people there not get taken for granted. And he brushed through pretty quick. He had things to do, and visiting the Coast Guard people wasn't one of them. I had alerted our folks that that was probably going to be so. He got in late in the evening anyway, and that didn't encourage our desire to stay around, although a lot of Coast Guard people did come to see him, stayed to see him, and of course the watch standers were there. But it was more, "I saw the President and I directed his car," that kind of thing. But Rosalynn was good. She spent a little time talking to the CG families and doing a press conference .

I spent quite a bit of time off and on with Congressman Dellums, because I chaired the Minority Business Opportunity Committee of the San Francisco Federal Executive Board.* Of course, there were a couple of conferences, and he and I shared podiums. I managed to convince him that women were minorities, too, and we needed to take them into the fold as well. And he was fine. I enjoyed working with him.

Paul Stillwell: Any other impressions of him?

Admiral Gracey: No. He's an accomplished politician and in his element when he was in the Bay Area. That's his home turf.† And he handled it well. He was a stayer. He was at this conference, and it wasn't a case of, "I'll give you ten minutes, and then I've got to go somewhere." He came and stuck around. I had lunch with him, and he was interested.

* Ronald V. Dellums, a Democrat from California, served in the House of Representatives from 3 January 1971 until his resignation on 6 February 1998.

† Dellums attended the Oakland public schools, later graduated from Oakland City College and San Francisco State College.

Some politicians are and some aren't. "Politician," by the way, is not a dirty word in my book. I'm an admirer of politicians, but some are more human about it than others. I thought he was great. I know that he's got a lot of detractors, and I can't even remember what they were unhappy about, but there was a lot of criticism of Dellums for some of the things he did and said. I found him personable, pleasant to be with, interested in what I had to say, and willing to tell me what I asked about.

Paul Stillwell: He's not known as a strong advocate of national defense.

Admiral Gracey: Oh. We didn't talk national defense. I was there as Chairman of the Minority Business Opportunity Committee, and I didn't hesitate to tell him about the Coast Guard, a lot of things he didn't know. Would have no reason to know. He wasn't on any of our committees, although he was in the Bay Area. You would think that might have come up. But if it's not in your sight zone, it's not there. I was able to spend some time talking to him, and he listened. I was able to talk to him about how we of the Coast Guard blended in with the other Armed Services and all of that sort of thing. But it was clear that there was no point in spending a lot of time there, because that wasn't his interest zone. That wasn't why he was there. The reason he was there was the Minority Business Opportunity business, and he was very interested in that.

I talked to you about the wonderful Flag Quarters we had in San Francisco, the old lighthouse keeper's house on Yerba Buena Island, so I won't go into that again. I didn't talk enough about my wife Randy. I won't say she's an unsung hero, because everybody loves her, but over the years she really gave the Coast Guard a heck of a lot of herself—her care and imagination and ability to reach people.

For example, she created the idea of an Independence Day Eve party at our Quarters on YBI for the foreign consuls in town. We got very much involved in that program, especially through the Foreign Relations Council. I thought establishing and maintaining relations with them were very important. I think I probably pushed that more than other Pacific Area commanders. I thought the Coast Guard had an international role that wasn't being pushed enough. Well, in PacArea this was my first chance to get broadly

involved in that. In the Great Lakes I worked a lot with Canada, and that was interesting and productive, but it was just one country and already a close friend and neighbor at that.

Paul Stillwell: With your treaty-making abilities.

Admiral Gracey: Yeah, that's right. [Laughter] I learned not to make any treaties, but I did think it was important to reach out. And we did that, starting with the consuls general, and then reaching out. As the consuls general arrived for the Independence Day Eve party, they came down a long walk that ran down the side of the Quarters building. We had that lined with small American flags. As they came to the front door there was a huge red, white, and blue bouquet on the front door. And as they went inside, all the tables were decorated with red, white, and blue flowers of course and red, white, and blue napkins.

We really gave it the business. But I thought the coup, the marvelous touch of the evening was that we served them hot dogs, fried chicken, watermelon, and Fudgecicles. We said, "Tonight you're going to have an American Fourth of July picnic dinner." They loved it. They absolutely loved it. Of course, we had drinks and hors d'oeuvres and all the usual thing before dinner. And they were all properly embellished. But the understanding was, "This is the celebration of our independence, and we're not going to ask you to do it tomorrow, but come to the party tonight and help us get ready"

Paul Stillwell: FDR fed the King and Queen of England hotdogs in 1939 when they visited the United States.*

Admiral Gracey: Really? Okay. Well, for all, I know Randy read the book, and it was her idea. Our Quarters Managers, boy, they thought that was the greatest thing ever, and they got into it. For the consuls general, it was special because it was so different. We did it every year. They would ask, "Are we going to have that party this year?" They loved it. You never know how that's going to reach out.

I also enjoyed hosting our retired flag officers. When Admiral Bender got word that I was coming, he wrote me a note. Terrible handwriting, you could hardly read it, as

* FDR—President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

always. The note said, “We’re pleased to hear that you’re coming to San Francisco. You will be happy to know that there are six retired admirals out here. One four-star, two three-stars and three two-stars. Three of them are former Area and District Commanders, and we’re prepared to give you all the help that you can possibly use. And we look forward to the opportunity.” [Laughter]

I said to Randy, “I can just see the twinkle in his eye when he wrote that one.” [Laughter] But I put him to the test. When I had been there a couple of weeks, I said, “You promised me all the help I could get. Well, for one thing I need help in using up some of the food at Quarters A, so how about you and the other guys coming out and having lunch with me at YBI? And while you’re there I may just pick your brains on a few things.”

So we made that a regular thing. They would come out, I don’t know, four or five times a year. They didn’t beat it to death, but I would call Chet just to chat. They were helpful, but most of it had gone by. You know, there were new things happening, and it was just the idea that I heard great sea stories and these were real interesting old-timers who had been down the road, and they were interested in what we were doing.

Paul Stillwell: Sometimes you get more help than you want in a situation like that. [Laughter]

Admiral Gracey: Well, I knew Chet Bender. He was marvelous obviously. But I took him up on it. Quarterly I had them out to lunch and said, “Okay, you said you wanted to help. Help. This is what’s going on.” They’d come at 11:00 o’clock and wouldn’t go home till 4:00 o’clock in the afternoon, and they’d sit and we’d talk about—for me, talk about a wealth of experience and learning at the hands of the masters, some more masterful than others, as is always the case.

Paul Stillwell: Do you remember any specific advice or help that you got from them?

Admiral Gracey: I should have known you were going to ask me that question. That’s a good one. Mostly it was how to deal with local politicians, local situations, because times

were a-changing. Two out of the three of the seniors had dealt a lot with the international group. Not to the extent we were but had been involved. Some of the others had not. My successors didn't see the same sense of gain from that that we did. There was a lot about Navy League contacts, local maritime interests, some of the shipping companies, some of the company people, individuals and what their outlook had been, the experiences with different questions that had come up. But we were going further in the law enforcement business than they had. We were carrying firearms, and they had never got to that extent.

The oil cleanup business was just getting started with forming an oil company sponsored outfit called Clean Bay, and I was very supportive of that. We had for a very long time a law about cleaning up pollution, but it had never gotten to the point that we had gone to in the '70s. So with the retired Flags what they brought was from experience mostly local knowledge, that sort of thing. They had lots of opinions about various ongoing events, of course, and they were valuable. I briefed them on the kinds of things we were into, and periodically they would say, "Well, we got into something like that one time," one or the other would say. And, "This happened, but that guy's gone away," or "You don't have to deal with that anymore," or "That company doesn't run ships there anymore." But it still was experience that was valuable to me. But mostly it was fun for me to sit down with those old-timers and have them spend their time talking to me and be willing to listen and share—and they were sure willing. There was never any hesitation. I'd see them somewhere, and they'd say, "When are we going to have the next one?" So it was a great experience.

I had frequent trips. Did a lot of time, traveling time, on airplanes back and forth to Washington, because the Commandant had a couple of boards. He didn't call them boards. He called them oversight groups or something like that that. We met periodically, and I would fly in for that, or I'd be a chairman of a board of some sort, that kind of business. And he would invite the LantArea and PacArea commanders in with him and his Vice Commandant and his Chief of Staff, and we'd meet to hash out various matters.

One spin-off from my tour of duty in the Ninth Coast Guard district was that the wife of one of the aviators at Coast Guard Air Station, Traverse City, was a stewardess on the United Airlines 5:00 o'clock flight from Washington to San Francisco. Periodically I would go aboard, and there she would be. The first time I did it she said, "Sit as far front

as you can.” Then after we got off the ground she would pull back the curtain and give me the nod, and I’d go up and fly first class in some seat that hadn’t been sold. I spent many of my flights back to San Francisco in first class because Nancy had the duty that night.

I was impressed in those trips by Congressman Leon Panetta.* His congressional District was part of my 12th Coast Guard District, in Monterey and so forth. Every single time I flew back to Washington on a Monday or maybe a Sunday night there would be Congressman Panetta, and I don’t remember the class airplanes but they had two outside rows and then a row of five seats in the center. The Congressman would be in one of the center groups, and he would have three seats and the tables would be down and he would have papers spread all over them. And he never ate, he never drank. He just worked all the way to Washington..

I would travel in uniform, and he would recognize me. So we got to talk to each other until it was time to go, or periodically he’d get up to go to the head and he’d swing by and say, “Come on back and let’s have a chat,” and we’d stand in the back of the plane and talk. Wonderful guy, a wonderful guy. His wife headed up the office in Monterey, and she didn’t hesitate to call, and I didn’t hesitate to call her if there was something that we needed help on or whatever. I was really pleased that the country got to look at him in another vein while he was the chief of staff in the White House, because he’s a world-class individual as far as I’m concerned.

Paul Stillwell: One thing that struck me from watching him on TV is that he usually answered questions more directly than most politicians.

Admiral Gracey: Yes. He was very direct, but he didn’t beat you over the head. I mean, if he had a complaint from one of his constituents, his wife would usually call up with it, or you would get a letter from him, or he on occasion would call himself. And we’d get him the answers. He knew we were going to give him good answers and straight answers, and he just never embarrassed us. He never threw his weight around. We all knew it was there, and my stance with my people had always been—for all members of Congress—

* Leon E. Panetta, a Democrat from California, served in the House of Representatives from 3 January 1977 until his resignation 22 January 1993. He was subsequently director, Office of Management and Budget, January 1993 to July 1994, and chief of staff to President Bill Clinton, 1994-1996.

“Hey, a Congressman is not there to get rich. He’s there to serve his people, and if he’s got a problem we’re going to help him. And we’re going to give him answers. We don’t have to knuckle under. We don’t have to say ‘Yes’ if we don’t mean to say ‘Yes.’ We just tell him ‘No, but here’s why.’ Or give him some kind of an answer that he can give his constituents, because that’s what he needs to do. Or if they’ve got a point, well, okay, they’ve got a point and we’re wrong and we’ll fix it.”

I had used that approach with all the command jobs where I could do that sort of thing. Early in my second tour at CG Headquarters, I’d gone to a dinner that the Secretary of Transportation Volpe held, and the speaker was an official on the White House staff at the time.* I don’t remember his name. He wasn’t White House Chief of Staff. It’s not important to the message I came away with. He handled the list of who was going to see the President. And his pitch was, “U.S. Congressmen got there the hard way. They stayed there the hard way. They have to get reelected every two years. My feeling is if they need something, they’re going to get to go to the head of the list as far as getting them in or getting an appointment to see the President. We feel they’ve earned it.” I thought that was interesting, and obviously I remembered it because I am telling you about it.

Paul Stillwell: The President needs their votes.

Admiral Gracey: Well, yes, he does but that wasn’t the thrust of what he was saying. It wasn’t a bad idea either, of course, and I’m sure that was there. I mean, none of us were so naïve that we didn’t recognize that politics is a two-way street, but he didn’t say Republican congressmen in it. He said, “They all do, and they all ought to have the right time of day.” We didn’t get into the wrangling over certain issues, whatever the issues were at the time. But it’s an important lesson, and we did it. It’s just my way of doing business anyway, so it was not a problem.

Among other jobs I had out there in San Francisco was Regional Emergency Transportation Coordinator, otherwise known as RETCO, for Federal Region 9, which is California, Arizona, Nevada, and Hawaii. The job was to prepare for transportation emergencies, particularly among all those to be prepared for when the nuclear bomb drops.

* John A. Volpe served as Secretary of Transportation from 22 January 1969 to 1 February 1973.

I thought a more likely event was going to be an earthquake. And if it was a major earthquake, probably there would be differences from a nuclear bomb, but it was going to be similarly devastating in terms of transportation if you had a major one that knocked down bridges and highways and so forth as later occurred. I found that there were no plans, no drills. There was a so-called “Earthquake Plan,” but nobody really talked about it. Nobody ever did anything about it, and it really was totally inadequate.

Paul Stillwell: This was before there was a FEMA.*

Admiral Gracey: No, there was a FEMA man we did business with. FEMA was around, but they were concentrating on the bomb and day-to-day kinds of emergencies. I wanted people to recognize that, hey, someday there’s going to be an earthquake and we’ll have to cope with it. I was concerned about the lack of planning in the state, in San Francisco, etc. We had set up a planning group. We had an organization called the National Defense Executive Reserve. These were transportation company officials who participated in this program, and I can’t tell you who appoints them to that, except I had on my staff a civilian transportation wizard, former professor at University of San Francisco named J. Monroe Sullivan, who was a real pro in all this. Our job was to gather these people together and get them thinking about the bomb drop and what to do after it, vis-à-vis transportation needed to cope and ensure survival.

But also let’s now talk about the earthquake. And so we set up this group. We met regularly. We got to the city. We got to FEMA. We set up exercises. We worked out arrangements. We had commercial aircraft located as predesignated standby that would be diverted to whatever was necessary to replenish. We had alternate transportation arrangements, things to move by water. We had barges and vessels that could be diverted to getting things in. One of the important things to do if you’ve got a city devastated by an earthquake, life has to go on, businesses have to run. You’ve got to not only get food into the businesses. You’ve got to get money to the businesses—to the banks and to the grocery stores—so they can make change, so business can go on.

* FEMA—Federal Emergency Management Agency.

One of the knottiest problems we had was how to move cash around town and how to get it in and out of town if all the bridges are down, the highways are knocked down and you've got major kind of problems. I've already belabored that, and I won't do it any more, but that went on for the full time I was there. We ultimately had a good plan, and we got FEMA involved with it. We had a couple of exercises, and they were really quite successful, but as in all exercises you learn those things that you had overlooked or lessons learned. You say, "Yeah, that was a great idea, but it won't work."

At one point I got my own staff together, and then I got the planning group together and delivered several times this same message: "Super plans are wonderful things. They're no damned good if you can't do them, or, if you can do them, it's still no good if it's going to take you forever to get them down on paper and out in the street and into practice. Give me a "half-super plan" that I can do and I can do next week, and I can publish tomorrow. Then we'll work on making it more super than we think it is now."

Paul Stillwell: And the rehearsals can help refine it.

Admiral Gracey: Of course. But one of the hardest points to get across I found, and I found this over and over—and I'll probably talk about it again—is that old saying, "Perfection is the enemy of good enough." That's a quotation that you know. An example I would use goes like this: "Come on, people. We have a project that requires moving 15 bricks 100 yards. All we need is four wheels, two axles, two boards, and a rope. Load the bricks on. We don't even need the rope. We can push them, but load the bricks on, hang onto the rope, and we'll pull it. We do *not* need a Loran-navigated, automated, air-conditioned 18-wheeler that can climb up Mount Everest and all that. We don't need that for this job. Don't give me all that unnecessary-to-the-job stuff. Give me something I can buy and I can get now. Let's go." Gosh, that was hard to get across.

It was viewed a sign of failure if you didn't use all the technology that was available. And this was not just in PacArea. It was true at Coast Guard Headquarters, had been true earlier. It was not something new to me. It's staffers, maybe the engineers and the ops guys. They were the classic opponents in this. Two different staff people in different sections with different responsibilities would disagree on how something should

be done. Both had good ideas. They just couldn't agree to let one or the other go—and they would wrestle it to death and never go anywhere with it.

I tried to press the idea, “Recognize when you are at that point. I promise you, nobody up the line is going to look on you badly if you say, ‘We just can't work this out. We've got two good ideas. We can't resolve it.’ Kick it up to your bosses, let them try. And if they can't do it then there is one boss who can, who must, and that's me—the District Commander, the Commandant—or whatever I was.” Well, anyway, you get the idea that that was a hard thing to get across—I didn't want things that I didn't need to get involved in. I didn't want to get involved in everything, but there were some things that only the boss can decide, so kick it up there. I never fully succeeded on that anyplace I was, including CG Headquarters, because there's always a reluctance that that means to the junior person that he or she has failed. I never felt that. If I had tasked it properly and thought it out and I simply couldn't work out with somebody else how to make it go, then I wasn't getting paid for making the big decision. I could make the big recommendation and make sure the boss had what he needed to make a decision and then let him do it.

Paul Stillwell: Was the plan used when the earthquake came in 1989?*

Admiral Gracey: Believe it or not, it was. Thank you for asking that. I meant to say that. On that fateful night I was watching the baseball game on TV, so I saw the bridge with cars falling off and all of that sort of thing and the stuff falling down in Alameda, the overhead highway and the fires down in the Marina District. I was pleased to see what I could of the responses. The events we had talked about were all in there. It never got to the extent of the worst disaster we had talked about but, yeah, a lot of factors that we built in were there. And I said, “Hey, how about that? Look at that.”

In fact, I called up a couple of the old San Francisco teammates. I called up Monroe Sullivan and said, “Not bad, Fella.”

* On 17 October 1989, a magnitude 7.1 earthquake hit the San Francisco Bay Area just before the third game of the World Series at Candlestick Park; it was the worst earthquake since 1906. The tremor collapsed a section of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge. Damage was estimated at almost three billion dollars in San Francisco, which was approximately one-half of the total damage figure for the entire earthquake zone.

I talked about Congressman Clausen from Northern California and the fisheries flap we had. He was also interested when we had an extended problem in the city of Eureka, because we had a buoy tender assigned there. We couldn't get a place to moor it. For some reason or other, space at the pier we were using had been lost to us. That went on and on and on and on, and meanwhile the crew was hung up. The ship was in San Francisco, and the families were in Eureka. Congressman Clausen wanted to know what we were doing about the pier, and we wanted to know what was going on with the pier. After a long struggle trying to get the problem solved, I finally said one day, "You know, we've got to fish or cut bait here. This has gone on much too long. We're going to take the ship out of your town unless the mooring situation gets resolved." The problem was made worse because, in the meantime *Blackthorn* was sunk in that awful collision with its terrible loss of Coast Guard lives.*

Paul Stillwell: Was that the one around Tampa?

Admiral Gracey: That's right, Tampa Bay. Besides the human disaster of the whole thing, it meant the Coast Guard was short a buoy tender. So are we going to move *Clover* down to replace her. We had just sold another one to some foreign government. Were we going to buy it back? We had an extended hassle about that. The Congressman was interested in that sort of thing because he would hear from the various crew members' families, and so would I. We finally got it all worked out. We finally decided that we would buy back the *Citrus*, and *Clover* would get fixed up. We couldn't get a medium endurance cutter into Eureka, so they finally worked out an arrangement where we would have a pier. It turned out that not too long after that was decided we decommissioned *Clover*. Anyway, there was indeed congressman involvement.

That part of the world is an area of interesting kinds of things happening, as I said before. There's a place over on the opposite side of the bay called Waldo Point. It's in Sausalito. At Waldo Point there was a collection of boat people. They had barges, and

* On the evening of 28 January 1980 the buoy tender *Blackthorn* (WLB-391) collided with the commercial tanker *Capricorn* just outside Sunshine Skyway Bridge at the mouth of Tampa Bay. The *Blackthorn* sank as a result of the collision, and 23 Coast Guardsmen died. For details, see Ed Gilbert, "Anatomy of Two Collisions," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, October 1980, pages 132-136.

they had built houses on them, and they lived there. But the Corps of Engineers had decided they had to come out of there, because they were going to dredge. They needed to dredge the access. They had a riot over this the year before I got there—literally a riot. There were proposals and decisions, and this went on over several months. The question was, “Are we going to get involved in the enforcement? Are we going to be armed and get in and stop the riots if they recurred?” And we made some decisions that, no, that was not our baby. That was essentially a shore situation, and it wasn’t a matter of marine safety. We would be supportive of the Corps, but we were not going to take a police action in that kind of a situation. So things like that kept coming up in different parts of California.

Coast Guard Barque *Eagle* did a West Coast swing. She came into San Francisco and was a smash hit, of course, because *Eagle* didn’t get out to that part of the world very often. They had to fly the cadets back and forth to the East Coast to make the summer schedule work. On the day *Eagle* arrived in San Francisco, they were getting ready to give me arrival honors when I went aboard. Part of it involved flying my flag, and there was a young man way up at the top of the mainmast at the truck where he was rigging my flag. They didn’t normally have a flag they could break on the yardarm, so he was going to break it from the masthead as soon as I came aboard. We were standing on the dock, and this little old lady said to me, “What is that young man doing way up there? That’s dangerous up there. He’s got a flag in his hands.” I explained to her about that and what the flag was for.

She said, “What awful person would require such a thing of that young man?”

I said, “It is me, Ma’am. I didn’t require it, but it’s tradition and that’s the way it’s done, and the captain of the ship decided that was the place he was going to do it. When I go aboard, you watch. You’ll see that flag pop away from what he’s holding.”

The next night they had a reception aboard, and some of the cadets had flown in the day before, and some had flown in that day. We were talking to one of the young people that had flown in the day before, and he said he really felt sorry for the other guys “because they are at a great disadvantage.” When I asked why, he said, “Because we’ve been here 24 hours. We know the ropes.” [Laughter]

I said, “Right on, but don’t be too tough on them, because there may be a couple of ropes you haven’t found yet.”

Paul Stillwell: Well, you know what the first Coastguardsmen said to the second when he came aboard ship. He said, “It wasn’t like this in the old Guard.” [Laughter]

Admiral Gracey: That’s right. Yeah, it’s always different, and I’m guilty of that just like everybody else is. Somewhere in here the city of San Francisco was so pleased about *Eagle* coming and my helping with *Christian Radich* coming that they gave me a City of San Francisco Honor Medal, which was very nice of them.

Our patrol boats were 82-footers and 95-footers, and they were doing drug patrols offshore. They were trying to head off people coming into shore from outside the 12-mile limit. We were using an awful lot of patrol time just running back and forth between Base, San Francisco and the patrol areas. They would go out and take a day to get to their area. And they would patrol two days, and then come back in, because we had them all based in San Francisco except for those up in Northern California. So we spent a lot of time on rearranging their patrols, putting them into operating areas, changing their homeports so they would be home-ported in smaller ports, and they would be more accessible to their operating zone.

I felt very strongly in a number of areas that we really put hardships on the troops, just because of the nature of the standby times we imposed. We had them on six-hour standby, but when we analyzed how they were being used we found, there was no way we needed six-hour availability except under certain situations, so we changed it to 12. There were a number of kinds of things I thought we could do to take better care of the troops and still get the job done—often better.

Paul Stillwell: Did you have any measure of effectiveness of those drug patrols?

Admiral Gracey: They weren’t very effective at all. In fact, after a while we essentially knocked them off and relied on overflight patrols, or we did them on random basis. We figured that the “bad guys” had worked out when we were going to be out there. It was a real hit-or-miss deal. You just had to luck into somebody that was coming, but if they knew you were out there, they weren’t going to come in. We just decided it really wasn’t

paying off, and we were beating our crews to death. Better to save them for their rescue work or an intelligence-specific case. There was an occasional patrol just to keep the druggies honest. But if we did spot somebody out there, or if a helicopter did, a patrol boat tied up at the dock at the foot of Yerba Buena Island couldn't get out there fast enough to do any good. Better they should be at Half Moon Bay and Noyo River and some of those places. So we did make that arrangement. Took some time. It always takes time to change homeports. You have problems with people and families to work out. Not something you want to do very often—and unless there is a darned good reason. We had one, and it came out okay.

There was a suggestion one time about putting our 82-footers out in Hawaii and swapping them with their 95-footers. There were a number of problems with that. Guam, for example, felt they really needed a 95-footer because of the longer-range capability. Problem with having women in the crew. If you had a woman commanding officer on an 82-footer she's going to share the space with the XO. That wasn't going to work. On the 82s they had a joint cabin space. On 95s the XO and the CO each had their own space, so you could work that.

In fact, the first woman to command a Coast Guard Cutter was a woman from San Francisco, Beverly Kelly, who went out and took over a 95-footer in Maui.* That's an interesting story in itself. Randy and I went out to visit her ship on one of our swings to Hawaii. We wanted to see how things were going with a mixed crew on a small ship. As was my style, I didn't inspect the crew. We've got people to inspect. I could look at them and see whether they were squared away or not, but I wanted to talk to them, and I wanted them to talk to me. That was harder if I had just done a proper personal inspection. In the course of our arrival and talking with the crew, I could tell that there was an interesting relationship between the Skipper and her XPO. Lieutenant (j.g.), Kelly was pretty salty; she'd grown up sailing with her father. Her Executive Petty Officer was really a crusty hard-bitten chief boatswain's mate. So after I talked to the troops, I asked if we could go down to the cabin and talk, the four of us, Randy and I and Kelly and the XPO. I said, "How's it going, Chief?"

* On 1 April 1979 Lieutenant (junior grade) Beverly Kelly became the first woman to command a Coast Guard cutter when she became skipper of the 95-foot patrol boat *Cape Newagen* (WPB-95318), based in Hawaii.

He looked at the captain, and he said, “Well, sir, we weren’t quite sure when we heard who our commanding officer was going to be. And she hadn’t been here very many days before we got a rescue call. It was a bad night. And we went out. And a helicopter came out to help. “I mean, it was *really* a bad night. We were getting our brains beat out. And I thought, ‘Oh, boy.’ And then the helicopter checked in. Admiral, would you believe it? There was a woman flying the helicopter. I thought we were all going to die.” [Laughter]

But I knew everything was okay between them, because Captain Kelly looked at him with a great twinkle in her eye and said, “But we did it, didn’t we, Chief?”

He said, “You bet your buttons we did it. And we did it well.” He said, “We’ve been doing it ever since.” It was great, really great to see. And the crew was very comfortable with the whole business of who their CO was and all that.

After this meeting I asked her privately how she felt about it. She said, “Well, obviously it’s a wonderful experience. I wasn’t worried about my ability to run the boat. You know, I’ve been doing that since I was four years old. I was concerned about whether the crew would accept me.”

I said, “It looks like they have.”

She said, “Yeah, they’ve made me very comfortable.”

Of course, I said, “Well, that’s a great compliment to you, Captain. They didn’t have to do that. And your relationship with your XPO is wonderful to watch.”

She said, “We have a lot of fun. We complement each other very nicely, and the crew knows that.” And, you know, it was clear. I mean, I could tell from talking to the crew that we didn’t have much to worry about. Great situation.

Paul Stillwell: One other point on the drug patrols. While you were doing them, there was no way to measure the deterrent effect that they might have had.

Admiral Gracey: Of course, of course. And that was one of the things we thought about. It’s why we didn’t just stop. We just kept visible offshore, and we were visible with helicopter patrols. But you’re exactly right—there’s no way to measure deterrent

realistically. And there was other stuff going on too. The idea was to find a way to get the most bang for the buck without beating your troops to death.

Speaking of which, in the course of this there was a young lieutenant (junior grade) named Doug Fluddy, who was topnotch.* I had him pegged to be a future Commandant of the Coast Guard or something great because of a lot of factors. He was tall, good-looking, sharp, smart, skilled, a pro in every sense of the word. He was a skipper of one of the 95-footers. One night they were out on a case, and it was really bad weather. He got thrown out of his bunk and hit his head on something and wound up with seizures. He was hospitalized and came back, but he had to be retired early because he kept having those blasted seizures. He couldn't go to sea. He and his wife were wonderful people. He went back to Connecticut and was harbormaster in a small marina there for a while and ultimately died at a very early age. Really sad story. Broke me up, because I had so much respect for that guy and his wife. But it happens.

Paul Stillwell: Fate can be cruel.

Admiral Gracey: It can. It can. I've talked a little bit about the kinds of messages I was trying to send to the folks in the staff. When you've got a combined Area and District command, you've got two distinct commands, each with separate functions, one oversight and one not. You try to keep the Area out of the District's business and so forth. We talked about that the last time. But, on the other hand, they've got to be in it a little bit. But when they're right in the same building right down the same hall—

Paul Stillwell: The temptation is there.

Admiral Gracey: Oh, yeah. Of course, we had inspections, and I've talked about what I called my "Inspection Philosophy:" assume they all want to do it right and do it well and all that. But one of the things I found that we really weren't doing well was to trust the commanding officers and the officers-in-charge of the smaller units enough. We were giving them too many specifics about things to do, and in the process we were sending

* Lieutenant (junior grade) Douglas E. Fluddy, USCG. He retired in 1981 as a lieutenant.

negative signals. The negative signal was, “Look, we expect you’re going to screw up, so we’re going to help you go straight. We’re going to tell you how not to screw up.”

I said, “I don’t want you to do that. I don’t want to send that message. I want you to send a message that, ‘You guys, you’re great and you’re doing a great job. You work this one out. If you come up against something you can’t handle, let us know.’”

Paul Stillwell: Too much oversight discourages initiative also.

Admiral Gracey: Exactly, exactly.

In that regard one of the things I found out something about PacArea, as opposed to LantArea. The Atlantic Area encompassed a sizable percentage of the Coast Guard. It was all the Eastern Seaboard and Gulf States. In terms of numbers of CG people assigned, Pacific Area was pretty slim. It had Alaska and Hawaii and the West Coast and dribbles out spread around the Pacific Ocean, but really very small numbers of people and units. The Pacific Area commander had always been junior to the Atlantic Area commander. Part of that was because New York was where the maritime industry management was concentrated. I never tracked back to know whether it had always been that way, but everybody thought of LantArea as the big guy and PacArea as a lesser light. San Francisco had an Area Office, but it was not as big as New York’s.

The net effect of that was that I found that we had a junior-partner syndrome, that our guys, the people on the PacArea staff given a task, given something we wanted to accomplish, would first go to the Atlantic Area staff and ask them what they thought. Then they would go to the CG Headquarters people at their working level in the various Offices and ask them what they thought and ask them for directions and for help. You won’t be surprised when I tell you I didn’t like that at all. I said, firmly, “No, don’t do that. Do it here. We can think. We’re good. We know how to do this. Put together an idea. Put together the plan. *Then* we will go to headquarters and tell them, ‘This is what we’re going to do.’ Send a copy for information to LantArea just so we can cut them in. We don’t want to cut them out. They might need our help. Just tell them, ‘This is what we’re doing. We thought you might be interested.’ Don’t say, ‘Is it all right with you guys

if we do this?’ No.” Well, that was hard. That was *really* hard to sell. I was trying to put to bed a long- time embedded way of doing business.

Paul Stillwell: It’s a change in culture.

Admiral Gracey: I suppose. Whatever. I don’t want to beat it to death, but it was ongoing.

Paul Stillwell: Well, did you feel you succeeded in changing that mind-set?

Admiral Gracey: Yeah, I did with a lot of pieces. You know, I worked at it for three years. Fortunately, I was sent out there for two, and then I was supposed to be in New York for two, but we shifted and I had three and one. I wouldn’t have traded that for anything. I had three years in Cleveland too. I was lucky with that because in your first year of a district command you’re getting acquainted. You’re getting to know the people in the maritime industry and the ones you work with, other government agencies, local military, all that, and the public. And you’re getting to know your own people and their abilities. Second year, okay, now you’re starting to really put together some things. Third year you got it done. You’re a known quantity. If you’ve been successful, you know, the word “hero” comes to mind. That’s not right, but you’re respected amongst the maritime industry and all the people and they look for ways they can help you, they look for you to help them. And so the door is open. You can accomplish things.

I don’t think it would be a good idea to stay four years. I think it would get stale. And some of it got stale about the third time you did the same thing, went to the same social event or spoke to the same group, for example. They needed to see some new blood and new faces. But three years was great, and I had three years in San Francisco. So I did manage to change some of the mind-set. But, of course, you have new personalities, and some of them are never going to understand, never going to get the idea. I kept having to intercede.

I had an open-door policy, which really made both the PacArea and the 12th District staffs very nervous. Because no matter how many times I said to them, as I did in

my opening address to them practically the first day there, “I’m going to have an open door. I believe in the chain of command. Don’t worry. But there will be some things where people will think there’s not anybody but me to whom they can say what they feel they need to say or ask. We’re never going to hear about it if they don’t come say it to me, and then we can fix it. We can make it better, or I can say to them, ‘Look, that’s not right. This is the way it’s going to be.’ And they can go away, and it’s my job to make them comfortable with what we’re doing. But trust me.”

Well, they didn’t totally trust me, but I think I built it so they were aware. I backed their point of view if it was legitimate. If not, we got together, and I explained, and we worked things out. For example, one case I remember that we had a young seaman apprentice on a buoy tender moored down at Base, YBI, and he was a perennial absentee. So he took his lumps. His skipper sent him to the brig. Gave him a special court, whatever it was. Did all of that. Somewhere along the way, the bell rang, and this young man really turned around. And I had been talking to groups. I didn’t use the prodigal-son routine, but I said, “Look, if you’ve got a problem, okay, fix it, and you’re going to be okay.”

Here was a young man who had really done that, and what he wanted to do was go to HM School to be a corpsman.* That was one of the reasons he claimed he had been absentee, because he wasn’t doing anything he thought was productive. He proved himself over a matter of several months, and the skipper said to me, “I think we ought to let him go to school.”

So I said, “Good enough for me,” and we arranged for him to get to the Corpsman School at the CG Academy.

He hadn’t been gone very long before he showed up back in San Francisco. “What’s he doing here?”

“Well, they threw him out of the school, but we don’t know why and we can’t find out why.” We couldn’t find out why they’d thrown him out. Nobody seemed to know, so I called up a chief petty officer at the HM School that I’d known from someplace else. But he wasn’t there. So I talked to his chief warrant officer boss, and he said, “We sent him

* A hospital corpsman is an enlisted person in the medical department.

back because he's a no-goodnik with a bad record. What are you going to do? If you send people like that here, what about the good guys?"

I said, "You don't understand. He wouldn't be there if he were a bad guy. *Now* he is one of the good guys. That's the point we're trying to make. Once a bad guy, not always a bad guy. You can fix it. And we really want this guy to go to the class." The chief warrant officer could hardly be civil. This was not something he wanted to do.

A couple of days later the chief that I had originally called called me back. He said, "Mr. So-and-So said, 'What in the hell is a vice admiral doing wasting his time on a lousy seaman apprentice?'" [Laughter]

I won't tell you what I said in response, but I was absolutely appalled. Absolutely appalled. And obviously I'm remembering it. So I called the Chief, Office of Personnel at CGHQ and we had some changes made—like *right now*. This was bad news. I don't know whatever happened to those guys in New London, and I don't really want to know. I wasn't out to get them. It's just this attitude I thought was awful. I kept fighting that kind of thing.

I would be interceding, but I found out that I could fix things. I could fix things between parts of the shipping industry and the port industry. Just some intercession if you could do it in a way so neither party would think you were against them. In this case I don't think I succeeded in that at the Corpsman School—at least not with those two guys. But with parts of the industry and different companies and ports I think I was able to do that. And more often than not I succeeded within the Coast Guard too.

Paul Stillwell: What was the outcome with the seaman apprentice?

Admiral Gracey: He went back to school, graduated with honors, became a top-notch corpsman. I don't know where he is today, and I don't know how long that lasted. When he left to go to the first time, the crew gave him a rousing sendoff. They loved this guy. They were so happy that he had turned himself around. They wanted him to succeed, and when he got sent back, the crew of this buoy tender was torn up. The captain was a real human being that I had worked with over the years, so I knew that Tim would take care of it. Anyway, in the end it came out good.

One of the things we had to make sure the maritime industry understood was that we wanted to help, but we weren't going to be what they would consider totally accommodating. My tack was: "You tell us your problems with our policies, and we'll talk about them, and we'll fix them if they're wrong. If they're not wrong, then we hope you'll understand we'll put them in a shape you can live with."

One problem went on for a long time. There was a great concern on the part of the California Coastal Commission and other environmentalists and us about the fact that the shipping lanes along the West Coast from San Francisco south tended to go through areas of oil drilling. Now, there were rules about how close—I mean, these were a couple of miles off. They didn't run right next to a drilling rig, but nonetheless they were there, and you get fog and bad weather. It was an ongoing, running kind of a discussion that went on for a couple of the years I was there about how to move the shipping lanes so they weren't going through the high-risk areas. Move them outside. Well, that was going to be extra distance to travel, and, of course, distance is miles and miles are money for a ship.

Paul Stillwell: Both extra time and extra fuel.

Admiral Gracey: Exactly. So we set up a series of meetings with the industry where we talked this thing through and brought in experts. We tried out different ideas, and it took some time before they would even talk to us about it. They didn't want to hear about it. But we gradually managed to convince them that we were concerned, that we were interested in their well-being, and we had some alternatives that we thought they could live with. Ultimately what we did was to set up the diversion of shipping lanes only in areas where there was drilling. They had a whole stretch of the West Coast where there was nothing going on, and there was really no point in making them adhere to the lanes there. So we made some changes. I don't remember all the details, but ultimately it was a "solution" that we worked out.

I think I talked some about having regular conferences with the four other District Commanders in PacArea. We rotated locations, meeting in Long Beach, Seattle, Juneau, Honolulu, and San Francisco in turn. It gave all a chance to see firsthand the people and facilities of the others and to meet some of the government and industry people the host

district commander dealt with. We would bring the wives in, too, because we were dealing with Coast Guard families. One year it was the 17th District's turn to host. We did Sitka and Juneau and out to Kodiak. On the way back from Kodiak I wanted to stop in Yakutat, because I had been the commanding officer of the Loran A station there 25 years earlier as a lieutenant jaygee. The station wasn't long for this world, because Loran C was coming at that point or it was starting to be here. But they were still on the air at Ocean Cape, about 10 miles outside of Yakutat.

When I had gone there in 1953, I had gotten there three months before my wife and kids did. I got there in May. Randy and the kids came in October. I told Randy about the wild strawberries that grew in the summer out between the station Quonsets and the beach. They were wonderful big tasty wild strawberries. They were yellow and looked ugly, but they were great, and she said, "Yeah, right." She came after all that and left the following year before they were out. So she never did see any of this stuff, the flowers, the fireweed, the berries, all that stuff. They were beautiful. I had been telling the Admirals and their ladies about that and about what it was like to be a commanding officer of a station in Alaska when it was still the Territory of Alaska—not a state.

So 25 years later I said to the 17th District Commander in Alaska, "Look, I want you to schedule this meeting when the wild strawberries are in bloom in Yakutat. If we're going there to visit, we might as well visit when there's wild strawberries so I can make an honest man of myself and show everybody this." So he did and we wound up in Yakutat on a very rainy day. Piled into a truck at the airport and drove "downtown" first. There was one road in town, and I was amazed because they'd since paved it. In my day it was dirt. But it was straight as an arrow. Ran for four miles, and that was not only a directional thing but it was so that aircraft could land on it. This was all wartime building. And there was a tumbledown shack sitting up on the edge of the cliff. That had been our palace. We looked at that, then we went into town.

There was the general store, and I said, "You guys really need to go into this general store. It's been 25 years ago, but I bet it hasn't changed very much." And so everybody was in wandering around looking around. Around the corner of this pile of beer cases came this little old man. It was the guy I told about who had been the Yakutat chief of police when I was CO at Ocean Cape. He had no idea we were coming in. It wasn't in

our plan. But he looked at me, and he said, “Lieutenant, what are you doing here?”
[Laughter]

I looked at everybody, and they bowed a little bit and they shook their heads. I said, “Paul, tell them about the murder.” Well, he did in great detail.

So we got out to the station. The crew was wonderful. They had baked a cake. I mean, “Welcome Home” because Randy and I had been there before all this. And I said, “Now, come on, I’m going out and pick strawberries.” So Randy and I went outside. Well, there were the admiral and his lady out there picking strawberries in the rain. You can’t let that happen. So all the other admirals are out there with their ladies, picking strawberries in the rain.

We looked back, and the crew all had their faces pressed to the glass in the Quonset hut saying, “Look at those idiots out there picking strawberries.” [Laughter] So I explained it to them. It was wonderful visit. They weren’t all that good, but that was memorable.

In September 1978, I was invited to represent the Commandant at the Mexican national celebration called “Grito de Dolores.” The word “grito” means “shout,” and it is used for this celebration because it commemorates the event on the night of 16 September 1810 when a priest named Hidalgo rang the church bell of his mission at 2300 and shouted “Viva Mexico. Kill all the Spaniards,” or something to that effect. The result was the start of a revolution that ultimately led to the Mexico's independence from Spain. Every year—at precisely 2300 on 16 September—throughout Mexico the local mayor or governor unfurls a big flag and shouts Hidalgo's “grito” to the citizens. In Mexico City the President of Mexico appears on a balcony of the National Palace, rings the very bell that was rung by Hidalgo, and delivers the shout to the huge throng of people crammed into the central plaza below.

We were invited along with senior members of all our sea services and those of other countries to come as guests of the Mexican Navy. The other Mexican services also invited their counterparts. The U.S. group met at Randolph Air Force Base, from where we were all flown to Mexico.*

* Randolph Air Force Base is near San Antonio, Texas.

It was a marvelous event full of social events, a Navy League Ball, the Grito Ceremony itself, a trip to the pyramids, a Noche Mexicana evening, and a huge parade. We called on Ambassador Lucey.* Each couple had a Mexican Naval Officer assigned as escort. Ours was Captain (later Rear Admiral) Ghandi Zilli, a graduate of our Naval War College in Newport. At social events Mrs. Zilli joined us. Everywhere we traveled we were in a car with armed guards, and all intersections were controlled by the military.

On the night of Grito we were individually presented to President Portillo in his offices.† After that meeting we moved to balconies of the National Palace adjoining the President's and watched and listened with awe as he rang the bell and cried out, "Compatriots, long live the heroes of the Independence." He then called each name in order: "Hidalgo," followed by "VIVA" roared by over a million people in that plaza. Then "Morales" and another roar of "VIVA." After "Allende" and "VIVA" the President shouted "VIVA Mexico" three times. That was followed by a roar that made the previous ones sound like whispers and fireworks erupting from the roofs of every building around the darkened plaza and from around the floodlit flagpole in the middle. Only the National Cathedral stood quiet.

It was amazing. We stood on the balcony as flaming debris crashed at our feet—and, of course, into the crowd below. I wondered—hoped—they were wearing asbestos sombreros. Awesome.

The parade the next day consisted of marvelous horsemanship and Mexican dress and went on and on. For the first time in a long time the armed forces were allowed to come to the city and parade. We were told that before that there was concern about rebellion if all were in the city. The same was true of military aircraft, HU-16s and helos, flying above constantly, though that was lessened in effect when our Assistant Commandant for Air of the Marine Corps pointed out to me that it was the same 12 airplanes coming around and around.

I didn't get a chance to go back another year. After my description of the meaning of the thing, Jack Hayes went himself. I think the practice of inviting foreign military was discontinued later. I understand, too, that we of the sea services received much more

* Patrick J. Lucey was U.S. Ambassador to Mexico from 19 July 1977 to 31 October 1979.

† President José López Portillo.

gracious hosting than did the Army and Air Force. Our enthusiasm on the plane going back to Texas was not matched by their feelings.

The Coast Guard Auxiliary was a big factor in that 12th CG District part of the world. I had been talking about our “One Family.” The Coast Guard had been merged into “One Family,” and I really believed in that. We had different words for it, but “Family” was the word I used—that we were all in the Coast Guard, the civilians, the Auxiliary. I said, “We’re four parts of the Coast Guard, those of us who wear a uniform full time for pay, those of us who wear a uniform part time for pay (namely the Reservists), those who wear uniforms and don’t get paid, the Auxiliary, and those who don’t wear uniforms at all and get paid. And we’re all in the Coast Guard Family.”

I really worked with the Auxiliary, and they were very receptive, and they were a very active group. They had what they called Admiral’s Day at CG Station, Rio Vista, which was up the Sacramento River above the Bay on the way to Sacramento. The Auxiliarists proudly said they had Admiral’s Day in September because it never rained. They would have a marine parade of Auxiliary vessels going by. An 82-footer from San Francisco would be there. We’d stand on her deck, and I would take the review.

The first time we went it poured rain. I mean to tell you, they said they had it because it didn’t rain. It rained. And all I had was a light jacket. Our photographer was there, a first class petty officer, and he had no protection. So I put my jacket on him. I said, “Here, Mario, put this on.” So he was standing there with his three-star jacket on, and more people were taking pictures of him than me; they hadn’t seen a three-star photographer before. Anyway, we had a wonderful time with it.

The following year Admiral’s Day was an absolutely gorgeous day, no rain at all. Randy and I took raincoats and umbrellas. [Laughter] We waited around the corner of the station building until everybody was in place and waiting for us. We were a few minutes late, and then we came around the corner. There was a long gangway that went from the top of the levee down to where the 82-footer was. They were all gathered down there waiting, looking for us to arrive, and we came around the corner. We had umbrellas up and wore our raincoats as we walked. Wonderful time. They had an over-the-bottom race every year too. It rained for that. I just accused them of Admiral abuse.

The 12th District Auxiliarists had a winter meeting in Salt Lake City every year. There was a bunch of Auxiliarists up there that worked on the Flaming Gorge and Salt Lake and all of that, and so we would have a training meeting. We would take a C-130 load of trainers and 12th District staffers to go over to make it a business working meeting. And of course, they always had their Awards Dinner and that sort of thing. Salt Lake was dry, bring your own, but the Auxiliarists managed to have a long cocktail party before the dinner. Then they managed to arrange with somebody to have wine during dinner. This thing went on and on and on and on. And in the next ballroom over from us, separated by a collapsible partition, was a rock band playing very loudly for a dance over there.

At 11:15 at night I was introduced to make the featured speech. They'd given out awards for everything under the sun, and they'd been drinking wine, it was late at night, and they'd been going since dawn. I said to Randy, "If I can get these guys tonight, I can get anybody." But we had a wonderful time, and we managed to get a few of them. I again accused them of Admiral abuse, but it was fun, and they were great workers and they did wonderful work for the Coast Guard. So I've always been high on the Coast Guard Auxiliary. They don't believe it right now, because I'm the one that put in place the idea of "non-emergency SAR." Let the private guy do the towing when there is clearly no risk to life. That was to save the Coast Guard from being privatized by the Reagan administration, but I'll talk about that when we get to my Commandant years.

There was a California State Senator who was big on air emission standards for ships. He was really concerned about air quality. His name was Senator Milton Marks, wonderful guy. He lived in San Francisco. I went to all his hearings, and he had in mind that I was going to be his buttress, because I was going to stand up for emission standards. I said, "I agree. I'm a water quality man, Senator, and I agree on the need for air quality, but there is a significant problem. If California is the only state that has a law like the one you want to pass, then California is going to take it right on the head when it comes to where ships go to do their business. I think you're going to really hurt the ports and one thing and another." Well, bless his heart, he accepted that and invited me back to give my views time and time again. But he still pressed to have the standards put in place. That went on for a long time, and I got involved in that kind of thing a lot.

The San Francisco Chamber of Commerce decided that I should be a member. It was me they were after. And they could not understand when I said, “I am supposed to be a proponent for all the ports in all the Bay Area. I cannot be on the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce when I’ve got Oakland, Richmond, all the different ports, even Sacramento. I can’t do that.” They were after me for two and a half years. I never did do it, and they never did seem to understand. Once they found out I was willing to participate in various events, they backed off a bit, but they really wanted my name—and especially my job title and “USCG”—on their member list

There was a considerable to-do in the nation at that time about military pay, and well there might have been. People were saying that the reason people were getting out of the services was because of military pay. I thought there was more to it than that. And I had a perfect example right in San Francisco, where we had four high endurance cutters home-ported. Identical ships, they had identical long and difficult patrols, they all did Alaska Patrol, they all did fleet exercises, they all did refresher training, they all had bashed-up homeport periods. The whole nine yards, everything was the same. Two of them had 70% re-up rates. Two of them had 20% re-up rates, and, of course, the answer to me clearly was that it was a matter of leadership. It’s how the people feel about what they’re doing. Yeah, they’d like to have more pay, and they should have more pay. But that’s not the only answer. Just more money isn’t the solution. Throwing money at the problem is not going to solve it.

I used that leadership situation to work another condition I wanted to broaden—namely, the matter of our women's sea assignments being restricted to smaller vessels engaged in operations of short duration. I thought it was time to get them on our high endurance cutters and become true full partners in CG ops. And we had a perfect situation in Pac Area at San Francisco to demonstrate the feasibility of the idea.

One of our ships that showed the result of good leadership was USCGC *Morgenthau*, commanded by Captain, later Rear Admiral, Joe McDonough.* Joe was not only a fine skipper with demonstrated leadership skills, but he was also the father of six daughters. I figured if anyone in the Coast Guard could run a demonstration of the feasibility of bringing the CG's women's program to full maturity by adding them to the

* Captain Joseph A. McDonough, USCG.

crews of our long-patrol ships it was Joe McDonough in *Morgenthau*. So I proposed it to Commandant Jack Hayes. He bought it and agreed to two officers and six or eight enlisted—I can't remember the exact number.

And off we went. Almost the first patrol they made was Alaska Patrol—60 days in the Gulf of Alaska enforcing fishing laws, making rescues, doing international work of one sort or another—all in some of the worst sailing conditions imaginable. I asked Captain McDonough to keep me posted with regular how-goes-it reports. It was a great success, with two totally unexpected, though not at all surprising results.

In his first feedback, Joe reported that lost time due to seasickness had gone right off the screen. Obvious—once we heard it. In the old days men who felt queasy in bad weather would turn in or slow down badly. With women aboard, none but those suffering from true motion illness were going to give in. And the women were going to have to be near death before they would let a man see them be seasick. Wonderful.

Another great effect was that on holidays at sea—Thanksgiving, etc.—morale was really bolstered by the fact of having women on the mess deck at mealtimes. It created a family-like atmosphere with men and women eating together, and Joe noted a marked improvement in how people felt on days when they were traditionally missing the homelike atmosphere.

On an unrelated topic, the Mayor of San Francisco was murdered while we were there.* Now-Senator Dianne Feinstein became the Mayor.† When she got settled in we began a long relationship, some of it stormy, some of it quite the opposite.

Did I talk about the time a chemical barge under tow broke loose and was going aground at the Golden Gate and the San Francisco Fire Chief thought that I'd done them in because he hadn't been alerted?

Paul Stillwell: I don't recall that.

* On 27 November 1978, former City Supervisor Danny White killed Mayor George Moscone and City Supervisor Harvey Milk in San Francisco City Hall.

† Dianne Feinstein, a Democrat, served as mayor of San Francisco from 4 December 1978 to 8 January 1988; she has been a member of the U.S. Senate since 10 November 1992.

Admiral Gracey: The barge that broke loose was carrying chemicals and explosives. I got called at 5:00 o'clock in the morning that this had happened. My first question was, "What way is the wind blowing?" The wind was blowing from the southwest, which was going to blow the barge right up on Point Bonita, which is on the north side of the entrance to the Golden Gate and San Francisco Bay. But any gas that got loose was not going to blow into San Francisco. It was going to blow into Marin County so I asked, "Are we working with Marin County?"

"Yes, sir, that's already done." The chemicals were in hard containers, not tanks but hard containers, so it was probably going to be all right anyway. But that went on, and after all people in the possible path to the north were alerted, we notified the San Francisco Fire Chief. He was a politician supreme—in this case a not necessarily proud word—but he worked at the negative aspect of it and went to the mayor and told her that we had really endangered the City of San Francisco and so forth.

Mayor Feinstein called me, and she wanted to know what that was all about, and I told her. She had a press conference—radio, TV and all—and I was asked to come. At it the Fire Chief said, "We weren't notified by the Coast Guard, and I didn't know about it." At the press conference he went back to his old story, and the Mayor went right along with it. I didn't accept what they said.

I felt we were being battered unfairly, so I spoke back and countered what he said—on television—and that was great press that night. And it didn't make the new Mayor very happy. I wrote to her and said I was sorry if I'd embarrassed her, but they were beating up on my Coast Guard and us. I said I wanted her to know we were never going to endanger her city. That was the last thing we wanted. So Mayor Feinstein and I had a kind of an arms-length relationship for a while. Some time later she had a group of Chinese delegates in town. At a big dinner for them one night, she called me over and introduced me as her "favorite Admiral" and one thing and another. So when I got back to our table, I said to Randy, "I think I just had a peace offering."

Paul Stillwell: Sounds like it. [Laughter]

Admiral Gracey: After that we got on famously. She came to my change of command when I left. And when I got to be the Commandant, she was one of the first people I heard from. It was great.

Paul Stillwell: She was very supportive of the Navy as well.

Admiral Gracey: Yes. Well, I think she's a good politician, and for me that's a positive word. And she's an interesting person. Seems like she's a good senator. She's nobody's soft touch. She knows what she wants and what she thinks, and she's going to stick with it. If you don't agree with her, well, you'd better have good grounds for that. And I guess we did because it worked.

Along about this time you may remember the business of the Reverend Jim Jones in Guyana.* He was out of that San Francisco area, and there was a great press to use a Coast Guard boat to distribute his ashes in the water. My answer as you might expect was, "No way. No way. We're not going to do that." But that sort of thing kept coming up. Oddball, off-the-wall kinds of situations.

Wonderful experience—I chaired a DoT Hazardous Material Committee, putting together a hazardous material plan for the city. One of the things I was concerned about was containers coming on trucks and trains—particularly to Oakland—to be loaded into containerships. Periodically we would open one to inspect it, and it would be a real nightmare. The stuff would be improperly stowed, improperly marked. It would be hazardous stuff inside and nothing to indicate it. That said to me that people loading ships with containers really had very little idea of the true nature of what they were actually carrying

Over a period of time, working with a representative from DoT in Washington D.C., we worked out a system whereby when a train or a truck was loaded with hazardous materials—hazmat—we would get a copy of the proper papers describing what was in the container. Part of the problem was that papers carried by truck drivers were useless in describing what they were hauling. They often said, in effect, "Take this box to Oakland."

* Jim Jones was leader of a religious cult known as the People's Temple in Jonestown, Guyana. In November 1978, after the killing of a visiting California Congressman focused attention on the cult, Jones led more than 900 of his people in a mass suicide.

We wanted the invoice, or manifest, or whatever would give us a heads-up as to the actual contents, so we could spot check them and their stowage before loading on the ship. When the truck arrived at the Oakland yard or at the entrance to the port, we could check with the driver or the trainman and find out what the containers were supposed to carry, what they thought they had brought. Then if there was something that had hazardous material in it, or if there was some disagreement about it, we could segregate them and look at them on a random basis—see what kind of luck we had.

Took a lot of selling, but we finally got everybody involved, although they were concerned about bottlenecks being created, and well they might be. I think the thing kind of died of its own weight after I left, but it was really moving for a while. But we did figure out a way to do some random inspections that wouldn't delay people. We could spot check, and we had a less deterring way to keep the traffic moving. The Port of Oakland agreed to give it a try, and that was where we were going to do it. Oakland was the big container port.

We moved our fleet of C-130s from San Francisco up to McClelland Air Force Base in Sacramento. We had some initial barracks problems and one thing and another, but it worked out okay. And their support facilities were better because the Air Force, of course, was flying C-130s.

I was a non-voting member of the Pacific Fisheries Management Council. They met quarterly or more often, usually in Portland, Oregon. Their job was to look at the state of fisheries in that part of the ocean. There was another Council in Alaska. They were all over the country. This was a big one because we looked at salmon and salmon fisheries and that kind of thing. They looked at all kinds of fish, but periodically as the fish got endangered they would narrow the window of time in which fishermen could fish. I was concerned about that and spoke about it quite a bit, because it led to fishermen taking chances. In that narrow window left open for them they'd go fish on days when the weather was such that they really shouldn't be out there. But they had to go, because it was their only chance to make a living. And the fishermen's wives were very concerned. I was a hero with the fishermen's wives for the stance I had taken. I wasn't a hero with the rest of the Fisheries Management Council necessarily, but it got really kind of interesting.

One time we had a closed meeting. Usually they were public, but this one was closed, because one of the things was to discuss some of these inflammatory issues. When it came time to leave, we found a pile of fishermen lying on the floor outside the door barricading it so we couldn't get out until we let them in and listened to what they had to say. [Laughter] Interesting. All right.

Randy and I started a practice of having what we called "Team" Christmas parties at our Quarters on YBI. It was a party for my aide, my driver, the Quarters Managers, and their families. Randy would cook, and I would serve. They would bring their kids too. Really got to know them well, and it was great. Later we did it in New York and in D.C. Always had a wonderful time.

The Rose Festival is a big event in Portland, Oregon, every year. They would invite a bunch of naval ships and some Coast Guard ships and politicians, and they would have a wonderful big event. On one occasion, three weeks after Mount St. Helens had her major blow, there was an aftershock, and more ash came down.* We came out of a Duke Ellington-Sarah Vaughn concert on one night of it. The streetlights outside the theater were yellow sodium lights. The ash was coming down, and it looked like you were walking into a snowstorm. It was a warm night, but you went out there and your first instinct was to turn up your coat collar and brush the snow off. Of course, it didn't melt like snow, but that's what you did when that stuff fell out of the sky. They had to make some changes in the events, including moving the parade inside the coliseum, but they survived.

One year I was crowned Sir Gold Coin as a Knight of the Rosarians. We all knelt down and got dubbed, all that sort of thing.

Paul Stillwell: I'd never heard of that word Rosarians before.

Admiral Gracey: You would have if you had been to the Festival. They're big stuff, motivators, etc. of the Festival. It's a great tradition and it's a wonderful festival. It was

* At 8:32 Sunday morning, 18 May 1980, Mount St. Helens in southwest Washington State erupted and spewed ash for the next nine hours. More than 200 acres of forest were turned into a gray, lifeless landscape.

there that I had my experience with the “Great Lakes Ice Fighter” who dove in the river a couple times “for Admiral Gracey.”

During my three years in San Francisco I had a lot of contact with celebrities, Shirley Temple Black, Kiri Te Kanawa, the opera singer, Danny Thomas, Victor Borge, Alexander Haig, the Carters, Ambassador Mansfield in Japan when I was there, and a number of others. They just seemed to be at various events where I was. Oh, I sat with Jimmy Doolittle at a USO dinner one night, a Man-of-the-Year dinner.* What a fascinating experience that was, because he was more than willing to talk about his experiences. You know, I was a three-star in the Coast Guard, and he was happy to talk about us and him, and he’s a pretty outgoing guy. It was a nice experience.

There’s a restaurant in San Francisco called the Cliff House. It was created by a Greek gentleman named Hountalas, who had run a pushcart in San Francisco at the time of or shortly after the earthquake—the San Francisco earthquake—and earned enough money to buy a restaurant.† One thing led to another, and it became one of the key spots in San Francisco. It is built right on a cliff the south side of the Golden Gate entrance to San Francisco Bay. His son, Dan Hountalas, was running The Cliff House when we were there. He encouraged people who were seated where they could see things happening in the water to tell a waiter, “There’s somebody in trouble out there.” Dan made it that you got a free appetizer if you reported anything going on outside the window that resulted in the Coast Guard coming to the rescue. [Laughter] People clamored to sit by windows.

And, bless his heart, he had what he called Coast Guard Appreciation Day. He would invite the crews of the air station and all the rescue stations around that were in range of him. And he would throw a luncheon supreme. They would have quails’ eggs and you-name-it. I mean, he did a luxury luncheon for the U.S. Coast Guard people. It was a wonderful event. Each year he would give me a stack of chits that were good for any Coast Guard man or woman and his or her other, significant other or date, whatever, for a full night on the Cliff House. I doled them out to the various commanding officers,

* On 18 April 1942, Lieutenant Colonel James H. Doolittle, USA, led a raid of 16 Army Air Forces B-25 on a bombing raid over Tokyo, Yokohama, Kobe, and Nagoya, Japan. The planes were launched from the aircraft carrier *Hornet* (CV-8). Most of the planes crash-landed in China. He eventually became a four-star Air Force general.

† At 5:15 A.M. on 18 April 1906 the city of San Francisco was hit by a massive earthquake that led to widespread damage and fires. Modern analysis estimates it registered 8.25 on the Richter scale.

and they would be for special good things that were done. I said, “Don’t degrade their value. Don’t just give them out willy-nilly.” And they didn’t, and it was a great thing. Much looked forward to.

The Public Health Service Hospital in San Francisco served us. It has since closed, of course. But we had moved a bunch of families into housing at what had been Hamilton Air Force Base in Novato, which is about 35 or 40 minutes north of San Francisco. For the families in family housing up there it was a long drive down to San Francisco to get medical care. We talked to the Public Health people and—with the blessing of the Air Force people that were left—they set up a primary care facility for families. Public Health assigned a doctor and a couple of nurses up there, and it was just where you went to get checked. If you needed hospital care, then you went from there, but you didn’t have to go to the hospital and sit around and wait for an appointment to find out your kid only had a bad cold. It was the first of a kind. Since then that sort of thing has been done all over the country, but that was the first for us. It was great that they were interested to do it. I wear a Public Health Service citation for that, and I’m very proud of it. It was really, really great, and it was a good way to take care of the families. I’m great at the word “great,” am I not?

I had a Command Enlisted Advisor, now called the Command Master Chief, I was very happy about. I selected him—a crusty old chief boatswain’s mate. He would argue with the term “old,” but he could have been 900 years old. He was crusty. He was marvelous. He was a sailor’s sailor from the get-go. This guy was the skipper of an 82-footer that was home-ported at Base, San Francisco, right at the foot of the cliff by our Quarters. Whenever he sailed he went around the point on Yerba Buena Island on which our lighthouse sat. And on the west side, the city side, he swung in, and our bedroom window was right over the cliff on that side. Whenever he came in early in the morning, he played “Semper Paratus” on his bullhorn as he went under our bedroom window. [Laughter] I used to tease him about it, but I had made the decision that he was the man I wanted to be my new Command Enlisted Advisor. I hadn’t talked to him about that. Whether he wanted it or not, I just wanted him to do it.

Paul Stillwell: What was this gent’s name?

Admiral Gracey: Master Chief Petty Officer Jack Barker. So one Saturday morning he came in at 5:30 in the morning, something like that, and there went “Semper Paratus.” I said to Randy, “This is the day,” and I went to the telephone. I called the base, and said, “When *Point Winslow* ties up you tell Master Chief Barker that I want to hear his voice on the telephone. You tell him to call me ASAP.”

Master Chief Barker called up and said, “Too early for ‘Semper Paratus,’ sir?”

I said, “Damn right it’s too early, and I’m going to fix your wagon. I’m going to fix it so you can’t play ‘Semper Paratus’ anymore, because I’m going to pull you off that boat.”

He said, “Oh, no.”

I said, “Yes, you’re going to be my Command Enlisted Advisor. I want you up in the office where I can keep an eye on you.” [Laughter]

There was this long silence. He said, “You’re kidding me, aren’t you, sir?”

I said, “No, I’m not, Jack. I want you up there. You just gave me a good excuse to call you this morning.”

He said, “Everybody down here thinks you’re about to hang me.”

I said, “Well, maybe it’ll feel that way after you get on the job, but that’s it.”

He was the kind of a guy with whom you could have that kind of exchange and still keep everything in its proper place. One of the reasons I highly respected him was that he could—and would—do this. When we’d have softball games, he really gave me the business. At one point I stumbled running around second base in an officers-enlisted game, and on the next pitch he said to his shortstop, “Stand back a little bit so the Old Man won’t stumble over your shadow.” [Laughter]

Paul Stillwell: What kind of help can an individual in that billet provide to the commander?

Admiral Gracey: Inestimable help if he’s the right man. Well, he has the ear of the District Commander—and the Area Commander, in this case—and everybody knows that. So people will talk to him. He’ll sort it out. He can put an ear to the ground. He

understands. He's the enlisted person's enlisted person. Later on I learned with great pleasure that in some quarters I was known as the "enlisted man's admiral," and that didn't shake me up too much. He can understand what you're doing, he can communicate it directly to the troops in words they'll understand if for some reason you can't. He can keep an ear to the ground, and he can tell you when things aren't right here or there.

He will go around and visit the units. He'd just go and visit, but would have the skill to recognize that something was wrong here. I particularly remember his going to a couple of our big ships and coming back and saying, "We've got a big problem there." And on one he said, "The problems are not as advertised." It would be his view, but I had great faith in him and his judgment and his way with people—all people. We would go together, just as now the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard goes almost everywhere with the Commandant. And in all the services it's done that way. He or she is the enlisted man's person in the front office. The troops know that, and as long as he manages to stay away from doing something that makes them feel like they've been betrayed or the commander has smarts to accept some counsel or some information he's gotten and not blow the cover. You know, not make it come out like they've been put on report by their own guy, that kind of thing. We were a good team and managed to avoid doing that.

In fact, he was so good at his job that I think the next three PacArea Commanders kept him on. He's a colorful guy. His wife died while we were there. He came in one morning and said, "I've lost Lil," out of nowhere. He has a daughter.

I said, "Do you want to change your orders?"

He said, "No, I don't. No, sir. I want this one, and Diane wants me to have it." That's his daughter's name. She was 12 at the time and he said, "She has fun watching me parade when you parade." We have exchanged Christmas cards for over 20 years now—and played a few rounds of golf together at one Coast Guard tournament or another. The two of them always show up at the CG Foundation Awards Dinner in San Francisco where I go each year to present the Admiral Gracey Award, and we get to hug Diane and laugh over old times.

Paul Stillwell: So he could be very effective as a two-way communicator.

Admiral Gracey: Exactly. Exactly. An exchange of information, an understander. I would on occasion—here was this guy. You talk to him. He’s a rough guy, rough, tough. Loves golf, loves baseball, a sports nut, Pittsburgh Pirates-Pittsburgh Steelers. I mean, he’s got Pittsburgh on the brain. I hate him for this. We had this running thing between the Red Sox and Pittsburgh.

I sent him off one time to do a Memorial Day speech. I said, “You know, you’ve not done any speeches lately. How would you like to do one on Memorial Day?” And this was a group that I thought would like to hear from somebody in his job. It was a bell-ringer.

He gave me a copy of it after he was done, because I kept hearing. I said, “Jack, have you got a copy of that speech? I mean, people are calling me up from all over the place. You just gave yourself another job.” It was dynamite. I said, “Where’d you find that, on the third hole in the sand trap?” [Laughter]

The Command Master Chief is a wonderful idea. Our first Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard was MCPO Calhoun in 1969.* But the timing of the first appointment created a problem that lasted a long time. The problem was that it started out three years into the Commandant’s tour, so each MCPOCG served three years for someone other than the man who selected him. I’m not going to talk anymore about that now. I want to tell what I did about it when I get to my Commandant years, because it kept going that way and it wasn’t right. I fixed it, but I’ll talk about that later.

I had a several fun things that happened regarding my flag. I told about the *Eagle* with the old lady asking, “What’s that man doing on top of the mast?” There were many more incidents. You remember I told you we had a shortage of two-star flags in the Ninth District and, “I’m your flag man. I’m going to put it in my car and I’m going to get to the next place before you do.” Well, we had the shortage of three-stars in PacArea. I went to one station, and there was a two-star and a four-star flying and the chief said, “Admiral, it averages three.” [Laughter] I mean, some people I know would think that awful and

* Master Chief Charles L. Calhoun, USCG, served as the first Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard. He was appointed by Commandant of the Coast Guard, Admiral Willard Smith on 1 October 1969, and served as MCPOCG until 17 July 1973.

improper. I thought it wonderful that he would do that and tell me about it and perhaps feel that I would enjoy hearing his unique solution to a problem. I just loved it.

And, of course, there is one that I have used over and over and over and over in speeches. I went to Valdez, Alaska, for a change of command at the Vessel Traffic Center. It was a beautiful day, one of two that year. And they didn't have a three-star flag. Well, I didn't know that. We had flown over from Kodiak. I was going to look at the Valdez Vessel Traffic Service, and stay to see how they operated when a ship was coming in later that night. So I was having a very nice day.

Backstage things were hectic. When they went to make up my flag so they could break it on my arrival, they found that they only had a two-star, and they had a big panic. "Well, call Kodiak and have them fly it over."

"Too late. He's already on the way."

"Well, call Air Station Cordova."

"They don't have one."

"Well, what'll we do?" So they got their crew together and someone said, "We can paint a star on it."

"No, that's tacky."

"Well, what do we do?" Finally a young petty officer from Alabama, said, "Hell, Suh, why don't we just staple that sucker together so it can't open up. He won't know there's only two stars on it." So that's what they did. They stapled the flag together in such a way that when they popped it open it just looked like it was there with poor wind currents, and that's what I saw. I thought, "Funny my flag isn't flying and all the rest of them are flapping in the wind. [Laughter]"

So that night about midnight there was a ship coming in. Randy and I walked over to the VTS from the hotel to watch the operation and how they worked it. Afterwards, about 1:00 o'clock in the morning, the new commanding officer, who had been with me in San Francisco, said, "Did you notice anything funny about your flag today, Sir?"

I said, "Yeah, did you bring some tricks up from San Francisco?"

He said, "Well, as a matter of fact—" And he told me the story. I've used that on the end of speeches over and over and over again to say, "You know, don't worry. The

flag is flapping in the breeze and all the stars are showing. The Coast Guard's in good hands when we have people like that.”

We had a big fuel crisis. The whole Coast Guard had a big fuel crisis, but for us in PacArea it was really big. A lot of long-legged operations go on in the Pacific. The ships doing Alaska Patrol were two in Seattle, two in Honolulu, and four in San Francisco. That's a long haul up to the Gulf of Alaska, and then you cruise around. A lot of C-130 flying time too. Nothing was very close to anything except what might happen in San Francisco Bay, but even that's pretty big for fuel guzzling ops. Puget Sound, you know, a lot of maneuvering. So we were hurting.

It went on for some time, and we had some really significant decisions to make. For example, one involved what they call “Opening Day” in San Francisco. That's when the sailing season officially starts, and they start having regattas, and they start with a longstanding, truly major event. Traditionally the Coast Guard put a major cutter out in the Bay and a bunch of boats ran a lot, took a lot of dignitaries and others—and provided safety as well. It really was a big event. All the local sailors sailed by in a regatta-like marine parade and so on. I said, “We can't do that this year. We haven't got fuel to go out there for that kind of thing. We'll have people out for rescue work. We'll have those boats there, but we just can't—” The City of San Francisco and the yachting community didn't fully understand that, but we made a lot of decisions like that—just to stay fueled for more critical operations.

Paul Stillwell: We're real close on the end of tape. Any valedictory speech for this one [Laughter] or are we not yet to that point?

Admiral Gracey: No, I'm getting there, and I'll do it quicker. I'll do a quick wrap-up when next we go. I haven't talked about the WestPac trip yet, and we've got to talk about that.

Paul Stillwell: Okay. We'll get that one the next time then.

Interview Number 10 with Admiral James S. Gracey, U.S. Coast Guard (Retired)

Date: Wednesday, 22 August 2001

Place: U. S. Naval Institute, Annapolis, Maryland

Interviewer: Paul Stillwell

Paul Stillwell: Well, when we last talked you were in the midst of discussing your time as the Pacific Area commander, so if you could resume at that point please.

Admiral Gracey: Okay. I think we were drawing into the final year of that great three-year tour of duty. Great for both my wife Randy and me. As I told you, one of the wonderful events in that time was when Randy took the graduation review at Alameda Recruit Training Center, our West Coast boot camp, and made a speech. And it was a wonderful speech. She's good. She's the best bargain the Coast Guard ever had

Paul Stillwell: Did you notice any difference in either quality or quantity of available recruits when the all-volunteer force went into effect?*

Admiral Gracey: Not for us, because we didn't profit from the draft anyway.

Paul Stillwell: Well you must have benefited to some extent from the draft.

Admiral Gracey: Well, we benefited to the extent that some people came to the Coast Guard that didn't want to be drafted somewhere else. And that had interesting side effects. So, yes, I guess we did benefit from the draft. But that particular aspect wasn't always good. Sometimes the person you got was a guy who was trying to beat the system. That guy wasn't at all happy—or “with it”—when he found out that joining the Coast Guard did not mean you were going to sit on the beach somewhere with a dog and horse. You were going to pull weather patrols, you were going to be running 82-footers

* In 1972 the Defense Department announced it would end draft calls in mid-1973. Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird announced on 27 January 1973 that the use of the military draft had ended as of then, several months prior to plan.

off the coast of Vietnam, you were going to be at a Loran station in the jungle in Vietnam or up in some Podunk little place in Alaska or some other strange place. Or maybe you were going to be in a wonderful resort town and never get a chance to set foot on the beach, because you were out there in a boat all the time knocking your brains out in that small boat. Or you were working harder than you ever worked in your life on a buoy tender. I think most of them loved it; some of them didn't. So it was a mix.

These days I'm sure we've got a mix as well. It's just you can see them better. You can focus on them better. We spend more time taking care of them. And I don't mean by that being patronizing, although sometimes I think we do that. You have to be careful. You evince concern without being patronizing. Sometimes a little patronizing goes a long way.

Paul Stillwell: And paternalism as well.

Admiral Gracey: Paternalism is a good word, yes. And fraternalism. I've been referred to over the years as a cheerleader. I say, "What's wrong with that? What's wrong with being a cheerleader?" I'm an unabashed cheerleader for the people of the Coast Guard—for USCG as a whole obviously, but for the individuals and the people in the Coast Guard I will take the stand and cheer for them. Give me my megaphone, and I'm ready to do it.

I thought maybe one of the things I wanted to talk a little about today in PacArea was that I worked at trying to communicate the idea that some decisions should be made having in mind the people that were going to have to execute them. That doesn't mean that if it's a job that has to be done that you're not going to do it, but there's always different ways to get there. There is an old saying: "If you don't know where you want to go, it doesn't matter which road you take." But if you do know where you want to go, you're oftentimes pressed to take certain fixed roads. I worked really hard on trying to make our course be the road that had the least negative impact on the people that had to make happen whatever we were trying to do.

We had 44-foot motor lifeboats deployed up and down the coast of California. If there was a boat repair yard in their homeport or within 50 miles, why sail the thing all the way back to San Francisco? Well, the argument was, "Because we had a person who

was experienced with those boats, and he'd done all our work and he knew what we wanted and we would get a good contract and all that kind of stuff.”

Great arguments, great rationale, but it had a big effect on the few people that were associated with that boat who had to bring it down to San Francisco, hang around while the work was done. It yanked them away from their homeport and families and the station that was shorthanded anyway, for however long they were going to work on those boats, and sometimes it was a month or more. All things being almost equal, why not let's do it in a homeport? That was a hard sell. Now, every time I tell this story it occurs to me, and I sometimes see people's eyes glaze over, and they're saying, “Why does a vice admiral have to sell it? Why doesn't a vice admiral just decree it shall be and have it happen?”

Paul Stillwell: That's a logical question.

Admiral Gracey: You can do that, and it will happen. However, my way of doing business was to say that, “I think this is a good idea. Let's look into it.” And then if it doesn't seem to be germinating, pour a little more water and fertilizer on it. And maybe after about the third try quote the immortal words of the boatswain's mate, “Now hear this. This is no blankety-blank drill. Do it.”

But it depends on the situation. If what you're doing is changing a way of doing business that's been there for a long time, you want to be darn sure you know that you're right. You want to be darn sure you've heard all the reasons why it's not a good idea. And that in itself is a hard thing to get people to tell you, “Sir, that's not a good idea.” Or even to suggest, “Sir, there were some reasons why we started to do this,” or, “Last year we had this experience,” or whatever. If you eat them up every time they want to tell you that, then you don't hear it anymore. And one problem with rotating every couple of years as you do as a flag—well, I was lucky. I had three in Cleveland and three in San Francisco and so I could reap the benefit of that. But one problem of a relatively rapid rotation is, unless you have a reputation that has preceded you, most of the time it takes you a while to get in sync with the new band. If you're lucky, there's a few people in the

new gang that were in the old gang, and they were happy with how you did business. If they weren't happy, then you had to recognize that and deal with it.

Paul Stillwell: And they can vouch for you.

Admiral Gracey: Yes, yes, yes. I don't even remember how I got started down that road, but it's something that I felt really very important. In reading back through my notes, my journal over the years, and trying to bring myself back up to speed after all these years, I noticed a number of cases of things like that and the same thing with working with the private industry. When we get to New York, I want to share with you a position I took with the maritime industry, which was the same here. You know, my position was, "We're going to get in your knickers once in a while. We're not always going to do things that you want us to do or whatever. We're going to tell you why, but you've got to tell us what you're mad at. It doesn't do any good for you to be mad at the Coast Guard and storm around in your own offices. We can't fix it if we don't know about it. And if we do know about it but can't do it, I promise you we'll tell you. But it's still going to go on, and it needs to be changed. Please help us."

Paul Stillwell: Well, there's some inherent tension in that relationship just because you're a regulatory agency and making sure that they pass muster.

Admiral Gracey: I took the tack in the three districts I ran and as the Commandant, although I had more opportunity to do it as a District Commander and Area Commander, but on the Great Lakes, West Coast, East Coast I took the tack that the maritime industry-Coast Guard relationship is a model of how government and private sector ought to work together. In some cases it was better than others, and in some cases we had marine inspectors who were overbearing, or in some cases we had some that weren't bearing enough.

Paul Stillwell: Underbearing.

Admiral Gracey: Underbearing, yes, good word. But, by and large, we respected each other. They respected the Coast Guard. We respected what they were doing. Now, maybe it's because we were mariners. It's a beautiful argument on why an organization like the Coast Guard should be doing that job, because we had people who understood what it was to go to sea and what a ship was all about. We didn't always make the right decisions.

We got into a situation, and it showed up in San Francisco, where we started having a lot of new younger marine inspectors. At one point in the Coast Guard history we reached out to the maritime industry and we direct-commissioned a number of relatively senior maritime people, engineers and ships' masters, that sort of thing. We brought them into the Coast Guard, and we gave them I think a commander's commission, lieutenant commander to commander, and they worked in a regular rotation.

I had one of them with me, a fellow by the name of Edgar Dorr, on *Barataria* when I was an ensign.* Well, as a matter of fact, he was a lieutenant direct commission, but he came over from the maritime industry. He sailed in *Barataria*, but he then did CG Merchant Marine Safety work. It got to the point where at the end of that program, they'd all gotten to their 30 years, and that was the end of it—block obsolescence of a sort. So we were starting to bring in younger officers. The maritime industry had been used to seeing these old-timers around who had come from their merchant marine roots. Now they were seeing younger officers who had good training, who were smart guys, but who didn't have in their kit bag the sense of relationship with the people they'd been doing business with.

That wasn't all bad, but the maritime industry felt that some of them were being unreasonable in the things they wanted to do. That some of them didn't understand the full effect when they required a certain thing to be done by a certain time, that that was money and so forth. So we worked very closely with them, with the maritime industry, to work through that particular problem. I recommended that we change the way we trained those new people. Our practice had been to send them through a period where they learned everything they were ever going to need to know. They would have some time in each of the disciplines.

* Lieutenant Edgar W. Dorr, USCG.

I argued, “Let’s do one discipline at a time. Let’s get them so they are really good at one aspect of this business, and then when it’s time to move them to another one, we’ll recognize that they’ve got that foundation. They won’t need as much basic foundation. Now, spend that time in the new aspect so that the people they’re dealing with will understand that they’ve been doing this for a while. They’re not going to be boots in everything.” That wasn’t totally warmly received in the Merchant Marine Safety end of the Coast Guard, but we made some progress with it. Golly, I am going afield. That’s happened before, hasn’t it, Paul?

Paul Stillwell: Yes, indeed.

Admiral Gracey: But in my three stints as a district commander and my two as an area commander—seven years—I found you’re an arbitrator. It was beneficial to get in. If there was something like this Merchant Marine Safety thing, get yourself into it.

For example, on the Pacific Coast, in California, there was the California Coastal Commission. There was a parks something-or-other. We owned some land called Pigeon Point in Monterey, and we wanted to turn that over to become a park. But the California Coastal Commission and this park group were having a giant squabble trying to figure out who was going to do what and where and when, and the whole thing was languishing. I took it upon myself to get in the middle and have a meeting and get them together and talk about what we might do to make it easier. “We can bend a little bit on this or that or the other thing, and let’s just get this done and get it off our plate and get on with the next thing.” And that was really all it took. Then I could say, “You know, you’re asking for something they can’t do. But they can do this.” An arbitrator sometimes can see things or point out things when the involved parties can’t see the woods for the trees. So being an intermediary or being a referee, being a cheerleader, being a pacifier, and applying a little “there-there, there-there” sometimes helps.

Paul Stillwell: Well, last time you talked about the seaman apprentice whom you got into corpsman school and then followed up when he was initially rejected. Your relationship with him has a biblical connotation about the shepherd looking after the sheep.

Admiral Gracey: Yes, it does. And the shepherd is supposed to do that. Remember the headline we talked about in the newspaper that had an interview with me? It referred to my quoting the song about, “Would you rather be hammer or a nail?” I had a philosophical discussion about that. One makes things happen but uses brute force. The other is a binding factor—holds things together. Coach, professor, gosh, there’s any number of kinds of roles to be played for a leader. What a wonderful experience to have that. I’m not saying to have all those qualities but to be able to get involved where you could bring them all to bear. And working with the maritime industry and the state governments and the various governments and associations and the public.

I’ve got a box full of letters I wrote to people who were really irate about something or other that the Coast Guard did. There’s one person in particular I remember I wrote. He was really angry, because his group wanted to have a regatta in San Francisco Bay, and the rules were you had to clear it with the Coast Guard. That was so we could make sure that some tanker didn’t go barging through the middle of the regatta or so we could suggest, “If you would just move your final leg 500 yards to the north, then the tankers won’t be in your way,” or whatever.

And he was really angry because, “How come you wouldn’t let us do it?”

“Well,” I said, “because you called us yesterday, and you want it tomorrow. We can’t do that.” I wrote him a long letter that explained that and in no uncertain terms what we were going to do and how we would do it and why we were doing it. He was going to be happy as a clam when he found out what we were going to do for him, but he had to tell us ahead of time because we couldn’t guess what he was going to do. His just having a wonderful idea out there somewhere with a group of people wasn’t enough. I said, “If you’ve got time, you can come to my office. I’ll spend three or four hours and run down just the list of people that we’re trying to do things for and help.” That kind of an emollient, giving him the spoonful of sugar to help the medicine go down—I’ve always enjoyed that kind of thing anyway in terms of relationships, but it was—

Paul Stillwell: Did these irate people usually respond positively to that kind of approach?

Admiral Gracey: Yes, most of them. I can't remember now what they said on the side. I don't know, but they didn't have to write back, but more often than not I would get a letter back saying, "Well, I've been told off in my day but never quite so gently." Or, "Thank you for making it clear. Now that we understand why it has to be done this way you can be sure we won't make that mistake again." Or, you know, whatever kinds of comments. But people would write, or I'd see them somewhere, and they would make a point of coming over to thank me for going to the trouble of writing it. And I would always insist to my staff that when we got to that point that it was to be my name on the letter. Usually it was my drafting. I'd get a rough draft, and then I'd put an ample dose of Jim Gracey in it just because I had a knack—still do—for writing that sort of thing.

We had some bright guys. We had a good staff. Just before I left I asked the two staffs, "Tell me what you think we've done in the last three years." And I have here the list they gave me. Let the record show I'm waving a document of about ten pages, which is the result of each division on the Pacific Area and 12th District staff writing a list of things they thought we had done in that period. Things like, oh, building some A-frames at Lake Tahoe, opening a Cutterman's Club. I'm going to talk more about that. Setting up specialized training programs.

We sent the shore-based junior officers "to sea" once in a while to give them some afloat training. We assigned them to go to sea in ships. If they were going to support the ships and their crews, they ought to understand what they were all about. We set up a "Good Shipmate Award." We had an Educational Enrichment Program that was spun off from other ones I started. They had a Junior Petty Officer Leadership and Management course that we sponsored. Those are just some of the things out of the list from the 12th District's Personnel Division, and each of the ops people and everybody was very proud of it. We had been thinking and coming up with good ideas for those three years, and they were proud of what they'd done.

There was an example of how that whole District team could come together. A tanker was on fire down off of Monterey, down toward Big Sur. It was dead in the water, drifting toward the coast. We couldn't figure out why it was drifting toward the coast, because none of the water current charts that we looked at indicated there ought to be any

currents going in that direction, and there was no wind blowing it that way. But there was no doubt it was going there.

At that point it once again became vividly clear to me that there was no salvage capability in the private sector anywhere. Oh, if it happens to be near a port and there's a tugboat there that isn't busy that day, they may do it. At one point there were tugs that were just available for that kind of work. You couldn't do that anymore. I approached a couple of the big towing companies just to verify, and that was right. If they happened to have one that was available, you could get them, but otherwise not so, and it was going to take time. In our Big Sur case there was a tug that could get there in a couple of days. We had an 82-footer in Monterey. Now, an 82-footer was not going to tow this tanker. But I did send them out. I said, "Send them out. Put a line on there. They're not going there to tow. Tell them not to try to tow it. Just slow it. Just do something to slow the drift until we can get somebody there." Meanwhile, a C-130 found a ship down the coast. It was a Greek ship. They dropped a message block to the ship. For some reason or other they couldn't reach them on radio. The message block told them what was going on back up the coast, and the Greek ship turned around and headed back to provide assistance.

Ultimately it turned out—before anything could come to pass, any of those, the tugboat or the Greek ship or anything—the tanker got the fire out. They got their engines going, and they got in on their own power. But the point was that all this stuff came to bear with great imagination: using the 82 to slow the drift, the C-130 finding the Greek ship and not being able to communicate, then flying low and dropping a message block. You know, we do it. We do that sort of thing, use our imagination.

We worked a lot on trying to adapt WWMCCS to the Coast Guard. We were using WWMCCS, the World Wide Military Command and Control System. And you rated readiness, the readiness of ships and by different categories and so forth. Some of the categories didn't really apply to the Coast Guard, but we wanted to use them because we were involved. And we worked a lot on adapting that.

We spent much of the last two years fretting about fuel. In '79 particularly we had the fuel crunches all over the place, and we had a lot of decisions to make about how we would use fuel for the operations within PacArea. I had kind of taken it on myself to

suggest that we might have an overall pool, and we would designate where some fuel allowances might be transferred from one CG District in PacArea to another based on what was going on. We would start off with an allowance, but if one had a surfeit of activity and another one didn't, we might make some changes there. But it was an ongoing headache and it has come back to haunt us just—here I'm talking in the year 2001 and it's just happened. The Coast Guard has been doing this within the last couple of years, so it is true that what goes around comes around.

Terrorism was a concern, and we worked with the FBI to develop and sign the first of what ultimately became a national agreement on working with them on maritime terrorism. In fact, Judge Webster was newly in the FBI, and he came out to observe the signing.* It was done between a local person and me. That meeting with Judge Webster led to a friendship that paid dividends when I was Commandant, and we worked together with the other heads of law enforcement agencies.

Paul Stillwell: On the drug enforcement, I wonder if you have an assessment of how successful that was. The impression is that only a tiny fraction of the huge supply gets interrupted.

Admiral Gracey: Well, yeah. I don't know what they're up to now. I've heard figures as high as 20% for cocaine. That doesn't seem very high. But on the other hand, you can't do it all by enforcement. You can slow it down. Nowadays with the new equipment we have, with all the DoD forces available to help, with our putting law enforcement detachments on Navy ships, which we started doing when I was the Commandant, although we had the Navy helping us before that by keeping an eye out for us. I started doing that on the West Coast while I was out there. They're getting literally tons of cocaine these days. They made a huge, huge bust just the other day.

In the time that I'm talking about in the Pacific Area we had a couple of pretty huge busts, but mostly we were talking about marijuana at that time. There was one ship that we nailed that was dead in the water off of Monterey. I told you about that one last

* William H. Webster served a director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation from 23 February 1978 to 25 May 1987.

time. We followed one ship all the way up the coast to Puget Sound, the Strait of Juan De Fuca. We would pick them up coming out of Ecuador and follow them up the coast and ultimately get them. But it was mostly marijuana. Every time we went to go aboard one of the smaller boats in the Caribbean we would see them throwing stuff over the stern, and it was pretty clearly the hard stuff in weighted bags. They couldn't do that with marijuana. They would try it, but it was just big bales that would float around.

Paul Stillwell: What do you recall about fisheries enforcement in the Pacific Area?

Admiral Gracey: We were very much involved with fisheries enforcement up in the Gulf of Alaska, and there was a clearinghouse approach to boarding a ship and seizing it if it was found to be in serious violation of the fisheries laws. It came up internationally, something with the Russians. Oh, we were shutting down grain exports to the Russians for something they had done. That got into the fisheries business in a sense because we scrambled a 378 cutter to the Alaska Patrol early so we would have two ships up there, with the idea of one of them working west toward the border. I'm not sure I have all the intricacies of that one straight, but it was something like that, and President Carter was involved.

I sat on the Pacific Fisheries Management Council. I was a non-voting member of that, and we met regularly, mostly in Portland, Oregon, and got involved with the fights between the fishermen and the Indians as to who was going to have the salmon. And it involved all the fisheries up and down the coast and out to sea, involving salmon and all kinds of fisheries. And setting windows for fishing but shutting them down because people were concerned about the drop-off in fish returning for spawning.

The Cuban boatlift came up while we were in San Francisco, and you wonder why in the world that would affect the Pacific Area.* Well, it affected us because we sent a C-130 and a couple of air crews and some 82-footer and 95-footer patrol boat crews to give the crews down there some relief. The Seventh Coast Guard District could keep the

* From 1 April to 25 September 1980 the Coast Guard was heavily involved in dealing with a massive migration of Cuban refugees in an operation known as the Mariel boatlift. More than 100,000 Cubans sought to reach the United States in boats that were often poorly equipped for the voyage. In all, the Coast Guard assisted 1,387 vessels.

boats running, but crew fatigue was getting to be a real problem. And we sent some of our intelligence agents. We sent some of our op center people that knew how to coordinate things like this. And we really sent quite a few people to the East Coast to help, and that, of course, made it tougher to get the job done on the West Coast, but there was no argument about the priority of that. It was clearly the right thing to do. That was a big deal going on back with the Mariel boatlift. As Commander, Pacific Area, I didn't own the problem, but I could help support the effort to cope with it.

In this period there was a move to try to save some of the Liberty ships.* There were a lot of them after the war that had been converted to tankers and one thing or another. One called *Jeremiah O'Brien* had been built in a shipyard there in Alameda. The idea was to make it an operating ship and then make it a museum and let it sail once a year. They asked for volunteers, and they got plenty. My 12th District Chief of Merchant Marine Safety, an old captain who'd been in the maritime service before he came to the Coast Guard, was one volunteer. Anyway, a bunch of old sailors volunteered to go to work on their own time and fix up the engines on this ship. And they did, people from all walks of life. There were corporate vice presidents that were going to be oilers when the ship was running. They were happy to get on there and grub it up. It was fun to see what pleasure they took in just doing the work of restoring those old steam engines and that engine room.

They got *Jeremiah O'Brien* running. Then they had an opening day where they invited as many people as they could find in the Bay Area that had helped build those ships. You talk about sea stories! There were several who showed up that had built the *Jeremiah O'Brien*. One little old lady claimed that she had been a welder. She said she was a welder, and she'd built this ship. When a bunch of skeptics said, "Sure, sure," she said, "Go up in the sea cabin—the little room behind the bridge—and look under the steel counter up there. You look up underneath against the bulkhead, and you will see a symbol like such-and-such." And somebody said, "Right, right." She said, "Go look." And, of course, it was there, and she said, "Every ship I built had my initials on it somewhere, and that's where they are on this one." [Laughter] They got under way.

* The Liberty ship was a mass-produced cargo ship designed by the U.S. Maritime Commission for use by the Allies in World War II. All told, American shipyards built 2,770 Liberties.

Sailed out through the Golden Gate, turned around and came back in, and then had a party afterwards. But there were old-timers there, and they told you wartime maritime stories that would curl your hair.

Paul Stillwell: That ship went over to Europe for the 50th anniversary of D-Day.

Admiral Gracey: It did. Exactly right. I think Rear Admiral Tom Patterson, U.S. Maritime Service, Kings Point boss earlier, took it over there. I also think they ran out of money, didn't they, in England? Some of them couldn't get it back?

Paul Stillwell: I guess they got it back somehow.

Admiral Gracey: Yeah, it's in San Francisco now, but for a while it was among the missing.

I have talked about how I thought it was very important for our troops to be armed when in potential law enforcement situations. That doing boardings of the kind they were doing on a random basis at who knows what time of day was really dangerous. I had described earlier the experience where somebody had to use a swab handle in the dark and pretend he had a gun to get the bad guys to drop their guns. We were very lucky they did. It was clear, however, that if our people were to be armed in doing their jobs, they had to be well trained in the various matters involved with firearms in law enforcement—when to shoot, when not, etc.

So another one of the accomplishments of our staff was to set up a firearms training program at Modesto Junior College. Well, it got to be a big flap about how this was going to be done. It turned out that one of the professors that was setting it up was also a Coast Guard Reserve officer, and there were other junior colleges that wanted to get in the act. We appeared to be showing bias toward Modesto because it had this CG Reservist on its staff. I didn't even know he was a CG Reservist. The 12th District Contracting Officer thought it was wrong not to go out for bids or whatever, and we just had a huge flap. This was another example of my getting involved. The training program was not going forward. We needed to get it squared away. Modesto gave us what we

needed—and we needed it *now*. So I personally signed the contract. I said, “I’m the boss here. I believe I’ve got contract signing authority. Is that correct?”

“That’s correct, sir.”

“Fine. You’re not comfortable with signing the contract. I appreciate your advice and professional input, but I won’t ask you to do something with which you’re not comfortable. So I will sign it. Put it in the proper form and send it up here. We need to get going.” And we did. It was a good program. They not only learned how to shoot but how *not* to shoot, *when* not to shoot. It was the standard shoot-no shoot, but when you do shoot, know darned well what you’re doing—know how to aim it and how to hit something with it and all of that sort of thing, but always include how to show restraint.

We had a problem on one of our buoy tenders. It sorely needed a replacement engine generator. And we had a big debate about how much it was going to cost. We were going to ship it by rail. I said, “We need this ship. How long is it going to take to get the engine here?” Well, it was going to take forever to ship it by rail. And they had to have all the papers, and they had to have all this stuff, so I said, “I’ve got a whole fleet of C-130s out here, and I understand they can handle one of those things just fine.”

“Well, you can’t do that. It’s too expensive.” So we looked into how expensive it was, including the value of time and lost vessel capability. At this same time there were some aircraft parts that the CG Aviation Repair and Supply Center in North Carolina desperately needed. We had some.

I said, “I’ll tell you what. How about if we fly the parts to ARSC so they can keep on repairing the helicopters, and then as long as we’re on the East Coast anyway we’ll just swing by Baltimore and pick up that engine and bring it back? How would that be?” Wonderful idea. Wonderful idea. It worked.

I should mention General Grant’s bed in the hotel in the mining town of Murphys, California. There was one there, and I was supposed to sleep in the General’s bed. But I chose not to because I remembered noting as we arrived that the head of the famous bed was right above the drummer of the rock band in the hotel lounge. The room was a museum, sort of, with a glassed entrance so people could step inside and look. The Navy League man who had asked me to be the speaker for the dinner that night had his new

bride with him. She was very happy when I offered to swap rooms with them. He wasn't very happy the next morning—even added a nasty word to my vocabulary.

One of the things we did do that I was pleased with involved the four 378-foot high endurance cutters we had moored just across from Jack London Square in Oakland at the Naval Supply Center. It was a long haul for anybody to go on liberty from there. And while there was Jack London Square right across the channel, we didn't run liberty boats to Jack London Square. So we created what we called the Cutterman's Club. We got the Navy to give some space in one of the buildings right there on the pier, and we got one of my former Quarters Managers, a food specialist, to be the manager. So we set up a place where the crews could go, and they could shoot pool, and they could have a beer. The idea wasn't to go drink. It was to go relax, play, make a phone call, read a magazine, watch television, but something to do that was off the ship.

Paul Stillwell: Was this at the Alameda Naval Air Station

Admiral Gracey: No, it wasn't at the Naval Air Station. It was part of the Oakland Naval Supply Center—an annex right on the Oakland Estuary where we moored our four big ships. The Navy gave us a piece of one of the warehouses to use, and we got that set up just about six months before I left. It was great. My people really did a nice job of putting it together, and we got people to give us some money, donate furniture or whatever. And it was a place I think the troops enjoyed having for just them.

I have a wonderful and very different picture hanging on my wall. One Christmas I arranged the Alaska Patrol schedule so all eight of our AIPat cutters would be home. Originally the schedule had two of them being at sea—one to relieve and one relieved too late to get home for the holidays. So I had our guys juggle the schedule a couple of days either way so that everybody could be home. I said, "Don't announce it, but we'll let the Russians catch fish for free for two days." [Laughter] "We don't have to announce we're not going to be there. Just do it this way."

Shortly after the holidays one of the ships sent over the picture, nicely framed, in color. It shows the four San Francisco based ships in port, nested. The Christmas lights on the big tree over at Jack London Square are on, and the ships are fully dressed with

Christmas lighting, colored lights on, and it's just at dusk. There's a plate on the frame and it says, "All present and accounted for, Sir." Very, very special.

At our last sitting we were talking about the *Polar Sea*. It had a busted rudder and was caught in the ice north of Alaska. We talked about the polar gyre.

Paul Stillwell: I think we talked about that at lunch when the tape recorder was not running though.

Admiral Gracey: Okay. Well, we need to talk about that. *Polar Sea*, one of our two Polar-class icebreakers, was operating up north of Alaska in March. They dinged their rudder and were stuck in the ice. It was a big problem because at that time of year the ice hadn't broken loose yet, and *Polar Star* was in overhaul so she wasn't available to go up and relieve *Polar Sea*. We had no icebreaker that could do that. The questions we had to answer were: "What do we do about fuel? How long can we last there? And if we can't get her out, then what's going to happen?" At that point I learned about a thing called the polar gyre. It is a huge circular effect that goes on around the polar region. If you were caught up in that and couldn't get out, then in a matter of years, four or five years from then, you'd show up over around Labrador somewhere.

Paul Stillwell: If you had that much patience.

Admiral Gracey: I'm not a scientist who understands all this. They're probably saying, "What's he talking about?" But that's the way I understood it at the time. Would we keep a crew on there? Could we keep enough fuel for hotel services? Would we just abandon it? What would we do? We got that far along in our thinking. We had trimmed down the crew. We got mail out there. We could get food out there. That was easy. You could fly it out. And the question was one of fuel. We needed to keep enough so we could try to maneuver somehow if we got a break in the ice.

The Crowley Company had a tug called the *Arctic Challenger* that they used for resupplying the North Slope. And there was some thought they might be able to get some help up there. We figured we had enough fuel to run the high-speed turbines for

about 64 hours. And then we were going to go to hotel services for the crew, and that was going to last about 40 days. So what do we do? Well, we wracked our corporate brains. I've got a journal full of details here and there about what was going on. Rear Admiral Knapp, the 17th CG District Commander was really disturbed.* We were all disturbed about how we were going to work this out.

Ultimately we got a lucky break, when the ice broke earlier than usual. The skipper saw a break, but with his damaged rudder he could only go one direction, and it wasn't the direction we wanted him to go. What we wanted him to do was to get over somewhere close to the Alaskan coast. That's the way it worked, because the ice normally broke away from the Alaskan Coast first. Ultimately, after much study and overflight surveys and skillful, crippled maneuvering, *Polar Sea* got out. It wasn't a matter of days. It was weeks actually, but she finally got out.

Paul Stillwell: What would have been the consequences of abandoning the ship? That's one of the things you said you thought about.

Admiral Gracey: Well, yeah. We had to consider that possibility. In the normal "abandon" sense, could somebody come in and take charge? Could they say, "It's ours. We claim it." I don't know that you can do that with a vessel of the United States. We wouldn't abandon it in that sense. What we would probably do is figure out some way to have some presence. Periodically fly a crew out for a period of time but just enough to say that it had not been abandoned. The legalities of that were only touched on, because we were determined that wasn't going to happen one way or another.

And we still had the Russians over there that had icebreakers that could and probably would have helped us. We had good relationship with the Russians at the time—at least I thought we did—in terms of what we did with the fishing, and there were things that went on in the Bering Strait all the time and up into the area where *Polar Sea* was beset. We had occasional disagreements about where the border was. The Russians didn't agree with us on where the border was in the Bering Sea. And so periodically we sent one of our cutters over there to sail on what the Russians thought was their side of

* Rear Admiral Richard J. Knapp, USCG.

the line, but we thought was still our side of the line. We made a point of keeping our claim staked. Announced, “We’re going to sail into this disputed zone,” and everybody knew what it was we were doing. There were no repercussions.

Paul Stillwell: All right. What’s next on your pink and yellow notes?

Admiral Gracey: [Laughter] My pink and yellow notes. Well, somewhere, I’m not sure these are in chronological sequence, but along in about the early part of 1981 it dawned on us that there was another arrow we could put in our anti-drug quiver. We learned that Boeing was test-flying AWACS aircraft.* We checked in with the people who were doing the flying and said, “Would you like to have some real targets that you could check out, and would that be helpful to get a feel for how these things are going to work?” And they thought that was a wonderful idea. So just for information they would tell us what targets they saw out there and we could check them against what we knew was out there. If they didn’t seem to check, we could follow up. It was an interesting relationship, I think. It did not continue very long, but it was an example of the imagination that our guys brought to bear.

The Navy was going to give us two tugs, *Ute* and *Lipan*.† The Navy was going to give them to us. This was at the time when the East Coast drug war in the Caribbean was mounting up, and LantArea needed more ships. But there was a running battle that went on and on and on about how we were going to get them there—essentially a Navy Pac/Lant jurisdiction problem. The Navy had a tug whose skipper really wanted to tow these things. We had divers that went down and took the propellers off and got them all ready to go. Then we waited—and waited.

Finally it got worked out, and they left pretty close to Christmas time. They were going to arrive at our Coast Guard Yard for Christmas. But the Navy Pac and Lant had different views as to where these things were going to go. The skipper of the tug was hot

* AWACS—airborne warning and control system. This is an aerial look-down radar and tracking system carried on board the Air Force's E-3 Sentry, a modified Boeing 707 airliner with a rotating radome on top.

† The *Ute*, designated by the Navy as ATF-76, was commissioned as a Coast Guard cutter, WMEC-76, on 30 September 1980. The *Lipan*, formerly ATF-85, became WMEC-85 when she also was commissioned by the Coast Guard on 30 September 1980.

to go, but Navy said he couldn't take the tow all the way, because his crew wouldn't be home for Christmas. And that was good. They were thinking about his crew. But the tug captain likened as to how he thought his crew might not be too upset about buying Christmas presents in the Virgin Islands on the way home and a few other places that they might have to stop on the way. He thought maybe that would be a sop for the whole thing and they could get some special presents for their families while they were there. Whether that carried the day or not or whether it was a couple of phone calls I made to some Navy flags I knew, I don't know. Who knows what carried the day? But anyway ultimately it got done. But when they sailed from San Francisco they were ready for the holidays: one had a big red Christmas bow painted on her stack, and the other one had a big green Christmas bow painted on hers. There was cheering from everybody once they left the harbor.

Another thing that went on for a long time—and shows how different segments can get tangled up—involved Mile Rock, just inside the entrance to Golden Gate. I would guess from that name it's probably a mile out or a mile in. But it had been a huge problem for us to keep it maintained. It was hazardous. Our aids to navigation people had to go out and climb up a vertical, slippery, unsheltered ladder from the water to the base of the light, perhaps 40 feet or more, carrying tools, parts, etc. We tried a variety of ways to solve the problem, but none was really okay. So we decided we wanted to take it out of there. We thought it was not really an essential light. Well, a lot of people thought it was essential.. There was much back-and-forth with pilots and other groups. Finally we decided to replace the regular “light” with a simple, easily maintained strobe. We were going to fix it. A strobe light would do. We finally persuaded the maritime industry to let us put the strobe light on there. I said, “Let's clutter this whole thing up with facts. If it's not right, we will do something else.”

There was much argument about even whether to go that far, but ultimately we did. And the strobe was not worth doodly in a fog. Of course, you had to wait until there was a heavy fog to look at it, but we had a heavy fog, and everybody went and looked at it. Sure enough, the pilots and the old skippers that had been coming and going were absolutely right. A strobe wasn't going to give them what they needed. You're going to ask me how we ultimately resolved it. Well, we ultimately resolved it in a compromise

position that let us put in a different kind of a light, but it was a fixed light. It was a lighthouse-type light, not a strobe light, but it was more easily maintained by us. It was not the original Mile Rock light, but it gave them what they needed. That whole business went on for a year.

Paul Stillwell: Had strobe lights not been tested before that, or were fog conditions different?

Admiral Gracey: Apparently it was the nature of the fog, and I was dumbfounded that it wouldn't give them what they needed, but part of it was that the pilots had always had a light of a certain kind, and they were accustomed to using it. Anyway, we worked it out and brought peace back to the maritime family, Coast Guard, and industry.

Admiral Gracey: I think I talked about Randy and I getting Legionnaire's Disease in a hotel in Seattle.

Paul Stillwell: I do not recall that one.

Admiral Gracey: We went to the Propeller Club Annual Convention. Once a year they have a big national convention, and this one was in Seattle. And I was to make a major speech. The first day was fine, but the second day we could hardly get out of bed. We spent two days in bed in a not-very-exotic hotel, and the only thing we can think is we had Legionnaire's Disease. That's the only thing that anybody had told us.

Immediately at the end of this Seattle trip we were to go to Washington for the Commandant's District Commander's conference. And we were going to stay at the home of our friends, Rear Admiral Bill Stewart and Laura, since dead, bless her heart. We called HQ and said we couldn't come. We worked our way back to San Francisco on an airplane after a couple of days and called Bill "We're not coming, Bill. We can't subject you to that risk. We don't know what we had." Bill Stewart, being Bill Stewart, of course, insisted that we come and stay at their house. They would go to the social events, and we could just sleep in by the fireplace or whatever it was we chose to do until

he and I could get ready to go to the meeting on Monday morning. And we did just that. It was a typical Bill and Laura Stewart response, bless 'em. It all worked out, but we were *really* sick. We didn't care if school kept or not. We didn't eat anything. We didn't care whether the world came or went for a couple of days. We were just in that grim hotel room. It was an awful experience.

Paul Stillwell: You said you were going to tell me about your chief of staff.

Admiral Gracey: Well, yeah. I'll do this now, but then I'm going to go back and tell you about the WestPac trip we made. My 12th District Chief of Staff was Captain Ed Cope, a really fine, fine officer.* He incidentally was a pitcher on the baseball team and threw the "heaviest" ball I have ever caught in my life. I was a pitcher, but periodically we would throw just back and forth to each other. I don't know what he did, but when he threw that ball it was like you were catching a ton of lead. It wasn't terribly fast. He could throw a fastball. But no matter what he threw it was heavy. That's the only word I can think of. It was like getting hit with a block of steel.

He was an amazing, really competent, very imaginative guy. On our way out of town after the Change of Command, we got in our car to drive to Reno, en route New York. And there was a package in the front seat, a gift package, small one, and Ed's card. Written on it was, "Not to be opened until you cross Carquinez Straits." That's a bridge about 35 miles or so up the road toward Reno. We obeyed, but immediately after we crossed the bridge we pulled off the road and opened Ed's package. Inside was a brass ring.

Paul Stillwell: Literally.

Admiral Gracey: Literally. A small brass ring and a note that said, "Go for it." We had talked about the idea that I certainly had to be in the running to be considered for Commandant, and it was one year away. But Ed's message was, "Go for it." So eight months later, on the day after I was told by Secretary Lewis in a phone call that I was

* Captain Edmund L. Cope, USCG.

going to be the Commandant, I called Ed up and said, “National brass ring retrieval service reporting in.” And I didn’t even have to explain. Ed said, “Yes!!” [Laughter] You know, one of those things, very thoughtful, but it was typical of the way he ran his job. Should have been a flag officer, but he wasn’t selected. Who knows what motivates boards?

In 1979 I had been thinking about the U.S. Coast Guard’s international role. I got started when I was working with Canada in the Great Lakes, and I got thinking that, “You know, the Coast Guard really has a lot to offer on the international scene.” Most of the navies of the world really are coast guards. I had watched other people. I knew about what was then called IMCO, now called IMO—International Maritime Organization—that we, the Coast Guard, participated in big time. IMO is the maritime agency of the United Nations. It’s headquartered in London.

My ComPacArea predecessor, Vice Admiral Austin Wagner, had made a WestPac trip.* He had gotten in a great deal of trouble, because somebody in the crew at the San Francisco office objected to the fact that he came home with a whole airplane full of furniture and things that he and people with him had bought. That got into the press and, my gosh, it was a big mess. So the question was, “Are we going to do this?”

There was a great desire that we go forth and present AMVER Awards to ships from the different countries that had helped us in our AMVER program—Automated Merchant Vessel Reporting System—that we use for rescues on the high seas. Participating ships tell us where they are going, whether they have a doctor aboard, etc. And they report in regularly so we know where they are and can call them if somebody near them is in distress. We don’t know all the ships, only the ones that have chosen to participate in the program, but we have always tried to encourage more and more countries and ships to participate. To say thanks for extended participation we award a special burgee they can fly. We present it with a little ceremony at their company headquarters or, overseas, at our embassy or some such place. AMVER is a wonderful program. It has saved many lives.

The International Law of the Sea says, “If you hear an SOS call, you’ve got to go.” If we find an AMVER ship that’s close, we send him and release all others. It gets

* WestPac—Western Pacific.

prompt help and saves the cost and lost time for the others. In fact, I'm now chairman of an organization called the Association for Rescue at Sea, and every year we select one AMVER ship that has done something particularly special, and we give them a plaque at a special ceremony at Congress. At the same time we make a gold medal award to a Coast Guard enlisted person who's been a hero among heroes. Anyway, back to San Francisco. I thought it was time to go and do this in the countries in the Pacific Area. I got the blessing from Admiral Hayes, and we set up to make the trip.

One thing I did before I left was to draft a statement that my press officer was to use if there was a press inquiry about our trip. So we weren't having somebody coming off the wall trying to explain what we were doing. We were going forth to make contact with the maritime people of these other countries to see what ways we could be helpful to their coast guards or their navies in their coast guard-like operation, and to thank their shipping companies for their work with the AMVER program and that sort of thing. And we were also going to visit Coast Guard people wherever they were.

Paul Stillwell: Well, you also facilitate future contacts that way.

Admiral Gracey: Exactly. And so I wrote that into a statement and left it behind, hoping that if there were any press inquiries it would be all right. Ultimately it turned out we had zero flak. Maybe that's because we kept everybody back home happy. We did take a number of people along with us on various legs on a "space-available" basis. On the first leg, October 28, 1979, we took a whole bunch of folks to Hawaii that had family there or that were going there, and we did the same from Hawaii to Guam and so forth. We went by way of Hawaii, where we spent the night, and then went to Kwajalein. There we got briefed on the missile range activities, the politics of the Marshalls and the Trust Territories. They showed us some of the old World War II movies about what happened in the battle of Kwajalein.* It was ugly propaganda with words like "the dirty little yellow monkeys" and all that. But also, of course, seeing the Kwajalein end of the

* U.S. troops invaded Kwajalein Atoll in the western Marshall Islands on 1 February 1944. Kwajalein fell on 6 February, and the entire atoll was declared secured.

missile range, the target for shots they were lobbing shots into that lagoon from Vandenberg Air Force Base at the time. It was kind of fascinating to see that going on.

On the way to Kwajalein we crossed the International Date Line, and as we did the pilots made the plane "bump" across. Is that fun or what! Of course, we all got properly painted by the "Golden Dragons."

We went from Kwajalein to Guam. I wanted to visit our USCG Communications Station there, because they had taken on a huge additional job. The Navy had stopped communicating in CW, but many merchant ships of the world were still using it as their only means of radio comms.* So our communications station in Guam—along with our other commstas—in Northern California, Kodiak, and Virginia—had become terribly important in terms of communicating with a lot of the merchant fleets. Merchant ships were coming on to the other, newer means of communication, but there was still a big need for CW. I wanted to visit with our people and get a firsthand feel for "how goes it" and give them a "bravo" for their unique skills.

I also wanted to visit with the Governor of Guam, who had been very supportive of our Coast Guard people out there, and, of course, I wanted to be with Coast Guard families. Met with all the groups. One of the big problems was how the Merchant Marine Safety Office there could cover activities going on in Singapore. We had the office in Guam, but they were trying to take care of things and do their jobs that involved presence and inspections of work that was being done on U.S. ships in Singapore and a number of places like that. They used to have a guy in Singapore, but Coast Guard Headquarters had just pulled him out. We talked about that a lot.

Had an opportunity to make a point about thinking about the troops. They set up a situation where I was going to talk to all the people and their families. As I said before, when I visited units I didn't inspect. I tried to set up meetings so we could communicate and they could get to know me a bit, and I could get to know them. I would talk a little bit about what was happening in the Coast Guard and about my philosophies and then answer questions. That was kind of the Jim Gracey style. I'm sure that's not unique to me, but that's my style, and I followed it when I could. It was 105 degrees, and they set

* CW, or continuous wave, referred to a type of radio wave interrupted into the dots and dashes of the Morse code for the purpose of communication.

up the meeting out in the sun. We had a beautiful big garage that was at least shaded, but we didn't set it up in there. We set it outside. And they set it so we met at high noon or almost high noon, and they had all the troops and their families sitting out in the sun while I was to stand in the shade to talk to them.

I said, "No, I don't think we're going to do it that way." They were looking into the sun. I said, "Folks, we're not going to do this. I want you all to pick up your chairs and we're going into the garage. And if there's not enough space or if there's some safety reason why we can't do that, at least I want you all to turn your chairs around and I'm going over there. I'm going to stand out there. I'm going to look into the sun, and I'm going to talk to you and you can look at me. I don't want you to have to look into the glaring sun. We're in this together." I debated whether I should do it, because it made the skipper look bad. On the other hand, there was a message to be sent. I thanked him for thinking of me, and we came out okay, I think—I hope.

From Guam we went to Japan, Tokyo, and we stayed at Yokota Air Force Base. We had quite a few Coast Guard officers and their wives there, and we had what we called the Far East Section office there. We met with them and had our first exposure to a "Mongolian barbecue," followed by an all-Coast Guard gathering and gabfest. Great.

The next day I spent time with U.S. Forces Japan and was flown by helo to downtown Tokyo, where I met with I met with Ambassador Mike Mansfield.* That was a fascinating experience.

Paul Stillwell: Any particular observations on him?

Admiral Gracey: Just that he was, of course, a bigger-than-life kind of person in my mind because of all the things he'd done in his political career. He was knowledgeable, he was gracious, took time to talk, but nothing comes leaping out of my memory. It wasn't a terribly long visit, but he was welcoming, and had that marvelous ability to leave no question in your mind that he was really delighted to have a vice admiral from the United States Coast Guard in his office. I wasn't the Commandant at the time.

* Michael J. Mansfield, formerly a U.S. Representative and U.S. Senator, served as Ambassador to Japan from 10 June 1977 to 22 December 1988.

Paul Stillwell: He'd had a career as an educator in Montana before he went into the politics.

Admiral Gracey: I don't know how old he would have been at this time, but he'd been around.* After the Ambassador, we met with the Fisheries Attaché, and we gave some AMVER awards to shipping companies. This was our first opportunity to do that. Some of these ceremonies went better than others. Of course, Japanese, shipping is big stuff, and we had a lot of awards to give, because they had really participated in the AMVER program. But it was all done through interpreters with much bowing, and it just wasn't the same kind of warmth that went on in communications in some of the other AMVER events that came later in that trip—and many, many more in the rest of my career.

Paul Stillwell: Did you have any contact with the Maritime Self-Defense Force?

Admiral Gracey: No, not the Self-Defense Force. I went to see the Japan Maritime Safety Agency, JMSA, which is their coast guard. I don't think they do law enforcement. Can't remember. But one thing that is different is that their "top management" are not sailors like our Commandant and Vice Commandant. They didn't grow up in the organization. They're political appointees. And they were selected for their management ability, not their maritime experience. In fact, the head man was a railroad man, which I thought was fascinating. I then met with all their top officers, and that was interesting. They had lots of questions to ask. They had no answers to give. I asked questions. I didn't get any answers. They wanted me to tell them, but they didn't want to tell me. So I can't call it an exchange. It was pleasant and everybody was nice, but it was clear after the first couple of tries that there was no point in my asking questions about "How do you do this?" or "How would you handle that sort of thing?" They just weren't going to talk about it.

* Mansfield was born in New York City, 16 March 1903; moved with his family to Great Falls, Montana in 1906 and subsequently represented that state in Congress.

Paul Stillwell: Do you have an idea why they wouldn't talk?

Admiral Gracey: No, I really don't. Maybe they were uncomfortable with the nuances of the language. We were the ones that were enforcing the fisheries against their people. They did it within their territory up to a point, but they weren't out there making sure their fishermen kept things straight. We did that. I didn't have any sense of being pumped for intelligence. It just was the kinds of answers I got were very perfunctory. And, again, it may have been language. Maybe they didn't have anything to say, because they'd already told me what it was. Maybe they didn't know the answer, and there was reluctance to say, "I don't know."

We were invited to dinner that night by the Japan Fisheries Agency, which was a coalition of all the different kinds of fisheries groups in Japan. I had a pleasant and productive meeting with them that afternoon. I thought, "Boy, we are going to have a seafood dinner tonight." We had steak.

Paul Stillwell: Kobe beef?

Admiral Gracey: Kobe beef it was. We had Kobe beef, baked potatoes, string beans. For desert we had vanilla ice cream with mint syrup. We did have a little seafood something at the beginning as an appetizer, but by and large they wanted to make us feel right at home and give us a good old American meal. Randy and I were dying for some seafood—I wasn't dying for sushi, but Randy was and would have eaten anything they would have given her. But all that notwithstanding, it was a very pleasant experience—and productive. There was much exchange about the USCG and fisheries. Most was positive. Our Far East Commander, Captain Gerry Lesperance, said the talk was unusually frank and relaxed.*

They had an interpreter. There were only two women in the room and—bless their hearts—they had a woman interpreter because Randy was there. I'm inclined to think that was the case. She was great. She was quick, she was funny, she got the subtleties. And we got in some banter back and forth. She was bantering with herself

* Captain Gerald O. Lesperance, USCG.

because she was telling what I was saying, and there were a couple of characters there that liked to tease. And I was giving them as good as they got and vice versa. And she picked up all the nuances, I think. We had a wonderful time. It was a great evening. The Coast Guard wives had spent the entire day giving Randy a tour and lots of "CG Family" talk. What a day!!

Before leaving Japan I met with the U.S. Air Force people at Yokota. Then we flew to Hong Kong. We were to be there for a weekend before flying to Manila from there, but there was a typhoon coming through. We had to leave our hotel on Sunday night because our reservations ran out, so we went to another hotel in Kowloon and spent a night there

Again, several really good spin-off things came out of this. We had our AMVER program with the shipping companies, and it was superb. No language problem. Very open. Some of the skippers called on us later when their ships were in Oakland. But the Hong Kong Marine Police was a special contact. They were very, very interested in talking to me. Pretty much everything in Hong Kong was British-run.* This was a mix, but some of the key people were Brits. One fellow by the name of Ian Ward was their chief of operations. We arranged for him to come to San Francisco on his way back to England and spend several days. We showed him how we operated and the whole thing. And we just struck up a wonderful relationship with the Hong Kong Marine Police, which went on for some time after that.

Of course, I visited the Royal Navy people at their headquarters, and I got the honors and all those kinds of things. We talked about all the different programs, open-water law enforcement. They were concerned about the boat people, the people coming out of Vietnam and so forth. On our extra typhoon-provided day, Randy and I rode the Star Ferry, walked Cat Street, rode a tram to the end of the line and walked among the sampan people with their buckets of odd water creatures and had high tea in the lobby of a grand old hotel. A wonderful, no-business, touristy day.

We were flying in a Coast Guard C-130, which I should tell you about. It was one of ours from the 12th District out of Sacramento, and a wonderful crew who had put

* In 1898 Great Britain was granted a 99-year lease to the area known as the New Territories, including Hong Kong. The area reverted to China in July 1997.

together an absolutely marvelous trip book for us. They had put in a pod of regular passenger-type seats with a couple of tables and a nicely decorated toilet. And, of course, Coast Guard C-130s have huge search windows in the sides so we could sit and watch the Pacific Ocean, Indian Ocean, etc., go by underneath. They had painted on the side of this airplane “Orient Express,” and we all had elegant “Orient Express” patches.

Paul Stillwell: Nice touch.

Admiral Gracey: Indeed—one of several of them. When we first got aboard—it was a Sunday morning—all the Sunday newspapers were spread out on the table, and there was a big bouquet of flowers from the wife of the lieutenant commander who was flying the plane. Out of their home garden she made this bouquet, and he put it on the table.

We had with us a Public Health doctor, captain type. He was going to confer on various health issues in the various countries we went to on our behalf and also the Public Health Service. One of our law enforcement people was going to talk about drug enforcement and so forth in the countries we went to. We had a couple of intelligence people. I think in the party there were about six or seven people. And then, of course, we had space-available people flying with us. On our first lunch going to Hawaii everybody but I had fried chicken in the box lunches that one buys for such traveling. When they came around everybody got a box lunch but me, and I was told that they had a *special* box lunch for me.

The special box lunch for me had a cutout of my flag pasted on the cover, and inside were four slices of white bread and a jar of peanut butter. My reputation as a peanut butter lover, and, oh, I’ve forgotten what else on the side. But it was absolutely marvelous—that along with the “Orient Express.” And one other touch. I didn’t realize this until the first place we landed. They had painted the nose wheel so it was marked into segments. I think there were 12 or however many people were on the airplane. There was a segment for everybody. Before every landing everybody put a dollar in the hat and drew a slip. And the first thing after we landed was to have the crewman who went out to make sure we were parked in the right place, check to see which segment number was on the ground. Then he would come back, stick his head in the plane and

call, “Eleven.” And there would be great cheering or booing going on and then we’d get on with the business of red carpets and greeting the dignitaries. We did that everywhere we went on the trip, regardless of how much pomp and ceremony was waiting for us when we disembarked. I never won.

When I talk about having a love affair with Coast Guard people, this is an example of why. Our crossing of the Equator and our crossing of the International Dateline were also special. We got treated with great ignominy. I mean, you talk about irreverence, boy, I’m telling you we got it. And I had a penalty because I had not shared my peanut butter with anybody on the first day. I had to forfeit some peanut butter and buy drinks for the crew somewhere. It was a warm and fun event.

Paul Stillwell: I take it you were not a shellback prior to that.

Admiral Gracey: No, I was not. I was not. Hadn’t even come close. So I did it in the air on the Orient Express.

Let’s see. In Manila, when we finally got there after the typhoon, they parked us way in the back of Clark Air Force Base, and we didn’t quite know why they had done that.* Well, one of our crew was AD1 Dionisio “John” Castillo.† John’s family was in the Philippines. It was not his job to get out of the plane and direct it to its spot. But because John’s family was there, waiting, the Air Force had let them go way off in the back corner of this place. And they had them in the shade of some trees, and they had a little picnic lunch set up, and they just waited for us to get there. So we kind of slowed down our approach taxiing, put John out on the ground and John trotted up ahead to greet his family—first things first.

The pilots called Randy and me up to the cockpit and said, “Watch this.” And John went up to his family and we all sat there for a minute while he hugged everybody, and then he went on from there to direct the plane in and do all the right things, you know. Did that crew have its priorities right or what? All the way over from Hong Kong I had been practicing how to say, “Good afternoon something-or-other,” in Tagalog. So

* Clark Air Force Base was about 50 miles north of Manila, on the island of Luzon in the Philippines. It was closed as part of the U.S. military withdrawal from the nation in the early 1990s.

† AD1—aviation machinist’s mate first class.

when we finally got off the plane I walked up to John's people, and I very carefully spoke my Filipino words. And they all burst out in laughter because I had said, "Good night. What a terrible evening it is and I hope it doesn't rain," or something like that. [Laughter] Whatever it was, it was totally wrong, totally wrong. [Laughter]

On the way to the hotel later there was much excitement in the street. Mrs. Marcos was coming back from a trip and the school kids had all been let out to line the streets.* They had been given special lunches to take with them and told they were from Mrs. Marcos and they were to cheer loudly. They did—and enjoyed their lunch and afternoon off.

But our Philippine visit was good. We had a good relationship with the Philippine Coast Guard. It was a direct copy from us. The head of their Coast Guard was Commodore Simeon Alejandro—also the number-two man in their Navy. Alejandro's aide was a 1977 graduate of the U.S. Coast Guard Academy

Going to meet with Rear Admiral E. Ogbanar, Flag Officer in Command, Philippine Navy, was my first experience with international honors, and as I was driving there with the U.S. Navy aide I said, "How do I behave when I get there?"

He said, "Just stand on the red box and do what comes naturally."

I thought, "That's pretty skimpy." But I went in, and there was a red box, and I went and stood on it. And there wasn't much doubt as to what I was supposed to do, so I did it and got the salutes and all that kind of stuff.

I had a great series of meetings with them. The U.S. ambassador, Murphy, wasn't in country. We did our AMVER ceremony first thing—at a big Propeller Club luncheon, where I also spoke. Commodore Alejandro attended. There was TV coverage. Big event. We had dinner with the Alejandros, a marvelous dinner at a Philippine club. And once again—like in Japan—no Philippine food. Once again, we had a good American dinner: roast beef, baked potatoes, string beans, vanilla ice cream and crème de menthe. You know all the stuff, all the stuff. It was great. Next day, after we had boarded our plane Commodore and Mrs. Alejandro arrived at the airport to say farewell. Really

* Imelda Marcos was the wife of Ferdinand Marcos, who served as President of the Philippine Islands from 30 December 1965 until 25 February 1986.

wonderful and thoughtful people. We brought them aboard for a short chat and introduced them to our Filipino-American crewman, John Castillo.

From there to Singapore and what a change. Ambassador Kneip was a former senator from one of the western states.* His office was all full of cowboy pictures and one thing and another but not much to do with Singapore. But we had wide-ranging discussion, and he was concerned. I asked how it was about the Marine Safety Detachment being pulled out, and he said he thought Admiral Hayes had made the right decision. Asked if he'd heard anything from the U.S. shipping people. No, he hadn't. So all the concern that went on in Guam apparently wasn't getting relayed to Singapore or whatever. I visited with the Minister of Defence and also the Permanent Secretary of Defence and the Commander of the Singapore Navy. We had a wonderful give and take. They had in mind that they wanted a Coast Guard ship to be given to them. What they wanted it for was for the Navy. They didn't want to do Coast Guard-like work, so I explained to them the difference, that we had good seagoing ships, but they were looking for a warship. And we had armament and so forth, but what they wanted was a DE or destroyer or something like that from the Navy.

Paul Stillwell: And you didn't really have any to spare anyway.

Admiral Gracey: No. This was '79, and I can't remember whether we still had some of the 311s. We still had a couple of 327s that were operating. But, anyway, that was the thrust, and we found the difference between Hong Kong and Singapore very interesting. Hong Kong is wide open. I mean, you know, its bustle and people and the whole thing, and Singapore seemed to us to be pretty sterile. Now, I said that to some people after that who'd been there, and they said, "No, that's not really the way it is." But it seemed that way to us.

The AMVER Award ceremony was small, six ships, but productive. Two of the Neptune Lines skippers made regular runs to Oakland and promised to see me there. A big reception afterward brought contact with a wide array of military, government and

* Richard F. Kneip of South Dakota served as U.S. Ambassador to Singapore from 7 August 1978 to 25 September 1980.

industry leaders. Chance to tell the Coast Guard story and show our international interest and things we bring to that scene.

Paul Stillwell: Did you get to the Raffles Hotel?

Admiral Gracey: Yeah, yeah, yeah. We had tea at the Raffles Hotel, and we stayed at the, I think it was the Century Hotel, but Raffles, of course, is the historical place. And we lined up for the Singapore Navy to do some training with us later on. It was a good visit.

From there we went to probably one of the high points of our trip, which was Bombay, India, where we were met by U.S. Consul General Bill Courtney and wife Mary.* With them was Captain Amrik Singh, Indian Coast Guard, replete in uniform and traditional Sikh turban and beard. The Courtneys lived in an old maharajah's palace right on the shore of the Arabian Sea. They were wonderful people—had arranged for us to see and be seen. Major dinners every night. Official calls. Experience Bombay. Met a lot of people. Did a *lot* of educating and other business.

This was exactly at the time that the Iranians had taken over our embassy in Teheran, so before we left the airport to go our various ways I had Bill brief me about precautions our team and plane crew should take. I then briefed our people. He said Indians were with us, and our people would be okay.† There was some concern as to what was going to happen to the U.S. consulate, and there were Indian troops and Indian police all over sleeping on the lawns all over the consulate grounds and all around the outside. Nothing ever happened. There were some demonstrations that you could see down the street, but nothing there. And Randy and I and Mrs. Courtney toured Bombay, out of uniform, of course.

One concern was for our plane. There was that big white C-130 of ours sitting out there at the Bombay Airport. One of the arguments I used, incidentally, when

* William Francis Courtney was the U.S. Consul-General in Bombay.

† When the Shah left Iran in January 1979, the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini seized power and declared the nation to be an Islamic republic. On 4 November 1979 Iranian militants seized the U.S. embassy in Teheran and took the staff members there as hostages. The hostages were ultimately released on 20 January 1981.

persuading people to let us go on this trip—and, as I have told people of the other services since then—there was no way the Air Force or the Navy could have an airplane sitting in the Bombay Airport, because that had implications of international military alliances or whatever. But here was this big white bird of ours that had the American flag on it, but it also said “United States Coast Guard” on it, and everybody knows we’re good guys. So there we were, and it sat there, and nobody even batted an eyelash at it for several days. We just had a marvelous round of meetings with the head of Air India and the maritime industry. We were wined and dined by them every night. And we had a big AMVER Award ceremony one evening in the Consulate gardens. A huge turnout. Did a lot of talking.

They were just beginning to create an Indian Coast Guard, and they were opening up their Western Region. Captain Singh, who had met us at the airport, was the head. And they had a reception for us on an Indian Coast Guard vessel, which didn’t look unlike one of our 327s. An Indian Navy band was there, and they played American music for us: “Turkey in the Straw,” “Alexander’s Ragtime Band.” It was marvelous stuff. At one point I walked back to where they were to thank them for playing for us and playing our music that we all knew and loved. And the director was afraid of me. As I approached him he backed away. And I said, “No, it’s okay.” What I really wanted to do, I said, “I really wanted to have my picture taken with you and the band. Would that be all right?” That was okay. So we were standing there, and many people in the band were trying to get in position so they could be in the picture, and the director came about up to my waist. So I said, “Why don’t you and I sit on the bitts here, and then the pictures will show the people in the band too.” So we had a series of pictures taken, and we were rewarded with a medley of U.S. rock music.

Wonderful story from an Indian general I got talking to about medals and one thing and another. He told about going to an inspection one day and seeing a young man in the Indian Army who must have been brand new but had every medal there ever was, all the way down to his knees. And the reason was that he’d been told, “Wear all the medals.” And he got apologetic when the general showed up and said, “I’m sorry, sir. These are the only ones I could find.” He had gone to a store and bought them out. [Laughter] Captain Singh then told about his wife moving all his ribbons around so the

colors would match. It was a marvelous exchange. At precisely the scheduled ending time the band played both national anthems. It was thrilling!"

I met with Captain Singh at his headquarters, and we talked about what kinds of things they might do, how we might help them to get organized, and what kinds of work they were going to do. And I offered them help. That was a relationship that went on for a number of years. Even after he retired and came to the U.S. we exchanged notes periodically.

The AMVER ceremony at the Consulate was absolutely marvelous. It was held on the lawn of the Consulate with over 250 guests, many coming for the first time ever. I spoke—again—of the brotherhood of the sea and friendship of nations. Got rousing applause. Many consuls from other countries were there. And at dinner that night at the home of the vice chairman and managing director of the Shipping Corporation of India we had an absolutely marvelous spread laid out. I'd been warned about spicy Indian food, so I was being very chary about what I took from his buffet. He was saying, "It's mild, Admiral. Don't worry about it." So I took more. Well, his version of mild and my version of mild are not exactly the same.

From India we went to Indonesia, to Djakarta. We crossed the Equator over Sumatra and had an appropriate "Shellback" ceremony. At dinner that night was our first chance to get back to American food. We were at an Intercontinental Hotel, where they had food I could recognize. We were also setting the clocks ahead, so we knew we were heading home. We had a great celebration.

My crossing-the-Equator penalty for not sharing my peanut butter was I had to buy a drink for all the people in the crew. They were all having dinner way down at the other end of the room, so we sent the waitress down to tell them, "There's an old gentleman and his lady at the other end of the room, and they are great admirers of the United States Coast Guard. They are going to buy you a round of drinks." So the guys were all peering around and one thing and another. Finally somebody figured out what was going on, so they all bought three drinks. [Laughter]

In Djakarta the Ambassador was Ed Masters, an old-line Foreign Service officer.* In his office were pictures of Indonesia. His people spoke Indonesian and focused on

* Edward E. Masters was U.S. Ambassador to Indonesia from 10 December 1977 to 10 November 1981.

Indonesia as opposed to Singapore, for example, where it was all South Dakota. And I don't know. I'm not trying to draw parallels. It's just my judgment that here was a pro, an old-line Foreign Service officer, and he saw his job was to go to that country and blend in, be there. His residence was full of Indonesian artwork, and our dinner was Indonesian food. His staff was very helpful. They even got into trying to help us get an answer from the Melbourne Consul General. We had been trying since Singapore to have them agree to meet us after our 12-hour flight. Arrival was to be about 2245—not terribly late. But we got no answer and no bend beyond having public cabs available. Ambassador Masters was not happy. We never got a real answer. Admiral Gracey was furious.

Paul Stillwell: Ambassador Masters was a pro at this business.

Admiral Gracey: Yeah, and he was highly thought of. At the AMVER ceremony there a short—gee, couldn't have been more than five feet tall—ship captain came up to me. He was wearing his uniform hat and had his cap device held on with a safety pin. Whenever he spoke he clicked his heels and the cap device bobbed up and down on his hat. And he had it on in the reception. I presented the whole group of people with their awards, and afterwards he came up to me while we were having drinks, and in pretty good English, said, "Admiral, I've been going to sea all my life, and I've always been afraid. I've always been afraid, because we were out there in the middle of the ocean, and if anything happened who was going to help us? Then you came with AMVER, and I'm not afraid anymore, because I know you'll find somebody to help us."

Paul Stillwell: You must have glowed on hearing that.

Admiral Gracey: Oh, what a marvelous—I've told that story a thousand times. It was funny. At the same time it was really touching, and, boy, the AMVER people loved it. I could hardly wait to get back home and call them up and tell them about that conversation. And it's true, of course. That's the way AMVER works.

I met the brother of Mr. Habibe that was the Airbus man in Germany. Built the Airbus and so forth. His brother was a key person in the maritime affairs of government in Djakarta. And we spent a lot of time together. He took us around on a tour of what they called the “old port” and the new port. The old port was where they have sailing ships that supply the islands of the Indonesian Archipelago. They load them by having two maybe one-foot-wide tree trunks with a narrow slice taken off to make the top flat. They load trucks on them. They drive them down those narrow timbers across the water and onto the sailing vessel. I was absolutely fascinated to watch them load the cargo.

We didn’t talk much about the government of Indonesia, but at the time they were very interested in having us do some U.S. Coast Guard-type training for them. They really wanted a training program.

Oh, and it was in Indonesia that I met with the heads of all their Shipping Associations. This was shortly after the Iranian takeover of our embassy in Teheran. My aide and I and the U.S. Commercial Consul from the American Embassy, were the only non-Muslims in the room. And I thought, “This is going to be interesting. Be interesting to see how this goes.”

I soon found myself in the middle of a pitched battle. The pitched battle was between a group of Muslim executives on one side of the table who thought the U.S. should nuke the Iranians and those on the other side who had some other dire thing we were supposed to do to the Iranians. And I’m the one who’s saying, “No, no, no. No, no, not the United States. I can say with absolute sureness we are not going to nuke the Iranians over this event, or hopefully over any other event. We don’t do that.” But they were in total agreement among themselves that the United States should retaliate somehow. They were indignant on our behalf. I was with somebody at a church event just last night, and he was were bemoaning something about Muslims, and I was saying, “You cannot say a Muslim is a Muslim is a Muslim, any more than you can say that about *any* group of people.” The Indonesian shipping people, albeit Muslim, were in total sympathy with us. We had a wonderful discussion. It turned out one of them was a great fan of Douglas MacArthur and his “duty, honor, country” speech, so when we got home my aide went and found the recording and sent it to him, which he absolutely

loved.* We had a great visit in Djakarta and in Indonesia, ending with a superb dinner at Ambassador Masters's residence, where I had a couple long talks with him and key government and military people.

Then we flew to Melbourne. We flew diagonally across Australia on a day when there wasn't a cloud in the sky anywhere. You talk about the "Outback!" We flew over it. It took us 12 hours. We arrived right on time at 2245—and were met by nobody but a team of plane fumigators saying nothing. We couldn't disembark until they were through. Eventually regular taxicabs showed up in our back corner of the airport. It turned out the Consulate arranged with a local airline to work with our crew and the plane.

In Melbourne we did our AMVER ceremony in a boat cruising around the harbor with the harbormaster, the Port Director. He was an old-timer, and he hosted us for the ceremony. At the end of it he said, "Would you come back to my office? I'd like to have you see the Port Authority offices, and I think you'll find them attractive. And I'd like to have you come and have a spot with me." Thinking a spot of tea, of course.

No, an Australian Port Director's "spot" is good old Scotch whiskey. So Randy and I went there, and it was beautiful. I mean, you imagine the port of Melbourne, the office of the port director, old English, you know, style, and it was just absolutely gorgeous. But we got talking about his wartime experiences. And he said, "Well, I was in Singapore before the war."

I said, "Did you get out?"

He said, "No."

I said, "What did you do during the war?"

He said, "I built bridges."

I said, "Like the River Kwai?"[†]

He said, "That was one of them." He told about building bridges for the Japanese. Well, to hear somebody telling you this firsthand was a great experience. He also told

* General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, USA, made his "Duty, Honor, Country" address to the cadets of the U.S. Military Academy in accepting the Sylvanus Thayer Award on 12 May 1962.

[†] *The Bridge on the River Kwai* was an Oscar-winning movie, made in 1957, about the plight of Allied prisoners, mostly British, forced by their Japanese captors to build a railroad bridge in the rugged Asian jungle during World War II.

about the World War II "Battle of Brisbane," where U.S. troops and Aussie troops had an ugly pitched "battle" because Aussies shipping out were taunted about their women by U.S. troops arriving.

But we also did a lot of work with the Australians on tying in the Coast Guard and their Navy, the kinds of things we do, the things we have to offer. And they have an Antarctic division. Of course, we have a lot going on with our polar icebreakers and so forth and spent a lot of time with that. We had a good and productive meeting with the maritime people and their DoT and some interesting and informative exchanges at a Navy League luncheon.

From Melbourne we went to Christchurch, New Zealand. Christchurch is on the southern island of New Zealand, and that's where all the aircraft take off for operations in the Antarctic.

Paul Stillwell: Deep Freeze.

Admiral Gracey: Deep Freeze. Thank you.. Anyway, we stayed there. We were briefed by a Doctor Todd from the National Science Foundation and a number of his people. They were trying out some new kind equipment that he showed us about, and, of course, we met with the U.S. Coast Guard aviation group. But there was nobody there really. They were all doing their thing somewhere else at that time of year. It was November, and that's springtime down there. To our disappointment, the only place we had any trouble anywhere in the entire trip regarding security of our airplane was at the U.S. Naval Air Station at Christchurch. Somebody broke into our plane and stole a bunch of stuff. Of course, the CO was mortified.

Paul Stillwell: As he should have been.

Admiral Gracey: As well he might have been. And that was a disappointment. New Zealanders are wonderful people.

From there we went to American Samoa, where we had a great experience with Governor Coleman, who told about Samoan affairs and how they operated.* And got a little acquaintance with the Samoan culture with people living virtually outdoors in gazebo kind of buildings. It's all outdoors. They just drop the blinds. They have television sets and all that, and it's just open air. There was some concern that things were changing, because in the old days the Samoans weren't terribly industrious, because if they were hungry they waded into the water and caught a fish by their bare hands and ate it with a couple of bananas, and it was all right there. God was providing it all, and that was a concern.

The U.S. Coastguardsmen had a boat. There was a Coast Guard unit there, and they had a boat they called *Mata-ala*. They told us that stands for Semper Paratus, "always ready," and we accepted it. We were interviewed on local television.

Back to Honolulu and home, sweet home. It was a spectacular experience. That airplane just kept right on flying; that crew did wonders. We got every place on time. But I've only touched the surface of the people we talked to and people we met.

Paul Stillwell: And I'm guessing you did not bring home a load of furniture.

Admiral Gracey: We did not.

Paul Stillwell: How long did this whole venture take?

Admiral Gracey: It took about three weeks. We left San Francisco on October 28 and returned on November 21.

Paul Stillwell: Did you find it fatiguing after a while?

Admiral Gracey: Well, I think we were so excited and into the whole thing that we didn't have a sense of fatigue. Of course, we had some long flights with nothing to do but doze, watch the world go by, and get our journals caught up. When we got home, as I

* Peter Tali Coleman was the first popularly elected Governor of American Samoa.

remember, we realized that we were pooped. But we'd been going, going, going. It was only two or three days in each place, what Randy calls "mosquito bite visits." Sometimes only an overnight, and then on to the next one. There was a lot of ceremony. There was a lot of visiting. There was some sightseeing but minimal. Randy got a little more of that than I did. But most everything I did she was along with me. We were learning so much, and it was so fascinating. But when we got on the plane we could put that seat back and zonk out, although we were both busy trying to outdo each other in finding another way to describe the color of the water in the journals we were keeping. We kept separate journals, and we both realized that we ran out of words to describe the color blue. It was different.

Paul Stillwell: How much did you keep in touch with your headquarters while you were on the trip?

Admiral Gracey: Zippo.

Paul Stillwell: Interesting.

Admiral Gracey: I said to my Area Deputy Commander, "I'm going. You are the Area Commander. You've got the ball. If you absolutely have to find me, you know where I am. You've got the itinerary. You can get me through the embassy if there's something you think I really need to know, but I don't think you really need me, and you've got it. Run it. When I get home you may want to explain a few things. On the other hand, I probably won't ask you." I didn't. I said the same thing to my 12th District Chief of Staff.

I did the same thing when I was the Commandant. Yeah, I had faith. And we had top-notch comms on our aircraft. Later, on the Commandant's CG-01, it was even better—specifically tailored for the Commandant and for the Secretary of Transportation. They could find me anywhere. I mean, they can get you if they have to, but, hell, I left behind a vice admiral in Washington who I had great faith in, and I had captains, my deputies in both the 12th District and PacArea, two guys I had a great deal of faith in. If

you try to get involved from someplace else, all hell breaks loose. (A), it's not good leadership, and (B), it's not a good idea.

We have the famous Coast Guard example years ago of the Simas Kudirka case. He was the fellow that jumped over onto a Coast Guard ship from a Soviet ship somewhere off the New England coast.* The Coast Guard First District Commander was on sick leave at the time, but he got called about the situation. He tried to suggest things that ought to be done when really he should have let his District Chief of Staff that was Acting District Commander run it. They got into all kinds of tangles, and it all turned to mud. He got in much trouble. It spoiled his career. It wasn't a good idea. But that was not foremost in my mind. I just wouldn't do it. If I went off driving a car on a trip in the Great Lakes, driving from one place to another, I would say, "Look. I'm here. I'm still in the Ninth District. I've got a phone in the car. But if you can't reach me, if I'm doing something and you can't find me, you've got the ball. Do it."

Paul Stillwell: Not every flag officer has the personality that would enable him to take that kind of hands-off approach.

Admiral Gracey: Well, I have to say that I've watched in the Capstone program, where I have been a senior fellow for several years, and they're all the new admirals and generals. Some of them are new, some of them have been there for a year or two, but they cannot resist. We beg them to stay away from the telephone. "Give it a week. Give it six weeks. You've got somebody back there." Most of them can't do it. It doesn't mean I'm not interested. Doesn't mean I don't want to hear about it when I get back. Like I said, "Doesn't mean I'm not going to ask you some questions about, 'What were you thinking of when you did that?' or, 'What was your rationale, whatever, you know?' Be ready to tell me about it when I get home. But do it. And I trust you." I don't know. Everybody has his own way, but I was comfortable with that. So much for WestPac.

* Simas Kudirka was a radio operator on board the Soviet fishing trawler *Sovietskaya Litva*. On 23 November 1970 he leaped from his ship to the deck of the U.S. Coast Guard cutter *Vigilant* (WMEC-617), which was moored alongside in American waters, near Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts. Ten hours later he was removed by force from the U.S. ship and returned to the Soviet vessel.

Paul Stillwell: What other items do you have in your notes?

Admiral Gracey: There was a historical group that was building a replica of the U.S. Revenue Cutter *California*, which had been a wooden sailing ship. I was invited to come and participate in the launching, christening. They asked if I would be willing to drive the golden spike. I'd love to do that. Be honored. What they didn't tell me was that I was going to go walk out on a very narrow plank. It was not terribly strongly braced. And I was going to have a sledge that I could hardly lift off the ground, let alone swing. And this spike was on the bottom of the turn of the bilge, so from this wobbly board I was going to have to swing this sledge upward and hit this golden spike. [Laughter]

Paul Stillwell: And you said, "If it weren't for the honor of the thing, I'd just as soon not."

Admiral Gracey: I wish I had thought of that. Well, I think they had prepared it. It took a few hits to get it in place, and I have a hunch that somebody came along later on and whacked it properly after I'd gone away. But we had fun with it. I had a few things to say, and there was a share of laughter and applause when it finally got done that I hadn't killed myself in the process. [Laughter]

My official duties back in San Francisco included working with the DoT Secretary's Representative. Each of the ten Federal Regions had one. The one for Fed Region Nine was in San Francisco. I was the Regional Emergency Transportation Coordinator for that region. Periodically the SecRep would leave town, and he always asked me to be his Acting SecRep. So I got to participate in various interagency and intragovernment matters. For a while we didn't have one at all, so I was the SecRep as well as my other jobs.

That got me involved in the political arena a little bit but only to the extent it was appropriate for a military officer. I can't tell you anything particularly exciting that happened except that it was there, and I was seeing the world from a little bit different vantage point. I wasn't a total novice at what happens in the political arenas, and I had watched the SecRep in Chicago do his thing when I was in Cleveland. I was the RETCO

working on the earthquake plan, as I've mentioned, and that sort of thing. So when we had drills and exercises we got involved.

Had an interesting interaction with fishermen. I noted there were some fishing vessels that kept showing up on our list of vessels assisted. There'd be the third or fourth time I'd see the name of this or that fishing vessel when I read the reports of assistance cases in the morning. I asked my people about that, and they said, "Yeah, there's some of these guys that really shouldn't be going to sea at all in these things."

So I signed a letter to all the owners of these particular vessels, and I said, "I note that you own such-and-such a vessel, and we have been called out to assist her three or four times now. That tells me that the boat is probably not in good shape to go to sea. What I'd like to do is offer you the services of our Merchant Marine Safety inspectors." There was no law that authorized us to regulate fishing vessels. So I had no way to order them to have their vessels inspected. But I said, "I'd like to offer it. They'll come and do it for free. We'll come and do an inspection and tell you what kind of work you need to do to make your vessel safe."

Several of them accepted that. Several of them took it and put their boats in the dock, in the yard, and fixed them. There were a couple that didn't want to do that. They didn't want to participate. So I had some people I knew in the insurance business, and I said, "If you insured one of these vessels and we made this offer, would you like to know if they chose not to accept it, even though it was a vessel that we'd had to assist three or four times? Would you like to hear about that?" [Laughter]

The answer wasn't, "Is a frog watertight?" but obviously the answer was, "Of course we'd like to hear about it."

So I then sent my follow-up letter to those owners. I said, "You know, I understand that you may not want to do this, but I think I really ought to tell your insurers that you've chosen this course to sail an unsafe vessel. I feel obligated to do that with my duty to keep things safe." And they all came around. I was pleased. I told some of the ABS, American Bureau of Shipping people about doing that later on, and they were appalled that I had done it. [Laughter] But it worked.

I was the West Coast advisor to the National Cargo Bureau. I was a trustee of the United Way of San Francisco. I spoke at all kinds of occasions. I ran the DoT Regional

Hazardous Materials Committee. I chaired the Minority Business Opportunity Committee of the Federal Executive Board.

And that's it for San Francisco, except I got tangled in working out how I could go from being ComPacArea to ComLantArea without losing my seniority. I would be reduced from vice admiral, O-9, to rear admiral, O-8, on the way across country, because I had the three-star rank only as long as long as I had a three-star job. But there was some concern about when I got my new rank in New York if that was going to be my date of rank, or was it going to be the original one—1978 vs. 1981. The first answer was it would be 1981. We tried all kinds of suggestions as to how to avoid that, and somebody asked, "Why are you worried about it?"

I said, "I'm worried about it because the other services that we're dealing with, U.S. and foreign, understand seniority. If I'm a four-year vice admiral, but my book says I'm a one-year vice admiral, that's not good for me, it's not good for us, it's not good for the U.S. in my international relationships. I think people with whom we're doing business need to understand whom they're dealing with. I'm not one that sits and looks at numbers all the time, but it's going to be a factor."

We went back and forth over a period of time, and finally some wise head somewhere asked and found out that what the Navy does in such situations is use your earliest date of rank. If you go in and out of jobs that have higher frocking, well, so be it. Your date of rank is the earliest one you had. Ended that. We drove across country winding up ultimately in New York.

Paul Stillwell: Isn't it unusual for a Coast Guard officer to command both the Atlantic and Pacific areas?

Admiral Gracey: It's not been a standard practice, but others had done it. Vice Admiral Mark Whalen for one. He was in New York in 1969 when I left there.* Later on he was

* Rear Admiral Mark A. Whalen, USCG, served simultaneously as Commander Eastern Area and Commander Third Coast Guard District in New York. Subsequently, as a rear admiral he was Commander Western Area and 12th District in San Francisco. He was promoted to vice admiral when the billet became Commander Pacific Area.

the Pacific Area commander in San Francisco. I don't know for a fact how many others have done it.

Paul Stillwell: How did that assignment come about? The admiral in New York was retiring and that created a vacancy?

Admiral Gracey: I mentioned earlier that Admiral Hayes and I were kind of the last two in running as to who was going to be the next Commandant. Finally, Secretary Adams selected Rear Admiral Hayes to be Admiral Siler's successor. I don't know what form this took, but Admiral Siler told me that Secretary Adams directed that I be given three stars. The deal was that I was going to go to San Francisco for two years, and Bob Price was going to retire in two. Then I was going to go to New York. Admiral Hayes explained that was the way he had in mind it was going to work.

When it got coming on toward the end of the second year, he called me up one day, and said, "Bob Price has decided he doesn't want to retire now. He'd like to hang on another year. How do you feel about staying out there another year?" My answer was something like, "Don't throw me in the briar patch. That will be wonderful, and there will be great sounds of celebration when I get home tonight and tell my wife." But I actually said, "No, that's fine." So that's how it happened and I did three years out there and then went in for one in New York.

It's hard to make things happen in just one year on that kind of a job, but we managed to get some things done. We had a great trip across country and got to New York on time. We moved into guest quarters for a few days and then had our change of command.

During our period in New York a variety of new kinds of things came down the pike. One of them was the Haitian Migrant Interdiction business. President Reagan had announced that he was going to stop the migration.* And so the word came that it was to happen, and, of course, being in Atlantic Area that was mine to get done. Commander Seventh District in Miami was going to run the operation.

* Ronald W. Reagan served as President of the United States from 20 January 1981 to 20 January 1989.

Paul Stillwell: This was Admiral Stabile?

Admiral Gracey: It was Admiral Stabile at the time.* So that got to be a big issue. One of the concerns I remember was, “How are we going to work this with the troops?” They’re used to being good guys. “Smokies of the Sea,” drug busts, that’s one thing, though even that hadn’t really hit its peak at that point. But here we were going to take folks who were on their way making a dash for freedom, and we were going to pick them up and take them back to Haiti. And how do you communicate that that’s an okay thing to do? Obviously, it’s okay to do, because you’ve been told to do it by the President of the United States, but that’s not the point.

Paul Stillwell: It’s counter to your training and instincts.

Admiral Gracey: Yeah, yeah. You save people. And with the Cubans we saved them, and we brought them to the U.S. We didn’t take them back to Cuba. Well, my approach here was to try to come up with—to coin—a rationale our people could hang onto. We found that this migration was a bad thing that was going on. It was bad in the sense that the people were being robbed. They were really being robbed. They would get their whole life savings together, and they would pay some guy an inordinate amount of money to get them to the U.S. He would put them on a boat, sail around for a while and go around to the other side of Haiti, and put them ashore and say, “There you are.” Their money was gone, and they weren’t even at their hometown.

Paul Stillwell: And these had to be desperate people to embark on that kind of venture.

Admiral Gracey: And how. Well, everything they owned they had sold to get enough money to do this. I had heard several stories like this, and so I went around talking to our people about this sort of thing, and Ben did the same with his people, just try to get across the idea. Because we were shipping Coast Guard people from all over LantArea to go down to help with this operation. And it got to be okay. They got so even though they

* Rear Admiral Benedict L. Stabile, USCG, Commander Seventh Coast Guard District, Miami.

didn't like it, they understood why it was going on. And it wasn't a pleasant experience. It wasn't one you could beat your breast about and say, "Well, look at the good work we've done today." But, on the other hand, there were some good sides to it

It was interesting to go back as "The Admiral" in Admiral's House. I was happy that buoy was gone that we took out shortly after the first admiral went in. I mentioned that the Army kept trying to get the bell buoy out from under the general's bedroom window, and we kept saying it had to be there and it lasted one night with a Coast Guard admiral in the house. The Army said, "You bastards. We knew you were going to do that." But I was happy that it had happened when I got to sleep in that house. But at the time it happened I wasn't thinking about sleeping there some day.

I had set up the labor situation 15 years before. But we got into a big flap with the union. We'd gotten involved with the staff in the office as well as the Public Works Division people on the island, the staff in the LantArea and Third District offices. There were some real tense negotiations that went on. Finally I decided that I'd use the lessons I'd learned out west—that once in a while you've got to step in the middle and referee or see if you can't come up with something different that you can do that nobody else can think of to do to sway the day. Somewhere in my journal there I've got the gory details, but we don't need to talk about that. The point was that ultimately we got it resolved.

But in the course of all this we were also working on equal opportunity. And I got involved in a couple of cases where there was really some bias going on against a Puerto Rican woman. I stepped in and ordered that she be given her back pay and a few other things, just because I thought it was a bad scene. That created a bit of a rumpus for a while, but ultimately we got it all pacified.

Paul Stillwell: Was she a civil servant?

Admiral Gracey: Yes, she was a civil servant, and it was clear to me there was no reason for her not to get the promotions that were available. She had all the talent and everything else. To me it was clear that there was bias going on and prejudice. I had personally written my Human Relations Policy Statement after a running battle with the personnel officer in San Francisco. It was a straightforward writing of what I expected:

attitudes and warmth, and that what I expected in terms of relationships went beyond the mere legalities. I finally got it printed.

But I got into the head of the Office of Human Relations at Coast Guard Headquarters. The Office Chief had gotten on my case because they and the civilian personnel officer in San Francisco insisted there needed to be two separate statements, one for military and one for civilians. When I said, “Why is that so?” they said, “Because you have no handicapped people in the military.” Good grief!

“So there are no handicapped people in the military. So there’s no problem. That doesn’t mean they aren’t going to be considered with the ones they do business with. I keep talking about us being one big family here. We’ve got all pieces of family. Some of them wear civilian clothes. Some of them wear uniforms. I’m going to insist on my feelings about the attitudes and the tone I want and the relationships I want and that I expect. It doesn’t make any difference whether the people are wearing brass buttons or not.”

And I wouldn’t change it. We had a big shootout, and I wrote a letter to the Commandant. I said, “I won’t change it. I flat out won’t change it. I’ve written it. It’s posted. It’s going to stay there, and it’s going to go to New York or wherever else I go, and if I go home it’ll go home, but that’s the way it’s going to be.”

I was the Combined Federal Campaign chairman in New York for that year. I was only there a year—less than a year, really.

We had a vessel traffic system in New York, and we had a board of advisors for it. Part of President Reagan’s budget cuts really knocked that VTS in the head. The system had not been completed. It started off with some radar and some low-light-level television observers so you could see people coming down the East River, and we could monitor the anchorages in the harbor. If a ship was dragging anchor, we could alert them before they got in the way of a ferry or of a ship coming in or we had some major disaster in the harbor. There were all kinds of things we could do with the VTS we had.

They cut out the money, and we had virtually nothing left, so the Board of Advisors and I went to work to see how best to use what we did have. What we decided was, “We haven’t got enough money to do the whole thing, so what we’re going to do is concentrate on protecting the Staten Island Ferry. We have multi-thousands of people on

each one of those ferries every morning, and we had a near miss recently with a Norwegian ship that almost hit one of them. So we're going to focus on that." That went on for two or three months, but we finally came up with a way to rearrange what we had so we could protect the Staten Island Ferries. At least we felt we were doing some good, and, of course, they could also keep an eye on the anchorages.

In San Francisco we had found that having the VTS radar up at the top of Yerba Buena Island, right in the middle of San Francisco Bay, was helpful on a couple of search and rescue cases. We had somebody calling for help out in the Bay, and we were going out and trying to find them. We could have them do a circle or something that we could see on the radar so we knew which of the many targets it was. Then we could vector our boats to them, and we could get it done more quickly. Our guys and gals used a lot of imagination in how they took advantage of that VTS radar .

I went to a World Series Game at the invitation of George Steinbrenner.* I'd met him when I was in Cleveland because of his shipping and shipbuilding business. Even though I was a not a trained "M" guy—merchant marine safety specialist, that is—I really felt that a relationship with the maritime industry was good, and a CG District Commander ought to get involved. Anyway, George invited me up to Yankee Stadium, and it was a night there was national television. I sat right in front of Jimmy Cagney in my uniform.† People from all over the world who were watching the game that night called. The TV people panned across Steinbrenner's box, and there was Jimmy Cagney, and, of course, sitting right in front of him was this Coast Guard officer. "What the hell are you doing at the baseball game, Gracey?" [Laughter] That was a one and only event, but it was an interesting one.

I went make a speech at the Union League of Philadelphia. They wanted to hear about the Coast Guard and some things happening in Philadelphia regarding maritime business and so forth. They told me my wife and I could stay at the Union League building. That's a big, old-line, back-to-Civil War times very exclusive club.

Paul Stillwell: I don't think the furnishings have changed since then either. [Laughter]

* The Los Angeles Dodgers defeated the New York Yankees in the World Series of 1981.

† James Cagney (1899-1986) was a long-time actor whose movie career went from 1930 to 1981.

Admiral Gracey: No, I don't think so, nor some of the policies.

Paul Stillwell: They've got the dark paneled walls and the portraits of all the old generals.

Admiral Gracey: Yes, and marble corridors and marble pillars. They told me how to get there and that I could park in a garage right next door. So Randy and I drove down from New York. The Union League building is right in the heart of downtown Philadelphia, approached by a series of one-way streets—working your way to the center like the wonga-wonga bird. Do you know about the wonga-wonga bird?

Paul Stillwell: No.

Admiral Gracey: The wonga-wonga bird. As an example I've cited him often in my various dealings over the years. We learned about him as cadets. He is one who flies around in circles of ever decreasing radius until he disappears up his own rear end. Well, it was kind of wonga-wonga bird approach.

I was driving along a one-way street. There was the Union League, and I'd just passed the parking garage. What do I do now? I didn't want to go back and start over again. Among other things we were getting on towards time when I was supposed to get ready to go to a speech I was making that night, and I was meeting with some people that afternoon. I had my vice admiral suit on. In my youth, remember, I'd gone to the Provost Marshal General School at Camp Gordon, Georgia. I had been trained by U.S. Army MPs. I knew how to direct traffic. I said to Randy, "You drive. I'll direct traffic."

At high noon in the middle of downtown Philadelphia. I went and stood out in the intersection in my vice admiral's suit, and I stopped the traffic. Had Randy back up. Pointed her down the side street to the garage—all this using proper arm and hand signals, of course. Waved the traffic through and walked off the street. I hadn't seen him, but there was a Philadelphia cop leaning against a telephone pole, watching. He walked over and said, "Not bad, Admiral. Not bad." [Laughter]

That night, after my speech, I went back to the Union League, and there was a ball game on television. We didn't have television in our room. We just had a radio. You're right, old furnishings. But they had a television room downstairs just off the main corridor. So I went down. I had a sweater and slacks on, no necktie, and I was walking down the corridor. My footsteps were echoing. There was not a soul anywhere around. And this voice came from behind one of the pillars and said, "Oh, sir. You can't be here like that."

Dumbfounded, I said, "What do you mean?"

He said, "You have to have a coat on and a tie on the ground floor."

I said, "There's nobody here but you and me, and I'm going to watch television."

He said, "Well, if you'll sit behind the magazine rack—"

I said, "Thank you, no. I'll go up and read a book." [Laughter]

During that period we created what has become an annual event for the Coast Guard Foundation, which was then the Coast Guard Academy Foundation. They started having an annual fund-raising dinner at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York. The previous year they had gotten the marine industry together for lunch. I thought, "I'm not sure it's a good idea to squeeze the marine industry on giving money to Coast Guard functions. And why don't we do it right and have a 'Salute to the Coast Guard Dinner?' Get the Coast Guard Band to come down. We'll get the Cadet Glee Club to come down from New London. We'll do it in the Waldorf. We'll charge a lot of money. The Coast Guard is doing a lot of interesting things. We'll pick three or four special things that illustrate what the Coast Guard does. We'll give awards: one for heroism, one for circumnavigating the Antarctic or whatever they've done that year that will illustrate what the Coast Guard does and warrants recognition. And we'll do that at the Waldorf."

The Foundation Chairman, John Irish, and Secretary Paul Richardson and a couple others on the board, bless their hearts, thought that was a good idea. They hired somebody to do the logistics. We started the Annual Salute to the Coast Guard Dinner tradition that year. They let me do the talking, tell the stories of the particular awards, and present the awards. I loved it, being the ham that I am. The next year I was the Commandant, and I was going to go back to this event. Coast Guard people at HQ had made up a dog-and-pony show they thought would be a good thing to show up front to

get everybody familiar with us, see what our hardware looks like and all that so when we talk about these things they'll have some idea. And I said, "Now, I want it to be hard hitting, zippo, and don't let it go on a long time. And let me know. I want to see it when you've got it ready."

So they called me in to look at it. They had pictures of guys really knocking themselves out working on a buoy. And there was soupy violin music playing in the background. I said, "No, no, no, no. Stop the tape. We are not a violin outfit. We may be marching bands. We may be country and western. We may be big bands. But *no* violins. Take it back to the drawing board. I want it by the end of the week." I couldn't believe it.

At the end of the week they said, "Can you come in to look at the film now. We think you'll like it." I went in and they had a folding chair set up, and it said "Director" on the back of it. Next to it was a stool, and on top was a bowl of popcorn. [Laughter]

They said, "Are you ready, Admiral?" Well, they got it right that time. I mean to tell you. To the pictures of Coast Guard guys hacking brush away from lights along a riverbank, there was country and western music. If the scene warranted marching band music, it had marching bands. And if it was ships at sea, it was go-to-sea music. They did it right—in spades.

I insisted on describing the events in plain language so that I could read them in New York. As you know very well, I enjoy telling Coast Guard stories. We described what we were doing in a concise narrative. We didn't have people brace up for their awards. Nowadays they have them stand braced like they do at medal award ceremonies, and they present them like medals. I think it was more fun the way we used to do it. We had the awardees stay at their tables until I finished. Then, with a flourish, I would say, "And now, ladies and gentlemen, I want you to meet that plane crew" or whatever fit. They would come to the stage in a spotlight from the balcony as the Coast Guard Band played some real "whoop-de-doo" music. The audiences loved it.

We had the words to "Semper Paratus" on the back of the program. And I would say to the audience, "Now, you are not in the Coast Guard, but you're here tonight. That means tonight you're part of the Coast Guard. The band is now going to play 'Semper Paratus' and we're all going to stand up. And I mean *all* of us. And we're going to sing.

I mean *all* of us. The words are on the back. I want to hear you singing. I'm going to look, and I expect singing. You'll recognize the music." They did. They all sang. It was wonderful. [Laughter]

Paul Stillwell: After that threat what else could they do?

Admiral Gracey: What could they do? Well, it was a great program. I enjoyed doing it—and the audience did too. They came back the following year and brought friends.

There was a continuing resolution in Congress. They couldn't get around to passing the budget, and how were we going to keep operating? You know, in theory under a continuing resolution you can only do a certain percentage of the prior year, but we had a humongous new operation going. We were trying to do this Haitian Migrant Interdiction thing, and there was a drug war heating up, and we were trying to do some operations with the Navy. It was a very busy period of shuffling ships and aircraft schedules around so that we could meet the responsibilities as best we could. But we did. The guys and gals did it.

I did have one case in New York where I stepped in and countermanded the Third District Operations Officer. I had been really pushing on the matter of crew fatigue. I said, "I don't want to send people out there with small units that are going to have to be out there a long time and will wind up fighting the fatigue factor." One day we had a case well offshore in the Atlantic, where we were trailing, keeping an eye on a guy. We had every reason to believe there was going to be a drug rendezvous in a particular area, and we wanted to nail him. I went down to the op center and I said, "Who's covering this?" Well, it was an 82-footer. I said, "I thought we weren't going to send 82-footers on such an extended case, with loiter time and all."

"Well, there's two of them."

I said, "Now you've got *two* tired crews. How's that going to help? What I'm talking about is a ship that's built to go out and stay out for a while—like a seagoing buoy tender or medium endurance cutter. He said, "We're only using buoy tenders for aids to navigation work."

I said, “If a tender is the only asset we have that can go to sea and stay there, we’ll use it. Use that one now.” And it took a little while to get that point across to the Districts, so we would look at individual cases. Periodically the Area would step in and say, “No, no, that’s not what we’re talking about.” But mostly it would be directing a ship to deploy by name and time and tell the District, “Deploy such and such a vessel.” And that’s the way I got involved.

Incidentally, that bit about, “We’re only using buoy tenders for A to N work” came out of Coast Guard Headquarters—the Aids to Navigation Program Director. The rear admiral involved was a zealot on the matter of “his assets” being “his.” That we were pressing the multi-mission nature of our facilities as a reason we had to keep the Coast Guard intact was not on his horizon. I had missed the fact that that edict had been sent to the field as an inviolable rule. I read it as a “most of the time, depending on the situation” policy. My ops guy obviously read it differently.

By this time we were in Ronald Reagan’s presidency, I guess. He started in ’81, right?

Paul Stillwell: January of ’81.

Admiral Gracey: Yeah, ’81, so that was my last six months in San Francisco and the next six months in New York. There was a big push for the Coast Guard to move to DoD. There were all kinds of people who had decided that was the solution to our budget problems. We should go there. I would go around to do one event or another, and the press was all over that case. I had checked with Jack Hayes so that I wasn’t bucking him on it, but we were both agreed that going to DoD was not going to solve the problem. It was going to make it worse, and we were going to disappear in a hiccup somewhere over there at the Pentagon. We were working with the Navy in operations and so forth. Senator Hawkins from Florida was pushing real hard to get more ships to Florida.* She didn’t care what else was going on. She wanted them in Florida, because we had the Haitian mission, and she felt threatened by the Haitians and the Cubans, and there was a lot going on in Florida. But we didn’t need her extra pressure.

* Paula Hawkins, a Republican from Florida, served in the Senate from 1 January 1981 to 3 January 1987.

Paul Stillwell: The Reagan administration really turned on the money faucets for the Department of Defense. Did they get turned on for you?

Admiral Gracey: No. They did not get turned on for us. I had the experience of struggling with it both in one sense in San Francisco but big time in New York. One of the things I tried to do to cope with the budget problem was to address our aids to navigation situation. And I did this in the Third District. I couldn't do this sort of thing as the Atlantic Area Commander, but as the Third District Commander I said, "What I want you to do is log all the buoys out there, and I want a list of aids that we think are essential or "semi-essential." A semi-essential aid is one that serves a limited amount of traffic or traffic of just a private group. If it's to mark somebody's marina, then let the marina owner take it. Let's think and see if it's possible to say to the marina guy, "You've got to provide your own marker for the entrance to your marina."

Well, didn't I create a hornet's nest? Congressman Studds of Cape Cod and another great supporter, great friend of ours, and Congressman Bill Hughes from New Jersey, really got on us.* We had put out a Notice to Mariners, and they responded right now. We kept working on it for a while, but we finally realized that it was causing more problems than it was going to be worth. And they were unhappy because their fishermen and boating people and everybody else were on *their* case. What we were doing was asking people to tell us if there were any aids out there they thought they could do without so that we could cut down the cost of running the program. It was one of those great ideas that every so often you've got to say, "Well, it was a great idea, folks. Let's reel it in and file it away for future reference."

Paul Stillwell: Well, if somebody's been getting a service for free, he doesn't have much inclination to then want to start paying for it.

* Gerry E. Studds, a Democrat from Massachusetts, served in the House of Representatives from 3 January 1973 to 3 January 1997. William J. Hughes, a Democrat from New Jersey, served in the House of Representatives from 3 January 1975 to 3 January 1995.

Admiral Gracey: Yeah. I'll talk about this when we get to my Commandant years, but we got into labeling waterways as "critical" and "non-critical," which ones we would consider privatizing the aids, let some contractor do it. But I said, "We flat out will *not* contract out what we consider critical waterways, where major events can happen, where the major traffic lanes for trade are crucial or where an accident will cause a major hazard for people or tie up a port and the economy of a region. Anything of that ilk is going to be called a critical waterway, and we're not going to stop working the aids to navigation on it. It's going to be like saving lives. If there's a life at risk we're going to do it. We're not going to hand it off to somebody else. No amateurs needed." And I got away with that. No limit to what you can do with a little bravado once in a while if you've got a little logic that goes with it.

On February 1, 1982 I got a call from Secretary Lewis, Deputy Secretary Trent, and Commandant Jack Hayes to tell me I was going to be the 17th Commandant of the Coast Guard.* Then started a series of trips almost every day to Washington and back. The first one was the very next day. The purpose was (a) to meet a bunch of DoT people and (b) to talk about the bad relations DoT was having with the Coast Guard, and (c) to be told that the Coast Guard was all fouled up and one thing and another. I said, "That's a bum rap. If that's where we're going, maybe you'd better not announce publicly what you've just told me on the phone. But I think we'll fix that."

Paul Stillwell: Had there been any foreshadowing? Had there been job interviews before you got this call?

Admiral Gracey: Oh, yes. I jumped over that. Yes, I'd been interviewed in the late fall. I'd gone down to meet Secretary Lewis, I had a long interview with him, and he at that time had asked me how I felt about relationships, taking orders from the department and that sort of thing, because there'd been a little bucking the tide going on there. There had been some of that mostly because the Reagan Administration was going in a direction that was really going to be harmful to the Coast Guard. I bucked them big time on it

* Andrew L. Lewis, Jr., served as Secretary of Transportation from 23 January 1981 to 1 February 1983. Darrell M. Trent was Deputy Secretary of Transportation from 29 January 1981 to 1 May 1983.

myself. I read somewhere that Jack Hayes had put all this to bed. Not so. He started some studies and things that were potentially helpful, but it went on big time on my watch.

I told Secretary Lewis at my interview that as Commandant I would see that it was my job to run the Coast Guard, and as far as he was concerned, my job was to keep him posted on how the Coast Guard was going. If he had some ideas, I'd be happy to talk to him about them. But if I thought he or his people were making a mistake, I was going to tell him "where the bear went in the buckwheat." That was my duty to let him know. And if he said, "I understand all that, Jim, but I want to go in the buckwheat anyway." Then, depending on where we are, I will say, "Take my arm, Mr. Secretary, and I will lead you right in the middle of where the bear went in the buckwheat. But you're going to be warned about it and you're going to hear our view. You obviously are the Secretary, but I think we can work out an arrangement where we don't have to do that."

It was interesting to note that when I went in to see him for my interview, there was laying on the coffee table in his office a copy of the "Harvard Business School 25th Anniversary Bulletin," and that was my 25th year at HBS, from 1956. He was one class ahead of me at the Business School, which I didn't realize. I had been featured on the cover of this section about the 25th year class. In the photo I was standing with my cap under my arm, and in the background were some Coast Guard ships. And the article was titled "Coast to Coast Guard."

The "Bulletin" had interviewed me in San Francisco, because I was a vice admiral with a huge job, and I was an HBS grad. That was a big deal, and all of sudden I was in New York too—with a similar job. They thought they'd died and gone to heaven with the theme for this article. So the magazine was open with this picture and the "Coast to Coast Guard" title. Secretary Lewis came in and introduced himself, and he said, "Doesn't look like we're going to have too much trouble here, does it?"

[Laughter] I said, "Well, you may want to talk some more."

And he said, "Yes, I do want to talk some more but—"

Paul Stillwell: The old school tie didn't hurt.

Admiral Gracey: I said, “Do you know Harvard Business School?”

He said, “Yeah.” I think he was class of ’55. I was ’56. Old school tie, I don’t know about that, but he just found it interesting, and, of course, it was in all my records. He already knew I had that background. And it would have come up. But the ’Bulletin’ was open to that page. Somebody had laid it out on his coffee table before we talked. So, yes, we had the interviews. This February announcement didn’t come as a bolt out of the blue. I never did find out the results of these things, but Admiral Hayes had done a survey of all the flag officers as to who they thought the top three choices ought to be. Some of my good classmates got angry about that.

Paul Stillwell: Why?

Admiral Gracey: Because they thought, bless their hearts, “How could you possibly ask the question? Who else could you even consider but a guy that’s just run both areas and three districts and been the Chief of Staff and ran CPA besides, and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah?”

And I said, “Hey, it’s okay.” And I gave them my list of three, and my name wasn’t on it. I gave them three others and told them they ought to consider it.

Paul Stillwell: Admiral Yost said that you won all the others. [Laughter]

Admiral Gracey: Well, believe it or not, I don’t know that. I’m pleased to hear it, but it never occurred to me. You know, shame on me, but I just assumed it was going to be me, and if it wasn’t going to be, well, okay. I did the best I could. A young officer interviewed me the day after I became the Commandant and asked, “What advice do you have to give to people who aspire to be the Commandant?”

I said, “I don’t think aspiring to be the Commandant is a great idea.” I said, “I think you ought to do your job, give it 110%, let your brain run, be your own self, and if who you are is what they want, then that’s it. And if it’s not, you can’t change it. I’ve seen all kinds of people go down the tubes trying to force the system. Don’t do it.”

Paul Stillwell: And sometimes it's just a matter of timing and who's in a position to make the choice at a given time.

Admiral Gracey: I have to tell you that I hesitated to tell you the story about the magazine. I have never told it much outside of very close circles, because I didn't want anybody to think that I became the Commandant because Secretary Lewis and I had both been to Harvard Business School. I never saw the man in my life until I went in for my interview. I didn't know anything about the man. And if you know Drew Lewis, you know he was joking. It didn't matter anything to him. But I didn't want anybody to think that it did. I wanted them to think that I got there because—what I always said to people was, “They gave me every other job it was possible to give me, and found out I couldn't do any of them.

They finally said, “We have one more. Let's see if he do can that one.” And that's kind of the approach I've taken.

I did tell you earlier about a Coast Guard retired chief warrant officer, Betty Splaine. She's 80-some years old now, and she just flew up to Kodiak for the commissioning of the new Coast Guard cutter *SPAR*. The day after it was announced publicly that I was going to be the next Commandant I got an overnight mail package. From Betty obviously. And inside is a T-shirt, which says on the front of it: “Hail Mary, Hail Mary, Hail Mary, Hail Mary”—four Hail Mary's for four stars.

The announcement was made on 2 February. We had already made arrangements for the Navy Chief of Chaplains and his wife to spend the night of February 4 with us at our quarters on Governors Island and have dinner with all the chaplains there.* The next morning he was to be the speaker at a prayer breakfast on Governors Island. And here it had been publicly announced that I'm going to be the next Commandant. There was lots of conversation about “How did you manage to work that one out? What did you know?”

And Ross Trower kept saying, “No, no, no. It was arranged a long time ago. We just didn't know it yet.”

* Rear Admiral Ross H. Trower, CHC, USN, served as the Navy's Chief of Chaplains from June 1979 to August 1983

Ross Trower was a wonderful man. He and Jack Hayes had talked about possibly having a Chaplain of the Coast Guard position created, reporting directly to the Commandant. When I came in he saw to it that we had it. He set it up. Asked me how I felt about it, and I said, “Oh, wow. Wonderful. I want it.” And he found a Captain named Eddy Moran, who was just absolutely superb—perfect for the job and for our working together.* More later about him and that great start for the Coast Guard Chaplains program. .

Then on the fifth of February—you know, it was boom, boom, boom—I flew back to Washington, and we worked out who was going to be the Vice Commandant, and I said I wanted Ben Stabile. At DoT they were all happy with Ben Stabile and that was a good choice. And I went to OMB.† The announcement was out about me, but it didn’t come out about Ben. They hadn’t worked out any of the details yet, and whatever the politics were behind the scene as to whether that was going to be all right. I spent most of that week with Admiral Hayes. Time was marching on and still no public word about Ben being the Vice Commandant.

At that time the Coast Guard had a tradition of having a “Sweethearts’ Luncheon” for Valentine’s Day, and there was to be a big one at Coast Guard Headquarters. Ben and I were in town. He was up from Florida allegedly doing some work on the Haitian business with operations people, but he and I were actually meeting in the cellar at Jack Hayes’s Quarters every night and behind closed doors at Headquarters. Finally Jack, I think, persuaded the Secretary to let us announce about Ben. We were having this luncheon. Would it be possible that we could introduce the full team at the luncheon? The Secretary called me up, and said, “Not only may you do it. I insist you do it, and you and Ben go together.” And we did.

Paul Stillwell: What were the factors that led you to choose him?

Admiral Gracey: Well, let me count the ways, not necessarily in order. But one that has always struck people’s fancy was when I was a pitcher at the Coast Guard Academy, Ben

* Captain Eddy Bill Moran, CHC, USN.

† OMB—Office of Management and Budget.

was my catcher. And everybody figured, “Well, that’s number one and two. That’s the pitcher and the catcher on the scorecard. Right?” And that’s gotten a lot of play.

I had known Ben and admired his work for a long time. Ben and Barbara are just superb people. I knew Ben had engineering skills and some seagoing experience I didn’t have. He’d had time in command of a high endurance cutter. I hadn’t had that. He had run the Coast Guard Yard. He is an engineer. He brought a lot of skills that I didn’t have personally. I valued him as a person and as an old friend, and with those skills to go with it I thought we’d be a good combination. And he’d been running Miami, and that’s a big job. So that’s how I picked him. There were others, but I won’t talk about them. I did consider them carefully, and they probably would have worked out fine, but Ben Stabile was the right choice.

There were a lot of people who didn’t think that I was going to be sufficiently military minded—caring about our defense mission—even though I had set up training programs with the Navy in the Pacific that had never been done before and had made overtures to CinCLant and his people about a more active relationship with the Coast Guard.* When I was the USCG Chief of Staff I had opened the door for all kinds of things military. Had always talked—often and loud—about us as the fifth military service and what we brought to the table and all those kinds of things. There were people who thought that I would not press that in the halls of the Transportation Department. I told them about the two theme songs I mentioned in an earlier interview, “Accentuate the Positive” and “You Don’t Mess Around with Jim.”

In fact, at one of my very first sessions with the Coast Guard Flag Officers, one of them asked me, to everybody’s shock, “What did you have to give up? What promises did you have to make to get the job?” I thanked him for asking me that. I really was glad he asked me.

I said, “I didn’t promise the Secretary anything except that he was going to hear from me regularly about how I felt about what was going on between DoT and the Coast Guard. He didn’t ask me for any promises.”

Paul Stillwell: And you’d walk with him if necessary.

* CinCLant, a Navy four-star admiral who was Commander in Chief Atlantic Command.

Admiral Gracey: And I told them the story. I told them exactly what I had said to the Secretary. And I said, “I have not sold my soul to get this job, and I have not sold out the Coast Guard or anybody else.”

So, anyway, over the next several months I was back and forth to Washington. Jack Hayes called me on a number of things. One was that they were going to close the boot camp at Alameda, and they wanted to sell that island, which was called Government Island. They wanted to sell it to private enterprise. Jack felt we shouldn't give away any maritime waterfront property. He called to see how I felt about it since I'd just come from there. He asked what I would think about moving the 12th District and PacArea offices over to Alameda from downtown. There were some things you gave up by not being in the city, but the move was a wonderful idea, I thought. So we talked about that kind of thing, and he checked with me on things that were going on. There were some things we didn't agree about, but time enough to cope with those.

Paul Stillwell: Well, I've got some more questions about your time as area commander. One would follow on to that. What was your general relationship with Admiral Hayes, both when you were in San Francisco and in New York?

Admiral Gracey: Good. I heard more from him in New York after this. The first few months we were kind of apart, because the selection process was all taking place, and I think he wanted to stay impartial, whatever. He interviewed me, incidentally. I thought that was kind of interesting. But on things like the Haitian Migrant ops and other big things that were coming down, we would talk. He had regular meetings of the two area commanders and the Chief of Staff and him and the Vice Commandant. We would meet regularly, quarterly or more often depending on what was going on. So we saw each other. And I'd stay at his house when in for one of those meetings. Relations were good as couples too—Jack and Bogie and Randy and me.

There were some things I didn't agree with. He went about trying to solve the privatization problem in ways that I wouldn't. Well, hindsight is wonderful. I would have gone about it in a different way. And I did go at it differently when I got in place.

But we were good friends. Till the day he died we were good friends, I thought.* And Bogie and Randy did spend a lot of time together. When I was the Commandant I tried to get them involved whenever we could. But they were up in Alaska, you see.

And I tried to get the Silers involved in things around town. That doesn't happen these days, by the way. That isn't done anymore, but I thought it was important that my predecessors be involved, like my luncheon consultations with the former Pacific Area commanders in San Francisco.

The Hayes-Gracey relationships were good, and we talked a lot. And after the decision was made about my succeeding him, we talked regularly. I went to D.C., and I spent several days at his house. After dinner he would let Ben and me talk for a while in his basement, and then he would come down if we asked him or—routinely at the end of the evening, “Let's just talk. We need to pick your brain.” But we were working up flag officer slates. We were trying to figure out who we wanted to put where and that sort of thing, but when it came to talk about background, things that had happened, things he knew, things that he'd been involved in he talked. You know, we spent hours talking. It was a great turnover, really.

Paul Stillwell: The other thing I want to know about was your relations with the media in both cities, and particularly on the Haitian situation.

Admiral Gracey: I wish we could have generated more coverage for the U.S. Coast Guard. My personal relationships with the press and the media everywhere were good. I went to a point where I sought meetings with editorial boards of television, radio, and the press. I reached out, tried to do that. I made myself available for interviews or anything they wanted to do. We would explain what was happening and tried to be very open with it. It was good. I remember there was some negative press about the Haitian thing, but I can't remember details. I just don't have any sense it was huge flap. I'm not sure if everybody totally understood the significance of what was happening, and I only had to live with that three or four months, and then I was doing it in Washington. I don't remember the specifics. We had no scenes like this tackling the guy we've seen more

* Admiral Hayes died on 17 January 2001.

recently. There's the rule if you get to the beach you've got it made. There was none of that. They never even got close. They were in old junky boats. The pitch was we were saving these people from drowning at sea and that we were taking them back. That was the national policy and that's what we were doing. We were fulfilling the national policy.

Paul Stillwell: And if you're open and make the facts available, you're going to have less problem.

Admiral Gracey: I've always found that to be so. If you just explain it, and as I wrote to the maritime industry, "We're going to get in your knickers sometimes because it's our job to be there. But we'll try to explain to you why. And if you can be open and listen to us and tell us if you don't understand, let us try again. And who knows? We may be wrong, and if we're wrong we'll fix it, I'll promise you. But I'll promise you that we aren't going to be able to fix it every time. When that's the case, you'll know why."

Paul Stillwell: We are near the end of the tape. I wonder if you wanted to wrap up anything else on the area commands and then we could start with the Commandant years next time.

Admiral Gracey: Yeah. Let me run down real quick. I was on the Classification Committee of the American Bureau of Shipping, *ex-officio*. Admiral Price had done that, and even though I didn't have the marine safety background, ABS wanted me to continue. That was an interesting experience. I was on the National Cargo Bureau. I was Combined Federal Campaign chairman for New York City. And I dealt with the VTS Board of Advisors.

Oh, I haven't talked about meeting President Reagan. I was invited to D.C. for a photo op with the President. This was in early March. I had really dinged my back a few days before, so I was sitting on the front edge of chairs, and I was very erect because I really had injured a sciatic nerve somehow. That was a Monday morning in March. It had been an icy weekend in D.C., and Secretary Lewis had fallen and sprained his neck.

So he came into the West Wing where I was waiting. We were going to go in and meet Ed Meese and Mike Deaver and Jim Baker, and Vice President Bush and then I was going to go in and meet the President.* And in the door walked Secretary Lewis with his neck in a brace.

Paul Stillwell: The halt and the lame. [Laughter]

Admiral Gracey: And I was sitting on the edge of the chair. We went in, and I've forgotten whether it was Baker or Meese could hardly wait to take me to the Vice President saying, "Look at our Department of Transportation." And they really gave me a hard time. But when I got to the Oval Office I got the President talking baseball while they were doing photos. I mentioned the fact that I had been captain of the Coast Guard Academy baseball team, and I knew he was a baseball fan and an announcer. And it was a wonderful experience. We had a great chat about sports.

I've heard this about him before. He's one of those people who—while you're talking to him, you're talking to *him*, and he's talking to you, and he's not looking over your shoulder. He's not doing anything. For those 10 or 15 minutes, whatever it was, it was Jim and Ron having a conversation. Great that way. And anytime you met him in a receiving line or we went to state dinners at the White House it was always very warm. He's good at that. He did that with everybody. It wasn't Jim Gracey. It was everybody. But it was a great experience.

Mad scramble to line up dates for hearings. The confirmation hearing went on in this period, and that was interesting because this was the fourth time I'd been confirmed by this committee that was chaired by Senator Packwood.† My opening line was, "You know, Mr. Chairman, if you confirm me today this will be the fourth time, twice for three stars, once for two stars or one star, and I hope you don't change your mind."

He said, "Well, Jim, the Senate has never been known for consistency."

I said, "Gee, Mr. Chairman, you're scaring me to death."

* James A. Baker III was the White House chief of staff; Michael K. Deaver was his deputy; Edwin Meese III was Councillor to President Reagan.

† Robert W. Packwood, a Republican from Oregon, served in the Senate from 3 January 1969 until his resignation, effective 1 October 1995.

And Senator Packwood said, “Well you think that’s bad. You may have noticed I was chatting with your wife beforehand. Wait till you hear the questions she gave me to ask you.” [Laughter]

Secretary Lewis leaned over and said, “I don’t think this is going to be too bad today.” I’d been around. I’d known all these people and even before I was an admiral. I was working with people on The Hill while I had the CPA job, so I was a known quantity.

There was a team at OMB that was dedicated to changing the Coast Guard, and they all wanted to get at me long before I got on the job. I just said, “Do you want to talk about New York? And how about non-essential aids to navigation, would you like to talk about them?”

At the change of command ceremony, Vice Admiral Wayne Caldwell relieved me.* It had been agreed that I would be frocked with my four stars after Wayne took over. I said, “I want to be frocked on the parade ground in front of the troops. I want to make a short speech that tells them I’m about to do something that they are responsible for.” Jack Hayes said, “That’s a good idea.” So I had a coat striped for a four-star. My aide had it. And I made this little speech. They had a mike set up in front of the troops on the parade ground. I walked off the podium, went out there, and Randy was with me. And I said to the troops, “I’m about to do something that I have you to thank for.” Then—assisted by Randy—I took off my vice admiral's coat and put on my new one.

The New York Daily News thought that was great. It was a centerfold the next day. They had this picture of Randy putting on my new coat. And I had arranged a surprise for her. She’s a big balloon freak. She loves balloons, and I had arranged for a huge bunch of red, white, and blue balloons to be hidden out behind the grandstand, to bring in and give to her. A bit of background. In his first year as Commandant Admiral Hayes had given his wife a horse. He surprised her with a horse one Christmas Eve, and it had been a bad experience. She’d had to muck out the barn and do all that stuff, and the horse died. And it was sad and yet funny and everybody teased him about it forever.

* Vice Admiral Wayne E. Caldwell, USCG.

Anyway, here we were. I had my coat on. I had buttoned it up. And the man with the balloons was coming on the field. Randy started to turn, and I said, “Don’t look. I have a surprise for you.”

And she said, out of a clear blue sky, “If it’s a horse, I don’t want it.” [Laughter] The two of us collapsed laughing. We didn’t go down onto the ground, but we almost did. She just broke me up, and I’m sure the troops—nobody had their eyes in the boat at that point. They were standing at ease anyway. I’d put them at ease. But they were wondering, “What are those two idiots doing out there?” And finally this guy came in with the balloons, and it was fun. During the receiving line that followed, every little kid that came through got a balloon from Randy. The word was, “Anyone who can walk under my outstretched arm can have a balloon.”

I was named the Maritime Man of the Year, and the next day at Kings Point I reviewed the parade with Victor Borge, the two of us.* That was our last hurrah in New York. From that we went directly to Washington and went on from there. End of New York.

Paul Stillwell: Great way to wind up a fine interview. Thank you.

Admiral Gracey: Thank you.

* U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, Kings Point, New York. Victor Borge was a noted comedian and pianist.

Interview Number 11 with Admiral James Gracey, U.S. Coast Guard (Retired)

Date: Tuesday, 18 September 2001

Place: Admiral Gracey's home in Arlington, Virginia

Interviewer: Paul Stillwell:

Paul Stillwell: Well, here we are again, a week after the terrorist activities in New York and at the nearby Pentagon, and I know that the Coast Guard has been involved in the relief and recovery efforts.* Undoubtedly some of the people now participating in those were in the Coast Guard on your watch, so that's part of your legacy.

We were talking last time about the turnover in which you and Admiral Stabile were meeting in Admiral Hayes's basement, and the outgoing Commandant was participating to some extent. I wonder if we could explore that a little more and whether Admiral Hayes had some unfinished agenda items that he hoped you would work on and whether you had your own that you wanted to bring to the table.

Admiral Gracey: Well, on the latter, you can be sure there were several ideas of my own that I wanted to bring to the table. I had a number of things I wanted to get done: some continuations of things we had started, some things original from me, some expansions of ideas I had introduced in the field. We didn't talk about agenda items that Admiral Hayes might want to pursue. And he didn't press us on any. For one thing, I knew them. I had been one of his area commanders. I'd been the Pacific Area commander for three years and the Atlantic Area commander for one year, and we'd been flag officers together before that. I had participated in developing some of the matters that remained undone.

During his tenure as the Commandant he had quarterly meetings of PacArea and LantArea, the Chief of Staff, the Vice Commandant, and the Commandant. The Area Commanders would come in to Washington for a couple of days, and we would all have dinner together. We would sit in the Commandant's office and talk about what was going on. And Jack Hayes was not timid about letting people know what he thought, nor

* On 11 September 2001 terrorists hijacked commercial airliners and crashed them into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia.

is present company, and we had some good resounding disagreements and agreements. So by the time it got to where I was going to relieve him, I pretty much knew where he had been coming from. I'd been a part of all that was going on, really.

I didn't always agree with where we were going. I totally disagreed on one tack that we were taking regarding the personnel legislation that was going up to the Hill. But I don't recall Jack trying to sell Ben and me on any particular idea he wanted to see continued. I did read his oral history.* It was good for him to have it done just after he retired. I find in reading it and thinking about how it is for me trying to do this 15 years after retiring, that it's really very different. The amount, the kinds of recall are different.

But he mentioned in his interview a program he had started of getting rid of low performers, having the Coast Guard just not reenlisting, in fact inviting some to go home. If they just couldn't cut the mustard, send them home. He commented to the interviewer, "I notice that Admiral Gracey is carrying this one on with vigor." So he was paying attention, and as I knew he would. I paid attention to what went on after I left too.

One thing he was concerned about showed up during the selection process, and I didn't fully understand that particular selection process until I read his oral history 20 years later. They had set up a system whereby he and the Deputy Secretary and the Secretary were all going to interview. I don't know whether Jack Hayes interviewed everybody, but he did interview me, which I thought was interesting since we had the long-term relationship we did. But they were going to interview, and they were each going to set up who they thought were their one, two, three choices and then ultimately the Secretary would make a choice. As I understand, that was the way they worked out.

I did have an interview at some length with Jack in a side room over at the Department of Transportation Building. He was mostly concerned about my position on the Coast Guard's defense role. I was dumbfounded at some of the questions he asked me about that, considering the military programs I had put in place, military relationships I had established, and what had been going on in my part of the world while I was one of his two major field commanders. I don't know why this was a concern. It was also a concern on the part of the Vice Commandant, Vice Admiral Scarborough, and a number

* The oral history of Admiral John B. Hayes, USCG (Ret.), Commandant from 1 June 1978 to 28 May 1982, is available through the Coast Guard Historian's office in Washington, D.C. The interview was conducted by Lieutenant (junior grade) Michael Mansker, USCG, in October 1985.

of other people.* Some of the Coast Guard Reserve Officers were concerned that I was going to be weak on defense, that I was not going to see our military role as terribly important. Perhaps it was because I had not commanded a major cutter, nor attended one of the War Colleges, nor had an assignment in Vietnam or Korea. Who knows? It was a mystery to me—and frankly it ruffled my feathers a bit.

Paul Stillwell: How do you think that perception grew up?

Admiral Gracey: I haven't the slightest idea how it got started, because when I ran the Programs Division, CPA, defense—capability, hardware, roles, training, readiness—was always one of our top two or three priorities in the budget. We in CPA were the ones that, in effect, created the priorities. And I ran CPA. Granted, we talked to everybody, but we were the ones that ultimately set it, and the Commandant bought it or didn't buy it—and he bought our ideas about our defense role. I had a big hand in helping “save” the Coast Guard Reserve by putting into practice Vice Admiral Trimble's approach of giving them actual jobs to do, but that was not popular with old-timers in the Coast Guard Reserve. As a flag officer I spoke often about what we were ready to bring to the defense table. I talked earlier about my various actions in PacArea and LantArea.

In PacArea our Alaska Patrol ships, despite their tough patrol schedules and extensive sea time, were all involved in vigorous participation in Navy fleet exercises—scheduled by my PacArea Readiness staff. I was speaking all over the place about our role in national security, and I did say that it goes beyond shooting guns. That national security depends on the health of the economy. It includes being able to have the merchant ships come and go and carry our trade, our people feeling safe and having confidence that they were going to be okay if they went down to the sea in ships or in small boats—all those kinds of things. I said that the commerce was going to flow freely and safely because we were going to keep the aids to navigation working properly. We had port security programs. These were all part of national security, and, yes, the defense role was there. I was astounded by this apparent perception; more than that, I was troubled by it and where it was coming from and why.

* Vice Admiral Robert H. Scarborough, USCG, was Vice Commandant of the Coast Guard, 1978-82.

Paul Stillwell: Was there ever an issue that you didn't have as much sea time as some of your contemporaries?

Admiral Gracey: Not an open issue that I was aware of, and I never sensed it among my people. As I said earlier, that may have been part of it, although nobody ever looked me in the eye and said it. But it was probably a contributor, yes. And I've always unabashedly said that it was a source of disappointment for me that I didn't have more sea time—and more command at sea. I joined this outfit to go to sea. I did go to sea as an ensign, and I commanded a buoy tender as a lieutenant commander. When I finished my Loran tour as a jaygee, I wanted to command a 95-footer so bad I could taste it, but CG HQ had other things in mind. But that was it. Every time it was my turn to go to sea, somebody wanted me to go do something else. It was my time to go to a medium endurance cutter when Governors Island and the Fort Jay Project came up, and they wanted me to go and have a role in that. I was led to believe I was handpicked for the job, and it was a significant job. From there I got deep-selected for captain and wound up in Washington at Coast Guard Headquarters as Chief, Programs Division. I never asked for any of those assignments.

Much to my wife's dismay, my wish list, what we called the assignment card, always said, "You know what I can do. Give me an interesting and tough job, whatever it may be." You listed sea duty preferences and shore duty preferences and for sea duty. I said, "I'd like to ship out of these ports. That's it, but in terms of kinds of duty, whatever. Give me an interesting job. You know what I can do." And they did. I had a series of interesting jobs. Yeah, that sea duty business may have been part of the misperception.

So my reaction in this interview by Admiral Hayes was vigorous. I pointed out what I had been doing. This is not defense, but I was the guy that pressed for arming our boarding parties and took the lead in getting it done—even to the point of running contrary to policy from Coast Guard Headquarters. I, in fact, said, "I don't care what your rules are. Boarding parties in my District and in my Area are going to be armed. I am not going to have my people put in jeopardy." I told the story about the Ninth District man using a broomstick to bluff some smugglers into dropping their rifles. And I sold

that around, and I had speech upon speech upon speech where I told about the significance of what the Coast Guard brought to the defense arena. I said that we had special skills, they were there, they were available, and we honed them every day.

I was the guy that would continually stand up in one meeting or another with flags and generals from the other services and say, “One of my jobs is to teach you guys how to count to five.” It got to be kind of a joke. If somebody forgot to mention the Coast Guard at some place where I was, people would look at the head table and expect what was going to happen next, because I would stand up and say, “Wait a minute. There are five of us here, Folks.” I was at a Navy League luncheon where the chaplain asked God to bless the men and women of the Navy and the Marine Corps. I beat the master of ceremonies to the podium and said, “With all due apologies, Chaplain, I bet God wouldn’t mind if we asked Him to bless the people of the Coast Guard as well.” And, of course, I got a standing ovation, not just from the Coast Guard people but everybody. They knew what was going to happen. The chaplain forgot us and walked away, and you could almost hear everybody go, “[Sound that couldn’t be reproduced on paper].” [Laughter] Well, I mean there are different ways to make clear our role on the U.S. defense team. The chaplain was one of our big supporters. He just forgot and was mortified. I noted to him that he had given me a huge opportunity to make a point about the U.S. Coast Guard and the United States Armed Forces, and for that I was grateful

But I think in terms of military. I had not been to Vietnam. I had not been to Korea. My seagoing service was on a weather ship in the North Atlantic and a buoy tender. I was the gunnery officer on an ocean station vessel, and I think I told the story about going to Newport for gunnery exercises, and never firing a round. We never fired a round, because the skipper was leery about firing the gun and one thing and another. We did fire one round in the middle of the Atlantic after I convinced him the crew really ought to know what a 5 inch/38 sounds like.

I took my buoy tender out and guarded the Texas Tower off of Nantucket when they took the Air Force crews off after the tower fell over off the New Jersey coast. They did that when the wind was going to be above 50 knots, and that meant a Coast Guard ship went out and guarded them, and we did that. I always thought it was rather interesting. I was going to protect the tower from invaders, but I wasn’t allowed to

uncover my 3-inch gun. It was to be kept covered and not used. Well, that wasn't my doing. I'm not sure it was a great idea to go shooting at people anyway, and we wouldn't have done that except if the name of the game was to stop at all costs. I figured the way you could keep people from getting on that tower if they were dead determined to do it was to put yourself in harm's way and create a collision situation and hope they'd turn away. And we practiced that, as a matter of fact—how we would do that.

Anyway, back to Jim Gracey and defense. Jack Hayes was concerned about that. I apparently put his mind at ease, but that was a big part of my interview discussion. And the retiring Vice Commandant, I know, was concerned about that and in fact told me he was going to keep an eye on me to see how I behaved in this arena.

Paul Stillwell: This was Admiral Scarborough.

Admiral Gracey: Yes.

One of the first events I got involved in as Commandant was a national Reserve Officers Association convention in Puerto Rico. There was a big terrorist group in Puerto Rico at the time that had made threats against all the people coming. Security was very tight. I remember armed sentries on top of all the buildings at the airport and up on the roofs and all around. Three Coast Guard intelligence agents were there to protect Randy and me and stay with us at all times to keep us from harm. And General Creech from the Tactical Air Command was there and a few other people like that.*

I spoke to the Coast Guard Reservists who were there and said I knew of their concern. I said, "I don't know where this got started, but let me assure you that I understand the role of a military service, and the Coast Guard is one, and I also think I know how to make the Coast Guard's defense contribution even greater. The defense program is going to be a lot stronger if we take a proactive part of shaping it than if we just wait until they remember to call us up." And I stressed—as I had in speeches when I was a vice admiral in the two Area Commands—"It's going to be a come-as-you-are war, the next one, and how you are now better be how you want to be when it starts. And we're going to work to be the way we think we're going to need to be when it starts.

* General Wilbur L. Creech, USAF.

We're not going to wait and decide after the bomb drops or the Navy decides, 'Oh, my God. We've got people over there we could use—the Coast Guard.' We're going to make sure they understand ahead of time what a marvelous resource we are—understand it well enough that they have us written into all their planning.”

Paul Stillwell: Within the limitations imposed by the budget and manning levels.

Admiral Gracey: Of course, of course. But we're going to do what we can to be how we want to be, and how we want to be is not going to be the same as World War II. One big role is going to be getting merchant and naval ships out to sea, as we for do Reforger exercises, those kinds of things.* Getting them out safely. Using our high-endurance cutters as we have in fleet exercises and so forth and other ways we and the Navy haven't thought of yet. I'm really belaboring this issue, because it was a point of great concern to me that this feeling was around. And I must confess, I felt indignant that it was.

There was also a concern—and I really can't imagine how this one got around—that I was going to really knuckle under to political seniors at the Department of Transportation, and the Coast Guard was going to be sacrificed somehow, and that I wasn't going to stand up to them. The people who knew me could not understand how anybody could get that impression, because I'd always been one who stood up to all my seniors, even as a relatively junior officer: “But, sir, that's not a great idea because...”

Paul Stillwell: Did you do specific things to try to counteract some of these perceptions that had grown up?

Admiral Gracey: No. I was comfortable that the truth of the matter was going to come out okay, and people were going to have an opportunity to see this. And there were times when I was “standing up to my seniors” that it wasn't a great idea to advertise it. You might win the battle and lose the war on that one. But I did share it with my staff, and they knew what was going on. I did say in a speech at the ROA convention that, “I have

* Reforger exercises involved reinforcement of U.S. troops stationed in Germany during the Cold War.

two theme songs. One is ‘Accentuate the Positive,’ and we are going to do that. We are going to accentuate the positive in everything.”

In my first “State of the Coast Guard” speech I went through that again and the importance of not just giving medals for especially good work but also of praising routine good work. I said, “If you’re standing on the fantail someday looking aft and you think ‘Boy, whoever’s got that the helm today is really doing a great job and keeping a good track.’ Well, when he gets off watch go say to him, ‘Hey, you did a nice job today, buddy.’ While you’re having your bowl of soup on the mess deck, no big deal. Tell the cook you like the food once in a while or, ‘Hey, that was a great presentation you made this morning to the old man.’ Share some positives.”

The second theme song ended “... and you don’t mess around with Jim.” Well, there were a couple of guys in the audience who thought I meant, “You guys in the Coast Guard Reserve, don’t screw around with me.” I didn’t find out about that until way too late to fix it. Five years after I’d retired I found out. I could never understand what was bugging those guys. They were a couple of fairly senior guys in the Reserve. What I was saying was, “You don’t need to worry about my standing on my own hind feet and standing up for us.” Well, I guess it was too subtle. I’m surprised at myself over this one, because one of the things I regularly stressed to my people was the importance of finding the right words to make your point. I would say, “If there is any conceivable way for a reader or listener to misunderstand or misconstrue what you said, they will do it. Count on it and pick your words very carefully. Try them out on an ‘average ape.’”

Paul Stillwell: Well, you have a jocular style at times, and some people may not interpret it as such and sort of clam up as a result.

Admiral Gracey: Yeah, I think that may be so. In the annual “State of the Coast Guard” speeches and at every opportunity we talked about what was going on and that we were projecting and all that. I can’t tell you any specific strategy I took to change that. I figured it was going to work out as I got to show where I was coming from.

One other philosophy I conveyed to people like the National Advisory Committee on Oceans and Atmospheres, NACOA, was, “If it ain’t busted don’t fix it. We ain’t

busted. Don't fix us, just help us." And I did stress that a lot—that we don't need repair, we need help. We need support.

With Secretary Lewis there were a number of things early on that were troublesome: reorganizations and so forth that he had in mind. One day I just said, "Mr. Secretary, that's the wrong thing to do. You're going to hurt the Coast Guard. It's not based on a full understanding of us. Let me tell you how it works and how we work. And that's wrong."

When I got done, he laughed, and said, "Well, they told me you would do that, Jim." And he changed course.

Paul Stillwell: What was his scheme for reorganization?

Admiral Gracey: I can't remember all the details at this point. There were two or three times that reorganizations came up during my various years there, so I can't remember which one it was. But they were going to create regional offices, and they were going to divide the Department of Transportation. He was going to split up DoT and try to have people farmed out all over the country. And they were going to give a lot of direct command authority to the Secretarial Representatives, SecReps, like the one I worked with and subbed for in San Francisco, a political appointee. Our people out there were going to report to the SecReps on the way to reporting in to our Area Commanders and to me, the Commandant.

That just wouldn't work in a military organization. I persuaded him that this was really going to chop the Department into little pieces. You were going to add a level of oversight, and you were giving them authority and responsibility as well as their advisory role, you know, being your representative out there. That was just going to bog things down. In the Department of Transportation the Office of the Secretary originally was supposed to be a very small organization, the department itself. In creating it in 1967 they brought all the various organizations together like Federal Railroad Administration, Federal Highways Administration and Coast Guard and FAA—agencies who already had their hierarchy. DoT's only role was supposed to be to oversee them and coordinate them and keep them together.

Paul Stillwell: Sounds like he was trying to create a duplicate chain of command.

Admiral Gracey: Something like that, yeah, but for all the DoT agencies. And, again, I may have two or three things mixed up in my memory. But the point was, and this happened on several occasions where I could make my point. First of all, I convinced him that we would be supportive, and we would go with his plan as long as it didn't do bodily harm to the Coast Guard. But if it was going to do damage to the Coast Guard and I saw it, I would speak out, and I would speak out vigorously. If it persisted, and it was really doing bodily harm as I thought, then I was going to fight him openly on it. Otherwise I would be supportive. Lord knows the Office of Management and Budget in the early days of the Reagan Administration was truly and openly out to do away with the Coast Guard. Literally. There was no question about that.

Paul Stillwell: Why?

Admiral Gracey: Because they thought they didn't need the Coast Guard—that the private sector could take care of our various missions. And later on we had the Grace Commission, and that argued along the same lines, and there were all kinds of people that thought anybody could do what the Coast Guard does. We don't need a whole organization and a military organization to do that. Yeah, we'll keep some of the ships and stuff, but mostly the rest of it can be done privately.

Our own Deputy Secretary, Darrell Trent, was in that camp. The Coast Guard, for some reason, somehow had turned him off. Well, I said to him one day, "Why is it that you insist that the Coast Guard come to you with all these things? Why am I over here answering all these questions? Do you do this with all the other agencies?"

He said, "No."

I said, "Why not?"

He said, "Because you're the only agency that's not headed by a political appointee. Therefore you owe no allegiance to the President."

I said, "Wait a minute."

He said, “Your loyalties are to the people within the organization, not to anybody outside.”

I said, “Well, I am loyal to the people within the organization. You’ve got that right. I’m the Coast Guard’s number-one loyal cheerleader, whatever. You don’t mess around with my Coast Guard. You’ve got that exactly right. But hey, we all understand. We work for the Secretary, and the Secretary works for the President. We understand all that. We don’t need to be political appointees. I personally have more years of political experience than your entire staff in terms of doing business in Washington in the political arena.” And we had a little set-to on that one.

Paul Stillwell: This had to be frustrating to you at a time when the Reagan Administration was throwing so much money at the Department of Defense.

Admiral Gracey: It was. It was. Along the way I developed a good relationship with Vice President Bush.* He was designated head of the NNBIS, National Narcotics Border Interdiction System. He had a Coast Guard captain on his NNBIS staff to help him, and the Coast Guard was running the war on drugs at sea. I won’t say it was a weekly deal, but several times I had meetings with the Vice President in his office. One day I went in there and I went to talk about the drug thing, but the subject of the budget came up. He was talking about all the good things they were doing for the military services. I had hoped we would get into this, so I’d made some charts that showed how the DoD budget was going and how the Coast Guard budget was going. DoD’s was going up, up, up, up, up and ours was actually going down. I held up a chart from across his desk.

He said, “Get that chair and come over here and sit down and let me look at that stuff.” So I pulled up a chair behind his desk and we laid down the charts, and he said, “My God. I had no idea.”

I said, “Well, I’d like to think the President doesn’t have any idea either, sir, but OMB and others are trying to do away with this beautiful jewel of an organization, the United States Coast Guard. They just don’t understand what it brings to the national

* George H. W. Bush was Vice President from 1981 to 1989 and subsequently President from 1989 to 1993.

defense role or to the good of the country in general. We're respected around the world—a lot. "We represent what the United States would like to be: competent, thoughtful, caring, professional. The image that the Coast Guard conveys to people who know about us is the image I think the United States as a nation would like to convey around the world. And the Coast Guard is respected all around the globe. A lot of people I have visited around the world have said, 'Any country that will use its wealth to support an organization like the United States Coast Guard has got to be a wonderful country.' And I've heard person after person tell me that. So it's just that there's a hiccup going on between the Office of Management and Budget and what you're seeing and what's happening with the defense budget. Defense is going up, but as you can see, we're not."

Paul Stillwell: Did he become a useful ally?

Admiral Gracey: Well, I don't know. We were looking at figures for budgets already in place and talking about what was coming up. The way the budget cycle works, you're always looking a couple of years out in the future. Things improved some, and OMB backed off a bit. I like to think he helped.

He was a strong advocate. He would stop in the middle of a speech if I was in the audience and he'd say, "Ah, there's my favorite Coast Guard admiral. You people ought to get to know the Coast Guard. That's a great outfit."

Well, I don't know whether that was baloney or not, but I don't think so, and I think he seriously meant it. On the day I retired I got a handwritten note from him saying, "It's been a joy working with you. You have my lasting respect. Good Luck, George." In my keepsake files I've got letters from the White House and all that, but that personal one from then-Vice President Bush is very special. And he was good at that sort of thing. He would write notes periodically, and he'd say, "I noticed your Coast Guard guys really did a wonderful job down in blah-blah-blah the other day. Way to go," or something like that. So he was an ally.

I've really wandered off on the defense aspect of the budget, but we never did get picked up in the Reagan Defense build-up. As I explained to the people of the Coast Guard in one of my annual State of the Coast Guard speeches: "The Administration is

trying to reduce the size of government, and that means everybody in the government, or almost everybody since DoD isn't being reduced. Our job is to do the best we can with what we have, and we'll make it. I'm confident that it's not going to be as bad as it seems to be."

We got scolded about one congressional hearing or another over the years. When I used to go to testify as the Commandant there was always a person from OMB in the audience. Phyllis—can't remember her last name now—was usually the designated person. About the second time I saw her there I said, "What's your role here?"

She said, "My role is to make sure you don't get off the reservation."

I said, "Well, that's for you to judge. Have at it. What I'm going to say is what I'm going to say, and when they ask me questions I'm not going to lie. I will be supportive of the President, as you can see, because you rewrote my statement. But if they ask questions, I'm going to answer them truthfully"

Early on I got into an amazing conversation with an OMB person, a woman named Annelise Anderson.* She had a high-level position there. Was married to a senior person in the Reagan Administration. I can't remember what her role was, but she had a lot to do with us, and she was really concerned. David Stockman was the guy that was the first Reagan budget person.† She said, "He's concerned about the fact that you've got too many big ships."

I said, "Have you ever been to sea?"

She said, "Well, yes, I took a trip across the ocean last year on an ocean liner."

I said, "How'd you like that?"

She said, "Oh, we got tossed around something awful."

"Was it difficult?"

She said, "Oh, yes."

I said, "That ship you were on is probably 15 times the size of our quote big ship, maybe ten times. You think you got tossed around? What do you think my crews get?"

* Annelise Graebner Anderson, an economist and author, was a senior policy advisor in Ronald Reagan's 1980 presidential campaign and subsequent transition to office. She was associate director of the Office of Management and Budget, 1981-83, and subsequently a senior research fellow at Hoover Institution.

† David A. Stockman, a Republican from Michigan, served in the House of Representatives from 3 January 1977 until his resignation 27 January 1981; he was Director of the Office of Management and Budget 1981-1985.

And that's the so-called "big" ship Stockman is worried about. How about the middle-sized ships and the little ships? I don't think you understand what's going on here."

That was at a one-on-one lunch in the White House. We had a long, frank discussion. Over a period of time things were tense. She did not trust us, and I couldn't seem to change that no matter how many examples I gave as to why she could—and should. She called me one day to prescribe a strategy that I was to use. I was to say certain things, but I said, "I can't say that."

She said, "Why can't you say that?"

I said, "Because it's not the truth. If you choose to set that as the President's position and I'm asked if that's the President's position, yes. If I'm asked 'Is that going to work? Are you really satisfied with that number of ships? Can a ship of that type do what a ship of the other type can do?' Any kind of specific question like that, I'm not going to lie. I flat out will not lie. And if you want somebody that will, you'd better find another Commandant."

In fact, at one point I called my staff in and said, "Is it time for me get on my white horse, grab my spear, and ride off into the sunset or whatever?"

They said, "No, no, no, no. Don't do that. We need you around." But it got real unpleasant at times. And it didn't help that we had a Deputy Secretary who was an in-the-trenches political colleague of Annelise Anderson. He was involved from the get-go and believed in this particular OMB approach about us. There was a person in his outer office who reviewed every piece of paper the Coast Guard ever produced. That's all he did. They just didn't trust us. I was asked about that when Secretary Lewis interviewed me. I told you last time what I said to him about the bear going into the buckwheat.

Paul Stillwell: How would you characterize your overall relationship with Secretary Lewis?

Admiral Gracey: Super. Super. He listened to that bear-and-buckwheat bit. Well, that was in my interview, on the way out the door. We'd been talking and he said, "Oh, by

the way.” Kind of like Colombo does, you know.* “Oh, one other thing.” So we stood at the door. He had his hand on the knob getting ready to go out, and he asked this question. I don’t know what he was expecting to hear, but we must have stood there 15 minutes. And he said, “Been a nice conversation, Jim.”

Now, as an old friend said yesterday, “Nobody ever thought that your ego was very small.” My ego wasn’t. Who else could they pick anyway? In fact, I said that yesterday, and my friend said, “Yeah, well, we all knew that.”

But, anyway, Secretary Lewis was wonderful. He didn’t really understand the military, but he wanted to. He had to learn how to put his hand over his heart to salute and how to salute when going aboard ship and all of that kind of stuff. And we taught him. I would remind him ahead of time, because he wanted to do it right.

I had full access to him. I’d go over to his office when I needed to see him. And I say “over” because we were in a different building at that point. I’d walk in, and he’d be sitting behind his desk, usually with his feet up on it, talking on the telephone, and he’d look up and see me. Wave me in you know with a big wave. Point at the coffee pot, point at the sofa. Signals: “Get yourself a cup of coffee, and sit down”

After a while I didn’t even need the routine. He would wave me in, and I’d point to the pot, and he would nod vigorously “Yes” and I would get a cup of coffee and go sit down. And he’d continue to talk on the phone. And the fact that I was listening didn’t deter him; it was fine. We had a relationship of trust and understanding—comfortable. Later with Secretary Dole it wasn’t that way.† (A) Her door was always closed. (B) You had to have an appointment to see her. (C) Unless it was an emergency, she wanted an agenda the day before. She wanted to be prepared, and that’s okay, but it was a totally different relationship than I had with Drew Lewis.

Paul Stillwell: Was she willing to listen?

* “Colombo” is a Los Angeles police detective in a television series by that name. The scenarios frequently involved his repeated conversations with a murder suspect. Just when it seems that the discussion is over and Columbo is leaving, he has to ask “just one more thing.”

† Elizabeth Hanford Dole served as Secretary of Transportation, 7 February 1983 to 30 September 30 1987.

Admiral Gracey: Well, it seemed so, but her staff was pretty good at talking her out of it sometimes. I said to her one day, “I’ve got some good news and some bad news. The good news is you’ve got the greatest and most loyal staff in the world. The bad news is I think they’re suffocating your department.”

“And why is that?”

“Well, because nothing can happen without a thorough screening to make sure that there’s not going to be any harm done to the front office. And we’re all conscious of that.”

Paul Stillwell: That implies a lack of trust.

Admiral Gracey: Some of them thought maybe somehow we didn’t understand how politics worked, or that we didn’t care, or that we wanted to somehow make her look bad. That wasn’t the case. Nobody wanted to do that. I said, “We’ve worked for a lot of Secretaries, and we’re military people. We know how to work for a boss. You work for a person. And if you work for her, work for her. If you can’t work for her get out, go away, go do something else .”

She said, “Well, that’s not the way I do business.”

I said, “I know it’s not the way you do business, but it’s the way business is being done by your staff, and I just wanted you to know that.” This was in a closed-door session, and maybe I’m divulging a confidence at this late date. I don’t know whether she met with her staff afterwards or what. There were a couple of issues where I pressed so hard that we did in fact have a meeting with the key people in the staff and her at the meeting, and we ironed it out. They were good folks that were working for her, almost totally women. They were good at their trade, but their trade wasn’t what they were doing at the time. There was one who had been put in charge of space travel or whatever the name was. She was great, but she knew nothing about space or travel, and she had a lot of learning to do. In the process there was a great concern that somehow we of the Coast Guard would do something that might reflect badly on the Department of Transportation.

Paul Stillwell: Did the way in which these issues would impact politically on the department seem to be an overriding concern?

Admiral Gracey: Yes, indeed. At least that was our impression.

From the get-go one of the things I pressed and talked about in my first “State of the Coast Guard” speech and at every opportunity with the flags and with people I talked to in the field was, “I don’t want to waste a lot of time and money on studies.” In fact, my policy was, “I don’t want a lot of outside studies. I don’t want big studies. I don’t even want small studies. As I said to the audience at the first State of the Coast Guard address, “I can take any ten of you at random this afternoon, put you in a room at CG Headquarters and tell you I want you to figure out a way to handle a particular problem . And I want it in a finite period of time. You will give me a product that is every bit as good as one I’m going to spend \$100,000 on. It may have some things missing. What I want to do is this: I want to get an idea, create a concept, discuss it, put it into effect, review it, adjust it again and get going. We can do that. We’ll take a chance that we might not be exactly right when we start. But we can fix it.”

Now, there are some things where this clearly is not right. If you’re talking about designing a ship or something, this approach doesn’t work. But I’m talking about big exhaustive studies on all kinds of things that were being proposed at the time. I said, “I don’t think we need that. In fact, if it’s urgent I can take any four of you and put you in a room and tell you you’re going to stay in that room on bread and water until you get me an answer. And I’m going to have an answer tomorrow morning, and I’m going to be willing to go to war on it, because you’re good. We’ll pick the people that we do that with perhaps or we’ll do it at random. My point is this: You’re *good*, you know what this outfit is all about, and you think. We’ve got to be willing to try things.”

I got a memorandum one day that I prize. It was from my from my Chief, Office of Engineering, Rear Admiral Ken Wiman, who said, “Today I sat in a meeting and I was overjoyed because a decision was made which is going to change the Coast Guard. And it was made in that meeting on the basis of that briefing. And you did it, and I thank you.”* And that was a decision to build the SWATH, small waterplane area, twin hull.

* Rear Admiral Kenneth G. Wiman, USCG.

Stable platform, ideal for the Coast Guard. You could do aids to navigation with it. You could just sit there and pick up those buoys. You know, I didn't command a lot of ships, but I worked hard with the buoy tender I had. Time and effort and risk would have been a lot better with a stable SWATH. With the SWATH we can fly a helo off a relatively small ship with a crew of about 30 people. There's any number of things we can do with that kind of vessel. Crew fatigue is going to be way down, so we're not going to beat our troops to death when we're out there trying to do a search or work a buoy.

Paul Stillwell: The down side of that approach is that you have insiders who are communicating with each other, and you may not be receptive to outside ideas.

Admiral Gracey: Well, it's not a case of shutting out outside ideas. But, yeah, that's a good point. I wasn't saying that we have all the knowledge in the world. It depends on what you're talking about, but I was suggesting that we be open to all the ideas. I mean, we're all aware of what other people are doing, and there are lots of ideas out there. You know, if you took the words I used there totally literally, then the consultation industry in this country would go into moratoria, but that wasn't going to happen, and I knew that. For some things you've got to get specialized help—you know, if there's an element of complexity or sophistication we haven't reached yet. If nothing else, what you're going to do is come out of this saying, "This is the concept, but we don't have the smarts to know how to implement it, so let's go buy the smarts to implement it." That may be the decision. It doesn't mean that we're going to create everything ourselves.

Mostly we're talking about directions to go, approaches to use. Should we create an Office of Acquisition or shouldn't we? What are the pros and cons? We did create one by the way. That sort of thing. Incidentally, going back to the SWATH, that wasn't new with us. There were other people who had SWATHs. Of course, it was to have one for the Coast Guard. And we had money appropriated and the whole thing. But it got killed in the Department, because when it came time to implement the budget it got killed because "it might not work." A total cop-out.

Same thing happened with the idea of using blimps. We had the money to look at the idea. We explored lighter-than-air and its benefits and how we could use it. We'd

even been talking to a couple of companies. That program got killed in DoT because DoD had already had some blimps, and DoT felt we should learn from them. If there were going to be mistakes made, let DoD make them and pay for it. The net effect was we could never take the lead on anything, at least on my watch, and it was really very frustrating. By that I mean the lead on doing something different with a different piece of hardware.

We did get three surface effect ships and use them. The Navy would have loved to have us take over one of their hydrofoils, but there were colossal problems. We did pay attention. We even did some trials with one. I've forgotten who it was that called me to ask if I would be willing to take one off their hands. Couldn't have been Secretary Lehman.* He wouldn't have done that. Whatever. The problem with a hydrofoil for the Coast Guard was that, it's good only for high-speed run. Once we get on scene, be it rescue or arrest, we often tow people. The hydrofoil becomes useless at that point. Down in the water it's not a very good sea boat. It's fine when it's up on its legs, but it's not good when it's down on its hull, and we spend a lot of time down on the hull towing people back to port or making boardings or whatever. It's just not of use to us. The surface effect ships were good at that. They turned out to be very expensive, and ultimately we dropped them, but they did yeoman service for several years.

Paul Stillwell: Do you recall specific issues that you had disagreements with Secretary Dole on?

Admiral Gracey: No, but I probably will the next time we talk. [Laughter] No, I can't at the moment. They were more issues of how to do things, budget, kind of a where we were going. She wasn't comfortable with the idea that she was the Secretary of an Armed Force. I kept saying to her, "You're the first woman to be the Secretary of an Armed Force." Secretary Mineta these days refers to himself as the Secretary of the Coast Guard.† At a luncheon he had in his executive dining room on Coast Guard Day,

* John F. Lehman, Jr., served as Secretary of the Navy from 5 February 1981 to 10 April 1987.

† Norman Y. Mineta has served as Secretary of Transportation since 25 January 2001. On 1 March 2003, subsequent to this interview, the Coast Guard transferred from the Department of Transportation to the newly formed Department of Homeland Security.

August 4, he invited some of us former Commandants. I told him, “Every time I hear you say that about being the Secretary of the Coast Guard I stand up and salute, even if I read it in my e-mail. I’ve got to tell you that it’s so wonderful that somebody finally figured out that that’s what he is,” or she is—and is proud of it and speaks about it.

Years after I retired I was in Europe. I guess we were just traveling. And in the *Herald-Tribune* over there was a picture of a woman who had just become Secretary of the Air Force.* She was reviewing her troops and the caption was, “The first woman to head an armed force.” I cut out the picture and when I got home I sent it with a note on my letterhead to Elizabeth Dole. I said, “You and I know that this isn’t true, don’t we, Boss?” Never got an answer. [Laughter]

Paul Stillwell: You’ve probably wished you had such a hands-on Secretary as the Navy had at that time in John Lehman.

Admiral Gracey: Well, it depends on how “hands on.” Frankly, I would have been happy with “hands off”—and let us run the Coast Guard. My relationship with John Lehman was wonderful. Shall we talk about that for a minute?

Paul Stillwell: Sure.

Admiral Gracey: Since we’re bouncing around a little bit here, but what else is new, right? I can’t put a time frame on exactly when this started, but Secretary Lehman was in place when I became the Commandant. Admiral Tom Hayward was CNO, and he and my predecessor, Jack Hayes had worked very well together.† Tom had been very supportive. He’d gone up and testified for us to our committee in terms of the kinds of things that the Coast Guard needed, in terms of its role as an armed force important to the Navy, as part of the sea services team. He left very shortly after I got here, and Admiral Jim Watkins took over.‡ But John Lehman was SecNav and stayed.

* Sheila E. Widnall served as Secretary of the Air Force from 1993 to 1997.

† Admiral Thomas B. Hayward, USN, was Chief of Naval Operations from 1 July 1978 to 30 June 1982.

‡ Admiral James D. Watkins, USN, was Chief of Naval Operations from 1 July 1982 to 30 June 1986.

One of the things that was hanging fire, and it was one thing that Jack Hayes didn't talk to me about but Bob Scarborough did, was that we had some personnel legislation up on the Hill. It was going to do a number of things. It was going to change the way we calculated seniority, and it was going to do a lot of things like that, which I thought were pretty good. One was the lockstep idea—where you are when you graduate from the Coast Guard Academy is where you are when you retire in terms of precedence list, except for deep selections. But even they stay locked in sequence to others deep-selected in the same year. Well, those were the kinds of things we hoped to set right with the legislation.

One thing that was in the legislation was to make permanent in the Coast Guard the matter of an O-7, one star, being called "Commodore." The Navy had done that, and we were wearing one star and we were calling our new flags "commodore." One of our things that I had to convince the Transportation Secretaries about was that there are some things we've got to do just because we've got to be ready to go with the Navy in case of a national situation. We've got to be somewhat in sync with them. Our roles are different. The things we do are different. We get our experience in different ways, and that's the beauty, because we bring that different experience into the arena and meld it in and complement the Navy. But there are some things like pay and ranks and admin systems, etc., that make it flow better when we actually move to their control or just work closely with them. So we had this legislation on the Hill that was going to make permanent that a Coast Guard one-star would be a commodore and so forth. One day very soon after our change of command I got a phone call from Secretary Lehman about our personnel legislation.

I had gone with Jack Hayes to meet the SecNav. That was one thing among several Jack did for me. He was very helpful. He took me around and introduced me to people. They had a luncheon at Coast Guard Headquarters, where I met Lehman and CNO Tom Hayward. Jack took me up on the Hill and introduced me to some key congressmen. He was saying goodbye as well as introducing me. It was a dual thing, but he took me along and I got to meet them, and I could see the relationships, and that was good. Some of them paid off and some didn't. Some of them I never saw again after Jack left. Jack was trying to get DoD to come in and support us in the budget, and he did

a good job of that. And he was really fighting that fight. There was, of course, the big question about whether we should go to DoD, and I'll talk about that later. I had views on that which agreed with Jack's, I think.

Anyway, I had met SecNav Lehman. He called me up personally; he was on the phone when I picked up. That's unusual in D.C.—or was then—so I knew something was up. He said, "This is Secretary Lehman."

I said, "Good morning, sir."

He said, "I understand you have some personnel legislation on the Hill."

I said, "Well, yes, I haven't had a chance to review it yet, but, yes, I know about it and, yes, sir, it's there."

He said, "I understand that you're going to pick up on the idea of the commodore rank."

I said, "Well, we've already done that, but, yes, this is going to put it into law."

He said, "I'd like you to withdraw that legislation. I want you to change the title."

I said, "Okay. What would you like me to change it to, sir?"

He said, "I want you to change it to 'commodore admiral.' And after you do it, then the Navy will follow suit."

I said, "Let me get this straight, sir. [Laughter] You want me to take the lead in tacking onto everybody that ever becomes a flag officer in the Navy or the Coast Guard in the future the abominable term 'commodore-admiral?' Shall we just call it CAD for short?" [Laughter]

He said, "Don't be a wise guy, Admiral."

I said, "Sir, you're hitting me cold with this one. Can I have overnight to think about it?"

He said, "Overnight. I'll hear from you tomorrow morning."

"Yes, sir." And this is my memory of the conversation. I can't guarantee these are all the right words, but this was the message I was getting. So I called him up the next morning and I said, "Mr. Secretary, I can't do that, but I've got a suggestion to make. We have always lived with "rear admiral upper half" and "rear admiral lower half". The only reason the other services are unhappy is that our O-7s wear two stars while theirs wear one. Why don't we stay with "rear admiral upper half," "rear admiral

lower half,” and let the O-7s wear one star? And then we’ll be right in step with everybody else. And I will tell you I would be more than happy to take the lead on that one if you would like. But you’ve got to guarantee not to be mad at me because I look like I’m crossing up the entire United States Navy. You might like to take the lead, because I think it’s a hell of a good idea.”

And he said something to the words of, “By God. They told me you’d come up with something, and it is a hell of a good idea. We’ll do that.”

So I said, “I’ll withdraw our legislation, but I won’t say why. Is that what you’d like me to do?” And I’ve forgotten how we worked it out. But, as I tell every class of new flag officers at Capstone, “If you’re happy with being a rear admiral lower half instead of a CAD, I will take a bow. If not, it’s too late now.”

Paul Stillwell: Why did he want the Coast Guard to take the lead?

Admiral Gracey: Only because we had legislation that hadn’t been enacted yet. His was already locked in. And so if we did it, then the Navy could say, “That’s a good idea. We want to do that too.”

I think I convinced him that, “That’s okay and I’d really appreciate it, but on things like this you guys really ought to take the lead. And we’re going to go where you’re going to go on this sort of thing—even if it’s a bad idea. If it’s a wonderful idea, well, I’ll be happy to take the lead, but that particular title of commodore admiral is not a good idea.”

Paul Stillwell: I take it this was after the one-star rank had been used for a couple of years as just commodore.

Admiral Gracey: Exactly, and they had legislation in place. We had gone along with them. We called our O-7s “commodores,” and they wore the one star. But our legislation hadn’t been formalized, because we wanted to tack some other things on it. And the other things involved a few controversial issues about personnel management and boards and continuation boards and a few other things, as I remember it. And so it

was a little slow getting going. We were doing it. All our new flags were called commodore and wore one star, just like the Navy. But the Navy legislation had been enacted into law, so it meant their taking the lead in fighting this fight to get the law changed. And he thought it would be convenient if we took the lead.

On at least two occasions that I can remember it came time in the annual big worldwide defense exercise when it would get to the point where the Coast Guard was to move over and be a part of the Navy. And my folks told me that that meant that our women all had to come off our ships. And I would always say, “No way. No way.”

“Well,” they said, “they’re not actually going to come off. We’re just going to say that if this were for real they would, so we’re going to simulate ordering them off.”

I said, “No, we’re not. We are not going to do that. We’re not going to tell the people out there that are fully qualified to do the job on the ship or they wouldn’t be there—we’re not going to tell them that they can’t stay there when things get rough. The law does not apply to us anyway, but I don’t care. Frankly I don’t think it applies to the Navy either, but whether it does or doesn’t it doesn’t apply to us. We’re not going to do it. So don’t. I don’t care what they tell you over there in the Pentagon, do *not* send that message out to our fleet.”

Well, that got back to Secretary Lehman, and he called me up. And he thanked me for the advice about the admirals, and then he said, “Now, about the women on the ships.” [Laughter]

And I explained to him, “I can’t do that, Mr. Secretary. Our women are out there doing a job and doing it well. We’ve got women commanding some of these ships. I’m not going to do that.”

We were talking back and forth, and he’d say, “Well, I guess we’re just going to have to ignore it then.”

I said, “However you choose to do it, sir, but I am not going to put out an order that totally pulls the rug out from under every woman on every ship in the United States Coast Guard. But, I’ve got a great idea.”

He said, “Another one of your ideas?”

I said. "Yes, sir. I've got a great idea. Why don't we just have the President call the Soviets and tell them we can't go to war until we get all the women off Coast Guard

ships. That will take about 30 days while we get them back from wherever they are around the world—and get them replaced with men. Then we can go ahead and have the war. It might be a good cooling-off period. Maybe we won't ever have any war, and you can give all the credit to the Coast Guard because of the women on the ships."

"Don't be a smart-ass with me."

I said, "Sir, do you understand where I'm coming from?"

He said, "Yes, I do." The following year same thing. He called me up, and he said, "Are we going to do this again?"

I said, "We're going to do it again, sir. I won't talk to you about the cooling-off period, but even more so. I mean, our women are doing great. Some of our best senior seagoing officers and petty officers are our women. We're not going to do that."

He sighed and he said, "Okay," or words to that effect. Went away.

Every year it would come up, and every year I would say, "Don't you dare."

After a while our people running our part of the exercise said, "Are you going to tell us not to dare send it again this year, sir?"

I said, "You don't even need to ask, do you?"

And they said, "No, but we thought we would." But Secretary Lehman was good that way. I would see him at various events, and he would always josh a little bit about it, but it was there, and he seemed to respect that. And there were a couple of other things, which I can't remember at the moment but where he called me direct on the phone. I don't know whether he had ever talked to Elizabeth Dole about it or not. I didn't ask him, and I didn't ask her. There was one place involved where Secretary Dole got into the military situation, and that was with Grenada. I'll cover that later.

Paul Stillwell: How much of a role did you as Commandant have in operational issues?

Admiral Gracey: I was in the operational chain of command. The Commandant of the Coast Guard is—or was—the only service chief for whom that was true. For example, if there was a major seizure at sea going down, I would be called. The Headquarters OpCenter—we called it "Flag Plot"—would coordinate. Our policy was that the commanding officer on scene had to make the final decision. But because we were

usually dealing with a ship flying a foreign flag, we had to screen with Justice Department and State Department. We had a sequence to follow. One of the things we accomplished over time, incidentally, was to find ways to speed that process up so our people weren't sitting out there for a day and a half waiting for an answer. But we had to touch all the bases. When that was done, I was called and briefed with a recommended action—usually the okay was for an answer of “No objection.” That meant the CO on scene was free to act as the situation warranted.

Actually ComPacArea and ComLantArea were the ones that diverted ships and all of that. I didn't really get into it. I was in the chain, but the Area Commanders were kind of like CinCs are now. The district commanders handled what was going on within their district. But the area commanders had certain assets like the high-endurance cutters and the C-130s and the long-range assets that crossed district borders; they owned those assets, and they were the ones that would deploy them in a situation.

But Headquarters Flag Plot and I as the Commandant were in the operational chain of command if warranted, and we did it because all those other agencies, high-level stuff within Washington, White House, Justice, State all that, were involved in the last quick briefing. The okay-to-go kind of thing was up to me, or if I wasn't around, the Vice Commandant.

When the Russian sailor jumped in the river down in the Mississippi off of Baton Rouge the Vice Commandant and his wife and Randy and I were down at the Naval Air Station, Pax River.* We'd decided to go and have a weekend. We stayed at the guesthouse there, and they had a dinner theater and then we were going to play some golf. The night we arrived we got word that the guy had jumped in the river.† The Coast Guard Chief of Staff, who was really great, Rear Admiral Deese Thompson, had organized an action team, and it was meeting at our Commandant's Command Center.‡

* Pax River is short for Patuxent River Naval Air Station, Lexington Park, Maryland.

† On 24 October 1985 25-year-old Seaman Miroslav Medved jumped into the Mississippi River near New Orleans from the Soviet freighter *Marshal Konev*. He was picked up and returned to his ship, whereupon he jumped overboard again. He was subsequently interviewed on board a U.S. Coast Guard cutter concerning his intentions because of the possibility of defection. News reports hinted that the Soviets might have made threats against Medved's family. In any event, he returned to his ship, which then left the United States with Medved on board. The issue was debated in Congress as to whether the United States had accorded the right treatment to a potential defector.

‡ Rear Admiral Donald C. Thompson, USCG.

We had a room set aside for this sort of thing, and he'd got the team together and the whole bit. The Vice Commandant and I discussed whether we should go back to D.C. or not, "Well, do we stay or do we go?"

"They don't need us."

"No, they don't need us, but we don't want it to be said that we down here playing golf and going to the theater when this was coming down." So we reluctantly left our dessert and drove back to D.C. We told Admiral Thompson we were coming, but he had the ball. "You've got it. You do what you think is right," and he did. Then he just kept us posted on the car phones, but I was in the chain of command. But I think the Coast Guard is the only service chief that has that responsibility. It stems in part from the Coast Guard's law enforcement function and the way some of the laws are written. But in terms of operational command the Commandant of the Coast Guard is in the operational line. And that applies to the law-enforcement situations as well, because we do have that aspect going on all the time.

We're talking about relationships, and one of the things that you had mentioned that might be of interest was my relationship with the FAA chief, Don Engen, Vice Admiral Engen.* It was great. To know Don was to love him, and he was just a wonderful guy. He and I later on were together on the board of directors of the Association for Rescue at Sea. The FAA and the Coast Guard were the two big parts of DoT. That's where the hardware was in the Department. That's where the muscle was in the Department, muscle meaning "do it" kind of thing with people on the street, in the field, on scene. And so we and FAA periodically had similar kinds of problems of money from budget being diverted to highway work or mass transit work.

I know Paul Yost was very worried about that, what is called Function 400.† And that the Coast Guard was getting the short end of the stick. We and the FAA were pretty subject to money being taken for those kinds of sometimes politically advantageous programs. A national highway system is something that nobody would scoff at, and there was highway safety and the railroads and all of that sort of thing. So Don and I were

* Vice Admiral Donald D. Engen, USN (Ret.), was administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration from 10 April 1984 to 2 July 1987. His oral history is in the Naval Institute collection.

† Admiral Paul A. Yost Jr., USCG, served as Commandant of the Coast Guard from 30 May 1986 to 31 May 1990. His oral history is in the Naval Institute collection.

alike in facing that kind of problem. Our agencies got caught up in this funding competition. Don's office was in the DoT building. Don and Secretary Dole had a really good relationship.

We had some fun too. I went to a DoT meeting one day and announced that I had a whole bunch of music that I was going to play for them. I said, "We're going to have a concert today, and the program is going to go like this. For Federal Highways it's 'I Get My Kicks on Route 66.' For the Federal Railroad, 'I've Been Working on the Railroad,' of course. FAA, 'Come Josephine in My Flying Machine.' And then Urban Mass Transit, 'How Do You Get Charlie Off the MTA?' And then there's the Coast Guard, and that is, 'Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?'" [Laughter] They were all enthralled till I got to that line, and they all booed when I said that. I said, "You've got to grab every opportunity you've got."

Paul Stillwell: I interviewed Admiral Engen and he said he had his differences with Secretary Dole.

Admiral Gracey: Yeah, he did. He did. We all did. Getting along with her and having a good relationship—well, I had a good relationship and we got along fine. And it was a pleasure to meet her husband. I got to meet Senator Dole on several occasions, and he's a wonderful personality to be with. He's got a good sense of humor. In social situations or receptions at the Department he would show up and join right in as the Secretary's husband—not as "Senator Dole"—though nobody missed what his "day job" was.*

Paul Stillwell: He's got a great second career doing humorous television commercials.

Admiral Gracey: Well, yeah, some of them are marvelous. [Laughter] But I liked Don Engen a lot, and the world lost a nice and very competent man and a good man when he was killed in that plane crash.†

* Robert J. Dole, a Republican from Kansas, served in the Senate from 3 January 1969 to 11 June 1996

† Engen, who was director of the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum at the time of his death, was killed in a motorized glider accident while vacationing in Nevada on 13 July 1999. He was flying with his friend and longtime pilot, William Ivans, when the glider crashed near Minden, Nevada.

Paul Stillwell: I certainly second that.

Admiral Gracey: With the rest of the DoT staff, our relations were excellent. I mean, I felt I had good relationships. They had weekly meetings, and we were friendly and all of that. Some of the junior staff people were a little tentative. They weren't too sure they trusted the Coast Guard, and that got my Irish up a little bit. But in terms of the seniors, the agency heads and that sort of thing, the relationships were good. The DoT Inspector General gave us some headaches. In fact, I came across another piece of paper the other day where I had written a note to the Deputy Secretary in which I told how many Inspector General reports there were ongoing, and when I find it I'll build it into these remarks. But it was just incredible how many Inspector General reviews were being done on the Coast Guard and how much of our time we were spending on them. Way out of scale with the other DoT agencies. *Way out.*

Paul Stillwell: Well, did you view this as harassment?

Admiral Gracey: I hoped not, but at times we wondered. I think we just had so much going on—so many different things in so many places—that it was a great field of opportunity. That's the only kind of thing I could think. I don't ever remember a major kind of finding happening. Most of the time I would wind up signing a memorandum, which pointed out that what the IG's report stated as fact just wasn't true. "What you're saying is not true."

Paul Stillwell: What kind of topics were the subjects of these inspector general visits?

Admiral Gracey: Well, all over the place. There was one about housing—in Kodiak. They were talking about some work we were doing on some housing, I remember. Inspector Generals go out to look for safety, and they look for proper running of the programs, doing your job properly, and they look for proper spending of the money. They have a good role, and I believe in inspections as an important part of an operation,

finding out what's wrong so you can do something about it—or what's going well so you can be pleased. The latter rarely happens.

Paul Stillwell: Well, they also have a deterrent role.

Admiral Gracey: They do indeed, and that's not bad unless—as happened with us on occasion—they deter good things that should go forward. One of the objections I had was that the nature of some of what they call findings would be published in an open newsletter and sometimes in reports to Congress before we had responded to the initial write-up. And oftentimes they were not correct and were provably not correct. That really bothered me. I had a big campaign to sell the idea that there's got to be some way we can hold off reporting alleged “findings” until after we've gone through the proper review cycle. But it goes out. And they're not saying, “This is what we found, but we haven't heard from the Coast Guard yet.” They're reporting it as fact. And many times it wasn't fact. It wasn't accurate. It was based on a lack of understanding of what was going on. So there was some friction, sometimes a lot of it, with the Inspector General.

Paul Stillwell: One of the topics that's become big in that area in recent years is sexual harassment. Did you have any specific program in that?

Admiral Gracey: Yes, I did. Yes, I did. I think the best way I can sum it up is to refer, again, to my Human Relations Policy Statement, which I wrote personally. I directed that we take down all the formal Equal Employment Opportunity Statements and replace them with my policy statement, because I wanted to go beyond just “equal opportunity.” I wanted our human relations to be good in all aspects, and I said, for example, “In day-to-day working relations I expect each and every person to be treated with dignity, warmth, courtesy and respect. This applies to all Coast Guard people, regulars, Reservists, Auxiliarists, military and civilian. I expect the needs, wants and emotions of each person, male or female, military or civilian, to be considered by associates above, below, and beside in the organization. I expect all to be given a positive supportive climate in which they can do the very best of which they're capable, in which they will

feel comfortable, needed and wanted, and in which they can grow and achieve according to their individual desires and talents.”

And there’s more. I think I can sum it up in what I said in my first “State of the Coast Guard” speech. Every year the Commandant speaks at a luncheon with the Coast Guard people in Washington. Nowadays it’s televised live, but it used to be made in a film and sent out to CG people in the field. It’s reprinted in the *Coast Guard* magazine. On the subject of sexual harassment I essentially repeated in my speech that first year what I had been saying as I traveled around the country and so forth.

This is as good and clear as I can put it. I said, “Sexual harassment. We will stop it. One way or another, we will stop it. We are working on that by providing special courses. It’s built into the curriculum at all the petty officer schools, at OCS and at the Academy. A lot of people just don’t understand what sexual harassment is, and we’re going to make sure everybody does. We’re not going to have a great deal of patience with those who want to pursue it. We haven’t totally overcome the macho instincts yet, Gentlemen, and we need to.” And that was my message wherever I went. And we did what I said. We set up training programs. We really came down hard on any incidents that were reported. You’re going to ask me if I can remember any specifics, and I can’t.

Paul Stillwell: But that’s the way you enforced the words.

Admiral Gracey: That’s the way. We walked the walk. We talked the talk—and we walked the talk, i.e., we did what we said. That’s the message. It was plain language. “Gentlemen, we haven’t overcome the macho yet, and it’s time to do it, now. Stop it.” And I gave it to them personally when I was there, and I wrote it whenever the opportunity came for it. And my policy regarding sexual harassment was—in plain language—“Ain’t going to be no.”

But it went beyond that, as I read in my Human Relations Statement. And, as I have said several times, I wrote that personally, and talked it personally. I started it in the Ninth District when I was out there. I just felt very strongly that we needed an organization where everybody felt good about themselves—where they were proud of the organization, proud of themselves, felt comfortable, all of those kinds of things. And I

think it paid dividends. We got a lot done. The kinds of things our people accomplished over the four-year period were amazing. They had done a lot before, and they've done a lot since, but I was just dazzled at the kinds of things that these people managed to do. They were proud of themselves about it. They felt good and they cared about each other.

Paul Stillwell: Did you have any kind of an ombudsman organization to field complaints and what have you?

Admiral Gracey: Yeah. We created the Family Advocacy Program. It started with a small organization at Coast Guard Headquarters called "The Family Advocacy Section." Then throughout the Coast Guard, starting in the bigger commands, we had ombudsmen. We got Coast Guard spouses who volunteered to act as ombudsmen and work with the senior master chiefs who had been designated Command Enlisted Advisors. Now we call them the Command Master Chief Petty Officer, a much better term.

Those CEAs got into it big time. They really latched onto the Family Advocacy Program and the ombudsman bit. We brought them to CG Headquarters two or three times a year, so they could interface with the Program Directors, etc., and have some joint time with the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard and me. I would spend three or four hours with them talking about all of what was going on. That Family Advocacy Program got started early on. It was really rolling by the second year or so. It started more or less informally, where various commands developed ideas that worked for them. Later we formalized it.

My wife Randy worked big time with some other people in putting out a book called *Charting Your Life in the Coast Guard*. And it became the model for the other services, at least the Navy. There's a woman named Kathleen O'Beirne who had been working on this sort of thing for the Navy. She glommed onto this book of ours. She and I were on the USO World Board of Governors together. She had heard about "Charting Your Life ...", so I got her a copy. She said, "Oh, wow, this is wonderful." My understanding is they copied it—using Navy terms, of course. It was really plain talk, what it's like to be a Coast Guard person in a Coast Guard family, about moving, and all that sort of thing.

These ideas were not all original with us. The other services were doing things like this too. I know CNO Jim Watkins did a lot of talking about this sort of thing.

We set up a sponsor program so each family or individual being transferred to a unit had somebody there who was designated as their “sponsor.” The sponsor would show them where to go shopping and help them get settled in, find a place to live, answer their letters ahead of time as to what kind of clothes they should bring, what schools were like, etc. You know, just provide information back and forth. My understanding was it worked very well. It should have worked very well. There may have been times when it was hard to find somebody who had the time or willingness to be a sponsor, but my understanding was that people were designated. Some, I’m sure, did it better than others. But that was part of our program.

Paul Stillwell: Was spouse abuse folded into this human relations policy also?

Admiral Gracey: Yes, though I can’t remember whether there is specific language, but I would talk about the subject when I was with the CG people. But I can remember telling, in one forum or another, about there having been spouse abuse at Governors Island, where we had, literally, one-sixth of the Coast Guard living in that one small place. Early on, when I looked at the “blotter” of our Governors Island Coast Guard police force, I was amazed at what I saw. So I would say, “If you think it can’t happen here, folks, you’re wrong. It does happen here. We do have spouse abuse and it’s wrong.” The kind of people that would engage in that sort of stuff are not the kind of people that we wanted in our “Coast Guard Family.” I know things happen that cause rifts between partners and so forth. And there are ways to cope with that.

We started the Coast Guard Chaplain program. The Chief of Coast Guard Chaplains was assigned to report directly to the Commandant. The first one came early on my watch. I don’t know whether Jack Hayes had set that up or had talked to then Navy Chief of Chaplains, Rear Admiral Ross Trower, about it or not. I know the man that started it out for us was picked by Ross Trower after he found out who was going to be the Commandant. I had known Ross from when we were setting up the chapels and religious programs in New York and a variety of other ways.

He said, “I’ve got a man that’s going to be just right for you.” And, boy, he was right in Captain Eddy Moran. Prince among princes, plain talk, wonderful sense of humor, unfailingly delivered prayers that were just right for the situation and to which everyone listened. He fit with me and into the Coast Guard like he had always been one of us. He set up a full chaplain program. He went out to the field, got a bunch of Navy Reservists who agreed to be chaplains in Coast Guard Districts, and so forth. Now we have actual billets in all the districts and major commands. For years our chaplain program had consisted of one at the Coast Guard Academy, one at each of the training centers and the two boot camps, but that was it. Now we were getting into Coast Guard operations. If the troops were out there hauling in body parts after an airplane disaster, the chaplains were on scene to help them cope with it or family stress situations—all the things that chaplains do. And my understanding is the chaplains today really love it. I was talking to one just recently. He had flown in from the West Coast for the annual Coast Guard Memorial service, and I asked, “How do you feel about serving with the Coast Guard?”

He said, “Oh, I absolutely love it.” He said, “This is one of the assignments that Navy chaplains try hard to get.” That’s because there’s stuff going on for them every day. Families are under stress. People are going out in storms. I don’t know whether you’ve seen our current ad about “Be a hero every day.” Well, that’s going on, and our people are into it. These stressful situations are often in remote areas where there’s not much support. Right up a chaplain’s alley. Our Chaplain Program is a good thing.

Paul Stillwell: We were talking about spouse abuse.

Admiral Gracey: When I get to a subject where our chaplains are involved, I get carried away. Thank you, Eddy Moran. Thank you, Ross Trower. Et al. Back to spouse abuse. I’ve been talking about various “tools” we used to address the whole range of human problems that arise. The ombudsmen and this “Charting Your Life in the Coast Guard” were a couple. We worked really hard on building a network of families, of the family, the spouse side of it. My wife Randy and some associates produced a thing called the “Green Sheet.” And this went out monthly I think—just to kind of spread the word, talk

about what was going on, what kinds of things were available for help and so forth. It was all a part of walking the talk of the “Human Relations Statement.

I kept banging away on the subject of abuse—the same kind of approach I used on the sexual harassment problem. “If you think it can’t happen here, folks, you’re wrong. It can and it does—and we’re going to stop it.” And the same approach went on with smoking and drinking, particularly overdrinking. I thought that was a big problem.

And drug abuse. I’m convinced that we had about a 10% problem with drug abuse when I got to be the Commandant. I could see it in the field. I knew it was happening. That was an advantage I had from my seven years of commands as a flag officer in the field. The previous regime didn’t really accept that it was true about the size of our drug abuse problem. They had a program to address it, but in their program an offender got two chances. If you got one hit, then you got another chance, etc., etc. There was a program of testing and so forth. Very early, almost from the get-go, I said, “That’s it, folks. One hit and you’re out. We’re not going to have any of this stuff. It’s unfair to the people who are going to sea with you, who are flying airplanes with you, who are working in the shop with you, who are cooking with you or who are doing anything else. It’s unfair. It’s wrong. It’s illegal. And we’re supposed to be the pillars of virtue in all of this. So—one hit and you’re gone. And we’re going to do random tests on a regular, ongoing basis.”

Shortly after taking over as the Commandant I went down to Coast Guard Base, Portsmouth, Virginia. I had a meeting with all the Coast Guard troops and their families in the gymnasium, probably about 400 people there. The Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard, Carl Constantine, and Randy, my wife, and I sat in three chairs out in the middle of the gym floor with a microphone.* Carl talked a little bit, and I talked a little bit, and then we asked for questions. Right off the bat, a young man stood up and said, “I want to ask about your drug policy. It seems to me it’s an invasion of my privacy, and it’s an infringement of my rights, and I want to know what you’re going to do about it.” There was dead silence in the room.

* On 1 August 1981 Admiral J. B. Hayes, Commandant, appointed Chief Radioman Carl W. Constantine as the fourth Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard. Constantine served in the billet to April 1986.

I said, “It’s undoubtedly an invasion of your privacy. When somebody stands and watches you urinate into a bottle, that’s an invasion of your privacy, no doubt about that. But, an infringement of your rights? I’m not sure whether it is or it isn’t. But I don’t care. We’re going to do it anyway.”

To the absolute amazement of Randy and Carl and me, the other 399 people in that room stood up and cheered. It brings tears to my eyes to tell you about it. I looked at Randy and Carl, and I said, “I can’t believe it.” I really could believe it, but it was just so awesome. There was BOOM and right up just like you pushed a button and jumped them all up. They’d been waiting to hear this. They didn’t want to have this drug abuse stuff going on around them. I guess they also wanted to hear somebody say, “No, by God. There will be none. I don’t care about your legalities. We’re going to do it anyway.”

Whatever it was, it struck a chord. I wasn’t shooting for effect. It just came out that way, but it certainly showed. And, of course, then as we went around the Coast Guard we had that behind us, and we got a similar response everywhere. It was a good tack to take. To avoid the problem of tests being challenged as false positives, we set a level that was higher than the other services set. If someone was taking a test and it was positive, there was no way one could ever claim—in a court martial or whatever action followed—that he got to that level because somebody in the room was smoking, or she didn’t know it was there or you were at a party and you just inhaled it. There was no way. That defense was gone. We had good results and very few challenges.

Our level wasn’t a lot different, but the other services had set a very tight level with the idea of excluding abuse by the mere fact that the “okay” level was so low. But it wasn’t working because it could get beaten legally. Ours never got beaten. And in the course of a year our experience—I hope I’ve got the numbers right. I’ll probably exaggerate because I love them, but they went from somewhere around a 10% hit rate to 1% or less. I mean, it went right off the table.

Paul Stillwell: The Navy had a similar result when Admiral Hayward spoke out very stridently against drugs.*

* See Admiral Hayward’s Naval Institute oral history.

Admiral Gracey: We backed our talk with lots of ongoing random tests. I'm sure they did too. It was expensive.

Another aspect of our program dealt with the higher level I spoke of. We coped with the “near misses” this way: If you were at a doubtful level where you weren't over our top but you were within a certain amount of it, then you were put on probation, and you had to take tests at a regular, very frequent rate. It was expensive for us, but you were tested. You had to go and be tested every day or every other day for a finite period of time, hopefully getting you out of the habit. Certainly getting the idea across that, “We ain't kidding here, man. And you've been fooling around here somehow. We'll give you the benefit of the doubt that maybe you were at a party. But you better not go to any other parties where you're going to inhale it, because we're going to nail you. Any future positive hit at any level and you're out,” I think was the way it worked, and it had a good effect.

Paul Stillwell: So I presume you got rid of a bunch of people as a result of the tests.

Admiral Gracey: Yes, we did. Yes, we did. Some went willingly, some didn't, but they went. At the same time we had a program of getting rid of ineffectual performers. .

Paul Stillwell: One topic that I know you want to talk about from your term as Commandant was working with the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard and recycling that to coincide with the Commandant's tenure.

Admiral Gracey: Yeah. Thanks for asking that. I did want to talk about that. The original system of having a Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard started several Commandants before me. Admiral Willard Smith picked the first one in 1969—the third year of his four-year term.

His choice, Master Chief Calhoun, was highly esteemed. They've all been great people. But when the program was started in the Commandant's third year I guess nobody gave any thought to the fact that the MCPOCG would serve most of his time

under the successor to the man who chose him. A Commandant picked a person, and had him for one year. The next Commandant had him for three years. Then he would pick one and have him for one year. And so on. But it's a very personal kind of thing. There is a variety of people from whom to choose, but they need to be people that are in sync with your philosophy and your style and all of that. It would be awful on both people if it weren't so.

Admiral Hayes had picked Master Chief Constantine. We had a few rough edges at the start. One day in my office I said, "Carl, would it come as a great shock if I told you that I think I'm the Commandant of the enlisted personnel too?"

He looked at me with his marvelous smile and said, "You know, I never thought of it that way."

I said, "No, I didn't think you did, but I think you ought to. We're both looking out for the enlisted troops, Carl. And I'd like it if you'd let me be the Commandant of the whole Coast Guard. And we'll work together. You're going to be my right-hand man. You're the senior enlisted man. You're the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard. That's the way it's going to be. You've got the three stars on there. I've got them, too, but it's on a plaque on the wall that some of your colleagues gave me. But how about that?"

He said, "Yes, sir. We'll make it go." And we did.

Paul Stillwell: What led you to pose that question to him?

Admiral Gracey: I wish I could remember. I think it was just that there were indications that we weren't exactly in sync. We weren't walking arm in arm as I thought we should be, and I had some ideas that were a little different from some of his as to the way I wanted things, the tone I wanted to set. He wasn't fighting me. He was just carrying on from the year he'd had with Admiral Hayes, and Jack and I were different in our approach. That doesn't mean good or bad, better or worse. It just means different.

I can't remember what finally triggered the meeting, but it was early on and I thought, "We need to get together here. I'm making announcements out there as to how I

feel about how things ought to work and how I feel about the troops. Shame on me for not having talked to you at length about it before I did that. I'm here, too, Carl."

But we talked about things for the Uniform Board. He hated the idea that I pushed to approve umbrellas. So did a lot of other old-timers. My pitch was I could never understand why it was that just because I had a uniform on I had to stand out in the rain like an idiot and get wet. And so I said, "I approved umbrellas on Governors Island. Now I'm going to approve them for the entire Coast Guard. But they've got to be black, and they've got to be small enough to go in a briefcase and fold up tight. And you're not going to use them on the parade ground. On the parade ground you're going to get wet." Well, I didn't have to stick Carl too deep to find out he didn't really like that very much.

I can't remember anything that was open opposition. It was just it wasn't quite coming together the way I thought it ought to. I'm making much more of it than is necessary, because when I said what I did about being Commandant of our enlisted people too, he smiled and said, "Damn, I never thought about it that way." After that we were fine. Carl was really good. He always traveled at Christmastime. Left his family at home and went out and rode a ship somewhere at Christmastime and was with the troops.

I didn't do that. If I were going back and do it again, I think I might have, although one of the reasons I didn't was it's all well and good to be there and be on the mess deck, but when the Commandant's coming, all hell breaks loose ahead of time. You know. "The Commandant's coming. The Commandant's coming." It always happened—even though I sent word ahead that I didn't want it to. You said it. The Commandant arriving is not a casual thing. I would like it to have been. I wanted it to have been. I would have been perfectly happy if it were, but it wasn't. Pure bald fact is no matter what I said, it wasn't. And so I thought, "I don't need to do that at Christmastime. Let them have their thing." So that was one of the reasons I didn't.

But Carl did, and he was good at that. He traveled with us. He traveled on his own a lot. He was really good about sharing with me the sessions with the field Command Master Chiefs when they came in for their periodic meetings. And they gave me as much time as I wanted, and he was positive in the enforcement of that. Was instrumental, I think, in one of the great events of my four years and it'll show you

something about Jim Gracey, I guess, when I tell you this was one of the great events of my four years.

It was on the next-to-last day of my time as Commandant. It was just before my change of command and retirement, and we're going to talk about that a little bit. Initially I brought in all the Command Master Chiefs from all the districts to come to the Commandant Change of Command Ceremony. I wanted them there, and I don't think that had been done before. Maybe, but I don't think so. In any event, I brought them all in, and I brought them in a couple of days early: (a) so they could talk to Admiral Yost, who was going to be my relief, but (b) I wanted to talk to them. I wanted to just spend a little more time with them. We had a dinner out at our Quarters for them and their wives. It was a splendid evening. On the two days they'd been in town I met with them. On the first day I thought, "Well, those guys are all going to be in shirtsleeves," so I went down in my shirtsleeves. They all had their coats on. So I said, "Take them off." Next day I thought, "Well, they're all going to have their coats on again." So I went down with my coat on and they all were in shirtsleeves. [Laughter]

So now it was the day before retirement, and we'd had this dinner at the house the night before. Coming into the work I thought, "You know, I really haven't told those people how much I appreciate their support, how really great they've been. I'm going to go drop in on their meeting and do that." So I said to my aide, "Go down and just alert them." The conference room was just down the hall maybe, who knows, 100 feet. "Go down and tell them I'm coming in. I'll be right in. I just don't want to walk in on them cold turkey." So my aide, Lieutenant Commander Pat Stillman, went down and gave them the word.* I walked along behind him, a minute or two behind him.

As I came in, this is what I found. On one side of the table they had their coats on. On the other side of the table they didn't have their coats on. And on the far end of the table was the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard with his coat half on and half off. [Laughter] There was no way in God's world they could have dreamed that up. They had no idea I would be coming down. It was an instantaneous reaction. Somebody said, "Let's do this." That was such a wonderful thing. I remember it. As I said, it was

* Lieutenant Commander Patrick M. Stillman, USCG.

one of the best things that happened to me in my whole tour. Those guys did that for me that morning. I thought it was great.

Paul Stillwell: Getting back to the original question, did you extend Master Chief Constantine for a year so the tours would coincide?

Admiral Gracey: Oh, thank you. I got sidetracked. Thank you, Paul. Imagine that, I got sidetracked again. [Laughter] Yeah, along the way it was coming up on the end of his tour, and I said, “Carl, this is a silly system. This is a silly system. You and I have worked very well together, but you really were Jack Hayes’s guy. You and he were perfect. We’ve done very well, and I thank you for that. But wouldn’t you have preferred to spend your four years with the person who picked you and then let the new Commandant pick his own man?”

He said, “Yeah, that’s the way it ought to be.”

I said, “You and I can fix it, Carl, but it’s going to take sacrifice on your part because you’re going to have to stay here another year. You’re going to have to put in a fifth year on this job and postpone your retirement one year. And it’s not going to be easy on me either, because I’m going to have to put up with you for another year. But we really should do it.”

Paul Stillwell: You said that with a joking expression.

Admiral Gracey: Of course. You know, I pick on people, but I periodically have to step aside and say, “Hey, wait a minute. Now, you’ve heard me say 100 times, and I’ll say it again. You only tease the ones you love. If I meant that, I wouldn’t say it.” And he knew that by that time. I mean, he pulled my chain as often as I pulled his. It was a good relationship. But the point was he said, “Boy, I’m going to have to talk to Jan, my wife, about that.” He said, “But it’s the right thing to do.” He came back the next day, and he said, “Well, Jan was really looking forward to going back to Alaska and so forth, but we’ll go another year.” And I thanked him and called her up and thanked her and all the

proper things. That got it into the proper sync so that each Commandant now picks his own Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard, and that's the way it ought to be.

Paul Stillwell: One role that he can provide is as a two-way communications conduit to relate to you the concerns of enlisted personnel and to communicate yours to them.

Admiral Gracey: Absolutely, and part of that was his relating to me what he was hearing without violating confidence. I didn't care about names or who said that, but what are you hearing out there? Yeah, it's critical. Plus, there has to be an indication of support so that the people out there understand that the MCPOCG does in fact have the ear of the Commandant, and they are in fact going to talk to each other. It may or not come out with things they want to have come out, but they can be comfortable and confident to know it's been there. I mean, it's been discussed and so forth. And that's good things as well as bad.

If you're trying something, you need to know whether it's working or not. And if it's not, why not, and maybe we can fix it. Maybe the basic idea's good. We're just not going about it in the right way. And those are the kinds of things we could talk about. Some of it is just for show. I don't mean that in a derogatory sense. But showing that you're together. We were together at that very first event down in Portsmouth. It was Carl and Randy and I, because the families were there and Randy was there, and we were selling the family idea. This was not new, incidentally. Everybody in PacArea had heard this more times than they wanted to, and everybody in Atlantic Area too. And everybody in the Ninth District and everybody anyplace wherever I'd been had heard it all. But it needs to be in sync. You can't run separately, I don't think, and I think that was one of the things I was concerned about up front. The Master Chief and I were not completely in sync, and I've heard some people say that I was the "enlisted man's admiral." Well, there can be a lot worse labels than that.

Paul Stillwell: That's something to wear proudly.

Admiral Gracey: You bet. I would hate to think that that meant the officer corps was mad at me. But I spent a lot of time talking about things I wanted for the troops, and the civilians, everybody. But I really tended to focus down at that level, I think.

Paul Stillwell: Do you remember problems that he brought to you that you would not have heard about otherwise?

Admiral Gracey: Offhand I can't, but they were there. And I may be fooling myself, but I think we created a pretty open society quote-quote within the Coast Guard, just by the fact that people would ask me the questions they did, the fact that that guy would stand up in that arena and ask me that question about my drug policy.

There was a kid who one day at a meeting at Group, Astoria, Oregon, said to me, "Sir, I want to know how you put your pants on." And everybody kind of looked at him like, "What are you, crazy?"

I said, "I hang them over the end of the bed and jump into them both legs at once. Don't you?" [Laughter] I do it one leg at a time like everybody, of course, but I said, "No, no, no. I'm the admiral. I hang them over the bed and jump into them both legs at the same time. What else would you expect?" Well, it got a big laugh. He enjoyed it, but the fact that he would stand up and ask that question I thought was good.

Now, he might not say to me whatever, if he had some particular gripe, in that forum, but he would say it to Carl, or he would say it to his own command master chief. I did have an exchange with a young man down in Houston at the Marine Safety Office. We had bought them a whole bunch of computers for handling port security stuff and merchant marine safety kind of work. I went for a Q&A when I was in town, and this petty officer said to me, "Sir, these are nice computers we bought, but we got no instructions with them. We don't know anything about it. What good are they? When are we going to get some information on how to use them? Aren't we going to get some training?"

That was the first I had heard about that. I said, "Well, thank you for bringing that to my attention, and if you've got new equipment you certainly ought to have the instructions on how to use it effectively. But let me ask you a question, because you guys

out here are the smartest people in the world. I mean, you are so much smarter when you come out of boot camp than I was when I came out of the Coast Guard Academy that I can't believe it. Have you figured out how to light it up, get light on the screen?"

"Oh, yeah."

"Have you figured out to make it talk to you, put words on the screen? Something happen when you punch on a key?"

"Oh, we figured how to do that."

"Have you figured out how to play a game on it?"

"Yeah, well, there's a good one I play during lunch hour."

I said, "Okay." And the rest of the gang was watching as I was reeling this guy in. And I said, "Well, that's a lot. I don't suppose you've figured out any things that you might do better than you've been doing because you've now got this ability to light it up and make it talk."

He said, "Well, I did have a suggestion I passed into the CO the other day about how we might do—" And he went on to talk about this particular thing.

I said, "And how long have you had this?"

He said, "Three days."

I said, "All right." And at that point everybody laughed. I said, "Okay. This is not fair, because I just reeled you in, but you have demonstrated the point I'm making. You're absolutely right—and thank you for telling me that you don't have the books. You ought to have the books. You ought to have training. You ought to get all of that stuff if we're going to buy you new hardware. I keep talking about quality of life, and I keep saying quality of life is having the right hardware and the right tools so you can do the job the way you are capable of doing it. That makes your quality of life much higher. Quality of life is more than having a nice house and all that. It's having the right stuff in the right place to do your job. But you've also just illustrated to me that I'm right when I tell you how smart you guys are. And look what you've done. You've had this thing, what did you say, three days you've had it? You've lit it up. It talks to you. You've figured out a game to play on it, and you've already told the CO something they can do better if you do it your way."

Then I turned to whoever it was with me, and I said, “Let’s get the instruction books down here, because if he did this without the instruction book, God knows what will come when he has it. We may not be able to stand it if he’s got instructions.” They all laughed, and that was the end of it.

But the point that pleased me was that he would tell me about it. The people were not uncomfortable, and when I responded I was comfortable in giving straight answers and having some fun sometimes. There was one time, however, that I laced into somebody who was concerned about our pushing too much on grooming standards. I think that was what it was. Appearance. And this was the only place I did it. He really pulled my chain because, I’d been thinking, “This is the scruffiest looking bunch of people I’ve ever seen anywhere.” No haircuts. I mean, it was really bad. So I unloaded on him and the unit and everybody right on the spot about, “One of the reasons we’re talking about grooming standards is because we’d like to have them. If you don’t want anybody to talk about them, then you might go get a haircut once in while. When was the last time you had one?” I hated myself for doing that, because that’s the quickest way in the world to snub out anybody ever asking you a question again. But this was so bad.

Paul Stillwell: That was a thing that Admiral Yost felt he had to make a point about, also, when he became Commandant.

Admiral Gracey: Was the beards.

Paul Stillwell: Grooming standards in general, courtesy to fellow Coastguardsmen.

Admiral Gracey: Really? God, that surprises me. I thought we had that one pretty well trained, but I know Paul hated the beards. He hated them while we were together. And I’m glad you brought that up, because the Navy said no beards. I’ve forgotten whether it was Watkins or—

Paul Stillwell: It was Admiral Watkins.

Admiral Gracey: Watkins said no beards.* I talked to MCPOCG Constantine and asked, “How do you feel about this?”

He said, “Well I can understand what they’re doing,” but he said, “I think Coast Guard people are comfortable with having the beards.”

I said, “How about checking with your Command Master Chiefs and see how the folks out there feel about this?”

The answer back was, “They feel good about it. Among other things, they don’t want to shave them off just because the Navy did. They like the idea of having them. They understand the need to keep them well trimmed, and they understand that in certain jobs you can’t have one. If you’re flying an airplane or someplace where you’re wearing a mask or something, they understand that and they don’t have them. But in general the feeling is they like the idea and they’d like to keep them.”

So I said, “That’s good enough for me. We’ll keep the beards.” And I said, “Put the word back that that’s what I said because they said it was good and they like it and they’re comfortable and they can keep them in check. Keep them looking decent. We will continue at least for the present.”

I really banged away on the grooming standards, and I thought we had it in place. I was also banging away on height and weight standards, because my argument was that, “You can have the best uniform in the world, but if it doesn’t fit you very well, that’s not the kind of appearance we want, and we want to look sharp. We are sharp, and we want to look sharp.” I banged away and talked about it every year in the State of the Coast Guard speeches. In fact, early on I reinstated the Uniform Board that had been idle for four years. We set up a situation where we had uniform-fitting stations I guess, whatever the right word is, all over the Coast Guard. And we subsidized the exchanges where there wasn’t room enough for them to buy things. If they were too small to stock Coast Guard clothing, then we subsidized them so that what clothing they did have could be filled at the same price as in a clothing locker. And we had fitting rooms so that people that bought uniforms could be professionally fitted at the spot.

We had a mail-order system set up for uniforms out of Cape May where orders received would be shipped back within 48 hours. Actually they did so well I

* The Navy had issued an order that its personnel would have to stop wearing beards as of 1 January 1985.

complimented them in one of my speeches. They had it at 32 hours at one point, that stuff coming in was being turned around and sent back to the ordering point on a mail-order basis. I don't know what happened to that after I left, but the idea was that people needed access to standard clothing items—and we were going out to buy quality uniforms. The trench coat that we got for our officers was from a quality, well-known clothing manufacturer. We got a good price on them, and it was the blue trench coat that replaced what the Coast Guard enlisted people called the “wino coat” that everybody hated.

Paul Stillwell: Well, you explained before the tape started about the wino coat, so maybe you could put that on the record.

Admiral Gracey: Well, it was just a plain, ordinary hang-off-your-shoulders, button-down-the-front raincoat, but it really wasn't very attractive and the people in the Coast referred to it as the “wino coat.” And my promise to them early on was, “We're going to get rid of the wino coat,” and I proudly announced in my first State of the Coast Guard speech that the wino coat was out of here. We were getting a raincoat, and we were going to get a reefer as well. Ultimately we got the raincoat.

But, as I say, I'm surprised to hear that Paul Yost thought grooming needed to be a point of emphasis, because I thought we were really doing very well at that and people were very proud of themselves. But we did have the beards, and the beards went away shortly after he became Commandant. I mean, I don't think it was in his acceptance speech, but it was in the next morning. I had tried for four years to get some coverage of the Coast Guard in *The Washington Post*. I got through the change of command, and I went off to Bermuda to hang out at the Naval Air Station there for a few days.* When I came back, I found *The Washington Post* had an article about Admiral Yost getting rid of the beards—that the Coast Guard was going to conform with the other services.† I think

* Admiral Paul A. Yost, Jr., became the 18th Commandant of the United States Coast Guard on 30 May 1986 when he relieved Admiral Gracey.

† “Coast Guardsmen Ordered to Shave Their Beards,” *The Washington Post*, 9 June 1986, page A7. Admiral Yost issued a directive on 6 June that specified that the ban on beards would begin on 15 June.

I'm jealous about that. That's a dirty-pool way to get in *The Washington Post*.
[Laughter]

Paul is very direct and forthright. I don't think he would have done that in the change of command speech. Maybe I just tuned him out when he got to that point. There was no secret about how Paul felt on a number of issues—one of which was beards, for sure. He may have alluded to something with several words, but I think it was clear. I think the first work day afterward he announced that the beards were going out of here. There were some getting-ready sessions down in Fredericksburg. They were at a hotel down there, where the new Commandant got together with his folks in a flag conference, and I stayed away. We went down for dinner one night, but basically we stayed away so that they could get ready and be off and running. I have no doubt that it was announced then, "Stand by, the beards are coming off." Maybe there'd been some talk about it. But I don't think you would have heard it in his change of command statement.

Paul Stillwell: What about the climate for minorities in the Coast Guard during your watch? Did you change anything from the status quo you inherited as far as opportunities or stamping down on discrimination?

Admiral Gracey: Well, I had my Human Relations Policy Statement that I have talked about often in these interviews. And it got a lot of play. I had done it in a number of other places. There were a whole string of kinds of things that went into place, some of which had started before. The Coast Guard had been working on this. I can't remember anything that I said, "Boy, we need to really fix this," like I did with the drug thing. And that was just a case of getting tough, getting tougher.

We set up education programs. I did a lot of work with the civilian part of the Coast Guard, as well as the military, banging away again the human relations thing. In reviewing for this, I saw some figures about where we were in terms of minorities and women, the status of our recruiting and that sort of thing. Unfortunately, I can't remember what they are. But we went to work on trying to just make sure they were solid and that we got rid of some of the biases that were around.

I'm not sure you can ever do that unless you just deal with them one by one and hope you're setting a tone. I tried to set a tone and tried to have people just bang away at the idea that everybody is significant, and we want them to feel warm and comfortable and welcome as part of the Coast Guard. And what we want to concentrate on is what they've got to contribute to the "Coast Guard Family." Never mind all the other factors—are they female, male, black, white, whatever. And, as I say, we had programs for trying to find black cadets. We had a program with traditional black colleges. Well, that's about all I can do now. Before our next session—while I'm thinking about this afterwards I hope I'll come up with some things that will be useful, and I will be able to get more specific. But the point was we worked at it. It was a point of emphasis, and I banged away at it at every opportunity. Every place I went that was always a part of what we talked about.

Paul Stillwell: You talked about Admiral Yost relieving you in 1986. Going back to the change of command at the other end of your tenure, what do you remember about taking over from Admiral Hayes?

Admiral Gracey: Well, I remember first of all that we did then what I described doing with Admiral Yost. Up the river there's an old mill where John Brown hung out.*

Paul Stillwell: Harper's Ferry?

Admiral Gracey: Harper's Ferry, thank you. At a motel in Harper's Ferry we all gathered, and we went through this kind of preparation. And we had a roast for Admiral Hayes. I persuaded Rear Admiral Howie Parker to put together a roast for the outgoing team.† He did a great job of it. But Vice Commandant Ben Stabile and I spent a couple of days with the flags and the senior civilians and so forth just talking out where we were going to go and answering questions and setting a tone.

* John Brown was an ardent foe of slavery in the years leading up to the Civil War. On 16 October 1859 he and 18 of his followers captured a U.S. Army arsenal at Harper's Ferry, West Virginia, presumably in an attempt to get slaves to rebel. Brown was captured, convicted of treason, and hanged on 2 December.

† Rear Admiral Harold W. Parker, Jr., USCG.

And I explained myself. I was not exactly unknown to these guys, although I said that to Randy one time, and she said, “Yeah, but you’ve never been the Commandant.”

I said, “It’s going to be a snap, because I know all these people. I’ve worked with them all.”

And she again said, “But you haven’t been the Commandant before.” And she was right about that, of course. The Flags and I were all known quantities to each other. I had commanded three of the districts in both Areas and been the Chief of Staff, so there weren’t very many surprises. But, anyway, we talked through all that for a couple of days and then came back to Washington and went through the change.

The change of command was held at the Navy Yard, as they all were at that time. *Eagle* was in. We did the ceremony and speeches off the fantail of a Coast Guard cutter, of a 210.* And it was a nice hot day. I remember that. We made our speeches and had our reception in the Navy Museum. The town of Needham, Massachusetts, sent its Chairman of the Board of Selectmen, who’d been a long time friend of my father’s. And he came down with a proclamation that this was Admiral James Gracey Day in Needham. The poor man kept wanting a place in the festivities where he could make an announcement, and there just wasn’t anyplace to do that—except at the reception. A big group of our high school classmates came down, and we had a nice reunion. Randy and I went to high school together; that’s why I say *our* classmates

Paul Stillwell: How did these interpersonal relationships change when you became Commandant?

Admiral Gracey: Frankly, in some cases there was a little more standoffishness. The first meeting I went to put me to a test. I’d have a morning staff briefing with the Office Chiefs. We’d have an ops briefing, and we’d talk about what was going on—issues, heads-up info, etc. One day early on I came back to my office after this. I didn’t realize I was doing it, but apparently I stormed through, didn’t say anything to anybody, went in my office, and slammed the door. Then I went in the back cubbyhole around the corner to get a cup of coffee. It had been one of the days when I knew there were things that I

* The ceremony, on 27 May 1982, was held on board the cutter *Alert* (WMEC-630).

was supposed to be getting told and I was proposing something that needed to be discussed, and they wouldn't open up. I couldn't get them to talk about it. I couldn't get them to join into a give-and-take. Somebody would say something, and I knew there were three guys that didn't agree with him, but nobody would say so. And I'd been trying very hard to build a climate where that wouldn't happen.

So I came out with my coffee, and my aide was standing there, young fellow named Joe Kyle.* The office door was closed, and he said, "Didn't go too well this morning, eh, sir?"

I said, "What do you mean by that, Joe?"

He said, "Well, usually when you come in you smile and you stop and chat, and we talk about how things are going. We have a little banter, and you never close your office door, let alone slam it. So we figured maybe it didn't go too well this morning."

I said, "All right, so you're a clever guy. I owe it to you to tell you," and I gave him a little explanation.

He said, "But, sir."

I said, "Joe, those are flag officers in there."

He said, "Sir, this may come as a great shock to you to hear, but most of us think the normal distribution curve applies to flag officers too." [Laughter]

Well, there it is. All my years later, 20-some-odd years later and I'm telling you the story. I said, "Joe, you have given me a gorgeous lesson, and I thank you, sir. All is well, Joe. Open the door and I'm coming out, and I'm going to smile at everybody." And I did. Went out and we had a wonderful chat. And I could see people looking around like, "What's going on here?" I said, "Joe just gave me the blessing of freedom. All is well." [Laughter]

For a while it was hard to get anybody to talk. It was hard to get anybody to say—after hearing a colleague's input, "Well, yeah, but if you do that that's going to have this effect on me." I can only assume it was because I was in there. And I chose to assume it wasn't me, and it wasn't Ben Stabile. It was the Commandant and the Vice Commandant, because these were people who in the past had never had any trouble

* Lieutenant Commander Joseph M. Kyle, USCG.

telling me what they thought. I think we shook it loose, but it took a while. That's the only thing I can think. It was, "You know, now we're dealing with *The Commandant*."

Well, the Commandant was still Jim Gracey, and who I am is who I am and what I think and how I react and all of that is not going to change any, and I really don't think it did. But there were questions or doubts in some minds. As I told earlier, one of them stood up and asked me at the session in Harper's Ferry, "What did you have to give up? What did you have to promise to get the job?" I won't use the name of the person, because it might embarrass him—or maybe it wouldn't. I don't know. He was asking a question that I'm sure was a thought on everybody's mind. How much of one's soul does one have to sell to get this job?

I said, "Zero. Zippo. Nothing. The only promise I made was to the Secretary that I would tell him where the bear went in the buckwheat." And I told that story. And I said, "That's the only promise that was made except that the fact that they could count on a blatant and continuing cheerleader and pusher and prober for the Coast Guard and, no, there were no promises. Nothing was given away, folks. My standing here doesn't mean you've given anything away. Zero. I wouldn't do that. I've often said, and some of you have heard me say this before. 'They know what I can do. If they want that they've got it. They don't want it, I don't want it. And who I am and what I am is who I am and what I am,' and if you go back over the years and look at things that I've said and things that I've written and so forth, you'll find that it hasn't changed very much. Now, that's good and that's bad, I guess, but I mean in terms of style and in terms of things I think are important. And I'm delighted to have the job. I'm proud and happy and ecstatic about having the job. But I would never sell out myself or the Coast Guard to get it. I would not do that." It was pretty quiet in the room when I finished, but I said, "Okay. Now that we've got that out of the way, let's get down to where we're going to go."

Paul Stillwell: What was the division of labor between you and Admiral Stabile? What types of things did you do? What types of things did he do?

Admiral Gracey: For one thing, I made him the contact point for the Coast Guard Foundation—at the outset it was the Coast Guard *Academy* Foundation—more on that

later. In the past it had been Chief of Personnel because of the Academy tie-in. I wanted to get it up to the Vice Commandant. That was when we persuaded the Foundation to broaden its scope to the whole Coast Guard and become the Coast Guard Foundation. He was our representative on the NavGuard Board, the Navy-Coast Guard Board that worked on our interservice relationships, joint tasking ideas, etc.

He and I rode in the car together. We talked a lot. I really relied on Ben for his operational and engineering background. He had a lot of ship-driving experience, and he was an engineer of the first order. Ben's really a smart guy, and one of the reasons I asked him—aside from the fact that I really liked and respected him a lot was that his work background complemented mine. I told you before that at the Academy I was a pitcher and he was the catcher, so we thought “one-two” relationship would work nicely. Turned out that he could throw the ball back to me harder than I could throw it to him. And that was still happening after we got into the Commandant's office, by the way.

Good guy, highly respected. A lot of people loved Ben and Barbara. I thought they would be a good team with Randy and me. We had known each other. We'd always had pretty good relationships. He'd been running the Seventh Coast Guard District, and so he had all that smarts of what was going on in the drug war down there. He had the engineering skills. He'd run the Coast Guard Yard. He'd been the Chief, Office of Engineering. So I relied on him for the technical skills and the interpersonal skills and a lot of the operational stuff. It's just the fact that we were good alter egos and with the final family thing and the things we wanted to do together, Randy and Barbara and the four of us were a good team.

In fact, just before we retired, what was then called the Officers' Wives Club but now the Spouse Club had put together a special event at the Navy Yard Museum. The Coast Guard Band was in town, of course, for the change of command, and the band played. The conductor, Lieutenant Commander Lew Buckley, composed a special piece, called “Randy and Barbara,” which was played. There were a whole bunch of officers who had been singers at the Academy, The Idlers, and they went up in the ship's rigging that's in the Navy Yard Museum. They were all perched up in there and they sang to Randy and Barbara. And they did a roast of Ben and me about baseball and a variety of

things like that. The point of all that being that it melded together nicely. Secretary Dole attended, by the way, at the invitation of the Wives Club.

Ben would have been very happy to leave after a couple of years and go to be an Area Commander. We had never done that in the Coast Guard before. We had four years. And I'm sure it was disappointing to him, because he would really have liked to have done that. But I really depended on him, and we had such a good in sync going, and people knew what to expect from us that I asked him to please stick it out for the four years. Paul Yost decided to go the two-year system that the Navy uses. I suppose there are arguments either way, but Ben would have been happy to go out to the field. It was hard for him. Much as we worked together and talked together, there were some things we didn't agree on, but I was still an ebullient guy, and I'm the kind of person I am in front of him, and I'm an ebullient guy. I don't mean I throw my weight around and say, "I'm the boss," or "You will do it my way," but I just tend to be the guy that stands up front. We sent him off on field trips and so forth, but I was doing more of that than he was. I was out trying to sell the anti-privatization stuff, and I had a bunch of speeches lined up in that regard. And I really wanted to get around and visit the troops, and that meant that Ben spent a lot of time back here holding the ball.

Paul Stillwell: That's sort of the division of labor in the Navy, too, that the Chief of Naval Operations is the outside man, and the Vice Chief runs the internal Navy.

Admiral Gracey: And that's the way it was. Ben worked with the immediate office staff. I did too. At that time the admirals in Headquarters were called "Office Chiefs;" that's all been changed now. But they would come to me when it got to that point where we needed to talk about it, or Ben would say, "You and I need to talk to So-and-so." And we'd come in, and we'd have a rap session or we'd talk to an issue, or a group would come or whatever. And Ben was pretty much a first point of contact on that, because I was wrestling with the Department and outside and with the politics on the Hill and that kind of stuff. So it was a similar kind of deal. I picked him because he had all that other experience, and he was a guy who was very well trusted. There were a couple of other

guys whom I gave careful thought to, but he wound up here for all those reasons, and it was the right thing to do.

Paul Stillwell: You mentioned Admiral Stabile's role on the NavGuard Board. Could you talk about that board and then the evolution of the Maritime Defense Zone concept?

Admiral Gracey: Yes. The NavGuard Board got started on Admiral Hayes's watch, but I don't know when exactly. The idea was to have an exchange between the leadership of the Navy and the Coast Guard as to things that were going on. We were going to be melded together sooner or later somehow, so we needed ways to facilitate that, to make sure they could support us in one thing or another and vice versa. That we could be going in directions that were going to be constructive from their point of view. The cochairmen were the Vice Chief of Naval Operations and the Vice Commandant of the Coast Guard.

Somewhere along the way the idea came up of having an ongoing role for the Coast Guard, something that was in place. I had always been an advocate of that. As I was saying earlier, it's a come-as-you-are war, so how you are better be how you think you're going to come. But the Coast Guard's role had always been: "Just be ready and show up, and we'll tell you what to do." And, of course, that would mushroom quickly, as it did through World War II and the landing craft and all of those kinds of things. But everybody realized it was time to pin that down, and there needed to be specific assignments, specific duties, specific things that were going to be done so that we could focus on those and know we were generating skills that were going to be useful somewhere. But it was hard to sell that concept.

Paul Stillwell: You didn't want to just have an ad hoc organization when the time came.

Admiral Gracey: Right, exactly, good words. So, among other things, NavGuard Board came up with the idea of the Maritime Defense Zones, Atlantic and Pacific. The Coast Guard Atlantic and Pacific Area Commanders would also be "MarDez Commanders." There would be a system run by the Coast Guard, the purpose of which was to protect the

coastal United States and make sure the accesses to the ports were open. It would be a combination Navy and Coast Guard operation. Where there was a Coast Guard admiral as the head man for a particular region, his vice would be a senior naval officer. In a couple of places it was the other way around, but most were set up so that Coast Guard District Commander was the commander

The Coast Guard Area Commander, the three-star, Pacific and Atlantic, was the overall MarDez Commander for that part of the world. Our Pacific Area Commander went regularly to Hawaii to meet with CinCPac. Admiral Don Jones was one of them that worked with our man in California.* So NavGuard got this idea, and it worked along and people talked about it a lot, and it was wonderful to think about, but it was languishing. It wasn't going anywhere.

CNO Jim Watkins was not really big on the Coast Guard. He and Tom Hayward were not singing from the same sheet of music. Jim wasn't opposed to us. He just had lots of bigger things on his plate. So at one point I pressed him, "Let's go forward with this MarDez thing. Let me put it into black and white, and let's press with the NavGuard Board, but let's you and I sign it and see if we can't get the Secretaries to sign it and get it into place." He agreed and we signed it. It took some explaining to our DoT Secretary as to what that was all about. But ultimately it was put in place, and the whole scheme became a reality.

I remember talking about this in one of my four State of the Coast Guard speeches. I reported back to the folks in the Coast Guard that MarDez was in place, and we were now going to go. It was going to use our Coast Guard Reserve forces a lot and Naval Reserve forces. The business of our high-endurance cutters operating with the Navy regularly was important. During this period we established a lot of liaison officers in DoD at different places. We'd always had one senior captain, who was liaison to the CNO or something. I thought it was money well spent to get liaison to the different pieces of CNO and the different pieces of the Pentagon establishment where we might go, and also to the State Department, because our international role was big time and our international relations were expanding, partly because of my push to do so and my travels, etc. I can't tell you the number, but we spent money on getting several liaison

* Vice Admiral Donald S. Jones, USN, served as Commander Third Fleet, August 1983 to August 1985.

billets established so that we could work these things through. And we wound up getting our cutters notionalized into the Navy's plans, specifically named. They were going to be a part of this group and that group, and the exercises would be done accordingly. And our ships just knew that that was going to come.

In the Maritime Defense Zones our Reserve forces and our Port Security Units were designated to have specific roles. It was the additional emphasis we wanted so we could pin those down. They'd always had a role, but now they knew they were going to be the port security people and knew where and who and what. And the Coastal Defense Zones were pretty much earmarked. And our Ninth District and Second District had Reserve units focused on being our deployables. They were the ones that went to Desert Storm in the ports there.*

After USS *Cole* was bombed, it was a Coast Guard unit from one of those Districts that got picked up and sent over there to protect it.† That's very much a part of where we are today. In fact, we've got one great story about a Reservist who is a grandmother. I can't remember her last name, but she's known as "Grandma." In the weapons training Grandma turned out to be the best shot. [Laughter] She was a part of one of these units. She's an older woman. She went out to Arabia with her port security unit. That all spun out of this Maritime Defense Zones business. I don't know what the status is today. But that was built in. The idea was to give us a specific role. For the first time the Coast Guard had a specific wartime-when-the-bomb-dropped role, but more than that it was an ongoing thing. Part of my enthusiasm about it and wanting to push on it was I had talked to General Wally Nutting out of Tampa.‡ He had come to talk to me about what he'd seen during a Reforger exercise. We also talked about some of the things he'd seen at an Alaskan exercise. His concern was about, "It's all well and good to say we're going to have Reforger, but all somebody's got to do is drop one of those

* In January 1991 U.S. and Allied Coalition forces attacked Iraq to get it to retreat following its August 1990 invasion of neighboring Kuwait. The holding action in the meantime was Operation Desert Shield. The conflict itself became known variously as Operation Desert Storm and the Gulf War. Coalition forces won the war in February 1991.

† On 12 October 2000 the destroyer *Cole* (DDG-67) was in the port of Aden, Yemen for a refueling stop when a small boat laden with explosives was detonated beside the ship. The explosion blew a hole in the side of the ship, killing 17 sailors and injuring 39. The ship subsequently returned to the United States and was repaired. She returned to service in April 2002.

‡ General Wallace H. Nutting, USA, Commander in Chief U.S. Readiness Command.

bridges on the river out of Houston, and that's the end of that." And we cited a number of other places we both knew about from our experience that had similar problems.

So we set to work. He was really very anxious to get this thing going, and I was, too, so I kind of jumped on that and ran with it as well. And I can't tell you the sequence of events, but somewhere during 1984 I finally got Jim Watkins to agree to sign. I'm making it sound like he was holding the back. He wasn't. It just wasn't on his scope anyplace. And the NavGuard Board had put it together. It just needed to be implemented and we did. That's all I can tell you for that one.

Paul Stillwell: All right. Well, I guess there is one question that occurs. You were moving these captains into liaison spots. There are a finite number of senior captains. Where were they coming from?

Admiral Gracey: No, they weren't all senior captains. When we had only one liaison to DoD, he had to cover a lot of territory at a lot of levels, so we used a captain. But when we broadened our liaison and spread it lower we had some lieutenant commanders and some commanders. Remember, at the same time we started putting more liaison in other agencies and even had some attachés in selected embassies. We bit the bullet on expense for these people, because I believed—we all did—that we needed to be known more, and we needed to know more. Among other things, I wanted Navy people to get used to seeing a Coast Guard uniform. I wanted them to find out about us, and I wanted our guys to listen and say, "Wait a minute. The Coast Guard could handle that," or "But if you do that you're jeopardizing this," or whatever. Just be a part of the conversations that were going on. Be a part of the scene and get people so they were used to seeing us around.

With more liaison we could get information coming back so that we could take action accordingly, or we could, if necessary, kick it upstairs. I could go talk to Watkins about something that was going on or at least know about it. But that likelihood was really pretty remote. Mostly it was just their getting used to our being around when they were thinking about things. And, as I say, we spent quite a bit of money on getting people into positions to do that. And they were very happy to have us there. I mean, it was an extra pair of hands and an extra head, but they also found out that Coast Guard

people are darned good. Of course, we sent sharp people over there. We weren't born yesterday. But they found out that, "My God. Those Coast Guard people over there have something to offer."

Later, after retirement, I got to be a Senior Fellow in the Capstone program. That's the congressionally mandated course for new admirals and generals of all the services. It was just getting started while I was the Commandant. One of the things we talked about a lot and one of the things I insisted on was "Count to five. Number five on your team is the Coast Guard." I told Paul Yost when he was Commandant "You're the one that's talking a lot about wartime capability these days. You're the one that's putting war-fighting into the fitness reports. How about we have a Coast Guard officer in every Capstone class over here? The other services have to do it by law. We don't have to, but let's put our money where our mouth is. How about you making sure we've got a Coast Guard flag in each class?"

"Well, I don't know whether we can come up with four flags a year."

I said, "Paul, I think you've got to." He agreed and did, and since then we've had at least one in every course. That way the Coast Guard people could be seen at the higher level as well. One of the beauties of the program is that, as a Capstone Fellow, you are communing with people who are at your same level in the other services, and they will rise in their services as you do in yours. Known quantities to communicate with as needed.

One of the things senior people say is, "You're at this course, and you're with 25 or 26 other people from all the services, all of whom are starting their career at about the same time, which means you're all going to progress about the same time so that—" And this universal symbol is the telephone symbol that whoever the talker is and now a senior guy in the Tank over at the Pentagon or something that's briefing them but who went through Capstone when he was a one-star, and he said, "Some day you're going to say, 'I remember Joe said something about the Coast Guard could do something about that.' And you pick up the phone and you call him and find out where he is, this old classmate, and you exchange fun about the trips you had and then you get down to finding out what you need to know and all that stuff. It's all part of the whole thing."*

* "Tank" refers to the room in the Pentagon in which the Joint Chiefs of Staff meet on a regular basis.

We also started during my watch sending an officer a year to the State Department Foreign Service Officers' course. It's not unlike the War College courses, but this is from the State Department, because of our international role. I was pushing hard on our international role, both while I was in PacArea and started in the Ninth District with Canada, of course.

With PacArea and then as the Commandant I traveled and worked a lot with foreign countries. At one point I noted I had traveled 40,000 international miles that year just getting around to different countries. One of the benefits I saw doing that, and one of the things that clearly came out to me of that was, first of all being the Commandant with four stars and an admiral and all that carried a lot of swat in foreign countries, big ones and little ones, but particularly little ones. But, because of the nature of the Coast Guard, I also had a foot in the civilian sector with the Minister of Marine and the Minister of Fisheries and the Minister of Defense, etc. I was working in those areas too. So I could deal with the military, and I could deal with the civilian side. And they all had infinite respect for the Coast Guard, and as I said earlier, for a country that would have such an outfit. A lot of the things we were doing, they were trying to learn how to do, how to protect their fisheries, how to do law enforcement. Search and rescue wasn't a big thing. Most of them didn't have that very high on their priority list. They knew we did it, and they respected us for it, but it was mostly the other things. This was all part of spreading out and getting beyond our little corner down there on Buzzard's Point.* There was a lot more to us than people realized, and I was determined to spread the word.

Paul Stillwell: Well, let me go back to my question again. Sending these sharp people to these places they haven't been before, did something else suffer as a result?

Admiral Gracey: No. It's a matter of priorities and what you're trying to enhance or change. It happens every time you transfer someone. Anytime you take a good guy and put him on a new kind of assignment, then the place he was before doesn't have him anymore. But we had a succession of good guys coming along. You know, the Coast

* Buzzard's Point is the name for the area in which Coast Guard Headquarters is located in southwest Washington, D.C.

Guard doesn't have very many non-performers. At one point, as I told Elizabeth Dole, 88% of Coast Guard officers had postgraduate degrees.

We really believed in postgraduate education, and we'd been doing it for a long time. And that figure didn't count flight training and stuff like that. No, we weren't stripping down. I mean, we're talking maybe 14 or 20 people ultimately, and, yes, we could have used them somewhere else, but we made the decision it was more important for us to get really established in those other areas. It was a big part of where we were going. It was building our future. And from where I sit 20 years later, we were right on the mark. Getting up and flying a bit—reaching out—has really paid off in our ability to serve better and broader.

We were into this Maritime Defense Zone thing. We'd been saying, "You need us, you other guys. We bring something to your table, and we're practicing our skills every day. Just let us be a part of your thinking and build us in there, and you can learn from us while you're building, and we can learn from you what kinds of things we should be thinking about that maybe we haven't, or maybe ways to look at what we do. What we're going to do, we're going to do anyway, because we've got to by law. The Coast Guard is always going to do what it does. But important now is how we can make that applicable in our exercises and in our training and in our schools and all that kind of thing, how we can build in here, and also with you, this is all going to flow from that." And I felt very strongly about spreading out and pressed hard on it.

Paul Stillwell: Well, we're right near the end of the tape. Any final benediction for today? Think positively was your message.

Admiral Gracey: That was one of them. Accentuate the positive. No, I don't think I have any great nugget to add.

Paul Stillwell: All right. Thank you.

Admiral Gracey: Okay. I'm sorry I haven't got any more gems of wisdom.

Interview Number 12 with Admiral James S. Gracey, U.S. Coast Guard (Retired)

Date: Wednesday, 26 September 2001

Place: Admiral Gracey's home in Arlington, Virginia

Interviewer: Paul Stillwell

Paul Stillwell: Well, here we are, Admiral, on a beautiful late summer-early fall morning and ready to resume discussion of your time as Commandant. I understand that you want to open with a statement, and then we'll move to the questions and answers.

Admiral Gracey: Yes. When you say opening with a statement, that almost sounds like I'm testifying before Congress.

Paul Stillwell: Yes, it does.

Admiral Gracey: Paul, I hope this doesn't come on like an opening statement before testimony, because they were always written out ahead of time and cleared—sometimes partly prescribed—by DoT and OMB. It wasn't until I got to answering the committee members' questions that I got to ad lib and "say it straight." I certainly don't think of our sessions as "testimony." Straight talk has been our modus operandi all the way.

But, speaking of Congress, I was never timid about saying what I thought to them. You may remember my talking about OMB sending a person to sit in on all my testimony "to see how far off the reservation Jim Gracey went." I was interested to be reminded yesterday of a situation where I was testifying and trying to get the point across that America is an island nation, really dependent on water, and the maritime service, the merchant marine, is significant. What I was doing was illustrating the significant role that the Coast Guard plays in national security by keeping shipping flowing freely and safely and that sort of thing. And a senator spoke up and said,

He said, "Well, there's also highways. America is a mobile nation."

I said, "Guess where a lot of the cars come from. They come on ships."

"Well, there are bridges made of concrete."

I said, “The concrete comes from across the Great Lakes and down the rivers on barges.”

“Well, some of them are made of wood.”

“A lot of the timber moves by ship—intercoastal and international.”

He said, “Admiral, you’re picking on me. You’re being argumentative.”

So I said, “Sir, I’m trying to make a point that this is a nation that depends heavily on water transportation. And the Coast Guard keeps it safe, keeps it operating, keeps the country going. The Constitution says, ‘Provide for the common defense and promote the general welfare.’ Bingo. That’s what the United States Coast Guard does.”

I used to argue that we are a microcosm of the United States, and we do the kinds of things and present the kind of character around the world that the United States wants to, and so forth. But in these four years that we’re going to finish discussing here very soon, you hope, [Laughter] I’m having a wonderful time. As I mentioned yesterday, this is all making me homesick for my dearly beloved days in the Coast Guard and the years I spent on active duty. How I love that organization. To coin a phrase: “To know it is to love it.” But the four years I was the Commandant were testing years.

President Reagan was trying to reduce the size of government, but he was also trying to build up the military forces. We were attached to a part of the government the Administration planned to reduce in size. At the same time, we were also attached by law—and logic—to the military part of government that was being built up. There was the Grace Commission, which did damage, in my opinion.* There was a major move to privatize us. I talked last time about some of my conversations early on with the new people at OMB and DoT.

GAO for some reason was on our case, and so was the DoT Inspector General.† I thought it clear there was a mandate to “get” the Coast Guard somehow. At one point, we had 20 GAO audits and 90 Inspector General audits going on at once. There were

* The commission was chaired by business executive J. Peter Grace in response from a mandate from President Ronald Reagan to find ways to reduce waste, fraud, and abuse in the federal government. The official title of its final report, which was approved in January 1984, was “President’s Private Sector Survey on Cost Control.”

† GAO—General Accounting Office.

110 audits going on at once. They were auditing places like our procurement shop and things like that and then saying, “How come you guys don’t work harder?”

My answer was, “How can we work harder? We’re trying to answer all your questions all the time. Go away and leave us alone and we’ll fix it.” It was a time when we had a lot of that. For some reason we were not trusted in some of the halls of government, although where it really mattered—among other law enforcement agencies, at the Pentagon, and so forth—we were. But there was this constant kind of a pressure.

One process that gave us fits was the A76 program, which was designed to analyze whether you can do it better, government civilians can do it better, or the private sector can do it better. It was a special program that was in vogue at the time. Everybody was supposed to go through a certain process and analyze it to death. If it came out that the private sector was to do it better, well, okay, you farmed it out to the private sector. That was acceptable for mess halls and things like that. It wasn’t a great idea for some of the operating services. Nobody was suggesting that the private sector run the United States Navy, but there were people who were seriously and doggedly suggesting that the private sector run the Coast Guard.

Paul Stillwell: Well, to some extent parts of the Navy shore activities have been privatized.

Admiral Gracey: Have been, that’s right, and selected parts of the Navy. I was thinking about the operating part. Some logistics matters have been privatized, and it is not all illogical. The point I’m trying to make is that much of my watch was a time when all of this was hitting the fan, as the old saying goes. When I said earlier I was dazzled by how much Coast Guard people accomplished in my time, I was referring in part to the fact that they did it despite the outside distractions, distrust, and heel nipping.

I was reading through my final “State of the Coast Guard” speech the other night—kind of my going-away song. That Admiral Yost was to relieve me had been announced. One of the questions I was asked in the Q&A session after the speech was, “What kinds of things do you see the new Commandant has to do?”

My answer was, “We don’t have a new Commandant. I’m the Commandant, and I’m going to be the Commandant until Admiral Yost relieves me. What we have is the next Commandant, and I’ll tell you about the next Commandant, but we don’t have a new one yet. The day after he swears in then you’ll have a new Commandant.”

In that speech I wanted to kind of wrap up where we’d been and so forth. The opening couple of paragraphs I think encapsulated what the four years had been about. I said, in the spring of 1986, “There’s an ancient Chinese blessing that says, ‘May you live in interesting times.’ And there can be no doubt that we’ve been living in interesting times. But let me give you an overview of what I see as the last four years. For starters we’ve been in a very bright spotlight. We’ve been studied, audited, probed and soothed.” As an aside we were soothed on two or three major shipbuilding cases that made us change course, and that seemed to be in vogue.

I went on: “We’ve been lauded, applauded, supported, squeezed. We’ve been pushed, pulled, blocked, and backed. We’ve been capitalized, criticized, cut, and cosseted. There have been suggestions that we should civilianize, privatize, militarize, reorganize. We should economize, aggrandize, publicize, and above all proselytize. Within The Family [and I referred to the Coast Guard as “The Family”] we have planned, puzzled, philosophized, and pondered. We have simplified, stretched, raged, and rejoiced. We endured, enjoyed, dreamed, and schemed. We have been pinched, prodded, chafed, and championed. We’ve gloated, floated, soared, and roared. We’ve scowled, growled, preened, and beamed. We’ve arrived, derived, high-fived, and survived. We’ve paraded, berated, saluted, and high-faluted. But, above all, we stood tall and we’ve been proud—and properly so.” And then I went on to other things.

Paul Stillwell: I’ve never heard a paragraph with such a high percentage of verbs.
[Laughter]

Admiral Gracey: Probably so, and a little bit of alliteration and poetry besides. I worked hard on that paragraph, but as I read it, skimmed through it yesterday to kind of refresh my memory, it summarized what the four years were like. All that stuff was in there, and

I could probably have written two paragraphs more if I had time to dream up the words. But it was like that.

Paul Stillwell: Could we discuss more on the lawsuits please?

Admiral Gracey: Yeah. We had two big ones in particular. One had to do with where we were going to build the 270-foot cutters. We started building them at Tacoma Boatbuilding Company. Then we were sued that our contract wasn't properly awarded, whatever. Anyway, we built two there. The suit finally worked its way through, and the last ship in the Tacoma yard was not quite finished.

The order was to make the award to a small outfit, Robert E. Derecktor, up in Newport, Rhode Island. It was not a shipyard. It was a yacht yard, and it was hardly a yard. There was no shipyard there. There was no ability to build a 270-foot ship when we got the contract awarded. But Derecktor's price was such that it included building the shipyard and getting the ships and having them done on time. And he did a good job, in all fairness, but it was a bit of a time of upheaval in making that shift and getting the Resident Inspector's Office set up and all the things you have to do when you have a major contract. I'm trying to remember when this suit actually started, and I'm not sure but what it was before I was the Commandant, but it came down on my watch.

Another suit involved our move to replace our patrol boats. We started off with three surface-effect ships, and we thought those were going to be really good for the drug interdiction business, in the Caribbean particularly. We got the three. We rejected the names proposed and decided they should be birds of prey and so forth.* They worked fine, but a surface-effect ship isn't great for towing and the other kinds of things that the Coast Guard does. It was wonderful for dash speed, get out there, do the job, and they served us well. But they had limitations.

So we decided what we needed was a new fleet of patrol boats. This issue was, incidentally, one of the things we got criticized for, or that was not mentioned in the critique from Senator Roth and the GAO that I had to cope with later on.† Another one of

* The three were the *Sea Hawk* (WSES-2), *Shearwater* (WSES-3), and *Petrel* (WSES-4).

† William V. Roth, Jr., a Republican from Delaware, served in the Senate from 1 January 1971 to 3 January 2001.

my letters of deathless prose. Rather than go from scratch and take the multiple years it always takes to do that sort of thing, we said our parameter was to buy a proven-somewhere-in-the-world, in-place patrol boat. We were going to buy that design, do whatever minor modifications were necessary to make it useful for us, and build them in the U.S.

Paul Stillwell: Essentially off-the-shelf, as the term goes.

Admiral Gracey: Exactly. And we did that. We had two designs. We had a Korean boat and a British boat. The British boat was proposed by the Bollinger Shipyards in Louisiana, and Tacoma Boat bid on the Korean boat. I made the decision. When push came to shove, it came down to my decision as to which one we would do. We had briefings on both and big discussions and recommendations and so forth on which boat to select. I opted ultimately for the Korean boat. We loved the sound of the British boat, but it had a feature that I didn't like. That was that part of the crew berthing area was separated from the rest of the crew, and the people assigned there had to go through the engine room to get to the mess hall and where the rest of the people were. For my whole watch—and before—I had worked on making things better for our crews. Crews that were together not only had the good attitudes amongst themselves, but when their physical working places were good, afloat or ashore, they would and could perform better. Besides that, it was just plain the right way to go—to treat them right.

And the Korean boat was better in that regard. The crews' spaces were, I thought, better laid out and so forth. So we opted for the Korean boat. We were told that we would absolutely love doing business with Bollinger. That was a big argument for the Bollinger people. But I made decision for the better-for-the-crew reason. Bollinger sued us, saying we hadn't lived up to our own specifications regarding the engines, that they had to be the original engines or something like that, and we were not going to do that with the Korean boat. I've forgotten all the technicalities, but anyway we lost the suit, and Bollinger got the award.

So we had to change course, and that was a big one. Took a lot of time. That loss was also case of “falling overboard and coming up with a string of pearls around our

neck.” Bollinger has done a wonderful job for us. We started out to build—I can’t remember the number—16 maybe, something like that. We now are up to, I think, 60 or more.* The contract keeps getting renewed. The only problem with them was maneuvering in tight quarters. It was either idle or go. There was no dead slow. That made mooring and towing tough. We dinged a few of them before the skippers and their executive petty officers learned how to maneuver them alongside a dock or whatever. Over the years there have been fixes on that problem. They’ve been great boats.

Those are two suits that popped into my head as biggies, but it seemed like we were always being sued for something or other. As far as I know, to this day I’m not supposed to go into the state of North Carolina or even fly over it because I was personally sued by the state about pollution at Coast Guard Air Station, Elizabeth City. That is because somewhere back in the past, as in all airplane facilities, when they got through doing whatever they did in maintaining the engines, they went out and dumped the polluting stuff in the sand.

We had a similar situation at Traverse City, Michigan, which came up a week after I took over the Ninth Coast Guard District. A neighboring person somewhere near the Traverse City Air Station, which had been for years a naval air station, found some stuff in their water in their wells. As a result, we eventually built half the town a new water system and all of that. Well, a similar kind of thing happened at Elizabeth City. From that some kind of a judgment came down that if I ever went into the state again I was going to get nailed to the wall. I’m sure I’m exaggerating, but the point was that I left with a cloud over my head because of being held personally responsible for something that had happened years ago in North Carolina.

Paul Stillwell: What was done to rectify that situation in North Carolina?

Admiral Gracey: I’m sure we cleaned up the mess, and at this point I can’t even remember how it came to a head. I don’t think it was pollution in wells. It may have been just somebody noticed that that sand was dirty or whatever. We certainly weren’t

* These are the 110-foot boats of the Island class, built by Bollinger Machine Shop and Shipyard, Lockport, Louisiana. The first of the class, *Farallon*, was commissioned 15 November 1985.

still doing it. We'd stopped it long since. But, you know, it gets in there and it stays there, and maybe something was leaking out, maybe there were some dead fish. I can't remember. But it just seemed like there was a lot of that.

On the other hand, there were people that loved us. I said we were "championed" here. We were. I mean, people love the Coast Guard. There were some that didn't in those days. The privatizers wanted us to go away. I labored mightily on a paper that was published about the perils of privatizing. I know Admiral Hayes thought that this was all going away when he retired. No way. It went on—big time. I finally published, a couple of years into my watch, a tour-de-force called "Privatization, a Question of Balance." It was a thorough dissertation on how the Coast Guard is put together, how it works, why it works the way it does, why it's organized the way it is. I had a speech along similar lines that I made all over the place. The title was "On Babies and Bath Water." I mounted a major campaign; I really did a lot of writing and speaking on the subject of driving this whole privatization thing away.

One privatization issue involved the "Search and Rescue" program. It led to a decision I made—what we call the "Non-emergency Search and Rescue" decision. It ultimately wound up creating an entire new industry in the United States. That is the small boat towing industry. There was this great press to privatize search and rescue. And I said, "Over my dead body. No, sir. No, sir. We're the pros. We're the lifesavers. That's our job, and we're going to do it. Now, to be sure, there are some instances on Sunday afternoon when somebody runs out of gas or drops an oar overboard or whatever, and it's a perfectly nice day, and they're not in any particular danger. They're anchored in a shelter somewhere, or they're drifting, but they're not in any danger. They call for help, and if there's somebody available that wants to do it, fine."

There was an outfit up in Huron, Ohio, I think it was, that had started doing this sort of work, and they were really very aggressive about it. The Coast Guard had always had a policy of not racing salvage people to the scene. We just weren't going to do that. If there was a tug nearby or whatever and if they could put a line on them and bring them in safely, that was fine with us. We'd stand by and let them do it. But this "Non-emergency SAR Policy" went beyond that. This was for small craft mostly. The new rules were, "We'll defer to the private tower. We will even refer the call to a private

tower. But if it's not getting done before dark—once dark arrives, that's the end of 'no visible threat to life' as far as we're concerned. If there's bad weather coming, thunderstorm, whatever, that's a possible threat to life. In those situations, you're out of here, private tower. We've got it. And if you're not able to prosecute it in a reasonable time, certainly before dark and those things, then we're going to come out and take over. But if you can get it promptly and do it, you've got it."

Today it's a big-time business. There's an organization of all of these various companies, and they do very well. It's working out. At the time the Coast Guard Auxiliary thought they'd really been done in, had really been had, because those were the kinds of things that the Coast Guard Auxiliary did a lot of. And my instructions were, "Get out of the way and let the private tow have it. Stand by, but the private people have it." I spent a lot of time trying to talk to the CG Auxiliarists and explain that it wasn't a lack of faith in them, that there was going to be ample opportunity for them to assist the regulars as our "one-family" approach, where we had CG Reservists and CG Auxiliarists standing watches with us and all of that. It was just that we were in danger of having our entire search and rescue capability undermined, and if in fact it were undermined then there would go our ships and aircraft, and those were used for other missions too. It was a very significant threat to one of our key missions and our entire multi-mission capability. The "Non-Emergency SAR" decision was a good one—in many ways.

That was the first step. The second one had to do with the "Short Range Aids to Navigation" program. It went on over a period of time, of course. Regarding privatizing the aids to navigation mission, my stance was: "There are critical waterways, that is, waterways that carry trade critical to a port or a region or the country as a whole, that keep a port open, that keep goods and import and export services, fuels, all of those kinds of things moving safely, that contribute to national security. Keeping trade moving in and out of the United States is vital. Those kinds of waterways we're going to call critical waterways, because if something goes wrong in there, we've really disrupted the economy of a particular region, or there may be some danger to the populace."

So we set out to survey every waterway in the United States and label each one "critical" or "non-critical." For the non-criticals we said, "If there is a company that can maintain the aids to navigation in that area, they can do it for a fee." I had gotten into a

bit of trouble starting this up in the Third Coast Guard District, where, as in most CG Districts, we were spending time servicing essentially private aids—those into small marinas, that sort of thing. I felt we didn't have the money to do that, and the marinas, for example, ought to hire somebody to put in the aids they needed. We'd look at it and make sure it was the right kind of aid and all that. This was an expansion of that smaller program.

Another share-the-work decision had to do with icebreaking. People felt there was no need for the government to break ice. "There's lots of people can break ice," they said. My argument was, "An icebreaking-capable vessel is a significant investment in hardware which you're not going to use all year long in normal trade." Besides that, there was an old U.S. Executive Order that went back into pre-World War II about keeping open the nation's waterways. We wanted to be sure that iron ore and all that could keep moving in the Great Lakes in the early days of the war effort. I don't really remember exactly why it was set up. Nonetheless, it said that the Coast Guard's responsibility was to keep waterways open so trade could move. It didn't talk about the Polar Icebreaking program, but nobody in the private sector was suggesting they ought to take over that major mission.

Our position on the Domestic Icebreaking program was, "If there's somebody who decides he's going to sail his vessel, and he's in a trade which does not have a particularly significant effect on the national economy, and he decides he wants to sail before the established safe navigation season, in areas which are traditionally frozen in the winter, like up on the Great Lakes, then he can hire somebody to break it for him if he wants, if he can find one. But we're not going to do it. If they can find somebody who wants to do it and can hire them, they will. But in terms of keeping the waterways open, the Coast Guard is going to do it. That's our job. We've got the equipment. We know how to do it." I went back to the old Executive Order and our other statutory mandates and missions. I had taken that stand when I commanded the Ninth Coast Guard District, and it got put to a test there, as I described in telling earlier about one particular cement company. That experience stood me in good stead in our stand on icebreaking during this later privatization push.

Those were the three mission areas where we had to cope with privatization of operations matters. Nobody was messing around with our Defense mission. For the Environmental Protection program there was more than enough work in the cleanup business for everybody to do. We had our own Strike Teams, and they went in and supervised and took over, did some of the really big stuff. There were companies just getting started. Some of them had made a lot of progress since the early '70s when most of them started. And they were there, and it was pretty well coordinated. We weren't fighting each other for that. Nobody was really pushing on that. That's the privatizing situation in a nutshell. It was one of the things we really struggled with a lot. I think that's what I wanted to say about an overview of the kinds of situations we had.

There was a lot happening in those years, and we were doing a lot of stuff. We were spending a lot of time fighting off those who wanted to help us, quote unquote. And it wasn't much help. One of the criticisms that was a big and prevailing one had to do with people who were unhappy with our procurement practices. And we had, in fact, been slow. But we went to work. I knew about that, and we went to work to straighten it out. GAO did a study on us, as I alluded to earlier with Senator Roth who wrote to us. And our Inspector General was looking at it. We had already put things in motion.

One of the things that bothered me a lot about all of this was that the General Accounting Office would come up with a report, or the Inspector General would, and it would be published before they heard what we had to say about it. And often it was misleading, it was just plain wrong. In the subject of the procurement, of spending the money when we had it, there was one particular situation where we had a big surprise gift of money, if you will. Senator Stevens decided he really wanted the Coast Guard to be properly equipped, bless his heart.* Each year while I was the Commandant we got \$300 million in the DoD budget marked for the Coast Guard to buy things, hardware, ships, planes, aircraft, helicopters, so forth. It all came as a big lump.

It had a deadline for doing, and we had within a matter of several months committed those funds and spent them wisely and so forth. The people in our buying business had done an amazing job.

* Theodore F. Stevens, a Republican from Alaska, has served in the Senate since 24 December 1968.

Paul Stillwell: What were the complaints on procurement? That it was too complicated, took too long?

Admiral Gracey: Took too long. That we weren't committing the funds properly. That we weren't buying off-the-shelf kinds of items, but, in fact, we were buying off the shelf. I just talked about the patrol boats. In the letter I wrote back to Senator Roth I talked about what the GAO had said and what the GAO had *not* said, what they had not told him about. In those cases it was the other side of the coin. Seventy-five percent of the unobligated funds at the end of 1984 were from 1984 appropriations, and 45% of those had come as an 11th hour surprise, so you just can't do things overnight. You get the money, and you've got to follow certain legally prescribed procedures. We knew how to go about it.

Paul Stillwell: After a time did you develop a wish list to go with unexpected funds?

Admiral Gracey: We had had a "wish list" for some time. But having a wish list and having money to apply against it or putting out contracts are two different things, because you've got ongoing stuff with your operating expense money and so forth. The fiscal year 1984 budget would take effect on October 1 of '83, and that meant it all got started much earlier. The stuff we'd been working on would have been going on. I'd only been the Commandant since May of '82, and we had started working on speeding up the use of our money and getting it out. But I was not a stranger to all this. I had worked at it for several years and watched it from a senior position for several more. I think this was the first time that Senator Stevens had come through with this, although I may not be right about that.

In response to the off-the-shelf questions, I pointed out that one of the very first things I said was, "Instead of buying these new patrol boats, why don't we buy some offshore supply vessels that are in use in the Gulf? That kind of a unit that everybody knows is around. There's probably some we can buy." At the time we heard there were a whole bunch of them tied up. Convert them for Coast Guard use and get them going, because we wanted them on line quickly so we could get on with the drug war.

We took a really hard look at that idea and concluded (a) it was going to cost a fortune to get the offshore supply boats up to our standards, (b) they are not designed to endure all kinds of weather. Granted they operate in the Gulf in hurricanes, but not if they can help it. Our guys do that regularly. They go out, they stay out, they get beat up, it just was not going to be safe, and it wasn't going to provide proper living standards for our crews. They weren't going to do the job well. In our opinion it was a waste of money. So, after a careful look, I just said, "Good. Thanks for that. I had a bad idea. Stop. We'll go get these other patrol boats."

Incidentally, one of the things we discovered was that what we want from a patrol boat and what the rest of the world wants from their patrol boat are different. A patrol boat in most nations is a boat that goes out and patrols and comes home. That may be an oversimplification, but basically that's it. Our boats don't patrol per se. We go out on rescue cases. We do law enforcement. We tow people home. The patrol boats we were looking at were all military boats. The private sector in most parts of the world doesn't have patrol boats. We were selecting from boats designed for military kinds of things, not private sector work.

The boat we finally bought is an English patrol boat. In England their Royal National Lifeboat Institution does all the rescue work, not the Navy. That was something we didn't think about when we got into the proven patrol boat idea. It's worked out all right, and we've made it work, and we've made modifications where necessary. Bottom line—we did look at alternatives.

I used to say regularly, "Alternative is my middle name, and I want it to be our middle name. Think about different ways to do what we're already doing or what we're thinking about. Get outside the box. Just because we've always had a thing we call a buoy tender, it doesn't necessarily have to look like the old buoy tenders. It doesn't have to do business the same way. It has to do the same kind of business and perhaps better, and if we can do it better and cheaper then we've made a profit for the government, or for the U.S. taxpayer." Okay.

You asked about any particular SAR cases that I remember. Well, of course, one of the biggies that leaps right off the top of my head is the *Challenger* explosion.* Nobody was expecting it, of course. Our response was a great demonstration of the marvelous capability of Coast Guard people. We traditionally put a couple patrol boats out under the launch area to keep vessels away, keep miscellaneous people out of the zone. On the day of the *Challenger* explosion our boat was out there, and all this debris was raining down around them.

A young lieutenant jaygee was on scene. He took charge, and he did all the right things. Then a young lieutenant commander who, just a few months earlier had been Admiral Gracey's aide in Washington and was now Commander, Group Mayport, took charge and sent out more boats. They started identifying the debris and where it was and keeping people away, and they set up a perimeter and all of that.

By that time the Seventh District Commander, Rear Admiral Cueroni in Miami, got up there.† He took one look at what Lieutenant Commander Joe Kyle and his people were doing and said, "I don't think you need me around here. Keep me posted. Looks like you're doing just fine." Well, of course, it had to get escalated because the public relations side of it got big time, and it went beyond the scope of Group Mayport. And the salvage effort got huge. We were involved, but the Navy took over. That's one I remember in particular. It wasn't really search and rescue per se, but all the principles were there.

In the military readiness role I mentioned the other day that we and the Navy had created an activity called the NavGuard Board, with the Vice Commandant of the Coast Guard and the Vice CNO as co-chairmen.

Paul Stillwell: I think we covered that pretty well already.

Admiral Gracey: Yeah, we don't need to do that.

Fleet exercises were big in my upgraded readiness campaign. Joint exercises too. We were involved in the JCS exercises, and one of the things I stressed was the

* On 29 January 1986, the space shuttle *Challenger* exploded 79 seconds after launching from Cape Canaveral, Florida. All seven astronauts on board were killed.

† Rear Admiral Richard P. Cueroni, USCG.

importance of follow-up.* We had a system in place called RAPs, “readiness assessment program.” They were after-action reports of exercises and so forth. One of the things we hadn’t done as part of RAP was to identify things that weren’t working, follow up on them to find corrections, and put them in place. So I insisted that after every major exercise I see the after-action reports and get progress reports on how we were going to fix the things that we discovered. That, after all, is what an exercise is all about, in my opinion. I pressed for realistic, meaningful solutions and action on them according to achievable schedules.

Upgrading the inventory of ships and aircraft, modernization of shore facilities—well, that was a big-time program. We were bringing the 270-footers on line. We developed a fast search and rescue boat to supplement or complement the 44-footer, which was a great heavy-weather boat, but it tended to plod along. Now we have the 57-footers that do both. But we designed a 30-footer and set out to buy some. The idea was faster speed, easier handling, for other than the heavy surf kind of stuff. They could handle a share of heavy weather, so they gave us a range of capability and generally faster response.

I had told the people in the Coast Guard early on that I thought part of my job—in terms of their quality of life—was to get them the hardware and training they needed to do the job the best of which they were capable. Among other things I *decried* the old Lifesaving Service saying, “You have to go out, but you don’t have to come back.”

I said, “You *do* have to come back, and part of my job is to make sure that you can, but you’re also going to come back with a job well done, and you’re going to feel good about it. To do that you’ve got to have the right equipment and the right training. And we’re going to get that for you.” And I banged away at that. One of the things I said I was going to do right up front was get search radar in our C-130s. Our long-range search aircraft had big windows in the side of them. But our crews were forced to rely on what I called the “Mark 1, Mod 1 eyeball,” pure and simple, to find things, maybe with a nice set of binoculars. We had weather radar, but we didn’t have any search radar of any kind. I thought that was silly and not a good use of our hardware and our pilots’ time and skills. Well, I didn’t really succeed at that. When I left four years later we still didn’t

* JCS—Joint Chiefs of Staff.

have one. It was one of my great disappointments. I'd banged away at it year after year, but there was always a reason. One year we were allegedly in line to get it from the Navy. Then it was to be the Air Force. After four years we were still stuck with Mark 1, Mod 1 eyeball. I was really frustrated by that problem and the failure to solve it.

The HU-25 Falcon jets were coming on line. The HH-65 helicopters were coming on line. We had some logistics problems with those, but we were getting them. I won't go into the whole business, but we were expanding the inventory. We were getting new C-130s. We had started the FRAM program to upgrade the 378-foot WHECs and we had a mid-life maintenance availability (MMA) program for the 210s.* We took some of our 40-year-old 180-foot buoy tenders down to the waterline and built new ships on top over at the Coast Guard Yard. We really had a lot of work going on.

We revised our long-range plans to build in a lot of this. We created what we called a "Capital Acquisition Plan. You asked if we had a list of the things we wanted and needed. Yes, we did. We had the Capital Acquisition Plan. We priced out what it was going to take per year to keep moving forward. We knew what we had to do and when and so forth. But you know the old saying, "Planning is what you do while you're waiting for reality to take over." Well, who would have envisioned the Haitian migrant interdiction operation? That came out of nowhere.

In the area of special missions, people talk about all the missions that are going on today. There are a lot, but they're coming on, and I wouldn't belittle it at all, quite the contrary. I'm proud as hell of what the Coast Guard is doing. But back in the late '70s and '80s we absorbed new things too. There was the Haitian business. There was the Cuban sealift and that kind of ongoing business there. There was the 200-mile fisheries enforcement business.† We had to accommodate that, get on with it, while at the same time President Reagan and his folks were reducing the size of government.

Paul Stillwell: What was your specific mechanism for dealing with the Haitian situation?

* FRAM—fleet rehabilitation and maintenance.

† The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976 claims for the United States exclusive authority over fishing resources in zones extending 200 miles from the country's territorial seas. The territorial seas extend three miles outward from coastlines.

Admiral Gracey: Well, it started actually while I was Commander, Atlantic Area. We moved some aircraft and some boats from other regions into Florida. Of course, Florida was the focus of all that. We shuffled our hardware and people around and went to work. Early on, one of the major problems was the morale of our very own people. They really didn't like the idea of picking people up and taking them back to the life they were trying to escape. Our people were proud of being "Smokies of the Sea." They were used to being the good guys and doing the drug interdiction thing. That was okay, that was Smokies' work. But the Haitian mission was really hard for them.

To help them feel better about what they had to do I worked on and had our various leaders work on the idea that those Haitian people were in great peril. I mentioned last time that they were often being taken by the criminal sector of Haiti. Stories told of men being thrown overboard by crews and women passengers being raped. My message to our people was, "We need to stop this thing. It's really not right." It was the only way I could think that we could make our people feel comfortable with the idea that we were in the way of people who were fleeing a country that was in abject poverty and misery and they wanted out. We were not going to let them come out, and that was hard for our folks to take. I have a picture I find moving. It's of a Coastguardsman holding up a tiny little baby that has just been handed up from a boat full of people. The brass plate on the frame is inscribed, "The Littlest Refugee." It's just a marvelous picture. It was given to me after I spoke to a group of Coast Guard people. In presenting it they said, "This is the kind of Coast Guard you've talked about, sir, and here we are." In the picture is the crew of a Coast Guard small boat that has handed the baby to safety. They're all smiling, and the man holding the baby is obviously talking soothingly to him or her. Are Coast Guard people special human beings? You bet!

Paul Stillwell: What about the political aspects? Did you get involved in interfering with Haitian sovereignty?

Admiral Gracey: No, because it was agreed that we would take them back to Port-au-Prince on Coast Guard cutters and put them ashore. Except for that return trip, we didn't operate inside the 3-mile limit. We would pick them up at sea. I've forgotten

exactly what the ground rules were as to how we did this. It was 20 years ago. No, I don't remember Haitian sovereignty coming up. I can't think of how we would have violated it other than to take them into Port-au-Prince, and it was bringing their own citizens back, and ostensibly we had saved them. I'm sure there were protocols worked out, but I can't recall the details.

This time, incidentally, was also the time of the boom in recreational boating. It had started much earlier, because we started our Recreational Boating Safety Program back when I was in the Second District. That would have been in the early '60s. But it was really going big time in the '80s. We were really working hard on our cooperation with the states and with the state authorities. Secretary Dole said to me when she first came into office, "I'm really interested in safety. What things can you think of that I should really concentrate on?"

I said, "Well, without even drawing a breath I can tell you two big ones: drinking while boating and fishing vessel safety. Those two things are killing more people than they ever should. With recreational boaters, the practice is to get in a boat, get a case of beer or two, go out in the hot sun, and drink beer all day. Then you try to navigate home, and you can't do it. It's just not safe. The other thing is, of course, that our fishing vessel industry is the most dangerous industry in the country." I've talked earlier about my father being a marine insurance man and his tales of losses and all that. I'd grown up hearing about fishing vessel safety. And I had been in positions in the Coast Guard to see the problem, firsthand and otherwise. We were spending a lot of time on the boating boom and loss of life with it.

On another topic, the drug war really got going big time in the late '70s, early '80s. From the West Coast, I've talked about flying C-130s out of Howard Air Force Base in Panama and picking up ships coming up off of Ecuador and following them up the coast and then nailing them when they got off our West Coast. And we set up artificial choke points. The East Coast, of course, already had natural choke points. Smugglers coming north out of Colombia had to go through the passes between the various islands, such as Haiti and Cuba, and they were relatively easy to check. I had gotten some volunteer help from the Navy on the West Coast and later in the East by asking them if they would keep an eye out for vessels of certain generic descriptions and

let us know, tell us about it. I said, “I know you can’t enforce it, but you’re out there. Tell us what you see, particularly on the West Coast.”

Paul Stillwell: I take it there’s some kind of profile that the drug smugglers fit.

Admiral Gracey: Well, yeah. You recognize an alleged fishing boat that doesn’t have its rig rigged or that doesn’t seem to be hanging around where there’s any fish. Or there’s a vessel loitering offshore, and there are small boats coming back and forth from shore. There are things you can see. There are small freighters that are laboring along out there. Just tell us what you see. Never mind whether you think it’s a druggie. Let us make those decisions. Just tell us what kinds of things you observe that you think we might want to take a look at. If it’s a big sleek American President Line ship, well, we probably know where they are through our AMVER program anyway. The Navy was a lot of help.

Somewhere along the line we convinced the Navy to let us put some teams called law enforcement detachments aboard Navy ships. Coast Guard people would have law enforcement authority. They had authority to stop a vessel. A Navy ship could do it, but only under the authority of a Coast Guard officer or petty officer. Navy ships were operating in the Caribbean and off our shores, so why not add this law enforcement capability? Ultimately they all were required to participate, because the Pentagon figured out this was a good thing to do to get into the act. I think they were ordered to do it later on. Navy went along with the idea but with some concern

Paul Stillwell: Because Posse Comitatus would prevent the Navy from doing it itself.*

Admiral Gracey: That was one thought. Technically I’m not sure the concern about Posse Comitatus was valid. There was always some argument as to whether Posse Comitatus applied to them.

Paul Stillwell: I see.

* The Posse Comitatus Act of 1878 essentially bars the military from acting as a domestic police force.

Admiral Gracey: They really didn't want to get involved with law enforcement. This is Jim Gracey's view. I think Posse Comitatus was written for the Army after the Civil War, but it has been interpreted over the years to mean that we don't want our armed forces enforcing laws—except for the Coast Guard, of course. So the simple way to solve the problem was to just put a small team of Coastguardsmen aboard Navy ships. They all had rigid-hull inflatable boats or whatever, and I think the Navy kind of liked the idea of doing it that way.

I loved a story I got back about one of the first times a Navy ship fired a shot in anger at a druggie. I think I told you the other day that it was one of our bigger ships, Navy ships, and now I'm sorry I can't remember the name, because I thought it would be indelibly impressed in my head. But they fired a shot from one of their major weapons across the bow of a suspected smuggler. [Laughter] And we had a lot of fun imagining what it must have been like on this little druggie when here came this big gray hull up alongside, lowered the gun, and kapow went the shot. And then came the small boat with the Coast Guard team and busted them.

I met the commanding officer of the ship at a reception up in the Capitol one night shortly after this, and he was bubbling over with how happy his crew had been that they'd gotten to do this. But it was the very first time that it happened. When this enforcement situation is under way, the Navy ship has to fly the Coast Guard Ensign from the masthead. That's their "badge."

Paul Stillwell: Which you didn't mind at all.

Admiral Gracey: We loved it. [Laughter] But the chief signalman on this first ship that had a LEDET (Law Enforcement Detachment) aboard didn't like it at all. He minded it—big time—so much so that he called up the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard and said, "What is that blankety-blank nonsense about having to fly your flag from my mast?"

And the MCPOCG said, "Because you're impotent without it." [Laughter]

Paul Stillwell: That ended that discussion.

Admiral Gracey: Well, I'm sure there was a stream of invective before the Master Chief got to explain why they were impotent without it. But I told Master Chief Carl Constantine, "Man, if I didn't love you before, I love you now. What beautiful words." But that law-enforcement detachment idea worked very well.

Later on, toward the end of my watch, Admiral Yost, who ultimately became the Commandant, was Commander Atlantic Area, and we put together some major exercises. This was all done under what was called the NNBIS, the National Narcotics Border Interdiction System. It was run by then Vice President Bush. We were the chief guys at sea. Customs was out there and so forth, but the Coast Guard was running the program. We had a Coast Guard captain on the Vice President's staff, and we had regular meetings over there. I met with the Vice President regularly. The President had a group which he called the Drug Principals Group, and these were the heads of several law enforcement and anti-drug kinds of agencies. We met in the White House every month or so and talked about the President's "Five-Point Plan" about drugs and the drug problem.

Paul Stillwell: Is there any difficulty psychologically in individual Coastguardsmen who joined to be the humanitarian lifesavers and then instead wind up being the bad guys to use weapons and enforce these drug laws?

Admiral Gracey: No, I think they really got their kicks out of it, because they weren't being bad guys. We made it very clear to them at the beginning that drugs are bad, that this is bad stuff. I told you the other day about the reaction I got when I talked about the steps we were going to take in the Coast Guard about, my get-tough policy on anybody that was picked up in our urinalysis program, and the big standing ovation I got from all the troops down at Portsmouth. They recognized this is bad stuff, and by stopping it they were performing a service for the U.S. and for their own safety.

Sometimes, I'm sure, it drove them crazy with how slow things were going, but on the other hand there were lots of people to look after, and the druggies in those days weren't quite as inventive. They got more inventive once they figured out that this was no game to us. We were serious about this stuff. And for a while they were hauling

mostly marijuana, and that comes in bales. They would throw it overboard, but it always floats around, so you could pick up one bale, and you had evidence to take them to court. But we always saw them also throwing weighted bags of stuff over the side. We just know that was cocaine or something like that. The troops knew that. They recognized it. Then it got to a point where the drugs were cleverly hidden in false bulkheads, etc. So our people had to find the hidden drugs. They got pretty good at that. And Coast Guard people are pretty good about understanding.

Paul Stillwell: Well, if you get them to throw it overboard you've achieved your objective.

Admiral Gracey: Sure. Exactly. We made that point to our people, and they knew that. We really didn't have to tell them. They're smart. They figured that out real quick. One of the things that concerned us was that up on the East Coast, up north, there were a couple of courts where drug smugglers would get a quick turnaround and go right back out again. We knew which jurisdictions wouldn't do that, so we would always tow the seized vessels there, because the judges in those jurisdictions were going to throw the book at the bad guys.

Paul Stillwell: You do what works.

Admiral Gracey: Yeah, and our guys figured that out. They said, "Well, that guy in New Jersey, if we tow it into [pick a port], they're just going to get turned around and sent home. But if we go up there to that one in New York or out on Long Island—or wherever it was." They had places that they knew about, and if it was not ridiculous to go there from where the bust was made; they went to where the tough judges were.

I don't know how they felt at first about the increased drug enforcement effort. I never had any sense of their feeling bad about it. I did know about the Haitian migrant interdiction mission reaction. Here were these poor people who were desperate, and we were taking them right back to where they started from. That was hard for Coast Guard people to take on. But going after the druggies—I don't think so.

Fisheries enforcement was a big job. I mentioned the 200-mile Fisheries Zone and Magnuson Act and all that. Enforcement in the Gulf of Alaska was called the Alaska Patrol—AlPat. It was my baby when I had the Pacific Area. It was big-time stuff, and it had some bennies a lot of people didn't understand. I would talk about them in speeches and so forth and always got questions. By being there, we were the United States. By having our cutters and aircraft out there looking for fishing vessels that might be in the wrong place, we could also find Russian ships that were in the wrong place or other things that might be going on at that disputed border area that exists between the U.S. and Russia up in the Alaskan waters. Also, if one of the fishing vessels got in trouble, we were already out there. Our cutters carried helicopters, so they could respond more quickly. We also provided a measure of safety for fishermen that got in trouble, as they often did. AlPat was a marvelous example of the Coast Guard's multi-mission ability in action.

The 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles involved a major operation. Coast Guard Reservists and Auxiliarists and the regular establishment, of course, got involved big time, because there were a lot of water venues that went on. Security and safety and keeping the events free of interruption with a lot of international impact. The sailing events and all that sort of thing needed to be patrolled to keep people away. It was just a big-time operation.

The other day we were talking about people expressing concern and disapproval about various activities by senior government officials, one of them being the use of government automobiles. The Commandant had two airplanes. We called them "Coast Guard One" and "Coast Guard Two." Imagine that. One was a Gulfstream 2, a G2 executive jet. That was 01, and 02 was a Gulfstream turboprop. The 02 was the first Commandant airplane we had after we had gone through other types in earlier years.

The Department of Transportation felt that we didn't need two executive airplanes. In those days we parked our airplanes by the north end of the National Airport runway, where the U.S. Airways terminal is now.* It was our hangar when I started as Commandant. So if the planes were outside the hangar, everybody that came to the

* On 6 February 1998, President Bill Clinton signed into law the bill introduced and passed in Congress that changed the name of Washington National Airport to Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport.

airport from the north saw those two Coast Guard airplanes sitting up there. Some asked about them. That embarrassed Secretary Dole. At the time the Marines were really looking for some additional executive aircraft and wanted turboprops, so it was decided that we didn't need old faithful, CG-02. We should give it to the Marine Corps. Now it can be told, I guess.

I called Air Station, Elizabeth City and said, "You can do fairly long flights with a turboprop like CG-02. You guys know about that airplane."

"Oh, sure."

I said, "I bet you could even carry some drug observers and look out the windows while sitting in those nice passenger seats, couldn't you?"

"Well, I suppose."

"Well, guess what. You've just got a new operational aircraft."

"Wa-wa, well."

I said, "You've just developed an important need for this airplane." [Laughter] Because I was damned if we could let that plane get away. We had a perfectly good airplane, and it was useful. If a district commander needed to take a group of people from here to there, we could fly 02 out, take him and his bunch down to a meeting, an inspection trip, or whatever. It was really useful. The Commandant didn't use it a lot, because it was slow and one thing or another, but for short trips and a larger passenger load, it was fine. Anyway, 02 went to Elizabeth City and became an operational aircraft. It wasn't called CG-02 any more. As it turned out, the troops at Elizabeth City Air Station figured out it was a pretty good operational aircraft. By gosh, it worked. Besides, it was nice for the guys that were looking for the druggies out the windows to be able to put their coffee cups behind the seat in front of them. They took out some seats and did some other things to make it even more operationally useful.

Paul Stillwell: So you foiled the Marine Corps.

Admiral Gracey: The Marine Corps had to go find their own dog-gone aircraft. [Laughter] And I think the folks at DoT went away thinking, "Oh, he's done it to us again." In this whole time, by the way, there was a big concern about moving the hangar.

Part of it was that U.S. Air wanted to expand, and so we got into a great hoorah about where we were going to be at National Airport. Ultimately we went clean down to the other end of the airport. Oh, the people at the Coast Guard Air Station, Arlington thought the world was going to end. They couldn't possibly fly from the south end of the airport. It all worked out, but it was like pulling teeth. They thought I had given in too easily or something.

One day, I said, "Look. What I want you to do is to put together a plan as to how we *can* do it. Pretend you really want to do it and make a plan as to how you're going to make it happen. If, when you get done with the truly best possibility you can think of, it should turn out that it really won't work very well, then okay, we'll go back to the Secretary. But at least we gave it a try. Don't sit around and shoot everything down. You're making our credibility go right out the window." They did, and it turned out it wouldn't be too bad after all. We combined with the FAA and a couple of other agencies, and that's where CG Air Station, Arlington is now—at the south end of National Airport.

Did I talk about the Africa trip?

Paul Stillwell: You did not.

Admiral Gracey: Let's do that. I went to West Africa in 1983. At the time we had, in our international radio aids to navigation system, Loran C, which we were essentially running for the Department of Defense, though everybody could use it. We had stations around in the Mediterranean, in Spain and up in Denmark and around the Pacific and in the U.S. There was also Omega, which was an international system. At one point it was going to be a competitor to Loran C, because it only required five or six stations around the world. It was used by some aircraft and ships, but it couldn't come close to the kind of service and accuracy Loran C provided.

The Coast Guard ran the Omega program. We owned all the stations, but we didn't have our crews on them. They were manned by civilian nationals. We were the overseers, the supervisor of the program. At regular intervals we held an International Omega Conference in one of the countries that hosted an Omega station. In 1983 it was

to be in Liberia. I thought, “What a marvelous opportunity to visit West Africa.” Those are coastal nations. We had been hearing about some of them having problems with fisheries enforcement and some of the other kinds of things we do, and maybe we could be helpful. This tied in well with my ongoing strong feeling that the U.S. Coast Guard had a wonderful role to play in the world. In most of the small maritime countries, their navies were really coast guards except for the rescue part.

Nobody really cared much about rescue work, but stopping smuggling and protecting fish and flexing their muscles, was what they did. They weren’t interested in international presence. None of them was going to sail against somebody on the other side of the world.

I used to describe our unique place in the U.S. Government this way: “In the United States we’re standing astride the Potomac River. We’ve got one foot in the Department of Transportation and one foot in the Pentagon.” We could relate to the different parts of the foreign governments, so we were welcomed. We had access. I always think of the Coast Guard as a microcosm of the United States, and we convey an attitude and an image of what the United States is all about. We are an organization whose sole function is to be helpful. Clean up the environment, protect the fish, save lives, keep our maritime trade moving smoothly, the whole thing. And I found around the world that people thought, “What a great country the United States must be that they will have an organization like the United States Coast Guard that they’re willing to pay their money to have in place and do all these wonderful things. That must be a great country over there.” People actually said that to me.

Paul Stillwell: I take it they were quite receptive in these African nations.

Admiral Gracey: Very receptive when I was in West Africa. So, anyway, going to Liberia was an entrée. The Omega Conference was a reason to go. I was invited to make the keynote address. So I proposed to Vice President Bush that I go to Liberia and that we go to as many countries as we could along the west coast of Africa while we were there—that we extend the trip. The Secretary of State thought it was a great idea. The

Vice President said, “Hey, a vote in the U.N. is a vote in the U.N. Go forth and make friends.”

Paul Stillwell: Was that George Shultz?*

Admiral Gracey: Yes, Shultz was Secretary of State, and I remember his wife Obie.[†] She and I shared a wonderful evening at a state dinner one time when the Moroccans were here. Randy and I were invited because we’d been to Morocco while on our West Africa trip. The entertainment of the night was a quartet from the Army or Air Force Band. To our amazement they sang “Java Jive” and “Cement mixer, putty-putty.” The Moroccans must have wondered what was happening. Eyeballs were glazing. At the end of it all the old Marine, George Shultz, said, “Well, let’s stack arms and get the hell out of here.” That was his closing for this state dinner. Obie looked at me and I looked at her, and she said, “Did he say what I think he said?”

I said, “Yes, Obie, he said what you think he said.”

She sighed and said, “Oh, George.”

But, anyway, back to the Africa trip. Secretary Schultz set up for us to get briefed on the various nations and to go forth. We went to Senegal, Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, The Ivory Coast, Nigeria, and Morocco. Hearing that I was going to be in Africa, the Nigerians invited me to come down and address the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs about the Coast Guard. They had a Navy, and it had been proposed that they also should have a Coast Guard. They wanted me to talk about that. I met with a number of the senior defense people of course and other government people.

Our Ambassador there at the time was Tom Pickering, who has since been very prominent in State Department matters.[‡] Randy and I stayed with him and his wife Alice. What a marvelous experience. We have just recently—19 years later—met them at a reception in Washington. We spent a good 20 minutes talking about that visit with them all those years ago, and it seemed to all four like yesterday.

* George P. Shultz served as Secretary of State from 16 July 1982 to 20 January 1989.

[†] Mrs. Shultz’s maiden name was Helena M. O’Brien.

[‡] Thomas R. Pickering served as U.S. Ambassador to Nigeria from 30 November 1981 to 9 July 1983.

We were well received everywhere. In Guinea we were met at the airport by a party that included the Minister of the People's Army, the Minister of International Cooperation, the Chairman of the Joint Staff, the Chiefs of the Army, Navy, Air Force and Gendarmerie, the Guinean Ambassador to the U.S., a military band and a large Honor Guard. They set the record for the trip I think. Sékou Touré was the President.*

We stayed in the President's guest suite in the People's Palace. The reading room outside our bedroom was replete with magazines, newspapers, articles in flaming red and headlines about how Sékou Touré had led the rebels to take over the country after the French left. He was a big, impressive man wearing white. We met him after our morning meetings with his ministers. He came down a long curving, open staircase—made quite an entrance. After cordial introductions he invited us to lunch, and Randy sat next to him. He was speaking French with a little English, and Randy was speaking English with very little French, but they communicated marvelously. There was a mango in a bowl of fruit on the table and Randy asked him, “How do you eat a mango?” He reached inside his white jacket and pulled out a huge knife. He took the mango and made a slice in it with that knife. Then he took it in his two hands and just “unscrewed” the mango. It was marvelous to watch. We also spent a lot of time talking about our two countries with his people, and my staff was out talking to other levels. We had our Chief Medical Officer along, Rear Admiral Jellerson, and he was talking health matters.† Also with us was our Chief, Office of Civil Rights, William T. Hudson.

Each Commandant in those days had an adviser from the State Department. Originally he was called the Political Adviser to the Commandant—“PolAd.” That was changed, and the man during my watch was called “Foreign Affairs Advisor.” His name was David E. Simcox, a Senior Foreign Service Officer. He was with us, of course. We and the U.S. Ambassador had an extensive discussion with all the senior ministers. They had a long list of ways the U.S. could help them. I had to parry most of them but had been cleared to tell them of some ways U.S.A. was able to assist, and in the process I was able to provide some info about other possible sources and perhaps self-help opportunities. Interesting experience. That night they put on a special performance of

* Ahmed Sékou Touré was President of Guinea from October 1958, when the nation gained its independence, until his death in March 1984.

† Rear Admiral Leon R. Jellerson, USPHS, Chief, Office of Coast Guard Health Services.

their “African Ballet.” We were escorted into a large auditorium or concert hall through a side door to front-row seats. The whole place was filled with people dressed in sparkling white outfits, a capacity audience. I suspect it was a command performance. It was a magnificent performance.

We went to bed that night in a bed that had been provided by the Chinese. There was a label on it somewhere that it had been a gift of theirs. There was a radio in the headboard. We decided that the radio was probably for listening to us, not us listening to them. [Laughter] So as we turned out the lights I turned on the thing and said, “Goodnight,” and turned it off again. [Laughter] But they were wonderful hosts, although our plane crew had a different experience. In many places we went the potentates had Gulfstream aircraft like ours. So many of their crews had been trained along with ours. So our people went and compared notes and so forth and always had a good time.

In the morning, when it was time to leave Guinea, it was obvious that the crew wanted us to get on the plane promptly. They didn’t want us to loiter around and talk. Nobody said anything. It was just clear that something was different. So we kind of moved quickly through our farewells and thank-yous and all that and got on the plane and buttoned up. The runway was a huge, long thing which was clearly not built for Guinea. It was clearly built for long-range aircraft from some country. The Gulfstream is a hot airplane, but it doesn’t take five miles to take off. That morning we taxied and taxied and taxied, way down to the end of the runway. Like I said, something different was going on. Finally we turned around and rolled.

Our departure time had been set for 9:00 o’clock. The clock on the tower of the airport terminal said precisely 9:00 o’clock as we got right in front of it. Then the pilot did a hot takeoff. I mean, it was ka-woom and into a steep takeoff. We must have blown the eardrums out of half the people on the ground. That was followed immediately by “Semper Paratus” being played on the PA system of the airplane. So I got up, and I went into the cockpit, and I said, “All right, you guys, what’s going on?”

They said, “They weren’t very nice to us here, so we just thought that we would show them how an organization that’s well organized knows how to go. And when we

were going to take off at 9:00 o'clock, by God, we took off at 9:00 o'clock, didn't we, sir?"

I said, "With a flair."

Incidentally, in these places we had extensive talks about ways that we might be helpful. A lot of people wanted us to provide boats and equipment, but I explained I couldn't give them promises like that. It might or not be done, but we could certainly send some people over to help train their folks and show them how to protect their fisheries or whatever.

Our trip started in Senegal. In the middle of the night we flew from Washington to Barbados. At something like 2:00 o'clock in the morning in Barbados the U.S. Ambassador and a couple of his people met us. We had a wonderful little reception while we fueled the airplane and discussed business of the Caribbean. One of the things about the Gulfstream G-2 was you can go around the world in it, but you've got to plan your landings and takeoffs because the G-2 is not as long-legged as some of the later versions.

Incidentally, Secretary Lewis wanted to convert it to the later G-3 version, which had longer legs, but I persuaded him that the cost was not really going to be worth it. We could get wherever we needed to go with just a little more careful planning. Anyway we then flew to Dakar, where we stayed for a couple of days with Ambassador Charles Bray, who had arranged a marvelous assortment of briefings and meetings and social/business affairs.* That included a meeting at the Canadian Embassy, where we learned about a major program to train the Senegalese in fisheries surveillance, pollution control and search and rescue. The Chief of the Senegal Navy noted at one of our events that our visit was his first chance to brief a U.S. flag officer. Amazing! Randy got to spend some time seeing the city and some of the slave departure points in the harbor. The wife of the Defense Attaché was her escort. From there we went to Guinea and then on to Liberia.

I was given all sorts of military honors everywhere we went—some more impressive than others. In Liberia I was receiving my 19-gun arrival honors when the guns quit at 11. So the Liberian colonel and I, who were saluting each other at the time, nodded almost simultaneously, agreeing that 11 was good enough. Let's get on with it.

* Charles W. Bray III served as U.S. Ambassador to Senegal from 18 July 1981 to 17 May 1985.

The head of the Liberian Coast Guard was a graduate of the U.S. Coast Guard OCS, so we, of course, spent some time with him and his people. We were given nice gifts and very thoughtful kinds of things in the various places we went. And, of course, since Liberia was the host of the Omega conference, people from all over the world were there. There were a couple receptions at which a Russian officer wanted to talk to me. We talked about a lot of things. I, of course, dutifully reported all this back when I got home. I didn't know whether it was helpful or not. But people talked, and we listened, and we talked. But with Liberia we discussed how we could be helpful.

This was at the time of Sergeant Doe, who had led the big rebellion and had lined people up along the beach and shot them all after he took over the government.* Our host was Ambassador Bill Swing, who later was in South Africa and then was in Haiti at the time that we had the operation there just a few years ago.† We're still exchanging Christmas cards with him 20 years later. He really wanted me to meet Sergeant Doe, but we never got to. We had an appointment with him and were just outside his gate when it got canceled. Later we found out that they were at the time about to go to war with some tribes across the line in Sierra Leone.

We learned the "Liberian handshake." There's some way you shake hands, and as you pull away you click your fingers into the palm of your hand. We dutifully and relentlessly tried. I never made it. They all had it down cold, of course, and they always would laugh as I tried and failed. It was their custom, and we all kept trying. They gave me some tribal robes and so forth, and they made Randy "First Lady of the Liberian Coast Guard."

The Omega Conference itself was not very remarkable. It was held at a splendid, but empty, resort hotel that had been built—as was the case in many of the countries we went to—for one major event or another as they tried to draw businesses and travelers. It was interesting to see the station and meet people at the receptions. I really don't know whether the technical people found it useful or not. My key address was well received and led to discussion at events later.

* Americo-Liberian rule in Liberia came to an abrupt end in 1980, when 28-year-old Master Sergeant Samuel K. Doe staged a violent coup and toppled the old regime.

† William Lacy Swing served as U.S. Ambassador to Liberia from 11 August 1981 to 10 June 1985.

In Sierra Leone the U.S. Ambassador was a woman named Terry Healy.* She had communicated with us several months before about needing help, because they were having problems with fisheries enforcement. The head of their armed forces was a man named Brigadier Momoh.† Brigadier Momoh had one day gotten his army together, lined them all up, and went down the line pointing to individuals saying, “You, you and you, buy a white suit. You are now the Navy.” They got a 60-foot boat, and early on they went out and seized a Russian trawler. Brought it into port, not having the slightest idea what to do with it then. So the Ambassador called me in Washington for help. We sent a lieutenant and a chief petty officer over there to help them get organized and show them how to run a fisheries operation and so forth. Ambassador Healy was eternally grateful, and when she heard we were coming to Africa, nothing would do but we would come to Sierra Leone. She wanted us to meet Brigadier Momoh. I think she was a little afraid of Brigadier Momoh, to tell you the truth. But anyway we went there.

At the airport in Sierra Leone we were welcomed personally by President Stevens.‡ He was going off somewhere else in his helicopter, but we sat and chatted and had tea for, oh, half an hour or an hour. The Ambassador and Randy and I and the President and a couple of his staff. It was a special experience. I learned that the President and I had the same birthday, so when we met later with his son, the Foreign Minister, I left a small gift for the President.

Paul Stillwell: Did you have interpreters for these discussions?

Admiral Gracey: Didn't need them with him. Sierra Leone is English speaking. The countries we visited seemed to alternate speaking French or English. Senegal was French and Guinea was French and Ivory Coast was French. Liberia and Nigeria and Sierra Leone spoke English. Morocco was mostly French, but we made out all right. People were kind to us. But, anyway, in Sierra Leone it was not a problem at all. They spoke perfect English

* Theresa A. Healy served as U.S. Ambassador to Sierra Leone from 18 September 1980 to 13 July 1983.

† Joseph Saidu Momoh. He later served as the nation's President from 1986 to 1992.

‡ Siaka P. Stevens served as Sierra Leone's head of state for 18 years before his retirement in 1985.

After the airport visit we and the President parted ways. We rode a ferry into town and went to the headquarters of the military services to see Brigadier Momoh. There was an honor guard of seven people in white uniforms, clearly the Navy, plus one old-timer with a battered bugle who was wearing an old-time British uniform, the white trousers with the stripe and the red coat and the pith helmet.

I had learned a long time before that at international honors ceremonies the honoree goes and stands on a box. There's always going to be a box for you stand on. In the Philippines it was, "Go stand on the red box." And here the box was a little wood platform with chipped white paint. I stood on it and, as someone told me once, "Do what comes naturally." I did, but it was a little hard to tell what was "natural" here. The bugler—an old-timer—wasn't very good, and his bugle was battered, but he tried and it came off fine.

Then I went in to meet Brigadier Momoh in his office. It was a small office. He had an oak desk, a settee, and a couple of chairs and a table piled with magazines. And his desk was absolutely piled up to his nose with paper. He was a big strapping man. Visualize somebody that goes by the name of Brigadier Momoh, and you've probably got a picture of this. And, as I mentioned, the Ambassador was a little uneasy around him. I said to him, "Brigadier Momoh, I'm really pleased that you've welcomed us here today, and you've made me a doubly happy man. One, I appreciate the arrival ceremony out there. It was nice to see your troops in their naval uniforms. But mostly you've made me happy when I come here and look at the state of your desk. I have trouble with my desk, but that's the worst desk I've seen in the entire world." And the Ambassador gasped. [Laughter]

And, of course, the Brigadier threw back his head and laughed and said, with a broad British accent, "Oh, Admiral, I have a stupid staff. They keep sending papers in here. I don't know what to do with it."

I said, "General, I have a stupid staff too. I'd like you to meet some of them," and I introduced them. And we sat down and we had a wonderful conversation. For the next two days that we were there, every time I went anywhere, there was Brigadier Momoh over in the corner, and we had some wonderful talks. He explained to me why there was a bridge here and there wasn't a bridge there, why this road did that, and it was

wonderful. But Ambassador Healy thought that was the end of the visit right there, when I teased Momoh about his desk.

In the Ivory Coast we were really treated royally. I had met their Minister of Marine, Mr. Fadika, at the International Maritime Organization meetings in London.* So we were a known quantity to each other. We saw much of him during our stay, and we were hosted by him at a large state dinner. He spoke often and publicly about U.S.-Ivory Coast relations, shared ideals of democracy, his admiration for the U.S. Coast Guard, and his aim to emulate it. This was a pattern repeated often as I met with almost all the Ivorian Ministers. We had several press, TV, and radio interviews—and got full national coverage. I had plenty of chance to call on my diplomacy skills on such issues as the U.S. position on “The Law of the Sea” and other matters. Loved it.

Courtesy of Mr. Fadika, Randy became the first and only woman ever to be and probably that ever would be in the Ivory Coast Navy. They gave her a Navy hat and the proper things like that. The President of the Ivory Coast was Houphouët-Boigny.† The town where he was born was Yamoussoukro, and he was converting that into a university center and education center with beautiful buildings. He had his Presidential Guest House there too. It was really a palace beyond parallel, and he wanted us to see it—a real honor because visitors there were rarely permitted. He also wanted us to see his pineapple plantation, which incidentally was run by Israelis. They had the pineapples scheduled to ripen in sync with shipment orders. If they didn’t ripen at a certain time, they injected them with something so they could load them in the airplanes and fly them to be in Paris, ripe, at a certain time at a certain day. We were flown to Yamoussoukro in an Ivorian Presidential aircraft, a splendid executive aircraft. The mayor of Yamoussoukro was a great fan of the television program “Dallas,” and nothing would do but we’d send him a cowboy hat when we got back. I just wished I’d known it before I got there

We toured the Guest Palace. The dining table was a 10-foot long by 4-foot-wide oval shape of solid malachite. Outside was an alabaster gazebo surrounded by turquoise pools all with carved Moroccan kind of carving. And this whole place was surrounded

* Mohammed Lamine Fadika.

† Felix Houphouët-Boigny served as President of the Ivory Coast from 1960 to 1993.

by a moat full of crocodiles. At a certain time of day there would be a public feeding of the crocodiles. Townspeople would be invited to come and watch. At the appointed time the feeder would clink a large knife on an iron railing, and the crocodiles would all rise to the surface. He'd throw meat out to them. This was clearly to let the people know that those crocodiles were in there. Don't try to swim across this moat. [Laughter]

Back at the capital, Abidjan, we met with all kinds of local and national government people, courtesy of Ambassador Nancy Rawls, a marvelous, gracious lady.* It was really a very special visit, capped by a splendid outdoor state dinner hosted by Ambassador Rawls. She made a lot of friends for the United States and gave us abundant opportunity to do the same.

In our various visits I was often challenged about U.S. positions. At the urging of our Nigerian Navy host I granted an exclusive interview to a Nigerian journalist who was *very* aggressive. Questions were about “strings we attach to U.S. assistance, our expectations of Third World countries and the “Law of the Sea” matter again. “How could we treat them like that? How come we didn't agree with them?” Approaches like that

I said, “You must have some personal friends. Do you always agree with what they say?”

“Of course not.”

“Well,” I said, “that happens with countries too. Just because we don't agree with what Nigeria's position is on this particular point doesn't mean you're not our friends. And we hope we are your friends. It's just we don't happen to agree. We're talking about it. We'll work it out.” That seemed to ease him a bit.

When we arrived in Lagos, Nigeria, I was met by Rear Admiral D. E. Okujagu, Flag Officer Commanding, Western Naval Command, who had been designated by the Chief, Naval Staff as host for the visit. The admiral and I had to hurry to an appointment with the Chief, Naval Staff so we got quickly to a car and headed for town on an eight-lane highway, which was wall-to-wall cars. It was a permanent condition known as a “Go-Slow.” You know about that, Paul, from riding the last couple of trips here. The “Go-Slow” is routine from the airport into the center of town. But we had an appointment

* Nancy V. Rawls served as U.S. Ambassador to the Ivory Coast from 16 January 1980 to 16 August 1983.

to make. We had two motorcycle outriders escorting us. The admiral said something to the driver, and the driver said something to one of the motorcycle guys, who said something to the other guy, and then it began. They would drive up between two cars ahead of us and knock on the window and point. And if the cars didn't move over they would knock again and they would make a kind of a hex symbol of some kind with their hand, and they would say, "Stupid mon." And the "stupid mon" would somehow make room for our car to get through, and we went down the entire highway weaving like this.

When I got back to Washington I told the staff that from then on, when I didn't think things were getting to me fast enough, I was going to say, "Stupid mon," and see if it worked.

Somehow we arrived on time and met with the Chief of the Naval Staff, who took us to a longer meeting with the Chief of the Defense Staff. It was a very productive visit and talk.

Next came my address to the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs. The audience included military people and representation from Police, Customs, academia and political groups. There were probably 100 people, 150 people maybe, in an amphitheater, a classroom kind of thing. I spoke for about 20 minutes and then opened for questions. That part was supposed to be for 15 minutes. It went on for an hour. They asked a lot of questions, some probing, some along the lines of what the reporter had asked about, but mostly about the Coast Guard and what we do and all that.

I spent the rest of the afternoon with the Navy. That night the Pickerings had a reception for us at their quarters. In the morning we had an early session with the Embassy country team and left.

We flew from there to Morocco. Flew out over the desert. I went up to the cockpit and said to the pilot, "How are we doing? Where are we?"

He said, "Admiral, we know where we are, but down there nobody's got any idea where we are, and they don't really give a damn. They don't care where we are, but they know we're out here somewhere." Amazing

I was absolutely dumbfounded when, after having flown most of the day from down south over the desert toward Morocco, we flew over the Atlas Mountains covered

with snow. Who would expect you'd come in off the desert, and there would be mountains covered with snow all with green, green, green on the other side?

We stopped first at Casablanca, where we met with the Navy and port officials, had a SEAL demo, toured their ships, etc. Discussions included much about ways the U.S. could help through teaming, training, etc. One big pitch was made for how they could use help from New York about how to run their port. I noted what I had seen of Casablanca flying in and suggested they would do better to team with a port more like theirs. Shortly after we returned home an arrangement was made with Port Everglades, Florida. After this meeting I met with Minister Smili of their Ministry of Merchant Marine and Fisheries. More about Minister Smili later.

And then to Rabat, where we were met by the U.S. Ambassador, Joseph Verner Reed of the New York Reed banking family and later the Chief of Protocol for the State Department.* Ambassador Reed was a colorful and interesting man. He worked hard at being on good terms with the King of Morocco. He had arranged a state dinner that night for us. We were receiving people as they arrived. I said to him, "How many people are coming?"

He said, "We don't know." They had two big dining rooms all set up. He said, "We don't know, because in this country it's not polite to say 'no,' so nobody ever says anything. You don't know who's going to come and who isn't. [Laughter] But he said, "We're hopeful. We think you'll be a big drawing card."

I said, "That's because they don't know me personally, only because of my rank?"

He said, "That's part of it, but once they know you personally—" We had fun. They filled the place. They filled the place. Here was a four-star admiral of the U.S. Coast Guard. They didn't know about this sort of thing and they came. It was a wonderful dinner. He was one of those hosts that never sit down. Goes from table to table, talks to people. I sat with Minister Smili of Marine and Fisheries, who spoke very little English, and I spoke very little French, but we had a Swedish woman sitting with us and she kept us in sync, and we became good friends. Randy sat with his Mrs. Smili at another table, and they became really good friends. Randy was asking about her and

* Joseph Verner Reed, Jr., was U.S. Ambassador to Morocco from 7 November 1981 to 21 May 1985.

cared about her, and apparently it was like this was the first time that had ever happened for Mrs. Smili.

Later on they came to the U.S. to visit and brought their whole family. We had them to dinner with the Moroccan Ambassador and all that sort of thing out at our Quarters. We did a lot of talking about Morocco, and they reminded us that back in the 1700s Morocco was the first country to recognize officially the United States of America. I didn't know that. And they were very proud of that fact.

The next day I received honors as we visited the mausoleum and mosque of Mohammed V, father of the King. After a country team brief back at the Embassy we went for a long session with Minister Smili where we talked about how the U.S. might help Morocco. This was followed by a hearty Moroccan meal eaten by hand with delicious delicacies like goat eyes, couscous, etc.

Paul Stillwell: Did you have somebody in your entourage doing intelligence collection on this or debriefing you as you went from stop to stop?

Admiral Gracey: No. We were all listening to people we were with. I've mentioned earlier a few specific topics of interest that came up when I was talking with various officials and at various social events. We filed a detailed report when we got home. Among ourselves we compared notes when we gathered on the plane for the next leg. It was clear at the beginning that I wasn't going over there for intelligence. I was going to make friends, to learn how U.S. Coast Guard might help, to get a feel for the people, cultures, and governments of a part of the maritime world that was largely unheralded

Our visits were only going to be what my wife calls "mosquito bite" visits. In one day, maybe two, and out the next with time enough for a round of visits and a state dinner of some sort. If the situation warranted, we had a social event with some community leader or government leader or something, but mostly it was visits, briefings, dinner and gone. One plus I hadn't contemplated was the chance to bring U.S. Ambassadors and their people up to speed on the Coast Guard. The lack of knowledge of what we had to offer was astounding.

We flew back by way of the Azores making one of the most spectacular landings I've ever experienced—getting into the Naval Air Station at Lajes. There's a mountain right there, and there's always a crosswind on this runway. The pilot just got on the horn and said, "Admiral, you're going to think I'm crazy. Trust me." It must have been blowing 40 knots—and raining. He came in perpendicular to the runway, right toward the mountain, and then at the last minute did a dip and down. At least that's the way I remember it. It was a great landing. [Laughter] And we were all glad he made it. But as I was leaving the plane I had a few appropriate words to say to him about the quality of the landing.

Paul Stillwell: Did you have a bodyguard as you made these various trips?

Admiral Gracey: Not a "bodyguard" per se. Coast Guard intelligence people doubled in that role and they did, as they did on occasion back in Washington. On trips it depended on where we were going. I had a death threat put on me in Washington by the druggies. They said they were going to kill this Admiral Gracey that was leading the drug war at sea and talking so much about them. So for some period of time coming and going from work there were a couple of cars that were just plain, ordinary cars and with a couple of our guys in each that went where we went. We varied our routes. I spent a lot of years as a commuter in Washington. When I was driving myself I couldn't stand sitting in line, so I knew a whole bunch of different ways to get into the city of Washington from Maryland and other alternate routes within the city.

Vice Admiral Ben Stabile, my Vice Commandant, was one who went the same way every day apparently. We used to ride together with a driver, and we would read office papers and talk about business. On the first day of using our special routing Ben was wrapped up in some paperwork and about the time he thought we ought to be at a certain place he looked up and we were no place he'd ever seen before. In some alarm he said, "Where are we? Where are we?" and I pulled his chain about that. The driver and I had fun finding a different way every day. Anyway, the Coast Guard Intel people protected us.

I think I talked about going to the annual Reserve Officers Association conference in Puerto Rico, where there were gunmen on the rooftops and all this kind of thing. We had three Coast Guard Intelligence men doing their “executive protection” bit. They went everywhere we went, and we had a man outside the door all night long at the hotel because there was a terrorist threat in 1982—imagine that—against senior military people. The three on our team were marvelous. Their first instructions to Randy and me were, “This is the way it’s going to work. You’re going to do your thing. You go to the social events. You do everything else. Know that we will be there. If anything comes up, all you will know is you will feel a hand in the small of your back maybe taking you by the belt. But you’ll feel a hand, and you’ll hear the words, ‘Gun right, knife left, whatever.’ That’s all you’ll hear and you’ll feel the push. Just go with it. Don’t fight back. Trust us. It’s us. If it’s something else in a foreign language, that may be different, but that won’t happen. Just stay loose and do it. Trust us, we’re there.” And they were. And we did.

I thought it would be wonderful to have that all the time, because one of the things they do is scout out where the heads are. And in a situation, say, while you’re at the head table and you need to go to the head, they know the safe and shortest way. And if you make any movement of your chair, they’re going to step out from behind a potted palm or something and lead. They were really good. It was one of them, incidentally, the head man in that group, who didn’t lift me by the elbows exactly but firmly insisted that I leave the building at the time of the famous bomb scare.

Paul Stillwell: You have not told that story on tape, so please do.

Admiral Gracey: Well, maybe this is the time to do it. One day we were sitting in my office at Coast Guard Headquarters. It is about the middle of the building on the second floor. The Flag Mess is on the southwest corner of the same floor. Word came that there had been a bomb threat, and it was allegedly in the area of the Flag Mess. It was at 11:30 or something like that when we got the word. We ate at noon. And the Executive Protection guys, of course, showed up a couple of minutes later.

The question was, “What do we do?” We should get people out of the building, but if we made an announcement over the PA system, all the people from the upper five floors in that whole quadrant of the building would be in the stairwell that went right past the threatened area. So we were reluctant to make an announcement. We wanted people to get out, so we kind of spread the word to leave the building. We had a PA system, but we didn’t think it wise or safe to use it. We sent scouts out to spread the word. There was a half an hour. Then the Executive Protection people came in and immediately started closing all the venetian blinds in the office windows to prevent the effect of shattering glass.

I said, “Okay, shall I go outside? How do you want us to leave the building? Or since that’s all covered and it’s down in the corner I’ll just stay here. Why don’t we just stay here and close the door and shut the windows? Why don’t you all get out, and I’ll hang around in here?”

“No way are you going to hang around. You’re getting out of here, sir.”

I said, “Well, okay. Which stairway do you want me to use?”

“Well,” they said, “we’ll take care of that. We want you to go down and get in your car and get the hell out of here.” So we had a little discussion about that, and the bottom line was, “We don’t think there’s anything here, but if there is we’re going to need you around. We’re going to need your leadership. The Coast Guard’s going to want to know you’re okay. We need you out of here.”

I started arguing, and they said, “Sir, our job is to take care of you. We are the Executive Protection Service. That’s one of our jobs. And you know that from the places we’ve been. Please.”

So the driver and I went “next door” to Fort McNair.* We sat in a place where we could watch the building, make sure everything was all right. It got past the 12:00 o’clock hour, and I said to Petty Officer Farrington, the driver, “I think we’re okay. Let’s get the hell back there. I’m not comfortable with this at all.” And we did.

I really felt bad about the fact that I had done that, so the next day I called a meeting in the cafeteria of everybody in the building. I told them what had happened and

* Fort McNair, located in southwest Washington, D.C., is the site of the National War College and the Industrial College of the Armed Forces.

why I had left and why we had not made an announcement in that part of the building, but we did spread the word. And they likened as how, “Yeah, everybody got out.” Anyway that was it.

Afterwards, interestingly enough a couple of junior officers, some women, different people in the staff wrote and sent me notes with comments on the fact that I had done this. I think it was that night ABC, one of the local television channels, wanted to do an interview. I agreed. I took them to the space where allegedly the bomb was going to be and met with them there, and we talked, and I told them the story. And they decided it was a non-story, and I don’t think it ever ran. If it did, it was okay. But I’m talking about it. I still feel bad about it.

Paul Stillwell: How close was your office to the alleged bombsite?

Admiral Gracey: Fifty feet or so. That was part of my problem. Back then I didn’t see how there could be a problem. Now I’ve seen what bombs can do in buildings. If they were to say it to me today, I wouldn’t hesitate. I would say, “Put an announcement out, but put somebody at the head of the stairs in that corner and get people to go different ways. Let’s stay the hell off elevators.” But I’m not sure about that part. We had drills, but as in so many cases some people in the building participated and some didn’t. We all have thought, at one time or another, “Well, that’s just a drill. I’ll keep going. I haven’t got time for that.” I have always gone by the thought that when push comes to shove, you’ve got to go by the pros that are on your staff doing a job. You’ve got to do what they tell you. And that’s what I did. But I was sure uncomfortable about it—and 20 years later I still am. The reaction of the people at the all-hands meeting helped me a lot.

Paul Stillwell: What was the tenor of the notes you received from these people?

Admiral Gracey: The tone was that they were really grateful that I had called them together. One said they really respected my courage and my integrity in coming down and telling them what had occurred. That it had to be hard thing to do. One thanked me for telling them and letting them know that I cared enough about them to come do that. It

was all positive thoughts like that. Nobody said, “You crumb bum. How come you left us to blow up and blah-blah-blah?” Maybe the ones that felt that way wouldn’t write it down.

This is at the time when I was the target of death threats, and the idea was they were going to get the flag officers, and if it was the real thing it was going to be admirals that were going to be in the Flag Mess, and I always ate with them when I was in town. It all sounded like a part of that “Kill the Commandant” time. Anyway, that’s more than enough on that.

Paul Stillwell: Well, if we could go back to Africa then did you have any downstream benefits or results from that trip?

Admiral Gracey: Before I answer that I must tell you about another extensive foreign trip in 1983.

During each Commandant's tenure there comes the Quadrennial International Lifeboat Conference (ILC). In June of 1983 it was held in Göteborg, Sweden, and it was followed by a meeting of the Maritime Safety Committee of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in London. I took the opportunity to expand my international outreach objectives for the Coast Guard and to enhance my knowledge of the organizations and the people involved.

Leaving Washington in CG-01 late on 1 June, we traveled to Iceland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, The Shetland Islands, and England, arriving home on 15 June.

The first stop was at Reykjavik, where we were joined by Captain Bob Biller, Commander, Coast Guard Activities Europe (up from London).^{*} We met with Ambassador Marshall Bremont and talked about the importance of the USCG/Iceland relationship.[†] He then hosted a luncheon with the leaders of the Icelandic Coast Guard, the Ministry of Justice, and the Icelandic Defense Force. After an afternoon of courtesy calls and discussions we were flown to the Westmann Islands, site of the 1973 volcanic eruption that drastically changed the physical nature of the Islands and buried most of the

^{*} Captain Robert A. Biller, USCG.

[†] Marshall Bremont served as U.S. Ambassador to Iceland from 16 September 1981 to 1 August 1985.

largest village. We were able to walk on the lava and experience the amount of heat that remained ten years later—heat that is used to provide power and hot water to Reykjavik and other cities miles away across open water. Absolutely amazing. We were hosted at dinner by the Director of the Icelandic Coast Guard.

The next day we met with the Chairman of the National Lifesaving Association. We talked about their work and about providing training at our Search and Rescue School for some of their personnel. I presented a letter of appointment to the U.S. Coast Guard Academy to the son of an active member of the Lifesaving Association. Later we met with their Director of Shipping Inspection and learned about new merchant marine safety developments.

The day ended with an AMVER Award ceremony for their vessels that participate in our program. The same sort of thing was done in all the countries we visited.

Next day we flew to Malmo, Sweden, home of the World Maritime University, sponsored by IMO. I had been very supportive of WMU and we had been pleased that they selected as part of their staff Captain Bud Mathieu, U.S. Coast Guard (Retired).*

From Malmo we flew to Göteborg, where Randy and I met with Ambassador and Mrs Franklin Forsberg, who had come to Göteborg to attend the ILC opening ceremonies—a regal affair.† After the ceremonies we attended a dinner where we were seated at the head table with Prince Bertil and Princess Lilian of Sweden, the Chairman of the Swedish Sea Rescue Institution and others.

After attending the opening sessions of the Conference I went to meet Commodore Sven Uhler, Director of the Swedish Coast Guard (SCG). We were flown in an SCG aircraft for a demonstration of a sensor package they use for oil spill and other surveillance, and we went under way aboard two SCG vessels. From that afternoon sprang a special personal and professional friendship between Commodore Uhler and me that lasted even after my retirement. It included an afloat tour of Archipelago waters and dinner at a remote restaurant that night.

The next day, June 7, the Graceys, Captain Biller, and Lieutenant Commander Kyle flew to Oslo for mostly classified meetings with Ambassador M. Austad, the head

* Captain Charles E. Mathieu, USCG (Ret.).

† Franklin S. Forsberg was U.S. Ambassador to Sweden from 14 January 1982 to 12 December 1985.

of the Norwegian Navy and the Norwegian Coast Guard, the head of the Maritime Directorate, a senior representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and telecommunications officials regarding Loran, Omega, and other such systems. The afternoon closed with an AMVER Awards ceremony, and then we and the Ambassador flew back to Göteborg to attend a celebration of the 75th anniversary of the Swedish Sea Rescue Institution.

Two interesting sidelights of the Oslo trip. First was the surprise that a change of government occurred unexpectedly on the morning while we were flying there. I didn't learn if it was, because they had agreed to let me come or not. But it resulted in a lot of schedule changing, as you can imagine. Second involved the Norwegian Ambassador to Brazil, who was a consul General in San Francisco when we were there. I talked about our friendship. It turned out that Sonja was on home leave on June 7 and met us at the airfield to take Randy away for a day of talking and seeing as much of Oslo as they could in the time we had. I got to see her a little on arrival and before departure, but Randy got a marvelous education about that part of Norway. Per was still in Brazil.

The next day provided one of the great events of my wonderfully full-of-events life. It was to include a luncheon of delegates followed by an afternoon of demonstration rescue operations by the lifeboats of various European countries. As I was going into lunch with our group (hoping to find Randy there somewhere), I was met by a Swedish official who said, "The King is having lunch with us today and would very much like to have you sit with him." What does one say to that? I had heard that "Carl XVI Gustaf, King of Sweden" was an avid boater and interested in boating safety.* He was that indeed and very interested in the U.S. Coast Guard and me. We had a marvelous flow of conversation back and forth all through lunch.

At the end he said, "Admiral, I would consider it an honor and pleasure if you would join me on the Swedish lifeboat during the demonstrations this afternoon. Tell your people you will be in my car." I found somebody to get the word to the right people and jogged along behind the King. And then the real fun came. The exercise of the Swedish boat was to act in concert with a German lifeboat in putting out a fire on a fishing trawler. The fire consisted of several oil drums on the decks of the buttoned-up

* Carl XVI Gustaf has been King of Sweden since 15 September 1973.

trawler. The operation was for each lifeboat to go down one side and wet down the fire with its water cannon.

The King and I were standing at the bow, and it occurred to me that we were going to get very wet if the Germans didn't stop shooting water when they got to the stern of the trawler. The King's men were communicating something that I assumed was orders not to wet the King. Whatever—it didn't work, and the King and I got very wet. He, being much more nimble than I and having priority, of course, got out of the way quicker than I did. Nonetheless, we wound up in a sheltered space back aft with towels being thrust upon us by the embarrassed crew. As I told my Coast Guard folks when I got home—to their great joy: “Your Commandant got to dry off the King of Sweden. But even better, the King of Sweden dried off your Commandant!!” What an experience—like two old friends caught in a rainstorm. Classy, I thought. Later that afternoon I got back to the hotel and found Randy. Whew.

Following an AMVER Award Ceremony hosted by the Swedish Ship owners Association the next day we attended a reception by the Royal National Lifeboat Institute (RNLI) of the U.K., said our farewells and packed for a flight to Copenhagen the next morning.

In Copenhagen we were met by a car whose driver wore a necktie with what I recognized as their tall ship *Danmark* on it. When I asked him about it and told him I was one who had trained in *Danmark* at the end of World War II, he said he knew that and asked to be able to drive us. He had been one of the crew. How about that?

The day was spent in meetings with leaders of the Danish Navy and the Director of Navigation and Hydrography, a tour of the harbor in a RDN launch, honors—including passing honors rendered by the crew of the Royal Yacht—and a meeting at the Naval Base. I then met with Ambassador John L. Loeb, who went with me to an AMVER Awards ceremony.* That night Randy and I went to the fantastic Tivoli Gardens, winding up a full day very late at the hotel.

On the way to London the next day we visited the Coast Guard Loran Station on the Shetland Islands. To get there we had to stop in Aberdeen, Scotland, and change to a chartered plane flown by a retired RAF pilot, CG-01 being too "hot" to land on the

* John Langeloth Loeb, Jr., U.S. Ambassador to Denmark from 13 October 1981 to 17 September 1983.

runways in the Shetlands.* En route he gave us a low-flight tour of the west side of the Shetlands. On the way back he dropped to 500 feet and showed us Scapa Flow, the spot where HMS *Royal Oak* was sunk, and some spectacular 2000-foot cliffs.†

At the Shetlands we had a wonderful drive the length of the island to reach the station from the airfield—lots of sheep. At the Station all the crew's families were gathered to be with us and share lunch in the crew's mess. Also there was a group known worldwide as the "Shetland Fiddlers," who entertained us all through lunch. Absolutely superb—as was the experience to be with the Coast Guard people. The CO, Lieutenant D. Ackerman, and his wife were great hosts and obviously had generated the kind of family spirit Randy and I always looked for. What fun.

Back to Aberdeen and off to London. We landed at Northholt, the RAF base for arriving dignitaries and the Queen, et. al. During our stay in London I attended some meetings of the IMO Maritime Safety Committee, and entertained IMO participants at dinner. Randy and I were hosted at lunch by First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir John Fieldhouse and Mrs. Fieldhouse, where we talked about lessons learned at the Falklands and our experience with women in the military.‡ I lunched with C. P. Srivastava, Secretary General of IMO, and called on Ambassador John J. Louis and CinCUSNavEur Vice Admiral Staser Holcomb and Royal Navy seniors.§

On 15 June—our 34th wedding anniversary—we flew home to D.C. via Shannon and Gander. What a marvelous, full, and rewarding trip it was. Different in many ways from the Africa trip. These were all major maritime countries, and all had long histories of working in IMO and association with senior military people from USA.

Both trips were—I'm convinced—productive and worthwhile, even mandatory. They certainly were personally rewarding in giving me a chance to see and hear some of the other sides of our outlook and to open some more doors in my drive to make the U.S. Coast Guard a major factor in the international affairs of the United States.

* RAF—Royal Air Force.

† On 14 October 1939, the submarine *U-47*, commanded by Gunther Prien, made a daring entry into the British fleet anchorage at Scapa Flow, in the Orkney Islands north of Scotland, and sank the battleship *Royal Oak*, killing 833 of her crew.

‡ Admiral of the Fleet Sir John Fieldhouse, RN, served as the United Kingdom's First Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Staff from 1982 to 1985.

§ John J. Louis, Jr., was U.S. Ambassador to the United Kingdom from 27 May 1981 to 7 November 1983. Vice Admiral M. Staser Holcomb, USN, Deputy Commander in Chief U.S. Naval Forces Europe.

You asked earlier about downstream benefits or results from the Africa trip. The same answer can apply to both trips. We gained lots of insight and several new points of contact I could use at the International Maritime Organization where I headed the U.S. delegation. The Commandant always goes to the IMO Assembly once or twice during his tenure. Every other year I think it was for plenary session. Meanwhile, we've got staffers over there on their safety committees and all that. It's an ongoing thing. The first time I went our then Deputy Chief of International Affairs, now Chief and SES, Gerry Yoest, was introducing me to people, and it kept being folks that I'd met somewhere else. I already knew this guy from Japan. I already knew that guy from India. I already knew this guy from Africa. And our fellow says, "I'm wasting my time here introducing you to all these people. You already know them."

I said, "No, you're not wasting your time, but it's interesting to see some examples of the progress we have made in my ongoing effort to increase our international contacts and relations." We were trying hard to make contact with the small nations of the world. I thought it was important and SecState Shultz and Vice President Bush agreed with me. I'd already started doing it for the Pacific Basin nations when I was in San Francisco. But we were also trying, through the International Maritime Organization, to equalize the differentials between merchant marines of the world. There were people who argued that the reason the United States merchant marine was going downhill was that it was too high cost. That they had to meet too many regulations, and that increased the cost and therefore they couldn't compete.

Paul Stillwell: That was part of it. Certainly there are other causes as well.

Admiral Gracey: Yes, but that *was* part of it. But we talked early on about how to resolve that. Well, we agreed that we weren't going to solve the differential by backing away on our own levels of safety. The Safety of Life at Sea Conference, SOLAS, was not everything we wanted, but we actually exceeded it. What we were going to do was work to bring the rest of the world up to our standards, because if there were bad going-to-sea situations, it was bad on humanity in general, and we cared about that. If an accident was anywhere near where we were going to be, we were going to get involved in

trying to help them anyway. So our position wasn't *totally* altruistic. But mostly we thought, "If we're going to be a world safety organization, let's get to the people who go down to the sea in ships, and let's make them safe."

Paul Stillwell: Was this directed specifically at the flags-of-convenience nations?*

Admiral Gracey: No, not directed specifically at anybody. In fact, some of the flags of convenience nations like Panama and Liberia were really pretty good. They had organizations in this country. A lot of retired Coast Guard people worked for them. They ran pretty good ships, a lot of them. There were differences in crew qualifications and some of that kind of stuff compared with what we had. And we also had unions that drew a lot of pay in the U.S., and I don't begrudge it at all, but that did run the cost up. But we were working on that and having people there at IMO that we knew and had met somewhere gave us a leg up.

I was always amazed sitting in the plenary sessions at how it got to be people from all over the world, and they had some really strong differences. What was being said was being interpreted live in six different languages, including Arabic and Chinese. It was fun periodically if you didn't really care what a particular speaker was saying at the moment to listen to what an interpreter said he was saying or you could hear what it sounded like in some other language. It was amazing how collegial a lot of it got to be, particularly among the people who came back year after year—or even different times during the year to serve on committees and such.

There was a lot of political maneuvering going on. The United States at that time was delinquent in paying its dues. Still is. One of the things we did just the other day after this September 11th disaster was to decide we were going to pay our dues to the U.N, not all of it but some of it. It was always an ongoing thing. Every time I went to a plenary session of IMO there would be speech upon speech beating me about the head and shoulders because the United States hadn't paid its dues. I knew it was going to

* Flags of convenience is a term used to describe a practice whereby some nations permit non-resident owners to register merchant ships under their national flags. This allows owners to avoid some requirements imposed by their home countries but precludes their receiving benefits provided by those home states.

come, and I would beg the State Department to pay the doggoned thing before we got there. One time we went and in the middle of an afternoon session of the plenary I got a message that the dues had been paid. So I called for a special intervention and interrupted what was going on, addressed the chairman who was running the plenary, and said it was my great pleasure to announce that the United States of America had paid its dues. I got a standing ovation. Everybody cheered and hooted, you know. It was sarcastic as hell. [Laughter]

We could melt a lot of ice by knowing people and having a semi-personal relationship, just somebody that you had talked to before and who had talked to you. And my troops were big-timers, doing that through the committees and the real working parts of IMO. We were well known and well respected. The head of IMO, the Secretary, was an Indian gentleman. He had high respect for the United States and for the Coast Guard in particular.

Paul Stillwell: Speaking of the merchant marine, what memories do you have of Admiral Shear, who was the maritime administrator in that period?*

Admiral Gracey: Hal Shear had come out of the Navy and had gone to work for one of the big shipping companies and then was pulled from that to head the Maritime Administration. Gruff old bear of a guy. I don't know about old but gruff. He had a pretty good sense of humor if you could work your way through—once you got inside Hal Shear. Had his idea about where he thought the U.S. Maritime Service ought to go. He was probably one of the world's worst speakers, which was unfortunate in his job. We were good friends, and one interesting outcome of our relationship and that of MarAd and the Coast Guard was that we set up what is now a standard annual "Secretary's Cup" football game between the Coast Guard Academy and the Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point. Hal and I would always go. We'd sit on our own side of the field and cheer royally, but we'd always fly in the same plane going and coming, namely "Coast Guard One."

* See the Naval Institute oral history of Admiral Harold E. Shear, USN (Ret.). On his retirement from the Navy, Shear became vice president of Norton, Lilly & Co., a steamship company, in New York City. In 1981 President Reagan selected him to head the U.S. Maritime Administration, where he served until 1985.

I don't know whether Hal was good for MarAd or not. He had some strong ideas, and he wasn't about to be deterred. And you're going to ask me what they were, and I'm not going to be able to tell you at the moment. He had a different view. He came from a shipping company that wanted to run things their way. I really can't go any further than this because I haven't really thought about it for a long time.

At the time I was pressing whenever I had the chance that we needed to enhance the United States merchant marine, and in all my speeches I would not only plug the Coast Guard but I'd plug the merchant marine, the maritime interests of the country as much as anything. I persuaded Secretary Dole to come to an annual Propeller Club Conference, the Propeller Club being kind of the representatives of the shipping industry. They have a huge annual conference. The one I'm telling aboutp was to be in Tampa. I persuaded her to come down and make a speech. She wouldn't fly in CG-01 because she had committed to going commercial. So she flew down separately. I met her at the airport and took her down to the waterfront. We have a great picture of her in her high-heeled shoes and hardhat underneath a ship that was in dry dock.

She made the luncheon speech that day, and the room was packed with maritime reporters. She made a "Go Merchant Marine" speech, but it wasn't her best. She had a special press conference scheduled afterwards. There were a couple of maritime-Coast Guard issues pending, and we really thought, "Ah, we're going to get an announcement of a breakthrough." Perfect place and time to do it. She had called that press conference to announce to the world that she was changing automobile rules, and you now had to have those stoplights in the rear window of your car.

Paul Stillwell: [Laughter] What a letdown.

Admiral Gracey: I can't tell you. The people there were all maritime reporters. I mean, big time from all over the world were in that room. She got about 20 words into her announcement, and there were about three people left in the room. They all got up and left. It was embarrassing. She said to me afterwards, "What was that all about?"

I said, "Boss, you're at a maritime conference. They were expecting you were going to tell about—" one or the other of the maritime/Coast Guard things. I've forgotten

what they were now. And I said, “What you’ve just announced is important, but this wasn’t the place to do it. I wish you’d asked me.” I could never get her to consult me ahead of time. Early on in her tenure I said, “I’ve been around. I’ve been in and out of Washington a lot. I’ve paid attention to politics. I’m not a politician in the sense of the word that I’m running to be elected for anything. I am already working at the highest job I can get into, and I’m happy as a clam. I’ve got no agenda. I’ve just been around a lot. How about using me as an advisor? Use me as a test board. Try things out on me. I’ll tell you the truth. I’ll tell you whether I think it’s good, bad, or indifferent whether it’s maritime or Coast Guard or not. I volunteer my service.” But she never took me up on it. I could have saved her a big mistake in Tampa

Paul Stillwell: Getting back to Admiral Shear, his personality and style were such that he was inclined to try to dictate solutions rather than negotiate.

Admiral Gracey: True. And even if he wasn’t, people thought he was. He was sure he knew the right way to do it, and he didn’t suffer fools terribly gladly. And so I’m not sure those years will go down as the greatest years of the Maritime Administration.

It was fairly soon after the Maritime Administration moved over to the Department of Transportation. When DoT was created, MarAd had stayed in the Department of Commerce. I thought that was a terrible mistake and talked about it a lot. I can’t remember exactly the timing; it was sometime when I was in Coast Guard Headquarters at a senior level that they made that move. It was the right thing to do. The merchant marine is a transportation industry, after all. Its spokesman and overseer belonged in DoT.

One question that often comes up, “Is DoT a good place for the Coast Guard to be?” and the answer is “Yes.”

Paul Stillwell: Why do you say that?

Admiral Gracey: It was a big issue while I was Commander, Atlantic Area, and it kept coming up. Some people thought the Coast Guard would be treated better in the budget

if they were in the Pentagon or if they were back in the Treasury Department or an independent agency. In one of my “State of the Coast Guard” speeches I devoted a lot of time to going over that with the people of the Coast Guard as to why DoT was the right place. For one thing, changing at that point would have been disastrous. My argument was, “We know our congressional committees. They know us. We know the people in the Department that we’re working with, and they know us. We know our reviewers in OMB, and they know us.” If we were to make a move to another department or another place or even if some miracle should occur and we become an independent agency, there were a lot of reasons why we would suffer, not only in the budget battles but also in other ways in which we relied on our Congressional relations.

I thought we ought to have a cabinet officer who can sit in the halls of the mighty and speak for us. It would be two years before we ever found out where we were and the way things were going, as I said, “The way things have been going here during my tenure as your Commandant and the way I see they’re going to be going, the way they were already going under Admiral Hayes and what was happening then and the way the world is changing, we couldn’t afford to step outside it for two years and then hope to catch up.”

We were fine. Everything we do relates to transportation in one way or another. Now, it may be illegal transportation, it may be legal transportation. It may be safety of transportation. If you think of it, our aids to navigation and icebreaking work are all designed to keep commerce flowing, keep people safe, bolster the economy. Not waste oil by having it spilled out of some ship that ran aground. We need that oil. All of those kinds of things are involved in transportation.

I told them that our defense role is going to be what it is wherever we are, because the law says we’re a military service, and we’re going to be ready to report in when needed. What we’re doing these days about that is that we’re not going to wait for something to happen to report in. It’s happening now. We’re going to have earmarked notionalized jobs in the overall DoD planning. We’re going to be an ongoing part of it. We’re going to be there. We fill voids at their table. One big job is to teach those guys in the Pentagon how to count to five, that there are *five* military services, and make enough noise so they remember we’re here when they think about missions needed.

We're going to keep banging away at that, and we're going to have liaison people there and we're going to do all those kinds of things so we don't ever get lost in the shuffle.

Ultimately that's going to happen. We're going to get fit into the plans, and when something comes up that needs to be done, we're going to be there already. They don't have to remember, 'Oh, we forgot the Coast Guard.'" That's aside, but we're still talking about the military role aside from the high-endurance cutters in battle groups, some things like that, which we've done some of lately. And I foresaw that it would come. We would be involved in fleet exercises and all the rest.

An old aside on that—one of my favorite stories is when I was Commander PacArea we had one of our high endurance cutters on the West Coast engaged in fleet exercises, and it was coming up on Christmastime, and our people in the high-endurance cutter *Morgenthau*, commanded by Captain Joe McDonough, had made a Christmas tree out of wire frame and lights back aft toward the flight deck. They were engaged in the fleet ops, and it was a no-lights operation. But somebody decided they would do a quick check, and make sure the Christmas tree lights worked. They forgot they were running darkened ship. Somebody turned on the Christmas tree and quickly turned it off again. And then there was great trauma until an order came from the flagship. The order was, "Show seasonal illumination."

Somebody on the bridge said, "What does that mean?" And somebody else said, "It means 'Turn on the Christmas tree, dummy.'" [Laughter] So they turned on the Christmas tree. It didn't ruin the fleet operation.

Actually we took a lot of kidding about it, "Jeez, you guys don't know how to run darkened ship. You turn on Christmas trees, for God sake." Obviously. But our WHECs were fully engaged in fleet exercises. Our buoy tenders were involved too. They were going to clear channels, they were going to put down special markers like we did later when we went into Haiti.* They had many miscellaneous jobs. Very versatile ships and crews.

Nobody tells you this, but the first ship in was a U.S. Coast Guard buoy tender that laid buoys so the other guys could get in without running aground. Well, okay. I

* The de facto military government of Haiti agreed on 18 September 1994 to relinquish power. U.S. troops began arriving in Haiti the following day to pave the way for the restoration of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who had been ousted in a coup in 1991.

mean, we don't need to have a big bugle blow about that, but that's kind of the way it works. And our merchant marine crews and the merchant ships that are going to carry the cargoes, they're going to support the troops. They must all be safe. We've got to have qualified crews on our merchant ships

That's all transportation, but it's also military. So being in DoT is right. Going to DoD, we'd get lost in a hiccup. At the time a lot of people thought, "Well, they've got big budget numbers. We'll get a piece of it." You know, they don't even understand the kind of numbers we're talking about. That's peanuts. And, besides, we get support by way of some people in Congress like Senator Stevens, and Congress understands, and when there are some things they can funnel through into our channels, they do it.

While I'm mentioning Senator Stevens, let me digress for a minute and talk about the Dutch Harbor matter. When I was Commandant, Senator Stevens of Alaska was concerned about safety of fishing vessels that were moving farther west as the fish did. He wanted us to move our C-130s to Dutch Harbor. After much staff discussion, the Senator asked me to come and meet personally. As I've mentioned, he was a great supporter of the Coast Guard, and we had good personal relations. We owed him. In this private meeting I said, "Senator, I know you want to go to Dutch Harbor, because you feel that's going to be the center of fishing. You have said, "Wherever the Coast Guard is, that's going to be the center of fishing in Alaska, and you recognize that it's moving further and further away from Kodiak. But there is no ground control into the airport in Dutch Harbor. My C-130 pilots tell me it's wingtip to mountainside going in there. We both know the weather there is awful. You know it better than I do being from there, but I know it's awful. I've been up there. This proposal is going to be done on the backs and at the risk of my troops, sir, and I will openly resist. It is the wrong thing to do. Now, Cold Bay is only halfway out, but Cold Bay has a beautiful big runway that was built for long-range aircraft that were heading west. And it's got ground control. It's a nice flat plain. It's called Cold Bay for a reason, not a great place to be, but if you want an air station further out, that's the place for it."

He looked at his two staff men and said, "Gentlemen, I guess the center for fishing is going to be Cold Bay." And to his credit, he recognized that moving to Dutch Harbor was not a good decision. There's nothing wrong with Dutch Harbor, but it's not

the place to fly airplanes on the kind of basis that we fly them when rescuing and patrols and the weather we fly them in.

Paul Stillwell: This “Don’t Upset the Apple Cart” explanation about not moving from DoT seems counter to your usual way of approaching things, which is to think outside the box and see if there’s a better way to do it.

Admiral Gracey: No, I’m not suggesting, “Don’t think outside the box.” Quite the contrary. I am suggesting, “Think outside the box.” I was not saying, “Don’t upset the apple cart.” What I was saying is, “If a result of upsetting the apple cart is that it takes you two years to pick up the apples and get them back on the cart, you may lose too much in the process. By the time you’re ready again, the parade is five miles away and you can’t sell your apples,” if you want to carry that analogy further. That’s what I was saying. To use some terminology from the business world, if the payback time is too long, you may never really be able to profit from the move.

Thank you for bringing that point up, but no. I always argued, “Think, think, think. Think differently.” I didn’t necessarily like to use the term, “Outside the box,” but that’s okay. My idea was that we are smart. We know what we can do. We’re good at it. I used to say, “You people, you in the Coast Guard, you are brilliant. You know what’s going on. Use your brain. Don’t get tied down to where we are. Don’t throw out any alternative without a look. One alternative always is to do nothing. Don’t change it. If it works, leave it alone. If you’ve got a way to make it go better, by all means figure out how you can do it. Can we afford to do it? And be honest about it. Don’t say we can’t just because we don’t want to. If we can afford it and it’s better, even if we don’t like it, we’ll do it. It’s okay to say we don’t want to, but have some good reasons *why* we don’t want to.”

Paul Stillwell: Then you get into perceptions of what is better.

Admiral Gracey: And you need to take a careful look at “perceptions.” Well, of course. Better for what? What do you gain from this? I really gave a lot of thought to this

business of “who we are” and “what we are” in my dissertations to the Coast Guard folks and in various writings over time. I analyzed this and went to some length to explain why I thought it was right. But the bottom line was we should be in a cabinet department. I didn’t think being an independent agency was for us unless the Commandant was going to have a seat on the President’s Cabinet, and that was simply not going to happen. Now, don’t hold your breath till that one comes up, folks.

So independent wasn’t a good idea, and we ought to be in a department. What are your choices? Treasury? Well, why go back? Yes, you could say we started there and, yes, we’re doing law enforcement, but look at all the other things we’re doing. Law enforcement is one thing we do. It’s kind of like search and rescue. Everything we own does search and rescue, as well as the other things. That’s the point. The multi-mission aspect is the real strength of the Coast Guard, and it shouldn’t be overlooked. And if you start focusing in on a place like the Treasury, among other things they’ve got to go back to learning how to run an operating agency like us.

One of the arguments in going to DoT early on was that at least they would understand hardware. They know railroad trains and trucks and buses and airplanes and subway cars and Coast Guard cutters. They may not know or understand the essence of the organization. That’s our job to teach them, and we have to keep teaching them over again every couple of years. But I thought DoT was a good fit, and for a variety of reasons, most of which I think I’ve outlined, we shouldn’t shift again.

Paul Stillwell: What can you tell me about your quarters as Commandant?

Admiral Gracey: It was eminently suitable. It got changed a little bit over the years. We had some ideas about how to improve it for taking care of families that lived there or VIP overnight guests so they didn’t have to go out into the main upstairs hallway to go to the john and things like that. We had some plans drawn up and so forth, and it was a great idea. I just flat couldn’t see spending money on the Commandant’s quarters when I had the rest of the Coast Guard in a “slow-down, squeeze-down” mode. There’s no way we would do that. I’ll talk about slow-down, squeeze-down more later on, but there were

real family quarters situations involving our people and hardware situations all over the Coast Guard. I just couldn't see spending money on mine at that critical time.

There were some things that we did do. Randy and I had VIP dinners. Really, it was important if we were going to live in representational quarters that we should have dinner parties and so forth. And we did need to do a little upgrading. Some of the furniture had just gotten to the point where it was long past being suitable. We didn't buy new. We just reupholstered and did some things like that. But no major overhauls of the quarters.

The story about how we got the house, I think, is wonderful. For years the Coast Guard had no quarters for the Commandant. He just came into town and bought or rented a house like everybody else, but that wasn't fair because you expected him to be able to handle large groups for social obligations or to have a table where you could sit 20 people at a VIP kind of dinner. One of the big jobs of somebody like the Commandant or a District Commander is getting to know people, getting in a social situation with the kind of people you do business with so you get to know each other. And I think they're very important. Some people don't think that is worthwhile, but I think they're terribly important.

Anyway, we didn't have a set of quarters for the Commandant. Sometime in the '60s it was finally decided that the Coast Guard ought to have one. They were going to build a house out on Bethesda Naval Hospital grounds. Well, that didn't work out. And then they were going to build down at what was then our Washington Radio Station, the big communications station down in South Alexandria, near Fort Belvoir. That didn't work out either, so they decided to buy one. They were allowed to spend \$95,000 or some minuscule number like that. There was no way we were going to get the kind of place we were talking about for anything like that.

But one night at a social event a man came up to the then Commandant and said, "I understand you're looking to buy a place, and I have one I'd like to sell you."

The Commandant said, "Well, that's wonderful. Where is it?"

He said, "Well, it's in Kenwood." Kenwood is a special part of Chevy Chase, Maryland. Chevy Chase itself is an up scale community, and Kenwood is even more so.

It has million-dollar houses all over the place. There are 250 or so homes in the area known as Kenwood.

The Commandant said, “Well, we can’t do that. We can’t afford to live there.”

The man said, “I know what you’re allowed to spend, and I’m going to sell my house to you for that amount.”

The Commandant said, “What’s the catch?”

The guy said, “There’s no catch. It’s just you’ve got to put a brass plaque in the front hall with my family’s name on it. And, oh, by the way, we’re yachtsmen. We’re boaters. We got demasted in a storm at sea a couple of years ago, and your people came out at great peril to themselves and saved my family and me. We would like you to live in our house.”

So we have that house and we have a brass plaque with their name on it. Also on it are the names of all the Coast Guard people who’ve lived there since. Periodically we would have some of the other Service Chiefs to dinner, one or two at a time, and they always said, “How do you guys get to live in a place like this?” Because there’s this chunk of United States Coast Guard property—this government land in the middle of all those houses. The Coast Guard bought the land and owns the property. We had the U.S. flag flying out front, the Coast Guard seal over the door. They don’t do that anymore, I guess, because it advertises too much, but we thought it was wonderful. The Montgomery County police used to call it “The Coast Guard Embassy.”

Paul Stillwell: How long has that been the Commandant’s residence?

Admiral Gracey: It was in the late ’60s, as I remember, that it started. I think Admiral Smith was the first. I don’t remember exactly. Anyway, 40 years let’s say. And there have been some changes made. There was one significant one. At first there was a big open porch in the back. They closed that in and made it sort of a social room, and things like that. But there have been some wonderful events there. We used to have an annual event called “The Salute to Spring.” I think it was Jack Hayes and company that started that. May have been the Silers.

Every springtime we would have “The Salute to Spring.” The Coast Guard Band would come down from New London and set up at one end of the yard and play. We would invite Supreme Court justices, congressional leaders, cabinet officers, other dignitaries, and the Vice President. Early on we decided not to invite the President, because if the President came all the neighbors would have to nail their windows shut, and that didn’t seem like it would be too popular a move. We would bring some of our Honor Guard people out to help park the cars and direct traffic. And we’d explain to all the neighbors what was going on and we’d invite them to come and share because they were all civic leaders of one sort or another. It was a wonderful event.

Randy and I did it a little differently—among other things so we could take advantage of the marvelous skills of the Coast Guard Band. We divided the Band into small groups—brass quartet, woodwind trio, Dixieland combo, and so forth—and spread them around so people could be close, a more intimate set-up. I am such a fan of the Coast Guard Band and have been for a long time. Periodically we used to get a picture of them inscribed “From Your Band.” There was a four-piece combo that played for our dinner parties and other such events. They sent a picture with some nice words “From your combo, ‘Windsong,’” which I absolutely loved. But I made a big thing of them, and I just love them. Even today, when I go where they are, I always go over and say “Hello,” and there’s usually a couple of old-timers in the band who say, “We’ve got a seat in the trombone section here, Admiral” or some such happy thing. It’s a warm and ongoing relationship.

Anyway, we decided they were so good that it was a shame to have them all in a big group playing down at one end of the yard, so we broke them up into the five or six different groups I described. I said, “Now, just don’t all play at once, folks. Rotate it around a little bit. But let people see just how good you really are.” And that worked out very well. They don’t have Salute to Spring anymore, but we thought it very worthwhile. The people who came were important to the Coast Guard, and they always remembered their evening with the Coast Guard

The Quarters and the yard worked well for parties. Outdoors we always had a tent in case it rained. I said to a guy one time when he was taking down the tent, “I guess we didn’t need to have the tent.”

He said, “Admiral, we don’t make money on rain. We make money on fear of rain.” [Laughter] And I guess that was it.

Paul Stillwell: How large a staff did you have to run that facility?

Admiral Gracey: Well, we had three people—two who were assigned and a third one temporarily assigned because Randy ran a pro bono training program for new quarters managers. It was to expose them to the special extras we thought important for them to know: social niceties, management of the quarters and grounds, food presentation, etc. We started doing it on a smaller scale in Pacific Area. But when we got here the two people we had were not enough, and Randy had some very strong ideas about how social events should be run, how the quarters should be run. We coined the term “Quarters Manager.” When we were in Cleveland was our first experience in Flag Quarters. They were called “stewards” and later “subsistence specialists,” I think. Whatever, we said, “No, we want more than that from these people.” They were all men then. Nowadays they’ve got both men and women. But we wanted them to manage the house and grounds. We wanted them to keep track of small repairs, buy things that needed to be bought, see that the grounds were maintained, and even if it was on a contract basis we wanted them to oversee it. We wanted them to be available for the special social occasions but also to manage the whole place. So we called ours “Quarters Manager.” It took a while for that to catch on, but we pressed because we thought the people doing the job weren’t getting enough credit or understanding about what a tough and demanding job it was.

Nobody cared what we called them. Where *we* were we called them Quarters Managers, and when I got to be the Commandant I decreed that when they had that job they were “Quarters Managers.” We worked hard on selling the idea that theirs was *not* a snap job. Detailers in the Enlisted Personnel Division thought it was a piece of cake: “Why should anybody—why do we care?” Well, you care a lot because it’s a very hard job, especially if you’re only one person. And the only quarters that had more than one were with the two area commanders and the Commandant and the Vice Commandant. If you’re the sole Quarters Manager, you’ve got nobody to talk to really. You don’t have

any of your buddies to talk to. If you bang your thumb, you can't swear. If you're inclined to smoke, you can't smoke. You've got to be on call all the time. Your personal schedule is subject to the Admiral's social schedule, when he needs to have meals prepared or whatever. All of that kind of thing, and there's just an infinite variety of things that you're expected to do to manage the place.

You've got to know something about numbers, something about minor repairs beyond the cooking and stuff. So we set up a training program, and we had one, sometimes two, extra people that were assigned to the Commandant's Quarters, but they were being trained. They went from there out to some of the District Commander quarters. I think that training also stopped after we left. But we had some extra help on that basis. That wasn't why we did it, but it worked out that way.

Incidentally, on this business of rotation of duty, one of the things I argued very strongly with the Department of Transportation and the Congress and OMB was in terms of why we needed enough people. We needed enough people so we could have adequate sea-to-shore rotation, or overseas-to-back-home rotation. Certain ratings were going to spend most of their life at sea with very little opportunity at home, especially when we started running the mess halls ashore with contract people. When that started, we lost a whole bunch of jobs that let us rotate people from ships and isolated duty so they have some decent home life. But we needed enough people to do this.

I argued, ultimately successfully but with great hoots when I said, "And Alaska and Hawaii count as overseas."

"You can't do that. That's part of the United States of America."

I said, "I know it's part of the United States of America, but if you live in Alaska and you're the kind of person that likes to drive home to see grandma on a weekend, you can't do it from Alaska or Hawaii unless they happen to live there. In Hawaii you can if she happens to live on Oahu or whatever island you're on, but beyond that you're stuck. And that's different. You might as well be in the middle of Nepal, I mean, in terms of your ability to live that kind of normal life." After a while I convinced the senators from Alaska and Hawaii that I wasn't shooting at Alaska and Hawaii. They could understand what I was after, and we managed to get that idea picked up in our sea-to-shore rotation numbers—and got support for it.

I talked earlier about the regular meetings of the President's Drug Principals Group. The heads of the various law enforcement agencies in town also met regularly—FBI, U.S. Marshal Service, Secret Service, Coast Guard, Customs, etc. We got to be good friends and developed good working relationships. We got to like each other and understand each other's business by having lunch together once a month. We had a regular time. Not everybody could be there every time, but it got so it was a good turnout and we would go to one agency's dining room or another. We could talk pretty openly about what was going on.

On the subject of public speaking and appearances, it goes with the job, and I sought every opportunity I could to find ways to tell our story. I also wrote whenever I could in professional journals and *Sea Power*, that sort of business. There was one theme that I pressed in New York in particular when I first got there as Commander, Atlantic Area. That was "We plus you equals us." And that really means the maritime industry and the local governments and the Coast Guard. We need to be together because there are some things that *us* need to do. I only had a year in New York, but I worked hard on that theme. It was not new with me. I had worked it in San Francisco and Cleveland. I always felt our Coast Guard District Commanders should take a major role in the business of enhancing maritime trade and the health of the industry.

Educating the public about the Coast Guard is something that I banged away at, and beating off the privatization drive was another. Part of my effort focused on being sure we of the Coast Guard really knew and understood who we are, what we bring, and how we do America's work. As I met with our people, I said, "You tell the story. You are our best spokesmen. You are our best public relations people. But know who we are. Understand us." And when I said that, especially to people who had been around a while, their eyebrows would go up, and they would think, "Do you think we don't know who we are?" The same happened with people outside the Coast Guard who thought they knew us well.

I went through a long list of questions like, "Do you know the answers to these questions? Do you know why Nigeria wanted to have your Commandant come talk to their Institute of International Affairs? Do you know why we're a part of the IMO? Do you understand why we're in the International Lifeboat Conference? Do you understand

how we calculated that 300% return on the taxpayer's investment that we tell them they get? Do you understand how we got that?" And I gave a whole list of kinds of things that I'd banged away at over the years.

Wherever I went I would press on this to the people of the "Coast Guard Family" that I met with, and that's the Coast Guard Auxiliary and Coast Guard Reserve and regular and civilian. "Understand us. Then, by gosh, talk about us. Brag about us. You've got a right to." I actually said, "I'm damned proud of you guys and gals. I'm damned proud of you and with a reason. I hope you're proud of yourselves. So understand about us and tell people."

That was the heart of my public speaking and appearances, and I grabbed every opportunity I could.

Paul Stillwell: Well, interestingly, I went through a number of published interviews with Admiral Yost when I was doing homework on him, and I was struck by how often the questions were the same place after place after place. So you get the pat answers and feed them in as appropriate.

Admiral Gracey: You did get a lot of the same kind of questions, but I tried very hard to avoid pat answers. I thought it important to frame them in style and terms meaningful to each particular audience.

We've talked off and on about the Coast Guard Academy. I did talk the other day about persuading the Coast Guard Academy Foundation to spread its wings and its focus and become the Coast Guard Foundation. That created some angst in New London, because they thought I didn't care about Academy. Some people thought that and wrote me or questioned me. All I could say was, "See my job description. It says I am the Commandant of the Coast Guard, and the last I knew the Academy was part of the Coast Guard. That makes me the Commandant of the Academy too. I certainly do care about it—a lot. This is going to be a leg up for CGA too"

The Coast Guard Academy is really very important. Somebody did a study of the Academy as to whether it was doing the right thing and whether it should be combined with and moved to Kings Point. They said we could save all the money we spent on the

place and blah-blah-blah. The study affirmed that it's where it ought to be. It's in New London, and that's a good place to be, and the two academies should not be combined. Their missions are separate. There's no way to make sense out of a combination.

My position was, "If you want to have the maritime cadets go to the Coast Guard Academy and then make a decision about being in the Coast Guard or the maritime service at the end, as is done at the Naval Academy as to whether they want to be Marines or Navy or some other service, fine and dandy. But what we're doing is teaching the Coast Guard people our specialized mission. Kings Point is teaching people the business of shipping, I guess, and how to run a ship. There's some cross-over in basics, but there's no way they've got the expanse of stuff that a Coast Guard cadet has to be exposed to because of the nature of what he's going into."

Ultimately whoever it was that did the study concluded that my position was right. The Coast Guard Academy is a great organization, and, of course, what they're really doing on the grounds up there nowadays just boggles the mind. The CPO Academy, which started on my watch, by the way, has moved to New London from Petaluma, as has OCS from Yorktown. They've got chief petty officers that are working with the Cadet Tactics Officers for the companies of cadets. They're working directly with cadets. That didn't happen on my watch. I wish it had. Every so often I'll hear about a good idea put in place by current leaders at the time, and I say, "I'm going to file that on the long list of things I wish had thought of." And that's one of them.

There are two benefits. One, the chief petty officers are finding out that it's not an easy row to hoe that those cadets go through. That's a tough four years. And the cadets are finding out that the chiefs are pretty smart guys. And there's a lot to be gained from them. Every year at the Academy graduation ceremonies, as I was in the process of swearing in the new ensigns, my preliminary remarks were always, "Well, okay. Congratulations. You've finished your apprenticeship. Now you're going out into the real world, into the real Coast Guard. And out there are some people that really know their jobs—and yours. A lot of them don't have horizontal stripes. I want you to listen to them. I want you to take care of them."

Paul Stillwell: When you were Commandant, was it pretty much management by exception with the Academy, that you would deal only with cases that were out of the routine?

Admiral Gracey: I didn't get personally involved in very much there at all. In fact, there were a couple of times when there was some hiring and firing up there that I thought it might have been nice if I'd been consulted or at least told before it hit the *New London Day* or "higher" depending on the individuals, but I didn't really say anything because I didn't think I should. My approach for all field commanders and the like was, "You've got job X, and it's located in New London, Seattle, or wherever. Go do it. And if you've got a problem some day you think I should know about, call me up. I'd like to know about it. I'm interested. I want to know what's happening. And if there's something that's over your head or we can send you some help or you could use whatever, call me up, and we'll work it out. But otherwise go forth and run the job. I know where you are, and you know where I am, and let's talk to each other once in a while." That was the way I felt it was important to go. It worked most of the time. But the Superintendent at the Academy got really bent out of shape about the Coast Guard Foundation thing, to the point that he openly fought me on it, and I thought I had to have a few words to say about that.

The change in focus of the Foundation has really, really paid off for the whole Coast Guard. It has really been a wonderful move. If I do say so myself, it was a brilliant idea. At one point in the flap over the change I wrote a letter of rebuttal to an old-time friend, a retired rear admiral, who just thought changing away from the Coast Guard Academy Foundation was the dumbest thing ever, and he wanted me to go after the idiot that had created it. I said I couldn't do that, because I was the idiot that did it. [Laughter] And not only that, this idiot wasn't going to change it because it was going to really be helpful—to the Academy as well as the rest of the Coast Guard.

[Interruption for change of tapes]

Paul Stillwell: Well, we've just returned from a break for lunch, and one of the topics you discussed was trying to promote oral history of old Coastguardsmen when you were Commandant. What can you say about your whole effort in regard to Coast Guard history from that period?

Admiral Gracey: We did not succeed in the program that I had in mind, only because there were so many other things whirling around we didn't have time to really concentrate on it. The thought was that we would persuade people of the Coast Guard Auxiliary and the Reserve who were spread all over the country—they're not just in Coast Guard places—to go out into their local areas and find people, retirees, people, old Coastguardsmen, whatever, and sit down with a tape recorder and buy them a cup of coffee or whatever or just sit down and talk to them, take them to lunch. Just get them talking. And don't draw any judgments. Just let them tell their stories, and we can sort them out later on.

We had done a few histories up to that point, but they were so structured they took forever, and it took forever to get the structure in place and the interview done and printed. We just weren't producing very many. At the rate we were going, there was a giant chunk of history that was never going to get recorded. And the chunk was getting bigger all the time. I thought we could make progress if we, the Coast Guard, could buy everybody a small recorder. It didn't matter whether the tone quality was good or not. Just get their story down somehow. And there were people who bought on. I talked about it around, but I don't think it ever went anywhere. I was disappointed in that. It was one thing that I wished I'd started earlier and pressed to completion.

Another question that kept coming up was that of a Coast Guard Museum. In San Francisco I think I mentioned there was a Navy-Marine Corps Museum on Treasure Island, and they asked if I would support it, and I said, "Yeah, providing you'll change the name to Navy-Marine Corps-Coast Guard Museum." I was nothing if not steadfast in my banging away at this point of the Coast Guard being part of the action and getting some recognition routinely.

Paul Stillwell: That was a nice little museum while it lasted.

Admiral Gracey: It *was* a nice little museum, and they did in fact change the name. They changed it, and we put an exhibit in there. And then there was a pretty good little one in Seattle, and the Coast Guard Academy, of course, was supposed to have *the* museum. It was a fine little museum but really not sufficient. And I thought it was not the right place to have it. The Academy is off the beaten path, and the museum is too. It is not accessible, or particularly attractive, to a huge number of visitors

Paul Stillwell: And it's small.

Admiral Gracey: It's very small. That's part of the problem. It is small to this day, because they are limited in space. My thought was that there were places all over the country where there were little Coast Guard museums, and we were part of others like the Great Lakes Museum in Vermilion, Ohio, and so forth.

I argued that you could make a point for not having one huge Coast Guard museum somewhere but having regional Coast Guard museums. The histories in the different regions were different. The way work was done in the Great Lakes was different than the way work was done on the Mississippi River, which was different than the way it was done in Florida and so forth. The kind of weather was different, the kind of cases they had. There weren't very many pirates on the Mississippi River that you dealt with, but there were some off the Florida coast. There were different kinds of lighthouses that took on different structures to cope with local conditions. In most places we didn't haul boats on local railroads and by hand to the next place to get them in the water to go out and try to help somebody like you did in the Great Lakes.

There were some places where you didn't have big long beaches on which you could ride horses and do those things. You didn't have Lyle guns and line throwing gear, breeches buoy gear and all that. It was all a part of it, but it was used more in some places. You couldn't do that off the Oregon coast. So I felt that you could have an overall pattern of continuity, but then if you had regional museums you could focus on the regional specialties, and you could use equipment from local lighthouses, local

lightships, the names that people knew would be a part of the regional history. That was one alternative to trying to have a major museum—a dream I saw no hope of realizing.

We now have hope that the Coast Guard Foundation is going to fund one. They've created a separate sub-Foundation, which is the Museum Foundation, and they're going to build one in New London downtown at Fort Trumbull, which has some historical significance for the Coast Guard, because we had a predecessor of the Academy there for a while, and our ships have tied up there. Our Group, New London has operated right next door forever.

I also mentioned just before we quit that there was one kind of a historical thing that happened. This is called a segue. [Laughter] But early on—well, let me go back a way and say that one of the Coast Guard missions we haven't talked about is our Administration of Bridges program. We oversee bridges over navigable waters. We give permits to build or alter them. We make sure they don't obstruct navigation and all of that. Going back to the beginning of time in this country, the needs of navigation were primary. If you were going to build a bridge, it had to be such that it could not impede navigation. That's understandable, certainly in the early days. Hey, our "highways" were the rivers and streams.

I was amazed at some of the places where the governing navigability question came into play when I was the Commander, Ninth District in the Great Lakes. Some of the places involved relatively small streams, but they were in fact "navigable," and people did in fact navigate them or had in the past. If somebody wanted to build a small bridge across it, then the whole world came undone. Early on in my time as the Commandant, a case appeared on my desk that involved the Danvers River Bridge in Massachusetts. Danvers is a small port up north of Boston. They had a drawbridge in town, and it was really an obstruction to commerce. The highways were backing up on this thing. It was time to replace it. We weren't the ones that initiated the replacement. Sometimes we did order such changes. We did budget for them under our "Alteration of Bridges" item in our annual budget. I've forgotten the details of how the appropriation worked, but we were the overseers and so forth. We inherited that from the Corps of Engineers when DoT was formed, and the Corps was very happy to move the headaches to us. It's a political nightmare, but I thought it a significant program. It didn't take a lot

of our time, but I thought it was one we ought to pay attention to. Knowing about bridges and all takes on new meaning in the current era of terrorism.

At this particular drawbridge in Danvers, the highway situation was really tough. The idea was to go to a fixed bridge high enough to let all water traffic through and not hold up vehicular traffic. Most of the navigation on the river was downstream of the bridge, but there were a couple of yacht yards above the bridge. There were some sailing yachts that needed to get up to those yacht yards for their winter layover. Most of the time they unstep their masts and work on them over the winter and one thing and another. But the new bridge had to be high enough so that those few tall-masted vessels could get underneath. And, of course, the yachts were getting bigger, and masts were getting taller all the time, as was the required height of the bridge

The idea was to build an arch across the river so vessel traffic could go underneath. There would be no drawbridge. The bridge was getting huge, and the expense was going right out of sight. Furthermore, when you build a high bridge it has to come down at a reasonable angle, which means it uses up more of the commercial land space on both sides of the river. That's all space that could have businesses or homes or whatever. In this case one side of the bridge was, as I remember it, downtown Danvers, and the other side was a suburb.

Traditionally the bridge decision was made that the rights of marine navigation were dominant. That was a throwback to the old needs-of-navigation-are-primary truth. I concluded that in this case that was not so, that it was time in this country that we started taking a look at the fact that sometimes, *sometimes*, the needs of navigation are less significant than highways. The approval of a bridge had to take into account the flow of commerce, what you were doing to the community in which the bridge was being built, and the approaches and all of that kind of thing. And you had to weigh that against navigation and the reasonable needs of navigation.

In this case I found that there was not much above the bridge except a couple of yacht yards and some small businesses. There were arguments that, "Yeah, but there might be some day."

To which my answer was, " True, but the river doesn't go very far, so there's not going to be much room for increases." And it was not a question of no mid-river height

to the bridge. We weren't talking about building a flat bridge across there. We were talking about an arch bridge, but there was a question of how high it should be. So I reversed the position taken by my Bridge Division people and said, "No, we're going to build it X height, and the few people who have masts that happen to be 10 feet taller than that are going to have to moor their boats downriver. If they want to go upriver in the winter, then they're going to have to unstep the masts downriver and ship or carry them up."

Well, my gosh. Didn't we have a flurry over that! I stuck to my point. I'd say it was a historical first, because I don't know of that kind of decision having been made before. I would certainly hope it had, but my Bridge people didn't remember it. The Coast Guard's position had always been that the needs of navigation must prevail. I said, "We are at a time in history when we must take into account highway transportation. Railroads are different. With them the matter is academic, because they've got to cross at drawbridges or they aren't going to go across. Railroads aren't going to cross over arched surfaces. Highways can go uphill and downhill over an arch bridge. So we had to take that into account.

It was early on in my tenure. It gave me an opportunity to make another point, and that had to do with how to proceed after a decision has been made—especially when it has been a contentious one, involving this kind of discussion and this kind of agonizing decision-making. I'd been briefed and re-briefed, and we had discussed it in great depth and we had talked about alternatives. And finally I had made a decision. I have said, "That's it. Now I expect it to be done. A basic responsibility of a subordinate or a staff member is to make absolutely sure that the boss understands the situation, understands all aspects of it, understands that he's going in a different direction than anybody's ever gone before, all the pitfalls. If you think the boss is erring, then tell him so and beat on it.

But when he says to you, 'I understand that. Here's my reasons for going a different way. We're going to go,' then shut up and do it." And I said, "You guys have done a wonderful job of telling me all the aspects of this thing. I'm telling you that for good and valid reason I think highways have to predominate here. I'm not asking you to change your views. I accept them. They are perfectly valid. I'm not asking you to sell your soul. All I want you to do is shut up now and follow the decision that's been made."

And I kind of publicized the decision without making it a “me-against-them” kind of thing—without naming the individuals who refused to let go. I’m sure the word got out. But they really had a low-grade administrative mutiny going on, because they just felt that this stupid new Commandant didn’t understand. But I did understand. I’d been a District Commander in three districts. I’d been doing Alteration of Bridges problems since Christ was an altar boy. I understood about bridges.

Paul Stillwell: Who were the mutineers?

Admiral Gracey: They weren’t really mutineers. They were a couple of the civilian staffers in the division. They had been working for a long time under a philosophy that was standard regarding primacy of navigation rights. They’d also been used to calling the shots and everybody saying, “Yes, sir,” or “Right,” and going their way. This was the first time that they’d been bucked, I think. I can’t remember all the details, but I bring it up only for two reasons. One, because the Danvers River Bridge decision was a different one. It was setting a new approach to the Coast Guard way of looking at bridge decisions. I don’t know where we are today, but I hope we stayed the course. And secondly I was new, and they were unaccustomed to having somebody in the front office look at a bridge decision at all, much less reversing it. I got into it because it was highly controversial at the time and a big flap was brewing. It was hard for them, especially since history was on their side

In telling about this I have used the words, “Shut up and do what I tell you.” I didn’t say that to them in those words, but the message was, I think, clear. And I wanted the message to get out, and I mentioned it a couple of times. I mentioned it periodically in talking to people in the field about the importance of being sure your boss was fully informed and understood, then going with the decision. I really felt strongly about that. I told the Secretary of Transportation this was the tack I was going to take with him. “It’s my job to tell you if I think you’re making a mistake. And if you say you understand, it’s my job to make absolutely certain you understand. Have you thought of all of these things, sir?”

But when he says, “Hey, I hear you, but I want to do it anyway.” Then that’s the way it’s going to go. Enough on that.

Paul Stillwell: What was the outcome on that?

Admiral Gracey: The outcome was the bridge was built to favor highways, and I think the people up there with the boats figured out there were alternatives, or the yacht yards figured out ways they could get portable equipment down and unstep the masts downriver, and then they could sail them up and they get to winter storage after all. A yacht didn’t necessarily have to go under the bridge with its mast up. It was twice a year they went under the bridge, and most of the time when there was a drawbridge they didn’t want to be bothered with it. If they were in the habit of coming and going regularly, well, they were just going to have to find a place to moor downriver. But it was only a handful of individual vessels owned by private individuals. There were tugs and so forth that had gone up, but they could get under the new bridge easily. It wasn’t like we were building a flat bridge. It was 60 feet high or something like that. I can’t remember the size, but there was ample room to get under it for most vessels. There was just a handful that couldn’t. The new principle was: navigation is not *always* primary. You’ve got to look at “navigation to where and for what,” and you’ve got to compare it with the impact on commercial transportation on highways and on the communities in which the approaches to the bridge must be built.

Paul Stillwell: Was there any congressional input on that one?

Admiral Gracey: Well, there’s always congressional input on the matter of bridges. I can’t remember where the delegation came down on that. I never got any pressure about the decision. Maybe the owners of those boats, four or five of them, were going to get to their congressmen and say, “Get on this guy.” And if so I would have had a call, and I would have explained it. And I don’t think there ever would have been any question, because we were going to clobber downtown Danvers with that bridge as originally conceived. We were just going to wipe it out. There were going to be a hundred

businesses that were going to be knocked down so we could have this bridge so those guys could sail their five boats up the river. I mean, it doesn't make sense. It's not that simple—but almost. But such things had always been decided the other way.

Paul Stillwell: Cost-benefit evaluation.

Admiral Gracey: Well, yeah—of sorts. More “impact-benefit” in this case. Even the cost in rush-hour time loss, cost in sanity evaluation is—anyway, it got me off to a running start. It was about the third month on the job that I got this case, and in a way I was happy that I did because it gave me a chance—now I've been reading off a memo, you may notice. It's a copy of a handwritten memo. I didn't publicize it. I wrote it longhand myself. Hand delivered it to the boss of the Bridges Division. He was the boss of the people who were having this problem. I said, “Read this.” But I kept a copy.

Paul Stillwell: On the subject of service chiefs, we talked about your relationships with the two CNOs. I don't know if you mentioned any of the others.

Admiral Gracey: Well, not in depth. P. X. Kelley and I saw each other a lot.* Army Chiefs of Staff Shy Meyer and John Wickham and I worked together a lot.† Charlie Gabriel of the Air Force and I would see each other when all the service chiefs were together, but I didn't operate much with Charlie.‡ Our various functions weren't connecting. The Marines and the Coast Guard have always had a good close relationship, and I think I commented earlier that P.X. Kelley and I came from adjoining stops on the Needham Local railroad out of Boston. That enhanced our relationship. I remember calling him after he lost all those people in Beirut.§ I wanted him to know, personally,

* General Paul X. Kelley, USMC, served as Commandant of the Marine Corps from 1 July 1983 to 30 June 1987.

† General Edward C. Meyer, USA, served as Army Chief of Staff from 22 June 1979 to 21 June 1983. General John A. Wickham, Jr., USA, was Chief of Staff from 23 June 1983 to 23 June 1987.

‡ General Charles A. Gabriel, USAF, was Air Force Chief of Staff from 1 July 1982 to 30 June 1986.

§ On 23 October 1983, a suicide terrorist drove a truck filled with the equivalent of 12,000 pounds of explosives into the Marine Corps barracks in Beirut, Lebanon. The resulting explosion killed 241 Americans and wounded 70.

that I—and all of us in the Coast Guard—shared his grief and anger and that of his troops.

You suggested I might want to talk about the role of the aide. The role of an Admiral's aide is to smooth the way for the Admiral, to clear out as many minutia and distractions as possible, including schedules, etc. But it really comes down to the two people involved—how they work together and what the particular Flag needs and wants. I had two wonderful guys. The first was Joe Kyle, now out of the service, I'm sorry to say, and getting rich in Juneau, Alaska, doing consulting work with Indian tribes and fisheries organizations and running some fishing vessels of his own. I could always count on Joe to tell me the unvarnished truth, to give me signals from the back of the room when he thought I was talking too long, to set me straight on a variety of other things. And he was a good traveling companion

Joe told me that if I didn't pick Patrick "Pat" Stillman as my next aide, when Joe left after two years, then he was going to hate me forever, and I was going to regret it, and there would be a role for me in hell or a few other things. [Laughter] Pat was working up on the Hill in our Congressional Liaison Office at the time. He became my next aide, because he had great credentials. I had a great deal of faith in Joe, and Joe didn't kid me at all. Pat was every bit as good as Joe said he would be—as effective as Joe, but in a different way. Pat is now Rear Admiral Stillman, and he's running the Deepwater Project. So I had two marvelous people to help me when I was the Commandant.

As commander PacArea I had another one, Lieutenant Brent Bosin, a gunner's mate before he was commissioned.* Another source of straight answers and lots of help. He's now retired. Married to a Coast Guard aviator. He should have retired rich, though. Long, long before the short order restaurants provided coffee in cups with lids with a hole in the lid through which to drink coffee, Brent taught me the gunner's mate trick of cutting a vee out of the lid with a jackknife. He should have patented it.

* Lieutenant Brent A. Bosin, USCG.

Paul Stillwell: I ran into Pat Stillman last year. He represented the Coast Guard at Quentin Walsh's funeral over on the Eastern Shore.*

Admiral Gracey: Well, he's good. He's good.

Paul Stillwell: How would you describe a typical day for you as Commandant?

Admiral Gracey: It depended on where we were and what was happening. We did a lot of traveling, but on a typical working day in Washington I shot for getting to the office at 8:30. I'd get picked up at the house. The Vice Commandant would be picked up first. We'd get picked up about 8:00 or 7:45, and we would be driven right in to work. We would talk business in the back seat of the car or read office papers or whatever as we went. Believe me, Ben and I made good use of that hour and a half each day with just us and Petty Officer Farrington, whom we trusted completely to leave what he heard in the car. And to brighten the trip with his marvelous laugh and skill at the wheel. What he liked more than anything was when we were late for a key appointment and he could put the portable red light on the roof and roll. He was driving Federal law enforcement officers, after all.

At the office I'd start with the Flag Brief and daily ops briefing, and then spend, oh, a half hour or so session with the Office Chiefs and other flags as to what was going on with our people and, what kinds of things we needed to be aware of or decide. For a while it was hard to get people to talk to each other back and forth about the issues with me sitting there. We broke that down eventually. There were no "chew-outs," and I really worked at getting all to pitch in. "Collegial" is a word that occurs to me—perhaps "cooperate" too. They knew who was the boss. I wanted to put that away and have open discussion and good ideas. I really valued their minds and abilities and wanted to hear from them. And I wanted them to hear each other. We got there, and it paid off nicely, I think.

* Captain Quentin R. Walsh, USCG (Ret.), was a Coast Guard hero in World War II. He was awarded the Navy Cross for his role in June 1944 in capturing a German-held fort in Cherbourg, France.

Whenever I was in town I always tried to eat in the Flag Mess, but I had lunches with the Secretary and at different business groups, and it depended on who was in town and what was going on. You have a luncheon schedule. And you had meetings, and I tried to meet with and arrange time for people to come see me.

I tried to travel enough to do the Coast Guard's business and to be in direct touch with our people. I wasn't desperate to get out of town, because I enjoyed what I was doing when I was in town. But, on the other hand, I also wanted to get around to see the real world of the Coast Guard and be with the other people of the Coast Guard Family so we could talk to each other and get to know each other. I also went to make speeches, to attend various industry meetings and things that I might have been invited to where I could contribute or just tell the Coast Guard story.

Paul Stillwell: And it helps the people of the Coast Guard for you to be visible to let them know that you care.

Admiral Gracey: Exactly, exactly. That's right, Paul, that's exactly right. I felt that was very important. Periodically I would just feel I'd been in D.C. too long, or I felt deprived because I hadn't been with our field people lately. Then it was time for me to call one of the aides and say, "Where haven't we been lately? Tell the Air Station to wind up the plane. We're going there tomorrow," or whatever would fit.

And we would do that. If Randy could, she'd go along and visit with the families, and we would get the families together out there. And we'd participate in various events, and we'd let them talk and let them find out that there is such a guy as Gracey. He's real and he's alive, and sometimes he says funny things, and sometimes he says stupid things, and in either case he's willing to laugh at himself and you. He loves you, and he's proud of you, and that's what we wanted them to know.

I got some great questions, and I had people that would argue with me out there. I was so happy about that—that they would in fact talk to me and sometimes would question something I'd said. And they would fun with us. Had a great sense of fun. We had lots of laughs from "The Family." Wonderful, absolutely wonderful. That told me that I had somehow built a confidence factor, that they were confident in themselves that

they could do that, and they had faith in me that I wouldn't bite their heads off. Not to say I didn't snap once in a while when I got something, but we always made it better.

Paul Stillwell: Did you take the job home with you at night?

Admiral Gracey: Yes. Yes. We'd leave the office about, oh, 6:00, 6:30, sometimes later, depending on what was going on. I had a roll-top desk in the finished basement in the Quarters. On evenings when we were home I always took a bag full of work that needed to be signed. I tried to move the paper promptly. There were a couple of things that hung on there, however.

I am embarrassed to say there were a couple of issues I just didn't like. They were going where I didn't want to go, and I couldn't figure a way around them. They were being imposed on us from outside the Coast Guard. So they languished on a side table by my desk for too long. After a while one of my assistants would come in and brandish them and say, "You know you really need to go on this. They're getting antsy at—"

I'd say, "I know," and I'd put it right back again. But most of the time they were no-win situations. I just didn't want to fight those fights, and I had other things I wanted to get done. They were coming from outside the Coast Guard usually. True confessions.

Paul Stillwell: I heard of a Navy admiral in World War II, a Chief of the Bureau of Ships, who had a too-hard basket. He'd leave things in there for a while, and sometimes they'd solve themselves. If they didn't, then he'd eventually deal with them.

Admiral Gracey: Well, that's probably what I had. I had a nice neat little stack, an accordion kind of a stack. I make it sound big. No, people worked hard to get paper to me, and I wanted to get it back out promptly, so I took work home every night, a lot of reading, a lot of things to sign. I tried to cut down on the number of things I actually signed, but if it was for me to sign and it got to me, then I wanted it to get back. A lot got done in the car, especially on nights when I had a dinner engagement or something to go to. And that seemed to be a lot.

I had a very strong feeling about how I wanted us to express ourselves in our correspondence, particularly to the Congress, but to anybody. I wanted it to be human, and I wanted it to be plain language. I didn't want to pull any punches, but I didn't want to be stupid about it. And so I was doing a Writing 101 course while I was going about the paperwork.

I was famous—or infamous—for my red pen. I used a red pen to write occasional comments, or do mark-ups. I know some people were disturbed by this. And I used to say, “Look, do the best you can. If I comment on it, then you have still served a useful purpose. If I know what it is I *don't* like, then you have helped me see what I *do* like. If you've managed to evoke a Gracey red mark on the paper, that means you somehow got into my inner being, and you've made me come to grips with something. I try not to do it just because.”

Paul Stillwell: I heard Eisenhower once said that the mark of a good executive is that there are times when he will sign something that is not as well done as he would have done it himself, because he can't do everything.

Admiral Gracey: That's right. I tried very hard not to change things just because I didn't happen to particularly like the turn of phrase. But if that turn of phrase was confusing, if that turn of phrase was giving the wrong impression as to where we were coming from, if that turn of phrase instead of saying, “No, we can't do that,” implied, “We'd be very happy to do that, sir, but something else,” which wasn't correct or to create some false hope that we were going to do it if he would only come back with something. That was a sure invitation to get it back like you would say, “If you would only,” and then you're stuck with it. Things like that, the subtle traps, I tried to keep away from. I've always been good at putting myself in the seat of our addressee—to read or hear our message from his point of view. I tried to teach that. It's hard for some people to do. I also learned early on and tried to pass along the fact: “If there is any conceivable way for someone to misread or mishear something you've written or said, they will do it. So don't give them any easy ones. Make it hard to be misunderstood.”

Paul Stillwell: Did you get any chance to relax with this demanding schedule?

Admiral Gracey: Well, my whole day was relaxing. [Laughter] I loved it from the minute I started. We told jokes. We had fun at the Flag Brief. We saw the funny side of things in between throwing pins at dolls and one thing and another. I enjoyed my job—all of it. That’s not what you’re asking me, though.

Paul Stillwell: Let’s use the word “recreation” then.

Admiral Gracey: I tried to play golf on the weekend. The Vice Commandant and I and our ladies played golf over at Andrews Air Force Base when we could. Occasionally on a trip I would try to play some golf too if there was some opportunity at the other end where I could borrow a set of golf clubs. We played some cards, some bridge. We had a Coast Guard duplicate bridge group that we belonged to. It’s still going by the way—50 years after it started. Different people but still the essence is there. I bowled. I guess when I was the Commandant I wasn’t in the CG bowling league, but always before I had been.

I watched television, not slavishly, but we were interested. We’ve always been interested in the McNeil-Lehrer hour and in various kinds of things on PBS and so forth, and we would watch that.* I could do a lot of that while I was signing papers and going through stuff. My roll-top desk was at one end of the room, and the television was down at the other on the other side of the fireplace. I played a little tennis, not much. And we liked to go to a movie once in a while, miscellaneous things like that. I think probably “workaholic” may be a word that applies to me. I’ve always worked hard and I did then. But, yeah, we relaxed and had fun. Found ways to stay loose.

Traveling, getting on Coast Guard One and going off to do the Coast Guard’s business. On the plane there was a blue cardigan sweater that was just mine. It was a Coast Guard sweater, the old style, not the new kind of pullover style. And that was on the airplane, as was a pipe rack on the windowsill and my “flying pipe” was in it. And

* The McNeil-Lehrer hour was a news program on the Public Broadcasting System.

there was my chair, and Randy's chair was across the aisle and, "Crank her up, folks. It's time to go. Let's go find the real world." And I absolutely loved that.

I enjoyed giving testimony before Congress—most of the time. I got into some wonderful exchanges with Congressman Studds, who was our chairman. He suffered me gladly, I think, is probably the right way to say it. We got so we bantered a little bit until I figured out I'd gone maybe a half a step too far, and then I would stop. But he was good that way.

Paul Stillwell: Well, you're home state guys from Massachusetts.

Admiral Gracey: Well, I suppose that's right. But I enjoyed it. What I didn't enjoy was when I had to support positions I didn't like. My job was to represent the President there. One of my jobs at the same time was to tell the Coast Guard story. And I hated it when we were really being done in by the Department or by OMB particularly. My statement was not *my* statement. It was my statement as edited by DoT and OMB. So I would dutifully present it, and when asked questions I would answer them. Well, I would then testify about them.

I tried to communicate through our Congressional Liaison Officer, later Rear Admiral, then Captain Ted Leland.* I'd say to him, "Tell them to listen for what I'm not saying as well as for what I am. Tell them to watch my eyebrows. Ask me a damn question while I can answer. If they ask me a direct question, I can answer it. I can't go up there and voluntarily torpedo the President's program. I'm not going to do that. But if they ask me 'Am I happy with this?' If they ask me a specific question, I will answer it honestly. I've also told OMB and the Secretary and everybody else that will listen to me and some that don't want to, I'm not going to lie."

If they say, 'Admiral, if we do that, will our ship sink?' and if the ship is darned well going to sink if we do that I'm going to say, 'Yes, it will.' I'm not going to say, 'No, sir.'"

I had one session with our House Appropriations Sub-Committee that was really troublesome. The Chairman, who was from Florida, had a whole bunch of "home

* Captain Walter T. Leland, USCG.

district” television cameras and newsmen in there to televise how he was running his hearing and to carry a message he wanted out at home. He kept beating on me about something in Florida. I was just ducking it at every step, because I wasn’t going to answer him. What he wanted me to do was shoot the President down, and I wouldn’t do it. He got very angry at me, and I’m sure it set us back in our hard-earned good relations with him. I had to do some fence-mending afterwards. I don’t know whether it cost us money or not. Well, you never know with appropriations people. But that’s the way that sort of thing goes. He was putting on a show for the television, and I was trying to be supportive of him but at the same time not torpedoing the President. It was very difficult testimony.

But it was fun to contemplate testifying, and preparing for it was fun too. We had some great “murder boards.”* You know, our people sit around and ask me questions, and they’d ask me some wonderful questions. I enjoyed answering them, answers sometimes that one could never possibly give in the halls of Congress, but we had a good time. So I went into our hearings well prepared. Rarely was I surprised by something asked, because our “murder board” had thrown something similar at me.

The Senate was harder than the House, only because it was different. They weren’t as intimate. The House Authorization Committee particularly was very pro-Coast Guard, and Congressman Walter B. Jones had been Chairman forever.† He loved us, and he was from North Carolina. He was good to us, and the Appropriations group was okay except they had this one chairman from Florida who was really hard to reach. He had higher priorities in transportation than us, despite being from a state with big maritime and boating interests. And he had a senior staffer who was always out to get us. He would ask me detailed questions involving precise numbers in great detail. And my whole testimony was, “We’ll provide that for the record. We’ll provide that for the record.” And it was crazy.

There were times when I was able to make some points in my testimony. A lot of

* “Murder board” is a slang term for a rehearsal session in which a senior works with his staff and provides answers to questions he or she is likely to face.

† Walter B. Jones, Sr., a Democrat from North Carolina, served in the House of Representatives from 5 February 1966 until his death on 15 September 1992. He was chairman, Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries from 1981 to 1992.

times people listened and asked me about my position, and I mentioned earlier that people were on our case about we're not spending money fast enough. "Why should we give you this appropriation when you can't spend it?" That was early on in my tenure. I pushed on the importance of using what were given promptly and well. Later on we got so that we were in fact doing that. My answer to that was, yes, they were right. We should spend it faster, but I also wanted us to spend it well. It was hard-earned money. At one point in our House Oversight Hearings I said, in testimony to Chairman Jones, "Mr. Chairman we could spend our money a heck a lot faster if I didn't have to comply with over 400 laws about how to do it."

Chairman Jones responded, "What would you propose to do about that, Admiral?"

I said, "Well, I would propose that you use us as a sounding board, a trial horse for finding new ways for the government to buy things. We could spend our entire appropriation stupidly, and there would be no impact on the government. We don't have very much money. But we just might create some pleasant surprises if you would take almost all the rules off. Let us buy like the private sector does. Obviously you've got to have certain rules about spending more than you've got and all that kind of stuff. But all the higgledy-piggledy that we go through, all intending to accomplish something, is costing the taxpayers in dollars and lost opportunities. Take it away. Let us buy like a normal purchasing agent outside the government. Trust us. Make us a trial horse and give us the opportunity to do that and let us demonstrate what we can do. If we screw it up, we'll apologize. You can scold us. But at worst the taxpayers are not going to be very badly hurt. At best they will profit and new horizons for acquisition will be opened."

The Committee kicked that around, and after I got back to the office I got a phone call from Chairman Jones saying, "Will you help us draft legislation?"

I said, "Sure. Are you willing to go with it?"

He said, "I think it's worth a try."

I said, "Mr. Chairman, I love you. Send it down here."

It came down and we set to work on it. I thought it best not to surprise the Department, so I proudly told the Secretary. I soon got a call from the Deputy Secretary, the essence of which was: "No way, baby." [Laughter]

Paul Stillwell: Nice try. [Laughter]

Admiral Gracey: No way. My real hope was that the Committee would write it into our Authorization Bill and take us out from under. So it was a great idea, and I still think it would have worked. It would have been an interesting experiment to show what does work and what doesn't.

I'm not talking about the Pentagon that's buying fleets of tanks or something. You know, we're talking about what the Coast Guard spends money on. We go through the whole hoorah even if we're only buying 25 handy billies for fire pumps or something. Anyway, that didn't work. But I kept trying to make some changes.

I was able to educate Congress about the Coast Guard. There were some that didn't need educating and some that did. Mr. Oberstar from Minnesota, who's still there, became a big Coast Guard fan because of a couple of things that happened, and it was good. I can go on forever talking about my relations with Congress, but I won't.

I was continually pressed by some in Congress and the Administration about privatization. I dealt with the Grace Commission with great angst. It had much support in Congress but was dangerous and seriously flawed. And I assaulted the final report of NACOA, the National Advisory Committee on Oceans and Atmosphere. They wrote a study of the Coast Guard ostensibly to help us. What it was going to do was tear us apart. I attacked them on that, and I hurt their feelings.

The Grace Commission report about us was just full of ridiculous assumptions. In speaking about it in public and in Congressional testimony I used this comparison: "The fire department gets Mrs. Jones's cat out of a tree. A study group then concludes that the cost of getting Mrs. Jones' cat out of the tree must include the prorated cost of the fire engine, the cost of the firehouse, the cost of the firemen, and how dare they spend that much money to get a cat out of a tree?"

Well, the answer is the fire department didn't spend *anything* to get the cat out of the tree except the gasoline to get the engine there and whatever it takes to get the ladder up. The town needed a fire department, so they bought a fire engine, built a firehouse, hired some firemen—all for taking care of fires. The cat-in-the-tree calls were not why

they spent money to create a fire department. And the same thing is true of Coast Guard emergency boats. If we happen to pull in a guy who's not going to die if we don't pull him in, and we don't have anything else to do just at that moment, it hasn't cost anything. It's ridiculous to prorate the cost of the boat, the station, and the crew over things for which we would never have invested in the first place. That we can reap some extra return on our original investment is "profit" for the taxpayer. And the whole report was full of stuff like that. I was so angry over the Grace Commission Report.

Another of my jobs was assigning Flag officers. In the Coast Guard we only had 28 of them. For the first slate of our watch, Admiral Stabile, my Vice Commandant, and I started off out in Commandant Hayes's basement secretly figuring out how we were going to do this. We talked to the Flags present and newly selected. We tried to get people in positions where they would do us the most good and be happy. If it was someplace they wanted to go, fine, but mostly it was "Where can their particular skills be best put to use?" But at the same time we wanted to give them the opportunity to serve both in a CG Headquarters Office Chief job and a CG District command. In the past some never got to District Command before retirement.

Nowadays we have a Maintenance and Logistics Command in each Coast Guard Area. That's a one-star job under the Area Commander. That gives us a little more flexibility. Part of the decision in any given year depends on where they are in their rotations, what things kind of fit, what's going on. Trying to make it so the Coast Guard is the strongest, we tried to put particular skills in jobs where those skills could be used best.

On the other hand sometimes if you have an admiral with particular skills, and you want to broaden his base, you put him somewhere where he's going to learn something new. In my watch all flags were men. We hadn't had women officers long enough to have "grown" one to Flag level. I predicted our first was 20 years away. I was right on the money. It's not a case of always going back to where you were before to specialize, quite the contrary. That's not the strength of the Coast Guard. All our people are general service officers. Even the lawyers and so forth rotate in and out. We try to do that. I don't know what more I can tell you about Flag Officer assignments. How it's done is very personal with each leadership team. There are no "rules" per se. I'm sure

each Commandant, Vice Commandant team does it differently, though the options are limited.

Paul Stillwell: Well, and since the number is relatively small, you know each one well.

Admiral Gracey: Yes, yes, you do. There are few secrets.

Precepts for selection boards. Everybody writes up what they're looking for. I tried to do it in plain language. I had what I called my "Checklist for Leaders," which I had prepared when I was in Pacific Area. The Office of Personnel folks at Headquarters had called out and said, "What kinds of things do you think we should look at for selecting flag officers?" I'm sure they wanted a half a dozen items about character and all that. I gave them a two-page list of items, single-line items. The original paper has since been published and is copyrighted. It goes something like the following:

Is this person:

Willing to go out on a limb?

Willing to walk the extra mile?

Courteous and considerate, especially to or of juniors?

A pro?

Strong just in his/her own specialty, or can he/she contribute in a whole range of activities?

Willing to try new things even at some risk?

Warm and personable?

Perceptive?

Capable of being a maverick? Does he/she *insist* on being a maverick?

Willing to tell me what he/she thinks and not ask me what I want or tell me what he/she thinks I want to hear?

Is Coast Guard his/her number-one priority despite personal sacrifice?

Does he/she have a love affair with the Coast Guard?

Does this person:

Set a good example?

Suffer from chicken-littleism?

Meet the public well?

Get awed by big wheels, or is he/she at ease with them?

Let concern for his/her future govern his/her actions?

Understand the government and how to work in it and with it?

Make things happen?

Get things done?

Lead, not push?

Have imagination?

Go to bat for his/her people?

Disagree with me when he/she thinks I'm wrong?

Stand up and be counted?

Can this person:

”Walk with kings nor lose the common touch?” Quote.

Handle a huge workload and not lose the bubble?

Keep 12 oranges in the air at once and not drop any?

Convey his/her ideas to others and sell them?

Laugh at himself or herself? Can he/she laugh at all? Does he/she have a sense of humor?

Deal with the press and other media?

Walk in other people's shoes no matter how big or small?

Make a speech people will listen to?

Hit a golf ball in a shower stall and not get beaned? [Laughter]

Think on his/her feet?

Be tough when necessary?

Take an unpopular but necessary stand and stick to it?

Identify problems versus symptoms and get them solved?

Find a new course if the one he/she has selected comes a cropper, or does he/she get lost in the infamous single tree impenetrable forest?

Would I want to work with this person as a fellow leader?

Has this person got class?

There are other items that I skipped over, but that's the flavor of the bean.

Paul Stillwell: And for no one person is an answer going to be “yes” in all cases.

Admiral Gracey: Well, one or two. [Laughter]

Paul Stillwell: No real human being.

Admiral Gracey: I know a couple. I attached that list to the Convening Order for appropriate Boards and said I wanted them to use it—not just for Flag but for all senior officer selections.

Another thing I did that was different was to change the number of officers on a Flag Selection Board from five to six. It had always been said that, “All you need to make flag is three votes.” I hated that. It meant there was far too much weight being given to the vote of one individual, namely the Chairman of the Board. That’s what it came down to, at least on the boards that I had been on and had heard about. I realized that if we had six members on a board, there might be a tie vote. But if you got a tie it meant there weren’t four people willing to vote for the person in question. If you can’t get four out of six votes, then let’s go look for somebody else. If you got a tie, then there are three people who don’t like the person as well three people who do, so let’s find someone else. Let’s find someone who can garner four votes. It meant potentially more work for the board, but the selections would be more solid, and no one person could carry the day, not even the senior man at the table—the chairman.

We started it with a Continuation Board for captains, and the Board Chairman, Vice Admiral Caldwell, told me that he thought it was a great decision—that it really made things move.* So we tried it on the next Flag Board and got the same answer. So I made it permanent for my watch. I have no idea what they’re doing today. That was one of those Gracey-isms. “Who would ever think of having six people on a board? You’ve got to have an odd number, so you can’t have a tie.” Well, my angle is if you’ve got a tie go find somebody that you don’t have a tie with.

* Vice Admiral Wayne E. Caldwell, USCG.

Paul Stillwell: Apparently there was the occasional person that you didn't think should be selected but was and you worked with him graciously.

Admiral Gracey: Oh, well, there was some of that. Sure. Yeah, that's a good point. That's exactly right. There were a couple of times on my watch when I cringed at the selections. But the Board made them. I can think of situations where I might have rejected the Board. I can think of how that might happen. I didn't do it, but there were a couple that were close. I thought about it, and then the Vice Commandant and I kicked it around and concluded, "No, no. We'll go with it."

Paul Stillwell: Well, the disadvantage of tampering with the system would have been worse than getting somebody you didn't want.

Admiral Gracey: Precisely. And our philosophy was that there were darn few people in the Coast Guard that would ever get to serious consideration that I could honestly say, "I don't want them." In fact, there was only one individual in my entire career that I can say that I made that kind of comment about. He wound up serving with me at one point at a fairly senior level. I had come to a conclusion some years earlier about this guy. He shot himself in the foot—figuratively, of course. He was eminently capable of that. Anyway, I can only remember that one person that I'd ever thought that way about.

In fact, I had insisted that our Personnel people make the decisions about assignments of people to work with me and for me. They're in the business of making personnel decisions and managing our "work force." That didn't apply to the Vice Commandant and jobs like that, which were really carefully selected by a board and, for the Vice Commandant, the Secretary. But I'm talking about when I was a District Commander. I wanted Personnel to find a good Chief of Staff for me and so forth. I reserved the right of refusal in case they chose someone that just wouldn't fit my style. But they wouldn't do that, and I never had to exercise my "right." There were a lot of flag officers who went in to the Office of Personnel, beating them about the head and shoulders to get individuals of their choice assigned to them. My approach was to say, "Hey, you guys know me. You know what the job is. Send me somebody you think will

fit well. I'll make it work." There were a couple choices I was surprised at, but they turned out just fine. We did make it work.

Paul Stillwell: You had an example from your own experience when you got sent as chief of staff to Fifth District, and you made it work.

Admiral Gracey: Yeah, good point. Yeah, that's right. I did try to sell my way to the Flags, but I don't know that I succeeded. I didn't try to pin it down to see how successful I was, but I tried hard to communicate the idea, "Don't ask for people. Let Personnel pick them. You've got a right of refusal. If you've got somebody that's coming to you that you just can't live with, then you've got the right of refusal. But don't start by shopping. I don't want you guys putting in shopping lists to the personnel people. Let them do it. They're running the program. They're running those people's careers. Let them go. You're screwing around with that when you start shopping."

I don't know how successful I was. I suspect some of them did and some of them didn't. I know for a fact that, later, a couple of very high-ranking officers shopped the hell out of the system, I just let it go. One in particular I knew from the start was not going to change his ways, but I won some over, and that's better than it had been.

On contacts with news media I tried to get meetings with editorial boards around the country for not only newspapers but radio and television. Particularly in the districts where I was, I tried to go to the major cities in the districts. But in others, when I was the Commandant, I had a meeting with the *L.A. Times*, for instance. I flew out for something and asked if the local people could get me in. Somebody arranged for me to have a meeting with the *L.A. Times* Editorial Board. Did the same thing on a trip to Seattle. I just thought it was a good way to make some contact and that the Coast Guard "Boss" cares enough to come talk to you. Maybe he can give you a different view of what's going on with the Coast guard.

Paul Stillwell: Some officers view the media as a problem and try to avoid it and sometimes wind up shooting themselves in the foot as a result.

Admiral Gracey: I didn't believe they were a problem at all. I thought if we've done something that warrants their climbing on it, well, shame on us, let's fix it. I wasn't trying just to get to ones that might be down on us. If they thought they'd detected a problem, I wanted them to hear the other side. But mostly I didn't use the visits as problem solving. It was a case of laying the groundwork ahead of time so that they knew what kind of an outfit we were and they would understand when various events occurred or issues rose.

It was amazing to me how little people understood about the Coast Guard, even in port cities like San Francisco. They'd heard about rescues and one thing or another, but they didn't have any idea about the vessel traffic system that was running the ships in and out of the port or any of that kind of stuff. They just didn't know, and they didn't know the role of the Coast Guard in case they had an earthquake—what was going to happen and who was going to do it. All the stuff was going to come to San Francisco by water because all the roads and bridges were going to be down. They needed to know about that and what the Coast Guard would do to make it work. They just never thought about that. Sometimes I was invited to lunch. Sometimes just a short Q and A and chat. But I always gave a full picture of “the Coast Guard you don't know about.”

You asked about our Capital Acquisition Plan, and we had one. We developed a plan of what we were going to buy, when we were going to buy it, when we needed it, what it was going to cost us, how much per year we had to budget to keep it on an even keel. We valued our plant. Put a figure on it and dazzled even ourselves at the value of what we had, and what it was going to take to try to replace it. I think I've alluded to this.

We created the Office of Acquisition separate from the Comptroller's domain. I felt buying things was very significant and needed full-time Flag oversight, not just the divided and heavily worked attention of the Comptroller, under whose aegis procurement had always been. We needed to do a better job and to address all the concerns about our procurement policies. So the answer was to create a separate Office of Acquisition. And that still exists. It worked very well. It got off to a slow start, but we got it in place and running.

I used a kind of a “czar system” among my HQ Flag Officers. Same philosophy as with the District Commanders. “That’s his baby, that’s his part of the world. Let him run it.” We had an “Information Systems czar.” We molded into an Office of Information Systems all the kinds of things that were related and used to be parts of other sections of the organization. We had a rear admiral running that, and he was the overseer of all things having to do with information systems. His job was to develop new stuff, improve what we had, listen to his customers out there and figure out a way to provide them what they need. And then make sure they’re all going together, the whole process.

I did a similar thing with the Office of Research and Development. We created an “R&D czar.” In the past all the Office Chiefs who were Program Directors had put in a wish list of what they wanted. You know, two of these and two of those and two of something else. I told the R&D rear admiral that his job was to discuss with everybody and then to set down what he thought was going to do the Coast Guard most good in terms of R&D. We were going to look into designs for boats, for example, when we were coming up to new boat designs. That had been a pure Office of Engineering role. Go do some R&D in boat types so that we know which ones are suitable. You do it. Make that an R&D role. We can feed some money in out of the AC&I appropriation perhaps to help do that. In addition to developing better lamp changers for the buoys and things like that he was also to look into these bigger projects. Find us some alternatives, some new approaches.

We ran a test program on lighter-than-air aircraft, blimps. We thought that was a wonderful way to go. Everybody else wants to go higher and faster. We want to go lower and slower and stay there for a while. We did some tests with a small British blimp, and things were going very well until the Department of Transportation decided that that was not necessary. We already had the money, you understand. DoT’s view was, “The Navy has blimps. The British have blimps. Let them test it. We don’t need to.” And I couldn’t convince them that we were testing it through R&D so that we could get that all done and we could test for our mission before it got into actual spending money on it. We could make mistakes, and it would be part of Research and Development. Then when we found out where the mistakes were and pinned down the

benefits—or not—we could go buy the real thing—or not. It was really the right way to go and we had money in the budget to do it. It got killed in DoT.

The Educational Enrichments Program that I started in the Ninth District I continued on the West Coast and then applied the concept for the overall Coast Guard. For people who came to the boot camp with reading skills below eighth grade level when they were tested, we had a two-week special Enrichment Program that banged away at reading, writing, and arithmetic. It was before they actually got into boot training so those kinds of skills were up to par for them. And before people went off to a Class-A school, we had some special training we called a BEEP program, Basic Educational Enrichment Program. We'd give them a couple of weeks to hone up selected skills before they actually got to school.

Another special program was based on my observation and experience that we had a lot of people fail or just leave Class A schools because when they got there they found something different than they thought they were going to. They asked for training in a particular specialty and didn't really know what they were asking for. So we set up a program that gave them a chance to know what the various specialties did. After you finished boot camp you had to go out to an operating unit for at least six months before you went to school. That gave the recruiters a lot of grief, because they couldn't buy people by promising them a school of a given type. But I said, "Tell them they'll have their shot at school. It's going to take six months of learning what we're all about so they can make a more informed choice about the school they want." It also gave us a chance to sort out people who weren't petty officer material yet, or who would be better getting to petty officer by striking. And we beefed up our striker program.*

The Reagan Administration had a big crunch on cutting down funding, and we were really in a bight, so we created what we called the "slow-down, squeeze-down." Certain missions we were going to continue full bore. Others we were going to just do less. We were not going to get to our target on the backs of our troops by trying to do all the same things with less resources. We were going to cut out doing certain things so the time and money we had left could go for the critical missions we had identified.

* A striker is a non-rated enlisted man or woman officially designated as being in training for a specific petty officer rating.

We published a two-page AlCoast. That's a message that goes to all hands. In it we described in plain language what "slow-down, squeeze-down" was about and what things they should and shouldn't do. Later on I thanked them in one of my speeches and some writings for how well they had responded and accomplished this. But the name of the game was: "The Coast Guard is going to keep doing what it does. And in those areas where we do it, we're going to do it full bore. We're not going to have any across-the-board cuts. We're going to cut, we're going to squeeze, we're going to slow down. Instead of inspecting a buoy every X period, we're going to inspect it every two X periods or one and a half, whatever. Instead of a two-boat patrol, we'll run a one-boat patrol. What we do we're going to do fully manned, fully armed, fully equipped, fully ready to go. If we're not going to do it, we're not going to do it at all. We're going to pick and choose."

We did the slow-down, squeeze-down for an extended period of time. It gave us the money to get us over the hump and kept us alive until we got to the next budget cycle and got some relief. Meanwhile the organization kept intact. We didn't have things flying off or people scrunching down. We didn't have people expecting half-baked operations from the Coast Guard.

Paul Stillwell: But I would think this would be a factor in your mind almost all of the time, that you didn't have the resources you really wanted.

Admiral Gracey: True. But this was a big cut from our meager "normal." The way I explained to our great Coast Guard Family was this: "We've never had the resources—the money or the people—to do our job the way we would like to be able to do it. You can't do your job the way you are really capable of doing it. We just don't have it. You do amazing things with what we do have and, God bless you, keep it up. So we always have to watch the funding levels. But this goes beyond that."

The AlCoast named specific kinds of actions and standards—I'm sure you'd like me to read it to you, but I won't. [Laughter] It was a damned good message, if I did write it myself. It was clear and concise, and our troops got the message and understood the tack to take. It was directed at the people who had to bring it off. It spoke to them.

Remember my Christmas message that said, “Put a partridge in your pear tree and go easy at the wassail bowl.” I got all kinds of letters, or the Master Chief did, saying, “What the heck is a wassail bowl?” But they knew about the pear tree. That one worked. So did this one. Our people did an amazing job of getting the principal jobs done while saving money. They figured out some unique ways to “squeeze-down” for the duration.

Paul Stillwell: What was in your vision long-range for the Coast Guard?

Admiral Gracey: The word “vision” wasn’t in vogue then. We had an on-going document called “The Long Range View.” I wanted to keep it meaningful and updated regularly, but it was an unbearably slow process. It was deathless prose. Essentially the view was that we were going to be in the future what we already were only more so. That we were a key part of a variety of national interests. That our defense role, our specific function in the military establishment, was in place, but it was going to be even more so and that we were going to participate with the other Armed Services more and more. That the drug mission was going to change. That we were not going to still be finding just marijuana. We were going to be going after other substances, and it would be harder to do. The fisheries business was going to be in different parts of the world and farther away from our bases because of the nature of the way fisheries work.

I can’t remember all the changes we dealt with. We thought basically that the Coast Guard was going to continue to be “we are who we are.” We’re a maritime transportation organization with great capabilities in the military defense arena, and we’re always going to operate to protect the security and well-being of the United States. And that doesn’t mean only by shooting at other people. It also means keeping trade flowing, protecting our environment, making people feel safe and confident when they do things at or on the water, protecting our fisheries resources, our natural resources, doing those kinds of things as well as the shooting part of the security mission.

We had an Office of Reserve. We combined them with the readiness planners and made it the Office of Readiness and Reserve. We took the readiness functions that used to be in the Office of Operations and put them into the new Office so broader combined oversight was available. The Coast Guard Reserve is part of our readiness to

do things in crisis periods. We were able to increase Reserve strength. Over the years it has gotten knocked back. Our target need was 12,800 people in our Selected Reserve, but we only managed to get to 12,000. That's about the highest it's been, I think. We had them training by doing, working with the regular Coast Guard. The new Office of Readiness and Reserve was a big-time doer in the RAAPs program I talked about before, the Remedial After Action Program. When we had an exercise we analyzed what didn't go right? How can we fix it? What did we learn? How do we apply it? They did exercises and so forth.

Reserve personnel strength. There was a big thing about cutting it back, and I said, "No, we're going to keep the strength up even if we have to cut back training to get enough saving to pay for the strength. For a short term I'm willing to cut training but not numbers of people. We'll find other ways to train that won't cost extra money. We'll put Reservists to work more with Coast Guard units. Whatever. You'll get your pay, but you won't get any travel costs and all that kind of stuff to go to far-away schools. I think there are ways we can cut down and still keep the strength up," because it was really important to keep the billets. If they went away, we'd never get them back and we needed them. That lasted for a while. [Laughter] Somebody over in OMB was determined that they were going to cut the size our Reserve forces, but we managed to hold them off. Their current strength is about 67% plus or minus of where we had it.

Fishing vessel safety was a big problem and had been for years. I took a number of tacks on that, trying to make some improvement. There was no way that we were going to get any legislation to let us impose some safety rules. The congressmen in the states where there were fishermen didn't want regulations on the fishing industry. It was a sometimes floating disaster area out there. Since it was clear we couldn't get legislation we decided to go at it on a voluntary basis. We set up a program. We worked with academia, with the industry, with the scientific community, with the insurance industry and with the idea of teaching fishermen how to protect themselves, how to be safe.

Captain, later Rear Admiral, Gordon Piche, put together an absolutely marvelous loose-leaf book that we printed and distributed to fishermen all over the place.* It set forth very clearly and basically how they should look at their watertight integrity, how to

* Captain Gordon G. Piche, USCG.

check when they were overloading, how to avoid unbalanced loads. You know, stack everything on deck with nothing underneath, and you're in big danger, especially if you're in an icy area. Simple navigation skills. Understanding about how to behave in heavy weather. You would think a fishermen would know that well. Some of them did. A lot of them didn't. In the Seattle area particularly a couple of the universities were helpful to us.

After I retired, pressure from a couple who had lost a son in a fishing vessel sinking resulted in some legislation that should have helped. But there are still major disasters happening in the fishing business. I really thought the insurance industry might have taken some different tacks that would have helped. One other thing about marine insurance: I tried to get them to think about a "carrot" rather than a "stick" approach to getting people to improve the safety of their vessels. Not just fishing vessels, the whole, bigger arena. That if somebody did a particularly good job of providing safety for his vessel, lower the rates. Give him a break of some kind, because your risk is less if they've got that safety factor fixed. Let them share some of the benefit of that.

I argued that in a couple of speeches up in New York, but it was not a popular approach. I could even hear my marine-insurance-man father rolling in his grave. As a Coast Guard officer, what I was hoping to see was safer vessels, not uninsured and still unsafe vessels. I never sold the point that I know of. But, what the heck? What good is a bully pulpit if you don't bully in it a bit?

We had a big campaign concerning drinking and boating, and we got the states on board. They set standards for alcohol on boaters as with car drivers. It's still a problem, but I understand it's a lot better than it was. It was one of two major safety problems I suggested Secretary Dole put high on her safety projects. The other was fishing vessel safety, as you are more than aware at this point.

Family programs we went into big time. I really was concerned about it. I kept talking about the "Coast Guard Family," including those that stayed home and didn't get paid by us. We got the families involved in a lot of our decisions. We got wives to agree to be ombudsmen at various units. We had some family training programs. The Command Master Chiefs, then called Command Enlisted Advisors, at each of the District Offices and major units really got into this one. They really ate it up. They worked

closely with the ombudsmen. The MCPOCG had them come to Washington three or four times a year, and I'd meet with them at great length. They'd also meet with other people in Headquarters, of course. They were a great group. I thoroughly enjoyed working with them. It was a good program.

On the subject of health care, in those few places where we had medical facilities, the staffing was done by the Public Health Service, USPHS. And we got care at PHS Marine Hospitals when we could. Those lucky enough to be near DoD facilities could use them of course, but PHS provided the people for us—some better than others. We got what we could. Somewhere along the way we came up with a great idea of going out and finding some physicians for ourselves—in effect, recruiting for PHS. The deal was, we would find them and PHS would hire them, but they were aboard solely to serve the Coast Guard—no random assignments elsewhere. We went after experienced family doctors who wanted to continue doctoring but were tired of the headaches of running their own practice. They had all they wanted of collecting bills and all that. These would be older people, in their 40s and 50s. We asked them if they'd like to come be doctors in the Public Health Service and work for the Coast Guard. The response was marvelous—surprised even us. It was a wonderful program. It established a Coast Guard medical program tailored to our needs. I don't know how it's done now.

On my watch we persuaded Public Health to let us take over the budgeting. The doctors and dentists would continue to be Public Health people. They would continue to wear their Public Health insignia but on our uniform. But we would fund it, and we would recruit. And it was ours to do. And, boy, we were really happy about having that. Later the famous and outspoken Surgeon General of the U.S. was Doctor Koop.* I knew him as Chick. He was head of the Public Health Service for a while, and he went along with this. He and our Chief Medical Officer, Rear Admiral Jellerson, had a shooting match, and it wound up with Jelly retiring because he was mad about the whole thing. It was too bad because he was a good man—as gung ho Coast Guard as you could wish. After this flap Vice Admiral Koop and I came to an agreement about oversight of the work of officers assigned to the Coast Guard. I needn't say more.

* Dr. C. Everett Koop served as U.S. Surgeon General from 17 November 1981 to 1 October 1989. He advised the public on a variety of health matters: smoking and health, diet and nutrition, environmental health hazards, and he also became the government's chief spokesman on AIDS.

Paul Stillwell: Switching to another subject completely, now we are going to move on to the invasion of Grenada.*

Admiral Gracey: Okay. We were there at the outset. We had had a heads-up a couple of days ahead of time that something like this was coming down, because they wanted our high-endurance cutters out there for rescue backup, for aircraft, and that sort of thing. And they wanted smaller vessels out there for patrolling. We decided we would send a buoy tender as a mother ship—for the 82s, the 95s, whatever ones we had there, all out of Florida. The crews of the patrol boats could use the tender for getting a shower, a good meal, and all that kind of stuff.

The Navy called and asked if we could take over the close-in patrolling.

We thought about it and said, “Sure,” and got them under way. We also had a high-endurance cutter and staged a couple of C-130s out of Clearwater, Florida, for overflight coverage.

Not too long after that they said, “No, no, no. We only asked if you could do it. We didn’t ask you *to* do it. But we’d already scrambled. I mean they said, “Can you go?” and the words were such that we thought they meant, “Do it,” and we got everybody together and moved them around and created a flotilla practically overnight. Rear Admiral Cueroni, who was Commander Seventh District at the time, got this all together, and off we went.

It was a Sunday morning when all this came down, and I called Secretary Dole at home. I said, “Can you come down to the office? I need to talk to you.”

She said, “Well, it’s Sunday morning, and Bob and I were reading the paper. Can’t you come over here and tell me?”

I said, “I can do that, but you’re going to have to put the Senator in the back room

* The action that kicked off the campaign in Grenada was the murder of the nation’s Prime Minister, Maurice Bishop, on Wednesday, 19 October 1983. That led to a curfew and orders to shoot on sight. There was a perceived danger to 600 U.S. medical students on the island. On Saturday, 22 October the Joint Chiefs of Staff confirmed a Grenada relief mission, named Urgent Fury. On Monday, 24 October, the day after the Beirut bombing in Lebanon, Navy SEALs were inserted on northern beaches of Grenada. The amphibious landing by U.S. forces was on Tuesday, 25 October. See Michael J. Byron, “Fury from the Sea: Marines in Grenada,” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, May 1984, pages 118-131.

with a pillow over his head so he can't hear what we're talking about.”*

She said, “I don't think he'll like that very much.”

I said, “I don't think he will either. How about if I meet you in your office?”

She said, “Half an hour?”

I said, “Okay.” And we did and I just briefed her on what was going on, and she was very grateful, interested.

Paul Stillwell: This is in the lead-in phase before it was executed?

Admiral Gracey: Maybe it was that we'd gotten the word, and it was coming down. But it was a Sunday morning. I remember that. It was Saturday when we were putting all this team together, and our guys had already deployed, and they called us back. I can't remember the daily sequence now, but I remember that to brief her it was a Sunday morning, and we went through that little exchange.

It was different. She was great and understanding, and she's a quick study. I mean, she understood what was going on.

Paul Stillwell: Who had opcon of those?† Did the Coast Guard retain it?

Admiral Gracey: No, I think the Navy took opcon. I don't remember the details, but I can't imagine there was anything out of usual routine. They may have chopped when they got into the operating area. The C-130s would have had to be deployed by Coast Guard ComLantArea; they were his assets. The same is true for all planes and ships because of the nature of their operation. That's the kind of thing where the Area Command steps up. We couldn't “darken the skies” with C-130s, because we had other things going on as well.

I was getting this, of course, secondhand, people coming to tell me what had transpired or was about to. The Atlantic Area Commander and the Seventh District

* Robert J. Dole, a Republican from Kansas, served in the House of Representatives from 3 January 1961 to 3 January 1969; he served in the States Senate from 3 January 1969 to 11 June 1996, when he resigned to devote his efforts to his presidential campaign.

† Opcon—operational control.

Commander in Florida were putting these things together. They were getting input from CinCLant, Admiral McDonald's shop probably.* About the day the whole business started, the Navy decided it would be a good idea to have some small vessels down there that could take care of keeping people off the island and on the island, to patrol the perimeter of the island. They didn't want any "enemy" reinforcements coming from somewhere else, nor did they want a bunch of people on the island to get off. They wanted to corral what they had. And they decided that the Navy ships weren't really up for this. They couldn't handle it because you needed to be in close and you needed to have the ability to deal with small vessels and so forth. It was a good example of what I had been preaching: "We have skills, experience and hardware you don't have, and we're ready to use them when you need them. Think of us. Call on us. Put us in your plans."

We were the right people to do that. I think it was a Saturday afternoon when they called our people and asked if we thought we could handle this. And we said, "Sure." And the next morning they called up and said, "Well, we'll let you know when to send them."

We said, "What do you mean? They're already halfway there."

They said, "We just asked if you could do it."

And we said, "We thought you wanted it." And within hours—out of a clear blue sky—the Seventh District and LantArea had rounded up, I don't know how many 95-footers. Then our Coast Guard people decided the best thing to do would be to send a 180-foot buoy tender down there as a mother ship for the patrol boats so that the WPB crews could get fed and all that kind of stuff. And next morning they sailed. I'm not sure but what they sailed in the middle of the night. They just rounded them all up and said, "Go to Grenada."

Then the Navy Norfolk said, "Wait a minute. Wait a minute." Ultimately we got all that sorted out. The WPBs went down and patrolled, and the buoy tender served its function. It was really the first time we'd done that kind of thing. And for quite a while after everybody else had gone home, Coast Guard units stayed and kept a lid on things. I can't tell you how long, but it was days or weeks. We were a part of the Grenada

* Admiral Wesley L. McDonald, USN, served as Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic, Commander in Chief Atlantic, and Commander in Chief Atlantic Fleet from 30 September 1982 to 27 November 1985.

operation, and it was fun that our quick response to the unexpected tasking dazzled them. Years later Admiral Wes McDonald and I would have occasion to talk about Grenada, and we always commented on that demonstration of “Semper Paratus”

To this day he says, “I’ll never get over how fast you got those guys out and under way.”

“Well, you know, you said you needed us. There’s a job to be done. We are used to responding to special situations. We’re nothing if not flexible.”

He says, “I know, I know.” He and I were Senior Fellows in the Capstone program over the years, and he keeps shaking his head and saying, “I know, I know. There’s nothing you guys can’t do.”

I said, “Right, and overnight too.”

Paul Stillwell: Any further specifics on the operation?

Admiral Gracey: After a few days the Navy figured out that patrolling around the island to keep people from coming on or going off, additional people coming on or other people from escaping, wasn’t working very well with Navy PCs or whatever they were using, whereas our smaller patrol boats would do the job very well.* So we took over. We were there long after everybody else had gone home doing this operation and other things that the Coast Guard always does when we are someplace. That was Grenada.

In talking about hardware we were going to get, I didn’t mention Air-eye and forward-looking infrared, but they were all technological improvements.

I did mention Senator Roth and GAO’s review of our procurement. They didn’t want us to use the forward-looking infrared, FLIR, that we wanted to get. They had some cheaper models they thought would go better, and they wanted us to mix the cheaper models in with the more expensive models on different planes. They saw it as a plug-and-go thing. The way we shot that down was to spell out why that just wouldn’t get the job done. The problem of getting airplanes into availability and out and ready is huge. We’ve got to have them on standby because when somebody says, “Help” we’ve got to go. That’s a big enough problem, especially with some of the logistics problems

* PCs—patrol craft.

we're having without having to not only sort out all that, but sort out the additional variable of having to pick the plane that's got the right combination of sensors, etc., for the right weather conditions and whatever. Forget it. We're just not going to do that. And we got the blessing of the Secretary of Transportation on that one, so it was put to bed.

We created the Intelligence Coordination Center. We had been using other people's intelligence. We'd been using Defense Intelligence and Naval Intelligence and all that, and we had people of our own around. We were getting information coming in from all over the place for drug operations and the like. We were tied in with NSA and all that sort of thing.* Finally we decided we really needed a place to massage the information as we needed it. Not have to take the bits and pieces from other places and sort out our part from everybody else's. So at Headquarters we created a separate command called the Intelligence Coordination Center with a captain in command, and their job was to build intelligence that the Coast Guard needed and go after it, find it. Sometimes find it ourselves and pump it in.

Sometimes we had Spanish-speaking people down in Florida that were listening to druggies talking on the radio at sea. There was a lot of that kind of intelligence that was coming out. Much of it wasn't a hell of a lot of interest to the others, but it was to us. But also taking the big-time stuff that was coming down and screening it through. Just a bunch of people that were focused on intelligence for our operators in a place where they could do that. That was one decision that worked well. We were pleased with the results.

Talking about the drug operation interest. At one point Secretary Lewis and Secretary Weinberger had been talking about the drug ops.† Weinberger really didn't want to get involved in the drug business. So he told Lewis that he thought he could arrange for one or two million dollars that he could transfer to the Coast Guard if we would just do the whole thing and leave them alone. That's Jim Gracey's interpretation of what was said, but I think that's probably pretty close to how it came out. So Lewis called me and said proudly, "Hey, I've got a lot of money for you guys."

* NSA—National Security Agency, the primary U.S. organization in the field of communications intelligence.

† Caspar W. Weinberger served as Secretary of Defense from 21 January 1981 to 23 November 1987.

I said, “When does it come?”

“Well, it comes now.”

I thought, “Oh, boy. This is fairly late in the budget season, and we’re going to wind up with a huge pile of money that we haven’t spent.” I said, “Give me a little time to make sure we can use that much money wisely. It’s wonderful to think that we’re going to have a lot of money, but it’s labeled, and I want to be sure we can use it well and in a timely way.”

So I brought in then Captain, newly frocked Rear Admiral Clyde Robbins from the field and put him in charge of a small team to take a hard, quick look at this whole thing.* They created the zone concept that has served us well since. It noted there are really three areas of drug trafficking. We called them the departure zone, transit zone, and arrival zone for drugs being shipped by water. Departure zone obviously being South America, usually off the Colombian coast or a couple of key ports, but there were other places. Transit zone obviously in between, and then the arrival zone off our shore. They concluded that the single best place for us to nail these people would be in the transit zone. Don’t wait for the arrival zone. If you do, your problem is multiplied by skeety-leven.

In the transit zone there’s only certain ways they can come to the East Coast. On the West Coast it’s a different, but the Robbins group was convinced the bulk of the stuff was coming up the East Coast. To get here from South America almost all traffic goes through one of three passes. Between the Yucatan Peninsula and Cuba, between Cuba and Haiti, and between the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. We could focus on those passes. There’s nothing like that off the West Coast

We put together a whole strategy based on those transit realities, and we concluded that we *could* use the DoD-transfer money for getting some additional ships and other specialized equipment. One we wanted more of was the aerostat—balloons with radar. They could be tethered to a ship and towed behind, kind of like a barrage balloon only with radars running. We had some of those operating. They were fine, but we learned that in some situations it wasn’t exactly great to have a huge balloon tied on

* Rear Admiral Clyde E. Robbins, USCG.

the stern of your vessel when you had certain other USCG-type things you wanted to do with that vessel. Then we started running some from onshore, and that was helpful.

There were other things to enhance our effort. So the answer was yes, we could use the extra money wisely and well. Weinberger, however, decided he needed the money anyway, and Secretary Lewis decided he was going to go back to the private sector, so we never did get the money. But we did get the concept. Clyde Robbins and his team did a wonderful job, and their work has stood the test of time. Proved my point that we could take three or four people and put them in a room and say, “I want you to look at this and give me an answer on how to do it,” and they could get it done quick time. Never mind what it cost. It cost nothing really. And that was a point I’d been trying to sell.

Women in the military. I’ve long felt it was an important thing for the Coast Guard to do. I was a big advocate and pusher of the whole idea of women being a full part of our organizations, not only for the Coast Guard but for everybody. DACOWITS loved me.* I got invited to speak to them at one time, and that was nice. I liked that. And our women were great. I guess I got a reputation of being an active proponent for a full active role for women in the military. It surprised me a couple of times. I’d go to some event where there were Navy women or something, and I’d be introduced and there’d be this big cheer and people would come up and talk to me just because I’d been so outspoken on the subject. “Why are you so interested?” I’d be asked.

My answer always was, “Because we can’t afford to ignore 51% of the talent in this country.” And I was certainly right—about the Coast Guard anyway.

I’ll give you an example. One day I was called by a senior staffer from the White House—can’t remember his name—who said that President Reagan wanted to know why he didn’t have a Coast Guard officer as one of his Military Aides. My response was that I had been wondering the same thing myself and would be very happy to remedy that situation. He asked me to give him a list of candidates from whom the President might choose.

* DACOWITS—Defense Department Advisory Committee on Women in the Services.

At the top of the list of candidates we submitted I had us put the name of Lieutenant Commander Vivien Crea.* She had been one of my pilots in CG-01, and I knew her as a person of considerable talent and poise and personality—and, in my opinion, one destined for a great future in the Coast Guard. I was told that women were not assigned as President's Aides. What an opportunity! I thought it would be wonderful for USCG to be the only service represented by a woman among the President's Aides, and I was sure Vivien would do us proud. So, realizing it was a long shot, we sent the list off to the White House.

I got some feedback about how the process went. I learned there was some considerable concern among the President's staff, because he was clearly intrigued by the idea of having a woman serving as one of his aides. One line of defense I heard they used was, “But, Mr. President, the football”—referring, of course, to the code book that Presidential Aides are responsible for having available at all times. He saw no problem with that. “But what about the bathroom?” He was reported to have said, “I grew up in a house with six women and one bathroom. I think Vivien and I can work that out.” She was selected and served a full assignment with President Reagan. And I glowed—smugly. She is now a Rear Admiral.

We created a hotline for merchant mariners so ships' crews could call to inform us of problems on their ships. There was a lot of concern that there were ships sailing out there with maintenance or command problems—situations putting the vessels and people at risk. We had experienced the *Marine Electric* disaster, the collier that sank off of Norfolk, and we had the *Edmund Fitzgerald* earlier.† That was back while I was in Cleveland. But there were things happening all the time, and there was no way for us to get a heads-up—for a whistle-blower to tip us off. We felt that it just might be that there were people aboard ship who knew of potential problems but didn't know how to tell

* Lieutenant Commander Vivien S. Crea, USCG. In 2000 she became the first woman promoted to flag rank in the Coast Guard. On 6 May 2002, Rear Admiral Crea became Commander First Coast Guard District. In 2004 she is slated to become the service's first female vice admiral and will take command of the Coast Guard's Atlantic Area.

† On 12 February 1983 the coal freighter *Marine Electric* capsized and sank 30 miles east of Chincoteague, Virginia, during a storm in the Atlantic Ocean. Of her crew 33 lost their lives, and three were rescued. A series of newspaper articles brought to light many unsafe conditions on board the ship, a symptom of a larger problem. For details see Robert Frump, *Until the Sea Shall Free Them: Life, Death, and Survival in the Merchant Marine* (New York: Doubleday, 2001).

anybody. So we created a hotline and guaranteed privacy—confidence that their identity would be protected. We publicized this and people would call in and say, “This or that or the other thing is happening on this ship,” or “They told you they’re doing this, but they’re not,” or whatever.

Sometimes it was just some guy that was mad at the ship’s captain or his first mate. Sometimes they didn’t even know what they were talking about, and sometimes it was for real. I don’t know whether the Merchant Marine Safety people gave up on that or not, but it was something we thought might be a source of intelligence about safety problems. Maybe we could head them off at the pass before a disaster occurred.

Along the same line we created a computer system called Marine Safety Information System, MSIS, which reported on line in several ports. The idea was ultimately that they would cover all ports, and we could track the movements of ships in and out of ports. We would know where they’d been. We would know what their safety record was at other places. We could track the bad actors and when they sailed from one place and arrived at another port, that port would know to watch out for them because they had poor safety habits or whatever. We spent a lot of time and effort on getting that system in place. The first try had some glitches in it, but the last I knew it was firmly in place. It was an important way of keeping track of ships that nomad around the world or are just on regular voyages. Sometimes they sail out of one place and are told to go to a shipyard. The next port they go into ought to know that they’ve been told that so they can check and see if they have done the work.

Paul Stillwell: How did that relate to AMVER?

Admiral Gracey: Well, that’s entirely different. The MSIS is aimed at safety enforcement and follow-up. It’s a way of spreading the word about potential problem ships, pending enforcement actions, etc. The ships involved have no say in whether they will or won’t be tagged, etc. AMVER is a voluntary system aimed at having information so vessels at sea can help each other in disaster situations. If somebody gets in trouble out there we can crank up the computer, see who’s closest and call them up and ask them to go help. Usually there’s a couple or three that will respond. The Law of the Sea is if

the message goes out everybody is supposed to go. The effect of AMVER is that they don't all have to go. Only the closest and we'll ask them. And that's what AMVER's all about. It's different.

I guess that one of the reasons some countries haven't participated or didn't during the Cold War was that they figured we were using that as a spy system. All we were really trying to do was track where the AMVER participating ships were. I suppose we could have used it for intelligence, but we didn't. If push came to shove I guess we could track down a particular ship, but that wasn't what it was for. We've demonstrated over and over and over again that's it's for safety and rescue at sea. Every year the Association for Rescue at Sea, of which I am currently Chairman of the Board, selects the most outstanding rescue by a vessel acting in response to an AMVER call. We give the winner the AMVER Plaque award in the halls of Congress at the same time we give our annual Gold Medal and Honorarium to a Coast Guard enlisted person for extraordinary heroism.

Another different action we took to beef up marine safety was to take criminal action against a ship owner for failure to maintain his ship and thereby causing loss of the ship and several lives. He had violated all kinds of laws. I said, "Why are we letting this guy get away with this?"

The Chief of the Office of Merchant Marine Safety said, "Well, we don't have to."

And, "Was there criminal neglect here?"

"Yes, we think there is."

"So I said, "Let's run it through the legal system. Let's see if he gets indicted, with the hope they will find him guilty of malfeasance of some kind, whatever the right words might be." And we did, and the corporate people got convicted.

Paul Stillwell: What was the ship?

Admiral Gracey: The *Marine Electric*.

Paul Stillwell: Was this indictment after the ship had sunk?

Admiral Gracey: It was after the ship had sunk, because we knew the condition, and that brought it up. There's no reason we couldn't do it beforehand, you know, when we make the inspections.

International training. I don't know whether I mentioned that we started sending an officer to an annual year-long course at the Foreign Service Institute. The State Department runs the course, much like our war colleges, our Industrial College of the Armed Forces, one of those kinds of courses. And they have one at the Foreign Service Institute for people involved with foreign relations. While I was the Commandant we started having an officer every year go to that course. I hope they're continuing it or maybe sending more because our international work is very significant.

In our annual budget crunches we'd get to the point where we would have to make cuts to meet our mark. Big decisions about what and where to cut. One of the first candidates always mentioned would be Officer Candidate School: "We don't need to have OCS. We've got the Academy."

And I would argue, "No, we do need to have OCS. We do need to have OCS for enlisted personnel who want to become officers. You can shut down the part for civilians coming out of college if we must. We can do that if you think we need to—temporarily. We can cut down the size of the Academy class too. But we are *not* going to shut down the OCS opportunity for our enlisted people." After that annual statement from me we always found that we didn't have to change the Academy size, and that's good because there is a critical size below which they start spinning their wheels up there in New London. It really gets very expensive, and we didn't really want to mess around with the size of the Academy classes. But I was adamant that we would *not* cut out the opportunity for our enlisted personnel to go to OCS. So we never did.

Interestingly enough, you never know how those things spin out, but I was down at OCS sometime after that. It was in the budget arena that I'd made my strong pronouncement. I wasn't aware it was common knowledge, but a couple of OCS students came up and thanked me for giving them the opportunity to go to OCS, and I said, "How did I do that?"

They said, “You didn’t shut us out, sir, and we’ve been waiting a long time to get senior enough so that we get there. And here they were talking about cutting it out and sending us home. You didn’t let it happen, and we’re very grateful.”

Paul Stillwell: Well, are prior enlisted people now the only ones who can go through OCS?

Admiral Gracey: No, no. I don’t know exactly how it runs now, but no. And in fact that never got too bad. We may have cut out one class of college people or something until we got into the next budget year. It was never our intent to permanently eliminate it. But if we needed to save money on students or whatever for that year, I said, “Yeah, well, we’ll cut out the college graduate part of it.” But I was trying to make a point. I always thought we should change the balance between the number of officers from the Academy and the number from our other sources. That wasn’t popular in New London, but I thought we should weigh it. In the budget scuffle I was making a couple points, the primary of which by far was that we were not going to pull the rug out from under our enlisted officer candidates. But OCS is not just for enlisted candidates—nor should it be.

Paul Stillwell: Well, I think one advantage of getting the college graduate OCS product is just more diversity of background in the service.

Admiral Gracey: Oh, absolutely. I wouldn’t for a minute do without it. Diversity *is* important. As a matter of fact, I suggested at one point that we should think of a target for the sources of our officers that included a higher percentage of non-Academy people. That, of course, enhanced my undeserved and incorrect reputation in some minds as one who was anti-Academy. Nothing could be farther from actuality.

The one thing that I just did not want to happen was to cut out our enlisted people. You may have gathered a pattern here. I tended to pay a lot of attention to what was happening to the enlisted personnel of the Coast Guard, and I was determined that they weren’t going to get aced out in this thing. It was too easy to say, “Oh, let’s just cut out

OCS.” It wasn’t going to save a lot of money anyway. That’s not the point. The point is the message it sends.

Uniform changes. I don’t think I’ll spend time going into detail on uniform changes except that early on I think I mentioned there had not been a Uniform Board meeting for four years before me. Admiral Hayes felt that he didn’t have time to deal with that. But we really needed to make some changes. So the Board started meeting regularly on my watch. We did away with tropical whites for officers and enlisted. We said service dress whites were optional. You can own them or not. I said that if you had a ceremony and you were going to prescribe whites, you could not prescribe whites for the officers if the troops were in dress blue. If the troops were in tropical blue you could prescribe whites. The point was, we’re not going to have the officers cool while the troops are out there melting. As a matter of fact, I think oftentimes at places like Hawaii the troops are always in tropical blue, which was our substitute for tropical white

We spent some time on improving some of the features and the quality of the women’s uniforms. And I eliminated khakis—dress and work. The officers didn’t wear work khakis and the chiefs didn’t wear work khakis. And on that early trip to Puerto Rico that I talked about I went and had breakfast with a group of officers and chiefs at one of the clubs. During the Q and A session after my remarks one of the chiefs stood up and said he was on a buoy tender and, “Sir, I’ve got to have khakis.”

I said, “Why do you have to have khakis, Chief?”

He said, “Because when I’m on the buoy deck those people have to know who I am.”

I said, “Chief, if you’ve got to wear a funny-colored suit so that your troops know who you are, you’ve got bigger problems than what color the suit is. I don’t happen to think that should be a problem. You’re going to wear working blue, and they’re going to know who you are. You’re going to have a different kind of hat on. On the buoy deck you’ll have a hard hat on, and it can be a special color.” I apologized for coming down so hard in my answer. Then I went on to say, “We’ve got to get our chief petty officers back in the CPO business.” Over the preceding several years we had set up a bunch positions with special titles where people could get this, that, and the other thing kinds of help, etc. The chiefs had kind of backed away from their traditional part in those things.

There were human relations boards, and there was a board for everything to deal with every kind of human relation situation. The effect was that the chief petty officers had felt, “They don’t need us to be leaders anymore.” That was the attitude many conveyed. I was disturbed by that, well-intentioned as the various interventions may have been.

Paul Stillwell: Things had been taken out of their hands.

Admiral Gracey: Or at least it seemed that way to them. We’ve got all these boards and designated counselors. We’ve got this board and that board and the other board, and they all prescribe. I said, “I want you guys to get back into business. I want you to be chief petty officers, but I don’t want you to wear different-colored suits to do it.” That afternoon I went down to visit on a buoy tender, and there was a big sign on the door of the Chief Petty Officers’ Quarters. It said, “Chief Petty Officer’s Quarters, Keep Out, This Means You.”

I was with the captain of the ship, of course, and I said, “Skipper, I think we’ve got a problem here. Now, I understand the chiefs don’t want people barging in and out of their quarters. That’s always been the case. We’ve always knocked and one thing or another. When I was captain of a ship, I wouldn’t go into the Chiefs’ Quarters without knocking. I respected their privacy. But I think there’s a message here that is, ‘Don’t mess with me. I’m a Chief Petty Officer and I don’t want to hear from you guys.’” If that’s not the message, fine, but I think that’s the wrong sign, and so I had a few words to say about that. The withdrawal attitude went away quickly once my feeling about CPOs got around. And the word also spread very fast, “Don’t talk to Admiral Gracey about khaki uniforms.” And “The chiefs are back!”

Paul Stillwell: So you got rid of tropical whites and khakis. What did that leave for summer?

Admiral Gracey: Tropical blues. Lightweight blue trousers and light blue shirts. The Coast Guard tropical blue shirt was every bit as cool as the tropical white, and it didn’t show the dirt quite as much. And we had working blues and we had dress material. They

were different quality. The working blues were chinos, but they were blue instead of khaki.

Did I talk about *Polar Sea* going through the Northwest Passage from east to west and causing a high-level flap with the Canadians?

Paul Stillwell: I don't think so.

Admiral Gracey: Well, it caused a short-lived international flap. But first a little background. When I was Commandant, The Commissioner of the Canadian Coast Guard was the man I worked with regarding Great Lakes Pilotage when I had the Ninth Coast Guard District. He was then in charge of Great Lakes pilotage for Canada, and we had worked very closely together. Got to like and trust each other. I had persuaded the Deputy Secretary of Transportation to let me negotiate a deal with Canada, because he and the Canadian Minister of Transport weren't making it. Ran Quayle was the man's name, and he and I met a few times in Toronto to work on the problem, and we got to be really good friends. I'd fly home to Cleveland after a day of negotiations having spent the day in a hotel room with Ran in Toronto, and Randy would always say, "Well, do you have a black eye or where did he punch you today?" And Ruth would say the same to Ran. But we worked out a hell of a good system.

Well, now it was nine or ten years later, and Ran was the Commissioner of the Canadian Coast Guard. We of the U.S. Coast Guard had a situation where *Northwind*, one of our ancient icebreakers, was supposed to resupply Thule, Greenland, but *Northwind* had found a crack in its hull. *Polar Sea* had just returned to Seattle from having done Deep Freeze in Antarctica, and they'd come up around South America, a deployment of several months. And they were due north of Point Barrow, Alaska, a couple months later for an exercise with the Canadians. And *Polar Star* was in a shipyard. But Thule *had* to be resupplied, and that required an icebreaker.

So we whistled *Polar Sea* back down through the Canal and up to Thule to break them out. Now they were in Thule and they had to be north of Point Barrow in the latter part of the summer for an operation being conducted with the Canadians. We could send them home by sailing all the way back down the East Coast, through the Panama Canal,

and all the way back up the West Coast again, or we could go “straight” across the top, westward through the Northwest Passage. So I called Quayle, and I said, “We’ve got this situation, and we’re supposed to meet your guys off of Barrow. How about if we just go across the top and meet you there? Would that be okay?”

He said, “I think so. I’ll check.”

He called back and said yes. I didn’t think to ask whom he might have talked to or whatever. And I can’t remember whom I talked to.

So I said, “Okay, do it.” The next thing I knew, the Canadian Prime Minister was practically threatening to punch President Reagan in the nose for violating their very sensitive “Arctic sovereignty” concerns in the archipelago. They’re very chary of their rights up in that part of the world, and how dare you guys do this? We almost created a major international flap. Well, it was a serious minor flap as it was.

Paul Stillwell: What was the outcome?

Admiral Gracey: That was in the summer of 1985. In 1987, at a Reagan-Mulroney Summit a joint statement was issued in which President Reagan assured Canada that such an “incident” would not happen again, and the USA would request permission next time.* Of course we had “requested permission” but not at the right level—and information about it was not helpful. It made it sound like a casual run-through while doing “intelligence work for the U.S. Navy.”

Anyway, *Polar Sea* went west, everything worked fine, and it was a good passage. We met their forces off of Point Barrow on time, and the exercise came out well. And *Polar Sea* didn’t have all that extra sailing time. A variety of other things spun off from it.

In all of this we haven’t talked about the infamous pay cap that applied to O-10s and O-9s and other seniors, but to a lesser extent, in those days.† Everybody’s talked to you about it sooner or later, I guess. The situation was that no one could be paid more than a Congressman, and the Congressmen didn’t have enough courage or gumption to

* Brian Mulroney, a Conservative, served as Prime Minister of Canada from 1984 to 1993.

† O-10, four-star admiral or general; O-9, three-star admiral or general.

vote themselves a pay raise, even though it was *long* overdue. The net effect was I was getting paid about the same as a one-star. That bothered me a little bit. I thought maybe at least when I retired I'd go back up to a level based on the pay I was supposed to be getting—on paper. No, I didn't. What I did when I retired was revert, for pay purposes, to O-9, which was the rank I was at when I got to 30 years' service for pay. My retired pay was calculated as if I had retired on that day back in 1979—seven years earlier. You've got those choices. You can either take what you've got now, or you can revert to some previous day. I didn't do the calculation. The pay office told me I would be better off by going back to '79 base pay. Then I could get credited for all the COLAs that had been given.* Where I was I couldn't get them because it would put me above the cap. But I never got even close to what I was entitled to get paid. I was four or five thousand dollars a year short.

Paul Stillwell: Did that apply to officers in the other services?

Admiral Gracey: Sure, it applied to all military people. And, of course, as the Commandant I had extra that I was supposed to get, a little bit over an O-10 but I didn't. Yeah, it applied to anybody that would have gotten paid more than a Congressman if they got what was prescribed by law.

So now, if you can bear with me, I'm going to skim through these other notes, and we'll be done. All right? A lot of them we've already covered, so don't panic. Don't panic.

I talked about the Intelligence Command, drug enforcement.

We created some regional centers for some of our engineering work design for shore structures. Instead of every district office having its own staff of civil engineers and so forth we created centers in Norfolk and on the West Coast. Called Regional Design and Construction Centers.

Communications. For a long time here at Coast Guard Headquarters if I wanted to make a secure telephone call, I had to get in a car and go over to DoT, because we didn't have any secure telephones in our HQ building, believe it or not. Nor did we have

* COLA—cost-of-living allowance.

a conference room where we could sit everybody or that could be used as a situation room if we had a major incident. We put a stop to that silly situation, but it took a lot of doing.

Under Merchant Marine Safety, in addition to the hotline I talked about and the MSIS information system, we created a program of inspecting old ships. I don't remember how we defined "old" but ships that had been around for a while. We did an extra inspection on them, because they seemed to be the ones that tended to break up or have other major problems. We re-codified the Merchant Marine Safety Laws. We worked very closely with the American Bureau of Shipping in developing ways to share inspection work, accepting theirs for ours, etc. We didn't go as fast as they wanted us to go into having them take over a lot more of our Coast Guard functions. There was some concern that because they were doing a lot of their work for insurance purposes, and there was some feeling amongst some of our Merchant Marine Safety people that there was a potential conflict of interest. So we kind of slowed down a bit and said, "Let's level off where we are in the amount of delegation that we've done and the amount of split. Let's stay with that for a while and later take a second look."

That bothered some of the more senior people at ABS, and some of the ship owners and shipping company owners. They thought that we had some other motive in mind, that we were trying to hog it all into the government, especially since I was arguing against privatizing. And I kept pointing out my theme that it was all "A Question of Balance." There was a need for government to have a role in prescribing and maintaining safety in marine transportation. We had to find the right balance for the times. But there were a couple of them that never did get happy with that.

At the IMO we pressed hard for a program to combat marine terrorism—a program that all the countries would subscribe to in terms of safety measures to head off marine terrorism. There was a lot of piracy going on too. Still happens in the Southern Pacific.

Paul Stillwell: Strait of Malacca was one of their choke points.

Admiral Gracey: Yeah, big time. But there had been the case in the Mediterranean where pirates took over the ship and threw a passenger over the side.*

Paul Stillwell: The *Achille Lauro*.

Admiral Gracey: There were a number of cases, and we took the lead to put together a program, and we sold it at IMO in all six languages. We also had a memorandum of understanding with countries around the world regarding port safety. There was always an argument between the flag state and the port state as to who owns the port, who owns the ships that are coming into the port, and whose rules predominate? And IMO worked on that, and we had a big hand in having it come out where it ultimately did.

More on medical care. As part of the business of taking over our own medical care program we consolidated the rates of the dental technicians and hospital corpsmen. I don't know whether the Navy did that or not.

Paul Stillwell: I don't think so.

Admiral Gracey: We did it because we thought it gave us a better flexibility for the use of our limited resources. We also set up Primary Care Centers for families in and around the Coast Guard, and we also had mobile dental units. We used what we called a Dental Extern Program. We had people who were dental students who would provide dental care for families. That we could do because we now owned the resources.

Officer and enlisted performance evaluation systems. We created entirely new and unique systems. They were known by different names. When I got to be Commandant, we were still living with an enlisted personnel marking system that was archaic, to say the least. People were compared against other people, and the marks were on a 4.0 marking system. The problem was it had gotten down to where you could

* In October 1985 four armed Palestinian terrorists hijacked the Italian cruise ship *Achille Lauro*, in the Mediterranean, in the vicinity of Egypt. The hijackers demanded that Israel free 50 Palestinian prisoners. The terrorists killed a disabled American tourist, 69-year-old Leon Klinghoffer, and threw his body overboard with his wheelchair. The terrorists finally left when granted safe passage, but their plane was intercepted by Navy F-14 fighters and forced to land in Sicily.

predict a person's marks by his or her pay grade. If a person was an E-3 he got 3.3. If he was an E-4 he got 3.4. It was an almost universal fact, unless a person was really bad or a real hotshot. The real bad ones didn't go down much. It was meaningless. The terminology consisted of a whole bunch of factors, expressed as single words and lumped into three different characteristics. That's all. Conduct, proficiency and something else, and it was useless.

So I said, "I want a new system. That's one of the first things out of the barrel. I want us to have a new enlisted evaluation system."

"Well, we need to study it," said the Office of Personnel.

I said, "You don't need to study it. You don't need to study it. If you don't know what's wrong with it, give me a half an hour. I'll tell you. Stand by to take a lot of notes, because I've been living with this in the field and I've seen it. We've got to find a better way to do it."

One thing led to another, and they wanted a certain period of time to get it done, and I said I'd like to have it by March. They said, "We can't do that." So I said, "Make it February". [Laughter] They got my message and said, "Would you settle for July?"

I said, "Okay, July, but no kidding." In all fairness this exchange was with some of Rear Admiral Cueroni's people. He recognized, and so did they, that a change was needed. I was really hitting them over the head with this, because I wanted it done yesterday, and they'd already been looking at it for three months. They weren't fighting it. So they went to work. We brought in a CPO who was later the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard to help work on the project. He had a Ph.D. and a lot of talent.

Paul Stillwell: Vince Patton.

Admiral Gracey: Vince Patton.* The end result was we created a system that is based on what is expected of a "typical high-performing Coast Guardsman." It is long. There are a lot of words. For each characteristic to be rated there is a set of standards. People are

* Master Chief Vincent W. Patton III, USCG, served as Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard from 22 May 1998 to 10 October 2002.

judged against written standards, not against other people as seen by the particular marker. Marks are based on a normal distribution basis. You know, where most of the people are going to be in the middle. Marks range from 1 to 7 with 4 being the mark of the typical high-performing CG person of the pay grade being evaluated. It is the norm. For number four we describe in about ten words in a small box, for each characteristic what we expect from a typical high performing Coast Guard enlisted person. The words are different for different pay grades. And then we had 5, 6, and 7 in gradations up from 4, with words to say “how *much* better.” Marks of 3, 2, or 1 go the other direction, of course. To get a 7 you have to dine regularly with God. For a 1 you dine with the devil regularly. [Laughter]

To give anybody a 6 or a 7 you had to say why in writing. To give anybody a 1 or a 2 you also had to write about it. What this did was to put the criteria into standard level-of-performance words that were printed on the form. We agonized over the wording to get just the right descriptions. Rear Admiral Cueroni’s people did a fine job and managed to keep their sanity through a lot of review from on high. It took a long time; we really worked on the wording because it was the key to success. In the end one true benefit was that a person could look at those pages and see—in plain, straightforward English exactly what was *expected* of him or her. All he or she had to do was read the words for a 4. Some of the characteristics graded are for military performance, but there are all kinds of categories—as many as 60 or so line items. The completed form got reviewed by the commanding officer and the usual review processes.

For the first few evolutions all the sheets had to come to Headquarters so a special team could review them to be sure the system was understood and to pick up where revised standards might be needed—or clarified instructions. If somebody out there was giving too many 7s we sent them back with an explanation of why. One of the biggest hurdles was to sell the idea that getting all 4s was just fine—it meant you were a “typical high performing ...” The idea of “normal distribution” wasn’t fully understood.

Next came the Officer Fitness Report system, which wasn’t much better. It was all skewed to the left. It was all 9, 8, 7. If you were writing on a U.S. Navy officer and it wasn’t all 9s, he was finished. I wrote what I thought was a darned good report for a Navy officer detailed to my command. It had a couple 8s in it, and he almost wept. Then

I began to see other examples, and it was pretty clear that, yeah, that's the way it worked in the Navy, and we were getting there too. We weren't quite that bad, but we were getting there.

So we created an Officer Performance Evaluation system that was essentially the same as the one for enlisted. It took a little while to get it done. We had to allow for the differences in officer promotion systems, etc. I was convinced it was a good way to go. My understanding was that when boards sat down to look at people they had to pick, with the new OPES they had something to work with. The pure bald fact of the matter is there *is* a great mass of people who are all the same. So then they went to look to see what things they could use to differentiate. But on any board the gray zone is that great mass in the middle, and you've got to figure out how to sort them out, and that's hard to do. The OPES helped do it.

For officers there was more writing required. The marking officer had to write and explain certain kinds of things. Enlisted, certain things had to be explained but others didn't.

Next the Chief, Civilian Personnel Division said, "Hey, we want to get in that act too." So they created what they called a "generic evaluation system." It had to be done a little differently because of Civil Service rules, etc., but basically it was the same. Nonetheless, in this period of time we totally overhauled all categories of evaluating performance in the Coast Guard. And I understood at that time that some of the other Armed Services were kind of intrigued by our work. I don't know if they finally changed or not.

Flag Officer evaluations were all reviewed or written by the Vice Commandant and me. We created a set of standards as to things to be considered when evaluating a Flag Officer because the stuff we were getting was not helpful. We wanted all evaluators to be playing by the same rules. The Continuation Board legislation required some hard decisions. And they were being made on some soft or far-out bases, because that was all they had to go by. Everybody between the beginning of their fourth year as a flag officer and the end of their fifth year had to come before a Continuation Board. Every year at least 25% of those who came had to be discontinued. It was supposed to give the Commandant flexibility in managing his Flag Corps. Actually it was a great problem of

how to schedule the Boards and how to make Flag assignments. Who's going to come to the Board so you don't wind up forcing out too many people in one year and not enough in another—to keep an even flow—or to avoid having all top performers before a particular Board and have to lose one. It was an interesting process for the Vice Commandant and me to have to live with. We felt better about it after we set down some standard evaluation parameters.

We set up a system for handling human relations complaints more quickly. The process was endless and self-defeating. It would go on for months, sometimes years before anything happened. We put some teeth into it so that people could get some answers. We could do something about the problem that was the subject of the complaint in a reasonably timely way, and if something was wrong we could fix it before it happened again and again.

We had to execute the DoT Roles and Missions Study that Admiral Hayes had pressed for. And that was no help at all! Jack Hayes said one of the things he would have done over again if he had the chance was he never would have asked to have a Roles and Missions Study done, because it was an invitation to mischief on the part of the people in DoT. I cringed when I heard he had asked for one, because I foresaw great problems. But we made it work. We worked it out. But it would have been very nice if we hadn't had to.

We had a Boating Safety Hotline, too, where people could call in about the condition of their boats. If they had bought a boat somewhere and had problems with it, they could call and tell us about it and why they were unhappy. Or they could tell about things they'd seen, somebody that they'd seen misbehaving, breaking the law, boating recklessly, whatever. We had to be careful what we did with that, but on the other hand it gave us an alert to watch. But mostly we wanted to hear about defective equipment, and that was what we got primarily.

We set up an Automated Pay System. It had bugs up the ying-yang, but we got them all out and got it working. But the people weren't sure that they wanted some machine to cut their paycheck. They wanted a real live storekeeper to do it.

I wasn't quite sure when they calculated my retirement pay that it was going to last the rest of my life. I remember my first day on the job as a brand-new vice admiral

in San Francisco when I asked my aide to find out how much I was going to get paid. The issue was in doubt, because I had been promoted two pay grades, but I was also now living in government quarters. The number that came back was exactly what I'd been getting paid in D.C. The petty officer who had my pay record said that was because he didn't have any proof that I was a three-star. I had been a one-star, but he didn't see that I'd ever been a two-star. How could he pay me as a three-star? So we proved it to him, and he paid me as a three-star. He was right. I had jumped from one to three. I never had been a two-star.

We banged away at doing a better job with public affairs. Sought every opportunity to speak and get good press.

We worked on some protocols on oil-spill liability. That's still going on, and I'm on the Board of Directors of the top oil spill clean-up company in the country now, and they're still wrestling over that one. But we tried to make some sense out of it.

The HH-65 coming on board. Boy, we had some real pre-delivery problems, but we got them solved, and they're flying. The HU-25 had logistics problems that wouldn't quit. We were forced to buy a French plane, and then we tried to force an engine that was too big for the nacelle. We thus made it a different airplane, and it cost us a lot of problems. I understand we're not flying them anymore. But, hey, that's not bad. That was almost 20 years ago. They never did what we hoped they would.

Small arms. We changed our side arms to 9-millimeter pistols. We went along with the other services. We'd been carrying .45s and .38s, and we went to all 9 millimeters. That, surprisingly, was a major flap. Never could quite understand why. There were people that loved them, and people that didn't want any part of them. The people who were supplying one kind didn't want us to have the other kind. Imagine that!

Critical waterways. I talked about classifying all United States waterways as "critical" and "non-critical" to establish where we would consider contractor servicing of aids to navigation and where we wouldn't. That was a major and controversial undertaking forced on us by the privatization initiative, but it gave us some significant data for our own planning anyway.

International organizations. We were involved in a lot of them and always had been. It continued. I'm talking about the International Lighthouse Authorities and

International Lifeboat Conference and International Radio Communications Conference, and a lot of bilateral agreements. I thought our international role was really very important and worked to expand it

We set up a school of our own for quartermasters. We'd always gone to the Navy's quartermaster school, but more and more it became clear that what Navy quartermasters do and what Coast Guard quartermasters do are really very different. Oh, everybody keeps a log and stuff like that, but our quartermasters are a more significant part of the bridge crew because sometimes we only have four or five people on the bridge anyway. I guess more than that in certain evolutions, but it's different. So we set up our own school.

We really reached out to the retiree community. Incidentally we created the Coast Guard Retiree Council in Washington in November of my first year. I asked Vice Admiral Bill Rea to chair it, and he did a great job.*

All things considered, the active-duty time was one super 41-year stretch for me. I loved every minute of it. The four years as Commandant of the United States Coast Guard—there is just no way to tell you how meaningful, rewarding, happy that was to me and Randy. We were talking about it this morning, what a wonderful time. How could it not be with the people we have in this splendid organization? They're just wonderful. They just made us feel so good about what we were doing and what they were doing, and they were so responsive. I mean, it didn't really much matter what I had laid on them, they'd figure out a way to get it done somehow. I tried not to lay stuff on I didn't have to, but there were some things that had to be done, and we had to work our way through a lot of that.

We had to work our way through a lot of tough stuff—and a lot of changes we put in place ourselves. They were all there to be done and they all got done. We laughed about some of them, we cried about some of them, we got angry about some of them, or all of the above, but it worked.

Paul Stillwell: What do you recall about the process by which your successor was chosen?

* Vice Admiral William F. Rea III, USCG (Ret.).

Admiral Gracey: I really don't know. I wasn't much of a part of it. When I was chosen, I was interviewed by the Deputy Secretary and the Secretary and the Commandant. Even if I'd been asked by Secretary Dole—and I wasn't—I'm not sure I would have interviewed any of the candidates to replace me. I found that awkward and strange when it happened to me. I would have talked with them if the Secretary really wanted me to, I suppose, but it wouldn't have been an "interview" per se. I knew those people.

There were some great candidates. Besides Paul Yost there was also Vice Admiral Jack Costello, and Rear Admiral Deese Thompson—two of the greatest admirals not to make Commandant, to borrow a sports phrase.* Anyway it doesn't matter. I made Jack a vice admiral, and Deese should have been one. He was when Paul Yost moved up. These days he would have been a three-star, because I brought him in to be my Coast Guard Chief of Staff, and that has finally become the three-star slot it always should have been. Anyway, he was one fine officer, and then Rear Admiral Rick Cueroni was another one. He was my Commander Seventh Coast Guard District, later on went to the Coast Guard Academy as Superintendent.

Any one of those guys could have qualified and could have done a wonderful job as the Commandant and would have added a special flavor. I did make some comments to Secretary Dole about my feelings about the various individuals, but they were not formal. I wasn't asked. I was not told what the choice was until it had already gone forward. Elizabeth called me up and told me after it was locked in. I might have made a different choice.

Paul Stillwell: The facial expression suggests that indeed you might have. [Laughter]

Admiral Gracey: Paul Yost's a fine man. Paul's a fine man, and he did a good job. It's just that he and I didn't see things eye to eye. We do business in a different way, as we've talked about before. We have different priorities, and one tends to like to keep the flow going in the direction you've started it. If you've got a certain feel with the people and so forth, you kind of want to perpetuate that. We are different people with different

* Vice Admiral John D. Costello, USCG; Rear Admiral Donald C. Thompson, USCG.

styles. After our Change of Command I just said, “I’m out of your hair for a year, Paul. I’ll let you know when I’m back.”

And he was great. He offered me an office at Coast Guard Headquarters to come over there and use to get going with the rest of my life. I didn’t use it, but it was a very thoughtful offer.

Paul Stillwell: Please tell me about your retirement ceremony.

Admiral Gracey: Well, the retirement ceremony was wonderful. It was at the Navy Yard waterfront. There was the usual collection of officers from the other Services. I was pleased to see the Joint Chiefs were there or represented. The Chairman was there, the Secretary of course, and it was a good collection of people.* And we had a contingent of our Needham High School buddies from all over. It was a nice day, and the crowd was warm and receptive. After the ceremony Randy and I walked to the reception at the Navy Museum. It took us past all the people in the audience and they applauded. That’s a very nice feeling.

I made a speech, and *I* think it was a bell-ringer. I thought it was a hell of a speech. Still do. In fact, I had several people ask me for copies. One man with whom I had worked a lot when he was the Navy League’s local Coast Guard rep said he wanted a copy for his son, because he wanted his son to read about my life. I had talked about my life in the Coast Guard as an adventure. I talked about things that we’d seen as we did the Coast Guard’s business around the world—sampans in Kowloon, whatever, wherever—and I talked mostly about Coast Guard people and what Coast Guard people do. I probably talked too long, but *you* know I always do that anyway. I have several speeches I’m proud of, but the one I made coming in as the Commandant and the one I made going out were my best—darned good speeches. They say how I felt and the messages I wanted to send to the Coast Guard and its people. I was pleased with it. One thing I regret is that I didn’t press to have Randy given an award at the retirement ceremony. If there was ever a person who deserved the Distinguished Public Service

* Admiral William J. Crowe, Jr., USN, served as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from 1 October 1985 to 30 September 1989.

Award, it was my wife. What that woman did and is still doing for the United States Coast Guard and the people in it most people will never know.

Paul Stillwell: Well, this is your chance to tell that.

Admiral Gracey: Well, she just reached out at every opportunity to help set a tone, to create a warmth, to make juniors as well as seniors feel comfortable and welcome. She on a couple of occasions filled in for me on official business. I had a situation in the Great Lakes where I simply couldn't leave Cleveland, nor could any of the people that I would have wanted to go to make this appearance on a radio show in Muskegon, Michigan. I knew Randy knew the subject matter, knew what it was all about; it had to do with water quality and related issues.

I asked the radio station people if it would be okay with them if my wife filled in. Because we had all this other business going on, would it be okay with them if my wife came up and spoke for us. They welcomed her with open arms, and she did a magnificent job. Then she got involved with a scientific project in Cleveland afterwards, involving discussions of water quality.

Randy was instrumental in putting together the "Charting Your Life" book and in communication with families wherever we went. She was a regular contributor to a communiqué we called "The Green Sheet" that went out to Coast Guard spouses for a long time. And she developed a training program for the quarters managers. On Governors Island Randy was into everything. When we were there as "Pioneers" and when we first started up, it was us bringing in the Coast Guard families. I was up to my ears, you know 7:00 in the morning till 7:00 at night and then all night long, too, trying to do the things that had to be done to make this come off right with the Army and otherwise. She was picking up on a lot of the pieces in between time and raising a family besides.

She reached out to the community. My Lady is one of the greatest Coast Guard cheerleaders there ever was in the world. She always, I think probably to this day, carries a copy of "Semper Paratus" in her purse, and if somebody doesn't happen to know it she'll rip it out and invite them to sing right along. You'd never guess it because she

comes on kind of low key, but she makes things happen. She's a world-class representative, communicator, and person who cares. She listened to "Family" people we met and heard them,

She just did so many things to be supportive of my role in the Coast Guard. Drove me down to pick up my ship that got called up the Hudson River when I was home for a weekend. They got suddenly called up the river from New York City, and so she drove me with the kids down to meet the ship at the end of a dock near the Tappan Zee Bridge. We were on the way up river to break ice. There was a tanker stuck in the ice upriver, and Albany was about to have a brownout. Meanwhile, unbeknownst to me, Randy and the kids got stuck in the snow on the dock. We sailed away, and there she was stuck in the snow with the three little kids in their bare feet and their pajamas. She likened as to how she was going to go throw her body down in front of a taxicab or something, but she somehow managed to get the car out of the snow and drove back home to New London.

That's not unique. I mean, military families do those kinds of things. But she just seemed to have always been there. It was her idea to say about our Quarters Managers and their families, "Look, they take good care of us all year long. In the Christmas season let's have them come to dinner, and I'll cook and you serve." Wonderful idea. I loved it and we did it and they seemed to be pleased and astounded. And, of course, there was the chance to put into practice the things she'd been teaching them. That was over 20 years ago, and we still are in touch with them. Christmas cards for these people. That kind of thing.

She created the Executive Development lecture program for Spouse Week in the Capstone Program for new flags and generals of all the Services. She has been running it for 16 years. The new flag spouses get a couple "forum" sessions in which they learn from My Lady. You shouldn't have gotten me started. Dorcas Gracey should have received an Award from the Secretary of Transportation. Jim Gracey should have insured it and not left it as "certain." I felt wounded then, and I still feel wounded about that.

Randy and I worked at getting retirees involved in things wherever we were. We entertained a lot. In San Francisco we had the retirees regularly to the house as well as

other Coast Guard groups. Here in D.C. we had a special Retiree Christmas Party at our Quarters in Kenwood. We would have as many retirees as we could jam into the place come and get inside the house and see what it looked like, get reacquainted with old friends—and us—and share the fun of the Season.

As with the Salute to Spring I talked about, we had some Coast Guard Honor Guard people come out to help with cars, etc. At the end, after the guests had gone I'd say, "Come on in. Would you like to eat up the party leftovers?" Well, you know, is a frog watertight? You've got 19-year-old kids that have been standing out in the cold for a few hours. They ate with gusto. Not only that, but they wanted us to autograph napkins and have pictures taken with us and all that sort of thing.

So after the first year we got smart, and Randy planned ahead with our folks in the kitchen. "This is what we need for the party, and this is what we need to have you prepare for the Honor Guard. Those are labeled L for leftovers." [Laughter] "Those are to be 'leftovers.' You just keep them right there. Your timing is important. We're going to have the Honor Guard people come in, and your job is you've got to go put the 'leftovers' around and make it look like they're still all left on the plate. But they have to be warm too" [Laughter] And they did that. Everywhere we went we were blessed with Quarters Managers with imagination and willingness to go an extra mile to enhance the fun.

You know, this is all off the top of my head. There are things upon things my Lady got into and ideas she contributed, etc. We had an in-house award called "The Golden Swivel Shot," and we gave Randy that. The idea was created by Jack Hayes, and we revamped it. I really have always felt badly that I didn't see that Randy got a proper award. I thought it would come from DoT like mine. Naïve. Incidentally, Randy would be—and has been—the first to downplay the whole idea of an award for her. But that's Randy. Just the opportunity for the doing was enough to give her joy.

Paul Stillwell: How much did she serve as a sounding board while you were Commandant?

Admiral Gracey: A lot, as she always has and still does. We talked about a lot of things, and, of course, she was with the other wives, and she was active in the group, so she was hearing things. People talked to her, knowing full well that they were coming to me but also they were talking to her. I'm sure she heard lots of things that were in confidence, and she just kept them to herself and did what she could to cope with them. But I've always bent the poor woman's ear about what's going on at work and in my life. But she kept informed. She was aware, and she had a sensitivity for what would be a good way to go about coping with this particular situation or that. She's a great helpmate, and, as I say, her own life story would be an interesting one. I'm trying to get somebody to write it for her as a matter of fact, but she doesn't want any part of that.

Paul Stillwell: What was the emotional reaction for you when you took off the uniform after 41 years? Was there a sense of letdown?

Admiral Gracey: No. No "letdown" really. Well, what's a good word? Homesick. The first time I've ever thought of that word was in reading to prepare for this wrap-up last night. I read my final "State of the Coast Guard" speech. In it I kind of summed up how I felt about Coast Guard people and my four years as their Commandant. Somebody asked me about the four years, and I bubbled up with all those words—the ones you said set a record for verbs in one paragraph. That and all the preparation I've done for talking to you, Paul, about as much as I have, has all brought a lot back, and there's still more that I haven't even looked at.

People ask, "How do you like retirement?"

I say, "Oh, it's okay, but I really miss the people. Really miss Coast Guard people." The Master Chief of the Coast Guard, Master Chief Patton, has parties periodically at his quarters. They're not very far away. If the Command Master Chiefs are in town or something like that, he'll invite us to come over and participate.

Well, I always come out of those parties nine feet tall and up in the sky, because just talking to those people about, "I remember when," is great. And they'll poke fun at me. "Yeah, yeah, but do you remember the time you promised, you did this, and dah-dah. And you stumbled and you dropped your coffee," or whatever. I mean, it could be

anything—who knows? Who knows the things that people remember about when you and they were together or things you did or said that affected them?

Randy, incidentally, in running this Capstone Spouse Week program for spouses of the new flag officers of all the services tells story upon story about things that happened to her and to us. She tells one about going to a big formal event at Fort Myer and going up the large open staircase where there are railings all around. She was walking up on the arm of a young officer, and I was coming up behind. I saw a little piece of cloth hanging off the tail of her long gown, and I said, “Hold on a minute, Randy.” Then I bent down to pick it up, and I found out that this little piece of cloth wasn’t a little piece of cloth. It turned to be the tie for her bathrobe that had gotten snagged in her skirt. [Laughter] All these people were standing there looking over the railing to see the celebrities arrive and watching as I rolled it up. [Laughter]

Well, she tells this story with a great flair, and the other spouses all love it, because, you know, it’s either happened to them or it’s going to. Yeah, I miss the people—I enjoyed being their boss. I enjoyed being the guy who set a tone. I enjoyed being the one, when push came to shove, who had to say, “Tell them to tie up their boats downriver. We’re not going to bust up the city of Danvers so they can go up to their yacht yard.” I liked being that guy and all that went with it.

People said to me, “Aren’t you glad you’re not the Commandant?” when we had the Hurricane Hugo or whatever it was and then they had the big oil spill in Valdez.*

I said, “Are you kidding? I would have sold my soul to have an event like that instead of fighting off privatization.” We had big stuff on my watch. We had the *Challenger* case and a bunch of other things happening. I’ve talked about some. I just thoroughly enjoyed the business of being the Commandant of the United States Coast Guard.

But I spent a lot of time and emotional energy on the fight to save the Coast Guard from being nibbled to death by ducks, from being fragmented by the Grace

* The largest oil spill in U.S. history began at 12:04 A.M. Alaska time when the tanker *Exxon Valdez* ran aground on Bligh Reef in the Gulf of Alaska and tore a gash in her bottom. The site of the grounding was 25 miles from the port of Valdez, Alaska, the southern terminus of the Alyeska Pipeline. The spill amounted to an estimated 240,000 barrels of crude oil. See the Naval Institute oral history of Admiral Paul A. Yost, USCG (Ret.).

Commission, from the demoralizing and Coast Guard-threatening nature of all of that stuff. Hey, remember: “The only reason an Irishman takes a step back is to get better leverage.” And I wasn’t at all averse to doing that. I love a good fight, and I wrote some zinger letters and speeches and commentaries. I wounded a few egos in the process. You’re mucking around with my Coast Guard there. Get your hands off. Don’t you mess around with my Coast Guard.

I miss all that, but mostly we miss the day-to-day ongoing relations with the people. It changes. You know, things change. But also there are a lot of things that aren’t very different. Some of the things that we talk about today are in different arenas, and they’re in different categories and they’re different magnitudes, but a lot of it is the same—what goes around comes around is an old saying, right? And, yeah, it does.

Paul Stillwell: Could you talk about your role and your wife’s role in Capstone and how that’s a legacy to a future generation of flag officers?

Admiral Gracey: Capstone is a six-week course given four times a year for new flag officers of all the services with the idea of getting them to understand jointness, understand what each of the five armed forces brings to the arena. Among other benefits of the program—one almost always cited by graduates—is getting to know the classmates. This provides points of contact, in each of the other services, with people at about equivalent career positions. Over the years all have found this useful in finding ways to work out various problems or getting needed info. Early on I was asked if the Coast Guard would support this program, which was being created about 1982-1983. I said, “Sure—providing you give the Coast Guard equal time.”

And the general said, “Well, equal?”

I said, “Well, proportionally equal. If the big four are each getting a day, give us a half a day. Just let us have our time, and make room in the class for Coast Guard officers, at least one in each class.” That was agreed, and when I retired I was invited to become a Capstone Senior Fellow. Senior Fellows are retired four-star officers who participate with each class, answer questions, share experiences, etc. They’re just there

for the Capstone Fellows. For several years we had three or four that sat in all the time. Now it's down to one or two.

One would travel with each group when the class traveled. They'd split the Fellows into three groups and travel to different parts of the world for about three weeks. One group goes to Europe, one to Asia, and one to South America. Each of those groups has a Senior Fellow with them. Another week was spent with the entire class together visiting major commands in the U.S. One or two Senior Fellows would go with them on that trip. Here in town we met at National Defense University at Fort McNair. We would have three or four Senior Fellows sit in on the lectures and visits to the Congress, and various service headquarters. The idea was we would listen, we would talk with them. We would answer questions, and we would have a Senior Fellows Forum, and they could ask us whatever they wanted. It is a "non-attribution" course. Nothing anybody says is ever allowed to be repeated outside the room. So the Fellows all felt comfortable asking questions, and the speakers felt free to give straight, unqualified answers. Non-attribution was strictly observed and carefully followed by the Fellows.

For the last week of the six-week program they bring the Fellows' spouses in from all over the world. Government pays for it. The idea is that the spouses can get a feel for what this is all about and get to know each other and get to be more informed about geopolitics and the like. It is *not* a "sugar-and-spice," "duties-of-the-spouses" program. The first course I went to as a Senior Fellow was in September of '86. Randy asked if I thought she could sit in, and I said, "I bet you can. I'll ask the general."

He said, "Love to have her."

After her first day I asked, "How did it go?"

She said, "Somebody needs to tell those guys that we can handle the big words. Maybe we might even be treated like intelligent adults." [Laughter]

I said, "Oh, well, why don't you pass that along to the general?"

She said, "Do you think he'd like to hear that?"

I said, "He probably wouldn't like to, but I bet in a way he would." So she called Army Lieutenant General Dick Lawrence, who was President of NDU at the time.* He said, "Oh, my. How would you like to create a program that meets those standards?"

* Lieutenant General Richard Lawrence, USA.

She said, “Hmm. How about if I do it on a trial basis and you tell me if you like it?”

He said, “Okay.” So she set out to create a program where they get lectured on geopolitics and world affairs and other “intelligent adult” topics. They do share experience. She points out that between them they have multi-years of experience, and so they should talk to each other and share. She has a forum where she talks and answers questions. But they get lectured by experts on what’s going on in different parts of the world and other matters of moment.

Randy has been doing her Capstone Spouse Week thing since 1987. She has been a smash hit with every class—some more or less than others, of course. Recently I was at a Capstone Dinner and someone talking to me about the whole program said “Your wife is a legend for the work she has done with Capstone.” Not bad—and deserved. But she loves every minute of doing it—shouldn’t get paid for having such satisfaction and fun.

Capstone has been very significant for the Coast Guard. For a while Admiral Yost didn’t think it was necessary to send our new flags to Capstone. I persuaded him that it was. If we’re going to talk about us being part of the U.S. military team, we’ve got to be part of the whole—not just bits and pieces here and there. And the other people need to know about us. They need to know Coast Guard officers, and they need to know what the Coast Guard’s all about—what we have that will fill out U.S. capabilities. The course was run differently early on. There were sessions for each service to tell what they brought to the arena. They don’t do that anymore. The fellows are just supposed to pick it up as they go. I think that’s a mistake, but nonetheless.

The young flags that go there are fun to be with—and impressive. It was great when I was there as a Senior Fellow, especially because I got to know the new Coast Guard flags coming through. Randy gets to know the spouses and a little bit with the military members. Her class of spouses these days usually includes a man or two. Early on I knew all the new Coast Guard flags, but after several years into my retirement it got so I knew a few but not most of them. They knew me, of course, but I didn’t know them. So it was good to have the chance to know Coast Guard’s new leaders.

You asked me, Paul, about the impact of Capstone on the Coast Guard and relationships with the services and of both Randy’s and my participation. I like to think

it's really quite significant. On the first day of each Capstone class, we Senior Fellows introduced ourselves to the class, and the Fellows introduced themselves to everybody. Just go around the room. In the course of introducing myself, I always said, "One of my principal jobs here is to teach you guys how to count to five. And I want you to understand that. The number is *five*. That's the number of military services in this country, and you can guess which one is number five that I'm talking about."

On their trips they go to visit the Coast Guard command down at Key West. And they stop off at one place or another and they see the Coast Guard ships and the airplanes, and they watch our crews, and they go out on a surface effect ship, and they watch our guys and gals and our helicopters do their thing. I would think that would be ho-hum for them. It isn't ho-hum for them, because they haven't seen it before. We do it all the time, and so they get a feel for this in the course of discussions.

I hope the current Coast Guard flags that are going through the course pitch in, because there have been some that were a little reluctant to project themselves and us and I've gotten them aside and said, "Hey, jump in here and put your two cents' worth in. They need to know how you think, and how you think is how the Coast Guard thinks. They need to understand that. That's part of why they're here." I think the value of that has already shown. I think the readiness of current leaders to call on Coast Guard assets in a variety of international military situations of late can be at least partly attributable to the fact that those leaders were exposed to realities of how the Coast Guard can do some special things that need doing. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs always comes and talks to each Capstone class once. For a while it was done with the spouses present. That's the way it is nowadays. But some of the Chairmen preferred talking just to the Fellows. General Powell and General Shalikashvili came and talked just to the Capstone Fellows—and us Senior Fellows.* Like all sessions, it was non-attribution, so they really laid some stuff out for all of us to hear and see. Admiral Crowe was pretty good about this, but Powell never missed acknowledging me in the room and the Coast Guard as part

* General Colin L. Powell, USA, served as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from 1 October 1989 to 30 September 1993. In 2001 he became Secretary of State. General John M. Shalikashvili, USA, served as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of staff from 25 October 1993 to 30 September 1997.

of the team, nor did Shalikashvili. General Shelton talked to Fellows and wives together—and included all.*

Shalikashvili was dynamite in terms of the Coast Guard as a part of the team. I think part of this is because of liaison people. Part of it is the Capstone program. I like to think part of it is because in the early times I was banging away at this all the time, and now all the people that are in those top DoD positions were the people who were there when I was saying, “Count to five. Don’t forget the Coast Guard could do this or that for you guys if you just let us. Don’t forget this, don’t forget that. Oh, by the way, when you talk about intelligence,” I said, “I don’t see any space on your chart for the Coast Guard Intelligence Center.”

“Well, do you have one?”

“Yes, we do.” And I like to think that all of that kind of merged in and then, bit by bit, things happened that they asked us to participate in and, “Whoa, look what those guys can do.” Now it’s just routine. Of course we’re going to go where the action is. You’ve got to board some ships. You’ve got to check for illegal cargoes, smuggling stuff. Hey, that’s what the Coast Guard does. You say you’ve got some oil well fires, or you say somebody’s blowing up your ships? Well, let’s get a Coast Guard Reserve team over here, a Port Security Team, and put them in the water and keep those devils away from us. So I think it’s routine. I think that’s not ever going to be a problem again, but it was a major problem in the ’80s during my tenure and before.

All the while I was “growing up” as a flag officer and certainly in my three-star and four-star years, it was a big-time problem and I kept banging at it. Capstone is a good program. It’s changed some in approach, and that’s disappointed me a little bit, because they’re building in some days that are more training than education if that makes sense. They’re spending time listening to lecturers talk about this, that, and the other thing. Going out to CIA and finding out how all that goes together and that kind of thing. We always played a two-day war game over at the National War College, but now they’re going down to Norfolk, and they’ve got a big computerized deal, and they’re spending four days at it out of the limited time they have for U.S. travel.

* General Henry Hugh Shelton, USA, was Chairman from 1 October 1997 to 30 September 2001.

My impression is that the people are coming back not feeling like it's been really worthwhile. Yeah, it's important to do that a little bit I guess—how to fight a war—but that's all going to change now. Capstone is not intended to be a training program. It's intended to be an “information and familiarization” program.

But I think having a pushy, outspoken U.S. Coast Guard advocate as a Senior Fellow in Capstone has been important. And, certainly Randy's involvement with the spouses has been meaningful. They have always responded to her, warmly and personally. Well, almost always. They're not universal, because some think, “Why is she telling us this?”

You know, “Who is this Coast Guard wife?” or “Why is this old woman telling us these things?” You get some of that. They always have a dinner during the course of that last week, and I usually go with Randy. One after another of her spouse class will be introduced to me or see my tag and say, “Oh, boy, do we love your wife.” Or one of the Fellows will comment about how much his or her spouse is getting out of the course or being with Randy. They don't have to say that. So she's communicating, and, of course, we think she's making the Coast Guard women proud and maybe showing a way. And we think that sort of thing spins out. You never know what's rubbing off on whom. One of the things I've had reinforced in my mind since I have retired is being amazed at how what you did somewhere, sometime in your past rubbed off on somebody. In a way or ways you never imagined. It's amazing—and fun.

Paul Stillwell: Any memories you have of the other senior fellows you worked with? I know Admiral Harry Train was very active in that, for example.*

Admiral Gracey: Yes, he was. Harry Train, General Wally Nutting from the Joint Readiness Command and SouthCom. Admiral Wes McDonald of CinCLant, General Bob Sennewald, Korea and ForceCom.† Air Force General John Shaud, Europe.‡ General Tom Morgan, Marines Assistant Commandant, and others.§ Admiral Ike Kidd

* See the Naval Institute oral history of Admiral Harry D. Train II, USN (Ret.).

† General Robert W. Sennewald, USA (Ret)

‡ General John A. Shaud, USAF (Ret).

§ General Thomas R. Morgan, USMC (Ret).

was also a Senior Fellow for a while.* All interesting people in their own right, and we had wonderful relations. Ike was a bit of tyrant, but that was Ike Kidd.

Paul Stillwell: That was his personality.

Admiral Gracey: That's right, that's right. He was playing the Ike Kidd role, and he did it well. I was very fond of Harry Train. I think Harry was pretty disappointed that he didn't make CNO, and I can understand that. I think that was a real jolt to him as a matter of fact.

Paul Stillwell: He discussed that in his oral history.

Admiral Gracey: Did he? He never said that to me, but I know from what he did afterward, I think. He went off and hiked the Appalachian Trail for a while. I had Coast Guard Atlantic Area in 1981, and Harry invited me down to Norfolk just to see what was going on in his domain at CinCLant. He took me around and showed me. Before I went, people told me that Admiral Train would talk for a short while, but he was a really very busy guy. I should not be offended if he didn't hang around and if he didn't squire me around or see me out to the car or any of those kinds of things. Harry never left my side. We spent the whole day together. We had lunch together. He took me in and shared his ops brief. We talked at great length. I was just a Coast Guard three-star up there in New York, but we got to be big friends. It would have been fun to work with him as CNO. We would have made a good combo, I think.

Wes McDonald is Wes McDonald. I mean, I got to know Wes early on by giving him a ride back from Pensacola in Coast Guard 01. We were both down there for the induction of pioneer Coast Guard aviator Elmer Stone into the Aviation Hall of Fame, and Wes was there with another Navy flag whose name I've lost for the moment, and I said, "Have you guys got a way to get home?"

* Admiral Isaac C. Kidd, Jr., USN (Ret.).

“Well, we’re going on such-and-such an airline.” I said, “Well, how about flying ‘Red-Tail Airline,’ as we sometimes call CG-01 in house? It won’t fly until we’re ready, and when we’re ready it flies.”

They said, “Sounds good to us.” So they flew back with us. And we had a good chance to get acquainted. We knew Nancy, Wes’s first wife, who was very ill for a long time. Randy and Wes were hugging friends, you know, and it all spins off of all of that.

Bob Sennewald and I had some different points of view, but we had fun with them. This was a very friendly group. We were very close. Ike didn’t hang in. Ike was there, and we were all friends and he was a part of it, but we didn’t sing to the same choirmaster that Ike did. And so there was some fun that we had together that, just hanging over a coffeepot or telling what somebody had said or when we did our forums together it was always fun. When Ike was involved it was different. He was pretty tough on those young guys in the class, and he’d climb their frame sometimes. I didn’t feel it was warranted. But good experience.

Paul Stillwell: He couldn’t be any other way.

Admiral Gracey: No, no. I met Ike when I was Atlantic Area. I’d been up in Newport, and I was going to the airport in Providence to fly back to New York. Ike was there, and I introduced myself, and he did the same, and I’d heard the name Ike Kidd, of course, but I didn’t really know him. We had a good talk and one thing and another. He was kind of an interesting character. He had a wonderful manner of always greeting you like you were the person he was most hoping to see when you came around the corner that day. He was very good at that. Sometimes I felt he couldn’t have the slightest idea who I was, but he treated me as if he did. I came to believe, as I knew him better, that he probably did have a memory like that. It was a great talent, and it served him well. Ike served the country well. But he was certainly a reprobate. Is that a good word? I think that’s a valid word.

Paul Stillwell: Okay. What can you tell me—highlights only now—about how you’ve spent your retirement time other than with Capstone?

Admiral Gracey: Well I applied for a couple of jobs kind of halfheartedly that I read about in newspapers and thought they might be interesting, and that's silly. What I really wanted to do was be on boards of directors. I liked the idea of that. I didn't think I really wanted a full-time job. If one had come along that struck my fancy, I would have jumped at it, but I didn't go look, and I certainly hadn't curried any before I retired. I was approached and interviewed about taking over the presidency of the American Bureau of Shipping, but that opportunity had become doomed about the time I started making my anti-privatization-of-the-Coast-Guard speeches: "There's room for both government and private." There were a couple of maritime executives who didn't like that. In fact, one of them put out a memorandum that said, "Now, you know this guy's going to be looking for a job after he retires. You'd better read what he just said here very carefully." Well, he totally misinterpreted what I had said, though he knew me well. He never answered my letter to him when I wrote to try to set things straight.

Anyway, ABS picked a good man, somebody out of the shipping industry, and they should have. I could have done the job and would have done it well, but it was different from where I was headed, so probably just as well it didn't go my way. But I thought being on boards of directors would be interesting, and fairly early in the game I was invited by George Steinbrenner to join his board of directors at American Shipbuilding and Tampa Shipyards. And I did that for about five years.

The Board used to meet at Yankee Stadium periodically. Most of the time we met in Tampa, but we would periodically have a meeting in one of the executive rooms behind the skyboxes at Yankee Stadium. We'd look out over the field as we met in the daytime. Then we'd have dinner at the Yankee Club, and then see a game that night. And I told George, "Don't ever do this on a day when the Red Sox are in town, or I'm going to embarrass you when I get into your box then, because I'm born and brought up a Red Sox fan." And George always had something appropriate to say. But one night he came down to where I was sitting in his box and said, "There's somebody up back here who wants to talk to you. It was Richard Nixon. That was a fascinating and very positive experience. We spent the entire game together.

Nixon was sitting back there, and George introduced me. The former President was most hospitable. This was about the second inning. And he said, “Sit down, sit down, Admiral. I want to hear what’s happening to the Coast Guard.” And he really did want to know what was happening to the Coast Guard. We talked about it at length, interspersed with comments about the baseball game that was going on. He was a very knowledgeable baseball fan. Fun to be with. I have no idea whom the Yankees were playing that night, but President Nixon and I talked the entire game.

One night the same thing happened with Senator Paula Hawkins from Florida. She had some axes to grind about the Coast Guard, and why not do it in George’s box at Yankee Stadium? I would have preferred to talk baseball, not grind axes. I chaired the board of Tampa Ship, and I was on the board of American Ship. Chairing the Tampa Ship board didn’t mean very much, because that was all part of AmShip. I resigned. I didn’t like the way things were going, and George didn’t necessarily want to hear me talk about it. So after about five years I resigned.

I was a consultant for the MITRE Corporation, which serves as a government partner of sorts, a Federally Funded R&D Center I think it’s called. They do a lot of aviation work for FAA, and they were interested in the Coast Guard. One of their vice presidents had worked for the Deputy Secretary of Transportation, and I met him on a couple of trips to San Francisco when I was ComPacArea.

His name was Jack Fearnside, and I got to know him quite well. He wanted me to come to MITRE and do some thinking about how they might help the Coast Guard. Also, he was working up a new approach to administrative work and interrelationships on his staff. He remembered my work with the Coast Guard, and he wanted me to help him build that into his staff. So I did that for several years.

I was invited to be an advisor to Peter Sulzer, Chairman of New Sulzer Diesel, a Swiss company that built big slow-speed diesels, mostly for cruise ships and other commercial vessels. But they also competed and put the diesels into the new Coast Guard icebreaker *Healy*. Peter’s theory was, “Everything that happens in the maritime world is either paid for in the United States or is owned by somebody in the United States or is motivated to serve the United States. All I want you to do is pay attention to what’s

going on in the maritime arena in the U.S. For one day a week or so we'll provide an office for you."

He had some lawyers at law offices in town that represented him, and they had an office for me. I'd would just kind of drop Peter a note once in a while as to what I saw, or if he was in the country we'd have dinner together. And basically what I did was to make a point of going to all the merchant marine affairs like the Propeller Club luncheons and the many breakfasts people have in Washington and the various marine engineering societies and just kind of listened. I read all the industry press and met with principals.

And I told him, "If you have in mind that I'm going to sell anything to the Coast Guard, I won't do that. I don't want to sell at all."

Peter said, "I don't want you to sell anything. We have marketers to do that. All I want is your professional ear to listen. And I've been told that your understanding of politics and so forth in this town is pretty good, and I want to take advantage of that." We had a fine relationship. When I was in Switzerland I always had dinner at his home outside of Winterthur, not far from Zurich. I was with Peter and New Sulzur for five or six years.

Then I wound up on the board of a small company in New England called Maguire Group, Inc. That's an engineering planning company. Their President got tangled up with the State of Connecticut, because he rented a building in Waterbury, Connecticut, that was owned by the Mayor of Waterbury. The building had no socially redeeming graces, and Maguire paid an inordinate sum of money to get it. But miraculously Maguire showed up with some big contracts. Somebody blew the whistle on this, and the employees blew the whistle on the president and bought him out. The state then told the company they were disbarred from doing business in Connecticut. They operated primarily in New England, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York. Maguire counter-sued. In the settlement Connecticut agreed to let Maguire operate if they created a wholly owned subsidiary with an entirely separate Board of Directors that had to be approved by the State of Connecticut. The Commissioner of Transportation accepted. The subsidiary was to be called Maguire Connecticut.

Maguire then invited me to be the Chairman of Maguire Connecticut. I called my brother, who is an attorney in Connecticut. He said, "I don't know anything about

that company, but if they build roads in Connecticut, forget it.” So with one thing and another this was kind of a messy situation that was going on. The Maguire people were determined the company was coming back, but I said, “No, I don’t want to do that.”

The new President of Maguire and the Chairman came to Washington to have breakfast with me. In the course of that conversation they persuaded me that Maguire was a special, top-notch group of people—a company I wanted to work with. It was very much like the Coast Guard. Small, good, proud of itself. The employees were embarrassed by the Waterbury bit, and they bought out the errant boss at great cost to themselves. They were—and still are—the only engineering company in the country that has a published “Code of Ethics.” The employees themselves helped develop it and swore to it, and they all carried it around with them. This company deserved some leadership, and they wanted me to do it. The chairman was a pitcher at West Point, one year behind me in New London. Struck out Johnny Mize three times in a demonstration game at the beginning of the season, and Mize threw his bat at him.*

Paul Stillwell: Who was he?

Admiral Gracey: Ted Greisinger his name is. And the president of the company, Dick Repeta, was an all-American soccer player at U Mass, and I played soccer in New London. Those are not reasons to go, but I liked the leaders, and I liked what they said, so I said I would accept their invitation. I’m still there. The company got back on its feet in Connecticut, became very highly respected once again. Is now a going and probably one of the leading parts of the overall company. We did away with the subsidiary aspect and merged MGCI back into MGI after a certain number of years. I’m now on the major board of the company, and I love every minute of it. It’s a great little company. Warm and caring and very talented people.

Paul Stillwell: What’s it called?

* John Mize was a Baseball Hall of Fame player for the St. Louis Cardinals, New York Giants, and New York Yankees.

Admiral Gracey: Maguire Group, Incorporated, headquartered in New Britain, Connecticut. Unbeknownst to me at the time, they had, many years before, done some work at the Coast Guard Academy. Built some of the buildings there. They're involved with the so-called "big dig" in Boston as a subsidiary. Big things and little things.

Paul Stillwell: The eternal big dig.

Admiral Gracey: Yeah. I'm in another company. I should tell you that along the way I was called and asked about taking the Maritime Administrator job. As a matter of fact, it was Paul Yost that called. He'd been asked if he knew anybody and he said, "I thought of you instantly. Are you interested?" And I thanked him for that and I was interested a little bit. But I thought of what was going on, and the net pay return. At that time you lost half your retired pay if you took a government job, and the net effect was that I was going to be really busting my tail for about \$20,000 a year or something. It just decided it wasn't worth it. We talked about it, though.

Hey, life was more important than that, and at the time I had a couple of other boards that were dangling, and that's what I really wanted to do. So I said thanks but no thanks. Oh, I guess I was still involved with AmShip, too, and I would have had to give that up. And I enjoyed that. We had good people on the board, and I enjoyed it. Met Ted Williams through that board.* At Tampa airport one night Ted was there, I introduced myself and told him I was longtime Boston fan and a good friend of one of his fishing partners. He, being a Marine officer, respected my rank.† We shook hands, and he never let go of my hand. Must have talked five-ten minutes and he said, "Admiral, I've got to go get my airplane." But he was really great to talk to. It was a wonderful experience. I came home that night. I was a 60-year-old man. Randy said, "How did it go?"

I said, like an excited little kid, "I talked to Ted Williams. I talked to Ted Williams." [Laughter] But he was my hero, you know.

* Theodore S. Williams was a Baseball Hall of Fame player for the Boston Red Sox.

† Williams was a Marine Corps fighter pilot in World War II and the Korean War.

After the Valdez oil spill the oil companies created a two-part company to meet the provisions of the Oil Pollution Act. One was called the Marine Preservation Association, MPA. The other was called the Marine Spill Response Corporation, MSRC. MPA was designed to get shipping companies and ship operators together to fund oil-spill cleanup operations, etc. They would all pay dues based on how many barrels of oil they moved and so forth. With that they would fund an operating company that would do the actual cleaning up of spills, but they would keep the two separate because of the liability aspects and so forth. MSRC was that company; it was a spin-off of an association of oil companies.

They wanted MSRC formed, and I was invited to be on the board of directors. The Board was made up of people with assorted backgrounds in business and government. Nobody who had worked within the oil industry within two or three years could be on it. There were seven of us. Vice Admiral Jack Costello, U.S. Coast Guard Retired, was to be president of MSRC. A couple of people I knew in the oil industry in California called and asked what I thought about Jack being the president. I said, “Boy, you’ve got a winner. Grab that guy. If you can get Jack Costello, you’ll get this thing put together in nothing flat.”

Later on I was asked to be on the Board, and I still am. I’ve been doing that for ten years. With a couple exceptions the original Board is still together. One is General Julius Becton of Washington School Board fame and FEMA, Federal Emergency Management Agency fame, and now on the General Dynamics Board of Directors.* One is Don Ogleby, who is President of the American Banking Association. One was Executive Vice President of Fanny Mae. MSRC’s Board is a collection of people like that. We had our tenth anniversary dinner the other night, and we were remembering the first dinner we had. It was memorable because it was the night the bombs first fell on Baghdad in Desert Storm—1991.

Another memorable time we had a meeting in Nashville. On our way home, we were sitting in the lounge at the airport; one of them had a membership to the Admiral’s

* Lieutenant General Julius W. Becton, USA (Ret.).

Club or something at American Airlines. Anyway, we were all sitting in there having a cup of coffee and that was the day of the Oklahoma City bombing.*

Recently we were sitting after another Board dinner, and it was right after the 9/11 Trade Center disasters in New York and at the Pentagon. Someone jokingly suggested that perhaps we should disband. We're a bad group ever to have a meeting.

MSRC has built a fleet of 12 ships, 200-and-some-odd feet long. Great capability, navigation and capability that won't quit. Handle a helicopter. Just state of the art. Clean-up ships. We have small bands of people around the country that are there and ready. We have trained people that will be called in when they have a spill. So that's some of what I've been doing professionally since 1986.

Paul Stillwell: Well, please bring me up to date on your children.

Admiral Gracey: Well, as you may remember, we have three offspring who are a long way from being children. They are all middle-aged adults. They are all sharp. All got academic scholarships to college—thank heavens.

Son Kevin is our eldest. He went to Trinity College in Hartford. After two or three near misses, he has decided he would just as soon not get tangled in the marriage arena, and he and his dog live in house at a beach near Quincy, Mass. He worked for several years in the retail music business and did some amateur acting. Now works for a company that works primarily with the Air Force on various defense contracts. In season he spends just about every weekend at our three family shore cottages in Clinton, Connecticut, where he does a lot of work and helps manage the rentals.

He hits a lot of golf balls. Is a good golfer. Would be a lot better if he had time to play more. Is into computers and on-line auctions and the like. Smart, smart guy. He and Randy and I have some good golf matches, and he's inherited his mother's love for and wizardry with flowers and gardens. And we're all avid bird watchers and feeders—both at home and at our place in Connecticut. In fact, the whole family is big on birds

* On 19 April 1995 Army veteran Timothy McVeigh detonated a rental truck filled with explosives and did extensive damage to the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The explosion killed 168 people who were in the building. For his actions McVeigh was convicted of murder and executed on 11 June 2001.

and animals. Our cottages back up on a long stretch of wetland/salt marsh that is rife with birds, from ospreys to swallows. And in the fall the monarch butterflies fly right straight through our yard on their way to Mexico—fantastic.

Our next oldest is Cheryl. She is married and living in Kirksville, Missouri, with her husband and 14-year-old son. She went to Tufts University. While there she got involved with the Tufts Mountain Club doing a lot of climbing in New England and taking a trip to Africa “to see the eclipse from Lake Rudolph and climb Mount Kilimanjaro.” On the way home from that adventure her plane was on the ground in Beirut when there was a hostage incident at another plane that got a lot of world attention. Somewhere in there after Tufts, she got a master’s degree in linguistics at the University of Michigan, and spent two years in VISTA—Volunteers in Service to America—in San Antonio. After that she went back to New England and did some paralegal work and work writing exams and miscellaneous writing. That’s where she met her future husband. She has done some archiving work. She got involved with that at Amherst College doing the papers of John J. McCloy, one of the post-World War II government architects. She is now a curator at the museum at the National School of Osteopathy in Kirksville. That’s the place that was created by A. T. Still, who developed the science of osteopathy.

She is married to Steve Carroll, a tenured professor at Truman State University, where he teaches and researches environmental studies and botany and writes. She is into church activities big time, having been an Elder of the Presbyterian Church in Kirksville early on. They lived in Bloomington, Indiana, while Steve did his post-doctoral work at the University of Indiana and went looking for his first post

They have a son, Timothy, who is king of the world and a really smart kid. He is 14 and active. He participates. Timothy doesn't know how to say "No," doesn't want to say, "No." If there is something to be done, Tim wants to do it. That includes church activities, sport, the band, whatever.

Our youngest, daughter Pamela, lives in Canton, Connecticut with her 13-year-old son and 11-year-old daughter. She is a nurse. She is a graduate of Washington College in Chestertown, Maryland, and McQueen Gibbs Willis School of Nursing in Easton, Maryland. She works for a corporation that has a collection of homes for severely

handicapped people, where they care for a handful of people each. She's the nurse that goes around to make sure that everything is being done right. Currently estranged husband Bill is also a nurse.

Pamela is a woman of amazing strength. She's into pets—dogs and dog rescue particularly. There is a Dog Rescue Society, and Pamela is the representative for the west side of Hartford. People call up and say, “We have this dog that needs a home. And we think we have found one. Can you take the dog until we can make connections?” Pamela says, “Of course.” Except they all fall in love with the dog. So now they have several dogs. The last I knew they also had six cats and three rabbits. This is a house full of livestock. She and the kids love them all. She's got the greatest sense of humor of anybody I know. She and I can make each other laugh whenever we talk. That's true with all the kids really, but Pam and I can easily get to each other's funnybone.

Her son's name is James, and her daughter's name is Dorcas—goes by Dori. I can't imagine how she got *those* names. [Laughter]. James is a big kid—like his father. He's into reading and computers and has the most amazing store of information in his head. He's one of these guys that can read anything in a minute and know what he read—like his Uncle Kevin. He has a great laugh and a good sense of humor, inherited from his mother. Dori is into everything. She is a vigorous person with strong opinions and a sense of fun. She is fearless and enjoys intramural sports. She's gotten into the game of horseshoes, which we all enjoy playing at our shore cottage—along with just being together.

And so there we are. That's the family, and I should tell you about Dorcas and me, Randy and me. Randy is still working as Director of the Executive Development Course for the Capstone Program. She's now sharing the classroom work with another woman. They do every other course. She is the head of the Stephen Ministers at Calvary Methodist Church here in south Arlington, Virginia. We're both involved in the church. I've been the Chairman of the Board of Trustees and I am now chairing the Church Council. Living five minutes away from the church and being involved in a bunch of things there means we're spending a lot of time there.

For a while, shortly after joining the church, I got up to my ears in church financial matters. A long-time member who had been treasurer and contractor and

repairman and you-name-it forever had a stroke which took away his ability to communicate for a while—and he had all the knowledge of what was to be done and how he had done it in his head. We had no finance committee backing up the now-unavailable treasurer. Paper was flowing in, but money was not flowing out in timely fashion. We found a pro to work part time to get us where we should be and keep us there. The church owns 14 rental houses on its block. But our insurance for them and for the church itself expired with no word from the insurer, so we found a new one that would talk to us. And the ancient heating plant for one of our three buildings—a day school—died. In the middle of winter, of course. We found an imaginative contractor to come and put us back in business with a brand new plant in four days. It was exciting for a while—but kind of fun to be able to help a bit. All's well now. And our old friend is available to help.

Oh, and I'm the Chairman of the Board of AFRAS, the Association For Rescue At Sea. We're building up our international contacts—non-governmental lifesaving organizations we can support in addition to the Royal National Lifeboat Institute—the British organization we were originally formed to support. Every year we have our Annual Awards Ceremony to award a bona fide gold medal and a \$500.00 honorarium to a Coast Guard enlisted person who has made a particularly spectacular rescue. We do it in one of the congressional office buildings and congressmen and staffers and maritime people come—even some people from the organizations we support. We also present the award I talked about to an AMVER-participating ship each year. One day we'll give an award to a Coast Guard Auxiliarist who makes a rescue that qualifies under the same criteria as for the gold medal. And that takes a lot of time, because we have a new president, and he's very ambitious and we want to expand out horizons.

I've still got most of my old friends—and a lot of new ones. Thank heavens, Randy and I lost nobody close last week, in that ugliness on September 11. We were in Connecticut at the time. Spent a lot of time staring alternately at the television and at our feet and didn't know whether to be angry or torn up. I cry at movies. I've cried more in the last two weeks just listening to music or watching people. I also cry at parades. I love a parade. I love patriotic music. So it's been a tough two weeks—emotionally.

And I have to tell you, Paul, that this has been one wonderful experience for me. To sit and talk for as many hours as I have—I'm embarrassed to think how many they were. Don't tell me. I don't even want to hear it—about the second greatest love of my life. Randy says, "What do you mean second greatest?" [Laughter] That being the Coast Guard. Just a great opportunity and I thank you for it.

Paul Stillwell: Well, I thank you, because I echo that word of enjoyment. This has been a treat for me, and I'm grateful to the Coast Guard History Office for sponsoring the oral history and suggesting the idea. I have enjoyed the opportunity to get to know you well, and talk about our mutual love of baseball at the same time.

Admiral Gracey: Oh, golly. It didn't take us long to find that out, did it?

Paul Stillwell: No.

Admiral Gracey: Yeah, having that wonderful bridge if we needed one, and I don't think we did but it's great to have it.

Paul Stillwell: Thank you very much.

Admiral Gracey: Yes, sir.

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Admiral James S. Gracey
U.S. Coast Guard (Retired)**

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***Polar Sea*, USCGC (WAGB-11)**

Around 1980 was caught in ice north of Alaska, 483-485
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