

California Maritime Academy Library

Interview with John Creech

Oral History Project

Interviewee: John Creech
Interviewer: David Hollander
Date: October 9, 2007

Place: Unspecified
Transcriber: Rev.com

Preface

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with John Creech conducted by David Hollander on October 9, 2007. This interview is part of the Cal Maritime Oral History Project.

Readers are asked to bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose.

John Creech is an alumni from the class of 1954, Deck.

Abbreviation

JC: John Creech
DH: David Hollander

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Interview

DH: Hello, today is October 9th, 2007. My name is David Hollander and I'm a cadet at the California Maritime Academy. I am interviewing John W. Creech Jr, who was born on February 16th, 1929. This interview is being recorded by Benjamin Bolin at the California Maritime Academy Library in Vallejo, California. First, I would like to take this opportunity, thank you for being here. This is very nice of you to volunteer your time.

JC: My pleasure, my pleasure. Nice meeting you.

DH: Now you graduated in the year 1954.

JC: Correct, yes.

[00:46]

DH: I have some simple questions for you just to start off with. Looking around at the campus now, what is dramatically different, besides the size, that you see, and you know, behavior amongst the cadets, different types of buildings, different layout? What first strikes you when you walk on board now?

JC: Coming down the drive, that big lawn area just down from the tennis courts was our barracks. And the mess hall was on the other side, and every night, every meal, we'd have formation on the driveway comin' down, and then we marched into the mess hall there and the part of that mess hall was the library. And that's a big difference, about the only building I see that's still standing here back in those days is the gymnasium and the swimming pool. Everything else is new.

[01:34]

DH: So was more of a military setup for you--

JC: Very definitely a military setup. And where I would, taking a number off my top my head, 90% of us were midshipmen USNR/MMR and we were all committed to drills every Saturday, very military.

DH: That brings up another question I have, were you part of the Reserve Officer Training Program?

JC: Yes, I was a USNR/MMR and I think I made 54 cents a day.

DH: A small stipend amount.

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JC: Yeah.

[02:06]

DH: Did you did you go to CMA for that purpose? I mean, was it was one of the draws that you would become an officer when you graduated as well--

JC: That was one of the reasons I came up here and also my family has a background in signaling. My father was Quartermaster with the old army transport service and my granddaddy was a sea captain up and down the Pacific Coast here, brought into Alaska. So that was sort of in my blood.

DH: Oh, I understand you're from Berkeley, too?

JC: Yes, Berkeley. I was born and raised in Berkeley went to Berkeley High and those schools in and around there.

DH: So, this is your backyard?

JC: Yeah, this is my backyard.

[02:40]

DH: So, you had mentioned something earlier, and this is about the time when you were a student here. You said CMA was a closed campus. How did the closed campus work?

JC: Closed campus, when we were third classmen, here we were here Monday, but we're here five days a week. We could not get off campus. Liberty started noon [12:00 p.m.] on Saturday after drill out on the field up by the gym and as third classmen when we had to be back at 10:00 p.m. Sunday night. And when we moved up the ladder it was the same, and we had to be back at 11:00 p.m. Then as first classmen when we had Wednesday afternoon off and didn't have to be back until midnight on Sunday. And other than that, the plans were closed.

DH: Wow.

JC: We didn't get off at all. You'd get off on Wednesdays if you had a medical, but generally speaking it was closed.

[03:35]

DH: Now I notice also in your yearbook that you were a third mate.

JC: Yes.

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DH: What does that mean? 'Cause the course setup is a little different now.

JC: Well, I graduated here in the deck, that time we had a deck department and an engineering department. Graduated, I was considered '54 D, deck and there were some '54 E and that was previous classes and up and down. When we graduated, we were, after we'd taken our exams, we were licensed by the Coast Guard as third mates or third system engineers, and we were, entitled us to operate as an officer on any of the commercial ships. However, when I graduated, I may interject in here, Korea was still in existence and we went into the Navy immediately. I walked; upon graduation I had my orders to the Navy.

[04:29]

DH: So, you went to combat afterwards or-- on patrols?

JC: I went up, I went on, I was called, I asked for cargo ships, tankers, and what have you, and they put me on the first guided missile cruiser in the Navy.

DH: Sounds like the Navy now.

JC: So, yeah, so the ship was over here at Mare Island being refitted and then I went on board her as a junior officer.

[04:52]

DH: Okay, then I must have misread it because I thought maybe it was a campus position of leadership.

JC: No, in campus here, I got out ahead. They decided they were gonna form a Band Company because every, all the companies here, divisions carried rifles. And I said, "I'm not good at that." You have to clean 'em and you get demerits if they're not clean, right? So, I played a clarinet at someplace in my life. So, I became part of the band playing the clarinet. And we had all kinds of beautiful privileges doing that. And then in my senior year, at that time we had company commanders and staff officers, I became the band sub commander, which was the executive officer of the band.

[05:37]

DH: Yeah, I noticed that, and how did the Band Company work? You know, you said it was a very military atmosphere. Little different from now. What sort of privileges did you get?

JC: Well, down in Vallejo here, for example, they used to always have a couple of parades, so we went up there and marched in the parade. When we were in a foreign port, they always asked to hear us so we went played for the dignitaries these foreign ports, so we

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got extra liberty. And so, there was, take advantage of it and we went off and we played, we marched in San Francisco in parades quite a bit over there. So, it was fun. I can't remember the number of people in the band, but it was good-sized band.

DH: Now, you were one of the founding members of the band?

JC: I was in the first group of the band, yes. I was, I think a second classmen when I went into the band, and it, life was a lot better when you had that privilege.

[06:19]

DH: So how did that whole idea start?

JC: I think the superintendent we had here at that time decided he wanted to have a band. So, he went ahead and focused on it, see what they could, appointed a couple of people who had some musical background that he knew about, and it just sort of evolved from that point. We raised our hand and volunteered, but also with the privileges and also the fact that we didn't have to carry a rifle was an incentive for a lot of us to get into it.

[06:52]

DH: Now, did these rifles, besides being having to be cleaned, were the people who carried them trained to use them and practice with it?

JC: No, they were just show rifles. I don't even know if, I think they could do some kind of what you call arms,

DH: Order arms.

JC: Order arms, yes. But anyway, on Saturday when they were all lined up, we marched back and forth in the band and we had a full inspection every Saturday.

DH: Wow.

JC: And if your uniforms were not, and your rifles weren't up to the standards that they wanted, you got demerits. And get too many demerits, you got privileges taken away. You didn't get liberty, you didn't get, you could actually be goin' on probation if you got too many. So, it was something does stay aware of, but make sure they were clean. But not for me. They didn't know what a clean clarinet was supposed to look like.

DH: Do you still play the clarinet?

JC: No, no, I gave it to my granddaughter a long time ago. She plays it now.

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DH: Now, also in the yearbook it said that, it mentioned very specifically, and it almost seemed tongue in cheek, some administrative policies that you had made that kept everybody on an even keel. What were they talking about?

JC: Gosh, that big in there. I must have been doing with the band at the time, that would be the only thing of, I just don't recall what that would mean. You're reading something that I don't remember.

DH: Oh, well okay.

JC: Yeah, sorry about that.

DH: Well, if it comes to later on, maybe a question might jar it. 'Cause it may have maybe had something to do with the Ring Dance. But this goes to the next one of, I'm sorry.

JC: No, I did work on the Hawsepipe, but that would not have been administrative type and things like that, but I don't remember anything specific, sorry.

[08:42]

DH: Oh, that's okay. When it came to discipline, 'cause you mentioned demerits, how were problems solved, especially among students, when you were in school here?

JC: Well, with the hierarchy we had here, of course, any problems that you had had, amongst classmates, we really didn't have any to speak of, if that's what you're referring to, because we were pretty well military and we were pretty much in order. We just really didn't have any issues of, if things got out of hand and if there was a theft or there was something of that nature, it was handled by the commandant and the Corps officers who would bring it to the attention of the Corps. I don't know if that answers your question or not.

DH: Well, I was tryin' to think, the little interpersonal rivalries that might happen, or people just plain old don't like each other. How were things like that handled when you're in a strict closed campus atmosphere? You're gonna have people rub each other the wrong way, how--

JC: We have people rub; we'd just ignored 'em. We just stayed away from an inner rivalry. The only inner rivalry we really had was you know, the deck department and the engine department going at each other. We had rivalry from the standpoint, who is gonna end up number one, number two, and number three in the class standings, in academic standings. We had rivalry in that standpoint, but from a standpoint, and there was only 50 of us in my class. We started with 100, and we started 50 and that was divided, not evenly, but between the deck and engine. So, I just don't remember really having any issues that way. They could have been, but I don't remember 'em.

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DH: Okay, so everybody's pretty close by this--

JC: Yeah, it was pretty close. And we're all striving for one thing, because in one sense if we left out of here, we were all old enough, because we were all midshipmen here on the US, in our program. We were gonna be down a four door. As buck privates.

DH: Ah.

JC: We were all draft eligible.

DH: I see.

JC: And we were draft exempt when we were here. And so, it was pretty, you'd rather be Navy officer, naval officer versus a buck private.

DH: So, it was a real incentive to graduate.

JC: Very, very definite incentive to graduate.

DH: Now you told me earlier that you were a little older when you came through here. So, you were in your--

JC: I was 21 when I came in here. And we had, at that time we had to be graduated and commissioned at 25. You could still, you had to, the rules were we had to be less, 25 or less when we graduated from here. And I was just...

DH: You were just 25, now did you receive a degree while you were here or just--

JC: At that time my degree was a Bachelor of Science in Nautical Sciences. That navigation and seamanship, I think they called it. We were only three years when I was here. But it was three years.

DH: Yes.

JC: It was, you got a little break after the holiday, and you got a little break after you came home from cruise. And, of course our cruise system was a lot different than it is today, too.

[11:34]

DH: How was it different?

JC: Well, we took our cruise in January. We did all three cruises on here, and we did three cruises on here. Whereas now you got two cruises on the ship and you have one

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commercial. I think from one standpoint that having that commercial is very positive. That some of us didn't have and, you know, when you take when you go on a commercial cruise as a third officer you don't want to come on aboard the ship as a complete, ignorant to the facts of being on a commercial ship so, at least that's the way I look at it. So I think the program is a lot better from that standpoint, but also having the, being able to get onto the ship and do nuts and bolts is a very, very positive thing, and that's why I think the CMA graduates are better fit for commercial than a lot of places because of the training.

DH: You mentioned that with the training here that you got, you got a special award as an incident while you're in the Navy, because of the training received here.

JC: Correct.

[12:52]

DH: Later on, you attributed the training you received here to becoming the vice president of a company and CEO of a couple of the divisions. What, compared to other college students who were going into the job market at the same time you were, set us as CMA graduates apart, other than the military regulations and the rigors that we had to go through?

JC: Discipline, integrity, ethics, and leadership. Any way you wanna put those. Those are things that you have to, you just don't lie up here. You have to develop integrity and you work hard to get your integrity and you don't ever lie to anybody and you don't accept lies. And you know how to pretty much distinguish those things. I think that's pretty important. And I don't, I just do not believe that I would have had the successes in life without this training here.

DH: Now, while you were here, what sort of, what people encouraged you to have that sort of mindset? And it's not something that can be taught, it's something you have to pick up.

JC: I think it just sort of, being here. It just sort of, just came, and there might have been a bad apple or two, but I don't remember any. And I just think it sort of happened in the atmosphere that we were living in. And I just can't speak highly enough of the school. That's why I support the school. That's why I was on the foundation as long as I was before we went, you know, the foundation has completely changed now since we've become CSU, but it was very important to me to be able to give the school back something in volunteerism. At that time, I'm sort of digressing here a little bit. Up until '95, we had our own foundation board and they had their own board of governors. Only Bruce Johnson was the head of the board of governors. And I was chairman of the foundation. And he wanted us at every meeting of the board of governors, so we could interplay and had a relationship there. We weren't adversaries, and it was very encouraging to be with that type of people and where we can support the school with the funds that we had, where they couldn't get 'em from the state and the only time we couldn't be part of the board of governors meeting was when they had personnel issues,

which is, you know, but I, everything I have today I believe to be, my parents, but the school from an educational standpoint, this is it.

[15:12]

DH: Do you still see that attitude here prevalent today?

JC: I see that, I can't identify whether there, because your structure is so much different that I don't totally understand the leadership within the Corps that you have today. So, I'm a little bit hesitant to say. I see that, as I said earlier, the students are focused, and I would hope that what I have said I got out of this, they get out of it. But I couldn't identify whether your Corps setup was, it trickles down or it's entirely does work, I mean, you'd know that probably better than I, and I'm sorry I can't give you a definite outlook.

DH: No, I mean encountering CMA graduates now. Do you see that same sort of attitude? The one of integrity, honesty, discipline.

JC: The graduates that I saw, the senior class that I saw here in January, I did not see anything would contradict what I said. The graduates that came by Mercy Ships booth, table, there to talk to us, I was very impressed with them. They were all very sincere. And so, I am gonna make the statement that I feel that, yes, from the seniors that I saw in January. So, I was very impressed with the ones that we saw. And very nice people very, I think they have the integrity and the honesty. I hope for their sake they do because they're gonna, it'll backfire on them in this industry if they don't.

[16:45]

DH: While you were at CMA, did you receive any special awards?

JC: Well, scholastically I think I was okay there. I was, I think seventh in the class, but, so nothing particularly interesting there. I think the reward of course, in that period of time I was here, we were appointed into our officer corps by the superintendent, you know, they said earlier, superintendent, the commandant of midshipmen, and another one, but they are the ones, we did not volunteer ourselves. So, I think that would be an award in itself being admitted to the Corps.

[17:32]

DH: Yeah, how did that work? 'Cause now we, there's a call put out for volunteers. Volunteers fill out an application and go through an interview process like a job for a Corps officer position, and the upper Corps officer positions are usually pulled from people who had started when they were younger. So, there's never an opportunity now for somebody to step into an upper position. How did that work when you were a student?

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JC: All Corps officers were in first class. There were no Corps officers from the second class or the third class. And we worked into that position. I shouldn't say we worked into it. We were appointed to that position by the superintendent, commandant of midshipmen and the academic team. And that was it. And it was something, when you were asked to do that, you took the opportunity to accept, because again, it gave you a few extra privileges and it was fun. And so, it was not a volunteer situation.

[18:30]

DH: So, it was, "You will do this." So, what was your position?

JC: I was sub command, they call it sub commander of the band,

DH: What sort of privileges did you get personally for being the--

JC: Oh, we got a little extra time off of here and we got to keep, at the entrance up there, there was a house up there, and there was, we could keep our civilian clothes up there. We could not wear civilian clothes on the base. We had to change in this changing house up there. And we kept our civvies up there and so we had lockers up there where the other people just had to hang their clothes there. So, we had that privilege. There weren't not much, but you took advantage of every privilege you could get.

[19:08]

DH: Every little thing. Now the entrance to, and that was referred to as a base then, so the entrance to the base was guarded?

JC: Yes, we stood, we were the guards, the midshipmen and it was a third-class person here, you had to stand up there, midnight. I mean 24, well, they were not during the day, but they started at 6:00 p.m. at night and we guarded and we had to get out and manhandle the gates coming back and forth and also trying to run, get the 12 o'clock watch and try to stay awake in class the next day was quite a chore. And then we did not, changing somewhat, we did not have liberty. We had to stay on base. About every third or fourth weekend we had liberty and there was also an administrative building, there was a messenger, and the first class was there and they, there was a duty officer that slept there. Then we had watches down on the ship. And so, it was probably four, from 6:00 p.m. at night to 7:00 a.m. in the morning we were on watch. So, it was tough to stay awake the next day.

DH: Yeah.

JC: We had one professor here that was pretty good with chalk and an eraser and you start to like, next thing you know you had you had it right in your face. You'd start to go to sleep.

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DH: Hopefully he didn't take it personally, think it was him.

JC: Pardon?

[20:37]

DH: Hopefully he didn't think it was, he was being boring. Or maybe he was. So back to a topic that was brought up earlier. What was the Ring Dance?

JC: My particular class they held it at the Hotel Claremont in Berkeley. They had a big, big mock of a ring. And the class that you were graduating in and you had your sweetheart there and you walked up to the ring and they announced who you were and some people at that ring dance announced that they were gonna get engaged. Of course, this was still, you couldn't be married that time, so some people got engaged at that particular time, made a big deal out of it. And it was it was a fun dance. It was a formal affair. We wore uniforms and the girls wore nice, long dresses at that time. It was very pleasant evening.

DH: So, what was the significance of the ring then if you weren't getting engaged?

JC: Just that you were coming up for graduation in a year, and just presented that you'd gone through two years and you're close to graduate, within a year of graduation.

DH: Was there a class ring that was presented then?

JC: Everybody bought one and most of the ceremony, if I remember it correctly, the boy would give it to his date and you know, sort of put it on the ring and so became ring knockers at that point.

DH: Oh, okay. Official.

JC: Yeah. But it was done just before you became first classmen, I think.

DH: Okay, so that's why it was important to say goodbye that you were now--

JC: Yeah, very important.

[22:01]

DH: So, what can you tell me about your friends at CMA, such as Woody Woodson, Fred Wallace, Oren Townsend?

JC: They've sort of lost time to talk with those. I've still, a couple of my classmates are still around, like Joe Swirling is on there, which was the one that he was the Corps commander. Several of my classmates that I was particularly close to, like Dalton that

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wrote my briefing there for the classified, he's passed on. So, I've sort of lost track of some of those fellows. I have a gentleman that was close to, was in my class. He dropped back a class and his grandson just graduated this last year.

DH: Oh, what was his name?

JC: Tim Pucek, Tim, I would think, probably back, back. Patrick?

DH: Petrovik?

JC: Yeah, he just graduated. Think that's getting the spelling of it wrong, but anyhow, Tim, he just graduated, his grandfather was, sailed for a good long time and was head harbormaster down at Monterey. And so, I stay in touch, on the ship here, I've, right now my closest friends are in the class of '56, served with him on the board up here, so, but anyway.

DH: So, your friends in a closed community, in a type of very specialized school like this, you weren't, your group of friends you hung out with, you weren't known for any specific sort of trouble you may have caused?

JC: Nope, not that I know of.

H: Or something that you would do that set you apart from everybody else, as a group?

JC: No, I've probably one of the straight laced, I've been, because of sports that I had all through high school and college, because I had some college before I came here. You did not drink and smoke or you got kicked off the team, it's different. So, whenever we went out on liberty, I was the designated, get 'em back to the ship.

DH: Oh, okay.

JC: So that's what they know to me for. I'd go along and have fun, but since I always knew where the ship was, and I was not inebriated, I could get 'em back to the ship.

[24:18]

DH: Now what sports did you play while on campus?

JC: We didn't have, I was out for swimming, but we didn't, we just had swimming. We didn't have a swim team. We were trying to get one together, but it just didn't materialize. We did have a water polo team, but I was not a water polo enthusiast. So, we didn't have any really intramural sports, I mean, intercollegiate sports at that time.

DH: So, you didn't compete with other schools?

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JC: No.

[24:50]

DH: Oh, okay. Now I noticed in the cartoon picture in your yearbook that somebody drew, it's you playing golf. I take it this had something to do with another note on your on your record of the CMA Country Club?

JC: When we became second class, Wednesday was medical appointment day and/or sports day. So, we called it, formed a golf club so we get off of here. And we went up to the Vallejo municipal golf course every Wednesday to play golf just to get off of here. And that was something we got to do, second class and first class. And so that week, we formed it, at that point, maybe there was 10 or 12 of us, but it got us off the campus.

DH: Okay, so, so how did the CMA Country Club work then so it was it was to get off liberty a little bit,

JC: Get off liberty and go play golf and have fun, and we just, we named it that just for the fun of it. So, we had a designation, well, you joined the Country Club and you get off of here on Wednesday. So, it was fun, we just got the heck off of here.

DH: Did you do anything else besides play golf when you went out?

JC: No, well, no.

DH: Oh, okay.

JC: We'll leave it at that.

[25:58]

DH: Okay. So, what was your favorite activity here at CMA?

JC: Liberty, going home, being with my girlfriend, who's now my wife. But so we have 53 years now of marriage.

DH: Wow, congratulations.

JC: So, but, life, looking back on it, life here when I first got here, I had a heck of a time adjusting to the military. Hitting the bulkhead, and some of the things that went on. Six months, I kept saying to myself, I'm maybe jumping into an area, "Wow, this is tough," but then you kept thinking, you didn't want to leave here because if you left here, you were going to Fort Ord. So, but I had a tough time adjusting to the restrictions and my

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life, but there was enough incentive to stay here, so I don't know if that answers your question or I sort of deviated a little bit.

DH: Well, it's okay. I was thinking of a sport or a club or a team that you had really, that you would look forward to doing while you were stuck on campus.

JC: Well, we had the Propeller Club here at the time. And that was, that and the golf club and that was just a relative, and of course the band, we had to practice on the band. So though those are really about the issues and we had pretty good studies, I mean, we didn't have electives here, we had a mandatory, the deck department was here at 8:00 a.m., the deck department was here in class at 8:00 a.m., I mean, we just went, step marched with each other. And of course, every afternoon we had turn too on the ship except Wednesday. After lunch, we put on our dungarees and went down and whatever we had to do to maintain the ship. So, we didn't have a lot of time for other activities other than what I've already mentioned.

[27:46]

DH: Okay, when you left, did you do anything specifically related to your CMA degree?

JC: Well, when I left here, I walked out the door and I was in the Navy immediately. So, I was in the, my commitment in the Navy was two years on active duty and six years in the reserve. I stayed three years on active duty thinking I was gonna make it a career. I made some changes and I didn't, but I stayed in the reserve for another 11. So, but then, because of the job situation change I had to drop out of the reserve, unfortunately. So, I had 14 years in that, so, after I left, got out of the Navy, I worked for one of the shipping, steamship company.

DH: Were you a third mate on the steamship?

JC: No, when I got out of the Navy I decided I wasn't gonna go back to sea, and so I became what they, at that time we were break bulk ship, we had 48 ships at Waterman and I was the Southern California cargo planner, they called it super cargoes at that time. So, I planned the loading of the ships, cargo, because everything was break bulk you didn't have containers at that time. And then, the ship, Waterman, one of the ships that I used to work, I didn't make a sail on it, but they converted that into the first cargo container ship. We have the gantry crane on the ship, and we ran it from Puerto Rico, New Orleans to Puerto Rico. And that particular ship company was sold to a gentleman named Malcolm McLean. Malcolm McLean owned a trucking company back east and he decided he was gonna change the name and he changed the name to SeaLand.

DH: SeaLand Maersk.

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JC: Well, SeaLand at that time. And then of course, he sold it to, I believe it was RJ Reynolds. So, but anyway, the company that was the outgrowth of SeaLand.

[29:36]

DH: Yeah. Yeah, that name sounded really familiar. So, what caused you to switch fields later on?

JC: My daughter was born, and I decided that, at that time they did not have the rotation schedules that you have today. So, there was more sea time out there then, I really wanted to be away from my family. And so that was one reason I changed, and of course, I worked for Waterman ashore, but then I decided, I think I could do better other way, so I changed my field entirely.

[30:09]

DH: Now that you've kept your connection with CMA throughout this whole time. Where do you see the school going in the future?

JC: Well, from when I was up here and where it's going now, I think it's just, the vision is so positive of where, bringing in the outside, the other non-licensed programs. I think the future is fantastic here for both the graduates and the school. I think it's found a place where it's sort of filling a specialty situation and I think that's, it can't be everything to everybody, but I think it's found a niche that it's gonna be something for a specialized group, and I think the reputation is positive.

[30:58]

DH: So taking from your positive outlook on what CMA has going on, and what you're doing now with the Mercy Ships, could you tell us a little bit about what you see, the combination as you said, students working on the Mercy Ships? How's that working out?

JC: Well, we've been up here for Mercy Ships career day for four years now, and each year we've been here, we have more and more of the students looking to do charitable type work. I think that they realize that there's something out there for them in this, and we, this last time we had 28 students sign up for further information. Now, we're not really looking for them to be the 2007 graduates to be with us immediately. We're looking for them, maybe 2009, 2010, down the road where they've got maybe some loans paid off and what have you, where they feel that maybe they want to do something like this. I think is a very positive thing. There are other charities that are running ships out there. We're the only ones who are running hospital ships. I've gotten great, great pleasure and just, I think it's just great, what they can do.

DH: So, you're one of the founding members of the Mercy Ship Foundation, aren't you?

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JC: No, no, I just, I'm a supporter of it, but I'm not, the group has been going over 25 years. And so no, I'm a supporter of it. I work where I can, both the land what I do, no I was not, I'm a very strong supporter of it, but I'd like to say that I was in this founding of it, but I'm not.

[32:31]

DH: So, did anything that you saw and did here at CMA encourage you to later on in life become part of the Mercy Ships?

JC: When I first became acquainted with Mercy Ship, I belonged to the Navy League and their monthly magazine had a full-page ad looking for merchant mariners. They were short, so then I went down, 'cause, of course, I'd been away from anything for a long time. So, I went to Coast Guard, they tell me what I had to do to get my documents back in order, so I took their advice, and I did it and that was in 2001. So, you know, I'm talking from 1960 to 2001, where I was really away from it, sure I was involved up here at the Maritime Academy during that period of time, but I was not active in the sea. So, I went down to San Diego and went through STCW school and Coast Guard gave me my certificates that I wanted. And then I went to Mercy Ships and worked on the Caribbean Mercy out of the Gulf area, and we went into Central America. So the new ship that I told you, that we've talked about, the Africa Mercy, she's a brand new ship and she's a beautiful ship and I just was on the maiden voyage on her taking her from England to Rotterdam to the Canary Islands and then right now she's in Monrovia, Liberia. And she'll be there until December. But, anyway, I don't know if that answered.

[34:14]

DH: No, it did. Now, one more is kind of off the cuff. You went on the Day on the Bay with us, with the alumni, and taking a look around at the campus, the difference, the students, the mindset of the people around you, what really struck you about CMA now?

JC: The caliber, looking at the caliber of the students that are here. They all have a goal in mind. When they come in here, they have a goal in mind and they seem to be focused, very in that goal of mine, where you go to some of your colleges, they have in your first two years, you can sort of fool around and make up your decision of where you wanna go, where you wanna go, the philosophy or what have you. But there's, this school is very focused on where the students are going and they're very focused and usually when you get into a program, there's other state colleges. Once you get into that program, it's very difficult to say, "Well, I don't like the, this department. "I want to change over." So, I mean, they, all of the students I see here, talk to on the ship, I talked to quite a few on Sunday. They're very focused on where they're going and what they wanna do when they get out of here.

DH: That impress you?

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JC: Oh, very impressive, and I would, I used to be in a very hiring position at the job that I had before I semi-retired, and if I had a CMA graduate coming to me, he would be outstanding over anybody else I'd ever seen, maybe I'm prejudiced. If that gives you my feeling of the school.

DH: Definitely does.

JC: John Creech, Mr. Creech, thank you so much for being here for this interview. Taking you time to do this. I really appreciate it.

DH: Nice meeting you. Nice meeting you.

BB: Thank you.

DH: Again, my name is David Hollander. This concludes the interview with John W. Creech Jr. on 9th October 2007.

[End of interview]