9 November 1999

SOYBEL: I'm with Rear Admiral Frank J. Allston, retired, Supply Corps. Good afternoon, Admiral Allston.

ALLSTON: Good afternoon, Dr. Soybel.

SOYBEL: You were born in New Bern, North Carolina?

ALLSTON: Right. Settled by the Swiss from the Berne Canton of Switzerland.

SOYBEL: And is that near the coast or in the interior?

ALLSTON: New Bern is forty miles from the coast. It's in what they call the Coastal Plain of North Carolina.

SOYBEL: I spent, actually, a fair amount of time in the Outer Banks of North Carolina.

ALLSTON: New Bern is south of the Outer Banks. And of course, forty miles inland.

SOYBEL: You did your undergrad at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill?

ALLSTON: Yes. Well, those of us who went to the University of North Carolina before a bunch of smaller colleges were made part of the university, just say University of North Carolina. It happens to be located in Chapel Hill.

SOYBEL: You entered the NROTC Program?

ALLSTON: No, I did not. When I entered college in the fall of 1948, we were out of World War II by three years and there was not a lot of interest in the military. My mother wanted me very much to apply for a scholarship because she and my Father were schoolteachers and they thought an NROTC scholarship would be great because it would reduce the financial burden. But I wasn't interested. And as a matter of fact some friends and I were talking about going into the Army, maybe after we graduated from college, but that was just idle chat.

But during the summer break between my sophomore and junior years, the Korean War broke out. And so we became much more aware of the military situation. When I returned to Chapel Hill that fall, seven members of my fraternity pledge class had all been tabbed by small town draft boards in North Carolina. These draft boards had a quota of one and they were it. Suddenly I realized I was at risk and I, of course, took the Student Deferment Exams, but it became rather apparent that my draft board was interested in me. At the time we were living in

Arlington, Virginia, and I'd gone back to my home state of North Carolina to go to college. So I went around and talked to both the Navy and Air Force ROTC units, who said, “It’s too late. If you'd come in your sophomore year, we could have taken you. But not in your junior year".

But I remembered that across the street from the Chi Psi Lodge, lived a good friend of my father, who was the soccer coach at Carolina. I'd seen him in Navy uniform every once in a while come out of his house, get in his car and drive away. So I went over, knocked on the door, and I said, “Hey, Coach Marv (Allen), you're in the Naval Reserve," and I explained what was going on with me.

He said, “Well, you've come at just the right time." He said, “We have a program called the ROC School. You enlist in the Naval Reserve as a white-hat, you drill once a week, and you go off to officer candidate training for two summers. Normally, you go between your sophomore and junior year, and then between your junior and senior year. But you could have your second year after you graduate. With the combination of those two eight-week courses, which is the same length as the Officer Candidate School, but split over two years, you would then be commissioned an Ensign.”

So I said, “Sounds good to me."

And he said, “Last year we had 350 slots that went unused." But I found out after I enlisted that there were 30,000 applicants, because the Korean War had broken out and they were taking only 1,100 people. Those odds didn't sound too good to me, but fortunately I was one of those selected. I drilled for sixteen months in my junior and senior years in college and went off for two summers, once to Treasure Island in San Francisco and once to Terminal Island in Long Beach, and was eventually commissioned.

I went in the Supply Corps because between those two summer sessions I took a physical exam and they discovered I was colorblind. They threatened to disenroll me, because I started out to be a Line Officer—a Public Affairs Officer. It turned out that my father knew an officer in BuPers in Washington and called him to find out why they were going to drop me. He said, “Relax, I'm in charge of that program."

SOYBEL: What was BuPers?

ALLSTON: Bureau of Naval Personnel. They made me a candidate for the Supply Corps. Well, I completed training and was commissioned in August of 1952. I had a number of college classmates who had been in the NROTC and were going into the Supply Corps. All of a sudden I'm in the Supply Corps. Well I show up at Supply Corps School the same time they're there and they said, “What are you doing here?"

And I said, “I've been through Reserve Officer Candidate School and I've been commissioned and I'm here to do the same thing." All these guys had commerce degrees or

accounting degrees or other kinds of disciplines that related to supply and logistics and accounting and financial management, and I had a double major—Journalism and Political Science, which would have been ideal for public affairs. I go to the Supply Corps school and I figured I had better study hard. It turns out that I did better than most of them did because I didn't have anything to unlearn. Some of those guys were constantly arguing with their instructors in Supply Corps School because they'd learned a different accounting system. I hadn't learned any accounting system, so I learned the Navy's system.

SOYBEL: Sometimes it's better to start from scratch than to, as they say, unlearn it all. That actually covered the first three of my questions.

ALLSTON: Oh, I'm sorry.

SOYBEL: No, don't worry. You said your father had served in the Navy in World War I.

ALLSTON: Yes.

SOYBEL: Do you, in your explanation, describe how you ended up in the Navy? Actually one of my questions was whether or not Korea had a bearing?

ALLSTON: It had a major impact.

SOYBEL: Did your father's service also have any bearing? Often, sometimes people will join a similar service because a parent or grandparent...or there's a tradition within the family.

ALLSTON: Well, not directly. But indirectly it did, because my father had been a Navy man in World War I, but he had not stayed in the Reserve. He just served during the war and he came out as a Seaman Second Class. He served on destroyers in the Atlantic Fleet. Because of his Navy background, he found it easy to make friends with Navy people. And living in Arlington, Virginia, there were thousands of them, including in our church we had four or five.

SOYBEL: And as you said there was somebody across the street that…

ALLSTON: My father's friend across the street was in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. That was at the University. But my father and his friend in the Bureau of Naval Personnel were both elders in a Presbyterian Church. Of course Dad was very happy that I went into the Navy. He never really pushed me, but he was very happy that I did. So I say indirectly it had an influence, but not directly.

SOYBEL: You talked about what made you decide to opt to go into the Supply Corps. Was it really sort of put to you that the Supply Corps would be best given your colorblindness?

ALLSTON: I really had no other choice. I was either going to have to go on active duty as an enlisted man or I was going to go into the Supply Corps. And that was an easy choice to make.

SOYBEL: My question was, was there one aspect of the Supply Corps that appealed to you, and you've answered that question. Or was there—you could have gone enlisted but you chose to go into the Supply Corps—was there something about it that attracted you?

ALLSTON: Yes, it was the chance to be an officer. I found out after serving in the Supply Corps that I liked the business part of the Navy. And I had studied some economics in college, but I never had any Business Administration, no Accounting, but I was interested in Economics. So that prepared me a little bit, if you will. I found out that once I was in the Supply Corps I liked it and I did well.

SOYBEL: You were commissioned in June of 1952.

ALLSTON: I was actually commissioned in August, but my commission was backdated to the same date as all the NROTC boys. And that really got to them, too.

SOYBEL: Why did it?

ALLSTON: Because they had been midshipmen all this time and I had been an enlisted man in the Reserve and I ended up with the same date of rank as an officer as they did. It wasn't a contentious thing. It was a point of needling. Also, I received retirement credit for a year and a half as an enlisted man, but they received none for four years as midshipmen.

SOYBEL: You made a point actually that one of the possible topics was the day you were commissioned. Is there a story behind that?

ALLSTON: Yes. It turns out that the fellow that my father called to check on what options I had, and who turned out to be in charge of this Reserve Officer Candidate Program, was coming to Long Beach, where we were at the end of the program when I was to be commissioned. He was there to observe the program and evaluate it. So, he pinned my bars on.

SOYBEL: So he made it very special to have somebody you knew.

ALLSTON: Because my family wasn't there, and Barbara and I at the time were dating, but we were not even engaged. And so I had nobody there. Lots of the guys had their parents or their wives or their girlfriends.

SOYBEL: So this was your personal connection.

ALLSTON: Yes.

SOYBEL: You end up on active duty.

ALLSTON: Yes.

SOYBEL: In June, 1952 to August, 1954.

ALLSTON: Well actually, I went on active duty in August—after ROC School—and reported to Supply Corps School, which at that time was in Bayonne, New Jersey.

SOYBEL: What was the Navy Supply Corps School like?

ALLSTON: Navy Supply Corps School was very interesting. It had been an orphan. It originally started in Washington. Then it was moved to Philadelphia. And then it was expanded to the Boston area during World War II. They took over large amounts of space at Harvard, at Babson Institute, at Wellesley and Radcliffe. When World War II was over, which was the time they were in the Boston area, the schools all wanted their spaces back. So the Navy had to find someplace to put the Supply Corps School. The only logical place they could find was at the Navy Supply Depot in Bayonne, New Jersey, which is in the New York metropolitan area. The building they had, that was a combination classroom/offices. They had a big mess hall or wardroom and they had all the berthing spaces in the BOQ. The building had actually had been condemned, but they had a waiver to use it. So I took about a month of that. Three of my classmates, two of whom I'd known at University of North Carolina and a fourth guy, got together and rented a two-bedroom apartment over on Staten Island and commuted. We paid $75 a month for the two-bedroom garden apartment on Grymes Hill and $25 a month to rent furniture. So the four bachelors lived there for five of the six months we were in Supply Corps School.

SOYBEL: One wonders how much an apartment like that would go for now?

ALLSTON: Probably some place in the range of $400-$500.

SOYBEL: Not bad for, what, forty years?

ALLSTON: More than forty years because that was in 1952.

SOYBEL: It was in Bayonne, New Jersey. That was Supply Corps School. And you said that you ended up having to learn accounting systems and ended up having to take a crash course in business, I gather?

ALLSTON: Yes. It was interesting enough, so it was no problem. And we were close to New York City. We occasionally would go into the city. We'd go down to the Staten Island Ferry. You could ride across for a nickel, but if you were in uniform, you could ride for free. I was asked because of my journalistic background—nobody else had one—to be the editor of the yearbook. And so I did that, and the word got out in Washington when the time came to graduate.

What happened was I served as Editor of what they called at the time The Oak Leaf, which was the yearbook for our class at Supply Corps School. And toward the end of that six-month period, the people came in from Washington to interview all of the graduating student officers, for their duty following graduation. And there was a big, big push because they had a large number of people out in the Atlantic Fleet—something in excess of 150 Supply Corps Officers aboard ships—who were due for relief. They needed a large body of officers to relieve that group in a relatively short period of time so that they didn't create huge morale problems by taking a few guys out early. That was tough duty in those days on destroyers. So we were all pretty much resigned to the fact that we were going to destroyers as Supply Officers in the Atlantic Fleet. But when they came down from Washington to interview us, I sat down in the room with Lieutenant Commander Jack Scott, who later became a rear admiral and a good friend. Jack started interviewing me, and he said, “I see you have a Journalism degree."

I said, “Yes I do, and Political Science."

And he said, “Well we need an Associate Editor for our Supply Corps Newsletter magazine in Washington. But we have a policy that we can't order Ensigns to Washington because the cost of living is so high."

I said, “Well, that's no problem. My parents live in Arlington." I asked, “Where is this Newsletter office located?"

He said, “In the Arlington Annex."

I said, “Well, that's about three miles from their house." So they ordered me to Washington as Associate Editor of the Newsletter. My major responsibility was to be the field editor. I would go out and do stories about various activities because we were working with BuPers. They had a big problem in getting mid-grade and senior-grade officers to go to certain duty stations because they didn't know anything about them. You know, it was easy to offer somebody duty at a Military Advisory Assistance Group in Paris or the Naval Purchasing Office in London or to the Navy Supply Center in Oakland, or places that were well known. And so I'd go to these obscure places like the Navy Powder Factory in Indian Head, Maryland, and a lot of places like that, and then I started going down and doing stories at Norfolk for a couple days. I'd go aboard a half a dozen ships, and I'd talk to the Supply Officers to find out what their problems were and write stories about what's going on in the Fleet.

I don't know whether I should relate this story or not, but toward the end of my active duty commitment there was one of these “All Calls Made and Received” parties. I don't whether you're familiar with it, but, traditionally in the Navy when you were ordered into a new duty station you made an appointment and called on the Commanding Officer with your wife, and you presented a card. It was a social responsibility. And then within a matter of days, the Commanding Officer and his wife would return the call. That was “Calls Made and Received.”

When you get into a situation like the Korean War, the numbers got to be pretty big. So they started having cocktail parties at an Officer's Club, and you'd present your card and that was the call made. And you'd go through a receiving line and that was the call returned. “Calls Made and Received.” So the Chief of Corps at that time was a very courtly gentleman, Rear Admiral Murray Royer. Being in the “Front Office”, I was the only Ensign in the Bureau of Supplies and Accounts, publisher of the Supply Corps Newsletter. Admiral Royer had mentioned to me several times that I should augment into the Regular Navy. Somehow he took a liking to me and decided I should become Regular Navy. I said, “No, Admiral. I have other objectives in life. I probably will stay in the Reserve, but I have possible political ambitions and I have a job offer from General Electric that I've already accepted."

He said, “Well, do you have any problems?"

I said, “As a matter of fact I do, Admiral." I said, “All these other Navy magazines cover stories around the world. We’re covering all these activities in the United States, but we're not doing anything overseas."

And he said, “What do you think we ought to do about it?"

I said, “I think we ought to send somebody overseas and do the same thing over there that we're doing here in the States."

He said, “Well, can you give me a memo on it?"

And I said, “It'll be on your desk tomorrow morning." So I put together a plan that he approved. I spent a month in Europe doing the same thing I'd been doing in the United States.

SOYBEL: You were doing what you did in the United States?

ALLSTON: Yes. We needed to write about a Military Advisory Assistance Group. We had a Navy Purchasing Office in London. I said, “I ought to go there because that's the only purchasing office. So far as the Military Advisory Assistance Groups, France is one of the largest, so I ought to go to MAAG Paris." And then I said, “I should go down to Commander, Naval Forces Germany," which at that time was in Heidelberg. And I said, “I should also go to the U.S. European Command", which was in Frankfurt. Of course Germany was still an occupied country at that time. I had become friendly with one of the instructors at Bayonne who had gone over to be the Supply Officer for the Rhine River Patrol. The U.S. Navy was patrolling the Rhine River and that was in Schierstein. And then I said, “Probably I should go down to CinCSouth in Naples, and I should also talk to a Supply Officer in one of the embassies. I know the Supply Officer who is in Rome, so while I'm in Naples I'll just run up to Rome." And there's another story associated with that. But at any rate, I made “la grande tour”. So I was still writing articles for the Newsletter after I left active duty at the end of August in 1954, and I've continued to write for them. I have written articles down through the years.

SOYBEL: Had you been out of the United States prior to that tour?

ALLSTON: I'd been to Canada and I'd been to Mexico—from San Diego—across the border to Tijuana. That was my only previous foreign travel.

SOYBEL: This was also sort of a new experience for you?

ALLSTON: All through school I was an absolute geography nut. And so I felt very comfortable wandering around. And there were a lot of places I'd read about and was interested in seeing. It was an unusual assignment, but given the opportunity to set it up, I did it while I was Associate Editor of the Newsletter.

This European trip came right in the middle of my service as Acting Editor. The Editor came down with what they thought was arthritis of the spine, and they sent him to Bethesda Naval Hospital. So Capt Earl Chesney called me in and said, “You're going to be Editor, but we can't give you the title.”

SOYBEL: As Editor.

ALLSTON: By this time I was a Lieutenant (jg). “We can't have an Ensign or a Lieutenant (jg) as Editor. There are too many more senior people who would like the job out there in the field." So he said, “You're going to remain Associate Editor but you're actually going to be editing the magazine." So I said fine, and I did.

SOYBEL: Your assignment was in the Bureau of Supplies and Accounts?

ALLSTON: Well yes, the newsletter was a division of the Bureau of Supplies and Accounts.

SOYBEL: What was your general impression of Washington at the time?

ALLSTON: Having lived in Arlington, Virginia, and gone to high school there, I was familiar with the Washington scene. My father worked for the Federal Government. His last job was with the War Assets Administration. And as a matter of fact, I spent a lot of time in Washington. Not only did my high school buddies and I go to the Washington Senators baseball games and the Washington Redskins football games, but I actually attended all the big parades; when Eisenhower came home, when Nimitz came home, and others. And these were in 1945 while I was still in high school. On VJ-Day I actually went down and sat on the curb across from the White House waiting for the announcement to come out. So, I knew the Washington scene as well as a high school student could and I'd, of course, studied civics in high school.

But, being there as part of the Navy I really got a chance to know a lot of the senior people in the Navy and was really impressed with the flag officers in the Supply Corps because

when they'd come in from the field they'd always come by the Newsletter office because they were always looking for publicity for their operations. I knew a lot of these admirals. And I made a number of good friends there and I learned a good bit about the Navy's supply system. That encouraged me when I completed my active duty. I was going to stay through the month of August because I had known of some instances where people had gotten out early and they were called back to active duty because they hadn't completed their obligated service. So I wanted to get my full two years in. But, one month before I was to be released from active duty, I came down with acute appendicitis. So, I went into Bethesda Naval Hospital and was there for a week, and home recuperating for another three. I went in the hospital around the 1st of August and I was due to get out on the 31st of August. I was discharged from the hospital and the Navy on the same day.

SOYBEL: So you did your full two years.

ALLSTON: And left my appendix as a souvenir.

SOYBEL: Well, you know, you've got to leave something to the U.S. Navy.

ALLSTON: And I had no health insurance at that point. Now I'd accepted a job with General Electric, but I wanted to have the Labor Day weekend at home. I went to work for GE in early September of 1954.

SOYBEL: Last question for this side of the tape: How did you feel upon your release?

ALLSTON: I had mixed emotions about it. I had enjoyed what I was doing. But at that point I knew I didn't want to make the Navy a career. And I was looking forward to the opportunity at General Electric because it was a fine company and they had an excellent advertising and public relations training program.

SOYBEL: Now as I said, you're answering some of my questions anticipating but it's fine, they're working in good order. You made the decision to remain in the Navy.

ALLSTON: Naval Reserve.

SOYBEL: Through the Naval Reserves. What led you to that decision? I know that you said before that when you were asked if you would stay in, you said, no, but I'm probably going to stay in the Reserves. What was the deciding factor? What made you decide to stay in?

ALLSTON: When I was commissioned, I had a six-year commitment. That meant two years of active duty and four years in the Reserve. But I already had a year and a half in the Reserve before I was commissioned, so that would have given me seven and a half years. I said "As long as they've got me on the hook they're going to pay me for it." So, I went in the Naval Reserve,

and actually I had to take a pay cut to go to work for GE because of the non-taxable allowances and those kinds of things that came with my Navy pay. The actual money in the pocket was less when I went with GE than when I left the Navy. It didn't take very long for that situation to reverse, but at least that was it when I started out.

I also figured I could use the additional money from Naval Reserve drill pay. I was enjoying the Naval Reserve and I said I'd like to try and see how it compares with the active Navy. So, I became what they call the appropriate duty supply officer at the Naval Reserve Training Center in Troy, New York. I was working for GE in Schenectady. Albany, Schenectady and Troy form a triangle that they call the Tri-Cities Area. As appropriate duty supply officer, I didn't have a drill night so to speak. I just worked out, with the station storekeeper, who did all the supply work, a schedule when we could meet and then I could review his work and I could do a little training and help him with his studying for advancement to the next rate, and so forth. Although it turned out that there were things that I could also help the Reserve unit with, so I probably drilled at least eighty per cent of the time with the unit. And the other times if I was doing something at GE or had something personal I wanted to do that interfered with a drill night, then I'd just call up the storekeeper and we'd make a date to do it some other night.

SOYBEL: So you stayed in. You initially stayed in because you had a six-year commitment…

ALLSTON: And I enjoyed it.

SOYBEL: And so that's why you continued…

ALLSTON: Yes.

SOYBEL: And you stayed in thereafter, after your initial six-year commitment…

ALLSTON: Right. And when I got to the seven and a half-year point I wasn't unhappy and had no motivation to get out. By that time, I'd moved a couple times with GE. I'd been in New York City and I'd been in a transportation unit; and that's my subspecialty in the Supply Corps—Transportation. Then I went from New York to Winston Salem, North Carolina, with GE and I became the appropriate duty supply officer there. And that was fun and the money helped. And by that time I was married. Barbara and I were married in September of '55. Then we went back to Schenectady and there I was the appropriate duty supply officer in Albany for a while because they had one in Scotia, which was close to Schenectady. But when the guy at Scotia retired, I applied for and was given a transfer, to become appropriate duty supply officer at Scotia, which was about two miles from my home. And so, you know, it was always very convenient for me. And I was always in a pay billet. A lot of Reservists don't get into pay billets. And so, then I went back to New York again and I returned to my old transportation unit at Fort Schuyler. All this time at General Electric I'd been in the advertising end of the business. But in 1961, when I moved back to Schenectady, I went into technical publications. In 1965, an old boss of mine was

running the GE operation at the New York World's Fair. He invited me to come down there to be his Information Services Manager. So I had a delightful year working at the New York World's Fair and again drilling at nearby Fort Schuyler.

SOYBEL: So you started out with General Electric in advertising, which obviously was directly connected to your major in college?

ALLSTON: Yes, but actually it was more sales promotion. It was called Advertising and Sales Promotion. And I was more in the sales promotion end in the beginning. And later on I became an advertising copywriter and then an account supervisor.

SOYBEL: And then you went into technical pubs…

ALLSTON: And then I went into Technical Publications, after which I went to the New York World's Fair. And from there I went into the corporate office when the World's Fair closed down in October of 1965. In the corporate offices, I was assigned to the Public Information operation. And I was there for a couple of years. I had a couple of very interesting assignments. I drew a six-month special assignment in Washington during labor negotiations in the summer of 1967. Because of the contacts I had in Washington, they sent me down as the Corporate Office representative in the Washington office, which was providing support for the GE negotiating team.

SOYBEL: I was going to ask how did your duties at the Bureau serve you in civilian life, and you've just answered part of the question in that the number of the contacts that you made in Washington obviously…

ALLSTON: Well, one of the things, while I was there in 1953-1954, I was playing semi-pro softball in Arlington Virginia. One of the guys I played with was named Orville Split, who was a colonel in the Air Force. Orville was a shortstop and I was a center fielder, and we got to be pretty good friends. He was considerably older that I was. I was fresh, wet behind the ears, still in college. By the time I got back to Washington in 1966 Orville Split was the Public Information Officer in the Defense Department. And these labor negotiations were in Washington because the question was, “What impact would a strike have on the Defense Department?" So they set up a couple of special press conferences; and I worked with Orville twelve years after our softball teamship.

I had another interesting experience while I was assigned to General Electric's New York headquarters. I was in the Corporate Public Information Office, handling general interest magazines such as *Time*, *Life*, *Newsweek*, *U.S. News and World Report*, *Business Week*, and *Saturday Evening Post*. I regularly entertained senior editors of these publications at Manhattan restaurants. In the spring of 1968, Mort Reichek, a *Business Week* senior editor advised me that his magazine wanted to do a cover story on GE. I agreed to set up a series of interviews with Chairman Gerard Philippe, President Fred Borch, and vice presidents who ran suchGE

businesses as appliances, electronics, and jet engines. Mort asked me if there was anyone else he should interview and I said, "There's a 31-year-old engineer running the Chemical Department up in Waterford, New York, who is extremely bright and has an excellent future with GE. His name is Jack Welch and I want you to add him to your interview list." Mort agreed and we went to Waterford, near Albany, where he interviewed Jack Welch on his corporate views. In June 1968, *Business Week* published Mort's story with significant quotes from the Welch interview. The rest is history.

SOYBEL: So contacts were one of the elements that certainly served you in civilian life. What else from your early active, and then early Reserve, duty in the Supply Corps helped you both with GE, and later with IC?

ALLSTON: One of the things that brought me out here in this area of the country is I was offered a job by Bunker Ramo to come to Oak Brook to be their director of information services. They were looking for somebody who had experience in advertising, sales promotion, public relations, technical publications, and exhibits. World's Fair, what bigger exhibit can you have than a World's Fair show? I had it all. So they hired me to do that and that's why I came out here in October 1969. The friend who recommended me was Zane Robbins, another college classmate, who at the time was running an office in downtown Chicago for one of the nation's largest PR firms. He had the Bunker Ramo account and he knew they were looking for somebody. He knew what my background was, so he put the two of us together. Those three years at Bunker Ramo were not the happiest years of my corporate life. That led me to meeting another ex-GE guy that I had known in Schenectady, who was with a big PR firm in downtown Chicago. He knew that IC Industries was looking for a financial communications guy. And I, of course, in the three years of Bunker Ramo, had handled financial communications. I'd done annual reports, the whole bit. So that's what led me to IC Industries.

IC Industries had been formed from the assets of the Illinois Central Railroad. After fifteen very successful years at IC Industries, during the last year I was there the Chairman of the Illinois Central Railroad, which was one of the major subsidiaries of IC Industries, kept telling me he wanted me to join his staff. I said, “Well, what's the deal?"

He said, “I want you to be an assistant vice president."

I said, “An assistant vice president, what does that mean?"

He said, “You report to the Marketing VP."

I said, “No way. To be in charge of communications, I need to report directly to you or I'm not interested." So, I said, “Find somebody else."

So he interviewed, I think he told me eleven guys. And he came back and he said, “I still want you."

I said, “Well that's fine. I appreciate that. But you know what the deal is."

He said, “Well I can't make you a Vice President because that means I'd have to take all this responsibility away from the Marketing VP and I'd have to downgrade his job."

I said, “Well, tough luck." So shortly thereafter, in the summer of 1986, the Chairman of IC Industries, Bill Johnson, approved my going to the University of Chicago, going through the Executive Program and getting an MBA. I had made it plain that while I didn’t think it was absolutely necessary, I would learn things that would give me additional entrée to the financial analysts and fund managers, most of whom have MBAs. It's having that certificate, that’s important in some circles.

SOYBEL: Having the credentials.

ALLSTON: Having the credentials. It opened more doors for me, and I said, “Besides, I haven't given up the thought of going further in this organization."

So, Mr. Johnson said, “Great." I enrolled in the University of Chicago in the Executive Program—on alternate Fridays and Saturdays. You give up one weekend day every other week and the company gives up you for one day every alternate week. In the middle of all of this, in the summer of 1987, a long-standing effort to decide what IC industries was going to do with the railroad came to a head, because the railroad was not doing well financially and it was a hindrance to the other businesses. Many of the analysts and fund managers who might have invested in IC Industries wouldn't, because of the railroad. The thought of spinning the railroad off to the shareholders came forward in late summer 1987. And the Chairman of the railroad came in and plopped himself down in the chair in front of me and he said, “Okay, I can now give you what you want." He said, “Write it down on a piece a paper, everything you want." He said, “Be needy, but don't be greedy." So I sat down and talked with the IC Industries, what I call personnel guy, but which is supposed to be, I guess, “Human Resources.” He gave me some ideas and I had some ideas of my own and I put together a package. This was in August when it was pretty sure the spin-off was going to go through in September.

SOYBEL: And this is '85?

ALLSTON: '87.

SOYBEL: '87, okay.

ALLSTON: It actually happened at the September Board Meeting. The spin-off was announced on, I believe it was the 17th of September. I went to work the next day for the IC Railroad as Vice President of Corporate Affairs.

SOYBEL: And just very quickly, when did you retire from the railroad?

ALLSTON: I retired on March 31, 1989. And the reason is the railroad was acquired in a leveraged buyout and I had insisted upon reporting directly to the Chairman, the acquirers severed the Chairman and nearly everybody who reported directly to him. But, I had a contract and there was a severance package. My office was right next to the Chairman. And the people that were coming in had their own President and Chairman and they wanted my office for one of those two guys. So I was one of the first to go. But that was fine. I networked for about a month and one day I asked myself "why are you doing this?" And I didn't have a good answer, so I just retired.

SOYBEL: We've now covered you corporately. Let's go back to talking about some of the things that you did through your various Naval Reserve two-week active duty tours, etc. The first that I wanted to ask you about was you mentioned that you were on the last ship out of Cuba.

ALLSTON: Oh, yes.

SOYBEL: Let me rephrase that. You mentioned that your ship was the last ship coming out of Havana at the time of Batista's fall, just before Castro came in.

ALLSTON: On Memorial Day weekend, 1958, I had gone on two weeks of active duty on a submarine tender down in Key West. That was May.

SOYBEL: *H.W. Gilmore*?

ALLSTON: Yes. I'd gone down there for two weeks training. I had decided as I went along I needed some aviation experience, so in 1957, I went for two weeks to the Naval Air Station, Jacksonville, Florida. And then in 1958, I went aboard the *Gilmore* at Key West to get some exposure to submarine supply. Well, there was another reservist there. I was a lieutenant and he was a line commander, from Tampa. He got the bright idea that we ought to find a way to get down to Havana for the weekend if I'd go with him. I said, "Sure, I'll go with you." So he wangled us a set of orders on the destroyer escort *Saarsfield* that was going to Havana for the weekend. Our orders were to go aboard the *Saarsfield,* which was to take the Sonar School students out to do hunter-killer exercises, locating and identifying submarines. After a morning of exercises, we didn't even go back into port. They sent a tug out, met us at the sea buoy, and all the Sonar School sailors got off and onto the tug that went back to Key West. We took off for Havana. It turns out that the commodore of the division was aboard and he had a cocktail party invitation at 4 o'clock in the afternoon in Havana. So we took off from Key West and we made that ninety-mile run in a hurry. So Bill and I spent the first night aboard ship and the next day found a little hotel near the Hilton called the Vedado, where we stayed in Havana for a couple nights. In the meantime one of my college fraternity brothers was treasurer of GE Cubana. GE had a big operation there. I'd contacted Lew and told him I was coming. I left Bill at one point

and went out and had dinner with Lew and Joyce. The four of us also went to the Tropicana, the big nightclub there in Havana. They introduced me to an interesting Cuban restaurant. It was called Centro Vasco, a Basque restaurant, which I understand has reopened in Miami, but I've never had a chance to get down there and check it out. But anyway, on Monday, Bill and I just bought ourselves a couple of airline tickets and we flew back to Key West that afternoon. The destroyer was still down there and they left Monday morning to go to Guantanamo Bay. That was the last U.S. Navy ship that visited Havana before…

SOYBEL: Castro came in.

ALLSTON: Castro came in. He came in the next week. So, my friend with GE Cubana was out of there within six months because the company was seized and just decimated.

SOYBEL: How did you feel about being in Havana? I mean, now understanding the chain of events?

ALLSTON: Well I think I can get the essence of your question. I had been reading about Castro. In fact I had written to Lew and told him I was going to be down in Key West and I was going to try to get to Havana. When I asked about the rebels, he said, "Oh, well, that's nothing. That's just a little uprising. That won't last."

Well I kept reading they were getting closer and closer. And when I got there I said, "Hey, I understand he's twenty miles away."

And Lew said, "Oh no, no, no. He's not twenty miles away. He's still way down in the Eastern Provinces." Well Castro was right around the corner, as we all later found out. And so I was curious about how everything could be going on so peacefully in Havana when there was a danger of there being a war in the streets. And quite frankly I was a little relieved to be out of there that Monday afternoon, although we flew back to Key West on an old four-engine DC-4 with an airline called Aerovias Q, the letter Q. And it was an uneventful trip, but it wasn't very comfortable. But, you're only ninety miles away, how bad can it be? But I was glad to get out of Havana.

But the first night we were there, which I believe was a Friday because Memorial Day was on Monday, so it would have been a holiday, we had time to do some sightseeing and we went to the Havana Hilton, which was very near the hotel where we were staying. We went in the casino and went to the shows.

SOYBEL: Was it during this two-week tour or a different one that you wound up flying into an eye of a hurricane?

ALLSTON: Oh that was the previous year. What happened there, I had gone down to the Naval Air Station at Jacksonville where then-Captain Ken Wheeler—he had been a Prisoner of War of

the Japs during World War II, after he was captured on Corregidor—Ken was the Supply Officer there. At NAS JAX there was a lawyer from New York, another Reserve Supply Corps officer. Ken gave the two of us an assignment to do a major study on supporting aircraft out of commission because of parts—needing parts. This officer and I knocked off this report in the first week. And so Ken was kind of hard-pressed to keep us meaningfully employed for the second week. He gave us our choice of doing various things. One of the things was to fly in a helicopter. Another was to fly into the eye of a hurricane. So I said, "Well, that sounds kind of interesting." That was going to be the following week.

In the meantime, Barbara came down with our son, Jim (just 2 years old) to spend the week with me because I was staying in a motel right across the street from the main gate. And she was absolutely flabbergasted that I had signed up for this thing. So I got up at 3 o'clock in the morning, went down for a briefing on the flight line at 4 or 4:30 and got in the flight suit. While we were in there getting the operational briefing, some guy walks in and says, "The mission has been scrubbed. There's a problem with the plane." I got out of the flight suit, dressed again and went back to the motel – much to Barbara's relief.

And so, when Ken Wheeler wrote up the fitness report on that two weeks he wrote that "Lieutenant ALLSTON did an outstanding job and the report was very helpful to the command, and he threw himself into the operation. He even volunteered to go on a mission to fly into the eye of a hurricane." He didn't say I never went.

I've always told Ken, he's now a Vice Admiral, "You know, you're responsible for my being selected, based on that fitness report". We share a laugh over that.

SOYBEL: So with regards to the rumor you flew into an eye of a hurricane?

ALLSTON: No, I didn't.

SOYBEL: But you volunteered to do so, and volunteering is…

ALLSTON: The intent was there.

SOYBEL: The intent was there. My other question was how would you describe the sight, but…

ALLSTON: I've seen it on television.

SOYBEL: Pretty impressive even for television. Having grown up in Massachusetts I have to confess, I remember almost hurricane force winds.

ALLSTON: Being a native of Eastern North Carolina, I've experienced hurricanes as a kid.

SOYBEL: I'm probably more set in Massachusetts, where we really don't get as many. You'd spent one tour of duty at the National War College at Fort McNair.

ALLSTON: Yes.

SOYBEL: You spent one tour at the Naval War College in Rhode Island—Newport. Certainly a change, at least from what I can see in this, from your other tours.

ALLSTON: Well, as I became more senior in rank, these opportunities opened up for me.

SOYBEL: And, what was your impression? What did you carry from these courses?

ALLSTON: What you got into in both instances, you were in a mixed group of not only Navy, but Army, Air Force, Marine, even Coast Guard, FBI, CIA, State Department. And you've got a much more comprehensive concept of what the national policies were. I became much more knowledgeable in that arena. And it was enhanced by my experience at both war colleges.

SOYBEL: Anything specific that you remember carrying from these?

ALLSTON: One of the things that I learned was that most of the naval officers, and I don't want to sound too parochial, but naval officers because of the very nature of their worldwide mission and scope tended to bring more to the table than our fellow officers from the other services do. And it was also very helpful to be able to talk with people from the civilian branches of government. We had lots of discussions. I know I got in a real discussion one time with an Army lieutenant colonel, I was a commander at the time, and a guy from CIA. We were talking about freedom of the press. And I was a staunch advocate of freedom of the press. They were blasting the media. I said, "There are certain elements in the media that should be blasted." But I said, "I believe that we have the right of freedom of expression. But along with that right goes a responsibility." And so those dialogs that we had, in the evenings, were highly stimulating.

SOYBEL: That's often what many academics like about academia is that, you know, you get into an atmosphere where there's this freedom of, this market place of ideas as Oliver Wendell Holmes would say. Other than civilian, did you find officers from other countries' services?

ALLSTON: It just so happened that the two weeks that I was at the Naval War College coincided with the Global Strategy Seminar while the NATO Strike Force was in port—those Strike Force people from Canada, from Germany, from the U.K., from Portugal, I forget what other nations were represented in the NATO Strike Force. We had several opportunities to visit with them aboard their ships or at the Officer's Club. They were not a direct part of the Naval War College program that I attended.

SOYBEL: In June 1972 you left the Supply Corps for the Recruiting District Assistance Council, something which you suggested was not the happiest time after you got there. I could be reading it wrong. But what was the RDAC?

ALLSTON: I'll tell you. I got involved in Navy Recruiting because I had gone on the Chief of Naval Operations' Sea Power Presentation Team back in the late sixties and I made something like 215 presentations in twelve states and in Canada. And I'll explain the Canadian thing if you're interested a bit later. But at any rate, these presentations became very important to recruiting. So in 1972 I was asked to come down to the Navy Recruiting Command in Washington to assist in updating some of these presentations, about which I had complained. During this period in the early seventies, I was also part of the Navy Recruiting Command's Market Review Group.

SOYBEL: I was going to say not always easy given that by this time Vietnam is raging and…

ALLSTON: Yes, and there was a tremendous need to improve recruiting in the eighteen to twenty-four age group. I was asked to serve on a group to review marketing approaches to recruiting among that age group. And I did. And we had the Vice President of Anheiser-Busch, the Vice President of Levi Straus, several advertising agencies, and other companies that were selling into the same age group. I'd come to know the people in recruiting and they asked me to come to Washington and help them work on the Sea Power presentations directed specifically toward enhanced recruiting. In other words, to change the emphasis from the knowledge of the sea as an important element of our national commerce and total national policy, to reorient some portions of the Seapower presentations to recruiting. I went to Washington to work on that. And as an outgrowth of that, I said, “Do you know what you people really ought to do? You ought to take advantage of the Navy organizations we have in the communities like the Navy League, the Naval Reserve Association, the Naval Enlisted Reserve Association, the Navy Mother's Club, the Navy Wives Club, etc., and bring all those together and use those resources to help the recruiters.”

And so they said, “Okay, tell us what we ought to do." So I sat down and came up with this plan to form these Recruiting District Assistance Councils. I actually gave them a timetable and a pilot project. The pilot project was to test this concept out in the Chicago area where I could monitor it by being here. I had a couple people in mind who I thought could be made chairmen and put in charge of it.

Well, Vice Admiral Emmett Tidd said, “No, you be in charge of it. You monitor it by being in charge of it." So I agreed to do that. So I had to give up my Supply Corps duty to do this. But I've always said Supply Corps officers are resource managers and personnel are resources, so it was a logical assignment. I did that for eight or ten months. Then I got back in the transportation business when they formed a new reserve unit in Chicago and I became executive officer.

SOYBEL: It looks certainly like the next; July 1973 was when you were assigned back to Transport action. In the middle of July '72, Naval Recruiting District, Chicago, Illinois. And that was a three-week tour as opposed to a two-week tour.

ALLSTON: Yes. At that point in time I had left Bunker Ramo because I'd been hired to come in to be vice president by what turned out to be a lame duck chairman. The new guy who came in, he and I just had totally different concepts. I said, "I'm not doing the job I was hired to do. I don't want to do this." And so we agreed that I would leave. And I got a nice little severance out of it. And so I was between jobs at that time. When we got into this RDAC thing, there was a need to do a lot of work and they asked me if I'd stay on a third week and I said, "Sure". So I did. That's how that came about.

SOYBEL: Now you mentioned you gave a Sea Power presentation in Canada?

ALLSTON: I do not recall the exact date of my venture into Canada to give a Sea Power presentation, but it was in the mid-1980s. It started with a telephone call from Rear Admiral Ted Walker, who was Chief of Supply Corps. He told me that he had received an invitation from the Ontario Section of the Canadian Professional Engineers Society to address its annual meeting at Niagara Falls, Ontario, but that he had an irreconcilable conflict. He asked that I substitute for him and I accepted. With official orders in hand, I flew off to Buffalo, where the chairman of the meeting met me. We arrived at the border in mid-afternoon. I had not been to the Niagara Falls area in about 20 years, so he took me on a tour of the lovely little village of Niagara on the Lake. This occurred on the day when a major story involving the U.S. Navy - I do not recall what it was - broke. When we arrived at the revolving restaurant atop the observation tower overlooking the falls, three Canadian television cameras were set up to cover the meeting. I had been in transit and out of communications for several hours and was unaware of the big news with the press was preoccupied, so I was in the complete dark about the subject. I was not about to comment on this issue even in the United States and certainly not in a foreign country. As the questions were fired at me from both the TV and print media, I parried them with the statement that I was not an official spokesman for the Defense Department and that they should direct questions to the Pentagon. You can imagine how that went over with the press. They finally gave up and didn't stay around for my talk. After dinner I gave my Sea Power presentation, which was well received by the Canadian professional engineers. To the best of my knowledge, nothing about my talk - or visit - appeared in the press or on television.

There was an interesting incident relating to that visit across our closest neighbor's border. Of course, this talk was to be given in uniform - service dress blue - in which I had traveled from Chicago O'Hare to Buffalo. I entered Canada in uniform in mid-afternoon and the Canadian immigration officials at the border paid little attention. But, trying to return to the United States after the meeting, about 11 PM, was another story. An American immigration officer eyed me suspiciously. He demanded that I explain who I was and why I was in Canada wearing a U.S. uniform. Both my host, a Canadian citizen, and I explained why I had been in

Canada, but this staunch defender of American soil was unbelieving. Even after I produced my military I.D. card and a copy of my orders, it still took nearly a half hour for me to convince him who i was and why i wanted to enter the United States. I suppose I should be grateful that our border security is so effective in preventing aliens from entering America in costume, but I was annoyed. I was tired and wanted to get to bed at the Buffalo Airport Marriott for an early morning for an early morning flight. I grumbled into bed well after midnight and flew back to Chicago the next day. Later Ted Walker broke into raucous laughter upon hearing about my experience, but I told him that accommodating him had almost made me a man without a country.

SOYBEL: In February 1978 you were selected for promotion to Rear Admiral.

ALLSTON: Right.

SOYBEL: Effective October of 1978. What kind of general…

ALLSTON: Well actually I didn't put it on until the Fall. But it was actually backdated to June again. Just as my original commission was backdated to June. So my date of rank was the 1st of June.

SOYBEL: Let's put this in perspective. How many men, probably not all that many, but how many men went up for promotion to Rear Admiral that year and how many were selected?

ALLSTON: I can't tell you the exact number that year but I can tell you I've sat on four Flag Selection Boards myself and we normally look at between 75 and 100 and select one.

SOYBEL: So out of 75, and now are we talking just within the Reserves?

ALLSTON: This is Reserve Supply Corps.

SOYBEL: So about 75 to 100 people who were potentially…

ALLSTON: A hundred captains.

SOYBEL: Captains come up and one is chosen as Flag. Given the select nature of the upper ranks, how'd you feel?

ALLSTON: Lucky. I thought I had a pretty good chance going in, but who knows what's in the records of all the other guys? So, I was surprised and pleased. I did think I had a reasonably good chance, but I didn't think I was a lead pipe cinch by a long shot.

SOYBEL: But a reasonable chance is better. After you had become an Admiral, you did several things, which certainly looked like public relations…

ALLSTON: Before answering your question, let me preface that by saying, during this entire period, I continued to write articles for the Newsletter, mainly on Reserve topics. As a result I was constantly in the forefront of the Supply Corps because I was being published in the Supply Corps professional magazine.

SOYBEL: You did a number of things where, I think we can directly look at them as public relations, although, obviously there's a working relationship behind this. One of those is the relationship you established with members of the Royal Australian Navy, the RAN, in particular Captain John Ingram and Commodore David Campbell.

ALLSTON: Now a Rear Admiral.

SOYBEL: Now a Rear Admiral. The relationship with Captain Ingram particularly stands out because you described that it's not only a working relationship, but there's a friendship that emerged as well.

ALLSTON: Very much so. When I became Commanding Officer of a Naval Reserve Supply Unit that supported the Ships Parts Control Center at Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, John was a Commander, and an Exchange Officer on duty there. When we would take the unit back to Mechanicsburg to drill, he was also the Reserve Coordinator. So, we had a close working relationship with John. John was also involved in negotiation of the contract to sell the P-3 Orion to the Royal Australian Navy.

SOYBEL: What is the P-3 Orion?

ALLSTON: P-3 Orion is the four-engine submarine search plane which is a variation of the old Lockheed Electra, but with a strengthened I-beam wing and more powerful engines and equipped with sonar and other electronic gear. I arranged for John to come out and make a presentation to our Reserve unit, which drilled at the Naval Air Station, Glenview, where we had two squadrons of P-3s. I arranged for John to get thoroughly briefed on the P-3 at Glenview while he was here. He appreciated that. And I appreciated John's attitude. We became friends.

John went back to Australia and he was the last supply officer on the aircraft carrier *Melbourne*, which has since been laid up. The RAN doesn't have a carrier now. Barbara and I had always wanted to go to Australia and so in late '88, when I was still with the Illinois Central Railroad, the Chairman had a rule that people who reported to him should take no more than a week's vacation at a time. With special permission, they could get two weeks. He and I had gone out for a due diligence meeting on the West Coast, and we were flying back, and I said, "You know, Harry, Barbara and I want to go Australia next year, in '89." And I said, "You really don't

go all the way to Australia for just two weeks. We really ought to go three." And he reluctantly agreed that we could go for three, but not to tell anybody.

SOYBEL: As if your presence would not be missed.

ALLSTON: So at any rate, shortly thereafter, in fact in January of '89 the hostile tender offer came in and we finally had to give into it in March of '89. The actual spin-off was announced in September of '87 but it didn't take place because of union appeals and the old Interstate Commerce Commission, which never could make a decision. It dragged on and we actually became listed on the New York Stock Exchange on the 3rd of January in 1989. The hostile tender offer came in on the 27th. So we had twenty-four days of independence. I told the chairman, and I've told a lot of other people, about the work that I did in that year between the announcement and the spin off from JC Industries, when I called on the fifty major shareholders of IC Industries to convince them that their investment would be better with the railroad stock separately than as part of IC Industries. Not a share was sold by those fifty on the day we came on the market. In fact several of them bought additional shares. So I figured I had inadvertently helped accelerate the pace and increase the price of that hostile tender offer.

But, at any rate we were taken over. At that point, Barbara and I were planning to go on vacation?" to Australia in November. I said, "What the heck. I'm out of work. Let's go for four weeks." So I contacted John Ingram, who by that time was out of the Navy, and he had a B&B up in Northern Victoria right on the Victoria—New South Wales border. John invited us to come up and spend some time with him and his wife, Jan. We went up and visited with John and Jan and then we went back in 1995. We didn't see John on the 1995 trip because he was tied up in something that took him elsewhere. In fact, I just had a letter from John yesterday.

In the meantime I'd met David Campbell, who was Australian naval attaché in D.C., when I was writing the Supply Corps history. I met David Campbell through Rear Admiral Ted Walker, who was Chief of the Supply Corps at the time I retired and got me involved in doing this history of the Supply Corps. Ted had introduced me to David Campbell and I had seen David on several other occasions. I invited him to come out and speak to the Chicago Navy League, which he did.

And then, in 1995 I wrote to the Senior Supply Corps Officer, U.S. Navy, who was on duty in Australia at the Embassy in Canberra, and I said, "Barbara and I are coming out there. We'd like to meet you and take you and your wife out to dinner and just get acquainted."

So instead of writing back, Commander Mike Powden called me on the telephone and he said, "The four of us U.S. Navy Supply Corps officers, one in Sidney and three in Canberra, were going to get together and celebrate the 200th Anniversary of the Supply Corps by hoisting a few in a local pub. Since you're writing the book, we think we ought to have a party." And he said, "I've talked to Admiral Campbell."

And I said, “Is that David Campbell?"

He said, “Yes. You know him?"

I said, “Sure, I know David."

And so he said, “Admiral Campbell wants to come give the toast to the Corps."

So I said, “Yes, I'll come, but I wasn't planning to bring a uniform."

He said, “If you'll ship your uniform over here, we'll have it pressed and hanging in your closet at the hotel when you get here." Well, we had a Supply Corps Ball coming up here at Great Lakes, which we always attend in uniform. And I needed the uniform about a week and a half before we would leave for Australia. So I had to cart the uniform out there. But CDR Powden did ship it back. We thoroughly enjoy the Aussies. We've spent a month out there twice now. And I've met some other Royal Australian Navy people. In fact I met quite a few at this party because the Aussies love a party, and we had a great time with ten Americans and thirty Aussies.

SOYBEL: What issues and problems did you find in common with the RAN officers?

ALLSTON: Too big a mission and not enough resources. We all suffer the same thing. We never learn. We didn't after the Civil War. We didn't after the Spanish American War. We didn't after World War I. We didn't after World War II, the Korean War. Every time we win a war we say, “Okay, that's it. Downsize the military." And so that's something we always commiserate about.

My close personal contacts with senior Allied naval offices have not been limited to Australians. I met Vice Admiral David Hallifax of the Royal Navy, at Jacksonville when he was deputy commander of SACLANT in Norfolk. I escorted him and his wife during a Naval Reserve Supply Corps Readiness Workshop at Jacksonville in 1983. He had been the architect of the imaginative logistics plan that was instrumental in the Brits’ repelling the Argentine invasion of the Falkland Islands. I invited him to come to Chicago to address the Navy League, and he was the Navy Day speaker about a year later, shortly before he was due to return to England for duty at the Admiralty.

While here, he invited us to visit him on our next visit to the U.K. That opportunity came in the spring of 1986 when we visited Great Britain. He had been promoted to admiral and knighted by Queen Elizabeth II. Admiral Sir David and Lady Hallifax hosted a dinner and a lovely evening for us and some RN guests at their beautiful home in Hampshire. The last time I saw David was when he had driven Barbara and me to the station to take a train back to London late at night, and he was standing on the opposite platform, calling across to us to assure that our train was coming and he could return home. He retired a couple of years later, became governor of Windsor Castle and died before we could get back to visit him and Lady Hallifax there.

In 1980, Barbara and I visited Rear Admiral Mike Martin, Commander of Canada's Pacific Defense Forces, at HMCS Esquimalt Dockyard, while on vacation at Victoria, British Columbia. We had an interesting discussion regarding Canadian lack of resources for anti-submarine warfare exercises and reliance on U.S. Naval Reserve sea and air assets to fill the gap. As he put it, "They are only a phone call away and are always willing to cooperate."

SOYBEL: There's the famous story about learning from the mistakes of others, with the response, "No, we prefer to make our own mistakes."

ALLSTON: Well look at us right now. When we were in the Cold War we knew who the enemy was. We knew what his capabilities were. We knew what it took to offset what the Soviet Union's potential threat might be. Now we don't know who the enemy is. And they say, "Well we don't have an identifiable enemy. We don't need these forces." Ah, we need more because we may be called upon to be in a lot of different places at the same time. And so I say we need to be more vigilant now than we were when we knew who the enemy was.

SOYBEL: It would seem fairly clear given that we have naval forces in the Adriatic. We have naval forces in the…

ALLSTON: Persian Gulf.

SOYBEL: In the Persian Gulf…

ALLSTON: Western Pacific. We're also using naval assets to supplement the Coast Guard in the Caribbean. The Navy has the only resources that can do this. And so that's just another mission we get assigned. The Navy gets assigned missions all the time without being given the commensurate resources. So something else has to give.

SOYBEL: Something else?

ALLSTON: I was just going to give some examples. We have fewer steaming hours for the ships. Fewer flying hours for the aircraft. And so the fewer hours that you steam and fly, the less ready you are. Your readiness goes down.

SOYBEL: One of the questions I'm going to have as we get to the nautical questions is that there seems to be this problem of we have less people who are in fact volunteering. And those that are in the military are not staying in as long and not being…

ALLSTON: And that's right because our ships are staying out longer. It used to be a ship went out for 90 days, 120 days and then you came back and you were home for a year and a half. Now you're sometimes gone for nine months and you come back and you get maybe two or three months at home and you go back out again. And that doesn't do much for family life.

SOYBEL: In 1985 you were selected to write the Bicentennial History of the Supply Corps, "Ready to Sea"…

ALLSTON: "Ready for Sea." That's the motto of the Supply Corps.

SOYBEL: "Ready for Sea". How did this come about? I mean you've obviously had a long-standing career…

ALLSTON: Well, there are a couple of elements to this. In the first place, when it came time for me to retire I asked the Chief of the Corps, who was then Ted Walker, to come out and conduct my retirement ceremony. And he said, "Okay, I'll do that if you'll write the history of the Supply Corps?" I had known that one of my fellow Reserve flag officers had been suggesting to Ted that he have me write it. And so I wasn't totally unprepared for that and I agreed to do it. At the time I had a full time job. I had a Secretary. I had an Administrative Assistant. I had an unlimited travel budget. I could plan my business travel to parts of the country on a schedule that would facilitate my being there so I could spend some time interviewing people for the book. That was in 1985. Along comes 1989 and the leveraged buyout of the IC. Now, all of a sudden I don't have all these things.

The Supply Corps had twice before attempted to have the history written. Once in the 1930's and once again in the 1950's. And neither time was it completed. The 1930's people did a pretty good job of getting some information together, and all their notes fortunately were saved from the trash heap by a very dedicated civil servant in Washington, Nan Dimond, who had worked for me when I was on the Newsletter staff. She saved these files literally from a dumpster. She didn't know what she was going to do with them until I came along in 1985. She turned them over to me, and I used them. They tried again in 1950 and it never got off the ground. I can't tell you why both of them failed, but I had that material available. But when I took on the assignment, I was bound and determined to make it work. I had several confrontations with some of Ted Walker's successors. In fact, one of them called me up and said, "When am I going to see the first chapter?"

I said, "When you see the last chapter." There was deadly silence there at the end of the line. So I said, "If you don't like it, get somebody else." Well they didn't have anybody else. I knew that and they knew that. So, I was able to do it my way. I decided the history of the Supply Corps is the history of its people, and so that's how I wrote it. I employed a continuum of naval history over the 200 years, which is really a history of our country, and I interspersed that with vignettes of people that either I interviewed or I found on the record from books and letters. I went down to the University of Georgia and went through their Civil War file and got material on Civil War Supply Officers…

SOYBEL: Both Union and Confederate or just Union?

ALLSTON: No, not Union. I have part of a chapter on the Confederate Navy, because the Confederate Supply Corps was really comprised of people who left the Union Navy. That's all in the book. And so I did it my way. I wanted the people to stand out. My four heroes are Ken Wheeler, Sam McGowen, who headed BuSandA in World War I, John Stevenson, a Civil War paymaster, and Teddy Roosevelt. It was Roosevelt who, as Assistant Secretary of the Navy, inherited fewer than thirty ships. If they tried to conduct a parade of naval ships in 1881, they would have done that at four knots, because that was the maximum speed of most of the ships. T.R. is the one who almost single-handedly turned the situation around by convincing Congress to fund construction of the A,B,C,D ships in the mid 1880's. Then, of course, the battleship *Oregon's* 69-day dash around South America in 1898 is really what demonstrated, as no other single event could, the importance of having a canal across Panama.

SOYBEL: Demonstrated both Mahan's theories and the importance of the Canal.

ALLSTON: Right. T.R. and Mahan became close and spoke jointly on any number of occasions in public venues.

SOYBEL: What goals do you set for yourself? And I think part of the answer was already that you made this a history of the people, of the Supply Corps versus the dry end of it all.

ALLSTON: I said that the history of the Supply Corps is the history of its people. Now I have to put that into context. And that's why there's a continuum of naval history. One of the biggest challenges I had was to find out what the Supply Corps people at Pearl Harbor did on December 7, 1941. I actually went to Hawaii to the Library at the Pearl Harbor Naval Station, but that library did not open until March of 1942. So they literally had nothing on the infamous attack. And I found one guy whose father-in-law had been in the Supply Department and I talked to this guy, who was in his 80's, on the telephone. I said, "What stands out in your mind?"

And he said, "Oh, well, while during the bombing we just holed up in the warehouse. So we didn't do anything."

I said, "Weren't there any exciting things that happened with all this going on?"

He said, "Yeah, when they finally let us go that night we had to drive home without headlights. That was pretty exciting." I was at a dead end.

And then Dan Roth, curator of the Navy Supply Corps Museum in Athens, Georgia, which is where the Supply Corps School is now located, knew I was on this search. He called me and said, "I found something that maybe you could use."

And I said, "What's that?"

He told me, “I have a file that was compiled by Captain Tom Brown, retired, up in Rhode Island, who was a Lieutenant at Pearl Harbor at the time as the senior Supply Department watch officer.” There was not a Naval Supply Center at Pearl Harbor at that time when the war started. It was the shipyard Supply Department. On December 9, Tom had every Supply Corps officer at the shipyard, of whom there were about twelve, write down in detail what happened on the 7th and 8th of December. And he had all these memoranda. Boy, that was a gold mine. A real gold mine.

I set a goal for myself of doing a comprehensive story. It would have run about a thousand pages. And the one thing that I regret and will always regret, that the hierarchy of the Supply Corps forced this book to go through the Naval Institute Press. They said the Naval Institute Press had prestige and it would give the book prestige. So, it cost us four times as much to have that book published at the Naval Institute Press than I could have had it done at the University of Illinois Press where the Business Manager is a retired Supply Corps Reserve Captain and a good friend. They were going to do it for $4 a copy and the Naval Institute Press wanted $16 a copy. And so that's the biggest regret I have in that whole process. I had a manuscript that would have probably related to about a thousand pages and that was more then they could stomach. Ted Walker had originally suggested it might take two volumes. It turned out he was right. And so they wanted me to cut it back essentially in half. So I went to work with a meat cleaver and cut. I cut a lot out, all of which I think should have been in the book, but I had to take it out. Fortunately through a miscalculation, they thought I had cut more than I really had. And as a result we ended up with a book that's 600 and some pages, close to 650.

And so, I'm relatively happy with the book. I would have been happier with the book had I been able to include all the material I had to cut out. There were some people who felt slighted because they had given me information that doesn't appear in print. That was a judgement I just was forced to make. The most fascinating part was the last fifty years, for which I was able to interview personally some of the living heroes. I realized I had so much valuable information on tape, I turned the tapes over to the Supply Corps Museum and suggested they start an Oral Autobiography program. They did.

SOYBEL: And the other question I asked you was how well was the manuscript received by fellow Supply Corps officers?

ALLSTON: You mean the published work?

SOYBEL: Right.

ALLSTON: The lower and middle grade people were extremely complimentary about it. In the upper grades there was varying opinion. Some of them really read it in great detail and were complimentary, but I think there was some jealousy. I don’t know for what reason, but anyway I got the job done. It is the definitive work in the absence of anything else and several people tell me that they keep it on their desk for ready reference. Doctor Bill Dudley, the Director of the

Naval Historical Center, tells me he keeps it, on the credenza behind his desk for ready reference. And several other people, including the current editor of the Supply Corps Newsletter, have told me the same thing. I am frequently asked to autograph copies. It's pretty much sold out. The Naval Institute Press is out of copies and the Navy Supply Corps Association has a few left, mostly more expensive leather-bound copies.

SOYBEL: Is it out of print?

ALLSTON: Essentially, yes.

SOYBEL: Do you think it will be reprinted? Will you revise it?

ALLSTON: There has been the suggestion made that it be printed in paperback form and given to every new student coming into the Navy Supply Corps School. That never seems to have gotten off the ground. But when that was proposed, I said I would like the opportunity to correct some minor errors, and there are some typos as well as at least one place I think I need to restate something. And I asked for the opportunity to do that should they plan to reprint it. But there's no indication at all that they plan to reprint it.

I spent ten years on this project and I'd certainly be willing to invest the additional time to revise and update it. This was a "labor of love." I received no remuneration and would not expect any for a revision.

SOYBEL: I'd ask you how you were enjoying your naval retirement, although it sounds as if you have not necessarily retired completely, given that you started…

ALLSTON: This is my third meeting today. But at any rate I have enjoyed staying active in the Navy. The book, of course, kept me very busy up through the middle of 1995.

I am an active life member of the Navy League, the Naval Institute, the Naval Reserve Association, and the Navy Supply Corps Association. I still speak to local organizations and conduct an annual auction for the Navy Supply Corps Foundation, for which we have raised more than $100,000 for college scholarships over the past twelve years. As an active Rotarian, I bring in Navy speakers to speak to our 130-member club. I have also volunteered to speak to high school students about careers in the Navy. When Barbara and I travel to nations where Supply Corps officers are stationed, we contact and entertain them.

I have continued to write for the Newsletter. I did a three-part series on the Centennial of the Spanish-American War. It was called The Importance of Logistics and the Role of the Navy Pay Corps in the Spanish-American War. Pay Corps was the name of the organization before it was changed to Supply Corps right after World War I. Earlier this year I did a story on the role

that was played by two retired Supply Corps Commanders: John Hancock and Maurice Karker in taking the Jewel Tea Company from near bankruptcy to heights of prosperity. I currently am researching and writing an article on the Navy's role during the Boxer Rebellion in China in 1900. I continue to write. I have made the offer that if any former Chief of the Supply Corps dies, and I know all the living former Chiefs personally, I'd like to write the obituary for the Supply Corps Newsletter. I'd like to personalize a story, not just publish a cold recitation of facts. I've already done that in one case and it was extremely well received by his widow. I'm thinking very much about, if I'm still around in the year 2007, doing a story on the 100th anniversary of the Great White Fleet, and the logistics problems associated with it. Now I'm not too sure that I'd be around to do something on the anniversary of World War I.

SOYBEL: Well, you're in your 60's or 70's?

ALLSTON: I'll be 70 next year.

SOYBEL: You're still young though. One of the topics you wished to address was the early efforts to enhance the role of the Naval Reserve in becoming an integral part of the Naval Establishment. I think I'm using your words. And while some of these may seem sort of basic questions, hear me out and then you can sort of decide how you want to take them. The first questions that I had were, how old are the Naval Reserves and how did they come about? How were the Naval Reserves treated, which I think is part of the topic in general that you were dealing with. How difficult was the integration of the Naval Reservists within the Navy itself? You talked about integration within that area. And how does the Supply Corps figure in the Reservist System?

ALLSTON: Well one of the problems is that the Naval Reserve when it was first formed...and they celebrated the 75th Anniversary a few years back and I don't remember the exact date. It's in my book here someplace, but it's not indexed, unfortunately. The Naval Reserve never had a clear-cut mission other than just to be a backup force in time of need. The Reservists themselves had tried down through the years to develop a mission, or to have a mission developed and to establish an organization that would carry out the mission. Basically what the Reserve was for most of its life was a one-on-one organization. If you needed thirty people, you picked thirty people from the Reserve and you plugged them into thirty jobs.

The Naval Reserve today, and I'd like to think that the Supply Corps Reserve played a leading role in getting to this point, is comprised of units that are tasked to support specific active units as augmentation assets. For example, when we set up the Supply Corps Inventory Control Point Unit back in 1977, we were to be the second shift on mobilization. We matched up our officers with the officers who were in a given shop. You would look at a mobilization as probably a 24-hour operation. We would relieve the first shift and maybe split up into a third shift. And so we have come a long way.

And many regular Navy officers historically resented the Reserves because here were commanders, captains, and Flag Officers who were holding the same rank as people who'd served twenty, thirty years on active duty. We had Reservists in the comparable ranks that had not served that much time. They didn't accord the Reservists credit for having gained experience in the business world that was directly applicable to the Navy job. This was particularly true of the line officers that managed the Naval Reserve.

So we did some pioneering things. When we formed the Inventory Control Point Unit, we were supporting Mechanicsburg. I said, "We're going to go back there at least once a quarter." Well they didn't have enough money to send us back that often. So I made a deal with the Illinois Air National Guard and we flew in tanker aircraft from O'Hare Field to Olmstead Air Force Base outside Harrisburg. I got a lot of criticism for that. And I finally said, "Look, we salute the same flag. If we go to war, we're going to have the same objective." I said, "I see nothing wrong with the Illinois Air National Guard helping us. They're set to go up and punch holes in the clouds. They might as well take somebody someplace who needs to get there." I said, "General Smith and I have a good agreement." And so the Naval Reserve hierarchy finally backed off.

But many of these Naval Reserve Readiness Commanders and Reserve Center Commanding Officers insisted that on a given weekend they could go out on their drill decks and count the number of Reservists who were there. And I said, "We can't get our job done in that way. We can't do our training job in a Naval Reserve Center in Forest Park, Illinois. We need to be at the site of an ongoing supply department, and Naval Air Station Glenview is the place to do it. So, over vast objections, I was able to get that established that we could drill at Glenview in a supply department. And we could help them with such tasks as reviewing stock records, and conducting an inventory. We could help them with all kinds of inventory management things that we couldn't do at a Reserve Center. But the line officers that ran these Reserve Centers felt that "They're my Reservists. I need to see them and be able to oversee them." It was an absolute waste of time. Now what is happening, I have a nephew who is a chaplain in the Naval Reserve. He's down in St. Petersburg, Florida, where he's Pastor of a Presbyterian Church. He's attached to Central Command, which is at McDill Air Force Base in Tampa. He's getting ready to go on his third two-week active duty tour in the Middle East. They'd like to have him in Bahrain all the time. Well he has a family and he has a church, and fortunately his wife is also a Presbyterian Minister, so she can back him up while he's gone. But he goes to Bahrain and they always want him to stay longer because the Navy has now learned how to use its Reserve assets. Of course the Navy has fewer assets on active duty today than they had at any other time in recent years.

SOYBEL: So integration is certainly a lot better now then it was…

ALLSTON: Yes, it's not 100 per cent but it's in the nineties probably, in my opinion. I'm going to find out soon, I hope, because I'm going to be in Washington on Friday to attend a retired Reserve Flag Officer Conference.

SOYBEL: And I think you've already answered how does the Supply Corps figure into the Reservist system, but do you want to add anything?

ALLSTON: I think, again, the Supply Corps is in the field of resource management. I don't think the Navy is willing to give up to the Reserve some of the areas in which the Reservists can probably do a much better job then an active duty line officer could because of our training and experience in resource management.

SOYBEL: Do you think the Naval Reserve is capable of meeting its obligations as we go into the end of the twentieth century, coming up on the year 2000?

ALLSTON: Oh I think the Supply Corps Reserve is. I can't speak for the rest of the Reserve.

SOYBEL: And is the Supply Corps—Reserve or Active Duty—finding that it's having the same problems in recruiting that the regular Navy does?

ALLSTON: Oh yes.

SOYBEL: How do you think that that can be resolved?

ALLSTON: Well I think there's a public relations problem. There needs to be a major effort made to influence the public's perception of what benefit there is to the country to have a highly trained force in readiness. I think there is a major misconception, particularly in the academic field, of the value of military training as a preparation for business. For example, we have in the Navy petty officers second class who are nineteen, twenty, twenty-one years of age and managing multi-billion dollar weapons systems. And where in industry do you get that kind of responsibility? You work in the Navy from day one. It's better than in industry where you often start in the mailroom and work your way up. But you go through a very long informal apprenticeship period in industry before you get the level of responsibility you get as a young Naval officer.

SOYBEL: So do you think that part of the key might very well be perhaps linking with business to convince them how best to...to perhaps encourage them to encourage their workers or management to perhaps enlist in the Naval Reserve?

ALLSTON: Well I don't think you can rely on them as direct recruiters. What we have is a program called "The Employee Support of the Guard and Reserve." And the emphasis there is to convince Management that it needs to see that members of the Reserve and the Guard are given time to perform their duties because it's in the nation's interest. And if it's in the nation's interest, it's in their business interest. We have not done a good job of getting that point across. And in the academic arena, we are forbidden to go into many colleges and many high schools on Career Nights and to brief the counselors on what opportunities exist for young men and women in the Service.

SOYBEL: Why do you think that ban is in place?

ALLSTON: I think it's because of a lack of understanding in many areas of academia of what the military is. The military is an organization that's controlled by civilians to carry out assigned national missions. The military does not have goals and objectives of its own. It only has goals and objectives that support missions assigned to it by the national command authority. And again, it goes right up to the Commander-in-Chief. And so I think there's a lack of perception. And I think maybe the academic community, and particularly in the teachers colleges, and other educational institutions that specialize in preparing people for the teaching profession, need to understand this. We must get an understanding of the role of the military in a free society across to them while they're still in school, so that when they come out they won't mislead their students. I think there's sort of a liberal versus conservative philosophy at work here. And I think you can understand where I'm coming from.

SOYBEL: Certainly. I come from a both a conservative northern background, but the military is in my family, great-grandparents on down. But I was going to say, do you think that it would be natural, particularly for high school guidance counselors, because I think the problem could be more at the high school…

ALLSTON: Oh yes, absolutely.

SOYBEL: This would seem to be a great place to able to sell...you tell an eighteen-year-old, "We've got a way to get you to go through college to get you skills that are certainly marketable."

ALLSTON: Well absolutely. You talk to any electric utility in the United States that is in the nuclear power business and where did their engineers get their training? They're all Navy trained. Because nobody else runs a training program for the nuclear power people. And that's just one example. Vocationally the military provides an opportunity to learn skills that are marketable. A certain percentage of these young people who come in the service, we need to have remain on active duty. And that's the retention problem. But again, that gets back to the lack of resources to make military life compatible with family life. And this so-called "peace dividend" that we want to use for all kinds of things is being done at the expense of the military. Now we just recently had a Defense Appropriation Bill that went through Congress that's larger than last year's, but it's still way, way below what we need. So many things were knocked out of the budget because, one of the things that they tried to do was get a big pay raise through. Well that's important. But if you don't have the ships and planes for the people to operate, you're borrowing from Peter to pay Paul.

SOYBEL: You're cutting off your nose to spite your face is another good cliché.

On the Supply Corps itself, how has the role of the Supply Corps evolved over the last 200 years? I know that's a long period of time, it's a summarization of your book. If you want to start later than that, that's fine.

ALLSTON: No. I think one of the continuing themes that runs through this book, and runs through my experience, is whenever the Navy has a job that doesn't fit in the other niche, they turn to the Supply Corps to do it. And the most recent example is that the mail got all fouled up during the Persian Gulf situation. So what did they do? They turned all the mail clerks over to the Supply Corps. And now we're running the mail system for the Navy. And there are a number of instances in this book in which commanding officers have called on people in wartime to volunteer. And it's the Supply Corps officers who step forward and have done it. John Stevenson is a perfect example. He went behind Confederate lines three or four times and escaped every time and brought valuable information back.

SOYBEL: So it's evolved that, in some ways it's become the catchall of the Navy that if…

ALLSTON: Not officially.

SOYBEL: Not officially, but unofficially, informally it's become sort of the, if such and such can't do it we'll give it to the Supply Corps.

ALLSTON: Well, and we have a current example going on right now. Several years ago, and I can't tell you exactly when this was, but some years ago they created a new corps in the Navy. An administrative corps of these people who didn't go to sea, didn't fly airplanes. They did administrative jobs. They ran the Personnel Support Departments. They ran the security systems. They ran the Police Department and those kinds of things on bases and stations. And there's some severe problems with regard to promotional opportunity. So somebody came up with the bright idea, "Oh, throw them all in the Supply Corps." So you take a guy who's a commander or a captain and you plug him into the Supply Corps. When a Selection Board meets to select Supply Corps Officers, how is this administrative guy going to make out in terms of promotional advancement when he hasn't had the same kind of experience and training that the guy he's competing with has had. So, you know, the Navy does it, sometimes, in this case, officially. I don't think that's going to fly because too many people can see through that one. But there are lots of instances where Supply Corps officers have done unusual things. And in the Rickover days, he found Supply Corps officers and gave them enormous responsibility in the area of Contracting and in Operations Management.

SOYBEL: At what point did they become the professional accountants of the Navy?

ALLSTON: Oh, early in the game. That happened early in the nineteenth century.

SOYBEL: What is the Supply Corps legal status at present?

ALLSTON: The weaknesses I think are the fact that the Supply Corps does not exist in law. The Supply Corps was established in law, and in a change ten to fifteen years ago, someplace along the line the legislation was rewritten so that the Supply Corps exists at the pleasure of the Chief of Naval Operations. And that has not been a problem to the best of my knowledge so far. But down the road that could be a problem. As a matter of fact, one of our three-star admirals who's quoted in the book, said he believes that the future of the Supply Officer is assured, and as such probably the Supply Corps. But he says the Naval Supply Systems Command, which is the home of the Supply Corps, does not have an assured future. I said that wrong. Its future is not nearly as assured.

SOYBEL: Now what do you think are the potential problems in the fact that it no longer exists in law?

ALLSTON: I really don't know because I'm not close enough to the thinking at the Pentagon level to know what the problem might be. But if somebody gets a bright idea that we don't need a Supply Corps anymore, somebody with enough authority to make the decision, he can just make it and it will happen.

SOYBEL: It doesn't strike me that it would be that easy to dismantle what seems to be a very large organization.

ALLSTON: Again, this three-star admiral said in one of our interviews, and is quoted in the book, he believes that the Supply Corps itself will continue to exist. But it might not have a Navy Department home so to speak, as the Naval Supply Systems Command currently provides. I don't know that there's any current thinking with regard to doing that or not, but…

SOYBEL: The potential though is there.

ALLSTON: The potential is there. You know, when people start cutting budgets there's often no rhyme or reason where they look to save money.

SOYBEL: A couple of extra questions I want to go back to. You spoke of several men who had a lasting impression on you. One was Vice Admiral Ken Wheeler who you already mentioned in World War II, a POW. But you also talked about Admiral Jack McCain, who —am I correct in that this is Senator John McCain's father? And Professor Curtis Hunter at the University of North Carolina.

ALLSTON: I took a couple of political science courses under Hunter. He was a playwright, as well as a speechwriter for Adlai Stevenson, the original. Curtis Hunter was just a terrific guy and a great teacher.

SOYBEL: Can you explain why these men specifically—I mean these are men you met and you named specifically—why these men specifically left a lasting impression on you?

ALLSTON: Well, when I first met Ken Wheeler, which was at the Naval Air Station at Jacksonville around 1957, I was very impressed with him as an officer. I was unaware of the fact that he had been a horribly mistreated prisoner of war for three and a half years. I was unaware totally of his heroic actions for which he won the Bronze Star twice while a prisoner for saving fellow prisoners from prison ships that were not marked as such and were sunk by U.S. Forces. And I've subsequently come to know Ken quite well and we're good friends. And the faith that man had through his internment and the leadership that he's given to the Supply Corps in subsequent years, it's just absolutely amazing. I was with him in April of this year on his eighty-first birthday, which I helped him celebrate. And so he just had a tremendous impression upon me. He still thinks like a man who's totally in control. And all of the Chiefs of the Supply Corps, current guys, much younger than he, turn to him for advice.

SOYBEL: What about Admiral Jack McCain?

ALLSTON: Well, the late Jack McCain was Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific. I knew him when he was Commander of the Eastern Sea Frontier in New York and I was a lieutenant commander. I went on active duty for two weeks at Eastern Sea Frontier headquarters in 1966. And the first thing they had me do when I got there was fill out a personal questionnaire. It wasn't an hour later when I was told, "The Admiral wants to see you." So I went up there.

Jack McCain was a short guy. He smoked a cigar that was longer than he was and he paced up and down. He couldn't sit still for a minute. And he said, "I understand you're in Public Relations for General Electric."

I said, "Yes Sir, I certainly am."

"What do you do?" I described what I did. At that particular time I was involved in a couple of very interesting projects. One of which was I controlled the price desk because President Nixon had decreed a price freeze and wage freeze. And GE got a lot of criticism because one day the Wall Street Journal carried a story that General Electric raised prices on locomotives, refrigerators and switchgear, all of which were announced in one story on the same day. And boy, the furor that arose, even though those three businesses had nothing to do with one another, but they all belonged to General Electric. So they decided to set up a price desk in the Public Relations Operation in New York where an individual would match up price increases and price decreases from disparate organizations. I became that individual.

So, I'd get a call from a guy in the television business. He says "We need to raise prices. Our cost of supplies has gone up."

And I said, "Well, we don't have a price decrease at the moment. As soon as we get a price decrease I'll match them up and we'll let you release it."

Or if somebody would come in and say, “We're going to reduce prices in order to improve market share," I'd say, “Well let’s sit on it for a couple days because we may have somebody coming up with a price increase and I'll match the two of them up."

And so that was very interesting. And McCain was absolutely fascinated with that. And he said, “You ever heard one of my Seapower Presentations?"

I said, “No Sir, I haven't."

And he said, “Well, we'll set up a projector in the auditorium and I'll give you one of my Seapower Presentations." So after lunch I went in and sat in his little briefing room and they turned the projector on with the slides and he gives his Seapower Presentation. He said, “What'd you think of that?"

I said, “I'm very impressed. It's very interesting." He's the one who got me into the Seapower Presentation business.

So he said, “I'm going out to Chicago day after tomorrow to give a speech." He said, "I want you to go with me."

So I said, “Aye, aye, Sir." So we flew out in a R4D, which is an old DC-3. And Jack McCain walked all the way to Chicago and back. He paced up and down, up and down. That cabin was full of cigar smoke. I invited him to speak at one of a series of management meetings at General Electric with outside speakers for the edification of employees in middle and upper management. I got together with the VP who was chairman of the series. And I said, “I have a Vice Admiral, Commander Eastern Sea Frontier, who would like to come in and give a Seapower Presentation."

He said, “Great".

So I introduced him. I said, “It's not often that a lieutenant commander gets up and has a chance to say anything he wants to about a Vice Admiral. I assure you I'm not going to abuse the privilege." Just then there was a tremendous explosion. This GE room at 570 Lexington Avenue where this was held was in the basement and it was adjacent to the Lexington Avenue subway line. They were doing some blasting as part of lengthening the station platform.

McCain said, “I didn't know when Commander Allston invited me here, that the building was subject to depth charge attack."

I met his son - now Senator McCain - years later when we shared a cab from the Senate Office Building to the Navy Arlington Annex.

Well, anyway, I signed up for the Seapower Presentation Team and I made 215 presentations.

SOYBEL: Which was 2 centurions?

ALLSTON: Yes. That means I gave a hundred presentations twice. And so when I became Flag Officer, I had to give that up because I just had too many other responsibilities. And one of the things we haven't talked about was the first year that I was a Flag Officer. The Supply Corps was wrestling with the problem of how to fill 396 ensign and lieutenant (jg) billets in the Naval Reserve. The problem was that everybody who was coming off active duty after serving three or four years was already, or just about to become, a lieutenant. We didn't have the new blood coming into the Supply Corps Reserve we needed at that lower level. The question was, "How are we going to solve this?" Because we weren't allowed by the Naval Reserve hierarchy to have more senior officers serve in junior officer billets. So we had to have the junior officers.

My fellow Reserve Supply Corps officers said, "Allston, you are junior. You solve the problem. It's yours." I think it was kind of a test to see what I could do.

So I sat down, thought about it, then I said, "The answer is simple. We go back to what they had to do in the Korean War. We have a Direct Commissioning Program. We set up a program for people with prior enlisted military service, who had come out and gone to college on the GI Bill. They're now college graduates. They have military experience. We provisionally commission them directly and we send them off to Supply Corps School over a three-year period. They go two weeks at a time and they take correspondence courses. And at the end of that three-year period, then their Reserve commission becomes permanent. In the meantime they can be promoted as they go along."

"It'll never work, never work," the Chief of Supply Corps said. "I won't have anybody wearing the oak leaf who hadn't been through the resident course at Athens."

I said, "Andy, if you have a better idea, I'll be the first one to support it. But if you don't have a better idea, I want your support for my proposal." He finally gave in. His son actually went through the program. It's been very, very successful and is still operating today.

SOYBEL: And so that's how the Supply Corps filled its junior officers.

ALLSTON: Yes. We commission them as ensigns and they serve in the Reserve billets while they're going through this process of being trained, and it works. There were many skeptics, but we won them over.

SOYBEL: Anybody else other than these people that you respected personally? Certainly Ken Wheeler left you with a tremendous impression. Jack McCain got you started…

ALLSTON: ...in the area of Seapower, which is not typical for Supply. I've done a lot of things. The RDAC was not typical of Supply Corps. But again, I maintain Supply Corps officers are resource managers. Wherever resources need to be applied, we know how to do it. I think I mentioned John Stevenson, who during the Civil War, or the War between the States as we call it in the South, certainly was especially resourceful.

SOYBEL: Although I was thinking more in terms of people you met. You know, the question on the preliminary was people you met who left lasting impressions. You talked about a couple of people that you worked with. Whereas at least one person that you worked with in civilian life, but pretty much everybody else…

ALLSTON: William B. Johnson, who is the retired Chairman of IC Industries. Bill is just a brilliant guy, brilliant. And I really enjoyed working for him. I didn't report directly to him, but I had a very close working relationship with him because whenever he really wanted something in the area of financial communication, he called on me, but that created a problem with my boss. My boss was jealous because he couldn't go into a financial meeting with the Chairman without taking me along. The Chairman figured that out pretty quickly, so he started dealing with me directly. And he's the one who approved me going to get my MBA. Now I have my MBA. In the middle of going through the MBA program at the University of Chicago, two things happened to me. I had a TIA (transient ischemic attack), but recovered quickly from that. And then I took the job at our railroad subsidiary. Some of my associates said, "Well you're going to quit the MBA program after that big promotion."

And I said, "Of course not. I'm going to finish it." And I did!

Bill Johnson approved, saying, "Education is always valuable." It cost him $26,000 a year, or a total of $52,000. He didn't blink an eye. And in fact, he and I did a book together on his restructuring the Illinois Central Railroad into a highly successful, diversified, multi-national corporation.

SOYBEL: Conglomerate. No, that's an article.

ALLSTON: "Con-glom-er-ate." Yes, that's the other book. I did that while I was researching the Navy book and I actually polished my interviewing techniques on "Con-glom-er-ate" before finishing "Ready for Sea." I'd go off on IC Industries business trips and I'd interview people for both books.

Jim Miller, rear admiral, Supply Corps, was the next to last Chief of Supply Corps with whom I dealt during the preparation of "Ready for Sea." Jim was a great supporter and I shall forever be grateful. He is a fine leader, who did not micro-manage the Corps when he "had the con." He is quietly effective and a caring leader of people.

SOYBEL: This is a very broad question. What do you see as the strengths and the weaknesses of the modern U.S. Navy? I asked you about the Supply Corps. And while I know that your experience is Supply Corps, nevertheless…

ALLSTON: My Seapower experience has given me a little bit of more broader perspective. In the first place, the U.S. Navy is the power projection force of first choice. If you want to put a Marine, Air Force, or an Army unit onto foreign soil, you must have the agreement and the permission of the national authorities. We can put an airfield five miles off the coast and fly airplanes in. The Air Force can't do that. As VADM Jack McCain said, "Still the way to exercise power over real estate is the man on the ground with a gun." Who's going to get him there? You know, Air Force transports can't go flying in and just land at an airport. They'd be blasted on the runway. But we can take in a landing craft or they can be parachuted in from carrier-based helicopters. And so I think the Navy has a unique capability to carry out the national mission and project power any place in the world. Because after all, eighty per cent of the earth's surface is covered by blue water.

SOYBEL: And the Navy's operating area is two oceans—the Atlantic and the Pacific.

ALLSTON: Thanks to Teddy Roosevelt. I keep insisting that we pronounce it the way he pronounced it: R<u>oo</u>sevelt. But really, the U.S. Navy operates on all of the "seven seas."

SOYBEL: What about the weaknesses?

ALLSTON: Well, the major weakness is that we are tied to an annual budgetary process that makes it difficult to do multiple-year planning. We have to go in every year and justify everything on an individual case basis. We have some capability of getting legislation to do long-lead items for major projects, but basically everything has to be done on an annual basis. I'm not going to be critical of the system of government we have, but nonetheless, the individuals who make up the Legislative Branch change every two years, and have the potential of changing every four years in the Executive Branch. And so that is a restraint, but that's what the Founding Fathers had in mind with the checks and balances in our system.

SOYBEL: Exactly. And I was going to say there is a Constitutional prohibition of doing anything over two years, in terms of the Armed Forces because of that original 18th-Century fear of the standing army.

ALLSTON: And of course, with the present situation, it takes an unusual person to go to sea. Not just anybody can do it. But we have had a great deal of success in getting about thirty to forty per cent of our manpower from eight upper-Midwestern states. I think it's the lure of the sea to people who don't know the sea, and the opportunity to travel. Today, there's more and more competition for the best and brightest. Industry is offering big bucks and with the advent of computers and the Internet, these young people are capable of doing things today that they couldn't have done ten, fifteen, twenty years ago. So it's going to become increasingly difficult to

find the right mix and number of people that we need. And that's one of the challenges that we'll be facing. But we do have the best of technology and we do have the most flexible force.

SOYBEL: In spite of diminished standards, a lower emphasis or less of an emphasis on morals than increased emphasis on political correctness. Although not all political correctness I would argue is a bad thing, but…

ALLSTON: No, but most of it is.

SOYBEL: But nevertheless, sometimes there is a tendency to go overboard.

ALLSTON: Yes.

SOYBEL: You cite these as negatives. How do you see these in respect to the Navy?

ALLSTON: Well, we get into this question of the role of women in the military and the role of homosexuals. And I have very strong opinions. Women in combat is a problem to me because the unit cohesiveness is based upon your close relationships with your shipmates. And men and women don't really develop buddy systems. It's very difficult and I'm talking now about foxholes and submarines and places like that. And women have physical and physiological differences from men. If you look at some of the movie footage from World War II and see a couple of guys bouncing into a foxhole. What happens in that close confine over time? That bothers me. I don't have the answer to that, but it bothers me that we're pushing to make the military a social laboratory. I think that's wrong.

SOYBEL: Okay.

ALLSTON: And I feel the same way about homosexuals.

SOYBEL: Although, do you think the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell".... I mean if you don't know that your fellow…

ALLSTON: I don't believe in that. I believe we ought not to have homosexuals, period. I don't believe in the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

SOYBEL: But this is all part and parcel of what you cite as diminished standards. When you say diminished standards are you looking only at this question of women and homosexuals, or are you looking that the Navy itself has perhaps lowered its standards so that they can get more people in?

ALLSTON: Yes. And I don't mean to put the total emphasis on the women and homosexuals. It's just one part of it. I think yes, because of all kinds of sociological reasons. We have been forced to accept lower standards and, you know, these quotas that exist in certain areas, we have to have

so many Blacks and so many Hispanics. So far as I'm concerned we take the best people, irrespective of color or creed or whatever. But then on the other hand I was very tempted when I was in Istanbul, in October. We had a guide who was a PhD Sociologist and she was a devoted Muslim. She talked about all the wonderful Muslim tenets. I was so tempted to say, “How do you equate these laudable beliefs with terrorism? How do you justify that with terrorism created by Muslims?" But, I backed off because I didn’t want to create a scene. I really would have liked to have sat down with her and discussed that one-on-one.

SOYBEL: I was going to say, how would you relate that to talking about what you see as the diminished standards? I think most people who have any understanding of politics in the late 1990's are going to understand the conflict of the less emphasis on morality coming from the Commander-in-Chief on down.

ALLSTON: Amen.

SOYBEL: But how are these particularly affecting the Navy?

ALLSTON: Well I don’t know. I'm not close enough to the…

SOYBEL: How about the Supply Corps?

ALLSTON: Well I'm really not close enough to the junior officers and the enlisted people. Right now the people that are Flag Officers in the Navy are the people who were Lieutenants and Lieutenant Commanders back when I was an active Flag Officer. One of the things that bothers me is about the fact that there are certain areas in which they believe everybody deserves a high school diploma, whether he or she has actually accomplished what the standards are for that diploma. You give them a diploma because they will be socially deprived if they don’t have a diploma. That’s absolute nonsense. I just wonder how many people that we end up getting into the military are people who really haven't qualified to hold the credentials that they have been given.

SOYBEL: Okay. Let's end on a positive note. You covered some of this, and so it's a tie-up question. What are some of the positive trends within the Navy in general and the Supply Corps in particular that you see?

ALLSTON: Well, the positive trend that I see is that, despite being severely restricted in resources, we are continuing to perform at a high level. We have dedicated people out there who have made the commitment to our country. We see that every day in the up-tempo of seven days a week, twenty-four hour a day operations of our major combatants. I think that's very positive. I think we are seeing in the Supply Corps the education and the abilities that have given the typical Supply Officer coming in today a high degree of skill in the area of computers, the Internet. We have the capability to do many, many of the functions, day-to-day functions, better and faster then ever before. I think we have a much more intellectual group, an increasingly higher level of

intellectual capability among our Supply Corps Officers. And I think our people have understood that this changing environment that is existing organizationally requires us to be much more nimble and much more flexible in our response. And I think that's a good thing. So I'm pleased with where the Corps is going.

SOYBEL: That was all the questions that I had.

ALLSTON: Before we conclude this interview, I'd like to discuss three more subjects. First, I believe the Navy is really a family—or an extension of an officer's or a sailor's personal family. The Navy takes care of its own by providing a wide range of support programs for the families of its personnel, particularly when the military member is deployed away from the home base. Child care for an employed spouse, peer "sponsors" at the new duty station upon transfer, and ombudsmen are examples of some of these support programs.

Second, the spouses of military members provide the stay-at-home "glue" that holds families together when the sponsor is on duty. Spouses of Reservists, who hold down two jobs—one a full-time civilian position and the other a weekend Reserve billet—perform similarly. As the late, great Sir Winston Churchill put it, "A Reservist is twice a citizen." That applies equally to spouses, who share their military partners' dedication.

My family is a prime example. Barbara, a college classmate and a former CIA analyst, was perfectly willing to give up her career when we married. She was a stay-at-home wife, who was always there for our children and me when I worked in industry and was an active participant in the Naval Reserve for 34 ½ years. When I started on the ten-year project to research and write "Ready for Sea," she became my chief editor and critic. When she proofed my copy, she insisted that if she could not understand what I had written, nobody else could. I could not have completed the project without her total, loving support.

Third, some of the longest and deepest friendships I have made during my lifetime are with Navy and Naval Reserve "shipmates." These are intelligent, interesting and caring people with whom I have spent some of the best times of my life, both on and off duty. These friendships have deepened in retirement for both Barbara and me. We travel at least once a year with some of our Navy friends.