

Women of the NOAA Corps: Reflections from Sea and Sky

00:00:03.770 --> 00:00:10.750

The year was 1972.  
Folk, rock and soul music ruled the airwaves;

00:00:10.750 --> 00:00:14.699

platform shoes and bell-bottoms  
defined modern fashion,

00:00:14.700 --> 00:00:19.460

and technological advances included  
the pocket calculator and the first video game.

00:00:21.380 --> 00:00:24.500

President Nixon was elected to a second term

00:00:24.500 --> 00:00:30.620

and the Vietnam War continued to cast a dark  
shadow over the country.

00:00:30.620 --> 00:00:34.200

In the sciences,  
the space shuttle program was born,

00:00:34.220 --> 00:00:39.780

Apollo 17 sent the world the unforgettable  
"Blue Marble" image of Earth,

00:00:39.780 --> 00:00:42.480

and the NOAA Commissioned Officer Corps,

00:00:42.480 --> 00:00:45.440

a science-based service provided by the newly formed

00:00:45.440 --> 00:00:52.820

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration,  
commissioned its first female officer.

00:00:54.180 --> 00:00:58.780

From then on, through their skill, strength  
and expertise,

00:00:58.780 --> 00:01:03.640

the women of the NOAA Corps  
have built and shaped a solid foundation

00:01:03.640 --> 00:01:05.180

for Women In Service.

00:01:14.480 --> 00:01:19.760

With only 321 active officers,  
the NOAA Commissioned Officer Corps

00:01:19.760 --> 00:01:23.960  
is the smallest of the seven  
uniformed services of the United States.

00:01:24.640 --> 00:01:29.160  
It's very small because its focus is very  
specialized.

00:01:29.179 --> 00:01:35.499  
NOAA Corps officers serve at sea, on land,  
and in the air commanding a fleet of ships

00:01:35.499 --> 00:01:42.170  
and aircraft specially equipped to enable  
scientists to study, understand and predict

00:01:42.170 --> 00:01:46.729  
changes in the complex and dynamic natural  
systems of our planet

00:01:46.729 --> 00:01:49.160  
that sustain life as we know it.

00:01:50.060 --> 00:01:52.140  
From the seafood we eat,

00:01:52.140 --> 00:01:53.960  
to the weather we brave,

00:01:53.960 --> 00:01:56.420  
to the ships that navigate our seas

00:01:56.420 --> 00:02:00.480  
carrying people and cargo to and from our ports,

00:02:00.489 --> 00:02:04.959  
to the deep ocean we have only just begun to explore,

00:02:04.960 --> 00:02:08.140  
the work of the NOAA Corps  
reaches every American

00:02:08.140 --> 00:02:13.240  
- protecting our lives and property,  
and preserving our natural resources

00:02:13.240 --> 00:02:16.320  
for current and future generations.

00:02:18.700 --> 00:02:21.720  
One of the most memorable stories  
that I have over my career...

00:02:21.720 --> 00:02:23.700

One time when we were out...

00:02:23.700 --> 00:02:26.780

I'm surprised I went back to sea after my first sea tour...

00:02:26.800 --> 00:02:30.420

This is absolutely everything that I was looking for...

00:02:30.420 --> 00:02:33.420

That was a moment that I will certainly never forget...

00:02:34.300 --> 00:02:39.800

Like a photograph, personal stories are an imprint of our life experience.

00:02:39.820 --> 00:02:43.100

They tell us something about our place in time:

00:02:43.100 --> 00:02:50.060

a memorable moment, a defining experience, or simply those times in life when we intersect

00:02:50.060 --> 00:02:56.290

with people or places in random ways that set us on pathways that we couldn't imagine,

00:02:56.290 --> 00:02:57.940

let alone plan.

00:02:58.280 --> 00:03:00.740

Everyone has stories to tell

00:03:00.740 --> 00:03:04.440

and those stories tell us about ourselves:

00:03:04.440 --> 00:03:09.920

what moves us, what challenges us, what makes us who we are.

00:03:09.920 --> 00:03:14.060

These are stories of a small group of unique women

00:03:14.060 --> 00:03:17.140

who joined a small corps of unique purpose

00:03:17.140 --> 00:03:19.080

to serve their nation

00:03:19.080 --> 00:03:21.480

-- women from different walks of life

00:03:21.480 --> 00:03:24.400

who served at different points in time,

00:03:24.400 --> 00:03:28.120  
but who all share the same sense of dedication

00:03:28.120 --> 00:03:33.860  
toward the pursuit of understanding  
and stewardship for our common home.

00:03:36.040 --> 00:03:41.280  
I had one letter was,  
"No women! Not now, not ever! Blaaaargh!!" You know...

00:03:41.280 --> 00:03:44.780  
And I said, "That's okay....  
About time he retired anyway.

00:03:45.840 --> 00:03:49.500  
The story of women in the NOAA Corps  
begins with a man

00:03:49.500 --> 00:03:52.560  
who unlocked and opened the door of opportunity

00:03:52.560 --> 00:03:55.090  
and a woman who walked through it.

00:03:55.090 --> 00:03:58.840  
There was no reason women couldn't be commissioned.  
None!

00:03:58.850 --> 00:04:04.319  
No legal reason, no social reason,  
no practical reason at all.

00:04:04.319 --> 00:04:06.920  
It was just something that was overdue.

00:04:06.920 --> 00:04:10.480  
The NOAA Corps was established  
long before NOAA was.

00:04:10.480 --> 00:04:14.240  
By the time NOAA became a federal agency in 1970,

00:04:14.240 --> 00:04:19.560  
the Corps was already in its 53rd year,  
having operated under predecessor agencies

00:04:19.560 --> 00:04:22.860  
ever since it was first established in 1917.

00:04:23.360 --> 00:04:27.960  
Admiral Harley Nygren began his service in 1947.

00:04:27.960 --> 00:04:31.639

Over his long career, he rose to the top job.

00:04:31.640 --> 00:04:35.020  
He was the director of the Corps  
when NOAA was established

00:04:35.020 --> 00:04:40.020  
and the decision of whether or not to  
admit women into the Corps was his.

00:04:40.020 --> 00:04:42.580  
Ultimately, the responsibility was mine.

00:04:42.580 --> 00:04:45.920  
But I had encouragement from the administrators.

00:04:45.920 --> 00:04:48.370  
They didn't pressure us at all.

00:04:48.370 --> 00:04:52.900  
Once in a while he'd say,  
"are you ever going to have any women in the Corps?"

00:04:52.900 --> 00:04:54.860  
And I'd say, "yeah, we're looking at it."

00:04:55.700 --> 00:04:58.920  
So the environment was there and it was a

00:04:59.020 --> 00:05:03.300  
matter of looking at the mechanics of it.  
And the outcome was obvious:

00:05:03.300 --> 00:05:08.900  
We had no basis for not recruiting women, none.

00:05:08.900 --> 00:05:12.112  
There were good reasons for doing it -- social  
reasons, economic reasons --

00:05:12.120 --> 00:05:14.240  
all kinds of reasons for doing it,

00:05:14.320 --> 00:05:17.020  
but one for not doing it was

00:05:17.020 --> 00:05:19.380  
"we never did that before."

00:05:19.380 --> 00:05:21.600  
And that's not acceptable.

00:05:21.600 --> 00:05:24.880  
Pamela Chelgren was the first female officer

00:05:24.889 --> 00:05:27.740  
to step up and test this new space.

00:05:27.740 --> 00:05:30.060  
Together with her male counterparts,

00:05:30.060 --> 00:05:35.040  
she and the women who followed laid  
the groundwork for a new era.

00:05:35.040 --> 00:05:40.320  
There were times at which I very much felt  
pressure being the first.

00:05:40.320 --> 00:05:48.240  
Because I was the first, if I did poorly that  
would make it harder for women coming in behind me.

00:05:48.240 --> 00:05:52.140  
After the class came through with six women in it,

00:05:52.140 --> 00:05:55.420  
I no longer was worried about that.

00:05:55.420 --> 00:05:57.535  
Pamela Chelgren's commission

00:05:57.535 --> 00:06:00.480  
pioneered a societal shift in the Corps

00:06:00.480 --> 00:06:03.610  
that picked up steam in the ensuing years.

00:06:03.610 --> 00:06:09.460  
By 1975, eighteen more female officers had  
joined the ranks of the NOAA Corps,

00:06:09.460 --> 00:06:15.280  
including Evelyn Fields, whose career in the Corps  
spanned 31 years.

00:06:15.280 --> 00:06:20.710  
She attained the rank of Rear Admiral and  
the distinction of being the first female

00:06:20.710 --> 00:06:23.840  
commanding officer of the NOAA Corps.

00:06:23.840 --> 00:06:26.699  
Before we got there, I understand that the

00:06:26.699 --> 00:06:31.259  
commands spent a lot of time prepping their crew.

00:06:31.259 --> 00:06:34.960

'We're going to get these ladies  
and you got to clean up your language,

00:06:34.960 --> 00:06:37.960

and you got to do this, and you got to that,  
and you got to do the other.'

00:06:37.960 --> 00:06:45.120

It was kind of a test or platform that  
the C.O.s didn't want to fail at,

00:06:45.130 --> 00:06:50.300

those that were fortunate enough to get us,  
(and I do mean fortunate enough to get us),

00:06:50.300 --> 00:06:52.340

the women coming out of the class;

00:06:52.340 --> 00:06:54.020

they didn't want to fail either.

00:06:54.020 --> 00:06:58.520

It was a real step forward for the NOAA Corps because

00:06:58.520 --> 00:07:00.590

the other services, yes, they had women,

00:07:00.590 --> 00:07:05.960

but they didn't have women doing  
the exact same job that the men were doing.

00:07:05.960 --> 00:07:09.469

You were sworn in as an ensign,  
you went to basic training class and when

00:07:09.469 --> 00:07:11.840

you came out of basic training class you went to a ship.

00:07:11.840 --> 00:07:16.140

My first ship, I was the only woman on my first ship and

00:07:16.140 --> 00:07:18.969

when we got underway from Seattle

00:07:18.969 --> 00:07:22.620

for a four-month cruise to the South Pacific,

00:07:22.620 --> 00:07:24.849

there was 81 guys and me.

00:07:24.849 --> 00:07:28.580

I know the captain was very worried.

00:07:28.580 --> 00:07:32.309  
He would have weekly lunches with me just

00:07:32.309 --> 00:07:35.800  
to check in and see how things were going.

00:07:35.800 --> 00:07:39.099  
My sense was, after that first sea tour,

00:07:39.100 --> 00:07:46.580  
I would say about five percent of the guys were verbally, vocally  
supportive of me being there,

00:07:46.580 --> 00:07:50.139  
10 percent were the opposite, negative,

00:07:50.139 --> 00:07:52.480  
and 85 percent really didn't care.

00:07:52.480 --> 00:07:55.490  
So you know, 'you get the job done, that's fine.'

00:07:55.490 --> 00:07:58.060  
And that 10 percent,

00:07:58.060 --> 00:07:59.639  
that really did change

00:07:59.639 --> 00:08:01.780  
after the first couple of years.

00:08:01.780 --> 00:08:06.360  
It took them really seeing that I was there

00:08:06.360 --> 00:08:08.620  
to get the job done and I wasn't

00:08:08.620 --> 00:08:10.910  
there to make trouble for people.

00:08:10.910 --> 00:08:15.700  
I was really there committed to the same things  
they were committed to

00:08:15.710 --> 00:08:18.160  
and wanting to be a shipmate.

00:08:18.160 --> 00:08:21.040  
And that really counts for something.

00:08:24.020 --> 00:08:25.600  
In the journey of life,



00:08:25.600 --> 00:08:28.979  
sometimes we follow a road out of curiosity.

00:08:28.979 --> 00:08:31.920  
Other times we set out with clear intention,

00:08:31.920 --> 00:08:35.900  
motivated by specific people or aspirations.

00:08:35.900 --> 00:08:39.540  
Whether their initial plans were experimental or inspired,

00:08:39.540 --> 00:08:41.910  
these women all answered a call

00:08:41.910 --> 00:08:45.780  
of scientific service to their country.

00:08:45.780 --> 00:08:47.820  
My dad was in the Coast Guard.

00:08:47.820 --> 00:08:50.500  
He was in the Coast Guard and the Navy.

00:08:50.500 --> 00:08:53.300  
My dad is a retired Navy Reservist

00:08:53.300 --> 00:08:56.280  
and the proudest I ever saw him was on those weekends

00:08:56.280 --> 00:08:59.440  
when he put his uniform on to go to his monthly

00:08:59.440 --> 00:09:02.420  
weekend duty or his two weeks a year.

00:09:02.420 --> 00:09:04.740  
And so I was groomed from the time that I was young

00:09:04.740 --> 00:09:09.430  
to want to serve my country  
to work on behalf of my country.

00:09:09.430 --> 00:09:12.040  
That's, I think initially, too, what sort  
of

00:09:12.040 --> 00:09:15.880  
drove that desire to serve my country and

00:09:15.880 --> 00:09:17.080  
to wear the uniform.

00:09:17.080 --> 00:09:20.140

I didn't know what my service  
would look like growing up,

00:09:20.140 --> 00:09:23.260  
but I'm not surprised that I'm  
wearing a uniform today.

00:09:23.260 --> 00:09:26.180  
I watched a documentary about the response

00:09:26.180 --> 00:09:29.500  
to the Exxon Valdez oil spill when I was in high school,

00:09:29.500 --> 00:09:32.980  
and that sort of set my compass to know that

00:09:32.980 --> 00:09:36.080  
I wanted to do something with the ocean.

00:09:36.080 --> 00:09:37.960  
I stumbled across the NOAA Corps website.

00:09:37.960 --> 00:09:40.880  
I actually didnt know that NOAA even had  
a corps of officers

00:09:40.880 --> 00:09:42.660  
that drove the ships and flew the planes.

00:09:42.660 --> 00:09:45.800  
So that was sort of just bumbling along  
following the websites,

00:09:45.800 --> 00:09:49.010  
and found the old school  
NOAA Corps recruiting video.

00:09:49.010 --> 00:09:52.940  
And it was like, "do you want to dive and  
do you want to fly and do science,

00:09:52.940 --> 00:09:54.420  
and serve your country at the same time?

00:09:54.420 --> 00:09:56.300  
I was like, "Yes."

00:09:56.310 --> 00:09:59.440  
I looked it up online and I was really impressed.

00:09:59.440 --> 00:10:03.700  
I noticed that they had a lot to do with  
oil spill response

00:10:03.700 --> 00:10:07.520  
and it was different. It was about providing scientific support to the  
Coast Guard

00:10:07.520 --> 00:10:11.520  
during major oil spills  
and that really piqued my interest.

00:10:11.520 --> 00:10:13.860  
My entire career I've worked for the Office  
of Coast Survey,

00:10:13.860 --> 00:10:15.180  
and the Office of Coast Survey

00:10:15.180 --> 00:10:18.580  
collects the data that makes  
the nautical charts for shipping.

00:10:18.580 --> 00:10:23.380  
So in my mind, at least, that's a very clear,  
relevant thing.

00:10:23.380 --> 00:10:26.480  
You know, ships need to know where they're  
going and how to get there.

00:10:26.480 --> 00:10:32.200  
I mean, they're moving 80 percent of the  
goods that are coming in and out of the United States.

00:10:32.200 --> 00:10:34.180  
So, for me, that's a very clear mission.

00:10:34.180 --> 00:10:37.340  
I don't think about it a lot, but when I  
do kinda get down in the dumps

00:10:37.340 --> 00:10:38.820  
about 'why are we doing this,'

00:10:38.820 --> 00:10:40.920  
I just think about maps.

00:10:40.920 --> 00:10:42.000  
We make maps.

00:10:42.000 --> 00:10:44.370  
Who can't get behind a map?  
It's information.

00:10:44.370 --> 00:10:46.300  
It tells you where things are.

00:10:46.300 --> 00:10:48.080

You know where your resources are,

00:10:48.090 --> 00:10:50.540

you know where the fish habitat is,

00:10:50.540 --> 00:10:51.640

you know what minerals there are,

00:10:51.640 --> 00:10:52.840

you know where to lay a cable,

00:10:52.840 --> 00:10:54.860

you know where to put a navigation channel.

00:10:54.860 --> 00:10:56.754

There's a whole bunch of stuff going on underneath there

00:10:56.754 --> 00:10:57.600

and there's a whole bunch

00:10:57.600 --> 00:11:00.890

of people on the surface doing a lot of different things.

00:11:00.890 --> 00:11:04.200

So, that's, kinda, the little speech I give to myself

00:11:04.200 --> 00:11:07.240

about maps. I like them.

00:11:07.240 --> 00:11:10.810

The mission that we fly is an important mission to the nation.

00:11:10.810 --> 00:11:12.720

We're out there collecting vital data

00:11:13.020 --> 00:11:16.680

that they use for hurricane forecasts and intensity models.

00:11:16.680 --> 00:11:19.700

That information gets relayed to the National Hurricane Center

00:11:19.700 --> 00:11:21.500

for them to make better forecasts,

00:11:21.500 --> 00:11:23.680

and it's all about saving life and property.

00:11:23.690 --> 00:11:25.640

We want to make sure people are protected.

00:11:25.640 --> 00:11:27.960  
In my opinion, that's why I'm out there doing my job.

00:11:27.960 --> 00:11:29.120  
That's what I love about my job.

00:11:29.120 --> 00:11:30.440  
I am out there making a difference.

00:11:30.440 --> 00:11:32.270  
We are there to collect that data that could

00:11:32.270 --> 00:11:37.170  
help somebody who is along the coast know  
that the storm is actually coming their way.

00:11:37.170 --> 00:11:39.780  
It's important.  
And I feel proud after those missions,

00:11:39.780 --> 00:11:41.800  
and it makes me want to go fly another one.

00:11:42.180 --> 00:11:44.640  
I was involved in Deepwater Horizon.

00:11:44.640 --> 00:11:48.360  
I was previously on the NOAA Ship Gordon Gunter  
as my first sea tour,

00:11:48.360 --> 00:11:50.760  
and we ended up being the first federal vessel

00:11:50.760 --> 00:11:54.100  
actually onsite to do oil spill response.

00:11:54.100 --> 00:12:00.500  
That was an incredible opportunity to really  
be there at a time of national disaster and

00:12:00.500 --> 00:12:02.100  
to be able to play a part in that.

00:12:02.100 --> 00:12:05.010  
Whether it's cleaning up oil spills or even

00:12:05.010 --> 00:12:09.780  
just protecting endangered species like we  
do out here or to help gather data

00:12:09.780 --> 00:12:10.920  
for climate change,

00:12:10.920 --> 00:12:14.640

all of these things are going to have  
major impacts on future generations.

00:12:14.640 --> 00:12:17.640  
And to me, I couldn't get any fulfillment

00:12:17.640 --> 00:12:20.620  
out of anything else the way that I do with this career.

00:12:20.627 --> 00:12:23.680  
I tell people that I have the coolest job

00:12:23.680 --> 00:12:25.040  
in the world

00:12:25.040 --> 00:12:28.600  
and that has been my story since day one,  
and it's the story that I'm sticking with.

00:12:32.940 --> 00:12:35.140  
We all face moments in life

00:12:35.140 --> 00:12:37.360  
that do not go as planned.

00:12:37.360 --> 00:12:40.860  
Navigating the unexpected is a test of skill

00:12:40.860 --> 00:12:42.920  
and courage under pressure.

00:12:42.920 --> 00:12:45.347  
These challenges are milestones

00:12:45.347 --> 00:12:48.860  
that speak to our strength or teach us a lesson,

00:12:48.860 --> 00:12:52.260  
and from which we can either stay or adjust our course.

00:12:53.860 --> 00:12:55.340  
You never really think about,

00:12:55.340 --> 00:12:57.940  
'Oh, I don't know, I can't do this.'

00:12:57.940 --> 00:13:01.680  
You just deal with it, get it done and move on.

00:13:01.680 --> 00:13:05.180  
Our second flight from Turks and Caicos back to Florida,

00:13:05.800 --> 00:13:10.480  
about halfway back, we're over

the Bahamas at this point,

00:13:10.480 --> 00:13:12.920  
we get an engine fire indication.

00:13:12.920 --> 00:13:16.780  
That, of all the things that could  
probably happen to the plane,

00:13:16.780 --> 00:13:19.680  
that's probably the one that you never really want to hear as a pilot.

00:13:19.680 --> 00:13:21.880  
So the first thing that you hear is the fire bell goes off.

00:13:21.880 --> 00:13:25.690  
So it's a really loud bell in the cockpit that sounds.

00:13:25.690 --> 00:13:27.180  
And so you have this bell.

00:13:27.180 --> 00:13:28.850  
You jumped to action, in that sense.

00:13:28.850 --> 00:13:33.080  
You really don't have much time that you're  
like, 'oh, let's sit and think about it or talk about it'

00:13:33.080 --> 00:13:34.880  
You're like, 'run the checklist.'

00:13:34.880 --> 00:13:38.240  
So, after we shut down the engine, we're calling,

00:13:38.240 --> 00:13:41.060  
declaring an emergency, and so they had us divert.

00:13:41.060 --> 00:13:44.380  
At this point we're at 8000  
and also heading into some iffy weather.

00:13:44.380 --> 00:13:49.380  
And they're like "Hey, Rock Sound is your  
closest airport; go," basically.

00:13:49.380 --> 00:13:52.100  
We're looking at: what's our runway length  
at this place we're going into?

00:13:52.100 --> 00:13:53.790  
We've never been here,  
we have no idea,

00:13:53.790 --> 00:13:56.380

we're just headed in, single-engine, into this airport

00:13:56.380 --> 00:13:58.581  
as storms and stuff are coming in around us.

00:13:58.581 --> 00:14:00.180  
So we landed.

00:14:00.180 --> 00:14:01.310  
Everything went well;

00:14:01.310 --> 00:14:05.820  
it was my first legit single-engine landing.  
You know, we practice it here.

00:14:05.820 --> 00:14:10.160  
Surprisingly enough, simulation is pretty  
much spot on for the real thing.

00:14:10.160 --> 00:14:15.380  
So that was a huge confidence booster for  
me to be able to fly this thing, single-engine,

00:14:15.380 --> 00:14:20.700  
land single-engine in the middle of nowhere,  
and go, 'all right, that wasn't too bad.'

00:14:20.700 --> 00:14:22.440  
It wasn't as bad as you thought it would be.

00:14:22.440 --> 00:14:24.560  
Whenever you have a challenge, to me

00:14:24.570 --> 00:14:28.630  
(and I used to say this to the folks that worked for me),

00:14:28.630 --> 00:14:34.280  
I don't look at it as a challenge.  
I always looked at it as an opportunity.

00:14:34.280 --> 00:14:37.480  
And I think that puts it in a whole new realm

00:14:37.480 --> 00:14:41.100  
when you say an opportunity as opposed to a challenge.

00:14:41.100 --> 00:14:44.610  
But what that does is it builds a level of confidence.

00:14:44.610 --> 00:14:48.980  
So each time you take one of those opportunities

00:14:48.980 --> 00:14:53.380  
and succeed at it, it builds the confidence



that much more.

00:14:53.380 --> 00:14:57.580

It definitely was one of those things that nobody wants to have an emergency in the plane,

00:14:57.580 --> 00:15:04.230

but it was also a monster confidence booster for me, and also a surety in both our training,

00:15:04.230 --> 00:15:06.300

our aircraft, and your skills.

00:15:06.300 --> 00:15:08.670

And I think it builds that confidence level

00:15:08.670 --> 00:15:10.760

to the point that you just kind of go,

00:15:10.760 --> 00:15:13.380

'okay, I'm ready for the next one; bring it on,'

00:15:13.380 --> 00:15:15.980

you know, and you just move on.

00:15:19.920 --> 00:15:23.840

The gifts of wisdom, encouragement and support,

00:15:23.850 --> 00:15:27.397

born of shared experiences, become special bonds

00:15:27.400 --> 00:15:30.600

that shape our sense of self,

00:15:30.600 --> 00:15:32.500

connect us as a family,

00:15:32.500 --> 00:15:34.820

and carry us forward.

00:15:36.360 --> 00:15:39.540

One of the things they told me early in life was that

00:15:39.540 --> 00:15:42.573

in order for two people

00:15:42.580 --> 00:15:45.680

to really communicate with each other,

00:15:45.680 --> 00:15:48.240

they have to have some shared experience.

00:15:48.240 --> 00:15:51.140

You take a group, take a squad of marines

00:15:51.140 --> 00:15:52.350  
and shove them through a firefight,

00:15:52.350 --> 00:15:54.860  
those folks are welded forever as a family because

00:15:54.860 --> 00:16:00.160  
they have shared that experience  
and now they're communicating,

00:16:00.160 --> 00:16:01.980  
and that's true anywhere.

00:16:01.980 --> 00:16:05.580  
On my second ship, I was the only female in the crew.

00:16:05.580 --> 00:16:10.600  
And so when Liz went out to one of her ships

00:16:10.610 --> 00:16:12.560  
she was the only female in the crew.

00:16:12.560 --> 00:16:14.310  
And just keeping tabs, you know, and just

00:16:14.310 --> 00:16:17.240  
checking in, seeing if everything is good,

00:16:17.240 --> 00:16:20.900  
we bounce off a lot of different ideas with each other.

00:16:20.900 --> 00:16:24.730  
So it's been a friendship, mentor, mentee,

00:16:24.730 --> 00:16:26.720  
and it goes back and forth.

00:16:26.720 --> 00:16:29.455  
She's certainly spoken to me about

00:16:29.460 --> 00:16:31.860  
blind spots that I had, and

00:16:31.860 --> 00:16:34.875  
also strengths and how to capitalize  
on those strengths

00:16:34.880 --> 00:16:37.300  
to make me become a better leader.

00:16:37.300 --> 00:16:39.660  
And I know in the past, as she was just saying,

00:16:39.660 --> 00:16:43.350

I've been a sounding board for her for sure in the past.

00:16:43.350 --> 00:16:46.880

And so it's kind of nice that it has gone both ways,

00:16:46.880 --> 00:16:49.780

both up and down between us over the years.

00:16:49.960 --> 00:16:51.600

They're our support group.

00:16:51.600 --> 00:16:54.340

We know that we're all kind of going through the same sort of thing.

00:16:54.340 --> 00:16:59.730

Whenever I need to vent, you know, I'll just call one of my NOAA Corps friends.

00:16:59.730 --> 00:17:04.580

And we'll just scream about things for a little bit and then it

00:17:04.580 --> 00:17:08.160

goes back to normal.

00:17:08.160 --> 00:17:13.959

They are people that I have maintained close relationships with that I feel comfortable

00:17:13.960 --> 00:17:17.940

asking for advice, asking for help, just keeping in touch,

00:17:17.940 --> 00:17:22.100

letting them know kind of what I'm up to, sharing stories, different things like that.

00:17:22.100 --> 00:17:27.280

Look above you and look below at folks who have gone before, folks who are coming up behind you.

00:17:27.280 --> 00:17:31.520

You're part of a really, fairly fabulous club or family.

00:17:31.520 --> 00:17:35.140

It's a pretty small alumni association of a group that's done some

00:17:35.140 --> 00:17:37.440

very, very, very special things.

00:17:37.440 --> 00:17:39.160  
You share a bond of service,

00:17:39.160 --> 00:17:44.360  
you've made contributions to the country like  
no one else has made.

00:17:44.360 --> 00:17:46.100  
You're like a family.

00:17:49.860 --> 00:17:54.660  
Although the idea of women in service is no longer  
the novelty it once was,

00:17:54.660 --> 00:17:57.480  
this is only because of bold decisions

00:17:57.480 --> 00:17:59.900  
that created new opportunities

00:17:59.900 --> 00:18:03.320  
and because of the courageous women  
who seized them

00:18:03.320 --> 00:18:05.920  
and forged pathways for others.

00:18:05.920 --> 00:18:11.700  
Today, women serve prominently  
at all levels of the uniformed services

00:18:11.700 --> 00:18:13.910  
and have boundless opportunities.

00:18:13.910 --> 00:18:20.000  
So, why is it still important to tell stories  
of women of the NOAA Corps?

00:18:20.000 --> 00:18:24.500  
I have no idea why it's important to talk  
about the stories of women in the NOAA Corps.

00:18:24.500 --> 00:18:27.560  
You know, to be honest, I wish that we weren't.

00:18:27.560 --> 00:18:31.000  
I wish that we were just talking about  
stories of the NOAA Corps.

00:18:31.000 --> 00:18:34.240  
Like, who cares what you are as long as you

00:18:34.240 --> 00:18:36.640

can do the work or have the skills,  
or have the training.

00:18:37.600 --> 00:18:41.260  
I want my job because I'm qualified!  
Not because I'm a girl!

00:18:41.270 --> 00:18:45.390  
To be, like, a woman pilot I don't think it's  
one of, like, a news-breaking thing, you know,

00:18:45.390 --> 00:18:47.280  
they've been around for quite a while.

00:18:47.280 --> 00:18:51.460  
I've been in the NOAA Corps for 16 years.

00:18:51.460 --> 00:18:55.540  
I have never, in my entire career,  
had any, I guess,

00:18:56.020 --> 00:18:58.200  
reactions because I am a female.

00:18:58.200 --> 00:19:01.260  
In my opinion, everything we do is about qualification.

00:19:01.260 --> 00:19:04.880  
We get our jobs because we  
are qualified; it's not gender specific.

00:19:04.880 --> 00:19:09.470  
Gender is a thing that, really, in my mind,  
I don't see it as an obstacle.

00:19:09.470 --> 00:19:13.590  
I don't see it as something that's in the  
way of anybody doing their job.

00:19:13.590 --> 00:19:19.340  
What I see is highly trained people in this  
organization going out and doing the things

00:19:19.340 --> 00:19:22.630  
that they are passionate about and dedicated to.

00:19:22.630 --> 00:19:26.700  
I can sympathize with the viewpoint that,  
you know, 'why are we talking about

00:19:26.700 --> 00:19:29.280  
women in the NOAA Corps, it's about the Corps.'

00:19:30.460 --> 00:19:33.840

I was one of the few women in the Navy Reserve

00:19:33.840 --> 00:19:39.600

oceanography cadre when I was there, one of the few women at the outset in the NASA astronaut program

00:19:39.600 --> 00:19:44.970

and I didn't see either of those as, you know, female quests or gender quests.

00:19:44.970 --> 00:19:52.060

That was a line of work, a role, a profession I was qualified to pursue and interested to pursue,

00:19:52.060 --> 00:19:56.160

and wanted to earn my standing on the basis of being a qualified professional.

00:19:56.160 --> 00:20:01.110

I also cared a lot about, being Navy, being NASA.

00:20:01.110 --> 00:20:04.330

I didn't want to be some subpart. 'These are the real NASA people

00:20:04.330 --> 00:20:06.460

and we then have some girls.'

00:20:06.460 --> 00:20:10.120

And so, I get the not wanting to keep saying,

00:20:10.120 --> 00:20:13.160

'here's the real NOAA Corps and then there are some girls'

00:20:13.160 --> 00:20:15.020

or even to say, 'here's the real NOAA Corps

00:20:15.020 --> 00:20:18.460

and isn't it cute or isn't it amazing that girls are here,

00:20:18.470 --> 00:20:19.600

or that women are here?'

00:20:19.600 --> 00:20:23.150

It's neither cute nor amazing.

00:20:23.150 --> 00:20:25.980

We all, I think, hope that we can get to a point

00:20:25.980 --> 00:20:28.940

where it goes without saying,

00:20:28.940 --> 00:20:32.780

it's a given, and it's natural and it's accepted.

00:20:32.780 --> 00:20:36.720

But the fact of the matter is, as a society  
and as an organization,

00:20:36.720 --> 00:20:40.060

we're working our way through some of these shifts;

00:20:40.060 --> 00:20:44.280

shifts in what roles are widely open or open at all

00:20:44.280 --> 00:20:47.740

to people of color, to people of different genders.

00:20:47.740 --> 00:20:53.530

And it is, therefore, still notable  
by some and noteworthy to others that women

00:20:53.530 --> 00:20:58.179

are entering new fields; and the question  
of, 'well how are they doing in those fields'

00:20:58.180 --> 00:20:59.680

matters to some.

00:20:59.940 --> 00:21:01.799

I can see both sides of that.

00:21:01.799 --> 00:21:06.840

I think there is a value to taking some time  
to talk specifically about the stories of

00:21:06.840 --> 00:21:10.140

women in the Corps for two reasons.

00:21:10.140 --> 00:21:12.470

There will be women looking around, maybe

00:21:12.470 --> 00:21:17.180

still testing or questioning or wondering  
if that's a path for them

00:21:17.180 --> 00:21:20.180

and I think the example and a bit of a shared insight

00:21:20.180 --> 00:21:22.580

about 'what is this work,' 'what is this place,'

00:21:22.580 --> 00:21:25.060

'what is this group that you're joining,'

00:21:25.060 --> 00:21:27.940

may help some of them steady up their course

00:21:27.940 --> 00:21:31.200  
and hopefully draw them to NOAA and to the Corps and

00:21:31.200 --> 00:21:33.360  
become part of the work that we're doing.

00:21:33.360 --> 00:21:36.360  
And, on the other side, there may well still

00:21:36.360 --> 00:21:41.200  
be some men or others who think,  
'I don't know what these women are doing here.'

00:21:41.200 --> 00:21:45.740  
And I would hope that they, too,  
would take a look at this film

00:21:45.740 --> 00:21:48.520  
and maybe get a fresh glimpse

00:21:48.520 --> 00:21:53.060  
of the caliber, the competency,  
the professionalism, the integrity

00:21:53.060 --> 00:21:57.580  
of the women who are serving  
alongside them as officers in the NOAA Corps;

00:21:57.580 --> 00:22:01.340  
and come to see more clearly  
that,

00:22:01.340 --> 00:22:04.160  
although they change clothes in a different locker room,

00:22:04.160 --> 00:22:09.040  
they are on par: professional standing,  
professional footing,

00:22:09.040 --> 00:22:12.380  
competency, commitment, dedication and passion.

00:22:12.380 --> 00:22:16.940  
They are true peers and true equals and maybe  
shift that mind set a little bit, too.

00:22:20.100 --> 00:22:25.880  
Looking back on life helps us to see the richness  
and meaning of our experiences,

00:22:25.880 --> 00:22:29.680  
those events that shape us  
and become part of who we are.



00:22:29.680 --> 00:22:32.800  
We may travel winding and varied paths

00:22:32.800 --> 00:22:35.420  
and face obstacles along the way,

00:22:35.420 --> 00:22:39.490  
and, from this, gain new insights and abilities.

00:22:39.490 --> 00:22:43.240  
We may be lifted up by others and connected like family.

00:22:43.240 --> 00:22:46.340  
Challenges that seem indomitable at first,

00:22:46.340 --> 00:22:49.900  
perceived through the wisdom  
that comes from experience

00:22:49.900 --> 00:22:53.060  
may be met with surety and grace.

00:22:53.060 --> 00:22:55.420  
What we discover through our life's work:

00:22:55.420 --> 00:22:57.980  
our guiding principles, our values,

00:22:57.980 --> 00:23:01.260  
or even just one word to live by,

00:23:01.260 --> 00:23:04.080  
is a gift we give ourselves.

00:23:04.580 --> 00:23:07.460  
If I had one word to describe the gift, or

00:23:07.460 --> 00:23:11.120  
the most valuable thing  
that NOAA Corps has given me...

00:23:11.120 --> 00:23:13.460  
If I to describe the last eight years  
in one word...

00:23:15.060 --> 00:23:17.120  
Gosh, this is a tricky question!

00:23:17.560 --> 00:23:19.680  
Ask the question again.

00:23:22.120 --> 00:23:24.480  
I would say, "depth."

00:23:25.120 --> 00:23:27.320  
It's grown me,

00:23:27.320 --> 00:23:28.680  
challenged me,

00:23:28.680 --> 00:23:29.540  
pushed me,

00:23:29.540 --> 00:23:30.860  
stretched me;

00:23:30.980 --> 00:23:35.800  
but at the same time, been some of the most enjoyable  
experiences that I've had as well.

00:23:35.800 --> 00:23:41.640  
So I'd say overall it's given me depth of  
character, of experience, travel...

00:23:41.640 --> 00:23:43.800  
can't beg for anything else in that regard.

00:23:43.800 --> 00:23:45.800  
I think it's given me adventure.

00:23:46.220 --> 00:23:48.560  
I've been to several continents,

00:23:48.560 --> 00:23:54.520  
I've had the opportunity to fly  
in helicopters during oil spills,

00:23:54.520 --> 00:23:57.670  
dive with hammerhead sharks on remote atolls...

00:23:57.670 --> 00:23:59.700  
I would say, "passion."

00:23:59.700 --> 00:24:00.890  
"Interesting."

00:24:00.890 --> 00:24:03.980  
There are good days and  
there are bad days around here.

00:24:03.990 --> 00:24:08.960  
It's not always awesome, it's not always bad,  
but it's always been interesting.

00:24:08.970 --> 00:24:13.860  
But if you believe in what you do, and you  
love what you do, you can get through those

00:24:13.860 --> 00:24:16.900  
bad days and you can make those  
good days even better.

00:24:16.900 --> 00:24:18.840  
And so you can do anything.

00:24:18.840 --> 00:24:23.140  
You know I don't really care if I have a good life,  
or a fun life, or I make a lot of money.

00:24:23.140 --> 00:24:24.740  
I just really hope it's interesting.

00:24:24.740 --> 00:24:27.420  
And I think, so far, it's been that way.

00:24:27.420 --> 00:24:29.400  
The most valuable gift that NOAA has given me,

00:24:29.400 --> 00:24:32.301  
my first thought was my independence;  
that I can stand on my own,

00:24:32.301 --> 00:24:34.200  
I've moved around seven times,

00:24:34.200 --> 00:24:39.120  
that I can show up to a new place,  
continue in my career, reach for my goals.

00:24:39.130 --> 00:24:41.080  
That's what I like to think of my independence.

00:24:41.080 --> 00:24:43.500  
But then, I've got the counterpart which is the teamwork.

00:24:43.500 --> 00:24:46.000  
In my opinion, I love working with a group of people.

00:24:46.000 --> 00:24:50.880  
I would rather come to work and work  
with a group of people than work on my own.

00:24:50.880 --> 00:24:52.130  
Which word do I use?

00:24:52.130 --> 00:24:54.700  
Independence has allowed me  
to get where I am in my career,

00:24:54.700 --> 00:24:58.540  
but I love my career because the teamwork

that I'm actually able to be part of.

00:24:58.540 --> 00:25:03.460  
If I were to describe that in one word,  
it would be "resiliency."

00:25:03.460 --> 00:25:05.120  
"Command presence."

00:25:05.120 --> 00:25:06.280  
"Confidence."

00:25:06.280 --> 00:25:10.680  
Conducting operations is very dynamic and,  
to go out to sea,

00:25:10.680 --> 00:25:12.400  
you're constantly operating

00:25:12.400 --> 00:25:14.580  
and managing risk.

00:25:14.580 --> 00:25:18.990  
The ability to, on a day-in-day-out basis,

00:25:18.990 --> 00:25:25.240  
take a look at what the environment is providing  
and being able to get the mission done safely

00:25:25.240 --> 00:25:29.450  
is something that takes a great deal  
of intestinal fortitude.

00:25:29.450 --> 00:25:33.400  
But being able to go back at it again, yeah,

00:25:33.400 --> 00:25:35.570  
I would say, "resiliency."

00:25:35.570 --> 00:25:39.730  
When I say, "command presence," I guess  
that maybe it only makes sense to

00:25:39.730 --> 00:25:42.580  
somebody in the service or on board ships but

00:25:42.580 --> 00:25:45.470  
that's a bearing that you have,

00:25:45.470 --> 00:25:49.440  
it's a tone that you have, it's calm but directed,

00:25:49.440 --> 00:25:52.730  
even if everything is hectic around you.

00:25:52.730 --> 00:25:58.840

"Confidence" because, as I look back  
on my entire career,

00:25:58.840 --> 00:26:04.850

you always have that question mark as to  
whether you can do something or not.

00:26:04.850 --> 00:26:06.160

You might not show it,

00:26:06.160 --> 00:26:10.240

you might not come across as being,

00:26:10.240 --> 00:26:13.240

oohh... scared to death,

00:26:14.640 --> 00:26:17.400

but that confidence level builds.

00:26:17.400 --> 00:26:20.720

It builds a little bit more  
with each opportunity that you get

00:26:20.720 --> 00:26:23.460

and you walk away feeling like,

00:26:23.460 --> 00:26:26.000

'okay I can conquer the world and it's gonna be okay.'

00:26:28.860 --> 00:26:33.740

These young ladies have done some, just, incredible things because they  
were given an opportunity.

00:26:33.740 --> 00:26:39.320

I'm just so inspired and so impressed  
with the quality and capabilities

00:26:39.320 --> 00:26:41.900

of the people that work for the NOAA Corps.

00:26:41.900 --> 00:26:48.320

It's gratifying to see that the talent gets better and better and better  
and I think that's

00:26:48.320 --> 00:26:52.240

what you really ultimately hope for.

00:26:52.240 --> 00:26:57.240

All of us can be very proud of where  
all of NOAA stands at this point,

00:26:57.240 --> 00:27:00.420

not just the officers but the civilian side, too.

00:27:00.429 --> 00:27:02.820

It's very positive.

00:27:02.820 --> 00:27:05.860

I can never think about the NOAA Corps without

00:27:05.860 --> 00:27:11.480

reminding myself that President Thomas Jefferson started the ball rolling in 1807

00:27:11.480 --> 00:27:13.540

with the survey of the coast.

00:27:13.540 --> 00:27:15.720

As we look back at the history of the NOAA Corps now,

00:27:15.720 --> 00:27:18.340

we should remember to look all the way that far back

00:27:18.340 --> 00:27:21.420

and think about what that first impetus was.

00:27:21.420 --> 00:27:26.720

And I find it fabulous and gratifying to look at the today of the NOAA Corps

00:27:26.720 --> 00:27:29.020

and say that's still what it's about.

00:27:29.020 --> 00:27:33.880

It's the capacities to measure and monitor and understand our planet that are vital to

00:27:33.880 --> 00:27:38.640

the health and vitality of our country, of our society, and of our economy.

00:27:38.640 --> 00:27:41.660

I have every confidence, if Thomas Jefferson were here today

00:27:41.660 --> 00:27:46.300

and maybe Alexander Hamilton along with him, who started the Coast Guard;

00:27:46.300 --> 00:27:49.320

they'd be amazed and tremendously proud

00:27:49.320 --> 00:27:51.400

of what the NOAA Corps has become and they would be

00:27:51.400 --> 00:27:55.960

particularly impressed with the people who  
serve in the NOAA Corps.

00:27:55.960 --> 00:28:00.560  
Being founding fathers they might be slightly  
astonished that women were serving in the NOAA Corps

00:28:00.560 --> 00:28:03.680  
and serving in every imaginable  
position of responsibility.

00:28:03.680 --> 00:28:07.460  
They would be hugely gratified  
to see how the glimmer in their eyes back then

00:28:07.460 --> 00:28:10.360  
has lived through the years and continues today

00:28:10.360 --> 00:28:11.987  
to serve the country and serve the planet

00:28:11.987 --> 00:28:14.060  
so brilliantly well.