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# Oceanography

## Women in Oceanography: A Decade Later

### Autobiographical Sketches

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I lead the Ocean Climate Stations project at NOAA Pacific Marine Environmental Laboratory. Ocean Climate Stations are surface moorings that carry suites of sensors to monitor air-sea exchanges of heat, moisture, momentum; upper ocean temperature, salinity, and currents; and ocean bottom temperature and salinity. Co-principal investigators also add other sensors to monitor carbon dioxide uptake, ocean acidification, and aspects of the carbon cycle. With these data, I study how the atmosphere affects and is affected by the ocean. I am also fascinated by the dynamics of fronts and currents—my thesis (in 1993) was on eddy-mean flow interaction in the Gulf Stream. Most of the literature for my thesis

was based on the Jet Stream, thus beginning my interest in “weather” (both in the atmosphere and ocean), climate, and air-sea interaction.

Going back further, as a college student, I considered physics to be a language, but how should it be used? I talked to everyone I met who had a science degree. What do you do? Where do you work? Do you like it? When I heard about physical oceanography from a family acquaintance, something clicked. That was what I wanted to do. She suggested I call her professor at the University of Rhode Island to see if he had a summer job available. I followed up, and this eventually led to a fabulous summer involving a research cruise and a window to another world. That summer was a turning point for me. I knew what I wanted to do. There have been few times in my life when I have had such clarity of purpose.

I have never regretted it. There are many things about this career that I really enjoy: it is very satisfying to figure things out, to make the connections, and see how to express our natural world in terms of mathematical equations. I work for those “Ah hah!” moments. I also work very closely with colleagues in Japan, Canada, South Africa, and other parts of the world, and we now have many very close friends scattered around the globe. While being a scientist has meant being somewhat of a nomad and living plane rides away from family, the world feels smaller and more accessible.

My husband has always been highly supportive of my career. When our daughter was young, we realized that it would not be possible to do everything we wanted to do with both of us working full time, particularly as our work travel increased. Brian opted to leave his “day job” and embrace the “homemaker” role (volunteering at our daughter’s school, soccer dad carpool), which also gave him more opportunity to pursue his musical interests. While we didn’t know any stay-at-home dads at the time, we have since met a growing number. Being now the sole breadwinner in our family, I am very grateful for having a hard-money position at NOAA. Overall, I feel very fortunate to be able to work on important scientific problems that will help us better understand weather, climate, and our changing world.

