

So, as time went on, to my pleasure and some surprise, there became these other activities. Now and then we would hear somebody else that we didn't already know and was not part of our group utter the words "Cordell Bank," and every time I would hear somebody else say the word "Cordell Bank," I would be amazed.

It would be an astonishment that someone else knew about it, and even in those early days I couldn't quite come to grips with the idea that anybody else would think it was important, because, after all, Cordell Bank is a little place way out of the way. Who would consider this important?

But then a big event occurred, and that was a bill was introduced in Congress to establish the Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary. Now, that's not the way NOAA normally did their sanctuaries. Those are established by regulation. All of the other sanctuaries to my knowledge in the system are established by regulation within NOAA, and, to my understanding, each of those could be undone if some administrator somewhere – and I'm not making light of this, I'm trying to describe what I understand is the structure – could simply delete one of those sanctuaries off of the list without too great a consequence. An Act of Congress is tougher to get around.

"Well, why did we have an Act of Congress?" I said, and the answer was, apparently, during the two terms of the Reagan administration, not a single sanctuary was designated. Somehow, the SPD of NOAA went into cold storage. Maybe you can associate it with the politics of the Republican Party or something like that. I don't know what the truth is there, but by 1988-89, there were people, and I will name them, who were getting rather irritated that there were no more sanctuaries being developed.

Well, what was available? Cordell Bank was available. It's in the pipeline. My original letter that I had written was stimulated by a direct request from – I think it was Nancy Foster, and that might have been 1983 or so. We could check the record on that, a short letter nominating, and it's a trigger to start that process. So that was five years earlier, and all that time Cordell Bank had been sitting on somebody's in-basket.

01:05:30

Well, Diane Feinstein, Doug Bosco, a Congressman, and the current Speaker of the House, introduced a bill in the Congress to establish the next national marine sanctuary, the Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary, and it was passed. And it went to the President, President George Bush, Senior, who signed it as the first environmentally oriented law in his new administration early in 1989.

The years leading up to that were for me a period of transition out of it. I not only caused myself but I watched myself kind of exit from this ownership, this total exclusive ownership of Cordell Bank. Every time I would say – in the early days, I would say “Cordell Bank” to someone, and they would respond with a blank look. I had the semi-satisfaction out of saying, “Well, Cordell Bank is a rocky bank off the coast of Point Reyes.” And then as time went on, I would encounter someone that I didn’t need to tell that to.

Here is an example that was both sweet and slightly bitter to me, so there is that combination. It was Maxine McCloskey who founded and ran a thing called The Whale Center in Oakland. It was an environmental activist volunteer organization. Maxine not only mastered what it was Cordell Bank was, where it is, and what it’s about, but provided a lot of support and stimulation and education to people, to the public who were needed to support such a nomination to actually bring about approval of the sanctuary. After all, if the SPD threw a sanctuary party and no one had ever heard of the place before, it might have fallen flat.

So, for me personally, I watched these things happen with increasing pleasure that other people were learning about this place and a bit of a decrease, a kind of a letdown, kind of a deflating experience that I was not the only word in town, that there was somebody else who was also worthwhile listening to about the phrase “Cordell Bank.” And that process continued right up until designation. There was a still slightly bitter – not bitter. That’s too hard a word, but a disappointment.

I knew in advance when the President was going to sign the bill, and one of the – somebody, I actually don't remember who it was who said, "Well, I think you should be there when he signs it." I said, "Well, yeah, actually, that's appropriate, isn't it? Gee whiz. How did this come about? This would be appropriate. The President usually has somebody ceremonially around," and until the day before, I thought I was going to be at the White House for the signing of this bill.

And then suddenly the connection seemed to break. It was sort of like a radio station going off the air or a phone clicking out. Suddenly, I couldn't get any response. I would call and leave a message, or they would say, "Well, I don't really know. Things are changing around."

I understand all of this in the sense that the President's schedule changes a lot, and they have to do things informally and quickly. I think I also understand it in terms that I was not quite as significant and important a character. By the time it got to the White House for the President to sign, my role, Bob Schmieder's role in all of this, was not terribly recognizable. That is, the Diane Feinsteins and the Barbara Boxers and so on were the personalities associated with this, and I am not ungrateful at all.

*01:10:25*

This wouldn't be a sanctuary if someone else hadn't taken it up. I was not able to make a sanctuary out of it. I was only able to nominate it and do the field work that provided the scientific justification for it, but the politics had to be done by people who carry around big political hammers.

But, for me, missing the chance to go to the White House to stand by the President of the United States as he signs this bill was a real disappointment, and I wanted that picture to take back to my team to pay them, to reward them for what they had done. It was a small thing, and this is the only time I've ever described my own personal feeling at that. It would have been nice, but it's okay, because look what we have now, this fantastic sanctuary, and so the satisfaction is there even if this particular event was missed.