**Paul**: Good afternoon this is Paul Seacrest for the national park service. Today is Thursday March 27th 1997. I am here at Ellis Island at the recording studio and I am here with Mr. Tracey D. Ketcham Junior. Mr. Ketcham was here in Ellis Island kind of off and on in the coast guard beginning in 1941 and then again in 1942?

**Ketcham**: Well I continued right through from 41-42.

**Paul**: Right continuously. Today is also Mr. Ketcham’s birthday. So Mr. Ketcham can we begin by your giving me your birth date please?

**Ketcham**: March 27 1919

**Paul**: Thank you. And where were you born?

**Ketcham**: I was in Amity Ville New York.

**Paul**: In Amity Ville New York so, on long Island. Can you just give me a just a little bit of information about your family background and where your parents came from?

**Ketcham**: Well my parents were born in Amity Ville. My grandfather I think was born in Hannigton. He was in the old lifesaving service on the beaches of long island and retired from there. My father served there also and my uncles too. And my father he was in world war one he volunteered for it but it ended too soon.

**Paul**: What was his name?

**Ketcham**: Same as mine-

**Paul**: Changed it to senior obviously.

**Ketcham**: Senior.

**Paul**: And can you just tell me what his nationality was? What was his-what’s your ethnic makeup?

**Ketcham**: American.

**Paul**: U huh!

**Ketcham**: I would say-I really don’t know they go we back. Ketchams go way, way back.

**Paul**: Do you know where they came from originally? Like way back?

**Ketcham**: I don’t. I have tried looking it up and so forth and I haven’t had the success. I believe they came from maybe England or somewhere like that

**Paul**: I see. And what was your mum's name?

**Ketcham**: My mum’s name- Stine S-T-I-N-E.

**Paul**: That would have been her maiden name. What was her first name?

**Ketcham**: Edna.

**Paul**: And do you know anything about where her family had come from years ago?

**Ketcham**: We came from Pennsylvania. I am trying to think of the name of the town. I can’t think about it off hand. Small town.

**Paul**: So the whole family sort of lived on long island and you said that your grandfather and uncle have been part of the lifesaving service?

**Ketcham**: Oh yeah. He came from hannigton originally.

**Paul**: Your grandfather? Is that your father's father?

**Ketcham**: Yeah.

**Paul**: Was he also a Tracey Ketcham or?

**Ketcham**: No his name was Albert.

**Paul**: Albert. Tell me a little bit about how you got involved in the coast guard?

**Ketcham**: Well it was the time to be drafted in the service because I was upstate I had been sent out there with the Dodgers to try out with his team out there because I had been to Orbits field.

**Paul**: Oh wait lets back up so you were a baseball player?

**Ketcham**: Right.

**Paul**: Can you talk a little bit about that then before we get into the coast guard?

**Ketcham**: Well I had been playing amateur baseball here in the island with various teams. And I tried out with the dodgers and they sent me up in 1941 in April I think of 41 to Rome New York where the Rome canals of the New York-what the hell team was it? Oh God.

**Paul**: That’s alright maybe it will come back to you as we are talking.

**Ketcham**: Rome Canals of the Canadian American league. Okay was a class C bull club. And I was trying out there with them and I ha been told I had made the club but then just a few days before I was to be signed I got a call from my father that I was going to be drafted.

So I couldn’t ignore signs of returning so I returned to long island and I went in a volunteered with the coast guard. Well the first place he took me into was the coast guard reserve office.

**Paul**: This was your father?

**Ketcham**: Right. And I had been clerking previous life before and they gave me-made type to stuff out and I was pretty good typist. And they offered me an element third class or the element second I forget which but one or the other. And with that my father said well let’s talk about this and with that we went outside and I ended up with the coast guard regulars as an apprentice semen. And I was apprentice semen three months at Ellis Island. And I went to semen second and semen first.

**Paul**: Did your father have an objection of some sort to the clerical work or?

**Ketcham**: Not an objection to the clerical work but he thought that I should start with the regular coast guard. As opposed to the reserves,

**Paul**: How did you feel about that?

**Ketcham**: Well I didn’t feel bad about it in the beginning but I didn’t feel bad about it later on actually either. I kept to the movement lost is the difference between apprentice semen and second class pay. But other than that eventually I got up there anyway.

**Paul**: Do you remember how much time had lapsed from that day to when you first reported for duty out here at Ellis?

**Ketcham**: At Ellis island? Well I-it was a very short time I don’t know how many it was not too long I think a few weeks couple of weeks.

**Paul**: It happened all very first?

**Ketcham**: Yeah. And you had to report to State Street where they give you physicals and that stuff you know.

**Paul**: What did you have to go through you said the physicals and stuff what did that entail?

**Ketcham**: Well your normal physical exemption and so forth and so on and that were it I guess and so forth. And then of course they shipped us to get out to the ferry and then that was that

**Paul**: Did they issue a uniform at that time?

**Ketcham**: Well we got most of our uniforms and so forth at the island

**Paul**: Here at Ellis Island?

**Ketcham**: Yeah.

**Paul**: Oh alright. What do you remember about that first day that you brought out here at Ellis Island? What sticks out in your mind about that?

**Ketcham**: The first day I was here. I don’t know I think it was the second day that I had to report over to Clove liken in Staten island for the ball team. So I was there but hat season only lasted like a month because it was in August we were right near the end of the season.

**Paul**: So once you got into the coast guard you played baseball?-

**Ketcham**: At Ellis island for the coast guard. Right

**Paul**: For the coast guard.

**Ketcham**: For about a month and a month and a half.

**Paul**: Can you talk a little bit about what it was like to play baseball in the coast guard how that might have been experienced before you joined the coast guard?

**Ketcham**: Well it’s hard to say some of the fellows on the club had minor league experience and so forth and others had been playing with amateur teams. Some of them in long island and so forth. And that about tells the tale of it you know.

**Paul**: How often did you practice?

**Ketcham**: Well once the season started we didn’t work out too much because you had duties in the coast guard and so forth and so on and we usually played at least one game an week.

**Paul**: And whom would you play against?

**Ketcham**: Well God it’s a long time ago. We played against various teams I don’t even know the name of them now.

**Paul**: But where did they come from? Where they-

**Ketcham**: Well they came from Staten Island, they came from queen's long island, and some are from the Bronx.

**Paul**: So they weren’t necessarily coast guard teams

**Ketcham**: No they were not coast guard teams. No. Then came the winter time and they tried the calls for the basketball team so I played basketball there until through the end of the season. Which would be in spring some time and then I was there for short time longer and then I got transferred to State Street?

**Paul**: You played basketball here at Ellis Island?

**Ketcham**: Oh yeah.

**Paul**: Where did you play basketball? Where was there a place to do that here?

**Ketcham**: Well one place was at the 33rd street or 32nd street. It was a YMCA place up there.

**Paul**: So they didn’t actually have a facility here?

**Ketcham**: Then we played in the Brooklyn navy yard I like that. And some other place had a gym but I don’t remember the name of that place.

**Paul**: Was there a gym here in the island?

**Ketcham**: No

**Paul**: How did you-

**Ketcham**: There was a basket here in a small area and various people used to play in so forth. We had to go to-where the heck did we go to parties? No we went to various gyms to practice up where I told you on 33rd or 32nd street. It’s a long time ago.

**Paul**: What about for the baseball did you practice here on the island or did you go somewhere else to parties?

**Ketcham**: We practiced at Clove Lake.

**Paul**: Clove?

**Ketcham**: Clove Lake yeah on Staten Island.

**Paul**: So you never actually practiced here? That you can remember?

**Ketcham**: No we used to throw the ball around here but not-there were nonparty’s fields here. The immigrants used o has the area at the back of the building.

**Paul**: What do you remember about the immigrants being here at that time if anything?

**Ketcham**: They were all upstairs. I never hardly saw them very much. Once in a while they would have a little riot or something and they would have to send the people up the [unclear 00:09:54] but I actually never went up there I never did because I wasn’t here at the time.

**Paul**: Could you tell me a little bit of what your barracks looked like here in the island?

**Ketcham**: Well it was just a series of beds, beds, beds. Then there was at the back of the island facing New Jersey was a small area where you could have a little recreation out there and so forth and so on. And then in the fields to the right of it would be where the immigrants would walk around you now.

**Paul**: That’s where you saw?

**Ketcham**: That’s where you saw them. There was a barrier there-chain-link fence you couldn’t get over to them.

**Paul**: I see. Aside from playing baseball what were your coast guard duties here?

**Ketcham**: Well I was with the office force.

**Paul**: Can you explain what that is please?

**Ketcham**: Oh I had office duties whatever it was. There were varied. One time I had quite a few months with the log with one of the offices here and I had to sit with him every night tell him all this stuff and read it out.

I guess he called the-I don’t know what it was sub logs or something and he would record it in the big book. I think his name was Lieutenant Miller or carnal miller or something like that. And that was my job and it was a very boring job.

**Paul**: [Laughter] what about-

**Ketcham**: I'd fall asleep. I would be reading everything. Ever guy’s name ever serial number everything. And they would have it published you know that’s how they keep the daily log.

**Paul**: Can you describe for me what a typical day would be like what time did you have to get up?

**Ketcham**: Well you normally got up about 6-6.30 somewhere in there.

**Paul**: And how did they get you up?

**Ketcham**: Well if you would have played ball for instance in basketball, if you had played the night before and so forth with the people who were in the athletic group.

You got a little luxury time where you could sleep a little later so there was no definite time. Because at that time the people who were in the athletic team enjoyed a little bit of loose stuff than the other people you know. So-not that they gave us lee way to do anything we wanted but so forth.

**Paul**: But you got that little bit of pampering I guess? Little extra time to sleep. Once they woke you up then what happened?

**Ketcham**: Well then you had various duties. Sometimes you got mess duty here; sometimes you swept the place up-

**Paul**: And this is all before you had eaten?

**Ketcham**: No this would be after we ate.

**Paul**: Yeah I guess that’s what I am trying to get from you is the actual schedule. You woke up and then what would you do?

**Ketcham**: Like I say I worked in the kitchen for a while washing dishes you know that sort of stuff. I worked so late at night sometimes after the dinner hour. And otherwise we didn’t do any picking or labor or anything like that you know.

**Paul**: What about you mentioned the mess what’s sticks out in your mind about the process of being fed here or working in the kitchen.

**Ketcham**: Well I didn’t actually serve any meals or anything. But if you had the duty then you would get into the kitchen, then you scrubbed the pots and pans and wash the dishes and you would up for supper time maybe up to 10-11 o’clock.

**Paul**: How often would they feed you during the day?

**Ketcham**: Well you’re supposed to get feed three times.

**Paul**: And who else was eating in the dining room at that time? Was it just coast guard or?

**Ketcham**: The bugs.

**Paul**: The bugs? What do you remember about the bugs [laughter]?

**Ketcham**: Well you would get various bugs in your milk and stuff like that. I don’t want to say anything about that [laughter]

**Paul**: [Laughter] alight. What about coast guard drilling of some sort did you have to do any kind of drills on the island?

**Ketcham**: Well they did have drill yeah. At that time I didn’t get involved too much because of basketballs. You more or less were allowed a little luxracity you know.

So I didn’t really get involved in any heavy duty stuff. We did sometimes have to unload the ship-the boat that came in from New York or something like that and so forth. But otherwise not too much in that sense.

**Paul**: What were some of the other sports that were available to coast guard’s men here in the island? You have mentioned basketball and baseball what other?

**Ketcham**: And boxing.

**Paul**: What do you ember about that?

**Ketcham**: Well there had a lot of professional boxers here. Not real professional-what the heck was his name he became light weight champion of the world? Oh God. I would have to think about that.

**Paul**: Did they have a boxing ring here somewhere on the island?

**Ketcham**: Oh yeah.

**Paul**: Do you remember where that was in your mind?

**Ketcham**: It was here it was right in the back of the mess hall.

**Paul**: And where was the mess hall? Do you remember?

**Ketcham**: Well it was right next to the bunk area where you slept. With the big long building near the back of it. And the kitchen was at the back of that the gallery.

And up to bring the air and there was one basket for basketball for recreational it wasn’t for teams. And that was about the size of it but the boxing was a big thing here then we had to think about a couple of champion here and-

**Paul**: Did you ever box while you were here?

**Ketcham**: NO I didn’t box. That wasn’t my game.

**Paul**: When you played baseball did you have your own separate coast guard baseball uniform of some sort?

**Ketcham**: OH yeah we had baseball uniforms. But I don’t have one now it’s a long time I don’t even remember. I just think it said USCG on it/

**Paul**: Do you remember-can you describe it a little bit? For me what it looked like?

**Ketcham**: It was just the regular if I am not mistaken it was light flannel suit. The color was light flatly you know. It was quite a long time it’s tough to remember you know.

**Paul**: It’s really a long time ago. Is there one game that you played baseball game that really sticks out in your mind for some reason?

**Ketcham**: No. it I can’t really think of any that stood out you knows. We played various teams it wasn’t professional baseball because we are not that many professional on the teams at that time.

**Paul**: And you said all the games that you played were actually not on the island. You played in other.

**Ketcham**: Oh each there was no ball field here.

**Paul**: You never played here on the island?

**Ketcham**: NO

**Paul**: Do you remember your officers at all any that stick out in your mind someone? Maybe not their names but I mean they did something that you remember or they looked a certain way?

**Ketcham**: Oh God!

**Paul**: You mentioned officer miller with whom you were doing the logs.

**Ketcham**: There was an older man here-oh God. Trying to think-there was one officer here. He was on the basketball team I am trying to think what his name was. An Italian fella-gentleman.

**Paul**: For the coast guardsmen have to watch which sport did they support to watch? Which sport did they support the most?

**Ketcham**: None of them.

**Paul**: None of them?

**Ketcham**: Yeah really because we never played here in the island. We went away.-

**Paul**: Except the boxing that took place here.

**Ketcham**: Well they didn’t really have a lot of boxing here either as far as regular bouts. They had a great crew of boxers here. Some of them were champions, ex champions and so forth and so on. They had quite a good crowd of them here.

**Paul**: What else did they offer to you for entertainment when you were on the island? What was available to you?

**Ketcham**: Once in a while we would have a dance. That’s about the [unclear 00:18:46] we used to go into New York.

**Paul**: What did you do if you went into New York?

**Ketcham**: Well you would do whatever you feel like if you had liberty. And you didn’t have to be back till the next morning.

**Paul**: How long did liberty last?

**Ketcham**: Well liberty was all night. Until 8 o’clock in the morning anyway. If you missed the last ferry -I think that was 11oclock ferry at 10.30-if you missed that you slept in the badge office on a bench. That’s where you got the ferry at the badge office in New York.

**Paul**: What was the procedure to obtain liberty? What did you have to do to actually get permission to leave?

**Ketcham**: Well if you had your activity and the athletes always managed to get free passes or something and so forth. I can’t remember a lot of it because it’s so long ago you knows.

**Paul**: Well you do a great job. Tell me about medical facilities? Did you ever have need for the medical facilities here in the island or do you remember somebody who had need?

**Ketcham**: I never had an occasion to use them. I never got hurt as far as I know so far.

**Paul**: Maybe some of the boxers did?

**Ketcham**: Well they had-but they were a separate group. Most of them were professionals and so forth and so on and they were kind of charmy with themselves.

**Paul**: Sure kept to them. So you were on the island for almost a year 41-42?

**Ketcham**: Well I was from 41 to somewhere around April. When I was transferred to New York. 1 state street I think. And I was there for a couple of month then I got transferred to a ship.

**Paul**: So did you ever come back here for any reason? To Ellis Island?

**Ketcham**: This is my first trip since I got away.

**Paul**: [Laughter] like you say it was a long time ago.

**Ketcham**: And that’s why I say forgotten allotted of stuff because of time. I am 78. Time marches on/

**Paul**: Tonight it will come back to you as you are going to sleep.

**Ketcham**: Today I am 78.

**Paul**: That’s right. When you look back at your time-how long were you in the coast guard all together?

**Ketcham**: Five years and five days.

**Paul**: When you look back at that time now how do you think about the time that you spent in the coast guard?

**Ketcham**: It wasn’t bad. I was there I got transferred to the ship, went up for Boston. We went up for Boston-I was about there for little on year. I was transferred off of that into the first coast guard district. I was there working in hotel [unclear 00:21:45] which was the coast guard station there.

And I had various assignments you know. And then I was running the transportation out of there. For all the people that were getting transfer around the country. And I did that until myself and this other fella-from the [unclear 00:22:06].

And he had been writing and he was on the LST that was due for the invasion. Sands the fellas name is Steve Yuhase YUHASE. We volunteered for that. And they sent us to Norfolk Virginia.

Well they didn’t want to let us go because we were running the transportation it was hard to train other people. But I they finally did let it go.

**Paul**: Did you continue being athlete at all? Obviously they didn’t have baseball team probably on a ship?

**Ketcham**: No we went to Norfolk. We were there for about two or three weeks and they shipped us back to New York. But in adamantly somehow, I don’t whether they miss interpreted the orders or what but we ended up in a navy base at Hudson River.

Instead of a coast guard base which was on long island. Where there gave-it was 16 of us -and they gave us the booth to go to England. And they gave us very rotten detail there was the navy guys.

So one day when they had the call for baseball players-this other fella and I raced for the baseball line-they took us up to [unclear 00:23:21] at Yankee stadium we had to try out with them. We both of us made the club.

Couple of day’s latte they shipped the other 14 guys over to long island at the base there. I don’t know where they ever ended up. But we were also out-it was only a couple of months till the end of baseball season.

And then they shipped us over there and then Steve [unclear 00:23:48] he was shipped to the west coast and so forth. And I needed up with a little escapade of my own here. And I finally was transferred into Alaska.

**Paul**: Let me ask you this because we need to end in just a moment, how do you think that being in the coast guard influenced the rest of your life?

**Ketcham**: Well I like the coast guard at that time. I don’t know if I would have liked it the day after that. When everybody was getting discharged and everything. I enjoyed it. I served on three ships and so forth. In Alaska. [Unclear 00:24:36] Alaska.

**Paul**: Certainly got around from place to place. Well Mr. Ketch I want to thank you very much. As I said we find coast guards who were here so rarely and we never found one that played baseball so this has been a real treat. I interviewed one man that played the trumpet for the coast guard but never play-

**Ketcham**: What’s his name?

**Paul**: Yeah I will tell you afterwards I will remember after we are done let me just sign off. This is Paul sears signing off with Tracey D Ketcham junior on March 27 1997 Mr. Ketchum’s 78 birthdays. And this is Paul sears signing off.