**Paul:** Good afternoon this is Paul Secrest for the National Park Service. Today is Tuesday October 17th 1995. I am in the Ellis Island recording studio using the portable digital recording machine and I’m here with James Kuhn.

Mr. Kuhn was stationed here at Ellis Island in the Coast Guard from 1952 until February of 1954. It’s just us up here there is no other people and we’re going to find out about his Coast Guard experience. Mr. Kuhn can we begin by you giving me your birth date please?

**James:** February 27th 1932.

**Paul:** Just quickly where were you born and tell me a little bit about your family background.

**James:** I was born in Green Bay Wisconsin, my father was a barber my mother was a school teacher.

**Paul:** Ethnic background?

**James:** My father came from Good German Lutheran stock and my mother came from Good Irish stock. My mother’s people came from Tipperary and I’m not sure where my grandfather’s people came from the Kuhns’. There was a history of them but I’m not familiar with it right now.

**Paul:** Tell me as you were growing up was there one side of the family or the other side that you tended to lean towards? Which side of the family was this and why?

**James:** We definitely leaned towards the Irish side. My mother’s family was, we’re farmers and my mother was from a family of 8 children and my father was from a family of 6 boys and 2 girls, 8 children there.

But we did my grandfather, my dad’s father had a tavern when I knew him. He had a tavern before that he had been a farmer. My dad says he not too good at one. But Henry was very good at picking up other languages in the area that he lived in which was Black creek Wisconsin which is about 20 miles from Western Green Bay was a heavy German Lutheran background there.

One of the funny things that I think of that time was that my uncle was born in the United States, and Uncle Oscar joined American army. Most of the people around Black Creek the Germans would not speak to them. Because it was 1917 and 1918 and he was off to fight the Germans.

So they would have, they wouldn’t talk to him they felt that he had betrayed their stock, their people. My mother’s people always clang to their Irish background. The story is that my grandfather was born in Water Town New York. We lose I don’t think anybody has ever been able to prove it by finding any kind of a document.

An interesting thing that came about my grandmother’s people adopted a young orphan. They came through on a train and he became our uncle James and my mother says she feels that and he came from New York.

My mother feels that he was Italian that he was very dark. At the same time my grandmother also adopted another orphan a girl had red hair. The 2 of them of course were not family but they became family.

I have that wrong, the boy was adopted by my grandmother and grandfather my great aunt Elizabeth adopted the girl as a companion. Because in those days her husband was a horse trader. He would leave the farm for many days at a time.

So she wanted a companion but the family always considered her family and always considered my uncle James family, Irene and James and it stayed that way. My uncle James never married, he never went to school.

My grandfather would put him in the milk wagon and they go to the cheese factory. The school house was next to the cheese factory. My grandfather would drop them off there and by the time my grandfather got back from the cheese factory and 2 miles to home James was there waiting for him on the steps.

He never learnt to read, he never learnt to write which was they just couldn’t get him to do it. He didn’t want to do it, and he always stayed on the farm. He never left the farm for any reason maybe to go to the fair.

Otherwise and he ended up eventually dying on the farm, he just I believe he was about 76 years old when he died. My mother said the great thing about uncle James was he knew horses like nobody ever did and my Irish grandfather he said didn’t know lifestyle from a heal of beans and he would have been better off if he would have stayed in the hotel that he was running in Green Bay.

**Paul:** You told an interesting story earlier on about the German side of the family and how they perceived the relative going to fight for the United States during the First World War. As you were a child when you were growing up what were the attitudes towards the military in your own family?

**James:** Well my family it changed the attitude was not there. All of my dad’s nephews my cousins on my father’s side all served. One was [inaudible 00:06:37] and they were all in the service and there was never any beakering or anything like that or any. They were all patriotic Americans and the Germans and the Japanese had to be defeated that was all it was to it.

**Paul:** What made you wish to pursue going into the military, going into the Coast Guard?

**James:** Well when I, I was 19 when I went into the Coast Guard and I was one year out of high school. I didn’t know what I was going to do and then the, so I didn’t do anything after high school. I didn’t look into college or anything. But then the Korean war came along and I always say that was America’s gift to me for graduating.

When the Korean war came along and I had been working as and as printist pattern maker.

**Paul:** In a printist pattern maker?

**James:** Pattern maker.

**Paul:** Pattern?

**James:** Pattern as in industrial patterns for machines that sort of thing. Most of my work was for Northwest engineering which made large cranes. Then crane baby and the heavy paper mill industry there, machines for patterns to build paper machines.

So anyhow it was either the army, the army was 2 years but there was a chance of career. The marine cop was 2 years there was a chance of career. The navy was 4 years and the air force was 4 years. The air force just going on its own at that time and the Coast Guard was 3 years.

I had, I thought that I was going to be drafted. I got my notice and I just happened to be playing baseball with a group of men and we were sitting around and talking and they said, “Well what are you going to do, when are you going in service?”

I said my Boatswain's mate was on the baseball, I said I lied and I said it’s either the Navy or the air force. I said for I hate to go for a 4 year hitch but I guess I’ll have to be that. A fellow piped up on the team and said, “Well why don’t you join the Coast Guard?” I said the Coast Guard I said I checked into that there is a 6 month waiting list.

I said, “You have to know somebody to get into the Coast Guard.” He said, “Well you know somebody,” and I said, “Who do I know?” The other guy said, “Well you know us, we’re the Coast Guard recruiters.” I said, “I’ll be down tomorrow morning if you can take care of me.”

So I went down the next day and signed all the papers and came home and I was 19 but they still wanted my dad’s signature. My dad and I went to the kitchen he said, “Are you serious about this?” I said yeah I said sign this thing up it’s a 3 year hitch, I can’t do better than that.

He said well he said, “You realize that if I sign this you promise you’ll never forget that you’re the one that told me to.” Because he said, “I don’t want to get a letter 6 months from now saying dad come and get me,” and he never did.

**Paul:** Then what happened, what was the process between that moment and the time you went to the Peer at Ellis Island?

**James:** Well up to that time then I left in September 10th I left Green Bay with 2 fellows from Minnesota. They had to come all the way from Minnesota from Green Bay because Green Bay was the only, was the closest Coast Guard enlistment station for them from Minneapolis.

So the 3 of us got on a train in Green Bay and then switched trains in Chicago and headed for Cape May New Jersey. When we got on the train we met some other fellows who were going at the same place. We ended I believe in Philadelphia and then we had a train change stations and get on a little puddle jumper that was going to Cape May. Cape May we spent 3 months in boot camp down there and they let us go home for Christmas.

Right after Christmas we had to report to, a group of us had to report to Staten Island, the Stan Island repair base. It was interesting when we got out of boot camp they called us in the last week to find out where we wanted to be stationed. Which I never heard anybody else doing.

They said, “Where do you want to go and I said, “Well I’d like to go to New Orland’s.” They said, “Well there is only 5 openings in New Orland’s and there is plenty of people that have signed up for it. So you’ll have to draw cards, high cards wins.” I drew the 3 or hearts.

So then they said, “Well where do you want to go now?” I said, “Well what’s my pick?” They said, “Well you can go to New York or you can Virginia. Or you can go to the first Coast Guard district up in Boston. All the guys in Boston said, “Oh! You don’t want to go there, it’s where they ships all way you don’t want to go there.”

Well it ends up that they don’t us to sign up because they wanted to get back to the Boston area. Coast Guard district they’re the 9th Coast Guard which was the great lakes was closed. There was no openings there. If you wanted an opening you had to find somebody in the Coast Guard district there of equal rate and you could switch with him, which paid your own way then, which was kind of a unique way of doing things solving problems.

But I think that one of the happiest days in my life was the day that I told them that I would take New York. From there then of course they sent me up to Staten Island. They put us at the Saint George repair base and all figured we were destined for the weather ships because there were 2 weather ships in at the time when they sig warred for 30 days at a time.

Not somewhere in the middle of the Atlantic at that time in the 1950s and just do a circle on the ocean and report the weather to the airplanes and the ships that are going by.

**Paul:** That was not considered desirable to do.

**James:** No 30 days in the North Atlantic was not a picnic and then if went far enough you were closer to Scotland. So you would go to Scotland and get a few days of leave and then they’d take on supplies then go back for another 30 days and end up either in New York or Boston those places.

So we figured we’re all destined for a weather ship and they told us and they came down and we were all working doing one thing or another to keep us busy. Sweeping decks and all they said, “Go to your barracks, don’t change your clothes you’re good just the way you’re and report to the main office.”

We said, “Hey it’s a weather ship they’re right down there at the end of the Peer, we don’t have any problem there. We’ll just walk on there and our way we go. So we’re all standing there and waiting and this little guy came on little Irish man came out and Flannigan was his name Boatswain’s Mate second class.

He came out and didn’t say anything to us but the clerk came out and said follow this man. So we followed him we still haven’t hear anything and he’s got all our orders and he merges us and instead of going to the right to the weather ships we go to the left and he said, “Throw your seat bags down.”

We look down there and there is this little 40 foot patrol boat. Finally we said, “Well where are we going?” He said, ‘You’re going to the port security, you’ll know at Ellis Island.” Wow! I thought that was just great. Another fellow I was with was just terrible he wanted to go on one of the weather ships.

So we got there and the first month you’re a guard you’re on security duty, you go around with the little clerk during the day and at the night you’re turning the key and there is different stations on the, which we call the hospital side of where we were stationed.

So just to acclimate yourself to what was going on there. Then they had 2 different site where you could be in the maintenance group or you could be in the Peer guard group or you could be in the port in the boat group. Most of the, well almost everybody I think we’re one of the few exceptions. All of these fellows went to camp golden Georgia and took military police training there after they left boot camp.

Or they were on ships, so each of the ships had to designate somebody to go down there and take this training. So most of the fellows who were there took this MP training down in Camp Gordon they came back with the big army boots and all of that.

Then if you were in the Peer guard group you were, there were certain government restricted Peers and you would proceed then if you were a Peer guard they drop you off and one of these Peers accompany you. You were there to make sure that nobody, no one authorized personal would be on that Peer.

If you were in the boat group you delivered the Peer Guards to the Peers and then you ran a 6 hour patron in New York harbor. The Yankee patrol was from Ellis Island up to the George Washington Bridge on the Jersey side. Down as far as Staten Island. Then there were 2 other patrols one went the back side of Staten Island and the other one went up by the New York Airport in that area.

You were strictly water security if you saw anything that was, that didn’t look right you reported it. If you came across a body in the water you tied a rope around it and called the harbor police. If a boat broke down you had your regular Coast Guard duties rescuing people, pulling boats and getting a hold of the 3rd boat and say, “Hey got a rail road budge going down the river here.” There was patrols that run 24 hours a day.

**Paul:** So were you rotated to these different duties?

**James:** No.

**Paul:** How did that work?

**James:** Well the first month whether you’re on a ship or whether you’re on a base they’ve got you working sweeping decks, as they call it decks. Maybe scrubbing paint or doing some painting and then you spent a week or 2 in the gully washing dishes, peeling potatoes that sort if thing.

**Paul:** So when you were at Staten Island that’s what you were doing.

**James:** Yeah at Staten Island but then when I got to Ellis Island I got a month of that. Then if you didn’t know what you wanted to do you could sign up for another month. I signed up for another month because I just I didn’t want to go to any of the, I didn’t want to cook school or any of the other ones just wanted the general duty.

I wanted to get into the boats is what I wanted, I wanted boats. So I spent another month in there and made sure that I kept my nose clean didn’t get any trouble. Did what I was told to do so that when I asked to get into a boat it’s you did a good job.

At the same time I’m busy talking to the people in the boat so that they remember me. So that after 2 months I made boats.

**Paul:** Can you talk a little bit about the first 2 months and be very specific about the kinds of things that you did here at Ellis Island, or any stories that you remember from those first couple of months?

**James:** Well there were the thing about being from Green Bay Wisconsin I’m from like saying I’m from Podunk or something. But and then coming to New York and then I get with all of these guys and most of them are Italians and they’re from Boston or they’re from Jersey or they are from New York.

The other thing about it is, is that I got the feeling that a lot of these guys went down to Camp Gordon Georgia were people that maybe were just a little bit of independent when they were on the ship. Or they were doing things to get off the ship and it was the opportunity in some cases not all cases. Because there was an awful lot of guys that went down there and just signed up because they said, “Hey you want to do this.”

But others I think had sent down there so that there were guys inherited, I can’t believe you do that sort of thing. Trouble makers like guys that were all looking for an angle, this one guy used to say to me, “Don’t sweep so fast,” “why not?” He said, “Well if you sweep fast we’ll get some other stinking job to do around here.”

I’d say, “But I hate sweeping, I’d rather do something else. Give me anything, give me a paint brush or something.” Then there were little problems that would come up. There was quite a bit of drinking going on at that time and of course New York at that time had ruled that if you were 18 you’d go in any type of bar in town.

You weren’t restricted you could have beer, you could whisky whatever you wanted. So there were a couple of incidence where guys got into, there were just 2 guys in a fist fight or something like that. But it was…

**Paul:** That happened here on the Island or did that happen when you were leave?

**James:** No it happened on the Island.

**Paul:** Yeah.

**James:** It happened.

**Paul:** Can you be more specific about that?

**James:** Well there was one time that I got there or they told me, “Hey you should have been here a couple of hours ago.” Or I would have in a while. So and so this fellow and this other fellow took actions to each other and I said, “What, yeah what happened?”

“Well I don’t know but he said something to him and this guy grabbed an axe and the other fellow ran into the closet. Then the Ensign came, the officer today the Ensign came along and he almost got hit by the guy in the closet with the axe because he stuck his head in there. The guy thought it was, didn’t know it was him.”

So they said this is just one of the incidents and there was an occasion where we had a boatswain's mate that whenever he went out on patrol, he always put around in the 45. We carried a 45, a carbine and a nightstick.

**Paul:** you should say for the sake of the tape, because people listening to this may not know what all this is that that’s a gun.

**James:** All right the 45 is an automatic, is a semiautomatic pistol and the carbine is a small version on an M1 riffle of 30, fires a 30 caliber bullet.

**Paul:** Can you spell carbine please?

**James:** Carbine.

**Paul:** Thank you.

**James:** Capital C and then of course we had the nightstick. But he, the Boatswain's mate always carry the shell and the chamber, you jerked one in there. One morning we hear a loud explosion and we went to the door the gunners mate check. The gunners mate was absolutely white pale, he was grey and shaking. The seamen of the 3rd class seamen or 1st class seamen was standing there with a stun look on his face and the Boatswain's mate a smiling.

So we asked what happened and he said, “Well the seamen just put a hole in the ceiling.” Sure enough we looked up there and there is this hole in the ceiling. When we came in from patrol, we usually would come in and the Boatswain's mate they required us to take the 45 out of the whole stuff, pull back the chamber on the 45 look inside snap a chat pull the trigger.

Of course that was it and then he take, we proved to him that there was nothing in the chamber. The clip was out of the pistol and from there we just set the stuff down and walked away. Assigned to sleep and we were okay, because we had to check this out and check in every 6 hours whenever we went on patrol.

What happened was that the Boatswain’s Mate they put their round in the chamber but then he was busy doing something and he said go up and give this to the gunners mate. Check the guns there, which was something we always did.

So he forgot that the Boatswain’s Mate put that round in the chamber of the pistol and he went in there and he pulled the trigger and he blew a hole in the ceiling. The Boatswain’s Mate came in right after and he thought it was pretty funny but the Gunners mate was white because the guys didn’t always point the gun at the ceiling when they pulled the trigger.

It could have been just one of the other fellows who just waved it around and fired it because sometimes you got careless, nobody cares any. It’s always the unloaded gun that goes off and that’s what happened on this case.

**Paul:** Were you trained to use the guns and the nightstick here at Ellis Island, or were you trained to do this before you got here?

**James:** No we had about a week on a rifle range in boot camp, and then we came up here and we were put into another boot crew in that. We never had any, the only we were sent back to Camp May in well I think it was 1953 to riffle and to range again.

So then you went out there and you spent a week down there and you may be fired this weapon 30 times at the most. The M1 and then the 45 pistol and that was it and then we came back here.

**Paul:** So to the best of your knowledge there was no firing range or anything like that here on the Island.

**James:** No nothing, nothing like that.

**Paul:** Could you describe for me starting from the time that you woke up in the morning sort of an average day would that be possible?

**James:** Well if you were, if the average stay with the boat crew in the boats was…

**Paul:** That would be sort of the second stage of your time here, this is past the sweeping and the scrubbing.

**James:** A time in the gully.

**Paul:** Right well what time would you wake up?

**James:** We were up at 7 o’clock in the morning.

**Paul:** How were you gotten up?

**James:** Somebody the 1st class Boatswain’s Mate would come in and wake you up. He would just come in and say, “Hey time to get up.” I can’t recall that we ever had revelry piped in and I don’t recall it. But we were up by 7 o’clock.

Some guys there, there was always something going on and you eventually slept through it because guys were coming in at 1 o’clock in the morning off patrol and other fellows were getting up at 5 o’clock because they had to take the Peer Guards out by 6 o’clock have them on the Peers. They had to go down and eat their breakfast.

So there was always somebody coming in and out of the barracks, always something going on. But usually you were up by and then you went down on the basement to the gully and you had your breakfast and the food was good.

**Paul:** Was that be, would you wash before you went or you wash in the room?

**James:** Yeah we had, each of the barracks had 3 different bathrooms and they had and some with showers and some were just a lot of sinks so that you could do your shaving. So you shaved you had to be clean shaven every morning and everybody got up brushed his teeth and cleaned and shaved.

Then went down as we used to say and I keep forgetting because my wife told, “Me stop saying that,” I guess we down for Chao. My wife says, “It’s not Chao its supper or its dinner.”

**Paul:** You remember being beneath where you were staying you went downstairs like this.

**James:** Yeah it was you mentioned that being downstairs which reminds me that being downstairs didn’t secure you from wonder by. Because the cockroaches were off for beg, and boy they were big. We used to say I think they walked off with my locker today.

But we got on stairs and if you could, the gully was right off one of the main passage way in the basement there. The kitchen was in one side and the way you pill potatoes and all that stuff it’s on one side.

Then down the hall were the supply rooms for the food supplies, and then the cooking stations were there in a long trace in that. There were only I guess about 200 of us at the base at one time, that’s I think our officers had been.

**Paul:** What was the dining procedure say for breakfast, did you have, well you tell me what the procedure was?

**James:** Well it was like going through a cafeteria line, it was cafeteria style but the nice thing about it is they said you want fried eggs you want scrambled eggs and they did for you. It always amaze me that those fellows could do 2 and 3 eggs in one hand and not break them. They just crack them and dump them on a grill and not smash them.

**Paul:** Who were the kitchen staff?

**James:** Regular Coast Guard cooks, and then you had most of the time you had fresh milk you didn’t get powdered milk. The only time you got powdered is when they ran out of fresh milk and oh! The bakery I swear I put on a lot of pounds just to, because the bakery came over on the ferry and it was always nice and fresh you had Boston cream pies and just about anything you can imagine was there. It was a heck of a place to eat.

**Paul:** How long would you get for breakfast?

**James:** More than enough time, as a matter of fact you could sit down there and after you were done eating and shoot the breeze for another you know what. Because it would open it, I think we opened at. Well it opened at 5:30 because the boat crews and the Peer Guards had to eat.

So the cooks had to be on duty have everything ready for 5:30 in the morning and then they stayed awake until or stayed that way until somewhere around 9 o’clock. Then of course I think the finest meal one of the biggest surprise I had was going through the line on a Friday.

They had these big buckets that were steaming and I watched and all of a sudden I said to the fellow next to me I said, “Harry what is that?” I said, “Is that lobster?” He said yeah. I said, “That’s a whole lobster, isn’t it Harry. I know like we see down on the windows in New York City.” He said yeah.

I said, “I’ve never had a lobster,” Harry said, “You’ve never had a lobster?” Harry was from Miami and I said no. I said, “I don’t know what to do.” He said, “Well sit next to me when we sit down sit next to me,” and he said, “I’ll show you what to do.”

So Harry showed me how we break the lobster into half and told me, “Hey the best part, the sweetest part is the claws,” and I couldn’t believe it that we would have this. Then I thought that was great and then we got it again the next Friday.

But those were the only 2 times we had lobster but it was enough for me to enjoy lobster, one lobster every chance I can get.

**Paul:** All right so when breakfast finished then what now?

**James:** Then we had, now it’s clear in my mind we couldn’t stay there all the time because we had master at 8 o’clock.

**Paul:** Which is what?

**James:** Master is calling all of the boat crew would report to one area and the Peer Guards were at another area and then the maintenance staff if you weren’t in either one of the Peer Guards or the boat crew they met at another area.

What happened then is that a rule was taken and everybody who was supposed to be on duty would be, should be there. Unless you were on patrol some place you had to be there report for master.

Then they would, the Boatswain’s Mate would take people aside if they were engine men or firemen they went with the maintenance or the mechanics chief. Old guy by the name Dutch, chief Dutch.

Then the rest of us that if we were what the heck we were, if we were with the maintenance group the Boatswain’s Mate said, “Why aren’t you in the pain locker and you 2 guys grab your brooms and sweep down the main hallway and don’t get in the old man’s way.”

“You people when you go to the pain locker I want you to get the paint and I want you to go paint those windows. You guys go on that barracks and you scrub the paint off of those windows, you did a lousy job on it yesterday let’s get the windows cleaned up.”

**Paul:** So the mastering is sort of the organizational beginning of, hey this is where everyone was assigned to work to.

**James:** Yeah everybody gets his work orders, the other things that every morning when you got up your barracks had to be swept. Somebody had to come through a buffer, buff the floors between the banks and that. Everything had to be put away, your beds had to made and usually did.

**Paul:** Was there an inspection process too that you did undergo daily?

**James:** The chief would come or the 1st class Boatswain’s Mate would come in during the day or in the morning to inspect. But on Friday’s, Friday morning was the main inspection. For that one you had to make sure that you, most important thing was cleaned all the heads or the bathrooms. All the toilets all the sinks and once that was done nobody used them.

We maybe had one are we would say you can use that bathroom and that’s it. When inspection came around even if you were on, even if you had been on a made the sick patrol you had to get out of bed get dressed and go someplace. Because the old man was going to come around and he was going inspect. He walked through and he inspected and everything had to put away.

**Paul:** Do you remember an instance in your time here where the inspection was not acceptable, where whatever the inspector found was not?

**James:** No it was, it wasn’t the same as in boot camp. In boot camp you had to lay out all your clothes and they all had to be tied and nuts had to be in a certain seam and all your clothes were. One thing about being in the navy or the Coast Guard all your clothes are folded inside out.

I don’t, if you looked at a navy blue uniform the seams were always bent to the inside. Because that way it didn’t get linty, it didn’t get dirty and then they had to be in boot camp they had to be, in boot camp they had to be rolled. They said what if you were out at sea because everything went into a sea bag. While here we got away from that because we had these big lockers that we could use.

**Paul:** So it was a little more relaxed in that way.

**James:** Yes it was a more relaxed atmosphere and really I think back many times and the Coast Guard at the port security on it at Ellis Island was almost the closest thing to civilian life you could get.

Your life was, you had what they call port and style with liberty. Liberty started at what was that by one o’clock in the afternoon you were off from one in the afternoon till 10 you had to be back at 10 o’clock the next morning.

Your duty worked the same way, when you came back you got back here for duty you got back by 10 o’clock and you changed into your work clothes and you reported to whatever it is. Whoever the Boatswain’s Mate or something or you might have a patroller jet to go on.

**Paul:** What was the process to get liberty and what did you have to do to obtain…?

**James:** You had to keep your nose clean, if you didn’t. If you made some infraction for instance if you came back late from liberty and you didn’t call up and say, “Sir I’m going to be late, I’ll be an hour late,” you could lose your liberty.

Most of the time if you had a captain’s mist, a captain’s mist was kind of the lowest form of trial that you can get in the Coast Guard or the navy. They were held right in the main hallway of the administration building across away on the Ellis Coast Guard side.

The commander the captain would come out and each stand on the hallway and the young Archon that goofed up would stand across and then they would be the recording sectary. The scribe would be there and I forget what they were calling a scribe.

But the secretary would be there to get and the old man would be there to take the notes on everything. Then old man would tell the guy what he was going to get. Right you’re going to report to Boatswain’s Mate, the Boatswain’s Mate is going to do this. So you’re under his jurisdiction or you do not have leave for a week.

Or not leave but liberty for a week or 2 days something like that. It’s very efficient, it took care of all our problems. It was held once a week, so the guy if he goofed up on Monday you had I forget what I think Monday morning was. So if he goofed Monday after he had to wait all week before he found out what the old man was going to do to him.

**Paul:** Is there a story about a specific instance where this happened to someone you know that you can be specific about, or did it happen to you or?

**James:** I got into a problem one time because I came back in liberty night before but I thought I was being a little smart and I thought that I could get out of cleaning the barracks and inspection day if I just went back in liberty again. So I did.

Well when they came looking for me and I wasn’t there the Boatswain's mate when I came back at 10 o’clock came around to see and inform me that he had turned me into the, he had booked me and turned me into the executive officer.

Well I got a break, the regular executive officer was an academy man and they were rather strict. He was on leave, so we had a reserve returning commander that was the acting executive officer. So I had to report to his office and I apologized to the Boatswain’s Mate, I apologized to the officer and the officer were litigiously.

So he said, “You will report to the Boatswain’s Mate for the next 3 days for extra duty.” So I did and the Boatswain’s Mate would say, “Okay I want those shower store scrubbed, I want this deck scrubbed.” Whatever he wanted me to do after my full working day then I worked for him until he said I could quit.

I might have to scrub a deck or whatever it was but that was 3 days. He had, this Boatswain’s Mate had been turned in. He was the 1st class Boatswain’s Mate.

**Paul:** Do you remember his name?

**James:** Yeah his name was Flaw, and he was turned in by a 1st class engine man. The engine man and his crew were, the more mark and his crew were scrubbing a deck one of the passage ways and waxing it. That’s one of the things had to be done, you didn’t have genitures you were the genitures.

**Paul:** Well I should save this segment tape that when you say you were washing the deck you’re meaning the hallways the floors. You’re not actually talking about boat decks.

**James:** No.

**Paul:** You are talking about lingo for the floor.

**James:** When you’re in the navy or Coast Guard whether you’re on land or sea a wall is a bulk head, the ceiling is an overhead and the floor is a deck.

**Paul:** That’s good for us to know about.

**James:** If you don’t say it that way you’re corrected immediately. As a matter of fact that’s one of the things they drill into you when you’re in boot camp. That’s not a door that’s a passage way.

So the Boatswain’s Mate came along and the Boatswain’s Mate Floyd came along and he walked on the floor, he walked on the deck where they were scrubbing. The 1st class didn’t know who he was because we didn’t have any rates on our arms we were all in chambering shirts and dungarees or overalls.

So he said something to the Boatswain’s Mate about, “Hey you stay off this deck we’re scrubbing it.” Well the Boatswain’s Mate didn’t know who he was so he smutted off to him because I’m 1st class and you’re like. So the guy just looked at his name and said, “Oh! Okay,” and just wrote it down and turned it in.

Well Floyd had stand in front of the captain’s master and explain why he did this. When the 1st class found out that Floyd that done he said, “What was I going to do, I didn’t know who he was.” Ordinarily they said both of them would have recognized each other and everything would have been just fine. So Floyd was kind of irritated because it affected his 4.0 conduct by doing it.

**Paul:** 4.0 being a rating of some sort.

**James:** Being the best, you have either 4.0 conduct or you go down from there. You always wanted to maintain a 4.0 because if you’re 4.0 you sure you get your rate. If you’re going to get an advancement you had to have that 4.0.

**Paul:** Is that like a 4.0 or not like 4 like 40?

**James:** No.

**Paul:** That’s what it look like on the 4.0 it’s like 40, 4.0.

**James:** Just like college you want to a 4.0, a 3.9 is not as good in the military as it is in college. So anyhow that was incident that happened the 2 of them had it though it was missing.

**Paul:** Kind of for both.

**James:** 40 for patrol boat and the cooks always got off at midnight, they could leave the building at midnight. There is only one thing wrong with that the last ferry left here about 11 o’clock. So there was only one way that they could get off the ferry and that was while getting off of the Island. That was by patrol boat.

So the boat crew always that the cooks got where they wanted to go, they lived in New Jersey we’d take them on a patrol and then drop them off some place.

**Paul:** So the cooks themselves were hired then they were not Coast Guards.

**James:** No they were Coast Guards.

**Paul:** But they were allowed to live at home?

**James:** They actually got off every night, the cooks did. But somebody had to be back the next morning to prepare food. But if they wanted to they could go and they could come back. They’d be done by say 6 o’clock and most of them would go home and then they would have skeleton crew on for the rest.

**Paul:** Why would they be allowed such…?

**James:** Because they weren’t needed really until 5:30 in morning and they worked all day.

**Paul:** Why didn’t they want to live here?

**James:** I don’t know it’s always that way with the cooks.

**Paul:** Special treatment.

**James:** Yeah everybody takes care of their cook.

**Paul:** I’ve interrupted your story I’m sorry.

**James:** So the boat was missing, well how come the boat was missing? Well the radio man said, “I called I looked out the window of the administration building, I looked out. I saw this boat going out there was no lights on it but they left and I called them nobody answered.”

Then the next morning St. George repair base called and said, “What do you want us to do with this 4040 you’ve got over here?” The guy said, “Oh! Is that where it ended up?” Well one fellow decided to go haywire in front of boat pool and the cook and another boson a matter of fact ended up being one that I had went with them and he took, he delivered the cooks where they wanted to go at Staten Island some place or Jersey.

Then they went to the repair base and they left the boat there and then the one fellow went home to wife and family. The other fellow just went haywire. The funny part of it is that they can never prove who took that boat. I think after 40 years of the statue of limitations they won’t touch him anymore.

**Paul:** What about for extreme cases, do you remember any extreme punishments being administered, or was there a place on the Island that was like a jail or something like that. That would be used in certain circumstances?

**James:** No they felt that we didn’t need a jail because this was, they were on an Island and there was only certain ways they could get off, and if you had gotten into trouble everybody knew you were in trouble. The last thing they were going to do is take you off if you were in trouble.

There was an incident and the fellows were restricted to the base for 3 months for, or at least a month for turning in a false alarm done at south ferry one time. The 2 of them got some time but the New York police…

**Paul:** Was some fire alarm?

**James:** Yeah the New York police caught them right away put them in jail and then turned them over to our legal officer. He brought them back here and they stayed here until they had a hearing and then they did not get any jail time for it. They were remanded to the custody of their legal officer here in the base.

I’m not sure but St. George repair base had a brig and you would be sent to the brig over there.

**Paul:** That’s on Staten Island.

**James:** Yes yeah.

**Paul:** I see, we sort of got we routed from our daily routine here. Anyway so were mastered to your individual duties. So why don’t we talk about when you had boat duty because that made you happy, when you had the boat duty. So what would happen, you were given your instructions and then what happened?

**James:** Well after we got the first we had, the first thing that had to be done is we had to deliver the Peer Guards and there would be about 6 of them. We might have to deliver them to, over to places in where was it in Jersey City in that area in there. Or over into Graves and Bay they call it over in Brooklyn.

Then we would deliver them and then we would bring the other Peer Guards back and then we go and maybe get a cup of coffee or sandwich or something and then go on patrol.

**Paul:** So these Peer Guards would be stationed here, what were they guarding? What was the function of a Peer guard?

**James:** The Peer guard it was a government restricted Peer. It was a Peer that usually was loading supplies, military supplies. The only other interesting thing that we had when we were Peer guard or a waterside patrol is what they called us. But the other thing we had to do was, that was interesting was observe the ships that came into the port. That were either had put into a communist country like Poland or seldom Russia.

But into a communist country or if somebody had boarded the ship that came in was suspected of dealing in dope. Then we had to make sure that we had to put our ship right or our little boat next to this big ship and steer it all the time. For if they drop an atomic bomb or something like that into the water.

The ships were that they had put in the phone had stopped a communist port many times all the time. They were met outside of the permanent limits and searched. Our officers would go aboard with gagger counters to check to see if there was any atomic or any uranium or anything like that on them.

**Paul:** Are you in the little 40 foot boats doing this?

**James:** We didn’t go aboard the ships but the guarding of the ship in that water was important.

**Paul:** That brings up a whole another side of this, did you have any interaction with what would function as in at Ellis Island and it’s function as an immigration station at that time. Because suspected communist and people such as that were being detained here in the early 1950s. Were there rules about your interaction with this part of Island, or did you indeed have some interaction with this part of the Island?

**James:** The only interaction that I had as far as immigrants were concerned and as far as Coast Guard was concerned. Is that one day in 19 I believe it was 1953 we were, our boat was ordered to, our crew was ordered to stand by our boat. Then a tug came in, a Coast Guard tug came in and pulled up on the immigration side.

They loaded all of a whole group of men from what do I want to say, I don’t know if they were from Cuba or. But they were Spanish speaking and they were all Spanish speaking. So I don’t know if they were Mexican or Porto Rican or Brazilian. Just what they were and the Brazilians don’t speak Spanish anyhow.

But they were being shipped out of the country, they were being deported and it was our job to watch to follow that ship still alongside that ship to follow that ship or that tug to the ship that were reporting on board that was over in Jersey.

So we went over there and, we followed them over there and waited till they were all marched up to gang clank and put on the ship. Then we pulled out and went back in our regular duty. But an interesting thing was that one of the fellows a couple of days later came back to the barracks and he said, “Read this.”

It was a headline in the daily worker the communist newspaper here in New York and it said that gun todding coasties whole of citizen deport people. That was really the only time that there was a second time and that’s when 2 people on the immigration side escaped.

Wrapped all their clothes in the shower curtain and jumped off the Jersey side of the wall here and went into Jersey. Who knows they might be back in those swamps yet. But that time we were, we all searched our side went up into the adecks, and what we usually punched the clock for fire watch. But we had to go through the adecks all the rooms in that and searched to see if those 2 fellows were there.

Eventually we got the news that now they had swam over to Jersey side and then escaped. The other thing about, I used to come over here for mass on Sunday.

**Paul:** Can you describe where that was and what that all entailed a little bit?

**James:** Well the thing I remember it was a large room because there were awful lot of people that went there.

**Paul:** So it was here on the immigration side, wasn’t it?

**James:** It was on the immigration side and we came, we always had a guy to take us over there and you went through it so fast and you didn’t get a tour of the place or anything. So it was hard to remember but I do remember the room had one of those large mirror rows on it.

A lot of I don’t know if that was done in the 1930s when so much, so many artists were given jobs doing mirrors on walls for to keep them busy to give them money during the depression years. But anyhow I remember the mirrors and they’d be the benches like you have down in the main hall.

Benches like that were in there to sit on and then they’d have a sort of an alter up there and a place for the priest to stay and while he gave the sermon.

**Paul:** Was it a Coast Guard chaplain or was it a priest who came to…?

**James:** No it was, I believe I don’t know what the order of priest were but it was from the little church at south ferry. There is a little church at south ferry and they would bring a priest over every Sunday to hold mass.

The one time that was really humorous it’s something that you think how can it be humorous you are at mass. Well the priest it appears as though there was a family in the front row.

The priest said the mass and saying the mass he got to the gospel and the epistle he did the epistle in English, and then he did it in what I think was Polish. Then he did the gospel in English then he did it in Polish, and then he gave the sermon in English and then he did it in Polish.

Well by that time those being in the back as far as I know there must have been 50 men back there.

**Paul:** We’ve got to stop just for a second, I’ve got to put another tape and we’re just about to run this out. Sorry we’re going to just pause just for a moment and I’ll put in tape 2. Okay we’re now beginning tape 2 with James Kuhn who was in the Coast Guard here at Ellis Island from 1952 to 1954.

Mr. Kuhn when we ended tape one you were telling us about being in the service up at the chapel and there was a family in front row and you noticed that the priest was alternating between speaking English and speaking Polish.

**James:** Well when he got to the, when he started to do the sermon in Polish because the sermon in English was long enough. When he started to do it in Polish there were about, there had to be about 50 men in back of us.

We sat up in front with this family and all of a sudden during the Polish section of the sermon the noise get louder. It’s these guys talking and carrying on and like hey one this guy I didn’t speak. It was all Spanish or it wasn’t English, but who were these 50 guys were talking at.

So they were very irritated that they were getting this thing in Polish. They had both versions English and of course most of them probably didn’t speak English. So then they’re getting another language besides Polish.

**Paul:** Well now I’m confused, were these people men not other Coast Guards men?

**James:** No these were immigrants, I’m sorry.

**Paul:** Well seems you had another range for action that you had with the immigrants then. They were attending church services here. I thought that this, I was under the impression that church services were held for the Coast Guards.

**James:** No we were just we were guests, we were guests over here. Immigration summary made arrangements that we could come over. Imagine our officers made arrangements that those people that were catholic could cover over. I didn’t know of any other service that were held over here that other fellows went to.

**Paul:** That’s why I asked you if it was the Coast Guards…

**James:** Yeah.

**Paul:** …because I assumed it was the Coast Guards.

**James:** So these fellows were all another nationality and I believe it was Spanish. So they started talking, as far as they were concerned this church was over because they had adducted and the priest stopped talking and he looked down at the bunch of them and he said, “If you people don’t keep quite I’m going to have the officers here clear this room and you won’t hear mass today.”

There was little talking back and forth like somebody saying, “What did you say?” in Spanish and the other fellow said in Spanish, “Hey he said he’s going to cut this thing out if you.” It took a minute or 2 for things to settle down and then I thought the good father pushed his luck he went back to polish again and finished his sermon.

But then after that we had the rest of the mass was said and there was no problem after that and never ran into it again while we were there. But of course we didn’t someone came in and gave a sermon in 2 different languages.

**Paul:** Would you have a different priest periodically or?

**James:** Yes because it wouldn’t always be the same priest and I don’t know for sure that this part it would seem kind of strange or this particular priest would be come over from there and speak the language for the people that are at the Island and are detained here, that family that was detained here. But that’s what happened.

**Paul:** Were you required to sit in a certain place at the sermon?

**James:** Yeah they had to sit up in front with any people that were not, that seemed to me that wouldn’t guess or detainees in good standing.

**Paul:** Were you ever given any instructions like when you first got here about rules about addressing detainees or anything like that?

**James:** No nobody ever…

**Paul:** Were you allowed to talk to them if you felt so inclined?

**James:** As far as we know it was they took through so fast after all we were guys 21 and 22 so we didn’t come to church an hour early or half an hour earlier or 15 minutes. If mass was at 9 o’clock we’d go marching over at it about 10 minutes to 9 so they could bring us into the room and we very seldom saw any activity going on.

We saw more of the immigrants and that when we were washing our boats and they would come on the ferry boat we’d see them. It was great because you saw people wearing all kinds of dress. The city jewels and which I thought were just interesting as could be and I had never seen it before, Green Bay.

**Paul:** Who maintained the boats that were here, these 40 foot boats that seemed to do everything in. Who maintained those and how were they maintained?

**James:** Well we maintained them ourselves, each boat had its own engine men and then…

**Paul:** Were they docked at in a certain place on the island?

**James:** They were docked on the other side and…

**Paul:** The other side of what?

**James:** The other side where the ferry slept.

**Paul:** I see.

**James:** The ferry…

**Paul:** On your side of the ferry slip.

**James:** Yeah on our side of the slip.

**Paul:** Not on the immigration side.

**James:** There were approximately 13 40 footers here at that time, we had 13 of them. They were…

**Paul:** Just docked in the water or they out of the water?

**James:** Just docked in the water, the only time they came out of the water is when we had to take them over to the Saint George repair base. Then we had a crane that lifted them out of the water. Put a sling on and lifted them out of the water changed the screws or put them up on a dock so we could scrub the bottoms and paint them and then put them back in the water.

Otherwise all the maintenance for the most part was done here, every once in a while the Boatswain’s Mate would say. Or the boat officer would say it’s time for you fellows your boat needs painting. So we’d get out a little raft, there was always a raft or we pull the boat over to the raft and we paint this side and then we turn around and paint the other side.

Paint the decks and the Coast Guard was big on painting, yeah. White boats, black lettering and white and spar was the color. With spar being a brown but…

**Paul:** Does that go for the interiors of the Coast Guards who were here?

**James:** Yes most.

**Paul:** Probably will remember you probably painted them.

**James:** White and spar was except the big wood ward doors of the barracks and that they didn’t do those, but anything else that was anything in metal in that it usually got painted spar or grey or white.

**Paul:** Were there multiple barracks too or were you all in one or there was somewhere else?

**James:** No there was, we had a port where they call a port and star boat crew. There were 44 men in each of those crews and then there were and each of the men had their own barracks on the main floor.

Then the Peer Guards had, what they had? They had at least 2 barracks and they were over on this side. We were down that way they were on this side, they were upstairs and downstairs and then the permanent…

**Paul:** Those were the men guarding the Peers that you used to ferry back and forth to the port.

**James:** Yeah and then the group suggested the, or just the business of what do I want to call it? Just the maintenance work in that, the new arrivals in that they would come in there. They would be in another barracks so that you never really mixed except when you took the Peer Guards out to their places that they had to guard. You never mixed with them.

The boat crew was over here and as a matter of fact you knew the guys in the other boat crew but you didn’t have a lot to do with them, because they were always on duty when you weren’t.

**Paul:** What about training what kinds of training or classes did you have to undergo while you were here if any. Well for instance we’ve had descriptions with signal mastering school being conducted here in summer for and that sort of thing. Did you in the late or mid-1950s, did you have any of that here?

**James:** I made I didn’t get the training the school training that I wanted because I made a mistake of and I didn’t know it was happening. They were scheduling a class in boat handling and that was to include not only the handling of the boat but the navigation involved with it.

It was an upper class of seamanship and I took leave and when I came back they had started the school so I couldn’t get in. That was the last school that they had but then I was able to become a boat officer by taking, but just taking a test and passing the test and then I became the officer in charge of the boat. Otherwise that followed two fellows that I went through boot camp with, they were at the time and they got to go to the school and it was, I don’t know, it was about a month.

**Paul:** Was that held here?

**James:** It was held right at the island, right the officers over here did the training. The other training it had is at least it was quiet often that you would either have summer for training refreshment. Or what was the other thing, first aid and the other thing was fire drill. This place you had a fire drill and you know you had to know what your job was and when they had the drill you had to be there.

If you weren’t there you could go, you could be booked, you could be turned in for a captain’s mask for not being where you are supposed to be at that time. One of the first things you learn whether you are on the ship or whether you are on land is general quarters, what’s your duty at general quarters and what is your duty for fire drills?

Of course we didn’t have general quarters here but which would mean everybody to a battle station. But the fire drills you either showed up with an axe or you were the third man on the hose or you had to bring in a pump and or you were in charge of putting the searching into the water to start the hose in order to start the hose in order to start. Andy build the gas operated pump, water pump too. So you had a job that you had to do.

**Paul:** Was that one of the first things that you learnt when you got there?

**James:** First thing you learnt is well what’s your fire station is and where you sleep.

**Paul:** Was there ever a fire here while you were here?

**James:** Not that I can recall.

**Paul:** You did mention fire watch earlier in the interview and we haven’t really described what that is, that’s something different all together. So maybe if you could just take a minute just like that.

**James:** The fire watch is or security watch, what you did was you reported to the master at arms or the officer of the day. The officer of the day was the guy who run the whole thing after the old man left. The officer today was a fella in charge of everything because the old man was busy and the executive officer was busy.

So, this guy answered any questions you reported to him and they gave you a clock with a paper dial in there. Then they had areas all through the building that you had to fire, what do they call them, clock stations or something. But up there in the rafters in the attic was a key to this clock. You went up there and you put that key reported up there.

You turn the key in that clock and that made a punch then you went to the next one. You went started out at the top and you went all the way to the bottom. This different station all are on the way and sometimes it’s, but you were there to observe and you just kept doing this for six hours.

**Paul:** So it’s an inspection process of some sort.

**James:** Right.

**Paul:** What are you looking for exactly?

**James:** Mostly we are looking for firewood, just of course it could be anything else too who knows. Some animal might be up there something like that but for the most part you are just looking for fire to protect everybody because it was an awful big building and it was built a long time ago. But it was your job to see to it to protect all the people and if you could easily get into trouble.

**Paul:** Where those paper dials then dialed over to someone with all the punches who was a sergeant.

**James:** You reported back, I think it’s only a two hour watch I can’t remember but you reported back to the officer and they opened up that clock and they inspected it. If they were any punches missing you were called in and they wanted to know why this punch wasn’t made. The thing about this is somebody took you through and showed you the punches where they were and then you, it was up to you to remember where they were and make all the punches.

**Paul:** There was no big sign on anything?

**James:** No.

**Paul:** It’s this clock in there, anything here.

**James:** Well after a night’s punch no.

**Paul:** Tell me what kind of medical facility were offered to the Coast Guardsmen who were here and if you had an occasion to use them.

**James:** They only thing they had here was a chief, seems to me there was either, I believe it was a chief but we didn’t have a doctor. If there was anything wrong, if we had any problems, medical problems all we, we could report to sick bay. Then the corpsman would look you over and they take the corpsman would be the first class hospital man I think we call, we call him corpsman or hospital man.

**Paul:** How do you spell that?

**James:** Corp C-O-R-P I think the S is in there M-A-N.

**Paul:** I see.

**James:** So, you would go to him and he would take your temperature and he would look in your throat and he would say yes, you’ve got a bad case of strep throat gaggle with salt water and report back here tomorrow. He would have the power to put you on no duty. He could say with what you’ve got here you better report to your second stay there.

Or he would put you in what they call the sick bay, they would put you in one of their rooms which was you know you might say a little clinic. We never had a doctor here but we were sent up to all up to the public health doctors where on Manhattan Island. We get sent there or they would be sent over to Staten Island to the merchant marine hospital, I believe there is a merchant marine hospital there. We would be sent over there for any problems that we had.

**Paul:** Do you remember an incident where you were sick or somebody one of your fellow Coast Guardsmen were seriously ill or hurt somehow that that would require medical attention.

**James:** I am, one time I seriously twisted my ankle. So, I reported to sick bay and because it was I spraint my ankle and they said hey you harbor up to the public health doctors up there in Manhattan I just can’t remember which street it was on there anyway. But I had to go out there and spend, it was funny because they didn’t give me any crutches to get up there.

When I came back all they did, all they had done up there was kind of a fast clinic like and they just wrapped it with a nice bandage and sent me back no crutches, no cane, nothing. I suppose they figured well I wasn’t wounded was good enough. But otherwise no I can’t recall of, I spent 15 minutes in one of the banks one day over there.

I was using a paint scrapers clipping the bottom of one of our Monamoye surf boats. The paint scraper had a, they were sharp but it had a hooked end and then it had a straight end. They pulled on the hooked end and the straight end went and put about a three inch gash in my leg. So, I went in and the corpsman said to me, you are going to need stitches.

I said “I am?” He said “yeah,” I said “Well where do I go?” He said “I’ll do them.” So, he got out all of the equipment and put stitches in my leg and I said, “This is the first time that I’ve had stitches put in me while I was awake? He said, “Well, this is the first time I ever did it.” So, after I was done with that he said, “Hey, got a favor I want you to do for us.”

I said, “What’s that?” He said, “Well, we got that one bank in there that we didn’t make up and the old man is coming around for inspection was at Friday morning. The old man is coming around for inspection I said yeah. He said, “Would you mind lying in here until he goes?” So, I said yeah sure so I climbed in the bunk.

The old man came through and looked at me and said, “What did you do sailor?” I said, “Sir I was working on that Monamoye surf boat out there.” I said I opened up my knee with the paint scraper turned the scribe and he said the old man and he said, “I can order that, we can have those paint scrapers checked” he said they are getting dangerous so everybody was happy.

**Paul:** You’ve used a word twice describing the boat that you were scraping, what was that word?

**James:** Monamoye

**Paul:** Can you spell that please.

**James:** Probably not, Monamoye how is, it’s like M-O-N-A-M-O-Y-E.

**Paul:** Is that right?

**James:** It was, I don’t know where it came from always felt that it was named after some point or something along the East coast.

**Paul:** It’s not a brand name for a boat?

**James:** Not that I know of, no.

**Paul:** If the immigration side of the island is this island.

**James:** Wasn’t a surf boat, it was a life boat. A Monamoye life boat is what it was. The surf is something different.

**Paul:** I see, this is the immigration side, the coastguard is sort of in the middle area. What was going on in the far into the Island that you know and what do you know about it?

**James:** The only thing I know about it is the, that the administrator of the island I believe was staying here and with his family. They had the last building seemed closest to the statue of liberty and they were in that building. One time we were in that area, it was great for marching we used that what would you call it, that plaza or if you could called it plaza.

**Paul:** That middle area.

**James:** That middle area there, and we called it the parade ground. But we mastered there after a while with the boat crews and the Peer Guards master there. We had to merge for a parade for a man named Curt Carlson. Captain Curt Carlson was a captain of the flying enterprise of ship that sunk in the Atlantic and it was days whether he was going to be able to save his ship.

Large Ocean going tags went out there and they were pulling the ship and arching on it and toeing the ship I should say and he stayed aboard. Finally the ship was going down and that’s when he got off the vessel. So, when he came to the United States they decided that they would have this parade for him and this is 1952 and it was sort of in March something like that.

So, we had Marconi’s daughter was at it the whole thing. We knew this point was coming up and so we never merged after we left boot camp. So now they say we’ve got a practice this marching because we are going to be in this parade in New York City. So, we were marching and we had this to borrow some snip it was a third class, second class something like that.

A tall skinny guy can’t remember his name but he was funny. Anyhow he would, mostly these guys as I said were from had been down to Camp Gordon Georgia for MP training under army instructors so they did a lot of marching. While they are marching they picked up another lot of raunchy chants, C-H-A-N-T chants.

They here we go do you chop and after that it was nothing but one day we were doing this and then everybody is going sound up 1,2, 3, 4 and all that. All of a sudden the officer of the day comes out, stops and he just starts on the bosses maid right there. “If I ever hear another chant like that from you, you won’t see the light of day for a long time.”

It ends up that what happens is that we are doing all these chants and we are marching around the place and it appears if so the administrator of Ellis Island did not think that the chants were appropriate for his wife and his daughter to hear. He called over and showed them out, they proceed to cheer out the Boatswain's mate.

The rest of us are standing there just smiling, we just couldn’t believe that this was that he was chewing him out in front of everybody. The boss’s maid just keeps getting redder and redder and nobody ever said anything to him about a boy he already got it we just kept our mouth shut.

**Paul:** We’ve got six minutes left and then we are really going to have to end if we are going to go over and look around the abandoned parts. What I would like you to talk about is the process of getting off the island and when that happened and what that entailed.

**James:** You mean as far as, when I left here permanently?

**Paul:** Yeah when you left what did you accomplish and why were you moved on, why did you move on?

**James:** Yeah, all right we moved on, they closed at dawn and port security unit was here just to protect the harbor, protect New York City harbor. We did a heck of a job because not one corpsman did any work while we were here. There were no explosions or anything we had those guy scared stuff I’m being fictitious.

We were called in we had heard that the Korean, we knew the Korean War was over and so they were downsizing everything. Some guys if they checked and they said if you have less than six months to go you can get out six months early. Or if you have less than a year to go, you can get out six months early.

Well, the other stipulation was that you couldn’t be a party officer. You couldn’t be a third class boss and maybe had to be a seaman unless. The thing that irritated me was its six days before that they had given me my third class. So, I heard of witness that are getting out say January I got out or in March I got out in September.

Then they came up to us and they said, “Where do you want to go? Do you have place that you want to go in the third coastguard district?” So, I said “Well, what do you have open?” They said well, we’ve got this life boat station or we’ve got the US or the coastguard cutter weather ship I can’t recall to crumble or dispenser one of those that are in going.

I said, “Instead off boat off the same, boat of as we go on.” He said, “Kuhn where do you want to go?” I said well Mr. Mark I’ll take a life boat station.” “Oh no Kuhn, I am sending you out on a weather ship.” “Sir, if you send me out in a weather ship you are going to set the coastguard back 60 years in the seamanship.”

“All right, where do you want to go?” “Well what do you got there?” So he said, “I’ve got the Hereford inlet life boat station Wildwood New Jersey.” I said, “That sounds good, I’ll take that.” In a couple of days he called me in and gave me my orders and my papers. I think I came down here and got my, I always got my train tickets here on the immigration side.

I would walk over and get my ticket and I’ll be all set and I’ll get on ferry boat and cross over to Manhattan in Manhattan Island. I always took the Pennsylvania station because I could get home real quick there by Pennsylvania because I didn’t have a waiting period at the train station. So, anyhow then they ship me off and sent me down to Wildwood New Jersey for the last nine months of my, or say eight months of my time in service.

**Paul:** How do you look back on your experience here for those two years that you were here now?

**James:** I think it was just great, I always have fellas at that time from 18 to 23 were going to college. I got out of service and a lot of these guys are telling me about the good time that they had in college and all the parties and all of that stuff. After all I got married almost immediately and started raising that family plus going to school, going to college.

So, I looked at my service time as a great time. When you figure that I was off every other day for two years, I was getting, I was keeping $21 every two weeks and the rest was sent home. But I was living at $21 I could go to New York City anytime and see anything for a dime on the subway. I paid a dollar and a quarter today and a dime on a subway and come back here and sleep.

I go up to time square and I would meet guys from town from my own town. Guys I went to high school with, things like that. I went to stage plays, I went by one time ladies the door man at the theatre said, “Hey sailor come here.” I said “what is this now.” So I say “What do you want?” He said, “A lady stopped gave me this ticket and said give it to the first service man to walk by, that walks by.”

So, I got to see the king and I was with old burner got to see Hosea there and Anna Shrike. Just all kinds of the US socials and our tickets, Author Godfrey al the big shots, it was great. Central park, the Jewish USO it was just marvelous. I loved the big apple yeah and that’s why I’m here.

**Paul:** We need to end now. Mr. Kuhn thank you very much we’ve been talking for an hour and 31 minutes.

**James:** You said 45.

**Paul:** I did say 45, it’s been wonderful I think we can probably go up to another hour. This is Paul Secrest signing off with James Kuhn Tuesday October 17th 1995 here at Ellis Island thank you sir.

**James:** Thank you Paul.