**Debbie:** This is Debbie Dane and I’m speaking with Jack Rund on Friday November 1st 1985. We’re beginning the interview at 4:10pm. We’re about to talk to Jack Rund about his work experience on Ellis Island from 1937 to 1942.

He was a hearing stenographer and a member of the Board of Special Inquiry. His number is 067. How old were you when you started working in Ellis Island?

**Jack:** I was approximately 20 years old.

**Debbie:** Do you remember how you got the job?

**Jack:** Yes, I took a civil service examination and I placed in the top 10 in the city of New York. I was really qualified to be a court reporter at that time and this only called for a hearing stenographer. I was over qualified for the position that would explain why I received such a high mark. Because I had I was immediately picked off of that and given the position.

**Debbie:** What were your responsibilities as a hearing stenographer?

**Jack:** To begin with, we had to make the verbatim transcript of the hearings that were held before, what was called the Board of Special Inquiry of the Immigration Naturalization Service.

We also had the duty, which I did not realize at the time of taking the job, of being an acting or associate member of the Board of Special Inquiry. I was perfectly competent for performing my job as a hearing stenographer but I had very little training in law, in the field of Immigration Naturalization Board especially.

**Debbie:** Explain to me, what was the Board of Special Inquiry? What was their responsibility?

**Jack:** They were the second level of entry. The first level would be when an immigrant came, at that time almost always on a boat, and approached New York harbor.

When they approach New York harbor they would be examined by an immigration naturalization service inspector and a doctor who would examine them on their physical well-being and their credentials, passport, all of the other incidentals necessary, visa.

Then if he found anything that was wrong, or if the doctor found anything that was wrong or that was not absolutely up to their standard, that they had any question about, they would refer him to Ellis Island and to the Board of Special Inquiry, that was the second level. They then in turn processed each immigrant who came to Ellis Island to determine their eligibility for admission.

**Debbie:** These people were on their way to deportation almost? I mean they weren’t the ones that were accepted right off?

**Jack:** Technically, but very few of them were. In most instances it was because the inspector and doctor on board were operating with hundred, sometimes thousands of people on board a ship, boats were very crowded.

They didn’t have time to process these people thoroughly. Everyone who had everything in order would be let go. If there was anything at all out of the ordinary, out of the way, they would then send them to Ellis Island. Because there they had more time, they had more facilities for processing the people.

**Debbie:** How did you get trained to be on the board? What did you have to know so you could fulfill your duties?

**Jack:** That is rather funny and ludicrous. They gave me a book the day I came there which contained all of the immigration laws and regulations, black book, about probably an inch thick. Not only the laws and regulations but all of the interpretations and decisions made from those laws.

They said, “Well in your spare time just go over this and familiarize yourself with it,” which was quite difficult because I didn’t have very much spare time.

**Debbie:** And the criteria, what were some of the things that were the standards when people would come up for the board, that you had to compare your checklist that would allow them entry?

**Jack:** The criteria, they had to meet primarily the public charge or freedom of being a public charge which meant in layman’s language, that they would not be without work or without money, funds to sustain them for a given period of time, at least six months, preferably a year.

Very few of these people who came were in that position. They had relatives who would ordinarily put up a bond for them. The bond then would be forfeited if they ever did become a public charge, within that initial period of time.

You have to realize that at that time people were coming here who had no money. The governments of these various countries like Germany and Italy who really controlled Europe in the period from about 38 to 45, stripped them of everything that they had. They were just lucky to get out with their skins in most instances.

Money was something they couldn’t have. Becoming a public charge was a very important factor in determining whether someone was going to be admitted.

The criteria, if you want me to continue on it, also had health as one of the significant reasons for admission or being denied admission. People came in and very often they had things like trachoma, which is an infection of the eye and at that time it was a very serious infection, could not be treated easily. I think they used to use silver nitrate or something of that sort and put it in your eye which was dangerous.

There were many illnesses. There were lepers who had leprosy in some form or other. There were people who had syphilis, gonorrhea. In many countries these things are not that rare. Here we were trying to exclude anyone who could transmit these diseases. Many of them were communicable and highly communicable. There were many other diseases, without going into details. That was another one of the criteria.

There was a number of these criteria, I don’t know whether you want me to go into them, there were things like moral turpitude. If an immigrant applicant had been guilty of or convicted of a crime involving morals. Which would be certain types of homosexuals, could be involved in that.

That was another thing we had to look out for, leading to a minor’s perversion. I don’t think homosexuality as between two consenting adults. We didn’t even talk about things like that, some of these things are hard to determine but if someone had committed a crime such as a felony, anything above a misdemeanor or …

**Debbie:** Did you get this information by questioning or would they have some sort of papers with them that would say that they had been involved or in jail at a certain point?

**Jack:** We would usually, in cases like that, have data that was given to us. People ‘ratted’ I guess would be the word, people told on other people. Also we had information from legal sources that we had checked and found to be accurate.

These people would be able to get visas because it would not all be apparent to the consul or officer at the time he was issuing the visa. By the time they got to us, we had information that led us to believe that they were not true applicants for admission.

**Debbie:** How long would the hearings take? Would you have a set of questions that you would ask every person or was each case …?

**Jack:** Each case was different. Naturally there were usual questions like name, address, and how long had they lived in such and such. Once you got beyond the boiler plate, you had a free range of questions. Because every single person is different, every case was different. Many of the cases were extremely complicated. Most of them were very simple.

**Debbie:** During that time that you came, it was just after the depression and just at the start of the Nazi take-over, beginning to take over most of European countries.

As I was saying, the depression was just over, people [inaudible 00:11:12] economically here, the war and the Nazi rise to power was just happening in Europe. Did that bring any special cases to you, to Ellis Island?

**Jack:** It certainly did. I would say that 90% of them came because of those reasons. We had a terribly tense situation in the world, particularly in Europe. Where the fascists and the Nazis were trying to dominate the world and certainly they were dominating Europe.

It was extremely dangerous and hazardous for anyone who lived there. Some people had a double onus, a double burden. They were the people who were being singled out for persecution. There were many of them.

Among them were Jews communists who were being specifically isolated and put into camps for extinction. Then there were many others who were being persecuted. Not just the idea of destroying them but to silence them. There were all sorts of things, freemasons, everything you could think of that was contrary to the idea of Nazism or fascism.

The difficult part was to determine who was really being persecuted and those people who wanted to escape a situation where a war was eminent or actually going on.

The same situation, I’m sure faces our immigration inspectors today, who is really fleeing because of the danger to their life? Who is coming here for economic reasons or for general safety reasons? This is a haven. We live in one of the great islands of the world, maybe the only real island of the world.

**Debbie:** At that point then early on anybody that could prove that they wouldn’t be a charge to the state. Weren’t bringing disease and weren’t a health threat were allowed in but during this time, were we saying that you had to come forward with political reasons? Or we weren’t just opening doors to people that could support themselves and weren’t a health problem?

**Jack:** No. There had to be a quota. We had quotas which governed each country. Every country had a certain amount of people that they were allowed to have visas for.

Getting on that list was really something, because at a time like that perhaps 10, 20% of the population of a country wants to leave immediately. Whether they have good reason or not, or they’re being persecuted or not. The quota could be 1,000th of that. Who was going to get those spots? Unless you had the spot, you could not even get the visa.

**Debbie:** I’ve also read that, since the war was starting and Hitler was beginning to occupy territories. That the State Department was worried about refugees coming in as subversives, were you directed to keep an eye out for these people?

**Jack:** Definitely. We were looking out for- I guess you would call them spies or saboteurs now, infiltrating or communists too. Not communists per say, as a member of a political party, but a communist. If he is a true communist, believes in a communist manifesto, which is the overthrow of an organized form of government by force or violence.

We don’t want to let people in, I don’t think we still do I hope not, to this country who are going to start planning the overthrow of our organized form of government by force or violence and that was the way it was then.

**Debbie:** There were communists that were coming over. You had to determine who was going to be an active subversive, if you will, and who was going to have it as a parlor belief?

**Jack:** Generally speaking that’s right. Although communists really had the burden on them to prove that they were not true communists. We would kick that upstairs, would exclude them, it was virtually mandatory.

There were a number of mandatory reasons for exclusion where you didn’t have any say in whether they were going to be admitted. Things like this were of they were, if they were true, if they had a communicable disease which could not be treated. If they had committed a serious crime, a number of things like that.

**Debbie:** This must be hard to remember if it’s true, but some of these people were escaping persecution. Now are they coming back with these horrible stories that no one couldn’t comprehend at this early stage 39, 40?

**Jack:** True Debbie. They had very little play in the press at that time that was able to verify terrible persecution going on. There were stories in the press, many stories but it’s hard to believe.

As I think I mentioned before, the First World War they had many stories emanating from that, where people said that the German soldiers had committed all sorts of heinous crimes and those turned out not to be true.

It was true of many other incidents where people would say something terrible about another country, what they were doing because they were the enemy at the time and you wouldn’t believe it.

Then after the war or after the difficulty was over, you found out that they really weren’t true. In this case they were true but nobody knew it at the time. You had to be able to read a crystal ball to be able to tell. The people who came over told you, “Our lives are in danger, they are persecuting us, they’re taking people and shipping them away, we don’t know where.”

Even they didn’t know where they were going because it was such a well-kept secret at the time that I’m talking about at least. We didn’t find out until 44 that there were such places where they were not just incarcerating people but burning them and destroying them by the millions not by the thousands.

**Debbie:** Could you believe as these people were standing here saying, “They’re taking hundreds and hundreds of people from my city and I know I’m next. I don’t know what’s happened to them.”?

**Jack:** It was hard to believe. It was very difficult to believe. You always thought that they were telling you this story in order to obtain ingress to get into the country. It’s too bad when you think back on it but that is just the way it is. If you don’t have all of the information you have to act on the best information you have.

**Debbie:** Would you talk with the other members of the board and discuss this as crazy talk?

**Jack:** Yes, sometimes.

**Debbie:** “[Inaudible 00:20:15] this was a real warper, can you believe that their -How do they expect us swallow it?” How much could you believe? How much was- you thought they were telling tales?

**Jack:** Many times we’d almost laugh at some of the stories that were told to us because they were warpers but generally speaking they were very serious about these people. We know their lives were hanging in our hands, these people had no place else to go.

Whether you believe their story or not you knew what the situation generally was. You knew that if you turned them away, it was going to be difficult for them at the very least, no money, no place to go, returning to a country that is being devastated.

It wasn’t something you laughed about. The occasions I’m telling you, some of them were ludicrous, some stories you would hear. Generally speaking, they were all people who were desperate.

**Debbie:** You were 20 years old, as a young person who hadn’t had a whole lifetimes of experience to understand that life can be as horrible sometimes as it can be. How did you deal with it?

**Jack:** It was traumatic, it was shocking. It left its mark on me, in my life. I don’t think you ever get through experiences like that without having them affect you personally, deeply.

**Debbie:** How many people were on the board?

**Jack:** There were three members of the Board of Special Inquiry. We, the hearing stenographers, made up the third member. Usually our vote would not be necessary or would not count because the other two members would vote in one way, they’d either vote to exclude or admit.

The difficulty came when they would split, which would not be often. I wouldn’t say it would be often, or at least not often, 1 in 100. Then we would have to make up our minds, which way to vote. That would be a harrowing experience for us because we had insufficient background and experience.

We did know that every case that was excluded would almost certainly go to the Board of Immigration Appeals, not necessarily, not ipso facto that way, but generally speaking that’s the way it would go.

They would be another level, a third level that would be able to examine these people on their credentials. Nevertheless, you didn’t want to goof, you wanted to make a decision there that was reasonably sound.

What I did was I knew their petty grievances, likes, dislikes, everybody’s human. There were certain ones who were, in my opinion at least. In the opinion of the other he’d qualify. We would side with the more qualified person.

Very few times, only once that I remember the times that I voted, was the decision overturned by the Board of Immigration Appeals. I guess our inspectors were concerned even if we weren’t as far as the immigrants were concerned.

Some of these inspectors were very competent. I’m going to say all of them were competent. Some were just more competent than others. Some were more human than others. Some had more sentiment than others, just like people do. Take any group of people and that’s the way they’ll be.

**Debbie:** This is a hard one but I’ve read it, so I’m going to ask you a question about it. During the late, when was it? Actually when you were there, between 39 and 40 I’d read that there was an investigation that had been, I don’t know if it was the state department or who, but trying to expose anyone that was selling re-entry permits to immigrants. Were you aware of anything of that sort going on or hearing about the investigation?

**Jack:** I didn’t even know there was an investigation. I knew that there were rumors that this was going on, entry permits. I don’t know about re-entry permits, but there were a lot of shenanigans going on there. An entry visa was worth a fortune if you can get one because of the limited number.

It was something that was susceptible to greed, that’s all. Just like you pick up the paper any day and you see Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, they’re all being charged with something.

These were just immigration officials, pretty low down on the totem pole. Sure, there must have been some but I don’t think it was significant. I didn’t know there was an investigation. I knew that there was a bunch of talk, rumors about what was …

**Debbie:** Were you ever approached? Were you ever in a position to be approached by someone that slipped you some money?

**Jack:** Not really, no. There were times when people from the shipping company would talk to you about someone. No one ever approached me to try to buy my boat let’s say.

I don’t think I was in a position to have a say in the matter. Because it’s so [inaudible 00:27:36] wouldn’t have a chance to vote. I don’t know of anyone there who ever did that or would have done it. I think they were all pretty gentlemen. I didn’t agree with a lot of their decisions but I wouldn’t say that they were dishonest.

**Debbie:** How many cases a day would they see? Are we talking 10, 20?

**Jack:** I think we are talking just about 10 or 20 different cases that each Board of Special Inquiry would hear but then there were three Boards of Special Inquiry each time. You’re talking about roughly 50 cases a day, not more than -I would say under the most extreme circumstance not more than 75 in a day.

Some of the cases would only last a few minutes. They’d be most perfunctory examination because everything was right, except that the immigration officer at the time had neglected to see something under the stress of his situation. We had time to examine these things more thoroughly.

Sometimes a case would run on for an hour, hour and a half, couple of hours in certain instances. Particularly in difficult cases where you had to make a decision which was almost a human decision, rather than a decision of law.

**Debbie:** Such as?

**Jack:** Cases like the people who returned from Spain from the Abraham Lincoln Brigade who had been citizens of the United States. They claimed they still were citizens of the United States. They went to Spain in order to fight, the fight against fascism.

We were more or less against fascism too. How do you say to somebody, “You went there to fight fascism, I probably would have gone to fight fascism too. I did go to fight fascism later on, but you’re not eligible to come back to United States.” “Why?”

Because when he went there, he didn’t just go to fight fascism as a member on the American forces. He had to take an oath to the country that he was fighting for, in this instance Spain Republic. He had to swear that he would uphold and defend the government, the principles of that country.

When you do that, you can’t be swearing to uphold principles and the government of two countries at the same time. Maybe you can, but it’s difficult if they ever come in conflict with each other.

Automatically, and that’s the way the law is written, if you ever swear to the constitution or another country government. You are automatically per say, renouncing United States citizenship.

Those cases they would drag on because you were trying to split hairs, what did he really want to do? Did he know the consequences of his act? Many of these fellows were young, younger than I was. They were 17, 18, 19 years old when they went over there. They were just imbued with this idea, some of them great people.

**Debbie:** End of side 1067. This is the beginning of side 2 with Mr. Jack Rund who worked on Ellis Island between 1938 and 1942. His number is 067, its 4:45. You were saying that the difficult cases were the people that had gone to fight for freedom in Spain. That was hard because they were splitting hairs. How could you, since the law it was written that if they fought then they denounce their American citizenship. How could you get around that when you thought …?

**Jack:** It’s a matter of intent as well as a matter of legality, if someone unknowingly or unwittingly does something without the intent to do it and has not been fully apprised of the fact that he is going to lose his US citizenship.

In some cases that was true, some of these young fellows, nobody thoroughly explained to them what was going to happen. What the consequences of this violent action, we could call it a rush action I suppose was. These mitigating circumstances could get you around a point of law. You really tried to interpret these things in the most human way and tried to look at them as …

**Debbie:** You were saying that you tried to interpret in the most human way?

**Jack:** Right. You tried to find out what the intent of something was, not just what the actual action was. It wasn’t mandatory to exclude someone in that case. It wasn’t like a case of someone being guilty of a murder, or having some terrible communicable disease. Which were excludable and you had absolutely nothing to say about them.

Here it was a matter of interpretation. Did this man really intend to give up his United States citizenship or not? They could tear you apart cases like that, where you had to make the decision. You always know you had this third level, where they would have greater authority than you to interpret the law.

We were pretty much bound by those rules and regulations that we had. They couldn’t use a higher degree of leniency, if you want to put it that way, in interpreting them.

They could even go around the law. They could say this case is by its nature one where we decide that the law does not apply therefore we are going to admit this person. We could not do that, we could just interpret it.

**Debbie:** During these hearings, just as if we were watching a movie of the three of you and then there’d probably be a stenographer. These long hour and a half cases, was there pleading by this guy, these people that would want to get back in?

**Jack:** Yes. A lot of times people would break down and cry and scream. Your life is on the line and this is it. Not just your life, but sometimes you’d be having several children there with a mother and a father.

As far as they were concerned, it was sure death for them to go back, sure death for their children. Just put yourself in that position, you’re not going to sit there and listen to somebody tell you can’t come in when you are in.

Your toe is in the door, you’ve clawed your way all this way up to that point and someone’s going to tear your fingers away from it. You’re going to fight and you’re going to give everything you’ve got. Some of them were hectic.

Generally speaking they were not. It didn’t come down to that. As I say most of the cases that we heard, the people were just there because of a technicality and they were admitted without any problem.

**Debbie:** Would you retire as a board and then …

**Jack:** No.

**Debbie:** People, at the end of the time you had to say, yeah …

**Jack:** No, right then. We made the decision immediately, if a person was going to be admitted or not admitted. You didn’t have time to check reference books or the law. You had to know the pertinent portions of the law in your mind. You had to carry them around. In most cases, just certain laws applied so it was not too difficult.

**Debbie:** I don’t know where you worked, if you stayed in one place all day but the people that were there on the island, the people that were coming, trying to get in and people that were being deported because it was a deportation center at that point too. Were they free to walk around? Were there hundreds of them at that time?

**Jack:** Yes. That was very interesting period, you had hundreds.

**Debbie:** You were saying it was much more difficult.

**Jack:** It was very interesting because we had so many people, particularly when a big boat came in. You would have hundreds of people who were there for possible exclusion or at least hearing, let’s put it that way.

Then where do you put all these people? There’s still people left over from the last boat which came the day before or maybe that morning. We had, what we call the big hall, it was a huge room, the big room.

Here it looked like a scene out of the building of the pyramids. You had hundreds of people walking around in there. Just wandering aimlessly or doing something, some perfunctory task, waiting for their turn to come up.

All sorts of facilities were short. They didn’t have enough bathrooms to take care of everybody. The lines in the bathrooms went on forever.

Everything was difficult, eating was difficult, they had a place to eat. People had to sleep there too, at night because you didn’t have enough facilities, you didn’t have enough rooms to put everybody up in.

You’d have certain rooms that you would reserve, if you possibly could, for families or situations where they had small inherent group. The rest of the cases, they’d all be in this enormous room, bunking out there for the night and then the morning they’d be running around trying to shave or do whatever it was, tending to all their functions. It was chaotic that’s all.

**Debbie:** Would you hear a lot different languages? Was it a quiet place or a noisy place?

**Jack:** You’re talking about this big room and the area that was the tower of Babel. You could hear, I suppose, 10 or 20 different languages if you know that you’re listening to 10 or 20 different languages. They are all people who are coming from different places there at the same time.

Just because they all came over on one ship, didn’t mean that they all came from one country. They could have come from 10 different places and probably did. It was an unbelievable spectacle.

**Debbie:** There’s something else that I’ve read, is that really up to about the ‘30s, Ellis Island was considered an immigration center. Post ‘30s and around your time it was known like a deportation center. Did you …?

**Jack:** I hate to think that.

**Debbie:** Do you think?

**Jack:** No, I don’t really feel that way. I would hate to feel that way. I thought it was a place where we screened people a lot more intensely than had been done there before. That we had the opportunity to try to keep a lot of undesirable people out, at least undesirable by our law and we did the best job we could under the circumstances.

**Debbie:** I guess what I’m referring to …

**Jack:** They’re probably dead.

**Debbie:** We’re talking about the personalities on the board and the …

**Jack:** The personalities on the board were quite disparate, different, they were unusual people, they were intelligent people. Sometimes they did not get along with each other and in some cases they absolutely disliked each other.

I don’t know whether I should go as far to say that they hated each other or loathed each other. They were human and having been in close proximity to one another for a generation they were on this board certain animosities would occur.

The backgrounds of these people were interesting. I don’t want to go into where they originally came from or what their backgrounds were, but they were different. Sometimes so different that today people in those same categories are mortal enemies. They were pretty much antagonistic to each other.

I being the third member of this board, if I had to cast the vote and take the side of one against the other. They would very often suspect that I was voting, not as a matter of law or of principle, but as a matter of my sympathy either toward that individual or against hostility toward the other individual. I know that was the case in many instances. Which wasn’t a good spot for a young fellow to be in, but that’s life.

**Debbie:** I’m going to ask you a couple of questions about things you may not even remember, having to do with the coast guard appropriating some of the buildings on Ellis Island because of the war. Do you remember any …?

**Jack:** I don’t remember any of that and I don’t believe that it happened while I was there or if it did, it was just the beginning. Because I left in 1942, just after the war began, when I was called to the service.

**Debbie:** They wouldn’t translate five years on Ellis Island as service but I guess you …?

**Jack:** They translated it as service to the government sure for pension purposes, but not as a service in their armed services. Which should have been armed sometimes I think.

**Debbie:** Here’s another event, the 50th birthday anniversary of Ellis Island, I understand that there were celebrations which would have been in 1940. Does that ring a bell?

**Jack:** No, not really. I think I very dimly, now that you’ve mentioned it, I think there was something, but I don’t remember any details, nothing.

**Debbie:** Here is one more. The part where I was talking about people coming in and people being detained that would be deported. Some of those that I’ve read also were POWs that were picked up on boats, Germans and Italians principally. Do you remember their presence? Were you aware that they were there?

**Jack:** I can’t really recall that. I suppose if I had known of this in advance and started to search my memory from 50 years back, I might have been able to recall something like that. Vaguely there’s something running around through the halls of my mind, but I wouldn’t want to say anything about it.

**Debbie:** Now just a routine of your routine. You lived on a daily routine. You lived in New York on Manhattan?

**Jack:** That’s right I lived in Manhattan 122nd Street Park Avenue. Not the Park Avenue everyone knows about, but it was a nice place, reasonably nice. Then I had to take the elevated train which turned into a subway down to the Battery. At the Battery I walked across Battery Park in all sorts of weather to the ferry, the Ellis Island ferry.

There I had to get there early enough because that ferry left on time. It wasn’t waiting for Jack Rund, I can tell you. If you weren’t there, you had to catch the next ferry and if you caught the next ferry you had hell to pay. I caught that ferry, I was never late. I think that’s one of the hallmarks of a reporter, he’s never late, always on time.

**Debbie:** Had to be, the show can’t go on without you.

**Jack:** That’s right. They were all waiting for the guy who’s going to record it all. There’s no point in doing it unless you’re going to have it recorded for posterity.

**Debbie:** You’d go over on the ferry. Would it just be, on that early one, just the employees? Was it a full ferry at that hour?

**Jack:** It was a full ferry. That ferry was packed when we went across, there were no seats left. I usually went up on the outside because I loved to be on the outside of the ferry, riding along, looking at the boats coming across the harbor.

Every day that’s what I did I never went inside. Even if it were inclement weather, snow, rain, I’d stand out there. Looking at the birds at the [inaudible 00:48:38] watching them fly. Watching these different ships come across every day for five years. Doing this for every single day, five days a week, watching these boats come in.

It really excited me and made me want to travel. I had only been on an ocean liner one time with an inspector to witness this inspection procedure that was going on boats. I didn’t need that to wet my appetite for travel. Then I travelled all my life after that.

**Debbie:** That’s the busiest harbor in the world at that point.

**Jack:** Yeah it was.

**Debbie:** You would see the Statue of Liberty when the ferry …?

**Jack:** Statue of Liberty was one of those things you saw all the time. It was a breathtaking site then, I guess it will be more breathtaking when they clean it up and fix it up. It was always such a beautiful ride.

Looking at Ellis Island was interesting too, it was a beautiful building. It looked almost like a mosque, an oriental sort of design. I don’t know who the architect was who picked out that design, the millions of mirror-like glasses in all the window panes. When the sun was shining, you’d see them just shooting lights at you from every corner and the different colors of the stone.

The Statue of Liberty was a remarkable thing to have out there. I don’t know how the people felt who were coming there because I wasn’t one of them. I can imagine what they felt seeing it for the first time when I had seen it for thousands of times and I was still stirred every time you see that hand up in the air.

**Debbie:** Your job [inaudible 00:50:45] in a way were one of the keepers of the gate. Seeing the Statue of Liberty every day when you went home, was it a positive experience as far as being an American citizen or was it a lot more than you wish you had had to handle?

**Jack:** No. I felt it was both passive and positive. It was passive in the sense that you were riding on a boat from that stand point, the physical stand point. Riding on a boat it was pleasant in most cases even if it was blustery.

It was positive in the sense that you really did feel like you were doing something, like you were performing a job that was necessarily and absolutely essential. I wouldn’t say I felt like a patriot standing there, like Nathan Hill, with only one life to give, but I did feel extremely patriotic. I still do and always have and maybe it comes from my background and upbringing.

I can sense how those people felt. It must have been a fantastic experience for them but then to have to come to Ellis Island when they were on the verge of getting there and have this [bobo 00:52:20], this marvelous thing that they’ve been reaching for. For that thing to be snatched away from them, that must have been something traumatic.

**Debbie:** How would you describe, we’ve been talking about for the last hour, in a short sentence or two, your five years there? You mentioned chaotic. Your overall impression if you were to tell your young grandchild that’s just learning about Ellis Island?

**Jack:** Very difficult. I think if I had to sum it up that’s what I would say, it was a very difficult time for me. Not from the physical standpoint or logistical standpoint, but from the emotional, mental, psychological stand point, very difficult.

**Debbie:** [Inaudible 00:53:23] staffing on the island, did you feel terribly shorthanded? I know you were because you were pulled on to the board, but overall, were they up to staff?

**Jack:** It was very badly understaffed, really was. We were in a depression period, it was when I came there 1937, this was just -We were just starting to come out of this terrible depression. People were still selling apples and pencils on the corners and they really meant it.

To get any kind of a job, anything was a wonderful thing in that time. It was a very good thing for me. I thought it was terrific to get this opportunity because I didn’t know what it was leading to. There were so many deficiencies from the standpoint of personnel.

We could have twice as many reporters or hearing stenographers and still not have kept that. We were sometimes months behind. The cases that were on appeal came first. We had to get those out because they were urgent. The other cases, well they’d be waiting in limbo somewhere.

In my case I know one point I was several months behind. I not only did that but I had -Since I was a reporter court reporter, they had me take the conferences at the district director, Bryon [inaudible 00:55:04] I think was his name, had on personnel matters on the island.

I came, first hand into contact with the shortages of personnel there, they was dreadful. We should have had at least twice as many people there. We should have had more doctors, more interpreters, more inspectors, more Boards of Special Inquiry, more reporters, more everything. They couldn’t do it, they didn’t have the funds, they were only allocated so much money.

It was bad. It was very bad for the people who were there because they were working shorthanded. Every day you came in, you knew there was this tremendous backlog you had. You couldn’t write reports. Inspectors had to write reports too. Everybody had work that was drowning them. You’re drowning in a sea of paper.

**Debbie:** Prometheus.

**Jack:** Bound to the rock.

**Debbie:** One more thing, was Ellis Island being written about in the newspapers at that time? Was it a news item over the period that you were there?

**Jack:** Not that I know of. To tell you the truth I really didn’t have much time to read the papers. I was just bustling about.

**Debbie:** Anything else that you want to include that I haven’t been able to allow you to?

**Jack:** No. The only thing that was interesting that I would mention, which had nothing to do per say with Ellis Island, was that huge hurricane we had in 1938.

On a Friday afternoon we were ready to leave for the weekend and this hurricane, which had been hovering around unpredictably off of New York State. Was being chattered by the weather service, which wasn’t even as good as it is now and now they have a hard time telling what a hurricane is going to do.

It suddenly veered out the sea, they said, “Good, you can leave.” They gave us the okay to go ahead. Off we went with the ferry. We slipped our anchor there and started out.

We hadn’t gotten halfway across, before the eye of that hurricane turned around and came at us just like a bolt of lightning. It ripped those seas into 75 foot waves. We have this from the coast guard itself at that time. Our boat was going up and down.

It was one of the most frightening and most insane sort of things I’d ever seen. This is a ferry boat, not even a real boat with a keel, going up and down. Down these 75 foot drops and then up to the top of the next wave. We broke our radar.

The coast guard sent a boat after us because we were adrift there and shot a line to us. How they ever did that that must have been one of the great engineering feats of all time like building the pyramids.

They got it to us, I remember those men out there on that front deck grabbing this cable that was shot to us and tying it around the -Whatever that object is on that they tied the …

**Debbie:** The [inaudible 00:58:41]?

**Jack:** Yeah a huge [inaudible 00:58:43]. Then they towed us up onto Battery Harbor, onto the Battery itself which was completely under water at the time. We got out and walked down, up to Broadway, the beginning of Broadway which was underwater and the subway was underwater. You couldn’t get in to the subway then because the water had gone down into the subway. You had to walk up to the next station.

We were walking, initially through water chest deep, in Battery Park where they used to have the aquarium. I was just wondering what happened to those fish in that aquarium when the real ocean came over them. That’s about the only other thing I wanted to -Just the human interest sort of thing.

**Debbie:** Yeah, that’s great.

**Jack:** As if we didn’t have enough human interest in there.

**Debbie:** End of slide two interview with Jack Rund number 067. It is now 5:25.