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**WILLIAM CONWAY**

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**COAST GUARD AT ELLIS ISLAND**

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**RESIDENCES:**

LEVINE: Today is March 17<sup>th</sup>, 1999. And I'm here in Pembroke Pines, Florida with William Conway, who was a Coast Guard and stationed—during World War II and stationed at Ellis Island from, probably, the first of November, '45 until April, '46. And this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. Okay. Maybe if we could start—well, why don't you give your birth date and where you were born?

CONWAY: Okay. My birth date—I was born January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1926 in Summit, New Jersey.

LEVINE: And were you living in New Jersey up until the time you joined the Coast Guard?

CONWAY: Yes, I lived in New Jersey all my life until I moved to Florida about six months ago [chuckles].

LEVINE: [chuckles] Okay. And [clears throat] did you have any connection with Ellis Island via immigrant parents, grandparents or anybody?

CONWAY: I think my grandparents, probably my mother's parents and my father's parents probably were immigrants from Ireland or England.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So did you—you have any sort of special feeling for Ellis Island when it turned out that you got stationed there?

CONWAY: Well, at the time when we were stationed there, it was just part of being in—in the service. Right?

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

CONWAY: And during the time of the war, there wasn't too much immigrants. There weren't too many immigrants coming in.

LEVINE: Right.

CONWAY: I—I—my duty was on a troop transport and we ran between this country and Calcutta, India. And on some of the trips coming back, we brought back civilians, other than troops, like Indian—Eurasian Indian. They—they were married to—to American servicemen and they came here. And at one time, we had a whole contingent of about 300 Chinese nationalists that were on the ship coming from India to the United States, probably for training.

LEVINE: Oh.

CONWAY: I sort of lost track of that because, on that trip, we—we were into Norfolk and they got off in Norfolk. And I got leave and I picked the ship back up in New York.

LEVINE: Interesting.

CONWAY: But then when—then—I commented before that, on my last trip over, we—your—yeah, Germany had surrendered. And everything was relatively fine going over there. We went through the Mediterranean in the Suez Canal. And my last trip over, we were in the Gulf of Aden and it was August 15<sup>th</sup> where we were. And they—we woke up in the morning and they announced that Japan had surrendered. And then we went into Calcutta and picked up our troops, or whatever, and then came back into New York.

LEVINE: Oh.

CONWAY: And I was transferred off the ship then and I ended up at Ellis Island.

LEVINE: Okay. Now, why don't we start at when you decided to join the Coast Guard. The mic's going to pick—

CONWAY: Oh, oh.

LEVINE: —that up, so [chuckles]—

CONWAY: Oh, oh. I'll try not—I'll try not to do that then.

LEVINE: Okay.

CONWAY: When I—I decided to join the Coast Guard because [sighs] I graduated from high school in 1943. I was 17. And I got a job with—with the Ciba [PH] Corporation in Summit, New Jersey. It's a pharmaceutical manufacturer.

LEVINE: Seabrook?

CONWAY: Ciba—C-I-B-A. It was a big cartel, Switzerland-based. But anyway, and I—while I was working there I did various things. And I was in the shipping department and I was in the—one manufacturing thing when they were making ba—batches of sulfa—sulfathiazole. But anyway, there were some men that I—my coworkers and they were—they were joining—a couple of them went in and joined the Coast Guard. Okay. And I talked to another friend of mine that I had grown up with and I said, "Well, let's go in and enlist. We'll take off tomorrow and we'll go and enlist." He said, "Okay." Then I went over by his house and he wasn't there. And I went over and I got on a bus and I went past the plant and he was inside the plant. But I went up into Summit, New Jersey and I took the train, the Lackawanna Railroad into the—into the—to—to—yeah, where Frank Sinatra was born. Hoboken.

LEVINE: Bay—Hoboken.

CONWAY: Hoboken. I took the ferry down to Canal Street and I went into the—into the recruiting station with the Coast Guard. And one of the reasons why I joined the Coast Guard, other than these other guys going in, was that my oldest brother was in the Marine Corps. I had two brothers that were in the Navy. I didn't want to go in the Army. So I thought, 'Well, if I go in the Coast Guard, maybe one of my younger brothers will end up in the Army and my mother will end up having somebody in every branch of the service.' So that's—

LEVINE: Why were you [chuckles]—

CONWAY: That's why I—I joined the Coast Guard. And I went home and I had to have my father sign, because I was still 17.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

CONWAY: And that was in August—August of '43 that I—I went into the Coast Guard.

LEVINE: Wow. So what—why didn't you want to go into the Army?

CONWAY: Because I figured I wanted to live. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Live. [chuckles] Good reason.

CONWAY: I'm a very devout coward. [laughter]

LEVINE: Okay. Well—

CONWAY: I would liked to have gone into the Army Air Corps but I did—I didn't think that my—my sight was good enough to—to get into the Army Air Corps.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

CONWAY: That's another reason why I didn't, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

CONWAY: [clears throat] Because they had—they had, like, an unwritten rule where you wouldn't go overseas and—before your 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, you know. [clears throat] And I know guys that I graduated with, like, they—they were in D-Day, you know, the two or three days after their 18<sup>th</sup> [chuckles] birthday. You know, they got killed or wounded or whatever.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm.

CONWAY: [clears throat] So—

LEVINE: Yeah.

CONWAY: Because one of the men that was—was—that went in—induced me to go into the Coast Guard—he was in before me, was a couple of classes in Manhattan Beach. But he was a—a signalman on one of those Higgins [PH] boats and he was killed in—in—in Normandy. He was a Coast Guard signalman.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

CONWAY: So, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

CONWAY: You go and, I figure, you take your chances. You do what you're supposed to do. You don't volunteer for much but, you know, you—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

CONWAY: —take what God sends you.

LEVINE: But you felt you wanted to—I mean, you weren't—you weren't drafted. You—

CONWAY: No.

LEVINE: You went and you—

CONWAY: No. One of the reasons I did, see, I guess when everybody said, maybe, I was big for my age and said, "When are you going in?" You know. And I said, "Well, I'm only 17." And they, "What do you mean?" "I'm only 17. You know, I'm not—I'm not 18 yet." Didn't have to—didn't even have to register for the draft. But it was part of it that I figured, well, I was sort of ready emotionally.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

CONWAY: I guess, as a kid, you don't know. But what—what—you know, you had no—no recognition of fear at that time, really.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

CONWAY: And so then, I went into the Coast Guard.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Well, the war had been going on—

CONWAY: Yes, it had.

LEVINE: —for a while. So you—you must have been hearing and very—

CONWAY: Oh, yes, we heard a lot. Yes, yes, yes. My—my—my br—oldest brother was in the Marine Corps. And he was on the aircraft carrier, Essex, and they were commissioned in Norfolk and they took their

shakedown crews to the Oran—to the African invasion. They went to Oran, North Africa. And after that, they went out through the Pa—Panama Canal and out to the Pacific.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Well, for a young man of 17, and—and the war was going on and you had brothers who were involved—

CONWAY: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: Did—did you—h—can you—can you recapture how you were thinking and feeling about, you know, whether you thought it was your duty or whether you—

CONWAY: Basically, it—you—you figured it was sort of—sort of your duty. But everybody was doing it. The whole world was at war, you know, either on the [unclear] side or the Allied side. And, you know, we—we—I spent time—I was a little time in Australia. I spent some time in Egypt. You know, you go ashore and everybody there is war oriented.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

CONWAY: You know. And I made—I made a trip to—to Le Havre, France after the war, after Germany surrendered. We went over there. We made a dry run out of New York to Le Havre, France and we picked up the 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry, the Red Diamond Division in Le Havre. But when we—we pulled in there, you see, they had—they had sunk liberty ships to put—make a sea wall, because there—there was a big storm right—right around the time that D-Day occurred, a great big storm. And they sunk liberty boats in a—in a line to make a sea wall, like. But then we pulled into Le Havre and—and they had put the clock ahead of five hours and it was still light 11 o'clock at night to save power.

LEVINE: Oh.

CONWAY: They put the thing, you know—and then you saw the—the people picking up their houses, picking up bricks from bombing and shelling and putting them aside to rebuild their homes.

LEVINE: Hmm.

CONWAY: And then I saw German POWs working as, like, [unclear].

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

CONWAY: You know, that's what I saw. I never saw any—any action.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

CONWAY: We allegedly had a torpedo shot at us in the Indian Ocean.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm.

CONWAY: But I was asleep then. And if had hit, I probably wouldn't have known about it.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So—okay, so when you went down to the Bowery that day, you were by yourself.

CONWAY: Yes.

LEVINE: I guess.

CONWAY: Yes.

LEVINE: Ah, could you describe what the recruitment experience was like for you?

CONWAY: Well, what I remember of it was that I went in and the guy said, "Okay," you know. I said, "I want—I want to enlist." "That's fine. You know, come on in," and they gave you the papers and stuff. And—and then he just said, "Well, you have to go home and have your parents sign, right." So I did and then brought them back and then they gave me a date to report. And the rest is history, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

CONWAY: I had—I—was kind of matter of fact, to me.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Were there a lot of people at that point in the recruitment?

CONWAY: Not—not—[unclear]. It wasn't—wasn't too busy.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

CONWAY: I mean, I didn't think. Some of the guys—you know, if they were drafted, there would be a lot more. If the men were drafted, there were whole, you know, cadres of them that went in. Like, my oldest brother was in—he was drafted and he went in and he—he ended up—he hoped that he would get into it. And he ended up in the Marine Corps. Right. Another brother, next older brother—he's he living, not—left. He went into the Navy and he was a radio operator.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-hmm.

CONWAY: And he was in the Armed Guard for a while and—and then after that, he was transferred to the Amphibious Forces and trained down around Norfolk, Little Creek, Virginia, and got on an LSM and spent a good portion at a time out in the Pacific.

LEVINE: Did you get letters from your brothers prior to your going in?

CONWAY: Probably. I don't specifically remember, you know. But I know one time when I was—I was—when I was in the Coast Guard, I was in— [chuckles]—I was in Radio School down in Silver Spring, Maryland. And my brother—I was in the hospital down there because I had, like, [unclear] sore throat. And my brother came home on leave and my mother sent me a telegram about—I guess he thought I was going to get sick leave or something. But anyway, I came home to see him while he was home on leave.

LEVINE: And did—did that—were his stories something that you—

CONWAY: Well, his story—he—he—he saw his share of incidents. As—as Marine Corps, he was the orderly for the admiral. But the battle stations for the Marines were along the flight deck and the 40-milimeter guns. There were four men on a crew, right. So two men would sit. One was to be a pointer and a trainer, and the other two were loaders. So if they were at battle stations, they would say—or battle watch, two men would sit on a—in—in—in the guns. And the other two guys would just rest along the flight deck. Right? And he said one time that [clears throat] he had just changed. He had been in—in the seats, right. And he just changed to go down and sit down. And the two guys that replaced him—and a plane took off and hit the gun [unclear], killed two—both guys.

LEVINE: Wow.

CONWAY: That's what he saw. And another time, he saw a—like—like, kamikazes to—to the right of them with 20 millimeters, like, 10-, 20-millimeter guns. And they were manned by steward's mason [PH]. Most of them, steward's mason at that time were black—black guys or Philipinos.

LEVINE: Oh.

CONWAY: We called them Negroes—

LEVINE: Hmm.

CONWAY: —at that time, right. They were called Negroes but now they're called black.

LEVINE: Right.

CONWAY: Anyway, the kamikaze hit their deck, ding, gunman right next to him—

LEVINE: Mmm.

CONWAY: —and killed those men.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

CONWAY: So whatever he saw, he did his share but he got lucky.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm.

CONWAY: Yeah. And my—my—my brother, who was on an LSN—in fact, we were talking about that. He had his 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary this past September, and we visited with him. And he commented, like that—he was on Okinawa and that was the last big battle of World War II, Okinawa.

LEVINE: Hmm.

CONWAY: And he said they were—they were out there one night off the—off—off—off of Okinawa. And he said, “We had, like, a little canvas thing over—overhead.” And he said, “We’re out there and we’re laughing, right. And we had the false sense of security because of this canvas.” He says and then the—the Japanese started to hit them with mortar. And he said, “We realized.” [chuckles] So he said they went back inside.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

CONWAY: You know, that they better get inside.

LEVINE: Hmm.

CONWAY: Whatever.

LEVINE: Hmm. Well, so—okay, so after you were recruited, how long did it—I mean, how—when you went to the recruitment office, how long did it take before you—

CONWAY: I went in?

LEVINE: —got your orders and you were on your way?

CONWAY: Probably a matter of weeks. June—J—I graduated in June. I got the job with the Ciba Corp. I probably—I was in—I was—went in August 27<sup>th</sup> so it probably wasn't long.

LEVINE: Oh.

CONWAY: Probably two or three weeks.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

CONWAY: Maybe a week.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. So you went in August 27<sup>th</sup>, 1943.

CONWAY: 1943, that's correct.

LEVINE: And then where were—where were your first orders to?

CONWAY: Well, to—to Manhattan Beach Training Station to boot camp.

LEVINE: That's Brooklyn, right?

CONWAY: Yeah, Brooklyn, right. By Coney Island.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

CONWAY: And we—we spent time there in our boot camp. And after—after we were there, I—you get, like, classified. You know, you go through tests. And I ended up in a—in a pre-radio school. That pre-radio school was basically teaching you the mathematics of electricity, amperage and voltage and power and all this stuff prior to—to go to the radio technician school. And when I finished that, I was sent to—was called Capitol [PH] Radio Engineering Institute. That—that place there was one by the Coast Guard but it was a private—a privately run—run place for the—for the Coast—like a contract at Capitol Radio [unclear]. So I went there, like, for 16 weeks.

LEVINE: The—well, just, before we leave boot camp, was there—what else was involved in your boot camp experience besides being tested and—

CONWAY: Oh, well. You got your drilling, your regular drilling. We had—during the day, we used to have [unclear] order drill, right, marching. And then—and then we had phys ed—phys ed and—and you had, like, one

week inside where you would get into the—into the gym. And you'd box or play, like, street fighting and judo. You'd rotate various—various things. And—and then the next week you would have boats. And that—that part of it was you'd either have the—the surfboats, the double-ended surfboats that you rode, or gigs, little motor—motorized boats. And we'd come in and out of the thing there on Manhattan Beach there by Coney Island. And we also had instruction in demonstrations of, like a Thompson submachine gun. We didn't fire that. We did fire, like, a 38 in—at a range, [clears throat] pistols, and then they had you test, like, gas masks. You put a gas mask on and go into a smoke-filled room, or tear gas. And then they'd get you out and have you wear—wear the—the gas mask and run in the sand to—to let you know how inefficient it was. In other words, that your efficiency was reduced by the fact that you had this gas mask on.

LEVINE: Hmm. Do you think the—the training in the boot camp was condensed because it was wartime? I mean, do you think you got a—a fast training period before—

CONWAY: I guess—I mean, well, in retrospect, probably. We [clears throat]—we carried dummy rifles. We never had real rifles issued to us there. They were dummy rifles with dummy bayonets, plastic bayonets that they—they had you march around with.

LEVINE: Hmm.

CONWAY: And the only time that I saw a—a real—real guns were when I—af—after I finished the radio school, I was sent to Norfolk. And when I was at Norfolk, I was sent to small arms school in Danneck, [PH] Virginia. And there, we fire—I fired this 1903 Springfield rifle—

LEVINE: Hmm.

CONWAY: —for—on—at the—at the range—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

CONWAY: —on tour.

LEVINE: When you were first in boot camp or during your boot camp time, how did you feel? Did you feel like you had done the right thing—

CONWAY: Yeah.

LEVINE: —to sign up—

CONWAY: Yeah. I was—I was gung ho. I was—I was a—amazed in one way because I really had never been away from home. And I thought that would—I—I would become homesick. And I wasn't. But I can tell you a time when I did become homesick.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, why don't we go kind of chronologically through—

CONWAY: Sure.

LEVINE: —your career in the Coast Guard?

CONWAY: Sure.

LEVINE: And then when—

CONWAY: Yeah.

LEVINE: When [chuckles] that it might come, you can bring it up.

CONWAY: Sure.

LEVINE: Okay. So—so you were then sent to the Radio—

CONWAY: Radio School in Wash—near Washington, DC. Silver Spring, Maryland.

LEVINE: Silver Spring, Maryland.

CONWAY: Right.

LEVINE: And—and was that something you were—you were—you felt like you had been channeled in a direction that you wanted to go or—

CONWAY: Yeah, sort of. You know. I—I thought, 'Well, they—they know—you know, they—they want me to go here.' So I went and I—I did what I had to do. You know, you study and you learn about—about things and how to fix radio and radar. And—but when you're—when you're like a seaman or that, you don't get too many responsibilities. [chuckles] You know, you're like a gopher—

LEVINE: [chuckles]

CONWAY: —when you get sent, you know. Because af—af—after radio school, I was sent to Norfolk.

LEVINE: And that was for what?

CONWAY: Well, it was a—a Coast Guard operating base down there ri—and I was assigned to the radio repair shop. Right? But what we did—what we did there was they were refurbishing, like, a lot of 83-footers and 125-foot Coast Guard cutters. And on one of them, like, they were replacing the radar and some of the guns. Like, one of the ones they—they were updating the radar. And I can recall, like, we were ou—we were up on top of the—I was up on top of the mast. And there was a plate there they were going to use to mount the radar antenna. And I was drilling the plate. That was my job to drill that plate. And then when—when they got that done, they mounted the radar and they—they changed the guns, like, updated. They put, like, instead of 50-caliber machine guns, they put 20-millimeter things like that on them.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

CONWAY: And I think on some of the—some of the Coast Guard, the cutters, 125-footers, they probably did stuff like that. And they probably changed, like, three-inch guns to five-inch guns. [coughs] Yeah.

LEVINE: W—was it an eye opener for you to be with young men from all over the country and—

CONWAY: To a degree, it was, you know. You—you think, well, you got all kinds of people and you just do your thing, right.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

CONWAY: That's all.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. So then where did you go after you—after you left Norfolk?

CONWAY: Okay. Norfolk, they were—well, I—they [chuckles]—they had a bunch of—there was supposed to be a flotilla of air/sea rescue boats that were going to be based basically on, like, a 83-foot cutter. And they sent—they were supposed to have a radio technician on these, among—there was about eight or nine men on a—on a 83-footer, among which was supposed to be a radio technician. But they sent myself and another man to the West Coast. And we [chuckles]—we went to Long Beach. We were shipped to Long Beach. And when we got out there, there were about 4 or 500 men sent out for about three—about—about 10 ships. You know, there was this overkill.

LEVINE: Did you go there by ship?

CONWAY: No, no.

LEVINE: No.

CONWAY: We went—we went by train.

LEVINE: Oh.

CONWAY: We went from train from—from Norfolk—well, really, Hampton Roads where they pu—got us up to Hampton Roads. Hampton Roads to Chicago; Chicago to Los Angeles. And—and then we ended up—and—and most of the time in service you're—I would say, like casual thing. You—you end up, you're doing casual duty. You just do—you know, go clean barracks, empty garbage cans, do this and do that. And that's what I did over—out—out there in—in Long Beach. A lot of work parties.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm.

CONWAY: “Go clean the barracks. Go empty the garbage. Go do this. Go”—we—we worked on barges where they were just in a dry dock.

LEVINE: Mmm.

CONWAY: Chipping paint, things like that. We were just, you know—and then I was assigned—then I was assigned to the crew of this—this troop transport.

LEVINE: In Long Beach, you were assigned?

CONWAY: Yes, and then they shipped us up to Alameda.

LEVINE: Where's Alameda?

CONWAY: Alameda's up by—by Oakland. San Francisco, Oakland.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

CONWAY: And—and then there, then we went into tra—we had, like, training for that, the ship. I was still, like, a seaman. And they didn't have my—my striker res—designation with me as a radio technician. So they sent me to gunnery school at Port Monterra [PH]. I went to fire fighting school. I think out there I went to fire fighting school. That—that was something that I'm—I'm grateful for.

LEVINE: Why is that?

CONWAY: Because it—it—it told you, one, the danger of a fire on a ship and the danger of fire anywhere. But that if you—if you use logic and everything, you can overcome fire. If you use logic and the right tools, you can overcome fire.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

CONWAY: You know, you don't have to really be—you've got to respect it but you don't have to be terrified of it.

LEVINE: So did you—was part of your training to be on a ship that was on fire?

CONWAY: No, no. But it—you had to—you had to—you had to anticipate that because it was wartime. You—you could have been torpedoed or bombed. And they—they took the guys in and told them how to fight fires in holds.

LEVINE: Oh.

CONWAY: You know, they had—they had a mockup of a ship's hold.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

CONWAY: And they would bring you in there and they'd set it on fire. And they'd say, "This is what you do. This is what you do. And—and don't—try to breathe through your mouth." No. "Don't open your mouth. You know, breathe through your nose. Don't"—and then—then you'd put the fire out and they'd say, "All right. Now, stay here and eat the smoke for a while." In other words, to get accustomed to it and feel how it feels. That's all.

LEVINE: Hmm.

CONWAY: So that's—that was—was a—a blessing to me. As a matter of fact, after I got out of service, I ended up and I spent time in a volunteer fire department—

LEVINE: Oh.

CONWAY: —in my hometown.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So you—you used compressors in the holds to—wh—there's something called a billy-something. And is that what you were using when you were learning that?

CONWAY: I'm not sure. But what we did, they had—they had a—what they called “fog applicators.” It was like a big wand. It was a big—like a big wand. It had, like, a bend in it. And then a spray came out of it, like a big spray, a big shower, but fine. Fine. Not—not real solid droplets. So you would get in there and get that thing going around, right. And that would put out oil fires—

LEVINE: Hmm.

CONWAY: —and gasoline fires.

LEVINE: Hmm, hmm.

CONWAY: Just—just—I guess it would super—cool them down real fast and get them below the ignition point.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

CONWAY: You know, because they'd say, “You never put a solid stream of water on oil or—or gas.”

LEVINE: Hmm.

CONWAY: But you could smoke it—you could—

LEVINE: C—cool it down.

CONWAY: Cool it down real fast with this applicator, like a fog—fog applicator. And most of the—you see now, they have them in their—in their nozzles. They can make it foggy or solid stream.

LEVINE: Oh.

CONWAY: They can push the—push the lever on the nozzle and would either come down a fog or a solid stream.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm. So you went there, probably because there was such overkill on the number of men there were sent to Oakland.

CONWAY: Yes, and then I got—

LEVINE: Then you—

CONWAY: —assigned to the troop transport.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

CONWAY: See, and it's—that—that thing where they [unclear] rescue boats was—I was out of that cadre. And the—[chuckles] the—on—on the ship—I was assigned to the ship. And then I also went to, like, a—on a—on a training cruise off of San—San Francisco of a—of a—like a—it was like a—like a—a liberty ship. But they sent people out on that. And then we came back in and we ended up on Treasure Island, on Treasure Island, which is in the bay between Frisco and Oakland. The World's Fair was out there. But that was the Navy base during the war. And then I went to, like, a—a refresher course for radio. And I attended—I attended, like, a gunnery school once. And that was interesting because it was before Point Monterra, but it was, like, in a—it was, like, in a shooting gallery. They—they projected pictures, you know, of planes and then you would shoot them.

LEVINE: Hmm.

CONWAY: You know. [chuckles] They—through this—through this sight. That might be why I was sent to Point Monterra. I don't know.

LEVINE: Hmm. So you got a quite a bit of training.

CONWAY: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: Yeah.

CONWAY: Oh, yes. Yes. We had that and we got the ship. The ship was commissioned in Mayer [PH] Island. And then we went and we took our shakedown cruise off of Santa Barbara, Santa Catalina down—down by Long Beach.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

CONWAY: And then when we were finished, the—the—the shakedown cruise, they—they trooped up in San Pedro, loaded troops. And we left from San Pedro. We went from San Pedro to Melbourne, Australia.

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A]

[BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE B]

CONWAY: —Greeley—G-R-E-E-L-E-Y. AP141.

LEVINE: What's AP mean?

CONWAY: Well, auxiliary personnel. AA is on auxiliary ship. You know, supplies or whatever. Like, AKs were cargoes.

LEVINE: I see.

CONWAY: AKA was a—a cargo attack. But AP was—APA was a—an attack—an attack tr—transport. But we were just an AP.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

CONWAY: [clears throat] And one—one of the incidences or coincidences of that, we—we were sent to—our—our ultimate destination was Calcutta. Now, we went to Melbourne and then—oh, and—about the time we're getting—getting homesick, we had a—a Army on there going to—going to India. We had a bunch of Red Cross personnel, a lot of female Red Cross personnel going overseas. And we had a contingent of Australian Air Force men who had trained in Canada and the United States. And one of these men—we were talking with them and on—on the ship. And a lot of these guys wanted something to do. They were, "How can we help you?" Because they were so bored. You have 3 or 4,000 men with nothing to do. Right. But anyway, this one guy got talking about—he said he was in a place called Chatham [PH]. And I said, "How do you spell that?" So it was my hometown. Chatham.

LEVINE: That's where he had been?

CONWAY: He had been there.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

CONWAY: And he showed me a picture of a girl that I knew—

LEVINE: Hmm.

CONWAY: —that he had taken to a high school prom. And she was in the playground of the school where I went to school.

LEVINE: Wow.

CONWAY: Right? And that's—and I'm going to Australia. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Right.

CONWAY: That's when I sort of became homesick.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

CONWAY: But it didn't last long.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

CONWAY: And so we—we got into Melbourne. I didn't get ashore in Melbourne. And we went around and then got on into Perth. But it was really Fremantle. Fremantle is the port for Perth and I got ashore there. And then we went up—up around—around Australia and we—when we passed the northwest corner of Australia, we picked up an Australian corvette as an escort. Because we had traveled by ourselves up until that point, but the Japanese were still active in some respects in the—in that Indian Ocean area. And that's where we had a torpedo shot at us.

LEVINE: I see. So an escort—was it a—what kind of a—

CONWAY: It was—it was like a corvette, an Australian corvette, which is about, maybe 150 feet long.

LEVINE: Oh.

CONWAY: Not a—not a big ship. But they probably were a—a little faster than us. We—we cruised at about 16 to 18 knots. [clears throat] And we went into—into Calcutta. Now, Calcutta is one—on—on what they call the Hoogley [PH] River. It's probably a—a tributary of the Ganges and the Ganges Delta. But it's 50 miles up—up that river. So we were the first ship of our class that went up there. And right outside of Calcutta they had an Army Air Corps base, which was flying over the hump into India. So now, they had—instead of Karachi and Singapore, they now the Calcutta as a POE. So they sent all our sister ships over there.

LEVINE: Hmm.

CONWAY: And we—we went—from Calcutta, we went to Ceylon, which is now Sri Lanka. We stopped there for supplies and to drop off a man who had been hurt on the ship. And we—we stopped in Trincomalee, which is on the east coast. It's like a great big port. You come in a little bit of an inlet and it opens up. And half the British Navy was there.

LEVINE: Hmm.

CONWAY: And—and then we went into Colombo [PH], Ceylon. And I got ashore there. And then we went into the Suez Canal and came over in—as I said, the first time into Norfolk.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

CONWAY: And—and then I picked the ship up. And I think—after that, we—we made our trip to La Havre. And we came back and then I made two more trips between New York and Calcutta before they [coughs] took me off and sent me to Ellis Island.

LEVINE: And were you transporting people a—

CONWAY: Yes.

LEVINE: —all those times?

CONWAY: Yeah.

LEVINE: Ah.

CONWAY: The only time we didn't have any—anybody was when we went from New York to La Havre. We were—like I said, it was a dry run. We had no troops going—nothing going over. But we picked up the 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry Red Diamond Division and brought them back into New York.

LEVINE: Hmm.

CONWAY: And that was kind of a big thrill because you get kind of blasé about the Statue of Liberty, right. When these guys are coming, boy, and they say, you know, "Oh, boy. That's great."

LEVINE: Hmm.

CONWAY: You know, because at that time, the Verrazano Bridge wasn't there.

LEVINE: Hmm.

CONWAY: You know, you're coming up the narrows.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

CONWAY: And those guys liked it.

LEVINE: Mmm.

CONWAY: I think—I think a lot of the times when—I liked—I liked being in the Coast Guard. But when—when I—when I finished up, I was too close to home. I was—I was too close to home. I—I just—you know, I'd say, "Well, why—why stay in?"

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

CONWAY: So I—I got out.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So it was when you came back from the trips to Calcutta—

CONWAY: Yes.

LEVINE: —that you—

CONWAY: Were assi—

LEVINE: —were stationed at Ellis—

CONWAY: —assigned to Ellis Island.

LEVINE: Oh.

CONWAY: Right, I got there and, like, we—we were basically casual there, right. And—and then during that time, the—the—in the barracks area was a great big—great big, huge room, you know. Real high ceilings. And [coughs]—and they had a—a flood scare in New Orleans. And they were going to send a bunch of guys down there to tote sandbags. So, you know, bo—so I said to them—the [unclear] mastered arms. I said, “Well, I’ll pack but I bet I don’t go.” And so I packed my sea bag and I was all ready. And so they come down and holler, “Conway! Conway! Conway!” I said, “Here.” And it was the [unclear] mate. And he says, “You were right.” He says, “We can’t ship you right out of the district.” I was radio technician, see. And there were a shortage of those.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

CONWAY: They wouldn’t let me ship—they wouldn’t ship me out.

LEVINE: You knew that? I mean—

CONWAY: Huh?

LEVINE: That’s what you were thinking?

CONWAY: I—yes, I was. [coughs] And—

LEVINE: [clears throat]

CONWAY: I—I also—he said, “Did you ever chase prisoners?” And I said, “What is that? Like”—he said, “To be a guard.” And I said no. So then he said,

“You do it, I’ll give you two out of three liberties.” So I said, “Fine.” And I had—there was two other men there guarding them and there was about 40 men that were prisoners. And at that time, Japan had surrendered. They—you know, everything was winding down. And they had a point system. So these men get out, right. And I ended up one man with a watch belt and a billy club and 40 prisoners with shovels and axes and picks. You know.

LEVINE: What were they in for?

CONWAY: Well, most of them were—were—it’s foolish. They were [clears throat] like—one man was, like, a deserter. He went—he went AWOL. He was a Indian from Oklahoma. He went AWOL and they found him a year later working in a defense plant. Okay. The other guys would be—you—you had—on a ship, you had a port and—a port and starboard liberty section. Right? So they came in to port and they didn’t get liberty, so then they go AWOL. You know, they can’t wait one more day. And that’s—that’s one bad thing about—about that system, like we have in the civilian courts, habeas corpus. Right. [coughs] But that has no effect there. They can have those guys stay in for five months before they—they hear their case. They hear their case and they’d be another five months before they get a decision. And here they are, being a—being a prisoner. You know, that would never happen in the civil—well, it would happen if you get overlooked, but rarely happens in civilian life.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

CONWAY: But those guys were just, you know, and they—their primary purpose was on the—on—on the island, they had—people would clean the garbage up every day from all the barracks and all the places, including the hospital, and bring them down there to that end. And they had the incinerator there by that water tower. And they would burn it. They would burn the garbage there. And—and they had a—a—it was sort of like a small tug, but a small barge alongside. But it went around—around the harbor and picked up loose pilings. And then they brought the loose pilings over there and those guys would chop them up. Then they would use that for fuel in the—in the incinerator.

LEVINE: Were the—[clears throat] were the prisoners often—what do I say? Were they—did they have an attitude about—about being there? I mean, were they—were they—were they docile prisoners, [chuckles] or were they feisty or—

CONWAY: Basically, they were docile. Ba—basically, were docile, because I think what they—what they figured was, what—what could they do? They're on an island. How can they get off of it? Right?

LEVINE: Right.

CONWAY: As a matter of fact, one of them—we were—we were out doing—it was a black guy. And on that end of the island, that's pretty close to New Jersey.

LEVINE: Yes.

CONWAY: If you look over and almost touch the piers over there in Bayonne. And he said, "Well, that's pretty close." And I says, "Yes, it is. Do you think you can make it?" I said, "I'll tell you what. I'll—I'll bet you." I said, "I'll hold your coat." And I says, "You go try it." And I said, "We'll pick you up floating around in about two, three days." He says, "What do you mean?" I said, "Hey, that water looks very calm right there. Two feet down, it might go another way. You know. Besides, it's cold. Right?" "Maybe you're right, man." You know, I said, "Hey, you know." And very—of course, they had found a guy and I guess one of the psychos off of the hospital had tried that. And they found him floating around.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm.

CONWAY: [coughs] So—but anyway, these men—I—I can recall when I first started that they tried to intimidate me, you know. I was in—in by the incinerator. And they had—well, I guess the brig master assigned people to where they should work. And maybe his pets got into that incinerator because when it was—that was warm. And in the wintertime, [chuckles] that place was cold. But that place was warm. So they—they bring the garbage cans there and they had a—a manual [unclear] and they raised the garbage cans up and pull them over and dump them. And the guy said to me. He says, "Oh, boy. You know, you better watch it. That could slip and hurt somebody, you know. The garbage cans." So I said, "Ho, ho, ho." [chuckles] And I said, "Well." I said, "We ought to get something straight." I said, "You're here for a reason, right." And I said, "I'm here for a reason." And I said, "Do you think that we should try to get along with each other or would you rather do everything by the numbers?" Then he realized I wasn't as dumb as I looked. [chuckles] And we had—we had—these guys—what I—I did to the guys, and when I ended up with just the one—one guy with all these prisoners, well, the guys were outside. And—and right near there, there was a—was the boiler room. There was a boiler room right near there. And I said to them—I said, "Among yourselves"—I said, "Rotate and go in there and get warm every so often." And I said, "If the brig master

comes around, everybody works. You know, just look busy.” So that’s—that’s the way we got them going. And then they also had to go out and—at the ferry slip, they had to shovel. If there was snow, they had to go out there and shovel snow, see. So then when the—when the ferry came in, I had to bring them off to the side. They didn’t want anybody sneaking [chuckles] on the thing. So the chief master at arms, he’d be, “Get those guys out of there.” And I said, “Yeah, okay, sir. We’ll get them right away.” I said, “Come on. We’ll take a break and have a smoke.” We’d get them over there and they—and for a short time, before I got assigned to the brig, I was, like, a petty officer of that. They—one time, they—they brought me over there and I had to line the guys up when they were leaving on liberty and so on and coming back in. And they—they issue you a—they issue you a 45. I had a 45 and that. But that was ceremonial. You know, you just take—ta—make sure the guys are dressed right. The chief, he would worry about everybody being dressed properly.

LEVINE: You mean when they were going on liberty?

CONWAY: Going—yeah, going on liberty and stuff. You know, but I—it didn’t matter to me. [clears throat] And did I tell you? They had a—they had an indoor pistol range there on one of them passageways going—going out from—from where the officers were down back toward where the brig and the barracks area was. And it was like an indoor pistol range.

LEVINE: Hmm.

CONWAY: And they—I—I went in there one time and they had—they had 45-caliber—the 45 weapon that was chambered for 22s. So it was just an indoor range, went in there and fired that for a while. That was interesting. I would loved to have had one of those guns.

LEVINE: Well, now, where were the officers?

CONWAY: [exhales] I’m not sure. They had to have their own quarters.

LEVINE: They weren’t in the dormitory building where—

CONWAY: Yeah.

LEVINE: —everybody else was.

CONWAY: No, no.

LEVINE: They were d—through the corridors?

CONWAY: Probably.

LEVINE: Thr—

CONWAY: I don't really—I—I don't really know. I know when—when I—when I come down from the barracks there and you come back up, they had, like a—the sick bay. But, like, there was the dentist's office there and some doctors' offices for the Coast Guard guys. And that's about it. But I guess if you really got bad, you had to go over to the hospital, which never happened to me. But I had to—I had to take a prisoner to the dentist one time. And we walked up there. And I just told him. I said, "Well"—because they wore clothing with a big "P" on the back of it, you know. And I just said, "Well, we're—we're coming down. And just fold your arms across your chest."

LEVINE: Hmm.

CONWAY: "And then we'll do our thing."

LEVINE: Did you ever have to take a prisoner into Manhattan or—

CONWAY: No.

LEVINE: —off—

CONWAY: No.

LEVINE: And how about the other people who were on the island? Did you have any contact with either immigrants or—

CONWAY: Very little.

LEVINE: —Public Health Service or—

CONWAY: Very little. Very little.

LEVINE: Yeah.

CONWAY: I—at that time, I didn't have any contact. I remember seeing some of the [clears throat] people who were there going ashore. And most of them, to me, were like—were Indian-type Indians like—like Eurasians, but probably from India or Pak—like, now, is Pakistan. That—that's the only people I remember.

LEVINE: And they had come in—

CONWAY: Yeah.

LEVINE: —on the kind of ships that you were involved with?

CONWAY: Probably. Yes, yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

CONWAY: Yes, probably.

LEVINE: But I wonder why they came to Ellis Island.

CONWAY: I don't know.

LEVINE: Yeah.

CONWAY: I don't know. Maybe they—maybe they were going to get permanent—permanent settled in—in this—in this country, so—

LEVINE: Because they were war—war brides, a lot of them?

CONWAY: Could be, yeah. Some of them were war brides. Yes, some of them were war brides.

LEVINE: Huh.

CONWAY: And they—they—they—the ones that I saw, like, that were brides, were a mixture of Eurasian and Indian.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

CONWAY: I didn't see anyone, like, true Indians like we see, you know, around now. They—a lot of the Indians and Pakistani run hotels and—like 7-11s and pl—and gas stations, you know. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Right. [chuckles] Right.

CONWAY: Yeah.

LEVINE: Right, right.

CONWAY: So—

LEVINE: How about the—you mentioned recreational activities. Movies, limited sports.

CONWAY: Yes.

LEVINE: Some shows.

CONWAY: Yes.

LEVINE: USO. Can you talk about that at all?

CONWAY: Well, there was very little at—I think Ed Sullivan came over there—

LEVINE: Hmm.

CONWAY: —on one occasion. And they'd have a—they'd have a show in what would be, like, I guess, equivalent to be the mess hall. And that was like an all-purpose one. But I don't remember much about that. I remember more about seeing stuff out in the—on the West Coast on Treasure Island where—where they had USO shows. And I remember seeing Jeanette McDonald there and—and then they had another—and the guy—there was a guy, the name of Andy Veripapa, who was a good bowler. He was like a trick bowler.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

CONWAY: He would—he would shoot and knock down pins in two or three alleys a side, and all kinds of stuff.

LEVINE: Hmm.

CONWAY: But that's—that's all I—I remember. On my ship, we had a band and there was a guy by the name of Bill Shallot [PH]. He was from Brooklyn and he was—I think he played with Alvino Ray [PH]. He played trombone and he sang. And then we had a guy by the name of Shelly Mann [PH] who was a drummer. And Shelly Man, after the war—he had—had a place in Mann's Chinese Theater. He—out—out in Hollywood. He owned that—

LEVINE: Hmm.

CONWAY: —and ran that.

LEVINE: Hmm.

CONWAY: But he was a drummer.

LEVINE: And they would play aboard ship?

CONWAY: Yes. Yeah, they were—the—the band was assigned to our ship.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

CONWAY: Assigned to our ship, part of the crew. It was a Coast Guard band.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

CONWAY: And the Coast Guard had a couple in it, a—Rudy Vallee. He was—he had a band with the Coast Guard. And the other guy—I can't think of his name.

LEVINE: Oh, it'll come to you. Well, so, h—what—was duty on Ellis Island considered a good thing to get or not, or—

CONWAY: I think at that time it was just routine. It was part of what was happening. In other words, the guys—was—was like a—a exchange point of people coming off of ships and other places to go to other duties. So I say, when they found out—when they found out my designation and my rank, right, at Ellis Island, they shipped me to St. George to the—to the operating base over there.

LEVINE: I see. In Staten Island?

CONWAY: Yeah, the repair base.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

CONWAY: So you went in—in the communications and electricians and so on and you did duty.

LEVINE: I see. So—so your time—

CONWAY: [coughs]

LEVINE: That's what a receiving station—you'd come in and—

CONWAY: Yeah.

LEVINE: And they'd find out—

CONWAY: Yes.

LEVINE: —what your—what your qual—

CONWAY: That's about right. Yeah, receiving station. Right.

LEVINE: And then they'd send you to the appropriate—

CONWAY: Send you—yeah. Right.

LEVINE: But you were there a fair amount. I mean, you were there probably longer than a lot of people.

CONWAY: I think so.

LEVINE: Yeah, I think so too.

CONWAY: Yes.

LEVINE: Yeah.

CONWAY: And then—then at Staten Island, I ended up [chuckles] inadvertently doing something good, I guess. And the commander put me on subsistence in quarters. [chuckles]

LEVINE: He put you on what?

CONWAY: Subsistence in quarters. In other words, that—that'd mean I could live off the base.

LEVINE: Oh.

CONWAY: I got subsistence in quarters to live off the base.

LEVINE: Ah. So did you then go to Jersey?

CONWAY: No, what happened was I—I—I—I—yeah, well, I—I was living home but I really was sleeping most of the time at Ellis Is—[chuckles] at Staten Island. I wasn't supposed to but I did.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

CONWAY: But what I did there when I got put on subsistence in quarters, I—I had to go to St. George every day to meet a chief. We met a chief and he had a Jeep. And we went out to—to—to Rockaway—Rockaway Point. And I think that was—the base—the base there at that—on Rockaway, I don't know whether it was Fort Hamilton or not. But it was right where the big 16-inch coastal guns were. But anyway, on this—on this Coast Guard base, they were putting in what they call a Raycon Station. It was a radio-controlled aid to navigation of some—radio or radar-controlled thing. And the chief was an electronic technician's mate and

I was electronic technician's mate. But we were mounting antennas on, like, a 65-foot and a 55-foot and a 75-foot telephone pole. And all I did was I did, like the—the—the labor work. I, you know, come up there and we mounted the antennas. And I bolted them down and I—I climbed. I had electrician's, you know, climbers, like telephone lineman's climbers—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

CONWAY: —and a safety belt. [clears throat] And I'd climb up and I'd put the bolts in and mounted the antennas. And then the chief went up and he—he wired them. He ran the coaxial cable down, I guess. And that's all I did. And then they—then they pulled me back to Ellis Island, said I had enough points. And I really didn't. And then the chief there said—seeing my rate, he said, "Can you type?" And I said, "Yes," because I could type. And I was like a yeoman, because I was making the transfers, taking, you, you know, make this form. I forget the name of the form. But you were—sending you from here to the separation center. That was it. Then the guy was—get out.

LEVINE: How long were you doing that?

CONWAY: [coughs] Probably about two or three weeks, wasn't long, because I had almost enough points. It was, like, every month you got a certain number of points. And I didn't have enough points to get out. You got so many points for your—every month you were in and so many points for overseas and all this other stuff. But I figured that I didn't have enough, and the girl said I did and she was wrong. And—but it—it worked out. I got there and that was a good deal because I didn't have to go back to Staten—Staten Island. That was a convenience for me.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

CONWAY: Because you could go out, right, and I—I—I could go in to—to the Battery there. And I think you could get out over by Canal Street. And I could get a Hudson Tube over—get to Hu—33<sup>rd</sup> Street and get the Hudson Tubes over to Hoboken and take the train on home. You know, bing, bing!

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm. So when—what was your discharge date?

CONWAY: April 30<sup>th</sup>, 1946.

LEVINE: So you were really in three years.

CONWAY: Yeah, well, like two years, eight months and four days.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

CONWAY: [chuckles]

LEVINE: Okay.

CONWAY: As—

LEVINE: So how did you change, would you say?

CONWAY: In what respect?

LEVINE: Just thinking of yourself as a 17-year-old going in, and coming out practically three years later? How—do you think you changed over that—

CONWAY: Well, I think I changed. What—what really—what really, I think, changed us mostly—and it wasn't for what we did in the war. It was—was the GI Bill.

LEVINE: How did that affect you?

CONWAY: That was—greatly. It was the—one of the biggest and best social experiments of all time.

LEVINE: Yeah, I agree.

CONWAY: Right?

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

CONWAY: All these men come out, [coughs] got homes. I got a college education because I know that my mother and father could—would never have thought of me going to college.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

CONWAY: Right? So of—four of us were in service during World War II. Okay? Three of us got college educations.

LEVINE: Wow.

CONWAY: Okay? The oldest brother—well, and I got—I got a—I got—I got a house, a GI loan. Right? My first house.

LEVINE: Were you married soon after—

CONWAY: No.

LEVINE: —you got out?

CONWAY: No, no.

LEVINE: Yeah.

CONWAY: No. I'll tell you why I got—why I got—I got the house and other things. So as I said, I know now, my—our youngest brother was in during Korea. I guess he got—I don't know what benefits he got. But he's—he just turned 69 this February 28<sup>th</sup>. And—but the other brothers, like, now, my—my oldest brother, living, he's out in Illinois. He went to college. And my young—I went to college and my next younger brother went to college. He went to Lehigh and he's retired now. [clears throat] And he was an engineer and I was—I—I—I had a business administration personnel. And I had—never worked one day in personnel work. Never worked one day. [clears throat] And I—I ended up [coughs] into computers and I got a job with the government. And I retired as a—as a—as a com—yeah, computer programmer analyst.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

CONWAY: Mainly, mainframe.

LEVINE: What is that?

CONWAY: Mainframe. You know, big—big, you know—

LEVINE: Oh, mainframe computers.

CONWAY: Mainframe—

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

CONWAY: —computers.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

CONWAY: Not like little stuff.

LEVINE: Personal, huh.

CONWAY: [clears throat]

LEVINE: Wow.

CONWAY: I had a lot of experience in military payroll, civilian payroll and Navy supply systems, you know—we—over the years.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

CONWAY: And it's surprising because when I—when I—when I got up to the point where I—I was going to retire, you—you sort of disdain what you do, you know. And everybody said, "Well, I don't know what you're going to do when you leave, you know. You know so much." And then you realize that you do know a lot, by osmosis, almost, that you know so much.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

CONWAY: And I had—in fact, I had people tell me, like, six months after I—I left, that, you know, that—"Oh, the other day we had this problem." And then somebody said, "Well—oh, Bill Conway said this," and, "Bill Conway said that." And they check it and darned if it isn't right, you know.

LEVINE: Yeah. Okay.

CONWAY: Well—

LEVINE: Well, we have about three and a half minutes left. So just quickly, tell me your wife's name and maiden name and your children's names.

CONWAY: Okay. My wife's name is Genevieve. Her maiden name was Pattikowski.

LEVINE: P-A-T—

CONWAY: T-I-K-O-W-S-K-I. As a matter of fact, I met her [exhales]—I was a junior and she was a freshman. And I went with her for a while and then I broke up with her when I—just before I went in the service. And I went with another girl and I broke up when I went in the service. But then when I came out, my wife was engaged to somebody else. So I figured I should break that up. [laughs] No, it doesn't—that's too egotistical.

LEVINE: [laughs]

CONWAY: Anyway, and we've—we were married and, incidentally, she—we went together all the—all the time I went in service. So I went—now, or went

to college. I went in '46, right. I come out of college and—out of service and then [clears throat] go to college. So I—I was working, like, in a grocery store. And I took—I took the test for Seton Hall College and I got accepted, so then I decided to go. And we went together all during—all during that time. And then I—I come out and I graduated, really, in August of '50. And then we got married on the 12<sup>th</sup> of August in 1950 and I graduated. I didn't have a job. [chuckles] But about two weeks later, I graduated, you know, in September, I think it was. [clears throat] So my—we were married five years and then we had a—a daughter, Nancy. She's married and has three children. She lives in Utah. Her name is Morgan, Nancy Morgan. Then I have my—my second child, son, oldest son, David. He lives here in Pembroke Pines. And he had five children. He has Becca, Leah, Ariel and Kyle and Billy. And they lost a baby that was about a eight-and-a-half-month-old fetus when—when it was stillborn.

LEVINE: Huh.

CONWAY: And then my youngest is—is Bill. And he's—he lives in Maryland. He's a CPA and he is [chuckles] cohabitating with another woman that's a CPA. He was married and divorced and she was married and divorced. So they're being—

LEVINE: Cautious.

CONWAY: —very cautious, I guess. So I got my five grandchildren here and three out in—in Utah.

LEVINE: Wow. Okay, well, then the last 30 seconds, is there anything you would like to say about your Coast Guard career and maybe its aftermath for you?

CONWAY: Well, the only thing is, I think it's, you know—it was a good experience for me. Like they say, it makes is a man out of you. I don't know whether it made a man out of me or not, but I'm glad I did it. And it—I—I tell you one thing. I got to go places in the world I would never have—I got to go all around the world.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

CONWAY: I've been all around the world. I've been in Asia, in Australia, India, Egypt, France. That's during the war, right.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

CONWAY: So I'm really grateful for that. I don't—you know, I don't regret the time I spent—spent in service. I can recall one time on—on Ellis Island that when—when I first got there, I—like, my birthday is January 1<sup>st</sup>, right. And I can recall that I didn't—I couldn't—I'd had a—I had the duty New Year's Eve, right. And I'm in there and I'm feeling so sorry for myself. [chuckles] Right. Because—because I can't get out and celebrate my birthday.

LEVINE: [chuckles] Okay. Well, I've been speaking with William Conway and we're here in Pembroke Pines, Florida. And Janet—this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. And I thank you.

CONWAY: Okay.

LEVINE: And I'm signing off.

CONWAY: My pleasure. Glad you could. Hey, okay. Amen.

LEVINE: [chuckles]

[END OF INTERVIEW]