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ANDREW KORINDA
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MR KORINDA WAS IN THE US MARITIME SERVICE, TRAINED AND INSTRUCTED IN RADIO OFFICER SCHOOL ON HOFFMAN ISLAND [IN NY BAY], FEBRUARY TO OCTOBER, 1945

ORAL HISTORIAN'S NOTE: HOFFMAN ISLAND HOUSED THE MOST SERIOUS INFECTIOUS DISEASE CASES OF THE ELLIS ISLAND HOSPITALS. MOST SEVERE, LIKELY FATAL, CASES WERE THEN TRANSFERED TO SWINBURNE ISLAND, CLOSE BY IN NY BAY

LEVINE: Your name and

KORINDA: Yes

LEVINE: when you went to [not understood]

KORINDA: I am Andrew Korinda. And in January of 1945 I volunteered for the Merchant Marine in Lower Broadway, and, I had a physical and they saw that I was 4F because of my bad knee. I had torn it up in college. I asked to go to King's Point, and they laughed. They said you had to be in service for a year and then you had a good chance of going. They said, but just come on in. So, I signed a waiver, and I had to wait to hear from Washington.

A month later, a telegram came telling me to report to Hoffman Island for training. I arrived there and I had my basic, combined with a tour of the school. And they were hoping that I would be a code typing instructor since I had graduated a month before from college with a degree in business, including typing, shorthand -- all the business machines I could operate. And they were looking for someone to move into their instructional staff. Turned out that person that they expected to ship out did not ship out and I was attached to the procedures office where we had three chief instructors and one lieutenant in charge.

One of the chiefs was the first from his radio class to get his FCC license. That was Harry Macomber. And I worked with Harry for two and a half years, actually. Even after I left Hoffman Island. During the first six weeks, I was trained part-time with basic. I was trained on the 20-millimeter anti-aircraft gun. I did all the other basics. Learned knot tying, fire control, did everything except marching and if I had been at Sheepshead Bay, with my knee, I probably would not have lasted with the marching. I still was looking forward to going to King's Point, but after a few months I forgot about that and concentrated on trying to learn the radio code and the theory, which is what they were getting in classroom, but I was marking papers and making up study guides and designing things for the mimeograph reports that went out. Running the office, being a “go-fer” for

the lieutenant, and eventually, being very gradually promoted every three months, if you passed the test.

Along the same time, I was standing watch duty at night from twelve to two, two to four, or four to six, once every ten days, and I became acquainted with the other officers on the island, which about forty years later I met up with some and managed to get them into our organization -- into the Hoffman Island Radio Association. When that started out, their first national reunion was Baltimore and I first found out about it a day or two before that meeting and I could not get to it. But I did make the next years at Charleston. And I've made every one since, and I've been an officer for about the last five, six years. Mainly helping out with the meetings and writing articles for the new "Tales of Hoffman". Cause while we were at Hoffman Island they had an existing paper before the radio school began.

The radio school began about D-Day, June '44, and it the newspaper continued publication every other week until approximately the middle of September in 1945. Many of those issues were maintained and kept by various cadets, radio cadets and Bill Yerger, who passed away, was our illustrious editor for a number of years. Bill's sister and mother kept everything that he had in the attic. And that's where our archives are now. Eight, I think, large cartons. Uniforms, certificates, the "Tales of Hoffman" newsletters and stories about various officers such as our commandant, Harry Manning.

Harry Manning was very imposing character. He graduated at 1918 at the age of eighteen, I believe, from the Fort Schuyler Merchant Marine Academy. It was New York State Academy at that time. And Harry went to sea right after World War I and he sailed on some of the existing sailing ships. He was the last one to perform a rescue in a hurricane. He went in a

lifeboat and he rescued something like twenty- six people from a sinking ship in a hurricane. And Harry Manning later flew with Amelia Earhart. He was to go around the world with her, and he left California with her, flew to Hawaii, and on Hawaii she was doing take-offs and landing practice and she ground looped and crashed the plane. Harry was injured. His leg was broken or arm broken, and he went back to the US Lines where he had been a captain. And he had had a three-month leave and he couldn't stay away longer cause he wanted to get back to his ship and she was miffed and she threw out all his radio equipment and did not take a radio operator with her. And they reversed the course and she flew eastward and ended up, of course, in the Pacific and didn't know very much about radio. Was going to rely on Manning and instead relied on Noonan, and I think the, the Coastguard out there, the Navy ships, the USS Colorado was looking for her and they could hear the distress calls but they could not, reach her. She could not hear them. Something went wrong with the simple radio that she had. And she was lost.

Manning had his own plane after that and one time he crash-landed on the beach at Asbury Park. Ran out of gas. But he started out at Huntington, which was a prep radio school for Gallups Island. Gallups began in late 1940, and they graduated forty five hundred radio operators compared to Hoffman Island which had about fifteen hundred in the period of time that they operated. We had about fifty-eight classes. They were weekly classes that came in anywhere from thirty or thirty-five and one or two classes might have had forty members because there was a severe shortage of radio operators. They tried to have two or three operators on board every ship in order to stay in twenty-four hour watches. Once the war was ended they went back to one radio operator per ship and there was a very abrupt stop. Gallups Island stopped sending men for the FCC

the end of August of '45 and what remaining members they had sixty or so, came down to Hoffman Island the month of September in '45.

I left October first of '45. There was no need for the instructional staff anymore, and I was due to go down to Florida on the Vima which was a three-mast'd sailing ship and when I heard there was an opening as an instructor in New York City with the Institute, the USMS Institute, I, together with Harry Macomber and George Stano, our boss, we went into the Institute. My roommate took my place on the Vima and I was always sorry that I didn't sail on down to St. Petersburg, but then I would have been totally out, discharged and have to take the train home to New Jersey. And so in a way, I stayed another two years with the Institute and the last three months they transferred us from Forty Fourth Street to Sheepshead Bay.

And while at Sheepshead, I had to spend weekends in the firehouse doing a fire watch. The officers had quarters, but I was on subsistence and would commute from North Jersey to Sheepshead Bay every morning. Five in the morning until eight at night. I'd get back to Ridgewood where my wife and I lived. And it was a difficult time. But I, I would have stayed on, but we were downsized when the Federal Government cut the number of personnel that we had and I didn't know that the Institute, the Correspondence Institute continued. Some of the fellows who were in our organization took courses from me and from George Stano and the other instructors who were in the Radio Department of the Institute. This was the equivalent of the Armed Forces Institute and they were able to get their high school diplomas through this and they got credits for the time they spent in courses on Hoffman Island.

Many of them became engineers. And it's really a pleasure to, to be with these fellas now, and to look back on their careers and to see what they've

done with themselves. We have several attorneys, judges --- many engineers. Many of them went into the, were drafted into the Army or Air Force afterwards. Some of them were in the Civil Air Patrol. I was with the Civil Air Patrol for ten years in the seventies, and enjoyed that. I was not a pilot. Two or three of them are pilots. Several had their own planes.

I discovered in 1989 or '90 that my cousin, one of three Merchant Marine officers, had been on Hoffman Island. As far as I know, there might have been some brothers. But I know of no other cousins that were together. We were not together and I didn't know he was there. He was there in 1939, 1940 and '41 in training as an assistant engineer. And on Maritime Day, May twenty second in 1941, he was in Washington, D.C. They had taken trainees from Hoffman Island on down to parade for President Roosevelt on Maritime Day in 1941. Johnny, my cousin, always said that Roosevelt knew the war was coming and he instructed them to set up Hoffman Island which was the first training base and we did not know that while we were there. I didn't find out until about five or six years ago that Hoffman was number one. And I brought the flag, the last flag that few over Hoffman with me today, with a frayed edges, forty-eight stars. As someone was leaving in late November/December of '45, they went back and rescued the flag. They also took all the pictures that they could find and they're for our archives. One of the fellows gave me the flag, gave the pennant, the comet that flew over one of the barracks and I have that and all of these things will be put in the archives and we're going to have to move the archives to a safe place. Either King's Point or one of the maritime stations. There are three or four ships now that are museums and they might, either on the East Coast or West Coast or Florida, maintain these exhibits. Hopefully somebody will remember.

LEVINE: If we could just back up a second. Why did you want to be in the Merchant Marines?

KORINDA: Well, the war was at a peak. And I had been in the Naval V6 and V12. Could not pass the physical. I had torn my knee apart, and when they asked me, the day I went in, I went to the Navy first and they said, no, we can't use you. I went next store to the Merchant Marine, to the Maritime Station, Lower Broadway, and they said, well, if you sign a waiver on your knee, we'll take you. I said, well, I want to go to King's Point. They said, we can't guarantee that, but if you stay in for a year and I found out later this week, actually, that this all had to go through Washington, and they would report on the waiver. And I don't know why I wasn't sent to Sheepshead Bay, but was sent directly to Hoffman with about eight others.

And I don't know what happened to the others that came on board the island. Two were in the basic training with me and they either went to Cooks and Bakers school or one of the other schools that was still -- although Sheepshead was the giant base. Sheepshead was the fourteenth base -- we were the first. Sheepshead the fourteenth. Again, we're talking, the difference between 1939 and 1942 when they bought the property for Manhattan Beach and Sheepshead Bay and began throwing up those buildings. By December, they graduated the first classes at Sheepshead, at 1942.

LEVINE: Hm. So it wasn't something about the sea that attracted you, it was some kind of like you couldn't get into the other ones because of your knee.

KORINDA: Well, right. When I was seventeen, I tried to enlist in the Air Force and I was actually being sworn in, but I didn't have a letter from my parents. And my buddies were with me. We were freshmen in college and I said, "I want

to go". This was a meteorology group that was being formed. And they all turned out to be Air Cadets or something else. But I did not have a letter. I should have forged my parents' signature and I would have been in. The three of us in the room out of about forty. We had our hands up and a sergeant came in and counted noses and he said, oh, there are three under ages in here ---- you can't get in. And so by the time I wrote and got my parents to sign the application they closed the door on that. And then I went, soon after that, for my physical and I tried to get in the, I did everything except the Marines. And I never thought of that. But I wanted to fly, actually, and it wasn't 'til I got in this little Air Patrol that, as an observer, I flew a lot.

LEVINE: Well, can you remember your first impressions of Hoffman? When you first approached it?

KORINDA: Ye. I, I had a small gym bag that I came with. And I saw this island in the middle of nowhere, and I was familiar with New York City, as I said before, but I had not been to Staten Island and we took a --- was a Chase--- Chesapeake Ferry that was converted to their supply boat, called the Mayfair, but everyone on the island called it the Mayflower. And we took about a twenty, twenty-five minute trip to the island and I saw these brick buildings that looked like an old New England village and antennas over the thing and I thought this was secret base of some sort. I didn't know anything about the Maritime Service. Everything that we knew was the Merchant Marine were on ships that were out there and they were being sunk right and left.

And we just volunteered because there was a war on. And we docked and they took us to a -- a supply office and they issued us shoes and underwear and winter outfits. They gave us a beautiful sheepskin jacket,

which, it was still very cold in February and ice was everywhere and we were thankful to have that, especially if you were doing a night watch and, I was given a temporary triple bunk lodging over the Mess Hall. And of course all the smells of the mess hall came up and they had, you put your sea bag with the uniforms into a locker, a six-foot locker and I noticed then that it was integrated. It was the only service that was integrated. There were blacks there whether they were cooks and bakers, a lot of them were in the Stewards department in the school and some were working in the Mess Hall below.

And then after one week, I was given quarters in the Petty Officers building, which as I said last night, was like the Army Posts built in the 1880's, 1890's. Very large rooms, although we had double bunks, and my roommate was a two hundred and ninety-pounder. A lot of the men on the island, whether they were trainees or whether they were the ship's personnel were six-foot-seven or six-foot-six and they were beyond the height that they would take you in the regular services. But they were there. There were some that were shorter. There were some that were, like my roommate, two hundred and eighty pounds. They, today, would be nothing. They would be football players. But it was Mel Cassid was my roommate and Mel was from Tennessee. And he was a gre --- as I said he took my place on the Vima. He sent me a postcard from Florida, from St. Petersburg, and he said he had the wheel two nights coming down off the --- on the Atlantic coast, and he said it was the most beautiful sunset he ever saw in his life.

And I really, I was there in New York when the plane flew into the Empire State building. The next day I was on leave and I saw it, and two of our fellows who were trainee in the barracks, the night before were talking about the Empire State Building and what would happen if a plane flew into

it! It's an amazing story. And Jim Shannon, who's our new editor of the "Tales", has written that up because he was one of the ones who was with the fellow who knew about that. And it's ESP. I've always been interested in ESP and there was some of that going on. It was a different time and it was an eerie feeling at night. If you were walking around, several times I had the payroll watch and you had to strap on a forty-five. And in our training I had to dismantle a forty-five and put it back together again, and you had to carry that if it was pay night and they had cash in the administrative office building.

And you --- you had to punch a time clock and walk around the island at two or three in the morning and it was a little bit scary. You had the water lapping up around the island and the submarine that's attached to both sides of the island and couple of times -- once while I was there and once the fellows here tell about, someone who tried to swim ashore the mile to South Beach, Staten Island. And as far as I know, no one ever made it. But there was a rescue one time, and this is a funny story. A Norwegian captain came in one time, and he was drunk and he was approaching the narrows and he fell off the ship. And one of our fellows swam out and rescued him. Brought him to Hoffman Island, and of course I don't know what happened to him after that. They rescued a dog one time. A Navy ship was leaving and a dog fell off and that was a pet --- before my time, but I heard stories about Missy, that the fellows in the Navy said, we'll pick her up when we get back! And of course they never did, but they had the dog for two or three years on the island. There were cats on the island, but I can't remember a dog when I was there.

LEVINE: What were your activities, like during a typical day what would you do there?

KORINDA: In my office, I did a lot of typing. I typed tests. I marked tests that were given. They --- many of them concerned radio theory. And I had to make up--- for the mimeograph we had to file this mimeograph sheets after you used them. There was a print shop on the other end of the island and the printer would come if we had huge amounts to do, he would do it. But what I did, eighty to a hundred and sixty copies of -- of tests, and we had mats that we could cut out with a razor blade for the multiple choice answers or true/false answers and I, I did that.

And every Friday we had the- the bull gang would come in and clean our office. And there would be six of these radio cadets who are here now who shipped out as radio operators. They would come in and I was on the second deck above the swimming pool. And only one of the fellows that I've spoken to remembers opening a closet door and looking down on the swimming pool, which is what we had. I could climb out through another closet on to the roof -- swimming pool had a flat deck. And we'd be like thirty feet in the air, and I could look over the horizon and see the masts of the ships coming over the curvature of the earth off of Sandy Hook before they turned to come into the Narrows. Take a sunbath up there on weekends.

But I was sort of in charge of the library. If one of the instructors wanted special textbooks we had about a hundred text books in our office. And in August when the war was winding down or ended, they moved the library and we had fellows come and help us move. I remember talking to Bobby Lane. We had a gym where we'd move in chairs for the movies and that the cadets would be in charge of doing that and the movies were run by the electricians on the island. And invariably they'd break down in the middle and you'd have to wait 'til they fixed them. But when the movies weren't on, they played basketball two or three nights a week. And Bobby Lane,

the hall-of-famer, and his buddy from Texas, Doak Walker, were in one of the last classes.

And I played basketball with Bobby Lane. One day we're shooting baskets and he said, where are you from? And I said, "Bo -- Clifton, New Jersey". And he said, "Highland Falls". And I said, "Oh, is that in New Jersey?" "Oh, no", he said, "Texas". [Both laugh] And he told me he was All State in all these sports and he was to have a try out with the Yankees. And because he was eighteen already, the Yankees thought he would be drafted even being in the Merchant Marines. They did not give him the try-out. But when he was in high school, he won every game as a pitcher. Of course, he was a fantastic football player, for --- hall-of-famer, and so was his buddy, who was a year younger, Doak Walker. They never shipped out. They went, they got their licenses. They went to New Orleans to pick up a ship -- ship had left. And so they went home to Texas and Bobby Lane got married at tender age, and Doak Walker was drafted.

And they both played football before they left, against each other in a practice game. And of course one went to University of Texas. One went to SMU and their college careers were against each other. And Bobby Lane got out first and became a professional football player. Doak Walker followed him. But Walker had the Heisman Trophy twice, his junior and senior year. And he passed away last --- two years ago. Bobby Lane died in '88. And I saw the obituary and it immediately came to me that I had known him before his football playing days and I didn't realize -- they mentioned Doak Walker in that article. But we couldn't find Doak Walker. We looked for him for almost ten years and we never did come across him until he became injured in a ski accident and a year later he was, he passed away. But there were many, many characters on Hoffman Island.

LEVINE: How about the movies? Somebody mentioned that the movies came from Ellis?

KORINDA: We, we had a sort of circulating library. As I said, the electrical officer, who was in charge of all electricity on the island also could take off in the picket boat, go to Fort Schuyler and take our movies that we had shown to them, Fort Schuyler's movies, took over to Ellis Island. Ellis Island would give him some movies to bring to us. And we'd have two or three movies a week. And in-between time, if you were, if the cadets were failing either code or their theory test, they couldn't go to the movies. They'd have to study or they'd have to go to the code classes. And the code classes were interesting. They had very early tapes that they ran at different speeds. And you could sit down and you could turn a dial and you could take code. You'd hear the code coming into your earphones at ten words a minute, fifteen, twenty, and in between. So you practice. And then they also had the keys where you could, you could send. And, and you could learn to code that way.

You were expected to do at least sixteen to twenty, twenty-four words a minute. And you could, you were supposed to type at twenty-five words a minute and for those who had typing in high school it was no problem. Others had to learn the touch-typing method which I sat in two classes, I was gonna be the substitute and they didn't need me for that, but I observed students in the class. Twenty-five students. They ranged in age from sixteen to forty. There were several older fellows in the room and they had no problem. Some of them had the code before; some of them had typing before. In those days a lot of -- of young fellows did'nt want to take typing because it was a female thing. But those who were lucky and the school I later taught at, it was a requirement for just about everybody to take typing before they got out. So it was it was no handicap.

And I think about ten percent of the fellows really, before they arrived at Sheepshead or Hoffman, we took trainees from Sheepshead, or from St. Petersburg, a few, and a few from Catalina in California. And with the fellows who were on the island, the administrative staff, they talked about getting to Catalina. That was the ideal. If we could get to Catalina and be off the coast of California. By that time there was no, not much threat of the Japanese invasion. And it would be a fine deal. We had a few fellows come in to enter the other training programs that were on in cooks and bakers. And they still had a few deck and engine --- they called them PLOs -- prospective license officers. And, and before the radio school started, that was an enormous program that went on. Sheepshead took most of them, but we still had until the end of 1943 and into '44, classes of thirty-five or so, every week of these prospective license officers who were trained or retrained in –in deck and engine. And it was a good experience.

END SIDE A, TAPE ONE BEGIN SIDE B, TAPE ONE

KORINDA: Manning, he had a chance when he wasn't administrating, he tried to play tennis with, --- I don't know if you spoke to Ed Beaverhaud? Ed was one of three or four blacks over the years that were radio cadets and Ed was a tennis pro at that time. Ed was older, he's now, I think, eighty-four years old, and he started coming with us to reunions after Mystic. Ed is in the Hall of Fame, the New England Tennis Hall of Fame. And he's a great guy. He left this morning, but Ed is very shy. He shipped out as a black radio operator. And there weren't that many. And of course, in those days, although we were integrated, the armed forces were not and there was of course prejudice against Ed, but he was teaching Captain Manning how to play tennis.

And Manning would divide his time between the piano -- he was trying to learn to play piano, and that was sort of his hobby. Manning had gone through a divorce, I think, and when he wasn't living with us on the Island, he was staying at the New York Athletic Club in New York City. Of course, he was later to become a Commodore with the US Lines and he was the Captain of the United States. He went from the America, which was the best and biggest liner for the United States Lines and he was in on the planning for the United States, which was all aluminum and bronze and a wonderful, fastest ship. Still has the records for crossing to England and to France, and he was the captain for seven years. He was a friend of one of my friends, the electrical officers I spoke about, Don Coot, and his wife. And he ate frequently at their house on Staten Island.

And Mrs. Coot had two children. One, I guess they both spent a lot of time on Hoffman Island. We --- this was, ---- as there more before the radio school, but when it closed Don Coot had to inventory everything that was on the Island. All the telephones, all the typewriters, and all of that, all of those documents of course, have been destroyed or lost. And it – it ---- by Thanksgiving Day --- and his discharge was two days after Thanksgiving Day in November of '45, and I have that.

And I've always been asked, when was the last person to leave? I think it was Manning, but it may have just been -- I had the flag, the last flag that was flown, I brought it with me this week. Frayed edges, it might have flown over the island for several years -- maybe the entire six years it was there. Because of the hurricanes and all, I don't think so. I think in '44 there was a bad hurricane. I was not there. In forty-five, we had a near hurricane. Flooded the island to a depth of six inches. We had to go on the second deck of the library building and rescue all the books which were soaked. And the floor of the gym was just laid. This was August of 1945.

We had this very bad blow. They laid an oak flooring on top of the concrete. Of course in playing basketball, running on the concrete wasn't too good. The oak became waves, three feet high [laughs]. And it was useless after that. They never used the gym the last six weeks. Well, the war had ended anyway. But the gym was not in use. We didn't have any more movies. There was really nothing going on on the island, and the fellows who, who were in the last few classes, many of them left. Went back home. Those who went to get their FCC license were told, you may not have a ship to go to, because they only needed one operator instead of the two or three at that point.

So many of them were sent to Sheepshead Bay if they wanted to stay in. And they could go out as a purser, or they could go out as a steward which would be a comedown when you're, you're expecting to be a radio operator with higher pay, with better uniforms. Many of them bought uniforms at Brooks Brothers in New York City. Some of the instructors and a lot of the students. The captain's gig, the captain's boat was a Chris-Craft. It was a gorgeous thing, which was donated. My friend, Don Coot and his wife Jeanette. Jeanette was a historian herself. She was a specialist. Her family had come on the Mayflower. She was a specialist in 1600's and 1700's -- everything. She was brilliant. And the two of them lived into their eighties and passed on some of their Hoffman Island momentos to me. Which I still have, and, and letters. And they were familiar of course with Harry Manning and with some of the other characters. Benny Leonard was a prizefighter who was before my time, the physical training officer on Hoffman and then later on at Sheepshead Bay. But he was with us. He was a middle weight/fly weight, everything, the smaller weights champion in the late twenties and thirties. And again, the older instructors were in their forties and fifties and they're long gone today. It's --- it's -- it's a sad situation.

LEVINE: How did you feel when Hoffman was closing?

KORINDA: Well, they sent a letter around and they said, you know, what are your goals? What do you want to do? And I said, I'm gonna return to teaching. Because, for while I was waiting to be called, and my waiver was being worked on in Washington, you, you signed that you would not ever sue the government for a physical deficiency that you had when you came into service. I put down on the questionnaire that I would probably return to teaching. So when my boss saw that, he went to the Commander, who was the assistant to Harry Manning. And Simon Frasier, an old maritime name, came with us to the institute to --- with the instructors --- and we were all on Forty Fourth Street.

A beautiful building across the street from the New York Yacht Club. Next door to a Navy canteen. We could buy our uniforms next door at the Navy canteen.---- shoes, shirts and everything. And now the Penn Club, the University of Pennsylvania has that building as a club. And it's a -- just a --- I was in it recently. Had a tour of it. It had become the Truro Law Center. And then the University of Pennsylvania bought it from them, I believe. They used to send students all around the world for Truro. But Pennsylvania has rooms if you're a graduate of Pennsylvania, you could stay in that building. It's right on Forty Fourth Street, near the Algonquin Hotel. Never went in there, while we were there. Knew nothing about it. But we used to spend our time at the New York Public Library. Had lunch over there. Eat on Fifth Avenue. Walk up and down Fifth Avenue. And then when the government closed down a little bit, they sent everybody out to Sheepshead Bay and stay in the old barracks buildings there. We had what was known as the Mast Magazine. Did anyone tell you about that?

LEVINE: No.

KORINDA: Mast Magazine was the publication of the Maritime service. And it was a great magazine with stories, happenings, all around the world at that time. They did several issues on Hoffman Island and on some of the other training stations. They did stories on rescues at sea--- on into '47, '49. I think in 1950, they suspended operation of it. Again, the government wasn't gonna spend much money on it, and I think Harry Truman was not as favorable. Roosevelt would have had us part of the Coast Guard or Navy. Roosevelt was favorable. And we did not get veteran status for over fifty years because of prejudice ----- Walter Winchell and some of the others who disliked any mention of the Merchant Marine ---- who delivered the goods to every battlefield in the world. And it's --- it's --- it's --- it was amazing as a group they did not speak up.

LEVINE: Why do you think the prejudice was against the Merchant Marine?

KORINDA: Well, first of all the media was silent about the sinkings. And immediately when the war started, so many ships were sunk right off of New York State, and Long Island and New Jersey. Two hundred ships were sunk in the first year of operation. And it was like shooting ducks in a barrel. They still had lights on all the way down to Florida. It wasn't probably 'til the end of summer of '42 that they began worrying about the boardwalks at all. And oil was coming up on the beaches and the people couldn't swim, and the residents knew what was going on, but nobody else. They were silent. They did not have convoys in the beginning. The Navy was not --- Coast Guard was not doing a job. The Navy was silent. Why? I don't know. But the media picked up on the fact that some of the unions had communists and the media immediately said, well, we're done with this war. We're gonna fight the Russians.

And there was the communist threat of those Reds, and this went on. And the VFW and the American Legion picked it up, and of course, whoever was in Washington in Congress, was not in favor of it. There were bills that were put in in '43 and '44 to try to get the same benefits as the Navy or the Army had, and they could not get those bills through. The insurance was five thousand dollars instead of ten thousand dollars. And the pay was ---- figuring it out, it was the equivalent because if --- if you were torpedoed, your pay stopped. If you were a prisoner of war, your pay stopped. You got nothing. Everything was to go through the middleman which was the shipping companies, although the government authority was the War Shipping Administration. And they delegated the overseeing of each individual to the shipping companies.

And it was --- it was [sighs] a time of rumors and all. We all thought we were gonna go into the Coast Guard ---several times during my career. We were gonna go to New London and be part of the Armed Forces Institute. Because we were sort of competing with the Armed Forces. We several times the fellows would come in, into New York Harbor, and they would, would visit us on Forty Fourth Street, so we could talk face-to-face with someone that is corresponding with you and you're sending lessons and you're marking their papers for them and guiding them. And they, they'd come in, and after six months they cut out the mess hall in the basement of our building and you had to go across the street if you wanted coffee and buns and there was a fine restaurant called the Old Barn. It was full of pictures of ---- of Sheepshead Bay race, racehorses, and racetrack, and it was a fine place.

But mostly we had lunch at Nedick's, or Horn and Hardart's, where you could buy a very reasonable meal. You could each lunch for sixty-five

cents at Nedicks. But somebody would be standing at your back and wanting your seat before you got done eating. It was an interesting time. You could walk up and down Fifth Avenue and see the models with their hatboxes, and that was a perk that we had. …

LEVINE: Now, did you go back and forth much, or did you stay on the Island?

KORINDA: I, at liberty, I could go into New York City. I was dating my wife at that time, wife-to-be. And I would go down to college. She was two years behind me. And so I would go to dances and all. I would hitchhike down, in uniform, and go down to the ----- I'd take the small boat across to the Belt Parkway, Ft. Hamilton, hop onto the highway, and hitchhike over to the Holland Tunnel. Stand at the Holland Tunnel and try to get a truck that was going south to Trenton, and many times I got a ride right to the campus and be there in time for a weekend, and then Sunday night I'd have to hitchhike back or take a train, which sometimes was difficult.

LEVINE: How did people react and respond to you in uniform? The population at large?

KORINDA: Most of the time they thought we were in the Navy because the uniforms were so similar. I never had any prejudice or anything and I remember when the war was over and hitchhiking, they were very, very friendly and to get to my house, I would have to get up to the George Washington Bridge and hitchhike over the George Washington Bridge, down to, through Bergen County to get into Passaic County, and two or three times I had a ride right to the door of my house. Going back on, on Sundays, my parents would take me to the George Washington Bridge, and they would worry of course, but drop me off, and I'd hitchhike back. And if I didn't make the last boat to the island, I could sleep at the State Island Ferry House. You'd

have to get out at four o'clock cause they washed the whole place down. Go back in and you'd catch the, I think it was a seven thirty boat, back to the island. The Mayfair, Mayflower, would go back to the island and you'd be there around eight-fifteen in the morning. And you're supposed to be at your post in the office at eight-thirty. And then classes, I think, began about nine o'clock every day. At noontime, fellows were talking about this today, Harry Manning would have them play Offenbach, the Tales of Hoffman, at least three days a week and on weekends, twelve to one. You'd have the news on for ten or fifteen minutes. This was broadcast all over the island.

LEVINE: Oh.

KORINDA: You walked out your door and you could hear this music playing and they had taps every evening and there were records that they'd put on to the loudspeaker. And of course being a radio base, they had the best radio and speakers. It was nothing like we've had here downstairs. And even at --- I go to meetings in Port Newark of the Dennis Rowan group of the AMMV -- American Merchant Marine Veterans -- and there, their microphone and their loudspeaker system leaves a lot to be desired. But they have a radioman in charge, and he's from Gallups Island. And it's a fun place. I don't know if you met Ed Simpson. Ed may take the archives. Ed's got two barns on his property in Ringoes, New Jersey, and Eddie got to Paris before the war ended and he sent his wife back, or took back, some Parisian lingerie

LEVINE: Oh, my.

KORINDA: and she still has the pictures of it. He --- Ed is the one that had the big book with everything in it, and she kept everything. They were engaged at that time, I think, and she kept everything. I have my letters, not from

Hoffman, but from New York City to my wife-to-be, and her letters to me, I don't know what happened to them, but my letters -- yeah, I have hers too, But I don't have anything written on Hoffman Island, and almost every day we used to write each other

LEVINE: Oh.

KORINDA: at that time.

LEVINE: How many people were there, roughly, at that time?

KORINDA: On – on Hoffman Island? There were some civilian gals, who were secretaries, at least a dozen. In the administration, I would say, there were about a hundred including all the instructors. So a hundred say, give or take ten in that amount. And then of the --- of the classes, there would be probably five or six classes in operation. So they'd be a week apart, and you'd have to have enough instructors, you know, to go around. I think there were twenty, twenty instructors. And some of them came from Gallups Island because Harry Manning knew what was going on at the Radio School there. He was at Huntington, Long Island. They had the Kahn Estate. Adolph Kahn was a millionaire who allowed them to use his estate at Huntington. And they had a ---- in fact my boss, in the basics department when I got to the Institute ---- had been on Huntington. They had their own song, the Hunt Song --- To Huntington We Go. [Sings, laughing] And from Huntington they went to Gallups Island for three or four years.

Manning closed down that millionaire's estate at Huntington and moved some of the instructors who were doing basic training there over to our island, and he was in charge of, of everything. He got --- he arrived about

six months before D-day and set the thing in operation. He also was in charge of all this other training that was going on in, in deck and engine and cooks and bakers. And we had a wonderful cooks and bakers school. The chef at the Waldorf was the commander and he went back on weekends to the hotel but he stayed with us during the week, and, and he trained all the cooks. We had one Army sergeant as a cook, and a Navy chief. And both of them could take two eggs in each hand and break them and drop them in. They were skilled at that. And the mess hall was clean; they had machines to do the potatoes and all that. The food was very plain. And the night that I had my two wisdom teeth taken out, for the first time they had Swiss steak.

That was after the war ended in Europe, they had some more meat, and on Sundays it was always hot dogs and the fellows called that Coney Islanders tonight. [Levine laughs] When they had their hot dogs. But it was compact. As you said, it was about twelve and a half acres. And the buildings were close there and there was a concrete walkway around the island and a fence about four feet high and in those days, we --- we had cigarettes were ten cents a pack and we all smoked. If you were, you know, an instructor, you had cigarettes always on your desk. And it was a sad thing in a way, because I had hay fever and they used to bother me. Some of the fellows said, well, you take some Vicks and you put it along the side of the cigarette, and that was awful. I could never do that. And they had various things that they offered. They were very helpful.

We had two picket boats. One went to, the Fort Hamilton side, and that was right across the ship's traffic, and the other went to South Beach, where there was an amusement park. They still had a Ferris wheel there in those days, and they had built a pier. The Maritime Service built a pier out from South Beach toward the island, and the people there thought it was

their pier, but actually it belonged to the Maritime Service and existed there a long time. I was there a month ago with one of our graduates who didn't come to the meeting this week, but Miles McMann, really had eight children, nine children, eight survived. And he shipped out as a radio operator and he was a professor at Rutgers later on. And he and I went to Fort Wadsworth and met some of your, your ranger friends there. And Felicia. And they're interested in giving us a panel if we can come up with twelve hundred dollars to buy the glass case to put some mementos in. And they're looking for uniforms. And the flag that I have, the last flag that flew over, I would give to them. And we may split up our archives if some of them end up in one of the stations, or if Ed Simpson takes it. I think there are enough archives to go around. Because Bill Yerger, before he passed on, had a great collection of things.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. Well, couldn't you duplicate and have them in…?

KORINDA: Some of them can be. Yes. Some of them could be?

LEVINE: [-------].

KORINDA: Ye. Ye. Well, Bill was responsible for doing the radio shack at King's Point. And they have a, an RCA radio there. They have a radioman, a mannequin, dressed as, in Maritime uniform. And he forgot to put black socks on him. And so the day before he was to be dedicated, he got down on his hands and knees -- and Bill was about two hundred and fifty pounds in his later life. He sailed for almost fifty years. A great guy. And he took black ink and he was doing black socks. [Both laugh] And he became ill, they had to take him to the hospital and I was there the next day, looking for him and so was Miles McMann, the Rutgers professor that was with me at Ft. Wadsworth when we met the two gals and the one fellow – rangers --

to talk about an exhibit there in the museum at Ft. Wadsworth. But Bill recovered in a day and he was back home. And Miles, who was in the same class with Bill, called me. And I said, well, I know the hospital. I'm gonna call Sunday morning. So I called Sunday morning and I got a nurse and she went down the hall and she said, well, he's doing all right. We don't know exactly what went wrong. When I called the next day, he was gone. He had gone back to Bath, New York, and he was at work, again, at home. But ..

LEVINE: How many of the radio officers did you teach?

KORINDA: Probably I would say, several hundred. There would be ---- it would be from after I got my basic done with, and my predecessor was with me showing what he did for two weeks before he passed his license and shipped out. As I said, he got to Paris and sent us a card from Paris saying that he had a great time and he was --- he continued as a radio operator. But I met them individually going at liberty. I met fellows from California, from Tennessee, from Florida. And they came from everywhere. But unless they wandered in and wanted to borrow a book, or I met them in their first week, none of th --- only one of these fellows remembers being with me and learning how to clean the head and wash windows. They used to sit on the window ledge, outside the window, to wash windows. And we had a very small toilet there and they'd take care of that. And they, they'd sweep our office and dust everything, and I, I made them take the mimeograph masters, master copies, and clean them, those that I had the few remained that had to be cleaned, because the next day, we had inspection. And either Captain Manning or Commander Frasier would come through with white gloves on and they'd go through your office and through the closets, and unless everything was stacked perfectly. But

sometimes, in one of the closets, if you opened a door, these things would jump out at you,

LEVINE: Cockroaches?

KORINDA: Cockroaches. And they were that big!

LEVINE: Oh, my. Three inches long.

KORINDA: And they were mixed in with all these papers that were there. There was no food in -- but it was damp. It was like this, and, but our office was sort of on the edge. It was not over the pool. When you walked out, you could walk around, but they just had offices on the second floor around there. And, and it was wartime construction. They didn't use much…

LEVINE: So new buildings were constructed for…?

KORINDA: Yes. The three barracks buildings probably Spring of '44, they built maybe two more. There might have been one barracks. The pictures that I have, my cousin gave me a postcard which came out of the canteen when he was there in 1939. He wrote this postcard out and never mailed it, addressed it to two girlfriends that he had. [Laughing] And in, in my hometown. And it wasn't 'til fifty years later that he gave me some of the stuff that he had. So I have his story and I have a little bit on his two brothers. One of his brothers, my --- actually all of them were my father's cousins, was on the Deborah Gannett. Deborah Gannett was the first female Revolutionary War soldier. And she was recognized, they named a ship after her and they had a bronze plaque as big as this table with her story of her life. How she enlisted twice. The first time they discovered her, sent her back to Connecticut. And again, she dressed up in men's

clothing and got into the Army and was wounded. And after a few months, they discovered that she was a woman. After the Revolution was over with, they gave her fifty acres out in Ohio, and she was famous. In her hometown and out in the Midwest. But my cousin was first mate on this ship and I went aboard for a weekend. I ate in the officer's mess and I was like one of the crew in Hoboken. And then ---- you know the way cousins are --- I didn't hear anything more. Two of the older ones left and my cousin Johnny who was an associate, and he just passed away. And we have still to clean out his house and so I'm going to find Hoffman Island stuff there, I think, when we get there.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. Well I think we should pause right now, while I put in another tape.

KORINDA: All right.

END SIDE B, TAPE ONE BEGIN SIDE A, TAPE TWO

LEVINE: Here on tape two, and I'm speaking with Andrew Korinda.

KORINDA: I was just talking about Jeanette Coot and Don Coot. Don was the electrical officer and also the movie maven. He had, as a youngster, on Long Island, had worked in a movie house, and knew how to work a projector and to repair it. And when he got to Hoffman Island in 1939, he had been at sea for a couple of years, and he wanted to take the course as electrician on Hoffman Island. And they put him to work on the movie projector. When he finished his training in three months, they asked him to remain as an instructor and he stayed there until the last days of Hoffman Island. And they had an apartment on Staten Island, and they were friends

with the various captains on Hoffman Island, would have them to dinner. Had Harry Manning several times.

They had the Russians who came to pick up minesweepers, about eight minesweepers were given to the Russians in the middle of the war, and the officers stayed in an apartment, a two family house that the Coots lived in. The enlisted men, Russians, stayed on Hoffman Island with the regular trainees and probably did not speak much English. Neither did the officers. But Jeanette would do the shopping. She would go into New York City in the pushcarts and buy fruits and vegetables for these Russians and one of the Russians was a former submarine commander who had an accident with his sub, and he saved the lives of like thirty men. And they did not give him --- they gave him a promotion after that ------ but they wouldn't give him a submarine, so he was going to take ----- be in charge of the eight minesweepers that were being built at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, and they, they made a ceremony right near where the Mayflower, our Mayfair was docked, and Jeanette and Don were there as representatives of Hoffman Island and they saw the Russians off. They knew them by name, they, they lived with them. And she has written a story, I said, Jeanette Coot was a historian and she has written up a story. She has a tape that I will forward and Don also had a tape of his memories through almost six years on Hoffman Island.

They're a very valuable resource. I stood watch with Don and never thought of him for fifty years until I realized through Dick Wachter, that he had come across a fellow in Pennsylvania living in Scranton, who knew something about Hoffman Island. Turned out that Don and his wife, were living five minutes from my son and so Ann and I paid many visits to the Coots, and they were there at our grandson's eighth birthday, and we visited them a dozen or more times, and some of when they --- he passed

away at eighty-five, and she lingered on for another two years. We used to visit her in a nursing home. But they cleaned out their apartment and found a lot of Hoffman Island stuff which they turned over to me. And, and letters, too numerous to mention. I'll forward that to you later. Which is just a wonderful resource. Both of them, to give us an idea of the people that were there.

LEVINE: Great. I was going to ask you about the people that were there. Could you say anything about the, the, not the character, but the assortment of students? Did they fall into any kind of categories that you can think of? --- kinds of people that came through there?

KORINDA: Well, I already mentioned the athletes that were there.

LEVINE: Right.

KORINDA: There were many ----- the instructors were a mixed lot. Some had been to sea, most had not. The radiomen, the radio instructors, some of them had worked with radio stations throughout the country. And they were used to radio terms. They knew what vacuum tubes were and this was all second nature to them. To the general public, this was all a new language and, and they didn't, they knew how to turn a radio on and turn it off, but that was all that it was. And when I first came to our office, and I saw this split apart super heterodyne radio, with all the explanations and all the wires going back and forth to the tubes that were wall ---- that were hanging from this wall. And you could turn this on and you could get Europe or South America or anything, or you could get all the jazz stations in New York, which is what I used to do when I was alone at night. And I had to make up some tests which hadn't been done during the day; I'd be in there. And I had a key. I could go in.

And the office was my domain. It was fun. And of the staff that we had, one of them, Woodrow Wilson Smith, I've already, well, maybe I didn't mention Benjamin Franklin Morton -- he came later, when I was at – but no, he was one of my basic instructors. Ben was from Woods Hole in Martha's Vineyard. I'll start with Ben Franklin Morton. Ben was about six foot two. Very thin. Typical New Englander. Spoke with a Boston accent. Said that his great, great, great grandmother was one of Franklin's descendents. And she's buried ---- he said Franklin's wife is buried on Martha's Vineyard. I'm going to find out more about that on Saturday. Well, Ben was in to traffic management. He was about ten years older than I, and he had sailed all his life around Martha's Vineyard. And he got married while he was on Hoffman Island to a lovely gal, about ten years younger than he was. And they wrote him up in the Tales of Hoffman, and we still have that clipping. And Ben went with us, as I said, some of the instructors went to the Institute from Hoffman Island, and Ben was one that was directly opposite me in Basic office, and I lost track of Ben for many years, and I called when, Clinton was speaking the first time here on Martha's Vineyard, I decided to call Ben.

And I called information, I said I want a Martha's Vineyard number and they gave it to me, and eh, they, they found his name in the phonebook and it turned out that his widow got on the phone and she said she was just about to clean his desk out and she would send me his pictures and materials which she did, and that was wonderful. He had been the information officer on the island for the Chamber of Commerce for like twenty years. He was right at the dockside at Vinylhaven [Vineyard Haven]. Well the others in my particular office, Ben was attached to the sail loft. Ben, Ben worked on teaching knots and knot tying and he'd also get, we had long-boat training and you had to go out and row for three or four hours and you would get a

life boat ticket. I don't know whatever happened to my lifeboat ticket but you had to have one if you were gonna go ship out.

Any way, in my particular office, Woodrow Wilson Smith was a Sears's manager in California, I think in San Francisco. And Woody smoked cigars all the time. I don't think he did in the classroom but he did in our office. And there was a character in the comics called, Major Hoople, and we all called him the major, for Major Hoople. That was Woody. And we had Chief Sullivan, his name was, nickname was Sully. And these two chief were terrific instructors. Most of these fellows remember them and they liked them. They were cool – "characters" they said, in those days. And a third one was Harry Macomber. And Harry had come up as a cadet. He was in the fourth class to begin, but Harry's desk was closest to mine and Harry had been at Ft. Monmouth in the Army. And Harry was married, and again, older than most of the fellows. He was in his mid-twenties. And I don't know why Harry got out of the Army, whether it was eyesight or what, but he had known radio, being at Ft. Monmouth and he knew the code and knew everything.

When they put him in a class, he came directly to Hoffman also. They put him in the fourth class. He went up within a few weeks and passed the FCC. He was the first graduate be --- actually he didn't put in his twenty weeks, I think he did sixteen for the theory ----- and he went up and so his picture was with Harry Manning giving him his FCC license and they said immediately, "you're not gonna ship out, you're going to be an instructor". So he was a chief, one of three chiefs that I had to work with and mark their tests and be a "go-fer", for them, and our main boss was Lieutenant Stano. It wasn't long before Harry was promoted to ensign, and then we had another chief that came aboard by the name of Garcia.

I called him Message to Garcia [laughing], and he had come from Gallups Island. He was instructor there. And he didn't spend much time in our office, but he had been, he had owned a radio station and he had been a radio announcer and he had a lot of depth in that. And he lives down in South Jersey. And he hasn't made any of our meetings, but he's been a member right along. That was quite a mix in our office. There was a lot of kidding and teasing and it was just a great place to be. When I walked in, I felt at home immediately. I was only there a week and the Red Cross took me out -- my mother was taken to the hospital with a "hiatus" hernia and a gall bladder operation and so I had three days off immediately, and my indoctrination was held up a little bit, but then the fellow who was teaching me, Ralph Kerner, was going to ship out. He had passed his FCC finally. He was in the sixth class, but he got pneumonia or something, was in sickbay a couple weeks and he was set back and then he couldn't keep up with that class and so they said, you do it on your own. You go to work and be the go-fer. Do all this. We need somebody to work with these instructors. And so Ralph did what I was going to do.

He eventually, after three weeks with me, he shipped out and went to France. Sent us a postcard from Paris. And he and Harry Macomber lived in the Midwest. They were fairly close, but Harry lost track of him. And I met Harry again. Harry spoke at Sebring when the first of the conventions were going on, with about twenty-six fellows. Dick Waechter began that one. And when I heard that Harry was there, I immediately wanted to join the group. And so I made Charleston and I've made every one since then. The other instructors, some of them were looked on with distaste. Some of them were too tough. Some of them didn't care. Some of them were strange. It -- it was a mix. But it was a good mix. They all had to answer to a training officer who oversaw everything and who would walk into the code room and he'd put his arms around some of the trainees and he would say,

you know, you can do this. And even though you failed your test, you know, we'll give you another chance. Although they did fail some of them. They were kicked out if they didn't do well, or if they acted up somehow. It wasn't an easy thing.

LEVINE: How many of them do you think didn't make it?

KORINDA: I would say percentage wise, one or two percent. It wasn't that much.

LEVINE: I see.

KORINDA: Of course when we got near the end, you couldn't count August to September, because they were told, you know, you're not going to get a job [laughs] when you get out. So you can go home or you can go to Sheepshead Bay and you can take a different job. Because it was the numbers game. They knew they had IBM cards, that was the card system in those days. They didn't have master computers, well, maybe they did in Washington, but we didn't have them. We had a lot of hand operations and as I said, we had gals who were the secretaries who did quite a bit of work in the front office.

LEVINE: Did you have any women being trained as radio officers?

KORINDA: No. No. No. No. No. There were no women as such. There were women on board ship who were nurses, or there were women who might have been stewards ---- who before 1938, and three of them were prisoners of war, I believe. And someone may have been lost as part of the seven or eight thousand, between seven and eight thousand, they think, lost their lives in the Merchant Marine. We don't know of people like Canadians who came to this country and then shipped out on other countries ships rather

than our ships. And that went on also. So we don't know. The figures that they, they toss about, they're mostly US citizens that they know about. We don't know about seamen that were lost on other countries' ships.

The building that I was in later, the Institute on Forty Fourth Street, we used to house, they had three or four rooms where, if a seaman was leaving New York to go to South America or Panama Canal to pick up a ship ---- because somebody might have become ill and they needed someone ----- then they housed them overnight there and they'd pick up a plane right in New York there, because it was convenient. They could catch a train out or a bus to the airport and fly out the next day. The Mast Magazine had an artist who worked with us in that building and he was sent to Sheepshead Bay. He was in the same room with us. He designed the covers of the magazine, and it was a great monthly magazine. A lot of news that went out to the various maritime bases. But today, they're hard to find. They're like hen's teeth; you just can't find 'em. We do, at our monthly meetings at Port Newark, see Miss Church. We get about hundred to a hundred and twenty men that come out, and women. Several wives put on a luncheon for us. And you don't have to stay for the luncheon if you don't want to. But we meet from ten to twelve on the second Saturday of every month. And they have a picnic once a year, a dance at Christmastime. And it's an organization larger than this. We have about five hundred, six hundred members of that, which encompasses all aspects of the Merchant Marine.

LEVINE: Why do you think the bond is so strong?

KORINDA: With our group here? Because of the rock. Because of being on the rock. And we're up to a hundred and sixty members I think, now. For the longest time, before the Internet, we had a hundred and twenty to a hundred and thirty and it sort of stayed that way. And it's just recently that we had four

pass away, this past year. Usually it's been one, and some years none. And we've been very fortunate. We're in our seventies now, and nobody's getting any younger. [Laughs] I wish we could turn the clock back. And when I, all of us, when we first heard about it, we had submerged these memories of what went on when we were seventeen or eighteen and it by talking together these things come out. And it's a great feeling.

LEVINE: I guess it's a shared past, or something like that.

KORINDA: I think the age has something to do with it. Although you can go back to your high school reunion and it's not the same thing. It's not nearly the same thing.

LEVINE: No.

KORINDA: And the careers that these fellows have had, some of them are beautiful. They, they've got two ministers. And I don't know how many engineers, probably fifty engineers. And probably a dozen or more were drafted into the Army or some other service afterwards, and luckily half of them got to do something with radio. But they were never given their due, never given a promotion or any monetary reward because of what they did going to sea and being a radio operator. They were not even buck privates. They were called recruits. Some of them after three to six months they said," Well, you're going to get a promotion to Private". One fellow said," I don't want it. I want to get out". [They laugh] And they said,"You're too valuable. We can't let you out". But in the meantime they weren't going to------ the government was stingy, I would say. And that's our feeling as a group.

LEVINE: Do you think you'll get anything? Do you think the government will realize?

KORINDA: No. Not in our lifetimes, no. I don't think so. Just as with World War I, a lot of people were forgotten, I think we copied what England did, and I think they were as nasty to their merchant seaman, although they called it the merchant navy, they were, we are welcome at any of the merchant seamen's stations over in London or Liverpool or anyplace. We can stay overnight for practically nothing. And free to the museums and all that. But not in the Navy. Not, not, not, not in the Armed Forces over there. And some of our fellows, this was interesting to me, when they went on the Murmansk run or were torpedoed in the North Sea and stayed over in Scotland, some of them were hired by the Scotch to work a radio station there in Scotland, and they stayed six or nine months and of course they had good times while they were there and they were paid by the Scots. They were not paid by their own shipping company. As soon as they got in the lifeboats, their pay stopped. Which was a tragedy. And if you stayed off a ship for longer than ninety days or thirty, thirty days I think it was early in the war, you'd be drafted.

LEVINE: Oh, my god.

KORINDA: So. The young ones. Now, in my mind, looking back, I think thirty percent of the fellows who were in the service were either 4F or were --- over thirty-five. And they didn't have to worry about going. But they were there because they were volunteers.

LEVINE: And I imagine a lot of them were tall.

KORINDA: Yes. Yes.

LEVINE: So. [Not understood]

KORINDA: I remember seeing one of these tall guys in his pea coat; it looked like it hit him at his belt. His legs were so long, I was amazed at --- at --- but there were niceties, and before I got there they had a Christmas Ball in New York City, and the year that I was there they had a party. Christmas of '45 we had --- our own building had a party. The Institute had a party right next door on Forty Fourth Street, and then there was a, maybe it was Sheepshead and Hoffman in the middle of '45, whether it was Fourth of July or what, there was a dance held right off of Forty-Second Street in New York City. And the girls, who were secretaries at the Institute when I was there, came to the dance, and I remember dancing with one of the gals from Brooklyn. I said, "I'll take you home on the subway". Oh, no, she said. No. You're going to Ridgewood. You go the other way. Or close to it. At that time I was living in Clifton. And it was, there was a fun part of it, although there was a war going on, there were social amenities, and it was not all cut and dried.

LEVINE: How about overseas besides the British Isle? Do merchant seamen have some kind of reciprocity?

KORINDA: A hostel? Yeah.

LEVINE: Not hostility, hospitality?

KORINDA: There were books that told you where to go, where to stay abroad and published in 1940, so that would have been out of date. I don’t know whether another one was published in '43, but again, they're scarce and hard to find. But I think in our archives we have a couple of them that warned you about were to stay away. In Marseilles, you don’t want to go here. And they named the places that well; some of the fellas might want to go to.

LEVINE: Do merchant seamen as a group, do they receive you as a merchant seaman? I mean, as a, do the seamen of the world have a kind of fraternity, I guess?

KORINDA: Sort of, but let -- not --- If you go to Port Newark, the Seamen's Church there ---- The Seamen's Church used to be right at the foot of the Battery, next to Castle Gardens. And only a short walk to the subway, short walk to the Staten Island Ferry. Great place to be open dining room, cafeteria for the public. So when OpSail was on, you could have gone there and had lunch or dinner there. During the war, they maintained a hotel for seamen. Now, one of my buddies and I were at liberty on a Friday night and we decided to stay in New York. And he said, well, he knew all the places to go in New York City to get a free sandwich or anything. You might have to listen to either a Hebrew lesson or a Christian song or something like that.

But Max Blitz was his name. And Max was a great guy. He later wanted to go into the real Marines, and I think he did. He lived in New Hyde Park and he and I would buddy up and go into New York and get tickets for the radio shows or for a theater if we could get them. You couldn't go to a regular USO because they wouldn't let us in as a Merchant Marine. But there was Pepsi Cola Canteen and some of the others that let us in --- to these other canteens and occasionally they would have some good tickets or you could buy standing room for a dollar fifty and go into the theater. Well, Max and I went out one time and we, it was late and we couldn't find a place to stay so we said, we'll go to Seaman's Church. I don't think he had ever been there. I had never been there. And you paid your dollar or two dollars, whatever it was. They gave you a towel and a cake of soap and you went up to the eleventh floor, and took the elevator up. And we got out of the elevator and we saw all these guys standing in the hall and they looked

half-soused and they looked woebegone, and we turned right around, got in the elevator and we left. And we said, forget about it.

And we went up town to the Grand Central Station. And in Grand Central they had --- this was still while the war was on --- they had not day beds, but cots. And you could sleep on the upper level. There was only one at that time, under the clock there. They might have had fifty or a hundred cots and they had a USO person there, and you could stay the night, right there in Grand Central Station. So that's what he and I did. But I think, many times we went in. The, one of the best things that happened to, to me while I was on Hoffman, early on, was to go with Max. And there was another fellow, whose father was a Hollywood director. Had a Central Park West apartment. And Bobby, I can't think of his last name, but it was similar to some of the names of some of the directors today. I don't know if they're descended from him. But Max said we're gonna stay overnight with Bob in their apartment on Central Parks. The parents are out of town and we have the place to ourselves. It was no big party or anything, no big deal, but they had a view overlooking Sixtieth Street, right there, looking down at the park.

And the place was furnished like Hollywood in Chinese and Japanese. The whole place. It was --- they had three bedrooms. This was a huge apartment. Today, it would be a million dollars a month, I think, to be there. And we stayed the night. And Bob, the other fellow, was in Manning's office. He was in the front office, or in the supply room, I think he was -- may have been supply room. And the three of us, you know, pal'd around together, did things in New York. But we only stayed that one night, and that was enough for me. That was seeing how the other half-lives. But I used to meet my wife at Penn Station ---

VOICE: [Calls not understood question from across lobby]

KORINDA: Had what?

VOICE: Your jacket.

KORINDA: Yes, I have a jacket.

VOICE: Thank you.

KORINDA: We got ten minutes, I guess. We didn't have liberty every weekend, but when we did, my best girl, who is my wife today------ and I would meet her, that summer, if she was off, although she was going to school ----- meet her at Penn Station. And one time, I disappointed her. I was an hour late. I was getting on the Staten Island Ferry and there was a gal from Clifton, Staten Island, who was greeting sailors and she was doing portraits --- charcoal portraits. And she said, I'll do your portrait. And I didn't know how long it was going to take, so I sat down and she did my portrait and I thought it was a nice thing to give my girl, and by the time she got done, and by the time I made the next ferry, I was an hour late. Well, I heard it from my wife. She was be-friended by some people and had coffee with them and waited in Penn Station for me, but it turned out all right. We got, usually if we got together we could go to a Friday night "Band of America" radio program. It wasn't like a TV show. It was the band and we saw Lucy in her early days performing, singing. She was a gorgeous, young redhead then. A singer.

LEVINE: Lucille Ball?

KORINDA: Lucille Ball. Sang for the Band of America and other things that we did, in and around. We'd take a ride on the Fifth Avenue bus at that time.

END SIDE A, TAPE TWO BEGIN SIDE B, TAPE TWO

LEVINE: Did you ever have any truck with Swinburne?

KORINDA: Only when we got in our boats and rowed halfway between. They didn't let us get over there, but do you know on Swinburne

LEVINE: [Heavy pause here]

KORINDA: I used to look across to Swinburne because my office was on the southern tip just above the firing range. The twenty-millimeter and the three-inch, three-inch gun. And they used to fire that three-inch gun occasionally but not after V-E Day, they didn't use it much. When my cousin was on the island, they would take their boats and row over to Swinburne and sit on the island and smoke. The island was deserted at that time. The Navy hadn't taken over. It wasn't wartime. It was 1939. And they would peak in the windows and they'd see these large urns. The urns contained the ashes of people who were cremated there, and whether they had labels on or not, I don't know. I think they were mixed together. Anyway, Johnny told stories about going around there. And later on, on Swinburne, both the Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth's valuable interior furnishings were put on Swinburne -- for safekeeping. They were locked in one of the buildings there.

One of the buildings on Swinburne was disguised early in the day ---- early in the war ---- as a diner. {Laughs]. So they thought if the planes were coming over from Germany or if Germany took over England, and they flew

over, they would think that this was just a diner, an extension of New York City there. Actually on Swinburne they had the sonar equipment and they also had ----- we could control the gates around the entrance to our dock on Hoffman Island. The Coast Guard controlled the main gates. But Swinburne had the very vital information on what was going on within hundreds and hundreds of yards of the mouth of the narrows and all the way to Sandy Hook. And of course things were on Sandy Hook also. And we had blimps flying overhead frequently, looking for subs. Later on when Don Coot was there --- again 1939, 1940, as war approached --- they were firing blanks toward Swinburne. But once in awhile the shells, empty shells would land on Swinburne. And one day, he got a call. He was not a gunnery man, but Manning, not Manning, the previous commandant put him in charge, maybe it was Manning, put him in charge of instructing gunnery. Well, there already was a Navy chief, Chief Volpe, was the gunner. But in order to take trainees and give them to the chief, they named Don Coot as a gunnery officer. And they were firing one day and shells were landing on Swinburne, and they called up and said, “Hey! Cut it out! You're bombing us”. [Laughs] And that was the end of that.

They previously had a bigger, bigger gun on the tip of the island and when I was there it was a three-inch and a twenty-millimeter, and I was trained on the twenty millimeter. Handing the shells to somebody else who loaded them and you put your hands over your ears to protect it when they fired an anti-aircraft gun. Swinburne was a strange island. Later on the Navy --- when I would look across there ---- I would see Navy divers with hardhats going on. So I thought it was a Navy divers school. But actually they were going down to check on the sonar equipment or the mines. Because the harbor, later on, was mined ---- the entrance --- and then there were minefields everywhere, I guess, on the East Coast ---- to protect. But still, the subs got into Long Island Sound and they got in off the coast of

Georgia. So that the people were evacuated. The Goodyears and the Goodriches and the Edisons who had places down there at St. whatever island it is off the coast of Georgia, had to evacuate because they saw a sub within two or three miles of the place. And they thought, you know, it would be dangerous. Swinburne was interesting.

LEVINE: Ye. Did you ever know or have any contact with Ellis Island while you were there?

KORINDA: No. Not a bit. My biggest thrill though, speaking of the inner, inner harbor, was going back one day in the summer between V-E Day and V-J Day, and the traffic wasn't very heavy. I was taking the Erie ferry to Chambers Street, and I was standing on the upper deck and the captain whistled down to me and he motioned for me to come up to the wheelhouse. And I went up and he said, take the wheel. He said, where are you going? I said, Hoffman Island. He said, well, you could steer it. And I had it for five minutes going across the middle of the Hudson River, and it was the biggest thrill of my life then. And it was, it was great.

LEVINE: Well, when you think back of that time, do you think it affected your life a lot? Or in any way?

KORINDA: Yes. I, I think it made me more independent, and, and I was, as many of them were, younger looking than what we were, and I was shy because of that. And although I'd been to college and later on I got the chance to go to Columbia and get my masters. And the day that I was discharged, I tossed a coin and I said, shall I go to the racetrack or should I go to Columbia and sign up? And so I went to Columbia. And, of course, I'd been married at three months at that time, and was away from my wife, going back and forth to Sheepshead -----so that, I used to hitchhike a lot, still, in civilian

clothes. At Columbia I'd run down to the West Side Highway, jump over, and hitchhike up to the George Washington Bridge, where I'd either catch a bus to Ridgewood or I'd, I'd hitchhike to Ridgewood. And you couldn't do that today.

LEVINE: No. No. Well I guess we need to close, but is there anything you can think of before we close relevant to either Hoffman or…

KORINDA: This organization? Well, there was a close feeling on Hoffman as I said. In my office, we were like brothers. This group, I call the band of brothers. The author, I didn't invent that. The author of the High and the Mighty and ten other books on flying and so on, called the pilots the "band of brothers". Well, this is our "band of brothers".

LEVINE: Well, thank you for a beautiful interview. I've been speaking with Andrew Korinda. And this is Janet Levine for the National Parks Service signing off.

END INTERVIEW