

EI-1407

WILLIAM J. MALASHUK

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INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.

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LEVINE: Today is April the 4th, the year 2006. And I'm here one mile north of Baltimore [chuckles], in the city of Baltimore in Baltimore County, Maryland. And I'm with someone who was in the Coast Guard at Ellis Island in 1945. Mr. William J. Malashuk was at Ellis Island in the Coast Guard from July, 1945 until he went to the discharge station in September, 1945. This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. If you'd start, Mr. Malashuk, by saying your birth date and where you were born.

MALASHUK: I was born in Baltimore, Maryland. My birthday is August the 4th, 1920.

LEVINE: And [clears throat]—did you—were you in Baltimore up until the time you joined the Coast Guard?

MALASHUK: Yes, ma'am. Spent all my life here.

LEVINE: Okay. And what—d—did you have any family connection to Ellis Island? That is to say, did any of your relatives come through there—

MALASHUK: No.

LEVINE: —or anything?

MALASHUK: Not to Ellis Island. My family came in to—right into Baltimore at what we call Locust Point.

LEVINE: Oh.

MALASHUK: So they came right to here.

LEVINE: And when did they come here?

MALASHUK: My dad came over about 1913 and my mother and my brother and sister came over about 1914.

LEVINE: And where were they coming from?

MALASHUK: Russia.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MALASHUK: Don't ask for the town. [chuckles] Brushnik [PH]. It's all I know.

LEVINE: Okay.

MALASHUK: Where that's located, I have no idea.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MALASHUK: I've tried to find it; I haven't located it yet.

LEVINE: Okay. So—so, actually, you—your brothers and sisters were actually born—

MALASHUK: In—

LEVINE: —in Russia. So—

MALASHUK: Right.

LEVINE: —when you—when you were growing up in Baltimore, were you in an immigrant area, an immigrant neighborhood? Were there Ru—a lot of Russians—

MALASHUK: Well—

LEVINE: —or other people—

MALASHUK: East—

LEVINE: —from other countries?

MALASHUK: East Baltimore was loaded with immigrants and ethnic groups. At one time, I had an Italian family next door to me, a German family on one side, Italian on the other side, another German and so forth. Irish people. We had a great mixture of nationalities.

LEVINE: How about in school? Did you have—

MALASHUK: Same thing.

LEVINE: You had children who had come from another country—

MALASHUK: Yeah.

LEVINE: —in your classes?

MALASHUK: Yeah.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

MALASHUK: And back in high school, oh, this is—I learned how to speak a little bit of Polish, a little German, Italian and everything else playing with the boys at—you know, playing ball and various sports. But East Baltimore and southeast, around Patterson [PH] Park, that was noted for all the ethnic groups.

LEVINE: I see.

MALASHUK: The biggest thing you wanted to see was on a Sunday afternoon and going to Patterson Park and see the various little groups of men and women just sitting there talking in their native languages. It—it was a—it was fascinating.

LEVINE: Yeah.

MALASHUK: Just to watch and listen to them.

LEVINE: Yeah.

MALASHUK: And you see all, you know, your friends. We weren't allowed to wander too far because we were kept right under my dad's thumb. [chuckles] I was allowed to go about 10 feet. "Back, Boy. Come back here." [chuckles]

LEVINE: This is your father who came from Russia?

MALASHUK: Yeah, my father.

LEVINE: And he was very strict?

MALASHUK: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MALASHUK: Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah.

MALASHUK: He kept us under his thumb, believe me. [chuckles]

LEVINE: And—and did you—did your mother—did your mother and/or father keep other—did they keep certain customs or certain ways of the Old Country? Was that something they wanted to hold onto?

MALASHUK: They did it among themselves. [unclear] among Dad and Mom they did that. They spoke in their native language more than anything else. We learnt a little bit of Russian and so forth. But we basically insisted they speak English if they can. And they spoke fractured English but they got along.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MALASHUK: And we never had any problems as far as communicating was concerned.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MALASHUK: But—

LEVINE: Did they become citizens?

MALASHUK: Oh, yes. My father and mother became citizens.

LEVINE: I—I'm just so worried that we're going to get static. So that's just fine.

MALASHUK: [chuckles]

LEVINE: So—

MALASHUK: Yeah, they became citizens.

LEVINE: They did? Okay. So what prompted you to join the Coast Guard?

MALASHUK: Oh, that's a long story.

LEVINE: Okay.

MALASHUK: All my life I wanted to go into the Navy. And we were always geared to go to the Navy because, basically, in those days—Baltimore is almost a military town because you had Camp Harberg [PH] on the southeast side of the city. You had Annapolis close by from the Naval Academy and so forth, Washington Navy Yard not too far away. The Army, Navy and so forth, and then every year you always had the Marine Farm and Game. They always—town was loaded with Marines at the time. So basically, it was almost a military town. And all my life it was always Navy, Navy, Navy. Well, prior to the war, I was working in a bell foundry where I made ships' bells and church bells. And I was in charge of a machine shop. I was only about 21, 22 years old at the time. And my older brother and I went to the movies one night, and they flashed on the screen that the Coast Guard needed machinists. And my brother says, "There you are. If they need you, why don't you go now?" Well, I could have been deferred if I wanted to because we were doing government work. And I says, "N—Coast Guard." I says, "You know, we got the Coast Guard here on Curtis Bay and all that." I said, "Oh, I don't know. I'll see." So Monday morning I took off from work and I went up to the post office to see whether I wanted to go in the Coast Guard or the Navy. I went up to Navy Recruiting first. It was a little crowded. I said, "I'll go down to the Coast Guard." I went down to the Coast Guard, talked to them. That's what I liked. I just liked the way they talked to me compared to the Navy. I said, "All right."

LEVINE: Did you say anything about what it was, the way they [unclear]?

MALASHUK: Oh, yeah. I knew basically what the Coast Guard was all about, to start with, because the Coast Guard yard was down here in Curtis Bay. And I was familiar with the cutters coming in and out of the

harbor. So the whole military thing was nothing. I was real familiar with it. I got a pretty good education as far as, say, Baltimore was concerned. My older brother happened to be a photographer for the Sun Papers. And when he had to work on a Sunday, I used to go around with him. And I could see what's going on in the city because I went from one—I met the governor down to the—the guy on the street and so forth, just to take his pictures. And it was quite an education. So the Coast Guard was nothing I was not familiar with. And [unclear] I thought it was a good outfit. And besides, one of the guys I went to school with, he went in while we were still in high school. He—he enlisted too [unclear]. And of course, when he graduated, he went right in. So Ted and I, we'd talk about it. And so I was familiar with the Coast Guard, what it stood for and what it did.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MALASHUK: And the more I got into it, the better I liked it.

LEVINE: Oh, good.

MALASHUK: So one thing that I did learn, I was talking to an old timer. And we were talking about guns. And of course, after Pearl Harbor, we always made fun of the Japanese being a small man. And this man, an old timer, said, "Hey, there's no such thing as a small man with a gun. With a gun, they're all big. So don't underestimate a man with a gun." So I took his advice and I paid attention to these old timers.

LEVINE: Yeah.

MALASHUK: And I knew what they were talking about. So the—but I liked the idea that—what the Coast Guard did.

LEVINE: What—what was it about what they did that you liked?

MALASHUK: They had an old saying, "You have to go out but you don't have to come back." That means you go out to save a life. It takes a lot of guts to go out there and save a life rather than kill a life. I—I always felt that anybody can kill anybody. It doesn't take too much fortitude to do that. But it takes an awful lot of guts to sit there and try to save somebody's life. And I kind of liked the idea. So—and it happened to me twice and I was real proud of it.

LEVINE: Oh, good. Well, where did you go when you first joined up? Where were you sent?

MALASHUK: [chuckles] I went from one end of the streetcar line to the other end.
[laughter] I went down to Curtis Bay, Maryland.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MALASHUK: And—

LEVINE: Was that—was that a training thing?

MALASHUK: That was a training base, Curtis Bay.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MALASHUK: That was a Coast Guard yard and a training base. The Coast Guard yard was the repairing of the ships and—and schooling and so forth. And the other part was the—the boot camp. And I happened to know about it because in my teens one of the girls who we used to hang around with, her aunt owned some shore property just down from the Coast Guard yard. And we used to go down to go swimming.

LEVINE: Oh.

MALASHUK: So I knew what the back end of the Coast Guard looked like.

LEVINE: Yeah.

MALASHUK: And that was fun. So when I got down there I felt like I was—I was real familiar with [unclear].

LEVINE: Yeah.

MALASHUK: Well, unfortunately, or fortunately, I should say, I only had a—roughly, about 30 days of training. That's all they gave us. We were pulled out. But I had more—

LEVINE: When did you go in? What year were you—

MALASHUK: Well, I went in—I enlisted in August of '42 but didn't go in till September the 4th of '42. And—

LEVINE: So the war was on. You [unclear].

MALASHUK: The war was on.

LEVINE: And, uh-huh.

MALASHUK: And—

LEVINE: So you got 30 days of training.

MALASHUK: Just about, 30 or 32 days, something like that. I didn't get much real training but I had more fun in boot camp. Oh, I had a ball in boot camp.

LEVINE: What was so fun about it?

MALASHUK: Well, the first place, I was—I just got through playing softball in the state tournament when I went in the service. We got into the quarterfinals. And when I got into boot camp there were several young men in there who knew me from playing ball when I was in high school and also knew where I played in Patterson Park. So they talked about staying down there and playing ball in Curtis Bay. Well, I didn't join the service to play ball. And so, like I said, the opportunity came to play ball and I turned it down. But every night, one company would play ball against another company. We played softball, soccer or football and so forth. And that was a lot of fun. The other thing is, for some reason or another, I got caught with doing a lot of KP.

LEVINE: [chuckles]

MALASHUK: I—I think I got KP more than anybody in my company. [chuckles]

LEVINE: You mean you just got lucky? You got—

MALASHUK: Yeah, I got lucky. [chuckles] Yeah.

LEVINE: I see. Uh-huh.

MALASHUK: Like [chuckles] the guy, who became our temporary platoon leader, made some remarks that wasn't exactly complimentary. [chuckles] And he and I had a few words.

LEVINE: Oh, and that's how you ended up—

MALASHUK: That's how I—it's one time I ended in KP. [chuckles] So, but I didn't mind it. It was a lot of fun. Some of the things I did in KP—for instance, I became a scullery maid. A scullery maid is where you wash all the pots and pans. So I said, "Okay." I started washing the pots and pans. The—the chef down there says, "Use some more soap." I says, "Okay." So I went and I got a box of soap and put in there. I used a week's supply of soap in one afternoon. It didn't go over too big with the master at arms. [chuckles] So he took me out

of that one, put me on a garbage detail. Well, at the time we had about 35 GI cans. And I looked at those cans. I said, "They're all clean. I'm not going to get 'em dirty." So I only let 'em have 15. So [chuckles] I'd clean out 15 cans. But it just so happened I didn't have any dessert for lunch that day. And I mentioned to the master at arms. He said, "Oh, help yourself to all the ice cream you want." So I went in and I got myself a gallon of ice cream. [chuckles] Went back out to the G-man headquarters, which is a screened-in porch [chuckles] and had ice cream all afternoon. So that's one detail I got out of.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MALASHUK: But the other detail that I—oh, I got a big kick out of this one. It came from one of our lessons on flag signaling, A, B, C and all that. But it just so happened that when I was in the Boy Scouts that was one of my best merits was flag signaling. So I brushed up on it the night before. [unclear]. Finally, morning, we went out on a field and he had three companies. And he was dressing the—all three companies on how to position the flag and so forth. And I looked out. I says, "Oh, this is stupid." And I put my head down, closed my eyes and sort of fell asleep. And he caught me. [chuckles] He says, "You're so smart. You get up there and do it." I says, "Okay." And I got up on a platform and I started doing it. Well, that surprised him and he started throwing flags back at me. And he didn't realize that I could keep it up just as well as he could because I did a lot of it when I was a kid. So he got mad with me and made me go down on the point behind the captain's house and be the signalman to the light ships that were anchored out in Curtis Bay. I had a lot of fun till the captain of the yard came in, wanted to know [chuckles] what I was doing out there. He said, "Get out of here and go back to your base." [chuckles] So I got out of that one. That was a lot of fun.

LEVINE: So where'd you go after that?

MALASHUK: Oh, I got another—I got another story that's got—pretty good too.

LEVINE: Oh, [unclear].

MALASHUK: Oh, yeah. So, now, my parents used to come down on a Sunday afternoon. And my older brother would bring my father and mother down. I told you, my older brother was a photographer. So this one day they issued rifles out to us and we're getting ready to march out on the drill field. And as I was marching up I saw my brother and another photographer from another paper, who I happened to know. And I yelled out. I said, "Hey, Ax." My—my little brother is Axel and

[unclear] Tiny. “Hey, Tiny.” “Hey!” So they’re yelling at me. All right. So when I’m on the drill field and we’re practicing when a messenger came across the field and went to the company commander. And they said they requested the Seaman Malashuk to report to the commando course. So the company commander knew who I was but he made the announcement. So I went down and there is my brother. He said, “Hey, I want to make a picture for Mom.” So, okay. So we posed the picture. I’m jumping over [unclear]. Incidentally, I’ve got it. [chuckles] And so everybody on the whole drill field is watching me have my picture taken and everything else. They think I’m some type of celebrity. So [chuckles] when I got back, you know, they—“Who are you? Can we have your autograph?” And things like that. And I wouldn’t tell them who I was. [unclear] a ball. [chuckles] A great time with it.

LEVINE: Yeah.

MALASHUK: So that was a big thrill. I was telling the—one of the boys this morning two things that happened to me that—when I was still in high school, one Sunday I went with my brother. And after he got back to the paper, he had to go report to the sports desk, take his pictures back up. So he gave me a call. He says, “Come on up here.” He says, “I want you to meet somebody.” So when I got up to the sports desk, in the corner of the room sat a man. And I looked at him and said, “Oh, my gosh! That’s Jim Thorpe, the Olympic”—I—he says, “Yeah, you know him?” I says, “Yeah, I’d like to meet him.” My brother says, “All right.” So we went over and we met him. And he started talking to me and he said, “Do you play ball, Bill?” I says, “Yeah.” He says, “What do you play?” I says, “Well, right now I’m still playing football in high school.” And he said, “What school do you go to?” I says, “Patterson.” “Oh,” he says. “I’m going to be there tomorrow.” I said, “All right.” So that day—I mean after I went home that night, met some of the boys I used to hang around with, said, “Hey, I met Jim Thorpe yesterday.” “Ah, you’re a lot of stuff.” They’re kidding me. So the next morning in school I go and I’m telling them, “I met Jim Thorpe yesterday.” “Oh, don’t give us that line.” I said, “We’re going to have a special assembly.” “We never have an assembly on a Monday; it’s always on a Thursday.” Well, sure enough, we get notice to report to the assembly hall. We went there and I kept saying, “I met him. I’m telling you, I met the guy.” So sure enough, Jim Thorpe came in and they introduce him. And he was telling about his life as an Indian and what he went through. And then he mentioned—he says, “Yesterday.” He says, “I was at the Sun Papers and I met a delightful young man by the name of Bill.” And he said, “We had a little talk and so forth.” And everybody in the whole school’s looking at me, you know. [chuckles] So—so after the

assembly is over with, I'm saying, "See, I told you I met him yesterday. I told you." "Nah!" So just as I walked by the entrance of the stage door, it opens up and he steps out with the principal. And they look at me and he puts his arm around me and says, "Hello, Bill." [chuckles] Oh! I walked about six or seven inches off the floor and didn't touch once. [chuckles] I walked down to the office with—oh, was my principal burning up that day. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Oh, wow.

MALASHUK: So that was [unclear]. The other big thing that happened to me is—and I've got the picture hanging up downstairs. The only time I had a picture taken with a celebrity that I wanted—I met movie stars and all kind of athletes and so forth, but this is one man I didn't want to [unclear]. That was Jack Dempsey. He was in Baltimore for a—a bond drive just before I went into the service. I went in on a Wednesday or a Thursday. I can't recall which. And this was the Sunday prior to that. And he—he was at the—downtown on a bond drive with Edward Arnold, who—the big movie star at the time. And so I asked my brother. I said, "Hey, I—take a picture of this." This one time I wanted because when I was a kid I heard the Dempsey, Gene Tunney fight. And when he lost I cried. I remember that. So sure enough, we had the picture taken. Well, it just so happens, it looks like Dempsey's closing his eyes just as the picture was taken. [chuckles] So throughout the whole war, I carried that picture with me. Every place I went, I carried it, hoping some day I'd meet Dempsey, let him sign it. Well, not until years later that my wife called me up one day and she said, "Oh, Jack Dempsey's here in town. He's going to dedicate a shopping center just about a mile over from here." And I said, "Do me a favor. Get the picture. Take it to him. Get him to autograph it." So sure enough, she did it. And he said to her, "Oh, this is an old timer." He said—and she started talking about it. And he said, "Vaguely, I remember something about it." I says, "Yeah." She said to me, "Why would he remember?" I said, "Well, after the bond rally, we all went back to his hotel. We had a drink together."

LEVINE: Wow.

MALASHUK: And so forth. So—

LEVINE: Why were you so enamored with him, do you think?

MALASHUK: He was a champion boxer at the time. And I was only a [unclear] kid, you know. And [unclear], this was it for me. So—

LEVINE: Yeah.

MALASHUK: —that's why I was [unclear]. Dempsey was my boy at the time.

LEVINE: Yeah.

MALASHUK: So that's why—and when Gene Tunney won the world championship, I cried. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Yeah. Do you—when you say—did you have other heroes too?

MALASHUK: No.

LEVINE: Or that was it.

MALASHUK: Just a—

LEVINE: That was the main one.

MALASHUK: That was the only one I ever had.

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-huh.

MALASHUK: And—because hanging around with my brother, he has met so many people. And he is a story in himself.

LEVINE: Yeah, he sounds—

MALASHUK: Oh, you—you [unclear]—I—I was just looking for a book that he—we have around here somewhere that—you've heard of Ernie Pyle, the war correspondent?

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MALASHUK: Well, my brother knew Ernie Pyle. And Ernie Pyle was in Europe writing stories and so forth. And they went to the Pacific and my brother met him over there in Okinawa. My brother was a combat photographer also. And they—they were talking about mutual friends they had and where they are and so forth. And a sniper opened up on them. And both of them ducked behind a tank. And my brother had the picture taken. It's the last picture taken of Ernie Pyle alive. The next day, the same area, Ernie Pyle was going by and he said to my brother, "I'll see you later, Ax." And the sniper opened up and he ducked behind a bank and he's laying there. And he picked his head up. When he picked his head up, he was shot and killed. So in the book it shows my brother—

LEVINE: Don't forget your book.

MALASHUK: No, no. I'm go—I'm going right here. [chuckles] So they—I—I—maybe [unclear] in a lot of things.

LEVINE: Now, he—did he—he—he was a combat photographer.

MALASHUK: Yeah, he was a combat photographer.

LEVINE: For what branch?

MALASHUK: Hmm?

LEVINE: Was he in a branch of the service?

MALASHUK: Yeah, he was in the Army.

LEVINE: Army, uh-huh.

MALASHUK: And—

LEVINE: So who was in the Navy?

MALASHUK: Oh, here's Ernie Pyle's picture.

LEVINE: Hmm, yeah.

MALASHUK: You know, and hanging around with—I met movie stars. I met Esther Williams an an—unusual circumstances. And I danced with—oh, what was her name? Xavier Cugat's girlfriend. Abby Lane.

LEVINE: Abby Lane.

MALASHUK: Yeah, I remember her. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Wow!

MALASHUK: So—

LEVINE: Well—well, so tell me. Was your—what did you do? After the 30 days of training, did you have to go—

MALASHUK: Yeah, we—

LEVINE: —[unclear]—

MALASHUK: From th—from there, we went—out of boot camp we went to Virginia Beach, Virginia where we were assigned various lifeboat stations along the coast. I went to what they called False [PH] Cape, which was right on the Virginia, North Carolina state line. And that's roughly what—I imagine about 23, 25 miles south of Virginia Beach. And I spent several months down there patrolling the beach. I've had a couple good experiences down there that I like to talk about.
[chuckles]

LEVINE: Okay.

MALASHUK: Do you want to talk about it? It's bad enough some of the duties we had. But one duty we had, we had our own separate toilet facilities building to itself. Everybody had to take a turn on cleaning—cleaning the shed out and so forth and burying the—the refuse. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MALASHUK: So—and what we did, we used to mark them with a stake. All right. Now, it's cold. Now—and meanwhile, the Army had a patrol that was south of us. They patrolled two miles south of us.

LEVINE: You mean from the sea or from the land?

MALASHUK: No, on land. We're—

LEVINE: On land. You're—

MALASHUK: —walking on the beaches.

LEVINE: Oh, you're walking on the beach.

MALASHUK: We're walking on the beach with a gun on [unclear]. So they—they patrolled. And they used to use our shack while they're waiting to go on patrols and so forth. So, you know, it worked fine. But they had a lieutenant who always came down and checked on them. So we knew he came down every night. And this one particular night we spot his Jeep coming down the beach. And we were behind some buyers, get out of the wind. And, you know, two patrols just met and we were sitting there talking. And I said, "Oh, here comes Lieutenant Wasaki." [PH] I said, "I guess we better stop him and challenge him." So I said, "Oh, I'll do it." So I stopped the Jeep and he—"Who is it?" And he says, "Lieutenant Wasaki." "Okay, go ahead." Well, he got out of the Jeep and he chewed me out for not properly challenging him and so forth. "Oh, yes, sir." And he proceeded to

chew me up and down one side of the beach to the other side. Okay. So when we got back to the—to our station and so forth, it became quite the talk that I got caught not challenging him right. All right. Well, it just so happened a couple nights later, one of other boys who was on liberty came in and he heard about it. And he said, “Oh, we’ll take care of him.” [coughs] So it’s night and this was a cold night. Oh, it was a good cold night. This was [unclear] in January of ’43. And here comes the Jeep now with lieutenant in it. And he says, “I’ll take care of him.” So he stopped the Jeep. “Who’s there?” “Lieutenant Wasaki.” Said, “Don’t know who you are. Got any identification.” He said, “Yeah, dog tags.” He said, “I can’t read your dog tags in here. Can’t read it at night. No lights down here on the beach.” So [chuckles] he made the lieutenant get out of the Jeep, made him strip all of his clothing off except for his blouse to get to his dog tags. And he says, “I don’t know who this is either.” Says, “Put your hands up.” And he marched him to two—about two miles down the beach till we got to the station with his hands in the air. Well, by the time he got down to the station he was blue. [chuckles] So in the meanwhile, we were pulling our patrols and finally, we got relieved and we’re pulling into the station. Now, the chief of the station says, “Well.” He said, “Oh, go ahead back to the—get back in the Jeep. And he said, “Now, take him”—he said, “Take him across the shortcut. Instead of going to your left, go all the way around to the beach. Take him across the shortcuts.” “My pleasure.” Now, remember the marks we made. We used to call it the cemetery. And they said, “Now, walk by the cemetery.” “Oh, okay.” So in the wintertime the beach has got a crust of ice on it.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MALASHUK: Only maybe a quarter of an inch.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MALASHUK: Now, some of the holes we had to dig were a good two feet deep, two or three feet deep. And we used to fill the holes up. So I knew exactly where the stakes were. As I walk along, I make sure that the lieutenant was on my left side to walk across the graveyard. [chuckles] He walked across the graveyard and the sand gave away [chuckles] and he sunk up to his knees [chuckles] in what was formerly—it was future fertilizer. Let me put it that way. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MALASHUK: So—

LEVINE: I guess—

MALASHUK: Oh, did he smell. [chuckles] Oh!

LEVINE: Did he put it together that—that—

MALASHUK: No, he didn't put anything together yet. But the Army boys were—oh, they got a big charge out of it. But we didn't have any trouble after that from Lieutenant Wasaki. When we yelled, "Halt," we don't care if we're 50 feet away, he stopped. [laughs] So we had a little fun with him. But that was a good experience down there.

LEVINE: Yeah.

MALASHUK: That was one of the funny ones we had down there. But—

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A]

[BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE B]

MALASHUK: So I was in the—I rescued a pilot who crashed just offshore about a mile below us. I saw him fly—well, a goose flew into—in the area there is what they call Back Bay Wildlife—Wildlife Reservation. And it just play—they were just loaded with ducks and geese. You could almost walk across the whole back bay on—from duck to duck. So that's how thick they were. And I saw this Canadian goose taking off. And I saw the plane from Oceana Naval Air Station banking. And he flew right into the plane. Boom! Down they went. And I ran down to—down the beach, two of us, while one guy—he had a Jeep because he was only visiting. And he—he got in the Jeep and I run down there. And the two of us went out there and we saved this pilot. And, well, wouldn't say—he was fine. He wasn't hurt or anything like that. So that was one time we saved a life. Also, we—[clears throat] we came back off of liberty when the chief said to me—because a pilot just went down—and we rode out about two, two and a half miles and we picked him up. So there were two things there I was kind of proud of. Of course, I had one later on where I was doing convoy duty we were all proud of. We were—that guy fell off of a—he was on the—one of the Navy gun crews on the merchant ship. And he fell off and we were—at that time, the convoy commander. And we circled the whole convoy and came back. And we searched, oh, for about three or four hours. And we finally found him. Yeah, that was a big thrill.

LEVINE: Now, where—what—what waters was he in?

MALASHUK: Oh, this was in North Atlantic, in the Atlantic. Yeah. And we—we found him and we were always proud of that, every one of us. But, you know, it was something we were always used to doing and we thought nothing of it. Nobody got a letter of commendation for any of this stuff. What the heck? [chuckles]

LEVINE: Well, how—what was the—was it like the first time you had met people from all over the country that were in—

MALASHUK: Oh, no.

LEVINE: —the Coast Guard?

MALASHUK: No, no, no. I'm—I'm—I was pretty well used to meeting these people from—see, Baltimore was a good Coast Guard town.

LEVINE: I see.

MALASHUK: Oh, yeah. That was a real good Coast Guard town. So you always met somebody who was from down there. And—

LEVINE: I see. And what was it like being in the Coast Guard? I mean—

MALASHUK: Well—

LEVINE: What was the—what was the community, if you want to call it that?

MALASHUK: It was close. I was surprised how close it is, especially when you're pulling patrols the way you did. You got to know the man's family you were with and so forth. And it was a lot of fun. It's one guy—well, Bill Noble, who I was real close in boot camp—we—he was from Fredericksburg, Maryland. And we used to pull a lot of patrols together. He almost killed me. He was unloading his gun and he had it pointed right at me. And I says, "Hey, Bill. [unclear] the gun." I just pushed the gun aside when he pulled the trigger and it missed my ear. So that was a close one for me. Of course, Bill turned white. But the other guy that I pulled a lot of patrols with, a boy by the name of Sipington [PH], who lived in Baltimore, and I had a lot of fun with him. Two things. One, he kept asking me every night, "What time is it?" And I used to look at my watch, tell him the time and walk. A half hour later, "What time is it?" Finally, I got tired of that and so I bought myself a pocket watch one day and took the back off and I put a fly in it. So every night he'd say, "What time is it?" "My watch stopped. My watch stopped." So we were having breakfast and he said, "What time is it?" I said, "Oh, my watch stopped. Wait a minute. Let me

take the back off and see what the—what’s happening.” So I took the back off and the fly fell out. I said, “No wonder this thing doesn’t work. The engineer’s dead.” [chuckles] He turned around and he says, “The watch has an engineer in it?” I said, “Yeah.” So Sipington never asked me for the time after that. But it just so happened he and I did—this was pointed to me. We pulled the patrol south and it’s a fairly—fairly warm night and a little hazy as we’re rolling along. And all of a sudden, I see a dark object lying on the beach. And I said, “Wait a minute. That doesn’t belong here. Something’s wrong.” So I said to him, “Get on my right.” I said, “Get on my right and we’ll challenge him.” So I’m walking down and crouching and I’m going like, waving my hand at him to go forward with me. And I’m going like this all the time and I’m getting close. And I was on my belly and I crawl up and I realize that this object isn’t moving at all and didn’t know what it was. Finally, I got close enough. And meanwhile, I’m still waving my arm for Sipington to come up with me. I look down at the object. It’s a dolphin, dead dolphin washed ashore, which I’ve never seen before. So I looked at it. I says, “I’ll be darned.” So finally, I says, “Where are you, Sipington?” He’s still 50 yards behind me. So finally, I make him come up and we’re standing there. And we’re looking at the dolphin, just watching it. Well, we heard a noise behind us. And I turned around real fast with my gun and I see this big black object in front of me. And he turned around and looked at it and saw the big black object. And all of a sudden the thing goes, “Moo!” and he faints. This was a cow that’s been straying up and down the peninsula for years. [chuckles] Of course, we had pigs running around. We had cows running around. But he fainted. I never let Sipington live that one down. [chuckles] So—but it was a lot of fun being on the beach. I could have stayed there if I wanted to. And like some of the boys who were from Chicago, they stayed during the whole war there.

LEVINE: What did you choose to do?

MALASHUK: And—me, I turned around. I had to get out. So I had an opportunity to go to motor machinist school up in Groton, Connecticut. And I took advantage of that and I went to school for 13 weeks. I found out just about the last two weeks I was in school that I was allergic to diesel fuel, and I’d break out, all kind of rashes. So when I came out of school I went back down to Norfolk. I was at a receiving station at Berkeley when one of the boys said, “Oh, there’s a detail going out to Washington, DC. You want to get into it, Bill?” I says, “Sure, I’ll sign up for it.” So the next day, Smitty was going. He says, “Aren’t you going to Washington?” I said, “No, I haven’t heard anything.” He said, “We’re leaving in about 10 minutes.” So what happened here? So I didn’t hear any word on it. So I went into the office to see what

happened. And the guy said, “Oh, the detail’s already made up. They already go.” So the chief said, “Did you sign up?” I said, “Yeah.” So he looked at the roster and he said, “Wait a minute. The things calls for five firemen.” He said, “How come there’s only three firemen and two seamen?” The yeoman says, “Well.” He says, “The two guy said that they were off one of the transports and they wanted to get some other—some other type of duty.” I said, “You jerk, you. They’re on a cleaning duty. They weren’t assigned to the—to the transport.” [chuckles] “They were up there to clean the ship and that’s all.” So, oh—so I was a little upset about that because, you know, going to Washington, DC, 40 miles from home, been ideal. But I was a little upset. And the chief says, “Well.” He says, “You want to go out?” I says, “Yeah.” He says, “Listen, there’s a couple of PGs up in Boston.” I said, “PGs?” I thought—thought about it, thought, ‘PG? PG?’ Finally, I said, “Patrol gunboat?” He says, “Yeah.” I said, “Okay, I’ll sign up.” So I signed up to go on a patrol gunboat. We were shipped up to Boston. They had no place to keep us. They could feed us but couldn’t sleep us. And I wound up in local lockup number four every night. And the sergeant used to say, “You know where to go? Go ahead. Sleep.” [chuckles] Come back the next morning.

LEVINE: What’s the local lockup?

MALASHUK: Jail. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Coast Guard jail?

MALASHUK: No, police jail. [unclear] police—

LEVINE: Boston jail?

MALASHUK: Yeah. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Oh, my goodness!

MALASHUK: I can’t re—couldn’t find a pillow if my life depended it right now [chuckles] but I [unclear] good night. So that was a lot of fun. So there was three ship’s crew was made up at the time. And of course they had no place to put us because the ships weren’t ready to receive us yet. And so they used to march us from the Boston Commons to the YMCA. Huntington Avenue is a fairly wide street in Boston. Some of the traffic goes underneath the cross section and so it doesn’t tie—tie traffic up too much. Well, you got three ship’s crews marching and half of it would disappear down the street into the bars and so forth. Finally, they put us down to South Boston

Navy Yard and we were there for one or two nights, found out that 80 percent of the guys on our ship either had [unclear] court martials or general court martials against them. And I happened to be one of the 20 percent who volunteered for this. [laughs] They—they didn't volunteer. They had no choice in the matter. So—so finally, we got assigned to the PG93, USS Intensity, which happened to be a corvette. And I can't recall a number. I'm not sure. Seven or eight or 10 of them were assigned to the Coast Guard, who did [unclear] duty with them. And I—I stayed on there for two years and I moved from a border tender's job, from a [unclear], I should say, up to First Class Border Tender in two years. And I liked the position or the—what I was doing so much I stayed in the business.

LEVINE: Oh.

MALASHUK: And I became a stationary engineer in the state of Maryland. I worked in power plants [unclear].

LEVINE: Wait a minute. Before we get to that, we need the Ellis Island part. That was the very small—

MALASHUK: Okay.

LEVINE: —part but—

MALASHUK: Oh, all right. The Ellis Island part is after I—when I got hurt, I went into the Marine Hospital out on Staten Island.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. How did you get hurt?

MALASHUK: Well, it's always been an argument. Somebody dropped the depth charge at a very shallow depth at slow speed. And at the time, somebody said to me, "Bill, they dropped the pennet [PH], black pennet down." Now, I was gun captain on a 20 millimeters, 20 mil guns, and I was on my up to the gun when the thing blew. And Louis and I dropped from the top of the ladder down to the grates down below. I landed on my knees and fractured my knees. And when we got back and so forth, then I went to the hospital, and I spent, I don't know, a couple of weeks in the Marine Hospital. Then I got some professional advice not to let them operate on my knee, because they were afraid that I'd be a cripple. Because I thought I'd be playing ball when I came out. Then I went out to a convalescent hospital in Long Island, Westhampton Beach, spent half of June and part of July of '45 out there. And then they—when I got called in front of the doctor, he said, "We're going to discharge you. Of course, you can't go to sea

anymore. You have a sea-going rate and you can't get shore duty."
And I didn't—

LEVINE: Why couldn't you get shore duty?

MALASHUK: Because our work doesn't call for shore duty. It's all—

LEVINE: Oh.

MALASHUK: It's all sea ships and you always go out—going to sea on it, which I liked. I didn't mind it. But I liked going to sea.

LEVINE: Were you kind of ready to get out of the Coast Guard by then?

MALASHUK: Yes and no. I was going to make a career out of it.

LEVINE: Oh.

MALASHUK: When I originally enlisted, I wanted to enlist for 20 years. I definitely wanted to be into it. And—and I kind of looked forward to it so when—when I went in front of the doctor and he said, "We're going to discharge you because you can't go to sea, and for good of the service," I almost broke down to tears. I says, "Doc. Come on, Doc. Don't do this to me." And he said—he said, "You can't go to sea anymore."

LEVINE: You couldn't change what you did in the—

MALASHUK: Well, I probably could go after my—my machinist rate. But, ah, I—nah, I kind of liked what I was doing. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah.

MALASHUK: So—

LEVINE: So you went—so you went from Long Island, the hospital—

MALASHUK: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: —to—to—

MALASHUK: —to Ellis Island.

LEVINE: —Ellis Island.

MALASHUK: Right.

LEVINE: So tell me about Ellis Island. What—

MALASHUK: Well—

LEVINE: —do you remember?

MALASHUK: All right. When I first got to Ellis Island I was told to go see the doctor, and he would sign my discharge papers so I can be released from the service. Now, this is in July of '45 before the war is over with. It just so happened that the day that I got there or the day before I got there, the doctor took off for a 30-day leave. So I had to [chuckles] stay there till he got back. We had a coxswain who was in charge of the—all recruits up there, or should say everybody at the receiving station. Irregardless of what your rate was, he was in charge. And he used to make life miserable for everybody who had sea duty because he never had sea duty. And he had us marching up and down. Well, he made us march and my legs were always taped from my calf up to my thigh. And they were—oh, they were out like a balloon when he got through with me. So he and I never made friends very long. That was one thing. The other thing is that we did seawall watches. And we walked along the seawall at Ellis Island. That was interesting because there was a fence right in front of the, what, Central Hall down there?

LEVINE: Great—Great Hall?

MALASHUK: Right. Great Hall, that's it. And—and there were political prisoners in there, German political prisoners and so forth. One story we were told was there was a woman who was always knitting. And if she ever calls you over, don't go near her because she is supposed to have taken one of the needles and stuck one of the men with it. I mean, we used to see her but I never got near her. That was one thing. The other thing that I—to me, I—I made the biggest boo-boo, I think, ever in my life when I did this. One evening after chow I was walking the seawall just to [unclear], just walking along. And another man who had a foreign accent, which I took to be Puerto Rican—they were the only men I knew who were still in the Coast Guard were people from Puerto Rico. And he—he spoke English and so forth. And he was standing there talking to me and he said to me, "Now, that's all New York in front of you." I says, "Yeah." He said, "What's that big tall building in front of you?" I said, "Well, that's the Empire State Building." He says, "Kind of big, isn't it?" I says, "Yeah." He says, "Doesn't airplanes ever fly into it?" "Oh, no. No, they stay away from it. Don't worry about a thing." I says, "That—plenty of room in there." Well, it just so happened, next morning in a fog, a

plane did crash into the Empire State Building. I never [several words unclear] after that. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Wow.

MALASHUK: So that was pretty good.

LEVINE: Did you have any—any contact with these so-called enemy aliens?

MALASHUK: Yeah. Now, that's what I'm coming to now.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MALASHUK: After the war with German—with—was over with, the political prisoners were being discharged and going ba—were being shipped back to Germany. One of the notorious prisoners was Hans Kuhn [PH], who was the American fuehrer, who was charge of the American Bund [PH] in this country. And he was a political prisoner. And they were—they all packed their luggage outside of the fence right there at the ferry slip, so they can put 'em right on the ferry and take—go in—into Manhattan and being shipped back by boat to—back to Germany. And—and we—we were told that when you do seawall watch, you were to walk around them. It just so happens they—they gave me a [unclear] machine gun in my hand, you know. And, which I was well qualified to use. So we—I walked along and I'd walk around 'em. Well, I did this for about eight or nine or 10 times. And I said, "I'm getting sick and tired of walking around [unclear]. I'm going right through 'em." So I started walking through and, just as I started to go through, Fritz Kuhn stepped in front of me to block me. Well, I just dropped that gun and I put it right in his gut. And I said, "You either move or I'll shoot." And he moved. [chuckles] And he followed me all the way down to my post. I came back the same way and I dropped the gun again. [chuckles] And he stepped back. I did this about four or five times to him.

LEVINE: What—what was his—what do you think he was doing? He was just—

MALASHUK: Just [unclear] me. That's all. I don't think he'd attack me. I don't believe for one minute he would have. He would have been foolish to attack me. So [clears throat]—and—

LEVINE: Oh.

MALASHUK: So—

LEVINE: Did you observe any of the—of the—of the activities, or anything of these people who were being—

MALASHUK: Well—

LEVINE: —returned?

MALASHUK: No. A lot of them—a lot of the men played soccer barefooted and so forth. And that was—that was interesting to see. Of course, it was, you know, warm weather. The women just sat around, talked, and this—except for the one woman was crocheting all the time. But they had nothing to do with us. They stayed to themselves, basically. Even when they were getting ready to leave, they just talked among themselves. And all we did is walk around them or something like that. We had nothing to do with them. So that's about the only activity we had.

LEVINE: Were you ever in the hospital there at Ellis Island?

MALASHUK: No, not there.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MALASHUK: And that's the funny part about it. When I went in the Marine Hospital for my knees, the man who x-rayed me, the doctor who x-rayed my knees, he and I are very good friends to this day. We go to church together. [chuckles]

LEVINE: And that's where you met?

MALASHUK: No. Well, we met when he came into church from—

LEVINE: Afterwards.

MALASHUK: Yeah, afterwards.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MALASHUK: Wally lives right over the hill here.

LEVINE: Oh.

MALASHUK: And we sat there and we'd talk [unclear]. And we started talking, this—"Yeah." We found out we were—we had a lot in common and so forth. And I always kid him. I said, "You know, Wally, you [unclear] captain, don't you?" He says, "Yeah." I said, "You mean to

tell me I've got to salute you every time I see you?" [chuckles] He said, "Yeah, you got to do that to me." [chuckles]

LEVINE: Now, is there anything else about Ellis Island that you remember?

MALASHUK: [coughs] Yeah. They didn't know what to do with us half the time. I went down to the pistol range.

LEVINE: Where was that?

MALASHUK: Oh, they had a little pistol range down in—behi—

LEVINE: Do you remember? Like—

MALASHUK: Down around where the power plant was.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh. Yeah.

MALASHUK: I remember that. Back in that area.

LEVINE: Oh.

MALASHUK: I also—I got assigned to a detail to take—I remember the date it happened, July the 31st, or 30th. July the 30th; 31st is a—I took a detailment down to Sea Girt, New Jersey to go on a—on a range down there. It didn't make sense to me. The war was ov—with Germany was over with. And we knew we were going to be discharged soon. Why should we go down on the range, learn how to shoot? It never made sense to me. So—but I went down there. Oh, we had to qualify for marksmanship and all that. I could qualify. I wouldn't say I was an expert but qualified enough to do some shooting both on the rifle, the pistol, the automatics. And then the final day was the machine gun. And that's when they were really putting it to me. Everybody was kidding me. And I says, "Okay." And I got on the machine, on—cocked it up and I shot the stakes in half and they were surprised. They didn't—I knew anything about the machine gun. I—finally, I told them. I says, "Yeah. Well, I was gun captain." So then they believed me. But when we got back—I spent my birthday down in Sea Girt. And we jumped—we jumped camp at night. [chuckles] Had to pull watches at six o'clock in the morning. [chuckles] So got in more trouble again. A lot of fun.

LEVINE: Do you remember when the war was over? What—where were you?

MALASHUK: [unclear]. Now, after we pulled seawall watches and so forth, this one day, August the 15th, if I remember right, I decided I was going to

take a shower. I was right in the middle of a shower when somebody starts ringing the bell. "The war is over with. The war is over with." Well, I came right out of that shower room, out of the Great Hall, right on out through the sea wall. [chuckles] And all the political prisoners sitting there laughing at me. And I just sat there and smiled. "You can laugh all you want but I'm going home." [laughs]

LEVINE: [unclear].

MALASHUK: So that's what got me. Now, that happened twice to me about getting caught in a shower, once when we were at—at sea. I was in a convoy. I just came off watch and I—I was taking a shower when we sounded GQ.

LEVINE: What's GQ?

MALASHUK: Oh, General Quarters.

LEVINE: Good.

MALASHUK: So we—we had a sub contact. And I ran out of the shower right up to my gun. I strapped myself in, you know. And I'm standing there. It's there. Finally, I said—I told [unclear]. I says, "Ask the bridge if I can be released so I can get some clothes on." "What do you mean, you get some clothes on?" And everybody's over the bridge looking at me, you know, and here I am, strictly strapped in with no life jacket or anything else. And so finally the words goes around. "Nah, let him stay out there. The sunshine'll do him some good." [laughter] So I stayed out in the sunshine. I got sunburnt all over that day. [laughs] So—

LEVINE: Okay. Well, we're getting near the end of the tape. So why don't you tell me about—was there anything about being discharged that you would want to mention?

MALASHUK: No, not being discharged. I—I was, oh, I'd say in a way I was disappointed because I really wanted to stay in.

LEVINE: Wanted to stay, yeah.

MALASHUK: And—but I went from Ellis Island, went down to Philadelphia. I went down to a warehouse on Fourth and Walnut. The only person I knew down there happened to be the dentist, which I knew from the Marine Hospital, recognized him. And he and I would talk and I only stayed, I don't know, three or four days down there when I was discharged. And I came on home.

LEVINE: How do you think about that time in the Coast Guard now?

MALASHUK: Oh.

LEVINE: How would you look back on it?

MALASHUK: I loved it. I'd go back in a minute.

LEVINE: Oh.

MALASHUK: I—as a matter of fact, I tried to get in the Reserve. And there was no Reserve here in Baltimore here at the time. And I was—oh, I was real disappointed.

LEVINE: Hmm.

MALASHUK: But I didn't want to go into the Navy because Coast Guard is—is a different atmosphere than the Navy. I had—I had a lot of respect for my engineering officer, for one thing. I had respect for my first two skippers. The last skipper we had, no. We—we just considered him just a—somebody who was on board ship more than anything else. Because he had a—we were in a hurricane one time. And when he was still the executive officer, he had those guys sandpapering the deck in a hurricane. Didn't make sense. But anyhow, he didn't make any points. But I got even with him. We—when he became captain, he used to try to make inspections at sea. Well, that didn't work. You don't pull inspections at sea. So—so one night, the other guy who was on watch in the engine room while I was in the boiler room—turned around and I says, "Hey, the old man's sleeping out on deck." "Oh, he is? Whereabouts?" He said, "Right there by the overflow tank." I said, "Oh, that's nice." So I went up and I says, "Irish, how much make up water we're using?" And I said, "Try to get some over here, will you? I'm going to pump it up." [chuckles] So I pumped up. I overflowed the tank and I wet the whole deck. And I wet his mattress. [chuckles] And he slept on a wet mattress. The reason he slept on a wet mattress is because I put the heat on to his room into his cabin. I turned the heat on in there. [chuckles] It was too hot so he went out on deck. I got [unclear].

LEVINE: Okay. We'll be—we're nearly at the end. Just say what you did afterwards.

MALASHUK: Yeah.

LEVINE: In a thumbnail.

MALASHUK: Well, after it was all over with, I knew that I had no future in the bell business. I could see any—nothing in there. I had a very difficult time readjusting to civilian life.

LEVINE: Why is that?

MALASHUK: Well, because we got fairly independent. And it became very difficult to take orders from—from men I didn't respect or anything else. It took me a long time to, you know, get used to people like that again. I was very, very restless when I got home. And so that—that was no fun. So finally, I tried all kind of jobs. And finally, I turned around and I said, "Well, let me go back to what I know I can do and I still love." Then I went to the [unclear] Electric Company and worked in their power plant.

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE B]

[BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE A]

MALASHUK: And there I got my [several words unclear]. And out of the clear blue sky we got laid off. And to this day, nobody knows why we ever got laid off. But I stayed in the business and I went to work for Esso Standard Oil, which was pretty good. And I did fine, enough to buy this house.

LEVINE: Is—is that where you stayed, mostly?

MALASHUK: I—well, no, because they closed the refinery down. And when they did that, I went down to—worked at Spar's [PH] Point for a couple of years. Spar's Point is steel-making plant, largest tidewater steel-making plant in the world. And they went on strike for stupid—the—wages. Instead of going for benefits at the time, so I disagreed with what they were striking about. And I left them and I went with Flynn and Embreckt [PH], who built stokers and incinerators. They needed a licensed engineer. Meanwhile, I got my—my first grade chief license while I was working for Esso. And so I used to do field engineering for Flynn and Embreckt on incinerators and boilers. The bottom fell out of that business. I went down to Allied Chemical Company and I was only there for about a month and a half, two months when the bottom dropped out of that business. [chuckles] So I said, "I'm going to take it easy for—for a week or two." And I went up to take my unemployment and they asked me to go up and be interviewed for a job with the state. Well, I wasn't too happy at first about that because I knew the wages that the state paid compared to what private industry, it was a big difference. But in

order to stay eligible for unemployment and so forth, I took a test with the state, got first on the list. I got the premium job at the time and that was what's called daylight and—the daylight shift. Up to this point, I was constantly shifted. By this time, I had a—all daylight and—

LEVINE: And what—how long did you stay?

MALASHUK: Well, 20-some years. [chuckles] I went to—I went from—let's see, eight years at Employment Security. Then I went out to [unclear] State University, went out there as chief engineer when they asked me to take the maintenance over for the college, which I did. And then I was there for what, seven or eight years and then had an opportunity to go down—downtown to the main site office building. And I went down there and became the supervisor of maintenance throughout the state office complex. And I was down there till I retired.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, we're definitely at the end of this tape. So I think this is where we'll stop, [chuckles] where you retired. Okay?

MALASHUK: [laughs]

LEVINE: Well, thanks so much. That was a great interview.

MALASHUK: Okay.

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine signing off, having been speaking with Bill Malashuk.

MALASHUK: Malashuk.

LEVINE: And—on April 4th, 2006.

[END OF INTERVIEW]