

EI-203

PATRICK SHARKEY

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**HISTORIAN'S NOTE: Immigration and Naturalization Service
inspector at Ellis Island, 1943-1946**

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and I'm here today at the Ellis Island studio with Patrick F. Sharkey, who worked for the Immigration Department, first on the Canadian border as an immigration border patrolman in 1940, and then in 1943 was given a promotion to immigrant inspector at Ellis Island. He worked at Ellis Island from 1943 to about 1946. And today is August 25, 1992.

SHARKEY: When I, when I was, re-assigned from Ellis Island I went to 70 Columbus Avenue. They were moving the headquarters of the Immigration Service in New York from Ellis Island to 70 Columbus Avenue, which was temporary quarters, pending the completion of the Federal – the Federal Center today, which is located in downtown New York.

LEVINE: That was in 1946, you got there?

SHARKEY: Thereabouts.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, let's go back a minute. First, why don't you give me your birth

date?

SHARKEY: I was born on January 30, 1914.

LEVINE: Okay, and --

SHARKEY: In Pennsylvania.

LEVINE: Okay. And when did you, it was 1940 when you were working --

SHARKEY: My original appointment was with the Immigration Border Patrol on the Canadian border.

LEVINE: Okay.

SHARKEY: In Vermont.

LEVINE: Okay.

SHARKEY: Newport and Derby Line, Vermont.

LEVINE: And then how did it happen that you came to work here at Ellis Island?

SHARKEY: I received a promotion from border patrol -- border patrolman in the Immigration Service to Immigrant Inspector in the Immigration Service, and transferred to New York -- Ellis Island, New York -- where I was employed as an immigrant inspector.

LEVINE: Now, had you heard anything about employment for the Immigration Department at Ellis Island before you actually came here.

SHARKEY: Oh, yes. I was familiar with the fact that Ellis Island was here, and that there were immigrant inspectors and an immigration service. And it was known as the Immigration and Naturalization Service. I think it still carries the same name.

LEVINE: Now, did the, did you look forward to coming to Ellis Island? Was that considered --

SHARKEY: Well, yes. That was a promotion, a substantial promotion for me. And another factor was that my family and my wife's family were both located here in the New York Metropolitan Area. And it was kind of a transfer home for me, so it had a double benefit. But it was an advancement, a career advancement, and I took advantage of that.

LEVINE: Now, who did you work under when you were transferred here?

SHARKEY: Well, Frank Watkins was the District Director of the New York District in the Immigration Service. I think he was our first director. Prior to that, when I was assigned here at an earlier date -- while I was on the Border Patrol -- when they had the roundup of the alien enemies in the New York area when we became involved in World War II. I was tra -- not transferred but was detailed here to Ellis Island to help handle the, war detainees from Italy, Germany and Japan. And they were brought here to Ellis Island. And, and then sent back on the Gripsholm to their proper countries. Or in -- in the case of the Japanese diplomats (who were given special treatment) to a very large and famous hotel in the mountains of West Virginia, I believe. And it was called the, I can't ex -- re -- exact em. I remem-- it's on the tip of my tongue, but I can't remember the name of the hotel. Not -- well --[pause] White River Junc-- not White River Junction, that's in Vermont. A name like that in the Virginia Mountains, where the Japanese diplomats who were also, of course, alien enemies. But who

deserved special treatment, because we expected the Japanese to give our diplomats special treatment. And they were sent down there to live under first class conditions until they were disposed of and returned to their homeland.

LEVINE: Well, now, what was it like accompanying them? Did you go by train?

SHARKEY: Yes, by train – ‘Supertrain’ out of New York -- to the hotel. And, we were there essentially to see that order was maintained and that there were no escapees and that the transportation of these people was accomplished without – without complications.

LEVINE: Were you able to speak with them?

SHARKEY: Oh, yes. Many of them, of course, spoke fairly good English. As a matter of fact, my recollection, most of them -- if not all -- spoke acceptable English. And I carried on a conversation with many of them. Not only – not only -- there on the train. But while they were detained here at Ellis Island and I was detailed in here -- at that time an employee of the border patrol element of the immigration service. Until they could hire people in this area to do the job that we were detailed here to temporarily perform.

LEVINE: And what would you say their attitude was about their situation at that time?

SHARKEY: Well, almost predictably I guess you'd say that they were anti-U.S.A. They considered the United States an enemy which, of course, under the conditions of war later on they were enemies of our country. And they were pretty certain that Japan was going to win the war. And that – and that we were a country that couldn't be trusted, and all the usual things you hear from people who are your enemies during wartime.

LEVINE: Did they give you a hard time at all?

SHARKEY: Not the, not the detainees here in New York. They were compliant and complacent. They weren't happy. They felt that they were being handled unjustly and incarcerated unjustly. But they -- I had a discussion with several of them whom I got to know pretty well. Because I was in here for eight hours a day and, of course, they were here twenty-four hours a day. And with certain men -- Japanese men of my own age -- I got to carry on long and detailed conversations as to the pros and cons of why we were -- why we were at war and who did who to what. You know, the Japanese attacked us at Hawaii and the Hawaiian islands, etcetera, etcetera, that kind of thing. Incidentally, I have my daughter here with me today who, at that time, was an infant -- a little girl a few years old. She was born in 1940. And, of course, the war came to us in December of '41. And this alien that I was talking about, the Japanese alien enemy was somewhat of a amateur artist, and he drew a pencil sketch of my daughter, a likeness, from a photograph. And we still have that at home which is a considerable keepsake.

LEVINE: Did you ever talk personally about, you know, your families or your lives with some of these men?

SHARKEY: Somewhat, somewhat. Of course, the people that I got talking to here were the -- the elite of the Japanese people. They were the upper -- some of them were considered in the hierarchy, the ruling hierarchy. Because they were in the diplomatic corps. And many of them had subordinate administrative jobs of one kind or another where they were also the educated and selected people who were -- were fairly high in the Japanese administration of the diplomatic service.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Are there any characteristics that you can think of by way of characterizing this group of people?

SHARKEY: Well, they -- they were self-righteous. They were, they -- they did nothing wrong. The people who did them wrong was this mighty United States of America, whom they distrusted and disliked because of our so-called imperialistic ways and our attitudes regarding how to treat the Japanese. But -- and also in the diplomatic relations between the two countries. But there -- there didn't seem to be a deep-seated vehemence involved, in my discussions. Of course, we were at the beginning of the war. The war had just about started when they had to round these people up because of their dangers as saboteurs and -- you know -- dangers to being in the United States without supervision. And, of course, anyone who was not a citizen of the United States -- especially among the Japanese. They just didn't feel that they could be; our government felt that they couldn't be trusted to not do things to hurt us if they could -- if they could do it. So they -- they wanted to be careful that they were probably held somewhat incog -- incognito until they could be returned to their own country. I'm -- I'm, of course, talking about what I thought. (laughs) My position in the federal government of the United States was a relatively modest one. I -- and these are all my impressions.

LEVINE: Absolutely. Yeah, that's what I wanted to hear, your impressions. So, did you ever have any reason to find that somebody was interested in sabotage of some kind? I mean, did you ever have any incidents under your watch?

SHARKEY: Well, we had -- we had. When I was in the Border Patrol prior to coming here, the Japanese, not the Japanese, the Germans landed a submarine off the coast of Massachusetts, one off the coast of Long Island, and one somewhere down in the Gulf of Mexico on the Florida

West Coast. That that time we were told -- we were told, and the people on the border patrol were told -- that the Navy and the Coast Guard did not have the manpower nor the equipment to properly patrol our coastline to prevent German alien enemies from being landed on our shores as saboteurs. And they I -- I was shipped off to the Tampa area as a border patrolman to patrol the certain segments of the Coast of West Florida with others -- other like-employees, like myself, patrolling other areas of the coast. And we worked from dusk until dawn seven nights a week in the backwoods of Florida waiting to run into some Germans coming in.

And, of course, we were somewhat expendable. These men would be trained soldiers with high, high-powered weapons. And we had merely side arms and some shotguns and that kind of thing in our patrol cars. But if we didn't come back they'd know that somebody was out there that they had to look for. And so that's how they had hoped to possibly prevent further encouragement. The people who -- the Germans who landed on Long Island out somewhere near Montauk Point buried a rubber boat and some rubber boots and other things, which they discarded after landing from the submarine.

A Coast Guardsman was walking out there one morning to get his morning exercise, or just walking along the bor--. And he kicked something that looked black. And when he kicked it, the toe of a boot showed above the sand. And he dug the boot out and then dug a little more. And when he ran into the boat he got back to his superior officers who immediately, of course, discovered that it was somebody there who shouldn't be there. And that's how this whole incident got opened up. So I stayed down in Florida on detail along the West Coast of Florida and around the Newport, Newport Richey area for, I think, six to eight months. And, I was on detail. And, of course, then I returned to my station in Vermont. And shortly after that I was appointed, or promoted, to

immigrant inspector at Ellis Island.

LEVINE: I see --

SHARKEY: I don't want to wander now. So if I get wandering, why -- cut me off.

LEVINE: No. (laughs)

SHARKEY: Or straighten me out. I mean, getting a--, that was in the border patrol, and that didn't have anything to do with Ellis Island -- that thing, per se. Except that the, the detainees were kept here.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Well, now, did you, was it usual when you were at Ellis Island to carry a weapon?

SHARKEY: No. I -- I carried the weapon as a border patrolman.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. But here you we - --

SHARKEY: We were armed. We had carried side arms in the border patrol along the Canadian border where we were looking for aliens who were coming through the United States border without proper inspection -- probably trying to smuggle themselves into the country, and we were there to apprehend and -- and return those people to their countries through the usual process of law, immigration law.

LEVINE: But when you came to Ellis Island, were you then not carrying a weapon?

SHARKEY: Not as an immigrant inspector. We were considered administrative employees. And I worked in the Hearing Division, which held hearings of deportation on aliens who were improperly in the country. And at that time

most of the aliens that were giving these hearings were seamen who jumped ship in New York to avoid the torpedoing off of our coast and in the Atlantic. And they just didn't want to be killed at sea by German submarines, so they jumped ship in New York. And they were picked up by our investigative services and investigation services and sent to Ellis Island where my duties were to conduct hearings of deportation on them; which would (and our recommendations) which were sent down to higher authority for disposition and decision as to whether they should be deported. There were many laws that pertained and ultimate decisions were made.

At one time the, merchant seamen of – of our allies and of this country were running in such short order because of the number of ships being sunk by the submarines that these people would rather, you know, they would almost rather be – be put in prison than they would return to their ships. And so--. And I was given to understand (how true this is I don't know) but the consuls of the country from which these seamen came (Holland and Britain and France, our allies) would appear here at Ellis Island and tell these seamen who jumped ship that if they did not return to their calling where they were sadly needed as merchant seamen to keep our merchant marine operating -- that they'd be returned to their country and put on the front lines on the Russian front (laughs) where their chances of survival would be less than they would be at sea. And so many of them voluntarily returned. Some of them refused and had to be deported. And, well, essentially that's the big picture of it all.

LEVINE: How long did it take to process a single potential deportee?

SHARKEY: Well, tha-- that's almost an unanswerable question. These people would run away in New York and they'd hide, and they'd be protected by friends or relatives. And when they'd be arrested after an investigative --

investigators went out and found out. You know, they had -- we had some tips. Some people write -- write letters, some --. In -- in different ways of gaining information as to who these people were and where they were.

They'd be brought here to Ellis Island, and then they'd be put in -- kept in detention with certain parole pri--, not parole, bond. In other words, released under bond privilege, for some of them who were not considered dangerous or criminals, etcetera, etcetera. And, then on -- on a basis of when their turn came up, they were given a hearing and processed from there. And I guess it would take anywhere from two or three months to a year or two to get them finally back where they were. We were so badly swamped with work. I understand that there were thousands of names in the file that we never got, never got an opportunity even to investigate. Because we didn't have the staff to do it. We just had to, it had to be sort of a piecemeal quota kind of a thing to try to get as many as we could with the staff that we had.

LEVINE: Did you have priorities as to who you tried to investigate?

SHARKEY: I -- I -- Imagine if -- if there were known criminals who were dangerous people, they would receive prior attention. But I had little way of determining that. I was not in the investigation service.

LEVINE: Now how would you, in your words, how would you describe the hearing?

SHARKEY: The hearing? Well, we had a set of rules and regulations to go by as to what offenses were -- were considered deportable offenses. And different agreements that we had with the countries of different aliens who, who were incarcerated. We'd have a different agreement with Britain than we would with France or with Holland or with some of our other allies. And they'd be -- I had a secretary. We had one, we had a pool of secretaries.

We had one permanent secretary assigned to us, and then hearings took anywhere from one, two or three hours to probably several months. Because if something came up which couldn't be determined at the time, we'd have to close the hearing, send the alien back to detention or back to where he was staying outside of detention, and then call him back in for completion of hearing. Such things as proving criminal records or proving marital status or proving prior citizenship, which couldn't be ascertained at a moment's notice. And they would have a bearing upon the outcome of a hearing, and so the hearing had to be closed. So some hearings were very quick and easily accomplished. Others took a longer time.

LEVINE: And what would happen if they were found to be, let's say a criminal. What would then happen?

SHARKEY: Well, of course, there they were subject to other countries, and we had no -- no --no --. Unless -- unless they commit a crime, committed a crime which was punishable under our laws. If who was -- if they were punished -- if they were punishable (under our laws and the immigration service and the state under which -- under whose laws they were obligated to be tried and imprisoned if they were found guilty) -- depending upon what kind of arrangements could be made between the federal government and the state government concern, that would resolve -- resolve as to who got jurisdiction. If they, if they, well, if they committed murder maybe they'd be returned to the State of New York for trial and imprisonment. But if they committed a relatively minor offense; they would, the State would say, "Okay, deport them. We -- we have --you know, we don't -- we don't want them that badly". I'm -- I'm -- of course, I'm getting now into a realm that I know very little about -- how these things were handled, and other than my own department.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Now, when the aliens, the American, Japanese-Americans, for

example, they were brought in?

SHARKEY: We had no Japanese-Americans here. They were on the West Coast. These were the people who were, and today it's still a raging question as to whether they should have been brought out and put in detention camps until the end of the war because we were afraid to trust them. I ran into none of them here on the East Coast. The people here that I ran into at Ellis Island were Jap-- known Japanese subjects, or citizens (if you can use that term) who were here for business, diplomatic or other purposes -- who were picked up and considered a risk. And so they were sent out of the country as best we -- none of them were sent to a detention camp. One that we brought down to the hotel in Virginia, White River something or other, were diplomats. And, of course, they were returned to their own country for re-assignment or whatever Japan wanted to do with them. But we had no -- no American -- Japanese who were American citizens in here at Ellis Island that I know of.

LEVINE: Well what, what groups did you deal with that you could categorize?

SHARKEY: Any alien. Any alien, and especially if they belonged to the countries which -- which we were at war with. The Italians, the Germans, and the Japanese, essentially.

LEVINE: So they were citizens of those countries.

SHARKEY: Yeah. And they were, therefore, our enemies. Now if -- if a citizen of Greece came in here who was an alien and who's subject to deportation, then he -- that was not an enemy country. They had different ways of handling them. Usually they were seamen who were needed, very badly. Needed to man our ships that were being sunk, as everyone knows, in such numbers that we might have lost the war because of the submarine

warfare conducted in the Atlantic, and later by the Japanese in the Pacific.

LEVINE: Hmm. Well, now, did you enjoy your duties?

SHARKEY: I did, yes. I thought it was a great job. I enjoyed it very much. I enjoyed my border patrol work, except that I was at the bottom of the ladder career-wise. And having a wife and two youngsters -- another one later on -- I was interested in career advancement. And I grabbed the opportunity here to come here to New York as an immigrant inspector, and I enjoyed my work here.

LEVINE: And did you live, where did you live when you were working here?

SHARKEY: Well, I lived in Northern New Jersey and North Bergen. I lived out on the -- on the island in Corona at that time.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So you came --

SHARKEY: And I commuted. Subway, bus, etcetera, etcetera.

LEVINE: And then were there --

SHARKEY: I took the Ellis Island ferry over here --

LEVINE: Did you?

SHARKEY: -- to the island every morning five days a week, and went home by -- by the Statue of Liberty looking at us right there a couple of hundred times. And never got a chance to get over to visit the island, Because we were so close to the statue it didn't, we didn't feel that--. You know, you walk by somebody fifty times a day, you feel it's not -- not im -- important for you to

visit them. And so I never, I never got to Bedloes Island.

LEVINE: But you, and you were overworked, you would say. There was a lot of people to be processed.

SHARKEY: Oh, yes. I don't think we were overworked in the sense that we were exhausted. We worked – we worked eight hours a day. And we did what we could, but I don't think you'd say that, I don't think there was overtime, that sort of thing. I don't recollect that there was. I knew that the, the workload was such that someone had to determine which were the priority cases, which were the important cases. And, from the top down, that's the way they were processed.

LEVINE: Now, what happened to a detainee? What would happen?

SHARKEY: Until he was deported he'd be either detained here at Ellis Island or released under bond or released in the custody of the consul of the country from which he came. And they had their own rules about, about vouching for whoever they --. Usually the consul would vouch for – for seamen. They wanted those seamen to get back aboard our – our maritime ships, and the consul would come in and say what he wanted to say to his people, "If I get you out of here, will you go back to sea?" And what took place after that is conjecture. I, all I know is that that's the way they did it. And for people who were considered reasonably dependable and responsible people, they'd be released under bond. We didn't have enough room here to take care of everybody that needed care. We had to make a choice, who could be released under bond and who couldn't. Then it went on from there.

LEVINE: How about the detainees who were detained here? Where were they held? Do you remember?

SHARKEY: Well, here right on -- right on the island. Their -- their day room was that big room that we just come by out here where there'd be several hundred of them in there milling around sitting down --

LEVINE: The Great Hall.

SHARKEY: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SHARKEY: Mainly. They all had sleeping quarters which were somewhat like army barracks, with triple beds, one on top of the other. What do you call them?

LEVINE: Bunk beds?

SHARKEY: Steer bed, bunk bed. And, enough room to maneuver between them, but that's where they slept. I didn't spend too much time in there. I saw it. But they were always empty when I got in there. So there was nothing there to keep me there to observe except beds and someplace for these people to sleep. And they were fed. In another hall here were long bench-like tables. Which I recollect looked like something you'd see in the movies about prison tables where everybody would be lined up and fed from the big kitchen here. And it's sort of an institutional feeding kind of thing. The quality of the food I -- I can't vouch for. I imagine it was probably less than luxurious but acceptable. I know -- I know they weren't mistreated or in any way starved or de-- denied anything that wa—that here was needed to, you know, the necessities of life.

LEVINE: Was it kind of prison-like in some ways, since they were being detained against their will?

SHARKEY: I never got that impression. The impression that I got was this is a temporary incarceration, mainly because of the war. But for -- during periods of time where the war was not a factor, it was strictly an administrative temporary deten – temporary detention that they determined disposal. There were many – there were many laws about permitting people who were in – in this country illegally to remain. One of them was marriage to an American citizen. Another one was if they had five years during which they could prove good moral character and no arrests, no crimes. If they had any American-born children who -- whom they parented, they could go to Canada (go to Montreal or some other city) and declare their intention to come in here as permanent citizens. And if they were found otherwise admissible -- the same as if they applied in their own country -- then they were permitted to come here and be processed as aliens who were coming in here for permanent residence. And ultimately could obtain citizenship after two or five, two and five years, I think. Two years to declare and five years to be processed by the naturalization courts for naturalization as a U.S. citizen.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. Do you recall any particular detainee that you had any exchange with, just as an individual, on your job?

SHARKEY: Except for this Japanese boy that I previously mentioned, there was, there was not – there wasn't very much time for fraternization and chit-chat. You – you were supposed to do your job, and you couldn't do that if you were sitting in the corner carrying on long conversation wi--. And then, then – and they weren't too anxious to. It's – it's almost like a prisoner and a prison guard. Their – their – their compatibility factor was probably lacking in a lot of, for a lot of reasons. So I don't think we -- I had too much knowledge of these peoples as individuals.

LEVINE: Okay. I think maybe we'll pause here and turn over the tape, and then we'll continue.

END SIDE ONE

BEGIN SIDE TWO

LEVINE: Okay. I'm resuming now, talking with Mr. Pat Sharkey. I wanted to ask you, were there any other organizations or agencies that were stationed here at Ellis Island when you were here?

SHARKEY: U.S. Public Health Service had one of their hospitals here right across the ferry slip from the immigration buildings. I can't think of any other federal agency who had – who had any – any connection here with Ellis Island at that time.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Were there any social agencies from, connected with the ethnic groups that were being detained?

SHARKEY: Not that I recollect. There could have been. I know that many attorneys appeared here -- at our hearings where I presided as immigrant inspector – who in behalf of the aliens who were involved in the deportation proceedings. But they were usually private attorneys from the city who were interested and – and competent with immigration law. And they appeared on behalf of the aliens, but they were not stationed here at the island. There may have been some social services that were available from here, but I don't rec--. I wasn't -- it wasn't a need-to-know thing with me.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Now, did you wear a uniform?

SHARKEY: Yes. Both in the Immigration Service and as an immigrant inspector, a uniform and a badge. And, with the border patrol, side arms.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. Okay. And what were your work hours?

SHARKEY: Usually eight hours a day, five days a week, forty hours a week. And – and -- the border patrol -- we had round-the-clock, you know, different shifts around the clock which we shared with everyone else. Here at the island -- the island; because of a ferry mainly, this island closed promptly at four-thirty, I think. And eight to four-thirty, I think, with a half hour for lunch. If my memory serves me.

LEVINE: And how about lunch? Did you bring your own lunch? Were there facilities?

SHARKEY: On some occasions we did, and I think we had a cafeteria here for employees if they wanted to do it. If they wanted to participate in its use. But I don't, the -- I don't have a very strong recollection of the food services available to the employees. I'm certain they had something.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And as far as the immigration service, was it strictly run? In other words, were you or your colleagues reprimanded for any kinds of violations, and --

SHARKEY: For wrongdoing. We were all subject to the rules and regulations not only of the agency but of the Civil Service Commission. For improper conduct or violation of the rules or the laws or bringing the service into disrepute by personal conduct, etcetera, that kind of thing. And some, some lost their jobs over things like that.

LEVINE: Uh, now, you mentioned, when we were speaking earlier, that you had to go into the hospital at some point when you worked here. Would you tell me about that?

SHARKEY: Yeah. I -- I had some sort of an ailment (I think it was an upper respiratory) where my personal physician, in Union City, I believe, prescribed sulfa drugs. They were new then, and there at the beginning of the war they were very effective in preventing infections for our wounded soldiers. But they prescribed sulfa drugs, and the sulfa -- sulfa drugs crystallized in my kidneys and I was ultimately diagno -- diagnosed as having crystals in the kidneys. And I went into the U.S. Public Health Service Hospital over here to get them out mainly by being leached -- by drinking fluids and water and, of course, medicines of one kind or another that I don't remember what they were. But they told me not to take sulfa drugs again. And ever since then I always declared this as a drug to which I am sensitive due to an allergy.

LEVINE: So you were on Island Two, what's called Island Two on the other side of the ferry slip?

SHARKEY: At the U.S. Public Health Service.

LEVINE: What, now, who was eligible to go to that hospital?

SHARKEY: Uh, the beneficiaries of the U.S. Public Health Service Ho-- hospitals were federal employees, employees of the U.S. Public Health Service and merchant seamen, I believe.

LEVINE: Were there many people in the hospital while you were there?

SHARKEY: Oh, yeah, it was quite active. And they had other stations here around the New York area. They had a dispensary station up here on Hudson Street near -- well, then, downtown on the west side of New York in Manhattan. And then they had other U.S. posts. One was at Stapleton, Ellis Island the

biggest of them, I think. And they had another one out at Neponset Beach, which was a temporary wartime hospital. But those were for more th-- the reason the population was up and required additional beds then was I believe because of the war and the merchant seamen casualties.

LEVINE: I see. Is there anything else that you remember about that hospital and its functioning during that time in the early '40s?

SHARKEY: Well, I remember the -- I think they had a title for the head of the hospital - - Medical Director in Charge, I believe. They wore the United States naval uniform. They carried the same ranking designations as four stripes for captain, and that sort of thing. And the directors of the hospital were -- were captains, and then on down. They had two sers -- two services in the U.S. Public Health Service. One was called, for want of a better term, the Uniformed Services. They were -- they belonged to a quasi-military (during the war, anyway) -- a quasi-military officer group. And they were, they were treated and paid under that particular designation.

Other hospital officials such as doctors and department heads and that sort of thing were civilian employees of the U.S. Public Health Service. And they came under the Civil Service Commission. The name of the director was, Faget, I think, a French name, F-A-G-E-T-T, I believe. And one of the reasons I remember him so clearly is that at the time he was here as Medical Director at Ellis Island, his brother was the medical director of the only leprosarium in the United States (in Carville, Louisiana). I don't know why that name sticks into my memory, but Carville, I think, was what--. I think it's still there as a leprosarium. I don't know how many patients they have who are lepers, but that was where we treated the lepers in the United States. Not too many, but they -- we have 'em.

LEVINE: Now, do you remember the names of any of your colleagues that you worked with here?

SHARKEY: Well, I remember my -- the director I had here at Ellis Island. His name was Frank Watkins. He was the -- he was the District Director U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service. His assistant was Zucker, Z-U-C-K-E-R. There was a supervisor here by the name of Moutal M-O-U-T-A-L, Monty Moutal. I knew him as Monty Moutal -- Moutal. Maybe Monty was sort of a nickname. I -- I heard later that he had been promoted through to District Director in Chicago in the Immigration Service. So he kind of climbed the ladder of success. I worked with a section chief by the name of Kristofferson when I was in the Law Division handling hearings. And Kristofferson was ultimately promoted to District Director here at Ellis Island.

Then I had a sort of a companion buddy -- a man by the name of Paul Maki, which is a Finnish name -- who was an Immigrant Inspector with me here. Another one by the name of Dave Caldwell. John C. Hill was the first personnel officer at Ellis Island in the Immigration Service under a program at that time of decentralization. Where a personnel matters were handled out of Washington and they were ultimately decentralized to the field for better administration. These are a few names that enter my mind. There were many others, of course, but I'd have to think for a little while before I come up with the names.

LEVINE: Did you ever maintain contact with any people that you worked with after you left working here at Ellis Island?

SHARKEY: Some. Paul Mackey was one of them. [pause] I --

LEVINE: Do you know his whereabouts today?

SHARKEY: (laughs) Isn't it interesting? Paul Mackey, I understand -- I used to write to him. He was, at his request he was transferred to a job on the Canadian border as Immigrant Inspector from Ellis Island because his family were from northern Minnesota. And he successfully obtained that transfer. And then I heard later -- one of my letters was returned unopened and I wrote up to the Immigration Service up there where he was stationed. And they said that he had -- I think they sent it to his wife and his wife told me -- told me by letter that he had went out hunting one day and never came back. He had some sort of a hunting accident. And whether they ever found him, I don't know. But I think he was killed in a hunting accident on the Canadian border in Montana. So that was Paul Mackey's fate, unfortunately.

LEVINE: Was there as much of a sense of camaraderie among the men who worked for the --

SHARKEY: Yes, yeah, yes.

LEVINE: -- Immigration Service?

SHARKEY: It was-- Well, you know, we -- we lived in diversified areas -- areas. There were very little socialization because of distance. I mean, I might live in -- out in Long Island, and one of my friends might live in Northern New Jersey. And although we see -- saw each other daily, we had little opportunity to see each other socially after working hours or on weekends. So that, a good morale and camaraderie on the job, but not too much from a social standpoint.

LEVINE: Why don't you mention your wife's name and your children's names?

SHARKEY: Well, I'm m-- married to Agnes – Agnes C. Sharkey nee Merz M-E-R-Z, who was born in New Jersey. And I had three children, Patricia, Marureen and Patrick Robert. And they're all well, thank God, and living in New York -- one on Manhattan, the other two on Long Island. And my oldest daughter, Patricia, is here with me today. She provided my chauffeured transportation, which was delightful.

LEVINE: (laughs) Now, before we close -- just in terms of your life experience -- how does this little segment of 1943 to about 1946 working at Ellis Island, how do you view it now in retrospect?

SHARKEY: Well, I'll – I'll give you a very quick – quick picture of my career. I – I spent thirty years in the federal civil service, and I retired from the federal civil service. And while I was employed here at Ellis Island, and later at Columbus Avenue where the headquarters was transferred uptown when they got ready to close the island, I began to get interested in personnel administration. And so I grabbed the opportunity of a promotion from immigrant inspector to a staff job in the personnel division up at 70 Columbus Avenue as an employee relations specialist. And after having spent a couple of years in that, I was -- there was an opening in tha--. Now that I was in an administrative capacity (other than immigrant inspector) which was a specialty not of the immigration service exclusively but all agencies in personnel. Because they all had personnel activities. I had an opportunity to grab a transfer and a promotion to the U.S. Public Health Service.

So I was assigned as the top specialist in personnel administration in the New York area, working out of a sub-treasury building on Wall and Nassau Street. At which time I was -- the personnel administration was not decentralized in the field at that time. I was one of the vanguard to start it off as a personnel specialist -- assigned to all of the U.S. Public

Health Services here and all of the U.S. Public Health Service stations here on -- in New York. And with Ellis Island, and there was a dispensary on Houston Street, there was a Stapleton in Staten Island, there was Nesconset on Long Island, and one or two others that I can't think of. And I was the top personnel specialist for all of those stations. And then later on I received an opportunity for another promotion and advancement in the V.A. And I took that, and, I ultimately retired as GS-13 in the -- in the Veterans Admin-- administration as a personnel director.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Well, how about the stint at Ellis Island? Does that, how does that --

SHARKEY: Well, it started it off. Those were the beginnings of my career of thirty years in the federal service. The first one being the border patrol, the second one being the immigration service and I enjoyed both of them. As a matter of fact, I was lucky to have enjoyed all of my work in the U.S. government. Because I was in a job that I think suited me, and I liked it, and I did pretty well in climbing the ladder that they call success. Not to the top, but pretty well up in there.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Was there anything else you'd like to add about your work here at Ellis Island before we close?

SHARKEY: Nothing remarkable that I can think of. It's -- I was very pleased to see something done about saving Ellis Island as a national shrine, if I can call it that. Mr. Iacocca, who was commissioned as the head of the group destined to rejuvenate or rebuild or refurbish Ellis Island did a great job. As I can see here today, it isn't finished, but they've come a long way. And I like -- I like the idea that this place here is going to be preserved as a sort of a national monument and a national --. So I think, I hope it will get complete status in the National Park Service as a national monument or

something like that so that it will be preserved forever as long as we have a country here.

LEVINE: Well, on that note, I want to thank you, Mr. Sharkey, for being here today in the Ellis Island studio. And this is Mr. Patrick Sharkey, who was an Immigrant Inspector at Ellis Island from 1943 to 1946, and this is Janet Levine signing off.