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HOWARD CARLISLE BEAN AND WILLIAM SMITH BEAN, III

BIRTH DATE: APRIL 9, 1923 AND JANUARY 30, 1920

INTERVIEW DATE: APRIL 20, 1994

INTERVIEW LENGTH: 49:53

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RECORDING ENGINEER: KEVIN DALEY

INTERVIEW LOCATION: ELLIS ISLAND RECORDING STUDIO

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: JOHN MURIELLO, 5/1996

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: CHARLES MITCHELL, 1/2007

**SONS OF WILLIAM SMITH BEAN, JR.: EXECUTIVE OFFICER
MARINE HOSPITAL AT ELLIS ISLAND
1926-1928**

SIGRIST: Good afternoon. This is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is Wednesday, April 20th, 1994. I'm at the Ellis Island recording studio with Bill and Carlisle Bean. Bill and Carlisle obviously are brothers, and they lived on Ellis Island between 1926 and 1928. They are the sons of William S. Bean. He was a surgeon with the U.S. Public Health Service. He was the executive officer at the Marine Hospital. I have that correct?

WILLIAM: That's correct.

CARLISLE: Right.

SIGRIST: Great. It's a pleasure to have you both here. Let's begin. Carlisle, can

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you give me your full name, in case you have a maiden, middle name, and date of birth.

CARLISLE: Howard Carlisle Bean, born April 9, 1923.

SIGRIST: Thank you. Bill?

WILLIAM: I'm William Smith Bean III, born January 30th, 1920.

SIGRIST: And let's begin, I think, the interview talking about your father. I'll ask you, since you are his namesake, your father's full name and his date of birth, please.

WILLIAM: He was William Smith Bean, Jr. And he was born September 9th, 1890.

SIGRIST: And tell me a little bit briefly how your father got, became a surgeon and went into the medical profession.

WILLIAM: Well, he, he went into the medical profession because he caught typhoid as a teenager and spent some time in hospital and became fascinated with, with medicine, and gave up his original idea of going to Clemson and becoming a civil engineer. And instead, I don't know whether he had graduated at Presbyterian College in South Carolina at that time or not, but he went on, and went to medical school at the University of Virginia.

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And in 19', yeah, 1915 he was commissioned in the public health service as a, an assistant, assistant, acting assistant surgeon, I think. Let's see, yeah...

CARLISLE: Assistant surgeon is what he was.

WILLIAM: Yeah, assistant surgeon, I guess, was his official rank.

CARLISLE: He, he had interned at the U.S. Marine Hospital in Baltimore from 1914 when he left the Virginia till '15 when he was commissioned. And his first duty was with the Coast Guard, a cutter, the Androscoggin. That's A-N-D-R-O-S-C-O-G-G-I-N.

SIGRIST: Thank you.

CARLISLE: Which was built as an ice breaker, but it drew eight feet too much water so they couldn't get up on the ice to break it, and it took care of merchant seaman on the Grand Banks fishing fleet.

WILLIAM: And I think he was also on ice patrol during that time. I think his, his duty station was, officially was the U.S. Marine Hospital Boston, with duty with the Coast Guard.

SIGRIST: And then how did he finally get to Ellis Island, Bill, I'll ask you.

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WILLIAM: Well, okay. He had several public health assignments in the meantime. In the early twenties, from about '22 to '24 he was at the hygienic lab in Washington, and then was assigned to a public health facility at Hudson Street in New York, and came up in 1924. We lived in Brooklyn at the time. And then in 1926 he was assigned to Ellis Island. It was a normal, like, military assignment. You know, you served a few years in one job, and, and then a few years in another. And generally speaking, as in the military the, the more junior people had shorter length assignments and perhaps more varied until they found the, the specialty that interested them. And from the time he was in here till the end of his career he was really in hospital administration. He was the medical officer in charge of several marine hospitals after we left here.

SIGRIST: Carlisle, I want to ask you a sort of more personal view of your dad. What was his personality like and his temperament?

CARLISLE: His temperament was extremely good, I think. He was good with the four of us and with our mother, and he was easy to get along with. People in various hospitals when he was transferred would give him a get together and give him a present or something, and he was genuinely, I believe, liked by most everybody near him.

SIGRIST: Bill, when you think about your dad, and, and let me ask you the same

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kind of questions, what things come to your mind in terms of personality and temperament and...

WILLIAM: Well, I don't have anything much different from what Carlisle said. He was certainly, well, you would almost say in today's language he would almost be laid back. He was easy going. He liked, he liked to play tennis and did until pretty late in life. He died when he was fifty-four.

SIGRIST: A young man.

WILLIAM: Young man.

CARLISLE: Hmm-hmm.

WILLIAM: Younger than us by twenty years. He, even when he got into the bigger hospitals where his administrative duties were perhaps more demanding than they were in the smaller ones, he went, he made rounds, and he did not have specific patients, you know, but he went around with the ward doctors and so on, and, and any patient that had special needs, our understanding is that he, he was aware of it and then checked up to make sure they were getting what they, what they needed.

SIGRIST: Sensitive to the patients plight.

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WILLIAM: He really...

CARLISLE: When we were in Norfolk, there was a three hundred and sixty-five bed hospital. And a couple of the doctors there had told me that if a patient had been in there as much as a week my father could call him by name without looking at his chart. So he had a pretty good interest in individuals.

SIGRIST: Let, why don't we get rid of the family information first. Carlisle, what's your mother's name and her maiden name?

CARLISLE: She was Sophie, S-O-P-H-I-E, Willis, W-I-L-L-I-S, Carlisle.

SIGRIST: Do you know what her birth date was?

CARLISLE: Yes. She was born January 12th, 1893 in Spartanburg, South Carolina.

SIGRIST: And can you tell me a little bit about your mom's personality and temperament?

CARLISLE: She was easy to go along with and get along with, until the last couple years of her life when she was well into her nineties, and she was a little bit demanding then. But she, I think she was devoted to our father, and I think she was probably a little more lenient mother than necessary with us

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boys. (they laugh)

SIGRIST: You both laugh. Bill, is there a story that comes to mind about, about her being maybe a tad bit too lenient with your...

WILLIAM: Well, I, I can't think of a particular example. Can you, Lisle?

CARLISLE: No. I know the last years of her life, though, if I didn't go by the house to see her every day after work, she'd say I haven't seen you for a week. And she just, time meant nothing back, at that late stage.

WILLIAM: I'm sure that a day seemed like a week...

CARLISLE: Yeah.

WILLIAM: ...in those, in that situation.

SIGRIST: You mention that there are other siblings also. Bill, why don't I ask you...

WILLIAM: Yes.

SIGRIST: ...can you name your other siblings, please?

WILLIAM: Yes, quite easily. (they laugh) Our late brother, George Adam Bean, A-D-

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A-M, and his twin brother, Joseph Sanborn Bean, S-A-N-B-O-R-N. The, the name Joseph Sanborn has been in, goes way back in our family. They were May twenty-, born May 27th, 1925. So that's five years between me and the youngest.

SIGRIST: And they were born while...

WILLIAM: The four...

SIGRIST: ...the family was here, '25?

WILLIAM: Well, they were born during that period, but they were born, again, in Spartanburg, South Carolina.

CARLISLE: I'm the only one who wasn't born in Spartanburg, because my mother went back when Billy was born, and went back when Joe and George were born, but I don't what, maybe my father couldn't afford it, or, well, I was born in a home in Washington, D.C. And the doctor who was taking care of my mother came to see us, said it would be about a week before you had another child, and he was just barely out of sight and there I was. (he laughs) So my father delivered me.

WILLIAM: So that might have been the explanation.

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CARLISLE: If she'd had a full week, she might have gone back.

WILLIAM: Hmm-hmm. But he's the only one that was, we were, none of us were born in any state except South Carolina. D.C. was not a state. (they laugh)

SIGRIST: And so it was, it was not that long then after the birth of the twins that your father ended up with this...

WILLIAM: Yes.

CARLISLE: Yes.

SIGRIST: ...position here. Who remembers arriving to Ellis Island? Do either of you have a recollection of coming here that first day, or what it meant to you, what you knew about this place?

CARLISLE: All I can remember is we came on a ferry boat. And that's, that's, I was three when we came here.

SIGRIST: Quite young.

WILLIAM: And I was, I was six. I had to go to school in Brooklyn. Had gone to kindergarten, and, let's see, I must have come close to finishing first grade

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there as well. And when we moved here, there was no public school available. And so our mother taught me at home for maybe half a year. And then the school on Governor's Island, which at that time, of course, was an army base, was taken over by the New York public school system, and became an annex of P.S. something or other. And at that point it was, it was feasible for me to go there as a student. So I took the, I took the ferry from Ellis Island to the Battery, walked over to the Governor's Island ferry, took the ferry over there and went to school. But I really don't, and I remember some of those things, but I don't remember arriving here, either, Carlisle.

SIGRIST: What, what month did you arrive in?

CARLISLE: May of '26.

WILLIAM: Yeah. May...

SIGRIST: May of 1926.

WILLIAM: May, 1926.

SIGRIST: Well, maybe the best way to approach this is to just sort of free associate. What, what do you remember about being at Ellis Island?

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WILLIAM: (he laughs) Well...

SIGRIST: What are the things that stick out? We'll start with Carlisle.

CARLISLE: One thing that sticks out I remember seeing Charles Lindberg come back from his flight across the Atlantic on a navy cruiser. And I think every ship in the harbor was blowing its whistle. The bell which used to be used for fog on the Ellis Island, I don't know whether it's still here, but that bell was rung, and the fire boats were shooting streams of water up, and it was really quite an exciting. I, I still remember that. That's been, well, 1927 was when Lindberg flew across. And the president sent a navy cruiser over to bring him back. (he laughs)

WILLIAM: I'm trying, I, I remember some big occasion at school. And it may be that they dismissed the school, or took the students down to the shore to watch this, because I think I saw it from the Ellis, from the Governor's Island side, rather than from the Ellis Island.

SIGRIST: Well, it's a tremendous event.

WILLIAM: Oh, yeah.

CARLISLE: Oh, yeah. Sure.

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SIGRIST: Yeah.

WILLIAM: Sure.

CARLISLE: And I remember leaving my tonsils and appendix here on the island when I was operated on. (they laugh)

SIGRIST: Can you elaborate on that? What do you remember about that whole procedure?

CARLISLE: Well, I remember particularly about, I was just five when I lost my appendix. I can remember my father carrying me in his arms from third island down the corridor to the hospital which was on second island, and taking me in there, and promising me he wouldn't leave me. When they put the ether to me, as soon as I went out he left, he went out, too. (he laughs) I was in there for two weeks, which is about what you did back then. And then Billy would come over on Sunday and read the Katzenjammer Kids funny paper to me. And it would hurt so bad I would have to make him stop, because they did a...

WILLIAM: To laugh. (he laughs)

CARLISLE: Yeah, they did a, a, probably even on a little fellow a three, three and half inch scar. And...

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SIGRIST: Can you, can you describe for me what the ward of the room where you put looked like?

CARLISLE: Well, as far as I remember I was in a room with windows that looked out over third isle. And it was, it was bright and sunny, usually. And it was, as I remember it was on the second floor, but I'm not sure. And I remember, I don't remember much about my tonsillectomy. But I remember that Joe and George and I each had ear infections, and had abscesses. And I can remember my father taking one at a time into his bedroom, chloroforming us and, and puncturing the abscess. It was not pleasant. (he laughs) But I guess he, he figured it would be less traumatic for us to have it done at home that it would be to come over to the hospital. Are the corridors still over on second and third? That's where I learned to roller skate.

SIGRIST: Oh, can you describe...

CARLISLE: In the corridor...

SIGRIST: Yeah.

CARLISLE: ...I had wooden wheel roller skates. And I learned to skate in there. And that's where I they brought us our food, because it was cooked most always at the hospital. Probably a hot tray or hot cart or whatever.

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WILLIAM: We had government supplied rations.

CARLISLE: Yes. (he laughs)

WILLIAM: And so the hospital, we ate from the hospital kitchen, and...

CARLISLE: Yeah.

WILLIAM: ...as I recall the hospital food was pretty good. (he laughs)

SIGRIST: Where was, where was the kitchen in the hospital.

WILLIAM: I don't remember.

SIGRIST: Did you...

CARLISLE: It was on the first, first floor is all I know.

WILLIAM: Of second island probably.

CARLISLE: Yeah, it was on second island.

WILLIAM: Yeah. Because all the, all the major facilities of hospital were on second

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island, and third island were wards. And I don't know think there were...

CARLISLE: And our quarters.

WILLIAM: Yeah. I don't think were any, any real treatment facilities in terms of O.R. or, you know, any of that.

SIGRIST: Bill, let me ask you about your, your quarters. Where did you stay and what did it look like and where was it?

WILLIAM: Well, there's a big duplex facing the harbor at the, on the New York side of first island. Third island.

CARLISLE: Third island.

SIGRIST: Third island.

WILLIAM: Yeah. I'm sorry. And there was, there was plenty of room. We had, I'm sure we had government furnished furniture.

CARLISLE: Linens.

WILLIAM: And linens and all that. I remember there was heavy oak furniture with leather or, I don't know that naugahyde was known then or not, but...

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CARLISLE: Leatherette.

WILLIAM: ...it was pretty, yeah, leather, leatherette cushions for the most part.

SIGRIST: And you had the entire house to yourself?

WILLIAM: No, we had, we had one side.

CARLISLE: Yeah, we had half of the duplex. The other half was Doctor Sculley [PH].

WILLIAM: Yeah.

CARLISLE: Or Mr. Sculley.

WILLIAM: No, he was a doctor.

CARLISLE: Okay, Doctor Sculley...

WILLIAM: He was a doctor. Yeah.

CARLISLE: ...and his wife and two children.

WILLIAM: I don't remember what his, he was very likely a surgeon as well. I don't

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know what his function was, whether he was chief of medicine or chief of surgery, or...

CARLISLE: Well, Doctor Carnes did the surgery over here, because he took out my appendix.

WILLIAM: Well, he must have been chief of surgery then, and maybe Sculley was chief of medicine. I don't know, but, at any rate they lived beside us. There was a girl, Jeanne Sculley, who was about my age, and Bebe Sculley was about your age, wasn't he?

CARLISLE: That's right, yeah. Bebe was about my age.

WILLIAM: And so, Jeanne and I, after they moved in, used to take the, used to go to school on Governor's Island together, and, and...

CARLISLE: In bad weather the harbor police would pick him up and take him to school.

WILLIAM: Is that right?

CARLISLE: Yeah, when the, the ferry sometimes couldn't run because of fog, and the harbor police, I remember seeing them pull in, out here in the slip, and you two get on and go.

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WILLIAM: Well, I'll, I'd have to have my repressed memory dredged up, I guess, to, to, I won't disagree anyway.

CARLISLE: No. (he laughs)

SIGRIST: Carlisle, let me ask you, what do you remember about the house and the actual quarters. What sticks out in your mind about growing up, spending those couple of years in that house?

CARLISLE: Well, it was a two story house. Our both halves were the same. And we lived in the section of the, nearest to the Statue of Liberty. And it was planted with bushes and things in front. I remember one time we, George and I decided we'd camp out. And I think our father made a makeshift tent out of a bed sheet or two. And it began to rain a little bit, and my mother made us come in. Of course, it was going to leak, so we were happy to do so. (he laughs) But we could see the Statue of Liberty over on Bedloes Island from our, from our windows. And I can remember sitting in the dining room, eating, and seeing the luxury liner Leviathan come in and go out, and the Majestic and this ships of that era.

WILLIAM: Grand old steamers.

CARLISLE: Yeah.

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WILLIAM: Yeah.

CARLISLE: Well, of course, the Leviathan was the former German "Vaterland"...

WILLIAM: Yeah.

CARLISLE: ...the, took (unintelligible) reparations after W-W- One.

WILLIAM: But we used to watch those parades as the, you know, there was plenty, of course, at that time. And I don't think we ever got tired of watching those...

CARLISLE: No.

WILLIAM: ...those ships go by.

CARLISLE: And the tug boats. We...

WILLIAM: Yeah.

CARLISLE: ...we enjoyed those...

WILLIAM: And the Staten Island ferries, and all those, and, and, "Man the boat. Man

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the boat.” There would be...

CARLISLE: That was Joe.

WILLIAM: I don't know whether they were fishermen or crab trappers or what, but there would be people in little skiffs. Some, maybe even with outboards, I don't know, but...

CARLISLE: Some of them with row boats.

WILLIAM: Yeah, most of them with row boats, and they, doing what I don't know, but...

CARLISLE: Just off the edge of Ellis Island.

WILLIAM: Yeah, just, the, the, the younger boys particularly were real, always real excited about that. “Man the boat. Man the boat.” (he laughs)

SIGRIST: Bill, let me ask you, talk to be about your father's duties here on the island. We know what his title was. Maybe you could repeat it for us. And tell, tell me exactly what he was responsible for.

WILLIAM: Well, I probably have to speculate a little bit, but as executive officer of the hospital I'm sure that he was responsible that seeing that, that all the

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proper procedures and any specific instructions or decisions by the medical officer in charge were, were carried out.

CARLISLE: And he also had to keep up with personnel...

WILLIAM: Yeah.

CARLISLE: ...and make sure that people were doing their jobs right.

WILLIAM: Yeah. So I, you know, the title, executive officer, I can't really say anymore than what that would imply. He did have an administrative staff as well. I remember particularly a Mr. Theiss.

CARLISLE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that? Theiss.

WILLIAM: I'll try. T-H-E-I-S-S...

SIGRIST: Thank you.

WILLIAM: ...is my, my understanding of how it was. He was a bachelor who had a room or an apartment in the main hospital building on second island. And he was great friends to us, particularly me being the oldest and, and

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easiest to interact. I remember he had a big alligator hide that he had shot, which was legal at the time. And I was very impressed with that. And he made me a sail boat, about two and a half feet long, maybe. Maybe two...

CARLISLE: Not over two.

WILLIAM: ...I suppose. A two, a beautiful model of a two-masted schooner, with a clock gear as a, as a wheel, ship's wheel, and which when it was turned would move the rudder, and the sails had halyards and sheets. And I had that boat for a long time, and we used, it was, it was a working model. It sailed nicely.

CARLISLE: We'd sail it in the harbor with a long string on it so we'd get it back.

WILLIAM: Well, I don't, I don't think in the open harbor, Lisle, because there was a, there was a lagoon in between...

CARLISLE: Second and third.

WILLIAM: ...second island and third island. And we used to sail it in there.

CARLISLE: I remember once we sailed it...

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WILLIAM: In the...

CARLISLE: ...in between us and Bedloes Island.

WILLIAM: Maybe so.

SIGRIST: So you gentlemen have recollections of the old, the other ferry that one, at one time existed between the second and third islands?

WILLIAM: No.

CARLISLE: No.

SIGRIST: Was it...

WILLIAM: Maybe...

CARLISLE: There was a lagoon there, but it was...

WILLIAM: Oh, it was closed...

SIGRIST: Was it being, was it being filled in at that time?

WILLIAM: Being filled in at that time. That's right.

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CARLISLE: They were putting a seawall across it.

SIGRIST: That's interesting. Can you talk a little bit about that? What do you remember about that process of it being filled in?

WILLIAM: (he laughs) Oh, well, I, they, of course, the ferry was a, was a coal fired, steam powered ferry. And after every trip or two they would clean out the ashes and clinkers, and load them into these two-wheeled carts as I recall, the kind they used to push concrete in and so on. And they'd wheel those over on the bridge from the ferry slip between first and second island, and dump them into the slightly diminishing lagoon there. And the ashes would be hot. And they would, they would bring forth deposits of sulfur and whatnot. I'm sure it was high sulfur coal, you know. And there'd be beautiful...

CARLISLE: Steam.

WILLIAM: Yeah. There'd be beautiful growths of crystals and whatnot on some of these cinders, and steam coming up. It impressed me because there was a film about Alaska at the time, "Valley of the Ten Thousand Smokes," about one of the volcanic sites in Alaska, and this conjured up that kind of image to me, as, as tender age as I was. (he laughs) And...

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SIGRIST: Like this kind of exotic world created by this...

WILLIAM: Yeah, it really was. And we used to sail, well, much, much simpler boats before we got this nice model...

CARLISLE: Dixie.

WILLIAM: ...which was called Dixie. (he laughs) And the patients had a terrace or something on, on third island overlooking this lagoon. And those who were convalescing or something and were not longer, had any, with any contagious disease or anything were, we used to talk to and associate with, and they would make things for us. And, and they'd help us, I think somebody showed me how to make fishnets, one of the patients did. And, and maybe I even learned how to do macrame from one of them.

SIGRIST: So you did, you had some interaction, then, with the patients that were here.

WILLIAM: Yeah, we did.

CARLISLE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Carlisle, what patients stick out in your mind? (Bill laughs)

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CARLISLE: Well, there, I didn't know a patient was. And I asked before we started if you had read "Winnie the Pooh" by A. A. Milne, and you said you had. And I asked you if you remembered the heffalump [PH] trap. And you did. And I decided I was going to build a patient trap on third island. So I scooped I guess probably four or five inches deep maybe in the sand, and put some stick over it and a piece of paper and sprinkled sand on top, and I don't know, don't think I ever caught a patient. (Bill laughs) But the, I knew some of the people who were patients, but I didn't relate, I didn't connect in my mind that this man sitting over there is what's called a patient. He was just, there he was.

WILLIAM: Uh-huh.

CARLISLE: You know, four or five years old, that's about as far as you could think.

SIGRIST: And, and would they play with you, or, I mean, were they that free...

CARLISLE: Well, they, they would talk with us, and they would, like Billy says, they would occasionally, if they had a special skill and you were interested, they, they may be working on a, a macrame belt for instance. And he...

SIGRIST: Part of their therapy here perhaps?

CARLISLE: Well, that maybe, or pass time...

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SIGRIST: Materials supplied...

CARLISLE: ...or whether it was...

WILLIAM: It was, it was a traditional nautical skill, you know, making, in fact on the old whaling ships, they said these guys would come back with what we call square knot work. We didn't know it was macrame at the time. (he laughs)

CARLISLE: No.

WILLIAM: And bedspreads and things. So there were big projects. But belts were a very common artifact for them to, to make.

SIGRIST: Who were these patients? Were these immigrants...

WILLIAM: No.

SIGRIST: ...or were they people brought in...

CARLISLE: It was some immigrants and some, I guess, merchant seamen.

WILLIAM: Well, the purp-, the original purpose of the, of the marine hospital service,

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it was called, was to provide, it was socialized medicine, to provide medical care for the merchant seamen as part of the program...

CARLISLE: And the Coast Guard.

WILLIAM: ...to, yeah, that was, to, to, as kind of a subsidy and encouragement to the merchant marine. So that, that aspect of it continued as long as the, as long as the public health service was running hospitals. And there were also some government employees who were eligible for that kind of care. And, but I, I always figured that most of these guys were...

CARLISLE: Seamen.

WILLIAM: ...were merchant seamen. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Mostly men?

CARLISLE: Hmm-hmm.

WILLIAM: Yeah. I don't remember any...

CARLISLE: I don't remember any women.

WILLIAM: ...I don't remember any women in the bunch. Conceivable there might

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have been, but...

SIGRIST: Well, this brings up the question of, of course, there's still some immigration going through here in the mid 1920's.

WILLIAM: Yes.

SIGRIST: And, of course, some of that immigration would need medical attention. Was there any connection between the public health service hospital that you know of and the immigration part of, of this complex.

CARLISLE: There was some, I'm sure. And the reason I say that is I remember our father telling us that one of the interpreters in the immigration service was the little flower, Fiorello La Guardia, who later became mayor of New York. And he worked over here as an interpreter. So I'm sure that my father and other's had contact with some of the immigrants.

WILLIAM: There was the quarantine station at Stapleton. And that was also a public health service responsibility. So that ships coming in would, would stand off Stapleton, and public health service doctors would go aboard to check the passengers to see if they had any communicable diseases. And I guess if they did, they were supposed to be screened before they left. So there weren't, shouldn't have been too many who got here.

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CARLISLE: But those who did, got here at the hospital here.

WILLIAM: Yeah. I think they were, when, when feasible were taken care of at the hospital here.

SIGRIST: But the patients that you remember were mostly men and were most merchant seaman...

CARLISLE: Correct.

SIGRIST: ...at that time?

WILLIAM: Yeah. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Were you pretty much allowed to run free around the island, or were there parts where you were not supposed to go?

WILLIAM: First and second island, just about, we had the run of the place, as I recall.

CARLISLE: Well, we went, we went to second island some. But...

WILLIAM: Well, mostly third, yeah. We didn't...

CARLISLE: No. But I, I remember roller skating over to second island in the corridor.

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WILLIAM: Yeah. And, of course, we'd pass, when, whenever we took the ferry, we took the bridge from the ferry slip or across the end of second island back. And I suppose we went to our father's office on occasion. I don't remember that.

CARLISLE: I don't remember it, but I remember he used to take us occasionally to Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church to Sunday school, and if it was pretty weather, you and he and I would ride on top of the Fifth Avenue bus up to Central Park and back. Of course, that's long gone, but...

SIGRIST: But as you remember, pretty much your world was on, on the third island...

CARLISLE: Third island. Hmm-hmm.

SIGRIST: ...and maybe a little on the second.

WILLIAM: Now, I, we, we used to go to see movies on second island.

CARLISLE: That's right.

WILLIAM: They had, they had a rec-, you know, recreation for the patients. They'd have movies. And we were allowed to go over and see those. I don't think there was any parental guidance required. (they laugh)

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(unintelligible) But I, I remember I was wild about westerns. And I wanted a sombrero. And I thought maybe the hospital supply room might have something like that, and I was dreadfully disappointed when I, that there was no such article to be had. But we did use to see those movies, so we went, we went to second island for things of that nature.

CARLISLE: Yeah. Yeah.

WILLIAM: And I don't, and I must have known where the supply room was, because I think that I can remember going in and asking the supply clerk and being told they didn't carry any articles of that sort. (he laughs)

SIGRIST: We're going to pause just for a minute...

WILLIAM: Right.

SIGRIST: ...so Kevin can flip all the tapes over, and then we'll continue. Thank you.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

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SIGRIST: All right. We're now continuing with Bill and Carlisle Bean who lived on Ellis Island between 1926 and 1928. Bill, you were just telling us about going to the movies on the second island. Where did you go? Where were the movies shown, do you remember?

WILLIAM: Well, you know, there's, there's the big hospital building there, and I don't know where this was in, in the building. There was, certainly there were recreation facilities for the patients there, and this was in that, but I, I have no idea where it was in the structure.

SIGRIST: You were just about, when we, just before we ended the second side, you were just going to say something to...

WILLIAM: Yes.

SIGRIST: ...to Carlisle about what he remembered. Could you continue that thought, please?

WILLIAM: Well, I'm not sure if it was about what he remembered, but it was something I remembered that, that is not a medical topic at all, but that was during prohibition. And the Coast Guard was very active in intercepting rum runners. And a number of the vessels that they confiscated who had been bringing booze ashore were tied up on third island. On the side toward the Statue of Liberty. And at any given time

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there might be two or three good size boats tied up there. And one of my delights was to go aboard those boats and poke around. And I guess you did too, Lisle.

CARLISLE: I don't think, I don't remember doing it...

WILLIAM: Uh-huh. Yeah.

CARLISLE: ...but I remember the boats being there.

WILLIAM: I don't remember your specifically doing it, either, but I can't believe that you didn't. (he laughs) But, and I, I suppose our father must have known about it, and as long as we didn't...

CARLISLE: Fall in. (he laughs)

WILLIAM: ...I didn't, yeah, do, cause any damage. But anyway, it was, it was kind of an exciting thing to do, you know, go aboard and look at this, and all, all the rum had been long since removed. (he laughs) But that was one little side, side topic, you might say.

SIGRIST: Carlisle, are there things, you mentioned roller skating, are there other recreational activities you remember doing here on the island?

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CARLISLE: I remember we had a sled, but there were no hills. And so you sort of pulled each other around. And we had vehicle called an autocar, which was a terrible machine.

SIGRIST: Can you describe that, please?

CARLISLE: Yeah, it was four wheel thing, and it had a seat on it, and you put your feet on the...

WILLIAM: Front, crossbar or front wheel.

CARLISLE: ...axle.

WILLIAM: Yeah, axle. You steered by just pushing.

CARLISLE: And then you, you, you rotated the steering...

WILLIAM: What was appeared to be a steering wheel.

CARLISLE: ...but it actually was generating the power that powered the rear wheels and moved it along. And, of course, we had wagons and, you know, had a Dan Patch wagon as I remember. A wooden wagon. We'd pull each other around in that. And, of course, Joe and George being so much younger, we'd try to get them to pull us but it wasn't always very

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successful. (Bill laughs)

SIGRIST: Do you have recollections of celebrating Christmas here, Carlisle?

CARLISLE: No.

SIGRIST: Do you, Bill, at all?

WILLIAM: Well, as a matter of fact we generally went to our mother's home in South Carolina for Christmas. And I don't know whether we did both years that we would have been here for Christmas or not. I don't remember either way, tell you the truth.

CARLISLE: I remember when we left here, our father was transferred from here to Mobile, Alabama to the marine hospital. And we went by steamer from New York to Charleston, South Carolina, where our uncle met us, took us up to Spartanburg a couple a hundred miles. But we had a cabin I guess for the four boys, and our parents had an adjoining cabin. Soon as we got in and the door was locked, our brother George threw the keys out the porthole. And we were locked in. (he laughs) They had to go find somebody that had a spare set of keys to let us out of the state room.

WILLIAM: That was the S.S. Seminole...

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CARLISLE: It was?

WILLIAM: ...of the, of the Clyde line. I don't know why I remember that. I remember eating some raisin pie that made deathly sick, and I've never liked raisin pie since then. (they laugh)

SIGRIST: You know, bringing your mother up and all this makes me want to ask, how did she cope with living on an island? This is very different than probably anything she's ever done before.

CARLISLE: Oh, sure.

SIGRIST: Let me start with Bill. Talk a little bit about how your mother liked it, didn't like it...

WILLIAM: Well, for one thing she didn't have to cook. (he laughs)

SIGRIST: And did she like that? Was that a good...

WILLIAM: I, I...

CARLISLE: She was never a good cook.

WILLIAM: She was never, never, never crazy about cooking. She could, she could

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cope when she had to, but I'm sure she was happy not to. And I, I suppose as far as cleaning house, she had, had maid service.

CARLISLE: Yeah.

WILLIAM: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Oh. Can you, can you talk a little bit about that? There were people, domestics who came in to take care of the house?

WILLIAM: Well, you know, I'm not sure whether, whether she hired somebody from New York to come over...

CARLISLE: Or whether it was somebody here that was assigned by the hospital, I don't know.

WILLIAM: Yeah. Yeah. I don't know that.

SIGRIST: Do you remember the person specifically?

WILLIAM: No. No.

CARLISLE: No.

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WILLIAM: No. I don't.

CARLISLE: Now, who was Sara Shelton.

WILLIAM: Sara Shelton was the woman that went with us...

CARLISLE: To Brooklyn.

WILLIAM: ...to Brooklyn, and married.

CARLISLE: She was a colored woman from South Carolina who our mother hired,
and...

WILLIAM: I think she was in Washington as well.

CARLISLE: I don't believe so.

WILLIAM: You don't think so?

CARLISLE: No.

WILLIAM: I don't know.

CARLISLE: But anyway, either the hospital personnel were assigned to do essentially

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heavy cleaning or we had somebody that my mother had hired. I don't know.

WILLIAM: Now, whether she had friends on the mainland, I don't know. Do you have any...

CARLISLE: She, she had a couple of friends. And then she and Ms Sculley were friendly.

WILLIAM: Yeah. So there was a small community, you might say, on the island. (he laughs)

CARLISLE: Our father used to go over occasionally and have lunch with Alphius Custus Bean, who was stock...

WILLIAM: I don't think, it was Crosby.

CARLISLE: Custus.

WILLIAM: Crosby. Anyway

CARLISLE: Anyway, he was a partner in Merrill Lynch, P.S. Finner and Bean. And he was a cousin of our father. And they used to get together occasionally. Whether the wives did or not I do not know.

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SIGRIST: Did your mother ever talk, when she used to talk about this experience, I mean, what did she say about it? Was this a good thing for her, or did she really not like it here?

WILLIAM: I think she...

CARLISLE: I think she enjoyed life.

WILLIAM: Yeah.

CARLISLE: I don't think, I think she just accepted the fact that she was going to be moving around all of her married life, and this was just another experience. I think in a way she enjoyed it because it was different.

WILLIAM: Yeah. Now, you know, if she had lived, lived there for ten years it might have gotten a little old.

CARLISLE: Yeah. (he laughs)

SIGRIST: Yeah. Right.

WILLIAM: But for a couple of years, and, and we were young, and she had her hands full looking after her sons.

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CARLISLE: But, of course, being on a island was an advantage. You couldn't run away. (he laughs)

SIGRIST: Get into the rum boats. (they laugh)

CARLISLE: Well, yeah, we could get into the rum runners...

SIGRIST: Can you describe for me, since you spent so much on, on islands three, on island three, your house is at the end.

WILLIAM: Uh-huh.

SIGRIST: Can you describe sort of the layout of island three and what else was there at that time?

WILLIAM: Well, let me go ahead and you fill in, Lisle. There was a, there was a long corridor coming from the Jersey side of the island up to our quarters, which were on the, fronting on the harbor side. And off of this corridor were patients wards.

SIGRIST: Were they filled at that time? Or were most...

WILLIAM: They were occ-, they were certainly occupied. How, how full they were I

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don't know. But there were, as far as I can recall, there were a lot of patients over there. Now, how, capacity, I don't know. And, that was about it, because I think all the main treatment facilities were on...

CARLISLE: Second island.

WILLIAM: ...second island.

SIGRIST: What about offices or anything like that, any, not that you remember?

WILLIAM: No. Not that I know of. Now, what there might have been in the bridge structure, because you know, the bridge went across all three island on the Jersey end. What there was in there besides just passage way, I don't know.

CARLISLE: Well, under the corridor, that's one of the few places we've been together, was where the steam pipes...

WILLIAM: Yeah.

CARLISLE: ...brought heat to our house from the hospital on second island, and where the water lines and the sewer lines all ran.

WILLIAM: Yeah. All the utilities were under there.

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CARLISLE: All the utilities were under the concrete floor, not embedded in anything, but in a crawl space type thing.

WILLIAM: Yeah.

CARLISLE: And that was strictly off limits.

SIGRIST: Now, did you have any knowledge of, for instance, the garbage incinerator or anything like that that is over on island three.

CARLISLE: I don't remember anything about it.

WILLIAM: I don't either. I don't either.

CARLISLE: It was probably as far as away from our house as it could be got would be my guess.

WILLIAM: I, I expect so.

SIGRIST: It is, actually. It's at the...

WILLIAM: At the Jersey end.

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SIGRIST: ...opposite end. Yeah.

WILLIAM: So I, I don't think I was ever aware of that or concerned about that.

CARLISLE: I wasn't concerned about garbage. (he laughs)

WILLIAM: I figured garbage was taken away, and never, never got to where it smelled bad.

CARLISLE: But it was a fascinating time for little boys.

SIGRIST: Well, and living in a very unique...

WILLIAM: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ...environment, certainly.

WILLIAM: It was.

CARLISLE: Well, it's like I told somebody at home not long ago that I was coming up to New York this week to see where I lived on Ellis Island. And their eyes get big, and they say, "You what?" And I say, "I lived out there in the twenties."

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WILLIAM: Didn't know anybody...

CARLISLE: Didn't know anybody ever lived out there. And it's, it's something that makes us a little different. (they laugh)

WILLIAM: Might back up and mention a little bit, we had been talking about our father and mother, of course, and how they met. They, they met in Spartanburg, South Carolina, which was her family home. His family home had been Clinton, a small town about thirty miles away. But he was assigned to Spartanburg during the Pellagra Project of the late teens. And...

CARLISLE: He worked with Doctor Goldberger.

WILLIAM: Yeah, Doctor Goldberger who, who solved, pretty much solved the Pellagra problem. But it was a big effort. And his sister and brother-in-law lived in Spartanburg. And his brother-in-law, Max, said, "Bill, have I got a girl for you." (he laughs) "It's Sophie Carlisle that lives just down the street." So they lived on the same, the Carlisle's and the Kennedy's lived on, a few houses from each other on the same street. So our father got introduced to our mother, and apparently it took hold pretty quickly because they were soon married and, and, but she probably didn't have all that big an idea of what she was getting into. (he laughs)

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CARLISLE: No, she didn't. Probably not, but...

WILLIAM: But by the time she was in Atlanta and New Orleans and Washington...

CARLISLE: Columbia.

WILLIAM: Were they in...

CARLISLE: They lived on Green Street in Columbia.

WILLIAM: Okay.

CARLISLE: Yeah. That's...

WILLIAM: Anyway...

CARLISLE: That's where another doctor in the public health service used to tell my father that he ought to take a drink in the summer. And Pop would say, "Well, why?" And he'd say, "Well, it'll cool you off." And in the winter he'd say take one to warm up. (they laugh) I've heard Pop tell that before he...

WILLIAM: Okay.

CARLISLE: That...

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WILLIAM: But anyway, by that time she, she had a pretty good idea that she was not going to have a, a geographically stable life. (he laughs)

SIGRIST: Well, when your father talked about this experience, now, I realize he, he died quite young. But when he talked about this experience what, how did he present it? What stuck out in his mind about this experience? Were there specific cases maybe that he remembered, or...

CARLISLE: Well, what, the first thing that I remember him saying about it was that the medical officer in charge was supposed to live over here, and he refused. So that's why my father was over here. And I think he neither objected nor asked for the duty. He was just transferred over here. And I think he enjoyed it. He got to spend a lot of, probably more time with his family than he would have had he been somewhere else. And he enjoyed looking at the water. He didn't enjoy being out on it, because he said the only time he was, had anybody sick on the coast guard cutter that he spent a year on was himself. As soon as they cast off the lines he'd get sick, and the pharmacist mate would try to get him straightened out. (they laugh) But, no, I think he enjoyed it out here. They occasionally would go into Manhattan to the theatre or concerts and that sort of a thing, and I guess leave us with whoever it was that took care of us.

WILLIAM: Yeah.

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CARLISLE: And he enjoyed doing that.

SIGRIST: Do either of you have specific memories of packing and leaving Ellis Island?

CARLISLE: I remember getting on the steamboat...

WILLIAM: In the steamboat.

CARLISLE: ...to Charleston, but I'm sure we didn't do any packing.

SIGRIST: What was, what was the date that you left Ellis Island?

WILLIAM: Well, the, according to the orders, according to the orders it was August 3rd.

CARLISLE: '28.

SIGRIST: Of 1928

WILLIAM: Of 1928, yeah.

SIGRIST: ...was his last day here?

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WILLIAM: Yeah. And...

CARLISLE: And I'm sure we took the ferry over to Manhattan, and then went up to wherever, whichever pier that this vessel left from.

WILLIAM: The Clyde line used. Yeah.

CARLISLE: And headed out.

WILLIAM: And I believe one of the, one of the kids threw his shoes overboard, too, didn't he?

CARLISLE: That was off the island.

WILLIAM: It was off the island you think?

CARLISLE: Yeah. Joe threw his shoes.

WILLIAM: I remember a sailor hat floating out over the water, too.

CARLISLE: Yeah.

WILLIAM: They loved to throw things, there was a kind of a chicken wire fence

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around our, the yard of our house, so to speak. And they loved to try to see if they could throw something over the fence, you see. (he laughs)

CARLISLE: Well, that one reason our mother enjoyed it, was because we were inside the fence.

WILLIAM: Yeah.

CARLISLE: If it had just been the bulkhead around there, she'd have been a terrible mess.

WILLIAM: Oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Because there a, yeah, the seawall had a big timber on, on top of it as I recall.

CARLISLE: Hmm-hmm.

SIGRIST: Do you remember a bad storm or anything like that hitting when you were here?

CARLISLE: I don't.

WILLIAM: I remember vaguely...

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CARLISLE: I remember fog.

WILLIAM: Yeah, fog, and, and some stormy weather, but I don't remember any specifically bad one. Carlisle says that he does remember that, maybe he mentioned already, that the police would sometimes take me to school if the weather was such that the ferry couldn't run.

CARLISLE: Yeah, that was during the heavy fog.

WILLIAM: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you gentlemen have any recollections of there being any kind of emergency with the boats in the harbor, like a collision or something because of bad weather while you were here?

CARLISLE: No.

WILLIAM: I shouldn't.

CARLISLE: I don't remember anything like that. I remember occasionally that the ferries would stop running and other boats would anchor in the Hudson rather than try to maneuver. I'd heard that. I don't think could have seen it, because if the fog were that thick I couldn't have seen them anyway.

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WILLIAM: You wouldn't have known what maneuver was anyway, Lisle.

CARLISLE: Well, I would have known what anchoring was. (they laugh)

SIGRIST: Do you remember any kind of good-bye party or celebration for your family when you left?

WILLIAM: I don't.

CARLISLE: I don't either. Well, there really were very few people who lived here. The Sculleys, I think they left either just before or just after we did.

WILLIAM: I don't remember that.

CARLISLE: And Mr. Theiss was still here, but he was a bachelor, so...

WILLIAM: Yeah, he was a bachelor. And, and he was, he was not a commissioned officer. I don't know if he was civil service or he was, well, I don't know if there was any comparable, any like enlisted corps in the public health service. But at any rate...

SIGRIST: There's, there's no social network, really...

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WILLIAM: No.

SIGRIST: ...and probably people coming in and out is a very common occurrence as people get new positions in other places.

WILLIAM: Well, there, there was, in general there was quite a social network in the service, because people had served together, and, and our mother knew Mrs. so and so, and our father had served with a great many of the doctors, or, and known them. So they knew people in a lot of places, but in any given place there was usually a very small contingent. And so social life within the public health service at an installation was kind of limited. They in many places had contact with the military, because being a uniformed service, and having comparable rank and pay and everything, and certain privileges. For instance...

CARLISLE: Commissary people.

WILLIAM: They always had commissary and P.X. privileges and club privileges if they wanted. And so there was kind of an interaction with the military. And I remember that our father had friends in the corps of engineers and so on.

CARLISLE: Coast guard.

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WILLIAM: Coast guard, of course.

CARLISLE: Yeah.

WILLIAM: Which was very, a sister service, you know, I'd say, because the public health service provided the medical support for the coast guard. So, but, it was, well, in Pittsburgh particularly, and Mobile as well, it was, our mother was, the civilian community that she, and our father as well, took party in and socialized with.

CARLISLE: But it was, there was one thing that I think the way we lived here and other places, the four brothers were closer than normal, because we'd move to a place where we knew nobody else. And so we were sort of thrown on each other. And Joe and George and I used to beat up on Billy. (he laughs)

WILLIAM: Yeah. I remember one occasion where, where you guys, I think the little boys got me around the ankles, and you bumped me in the middle, and I fell over and hit my head on the back of this oak sofa, and I about split my scalp, and bled all over the place. (they laugh)

CARLISLE: Just brotherly love, you know.

WILLIAM: We were children. We were children.

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SIGRIST: But that's a very interesting point, actually, because you're constantly moving around...

CARLISLE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ...and, and you really have to be each other friends, because you really don't, takes a long time to get to know people.

CARLISLE: Well, of course, Billy stayed in the military in the airforce twenty-eight years, wasn't it?

WILLIAM: Well, all together, yeah.

CARLISLE: And so he did a lot of moving around also.

WILLIAM: Yeah.

CARLISLE: But I've lived the same place for, like I say, forty-six years I've practiced law at home. Of course, I've been thirty-two in Arlington...(they laugh)
The moving around has been long.

SIGRIST: Well, gentlemen, this has been a great pleasure. You, especially the information about filling in the ferry slip on, between islands two and three

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is unique to this collection, and this has been a wonderful interview. (they laugh) I can't wait to get you over to the abandoned part of the island, because I bet even more things will come. Anyway, this is Paul Sigrist signing off with Bill and Carlisle Bean on Wednesday, April 20th, 1994 here at the Ellis Island recording studio. Thank you so much, gentlemen.

WILLIAM: Thank you.

CARLISLE: Well, it's a pleasure.

END OF INTERVIEW