

**EI-648**

**WILLIAM SARETSKY**

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**INTERVIEWER: PAUL SIGRIST**

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**TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: TAPESCRIBE**

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**COAST GUARD 1943-46**

SIGRIST: Good afternoon. This is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is Thursday, August 10<sup>th</sup>, 1995. I'm in Yonkers, New York with William Saretsky. Mr. Saretsky was in the Coast Guard from 1943-1946 and during that time was in various positions in New York Harbor.

SARETSKY: Absolutely.

SIGRIST: Can we begin, Mr. Saretsky, by you giving me your birth date please?

SARETSKY: I was born on September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1923.

SIGRIST: And where were you born?

SARETSKY: I was born in the Bronx Hospital, Bronx, New York.

SIGRIST: And can you give me a little bit of family background, about your parents and where they were from and that sort of thing?

SARETSKY: Well, me—both parents came from Russia, but they met in New York City. My father originally went—settled in Canada with his family and spent about two years there and then came to New York City, where he met my mother. My mother probably came through Ellis Island, I don't—I'm not sure of where she came from, but I know my father came through Canada.

SIGRIST: Do you know the dates of when your parents came to this country?

SARETSKY: Ah, 19—well, my father—about 1916 or '17 my father. I don't know when my mother came, but it was approximately the same time.

SIGRIST: And what were their names?

SARETSKY: My father's name was Leon Saretsky, and my mother's name was Sonia Zhukovitsky.

SIGRIST: Zhukovitsky.

SARETSKY: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And you said to me earlier you weren't sure how to spell that.

SARETSKY: No, because she changed her name here to Dillon.

SIGRIST: Dillon?

SARETSKY: But she came through as Zhukovitsky when she came through whatever—I don't know how she came through into the United States. When she entered, her name was Zhukovitsky at that time.

SIGRIST: Say it one more time, slowly.

SARETSKY: Well, it's like they had a general in the Russian Army during World War II whose name was Zhukov and that was Z-H-U-K-O-V, and her name was Zhukovitsy, so it made it easier for me to pronounce, because his name was in the headlines and all that.

SIGRIST: Is there a story about why your mother changed the name to Dillon?

SARETSKY: Well, it was just easier to spell. If I—I wouldn't use that name. [Laughs] I use Saretsky, which is easy to spell and everything, but it—it confounded people.

SIGRIST: I should also for the sake of the tape that the recording may pick up cicadas that are in the trees around the house. Tell me a little bit about your parents' experience once they got to America.

SARETSKY: Well, what I know about is they were going together and my—my father was a—in the millinery business making hats and my mother was a cap maker and she told me—she told him when they got engaged to become a cap maker because they made more money than the person working in the—I guess it was the garment center

making hats. So they both came into the needle trades, actually, and he went—he became a cap maker. Eventually, they got married and I—they—my mother had an uncle who was in the dry goods business and they worked in selling piece goods and dress fabrics and eventually he opened his own store in the Bronx. About 19—how old was—just when I was born. About 1923 he opened a store in the Bronx because I was born about the time he opened his store, and it was at 170<sup>th</sup> Street in the Bronx and he was there 19—until my mother died in 19, I don't know '60, something like that. And that's where he made his living is working in a store in the Bronx, and I worked there for a while. And then I had my own store for a couple years and then I became a taxi driver because I hated the retail business.

SIGRIST: Did you have brothers and sisters?

SARETSKY: I have a sister.

SIGRIST: And her name?

SARETSKY: Emma Saretsky. Saretsky.

SIGRIST: And can you tell me a little bit about what it was like growing up in a household? Your parents were immigrants. What was this like as a child for you?

SARETSKY: I—I led a normal childhood. I—actually we lived next door to a store—a school. We lived on the same block as a school and it was very easy. My father had a store in the—in the—we lived in an apartment, tenement apartment building on 170<sup>th</sup> Street in the Bronx, corner of Thompson Avenue. He had a store on 170<sup>th</sup> Street which was the main business street because the subway brought—they had all the stores there and I—my apartment—we had an apartment overlooked the school yard and I was the last guy to school because I looked out the window, I could see all the lines in the winter and I—was very—it was a happy childhood. Very happy childhood.

SIGRIST: What language did you speak at home?

SARETSKY: Spoke English. I only—I picked up a little Yiddish, but that was just because I was interested, but sister doesn't know a word.

SIGRIST: What about your parents, what did they speak?

SARETSKY: When they didn't want me to understand, they would talk Russian, but they could talk Yiddish and I understood some of it, so they were careful. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: Now, was there a large Jewish population in this part of the Bronx?

SARETSKY: Oh, yeah, it was—there was—it was like 90-95% Jewish there. Very Jewish intensified area there. The only non-Jews—well, there were a lot, but there weren't a lot. I mean, but there were some. I had some non-Jewish friends, but a very small percentage.

SIGRIST: But for the most part your family sort stayed within—

SARETSKY: Well, it's not that it was the family stayed—yeah, well, my father didn't have many non-Jewish friends. I had them because I was in the streets and I was associating with them. So my friends were mostly Jewish, but there were a few non-Jews there.

SIGRIST: Tell me if there were any traditions that your parents brought with them to this country that you remember having to follow when you were growing up?

SARETSKY: Well, we were—my father was a socialist and he did not follow the religion. He was not—we were not a religious family. We were non religious family. Only thing is like the main holiday, he—I wouldn't go to school, but that was it. I mean, when we had the Seder on Passover, we went to a—an uncle, but I didn't have any religious training or anything because he was a—he wasn't an ardent socialist, but he was a socialist. He had—and that's—he didn't follow the religion.

SIGRIST: Was there a socialist community up there? Were there other people who—

SARETSKY: No, he—oh, I guess there were, but he didn't—he was so busy working. The people that worked at that time, worked terrible hours. The retail business was terrible. They used to open the store at ten in the morning and stay open until twelve o'clock at night, waiting for the people for the—that we—the entertainment at that time was movies and he was waiting for the few stragglers that came out of the movies to—people shopped at midnight that time to—to buy things, but that's people that came out of the movies. He didn't close 'til the people came—left from the movies and were on their way home and did some shopping. And he worked six days a week, miserable hours and on Sundays he used to put in a couple hours in the store in the basement preparing orders or doing stock work or whatever he

had to do. So it was—they were very hard working people, but not—nothing that I would ever want to do. That's—I don't know. I talk about that and I built up a hate for the retail business. [Laughs] I got out eventually, and I should of got out sooner.

SIGRIST: Well, it's like they don't even have lives of their own either.

SARETSKY: No lives. Their life was work. They had no lives. We went to the park on a Sunday or something, but that was—or he went—he took a trip with the subways. Wherever we went, we had subways. We didn't have a car until 1947 because we had no cars, and everything—you went everywhere for the subway. It was a nickel. I went to school down in Lower Manhattan, I went to Stuyvesant High School and we used to go to the subway. It was an hour ride, and we used to go down to Union Square and back, and we walked five blocks, six blocks to the school and didn't think anything of it. No busses, no nothing. It was just that was the way—that's the way life was and that's what we did.

SIGRIST: When you were a child, did you have any particular ideas about people in the military or—or—

SARETSKY: No. No, I—I was busy playing ball. I—I liked to play. We played stickball. We—I didn't live close to park and we used to take broomsticks and get a rubber ball, you could buy. We called them—everyone called Spaldenes. We used to get the rubber ball. Three of us put in a nickel, I think it was fifteen cents or something, and we used to play stickball. And we used to go to garbage cans and take the broomsticks and strip off the straw off and use it to play ball. And I lived next to the schoolyard and I was constantly, my whole childhood was spent in the schoolyard playing ball. I was—I didn't join any organizations or anything like that. It was—there were—I guess there were some Boy Scouts and things like that, but I wasn't—I—I wanted to play ball. I liked to play ball. We didn't play hardball because there was no—it was concrete. Concrete and we did play football, touch football and we played roller hockey in the—in the gutters because there were very few cars at that time. We played roller hockey and we used the—the lids of the—sewer lids for—if you knocked this hockey puck, which we made out of cheese boxes. Cheese at that time came in wooden boxes and we—and the ends were little squares and we played roller hockey and we played hockey and—and there was a lot more snow or there was no cars or whatever the difference is and—and we all had the Flexible Fliers. In fact, I still got one in my garage. Not mine, my son, but we used the Flexible Fliers and when it snowed we used to go—then we went to the park or we went in the streets where there—there was some

cars. We had to be—they're very—there wasn't many cars that you had to watch out, and we used to go sliding down the hills in the—in the winter. And that's—that's where we spent our time.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about how you got interested in—in joining the Coast Guard and why you wanted to do that?

SARETSKY: Oh. Oh, that's different. [Chuckles] I—the war was—I was a patriot and the—I was in high school and I just graduated high school and I saw the draft coming and everything. So I went down to the Marines to enlist in the Marines. A friend of mine and I went into the Marines, and I was rejected for my eyesight. He passed and he was killed in New Ireland in the—during the campaign, Guadal Canal and all, on one of those islands down there. So I guess I did all right by failing. I owe my eyes—my life to rotten eyes or something. I feel there's a certain amount of that, and so I said, "Well, they won't take me in the toughest outfit, I'll take—I'll go into the Coast Guard." That's also—instead of going—I didn't want to go into the army. I felt I—so I enlisted in the Coast Guard and I went in about the same time I would have been drafted, anyhow.

SIGRIST: How did your parents feel about this?

SARETSKY: It was—they expected it. It was every—it was happening to everybody. It was no—no big deal, you know. Every—everybody was doing. We knew everybody this age was going. I was—most of—all of it was already gone because I was younger at that time. I was—in 1920s, I went in 19—I was nineteen when I enlisted, so people, they were getting to the nineteen year olds and they were going—they get—they're drafting the younger kids then.

SIGRIST: Well, of course, by this time Pearl Harbor had been bombed.

SARETSKY: Oh, yeah. It was—yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember where you were in Pearl Harbor was bombed?

SARETSKY: Absolutely.

SIGRIST: Could you talk about that?

SARETSKY: Yeah, I was at the polo grounds where they—I was—I was selling score cards at the polo grounds when the—the announcement came for Colonel Donovan to report and we didn't know nothing. And what happened was, I didn't realize Pearl Harbor happened at that time. It was on a Sunday and we came back. We heard about it—we got

home, we heard that Japan bombed Pearl Harbor. I says, "They're crazy." We used to think that it—they were little nothings. We didn't realize that they would be a tough opponent. Thought we could go march through them like in five minutes. I said, "What the hell are they doing this?" and I also remember that Sunday night I went to a hockey game. Toronto Maple Leafs were playing and I was a fan of the Toronto Maple Leafs because my father came from Canada and everybody were the Rangers, so I had to take the—the other side. And I was at the hockey game and I was—I was—I had a fan club which I was a friend with one of the—a couple of the hockey players and we went to see them in a hotel room before and we were talking about it. So that's how I—how I spent Pearl Harbor day.

SIGRIST: After you were rejected from the marines—this is a little bit later.

SARETSKY: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Tell me how you went about then joining the Coast Guard?

SARETSKY: Well, I—I was working at the time. At that time I was working for Curtis Wright in Patterson, New Jersey. We made airplane engines. I was in defense work. I knew how to operate a machine because I went to Stuyvesant High School and they had a machine shop and I enjoyed working in the machine shop, so I took—I got a job over there at the time and I knew I was going, so I just enlisted in the Coast Guard.

SIGRIST: Did you have to take another exam?

SARETSKY: Oh, yeah. You had to take—

SIGRIST: Can you describe the process please?

SARETSKY: Oh, the other thing is, I—first thing—no, first I went to the Marines. Then I went to Navy Air Corps. I wanted to go in there, and I failed again for my eyesight. I failed that also for eyesight and I went—and then I finally went into the Coast Guard. But, you know, I had the choices of the services and rather than go into the army. I didn't feel I'd be happy in the army.

SIGRIST: What kind of a test? You said you take—you took a test.

SARETSKY: Well, a physical.

SIGRIST: Oh, I see, a physical.

SARETSKY: Oh, no, no—I—

SIGRIST: An examination.

SARETSKY: Well, yeah. Well, no, to go into the Navy Air Corps you had a very tough test, and I passed. It was very—I—and then they gave you a second test, but I passed the first test real good. I mean, I was the—I went to high school that's high in—you do a lot of math and I was good in—and the test was mainly math. So instead of taking the second test, they just said send me right through. The recruiting officer said to me—I remember very well. He says, because I skipped that other test and he said, "Why do you want to be a pilot?" So I says, "I feel I can do the most damage to the enemy as a pilot." I guess I was an individualist or something. So he says, "Okay." He sent me to the physical and I never passed the physical. I had three tries. I—I took the physical and I didn't pass, and I took it again about two weeks later and I didn't pass it again. My eyes weren't good enough for—at that time the requirements were very high. They had the—the pick of the crop at that time.

SIGRIST: And then how long did you have to report after they took you?

SARETSKY: After I was in the Coast Guard, they said, "Come back in about a month," I guess. I don't remember. I'm not sure. After I passed the Coast Guard, excepted by them, then they sent me out to Manhattan Beach, which was the training station out in Brooklyn, and it was in the winter. It was a cold winter that winter and you were in these—the barracks were all CC barracks. CCC camps, which was from the Depression they had these camps and they used to—they took these—they built these barracks all over the—down in the south in things in the country and the government appropriated them and moved them in and made them in for the soldiers at that time. But the CCC was during the Depression they were sending the—the people and doing public works in them.

SIGRIST: Can—for the sake of the tape, can you—can you say on tape what CCC stands for?

SARETSKY: Civilian Conservation Corps. They would—they were guys that were drifters and everything and it was the Depression. It was hard to get work. The government was putting into these—they had these camps. They had the NRA. They had the CCC. They had the WPA. They had all different programs at that time and that was—I think—I think Tony Rodamsky went to the CCC's. A lot of the guys came out of the C's and went into the service. They used to call it the C's and

had the WPA, NRA, the TVA, everything. It was—this was during Roosevelt's administration.

SIGRIST: I should say for the sake of the tape that Tony Rodamsky, whom you just referred to—

SARETSKY: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Is our interview EI-647 and Kevin and I have just come from his house.

SARETSKY: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And you and Mr. Rodamsky are friends.

SARETSKY: Yes.

SIGRIST: Old friends.

SARETSKY: Yes.

SIGRIST: What—you said they did public works. What kinds of things?

SARETSKY: They put them out in the woods and they were chopping down trees. I don't know. I wasn't a—I didn't belong to the C—very—but young men all—who were drifters or—or couldn't get work were going there and it was kind of a job doing—maybe cleaning the parks. Like, the—the WP—these were for the younger men. The WPA was for the skilled construction workers. So this was for the young. They were cleaning up parks and they were all through the south and all over the country, I guess. I mean, I was too young for that, so—

SIGRIST: So you were put up in these CCC camp barracks, which had been reconstructed at Manhattan Beach.

SARETSKY: Right.

SIGRIST: And was this your boot camp?

SARETSKY: Yes.

SIGRIST: Is that what it would be referred to?

SARETSKY: Yes.

SIGRIST: Can you describe for us exactly what boot camp is and what you learned there?

SARETSKY: Oh. [Laughs] It was a six—it was a crash course because at that time the Coast Guard needed men, and I was only there six weeks before they shipped me out and it was a six weeks' period that they did. Later on the boot camps lasted much longer and I think today even the guys, six months courses. And they—they just gave us basic marching. We were marching. We were basic marching. Used to sing when we marched. We got our shots. Got our uniforms. Learned how to clean the uniforms, how to—just gave us basic training. That's all that the boot camps were is basic training. We got very little training actually at that time because it was 1943 and they needed everybody they could get at that time with the—the submarines were running wild in the Atlantic and that's what they needed the—most of the Coast Guard men were doing, doing were being prepared for.

SIGRIST: You said you sang while you marched.

SARETSKY: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what you sang?

SARETSKY: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Can you sing something?

SARETSKY: [sings] "Bell-bottom trousers, coats of navy blue. Climbing through the rigging like your daddy used to do. Now along came a bar maid from down on Drury Lane. Her master, he was good to her. Her mistress was the same. 'Til along came a sailor from far across the sea. He was the cause of all her misery." [laughs] I don't remember the rest. I'm amazed that I still remember that.

SIGRIST: And you would march in rhythm to this?

SARETSKY: Yeah, they'd sing other songs, but that—that one I remember. That one I [unclear].

SIGRIST: Oh, thank you.

SARETSKY: And we used to march along to—I'm sure that's well known.

SIGRIST: So you were there for six—

SARETSKY: Six weeks.

SIGRIST: Weeks, and you got basic—I mean it's very basic.

SARETSKY: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And then you were shipped out. Where did they put you first?

SARETSKY: They sent me to Greenport, Long Island in the—I was assigned to the Third Naval District. Greenport, Long Island has—was the sailboat fleet. They had a line of sailboats that ran—because this was a submarine menace, you used to go out on patrol off the coast of the US and up in Canada. The First Naval District took the Boston area. I don't know how far they went. We did the Third Naval and we used to get out in these sailboats and we went up and down in a grid. The Atlantic was divided into grids and you were safe in sailboats because no submarine is going to come up and knock over a sailboat, and if you set a torpedo, it would just go under the keel anyway. It would never hit us, and we—we used to go back and forth in this grid patrol. Never saw anything, and—

SIGRIST: And how long were you stationed there for?

SARETSKY: I was there about two months and I was called to—[unclear] to the—this school for this lookout tower detail in New York Harbor, which got me to the Statue of Liberty and all of that. I had good marks. I was a pretty bright guy and they took the brightest to go into the—became what they call Quartermaster Signalmen. They set up this—we took some training. They sent us first to Bridgeport and then to Graway, New Jersey and then the towers were ready. We were there getting training until the towers—and we practiced blinker light, which was our main thing. Flashing lights that we used—we were going to use to blinkers and these—the flags and it became Signalmens and Quartermasters because at that time the rating in the navy and the Coast Guard, you were what's called a Signalmen Quartermaster. You had to do both jobs. Now they're all specialized, but at that time you were a Signalmen Quartermaster and we went to that school, and then you had to be—you know, the higher intelligent guys went to that or became radio men, things like that, where not regular swabbies. [laughs]

SIGRIST: And what were the positions in New York Harbor? I assume there were several.

SARETSKY: I know—I know them all. Seven.

SIGRIST: Could you name them, please?

SARETSKY: Yeah, the headquarters with the Barge Office. That was—

SIGRIST: On—

SARETSKY: Room 41. I can even name—I think I remember them all.

SIGRIST: And I should say for the sake of the tape that the old Barge Office is approximately where the Coast Guard building stands now in Battery Park.

SARETSKY: Yeah. Barge Office was headquarters. The First Naval District—the Third Naval District headquarters was at 42 Broadway. That was the head of all the naval affairs. The Coast Guard had—the Coast Guard had their offices in—in 42 Broadway. The Barge Office controlled the Captain of the Port, which was all the pier guards and the picket boats and everything, you know. And—but we had—our tower, the headquarters tower was on top of the Barge Office, U-41. We were all given a U designation.

SIGRIST: There was a tower that was on—on—

SARETSKY: Yeah, there [unclear] on top of the [unclear].

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

SARETSKY: Then in the Statue of Liberty, we were built in the base where those columns are and we were facing two directions. That was U-42. One was facing toward Brooklyn and the other was facing—and we could see the Harbor, but it was on that angle, and the other one was facing toward the Barge Office. We didn't use this part facing Jersey. That was U-42. U-43 was the Starrett Lehigh Building on 28<sup>th</sup> Street and 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue that controlled the Hudson.

SIGRIST: Could you say that name again?

SARETSKY: Starrett Lehigh Building. It's still there.

SIGRIST: Starrett? S-T-A-

SARETSKY: Lehigh. R-E-T-T. Lehigh, like the train.

SIGRIST: L-E-H-I-G-H.

SARETSKY: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Thank you.

SARETSKY: Building on—on about 28<sup>th</sup> Street and 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue, which controlled the Hudson. Across the harbor, we had—there was—there was—at that time there was a tower on top of the Hoboken Train Station. It's gone now, and we were stationed in that tower, up—they built a building up in this tower up there where we also controlled the Hudson, the upper Hudson. That was U-44. No, that was U-45. Oh, U-44 was the Seamen's Institute, Seamen's Church Institute, which was right across the street from our pier. We were on Pier 9, East River, and it was like Peck Slip. Was it Peck Slip or—right by the Treasury Building. They got the Mint Building or they had some building down there, official building which is still there. US Mint or you—they tore down the Seamen's Church Institute. We were in the Seamen's Church. That was U-44. U-45 was Hoboken. U-46 was Brooklyn on top of Pier 6, Brooklyn, where the Brooklyn Army Base was, where ninety percent of the stuff that shipped out of New York was stored there before they put on the freighters. Then U-47 was Staten Island on top of the town hall in Staten Island and back from the ferry slips and out to—and we could look out at the entrance to the harbor and control—looked all over New York Harbor. So that's—that's where the seven towers were.

SIGRIST: Just for the sake of the tape, can you explain what it was you were looking for?

SARETSKY: Okay. At that time, convoys and they were up to a hundred and a hundred and fifty ships. I don't know, there were so many. Used to come into New York and they didn't have pier space for them, so they used to anchor down in Graves End Bay in Brooklyn, up the Hudson, outside the Statue of Liberty. You had to use these anchorages until the piers could handle them. Now, what we're looking for, when the ships came into New York, probably out by Ambrose and even further out, they had radio silence. No one was allowed to transmit. Their radios were sealed. No one was allowed to transmit because of spies, security reasons, and the only contact with a lot of these ships that all the ships in the anchorages went through these signal towers and they used to get in and "Send a tugboat. We need help. We need a doctor." That's what the signal towers were and also we watched the piers for fires. In fact, I reported one fire time, Pier 5, before they got it, and we watched the piers for fire and security. We could—and we—we used to also enforce the laws of the—the port, which was that you weren't allowed to block these piers with tugs or barges or whatever—whatever

they—and we'd make sure if something was wrong, we called them up and we sent a patrol boat to clean them out.

SIGRIST: Ships were traveling in large convoys because this was the height of the war—

SARETSKY: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: For safety.

SARETSKY: Oh, yeah, coming and going. Coming and going they used to—well, coming they were empty. Going, I used to see them loaded up. We could always tell by the water line if they—what they had in there. You can tell a ship had anything on it and to—that's what—that's what we were there for, to—

SIGRIST: Talk about—

SARETSKY: We worked for what the—the division of the Coast Guard called Captain of the Port. He was in charge of security there. Patrol of the harbor and headquarters were right in the Barge Office.

SIGRIST: Who was the Captain of the Port of New York at that time?

SARETSKY: I don't know. It was—it wasn't—Captain of the Port is—is not a captain. It's a—it's a division. It's a division they called Captain of the Port. On every pier they used to have three or four guards because the Normandy burned and—and in fact, they were there were there when the Norman—and to watch. It's security against spies and saboteurs. And the [unclear] pier in New York had piers which was a division of the Captain of the Port. We were the—we were called the LTD, Lookout Tower Detail. That was our division. We had about fifty. There was hundreds of pier guards. There were pier guards in Brooklyn, in Staten Island, in Manhattan and Chelsea Barracks, Brooklyn Barracks, over a pier in Staten Island, over in Hoboken and Jersey City was the one that patrolled the Jersey piers, but this was all security. Protection against saboteurs.

SIGRIST: Can you describe for me the actual process, from the time you left your barracks until the time you got to your post and what you had to do when you got to the post?

SARETSKY: Yeah. Every post was manned by two men. To get to the Statue of Liberty from—we went—we lived on Pier 9. Pier 9 you could walk across street to the Seamen's Church Institute.

SIGRIST: There were barracks at Pier 9 or—

SARETSKY: Yes.

SIGRIST: Something.

SARETSKY: That's where we all lived.

SIGRIST: Right.

SARETSKY: We all lived at Pier 9 on the Lookout Tower Detail. There—we also had the picket boats there that patrolled the harbor, but that was—picket boats were a lot of different divisions. But the picket boats for Manhattan were at Pier 9, East River. Pier 11, East River had navy picket boats, but they weren't in charge of the port. They did naval services. Ah, we walked from—we could walk to the Barge Office from Pier 9. We could walk to Seamen's Church Institute from Pier 9. To go to the Statue of Liberty, a picket boat, which is a 38-footer, used to take us to the dock at the Statue of Liberty and wait for the—we relieved the people up there, whoever was on duty. Waited for them to come back and they came back to—they came back to Pier 9. Everything was Pier 9.

[END OF SIDE A]  
[BEGIN SIDE B]

SIGRIST: So the second boat would stay there and pick up the—the people who were—

SARETSKY: They dropped off somebody and picked them up, [unclear].

SIGRIST: Do you remember where on—on Bedlow's Island the dock was?

SARETSKY: Probably the same place it is now, with a different dock.

SIGRIST: Which is where, if you can just say that?

SARETSKY: Ah, well, it was—it was the dock—what I remember is if you draw a line from the Statute of Liberty to the Barge Office, it would be somewhere in that area.

SIGRIST: Somewhere in the front of the Statue, as you recall.

SARETSKY: Yeah. Well, and if you go up—you had to go up from the Statue of Liberty—from the north end of the Statue toward the south end of the

Barge Office. You could draw a line from there. So we ran—we used that, and on there was somebody from the National Park Service who was very friendly with the guys there. They got to know him very well. In fact, Tony knew him very well. He—there was a family that lived on the—that was in charge from the National Park Service—that was in charge of the Statue and all of that. Were you aware of that?

SIGRIST: No.

SARETSKY: There was a family lived on there, while—it was—Bedlow's Island was controlled by the National Park Service at that time and it was—they had people, had a family there or I'm sure of them knew more. I didn't spend that much time there, but Tony Radomsky spent a lot and I know they were very friendly with the—the people there. You know, that—that took care of the dock and whatever services they had. So I think they—it was like a lighthouse service, or whatever it was, but I'm sure it was the National Park Service. They—they—they were in charge of Bedlow's Island at that time, and to go to Brooklyn we used to go by jeep and go to—there used to be a jeep that used to take the guys going to Brooklyn. Guys going to Staten Island used to work to the—walk over the State Island Ferry, take the ferry across. That was the long trip. Then walk up to the—so we used the Staten Island Ferry as transportation going between Pier 9 and Staten Island, and Hoboken we had a jeep that went up to West Side. Went to the Starett Lehigh Building on 28<sup>th</sup> Street and dropped off someone at the Hoboken thing, ferry, when—they picked up the people at Starett Lehigh Building and then they waited for the Hoboken Ferry to come back and they—they came back to Pier 9. That was the transportation between these piers. Between our posts.

SIGRIST: Say at the Statue of Liberty—

SARETSKY: We had—

SIGRIST: You've come in by the picket boat.

SARETSKY: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Then—then where did you go? Just retrace your steps.

SARETSKY: We walked—we walked—we walked to the Statue of Liberty to the base. We took the elevator up to the top and that was exactly—which was actually part of the base.

SIGRIST: To the top of the base?

SARETSKY: The top of the base, where—and we got out. I think we might have been one floor below the top.

SIGRIST: And there was an elevator, as you recall?

SARETSKY: Elevator. Same elevator that—I've been there a couple years. I think it was the same one that I recall, the elevator. And took the elevator up. We signed out, the others signed in and they went back, took the elevator down and walked out to the pier, and where the picket boat was waiting and went back to the pier.

SIGRIST: You say that you had to sign in. Was there another person on duty there with a log of some kind?

SARETSKY: Oh, there's a—we—yeah, we kept a constant log at all—all towers, and you had to sign in and sign out and we—there was two people on each tower at—and we—we relieved each other. You had to sign in and the other guy had to sign out.

SIGRIST: How large of a space did you have, these two people to—to sit or however you were doing your watch?

SARETSKY: Well, the watch in the Statue of Liberty, you had to go outside. The—the office was inside. You had to go outside and look over the balconies. I guess they were balconies, and we were in the base of where those columns are. I remember—this is the part that's interesting. I remember when we first were building this and I was on the first detail up on the Statue of Liberty and it was full of guano. We had a boatload. We loaded it up and we had to clean out all the pigeon droppings. It was loaded with pigeons at that time. But they built inside that that floor, so where they built an office with a telephone and we had the blinker lights and we could use—that was our communications with the shore. That was the Statue of Liberty, and the others we all had telephones and they were—how big were they? I don't know maybe ten by ten or something like that, a space. Not—we didn't have much equipment there.

SIGRIST: Were you allowed to sit?

SARETSKY: Oh, yeah. [unclear]

SIGRIST: So there were chairs.

SARETSKY: We had—I guess there were chairs. We may—what—I don't even remember. I'm sure there must have been chairs there or something,

but we didn't sit in there. We—you had to—we were there to look and watch the harbor. We were outside most of the time.

SIGRIST: How long was—was the actual watch in hours?

SARETSKY: Four on eight off.

SIGRIST: Four on eight off.

SARETSKY: Four hours on, eight off. It was four shifts and somebody had two days off. And that's—then it was rotating.

SIGRIST: And were—excuse me—were you using any sort of device for scanning, like a telescope or—

SARETSKY: Oh, we carried—we had—had the good navy binoculars. We had binoculars and we had—that's the only thing I think, that I can recall. I got a picture somewhere of when I was—then we had foul weather gear and we carried a pistol because we had codes. You had codes in there and we had books, like the naval to interpret messages. We actually never used them. You could send messages by flags and you had to look up in book, but everything we did, we used the Morse Code and that was our communications with the—with the ships.

SIGRIST: What kinds of things were you taught to see in—in the—on the horizon that would give you a clue that something was going on or that—

SARETSKY: Just scanned. No—nothing special. We knew the—the laws of the piers because we were actually working for the piers and the Captain of the Port and he was in charge of all the piers. And we watched the piers and we'd watch anything unusual or—or if we saw driftwood or some kind of a danger to shipping, big logs or something like that, we reported those things and they sent out tugs or whatever they did to pick it up, or the debris. We did—just generally useful but the main point we were there was to maintain communications between the ship to shore.

SIGRIST: And this is going on during the day and the night, or just in the night?

SARETSKY: Twenty-four hours a day.

SIGRIST: Twenty-four hours a day.

SARETSKY: Yeah. We reported fires. We—there weren't many of those, but just general security.

SIGRIST: Are there—are there any incidents that stand out in your mind where, you know, there was a security hazard or—

SARETSKY: No, I don't—with the enemy, no. Normal maybe—I remember I was on a duty and a fire started right down on Pier 9 where we lived, and it came right through the roof of the barracks there and we reported it. But that wasn't any—that just was accidental. Electrical wiring or something, but nothing—no incidents with—with the enemy.

SIGRIST: Did you ever have any interaction with any of the refugee ships that were coming in from Europe at that time?

SARETSKY: There were—I don't recall any refugee ships. I don't recall any refugee ships. I remember we—we were doing what most people would do, which was ninety percent liberty ships which were cargo vessels. The escorts went to the navy yard or to the—they had a base on Staten Island where the naval vessels. I don't know if the Coast Guard vessels had a base there. I don't—and I—in fact, one time I remember when I saw the Franklin come in, I was on duty and that came in from the Pacific, I guess. That was shot through holes. You could look right through the ship where a kamikaze hit it and exploded. We saw the naval vessels come in the big thing was the Queen Mary and the Queen Elizabeth used to run and they didn't even run with the escorts. They ran across because they could—they had such speed, they could outrun submarines and they run unescorted. And but we always knew when they're going because we could tell their—their foghorns. You could just tell their—they used to blow their foghorns when they were getting out in the harbor and coming in. We knew they were in, but they—that was the biggest ships that I can remember was the Queen Mary and the Queen Elizabeth.

SIGRIST: Can you describe for me the uniform that you wore at that time?

SARETSKY: Regular, we wore jeans and I've got pictures of them. We wore jeans, dungarees and denim shirts and in the winter we had foul weather gear. We had something that was issued to us for foul weather, but on duty we were supposed to wear a hat and a gun and denim shirts and the jeans. That's what—that was our uniforms.

SIGRIST: When—how many times do you think you were at the Statue of Liberty?

SARETSKY: I wasn't there much because I was on the—the—I was one of the bad guys. So that was—they had the guys that behaved good go on

the Statue because that was a prime place. They used to send me to the outskirts, Staten Island or Hoboken.

SIGRIST: Well, now, what did you do that—that put you into the bad guy category?

SARETSKY: I was a wise guy—I was a—I thought I was smarter than these—because the—the two—we were in charge of two Chief Petty Officers and one was a real moron. A real moron. I don't know what—he was—I just used to give him a lot of lip. I—I—and he knew I didn't respect him or anything. The other one was okay, but he was—he was a dead head. [Laughs] So I just thought I was smarter than them, so they—they—they realized it, but we got along. We got along.

SIGRIST: You said you were stationed at the Hoboken Piers.

SARETSKY: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What—what kind of tra—traffic is coming into the pier in—in—at this time?

SARETSKY: Hoboken Pier was for the ferry. They used to run a ferry between Hoboken and New York.

SIGRIST: Right.

SARETSKY: It was a commuter ferry and the—and the Jersey train station was under it.

SIGRIST: And that was the only—it was just the commuter traffic that was going back and forth?

SARETSKY: Well, no, there was—Hoboken Piers, as you go further down, and I got pictures here, you could see there—the freight and general harbor traffic was in there. I don't know—Hoboken hadn't the naval traffic or the liberty ships. I guess they were all over, but I don't recall that. But—but that's what Hoboken was, mainly a commuter station. People used to run across, take the train and run down to Wall Street. It ran across to Barclay Street or somewhere right down in lower Manhattan, the Hoboken Ferry. They had a ferry there and I don't know if they had one in [unclear] or not. They didn't have one in [unclear]. They might have had a ferry at [unclear], but that was one of the main transportations between New Jersey and Manhattan.

SIGRIST: The few times that you were at the Statue of Liberty, do you have any recollection of there being visitors? Civilian visitors?

SARETSKY: Oh, yeah, all the time. All the time.

SIGRIST: Does anything stick out in your mind about seeing them or—

SARETSKY: A couple of guys used to make dates with the girls and stuff. I know they used to talk about it. I didn't spend that much—yeah, they—they'd go down and screw off a little bit and talk to them because it was quiet or something. One guy would—could actually man it at the time. So, yeah, there were visitors just like you have now. They were—they were running the Statue of Liberty boat. It was a big tourist thing.

SIGRIST: And who ran the Statue of Liberty boat, do you know? Was that a—

SARETSKY: I think—I have no idea. Private enterprise, I would say. It was a private enterprise at that time.

SIGRIST: Could you talk a little bit about the picket boats and—and exactly what their purpose was in the New York Harbor?

SARETSKY: The picket boats were the thirty-eight footers. They were called picket boats.

SIGRIST: These are wooden boats.

SARETSKY: Wooden, thirty-eight footers and their job was to police the harbor. We were part of Captain of the Port. They used to do the same thing. They made sure the piers were maintained right, that they weren't blocked so a fire boat could get in because sometimes these barges, they used to put across them and they used to put three wide and they weren't allowed to, so—and they used to patrol. Picket actually means patrol boats. They were patrolling the harbor and doing services like running people out, naval personnel to these ships because these—the convoys—the harbor was loaded. At times there might have been thirty or forty or fifty boats at anchor because they couldn't get into the piers. There was just so much—so much space and we used to run—I didn't do it. They just were patrol boats. I don't know what—that's—that's what their job was and they did odds and end work like they took us—they weren't there for us, but as long as we needed them, that was the way they were going to use them.

SIGRIST: And they were run by the Coast Guard? These were Coast Guard boats?

SARETSKY: Coast Guard ran the picket boats. The navy had these launches, bigger boats, open. Picket boats had a little roof on them. The launches were open boats and they used to do work between the naval vessels, I guess. But we worked all the—all the merchant marine and the tugboats. Most of our messages were calls from the ships to send a tugboat, they're ready to go to a pier and they're getting tired of waiting and things like that. They had a big towing company. Even though we worked for them, the company was named Dalzell. "Please send Dalzell." That was half the messages. "We're waiting. We're waiting. Get in touch with Dalzell, see what happened."

SIGRIST: Now, at night from these different lookouts, were there lanterns up there that you could send messages with or how—

SARETSKY: We had blinker lights.

SIGRIST: Blinker light. Can you describe a blinker light for us on tape?

SARETSKY: Oh, blinker light was a powerful beam with a powerful bulb and had a—

SIGRIST: So it's electric?

SARETSKY: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah.

SARETSKY: It had a handle on each side of it. It was, I guess it was like eighteen inches in diameter. Twenty inches, eighteen, twenty and it had a handle on each side with a spring on it and you sent dots and dashes. You used the Morse Code, and you could see it up and down the harbor. You could go for three or four miles, which is all actually you needed. I was on a—when I was on a navy ship—no a Coast Guard ship, a naval vessel because the Coast Guard manned some navy ships at that time. That was after the war. We used to send—I—I sent a message to a ship eight miles away by bouncing it off a cloud. We were in the Suez Canal and we were bouncing messages off the cloud, just for the fun of it. So you work, but those were with the cleag lights. We didn't have—those were like electrodes. These were just bulbs, but we had those powerful bulbs. I don't know how many watts they were.

SIGRIST: I know that you were discharged from Ellis Island.

SARETSKY: Yes.

SIGRIST: And we'll get to that soon. Did you have any other interaction during that time with Ellis Island, or—or heard any stories about anything that went on there or—

SARETSKY: Well, I had a friend there whose—whose cousin played for the Ellis Island basketball team there. Because every base had some kind of an intramural thing or whatever it was.

SIGRIST: Sure, and it was a Coast Guard base at that time.

SARETSKY: Yeah, and we went over to see his cousin on Ellis Island play one time but that's—that's about the only time I did go to Ellis Island, except to, as a receiving station when I got discharged. They sent me from there to—to the discharge station, but that was like a waiting station, holding you.

SIGRIST: When you went over to the basketball game—

SARETSKY: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Does anything stick out in your mind about going over there?

SARETSKY: Because it was only one day and I—

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

SARETSKY: I—I remember—

SIGRIST: Do you remember—

SARETSKY: Yeah, the Great Hall was there. I still remember the Great Hall. That was the first time I saw the Great Hall and I remembered that was very impressive, that Great Hall. The Great Hall was very impressive and when I went to see it a couple years ago, with my grandchildren, I says, "I was here." I could—I had felt it. Dejay-vous [sic], or whatever it is. I—I felt that I was there. I remember that.

SIGRIST: I guess what I'm wondering is do you remember where they played basketball on Ellis Island? Do you remember where you went to see basketball?

SARETSKY: They must have had a gym somewhere. Maybe they used the Great Hall. No, because I think I remember benches there or something. I don't—I don't really recall. I can't—I can't—just too hazy. I just know I did it. I don't remember anything about it. I just know I did it. That's all I know.

SIGRIST: Kevin, do you have any questions that you'd like to ask? I should say for the sake of the tape Kevin Daley is running the equipment, and if you have any questions—

DALEY: Well, we came across one photograph in the collection that's labeled on the back, because usually this was Fort Wood—the Statue is called Fort Wood.

SARETSKY: I don't remember it called Fort Wood. Okay, it may be.

DALEY: Well, we also have a photograph with another name on the back like Fort—I think it was Fort Howard. Do you remember knowing—

SARETSKY: I have no recollection of either.

DALEY: Oh, okay. Okay.

SARETSKY: Nothing. In fact, if you—if I'd show you where we had the tower room by pointing at it, but I guess—

DALEY: This is in 1941, in August 1941.

SARETSKY: Oh, there's the pier.

SIGRIST: Yeah, here's the pier.

SARETSKY: Yeah.

SIGRIST: We're looking at a photograph?

SARETSKY: This is Governor's Island now?

SIGRIST: Ah, no, actually this is the—this—

SARETSKY: Oh, yeah, right here. This is the pier.

DALEY: That's in the front.

SARETSKY: That's the pier.

SIGRIST: We're pointing to the pier in the front of the Statue of Liberty.

SARETSKY: Governor's Island's out here somewhere.

DALEY: Uh-hmm.

SARETSKY: Staten Island's down here somewhere.

SIGRIST: Right. Actually, Governor's Island would be like here.

SARETSKY: Whatever.

SIGRIST: Almost across, yeah.

SARETSKY: Yeah, okay.

SIGRIST: And so up in—

SARETSKY: That's Jersey over there.

DALEY: Right.

SIGRIST: So here in the colonnade, that's where--

SARETSKY: Under that, that's where we were.

DALEY: Oh, in the colonnade.

SIGRIST: Under—down in the columns.

SARETSKY: Right down here.

DALEY: Which would now be called 5P. In the modern—

SIGRIST: Now—

SARETSKY: And there's one more flight of—

DALEY: 6P.

SARETSKY: At the top of the elevator, right?

DALEY: Yeah, 6P is where you go outside and walk all the way around the pedestal top.

SARETSKY: No, we didn't go up there.

SIGRIST: Oh, okay.

SARETSKY: We were in the colonnades and down here.

SIGRIST: Now, was there some kind of a structure built by the Coast Guard to facilitate your using this as a watch tower?

SARETSKY: Inside. Inside.

SIGRIST: And what would—

SARETSKY: And out here—out here we had the—yeah, we did have the blinker lights out here.

SIGRIST: They were mounted outside?

SARETSKY: Yeah, absolutely.

SIGRIST: And then what kind of structure was built on the inside? You said there was like an office area.

SARETSKY: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What exactly did they do?

SARETSKY: A wooden—[unclear] a wooden structure just to keep some books and keep your gear in there. Hang your coat or something.

SIGRIST: You said there was a telephone in there.

SARETSKY: Oh, yeah, we had to have the telephone was in there.

SIGRIST: What about heat? Was there some—

SARETSKY: Heat was in there.

SIGRIST: On your four hour on shift.

SARETSKY: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Did you get a break during that time?

SARETSKY: No. Oh, we—we—between the two of us, we did what we wanted. We were isolated. We did what we wanted. I mean, but the break

was if we wanted to sit down, we sat down or whatever it is.  
Nothing—

SIGRIST: Do you remember what else may have been inside the base of the Statue of Liberty? What—

SARETSKY: I think we—is this the end? We came through here to the elevator, right?

DALEY: Yes, the—according to one other army person we interviewed, Charles Polasky, he said the visitors would go in the Sally Port which is the front of Fort Wood and come up to a little structure in front of the pedestal and then walk into here. So I guess if you—this would be the same path you might have followed.

SARETSKY: Right. Right.

SIGRIST: Just for fun, did you ever climb up to the crown?

SARETSKY: Yes. Once and I'll never do it again. I said I'll never do it again, and my wife made me do it when the kids were here and I was sorry—I says, "I remembered I wouldn't do it again, when I went up to the crown," because once I wanted to do it. And I did go up to the crown and I says, "I'm not gunna go up this thing again," and she made me go up that time and I says, "I knew I was right the first time." I knew I had that in my memory somewhere not to do it again. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: Did you wander around the grounds anywhere else during that time when—

SARETSKY: No, we weren't allowed to. Of course, I know some of them did. I know some of the guys did because they told me they used to go out and shoot rats. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: Do you—

SARETSKY: I wasn't there, but I heard those stories from the other guys and I believed them.

SIGRIST: They were shooting rats at Ellis Island.

SARETSKY: Yeah.

SIGRIST: At Statue of Liberty.

SARETSKY: Yeah.

- SIGRIST: Did you ever see any rats at the Statue when you were there?
- SARETSKY: No, I didn't. No, I saw the pigeons, though. I remember the pigeons. I cleaned up after the pigeons because we were moving stuff in there and this all in here. We cleaned out all—all—
- SIGRIST: That whole upper part of the—
- SARETSKY: Yeah, it was all loaded with guano. So, we cleaned it.
- DALEY: Did you ever hear of a story of a prison being in the base of the Statue?
- SARETSKY: No. No.
- SIGRIST: Was there some kind of a brig for Coast Guardsmen somewhere in New York Harbor, who Coast Guardsmen who had been particularly bad?
- SARETSKY: I went—yeah, I went, I think it might have been on Ellis Island. I think it might have been on Ellis Island because I remember when I was getting discharged, they gave me one night I had to guard the brig there. There was a whole bunch of us, but one of my jobs was guarding—I think it was—it was—am I right?
- SIGRIST: There was one at Ellis Island, yeah.
- SARETSKY: I—I did it. You know, I was there about three days or four days getting processed and I did guard the brig. That was one of the jobs they gave me, right.
- SIGRIST: Well, actually, before we talk about Ellis Island, do you have any other questions about the Statue of Liberty specifically, Kevin, that you'd like to ask Mr. Saretsky and then we'll get to the—the whole discharging experience?
- DALEY: No, the—no, not at this point.
- SIGRIST: All right. Well, let's talk about, this is 1946 when you're being discharged.
- SARETSKY: Yes. Yes.
- SIGRIST: Why are you being discharged?

SARETSKY: I reached the point system. I was a—by being stationed in New York, they discharged you—they had a point system discharge. Overseas time counted X amount and stateside time counted less. So actually I had more time than a lot of the—most of the guys being discharged, but my—my duties up until September 1945 were all stateside, and they were getting like three points to my two points every month. And they used the point system, so in 1946 when they started discharging, I was right at the bottom of the barrel somewhere in line to be discharged and they put me on a ship and actually I went overseas in 19—in 1946 I went overseas. I was put on a troop ship as a signalman doing the same duties, but I worked out of—I did it on a troop ship until—until—it was 1945, September 1945 until I think April '46, where I got discharged. I was on this ship and the ship actually was—we ran in and out of New York Harbor bringing troops back. I made a couple of trips to India, a trip to Puerto Rico. We brought troops back to Puerto Rico—we brought, and they gave me—the last trip I brought troops back from France and then the next trip was going to Genoa, Italy and my points were right and they asked me, “Do you want to make one more trip?” and I debated because I did want to go, but I says, “I better get out when the going’s good.” So I got out and that’s how I got discharged.

SIGRIST: And what is that process? What did you go through?

SARETSKY: It’s a point system. It was a point system and the process was you went to the receiving station, which was Ellis Island. I stayed there maybe a day I think or two and then I was sent to Brooklyn Barracks, which I was stationed at at one time because they broke up Pier 9 and they put the—they sent a lot of us to a place in Brooklyn called Brooklyn Barracks, which was at the foot of Columbia Street in Brooklyn and Redhook. And we were in Brooklyn Barracks I think the last three or four months before the end of the—after the war in Germany was over ‘til—‘til Japan I think I was in Brooklyn Barracks. In Brooklyn Barracks they put me on the ship. The ship they put me Ellis Island. Ellis Island was like the receiving station. I was there a day or two and then they sent me to Brooklyn Barracks where they—they did the entire process. The—you got—you got your records and they got where you were going and they gave the discharge money and they gave you your transportation money and whatever else. They gave you the health examination. But I think Ellis Island was just mainly a receiving station, in and out, while they were waiting for spaces where you could, of course—some of the—like twenty guys came off the ship with me, we were eligible at that time. So they were going all over the country. I just happened to be in my home district. That’s what Ellis Island was. They shipped them all over the country.

- SIGRIST: What sticks out in your mind about those couple of days that you spent at Ellis Island? You just told they—they put you to guard the brig.
- SARETSKY: Yeah. They—they gave you something to—they needed brig guards and they—I guess I was one on the list or some. All I remember is we were sitting around waiting. Waiting most of the time, I guess. I—I—I did guard the brig, though. I remember one day in my life I guarded the brig and I'm pretty sure it was at Ellis Island.
- SIGRIST: What about any of the physical details, or the room that you were waiting in or wherever you slept that night?
- SARETSKY: Have no idea. No idea. I was in so many barracks. You go in and out and—
- SIGRIST: And they all look the same, for the most part.
- SARETSKY: Yeah. Yeah. There's nothing distinctive about it, let me put it that way. There's nothing that I should remember about this.
- SIGRIST: When you say it was a receiving station, Ellis Island, what do you mean exactly by that?
- SARETSKY: It was a—a receiving station to me is a place where you go before you go to your destination. It's a holding area. That's what a receiving area is. It's—I was there, well, I remember the guy I went there with was another Quartermaster. His name was John Bolotin. He came from Washington State.
- SIGRIST: What was his name?
- SARETSKY: John Bolotin.
- SIGRIST: Bolotin?
- SARETSKY: B-O-L-O-T-I-N.
- SIGRIST: Thank you.
- SARETSKY: He was a shipmate of mine and we got discharged at the same time and we went to Ellis Island, but I had—I was going to Brooklyn Barracks and he was going somewhere in the West Coast. So from Ellis Island they sent them all over the United States to wherever you came from, to your home district and from your—you discharged in

your naval district where you enlisted in or whatever you listed as your home area.

SIGRIST: So it was like an organizational spot?

SARETSKY: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Everybody went there and then they divvied up who was going to go where.

SARETSKY: That's right.

SIGRIST: And would—would you say most people probably in your situation were only there for a few days?

SARETSKY: Yeah. They—they had a cadre that ran the base, but most of us were just transient. Just in and out. I guess the guys in the brig weren't so transient. [Laughs] But, yeah, it was a transient area, that's all it was.

SIGRIST: Tell me how, when you look back on—on this experience of working in New York Harbor and, you know, keeping watch in all these different places.

SARETSKY: Yeah.

SIGRIST: How do you think about that experience now, fifty years later?

SARETSKY: I—I enjoyed myself there. I really—well, I was home, too. I—you know, I—they used to give us like six hours leave in between watches every other day or something like that. So I could go home and whoever my friends was home, they were coming from overseas or something, or they were—they were going—they were in Arkansas or Tennessee and they came home for two days, I got to see them, which was great being stationed there. In fact, I liked—I—I had a good time. I—I enjoyed it.

SIGRIST: Do you think the coast Guard has shaped your life in any way? The rest of your life?

SARETSKY: Probably, had to have a—it was a—in my maturing years, sure. Sure, it was—it was good years. I know I enjoyed it. I could go home when I wanted to. I got to work six days on and two days off and then you had two nights off for short periods, but if I wanted to go home, I could go home, or if I wanted to—and being in New York was great. New York was great.

EI-648/SARETSKY

SIGRIST: Mr. Saretsky, I want to think you very much for letting us come out on short notice, and ask you questions about—

SARETSKY: I thought you might be interested in seeing one or two of these pictures.

SIGRIST: Sure, let's—we'll just sign off here and we'll go on—

SARETSKY: You want—oh, okay.

SIGRIST: This is Paul Sigrist signing off with William Saretsky on Thursday, August 10<sup>th</sup>, 1995 in Yonkers, New York. Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]