

EI-685

KNUD HANSEN

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**Coast Guard at Ellis Island
1952-1953**

LEVINE: Okay. Today is October 13th, 1995. And we're here in the Oral History Studio at Ellis Island. I'm here with Knud Hansen who was in the Coast Guard here at Ellis Island from February 1952 until November 1953, a period of twenty-two months. So, I'm looking forward to whatever you can remember about being here. And why don't we start at the beginning. If you would say where you were born and when you were born.

HANSEN: Well I was born in Brooklyn like so many immigrant children, and brought up, spent my first eighteen years in Brooklyn. And then from that time on until I was about sixty I lived in Staten Island and then recently moved upstate New York.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And what's your birth date?

HANSEN: My birth date is January 6, 1931.

LEVINE: And when you were eighteen and you left Brooklyn did you, were you---? When did you join the, the Coast Guards?

HANSEN: I joined the Coast Guard in 1950 so I was nineteen years old when I joined the Coast Guard, November 1950. I was in for three years.

LEVINE: Okay. And why did you--? Well you mentioned first that you were a child of immigrants. Where were your parents from?

HANSEN: Parents were from Norway. And my father when he immigrated came through Baltimore. But my mother and my grandmother spent overnight on Ellis Island. And the story that she tells, she had a cold. And her mother kept telling her don't cough because they'll, they won't let you in. You know, if you cough, that's how--. I didn't realize it. And I never knew the story until I came to Ellis Island after it had been restored and read some of the stories. How, how frightened some of the immigrants were of being turned back.

LEVINE: LEVINE: Well did you--? Did--? Were--? Was your mother--? Were your mother and grandmother alive when you were here, when you were stationed here?

HANSEN: Oh sure. Oh yes. My mother lived to be ninety and, and was here, you know, well through that time. Sure. And mentioned it. But at that time it didn't really click in my mind. It wasn't until much later and I started coming here when the island was restored that I realized the significance of the place.

LEVINE: So your mother was alive when it was restored or not?

HANSEN: No.

LEVINE: No.

HANSEN: No. She had died before, before they really got to, you know, really, you know, had done any work on it at all.

LEVINE: And was your--? How old was your mother? Do you recall when she came through?

HANSEN: She was sixteen. She was sixteen years old. Came in 1908. Came over in 1908.

LEVINE: And what was her name?

HANSEN: Her name was Sigrid, Sigrid Hardwickson. And her name is on the wall as a matter of fact, as is my father's. He also came from Norway from the same town in Norway. But they knew each other only casually. And met here and married.

LEVINE: Now did he have anything that he remembered about Ellis Island?

HANSEN: Well, he didn't—

LEVINE: Oh he didn't come through Ellis Island.

HANSEN: But—

LEVINE: About his immigration perhaps.

HANSEN: Well he was a maritime person. And he finished out his career as a lieutenant commander in the Coast Guard. He was in the marine inspection unit, which was housed in New York, up in Manhattan, in lower Manhattan. And that's probably why I wound up joining the Coast guard because I knew about it. A lot of people didn't at that time. And I'm sure that's what influenced me. Had a brother also that was a, that retired as a captain in the Coast Guard so there was some Coast Guard influence there.

LEVINE: Yes. What was your father's name?

HANSEN: Knud, as a matter of fact.

LEVINE: Knud. And your grandmother who came through Ellis island?

HANSEN: Yes. Her name--. I only remember her nickname, which her husband called her. It was Kaia, K-A-I-A. And Kaia Hardwickson. My grandfather was, sailed on sailing shops and he died at sea, which was the fate of many. He was the captain of the ship. And apparently he was coming back from South America and – this is around 1900, around the turn of the century – and where there was some sort of disease at the place that--. We have the last letters he wrote. And he evidently got it. And it made him dizzy and he fell overboard and that was that.

LEVINE: So that, that occurred before your grandmother came to this country.

HANSEN: Yes. Yes. And probably was the reason she came to this country because the captain--. When the captain died there were no pensions or anything in those days. You just lost your livelihood. And she struggled awhile and had a store and the telephone exchange on the island that they, on which they lived, outside Orendall. And at one point her brothers, two of her brothers, had come over here and said, come on over. So she and my mother came at that time.

LEVINE: Wow. Did your grandmother or your mother or your father, well, yeah, did they retain any Norwegian ways?

HANSEN: Lots of them and so do I, yes.

LEVINE: What—

HANSEN: Foods. We have a certain, certain ways of celebrating the holidays. I have been back to Norway. My wife's family also comes from Norway. And I've been back to Norway six times. So we have lots of friends and family that we, we meet and go to their houses. And they come over here and we show them New York. And that, that has been a wonderful addition to our lives. It's really been great. But yeah, we, we--. Mostly foods and the way the house is decorated. We have things that we buy in Norway, and bring back and put up on the walls. So it's, yeah--. People feel when they come in there, they say this place is like, you know, Norway. They see all the stuff that we have around.

LEVINE: How about attitudes? Is there any--? Are there any kind of ways of viewing the world, or, or—

HANSEN: Well, I guess my father always felt that you--. He would always encourage you to get the next license, the next biggest license or the next degree. He could never understand--. I was in education. He could never understand why I didn't want to become a principal because that would be the next logical step up. I mean he, he, he would always say t me, 'why don't you become a principal' because in his mind you always studied for the next thing and you went up and up and up. He was an impressive man. And one time I was a teenager and I visited him in his office. And he was--. We were talking. And we were going to go out to lunch or something like that. And he got a phone call. And the person was giving him numbers having to do with stress on a boiler. And he took out a slide rule and kept the conversation up with the person as he worked the slide rule. When he was finished with the conversation or finished with the slide rule he gave the person the answer that he wanted on what the, on the stress factors. And that always impressed me, that how he could do both at the same time just--. I mean--. You know at that time a slide rule was like magic. Of course it's been since we have computers we don't need slide rulers anymore but—

LEVINE: Yeah. Well that's a, that's a beautiful image of your father.

HANSEN: Yes. Yeah. That, that—

LEVINE: Okay. Well, so you went to high school in Brooklyn?

HANSEN: Yes.

LEVINE: You finished in Brooklyn.

HANSEN: Yep. Ford Hamilton High School in Brooklyn. Lived in a Norwegian neighborhood, 8th Avenue and 57th street where you could go to any store and buy something. Ask for something in Norwegian and the store owner, or people working behind the counter – who might be Italian or Jewish or German – would know what, would answer you and talk to you in Norwegian. I never had to do that because I don't, I don't speak Norwegian. But I have been in the store plenty of times when people would, would be talking to the Jewish counter man in Norwegian and he would be talking back. And that was not uncommon in Brooklyn at that time.

LEVINE: When you moved to Staten Island was it also a Norwegian area or no?

HANSEN: No. No. No. When we moved to Staten Island I, I was still living at home. And very soon after that went into the Coast Guard got married and then lived with my parents in an apartment in that house for a while before we bought a house on Staten Island. At one time all of my family lived in, in Brooklyn. And now none of us live in New York city. And the--. I'm the last of nine. So we're all over, all over the place, those of us that are alive are all over, Ohio and Florida. And we have a family reunion every year, which we get between a hundred and a hundred and twenty-five people. And so it's--. We try to keep the family together that way rather than only meeting at weddings and funerals.

LEVINE: Well do you remember your feelings about your decision to go into the Coast Guard?

HANSEN: No. I had looked around for--. It was during the Korean War. And I think the air Force you had to enlist for four years. And those are the--. The Navy, I think, was four years. And the Coast Guard was three years. So I'm looking forward to getting out. I decided that I'd go in the Coast Guard. And also with the family background and my father being in the Coast Guard I figured that would be a good thing to do.

LEVINE: And when you, when you signed up where did you go?

HANSEN: I went to Grautin, Connecticut to boot camp.

LEVINE: And what--? Exactly when was that again?

HANSEN: That was--. That would be November of '50. And went to Grautin, Connecticut. And I was up there, I believe, sixteen or seventeen weeks. And then I was assigned to the Port Security unit at Pier 9 in Manhattan. That was my first, the first place I was assigned. Relatively soon after that I put in for engine man school, which was also in Grautin, Connecticut. So I went back up to Grautin, Connecticut and went through engine man school. And when I came out of engine man school I was assigned to Ellis Island.

LEVINE: And were you married at this time?

HANSEN: Let's see. Engine man school--. I think I got married--. I got married in February of '52 so that's just about the time--. I think coming out of, out of--. I had to go to Port Security School, also, which was down in Georgia. And coming out of that I had leave and got married during that time. So I was married when I came to Ellis Island.

LEVINE: And who did you marry?

HANSEN: Gladys Ostenberg was the person I married, who again, both of whose parents came from a place called Soodiness, Norway on the west coast, a charming town that we have been back to many times. And she has more relatives in Norway than she has here. And they now have started coming over visiting us. And it has been a great, you know, great experience for them. We had a cousin over this summer and one last summer.

LEVINE: Is that when you take your trips to Ellis Island?

HANSEN: Yes. That's when I take the trips to Ellis Island and to Liberty Island and to Manhattan and ride the subway and the World Trade Center, the whole bit.

LEVINE: So did you know your wife--? Did you grow up in the same neighborhood by any chance?

HANSEN: Went to the same church. I met her when she was thirteen and I was fourteen is when we met and, yeah.

LEVINE: So you were both part of, of, of at least the same religious community.

HANSEN: Same, same religious community, yes, same background, you know, ethnically, so it was very comfortable.

LEVINE: Okay. So when you got to Ellis Island what was your, what were your duties?

HANSEN: I was a, an engine man. And Ellis Island at the time had, I guess, between fifteen and twenty forty-foot patrol boats. They were called forty-footers, naturally. They had two 671-GM diesel engines on them. And had assigned to them an engine man, a seaman and a coxen. And that was the crew. We slept on, in the barracks at Ellis Island. But when we were on duty we went on six-hour patrols. So you'd go six hours. You'd be off six hours. And then you'd go on another six-hour patrol. And there were, I believe, four patrols that one went up the East River. One went up the Hudson River, which I guess, I don't know, they call this Hudson River, and one went around, pretty much around Staten Island, down through the Kills, and another one went out the Narrows, went out that way.

LEVINE: And what were you patrolling for?

HANSEN: Well this is during the Korean War and we were just patrolling for anything untoward. The other duties that we had, we had pier guards, also, on the island. And we would take the pier guards out to certain piers that had iron curtain country ships docking. And one of the other duties that we had was to--. Once when ships docked there were pier guards on the dock. And then we would be outside sitting in the, you know, on the waterside so that nothing would come up to the ship on the waterside to exchange packages or whatever. And sometimes we would shadow ships when they came in the harbor. If it were an iron curtain country – that's hard to say – ship we would shadow it until it was docked and then the pier guards would be there. You know, again the height of the Cold War it was a different time. It's hard to imagine that kind of thing but that's what we did. Yeah.

LEVINE: And as an engine man, I mean, you were there to--. I mean if something went wrong with the engine—

HANSEN: Yeah. We'd run the engines. Had a log to keep and had to write down the temperatures and you know the readings on the gauges every hour in the log. And then when we were at rest I would, had to clean the, check the oil and make sure everything was out. Clean the sea strainers, take any, you know, debris that was in them out so the engines wouldn't overheat. And if something went wrong with the engine then they would pull the boat out of service. And there was a crew on Ellis Island that would come down and work on the engine. And I would assist them on the repairs,

whatever repairs that had to be made. The other patrols that we had were boarding duty. This was in the summertime and we would board yachts and inspect them. And that duty was an all day duty. You'd leave at, at, at practically at sunup and you'd stay out until dawn, and take food with you. They had a little stove and sink on these boats. And you would be out all day. And when you'd see a yacht you'd board it, and inspect it and give them--. If they failed the inspection you'd give them what amounted to a ticket. And they had to get that whatever was wrong fixed and show that it was fixed and they would mail it back in. I don't know the paperwork part of it. But that's basically what we did. That was choice duty because many times the people on the yachts were partying and, and they were not, they would, would, would give you beer, you know, which we weren't supposed to take. But since it's so many years after now.

LEVINE: You can tell it now.

HANSEN: Yes. And what we would do is we would take ice with us and we would – in a barrel – and we'd just keep putting it in, in a barrel. When we came back off duty there would be, we would have a welcoming committee. (laughter)

LEVINE: Wow. Now what--? You were--? How was it that the Coast Guard was inspecting pleasure yachts?

HASNEN: Yeah, still do. Still do.

LEVINE: Oh, that's one of the—

HANSEN: Yes. That's one of their duties. Yeah. We had like a ten-point inspection. And we would go on board and, and we'd do that inspection and then, you know, leave. If they were inspected by the Coast Guard Auxiliary and they had a, a sticker on the boat we didn't bother with it. We, we--. Because they had yearly inspections. But if the boat was not inspected--. One time we came across a boat, a small boat, that was, the top part of it above the deck was plywood and homemade, you could see that. And it--. They were out in the middle of the Narrows. And there were at least three-foot swells, not waves, but just swells. And this boat was going, was bobbing like a cork all over the place. There had to be ten people on it, and one very pregnant lady. And we came up along side. And we were afraid we were going to--. It was tiny. It was, it was not more than fifteen feet, just a tiny thing. And that's right. We shook our heads and said, "what in the world", you know, "what are you doing out here". So we chased them back in, back

down in the, into the Kills where the water wasn't--. I mean, we didn't, we couldn't board it because it was too small. And we were afraid that we, we would have hit it and sink it but chased them back in. But other times on patrols we would disable, pick up a disabled boat and tow it to its own port. I mean that was a, that was a common, common thing. The way the propellers were made on these were, were for speed and towing ability. So you didn't get--. You know you didn't get a whole lot of speed and you didn't get a whole lot of towing ability but you got enough of each so we could do double-duty. And it did have a big towing ring on it, you know, for us to hook up to.

LEVINE: Yeah. What was--? What was the--? What kind of satisfaction did you get from, from what your job was when you were stationed here?

HANSEN: Well, we had every other day duty. So every other day I went home and every other weekend. So it was--. In that way it was really, again, choice, choice duty. And we, we did that--. You know I enjoyed that. And I enjoyed being in the boat. I enjoyed New York Harbor. I mean, you know, it just was a wonder, really a wonderful time. I didn't enjoy the wintertime. When you had to go out there and just to drop off pier guards some place, you know, four or five miles away you'd come back with an inch of ice on your boat. And these were not, did not have deep keels so they would tip easy. So we, we didn't think about that a lot. But for the most part it was, it was really food duty and I enjoyed it very much. Ooh, one other thing that we did. At the time we were here during this time people who were being deported were kept on Ellis Island, aliens that were being deported. And every once in a while one would climb the fence and jump in the water to swim to New Jersey. Well they would scramble the boats to, the Coast Guard boats and we would go out looking for the, whoever was in the water. And one time I was on a boat that the coxen said look--. You know there are two like tunnels that go through the island. You know that you can see them at low tide. And it was, it was about half, mid-tide. And he said, you know, he could--. This is wintertime by the way. And he said he could be in there. And we went and stooped down and looked with flashlights and he was. So we pick him up. And this boat happened to have--. We were armed at this point. On the way out we would grab weapons and we were armed. And we picked him up. We wrapped a blanket around him. And we happened to have some hot coffee on there. And he was shaking so much from fear from cold that he couldn't hold the coffee. The coffee just spilled all over. So we had to feed him the coffee in order to get something warm into him. And the

fear in his eyes it was incredible. I mean he surely expected to be shot. I mean just by looking at his face. But that was--. Yeah.

LEVINE: Where was he being deported to? Do you--?

HANSEN: I have no idea. We had no real connections with, with him. One other sidelight, we used to--. I played on the softball team and we used to play against, exhibition games, against the guards on their side of the island. We would go over there and walk through. And when we got over to the field there would be forty or fifty men out there playing soccer, you know, with one soccer ball. And it was just a cloud of dust and the ball fling around and you know forty, fifty men running around kicking it. Well the guards would clear the field. And there were times when--. Well actually the first time we went there we said, woah, what's going on, you know. And we kind of went for out bats and stood with the boats because we didn't know what was going to go on because the, the people who were there, the deportees, didn't take to this kindly. And there was some yelling back and forth. And then we played them and we beat them. And very soon we became, we became very popular with them. And whenever we came over to play they would start cheering. They loved us because we always beat the guards. (laughter) it's kind of interesting. In fact—

LEVINE: Common enemy.

HANSEN: Yeah. We had one, one big, real big guy, John Schmidt. I remember his name. And he could really hit the ball. And it was like he was Babe Ruth. They'd run over and touch him. And, you know, he hit a couple of real long homeruns. And they would run over, and touch him and yell at him. Couldn't understand anything they were saying, but that was kind of interesting.

LEVINE: Yeah. Do you remember names of anyone else? Like who was your--? Did you have an immediate supervisor whose name you, you, you know?

HANSEN: I don't remember any of those names. But I happened to have my pass, my Ellis Island pass with me. And the, the, the commanding officer was a man by the name of Hutchenson. And I--. It looks to me like he was a lieutenant commander, Hutchenson. He was--. And he lived in a house on, on, here on Ellis Island in the far corner across from where the renovations have been done in what was the hospital. We, we were--. The barracks was a hospital. And it was kept like a garden here. I mean--. And I guess because we had,

the Coast Guard, you know, plenty of people to mow it and do whatever, it was beautiful, absolutely beautiful.

LEVINE: So--. And that car you mentioned earlier you're going to donate to, to us.

HANSEN: Yes.

LEVINE: So if anyone wants to see such a thing. And, so you--. What, what was it like just generally being here?

HANSEN: Living, living on the island? Well it was interesting. When I woke up in the morning I could look out and see the back of the Statue of Liberty, which was kind of an interesting thing. Always--. Well I mean how could you not like the Statue of Liberty? Ooh, an added sidelight. The island that my wife's parents came from is an island called Carlmay. And there's a copper mine on the island. And that's where the copper from, for the Statue of Liberty came from, from that island. And I have been to that copper mine. Specifically because I knew ahead of time that's where the--. It's no longer in use but it is a museum now. And one of the big items in the museum, of course, are pictures of the Statue of Liberty, and it being built in France and, you know, because the copper came from that mine.

LEVINE: Wow. That's wonderful.

HANSEN: Yeah.

LEVINE: And, and so you mentioned it was, there was lots of gardens. It was well planted.

HANSEN: Well, gardens and lawns. I remember that more than--. And tree-lined, it was just beautiful. I mean, it really was. And you didn't have much to do when you were off duty. You know the six hours that you--. You know after eating you kind of just hung around or went and played softball out, out on the--. Oh, and then there's the tennis court. There is a tennis court, a clay tennis court, that I would have to wander around to find it. And it was in a state of disrepair but had all the equipment to, to get it back in shape. At the time I didn't play tennis. But there were a couple of tennis players and they asked if I would help them with, you know, restoring it. So we went out, and kind of raked it out and then rolled it. And the roller was a pretty good size roller that was filled with water. And the first time I visited Ellis Island I see it on display. And I say, "Hey, I used that. I pushed that roller around." And we

did get it into playable, into playable shape. And, you know, I used to go around and hit the ball but I didn't know what I was doing. But some of the guys used to go there and play tennis. That was, that was kind of fun. And part of the place there was a rec hall. And I would have to walk through to find out exactly where that was. And they would show movies there in the night. You know, seven, eight o'clock or something like that they would show a movie.

LEVINE: And did--? Was that like every night or a couple of nights a week?

HANSEN: It might have been a couple of nights a week. They had pool tables, ping pong tables, books, you know. That was the, the rec hall for the, for the guys.

LEVINE: And about how many Coast Guards were here, just roughly?

HANSEN: You know, fifty--. Well with the pier guards and all it had to be, you know, like two, three hundred, two, three hundred men, I would guess would be here. I'm trying to think. Our barracks we had about thirty--. No. We had double--. Maybe forty in our barracks alone. Easily three hundred men. It might have been more than that here.

LEVINE: And, let's see. And so what--? Did you ever venture at the time into Ellis Island?

HANSEN: Yes. When we played--. When we played the softball games. And I specifically remember the first time. We had to walk through the main building. And I remember walking through that. And, of course, it was in a tremendous state of disrepair. It was just, you know, paint peeling off the walls and just, just really, really poor shape. And I walked through there. And then I saw steps, wandered around a little bit being curious. And one other time I went through there, walked upstairs into the great hall. And that was kind of a--. You know I said that the hair on my neck stood up and I didn't know why. You know, what in the world. I really wasn't into Ellis Island at that time. And I guess it was just the ghosts of Ellis Island. There's just something about it. And, of course, years later after it's been restored and I've come back – I, I can understand what would happen.

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

(end of tape 1, side A)

LEVINE: Okay. Okay. We're continuing now with side two of this interview with Knud Hansen. And just to go back, are there any other names of people that you recall who were here when you were here?

HANSEN: I remember – not of officers--. But I remember the person who became, I guess, my best friend in the service. Tony Manacone was, you know, stationed here. But we were on opposite duties. He was--. When I was off he was on.

LEVINE: He was also an engine man.

HANSEN: Yes. Also we went to engine man school together. We--. I met him the day I enlisted. And the funny story is that he was--. He dressed--. He had this long like camel coat on. And, you know, and he, he--. You know, to me, he--. I thought to myself, boy, there's one guy I'm going to stay away from. He was--. He and his friend with him, just two nasty looking guys. And as it turned out within a couple of weeks we became friends and, you know, were in each other's weddings and things like that. And, and it, it just--. You know, you can't tell a book by its cover. And sometime first impressions are way off. But I haven't seen him or talked to him in, in quite a while.

LEVINE: Did you keep contact with him after you, after you were out of the Coast Guard?

HANSEN: For a while, yes, when we--. We did keep in contact. But then as happens, you know, you get busy and the contact was lost. And I haven't really spoken to him it's, it has to be fifteen years now since I've, since I've talked to him.

LEVINE: So there, there as--. Was there any Public Health activity going on at Ellis Island when you were here?

HANSEN: None. No. I remember two more names.

LEVINE: Okay.

HANSEN: Al Schelfer and Lenny Weiss. Lenny Weiss was the coxen of the boat that I spent most of my time on. And Al Schelfer was the, was the, the seaman. The reason I remember is I have these pictures. That's, that's Al Schelfer. And, well, you can't see him, but Lenny Weiss is at the, at the controls. This is what the boat looked like.

LEVINE: Do you have any sense of where these people might be if we were to contact them?

HANSEN: Tony Manicone I might be able to call you up and give you an address for. You know, thinking about--. These people I don't know. The Healey twins, these, I played softball with them. And one of them got married and when--. After he--. They were so identical looking that when the brother, the married brother, so that he could have every weekend home when it came time to, for him to have a duty weekend would give his wedding ring to his older brother and stay and do the duty weekends. He did that for a couple of months after, after his brother was married so he could have every weekend home. And of course, everybody knew it but the officers. It's just one of those things that we, that were done. This, this--. I mentioned John Schmidt. That's, that's John Schmidt here. And this is me over here.

LEVINE: Well, we're going to have either copies or Xeroxes or pictures in your file so that will be really, really good to have. Let's see. So when '53 rolled around what happened as far as your Coast Guard—

HANSEN: Well, November '53 rolled around and, you know, I anticipated getting out. And—

LEVINE: Because your three years were up.

HANSEN: Three years were up. And they tried to get you to, you know, sign up again, and promise you a promotion and all that. But I had other things. By then I think I had, you know, a child that was about a year old. And I had matured enough to realize that if I were going to do anything I had to go to college. On going into the service that was not, that was the furthest thing from my mind, going to college. I was--. I had loafed through high school and never even thought about going to college. I did attend NYU for a while because I worked there. But that was only because it was free, you know, and I just kind of took courses. But then I, I--. And while in the Coast Guard I figured, yeah, this is, I've got to do that and went into education. And that's--. So as soon as I got out I began going at night and then eventually quit my job and went full-time. And my wife worked and got me through college.

LEVINE: Let's see. Did you--? Have you ever had Coast Guard reunions?

HANSEN: No, no. Never, never had a Coast Guard reunion, never called up about one or, you know--. I did go to see a buddy of mine who lived up in Boston. But he, he was never on Ellis Island. He was from other places before I came to Ellis Island.

LEVINE: Let's see. Is there anything else about Ellis Island that you recall? I mean perhaps boats getting here and going off of there for passes or anything about the grounds or the buildings, any other—

HANSEN: Just that, you know--. The only odd thing, again, was the tennis court. The, the--. Well the story is told to me, that this is, you know, that at one time the city morgue was on Ellis Island. I don't know if that's true. That's something that could be checked on. And on the ferry there was supposedly a room where, where when they were carrying a body that this is the room that they would put it in. And there was, there was a little room on the ferry that would be about, you know, could carry a coffin, about the size of a coffin.

LEVINE: And the ferry is, is of the same ilk as what is now sunk in (unclear)—

HANSEN: That's the very same ferry, yes. The very same ferry, yeah, that used to go back and forth. It, it would go in where the Staten Island ferry and the Governor's Island ferry goes in now. It had its own slip because it was a much smaller boat. And it would go in and out at that, at that spot. And—

LEVINE: The same spot that the Staten Island ferry goes in?

HANSEN: Alongside it. It was a smaller slip and it would go in there. But they're all in that same, in that same area, yeah.

LEVINE: Right. Well, let's see. So you have--. Do you have more than one child? Did you have more than one child?

HANSEN: Yes. I had another child about ten years later, a daughter.

LEVINE: And their names?

HANSEN: Knud and Melinda.

LEVINE: And, well, it seems like Ellis Island has a lot of history, I mean for you.

HANSEN: Oh yes. Yeah. More and more, you know, as I come here, as I've been coming here--. And I tell people about my experiences on Ellis Island when we come over and point out where my barracks was, where I used to go in and out, where the boat was docked, to kind of add a little to the tour when we come here.

LEVINE: Well, hopefully we can add some more today if we go to these other areas.

HANSEN: Yeah.

LEVINE: When people were here in the Coast Guard did, were there many people with associations of immigrant parents or other associations with Ellis Island who were stationed here? Was that ever anything that came up in conversation or—

HANSEN: Nothing ever brought up. And you know I think back on it, again, I just was out to lunch about the whole, the whole thing. I tell people in growing up in Brooklyn I didn't know anybody whose parents were born in the United States. Everybody, everybody, you know--. Mostly from Norway but from Ireland, Germany, Italy, but none who were born here.

LEVINE: Okay. Well is there anything else that you'd like to say about, about having been stationed here?

HANSEN: Well it was a great place to be stationed. I can't believe that I didn't take more pictures when I was here. But it, but it was very, very good duty. And I enjoyed being here, enjoyed the harbor, you know. And had really a wonderful almost two years here.

LEVINE: How about engines? Is that something that you—

HANSEN: Well, somewhat. I mean I, I have you know, lawn mowers and stuff like that I think with. And for a time I sued to tinker with my own car engines. But now they're so complicated I, I leave that to the professionals.

LEVINE: Okay. Well I want to thank you so much for a most interesting interview. I've been speaking with Knud Hansen. And it's October 13th, 1995. We're here at the Ellis Island Oral History Studio. And this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. And I'm signing off.

END OF INTERVIEW