EI-851

WILLIAM TAFFIT

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UNITED STATES

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Judge Taffit was a born and raised U.S. Citizen who worked with the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Services, in various positions, from 1941 until 1971. While he did not often work directly with Ellis Island, he nevertheless had many colleagues who worked directly at Ellis Island and his experience remains unique.

LEVINE: Okay today is February 19, 1997 and I'm here in Boca Raton with judge William Taffit, who did not exactly work much of the time at Ellis Island

TAFFIT: Very little.

LEVINE: Very little, but was involved with the immigration.

TAFFIT: Some of my colleagues sat there while I sat in other places, we all had the same authority.

LEVINE: Okay. So when you were in Newark. Is that?

TAFFIT: I sat in Newark, I also sat in New York City, I sat in Buffalo New York, and I traveled from time to time, Washington, San Francisco.

LEVINE: Dealing with immigration cases.

TAFFIT: Only, only. For the period from March 1971, March 1941, excuse me, until July 31, '71, I was only with the immigration and naturalization service; in various positions, starting as a naturalization examiner and terminating my services as an immigration judge.

LEVINE: Maybe a good way to do this would be if you could start with 1941 and what position the immigration examiner, and what you did?

TAFFIT: As a naturalization examiner in 1941, I conducted interviews of applicants for citizenship, naturalization. The procedure was considerably more technical and more judicious then than it is now, because now naturalization is essentially a, an administrative function. But at that time we represented, we

meaning the naturalization examiners, represented the United States Government in the form of the Immigration and Naturalization Service in conducting interviews of applicants and reviewing the documents that they submitted to show their eligibility for citizenship.

LEVINE: Now what would, as an examiner, what would disqualify somebody?

TAFFIT: Well, a criminal record, a length of service in the United States that was not legal.

LEVINE: Under five years, was that what…

TAFFIT: They had to move in five years of residence but that five years was reduced to, at one time, two years, and at one time three years, if you were the spouse of a United States Citizen. There were other requirements, good moral character…

LEVINE: How did you ascertain good moral character?

TAFFIT: By police records, FBI records, querying the person, after a while you got to pretty well be able to tell you when somebody was or was not telling the truth! (Chuckles) We were all attorneys.

LEVINE: And how old were you, well maybe you should give your birth date.

TAFFIT: 3/23/15.

LEVINE: And how old were you, well obviously you would have been in ’41 then.

TAFFIT: I was 26.

LEVINE: You were 26. And was that your first?

TAFFIT: First government position; I was already then an attorney and had been working as an attorney in Newark, New Jersey. You mentioned that already. I had been working in Newark, and I, at that time, resided in Newark.

LEVINE: I see, but you hadn't been working in immigration.

TAFFIT: I had no connection with immigration before 1941.

LEVINE: And why was it that you became…?

TAFFIT: All of us took a Civil Service, I'm searching for the term, Professional Assistant Examinations and from those examinations some of us were appointed and I was appointed on March 10, and I reported, I don't know what day I said but the reporting date is March 17.

LEVINE: Okay, March 17, 1941.

TAFFIT: '41. To Philadelphia. And at that to the District Director of the Immigration Service, Immigration and Naturalization Service there. It was John L. Hughes, H-U-G-H-E-S. And I remained in Philadelphia as a naturalization examiner, although I traveled out of Philadelphia to Newark which was under the Philadelphia office at that time, and to the, all of the offices in Pennsylvania, Wilkes-barre, Scranton, at one time Pittsburgh but Pittsburgh ultimately became its own independent office, and then Wilmington, Delaware, a few other places like that, as a naturalization officer going to the courts that had jurisdiction to hear citizenship cases. We processed the case for the court and then presented the cases at what was called a final hearing, to the judge. Now, in most instances, the judges were then United States District Court Judges, although in some instances they could be judges of Courts of Record of the State.

LEVINE: Record of the State?

TAFFIT: Record of the State, yes. The State courts had jurisdiction for naturalization. It wasn't exercised too much, and as much as was possible the government seemed to try and cut it out because it became somewhat of a political football.

LEVINE: Well now when you took that exam…

TAFFIT: The Civil Service exam.

LEVINE: The Civil Service exam, where you aiming to be in the immigration?

TAFFIT: No, no, no.

LEVINE: No.

TAFFIT: It was a professional lawyers examination for placement in the Federal Government as an attorney.

LEVINE: Oh I see. So it could have been any number of things that you might have been appointed to?

TAFFIT: Might have been, but all of the fellows that I knew at that time who took the exam wound up in the immigration, in the naturalization part of the immigration service.

LEVINE: I see, so roughly speaking, how long did you remain an examiner, a naturalization examiner?

TAFFIT: Well having looked back at what, a civil service…I would say somewhere in the neighborhood of three or four years before I became a senior examiner in charge of a group of examiners. And after that I became an adjudications officer, in other words, reviewing the work of other employees of the immigration service, and I stayed in that function until, I guess it was latter part of the '40s, somewhere along about '48 I would guess, though I had one year, eight months and twenty days that I was within the military during that time. But after I returned to the government from the Army, and during the time I was in the Army, my function was military naturalizations. I was in charge of the military naturalizations for most of the East Coast of the United States, running out of Fort Dix. And the court there that had jurisdiction was the United States District Court for the District of New Jersey and it was Chief Judge Philip Forman, F-O-R-M-A-N who was in charge of it. And probably I would say he handled forty-fifty thousand naturalizations, military.

LEVINE: Ah. As I understand it, if someone immigrated and agreed to serve in the military, they were automatically made citizens. Is that not true?

TAFFIT: No. Not if they're agreed, but when they were within military, they could apply for expeditious naturalization, and that's what I was doing. And I was serving in a dual capacity, I started as the U.S. Government Immigration Service Naturalization Examiner, but I was also a military officer.

LEVINE: I see, so then you handled a lot of expeditious-

TAFFIT: All of them, all of them. Judge Forman came down to Fort Dix, I would say sometimes twice a week as the various; see Fort Dix was the staging area for troops going over seas to the Atlantic Theater. And we had many, many very strange and different applicants for citizen. We had royals in the sense of a couple of Arab princes, we had, I guess the most important ones for the military, we had the head chefs of all the New York restaurants (laughs)! And

of course that was always an amusing thing to us because we would, I would find out, most of the time, nobody knew about it because that wasn't something in your dossier but when found out this fellow was the executive chief at this and this big hotel in New York or wherever it might be, and I attend to his naturalization and suddenly disappeared from wherever he was and wound up on the executive staff of one of the generals.

LEVINE: And how about like, just generally, compared with the naturalizations of people outside of the military and the ones who were expeditiously naturalized, was there a difference in the kind of person?

TAFFIT: No. The soldier was, as several residents have said, the average GI was the average person in the United States.

LEVINE: Even though they may have only been here a year or less.

TAFFIT: Some of them much less than that. They were eligible for naturalization as long as they were in the military, had come lawfully, and had no major cause of disbarment like a major crime or a major criminal activity or something like that.

LEVINE: Did you ever, I guess, I don't know if you'd have any way of knowing, how these people fared, I mean as citizens.

TAFFIT: No, that we never, there was no follow up as far as I was concerned, there might have been by the military but not by the U.S., by the Immigration Service.

LEVINE: So.

TAFFIT: I did that until,… I left the military on, September 1945, no it was '44 and I took about a month off before I went back to work for the Immigration Service.

LEVINE: Now was this also an appointment I mean that you were appointed for a period of time to do the…

TAFFIT: No the appointment by the Federal Government as a naturalization examiner was apparently for good behavior. The one by the military to bear, bear… to be their representative in the thing, was just, I got tapped by my commanding officer who was a General, Cassius Dowell was his name, and he was the, a very, very distinguished man and the Commandant at Fort Dix. He was also the man who, among other things, stood up to General Patton, when Dowell was a one star and Patton was three stars. And that was because, among other things, he, Dowell, Patton made the grievous error of ordering Cascious out of his quarters at Fort Dix where he had been for quite a few years. He was not just a recent enlistee in the Army, he was a full one star general. And I remember so clearly, Dowell called us in and said, “Boys, look at this.” And he handed us a military telegram, it had just been given to him and he said- it was signed by Patton saying, “I will arrive at Fort Dix at such and such a day and you are directed to vacate your quarters and have them available for me.” And he says, “What are we going to do about this?” And none of us knew very much what to do, but I was lucky, I had a friend who was the staff officer, he was a lieutenant colonel, to the Quartermaster General of the United States, who was a three star general also. And I called Dick up and I said, “Dick, I got a problem, you gotta solve it for me.” I told him the story and he started to laugh, he said, and I said, “Buddy this is no laughing matter,” he says, “It is! Because this is just the kind of thing that your general needs to kick the good Patton’s butt!” And I said, “How?” He said, “Because there is,” he said, “It just so happened that just a few days ago reading through the Army regulations I saw this, I never heard of it before, and I don’t know that many people who know it. But there is a regulation in the military manual that says that a star officer on a post in the United States outranks every other star officer except a four or five star general. Now Patton is not a four star or

a five star officer. So when he comes to Dix, you tell Dowell what to say. "Buddy, right here I outrank you, even though I'm only one star and I'm not moving." Well the only thing wrong with that thing is that Dowell told me, and I was much, much lower, he says, "You tell him". And I said, "Me? That guy's going to shoot me!". He said, "No he won't shoot you, but you tell him". And we were all lined up in headquarters formation when Patton drove up in his fabulous jeep and he said to Dowell, "What are you doing here, I ordered you out?"

LEVINE: And you said…

TAFFIT: And I said, "If the General please, that order can not stand because you have no authority here at Fort Dix over General Dowell". "What do you mean!" He was smart enough not to say, "You're crazy! What do you mean?". I said, I quoted the military manual, and he turned around to his executive officer and he said, "What the hell is this?" Guy said, "I don't know?" And he hollered, and his legal officer came running and pulled out his manual and he turned to it, and I could see, he turned, he turned as white as this, and he said, "General I don't know what to say, but look!". He shook his head, now mind you he had two divisions here at Fort Dix that had come in by train from all over the country, they were to be staged there and out. And he said, and he never told them to relax, be at ease, he had all these guys at attention-terrible. And then he said, "What's the…next..". And then he started to whisper but some of the stuff that he was checking with his executive officers where there was another military staging post around here. And they decided there was one at Devons, in Massachusetts, and he marched two divisions, that's forty thousand men, a hundred and sixty-six miles from Dix to Demings, and that cost him his fourth star. Because Eisenhower heard of it, and I had the privilege of meeting Eisenhower a few times and serving him, and Eisenhower was among other things a great humanitarian. And he said, "I

will never forgive Patton for that", and he refused to sign off on Patton's fourth star.

LEVINE: Well, was there another person in the same position as Dowell in the staging area?

TAFFIT: In Fort Dix? There was only one headquarters

LEVINE: Where he marched them to?

TAFFIT: Oh yeah he took them to Devons, Massachusetts. I don't know what happened there. We were out of it…(laughing)

LEVINE: You were out there.

TAFFIT: (Laughing) we didn't want to know! We stayed out of it. But I, now this story about it cost the fouth star is strictly rumor- but that is what we heard. And I would dare say it was so, because having met General Eisenhower a few times, you know, I would, he, he would be that kind of a man. The idea of on your own personal whim, to mistreat forty thousand people, was unforgivable to Eisenhower. But that's enough of that.

LEVINE: Well that's an interesting anecdote.

TAFFIT: So I left Fort Dix and I went back to the immigration service…

LEVINE: Why did you, why did you- you left in '44 you said.

TAFFIT: And I went back to the Immigration Service, within a month of the time I was discharged.

LEVINE: Was that because they were not, not doing expeditious naturalization as much by 1944?

TAFFIT: No, no. They decided my feet were too flat!

LEVINE: Oh no.

TAFFIT: They did, they really did. No what happened really is that they wanted me to take it, when I left in the process of closing out at Fort Dix; they made me take another physical exam to assign me to officer school. And then they decided that I didn't pass the physical because of my flat feet and I never forgot that. But I still have them, the flat feet. But in any event, as a result of that, I did not, I didn't stay within the military. I got out and I went back to the Immigration and Naturalization Service, and I went up on the ladder that way. I was, as I say, an adjudications officer, became District Council of the Immigration Service for the Philadelphia District, served as Acting Assisting General Council of the Immigration Service in Washington, was in charge of litigation involving the Immigration Service, in other words where the Immigration Service was the defendant in the District of Columbia to which was where all of the litigation was brought for a while because of certain court cases, which required it to be. You had to serve the Attorney General who was the superior of the Commissioner of Immigration. And I defended most of those cases, along with a fellow named Murray Roberts who was the chief of that aspect of the legal services, the immigration - and he's still around. He became later the chairman of the Board of Immigration Appeals and then became the editor of *Interpreter Releases* which is the authoritative legal publication on the immigration field.

LEVINE: You say he's still around, is he around New York?

TAFFIT: No he's in Washington, lives in Washington, Or, actually he lives in the outskirts of Washington in Virginia. I have his address if you need it.

LEVINE: No that's all right.

TAFFIT: And from there I ultimately became an immigration judge. I would guess, I didn't bother to look it up to tell you truthfully, but I would guess that was about 1948 or '49.

LEVINE: Now did you, did any of the cases that you dealt with have to do with enemy aliens during the war years that were?

TAFFIT: No they never reached us. I mean they were snuffed off at a lower level before they, if anything like that (disturbance) if anything like that came up, they were certainly weeded out before our…But if your talking about alien enemy in the sense of they being German or Italian nationals, oh yes we had those and the Italian nationals pretty much went through without any uproar. The German nationals were not naturalized if they were heading for the Eastern, for the Western theater, because the commanding officers felt in Washington, as I understand it, that if they were captured, they might be harshly treated.

LEVINE: Now, how about the cases that had to do with Ellis Island, did you?

TAFFIT: Well what happened was, when I was stationed in New Jersey or- there were two men in New Jersey, another judge and myself. And each of us spent one day in New York. That was because New York was so busy, and that was to relive the pressure on the men of New York. And also we each spent one day traveling. I, for example, traveled to Buffalo once every two weeks to hear cases at the Canadian border at Buffalo. And, then, we were in New York if there was a need for (New York serviced Ellis Island, the New York office of the Immigration), when there was a need for an Immigration Judge to go. I

did not go to Ellis Island when there were, when before the Immigration Service appointed immigration judges. And when they were called at that time Special Inquiry Officers. At that time some of the New York staff went to Ellis Island. I was not in that because at that time I was not in New York. But some of the fellows did, and Ira Fieldstill, as one illustration I'm sure was one that did. And if it was Flieglman, definitely he did. My time in Ellis Island was very, very rare because the fellows in New York were happy to cover it, and for me coming from, I at that time lived in Trenton, New Jersey and commuted with Newark, I would have to commute all the way to Ellis Island, so the other fellows covered it. But Ellis Island was essentially for people held in exclusion proceedings, as differentiated from deportation proceedings. Now this differentiation was all ended in the last days, in 1996, by the latest immigration act in Congress, which ended deportation and exclusion, and now it's all illegal.

LEVINE: Oh what was exclusion? What did that…

TAFFIT: People applying for admission, and the immigration inspector, and a lower inspector of immigration officer, believing that they were not clearly admissible, and referring them to an immigration judge for a hearing to determine their admissibility. Now the vast number of these cases at New York were people that

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were interviewed mostly on board ship. But sometimes as far as Ellis Island was concerned, in the earlier days they were not. They were all taken off the ships and interviewed there.

LEVINE: What years are you thinking, are you talking about when you say that?

TAFFIT: Well we're talking about, of course there were no ships coming in of a consequence during the war, but, and after the war, there were very few applicants coming in because of the limited number of visas that had been issued that were still outstanding. You see to come to the United States you not only had to first go to a U.S. consulate overseas and apply for a visa and get the visa, then you had to get on a plane or a ship and come to the United States and then apply on the border of the United States, New York, or as I did as well, at Buffalo, for people coming in from Canada. Also I sat at times on here in Florida and we had some interesting cases here of, of people who had sought refuge here in the Islands around Miami, little prosperous islands, and had established fancy homes and so forth. And then the Immigration Service started moving on them to say either you establish your eligibility to be here or get out.

LEVINE: Were you by an chance involved with the, with the, apparently there were three boat loads of Estonians-

TAFFIT: No.

LEVINE: Who came from Sweden and President Truman at first didn't let them in, and then decided that they could. They were, I think, the first displaced persons.

TAFFIT: No I, I don't recall. I don't, when was that?

LEVINE: That was Miami, and I think it was 1946.

TAFFIT: No, I was not, as a matter of fact; I don't think I made my first trip to Miami until a bit after that, somewhere along about 1948.

LEVINE: Well, did you actually physically see Ellis Island?

TAFFIT: Yes. I went to Ellis Island, and I held hearings there, but they were exclusion hearings. They were hearings that applicants seeking to enter the United States where the immigration officer had some doubt as the eligibility to be admitted. And then we, by we I mean, the other immigration judges and I, heard those cases and made decisions as to whether they should or should not be admitted.

LEVINE: And the basis for that would be the same: criminal record, or…

TAFFIT: Well, no. There, where there was exclusion, the documents to enter the United States might not be valid, that was the big thing.

LEVINE: Oh.

TAFFIT: Of course right after the war there were a lot of cases, most of which were not heard by us but which were heard by a special panel of judges of senior rank in the immigration service, to screen out those who were attempting to sneak in from Germany and from the other German controlled areas - Austria, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia…

LEVINE: So these were people who did not have documents.

TAFFIT: Who had fraudulent documents.

LEVINE: Oh.

TAFFIT: Or who had documents in names other than their own. They received them and now were trying to use them. There were a lot of, particularly German people, who attempted to get into the United States that way. Most of those cases were heard by a panel and one of those panels was chaired by Deputy,

the Deputy Commissioner of the Immigration Service, Savoretti. Joseph Savoretti.

LEVINE: And this was after the war?

TAFFIT: This was after the war.

LEVINE: When you saw Ellis Island in the ‘40s what did it look like, I mean what was it like there then, just physically? Who was there and what did you-?

TAFFIT: No, it was just like it is now. Really, very little changed, oh they freshened it up a bit.

LEVINE: But the Coast Guards were also stationed there, were you…?

TAFFIT: No, that was actually around the corner in Fort Jay.

LEVINE: Well some were stationed there.

TAFFIT: They may have been.

LEVINE: Because, I have, you know we interview them too.

TAFFIT: They may be, I was not aware of that.

LEVINE: Oh, okay, so they weren’t involved with you. Let’s see, and you mentioned on the telephone that your immediate supervisor…

TAFFIT: Karl, K-A-R-L, middle initial I, Zimmerman, Z-I-M-M-E-R-M-A-N, who back in the ‘40s, in the early ’40s and ‘30s, was the Commissioner of Immigration, when, before the 1941 act combined the Immigration Service and the Naturalization Service into one agency. Well he was the Commissioner of

Immigration. And then, he then took the job of District Director at Philadelphia and became my immediate supervisor. I don't mean to, there were levels in between us, but he was the top man in Philadelphia. And somewhere in Lyndon Johnson's presidency, I would guess somewhere around about '65, '66, the Attorney General of the United States appointed Karl Zimmerman to go survey this whole thing and see whether we still needed the Ellis Island which was never very expensive thing to maintain. Oh, I'm be….carefully, because we were then doing, mostly just took 'em off and brought them to the Immigration Service office, which was at 70 Columbus Avenue. And he wrote this very famous, or infamous depending on which way you use it, I was particularly thrilled to participate in it, in the sense of, Mr. Zimmerman had to, had to been working until the wee hours of the morning in writing things out in long-hand then he'd hand them to me, or one of the other fellows to type up. But we did not, we did not, I repeat have anything to do with the decision. The decision was Karl Zimmerman.

LEVINE: Now Ellis Island had closed in '54, but in '65 I believe it became part of the National Park Ser.., the National Monument with the Statue of Liberty. But what you're talking about is to, to, it was to close it.

TAFFIT: Yes.

LEVINE: That you're talking about.

TAFFIT: You're saying it was '54?

LEVINE: Yeah. I mean, well, yeah.

TAFFIT: I thought it was after that.

LEVINE: In '65 it became part of the Statue of Liberty National…

TAFFIT: The part, well yeah that was, there was no longer Ellis Island as the point at which- well, may be it was that, I'm not that clear. But certainly he was the person who the Commissioner, the Attorney General said to prepare this report as to whether we should keep Ellis Island as a staging area for arriving immigrants. And he concluded that it was unnecessary and too expensive and recommended it's closing. And there was quite some debate I understand, within the department, and that ended by the Attorney General writing "Accepted," across Zimmerman's report or "Approved," one word, but the story was one word closed it. He was a very brilliant man. He was a Pennsylvania Dutchman, very, very kind, profound fellow, and I would count him among my friends. I don't think any of the other judges knew him, other than this Murray Roberts who was at one time, Murray was at one time Karl Zimmerman's aid, and the District Council, and I became the District Council after Murray Roberts.

LEVINE: Do you have any sense of what the major points that Zimmerman made about-

TAFFIT: Cost.

LEVINE: Cost.

TAFFIT: Cost.

LEVINE: That was it. But as far as…

TAFFIT: Cost in the sense of operating the Island and wasting the manpower. He was very, very conscious of that.

LEVINE: And of course people weren't coming in by ship so much by then.

TAFFIT: That's right, that's right. And for the sailors on the ships coming in, the inspections were already taking place on the ship. And when it, when we started to develop, as we now have, cruise ships in great numbers, the inspections were on the ships. And that's exactly what Karl Zimmerman said. There was no reason why they cannot be done, and if we send a proper group of officers on board the ship, at the mouth, by the time the boat gets up, it will be done.

(reviewed by Irv till this point – tape 138, side B)

LEVINE: How about, was it consideration given to those that were, you might as well say , interned? Because, because..

TAFFIT: We started to intern dangerous people in the sense of dangerous criminals or nazis and so forth, not at Ellis Island but in the Federal Detention Facilities in New York. The, the facilities at Ellis Island were not that secure. And reviewing the.., I spent some time there. I'm fluent in German and in French and a couple of other languages, too. But when we started to have these problems during the war, my first, one of my first jobs was being sent by Karl Zimmerman to the Detention Facility (long pause)…I'm getting old….

LEVINE: New York?

TAFFIT: Gloucester, Gloucester, Penns.., Gloucester, NJ.

LEVINE: No. Not Gloucester, MA?

TAFFIT: No. Gloucester, NJ. Where there was a detention facility. And we had quite a time there. And that was one of the other factors in connection with the Ellis Island thing. We had too many situations of young female applicants having a good time and some of the officers having a good time and being royally

treated food-wise and otherwise. And we had that and other things like that. Now if you had a detention facility with only applicants trying to come into the United States and those trying to overcome grounds of deportation, the applicants don't hesi… That's just as much as life. And many a time I, we walked, I walked through Gloucester three o'clock in the morning and find a guard in one detainee's bed. Many a - Ah!, not many a time almost every night.

LEVINE: Well now, the people - the Italians, Germans and Japanese who were held at Ellis Island during the war …

TAFFIT: Most of the Japanese were held at Gloucester, not at Ellis Island.

LEVINE: I see. But I'm wondering if it was a matter of degree. In other words, if it was say a Japanese businessman who had not, who wasn't considered a criminal but was simply rounded up.

TAFFIT: Well, the big problem with the Japanese problem in the sense that our mind set was that we didn't know which were ordinary and which were not. Their method of thinking was different from ours. To give you one illustration that I was involved in at Gloucester. We had, the FBI arrested a restauranteur who ran this lovely, lovely Japanese restaurant on one of the streets – if I recall correctly, it was 17th Street or something like that –

LEVINE: In Manhattan.

TAFFIT: No, In, in Philadelphia and they moved him to Gloucester which was the detention facility for the Philadelphia area. And he.. it turned out that he decided that he was <u>not</u> going to fight the facts. And he conceded that he was a full colonel in Japanese intelligence and that he sought repatriation and he was repatriated on the first Stockholm ship. You remember the Stockholm

took the ship – the people back. And the moving thing of this that none of us had ever seen before, particularly with the Japanese, is he had four children, born here in the United States. He had been sent here when he was a much lower level officer and he had been undercover as an intelligence officer in Philadelphia all these years. And one of his boys which we sort of gathered was his favorite son was a young boy, he was then sixteen, seventeen years old, and he said to all of those in this letter that he wrote to all of them and gave to the jailer who then gave it to me because I read German, the Ger – oh, no I'm off a bit ; they all came to me 'cause I read the German and the French, But I had to go get the Japanese translated. But in any event he said in the letter - and I remember now he wrote in English, he was fluent in it - that he wanted each of his children to know that they were born in the United States; they were registered with the Japanese embassy at the time they were born, so they were Japanese citizens; but they were, under United States law, American citizens. And each of them had the right to pick his own choice. And he said, I think that I ought to say that I hope that you will choose Japan; and as a senior military officer, I should say that. But I lived in the United States so long that I will not and I leave it to each of you - the decision. And this boy decided to stay. The wife and the two older boys went back . The third boy, third person was a girl. We never found out what happened to her. But the young boy elected to stay. He did not go back with his parents when they went out on the Stockholm. An interesting story.

LEVINE: Very, very. That difference in thinking, did that affect cases very often? I mean maybe the German way of thinking or the…

TAFFIT: Well, it didn't affect us. Because we weren't thinking German

LEVINE: You were thinking..

TAFFIT: American law. But I, ..at home, my parents, particularly my Dad, spoke many languages including German. And so I learned German as a child.

LEVINE: Oh, aha. Well did you use your language facility a lot in doing the work?

TAFFIT: Yes, yes, yes. Unfortunately, as far as my use of languages is concerned, we had more cases that were Italian or Greek than we had cases that were German or French. So my use of the language was limited by that, But I learned. As I used to say, I learned enough Greek and enough Italian to order from a restaurant in, anywhere in Greece and find the men's room and the ladies room.

LEVINE: (laughs) What did you like best about the kinds of immigrant…

TAFFIT: The multitude of different people that you met, always a challenge. We met a lot of great people.

LEVINE: And I guess they weren't, well, was there a particular theme or a particular kind of case that occurred most ..

TAFFIT: No. You mean, was there a pattern?

LEVINE: Yeah

TAFFIT: No. Except to the extent (*let me get some more Kleenex*) no, the, they…

LEVINE: We'll pause here for a second.

(THERE SEEMS TO BE A DISCONTINUITY, GAP IN THE RECORDING HERE, Irv)

TAFFIT: ….. than he was permitted

LEVINE: Oh, that would be , yeah, the most usual.

TAFFIT: That was in the deportation thing. Of course, criminal cases. And all of us visited; or I guess most of us - anyway, I did I know, and several of the others - visited the prisons to probably deportation hearings at the various federal and state prisons where people were being held on criminal charges and the government was moving to deport them. Then we ran into, not we, the immigration services, ran into this breach between the states who wanted to exact their pound of flesh in keeping them in the prison and the other people within the state authorities saying that's ridiculous unless its some heinous crime let's get rid of the people. But you had a lot of that. But as far as Ellis Island was concerned there, a lot was the…. Have you been to Ellis Island?

LEVINE: I work there. That's where my office is.

TAFFIT: When I was last in Ellis Island and I'm talking now when I went there as a visitor with Mrs Taffit and our two children, they are now 51 and 50, so and they were both single at that time. I saw they had reconstructed a room to show what the hearing room was like

LEVINE: ?

TAFFIT: And on the wall of that room as I now visualize it in the back wall of – in other words the wall where the judge would be sitting – as you were facing the judge it would be left side there was a picture of a group of judges being taken as a posed picture and I was the next to the last one on the left hand side of that picture, I remember that. I don't know if that's still there at all.

LEVINE: I'll have to go look, see if that's still there. So then that was taken at Ellis Island in those ….board ….of. inquiry

TAFFIT: Yeah, it was taken…no, I can't say that. I don't know where….. I have reason to think it was taken in the New York office. And then put up there.

LEVINE: I see. Well, is there anything else connected with Ellis Island that just has to do with, with you in any way?

TAFFIT: No. No. I spent, of the judges there were, at the start of this thing when law changed and supreme court held that we, that cases could no longer be heard by immigration officers but had to be heard by "judges" although they wouldn't say judges they had to be heard by people with legal training. That was the WAN ANG SANG case (Fong Haw Tan Case ? Reviewer note) by the supreme court in I guess late '40's, late '40's but I would guess '48, '49, but in any event I used to have all these things at my fingertips but I don't, I'm not involved with.. After the WANANGSANG decision, the attorney general of the United States directed the commissioner of immigration to appoint a group of immigration judges. The first group was twenty-four. Of the 24, (? Fewofue?) was one of those24, Flieglman was one of those 24, I was one of those 24 A fellow named Henry Melman, Edward Umanual, I don't even know if Ed's alive anymore because he was a bit older than we were and I'm one of the young ones and I'm 82.(laughs). And then there was …(long pause) who else? Unfortunately, we didn't have any social organization that kept us together. And once I left the immigration service in '71, I became a practicing attorney specializing in immigration law but from an entirely different point of view.

LEVINE: What was the difference?

TAFFIT: I represented major corporations in their applications for visas for important employees, (? Tooloo?) investors, treaty traders. I represented people like the employees of Xerox, Citicorp, Chase Manhattan, things like that. So I'm, some of the fellows, I was the first one of our group to retire. I retired in '71

when I made my eligibility and I was thinking of what I was going to do because , well, to give you an illustration, I just received in the mail from a friend in Washington – no, actually, from my daughter in Washington – a list of the pay scales of civil service employees. And you see we were civil service and we were US 12, ah 15 , the highest civil service and at that time we were getting 40 odd thousand dollars. That, and all of us were at the top of the US 15 grade. And that is now 98,000 dollars. And when I left it at 40,000, I had two children – let's see Bruce was 20, late 20's and Susie was a year and a half older. Our son is now the executive vice president of United Artists. Our daughter is married to the Director of Pharmacology of World Health. So that maybe where things were more or less to be able to give Elizabeth what I wanted to be able to give to the (gap) (?), why I left. And my, as I say, I got into the (?concusial?) aspect of immigration in the sense of representing corporations that had real problems in getting visas And I specialized in practice that was not with the immigration service, but with the state department, with the consul ..,with consular service in getting visas for people and tomorrow I am going to Miami to attend a lecture in which the chief of the state department visa office will be the main lecturer. While I am 99% retired, really

LEVINE: You're still a (?pistol?)

TAFFIT: Yes. I'm interested, I'm, I have, I just notified…(?serops?) at the end of….

END OF SIDE B, TAPE ONE

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