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STANLEY GROGAN
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INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.
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PORT:
RESIDENCES:

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service and I'm here in the Ellis Island Oral History Studio on February 14th, 1998 with Mr. Stanley Joseph Grogan. Mr. Grogan lived on Bedloe's Island from 1931 till 1935, so that would have been from age five through nine. And [clears throat] he was there because his father was a captain in the United States Army and was stationed there. So this is a—an extreme rare pleasure to have someone who can speak about the place, and apparently you remember where everything was. So I welcome you and thank you for coming for the interview.

GROGAN: I appreciate your comments.

LEVINE: Okay. Mr. Grogan, if we would—if you'd start with your birth date for the tape. Again, your birth date.

GROGAN: My birth date is 14, January, 1925.

LEVINE: And where were you born?

GROGAN: I was born at—in central Manhattan at a place, which was called Lippincott's [PH] Sanatorium, which is not an insane asylum but a place to—that today is a well-known Japanese restaurant.

LEVINE: Oh.

GROGAN: And right in the middle of town. And it was really a hospital at the time and—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

GROGAN: —not a sanatorium, despite its name.

LEVINE: Where—where was it located? Do you re—remember?

GROGAN: I have that on my birth certificate—

LEVINE: Oh, of course.

GROGAN: —that I left outside.

LEVINE: Okay. Great, okay. And there will be some material in—on file in the oral history offices that Mr. Grogan has provided for us. So [clears throat] did you live in Manhattan up until the age of five when you moved to Bedloe's Island?

GROGAN: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And was your father then stationed somewhere in Manhattan?

GROGAN: He was stationed at a place called 39 Whitehall Street, which was the Army Recruiting Center. His job was chief of public affairs for the Manhattan area. As a result of his work, he met many dignitaries coming through Manhattan, to include some of the English royals, many general officers, and had the job of publicity for these events and people that did come through Manhattan. It was my privilege to have met a number of them and to have seen the same kinds of things at which he was a project officer.

LEVINE: Oh. Well, how was it that he came to be stationed on Bedloe's Island? Do you know that?

GROGAN: Yes. Typical of the military of today and of yesterday was the fact that housing is provided when it is available. The job, located in Manhattan, was merely a working venue. However, he could have been housed at

Governor's Island or on Liberty. There was an apartment available on Liberty Island. We were assigned a—quarters number 16, which was the first apartment house facing the dock. It was an advantageous position for me to see many things. I'll never forget the sight of the Hindenburg flying over in the fog in the late afternoon in 1934. My sister and I both remembered it and, of course, I didn't realize the significance until years later. But even the eyes of a child, a remembrance of that sort was an era of history that one does not forget.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Now, you say you were the first house next to the dock.

GROGAN: Yes.

LEVINE: That was facing east?

GROGAN: That was facing Manhattan.

LEVINE: Manhattan, uh-huh. Okay.

GROGAN: That is to the east.

LEVINE: Right, okay. And—and, well, I guess I really—what was your father's name?

GROGAN: My father's name was the same as mine. I'm really Junior but, upon the death of a parent, you usually drop the junior and that's what I did when he passed on in 1978.

LEVINE: Okay. And your mother, her name?

GROGAN: Her name was Marie DiGiorgio [PH] Grogan. My father is Scotch Irish. My mother was Sicilian. And she was a very lovely person who died at the age of 93 in Washington, DC.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh. And you had just one sister?

GROGAN: One sister, Patricia Maria Grogan.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

GROGAN: And she lived on the island the same years I did.

LEVINE: And was she older or younger?

GROGAN: Two years younger.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, Uh-hmm. Okay. And [clears throat] was there any connection in your family with Ellis Island or immigrants coming and seeing the Statue of Liberty?

GROGAN: It may seem odd but the connection is indirect. All of the people on my father's side came through Ellis Island, the Patrick Grogans and the Duffys. On my mother's side, the DiGiorgios and Masinas [PH] all came through the island during the same span of years, just a few years apart.

LEVINE: Wow.

GROGAN: So I had literally two sides of the family, all of which came through the island in the early years.

LEVINE: Wow. Okay. So when—can you remember when you first realized you were moving to Bedloe Island or when you first did move? Any kind of remembrances about that?

GROGAN: Yes. Despite the fact that I was only five years old, I have recalled many times my entrance to the island, which was on a closed dock. The dock on the east end was not open; it was closed, only open at the point where the boat docked. As you entered the shed, and it really was an old warehouse used for the storage of goods largely in World War I, I exited that island and noticed the apartment number 16 on the right, the wall in the center of the island. And as you came out, you saw liberty on the left. All that has been demolished over the years, but I do remember leaving the boat, seeing the island in that particular way.

LEVINE: Wow. And [clears throat] do—were there other families? How many, roughly, other families were—were living there at that time?

GROGAN: The photograph you showed me before we came in the room indicates the number of houses available. My father, being only a company grade officer at the time, occupied one of 10 or 12 apartment buildings in the long brick structure, which has now been demolished. The larger houses down the row, four or five of them, contain the homes of higher-ranking officers, who were members of the armed forces too. But there were not that many families there. There were not too many children. The rest of the occupants of the island were all soldiers living in the u-shaped barracks on the opposite side of the baseball diamond.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So did you have much contact? I mean, were there—were there community facilities that you shared with the others on the island?

GROGAN: Yes, we worked together rather closely. As children, it was a great delight to ride on the old Army Conestoga wagons when they picked up the trash every week, because the Conestoga wagons were driven by mules. And we had eight mules on the island that would periodically escape, and we'd have a great time on a Saturday morning helping round them up. This little facet of life lent excitement to the routine of the activity, since most people living on the island worked elsewhere. We also played baseball on weekends. And we had visiting teams come in. And of course, you always had the tourists coming through and they would, of course, see the statue. And we liked to look at the tourists too so we'd sometimes join the crowds.

LEVINE: [laughs] Was there any interface or connection between the tourists coming on and the people who were actually living there? I mean—

GROGAN: Not really. What we would do sometimes, we liked to box and engage in sports. Sometimes, we'd have a little amateur boxing match and some of the tourists would stand around and cheer. But there was nothing that was organized.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. And so you see, the people tended to work elsewhere. Wh—where else were they working?

GROGAN: Okay. These were Army people, almost all of them either technical sergeants, captains, majors, some in the medical corps, some in the dental corps. My father was a director of the Army Information Services at 39 Whitehall Street. He worked in Manhattan itself in a building, which is now demolished, very close to the Battery. And these people who worked on Governor's Island, mostly, Fort J., and I recall sitting and told to be quiet by my parents because your—children are not supposed to disturb adults, in the cabinet of the Hook Mountain or the Favorite or the Bear Mountain (these are the names of the boats that we had) going from the Battery to Bedloe's Island. And on many an occasion, we—I would meet new people transferring in and out.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Would—did you actually call it Bedloe's Island at that time?

GROGAN: In my mind, I called it Bedloe's Island. We actually called it Fort Wood.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

GROGAN: Fort Wood was the common name. I always referred to it as Bedloe's Island. Governor's Island was the place where we all went to school. We took a boat from Bedloe's Island to the Battery, walked across to the Battery to the Hubert Humphrey and then got on that and went to Public School Number 3 in Governor's Island.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

GROGAN: I learned to read and write there and enjoyed my school days. I still remember the names of all my teachers, if you can imagine that.

LEVINE: Wow.

GROGAN: [chuckles]

LEVINE: And just as a little boy growing up there, w—was it an exciting place to be?

GROGAN: It was exciting years later because I didn't realize the significance of the things I saw. In 1931, we saw the tail end of the Italian round the world seaplane flights. And that, of course, gave rise to international aviation across the oceans. Yeah, it took me years to realize the significance of that experiment on the part of the Italians. But as a boy, I saw it. I'll never forget the time at Governor's Island when our teacher took us out of class, asked us to line up on the seawall to watch the Normandy come in for the first time. And then the Queen Mary, the original one, which is now in Long Beach Harbor, California, it came into the harbor. But the most striking thing that ever occurred to me that, in later years I reflected on as historically significant, was the German Zeppelin, Hindenburg. It came across in—almost in an apocryphal way in the fog, and you saw the giant swastika on the belly. And not—just as a child, I didn't realize the significance of this.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

GROGAN: But when World War II came around, I certainly did.

LEVINE: Wow. Did anybody point it out to you at that time or you just happened—

GROGAN: We all—we all knew about it and we literally convened in front of apartment number 16 to watch for this. It was a major event, and just as an eclipse of the sun would be, because it was a unique trip.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

GROGAN: Mmm.

LEVINE: And so you were actually on Bedloe's Island during the Depression.

GROGAN: Yes.

LEVINE: Did the Depression—how d—how did the Depression affect you, being there?

GROGAN: You know, as a child, you don't—you never know when you're poor. Nobody had any money, to speak of. No one went to concerts or to the kinds of things that you do today. And no one went on tours. You made do where you were. And I know we had a bowling alley on the island. Occasionally, we'd go bowling. We had a basketball court and we would play games there. We'd play baseball and, mostly, we would fish and crab. And I do recall a carpenter at one time who had a slab of bacon. And he would take the rind at the end of the slab and rub it on his saw to keep it oiled. And then he'd cut a part of it off and he said, "Here, put this in your crab net." And we did and we caught crabs. We took the crabs and we presented them to the occupants of the apartment nearest the dock. And on Saturday night, everyone came over for a big crab feed. So during the Depression, we cooperated. There was practically no crime. And it was a situation where everyone knew everyone and helped each other out.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. What kind of fish were you catching? Do you remember?

GROGAN: Mostly crabs, but I do recall with great fondness the fact that every spring I used to like to watch for the schools of mackerel that would circle the island. And then the more frightening aspect and, again, eels are harmless but when you first see them you think they're snakes.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

GROGAN: Under the old east dock, the one facing Manhattan, we'd stand in the rocks and maybe in knee-deep water and watch thousands of eels come up to spawn in the Hudson River.

LEVINE: Wow.

GROGAN: And we had all kinds of fish, wildlife. And even in the 1930s in the wintertime, the—the water would freeze over between Ellis and Bedloe's. And we'd walk out on the ice and pick up frozen ducks.

LEVINE: Really? You could—could you actually walk that distance?

GROGAN: No problem. I never walked the whole distance. I walked about halfway. I'd pick up a duck and bring it home. At one time, I had a pet duck in our hallway, which my father let me keep for a few months. But after it began to behave like a duck—it was rather unsanitary—

LEVINE: [chuckles]

GROGAN: —[chuckles] we couldn't maintain it any longer and had to let it go.

LEVINE: Wow, wow. Were—were there—during the Depression, were there many visitors to Bedloe's Island, to the statue?

GROGAN: Bedloe's Island has always had visitors. We had a steady stream of weekend visitors but during the week you didn't see too many. But on the east dock we had a souvenir stand with the usual statues; I'm sure they have the same today. And we had many interesting people come in but we did not have the droves of people you have in the '90s. We had a few. Weekends were crowded. During the week, practically no one, except those of us who lived on the island.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Did you—do you, by any chance, recall—I mean, were there a lot of foreign visitors or not so much? I guess at that time people weren't traveling so—

GROGAN: Those that traveled in those years were dignitaries, usually, people with money. And again, the Depression being what it is, there weren't many that had any money. Certainly, we didn't have any.

LEVINE: Right, right. [clears throat] So you really spent four years—

GROGAN: Yes.

LEVINE: —o—on Bedloe's Island. And did the place itself change much over that time? Any changes?

GROGAN: No, the—the changes were never apparent in the times that we lived there. Change was apparent in the '50s. In the late '40s and '50s, you began to see plans being made and partial construction taking place on the island. I remember I used to fly over it in an Air Force aircraft and look down and notice that nothing had changed. But by the late '50s, you began to see apartment buildings being demolished, land being leveled and the place being developed as a National Park.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And—and the accommodations and the facilities that were there when you lived there, would you say they were l—luxurious in any way? Or were they—

GROGAN: The quarters we lived in were typical Army quarters. They dated from World War I when the island was largely used, and consisted of a series of covered warehouses all over the place, and they look at the old photographs. Ammunition storage and storage for supplying the troops

overseas, those were all cleared out later and the buildings themselves were hardly luxurious. We had very large rats that inhabited some of the apartments. And I used to listen carefully at night for them so that I could place the trap where the rat would run, because as you know, rats can live on just little drops of food or practically nothing.

LEVINE: Hmm.

GROGAN: But they are huge. And we had a large cat, a big, black Persian named Smoky. And Smoky was a great rat killer.

LEVINE: Hmm.

GROGAN: And we kept that cat around for that purpose.

LEVINE: Hmm. Did you notice anything—any activity on Ellis Island while you were living on Bedloe Island?

GROGAN: Activity on Ellis Island was practically nil while we lived there. We noticed very little activity. I'm sure there was some. But there was no real interaction directly between the two islands or among us, the mainland, and the island. We—we had no reason for interaction. But we were actually a—a live-in community that worked elsewhere, either school or, as the adults did, working on Governor's Island, Manhattan or elsewhere.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Did you ever keep contact with anyone who—who was also there when you and your family were living there?

GROGAN: No. On only one occasion across the years in the military service, I did meet one person who had lived there, but we never were acquainted at that time and he has since passed on. But life goes on and the number of people that lived there were so small that I think almost all of them are no longer with us.

LEVINE: I see. I was—I was wondering about children that you were friendly with.

GROGAN: That's—

LEVINE: Do you think there are those that might be contacted?

GROGAN: No, there is a story that I've always reminisce in my mind. I—I wish these people were alive today. There was a sergeant on the island named Beltran and a very fine gentleman. He had two boys, one of whom was killed as a boy on Governor's Island, was run over by a

truck. And his other son, who was a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army, was killed in Vietnam. And I learned about this years later. But I have never contacted or have been contacted by any other inhabitants on the island of people my age or close to in those years. Those are the only two names I really remember, people that I would like to have seen survive.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm. Well, hopefully, we'll get to talk with your sister—

GROGAN: Yeah. I hope my sister does contact you. She says—said she would. And when I return to California, I will call her. She lives in Bakersfield and I hope that she gives you her insights, which I'm sure parallel mine but will be quite different and at a different depth than mine. She—she's very good about people. She does remember names. She remembers eight, nine, 10 or 12 families.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

GROGAN: And I had no idea she did. But because she has such a good memory, I'm sure that she'll help you out.

LEVINE: Oh, wonderful. Wonderful. Now, are there any other anecdotal memories? Anything that, when you think of that place, y—you recall from those years?

GROGAN: I like to think of the times I entered Liberty and walked to the top. I was never permitted to go in the torch because of the Black Tom explosion of—after World War I in which the torch was hit and damaged. And no one was permitted in the torch and I don't know whether they are today.

LEVINE: Yeah, they are now.

GROGAN: No, I'm glad they are. But at that time we couldn't do it. But it was always a pleasure to go up in the—in Liberty and look out over the bay and—and view things as they were. I also recall my desire to explore every facet of the island, which as an over-curious young boy, I did. And I recall walking around the island at low tide on the beach through the rocks all the way around it, just to see if I could do it. And it was instructive to me because you could do it. The sand was there. There weren't too many stones. I also recall the fact that the water was not polluted to any great degree. If you wanted to, you could swim. That was not permitted, though, because of the tides. It was just too swift. But the overall climate, the environment there was a very positive one and one which I think would be envied in the '90s.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Were there oysters? Is—that may be a naïve question but were there oysters, oyster shells there?

GROGAN: Ah, they're oyster shells but we never harvested oysters. Our interest was crabs.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

GROGAN: Crabs are highly edible and quite large in those years.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

GROGAN: Fishing was not that big but the fish that were caught were used as bait for the crab pots.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

GROGAN: But crabbing was popular because it was so easy to cook a crab. As you know, you just drop it in boiling water and it's done in 10 minutes. But the fact is, we cooked crabs a lot, a very popular dish there.

LEVINE: Hmm. [clears throat] Let's see. And did people—was New Jersey part of your world, living on that island?

GROGAN: That was always a point of confusion. We never knew if we were in New York or in New Jersey. On one day, someone would say, "You're part of the state of New York." We always considered ourselves as part of New York. But someone else would point out, "No, the line clearly shows you're part of New Jersey." And I believe that's a controversial point even today.

LEVINE: Yes, it is. [laughter] And how about artifacts or any kind of archeological activity during the time you were there? Were you aware of anything like that?

GROGAN: Not like that but there were—there was debris left over from World War I on the southern end of the island near the west dock, near the southwest portion of the island. There was a small beach area at which seaplanes would pull up. And they'd land in the bay and they'd stay for a few minutes and then take off again. We'd greet them there and perhaps we'd explore there. There—there was iron and debris from the World War I thrown in the water that had largely rusted out, old—old tanks, pipes and things of this sort. And then from time to time, barges would be docked on the island there, just for storage purposes. Then they'd—they'd load them up later on and take them out and sink them. But we—the island itself was a way station and it performed a number

of utilitarian functions. We had a firing range at the end of the island periodically. The military police that were there, and others would use that range. And that was behind one of the storage warehouses.

LEVINE: Really?

GROGAN: Yeah. The—the fuel that was used to heat the island was coal. And then there was a power station, an ancient World War I type power station, hardly a modern facility in any—even in the 1930s. But the life there was simple. It was clean. No one was lacking for any basic needs and people did cooperate to a very high degree.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm. I guess it was like a little, small town.

GROGAN: It was defy like a little, small town.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Wow. Well, when your father left there, what—did—was there a reason why he didn't stay longer?

GROGAN: Well, you know, in the Armed Services, you move when you—you're told to move, under orders.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

GROGAN: I know I am a retired Air Force officer. And I have moved many, many times in accordance with needs. And the needs that my father met were those of the 1930s. He was transferred to the Command and General Staff College in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. And unfortunately, my mother became ill and she had to go to the hospital. So I went away with them and was later sent to a boarding school in Maryland.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

GROGAN: That's when we left the island.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

GROGAN: We left because of the need of the service. It was just prior to World War II now, just a few years away, five or—

LEVINE: Yeah.

GROGAN: —six years away.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

GROGAN: And everyone was in this mode of preparation, even though they didn't know they were. It was at a time when the Army was less than 250,000 men and officers, very, very small nucleus of people. And of course, it was a basis for the expansion that led to the victory in World War II.

LEVINE: Hmm, hmm. Well, before we leave Bedloe, how did your mother like living there?

GROGAN: My mother loved Army life. When she was married, all the members of her family objected to her marrying someone who is going to be a—a gypsy wanderer all of his life. Fortunately, he got good assignments and she loved every minute of it. She lived in Germany. She lived up and down the East Coast for years. When I was in the service, I lived all over the world and she was envious of the different places that I'd been that she hadn't been.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

GROGAN: And in one of my tours to Germany, one time she visited me there. And this was well after my father had retired. But she said she'd never seen Germany and she thought she'd use me as an excuse to do so.

LEVINE: [laughs] Well, now, had your father traveled much before the Manhattan assignment?

GROGAN: Oh, yes. He had been—he was at Plattsburg [PH] Barracks. He was in charge of the publicity for the first Air Mail flights out of Manhattan. He had quite an exciting career. He greeted some of the royals on ships as they came into the harbor. He talked to the Roosevelt family quite a bit when the grandparents of Franklin D. would come to town. He had many, many contacts and was always doing protocol work for the Army and, of course, getting the recognition that the Army needed and representing them when that need came up for recruiting purposes and purposes of representation with the press. He had a fine reputation in New York and was missed when he left.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm. And—and how did you feel when you—when you learned you would be leaving?

GROGAN: As any child would, I didn't like it. You know how child are, and I was no different. I didn't want to leave the friends I had made and start all over again in a new school. And that is, I think, a rather common emotion.

LEVINE: Yes, it is.

GROGAN: [chuckles]

LEVINE: Okay. I'm not sure—okay. [clears throat] So—and—and how about your sister? Was—is there—do you have any particular memories in relation to her, either being there or leaving?

GROGAN: Yes. I—I think when I was at the island I caught every childhood disease you can catch. You know, we had very few inoculations or vaccinations. And what I recall with my sister was the fact that we used to talk about the whooping cough we caught and the smallpox and the measles and all the misery and the time we had to miss school just because of these things. This is the kind of memory I had because we both had these things and we didn't like getting these childhood diseases.

LEVINE: Where did you go to the—did you have a hospital or a doctor—

GROGAN: No, we—we had—we stayed at home.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

GROGAN: And that's all we could do.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

GROGAN: Because it worked out. And, again, I did have a nice view of the bay from apartment 16.

LEVINE: [laughs] Right. Okay. So i—is there anything else you can think of regarding your life there before we go to the next phase?

GROGAN: Only that it was a pleasure living there. It was extraordinarily significant and I've always appreciated the fact that the chances life gives you allowed me the opportunity to see many things that most people only see in picture books.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm. Well, this is a good place. We're going to turn over the tape here and then we'll continue.

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A]

[BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE B]

LEVINE: Okay. We're continuing here with side B and I'm speaking with Mr. Stanley Grogan. [clears throat] Do you remember anything about a radio station on Bedloe Island?

GROGAN: I had no contact with such an entity. I realized one existed but we were never permitted to enter the facility, for obvious reasons. Children do get into trouble, you know. And I did know that one was there. However, I never was permitted to go inside.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. The pe—it was being broadcasted from?

GROGAN: No, I believe it was for emergency purposes only.

LEVINE: Only. Uh-huh. Okay. And do you remember a Mr. and Mrs. Hill, who ran the concession?

GROGAN: Yes, I do. I—I remember the Hills well. Even as a child, they were very friendly people and I believe they had a son and a daughter. And I don't remember their names. I remember talking with them many times. Their father had the concession at the Post Exchange.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

GROGAN: Very nice people.

LEVINE: Oh, at the Post Exchange, not at the tour—not at the sort of gift shop for tourists?

GROGAN: Ah—

LEVINE: Or was that the same or—

GROGAN: I think it was probably the same. Perhaps my words aren't correct. But he did have some responsibility for what was sold commercially, however you defined it on the island.

LEVINE: I see. Because his son now runs that concession at—at the Statue of Liberty [unclear].

GROGAN: Well, then I—I probably know him.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. [chuckles] Uh-huh. Okay. And let's see. And how about New York City during the Depression? Did you get a chance to go into the city during that time? Do you have memories of that?

GROGAN: It's—it's interesting that you would ask that question. I was telling Kevin earlier that when my mother was visiting and—and my father had to drag me around, literally, when he went to the city we would stop off at some rather interesting places. And he would take me with him and I got to see the—many aspects of life on the East Side and to meet many

individuals and to see parts of—of Manhattan and to know my way around. And in later years, I had no trouble navigating through the streets of Lower Manhattan, the canyons of Lower Manhattan, if you will. But I did have many, many interactions with the city itself. Times Square, of course, today isn't what it was then. But that was one of the spots we visited frequently.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

GROGAN: And the old Astor Hotel and things today, which I don't think exist anymore.

LEVINE: Yeah, right. Kevin reminded me that you had a story about diving for nickels.

GROGAN: Oh, yeah. This was something that the boys in Manhattan did from the tour docks. And they would wait for the Statue of Liberty boat to come in and then they would dive from the dock itself for nickels. And this was pretty popular. Almost all the boys did this at one time or another.

LEVINE: Wow. I've heard of that being done in California. [chuckles] So I guess it's—

GROGAN: It was done in the '30s.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

GROGAN: All kinds of things occurred that never reach print because they're not newsworthy but they're a part of the life.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

GROGAN: And another part of the life was walking from Battery Park over to the Hubert Humphrey. And of course, we never walked in a straight line. We never went directly to the Hubert Humphrey. We always stopped for a hotdog or popcorn or we did something else, you know. But we eventually got on the boat. We never missed it. And coming back was the same way.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

GROGAN: But we had to behave ourselves on the boat. And one of the incidents that I recall like yesterday because—my sister recall this one too—we were coming from Bedloe's Island one day in extremely foggy weather. And the Staten Island ferry was coursing its usual straight line towards Manhattan at a much higher rate of speed than the Hook Mountain.

And it sideswiped us right in the middle of the bay. And here I was standing on the rail watching this and enjoying it. And of course, the adults on the boat were panicking because, "My gosh! We're going to get killed!" And here, I thought this was great fun—

LEVINE: [chuckles]

GROGAN: —that we would be sideswiped by a ferry. And then, being just a kid of about seven years of age, I didn't think anything of it but it was actually quite a dangerous thing.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm.

GROGAN: But no damage was done. It was just a clean sideswipe.

LEVINE: [chuckles] Well, you've mentioned some of the names. Maybe you could recall the names of the boats that you used when you were living on the island.

GROGAN: I remember the Favorite, the Bear Mountain and the Hook Mountain. And the Favorite and the Bear Mountain were probably the most used. Only occasionally would we see the other one. But I remember the names because we were on them so often. My gosh, you go on that boat twice a day for four years for most of the year, you're bound to remember a name like that.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

GROGAN: [chuckles]

LEVINE: And w—and were there boats? Were there—was there a—a last boat? Say you went into New York City and you needed to get back?

GROGAN: You had to watch your time and, true, everything was scheduled. They left on time and no one was about to dive into the water and swim after it if you were late.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

GROGAN: The water was too cold. [laughs]

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. And how about Battery Park? Do you have any recollections of life along the river and Battery Park?

GROGAN: Yeah, fond recollections of the aquarium. That was—I would badger my parents to take me over there every Sunday. So instead of that, they

wanted to rest on Sunday, during the week after school we would visit the aquarium. And we would delay going back to the island and arrive home just before supper and get away with it once in a while.

LEVINE: [chuckles]

GROGAN: —instead of coming directly home. We loved that aquarium.

LEVINE: Could you describe the aquarium from—

GROGAN: In detail, no, but I will say that it was always crowded and it was typical of the kinds of exhibits you see in most aquaria today that have the smaller windows. Today, if you go to Monterrey, California, you have the columnar windows, these huge windows that make you feel you're—as if you're in the ocean. The aquaria of that time were designed on a smaller scale, so you had a greater variety of fish, but you had to literally peer into the tank itself to observe it. And that's what it was like there. There was a rail in front of the glass and it wasn't just to—it wasn't very large. Today's aquaria are much more adventurous, let's say, in the participation. But it was a tremendous attraction and was for many, many years. I sincerely hope they do something with that building and put a roof on top of it. It's a—a structure which should remain.

LEVINE: Well, actually, it is part of the National Park Service and it is where—

GROGAN: Good.

LEVINE: —the tickets are purchased to come to the statue and to Ellis Island.

GROGAN: I noticed that when we walked through it on the way over today.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah. Okay. Well, then let's just do a thumbnail sketch. Where—you say you went [clears throat]—your moth—your father went to Kansas.

GROGAN: Yes.

LEVINE: And you went to Virginia? Is that—

GROGAN: To—I went to Maryland, to Baltimore.

LEVINE: Maryland.

GROGAN: To a boarding school.

LEVINE: And then what did you do after you finished school? What, as an adult, what did you—

GROGAN: Well, after I completed my education I was—went into the Armed Services. I'm a veteran of World War II, of Korea and of Vietnam. And I'm also a—at the present time, I do consulting work. I'm 73 years of age and I travel around the world giving seminars and lectures on various aspects of security and security management.

LEVINE: Oh. So were you in security in the—in the service or—

GROGAN: No, I used to fly in the service.

LEVINE: In—uh-huh.

GROGAN: But I got into security after I completed my career in education, because I'd had a lot of background and training and a lot of training in how to protect yourself and how to defend installations. I combined that into a consultancy in teaching people how to manage security considerations. And today, it's a hot topic. I was in New Delhi, India last year and Africa this year.

LEVINE: Wow. So do you consult to, like, corporations for their security?

GROGAN: Corporations and individuals.

LEVINE: Huh.

GROGAN: And they have, let us say, problems in management, problems with personnel, problems with loss of property. I—I assist people in improving their situations.

LEVINE: Oh. And you did marry. Who—what is your wife's name?

GROGAN: My wife's name is Mary, Mary Skroch Grogan and she is from Wisconsin.

LEVINE: What—how do spell her maiden name?

GROGAN: S-K-R-O-C-H.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

GROGAN: She is German.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

GROGAN: German background.

LEVINE: And do you have children?

GROGAN: We have one daughter, Mary Maurine Grogan. And we named her Maurine because Maurine in Gaelic means Little Mary. And so we have Mary S. Grogan and Mary M. Grogan. She is working in San Francisco at this time in the legal field.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And you live at this time in California?

GROGAN: I'm a resident of the state of California.

LEVINE: And you mentioned when we first started that you—that you have participated or contributed to other oral history projects. Why was that and what—what way were you—were you knowledgeable to speak?

GROGAN: After I served my time in the Armed Services, I volunteered to work in the California State Military Reserve. A—and the—I was a deputy commander for the State of California in the history area. In other words, we supplemented the National Guard. We were in uniform but we were volunteers. And one of the projects that I had was interviewing people who gave significant contributions to the state in terms of either concepts or techniques, which allowed the National Guard to be effective. An example would—that be the general officer who engineered the—how the Watts riot was controlled in Los Angeles. And we interviewed him about how he envisioned how to do it. And we did that so that future commanders would have guidance about how to handle riot situations. So this is all registered in the state of California. And we interviewed people like this who made contributions to the life of the estate.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. So if a researcher became interested in your story here and wanted to avail themselves of the interviews that you had, where would they find them?

GROGAN: They would find them in the state library in Sacramento, California.

LEVINE: Hmm.

GROGAN: And there's another library that does oral histories that I visited, and that is the one at the United States Naval Academy. And that is part of the foundation and anyone can go there. But they have similar kinds of histories. Examples would be interviews of Chester Nimitz or other people. And they don't leave out anything, including the language.

LEVINE: [chuckles]

GROGAN: Some—some of it is pretty colorful. But the fact is, it's all there and oral history people, I think, have a great contribution to give to knowledge of an era. And the ones in Sacramento at the library, this—and the ones at the Naval Academy are particularly good sources for these.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Wonderful. Okay. Well, I know you want to have a little time to look around and so i—is there anything else that you might like to say before we conclude?

GROGAN: Not that I can think of, and I really appreciate you're talking with me today.

LEVINE: Well, I thank you so much. This has been a most valuable contribution to our oral history collection at Ellis Island. And I've been speaking with Stanley Joseph Grogan, who lived o—on Bedloe Island for four years, 1931 through 1935. And this is Janet Levine, and Kevin Daley has been operating the audio equipment for this interview and will be doing a videotape of Mr. Grogan in a few minutes. So this is Janet Levine signing off on February 14th, 1998.

GROGAN: Happy Valentine's Day. [chuckles]

[END OF INTERVIEW]