

KECK-67

JACK RUND

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BOARD OF SPECIAL INQUIRY STENOGRAPHER

ELLIS ISLAND: 1937-1942

DANE: This is Debby Dane and I'm speaking with Jack Rund on Friday, November 1, 1985. We are beginning the interview at 4:10 pm. We are about to talk to Jack Rund about his work experience on Ellis Island from 1937 to 1942. He was a hearing stenographer and a member of the Board of Special Inquiry. His number is 067.

RUND: It's easy to look at Debby.

DANE: Thank you. Mr. Rund, how old were you when you started working on Ellis Island?

RUND: I was approximately twenty years old.

DANE: Do you remember how you got the job?

RUND: Yes, I took a civil service examination and I placed in the top ten in the City of New York. I was really qualified to be a court reporter at that time and this only called for a hearing stenographer, so I was over-qualified for the position and that explains why I received such a high mark. But because I had I was immediately picked off of that and given the position.

DANE: And what were your responsibilities as a hearing stenographer?

RUND: Well, to begin with, we had to make the verbatim transcript of the hearings that were held before what was called the Board of Special Inquiry of the Immigration & Naturalization Service. We also had the duty which I did not realize at the time of taking the job, of being an acting or associate member of the Board of Special Inquiry. Now I was perfectly competent for performing my job as a hearing stenographer but I had very little training in law, in the field of immigration and natural, naturalization law especially.

DANE: Explain to me what, what was the Board of Special Inquiry? What was their responsibility?

RUND: They were the second level of entry. The first level would be when an immigrant came, at that time almost always on a boat, and approached the New York harbor. When they approached New York harbor they would be examined by an Immigration & Naturalization Service, inspector and a doctor, who would examine them on their physical well-being and their credentials, passport and all of the other incidentals that necessary, visa. And then if he found anything that was wrong, or if the doctor found anything that was wrong or that was, not absolutely up to their standard that they had any question about, they would refer him to Ellis Island and to the Board of Special Inquiry. That was the second level. They then in turn processed each immigrant who came to Ellis Island to determine their eligibility for admission.

DANE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. So these people were on their way to deportation almost. I mean they weren't the ones that were accepted right off.

RUND: Technically, but very few of them were. In most instances

it was because the inspector and doctor on board were operating with hundreds, sometimes thousands of people, on board a ship. Boats were very crowded and they didn't have time to process these people thoroughly so they were--everyone who had everything in order would be let go. If there was anything at all out of the ordinary, out of the way, they would then send them to Ellis Island because there they had more time, they had more facilities for processing the people.

DANE: And then how did you get trained to be this board, to be on the board? What did you have to know so you could fulfill your duties?

RUND: Well, (he laughs), that is rather funny, ludicrous. They gave me a book the day I came there which contained all of the immigration laws and regulations. Black book about, oh, probably an inch thick. Not only the laws and regulations, but all of the interpretations that were, and decisions made from those laws and they said, "Well, in your spare time, just go over this and familiarize yourself with it," which was quite difficult because I didn't have very much spare time.

DANE: And the criteria--what were some of the things that you,

that were the standards when people would come before the Board, that you had to compare your check list that would allow them to entry?

RUND: The criteria, well they had, they had to meet primarily the public charge, or freedom of being a public charge, which meant, in layman's language, that they would not be without work or without money, funds, to sustain them for a given period of time, at least six months, preferably a year. Very few of these people who came were in that position. They had relatives who would ordinarily put up a bond for them. The bond then would be forfeited if they ever did become a public charge within that initial period of time. You have to realize that at that time, people were coming here who had no money. The governments of these various countries, like Germany and Italy, who really controlled Europe in the period from about '38 to '45, stripped them of everything that they had. They were just lucky to get out with their skins in most instances. So money was something they couldn't have. Becoming a public charge was a very important factor in determining whether some one was going to be admitted and the criteria also had, if you want me to continue on that--

DANE: Uh-huh.

RUND: --also had health as one of the significant reasons for admission or being denied admission. People came in and very often they had things like trachoma or, which is an infection of the eye. And at that time it was a very serious infection. It could not be treated easily. I think they used to use silver nitrate or something of that sort and put it in your eye, which was dangerous. Anyhow there were many illnesses. There were lepers who had leprosy in some form or other. There were people who had syphilis, gonorrhoea. In many countries these things are not that rare and here we were trying to exclude anyone who could transmit these diseases. Many of them were communicable and highly communicable. And there were many other diseases. Without going into details, that was another one of the criteria and there were a number of these criteria and I don't know whether you want me to go into them. There were things like moral turpitude. If an immigrant, applicant, had been guilty of, or convicted of a crime involving morals, which would be certain types of homosexuals could be involved in that, that was another thing we had to look out for. You know leading to the, to a minor's perversion and I don't think homosexuality as between two consenting adults, but we

didn't even talk about things like that, it's hard. Some of these things are hard to determine, you know. But if someone had committed a crime, such as a felony, anything above a misdemeanor, where...

DANE: Now, would you get this information by questioning, or would they have some sort of papers with them that would say that they had been involved or in jail at a certain point?

RUND: We would usually, in cases like that, have data that was given to us. People ratted, I guess would be the word, people told on other people. And also we had information from legal sources that we had checked and found to be accurate. So these people would be able to get visas because it would not all be apparent to the consul or officer at the time, but--at the time he was issuing the visa, but, by the time they got to us, we had information that led us to believe that they were not true applicants for admission.

DANE: And how long would the hearings take? Would you have a set of questions that you would ask every person, or was each case--

RUND: Each case was different.

DANE: Uh-huh.

RUND: It really was. Naturally there were the usual questions like name, address, how long have you lived in such and such, but once you got beyond the boiler plate you had really a free range of questions because every single person is different, every case was different. And many of the cases were extremely complicated, most of them were very simple.

DANE: Uh-huh. During that time that you came, it was just after the Depression and just at the start, really, of the Nazi takeover, beginning the takeover of most of the European countries. What did some of those--as, as I was saying, the Depression was just over--

RUND: Right.

DANE: So people were worried economically here and the war, and the Nazi rise to power was just happening in Europe. Did that bring any special cases to you, to Ellis Island?

RUND: Well it certainly did, I would say, I would say that ninety percent of them came because of those reasons. We had a terribly

tense situation in the world, and particularly in Europe where the Fascists and the Nazis were trying to dominate the world, and certainly they were dominating Europe. And it was extremely dangerous and hazardous for anyone who lived there. Some people had a double onus, a double burden. They, they were the people who were being singled out for persecution. There were many of them and among them were Jews, Communists, who were being specifically isolated and put into camps, which we didn't know about at that time, for extinction. And then there were many others who were being persecuted. Not necessarily with the idea of destroying them, but just to silence them. There were all sorts of things, Freemasons, everything, I mean everything you could think of that was contrary to the idea of Nazism or Fascism. And the difficult part was to determine who was really being persecuted and those people who wanted to just escape a situation where a war was imminent, or actually going on. And the same sort of situation, I am sure, faces our immigration inspectors today. Who is really fleeing because of the danger to their life, and who is coming here for economic reasons or for just general safety reasons? This is a haven.

DANE: Uh-huh.

RUND: We live in one of the great islands of the world. Maybe the only real island of the world and--

DANE: So, at that point then, early on, anybody that could prove that they wouldn't be a charge of the state and they weren't bringing disease and weren't a health threat, were allowed in. But during this time, were we saying that you had to come for, like, political reasons or we weren't just opening doors to people that could support themselves and weren't a health problem?

RUND: No, no. There had to be a quota. Now, we had quotas which governed each country. Every country had a certain amount of people that they were allowed to have visas for and getting on that list was really something because at a time like that perhaps ten, twenty percent of the population of a country wants to leave immediately, whether they have a good reason or not, whether they are being persecuted or not. And the quota could be one thousandth of that. So who was going to get those spots? And unless you had the spot, you could not even get the visa.

DANE: Uh-huh. They--I've also read that, that since the war was starting and, and Hitler was beginning to occupy territories, that the State Department was worried about refugees coming in as

subversives. Were you directed to keep an eye out for these people?

RUND: Definitely, yeah. We were we were looking out for, I guess you would call them spies or saboteurs now, infiltrating or communists, too. Not communists per se, as a member of a political party, but a communist--if he is a true communist, believes in a communist manifesto, which is the overthrow of an organized form of government by force or violence. Now, we don't want to let people in, I don't think we still do, I hope not, to this country who are going to start planning the overthrow of our organized form of government by force or violence, and that was the way it was then.

DANE: But they were communists that were coming over. Did, did you let certain--so you had to determine who was going to be an active subversive, if you will, and who was going to have it a, as a parlor belief? Is that--

RUND: Generally speaking that's right, although communists really had the burden on them to prove that they were not true communists. And generally speaking, we would sort of kick that upstairs, would exclude them. It was virtually mandatory. There were a number of

mandatory reasons for exclusion, where you didn't have any say in whether they were going to be admitted. And things like this were, if they were a true member of the Communist party, if they had a communicable disease which could not be treated, if they had committed a serious crime, a number of things like that.

DANE: Tell me, this must be hard to remember if it's true, but some of these people were escaping persecution. Now, were they coming back with these horrible stories that no-one could comprehend at this early stage, '39. '40?

RUND: It's true, true Debby. They had very little play in the press at that time that was able to verify terrible persecution going on. There were stories in the press, many stories, but it was hard to believe. As I think I mentioned before, the First World War they had many stories emanating from that where people said that the German soldiers had committed all sorts of heinous crimes, and those turned out not to be true. And it was true of many other incidents where people would say something terrible about another country, what they were doing, because they were the enemy at the time, and you wouldn't believe it. And then after the war or after the difficulty was over, you found out that they really weren't true. In this case, they were true. But nobody

knew it at the time, so you had to, you had to be able to read a crystal ball to be able to tell. The people who came over told you, "Our lives are in danger, they are persecuting us, they are taking people and shipping them away, we don't know where," you know. Even they didn't know where they were going. Because it was such a well kept secret, at the time that I'm talking about it at least. We didn't find out until '44, definitely, that there were such places where they were not just incarcerating people but burning them and destroying them and--by the millions, not by the thousands.

DANE: Could you believe it, could you believe, as these people were sitting here saying, "They're taking hundreds and hundreds of people from my city and I know I'm next and I don't know what's happened to them?"

RUND: It was hard to believe. It was very difficult to believe. You, you always thought that they were telling you this story in order to obtain ingress, to get into the country. It's too bad when you think back on it, but that, that's just the way it is. If you don't have all the information, you have to act on the best information you have.

DANE: Would you talk with the other members of the Board and, and discuss--

RUND: Yes.

DANE: --this sort of crazy talk. I mean did you, did you think--

RUND: Sometimes.

DANE: Would there ever be a time when you'd say, "This was a real whopper. Can you believe that they're, how do you expect us to swallow it?", or would you wring your, I mean, how, how much did you, could you believe and how much was really just, you thought they were telling tales?

RUND: Well, many times we would almost laugh at some of the stories that were told to us because they were whoppers. But generally speaking, they were very serious about these people. We know their lives were hanging in our hands, you know. They were just, these people had no place else to go. Whether you believed their story or not you knew what the situation generally was and you knew that if you turned them away, it was going to be difficult for them, at the very least. No money, no place to go, returning

to a country that is being devastated. So it wasn't something you laughed about. The, the occasions I'm telling you, some of them were ludicrous, some stories you would hear. But generally speaking they were all people who were desperate.

DANE: Uh-huh. And you were twenty years old. As a young person who hadn't had a whole lifetime of experience to understand that life can be as horrible sometimes as it can be, I mean, how did, how did you deal with it?

RUND: Well, it was traumatic, it was shocking and it left its mark on me and my life. I don't think you ever get through experiences like that without having them affect you personally, deeply.

DANE: Were there ever occasions, there were three people on the-- how many people on the Board--at, at each hearing?

RUND: There were three, three members of the Board of Special Inquiry. And generally speaking we made up, we, the hearing stenographers, made up the third member. And usually our vote would not be necessary or would not count because the other two members would vote in one way. They'd either vote to exclude or admit. The difficulty came when they would split, which would not

be often. I wouldn't say it would be oftener than, oh, at least not oftener than one in a hundred. And then we would have to make up our minds which way to vote. And that would be (he laughs) a harrowing experience for us because we had insufficient background and experience. We did know that every case that was excluded would almost certainly go to the Board of Immigration Appeals. Not necessarily, not ipso facto that way, but generally speaking that's the way it would go. So there would be another level, a third level, that would be able to examine these people on their credentials. But nevertheless, you didn't want to goof. You wanted to make a decision there that was reasonably sound. So what I did was I, I knew the members, and I knew their qualifications, and I knew their petty grievances, likes, dislikes, you know, everybody's human, and there were certain ones who were, in my opinion at least, in the opinion of the other reporters too, more qualified. Generally speaking, we would side with the more qualified person. (He laughs)

DANE: Uh-huh.

RUND: And very few times, I think only once that I remember the times that I voted, was the decision overturned by the Board of Immigration Appeals. So I guess we were good judges of human

nature, at least as far as our inspectors were concerned, even if we weren't as far as the immigrants were concerned.

DANE: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

RUND: And some of these inspectors were very competent. I won't say, well, I'll say, all of them were competent, and some were just more competent than others.

DANE: Uh-huh.

RUND: Some were just more human than others. Some were more, had more sentiment than others, just like people do. Take any group of people and that's the way they'll be.

DANE: Now this is a hard one, but I've read it, so I'm going to ask you a question about it. During the late, when was it? Well actually when you were there, between '39 and '40, I'd read that there was an investigation that had been, I don't know if it was the State Department or who but, trying to expose anyone that was selling re-entry permits to, to immigrants. Did you, were you aware of anything of that sort going on or, or hearing about the investigation?

RUND: Yeah, I, I didn't know, I didn't even know there was an investigation. I knew that there were rumors that this was going on and entry permits, I don't know about re-entry permits, but there were a lot of shenanigans going on there. An entry visa was worth a fortune if you could get one because of the limited number. And it was something that was susceptible to greed, that's all. Just like you pick up the paper any day and you see a Secretary, Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, they're all being charged with something. These were just Immigration officials, you know, pretty low down on the totem pole. And sure, there must have been some, but I don't think it was significant and I don't, I didn't know there was an investigation. I knew there was a bunch of talk, rumors, about what was going on.

DANE: Uh-huh. Were you ever approached? Were you ever in a position, I guess, to be approached by someone to slip you some money--

RUND: Not really, no. There were times when people from the shipping company would talk to you about someone, but no-one ever approached me to try to buy my vote let's say. I don't think I was

in a position to have a, a say in the matter because it was so infrequent that I would have a chance to vote. And I don't know that of anyone there who ever did that or would have done it. I think they were all pretty respectable gentlemen.

DANE: Uh-huh.

RUND: I didn't agree with a, a lot of them, a lot of their decisions, but I, I wouldn't say that they were dishonest.

DANE: How many cases a day would they see? Are we talking ten, twenty?

RUND: Yeah, I think we are talking just about ten or twenty different cases that each Board of Special Inquiry would hear, but then there were three Boards of Special Inquiry each time, so you're talking about oh, roughly fifty cases a day. Not more than, I would say under, the most extreme circumstances not more than seventy-five in a day. Some of the cases would only last a few minutes. It would, it'd be a most perfunctory examination because everything was right except that the Immigration Officer at the time had neglected to see something under the stress of his situation. And we had time to examine these things more

thoroughly. But sometimes a case would run on for an hour, hour and a half, couple of hours in certain instances, particularly in difficult cases, difficult cases where you had to make a decision which was almost a human decision rather than a decision of law.

DANE: Such as?

RUND: Well, there were cases like the people who returned from Spain, the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, who had been citizens of the United States. They claimed they still were citizens of the United States. They went to Spain in order to fight, to fight against fascism. Well, we were more or less against fascism too, you know. How do you say to somebody, "Well you, you went there to fight fascism." I probably would have gone to fight fascism too. I did go to fight fascism later on, "But you're not, eligible to come back to the United States." "Well, why?" Because when he went there, he didn't just go to fight fascism as a member of the American forces. He had to take an oath to the country that he was fighting for, in this instance Spain, a republic. He had to swear that he would uphold and defend the government, the principles, of that country. When you do that, you can't be swearing to uphold the principles and the government of two countries at the same time. Maybe you can, but it's kind of difficult if they ever come

in conflict with each other. So you automatically, and that's the way the law is written, if you ever swear that you are going to uphold the constitution or a, another country, government, you are automatically, per se, renouncing United, Unites States citizenship. So in those cases, they would drag on because you were trying to split hairs. What did he really want to do? Did he know the consequences of his act? Many of these fellows were young, younger than I was. They were seventeen. eighteen, nineteen years old when they went over there. They were, you know, imbued with this idea. They were some of them great people.

DANE: End of Side One, Number 67.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

DANE: Should I slate it? This is the beginning of Side two with Mr. Jack Rund who worked on Ellis Island between 1938 and 1942. His number is 67. It's 4:45. You were saying that the difficult cases where the people had gone to fight for freedom in Spain, and that was hard because they were splitting hairs. How could you, since the law was written that if they fought, then they denounced

their American citizenship, how could you get around that when you thought--

RUND: Well, it's a matter of intent as well as a matter of legality. If someone unknowingly and unwittingly does something without the intent to do it and has not been fully apprised of the fact that he is going to lose his U.S. citizenship, and in some cases that was true, some of these young fellows, nobody thoroughly explained to them what was going to happen, what the consequences of this violent action, we could call it a rash action I suppose, was. And these mitigating circumstances could get you around a point of law. And you really tried to interpret these things in the most human way, at least I did, I know. I tried to look at them as--

DANE: Oh, can you hold for just a second. You were saying that you tried to interpret in the most human way.

RUND: Right. You tried to find out what the intent of something was, not just what the actual action was. And it wasn't mandatory to exclude someone in that case. It wasn't like a case of someone being guilty of a, a murder or a, guilt, or having some terrible communicable disease which were excludable and you had absolutely

nothing to say about them. Here it was a matter of interpretation. Did this man really intend to give up his United States citizenship or not? And they could tear you apart in cases like that where you had to make the decision. But you always knew you had this third level where they would have greater authority than you to interpret the law. We were pretty much bound by those rules and regulations that we had. They could use a, a higher degree of leniency, if you want to put it that way, in interpreting them and they could even go around the law, they could say, "This case is, by it's nature, one where we decide that the law does not apply, and therefore, we are going to admit this person." We could not do that. We could just interpret it.

DANE: During these hearings, I mean just as if we were watching a movie of the, of the three of you and then there would probably be a stenographer, were, and these long hour and a half cases, was there pleading by this guy, these people that would want to get back in?

RUND: Yes. A lot of times people would break down and cry and, scream and, you know, your life is on the line and this is it. Not just your life but sometimes you'd be having several children there with a mother and a father and as far as they were concerned it was

sure death for them to go back, sure death for their children. Just put yourself in that position. You're not going to sit there and listen to somebody tell you you can't come in when you're in. You know, your foot, your toe is in the door. You have clawed your way, all this way up to that point and someone's going to tear your fingers away from it. So you're going to fight and you're going to give everything you've got. Some of them were hectic. Generally speaking, they were not. You know, you, it didn't come down to that. As I say, most of the cases that we heard. the people were just there because of a technicality and they were admitted just without any problem.

DANE: Would you give, would you retire as a Board and then pass the word on through an intermediary to these people--

RUND: No.

DANE: --or at the end of the time you had to say, gavel, "You will not be admitted."

RUND: No, right then, we made the decision immediately, the person was going to be admitted or not admitted. And you didn't have time to check reference books or the law. You had to know the pertinent

portions of the law in your mind. You had to carry them around. In most cases just certain laws applied so it was not too difficult.

DANE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. Do you remember, I don't know where you worked, if you stayed in, in one place all day, but the people that were there on the island and the people that were coming, trying to get in and people that were being deported, because it was a deportation center at that point, too, do you remember where, were they free to walk around? Were, were there hundreds of them at that time or--

RUND: Yes, that was a very interesting period. You had hundreds, yeah.

DANE: Okay. You were saying it was much more difficult .

RUND: It was very interesting because we had so many people, particularly when a big boat came in, you would have hundreds of people who were there for possible exclusion or at least hearing, let's put it that way. And then where do you put all these people, you know? There's still people left over from the last boat which came the day before or maybe that morning. So we had what we

called "the big hall." It was a huge room, the big room. There, (he laughs) it really looked like a scene out of the building of the pyramids. You had hundreds and hundreds of people walking around in there, just wandering aimlessly or doing something, some perfunctory task, waiting for their turn to come up and all sorts of facilities were short. You know, they didn't have enough bathrooms to take care of everybody, and the lines to the bathrooms went on forever, you know. (He laughs) And all, everything was difficult. Eating was difficult. They had a place to eat, but people had to sleep there too, so at night because you didn't have enough facilities, you didn't have enough rooms to put everybody up in. You'd have certain rooms that you would reserve if you possibly could for families or situations where you had small inherent groups. And in the rest of the cases they'd all be just in this enormous room, bunking out there for the night and then in the morning, they'd be running around to shave or do whatever it was, you know, attending to all their functions. And it was chaotic, that's all, chaotic.

DANE: Would you hear lots of different languages? Was it, was it a quiet place or a noisy place?

RUND: Well, you're talking about this big room and the, the area,

yeah that was the Tower of Babel, really. You could, you could hear, I suppose ten or twenty different languages if you know that you're listening to ten or twenty different languages, but they, they're all people who are coming from different places there at the same time. Just because they all came over on one ship didn't mean that they all came from one country. They could have come from ten different places and probably did. So it was an unbelievable spectacle.

DANE: Something else that I read is that really up till about the '30s, Ellis Island was considered an immigration center. And really post '30s and around your time, it was known sort of as a deportation center. Did you find that to be true?

RUND: I hate to think that.

DANE: I know. Do you think--?

RUND: No, I don't really feel that way. I, I would hate to feel that way. I thought it was a place where we screened people a lot more intensely than had been done theretofore, that we had, we had the opportunity there to try to keep a lot of undesirable people out, at least undesirable by our law. And we did the best job we

could under the circumstances.

DANE: But I guess what I'm referring to also, not the--

RUND: They're probably dead. (They laugh.)

DANE: Go ahead. We're talking about the interesting, the personalities on the Board, and that--

RUND: Yes, well the personalities on the Board were quite disparate, different. They were, they were unusual people, they were intelligent people, but sometimes they did not get along with each other and in some cases, they absolutely disliked each other. I don't know whether I should go so far as to say they hated each other or loathed each other, but they were human and having been in close proximity to one another for a generation they were on this Board, certain animosities would occur. And the backgrounds of these people were interesting. I don't want to go into where they originally came from or what their backgrounds were, but they were different. Sometimes so different that today people, in that, in those same categories, are mortal enemies. So they were pretty much antagonistic to each other, and, I, being the third member of this Board, if I had to cast the vote and take the side of one

against the other, they would very often suspect that I was voting not as a matter of law or of principle, but as a matter of my sympathy either toward that individual or against, hostility, toward the other individual. I know that was the case in many instances, which wasn't a good spot for a young fellow to be in. But that's life.

DANE: Amazing, just amazing. We're moving along, so I'm going to ask you a couple of questions about things you may not even remember, having to do with the Coast Guard appropriating some of the buildings on Ellis Island because of the war. Do you remember any--

RUND: I don't remember any of that and I don't believe that it happened while I was there, or if it did, it was just beginning. Because I left in 1942 just after the war began, when I was called to the service. (He laughs.) And--

DANE: They wouldn't translate four, five years on Ellis Island as service? But I guess you can't--

RUND: Well, they translated it as service to the government, sure, for pension purposes but not as service in the armed

services. We should have been armed sometimes I think. (He laughs.)

DANE: Here's another event. The fiftieth birthday anniversary of Ellis Island. I understand that there was celebrations which would have been in 1940. Does that ring a bell?

RUND: No. Not really. I think I, very dimly, now that you've mentioned it, I think there was something. But I don't remember any details, nothing.

DANE: Here's one more. The other, the part about when I was talking about people coming in and people being detained that would be deported, some of those that I read also were POWs that were picked up on, uh, boats, Germans and Italians principally. Do you remember their presence? Were you aware that they were there?

RUND: I can't really recall that. I suppose if I had known of this in advance and started to search my memory from fifty years back, I might have been able to recall something like that. Vaguely there's something running around through the halls of my mind, but I wouldn't want to say anything about it.

DANE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. And now just a routine of your routine. You lived on a daily routine. You lived in New York, on Manhattan?

RUND: That's right. I lived in Manhattan, 122nd Street, Park Avenue. Not the Park Avenue everyone knows about, but--(He laughs.)

DANE: North of that.

RUND: --but it was, it was a nice place, reasonably nice. And then I had to take the elevated train which turned into a subway down to the Battery, and at the Battery I walked from across Battery Park in all sorts of weather to the ferry, the Ellis Island ferry, and there I was, I had to get there early enough because that ferry left on time. It wasn't waiting for Jack Rund, I can tell you. (He laughs.) And if you weren't there, you had to catch the next ferry, and if you caught the next ferry you had hell to pay, you know. So I caught that ferry. I was never late. I think that's the hall, one of the hallmarks of a reporter. He's never late, always on time.

DANE: Have to be, the show can't go on without you.

RUND: That's right, they're all waiting for the guy who's going to record it all. There's no point in doing it unless you're going to have it recorded for posterity.

DANE: That's right. I like that idea. So you'd go over on the ferry, would it just be, on that early one, just the employees? Was it a full ferry at that hour in the morning?

RUND: It was a full ferry. That ferry was packed when we went across. There were no seats left. I usually went up on the outside because I loved to be on the outside of the ferry riding along, looking at the boats coming across the harbor. Every day I, that's what I did. I never went inside, even if it were inclement weather, snow, rain, I'd stand out there looking at the birds, the gulls, watching them fly, watching these different ships come across every day for five years, you know, doing this every single day, five days a week, watching, watching these boats come in. It really excited me and made me want to travel. I had only been on an ocean liner one time with an inspector to, uh, witness this inspection procedure that was going on, on boats. But I didn't need that to whet my appetite for travel. And I traveled all my life after that.

DANE: Huh. Huh. That was the busiest harbor in the world at that point.

RUND: It was.

DANE: And then you would, on the ferry, I'm just going to wait two seconds, you would see the Statue of Liberty when the ferry--

RUND: The Statue of Liberty was one of the things you saw all the time. It was a breathtaking sight then. I guess it will be even more breathtaking when they clean it up and fix it up. But it was always such a beautiful ride. Looking at Ellis Island was interesting, too. It was a beautiful building. It looked almost like a mosque, an oriental sort of design. I don't know who the architect was who picked out that design but the millions of mirror, mirror-like glasses in all the windowpanes when the sun was shining, you'd see them just shooting at you from every corner in the different colors of the stone. The Statue of Liberty was a remarkable thing to have out there. I don't know how the people felt who were coming there because I wasn't one of them, but I can imagine what they felt seeing it for the first time and I had seen it for thousands of times and I was still stirred every time I'd

see that hand up in the air.

DANE: And your job, I mean really is this, title of this book, you, in a way, were one of the keepers of the gate, and seeing the Statue of Liberty every day when you went home, how did--was it a positive experience as far as being an American citizen or was it a lot more than you wished you had had to handle?

RUND: No, I felt it was both passive and positive. It was passive in the sense that you, you were riding on a boat from that standpoint, a physical standpoint. You were riding on a boat, it was pleasant in most cases, even if it was blustery, but then it was positive in the sense that you really did feel like you were doing something, like you were performing a job that was necessary and essential, absolutely essential. And I wouldn't say I felt like a patriot standing there like Nathan Hale with only one life to give but I, I did feel extremely patriotic. I still do.

DANE: Uh-huh.

RUND: I always have, and they becomes my background and upbringing.

DANE: Uh-huh.

RUND: So I can, I can sense how those people felt. It must have been a fantastic experience for them. But then to have to come to Ellis island when they're just on the verge of getting there, you know, and have this bauble, this marvelous thing that they've been reaching for, threatened to be snatched away from them, that must have been something traumatic.

DANE: How would you describe, I mean what we've been talking about for the last hour, in just a short sentence or two, the, your five years there? I mean it's you mentioned chaotic-- your overall impression if you were to tell your young grandchild that's just learning about Ellis Island?

RUND: Very difficult. I think if I had to sum it up, it's what I would say, it was a very difficult time for me, not from the physical standpoint or logistical standpoint, but from the emotional, the mental, psychological standpoint, very difficult.

DANE: (To the recording engineer) O. J., how we doing? Staffing on the Island, did you feel terribly shorthanded? I mean, I know

you were, because you were pulled onto the Board, but overall did it--were they up to staff, or did it--

RUND: It was very badly understaffed, really was. We were in a Depression period. It was when I came there, 1937. This was just, we were just starting to come out of this terrible depression. People were still selling apples and pencils on the corners and they really meant it. So, to get any kind of a job, anything was a wonderful thing in that time. It was a very good thing for me. I, I thought it was terrific to get this opportunity. Of course I didn't know what it was leading to, but there were so many deficiencies from the standpoint of personnel. I mean we could have had twice as many reporters or hearing stenographers and still not have kept up. We were sometimes months behind. The cases that were on appeal came first. We had to get those out because they were urgent. The other cases, well, they'd, they'd be waiting in limbo somewhere. In my case I know one point I was several months behind. I not only did that but I had, since I was a, really a reporter, court reporter, they had me take the conferences at the District Director, Byron Ule, I think was his name, had on personnel matters on the Island. And I came first hand into contact with shortages

of personnel there. They were dreadful. I mean, they should have had at least twice as many people there. They should have had more doctors, more interpreters, more inspectors, more Boards of Special Inquiry, more reporters, more everything. But they couldn't do it. They didn't have the funds. They were only allocated so much money. So, it was bad, it was very bad for the people who were there, because they were working shorthanded and you knew that there was, every day you came in, you knew there was this tremendous backlog you had. You know, you, you couldn't write reports, inspectors had to write reports too. Everybody had work that was just drowning them. You're drowning in a sea of paper.

DANE: Prometheus.

RUND: Bound to the rock, right.

DANE: And one more thing, do you remember, was Ellis Island being written about in the newspapers at that time? Was it a, was it a news item over the period that you were there?

RUND: Not that I know of. To tell you the truth, I really didn't

have much time to read the papers. I was just bustling about.

DANE: Anything else that you want to include that I haven't been able to allow you to?

RUND: No, just, the only thing that was interesting that I would mention which had nothing to do per se with Ellis Island was that huge hurricane we had in 1938 when, on a Friday afternoon, we were ready to leave for the weekend and this hurricane, which had been hovering around unpredictably off of New York State, was being charted by the weather service which wasn't even as good as it now and now they have a hard time telling what a hurricane's going to do, it, it suddenly veered out to sea so they said, "Good, you can leave," and they gave us the okay to go ahead. So off we went with the ferry. We slipped our anchor there and started out and we, we hadn't gotten half way across before the eye of that hurricane turned around and came at us just like a, a bolt of lightning. And it whipped those seas into seventy-five foot waves. We had this from the Coast Guard itself at that time. And our boat was going up and down. It was one of the most frightening and most insane sort of things you'd ever see. This is a ferry boat, not even a, a real boat with a keel going up and down, down these seventy-five foot drops and then up to the top of the next wave.

We broke our rudder. The Coast Guard sent a boat after us because we were adrift there and shot a line to us and how they ever did that, that must have been one of the great engineering feats of all time, like building the pyramids, and they got it to us. I remember those men out there on that front deck grabbing this cable that was shot to us and tying it around the, whatever that object is on the thing that they tie the (he laughs)--

DANE: The cleat--

RUND: Yeah, like a huge cleat, right. And then they towed us up onto Battery harbor, onto the Battery itself, which was completely underwater at the time, and we got out and walked down Broad, up to Broadway, the beginning of Broadway, which was underwater. And the subway was underwater. You couldn't get into the subway there because the water had gone down into the subway. So you had to walk up to the next station. And we were walking initially through water, chest deep in Battery Park (he laughs), where they used to have the aquarium. I was just wondering what happened to those fish in that aquarium when the water, the real ocean, came and went over them. Well, that's about the only other thing I wanted to--just a human interest sort of

thing.

DANE: Yeah, that's wonderful.

RUND: As if we didn't have enough human interest in this.

DANE: Oh, nature, that's great. That's the end--ready. End of Side Two, interview with Jack Rund, Number 67. It is now 5:25.