

NPS-124
JOSEPH NOVEL
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JUMPED SHIP, 1929
AGE 17

SHIP:
PORT:
RESIDENCES
YUGOSLAVIA: NEAR TRIESTE
US: New York, NY

DIXON: Today is September 26, 1980. My name is Harvey Dixon and I'm speaking with Joseph Novel on Liberty Island. Mr. Novel first is going to tell us about Ellis Island when he was there. He first came in 1931. Mr. Novel, how did you come to be on Ellis Island in 1931?

NOVEL: I was locked up by the immigration authorities for deportation.

DIXON: How did you get into the United States?

NOVEL: I jumped ship in 1929.in Philadelphia.

DIXON: And so the immigration people picked you up. Did they pick you up in New York City or Philadelphia?

NOVEL: No. Brooklyn, Pier Five, Bush Terminal.

DIXON: How did they find out that you were in the country illegally? Do you know?

NOVEL: Well, it was many aliens picked up, especially from the Italian descent. Picked up left and right in Brooklyn -- from Brooklyn piers. On waterfront, I worked all the time. Pick me up on 44 Street that's where I live near. About two blocks away from the pier.

DIXON: So they kind of swept the whole area, and they simply got you among them.

NOVEL: One by one, they get them all.

DIXON: Right. So what happened after they picked you up?

NOVEL: I was in Ellis Island for the -- to be deported, to put on a ship to go back to Europe. And I give them a story that I got money coming on 42nd Street, between 5th and 6th Avenue in Manhattan. It was not true, but I give them a story just to get out. When we got on 42nd Street, which the guar-- guard had the chain like a dog's chain with a handle out on my face. I pull him down the subway steps head first and we broke off. I went one way and he went the other way.

DIXON: You got away?

NOVEL: I got away. Yes.

DIXON: So you didn't go to Ellis Island at all?

NOVEL: No, I escape from - from him.

DIXON: Oh, I see. You escaped from Ellis Island.

NOVEL: From - from - from the guard on 42nd Street. And I was supposed to face my problems.

DIXON: So in other words, you went to Ellis. How long were you on Ellis Island?

NOVEL: It was long time, anyway. I don't remember. But the only thing I remember that -- was a big Graf Zeppelin -- all the village. It must have been 4th of July, it was back in 1931. About six -- seven hundred ships, all of them flying all over New York, and all different shapes. They weren't plain like today. No, all different types at that time.

DIXON: Ah, so the dirigibles were still in service.

NOVEL: Yes, yes. It must have been a 4th of July celebration or something like that for 1931.

DIXON: Right. But you were on Ellis a long time.

NOVEL: Long time, yes.

DIXON: So then they took you to 42nd Street and you got away.

NOVEL: I escape in New York. I broke away from the guard, yes.

DIXON: So what happened after you broke away?

NOVEL: Well, I went back to work on the waterfront. And the waterfront was, I would say, in that years -- a slave camp. Hard work and especially for the majority of the Italian which I'm not Italian, but I'm telling you because eighty per cent of the people that work on the waterfront was Italian and about sixty per cent aliens. So when a man used to get hit in the leg and he was sent to the company -- case, or something like that; they just - they call up the immigration, the

company -- have them pull him back to Italy, and that's how they used to pay them off. It cost them nothing. It happened to me in 1938. I got hit o-in the foot and I lost my toenail, which then was up by the Armory. And they told me if - if I make a complaint for money, that they would ship me back so I had to keep quiet and keep working.

DIXON: Right. It's kind of like the Mexicans nowadays. You were here illegally and they knew it. So they could get you to be quiet.

NOVEL: That's right. That's right. These years on the waterfront, thank God for a fellow by the name of Austin Franklin, they are Jewish fellow where I live with. He save me many times from deportation, not only myself, but others. He was such a good -- I would picture him as a - a - as percentage of God in him. He was such a good-hearted and he always - he passed away. He always used to take care of all these Italians. Actually, for Italians at that time, you wouldn't - don't need policemen on the street. They was all honest people. And they broke their heart. It was hard for them. Some would commit suicide before going back to the Old country. They really love America. It's not like the immigrant that came here he don't know wanna -- It's not like the immigrant that came here, he don't know what's what. Why. He knew what e wants. He loved it. He work two jobs. And when he sees a policeman on the street, he bypass and goes across the street because he was afraid that the cop might arrest him or something like that.

DIXON: Right. The gentleman's name was Austin Franklin?

NOVEL: Austin Franklin, yes. I lived with him for ten years, I didn't pay no rent.

DIXON: That was nice. And what nationality are you? You're not Italian.

NOVEL: I'm Yugoslavian.

DIXON: Yugoslavian.

NOVEL: I talk it, I guess.

DIXON: How many times had you been to the United States before you jumped ship in 1931?

NOVEL: Well, I living here since - '27 to - to -- in '29, I jumped the ship over here. And I forget -- quite a bit, quite a few times, yes.

DIXON: So you had been over here before.

NOVEL: This last time that I jumped the ship was a - well, was Slavic ship, but -- the captain's was Slavic name like Nikolish. The first mate was Nikolish, and the commander was Nikolish. So when Italy took over, the company -- the ship commander, he changed his name. He call him - he call himself Nicolini. So I call one morning in Slavic, "Good morning, Mr. Nikolish." He says, "This port -- first port we come

to in Europe, he coming, throw you off the ship." he says to me. So I - I - I jump ship in Philadelphia a couple days after.

DIXON: So Italy took over Yugoslavia and changed the ships...

NOVEL: Was - that was - was - just for -- was occupation like, you know. Occupation like. Occupation like. Yeah. For years, they held the area.

DIXON: Okay, once you escaped, what happened? Did you just go back to doing what you did before?

NOVEL: I work as a longshoreman. I work -- and even during the War I - I -- when the - the war broke out with the Japanese and Pearl Harbor, I went to volunteer. I think it was 90 Church Street where everybody volunteer. And when I -- took my name and everything else. And then he says -- the guy wanted birth certificate -- want to know where I come from. I told him I come from; I was born in Austria Empire which I lost my father in World War I fighting with the Germans. He says to me, he says, "I can't take you." So the next guy, too, "You go in Hitler's army" He says to me, "I can't -- army" (Laughter) I put on my hat and I walked out. So, I wo-I was loading ammunition on Pier Five Bush, Brooklyn. When -- this time I was no longer an alien. I was an enemy alien, now. (Laughter)

So the federal agent, come down at gunpoint that show me up. I says, "Don't use! Please don't come down because we had a floor or stuff like that and everything with copper nail. Because you have explosives. If you make a - a - a spark with metal or something," I say "we all going to wind up in Staten Island from here!" So I - so he took me Ellis Island, and there I was also questioned -- they thought I was a spy or something. All through that procedure. Also got a beating because I answered nasty when I went through. Then I wind up with the Italian and German on Ellis Island.

DIXON: You went up with?

NOVEL: The Italians and German people that was aliens, enemy aliens and POW from the ships. It was all mixed up there. So I was against them. I was the only guy in the room against them. So I used to - I used to fight - I used to fight -- used to beat me up because I was alone. But when I used to catch him by himself like a guy by name Ezio Pinza. Have you heard of Ezio Pinza, the singer?

DIXON: Right.

NOVEL: His wife put him there. I went to work on him one day. I got him in the toilet. I put his -- (Laughter)

DIXON: Ezio Pinza, why was he...

NOVEL: He was also an alien. Italian. And his wife put him in there.

DIXON: And he was supportive of the Italians in Europe, is that why?

NOVEL: Yes, he - he was - he was a fascist, I don't know whatever you call them -- for the party. And I remember - and this was going on for a long time here. And I remember when the Normandy went down there -- 1942, when it shipped over -- you could see it from the back or the side of the room where the--. Not the room that you show the people now, but the one behind with the bars. I don't know if you familiar with Ellis Island the one with the bars.

DIXON: So you could see the Normandy sailing by?

NOVEL: You could see it so. And when they went over, you'd think it was Yankee Stadium - you'd think Babe Ruth hit ten home runs. Everybody clapped except me. you know, I was the only one that was sad.

DIXON: So the Normandy was sinking?

NOVEL: Yes. The Normandy tipped over. Remember when the ...?

DIXON: No, I don't know. Tell us about it.

NOVEL: It tipped over. There was fire and it tipped over and it went down the side. They all clap with happiness. It was -- they thought the German sabotage.

DIXON: Right. This was in Manhattan?

NOVEL: This was in Manhattan. You could see it from Ellis Island very well. Then I got call to the -- there was no further immigration. The FBI was in charge. So they called me up and they told me I am a troublemaker because it was always fight. They going to send me to Springfield, Colorado - a conservation camp. I don't want to go. So I told them, I say - I says to him, "I'm the - I'm no troublemaker. I'm on your side. You know, I'm different" The guy in charge. And I started walking around the room. He says, "Come back here, soldier," to me. He says, "Put your hand up." So I had to swear in, papers like that and sign everything to - would I go in the U.S. Army. I say, " Yes, of course." So he gave me a paper to go to the draft board and from there I went up to Fort Belvoir, Virginia. In Fort Belvoir, Virginia, I was pulling guard on many buildings in Washington. When your number come - your name come in a bowl. And also outside the gate of the White House, twice. And I was not even American citizen. (laughs)

DIXON: So when you got to Ellis Island the second time, they put you in the Army?

NOVEL: Well no, They didn't put me -- I - I volunteer.

DIXON: You volunteered.

NOVEL: I volunteered in the Army, yes.

DIXON: But you didn't want to go to Colorado, so that's why...

NOVEL: No, no. Well, I had fights with the Germans and this call me troublemaker, you know?

DIXON: So, okay, what happened after you enlisted? You went to the White House gates and were a guard. What was the other thing?

NOVEL: All those big buildings in Washington, D.C., the important buildings. From Fort Belvoir, there's only few -- five o-six miles. I used to pull guard. If you pull KP or wherever you go, and when they go to Washington, you got to go to Washington.

DIXON: Right. You stayed the whole war there?

NOVEL: No, no, no, no. Then I gue—I guess I made the Normandy. I made Normandy. My name was actually - my platoon name was on the -- on the boat in Normandy. That -- we took ammunition and brought them to the beach, twenty five tons more than any other platoon. And it was a - why, boy, I had only all kids from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Pollacks and Italians. I picked the hard workers from the mines. We throw the - throw ammunition down like it was - like it was butter.

DIXON: Right. So you unloaded at Normandy? I noticed in the scrapbook you sent that you got a Bronze Star.

NOVEL: Yes, yes. Well, that's for - that's when I go to Belgium. We went to Antwerp. I was assigned to a full battalion. I could have came home. I had a lot of points, but I want to see my relatives in Old Country. So I stood that. So then we start hit with - getting hit with V1's and V2. You know, what that is. (laughs) One day in a - in a - in a bar in Antwerp, I meet two friend of mines. I didn't want to go see the show. It was "The Plainsmen," was an old American picture, Gary Copper. It was show for first time. "Let's go the show." So I paid the tickets and went to the show and there wasn't a front seat. In the front row was two seats and there was three of us. One of the guys says to me, "Get out of here. That's my seat!"

So the two of them sit over there and I went in the back sit under the balcony. I wasn't there no five minutes, then a direct hit with a V2 rocket bomb. Hits the show. Was over nine hundred dead. Was only three remain alive; myself and the two little girls. I don't know. I can't explain this. All - close to -- over nine hundred men that die over you!. The blood from the - from the people, it look like you swimming in it. And the peo-- you never think bodies of -- pieces of body flying like chicken feed before they die. And I took -- so these two little girls, there must have been an apartment on top because it was a big, old fashioned tub--bathtub. Those two kids might be four or six, but they were, no, they must have been taking a bath in the tub and somehow or another that top saved their lives.

DIXON: Oh, a bathtub!

NOVEL: Yes. (laughter) I don't know how the time go. Anyway, they remain in there, they must have gone up in the air like the balloons and

come down. And I passed them on the street. That's the only way you can get out was to -- and then I had to climb myself down on a piece of hanging [not understood] . And that's it. But I cannot explain that nine hundred people had to die in one particular spot at once.

DIXON: You were a very lucky fellow.

NOVEL: Yes. I was all black and blue from head to toes from the concussion.

DIXON: Right. And you also mentioned in your scrapbook that you one time went across into the East, the Communist countries.

NOVEL: Yes, but I was in Germany in 1945. And there was no furlough for Communist states.

DIXON: There was no what?

NOVEL: They wouldn't give you no furloughs, the American army to the Communist zones because of the trouble, especially to the East was more trouble that time..

DIXON: This was when the war was over?

NOVEL: The war was over in '45. So I asked for a Compassion Furlough to Gorlitz [ph], which is near Trieste. It would have been the 85th Division US Army was main headquarter from Germany. So I go there and I met a farmer with his horse and wagon old fashioned. I give him my stuff to take it across the border to my house in so and so place. So at night I passed through the hills where I was born. I passed the American Guard, the British Guard and the Communist guards. (Laughter) I was wishing actually, that the Communist guard would catch me. This way they would take me to the headquarters, which was about a mile from my house - away from my old house.

The next morning was Sunday. So my mother says, "Let's go to church." I dressed up in an American uniform. Nobody know. All we cross roads you have Communist guards. They all salute me, I salute back. And when I went to church, I felt - I felt four bayonets on my back. "Come on inside the Headquarters." They wanted to know what I was doing here. I said, "What am I doing here! What are you doing here? I was born here. Where are you from? One guy was from Milan, Italy. Another guy was from south of Yugoslavia. They couldn't understand one another. One would kind of talk Italian. The other guy talked Slavish. He was the guy in charge.

DIXON: These were occupying your country?

NOVEL: This is -- This were the partisan or Communist, whatever you call them. And that -- so I told them, I says - he says, "All right for a pack of cigarettes." The other guy says, "All right for a pack of cigarettes? For two pack of cigarettes. I stood there as long as want." (Laughter) Everything was fine.

DIXON: And you had no trouble getting back?

NOVEL: No, no trouble getting back to the Americans. But by going through, they won't let you through. You know what I mean? So [not understood] an American captain told me, he saw me one day coming from the - from the Yugoslavian territory. He says, "What are you doing over there?" I says, "I was home. I was born there." He says, "If you give me \$1000 American, you cross that border [not understood]"

DIXON: So you went back and forth a lot of times.

NOVEL: For three years, which is like from New York to Staten Island. There is a border is between. Yes. Then you got the - the waterfront.

DIXON: Right, the waterfront. Tell us the waterfront story.

NOVEL: Well, the waterfront story -- . I - I used that stuff in the engineer many times, primer cord. I told people and I told the guards before this happened that this stuff could blow us to Hawaii. It looks like a rope, like a telephone wire. Nobody think, you know. So they were stowing it all over, which should be stored only on deck so you could throw it overboard - anytime it comes to..

DIXON: This is in reference to an explosion at a dock in Brooklyn.

NOVEL: Yes, that's right.

DIXON: Primer cord.

NOVEL: Nobody believe. So finally they -- in '56, December 3, the pier went on fire. I live near there. From 35th Street to 41st Street was a couple of walking blocks and I went down to look for myself. The thing went off and blow up. Twenty-two die and some die after, but three dozen die. The explosion was so great that you see the firemen from the roof, they fly off like cardboard boxes, the pressure. But my family had the water, when the shock was over, they was all right. They stick to where the water. This guy, the underwriter, says that it was lucky that the area that - that explosion was in the pier. Which cement give, the pressure went up and down. It was the Third Avenue or Fourth Avenue where the bottom would be solid; for fifteen square blocks, it would be all dead even if it hit you or not. Because it lost ninety percent of its power.

DIXON: I see. That was because it was concrete?

NOVEL: Because it was just a pier - they came and the pressure went up and down the water around it, you know? It was - we got hit with only ten percent of its power. If it was in a -- on a street, you would get hit with a hundred percent of its power. Even if it don't hit you, it would have tear you lung apart.

DIXON: And this was the Luckenbach Dock?

NOVEL: Luckenbach Piers. Yes.

DIXON: Luckenbach Pier. What was the year? 1956 did you say?

NOVEL: 1956, December 3.

DIXON: Okay, well, that's very interesting. You had a very busy life. (Laughter) When you were on Ellis Island, the second time and the enemy aliens were there, were there any well known enemy aliens there? Ezio Pinza was there, you mentioned.

NOVEL: Ezio Pinza was one of them. The reason I remember Ezio Pinza, I fought him twice. I knocked the hell out of him twice. (Laughter)

DIXON: You didn't get along well, eh?

NOVEL: Didn't get along no -- because different. I don't agree with them I was the only one.

DIXON: And they put you amongst all those people that you didn't agree with?

NOVEL: That's right. Well, they took me - take me out of Pier Five because I was loading ammunition. They thought maybe I'd try to blow up a ship or something. And the boss on Pier Five wanted to fight the - the Secret Service men. He says, "They're taking my best man away from me!" He didn't want that.

DIXON: How were you treated on Ellis Island?

NOVEL: Oh, lovely, Ellis Island. But the Ellis Island, now, for example, this boat that you have there, the old ferry boat.

DIXON: It sunk.

NOVEL: This is just a - this is just a, what do you call? I would say a - a nest for - for -- for water rats.

DIXON: Right. It's a pity it sunk.

NOVEL: Would they -- would look nice - don't it look nice if you get some of these countries like France or England or somebody. I'm sure they would donate to Ellis Island -to s-- old - old 1700, well, 1800 sailboats that people could visit. Would attract more people. And you see --could see beauty where the - the - the immigrants used to come in. We had no road-- I had a quota - say --it, it was like a slave ship, those things. It took you, and if he wasn't sick coming from Europe, he got sick on the ship before he arrived in the United States. Because you put 'em all -- It was like sardines. I think that would - that that would beautify the entry of Ellis Island, and I'm sure the countries would give you for nothing those ships. You know what I'm talking about?

DIXON: They're working on plans for Ellis right now.

NOVEL: But I think that would beautify the entrance to see those beautiful ships from 1700, 1800. I'm not talking the propel' ships. The tall ships. You see how many we have here in '76? Two of them belong on Ellis Island. I'm sure England, France or Netherlands, they have many.

DIXON: That's an interesting idea because that's the way people came over. Have some of the ships at Ellis.

NOVEL: Yes. We don't want to see the propel' ship. When the propel' ships just took ten days, twelve days from Europe. The other days took--it took sixty - it took me 62 days from Trieste to go to Buenos Aires. I was on a [not understood] behind the canal boat. Nobody wanted that job. I took in 1927. I was fourteen years old then.
(Laughter)

DIXON: But hey treated you well? They treated all the aliens...

NOVEL: All wonderful. Night times, the food all you want. The only thing I had trouble, because I was - I was suspected to be a - a spy. I got beaten. Then I got beaten by the Germans and - and the Italians.

DIXON: They beat you because they thought you were a spy?

NOVEL: Well, they ask questions. They work you over. Ask you --. . don't know nothing. I told them I made a mistake because enli-- tried to enlist. They got my name there. That must have been a follow through.

DIXON: And you ended up in the Army anyhow.

NOVEL: Then they find out I escape from Ellis Island. This guy is a big wheel. The war was on, you know what I mean? [not understood] was nothin'.

DIXON: How long, actually, were you on Ellis Island this time? Six months or a month or three months?

NOVEL: I was long time both times. That's when I would like to know, find out. hey got the records I had. I also like to know the day that I escaped from Ellis Island because in '81, it's going to be fifty years! Not like yesterday. I like to have a - a party that day.

DIXON: After you escaped, they didn't recapture or they didn't try?

NOVEL: Oh, they try. But th-th-actu-yeah. They try.

DIXON: But they never did succeed.

NOVEL: Never succeeded, that's right, yes. After I-- this Jewish guy, Franklin was ,look after me. He had connection with all kinds of authorities and I was well protected until I got into the Service.

DIXON: Well, I guess a reasonable: You weren't a citizen. Are you a citizen now?

NOVEL: Oh, yes. I became a citizen about, actually a year after (yeah, I got it right here.) - a year after I was in the army. I got discharged here. Do you want to see it?

DIXON: Sure.

NOVEL: You don't want this. That's from - that's from the fire department. Here's the discharge and the entry to the Army. Yes, '43 - that's when I got the paper.

DIXON: So you are a citizen now of the United States.

NOVEL: Oh, yes. Since the - I was -- a year after I served. So I could have got out -- the army. I don't have to be a citizen. Nobody would make a question. I could have gotten discharged.

DIXON: So in other words, you became a citizen because you wanted to.

NOVEL: That's right.

DIXON: How old are you now? You started...

NOVEL: On seaman? I was fourteen years old when I left home.

DIXON: You were fourteen when you left. And how old are you now.

NOVEL: I'll be sixty-eight in November.

DIXON: So in 1931, how old were you?

NOVEL: Oh, nineteen.

DIXON: So you were very young when they first--

NOVEL: Yes. I could pick - I could pick two hundred pounds now. That time I picked a guy -- (Laughter). I can't run that fast, but I could stand still that things could happen. And this-- (paper rustling). Oh this - well this situ-well, they don't want this thing. You've got everything on paper. This - that's from the - that's from the commander on the - on the what do you call it?

DIXON: Commander when you were on the...

NOVEL: That's the -- you know something else? That - that award I got was issue - was awarded to me on the General Eisenhower in 1944.

DIXON: This is the Bronze Star.

NOVEL: The Bronze Star, right. If you look at the Bronze Star, it took thirteen years to hike to Brooklyn. It was issued to me in 1957. So otherwise, I got the - the Bronze Star on the General Eisenhower was - it was - what do you call it?

DIXON: President?

NOVEL: Awarded it. And it was issued to me on the General Eisenhower when he was the President.

DIXON: So there was a long, how many years between the two?

NOVEL: You got to date it. Look on it. It took 15 years.

DIXON: Thirteen?

NOVEL: Yes.

DIXON: It's a long time for them to issue it. 1957 it was issued. Oh, I see. It was awarded in 1944 and --

NOVEL: I received it in...

DIXON: In 1957. Thirteen years, that's a long time.

Novel: Now what I mean -- I show you. You could never think that you got it on the general and then I became a president thirteen years after.

DIXON: That's very interesting. Too in your scrapbook you mentioned that you'd written something about the Grand Union Flag. What was the story about the Grand Union Flag?

NOVEL: Yes, well that's just in my answer. I just rather - you know, that -- ask question. I - I know Europe - I know Europe when I was to school, they still allowed to teach--especially Eastern Europe there - - American Revolution was number one subject. I know about American flag, but I can't see why they don't the respect -- the thing of '76. I was at Fort Hamilton -- Fort Hamilton Brooklyn. And '76 they was flying and the command was to fly the Grand Union Flag. I make believe I don't know nothing. I asked the - the commander there, who was a colonel, and I says, "What kind of flag is that?" He says to me, he don't know the one. He says, "Nobody know the - the - the first American flag" He says, "Washington would die for this!" He says. Well, the guys did die. How can you tell them that that's another flag was their flag -- which came after. If it really did came after.

DIXON: So this Grand Union Flag is actually a later flag than the right flag.

NOVEL: The Great Union Flag is the 1776 American flag. The only flag that flew for all the [not understood]. The other ones came or didn't come, especially Bennington [ph] flag--the one, the '76 one -- First of all, that one has six reds and five white stripes. It's the opposite. And then - [not understood] In 1776, and that month --well, the Colonies was - was British. They were backing up the British ship. It came after.

DIXON: So the Grand Union Flag they were flying was wrong to fly then because...

NOVEL: That's right. It was right to fly that. It was - was many nations fly it in '76, even the tall ships. But England [not understood] surprise. Because in sevent-1876 they did do that. The Declaration of Independence [not understood] was signed under that flag. We had no other flag-this country. Many-- people die in 1776, 1777.

DIXON: I think probably a lot of people are not aware of that part.

NOVEL: What?

DIXON: That's good that you knew that. A lot of people...

NOVEL: Well, you see, the thing is that what I'm talking is what you can study. There's proof, there's proof in different country from the Smithsonian Institute which -- for -- Washington himself. He lived it.

DIXON: That's interesting.

NOVEL: You know I got nothing else to do after I retire, so I - I like to pick up very different things.

DIXON: Well, let's see. Where did--did you meet your wife in New York? Your wife?

NOVEL: Yes, after the World War II.

DIXON: You have children?

NOVEL: No, I have no children.

DIXON: You are glad you came to the United States?

NOVEL: Of course I'm glad! (Laughter) If I wasn't glad, I wouldn't go to war with them.

DIXON: That's true.

NOVEL: On the waterfront, after the World War II, it was a happy going. Before the War II, it was a hard camp - a slave camp. Work in all kind of condition and different thing. But after the World War II, even today, you can't get a better job than a longshoreman. You got a - I was like -- I gotta be rich and most of the people are on guarantee wage.

DIXON: So you were a longshoreman after you got out of the military?

NOVEL: All of my time, before and after.

DIXON: You're retired now.

NOVEL: Yes.

DIXON: When you were on Ellis Island in 1931, was it a busy place or were there many people?

NOVEL: Oh, very busy. But almost all deportation, those places behind there what you show them on Ellis Island is the - is the immigrant that came with the windows open. You get to see the wall of the Islands down there. I don't know if you're familiar with it. Est-it was -- you got to make a story about that, too. Most people didn't want to back.

DIXON: So they deported a lot of people in the '30s who came over illegally, like you.

NOVEL: Oh, yes.

DIXON: They just swept the area.

NOVEL: They used to have an ex -- a special boat. They used to take them to the ships, passenger liner. And put them right on the ship and out they went.

DIXON: Lot of them were seamen who jumped ship, like yourself?

NOVEL: That's right. The majority, especially - the majority was in the thirties - they was picked up just because, sometimes, they had Italian's name. They was picked up, like - like Sacco and Vanzetti. Was -- I don't know if it was guilty or not, but you know what I mean? In those days, wasn't -- you look and an Italian name, and the idea was like it was a criminal or something.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

DIXON: You were saying that you didn't find it a hard time in the 30s because you, what were you doing in the 30s?

NOVEL: Well, I work on the waterfront when I was six months. My second job I used to ship from [not understood]. I work over there for smaller wages, and on weekends Saturday or Sunday. I could always get jobs washing dishes. So I was good for that time, twenty dollars, eighteen, twenty dollars a week was good money. You only used to pay but ten dollars a month rent.

DIXON: But what I was thinking of was they wanted to get people like you back to Yugoslavia so someone who was supposed to be here could get the money. That's probably what they were thinking.

NOVEL: Oh, you mean when I got arrested?

DIXON: Right. When you had the job, they wanted to give it because there was a lot of people looking for jobs.

NOVEL: Oh, the people there, they used to squeal on one another. And people used to turn them in because the guy worked because he was an

alien and the other guy then worked. Maybe the other guy don't want to do the hard work. Anyway, I used to go to all the hard work experience.

DIXON: Was there ever a reward for turning somebody in, like a bounty?

NOVEL: There wasn't, no. I don't think it was not reward. But maybe was twenty-five dollars and sometimes, I think. It was twenty-five dollars, if I remember right. Or there was five hundred doll- bail to get out and the lawyers used to get this guy out and steal all the pennies - they used to rob all the money.

DIXON: So, in other words, once you actually on Ellis, in order to get on bail you had to get five hundred dollars.

NOVEL: Yes. '31 we're talking about. I'm talking about the aliens, not 1942 when they would be enemy aliens.

DIXON: 1942. Ellis was as busy in 1931

NOVEL: Oh, beautiful 1942.

DIXON: It was busy, though, a lot of people, a lot of boats going off?

NOVEL: Busy, yes. You had a--. Actually, up front there-- where the boat is on the right was a visiting room. See. And the back of that was all rooms with bars, like a jail. It wasn't the enemy section. It was the one behind that was all the enemy aliens and POWs. Some from U-Boats, some from German ships, you know, used to be captured. Then used to be process to Springfield, Colorado different camps for interment.

DIXON: Did you ever see emigrants coming in the port or just displaced aliens were there? There were no immigrants, like people coming in?

NOVEL: No, there was no immigrants in - in -in the '42. Because there -- first of all, there was no ship coming because of the war. And then, immigrants that came after probably got the paper from the consul in country and visit and they used to come in as a passenger and visit by, you know, to the piers.

DIXON: It was, I think, handled differently in those years. Have we left anything out you can think of? You talked about Ellis in 1931 and your escape.

NOVEL: Well, I - I - I only -- the only thing I can think - think of that there should be something put for about the enemy aliens on Ellis Island to show - to show the future visitors. And please put those two ships. They would look so beautiful there.

DIXON: I will mention what you suggested about that. I don't know.

NOVEL: God bless them! God bless 'em. If I was a Rockefeller, I would give you all the monies to fix that damn thing. It's a shame they were -- a state - state like New York and New Jersey, which this is between, that a government let a thing like that go down - down to hell.

DIXON: Well, they're working on those .They're going to change that. They're trying to fix it up. It's very expensive to do. But it will be changed before long, I think.

NOVEL: Well, it takes time because, you know. It's all right, long you do it. But I tell you, that - that boat should be going all the time. That's nice for - for rates! I - I work on the waterfront, same as the waterfront that -- what do you call them never fixed that -- Brooklyn Piers and New York Piers. The Port Authority, they never do nothing. The - the Waterfront Commission came and they chased everybody to how long because for them, Hitler investigation, like a - like a - a Gestapo. They investigated [not understood] they just, some good men out there. Some guys maybe for a little crime, they cannot get a job back no more. That's not nice. When people can make one mistake and pay for it, should be at least entitled to get a job back. And these guys, they - they act like -like supermen, which I had to solve the case. They can't solve the case. I have saw the water from -- they - they was sitting on the - on the what do you call, on the primer cord one time and give a longshoreman a ticket for smoking. And they were sitting on dynamite and they didn't know what it was! That's the Waterfront Commission officers! I saw them my own eyes.

DIXON: Well, it sounds like you were a good immigrant to finally get into the country, a good citizen to finally get in. I enjoyed talking to you. Thank you very much.

NOVEL: I enjoyed it myself.

