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Oral History Interview with Alfred Kolkin

Brooklyn Navy Yard Oral History Collection, 2010.003.015

Interview conducted by Jennifer Egan and Sady Sullivan on July 15, 2008

at narrator's home in Chelsea, New York

JENNIFER EGAN: -- Yard.

ALFRED KOLKIN: Oh.

JENNIFER EGAN: Just so as we're talking, I mean we -- let's see. We went into your building, um --

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah.

JENNIFER EGAN: -- on our walk.

ALFRED KOLKIN: On, on --

JENNIFER EGAN: It was 128.

ALFRED KOLKIN: 128.

JENNIFER EGAN: Yeah, so it was -- oh, that's 12B.

SADY SULLIVAN: That's 12B.

JENNIFER EGAN: 128 is there. Yeah. So it's just, as we talk, it's just sometimes nice to have a --

ALFRED KOLKIN: Okay.

JENNIFER EGAN: -- a visual cue. So where do you want to go, Judy?

JUDY KAPLAN: No, I'll, I'll fit myself in.

SADY SULLIVAN: Do you want to pull up a chair here?

JUDY KAPLAN: That's Okay.

JENNIFER EGAN: Is that hum, um, okay --

SADY SULLIVAN: Yes.

JENNIFER EGAN: -- Sady? Okay.

JUDY KAPLAN: Now what?

SADY SULLIVAN: [inaudible]

JENNIFER EGAN: So just tell me when we're rolling.

SADY SULLIVAN: I think we're good. I did a sound check so if we can just do, get everybody's voices.

JENNIFER EGAN: Um, okay, so we -- and the air conditioning is okay?

SADY SULLIVAN: It's okay.

JENNIFER EGAN: Okay.

SADY SULLIVAN: Yeah.

JENNIFER EGAN: Can you tell us, like -- we're just testing your voice. Count to five?

ALFRED KOLKIN: One, two, three, four, five.

SADY SULLIVAN: Great, thank you , and you're good.

JENNIFER EGAN: And I've -- you guys should also jump in. I think we should just all, you know, if there's a question --

JUDY KAPLAN: Okay.

JENNIFER EGAN: -- or a comment. Don't you think?

SADY SULLIVAN: Mm-hmm.

JENNIFER EGAN: Um, so -- actually, why don't we -- should we introduce ourselves so we know who's here?

SADY SULLIVAN: Yes.

JENNIFER EGAN: Okay. So I'm Jennifer Egan.

JUDY KAPLAN: I'm Judy Kaplan, Al's daughter.

SADY SULLIVAN: Sady Sullivan, from the Brooklyn Historical Society.

ALFRED KOLKIN: I didn't hear that.

SADY SULLIVAN: Sady Sullivan, from the Brooklyn Historical Society.

ALFRED KOLKIN: Uh-huh.

SADY SULLIVAN: And if you would introduce yourself to the recording however you would like to do that.

ALFRED KOLKIN: I'm Lucille Kolkin's husband. Uh, I've worked in the Navy Yard, I, I don't know the, the exact overlap, but wh -- when she worked there, I worked there at the same time.

JENNIFER EGAN: And can you just say, for the recording, your full name?

ALFRED KOLKIN: My name is Alfred Kolkin.

JENNIFER EGAN: And what is your date of birth?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Date of birth is [date redacted for privacy] eighteen.

JENNIFER EGAN: So you have a big birthday coming up.

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah.

JENNIFER EGAN: Can you -- Al -- can you tell us a little bit about your, your family configuration at the time that you came to work at the Yard?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I, I worked at -- I lived with my mother and my sister. Uh, my parents had been divorced.

JENNIFER EGAN: And what did your father do?

ALFRED KOLKIN: My father was a tailor and he worked in a factory, a women's clothing factory.

JENNIFER EGAN: Did your mother work?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes. My mother worked in a, in a factory that, that manufactured, uh, what do you call --

JUDY KAPLAN: Wasn't she a seamstress?

ALFRED KOLKIN: She, she worked in a factory that, that made, uh curtains. Curtains and bedspreads and things of that kind.

JENNIFER EGAN: Okay.

JUDY KAPLAN: But she sewed, right?

ALFRED KOLKIN: She what?

JUDY KAPLAN: Was she sewing?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I didn't hear you.

JUDY KAPLAN: Did she sew?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Sew.

JUDY KAPLAN: On a machine?

ALFRED KOLKIN: On a machine.

JUDY KAPLAN: That was her job, yes.

JENNIFER EGAN: Okay. And where did you live at that time?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Which time?

JENNIFER EGAN: When -- at the time --

JUDY KAPLAN: They moved all the time.

JENNIFER EGAN: Oh, okay.

JUDY KAPLAN: [laughter]

JENNIFER EGAN: Did you, um, you moved within Brooklyn a lot as you were growing up?

JUDY KAPLAN: Brooklyn, the Bronx, Manhattan. [laughter]

JENNIFER EGAN: So I guess --

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes.

JENNIFER EGAN: Where, where did you live when you went to high school?

ALFRED KOLKIN: When I went to high school, I lived in the Bronx.

JENNIFER EGAN: And when did you graduate from high school?

ALFRED KOLKIN: In 1935.

JENNIFER EGAN: And can you give us a sense of how your working life led you to the Navy Yard?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I'm not sure exactly how to, how to time it.

JENNIFER EGAN: Okay.

ALFRED KOLKIN: But, uh, when, when I -- when I graduated from Stuyvesant [phonetic] High School, I was --

[Interview interrupted.]

RECORDED VOICE: Holdings -- global's annual expanse rate at zero point nine percent, well below the average employment of zero point five four percent for worldwide stock --

JUDY KAPLAN: Let's turn this off --

JENNIFER EGAN: Okay.

ALFRED KOLKIN: We, we had a, a couple that, that, uh, lived with us that the woman, uh, worked with my mother in a factory, and her husband, her husband, uh, gave me some, um, training in, uh, in mechanical things. And I, uh, I think I -- he was, he was a mechanic who, uh, worked on, uh, on ships. And ship engines, uh, and, and uh, I got my mechanical training from him.

JENNIFER EGAN: Mm-hmm. And do you recall how you ended up working at the Navy

Yard?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I was, I was working -- I was working for Sperry Gyroscope in Brooklyn, and I, uh, I, I applied at, at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, uh --I don't remember exactly, uh, but, but from, from the Sperry Gyroscope, I applied at the Brooklyn Yard for a mechanics position, machinists position.

JENNIFER EGAN: Do you remember what year you began working there?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I, I think I, I began working there in, uh, 1920.

JUDY KAPLAN: No, it would have to be in the late '30s.

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah.

JUDY KAPLAN: Or maybe early '40s even.

JENNIFER EGAN: Do you know what year you joined the, uh --

JUDY KAPLAN: Well, I can figure it out. Because they married in '43, and so you, this was probably '42.

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah, that could be.

JUDY KAPLAN: Yeah.

JENNIFER EGAN: And we saw the building where you worked.

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah.

JENNIFER EGAN: Which you described as being full of noise and machines --

ALFRED KOLKIN: Uh-huh.

JENNIFER EGAN: -- at that time. What, what kind of work did you do?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I worked on, uh, horizontal boring mill, and with this, uh, machinists work on -- I'm trying to re -- remember some details that are not, not really relevant.

JUDY KAPLAN: I think you made parts. You made machine parts, right?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Ship, ship.

JUDY KAPLAN: Ship parts.

ALFRED KOLKIN: Ship parts.

JUDY KAPLAN: He made ship parts.

JENNIFER EGAN: And you worked on the horizontal boring mill?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah.

JENNIFER EGAN: Was that a large machine?

ALFRED KOLKIN: It was quite large, yeah. One of the largest machines there.

JENNIFER EGAN: Hmm. Did you work as a group on that machine?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I sometimes had a, had an apprentice who worked with me.

JENNIFER EGAN: What did the boring mill do?

ALFRED KOLKIN: The boring mill was used to finish, uh, castings, c-c-castings were, uh, were pour, poured, poured metal. Uh, I don't know.

JUDY KAPLAN: What were the castings for? What were they used for?

ALFRED KOLKIN: The casting, castings were, were mostly artillery, um, bases for ar, artillery on ships.

JENNIFER EGAN: Ah. So like mou -- places where the artillery would be mounted?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes.

JENNIFER EGAN: Were the castings large?

ALFRED KOLKIN: The castings were, uh, were larger than a person. I'm trying to remember. There were, there was some castings which had an interior, uh, area that I, I could get into.

JENNIFER EGAN: Hmm. And so you worked to -- worked with the boring mill on these large castings?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes.

JENNIFER EGAN: I see. Did you work with other machines too, or was that your main machine?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Well, it, I, I worked on, um, on milling machines, which were smaller.

JENNIFER EGAN: Were you -- oh sorry --

ALFRED KOLKIN: Sorry. Sorry to -- to give you an overall picture.

JENNIFER EGAN: That's okay. Just whatever you remember is, is great. We're not expecting everything. Just whatever -- whatever comes to mind. Um, were you aware of which ships these parts would be going to?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah, see each, uh, part had, had an assignment of, of, uh, what ship it was for. Uh, everything was individual.

JENNIFER EGAN: Do you remember how long you would work on a part? Was it more than a day or just a little bit of a day?

ALFRED KOLKIN: The amount of time, the amount of time that, uh, I, I, I spent on a casting, finishing a casting or, uh, or that, that kind of thing, could be, uh, a day or a week. Uh --

JENNIFER EGAN: So it varied?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Varied, yes.

JENNIFER EGAN: And when you say finishing a casting, did that mean smoothing it?

ALFRED KOLKIN: It means -- well, a casting is, is as, as it comes out of a mold, and if something, it comes out of a mold, it has to be, uh, finish, finished by machining. And a machine, and what does a machining is, uh, is a horizontal boring mill, or a milling machine, or some sort of, some sort of machine tool that, that finishes surfaces on a casting.

JENNIFER EGAN: Takes away the roughness?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes.

JENNIFER EGAN: Okay. When you finished with a, uh, with a casting, what would happen to it?

ALFRED KOLKIN: It -- mostly, it was -- the casting would be, uh, it was either sent to another department in the Navy Yard, or it would be sent to, um, to a place, a department, that, that would, uh, finish, finish it, it's, uh -- I don't know.

JENNIFER EGAN: Did someone come and take it or did you bring it somewhere?

ALFRED KOLKIN: It would be, uh, picked up by, uh, by a crane, an overhead crane.

JENNIFER EGAN: Ah.

ALFRED KOLKIN: And deposited somewhere for, for further --

JENNIFER EGAN: Okay.

ALFRED KOLKIN: -- further use.

JENNIFER EGAN: Okay. Did you work with mostly other men?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes.

JENNIFER EGAN: And do you remember anything about them? Their ages?

ALFRED KOLKIN: The men were part of a department. But I really don't, don't have a clear picture of the other people that, that I worked with.

JENNIFER EGAN: Okay.

JUDY KAPLAN: Were they around your age?

JENNIFER EGAN: They were, they were, uh, my, my age or, or that, that general category of age.

JUDY KAPLAN: Yeah, because he was twenty-four then.

JENNIFER EGAN: Okay.

JUDY KAPLAN: Were some of them younger?

ALFRED KOLKIN: There were apprentices who, uh, had been working at, at the Navy Yard

for, for a long time and were under contract to, to be trained, I guess.

JENNIFER EGAN: Daniella, who works at the Navy Yard, mentioned, was recalling from our day together that you worked, was it Machine Shop Thirty-one?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes.

JENNIFER EGAN: Okay, and the building was 128?

ALFRED KOLKIN: 128.

JENNIFER EGAN: And was Machine Shop Thirty-one a part of Building 128 or just a group?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Say that again?

JENNIFER EGAN: Was the, was Machine Shop Thirty-one a place? Was it an area within the building? What did it mean, Machine Shop Thirty-one?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Machine Shop Thirty-one, it had, it had various, various kinds of, uh, machines, machine tools. I'm not, not sure exactly how to, how to phrase it.

JENNIFER EGAN: Okay.

JUDY KAPLAN: Was, was it your area? What were those platforms called?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Well, there was balc -- balconies where machines, machine tools, had been in, installed for, for various special, special purposes.

JUDY KAPLAN: So was, was it a particular balcony that was Machine Shop Thirty-one?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I'm, I'm not sure, uh, what the categories were, how the work was divided.

JENNIFER EGAN: Did you work in, on the bottom, in the broad area that we walked into?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yea --

JENNIFER EGAN: Or in another part?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I, I worked -- it, it, it was, uh, a very large ar-- area. And it had, uh, uh, I

can't re -- remember how, how it was, uh, divided up.

JENNIFER EGAN: Okay. Where were you and your mother and sister living at that time?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I was living on, on 12th Street, I think it was.

JUDY KAPLAN: Yeah, I think so. On what avenue? Was it A or B or?

ALFRED KOLKIN: What?

JUDY KAPLAN: What avenue were you living on? It was Manhattan.

JENNIFER EGAN: Oh, okay.

ALFRED KOLKIN: I was, was living on East 12th Street.

JENNIFER EGAN: Oh, wow.

JUDY KAPLAN: Yeah, so A, B, or C, and then --

JENNIFER EGAN: So how did you get to work at the Yard?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I took pub, public transportation, and, and to get to, to the Navy Yard from there was, was public transportation. It went across the Brooklyn Bridge to get to Brooklyn from, from Manhattan.

JUDY KAPLAN: Was it a subway or a bus or a trolley?

ALFRED KOLKIN: It was, uh, a -- it was a bus, or a trolley.

JENNIFER EGAN: Do you remember where it left you and how you entered the Yard, the Navy Yard?

ALFRED KOLKIN: It took me, it took me to, uh, someplace around Pacific Street and -- I'm trying to -- I can't, can't remember.

JENNIFER EGAN: Okay. Um --

JUDY KAPLAN: It's not when -- from there, when it took you to Pacific Street, did you take another bus to the Navy Yard or another trolley?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes.

JUDY KAPLAN: And that took you close to the entrance?

ALFRED KOLKIN: It, it wasn't, it wasn't walking distance, but it was close, close to that.

JUDY KAPLAN: Yeah, it was a long walk from where the trolley took you.

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah.

JENNIFER EGAN: Did you wear a uniform?

ALFRED KOLKIN: No. It was, there was no uniform. There was working clothes, but it wasn't, wasn't what you would refer to as a uniform.

JENNIFER EGAN: And the working clothes were?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Were denim or, or that kind of, that kind of thing.

JENNIFER EGAN: Mm-hmm.

JUDY KAPLAN: Like a canvas?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Not, not -- I guess you would call it canvas, I don't know.

JENNIFER EGAN: Was the building open when -- it seemed that maybe it was open to the outside quite a bit.

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes. It was pretty open.

JENNIFER EGAN: Do you remember the conditions? If -- say it was winter.

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah. There was no -- there was blowers, heating, heating blowers to, uh, make it more comfortable. There was no air conditioning or --

JENNIFER EGAN: So you felt, you felt the weather in there a bit?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes.

JUDY KAPLAN: Did they have fans? Would they have had fans in the warm weather?

ALFRED KOLKIN: They would, there were fans. I don't, I don't remember specifically what, where or what they were.

JENNIFER EGAN: You mentioned that you, you knew which ship the parts were going to.
Did you actually go on, on any of the ships?

ALFRED KOLKIN: No, I didn't.

JENNIFER EGAN: And were -- are there particular ships even now that you remember the parts were for? Particular projects?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Well, I -- at that, at that time, there was the *Missouri* and -- which was a battleship. And th -- they were, uh, they were, they were also, uh, constructing, uh, a couple of aircraft carriers.

JENNIFER EGAN: Okay.

ALFRED KOLKIN: At that time.

JENNIFER EGAN: Now, somewhere in the course of working at the Yard, you enlisted, is that right?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes.

JENNIFER EGAN: Can you talk about how that came about?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I was working in, uh, in Building 128, and --

[Interview interrupted.]

I don't remember specif -- specifically what, what I was actually doing. I really don't know how to answer the question.

JUDY KAPLAN: Was there a particular event during the war that made you want to enlist?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I don't think so.

JUDY KAPLAN: 'Cause mom didn't want you to enlist, right? Was that -- they were already married, right? Am I correct?

ALFRED KOLKIN: We were, we were married while we were both working there.

JUDY KAPLAN: In the Navy Yard.

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah.

JUDY KAPLAN: And after you married, that's when you enlisted.

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes.

JUDY KAPLAN: What was it, a few months later?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Uh, I don't remember that.

JENNIFER EGAN: You told me the day that we visited the Navy Yard a story about Lucy coming to find you in Building 128.

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes.

JENNIFER EGAN: Can you tell that story?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I, I don't remember the details. I remember that she had a, a problem on, on -- in her work that, that was, was not, not specific enough for her to, uh, to complete her work. And she, uh, she had the freedom to walk around the, the -- I think she worked in Building Four or something like that. And she, uh, she had, she had that freedom to walk around, and she, one day she -- while I was working on a horizontal boring mill -- she, she found me and, and she, we had, we had a conversation about a specific blueprint that she was working with. And I, I guess -- I guess we, we had, uh, a conversation a, about the blueprint that she was working with. I really don't remember, uh, what, what her problem was.

JUDY KAPLAN: But you helped her fix it?

ALFRED KOLKIN: What?

JUDY KAPLAN: You helped her work it out?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Well, well we, we talked about what, about the, the blueprint that she was working with. I didn't physically help her with --

JUDY KAPLAN: But you helped her understand what to do?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah. I was, it was a problem of understanding what, what the part was.

JENNIFER EGAN: Did you know her well yet at that point?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I don't remember whether we had been married be, at that point or not.

JENNIFER EGAN: Did you actually meet her at the Navy Yard for the first time --

ALFRED KOLKIN: We --

JENNIFER EGAN: -- or somewhere else?

ALFRED KOLKIN: We, we met --

JUDY KAPLAN: They were -- there was a camp that people could go to for the weekend.

Like a resort, I mean, not fancy or anything. And that's where they met. It was somewhere upstate. Am I correct?

ALFRED KOLKIN: It was at, actually in New Jersey. Or it could -- it was across the Hudson.

JUDY KAPLAN: Oh. Okay.

JENNIFER EGAN: And so you, were you both already working at the Navy Yard when you --

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes.

JENNIFER EGAN: Okay. And so was it, did you often see Lucy --

ALFRED KOLKIN: No.

JENNIFER EGAN: -- in the course of your days there?

ALFRED KOLKIN: No, it, it only happened once that we got, got together while we were both working there.

JENNIFER EGAN: Really? You mentioned that she had the freedom to walk around.

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes.

JENNIFER EGAN: Did you walk around also?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I could have, but I, I didn't have the, the need to, to do that. Apparently

she, she needed some addition -- additional, uh, instruction. I can't, I can't really, uh, specify what, what, what, what she was doing, or what I was doing.

JENNIFER EGAN: Mm-hmm. Do you -- oh, sorry.

JUDY KAPLAN: Let me just clarify. When they met at this camp, um, they were married three months later.

JENNIFER EGAN: Mm-hmm.

JUDY KAPLAN: So it became very, very intense very fast. They knew after six weeks that they were going to marry each other. [laughter]

JENNIFER EGAN: Um --

JUDY KAPLAN: So they were very close, you know, soon as they knew each other, they were very close, and they were both twenty-five years old.

JENNIFER EGAN: Okay. Um, do you remember your schedule there? What time you began work? Did you have a lunch break? How the day would unfold?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I don't, I don't really remember the, the schedule, but I know it was, it was either, uh, it was either, uh, uh, a full week such, such that --

JUDY KAPLAN: I think they were long shifts, right?

ALFRED KOLKIN: What?

JUDY KAPLAN: They, it was a long shift.

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah, it was, it was a, a, a lot of hours.

JUDY KAPLAN: Was it like a twelve-hour shift? It was ten or twelve, right?

ALFRED KOLKIN: What?

JUDY KAPLAN: I think it was ten or twelve-hour shifts. Yes?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I don't remember.

JUDY KAPLAN: Because I remember mom saying that on Saturday's it was half a day, it

was only eight hours. [laughter] Right, do you recall that?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I don't remember.

JENNIFER EGAN: After you and Lucy married, did she live at your mother's also? How did your housing work?

ALFRED KOLKIN: We, we got an apartment. Uh, uh, a distant relative of my mother happened to be, uh, a --

JUDY KAPLAN: A landlord?

ALFRED KOLKIN: She hap -- she happened to, um -- part of her family was, was -- owned property, and, and that, that person was instrumental in getting us an apartment.

JENNIFER EGAN: Do you remember where that apartment was?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah, it was in Bensonhurst. In, in the area, uh, that, that we ended up living, uh, with --

JUDY KAPLAN: That's where we, we grew up in that area.

ALFRED KOLKIN: What?

JENNIFER EGAN: Okay.

JUDY KAPLAN: That's where we, Margie and I grew up.

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes.

JUDY KAPLAN: Right near there. But I think that was about 80th Street and 20th Avenue, that apartment.

ALFRED KOLKIN: In that ar -- some place between, between 86th Street, and it was on the west, the West End subway line.

JUDY KAPLAN: Yeah.

JENNIFER EGAN: And did you -- oh sorry, go on. Did you and Lucy go to work together then?

ALFRED KOLKIN: No, we, we never, we never work, worked hours such that we, we would go to work together.

JENNIFER EGAN: Okay. Did, uh, you work -- were there any women working in the machine shops with you?

ALFRED KOLKIN: No.

JENNIFER EGAN: Did you ever see Ida or Syl at the Navy Yard?

ALFRED KOLKIN: No. I didn't.

JENNIFER EGAN: Um, do you know, do you remember how long after you married you actually joined the Navy and were called up for service?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I, I, I don't remember.

JENNIFER EGAN: I know that you did some training in Chicago.

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes I, I took, uh, an exam that, that, um -- I was able, able to go to a special, uh, elec -- uh, electronic training in, in Chicago. And from there, the, I went to, uh, another training school, and --

JUDY KAPLAN: Was that in San Diego?

JENNIFER EGAN: Or Delmar?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I went to, uh, one in California. I don't, I don't have it clear, clear in my mind.

JENNIFER EGAN: And is that where you were in California when Lucy came to join you?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes. I was going to school and, and she, and she got, uh, she took a train out, out to California, and got a job as a, as a waitress in that school. There, uh, there were other students whose, whose wives also worked, worked there.

JENNIFER EGAN: And did you live in an apartment or in military housing?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Well, I, I was in the Navy going to the Navy school, and she, uh, got a

job in the Navy school as a waitress.

JUDY KAPLAN: Did you live together?

ALFRED KOLKIN: No.

JUDY KAPLAN: Or you had to live like in a dorm, the Navy housing? Like a barracks, did you live in a barracks?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I, I, I worked -- I lived in a barracks, but she, she lived in a --

JUDY KAPLAN: She shared an apartment with other women, right, who worked there?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes.

JENNIFER EGAN: Um, and then how -- when the War ended, were you still in that place or had you --

ALFRED KOLKIN: When the War ended I, I was in Japan.

JENNIFER EGAN: Okay.

ALFRED KOLKIN: On a, a repair ship. And one of the, uh, ships that I mentioned, the *Missouri*, was, uh, took, took, uh -- the *Missouri* participated in the ceremonies at, at the end of the War.

JENNIFER EGAN: And at that point, where were you? Were you -- you were still in Japan?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I was on a repair ship.

JENNIFER EGAN: Okay.

JUDY KAPLAN: Apparently, I guess the signing of the surrender of Japan was on the *Missouri*, and the other ships were lined up and everybody was watching.

JENNIFER EGAN: Oh, so you were right there?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah.

JENNIFER EGAN: Wow. And at that -- when you, when you shipped out from California --

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah.

JENNIFER EGAN: -- did you go straight to Japan?

ALFRED KOLKIN: We went across the Pac -- from San Francisco, we went across the Pacific to, to the Hawaiian Islands, and then to Japan.

JENNIFER EGAN: And where did Lucy go when you shipped out?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Well, she had been working, uh, in the Oakland Army Base, uh, in the Personnel department. She got that job because they, uh, they liked the idea that she had experience working in the Navy Yard.

JENNIFER EGAN: So after the, the school that you went to where she was a waitress, you moved together to the San Francisco area before you shipped out?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Before I shipped out, I, I have a recollection that, that, uh, I came back to the East Coast and, and somehow -- I don't remember the, the sequence of where, where we were or, or when.

JENNIFER EGAN: Okay.

JUDY KAPLAN: Did you come back on leave before you shipped out? They give you some time to see family?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Uh, I, I don't remember.

JENNIFER EGAN: And after the war ended, did you return to California or to the East Coast?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I, I returned to San Diego, which is southern California.

JUDY KAPLAN: But mom was already back in Brooklyn, right?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes.

JUDY KAPLAN: Yeah. She didn't stay in California.

ALFRED KOLKIN: What?

JUDY KAPLAN: She -- I don't think she stayed in California after you shipped out. Not for

long. I think --

ALFRED KOLKIN: I don't, I don't remember.

JUDY KAPLAN: Yeah, she moved back in with her mother, I believe.

JENNIFER EGAN: Daniella had an idea that Lucy did some work in Monterey, just keeps, sort of, that's what I'm trying to get to, but I can't figure out --

JUDY KAPLAN: I think that's where the waitressing was.

ALFRED KOLKIN: What?

JENNIFER EGAN: But Monterey is northern California.

JUDY KAPLAN: Oh.

ALFRED KOLKIN: Monterey is, is sou -- uh, one, one area south of, of, um, San Francisco.

JUDY KAPLAN: Did mom work in Monterey?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Uh, Monterey. I don't think she worked there.

JUDY KAPLAN: Was she living there or where you living there?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Monterey was, uh, not in the Navy, and I, I can't -- I don't remember, I don't remember.

JENNIFER EGAN: Okay.

SADY SULLIVAN: So that's not where -- the Naval school -- where was the Navy school that you were at?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I went to three, three Navy schools. One was in Chicago, and one was in -- where was it?

JUDY KAPLAN: Was it San Diego?

JENNIFER EGAN: I remember it as a smaller town near San Diego. I think it was called Delmar. I'm just remembering from the letters.

JUDY KAPLAN: Okay, so near -- okay.

JENNIFER EGAN: That's easily findable.

JUDY KAPLAN: So Delmar --

ALFRED KOLKIN: I don't know what Del, Delmar is.

JUDY KAPLAN: A town near San Diego.

ALFRED KOLKIN: No. Del Monte was the, was the location of, of Navy school in, in California.

JENNIFER EGAN: Okay, so then it's Del Monte, okay. And it, was that in southern California?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes.

JENNIFER EGAN: Okay, that's what I'm trying --

JUDY KAPLAN: Okay.

JENNIFER EGAN: -- that's what I was trying to remember. And then what about the third school?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Third school, oh, that was, um, Treasure Island, which was, which was in San Francisco Bay.

JENNIFER EGAN: Got it. Okay, that makes sense. So Monterey must have been somehow part of, maybe you went there -- I mean, it's a beautiful place.

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah.

JENNIFER EGAN: Maybe you went there on a leave or something.

ALFRED KOLKIN: Where's that?

JENNIFER EGAN: To Monterey.

ALFRED KOLKIN: Monterey was -- we, we took, uh, a bike ride around Carmel, and Lucy, uh, it was very hilly, and she, uh, lost control of the bike and, uh, her, her forehead was scarred.

JUDY KAPLAN: Oh, is that where she got that scar?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah.

JENNIFER EGAN: Wow.

JUDY KAPLAN: So she fell off?

ALFRED KOLKIN: She fell off the, the bike. Yeah.

JENNIFER EGAN: Um, now, after you came back to Brooklyn, did you return to the Navy Yard?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I think I did. For a very brief time.

JENNIFER EGAN: Do you recall what you were doing that time?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I was looking for a job mostly, yeah. It was a, it was a -- a very rough, uh, period be, because I didn't have steady employment and I was trying to establish what I was going to be, be doing for, for a living.

JENNIFER EGAN: So you actually were employed again at the Navy Yard?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I think I was. I don't remember any details about it.

JENNIFER EGAN: And what did you end up doing once you found your -- once you got settled?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I, I worked in various machine shops and, uh, I, I worked at a printing factory. Uh, I, I think I have the records somewhere, but I don't remember.

JUDY KAPLAN: And then you worked, you worked as a tool and dye maker.

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah, I worked, worked in various machine shops.

JUDY KAPLAN: That was his title.

JENNIFER EGAN: Okay.

JUDY KAPLAN: And you worked at Paris Intertype?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes, I was --

JUDY KAPLAN: Didn't you work there a long time?

ALFRED KOLKIN: -- print, that was a --

JUDY KAPLAN: That was a printing?

ALFRED KOLKIN: -- printing factory.

JUDY KAPLAN: That was right on the waterfront in Brooklyn Heights.

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes.

JENNIFER EGAN: Paris Intertype?

JUDY KAPLAN: Yes. But it's that building, you know when you get off the Brooklyn Bridge and you're on the BQE and you're going towards Atlantic Avenue?

JENNIFER EGAN: Mm-hmm.

JUDY KAPLAN: And right there is a big building on the waterfront? That was, that was where he worked.

JENNIFER EGAN: Hmm.

JUDY KAPLAN: Many, many years.

ALFRED KOLKIN: There, there was a period of time when the Union was on strike. And I was looking, looking for a steady job, and it was very, very difficult living, living conditions were --

JUDY KAPLAN: Was that from Paris Intertype, that strike?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes. There was also another company, uh, American Can.

JUDY KAPLAN: That was before, yes?

ALFRED KOLKIN: No, that, that was -- it was a very complicated time for us.

JENNIFER EGAN: Did you have children already?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes.

JUDY KAPLAN: I think he's talking about the late '50s.

ALFRED KOLKIN: Mm-hmm.

JUDY KAPLAN: When you were on strike.

JENNIFER EGAN: You had been involved in the union movement for quite a while, is that right?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I know I, I had a, a union, um, pass. Or I don't know what you call it. I had, I had a union, uh, card from, from the machinists union. That was during, during the Navy Yard employment, and that, that helped me get employment in various machine shops.

JENNIFER EGAN: That card helped you later?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah.

JENNIFER EGAN: Do you recall anything about union, uh, meetings at the Navy Yard?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Well, union meetings, I, I, I became editor of, of a, of a newspaper. I think I still have a copy of, of it.

JUDY KAPLAN: Where would that be?

ALFRED KOLKIN: It would be in a, in a file cabinet.

JUDY KAPLAN: In your bedroom?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah.

JENNIFER EGAN: And what was the newspaper?

ALFRED KOLKIN: It was a, a local, a local union paper. It's -- if you want to, I can look it up now.

JENNIFER EGAN: Maybe when, we should talk a little more and then, and then take a break? But that would be great. This was while you were at the Navy Yard?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes.

JENNIFER EGAN: Okay. Let's talk a little more, and then, and then -- before we interrupt.

But then, it would be great to see, to see that. Um, do you remember any sort of big events that happened while you were at the Navy Yard? Any times when the work routine was interrupted or something special happened? Just any, any -- any memories that stand out like that?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Well, the, the, uh, the attack on, on Pearl Harbor in Hawaii took place while I was working at the Navy Yard on a Sunday, I think it was. And that was, uh, a big event.

JENNIFER EGAN: I can imagine. What do you remember about that? Do you remember how people reacted or what the atmosphere was like?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I, I remember going with Lucy to, uh, the, uh, launching of, of the *Missouri* from the Navy Yard into the East River.

JENNIFER EGAN: You went together?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah.

JENNIFER EGAN: Where you both working that day?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Well, a, apparently we, we took time off from work. That was a, a Sunday.

JENNIFER EGAN: Do you remember any details about the launching?

ALFRED KOLKIN: We had a -- we have a photograph of that. I think that's in that, uh, or --

JUDY KAPLAN: The al -- one of those recent albums I made?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah, the album, yeah.

JENNIFER EGAN: Of them at the launching? Um, any, any other -- those are some big events. Any other events you remember from your time there?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I don't think so.

JENNIFER EGAN: Um, after work, do you remember what you would do when the work

day ended? Did you go home or did you hang around with friends?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I, I don't think so. I don't remember.

JENNIFER EGAN: Do you have any recollection of Sands Street?

ALFRED KOLKIN: No, I, I didn't use that entrance. I used, uh, Cumberland Street --

JENNIFER EGAN: Ah.

ALFRED KOLKIN: -- entrance.

JENNIFER EGAN: Okay. Do you remember whether you liked your work there?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I was just pleased that, that I was able to get employment. There wasn't, it wasn't a very easy thing to do.

JENNIFER EGAN: The work itself?

ALFRED KOLKIN: No, to, to get a job, actually.

JENNIFER EGAN: Oh. Was the pay good, do you recall?

ALFRED KOLKIN: It was better than what I had, uh, been paid before. I, I, the pay, the pay was, uh, enough to, uh, have a family.

JENNIFER EGAN: Um, was the work dangerous that you were doing? Were people injured?

ALFRED KOLKIN: No. My work wasn't dangerous.

JENNIFER EGAN: Was it physically taxing?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes, I mean, it took a lot of energy.

JENNIFER EGAN: Do you have a sense of -- sorry -- how many people worked in that, in Building 128?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Uh, uh, I, I don't have a --

[Interview interrupted.]

-- get anything?

JUDY KAPLAN: Um, may, not -- I don't know, know which picture is that specific event, but we'll go through them because there's a lot of Navy pictures in there.

JENNIFER EGAN: Okay, okay. Um, I'm just wondering, in the building, as you were working were there people all around you or was it --

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes.

JENNIFER EGAN: Okay, so it was a very crowded place?

ALFRED KOLKIN: It wasn't, I wouldn't call it crowded. But it was, uh, there were a lot of coworkers.

JENNIFER EGAN: What about when you walked from Cumberland to your building. Was it crowded or not?

ALFRED KOLKIN: It wasn't crowded, it was -- I remember, uh, going on a, on a day off, there was a, a Negro machinist who, uh, who I went, went on a -- I went on a, uh, we rented a rowboat or a boat of some kind and we, uh --

JUDY KAPLAN: Was this on a day off?

ALFRED KOLKIN: On a -- on a day off.

JUDY KAPLAN: Where were you? In a park? Like Prospect Park or Central Park?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I think, I think we went to someplace in the Bronx. I'm talking about a coworker --

JUDY KAPLAN: Yeah.

JENNIFER EGAN: Was it a group of you?

ALFRED KOLKIN: No, it wasn't -- it wasn't a group. It was just me and him.

JENNIFER EGAN: Hmm. Did you -- were there many, um, African American machinists?

ALFRED KOLKIN: There were a few. I wouldn't hazard a guess as, as to how many.

JENNIFER EGAN: Mm-hmm. Do you remember how the, uh, how things were organized?
Did you have a supervisor that you reported to?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes. There was a supervisor. What, what they call a snapper. At that time, they had a term for it.

JENNIFER EGAN: And was that someone that you liked, do you remember?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Respected would be more like it.

JENNIFER EGAN: And the man that you went on the, on the boat trip with, was that someone you worked with directly?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Well we, we were uh, uh, in adjacent machines.

JENNIFER EGAN: Do you remember his name?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Cator Benjamin. C-A-T-O-R. Benjamin.

JENNIFER EGAN: Do you remember anything about him? His life or where he lived?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I think he lived in the Bronx, and, uh, he, he was a friend of, uh, one of the pop, popular Black artists or, uh, what's the name of, uh, uh, a singer, a Black singer?

JUDY KAPLAN: Al Jolson? Or --

ALFRED KOLKIN: What?

JUDY KAPLAN: Al Jolson?

ALFRED KOLKIN: No.

JUDY KAPLAN: Or Sammy Davis Jr.?

ALFRED KOLKIN: No, a woman.

JENNIFER EGAN: Ella Fitzgerald?

JUDY KAPLAN: Aretha Franklin? Yeah? Nina Simone?

SADY SULLIVAN: Sarah Vaughan?

JUDY KAPLAN: Um --Billie Holiday?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Anyhow --

JUDY KAPLAN: Was it Billie Holiday?

ALFRED KOLKIN: No. She, uh, she was probably part of, of his, um --

JUDY KAPLAN: His family?

ALFRED KOLKIN: -- his neighborhood.

JUDY KAPLAN: Oh.

JENNIFER EGAN: Did you go to hear her sing?

ALFRED KOLKIN: No, not at that time.

JENNIFER EGAN: But some other time?

ALFRED KOLKIN: But he -- no. But he, uh, he was proud, proud of being an acquaintance of hers.

JENNIFER EGAN: I see. Hmm. And so that day, where that you went --

ALFRED KOLKIN: Lena Horne.

JUDY KAPLAN: Oh!

JENNIFER EGAN: Oh!

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh!

JENNIFER EGAN: Wow! So that was a visit to his neighborhood that day?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah.

JENNIFER EGAN: And was he still working there, uh, Cator, when you left?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I think -- I never, never got in, in touch with her -- with him -- after the War.

JENNIFER EGAN: But he was one of your friends there?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes. Life was very, very complicated at that time.

JENNIFER EGAN: How so?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Well, being married and with children, and looking for employment,
and --

JUDY KAPLAN: This is after the Navy.

JENNIFER EGAN: Right. Do you have any questions, either of you, that I'm, I'm missing?

JUDY KAPLAN: When you would walk, when you would go to work, were the streets busy
with other people going into the Navy Yard?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes.

JUDY KAPLAN: So there were quite a few people on the street?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes.

JENNIFER EGAN: Do you remember where you ate lunch?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I remember Lucy's mother made me sandwiches for lunch. Uh, I never
managed to have lunch with Lucy.

JENNIFER EGAN: So her mom made you sandwiches? That's nice.

ALFRED KOLKIN: What?

JENNIFER EGAN: So Lucy's mom made you sandwiches?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes.

JENNIFER EGAN: Did you eat right in the area where you worked?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes.

JENNIFER EGAN: So you would just sit with some of your --

ALFRED KOLKIN: Coworkers.

JENNIFER EGAN: -- coworkers. Do you recall needing to go to other parts of the Navy

Yard at any time for your work, or other reasons?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Well, I, I was upgraded to, uh -- to, uh, a sort of, um, managerial, uh, level where I was given a desk and I was, uh, I was -- I was expected to wear a little more form -- formal, uh, work, work clothes.

JENNIFER EGAN: And were you still in Building 128 at that time?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Well, the work that I was given was, was in one of, one of the buildings. I, uh, it was an office type build-building.

JENNIFER EGAN: Do you remember where it was in relation to Building 128?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I think it had something to do with the fact that, that I was active in the Union, and the Union had, had the, uh, uh, ability to recommend individuals for, for working uh --

JUDY KAPLAN: Would that have been an advancement?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes.

JUDY KAPLAN: Like a promotion?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes.

JENNIFER EGAN: And do you recall what kind of managerial work you were doing? What were you overseeing?

ALFRED KOLKIN: It was, wasn't -- it had to do with, with machine, machining and, uh, I don't know what, what my, uh --

JUDY KAPLAN: But earlier, you said something about someone called a snapper, who was like a supervisor. Would that have been what you were?

ALFRED KOLKIN: This, this was a more, uh, a broader, a broader, uh, area of work.

JUDY KAPLAN: Was it paperwork?

ALFRED KOLKIN: No, it was, it was, uh, getting -- getting work.

JUDY KAPLAN: Were you giving work assignments?

ALFRED KOLKIN: What?

JUDY KAPLAN: Were you assigning work to different people?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I was assigning -- I was assigning work. Uh, I think, I think I was assigning work to various departments. It's rather, rather vague in my mind.

JENNIFER EGAN: Do you think if you -- if we looked at this map, you might be able to tell where that office building was? Okay, so here's Cumberland. There's your entrance, and there's 128.

ALFRED KOLKIN: Let's see. Someplace in, in this area.

JENNIFER EGAN: So somewhere kind of to the right. When you would come in, you would go this way?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah. I think so.

JENNIFER EGAN: Hmm.

ALFRED KOLKIN: I, I don't -- I don't really have a, a clear, a clear idea of where, where, where that building was.

JENNIFER EGAN: Would you -- how did you get to your office there? Did you take an elevator?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I think so.

JENNIFER EGAN: And is that the job you had when you left to join the Navy?

ALFRED KOLKIN: It may have been. I'm not really sure.

JUDY KAPLAN: Well, this is 128. Would this have been like a smaller building that was just administrative, or? Because these look like big work buildings where, where big machines would be.

JENNIFER EGAN: Well, there were -- I think seventy-seven had a lot of offices in it,

actually. See, this is why it would be great to have Daniella here. She could tell us in a second.

ALFRED KOLKIN: I don't remember.

JENNIFER EGAN: Okay. Do you remember, did you like the administrative job more than the, the actual machinist job?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I didn't, I didn't, um, really expect, expect to, to advance, uh, into a more managerial kind of work.

JENNIFER EGAN: So that was a surprise?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Surprise, I don't know.

JUDY KAPLAN: What, you -- you weren't happy about it?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Uh, I wasn't ex -- expecting to stay there for a long period of time, you know?

JENNIFER EGAN: Do you remember how long you did do that managerial work?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I think it was at least six months.

JENNIFER EGAN: And do you remember what year it was or do you, when you actually left to begin your training in Chicago?

JUDY KAPLAN: It must have been '44.

JENNIFER EGAN: Okay.

JUDY KAPLAN: 1944.

ALFRED KOLKIN: Could have been.

JUDY KAPLAN: Probably the winter when you left. I'm guessing like around February. Does that sound right?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I, I have -- I probably have a record of, uh, of when I, when I went into the Navy.

JENNIFER EGAN: So you had not been married very long when you --

ALFRED KOLKIN: Right.

JENNIFER EGAN: -- went to the Navy? Okay. Is there anything you want to add about anything else you remember?

ALFRED KOLKIN: One of the guys who was, who was doing managerial, uh, uh, work, and assigning, uh, assigning, um, where, where people were, uh, were finishing parts from castings, that kind of a thing, when I, when I came to live here, uh, one of those guys who had been doing managerial work in the Navy Yard was living in this, uh, complex.

JENNIFER EGAN: Huh.

JUDY KAPLAN: Wow.

ALFRED KOLKIN: And after a few years of living here, uh, I became reacquainted with him.

JENNIFER EGAN: Had you actually worked together?

ALFRED KOLKIN: uh, I don't, I don't think I was working together with him, uh, it was more like a, like a union kind of relationship.

JUDY KAPLAN: Do you remember his name?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes, his name was George Gorchoff.

JUDY KAPLAN: How did you spell it? His last name?

ALFRED KOLKIN: G-O-R-C-H-O-F-F.

JUDY KAPLAN: Two fs? Is he still here?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I think -- he and his wife moved to, uh, California. I don't know when.

JENNIFER EGAN: Did you and Lucy talk to them about your time in the Navy Yard?

ALFRED KOLKIN: No, I don't, I don't think we had a, a social relation with them.

JENNIFER EGAN: But you remembered each other?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah.

JENNIFER EGAN: Interesting. Anyone else that you saw again from that time, at any point?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I don't know, I haven't thought about it. No, I, I don't think so.

JENNIFER EGAN: Maybe we can try to find that paper. That would be interesting.

JUDY KAPLAN: Okay.

ALFRED KOLKIN: What paper is that?

JENNIFER EGAN: You mentioned the newspaper that you edited.

ALFRED KOLKIN: Oh.

[Interview interrupted.]

ALFRED KOLKIN: She says you had some questions?

SADY SULLIVAN: Yeah, I have just a few more.

ALFRED KOLKIN: Okay.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um, just a couple -- .

ALFRED KOLKIN: Okay.

SADY SULLIVAN: Clarifying things. Do you want me to move this out of the way or is this --

ALFRED KOLKIN: It's fine.

SADY SULLIVAN: Okay. Um, I had a couple questions about the people you were -- your coworkers. What was their, what was their background in terms of ethnicity and neighborhood?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Uh, I don't know what you're asking.

SADY SULLIVAN: The people you were working with in the Navy Yard.

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah.

SADY SULLIVAN: Did they tend to be mostly, you know, was there people from different neighborhoods and ethnic backgrounds, where their families were from?

JENNIFER EGAN: Italians or German families or --

ALFRED KOLKIN: I really didn't make any long time, long-term friends.

SADY SULLIVAN: Mm-hmm.

ALFRED KOLKIN: Whether, whether or not there are any personal records or, or anything like that, I have no idea.

SADY SULLIVAN: Mm-hmm. And what about, what about the, the draft and people enlisting? The people working in the Navy Yards, were -- did most people want to enlist and get 4F, or why were people in the Yards and not drafted?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I don't know. There, there was, uh, uh a problem of getting, uh, raises or trying to get more, more, wh-- better paying jobs --

SADY SULLIVAN: I think I -- I've heard, someone was telling me that, um, people were, were going from the Navy Yard to uh, a ship building place in New Jersey that, that paid more that was a commercial outfit rather than the Navy?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah.

SADY SULLIVAN: Do you remember that?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Uh, I was looking for, uh, some, some sort of em -- employment.

ALFRED KOLKIN: It was a very turbulent kind of, kind of time.

SADY SULLIVAN: Mm-hmm. Um, I just have, I have one, one last question, and that's how did, how did news travel within the Yard? News of what was going on in the War or just, or like when you, when the *Missouri* was going to be launched, how did people spread the word about when that would happen?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I, I think -- Judy?

JUDY KAPLAN: Yeah?

ALFRED KOLKIN: There, there should be, in our photo album, there should be something about the *Missouri*.

JUDY KAPLAN: Okay, we'll look through that, we will.

SADY SULLIVAN: Mm-hmm.

JUDY KAPLAN: I have it right here. There's some amazing stuff in here.

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh, good.

JUDY KAPLAN: Original records from the Navy Yard.

SADY SULLIVAN: Mmm.

JUDY KAPLAN: This, we've never seen any of this.

SADY SULLIVAN: [laughter]

JUDY KAPLAN: Hey, what was your question that you, that he's having trouble answering?

SADY SULLIVAN: How, how news spread in the Yard in terms of big events like Pearl Harbor or when the *Missouri* was going to be launched.

JUDY KAPLAN: How did you find out? Were things just word of mouth? The word spread?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I think so.

JUDY KAPLAN: Did you get any written notices of events?

ALFRED KOLKIN: No.

JUDY KAPLAN: I think there were enough people there that -- [laughter].

SADY SULLIVAN: Mm-hmm.

JENNIFER EGAN: Was there a loudspeaker system that you remember?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I'm, I'm sure there was, but I don't remember anything specific, specifically about --

JENNIFER EGAN: Okay. I have an unrelated question which is how, you, how did the letters come to be at the Brooklyn Historical Society?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Well, we had, we had shoeboxes full of letters, and, and we, uh --

ALFRED KOLKIN: We, we had to figure out what to do with them.

JENNIFER EGAN: And do you remember how that idea came up?

ALFRED KOLKIN: We, we worked --

[Interview interrupted.]

ALFRED KOLKIN: Okay. There's something happening there.

JENNIFER EGAN: I think that's our lunch arriving. Was, was Lucy still alive when you gave the papers and your work IDs and --

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes.

JENNIFER EGAN: -- all of that to the Brooklyn Historical Society?

JUDY KAPLAN: Yeah, they were moving here.

JENNIFER EGAN: Ahh.

JUDY KAPLAN: And so they were cleaning out --

JENNIFER EGAN: I see.

JUDY KAPLAN: -- a larger apartment to move in here.

JENNIFER EGAN: I see.

JUDY KAPLAN: And somehow -- what was your connection to the Brooklyn Historical Society at that time? Were you connect -- were you -- did you just go to them because of the letters?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes.

JUDY KAPLAN: Okay, so they had the letters and, you know, they couldn't throw them out.

JENNIFER EGAN: No. My gosh.

JUDY KAPLAN: And, uh, so that's probably -- that probably sent them to the Brooklyn Historical Society.

SADY SULLIVAN: Mm-hmm.

JENNIFER EGAN: And then you guys had copies of the letters, also?

JUDY KAPLAN: Yes, I'll show you, because there may be some things in there you want also.

SADY SULLIVAN: Do you remember who, who you knew at the Historical Society?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I don't remember.

SADY SULLIVAN: Who you talked to?

JUDY KAPLAN: I have letters.

ALFRED KOLKIN: I don't understand what you said?

SADY SULLIVAN: Do you remember who -- when you gave the Brooklyn Historical Society your letters, do you remember who, who was the librarian or the archivist who --

ALFRED KOLKIN: It was a woman.

SADY SULLIVAN: -- took them?

ALFRED KOLKIN: A woman by the name of MacDonald or, or O'Donnell or something like that.

SADY SULLIVAN: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

JUDY KAPLAN: Oh, here, I have four binders full.

JENNIFER EGAN: It was really fun to see your work IDs.

ALFRED KOLKIN: Uh-huh.

JENNIFER EGAN: Those weren't, they didn't have those accessible when I first, when I was reading the letters. So I didn't know what you and Lucy look like, I just had to imagine it. And then when I came back to fact check for that essay, they had found more of the, they had more of the collection available, and those IDs were there. It was really fun to see those.

ALFRED KOLKIN: They, they had the -- some system of, of, uh, having, having things rec -
-

JUDY KAPLAN: I spread the food around. We'll figure out who's is what.

SADY SULLIVAN: The acquisition system, you mean?

ALFRED KOLKIN: What?

SADY SULLIVAN: The way that, the way that -- the acquiring system, do you mean?

ALFRED KOLKIN: No, what was --

SADY SULLIVAN: Or the Yard?

ALFRED KOLKIN: It wasn't the acquiring system.

JUDY KAPLAN: What's your question?

SADY SULLIVAN: We, we were --

JUDY KAPLAN: Oh.

SADY SULLIVAN: I think we're good.

JENNIFER EGAN: Think we're good.

SADY SULLIVAN: Yeah.

JENNIFER EGAN: Unless there's anything else you want to add on the record, I think we can move onto lunch.

SADY SULLIVAN: Yeah. I'm going to, I'm going to take a picture.

[Interview interrupted.]

JUDY KAPLAN: You might want to look through this.

SADY SULLIVAN: Will you look over here so I can --

ALFRED KOLKIN: What?

SADY SULLIVAN: I'm going to take your picture for the -- to go with the interview.

JENNIFER EGAN: Thank you for remembering that, Sady.

SADY SULLIVAN: Mm-hmm.

JENNIFER EGAN: I forget almost every time.

JUDY KAPLAN: I brought a camera with me just in case. Um -- this has got all of the records from all these places he worked at, and there's a listing, these seem to be after the Navy Yard.

SADY SULLIVAN: Thank you so much.

JENNIFER EGAN: Yes, thank you. Thank you for thinking and remembering so much.

ALFRED KOLKIN: It's very, very difficult to put it in an organized way, uh, after so many years.

SADY SULLIVAN: Yeah. It was a long time ago.

JENNIFER EGAN: But in a way, it doesn't matter because everyone has trouble doing that, but if you have enough of those memories all together, a picture begins to form.

ALFRED KOLKIN: Mm-hmm.

SADY SULLIVAN: Mm-hmm.

JENNIFER EGAN: So in a way, it's, it's up to -- it's up to the scholars to organize it. You're just giving us what you can, and then we put it all together.

SADY SULLIVAN: Mm-hmm.

JENNIFER EGAN: And it's very, very helpful. So don't feel badly about that. [laughter] It was great.

SADY SULLIVAN: Mm-hmm.

JUDY KAPLAN: Now, these are papers, actually, that he would have had at the Navy Yard. And he had records in here of what he was paid at the different places, too, I don't know --

JENNIFER EGAN: Oh, that's interesting.

JUDY KAPLAN: -- if that's of interest. You know, not just in the Navy Yard. Let's see.

SADY SULLIVAN: So what was that you were -- what did you find, Judy, that, that, um, that let you know that he was there for four years?

JUDY KAPLAN: He has a record of those years and there's a paper of beginning of his employment, which is 1940.

SADY SULLIVAN: Ohh.

JUDY KAPLAN: So we have the actual paper of when he was hired.

SADY SULLIVAN: So these are, these are all different places that you, that you've worked?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah.

SADY SULLIVAN: Ahh.

JUDY KAPLAN: That's why he keeps saying it was a very hard time, because he kept going from job to job to job to job.

SADY SULLIVAN: Mm-hmm.

JUDY KAPLAN: I'm just trying to pull out some things that were specific from the Navy Yard.

JENNIFER EGAN: This has some helpful dates, too.

[Interview interrupted.]

ALFRED KOLKIN: Can, can I help you, Catherine?

CATHERINE: No, thank you. [inaudible]

JUDY KAPLAN: Here's something. Here's something in 1937.

JENNIFER EGAN: I'm going to give you more things to copy.

JUDY KAPLAN: Unemployment insurance in 1937, that he was entitled to ten dollars and seventy-two cents a week for thirteen weeks.

JENNIFER EGAN: Wow. Those were the days, right?

JUDY KAPLAN: Yeah.

[laughter]

JUDY KAPLAN: And here he has wage records.

JENNIFER EGAN: It's great you've saved things. This is -- it's nice. [laughter]

SADY SULLIVAN: Really good.

JENNIFER EGAN: Sometimes I look at my files and I think, "What is this going to mean? I've got to get more organized!" [laughter]

JUDY KAPLAN: And here's his wages from the Navy Yard. I assume this is weekly. This is amazing, huh? If it wasn't for you, I never would have seen this.

JENNIFER EGAN: You're [inaudible], it's certainly helping us.

JUDY KAPLAN: [laughter]

JENNIFER EGAN: Oh, this is really good, Sady.

SADY SULLIVAN: You keep good records.

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah.

SADY SULLIVAN: Look at this. We should all, we should all learn from you. Look at this.

ALFRED KOLKIN: What, what is it?

SADY SULLIVAN: I think these are your wages.

JUDY KAPLAN: Yeah, he --

JENNIFER EGAN: Here, Sady, this is a good thing to photograph.

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh, wow. Let's see.

[Interview interrupted.]

JUDY KAPLAN: This is probably -- is this from the Navy? Yeah, I think this is the same as the dates I gave you. I hope.

[Interview interrupted.]

JENNIFER EGAN: It's really got [inaudible]. This must be 1940.

JUDY KAPLAN: Look at this, this is from a union, a union letter, "Dear Brother Kolkin."

JENNIFER EGAN: Fabulous. I love it, at the end, et cetera.

SADY SULLIVAN: Do you want me to move stuff?

JUDY KAPLAN: This stuff?

JENNIFER EGAN: Yeah, we can move all the chairs now.

JUDY KAPLAN: This is from the '50s. I think you have these dates. It was in the paper.
The --

JENNIFER EGAN: Yeah.

JUDY KAPLAN: Where he did it a few times --

JUDY KAPLAN: Show Sady the picture of the *Missouri*.

JENNIFER EGAN: I think that picture may be at the BHS, actually.

JUDY KAPLAN: Oh, okay. These are -- he's going fast, but these are places he was stationed, right?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes.

JUDY KAPLAN: These were the -- this was the training school, right?

ALFRED KOLKIN: That's Del Monte, yeah.

JUDY KAPLAN: It was a beautiful estate. All right, don't go so fast, tell them what these are.

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah, I, uh --

JUDY KAPLAN: You're looking for something specific?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah.

JUDY KAPLAN: Okay. Lucy loved San Francisco. She just loved --

JENNIFER EGAN: Even before she went there, she was saying, "Maybe we'll stay there." That's a nice picture.

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh, that's gorgeous.

JUDY KAPLAN: Is that from her waitressing?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Hostess -- CIO -- hostess --

JUDY KAPLAN: It says, "CIO hostess". Where was that? Do you know?

ALFRED KOLKIN: That was in San Francisco.

JUDY KAPLAN: Mm-kay, but did she wear that?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I -- she must have.

JENNIFER EGAN: That's, that restaurant is still there, Top of the Mark.

JUDY KAPLAN: Really?

JENNIFER EGAN: Yup.

SADY SULLIVAN: It's an old hotel.

JUDY KAPLAN: Mmm. Those were the other women she worked with, right? Were these -- yeah, these were the other wives. There she is. These were the other wives in San

Francisco.

JENNIFER EGAN: "I'll always remember Lucy the gal from Brooklyn." [laughter]

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh!

JUDY KAPLAN: And these women kept in touch with a round robin letter --

JENNIFER EGAN: Oh, that's so wonderful!

JUDY KAPLAN: -- that went on 'til the 1990s.

JENNIFER EGAN: Really?

SADY SULLIVAN: Whoa!

JUDY KAPLAN: Actually, we got one after she died. Right?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah.

JUDY KAPLAN: The day -- every year -- like, the letter was -- people would put their own letter in the envelope -- and, and mail all the letters --

JENNIFER EGAN: It was like, before there was a listserv.

JUDY KAPLAN: Yeah, yeah -- and mail all of the letters to the next person. And they kept it going and --

JENNIFER EGAN: Is this your ship?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah. It's the -- shi -- they they were -- the ship got rammed right, right here.

JENNIFER EGAN: [inaudible] I can spend like two hours looking at this --

JUDY KAPLAN: Yeah. This is forty-five years later.

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh.

JUDY KAPLAN: We had an anniversary party for them. This is where he wrote in red -- I think that -- is their forty-fifth anniversary.

[Interview interrupted.]

JENNIFER EGAN: Who kept these albums so carefully? Was that -- did you, were you the organizer of the albums? Or did Lucy do it?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Somebody did it. [laughter]

JUDY KAPLAN: Was it you?

JENNIFER EGAN: It's inspiring.

ALFRED KOLKIN: I think it was --

JUDY KAPLAN: Was it me?

ALFRED KOLKIN: -- I think it was me or -- yeah, or Margie.

JUDY KAPLAN: Now you asked where she worked -- the -- this was someone -- oh no, no -- no I was thinking those were cousins, of hers. These were first cousins of hers who lived in Philadelphia. You asked where she worked -- she, um -- she didn't work until we were like school age. And then she started working part-time during our school hours and she started interviewing for doing market research.

JENNIFER EGAN: That's right. I remember you told me that which would be perfect for her.

JUDY KAPLAN: And then she, um, when we were old enough -- well, you know, kids used to walk to and from school and stuff at a very young age then.

SADY SULLIVAN: [laughter]

JENNIFER EGAN: Mm-Hmm.

JUDY KAPLAN: And like -- so even like -- even when I was seven or something I just go to someone else's house for lunch, you know, and my mother could work. And so she started working full-time for a company called National Opinion Research Center, which is the social research company attached to the University of Chicago. And they would get these big national studies to do on national healthcare or -- um -- all,

all to do with the social state of people in society. And -- um -- she started as an interviewer, and then started working in their office on 5th Avenue and 12th Street --

JENNIFER EGAN: Ahh.

JUDY KAPLAN: -- and she worked there a long time. She became a private -- uh, I don't know what the title was -- but like a private director. She would oversee, and training people, and interviewing, and do the phoning, and they would have to figure out -- you know --

JENNIFER EGAN: Right.

JUDY KAPLAN: -- how they were going to manage the statistics. She would see everything from start to finish.

JENNIFER EGAN: It was the National Opinion Research Center?

JUDY KAPLAN: Yes. I don't know if it still exists. I would think it does.

ALFRED KOLKIN: They closed the New York office.

JUDY KAPLAN: Oh, they did?

ALFRED KOLKIN: And the -- and -- they, they had -- uh -- a Chicago office.

JUDY KAPLAN: Right. Did you want to look more closely at the Navy pictures?

JENNIFER EGAN: Yeah, that would be great.

JUDY KAPLAN: Okay, so we have this -- [inaudible]

[Interview interrupted.]

SADY SULLIVAN: Do you want to come through?

[Interview interrupted.]

JENNIFER EGAN: There's Monterey.

ALFRED KOLKIN: I think this is Car -- Carmel.

JENNIFER EGAN: Right.

ALFRED KOLKIN: Monterey – peninsula.

JENNIFER EGAN: Did you take a little -- did you have, um-uh, a, a little break and went there for a vacation?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I don't -- I don't know.

JUDY KAPLAN: It was probably more like a one day off, kind of, one of these --

JENNIFER EGAN: Although it's not that close to San Francisco. It's a few hours away.

JUDY KAPLAN: Oh.

ALFRED KOLKIN: There's an Army fort called Fort Or -- Ord that had, uh, maneuvers on Fri -- on wee -- on the weekend while we were having our periodic exams. The fort was having, uh, a practice invasion of the beach that --

JENNIFER EGAN: Wow. Interesting. Over here?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah, like someplace in here. Or here -- or --

JUDY KAPLAN: Near Monterey?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah.

JENNIFER EGAN: Paul Robeson.

ALFRED KOLKIN: What?

JUDY KAPLAN: Oh.

SADY SULLIVAN: Wow.

ALFRED KOLKIN: Paul Robeson, you got his autograph.

JUDY KAPLAN: Was that from Monterey?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Who, who is this?

JENNIFER EGAN: Uh, the actor, Paul Robeson.

JUDY KAPLAN: Paul, Paul Robeson.

ALFRED KOLKIN: Oh.

JUDY KAPLAN: Did you see him in Monterey?

ALFRED KOLKIN: No, I think we -- we saw him in, uh, in San Francisco.

JUDY KAPLAN: Oh.

ALFRED KOLKIN: I took a lot of personal pictures.

SADY SULLIVAN: They're neat.

JENNIFER EGAN: Oh Muir Woods, yeah. That huge tree trunk, yeah.

JUDY KAPLAN: He -- he was a great photographer and always, you know, not just pictures of everybody, but -- you know -- artistic pictures, also.

JENNIFER EGAN: Hmm.

JUDY KAPLAN: He studied photography.

[Interview interrupted.]

JUDY KAPLAN: Want to take it out? [inaudible] Wait, wait, wait. There you go.

JENNIFER EGAN: I just love that one.

SADY SULLIVAN: It's gorgeous.

JENNIFER EGAN: She looks like -- um -- Sophia Loren.

SADY SULLIVAN: Umm.

JUDY KAPLAN: I've put another album here.

ALFRED KOLKIN: Okay.

JUDY KAPLAN: [inaudible] In case there's something in here you want to show. Okay?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah.

JUDY KAPLAN: And this one also has --

[Interview interrupted.]

JUDY KAPLAN: -- you want to -- these are all family pictures also, and there's an old birth certificate -- [inaudible]

JENNIFER EGAN: Wow.

ALFRED KOLKIN: Let's look at --

JUDY KAPLAN: Which one? Is this mom's school picture?

JENNIFER EGAN: Oh, wow! Look at them in their caps.

SADY SULLIVAN: They're cute.

JENNIFER EGAN: That's pretty adorable. Okay --

ALFRED KOLKIN: I don't -- I don't -- it's not dated or anything.

JUDY KAPLAN: I know. Oh, no, this is not her. This is from my sister's grade. [laughter]

JENNIFER EGAN: Oh, really?

JUDY KAPLAN: Yeah, so that's the early '50s. Look at this. This is mom, right? Is that mom?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah.

JUDY KAPLAN: And who is this? Is this her?

ALFRED KOLKIN: That's Lucy, yeah.

JUDY KAPLAN: Looks different there. And this is -- who's that? I can't see upside down -- that might be Min [phonetic]. And who's this?

ALFRED KOLKIN: That's Lucy.

JUDY KAPLAN: Their outfit -- you know -- it's like a nightgown or underwear or something?

JENNIFER EGAN: Yeah. Huh. That's so sweet.

JUDY KAPLAN: And this, I think I sent you that.

JENNIFER EGAN: Yeah I feel like I've seen that.

JUDY KAPLAN: Yeah. And this was her mother. And this is her with her mother. And -- I can't see if they -- these I think -- oh no -- that's, that's family. That's her -- um -- I think there might have been more Nav -- Navy stuff in here.

ALFRED KOLKIN: [laughter]

JUDY KAPLAN: Are you in there?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah, someplace.

JUDY KAPLAN: And here we -- it's got a date, so this is towards the end of his service. And, uh, where was Sampson?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Sampson is upstate New York someplace. I don't know what town or --

JUDY KAPLAN: Was that like your basic training?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah.

JUDY KAPLAN: Okay, so that was probably the first place he was sent.

JENNIFER EGAN: Yes, that's what I remember too. Yeah, so it's -- that's one -- a whole category of the letters: Sampson, then Chicago, then California.

JUDY KAPLAN: Oh, okay. You know where you are?

JENNIFER EGAN: I'm looking --

ALFRED KOLKIN: Someplace here -- oh right here. Here's an arrow.

JUDY KAPLAN: Oh yeah. [laughter]

JENNIFER EGAN: [laughter]

SADY SULLIVAN: [laughter]

JENNIFER EGAN: That's great.

JUDY KAPLAN: And then -- this is Del Monte. And these, I guess, are Del Monte.

ALFRED KOLKIN: They used to have, um, international polo matches at, uh, at Del Monte.

JENNIFER EGAN: Hmm.

JUDY KAPLAN: Wow.

ALFRED KOLKIN: Quite a ritzy place. Isn't it? The Navy took -- after the War -- the Navy took it over for -- uh --

JUDY KAPLAN: For a resort?

ALFRED KOLKIN: -- for -- uh -- a language school and --

JUDY KAPLAN: Oh.

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh, right, the Defense Language School, is it that one?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Which?

SADY SULLIVAN: The Defense Language School?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah.

JUDY KAPLAN: Sometimes they wore black, sometimes they wore white -- [laughter] That might be it. But here she is, 20th Avenue subway station --

JENNIFER EGAN: Great.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

JUDY KAPLAN: -- in *The New York Times*.

ALFRED KOLKIN: What year was this -- say -- can you tell?

JUDY KAPLAN: No, but I think it's before Margie was born. So Margie was born in '47, so this probably -- like '46 -- does that make sense?

ALFRED KOLKIN: I guess it might be possible to -- to -- to --

SADY SULLIVAN: That's true, you could zoom in!

JUDY KAPLAN: [laughter]

JENNIFER EGAN: [laughter]

ALFRED KOLKIN: -- zoom in, yeah.

JENNIFER EGAN: That's such a great smile.

JUDY KAPLAN: 'Cause this was near where her parents -- lived that station -- right?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah.

JUDY KAPLAN: So -- it was probably right after the War and you were both, you were living there and so you got an apartment.

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah. Right.

JUDY KAPLAN: So it was '45 -- '46. No this is later -- with short hair --

JENNIFER EGAN: Is that your mom?

JUDY KAPLAN: Yeah, I think s -- is it? I think it is. Maybe it's not. Is that mom?

SADY SULLIVAN: It doesn't look like her.

JUDY KAPLAN: No, it doesn't.

ALFRED KOLKIN: It could be -- yeah.

JENNIFER EGAN: I love that picture.

JUDY KAPLAN: Yeah. You've seen that --

JENNIFER EGAN: Um-hmm.

JUDY KAPLAN: -- yeah. Let me see this -- these are probably all after the War. Yeah, and that's Margie.

JENNIFER EGAN: Aw.

JUDY KAPLAN: [laughter] See -- we had long hair.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

JUDY KAPLAN: That's Margie when she's older. And that's me.

[laughter]

SADY SULLIVAN: Is that your grandpa?

JUDY KAPLAN: Yes, my mother's father. And then these just go on -- that's me.

JENNIFER EGAN: Really nice. I love the ice cream.

JUDY KAPLAN: It's just us getting older. And there's Lucy -- there's -- we were visiting
Margie at camp. Yeah.

JENNIFER EGAN: That's great.

JUDY KAPLAN: Look at the styles --

JENNIFER EGAN: Yeah.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

JUDY KAPLAN: -- the bathing suits.

JENNIFER EGAN: I love these big pictures. You can really see so much.

JUDY KAPLAN: That's other people -- and that's visiting me at camp.

SADY SULLIVAN: Uh-hmm.

JUDY KAPLAN: See the dresses?

ALFRED KOLKIN: What?

JENNIFER EGAN: 1960.

JUDY KAPLAN: Yeah -- so, I was ten and in those years you -- she never wore pants. She
was always in a dress. That's why she loved the Navy Yard so much, 'cause she was in
pants. [laughter]

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-humm.

JUDY KAPLAN: It wasn't until pantsuits became big in the '70s that women could start
wearing pants. Who is that? I can't see.

ALFRED KAPLAN: That's Paul and Sylvia [phonetic].

JUDY KAPLAN: That's -- her brother and his wife.

JENNIFER EGAN: Oh, right, right.

JUDY KAPLAN: It was very tragic. She was um -- schizophrenic --

JENNIFER EGAN: Oh boy.

JUDY KAPLAN: And she committed suicide --

JENNIFER EGAN: Whoa.

JUDY KAPLAN: Yeah, in about 1970 --

JENNIFER EGAN: Wow!

JUDY KAPLAN: Yeah --

JENNIFER EGAN: But her kids are okay?

JUDY KAPLAN: That's her kids -- that's Linda --

JENNIFER EGAN: Right.

JUDY KAPLAN: -- the one who was born in Washington?

JENNIFER EGAN: Right, right.

JUDY KAPLAN: That you read the letter of? And Steve -- there they are --

JENNIFER EGAN: There's a letter that I remember when, when she was born -- I guess --
and Lucy was writing to you about it. Said she wrote something like, you know, "five
pounds of pure perfection," or something like that.

JUDY KAPLAN: [laughter] But I was telling Jenny, she's still short. She's 4'10".

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh. [laughter]

JUDY KAPLAN: And that's Linda and Margie -- or Susan -- I don't know if that's --

ALFRED KOLKIN: That's Susan.

JUDY KAPLAN: Oh that's Susan. That's a friend. Here's one -- that's Rema [phonetic] --

JENNIFER EGAN: Oh. Yeah, yeah.

JUDY KAPLAN: -- any, uh, you know I used to order Rema. She was the most beautiful child. She was just a knockout.

JENNIFER EGAN: Wow. She's the older one? Okay.

JUDY KAPLAN: Yes. And that's me. [laughter]

JENNIFER EGAN: Getting older there. [laughter]

JUDY KAPLAN: But this is him in one of his shops, one of his machine shops.

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh wow.

JUDY KAPLAN: Where are you, dad? Do you know where you are? Is that you?

JENNIFER EGAN: Yeah, I think so.

JUDY KAPLAN: Yeah --

ALFRED KOLKIN: Could be --

JUDY KAPLAN: Yeah. And this is them -- this is probably -- it must be in the '60s somewhere -- pearls. I remember she had all different -- she had a lot of necklaces like that -- like a double strand --

JENNIFER EGAN: Right.

JUDY KAPLAN: -- of different colors. It was, like, stylish then. Oh and these are his cousin, Carly. She's the one that likes to swim at the pool I do.

[laughter]

JUDY KAPLAN: And she's now fifty!

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh my god. That's so crazy.

JENNIFER EGAN: Oh, there's American Can.

JUDY KAPLAN: And this is my dad's father and his wife. And that's the swimmer -- again --

[laughter]

JUDY KAPLAN: -- a little older. That's little Linda --

JENNIFER EGAN: Oh my gosh!

JUDY KAPLAN: -- the "five pounds of pure perfection." And that's a friend of the family --

JENNIFER EGAN: Well, we are definitely getting into some big hairdos. There --

JUDY KAPLAN: Yeah, yeah this is the late '60's. It's probably her wedding. Um, he's the machinist that the -- that my father lived with -- the families lived together.

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh -- who helped.

JUDY KAPLAN: He's the one who taught him to be a machinist.

JENNIFER EGAN: Oh wow.

JUDY KAPLAN: Yeah. And that's my mother with him. That's Peter, the machinist, and Ida, his wife. So -- I mean -- they weren't family, but they were like --

SADY SULLIVAN: Yeah.

JUDY KAPLAN: -- our family. And this was a friend of my dad's sister. She was a physicist for Corning, back in the '60s --

JENNIFER EGAN: Oh, okay, yeah.

JUDY KAPLAN: -- in upstate, like, near Binghamton? That was a really big thing for a woman to --

JENNIFER EGAN: That's kind of amazing.

JUDY KAPLAN: -- to be in that scientific world.

JENNIFER EGAN: Um-hmm.

JUDY KAPLAN: And she had horses, and we visited her. This Margie's wedding --

wedding pictures.

JENNIFER EGAN: Oh my gosh!

JUDY KAPLAN: Yeah.

SADY SULLIVAN: O! The sleeves.

JUDY KAPLAN: Yeah, we had -- um -- she picked the material, and a friend's mother made the dress for her.

SADY SULLIVAN: Wow she looks so beautiful!

JUDY KAPLAN: [inaudible] -- it's like a bell sleeve.

SADY SULLIVAN: That's really neat.

JUDY KAPLAN: Yeah. That's an aunt. And that's mother at work. And that's her with a pencil --

JENNIFER EGAN: Right, right!

JUDY KAPLAN: -- behind her ear.

JENNIFER EGAN: That's great!

JUDY KAPLAN: That's was at NORC. And that's, that. And these are all later.

JENNIFER EGAN: Right.

[inaudible]

JENNIFER EGAN: Oh, so fun to look at those, thank you!

JUDY KAPLAN: You're welcome.

JENNIFER EGAN: I felt -- when I was reading the letters -- I kept thinking, "I just want to know what happened after!" And I feel like I just got, like, this wonderful tour of that -
- [laughter]

JUDY KAPLAN: Yeah, okay good!

JENNIFER EGAN: It's very satisfying!

JUDY KAPLAN: Um, I don't think there's any point in showing you these binders, because I think you've probably --

JENNIFER EGAN: Yeah, I think it's probably --

[inaudible]

[Interview interrupted.]

JENNIFER EGAN: Well, thank you so much.

JUDY KAPLAN: You're welcome. The only thing that had other stuff was -- [inaudible]

JENNIFER EGAN: -- digitize -- [inaudible] -- the collection too if, if you're willing --

JUDY KAPLAN: I'm willing. Uh --

JENNIFER EGAN: I could lend them mine -- to digitize.

JUDY KAPLAN: Well yours have copies --

JENNIFER EGAN: Oh, right okay.

JUDY KAPLAN: -- and these weren't so great to begin with, so -- better to take it from the originals --

SADY SULLIVAN: So what are these? Cassette tapes?

JUDY KAPLAN: Ah --

SADY SULLIVAN: Those are --

JUDY KAPLAN: -- these were -- ah -- they had a reading at the Brooklyn Historical Society -- of reading their letters to each other. I think it was 1990 --

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh --

JUDY KAPLAN: And so -- there were two other events --

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh! Thank you.

JUDY KAPLAN: -- two other events, where she spoke about working in the Navy Yard -- that were for women in the Navy Yard -- and we have them on tape. Also have some -- a couple of tapes of them reading some letters to each other just at home. Just trying to sort through them.

SADY SULLIVAN: Wow!

JUDY KAPLAN: So, you're welcome to look through this, and um, if you want to borrow it, and I can get it back from you sometime.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

JUDY KAPLAN: Or if you want to -- what, whatever you want to do --

JENNIFER EGAN: And I can also lend you my copies. I don't know -- whatever -- I don't want --

SADY SULLIVAN: Do you have these on --? You have copies of the audio?

JENNIFER EGAN: I have copies that you made from --

JUDY KAPLAN: I made copies from these, and they are not perfect to begin with, so -- if you are going to make a copy, it would be better to use these.

JENNIFER EGAN: I just hate to have you part with your originals.

JUDY KAPLAN: Well, I'll get them back. [laughter]

JENNIFER EGAN: I know -- whatever you think, Sady.

[inaudible]

SADY SULLIVAN: We have the loan paperwork, but I don't have that --