

INTERVIEW LOG

Interviewee: Wally Willrick, Jr.

Oral History #214

Interviewer: Pete Leshner

Date: June 21, 1999

Location: Unknown

Topic: Wally Willrick's experience in the Coast Guard and on Sandy Point Light Station.
Duty on the tugboat *Mohican*

Comments:

Documentation:

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Pete Leshner: Okay, I'm Pete Leshner and today I'm interviewing Wally Willrick, Jr. about his experience in the Coast Guard and on Sandy Point Light Station. Maybe, you could start off telling me something about where you came from, Long Island, when you were born.

Wally Willrick, Jr.: Well, I was born in Long Island, 1930, and always been around the bay, always been around the water. So, in the end of '48, when I graduated high school, a friend of mine and I decided that we'd go in the Coast Guard, otherwise, we'd be drafted in the Army and we wanted to keep in the area of water and so forth, so he suggested we try the Coast Guard. So, September 1948 I joined the Coast Guard and went down to Norfolk, Virginia, after basic training in Cape May. We stayed there for about I guess a year, about a year I suppose, and I was on a buoy tender by the name of *Conifer* (ph), *CGC Conifer*, and we did a lot of buoy work and so forth in the lightship area and sea buoy area and the lower Chesapeake Bay area, with just the standard buoys. After that period of time, I went up to Groton, Connecticut, to diesel school and getting out of diesel school, went back to Portsmouth, Virginia, then was assigned to the Sandy Point Lighthouse in the end of 1949; stayed there 1950 and also into the spring of '51. About the time I got to the lighthouse, they just had started to build the Bay Bridge and we were using the ferry dock and the ferry facilities to pick up mail during the daytime and so forth like that and that was sort of a base to go get groceries and so on. We were allowed a certain amount of money every month to buy food and so forth, and we would take the big boat off the lighthouse and go to Annapolis to buy food and so forth just to service ourselves and so on. It was kind of primitive living out there for the simple reason we had an outhouse that hung over the side. We had a pitcher (ph) pump and what little room was a kitchen and a little sink. The fresh water we had was nothing more than rain water coming off the roof, go in the barrel in the basement and wasn't too much in the way of heat. We had a little kerosene stove in the main radio room which was our main object I guess, of course, to send out these signals to the merchant ships in the area that needed calibration for compasses and so forth. As far as rescue work, we really weren't called upon any time. That was our main duty, I guess, was to give calibration and so forth to the big ships.

PL: You talked a little bit about provisioning out to the lighthouse. Can you talk about you said something like \$40 dollars ...

WW: Yeah, provisions...I think the salary at that time...of course, I was an Engineman Third Class...was around \$80-85 or \$90 in that neighborhood. The total check for the month was \$129 and the rest was supposed to go for subsistence and so forth. The three fellows that were stationed with me were all from the Hatteras area of North Carolina, around Knotts (ph) Island and so forth; one was Ed Caisin (ph)...he was a seaman; Guy Snowden was a chief and the first class boson mate was Jesse Tolson (ph). When they would be off for the week that they were away, they would bring back all kinds of leafy greens and so forth, and that's what we'd cook for a while, but they were real vegetable eaters and that's what happened when they got back each time. Salt pork and string beans and kale and they would bring back bushels, so I had to change my food eating as well because we weren't into shore very often to pick up fresh supplies all the time. It's just whoever was coming back, would bring back a load of groceries and so on and we would all chip in and so forth. But, like I say, it was pretty primitive with the outhouse that hung over the side and that got a little cold and testy during the wintertime.

If we would run out of fresh water...if we had a lack of rain for a long while...then whatever Coast Guard ships or boats would come by, one of the small tenders, and then fill up the water supply, but they would also bring propane for the stove itself and propane for the refrigerator and also gasoline for the generators that charge the batteries and so forth to keep the light burning and the electric on and up to par.

PL: And your specific job on the lighthouse was connected with those generators.

WW: With the generators. I was the Engineman Third Class that was in charge of the machinery and so forth and that was my duty to keep everything up and running and trouble-free type of thing and if there were any problems to take care of, I'd fix them and so forth. I really didn't have much of a problem. The only thing that was a noisy part, was when it got foggy and we had to turn the fog horn on and that ran and ran and ran sometimes for days at times, but like everything else, you get used to that as well.

PL: Would your job actually be to go down and turn that generator on every day?

WW: Oh yes, yes. Batteries had to be charged every day. We'd run either one generator or the other just to keep everything up to what's supposed to be. The light was automatic light. You didn't have to turn it on by hand---at least I don't remember turning it on by hand. I think it was all automatic with some sort of photocell or something that they had to turn it on by itself, and then to stay in radio contact with everybody in case there was a problem on the Bay, or whatever, but relay messages and keep a watchful eye of boats in the area, or possible fire, or what have you, but that was primarily the idea of us being there that I could see is to run the calibration for the merchant ships that needed compass correction.

PL: Did you ever lose power or was that system pretty reliable?

WW: No, that was very reliable. Batteries seemed to last a long while I mean once they had a charge, because there were no real load put on that, other than the light and the radio signals that we had or running the radios...talking to different lighthouses in the area and different boats in the area...that's the only draw; you'd have a little light on during the night, but that was the only other thing. A little regular AM radio that you listened to, that was the only draw.

PL: How regimented was life in the lighthouse in terms of your daily schedule...you all rose together and that sort of thing.

WW: Yeah, pretty much so. You had the night watch and you had times that you had to stay on duty...you had so many hours on and so many off...and with three guys being on the lighthouse at the one time, it was like an eight hour shift every day. You just took the daytime, half the night, most of the night, but you were on watch for that eight hours and you slept accordingly. Every twenty-four days that you were there, you got six or seven days off and being I was from Long Island, I would go home for those six days and so forth, which was kind of nice also, but a pretty lonesome place otherwise out on the light. It was nice, it was quiet, it was peaceful, you'd get plenty of time to read or listen to the radio, but other than that, pretty solitary. Wintertime you were a little concerned because of the ice floes. It did rattle the lighthouse quite a bit when it would especially come down with the tide and shelf up quite high and then on the change of tide would turn around and go the other direction like a big iceberg, but other than that, it was a pretty desolate spot. It was very rare that we'd have a visitor; sometime in the summertime, somebody would come by and say hello or you'd talk down to them or something like that, but nothing much else to do but listen to the radio, tend the Coast Guard radio and

you'd catch some fish over the side, catch some crabs and so on, and add to your diet if you were lucky enough to get something off the side and pull them in.

PL: You were there for two winters.

WW: Two winters and a summer, yeah. I got in it was late fall, I guess in '49, all of '50 and the spring of '50. I left there and then went up to Baltimore to be on a tug by the name of the *Mohican*. It was tied up at the Pratt Street I guess Coast Guard dock right close to where the Baltimore to Norfolk ferry used to go back and forth. In fact, when I was discharged, they had no discharge headquarters or any headquarters up in Baltimore. Headquarters was down in Norfolk, Virginia, so I had to ride on that Baltimore to Norfolk ferry overnight on my last day in the Coast Guard. But, that was a duty that was, I guess it was rescue work out of the Baltimore Harbor. We would tend to a merchant ship once in a while, bring inspectors aboard or something of that nature, patrols of the Harbor and things of that nature also. But, other than that, it was also a very quiet duty.

PL: Getting back to the lighthouse...in those two winters, they were both fairly icy winters.

WW: Very severe, very severe. A lot of ice.

PL: And you could really feel that up in the tower then?

WW: Yeah, it would start to shelf up as it came down with the tide. When it broke off, it would shelf up higher and just make these icebergs along the north or the south side the way the tide was running and when the tide changed, it would just go in the opposite direction like this big iceberg actually. But, every time that heavy ice---our to six inch ice was pretty thick---and every time it would break off, it would sort of rattle the whole light and sort of give a vibration to it making you wonder whether this thing was going to topple over or not, but it was very sturdy and never had a problem with it, but by the spring all the barnacles and all the sea growth that was all around the bottom of the casing, there was nothing left---it was bright and shiny again.

PL: The ice just ground it all off.

WW: The ice just ground it all off, yeah. You couldn't see the rocks. It never did get that low tide where the rocks would come out of the water, so it was just below that; the rock level was below that, so very well built and very sturdy I think. But you did get that vibration, because that ice can do all kinds of damage and never did damage the light, but polished the casing is about all it did. (Laughter). Then we had the regular motor launch, it was about a 20 footer I guess...20 or 22 footer... and that was used I guess mostly just for emergencies and if we'd run for groceries into Annapolis, things like that then we had a small Dory that hung on a lift and also a small rowboat. The rowboat we ran back and forth to the old ferry dock where the ferry ran from Sandy Point to Matapeake back and forth every day and we had a post office box. To stay in contact with the lighthouse when one of us came back from shore leave, we'd just get on the radio and call over to the lighthouse and we'd get picked up and the next guy would go ashore.

PL: From Sandy Point.

WW: From Sandy Point, yeah. So, about the time I got to the lighthouse, they had just started to build the Bay Bridge, and when I got off the lighthouse, they were just about finished with it, so it was something to watch and something to see all the various tugs and bridge emplacements and so forth for those years, just to keep a watchful eye and see how it was all done and see the progress of it day by day.

PL: Tell me about the visit you got from hunters and getting the goose...

WW: Yeah, well (laughter), one winter, a couple of fellows came by and asked us if we wanted a couple of geese. They had just shot them that morning and we said, boy, what a treat that would be to have a goose dinner. So they threw a couple of geese up on the platform, and when I went to pick them, I found the wings on one of the geese or both geese, each had one wing that was clipped, so they got into somebody's tame geese and (laughter) and they dropped them off to us which was nice, but they didn't get them in flight like they said they did or they didn't set a rig to catch them or to shoot them and they got somebody's tame geese, and I tell you, they were very good eating 'cause they were probably corn fed all the way (laughter). But we did have a few visitors once in a while and somebody would come by and ask us if we wanted some fish and so forth, but it was mostly chatter from up on top to down the bottom and no real visiting crowds or anything like that. But a lonesome place for a lot of hours when nothing much was going on, especially when you get fog for a week or two weeks in a row, then you had the fog horn going besides as well and the only outside source that you spoke to was somebody on the radio and we talked to St. Thomas Point Light or over at Love Point or up to Baltimore Light, something like that, and there was just Coast Guard conversation. You couldn't get into anything serious, because it was all kind of restricted airways anyway, so it was just all in the line of duty, but that's the only people you talk to. The only other thing you had was an AM radio and no TV or anything like that, just listen to the radio and spend your time.

PL: How did you spend most of your leisure time. Were you a reader?

WW: No, not a reader at all really—magazines and so forth like that—but I'm not a reader of heavy books, so I stayed occupied with cleaning and scrubbing generators and washing floors and doing a little fishing now and then and in the wintertime it was kind of tough to get outside, but you just played it day by day and waited for the time to get off to go on home for a week.

PL: You said you never had an inspector from the Coast Guard come down to visit you.

WW: I don't really remember of an inspector. No, the ship came by lots of times just to bring supplies and so forth and a few people would come aboard. Now if some of those were an inspector, I don't really know, but they didn't seem to walk through and look or anything else. I guess they could see the place was being taken care of and everything was well maintained and all they had to do is walk through the generator room or the radio room and see that dust and spider webs weren't hanging on everything and if we got a supply of some fresh batteries or something like that, you know, they would all be coming aboard just to unload things, but other than that, I don't really remember of any inspections that were white glove type stuff.

PL: The official records of the Coast Guard tell us about the lighting apparatus and the fog apparatus and the radio equipment and things like that, but can you describe something about how well the place was furnished...chairs, tables, your bedroom furniture, and things like that.

WW: In the kitchen we had a small table and two chairs. The room was very small. Of course, the sink was in there. The refrigerator was over in the generator room because that was propane gas and that was all kind of kept by itself. To walk over from the kitchen was through the radio room about 8 or ten steps anyway, so really wasn't very far to go. The heater...all we had was if I remember...was a kerosene heater in the radio room and that was the only room that had heat. The bedrooms upstairs had nothing and

where the light was, of course, had nothing. In the wintertime, it got pretty cold. You slept with your clothes on and a hat and so forth, and there was frost on the pillow in the morning when you woke up (laughter), kind of primitive living, but I'm sure there not up to today's standards, especially with the outhouse hanging over the side and things of that nature, or the water running off the roof and trying to get drinking water out of it because we didn't put any kind of a purity pill into the water to clarify it or see if was any good or anything else. I know when there was a very dry spell, when the Coast Guard tender came alongside, he filled up the barrel down below. It was pretty tough to drink for a day or two before all that settled down because it really riled it up pouring all that heavy water or a lot of volume of water into the tanks below. They were big old wooden tanks if I remember and they were never really gotten into or scrubbed out or anything else, so whatever ran off the roof ran down the belly at the same time (laughter). Certainly, not up to today's standards.

PL: Looking at the pictures that you've brought along, you didn't routinely go in uniform for your daily duty here.

WW: No, no, it was just strictly dungarees all that time. The only time I got into uniform is when I went on shore leave, when I went home for the month...at the end of the month when I went home...but that's the only time you put a uniform on.

PL: When you appear in public.

WW: Hmm, hmm, appear in public or away from the light. Now when we went in to get groceries, that was strictly dungarees also, but you did wear a white hat and so on especially when you went into Annapolis to get groceries and so forth, but duties around the lighthouse was strictly dungarees and there was also no washing machines and there was also no dryers and when you wash your clothes, you washed them in a bucket, and that was the facilities we had, so we made due with what we had and there was no problem. Everybody got along well...there was no fighting, no arguing, and you might be chomping at the bit a little bit by the end of your monthly stay to get home for a few days, but after all, everybody's in their 20s and 30s and looking for a little time away from the quietness of the place.

PL: When you did go home, you went by road.

WW: Went by road, yeah. I drove from the Sandy Point ferry dock to Long Island, which then there was no 95, there was US 1 and 301, and the best way of doing it was to come across the I think it was the Outer Bridge Crossing on Staten Island and go across and get onto Southern State Parkway or Shore Parkway and Southern State to get out to Long Island. But, there were no major highways coming down like the 95 which saved a lot of time. It took about, I guess at that time, to hit all the red lights and the cross streets and everything else on 1 and 301, about eight hours to get from here up to Long Island. So, it was a good day's travel both ways, knocked off almost two days on your one week off, you know, so you had five days at home. That's about it.

PL: As you were ending your duty, you got to take the Baltimore to Norfolk Express Steamer.

WW: Oh, the Express Steamer, yeah. That was the last day in service. They told me, or they sent me in the mail tickets when I was up in Baltimore on that tug and they just said come on down on a certain night. Here's your tickets and so forth, and that was a nice sail. I guess I stayed on board, stayed outside till quite late in the evening. Went in and slept, and by the time I got up in the morning, it was early, and we were just about there.

I've forgotten now, but it's just an overnight trip and went over to the Fifth District...had a headquarters in Norfolk and the papers were all ready. They just said "Sign here," and I was out. It was a nice arrangement, so it was a nice trip on the last day, just to take a nice little cruise like that on that big old boat and of course I saw that today over in the Museum and it brought back a lot of good memories.

PL: You don't seem to have very fond memories of your time aboard the *Mohican*, the tugboat in Baltimore...just wasn't very interesting duty for you?

WW: No, it wasn't very interesting duty. We sat at the dock quite a bit and we would take somebody out to a merchant ship once in a while...we'd take a swing out into the Bay and come back and there was just a lack of doing things. I don't really know what the purpose was of the tug that was there. It was sort of in a barren place down at the end of Pratt Street which was not the nicest place in the world. A lot of people laying in the streets and druggies, not druggies so much, but drunks more at that time and sort of like the Bowery of New York City and didn't go ashore very much. We'd play baseball and softball on the dock at night in our off hours and you were waxing your car and fooling around because the cars were very close right there too, but there was no real activity. If you wanted to go up into Baltimore proper, you'd have to get through that rough part of the city to get into it and we really didn't go there much. There wasn't much doing. Did try to swim a little bit in the harbor one time, right in the middle of summer at the last of the tour, and that water was so bad, I just dove in once and came out and that was the end of it (laughter). It tasted horrible, so I guess everything from Baltimore dumped into it and I didn't realize what I was going to dive into (laughter) and that was the first and last time I ever tried that little trick, but it was a mess. I said "Whew, what horrible tasting stuff." Other than that, it was just sitting around in the evening on the dock and waiting for movie time that comes out at 8 o'clock on the tug or something like that, but that's about all they did was show movies every so often.

PL: You bunked right on the tug.

WW: Yeah, stayed right on the tug. I guess there were six or eight guys on the tug altogether, maybe 10.

PL: And your duties there were similar to out on the lighthouse...you were in the engine room.

WW: Yeah, in the engine room and taking care of the engines and making sure everything was going to run right if we had an emergency call or whatever, that when you hit the starter button up at the wheelhouse, things had to go, but it's nice duty if you didn't like to have anything to do, you know, but if you like being active, that's not really the place to be. I saw the people that were on it for quite a length of time, and I could see that they weren't going to get any further in life than just hanging around. Well, if that's what they like in life, that's fine, but I'd like to be a little more active than that than hang around doing nothing, just look like you're making busy, when you're not really busy.

PL: And that's why you only had one tour of duty with the Coast Guard...

WW: Yeah, one tour of duty, yeah...

PL: ...just three years.

WW: Yeah, just three years. The war in Korea that started in '50, I got out in the end of '51. I thought they were going to extend us for another year or two, but they didn't and very fortunate to get out when I did and not to get into the thick of things over there. I feel very fortunate, too, like many other people did, but it was time to give it up. The

people I did see that stayed in weren't looking to get ahead. They just seemed to be hanging around biding their time, saying, "Well, I'm going to stay in 20 years and I'm collecting my retirement," and I just didn't want to do something like that, so, I thought there was a little more to life than just kind of hanging around. So, that's why I only stayed the three years. And it was good.

PL: How is that you got the duties that you got on the lighthouse and on this tug? Were they just assigned or did you volunteer for it?

WW: No, they were assigned. When I came back from diesel school late '49, I was at the Portsmouth Coast Guard Base in Virginia and the reason we thought we got put on the lighthouse, is because we were playing basketball with the team from the Base and we had a pretty good team that winter or that time of year and we'd win quite a few games and the officers we played against asked me and another fellow if we'd play with them on their team and we told them no because we weren't officers, we were just unlisted men, and wouldn't be fair to play with somebody else and take away from the enlisted men's team and then three or four days later, here comes a transfer for the both of us, so we kind of thought and blamed it on them guys that they shipped us out to a lonely lighthouse somewheres to get even because we didn't play basketball. Whether that was the real reason I don't know, but it just seemed to fall right in line just like that. But, other than that, when I first got in, I went down to Norfolk, Virginia, on the big buoy tender and then put in for diesel school and after that came in then they sent me up to Connecticut and I went through diesel school for about six months and then came back to Portsmouth and then the lighthouse started after that and then why the transfer came in when I only had a few months to go...or six months to go on the end of my tour and sent me up to Baltimore on the tug...I really don't know. I just thought I was going to finish out that tour of duty right there in the lighthouse and for some reason they decided they wanted me up there. So that's how I finished up and the lighthouses always kind of fall right in line because I was born and raised near the Fire Island Lighthouse. I thought possibly with some stroke of luck, I'd get stationed up there in the Coast Guard because that was pretty nice duty. They had a lot of activity in that area and then getting put on the Sandy Point Lighthouse there for that length of time, and then now moving back from Long Island down to Florida, we're right by the Jupiter Lighthouse, so lighthouse after lighthouse, it all fits right in nicely, so kind of a soft spot.

PL: Tell me a little bit more about the interior of the lighthouse and I assume that the furniture was sort of metal government issued sort of stuff, or was it nicer than that?

WW: No, it was all, I thought we had like an old oak chair—wooden chairs—painted white in the radio room. There was an old porcelain table in the kitchen, of course, the porcelain top, the old fashion kind, and the sink of course with a pitcher pump along side of that we drew the water out of, the tanks below. I remember having an old oak, sort of a rocking type desk chair, but it was all solid oak that we used in the radio room and the desk where the radio was and so forth, and that was pretty comfortable because you'd kind of lay back in it a little bit and then there was another chair in there that you'd put your feet up on as well and, of course, the beds were just springs with a mattress on...metal beds...and pretty saggy in the middle. You could almost wrap that mattress around you when it got cold it sagged so much, but we didn't expect anything more than that. It was just sufficient for what was there. The rooms were painted all white as far as

I remember, oak floors, oak wooden, stained clear floors and brick on the outside. The wind whistled around the windows quite a bit.

PL: (Laughter).

WW: But that was just typical of the age of the building and so forth.

PL: Did you have pictures on the walls, curtains on the windows and that sort of thing.

WW: Uh, yeah we had curtains on the...gosh I don't remember now if they were curtains...I think there were little curtains that sort of just kind of closed off the light a little bit, but I really don't remember. I don't remember washing any curtains. I don't remember if we pulled down shades...that's 50 years ago... so you know (laughter), the memories don't go back to household duties. It just remembers what we did when we were there.

PL: When you got onto the lighthouse to begin with...there were several of you that went onto that duty at the same time?

WW: No, I went on by myself. One guy had just gotten off. So, to make this monthly circle, three guys would be on, one guy off and three guys would be gone for about 24 days and then you would be off for eight and then when you came back on, another fellow came back and he went off. So, it was just eight day-24 day cycles, seven or eight days at a time and there was always three on the lighthouse at one time, so there were only three beds, so we couldn't very well get any more on it. Each one had their own room upstairs...one way up and one on each of the bedrooms...or was it two way up. I forgot now, but there were two beds in one room and when you were gone, he was away, or he was there when you were gone, or something like that. It made a nice rotation. It was very simple, very easy organized thing and really nothing to it. Everything sort of fell right into place, but lonesome, especially at 20 years old (laughter).

PL: Did you have a girl back home on Long Island at that point.

WW: Yeah, oh yes.

PL: But you weren't married at the time.

WW: No, no, not married at the time, no. It was about four years after I got out of the service that I got married, so just the girlfriend or dates and whatever. But, a different kind of duty than I had expected. You expected to go in...you'd see advertisements around for all the good stuff that they show. Now, of course, they show things on television, but back then it was just posters and maybe a radio announcement maybe once in a while, and you did hear of different things on the radio from the war just being over after World War II and so forth, as to what was going on here and there and so forth. But, I always recognized the Coast Guard quite highly because of living in the area where they were around all the time.

PL: Where you grew up on Long Island.

WW: Where I grew up on Long Island, the south shore of Long Island, and the Great South Bay, and Fire Island Inlet, and the lighthouse that was right there also, and then of course, we had Montauk Lighthouse at the end of the Island, and smaller lighthouses on the North Shore. So kind of surrounded with that area, that's what you know, you feel you'd be more comfortable in the service life. But, it was very good. I learned a lot, I grew up a lot, you know. The first few days you're in, you say, "Oh my gosh, where's my socks." My mom didn't lay 'em out anymore. You know, where's my underwear, I don't have any in the drawer (laughter) and then the responsibility comes right then and there in an awful hurry, which I still think in today's day and age, every kid that comes out of

high school should be into the service of some branch for at least two years and that would shape up these guys a lot better than what's coming out of school nowadays with them doing just about what they please. The discipline isn't there anymore and the respect for everything around you is not there anymore. But that'll teach it to you in a hurry. So, that's strictly my opinion.

PL: Did you use some of these things that your diesel engine training in your later career.

WW: Uh, not really. When I first got out of the service, I started in a small garage in town and after that I could see that if I didn't buy the place or work in an area where there was something I could get out of it or in return down the road, so I went into construction and I started plastering and spackling and drywall and things of that nature and I stayed in that for about 15 years until the back went bad from all that overhead work and heavy work, just something happened that I had to take something where I was standing up straight. So, I bought a hardware store that I knew in town and rebuilt the whole thing, inside, outside, all the way around. I did a nice job on that and then in 1978, moved to Florida and I opened a donut shop. One business or another, it's all bottom line. You know, it doesn't make any difference. Whereas, in the hardware store, at that time, they were just starting to get into charging and everybody wanted to charge and you had to become a banker as well as somebody to help people with their needs and so forth and a donut shop is all cash over the counter. So, I kept that for about 10 years and somebody came along wanted to buy it and I just went back into home repair all by myself and fix everything and anything and I'm still into it now. And I do that now, not on a full time basis, but in between golf dates or fishing dates (laughter) or whatever...trips to St. Michaels and things of that nature (laughter). But, I still do a lot of that kind of work just to take care of people's houses and homes and so forth. I have a certain clientèle and respect from people. I have a lot of keys to different houses and just keep them up and keep after them while people are away and so forth. So, it's all worked out real well. But with these pictures, I didn't really know what to do with them, so I thought, well, I'll bring them on down and do what you like. Fond memories.

PL: You've gotten to go back to see Sandy Point Light at least from a distance.

WW: Oh, yes, yeah. We're going to go back tomorrow morning again and go around the park and so forth. We did see it about five years ago, only I didn't have any binoculars with me then, so now we brought the binoculars and the cameras and the long range lenses and things of that nature, so we'll see what we can do to get some little closer up pictures. I know it's all boarded up, but still it would be nice to see. And the area...the surrounding area...I love the surrounding area with all the fish and crabs and wooden boats, wooden boats. Now, nobody in Florida has wooden boats because everything is so much fiberglass now. They don't even look like a boat. They don't have a style of a good boat, so that's why we love this area so much.

PL: Are there other stories that you can think of...good tales, things that happened out there.

WW: Well, nothing really much happened. Uh, wild storms, ice. We never made any rescues or anything like that of somebody with a boat fire or sinking boat, or anything like that. Never got a call for anything like that. We just mainly relied on that calibration for the merchant ships and so forth. We did have people on board once in a while just to come and see what the lighthouse looked like and so forth.

PL: Could just about anybody come out and take a look? You'd welcome people.

WW: Yeah, we'd welcome people. We welcomed somebody to talk to differently (laughter). You're stuck with the same three guys for a couple of years, you run out of stories, you run out of tales, you run out of areas to pick on and so forth. So, it was always a welcome sight. Boating wasn't then like it is now. You know, there weren't that many boats around the Bay.

PL: The yachtsmen...

WW: The yachtsmen and so forth and now everybody's got a little boat and if you drive around the area here, we look in everybody's yard, there's a boat sitting in there...some kind of shape or size. So, that one couple we had with the young girl...you want that story?

PL: Please.

WW: (Laughter). One time, it was the summertime. It was a nice warm day, very calm, and a fellow and his wife had a small boat...I imagine in the 20-22 foot class, something like that with a little cabin on it, and a young girl, a young daughter about 18-19...and they asked if they could come up to the lighthouse. Now, they came aboard and we showed them all through and the light and up in the lens, tower, and everything else, and what we had for sinks and bathrooms and so forth, and we were talking along the south side of the light just facing south and the mother asked if the young girl could use the bathroom. I said, "Well, that's fine by me, except all we had was this outhouse that hangs over the side." She says, "Well, that's fine, that's fine." So, I said, "There it is right there." So when the young girl when in there to relieve herself, you know, I was a little embarrassed what was hitting the water, but what could I say, I couldn't say anything or keep a straight face, that's about all. And finally, after a little while, she came out of there and she was quite relieved, and I was too, but (laughter), still embarrassed as to what we witnessed and really couldn't say anything, and I didn't want to embarrass the girl and I didn't want to embarrass the parents (laughter). So that's about the funniest tale that I can remember that happened other than these hunters that threw the few geese up on the deck with the clipped wings. Other than that, it's not a very exciting place. It's uh (laughter) quite solitude and nothing really much going on except paying attention to the radio and paying attention to Coast Guard business and that's what we did. But it was good duty. It was easy duty. It wasn't anything that was tough by any means of the word, but very inactive kind of spot to be in at that young age. You know, when you're used to playing ball and being very active with sports of all kinds and then get stuck out there and you could hardly even run around the place (laughter) to do anything but maybe fish over the side and swim once in a while for a little exercise in the summertime, but it was all part of the duties and that's what you had to do so that's what you did. Other than that, it was a good experience and appreciative of what's around you in your everyday life.

PL: So, you did find ways of getting exercise here and there.

WW: Oh yeah, yeah, oh sure. And lots of times I just walked the beach over at Sandy Point, too. If I went to the ferry dock and get the mail if the mail truck wasn't there yet or they hadn't come in and there wasn't anything, I'd just walk down the beach or maybe run down the beach, kind of mosey along, because it was all just pretty much meadow at that time and a beautiful spot...lots of birds and wildlife and shore birds and a lot of ducks and geese in the wintertime and rafts and rafts of canvasback in the wintertime. I marveled at that because the food must be all over the place for them, otherwise, they wouldn't be around, but just rafts and rafts and rafts of birds and you'd see a big bunch of birds get up

off in a distance and they would look like smoke it was so thick and just a great big preserve that was just vacant...a beautiful place to be around. So, that's why I enjoy it so much too, because we had it for so many years up on Long Island and that was all a part of it---the fish, the ducks and the wild berries and all of that---so it was lonely, but you had your friends around.

PL: I suppose hunting wasn't something you could do when you were on there.

WW: Not up there, no. I thought of it, but I thought well, my duty is on the lighthouse, it's not on the shore, you know, to see how much time I could squeeze off or anything like that. It's just that we took care of the chores that had to be done and tended the business, so to speak. So, I don't know if that would be allowed or not, but maybe if you were on a lighthouse. That was on the shore and you can walk a meadow or something like that if it was public grounds or something like that, but this was a little bit different because it was so isolated out there and it was your responsibility to be there and take care of things, so I certainly didn't want anything going wrong when I was responsible. So, we hung in tight, so pretty much the story.

PL: Okay, well, thank you very much.

WW: You're quite welcome. I'm glad they could use the pictures and so forth. I didn't know what to do with them because I know the kids don't realize what they are and you know, what would they say, "Oh, this is grandpa when he was." So, they'd get heaved off somewhere too after a while and if they can be of help, or some use or some visual signs, you know, what went on at Sandy Point, that's fine, I'm glad I did it.

PL: Well, thank you again.

WW: You're quite welcome.

PL: Just remember to tell me about the cook.

WW: Hmm, hmm. A fellow by the name of Root, he was a great big guy and he was about the hairiest guy I ever saw. In fact, one of the fellows on the *Conifer* (ph) one time saw him in the shower and they come screaming out of the shower that, oh my god, there's a gorilla in the shower (laughter). Then he'd run around...

END OF SIDE 1

BEGIN SIDE 2

PL: Okay, you were telling me about Root.

WW: Yeah, Root, he was the cook. He was an excellent, excellent cook or chef, whatever you would call him, but he was a first class cook. I mean his rating was First Class and he was making his full time in the service. He was in for maybe 10 or 15 years at that time when I first met him on the *Conifer* and boy, he could put out food like you can't imagine. He could take anything and make something super out of it. And when I left the *Conifer* to go to diesel school, for that year and half or so or almost two years, I lost track of him. 'Cause, we didn't write or anything like that, but when I got off the lighthouse and went on the *Mohican*, he was on there as a cook and I was so glad to see him, because he was just kind of a fun guy, great big fuzzy guy and full of the devil and boy, he sure could cook. He could make apple pies and peach pies, oh gosh, and he would put in, once in a while he would get like a big pork roast, oh, with applesauce, and sour kraut, oh, and he would really put out some meal, so no matter who he fed or he cooked for, they were all so very pleased, I guess. That was excellent. He is a good friend and a fine cook.

PL: And you've got a picture of him here sitting with you, not with you, but with two other guys on the stern of the tug.

WW: Of the tug, yeah.

Unidentified background voice: (Unintelligible).

WW: Oh, that's what I mean, the furry chest. He was fuzzy.

PL: All right, well, thank you.

WW: All right, you're quite welcome. I don't know anything else that's happened other than...because that's 50 years ago, too, you know. But, uh, it was good fond memories of the whole thing and a good experience. I'm glad I went through with it.

END OF TAPE