

Alfred Kolkin

Brooklyn Navy Yard Oral History collection

Interview conducted on July 15, 2008

By Sady Sullivan and Jennifer Egan

At Mr. Kolkin's home in Manhattan

Verbatim Transcript

[00:00]

JENNIFER EAGAN: -- Yard.

ALFRED KOLKIN: Oh.

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

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah.

JENNIFER EAGAN: -- on our walk.

ALFRED KOLKIN: On, on --

JENNIFER EAGAN: It was 128.

ALFRED KOLKIN: 128.

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

SADIE SULLIVAN: That's 12B.

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

ALFRED KOLKIN: OK.

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

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

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

JUDY KAPLAN: That's OK.

JENNIFER EAGAN: Is that hum, um, OK --

SADIE SULLIVAN: Yes.

JENNIFER EAGAN: -- Sadie? OK.

JUDY KAPLAN: Now what?

SADIE SULLIVAN: (inaudible)

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

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

JENNIFER EAGAN: Um, OK, so we -- and the air conditioning is
OK?

SADIE SULLIVAN: It's OK.

JENNIFER EAGAN: OK.

SADIE SULLIVAN: Yeah.

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

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

JENNIFER EAGAN: Great, thank you, and you're good. And I've
-- you guys should also jump in. I think we should just

all, you know, if there's a question --

JUDY KAPLAN: OK.

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

SADIE SULLIVAN: Mm-hmm.

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

SADIE SULLIVAN: Yes.

JENNIFER EAGAN: OK. So I'm Jennifer Eagan.

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

SADIE SULLIVAN: Sadie Sullivan, from the Brooklyn Historical Society.

ALFRED KOLKIN: I didn't hear that.

SADIE SULLIVAN: Sadie Sullivan, from the Brooklyn Historical Society.

ALFRED KOLKIN: Uh-huh.

SADIE 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 EAGAN: Can you just say, for the recording, your full name?

ALFRED KOLKIN: My name is Alfred Kolkin.

JENNIFER EAGAN: And what is your date of birth?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Date of birth is 8/3/18.

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

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah.

JENNIFER EAGAN: 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 EAGAN: 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 EAGAN: Did your mother work?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes. My mother worked in a, in a factory that, that manufactured, uh, (sirens; inaudible).

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 EAGAN: OK.

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 EAGAN: OK. And where did you live at that time?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Which time?

JENNIFER EAGAN: When -- at the time --

JUDY KAPLAN: They moved all the time.

JENNIFER EAGAN: Oh, OK.

JUDY KAPLAN: (laughter)

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

JUDY KAPLAN: Brooklyn, the Bronx, Manhattan. (laughter)

JENNIFER EAGAN: So I guess --

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes.

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

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

[5:05]

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

ALFRED KOLKIN: 1935.

JENNIFER EAGAN: 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 EAGAN: OK.

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

V: Holding. Global (inaudible) 0.9%, well below the average employment of 0.54% for worldwide (inaudible) (recorded voice).

JENNIFER EAGAN: OK.

ALFRED KOLKIN: We, we had a, a couple that, that, uh, lived with us that the woman, uh, worked with my mother in the 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 EAGAN: 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 [Spurry 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 [Spurry Gyroscope], I applied at the Brooklyn Yard for a mechanics position, machinists position.

JENNIFER EAGAN: 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.

(pause)

JUDY KAPLAN: Or maybe early '40s even.

[10:00]

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

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah.

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

ALFRED KOLKIN: Uh-huh.

JENNIFER EAGAN: -- 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 EAGAN: And you worked on the horizontal boring
mill?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah.

JENNIFER EAGAN: Was that a large machine?

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

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

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

JENNIFER EAGAN: What did the boring mill do?

ALFRED KOLKIN: The boring mill was used to finish, uh, castings, like 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 EAGAN: Ah. So like met -- places where the artillery would be mounted?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes.

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

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes.

JENNIFER EAGAN: 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 EAGAN: Were you --

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

JENNIFER EAGAN: That's OK. 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?

[15:00]

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

JENNIFER EAGAN: 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 EAGAN: So it varied?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Varied, yes.

JENNIFER EAGAN: 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 EAGAN: Takes away the roughness?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes.

JENNIFER EAGAN: OK. 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 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 EAGAN: Would 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 EAGAN: Ah.

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

JENNIFER EAGAN: OK.

ALFRED KOLKIN: -- further use.

JENNIFER EAGAN: OK. Did you work with mostly other men?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes.

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

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

[20:05]

JENNIFER EAGAN: OK.

JUDY KAPLAN: Were they around your age?

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

JUDY KAPLAN: Yeah, because he was 24 then.

JENNIFER EAGAN: OK.

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 EAGAN: Daniella, who works at the Navy Yard, mentioned, was recalling from our day together that you worked, was it Machine Shop 31?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes.

JENNIFER EAGAN: OK, and the building was 128?

ALFRED KOLKIN: 128.

JENNIFER EAGAN: And was Machine Shop 31 a part of Building 128 or just a group?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Say that again?

JENNIFER EAGAN: Was the, was Machine Shop 31 a place? Was it an area within the building? What did it mean, Machine Shop 31?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Machine Shop 31, 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 EAGAN: OK.

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 31?

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

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

ALFRED KOLKIN: Where --

JENNIFER EAGAN: 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 EAGAN: OK. 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 EAGAN: Oh, OK.

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

[25:00]

JENNIFER EAGAN: Oh, wow.

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

JENNIFER EAGAN: 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 EAGAN: 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 EAGAN: OK.

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 EAGAN: 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 EAGAN: And the working clothes were?

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

JENNIFER EAGAN: Mm-hmm.

JUDY KAPLAN: Like a canvas?

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

JENNIFER EAGAN: 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 EAGAN: 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 EAGAN: 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 EAGAN: 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 EAGAN: 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.

[30:33]

JENNIFER EAGAN: OK.

ALFRED KOLKIN: At that time.

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

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes.

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

ALFRED KOLKIN: I was working in, uh, in Building 128, and (pause). 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 EAGAN: 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 EAGAN: 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... [35:00] 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 EAGAN: 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 EAGAN: Did you actually meet her at the Navy Yard for the first time --

ALFRED KOLKIN: We --

JENNIFER EAGAN: -- or somewhere else?

ALFRED KOLKIN: We, we met --

JENNIFER EAGAN: 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.

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

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes.

JENNIFER EAGAN: OK. And so was it, did you often see Lucy -
-

ALFRED KOLKIN: No.

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

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes.

JENNIFER EAGAN: 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 EAGAN: 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 EAGAN: 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 EAGAN: Um --

JUDY KAPLAN: So they were very close, you know, soon as they knew each other, they were very close, and they were both 25 years old.

JENNIFER EAGAN: OK. 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... (pause)

[40:00]

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 12-hour shift? It was 10 or 12, right?

ALFRED KOLKIN: What?

JUDY KAPLAN: I think it was 10 or 12-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 EAGAN: 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 EAGAN: Do you remember where that apartment was?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah, it was in [Benson Hurst]. 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 EAGAN: OK.

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 EAGAN: 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 EAGAN: OK. Did, uh, you work -- were there any women working in the machine shops with you?

ALFRED KOLKIN: No.

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

ALFRED KOLKIN: No. I didn't.

JENNIFER EAGAN: 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 EAGAN: 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 --

[45:27]

JUDY KAPLAN: Was that in San Diego?

JENNIFER EAGAN: 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 EAGAN: 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 EAGAN: 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, mom did?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes.

JENNIFER EAGAN: 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 EAGAN: OK.

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

ALFRED KOLKIN: I was on a repair ship.

JENNIFER EAGAN: OK.

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

JENNIFER EAGAN: Oh, so you were right there?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah.

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

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah.

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

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

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

[50:00]

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 EAGAN: 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 EAGAN: OK.

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 EAGAN: 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.

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

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

JENNIFER EAGAN: 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 EAGAN: 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 EAGAN: OK. SO that's not where (clears throat) 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 EAGAN: 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: OK, so near -- OK.

JENNIFER EAGAN: 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.

[55:00]

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

JENNIFER EAGAN: OK, so then it's Delmonte, OK. And it, was
that in Southern California?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes.

JENNIFER EAGAN: OK, that's what I'm trying --

JUDY KAPLAN: OK.

JENNIFER EAGAN: -- 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 EAGAN: Got it. OK, 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 EAGAN: Maybe you went there on a leave or something.

ALFRED KOLKIN: Where's that?

JENNIFER EAGAN: 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 her bike and, uh, her, her forehead was scarred.

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

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah.

JENNIFER EAGAN: Wow.

JUDY KAPLAN: So she fell off?

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

JENNIFER EAGAN: 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 EAGAN: 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 EAGAN: 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 EAGAN: 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 went, you worked as a tool and dye maker.

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

JUDY KAPLAN: This is timing.

JENNIFER EAGAN: OK.

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 border (inaudible) in
Brooklyn Heights.

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes.

JENNIFER EAGAN: Paris Intertype?

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

JENNIFER EAGAN: Mm-hmm.

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

JENNIFER EAGAN: Hmm.

JUDY KAPLAN: Many, many years.

ALFRED KOLKIN: There, there was a period of time when the union
was on strike. [60:00] And I was looking for a steady job,
and it was very, very difficult living, living conditions.

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 EAGAN: Did you have children already?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes.

JUDY KAPLAN: I think he's talking about the late '50s. When you were on strike.

JENNIFER EAGAN: 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 machinist's union. That was during, during the Navy Yard employment, and that, that helped me get employment in various machine shops.

JENNIFER EAGAN: That card helped you later?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah.

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

[65:00]

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 EAGAN: You went together?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah.

JENNIFER EAGAN: Where you both working that day?

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

JENNIFER EAGAN: 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: One of those recent albums I made?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah, the album, yeah.

JENNIFER EAGAN: 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 EAGAN: 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 EAGAN: Do you have any recollection of Sand Street?

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

JENNIFER EAGAN: Ah.

ALFRED KOLKIN: -- entrance.

JENNIFER EAGAN: OK. 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 EAGAN: The work itself?

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

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

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

JENNIFER EAGAN: Was it physically taxing?

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

JENNIFER EAGAN: 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... [70:00] 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 EAGAN: OK. 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 EAGAN: OK, 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 EAGAN: 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 day off.

JUDY KAPLAN: Where were you? In the 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 EAGAN: Was it a group of you?

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

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

ALFRED KOLKIN: Respected would be more like it.

JENNIFER EAGAN: 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 EAGAN: Do you remember his name?

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

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

[75:00]

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 Joleson?

ALFRED KOLKIN: What?

JUDY KAPLAN: Al Joleson?

ALFRED KOLKIN: No.

JUDY KAPLAN: Sammy Davis Jr.?

ALFRED KOLKIN: No, a woman.

JENNIFER EAGAN: Ella Fitzgerald?

JUDY KAPLAN: Aretha Franklin? (inaudible)?

JENNIFER EAGAN: Sarah Vaughn?

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 EAGAN: Did you go to hear her sing?

ALFRED KOLKIN: No, not at that time.

JENNIFER EAGAN: But some other time?

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

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

ALFRED KOLKIN: Lena Horne.

JUDY KAPLAN: Oh!

JENNIFER EAGAN: Oh!

SADIE SULLIVAN: Oh!

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

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah.

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

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

JENNIFER EAGAN: How so?

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

JUDY KAPLAN: This is after the Navy.

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

ALFRED KOLKIN: What?

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

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes.

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

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes.

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

ALFRED KOLKIN: Coworkers.

JENNIFER EAGAN: -- coworkers. Do you recall needed to go to other parts of the Navy Yard at any time for your work, or other reasons?

[80:00]

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

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

building.

JENNIFER EAGAN: 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.

JUDY KAPLAN: Would that have been an advancement?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes.

JUDY KAPLAN: Like a promotion?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yes.

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

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

JENNIFER EAGAN: So somewhere kind of to the right (clears throat). When you would come in, you would go this way?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah. I think so.

JENNIFER EAGAN: Hmm.

[85:00]

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

ALFRED KOLKIN: I think so.

JENNIFER EAGAN: 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? Because these look like big work buildings where, where big machines would be.

JENNIFER EAGAN: Well, there were -- I think 77 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 EAGAN: OK. 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 EAGAN: 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 EAGAN: Do you remember how long you did do that managerial work?

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

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

ALFRED KOLKIN: Right.

JENNIFER EAGAN: -- went to the Navy? OK. 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.

[90:05]

JENNIFER EAGAN: Huh.

JUDY KAPLAN: Wow.

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

JENNIFER EAGAN: 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 F's? Is he still here?

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

JENNIFER EAGAN: 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 EAGAN: But you remembered each other?

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah.

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

JUDY KAPLAN: OK.

ALFRED KOLKIN: What paper is that?

JENNIFER EAGAN: You mentioned the newspaper that you edited.

ALFRED KOLKIN: Oh.

JUDY KAPLAN: Yeah. (inaudible) ordered some Chinese that I (inaudible).

ALFRED KOLKIN: What did you say?

JUDY KAPLAN: I'm going to order some, some lunch from the Chinese restaurant. (inaudible) will pick it up what you want, and then he'll (inaudible).

JENNIFER EAGAN: OK. Um, if I'm leaving anything out, please speak up.

SADIE SULLIVAN: OK, yeah, I'm (background noises,

intermittently inaudible throughout).

JENNIFER EAGAN: Hey, Daneilla. No, we're just, we're just taking a little break, um, so Al can go look for a union newspaper he edited. Yeah, yeah. We're, uh, you know, it's kind of -- it's very -- yeah. Exactly. I, um, I don't exactly. He mentioned that he thought he went to an office job, a kind of overseeing job having to do with, um, with his, you know, with giving assignments to other machinists and he had worked in a different building at that point. He thought sort of, um, kind of to the right after he came in at Cumberland as opposed to 128, which was right ahead of him as he came in. And I'm, we were all kind of scratching our heads about that. So was that a machinists' office area? Yeah. I mean, I wondered about Building 77. [95:00] Well, he was, he was sort of circling an even larger area as possibly where it was, but I mean, I think he's, you know, he's not, he doesn't, he's having trouble remembering. Yeah. Sadie brought a map, bless her, and, um, she still has some more questions to ask. I've pretty much run through my list. Um, so I think we're winding down. Um, yeah, but I'm renegotiating that. (laughter) Um, and actually, it seems like there was no stationing in Monterey. Uh -- why did she what? That she was in Monterey? The three, the three places that he says

he was stationed, two of which I can confirm from the letters, are Chicago and Delmonte, which is right near San Diego, and then the third was Treasure Island which is, you know, was a military island in -- yeah. And he said that they -- Delmonte is, Delmonte is Southern California. Right. By the way, let me just tell you right now, and Sadie, you too, we are confirmed for the 28th for the [antes], I just found out this morning.

SADIE SULLIVAN: OK, good.

JENNIFER EAGAN: I know. Thank god. I mean, I wasn't saying it, but basically from my end, if it wasn't going to be that day and they're not available in July, (laughter), I was starting to look at the fall. So 11am, Rococama (sp?), we've got to figure out how to get there, et cetera. But that's the plan, OK? 11am. And we'll meet -- and I didn't, I didn't -- no. I wasn't sure with the postponement whether they still wanted to move forward with that. I did not bring it up this morning because I didn't want to bring it up if it wasn't still a possibility. Jill attending. All right, well let me -- why don't I -- since it's still a possibility, why don't I -- I have to call her back anyway, um, and I'll just find out whether they're open to that. Because we don't know. Um, and would Jill

be coming with a photographer? OK. All right, well let's start with whether they're open to the idea. I can't really see why they wouldn't be, but -- OK, great. Talk to you later. OK, bye. Um, (inaudible). Keep moving. But I feel like she (inaudible) lunch. Um --

SADIE SULLIVAN: If you --

JENNIFER EAGAN: I think I will.

SADIE SULLIVAN: (inaudible), can't realize --

JENNIFER EAGAN: I know, but like -- um, do you have, do you have a few more Navy Yard questions?

SADIE SULLIVAN: Mm-hmm.

JENNIFER EAGAN: Great.

(pause)

JUDY KAPLAN: Did you pick what you want?

JENNIFER EAGAN: Um, yes. I will have broccoli with garlic sauce, please.

JUDY KAPLAN: OK, and white rice or brown?

JENNIFER EAGAN: Brown would be great.

JUDY KAPLAN: Broccoli -- wait. Broccoli with garlic sauce?

JENNIFER EAGAN: Yeah, just (inaudible).

JUDY KAPLAN: OK.

JENNIFER EAGAN: We want the specials. Um, there. I believe it would make sense.

JUDY KAPLAN: Yeah.

JENNIFER EAGAN: Yeah. Actually, if they can add tofu to that, that would be great.

JUDY KAPLAN: Sure, OK.

JENNIFER EAGAN: But if they can't, it's no big deal.

JUDY KAPLAN: OK.

JENNIFER EAGAN: (clears throat)

JUDY KAPLAN: Pick one anyway.

SADIE SULLIVAN: And I'll pick the string bean with tofu.

JUDY KAPLAN: OK. String bean chicken, corn, beef, or (inaudible).

(overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

JUDY KAPLAN: They do, they do, they do teri -- OK. And brown or white?

SADIE SULLIVAN: Brown, please.

JUDY KAPLAN: OK.

SADIE SULLIVAN: Thank you.

JENNIFER EAGAN: And what would you like?

[100:00]

JUDY KAPLAN: (laughter) No, it's my treat. What would you like? Pick something.

CATHERINE: Chicken and broccoli.

JENNIFER EAGAN: Chicken and broccoli?

CATHERINE: Yeah.

JUDY KAPLAN: OK.

CATHERINE: Thank you.

JUDY KAPLAN: You're welcome. Any special sauce?

CATHERINE: More.

JUDY KAPLAN: Anyone? OK. Garlic.

CATHERINE: Uh-huh, more.

JUDY KAPLAN: You like garlic?

CATHERINE: Garlique.

JUDY KAPLAN: OK. And white rice or brown rice?

CATHERINE: White rice.

JUDY KAPLAN: OK. (pause) Yes, I'd like to place an order.

Delivery. Uh, 305 West 28th Street. 14H. Uh, 212-691-5275. Uh, this is for Mr. Kolkin at like, uh, (ordering Chinese food). Do you want soup or soda? (laughter) Uh, Jenny? Would you like a soup? It comes with a soup.

JENNIFER EAGAN: Uh, no thanks.

JUDY KAPLAN: No? Soda?

JENNIFER EAGAN: I'll have a seltzer, sure.

JUDY KAPLAN: OK, uh, do you have seltzer. OK. Uh, yes, there's two more things. (continues ordering Chinese food). Soup or soda?

SADIE SULLIVAN: A ginger ale, please.

JUDY KAPLAN: Ginger ale. And, um, one more. (orders Chinese food). Catherine (sp?)? Would you like soup or soda?

CATHERINE: Soda.

JUDY KAPLAN: Soda? OK.

CATHERINE: Pepsi.

JUDY KAPLAN: Do you have Pepsi? OK.

CATHERINE: Thank you.

JUDY KAPLAN: And that's it. Now? (inaudible). All right, we're in. It'll be about ten minutes.

(pause)

JENNIFER EAGAN: Hey, (inaudible). That's OK. You know, I, I don't think I'm going to be home for at least an hour, so I just don't know, since I don't have it set up for you, I think maybe we should just let it go. That's OK, just that, well, now, you know, is email not really a fast way to reach you, actually? Should I just be -- OK. [105:00]

Yeah, no, I was thinking about that because I, I'm the same way. So, so maybe, should we, um, try to make that happen on Friday before you -- OK, great, wonderful. So I, I'll have it set up so that if I'm not there, you can just come in and grab the stuff. Um, OK. Now, the other thing is did I in fact email you details about today or not? Did -- did I email you cell phone numbers, et cetera, for today? Oh, God. OK, um, I, uh, God, that's really weird. I feel like I remember doing it, but maybe it was nothing. So basically, um, you're going to wait outside of (inaudible) for a woman named Annabelle to come and get (inaudible). She is Elliot's mom. Um, I have her cell phone number at home, um, and if there's any problem obviously we can, we'll track her down. But it seems like she'll be there at three and that's what she's going to do. And then the other thing is, um, she, uh -- you, then are going to take Raul back to our neighborhood, and as you get close give Patty a call on her cell phone and she will deliver Riley to you --

END OF AUDIO FILE Alfred Kolkin A

[00:00]

ALFRED KOLKIN: She says you had some questions?

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

ALFRED KOLKIN: OK.

SADIE SULLIVAN: Um, just a couple of (mumbling; inaudible).

ALFRED KOLKIN: OK.

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

ALFRED KOLKIN: It's fine.

SADIE SULLIVAN: OK. 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.

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

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah.

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

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

SADIE SULLIVAN: Mm-hmm.

ALFRED KOLKIN: Whether, whether or not there are any personal

records or, or anything like that, I have no idea.

SADIE 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 problem of getting, uh, raises or trying to get more, more, wh-- better paying jobs, or...

SADIE 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.

SADIE SULLIVAN: Do you remember that?

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

SADIE SULLIVAN: (inaudible)

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

SADIE 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.

[5:05]

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

SADIE SULLIVAN: Mm-hmm.

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

SADIE SULLIVAN: Oh, good.

JUDY KAPLAN: Original records from the Navy Yard.

SADIE SULLIVAN: Mmm.

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

SADIE SULLIVAN: (laughter)

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

SADIE 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).

SADIE SULLIVAN: Mm-hmm.

JENNIFER EAGAN: 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 EAGAN: OK. 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 --

(doorbell)

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

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

ALFRED KOLKIN: We, we worked -- OK. There's something happening

there.

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

JUDY KAPLAN: Yeah, they were moving here.

JENNIFER EAGAN: Ahh.

JUDY KAPLAN: And so they were cleaning out --

JENNIFER EAGAN: I see.

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

JENNIFER EAGAN: 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: OK, so they had the letters and, you know, they couldn't throw them out.

JENNIFER EAGAN: No. My gosh.

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

SADIE SULLIVAN: Mm-hmm.

JENNIFER EAGAN: 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.

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

ALFRED KOLKIN: I don't remember.

SADIE SULLIVAN: Who you talked to?

JUDY KAPLAN: I have letters.

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

SADIE 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.

SADIE SULLIVAN: -- took them?

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

SADIE SULLIVAN: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

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

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

ALFRED KOLKIN: Uh-huh.

JENNIFER EAGAN: 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 can figure out who's is what.

[10:00]

SADIE SULLIVAN: The acquisition system, you mean?

ALFRED KOLKIN: What?

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

ALFRED KOLKIN: No, what was --

SADIE SULLIVAN: Or the Yard?

ALFRED KOLKIN: It wasn't the acquiring system.

JUDY KAPLAN: What's your question?

SADIE SULLIVAN: We, we were --

JUDY KAPLAN: Oh.

SADIE SULLIVAN: I think we're good.

JENNIFER EAGAN: Think we're good.

SADIE SULLIVAN: Yeah.

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

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

JUDY KAPLAN: You might want to look through this.

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

ALFRED KOLKIN: What?

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

JENNIFER EAGAN: Thank you for remembering that, Sadie.

SADIE SULLIVAN: Mm-hmm.

JENNIFER EAGAN: I forget almost every time.

JUDY KAPLAN: I brought a camera with me just in case.

Um...this was in the old record (inaudible), all these places he worked and, and there's a listing, these seem to

be after the Navy Yard.

SADIE SULLIVAN: Thank you so much.

JENNIFER EAGAN: 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.

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

JENNIFER EAGAN: 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.

SADIE SULLIVAN: Mm-hmm.

JENNIFER EAGAN: 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.

SADIE SULLIVAN: Mm-hmm.

JENNIFER EAGAN: And it's very, very helpful. So don't feel badly about that. (laughter) It was great.

SADIE 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 EAGAN: Oh, that's interesting.

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

END OF AUDIO FILE Alfred Kolkin B

[00:00]

SADIE 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 had a record of those years and there's a paper of beginning of his employment, which is 1940.

SADIE SULLIVAN: Ohh.

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

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

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yup.

SADIE 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.

SADIE SULLIVAN: Mm-hmm.

JUDY KAPLAN: I'm just trying to pull out some things that were

specific from the --

JENNIFER EAGAN: This has some helpful dates, too.

JUDY KAPLAN: -- Navy Yard. And here's something.

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

CATHERINE: No, thank you. No, I'm fine (inaudible).

JUDY KAPLAN: Here's something in 1937.

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

JUDY KAPLAN: Unemployment insurance in 1937, that he was entitled to \$10.72 a week for 13 weeks.

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

JUDY KAPLAN: Yeah.

(laughter)

JUDY KAPLAN: And here he has wage records.

JENNIFER EAGAN: It's great you've saved things. This is -- it's nice. (laughter)

SADIE SULLIVAN: Really good.

JENNIFER EAGAN: 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 (inaudible).

JENNIFER EAGAN: You're (inaudible), it's certainly helping
us.

JUDY KAPLAN: (laughter)

JENNIFER EAGAN: Oh, this is really good, Sadie.

SADIE SULLIVAN: You keep good records.

ALFRED KOLKIN: Yeah.

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

ALFRED KOLKIN: What, what is it?

SADIE SULLIVAN: I think these are your wages.

JUDY KAPLAN: Yeah, he --

JENNIFER EAGAN: Here, Sadie, this is a good thing to
photograph.

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

(papers shuffling; no dialogue for 30 seconds)

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.

[5:00]

(papers shuffling; no dialogue for 28 seconds)

SADIE SULLIVAN: It's really good (inaudible).

JENNIFER EAGAN: (inaudible) it was 1940.

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

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

SADIE SULLIVAN: Do you want me to move stuff?

JUDY KAPLAN: This stuff?

JENNIFER EAGAN: 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 EAGAN: Yeah.

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

END OF AUDIO FILE Alfred Kolkin C

[00:00]

JUDY KAPLAN: Show Sadie the picture of the Missouri.

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

JUDY KAPLAN: Oh, OK. 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 Delmonte, 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: OK. Lucy loved San Francisco. She just loved --

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

SADIE SULLIVAN: Oh, that's gorgeous.

END OF AUDIO FILE Alfred Kolkin D

End - Alfred Kolkin