

FREDERICK SCOPINICH ARCHIVAL DOCUMENT

Interviewee: Frederick “Fred” Scopinich

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Archival Processor: Annie Javitt

Copyeditor: Erica Fugger

Date: July 11, 2019

Location: East Quogue, New York

Session Number: 1 of 1

Project: National Home Front Project

Interview Contributor: The Long Island Home Front

Accession Number: ScopinichFrederick_HFN-OH_071119

ABSTRACT

Biography

Frederick “Fred” Scopinich was born in 1927 and was a teenager at the start of World War II. He grew up in Freeport on the South Shore of Long Island, where his father and uncle operated the Freeport Point Boatyard. The boatyard designed and produced ships for the U.S. Coast Guard and Navy, as well as the British Navy. Fred was a runner for the local air wardens during the war and was ultimately drafted in July 1945, after which he was stationed in Korea. He eventually returned to establish his own boatyard on Long Island.

Summary

In this interview, Fred discusses the history and operation of the Freeport Point Boatyard, including the types of crafts it produced for the U.S. government during World War II and the rum-runners during Prohibition. He also illustrates life in Freeport and how the war effected various activities, from the ban on sportfishing and pleasure boats to the Coast Guard’s recruitment of local fishermen.

Keywords

teenager, Freeport, Long Island, New York, Navy, Coast Guard, boatyard, scrap drives, fishing, air raid drills

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STORY TRANSCRIPTS

Story 1: Developing Boat Designs [9:33 – 10:38]

The yard was already doing government work; they were preparing for it. They didn’t have good designs yet, but they were developing designs for the boats that they were going to need.

For instance, the government asked for a boat capable of hitting the beach, like the landing barges. But the admirals wouldn't have the landing barges; they didn't even want to know about it. They were interested in the old-time sea skiffs like the rum-runners had.

They could hit the beach [and] the boat would stand level; it wouldn't fall over to one side or the other. They could unload the boat. And then, with a few guys pushing, the boat was now lighted, almost floating. They pushed the boat off the beach and the beach could go back into the inlet empty. And then, they'd hide everything from the federal men.

Story 2: Scrap Metal at the Boatyard

[16:43 – 17:24]

The yard had much material in scrap and brass parts that came off of boats. For instance, one dock underneath was loaded with brass junk that came off of boats—cleats. They just threw it under the dock.

Well, now the war had arrived, Columbian Bronze was in Freeport. They made a lot of the Navy stuff at the Freeport Yard on Main Street. So, if you brought a wagon full of brass to Columbian Bronze, they'd weigh it up and pay you.

Story 3: Wartime Preparations in Gym Class

[17:51 – 18:28]

The big change was getting us fourteen, fifteen, sixteen-year-old boys prepared for [the war]. So, the gym classes got tougher. We now had ropes up to the ceiling, and we had to go climb up those ropes, and come down without sliding and burning your hands. They taught you those things. What they didn't teach us rifles or anything like that. But they were getting our bodies stronger.

Story 4: Jones Beach Tower

[41:27 – 42:07]

There was one tower they had along [Jones] Beach there. It was a tower that they put up temporarily during the war, so that they could go up this tower and look out over the sea area; watch for submarines or whatever they could report. And that was high; I mean, it was like a hundred feet high or something. Maybe eighty feet, I don't know; I don't remember.

When that closed, [my friends and I] went there after school one day and we started climbing up those stairs—eighty feet, if it was. And we climbed and we climbed. And we got up there, we looked, and they were afraid to come down. [*chuckles*]

PHOTO CAPTIONS

Current 1

Fred Scopinich being interviewed in East Quogue, New York (Photo Credit: Chris Kretz)

Current 2

Interviewer Chris Kretz with narrator Fred Scopinich (Photo Credit: Chris Kretz)

Artifact 1

Fred Scopinich with the Freeport Point Shipyard's Army-Navy E-Award for Excellence in Performance of War Production (Photo Credit: Chris Kretz)

Artifact 2

Photograph of workers at the Freeport Point Shipyard testing lift slings (Courtesy of Fred Scopinich)

Artifact 3

Fred Scopinich showing wartime photographs from the shipyard (Photo Credit: Chris Kretz)