



The Bay Run



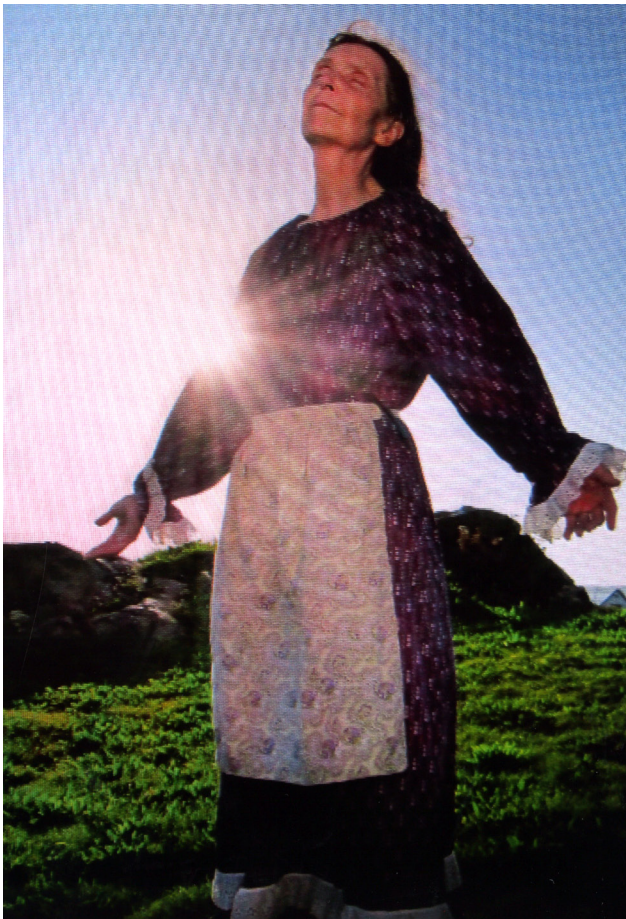
Newsletter of
The Delaware Bay
Lighthouse Keepers
and Friends Association, Inc.

Volume 44 Issue 33
Fall 2025

“Our mission is to preserve the history of the
Delaware Bay and River Lighthouses, Lightships and their Keepers”

LAST LIGHTHOUSE KEEPER IN THE UNITED STATES

Sally Snowman, who retired from Boston Light in December 2023, is the last lighthouse keeper in the United States. Holding this position since 1941, she was the first civilian keeper and the first female keeper to be appointed to this position, the 70th keeper to be exact – the other 69 keepers were males. Boston Light was constructed in 1716 back when lighthouse keepers were known as “wickies”. The lighthouse was also the oldest continually used lighthouse in the United States and the last lighthouse to be automated; automation took place in 1998. All lighthouses in the United States are now automated.



The story goes that her father was a member of the Coast Guard Auxiliary; he introduced little Sally to the sea and the lighthouse when he brought her to the island, where the lighthouse was located, for a picnic. Sally was fascinated by the light and its surroundings and stated to her father, “When I grow up, I want to get married out here”. She was true to her word when in 1994 she was married out on the island. Her husband was a civil engineer, and together they became famous after writing a book about their lighthouse adventures.

Sally suffered from attention deficit disorder and dyslexia and was very concerned about her “scrambled brain”. She decided to enroll at Walden University eventually graduating with a PHD in neurolinguistics and worked as a Learning Disability Specialist. She felt that would help her better understand herself. She was aware that the sea soothed her and brought her great comfort. At that time, she was also aware that she wanted to work on Little Brewster, the island where Boston Light is located. Consequently, in 1941 she was appointed keeper.

Each morning, she raised the flag; each evening it was lowered. During the day she would oversee all the tours, greeting the tourists by waving a white handkerchief as was the custom of the times. She was always dressed appropriately in period

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A BEAM FROM THE PRESIDENT’S DESK

Angelo S. Rigazio, Jr.



As I sit and write this column, I find myself facing (hopefully) the last “dog days of summer”. Summer has been presenting days with temperatures in the 90’s plus high humidity. Here in North Cape May our temperatures are normally 5-10 degrees higher than at the beach in Cape May. We live about five miles north of where the Delaware Bay and Atlantic Ocean meet.

The tomatoes, string beans, peppers, and cucumbers are currently thriving in the garden; however, maintaining their growth requires consistent daily irrigation. The fishpond is thriving this year. I found six more fish since the beginning of spring. Nature must keep them busy.

For those who have been following our granddaughter’s singing career since she was nine, I am happy to tell you she is heading to Las Vegas to start theater classes in September. Bella began singing the National Anthem at age nine. She performed the National Anthem two times at the Miss New Jersey Pageant, and at other schools and charity organizations. She had the lead in “Annie” and “Peter Pan” at the Performing Arts Center in Middle Township and in high school she was Miss Adelaide in “Guys and Dolls” and Velma Kelly in “Chicago”. I am immensely proud of her.

The organization cancelled the July lighthouse cruise as there were not enough passengers. Hopefully, the cruise for August 23rd will be more successful. Details about the August cruise are available on the website and Facebook. Our fall meeting will be on September 30th at the Nature Center in Cape May. Guest speaker will be Kelly Ruffel, Executive Director of Preservation New Jersey (PNJ).

I hope to see you on the August cruise and/or at the meeting in September. So, until next time, keep the lights shining! *Angelo*

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*The Delaware Bay Lighthouse Keepers and Friends Association, Inc. (DBLHKFA)
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FROM THE LOG OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

Tuesday, September 30, 2025 – Fall meeting scheduled to begin at 11 AM will be held at the Charlotte Todd Education Building part of the Nature Center of Cape May. The Center is located at 1600 Delaware Avenue in Cape May (the street before the Coast Guard Base going east). ITINERARY: Meeting at 11; lunch (brown bag) at Noon; 1 PM Guest speaker, Kelly Ruffel, Executive Director of Preservation History and Culture in NJ. Regarding preservation in our state, she will be identifying historic structures throughout New Jersey and how they are protected. As you are aware, many of our Delaware Bay lighthouses are in a tragic state of disrepair and neglect. Ruffel can learn about the Bay lights, our association, its goals and we can learn from her. Please make every effort to attend this important meeting. Your attendance will demonstrate to Kelly the important role played by the Delaware Bay Lights in our region's commerce. FYI: The New Jersey Preservation Association played a key role in the preservation of Cape May's Franklin Street School.

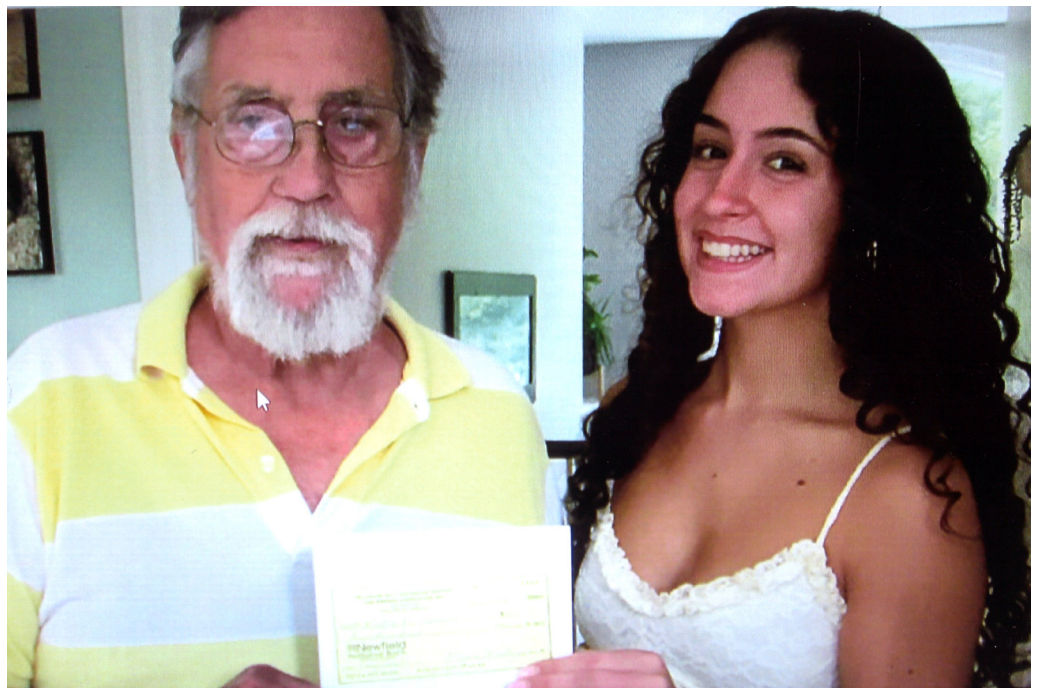
Saturday and Sunday, October 18 & 19, 8 AM – 6 PM – New Jersey Lighthouse Challenge. Due to the closing of East Point Lighthouse, our organization will be setting up at Leechester Community Hall, located on Main Street in Dorchester, NJ. We are again expecting over 2,000 visitors from all over the United States and other countries. Your organization can always use help so join the challenge, come out, check out the area, do some shopping and give us a hand. Hope to see you there. The "challenge" is to visit all New Jersey lighthouses in one weekend.

BELLA MCKEOWN AWARDED CAROL REILY SCHOLARSHIP


Bella McKeown, granddaughter of Darlene and Angelo Rigazio, was awarded the 2025 Carol Reily Scholarship. McKeown, a resident of Erma, NJ and a recent honors graduate of Lower Cape May Regional High School, won many awards during her high school career including being inducted into the National Honor Society for Dance and the Arts. She has also provided entertainment by singing at the Miss New Jersey Pageant, the Cape May County Chamber of Commerce, the Ceremonies held by the Cape May County Freeholders and several lighthouse events. An extremely talented young lady, while in high school Bella also had lead roles at the Performing Arts Center in Middle Township in "Annie," "Peter Pan" and more recently, her high school production of "Chicago".


She has been accepted at several colleges (10) but chose to attend the Theater Arts Preparatory School (TAPS) in Las Vegas where she passed the initial audition with flying colors. This past summer, Bella also had an audition at Disney World in Florida. Her future plans are to "make it big" on Broadway.


Congratulations and good luck in all your future endeavors.



DID YOU KNOW?


 Lucy, the famous elephant in Margate, had a sibling, “The Light of Asia,” an elephant shaped building located in South Cape May from 1880 to 1900. The “Margate Lucy” built in 1882, celebrated her 143rd birthday this past July. That makes her older than the Statue of Liberty and the Ben Franklin Bridge.

 Cape May Cove now has a handicap path for accessible walking with an ocean view.

 Pickering, Delaware is one of the most productive horseshoe crab spanning beaches in the world.

 Cape May is second to San Francisco in the number of Victorian homes and buildings in the world.

 Ocean City, NJ was voted the best beach in the state.

 This summer, the historic USS Constitution sailed out of Boston Harbor on July 4 for its traditional salute.


The following information regarding New Jersey was gleaned from the Internet: New Jersey...

 was first named New Netherlands by Henry Hudson in 1609 in honor of Holland.

 has the highest elevation along the entire east coast Maine to Florida.

 has more racehorses than Kentucky.


 has the most restaurants in the world and is sometimes referred to as the “Restaurant Capital of the World”.


 Jersey tomatoes are the best you can buy (I agree with that one—thank heavens our neighbors have gardens, grow the Jersey tomatoes and share them - YUM).


 is the world leader in the production of blueberries and red cranberries.


 AND, sad to announce, we also have the highest cost of living, car insurance and property taxes in the nation.

Comments from our readers on our Web Site Guest Page:

 Hi, I was stationed on Ship John after boot camp in 1965. Have some fond memories and some not so fond. I am now in South Carolina. I remember being stuck on the light in January '66 with Martin Muldowney. Ice was too thick for small boats to get to us. Finally got relieved via CG Cutter Sauk. A Philadelphia Bulletin newspaper writer was on board and wrote an article about us. It was on page three of the Sunday Bulletin. My father went out and bought 5 papers. Thanks for your association. *J. McKenney*

 I love the Brandywine Shoal Lighthouse. We have a boat and travel to her when we visit the bay. It is so beautiful. I love to see her. Hope someday soon they will open her for tours. *J. Young*

 Just found your web site. Brings back many wonderful memories. While in the USCG, I was stationed on 14 Foot Bank L/S back in 1969. We had several fishing boats come out and tie up to fish. It was nice to see visitors. I changed duty stations with Dan McFadden. I believe he had something to do with the lighthouse organization up there. *W. Gillette, BMCM USCG Ret. (Editor’s note: Dan McFadden was the first president of our organization.)*

 Was stationed at the Lewes coast guard station in 1963 and 1964. I was a boatswain’s mate and did most of my work out of Roosevelt inlet. We were in the search and rescue unit using 40 footers. I remember the lighthouses very well since we were out in the bay almost daily. We used to drop mail and supplies off to the guys and transport them back and forth whenever necessary. Great time in my life. Thanks for creating the website. I want to say hello to Ray Pfaff who I was stationed with in Lewes. I have a lot of great stories about my time on the bay. Thanks again. *G. Pyle*

 Great job. I really like the website. *R. Pfaff DBLHKFA member and former Keeper Coast Guardsman*

UPDATE ON EAST POINT

By Nancy Patterson-Tidy

Sadly, the lighthouse is still locked up; alarm still beeping from inside; the grounds are overgrown making the bugs even worse and the historic lighthouse is still being neglected. What a needless waste and a very sad example of government abuse of power and mismanagement. It is truly sickening to watch this special place deteriorate again under the state of NJDEP after all the amazing teamwork efforts and expense (by others -not the NJDEP) to restore this historic lighthouse and offer it to the public for tours and special events.

After driving out and removing the community/society back in September 2024, the NJDEP said in a press statement they would open the lighthouse following much the same hours as it was open under the management of the society...but clearly that hasn't happened. It was yet another lie in a long stream of lies designed to shut us all up. What is it going to take for them not to have seemingly limitless unchecked power? Something really needs to change in our government. Not only does there need to be big changes made on how the NJDEP functions, but historic sites should not be under the NJDEP. Parks shouldn't be under the NJDEP either. Both are being discriminated against and treated very poorly. This historic lighthouse and tourist attraction shouldn't be locked up and empty. It should once again be a fully furnished, family friendly, hands-on educational museum; well protected and cared for and open on a regular basis, full of happy visitors.

FYI: The Maurice River Historical Society has purchased the plot of land next to East Point Lighthouse. The Society will be permitted to place a trailer (dimensions dictated by the DEP) on the property to establish a gift shop.

FEATURED ARTICLE

continued

costume. It was a job that Sally loved. Regarded by the coast guard as a “one-woman station,” she was solely responsible for maintaining the light that beamed 27 miles out into the Atlantic guiding mariners to safety.

In 1964, Boston Light was registered as a National Historic Landmark and in 1989 listed on the National Registry of Historical Places. Thanks to the National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Act of 2000, the lighthouse will remain a historic site. Snowman is currently working at the Lifesaving Museum in Hull, Massachusetts; Hull, where she grew up as a child gazing across the water looking at her beloved lighthouse. Our extended gratitude to Sally Snowman for her tireless efforts in taking care of one of the lights responsible for guiding seafarers to a safe harbor.

DID YOU KNOW *continued*



A wonderful lighthouse cruise with a great group of people. Really enjoyed the opportunity to see and photograph Brandywine Shoal, Harbor of Refuge, Fourteen Foot, and Miah Maull Lighthouse. Looking to future events with the club. Thank you. *B. Watson*



I love this site, and it has helped me get info on New Jersey lighthouses that I didn't have. I think that all of you are to be congratulated on a job well done. *H. Kent Edwards , Lighthouse Photo*



Just found this site and am interested as I was stationed on both 14 foot and Brandywine during 1971 – 1973. *R. Alkins*

Thanks to all our contributors. We are happy to hear you are enjoying our efforts.

MY LIFE IN THE COAST GUARD--CONCLUSION

By Ron Mikulski

(continued from Spring, Summer and Fall issues 2024)

(NOTE: Mikulski has taken us through experiences in his basic training at Base Cape May to his assignment on various lighthouses and a lightship, summarizing his first year in the coast guard. He now continues with the remainder of his coast guard career starting with the next adventure.)

IBM Green, a coastguardsman stationed on Fourteen Foot Light, lost weight, reenlisted and eventually transferred. His replacement was BM3 Fryberger who was a nice enough guy but a bit different. At the same time, we got a seaman who liked to play Batman. He would get letters addressed to him from his girlfriend addressed to the “Bat Cave” or “Stately Wayne Manor” care of the Base Cape May. One morning the supply run was cancelled due to the weather on a day when Fryberger and I were supposed to have off. We also had two civilian workers from Base Gloucester on board fixing a generator which had thrown a piston rod. Later that day the weather calmed so Fryberger decided that he and I should go to Miah Maul Light for a visit. I had some doubts because the boat we had was only 13’ long and had a 7 ½ HP outboard; consequently, it would take a while to get to Miah Maul. But, away we went. We visited for about an hour then headed back; about halfway back the outboard quit. About the same time the weather began to decline. We started rowing but the wind and tide were against us, so we decided we should let the boat drift back to Miah Maul. All of a sudden, a 40 footer from Cape May appeared. The weather had eased somewhat, (they had left the base about the same time we left for Miah Maul) we graciously jumped into the 40 footer. The 13’ boat we were on originally was lifted onto the engine hatch. They returned us to Fourteen Foot Light and came back for us later. When we got to Cape May the powers that be were not pleased with Fryberger. He was demoted to seaman and sent off to the Westwind. I, being of lower rank, just went home after being reprimanded and told by the warrant officer I should have known better. The Westwind, a weather ship that was often sent to the North Pole, had a reputation. Some problem members of the coast guard were transferred to the Westwind due to disciplinary problems.

One story I heard about the Westwind was that it patrolled the Northern Circuit and stopped at Halifax, Nova Scotia as part of the circuit. One day apparently when the ship sailed into Halifax harbor the mayor of the town refused to let any of the crew come ashore due to the havoc they had caused on their last visit. At that time the ship still had either a 3- or 5-inch gun mounted on the bow. This gun was left over from WWII. Apparently, some of the crew turned the gun towards Halifax and threatened to start shooting if they weren’t allowed ashore. Needless to say, the gun was removed from the ship shortly thereafter.

Later when I was stationed at Cape May a similar incident occurred at Ship John Light which is further north up the Delaware River closer to New Jersey. The Cohansey River was bordered by a couple of small towns considered “watering holes”. Personnel stationed on Ship John were known to unofficially leave the light station on a rotating basis for a night ashore. Apparently one afternoon an argument broke out concerning whose turn it was to go ashore; so they decided they would all go leaving the light and foghorn on and unattended. Normal protocol was for each light station to report to Cape May Radio every four hours. Sometime the next morning Cape May realized that they had not heard from the crew on Ship John for quite some time; a boat was sent out from Fortescue, NJ. A coast guard boat and crew were housed in a trailer at that location in the summer. The crew arrived about 11 AM. The Ship John crew showed up about 1 PM. The people at Base Cape May were not happy.

On my return I found BM2 Paul Gadney had replaced Fryberger. Paul was a big guy with a very mild temperament and was a short timer. He had recently married the daughter of a marina owner in Cape May and was looking forward to his discharge. “Batman” also got transferred; Bennie Sciarra was his replacement. Christmas rolled around and since Jackson again wanted New Year’s off, I was home for Christmas. When I returned the next week Jackson and Sciarra took off leaving Gadney and me. The following weekend the wind was howling, and the temperature had dropped into single digits. By the time the next supply run was due, the bay had frozen solid, and we were stranded. The highest the temperature got in the next two months was in the teens, occasionally making it into the twenties. Fortunately, we were required to keep enough food on the light to last the crew two months. Unfortunately, the third week of January we were suddenly awakened by alarms going off. The heater had caught fire. Fortunately, the CO2 cylinders had gone off, extinguishing the fire; now the only heat was from the electric stove and oven which we kept on full-time; the heat supplied was enough to keep the kitchen somewhat warm. We slept with all our clothes on including foul weather jackets and knit caps. The ice and snow cover were

MY LIFE IN THE COAST GUARD--CONCLUSION

By Ron Mikulski

(continued from Spring, Summer and Fall issues 2024)

blinding. The only thing that would occasionally break the bleak whiteness was a string of ships traveling the channel about 4 miles away. The lead ship was always a tanker because their hulls were thicker and could break the thinner ice of the channel. The tanker would be followed by a string of freighters. I was told the ice that year ranged from 23 to 35 inches thick. We probably could have walked ashore except for the deep snow. Finally, after 2 ½ months the ice broke sufficiently to allow the buoy tender, *Sassafras*, to arrive with relief personnel and supplies.

Jackson was transferred and was replaced with BMI Matthew La Mott. Matthew arrived with a swinging seabag that clinked when it hit the lighthouse wall. Later he related that he thought his supply of beer was gone. Little did he know at that time the generosity of the men out fishing. Many years later when Fourteen Foot Light was sold, Matt apparently went out to the light to check things out with the new owner. His picture was in one of the local newspapers. La Mott was actually the last keeper to set foot on Fourteen Foot.

Gadney got transferred to Base Cape May. He was the only one of the many people stationed on various lighthouses that I saw on the base afterwards.

Later that spring I made EM3 and returned to Base Cape May. I was only on Fourteen Foot one time after that to repair an electrical problem with the generators. The person now in charge was a BMI who was about 40 years old and rather strange. A few months after I was at the lighthouse, he apparently had a breakdown. Fishing boats in the area reported him running around on the deck naked waving a foreign flag. He was removed from duty.

My stay at Cape May was short. I received a transfer to the Delaware light vessel. Another 3rd class coast guard member was supposed to go but begged off due to family problems. This eventually worked in my favor. The district apparently lost track of me when I transferred to the lightship. I was rediscovered when the captain put in to make me part of the permanent crew. When I got off the light ship 4 months later, I found that because there was also a Chief FM in Cape May the other 3rd class was transferred to Vietnam.

Delaware light vessel at that time was originally the Relief LV and prior to that the Chesapeake LV. The story went that the original Delaware went up to dry dock at Governor's Island. During hull inspection (which consisted of probing the hull with a large metal rod) the inspector poked through the hull into an integral freshwater tank and almost drowned in the ensuing flood. The ship remained in dry dock for several months while they figured out what to do with it. Another interesting story I heard about the ship was that about 10 years earlier it was ordered to shelter in place behind Harbor of Refuge Light due to an impending hurricane; they never made it. After the hurricane the ship was not to be found; after several days it was presumed lost. Miraculously it came sailing into Norfolk Harbor the following day. All radio and navigational equipment were inoperative. It was claimed the crew had to ask people on a passing boat where they were.

Arriving on the lightship I found the captain had gone to the same high school as I had quite a few years earlier. He was dubbed Captain Cookie by the crew due to his desire for chocolate chip cookies.

The ship went through a couple of spring storms. It was interesting to see the portholes on the mess deck go under water with each wave. Due to the amount of water and fuel stored in the ship, it took about 3 days after each storm for the rolling to stop. The ship had 3 alleged watertight compartments. The problem was too many holes had been drilled in the bulkheads; if one left the light on in the engine room and went to the aft compartment, that person really did not need to turn on any of other the lights.

One day the XO, who was a chief bosuns mate, came to me and said it was time to change the bulbs in the lights. It was done periodically when the seas were calm. We packed the bulbs in a sack, and I started to walk to the mast. The light was 85 feet above the deck and accessible by an I shaped iron rod welded to the mast like the ones seen on electric and telephone poles in the past. The chief stopped me and said, "Petty officers don't climb." Instead, I was led to a Boson's Chair which had already been rigged by the seamen to the small deck around the light. I was hoisted up by 5 or 6 crew members. Arriving at the top and looking down, the ship looked tiny, but the view was fantastic.

The chief had a pair of pearl handled pastels he was very proud of and liked to wear them frequently. Several months after

MY LIFE IN THE COAST GUARD--CONCLUSION

By Ron Mikulski

(continued from Spring, Summer and Fall issues 2024)

I left the ship, they were the cause of an unfortunate incident. Getting off and on the ship was done by jumping from the supply boat (usually the 95-foot Cape Kiwanda) to a Jacobs ladder on the side of the lightship or visa versa. The chief was wearing the guns when he jumped to the deck of the supply ship. Both guns went off causing him to shoot himself in both feet. Later that year one of the seamen lost his foot when he misjudged the jump and his foot got caught between both boats. Of interest also was the fact that he and his foot were taken to a hospital in Delaware. State law required at that time that the foot had to be buried in an actual grave in a cemetery.

The ship was powered by two 250 HP electric motors. Power for the motors was supplied by 4 GMC 6-71 diesel driven generators. The ship had been in some sort of stern accident and as a result the deck was 5 feet shorter than when it was originally built. Another result was the propeller was replaced with one from a retired 210-foot cutter. The propeller was only 2/3 in the water at any time. This caused the stern to hop every time one of the blades re-entered the water. Amazingly all the original equipment documents were still on file.

One day returning from leave in early August, I found we were leaving for the coast guard shipyard in Staten Island. It took over a day to get there as the ship could only make about 6 knots per hour. When we arrived at Staten Island, I was assigned a few equipment upgrades by the chief engineer in charge. He was a rather small cocky sort who didn't like electricians (or maybe me) and did nothing to prove otherwise.

It was my first time in New York, and I was not impressed. Times Square was a squalid, dirty area populated by open air bars, sex shows and generally unsavory other establishments. We were there for three weeks.

Getting underway from the dock, we were assisted by a tugboat, then left on our own. About a mile from the Verrazano Bridge the diesel generator (the chief and his crew had been working on) started to overheat and had to be shut down. Next thing I knew he pulled the power distribution switch for the generator because he said it would affect the unit. I argued against it having read the instructions but was overruled. By that time, we were in the channel after just passing under the bridge. It was at the time that all hell broke loose. There were whistles, sirens and all sorts of commotion to be heard coming through the open hatch. We were drifting in circles in the main shipping channel. The captain was on the speaker tube, and he was not happy. I went over and put the switch back in, everything returned to normal. About 5 minutes passed and the chief saw the switch was back in and pulled it out again. There was a recurrence of the original disaster. I put the switch back in again returning everything to normal. This time he left it alone.

We got back on station a lot faster than the original trip. I had noticed some wires on the propulsion control panel had apparently been pulled out accidentally over the years and, after inquiring to possibly find a reason for this, reattached them. Speed went from 7 knots to almost 11. The captain was pleased. As for the chief, I was on leave the day after we got back on station. When I returned the chief was gone.

Toward the end of August, the captain came back from leave. He came to me very apologetic. He said he had tried to make me permanent stationed but when the district found out they had a forgotten EM3, I was immediately transferred to Base Cape May which at that point had only a chief.

