

Jeffrey Kime was in the USCG for 4 years. He was stationed 2 years on lighthouses and 2 years on ships in the Great Lakes.

He was stationed on Alligator Reef for 4 months, but was in the Key West area from 1959 until 1961. Afterwards, he then headed north to Mackinac Island.

While at Alligator Reef, there were 3 men “on” and 1 man “off” on any given shift. They worked 3 weeks on & one week off the lighthouse. A typical day was to wake at 8 am, eat breakfast, clean the decks, and then work in the engine room. They would quit at noon because of the heat. During their leisure time, they would hang out on the decks, swim, fish, or even go scuba diving. My dad recovered several cannonballs and square nails while scuba diving around the lighthouse. He thought the nails were from the USS Alligator. He started to treat the cannonballs so he could keep them, but ultimately had to leave them behind. At certain times during his stay at Alligator Reef, they could stand in the light chamber or on the outer rails and see St Elmo’s Fire. He said that was always a treat.

Hurricane Donna hit on Sept 9, 1960, and my dad was on the lighthouse with 2 other men. He said the winds were so strong that they vibrated the steel shutter doors that separated them from outside. At the height of storm, the winds raged up to 135mph. They had 6-8 inches or rain in the

barrack area. He said he wasn't scared, but that it was definitely an experience. The 3 that rode out Hurricane Donna together spent Thanksgiving on the lighthouse and were in the Miami News 11-26-1960.

He then went to Mackinac Island where he helped close down a lighthouse. He doesn't remember the name but thinks it could have been Round Island Passage Light. He was only on lighthouse about 2 weeks. They had to close the Straits of Mackinac because the ice was getting too thick and ships couldn't get through. One weekend, several USCG and villagers walked over the Straits to the mainland to get groceries. He said whenever there was a deep crack in the ice, they would put a door down so the horse and buggies could cross over safely. He said that was scary. He was stationed on the USS Tupelo for awhile while he was up Mackinac way. The ship was used for ice breaking, and helped boats get from Detroit to Duluth so they could pick up iron ore to bring back to the motor companies. It also escorted coal ships to Detroit as well so that plants could stay up and running.