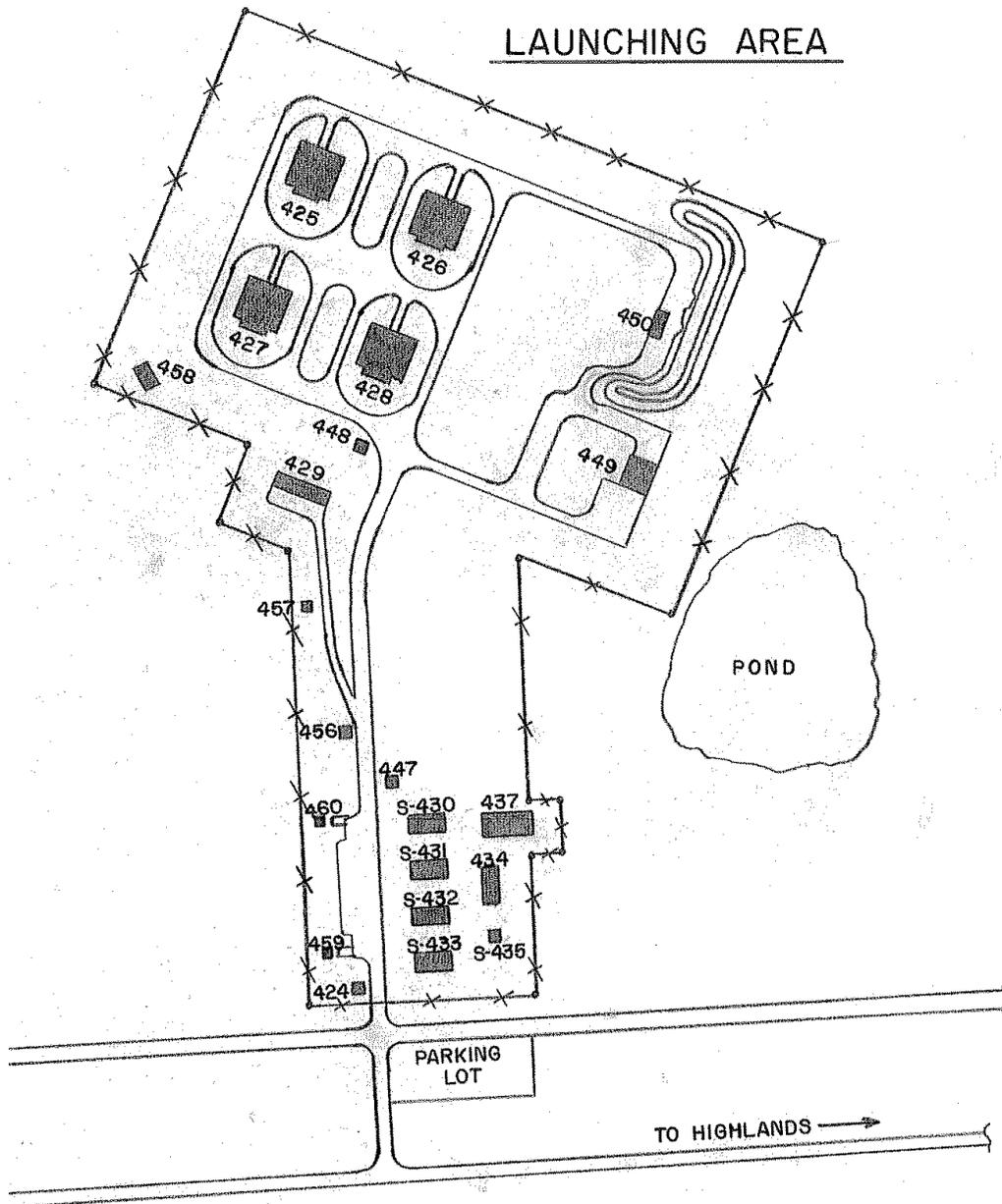
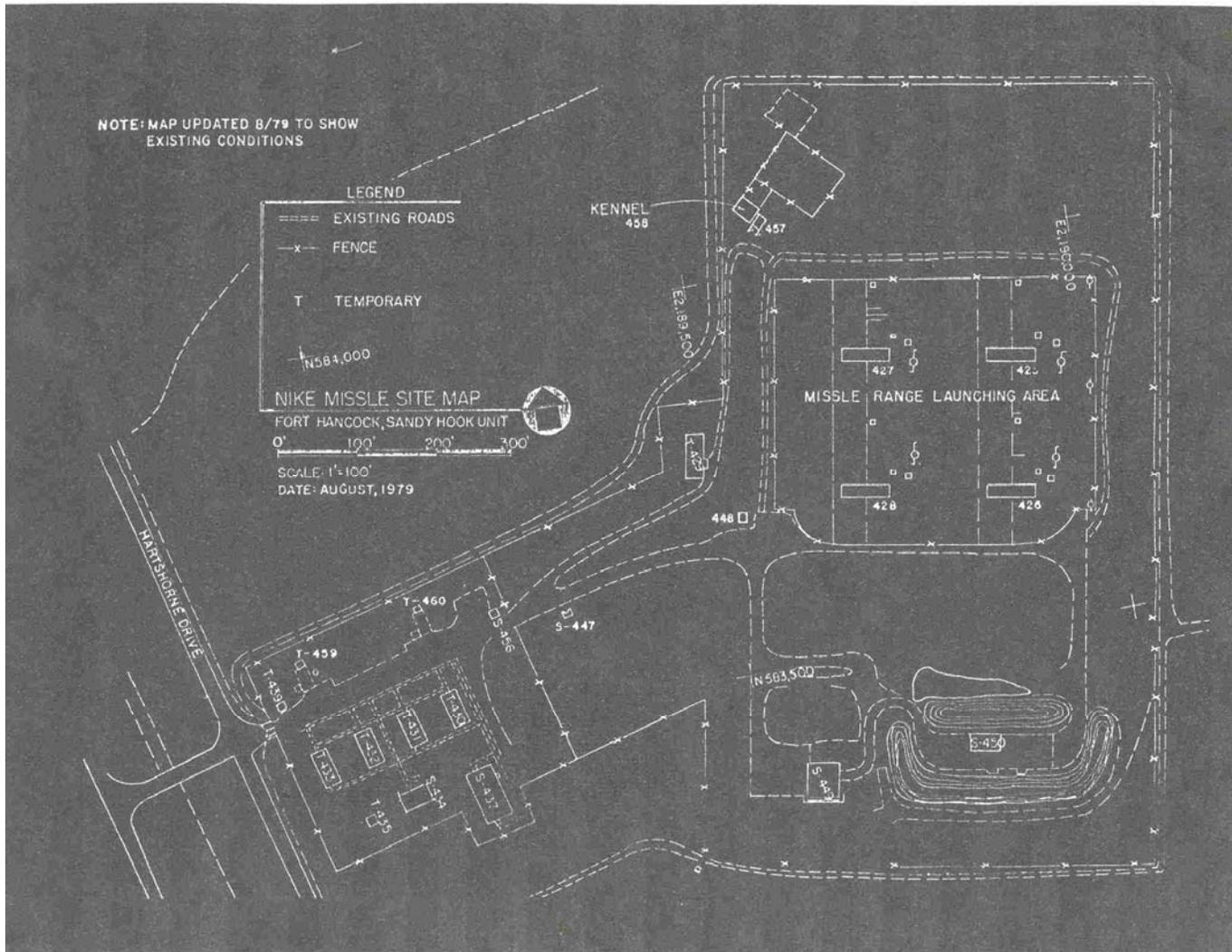


Sandy Hook, Gateway NRA, National Park Service
An Oral History Interview with Russell J. Marsh
Nike Launch Area Section Chief, 1971-74
Interviewed by Peter Dessauer and Tom Hoffman, NPS
Also a site condition assessment by Peter Dessauer, Historic Architect, NPS
August 22, 1979
Transcribed by Mary Rasa, 2011



Portion of a U.S. Army map of Fort Hancock Nike Launch Area, 1972.



Map produced by the National Park Service in August 1979.
 All images courtesy of NPS/Gateway NRA

Editor's notes in parenthesis ()

PD: The date is Wednesday August 22, 1979. Pete Dessauer, Historic Architect from the Denver Service Center and Tom Hoffman, Historian from the Museum at Fort Hancock, Sandy Hook, are here at the Nike Missile site on Sandy Hook, Gateway National Recreation Area, New Jersey.

TH: Okay Pete, we are standing right at the main entrance to the missile site which the Army called the LCA, the Launch Control Area, and we are standing by a cinderblock sentry box and on the old building list I have here as listed on the 1963 and 1974 Fort Hancock building list is listed as a sentry box and the only difference we have here is from the old building list its numbered 424. The structure number is 424 but they have it written on as T-439. So, at one point it looks like they changed it.

PD: Alright. (Tape stops and starts again.) Okay we are looking at concrete pads which are numbered as 459 (Transformer Shed, c. 1955) on my map.

TH: Right.

PD: What did that used to be?

TH: Air conditioning building. Made of metal, 40 square feet but no longer exists.

PD: No longer exists but instead we have another concrete block. What was here?

TH: This is interesting because it seems that there are a number of them here and up over there and they might have been the others all built together.

PD: 461, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66.

TH: Conversion house, it would seem to me "conv."

PD: Well, here at 459 and there remains of the flagpole and you said what some people might immediately interpret as an ancient mine is really just a buoy.
(Conversation irrelevant to Nike Missiles)

PD: We are standing in front of a pre-fab cabin painted green recently painted by the maintenance crew here at the Nike Missile Site.

TH: Right.

PD: And its number is T-433 (1955). What do you know about it?

TH: Well, its listed as barracks and it is probably for housing the soldiers that worked here at the missile site because I believe there were on two week duty with one or two weeks off.

PD: It was 24 hours.

TH: Yeah. They could be called out at any time. This is where they lived on duty 24 hours and they could be called out on a case of a national emergency. Right here, the front door has suffered some vandalism I have noticed. We had an AN-1 National Park Service padlock on here. It's missing and the inside of the door here is split.

PD: The Army pulled out of here when?

TH: Out of the missile site they phased operations out in I'd say in near mid-July 1974, and they took everything with them. All they left were empty buildings. These barracks buildings were empty. Of course, there are still fixtures over in the latrine building but all equipment all furniture and missiles were pulled out in mid-July.

PD: This T-433 is a barracks.

TH: Right. That is what it is listed as. We have four of them listed as barracks. We are using this area as storage like park maintenance.

PD: 433 is used as park maintenance storage at the moment.

TH: Right for signs. We have some old cannonballs here we got from Fort McHenry.

PD: Now, do you feel these old barracks are sufficiently secure from public intrusion?

TH: I believe so because we lock the front gate. All around the perimeter of the fence here we have got the Army barbed wire which is still potent barbed wire and it's pretty hard to get in here.

PD: The interior design and partitions we find here Tom, does not lead me to believe this was a typical barracks. There are some strange room arrangements. Perhaps...how many men do you think slept here?

TH: I don't know. We have a man who served here in the Army in the last years that the missiles were in operation and I think he could really fill us in on that. (Tape stops and restarts)

PD: Right here in 433 there is an electrical panel. We will have to ask one of the veterans. Now all four of these pre-fab little cabins or barracks...What's this? This is sort of a metal...

TH: Metal. Metal all bolted together.

PD: Bolted together on the outside. On the inside, they have stud frame and rock sheet walls. Now we are standing in front of the green, newly freshly painted barracks building labeled at T-432 (1955).

TH: Right, and its presently being used by the Sandy Hook concessionaires out here as storage for their sales artifacts.

PD: How about condition? Have you been inside? Does it look like its in...

TH: No. I haven't but it looks just like 433. The doors been damaged right here and they have a panel across there.

PD: They put a plywood panel over it and painted it. Okay but it is locked?

TH: Oh yes and secure.

PD: Another thing Tom, I see that there are a lot of utility wires going to the apex of the gable on each one of these barracks. What utilities are coming into these buildings?

TH: As far as I know, just regular electricity, you know, for each building for lights and outlets.

PD: The door is open to Barracks T-431 (1955) and we are looking inside and it's been recently converted into a garage. There is a Datsun truck and a large Dodge truck standing in here. Also it reveals the construction of these pre-fab metal barracks.

TH: The linoleum flooring has been taken up as you can see. You can see where it used to be. But now we are just standing on the pre-fabricated concrete foundation which is flat.

PD: Concrete slab.

TH: If there were partitions in here it would be pretty hard to see them. Looking at some of the bracings in the wall here you can see where things are missing.

PD: At least this garage, with all the interior or historic interior removed reveals the basic simple construction of these barracks. We are right in front of T-430 (1955), 430 and the door is locked.

TH: Right I will check it out here. It's a private lock. It's not a Park Service lock.

PD: But that is an old door at least it is designed like an old door. It's got the cross and open book design on it with the panels.

TH: Yep. (Tape stops and restarts)

PD: Tom Hoffman and myself, Peter Dessauer have been joined by Russell J. Marsh.

RM: Thank you. I was Spec(alist) 5. I was in charge of Alpha section. There were four sections. Alpha, Bravo, Charlie and Delta all missile pits and I was a section chief. (There are 4 pits at the site labeled A, B, C and D) I had 14 gentlemen working for me and our job was the readiness of the missiles at all time and maintenance of launchers and all of the Alpha pit itself okay. There were certain duty rosters and one of the duty rosters during the duty rosters you have sergeant of the guard, sergeant of the quarters. These were the E-5s, the sergeants and Spec 5s and one of the first things that was very memorable in the morning when you first see driving by early in the morning would be changing of the guards. And you would have certain number of backup people and you have your gate guard waiting to be relieved. Everybody that worked the night before could not wait until the next crew came in and they had a start an inspection. They would stand there and there would be the sergeant of the guard and the officer of the day would each inspect each and every man's weapon, his personal appearance and his general

orders. Each guard had a specific duty. Like the front key house job was mainly to keep which was Building T-439. (Sentry Box)

PD: That is where we are standing right now.

RM: Right. This building was basically, at night a guard would see anybody coming in going out. We would open gate for vehicles coming in and going out. This would be the low lax security area because this area in here there wasn't that much except for T-433 which was looking over here which was the guard building. It had the ammunitions and the rifles and the backup. That would be your primary backup. We also had secondary backup. We had backup also from Fort Monmouth. Now you had your little trailers over there, your little radar trailers okay. They were of magnesium. The thing I found particularly interesting about them if there was any fire, he had two chances in there, slim and none because it would go up in a matter of nine seconds.

PD: Okay, now where are these trailers you are talking about?

RM: The trailers were where the cars are right now, okay.

PD: Alright. There used to be trailers where the parking lot is now. And what was in those little trailers?

RM: It was like certain like little radars which would hook onto the missiles and it was the basic means of communications between the IFC radar and the missiles itself. Let's take a walk to building (tape stops)

PD: Once again we come back to T-433 and Mr. Marsh is going to fill us in on the history of this place when he was a resident. How long were you here and what years?

RM: I was here in the start of '71. During '72 I spent 13 months in Korea and I was lucky enough to return back here. So I put a total of roughly three years in here.

TH: What years were those?

RM: '71, '72 I was absent, '73 and '74 I spent here. In June of '74 I was discharged June 25th of '74. The last missile went out about the 5th of June when it was deactivated.

TH: It was June? Because I was told it was July.

RM: It was June.

TH: It was June.

RM: As far as the nuclear capacity go, okay.

TH: Oh okay.

RM: I mean let me put that, the nuclear capacity part was the part that really needed manpower here. Everything else was Minnie Mouse and Mickey Mouse but the heart of it was in June.

PD: Russell, can you tell us anything about the historical use of 433, T-433 when you were here?

RM: Okay, it was the heart of security. It was the meeting place and the beginning place in the morning. The first place everybody met. It was the first place you come to get a badge. This was the first badge system right here. It was the first alarm system was here. And here is where the sergeant of the guard would coordinate everything that would go on. The officer of the day would come in and inspect. They had a desk here and this where the sergeant of the guard would start everything and if you go in the back you had a small room over here. The first room on the left was more or less the TV room.

PD: What's this switch for here?

RM: This was electrical stuff. We had different security systems, okay. It was, the pits themselves, the missile pits, if it was open just a little bit the light would go off. The sergeant of the guard would be notified. We had backup people here. The sergeant of the guard would open it up. We had every type of weapon you want. He would run up there and we would have backup. That would be the basis for that. The only problem with that was due to like all electrical systems they went off a lot of times on false alarms. So, you could be napping after just pulling guard and you might be getting three hours sleep and in the middle of your three hours sleep you might have to get up and run down there and check out. And you don't know you have to play everything as if it would be real.

PD: Russell, I see what looks like a chain link iron door which leads into a long narrow room at the back of 433. What was this used for?

RM: Okay. This was your ammunition room. You had your M-16s and they were every bullet, every weapon was inventoried every day. Every change of shift had to be counted by the sergeant of the guard and had to be counted by the duty officer. And as it went down the line if it was missing went downstream as the old saying goes because the man would responsible. He couldn't really get off duty until it's accounted for. It was also certain gas. I remember one incident one day, there was a gentleman that stupidly unloaded he weapon and shot a bullet into the side there and he hit a tear gas and this place stunk. I mean we had to clear the place out. We temporarily relocated everything to the next building that day. But that was once in three years and it was an oddity. The gentleman was put up for a court martial for that. That could have cost a life. That was pretty dumb. Then again he was a lackadaisical soldier. He was you typical sad sack person. Everything went wrong for this person.

TH: Just, you had M-16s in here and also tear gas?

RM: M-16, there was tear gas, .45s

TH: The Colt .45?

RM: The Colt .45s which the sergeant of the guard and a lot of the guards would use, okay the gate guards, but the other ones...and each one, each man was assigned a weapon, okay. It was his responsibility to make sure that was clean. Out of the clear blue sky the battery commander would say, "I want to pull a weapons inspection." He better have a clean weapon. Technically the sergeant of the guard's duty he would check the weapons as the men were going off duty to make sure that they are clean so just around breakfast time you would see a lot of (M)16s out here being cleaned. Brushes and everything toothbrushes were very handy for cleaning it.

TH: Would that be done in this room?

RM: It would be done outside. You would never do the cleaning of a weapon in here.

TH: Right over here?

RM: Right out in the first (Tape stops and restarts.)

RM: And they would have a roster and check each gentleman. First, they would sign for the weapon, the serial number.

PD: Alright Russell, we are still in 433 and this is the room where the Park Service is storing the signs and cannonballs. What was this used for?

RM: This was basically your bunk room. This would be the gentleman who just pulled guard duty would be sleeping. We had a (inaudible dog type) that also for three years that was stationed here with us. Well, actually about four years. He name was Zonkers. I think he was named after the popcorn or whatever the, "Screaming Zonkers Candy" that came out. But every morning it was particularly interesting during this tour of duty that I had. Every morning when the guards would be standing guard, the dog would stand with him in line for inspection almost every day. And anytime anybody was going anywhere the dog would follow. And he would also, he was very intelligent, he would inform the guards that the duty officer was coming almost always. For some reason he had this uncanny reason for informing the guards so that they could, you know, fix their hat, straighten their uniforms up, whatever. But he was loved by everybody here. And then I believe, when the Fort was deactivated somebody for Canton, Ohio took him home.

PD: Now, we are in one of the front rooms of T-433. This is more or less the northwest corner.

RM: This was basically your security sergeant's office, their headquarters. The gentleman that would be in charge of security. Non-commissioned officer, of course,

and at the time we had Sergeant Barkley, who was an excellent guitar player too. He played at the bar in Highlands. He was excellent in guitar. And what was ironic he left in '71 approximately two months before I left for Korea and as it worked out I was like a ghost. I followed him to the exact battery. So, it was kind of eerie but they had one sergeant before him just about had a nervous breakdown due to the security because it is a pretty intense job. It does encounter a lot and it is a lot of responsibilities. So as you can see as the president itself, you can see how the president ages in office. The same thing could be said of the sergeant of the guard here. The pressures that were put on were so great and if you see anybody after a long period of time if you look at him it takes its toll on him.

PD: Once again we are in front of T-432. Can you tell us Russell, anything about this barracks?

RM: This is coordinations, platoon sergeant and the leading officer for the missile site, the 1st Lieutenant for the missile site. And they would have duty rosters would be produced here. Few meeting would take place here but basically the section chief would have to come in and have to report to the platoon sergeant. It would be my direct boss. And the platoon sergeant's direct boss would be the first sergeant. And the first sergeant all he had to do was answer to the battery commander. Okay, that's the chain of command for the NCOs. First sergeant, platoon sergeant and then goes down to section chief. That is where I lay in.

PD: You were a section chief?

RM: I was a section chief. Now you had to, a lot of times I would come down here after I assigned my men work just to type up duty rosters. And you have to figure out and show and anytime you have something go wrong or a problem of some sort you would have to come down here and see the platoon sergeant. (Tape ends and starts again.)

PD: Now it is used as a concessionaire storage area. Could you tell us something about the interior when it was part of the Army?

RM: The interior basically your simple Quonset hut. You'll have a desk over on the far right corner as soon as you come in and you'd have a desk in the far left hand corner and there was like an air of it and there was a locker in the back. It was almost separated. There was no partition there but it was like almost a separation line. There was an officer's quarter in the back and here was the non-commissioned officer in the front so it was like an imaginary line. You didn't walk past that line. You never it was not an accepted thing somebody that was an E-4 or E-3 or private first class or a corporal would not walk in and go straight to the officer and ask him a question. That is going through your chain of command now. They stressed that. You should go to your immediate supervisor, you section chief, then your platoon sergeant, then your first sergeant if you have a problem or something. Now, if somebody was to walk in and go straight across the imaginary line because the platoon sergeant was busy and said something he might not even get an answer. But he sure as heck would hear about it the next day. I

guarantee you that. There was also supplies that were needed. Simple flares or stationary basically was in there also.

PD: We are now walking into T-431 which is now a garage.



1960s image of Fort Hancock's Launch Area. Ready Barracks, Buildings 430-433 are behind cars.

RM: This was basically a training room. We did have nuclear capacity and we had nuclear fallout training and sessions. This room and the following room over there were both training rooms. We had different sessions. (Tape stops and starts)

PD: Its 430.

RM: We had two rooms. They were both used for training and they were different classes. We had educational classes. Public relations classes, human characteristic everyone had to have a certain amount of course that they had to take with the service to qualify because you did have to go through a mental exam as well as a physical exam in this certain program. You wouldn't want someone unbalanced playing with missiles. They could blow up the east coast.

PD: We have just been joined by my partner, Historic Architect Barry Sulam, Denver Service Center. You are now on tape Barry. (Tape stops and restarts.)

PD: Alright, we are now approaching which looks like the largest building here in the complex. And what number is this? This is building 437, S-437 (1964) which is the Ready Room.



Building 437, Ready Room. Photo taken in 2003.

RM: This is my favorite room and I think every GI that was ever stationed here favorite room. This was the recreation room. This was, they had 24 hour duty here. It was 24 hours on, 24 hours off and then you worked two eight hour shifts. When you first walk in to your left you have a TV, a nice half way decent color TV. You had a soda machine over in the corner over here which everybody would dive to take a break. Whenever they would take a break they would always try to come down here as much as possible to get a soda. As you go in the back, the bunks were lined against the right of the wall, okay. You had approximately two, four, six, eight, approximately 12 to 14 bunks.

PD: This is the back room. This is sort of the big large south room of the Ready Room.

RM: Right. And they had a pool table and a foosball machine, of little soccer men. And they had some really good players here when you are stuck here and that is all you can do. You become rather good. The only problem with these floors every morning when you got up they would leave, you would have to do safety checks on the missile approximately six o'clock, 5:30 in the morning. So, we would leave a couple of people down here to clean this place. They would clean like any GI. You would put wax down and then you would have a cloth over your buffer and they would shine. You could see your face in the floor. The bathrooms were spotless. Whenever there was an inspection they would go bananas over this room. They would always be cleaned. This little room over here was always the storage room. It still is. That is where your basic things are.

PD: Yeah. That's where, the latrine. Now who cooked the meals here?

RM: Meals, well, we were relieved. You had to go to the barracks (74). The barracks were approximately two miles from here, three miles from here. You could have a break

and eat lunch. A couple of people would eat lunch at a time. There was no major problem about eating lunch because if ever there was an alert you have approximately 20 minutes before you really had to get on the ball. They gave you a pretty good warning. The way the system was set up you did have enough time to eat and if you were eating you could stop if there was a real thing and make it to the missile site in plenty of time.

PD: How many men were stationed here?

RM: Stationed at one time?

PD: Mmm Hmm

RM: Oh, I have the pictures home. I have a whole battery. I have quite a bit of information at home. My estimate I would say approximately for C Battery, for just the mission alone, not the administrative people, just I am talking the missile and radar because then you have administrative supply and everything. Approximately 60 people 65 people but then you have your administrative people and everything and we are not talking the headquarters on the hill. There were quite a few hundred people here and with the whole thing going you have talking making 200 people between the different sections. That is why you had the Commissary, the church facilities and the different housing facilities given.

PD: How was the food?

RM: Terrible. No. It was good. It was pretty good. I have to admit that. It's a shame to say that and admit it now but it was pretty good. (Tape stops and restarts.)

PD: Now between S-437 where we just were and T-430 the barracks there now stands a volleyball court. Was this here when you were here?

RM: No there wasn't. There was a horseshoe, not a horseshoe a...

PD: Horseshoe pitch.

RM: Horseshoe pitch. Thank you. Horseshoe pitch.

PD: Alright we are now at Building S-434 (1955) and we are standing on the north side of it and there is a concrete pad here where the walk divides and most like in three directions like a big Y. Now what was here? Why was this concrete pad?

RM: That's a sewage or a septic tank.

PD: Septic tank.



Building 434, Latrine. Photo taken in 2003.

RM: Septic tank, okay. In this building is a bathroom. Okay, there is bathroom facilities and there is first aid facilities and there is fallout facilities and rations. In the event of a nuclear blast and people were caught they had big fifty gallon drums with certain powder that people would be powdered with after they were stripped and had taken a shower. They also had paint and different tools in it. Right around to the left of it and to back of it to the side was a garbage bin where people put their garbage.

PD: Now you are talking about a nuclear blast. Where did you expect this blast to be? In New York City?

RM: I would say if they were going to attack it would probably be in New York City. This was the heart for the National Defense of New York City and if we were to be attacked that's where we would go. We would try to stop them before they got to New York City and we probably would but when you are talking about a warhead that was possibly nine times what was dropped on Hiroshima and you are gonna have and if the wind was right you are talking about a large amount of fallout coming. You are talking about a crisis that we prayed would never happen. Luckily it never did. Maybe if we did shoot down a plane one missile would be designed to knock down a fleet of planes, not just one plane and the kill radius would be roughly a mile we are talking. We might do more damage possibly knocking a fleet of planes out then just letting them bomb due to the fallout which might come but that's not our decision and the government likes strong retaliation. (Tape stops and restarts.)

PD: Well, it still looks, we are now inside the building and it still looks like a latrine area.

RM: It still is and there used to be sinks here. They were taken off the wall which you can see. Over here you had your garden tools, your lawn mowers, rakes and various tools and basically these until the others were busted up. They haven't been used in quite a while. There used to be big drums here with different fluids and different things. Water, distilled water and the C rations would be on the side here which were excellent. As a matter of fact the C rations were (inaudible) (Tape stops and restarts.)

PD: What was life like here in the wintertime on the Hook?

RM: Cold and desolate. The worst things we could do would be pulled outside with the winter wind blowing. I had it so cold that a wrench almost stuck to my hand. And if you went out towards the tip of the Hook, which they used to dump garbage way at the end by the Coast Guard. You go out there and the chill factor sometimes would be 40 below. (Tape stops and restarts.) The officer of the day....

PD: This would be a private bathroom on sort of the west side of this building and this is the officer of the day's private bath. (Tape stops and restarts.) We are now west from S-434 toward a small building that is called T-435 (1955). On the south side of this building is an old rusty shell. What was this used for?



Building 435, Boiler House. Photo taken in 2003.

RM: Basically generator.

PD: Generator?

RM: Basically what it was. We had reserve power. This is a small one. They had big ones down a ways. Basically it would supply power to this immediate area.

PD: That shell keeps the door jammed, the door on the south side jammed shut. (Tape stops and restarts.)

PD: Peter Dessauer and Tom Hoffman are now standing on the front concrete pad of Building S-449 (1959) used for what?



Building 449, Missile Assembly Building. Photo taken in 2003.

TH: This was the Missile Assembly Building, Pete. And this is where they bring in the parts of a Nike Hercules for assembly. There were three parts and two of the parts were assembled here to my knowledge. That would be the booster section, the booster rockets were the lower part and then there was the white part, the white metal part which would be the middle part. That would be the second stage which would launch off the warhead. The warhead was the third part mounted on top. That was mounted at the other building.

PD: Now, just to the south of this building we see 150 feet away on the barbed wire fence a pond. Could you tell me about that?

TH: Yes. It is kind of interesting because we have a real detailed map of Sandy Hook done in 1889 and the pond is marked on that map clearly. It is called a round pond. At that time it was round like we see it here. It was very, very round but then going extending to the west of us and extending northward up the Hook the pond continued and ran into a marshy area right here where the buildings (are). Of course, when they built this missile site they filled in that pond and marshy area. That's gone.

PD: What is this used for now, this Building S-449?

TH: By the Sandy Hook Maintenance Division. You can look in here and see one of the maintenance division trucks for storage and actually they don't do the vehicle maintenance here. That is done up in the other area in Fort Hancock.

PD: What sort of maintenance work do they perform from this Nike Missile Site?

TH: Well, from here they take out the beach trucks. The trucks that go up and down the beaches here, Ocean Bathing Area 1 and numbers 2 and these trucks pick up the garbage out of the green cans. At the end of the summer they bring in the cans, the lifeguard stands and also all the snow fencing.

PD: What do you know about the present condition of the building? It looks like it might need to be repainted but beyond that.

TH: Right. That is the story of Fort Hancock's buildings. The Army kept up the maintenance fairly well. There is an eastern cottontail rabbit. But as you can see in the past five years especially with all the storms that come in here, the buildings need at least on the exterior need a good paint job. The poison ivy is taking over all over here as you can see.

PD: We are now both walking on the east side of Building S-449. We are now walking to a building which has earth berms surrounding it on all four sides and then large night lights. This is Building S-450, 450 (1959).



Building 450, Warhead Assembly Building in 2003. Image shows hoist system.

TH: This is your Warhead Assembly Building. After they had assembled the two stages of the Nike Hercules rocket back at 449 they would bring it out here to 450 where the third part, the top part of the warhead was assembled. These large earthworks around it are probably a blast slope in case a blast went here the blast would go up on either side.

PD: Now it looks like it is designed like a car, a modern car wash.

TH: That's right. It's basically intact inside. It is very clean inside. There is a linoleum floor and it's used for storage by the maintenance division here and also by the lifeguards. They have had some of their lifeguard boats put in here in past years since this became a National Park.

PD: What do they store in here? Do you have any idea?

TH: It was everything. The chief ranger had fire fighting tools, different tools stored in here. Signs, like I said the Lifeguard Division had some of their boats stored in here. Also every now and then there would a truck in here. No actual maintenance done on the trucks here. It was done strictly for storage.

PD: We are now walking inside Building S-450. And we see they have a tractor which pulls a beach rake machine.

TH: Okay, since the last time I was in here there was a nice floor in here. It is all gone down. As is most of the, they used to have benches and things to store wooden benches on either side of the walls here. And you can see where they used to be, the frames. But everything has been removed so they can have their beach cleaners stored in here because every morning the Maintenance Division goes out very early in the morning and cleans the beaches here for the public.

PD: Looking at the ceiling or roof construction we can see I beams nearly 12 inches deep and just below that we have another I beam system that was used for what?

TH: Right here, the main one that is going overhead was for probably for the work in here with the missile body and the warheads winching the warhead to the front of the body.

PD: I see. They hung it from that.

TH: That's right.

PD: And then they could slide it around.

TH: Right. Easier access, after all once they had everything put together that weighed an awful lot. So, they probably put this to the best of their advantage.

PD: We are outside again, Tom. Now just on the south side of the large concrete pad goes through building S-450 east-west direction you have this undulating concrete pad.

TH: Right.

PD: In the concrete surface.

TH: Yeah.

PD: What does this mean? What was it used for?

TH: I don't know. It's very interesting. Apparently they did something in here. They have something over there like a light fixture and something used to be, holes used to be set over there but I have no idea unless this was a cleaning area because you could see right there pipes.

PD: Right. Drainage pipes.

TH: Drainage pipes and perhaps this is where they actually washed off the Nike Hercules missile right here after they had all been all together.

PD: Gave those babies a bath.

TH: That's right. (Tape stops and restarts.)

PD: We are now standing at the far east end of the surrounding barbed wire fence. This point there is a chain link fence gate. This is now open and at this point you said Tom, that the beach combing machines exit and return from making their forays to collect the garbage that the public has littered all over our beautiful sand of Sandy Hook

TH: That's right. They will go right out of here and most of them will go right over to the south to go down to the OBAs (beach areas) to clean up all the garbage and everything here and then return back in here where you have the metal trash collectors right here.

PD: We are now walking north from the east end gate and we are nearing the fenced in silo area. When do you want to visit that? Tomorrow?

TH: Yeah we will have to because only 2 other park personnel have the key for that lock on the door that will lead us down inside.

PD: Now standing at the northwest corner of the Nike silo compound at the kennels and we can see just beyond the barbed wire fence on the west side of the kennels is the other half of the marsh. In the middle of which is the Nike Missile camp that was installed by the Army when the Missile Site was constructed in what year?

TH: I would date this around 1958. (The Launching Area Pits were constructed in 1955. The dog kennels were constructed in 1958.) The major part of the construction plus the silos is probably around 1958.

PD: Alright Tom, tell me what you know about these kennels and what they were used for?



Building 458, Kennel Building. Photo taken in 2003.

TH: Okay for security of the Missile Launch Site they had soldiers that were trained with German Sheppard guard dogs and the dogs, of course, were kept in the kennels right here. And their handlers were assigned to take them around the perimeter here for security to hunt out anything or for intruders. Here you go. You got one here. (Dog barking in distance.)

PD: Tom Hoffman and myself are standing on a concrete block just below a telephone pole which is just between Building T-429 (1958) and the entrance into the Nike Silo Compound. We can't find any trace of what it used to be on the historic map. What is your information say?

TH: Okay, this is on the older map I have gotten a copy of for you Pete. Its 448 (1958), Sentry Control Station.

PD: Oh, another one.

TH: Yeah. It says masonry here, 96 square feet if this is the correct site but this doesn't look like it was masonry. It looks like it was very, very temporary by looking at these bolts. Let's just make sure. That is 429 down there behind us. (Tape stops and restarts.)

PD: We are now standing at Building T-429 (1958). What do you think this was used for Tom? It looks like a gasoline pump.

TH: Yeah, I am trying to find it here on our list. It's a generator building. It's a generator building, corrugated iron and it now has the number T-429. It used to be S-429.

PD: Do you know anything else about it?

TH: No, but it is on the earliest map so it probably goes back to the late fifties when they built the site.

PD: It goes back to the late '50s. It is now used by the Maintenance Department and they store paint in there.

TH: They do painting in there. They paint the green trash cans in there. They also used to have a couple of scooters, electric scooters in here, stored here at one time back around 1977. The paint area... (tape stops and starts)

PD: We are now walking by structure S-447 (1959). What was this used for?



Building S-447. Photo taken in 2003.

TH: Okay on our master list, Paint and Oil Storage Building. Masonry and still has S-447 on it. On the master list it was just 447.

PD: What is it used for now?

TH: It might be the same thing. It is still be used by our Maintenance Division because there is a Maintenance Division lock on it. (Tape stops and restarts)

PD: We are now at another guard house. This is S-456. (1960)

TH: Right another guard shelter. It's the inner shelter. We started today over at the outer shelter near the main road, Hartshorne Drive but now we are inside near the inner fence gate which was more high priority as Russ (Marsh) was saying. This was more important here because now we are entering back into the silo area where the missiles were kept.

PD: It is not in good condition is it?

TH: No. Broken windows, broken windows in the door. Paint really chipping away in an area here and there in the corner.

PD: Exterior badly weathered. There is no ventilation in the soffits. Even a telephone apparatus in the interior is torn apart. (Tape stops and restarts.)

TH: Russ was saying they were more like trailers, mobile.

PD: Alright we are passing by the concrete pad of...

TH: Number 460 (c.1955 Transformer Shed)

PD: Number 460. And Russ said they contained little trailers here.

TH: Yeah. They, top secret, he couldn't divulge what they were really used for. We have on the master list that they were conversion houses here made of steel and some kind of air conditioning units made of metal and that these were self contained pre fabricated trailer units that stood on these sites here that were connected with the missile operation.

PD: But on both, in each case in 459 and 460 you have this large concrete pad and then just at the west end.
(Ends abruptly)

END OF INTERVIEW