

Oral History Interview with Albin Zwiazek
52nd Coast Artillery Battery C, 1937 -1939
Interviewed by: Elaine Harmon and Tom Hoffman, NPS 11/11/1982
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2 CDs

Today is November 11, 1982 and I'm Museum Technician Elaine Harmon interviewing Mr. Albin E. Zwiazek who was at Fort Hancock as a soldier with the 52nd Coast Artillery in 1937.

EH: We are standing at the intersection. Behind us is the old YMCA building #40, the 1901 brick building, the YMCA and we're facing the brick path now, which is a red brick terra cotta path which curves around the parade grounds. To our left are a series of four barracks and then a double barracks. The barracks are #'s 25, 24, 23, 22 and then on the very end is building #74. I think, Mr. Zwiazek you could talk a little bit about when you arrived and your Company.

AZ: Well, I arrived here on February 20, 1937 that was on a Saturday afternoon. And we reported – another fella and I were sworn in together at Newark. We were sent to Post Headquarters here where Master Sergeant DeLyle who was Sergeant Major and asked us which Battery we would like to serve in. There were vacancies in E Battery and C Battery in the 52nd Coast Artillery. When he told us that C Battery had the larger guns, we told him we wanted to be in C Battery. So he told us where to go. We had to report to building #74 north, which is where the Orderlies Room was located for C Battery. From there we were sent to Building 23 where we lived for many months.

EH: We are looking at Building 25 which is currently the Army Reserve Building, which is very soon to leave here, by the way, the Lightning Division (78th USAR Division) has a new home base, but we're noticing that above the West entrance there are three archways and above those are three archways are three red panels which Mr. Zwiazek was just wondering that by his theory, there was a sign above that doorway because it appears like a framework for what would have been a sign attached to it. But what do you remember about Building 25?

AZ: Well, Building 25 housed the Headquarter Battery of the 52nd Coast Artillery. And I remember they had a little Military Police Detachment. The person in charge of it was a Corporal and – I don't remember what his first name was, but he was called "Sparky" Adams. He later became a Sergeant and they had an office on the ground floor of Building 25 in the North section of the Building. That was Military Police Headquarters. I think they had about six men who were Military Police. This was occupied mostly, by Headquarters Battery plus Military Police. It wasn't a Military Police Company, it was just a detachment so they were part of Headquarters Battery of the 52nd Coast Artillery.

EH: We're approaching Barracks 24.

AZ: Barracks 24 housed members of the Quartermaster Corps, the Motor Repair Service, various maintenance personnel that were not in the combat Batteries, were housed in Building 24.

EH: Were you ever in it, actually inside of it?

AZ: Yes I was. I went into Building 24 once in awhile to see some “skin-flint” Corporal who used to sell Canteen Checks and make a profit on them. So we used to come in here to buy Canteen Checks. I can mention another thing, there was a Corporal Coleman who took his life in this building by firing a rifle into his head and that was in January 1938. So some people became depressed and occasionally a life was taken.

EH: Do you recall that the main traffic was between the Barracks and the Mess Hall at that time was the road actually different? Because historic photos showed that the actual main road did weave in between the Mess Halls and the Barracks.

AZ: When we were here there was really a walkway. Vehicles came through once in awhile. They had CCC trucks and they used to do maintenance around here but most of the time this was a walkway. It wasn't a thoroughfare like you have now on the other side of these Mess Hall buildings.

EH: We are standing at the West entrance to Building 23. We're noticing that in the middle archway, there is still a faint, black paint that says “23” and below the archway, are eight steps, some of which are crumbling. And fortunately Barracks 23 is not occupied and is truly in the worst condition of all the Barracks along the Parade Grounds here. The second story porch, is by far, in the worst condition. Now you can see right through it and see the daylight. The brick work is also in great need of major repair. So we have the sad experience of being in front of the Barracks that is in the worst condition and this happened to be the one that Mr. Zwiazek had occupied. While we're on the steps approaching the doorway why don't we talk about the daily occurrences on these steps?

AZ: Well, we used to “fall out” here the first formation in the morning at 6:25am for Reveille. We had a concrete strip out in front of all these buildings and that's where we would form in two ranks. Before the new Drill came into effect in 1939 we had two ranks, later on we had three. And we would fall out here for Reveille and the person in command of the group would salute the Officer of the Day who was stationed out on the Parade Grounds. And they started from Building 25, Headquarters Battery, and they reported to the Officer of the Day and that would be the first formation. And we would have another formation at 8 o'clock, when we were going out for Close Order Drill, back at 8:45, and we'd have a formation at 9 o'clock we were sent out to work details. We would be out here again at 1 p.m. for work, or for Drill or to go out to the guns and we also would have a Retreat formation. We'd fall out here for Retreat. But if it was a day when we were going to have a Parade we would march out there onto the Parade Ground and fall out there in the middle of the Parade Ground and march out over there to where the Headquarters Building is and make a “column left” there, in front of the flag pole is

make another “column left” and march south behind the Officers Quarters. The Reviewing Stand would be where the Commanding Officer’s house was. We would “pass and review”. And we went down there where the last Officers Quarters was and be dismissed. Oh, excuse me, we wouldn’t be dismissed there. We would make a “column left” and march over toward our respective Barracks and we would be dismissed in front of our Barracks. It was a very good set up here and if you were going on Guard, you would “fall out” in front of your building. Say two or three men out of each building. First group would march out from Building 74 and they’d march over to the next building and pick up some more men there. All the way down until they had the full compliment and then they would march to the Guardhouse which would be ...

EH: Building 28.

AZ: Building 28, north of the Barracks.

EH: I never noticed that there is, in fact, poured concrete on each west side of the Barracks which in historic photos appears as the red brick path dissecting the main path. And it was poured concrete into thirty squares by three squares and long strips for the formations. And that’s exactly what they were used for. When you talked about “falling out” that was the intention of it. But in the old photos it appears, simply, as an extension of the brick path at a 90 degree angle, when we looked in the 1910 photos. So apparently, there were some changes even in the 1930’s at some point perhaps, it’s hard to say when.

AZ: When I came here, the concrete was here. I’m not saying these concrete slabs were here then but they had the concrete here and it was a very good place to “fall out”, “fall in” rather, “fall out” is when you leave, “fall in” was when you start your formation and it was a nice place to set your feet so you could stand at a perfect formation when you were dressed properly. If you were standing on uneven ground you wouldn’t look right. Lots of times we would “fall out” when we were going to a Parade and they would have us lined up according to height, exactly. And with this concrete it was easy to do because it was level. On the brick walk or on the grass it wouldn’t look that good. We would do it here, and then we would march off. And incidentally, on November 11, 1937 we went to Trenton to an Armistice Day Parade there. We “fell out” here late in the afternoon and we went by truck to Trenton and had the Parade there. Governor Hoffman was in the Reviewing Stand.

EH: And you’re only here forty-five years later.

AZ: If someone ever asked me if I would come back here in 1982 to talk about this, I would have said no. I didn’t think I would be around here that long.

EH: Do you remember the Parade Ground looking pretty much like this with sycamore like trees?

AZ: These trees right here in front of our barracks were three or four inches in diameter, maybe five, the most.

EH: Now they are very mature trees.

AZ: Now they look like they are about two feet in diameter.

EH: Right. And do you recall the pine trees near the flag pole? What was near the flag pole, by the way, were there saluting guns?

AZ: Two seventy-five millimeter saluting guns. They had wooden artillery wheels with metal around the wood, instead of tires, instead of rubber tires. There were two guns because both guns would be loaded and if one misfired, immediately, the second one would be fired. Now that was the duty of the Corporal. A Corporal and two men would walk from the Guardhouse to that position where the guns were, the flag pole is right there. And the Corporal would load the gun in the morning for Reveille and the two men with him would get the flag ready to run up the pole. And when the time came, the Sergeant of the Guard, on the porch of the Guardhouse, would give the signal for the Corporal to fire the gun. He fired it exactly at 6:15 a.m.. The gun would go off and the flag would be raised and the bugler would sound Reveille.

EH: Was the gun a big boom sounding...

AZ: Yes, you heard that gun all over the Post. I don't think there was any place on Fort Hancock where you couldn't hear that gun when it went off. It was a blank cartridge and it was a .75 millimeter which is approximately 3 inches in diameter and it made a lot of noise. Everyone woke up when you heard it and of course you heard the bugle.

EH: Was there anything else surrounding that flagpole? Was there a speaker system or anything?

AZ: There was a megaphone on a pipe. The bugler could move it around. He would face south and he would sound his call. And he would turn the megaphone around, it swiveled on like a water pipe, a three inch, two and a half inch pipe, he would turn that megaphone around and face it north where Headquarters Battery of the 7th Coast Artillery was located and then he would repeat that call. And if they had a fire, all the buglers on the Post were required to repeat that call. When they heard the Bugler of the Guard, the Bugler of the Guard sounded all calls for a 24 hour period, and if there was any emergency like a fire, all the buglers had to pick up on that call and get out on these porches of these barracks and sound off. It was thrilling. They would be running out to the fire pulling carts, running with fire extinguishers and what not. It was interesting, everything was done by the bugler. The timing was accurate. I can tell you one thing about our bugler. I was on guard one day, while we are talking about buglers, he forgot a call. He was a new bugler and he forgot a call. So he says "Al, do you know how so-and-so goes?" If I hear it I'd recognize it, but I wasn't a bugler. I said make something up. He went out there and blew this call. Right after the call was finished the Corporal

of the Guard got a phone call from the Commanding Officer. He said what the kind of call was that? They listen for the call. Everybody listens for the call. They sounded many calls like: Reveille, First Call. Recall, First call in the afternoon, Adjutants Call, First Call in the morning, Retreat, Tattoo at night. 9:15 (p.m.), lights out. Later on they changed it to 9:30 (p.m.). We used to go to sleep at 9:30. We were young boys, eighteen, nineteen, twenty, we needed our rest. Eleven o'clock the bugler would blow the last call, which was Taps. And then he went to sleep and the Corporal of the Guard would wake him in the morning to blow First Call, Reveille, unless something happened during the night. If we had some fire call.

EH: Do you have any special comments about the concrete path that starts out between barracks 23 and 22 and then leads up to the Commanding Officers house on Officers Row, building #12?

AZ: That path was here when I came here and I never knew why it was here. I don't know now, but maybe a Commanding Officer wanted to walk across the Parade Ground and dew was on the grass and he didn't want to get his feet wet. So he had this walk installed. They used to do things like that. So, I really don't know. That's just guess work on my part. That sidewalk, concrete path, was here then and I'm surprised of the condition it's in. It's in pretty good shape.

EH: At the beginning of that path there is sort of an odd street light. What would the street lights here be like, outdoor lighting? Do you have any recollection?

AZ: I don't recall if these were the lights that were here then or not.

EH: They seem too modern, actually.

AZ: I don't think so. I think we had lights on these metal poles, porcelain clad metal, like ...

EH: With a curved neck?

AZ: I think that's what we had here.

EH: There's one still remaining of that old World War I style out by the Officers club, still on these grounds, but I think that is the last one of these old vanishing light poles.

AZ: Lighting was very inadequate out here then.

EH: And it still is, actually.

AZ: The Parade Ground looked in better condition. They didn't have the back stop here. That Pershing Field sign wasn't there because it wasn't called Pershing Field.

EH: How was it referred to in your time, as Parade Grounds?

AZ: Parade Grounds. I'd like to tell you about another use that this Parade Grounds had beside, Parades and Reviews and playing host to visiting dignitaries and what not. We used to have an airplane come over here from Mitchel Field on Long Island. We used to have the anti aircraft gun practice. We had these guns behind what we now call the Visitors Center. And we used to buy these guns in a sleeve that the plane towed, long, like you see at airports, looks like an elephant's trunk but much larger. Well, we used to fire at this sleeve. And when we were finished with this, the plane would fly over the Parade Ground and drop the sleeve here so we could count the bursts that mutilated the sleeve. So they'd fly over low and just drop the thing on the Parade Ground. People that were in charge of this would pick the sleeve up and see how we did. And we used to do a lot of close order Drill out here in the mornings. Like from 8 o'clock to about a quarter to nine, just about every morning, unless we had a snow storm. Close order Drill we used to call Infantry Drill – marching, executing various manual of arms and various maneuvers, which was good.

EH: Was the northern part of the Parade Ground referred to as the Athletic Field? Because there is definitely a street that bisects it and then there is the northern part. Because in some photos it's called the Athletic Field.

AZ: I don't know about that. I never heard it referred to as that. Maybe it was, but I don't recall that. I know they used to play here on this part of the field where we are now.

EH: On the southern part..

AZ: Right. They used to practice here...as a matter of fact, I have a photograph somewhere of a football team. They were photographed right here on this field. I can tell by the buildings in the background.

EH : We tried to enter Building 23 but its all boarded up that, unfortunately, we really can't get in. We're looking at the east façade, the length of the building has a wooden porch with six columns, double staircase, leading to the center doorway. There is also, below the front porch, a rather steep stairwell going into the stone foundation and double doors secured down below. There is also one side doorway to the left, or south, of the main double doors on the wooden porch. And perhaps, Al can talk about that. There's three windows to the left of that side door and two windows to the right. And then there's the double doors from left to right and a series of five windows. The second story has the identical dimension windows, five on either side of a center doorway which is directly above the main entrance which is on a balcony, actually, center doorway leading out to the balcony which has a double iron railing and a side ladder on the south end which is probably like a fire emergency ladder. But I think it would be best described by Al Zwiazek.

AZ: Well, we're on this side of the building that you just described and I'd like to mention that we could walk in and out of the building on this side if we were wearing fatigues. We could not go out the front of the building.

EH: The west side?

AZ: That's the front that faces the Parade Ground. You're not to be seen there, unless you were going out on a detail, then we would fall out there. But if we had to go anywhere, to the Mess Hall or anywhere else, incidentally to go to the Mess Hall, we had to walk to Building 74 and we would wear our Class A Uniform. We would dress. But we would always walk out the back exits.

EH: East side?

AZ: East side of the building. And if you look all the way across, there's a hallway going across from the east side to the west side of the building, there's a doorway all the way down on the right side. That is where the man who was in "charge of quarters" stayed for 24 hours. He was the fella who locked up the rifle racks at night, put the lights out, gave you your mail, call you if you had to go on Guard, because if someone had become ill and you had to replace that person, he was the one who would get you. He was on duty for 24 hours. He was in charge of the barracks for 24 hours. Usually he was a Private First Class. And when I became a Private First Class, I thought it was great to have a job like that, you know. For 24 hours, you were sort of like the "boss" here. You know things like that – the rifles, issuing things. So that was the room. So if you walk through here from the east side walk through the main entrance at the far end the door on the right is where the fella that was in "charge of quarters" stayed. Upstairs, they had two or three small rooms, I don't even recall how many, too bad we couldn't get in, but on that side, the left side of the building looking at it from the east side, was the Squad Room. There were like three rows of bunks up there. And on this side, on the north side of the building, there was also a Squad Room. They were equal in size.

EH: On the second story?

AZ: On the second story. That's where I spent many months on the right side of the building, the north side of the building. Then the older soldiers, the soldiers that were here awhile would be sent over to Building 74 and the recruits would come here. And later some us were sent here to show the recruits how to be soldiers because we knew how to shine our shoes well, and all that stuff. That is where most of the men stayed, in this building. They had that room for "charge of quarters", the men's room was over here on the lower floor, showers there and what not, but there was no Mess Hall in this building. The building east of it was not used as a Mess Hall when I was first here. We used to have to walk over to Building 74 where C Battery had their Mess Hall and that's where we ate.

EH: What was on this first floor, south end?

AZ: I don't recall. If I was in there maybe I could think it out. I don't recall what was over here.

EH: Do you remember the color scheme? Was it painted a buff wall ...

AZ: Ah... always the same. I know because I painted it. The ceilings were high there.

EH: That's right, they were extremely high.

AZ: If we could get in there I could show you where someone hung a barracks bag belonging to a guy, on a hook in the ceiling. These people stacked up about six or seven footlockers to get up there. And when this fella came back from pass, he couldn't get at his barracks bag 'cause it was hanging from the ceiling. The color was buff and brown. The trim, the woodwork was brown. I wielded many a paint brush around here, like when firing season was over, I remember those colors well. We had a heavy Corporal by the name of Klump. He used to be like the overseer, you know, taskmaster. He used to get us up on these scaffolds up there and "okay, come on, a little bit more, little bit more". And we used to go like crazy.

EH: It's very tiring.

AZ: Especially when you paint ceilings.

EH: Tin ceilings, especially

AZ: So, our barracks were comfortable though. They were warm....

EH: What heated the buildings?

AZ: They had coal, soft coal, I think it was. The boiler room was in the basement. We had coal delivered now and then.

EH: Was it warm and comfortable?

AZ: It was good. The barracks were all right. For a place like this where the wind blew all the time, its cold in the winter, the barracks were comfortable. I don't ever recall the barracks being cold or anything like that.

EH: Was there a reason for the door, on the second floor there, leading out to the balcony?

AZ: That's mostly because of the fire....

EH: Fire exit. We have some historic photos in the Museum of all the linens being aired over that railing. The blankets were hung out for the day.

AZ: The one Lakomie gave you?

EH: Yes, I think so.

AZ: Well, I'm gonna tell you which railing it was. It wasn't this one.

EH: You can tell the exact spot, I'm sure.

AZ: It was on a Friday, because we used to do this on a Friday. We had a formation in front of the barracks, it was in front of Building 74, and Mike Lakomie took these photographs. He was in the C.C.C. running around here with a camera and he photographed them. I told him, "you took this picture on a Friday". He said, "how do you know?" I said because the mattresses were hanging out there. Every Friday we used to hang them out there. And we used to get our clean sheets from the laundry in Staten Island, take the stuff in and then Saturday morning we'd have Inspection. It was done here too. But that photograph happened to me taken in front of that building Building 74. They did it here too, because we didn't have any rust here or anything. These places were in good shape. That metal work up there on top of this porch was well painted and not rusted so you didn't dirty your mattress up there.

EH: Was the paint basically this dark green trim and battleship gray stoops and steps? Is that what you remember? Which is now quite weathered and faded.

AZ: Right. I think that's exactly the same, dark green and battleship gray. As a matter of fact, even the Supply Room, I hate to mention this but since you're talking about battleship gray now, I'm talking about another building now. The Supply Room was in the basement of Building 74 and the floor was painted. Every few months they painted that floor. There must have been fifty coats of paint on it to make it look good. It always had to look nice. They'd paint shovels and what not that we used on the guns. You're not supposed to use them. Certain ones were for use and the others were just for show. And they were layered with paint. You couldn't dig a hole with a painted shovel coated with – almost like enamel. Anyway, getting back to this building, I'm sorry to see that it's in such condition. But it was good here. We were all young and healthy. The building was comfortable. The only thing we lacked here was the Mess Hall. Rain or shine we'd have to run over to the other building, which wasn't that short.

EH: We're walking now on the street that faces the Fire House, which is Building 76, which is now located in a little triangle. And just to the west of it is the first Mess Hall that adjoins the barracks in a line which is directly behind barracks 25 is Mess Hall 58 just to the west of it. And Mr. Zwiazek can tell us who was in each Mess Hall, for example, starting with building 58.

AZ: Well building 58, Headquarters Battery.... Building 25, Headquarters Battery 52nd Coast Artillery ate in this Mess Hall Building 58. Sergeant Andrew Barker was Mess Sergeant here. And the people from the Quartermaster Corps and the other support

groups here, the MRS-Motor Repair Service – people like that, lived in Barracks 24, they also ate here in Building 58.

EH: In Building 58.

AZ: They only had two Mess Halls here for these barracks. This one was open. Other buildings that look like this building, were used for other purposes. But this was the Mess Hall for Headquarters Battery of the 52nd and the Quartermaster Corps next door. In other words, for the occupants of Buildings 25 and 24.

EH: And also of the Guardhouse.

AZ: And the prisoners from the Guardhouse marched here because this was the nearest Mess Hall, and they were fed here. Each meal they were marched here. Some people say they used to rotate Mess Halls. I don't recall that at all because I marched prisoners here to go to eat and they came to this Mess Hall.

EH: The next Mess Hall we come to is Building 57 and I wonder is there anything notable in your memory?

AZ: I can't tell you the uses that all these buildings were put to because I don't recall. I don't know anything about this one. I don't know what was in here.

EH: 57 is right across from Barracks 24 and its in the exact identical style of all the Mess Halls in this line of four Mess Halls, sort of a peaked dormer top and a boxy bottom and a west side porch having about six or seven wooden steps and supported by three columns. Same stone foundation, same 1898/1900 more or less, construction techniques. We're approaching Mess Halls 56 and 55 which are adjacent to Barracks 23 and 22. Mr. Zwiazek was speculating which of the two Mess Halls 56 or 55 was the one that seemed to have the musicians practicing all the time. And he said he could still remember all the sounds coming out of that particular Mess Hall, 56 or 55.

AZ: I'm kicking it around back and forth, and I can't make up my mind if it was this building or this one. One of these two. I don't want to give you the wrong information. I know it was right in this area. It had to be one of these buildings. I was in this building 23 and later I was in 74.

EH: What were the instruments that you recall hearing the sounds of? Bugles, for sure.

AZ: Bugles, trumpets, they used a lot of trumpets, clarinets, I guess, saxophones, drums. They could separate that band and had like a drum and bugle corps. And most of the buglers played clarinets – not clarinets – trumpets.

EH: We're on the second story porch of Building 74 and we're in the north wing of it. And we noticed that on the northern most doorway of the second story is still a small red sign that says "Kitchen". And we're remarking that that was, in one wing, the original

kitchen that Mr. Zwiazek remembers from 1937. We're in the north wing in(talking in the background)..... What year are you talking about here?

Someone answers (TH)?: This was '79.

EH: Really?

AZ: Inaudible about 1979.

EH: Ok, let's have a quick commentary.

AZ: The old black stoves?

TH?: No these were, you know, like pizza ovens.

AZ: Oh, really. When I was here they had these ancient black stoves. They used to cook bread right on top of the metal, toasted bread, you know. Right along here they had....

EH: The north wing we are talking about? Second floor....

AZ: Yes, the north wing of Building 74 facing the east wall that's where they had these stoves for the kitchen of C Battery. To the left they had a table here where the cooks and the KP's used to eat before the main group came in and have supper. Over on the south wall facing the little courtyard here they had the sinks to wash the dishes along this wall, the south wall. I pulled KP around here. The dishes, the pots and pans, and every time you turned around the Cook had another dirty pot.

EH: Were the dishes the white porcelain on the bottom?

AZ: Right, and then you had the thick cups with no handles on them – coffee cups. The kitchen ended then you had the Dining Room, the cooks lived.....

EH: The cooks lived in the wing?

AZ: Yeah, right in here. That's where the cooks lived.

EH: Were there actual bunks and lockers?

AZ: Yeah, they had everything we had and they were here. And then – this was the entire kitchen here, and the cooks lived on the side. There was a way to go down the basement and here it is over here.

EH: We're opposite Room 116, that we're talking about and there is a door going down to the first floor here.

AZ: They had a storeroom down here off this kitchen and they had a large refrigerator right here.

EH: Right at the stairwell.

AZ: We used to go down here to peel potatoes. This is where they had all the vegetables and stuff. And there was a little store room here where the canned goods were kept. Most of the food was kept down here except the fresh stuff that was brought in and served right away. And one day I was cleaning up everything up here for inspection and I forgot the top of the refrigerator. So the Mess Sergeant walked down and poked his finger on the top of the refrigerator and he got very upset, because I didn't clean it. And I washed about 200 plates out there once at that sink and the Mess Sergeant looked at a couple of them and found dried egg and made me do the whole thing over. I thought I only had to do the ones over that he rejected. I had to do all of them over again, about a couple of hundred plates. And his name was Sandburn and they used to call him Sergeant Murphy. And he was down here he wouldn't touch anything. He'd say "alright wipe this off" "get that empty today". He had an accent, a Jewish accent. "Move this, no, too much, a little back". You'd think he'd move it, no, he wouldn't do anything, because he was a Sergeant, you had to do it. Anyway this basement area here is where the potatoes were stored, and carrots, and whatever, and canned goods and there was a large refrigerator here. Now I'll tell you a very short story about a fella he had acne skin, his name was Rogers. And they had a refrigerator up here also in the kitchen. They had "yeast" cakes in here and I had a couple of pimples. I thought they belonged to the Army. So I took them once and I ate them because I thought they were good for the skin too. So he came in one day when I was on KP and I ate them. He blew his stack. Who ate his yeast cakes? He was bigger than me so I didn't say anything I kept quiet. Our refrigerator was along here.

EH: How funny.

AZ: And then they had the Dining Room.

EH: Did the Dining Room just consist of rows of tables? And chairs?

AZ: The tables were like this.

EH: Long wooden tables.

AZ: Long wooden tables. I would say about, uuhhh, eight or ten people ate there. The first table here was the Non-Commissioned Officers table – all the Sergeants and Corporals were at this table. But every table, in addition to this table, had a Corporal at the head of it. A Corporal at each table and all the Non-Coms that were left would sit at this table near the doors to the kitchen. So they got served first. And if you got up early,

you could be the Dining Room Orderly. You would just clean up in the Dining Room. You wouldn't have to peel potatoes or wash dishes. First people that were here in the morning got the good jobs – Dining Room Orderly jobs. So we used to ask the man who was in charge of quarters to wake us up about 4 o'clock- 4:30, 5 o'clock. But sometimes somebody beat you to it, so you had to peel potatoes and wash dishes. This was a nice room, very clean. This place was immaculate. The floors were cleaned twice a day. The kitchen had a wooden floor. I think this floor here was varnished, the Dining Room, but the kitchen had a bare wood floor. We used to put lye and soap in the water and it was white. The Mess Sergeant was a very, very strict man, but I liked him, he was fair. He was so fair, that one fella walked out and the wind blew the door shut and the man was Court Martialed for some charge and spent thirty days in the Guardhouse.

EH: My goodness.

AZ: That's how fair he was he upset over it. But this looks entirely different but I do recall just how everything was. The kitchen was here, where we're standing now and the other end was the beautiful Dining Room. The way to get in from that hallway, man, we had to wear Class A uniforms. You never ate in there in fatigues. The only people wearing fatigues were the KP's, but they wore them on their job. They would eat before. Like people that were going on guard would eat what they called, "early chow" and the KP's would get early chow so they would be ready when the rest of the troops came in. Once in a blue moon we'd have to pack lunch because we wouldn't be here for lunch. We'd be out on our guns so they would make lunch for us to take out with us.

EH: Do you recall the interior was the old tin ceilings in this building, also, Building 74?

AZ: I was so busy looking down into those big, stainless steel sinks, washing dishes, that I don't know if I ever looked up at the ceiling. I don't remember.

EH: But the general interior was tin ceilings, buff walls, dark woodwork, wainscoting...

AZ: There's a very good chance that it was concealed.

EH: Right, and wood floors, you're talking about oak floors?

AZ: I don't know if that was oak, or ash but it was hardwood. I don't know what kind, maple, maybe maple. White bleached white. It got scuffed up a little but when we left here that night, it was....

EH: Spotless, right.

AZ: After breakfast we used to wash the floor and at night.

EH: Twice a day.

AZ: I don't know if that was good care of wood, but that's the way they used to do it. And the Mess Sergeant here was Sandleburn, Morris Sandleburn, Jewish accent. And we had an Irish Sergeant here we use to call him Sergeant Murphy. So he was known as Sergeant Murphy. I was to report here for duty one day and an Irish fella said go in there and ask for Sergeant Murphy. So I go in and said "Are you Sergeant Murphy?" He said yeah. He didn't bat an eyelash. He knew that I was green. So anyway we were sent in for some work, you know. Overall he wasn't a bad person. This is where you spend your KP days, very long hours.

EH: The south wing of this building is identical.

AZ: Exactly the same thing, but in reverse.

EH: Right, and it's the only U-shaped building with the double barracks, on Fort Hancock. Again that was another Mess Hall, am I correct?

AZ: That was another Battery there and they had their own Mess Hall. Their people came from Building 22. E Battery had people in Building 22.

EH: Right.

AZ: And in Building 74, south. They all ate in the Mess Hall in Building 74 south. C Battery was here Building 74 and the overflow was in Building 23. They occupied half of this Barrack and all of 23. So E Battery people were closer to this building but they had to walk a little further to the Mess Hall. And our building was a little further away but our Mess Hall was closer. This side was C Battery. This is where they had the Battery Commanders Office, this building facing the east, facing the Parade Ground. The Battery Commanders Office was there, the Day Room was there, the Orderly Room was there where the First Sergeant and Battery Clerks were. And in the basement they had all the maintenance shops there. The carpentry shop, the electrician. Below the kitchen was the store room, west of here, under the other portion.....

EH: Under the central part of the building.

AZ: The Supply Room was directly under the Day Room. The Day Room was south of where the Battery Commanders Office was in the hallway there. And when you're walking out to the front of the building you walk by a door on your left side that's the Day Room. The Day Room Orderly had a little room here in the back where he lived. His name was **Alfred T Davy** (?) from Nutley, New Jersey. He was a paratrooper during the War. I couldn't believe it, he jumped out of airplanes. But anyway, he did it. He was the Day Room Orderly for a long time. Then you had Latrine Orderlies, all kinds of orderlies. Full time jobs they had. And the guys cleaning up the latrine, which was down stairs in the front of this building, in the basement. You couldn't go in there if he was cleaning up, that's the way it was. I like this building more than I liked the other building because there's more downstairs. Lots of times on Sunday they used to feed you "sea gull", which was chicken, but we called it "sea gull". See around here, you pick up stuff

like that. And when we had pancakes and sausages for breakfast, that would be “gas check pads” and “primers”. The “gas check” pads go into the breech mechanism, you know. And the primer looked like sausage. The guys say “whatta ya got for breakfast?” Gas check pads and primers. Or SOS, which was good – fried eggs....

EH: You casually mentioned SOS. Could you let me know what that meant?

AZ: Well a lot of people when they hear the expression SOS, they don't know what it is. And I thought I was kind of hesitant about saying the words but if you want me to I'll say em. They mean “Shit On a Shingle”. And what that was was a piece of toast with little pieces of chipped beef in like a gravy/sauce. And that was just poured on like diarrhea on you're your bread. And I like that, I enjoyed it, it was nice and warm. It was good to have that in the winter time, you know, filling. We had that for breakfast. We had – I'll try to recall the menu – on Sunday, that was a nice day because a lot of the fellas would go out on pass, so they had plenty of food. You know they drew rations for those people that were on pass. If they were on furlough they wouldn't draw rations, but if they were on pass they would draw rations so they had plenty of food to go around. In the morning we usually had fried eggs on a Sunday and then at lunchtime we would have what they called “seagull”. I guess if we were out in the Midwest they wouldn't call it “seagull” but around here, since we're near the water here, they called chicken, “seagull”. They said the Mess Sergeant would go out there and catch these seagulls and that was what we were having for lunch. And every Sunday night we would have cold cuts and cheese, every Sunday, without fail, and on Wednesdays. Wednesday afternoon, if there was no gun firing or anything and if you were not on Guard or KP, you'd get the afternoon off. So there were not many people around. So they would use up the cold cuts that they had left over from Sunday and we'd have that for supper. And in the mornings we'd have scrambled eggs once in awhile, fried eggs, SOS. Lunch time we'd have – I used to like the stew, you know, and I enjoyed that. Usually chicken on Sunday, ham, sometimes, you know, fresh ham. Potatoes, we always had potatoes with the meals, except Wednesday night or Sunday night. Let's see, coffee, coffee was always around. They had these cups that had no handles on them. When I first came in the Army they looked so large, I thought I could never drink all that coffee. They were thick, the material was thick.

EH: White porcelain?

AZ: Yeah, I think that's what it was. I think the capacity wasn't that great, I don't think.

EH: Was it a round bowl?

AZ: It was round, I'd say about 3 ½ inches in diameter; very thick, maybe 3/8 of an inch thick round with a flat bottom and no handle on it. But everybody knew how to wrap their fingers around it. I wasn't too much of a coffee drinker but on the cold days it was nice. We used to have soup once in awhile, not too often. For dessert they would have pie. Almost every day we had pie for dessert, but we only got one slice. Whatever it

was, you got one of it. And they served like family style. The Orderly would bring the tray, like I said with the chicken, to the table. And everybody would take a piece or two. Some people would take more than they should have taken and the guy on the end wouldn't get any, see. So the person who cinched the plate, they called it "cinching the plate", you took the last piece, he was supposed to hold up that platter and the waiter would come, or the Orderly, and put more food on it. But when it came to dessert, you only got that one piece. Later on when I was sent to Governors Island, I was detached to a Company there, we could eat all the pie we wanted. But here they sort of rationed it out. The dessert, they always rationed it out. Once in a blue moon we had ice cream, peaches, something like that, a lot of can peaches they had, and spinach. I ate some things here that I never ate before when I first came in the Army, like pumpkin pie. I didn't like the looks of it and I came here and they had it I ate it and I liked it. To this day I like it. I didn't know what I was missing. I don't know how much more I can tell you about.

EH: Was a holiday meal a big event? Like a Christmas dinner here ?

AZ: Thanksgiving and Christmas were a big deal.

EH: I can tell by the menu's that we have in the Museum.

AZ: We they had all those things there, that they had on the menu – nuts, candy, fruit, olives, the whole bit.

EH: It was like a ten course dinner.

AZ: It was quite a feast. And I thought back later that when I was in Europe during the War, I had a Spam sandwich for Christmas dinner. And I thought back to my days at Fort Hancock, and I almost cried. I felt so depressed. But that's all there was so it was eat that or don't eat anything. And it was very cold, but it depends on where you are when you are in the Army and under what conditions. Like here it was Peace Time and the food was good. Some people used to complain. One fella said to me "I don't like this slum". It was stew. SLUM, if you were a cook you would call it slumburner. I met a fella from E Battery here last year at the Quarters #1 and he told me his name and I said what outfit were you with and he said E Battery. That was a slumburner and I knew he was a cook. A civilian would never have know that.

EH: I never would have known that, sure.

AZ: But anyway, SLUM, was stew, and it was good. They had an old Greek restaurant over here in the basement of one of these buildings behind the Museum. So one fella named Al Wonder, said "hey Al lets go down to the restaurant to the Greeks, we don't have to eat this SLUM" we'll buy what we want there. I said no, I like SLUM. I stayed here and ate SLUM. He went and had a hamburger steak. Who knows what the heck was in there, he paid of that right. That stew was better. He was a big shot. You know, we were both PFC's. We thought we were rich guys – went out spending money for this

hamburger steak. Overall, the food was very good there, I enjoyed it. I think I gained a little weight here and more muscular from working out, on the guns and everything.

EH: Do you remember your first day? And give the date too, while you're at it.

AZ: Yes. First day, several of us, maybe 10 – 12 men sworn in at the Recruiting Office in Newark. There was a fella standing next to me by the name of Victor J. Bruzek. He was from a little town called Franklin Township, NJ, near New Brunswick, Somerset County. He and I wound up on the same train coming down here to Fort Hancock. Incidentally, he is still my best friend. That was February 20, 1937. We came here, we came to Highland Beach, on the train. There was a railway bridge across the river. There is a highway interchange there now. We got off the train and we walked down to the Main Gate and there was a fella by the name of Corporal Gandy on duty there then. The Gate was quite close to what they called Sandlass Beach. I saw this pistol and I never saw a pistol like that, a .45 pistol. And I thought, gee, when was I gonna get a chance to fire one of those. It was days later when I was firing one down by one of those old mortar emplacements. That day we reported to Sergeant De Lyle at Headquarters and we asked for C Battery, like I mentioned earlier. The fella who was in charge of quarters had the responsibility of putting us up for the night. This was on a Saturday. And it was a long weekend because the 22nd was George Washington's Birthday and we came here on the 20th. So he put me up in his bunk in Building 74 'cause he was in charge of quarters and he was using the bunk downstairs where the CQ stays. And Vic was put up in someone else's bunk, somebody that was out on pass, probably. And then the next day we were sent over to Building 23 and we slept in bunks there belonging to people that were on pass cause this fella that was on CQ was off CQ the next day and he needed his bunk. Then on Tuesday morning, we reported to the Acting Supply Sergeant. His name was Edward Flaherty. He's the guy that called Sergeant Sandleburn – Sergeant Murphy. So Flaherty took Vic and I to the Quartermaster Corps for our uniforms. We were issued everything that we needed and came back and they issued us our rifle, bayonet, and pistol. That was it for that day. Then the following day we were dressed up in our uniforms and we had to report to the Battery Commander. He was gonna look us over now. Captain Richard C Lowerey, who shortly after that, was dismissed from the Service. He was a stern looking short man with a pock marked face and steel gray crew cut hair. He looked like an officer should look, to me. I had never saw an officer prior to a couple of days earlier. So we reported to him and then we had to go out to what the called "Recruit Drill", they call Basic Training now. There was a Corporal by the name of Hinchey, an old timer. He had us out there. Us, Vic and I, and other fellas that came in several days before us and people from some other Batteries, they combined them. We were out their drilling and running the Manual of Arms, and we did that for several weeks. We had several instructors, later, like Sergeant Stevenson, Van Severin, he was from another Battery. Each one specialized in something. Sergeant Stevenson used my pistol to show the men how to fire a pistol. He said "don't ever drop it in the sand cause they're hard to clean". Mine fell right into the sand. He dropped it right in the sand. So he told me to make sure I cleaned it real good that night – William O. Stevenson. So we did that for several weeks, you know, Recruit Drill, and then we returned to duty. As

soon as you returned to duty, they put you on a roster. KP, or going on Guard. You got a big thrill, big shot, going on Guard, you were in charge, in charge of all Government property. But the first night, the Officer of the Day, did a job on me. He was going to the Officers Club with his wife, who was a beautiful woman, he stopped in his car and he was going to question me. Sees this Recruit on Guard and “how long are you in the Army? Who’s the Secretary of War? Who’s the Chief of Staff. Who’s this and what’s that?”

EH: The third degree, huh?

AZ: Oh yeah, and I’m standing there with my raised pistol and its raining and my pistol is getting soaked and the water is running down into the barrel of it. His wife is within two feet of me and she’s looking at me and I’m sort of shook up, over this beautiful lady looking at me. She wasn’t admiring me but she was looking at me. And her husband was on the other side of the car where the steering wheel was and he’s questioning me and his wife’s between us. And he’s really – not putting me down – but making me feel like some kind of a dummy. So, I knew all the answers, we were all briefed on that stuff but I just felt very uncomfortable with this beautiful lady staring at me. And name was Patrick J. Guiney (?) Jr. He was a First Lieutenant. I understand he was a West Pointer. And I don’t care if he likes it or not, I’m gonna say it. He was the sloppiest looking West Pointer.....

End of CD 1

AZ: Well, anyway, we kept performing various duties going out on the work details and drilling with the Battery, you know, once you turned to duty you joined the rest of the Battery. They put you on this duty roster and you took your turn doing various chores. And then when spring came, we went out to the guns; the large cannons we were involved with. We would clean them, remove the cosmoline that was put on the fall before and get them ready for firing. And then we’d be very busy all summer long firing our 12 inch railway mortars, plus other guns. We would fire guns for West Point Cadets who camped here during the summer and ROTC’s, CMPC’s, Reserve Officers, National Guard troops from Delaware that used to come up here. We’d fire these various guns like Battery Granger. We’d fire the 1-5-5’s on the beach. The mortars we fired were usually around May, the first guns we would fire. We fire the anti aircraft guns which were located, like I mentioned earlier, right behind what is now known as the Visitors Center. We had concrete emplacements there for these guns. Several guns we fired, mostly Granger and mortars and E Battery, the Battery next door would fire the guns at Kingman and Mills. Each Battery had certain Gun Batteries assigned to them for firing and maintenance and we used to split the chores between E Battery and C Battery. Headquarters Battery of the Coast Artillery was a mine planting operation. They used to go out on the General EOC ORD and put mines out in the Bay. The only time we met those men was when we went on Guard. You had so many men from each Battery. And you’d meet them in the Guardhouse. I should tell you how many men were involved. Well the Guard was headed by a Sergeant, Sergeant of the Guard. A real large Guard,

they had Sergeant of the Guard and Commander of the Guard. Here we didn't have that. We had three Corporals, a bugler who blew all the calls for 24 hours and you had three men for each post and you had four posts, that's 12 Privates or Privates First Class. And you had two extra men who mounted Guard. Of all the men that were there, two were selected as Orderlies, that's why there were two extra men. The two extra ones may not be the Orderlies but they could replace the ones picked for Orderlies. Post #1 was the only Post that was walked 24 hours a day. That Post was walked on the sidewalk in front of the Guardhouse.

EH: Directly in front of the Museum.

AZ: In front of the Museum on the sidewalk on the concrete. At six o'clock in the evening that Sentry came back to where the bricks were, out by the porch, the brick walk, and he walked that brick walk. Every fifteen minutes he would walk around the Guardhouse.

EH: Completely around?

AZ: Completely around. This was in the evening from six at night till six in the morning. And if you ever saw the Sentry walking at the Unknown Soldiers Tomb, that's the way they walked here. Just like that, very Military. There was two on and four off. They'd walk about a half an hour then they would be relieved, someone else takes over. Here we walked two hours straight. And if you didn't become an Orderly like the Colonel's Orderly or the Adjutant's Orderly, it was sort of an honor to be picked to walk Post #1 cause that was the show Post. You had certain duties to perform. I used to walk my share of Post #1. I made Orderly a number of times. As a matter of fact I gave you people a Pass that an Orderly gets. He gets like a day and half off after he completes his tour as Orderly. He sleeps in his own Barracks at night. But in this building, the room we are sitting in now, the side we are on now....

EH: This is the North West corner of the Museum, Building 28.

AZ: Well, this room, was the room where the Corporal of the Guard sat. He had a telephone here and a buzzer. There was one post where the buzzer was sounded by the Sentry and the Corporal would hear that here in this room and he would know that everything was all right up to that point on that post #4. The buzzer was sounded outside a little building across from Battery Potter. There was no paving there on those streets. It was just gravel roads. People sneaking up on you at night, you'd hear them. A Sergeant did that to me one night. I think I told you about that. Did I tell ya that?

EH: I don't think so.

AZ: Well, let me tell you. This Sergeant's name was Red Potter. I forget his first name, they called him "Red". He was Sergeant of the Guard and I was Sentry at Post #4. I just sounded the buzzer, turned the crank to sound the buzzer outside this building we are in now, the Museum. And I walked over across this gravel walk, to the area in front of

Battery Potter where I was going to check the lock on those wrought iron gates. You were supposed to do that, every half hour had to check those locks. So I was walking to where I could hear an echo in that tunnel in Battery Potter. I heard these fast approaching footsteps getting closer and closer. This was 2-3 in the morning and it was dark around there. I'm armed with a pistol. At the beginning we carried pistols, later on we carried rifles. I'm armed with this pistol. We were instructed to remove the pistol from its holster and hold it up at a 45 degree angle before we gave the command "Halt !" After 11 o'clock at night that was the time when we would challenge anyone we saw or heard. So I hear these footsteps but I don't see anyone and they're getting closer and closer and I hear them in this tunnel. So I turn around, get into a dark spot, and challenge them. I got my pistol out and hollered "Halt !". And I heard like skidding, on the gravel. This person stopped. I said "Who's there?" "Sergeant of the Guard". I said "advance and be recognized". He advanced and I recognized him. Got him into a light area – street light or something – and I recognized him. He said "Jesus Christ, you scared the hell out of me". I said "what do you think you did to me". I hear these footsteps and I don't know who it is or where it's coming from. Well what happened was he was on duty, Sergeant of the Guard, Sergeant of the Guard didn't have too much to do. They were old timers and knew their job and took care of things. He was out on the beach with a girlfriend in her car and the car got bogged down in the sand. So he was running back to the Guardhouse to get help to go over there to push his girlfriend's car out of the sand. I didn't know his girlfriend was there and after I did know she was there, I didn't want to desert my Post to go over there to see if I could be of any assistance. I didn't want to leave my Post to go there while she was all alone because he was running to the Guardhouse. So he said he forgot about the Sentry there. He was running to see if he could get help. And that was the story on that. But things like that happened and you'd get all charged up and "who is it?" I didn't know, like what's happening. Anyway this is the room where the Corporal stayed. That large room out there where you have that large table was used for the Privates and Privates' First Class of the Guard and the Bugler of the Guard to sleep while they were not walking Post. There were some Quartermaster issued bunks there that were steel painted white. In the back part there was a headrest bars that had a Quartermaster insignia with the horse head and cross keys, or whatever they were, the wheel and the QC insignia. That's where you slept. You slept with your clothes on. On Guard your clothes are on twenty four hours a day. I'll tell you something, I used to have some dreams in this place. When you're tired and you come off post, you always dream about girls, I don't know why. That's what used to happen. You're tired out and you kept your clothes on. You could lay your belt out on the bunk that you slept on. And then later when they issued rifles, they had rifle racks here, we put our rifle in the rack and the Corporal locked it. If you had to leave the building, you had to go change clothes or something, whatever, you had to get permission from the Corporal of the Guard. And then he would give you permission to go and eat chow. Early chow and late chow, there was always someone around. And we used to go on Guard at 11:30 (a.m.) and by the time it was over it was noontime. Then Sentry #1 would be relieved by the new Guard. And the other three Sentries would go guard the prisoners in the afternoon. The ones that didn't have to guard Posts would guard the prisoners. You had three relief's at night; six o'clock, eight o'clock and ten o'clock and

go on to these other two posts. There's really not too much more, though I could talk forever on that.

EH: Well, one thing I would like you to describe, you talked about the ammunition box outside on the porch and this tally board that told what the attendance was in the jail. So I'm curious to hear your rendition. Also I heard there were benches on that porch. Was that true? The long benches, like long pews, almost. And that someone was caught taking a nap on the bench. I think it was Mr. Bishop that told me that.

AZ: That could be. Certain things used to happen once in awhile. A guy would go on Guard and before you knew it he would be in the Guardhouse before his tour was over.

EH: Well one of the major offenses was that if you were sleeping on the job, especially if you were assigned to a walking post that was considered very high priority. So his offense was that he fell asleep on the bench and he was discovered there and he was given a month, I can't remember how long, in the "brig".

AZ: Well what happened was this, in inclement weather, you could come up on the porch at night and walk, walk on the porch at night, but you had to go around the building every fifteen minutes, but you could come up on the porch. Every post had a little place where you could go for a little while.

EH: A shelter.

AZ: This fellow that Mr. Bishop mentioned was probably walking on the bricks outside in front of the building and he probably decided to walk up on the porch and take a nap, or rest a little.

EH: Stretch out on the bench...

AZ: So he fell asleep, so it happens. I was very concerned about my reputation. I didn't ever get into any trouble. I spent eight and a half years in the Army and I didn't have problems like that. I made sure I was awake and alert because I didn't want any trouble. The only thing I'm guilty of was when we used to take shelter in the stable where they kept the mules and the horses. And once in awhile I used to talk to the mules, because it didn't say anything in the General Orders about talking to animals in the line of duty and I figured they don't count. I used to tell the mules stories for five or ten minutes for the time I could stay in there and get some of the rain off me.

EH: Laughter.

AZ: Only in inclement weather you could go in there and then go out and walk. You always knew who the Officer of the Day was. When you were scheduled to go on Guard everyone would holler out "Who's the O. D. tonight? If I didn't know who the O.D. was I didn't know what to expect. Certain guys were "screw balls". Some were on the ball Officers. Guiney was a very strict guy but I didn't have much respect for him. Some

guys were easy, some were smart. I'm going to throw something in. There was an Officer by the name of Stanley Cherubin, graduate of West Point. Neat, very neat. When you saluted him, he just motioned to you to just forget about it. A very nice man. Several months ago I read an ad in a magazine written by a Stanley Cherubin from California. So I wrote him a letter and asked him if he was the same Stanley Cherubin who was here. And I described how it was. I never received an answer so I don't know if it was him. But he was an Officer here. I can name a lot of Officers. No one over Captain was Officer of the Day. Second Lieutenants, First Lieutenants and Captains. Once in a while the Sergeant of the Guard would come around and check you out at least once a night and during the day. You had to know your General Orders without any question and you also had to know you're Special Orders. Each Post had Special Orders for that Post and you had to know them. Like Post #1 had the most to do. You're out there sort of like a decoration, someone just walking around. "Were you the one who admitted the prisoners into the place?" If you were the one who turned out the Guard for the Commanding Officer, the National Colors the Armed parties, you shouted out these commands into the Guardhouse. If you were out there and you saw troops marching from Headquarters Battery of the 7th Coast Artillery, they're all armed. So you turn out the Guard on parties. And that Officer leading that group, saluted and you would return that salute and turned around to the Corporal of the Guard and say "Never mind the Guard". And you turned out the Guard for the Commanding Officer. If he stepped out of his Quarters and you would shout loud enough so he could hear you. If he heard you and he didn't want the Guard turned out he would salute. And you returned the salute. He saluted first, the Colonel he saluted. You returned the salute. Usually it's the other way around. You returned the salute and turned around and said "Never mind the Guard". You show the Officer of the Day "turn out the Guard." Lots of times he didn't salute. He wanted the Guard out there. One day they had a jackhammer out there working away. I was shouting like crazy "turn out the Guard, Officer of the Day" and nobody was moving. The Officer of the Day was walking back to the Officers Quarters. He was walking over here and no Guards fell out. He was furious. They didn't hear me. And I shouted, I shouted.

(break, standing outside bldg 28) I think there was a window here.

EH: Well, there was a doorway. Outside on the Museum porch there is two windows I think, and a doorway right in the center of this wall which is in the northwest corner.

AZ: 'Cause you can get up here on the porch and see if the Corporal was posting the Guard at the desk. That's why I remember that.

EH: Hee, Hee, Hee, you could spy on him.

AZ: Yeah, and sometimes an Officer from far away could look in here from beyond that porch there. Maybe you can prompt me a little bit so I can tell you more things that I could say but I can't think of what else....

EH: Well describe to me again the outside. The scoreboard and the box, etc.

AZ: Okay, if you are coming to the building you have to walk up a set of stairs just to the right of those stairs on those pipes that are like railings, was a board attached to it. The board was about 2 ½ ft by 2 ½ ft. and this board had three pegs in it. And this board also had holes drilled in it. The board was painted red with yellow lettering which were the colors we always used. Under one row of these holes it would say "General Prisoners." The next row it would say "Garrison Prisoners". The next row it would say "Non-Sentenced Prisoners". Then you had this peg and if you had 3 general prisoners, you would put it in hole number 3. At a glance everyone knew how many prisoners were in this Guardhouse. Non-sentenced they didn't know what kind of Court-Martial because they weren't tried yet. Non sentenced prisoners were in here. Garrison prisoners were any prisoners that were Court-Martialed by a Summary Court or a Special Court. If you were Court-Martialed by a General Court when you're a general prisoner. You don't stay here long. Governor's Island. And the non-sentenced prisoners were, who knows what they were going to be tried for, but they were non-sentenced. You had that row marked off. And when the people used to bring their, the Sentries used to bring their prisoners off of work detail, the Sentry would stop with the prisoners and say "Post #1, three prisoners". You know, he would identify himself. Post #1 would turn around and say "Corporal of the Guard, three prisoners". And the Corporal of the Guard would say "Let them in". He knew they were coming in. They were ready for them. That happened all the time. In the National Colors, you turn out the Guard.

EH: How big was this board, by the way? Did it swing suspended from the rail?

AZ: Two and a half feet, by 2 and a half feet. It was attached on by brackets, or wire or what, I don't remember. Just below that board, on the ground was a wooden box. That box was about three feet high by about four feet wide and maybe a foot and a half deep. And there was a lock on it with a lid on it and that's where they had all the ammunition for the saluting guns. They were brass with like reddish colored, looked like wax, that kept the powder in because there was no projectile attached to it. And that was used for the saluting guns in the morning and then retreat and if we had any visiting dignitaries that rated a salute of 11 guns, or 15 guns or 19 guns or 21 guns. Those guns were fired, both of them. And on the Fourth of July we always fired a 48-gun salute. We had 48 states then and there was one round per state. We used a lot of ammunition on that day for the saluting guns. And this fella, Al Wonder, he was on the detail to clean those guns all the time. You used to have to put a muzzle cover on and a breach cover, they were canvas. Once in awhile a Corporal would forget to take the breach cover off. He had to load the gun. He would attach his lanyard and once in awhile he would forget the cover and he would blow it off. Blow a hole in it. That hot powder would blow a hole in it.

EH: Sure.

AZ: Once I was in the Hospital here at Fort Hancock and a fella from the C.C.C.'s was in the Hospital with me with poison ivy. And he told me one time he saw the shell go over the Parade Ground when they fired that round. I didn't say anything to him. He

didn't notice that they were blanks. There was nothing flying over the Parade Ground. Maybe he was just kidding me but they were blanks.

EH: Was the muzzle cover like a draw sting bag?

AZ: It was a bag with, I think, a leather strap on it. You put it over the muzzle of the gun and you just tighten it, like a belt, you know. Some were leather and some were like olive drab canvas and it was made to fit over that. I don't know if they were made here or brought here from another arsenal. Another thing that a lot of people don't know is that State Troopers, State Police use to come here to pick up their ammunition. We used to get it from Raritan Arsenal.

EH: And so it was disbursed....

AZ: We used to keep it in a magazine here and once in awhile the State Police would come and load it up with cases of ammo.

EH: Can you recall there being a sign on this building saying "Guardhouse".

AZ: There was a sign that said "Guardhouse".

EH: Because we have a picture of it in the 1940's.

AZ: I'm gonna make you a print – I have a copy– it's hard to make it out. I took a picture of a guy out here walking Post. This Guardhouse, 1937- 1938, '37. You have an old picture here. Maybe you have one later, too, but this is one that I actually shot myself. And I was sort of fascinated by this place because I was new that's why I say it was 1937. I'm going to make you a print. I borrowed my buddy Vic's camera, I didn't have one. He was from Headquarters Battery. I don't remember his name. But he looked good and he stopped there so I took a picture. When he came to the wall where he faced Headquarters – you walked to the end and you came to a wall. Like say you were walking south, you walked where you were supposed to then stopped, make a right face, pause there for a moment, made another right face, then marched the other way. You made two left faces then marched back. You would turn, pause, turn pause, then march. The military watched you. It had to be right. They picked certain guys. They didn't put some slob out there. All the big shots used to come here. They would come to Post Headquarters and it was right there.

EH: It would be an embarrassment.

AZ: And once in awhile some young ladies would walk by, visitors, you know. I'm walking and thought, "Wow, they're looking at me". The rifle was very military looking but it was a pain in the neck, you had to lug a rifle around. The pistol was easy.

EH: One of the other things you were talking about was the slang. You told me the origin of the word "Jeep". I like some of the witty sayings.

AZ: I first heard the word “Jeep” in 1937 when I came here. And from what I could gather from hearing people talk was that it seemed to mean some awkward young Recruit that doesn’t know anything. A green horn that walked in here, you know. That was to me, what the word “Jeep” meant. Later on they came out with this vehicle. Everybody was saying that Jeep meant general purpose vehicle. That vehicle was unheard of when I heard the word, “Jeep”. I learned it here from the people who were here before me. So that word was in existence. So maybe it’s coincidental. For general purpose, maybe they say Jeep, I don’t know. That word, Jeep, was in existence long before that vehicle was named Jeep. I think they named that vehicle Jeep, because it was a young untried thing in the Army. Something new, the Army never had anything like that. Short wheel based vehicle, that could be used for many purposes. Some people called it a reconnaissance car. That’s not a reconnaissance car. The reconnaissance car we nicknamed “recon”. It was a large heavy sedan with a canvas roof and open sides. No doors – open cutouts. That was recon. It had a desk in it that folded out where the Commander could do his work. Look at maps and what not. Reconnaissance vehicle, that was a “Recon” a real one. It was not a Staff Car. A Staff Car was an enclosed sedan. You know, like my car is. The only one on this Post that had a Staff Car, was the Commanding Officer. When I was here that was a Colonel. Later on they had a Brigadier General. He was the only one who had a car. They had a lot of trucks called “Federal.” That was a civilian outfit. And they had USA tires. I understand that the Army used to make trucks with chassis, in Holabird, Maryland near Baltimore (US Army Quartermaster Corps Motor Transport Shop). I’ll tell you about these nicknames. We had a fella here named Olson, nice guy, Clement M. Olson. I think he was like an intellectual. He used to write poetry. Well these “yo-yo’s”, you know, could not stand something like this. Well, he had protruding ears. Clement, if you ever hear this forgive me because you’re a good guy, well he had protruding ears. The guys used to call him “wings over Hancock”, “red sails in the sunset”. You know if he stood out in front of the barracks and the sun was setting in the west, you could see blood vessels in his ears, so they were red. So the guys used to say “red sails in the sunset”. That song was popular in those days. And “wings over Hancock”. And we had a fella by the name of Hohaus. Well some of the guys used to call him something else. Sounds similar to Hohaus. There’s a place in Texas now on Broadway publicizing this. Well that’s what they called him.

EH: (Chuckling in background)

AZ: He was alright he was a decent guy. We had a Lieutenant by the name of Kuntz. You had to be very careful how you pronounced his name. Battery Commander came out there one day and told us, “This is Lieutenant Kuntz, I don’t want to hear that name pronounced any other way”. This is Private Hohaus. Not what you guys are calling him, H-o-h-a-u-s. And he was mad. And stuff like that all kinds of nicknames of fellas like that.

EH: What was the prank about hanging a bunk bag? Do you recall? I love these practical jokes.

AZ: Well, one prank that I was mentioning earlier. There was fella that was sort of like another intellectual type. His name was Jacob Chisholm Jacobs from Troy, New York. I tried to contact him this year. Well, he used to go home once in awhile. Not too often cause it was far. This one weekend the men stacked up these, I didn't say this before, did I?

EH: No.

AZ: They stacked up these footlockers. They were like trunks. So they could get up to the ceiling in Building 23. That was the upstairs Squad room on the north side of the building. There was a hook in that ceiling. I don't know why they had them up there, there were a couple of them. And they hung his barracks bag up there on this hook. He would be coming home late Sunday night and he has to get out early Monday morning for Reveille in the proper uniform. A lot of his stuff is up there. And they probably put things in there from his wall locker so he can't get at it. And then one day they nailed his boots to the floor. Spread out the sides and nailed the boots, from the inside, to the floor and leave them right under his bunk where he left them. So he comes home, late at night, and he goes to bed, right. In the morning he hears the bugle and its time to get out there for Reveille. So he puts his clothes on, he puts his breaches on now he has to put his boots on. And he can't get them off the floor. But they used to do things like that.

EH: Did they ever give themselves away as to who did those pranks? Or everyone laid low and they never revealed...

AZ: I know one person and I was involved in this, one person who squealed, and I'm glad he did, 'cause I was ready to go out of my mind. I was over in Building 74 and had a footlocker like everyone else. Under the footlocker they had a stand. In other words the footlocker stood about a foot, foot and a half, off the floor. You had a stand made downstairs in the carpenter shop and you could put three pairs of shoes on this stand, like a rack. And on the side you had what they called a "ditty box". That's where you kept your shoeshine polish and stuff for your brass, in the "ditty box". When I went overseas later on I got a "ditty bag" from the Red Cross girl. Anyway, someone was turning over my footlocker. You know, turning it upside down and shaking it. Every time I went downstairs to brush my teeth, take a shower, I'd come back and my footlocker would be upset. He just wouldn't shake it up and set it back like it was, he'd leave it upside down. And you know, I had everything in order, everyone did. Except that one fella that you talked about before. Well I had all my socks, underwear rolled, socks, ink and pen - we didn't have ballpoint pens in those days, my stationery - everything was neatly laid out. If you just touched stuff and put it back like it was then on Saturday morning it was ready for inspection. So this guy used to go and try to shake the heck out of it. Now I never tried to do harm to anybody and this bothered me, a lot. And this fella did it, maybe, five or six times. I'm trying to figure out, who is this, and why? Why is this fella doing this? One day a fella came up to me and said "I feel sorry for you, you are really going through a lot here. I'm gonna tell you who is turning your footlocker over". Liscizwitz is doing it. Liscizwitz was a PFC and an Assistant Squad Leader. Corporal Scarborough was the Squad Leader. So, on the back of our bunks we had a full field pack; the helmet, the

bayonet and the scabbard. It was hanging there. All you had to do was put this stuff on and you were on your way. So, he told me this and I waited until he disappeared and I let it go maybe two hours. Liscizwitz was sitting on his bunk. He had a bunk in the corner of the Squad room and I was like three bunks away. I walked over, took my bayonet out of my scabbard and I walked over to Liscizwitz. He was sitting on his bunk and I was standing up. This is no boloney, I'm telling you the truth. I don't like this but I'm admitting to this. I got the bayonet to about three or four inches of his neck. I said "Liscizwitz – I don't remember the exact words -how would you like to get this thing right down your throat". (He said) "What's the matter with you?" I said "if you ever turn that footlocker over again, so help me I'll kill you". I don't care how I have to do it. I'll cut you to ribbons or whatever. I'm not going to put up with it any more. Don't ever do it again, I'm warning you". It was never done again. Some time later when I was a Corporal in Camp Upton, who walks in, called back to duty, William Liscizwitz. I'm his boss now. LOL I never mentioned anything to him and he didn't mention it to me. This happened in the Army even in the higher ranks, it happened. You're in charge and other times the other guy is in charge of you. Well, anyway, that was the situation that I had. But there was one fella here, Nick Holanis, the guy that threw his shoes in the river. Some guy put water into a contraceptive and tied it in a knot and put it in Holanis' boot. Holanis was out on pass wearing his garrison shoes and his tailor made slacks, see and the boots were back in Camp, see. Somebody put this thing in here. And in the morning when its time for Reveille we're all watching Holanis. We all know about it see. We wanna see what he's gonna do. He puts his foot in there, laces up his boots and fell out for Reveille. He wore those boots all day. LOL

EH: And never noticed. LOL

AZ: I told his wife, I told her here at Quarters #1. Guys used to pull these dopey things. They used to short-sheet. You had two sheets and I think they got the lower sheet and they folded it in half. I forget what sheet it was. I didn't do this that's why I don't know how they did it. But anyway, you shove your feet in there. It had to be the top sheet. They did this with it. They folded it in half. So a guy gets in late at night all the lights are out in the barracks. He puts his feet in there and all of a sudden he's got no room. His bed is only about three and a half feet long instead of seven. Then, aahh, he's got to fix everything up. Some guy had Nestle power to make cocoa, they'd pour that in his sheets. Or they'd cut up a guys shaving brush up – cut the bristles into little pieces. I think I was short-sheeted once, lucky. But then this one clown kept flipping this footlocker over. That was driving me out of my mind.

EH: Did they pick on certain people, ethnically?

AZ: I don't know about the ethnic stuff because a lot of us was Ukrainian. Jacobs was English or Irish or something. Then this guy Olson from Scandinavia, you know. I tell ya Nick Holatis wasn't one of those intellectuals but he was a guy he liked to get irritated. Guys liked to get even. I told you I had a fist fight with him. It was the only fight I ever had in the Army. He wanted to do this and guys didn't like it. He became my buddy.

Anyway this stuff, there was no boundaries there, people just did it to other people. Wise guys, a lot of dopey things were done here.

EH: They went to the pranks partly because life was so regimented, certain times to do everything. So just to get rid of all this regimented stuff, they just had pranks, it sounds like to me.

AZ: When Nick was here I was talking to him about the time the guys sent him to the Tailor Shop to get his boots pressed. They did that to all the Recruits. They said “you know, you got nice boots now you’re supposed to take them down to Max Duze, Post Tailor, to get them pressed”. Their leather, right. So he went. Max Duze threw him out he was tired of all those pranks already ‘cause everybody went to him, right. Or go get the sideboards for the stove. Send you down to some battery far away, send you down to the Mess Sergeant – “uuuhhh, the Cook over at C Battery told me to come over here to get the sideboards for the stove. And they would laugh. There was no such thing, see. And you went like that for nothing. So this guy Nick went to get his boots pressed and was chased out. He insisted. They all say they get their boots pressed. The guy convinced him that it’s not so. So I introduced him to Bernie Duze, this is Max Duze’s son. Earlier I told Bernie Duze the story about the boots. So he said, “yeah, don’t you remember me Nick, I’m the guy that pressed your boots” LOL Just kidding around, you know.

EH: LOL. Funny. Actually, you talked about the bunk bag. Was that a duffle bag? What was it?

AZ: They had no duffle bags in those days. Duffle bags came out in the middle of the War.

EH: World War II, right.

AZ: We had blue denim barracks bags. They had a rope, like you use for a clothes line, that went into the top of it, the neck of it. You open it up wide and you just pull on it like a drawstring and it tightened up. I went to Africa I carried two of them. Everybody had two of them. But later the end of ‘44/’43 we were issued duffle bags. It was one bag, it was larger and it had a handle on it. And it had a black canvas strap, instead of this rope, over your shoulder cause you carried everything you owned. Here we had barracks bags. And they hung behind your bunk. We had a wall locker lined up against the wall. That’s where you hung up your uniforms.

EH: It was a metal locker? With a number on it, or a name?

AZ: It was a metal locker. It had a number on it and it was about a foot wide. You had your blouses there, you shirts, slacks.

EH: Was it painted?

AZ: It was metal like an olive drab color. Here we had our own padlocks. If you wanted to lock it you bought yourself a lock. You know they had like the two little hooks.

EH: Right, to put the padlock through.

AZ: We had that and most people had locks. I was in another place where we had combination locks. You couldn't put the lights on at night. How could you do the combination, you can't see. It was stupid, that was up at Fort Jay. But you had the wall locker with all the uniforms there. Then you had the footlocker. You had your underwear over there, toilet articles, writing paper, ink, pen, socks, all that stuff. They didn't have this all over the Army. They had their own set ups. Here they had these stand made right here in the carpenter shop that the footlocker rested on – I mentioned earlier. The thing was made in such a way that had these strips of wood so your shoes tilted down toward the front. Shoes were shined. There were three pair of shoes that you could put in the front of this rack. And the footlocker was above it. And then in the back I think you could put one pair of shoes. The ditty box was there. The ditty box opened from the side that occupied part of that area. That's where you put your polish and stuff, rags and neatly stacked in there. Some guys used to like to hide stuff in there, like a dirty pair of shoes in the barracks bag. I never did that. So that was it. The wall locker, the footlocker and your bayonet was on your pack on your bed, like I said, down there, and the scabbard and your cartridge belt was there, pistol belt also. Then you had rifle racks in the Squad room. That's where the rifles were locked. If you wanted to clean it you would go get the CQ to unlock the lock. We had little covers over the front sight. Well one day somebody took mine. I would never take anyone's. I would go to the supply room and draw another one. You would pay for it. It would come out of your pay. So somebody took mine and instead of going to another rifle and prying it off, - no I didn't want to do that. So I went downstairs to the Supply Room. So he said "awww, you lost it" I said "Sergeant, I didn't lose it somebody took it. So I had to sign for it, five cents. I was paid seventy cents a day. I had a buddy that was a Sergeant. He had a lot of them he issued one to me.

EH: What was your pay?

AZ: Well, it was \$20.75. It was \$21 dollars but they took a quarter out for the Old Soldiers Home. You never got that quarter, you got \$20.75. Don't forget thirty days a month it comes to about 70 cents a day. But then I made PFC in a couple of years and then I made \$30 dollars a month. Then I became an Expert Gunner that paid \$5 a month extra. But then they ran out of money. You were supposed to collect it for a year that's \$60. I collected for about five or six months. I think the last amount I got was \$1.35. That's it they run out of money, you're not gonna get anymore. The Government didn't have it. I tell ya, there's so much to say about this place, it's hard to think of everything. Got the (?) the bags, painting the barracks. We were painting the barracks this one year, we never painted the outside. Maintenance people, Quartermaster or some civilians doing that, I don't know, the WPA. So we painted these barracks. As a matter of fact I was sent to paint the bottom part the wooden stuff, brown. The upper was buff. It was interesting. We used to paint our guns, also. Sure, olive drab. And the ammunition part.

The part that the gun was on. And to make it shiny we used to varnish it. Everything had to be shiny. As soon as everything started looking bad, they had to be done. The paint was dull, the olive drab was dull, but you put varnish over it and it looked like enamel. I tell ya, I used maybe fifty gallons of varnish on those guns. And I got a good job one time. You know you didn't do this all the time, you had other things to do. I used to paint those "guide on's", you know on the gun.

EH: Yeah. Sure, the banner.

AZ: So, I got that job. It was easy, you just had to trace over the old yellow line. It would take me all day to do one. I only had two to do and it looked nice. This place was not a place to be lazy. A lot of work here with the big guns, a lot of maintenance. Cleaning them, after firing them all day, all the sand.

EH: But it was well kept up, everything was absolutely immaculate and in shape.

AZ: Oh yeah, the gun firing. In early, early spring shovel coal, chopped wood, delivered coal to these Officers, Sergeants Quarters.

EH: How big was the force here at that time? Could you give any idea?

AZ: I'll give you an idea. I'd say there was, maybe, eight to nine hundred. We had Headquarters Battery of the 7th Coast Artillery. And then you had – I don't know how many they had – 180 – 280. And then you had Headquarters Battery here which was the 52nd. It wasn't a Line Battery. We didn't have that many people. And then you had some guys in the Quartermaster, two Barracks, there was members of the band, twenty eight men. I would say 150. I'm guessing, but I think it's a pretty reasonable guess. Then we had E Battery and C Battery. That was about 700. That was next to us (inaudible) Now they have every combination. Man in charge Military Police, Provost Marshal General. In those days you didn't have that. They formed a little detachment, Sparky Adams, who was the son-in-law of a fella by the name of Razga and Razga was the uncle to Al Germaine. But anyway, you got to know just about everybody around. There were a few young ladies here. I was shy then. Now I see them, I'm not shy. (inaudible) There were some degenerates. I shouldn't say degenerates - some people that did not mind associating with homosexuals. I was shocked when I came here. When I learned about that. All the years I spent in this Battery, three years, I think I knew three "homos". That's not a lot. They sort of weed them out. When I was in Building 23 and I was supposed to go for ice cream. And this fella said wake me up and I'll go with you. I said I'll meet you outside. I walked downstairs and I stood on that walk and I waited for this fella. Finally he came out on that balcony up there and he said "I changed my mind". I said what'd you make me stand out here for. I'm standing out here 15/20 minutes. He turned all red. He probably had something else in mind and he changed his mind and he didn't know how to react. (inaudible) Guys, most of them were neat. Some guys were sloppy. This guy used to have cosmoline all over his shirt. He'd just throw on his uniform, wash his face and go to dinner. Everybody took a shower, took the dirty stuff off.

EH: Where did the laundry go to by the way?

AZ: There was an outfit called Mojecki and they were from Staten Island. They used to come here and go to all these Barracks and pick up the laundry. You always had one barracks bag away. You had one tied to your bunk with your pack and the other barracks bag was your dirty laundry that went with Mojecki. And then it came back, once a week, Friday. They used to back their truck up. Maybe they had several trucks for all these Batteries. It came in a package, like. The shirts were in cardboard, folded. And we used to use that cardboard to put our sheets away. Not the corner, where the sheet was when you climbed into the bed. The sheet would be folded over your blanket. So if you folded it over eight or nine inches, that looked nice. The blanket didn't go all the way up to the end of the bed. It was folded over and the sheet was folded over and then tucked in. So it looked nice. We used those laundry cardboards.

EH: Perfection.

AZ: Oh yeah, they used to draw strings from one bunk to another. Had everything lined up perfectly and you slept head to foot, head to foot.

EH: Well, it had to be precise, I guess.

AZ: It was, you know, I think maybe that's good for discipline. To show you can get the utmost out of a person. Later on, in combat, or something, - no dilly dallying everything is for real. And I think that paid off.

EH: Those habits

AZ: You knew exactly. I was always like that but I learned more here in the Army. The laundry came in and you took your stuff and now you had your clean sheets. The old ones went out. They'll come back next week. You lay your clean sheets and Saturday morning you stood Inspection of the Battery Commander. It was Company Commander but I was in Artillery so it was Battery Commander. We would stand Inspection, outside and in the barracks. About once a month we had the Commanding Officer come in. There would be a bugler on the porch and he would announce his arrival - blow the bugle. He's there, he's coming up the steps or something. And he wanted us to be warned. He wanted everything to be right. And then various Platoon Sergeants would report to their sections, you know.

EH: What if you didn't pass Inspection?

AZ: Most guys passed. Some guys would be put on KP, scrubbing walls down, extra chores.

There was one fella, he took his rifle completely apart. The next day he failed Inspection. Cleaned it (inaudible) you weren't supposed to do that the Ordnance Department did that. I used to field strip mine, clean it and everything would be perfect. My hands were

peeling from rubbing linseed oil on the stock all the time. It looked like varnish. So he cleaned his rifle. So he had a couple of little specks from the lint. Stuff like that, they get you for that. A guy gets new boots he's going on Guard, he has two men carry him down the steps so he doesn't wrinkle his boots. Then he marches to the Guardhouse.

EH: Oh my goodness. LOL Carry him down the steps so he wouldn't wrinkle his boots...What a riot.

AZ: Yeah, I saw them do that. What's the matter with that guy he's going on Guard and he's not in shape – his legs were hurt or something.

End of Interview