

Sandy Hook, Gateway NRA, NPS
An Oral History Interview with
Colonel Kincheon H. Bailey Sr., and his Children
Fort Hancock Assistant Surgeon
1928 – 1933
Interviewed by Elaine Harmon and Tom Hoffman, NPS
October 11, 1980
Transcribed by Jo Anne Carlson, NPS Volunteer, 2007
Edited by Mary Rasa, 2011



Quarters 14 photographed a few years after the Bailey family's time at Fort Hancock.



The Post Hospital around the time Kincheon Bailey was Assistant Surgeon.
Photos courtesy of NPS/Gateway NRA

Editor's notes in parenthesis ()

EH: We are in the Headquarters Building, Park Headquarters. This is October 11, 1980 and I am Elaine Harmon. I am in charge of the Sandy Hook Museum. We have the good fortune of having had a visitor come into the Museum this summer who remarked that her Father was here in the late 1920's and that she would bring him here as a special guest sometime later on. We thought, "Oh, maybe she'll come back." A lot of people never do return in fact, when they make that remark. But here we are in mid October and we have the good fortune of speaking with the family of Colonel Bailey who has bought four members of his family. And today we are fortunate to have him interviewed. First we'd like to introduce everybody. Colonel Bailey, give us your full name and your date of birth, and whatever else you would like to remark.

KHB: Colonel Kincheon H. Bailey. I was born February 3, 1893. I was in the First World War and also ever since. I had 35 years in the Army and I was stationed here at Fort Hancock from the first of November 1928 to September 1933.

EH: Can we all identify ourselves and then we'll go back to you, Colonel Bailey? Okay.

SBC: I'm Shirley Bailey Cox. I was born at Walter Reed in 1933. My parents were stationed at Fort Hancock when I was born.

EH: Who else is here today?

KHB, Jr.: I'm Lieutenant Colonel K.H. Bailey, Jr., retired U.S. Army and I was, my father's, Colonel Bailey's oldest son. And I was here, of course, the same time as my Dad.

MBM: And I am Margaret Bailey Maganthen (spelling), the oldest daughter. I went to school here and have many fond memories.

EH: And you're the lady that stumbled into the Museum and said that someday you'd come back and in fact you did and how great. We are very fortunate.

MBM: I really didn't stumble, Ms. Harmon. I made a point of coming back here. This was my first opportunity to come back to Fort Hancock.

EH: Really. I wasn't really sure if you just came in, you know. A number of people really do just wander in. That's great.

MBM: I came here. It was one of my first homes.

NBM: My name is Nancy Bailey Muehling and I wasn't really very old when we were here but I'm the second daughter and I can remember very many pleasant memories that we had here in the house and it was a lot of fun.

KB: She was born in Honolulu in 1925.

EH: Is that the entire family?

Daughter: Yes, four children. Four children.

EH: Can you, very briefly, give us sort of a chronology of your military career and then go into great detail about Fort Hancock? Just, you know, it doesn't have to be absolutely accurate.

Daughter: It will be.

EH: And I'm sure it will. (laughter)

KHB: When I joined the Army, I was in the University of Pennsylvania Medical School. I got an A.B. degree from University of North Carolina which incidentally is my home state. I'm a Tar Heel. And I graduated from the University of North Carolina with an A.B. degree in 1915. I was in the University of Pennsylvania from 1915 to 1919 and graduated there June 1919. In 1918, they took us, everybody in the University of Pennsylvania, into the Army, into the SATC Corps. And we stayed in the Army, which I was a private naturally until the War was over, the Armistice in Germany in 1918. Then I finished my, graduated in 1919. I took my internship in Gorgas Hospital in Panama for two years. And that's the reason I came in the Army and in the Army ever since until I came out of the Army in 1954. I had to be kept in for two years as a (inaudible) at the Pentagon as medical records for the National Guard Bureau. During my time I spent two different terms in Hawaii from 1924 to 1927 and from 1937 to 1939. And then from there I was stationed at Fort Sheridan, Illinois. In May of 1941, I went to Iceland with the Marine Corps. So, I was there on December 7, 1941. Incidentally, we got the notice of the bombing of Pearl Harbor about six o'clock that Sunday and then we were the 6th Marines immediately. The Marines, as soon as they could get off there, they went straight to Guadalcanal. That was the famous Marines sent to Guadalcanal. Then I was gone from May of 1941 overseas until July 1947. That was six years away from home. Then I just retired. From there I went to be Medical Director because I felt too young to be retired. And so I went to the (inaudible) Academy right up there in Virginia and stayed there for five years until I was ready to retire again. And that, briefly, was my Army career.

Daughter: But Daddy, how you first got in the Army, wasn't it Carlisle?

KHB: I had my first Post in the Army at Carlisle Barracks. I went there in 1923, the Medical Corps. We were the first Army troops in Carlisle Barracks. We took over from the Carlisle Indians. And since then it's gone to the Military Police and now it's the head of the War College. It's the War College now. Incidentally, talking about inflation, when I was there in 1923, we had many more troops there than we have there today. The Commanding Officer was Colonel Charles Reynolds, a Lieutenant Colonel. Today, my son-in-law, who is a General, he was in Carlisle and we went to see him. He had a Major

General ahead of him and a Brigadier General. Much more than we had in those places today it takes a colonel and two generals to run a small post. That was my first post, Carlisle.

Daughter: Then from Carlisle you went to....

KHB: I went to Hawaii.

Daughter: Then from Hawaii we went to....

KHB: I went to Fort Jay at Governors Island and stayed at Governors Island 'til 1928 when I came over here. And incidentally, it might be of interest to somebody, I don't know who, I got here the first Monday before the first Tuesday in November of 1928. In the Army, we couldn't vote in those days but I stayed here five years at Fort Hancock. So, afterwards I could vote down here in Highlands. Incidentally, the only time I voted in my life, for the President of the United States that was Al Smith, and he lost. I was sitting and listening to him about 12 o'clock and I got one of the greatest shock in all of my life. The first time in history that my home state of North Carolina went Republican. The only thing we ever had down there was Democrats and Baptists.

EH: So, your main concentration here at Fort Hancock was in 1928, November 1st thru September 1933.

KHB: That's right.

EH: What was your title in 1928 when you arrived?

KHB: I was a captain. I was never the chief surgeon. I was just the assistant surgeon. During that time the surgeons were Captain Askew, Major Evans and Major Beverly who was here when I left in 1933. I had the same quarters, #14 which still looks the same.

EH: What was your, were you in administration, or did you do everything actually?

KHB: I was a doctor at the hospital. I was strictly a medical man. My whole time I was an internist, internal medicine. I spent half of my time in the Army when I wasn't overseas at Walter Reed Hospital as a doctor. It was a pretty tough job. I never did any administrative work I was always a professional man except, of course, it was unfortunate when you get into War was the Regular Army can't afford, I mean they haven't got enough doctors. So, naturally the National Guard and the Reserve, so we had to take command of a hospital. So, I was commanding officer a hospital during the War overseas. That was the only administrative work, which I hated. I would much rather be treating patients. I didn't get ahead of my time. I was strictly professional always professional. I hated administrative work and never did like administrators, especially hospital inspectors.

EH: When you left in 1933, were you still a captain?

KHB: Yeah. I was a captain. I wasn't made a major until '35 when I was at Walter Reed where I was made a major. Then I was made a lieutenant colonel, ahead of my time, of course, in wartime in 1942. Then I was promoted and replaced as a full colonel. But still my regular Army rank was a major. Of course, in those days they didn't have as many generals as we have today. Now we've got more generals than they've got Indians (laughter). And so a medical officer didn't get promoted to general much. We didn't have more than three; surgeon general, one at Walter Reed Hospital, one in command at Carlisle Barracks. So, I retired as a colonel. Incidentally, I was never on sick call, never been in a hospital since. (inaudible) Don't do any harm. Took care of thirty men in thirty minutes. That's kept me healthy.

EH: My goodness, your residence was Quarters #14. For the entire five years?

KHB: Quarters #14. Yeah. For the whole five years. Incidentally, they were major's quarters but they were decreased or whatnot because they were major's quarters and I was a captain. I was supposed to get quarters as a captain, (Quarters) 13, Captain Sheen, Quartermaster. Then came along some major and he put a lot of effort in this house. These were wonderful houses that was built 1890. The paint, he scraped the paint and made it wonderful. Then came along Major Peirce and the only quarters that were available was some lieutenants quarters down the line about #6 or something. And his wife, when she saw it, she fainted apparently and came up in rank. Pulled Captain Sheen out of his quarters and pulled rank. So I stayed in Quarters 14 the whole time. That's a little small talk you know.

Margaret: Dad, the Commanding Officer of the Post was who?

KHB: The Commanding Officer when we came here in 1928 was Colonel Ordway.

Margaret: Colonel Ordway?

KHB: Colonel Ordway.

Margaret: How long was he here?

KHB: He left in '29 then Colonel Jacob Johnson came in. He stayed until 1933. We left in the spring of '33 until Lt. Colonel George Cocheu C-O-C-H-E-U and I never heard hide nor hare from him since. (inaudible)

Margaret: Daddy, I remember Colonel Johnson's daughter was married and her name was Jacqueline Dietrich and she wrote a book about Fort Hancock. What was the name of that book?

KHB: "Cavalcade". She wrote the first book that was "Parade Ground" but that wasn't about Fort Hancock. She wrote later "Cavalcade". She had me in it.

EH: You were in “Cavalcade.” Oh my goodness.

KHB: She said I was a nice southern talker. That was about Fort Hancock. She was the daughter of Colonel Johnson, Jackie Dietrich. She used to come to me with the book. Especially, “Parade Ground.” I mean about medical things. So, I really had a nice time. Five years seems a long time, longer than it does today.

Margaret: Daddy, you talked about the frost fishing.

KHB: Oh, yes the frost fishing. I didn’t believe it until I got here. I thought it was a snipe story or something. Sure enough about the fifteenth of December we were allowed to get frost fish. We’d go to the shore. I would spend a lot of my time generally about low tide. Would be about midnight and we’d be out here freezing and pick up these frost fish put them in a zip bag take them home and fillet them. Give the bones to the cats and the dogs. About 3 o’clock in the morning filleting fish. All we had was an ice box you know. We didn’t have a refrigerator then, an ice box to put them in. The Coast Guard here were wonderful for us here. They saved my life plenty of times. I had acute appendicitis. I had an emergency at the hospital. The Coast Guard fellas, any time of night when I’d call them. They’d take this patient straight to New York to the...what’s the name of that hospital in New York City? Anyhow they were very nice to me.

Margaret: How often did the ferry run back and forth to New York?

KHB: The ferry ran every Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday. Used to be a Captain Smith ran this ferry. He spent time with us at our house. My wife never missed a trip back going to New York and back.

Margaret: How often did they go?

KHB: They went on Monday, Wednesday....

Margaret: Yeah but just once a day?

KHB: They went once a day. Gosh, yes, just once a day. They left here in the morning at about 8 o’clock and came back about 8 or 9 o’clock at night. It was three days and so they gave respite, you know, for the members of this Post to go to New York. Maybe the men didn’t appreciate it so much as they had a pretty big bite out of their salary by the wives going shopping in New York City.

Margaret: Daddy, didn’t the band come out every day when the flag went down?

KHB: Yeah the band was out, played retreat. No, not every day. They had a bugler. Retreat and in the morning reveille.

EH: Did you personally have a routine, you know, you had a certain daily routine?

KHB: Well, not especially. Sick call at 8 o'clock, you know. We had to do everything. A doctor in the Army in those days had to be a surgeon, had to be everything. Had to do god knows what all. Had many broken legs. I said I wasn't the surgeon here all the time, but I was always alone here. Every surgery we ever had here they took the sick to Walter Reed all the time. We had 5,000 C.C.C.'s (Civilian Conservation Corps) which was Roosevelt to get those kids off the street in New York City and right here is where we processed them. We sent out two trains a day to Utah and to Nevada to plant trees. You can see that effect today what good those fellas did. Some project like that today would be apropos. But we processed them here. That was quite a job because I was here all alone. I had to get six private doctors from around the country to help me out every day because we worked from 7 o'clock till noon and 15 minutes to go to lunch and until midnight every night during that whole processing 5, 000 men. During that time I noticed the trees here that burned down. There was a tremendous forest fire here and this place was plagued with poison ivy.

EH: When was that big fire that was in the photographs?

KHB: I think that was in 1933, because we had at least 200 patients with eyes closed because naturally the poison ivy is volatile and naturally when the smoke got in the eyes and they were terrible. So, incidentally at the time we had devised there was one from Eli Lilly, I think, he had developed a vaccine for poison ivy. So, he gave it and I used calamine lotion which had been used for generations. In case that he did better than the Army then they would put it on the category of medicines and he did all the treatment for free. So, as usual, my patients with the old treatment got along much better than this fancy, brand new, stick it in the arm needle.

Margaret: Daddy, do you remember when I was going to school here the teacher would take us out for a nature walk in the fall to collect the leaves and I picked these pretty red leaves. They were so pretty and I was covered with poison ivy. And Daddy, do you know that my granddaughter who is now seven went on a nature hike with her teacher and did exactly the same thing.

KHB, Jr.: Never learn. History repeats itself.

Margaret: Isn't that amazing.

KHB: Most people susceptible to poison ivy or any roots of any kind are blonds. I'm blond naturally blue eyed, Scotch-Irish Tar Heel from North Carolina. I was exempt from poison ivy. I could put it up anywhere. It didn't bother me at all. I've seen brunettes that would just look at it. This son-in-law of mine, a brunette, he's standing off in the Valley of Nine in Arlington and tell me where the poison ivy was and I'd pull it up and he'd break out with poison ivy. It was a problem here. Because all they had was poison ivy here and sumac.

TH: Where abouts was that fire?

KHB: It was out in the woods out here. It was a terrible fire.

TH: That would be south of the Fort area, south of the building area?

KHB: Yeah that's right. South of the building area. It was all woods. Its still woods I noticed coming up here, you know.

Daughter: Did they ever find out what started that fire?

KHB: No. Nobody ever knows. Just probably smoking. They blame cancer and everything else on tobacco you know.

Margaret: I remember my brother on Halloween night and the Army brats really, you know, I remember you scolding Bert about Halloween night. What did he do, turned over the garbage cans? Something about the lights? How did the gas lights, the street lights? How did the lights work around here, the street lights? There weren't many.

KHB: No. I'm not too sure I think they must have been electric.

Margaret: I remember you and Bernie Duze ran around on Halloween night...Scared Alfreda and somebody else. He doesn't remember. (laughter)

TH: I'll have to ask Bernie. Bernie is still around.

Margaret: Bernie is still around?

TH: He is in Long Branch.

Margaret: Let's give him a call.

EH: You really should. He's at the Veterans reunion every year. The Veterans organization, which is now five years old, has an annual reunion. It was on September 14th this year and there was Bernie Duze.

KHB, Jr.: I met him in '54. I was out here in '54 visiting a friend of mine and he was here then driving the same old panel truck.

KHB: And incidentally this boy of mine he was selling Literary Digest and when he left, he turned it over to Bernie Duze.

KHB, Jr.: Then I found out later nobody bought them. The only reason they bought was because I was the doctor's son. He didn't have much success with it. All these people would buy these magazines and sold them for a dime and I got 2 cents for each one that I sold. It was all over the Post and it was cold. Take my gloves off to count out the change at night, selling Literary Digest. That went broke, of course. (inaudible)

TH: I'd like to ask the Colonel, when did you join the Army?

KHB: Well see, I joined the Army, I was drafted, well I wasn't drafted in the Army but I was drafted but the way they do things I joined the Army about the first school year at the University of Pennsylvania. We called it SATC, Student Army Training Corps, Company #11 Senior Medical Students. I was a Senior Medical Student at the time. That was about September 1918. Then after the Armistice, we were out. Here we were at the University of Pennsylvania at that time and you only had to have a two year A.B. degree with two years of French and German, so the average age was 26. Do you know what kind of command was sent to us? A freshman from Columbia University. So, he had a fairly hard time with us.

TH: The reason I ask is that you came to Fort Hancock in 1928 and that was the Roaring Twenties when the country was doing very well economically. I'm wondering what the Army was like after World War I? I know it was really cut down. You know, the war ends and a lot of men get out of the Army.

KHB, Jr.: I'll answer that question.

KHB: What they were going to do with us in Pennsylvania, the University of Pennsylvania Hospital was and always has been a General Hospital and that was in France and they were going to graduate us in January of 1919 and send us over to the General Hospital of Pennsylvania in France. But the Armistice came along and if they had listened to Woodrow Wilson, we wouldn't have had the Second World War. So then I finished up and I was still in the Army. I went to the Army Hospital, Gorgas Hospital in Panama. I stayed there for two years and then I came back and left Carlisle, in the Army again, as an officer. But the first year, I was a private in the First World War and I had a lot more fun as a private than when I was a colonel in the Second World War. So I had advised everybody going to make it a career to stay an enlisted man. You have got too much responsibility. When I was a private you can wave at the girls. You can't quite do that as a colonel, commanding officer of a big hospital.

TH: The reason I asked is that I think there would be a difference in the Army of the 1920's. Like when you came to Fort Hancock in 1928 and then all of a sudden the Depression hit. Was there a change in the Army? You know, did they cut back?

KHB: They didn't cut back, they cut our salaries. They cut us back ten percent and stopped all promotions. Incidentally, that order came the day when I was supposed to get an increase in pay which we did then. Which sounds terrible today, but we got every three years 5%. And I got almost 25% every year, you know, on account of inflation.

EH: What was your salary then?

KHB: My salary then was about \$250 a month as a captain.

Margaret: Daddy, I remember we went into the Schmitt Brothers meat place to get some meat during the Depression.

KHB: That was in Long Branch. When we were at the Hospital Commissary we always had bids out. The lowest bid would get the contract for the year. At the Hospital, of course, that was different. We had to do our own shopping at Schmitt Brothers, in Long Branch. We went down and got the food from Schmitt Brothers. Schmitt, he was German. He came over here and had the biggest (inaudible) in Long Branch. But his two boys walked side by side with Americans just like he was American, not German. But not him. He was a terrible German. But we didn't beat him we lost.

EH: Could you describe what it was like in Quarters 14? You know, what was it like in the inside of the house? Do you remember much about it? And who were your neighbors?

KHB: Well, they were very nice quarters. When these quarters were built in Fort Hancock, the Coast Artillery was the main branch of the Army because they protected the coasts. So, I was fortunate enough for most of my life to have Coast Artillery quarters. They were all Coast Artillery quarters were 3 story quarters with four bedrooms on the third floor and a bathroom, private bath. Majors, we had a den on the first floor that the Captains didn't have, with fireplace and butler's pantry. It was really nice. It really spoils you. In the Army, we were always in quarters except my last seven years. I came back from overseas in July 1947 and my last seven years was doing work I said I hated, administrative work. I was at the Pentagon as Medical Director of the National Guard Bureau, all paper work, after all an administrative officer.

TH: The furnishing in your home....

KHB: Oh, the furnishing they were all, that's one thing the Army always had was wonderful furniture. You know, especially those mahogany tables. Everything was mahogany, and heavy. No, they didn't spare anything.

Margaret: They didn't have beds right? We had Quartermaster beds. Was that a Quartermaster seal on my bed, the iron? Was it the Quartermaster seal?

KHB: I've been at many a post where we stayed. We didn't get them from Quartermaster, we generally got them from the Hospital 'cause they had plenty of beds, bed linens, and everything else. The Quartermaster didn't.

EH: Was the furniture issued to you? Was it in the house there?

(Tape stops and starts in another section)

KHB: Captain Schmitt. S-C-H-M-I-D-T. He was a doctor. When he got back down so many lieutenants had changed so often. Some of them living in the Bachelor Quarters would get married and move out. I don't remember much of the names but they did

change quite often. And they were all lieutenantts just because they didn't stay here that long. (inaudible) Captain Fee was in (Quarters) 7 but he moved. He got ranked out. Lieutenant Gibbs was in (Quarters) 6. He was there when I left. I've really forgotten. Everybody changed so much. I don't quite remember who was

EH: That's remarkable. You've gone through almost the entire row.

KHB: Let's see, 5, they did change them so much.

Margaret: Daddy do you remember this cannon in these pictures? Was there just one cannon in front of Officers' Row?

KHB: Yeah, the reveille gun.

EH: Was that in front of the Commanding Officer's Quarters?

KHB: No. No. That was on this corner here in front of the Bachelors Quarters, the officers' quarters right around the corner. We paraded there every Saturday morning.

EH: Were there any epidemics or anything you know really catastrophic as far as medical things happening here?

KHB: No. No very serious diseases here. We were out here, of course, during the time of the polio epidemic but we were fortunate not to have a single polio case here. I know that we had every summer, I never had a leave in the summer for the five years that I was here because in the summertime we had ROTC people here. In the winter time was the only time we could go on vacation. I never wanted to go alone. You know I wanted the family to go too. So, I never got a vacation, never. One time we had the Barnum and Bailey Circus at Madison Square Garden. The only time I took a vacation. I called Fort Monmouth to cover the Hospital while I was gone for that day. (I) took all the kids to Madison Square Garden to the circus 'cause I always liked kids. The old Madison Square Garden, not where you go now.

EH: Did Fort Monmouth cover for you actually as you mentioned?

KHB: Yeah. It was just for the afternoon. It was the only time that I was away. I did go, when Shirley was born, to Walter Reed, ten days. Well, they got somebody from, see I was the only one here. We had majors here but they were always gone. I was always here alone. They got somebody while I was here from Fort Jay, I think, which I came from in the first place to take my place. It took a little longer than we thought. Nobody can figure out exactly when a baby is born. I was there ten days when she was born. When I got back the fella was already packed and said, "I gotta get back home."

Shirley: I never did understand, Daddy, why I wasn't born at Fort Hancock?

KHB: I delivered probably about a thousand babies in my life. But you hate to do it with your own daughter, you know. I was the only doctor here.

Shirley: Well, did they deliver babies here? This was a dispensary, wasn't it? They don't deliver babies at dispensaries do you?

KHB: Oh, no they delivered at home. It's not etiquette for a doctor to take care of his own family. So we took you to Walter Reed.

EH: So, you just took care of the troops. You didn't take care of the families here?

KHB Jr: Sure. All of them.

KHB: Fort Totten was the hospital that we sent them to from here. Fort Totten.

KHB Jr.: He'd be out all hours of the night taking care of....

KHB: Fort Totten or go like myself, you know, I was a doctor, so I sent them to Walter Reed, you know. Called up and made an appointment there to have my daughter born at Walter Reed. With my son I did the same thing. (inaudible)

EH: What about Building 19 the Hospital?

Daughter: What was building 19?

KHB: The Hospital.

Daughter: I thought I saw a set of quarters with the number 19?

KHB Jr.: Those were 18. The hospital is 19.

KHB: The quarters on either side is where the sergeant major of the hospital lived, you know. The hospital steward, he was the head of the enlisted men.

EH: The hospital steward? Who was that at the time?

KHB: We had Sergeant Black. He was a staff sergeant. I forgot what his first name was. Major Evans made a remark about him. Major Evans was here for a short time. He said that this fella, Sergeant Black, said he got killed and this fella took his place because he couldn't read or write. That was a joke, but that wasn't true. He was a good sergeant They made all kind of jokes then. (laughter)

EH: In the hospital itself, you had a pharmacy I guess?

KHB: Oh yes, a pharmacy. We had enlisted men take care of it, you know. And they were all good, very good.

EH: The first floor was, what pretty much was the layout?

KHB: First floor was first door on the right was my office and we had operating room. We had a lot of operations but not serious operations. Two (derogatory word for African American removed) boys got wrecked. They were celebrating in New York. One of them got killed. He died while I was operating on the other one. Many times I worked from midnight till dawn. Some colored fellas in there went with a maid one time went around the curve down there and turned over. He cut every tendon on his wrist. We had no anesthetist here so luckily we had a dentist that could give ether. So, we gave ether to this particular colored person. Cut every tendon. (inaudible) It's the hardest thing in the world. You have to split the arm wide open. Each tendon to the exact finger in this one instance. It was dawn before I was through and I was getting pretty tired. I was putting the right tendon to the right place you know put it down put it in there. Long about dawn we closed the hand. I put the wrong tendon to the wrong finger. I put the index finger to the middle finger. So he would wiggle the wrong finger. I said, "Well, move this finger." But that's what the mind would do for you. His mind told him that it was wrong. Less than six months he had perfect action in his hand. That's what the mind will do for you. I don't know if you know it or not but in our lens of our eye, the image is upside down. (inaudible) Everything is upside down but the brain, its taking by learning that's not right, this is right. The brain makes things look right. And that's how he got trained. (inaudible) I was at Walter Reed, you know, where they got this high ranking medical facility. I was strictly a diagnostician. In fact, on the women's ward with cancer or what not, I made the diagnosis and sent them over to the surgeon. I liked this all right (Fort Hancock) but one of my best friends, Colonel Charles Reynolds, he was a surgeon with the second area and he came over and said, "You gonna stay here the rest of your life?" I said, "Well, I'm happy here. Nobody bothers me and I don't bother anybody else." He said, "You want to go to Walter Reed?" I said, "Sure." He sent me to Walter Reed and stayed there two or three terms at the time. (inaudible) I was a doctor that hated administrative work. I hated the Pentagon. When I came back from overseas in '47 one of friends was surgeon general. He said, "Where would you like to stay?" I said, "Well, I'm getting old, I would like a hospital like Fort Totten to retire in." He said, "You wouldn't like it." He said, "How about the Pentagon?" (I said,) "Anything but the Pentagon. I don't like paper work and I hate people that write orders, you know, that never been out there to do any work in their field." There's a lot of people like that. It's full of lieutenant colonel's very smart always writing orders. I hate that. He said, "Well, I have something to show you." He took me on the third floor in the Pentagon. Had my name already on the door.

EH: Oh my goodness.

KHB: He said, "We've been friends and I'll do anything you say." He says, "I'll show you." They made me director of the National Guard Bureau. I've been through two wars and I knew that the National Guard came in half prepared. I was there for seven years from 1947 'til 1954. I was there seven years. There was nobody that came into the National Guard anywhere, that would come into the Regular Army because when we had

a war I wanted them to come in now (with emphasis). Ready. I didn't care who paraded for their governors, you know. I wanted Regular Army men because the Regular Army doesn't have time for first division like me. You have to have the Regular Army to look over these others fellas. So, when I was there (inaudible) same building at the Pentagon. He said, "Would you take this man to the Regular Army?" They said "No." I said then he won't get into the National Guard. In the seven years that I was at the Pentagon I guarantee there wasn't no National Guard man anywhere that couldn't come into the Regular Army then. When the Korean War came along every reserve officer and enlisted man they examined. But they didn't say the 49th Division, the 36th Division, the career. I checked their records. They didn't examine those people. I said, "We don't have time to examine all these folks." They sent them over there without examination. That's what I did. I'd still rather treat some cranky old woman or somebody that has a bellyache or somebody's appendix or something like that. But I was stuck with it. A good friend of mine, if you have friends like that you don't need enemies, put me at a desk at the Pentagon for seven years.

EH: When did you officially retire?

KHB: Officially retired, let's see, you always retire in your birth month. I retired February 28, 1954. They kept me over a year 'til I was 60. I had to retire at 60 in '53 but they kept me over. They just said they can keep me on longer if you want to. I said, "No." The only reason I had this job down here not because of the money but they give you twice as much (inaudible) in the Army. In the Army, you get some rough treatment. You have to be rough. You have to be tough. Somebody's gonna get killed. You have to be tough to train them. (inaudible)

Daughter: When did you retire?

KHB: February 28, 1954.

Daughter: How long were you in the Army?

KHB: I was in the Army altogether, I was in the Army Hospital since 1918 to 1954. You figure that out, how much is that? That makes it 36 years.

EH: How many beds were in there? Was it like a big ward upstairs? I'm still trying to visualize Building 19.

KHB: Where was that? Oh, 19 well, up on the top that was where the soldiers slept, you know. The second floor had patients and also we had one ward on the first floor beside the operating room. One ward where we kept the sickest patients, you know in this ward. And, of course, when we had the C.C.C.'s here. A lot of them got sick, naturally. We put them around in the best places, you know. We scattered them around. We put tents out here. But there was quarters for the enlisted men, some of them like the sergeant, he was married. In those days there was no enlisted men that could be married. A staff sergeant could be married. But now of course, privates can be married. You can't tell

me that a man with a family qualifies as a soldier. The kind of soldier we had in those days... (inaudible) We had a tough judge in Chicago. Some nice fella could get in a barroom and get drunk, you know, and kill somebody in a fight. I mean it doesn't have to be murder. Manslaughter, just kill somebody. If he'd admit it, the judge would say "You get 50 years or join the Army." That's the kind of fellas we got. I tell you they liked to fight. (inaudible) No, they were tough boys. They chose the Army in those days just because they like the Army. I've seen them take a lot of stuff. I said I always felt independent. I've seen officers take thing from them, commanding officers, I wouldn't take things because you could go to any town, any state and I could go over there and I would make twice as much as I would make in the Army. I think it was bad for the Army trying to get men to come in the Army to make money. I don't think they are fighters. The doctors that come in now come in for money. Doctors could be a millionaire in a year you know especially if you had Medicaid, you know, that's when the government pays you.

EH: Sure. It is so different.

KHB: That's all they do. They make a million dollars a year. All of them are millionaires.

EH: It's so different. I am wondering what your children remember? I'm curious to hear.

Daughter: I just remember what fun that house was like. The third floor, the eaves where my brother would take me to light candles. (laughter)

EH: Didn't you have servants?

Daughter: Oh yes, yes.

EH: What were the servants actually? What were their jobs?

Daughter: Well, we had a striker and we had this girl from my uncle's farm in North Carolina, Betty. And we had her.

Margaret: Is that right Daddy? Betty was at Walter Reed.

KHB: Betty was here. We took her to Walter Reed, Margaret. She was here with Billy here.

Daughter: She was a colored girl.

KHB: Before it was a terrible depression down there, you know. He was a cousin of mine he sent, we went somewhere in New Jersey and picked up five colored girls. And my wife, she picked out this Betty. There was one old colored girl I thought we'd take care of. This big colored girl worked for the commanding officer. First thing he told me

was, "This one steals all my (inaudible)." This Betty turned out wonderful and we took her to Washington. Of course, in Washington it was a (derogatory word removed) town, she got spoiled down there. We had to fire here because she'd come in at noon on Monday with this evening gown. (laughter)

Daughter: Who was our striker, Daddy?

KHB: Where? Here?

Daughter: Yeah.

KHB: We didn't have a regular striker here. We had a regular striker at Fort Jay, but we didn't have a regular striker here. If we needed anybody I'd tell the sergeant who was retired age and I just paid him to come in and take care of the flowers there and he still stayed in the hospital.

EH: He was a gardner?

KHB: A gardener, yeah. There were gardens all around the place. He had a wonderful garden up there in the hospital.

Daughter: Did we have gardens around the quarters?

KHB: Well, individually yeah, Miss Johnson, especially, had a wonderful garden around Quarters 12.

Daughter: She had a garden between her set of quarters and 13, I guess. She had a flower bed.

KHB: Yeah. That's right. That's right. This sergeant that I had retired. He had nobody. He was a German. He had no place to go. He had no friends whatsoever. So he retired. I forgot what I paid him, but not much. But he died here.
(inaudible talking)

KHB: The second floor is where we all stayed. We didn't have a bedroom on the first floor. But those days, you know, the Army, when they built these quarters, the Army was gentlemen scholars you know. These quarters were built with the third floor was built for servants. They had a special staircase that came out the back. And they had you would talk to them or whistle at them and tell them to come down, you know. That's how the Army was in those days, you know. That was majors and captains. The majors had this swanky third floor for maids and butlers and servants.

EH: Did Betty live with you in the house up on the third floor?

KHB: Yeah.

EH: But there are a number of rooms up on the third floor.

Margaret: Well, they played up there. We had a little play room.

KHB: Oh yeah they had a playroom but they had a movie and charged people 2 cents to have people come up and watch the movie. (laughter)

Margaret: I remember we put on little variety shows and charged nickels for the little kids to come and watch the variety show. Nobody had much money.

KHB: (inaudible) In those days every officer lived on the Post. Now, (inaudible)

EH: What ages were you all? Give me a rough idea around 1928. How old were you all?

KHB, Jr.: We were seven, six, three and one.

Margaret: Bert and I went in the same grade together as I wrote on the back of these pictures. These are pictures of birthday parties. We are one year and one day apart. So we went through school in the same grade. Did you say we went to the first grade at Fort Jay?

KHB: Oh yeah. You remember things after all these years. I remember that was one of those things. I remember he was six and she was five and I wanted to send him to school at Fort Jay. He was six and she was five. Their mother said, "We'll send them both together." So he was six and she was five. I saw them going up over that hill hand and hand going to school the first time in Kindergarten, you know. First time at Fort Jay, Governors Island.

Margaret: So what grade were we in when we came here?

KHB: Well that was in '27. We came here in the fall of '28. You were probably second grade.

Margaret: I don't remember.

KHB: (inaudible) Incidentally, Bert here, he got "number one in the school" and he still has the prize of a train that he got for being first in the school.

Margaret: That was at a Christmas party.

KHB: Yeah that's Christmas party, the Christmas tree(looking at pictures). He was worried to death because Bailey, you know and they announce the presents and they started off alphabetically. He was sitting next to me and they finally got out of the S's and he said, "Dad they didn't give me any presents yet." They left him out simply because he got the prize, first prize. So they gave one prize to the boy and one prize to

the girl. Margaret was prize for the girl but they didn't want to give it to the same family so they gave it to the second girl the prize.

Margaret: Discrimination. (laughter) (inaudible talking)

EH: What was the school like? What do you remember about the Fort Hancock School and Mrs. Pearl Murray?

KHB, Jr. (Bert): Well we had five grades in one room.

Margaret: Each line of students was a grade, right?

KHB Jr.: That's right. Well, they had a row of desks. Fifth grade was on the right, fourth, third, second and first. Five grades in one room and the teacher would give a pencil to the best speller. I got a pretty big kick out of I guess I was in the third or second grade and I'd win the pencil against all the grades. I would get a pencil all the time. Win the spelling contests.

EH: What was the building that your school was in? There were four different schools on Fort Hancock that is why I am...

KHB, Jr.: Down past the theater.

Margaret: And past the bakery.

EH: Was it the one down by the Coast Guard section?

KHB Jr: It would be in the Coast Guard section on the right hand side of the road tucked in a little bit.

Margaret: I think it is the building where all the windows are...

EH: That originally was the Ordnance Laboratory building. It has columns on the outside. It's very old. I think its turn of the century structure. But it was the Ordnance Laboratory originally.

KHB: What did they take you to school in? How did you go to school?

KHB, Jr.: As a matter of fact, I can give you some notes because I have to leave. I have a twelve hour trip ahead of me. I can remember some things that happened here. One is it was cold here and I was going around the Post selling these magazines. When a heavy storm would come up and they had these barges out in the ocean. They had like five of them tied together. These tow lines would break in a heavy storm the tow line would break and one of these barges would wash ashore. And sometimes it would kill some men. What would spill out would be these tin cans of hardtack and I'd eat that hardtack. I liked that a lot. Then, of course, when we had these big guns firing. When they had

these big 12-inch disappearing guns firing they would put a notice in the New York newspaper a week ahead of time and here in the Post we were supposed to take all the food off the pantry shelves and roll down the car window and you know something once in awhile they wouldn't tell us all the food would be down on the floor in a mess. Those big guns were big things here. Of course, I ran around with Sergeant Bonnett's son, Bill Bonnett, and Bernie Duze and we ran all the time together and Sergeant Bonnett and Sergeant Razga he who was a famous Sergeant Razga.

EH: Yes we know him too.

KHB Jr.: A Camp Curry Marshal, a distinguished rifle shot. He and Sergeant Bonnett would go hunting and bring back a couple of deer and hang them on a lamp post and we always had a lot of venison meat. The third floor of this building you are talking about was empty. We didn't have much furniture put up there. I know my Aunt and I slept up there. Of course, I was a young boy and she was older. We lived up there and we'd show movies. It was a big deal for me. Dad had an Emerson radio and a crystal set. He also had a super regenerator receiver. And the way you tuned this thing when you'd hear a hissing noise you'd tune to it. And Daddy would go out there every morning and fill this wet cell battery. It was kind of a doggy thing but it was the best receiver you had in those days. You'd keep this wet cell battery filled so you could listen to music. The parades were always a big thing around here. The Army always had parades and ceremonial stuff. As a kid, these companies would go by with 130-150 men and Dad would come by with his medical detachment. They had about six men in it. I was always disappointed that Dad didn't have 500 men behind him but he was a medical officer. The beach plums, we used to eat those a lot. And that frost fishing, I remember Dad would find out when the tide would be coming in. It might be 11 o'clock at night or 1 in the morning. I would go out with him and get these frost fish in the bay. It was real cold. I'd also go clam digging. We'd go out a dig a bunch of clams out at Sandy Hook in the mud. My Mother would put them in butter and a meal and we'd have good old clam chowder. Boy, that was good.

EH: Where was the prime location for clamming? Was it just the north end?

KHB, Jr.: No. It would be on the south end on the way to town. I noticed coming in the place where we used to dig. A pit out there, you know.

(Break in interview as change of tape)

EH: I'm standing in the Headquarters Building, Park Headquarters. This is October 11, 1980 and I'm Elaine Harmon.

KHB, Jr.: We used to kill muskrats with bull rush arrows, me and Billy Bonnett and my mother would come back. Is this on now? Am I live?

EH: Mmm hmm.

(talking in background)

KHB Jr.: These planes would crash and one time this plane had crashed and we heard about it so the kids went out there and someone had taken this big airplane tire and putting it on the dock. I went out there and grabbed a tire and brought it back to my basement. I found out a couple of days later that the pilot was looking for that tire because it had saved his life. That great big airplane tire, he'd gone along hanging onto that big airplane tire.

Daughter: What kind of tire do you mean? He'd hung onto that tire in the water and it took him ashore.

KHB, Jr.: He hung onto the tire and it saved his life. He stayed there until the Coast Guard rescued him. We used to kill muskrats with bull rush arrows. We'd make them out of bull rushes around here. I am going to write some notes. One thing, when Mother went to New York City she was very generous with the kids, you know, and brought us back candy that had rum in it. Little chocolate bottles. She'd bring them back from New York City. That was a big deal. It was Mother by herself. Daddy was working. Another thing that fascinated us kids was this big rum running place. They brought rum in here to Sandy Hook. The Coast Guard would nail these people. We got a kick out of that.

EH: Were the children bored? Did you feel isolated?

KHB, Jr.: We had a tight knit little group. We had a big time. And, of course, in those days the officers' kids kinda kept to themselves. Some of them ran around with some of the sergeants' kids for some reason. They may have been closer to my age. Bernie Duze and Bill Bonnett and I ran around pretty much together and the younger ones, the officers' kids were younger and we mixed in real good, but the kids my age had to be sergeants kids. So, we got along real good. (inaudible) Those guns firing, the big roar of those guns, that was an impressive sight.

EH: Did you actually remember seeing them firing? You were not allowed.

KHB, Jr.: No, no we'd hear them. Oh yes we used to climb all over them.

EH: Did you remember the location of Battery Kingman Mills?

KHB, Jr.: Oh yes we would walk around there when they weren't firing them. We couldn't go down in the embuttments but we could see the guns. When you heard the guns go off it was a fascinating sound. (inaudible)

EH: In all of your recollections in total what was it like to be here? Was it a happy time of your life?

KHB, Jr.: It was a thrilling time for me. I enjoyed every minute of it. Always something new, something going on. Big house, plenty of room to play. Better than anytime since.

Margaret: I never felt that there weren't enough children to play with. We were never bored.

KHB, Jr.: One big thing about Hancock too was that Roosevelt came through to see the C.C.C. (Civilian Conservation Corps). The C.C.C. the first time they came was right here at Fort Hancock. That was quite turn around here because all the Regular Army soldiers were the big thing here on the Post. The kids come in and it kind of took over most of the area around here. The young C.C.C.s was kind of a real drain on the Post. Also each year they had the C.M.T.C. (Citizens Military Training Camp) Camp. They would set up out there and you would see a lot of C.M.T.C. kids. Always something going on firing, what they call small weapons firing. We'd go swimming, frost fishing, dig for clams. Always something going on.

Margaret: I think life was idyllic. There weren't that many children that we played with but we didn't know any different and we were quite happy. The gun would go off at 4:35 in the afternoon and the Army brats would fall out of trees and come out of basements and windows to stand for the flag. That was a great thing to stand for the flag. It didn't dawn on me until years later on I wondered why I was such a tenacious patriot and it dawned on me it was my upbringing. It wouldn't dawn on me to disrespect the flag or not love America or not back our men in uniform.

KHB, Jr.: We had a dog and everytime the - da-ta-da-ta-da - and he would recognize the call and would run and hide with his tail between his legs because he knew the gun was going to go off. He recognized the colors too. He'd run off. He knew they were going to fire the gun.

EH: He was so conditioned.

Margaret: I don't know what time the gun went off in the morning but evidently it would go off because my Father has told me that they had friends visiting and the guests would fall out of bed when the gun went off. I guess we got so adjusted to it. What time did the gun go off in the morning, Daddy?

KHB, Jr.: 5:30 or 6.

Margaret: Sunrise, I guess.

EH: Everyday without fail?

Margaret: Oh yes. I remember listening for it. At 10 o'clock it was time to go to bed. What was that?

KHB, Jr.: Taps. Tattoo at nine and taps at eleven.

Margaret: And we'd always listen for the bugler, you know, to make a mistake. It was a bugler standing there you know, on the parade ground blowing a bugle.

EH: Even if there was a storm?

KHB, Jr.: What they would do was stick their mouthpiece on a stove and then go out there and blow so it wouldn't stick to their lips. No, they were clock dependent. There was no excuse for not being someplace in the old Army days. Everybody would do their on time and did the best they could. (inaudible) Well, Miss Harmon, that's about all. The rest of them know more than I do. That was my two cents worth. Stay here don't let me run you off.

EH: We had a gentleman I must tell you here he was a veteran. He was here in 1908 and he talked for 2 hours and twenty minutes. Lander Ranford. He was remarkable. He could recall the names of the people on Officers' Row. (talking in background)

Daughter: This has been a whole weekend of reminiscence because we have been staying at Governors Island. I'm getting a lot of things straight in my mind. Things I've heard of you know, for years and years but I really haven't known where Daddy was stationed when those things were going on. Like I didn't know, they always talked about Sandy Hook and then they'd talk about Fort Hancock. I didn't realize they were talking about the same place. Same thing as Governor's Island. They talk about Governor's Island one minute and they talk about Fort Jay the next.

(Tape stops, restarts repeated information from first CD then new information begins)

EH: Was the furniture issued to you? Was it in the house there?

KHB: It was in the house.

EH: It was all there.

KHB: Yes. It was all there.

KHB, Jr: You were accountable for it.

TH: The reason we ask is that we give a lot of history tours for the public. They ask, people are interested in how the houses were furnished. This is how we get our information.

KHB, Jr.: At times they would walk right through the Fort to see what their tax dollars were paying for.

EH: Were there sofas you know, and upholstered chairs in the living room.

KHB: No. They didn't have too much of that stuff.

KHB Jr.: It was wooden furniture.

KHB: Anything you wanted like that, of course, you had to manage to try and get it with your small salary. But in those days we joined the Army not for the money like to day they join the Army for the money.

Daughter: But Daddy I think we had tables and chairs,

KHB: Always tables and chairs.

Daughter: And kitchen chairs, and what about the ice box? Was that ours or was that Quartermasters?

KHB: That was Quartermasters.

KHB: Ice Box, we had no Frigidaire. No ice. In those days it was prohibition made beer. (laughter) We set on side of the ice box.

KHB, Jr.: You said it. Bath tub gin.

KHB: I was in Honolulu (inaudible)

Daughter: That was in Honolulu though. That was here?

KHB: That was here. (inaudible)

Daughter: What about some of the wrecks here? I have a picture of a yacht on its side. The ship wrecks when the storms would come.

KHB: Another thing that happened when I was here. Admiral Byrd was at the South Pole. He would always come by on a ship here on his way to New York. He used to make a speech every Friday night on the radio. You could tell sixty degrees below zero. (inaudible)

KHB Jr.: Property accountability around here was always a big problem in the Army. You had to count every nut, bolt and screws. Daddy can tell you how he'd trade sheets to the Quartermaster.

KHB: (inaudible)

Daughter: Where did we get all that Champagne?

KHB: (inaudible)

EH: Did you know any of the Lighthouse Keepers?

KHB: Yeah the Lighthouse Keeper. What was his boy's name?

KHB, Jr.: David Miller.

KHB: Bill Miller.

KHB, Jr.: Bill Gould.

TH: Telegraph. Gould family was the Telegraph Tower.

Daughter: Here's a picture of him, the son I guess. He went with my Mother's Sister Alfreda. Did Alfreda graduate from the High School?

KHB, Jr.: Leonardo High School.

Daughter: Where was Leonardo High School?

KHB, Jr.: Leonardo, somewhere around Atlantic Highlands.

Daughter: Somewhere around Red Springs.

KHB, Jr.: Red Bank.

Daughter: Is there still a Leonardo High School in Red Bank?

KHB, Jr.: Yes, I saw a sign.

TH: Over in Leonardo.

Daughter: That's where my Mother's Sister went to school. How she got there from Fort Hancock, I don't know.

KHB, Jr.: She caught a train and got the bus in town.

Daughter: She went with this young man Gould.

TH: Is this Bill do you know? Because there was Bill and Jim and Tom.

Daughter: My brother says it's Bill, so it has to be Bill

KHB, Jr.: Bill Gould.

KHB: He was a telegraph man?

TH: Yeah.

Daughter: In this picture is my father's old car. Over here as you can see is the little roadster that belonged to Bill Gould that would pick up my Aunt Alfreda.

KHB Jr: He'd bring the big hunks of meat back from Long Branch so he trusted him pretty good.

TH: In your home at Quarters 14, in that time, I'm sure you had a radio. Would that have been the big thing?

KHB: Oh yeah we had a radio. Incidentally we had (inaudible)

TH: Do you remember that sergeant's name do you?

KHB: Black, Sergeant Black. He followed me to Walter Reed. You had to be very good to get to Walter Reed. (inaudible)

EH: Who were the other people on Officers' Row? You had begun to give us the names.

KHB: What?

EH: Who were your other neighbor's on Officers' Row?

KHB: Well, let's see.

Daughter: Start with the first quarters. Start with as you come in with 20, they started at 20.

KHB: (Quarters) 18, when I came here was always next to the Hospital and was the dentist. When I came it was Major Sealy and then he left, everybody left and I stayed and then Lt. Jones. Mike Jones he was the (inaudible) Red Bank, Asbury Park. He was the nephew of Bobby Jones, they both were from Atlanta. He was here when I left. Number 17 was (inaudible) officer and the first one there was Captain Esthe and then we had Major Evans and before him was Major Beverley and he was here when I left. (Quarters) 16 was Lieutenant De Vow and then 15 was Major Humphrey.

KHB Jr.: He was Coast Artillery.

KHB: They were all Coast Artillery. Then (Quarters) 14 was Colonel Turtle and 13 was Major Peirce.

KHB, Jr.: His son was killed in the Air Force. Graduated from West Point, real smart, Charles Peirce.

KHB: (Quarters) 12 was Commanding Officer Johnson, 11 was Major Homer, 10 was Major Knight, 9 was Captain Slicer (inaudible) then Captain Fee (inaudible)

KHB Jr.: Peirce is spelled P-e-i-r-c-e graduated from the Naval Academy.

Daughter: Charles Peirce was killed in World War II. He was an outstanding student at West Point.

(Talking about audio tape being recorded over and replaying first tape.)

KHB: #8,

KHB Jr.: There was a Scott in there somewhere.

KHB: There was a Schmidt.

KHB Jr.: Smith or Schmidt?

KHB: S-C-H-M-I-D-T. He was a (inaudible) As you got down the lieutenants changed so often. Some of them were in the bachelor quarters and would get married. (inaudible) There was a Lt. Gibbs. Fee was there when I left. (inaudible)

EH: That was remarkable. You have gone through almost the entire row. (laughter)

(inaudible)

(Tape begins repeating sections again and does not come to a conclusion.)

END OF INTERVIEW