Gateway NRA, Sandy Hook
An Oral History Interview with Bernard Duze
Post Tailor, Fort Hancock, 1919-1957
Interviewed by Elaine Harmon and Tom Hoffman, NPS, February 20, 1988
Transcribed by: Jo Anne Carlson, NPS Volunteer 2006

Bernard Duze standing in front of Tailor Shop, Bldg. 77 c. 1950.

Duze family home, c. 1920.

Inside the Duze home, c. 1920.

EH: My name is Elaine Harmon and I work for the Sandy Hook Museum, and I am interviewing Bernie Duze this afternoon. Tell me about growing up on Sandy Hook. What is your exact date of birth?

BD: I was born in the Station Hospital December 28, 1919, the Post Hospital, which is just over the hill from our house. We lived in a house that my father originally bought. There was a Sergeant Shell who was Mrs. Simpson's brother-in-law, and he retired from the service. That was around 1914. At that time it was a 3 room house. It was a Sears Roebuck house and those houses cost $100 a room so it was $300. My father paid them $300 for the house and then throughout the years he added rooms onto it. He finally added, I think, five rooms on to it. He added a living room, he added 2 bedrooms because I had 2 sisters and I had a brother so we had our rooms. Then he added a kitchen and a breakfast room onto it. They were all added on over the years.

EH: This house is no longer standing, Bernie?

BD: No. The steps were there until a few years ago. And they widened the road and they took the steps out. But those steps were built by my father and Johnny Simpson. They were to perfection. Do you remember those steps?

EH: Yes, I sure do.

BD: Yeah, they were beautiful.

EH: Just east of the hospital.

BD: Yes. And down just below us, Johnny Mulhern's father lived there. The first neighbors. In fact, Johnny's mother used to baby-sit for my mother. She took care of me when I was a baby. And there was a family up on the hill. The road didn't go through. Now the road goes straight through. Before the road used to end at our house and then go up the hill. Up on the hill there was a family, Evans. In fact, there was Babe and Louise. Sergeant Bob Evans, he was in charge of the Post Exchange. They had four children: Roland, Louise, Babe and Glenn. Glenn was paralyzed by infantile paralysis, so. But, they had the four children and we were very close to them. I remember them. Them after Sergeant Evans retired, there was a Sergeant Simpson who was the Drum Major for the band. He lived up there with his children. Simpson, and then after that there were different ones. Sergeant Connors lived there and Sergeant Druin. But, you would go over the hill and as you went down the hill to the hospital on the left hand side there was the morgue. I think the building is still standing there. I used to always be scared of that because we knew that when someone had died the body would be in there. I used to be frightened of that.

EH: How often would that happen though?

BD: Well. it was quite often. Whenever someone would die here, they would hold the funeral right here. They would have a formation on the parade field and they would have the band and the troops would escort the body down to the pier. And they would go down to the pier. I remember they used to play a funeral march as they took the body down to the pier. And on the way back they would play something kind of lively. I remember quite a few funerals. We had quite a few individuals who committed suicide too. Service men who killed themselves. I remember them, yeah. Marty Sitco (spelling?) didn't hang himself here. Marty Sitco, he hung himself, I think, it was over in Governor's Island. They had arrested him over in New York or something like that and had him confined in I think it was Governor's Island. And he hung himself, yeah. But then we had, I remember several enlisted men who shot themselves. We had a Sergeant Contois here whose wife committed suicide. She lived down at Gunnison, yeah.

EH: Louie Contois. I've heard of him.

BD: Yeah. He was having an affair with his wife's sister. She took iodine and she committed suicide. But something else down at Gunnison. There were four building down there for non-commissioned officers. For Sergeants, lived down there. Something else happened down at Gunnison. One of the first things I remember as a child. I was only about 3 years old. A good friend of the family was a man by the name of Dunsky (spelling?) who was a soldier and he was the Post Shoemaker at that time. On pay day, they used to gamble. And down at Gunnison behind these houses there was like a "rest house" like a bathroom and so forth for the men who used to be on the guns. So, they used to go down there and gamble. And Dunsky disappeared. Some weeks later, while they were, we used to have that was during prohibition time and there used to be boats coming in to Highlands-Atlantic Highlands. Rumrunners would be coming in. At night, the Coast Guard would chase them. You could hear the machine guns and you would hear the one-pound guns and so forth. So when the Coast Guard would chase the rumrunners, they would throw their liquor overboard. And the soldiers used to walk the beaches, you know, looking for the liquor 'cause they had these straw shields over the top of them so they would float. Some of the soldiers would get the liquor and they would hide it. So Sergeant Van Severn was down there and he went behind this building. And there was tin there, corrugated tin there. He thought that someone had gotten liquor and hidden it underneath the tin. He raised it up and he found Dunsky's body.

EH: Oh my goodness.

BD: Yeah. Another about that, my mother and father were very close friends of Dunsky. And my mother, I was about 3 or 4 years old and my baby sister had just been born, and one night she thought she saw Dunsky standing over the crib. So, I remember she bought a light that you could dim, you know, you pull the chain to get lighter and darker, and she used to keep it on all night, because she felt sure that Dunsky was dead because when Dunsky disappeared, she felt sure he was dead and sure enough, he was dead, yes.

One of the main things I remember about growing up here was that almost everybody had their own garden. My father had a vegetable garden. In fact, he had 2 vegetable gardens.

We had flower gardens. And we had chickens. We had a pretty large chicken coop. We raised our own chickens. We used to walk the beach. I used to go with my mother. We used to have a push cart. We used to walk the beach and pick up driftwood and use it for fires. In those days the house was heated, we had a pot stove in the middle of the living room. We used to burn wood in that. We'd burn coal. After you burned the coal you'd get the coke and you'd re-burn the coke. And I'd used to walk the tracks because when the trains went in and out and the ashes would drop and there would be coke on the rails and I used to pick up the coke and bring that home.

EH: Could you describe the house in detail for us? Was it a two story house?

BD: No, it was one story house. It was a one story wood structure, yeah. As early as I can remember we had a kitchen. We had a dining room, a living room and a bedroom. When I first remember, then my father built another living room and then he built, two rooms on there one for the girls and one for the boys. And then next to the kitchen he built a pantry, not like a pantry, I guess a breakfast room. And then in later years, my father and brother dug underneath the house. They dug the sand out and they put a cellar in there. He got cedar timbers from the woods and that held up the house. They picked up planks on the beach and they put a cellar in there and they put in a steam furnace and then we had radiators in the house. We raised a lot of our own food because well my father had a tailor shop but he was a PFC, Private First Class and he was only making $21 a month and raising four children on only $21 dollars a month. So we had to do a lot for ourselves.

EH: Was your father's name Maxwell?

BD: Well, Max. Originally, in Polish, his brother called him Maxim. But, in the Army, he was called Max. My father was born in, it was called Russia at that time, but then it became Poland. It was Radam. When he was 13 years old he left Poland and for three years lived with cousins in London. And then when he was 15 years old he came back to Poland because when the kids became 15 years old they were put in the service for five years or something like that. So, he came back and got his brother who was 13. My father was 15 and his brother was 13 and they came to America. And they went up well, my father wound up in Boston. I don't know where my uncle wound up. At that time my father was 16 years old and he was in Boston and he tells me that he was sleeping on a park bench in the winter time there. When my father was in Poland he was apprenticed to a tailor there and he learned to be a tailor. He lived with a tailor there. And he used to sleep on the bench there. So, when he came to this country they found him sleeping on this park bench in Boston so they took him to the old folk's home or something. They had him out there cutting wood with these old men and they found out that he was a tailor. They heard that at Fort Strong, which was a Harbor Defense at Boston Harbor, one of the companies there needed a tailor. So, they took him over there and told him if he enlisted in the service, he could be company tailor. So that's how he joined the Army. He lied about his age. He was 16 and he said, he was 17. You had to be 17. He stayed in the Army for 3 years. At that time, enlistment was 3 years. He stayed out of the service, I think, for 3 years. He originally joined the Army in 1906. He served for 3

years and got out. He was in Columbus Barracks in Ohio and he re-joined the service there. That was around 1912. From there he was sent to Governor's Island, which was Fort Jay. He was a company tailor up there. That's when he met my mother. My mother had come from Russia. Her brothers had brought her over from Russia. She came over about 1905 and she was living in New York on the East Side and she was working in a clothing factory. In fact, she told me one time that she worked with Fanny Brice. They worked making shirt-waist in a clothing factory there.

EH: What was your mother's full name? Her maiden name?

BD: Ida. It was originally Aginski but they changed it to Agin. She came from Russia. And prior to her coming here, two of her brothers came here and so they brought her over. So, she met my father. At that time my father was a private and company tailor at Governors Island. And at that time they didn't have no quarters for him so they let him to pitch a tent out in the field. So, they were living in a tent on Governors Island. So, somehow he got transferred to Fort Hancock. First of all, they lived in Highlands. They rented a place in Highlands. And then when this Sgt. Shell retired, he was able to buy this house from Sgt. Shell. That's how they came to live there. They used to raise their own chickens and they had their gardens and so forth. At first, my father was just the company tailor. I think it was with the 57th Coast Artillery. And when World War I came along, there were two children at that time, my elder brother Joe and my sister Helen. In 1918, the men from here (Ft. Hancock) shipped out for France. My father went overseas. For nine months they were in artillery over there.

EH: The family remained here?

BD: My mother remained here with the two children, yeah. My father was in, I think, Muse Argonne and he was gassed and he was shell-shocked. He received the Silver Star commendation because he saved one of the men's lives. When they were having a heavy bombardment around Thanksgiving, this one man was wounded, a Private Fay was wounded, and he could hear him crying in the shell hole and no one would go up and bring him back into the trench. So, my father climbed up over the trench and went out there and brought the man back. He didn't notice until he got back that he was in his bare feet. I understand that this Fay was hit while my father was carrying him over his shoulders, he was hit again and he eventually died. My father was overseas for 9 months and after the war he returned.   He was just a Private or a PFC at that time and he took over as company tailor. It was the first barracks, right here, I think it was the 57th, right here just past the PX on the left hand side. He used to do his own pressing. In fact, I still have his iron. He used to press with a hand iron. My father was a complete tailor, a custom tailor. He would measure a man and then he would cut the patterns. He always used to store the patterns. He would make the uniforms for anyone that wanted a custom made uniform. A lot of the officers would be sent overseas. Some of them would be sent to the Philippines or Panama or somewhere. They would write back to my father and my father had their patterns and he could make a uniform for them and send it out to them. A lot of times officers were in the Philippines and he would make uniforms for them. Each company had a tailor. Each company had a barber. These were enlisted men. And then,

as the Post grew larger, and I think it was in 1929, I believe the 52nd was sent up here from Fort Eustis, Va. My father went down to Fort Eustis before they came up here. If fact, he almost got killed going down there. In Virginia, his car ran off the road. He was heading down a hill going off a cliff. There was only one tree between him and the cliff. He hit that tree and demolished his car. He fractured his chest but he was saved. In later years, we had a Captain here, Captain Bailey, who was a doctor in the hospital here.

EH: We interviewed him. Dr. Kincheon Bailey, a fabulous man.

BD: Ken was here? That's his son.

EH: The whole family. No, Doctor Bailey was here with his children.

BD: That's the son. His father was Capt. Kincheon Bailey and the son too. Ken Bailey would have been about my age, right?

EH: Right.

BD: 'Cause I used to play with Bailey. But anyway, Bailey's brother was going down to Virginia, they were from Virginia, and he went off that cliff and he was killed.

BD: Prior to 1929, we, they had the disappearing guns they had the artillery and then they had the mines. I can't remember whether the mines were run by the 7th or it was a different command but they had the mine planter and they had the disappearing guns. But then about 1929, the three batteries of the 52nd that was stationed in Fort Eustis, Virginia was transferred up here and they brought the railway guns with them. Then, it became a combination of the railway guns and the disappearing guns. At that time, with the addition of the additional men, my father moved from that building over to the larger building that we had that was opposite the barracks.

EH: The barracks you're talking about, 22 the first building after the U-shape.

BD: So, he was in 58 and he moved to this large building, 77. Seventy-seven was originally built as the Post laundry. After they discontinued it as a laundry it became a garage. A lot of the enlisted men would store their cars in there. My father took over the north end of it. It was still a garage at that time. He took over the north end of it. At that time, I think he had two pressing machines and he did his tailoring there. He had at first he did the tailoring by himself but as he became busier he employed tailors to help him. He had pressers. Most of the pressers came from New York. We had rooms there and the pressers would stay there during the week. On weekends, they would catch the boat and go back to New York. But they would eat in the barracks. They made arrangements that they could eat with the soldiers and they lived in that building. The tailors were the same way. Later on when they started changing uniforms, my father got very busy. At one time, he employed I think it was three tailors and usually about 2 or 3 pressers. We didn't do our own cleaning there. We had the New York-New Jersey cleaners from Asbury Park came in. They would pick up the dry cleaning and they would just clean it

and bring it back to us and we would press it there. But we did all our own tailoring and my father would make uniforms there. He made quite a few uniforms for a lot of the officers and a lot of the enlisted men. In fact, you had a Zanet that was here with the 52nd and he was showing me a picture. Originally, they wore breaches and leather boots or they had wrapped leggings. Then, they went to fatigues and then they went to boots. My father did a lot of work in those days. A lot of fellas wanted their breaches, "pegged" to make a real sharp edge there that made it look real sharp so he used to peg a lot of breaches. But then they went from breaches over to slacks pants. And when they went to slacks the Army used to issue the men slacks that were made out of an elastique material. They could draw material from the supply room. They could draw serge material. And with the serge material my father would make pants for them and shirts for them so they would get tailor made uniforms. In other words they pay for the tailoring and they would provide the material. And this Zanet showed me a picture of a uniform that he had that he wore for years and years that my father had made for him and he was very proud of that. The material was 18oz. serge. It was beautiful material. It wasn't the color that it is now. Now the uniforms are a green color then it was olive drab and it was 18 ounce serge. Most of the fellas would have pants made with a three button waist on them. And a lot of them had their pants pegged. Then the officers stopped them. There was a regulation that the bottoms had to be a certain size. Some of these guys wanted the smaller some wanted them larger.

TH: It wasn't to regulation.

BD: No, it wasn't to regulation.

EH: So the quartermaster would issue the fabric.

BD: Yes, the men would draw the fabric and he'd make up the form.

TH: Would your Dad go to a certain building out here like would it be the Quartermaster warehouse up the street here to get the fabric he needed?

BD: No, the men got the fabric themselves.

TH: Oh, okay.

BD: My father would also furnish fabric too. The men would draw enough fabric for a pair of pants or something like that. I don't know the arrangement was to get the fabric but my father could furnish the serge too. Of course it's always better to get one piece because no two pieces of material are alike you know. Unless it's cut off the same bolt, it's not exactly the same shade. Originally, he was making them all himself, but then he was taking measurements and he had a tailor in New York that would make them up to his specifications. In other words, my father would take the measurements and send them to New York and they would make them up. He did the same with the shirts. I think you saw a picture today that had John Lotion. John Lotion was a well built muscular man. He was a weight lifter and everything else. These men, when they went on Guard Duty

they would do what was called “buck for orderly”. In other words, when they examined them the best looking man would get to be an orderly for an officer and he didn’t have to walk Guard Duty like the other ones so they all used to “buck for orderly”. I remember that some of them they would have the uniforms and they wanted the uniforms pressed with three creases in the back other ones would want four creases. Anything to make them look sharp so they could “buck for orderly” when they were up for Guard Duty.

EH: What would be a typical price? Do you have any recollection. You know for a custom made shirt…..

BD: Around $10 or something like that.

EH: How did the soldiers afford this?

BD: Well, the men were paid once a month. At that time a private was drawing $21 a month and for awhile they dropped them down to $17 a month and out of that $17 they took twenty five cents out for the Old Soldiers’ Home. So, my father was supporting a family on $17 a month and it was hard. That’s why I say most of these soldiers had gardens. The Post had gardens all over. You had a garden here and on the other side of the Lighthouse there was a big garden there. The Sergeants lived on Post they would be given a plot to grow their own vegetables there. There was another one down behind where the stable was. There was a garden there. People down that end they would use that garden.

Tom Hoffman: You mean the stables where the mules used to be?

BD: Yeah. Right beyond that.

TH: Building 36. Back behind it there.

BD: Yeah, that much later on became and NCO club, I believe. But then it was the stables. But a lot of the enlisted men, at least the Sergeants, they had houses at different parts of the Post.

BD: Like in Camp Lowe there were several houses. Some of them were owned by the Government and some were owned by the individuals themselves. And that Camp Lowe area that I told you about where the dump used to be there were several houses along there. There was one big government house on the hill and then there were a couple of houses in there and then into Camp Lowe itself - well, there was government houses - in fact, Johnny Mulhern’s father lived in one of those brick houses down there.

EH: You were describing to Tom where these things ……

BD: Through the pumping plant cause he operated the pumping plant. Prior to the War the Mulhern’s lived next to us. But during the War, the First World War, I think they made all the civilians move off the Post. So, he lived off the Post, he lived in Highlands.

Then after the War when he moved back he moved into that brick house next to the pumping plant. Then, further down the next road going south was Camp Lowe. There was a Sergeants Row down there and there was individual houses for Sergeants. In fact, Jimmy Helfer's father lived in the last house. There were two hangers down there. There was a low hanger and there was a high hanger. I believe the high hanger was used for balloons, observation balloons. And I'm pretty sure the low hanger was used for airplanes during that time. By the time I was growing up, they were no longer used. They used to store straw in one of them. We used to go in there. We had a rope and we used to jump off into the straw in the old hangers there. Opposite Camp Lowe where the hangers were was the old railway pier. The Jersey Central Railroad used to come into Sandy Hook and go out to a pier out there. Then people would board boats and go to New York. When I was a kid there was still one pier remaining there. In fact, I notice you have a picture of them finding the Halyburton remains and its men. I think it was while they were digging the spur to go out to the railroad pier that they found those remains there. That pier was there up as long as I can remember I guess until, the Second World War and it gradually disappeared. Prior to the War, the Monmouth County Sea Scouts were given an aged destroyer, the Tucker. They moored that destroyer at that pier down there. It remained there, in fact, Jimmy Helfer belonged to the Sea Scouts there for a couple of years, and it remained there until World War II and then the United States gave I think it was 100 aged destroyers to Great Britain. So that destroyer was returned to the Navy and they shipped it to Great Britain and I don't know whatever happened to it after that. But that's the last I remember of that.

BD: In our family originally, my brother was born in New York. In let's see, 1914, my brother was born in New York. My brother Joseph. Then after that, my mother had twins, the following year or a year and a half later. The twins died within six months. She was living at Sandy Hook when she had the twins. Then in 1917, she had my sister Helen. At that time they were living at Fort Hancock. Then my father went overseas and I was born when my father came back from overseas. In fact, when he used to get mad at me he would say, "I wish I would have stayed overseas." So I never would have been born. (laughter) My father was originally from Poland and when he was over in France they told him he could go back to Poland on a furlough if he wanted to 'cause his father was still alive. But he chose not to 'cause he wanted to get back home 'cause my mother was here with two children by herself. So he didn't go back to see his father and his father died around 1926 in Poland. And my father also left two sisters in Poland and during the Holocaust they disappeared and their entire families. There was a total of about 14 people. My father's sisters and all their entire families, they all disappeared. I think one sister lived in Warsaw and one lived in Hammersheldt which was where my father's father was living. We could never find a trace of them after the War, they all disappeared.

I remember, as a kid, I went to the Post School. It was next to the Church, St. Agnes, I think, a Catholic Church. St. Mary's Chapel, yeah. Well the school, just before you came to the Chapel was a wooden school. I went to school there. I remember my first teacher was Mrs. Yost. They had one teacher I think to teach the first and second grade and another one to teach the third and fourth and then Miss Murray and she took over and

would teach the fifth, sixth and seventh. So, my first teacher was Mrs. Yost, then I had Mrs. Conover, Peggy Conover and then I had Miss Murray. The first place we had the school was there. Then the school moved from there over to the big red brick barracks [Building 102] up on the hill. So we were over there. Miss Murray, before she even became my teacher, I used to be scared of her because she used to say "I'm gonna' skin you alive". So I could actually visualize being skinned alive. So I was always afraid of her. But, then later on in the fifth grade she became my teacher and she was a very fine teacher. She took a lot of pride. She went to Wellesley. And when she was in Wellesley her English Literature teacher was Catherine Lee Bates. She was the one that wrote, "America the Beautiful". She was always proud of that, that she was her teacher.

When I first went to school we used to walk, then later on they made a bus. They used mules for the bus. It was an old medical wagon probably from the Spanish American War or afterwards. A wagon that had been used as an ambulance and there were seats in there. They used to come around and pick us up and take us down to school.

Tom: Would there be a soldier assigned to do that?

BD: Yes, it was a soldier that would drive the bus mules. I used to like to stay on it because my house wasn't the last one, the last stop was down at Camp Lowe. So they would go down the back road and after they dropped everyone off at Camp Lowe, he let me drive the mules back. So, I used to go with them all the way 'cause that had to pass my house again so I would get to drive the mules. In winter time, they had a sled. In fact, it was an enclosed sled. The bus would come around and pick the kids up with the sled. I remember one time the horses got loose and ran away up by the hospital. There was a telephone pole with a wire guide on it and it got hooked on that and turned the bus over up by the hospital.

So, anyway I went here up until the seventh grade. After the seventh grade the kids would go to Leonardo and originally they would take the train. They would have to walk down. The kids that lived at the northern end of the Post would catch the train down at around the pier. Then the other kids, we'd walk down to Gunnison. We'd get on board the train that would take us out to Highland beach. There we would connect with the Jersey Central train that was coming in from Sea Bright-Long Branch and that train would take us to Leonardo. So, I went to the eight grade through High School in Leonardo. But, I only went on the train for about 2 years 'cause then they started running buses. So, I went by bus afterwards.

Many times when I'd walk to school as a kid, it was so cold I'd walk to opposite one barracks then I'd run to the next one and stop. It was so cold in between, you know, the wind would be blowing across and it was bitter cold. So, I was glad when they finally got the horse and wagon going. One kid was killed. He got off the horse and wagon and somehow he got under the wheels and one of the children was run over and killed.
We used to have a lot of fun. We would go down to the corral. They had the horses and mules in the old stable there and then they'd keep them in the corral. The brave kids

would hop off the side of the corral and jump on the horse's bare back. But I'd ride a mules around. I wasn't brave enough to ride the horses.

TH: Did you ever stop at the bakery?

BD: Oh yes, in fact during recess we used to go up to the bakery and, I think it was around 3 cents you'd get a loaf of bread. They also had tickets too. Sometimes my parents would give me a ticket and you could turn the ticket in for a loaf of bread. We'd get it when it was warm and we'd just scoop it out. Yeah, the inside, we'd eat the hot part of it. That used to be a good treat.

TH: Do you remember who any of the bakers were?

BD: Well, I remember Mr. Murray was one of the bakers, yeah Sergeant Murray.

EH: What did it look like inside the bakery?

BD: They had a big oven. And they had a long wooden stick that they would put the loaves in with and take them out.

EH: Was there a sales counter? Or store like

BD: I can't remember off hand. There probably was a counter there. But I can remember you go there and buy the bread while it was warm. Then they had the Commissary. They had a coal pile, they had an ice house.

TH: Where was the ice house?

BD: Just as you go down to where the coal pile is. After you pass the Commissary heading north, you turn right and the building, the first house on the left, was the ice house. I'm pretty sure that was the ice house. Then as you head down the hill there was a carpenters shop there. It was either a carpenters shop or a saw mill, they cut up wood there. Then down below, down a hill, there was a railroad trestle where they would bring the coal in and they would drop the coal down off that trestle.

TH: That trestle is still there.

BD: The trestle is still there? Well, that was down from the Commissary. I was telling you before that behind the Commissary there was a retired Sergeant Greer. They called him baldy Greer who was a very fine artist. And on his screen he had painted a picture of Pocahontas. One day Rabbit Hayes walked over there and said "Good morning ma'am". He thought it was a woman there. (Laughter) This Rabbit Hayes was something. Rabbit, he was always hunting. He mainly wore fatigues because he was so large. He had about a 50 waist and it was hard to fit him with a uniform. He did have a uniform but most time he'd wear fatigues. In those days they had two color fatigues. One was brown and one was blue. So Rabbit was usually wearing a brown top and maybe a blue

bottom. And they used to have the old fatigue hats which was a round fatigue hat. He spent a lot of time well he mainly worked with the Quartermaster taking care of the dumps. He had a lot of free time and he used to do a lot of fishing and a lot of hunting. One time he was walking by our house and I was standing in the back there, and my cat was just on the edge of the hill. He had a .410 shot gun. He killed my cat from about 50 yards away. So my brother went in the house and got his bb gun and shot him in the rear with a bb gun. (laughter)

TH: Why did he shoot the cat?

BD: For target practice. He was a dead shot very good. I used to go hunting with him. He had hound dogs and he used to hunt for rabbits. At night time he'd be out hunting for opossum. So sometimes I'd go hunting with him for opossum. He had a flashlight and you'd hear the dogs howl and howl. Finally when they'd get a opossum treed, I'd climb up the tree and shake the tree and the opossum would fall out of the tree. He would have a stick there and the opossum would grab the stick and he'd put the opossum into a burlap sack. The next day he'd be up there at the dump and he'd boil the opossum and he dug himself a bunch of clams and he'd have himself a meal, opossum and clams. Rabbit was a real heavy set man. He was from Georgia and had this Georgia cracker accent. His name was Abisha. So when they asked him his name he said "Abbot" and it sounded like Rabbit. So they called him Rabbit. But he used to take people that came on the Post out on his row boat and he'd take them out fishing. I don't think he took them hunting. I know he took them fishing. But, when he finally retired, it was around 1938 or '39 his 30 years were up, and he had no place to go. So, he must have been living in the woods down at Kingman and Mills. They said he lived in one of those old buildings down there. People would see him down there. He had a big beard. Then he disappeared. Then they were having maneuvers. I think it was in 1939, some of the men were having maneuvers. As you went down to Battery Gunnison there was a building on the left hand side some of the men ducked underneath there and they found his body under there. By that time it was decayed. They could tell by his fatigues – Sergeant Vance identified him by the fatigues. There was an empty bottle there, wine or liquor. So he must have crawled under there and froze to death.

TH: And where was this?

BD: On the road, going down to Gunnison. On the left hand side just after you pass over the tracks there was a building there and he was underneath that building.

TH: When he retired how old do you think he was? Was it mandatory retirement.

BD: He serviced his 30 years. He'd be in his late 50's I guess.

TH: Do you know where he'd been? Was he here for many years?

BD: He must have been here a lot of years because I remember him all during my youth and he was here as far back as I can remember. In those days a men would stay on one

Post for 20 years. My father was in Fort Hancock from 1914 until he retired in 1939. So you would stay in one place a long time. Because of that a lot of men would stay in the service. Now a days they only let them stay for 2 or 3 years and then they move them on. A lot of men are quitting the service after only 20 years because there is no security and it's not good for children. They are losing a lot of good men that way.

TH: Do you recall any of Rabbit Hayes' favorite fishing spots because you mentioned he used to take people out fishing?

BD: The main spot, well there's a long jetty I think its in front of quarters 5 and 6 where the road comes in, there's a jetty that goes way out. And there's a buoy out there. He used to go out there and fish, maybe for blackfish or porgies. And the fishing was very good. I used to go off the rocks in front of the hospital there and in an hour I'd have my basket full of porgies. I'd be catching them two at a time. The fishing was very good in those days. He used to dig a lot of clams. He used to dig his own bait. He was quite a fella.

Another thing I remember, as kids, we had Boy Scouts here. That was very good. It was Troop 19, Fort Hancock. Usually it would be some Officer would be Scoutmaster and we would have one or two patrols. We'd go out in the woods and camp overnight. Then we'd roast potatoes. And we'd have games. We used to go up on the hill by the Mortar Battery and play steal the flag. In fact, the Mortar Battery was the favorite spot for sleigh riding. In the wintertime, there was a wall all the way around. We'd way up to the top and sleigh ride down. The thing is that when you would come down to the bottom, the path would end into a wall. So you would have to swerve to go out in between. That was the best sleigh riding spot on the Post.

One thing, my life changed pretty much in 1929, not 1929, 1925. My mother developed gall stones. They took her to Long Branch Hospital which is now Monmouth Medical and she was operated on for gall stones. During the surgery her heart stopped and they thought she was dead. They went to remove her to the morgue and on the way to the morgue, they didn't even complete the operation, they saw she was breathing again so they took her back and completed the operation. But it was a messed up operation. Because they sent her home. And I remember I was only five years old at that time, and one time she was leaning over the sink her incision broke and her entire entrails fell out into her hands. That's one of the most shocking things I remember, as a kid. The Post Ambulance they took her. My father had her sent down to Walter Reed Hospital in Washington. At Walter Reed they made her a new gall bladder. They took a piece of flesh. That was one of the first operations. Colonel Keller the surgeon there, he took a piece of flesh from her leg and grafted it on o her liver and made like an artificial gallbladder. She lived for another ten years but she had a lot of problems. Finally, she died of cirrhosis of the liver in 1935.

She was in Walter Reed Hospital for about nine months and while she was there my father couldn't take care of the children. So, the two sisters, one of the Sergeants' families on Post took care of my two sisters and my brother and I stayed with a family in

Atlantic Highlands. I think we stayed there for about nine months to a year. Then my mother came back and we came back. From that time on it was hard because my father was deep in debt. And with my mother being sick and everything else, couldn't pay much attention to the children. But she worked very hard, even though she was sick. She took care of the garden and took care of the chickens and raised four children. She died. She was just 48 years old when she died. Two years later my father married my mother's sister and they had a son, Danny.

My father stayed on and ran the tailor shop all through the War. Well, I graduated High School in 1937. When I graduated High School, I went to work in the tailor shop with my father mainly taking care of the counter and matching clothes and marking clothes. I also helped him do bookkeeping. In those days we were able to give credit to the soldiers. A soldier was only paid once a month. He could get his clothes out and he would sign a receipt. At the end of the month, my father would turn the bills over to the First Sergeant of each battery. When the men were paid they would collect the money from their salary and my father would let them (First Sergeants) keep 10% as a service (fee). Later on, the Post Exchange took over and we weren't allowed any credit.

In fact, in later years when I took over the tailor shop, after the war, well my father retired from the service in 1939. Most of the time in the service he was only a Private First Class. Then he went up to Corporal then Sergeant. When he had 30 years in, I think it was around 1938, he was still only a Sergeant. And you had to be in rank, well they passed a law, you had to be in rank for at least a year before you could retire in that rank. So what a lot of men used to do, like my father paid a First Sergeant the difference in his salary and he would step down and my father became First Sergeant. My father was First Sergeant for one year in Headquarters Battery of the 52nd. He belonged to the 52nd before that, but he was on special duty as a tailor but for the last year he acted as First Sergeant and he was able to retire as a First Sergeant. In those days, First Sergeant was just a Tech Sergeant was two stripes I mean, with three stripes and two stripes underneath but later on it became a Master Sergeant. So, every time the Army would raise a soldier, a retired soldier would get that same raise. In other words, he may retire as a Sergeant drawing $90 a month but today he could be drawing $1000 a month because that's the rank a sergeant of the equivalent rank, gets paid. So every time they got a raise, my father would get a raise. My father retired in '39 but he stayed on through the War because there was as many as 20,000 troops here during the War. So the tailor shop was a big operation.

But after the War, my father wanted to retire completely. He wanted me, I came back from overseas, I was four years in the service, two years in England. I came back in December of '46. I guess it was. When did the War end '45? Well then I came back in December of '45. He wanted to retire and he wanted me to take over the tailor shop right away. I said I'd been in the service for four years and I wanted to rest awhile. He got angry with me and so he sold the shop to the New York-New Jersey Cleaners, the ones that had been doing his dry cleaning. And they took it over. Then, he went to California and I rode out with him to California. But afterwards there was this fella Harry Rose. Who had been a tailor in the Army. He was a soldier and he got out of the service. And

New York-New Jersey Cleaners were willing to sell the business. My father sold it for $4,000 and they were willing to sell it back for $2,000. They only had it for six months and for another $2,000 they would sell it. My father said he could get it back for me and Harry Rose. He didn't want Harry Rose to take over he wanted me to get in there. I had some money that I had saved during the War and we put down. Somehow we raised the $6,000 and we bought off New York-New Jersey Gallus Brothers Cleaners. So, I went in there and Harry brought his wife in there. They had both gone to dry cleaning school in Maryland. So they came in. It didn't work out as partners having him and his wife and me there. So, after two years it started to slow down. So, he said I'll buy you out or you buy me out.

BD:……. Army Ordnance and I was an instructor. First of all, I went through Basic and Technical training at Aberdeen Proving Grounds. And in, I think it was December of '42. I went in March of '42 and I went through my Basic and Technical training in Aberdeen. After I went through my Technical Training, I went to, what was called, Cadre School, which was training for non-commissioned officers. So, when I graduated Cadre School and I became a Corporal, a Drill Corporal, in one of the Basic Companies there. They formed a new Ordnance School. I was in the Ordnance School in Aberdeen and then they formed a new Ordnance School in Santa Anita, California, which was formerly Santa Anita Racetrack. Santa Anita had been used for, they had Japanese internees there. They had taken it over and they had barracks there where they interred Japanese. Japanese civilians that lived on the West Coast were interred at Santa Anita Racetrack. And then they moved them inland, to somewhere in Utah, I believe, and the Ordnance took over Santa Anita and the existing barracks that were there plus the stables and that became the West Coast Ordnance Training Center. So I went out there. Out there I was of course a Drill Instructor Corporal, and then I became a Clerical and Supply Instructor in a classroom there and I was teaching the Depot Supply 'cause I was mainly trained for Ordnance Depot work. From there I was, let's see I was there from about December to May then I went down to, they had a special assignment in Kelly Field, Texas. There were six companies of colored ordnance troops. There were three depot companies and three ammunition supply companies of colored troops. In those days the troops were segregated. Whites and colored troops were segregated. They had gone to the Port of Embarkation and they failed, they put them through various tests and they found that they were not qualified to go overseas. So they sent them down to Kelly Field, Texas, to be retrained. So I was sent with a group from the Ordnance Training Center at Santa Anita and I stayed in Kelly Field for six months training these troops. One of the main things they found out, that a lot of the officers they had there, what the Army used to do, if an officer came out of Officers Training School and he had a low mark, they'd assign him to a colored battalion. A lot of the officers resented it and the troops resented it too. There was no cooperation there and nobody was getting anyplace. So, one of the first things they did, they got all the officers together and asked them, "Do you want to be with these troops?" Anybody that didn't want to be with the troops they got rid of them. They got new officers and they were able to train them. Men that didn't object to being with them, they were able to train them. We re-trained them. Put them through regular basic training. Which is going on the rifle range and drilling and everything else. And they would put them through a technical training that was run through and Ordnance

Depot and there were men there who were in ammunition supply and ordnance. They had two separate kinds of supply. They had ammunition supply that was entirely separate from material supply and I was in the material Depot Supply. But after they went through their training they gave them tests they passed and they shipped out and I went back to California. I went back to teaching in the Ordnance School in California, the cléricl supply, I was teaching Depot supply. One outfit was going overseas this was in December of '42 I guess it was and they were short twelve men. So, they needed twelve trained men in a hurry so they went right to the Ordnance school and picked out twelve men. And, it was just a coincidence, but of the twelve, nine were Jewish. Just a co-incidence. And a couple of others happen to have names that sounded like Jewish. Like Harry Zaplin, he wasn't Jewish. They had another fella his name was Abraham Lincoln Gleason, so he was assigned. It was very curious to me that out of twelve men, nine happened to turn out to be Jewish. Of course, there was no prejudice in the Army (chuckles in the background). Actually it turned out to be a very good deal for me because we went to England. I was stationed at a smaller Depot that was G-24 that was just twelve miles from Stratford-on-Avon and our liberty post was Stratford just twelve miles away. I used to go into Stratford and in during the summertime they used to have the Shakespeare Festival. And they would have a truck going in there. If you went the same night every week you could see twelve different Shakespeare plays put on by the best Stratford-on-Avon players. I saw some very good plays there. From there I went to a larger Depot G-25. G-24 was just an Ordnance Depot.

Then we moved another 20 miles to G-25 which was a combination of all different Depots. They had Ordnance, Signal, Engineers, and they even had a tire repair company there and they even had an auto rebuilding company. I was stationed there. Our main job there was to prepare shipments for the invasion. Anything that went in on the invasion. They would take the supplies and broke up in twelve different parts, at least twelve and you would have identical shipments so that when it went ashore all the equipment wouldn't go ashore on one landing craft cause if that one craft got destroyed, you would lose all of one type. So they made up 12 or 14 different ones and we waterproofed everything. Everything was dipped into a wax material. First we would box it. We had a carpenter shop there and first we would box it. We found one thing. Shipments came over from the United States and you couldn't trust, sometimes they had a packing list on them. Sometimes you would open the packing list and it wouldn't be what was inside there. So, we had to re-open everything that came over from the States and re-check it to make sure everything was in there. One time I opened one box and it had pipes in there. Another time it had fruit cocktail in there so we had to re-check everything. Then we boxed it, we had our own carpenters there, and strapped it.

We had German prisoners that came there and when we got the German prisoners our place really started to move because they were very methodical. While we would be moving boxes around here and there, the Germans got rollers and put them on rollers. We used to take and stencil a box. A guy would take a little brush and stencil it. The Germans came they took a stencil, they put it on a stick they took a spray gun they put it down there and zip, zip, the stencil was on the box. They were very methodical in everything they did. In fact, even the food. When we got Germans there and the

Germans would cook, we ate better than we ever did. They were used to using powdered eggs and powered milk. They would take our cans of fruit cocktail and we had beautiful pies and cakes. We did very good with the Germans (prisoners) and they were very eager to work for us. I remember one day I was out working and these fellas, in German, they were cursing British weather because it was cold and damp. I could understand. I speak Jewish which is like German. Now your're here and you wanted to take this place, and now here you are and you are cursing the place. So what do you want it for? In fact, once I asked a British civilian I says, "When does summer come around here?" He says, "Well, it came on a Tuesday last year" (laughter in background).

BD: Oh yeah, I remember, it was just prior to the War, just east of the Lighthouse and just north of the Mortar Battery. They cleaned the woods out there and they were building a motor pool there. A lot to park all the trucks. And while they were digging it they must have dug up some skeletons there. I went out there one day and I think there were three skulls laying out there. So, I brought one of them home. I washed it out and I had it in the house. My aunt said to get rid of that and so I took it down to the Post Office. There was a flower box outside the post office. I left it sitting there. (laughter)

TH: Where was the Post Office, Bernie?

BD: The Post Office was the building just north of the Commissary. The building that originally been the ice house that became the Post Office for awhile. So, I left it there. It must have been around 1939-1940 and I often wondered whether those bones were Indian bones or they may have been the survivors that Halyburton had sent ashore to look for the deserters. But no one ever determined. In fact, no one ever worried about them. They just let them lay out there and they just scooped them up.

EH: Do you remember any other grave yards or grave markers?

BD: I told Tom that there was a grave out by the pig pens. There was a grave. I think it was a Captain. On the grave stone, it said that it was his wish to be buried here. And he was buried there and there was a tombstone. It was just on the edge of the swamp area there just before you went into where the pig pens were. There was a grave there. It was there before the war, but when I came back and went out there all there was pipes and they told me it had been removed and sent out to a cemetery out in Long Island where they buried soldiers. So I don't know what happened to it.

TH: He believes it was a post Civil War date on it.

BD: It was after the Civil War. I can't remember whether it was 1868 or something like that. He had asked to be buried there.

TH: What's intriguing is that there was a headstone. How big do you say it was?

BD: Not very high.

TH: So it was small and it had that little story that he wanted to be buried there.

BD: Yes. In fact, I saw somewhere that there was someone that wanted to be buried there in one of these stories about this area. In fact, I was talking to Jimmy Helfrey the other day and he was reading a book that he got out of the library in Middletown about the Hartshorne's. It told a lot about Sandy Hook because Sandy Hook was owned by the Hartshorne's. It was given to them by the British Government, or something like that. They owned all of Highlands from Atlantic Highland up to the Highlands. And they owned Sandy Hook. Then they deeded it to the Government when they wanted to build a Fort out here. I guess it was when they first came out here during the Civil War. In fact, that Fort, we used to call it Fort Lincoln, you know. People said it wasn't called Fort Lincoln, but I always knew it as Fort Lincoln. Where they started it down at the end of the Hook and they never finished it. By the water tower. But I understand that the Hartshornes deeded it to Fort Hancock. In fact, Clarence Moore told me that his father did some research on that and he went to Washington. You might ask Clarence some time to find out whether or not the Hartshornes had a deed or still had claim to it. A ninety-nine year deed or something like that. He thought it was still owned by the Hartshorne's. It was deeded for something like a dollar and it ran for ninety-nine years. I don't know whether it was ever transferred over to the government or not. Clarence or his father told me that his father went to Washington and researched that and found that it was probably still owned by the Hartshornes. I'll get a hold of Jimmy. He read this book about the Hartshornes. And see if I can get the name of it and get it out of the library.

BD: We had this Boy Scout Troop out here. We used always used to get military packs and military tents. So when we went to camp, we used to go to Camp Aree (Burton) down at where it's Allaire State Park now. It used to be Arthur Brisbane, and we used to go down there Camp Aree and we usually won first place because we had the neatest uniforms and the neatest tents and everything else. We even got Army campaign hats.

TH: (looking at pictures) The little girl right there. Is that your sister?

BD: Yes that's my sister Thelma.

TH: Is that the same one there?

BD: Yeah, she's in San Francisco now. There's turkeys, we used to raise turkeys. When my father retired, he went to California, Johnny Simpson helped him build a covered trailer.

TH: Yeah, I saw that.

BD: He packed all the stuff in the trailer and pulled it behind his car.

TH: Is that your sister here?

BD: Yeah, that's me and my kid sister and my elder sister Helen. Helen died.

TH: You owned dogs out here. Did you have a tick problem? Do you remember if ticks were a bad thing? I'm sure the mosquitoes were.

BD: I don't think we had any tick problems, no.

TH: We do now. Oh yeah, the ticks are bad.

TH: Bernie was also telling me about Johnny Simpson, how he I guess you could say worked himself to death.

BD: Well, Johnny got a stroke. During the War, when I was overseas this happened. They had a very bad storm here and nobody wanted to clean the roads off. The roads had to be cleaned to go down to Kingman-Mills, ya know. He took the road scraper and he went down there and this big storm, he got caught in this big storm. They found him. He was alive, but he got frozen. He got a stroke after that and he was paralyzed for the next seven years until he died.

TH: You were telling me how he was bed ridden, I guess?

BD: Yes. He retired and they bought a house in Oakhurst.

EH: What year did he die?

TH: It was around the time your Dad died I think.

BD: Oh no, my father died in 1958, Johnny died after that. No, I can't recall.

TH: I think it was roughly around the same time maybe a year later, 1959.

BD: Somewhere around there 'cause my father came to see him. He retired in '48 so he must have lived about another seven years or so.

TH: Bernie says that Johnny is buried in Fairview Cemetery.

BD: Yeah, he's buried there and his son John is buried there.

TH: Are those people, is that him up there in your snapshot?

BD: Yeah, that's Mrs. Simpson on the left there, Johnny and Mrs. Simpson's mother.

TH: Mrs. Simpson's mother now she lived a real long time.

BD: Mrs. Simpson had to take care of Johnny and her mother. Her mother became senile and she was something to take care of, but she kept her the whole time.

TH: Who's mother?

BD: Mrs. Simpson's mother. She became senile. I'd to got down there and she would fight her and everything else but she never put her away. She took care of her. Mrs. Simpson, they thought she had a heart problem and for years they were treating her for heart problems. They found that she had a "dead kidney". For years she had a dead kidney and when they finally located it and removed it, it was loaded with pus and they removed it and after that she was alright. She was suffering for years and they thought it was her heart. It was her kidney.

TH: (looking at pictures) Johnny's wife, and that's the wife's mother and that's Johnny.

BD: Her name originally was Wooley, in fact my daughter's name is Wooley. The Wooley's were a big family out here.

TH: Yeah, Long Branch.

BD: She was originally a Wooley. I think she came from Glendola or something like that. The man my father bought the house from, he was married to Mrs. Simpson's sister.

TH: Have we ever recorded the Dunsky murder?

BD: Yeah, I told them about that.

EH: We don't have the delivery by bicycle and that's kind of amusing and by the panel truck. What was that like?

BD: Well, I used to deliver by the panel truck to all the officers' houses. That's why I was telling them over there that I was in everyone of these houses and no two were alike. You saw a lot of things that came from the Philippines or from Shanghi, or from Panama.

TH: Which they bought when they were serving overseas.

BD: Like teakwood or bamboo or something like that. But then other things the Quartermaster would issue them.

TH: What would be some of the standard things that you would get from the Quartermaster here?

BD: I can't remember off hand.

TH: Like furniture, though?

BD: Yeah furniture, standard furniture like kitchen furniture, dining room furniture and bedroom furniture.

TH: Would the appliances be the same too, like refrigerator?

BD: Yeah, that would be the same. I never saw a refrigerator like that. That's an old Kelvinator isn't it? The old one you have there.

TH: GE.

TH: What kind of stoves did they have over there, were they coal burners?

BD: Originally, coal burners. Well, I remember in our own house we had a coal stove and after that we had a kerosene stove. I remember that caught fire one time. They were very dangerous, kerosene. Then my father finally got an electric stove. I remember my mother used to bake with that coal stove. My mother, her father was a baker in the old country, so my mother made her own bread and rolls and her own noodles. She was a very good baker. Originally, we had an ice box. Before we had a refrigerator we had an ice box. You used to put a card in the window. The Post would come around and deliver ice. The card, you'd turn it one way it would say 25 pounds or ten pounds or whatever it is and they would bring the ice in. You always had to remember to put a pan underneath there because the ice would melt. So, at night time you always had to remember to empty that pan before you went to bed. Sometimes you would wake up in the middle of the night and someone would yell, "Oh the pan !" and you'd get up and the floor would be all soaked. (laughter in background).

I remember another time too. We were Jewish, see, and there was no rabbi on the post and the rabbi would come in, but he would come in from Red Bank to visit. I remember one time, my mother, she had a ham sitting up on top of the refrigerator. The Rabbi comes in and he's standing there in the doorway and my mother is trying to get him into the house and he's standing there talking and she keeps looking up at that ham. (laughter) I don't know whether he ever saw it or not, but the ham was sitting right up there.

My mother used to make all kinds of wines and preserves 'cause we had the beach plums and wild cherries here and wild apples, crabapples. Then she used to make wine. We used to go out on the parade field and there used to be a lot of dandelions out there. We would pick the dandelions and she would make dandelion wine. And there was clover and we'd pick the clover and she would make clover wine. She made elderberry wine. And we had grapevines there and she made grape wine. She made beach plum wine and wild cherry wine. She must have made about eight different kinds of wines.

TH: No wonder your Dad is smiling in all those photographs. (laughter)

BD: Also, my mother eventually died of cirrhosis of the liver. I know she didn't drink, but it's very possible she may have drank some of that wine. It might have contributed because she had a bad liver anyway. So, I don't know whether that contributed to it or not. Also during prohibition, she used to make home brew and she used to bottle it herself. And a lot of times it would get warm or something and you could hear them start popping. She'd make it and we had cappers and you'd hear the tops start popping off.

TH: They didn't allow liquor on the Post, did they? I mean for the soldiers. That wasn't allowed for the regualar…

BD: No, but you could make wine or home brew 'cause you used to be able to buy malt and hops. Blue Ribbon used to sell the Blue Ribbon malt. So you'd take the malt and the hops and make your own home brew.

TH: To your knowledge, the soldiers had the pig pens out there in the woods. They didn't have any "stills" out there did they? To your knowledge.

BD: I know some of the soldiers used to come over to my mother to get wine from my mother or beer sometimes.

TH: That's kind of dangerous right? Prohibitions days' right? With all the rum running going on around here.

BD: You used to be able to get whiskey for "medicinal purposes". The hospital had whiskey that was supposed to be for medicinal purposes but it got around. (laughter) Chuck Connors lived up on the hill opposite me.

TH: You were neighbors. Any memories of him? What type of a fella was he like? And Mrs. Connors.

BD: Very nice people. I think he was Provost Marshall for awhile. He came from Indiana, I guess it was. I was telling you before, his son Ray went in the Air Force and when I was stationed at Kelly Field during the War, Ray was a Lieutenant in the Air Force and I was stationed at Kelly Field and he came down to see me one time and I understand that he stayed in the service. I was talking to Jimmy Helfer the other day he said he met him a few years ago. Well, I don't know how many years ago, but he was doing a job down at McGuire Air Force Base and somebody said, "Is your name Jimmy Helfer?" He says yeah. He says there's a buddy in here that wants to see you. He said he was a full Colonel and understands that he retired as a General. That was Ray Connors, his son. I remember we used to have fights. On time, I lived down below the hill and he lived up on top of the hill and I got mad and I threw a rock not knowing where it was going and I hit him and I heard a scream. I just threw a rock up to the top of the hill.

TH: That's a little house, that's a tiny little house.

BD: Yeah it's not very large. It has a basement there. I remember about four or five different families that lived there.

END OF INTERVIEW