

Sandy Hook, Gateway NRA, National Park Service
An Oral History Interview with Colonel Henry Neri
245th Coast Artillery
1929-1947
Interviewed by Elaine Harmon and Tom Hoffman, NPS
October 7, 1984
Transcribed by Mary Rasa, 2012



Henry Neri while Captain at Fort Hancock.



Officers' Tents in Tent City.



Inside Henry Neri's quarters.

Photos courtesy NPS/Gateway NRA

Editor's notes in parenthesis ()

EH: Today is October 7, 1984 and I am Elaine Harmon, Museum Technician with Tom Hoffman, Park Historian of the Sandy Hook Museum staff and we are interviewing Capt. Henry Neri of 36 Little Silver Point Road in Little Silver.

HN: Colonel.

EH: Colonel, oh excuse me. Colonel Neri.

TH: I saw it on the plaque.

EH: Colonel Neri, retired from the U.S. Army at his residence in Little Silver.

TH: People never even dreamed that there were the seacoast defenses out at Sandy Hook.

HN: I could tell you about the experiences we had with the 16-inch guns up on top of the Hill.

EH: In Highlands?

NH: I was in command of that too for about two months.

TH: Really of the Battery Lewis.

HN: Way up, way up top there. And we were, the Captain I had told you had died, Halleck.

TH: In a hunting accident.

HN: Yeah. He and I went up there before anything when the original owner was living there and old woman. I forget what her name was.

TH: Was it Trask?

HN: Hartshorne.

TH: It was Hartshorne.

HN: Yeah. Mrs. Hartshorne. Halleck says, "Let's go up to see Mrs. Hartshorne." I said, "You are crazy." He said, "Yeah we want to go talk to her about the possibility of putting in a gun position up here." I said, "You're Lt. Halleck. You don't decide these things." I said, "Big generals and the president decide. Not us." He said, "Let's go up there and talk to her." So, we went up there and it was a beautiful white home, columns and porch and I think a butler in a white jacket.

EH: It was an estate.

NH: We sat down. Oh yeah. She was an important family. So, we went up and this wonderful magnificent fine person sat down with us at the table and had tea and crumpets and the fancy tray, you know, of anything else we wanted. We talked there for hours about Sandy Hook and the history of Sandy Hook. The founding family turned it over to the government and what they were doing and all and they were talking about taking my home which I was gladly give and so forth. I lived in one of the houses there. She had about three houses. The main home and the house for the help and another home for something else. All three homes in Navesink on the installation on the hill. And my house, the one that I lived in right on the bluff. You looked out and it was right on the water, right on the point and you could see all the ducks down there. One day there were two wrecks, two big shipwrecks that had been left there, see. I saw something moving and there were two guys with rifles shooting at these little ducks. You couldn't eat them. They weren't edible.

TH: But they were duck hunting.

HN: They were duck hunting for these little innocent things that were worthless. So, I got my .22 and I opened the window about a half and inch and put a couple of shots about that far from them and plunk, right in the boat, you know. (laughter) Took another shot at the duck and plunk, plunk. Take them away.

TH: That's down below in the river below those bluffs up there.

HN: And that same day, I am thinking maybe I will do some more shooting. So, I looked out another window down the road and there was a squirrel there maybe about a hundred yards away and I aimed at the thing. And that damn thing got up on its hind legs and did this, you know. He looked right at me. I couldn't pull that trigger if I was offered a 100,000 bucks. I swear that thing was so innocent and so cute just sitting there looking you know. (laughter) I said to heck with that. Shut the window and put the gun away. It was so beautiful.

TH: Was Mrs. Hartshorne an older woman at the time?

HN: Oh yes. Yes. I would say in her 70s anyhow maybe older.

EH: What year was that that you are describing?

HN: It had to be very early before the War.

TH: Before our involvement? You know, before America got into?

HN: Well, it was at least the '40s, early '40, 1940 possibly '41.

TH: How come the Lt. went up there that you asked, remember?

HN: Because we were brazen we went up there. (laughter) We were walking into the oven not realizing only a pie belonged, you know. But we went there and were welcomed and oh gee, she was very gracious.

TH: This was on your own.

HN: Oh yeah. On our own. Big shots from (Fort) Hancock. If the generals had known we had done that we would have been in Alaska. (laughter) This guy Halleck was a butte I swear. He was a great guy.

TH: What was the outcome of that? Did anybody ever find out?

HN: There was no outcome, nothing official like that or all. The Army went its way of purchasing the property and putting in the water supply. They had a tremendous well in there, tremendous supply of water. It was self contained, self dependent. They had their own source of food, bakery shop, source of electricity. They had power plants, water plants. They had dug their own wells. They had two tremendous concrete gun

emplacement in which the 16-inch guns were in. They were able or capable of flying at that height 55,000 yards which was maximum. So that gun, those two guns plus the two guns on (Fort) Tilden provided the main support against enemy attack, battleship attacks. But today...

TH: It's a different story.

HN: It's a different story. 5,000 miles could be the weapon that is destroying it.

TH: But at the time, that position of being up on top of the Navesink Highlands with two 16-inch guns.

HN: It gave us, it gave us superiority over the biggest battleship which was the *Bismarck* and also the biggest Japanese battleship which had 18-inch guns on it. The biggest guns of all were 18-inch guns on the Japanese battleship. It gave us, well outgunning those battleships if they should ever attack us. We had to use 15% over power, 15% over charge. In other words, the guns carried a certain amount of charge.

TH: Right.

HN: Normal. We put an extra cap in there for 15% over charge. With the height would give us the additional distance. We were protecting New York City.

TH: Sure. In relation to where the 16-inch gun battery was built, where were those houses? Like Mrs. Hartshorne's big.

HN: They are gone.

TH: Yeah but in that...

HN: They were in that compound.

TH: They were in there.

HN: Well, Mrs. Hartshorne was right on top of the hill, not far away, way up on the top.

TH: I am trying to visualize where that is.

HN: Well, when you went up along the side, I haven't gone up recently but if you went up along Highlands,...

TH: Right.

HN: Went up along Highlands and you went up along what was that road?

TH: Portland Road.

HN: Portland Road, you go all the way around. Then you go up and when you get up the top you make a left turn up to the main surface, the main top. Her house wasn't at the ledge but not too far in from the ledge so she could have this beautiful view of the whole sea. And the sides of the ledge, the sides that hold the whole hill there and still are planted with large oak trees and all that has prevented it from sliding down. On top of that were certain (inaudible) so that the vibrations of the guns wouldn't destroy that hill. But until that time, the trees held the whole thing together. And that is where her main house was on the top. Now one house, the one that I was in, you come along Portland Road about halfway towards the rise and there was a road to the left that went down along the hill. It still exists but it is over grown.

TH: Yes. I know that road.

HN: You went down that road and came up on the other side.

TH: You are kidding.

HN: On that, that brought you to the point of that, well that is where our house was. And so help me I have an old Nash in there would just about make the damn thing. You would have to speed up, down, so you could make the up side, see. (laughter) Once I got stuck. I went up and I come right down.

TH: Didn't make it.

HN: This thing was a jalopy, a real jalopy. So here I was down there yelling and screaming. Finally some guy caught me and he got a couple of truck 6x6 whatever it was and they hauled me to the commanding officer.

TH: Speaking, you mentioned you were in command. How did that come about?

HN: Well, they put the guns up there and there was another officer, Miller, who was a colonel. Miller and I were very close. He was given command of the thing and he asked me to be his executive officer. I said, "Sure." I would be glad too, searchlight and big guns. Anyhow, then Miller got very ill. I think he lost a leg or something like that. During that illness I became commanding officer. Then I was transferred to the 7th Regiment. They wanted me in another outfit somewhere. But during that time I was commander.

TH: What about, what time was that? What year?

HN: Oh gee, 1941 or something like that (Battery Lewis was completed and manned in 1943).

TH: So what did you do as commander? Did they ever fire the guns or did you have any drills?

HN: Yeah

TH: Really?

HN: We fired the guns for the ordnance people. (We) fired for testing, settling.

TH: Oh, so once they were in place the ordnance people would...

HN: The ordnance people came in and they fired the guns for you know settling the guns in their position. They had the big water, water very mechanisms for controlling the azimuth and elevation. Incidentally, the barrels of those guns, four barrels, two at Hancock and two at (Fort) Tilden (Battery Harris at Fort Tilden was completed in 1924.) came off of I think it was the *Missouri*, the Battleship *Missouri*. (The guns at Battery Lewis were Navy guns that had never been used by the Navy.)

TH: Navy guns.

NH: Which was sunk at Pearl Harbor, during the Pearl Harbor attacks. Those guns were taken from a sunken ship, the barrels and of course the breaches and all that stuff. Taken off by the ordnance, restored by ordnance and put in place on the hill there and at Tilden so we had four 16-inch guns. That is where that came from. They were actually Navy guns which meant that they were a little bit shorter in length.

TH: Right.

NH:than the Army rifles.

TH: How many soldiers would be up there manning those guns?

HN: We had one complete battalion.

TH: How many soldiers would that be?

HN: Three batteries, three batteries. I would about say probably a hundred per battery. And that of course, you see they were on 24 hour duty you see. And you had to have ammunition details. They had a tremendous arsenal up there.

TH: Within just the 16-inch gun battery, the rounds.

HN: Oh yeah. You would go into the armory room and you see a sea of shells all kinds of shells. High explosives, armor piercing whatnot and then you had they were all huge ready to go. Then there were the casing that contained the ammunition, the propelling charges. Then there was another section that contained the, I used to call them the caps, the firing pins, the firing whatever they call them.

TH: The primers?

HN: The primers yeah. Primers. And whatever else they needed for those guns was also in this what do they call that, this ammunition thing.

TH: Oh the magazines. The magazines.

NH: The magazine and that was tremendous. Oh that was tremendous. Very, very carefully air conditioned. Temperature controlled. Circulation to prevent gases from forming and all that sort. No smoking signs of course. "If you wish to smoke use this," which was a pistol. (laughter) You guarantee you will smoke well. Oh ,yeah. We had signs like that all over the place.

TH: Being wartime, I guess it was pretty tight security.

NH: Oh yeah, absolutely. Oh sure, tight as a drum. As a matter of fact, that tree out there, that beautiful holly tree was a little stem about that big outside of one of our one of the 16-inch gun emplacements. A little twig, one little old branch like that about this high. Nothing on it, nothing on it, no little branches or anything, just a little stick like this. I pulled it out of the ground. It still had a little root on it, see. So, I went to the general and said, "You know I would like to have this at home." You couldn't take a leaf off that place. It was all camouflage, see. He said, "I guess that would be alright. I don't think the enemy will notice that." We were joking about it. I took it home and I planted it over there. It was a little thing up there. It remained there for about six weeks and I pulled it out of the ground and I threw it in the garbage can. And Millie said, "What did you do that for?" I said, "There is nothing growing." She said, "How do you know?" I said, "Alright. I'll take it out of the garbage can and I put it in the ground again," and there it is. So, the secret in planting these holly trees is first you put it in the garbage can, and then you plant it. (laughter) If you don't put it in the garbage can it won't grow.

TH: When the guns fired up there were you ever in the casemate, you know those big concrete...?

HN: Yeah.

TH: What did that sound like? It must have been.

HN: It shook it. There was a lot of compression. When it was, there was no, surprisingly no concussion. You shook up because you were nervous. The first time the gun fired I was behind a tree about 200 yards away.

TH: How about everybody else?

HN: Behind a tree, 200 yards away. (laughter)

TH: Really?

HN: The only guys in there were the ordnance people and I swear they didn't feel very comfortable because nobody knew and they tested everything with all kinds of different instruments. It showed 10 times, 20 times safety factors and all that. Not the first time that it blew up or we had a case in the early '30s at Fort Wright where the breech blew right off.

TH: Really? Off the back of the gun.

NH: And we had another occasion at the same place not too far away where a Lt. had taken his girl down to see a disappearing gun and fortunately it was one of the small ones a 6-inch disappearing gun like the one you see up there. So, they loaded the thing. He said, "I want you to fire that gun." There was, you know, no reason to fire it. So he said, "Sergeant, I want to fire that gun. I want you to fire it now." And he did, the gun hadn't been elevated.

TH: Really, right into the...that was a disappearing gun behind the wall?

NH: That's right. The sergeant tried to tell him, see and this officer was sort of (inaudible) to his girlfriend. "Fire it now!" So everybody got out of the place. He pushed the button, shoved the wall down and gun flew off of its mountings. No recoil. It flew off of its mounting and landed somewhere in a field.

TH: Where did that happen?

HN: That happened at Fort Wright (NY).

EH: Fort Wright.

TH: Fort Wright, H.G. Wright. What about the breech blowing off, was that a disappearing gun?

HN: Yeah.

EH: You said you had like a break in service between the '30 and the '40s.

HN: Well around 1933 I got tired of peeling potatoes.

EH: At Fort Hancock.

HN: At Fort Hancock, and they went to camp that year and I said, "To hell with this." I am going up to Fort Hancock, no this is at Fishers Island. I drove up to Fishers Island. I got on the ferry. I went to Fishers Island and I found out that they instead of going to Fishers Island they went some other place. They weren't there after my going all the way up to Fishers Island to visit them they weren't there.

TH: Now who is that?

NH: (Battery) B, the 245th. I said, "You are not going to get away from me anymore. The hell with you." So when they came back I joined up again.

TH: Out there, did you join up out?

NH: When they came back to Brooklyn.

TH: I see.

HN: The National Guard.

EH: You mentioned to me that some other earlier time when the guns were fired at Fishers Island the island actually settled from the concussion of the guns.

HN: There was three islands up there. I can't remember the names, three of them, small islands and they had a 16-inch gun mounted on one of the islands. This was in addition to Fisher Island. I can get the name and the two other islands were designated for future smaller guns, the smaller islands. So they fired this 16-inch gun and they came close to target. Then they fired it again, settling shots and this time the shots were over, way over and they made a correction and they fired again and they once again were way over, much more than before. They said it's something phony. Maybe it's in the construction. They checked it out. Everything was fine. They fired the gun again and it was way off. They made the correction and they fired it again and it was still far off. Something is wrong. What had happened was every time that they fired that gun the island moved. It shifted.

TH: It actually...

HN: It shifted the whole damn island and it shifted raising the barrel. It shift and shift and shift until finally the damn island sunk. (No verification of this story was found.)

TH: From a 16-inch.

HN: The gun and all. After a while the water crept up from the back. It was sinking in the back, see. The water came up farther and farther until it got up into the gun emplacement and the gun went down. I don't know whether they salvaged the gun or not but the island went completely under water.

TH: Well, you had those forts out there. You had Fort Wright.

NH: Fort Wright and there were two other, there was another fort out there.

TH: On those islands. The Long Island Sound defenses there. Is that also where you fired the mortars there which you told us about earlier?

NH: Oh yeah, sure. They go up in the air. You could see the darn thing disappear in the horizon sky.

TH: The shell.

HN: You could see the shell disappear and get smaller and smaller and those darn rings would come off once in a while, (The noise the shells made.) Whee, Whee.

TH: The rotating...

HN: The rotating bands

TH: They would fly off and you would hear that.

HN: Everybody would dive into a hole somewhere.

TH: Mortars were fascinating in that you had those gun crews trained. Wasn't it true that you had...

HN: Well, you had to come down to a horizontal position and load them in and you put the projectile and ram it in and the propelling charge was put in and the breech block was closed and the primer was put in and then it was raised into position and turned the azimuth. This is all operational between every shot.

TH: But what about all the soldiers involved in the loading it up. Where....

HN: They were in the pit.

TH: They'd be there when the gun was fired?

NH: Oh yeah sure.

TH: Well, this is what fascinates me. The mortar was a relatively small barrel. It wasn't long.

NH: It's a short barrel.

TH: Yeah a short barrel weapon, but it still was what, 12-inch shell?

HN: 12-inch shell.

TH: What was the sound of that plus the concussion?

HN: You had a horrible concussion from those things and of course, it was all up in the air, see. The concussion went up in the air and right down but you had to have two

people, as a matter of fact, three. Two people, one who was the gun pointer and he stood right along side the middle of that gun, right along the barrel. That gun was right along side the gun pointer when he looked through the gun to see if it was on target. He was right alongside the gun and there was another man who was down alongside in the pit alongside reading the azimuth.

TH: This is a disappearing gun?

HN: Yeah. And also on the mortars and he was reading the elevations to make sure that the elevations on the gun correspond to the elevation that was coming from the plotting room. And then there was a recorder, an enlisted man who when say I was there, I read out the azimuth on the scales. He would mark them down. Say, "Shot 1. Shot 2. Shot 3. Shot 4.

TH: He was a record keeper.

HN: He was a record keeper.

TH: A recorder.

NH: A recorder and invariably, invariably (laughter) after the first shot you had (inaudible) men.

EH: Good grief.

TH: They were shaken up.

NH: They were gun shy. They were wounded.

TH: Shell shocked, yeah.

HN: And we always tried to put an experienced man in with them, see. I was down there once with them. One of those fellas, commander of the battery at the time, (a) lieutenant gave up. He ran out of the damn thing. (laughter) There wasn't anything you could do. The shots had to go off. The stuff was coming in, you know. So, I went down there, the poor guy I held him up. We are leaning on each other, each supporting each other. He was trying to read the damn thing. I said, "Good job." I did a little bit of it. He did a little bit of it. He got fired by the way. But the concussion in that place was terrible.

TH: You would be wearing your blue fatigues, right?

HN: Yeah. That's right. The smaller guns had a much bigger crack than the big ones. The 155 (mm guns) were the worst of all.

TH: On the concussion and the effect on your...?

HN: I was a bad boy once at Fort Monroe (VA) where they training outfits, training people on the gun, on the 155, Enlisted Men School. And whenever you were a bad boy they always gave you the job of reading the azimuths which meant you were standing right alongside the 155 right in the middle of it where the crack was crackers. There you stood reading this damn thing while they were shooting this 155 and reading it. Oh your head would come together. Just one of those concussions, you know, where everything seemed to held down.

TH: That's like, the concussion is like the shockwave of when the projectile comes out you have that flame and smoke.

HN: Well, you have just powder behind the projectile hitting the atmosphere. You have the atmosphere go up in pressure and it travels almost everywhere depending on the wind, depending on atmospheric conditions.

TH: Right. And that immediate area right around the gun affecting the gun crew. Didn't it press, wasn't there a huge press on your uniform? Like the air.

NH: Oh sure.

TH: People ask me, see I am asking these question because people ask what was the effect on like those big mortars. You know, we would be on a tour at Fort Hancock in the Mortar Battery pit and they will say, "What was the effect on those soldiers' ears or on their bodies when, you know, you had in those pits at Fort Hancock, four mortars?" They fired those mortars off all at once or the disappearing gun battery. You know, what was, you could still hear us but did that ever injure soldiers?

NH: Sure it did. Sure it did. Some people were injured. People who had to have information that came from the base end stations or from the plotting room or what have you, would have ear drums. They were heavily padded. Those who didn't need that would wear cotton, heavy cotton in their ears and sometimes even ear muffs on top of that. We have had cases where nose bleeds occur. Bleeding from the eyes, from the mouth where people were sensitive to that sort of thing. We had to take those people out and replace them. There were a lot of people who had to be taken out of the gun pit because of fear or because of other physical arrangements. It didn't show up until they were there. You had to make these changes. That is all.

TH: Yeah, but what about you were supporting each other there? It still shakes you up.

HN: Well, we figured well we had a choice either go through this for ten shots or twelve whatever it was or declare the whole damn thing off and start over again. So, you had to go through with it. That's all.

TH: What is interesting is it called, the term blind firing when you were down in the mortar pit you don't actually see what you are shooting at. That information was coming to you from...

HN: Base end Jervis or the plotting room. That base end station said 78 degrees. This base end station said 48 degrees. So in the plotting room you knew where the gun was. You knew where your base end stations were in the plotting room and the plotting board came over 78 degrees and this one was at 48 degrees and it intersected with the target. And then you could figure out with your scale on the plotting board what the range was. Then there were tables where you figured curvature of the earth. There were tables that figured the wind which you got from the station. There were tables that figured ballistics, of course, of the shells to the rifles depending on rotation, the weight of the shell, the curvature of the earth, the movement of the earth automatically on these ballistics boards. But the only thing we fed to them was the rough information we got from the base end stations to the plotting board and the plotting board to the aiming devices. And many cases all we did was put that into the gun and pushing buttons sent it into the gun. The gun corrected it all, all of it in the correction box. You press your elevation gun. The gun would go up. You press your azimuth gun. The gun would rotate and that was it. Fire. And it was all calculated so that the gun would fire at a bell. The bell ringing at the time the calculations were made for the gun to fire. That took into consideration the movement of the ship.

TH: It's a moving target.

HN: So, you are shooting here but when the bullet arrives it's going to be here. So, you have to advance the gun to here. So, you had to calculate the speed of the ship which was done by two or three observations and you got a forward movement. You got in trouble when the ship was...

TH: Zigzagging.

HN: It may go this way and go back. Then you gave it what they call and area of fire. Just fire randomly before and after, over and short very rapid fire hoping that one would hit.

TH: I notice in the picture you have in your scrapbook in the Mortar Battery at Fort Wright there is a little concrete booth, the data booth.

NH: Yeah.

TH: Would somebody be in there could yell out to you? There's little windows in the data booth.

NH: Those were the observers.

TH: They would observe...

HN: They were observers. They had, those are the base end stations. They had little windows, you know, and your telescope would traverse through that little opening and you would observe your targets and your field of fire and anything else.

TH: Well, this one I am referring to I notice is down in the, down in the mortar pit. It was back behind the guns. From what I have read they are called data booths. They would have one like a small booth right in the mortar pit. You don't recall? Because I noticed in one of your photographs it was in the pit.

HN: In the pit?

TH: Yeah. They had a data booth. I thought that is where the information came in by telephone and they'd relay it to the gun battery.

HN: Oh yeah.

TH: Would those be regular enlisted soldiers in there in the data booth?

HN: Oh sure. Not to mention you had an officer who was in charge of the plotting room, you had an officer who was in charge of the entire battery the whole operation, you had an officer in charge of each gun, four officers.

TH: You had an officer too. What would sergeants do?

NH: Sergeants would be in charge of the training of the men. And you would tell the sergeant, you know, we are firing ten shot beginning so and so, okay. "Yes, sir." And he would take over and make sure that the ammunition was ready. He would make sure that the gun was clean and ready. He would make sure that the gun crew would operate properly that all his men were in position. He would make sure that the guns were swabbed. After each shot they were swabbed. They would have to be swabbed after every shot because if a little bit of that burning material remained after the previous shot and you put a propelling charge in there you would have a backfire.

TH: Sure. Yeah. Everybody would get wiped out.

NH: That's right. So you would have to have your swabbing crew. You had to have your brush crews. You would have to have all these different crews in there operating each gun. And that was the charge of the sergeant.

TH: How fast could a gun crew like say go into that sequence of loading firing, one of the big mortars?

HN: Well the 155 was four shots per minute.

TH: Okay.

HN: A 16-inch gun was one shot per minute. That was because of observation. They could do it faster but because of the timing. The timing and the travel of the boat and the timing of the gun itself and all that taking precautions. During practice firing it was one shot per minute.

TH: How about like a 12-inch mortar.

HN: Same way.

TH: That's pretty good because it's heavy, huge.

HN: They worked. They worked.

TH: One thing I read in reading about the seacoast artillery, the mortars had that limited range. That was a factor against them, right? They were a weapon that shot up and the shell came down.

NH: Preferably right through the chimney. (laughter)

TH: What does that mean?

NH: Boats had chimneys on them, see. Funnels. We would always talk that you would come down the chimney. They were a useless damn thing. They fired 4,000 yards. You could have had a ladder out of them.

TH: That was my next question, were they useful? No.

HN: This was antique stuff.

TH: Yeah, at Fort Wright they had those old mortars in there.

HN: If a boat ever came that close today, god help them.

TH: Well, here you are, what time period are we talking about while you were there firing mortars? Was it the 1930s?

HN: Early.

TH: Early '30s. Here you are, you are a young soldier.

HN: That's 55 years ago.

TH: Yeah. I was gonna say you probably looked at this and said, "Gee whiz."

NH: Gee whiz is right. (laughter.) 55 years ago.

TH: Is that the feeling of most of the guys of you and you buddies there looking at this stuff?

NH: Well, you know, there is a certain amount of nostalgia. You know, like you look at your first bicycle or your first wagon and, you know, and when you got back to Fort Hancock the feeling I get are very negative. All that beautiful equipment they had there all those magnificent emplacements. I have always said and I said not just to generals but to everybody and I am saying it to you the least that they could have done was to keep one of those installation one of those batteries fully operational and up to date. Maybe take the breech block off and put a wooden one on to conform to the disarmament or whatever baloney comes out of Washington you know but retain one of those things for its historical value. There isn't a disappearing gun in existence today in this entire country and they were one of the most beautiful pieces of armament that was ever created. Totally useless.

TH: I would like to tell you that there are several. The National Park Service has two 6-inch disappearing guns. One is down in the Gulf Islands National Seashore in the Gulf of Mexico. They have one 6-inch disappearing and the other one is out in San Francisco at Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

HN: What charge is that one?

TH: That's 6-inch too. They have two 10-inch guns, the state of Washington, the State Park System asked the Philippine government way back in the 1960s if they could take two 10-inch guns from the Manila Harbor Defenses and they donated, the Philippine government donated two 10-inch to the State Park Service where they have them all the way on the West Coast. But you are right everything else during and just after World War II was scrapped.

HN: Well, you know, those 16-inch guns on the hill that we had up there, towards the end of the war sometime in that area they were still building the thing up and they had ordered shields, 14-inch shell proof.

TH: Armor shielding?

HN: Armor shielding from the outside consisting of a big shield around the front of the gun on the mouth of the concrete emplacement. The gun would point right through the opening which was oval. The gun could go up in the oval and the whole thing could rotate with the gun. But this shield in places was 14-inches thick. They were cutting the gun up, slicing it, just cutting it.

TH: For scrap.

HN: The shields arrived.

EH: Incredible.

NH: It is.

TH: What was the soldiers' reaction when you were a young soldier and this goes for your buddies too you mentioned it was like something new they were seeing. Were some men afraid? You know, were some soldiers afraid of these things?

NH: Sure they were. Absolutely. I will tell you how afraid one of them was. This soldier was walking down the corridor at the Armory and an officer approached him. A soldier would always step aside and let the officer pass and salute and all that thing. This soldier was so hypnotized by the presence of an officer that he couldn't move one way or another. An officer approached and they were almost nose to nose and he said, "Hank, I am just human like you. All you have to do is say hello to me. I want to say hello to you. The way you do it in the military is by saluting. Step back one step and say hello." I never forgot that. I stepped back and I saluted him and he said, "That's fine. You are doing good." But that's how they froze. On the sight of an officer, ohh man in those days. An officer was the power on earth of god.

EH: Talking about there was so many names that you recalled, Captain Henry Johnson, Lieutenant James Dreyfus who became two-star general Joint Chiefs of Staff later in his career. Your Army buddies were Lieutenant Carroll, Jerry Niles, nicknamed "the Blossom." Remember, you mentioned to me?

HN: Yeah. "The Blossom."

EH: And Sergeant Carr who was the personal bodyguard of Dutch Shultz and he carried his (inaudible). Tell us a little bit about these individuals. These really unusual people like Dreyfus and some of your recollections of these individuals.

HN: Dreyfus' private life was...

EH: Lieutenant James Dreyfus we are talking about.

HN: I met him when he was a sergeant, 1929, Brooklyn Poly(technic Institute), both of us were going to Brooklyn Poly at the time trying to learn something about engineering. Somehow or another I became a member of the student council of which he was president at the time. That's how I met him and I would sit down with the other councilmen, five or six of them and I would look at Jim Dreyfus and instantly admire him for what reason I don't know. But this guy had some kind of mystique as far as I was concerned that was instantaneous. You know, you look at somebody you get this reaction and Jim was automatic, instantly and I always treated him as such. So, I started to talk to him about service. I asked if he was in the service. "Oh, I am in the National Guard." I says, "Why do you spend you nights at National Guard and so many hours at school here and the council?" He said, "Well Hank, I want to tell you someday this country has had all kinds of wars and people think that the last war was the last one. I don't think that. I think that every war that this country has had was followed by another

one. I think that this one will also be followed by another one. When that happens I want to know something about it. I want to know the front end of a gun. I want to know what it sounds like. I want to know how to shoot it because I know that I'll have a better chance of protecting myself if I am ever called into the service. I think the best way to do it is to spend a few hours a week in the National Guard. I would like you to come down and look." So, we went down one night and we had hamburgers and frankfurters and usual things. And he took me around to see these guns and stuff they had there. They had a war room, a big war room. A nice size and it was an exact scale layout of the Harbor Defenses of New York including Long Island Sound, Fishers Island, everything to scale, everything. Tremendous thing and they had the searchlights, the searchlights that you could control from where you were sitting if you were the searchlight officer.

TH: Really?

HN: They had little searchlights, strobe beams, you know. They had the airplanes up ahead, above that traveled on strings and all this thing and they had the gun positions every gun position elevated and all you could fire the gun. You could see a light splash or you know and all this and they were given these problems, the officers were given these. The searchlight would have his problem. The gun commander would his problem. Other people would have their problems and we would have people at base end stations that were actually on the floor where the guns were. And we would have gun crews on the 12-inch guns that we had on the floor, real guns, see. And they would load the guns and they would put the propelling charge in and they would put the caps in and everything and when they would fire the gun it consisted of, it consisted of a rubber projectile and they were firing at these targets that were thrown across on wire string. See these targets would be going across and these gun pointers...the funniest part was every time they fired the gun these darn fellas would go bouncing all over the parade floor see. (laughter) They would have the ammunition retriever maybe retrieving the damn thing bringing it back so they could load the guns again. But this whole damn operation went on. We had the meteorological people would go up on the roof, you know, and take the wind and weather pressures and directions and all this business. Make a complete meteorological report with a balloon that went up there with all the lights. They would come back with all that report, everything the whole damn thing just as in the field except that they fired the rubber ball. That's what they did at the regiment.

EH: At the regiment building you say?

NH: At the regiment building. Yeah. And then afterwards, the most interesting and important part, the officers would have what they called a critique and they would all go to the officers' room, the officers' meeting room and that was some place, my gosh. All in that room to describe it. All of the commanding officers and previous commanding officers of the regiment at his own expense, not a rule or a law....

TH: A tradition?

NH: A tradition would sit for a hand painted portrait of himself full size, uniform, dress metals, dress uniform and everything else and would be framed in this tremendous gold frame, the same as the others and in this room along the whole wall which was almost two stories high and all heavy beamed. Magnificent stepped wall.

EH: Does this still exist?

HN: Mmmhmm.

EH: Where is this?

HN: It's in the north section of Brooklyn.

EH: This is the main Putnam Avenue Armory.

HN: Sumner..

EH: Sumner and Putnam.

HN: This thing goes back a hundred and fifty years. So anyhow each officer in that room would have his chair, big leather chair engraved. That's where you would go. In front of the room, in front of this meeting room, the colonels would be in the front row, the Lt Colonels, the majors, then the all the way back and the commanding officers and those conducting the meeting would be in the end with blackboards and all this and they would critique the action of that night. Who did this? Who did that? What did we do wrong? How can we improve? What are our open spots and all this business. Was communications alright? How about comments from you or what are suggestions you have? And their critiques was very good. The best part of the critique though was the collation. Where all the lieutenants would put on white coats, me included, all the second lieutenants, you would carry a tray around with cookies and sandwiches and or if you were more fortunate you would carry the liquor you know. (laughter) You would go to all, that guy was a genius I swear. He had an outfit and I say this when we went to Fort Hancock and no criticism of those who were there because we were all soldiers and they had no money to do anything with.

TH: You mean Regular Army?

NH: No forces to do the job. There job was housekeeping with a paint can and a broom. That's all that was given to them and polishing brass and you painted everything and that was all you could do. And we went with all the underground wiring and all the piping absolutely on the low minimum or for everyday existence. That was the condition of practically all of our Army forts. Remember there was a time during the Depression years when funds were so low that the military individual received, believe this or not \$6 a pay in one month. This was for a short period of time then it was raised to \$9 and raised to \$11 and then it went back to the high rate of \$21 a month and we had that

terrible sloop and the Army was a place where you could get out of the rain, have a couple of meals a day and you had some warm clothes and a place to sleep.

TH: The Depression.

NH: Just about. When people tell you \$11 a week that was during the good days. They got 6 bucks a week. And there was (inaudible) that they weren't going to get any pay for a while.

TH: That's not a week. That's a month. Wasn't it?

HN: A month. Yeah. That's right. And those poor guys, you know, would get in line at the end of the month and get their pay and get their 11 bucks they would go down the line. 3 bucks for the PX.

TH: Sure because that whole month they were...

HN: Yeah. Two bucks for this and the laundry. Three bucks for something else. A dollar for their company fund and they were left with about 88 cents. (laughter.)

EH: Wow.

HN: For the rest of the month. So, help me that's right.

EH: Oh my goodness. Gosh.

HN: You just sit there and you wonder. Just try to keep the barracks warm. You know.

TH: I would like to get back to your friend who introduced you to all that.

EH: Lieutenant Dreyfus.

TH: Dreyfus. Yeah. You said that is where you ended up down at the Armory.

NH: Anyhow he took me down there one night and I looked flabbergasted, absolutely bewildered like a fly in a candy shop anyhow we would talk and talk and we ate some more and every time we went in the street he came out of the telephone company you know we had (inaudible). He was a ramrod. If you ever wanted to eat. "Hello, Hank." "Hello, Jim." (inaudible) So we would go down to the Armory and across the street from the Armory was an old German bar, real old. It sat on the corner across the street and we would go in there and would have... Jim was German, you know. He would go in there and have a German knockwurst sandwich or some kind of a German sandwich with a long German name. He said, "You ought to try it. It is good." "I think I will stick to the beer," those big German beers, you know.

TH: Yeah.

NH: I said very apologetically, “You got any ham?” (laughter) “Yeah sure we got ham, German ham.” This whole case of German ham. Oh gee that was beautiful. We would go in there and talk a little bit and then go across the street to the Armory and a lot of things would happen. We would go to a company room or battery room, battery. The thing that always impressed me was at the entrance you go down this hallway to get to our headquarters battery which was on the second floor and we would have to pass all these cabinets, big cabinets. Each individual officer had his riding habit. The officers, the staff officers and the battalion officers on his staff were mounted. And all the colonel and his staff and the battalion officers and their staff and whoever else had their particular riding habit in there. The saddle for the horse, all of the leather ware everything that you needed to supply the horse. What the horse required his boots and all that stuff were in there. His name was on top in gold plate, brass plate. When we had a parade they were mounted. Oh yes, they were mounted. Where they got the horses from? The (New York) Police Department and they were beautiful animals. All different colors you know, the white ones and the spotted ones and the brown ones and the black ones and all that. Once in a while you would get a frisky one.

TH: A spirited one.

HN: This is a new guy the horse would say. This guy is a new one. He ain’t my horse and I am not going to be his. That was the attitude that went through the horses head. (laughter) The poor rider, he had a problem with that horses head. The guy would hop around. He would walk sideways. Geez, that was funny as hell. You would see this bank clerk on top of a horse that is walking sideways.

TH: Everybody else is riding the right way. I could just see that.

HN: Everyone else is riding the right way and the horse is trying to hop up a little bit you know, but not too bad. Enough to show the guy (who’s) the boss. So eventually they cut that out. Everybody would walk from now on. The hell with this business. Boots were alright and spurs are alright but you are going to walk. But, you know, the spurs were a funny thing. They had two notches on the side. Chains, they had chains that went around the back spurs, chains that went on the back that were attached to two knobs on the side. Everybody said we got to be walking along with this saber and the two damn knots and be stuck and go (flying) (laughter).

EH: Straight down. Oh great.

HN: Gee, you couldn’t get your feet apart. You were still going forward and you got a saber. You went broop (down.) It didn’t happen very often but when it happened a lot of guys caught themselves in time. So, they eliminated the spurs.

EH: Oh my gosh. Crash. Didn’t you say before that at this same Brooklyn Armory that you were present at a very, very special Grand Army of the Republic Reunion?

HN: Oh yeah.

EH: That is something worth documenting here.

NH: Oh yes. Oh yes. I don't know the year but it was certainly when I was a, when I was an enlisted man anyhow. That was before '34.

EH: Early '30s.

NH: It had to be early '30s. Don't forget the Civil War was let's say 1860 and 1860 let's say the men were 18 years old lets make them as young as they, well, they were younger than that too. 14, 12, we probably got some of the 12 year old guys. But around 1930 or '31 somewhere in there we had a review, review is it, anyhow, alright we reviewed from time to time whenever we had these reviews we reviewed someone. The governor of the state, the mayor of the town, the colonel and his staff from some other organization whatever you know. This time it was given in honor of the existing veterans of the Civil War. And in two contingents, one for the veterans of the North and the other for the veterans of the Confederacy. And they spent a great deal of time locating these people local people who could travel.

TH: Yeah. Special vets.

HN: We gave them traveling, we provided every courtesy possible to get them there. During the review, during the review, which the regiment passed in review and all that. I don't know exactly what sequence these things happen but during these ceremonies we reviewed or they reviewed us whichever it is, the veterans of the Civil War and what they did was to bring on the veterans of the Union Army. They marched from one side onto the parade floor across the front of our soldiers. They stopped in front of our soldiers and did a left faced the soldiers and the banner of the unit in the Army. Dipped the flag and all. Sabers went up and saluted, you know, and all this business. It was a terrific thing. Just shaking.

TH: Then the Confederates followed up, right?

HN: And they returned a salute and they marched off. During that time they played the National Anthem, of course, was played. I don't know if before or after but then there was a Northern and a Southern type of...

TH: Like the "Battle Hymn of the Republic?"

NH: "Battle Hymn of the Republic." Which one was that for? That was for the North.

TH: North. And "Dixie" would probably be...

HN: "Dixie." That's right. "Dixie." "Battle Hymn of the Republic" for the North and I know it was "Dixie." And that was followed same thing with the Confederate soldiers. These old guys...

EH: Very elderly.

HN: These guys absolutely, I don't know of anyone that I have ever revered so much as those people. The feeling....

TH: They had their blue and grey uniforms?

HN: Oh yeah, the blue and the gray came on the same ceremony, you know. They carried the "Stars and Bars" of the south and they stopped and they saluted and everything. The flag came up and dipped, you know. It killed you. It absolutely killed you. I feel that way now. Any how they marched off again after they stayed their salutes. They went by you know, 80, 90 years of age. Some where in wheelchairs and still as proud as could be, you know, and after that, of course, the collation which none of us could show any more affection that we possibly could that anybody could show more affection than they did towards these people who were the very history of our country standing right before us. It was very proud soldiers.

EH: How did the people respond?

HN: Oh geez. When the Union soldiers marched off, as a matter of fact when they first appeared they were out of control. There were all kinds of yells for attention and that kind of stuff. Holy gosh, that was when they really blew up, when the Confederate soldiers came on. The fellas we were supposed to have defeated.

EH: Yeah.

NH: The Confederate flag came on and then they had another thing too. They had a searchlight, a small searchlight. When these flags came on the searchlight was on the flag on the flag.

EH: Like a big spotlight?

NH: Like a big spotlight, when that thing came on that followed the flag, you know, that flag followed it like a big hallowed saint and it remained there all during the ceremony. Terrific. Then during the collation that followed all these people all met together in the officers' room. Collation they called it. Where drinks were served and soft drinks were served and sandwiches and all of the nice things took place. The ladies there, and there were ladies present, ladies and the officers were all in full dress in gowns in evening gowns. We made these people feel that we liked them a hell of a lot which we did. Of they were so grateful with tears flowing and all this kind of stuff and stories took place and of course, "I remember Gettysburg..." Oh gee, terrific. Terrific. But that is all gone now. And there was one review some time later on where we honored the last living

veteran of the Civil War. I don't remember if he was North or South. He was one man left and some of our boys carried the flag, you know. He was, I don't remember if he was on a chair or he walked but here again the house was pandemonium. Absolutely burst into a flame and that was the end of it. No more.

TH: This was at the Armory also?

HN: At the Armory yeah.

TH: At the, with the Union and Confederate soldiers roughly how many soldiers were there? Was it a large...?

HN: Oh probably 20, maybe a few more, both sides about the same. Yeah that was the original time maybe 15, 20. And then the very last a couple of years later we had one remaining.

TH: Down to one, yeah.

EH: Could you describe Sergeant Shultz? I remember you were talking about this personal...

TH: Sergeant Carr.

EH: Sergeant Carr, excuse me and Dutch Shultz adventures because these are priceless.

HN: He was a great one. He was a great one. That fella had the courage (inaudible). That was his passport with Dutch Shultz when he was his bodyguard believe me.

TH: And that was of course .45.

HN: Oh yeah. That would be .45. Nothing else would do. They didn't kill people they pulverized them. You know, and he wanted to make sure the pulverization was pulverization. (laughter) And not just a near miss. A near miss to those people was a complete blast of the head off. But the pulverization was in .45. That made him happy.

TH: And you were saying he carried that even....

NH: Oh yeah sure except in forbidden areas. But if he couldn't wear it he wouldn't go in forbidden areas. Like the Theater and the General's house and so forth. He was a magnificent soldier. He wanted to be the sergeant of the guard whenever we took the guard. It was rotated among different outfits and everybody looked forward to having him come in too. All the prisoners wanted him because he was strict, absolutely strict. He was stiff as a fireplug but he played cards with them. He was walking into the place and would say, "Sergeant Carr is on duty tonight. You know what that means." (laughter) And he would walk across the front of the Guardhouse. He would walk across the front of the...

TH: Cell.

NH: Cell, all the gates you know and he would get his club out and run it across. "Sergeant Carr is here fellas," Brump. "Welcome home was the answer." They liked him. They thought he was swell. So, he would go in there and he would play cards with them.

TH: This is while he was sergeant of the guard?

HN: While he was sergeant of the guard. Yes sir.

TH: At Fort Hancock?

HN: At Fort Hancock.

TH: You were saying there was another sergeant too that I just wanted to throw that in.

HN: The sergeant of the guard and then there was an officer of the guard.

TH: I meant that had also been a bodyguard for another gangster.

HN: Oh yeah. I can't remember his name.

TH: Yeah. But Carr was for the famous Dutch Shultz.

NH: Dutch Shultz.

TH: How did these fellas ever get into the Army? Was this because of... was this before we got into World War II or did they just...?

NH: I don't think it was about it could have been a little before or about the time we got in. And these people were drafted but I think Sergeant Carr said to hell with this I am going to go in and fight these damn enemies. He was that kind of a guy, see. And I think the other fella did too. They didn't wait to be drafted. They knew they were going to be. So what do you do with a guy who was a bodyguard to Dutch Shultz? I mean a bodyguard, nextdoor man...

TH: That's right.

HN: And what do you do with this other guy who was a bodyguard for some other I forget his name. So, you pull him in and you talk to him like we are talking here. He says, "I want to be sergeant of the guard. I want to take care of the prisoners." Okay, so every chance you try out and see what you do. So, we tried him out and he did very well. The other fella said, "I want to bake in the kitchen." (laughter) Here's a guy who maybe one of the fellas on St. Valentines Day (sound of bullets) put all these fellas in their grave

you know. He wants to bake cakes. (laughter) Try and figure it out. "Alright, we will let you bake cakes." He baked the best damn cakes you ever saw. He went to every baking school. He baked cakes and pies like nobody else could.

TH: Is this the person who worked the deal out about going or am I confused you were telling....?

HN: Oh yeah. Yeah.

TH: How did that deal work?

HN: Well, it was under the cover. We did that with a lot of our people. With all of our kitchen people who wanted to go to the kitchen and do things, you know. We made deals. We had a meat cutter in Red Bank and he was a good friend of ours and he supplied... Schmidt. He's dead now. I knew him well. I said, "Schmidt, can you help us?" He said, "Oh sure. I would be glad to. I will get him started." Sent him down to his shop. "I will take good care of him," a meat cutter. So we sent him down to his shop three or four days.

EH: Like an apprentice type?

HN: Yeah. Under Schmidt. See he had his shop in Long Branch which was very convenient. So, we sent him to Long Branch for three or four days with Schmidt. Schmidt would teach him how to, don't forget we bought a hell of a lot of meat from Schmidt.

TH: Yeah. Sure. Yeah.

NH: That's right. If you ask him to do this which he complied with immediately. I want to do something for my country. So he we sent this fella over to Schmitt and taught him how to cut meat. He had him cut meat. Take a whole darn cow and spread it out different parts and all that. The steaks, the ribs and whatever else, chopped meat and all this business and how you could use certain meats with other meats to make it taste just like steaks, tender steaks. How to treat meat so it turned out to be beautiful meat and all this stuff. Stuff that the Army didn't teach us, you know. They had big signs. This is the first quarter. The hind quarter, this is the ribs. That's that. That's that. They learned how to cut it and that's it. But this guy went one step further. How to treat stuff, how to cut it. How to cook it so when it got on the table it was juicy and tender, see. They learned all that from these meat cutters. And this was one of the fellas. Then we started thinking along this line. "Well, why can't you bring other people out to do a lot of other thing like this?" Came to us, "Well maybe we could do it with baking. Mom is a beautiful baker. Nobody in the world a better baker than Mom when it comes to baking sponge and pies and all that. Well, would Mom do it?" Well, we asked her. Well, of geez she thought she was helping the whole United States Army. (laughter) So she turned her big antique kitchen into a baking party for these people with white hat and white jackets and they were guys from the outfit. And she taught them how to bake pies,

nice apple pies, peach pies, plum pies, pumpkin pies all kinds of pies. If your ear was cut off you make a pie out of that too. (laughter) But these pies would go back to our mess hall and baked and everything and it wasn't long before other guys on the Post learned what was happening and they all wanted to eat with us because...

TH: Word gets out.

NH: Word got out. So, we said, "Why can't we go one step further." So we sent another proposition. "What about your farm over here? Suppose we planted corn and planted lettuce and we planted other things that we could use in our mess hall. We would have our guys come over and they would take half of what they plant at their own expense and you could keep half of what, the other half for yourself." She said, "I wouldn't need all that. I would need maybe four or five corn and I would need so much of this. I would use so much of that. I give it away anyhow so they could take three quarters of it. If you want to do it, sure." They got the guys over here with plows and rakes and this and that and the seeds.

TH: This is out here, right?

HN: Yeah. Down the street. He's got it good. These people came from Texas. They came from the middle western states. They came from farmlands. They were experienced people. You put them on a farm, boy they could turn rock into..

TH: Yeah. They got right into it.

HN: They got right into it. They knew exactly what they were doing. These people were real professional farmers in uniform.

EH: And who was mom?

HN: Millie's mother.

EH: You wife's mother.

HN: My wife's mother, yeah. And boy what they didn't do to that ground. They tilled it and they had all nice straight lines and rows and everything. Boy the corn, you could see the corn grow as it was coming up. Then when the corn was all right they would come down with their truck and cut the corn up and all this business and, "Mom, how much do you want? We will get it out." Mom, said, "No. We will take care of it ourselves." From this line on was Mom's and the rest of the field, about three quarters was the Army's. They took all this corn, what they needed. The rest of was going to the store. They had the freshest corn right off the ground. Right into the pot. The lettuce the same way. You never tasted lettuce in your life like lettuce come right out of the ground. Pies and all this stuff. We had absolutely the best mess hall on Post because of what we had been doing. These men had an interest in it. One day, the kitchen, without our knowing about it went out and bought a dozen lobsters. Maybe they caught them. The officers,

six officers, our four and two were eating with us. We looked down and there was a big lobster in front of us. I said, "Everybody getting lobsters tonight?" He said, "No. Only the officers." I said, "You are wrong." He said, "What do you mean?" "No. Nothing doing." So each of us took out lobster, went into the kitchen, thanked them. We said, "Your thoughts are very highly appreciated but these lobsters are for the kitchen help." (laughter.) "The kitchen help will eat these lobsters. If the officers ate lobsters every damn man in this mess hall is going to eat a lobster." When they had SOS...

TH: I know what that is.

NH: We had it. That was damn good. No there was only one exception to that if anybody was out in the field doing maintenance work or something and came in at eight o'clock after mess most mess halls wouldn't feed him. We didn't do that. We fed them.

TH: Really?

NH: You fed that guy and you fed him what the men were going to eat in good condition. If not you would feed him eggs, fried potatoes and whatever else was good in the kitchen so they would have a good dinner whenever they came in.

TH: Speaking of the mess hall, does the building still stand amongst those, or are we talking about the concrete wall buildings that were mess halls and latrines for the tent city?

HN: They are gone.

TH: The mess hall you are talking about?

HN: Yeah. They were concrete buildings. Some of them were wooden buildings, one story.

TH: Yeah. Standard mess hall.

HN: The kitchen on one end and the ...

TH: Mess on the other.

HN: Some of them were ordinary wooden one story building. Some of them were concrete and I can't remember any that were.

EH: How about Larry MacPhail? That's a name you mentioned.

NH: Oh, that's a...

EH: He is an interesting person.

NH: Yeah. He was stationed there, Navy.

EH: He was Navy stationed at Fort Hancock?

HN: Yeah a lieutenant I think, my recollections because I am remembering fifty year ago now. He was a nice guy, a hell of nice fella. Very friendly and needless to say a very wealthy person but he didn't show it to anybody. He was just like anybody else. He was a sort of liaison type officer there, you know. But he would go to the bar which was a very small bar...

TH: The Officers' Club

HN: At the Officers' Club. When you went into the Officers' Club you had a main stairway in that hallway.

TH: Okay. We are coming through the front door.

HN: The front door. Yeah.

TH: Into the big hallway, the main stairs is right here.

HN: My recollection is that the bar was to the right of that stairway.

TH: You are right. I had an officer tell me back behind to the right. Yeah behind the stairs.

NH: And it was a small one.

TH: Today it's the women's room.

EH: That's right. Powder room.

TH: Yeah. That's the women's powder room.

NH: So, we had a bar in there and this guy McPhail, you know, would buy people a drink. You know, "Have a drink buddy for talking with me." Our friend, whoever he was, I forget who he was, some guy who was probably changing tires at the corner gas station that's what he impressed. He wanted to be a big shot all of a sudden, see. "Drinks for everybody on me." (laughter) You roll the dice, you know. Pay another round.

TH: He didn't know what he was up against.

HN: He didn't know what he was up against, no. We did do, we did straighten it out with the bartender. We paid the bill ourselves. This guy walked out of there boy, like some guys on TV, big shots but you can't blame him for trying to have some fun.

TH: How about, in that regards tell us about what led to the graves, those graves you made because you ran into two officers that were... they were from where? Delaware you were saying?

HN: Oh just out of college, college fellas. What was the saying on there?

EH: I did a great a great deed.

HN: Yeah, I have done a great deed.

TH: A great work.

HN: I have done a great work. Yeah. That became famous.

EH: These graves were just...

TH: I have done a great work.

NH: I have a great work and there was another one in there too.

EH: Rest in Peace.

NH: Rest in peace. So, that was the action we gave them. So, rest in peace. Anyhow they would be sitting at the bar, two people fresh out of college, god bless them just learning like a baby does, like the rest of us. He came in prouder than hell. He says, "You know John, I have done a great work today." (laughter) Talking to his friend see. I bet he hadn't even shaved yet, you know. You know, "John, I have done a great work." Oh. So, somebody said "Rest in Peace." (laughter.) I don't know who it was. He had them bust out laughing. You walked out and bust out laughing, you know. Anyhow that became this graveyard thing, you know. It was at the end of our tent thing. Every night we had to go out in the cold, cold damp blistery night for a bucket of coal and we would get out there frozen by the time we got to the coal bin. Fill it up with coal and bring it back to the tent and somebody said that would be a nice place for a graveyard for a bunch of guys getting damn sick and tired of this crap. You know, comments like that. I said, "Ut oh, I know just the graves." (laughter) All this intelligent stuff that goes on all day long, you know. So, next day or two we made the crosses and we put the stones in place. Put the mound there surrounding it.



Mock graves created by the officers of the 245th.

TH: That's great.

EH: Could you tell us the story about the cough medicine? The hot toddies.

HN: We even had the chaplain bless it.

EH: Bless the graves?

HN: Oh yeah we even had a ceremony.

TH: Is this the graves?

HN: Oh yeah. Yes. Sure. Of course, it was phony blessing but we had the chaplain go through all the things. We had the Amen's and all this business and we solemnly walked back again after this business after we got drunk. Any occasion was a drink. We had to have this for fun and laughs.

EH: Sure.

TH: Sure. But this all came about because two shave tails thought they were better than everyone.

HN: I have done a great job today. I have done great work today. And somebody said, Rest in Peace. That was it. That started a whole new summit. And everything if you dropped a pen or something it started a new.

TH: Do you recall why a little beer can was put at each headstone? Do you remember? Because we were looking at your photograph there and there was a beer can.

NH: Well, if we wanted to send them off in good spirits.

EH: In good style. (laughter)

TH: Elaine is right. Please tell us about, that was Sergeant Carr, right, involved with the famous cough medicine. Please tell us that story.

NH: Oh yes. Sergeant Carr. We were all involved. There was a strict rule you couldn't buy, you couldn't buy liquor. If you bought liquor you better not get caught. We bought a couple of bottles of liquor, see.

TH: This was on Post, now?

HN: Oh yeah. Originally I bought a couple of bottles of liquor for toddies. And this stupid lieutenant of mine, he put down in his book instead of...

TH: Medicinal purposes.

HN: Medicinal purposes, he didn't put that down at all. Four bottles of gin or four bottles of scotch which went by me and the inspector who came by to check books said your books are fine except one. I said, "What's that?" "Four bottles of liquor. You will pay for it." I had to pay for four bottles of liquor and I don't have to tell you what I did to that lieutenant. He wasn't drunk after it happened either. Anyhow it was a good lesson. It showed that they meant it. This time we went out big, big time utilizing the advise, rules of the club and all this stuff. We went out and bought I don't know how many gallons, my god. We bought a tremendous, we had a big pot. We had a big aluminum pot three quarters full of toddies during some bad weather we had, cold, rain.

TH: During wintertime.

HN: Dreary weather, see.

TH: But you had to tell Sergeant Carr to go out and get it.

HN: I called Sergeant Carr in and said, "Hey, how about doing this you know?"

EH: Forty gallons about.

HN: I forget about how many gallons. I forget how many gallons it was. It was a good amount of it.

TH: Well, for everybody it was a lot.

HN: You are darn right. We had a 130-140 people in the outfit and we were out on searchlights and all this weather out in the cold and all this business and made sure they got their share. So, we made this hot toddy stuff. We wrote down in the book 10 gallons of whatever it was. Eight or ten gallons of hard liquor for the purpose of preparing hot toddies for medicinal purposes. That had to be in there. I called the inspector. I said, "Look, we don't want to go awry on this thing. This is real. These guys are getting it. They got pneumonia. They got flu all over the damn place." He said, "Alright on that basis we will approve it." So, I had written approval proof by so and so officer. That is all I wanted, nothing else. We went out and we had to empty out the bar.

TH: But Sergeant Carr couldn't get over it that you were sending him to...

HN: Oh geez, yeah we were sending him. He was heaven. He was right back in business again. "Stuffing bottles, that's my profession. That is my profession. (laughter)

TH: And you make it with what?

EH: Lemons.

NH: Lemons and lime and fruit, whatever you put in there. Mostly liquor. So, we heated that up a little bit to make sure we it wouldn't explode. You know we had the dipper and all these glasses on the table for the guys to line up for their hot toddies. That damn line never ended. I tell you the guy came in and come by and you know what happened? Marched right back to the end of the line. This was one big continuous never ending circle. (laughter) By the time, the 5th time around they weren't going in circles anymore.

EH: They were spinning.

TH: This was your outfit, right, the searchlight?

NH: You are damn right it was my outfit. Boy, were they drunk. Happy, happy and we drank it right up. The last drop out of that thing. We were right with them. The next time we did it was around Christmas time and half of the guys were off. We kept half on and half off and we asked each one of them, you know, why would you want to go off? Well, I want to see my wife or I want to see my mom. We had one guy who had parents he wanted to see. The parents had died about two years ago. I want to see my parents. (laughter.)

EH: Good excuses.

HN: He says, Captain if I could have, I would like to have, we had all this information on all our people. He said, "Captain I would like to have this weekend off because Christmas time off with my parents." We said, "Alright. We will give you a bunch of roses for parents." We told him we would give him roses to carry to you parents and put them on the grave.

EH: On the grave.

HN: “You know about it?” “What do you really want?” He says, “I want to go home and see my girl.” We said, “Okay.” That’s a real one so he got his pass. Yeah and things like that happened, you know. They had all big reasons why they had to have Christmas off, you know. My wife is, I don’t think she is going to live. They are dispossessing my parents. You think of all the lousy reasons why you would have to be home, they had it. Of course, a lot you have never heard of before. Well, what we did, we said the only way we are going to handle this thing and we worked this out with Carr and the top sergeant is to be fair with everybody. So, we have got, we have got 150 people in the battery. Half of the officers go off and half of the officers stay. “I am going to tell you right now I am going to stay the whole winter. I will let you guys fight it out.” The rest of the guys, you got them got 1,2,3, 4,5,6,7,8,9,10. All the odd guys go first, all the even guys go second except if they wanted to change amongst themselves that’s alright with us. So that’s the way it was. You had so many requests in this and that and everything and everybody fighting. Then next year when it’s reversed, the odd guys go first and the even you are here. They thought that was alright. And we worked all weekends that way too. This half of the battery had off then that half of the battery had off. You had to be careful with your meat too. We had locations where meat had to be distributed. So, this week they got the hindquarter. The next week you better make damn sure that they get the hindquarter. You would rotate it that way. You have to treat these people so that they knew they were being treated fairly. Everything was fine and that was the biggest job, the biggest problem.

EH: What was the anecdote about the lyster bags that turned to ice cubes? That was a really great story.

HN: Oh yeah. This location was out in the field where the men lived in the field. This particular time they were still living in tents with the cold and the water supply, the drinking supply was delivered in what the army called lyster bag which was suspended from a tripod. Fresh drinking water was placed in this bag. It had a little drinking spigot on the bottom. The men would go there and get their drinking water. The other water would come out of spigots in the ground which was not good for drinking. So they had their drinking water except when they got up in the morning and the temperature had gone so low that night the lyster bag was one big lump of ice. Now they had one big ice cube. (laughter)

TH: Is that where Sergeant Carr called you?

HN: Yes. He said, “Hey. We have got one big ice cube down here.” I said, “Well, what do you want me to do about it?” He said, “That’s the drinking water.” I said, “Well, do they got strong teeth?”(laughter) We would make a joke out of it. We hauled water down to them. We had to haul water down to them.

TH: Was that the disappearing searchlight?

NH: That was the searchlights that were on towers that had to go up in the air. All night long they were up in the air and men were manning those things so that they could be turned on just like that.

TH: Was this like during the war?

NH: During the war.

TH: Oh really?

HN: Sure. Sure we had to keep the men at those places.

TH: How many men would be down there at the...?

HN: At one time, I am just trying to recollect now. We had to have a minimum, an absolute minimum operational strength of four per light.

TH: Four per light.

NH: And we doubled that.

TH: It must have been something to see it go up because it was of course horizontal on the ground when it was stowed.

HN: Yeah but they were counterweighted...

TH: Yeah the huge counterweight which are still there.



Searchlight tower in the raised position.

HN: The counterweights are still there. Yeah. The concrete blocks.

TH: They were tripped.

HN: They were cantilevered. They would use balanced tiers see.

TH: Yes.

HN: And your big blocks were here.

TH: At the bottom.

NH: Your tower was here and you had a crank, a hand crank at one time they were electrically operated but they were hand cranked now. So two guys got on that hand crank and this thing would go up. It was easy to go up because it was counterbalanced and what happened was that when it went up, the platform remained horizontal see.

TH: Yeah. It could pivot. It could pivot from the top.

NH: So on nights when the ladder going up was frozen and ice on the ladders, rather than have a guy climb up the ladder he remained on the platform.

EH: Oh, and ride up with it.

HN: Ride up with it.

EH: Wow.

HN: But you had to be careful.

EH: Oh grief.

HN: Because as the platform straightened out see with the searchlight on it there were levers

TH: On each side.

HN: If you got caught on those levers you would be crushed. It was tremendous pressure. You could just imagine as this thing closing very slowly.

TH: Heavy. Yeah big heavy platform and searchlight.

NH: The levers were so great that it would just take his arm or head or everything off. So we had to stay clear of those. So as a matter of fact, we built little wooden guards around that after a while to make sure he wouldn't forget in the darkness. It was all pitch black. So, he would ride up with the searchlight, see. There was things he had to do there. And

the only light that he had was when he turned the heating elements on. The little light that turned on on the azimuth wheel so that you could read the azimuths. As a matter of fact, those were operational and he was up there all during that time. When it came down, of course, he came down with it. We used to lower the lights just to get him the devil out of there. But he could never do it on a step ladder. He would risk his life. It was all caked with ice.

TH: Sure. I am sorry. Go ahead.

NH: We thought of all kinds of things to get rid of the ice. Chopping it off, doing this and doing that and once we got up there the ice would be up here and all that business because of the fog and the moisture in the air. We even thought of how we could heat the thing. It never worked out. We covered it with cloth and that didn't help any either so the only thing was ride up and ride down with it.

TH: Would the towers be painted any color like, olive drab or anything?

HN: OD (olive drab).

TH: OD. About how tall were they when you had them up?

HN: I guess now about 75, 80 feet.

TH: That's hefty. And your mission, why searchlights, their role was to illuminate the...

HN: Illuminate the areas.

TH: In case of a night attack.

HN: Any kind of an attack, saboteurs, any kind...As a matter of fact we had one light on the western side of Spermaceti Cove, in Spermaceti Cove a little island that goes out there. It was on the river. It was on the Shrewsbury River.

TH: Right. Yeah.

NH: Instead of on the ocean side. And the job of that thing was to sweep the area to discover saboteurs that might want to come ashore.

TH: On the river there. You got the bay too. The bay and the river.

NH: Either one. I think we had two searchlights covering that. Every night, I drew up a time schedule. Eight different schedules. Eight different schedules: 1:33 (a.m.), 1:38, 1:37, 1:40, 1:50. That was when that light was going into effect, see. Then there was another one, Tuesday, schedule number 2, a whole series of numbers and schedule number 3, a whole set of numbers, then schedule 4, a whole set of numbers, schedule number 5, a whole set of numbers so that anybody scheduling time off and time on would

know there would be no chance of them telling when that damn light was going to go on. That light is going to go on at five minutes after 1 every night see. Then we would change these things around. Then we would use schedule 1 tonight, then schedule 5 tonight, then schedule 4 the next night, then schedule 3 the next night. Then we would change it, schedules again so that there was no way in the world that anybody could tell when that light was going to go on. If you used the same schedule every night you could say well at 1:35 that light goes on. At 1:36 we are going to go. They couldn't do that.

TH: The, we call it Skeleton Hill Island now. The island that is out in Spermaceti Cove. If you had two searchlights out were those mobile units that were...?

HN: They were mounted on wheels.

TH: And brought out there on that side.

HN: We had to get them over the seawall and build a bridge. We had to build a walk for the men to get out because that was always covered with water.

TH: Yeah.

HN: We had to make sure the thing was on high enough ground so that at high tides it was still above water. We had a tent out there too for the guys to live in.

TH: That would be brutal in the winter.

HN: You are right it was. Sure it was.

TH: While your men were out at the different places around Sandy Hook manning the searchlights it would be brutal in the winter from the cold and then the summertime you had all the insects.

NH: That's right. We did what we could to help them out with it. We had the tents that were complexly wooded over, the canvas on the outside to give them additional protection. We had wooden floors that were elevated off the ground and between the wooden floors and the ground were all covered with leaves as additional insulation. All sorts of thing.

TH: Did you guys have any stoves?

NH: Sibley stoves and all that.

TH: Sibley stoves.

HN: Sibley stoves and we did away with them. We didn't like sibley stoves. If we did we put a regular one in with it with the lids on the top. That was a coal stove, a hard coal stove and that lasted longer. It gave more heat. We would go down during the day and

have sandwiches with them and wienie roasts and all that. We had a fire there one year. There was a fire.

EH: A brush fire?

TH: A tent fire.

HN: Burned everything right to the ground. Everything right down. Couldn't get to it. Burned everything right to the ground and the only thing that the Army was interested in, the inspectors was the binoculars. The only thing there was interested in. We had these eight power binoculars that we used on the searchlights to view and all that. They were big ones, real big ones. We always figured at the time a thing like that these guys burned it down because they wanted something. That was one of the possibilities. So they investigated to see if the binoculars were there. And if they, they found the binoculars they would see if the rifles were there. And incidentally when this tent burnt down there was bullets going all over the place. Everybody was in a hole with his face down because the bullets, BROOM, like a machine gun going off and the next day they came down to inspect. Look that fire, "Boy you sure had a good one here. What did you do?" You know, one match anything could spark, electrical short circuit, anything. A spark flies out of the stove and all this business, maybe the guy was careless and threw a match. But here is what we got now. The first thing they looked for was the prism from the binoculars. If they found the prisms they knew definitely that the glasses were there and that was not a motive. And they looked for the rifles and everything was there. And they looked for the ammunition. You don't find any ammunition here. It is all over the place. The damn thing exploded. Well, okay, alright, that satisfied them. They looked for everything possible that would indicate some kind of foul play. They would have to go through it because they could eliminate it and there wouldn't be a possibility of later on of somebody else making a charge, see. How were you sure that the binoculars weren't stolen? Did you investigate? Yeah we investigated and found out that the prisms were there. Okay well that eliminated that. Otherwise that became an issue when you no longer had any evidence. So it was a good thing they did things like that. But we lost a full tent.

TH: Was that tent down at the disappearing searchlight?

HN: That was on that little island, there in Spermaceti Cove. That little island where we had to, that was the tent for the people who lived, who operated that light.

TH: I see. Because I have found it very fascinating that something we never knew was your bombproof in there down by the disappearing searchlight between your road and you searchlight you had what would you call it? A slit trench of some kind that went into the...dugout.

HN: Yeah. Bombproof we called it. Bombproof we had two of those. One there and one way out at the point where that other searchlight post was.

TH: That was interesting the one that went up, that was searchlight 7 at the tip of the hook where you too what again. You took...

NH: Well, we took one of these tubes that was used, one of these circular things, structural things that supported the tower. They were constructed in two ways. With beams, girders and this particular one was constructed out of hollow tubes.

TH: Yeah. Metal. They were metal.

NH: The steps went around the searchlight on the outside of that thing. So that thing had been destroyed or taken down or dismantled or whatever it was.

TH: Was this during the War?

HN: Before the war.

TH: Just before the war.

HN: Just before we took over that thing was taken down and the tanks were still there. The tubes were still there. So right away we looked and said, what can we use that for? Always, you see a pile of bricks you say what can we use it for? (A) pile, what can we use it for?

EH: Ingenuity.

HN: You get a busted chimney. You say what can we use that for. The same way so what can we use this for. We found you know underground protection.

TH: Bombproof.

HN: Bombproof yeah. That was a big thing in those days.

TH: Bomb shelter.

NH: Bombproof. So, we dug a big hole and pulled the damn thing into the hole and covered over, put a couple of building blocks around it that went this way and that way. That was fine. It worked out fine. Ran electric wire from the building underground. It gave us electric lights and such. We even had a chimney on it so help me so we could cook weenies and frankfurters. Boy, what a hangout that turned out to be.

EH: My goodness. A social club.

NH: You should have seen the way they painted it white on the inside and put furniture in there. It was a clubhouse.

TH: How big was the metal tube in diameter? It must have been pretty big.

HN: It was. It was bigger than this room.

TH: Wow. The diameter...10 foot diameter.

HN: 8 to 10 feet. Yeah. It was in one of these big tubes that held up a whole damn tower.

TH: And you buried it deep. There was a section of...

HN: Oh yeah. There was about at least 15 feet of dirt on top of it.

TH: And this was near the wooden building.

HN: Right alongside of it.

TH: Searchlight number 7 building.

NH: No more than 20 feet away. And they even put floorboards on the bottom so you wouldn't be walking on the bottom. And beautiful. They played cards in there. It was a retreat. Nobody, well, "Where's Joe." "Well, he's on duty down at Searchlight 7." Everybody was on duty down at Searchlight 7, see. (laughter) You would go down and inspect everybody on duty at Searchlight 7 and join in the party. "Hey hi, Skip. Come and join in a drink."

TH: Down in your bombproof there.

NH: Yeah. More hot toddies. If we hadn't treated those guys, remember we had a group up at Fort Slocum. We had a couple of searchlights up there. We had searchlights all the way down south as far as Toms River. We had them by the gate. We had them on the point. We had them here we had them there. You mentioned we had them inland. How in the hell could you, if you were the kind of a guy that you were up a brash polisher they had a communication system that couldn't be beat. This searchlight 7 calling searchlight 3. Captain Neri was just here. Be careful he is on his way down to see you. I used to bug that thing. We had a switchboard. We had a switchboard up in the tower there see. You turn your switches on. You talk to this light or that light or that light or you could talk to all of them at the same time by pushing the switches. I used to give them lessons in communications. "Well, searchlight 7 talk to searchlight 3." "What'll I say?" "Any damn thing that comes to your mind." Searchlight 4 and 5, Searchlight 6 and 9. Then I would turn them all on. They'd all be talking to each other in a maze of glob you ever heard in your life. A maze of chatter, see. And I says, "That was an example of when you don't control your communications." And once in a while I would chop in and disguise my voice. "Hey this Sergeant Joe from light # 4. I hear the captain is coming down there. You guys doing alright?" He said, "Well we got a couple of guys here who I don't know." I said, "Well you better take care of them because the captain is looking

just for that see.” And then afterwards I would go on and say, “This is Captain Neri speaking.” (laughter) I said, “Thanks for saving me a trip.”

TH: I could just see the surprise. Great.

HN: I would go down there, you know, as commander of the whole damn thing.

EH: That is great. That is wonderful.

HN: We had a lot of fun. I swear. This was going all the time. They loved it. They thought it was great. As long as you didn't zing them. That was no good.

TH: I forgot to ask you because here you are with searchlights, any submarine alerts?

HN: Oh yeah. Sure.

TH: German submarines, you know with World War II right off the coast.

HN: They landed. They landed in a little, they surfaced in Shark River two or three times.

TH: Shark River, New Jersey?

NH: One of the little inlets in there. One of the little bay or little something.

TH: Well, you have got Barnegat Bay, you have, Barnegat inlet.

NH: Somewhere down there.

TH: To the south of Sandy Hook?

HN: Oh yeah. Sure. In that area.

TH: And this was along New Jersey.

HN: They surfaced, a U boat surfaced. I don't know whether they surfaced because of air conditions or what. They surfaced on two or three occasions actually. I know because we had to run a bunch of searchlights down there immediately, you know. Get them down there and all this kind of stuff. But they had a couple of surfacing. We had a lot of sinkings too, you know.

TH: Sure. Did you ever witness or hear out in the...

HN: I saw them come back and we saw some flashes out there which were certainly explosives. And then about an hour or two later you see the ship come limping back with

a big hole in the side and the bow knocked off. These convoys would leave New York. There was a big gate across from Fort Hamilton to Fort...

TH: Wadsworth, the Narrows.

HN: The big Narrows, a big gate, tremendous gate and then beyond on the outside of that were mines, manually operated mines or contact, see and then beyond that were what they called underwater loops. Electrically registered any crossing.

TH: Propellers, the sound.

NH: That was one way, the sound and the other was electrically crossing. They had that too.

TH: Okay, they had the magnetic.

NH: The magnetic, they had all these gadgets that would show the crossings or you would hear the sound you are talking about of propellers and all that sort of stuff. Whenever you had a recording of any kind of a crossing the radar would immediately check the area and you would check your list of crossings that were justified, announced prior. And if you couldn't justify it you would do one of two things, you send a boat out immediately and another thing you went on top of that. You alert all your guns and if you didn't get a positive answer you would start firing. That's all. You didn't mess around. And we did that once in daytime. We had an admiral come a ship. The ship was told to stop out there because he didn't have the proper identification. How it was I don't know. He didn't have the proper identification for operational procedure and everyday it changed.

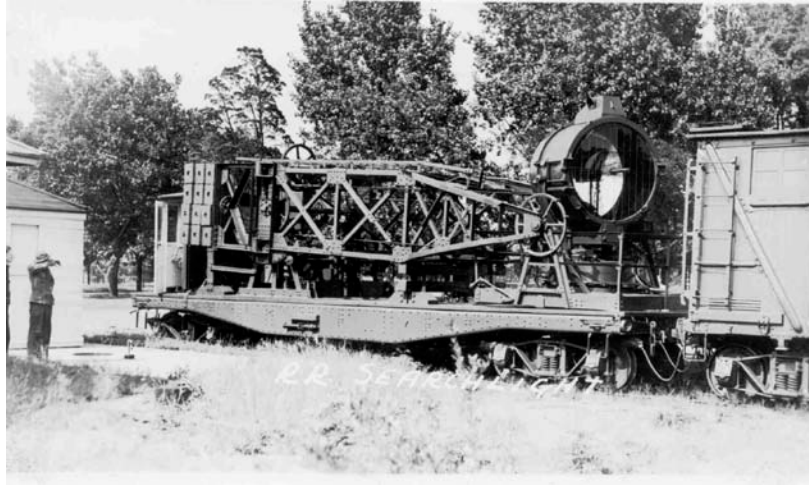
TH: Sure. Yeah.

HN: And he didn't have the proper identification and he was ordered to stop. He didn't stop so they fired a shot right across the bow. BOOM. He stopped dead and he turned around. So half an hour later we see this motor boat coming in. We see this cruiser type motor boat, big thing. We ordered it to stop. No stop. We ordered it to stop again. No stop. He said, "I am General so and so and I am coming in." Boom right in front of his bow. He turned around. (laughter) No fooling. You either had the, that private over there says he doesn't have the notification. Shoot him. Oh boy. So it was a lot of fun we had.

EH: Before you described the searchlight towers on the railroad cars and it is an incredible description that you had of the generators being in the...could you just briefly mention that?

HN: Well, the search, the railroad searchlight, I remember at one time there was a railroad that ran along the entire inside part of the sea wall from what all the way down to Long Branch and beyond. As a matter of fact all those rocks you see in Sea Bright right

along the inside of those rocks was a railroad track. And those railroad tracks carried passenger trains.



Railroad Searchlight

TH: Yeah. That's right. That was the railroad bed.

HN: They carried passenger trains where they crossed over to the mainland was at Highlands right alongside our present bridge and you can still see some of the foundations there for the railway.

TH: The railroad bridge.

HN: Anyhow we had, and part of that went into Hancock with supplies and troop movements whatever. You go to Hancock today and Fort Monmouth you will see the remains of the rail ties laying there. The old tracks and stuff like that. So along those tracks we had a searchlight. A self propelled searchlight which contained a flatcar and a tower and the control room in there and we drove the train and attached to it was a boxcar type of railroad car which contained the motor generators, the gasoline engines that rotated the generators that generated the electricity used in propelling the cars and also providing electricity to the searchlight. That was what they called a mobile searchlight. It could be used on any part of the coast provided there were tracks there to take you there to take the equipment.

TH: In this regard was that the type the railroad car sent down to where that sub sighting had been?

NH: We didn't have tracks going down that far.

TH: So I guess that was done by truck?

NH: I was done by truck.

TH: Okay.

HN: Mounted on trucks and sent down that way.

TH: But if you had, wherever you had tracks you could...

HN: We could have sent it down, sure. As a matter of fact at that time there were two towers in that direction not too far down. Not too far from the Rumson Bridge. The main part of town we had two towers there.

TH: In Sea Bright.

EH: South of the bridge.

HN: No. North of the bridge. North of the bridge. North of the bridge right on the inside of the seawall between the road and the seawall. We had two 50-60 foot towers. And the lights were on elevators on a platform. The light was placed on a platform and raised to the top.

TH: From the ground?

HN: From the ground with these cranks. It was on a cable system and they were raised on a platform.

TH: 60 inch?

NH: 60 inch inserts. And we had two of them. One alongside the other. They would crank them up every night and take them down during the daytime.

TH: What would be the range of say a 60 inch searchlight on a good night?

NH: The horizon.

TH: Really. You mean a beam of light just going out.

HN: Well, of course the weather had a lot, foggy nights you had less, you know. There were clear nights. Now, you believe this? There were clear nights so clear that you couldn't see the beam. On normal nights you could see a beam because there was enough moisture in the air to reflect the beams, see. You would see the beam shoot straight out. A streak of light but there was some nights that the atmosphere was so clear so clear of any moisture of any fog of anything that the only time that you knew there was a light out there is when the target lit up and disappeared. When the light passed it you know it would light up and then it would disappear. The light passed it. And then you knew that the searchlight was really operating. You would look up in the searchlight and say yeah it's operating.

EH: Perfect atmospheric conditions. Isn't that amazing?

HN: We had that happen all the time. It was very eerie.

TH: During World War II, did you men sit in darkness where they were or did they have that schedule? I am just trying to see how that worked.

NH: Well, the only time a light would work would be in darkness.

TH: I am sorry I meant during the night. Did you sit in darkness and wait for an alert or something to turn the lights on?

HN: There was a crew there at all times during the night at every light. That was their duty hour. The daytime was their off hour except for administration and cooking and all this stuff which meant I was on duty all the time.

TH: But what I am saying those lights would go on if there was an alert.

HN: Absolutely. They were right there.

TH: But they would be in darkness, I meant they would be off but the men would be waiting if you..

HN: That's right. And the engines would be operating periodically to keep them warm. Every hour or so they would start them up.

TH: The generators. Yeah. The generator.

HN: To see if they were loosened up.

TH: People have forgotten, a lot of people especially with new generations that 1942 was a very dark year. I mean Pearl Harbor, December 1941 we were the U boats were coming over sinking ships.

NH: Everything was all blacked out.

TH: Yeah. Everything was blacked out and here's the Coast Artillery was literally the front line on the east and west coast of America. How do you remember that year, 1942? I would be nervous like anybody if I were a soldier back then you know in 1942.

NH: We had a lot of alerts.

TH: Really?

HN: Oh sure. We had one alert that we were being attacked by enemy planes and I was up in the tower with Colonel Glime. As a matter of fact, he yelled the hell out of me because I wasn't there soon enough. But oh he stood there, blah blah blah as only he could. Get on the god damn...

TH: This was an air raid alert?

HN: Oh yeah and it was real. The lights were all I don't know what we were going to do with seacoast lights again the airplanes but we were ready. Anyhow three planes came over, three of them and where do they come they come zooming right at the tower right at our tower so help me and zoom away, see. You should have seen that colonel. Those SOBs. Zoom, right on the floor. (laughter)

TH: Dropped to the deck.

HN: Here it comes. Zoom right on the floor.

TH: Which tower was it on Sandy Hook? Do you recall which tower it was?

HN: It was a tower, our observation tower was the command post of which we were apart of. We had several locations, searchlight but this was the command post where all the maps were and all this stuff. We had blue lights on the maps and it worked out fine except only when we had the blue lights over the match the white lines turned blue and the blue you couldn't see anything.

TH: Yeah. It would blend right in.

NH: Nothing. So you blue, it all disappeared. There was not a damn thing on there.

TH: I am just trying to place where that tower is today. Was it up in the north end by Fort Hancock when that happened?

NH: Near the compound right there somewhere near the parade ground. Somewheres in that area. They had a number of towers but that first night with the blue light everything was fine. Oh gee, this is great. Nobody could see us or anything. We turned it on and everything disappeared. The blue blanket it set off. How do you beat this? We are going to use flashlights. We took our flashlights out. Learned, boy I tell you, learned a lot of lessons. You are darn right you did. That was the purpose of the exercise. Then I did something. I had the wires from the tower to my bed. Alongside my bed I had a map of all my searchlights with a degree thing. What do they call them?

EH: A compass. A compass.

HN: It wasn't a compass. It was one of those circles with the degrees around it. Draftsmen have it. One of these things. (shuffling through drawers)

EH: Protractor.

HN: Protractor, yeah. Except the full ones.

TH: Yeah. Yeah. Circular.

HN: I had one of those with an arm on it with this map right alongside my bed and whenever we had any kind of alert see from my bed I could give them immediately the location of that target with respect to the command post by locating the arm, where they cross, range and azimuth from my bed. The minute that that whistle went off, there was a wire from my bed up to the tower see. I told them, I said, in my battery here's what we do, the first lieutenant or the lieutenant whenever we have a battery, whenever we have any kind of alert, his job was to get up there the hell as fast as he can. He was on the command line. My job as fast as I can is to locate the target and give out the azimuths to every searchlight and also the azimuth from the control tower to the target and I could do that in about 15 seconds. Well, they liked that. They thought that was good. So, Colonel Glime came in. He said, "Let me see this joker thing you got." He came into the room see, and I showed him. I said, "Here it is." The only comment I got in there was, "You are a god damn lazy bum." He said, "Your place belongs up in the tower with the rest of those people and that is where I want to see you." I says, "Okay." He says, "Incidentally, that's a damn good idea." (laughter)

EH: A great invention.

HN: He said, "But look, have your lieutenant do that. You get up there. You're the commanding officer."

(Tape ends and restarts)

EH: Charles Glime are you talking about?

HN: Charles Glime and Barron. They came to my room one night and he was kind of a stout guy and so was Barron, see. So they stood in the doorway, belly to belly with their backs up against the door, you know. They were facing each other belly to belly. They could hardly get in the door. Both of them were yelling like hell at the top of their voice at me for something that I hadn't done or should have done or whatever the hell it was I don't know. All I remember was saying yes sir, yes sir, yes sir. And they were blasting like boy that was a good one. I enjoyed it. So later on (inaudible.) No. You are the boss of this damn thing. I said, "Excuse me sir, but you are the boss." "Yeah but I am telling you as a boss that you are the boss." It was great.

EH: You never did talk about Sergeant Neegan, the famous rowing champion.

NH: Sergeant Neegan was the national single oarsman champion. I would not rather say any more about him. It would sound derogatory. He was too much.

TH: Overbearing.

NH: Yeah. Overbearing on the job. Don't mention that at all. I wouldn't mention that at all.

TH: I wanted to know just getting back to World War II did they do their own guard duty around at the different searchlight.

HN: We provided our own guard.

TH: Really? The reason I ask is that during World War II they had the 113th Regimental combat team. Did they give you any support?

HN: The only support that they gave us was as a result of their routine guard that may have been assigned to them in the area as an area guard. For instance they were interested in beach landings and they were interested in sabotage. They were interested in a lot of things. They had a wide area from Shark River all the way down to the out and it was a hell of a lot for a regiment to take care of. So they didn't have any specific like guarding my equipment or guarding your house or guarding some one else's house. They had the general area. (inaudible) They wanted to prevail on us to guard their house. (inaudible) and I went to the general and I said, "Look, we can't guard that house. That's not their job." I said, "If the guard is to be provided by the Army to their house than the Army would have to provide it not our unit. We have a job to do there." So he said, "What's your opinion?" This was, it wasn't Gage. It was the guy who came after him.

TH: Ostrum?

HN: Ostrum. Colonel Ostrum. I went to Colonel Ostrum and he said, "What's your recommendation?" I said, "My recommendation is that guards be taken off of that thing entirely. That there is the Army has no mission to provide that particular house than they do to my house in Little Silver. That begins to be police danger than the local police should do it." He said I agree 100%. (inaudible) "What do you recommend?" "I recommend that these people not be interfered with by anyone." (inaudible) "If we are to guard them then I am going to insist that it be done by another outfit in our organization." "Take your men out and we will take care of it. You understand my position that she was the wife of a general or a colonel. We got to respect that."

TH: But I am wondering who, because I have been down to like where the two disappearing searchlights used to be. The counterweights are still there and the road there and I can visualize during the war years, during World War II you go through all the vegetation all the dunes to get out to the beach. There is the enemy to me. You have the poison ivy is the enemy.

HN: That would kill them.

TH: Which was there when you were there. I am sure every day. By the way, did any of your soldiers ever get it?

NH: Oh god yes. There was a wilderness in there that nobody ever penetrated. That was not at the light but you know as you came in the gates there was a wilderness to one side all the way down to the ocean not far from where the coast guard house is.

TH: Oh the Spermaceti Cove...

NH: It's on the ocean.

TH: Going to the ocean side.

HN: That is so damn thick you can't go through it.

TH: It still is.

HN: That is off limits. So I went in there all covered up (inaudible) Not only that, but there were birds in there that I had never seen before.

EH: Isn't that interesting.

HN: Ugly things and mean looking things and aggressive things. They stand there you know and there would be big beaks looking at you, you know, and ...

EH: Could they be night herons?

TH: I was going to say great blue herons.

EH: Black crested.

HN: But the heron has long legs. These didn't have long legs. They had stumpy thick fat aggressive looking legs.

TH: Turkey vultures.

NH: (inaudible) one of them had a wing spread as wide as this room.

TH: Yeah it sounds like it.

NH: Beak coming at you. We were probably in the nesting area, you know. Once you got out of there they didn't bother you. When you approach them as I did, and the trouble was you couldn't get away from them because there was no where to go except just complete coverage of thorns, the thorn type growth.

TH: Thickets.

HN: Thorns.

TH: That is still there.

HN: And poison ivy. Of brother and we used to go down there for beach plums and that was awful. Beach plums make beach plum jelly out of it, beach plum jam. Whatever it was? They still have them. But for every beach plum there were five juicy leaves of poison ivy. (laughter.) See we had one poor guy that went down there. He was in bandages, his face and everything.

TH: Bad reaction.

HN: Yeah he had a terrible reaction. He was all puffed up. He was a real sad case of poison ivy.

TH: I have stood there and could visual during World War II years that, you know, right there on the other side of the dune even through the thickets and poison ivy eventually get out on that beach. I was wondering if any beach patrols during World War...

HN: There might have been patrols, sure.

TH: It's so isolated. I can see being down there in winter.

NH: It was beautiful.

TH: But you like it huh.

NH: Oh that beach was gorgeous. Nobody there. The water trickling. That was heaven.

TH: Did you have any memorable storms while you were...

HN: Oh yeah sure. Right across, went right across the stretch. The entrance was just cut off and the tower, the house that we had at the tower washed out completely, the mess hall and all that twin towers you know near the gate.

TH: Oh down at the right at the entrance which is right now the toll plaza operation. The red brick....

HN: They had a big mess hall complete with sleeping quarters for the men who were stationed at those light.

TH: Really? Right there. That's...

HN: The whole thing. (inaudible)

TH: Let me ask what time periods were you involved with Fort Hancock? Was it right though World War II?

HN: Right through it.

TH: Really?

NH: I went there with the regiment and it was the last day I had to leave from the regiment.

TH: From the 245th?

NH: Yeah.

TH: When did you first arrive there?

HN: September the 15th, 1940.

TH: You remember the day.

HN: The first contingent. The first people on active duty.

TH: With the 245th. Was it the New York National Guard?

HN: The New York National Guard.

TH: Then you were federalized.

HN: They gave us a tickertape parade on 5th Avenue New York.

TH: Really? That I did not know. When you left to come down?

NH: When we left to go to camp we got a ticker tape.

TH: And you stayed right through the war?

NH: Right through the war. As a matter of fact, I was transferred to Panama in the middle of that thing. Everybody gets sent after three years gets a transfer order.

TH: Right.

HN: So, I saw mine in the newspaper. I said, "Okay. I got Panama." And General Gage called. "I want to see you in my office." I thought it was on account of that and I went to his office. I said, "General, Captain Neri reporting as ordered." He says, "I didn't order you to come here." I says, "Well I just received a telephone call from you ordering me to appear here. I am reporting in reference to that telephone order." "Oh no, I am sorry. I didn't call you I called Murray or somebody." The operator got me instead of Murray. He said, "While you are here sit down here and talk to me about the searchlight." I said, "Fine. What would the general care to know?" He said, "Well (inaudible) what can we

do to help you. I notice anytime we want the lights they are on. You done a very good job.” I said, “By the way General, I guess while I am here I better say goodbye because I am ordered to leave.” He said, “What?” I said, “Yes sir. I saw the newspaper order today that I was to leave for Panama.” You have two weeks or whatever it is. “Will you show me?” I said, “Sure. Its in the newspaper.” “Which one?” I told him. He called his aide, said, “Bring that newspaper to me.” Whatever it was. Yeah.

EH: Was it the *Foghorn*?

HN: It was one of them. *The Times*, I think it was *the Times*.

TH: The regular newspaper.

NH: So he said horse\$%^ . I said, “Well, you are the boss. Whatever you want.” “Nobody is going to take my searchlight officer away from me.” I guess he was all of a sudden scared because that was a special kind of a specialty thing all over creation. When he said lights on, he looked up in the sky and there was a blot in the sky, see. That satisfied him. Well, he called up somebody in Washington right then and there. He says, “This man in absolutely indispensable to the Harbor Defense of New York.” But it worked. It worked. They took my name off all the lists to be permanently assigned for the good of the service at Fort Hancock, Harbor Defenses of New York. They never touched me.

TH: Wow.

NH: It was just one of those damn things that happened. You walk into it and it’s a nice bakery shop, like a fly, see. On the other hand if that mistaken call had gone to the right, to Murray instead of me I would have been in Iceland somewhere. That’s the way things happen.

TH: That’s right. Yeah. Just by chance. General Gage’s office would that be in the Post Headquarters Building? Is that where you went in?

HN: Yeah.

TH: Where was his office?

HN: Downstairs.

TH: On the like, would you when you arrived did you come right to the front door? Did most officers go through the front?

HN: No. Wait a minute. There was a back entrance to that building.

TH: Yeah. We all use the back entrance.

HN: The back entrance and I think you went down a few steps or whatever it was.

TH: Up.

NH: Up. Was it up?

TH: Yeah.

NH: And then it was over to the left.

TH: Yeah. Because that's where our secretaries work and our superintendent well, the last commanding officer of Fort Hancock had his office up front on the left. The front of the building on the left hand side.

HN: That is where his office was. I think it was one up in the front and there was another office up in there too. Wasn't there?

TH: There was a couple on the left and there was...

HN: He didn't have the front office. He had the one towards the rear.

TH: How do you remember General Gage? You probably, because he was there for....

HN: He was fun. I liked him. I liked him. He was a social sort of guy.

TH: He seemed to be. Yeah.

HN: Social activities he brought that lady, what was her name? The screen star.

EH: Lana Turner.

NH: Lana Turner, yeah. I remember that day we were all three regiments standing at attention in the rain.

TH: Lana Turner Day.

NH: With long raincoats and it was raining and he came to watch us by with Lana Turner. Geez boy, they were all cussing. They didn't want to stand out in the rain all day long waiting for Lana Turner. They didn't like her because of that. "That tramp keeps me waiting out in the rain like this all day long."

TH: You heard some grumbling there.

HN: You are damn right I did. Sure.

TH: But the three regiments were what, batteries of the 7th, 52nd...

HN: 52nd and the 245th.

TH: 245th. The whole Post for her.

HN: Maybe the 113th was there too. I don't know but the whole Post was out. Yes sir, they sure as heck were. Out in the raincoats.

TH: Did you get to see here? Did you get to see her?

HN: Oh, yeah right in the front. You could here the (sound of raspberries)

EH: You could hear the raspberries. (laughter)

NH: You are damn right they did. Sergeant somebody, "Quiet, quiet, quiet."

EH: How funny.

NH: It was a real demonstration for us.

TH: My impression, you know, my impression because we talked to others, Sal Giovenco for one of the 245th that that was a real big day. Everybody was delighted to see her.

HN: Oh they sure were delighted. (laughter) They would have shot her with a flare practically. It was a funny thing. Another review about that same time with General Gage out there and a couple of his aides you know reviewing the regiment, reviewing the thing and there were about 15 dogs out there.

TH: Really?

HN: Among the group, you know. They were all at each other. They messed him up a little bit. Jumped all over him. He was in the middle of the field all by himself.

TH: General Gage?

HN: Yeah. Sure. Sure.

TH: Where did the dogs come from?

HN: They were following one of them. They got mixed up in that Parade Ground. It was the real show. It was a real show. They had those troops I tell you a New York show. A burlesque show couldn't have put those men in a better frame of mind than those dogs did. I swear. That was really something. In the middle of the Parade Ground, you know, the general is standing out there all by himself and he is being attacked by 15 dogs in full view of the... the guys said, "Eat him up." (laughter)

EH: How funny.

TH: How did they get it under control? Did the MPs come over?

NH: The MPs got out there and they I don't know they I don't know got rid of them. Shoo, Shoo.

TH: That was a day in here honor, right where they show her around.

NH: This was a different time.

TH: Oh, this a different occasion. Oh, I am sorry. Okay

HN: Its too bad that wasn't the same occasion because they didn't like Lana Turner at all. Oh geez.

TH: I am trying to remember where I read where well I know famous persons, Lana Turner, movie star but there was other famous people. I understand Joe Louis visited. Do you remember anything?

HN: I remember Joe Louis was there and Galento, as a matter of fact Galento did some boxing out there for the men.

TH: Exhibition boxing?

HN: Exhibition boxing, yeah. Galento, Tony Galento did boxing down there. A real fighter, he was a real fighter. They had other people come down too. On one occasion they had a New York Ballet come down in the theater, you know, and they did a lot of this female froo froo stuff, you know.

TH: Opera, yeah.

EH: Ballet.

TH: Ballet yeah.

HN: They made a lot of fun of it. Whoo hoo. (laughter)

TH: Soldiers will be soldiers.

NH: Soldiers will be soldiers yeah. You got this guy from the Bronx you know, whoo hoo. Poor girl. They started to laugh after a while. Then the one time they had a guy in there they shot a bullet through the ceiling. He was sitting there with his rifle looking at the movie, blowee, right up through the ceiling. The lights went on. They were looking for a couple of dead guys. They didn't know what happened. Oh geez. Great business.

TH: Any other personalities? Did Bob Hope come out? I think he...

NH: I don't remember seeing him. No. He may have been there but I don't remember seeing him. I guess he was there one night. But my best friends were the ladies. They wore the black caps with blue ribbon.

TH: Salvation Army.

HN: Salvation Army, yeah. They used to come to the tower unit in the middle of the night at two o'clock in the morning with hot coffee, donuts, sandwiches come up those stairs. All the way to the top of the tower you know.

EH: Oh gosh.

HN: They had donuts and cakes and all sorts of things, sandwiches and coffee.

EH: They'd climb the tower?

HN: Yeah sure.

EH: Good heavens.

HN: We came up with them. They were in the tower and they did that also while I was in (Fort) Tilden and also at Wadsworth. We saw them over there too. They'd come up there with donuts and all that kind of stuff for all the people, men, officers, especially those that were on duty at night. And the Red Cross, don't talk to me about the Red Cross.

TH: You've got some bad memories there? (laughter)

EH: Well, they take a lot of credit from what people say. They take a lot of credit but actually the Salvation Army is the one, the most charitable organization in the world.

NH: We got a Red Cross slobber our club. We got a big Red Cross flying on our boat. A big fat chubby...

TH: They would come out in these early morning hours, the Salvation Army?

NH: Yeah. But the Red Cross was always selling us stuff.

TH: Ah, I see. I didn't know that. You get the impression that...

HN: They'd come over for handouts. They'd come over for campaigns for money all this kind of junk.

TH: I got some questions just going back to the railroad mounted searchlight. The color scheme once again would be olive drab for the...

HN: Dull

TH: Dull olive drab. You were mentioning the controller car was a little enclosed in the front. Was that for the operator to lift up the tower or was that to operate the train.

HN: That was operated manually. The other thing was to operate, the tower was operated manually. It had it had an electric system for operating it electrically. But it wasn't practical. We operated it with two handles with no problem at all. Counterbalanced, the cabinet up front had nothing more than a trolley car control. That started it off and controlled the speed and there was a hand brake.

TH: You would be outside doing that on the car?

HN: You would be in the cabin.

TH: Oh, that little cabin.

NH: That little cabin in the front was like a trolley car. The way you control a trolley car and the engines and all that business and then the engines you would have you would have an operator in the engine room to make sure the engine was operating correctly, the gasoline was flowing properly. Check the carburetors and things like that. To start the engines.

TH: What would the crew size be?

NH: You would have four men for the, always four men standard for the searchlight, that was the standard searchlight crew. You would have one man that would take care of propelling the car but we figured that when the car was in motion you didn't need four men for the searchlight. So, there was one man from that point to operate the car or two. We had four men to operate the car and the searchlight. But you couldn't do both at the same time. The car is running, no searchlight. The searchlight is up, no running. So you would use the same four men to do the whole job. And we gave them ratings for doing that. Then you had, we always liked to have two men in the power plant. That is a good idea because one man could get hurt.

TH: That's right.

HN: He could get stuck in the flywheel. It happened not to us but it happened on the boat. We happened to walk on the boat one day when they had one of those engines on the boat (inaudible)

TH: The big flywheel going around.

HN: It was a small tug type boat for towing purposes, a big engine in it. It was anchored at the end of our pier when it was bringing some pilings in. So I went over and talked to the guy. You know, I saw them lay out (inaudible). He was moaning. I called up first aid and I called up some people from the (inaudible) immediately and they came running down. He got (inaudible) he got stuck in the fly wheel. He was starting it off and the flywheel got him. So we figured he got scrambled in the flywheel and pulled himself out. When that flywheel goes, forget it. If your arm is in there you are lucky to get out. There is no guarding at all. He was pretty well bloodied up.

TH: Could this be it because I wanted to ask you the stories about the tug being hit by the 155 (mm gun) and was it that type of a tug that they had?

HN: No. Even smaller.

TH: Even smaller?

HN: This one was smaller.

TH: I can see how an accident it was probably so cramped around that engine with a large wheel.

NH: He was a small tug.

TH: But I wanted to ask you about the tug being hit and also the getting the E for excellence with the airplane and the target balloon.

EH: Hitting the balloon. How you earned it.

NH: The tug was hit by a shell.

TH: Yeah but you told the circumstances because they used to tow a target, correct?

HN: Yeah. Well, we were towing. It was on the tug. We had to tow a target. The target line was maybe 300, maybe 500 feet long, pyramidal target on a float. And you tug it. Sometimes you had a square one. And the idea was for the guns on shore to hit the target, moving target. And you are usually 15,000 yards which is a hell of a long ways out.

TH: Yeah. You are a little dot out there.

HN: It was almost on the horizon. A little dot with glasses. Well, this particular time the haze came up and it was a perfect, from what it was described to me and we could see it on the shore too. We didn't know we were the same way. The haze was a straight line. I never saw it like that. Sharp. You could see everything above it clearly and everything below it was like white, blended with the ground. That's the way we were see. Everything below that haze was seen or blended with the ocean and everything above that

thing was a smokestack period. It even covered the target. So what happened was that the target being as small as it was at that distance the glasses went on the smokestack. That thing (was) the only thing out there. They picked up one target. One target, yeah, you are on target, alright. Then came all the azimuths, the plotting board and all this stuff the corrections and all this stuff. 155 (mm guns) let the first shot go and they hit the target. Right on the side of the tug below the smokestack. The target was hit (inaudible) what it did it didn't hit it straight enough to go through. But it hit the hull see. the hull in the water it hit the hull like this and on the inside of the hull was like a coal bin where all the coal was held so that probably gave it more resistance. It hit the tug on a slanting. It put a nice wrench in it but it didn't penetrate. Now if that thing had been a little higher it could have blown that tug to bits. It could have gone right through it and split in two. There was one officer that was on the side of the tug directly above that shell that was only about ten feet below.

TH: Right where it came into the tug.

HN: Right where it came into the tug. That's right. I was on the back of the tug taking care of the tow lines for the target. All day long you would hear these shells come across the target, see. Zoom, zoom, zoom. There was a certain kind of a sound, but this wasn't the certain kind of a sound. This thing was a roar. Oh my god and it seemed like hours before the darn thing struck. It was amazing. It just didn't seem that the time would come when this darn thing would hit. Whatever it was. You figure should I go there. Should I go here? Should I jump in the water? Should I do this? All of this is taking place in a split second. In the meantime, the damn thing hit. That was relief. You knew it wasn't you and the tugboat was over to the side and some guy got dumped in the water so they got wet. So what? We sent a radio message right in right away that it was hit. Please send a tow or whatever. Before we knew it there were about 15 boats out there. All speeding out there. We got the Red Cross. We had the people with donuts and coffee you name it. We had the doctors out there with all kinds of material. The general was out there. The colonel was out there. And they all said, "Don't say a word about this." (laughter)

EH: Keep it a secret.

HN: How do you keep it a secret around 150 people, you know? So anyhow, don't say a word about this. They were thinking of the bales of paperwork. We all went in and that was it. The tug was hauled out for repairs. That was the end of that. But they were hit.

TH: Was the, like the clock that you showed us, was that kind of a clock on that kind of a tug?

NH: Yeah. Same kind of thing.

TH: Did they repair it and put it back into service?

NH: Well the clock wasn't, there wasn't any damage.

TH: I don't mean the clock. I meant the tug you were on. The one that was hit.

HN: Oh yeah. They hammered the dent out. Maybe put a new plate in and that was the end of it. Normal maintenance.

TH: Was the shell a dummy because...

HN: It was a dummy. It wasn't high explosive.

TH: Still a 155 shell weighs and awful lot.

HN: Separate loading. Separate loading. 155 shell stands about that high.

TH: It's hefty. We have got one in the collection

EH: That's right.

HN: They are a formidable piece of artillery that 155.

TH: That is very interesting about the different sounds coming in.

NH: Yeah oh yeah.

TH: You knew it was coming.

NH: Yeah. Oh you sure did. You sure did. And that time factor. That the thing that seemed so long. Once you realized that it was coming at you, it was only a split second away these thoughts went through your mind immediately.

TH: Oh yeah.

HN: You knew it was going to hit. You didn't know where and you wanted to go someplace where it wasn't and you tried to figure all these things out you know. Amazing.

TH: To your knowledge in the Coast Artillery, because here you have a 155 round and when they, and my question is in target practice would like Battery Gunnison, when they were firing at towed targets out in the ocean were they dummy rounds or real shells.

HN: No they weren't explosives. They were called, oh they didn't call them dummy rounds. They called them, I guess I can't remember. They had all the ballistics, they had all the ballistics of a regular armor piercing shot which was heavier than a contact explosive. They had several types of shells. One that would explode on contact.

TH: Right.

NH: And it had a heavier nose with a soft nose with a heavier shell in the nose, the soft nose, the idea being that the nose would melt on contact and hold the shell in place long enough for the forward motion of the shell itself to penetrate.

TH: To go through.

HN: Yeah. And you had two second, maybe three second fuse on it that would explode two or three seconds after it penetrated. It would be an inside explosive. We had that too.

TH: So, you know what I am thinking of now is that way out off of Sandy Hook after all the years that the Army had been there with, you know, Fort Hancock with the 1890s through World War II that the target practice out in the ocean bottom must be....

HN: A goldmine. (laughter) You got an iron mine.

TH: An iron mine.

EH: Yeah. That's right. Well said.

HN: There is a lot of stuff out there.

TH: I have one question maybe you might because you were there in World War II, Searchlight #7 the building was out near the tip of Sandy Hook and you know that road that still goes out there.

HN: Yeah.

TH: It's pretty shot now but the road goes straight out from the Coast Guard Station. The building built in 1936 that used to be the whole Coast Guard Station out to the searchlight number 7 building roughly between, the space between, right out on top of the sand dune is a concrete mine secondary station. A blockhouse type World War II style. Did you ever get to know any of the soldiers working in there?

NH: Oh yeah. Sure you got talking to the mine people.

TH: Because the reason I ask is fascinating that stencil on the wall there. You can go in there. It's in pretty good shape. Made of reinforced concrete. You have to go down the rung ladder in the concrete down and then come back up inside of the blockhouse and stenciled on the wall there where they used to have these posts too, posts that I guess held azimuth instruments...

NH: That's right.

TH: But stenciled on the wall are compass markings like Coney Island, the Parachute jump for West Bank Lighthouse, for Romer Shoals Lighthouse.

HN: Orientation points.

TH: Orientation. Did you have the same thing in searchlight #7?

HN: All of them we had.

TH: Really?

HN: Orientation points.

TH: It would be immediate. Immediate.

HN: We point the searchlight too it, see. Throw the beam on it. Make sure it was right on it and then also look through our azimuth machines to check up again and recheck and then we knew measuring with compasses during the daytime what that azimuth was and then we would see what the azimuth circle on the searchlight tower responded to that reading. 72 degrees to that. 72 degrees here.

TH: Right.

NH: And we would do this north and we would do this south and we would do this on other known azimuth points. Check back and forth that way. But don't forget too that when you locate a searchlight the searchlight is a mobile type unit. And it's alright to say that from here to here is 75 degrees, right and from here to here is also 75 degrees. And from here to here is 75 degrees. But your other had changed at each location. That's right. And you have that variation every time you use your change in position you could change it if you want. If you want the actual degree location for each position you have to actually survey it. It's the only way you can do it. One is gun sighting of course. If you have a gun, you can have a crosshair in the front and a crosshair in the rear and you point your gun so your crosshairs are right on it, the target. And you know you are on that position, know position which translates into 72 degrees. You leave it there so you mark 72 degrees on the circle. Then you have to go through that whole business of orienting a piece of equipment is not easy. So you have all these locations. Every time you change it you have to go through the same thing. Otherwise you might be straight in this direction but in that direction you are off.

TH: Yeah. I also would like to know what happened when you had alerts during the War? What was the alert with sirens? Would there be sirens going off or what would happen?

NH: Sometimes we would have a siren. Yeah. Sometimes we would have a siren. Sometimes we would have telephone.

TH: It would ring when you would the word?

HN: We would get the word through telephone. You would have telephones that were installed in various locations just for that purpose. Not to be used by anybody but that purpose.

TH: I notice in your scrapbook there are some snapshots of a machine gun emplacements. Were they near your towers? Did you have those positions or is that...

HN: We had them for local protection.

TH: At your...

HN: If your place was ever, if it was ever infiltrated at any time you had protection. It certainly wasn't for seaward protection.

TH: Yeah or say antiaircraft or immediate...that leads me to the story about getting the one shot.

HN: Oh lord, we had a, we had everybody had a practice antiaircraft machine gun .30 caliber stuff and the airplane would fly here and there and across and parallel and what not. Different courses and it had attached to it maybe three or five hundred yards behind this balloon like thing a long thing like a sausage.

TH: Yes.

NH: That thing would go flying through the air. You were supposed to put holes in it, see. Every battery would have its own sock. And what they did after you got up there they allowed you 500 shots you know and take the thing down and count the holes. How many times you hit and divide by two. One went in and came out and left two holes. The argument, supposedly the only skin was a worm hole that only counted one shot. These arguments always went on. Suppose we did this, suppose we did that. Suppose, suppose, suppose. The biggest word in the Army. They counted up all the holes and divided by two and that's how many holes you got out of the 500 shots. It was funny. Sometimes they put balloons up and when you shot the balloon it went blup and that was the end of the balloon. This day they were using balloons. I guess they ran out of socks. Our friend what was his name? I forget his name. He was an Irish fellow and he was behind the machine gun, .30 caliber machine gun and he was going to shoot the sock, balloons. (inaudible) He was a hell of a nice guy. Anyhow, he took the battery over when I left. He was there firing at this damn thing, you know, typical New York guy. Hell of a nice fella and the thing is going over. He takes one shot and blup, that is the end of the balloon. So he looks at me and I look at him and I said, "That's all." (laughter) One shot. He said, "What else do you want me to do? You told me to shoot the balloon down. I shot the balloon down. That's all." So we laughed at each other. He said, "To think of all the ammunition I just saved." I said, "Yeah but look at all the fun you lost."

TH: Firing off a machine gun.

NH: So we are going back and forth, you know. And that was it. One shot and he shot the balloon. We all got E's for that. Excellent.

TH: That's how the Army works. That's what I like about it. But that was like you were saying earlier, very lucky shot.

HN: Oh absolutely. Everybody admitted that. Even him. Go ahead and do better. You could get a lucky shot too. So the guy is still as dead as dead can be or you might be otherwise if you got shot in the process. They used to have this colonel in the 113th and I can't think of his name. The 113th he tried to show us up. He tried to come around and show us up and all of that business. We had a machine gun record firing at the range. Which got high scores for the whole damn distance and we wore E's. We had more E's than we could wear and certificates from commanding general of the 1st Army and all this business. We went on the firing range. It was the same thing. When you go on the firing range with your rifle you had a, you know, they practiced for that. Give us instruction. Sideways correction and all this kind of stuff. Every one time we went down to that firing range our record was tops. Every firing record in the battery. All of them were wearing all kinds of sharpshooter medals and all this. What was that top medal, it was marksman, sharpshooter and...

TH: Expert.

HN: Expert. Well, I had an expert for a while and there was a couple of other experts and then we went down to sharpshooter of course, and I went to a Garand rifle which I hated. I hated the damn Garand rifle. Aim fire, aim fire. I could do better aim fire than I could do with 20 shots in a Garand. Anyhow we went to a Garand rifle and I came down to something else and the others did too but the our outfit was exceptionally fine when it came to firing.

TH: What happened, I would like to know, you said you were the last of your outfit to leave? Would that be after the war in Europe had ended?

HN: No. What happened was we went into the regiment, the big regiment. And after about a year or two I don't know they started to transfer people out, cadres. This battery would go out to train new outfits. This squad would go out to train that new outfit. This guy would go out. Our maintenance crew would go out to train this outfit to do something. It got dwindling down all along the line. So, the officers were gone and everybody was gone and they had new people come in and they were gone and they would have new people come in and they were gone. So that one time I was telling you about the Panama incident.

TH: Right.

HN: And the general said, "No. You are not going." He called Washington and I must have been taken some rotation list of some kind. Some dohicky they had down there and they never called me again.

TH: I am wondering about at the end of the War like do you remember what happened on V-E Day?

NH: Well, the War ended. Everybody yelled and hollered and everything. Then there was the job of dismantling after that. Don't forget we had two V (days). One was for Europe and one for Japan. When Japan gave up, that's when the war was really over.

TH: Over. Yeah right.

NH: Then there was a question of cleaning up. Accounting for this and accounting for that and turning this material back and deactivation and all. A hell of a bundle of paperwork. It was something. How many sheets are you going to turn in? God knows. After I came home, I had people coming over here, "Hey there are 140 sheets missing." "What do you mean 140 sheets missing." It developed that 140 sheets were someplace else. It was all that kind of stuff going on you know. Material, weapons, supplies, relieving yourself of responsibilities here and there. And you couldn't get relief of responsibility until you accounted for those two bundles of pencils that are missing and whatever. 14 shoes strings, crazy stuff like that.

TH: What do you think happened to all your searchlight equipment? That went surplus or was put in storage?

HN: Well, we had all brand new searchlights towards the end of the War and I mentioned from the 16-inch gun we had that whole new shield, that protection shield that was delivered while the guns were being cut up and that's the state of confusion that this whole thing was in. Materials and supplies were being delivered at the same time that materials and supplies were being destroyed, deactivated. It was just one thing overcoming the other, catching up with the other. We were one hell of a position. There was no way. I know I had one of the thing I had during or after the war was a lot of shop equipment, power equipment that was used by the men for recreation, see. Band saw, circular saws, surface planers, sanders, lathes, you mention it. All this stuff, very good stuff. But it developed that during the use of the machines people got hurt. One man had the top of his hand gouged out. it slipped over the planer. Another guy had a band saw blade go through his hand. He split the continuation of the wheel and had the band saw go through his hand. We had stuff like that and a lot of it. So the general says, "Get rid of that stuff. Sell it to the first guy that comes along. Sell it for a buck." I said, "Like hell." I said, "I am going to buy it." He said, "You want it? It cost you a buck." I said, "Alright. Here is a dollar." But it was in horrible condition. The bearings were all burnt out.

TH: Sure.

HN: The wheels were out of line.

TH: I can see why. There was a lot of people.

HN: The tables were all crumbed up. The bands around the wheels had to be replaced. It was just all the guys were completely worn out. So it was all good equipment but I had to write to the factory and get all replacement parts. But when it was all through I had a hell of a nice machine shop. Then I threw a lot of that stuff away and bought brand new. But there was a lot of that stuff going on. People buying furniture. People buying framed pictures. People buying beds and people buying this and people buying whatever stoves.

TH: You mean Army surplus.

HN: It was just thrown out.

TH: With war ending.

NH: With the war ending, yeah. And the order came through that said get rid of whatever you can and get whatever you can get for it. In other words they reduce all this junk. It contained all kinds of things. Motorboats, rowboats, oars, searchlights, everything you can imagine, automobiles, bicycles...

TH: Was this all taken place down at Fort Hancock with the war over?

NH: Individuals buying what was on the market. Lump sum box and the supply officer would be in charge of that department which was minor at the time (inaudible) and did a hell of a job. No funny business either. I said, "Listen buddy you want to go to jail, fine. I rather buy my stuff in an Army-Navy store than do that. You can do it legally, fine. I want to see every transaction first."

TH: Did you see any like the disappearing searchlight towers cut up?

HN: No. I saw them dismantled the one in Sea Bright. I didn't see the others (inaudible)

TH: After all that time. Did you leave the Army from Fort Hancock?

HN: '47. In '47-'48

TH: Was Ostrum still there? Was he still, because I think he kept commanding...

HN: He was there at the time and I think about that time he was reduced to the rank of Colonel after the war a lot of temporary grades and promotions were reduced.

TH: Because the War ended?

HN: Because the War ended. There was a reduction of everything.

TH: It always happens, yeah.

NH: Strengths. But a lot of positions were eliminated, civilian positions were eliminated. Department activities were eliminated. The only thing that remained was the (inaudible) Like I said they were cutting up guns when the shield. Just tremendous confusion.

TH: Was there activity going on like in 1946-47 at Fort Hancock? There were still soldiers there.

NH: Oh yeah. There were still soldiers there but there was no, there was very little, very little decorum. As a matter of fact, a lot of soldiers insulted the officers openly.

TH: Really? After the War?

HN: Oh sure.

TH: Really?

HN: There were some rough officers there. And the soldiers just went after them. Who the hell do you think you are?

EH: Good grief. Oh wow.

HN: Oh, absolutely.

TH: Really? That's...

HN: Who the hell do you think you are now? Openly. Ah put your head in the garbage. What am I going to do shine shoes now? Oh yeah, sure they did. We found out right away whether they liked you or if they had a grudge.

TH: With the war ending did you ever keep in touch, well you knew Jim Dreyfus was his name. Did you keep in touch with him?

NH: Oh sure. We were always close friends.

TH: I would like to know whatever happened to Sergeant Carr.

NH: I would too. I really would too.

TH: By the way, did he get transferred out you know as...

HN: Oh yeah. Eventually he was transferred. I don't know what happened to him or anything. I wasn't anywhere near the battery. He was transferred long after I was out of

the battery. (inaudible) We would go into the building, the two story building the barracks and I would go into the building downstairs and I could hear the (inaudible) rattling all over the floor. You could hear all this stuff from the second floor right above the entrance. So I go in the building and I stand in front door real loud. I stamp my feet on the floor. "Is anybody in the house?" (laughter)

EH: And they could hide the dice and the evidence.

HN: But it was too soon for them to disperse, see. So I would get up there. "What the hell are you guys doing? A map study all of a sudden? Where are the maps?" So I would get Sergeant Carr, "What the hell why do you have to do that during working hours. Suppose somebody else sneaked up on you?"

EH: How about the surprise visit of General Drum? Wasn't that one of the big events that here was an unannounced visit of General Drum?

HN: That happened on Tilden.

EH: That was Fort Tilden that occurred?

HN: Fort Tilden you are damn right. I know it was Fort Tilden. He visited my room in Fort Tilden. He said, "Open that door". He what they saw. I was collecting clocks at the time, see.

EH: No kidding.

NH: On my bed, let me give you a little description. On my bed was an antique grandfather's clock. All taken apart. The doors up against the wall on the floor with parts. On my table was all kinds of paint with cans and brushes and rags and stuff all over the place see. The more you looked, the more you saw. None good, see. Along comes General Drum walking through the building. It was only a one story building with maybe four rooms on the first floor. A small building. He said, "Open this door," and they look in that room and they see this whole damn mess plus the smell of varnish and shellac and shellac cans and stiff brushes and rags and this grandfather's clock all apart. Well, the description I got was that he looked in the room. He walked in the room and looked all around and he shook his head a little bit. He walked out of the room. In the meantime all the colonels with him said, "If I had him, Neri with me now you would have meatballs. That would fix him up so good that he would never see a clock for the next 14 generations." But then they said later on when he came out of that building he was a changed man. They said General Drum was a changed man. He was relaxed. He was telling jokes. He was laughing. He wasn't as stiff as he was before seeing all this. He couldn't put that finger on it. But he was so pleasant. He says, "I want to see that man at dinner tonight." I figured he was so happy everybody was so happy they were going to see him cut me in front of everybody see. So sure enough I am sitting down at the table. I didn't know this had gone on. I knew he was around but I didn't know he had come to my room. Somebody had told me at the table, "Hey, you know, General

Drum was in your room. He wasn't happy at all nor was anybody else. They were all gonna kill you." Well, you could have told me that after dinner. I was shaking because General Drum was sitting right down there two tables away with all these colonels and everybody and his aide right with him. So his aide kept looking at me, you know. He turned around once in a while and looked at me. How do you feel in a case like that? What do you think of? He would look around again to see if I was still there. Then they got up and walked out. Then the aide came in. He says, "Major Neri," he says, "General Drum would like to see you." So long. I went outside. I saluted the best I knew how. A salute of militarism. You never had a feeling in front of a guy in the military like you had when you faced General Drum. This fella was...

TH: God Almighty.

NH: God almighty. I got the same, I had the same feeling when I stopped and spoke to Cardinal Spellman when he visited Fort Monmouth there. You felt like you weren't talking to a man you were talking to god and so. It was such a strange feeling. You can't describe it. I went out and I said, "Major Neri reporting as ordered, sir." Oh yeah. He said, "I got a clock"...boy.

EH: You never expected him to say that.

HN: No. I got a clock, Major and its up in that room where I used to live in Fort Wadsworth and if you can fix that damn thing it's yours. So he says that's a nice hobby you got. He says I think I will do that too when I retire. I said, "Thank you very much." That was the end of it. I got a clock. And that's the round thing you saw upstairs.

TH: Yeah the wooden.

HN: So, I went to Fort Wadsworth. I was at Fort Tilden at the time. I went to Fort Wadsworth and I asked the OD or somebody there, I used to live on Fort Wadsworth. I was assigned there once. I said, "Did General Drum leave any word." He said, "Oh yeah, sure the clock is up on there. It's up on the marble fireplace on the building up there." He says, "We will have somebody come in with you open the building up and you can take the clock take it home with you on General Drum's orders." I went in there and walked out with the clock. It's fine. I picked it up and it's fine. That was the end of it. Gee that was some experience. General Drum I had with him.

TH: I see a picture of him and you get that feeling just looking old Army.

HN: He was absolutely sparkling. There isn't any word that describes it. He you know after all there was a time when he was considered for Chief of Staff, United States Armed Forces. General Marshall got the job. General Marshall came from Boston. It was only because of politics. Drum was not either a Democrat or a Republican or something like that. It was some political thing there that kept him from getting the job but he was in line for it and Roosevelt I think it was Roosevelt at the time said, "No. Give it to Marshall." Drum remained at First Army there at that island.

TH: Governors Island.

HN: Governors Island. Yeah.

TH: First Army command.

NH: He remained there for I don't know the duration or what and then he became, he became chairman of the board of the Empire State Building when he retired.

EH: No kidding. Oh boy.

NH: He was the chairman of the board of the Empire State Building, General Drum.

TH: I was going through Arlington National Cemetery and I came across his grave. Buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

HN: Camp Drum named after him.

TH: Yeah up in upstate New York.

(Conversation irrelevant to interview.)

TH: Did you fire the guns down at Gunnison?

HN: Oh yeah. That was my gun.

EH: Why don't you describe that? We are looking at a photograph.



Photograph of Battery Gunnison in early World War II before being converted.

HN: Well, that's a disappearing gun. One of those things that when you fire it bounces back into the loading position, see. And when it's in the loading position you open up the

breech and on the carriage there's another projectile. You put the projectile in and ram that in. Before you do that of course you clean the barrel out.

TH: Yeah. Swab it out. Yeah.

NH: Swab it out and you put your second swab goes in to dry it out and then the projectile is placed in and rammed into place and of course the propelling charge bag is placed in there and the breech is closed and the primer is placed in the breech and you ready to go. You pull the darn thing and sets off.

TH: The gun going up on the carriage, the disappearing gun going up, wasn't that done rather quickly?

NH: Not too quickly. It goes up just like this. About just like that. And I made a mistake. You put the primer in and then pull the lanyard. You put the gun in position first.

TH: Really.

HN: It's got to go up first. Then you fire it.

TH: Because you could have the accident of the primer being pulled.

HN: But after that experience that I told you about where the gun was fired in the lowered position and left all of its (inaudible.) They put a safety on it and it wouldn't fire until it was tripped by the gun, a mechanical arrangement. I don't know if this one was but most of them were, disappearing guns. You find out by pulling a lanyard. If a gun leaves off and goes 14 miles in the other direction you know that doesn't have a safety. (laughter.)

TH: A 6-inch rifle had quite a crack.

NH: Oh yes. More than the big ones.

TH: Even though this is a disappearing here in your photograph, latter on they converted Battery Gunnison into those 6-inch barbettes.

HN: Battery Gunnison was eliminated altogether. And what they did with disappearing guns was they just took the names off of these batteries and transferred them to the 6-inch field pieces, wherever they were. Gunnison was someplace else now. Then there was Bloomfield, then there was Richardson, and Halleck. Those names don't even appear anymore anywhere. But the old emplacements are still there with 8's 10's and 12's I think.

TH: I know looking into the old Army records that they took the two 6-inch barbette guns from Battery Peck down to Gunnison. They took out the disappearing carriages.

HN: They might have done that.

TH: They filled in your pit there with concrete.

HN: Yeah they might have done that to give you some protection. They might have done that.

TH: Yeah. They brought in the 6-inch barbette mounted rifles but either or that hurt the ears because they had a sharp...

HN: Oh sure. The 6-inch gun is a very sharp gun.

TH: How about the 3-inch rapid fires too? They would probably just be...

NH: They give you a rap. We'd fire 3-inch anti-aircraft and that was mean because the gun was way up in the air and there was little distance off the loader. You loaded the thing off a rack and you kept on putting a rack in there and you fired the darn things just as fast as you could rack it up. It was a pretty rapid firing thing. It gave you a real (inaudible) too.

TH: Did you ever stop down by Battery Gunnison to take a look?

NH: Yeah. I stopped down a couple of weeks ago. Get heartsick.

TH: I know. It's a mess. It's a mess.

HN: It's terrible. I see the old Gunnison, the original emplacement, there is nothing there now except I think there is the original indentation and walk through the casemates and the concrete is all falling and you get a scary feeling that its gonna fall in on you. There is no maintenance of any kind.

TH: Yeah. I am afraid it all stopped with when the Coast Artillery, you know, after World War II. I just think they just stopped using it.

HN: Well, Battery Potter was all locked off. You can't go into Battery Potter.

TH: Well, they are all falling apart. The Army really outside of using them for storage, some of them, not all of them for storing things.

HN: They are not good for that anymore. Water comes right through.

TH: That is true.

HN: And I think it is worth your life to go through that place. Buried under there just like that when that thing starts to go. One slam.

TH: We should go down to Gunnison together.

NH: Oh Gunnison, that was my pride. That place was..

TH: There was a lot more sand dune in front of it when you were there because there have been tremendous changes to the shoreline out in front of the gun battery. What is now sand dunes is nothing more than beach.

NH: That was a beautiful dune. Boy the poor guy that stood before that or alongside of it. This doesn't show anybody up on the platform.

TH: The gunners platform?

HN: Yeah. I don't think, maybe, that wasn't a very kind place to be when that gun had gone off.

TH: No. especially when that....

HN: I think what they did was they probably had that only use sub-caliber shooting. And sub-caliber shooting, this is what we used for sub-caliber.

TH: Ah, that's the round there? Is that a 37 mm?

HN: Yeah. That's what we used.

TH: See this is how it works.

HN: That is actually one of the shells that we actually fired. Sub-caliber. We had a sub-caliber tube that was placed inside of the regular tube and we used sub-caliber for training purposes.

TH: Yes. I can see it. Sub-caliber gun.

NH: Its one of the actual, of course the projectile is taken from another one. The projectile on that particular shell is gone. We fired that one. That was from another one. That's the actual sub-caliber shell that was used. And they used that on the big guns too. They just put a tube inside of the big guns.

TH: That was my question. Did they put a tube in the back of the canon on the inside of it. This bullet would actually fire.

NH: It would have to go through all the breech work and everything and the aiming and all this business except they saved on ammunition.

TH: Wouldn't they save the rifling on that too on the big guns

HN: Oh yeah. Sure. Oh sure and oil it good with oil so that the flash from this thing wouldn't sear the inside of the...in some cases I think they actually put a shield inside. Not a comb but a cylinder to protect it from the acids that came out of it.

TH: That is very interesting. That I didn't know.

HN: That's sub-caliber.

TH: That is neat. I have never seen that before. You know, I have read about them. Soldiers like yourself have told me about them but there is the actual thing.

(Talking irrelevant to interview)

END OF INTERVIEW