

Sandy Hook, Gateway NRA, NPS
An Oral History Interview with John R. Bishop
52nd Coast Artillery, Battery E, 1937 – 1939
Interviewed by Tom Hoffman, NPS
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Transcribed by Jo Anne Carlson, NPS Volunteer, 2008



John Bishop in front of Barracks 74



Soldiers in back of Barracks 74



Snow detail on red brick pathway in front of barracks on Parade Ground

Photos courtesy of NPS/Gateway NRA

Photos donated by Mr. Bishop

Editor's notes in parenthesis ()

Tom Hoffman: We're standing in front of the Sandy Hook Museum. Today is Saturday August 25, 1979 and I have a veteran come in and introduce himself and I'd like to introduce him to you now. It's Mr. John Bishop who was with Battery E of the 52 Coast Artillery. And we are talking about the time he spent here in the late 1930's in the United States Army stationed at Fort Hancock. And we were just talking about a duty right here at the old Post Stockade (Building 28), right John?

JB: Right.

TH: I'm sure you remember it very well. You pulled guard duty right here. What did you do exactly?

JB: Well, when we first came on Guard Duty, Post #1, he would be here along the edge of the road, on the walk. He would walk from one end of the Guard Headquarters, on the walk, to the other end. He would walk forward, look forward and then he would make a left turn, like this, he would look straight out then make another left turn, pause for a second, then walk to the other end. And that we did for two hours, each one on #1 Guard Duty.

TH: MmmHm. This is the sidewalk right here by the road.

JB: Right. Then in the evenings, after 6 o'clock in the evening, we would do the same thing on the porch at the Guardhouse or when the weather would be bad, rain, snow, hail, on the Post anytime during the day or night.

TH: And this would go on for 24 hours? Even during the morning hours too?

JB: Yes. Each guard would have his two hour duty. They would walk two hours. Then he would be relieved and there would be another guard who would walk two hours, he'd be relieved and another guard would walk two hours and then you would come on and do your two hours and that would be the 24 hours. You went on Guard Duty, about I think it was 11:30 am in the morning and then we'd finish up the following morning at 11:30am.

TH: What was your uniform classified as?

JB: It was like a dress uniform. At that time, we were wearing when I first came here at the Post, we were wearing breeches and boots and jacket. The jacket was something we always wore at that time regardless of how hot or cold the weather was, we always had to wear that jacket. And we'd either be doing duty with either a rifle or a forty-five caliber pistol.

TH: What was your rifle at that time? What issue was that?

JB: It was .30-06 U.S. rifle. A lot of people referred to it as a U.S. Army rifle, but it wasn't only used by the Army. It was used by the Navy, Coast Guard and other branches of the service.

TH: You know, walking right out here on this Guard post you probably had to look sharp because you were right across the street from the Post Headquarters.

JB: Oh, yeah. That was one of the things. We had to watch for the Commanding Officer when he came out of his quarters. That was one thing. And whenever we saw him coming out of his quarters we would have to say Corporal of the Guard turn out the Guard. And if the Commanding Officer didn't want the Guard, he would just give us a salute and we would just never mind the Guard. Or if it was the Officer of the Day, would have to do the same thing.

TH: You were mentioning that when you were on Guard Duty that when you had that time off you could actually sleep in the large room right here inside the museum?

JB: We actually stayed in that room. That is where we had to sleep during that twenty-four hours that we were on duty. We were kept there at all time during that twenty-four hours. The only person that didn't have to sleep there were the two guys that were lucky enough to be made the Commanding Officer's Orderlies or the Adjutant's Orderlies. They would be in that quarters there to run errands for the Commanding Officer's.

TH: In the Headquarters building?

JB: Right.

TH: Where would you eat? Twenty-four hours was a long time. Was the food brought to you?

JB: No, we'd go back to our own Battery.

TH: To the Mess Hall.

JB: And also the prisoners would be taken, I believe it was every month they would switch from one company to another. Like E Battery would feed them like one month. Then C Battery would feed them another month, and so on.

TH: You were telling me a funny story. Would you mind telling me again, about the soldier running in and waking you up?

JB: Oh, yeah, he was up at one end of the Post somewhere and I think he was in the Sergeants Quarters. He was supposed to be up there playing cards instead of walking his Post and the Officer of the Day was looking for him. And he came running in. It was just about 9:30 or just before 10:00 at night, I would say about that hour. I was sound asleep on my bunk and it was my turn to go out next but he came running in and he yanked me off the bed. I didn't know what it was all about. I was still in a fog. I wasn't quite awake yet. Anyway, the Officer of the Day came in and after that I don't know what happened but I did have to go out on Post to take his place. I had to get out there a little earlier. I can imagine, though(laughter) could imagine what happened.

TH: Also about the bunk arrangement. You said they were just the single bunks around the room?

JB: Single bunks. I'm pretty sure they were just single bunks.

TH: And I guess you had a rifle rack in the middle there?

JB: Yes there was a rifle rack in the middle. The guns were locked. They were locked by the Corporal. They had a special rack. They were made out of steel. And I think on the top where the ring went around and that ring moved when you rifle was put in the rack with the butt down and the barrel up. The barrel would fit in a little slot and then there would be a big ring that would turn. I forget how many rifles would fit in a rack. There was quite a few, I'd say somewhere around 10 -20 rifles, roughly. And then that ring would be turned and a lock would be put onto it. Nobody could touch them rifles until the Corporal opened that rack again. And the pistols, also, the .45s if you were carrying a .45, if I can remember it right, I think they had a slot in the top of the rifle rack where you could put them in there, also.

TH: So it all fit together, rifles and pistols. I guess....

JB: Yeah. And talking about the rifles, we used to do a lot of Guard Duty with just our pistols. Because that was really our main weapon, a .45, and being Artillery we couldn't be walking around with a bunch of rifles in our hands neither because we had to have our hands free for other things. We were doing Guard Duty with pistols for awhile until the

Commanding Officer caught one of the guys walking down the Officers' Row with his hands in his pocket and from then on he said, "Well, I'll give you something to hang on to keep your hands out of your pocket." From then on we were carrying rifles.

TH: I guess there were many a time here, especially in the winter, it must have been awful cold when you walked guard duty.

JB: Very cold, very cold in the wintertime, windy and cold. And we had our other things to put up with. In the summertime, we had our problems with the mosquitoes here.

TH: Ah, right.

JB: We used to wear mosquito nets.

TH: Really?

JB: Yeah.. In fact, while I've been walking around here today in broad daylight, I was attacked by two mosquitoes. (laughter)

TH: That brought back memories, right? (laughter)

JB: It sure did. (laughter)

TH: Let's just walk a walk down here. Were there soldiers about? If you pulled Guard Duty, would there be soldiers walking around here? Was it very active?

JB: They would be all over. They would be moving around. During regular hours they would be on their duties. They would maybe be over shoveling coal down into the Officers' Quarters over there. Or maybe they would be down to the Maintenance Shop doing some work around the Machine Shop like moving machinery. Or maybe they'd be down to the Officers' Club doing a little work down around there. But most of the activity would be around in the evenings then you would find most of them going back and forth to the Theater near the end of the Post up here. There was always plenty of activity around here. There were always soldiers around the Post doing something. And of course, your big Parade Ground you see here, all of that grass was cut by prisoners. You'd take your prisoners out there. You'd have four of them, because I've done it myself with the prisoners. There would be four prisoners and in them days they used hand mowers. And this Parade Ground would be mowed by them four prisoners. And you'd be on Guard watching them so they wouldn't do anything they shouldn't do, like try to get away, which very seldom would ever happen. But they would line up and one guy would go ahead and another one would take a piece, lets say to the left of him, the other guy to the left of him. You'd be surprised how much mowing they could do that way. That's the way we done it.

TH: I noticed in the large picture that you had that there were goal posts out there. Was that the Fort Hancock Army Football Team or was that just for recreation?

JB: That was the Fort Hancock Army Football Team. They had a regular team here. They had it made up of ones from the Post who wanted to get in on it. And we had a ball field. They played ball here and things like that.

TH: To your memories, recollections, did you have a good team? Did they play other Forts?

JB: They played Fort Monmouth, I know, and other than that, I never paid too much attention to the football teams and the baseball teams, because I had my little things that I liked to do, like go to Asbury Park on pass and things like that. But I know we played Fort Monmouth and Fort Monmouth came in and played us. But if they traveled to these other Posts, I'm not too sure of that. But I'm pretty sure they must have done it. They must have done it because they wouldn't just be playing Fort Monmouth all the time.

TH: We're passing one of the enlisted barracks right here I believe this is (Building) 25 and you were all the way down at the other end at 74. Would you know who was occupying these? Was it other batteries of the 52nd?

JB: I believe this first building right here, I believe this one here was the Quartermaster because the day I came in here on July 1, 1937 and I got here approximately six o'clock at night after chow time, but I was taken into the Mess Hall right there.

TH: Right there.

JB: They gave me a meal. A couple of fried eggs in a hurry and some potatoes thrown in. In other words, it was a breakfast food for supper. And then I was taken over into the quarters there and I was so tired from the activities through the whole day that I just laid down on a bunk and I passed out with my clothes and all on and I don't remember anything until later on that night when some guy came in and did a little hollering and yelling, you know, I guess drinking just a little bit too much. That was my first experience in the service.

TH: Were you just out of boot camp, or

JB: No. I was here, I enlisted and this was the Post they sent me to. I wanted Artillery. I wanted to get into the Coast Artillery. I don't know why, but I just had a buddy of mine at one time that I worked with. He told me he was in the Coast Artillery in Panama. And I just decided I wanted Coast Artillery although I didn't even know what it was all about. (laughter) But I just decided that's what I wanted. The recruiter tried to talk me into going into the Infantry at Plattsburgh Barracks (NY). And he tried to talk me into going into the Field Artillery at Madison Barracks (NY). But I said, "No, if you didn't have anything that I want, just forget about it." But he didn't want to lose a customer so he told me, "Well I'll tell you what, maybe we do have an opening down at Fort Hancock." So I said, "Where is that?" He said, "Down in south Jersey." I said, "Okay." He looked in a book. As far as I'm concerned, it could have been the Sears Roebuck catalog. He

says, "Oh yes, we have one opening left." So this is where I ended up, down here at Fort Hancock.

TH: We're right by the Mess Hall where you got your first Army meal.

JB: I'm pretty sure this is where I got my first Army meal. Right here at this Mess Hall here.

TH: Yeah, that's (Building) 58.

JB: Then I was put up for the remainder of the night, in the barracks, across from the Mess Hall, I think its Building 25. Then the following morning I was sent over to Headquarters and from then on they made out my papers and everything and told me I would be with Battery E (52nd Coast Artillery).

TH: You actually took your oath and everything over

JB: No, no, that was all done at Newark (NJ).

TH: I see.

JB: In my case it was done at Newark. In them days when a person enlisted, you had to enlist within your Corps area. That's why you should be able to find some of us veterans around New York, New Jersey, or Pennsylvania.

TH: We do.

JB: We were in what they call the Second Corps area. The Second Corps area their headquarters was at...

TH: Governors Island (NY).

JB: Governors Island, right. But if you were going overseas, you wanted to go to Panama or the Hawaiian Islands, then you would be shipped to Fort Slocum (NY). But then you would have to wait there to be transferred over to where you were originally going. Now, we had a lot of soldiers that came into this Post because they got tired of waiting over there to go to Panama, the Hawaiian Islands or the Philippines, wherever they wanted to go to. But if anybody was staying in the States, they had to stay in New York, New Jersey or Pennsylvania. Now with me, I enlisted in New York State, that is, I lived in New York State, but I had to go into Newark to enlist. First I went to Patterson (NJ), that's where I went first, Patterson. There the recruiter took my name and everything like that and explained to me what I had to do. Then I had to go back and get papers, my birth certificate and get a good record from friends of mine that knew me, police chiefs and so forth that everything was clean. After that, I took that into Patterson. They checked it out. Then they sent me to Newark. That's where we got our physical, we got

sworn in. And then from there they gave us a train ticket. We came down on a train. I don't know what this railroad was called ...

TH: Jersey Central.

JB: Jersey Central, right. And we, the train at that time came right on down through Atlantic Highlands, the Highlands. I remember coming down along the bay there. We got off at the station (Highland Beach) which at that time was located right outside of the Gate. But the station, today, is gone.

TH: Yeah, it's all gone now.

JB: Then on my way in, the Gate was just up a little ways from us. Which they don't have there today like it originally was.

TH: We do have a picture of it, the original gate.

JB: I have a lot of them pictures in my book. Then, at the Gate, another funny thing, I didn't even know where I was at. All I knew I was going to a Post down in South Jersey. Not knowing too much about South Jersey, I didn't even remember if the guy told me it was Fort Hancock, but if he did I wasn't paying no attention. So I told the MP (military police) at the Gate that I was going to be staying here overnight and I was going to be shipped to South Jersey in the morning. He said, "No. You're here at Fort Hancock." He said, "This is it. You'll probably be here for the next three years." So, then a car was coming in. They didn't have too many cars going in and out at the time, so he sent me in with one of the guys that was driving the car which I don't remember whether it was a soldier, or who he was, but then he was told to drop me off at the Headquarters, so I assume he must have been a soldier. 'Cause a soldier didn't have to always be in uniform. They could wear the civilian clothes at times if they were going off the Post. They could wear civilian clothes off the Post.

TH: How did you find adjusting to Army life? Was it easy for you?

JB: Well, no. I was always a home boy. I was never one to roam or anything like that. My Mother and Father were both living. I had two Brothers, a Sister and we were all a pretty close family. But somehow, this was when the old timers can remember, what we called Depression days. Money was hard and tight. Jobs were hard to come by. Although I had some jobs, the last job I had didn't appeal to me too well. So after I gave up that job and after setting around for awhile and not knowing what to do with myself, I decided I would go into the service. But to adjust to the Army life, it took a little time. I have to give a lot of credit to Sergeant Carlisle. God bless the man. I don't know if he is around yet today, but I doubt it very much. He was one of the old time soldiers from World War I. One day he got me aside and he told me, he said, "John, I'm gonna tell you something." He said, "You enlisted in this Army." He said, "You come in on your own." He said, "Nobody pushed you in. Nobody told you had to go in or anything." He said, "You enlisted." He said, "Now I'm gonna tell you one thing." He said, "Don't try

to make the Army to suit you.” He said, “Because the Army is too big.” He said, “You adjust yourself so that you will suit the Army.” So I begin to take his advice. Today I’m glad of it. Before I was discharged, I was discharged as a sergeant. So that was a big jump from private.

TH: Oh yes.

JB: So, I would give Sergeant Carlisle, I think that’s the way you pronounce it, a lot of credit, because I think he helped me out in the beginning.

TH: Yeah, he was a career soldier. He knew the Army.

JB: Right, right.

TH: I’m interested in knowing like, you reported right here, did they give you the Basic Training right here? You know, at Fort Hancock?

JB: This is Building 22. Right here we are standing in front of, correct?

TH: Yes that’s Building 22.

JB: All right. When we first come here for Battery E, I was in Building 22 and we got our Basic Training right here. We didn’t have too many men at the time. We might have had about nineteen-twenty men at the time because we were not being shipped nowhere else at the time. Whatever men came in here new they would get their training right here at the Post and they would be with the Post.

TH: Right here. Yeah.

JB: Okay. Here’s where we used to do our drilling. We would be in the building, this was our barracks. But then later on when we returned to duty, they gave us six weeks of drill. All types of drill, pitching tents, whatever you had to know. Then after that, you was turned to duty. I’ll tell you a funny story that happened to me. Like I say every once in a while, I’d goof off a little bit. I was in this building until after sometime after I had my Recruit Drill, then I was transferred over to Building 74 because when they would get men out of 74, they pulled them out of here to make room for the new recruits. But I’ll never forget the first day I was turned to duty. We were out here in the morning and the Sergeant, I won’t bother to try to think of his name now, but I could think of it if I had a little time. He says, okay, John, you and you and couple of other guys, youse return to duty right now. What I want you to do is youse go in now and this afternoon you’ll return to regular fatigue duty. When they refer to fatigue duty they mean you go out and work with a group somewhere. So, where I was sent to, I don’t know. I could have went down to the Machine Shop or the Maintenance Shop, somewhere. But I was told by the Sergeant to be sure to tell them to let me off early so that I could be back at the barracks early enough so that I could be washed, dressed, showered, and everything to be ready for that retreat parade, because it was a very important parade. So, I got into the barracks

real early. I got shaved, showered, dressed and all ready to go and the other guys, the regular guys that had been on duty they weren't even there yet. So, I figured well, they are just coming in now. I got plenty of time so I laid down on my bunk and the next thing I know, I must have fell into a dead sleep and pretty soon I heard music waking me up. I thought, "What in the world is going on." And when I opened up my eyes there's nobody around. I'm laying on the bunk. There is nobody around. So I run over to the window and I looked out and here's my Battery E marching forward, passing in review in front of the Commanding Officer and the other officers out there. Don't you think I didn't get chewed out for that deal. Because the next day the Sergeant wanted to know what happened. So, I told him. And the other guys didn't wake me up because they thought I was still on Recruit Drill, still taking my training yet. They didn't know that I'd been turned to duty. So, that was one of my first goof offs here. Only one of them, there were a few but they were all little minor things, nothing serious, just little things, like maybe not getting back on Post on time a little late at night. Maybe not getting back until the next day.

TH: How would a day begin? You know if there was an average day here at the Post how would it begin? Like getting up....

JB: Well, the first thing you'd here, you'd hear the bugle blowing. I forget now what the hours were. I'm a little bit lost for the times now. But we'd get up, we'd get dressed, we'd run downstairs. We'd have just our regular uniform on, we'd have our shirt, pants, whatever the weather would be. If it was a cold winter time, we'd have our overcoats on too. We'd fall out as we say it, in front of the barracks. Our roll call would be made to make sure everybody was present and accounted for. Then we'd go back into our barracks and then things would start rolling. We'd run downstairs in the basement. That's where we'd wash up, clean up, and so on. Then we'd go back upstairs again and get a little better dressed up, a shirt and stuff on. Then, I'm not sure, but I believe we had to wear a tie, even to eat. I'm almost positive we had to have our tie on to eat. Then we'd wait, more or less, in the hallway or in our Recreation Room what we called the Day Room. I'll never forget we knew about when the door would gonna be opened for us to come into the Mess Hall, because in them days they had nothing but radios and they always played *the Milkman's Matinee* and I think that used to come on around seven o'clock in the morning. Maybe somebody can remember exactly what hour, I don't, myself. But every time I hear that *Milkman's Matinee*, I always think of chow time, breakfast chow time, and the 52nd Coast Artillery. I always think of that. But that would be it. And after we would eat, we'd fall out in front of the building, right here in front of the building.

TH: This is the west side of the building right here? On the sidewalk here?

JB: Facing toward the Parade Ground we'd line up right here on the sidewalk and then it would be more or less would be some type of a drill, nothing too big or anything. We'd just go out and march around the field or something like that, but it would all be routine stuff. And then it all depends on the season and so on. If it was a real bad cold days or something, we wouldn't do that, we'd be in our barracks. We'd be studying our gunnery

stuff, like I was showing you in the manuals in the Museum. We'd be studying all of that in the winter time getting ready for spring and summer firing practice. But if it was summer time or even at a drill at a certain hour, we would complete that and we'd go out in the morning for our few hours of cleaning up or if it was the winter time we'd be shoveling snow on the walks here or cleaning up around the Officers' Quarters, or something. Oh, and talking about the Officers' Quarters, another routine we had to do, like clockwork, a group of men would be sent through the Officers' Quarters along the front and back and we would be cleaning up anything that maybe would be thrown around. In them days, it was never stuff like it is today. It maybe a cigarette butt, a match pack, because there were very few cigarette lighters in them days, but plenty of match packs. But somebody would get careless and throw something away. And we'd have to go through there and pick all that up. But now, most of it would be cigarette butts. In them days, we did what was called field strip the cigarette. The way we did that in them days, we didn't have cork tips or filter tips or anything like that it was just a plain cigarette and any butts we picked up we would just break the paper and sprinkle the tobacco on the ground, rolled the paper up in a little ball and stick it in our pocket or throw that back on the ground where it wouldn't be seen.

TH: Recycle it.

JB: Right, almost recycle, because nature would take that back. There was nothing like they have today, like cotton filters, and so on, nothing like that. That would be one thing. Then we'd come back, I think around eleven o'clock or so from wherever work we were at wherever we would be located. We'd be back in time to have our lunch. We'd have our noon hour lunch. Then around one o'clock we'd fall out again, line up. It seemed like we spent 95% of our life in the Army being in a line. Lining up for something. The other 5% was for our own, whatever we wanted to do. Then after lunch, like I say, we'd line up, then we'd also, go back out to work again if it was during the work detail time. We'd go out and do odds and ends, whatever they had for us to do. Then at night, for supertime we'd come back for supper, the after supper it would more or less be our own time. We could do what we wanted. On our free time we could pick up our pass, go out to town, or wherever we wanted to go. My hang out was mostly Asbury Park.

TH: Asbury Park? What was your social entertainment? Movies? Or just going to a bar?

JB: Well, if I stayed on the Post, like I said, we didn't bother going out every night. Sometimes we'd stay on the Post for weeks at a time. If we stayed on the Post, we most generally went to the movies. I did anyway. As far as the bars, I didn't drink, really, at that time. And I never wanted to bother with it on the Post, you know. So, I'd say my time was taken up in the movies.

TH: How much was it at that time, to go to a movie back then?

JB: Well, we used to have what they called, Canteen tickets. I think we went up and we got the Canteen tickets. We never handled money until pay day. If you wanted Canteen

tickets, I believe if I remember right, we went up to the Post Exchange (PX), got the Canteen tickets and your name was put down on the sheet. I think at that time you'd get like twenty tickets for a dollar or ten tickets. I forget now just what it was. And then, these tickets, each time you went to the movies you'd give them a ticket at the movies. But then when it came payday, now there was another thing that I could say in a joking way they ripped me off in a little way when I enlisted, they told me I'd be making \$21 dollars a month. Now, that wasn't true I didn't make \$21 dollars a month because when you went up to get your pay, when you went in on payday, which would be the last day of the month unless it fell on a Sunday or Saturday, you would get your pay. But when you walked up you'd get \$20.75. Then you'd wonder what about that quarter? What happened to that quarter? Well, the quarter went to what they called the Old Soldiers Home in them days. That was before World War II and they had what was called the Old Soldiers Home. We were paying to support the Old Soldiers Home which maybe some day, might even help me, I'm not sure. That's what the quarter was for. Then as you went down the line, you had to pay for everything else. You paid, I think like two dollars a month for your laundry, you paid anything you might have had done at the tailor shop, which would be like having your pants cleaned and pressed, your shirts cleaned and pressed, and so on because your uniforms had to be done at the tailor shop. Your other stuff like, your underwear, socks, handkerchiefs, bed linen, sheets, blankets, they went out to a laundry. But your uniform had to go to a tailor because they had to be dry cleaned and they had to be pressed at all times. Nice and neat and clean.

TH: Was the tailor out here? Would that be Max Duze?

JB: In fact, yeah I think that was his name. The tailor shop was out here in the back. The building is now abandoned.

TH: Building 77.

JB: I forget the number of it. In fact, his home, was right in this area somewhere right here behind the building.

TH: His sons have come back and told me they used to live right across the street.

JB: I don't remember his sons but I knew he had a daughter. I didn't remember his sons but I don't know if that was his oldest daughter or not because I got acquainted with her when I used to go home on pass. Sometimes I used to come back by train. I'd get down to Newark from a train in Suffern, New York, I'd get in around the Newark area and get the train down to Highlands and sometimes I'd meet his daughter coming down. We'd sit and talk the rest of the way in. Yeah, I'd forgotten his name, but he was our tailor.

TH: Yes. It's Max Duze, because a lot of veterans, like yourself, have come back and always talked about the tailor and named him. Then his sons came back. And the house used to stand over there.

JB: Well, isn't that the house right here in the back standing on the hill yet, or did they take it out?

TH: That's still standing but the sons said it was over ...

JB: I thought it was too. That's what fooled me when I came in again today.

TH: The brick steps are still over there.

JB: I was looking and I said it seems to me that his house was over this way but now forty-two years makes a big difference. Your memory kinda drifts a little bit. I said, "Maybe that building I'm looking at there by these wooden buildings".... I said, "No. That couldn't be his building." But now that you mention it, I do believe that his house was set back in here much further. I was telling Elaine something when I was down here. I was telling here when I came down here after the War with my ex-fire chief who transferred from Picatinny Arsenal (NJ) to Fort Hancock for awhile. He was fire chief here. So, I come down and visit him because that was, I think the last time I had a good look at this Post just before I started coming in on these visits. And he was taking me around. I told Elaine I thought they had, what she was telling me that (Building) 74 used to be a hospital. I had a little trouble convincing her that it was not originally a hospital but I found out from my Fire Chief that this was the hospital for awhile in World War II.

TH: An annex in World War II.

JB: I seen these white buildings here and for some reason I got confused. I was thinking in my mind that that was a ramp going from there to over there.

TH: There used to be a ramp right in here. Right where we're standing.

JB: Then I am right. There was a ramp. When I began to see these buildings when I recently began coming back again, I said I seen these long buildings here and I thought that was a ramp. Then I'm right there was a ramp here.

TH: The Army has it in the historic records that there was a ramp, a covered way, especially for men in wheelchairs. Especially when it was raining or it was snowy, they would have a covered access right from Building 74 over to the old hospital.

JB: Right. But to me it looked like it came from right up on the top of the building. That's why I looked up today at that window. I thought they broke a big door up there.

TH: Maybe they did.

JB: No, there's not. No, it's original. But like you say, it's probably just exactly how they had it, coming from there out. And I don't remember that being a closed in porch like it is now. The top part, I don't remember if it had a railing or stuff like that because that's where we used to have to take a little drill practice in the wintertime, back on that

top porch. Occasionally we would have a little drill, especially in bad weather. And when the ROTC Officers, the National Guard Officers come in, they would take over and drill us a little bit. If it was rainy weather they would still have to get their time in so they would take us up there and give us a little practice.

TH: You'd be going through the Manual of Arms?

JB: Yeah, Manual of Arms, things like that.

TH: When you used to come out in the morning and have a short drill, who was usually in charge? Would it be a sergeant?

JB: It would be, the whole thing would be your first sergeant, your captain, your lieutenant. The battery commanders, we called it would be the captain, most generally they were captains, and you had your lieutenant and you had like a second lieutenant, they would be there. Then it go on into the first sergeant, I'm pretty sure the first sergeant would be in on it too. Then your sergeants and your corporals, because you had two platoons. You had first and second platoon. And each one of them they had their sergeants and they had they guidons that they called it. They had their standard barriers the guys that would carry the flags and so on.

TH: I asked you about your time, how you spent your own time, because in this day and age there's TVs, there's radios, there's stereos, people have a lot more cars today. They hop in their cars and they get away from the house.

JB: Let's sit down here on the bench.

TH: Yeah. I was just wondering, back in those days, as you put it, it was the Depression and most of the soldiers, I'm sure, on \$20.75 a month were more or less, stranded here. They had to stay on the Post or nearby. I was just wondering how you spent your time in an era before TV and cars and things and going out?

JB: You brought up a good subject. In fact, you got me back on the track that I was talking about. I was telling you about when we got paid. I got off on the tailor business and paying the different things. Now, I used to come out pretty good because I was close with the dollar. I was pretty close with the dollar. I always was and I guess today I, almost the same. But anyway, a lot of these guys, they would as soon as they got to the end of the line, you might as well say they lost their pants and everything because they wouldn't have anything. They would come out, I think we got paid up there at the YMCA or somewhere. I forget where we got paid, well, anyway one of them buildings up there we got paid in. We'd come out. All right, I'd have a few dollars but what we would do, our Day Room up here, we had a radio and we had a pool table. I never played pool. I never cared much for it. My sport actually was hunting and fishing and I still do it yet today, hunting and fishing. But of course, down here we couldn't do that. But some of these guys their lives was made up of playing pool and playing baseball, and so on. We would have our radio, no television, radio, pool table, and magazines to read.

Now talking about magazines, I'm gonna tell you a funny story. We had a guy here, in fact, I saw him when we got discharged he got transferred up to Fort Adams, Rhode Island when I got transferred up there and he got his thirty year discharge. But anyway, he was strictly GI and he knew the regulations and nobody could put anything over on him. Being he had so much time in the Army, you gotta respect your officers and sergeants and he did too, with respect. But if he thought he was right, he would let them know it. Now one day he had just come off of Guard Duty, and after you come off of Guard Duty at 11:30 am in the morning, the rest of the day was yours. So, he was setting in the Day Room reading the paper. Now the paper was paid for by the money that was collected through playing pool. So, we knew that belonged to the Day Room. It belonged to you or I or anyone else that was with this outfit. But the first sergeant that came in, the guys name was Bower or Bowers. The guy says, "Private, the Captain" was Hennessey. He said, "Bowers, the Captain would like to look at that paper." So Bowers says, "Well you tell the Captain that this paper belongs to the Day Room and when I get done reading it if no one else in here wants it, he can have it, and not before." And they couldn't do anything with the guy 'cause he was in his rights. It was his paper. He couldn't take it away from him. Even though he was a captain he couldn't demand it. Another time the guy was made corporal, the same guy. He was made corporal from private. He was always getting busted for some reason but they got him up to corporal again. One day he fell out here for inspection. The Captain looked him over and said, "Bower, didn't I make you a corporal about two weeks ago?" He said, "Yes, you did Captain." He said, "Well then how come you are still wearing your private stripes? Why don't you have your corporal stripes on by now?" He said, "Because you never issued them to me." He was really strictly GI. Usually if we went to private or something we'd run as fast as we could to the tailor shop and let the tailor put them on. But this guy wouldn't. He was strictly GI. He wanted to get them directly from the Supply Room. So the Captain looked at the Supply Sergeant and said, "Sergeant, see that this man gets his corporal stripes." And he said, "Private, next time I inspect you I want those corporal stripes on." He said, "All right Captain. They'll be on as long as this guy sees that I get them."

TH: That's holding out.

JB: Yeah, we had some real guys here, I'm telling ya.

TH: Were you every really able to get, outside of fatigue detail and cleaning up around Officers' Row were you ever detailed to go over there for any reason or was that Officer territory?

JB: No. No, I'll tell you what, we never went over there just to walk around. Like I showed you the pictures I took of the cannons. That was all right. You wouldn't want to parade up and down around that area and they never came over around here. In fact, I don't every think while I was here I ever saw an Officer's wife or children cause they more or less, stayed by themselves. But we would have to go over there. I'll tell you another story. We had two guys over there shoveling coal one day. Like I say, they'd bring it up in the truck, dump it outside, and we'd have to shovel it down in the building.

Now, I don't know if they were doing it for the Commanding Officer, or for who it was but they really worked hard. Well, the Commanding Officer was so pleased. He may have looked out the window and saw them working in the area. He called up I don't know if he asked them what Company they were from, or what, but he called up and got those two guys a 3 day pass. They worked hard and deserved it. That's very odd to have anything like that happen. And the guy, I was telling you about #1 (Guard Post) that we used to have to walk. Well, this other guy, he put all the military into him that he possibly could put into him. He'd go up and make that stop like I told you, look, snap around, snap his shoes together, make a turn. He done that steady for two hours every time he was on duty. And one day, I guess that one particular day, the Commanding Officer must have looked out his window at Headquarters and was watching him and he called up and told them, when that guy goes off duty, see that he gets an extra days pass. Every once in awhile, you come up with something. I was Commanding Officer's Orderly a few times. You made that when you went on Guard Duty. How they picked you, you went up there, then the Officer of the Day, he would walk up and down. There'd be two ranks. In them days the Squads, as they called them, was made up of two ranks. Today, it's a different routine. They changed that also when I was in the Army. They done a lot of changing when I got in the Army. I don't know why. They changed the uniform. They shot the mules and horses here, they changed the way we drilled and everything. But I seen a lot of changes the little while I was in the service. But, anyway, what I was gonna say, I got a little bit off the track. Getting back to the Guard stuff. Now the Officer of the Day, could be a lieutenant could be a captain, whoever it was he'd walk up and down and look for the neatest, cleanest guy they had there in that group and he'd pick that guy and you'd be the Commanding Officer's Orderly, you'd be the Adjutant's Orderly, that's the way it would be. Every once in awhile you'd get some guy who thought he was just as good as the other guy. The officer might see the two guys and he might say I don't know which of you two guys I might take. So they might start a little challenge. Everything you owned you had to have your number on, you know, your serial number on it. Even your handkerchiefs and everything. So they might challenge a guy, I'd like to know if he has his serial number on his handkerchief or does he have his serial number inside of his web belt, you know, and things like that. Anything to get that job of being the orderly for one of the Officers over there.

TH: The Parade Ground is famous for drilling, and all, but did you ever have any type of ceremonies here? Or parades, you know, pass and review?

JB: We had what they called Retreat Parades. I think that was on Thursday nights. We'd have our Retreat Parades. Everybody would turn out. In fact, Battery E, Battery C, Quartermaster, everybody would turn out. And the Commanding Officer and all the Officers would be out there for the Retreat Parade. In fact, they used to let people come in from the outside to watch the Retreat Parade, because it was a great thing.

TH: You mean the general public could come in?

JB: Oh yeah, they could come in and watch, they'd let them in. This is another thing. It's a little bit sad to talk about it. We did have two of our men, they were both sergeants,

I'm sure they were sergeants, I won't mention no names or anything, but they committed suicide. And they had the Guard, or whatever, the firing squad rather, they had everything right out here on the Parade Ground before they were taken and buried. That was quite a thing.

TH: There were sad occasions as well as happy ones here.

JB: Well, yeah. One of those pictures I showed you that had me here, is where I was at. I think they were putting these concrete things in at the time.

TH: This driveway right here.

JB: I got myself a little extra duty cleaning up around here. This used to be where they dumped the coal because at that time I think the cooks used to have to use coal stoves to cook on. I believe it was soft coal, at that, not hard coal. We'd have to come out with the buckets, load them up with coal and bring it in for cooking and put it on the stove and that's what they used for cooking. But the cook stoves in those days weren't like the ones you see in the home. They were heavy, monstrous, thick heavy iron stoves.

TH: John, by the way, there's the house you're thinking of. That little brick house. There you could see the step there that leads nowhere. That's where the Duze house was, right there.

JB: Oh that's where it was. Oh, I see. Well, thanks a lot. You got me straightened out on that anyway. Now talking about that I'll tell you another funny thing that happened. When I come in here, you know, I was walking around one day back out there through the woods. I'm breaking my way through the brush, it wasn't too bad, and all at once I come out on what they called the "greens". Anybody that plays golf, or knows anything about golf, knows what I'm talking about, I find these greens. I looked around and I don't see no fairways. I thought, "What in the world was going on here." It looks like they were trying to build a golf course here. Then I found out later that the WPA was supposed to put golf courses out here for the officers. But they never finished it. They built the greens first before they built the fairways but they never finished the job. Now, this was Battery E, this was my Battery. And right here is where the kitchen used to be.

TH: This is the south side of Building 74 here.

JB: Just use a little imagination and split this building right here in half. This section over here was Battery E and that section was Battery C. Downstairs here was your kitchen and up in that area right in there was your dining room. And all down through that section there was your Squad Rooms where we slept.

TH: On the second floor?

JB: On the second floor. These little rooms over here that heads off toward part of C Battery there, that was where some Sergeants Rooms were, where some of your unmarried sergeants stayed in there.

TH: That's the west side of the building, second floor.

JB: I guess that's what you'd call it. Right down below was the Day Room, where the Day Room was, that section there. That's where we sat, we read, or listened to the radio, or played pool, whatever, you know. I guess they might of had some little things you could do, play checkers or something but I don't recall all of that myself. The corporals slept with the men, but the sergeants they didn't. If they were unmarried sergeants, they had little rooms, more of less, to themselves. They didn't more or less associate right in with the men. When it came to drill and parade, and stuff like that they were right there. But when it come to sleeping, buddy-buddy, that's where they draw the line.

TH: Sergeants were by themselves.

JB: Sergeants were by themselves, right.

TH: Was this a drive in area what is today now

JB: This was an area where they brought in... that other area around in back where there is a little door I told ya, where they put the coal, that's where they used to bring in the supplies. Like they would bring the garbage cans out here at the end of the night. The garbage would be brought out this door. You'd come out this way to get your coal, and stuff, cause they wouldn't let you go out that other door, I don't know why. Right over here about where that telephone pole is, is what would be called garbage racks. They had these racks, screened in and everything, we had to keep our garbage cans setting in there. That's more or less to keep the flies and stuff away. Then later, like the next day the stuff would be picked up and taken down to the dump. Later on, I can tell you about the dump. That's a little interesting too. It doesn't sound like it is, but it is interesting. Now another thing that I suggested, I'm not trying to hang any laurels on myself or anything, but like I say I came in on July 1st and it was in the summer time and I was a very funny eater. If something didn't look right to me, I wouldn't eat it. Yet today, I'm the same way. I don't know why. One thing my Mother said to me was, "If you go in the Army, I'm afraid you're gonna starve cause they'll probably give you stuff that you won't wanna eat." Like beans for instance, I never eat beans yet to this day. But when I went on KP (kitchen police) after I got turned to duty, I went on KP this morning. But prior to that I was still taking recruit instructions. I would go in and eat, but I wouldn't go no further than the dining room and come out and put our dishes on the table, scrape off the scraps and put our dishes on the bench in there and the KP's would wash them and so on. Now, I never paid much attention what was going on in the kitchen until one morning I was put on KP for my first time. I walked into the kitchen and I saw these two garbage cans. I believe there was two of them there. And they were brand new garbage cans, them days they had no plastic, they were corrugated metal garbage cans and I wondered why they were in the middle of the floor because I knew where we threw our garbage

was in the other garbage cans at the end of the bench. So, I go over and look and there's big chunks of ice in there floating around and they had soft drinks in there. And I thought, "My God, you mean they were giving us soft drinks out of garbage cans?" It was just a thought, because the garbage cans were actually new. And there for awhile it took me a little while to get in the habit of drinking soda again.

TH: Right, yeah.

JB: But getting back to what I was gonna tell ya, every night, some nights there would be a good half a garbage can full of that soda. And every night like clockwork, whenever it was left we'd throw it down in the sink. One day I said to the cook, "You know it's a shame to waste all this soda." I said, "Why can't we take it out and set it on the porch." I said, "The guys out there playing baseball, or whatever they are doing even me or anybody else, if they get a little thirsty and might want a drink, they can come here and drink that. It's a shame to waste it." He said, "You know, you got a good idea there." He must have talked to the Mess Sergeant about or something and from then on we used to take the cans out here and set them on the porch and leave a little dipper and glasses and we used to drink that at night instead of throwing it down the sink. But that was another funny thing about the Army, to see that soda in garbage cans, and we were drinking it. But like I say, they were clean garbage cans and they weren't used for garbage. But it's just that the thought about what they would be used for.

TH: Right. How did you find Army chow, overall? Were there any special dishes?

JB: It was good. Let's face it, you can't expect to eat filet mignon and all of that all the time. Now, I can't tell you what days when we had good meals. But for breakfast we had our little half pints of milk. In them days, they came in bottles. They didn't have no paper containers. Your half pint of milk was sitting on your table. Now the tables were similar with benches, really, but you had chairs. In other words, you had a long table but you had your individual chairs, four on one side, four on the other, and one at each end. Usually the guy on one end being served generally would be a corporal sitting there, not always, because some of the corporals could sit at their own tables with the sergeants. But like for breakfast, we would have fried eggs, we would have potatoes, and we would have our milk. We'd have cereal. We didn't do too bad, all in all. The only time things would get a little rough as far as eating the food concerned, like on Saturdays they never could get a record of how many would be eating for dinner, because once the inspection was over with on a Saturday morning, some of these guys wouldn't even stay for dinner. I know I wouldn't. Like on a Saturday morning I'd go on pass and go home and come back on a Sunday night. Now the cook wouldn't know how many was going out so for dinner maybe he would have like corn bread and beans, something like that. Because whatever was left over, he would cook enough and there would always be a little more and whatever was leftover and they had to throw it away. There was no big money thrown out. They couldn't cook steak alright for supper time. They could look up and see how many passes got out. Let's just say there's 120 guys going in the Mess Hall to eat, let's just say 100. Alright let say there's 25 out they could figure out there's 75 people they gotta cook for. So they cook for 75 people and they might give you

something fairly good. But then when they knew you were going to be here at nights, like Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays they knew you'd be here at dinner time, you'd get a pretty good meal. You'd have your steak, you'd have your pork chops, I wouldn't say every day, but then there'd be times you'd have your liver and bacon. Then you'd have your beans and your corn bread and then once in awhile salmon. Now today, you buy a can of salmon, I don't do my shopping today, my wife does most of it, but I know salmon is outrageous. In them days, salmon was used as a fill in. In other words, I remember one time the meal went bad. They took some stuff out of the refrigerator and tried to make up a hash, but the stuff they used had gone sour or something and when it hit the heat it blew up like a great big loaf of bread or something and they had to throw it out. Then they had to run down stairs and open up the salmon out of the stock room and open it up and eat salmon. But the meals, like I say the meals were all in all, wasn't too bad. We had our good days and we had our bad. In other words, let's just say we ate. We always ate. Nobody was wanting for anything. And the stuff was put out there it wasn't served like, you get one pork chop, you get one pork chop, and so on. It was put out there on the platters and you took what you wanted. Of course, you tried not to make a hog out of yourself. A few would. That was it, you took what you wanted, eat what you had, and if you wanted to go back for seconds and it was there, you got it. And it depended on the mess sergeant too. Now, the mess sergeant, he had an allotment to work on. If he overdone his allotment by the end of the month, then things would start skimping a little bit. He had to be careful then what he fed us. Otherwise, if he done too good in the beginning, we were going to suffer for it in the end.

TH: You mentioned that when you came into the Army you found it to be a time of change. You mentioned that they were doing away with the mules and the horses. I know in the old Army it was run the old Army was run on mule power. Was it still like that and were they phasing it out at that time?

JB: We had our trucks here, but they were using the mules. The horses I don't know. I always said the horses were used for the officers and their ladies, as they called their wives, ladies. Talking about officers and their ladies I hope that if any officers hear this they don't feel bad about what I got to say. Anytime we had a dinner, like a Thanksgiving Dinner or a Christmas Dinner, like say our Battery, the officers of our Battery would be invited. But the way the sign would be put up on the bulletin board, it would say – for Thanksgiving Dinner, New Year's Dinner, or Christmas Dinner, whatever, they would have it up there worded officers and their ladies, sergeants and their wives. Now, they put a stop to that but I think they put a stop to that after I left the service. Because I think somewhere, somehow I found out that they didn't think it was right to refer to a sergeant's wife as just his wife, because they figured that one is just as good as the other just because the officer was an officer. In fact, maybe a little better in some cases. I don't know.

TH: Were they killing the mules? Because I noticed you had a picture of a skull in your scrapbook here.

JB: That's just a skull that I picked up. I don't know where it come from. But they did kill the mules while I was here. I think they had five horses and four mules or just vise-versa, I'm not sure. But they'd took them down. I showed the other girl that was taking me around one day. I showed her approximately where, we didn't get right up to it. I showed her approximately where they buried them animals. Now, what they done, they come down with what they called a clam shell, that's a piece of machinery that run on rails and it had a big scoop. It's not like the bucket loaders they have today and things like that. It just went down and the two things went together and pick that dirt up. And finally they dug a big hole in the ground, a big pit. Now, I was told, I'm gonna tell you something else about this area too, talking about them horses. Now, I heard that they took them animals down there and got them down in the pit. I imagine it was the MP's that had to do the work because they always did the odd things like that like watching the outside gates. But anyway, they shot them animals down there and I heard it was like a massacre. The mules were running around and being shot. There was no routine like somebody taking a pistol and putting it between the horses (and mules) eyes, drilling him and let him drop. I heard they had them all down there in one shot. If I'm wrong I hope that someone who is still around could correct me but that's the way I was told about it.

TH: I see.

JB: But that was all from that area down behind, whatever you call it, that Battery down in that area.

TH: Would that be Battery Granger? Or Battery Potter?

JB: Potter I think they called it. The real old one down in that area.

TH: The one that looks like a castle? Has the castle main entrance?

JB: Yeah, the old one with the iron gate and stuff. Back off in that area they used to have a pistol range down there. We never fired rifles here because they would travel too far. But we did have our pistol range with .45 pistols. We used to go down and do our practice right down there in that general area too. Going back to what I wanted to tell you about this area, when they were building these WPA buildings here, the mess halls.

TH: We're standing in front of (Building) 317, yeah.

JB: All right now right in this area, I didn't see it myself, one of my soldier friends, I wouldn't say he was my good buddy, he showed us some pictures that he took which I didn't know nothing about at the time. When they were digging for foundations and stuff, they dug up, I think it was five skeletons. I always thought it was seven, but I think it was five skeletons. They were all men except one. One was supposed to be a woman's skeleton, according to the way they got it figured out. And one was a child's skeleton. And he claimed they also found a pocket knife. But they can't figure out why they were buried there. What they done, the skeletons are still in this location yet because he told

me. He must have seen everything because he took pictures. In fact, somebody took his camera and took his picture of him holding one of the skulls and the bones were there.

TH: Right in the ground?

JB: Right on the ground, they took them up out of the ground. But then after they checked them out and everything they decided to rebury them back again. Where abouts they put them, right about here.

TH: But this is where the WPA buildings went up right here.

JB: Right. The WPA's were the ones that dug them up. They were working on them (buildings) and that's where at least one guy got killed that time when they were putting these buildings up, the roof collapsed, or something.

TH: Really?

JB: That's what that picture is all about that I showed you.

TH: Where that roof is just laying there?

JB: Yeah, where them guys are all gathered around. I didn't get down there to see that, but I heard about it. I got down there later on. After supper is when I probably got down there.

TH: You mean where they actually building these WPA's.

JB: They were building these WPA's. These were built when I was down here. They were building them at the time when I was here. Now, they put the skeletons back in the ground and reburied them. Now, they said they wondered, "Well, how did they get there?" Why were they there? Well somebody said well its possible – who that somebody, I don't know – somebody with authority or just somebody taking a guess, that they claimed that maybe years ago when the ocean came up in this area... but still and all the pocket knife is what got me puzzled. I don't know how many years ago they started with pocket knives. When the guy was referring to a pocket knife, I don't know if he meant the folding type, or what he did mean. He claimed they could have had a sickness on ship and people could have died and they could have brought them in. And I got to thinking, if that's true, why didn't they bury them at sea. Why waste all that time coming in with the bodies when generally they did bury them at sea. Then I thought that maybe there may be some reason. Then I got thinking after I began reading about this Lighthouse and these people come back here in the 1700's and I got to thinking, well, when the Lighthouse got built back in the middle 1700's, I figured that maybe it was someone from the Lighthouse, maybe it was a little graveyard or something, you know no transportation in them days

TH: Sure. The Keeper and his family used to live out here and if they died it was probably hard to get them moved out so they probably buried them right out here at the Hook. They were forgotten as the years went by.

JB: They're buried out there somewhere. I don't think I could pick the location out but they're right in and around these buildings. So any day if they ever go excavating around there, and you're still here, you want to tell them to be careful they're apt to hit a few skeletons there.

TH: By the way, could you recall your friend's last name who took pictures here? Or was it too long ago.

JB: No. I wouldn't know now. I couldn't pick him out on that ... he was not one of these close ones you know. He was just a guy, like I say, you have a hundred and twenty men you're living with, you never really got to know one hundred and twenty men. You know, you couldn't have one hundred and twenty men for buddies, because maybe some of these guys lived in Pennsylvania and they traveled home to Pennsylvania. My buddy lived in Patterson, not too far from my home and we could travel back and forth together. In them days, hitchhiking was quite the thing. In the end, I had a car and when I got transferred out of here. I used to keep the car out in the Highlands and everytime I went out to get it I had to be sure to get some gas because somebody would always rob the gas because in order to get your car in the Post, the car had to be insured. On \$20.75 a month you couldn't very well keep insurance on a car unless you was making more than that, so my car was kept out of the Post. Like I say, getting back to friends, now that's why that guy was a buddy of mine because he lived in Patterson and I knew Patterson and so on and he would ride up and down with me. When I didn't have the car, he used to hitchhike with me or if we hitchhiked up and down and we'd have something to say. I took him up to my home a few times. He was actually an orphan. He was living with his aunt, I guess his father and mother was dead. He was going to be a career man too. He reenlisted and made sergeant but that unfortunate thing had to happen in California.

TH: Yeah, accident.

JB: Yeah.

TH: By the way, you saw these buildings built here by the WPA, that's the Works Projects Administration? Do you know what they were for? Were they a camp of....

JB: They were for Mess Halls. They were Mess Halls. They were for National Guard or anybody coming in on the Post just temporarily for training.

TH: They used to camp down here because the 245th New York National Guard I had veterans from them they camped back here. They called it a "tent city".

JB: Now, I'll tell you another thing. Another thing happened here. Now they were firing mortars. Now what type of mortar they were, they weren't no artillery mortar.

Now, they could have been used firing just infantry mortars because I'm sure they weren't no artillery mortars. Every morning before we got up they'd be out here firing boom, boom, boom they seemed like they were in here some area. I don't even know exactly where. But you know, they had a hang fire from what I understand. I think it was a sergeant. Now the routine is, if you have a hang fire, it means your fuses might be smoldering. And there might be a little dampness or something, something not right with the powder. And that fuse, it could be the primary even smoldering, it hasn't even hit the powder yet. You're supposed to stay back and leave the stuff alone. Don't touch it. Get away from it and let it rest for awhile and see what's going to happen. That thing may hang fire for a minutes or hours. You don't know. But what he did, he went and done he took the shell out of the gun. I think it was one of these breech loading mortars too. They claimed he had it in his hand cradling it, carrying it in his hand and the thing went off. It blew his arms off and I'm pretty sure they said it killed him. He was a National Guardsman. I'm pretty sure he was a National Guardsman.

(First CD ends. Break in conversation.)

JB: (referring to Battery Gunnison) So as the picture shows, in fact that's why they got that big steel shield up in front where the gun pointer and whoever might be there working that gun. Now they were landing guns in case the enemy – let's say they were hit and they were trying to get to shore or even, maybe, they were getting in close enough, you know you take them big twelve-inch guns you can only drop the elevation so low then forget about it. If that ship came in too close and you kept missing and he got too far in under your guns you couldn't get down low enough to hit him, that's why you had to have some of the smaller caliber guns.

TH: We're talking about the guns.

JB: Yeah, okay. The guns down here they are what we called the six-inch pom-poms. Why they referred to them as that, I don't know. But I know six comes under the caliber. That was the size of the gun. All right, but they referred to them as landing guns because they were fixed guns. And the men on the guns were only protected by that shield that you saw in the picture. They were not disappearing. So, if the enemy was coming in on shore, them guns could go down lower. They could even knock off row boats, if they had to. They could get down under a little more where the big twelve-inches couldn't. And that's why that shield is on there because if the enemy ever got onshore they could start firing rifles and everything. What would be the sense of duck a gun to load it back up bringing it back up and try to take another shot? So actually, them guns were stationary. They were not a disappearing gun, not that I know of. Not that I can remember, if we are talking about the same thing now. I'm pretty sure.

TH: Okay, I'll take a look.

JB: Now that picture of that shell that I showed you in the paper its just a dead shell. That was located about in this area right here on the side of the road. Of course, there

was a little grass and stuff. It wasn't cleaned up like that. That laid here quite awhile. How it got here I don't know.

TH: Just west here of Battery Gunnison.

JB: Yeah, on this road because the first time I ever saw a gun, an artillery gun was that one right there because I was in my civilian clothes. And on Saturdays when they had the inspection, I didn't get my uniform until four days after I was here. So I don't know what day it was that I come down on. If I had a calendar of 1937 and I looked at July 1st, I could tell you the exact day. Them calendars aren't around anymore.

TH: I'll tell you I have a 150 year calendar that goes back 150 and forward 150. You can use it and you can pinpoint what day it was.

JB: Right. Well, anyway, they had an inspection on a Saturday so I had to get up out of the Squad Room because I was in civilian clothes, a white shirt and pants and shoes, you know. So, they didn't want me to hang around the Squad Room. So, one of the sergeants said, "Just take a walk." I said, "Where?" He said, "Just go down the road anywhere. Stay around of awhile and come back." I said, "Okay." So, I just walked down the road. Sure enough I come to the guns here. This is it here, right?

TH: Yep, Battery Gunnison.

JB: This looks like it was all rebuilt.

TH: Yeah, that's what I meant, during World War II they

JB: Oh they rebuilt it. Originally – that's not a disappearing gun now?

TH: It used to be disappearing. The six-inch disappearing guns were here. But during World War II, that's what I am saying, they filled in the gun pits here. The disappearing guns were taken out and they filled in old pits with concrete here and they brought down the two six-inch guns from Battery Peck. Battery Peck was to the north of us.

JB: Let's take a look at these guns. Are you sure of that or did somebody tell you this?

TH: We got it right from the Army records. We got it from the Army records from the National Archives.

JB: I'll tell you, buddy, that I got a feeling that there weren't disappearing guns here. They might have had disappearing guns here a good many years ago before I got here, but I still remember this gun sitting like it is, even from this distance. If you want to go back and look at that picture from 1937, you'll find out, but I don't remember the steps and all of that. I know it had to be mounted up in the air. I know that it was mounted up on that parapet. It was a stationary gun. It was no disappearing gun that I ever known of. A disappearing gun has to have counterweights and everything. And this thing here has

hydraulic symmetry and kickback it hasn't got anything to make it disappear into the. And them counterweights has a lot to do. Them counterweights is made up of tremendous amounts of lead. You couldn't hardly handle them and there were tons of them on there. That's so when the gun was tripped the gun would go up in the air and everything was balanced just right. It would take the gun, the gun would go up in the air and bring the counterweights up with it but then once it was fired, that counterweight would drop it back into the pit again. That would ease it back in. You look at the picture now. You look at the picture. That was done years ago before my time because here's where the (inaudible) we were standing here. Here was the gun pointing thing.that's why you had these iron plates so if the shells were fired at you you wouldn't get knocked over. If you had a disappearing gun you would be out here somewhere. You'd have a big wall.

TH: Well, that's what I'm saying. This was a disappearing gun battery. This was the pit down here.

JB: Originally it was.

TH: But, these guns were up at Battery, up at Peck from 1904 – 1943. These guns were up there. They were the barbettes. That's what we are looking at but they were a mile north of us. But Gunnison, and this is what I'm also saying, you have pictures of Gunnison when it was a disappearing gun battery when this was the pit. This was the pit. What I'm saying is that during World War II they took those guns out and filled the pit with concrete, right where we're standing right now and brought these guns down from Battery Peck. That's what we got from the official Army records. (Battery Gunnison was a disappearing gun until 1943 when Battery Peck's fixed guns were moved to this location and the modified gun battery became known as New Battery Peck.)

JB: I'll tell you what, to make it a friendly argument, I don't want to doubt what the Army or anything says like that but when we go back to look at the pictures. You'll see the pictures that I took in 1937. The gun setting here has got to be the same one. I think it's still a six-inch gun. You see the whole thing the sheet and everything.

TH: Yeah, these are the guns but....

JB: That's what I'm saying. When did you say they took them out of here?

TH: '43, 1943.

JB: All right if they were brought from there in '43 how would I get a picture of them down here in '37?

TH: (laughter) Well were you at Battery Peck? Because Battery Peck looked just like this.

JB: I distinctly remember that when I walked down that road that day when they told me to “get lost” for awhile because of the inspection. This was the first gun down here that I seen. Now I’m positively sure that it wasn’t a disappearing gun that I was looking at, but like I say, forty-two years is a long time. A persons mind can just slip a little bit what he thought what he knew years ago, he might still think he’s thinking the same thing and his mind in the meantime, goes a little different. I won’t say that you’re wrong. You could be 100% right. But at the same time they had a gun setting here and it was a gun just like this. I don’t remember there being any disappearing pit here at the time. But you could be right. Like I say a lot of things have slipped my mind. You’d be surprised, just walking around, what’s came back already. I may have went up to the other end and took pictures up there. Maybe I took pictures of guns up there. We had a gun like this too down here. Just like you see, one single gun.

TH: Now, did you fire these?

JB: No. They never fired that I ever knowed of. The only guns that I knew of on the Post here that was ever fired, that I’m sure they fired, I don’t know who done it, C Battery (52nd Coast Artillery) or if it was somebody that came in from the outside like National Guard or who, but I’m sure that some guns were fired at the upper end of the Post there. Small caliber, maybe the six inches like we’re referring to here. But I’m positively sure because I can back up my word and statement is that I used to be down at Battery E, I mean Battery Richardson (part of 9 gun battery) an awful lot. In the end there, they were sending me down there a lot on fatigue duty. Like I say, you asked for earlier in the afternoon what we did, that was one of my jobs. I was sent down to them guns. That was just routine. All I had to do was fall in and fall out because I knew where I was going. But when I was down there they had a guy come in. He was a civilian guy and he was a machinist and he come in with a truck and he was cutting the rotating bands. Cutting the rings into the rotating bands. He had a lathe there. He must have been setting them up at the time then getting ready to fire because the rotating rings on them shells then. I’m not an authority. I don’t know if they were like that all the time or if they just sent them over from an arsenal like that. And later on they had to put rings in because they were going into storage. But that guy was cutting rings into the rotating bands. So that’s why I know, I’m pretty sure, that he done that because they were going to fire some of them shells from some of them guns down there. And I’m sure I remember them firing down there too. Like I say, we never went. Maybe on a Saturday or a Sunday when we were on the Post and had nothing to do and felt like taking a few pictures or a little walk we would come down. In the beginning, everything was strange to us and we wanted to walk around and look around and see what was down here. Like you say, there could have been disappearing guns here according this the way this thing here is laid out. When we go back, we get a chance or if you want to if you got the time, you look those pictures over and see if you can’t maybe pick out some little background which I don’t think you will, I mean, you won’t get a house or anything. I can’t even remember the names of these places anymore. The railroad is gone.

TH: Yeah everything. The Army tore everything up after World War II. This is going to be the boardwalk. There’s a big parking area back here now where the empty meadow

used to be. The Park Service put in a parking lot and this is the trail that comes from the parking lot. Then of course, to get out to the beach, they put in this boardwalk. Yeah, this is all brand new.

JB: You know, the swimming area used to be here too, but I only swam in it one time.

TH: Ocean swimming for the soldiers?

JB: Right, for the soldiers and the Officers and so on, but I think they had their own little private area too. I come down once and I swam. I don't know where it was but it seems to me that it was up in that area up past Battery Richardson. It was nice. They had their lifeguards and everything just like they have out here and the changing building and so on. I went swimming there once but for some reason I just couldn't enjoy swimming there. The first time I swam when I come in the service first was down on the bay there. We were diving off of old docks there and there was some piece of contraption down there I don't whether it was a barge or something half submerged. We were using that for a platform to dive from. And then, me and (inaudible), I keep referring to my buddy and I can't help it because he was a good friend of mine, we used to come down here on the beach right here on this road and we'd take the privilege of going in swimming in the nude because them days hardly anybody was ever on the beach. We'd have a nice little swim and go on back to the Post. We enjoyed it. Well, I don't know off hand what else I can tell you now.

TH: Getting back to firing guns, which guns did you fire?

JB: The 52nd, but I was not on the guns myself because, like I said, I took up railroad sergeant. I was more in the railway line, although, we never got no experience even with that. I knew they gave us all the fundamentals like book work and everything. Took us down and showed us different parts of the car. We had to know the train line and the trucks and wheels and brake shoes, the hanger you know, like naming the parts of an automobile. We had to know all of that and we had to know track construction. You know, how to lay out a track, how to lay out a curve, how long a tie was in amongst switches, and the standard width of a standard gauge, standard width of a narrow gauge. Things like that, you know, general.

TH: The maintenance.

JB: That's right if we had to go lay out a track somewhere, we would go and do it on our own but we never had that opportunity to ever really do it ourselves. But it was always there when we needed it like when we went down to Lewes, Delaware. That track was there. They may have put in a spur. But I don't think the Army put in a spur. I think they got regular railroad men to put in the spur.

TH: So, that was your training background, the maintenance of the railroad?

JB: That was me. Like I say, I couldn't see pointing a gun and firing it or anything like that because I felt I wanted to do something because when I got out of the service that maybe it would become good to me, you know. I had the opportunity to go into railroading as a brakeman. I was even asked to go in as a brakeman. I never took it up. I don't know why. It just didn't appeal to me for some reason, although, I was a brakeman on a line for awhile for a mine company. For some reason I don't know, I just...now where are we going?

TH: Straight back this way that's up where Battery Richardson is.

JB: We don't want to walk too far. This road used to be a dirt road. Of course, it was all dirt roads.

TH: Yeah, gravel, dirt.

JB: Except your main roads. Red clay like.

TH: That's where they buried the mules and horses?

JB: Up there on the left hand side going up.

TH: That would be on the west side of the road? Atlantic Drive?

JB: On this side, I don't know if I could pick out the exact spot or not. If I could find where we once did our pistol practice if the bunkers are still there, which I doubt it, I could almost find out where the horse spots were, maybe.

TH: Did you ever hear any of the big guns being fired? Were you present to watch them fire?

JB: Well, not on this Post. I was right there when they'd be firing the eight-inch railway rifles and the twelve-inch mortars. I'd be there but I wouldn't have a hand directly into it, you know. When I was at Fort Adams I was on the guns. I was on the rangefinder there. Being a sergeant, I wasn't the rangefinder. My men did that. But the rangefinder is right near the guns. When them shells went out of them twelve inch guns, you know, the disappearing guns, they had elevation to them. You could actually see them shells going through the air if you looked right. You had to know where to start picking them out. Once you looked, but all you'd see once you picked it out, you'd see it just for a short time, it looked no bigger than a baseball. It'd be a twelve-inch shell, but when you saw it would look no bigger than a baseball hitting the sky and the clouds.

TH: What did it sound like? Do you have any impressions that you have? Because those huge guns going off....

JB: It's a concussion. In fact, on the rangefinder up there, not getting away from Fort Hancock but I have to explain what went on up there. They used the same type guns that

they don't have here no more, that disappearing gun. There was quite a concussion behind them. In fact, the gunners here when they would be on that platform right next to that eight-inch rifle on the railroad cars, a lot of them guys would tie their pants legs around their ankles. Tie them tight around their ankles because they would be such a concussion that it would flap their pants legs and make their legs sore, believe it or not. That's what some of them told me. That's why they tied their pants legs fast. I don't know, I wouldn't say everybody. But anyway, going back to the other story, a medical guy come around, we called them pill rollers, but medical man is a nicer name, you know. Well, he come around passing out cotton to everybody. Well, I always had pretty good ears, guns never bothered me. I still do a lot of hunting and stuff. I don't know how he done it, but this one kid that I knew he said, "What do you think? Do you think I need this cotton?" I said, "I don't think so. We're pretty far away from the guns." Which we were maybe from here to that building. You know, that kid wound up in the hospital because his ears bothered him from the concussion from the guns because he didn't put cotton in his ears. He must have had sensitive ears, because it didn't bother me.

TH: It's funny because I was going to ask you was there any form of ear protection because visitors have asked me that and also park employees, other park rangers, did they have any protections for their ears? That was just plain cotton?

JB: Cotton, at the time but I hardly ever knew any guys that used the cotton. Now what the gun men done up on the guns themselves like I say, I was never really... being a newer guy, they would use the older guy. You know, when you're firing for record out here, you don't want a bunch of recruits on the gun. They're going to put good gunners on there. Believe me, I don't blame them. But I don't know if they used cotton in their ears or not. I'm not too sure. But they didn't use nothing like they do today, ear muffs and stuff like that. They may have plugged their ears with cotton, I'm not sure. I know up at Fort Adams they were passing cotton around up there so they must have used maybe something. Yeah, I'll tell you another funny thing talking about the guns. You may have heard the old stories about going snipe hunting.

TH: Yes. I know.

JB: Okay. Now one day I'm down at the guns and the sergeant says to me, Bishop, "Go up to the supply car and bring me a gun sight." I looked at him and said, "A gun sight?" Yeah, a gun sight, I think that's what he called it. I said, "What are you doing, kidding me? What is this an old jack snipe game?" He said, "Na, na, you get up there, that's an order you get up there and you tell the supply sergeant that I want a gun sight." No, a bore sight I think they called it. But it had something to do with sighting the gun. The gun pointer thing, you know. So, I go down, I was feeling a little foolish, and I told the guy in the Supply Room what I wanted and he gets out this little box. It wasn't a very big box, a little box with a handle on it. You carry it in one hand. I said what in the world is going on here. I said that maybe this guy was playing the game too because I'm new, you know. So back I go and hand it to the sergeant and I stand there waiting for him to start laughing. Nothing happened. He sets the thing down and opened up the lid and he pulls a piece of, I think it was brass, a thin piece of brass, maybe I don't know six

inches long, maybe a couple of inches wide. And it had a little tiny hole right in the center of it. And what they used that for is, they would put it up in the breach of the gun and that was to zero in your gun sights with the barrel of your gun because your gun sights wasn't on the barrel of your gun like a shotgun or rifle, you know what I mean? It's set off to one side. If you didn't zero in your sights with your gun, you were out of business, you couldn't do nothing. What they would do is they would aim the guns over toward Coney Island. They had a building out there. Oh, and then when they put that thing in the breach of the gun with that little hole in it on the nozzle of the gun there was a little groove cut in on the top and bottom, one on each side. Now what they would do is take cozoiline or in your language we would say thick heavy grease.

TH: Yeah, I know what cozoiline is.

JB: Okay, they'd take two pieces of string, one on each end. They'd take that cozoiline put a little bit on each of those marks there then they'd put a piece of string across and a piece of string down. Do you get what I'm getting at? They'd make an X. Then they'd take that gun sight and look through that little tiny hole down through the barrel and they would line that X up on a big building, let's say, over in Coney Island. Now the gun pointer, once they got the gun set where they wanted it set on that building then the gun pointer, he would have to zero in his sights so that he would know toward that building also, you know, that way there the certain angle where ever he was aiming that's where that shot should end up to, more or less. But they could do a lot of that stuff with instruments too. The gun pointer didn't even have to bother. They could set it too. Most generally you would hear that the gun pointer himself was the guy that did the He done the tracking, too. In other words, as the boat went along, he tracked that boat, he followed along. We say a target. He followed that from right to left because they were always pulling from down around Long Branch toward the point up this way. That's when they start the firing. Now the elevation was a different case altogether. It took a lot to fire these guns. You had to know your windage. They went out and got the meteorological, whatever the word is for wind currents and conditions. They would send up a gas balloon a great big like you would get in a carnival but it was much heavier rubber and much bigger. They would send them up in the air and track them with an instrument. See how fast it was going up and which way it was drifting. All of that stuff went into the plotting room. And that's how they got their elevation how far out and stuff, to lay the gun. In other words, they would lay the gun. They would call into the gunners to set that gun on their instruments. That gunner would have to be moving that at all times, probably like a guy in a submarine. Getting his fix on a ship or something. He was the same way. He had to keep that all the time. Not only that, while he was watching the instruments, there may have been another guy cranking the gun, raising and lowering it. But the gun pointer, at all times, he was tracking that with his own eye. But there could be cases where you could give him readings also. You know, what I mean what they called a set forward point. The guns were never fired at that ship. Never fired at that ship because that ship was moving. Let's say if you fired 12 miles or even 8 miles out to sea (inaudible) Well, anyway, in order to set point, you had to know just how fast that ship was traveling. You picked that up with your detectors that you had, your instruments and everything, and then you set your gun forward. You maybe, let's say

that ship was coming across here, you wouldn't fire at the ship you'd set it up here. If that ship was eight miles out you'd have that all figured out eight miles out, how high you'd have to elevate the gun. That shell was traveling up in the air and coming down. The trajectory has got to go up, you would set it forward. That's when the shell and the ship should meet there at the same time. And that would be it, especially with a mortar. The mortar had to take a big lead on the ship because they were way up in the air.

TH: Yeah, shot way up and then come plunging down.

JB: Right, right. Well, what are we gonna do, call this a day?

TH: Yeah.

JB: It's twenty minutes to five now, I think I'll ride down toward the beach and get something to eat and take a little ride down toward Long Branch and I might go down to Asbury Park, maybe. I was thinking I come from way up. It takes me about, I timed it coming down this morning – takes me about, if I really want to push it, I can get down here in two hours. I'm figuring on two hours, two hours fifteen minutes, two hours and a half, to get down here. Now they are going to have the signing in for the members for the Post here.

TH: The veteran's reunion is the 15th and the 16th.

JB: Right, but I think that Saturday doesn't look like anything more than just signing in at Quarters #1 according to the paper I got. They sent me the paper I got it in the car. Now the signing in is around 11 -12.

TH: The schedule.

JB: But anyway, I know I can make that if I come down on the Saturday, but the point is that on Sunday they are going to have signing in from 10 – 11 (am). And jeez I'd have to get up pretty early to get down here at that hour. I was just wondering if I was a little late, would they still sign me in.

TH: Yeah if you want to.

JB: I don't want to be late but if some little thing happened getting down, I'm not one to oversleep. I usually get right up and get out. I want to come down on Saturday too but if I change me mind and just come down on Sunday if I should be a little late for signing up, I guess they'd sign me up. All right, now talking about the garbage dumps the way we used to get rid of the garbage here, everything was taken down to what we called the dump just was down the road here on the right hand side toward the (Horseshoe) Cove not too far in off the road. They would take the mules, I was talking to you about the mules before, they would take the mules and the prisoners and take them down to the beach and they would pick up all the driftwood. The reason they would take the mules was that the mules could get in on the sand with the wagons, where the trucks couldn't.

And of course, you used prisoners for that. I would take them down once in awhile because I was a guard/sentry over there. We'd go down there, they'd pick up the driftwood and they'd put it in the wagon, they'd bring it up on the hard ground and dump it out of the wagon. There'd be more prisoners come down on trucks. They would take it with trucks and bring it down to the garbage dump. And then when they got it down there, it would be all scattered out in a big heap. Then all the garbage would be dumped onto that wood. Then they would burn it up and more or less cook a roast or a toast or whatever you want to call it because they never did do a clean job on it. Then after it was once burned then they would throw it over the bank. But that work there was done by prisoners too. Now talking about that, I'll tell you about another incident that happened. The prisoners, usually they kept about three prisoners down with a sentry. That is they took them down and generally they took them down on the garbage truck. They wouldn't have to walk all that distance. But one day, while the sentry was guarding these three prisoners, when I say guard, the prisoners were not that bad. Like I'm gonna tell you you could hand them the gun and they wouldn't do nothing about it, you know. They made no attempt to escape or anything from here because they weren't that bad. They did some silly little thing they were in for. So, anyway, while this sentry was down there guarding the prisoners and like I say, there wasn't too much transportation in them days, the sentry was taken with a touch of appendicitis. So, he was in pain and misery. So, two of the prisoners, they carried the guy because there was no trucks moving up and down the road at the time and between the prisoners, to make a long story short, they carried the guy and got the guy to the hospital while one of the prisoners unloaded his rifle and brought the rifle along with them. The prisoner, mind ya, carrying the rifle. When they got the guy to the hospital, they turned the rifle over to one of the officers, whoever I don't know, but turned it over to one of the officers. But then, I think they had to wait because I don't think they would have still been able, even though they showed their honesty, I still don't think they could have gone from the hospital to guard headquarters. I think they had to wait at the hospital until they brought down another sentry. That would have been the routine thing, anyway, they couldn't just say, "Well, okay go back to the jail." So I would assume that they would have sent down another sentry and he brought the prisoners back. But you know what happened? Whatever time they had served was finished. They didn't have to serve any more because what they did you because they could have just as well took off if they wanted to. Then another time talking about that and the rifle, it was in the winter time, we wore these big overcoats. The overcoats had to be regulation, eighteen inches from the ground to the bottom of the overcoat and they could be pretty clumsy. So, I'm guarding these prisoners on the trucks, moving back and forth on the truck. The guy that was down at the dump was bringing his prisoners back so his prisoners had to get back up in the body with my prisoners. Then he had to get up in the body right amongst them, you know. In order to get up there he had the rifle. At that, time we were using rifles. All I did was stand on the running board. I had my rifle on my shoulder. I could handle it. He's trying to get up in the truck by stepping up on the wheel and everything and he can't get up in the truck because of the rifle so he hands his rifle up to one of the prisoners and says "Here, hold this gun until I get up in there." So, the prisoner got the gun and he began to fool around with the guy and says, "Now what are you gonna do? I got the gun you're there on the ground, I got ya now. What are you gonna do?" Joking you know. But everything was calmed

down the guy said, "Aw come on, knock it off. I get up there I'll beat your head off." You know, kidding around. The guy he was guarding probably was his bunkie when we were in barracks.

TH: You all knew each other.

JB: Yeah sure. Right down the road they had what we called a dead man, a concrete thing in the middle of the road. I used to sit right there in the middle of the road. One day they moved it and the Provost Marshal, I don't know where they moved it to, if it was still in the road or if they had dug out and had it to the side, but the Provost Marshal he was sending some prisoners with a sentry to get the thing up in a truck. I don't remember how heavy it was, it couldn't have been that heavy. They had to get it up in the truck. It was made out of concrete. He said to the sentry, "Now when you get down there, you make these prisoners get a hold of that and you make them lift it. You make them get that up in that truck." And he said, "and I want you to stand back. Don't get nowhere near them because if that thing falls off the truck and onto them and they get killed they deserve it." That's the way he talked, you know. I used to be the easy kind of guy. But he was serious, you know, that's the way they were.

TH: We're also looking right up the street is the gas station. And just past the gas station the large building with the air vents, is the Post Exchange building. Did you ever spend time there? I guess to buy anything or anything like that?

JB: Oh yeah, we used to get out stuff in there. Sometimes, like I say, we'd go in there and get our Canteen tickets for the movies. Oh, we'd buy odds and ends that we might want, like toothpaste and shaving cream and all that. The government didn't give you that, you bought that stuff. Your soap, all of your toilet articles, your razor blades. The government would furnish you with a razor. They'd give you a razor. They'd give you a tooth brush and a comb. What did they give you for that? They'd give you a toothbrush. They'd give you a razor. They'd give you a comb. I don't what else. Sometimes it was always better to go buy the stuff rather than running to the Supply Sergeant. So, we used to buy our own toilet articles, brush. And them days being young, we had to be a little extra fancy. We'd have maybe a little Aqua Velva, a little powder. Put a little here a little there. Now them days are gone forever. (Walking on Magruder Road) That place down there used to be the tailor shop, I know that.

TH: That's Building 77, the old laundry and tailor.

JB: To the left, there used to be the old YMCA (a wooden structure before the brick gym was built in 1941). Another thing I used to go watch, boxing. They used to have some good boxing matches here. They used to have a lot of boxing matches. They'd have some guys in here. Some of them before they came into the Post were boxing before. One guy in our outfit he was a Golden Glover. He was a good boxer. I'll tell ya we did have some good boxers here although we did have a guy come over from Governors Island. He was a heavyweight and he boxed one of our heavyweights. That guy was good too. I gotta give the guy credit. I thought our man was good. He couldn't even lay

a glove on this guy. This guy was exceptionally good. He was a guy that would jab out with that fist and it seemed like he only had to use one hand and poked that guy in the snoot.

TH: Where were the fights put on John?

JB: In the YMCA.

TH: Right in the YMCA.

JB: Yeah, then they used to have the dances. That was another thing they used to have the dances. I don't know if they ever had any girls coming from the outside or had chaperones coming in or not, but I know the sergeant's daughters used to come there and their sons, you know. Everybody could dance but I don't think the officers' mingle there. But I know the sergeants' did because some of their daughters used to dance there. But when I was down in Dix (Fort Dix) one time on detached service, they had a dance down there. They had the Infantry and stuff there. They brought in a lot of girls down there. But they were, you know, all chaperoned girls. It was nice. It was really nice to attend something like that. (Walking in lighthouse area) This, you know, was the firehouse at one time. That other one up there is a new firehouse, isn't it? Way up.

TH: Well, the other one, up by the big black Rodman gun ...

JB: On the right hand side...

TH: Yeah, across the street from the old mule stables. That's always been there too. That's pretty old.

JB: I never knew that as being the Fire Department, though. I only knew this right here, as being a Fire Department. They had men there in control of that all the time. Then another thing down across from E Battery there where the garbage racks were, we also had a little building down there with a little hand cart in it. That pulled hoses and I don't know if we had ladders on it or not. But I remember that there. We had the little hand carts. In case of a fire, we'd get a call, in case of a fire, now one time we had a fire down at the Officers' Club. And of all times we had it just when we were all dressed to go to a parade in New York City.

TH: That's the Officers' Club caught on fire. Yeah.

JB: Up in the top floor I think it was. Well, whenever we had a fire, we had like sand pails in our building and axes. Like in Battery E you'd have to grab a sand pail. Somebody coming out would grab a sand pail, somebody grab an axe, somebody grab something else, a fire extinguisher or whatever, you know. And the shrewdies, when they were coming out they wouldn't grab a sand pail, they'd try to grab the lightest thing there was, you know, like an axe or something. Sand gets pretty heavy if you have to run too far with it.

TH: You mentioned you were going somewhere when that fire broke out?

JB: We were going to New York on parade. It could have been around Decoration Day (now known as Memorial Day). Because I think it was the early part of the season. But we made it.

TH: Now, that's the old Officers' Club. The old red brick building way up on the North end. I know the date. It was April 9th, 1938. That was a famous fire out here.

JB: It wasn't right on Decoration Day, it had to be somewhere around that time because they were putting on a parade in New York. We made it all right. They brought in some firemen from the outside too, you know, firemen from the outside. What was burning, I don't know. We never did get inside because who wants, they got a fireman there, who wants a guy with an ax or a sand pail, you know. They can't use us then.

TH: Yeah. You mentioned about going up to New York. I do know a lot of veterans have told me about the ferry, the Army ferry that used to go right from the wharf here, right up to the Battery.

JB: The Mine Planter (*General E.O.C.*) *Ord*, that's what it was, the Mine Planter *Ord*. That was the boat that used to take the 7th (Coast Artillery) out. They would be planting their mines, practicing planting their mines. That was the *Ord* that used to go out and run out of here just about every Saturday and you had to make it by 10 o'clock. I think it was 10 o'clock they used to call out. I think that a lot of guys used to like to get their inspections over, very seldom it could happen. Colonel McGruder, he was the guy, the officer that used to come over and say, "Okay, dismiss these guys. I know they want to get out of here in a hurry. They want to catch that boat." And he wouldn't hold us up. I've taken it many times. I've taken it over to Battery Park, get off and take the elevator up to 125th Street and they used to have a ferry there, cut across the Hudson, and then I'd hitch hike the rest of the way home. They used to have a ship called the *Mandalay*. It was like a ship that used to go to New York, I'm pretty sure it was the *Mandalay*. It used to be beautiful at nights you could look out and see it going down the bay. It used to go over to Keansburg.

TH: Passenger

JB: You know, I think that a ship sunk one time out here in the (Sandy Hook) Bay. I don't know if they raised it by itself or what happened.

TH: The *Alexander*.

JB: But that was when we were down to Lewes, Delaware, it sank. So, if you want to know what date that Lewes, Delaware was. I knew some of the guys that came up from Lewes, Delaware took a ride up to see it because a few guys had their cars down there. They took a ride up to see it. How serious it was, I don't know. Then they used to have

one come to Atlantic Highlands and I don't know which one that was or the Highlands, rather, that's the town.

TH: Highlands, then there is Atlantic Highlands and Keansburg.

JB: Atlantic Highlands, that's right, I was right the first time. I get the two of them mixed up. But I remember, though that boat there, I don't know the name of it or anything. The first day we went out on pass, I never forget it we got the bus out and the bus would take us over there. And when we got over there the ship was just pulling away from the dock. Now, there is no reason why the Captain couldn't just brought that right back in and let us guys get on. There wasn't too many of us. I don't know a handful and it was my first time out on pass. So, what happens, I don't know where I am. I'm stuck. I don't know how far away from home I was. I could have been a thousand miles from home but I said, "Well I'm going regardless of what happened. I'm out this far and I'm not going back to the Post." I wasn't familiar with this area down in here. So, like today when I came down I saw that great big gas tank, you know, that tremendous gas tank in (inaudible) that's what they used to store gas in years ago. I still remember that because when that Captain wouldn't pull that boat back up to dock so we could get on it the guys were there yelling, hollering, I wouldn't want to tell you some of the things they were saying, they were so mad. But anyway, I remember walking out and getting by that tank and I started thumbing my way. Every car that stopped I told them where I was going. Well, some of the people from down this way didn't know, but they would take me as far as they could but, I managed to make it home. Then, from then on it was thumb, thumb, thumb, you know, them days it wasn't too bad. There weren't as many cars, but you didn't have highways like there are today, you know. That used to be a one way road, I mean two lanes, that (Highway) 36 in them days. That used to be two lanes.

TH: You also met some famous people while you were stationed here, the King and Queen (of England)?

JB: Oh, yeah, I seen them. I seen them. Oh, by the way, talking about that, we also had, when we were firing, they were only practice shells, in other words they were dummy shells. They were the full size caliber, eight-inch, but they were loaded with sand to get the proper weight, see. They took a screw off the end and loaded them with sand to get the proper weight so they wouldn't wobble when they went through the air. But when the guys told me, "Guess who's up there watching us fire the guns?" I said, "Who?" They said, "Lindbergh, Charles Lindbergh." I said, "Go on, you're kidding me." He said, "No, go up and look." I wasn't doing anything too much, so I went up there and sure enough, there's Charles Lindbergh. Nobody knew he was coming in or anything. At least we didn't know it. He was watching us fire the guns. So, at least I can say I saw three or four celebrities and the Queen along with it. It was all right.

TH: Whereabouts was Lindbergh, again?

JB: Down on the beach there, down in that area there. We used to take the guns down.

TH: South of Battery Gunnison?

JB: No. Down in that area there, towards the swimming area. But I don't think it was all the way down by the swimming area, though. There used to be a road that went down there by the metal hut. That was before the day when they had Quonset huts. They still made out of metal like the old Quonset huts. There was a road down through there and they used to take their guns down there. They'd take the guns down by rail and fire them from down in that area. That's where they used to fire the guns down in that section. And then we the guns all the way down, but that day all we went down for, all the way down where your beaches are today, we had the guns down there one day and do you know, there's a lot of work to setting up them guns. Like I said you don't just pull them guns up and then stop and let go and jump back on and take off again and bang and away again. There's a way to do that a routine thing that has to be done now. They timed it. They wanted to see what the timing would be. It takes an hour and a half, and that's a good record. An hour and half to set them guns up. That's taking all the equipment off off that guy, the ties that went under that gun, the foot plates, and all of that other stuff that had to come off. It had to be put down. The holes had to be dug for the outriggers. The outriggers had to be slung over into place. Okay, now them guns, in order to get the ties over there, you had big jacks. You had to jack that gun up into the air by hand. You just raised it up enough to get the ties under the gun and resting on the rails. But anyway, it takes an hour and a half to do that. We did that in pretty record time but it took forty-five minutes to take it apart again. Because when you took it down, all you had to do was jack it up and pull those ties out, throw them up on there. You didn't have to be too fancy. You could always put them things back where they should be later on. But when you set them guns up, everything had to be set up in regular routine. You know, everything had to be done to order. But that was all done down in your beach area. Then another thing we used to do down there, and like I say, I was more or less the new man there, they used most of the old timers until you got yourself up a little bit. We had what they called anti-aircraft practice with the .30 caliber machine guns. You know, they would fire at the planes. In them days, that's about all you would need because the planes never went up too high. And if they were going to do anything they'd come in like strafing or something the guns, you know. We needed a little protection from the air, so, what they would do, we'd go down there and they would have like, four guns mounted and the guys would shoot at these targets. What they would be was a sleeve, something similar to you see on a sock on the airport.

TH: I've seen pictures of it.

JB: Same thing. The plane would come over from Mitchel Field (New York) and he'd have a steel cable on the back. How that rig worked, I don't know. You'd see the thing come out. It would come out like a bunch, she would hit the cable and catch and it come out and it would be that big round sock. Now, them guys would fire. They'd fire, let's say they would fire four guns. And then later on, one of the pilots, who you'd never get to meet, he knew the routine thing because one day they must have had a new pilot come over and what does he do, we'd get done firing so long, I don't know how he'd get the signal, I don't know to this day but he was to cut that loose and bring out another one.

He'd cut that loose and another one would come sliding down the cable and when it hit the end it would knock the old one off, you know and that would float. Now what he went and done he released his way down and the new pilot went floating down in the ocean a ways. One of the guys wanted to swim out for it but the Captain said, "No, no, you don't swim out for that you leave that alone. You leave it go." But the other guy used to bring it up and drop it over the Parade Ground and we'd go out and pick them up. So you say, "How do you know if you have four guns firing on one sleeve. How do you know who hit what?" Well you know how it's done? The machine gun bullets were in sort of, a web belt. They would take that web belt and roll it up before they put it into the box, in the wooden box. They would roll that belt up good and tight with the ammunition in it and they would have different color paints like, red, green, blue, yellow or whatever, and they would just dip the tips of the bullets, projectiles as we called it, just the tip, down into the paint. We'd dip so many in yellow, so many in red, now you get the story? And so many in green. Now maybe you'd be firing green and I'd be firing red. Now when those bullets are coming out of that gun, they're coming out pretty hot and naturally if that paint is dry, which it would have been, by the time it come out of the gun them things would be hot. I know 'cause I grabbed one one time on the range after it hit the butts. They are hot. Like putting your finger on the stove and now that paint would soften up and when it went through that sleeve it would leave a little paint mark around the edge. Then we would get them things out. Stretch them out on the Parade Ground, and we'd count them. How many yellow holes, how many red, how many green? That's how we knew. Although we all fired at one target, that's how you would tell who put the most shots in the one target. Red, green, yellow and blue.

TH: That's great. I was also wondering do you know why Charles Lindbergh was visiting was he just ...

JB: I don't know. I have no idea whatsoever. I didn't have even have an inkling and I know it was him, definitely, because he was big tall and I knew what he looked like. It was no imposter, twin brother or anybody that looked like him. I'm positively sure it was him. If it wasn't him, then nobody said he had a twin brother. I know it was him. I don't know why he was here. I don't know why the guns was firing. If he was familiar with the officers or somebody brought him in from some other areas and said, "Well, they are firing down at Sandy Hook." You know, before they could fire here, they had to put out warnings ahead of time to all ships at sea to stay out of our area. And they would. I'll tell you another thing I didn't know the Navy more or less, rules the sea. They everything to say. Now, we are firing our guns and we're firing for record. We're banging away out there and the next thing I know I'm out on one of the target boats pulling it there and we see, I think there was five of them, come over the horizon. You could see the smoke. In them days you know, they had coal burners, and they're coming right into our range and I thought, "Oh my God, here they are coming into our range. What's gonna happen now?" And the next thing I know, as they were getting in closer and they're flashing these lights up there and waving these flags. Well, that stuff don't mean nothing to us, just because we're out on a tug boat, and I don't even think the tug captain knew what it was all about. So, anyway the tug captain told us to pull in that target they're going to have to stop shooting. I don't know how they got word at the gun

because I don't think we had any radio communication at that time from ship to shore, you know. But they could see, you know. They had their instruments too, like I say, that's what they were there for tracking our targets and actually they could see them ships too from sea they had high powered instruments. So, the next thing I know, the ships come in, they stop, naturally the guns stopped firing, the ships come in, they stop and we see the guy come in with this little thing I guess they called it a giggi or something, you know. He's all dressed up. He's got gold all over him. He looked like half of Fort Knox you know he had the gold all over him. He come aboard our ship and he's talking to the captain of our ship, the tug boat operator. And finally we got word that well we can't fire no more because they are gonna lay in for the night and they're aren't moving out till the next day till when they got ready. So what could we do, we had to pack up and wait. Just let it go till another day. Yeah, I seen some funny things happen here; good thing, bad things. Things that make you laugh, things that make you cry. But it was fun. I like going down the beach, I was telling you about the mules. I was telling the girls about the day at the Museum. I went down with the prisoners, see, we were going down to get the driftwood. So what happened, the teamster, now he was a prisoner, I don't know if he was a teamster all the time or if he knew something about driving mules. We had these two mules. One was a big male mule and the other was a little female, boy and girl. So when we started down I'm up on the seat with the prisoner, the driver, and the other three, four, maybe three other prisoners were in the back of the wagon. So, we started down. The guy says to me, "This is your first time down here with us, isn't it?" I said "Yeah." He said, "Now you watch these mules, you watch, these mules are smarter than what we are." He says, "Come on mule. Get." and he tried to get those mules to run. We were heading for the beach. They wouldn't run. They walked along just unconcerned in no hurry at all. So, he went down on the beach, picked up the driftwood, bring it up on hard ground, turn around and go down on the beach and each time he brought it up on hard ground, we were facing towards the stables, see. And we made three, four, I don't know how many trips from the ocean part getting the wood up to the hard ground and back. Well finally, the prisoner says to me, "Now look it it's getting time to go in now and these mules know it. Now you watch when we make this last trip they can count. They know how many trips we make from the soft ground up to the hard ground." And you know, by God, when we got up there and it was time to go in, he could not get them mules to turn around and go back. No sir boy. And not only that, but when they walked down that road going down, they done just the opposite coming back, they run just as fast as they could for that stable. He told me, "You can't even hold these things back. You don't even need a driver with these things. Just let them go they know what to do." And the horses, they used to have a little corral there but I never saw them use them horses. I always said they were used for the officers' but I'm not too sure, but I think they were. I think they were riding horses. But where they ever rode them, I don't know. I never saw them riding them here. They really didn't have the facilities here unless they wanted to ride up and down the back roads here. Things seemed strange when I first walked in here again today I looked at these buildings. It makes you feel a little sad the way they are going. One time I couldn't get out of here fast enough now tonight I feel like I just don't want to leave. You know, like an old home to me.

TH: That's right, I know exactly how you feel. I'm going to have to dig out the list of the 52nd Veterans for you.

JB: I'd like to see that.

TH: There are men from your Battery.

JB: You have a lot of them come down here?

TH: I probably have about two dozen over a period of the 1930's and some were in C Battery and E Battery.

JB: I'm gonna tell you another story. In fact, you don't have to put this on the record, talking about C Battery. But all total, way back from the very far years right on up until the Post was shut down, how many would you say you had here? Like that one guy I was talking to in the Museum, I thought he was the one, but he said, no I served in the Army down here. I said when. He said in the 50's. I was just curious how many from let's say, I know you got one old timer here, didn't he serve here, the guy 74 years old. He's supposed to come here. He's supposed to be a lieutenant colonel or something like that.

TH: Oh, Lieutenant Colonel Mulhern, yeah, he was a young boy.

JB: Yeah when he came here, but did he serve here. Is he one of the Veterans, or something?

TH: No. He didn't serve here. He lived here his whole childhood.

JB: Then he can't make it here as a veteran, really.

TH: Well, he is because it's in the charter that anybody who lived, worked or served....

JB: Oh, lived, worked or served, I see. I thought it was for whoever served in here.

TH: We had a lot of civilian employees in here too, and Coast Guard and Lighthouse Service and Life-Saving Service and the US Navy was out here and Army. It was all Army.

JB: I thought it had to be all service men, only.

TH: If you threw in everybody from the Spanish American War through 1974 when they closed down Fort Hancock and what happened during World War II is that this became the main staging area for troops going over to Europe and the tens of thousands. I don't even know where to begin, tens of thousands that came back because this was the processing center to process veterans out of the service.

JB: You'll find more of them that came in after World War II and on but you won't find too many that was here before that.

TH: Yeah.

JB: But like I say, there should be a way of picking them up because the guys that came here, if they enlisted in Pennsylvania, they could served in Pennsylvania, like in Indian Gap or one of those places, Carlisle Barracks and them places. If they enlisted in New York they could serve anywhere in New York or if they enlisted in New Jersey, they could serve in New Jersey or they could do any other thing. If they enlisted in New York, like I did, that was my hometown, but I was sworn in in New Jersey. I could have went to New York or I could have went to Pennsylvania or I could have came here. This was it, see. So they shouldn't be scattered out too far. Oh, one thing I was going to tell you about, you don't have that on tape right now, do you?

TH: Oh you want me to shut this off?

JB: Yeah.

JB: Okay, like I was going to say, this buddy of mine, every once in awhile he would tell me, that's a lousy meal we had tonight. But he would says to me, "It ain't worrying me I went and threw everything away with it." What he meant with that was when he'd go up to the garbage can sometimes there'd be paper or wrappings off of something in the garbage can. He'd throw plate, cup, knife, fork and spoon and everything right into the garbage can and without anybody looking, push the paper over it. So, I imagine you'd find a lot of stuff down there, like spoons, that got lost, and knives and forks. Oh, and talking about finding things, as long as you got your tape going. We had to go down, I'll wait till this car goes by, we had to go down along, I referred to it as the tracks, they don't have anymore, down toward where the swimming beach is, there's a building off to the left. I don't know if it was the Coast Guard station or what it was.

TH: What is now our Visitor's Center.

JB: It could have been there but we had to string a cable, underground cable, off of a great big spool like the telephone company has today. It was on a flat car and we had to string that from that area up in there and what it was for I don't know. But they had all of us up there. I think they even had C Battery (52nd Coast Artillery) too. And we had shovels and you talk about digging a ditch. And being sand, we dug that ditch in no time flat. It only had to be down deep enough to get that cable under. One of the guys that was digging the ditch, he found a bayonet. I began to wonder if they ever had any troops down there because they said years ago it was always hard to get in here. When they were building here, they had to cut all of this out. Maybe they didn't come all the way up. Maybe they got their selves this far and said that's enough. But the bayonet, I don't know what year it would be, I know what a Civil War bayonet looks like and it was on that style. I think after the Civil War the bayonets came out with a hand grip? With a dagger. So this didn't have no hand grip. It was just for rifle use only, not for close you

know hand fighting or anything like that, it was made for rifle use only. Now it had to be either Civil War or Spanish-American, no wait a minute, Spanish-American had hand grips.

TH: They had hand grips. Even though it was long bayonets it still had a handle that you could clip onto a rifle.

JB: Well you know, our bayonets was fairly long the ones we had but later on the government came out with shorter ones. But anyway, this was a bayonet that could have been from the Civil War. I don't think it would have went to the Revolution, I doubt it. But then again, you never know. It was pretty well rusted.

TH: Did one of the soldiers make off with it as a souvenir?

JB: He kept it as a souvenir. It wasn't in too bad a shape it was pretty well preserved, but it was rusted but it wasn't all fallen apart. Now right up there by our Mess Hall, talking about that, I found what they called a .30-40 Krag-Jorgensen bullet. It was a tracer. Now how long that laid there I don't know. It must have been under dirt or something and somebody walking along must have scuffed it up. It just so happened that I would have a .30-40 Krag-Jorgensen rifle at the time. They would open up and you load the shells in the side. It was a government gun, but I don't remember what year they used them.

TH: Spanish-American War.

JB: Spanish-American, I would say, yes it could be. Now they loaded them in from the side. You know I took that shell home. I fired that, I didn't fire it. My Brother-in-Law now, then he was just a buddy of mine before they were married, he fired that and that shell went off, believe it or not. How many years that thing could have been laying there and it went off as a tracer. I didn't see him do it, but he had the gun at the house and he got it and he took it and fired it he told me and the gun went off. The shell went off. So, all that while they must have made pretty good ammunition. Sure there's gotta be a lot of stuff laying around I would say. Money wise, not really money because we never dealt with money till we got paid. If we were close with the dollar, I seen guys go out on pay day, believe it or not, and their money would be all grabbed up from them just before they got to the end of the pay line. But at the end of the pay line you know who would clean them us? Some of the sergeants. Maybe some of the sergeants are around listening, they may not like it, but some of these sergeants used to loan money out to guys. That's what we used to call three will get you five. Five would get you eight. That's the way it was. In other words, if I was to borrow \$3.00 of you on payday I'd give you back five. If I borrowed \$5.00 I'd have to give you \$8.00 but they never went any higher than that that I ever knowed of. These sergeants would be standing at the end of the line and they would be collecting their dues. Now the guys would come out and they wouldn't have a cent. Now you know what they used to do? Right away they'd get back to barracks and say can you loan me a couple of bucks? Can you loan me a dollar? No. I can't give you a dollar. So, you know what some of them would do? They'd go over to

the Post Exchange and buy maybe a hat and sell the cap for \$2.00. The cap was better than the GI issue because it had a nice patent leather peak on it was nice and shiny. The way we used to keep them shined up is that we'd clean them with Vaseline. Put Vaseline on them and rub them good with a soft cloth. The old GI issue was like the old olive drab, like I told you, and they were fuzzy, like a cotton looking thing and they had a leather visor on them so a lot of them didn't wear them hats. We didn't have to be strictly regulation but we had to look close to it. I'm not saying you can't come out without a hat on or a badge on your hat, or something like that or a hatband or something but a lot of, most of us were equipped with tailor made hats, as we called them, except that old Bauer I was telling you about, he was strictly GI. But they'd come over and get their hats. That's how I got my first one. \$2.00 I paid for them. I don't know what they were worth in the Post Exchange. Or some of them would go down and get Canteen tickets, put it on their bill and come up and sell it to you a little cheaper. That's the way they used to do it. We had guys that weren't good soldiers. I was telling the girls when I was in here before, we were down at Sea Girt, in fact, I got pictures in that albumWe were down at Sea Girt and this one guy. (Tape ends abruptly)

End of Interview