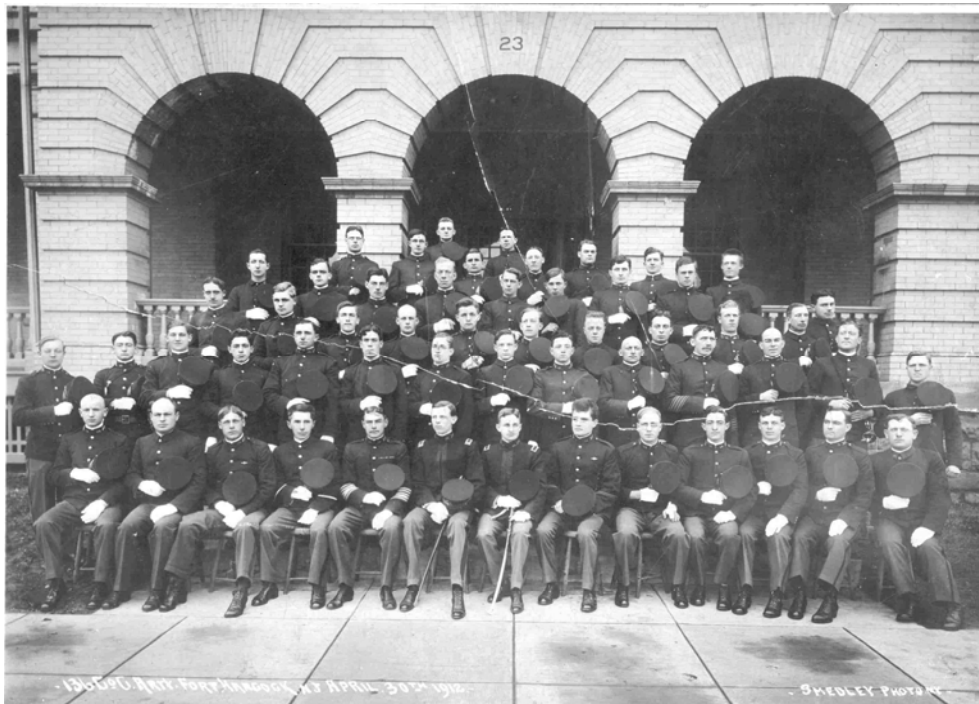


Sandy Hook, Gateway NRA, NPS
An Oral History Interview with John Borris
136th and 7th Coast Artillery
1912-1924

Interviewed by Elaine Harmon and Tom Hoffman, NPS and Patrice Fournier, NOAA
September 12 and 14th, 1986
Transcribed by Mary Rasa, 2011



Company 136 Football Team. 1915 Champions at Fort Hancock, NJ.



Thomas Smedley photograph of Coast Artillery Company 136 at Barracks 23 on April 30, 1912.



Photos courtesy of NPS/Gateway NRA and donated by Mr. Borris.

Editor's notes in parenthesis ()

EH: Today is September 12, 1986 and I am Elaine Harmon, Museum Technician speaking for Patrice Fournier who is a marine laboratory employee in Building 74. She will be escorting a special guest, John Borris who served at Fort Hancock in this very building 1912-1914 with Company 136. Pat will be escorting Mr. Borris through the building and will be asking him questions that we had supplied since none of the museum staff can be here to today. So we will now continue on with Pat and Mr. John Borris.

Mr. Borris' son: Okay and then they want you to go through and have you describe, you know, what did you do on a typical day, you know. You had reveille. You got up and spent, you know, like you were telling me last night you were on the mine planting and things like that and what was your particular duty and any Army buddies and names and any of the officers like you were telling me you went down the gun battery this morning.

JB: Yeah. Bordeaux.

Son: Yeah Captain Bordeaux. Your unit was the 1-3-6, you said.

JB: It was changed. In 1924, it was the 5th, was it, when I was discharged it was the 7th.

Mr. Borris' son: Okay. Well, we will get it all on tape. Okay.

JB: Yeah.

PF: You are free to wander wherever you remember, whatever you remember.

JB: I remember the stairs going up to our squad room. That's what it was called where we slept.

Son: Now on the first floor down on this side of the building dad you had a big auditorium. This must have been what, the mess hall?

JB: This was yes, this is that the extreme end.

PF: I think the kitchen used to be behind here.

JB: Yes. This was the dining area here. Well, did your granddad tell you anything about Fort Hancock? Did you ever discuss...

PF: I think I was too young. 'Cause I was the youngest of all the Fournier children. I was the youngest. Yeah. This is now our chem laboratory.

Son: Yeah this is the very end of the first floor, Dad. This had to be the kitchen part.

JB: Yeah this was the kitchen. I would say that was our dining area and this was our kitchen.

Son: Can you remember what color that walls were?

JB: I can't describe them. I think they were on the olive green if I weren't mistaken. They were dark, you know. It wasn't the white like it is here. It wouldn't show the dirt.

PF: Army green.

Son: Yeah. Typical Army green, yeah.

PF: Yeah. We are kind of cramped for space these days since the old building burned down last year.

Son: What...the old hospital?

PF: The old hospital building.

Son: You work for the fisheries department?

PF Yes. National Marine Fisheries Service under Department of Commerce.

Son: What exactly do they do out here?

PF: Basically we do long range studies on the water environment. We do troll, we do fish studies, water chemistry studies, but basically we don't do day to day studies like the EPA does. We do more long range like over a span of ten years or more. You want to go upstairs?

JB: Yeah. That's where I want to go.

PF: I wonder what the squad room is?

JB: That is where we slept.

Son: Going up enough stairs today, Dad. Dad is 95 now, Patrice.

PF: A lot of living.

Son: We are on the second floor now. Where were you here? Was this a wood floor?

JB: This was probably (inaudible)

PF: It still does.

JB: There were no walls.

Son: No, just part way.

JB: This was not a wall here. This was all open. That would be called a squad room.

PF: These are temporary walls here.

Son: Alright. Where is your window now?

JB: In the extreme corner. All of these were bunks where the soldiers slept.

Son: Did you study marine biology?

PF: No. Not me. I am a computer programmer.

JB: They had a (inaudible) for each. One of these desks. You just take care of all of your self.

PF: Ah, this floor we are trying to reconstruct our library which burned down in the other building so we have been beg, borrowing, and stealing as much...

Son: Did you lose much data?

PF: We didn't lose much data but we lost our library. Everything that you see has been donated. And they are still trying to sort through and log everything in.

JB: So this is it. This is it. Right here is my bunk, right there in that corner.

Son: Right by the window, huh.

JB: For a long time right there.

Son: Let me shuffle a couple of boxes around.

JB: Right down on our buddy. I used to have before 1920.

PF: (boxes moving noises) This place has gotten quite cluttered.

Son: There you go. You can get a view out of your old bedroom window.

PF: Does it still look the same?

JB: I stood right here. You know, Patrice, I am a Christian. I mean I am a believer in Christ as my savior. I believe you are too.

PF: Oh yes.

JB: I stood here with an apple core and I had accepted Christ and I had been a curser when I was in the Army before I met Christ. I cursed terribly. So, the captain of the baseball team asked me, "Are you coming out, Borris?" I was a baseball player, too. He asked me, "Are you coming out to the baseball team?" I said, "I don't know. I don't think so," because I was afraid I would burst out in a rage of cursing at the umpire (if he was against me. And I was eating an apple and there was a lawn down here and it was just like this. I said, "I will throw it out on the grass," and I hit this here window sash with my fingers and my bunk was over there and I just fell on the bunk and said, "God help me not to curse." (laughter) And from then on, I had victory. You know, that Kelly family was a wonderful family.

PF: Oh yes.

JB: You very seldom find a Catholic family that doesn't drink and don't curse.

PF: They were a group. They were a group.

JB: You could see and I used to go to dances with your grandmother, Anna Kelly. There were three brothers and three sisters and what kind of family do you get to go to a dance with? Three brothers and three sisters and one of the brothers was married so he brought his wife. There were four females and only three males. And I was a conductor on the train with Andy. He was the engineer. So he said, "Borris, do you know how to dance?"

Did you ever dance?" I said, "Yes, from the time I was 16 I dance." I said, "I don't know how," I said, "I haven't danced in a long time." I said, "I don't know any new ones." He said, "Well, we will practice." There was only one new dance that came in was the foxtrot. And that was easy. There was only a few steps. It was like a waltz with a couple of steps to a foxtrot. I said, "Okay." So, I would go there and I, we would have four, four females. So, I was Anna's partner. I think Helen had a man and she must have had him from girl on and never wanted any other man she must have just loved him. To me, Andy and I, your grandfather exchanged. I said, "It must have been Anna's turn to get married." He said, "No. She's a one man, a one man woman."

Son: Dad, what kind of heat did they have in here? Did they have the radiator?

JB: They had radiators. These were hot steam and those...

Son: How about the floor? Was it the same? Those small wood floor or...?

JB: No. They had a different floor. They had wood of a longer, longer sheets. They were you know...

Son: Wider boards?

JB: Yeah. Four inch, these are about a three inch I guess. They were wider, either four or five inch.

Son: What did each soldier have up here as far as...a wall locker?

JB: Wall locker.

Son: Did you have a foot locker too?

JB: My wall locker would be right about there.

Son: And you had the bunk over there.

JB: And then I had a foot locker and a bunk.

Son: About how many people did they have up here, about how many soldiers?

JB: Oh I think there were 60 in this squad room. There was another one I think on the other side. I believe there was another one. And then the sergeants' like myself, I had a room after I became a sergeant in the hallway. I wouldn't know what room. There are so many doors there now.

Son: How about these center columns? Were they still in here?

JB: Yeah these were, these were here. There was, like I say, there were no walls.

Son: The partitions weren't there. You can see straight across here. That's how why the room looks big.

JB: Yes. Now we can go out this other way.

Son: Is there another way out?

JB: No there isn't. We were able to get out the windows.

Son: Did they have a wraparound porch here?

JB: Yes.

Son: What color was it? They painted it green now. Was it green?

JB: If it was it wasn't that kind of green. It would have been more of an olive green. Everything was olive in those days.

Son: Even the walls they were.

JB: I guess that's what the walls. They certainly were.

Son: Olive Drab.

JB: Olive drab wouldn't show the dirt easy. Conformity.

Son: So, the second floor was this one big room and downstairs was the mess hall. What did they have downstairs on the other end? Do you remember?

JB: Well, there must have been, I thought there was another company in there but I don't believe there could have been.

Son: This was the 136th?

JB: It might have been close to a company like we had in those days it was down. It was less than a hundred and a company is over two hundred, is a company. So it was a way down from a normal company.

Son: Did you company have anything besides Battery Gunnison?

JB: We had I forgot the name of it? Madison or Richardson, it may have been Richardson. Three inch guns at the extreme north of Fort Hancock territory. (Battery Morris)

Son: But besides the guns did they have any other, they had what, mine planting?

JB: Mine planting was down near the dock. We had mines and material and cables and each mine had a cable on it and all the materials that were necessary to splice a mine and the cable together so that the cable would go to the casement where they would put wire, where they would tie up with the electric so they could fire the switch and explode the mine.

Son: Well, did they put down new mines all the time or..?

JB: No. You would use the same mines until they were no good. Same mines. But while I was here they used the very same mines.

Son: But did they pick them up and inspect them or...?

JB: No. We would plant them without any, any, attachment for firing. There was nothing put in. they were just a blank mine.

Son: Okay, practice then.

JB: Just practice. When we would plant them we used to go every other day or four times a week at least. We would go and plant the mine in the morning and pick them up in the afternoon. And that was all it was. And then there were different ones. There were eight men on each mine along the cable and then there were two men that would make splices. They would splice the ends and have to be waterproof. You know, they never had a test, but it couldn't make splices. And they would splice so that they wouldn't be soaked up with water.

Son: What size boat did they have, dad? Did it have a name?

JB: Pretty good size rowboats it was. They called them yoles. What we called yole now where we are in Florida instead of Arizona. I am going to learn my southern language, ya'll and dawling. My granddaughter, you know, when she went to school the very first her mother said, "Well what did you learn Marcy?" She said, "The teacher called me a dawling." She did didn't call her a dawling she called her darling. No. It was a dawling. So, that was the way we called darling.

Son: Did they have any bigger ships here dad beside the...

JB: Yeah. They had they had...

Son: No to take the mines out or back or...

JB: They took them out with the same...

Son: Small boat. Did they have anything bigger? Do you remember any of the bigger ships names?

JB: I think I was the *ORD*.

Son: The *ORD*.

JB: The mineplanter *ORD* sticks in the back of my mind. It was the mineplanter *ORD* that picked them up just like they would come up and the men would have their duty to twist them in a figure 8 and that way they...

Son: They used a bigger ship to recover them, to pick them up?

JB: No. There was a minelayer and a mine picker upper. It would be the same boat. If you go on the mine end cable the same one from there they had the men take the mine which was about one hundred pounds or more. It would take two men when the mine was empty to put it back into the storage shed.

Son: So, how was the food down here in the mess hall?

JB: I liked it. (laughter) He knows I eat slow now but I used to eat fast in those days. And when you were hungry and there were seconds, I had my plate up for seconds.

Son: How much day to day did they pay to cook?

JB: 28 cents a day.

Son: It's what it took to feed you?

JB: For three meals.

Son: You couldn't have eaten that good on 28 cents. Did they do anything else to...

JB: I said our company was one of the fortunate ones. Did you granddad tell you about that we had a pigpen?

PF: No.

JB: He didn't. Did he ever tell you we had a man that could build a rowboat and we would take a seine and go around. One man would stay with the rope over here and they would take the boat out and with a net and go around quite a drag and there would be men on to drag them in if we had a good one. Both sides to drag them in if we had fish. not only for our own company. We could give fish to the other companies. So, that way we saved money. Our 1-3-6 Company was wonderful that way. They had a pig pen on this road that goes down to Gunnison. On the right side was the pig pen and we used to slaughter. We had a good man who could slaughter. We were fortunate the 136th Company. So, you granddad didn't boast about it? Well, look I didn't tell anything about the Army either. And yet he liked the Army. It was in the blood. He went and

from his college days he went into the Army and retired as a colonel. Did he tell you he was a colonel?

PF: I never met her before. I never met him before.

JB: Oh, he was a colonel. And here is a poor sergeant, his dad. (laughter) Well, I am certainly proud of him.

PF: With due cause. Oh yeah.

Son: What was the name of the commanding officer of the 1-3-6?

JB: Walker but here the 7th where I last was Bordeaux. Walker was the 1-3-6 in baseball. I don't think he was in football. Is there a baseball picture that I sent?

PF: I don't know. You would have to check on Sunday.

Son: Yeah. We will check on Sunday.

JB: If there is I don't think your granddad is on the baseball team. He wasn't a baseball player.

PF: Possibly.

JB: At any rate I was the one that picked him out and I must have asked George. I said, "Are you a football player? Did you ever play football?" He said something about high school. I said you will be alright. We put him on the team.

Son: You were looking for one old time acquaintance. You mentioned his name.

JB: Oh, Van Severn. Did you ever hear of Van Severn?

PF: No. No.

JB: He lives in Highlands.

PF: Oh yeah.

JB: Well, now he may be as old as I. We fought here boxing, you know. We fought in the ring. To get a little money you do anything to make a little money. So, I used to fight as a kid. I said, "Well, I will be in the ring." So, I fought him three times.

PF: Out here?

JB: Yeah in Fort Hancock here in the ring and beat him twice and one was a draw but he never beat me. (laughter)

Son: What weight class did you box at when you were at Fort Hancock?

JB: I was in the middleweight but I gave way by 9 pounds. I was 151 fighting and 160 is the maximum for the middleweights.

Son: What year was that when you were fighting?

JB: From say 1914 up until the (World) War (I) and about 1924. When I came back I didn't fight. I had my shoulder busted in Germany playing a football game. When I came back (inaudible)

Son: Did they have post championships in boxing?

JB: No. They didn't. We didn't have any at all. Like I said to make a little extra money. What people won't do for money and they will do it yet.

PF: Oh yeah.

JB: Well, I just wonder did you talk with your grandmother at any time about the Army?

PF: I wish I could have. I was too young.

JB: You were too young.

PF: I was too young.

JB: Well, after she was gone you...

PF: Only my older cousin really remembers.

JB: Well, she was a fine girl.

PF: Well, I am glad to hear that.

Son: Dad, these must have been the (inaudible) down here.

PF: Hello (to person in hallway)

JB: This was perhaps this was the room for there is the sergeants' room

Son: You can't remember what one of those you were in when you made sergeant?

JB: I think it may have been that there. This is to go up in the attic.

Son: What did they keep up in the attic?

JB: Your stuff that you wanted to save.

Son: So, your civilian stuff.

JB: Your civilian clothes would be up there.

Son: How about the rifles? Did they keep them in the building?

JB: Yes. There would be a rifle rack in the squad room.

Son: Right in the squad room?

JB: At each end as much as the rifle rack would hold whether it was 16 or maybe and you had them right in the middle of folks on each side. This fine....

PF: Do you want to wander through the rest of the building down the other end?

JB: Well, we could. All of these would be sergeants.

PF: Just watch your step on this little lip here.

Son: These were all sergeants. Probably not this one.

JB: Let's see what it looked like. Yeah. That's a sergeant's room. About this size. And I am sure they had more of these blocked off and didn't use it when I was here. The Army was at its lowest and depleted. Men didn't care to enlist. The pay wasn't as good as it is now where you get a lot of money. So, they had a hard time to get men in. I know our company was sent out several times, the whole company was sent out on recruiting duty.

PF: Really?

JB: So, we could recruit, yes. Try to get on the street. We would be out. We would go from here. The truck would take us. Well, they paid our room and then the truck would take us to the corner where we would try to imagine the Army was doing this to enlist men in the Army. Go out on the corner and beg them to come in. (laughter) It was down to a bad situation in those days.

Son: Dad, why don't you describe that first firing on Battery Gunnison?

JB: Oh I'll do that when I...

Son: When you talk to Elaine. Okay.

JB: She will probably, Elaine, you know.

Son: Okay.

JB: (inaudible)

Son: Well, she is taping it.

PF: Well, if you are going to see Elaine on Sunday.

Son: We outta go in case something happens.

PF: True.

Son: Dad, you ought to describe this, the firing the first time out on Gunnison.

JB: And I think that this was a record. I was the gun pointer that particular spring. We had gun practice in the spring in the fall we had mine firing. They used to fire three mines. They set off three mines. A little boat I guess it was the *Harvey Brown* would drag a target around and where the target would go over where the mine should be they would give the signal to fire and at the (mining) casement. That is at the end of Sandy Hook. Not at the very peak but at the end of our Fort Hancock area. See the other end is just the government but Fort Hancock had a certain area. Well, at the extreme end of Fort Hancock there was called a casement. That was where they had batteries. They wouldn't have electricity. They used to have batteries to use electricity. And when they went to fire to set off a mine you would pull a switch and the battery would send up current into the mine to set it off like you would with regular electricity. But there was a man there all the time taking care of the batteries. They would get dry and this sergeant during the War became a captain. He went to Indiana.

Son: Do you remember his name?

JB: McKinney. McKinney. I can't think of his first name. But he was a graduate of Indiana University. He said, "Boy, if you could have gone to college," he said, "You would have been on the football team," and I asked him to play on the football and he said, "No. We get banged up." He couldn't play.

Son: Well, what was your job on the gun, Battery Gunnison?

JB: I was the gun pointer. That is a rating that you get six dollars extra for.

Son: What actually did the gun pointer do?

JB: He has to he operates with one hand the gun.

Son: Traversing mechanism.

JB: Traversing of the gun, you know, following the target. You had to follow the target with your arm this way and look through your glass and follow it.

Son: What was the target out there, a moving target?

JB: A moving target with a red flag on it.

Son: Sort of like a barge, a small barge.

JB: 6 x 6.

Son: Towed behind a boat.

JB: Towed behind a boat. Anything that would stay up on the water. It had to be a boat that it was in or made so it wouldn't go down.

Son: A small boat

JB: With one arm, you followed the gun looking through the sights and then when you were given, when you knew your gun was in sight, you would say fire and you would have eyes on it and they would fire the gun. No. I fired the gun. They had had a lever and you pulled it and you fired the gun at the time you thought that it would hit the target and if you didn't hit the target then you would stop traversing your gun with your hand and use your hand to pull the sight where the splash was, where the projectile hit into the water. Then the next time your gun would be where the splash was would be ahead of the target. See, your sight was on the target but the barrel of your gun was in front.

Son: Okay and then you fired again.

JB: The next time I was so fortunate. I don't remember any time that Gunnison had the record of hitting the second time, but I was fortunate. That splash was exactly where that lens hit in the middle of it and I said if the range data comes in from the primary and secondary station. You know what primary and secondary stations are? Well, primary station gives a certain reading and secondary gives a certain reading. And then they put that on...

Son: Where they cross.

JB: Where they cross and then they know how far it is from there to the gun and they give you the amount of yardage and they say put your scale on so many yards and they had the range good and my azimuth instrument, that is what they called the azimuth instrument you get the sight right. They do it also the same way by primary and secondary but this time they didn't. They did it manually like myself. So, I hollered and had the reading, not any reading but my sight. If you have a reading use the sight because you have to take the reading that they sent to you. But I had manually to depend on my ability to do the right thing at the right time. And I did and the projectile hit the

target on the second shot and I don't remember at Gunnison or any of the big guns they never hit the target because a 12-inch gun to hit a small target like that and so with the... see I don't know they ever knew sight but this particular left Captain Bordeaux. He said he we know this manual firing. So, we did that. He depended on me to get the proper azimuth sight and the proper range and get the amount. The range means up and down the gun is elevated. A certain it is so many yards it goes up higher. It is more. Or if you wanted less it is lower. Now my gun had to be in position for the amount of yards so this projectile would hit the amount of yards they tell them to in front.

Son: So, you hit the target.

JB: To get beyond me calculated.

Son: 70 years.

JB: Now you young people can calculate anything.

PF: We try.

JB: Patrice, you are okay. (laughter) Is your dad remember me?

PF: Yes.

JB: Does he?

PF: Yes.

JB: He must have been about 6.

PF: He remembers your name.

JB: I think he was about 6 years old when Andy and (?) took him and his brother.

PF: Joe.

JB: Joe. Joe was in the Kelly family. Joe, John, Mike, Ed and Andy.

PF: Yep. I remember Ed and Andy very well.

JB: Really?

PF: Oh yeah. They were two of my favorites. Those Kellys were my favorite relatives. Definitely.

JB: Yes. This was somewhere and I can't remember this wing where it was occupied or not. I don't think it was because we only had a small company the 1-3-6 company. 1-3-7

Company. This was 1-3-7 Company. Ours was 1-3-6 where me and your granddad were together in 1-3-6 Company.

Son: How about the latrine? Did they have latrines on the top floor here?

JB: Yes. They did.

(Tape ends) (Tape restarts with additional interview on September 14, 1986.)

EH: Today is Sunday, September 14, 1986 and I am sitting with Tom Hoffman, Park Historian. My name is Elaine Harmon, Museum Technician and our special guest today is John Borris who is continuing this tape of Friday the 12th. Accompanying us will be his son Roger Borris who lives in Parsippany, New Jersey and his dad who has just moved to Florida to be with Roger's brother who will be walking with us remembering Fort Hancock 1912-1914. This is Accession 917 we are looking at the donation of photo.

JB: Niemchech. This fella's name was Niemchech.

TH: Next to you?

EH: Looking at 1914 photograph of Company 136 baseball team. He is naming people. Phil Repella is standing at the top left.

JB: These officers were Pierce and Walker.

EH: Captain Walker and Lt. Pierce is written on the back of the photo.

JB: But then the others...

Son: What was the picture you were saying?

JB: This here was Hartman, but Evans, oh yeah here is Evans in the picture. But this is not the Evans that Mulhern mentioned. This was our company. He was...

TH: Right there behind the captain.

JB: Yeah. That.. this was Niemchech.

EH: There was Niemchech was a CCC veteran. Wouldn't that be a coincidence?

JB: But that's we had in 1914. Naturally I was there. That is a long time ago.

TH: Is that the back of your barracks there? The back porch of the barracks?

JB: This is the back porch of 1-3-6 Company Barracks.

Son: No. No. No.

JB: Barracks 23.

TH: Yeah Barracks 23 because it looks like the other type of barracks.

JB: That wasn't the double.

TH: Right. I understand.

JB: That was 1-3-7 Company and this was 1-3-6 Company with 1-3-6 on it.

TH: This fella again was your...

JB: He was the pitcher, Hartman.

TH: And he is lower right. Yeah. He is sitting lower right corner.

JB: And this is Evans but I can't think this was he was our second baseman. I was a substitute. When I came in from the coal mines we had no time to practice baseball. In the coal mines when we came home it was dark. Only time was Sunday and we didn't have Saturdays off. We had to work nine hours on Saturday as we did any other day. Nine hours so we didn't get to see much daylight. And we didn't get to practice yet. I was a baseball player.....

(Tape repeats over again) (Section removed as it is a repeat about the gun firing.)

JB: I made the team. The football team I made immediately. Company, I didn't go for the company team I went right to the post team, the best of the companies made the post team.

TH: Oh, I didn't know that.

JB: That's the way we would have a post team when one would play like play Hamilton or Wadsworth or Fort Totten. We played the post team.

TH: Almost like company teams were the minors and they you put a post team together and make the majors to play the other forts. (laughter) Very good.

JB: But now it was just a company team. We had no other teams right on the Fort. I mean we didn't have a post team at that time but starting about 1915 or 16 they made a post team.

EH: We have seen the old uniforms, yeah, the old baseball uniforms. Did they kept on being passed along to another member?

JB: During the winter we had them up in the attic. They weren't ours. We turned them in at the end of the season. If you were discharged, if you were discharged your uniform was in the attic. That was company...

TH: Army property.

JB: Company Army property.

TH: Do you recall what the color was? Like I see the numbers of your company here, 136...

JB: That was either blue or black. That I would not say.

TH: Okay.

EH: And was it stripped, was it stripping like a pinstripe of you suit?

TH: No. they just have...

JB: No. I think it was plain but that I wouldn't even know. It looks like it is just plain. Either off white or gray, I don't know.

TH: Do you recall when you finally got a post baseball team? Did they have Fort Hancock on it? Did they have like the letters that would say Fort Hancock? Right here because it says 136.

JB: I know after we got the post team I know he was our pitcher then so it must have been the following year they formed a post team. But I didn't even make it but he was, I left here in 1917 when Black Jack (General Pershing) formed his...

TH: Expeditionary Force.

JB: He formed the First Division and we were one of the companies. I guess they had it all set. We happened to be in a motorized battalion. We had four companies of motorized, four companies in the motorized. There were four companies in the horse drawn and you would take the ammunition from the depot up to Infantry. The horsedrawn, where we couldn't go in with the trucks. They could go in with the horses and they had the ammunition carrying to each man so many pounds on a horse. They had little carts like made of metal. They put the ammunition on it and they could haul it. Small maybe two horses would pull it into then Infantry where we went in as far as we could to those batteries that were close to the road. The men of those batteries would carry it was only the .75s. They would carry them up to the guns. But those are...

EH: I notice it says Smedley photo. Do you remember Thomas Smedley because John Mulhern remembers him?

JB: Oh yes, yes. We had personal pictures with him, you know.

EH: Because we have been tracking him down. Personal portrait photos?

JB: Yes. Smedley was, he got to be when we first, let's see this was when...

TH: April 30, 1912.

JB: That's when I first when.

Son: It's got the barracks number up there.

TH: Yeah, # 23.

EH: We are looking at a second photo which is 136th Company dated April 30, 1912.

JB: Niemchech up here.

EH: Right at the Barracks 23. In the baseball photo Niemchech appears second row, second from the left.

TH: He is at the very top.

JB: And he was saying about Dunn. Here is Dunn, the sergeant he is talking about he knows his gun.

EH: The far right, Sergeant Dunn.

JB: His wife had a miscarriage. She stepped without me being out there with the footstool and blamed it on me. She stepped too hasty to get off the train and she stepped down and fell and had a miscarriage.

EH: The bald soldier next to you.

JB: And I knew him well and I can't think of... Davis, Davis. See how the name comes.

TH: Great.

JB: Davis.

EH: What about the uniform? That is fascinating to us was the color of the uniform, the style.

JB: Blue, blue.

TH: Is this your dress uniform?

JB: Yeah. That is the dress at that time with the caps.

EH: Blue.

JB: Olive drab was our all day. This was the parade dress. Swartzman, when I enlisted he was my drill instructor. He taught me about the gun and how to, you know, regular parading and maneuvers. Knowing how to..

TH: March.

JB: And marching. He taught me.

EH: Swartzman is pictured...

TH: 4th from the left, front row.

EH: Seated.

JB: (inaudible about Pierce)

EH: Captain Walker or Lt. Pierce.

JB: This isn't Walker. I think he in the meantime must have left.

Son: No. Walker is in the '14.

JB: Yeah, I say in the meantime. This is 1912, so in the meantime he must have been

TH: Not there.

JB: He must have been elevated to maybe major. He was a captain. So, he may have been promoted to maybe major because he is not on here.

Son: That does look like Pierce.

JB: This does look like Pierce here.

TH: Right there. You are right.

JB: That's what I said. He must have retained but he must have been just a recruit lieutenant because he is still on here two years later. I thought he would be on here but he wasn't.

EH: And you do remember Thomas Smedley which is quite remarkable.

JB: Smedley was the photographer. He didn't have a big place but later he got to be pretty well fixed. He took the picture of that if you see that May picture that John asked me. You will see Smedley on there.

EH: That's right. Smedley photo, "The wreck of the *John H. May*." Sandy Hook, December 31, 1912. It is captioned, "We didn't take the anchor, nor yet the ships log, but..." That is the way it is phrased here.

JB: But anything happened. The sergeant emptied the ship and took all the lumber off of it.

EH: To build additions to their existing rather flimsy bungalows.

TH: You can see the lumber on the deck. Yeah. That is the lumber.

JB: Many of them, these became sergeants.

EH: In the group.

JB: In the group they became sergeants.

EH: We are looking at a smaller, like a postcard showing the football, the 136 Champions of 1915.

JB: These, this is George Fournier. This is Patrice's granddad.

EH: The first man on the far right, the first row. I like the mascot.

JB: Sam Sanders is this fellow's name.

TH: Standing third from the right.

JB: Our mascot, Meatball. (laughter)

EH: I love it. I wish I could stay but I have to get going.

JB: Well, have a good day.

EH: I have to leave here at 12 o'clock. This is going to be instant showering.

JB: We are taking Helen, maybe Patrice that took Meatball with them to France.

TH: When you were shipped overseas?

JB: Not our...we left Fort Hancock but the company after us who formed a company it maybe a similar circumstances. It may be a company that was all volunteered although I don't know that. Our company was all volunteers. We wanted to go. We didn't know what we were getting into (laughter) but we didn't lose many men. Our company did all our work at night. The Germans had to, we went in the dark. You had to learn how to drive without looking at the road. You looked at the sky.

TH: Really?

JB: Going through a forest. Surprising how you can follow the road by looking up at the sky. You turn. You can get this. We really only crept at 6-7 miles per hour. So, it wasn't like you were driving and would have a quick turn. That was the way we drove at night when it was dark and when you got out of the woods, you crept along by even somebody walking where it was bad and in all our work we unloaded our ammunition at the battery.

TH: Now this was when you were out in France?

JB: Well, in France you have heard of Gene Tunney haven't you?

TH: Sure.

JB: I was in the same tournament, the AEF Tournament for the boxers. He won the lightweight Champion, AEF, American Expeditionary Forces. He won and I would have probably fought the fella who won it. He was a has been. He was old and he was through fighting as a profession. He was a professional. I knew nothing of the tricks. You know, I street fought as a kid on. You call me an SOB, I was in a fight. So, I learned how to fight. Street fighting and that is what I carried out when I was a fighter. I had a good strong body. I must have had a pretty good punch. But I entered and I won my first fight and two days after I played a game of football and I busted my shoulder so I was in the hospital for another month, but the tournament was over. But I never did fight after that. My shoulder never did recover. So, that was always a hook on it.

TH: I know this is a lot of memories for you. I wonder if some of these fellas are still hanging around out there somewhere.

JB: I wonder. I wonder but they look, they must have been, I was 21 at that time.

TH: Right.

JB: This was in March. February I was 21 and all of these look like they are older so they would have to be older than I. Now this fella, Messinger, Mess, I know his name was Messinger.

TH: This fella right here.

JB: Next to me and this fella Davis and the Messinger.

TH: Yeah left of Davis, okay.

JB: Yeah. I outta know more of these names. Like this fella. I know Niemchech, outstanding on the baseball team Niemchech.

TH: Yeah right there, okay.

JB: But I knew them all. Let's see this is, oh there is a Brown. This fellas name is Brown. And I have an individual. He was a sergeant. He took a liking to me when I came in he took a liking to me. He was just something in him he like me when I was a recruit. After he saw that I was a good football player and afterwards I had to be boxing he was the one who put me in for corporal. And I got to be in the corporal, sergeant ability to be a sergeant through him.

TH: Now that is Sergeant Brown.

JB: Yeah. Brown.

TH: So, he is sitting there. Third from the right front row sitting there, Sergeant Brown.

JB: Oh yes. I got a picture of him.

TH: He looks relatively young though. He was young.

JB: Well, he was a sergeant. He must have been in three years at least. So, because of him I got to be in faster to be a corporal and afterwards he thought I was okay. I had to play baseball, and basketball and did a lot of swimming and I ran and I have on my recording. I ran in a five mile race. We ran around there was a barracks, you see. In front of the barracks and in behind the officers there was like a road in the back. There was no road in back of the barracks here. It was just a walk, a brick walk and up to the Hospital and down and after the intersection there where the officers' quarters, not the officers' quarters, the Headquarters and then the unmarried officers, what do you call those?

TH: Bachelor Officers, BOQ.

JB: Yeah.

TH: That was right there.

JB: There was a road. That was our route it was about a mile.

TH: Yeah. I would say.

JB: And this fella Mark who all he said to me, that's the one that said, "You go on. You participate in the five mile run." He said, "That is all that is left." I said, "Look." I said, "I just came out of the hospital." You know, that I was ready to be discharged. I am afraid that if I do something it may come back. He said, "That is all. That's that." (inaudible) He said, "Whatever I can do I will help." It looks to me like we can get where I don't have to run fast or slow or where I am running too fast. I want to say here is five miles. He wanted to divide it, a mile, 6 minute mile. I said, "I want to run fast." And he said, "That's a good idea." So, we measured a mile. And he stood with his watch. Whether he had a...they must have had stopwatches even then.

TH: Yes. Yes.

JB: I can't recall. He had a watch whether he used his own watch or a stop watch but the first mile I ran he said, "You keep that pace up," and I tried.

(Tape ends abruptly) (Interview starts with new topic.)

JB: (looking at photo) Oh, that really brings, this is even before my time maybe. Oh, that does look bare. But it wasn't long after, no I think this must have been '08 or something because we did have a little more trees. These little trees that are big now must have been about this size. Maybe that may have been.

TH: This is the, it's hard to see it right over where my finger is but this was the stables building. The stable, there is a soldier sentry talking to two children if you can make that out. If you can bring...

JB: Well, I thought there was a blacksmith shop.

TH: That's it. That's the Blacksmith Shop right there across the street from the stable building and there's the Bakery, there's the Post Bakery building right there.

JB: Yeah. And the next on is the Commissary?

TH: This one, it's called the Quartermaster Warehouse, the Quartermaster Warehouse, the coal bins, can you see?

JB: Oh, that I would unload those gondolas and make a little extra money. That was as a private. And this fella Sanders, he was from Pennsylvania. We would empty one of those gondolas. Know how to shovel, both of us and we would empty a gondola and get paid through the, what was the one that handled the money?

TH: Quartermaster?

JB: The Quartermaster, that is who. The Quartermaster then would pay us what he would have to pay maybe twice as much to those who didn't know how to shovel. We were both coal miner sons and we knew how to shovel and we would do it in half the time.

This fella Sander, he was better than I by far. You see that picture. He is a big man. Yeah, this fella, Sanders he was a piece of work so between us we would empty a gondola.

TH: Was that on tracks back there? Were there railroad tracks?

JB: Yeah. Tracks right up to the some of it could be dumped.

TH: Into the coal bins.

JB: Into the coal bin right there where the tracks were. The rest of it had to be by hand.

TH: I guess with scoop shovels.

JB: Scoop, good scoop. Hard coal. That's the anthracite coal.

TH: From there would they, I guess Army mules would take it around to the different buildings? You know, they have a cart.

JB: Yes. Dump trucks.

TH: Had trucks.

JB: Had dump, little ones, not great big ones. Small dump trucks.

TH: Hmm. Make deliveries over to the...

JB: That's the I think we used coal even in the kitchens for our...

TH: ...cooking.

JB: I don't recall. I don't recall whether we cooked by electricity. I think it was just coal.

TH: Coal stoves.

JB: We used that in Pennsylvania. We didn't have any else. Only the rich had gas. We had coal on ours, a coal stove. Imagine those are the weeds it looks like.

TH: Yeah pretty tall ones it looks like. But the Post is practically brand new when these photographs were taken.

JB: They were back in the early, before 1910 I imagine. That was before my time.

TH: I have to ask you. Here on the left you can see the officers' homes. I have to ask you what did the soldiers' refer to them as? Was it Officers' Row or Officers' Line because I have heard both terms used for where the officers lived?

JB: Officers' Row is what I have in mind, Officers' Row.

TH: When you were here? That's what they used to...

JB: When I was here Officers' Row.

TH: Because I have looked in several military dictionaries for the Officer Row, Officer Line and I can't find any of them.

JB: Any of them. It's probably just slang word, line, Officers' Line. I think I called it Officers' Row.

TH: I have often heard that the enlisted men weren't going over there. Like you weren't supposed to go over there unless it was on business.

JB: No. I worked for a colonel in his, in the morning I would stoke up his furnace and do several things as a private. I can't think of the colonel's name.

TH: Would he be commanding here? Would he be the commanding officer?

JB: He was the next, I believe.

TH: Second in command.

JB: I can't think of the name.

TH: But you used to go over there.

JB: I had access there and would go over there.

TH: But that was to do work, like you were saying.

JB: But all of these were something that added to my life, learning, you know. And I talked to him, you know. Why I don't remember his name. It was here that I worked for him for a year.

TH: Did they, you know, I have been told that the third floor of these officers' homes could be for a maid because the houses did have the maid's staircase from the kitchen that goes up the back and joins into the landing of the main staircase going into the second floor.

JB: Could be depending on the wife. If she was maybe an officer married into a lady who had wealth. You know, he married, he was from the Academy, West Point, but he married into money. That kind would want somebody like that.

Son: There is the old train bridge.

JB: That's in the Highlands. That's the old bridge, yes. And instead of turning like we do now we just went up, up there and that was the way we would go to Kelly's. I can't think of it. What's the county?

TH: Monmouth County.

JB: Monmouth County.

TH: Monmouth County.

JB: New Monmouth.

TH: Oh, okay. Alright. New Monmouth, the town. Okay.

JB: Yeah. New Monmouth. Well, they lived in New Monmouth, the Kelly's father. The Kelly's afterward married and moved places but Andy lived in Belford.

TH: Oh okay.

JB: Oh, theres the...

TH: This is the picture.

JB: That's the picture and let's see if Andy is... I can't make out.

TH: It's really hard but this is the photograph that John Mulhern looked at...

JB: Oh, he thought it was Pike.

TH: Jim Pike or Andy Kelly he says both of those fellas are...

JB: And I can't no it can't be Andy because Andy wasn't husky. Andy was more my build. Andy was more thinner.

TH: Slimmer.

JB: Thinner. I didn't bring any. (to Son) Did you bring those pictures of Anna and Andy together? Where are they? Well, because you will see Andy on a picture here. There's the two cars. That is what we had. And I was a conductor on that train. That's the train.

TH: This picture we know was taken before 1910 because in 1910, they built the huge metal or shall I say steel water tower replacing the little one over there.

JB: Is that so, oh?

TH: So, we know this photograph was taken before...

JB: But that is the same train that I was on.

TH: That was here. That was here. They didn't change it from say up to 1912. Yeah. I think that is a Baldwin locomotive. The famous Baldwin Locomotive Works.

JB: Well, I know that wasn't Andy Kelly then. Because I know he was in my time he got to be engineer. He was working in the Proving Ground. And after he was recommended, oh...

TH: There's your boat.

JB: Yep. That looks like it.

TH: The *Ordnance*.

JB: The Proving Ground.

TH: That's the ordnance.

JB: The *ORD*, the old *ORD*

TH: *Ordnance*. You had the *ORD* here too. You had the *ORD* and the *Ordnance* and the *ORD* was operated of course by the Proving Ground folks.

JB: I see. That's the reason.

TH: And I think the *ORD* was operated by Fort Hancock in the mine.

JB: The minefield.

Son: I didn't know that.

TH: Yeah. They keep, I wanted to show you this one here. There's the big water tank that is here now and here's the roundhouse and there's a locomotive if you can just see above my fingers. There's a locomotive there and all these buildings are still, the roundhouse is gone but the red brick buildings are still up there and there's the Officers' Club where, actually I am sorry, the Officer Quarters where the officers who worked at the Proving Ground when you were here. Of course, later on when the Proving Ground moved out of Sandy Hook, the Officer Quarters became the Officers' Club. And this is

the old Civil War Fort. You can see this huge wall. See, they smashed down the wall that was built during the Civil War days. That building was the laboratory, the research laboratory for the Proving Ground and right along side of it was St. Mary's Chapel. I don't know if you remember St. Mary's Chapel. It was right in here behind the lab.

JB: They tore that down since.

TH: Oh, it is still standing. Yeah. It is still standing. It ended up on Coast Guard property up at the intersection way up the street.

JB: Oh, that's not on the Fort Hancock...

TH: Boundary?

JB: Boundary.

TH: What was Fort Hancock...

JB: Just like the three inch guns are not. They are private. You don't go in there.

TH: Well, the thing is they are actually on our side of the fence. Your gun batteries up there like Battery Urmston I think that's how you pronounce it, Urmston, Battery Morris, the 3-inch gun batteries are actually on National Park property but that fence is so close. The other side of the fence is Coast Guard property. Those townhouses, the townhouses back there that's Coast Guard. But you see, the Army owned all this and gave the whole tip area to the Coast Guard in 1974 when the Army was closing the Fort. They gave the whole tip, was given over to the Coast Guard.

JB: And they then turn it over to the government park?

TH: Yeah. Half and half. Most of Sandy Hook went over to the National Park Service except about 200 acres of the tip area went over to the Coast Guard.

JB: All sand.

TH: Yeah. All sand right. Here's the, this is the Proving Ground Detachment here. They have got their tents up. I don't know if you tents were like that.

JB: I, they were somewhat...these are round tents.

TH: Here are some wall tents. They got some wall tents but everything else is like pyramid shaped.

JB: Well, here's what one man carried, you formed a squad. The front they were numbered. One man carried one part of the tent and another carried the other part of the tent. The two of you had to be together otherwise your tent wouldn't be formed right. So

the two of you in a squad, you know, your partner and one the one you are going to tent with. So, that was it, but these don't look like the tents.

TH: No. I know what you are saying.

JB: They went right down to the ground.

TH: Pup tents more?

JB: Yeah. Pup tents. Pup tents.

TH: So, you would have half the tent and your squad mate another half.

JB: Yes. Yes. Which you put together...

TH: This intrigues me. See the wooden box right here with a little roof. I don't know what that is for. It might be a fire alarm.

JB: That doesn't ring a bell to me. And these tents they must be a squad tent. They are eight men to a tent. See these, they are a squad tents. That's a company. (counting) Eight tents. And there are 32 soldiers.

TH: If you have eight to a tent and you have eight tents, in fact, you got a couple of white ones too.

JB: That's the sergeants.

TH: Really? Because I notice on both sides.

JB: That's the sergeants. You see these are squads. A sergeant don't belong in a squad. A squad is a corporal.

TH: Okay.

JB: And his eight, that's nine, no the corporal is right with them. There's eight, eight men.

TH: So the corporal is in charge of seven.

JB: Yeah. The other seven. See the corporal is #1. He is on the right. See, one two three four five six seven, eight.

TH: Okay.

JB: That's the way the corporal occupies a tent with his seven men. That's interesting because some of them like I say these tents must have been in the camp. Maybe this was

the mailman's. I don't know what this could have been. This could have been his tent where he gave out letters or like we used to have to go down to the Post Office.

TH: Right. I got you.

JB: To bring it out to camp if you were in camp like that. You miss out for a month no mail. That wouldn't have been right so I think a tent like that may have been for that purpose but I don't really know but they were a different tent then I am used to. This must have been the...

TH: Mess?

JB: The kitchen and the dining.

TH: Where they would...

JB: Eat.

TH: Where they would eat.

JB: Right. Because you would have to have someplace where your mess kit. And we would camp out at our battery.

TH: I wanted to ask you that. We have some information on the years you were here which I jotted down in my little notepad and now I can see my notepad. I can give you the days that you actually camped out here. This is my scribbled notes. On July 31st to August 10th the six companies here at Fort Hancock camped behind their batteries.

JB: That's it.

TH: That's 1913.

JB: Yeah. That's it.

TH: This is from returns of Army Posts. All of the Army records went to the National Archives and we found a lot of the returns, you know, your weekly what you were doing here so to speak things and on July 31st all six companies here including, the 136, 137th camped behind their batteries until August 10th.

JB: Yes. Yes. We would be behind Morris, Battery with the 3-inch. See at that time we had the 3-inch. I think the 137th had the 6-inch.

TH: Right. There are two of them side by side. Urmston and Morris.

JB: Morris is what I...

TH: Here's Urmston had upwards of six 3-inch guns and Morris had four 3-inch guns. And then Battery Peck had two 6-inch barbette guns which is World War II, in World War II, the Army moved the barbette guns down to Battery Gunnison back in 1942 or 1943. And those are the guns that are still there.

Son: Because my dad said those were disappearing.

TH: Yeah. Gunnison was originally disappearing built in 1904 until 1942-1943 when the Army took the disappearing guns out and brought...

JB: That's the gun that I manipulated to disappearing gun.

TH: You were up on that little platform with the..

JB: I stood on that platform not yesterday the day before.

Son: Are there any other guns, another 3-inch gun?

TH: There is a 3-inch rapid fire right in front of the Ordnance Museum at the Aberdeen Proving Ground.

Son: But nothing up here.

TH: Nothing up here. Your guns, Battery Morris guns, were salvaged in 1946. September 1946 so about a year to the day of VJ Day. So, they say salvaged in the records and we are fortunate once again the Army sent a lot of the records to the National Archives in Washington, DC. And when they say salvaged that doesn't necessarily mean scrapped.

JB: Scrapped, yeah.

TH: But sometimes they were to VFW Posts or American Legion Posts as lawn decorations.

JB: Some of them asked for especially.

TH: Yes. They could get them. But to do it you would have to survey every active post in the United States to find out where they went to because I know there are just the gun just one 3-inch guns my mom moved down to Forked River, New Jersey, down to Forked River, New Jersey in South Jersey. There is a gun in front of the town hall and that gun you can trace from the serial number on the muzzle. It came from San Francisco. From a Fort in the West Coast. I was sure it came from this Fort, from Fort Hancock but we traced the serial number all the way to the West Coast. So, these things get scattered.

JB: Salvaged and scattered.

TH: Yeah. Either or, either melted down for pots and pans or scattered to the winds.

JB: Do you think we have to meet Helen Kelly?

TH: What time is that?

JB: I thought Roger said...

Son: We have plenty of time.

JB: We have to leave here at quarter after 12?

Son: You have another hour yet.

JB: Okay. Because we don't want to meet them until 1:30. Is that it?

Son: Yeah.

JB: It only takes about a half hour to New Monmouth.

TH: Yeah about that.

JB: From New Monmouth I would say to Lynbrook I don't know just where. It must be just west of Red Bank.

TH: Lincroft.

JB: Lincroft.

TH: Yeah. Yeah. It's not far. From Red Bank to Lincroft is under ten minutes.

JB: Oh (inaudible)

TH: Yeah. We will hop in the car and go up there. Because I want to, you went to Gunnison right?

JB: Yeah.

TH: I would like to get a picture of you up on one of those guns.

JB: Yeah.

TH: And also go up to your old gun battery.

JB: Mulhern asked if I could take a picture.

TH: I want if you will let me especially by, in 1961 the Army named the parade field Pershing Field and I would like to, yeah after Black Jack I would like to get a picture there by the sign would be nice.

JB: So, it was he that we went over. He was in command of the First Division. He was the commander.

TH: Fighting in France.

JB: But he went over with the First Division. The summer, fall was our commander of our brigade in fact. But Blackjack Pershing he went over, not with us he went over before us. He was in Saint-Nazaire. Saint-Nazaire.

TH: France.

JB: That's where our boat landed.

TH: And you were in the 1st Division

JB: Yes.

TH: My wife's grandfather was in the 2nd.

JB: 2nd Division yeah. Oh yeah. That's the way Marines, they had a brigade of Marines in the Second Division.

TH: In the Army Division?

JB: Yeah...

TH: Really? I didn't know that.

JB: That's the 2nd Division where Tooney came from the Marines to be, he was a fighter in that same tournament that I had at first.

TH: Okay.

JB: I had won my first bout and then had my shoulder busted and I went to the hospital and I didn't fight anymore after that. I still played baseball and basketball but I couldn't fight. My arm was all messed up. So I just gave up boxing.

Son: Why don't we take a look at the battery?

TH: Okay.

(Tape stops and restarts outside.)

TH: How about guard duty here?

JB: Yes.

TH: Did you have to walk the post?

JB: Yes. And there would be that couldn't be where they sent was called sentinel blocks. Sentry box.

TH: Oh like a little sentry, tiny little building just for the soldier.

JB: Just for the fella to go into to warm up so he wouldn't, you know.

TH: Freeze.

JB: You know, when it gets down to zero or a little below. It does here in New Jersey, Fort Hancock. It gets we would have to go out to the *Harvey Brown* and walk a block or so out in the ice to unload whatever they had or if soldiers were out on a pass they couldn't dock. They couldn't get through the ice. It was hard enough that the *Harvey Brown* with its bow couldn't break the ice.

TH: It got so thick during the winter.

JB: Yeah. You have to stay right out and anchor there and let the men off that were on a pass and walk in on ice. (laughter)

TH: Now I am thinking of you walking. What was it done at night walk the posts?

JB: Yeah. And that's you have and I am sure just about right there they'd have one of those...

TH: Sentry boxes.

JB: Made of wood and bare. It was painted. It didn't look like a chicken coop. It looked like just where you could go in and warm up enough. It would be say five minutes. Five minutes of rubbing your hands.

TH: To get out of the wind. To warm them up.

JB: You wore those gloves and even they weren't warm enough. We had mitts. Not a mitt. Yeah mitts. Instead of finger gloves it would be a mitt to keep your hands warm. But we didn't know any different. When you don't know any different it doesn't bother you. (laughter) I enjoyed it.

TH: Well, you endured and survived all that poison oak.

JB: Oh, that was the worst. That was something. I experienced many things good and bad. But then there was that role of Ordnance Barracks that looked like it was..

TH: We just passed the Commissary and here's where the coal bins were right here. That concrete.

JB: Yeah right here. I was, now that I think of it there was a track behind here.

TH: And it's still there. It's still in the gravel. The tracks are still, they are still in the ground. See them over on the right? Just barely visible but they are right in the asphalt. And here is the Quartermaster Warehouse. You can drive right back here. You can drive right over the tracks. This...

JB: Is that the Commissary?

TH: No. That's another warehouse. To your right. Look to your right. Over here, see it down the street.

JB: Oh yes.

TH: That's the Commissary. And here's the tracks. See, the tracks in the ground.

JB: Yes.

TH: There's the tracks and they are still in the grass too. They are still in the grass. And they ran and they are still behind the Commissary too. (laughter)

JB: The cars used to dump part of it but you couldn't get it all out. Then you had to use a shovel.

TH: Mmm hmm. Right here is your Post Bakery. That was a latrine right there. Building 44 and there's the ovens are still in there but I don't think the Army used the Post Bakery building for many, many years.

JB: After the Second World War they just let it go, huh.

TH: Yes. This used to be the Blacksmith Shop here right here on the right. There's the stable building. Go all the way up here. I think this is where your gym was right here. The World War I gym.

JB: That's it.

TH: Right where those cars are parked.

JB: That's exactly where I thought.

TH: That's where you made your famous run from, caught the cold.

JB: And that put me in the hospital.

TH: And coming up on your right is Building 102. This was the barracks for the soldiers at the Proving Ground.

JB: That's it there. Built later that wasn't there in 1905.

TH: Yeah. They had wooden buildings over here to your left that were here before that brick barracks. There is St. Mary's Chapel right there. Right there. That is St. Mary's Chapel which the Coast Guard turned into a recreation building right there. That was St. Mary's Chapel and this was the research lab building which later became the school here. We will hang a right here.

JB: There's where the...that's the Proving Ground.

TH: Yeah. That was the Proving Ground, the machine shops. That was the red brick buildings were the machine shops and then we will make a left right here on this street coming up. And there is the Officers' Club up off to the right. That was Battery Richardson.

JB: See I, Richardson is one that is not on the map. Potter and Richardson is not on the map. The 12-inch disappearing guns.

TH: Yeah. That's it. And then Bloomfield is next to it. Those two pits were Battery Bloomfield and then where you see that battery commander's catwalk, that long catwalk there. That was Battery Halleck. They had three 10-inch guns at Battery Halleck. And up here up at the north end of the row was Battery Alexander. Battery Alexander and two 12-inch guns again. But Richardson was way down at the south end.

JB: Battery Richardson was the one that I remembered.

TH: We will probably have to park right in here 'cause we have to walk through the fence here and right down the street is you just have to watch that soft sand. (tape stops and starts) Did you have wagons or anything?

JB: They had wagons.

TH: Right in here, this was a range finding station that was built around 1921.

JB: Oh, that's one of the primary and secondary.

TH: Right. And this was built for Battery Morris, to find the range for Battery Morris which is right over here coming up.

Son: (Inaudible)

JB: That's one of the stations. They would have a what do they call those glasses? A range finding binoculars. A good type of binoculars where it was necessary to get the right range to send the range and azimuth in your data to your battery or if it were a minefield why they find it for you in the same manner. A target is a target. Following a target from a primary or secondary stations it makes no difference whether you are following it from mine to get the range or minefield or range for the guns.

TH: You were explaining that intersecting line.

JB: Yes.

TH: You would have the primary.

JB: It's known the distance to the gun from the primary or secondary station and you know where the intersection of your sight is. So, you get the proper range and the proper azimuth but if you are not using these, you are using just the gun and the gun pointer are using it as a rifle why then you don't need to get the azimuth. You got the azimuth...

Son: These, we didn't get to yesterday.

TH: Right.

Son: They are further on down.

TH: This is Battery Morris and where you see the rectangular area up there that used to be a metal plate up there saying Battery Morris and then below the erected 1903 there was a larger you can see the four bolt holes in the concrete there. We have that sign. I came in here and I had passed this gun battery many times and then one day I had brought up a new fella, a new ranger who started working here to show him the gun batteries and then I am standing here and here is this metal sign that was right over here. And all the letters were very, very faded. You can't even read it to this day. But it does give you the history of who Morris was. He was a Civil War officer in the Union Army. Was killed in Virginia and it gave the whole history of why this gun battery is named after Morris. And these were your gun emplacements. #1, 2, #3 and #4. this is up here you have a rapid fire 3-inch gun right up here. This one is about the best one if you want to go up the..

Son: Yeah. You want to walk up this one dad. This is a 3-inch battery. Okay. Now we are standing here in gun emplacement, this should be #3 Battery Morris. And you were saying that the parapet used to be clear.

JB: Very yes. Right down to the sand.

Son: How far was the water in front of it Dad?

JB: It wasn't very far at all. It was quite a drop.

TH: It used to be when he was here serving here it used to be right now here below us. The beach was right down there less than 50 yards in front of us. But over the years we started to talk about this earlier. The ocean waves kept bringing more sand up. The area now is all filled in in front of us.

JB: Oh, that taking the sand from Long Branch and bringing it over here.

TH: Yes and a lot more places here too. Asbury Park, Manasquan River area. All the beaches from roughly the Manasquan River, Asbury Park, Long Branch, Sea Bright are all coming up here.

JB: The wind must have been stronger or the waves to bring it down and now it is quite a distance from here.

TH: Hundreds of yards. The present day tip is way, way out over there.

JB: The reason these were was that boats couldn't get in close to the shore these 3- inch guns were fixed for that reason. And I don't know.

Son: Dad, how did you get the order to fire from up here? Was there a telephone or you know? Somebody had to be directing the phones from down here when to fire or was that from the individual gun.

JB: Well, if you fired them by just sight you didn't need you could have your company commander give the...

Son: I mean yeah, but where would the company commander be?

JB: He would stand on the place fixed like this where he could be heard and give the command because there were only say four men is about all that was necessary here.

Son: There weren't any phone or anything?

TH: This was the telephone box right here.

Son: That is the original one?

TH: Yeah. This had a, if this had a cover it would say gun telephone on the cover. We have one of these in our museum collection.

Son: No. I was just wondering if that was added later on.

TH: Probably added later on.

Son: Yeah because when he was out I think like you said it was just voice.

TH: But only four soldiers up here around the gun?

JB: That's as far as I know that's all that was necessary for the gun. The others would carry up you ammunition and have it placed in a rack and then they would put it in. Each man could handle it himself. It's a 75 and they were just easy for a man to load it into the chamber and fire it. As you stood you were able to see from your sight. I didn't have anything to do with the 3-inch guns as far as firing. Either my duties were to bring the ammunition up or doing or closing the breech or something of that kind.

TH: Really?

JB: As a private. But on the 6-inch disappearing I had other duties like I said the gun pointer. Gun pointer gets three dollars extra for on his pay. He is the gun pointer. In the mine company you passed an examination for it called first class gunner but he had nothing to do with a gunner. First class gunner he was in a mine company and got to be a first class gunner paid for a gunner and he wasn't firing. He knew what to do planting the mines. Got paid for first class gunner, even second class two dollars extra. \$15 was the rate. \$2 for second class gunner and \$3 for first class gunner.

TH: Nowadays it doesn't sound like much money but did it go far if you watched your money?

JB: Oh yes. \$15 you would say here almost \$100. Now, it is easy almost \$10 because we would say what would we get on a three meal day ration?

TH: 28 cents.

JB: You could see why you can't get a meal for 28 cents now. For one meal let alone three meals. It's surprising.

TH: When these guns fired off would it hurt your ears?

JB: Not much. It didn't bother me.

TH: It didn't bother you.

JB: No. Even the 6-inch guns you didn't feel anything in the ear.

TH: But it must have been a pretty loud report as they say.

JB: Well and strong enough that it would send back the gun.

TH: The recoil.

JB: The recoil of its own recoil it would send it back. It would lift it up as you would see there is a ratchet to lift it up

TH: But like on these 3-inch guns here...

JB: They were stationed.

TH: Stationary. How fast do you think they could, like in a minutes' time how many rounds do you think they could fire a minute like from this one gun emplacement?

JB: I would say 6 easily, 6 a minute.

TH: Was this fixed ammunition too? Was it the large...

JB: It was a large shell. It was in a shell. You didn't need a powder behind it. It just be a detonation was by a cap in the shell.

TH: At the base.

JB: Hitting the trigger on it. So, that was what sent it off, just like a rifle shell. 75 pounders, French 75 pounder about the same.

TH: I was wondering when you would have service practice, is that what they called it?

JB: Yes.

TH: Target practice.

JB: We didn't do any firing. We went through the...

TH: Motions.

JB: Without the ammunition in we would put a shell in there and go through the routine as if you were firing. That was it.

TH: What was it like here? Like you could look out at like the water, New York Harbor.

JB: There were boats. There were small boats that the enemy would bring in troops so that you could keep them all at firing. I don't remember what the range was. It was quite a bit.

TH: Several miles at least four or five. Would they clear would the Army announce that when they actually did have target practice did they clear out the area of ships?

JB: Yes. There weren't allowed. At the fall practice, they had practice at certain times where they would have cleared and they knew that a boat was dragging a target to be fired at. I assume that they had let people know that they had whatever method they used. We didn't go into that. It didn't bother me. They it was up to the higher ups to keep the...

Son: You want to do like you did yesterday? (moving on gun platform)

TH: This gun battery here doesn't have the recesses. There are recesses in the wall like the next one over which is Urmston. And we are at a loss as to why they had these recesses in the wall. I thought maybe it was for the ammo. But I am not sure. And that was right over. (moving over vegetation at battery) It was not like this right? Everything was kept.

JB: Everything was kept down.

TH: I am sure that the soldiers of the company did the fatigue details here. Cutting everything down.

JB: Yes. That is right. They kept their batteries in good condition. And at that time I imagine there was not as much of the underbrush as there is now to keep clean.

TH: He is right.

JB: It keeps accumulating.

TH: Yeah.

JB: The trees weren't high up you know high up the trees.

TH: What we are looking at right here is over forty years of growth since the Army stopped cutting it down.

JB: That's right. That's the reason.

TH: Wild black cherry.

JB: Black cherry tree.

TH: How did you like camping out here behind your gun battery? Anything you remember about that when you were living in the tents?

JB: Well, it was sort of monotonous. No communication. Only you own buddies that you were in the tent with and then the next tent it wasn't like you could go out and get anything to drink or maybe a little reading during the day and there was no time for that either. So we lived sort of a...

Son: Did you get any tans while you were out here? Did you go swimming or did they make you stay in uniform the whole time?

JB: Well, I don't recall every bringing my swimming trunks with me because there was no facility to keep yourself.

Son: To wash yourself off.

JB: I think there was not more than two weeks of camping for the same group of men so there would be another group that would relieve you.

TH: What kind of I wanted to ask you what kind of weapons did you have? Like what kind of rifle? Did they issue you a pistol?

JB: No. We didn't. Sergeants even the sergeants didn't have pistols. I got my first pistol and I never got to shoot it. Overseas and I didn't have a pistol but my own rifle which you were allowed to have and that was shot at the range. And the Coast Artillery men weren't good marksmen. It wasn't the Infantry. Infantry when you made marksmen you got paid extra for it like the Coast Artillery men when they made first or second class gunner. That's the way they got their extra money and rating.

Son: Do you remember what kind of rifles you had?

JB: Yes the old .30-03 Springfield.

TH: The 03 Springfield.

JB: The old Springfield. .30 gauge.

TH: There is a lot of poison ivy in there.

END OF INTERVIEW