Sandy Hook, Gateway NRA, NPS
An Oral History Interview with
Brigadier General Philip S. Gage
Commanding General, New York Harbor Defenses
1940-44
Interviewed by Tom Hoffman, NPS
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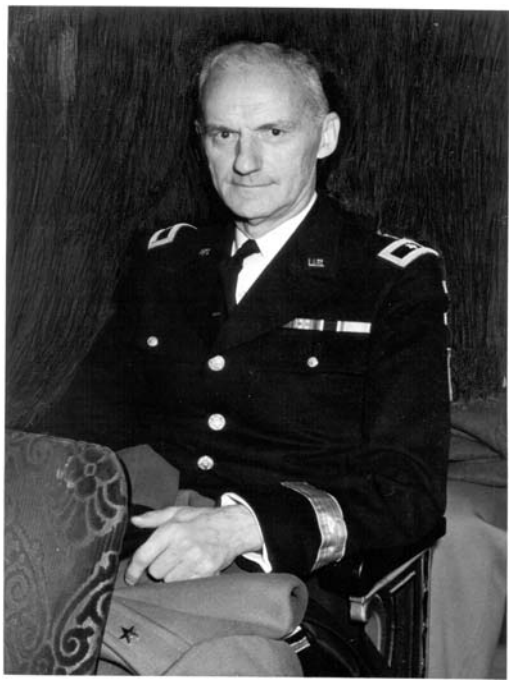
Transcribed by Mary Rasa, 2011



General Philip S. Gage at Fort Hancock

New Year's Eve Celebration at Fort Hancock Officers' Club.

General Gage presenting certificate to Red Cross representative.

General Gage (R) greeting Judy Garland at Fort Hancock Theater, 1943.
All photographs in interview are courtesy of NPS/Gateway NRA

Editor's notes in parenthesis ( )

TH: This is park technician Tom Hoffman who is with New York Harbor Defense Commander, commanding the harbor defenses of New York City during World War II from Fort Hancock, New Jersey. I have taken it upon myself to travel down from Sandy Hook, New Jersey all the way to where I am today in Atlanta, Georgia to see the General who has given me the time to interview him. The interview is taking place at the General's home which is located on 53 Robinhood Road in the Northeast section of the city of Atlanta in Georgia. And today's date is April 8, 1977 and this is Good Friday.

PG: (Tape cuts off sentence.)….George Patton.

TH: What do you mean?

PG: Well, young guards when the date you are telling me, my daughter was gave a dinner party for him and much to my surprise after the dinner was all over and long before they were going home he says, "General, I want to get a little statement from you. Maybe you have a few anecdotes about my father," and so on. I said, "I sure have." He said, "Would you mind putting them on this recorder." And I said, "Not at all." So, he turned the thing on and I put on some stuff. I hope I can talk loud enough.

TH: Oh yeah. I think we are coming in fine. All we have to do is talk. It records very well, this little machine. And I think what I would like to start with is the early year, like when you went to West Point.

PG: Oh, you want to go back then?

TH: Yeah, just a brief.

PG: I've got my book there.

TH: Okay. Let me get that.

PG: Thank you very much. The way I feel….(inaudible) You don't mind.

TH: No. No.

PG: Turn that light on please.

TH: Is that enough light or do you need more?

PG: I've burned that fireplace I don't know how many times here.

TH: That's why you've got the whiskers. I grew the beard.

PG: What's your first question? Before you ask me let me think about it. I think if you ask me the question and then let me think about it before you turn that on.

TH: Okay.

PG: I went to West Point by a kind of a fluke, I guess, F-L-U-K-E. I always, I was born and brought up on the water. I always wanted to go to Annapolis, but I took a competitive examination in which the congressman held open two appointments by competitive examination. And I took the exam one evening out of Ann Arbor, Michigan. I lived in Detroit. When the exam was over at night, the board came up to me and said, "Mr. Gage, you have come out number two in this competitive examination." I think there were about thirty-five, forty men that took it. They said, "Now you can either take," I am pretty sure the man who got number one was going to take Annapolis. "Now you can take either first alternate to Annapolis or principle to West Point." I thought a minute and I said, "Well, the fella that got in number 1 to Annapolis, he's probably going to take it, get it." So, I thought real hard and fast and I said, "I'll take principle to West Point." And that is how I got into my military career. (laughter)

TH: Do you have a memory of going there for the first time? Do you remember seeing West Point?

PG: Oh, yes. I think I went to one of these little preparatory schools for a very short time, a few days, I don't remember how long. And of course there, I met a lot of other men who were going to go with the class of 1909 and we talked and compared notes. But I was not in that school for just two days and made entrance to West Point. And it was a pretty rough introduction, of course. I never had time to realize or think about if I was having a happy time or otherwise because I never had a minute to myself. Everyplace we went, of course, we went double time. It was a long time before I got to sit back and breathe a little bit.

TH: You were on the go when you first got there. What was it, you were telling me about your roommate.

PG: Well, I had very nice roommates. When I was a first, when I was a plebe, as a plebe we had two roommates. And I think, let's see, I had a roommate when I was plebe by the name of Frank Hunter, a nice boy. He went in the War. He was killed in the War. No, he lost a leg and then died later. I don't remember all, and then I roomed with a fella by the name of Jimmy Walsh, W-A-L-S-H. And he was a very smart boy and I wasn't particularly crazy about him, but he was well my roommate. I know we had fight one morning and I knocked one of his teeth out.

TH: Why did you have a fight?

PG: Because I just didn't like him very much. Something was said, you know. And of course, he ran over to the dentist to get it taken care of and then they found out all about it over there and got a hold of me and they (inaudible) me for fighting which was not permitted.

TH: Oh yeah, I was going to…

PG: So, they gave me watch and I walked the area as punishment. We walked punishment tour. Five punishment tours a piece. We walked right along side of each other quite a while during our spare days. That was a good way to treat people who were fighting.

TH: Oh yeah.

PG: And then I was promoted to a cadet officer and when that happened I had to be transferred to another company and I was kind of tall so I was sent over to A Company. That was a flank company. I had been in F Company. They sent me to A Company. I went over there one morning looking around, seeing what I might do, where I might live and all that and George Patton came up to me. He said, "Where are you, who are you living with?" he asked. I said, "I don't know who I am living with George." He called me by my first initials, P.S. I said, "I don't know where I am living or with who." "Well," he says, "Why don't you come on and live with me?" He said, "I've got a suite of rooms here." And he became my roommate. So, that's how I got to live with George Patton. We had a bedroom and study room. It was quite unusual.

TH: Right. Usually you would just have…

PG: George and I were, we were roommates for two years. My second class and my graduation. We got to be very, very good friends and I got to know his whole family. I used to see a lot of them. And after we graduated, he would go to Hawaii with me. I went to his house many times for dinner and he would come down to my house when I was stationed in Boston. And I was always very, very fond of George, but I didn't serve with him because he was in one branch of service…

TH: Cavalry.

PG: Cavalry, and I was in the Artillery which would be almost impossible to get, you know.

TH: One thing I have to ask you, because with World War II he got a reputation as being a tough commander, but how do you remember him at West Point? How do you remember him as a cadet? Was he wild?

PG: No. He wasn't wild. George was he was a great disciplinarian and he disciplined himself as much as anybody else. But a lot of his classmates didn't like him because he used to skin 'em as they called it. He used to skin 'em when he found them doing something against regulations and they didn't like him because he was their classmate. They thought he ought to make exceptions for them. But he didn't make any exceptions for anybody. He'd skin himself if he was doing something wrong. But I told you I was an usher at his wedding didn't I?

TH: No, you didn't. Tell me that.

PG: He asked me to be an usher at his wedding. I was an usher at his wedding. He married Beatrice Ayer. She was an extremely wealthy woman from Boston. And I knew the whole family. I knew his sister very well. My son, and Ruth Ellen, she was his daughter. They were very attentive to one another when I was in Honolulu when I was stationed there. So, I knew George mighty well and always liked him.

TH: Did he get married right after he graduated West Point or was that some time later?

PG: It couldn't have been very much after we got out. It was a little after my time, after I got married. But Ruth Ellen is just a couple of years younger than my son. So he must have gotten married fairly soon after.

TH: In reference to yourself with your wife, did you get married right after West Point or did you..?

PG: No. I did something very few people do I guess. I got engaged to her on furlough. I had two years to go. I got engaged to Irene. She was a Detroit girl and I lived in Detroit. We had a place in the county in the summer. I proposed to her when I was home on furlough. I had two years to go. And of course, I saw her once in a while and when graduating we were still engaged. And I think I graduated in '09 and it was the early part of 1911. We were engaged a little over three years, which was almost unheard of in these days. But it was a long time, but she was having a good time. I was having a good time. We weren't together. I wasn't ready to get married at that stage of the game. I didn't have much to live on. Well, we thought differently about marriage in those days then what they do today, you know. We got married in 1911, in Detroit. I went out to Detroit. That was our home. We had a lovely wedding. Went on our honeymoon in New York and our first station was up in Portland, Maine. And now, as of now, well our wedding anniversary, what's the day today?

TH: April 8th.

PG: Well, nine days from today, if all goes well, we will have been married sixty-six years, I believe. People don't stay married that long, sixty-six years.

TH: That's great.

PG: She's a great girl. I will say that.

TH: Personally, when I read your letter, when you wrote me and said that you wouldn't leave your wife for a minute I was personally touched by that.

PG: Oh wow.

TH: I think that's great.

PG: I wouldn't leave her. I've got two children but they have their own families. Well, Betty has her two children in Europe, but she is always on the go with people and she seems to be very much in demand socially. And I wouldn't ask them and neither would Irene ask them to spend time with her unless it was necessary. But they will if for instance Irene fell out here and broke her wrist about a year ago. Betty came down and stayed with us for about a month I guess in that little room. She'd have to take care of Irene you know, help her. But she, Betty cooked the meals. In an emergency they will, but of course, I myself went out (inaudible) but that's the way it is.

TH: One thing that getting back to your days as a cadet at West Point. You kind of took me back before when you said you being Harbor Defense Commander at Fort Hancock wasn't the first time you saw Sandy Hook. When you were a cadet was the first time. Could you describe that experience going down from West Point?

PG: Well, somewhat. We had an Army boat take us down. It was quite a long trip, you know, from West Point to way down there, made a whole day of it.

TH: To Sandy Hook, right.

PG: We went down the Hudson and out down to Sandy Hook. Of course, they had a program arranged for us. That was somewhat of an event to have all the first class of cadets down there. And we were shown around the place. We saw some big 16-inch guns and other stuff. It was quite an event. I can tell you that.

TH: So, you remember when that was, that you first saw Sandy Hook?

PG: Well, I think it was 19, it must have been 1908 when the men, I don't believe it was right before graduation.

TH: Was that the whole class? Would that include George Patton too?

PG: Oh yeah.

TH: Everyone would…

PG: It was a long trip. It's a long trip and we didn't have a very fast boat.

TH: How did the class feel about that? Were they looking forward to it?

PG: Oh yes. They always were looking forward to something to get away from the Academy.

TH: Get away from studying.

PG: You have to have a change.

TH: Sure.

PG: We would be up there. I don't know. I never kept a record of it. We'd be up at West Point on the Plain as we called it. We'd never get out of the Plain sometimes for months on end. Right there on that (break in conversation, tape stopped) ground as a younger classman. When you got to be an upper classmen if your conduct was good, I mean if didn't go blow a certain conduct grade and everything was all right and you were out of debt with the cadet store, you could get a six hour leave. Which would be long enough to go see your girl or something in some nearby town like Poughkeepsie or Cold Springs (New York) or someplace like that. I used to avail myself of that whenever I could. I used to get away. I remember one time we had a six hour leave, a couple of us. We went over to Cold Springs in the dead of winter. We walked over on the ice and came back on the ice. (laughter)

TH: Over on the Hudson?

PG: Yeah.

TH: That's chancing it isn't it.

PG: Well, we took chances in those days.

TH: Sneaking out.

PG: Well, this was a sneak out. Yeah. We damn near got caught.

TH: I was wondering, you mentioned they had a program set up for you when you got to Fort Hancock to show you around. What was that like? Was it rush, rush or was it really disciplined.

PG: You mean with the cadets?

TH: Yeah. When the class…

PG: I don't think it was very rush, rush. No. I have a vague recollection of going out to see those 16-inch guns (at the Sandy Hook Proving Ground and) being very awed by them. I know it was a long trip down on the boat. It seemed like Sandy Hook was out in the middle of the ocean.

TH: I was wondering, the guns that you are referring to, were these the disappearing type or were they in concrete pits?

PG: Barbette.

TH: Barbette.

PG: I think so. 16-inch, I think they were, I'm not sure Tom, but I think they were not mounted on a regular carriage.

TH: I see. Did they show you around the Post any? Around the yellow brick buildings?

PG: No.

TH: No. Just guns. Then what was the intent of it?

PG: You see when you are a first classman they try to give you a pretty fair idea of what you will be up against according to what branch of the service you are in. Some people, I suppose it's advertising. The Ordnance Department wanted to see if they couldn't get some men for the Ordnance Department. You know, that was the prime place for the Ordnance (the Sandy Hook Proving Ground). And they oh, I don't know, the different things they had, and where they could they took us out. I remember that one, yeah, we went up to Watervliet Arsenal (New York) and then we also went up to Springfield Arsenal (Massachusetts). You know, they were very good about that as first classmen. They would take us out on these trips. It was to give us a general knowledge of the branches of service. Of course, we always had riding. Riding is for the Calvary. And another thing for the Infantry, and I don't know how they handled the Engineers, Signal Corps, they gave us a dose of each one of them. The first class because they wanted to give us an idea of what the different branches were like.

TH: You mentioned you were awed by the guns. Did you decide because of that visit to get into the Coast Artillery?

PG: Oh no. As I said before, the reason I joined the Coast Artillery is because I was very, I was brought up on the Navy. I was brought up on the Great Lakes. And always on the water in the summer and I loved the water and I always hoped that I could get in the Navy. Go to Annapolis. But that hope was dashed when the other fella decided he was going to take it and I knew damn well if I didn't choose one of them, and I happened to get number 2 I wouldn't get another chance. And I thought, "Well, I'll take West Point." I was glad to get in either one of the National Academies. And then it came time to graduate. And we had been around the Coast Artillery too. They took us up to Fort. They took the class up to Fort Wright (New York) one time. That's the entrance to Long Island Sound. We were up there one time. They took us around the Coast Artillery too. And I was not pleased with any of it that I saw and the time for choosing our branches was concerned the Coast Artillery was very much in favor with a whole lot of the cadets because promotion was very fast. And a lot of the other branches didn't like us and never liked us since because we got promotions so much faster than they did. You remember ever hearing about that?

TH: No.

PG: It was true. The Coast Artillery, they had the inside track when it came to promotions in those days because I guess the Coast Artillery was coming up and up. And I like the old iron set up of the old Coast Artillery. And another thing, this wasn't a turning factor by any means, but when I got into the Coast Artillery I learned the other branches were very jealous of our quarters situation. We always had fine quarters comparatively. And you were fairly near habitable portions of the country. It wasn't like the Cavalry where you were out on the wild and woolly plains and near (inaudible) you know. Some of those things, that didn't appeal to me in those days very much. But some people it did, like George Patton. He didn't care where he was so long as he was on a horse. In my case, I didn't care I guess as long as I was somewhere near the water. The Coast Artillery was a substitute for not getting the Navy for me. And I always, always had the most pleasant relations with the Navy. Every place I've served in the Coast Artillery, I mean especially as I got more rank and all. The admirals in charge of the Navy Yard and so on and myself we were I hope I can say good friends. It was a most, I thought, a most rewarding service for me. But of course, people make fun of the Coast Artillery. Say they are not a fighting branch and all that kind of thing, but neither is some of the other branches either. I guess the Coast Artillery had as much as some of the others. I was over in the First World War with the Artillery during the (inaudible) with big guns. I go and they put me in charge of Fort Hancock and I didn't see where I could get a better job than that anywhere in the Coast Artillery. I never thought I would get one that good.

TH: You probably never dreamed as a cadet that someday you would be..

PG: No, never. And then I, well as I say, I never dreamed that I would command the Coast Artillery there and especially New York. And then right after New York about three hours away I commanded Boston Harbor Defenses. About the second time I would say, maybe not in San Francisco. But what happened in Boston was that a classmate of mine by the name of Hickok, Colonel Hickok he had a set of quarters that I later operated, occupied. He was a colonel. He was in command in Boston and I had been at Sandy Hook practically all through the War, the whole entire War. The Japs hadn't capitulated yet, but they did shortly after. And then our people down there in New York got a telegram from Boston saying that Hickok had fallen down on his stairs and had broken his back. Of course, he was ordered to combat and he couldn't do anything except lie in a hospital. And then being the right person, I had so long in New York anyway, all through the War, practically. Then they sent me right up to Boston. And I will never forget going up there. And I enjoyed Boston tremendously. That was where George Patton lived up there on the north shore.

TH: Really?

PG: But I enjoyed Boston very much. Of course, it wasn't New York, but it was very nice. I had some very nice firing experiences up there. It was a nice harbor defense I thought.

TH: How long were you there as Harbor Defense Commander in Boston?

PG: Until I got to be 63 years of age and had to get out of the Army for age.

TH: They made you retire or did you …

PG: Then I retired.

TH: Did they make you or did you chose to?

PG: Oh, they made me. It was the legal limit that an officer could be on active duty.

TH: I see.

PG: I think it was and then they changed it from time to time but I think it was 63. I'm pretty sure. And I knew I had to retire.

TH: And what year was that then?

PG: That was in 1947. I think because we came down here in '47. And I was all scheduled to retire. There were no ifs, ands, or buts about it. I, my time was just up and I retired. I was in Boston and during my last few months or weeks, I was in Boston I used to be asked to these civic and other luncheons quite frequently when they had some big shot coming in like Admiral Nimitz or any number of them that came, you know, from elsewhere. And the city of Boston wanted to show its appreciation and give him a big dinner or luncheon down at the Statler (Hotel) or dinner and various fine hotels around there. And I'd always be asked, very frequently to sit at the head table. They had head tables and this particular day, I think it was the luncheon for Admiral Nimitz and old Ike Eisenhower was one of them. And I asked him and Nimitz was there and I sat at the head table right next to a civilian by the name of Mr. Paul Clark. And we conversed and I chatted during the luncheon and I guess I told him that I was getting out of the Army pretty soon, age retirement. He said, "Well by the way, General Gage," he said, "have you thought about what you are gonna do when you get retired." I said, "Yes, Mr. Clark I have quite a bit." I said, "I have thought quite a bit about going into the insurance business." He was the president of the John Hancock, he was at that time. I had talked to him several times. "Well," he says, "fine." He said, "I want you to come in and see me someday in the next week or two and we'll have a little talk." So I said, "Very well Mr. Clark. I would be very pleased." And (he) said, "I'll have my secretary call you up when I have a free time and try to get you to come over." Well, to make a long story short I went and had a nice talk with Mr. Paul Clark and before I came out of the (meeting) I had signed a contract to join John Hancock. First thing I did was go to school. I worked like a dog. I guess in about six weeks when I graduated from the first school then they gave me a choice of where I wanted to write business. Betty was married and lived down here (Atlanta) and I had been stationed here. And we lived down at the Biltmore Hotel apartment which was very nice and we met a lot of lovely Atlanta people and I had Detroit that I thought about going because that was my home and I knew an awful lot of people there and I thought of New York because that's where the money was and I wanted some money. And I mulled those things over and talked them over with different

people. And I finally decided Atlanta because Betty was here and I knew so many people. And Fort McPherson was here and Dobbins Air Force Base and Atlanta Army Depot. And it was quite an aggregate of military personnel and I was an Army officer and I thought I ought to have a fairly easy entrance anyway into military personnel to write business and that's what I did. Of course, I began to write civilian business too because that where the principle money is in those days. But that is how I came down here. That's how I went in the insurance business. And I'm still in the insurance business.

TH: Yeah. You are still with John Hancock?

PG: Yeah. I am still with John Hancock. I just got a little card from my general agent yesterday, a little Easter card. But they have been so damn nice to me up there. They are north of here in the suburbs. I go out there and I have an associate out there who is the leading agent in the agency. And we, the only claim that I have to being a life insurance man at all is I do know some people around and when I get a good lead, I am only too happy to give it to this fellow that I am associating with. (inaudible) and that is all I can do because my eyesight and my physical condition, I couldn't even read the rate book. You know, my eyesight isn't good. And I never, I never regretted one minute with John Hancock and the insurance business. If I do say and I shouldn't but I can just imagine where there are so many places I could be today where I would be struggling like mad to make ends meet, you know. I'm not a wealthy man but I hope I've got enough to keep the rats from the door and it never would have happened if I hadn't gone right to work. I'm sure it wouldn't have.

TH: Right.

PG: And I loved the insurance business.

TH: You've had two careers then. One was military and the other has been the insurance.

PG: That's right.

TH: How long was your military career?

PG: Forty-two years. I've been now, thirty, over thirty in life insurance. (laughter)

TH: That's fantastic.

PG: That's a hell of note isn't it?

TH: I would like to get back to your military career.

PG: Yeah. Go ahead.

TH: I'm interested in that because you were in the Coast Artillery right after graduation.

PG: Right on. That's the only branch I've ever, oh I've been in other branches temporarily, you know.

TH: But it's mostly been Coast Artillery.

PG: Oh, my basic branch is Coast Artillery.

TH: You've seen the changes I guess when you came out as a cadet. I guess that was 1909.

PG: Yeah.

TH: Did you go to the any more specialized training at Fort Monroe?

PG: Yeah. I went twice to Fort Monroe. (First) to the regular course and (then) the advance course. I was a distinguished graduate in the advanced course. Pardon my mentioning it. Coast Artillery, my first station was Portland, Maine (in) 1909. Fort Williams, Maine, I was on the staff, then Fort Monroe where I was taking the Student Officers Course at Coast Artillery School, distinguished graduate. Then Fort DuPont, Delaware, Mine Commander, Coast Defenses of the Delaware. Coast Defense Ordnance Officer with a company. That means that was my assignment. That didn't mean I was an ordnance officer. I took care of the ordnance. Then I was on the Mexican duty, border Mexican duty in 1916.

TH: '17

PG: '17. And then I was at Fort Clark. That was a god forsaken place.

TH: Texas.

PG: Oh brother.

TH: Was it out in the prairies like?

PG: Oh, I'll say it was. Nothing out there but cockroaches and tarantulas and scorpions.

TH: What were you doing out there?

PG: Well, I was, I was, we were with a company. I was not a captain then. I had a captain. I was one of the lieutenants. We were getting ready to go across into Mexico. It was to go after Villa, (Poncho) Villa. And were just getting all set. In fact, I remember once in the afternoon after we had been there awhile a captain took me down on a Sunday afternoon and said, "Tomorrow we are probably going to get orders to go in. I want you to go over here and come in around the town of Las Vacas," I think it was, but and, "I'll take the other platoon and I'll go straight across and up into the city and you come around and meet me and make a flanking move and meet me outside the city." It was all

planned. And old Woodrow Wilson's watching and waiting went into effect that night and we never got over. But that situation was in, now let's see, in 1916, Fort Sill.

TH: Oklahoma.

PG: Oklahoma. I was a student officer there too. You asked me if I had any other schools. I was in school for to fire the artillery. (phone rings.) Then from Fort Sill, Oklahoma, then I went up to Fort Ethan Allen in Vermont and then from there down to Fort Shelby, Mississippi. When it got so cold was we had to get the troops out, we were under canvas at Fort Ethan Allen way up on the lake and then let's see, I did get a detail in the Ordnance Department. I had forgotten about that with the National Army. I was the Division Ordnance Officer of the 92nd Division and went to Camp Funston, Kansas.

TH: That was in 1918.

PG: Yeah. Then I went overseas with a division to France. We were in the Argonne and some of that stuff over there. We were the G.P.F.s (inaudible) field. They were the .155s (mm guns)

TH: .155 millimeters right.

PG: I was in (inaudible).

TH: That later became one of the standard weapons in the Coast Artillery didn't it?

PG: Yeah. We had, I had them in my regular Coast Artillery Command.

TH: By the way, I wanted to ask you, when you first started in the Coast Artillery what type of guns were you firing? Was it disappearing, seacoast mortars?

PG: Yep. Whatever was around and bullets we had disappearing trials and 14 (inch guns). I never had commanded….(Tape stops. Break in conversation.)

TH: We were talking about the types of guns you commanded. Were the big 14-inch you mentioned out in Hawaii?

PG: Yes. I had mentioned I was the again, I was the head commander, I was the Post Commander. I was a major I think and captain's had command of these big disappearing gun batteries under my command.

TH: What Fort was this out there in Hawaii?

PG: Fort DeRussy, right on Waikiki Beach.

TH: There is a photograph here of the, there it is.

PG: Right on Waikiki Beach.

TH: Well, this is Battery Selfridge at Fort…

PG: That's at (Fort) Kamhameha.

TH: Did you have command of the 14-inch guns out there? Hawaii?

PG: Well, there again, a captain is commander of a battery.

TH: I see.

PG: All the time I think I was a major, all the time I was in Hawaii, and as such I has a battalion or equivalent of it, you know. And now that kind of a battery there at Selfridge, I was stationed at Kamhameha for two years and that battery was under some captain. I don't remember who. And I had probably another battery or two of some guns or some mortars and they comprised a unit which was an appropriate command for a major, you see, one or more batteries. But actually I don't think I commanded any actual battery except as I commanded several of them. You see what I mean.

TH: Mmm hmm. We were talking about the muzzle blast and the terrific muzzle blast…

PG: Well, I was always on hand to see any important firing.

TH: As a student when you were in the Coast Artillery School and all what did you learn exactly? Was it plotting, fire control, or supervising the loading?

PG: That's a hard question to answer. We had a very extensive course in Artillery and after completing the first course, a couple of years later I was sent back for the advanced course. And right after the advanced course I was sent back to the Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth, (Kansas). And that was what it meant to command general staff. But I had to go through two artillery schools first. And believe me we worked down there at Fort Monroe. I want to tell you they gave us problems to solve and all.

TH: Mathematical problems?

PG: Well, not scholastic problems. They were tactical problems and plotting problems, I guess. And a lot of different things; steam plant operation, you know, we had steam plants in those days to generate our power and some electrical. We had thesis to write and we had to make up, I remember I wrote, I wrote a thesis or whatever you want to call it on the defense of Bellingham, Washington. I had never seen the damn thing.

TH: But you had to defend it.

PG: But I had maps and all.

TH: Right.

PG: Literature and it was my job to make it out in kind of a thesis, you know. The defense of Bellingham, Washington and it wasn't even defended then. But now it is. I don't know if it's anything I said or not but I had never been out there. Things like that. They required a lot of work, you know, and a lot of study and put in application of what you learned. But the same was true at Command and General Staff School only more so. They were very strict. You had three hours (inaudible)

TH: I was wondering did they graduate you from 3-inch guns to 6-inch?

PG: Oh no.

TH: Did you drill on everything or only specific weapons?

PG: I didn't drill on everything. No. I'd be assigned to something and it would be up to me to familiarize myself with what was necessary, you know, to run the outfit. No. We had no, they didn't pick out at the school. They didn't pick out a 3-inch and a 12-inch because I guess there was too much of the stuff they had to learn. But I know we had, it was a very interesting course. I learned, I guess it says here I was distinguished graduate and I forgotten. I thought it was in the advanced course.

TH: It says 19-, Coast Artillery School, 1914, you were a distinguished graduate.

PG: Yeah on the next, I didn't go back again until some other time and then I went to the advanced course which was a year. As soon as we finished that in the spring, the next fall I was sent to Leavenworth, to Command and General Staff School. But that one was tough.

TH: You were mentioning the muzzle blast and how you protect your ears, because I have had visitors ask me that when I show them around Fort Hancock gun emplacements. The terrific muzzle blast, the sound must have been like thunder. And how you'd protect yourself, just put cotton in your ears you said?

PG: No. Maybe open your mouth.

TH: Yeah. Yeah. Prevent…

PG: I want to tell you this. Most people don't realize in my opinion and I've heard others say the same. Those enormous blasts from those enormous guns, they don't bother you ears half as much as the smaller calibers.

TH: The short crack of the…

PG: The awful sharp crack of a .45 pistol. Whenever I would go down on the pistol range, you know, I might put something in my ears and fire the pistol. (inaudible) I would come away from there with my ears just ringing when you get over it for some little time. And it's that sharp crack that seems to get my ears anyway. And the big guns didn't bother them half as much, my ears anyway. No. The big guns are earth shaking kind of thing, you know, where you have to take all the pictures off all the shelves and all that kind of thing.

TH: You were telling me that the gun itself, the disappearing gun, huge rifled cannon would go up in just a few seconds and when it fired the recoil would kick it back down again. You were telling me that you don't know the timing of a gun crew but it was quite quick even though those projectiles weighed a lot.

PG: Well, the 12-inch projectile weighed I think 1,240 lbs. and the 16-inch I forget the weight of those but it was a lot more.

TH: 16-inch disappearing.

PG: Yeah. You are taking me back to the old days.

TH: Was it all officers? Like you were all officers on a disappearing gun loading it or was it?

PG: Oh no.

TH: It was enlisted men and you were in charge.

PG: Well, some of us, one or two of us. You see, you've got two. Here's a 12-inch battery and it's got one gun here and one gun here and a parapet in between. And under the parapet the (inaudible) here and probably a lieutenant over here. Ideally another lieutenant over here. There were two lieutenants to a company you know and the captain up here in the middle where he can superintend the whole thing.

TH: Battery commander.

PG: And the major presumably had charge of two or three batteries. He can't be at all of them. But they don't all fire at once anyway. They would in action, but not in peacetime. Then, one battery fired and then you go to the next one. It might not even be the same day, of course, they could.

TH: What did the men wear back then? Was it just overalls?

PG: What?

TH: What did the men wear back then when they were loading up a disappearing gun?

PG: They wore, they usually wore blue denims, a hat and blue denims, trousers and coat, you know. They didn't go around half naked like they do today. They do any old thing today. You know, they do, at least the ones that I have seen which I think is awful if anything a soldier ought to wear a uniform even though it's blue denim if nothing else would be appropriate because there is so much grease and dirt around. But they ought to wear the same uniform. They used to in my day. I can tell you that. They don't go around in an undershirt.

TH: No. I know. One thing I am amazed about is all these guns had to be kept clean and here they are by the ocean (with) salt air, (and) sand. That must have been one heck of a job, right on disappearing guns or any type of guns.

PG: Well, I don't know. I don't remember ever hearing about it because they were going to have to keep them clean anyway.

TH: Yeah. The men would have to keep those guns.

PG: They've got to keep them in ship shape and a little sand would probably stick to the grease or something and they would wipe it off. And of course, they have to clean the bores pretty often. And the big calibers takes the whole squad of men to run that rammer up and down and clean them out.

TH: In your honest estimation, do you think if our nation had been attacked by an enemy warship fleet, do you think that the disappearing guns, the seacoast mortars the rapid firing guns, 6-inch, 3-inch guns could repel an invasion force? See, I ask you this because it never happened.

PG: Well, it's a pretty hard question to answer.

TH: Right.

PG: But on the other hand, the mere fact a Navy even as powerful as the German Navy was doesn't want to risk itself against fixed artillery. You know, because it's too dangerous.

TH: Right, and those massive concrete emplacements…

PG: Well, they are hard to hit you know and that isn't the point, but one of those big 1,600 pound projectiles. I don't know what they weighed the big 16(inch gun projectiles). If they hit a ship in its, its ordinarily goodbye battleship, I think. And they may not sink right away but they, oh boy, they would be pretty badly shook up and I don't think they would conduct very good fire after that. You see, it's much worse than it was in Steven Decatur's time or something like that because the size of the projectile in proportion to the size of the ship was nowhere near like these. Well, I wouldn't say that. These enormous projectiles and their weight landing on a ship is bound to do some pretty bad damage. But of course, it isn't anything like the damage airplanes do.

TH: Yeah. That's what doomed Coast Artillery.

PG: Oh, sure it did.

TH: That's what I was going to ask you. You saw the change especially with World War I. Didn't you?

PG: It didn't change much in World War I. No. Not for the Coast Artillery. No, we continued to man our defenses and we continued to improve our fire control and all that. It was World War II that sounded out death knell, no question about that.

TH: That's when you started to go over to anti-aircraft guns. The Coast Artillery more or less of World War II.

PG: We were adopting very, very drastically improved methods of fire control in those days which would have stood us in good stand. In the old days, position finding, you know, but the times were moving too fast in the air and we just couldn't keep up with them. And even though I remember at Fort Banks (Massachusetts) one of the first things I was quite interested in. We, I stood inside of an enclosed house on the shore and we were firing at a target way out, out at sea. I forget what caliber; 10-inch or 8-inch and I went into this house and couldn't see the target at all. And the guns were being fired and they went out and hit the target. So, they were flying blind in those days and by instruments. And another thing, what was that fort? I can't remember the name, one of these sub-forts out there in Boston, one of the things were giving our people and by that time we had some pretty smart engineers. I mean, they were attached to our fire control business. And the instruments they were used, to me they were simply incomprehensible, they were so complicated. I couldn't run them, but they had specialists just like the way they run computers these days.

TH: Right.

PG: A lot of people know how to do them but I don't. I didn't know, know how to run these things in our day. But we had people who did, of course. But the thing that was worrying them all, the officers and all of us were these Kamikazes. I remember going up to this inspection one day and I asked them about it and they said, "Well, we've got an instrument here now that we think we can keep ahead of the Kamikaze." In other words, we think we can lead to our guns far enough in advance that when we fire the gun and airplane will come together. But that was the only thing they could do and they weren't too damn sure of that either because the Kamikazes were coming so fast that our fire control instruments couldn't keep up with them. So you see, the Coast Artillery, things were getting ahead of it. They couldn't keep up with these airplanes.

TH: The advance in technology of warplanes getting faster, and higher and faster.

PG: Yes. Higher and faster and everything about them. And controlling missiles without being anyone onboard them at all.

TH: Yes. Missiles.

PG: In other words, one of those self contained missiles guided from somewhere two or three thousand miles away, what good would a fire control instrument do on that. It just you couldn't do it.

TH: When you were up in Massachusetts in Fort Banks that was 1945-46 until your retirement in '47.

PG: Yeah. I went to Boston in '44.

TH: I see. Yeah right.

PG: I was there the rest of '44, '45,'46 and I was there about two years. I was in New York for over five years I guess.

TH: What were those defenses like at that time, at about the time you were retiring? Were they doing away, were they scraping the old Coast Artillery guns and the anti-aircraft by then?

PG: Oh no. Oh yeah, a lot had changed. I was up at this place where they were having experiments for very fast airplane and there were no talk of giving up the artillery.

TH: Really?

PG: Not a bit. There was no talk. I think I wasn't in touch probably. I think that came out after I was out of the Coast Artillery and they began to realize it was a losing battle. We couldn't keep up with the increased speed. That's what it was, speed.

TH: Well, I should have, one thing is with World War I and the Coast Artillery and after, the years after World War I, wasn't the Coast Artillery trying to get more mobility?

PG: Yes.

TH: Like when you went overseas, in World War I?

PG: They were in with more mobility. Artillery on wheels, you know, heavy artillery.

TH: Heavy artillery. Is that what you served on in World War I?

PG: I served with GPF Canon de

TH: The .155 mm (guns).

PG: The .155 mm.

TH: Because I also know they sent some big ones over but it was a little too late to get in.

PG: I don't know if we got ours over there or we got them in France. I believe, we picked them up in France. I'm not sure.

TH: Where were some of the posts of duty after World War I, when you came back?

PG: In the states?

TH: Well, in the states and all over because you were…

PG: Well, I'll tell you the first Post of duty I remember quite well. I was assigned to the after the War, I was assigned to Headquarters Third Army, Koblenz, Germany in charge of enemy abandoned ordnance and the German ordnance turned over under the terms of the Armistice. Which was a very exciting and a very intensely interesting job. I had the whole area, the French, the American, British. The British in Cologne, the Americans in Koblenz and the French up at Mainz (Germany). And my job was to take care of all abandoned enemy ordnance. Get rid of it. And in charge or enemy abandoned ordnance and ordnance turned over under the terms of the Armistice. The Germans agreed to turn over a lot of stuff. It was my job to, I had assistants, of course, and other officers. My job was snoop out and find out where the Germans had left any weapons or pieces of war material. That was my job. Where they had given our rights certain weapons and all to the Americans. Then it was my job to take charge of that. And it was an intensely interesting job my station was in Koblenz, Germany. I had a very nice billet in the Koblenz Haus on the Rhine right across from Ehrenbreitstein. I had very nice people to work with. I worked with a number of the Germans too, which was quite interesting to work with. And that was a delightful and a very busy job. And a lot of it was destroying enemy ordnance. I remember we found, they didn't always tell us we had to find them. We went all over the area. We ran across it and one of my officers ran across one day, he was a great guy his name was McCabe. But anyway he ran across, he ran across you know these potato mashers grenades on a stick?

TH: Yes. Oh yes. Yes. They would toss them.

PG: Well, our people ran across a million of those potato masher grenades. Good as grass, you know, where were (inaudible) of them. Our job was to destroy the damn things and that was quite a job.

TH: Yeah.

PG: Oh another time, they used to pack their ammunition, their small ammunition in boxes like we do, you know, so many in a box. And somebody in my outfit ran across a bunch of small ammunition in boxes consigned Turkey. They never sent them to the

German ally Turkey. And it seemed to me, they were perfectly new, never been opened. I think there were, there must have been three million or something. They were all stored away in an underground in Ehrenbreitstein. That was one of their big fortresses over there near Koblenz. Well, we had to destroy all those. They would fit in any of our guns.

TH: Yeah. Different.

PG: And you know it was such an undertaking that I had to construct, I didn't construct but I had to take over a complete German factory and converted that factory. It was over a little from Koblenz. I don't know how many employees we hired. They were all German. It seems to me we had several hundred German men and women working there just destroying this ammunition. Of course, we got it down in a regular routine and we saved what we could of it but a lot of it was gunpowder and we had to get rid of it. And they used to have blasting hours over there and they poured this stuff into a furnace and you could hear it way over in Koblenz going off in the afternoon cracking. That was a long job. One day, I was sitting in my office over in Koblenz in Army Headquarters and a fella came in, none other than my classmate. We called him, his nickname was Goat because he (inaudible) Waldron was there a very nice fella. He had been found at West Point but he was in my class. He was dismissed for failure of his studies. And Goat came to me and said, "P.S., I'm looking for a job. Can you give me a job somewhere around here?" He was in the Army. I said, "Goat, I will see what I can do." And I finally gave him the job of superintendent of the plant. He did a swell job, a swell job. Oh, I don't know how many employees I had over there. I used to go over there quite often. But they used to take the, in a regular process, they saved the brass and they did something with the bullets. I think they saved the small components of the bullets. And they saved the brass, but they made every bullet so it couldn't be fired anymore. I had an interesting job.

TH: Yeah. It's really…

PG: And another time, we got a hold of some of these great big, like they have in the Coast Artillery, you know, enormous projectiles, 12, 16-inch. They had a bunch of those somewhere. We had to destroy those, no ifs and ands. We couldn't…. And I had a fella who used to work for the Atlas Powder Company and his name was Neil McCabe, an officer. And that fella, man and god nor the devil, I never saw anything, he had no nerves or anything. He used to take the great big shells. We had a place over there near Bassenheim which we call the Bassenheim pits. I've got a picture of it somewhere. And we put these things way down in these pits and then we would detonate them. And boy, they would really make an eruption when they go off. But Neil had all that to be in charge. A great big enormous pit like five feet long or I don't know what they fired them with. But that was an awfully interesting job. It used to take me up to Wiesbaden in the German bridges up there. I don't know what the, but anyway I used to have to go up there and down to Cologne with the British. And it was a very lovely assignment. And what I started to tell you I am slowly getting around to. One afternoon I was up in our billet overlooking the Rhine and the castle of Ehrenbreitstein on the balcony over the Rhine and I got a telegram that afternoon out of the clear sky. And this was I don't

remember, we just use arbitrary dates. This was about the first of let's say the 15th of August and it says you will proceed without delay to West Point, New York for assignment as an instructor in the academic department. You will report not later than ten days from now. I was in very much immersed and my officers in Koblenz in this job. Of course, I was tickled to death to get an assignment at West Point, you know. But it was done very much, you know ten days…

TH: Days, yeah.

PG: We didn't have airplanes in those days.

TH: I know, I was thinking, yeah.

PG: Oh boy, it was something. I think I started to get ready that very minute, that afternoon. And to make a long story short and the part about it that always I quoted if you know anything about European travel you know that Brest is a port of entrance to France and has been. I don't know what it is now. But it's one of the French ports of entry, Brest, France. And usually, or exit and when you go to leave France and they tell you to be there for such and such a boat, ship. Why you usually get there a day or two ahead of time. You should arrive; if that isn't the case they tell you to wait a couple of days because they have something to take care of or something. It was the way it was in the military. Well, I got to Brest and I had my orders and I said, "When can I get out of here?" And they said, "The *Great Northern* got in here this afternoon on her record turnaround she is going to be here overnight and she is going to leave tomorrow for New York." Well, I got down there that afternoon expecting to have to wait a couple of days at least. It was on a record turnaround. Now the *Great Northern*, you don't know but she was a terrifically fast ocean liner which the government had taken over during the War. Again, I was just in that hotel in Brest one night. The next day I went down, and passport, well I didn't have to have a passport because I was in the military but that was the quickest damn journey. All the way through Germany down there and the next thing I am on the *Great Northern*. I don't know how long it took me to get down from Koblenz. Well, I got on the ship and she was on her record turnaround and she was trying to make the record and I think her record was just a little over ten days from New York to New York. That's pretty fast in those days. But she was slim wonderful ship. Boy, she could go like a greyhound and she established a record turnaround. Am I wearing that thing out?

TH: No. (laughter)

PG: I was quite impressed by that and I went right up to West Point and Mrs. Gage joined me. I forgot where she was. She wasn't with me, of course. I was overseas. And I got there and reported in plenty of time for my assignment. We got a set of quarters and a very lovely set there at West Point. But on the way over there across the ocean on this awful fast ship for those days, I was out on deck and looking after something and I noticed our wake turned very noticeably and I was watching. So, I made some inquiries. "What are we turning for?" Well, they said that, "They got wireless up here that there is

a big lumber ship out here that is sinking at such and such a latitude and we are going to try to go to the rescue." So it was very interesting. We got to where this ship was, not too long a time and she was sinking alright, a big lumber ship. And as we got close to it, I was out on the deck. (It took) in a matter of an hour or two trip before we got there. I could see these ships' smoke all directions of the compass coming to the rescue. It was quite a thrilling thing.

TH: Yeah.

PG: See them all coming to the rescue of this ship. But when they got there, they all stood around and let us do the work, because of course, we were a government ship and they wouldn't have to pay any salvage.

TH: I see.

PG: And so they were smart. We rescued the crew and everything and then in spite of that was made a record turnaround.

TH: I was going to ask, yeah. You probably sacrificed it.

PG: It delayed us, but we made it up for something. It was quite an experience. It really was.

TH: And then you came back and you were an instructor at West Point?

PG: Four years. (inaudible)

TH: You should write a book like you said.

PG: Well, I must say I don't see any reason for me think about the service I had in the Army. There were some disagreeable points to it.

TH: Where else did you go from there because we were looking?

PG: I hope I am not boring you?

TH: No. No. This is…

PG: It's all interesting to me but I'm afraid…

TH: No. Please go on, please. So you were an instructor at the Point.

PG: (inaudible) And then I went to Fort Eustis, Virginia as a battalion commander.

TH: And where is that?

PG: That's not very far from Fort Monroe.

TH: I see.

PG: Fort Eustis is still quite a Fort.

TH: That's right.

PG: And then I went from there to Fort Monroe, Virginia again as a student officer in the advanced course. I graduated that June. And there I went from there right smack to Leavenworth, Command and General Staff School, another year of school. And then when I got through then, they sent me out to Hawaii.

TH: When was that? When was Hawaii?

PG: I was sent to Battalion Commander of the 41st Railway Artillery, 55th G.P.F. Artillery. It was 1927. And then I had been there a couple of years and I was asked to go down and take command of Fort DeRussy and I didn't want to go because I had a battalion at (Fort) Kamehameha that was awfully nice to me and we didn't want to go. And he said, "If you hang on, I will take you to Washington with me," or something like that. I don't remember exactly. And Irene was very anxious to go to Fort DeRussy and Colonel Cole asked me to stay there at Kamehameha and General Todd asked me to Fort DeRussy. And I didn't want to go at first and Irene said, "You are just a chump if you don't want to take that wonderful command." So, I finally gave in and went to Fort DeRussy and was in command down there. And that is right on Waikiki Beach.

TH: Heaven on earth

PG: Well, it was in those days. Of course they have got that damn hotel there now.

TH: Yeah.

PG: What do they call it Kamacorra (spelling?) or something?

TH: I know what you mean it is all built up.

PG: And about 16 stories high.

TH: Yeah, it ruins the…

PG: I guess they have torn down all the quarters and all out there. I have no desire to go back there and see because I remember it, just like Irene, I remember it was such a lovely place. It was such a lovely command, wonderful. And that was there until, I say I had five years there and then the 4th Coast Artillery District here in Atlanta here October 1930. They asked for me here and I came over to Atlanta. And was here until, no wait a minute I was in Atlanta from '30 to '36, that's right. '36, my second tour in Atlanta.

And then I went to Washington, D.C. as a student again in the Army Industrial College in Washington. I was there a year and then they sent me down to Fort Moultrie, South Carolina outside of Charleston.

TH: You were commanding harbor defenses there?

PG: And District I, 4th Corps area, Civilian Conservation Corps.

TH: You were a lieutenant colonel then?

PG: Yeah. I think I was. I'm pretty sure. Anyway that was a very enjoyable experience. I loved Charleston. Have you ever been there?

TH: Yes. Once before I have visited Fort Sumter back in 1965.

PG: Well, that was in my command too. Sumter was part of the harbor defense.

TH: They had disappearing guns.

PG: Oh yes. Sumter had the 6-inch and the old casements and all. And I used to go over there to Fort Sumter. It was chiefly, well, they did have target practice once in a while. But it was chiefly at tourist place. But I used to go there and seine for fish.

TH: Fish.

PG: We used to get a lot of nice fish over there.

TH: Right there in the harbor or the river there?

PG: Right off the sands of Fort Sumter.

TH: Huh.

PG: A lot of mullet there. And let's see then, Commanding Post District, I C.C.C., Civilian Conservation Corps and oversee the discharge and replacement depot, 1939-1940. That was one of my jobs was doing the Civilian Conservation Corps. I enjoyed that too. I had a lot of traveling. That was in addition to my job as Harbor Defense Commander and target practice. I had a lot of target practice. Then I was sent up to Philadelphia for a little while with the Reserves, but it didn't amount to much. General Drum sent me up to Plattsburgh, New York for maneuvers that fall. But the war clouds were looming up big then.

TH: Sure.

PG: And I was up there on maneuvers and then came back and wasn't home but a very short time before I was sent to New York. And had not the slightest inkling that I would be commanding general up there but it was.

TH: At this time you were a colonel and then you were sent…

PG: Well, I didn't get my star until I got to…

TH: Mmmhmm. But you were sent there with the intent to, you were telling me to command the 7th Coast Artillery Regiment, right?

PG: Yeah. That's right.

TH: But then, what happened then you were telling me that you got a, you were sent there and you got a telegram and were sent…

PG: Well, I got a telegram one night when I was out on drill, night drill. I was a colonel and I was watching my night drill and it was dark and dark night I think it was in April wasn't it. Let's see Brigadier General (looking at paper)…

TH: Let's see right there.

(Tape ends. Break in conversation)

TH: We were up to where you were the Commander of the 7th Coast Artillery. You got that telegram you were saying.

PG: Yeah. I was on night drill and that was in (inaudible). I was watching night drills. We had those about every week and I got this telegram and I didn't know what it was. And I opened it up and it says, "As of today, you are Brigadier General in Command of Defenses." And I was very pleased.

TH: Yeah.

PG: And then shortly after that, that Hickok broke his back and I had been down in New York, let's see… '47 see I went to New York in 1941 I guess it as, '41.

TH: Yeah.

PG: In '41 in '47. It was about 6 years. So, I guess I couldn't keep too much.

TH: You were in charge then by 1941. You were made a Brigadier General and put in charge of New York Harbor Defenses.

PG: That's right. You got it better than I have.

TH: Well, you were telling me in your letter. You wrote in your letter. That stretched all the way, was it Montauk Point all the way down to like near Atlantic City?

PG: You mean New York?

TH: Your sector of command.

PG: Yeah. It was from, it was from Montauk Point included all of Long, all of Long Island and all the city of New York and its environs there and then on the other side, the Jersey side almost to Atlantic City. I forget what the kind of a little place down there which was the southern limit of it. And all that territory and I had two combat teams. I had Artillery, I mean Field Artillery, of course I had Coast Artillery. I had Field Artillery, I had Engineers, I had Infantry, Signal Corps. As a matter of fact, I think I had about every branch of the service and I had the, I had two Combat Teams which themselves were pretty big outfits. I had the regular book blueprint I guess you would call it of what a brigadier, of what a brigade is supposed to consist of. It consists of two regiments and I had a regiment out on Long Island and I had a regiment down in New Jersey. And it was all armed, you know. And then I had, and then I had the Harbor Defenses and there were troops there for defense of New York City and I was in charge of the minefields and also the nets. We had some nets up there in New York. That was all my responsibility to keep New York, to keep its feet dry. It was very interesting job and of course, I had what I thought at the time very loyal and very fine help. And it was a, no wonder I had a good, enjoyed the service.

TH: I was thinking god that is a vast area.

PG: It is a big area.

TH: To defend, god.

PG: I used to have maneuvers. I used to have maneuvers on Long Island about once every other week and I had maneuvers on New Jersey about every other week. Because you have got to keep you people on toes especially in wartime, you know. We used to fire out to sea all the time, field artillery I mean.

TH: Yeah.

PG: And have marches and I had, I remember a grueling night march we had one night from Fort Hancock down to, oh where did we go? It was a pretty good long it was somewhere in Navesink or somewhere around the Post there. It turned out to be a soaking rain night and we were out there marching and well, I don't know what time we started but it was daylight when we got finished, you know, and we had a little time. And the roads were all soaked with water and people were sleeping in their trucks and everything and trying to keep a little bit dry. That was a rough march. I can tell you. And I saw the other day, you know, these damn unions are trying to take over the Army. You've seen that, of course?

TH: Yeah.

PG: And all the military and that's crazy. They want to ruin this country; anyway it said in there they wanted to do away with night marches, that they were too much discomfort to them. It was in one of the papers. Did you see it?

TH: Yeah. It got quite out of hand.

PG: Isn't that something?

TH: Yeah.

PG: Imagine that, our Army and call it an Army. Of I just nearly…

TH: I know, it's near getting near that point. They're going to have to, they can't allow it.

PG: No they are going to have to do something. But I think they, the unions, I really think the unions are ruining America if something is not done about it.

TH: I remember Napoleon was saying…

PG: They've got Carter in the palm of their hand.

TH: I was just going to say what Napoleon used to say, "If you don't discipline your soldiers you will have nothing but a rabble." And we are getting very close to that about the unions and all. Even then you had trouble with them back then.

PG: Trouble is what I wanted to say.

TH: Even then, but I want your first impression, can you recall coming to Fort Hancock? You know you were going to take the 7th Coast Artillery Regiment. You were going to be commander of that. Do you remember coming?

PG: Yes. I do. How interesting it might be. The day we got in as usual in the evening. We come from Philadelphia. Irene and I motored up and we got there and came in and I think our, this was Fort Hancock, wasn't it? I was not a general then. That was a set of quarters where Irene was telling me she pulled out all the (inaudible) in the dining room. Off the mantelpiece, wasn't that in the room?

TH: Well…

PG: That was in Fort Hancock wasn't it?

TH: Yeah. Yeah that's right. She rearranged the Officers' Row building that caught fire.

PG: Well, she did that yeah. She also, but that was later, but when I first got there, wasn't it as Hancock where she… I don't know. No. I think that was at Fort Moultrie. Where the devil was it? Well, anyway we got to Fort Hancock. Yeah and I think our set of quarters was waiting for us. They had it all ready. We went in and bunked down for the night. And I guess we got our own supper. Yeah and in those opulent days we had a very nice cook and a very nice maid.

TH: Who paid for that?

PG: I did.

TH: It came out of your salary?

PG: Yeah. Sure.

TH: I noticed like, all the Officers' Row homes at Fort Hancock, the third floor was for the butler and the maid?

PG: The third floor?

TH: The third floor was that housing for a butler and a maid?

PG: Well, the equivalent of that I guess. Let me think now, all, I may be a little bit off, but I think practically the whole time we were in the service we had a cook and a maid.

TH: You were paying for this?

PG: Yeah. Sure.

TH: Was your salary enough back then to afford the...?

PG: Well, the help was quite reasonable and they got their board too and I guess I don't remember entirely but I guess I had a little extra money on the side I guess. But not very much I don't remember but I always tried to make a little money even in the Army one way or another. (Evelyn) was very, she wore an apron and cap and, you know, and was very, very much of an addition to a little cocktail party passing the things around. And she was very, very nice. She lived right near the Post down there. (Fort Moultrie, SC) I think she, I don't remember or not if she went home at night. I wouldn't be surprised if she did. And Evelyn was the other girl, I remember. I don't remember. But Evelyn was one of them. We took Evelyn and Vera up there I think if I remember. I'd have to refresh my memory quite a bit. (Both women lived and worked at Fort Hancock for General and Mrs. Gage. One was African-American and one was Hispanic.)

TH: But they, that was on the third floor I guess, that…?

PG: They lived up on the third floor.

TH: I mentioned the striker. Would that be an enlisted man?

PG: Yeah. It was in those days. They don't have them anymore.

TH: No they don't. In fact, the term is kind of, the term striker the term I didn't know what it meant. It was someone who would have to keep the fires going and keep the house warm.

PG: Yeah.

TH: I have to ask you what were your winters like out there at Fort Hancock? (Was it) cold in that house because that's a big house? I had never lived in that house.

PG: Oh no, we weren't cold. We were in a lovely house and had a good striker. (laughter) He kept things warm. I don't remember, but I think it was heated by coal.

TH: Yeah. They were coal furnaces.

PG: They were coal.

TH: Yeah. We started out you were saying when you first came to Fort Hancock that you were going to command the 7th Coast Artillery and then you became, they made you a brigadier general. And you were put in charge of New York Harbor Defenses. Did you move from one Officers' Row building to the commander's or did you…?

PG: When I got to be made a brigadier general and assume (Colonel) Williford who was the incumbent as soon as he retired and left, I moved right in. That was where I was supposed to be. (The 7th Coast Artillery Commander at Fort Hancock in the 1930s also served as Garrison Commander.)

TH: I was wondering when you left Philadelphia, this is what I asked you earlier about the furniture you remember earlier we are trying to restore Officers' Row (Building) 12 where you lived and I was wondering if officers' back around 1900 would have their own personal furniture or if it was U.S. Army issued furniture in their quarters. Just to speculate, I know you wouldn't know offhand.

PG: I wasn't in the service then.

TH: Right.

PG: The Army always furnished some furniture. They had a big old so called mahogany that was stained I guess. I don't know what kind of wood it was. It was awful heavy all of it.

TH: Yeah.

PG: And we used to call this thing the pew. It was big old long bench with a back to it and (inaudible) move it from one side of the room to the other. It was enormous. And they had a dining room set with dining room chairs and they were all very heavy, cumbersome. I guess they figure they would make them heavy enough so they wouldn't break if they throw them around. It was very unattractive but now that's the only furniture that officers' had that I ever remember when I first came into the Army. But when I first came into the Army I was sent up to Portland, Maine. It was very cold and we had a very small house up there, very small, just a little box. They began to economize then. And then I recall in every, I've got photographs of it, we had the pew and the dining room table and chairs and that's about all I can remember. I don't think we had any beds or any bedroom dressers. I don't think we had any. I'd have to look through my personal photographs if I have any. But I don't think we had any. But if we did have it, it was pretty crude. It was made to look like mahogany but it was not more like mahogany than anything. And you are getting all this now?

TH: Yeah.

PG: Well, I'm sorry.

TH: No. We want this because I want the information if they ever want to try and restore your building; that the one we are after to restore around circa 1900.

PG: Yeah. There was, I can't recall any extensive Army furniture of any sort except those tables and chairs and the dining room table.

TH: Now compared to when you moved from Philadelphia to Fort Hancock did, your furniture was sent?

PG: We had to pay for it.

TH: Yeah.

PG: We had a furniture allowance but I was always way over my allowance, what the government would allow you.

TH: Yeah.

PG: But yeah.

TH: Your own personal furniture.

PG: Yeah. Sure we carried that everywhere. All that, that sofa over there, that one in the back….

TH: It's pretty.

PG: Well, that's a, that's really something. That's been in Irene's family for I don't know how many generations. That was a, that belonged to old George Washington Whistler. He was the father of James McNeil Whistler, the artist.

TH: The famous artist.

PG: The famous artist, his father. And he was George Washington Whistler. He's the man that built the first leg of the Trans-Siberian Railroad for the Czar. And that, the Whistler's are ancestors of my wife's and I don't know how it works in but she can tell you. But that furniture, that sofa we've carried that around with us all the Army. And it has to be repaired once in a while because it's so old.

TH: Yeah.

PG: We had it reupholstered last year. And I was very worried about it because the people who took it out to upholster it, they didn't bring it back and they didn't bring it back and they didn't bring it back and I phoned them and phoned them.

TH: Sure you have to.

PG: I was afraid they might have stolen it.

TH: Yeah.

PG: No. They could have you know.

TH: Sure.

PG: And that thing is worth a whole lot of money.

TH: Oh yeah, for historical value alone. It's pretty.

PG: Well, that's a museum piece, as a matter of fact nobody ever sits in it it's so old you know.

TH: Right. That was at Fort Hancock in Officers' Row 12 when you were there?

PG: Oh yes, sure. That's been with us. The upholstering of it last year, just the upholstering of it cost $600.

TH: Gosh. Your wife was saying a lot of the things here had been at Fort Hancock when you were there.

PG: Oh yes, sure.

Commanding Officer's Quarters from Post Record Book, 1940.

TH: The clock you pointed out to me.

PG: Yeah the clock, oh yes. Well, we've take our furniture around. It's been a pain in the neck because a lot of it get busted up and you have to have it repaired. And sometimes some of it is lost you know like but it's all that we had so we take it around the Army. The Army furniture was better than nothing but you couldn't very well make a home out of it. I don't see.

TH: Right.

PG: Rugs and all. The Army doesn't furnish any rugs. That's the way it goes.

TH: So, the next thing I would like to ask you is you went to Fort Hancock as the 7th Coast Artillery Regiment…

PG: Commander.

TH: Commander. But you were very quickly weren't you almost the same time made the brigadier general? When were you put in command of New York Harbor Defenses?

PG: Well, I went there in the fall of.. (looking at papers to check dates) Let's see, I was Commanding Officer of the 7th Coast Artillery. 6th April 1941. Made a Brigadier General, August 6, 1941. April, May, June…about four months. It was about 6 April '41 to 6 (looking over papers again.) 6th April '41, that was when I went to Fort Hancock.

TH: Yeah.

PG: Then, 6th April '41 Commanding General Harbor Defenses of New York and New York Sub-sector. 2nd March, '42. Oh, til the 2nd of March, '42.

TH: Yeah.

PG: Well, I guess it wasn't, April to…

TH: As soon as you got here, almost, you were…

PG: I was, well, as soon as Williford left I don't know, I would have to look in my diaries to see and that's quite a job to look for. I'll show you those diaries.

TH: But I was wondering, what were your duties? As commander of New York Harbor Defenses, your routine, say your daily routine.

PG: Well, I didn't have any. You know I did what the occasion demanded I guess or I thought it demanded. I mean if I had to go out somewhere and look at something that was going wrong and go out to the end of Long Island and see what was up I would have to go. And of course I made routine inspections but they were not necessarily routine. When you are in command of a big outfit like that you don't have any routine. There are too many things coming up all the time. It's unexpected and you've got to tend to them, that's all. There were certain things that I would schedule, of course, like inspections and of course drills and these little maneuvers once a week on Long Island and once a week on New Jersey. Little tactical exercises to keep the troops in trim. And then there was a drill. I didn't drill and troops particularly but I watched the others drills them and see what it was all about. And there wasn't, no there wasn't any routine. It was in command like that I think you were flying. Not anybody had a routine. That's too many things coming up of a different nature. That's what made it interesting.

TH: You had your office, though in the old Mortar Battery (also known as the Bombproof)?

PG: Yeah.

TH: What was that like, I mean that was down the tunnels? I've been in there a number of times.

PG: Well, I had a very nice office there, but I just felt this way, that if we do get bombarded or something and all my communications are down there, you know, I had an office up on the plain in the Headquarters building in the daytime. I didn't want to spend all my time down there. But I did want a post that I could go to incase of actual action, you know. And feel that I and my staff were fairly secure from being thrown out on our ears at any minute by bursting shell or something.

TH: Oh yeah.

PG: That's the reason, one of the reasons why I had it in there. It was very comfortable.

TH: What's that? You weren't very comfortable?

PG: It was very comfortable.

TH: In the Mortar Battery down in the tunnels there?

PG: Yeah. Very nice, an even temperature.

TH: Yeah they had the equipment right, dehumidifying equipment?

PG: Yeah. Well, I mean it would be pretty hot there some times in the summer and it was always an even temperature down and it was warm in winter.

TH: Right. Wasn't that made gas proof, the Mortar Battery? In case of poison gas attack you could seal off the Mortar Battery? Do you recall?

PG: I don't recall that. I think I would have remembered but I don't recall.

TH: Was that like an information center because I noticed on the blueprint map before of the Mortar Battery, its all intelligence and teletypes?

PG: Oh yeah.

TH: That linked up who now? Not only the batteries at Fort Hancock but where?

PG: Well, pretty much the telephone network I suppose it went through Sub-sector Headquarters in Fort Hamilton. He was my next up the line.

TH: Which general was that again?

PG: General Holmes.

TH: Right, and he was up at Fort Hamilton. What was the defenses when you arrived at Fort Hancock? What type of armament do you remember seeing there?

PG: You mean when I was ordered there?

TH: Yeah. When you first came.

PG: Oh, about the same they had to until about the end of the War when they got a bunch of 16-inchers. And they had, I think they put in a couple of 6-inchs toward the end of my stay there and maybe one or two 3-inches. But they all standby. There was the 12 and 10 and the 3-inch rapid fire, 8-inch, they were pretty much, I don't remember the names of them off hand. The only big addition I think was the 16.

TH: Right.

PG: And that was a tremendous addition because they started putting 16-inch guns all the way from Maine down to Florida and in case you had never heard it before. But here is the coastline here from Maine to Florida. And these 16-inch guns were spotted all down that coastline in such manner that their intersecting arcs. There wasn't anyplace out there about, what is the range of them, about twenty….

TH: 26 miles, I've read something.

PG: Something about that yeah. In such that their extreme range and their extreme useful range there wasn't anyplace out there along the whole coast where these trajectories didn't intersect from Maine right on down to Florida. And they put in, they put in two big 16-inch guns up there in Montauk Point, you know, and then I think they put in some 6-inches or something down there, well near Fort Tilden.

TH: Well, you had two 16-inchers at Fort Tilden.

PG: Did I?

TH: Battery Harris, yeah.

PG: I guess I forgot that. Then and they got those down at Navesink. That was part of the thing.

TH: Right. Battery Lewis.

PG: And then they went on down and near Atlantic City or something like that. And those guns intersecting arcs all the way down. That was a big addition to our artillery during the War in my opinion, tremendous addition.

TH: Before you were telling me the story about Battery Lewis, about its construction. Could you tell me a little bit more about that? You sort of opposed it at the time because it was getting late in the War by the time.

PG: Battery what?

TH: Lewis. The two 16-inch guns up on Navesink Highlands.

PG: Oh yeah. Oh yeah, I want to tell you about that. That property up there was owned by a widow, Mrs. James Trask T-R-A-S-K. A beautiful piece of property and she had a perfectly lovely home up there. Her husband I think had been quite a prominent attorney in New York. I believe he was. Any way he was dead and she was a widow. And I, when I found out they were contemplating taking over her property, and running her out and putting a battery of 16-inch rifles up there in back of her house I was very much distressed about it because I was very fond of Mrs. Trask. I used to go over there and drop in once in a while and visit her a little bit. She was quite along in years. And when

this thing broke the news broke to me I decided I had better go up and tell her to expect it, you know. I never forget what she said. She was patriotic spunky little thing. When I told her, "Mrs. Trask, I've got bad news for you I have to tell you." And I told her and she said, "Well," she said, "we've lived in this house, my husband and I ever since we were married." Or something like that. But she said if now we are at war and if the government wants me to give it up I will give it up. Just like that and she snapped her hands. Which I thought was a very, very patriotic thing. Not a dissenting word at all. "If I'm supposed to give it up, I will give it up." I always, those are all the words she said. And I went there once and asked, "Mrs. Trask, where is your little Japanese servant?" "Well," she said, "We are at war with the Japanese now," and she just said, "I decided that they better not be around." She was a, and then when she sold the place, that is where my friend, I got those gorgeous mantelpieces because they became government property. And they tore that beautiful house down. And she had I think there were, I don't remember but I think that there were at least eight of those gorgeous mantelpieces. I put three of them in my house, quarters, the general's house. I put, I think, I gave, no I put four in my house. I gave one to Horton Ingraham, two to Horton. He was my executive but he was ordered over to Fort Tilden and he took them over there and was going to put one in the Commanding Officer's House at Fort Tilden and then he got ordered to the Philippines and then he never got to do it. And the other one he put in storage somewhere over there at Tilden. Of course, I left I never knew what became of them. Somebody probably stole or sold them gorgeous things. What I did when they tore the house down I had the workmen match mark each one of those beautiful mantles. You know what I mean by match mark?

TH: No.

PG: Well, when they tear them down they notice this piece butts up against that piece and they put a number two on there and a number two on here.

TH: I see.

PG: Another one three and three and four and four on and on and they were all packed, each mantle in a separate box. And somebody got one of those. I think Horton, I don't think Horton had time, he may have put it up in the Commanding officer's House over at Tilden, but they were gorgeous, gorgeous mantles. Now, Mrs. Trask was such a lovely woman. She had a son but after she got out down there at the Navesink she moved up to the St. Regis in New York and had a suite up there. And when Irene and I were up in New York whenever we could we would drop on and make a little call on her. She was a lovely old woman. She was quite old but she was wonderful. But you can imagine by the way she said.

TH: Sure.

PG: We have to get out because our country needs this place for guns.

TH: Do you know offhand when they started Battery Lewis and finished it, the big 16-inch gun battery?

PG: No. I don't.

TH: Because you mentioned it was getting late in the War before. You didn't think it was really needed.

PG: Well, that wasn't a very wise statement for me to make and I probably should have said that they didn't need to pinpoint the spot that it was.

TH: Location, I see.

PG: But Colonel Homer, he didn't give a damn and he wasn't thinking about anyone else. He was one of these guys that said well, if Washington wants it that way that's the way it is going to be. And I don't know if he had so much respect for Washington or now but he just, I don't know why he felt, but I had recognized that country down around there on Mrs. Trask's property, right on the edge of it quite a bit because I didn't want to move Mrs. Trask if I could help it. I did find a place I thought where the gun could have been mounted and been in pretty good shape and if it never had to fire it was alright. Of course if it had to fire that's when the exigencies of war. But as happens it never did fire. Mrs. Trask could still be in possession of her home if she were alive but old Homer he, no, no, no. The government says they want that piece of land so there was nothing I could do to stop it.

TH: It was interesting too because you had the two, below the two 16-inch guns was the two 6-inch guns.

PG: That's right.

TH: What would they be used for because they were a much smaller caliber?

PG: Well, they would be used for inshore attacks or traffic or any smaller boats you know, destroyers. They were very efficient guns.

TH: By the way we are mentioning I think he was at the time because we are looking at his insignia, Johnson, Major Johnson. He left his Post of duty. What was that all about again?

PG: I went up there to see him. I was going down towards the Sandy Hook south gate. What'd they call that? Sandy Hook Gate.

TH: Yeah. The south gate.

PG: I was going down there. I don't remember exactly what was the occasion. I think Johnson had just been given a job that required him to go up there and so on. I don't

remember exactly but I know he was supposed to have been there I think and I went up to just see how he was getting along, you know. I gone there and he wasn't there. I forget who was there. Some private soldier or somebody I don't know. But the station was practically left without anybody in control. I got pretty hot about it. He had just been made lieutenant.

TH: I think major because he, well, I see what you mean, at that time.

PG: At that time…So I fined him. Well it had to be an example to other people.

TH: Sure because that was slacking off.

PG: Well, that's the whole thing of it. Discipline, punishment. You have to let other people know that you expect certain standards and live up to them or you would have a hell of a kind of an army or anything else.

TH: Oh yeah. We were talking about that earlier too. You have to set an example. I was wondering, you had identical kinds of gun batteries like Battery Lewis except they were 12-inch. That was Battery Mills and Battery Kingman and all these different gun batteries out at Sandy Hook, would you make inspections?

PG: Oh yes. Sure. I made inspections all the time.

TH: How would that, what would that be like? Would you just come in unannounced or something?

PG: No. I always had in my service; I always had two kinds of inspections. One of them, this was for troops or anybody else, one of them was an announced in advance inspection, time of the day, and date and everything and the kind of inspection it was and gave them plenty of time to ready and I expected them to get all the spit and polish they knew how and get it just as perfect as possible. And at that inspection I expected pretty much perfection as much as I could, you know. And they knew it I think and that was the way I conducted that inspection. The other type of inspection which I placed a great deal of value to really was an unannounced inspection. Well, of course, at that inspection I wasn't as nearly fussy about whether the brass was polished or the things were in order and everything but I did want to get the general trend and tone of the outfit, you know. Whether things were working right and all that kind of, and if I found something shabby or not as clean as it ought to be I didn't usually say much about it unless it was awful bad. But the other one I did and I think I was a, you have got to have some unannounced inspections so that they will always the troops will keep a modicum of order and you know neatness and cleanliness. But the one that you announce it you want them to put forth their very best effort. And usually those from outside were there, announce too like General Drum or General Lewis. When those people come down they expect perfection.

TH: You had an awful lot of men out there. I know you had the 7th Coast Artillery, you had the 52nd Railway, the 245th Coast Artillery, I'm sure there was plenty of other units

too that came out. You must have had thousands upon thousands. Do you know offhand the largest number of men at that time? You know after Pearl Harbor in 1942-43.

PG: I had, I used a more or a brigade. I had what I considered a really good sized brigade of two regiments. That didn't tell you exactly how many, but I had all the branches and all the divisions of a regular brigade of any number of troops. All branches: Signal Corps, Engineers, Artillery, everything but Calvary. You didn't need that, but then of course, I had my Navy too.

TH: Now talking about the Fort, I know that you had an interesting story about the Officers' Club and how your wife fixed it up. I would like you to describe that for me?

PG: Well, when we went to Fort Hancock, the Officers' Club was a pretty drab looking place. Green and red crepe paper twisted around the chandeliers and it was just kind of drab all the way around. We both said something has got to be done to this Club. And I had a meeting of the Board of Officers and we determined that something would have to be done. And I said, "My wife has quite a little experience in fixing up Army clubs elsewhere and Army buildings and if you will entrust her to the job I think she will do a good job." And being the Commanding General they acquiesced. (laughs) And she went to work and she spent untold hours of hard work and labor up in New York and all around and at the same time trying to save every nickel she could because she knew it was going to take quite a lot of money. But eventually, she came up with what I think and what I have reason to believe was a very lovely club because I have heard so many people say so. The question of what decorations would have to be the bar and the drinking room and the Board of Officers suggested some of them that we ought to have well, men serving the big guns throwing in projectiles, ramming the charge and all that. Then, when we want to go into the club I think we want to get a little relaxation from that sort of thing. And I said, "I know a Miss Mary Jones in Rumson who is an artist and I think she would do a good job. I will ask her for a few samples if you approve." Well, they approved anyway, but she brought up some samples that we adopted and they were rather nude mermaids and all and we had among the fishes and all on the walls in color for the decoration of the bar and drinking room also. And they were at the time, they were greatly admired until somebody came along in command later and decided that they were not becoming and had them painted out. Before that they seemed to be, I mention this because it just shows the different views of different people. That's all. They were nothing vulgar about them they were very artistic but they were nude and some people didn't like them.

New Year's Eve celebration 1944 at Fort Hancock Officers' Club. Mermaid and nautical drawing are visible on the walls of the room.

TH: Your wife also about the Officers' Row House had burned.

PG: Oh yeah, she had, the last house on the Officers' Row burned one night because an electrical (inaudible) was left on, sander I believe just after the work was practically all done. (Building #7) The house was ready to move into and the house burned right to the ground on the inside, the walls didn't crumble, but it was gutted. And she said to me several times, "I would like to redesign that house." It was a lovely house really. I said, "Maybe we can work it," jokingly. Nothing more said about it and one day well, several

months I think it was after the house burned the War Department had done nothing about rebuilding it inside, the walls were standing and I got kind of provoked about it and I wrote the War Department and I said, "When are you going to rebuild the house at the end of the line. We need it and the house is perfectly good. I wish you would," the War Department, "I wish you would give us some money to fix it up." So, it wasn't long after that. And I said, "If you don't, I am going to tear it down because it's an eyesore." And it wasn't long after that, that a couple of engineers came up from Washington and called on me. (They) had blueprints for the rebuilding of the house. And they went over them with me and they looked very good. But I said to them last, I said "Gentlemen, if it's not impossible to do so I would show these plans to my wife and give her the authority thorough the War Department of redesigning, superintending the rebuilding of that house because she has (done) a lot of that work in the Army and I think she would do a good job here." She said she would like to. They said, "Well, I tell you General Gage if you stay within the limits of our appropriation, go ahead and try." So I immediately hustled home to my quarters and called Irene and she was upstairs painting the balustrade of the stairway, the railing of the stairway. And I said, "Irene, I've got a job for you and she said, "Oh my heavens what is it?" I said, "You are going to rebuild that house down at the end of the line like you said you wanted to do." "Oh my heavens, I can't do that." I said, "You said you wanted to do it, like to do it, now you, you get the chance." So I didn't take no for an answer and got her there and pretty soon she was working and when it was finished my executive (officer) moved in right away. Colonel Ingerman and his family. And they told me that they had never lived in such a convenient and such an attractive set of Army quarters. That's all that was to that. That's true, oh she did a beautiful job. She was younger then and she had a good flair for arrangement. She as I say she built this house.

TH: Right, designed the layout and all.

PG: The layout and everything, yeah. Upstairs and down, everything. We got a full attic up here too. And one thing about this house, I like it myself, my home but in all the years we lived here and I have lived here practically since I retired. We've been living here practically there wasn't anyplace to live here in Atlanta when I came here. No houses for rent and the place was just a little village. She designed this house and we had it built by what we think was a very fine builder. And in all the years we lived here which is what I think about 25 years never once, never once have I heard my wife say, "Well you know, I wish we had done so and so in that room instead of the way it is." She had never said it. In other words, she has said this is the way I want it. And I was all for some innovations.

TH: Right.

PG: But she said, "You don't want those. You will get awful sick of that." What I want, everybody at that time was building these split levels, up and down a couple of stairs. She said, "As you get older you won't want to go up a few steps every time you turn around." She was so right.

TH: Oh yeah.

PG: And she was young then too. But never once have I heard her say, I wish we had done so and so. That's quite record I think.

TH: Yes. She was telling us before, remember in the kitchen she was telling us before about these soldiers. Yeah. Did you witness that?

PG: I didn't witness that. I wasn't allowed to. I came in late from being out somewhere on the Post and it was a cold, hell of a cold windy and, you know, how the wind comes down in those front doors. We all went in the back doors. I don't know if they still do that or not, but when the officers came in at night we hardly ever used the front door. We went in the back door. There was a road back there which might have been why. And I came in and I had been out somewhere and it was quite late and colder than the devil and I came in and Irene came out in the kitchen as I came in and I said, I knew something was up. I said, "What is going on?" She said, "Never mind. Don't ask any questions just never mind, just go on up to your room up there and your desk. Just don't ask me any questions." And I thought she had something up her sleeve so I didn't ask any questions. I went upstairs and I said later after this poor guy had gone why she told me about it. The poor duck he went overseas the next day. She was very sympathetic with people like that. He didn't know who she was. He asked her finally, "Who are you anyway? It's so nice in here." She gave him a hot cup of soup or something. And she said, "Well I am…" he said, "Where am I?" I think he was a first sergeant. And she said, "I'm Mrs. Gage. You are in the Commanding General's Quarters." He fell over, she said. But she said, "Go out this door and go home to your barracks." Which I thought was very nice of her. Had I seen him and all I would have probably had to say something to him and all. He probably felt very badly about it.

TH: After all, you were mentioning before, also after Pearl Harbor I guess you were really on the alert at Fort Hancock.

PG: Oh sure.

TH: Could you describe perhaps some of the preparations that went into effect on the famous, "Day of Infamy?" December 7th and what happened.

PG: Well, I can't remember just in so many words any drastic actions taken but we immediately started to put in effect more reasonable methods. We went down in the Bombproof for the protection of Headquarters. And our communications were looked into, you know, so the communications, I guess, war was imminent for a long time before it broke, so I guess we were pretty much walking along those lines right along. I don't know of any particular drastic step.

TH: Well, you mentioned to me about the dogs, that you suggested…

PG: Oh, that didn't take place until a little later.

TH: I see.

PG: Then they began to be popular as a defensive measure. I don't know remember exactly. I would have to go through my diary. All those things, there must be some mention of the…. It would be quite a job to look through all of them, even before the War.

TH: But you made that broadcast. Could you describe that? The NBC or CBS broadcast.

PG: Well, it was an ordinary thing. They wanted to get the dogs in on this thing, "Dogs for Defense," and broadcast it to show that we were using them in our defensive measures. I was supposed to broadcast it that Sunday afternoon which I did. And I didn't find out until some time later that they heard my broadcast in Japan. There were so many things it's pretty hard to…

"Dogs for Defense" on Fort Hancock's North Parade Ground.

TH: Yeah. I know. How about, I never heard about the *Dixiana*.

PG: The what?

TH: The *Dixiana*?

PG: The boat, you never heard about it?

TH: Well, not until you told me tonight. Could you describe that, the use of it? You were mentioning the interesting use.

PG: Well, I had owned boats. I was the Commanding Officer and I could use any one of those boats that I wanted to within reason, of course. I mean if I wanted to go to New York for some meeting they had a regular steamer that took all the personnel on Post up to New York often and their wives and anybody that had to go back and forth. But that trip took about an hour and a half; a long trip in a slow boat. And my *Sea Puss* would get up to New York in about less than three quarters of an hour, between half and three quarters of hour. She would really go. I was very comfortable on it. The other one that the government gave me, the *Playboy*, that was the name of the craft, was built over in Long Island somewhere she was always leaking and everything was leaking about it and rain would come in the windows. It was just a typical government sail, you know. It worked nice, it ran. And all of those, I said I had four boats and I needed every one of them because they went so fast all of them were fast. They went so fast that if they struck a toothpick in New York Harbor they would bend the propeller. And that's s figure of speech.

TH: Figure of speech, yeah.

PG: They could hit a very small piece of wood and bend the propeller. So there were always two out of four boats there were usually a couple of them in the repair place sitting in to get the propellers fixed. You actually could see some of this junk in New York Harbor, you know, floating down. Those propellers hit that doing revolutions a minute would just knock the spots off it. And I needed those fast boats because sometimes I would have to get over to Tilden, you know, and they were very handy.

TH: You also had the Harbor laid out with mines, too, right?

PG: Yeah. We had mines there and we think we some of the German subs or something stuck some mine.

TH: You really think that?

PG: Oh, they feel pretty sure they did because they would go out right after an explosion and mostly around there Ambrose Light down there and where it gets into the Ocean and they see a lot of junk coming up.

TH: Really?

PG: Oh yeah. Sure.

TH: So, then to your knowledge there was evidence.

PG: Oh yes. There was evidence on one or two occasions that we sunk a submarine and we had the net and we never had any trouble with that and they never messed around with the net. They will I don't think the subs got up high enough to do anything with the net. They didn't get up to New York verified. Whether they were scared off or what but our mission was to keep them out and they didn't get in. One of them on a cold Sunday

afternoon I wasn't out there but miles in the Channel. I remember it was Sunday afternoon. Irene and I were calling on (inaudible) and I got word at his house where we were calling. I think at that time, it was an airplane that sank a sub from Lakehurst, but I got, when I heard, I excused myself and I left Irene. I went up to my Headquarters where I had all my observation telescopes and all and I turned them on this place and the mouth of the Channel and the old torpedo boats and all were chasing up and down and the airplane was gone, of course, but a lot of commotion out there. They must have done something. But there was no (inaudible) by the submarine up and all that. Then we had the terrible accident one morning. I was just going down to breakfast and the 10-inch battery was, what was the name of that 10-inch?

TH: There was Battery Halleck.

PG: Yeah. Battery Halleck. That was to fire in the morning and I was getting breakfast and go down and be present at the firing and I was going downstairs and there was a landing and I was turning and this terrible crash and I said, "What the hell." I said, "That battery wasn't supposed to fire until ten o'clock." And I got on the telephone and called up someone and they said, "There had been an explosion in the Channel. A destroyer is being sunk." I thought, "My god what is going on." And the magazine in the destroyer had blown up. Of course, I got a boat right away as fast as I could and rushed out there, but the destroyer had sunk and most of the boats that were trying to make rescues and so on had done their job by the time I had got there and there wasn't much left so I came back home again and went down to the (Post) Hospital and our Hospital was filled with wounded Navy men and the women on the Post all turned out. They were great. They went right down to the Hospital and started to take care of those boys. Some of them were pretty badly wounded. A lot of them, something had sunk the ship and I tried to find out all I could about the cause of it and apparently there were some 3-inch shells that were not put in a cool enough place in the magazine. I don't know what was the trouble, but apparently they were detonated by being overheated. They were right next to the wall of the magazine. Anyway the whole magazine of 3-inch ammunition blew up and ripped the devil out of the destroyer and a lot of people were killed. It was very tragic accident. It was all over in about I would say an hour. They were all in the hospital or gone. And I think that never got into the papers or anything. They kept things pretty quiet, very quiet. Oh, there are a lot of things I could tell about that place.

TH: Well, one thing, getting away from that there were still nice social times, I guess especially when they had the USO Shows like with Bob Hope coming down.

PG: Oh yeah. They were very pleasant for Irene and me and I guess Betty (their daughter). We got to know just, we got to know them. We liked them and I guess they like us. They would be a damn hypocrite if they weren't. But they the people down in Rumson were perfectly delightful to Irene and me and Betty. And they were lovely people.

TH: Do you remember any famous personalities; movie stars like Bob Hope of hand or Generals that you knew that would stop by and visit at Fort Hancock?

PG: Oh yes. I can't think of their name offhand. You mean that would visit?

TH: Yeah, that would stop.

PG: Not entertaining?

TH: Well, as far as movie stars go that would entertain the troops if you can think of them offhand.

PG: Well, I can't. There were some. I remember one little incident that comes to mind, what's the fellas name? Oh, my names, he was a very famous movie star. Who was the one that had a famous father, movie star?

TH: Douglas Fairbanks?

PG: Douglas Fairbanks, you are right. Junior. And I had been out horseback riding with my aide that afternoon I don't know what day it was and we stopped by the building and while we were in there somebody said, "Have you heard the news," and I said, "No." They said, "Well, Douglas Fairbanks Jr. is on the Post. He had to come by there and go to New York and he would be there an hour or so." I don't remember what the circumstances were. But Fairbanks, I knew him in Paris. He was just a little tot there with my wife and they were at the same hotel we were and Mary Pickford was his mother, you know, and she and Douglas Sr. were stopping at the same hotel we were and we say them at dinner one night. I forget the name of the hotel, chandralei (spelling) there. But anyway, that was about the last time I saw him. We always like Douglas and young Douglas was on the Post for some reason. I don't remember what it was exactly. I think he had somebody else with him. I'm not sure what it was. I said, "How long is he gonna be." They said, "Well he's got to be here for to catch a boat up to New York." I said, "Well, I guess I better tell Irene." So, I called her up right there and I said, "Douglas Fairbanks Jr. is on the Post. I know you are crazy about him." I said, "I'm going to get word to him to come up to the house and have a cocktail with him." It was about 4 o'clock and he wasn't going to leave until about 5 and I said, "Call up some of the good looking young gals on the Post and ask them over to meet Douglas Fairbanks." Young women, you know, so when I got home they were all in a dider. We had a lovely house you know and Evelyn and Vera were there to serve and Irene had fixed up some cocktails and hors d'oeurves and asked some of the best looking gals on the Post to meet him. I don't believe there were any other men except just ourselves. Anyway, I got home kind of early and cleaned up a little bit and at the appointed hour Doug and his friend showed up. I don't know who was with him I am trying to think. But these girls all wanted to swoon. He was very pleasant to them. But there were a lot of girls on the Post that we knew, of course, a lot of officers' wives. And they were really had a time. It was quite an event. He stayed and had an introduction. It was very nice.

TH: What year do you think this was?

PG: Oh, I don't remember. I'd have t look it up.

TH: You also mentioned about the Post Band. You had a lot of famous fellas who played.

PG: Oh yeah. I don't know who they were but they were members of very famous orchestras. They were in orchestras in New York and they had enlisted in the Army and it was the fella who wrote that song, I don't know his name either but he was in the band.

TH: The fella who wrote, "Don't Sit under the Apple Tree."

PG: "Don't sit under the Apple Tree with Anybody Else but Me."

TH: Yeah.

PG: He was the leader of the band. That was a great orchestra. You couldn't have got any better orchestra than that in New York. The men knew it too, our men.

TH: And the dances, you were mentioning. The soldiers preferred to, what was it, bring the girls down.

PG: Yeah, they were only officers.

TH: Officers.

PG: Officers' dances, yeah. There were no enlisted men there. Just officers and their wives. Soldiers would go to New York or would tell their dates in New York to come down on such and such boat and tell them how to get their and they would meet them and the boat would come in and the girls would get off and their dates would get them and take them down to the Club. I guess they stayed at the Club the whole night. They had accommodations for women. Irene told me she said, "You know, these young officers they would rather bring their girls down here than go to New York and spend a month's pay." It used to be good or better.

TH: Yeah.

PG: It was good for the girls too.

TH: You mentioned also that you liked having your daughter there at the Post. You thought she added a lot to the Post.

PG: I think she added a lot to most anyplace. I think she does here in Atlanta so…

TH: Yeah.

PG: (inaudible)

TH: Well I was thinking that fort…

PG: My impression they have a pretty good, what is your position?

TH: National Park Service.

PG: Well, National Park Secretary or what?

TH: No I work there as a park technician, something like a park ranger.

PG: Yeah. Well, I think Fort Hancock has picked out a very fine park technician.

TH: Thank you.

PG: What were you going to say?

TH: No. I was thinking I know when you wrote your letter to my some time ago you said it was your most enjoyable experience in your whole military career being stationed at..

PG: Oh, I think probably it was. I think we felt as though we were in an important spot. No more important from a coastal standpoint than New York. I don't think they would be any more. And I think that gives one a sense of doing something, you know, and then the people there were very nice and all their officers and all but on top of that there were these perfectly delightful people in Rumson who were just tops. And as I say some of them we still hear from and see although (inaudible). I don't imagine they go around very much any more like we do. But not in that era they were certainly, they had children that were lovely and they themselves were lovely. They just, whether it was because it was wartime or they wanted to do something for the military, whatever it was they were certainly lovely guys. And we were asked down to their homes for dinners and luncheons, parties, and anyway we were asked down to the Rumson Club. On Sundays after church we were very frequently asked by somebody to the Sea Bright Club. You know where the Sea Bright Club is? I don't know if it's still there anymore.

TH: No. I don't think so.

PG: You don't think so.

TH: No.

PG: Well, that was a club right over the ocean. You could hear the waves underneath and they would ask us over there for Sunday luncheon often times and it was perfectly delightful. And like so many of those things the delightful part of them was the delightful people that were there. The food was excellent, of course, but the people were so nice. Irene was crazy about the people in Rumson. I hoped they liked us. I don't know why they kept asking us to be with them if they didn't like us, but it was a

wonderful experience. That was the social side of it more or less. Fort Hancock itself was a network for business. There were quite a few people at Fort Hancock I liked too.

Lt. Rodgers with son on Officers' Row.

TH: You mentioned you like the officers you worked with before.

PG: Oh yes, I did. Sure, I did.

TH: And who was your aide again. Was it Rodgers?

PG: Ed Rodgers, yeah.

TH: Ed Rodgers. And what was his rank at the time?

PG: First lieutenant. Ed was a very fine young man.

TH: Yes. You mentioned you went duck hunting down at Spermaceti Cove.

PG: Oh yeah, we would go down to Spermaceti.

TH: Did you ever get any?

PG: Oh yeah, sure.

TH: Did you eat them?

PG: Oh sure.

TH: Did you have retriever dogs to get the ducks?

PG: No we didn't. We'd go pick them up. We didn't have anything fancy we just had a little blind for them. Ed would stick his head in the Bombproof, (former Mortar Battery) in my office and ask me in the afternoon and say, "General, it looks like its going to be a awful good day for ducks this afternoon. How about it?" I'd say, "Alright Ed. You are on." About three o'clock I'd go down at three. I'd go home and put on my old clothes and we'd drive down to Spermaceti and go across to an old skiff down there and go across to the blind. Wait for the ducks and it wasn't very long before anything. We had a few decoys.

TH: By the way, mentioning the Bombproof down there, what did your office look like? How did you have it set up in the tunnel down there?

PG: Oh, it had a desk and a lamp and trays for paper and telephone.

TH: Because you mentioned your main office was of course, the Post Headquarters building.

PG: Oh yeah, that was in the daytime unless there was something special like expecting a raid or something.

TH: You had the aircraft scare. Remember you were telling me…

PG: Oh yeah. That was at night. And then I remember another one at noon when planes came down and had fired anti-aircraft guns on top of the battery. There were four of them.

TH: You mean. Yeah.

PG: The planes came around in daylight and made passes and we weren't sure if they were just getting ready to let loose or not. Then I found out later that somebody up at Army Headquarters, not Army but Sub-sector Headquarters, somebody had staged an exercise there and we didn't find out about it. It was a slip of the phone line there. But we got right into action. They didn't have any live ammunition.

TH: Those were the days of a New York Harbor Defense Commander though.

PG: Huh.

TH: That's how it was to be a Harbor Defense Commander when you were there. Everything you are relaying to me now.

PG: Oh yeah. More or less, well I was there after a couple of months as Commander of the 7th Artillery. After that it was all Harbor Defense Command and Harbor Defense and New York Defense. For all of my efforts and command I had two combat team headquarters one was down near, I forgot where it was. Is there an Eatontown, New Jersey?

TH: There is an Eatontown.

PG: I think it was near Eatontown. My combat team down there was equivalent to a regiment in the regular setup and the other one was up in Long Island and I know the name of the place but I can't think of it now. It's kind of a funny name. But that was up there and I was asked to go to both of those places. There was a lot of troops up there.

TH: Before I forget during World War II, I think it was a coast guardsman who caught saboteurs who had landed on the south shore of Long Island.

PG: Oh yeah, that was the Amagansett affair. (Long Island, New York)

TH: Do you remember that?

PG: Oh very well. I'll say I do. I head out that Sunday morning and I sent Al Parder (spelling?) up there immediately to investigate and see where they were going. And they caught those saboteurs. They landed in a submarine. And they caught them. One of them turned over states evidence and he got off. The rest of them were executed.

TH: Yes.

PG: It happened before today. He'd probably pardon all of them.

TH: Yeah.

PG: I don't know why they do things around in the country now. They were all (he made a sound representing killed) not very long there after.

TH: Yes.

PG: They didn't have anymore of that stuff that I know of. But that do you know that little incident was the means of tying up a whole division on the Atlantic coast and a whole division on the Pacific coast. That little incident because every harbor defense and coastal defense commander including myself, we asked, we pleaded for more troops. We didn't have enough troops. I told General Drum one time. I told general, you know we were talking about this Amagansett incident. I said, "General, you know, we just can't, we just can't patrol this whole coastline." He said, "I know it Gage." He said, "It's a big, it's a rugged coastline in and out, you know." I said, "I know it." I said, "I am trying to get some more troops here." It was after the Amagansett affair I don't know how long that we got these extra combat teams which were mostly Infantry but we had other things, Signal Corps and Engineers and all those things but in the aggregate that happened all up and down the coast, you see. Because they couldn't patrol on foot, you know.

TH: Sure. It was a large area.

PG: And so, that Amagansett affair tied up a whole two divisions I am told of troops that might have gone to Europe to fight. They had to have somebody on the coast. General Drum told me. I was telling him when he was down I said, "We just can't patrol these coasts with what we have got." He said, "I know it. I'll get some more." Well, those were great days Tom. You've had quite a day of it.

TH: Yeah.

PG: I bet you're sick of seeing me.

TH: No. no. It's been a…

PG: Well, I've had kind of a strange day because I didn't know how I was going with this tooth. This tooth was giving me merry hell this morning. And I say I had my tax man coming and I had to put him off. And Irene said, "Well, Mr. Hoffman had come all the way down from New York. She said, "I think you better put off your tax man." So I did.

TH: I'm very, very thankful that you spent the time.

PG: No. Well, I knew you were in quite a hurry and due back. I hope you had a good trip. Now, don't hesitate to write me anytime. I might not be the quickest man to answer because I have an awful lot of writing to do for an old man. I really…

TH: Well, it's good to be active.

PG: Well, I try to be. I've got a man. (inaudible)

TH: Perhaps I would like to come again and visit.

PG: Well, I would be very happy to have you.

TH: Perhaps we could grab hold of your daughter and your son.

PG: That's a big proposition. They are hard to get a hold of. Even I have a hell of a time. They were out all day today. I haven't even looked at my mail yet.

TH: You spent the day with me.

PG: Well, I don't get a chance to spend a day with a young man like you very often and I'm happy to do so.

TH: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW