

Sandy Hook, Gateway NRA, NPS
An Oral History Interview with Thomas Pandolf
9th and 244th Coast Artillery
1928-1929

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January 26, 1980
Transcribed by Mary Rasa, 2011

Editor's notes in parenthesis ()
(Tape starts with no beginning of interview)

TP: I still had the uniform with the high collar. I had the old brass, which were painted black at that time and the insignias. One was U.S. and one was the crossed cannon with the shell in the center. (They are speaking of collar insignia.) Do you have any here?

TH: Yeah. We have a couple, but it's interesting you say painted black.

TP: It was painted black.

TH: Huh, like was it enamel.

TP: No. After a while it came out that we could use brass and we took the black off and we shined them up.

TH: I see.

TP: With black on brass. It was like a coating that they put on. The reason for that was for World War I they didn't want anything shiny because I don't know if you were in the service or not...

TH: It would give you away on the battlefield. Anything shiny would give you away on the battlefield.

TP: Yes. Positively. You could see it and World War I, which I was too young for that, which if anything was shiny sniper would get you see. So, everything had to be dulled out. See like you have today, most of our blackout insignias.

TH: Yeah. I have seen it. Yeah.

TP: Now they're blackout on brass. If you take the black away it's brass on each.

TH: Shiny, just shine it up.

TP: That's right. But I have seen, I will be here again. I can make a trip out here if I can find the, it was a leather coat and on it had two crossed guns and on it. It had Coast

Artillery and I have pictures of parades and everything else in there. So, I am going to see if I can find it and I can bring it in and you can have it if I have it.

EH: It would be a blessing if you still have it.

TH: I would like to start with getting you name again. If you could just mention it and who you served with.

TP: Alright, I served with, my name is Tom Pandolf, Thomas Pandolf. I was with the 9th Coast Artillery which was changed over to the 244th Artillery, Heavy Artillery. At one time, we had from 10 to 16-inch disappearing guns and then we changed over to 244th (Artillery). We (used) were the .155 mm GPF gun which was made in France, see. It had a split rail and they were dug in. That's the .155s.

TH: Yeah we, this book here, Lewis's book (Seacoast Fortifications of the United States) has some pictures here of the .155 somewhere. There.

TP: Yes. That's the .155 GPF. That's what they called in World War II, the Long Tom.

TH: Right. It's a picture of it during World War II, Pacific.

TP: That's right. Well, this here is an anti-aircraft.

TH: Right. They have got it in the role, in that role here.

TP: This is a railroad gun. As a matter of fact, they had one down in Virginia, (Fort) Eustis, Virginia. I would say, approximately, that was a 14-inch by the way, a 14-inch railroad gun they had it in Eustis, Virginia in 19-- up until I don't know if they still have it up until 1928, '29 and '30. The last time I was down there was in '30 and they had it in one of the railroad parks down there.

TH: Now, first of all you were saying you were out at Fort Wright (New York in Long Island Sound) and you were telling us all about that.

TP: Yes. I was at Fort Wright, Fishers Island, Fort Wright, Battery Dunton, D-U-N-T-O-N, Battery Dunton and we had there the 12-inch and 10-inch disappearing guns.

TH: Right. Is that where that accident occurred?

TP: Right. The accident occurred on the 10-inch gun. It fired, it misfired and the shell went through 17 feet of concrete and about 600 yards out into the ocean. It blew itself right out off the trunnion, you know, what the trunnions are?

TH: Yeah.

TP: Those two arms that come out...

TH: Come out of the barrel.

TP: And come at the battery and then when they fire they bring it back. Well, it blew them right off there, broke them right off. The trunnions are still standing up but the gun, what do you call it? The breech of the gun was on the ground and it was lucky nobody was killed.

TH: I could imagine, yeah.

TP: We had a few people hurt like concrete flying around and some guys got hit with the concrete but that's about all but it was nothing serious. It was just minor bruises and things like that.

TH: Now, was the gun still down in from battery position?

TP: No. The gun had come off Battery position because it blew itself right off the trunnions. The trunnions were upright and the gun was on the ground.

TH: You mean down at the pit?

TP: Down on the pit, that's right behind the emplacement. See, the plotting room, I was in the plotting room at the time, the plotting room and the BC station which meant the battery commander station, see. BC was (an abbreviation for) battery commander. The plotting room was a concrete emplacement inside. They plotted the vessel, whatever it was coming through from the azimuth instruments that were placed on B prime and B second. They gave the azimuth locations. The BC plotting room would plot whatever like for instance if a ship was coming through, it would be plotted like this way, two funnel vessel going from east to south say for instance it was probably about 2,000 yard distance so they in the plotting room, they would take that arm which was 180 degrees. They would plot it. One man would plot the B prime, the other man would plot the second. That would give the center man just where the ship is but that wasn't that was like a raw score. Now, you had to have the windage. You had to have the elevation. You had to have, also the deflection of the gun itself, of the shell. When that was all computed it would take 15 seconds to do it. It was timed with a bell. It would ring on a second, like ding, ding, ding and in the meantime you were plotting and you had to have it done. And while you were plotting the battery would be loading, see and soon as you were through and the battery leader would say that the gun was ready. See, the battery commander would say, "Action," and he would fire. They would bring it up and fire and come down. In the meantime, we would be plotting the next course, see, and this is the way it went. And you would be doing that until you hit the ship or they hit you. But this was all in fun. What we did was we used to have a sub-caliber tube in the gun and we used to fire for practice a sub-caliber shell see. We only were allowed to fire a certain amount of big shells for big guns at a certain time on account of the expenditure of money. You have some of the shells out here.

TH: Yeah, they big ones.

TP: I think one is a 14-inch or 12-inch. I am not sure.

TH: The big one is 16.

TP: 16?

TH: And the yellow one is 12(inch). I was wondering because you could answer a lot of questions, what was the range of the gun you served on, the disappearing gun?

TP: The disappearing gun range I don't know. I can give you an approximate range. I think it ran somewheres around five to eight miles.

TH: Yeah. That is what we have read.

TP: About five to eight miles but that depended also on the charge that you put in.

TH: How much powder, right?

TP: That's right. Now the powder came up in silk bags and you put so many increments of powder to whatever range you wanted it to go.

TH: Sure the more gunpowder the...

TP: The longer the distance, see. And the shell was quite heavy and they usually had what they called a shell shelf. They pick it up or on the big guns they used to have an automatic crane to put it in and you had to ram it in.

TH: By the gun crew.

TP: And then you put the powder in, you closed the breech and then you put the primer in and it was ready to fire.

TH: It seems amazing. Those shells weigh half a ton and they could be easily handled, right?

TP: Well, they had a HE shell which was high explosive. They had armor piercing (AP) and they had a solid shot which I remember right. I have a book on it which tells you the whole thing on it.

TH: The men had certain duties. What was the size of the gun crew, roughly speaking?

TP: Well, you had the gun captain and then you had two loaders. You had a rammer. You had the rammer I think was the same man that sponged the breech. You had the

man that at the site and you had what we used to call powder monkeys. If you go into the concrete casements there down in the basement there used to be an elevator.

TH: Yeah. The old hoists, the old hoist.

TP: They would bring the shells up and bring the powder up. You could not wear any shoes down there. You had to wear sneakers because of the powder. Everything around that place, nobody wore, they wore shoes on the gun but not down in the powder rooms of the shell rooms.

TH: Yeah. Because one spark could...

TP: One spark could, well, you always had loose powder floating around just like that mill in Montreal, that silo that blew up the other day. Did you read about it on TV?

TH: No. I didn't hear about that.

TP: There was four men killed, the wheat powder is a very highly explosive. Believe it or not it's funny but you think that wheat is something we eat but when it comes in very small atomic pieces that damn thing is very highly explosive.

TH: Yeah. It's like black powder the gun we had...

TP: No. It wasn't black powder.

TH: No. I know. I said that it leaves a fine dust.

TP: A very fine dust. You can't see it. Actually you can't see it but it is there. It lays on the ground and hangs in the air and just a little spark would blow the whole thing up.

TH: The air would become, it's like the explosive. You are there and what gunpowder is it turns itself into a gas.

TP: Its sulfur and what do you call it.

TH: Saltpeter

TP: Saltpeter, well that's the black powder, but they had the other stuff there.

TH: Yeah. Chemicals.

TP: Chemicals in there which made it smokeless. And it made it highly more, what do you call it, explosive.

TH: You also, getting back to the gun crew, you also had a gun pointer.

TP: Well, the gun pointer is the man that was the rangefinder. He was up on the little, you got a picture of it?

TH: Back on that page, that's alright.

TP: He was right here. There he is. He pointed the gun. There he is again.

TH: I have to ask you, he was up there when the gun went off wasn't he?

TP: Yes.

TH: (laughter) How did he feel about it?

TP: Well, I tell you something. Today you have all kinds of gadgets and everything else. When you 16-inch guns used to fire off at (Fort) Tilden and I was there I have seen fellas bleeding in the mouth, nose, ears. The SOP in those days when you fired was: open your mouth, and stand on your toes for the shock. You would be surprised the concussion. If you were standing anywhere near the mouth of that 16-inch you would drop dead and nobody would know what hit you. The concussion would kill you.

TH: The shockwave of the gun going off.

TP: And even the .155 (mm guns) if you were standing nearby at the mouth when it was fired it would you would possibly drop dead. I have this ear here. This is the ear that got the most of it. This one here is tone, there are some certain tones that I can't hear. And lots of times people say something and I get some of it but I don't get all of it, see. That's on account, that is what they call an artillery ear. I don't know if you have ever heard of it. (laughter) When we fired we didn't have, today they have these ear plugs. They have these ear covers, they have everything. In those days you just had to take it.

TH: You probably just put your hands up to your...

TP: No. That was bad. You couldn't do that because they you would get most of the concussion through your mouth and your nose. See. What they have today gives you a certain amount of cushion.

TH: Sure. The ear plug protection.

TP: That's right.

TH: I am wondering if you could tell us that sound was like? I mean a huge disappearing gun when it went off.

TP: Well, if you can imagine a door. I would say a big barn door about 15, 18 feet high with about 14 or 15 feet wide and someone came along and slammed it with all his might. That's just, and that's almost what it would sound like. See, a .75, the old .75s you heard

of them, they had a bark that was shot like that and that was it. But the big guns like this it was like a lingering, almost a seconds.

TH: Because it was so big.

TP: Well, you would be surprised how much powder that, you know the principle of the cannon? It has a flange around it which I am trying to think of the name of it. It's a copper flange around it. And it matches what inside the gun, you have these grooves.

TH: Right for the breech block.

TP: The idea is that that copper, when its fired will expand. Its soft and it will expand. It will not jam because it can't jam because it's soft. And the propulsion power because the propulsion in back of it is so great. That it pushes it right out.

TH: It forms like a sealer. Seals the gaps.

TP: It seals. Even the breech had a seal around it. A cushioned seal. So, when it fired it took the impact. If it was solid it would blow it right out.

TH: I was wondering how long it would take? What would be the best time for a crew? In fact, how many men all together would be a number on a crew?

TP: I am trying to think. A crew is about anywhere from 9 to 11.

TH: On a 12-inch disappearing gun?

TP: On a 12-inch.

TH: Now, what do you think would be the fastest time, you know, for them to, you know, get the shell over to the gun, load er up, get her up and fire?

TP: I would say that they would fire every 15 minutes, 20 minutes, somewhere in that area.

TH: Yeah, in a drill.

TP: In a drill. And that was a good gun crew now. You had to have a good gun crew. Now the plotting room would plot every 15 seconds because that ship is moving. It's not staying still.

TH: Now, see, of course, that is in relation to like a peacetime drill. You know, the men went out to the gun and then you were getting your siting were relayed in. Of course your, that target out there was being tracked and you were getting the gun ready and all 'til you fired. I am thinking, of course, we were never attacked. I was just wondering

what it was like under battle conditions. You know, if you were really pushed. If your crew was really pushed, I wonder how fast you could...

TP: It depended on how good a crew you had. Mostly, I would say that your gun crew on your Coast Artillery you had were darn, darn good. They had to be because everything, there wasn't such a thing as being lax. If you were being lax you were out. They took you right off the weapon.

TH: It was all taken very seriously.

TP: You had to have a team that had to work just so otherwise it didn't work at all because if one man fell down on it the whole crew would fall down on it because it would throw them out of time, see.

TH: I was wondering if, what would be the quickest time in your estimate a good crew could do it in?

TP: 15-20 minutes. I would say every half hour would be the time by the time the gun came back in battery and would be in a position for loading and being back into battery.

TH: But would that even be in under battle conditions? That is what I am trying to...

TP: Ah, yes. I don't think you could do it any faster than that. Really with all the tracking involved, the bringing up of the ammo, because you can't bring too much ammo up. You had to have a one load in the gun, one load coming up. And already we had to watch out. If you were under battle conditions you had to watch out. You don't know when a shell is going to come down and hit you. See. They aren't playing marbles over there either. They are trying to get you before you get them. So, while a ship was going by and usually a ship in those days, it wasn't a torpedo boat or a little sub chaser. It was usually a battle wagon that carried 16 and 14-inch shells. The same as you did. And when they hit they took half the darn gone building away and whoever was in that building of near that area, forget it. They weren't there anymore.

TH: How did the old disappearing gun carriage work? The mechanism for lifting the gun from the loading position?

TP: Well, you had to have on hydraulic. It was hydraulic electric, see. It would come up into battery by oh well, hydraulic. It's the big guns I am talking about now.

TH: Disappearing guns.

TP: Disappearing. They would come up. When they would come up they would automatically when firing come back and it didn't go back right away because the hydraulic tubes would hold it back so that it wouldn't come back heavy. Otherwise it would probably, after it fired it would wind up fifty feet somewhere else.

TH: From the recoil, right.

TP: That's right.

TH: But that the recoil cylinders that were on the gun would actually slow it down. It fired off it.

TP: And you had counterweights too, you know.

TH: Yeah.

TP: I don't know if that shows you. They had counterweights on it too.

TH: But how would that be released? Would there be men assigned on the carriage to...

TP: What do you mean? To bring it back?

TH: Well, to bring it up what would be done?

TP: Well, let's see if I can remember now. It was electrically, I think it would come up by motor and it would pump in oil if I am not mistaken into the cylinders to bring it up and then it would reverse itself. I have a book that will explain the whole thing at home. I could bring it in and you could... I would like to keep it though because it's something that...

TH: We could photocopy it if it is alright.

TP: If you could do that sure. I also, well, it's a big thick book. It's about this thick. It's Coast Artillery by the school and the Coast Artillery School.

TH: Do you want to keep the interview going?

EH: Yeah. I would love to.

TH: Be right back.

EH: Can you describe your uniform again?

TP: What we had was the old OD uniform which was kind of rough. It actually wasn't a very smooth type. It was a worsted type.

EH: Coarse wool.

TP: Well, it actually wasn't coarse but it wasn't very fine finish, you know. It had a high collar and of course four pockets. You had breeches then which were, but we used to call them peg legged breeches. They came around us this way and you had the, now Field

Artillery and Coast Artillery we had the wrapped leggings that they wrapped around. They changed over after a while over to the high boots, lace boots.

EH: Was that in the 1930s maybe?

TP: Yeah that was later, see. But when I was in it they still had the wrap arounds. They were from World War I and the shoes were regular high top shoes and they were brown, of course. They had, the Infantry would have hob nails on the field boots. That's the only other pair of boots that they had and they had hob nails on the sole and a steel horseshoe on the edge of the heel.

EH: What was the insignia like?

TP: The insignia?

EH: Yes.

TP: Crossed cannon with a shell in the center. That was for the Coast Artillery. The Field Artillery had the two crossed cannons. I might have one of those left yet somewhere. If I have I will bring it in.

EH: And the hat you said was a floppy hat?

TP: No. With that uniform with the OD (olive drab color uniform) and the khaki uniform you had the campaign hat.

EH: Okay.

TP: Campaign hat and later on they brought out the garrison cap. We called it the garrison cap. Today they call it the field cap. They don't wear it anymore anyway, right now. You know with the brim.

EH: Describe the denim uniform.

TP: The denim uniform was a regular like a pair of overalls but trousers and a loose jacket with a shawl collar. That was in blue. That was our fatigue uniform. That's the work uniform. If I have a picture of them I know I had pictures of them because I took an awful lot of pictures at that time.

EH: One thing we should record is your military history if you could tell us a chronology.

TP: Oh, my god.

EH: If it is not too overpowering.

TP: When I first enlisted as a private, I was with the 9th Coast Artillery Battery D.

EH: Where?

TP: In New York. Then I was changed over to Battery D, 244th Heavy Artillery.

EH: Can you give us an idea of dates too if you can?

TP: Around 1930. '27 was when I first, in those days if your father or mother signed you could get in at 17 years of age. Today, I don't know if you can or not. I don't think so. You have to be 18. I lied a lot until I could get in. Then about 1931, '30-'31, I was with the 244th Artillery which was changed over from the 9th Coast. Then I was out for a while. When I came back, I came back with the 165th Infantry, the old fighting 69th.

EH: What year was that about?

TP: Well, I was with the, see I am a licensed pilot besides. I flew these small scout planes like the L 19s and L 21s artillery spotting airplanes. Then I got into the infantry in 1947 with the 165th Infantry the old fighting Irish 69th. You have probably heard of them. They had a picture of James Cagney with it and so forth. I was with them for quite a long time. I would say about, I can't remember now, 1955. I was made a warrant. At that time we only had two warrant slots which was WOJG, warrant officer junior grade and chief warrant officer. Then from there I went with the 39th Ordnance and after that with the 454th Engineers and from there I went with the 411th Engineers which is at Fort Tilden right now. 411th Engineer Brigade and then with the 11th Special Forces. I was with them approximately about nine years. When I was discharged...

EH: What year was that?

TP: After 34 years. I was chief 4, chief warrant officer 4 which was the highest grade you can get at a warrant.

EH: What year was your discharge?

TP: '72

EH: And presently you are with the (Army) Reserves?

TP: I am with the Reserves RG 2 in Dix. We are the mayteen which means that we teach these people here different things that they are supposed to know and check up on them and see if they are learning to do it right. That is maintenance and what do you call it team, technical team, we are technicians actually.

EH: So you instruct?

TP: We instruct. We hold classes. I taught over at Sea Girt, New Jersey National Guard on mess equipment. I taught also in different units as CBR officer. As chemical warfare

and also on engineer equipment so it is quite varied. I mean you don't stand still.
(laughter)

EH: What specific years were you at Fort Hancock?

TP: 1928 and about, I was here for about 10 days in '28 and possibly about another 10 days in '29.

TH: You were coming down for the training?

TP: Well, we were coming down to fire the guns.

TH: Actual targets, floating targets?

TP: Well, the targets that they had, I don't know if you ever saw them they are big like this wall here and a tug would tow it about a mile in back of it would be the target and we fired at the target and those targets were quite expensive and we had orders not to hit it. But it usually happened that at the last couple of rounds by accident they were hit and blown out of the water.

TH: By accident. (laughter) By the way, in our disappearing gun pits here I notice these massive rings in the walls around each gun emplacement pit. There's like three to five rings coming out of the wall and you know they are loose coming out of the wall.

TP: Are you talking about the mortar ring?

TH: No. I am talking about in the pits themselves.

TP: I will have to look at them.

TH: I mean they are movable and I have read that they were used to they were some type of pulley system that the soldier could rig up if the gun went into battery position, fired but jammed coming back down. There had to be a way of getting the gun down.

TP: Getting it down. See that would be with the gun crew. I was not on a gun crew. I was with the plotting room.

TH: Yeah. The plotting section.

TP: The plotting section. So, a lot of the intricacies of what happened there I am vague on because I didn't, you know, work with it.

TH: Because you mentioned earlier watching the mortars fire.

TP: Yeah.

TH: That was at Fort Wright. They had the mortars out there.

TP: Fort Wright. They had the mortars.

TH: And you mentioned literally being able to see the shells.

TP: You could literally see the shot coming out. As a matter of fact, on the 10-inch that I have a picture of you can see the shell coming I would say, it's about 20 feet from the mouth of the gun. It's like a streak.

TH: A blurred streak.

TH: A blurred streak.

TP: I wish I could find it. If you could see it would be very interesting.

TH: Did you, well, you witnessed the firing of the mortars. Did you ever get to witness the whole drill, like the men going through the drill and firing?

TP: I possibly did once, possibly but when you are at it I mean you are not paying attention. You are just watching and without registering as to what they are doing.

TH: Yeah, because the reason I ask is that I was hoping to get a time on how long it took to fire off mortars as compared to disappearing guns.

TP: It took longer to fire a mortar than it took to what you ma call it.

TH: Disappearing gun. That was literally blind firing wasn't it because they were down.

TP: No. It wasn't blind firing.

TH: It wasn't.

TP: No, because it was tracked. The only thing that was see with the 16, 14, 12 and 10s it was more like a flat trajectory. The other one went up in an elevation that was possibly I would say about 45 degrees and the idea was to that it dropped on the target. See, it should drop on the target. The other one was a direct hit on the armor plate or superstructure whatever it happened to be.

TH: How would you come down here Tom? Like if you were at Fort Wright and they were bringing you down to Fort Hancock?

TP: At Fort Wright once we came down by train another time we came down by boat, see and it took us oh, I would say it took us down there 14 hours.

TH: With all of the movement of troops getting them on and off.

TP: And on and everything else. And equipment on and off.

TH: It's a whole day's journey.

TP: It was a good day's journey.

TH: What kinds of a boats would bring you over?

TP: They used to hire some of these here sightseeing boats, you know.

TH: Like Circle Line cruisers and things like that?

TP: Well no, big ones like dayliners, Hudson day line or Keansburg. Were you ever on the boat that used to come to Keansburg?

TH: I read about them, yeah.

TP: They used to come out of Fort Tilden and come around and go down to Keansburg. It was regular ferry that used to come out. At nighttime they used to have a boat that came out of Keansburg.

TH: It was one good way of getting around wasn't it?

TP: Well, in those days there was no such thing as what do you call it planes. We had planes we had but they were in the infantry today you look at them and you say people fly those things. (laughter) how do they do it?

TH: By the way, that's what doomed the advancement of the warplane, you know, from World War I to World War II, production of the warplane.

TP: Well, the in World War I the only you had the journeys, the JN 5s, single and double ox engines in it then you had the spad and then you had the sofwest. They were actually combat planes.

TH: Right what I am saying it is what eventually lead to the doom of Coast Artillery, the warplane.

TP: Oh yeah they were doomed in World War II for the simple reason they could be bombed from the air and there was no place that they could hide those guns. They were right there and they were spotted and there was no way you could get away from them. That's why they dismantled the whole thing but they put anti aircraft guns so they could fire at airplanes coming in.

TH: Right. So they could give some type of protection. Right.

TP: But the guns were taken away.

TH: So, getting back to traveling down here, what time of year would you it be? Was (it) just brief, just to fire?

TP: Just to fire. We came down here usually in the spring. I would say between March and the early part of June you know we would be down here.

TH: If you came in here by boat you would come in where the old wharf used to be.

TP: The wharf down here where the Coast Guard is.

TH: And then how would you get to wherever you were...

TP: There was no such thing as putting you in a truck and taking you over or anything like that. You walked everywhere. When I was up in Camp Drum with the Field Artillery we walked to Madison Barracks which is a distance of I would say 18 miles see and you walked with a pack on you back. There was no such thing as you went to a truck and you pack was somewhere else and they take you over there and then when you got there somebody would mop the sweat off you brow and no such thing. You did everything yourself. And another thing too I was with the Field Artillery you took care of government property yourself before you took care of yourself. For instance with the Field Artillery I was with the 104th Field Artillery. I forgot that. You took the horses, you combed them, you cleaned them up you fed them, put them on a picket line, after you got through with everything and your gun was cleaned off and everything else then you cleaned yourself and went to eat. You took care of government property first. And today it is different. I'll eat first and I'll do that after. (laughter) The Army is a lot different today. There is a lot of things in the old Army that wouldn't be condoned. Like for instance like today you take a buck private and he will come up to a major or colonel and say, "How about doing this or how about doing that or..." You know what happened to him? You see that little jail like you have there? He would be in custody right away. And when you talked to an officer at that time, you talked you said to him, you were the third person. "Private so and so reports to the captain." Or "Private so and so wishes to see the captain," or, "Private so and so wants to discuss certain thing with the captain." But before you did that you would have to go to your platoon sergeant. First you talked to your corporal. He thought it was worthwhile to talk to the sergeant you went to the sergeant. If he said it was okay for you to go to the field sergeant, first you went to him. The first sergeant of a battery or a company he was the prime man enlisted. He had everything to say. He could put you in duress or he made your life easy. If he thought that you could talk to the captain had something to do about it then you could see the captain. But you made an appointment with him. He talked to the captain and say at 1400 hours you will see the captain, battery commander. He will see you. When you walked in it was just like walking into church. You took your hat off. Saluted. Take your hat off, put it under your arm and the captain would look up and say what is it? Private so and so wishes to speak to the captain on such and such a matter. And then you would discuss it with him.

TH: It's called the chain of command. (laughter)

TP: It's the chain of command.

TH: Yeah. We know. By the way in comparison to the old Army a thing that is forgotten that you were touching on a little while ago was the fact that Coast Artillery is very important when you served with it.

TP: The Coast Artillery, the Artillery branch and the Cavalry branch of the Army were the elite corps at that time. If you were a battery at parade or the Air Corps, well at that time there was no such thing as the Air Corps. There were little airplanes like down at (Fort) Monmouth right here. And possibly one or two over at Mitchel Field in Long Island or down at Brooklyn Kelly. They might be cleaning a few, things like that. But there was no such thing as the Air Corps. The Air Corps then was Army Air Corps.

TH: But getting into the Coast Artillery being on our nation coastlines it was literally our nation's first line of defense, literally.

TP: That was our first line of defense as far as our country is concerned if they bypassed the Navy which would try and lead them if they were anywhere nearby then you were the first line of defense. Now you find that most of your Coast Artillery Batteries were in big cities like New York, Philadelphia, New Cannan up in Connecticut because that was the entrance to Long Island Sound. But if they got past you and Long Island or if they got past here you would have Fort Wadsworth, Fort Hamilton, Governors Island which was Fort Jay at the time, (Fort) Tilden which was not too far away. But if they silenced these outpost guns then they could steam in and would attack the city. But then they would still have to silence Hamilton, Wadsworth and Fort Jay. Now if they came in the other way and they got through Fishers Island they would have to come down the (Long Island) Sound, see. Now you have there, my son when to it, Merchant Marine Academy.

TH: Fort Slocum, Fort Totten.

TP: No, because Totten was further down. Right by the what do you call it, the bridge, in the Bronx.

TH: Was this Fort Totten or Slocum?

TP: No. Slocum was further back. Fort Slocum was almost into the city. I am trying to think of the name of it. Where the Coast Guard is now, the Coast Guard Academy. That used to be a fort there too. That was part of the New York defense.

TH: Fort Schuyler.

TP: That's it Fort Schuyler yeah. That's the one. Fort Schuyler on Kings Point was another name for it. I am trying to think of it. Then it was Totten which was further in. that was almost in the city.

TH: Getting back when you got here, when you arrived here was there any activity going on that you recall, you know, around the dock area or on your way if you marched? I am sure everyone marched over here.

TP: Yeah they marched over here, but usually the activity was right around in this area here because the companies, the batteries were along here and they would march off to the guns, see. Or if they were going to the ramparts down here or going to the mortars over here or going down to the other end.

TH: Where were you put up? Where were you billeted?

TP: In these building here.

TH: Really, like where the Army Reserve?

TP: Well, no. I think the first time we came here we pitched tents where the trailer park was. (Near the MAST campus)

TH: The trailer park? Wow, that's where you pitched tents.

TP: Yeah. We slept in tents.

TH: Would that be the pup tent or was it..?

TP: No. Squad tents. There were eight men to a tent.

TH: What did they look like?

TP: You have probably seen a pyramidal tent.

TH: Okay. That's what it was. Did you have to put them up or were they already...?

TP: Oh, we had to put them up. Oh no, nobody put them up for you.

TH: Did you bring that along with you or was it here on Post?

TP: I don't know if they brought them along or not now but the Post here would probably have them because they would use them in the summer time. The summer time usually they would be out in tents.

TH: We were getting into a little while ago about the post life and what you ate and what you were paid. Can we get back to that?

TP: Post life usually the first thing you did in the morning was you got up, of course it was about usually about 5:30, 5 o'clock. You made your beds and everything was cleaned up in the barracks and you went down to breakfast see and then you had battery formation and the role call and so forth and then inspection to make sure that everybody was according to the day what they were supposed to do whether they wore blue fatigues or denims or parade khakis or whatever it happened to be, see. After that you went out to your post and whatever was called for the day. Approximately about 11:15 they would have recall. Everything with bugle calls. You would have recall and come back and wash up and have dinner see. After dinner you went back to whatever you were doing. And other times too it was infantry drill and you marched back and forth right out here.

TH: On the Parade Ground.

TP: Right out here, or if I was up on Fort Wright right on the Parade Ground down there. See and the drills were very intricate. They were not like they were today. There was no such as mass drills like the whole company going in on count of fours. The drills were intricate at that time and were very different like squads right, squads left, right front in the line. By the way, I have I am sure I have it still, a book that we had to have for drill that was like the Infantry Drill Regulations which was pictured and made for the West Point Cadets. It was in the early 1900s see. I still have it with the drill regulations and everything else in it. Rifle drills, saber drills because when I went in. I went to, I had ROTC for the enlisted people they had sort of the...I took the exam for West Point. I never went there though and you had to go through all the curricular, whatever it was and I (inaudible)

EH: At the end of you task for the day you had dinner? Finish off you typical day.

TP: Well, you know, whether your company was off on what do you call it, on guard that night if your company was on guard then it wasn't finished see. But if you had it all through about six o'clock and everything was orderly for instance and your barracks were clean and there was no special duty for you and you didn't have a barrack guard and you didn't have non commissioned officer in charge that night or you weren't whatever it happened to be the people were off. You sit on the balcony over the, you sat on the balconies and you chewed the fat and whatever it was or you went to the canteen and had a few beers.

TH: How much was it back then?

TP: Ah, beer, 5 cents.

TH: Five cents a glass.

TP: Five cents for beer and pretzels and things like that were free.

TH: Any recreational activities like pool or cards or anything?

TP: Well, you had the gym, you know, over here, you had the gym. I am trying to bring it to this area here. They probably went to the gym. They probably had basketball or in the summertime you had baseball. Different batteries would compete.

EH: Was there any theater?

TP: The theater was over here too. Or if you were religious you went to church but very few went to church. Of course, there was church parade on Sunday and you were told to go to church otherwise chaplains would be kind of upset about it.

TH: That's right. Would the men try and you know, like get off post? Say go down to Highlands?

TP: Well, if you got leave yes you could leave say for instance on the weekend or something like that. Usually you didn't ask for leaves too much because fourteen or fifteen dollars wasn't going to get you too far. You went off once a month you went to New York or you went to Newark or whatever it happened to be here. We went to New York.

EH: As a group?

TP: No, if you got leave you went. Like today, you see an enlisted man walking and he looks sloppy and you couldn't go out that way. Before you got your leave pass you had to go through the Guardhouse. You had to have you had to pass inspection. You were clean shaven. Your haircut was according to the Army. You had your boots shined. Your clothes were clean. You had to have at least five dollars in your pocket otherwise your leave pass would be taken away from you and that was it. You couldn't go out. There was no way of sneaking out either because there was guards all the way around. You couldn't sneak out or tell (guard) the yeah I am not going. I am going to walk past the guard post. No he wouldn't let you or if you did you would wind up in the jail.

TH: I was going to ask you too if you didn't just want to hang around in your free time with some of your friends. I was wondering if you could wander around the Post?

TP: You could wander around the Post, yeah. Unless you couldn't wander where it said off limits.

TH: They had it posted.

TP: They had it posted. You couldn't go in. Like over here you couldn't go down into the powder chambers or anything like that. You could go walk any place you want. As a matter of fact over at Wright we used to go swimming and you used to go you know all the activities.

TH: I was wondering also either beachcombing, you know, did any of the men like yourself do that at that time or go swimming in the ocean?

TP: You could. There was no, I mean they wouldn't stop you from it unless it was off limits for some reason or other. I don't know. But on this Post, I couldn't tell you too much what the activities actually were. I imagine they were all the same if you were here, Eustis, or Wright or Fort Hamilton or Fort Wadsworth. They were probably all the same.

TH: Yeah. Well, one thing that is the same time period is your uniform. Was it \$19 a month you were getting paid?

TP: Here is what you got. \$19 a month was an enlisted man, private, private first class now you could be a corporal which was \$21 a month. Out of that you pay for your laundry, your paid for your canteen chits, and for your battery fund for extra things. What you got left was approximately \$14 or \$15 out of the \$19 and if something came up you had less. Usually what would happen like I used to do many times I used to write home, "Mom, I need five or six dollars. I am broke." And I would get it. Sometimes I wouldn't. I wouldn't get five or six, I would get three maybe. But in those days with a dollar you could go quite a bit of places. The only thing that was very bad at that time was a lot of theaters in New York wouldn't let you in if you were in uniform. They had signs, "Soldiers and dogs not allowed."

TH: Really?

TP: Yeah. But came World War I you were gods.

TH: Very patriotic, yeah.

TP: But before that they didn't want anything to do with you.

TH: Because I guess that there was a prejudice that you might start fights or something like that. Was that it?

TP: Well, it could happen yes. It could happen. You see before World War I even during World War I and I imagine somewhat during World War II when the Army didn't have what you call the most intelligent Army, Navy or any right. The Infantry especially wouldn't have what you would call the most intelligent people, see. Usually you would find some misfits but if you were in the Coast Artillery or the Cavalry you had the best people because they took pride in themselves. You never saw an artillery man or a cavalry man in a sloppy uniform or anything like that. You never saw an infantryman because in the first place he wouldn't be allowed off post and the police would pick him up in New York or Newport News or places like that. They would pick him up and he would be taken back and we didn't have military police then. We had provost guards. The same thing as a military police.

TH: Yeah. The same thing but a different term.

TP: The terminology was a little bit different.

TH: How about here at Fort Wright? You mentioned the food.

TP: Well, the food was good but it wasn't elaborate like it is today. God I was looking at the mess display they had at the cook's school where they have trays garnished with pepper slices and different things. You had if you were on post here, you had the regular dishes like they probably would have here. Ordinary dishes if you had mulligan stew, which is the same as Irish stew. One had more potatoes than the other one had. And you had pork and beans and things like that. Eggs you very seldom saw them in the morning. What you had oatmeal or something like that. You had hardtack if you were out in the field which you usually took the butt of your gun and broke it up. And you put it in with what they used to call, hardtack and mule meat which was corned beef, actually dried up corned beef. You put them all together and put it in your mess kit and put them over a fire and ate them. I mean...

TH: You remember when it was a first rate...

TP: Over at the officers quarters there they used to have these oak banisters beautifully polished and well, it wasn't modern but I would say it was Victorian type furniture in there. You could take a look, you come up, this is one of the quarters, the enlisted quarters. The officers quarters are all on the other side.

TH: Yeah.

TP: I thought some of the officers' quarters were right back here.

TH: This is Sergeants' Row where the married NCO's lived.

TP: Yeah, the high NCOs.

TH: Yeah.

TP: You walk in there and you had stairways going up with oak banisters, beautiful chandeliers on the inside.

EH: Were you allowed into Officers' Row like invited inside?

TP: In those days, the only way an enlisted man could ever get into the officers quarters was if he was like a servant, okay, an orderly. See every officer had an orderly. And you were went to there and you did chores for him.

TH: What chores would they be like if you can remember offhand?

TP: Well, the only thing that I can remember was I was the regimental commander's orderly and you didn't get picked for it. You had to like it was like, you tried your best to get into it because it was what they called a cushy job. (laughter) In order to do that, to pass, there were candidates for it like for instance the way you could pass it was your underwear had to be spotless, that is number 1 your uniform had to be spotless, you had to be spotless. And you had to be a soldier in other words if discipline in those days was very bad there was no such thing as talking back to any officer or non commissioned officer. They beat the hell out of you. If he couldn't do it the next higher up would take you and all the way up the line until it got to the first sergeant. In order to be a first sergeant you had to be a bruiser. There was no weaklings in first sergeants. They were big husky guys who could take on anybody and they usually did if you didn't behave. Because usually they didn't have in the ranks people like you have today. Today you have a more educated bunch. During the draft you had college educated people, lawyers, doctors and so forth. In those days, if you had a high school education you were highly educated. Or they put you in the Infantry (if you weren't educated). But if you had a high school education or better you usually went into one of the technical branches like the Artillery or the Signal Corps or the Cavalry. That's why I said the Cavalry and the Artillery were an elite corps.

EH: How are you aware of the Officers' Row houses yourself? How did you manage to see them?

TP: I didn't know anything about the officers homes here until I came back here, years after World War II. I happened to wander in some of them. They weren't inhabited at that time. I was with the NG Dix, over at Dix.

TH: Was that when you came, like you were here briefly in the '28, '29 period but then it wasn't until...

TP: I didn't come back here until 19 I would say, about '73.

TH: That's about when everything was being closed.

TP: Well, the missile command had gone out already. I think they went out about '72.

TH: About that time. Actually they were still here in '74.

TP: They had the missile radar section here until about '73, '74.

TH: Yeah. That's the when they started phasing out.

TP: They dismantled it.

TH: Yeah. What were the, I am interested in the foods of the period because it is funny, you know, we take many things for granted. There was like a mania during the Civil War centennial, you know the 1960s. One hundred years later there is a mania to know

everything about how the Confederate and Union soldiers lived. You know, even the daily, day to day mania to recreate it for what we call living history programs to know about day to day existence. That is why we ask you things like that.

TP: Actually, compared to the Civil War period we were living in high standards because in the Civil War there was very primitive, very things weren't like they are today. First of all there wasn't company cooks. You did your own cooking. They gave you a certain amount of meat, a certain amount of sugar you got, not sugar but salt and things like that. And then the fellas would get together in a squad and they would cook like together. That is the Civil War. Now, when I was in we had kitchens and everything else but not like they are today. We had no refrigerators. There was ice boxes for the meat and you got your ice everyday. We got lemons because that was one of the main things because on board ship or anyplace where there is a congregation of people you can get scurvy from the food and from the way you live. You know what that is, the scurvy?

TH: Yeah.

TP: It's a sickness of malnutrition. So lemons, anything that had...

TH: Vitamin C.

TP: Yeah. That's right. They gave. That was part of your ration. I think if I remember right I may be wrong but I think it was like 13 or 14 cents a day for subsistence for a soldier but now don't forget a dollar during those days was worth a dollar over a dollar. See, we were still on a gold standard then. You had a lot of silver and gold backing it up. For example, I was, I lived in Brooklyn and I was only about 14 years old and my father had a band at, I don't know if you heard of Steeplechase (Park) on Coney Island?

TH: Yes.

TP: Did you ever go there?

TH: Very briefly. It's a very famous place. I have been there but...

TP: You never saw steeplechase?

TH: Yeah.

TP: My father had two bands there. He had the marching band and the dance band and I could go with fifty cents of course I got the tickets free but I could go with fifty cents and I had hot dogs, lemonade, root beer until I got sick. Hot dogs were five cents a piece. Root beer, you got a big glass of root beer for five cents. They had the smaller glass for three cents. You try and get it for 35 cents today. Corn on the cob they used to sell in the midway there outside of Steeplechase with all the butter you wanted and it cost you ten cents a big corn cob, see. So, you can see the difference as far as a dollar was concerned. Today, it cost you now they are going to make alcohol for the cars you couldn't last year

it was a dollar, I think it was 13 ears for a dollar. You won't be able to buy it next year for that amount.

EH: Do you remember the names of officers here? Commanding officer or you know any outstanding names?

TP: Not here, no. I couldn't. I had a First Lieutenant Kern was my platoon Lieutenant. I remember him because he was very friendly with me. I am trying to think of the captain's name, the battery commander's name. Force, Captain Force, F-O-R-C-E. He was my battery commander.

EH: Here?

TP: Not here, over in Fisher Island. That is the only two that I can remember. My first sergeant I can't remember. The company clerk was Constanza. He was Sergeant Costanza. I mean it's very hard. Don't forget now, you know how long it is?

EH: You astound us as far as well you remember.

TP: Fifty years ago. That is long time. A lot of water went under that bridge.

TH: I know, but you still talk as if it was yesterday. It's really to me a historian we pride ourselves as if it were yesterday. I understand fifty years is a long time but its still, you know not that far back either, you know.

TP: No. But you figure it out I have seen two World Wars. I have seen Vietnam I have seen Korea, maybe I'll see another one. I don't know.

TH: Yeah. About the uniform (looking at image)

TP: That's the uniform.

TH: Yeah. Titled a World War I collectors handbook but you know it's the cut of your, you mentioned you had the high...

TP: Now I mentioned they were blacked out. See it?

TH: Yeah your collar insignia.

TP: The collar insignia was blacked out and buttons were blacked out see. Now this is the uniform that we wore. This is the grey coat and they were warm believe it or not and we had raincoats. The raincoats, you were wetter on the inside then you were on the outside. (laughter) Believe it or not.

TH: From the...

TP: From the humidity because of condensation of the inside because they were rubberized on the inside.

TH: Sure and all your body heat inside.

TP: Body heat built up and humidity on the inside would you would be soaking wet. This was great coat. Now let me see if they have any summer uniforms in here.

TH: If you go this way they might have...well your uniform it seems like...

TP: This we wore in the wintertime, the leather garcon. Now there is raincoat that had these snaps, the woolen shirt, these were the breeches that we had.

TH: Tom, even though this is ten years after World War I this was still the basic style?

TP: The basic style the same up until I'll tell you when, I would say the late '30s. In the late '30s you still had these breeches but then they came out with the open jacket.

TH: Sure. Yeah.

TP: And what they called the swing back jacket. I don't know if you have that here. This is the cap I am talking about. We didn't have that here. It's the overseas cap.

TH: The garrison. Was this called the campaign hat?

TP: The campaign hat, sure. That was a campaign hat. We had this type of helmet.

TH: The old round type.

TP: The old British type.

TH: Yeah.

TP: This we very seldom got.

TH: It's like a sweater.

TP: It is a sweater yeah.

EH: A wool vest.

TP: And this we seldom got. You had the socks though. This was the boots that we had.

EH: The high boots.

TP: The high boots that they gave us in the Field Artillery and they gave us later on also to the Coast Artillery and you had to wear spurs.

TH: Had to wear spurs, how come, what was the reason for that.

TP: These spurs here. The Calvary and the Coast Artillery and even the Air Corps when they first started had to wear spurs.

TH: What's the reason?

TP: They took most of the Air Corps people were taken out of the Artillery.

TH: I see. Okay.

TP: Now, here is your insignias. We had these cords. The Artillery had red, Infantry blue, Calvary was gold or yellow, medics were white and red Ordnance was sort of yellowish red. Let's see what else they had in here. This was World War I.

TH: They had a picture of a knapsack. I think we went by it fast.

EH: We are looking through a World War I collector's uniform book. What did you call the trousers before? You called them a common name.

TP: We called them the peg breeches. They were pegged. (speaking about knapsack) See this is the bottom part. You pull that strap and you have the bottom part. This would drop out. Here you put your mess kit and your eating utensils right up on here. On the side here was a little something like this and you put your bayonet on there. On top of here would be you would strap your hobnailed boots, see. The Infantry did. You carried one blanket and half a pup tent, poles your raincoat and whatever, on the bottom part you carried underwear and whatever it happened to be. The pack weighed approximately about 60 pounds.

TH: Fully equipped.

TP: Fully equipped.

TH: Were there any rations, Tom? Were there any rations included on your person?

TP: Only in combat rations you had your bully beef and your hardtack and that's about it. You had your first aid kit which is the same as it is today. This is it right here.

TH: How about leggings by the way, were they wrap around leggings.

TP: The wrap around legging I think you had a picture of them here. The gas mask you put it on your side and when you had to use it you put it on your chest.

TH: Yeah I was wondering if there was any portions of the uniform that gave you discomfort, you know, any the guys didn't like.

TP: Everything.

TH: Everything. (laughter)

TP: You had to carry this on your pack too. That is your trenching shovel. (inaudible)

TH: I mention that because a lot of the clothing was wool. Well, did you switch over to summer, to anything outside to get away from the wool clothing?

TP: Yes, the khakis.

TH: The khakis. That would be the canvas duck.

TP: It wasn't duck it was a heavy linen.

EH: Describe again the weapons you were issued. What were you issued? What type was it you said you were issued?

TP: A Springfield 1906.

TH: I know the '03 was the famous one.

TP: No. The '03 was the same thing.

TH: Oh I see. Okay. There was a first model.

TP: They kept modifying it. And this is your clip for and there is your bayonet.

TH: And you were giving us the weight before.

TP: Yeah the bayonet runs between 6.5 and 7 pounds. No I am sorry, the gun, the rifle it was 9 pounds, 8.5 -9 pounds. That is this one here. Yeah the bayonet was 1.5 pounds.

TH: Did you ever fire at the rifle range here? Do you recall that?

TP: No. I didn't fire the rifle. (inaudible) and the artillery had a .45 Smith and Wesson.

TH: Was that issued to each man?

TP: Yeah to each man on the Field Artillery and the Coast Artillery had this type of weapon. You also had a rifle because you acted as Infantry whenever...

TH: Were they good weapons in your estimation? Were they good at that time?

TP: Oh, yeah. There was nothing better than the rifle.

TH: The Springfield '06.

TP: Springfield, oh that was beautiful. You could knock the hair off a gnat's nose at about 100 yards. I am not kidding. They were very accurate. As a matter of fact, they used them for snipers. They used them in WWII for sniping. This looks like either the Air Corps or the Field Artillery

EH: Did you get dog tags? Were you issued any?

TP: Yes, everybody got dog tags.

EH: What were they round tags or....

TP: The dog tags at that time were made out of metal. I think they were brass if I am not mistaken. They were just the same as they are now.

EH: Same shape, like rectangular.

TH: Are they rectangular today because I saw..

TP: Approximately yeah rectangular...

TH: Yeah with rounded corners.

TP: They had your name and your serial number. (inaudible)

TH: You also by the way I am sure were issued blankets at that time.

TP: Yeah.

TH: Would that be a standard Army blanket.

TP: Standard Army and it was all wool. All wool.

TH: I was wondering about that. Was it just a plain U.S. embroidered in there.

TP: Yes.

EH: Was it like stamped, stenciled?

TP: US.

EH: Stenciled?

TP: No. Well, if it was stamped or stenciled I couldn't tell you but they were US on it and on a corner, one of the corners there used to be an ID tag. A little and you put down your name and address or whatever.

EH: Was it cloth?

TP: It was cloth. Made out of white linen.

EH: Like a triangular corner?

TP: No, it was an oblong piece.

EH: Was this all issued from the Quartermasters' Department?

TP: Yeah. The Quartermasters used to issued everything, food, clothing, everything that you can think of. There wasn't that many different departments like there is today.

EH: So much more specialized and broken down into subgroups today. (inaudible)
When you were sent here did anyone describe it as you know a high class place to come to, Fort Hancock.

TP: Well, I tell you, Fort Hancock, Fort Tilden, Fort Hamilton, Fort Wadsworth, anything that was within the New York City area was considered a very good place to be stationed. The reason for that is you had all kinds of traveling facilities. You had everything that you would want. You could get into New York. You could do Brooklyn or New York or whatever that would be and it was enjoyable. Now you take some of the units out in the middle west or whatever it would be at that time, they were far from everything and it was sort of frontier living you know. It wasn't like living here at the greater New York area or Philadelphia area or Boston area.

EH: What was your favorite place to be out of your career?

TP: Home.

EH: Out of your career though. What was...

TP: I like New York. I was from New York and I had all my family there and I could get home any time I wanted. I could see my parents. New York was an ideal place if you could get stationed there. But usually then it isn't like today. You went to basic training and you might be shipped anywhere in the United States or Europe or Korea or anything. If you joined a regiment, there was regiments then. If you joined that unit, you stayed with that unit. You took you basic training (inaudible) squad and you took your basic training right there and you stayed there unless you wanted to get out for some reason or transfer to another unit. It isn't like it is today when they push you from one place. That was good for one reason. It sort of made an Espirit de Corps. If anybody said anything

about your regiment you probably beat them up. And if anybody in any of the other battalions of that regiment said anything about you battalion you would have the same feeling or if anyone in the battalion said anything about your company it was always that nucleus that you sort of had a feeling that you belonged to something. Today you don't belong to anything.

EH: That is so true.

TP: You could be today, it depends on what MOS (military occupational specialty) you have. You know what an MOS is? That is a job description. If you are a mechanic you might be a mechanic in a transportation corps. You might be a mechanic in the ordnance or you might be a mechanic but you were working on vehicles wherever you are. In those days you stayed with one unit and that was it.

EH: Can you describe the rank of chief warrant officer?

TP: Well, a chief warrant officer at one time used to be the highest grade of semi officer and better than a non-commissioned officer. Today it's about the same thing but according to regulations whenever they talk of officer it means officer or warrant officer. You have been upgraded into more of an officer's rank but you were warrant instead of commissioned.

EH: And you attained a # 4 rank of that, level four.

TP: Chief. They worked this way, warrant officer, chief warrant officer 2, 3, and 4 and a chief warrant officer four is the highest grade you can get in warrant officer. At one time a warrant officer was dressed like an enlisted man, today he dresses like an officer. It's been upgrade quite a bit. (speaking unrelated to interview)

EH: Are you in contact with any of your original Army career friends?

TP: I'll be honest with you some of the people I was with at that time were 17. Naturally, it was anywheres from a lot of them were World War I veterans. They were in their late 20s or early 30s or 40s and possibly they are all dead. Very few possibly alive World War I veterans. I don't think there are too many of them.

EH: Even the men who were in the same basic training with you were do you have any contact with them?

TP: No. No. After I got out I shifted around so much that you lose track of everybody.

EH: So you really don't have contact with...

TP: No. I don't have contact with any of them.

EH: Any of your original group.

TP: No. the only one that I... during World War II I used to I got in touch with he became a colonel and he was Dunleavy. Tommy Dunleavy. He was a sergeant with me at Battery D later on and I remember for some reason or another I came across him. He was a Lt. Colonel in the Engineers and I got came across him years after. I refused like I said before I took the exams for West Point but I never went. The reason for that was I got married. At one time there was one thing you could not have in West Point. That is a wife or a mustache. And that ruined me as far as West Point was concerned. But I came all the way up the ranks up to before I became a warrant I was a first sergeant. I came all the way up.

EH: Is there anything really outstanding you know some of the experiences you had that like unforgettable experience?

TP: That explosion over at Fort Wright was unforgettable because it could have whacked all of us out. That is one thing. No. I mean everything is, one outranks the other in other words. You can't pick any specific item.

TH: When abouts by the way was that accident at the gun battery out there?

TP: At Battery Dutton.

TH: When abouts was that?

TP: When about I would say about 1927.

TH: I'm sure there must have been an official report and some photographs.

(talking irrelevant to interview)

EH: Can you describe the Canteen that you were talking about before the Post Exchange title?

TP: Well, I can give you the one that I can remember. There was a bar and actually a big room. I would say bar room you know and it had tables and well, people could sit down just like they have in PX's now but it wasn't so elaborate. They had pictures of the different units and insignias up on the wall that I can remember on that and that's about it. I mean it wasn't anything elaborate.

EH: So, it was a very informal café.

TP: Very informal. It was only for enlisted people though. The officers had their own officer club. They always had an officers club.

TH: I hear it was building 114 after they moved the Proving Ground down to Aberdeen Maryland in 1919 they converted what was the officers quarters of what was the officers

working at the Proving Ground into the officer Club and it served as such for many, many years here.

TP: Well, I wouldn't be surprised because the officers had a club but the enlisted people had the canteen. There was no such thing as a non commissioned officers canteen and an enlisted man's canteen, the privates and all the people went to one canteen. The only thing is the privileges of course, rank has its privileges if you were a first sergeant or something like that you can tell a private to buzz off, you know. Get out of my way.

TH: I just marvel at the time period that you were here. The '20s were known as you know like the machine guns, the gangsters, prohibition and all and you would come down here to Sandy Hook and I would think it was quite a time. We walk out here today from time to time we have a veteran come in here like yourself tom and you try and do a put batteries in the tape recorder and go out on the Parade Ground. Some days you can't even think because we are on the flight pattern for Kennedy International Airport, but like when you came down here in 1928, '29 it must have been practically quiet.

TP: It was you might as well be out in the boondocks somewhere. Actually you were in the boondocks out here. The only thing during prohibition it was not uncommon for the Coast Guard to be chasing somebody out here coming in with a load of whiskey.

TH: Yeah rum running yeah.

TP: At night mostly in the after dark.

TH: You mean you actually would hear firing going on?

TP: Oh I don't remember any firing but I do remember hearing many time oh they just caught a rum runner out here and they confiscated all his whatever it was, see.

EH: How about was drinking very limited in the canteen itself? Did they really kept tabs?

TP: During that time we had the 3.2 beer but that doesn't stop anybody from bringing in imported hooch or something else. They used to make their own. It was a favorite thing for vanilla extract or something to be used.

EH: Really? How interesting.

TP: Sure. You know you have alcoholics then as much as you have now. Vanilla extract used to be one thing. They used to get the alcohol out of the dispensary somewheres to make what they used to call hootch. Or you got into Newark or you go into someplaces where there were speakeasies. You could buy a bottle of gin or a bottle of bathtub gin as they used to call it. Or lots of times you bought something and it had poisonous alcohol and the guy died or went blind. It happened. You had alcoholics then too. And life then

was monotonous. In the first place you didn't have any radios. You didn't have any TVs. You had a victrola or a piano in the enlisted men's lounge and that's about it.

TH: Somebody could play.

TP: Well, you had a player piano. You had a player piano or you had a phonograph but there were no girls like there is today. Who do you dance with? Another guy. Probably knock you brains out. (laughter) Today is a lot different.

TH: In fact, well, he died in 1926. I am thinking of Valentino but the '20s it was silent movies. That's what you would watch here? If you went to a movie here that's what...

TP: Silent movies with the captions on it and everything else. I think that the first movie that I heard sound was that colored singer

TH: Al Jolson.

TP: Al Jolson but that was sound and very little speaking.

TH: Yeah, the Jazz singer, 1927.

TP: If you lived where you lived today and somebody transported you back fifty years you would go out of your cotton picking head. But I tell you something the people then had more fun then you are having today.

TH: Everybody says that.

TP: You had more fun. The reason for that is today somebody has to show you something for an activity for you to do. In those days you made your own activity. See you didn't have to have somebody say to you, you are watching TV and somebody is entertaining you right here because if you lived right here on post you didn't have a TV so you had to find your own activity. You played pool. You played some cards or something and you were satisfied or bowled. You were satisfied because you didn't know any better. Say for instance you were going to go to Newark or someplace like that they possibly, I don't know about here but at Wright, you walked. You went down to the ferry and took the ferry and then you took the train or whatever it happened to be. Here more than likely there were no buses to take you there. You walked from here all the way down to where the bridge is and possibly took the train because there must have been a, I am almost sure there is a station there somewheres. The Jersey Central I think came in somewhere near there.

EH: Near the bridge.

TP: There wasn't anything like today. (talking about a non interview topic) If I had to get a pack of cigarettes, I don't smoke but I used to smoke a pipe at one time but if I had to get tobacco for my pipe I would walk possibly all the way out Sandy Hook all the way

out to Keyport. I didn't think it was strange. There was no other way of getting out there. And if I wanted entertainment of some kind I would make my own entertainment. I would get some fellas together and I'd say lets have a game of cards or let's shoot a game of pool or something like that.

EH: If you had a chose would you be back in that era do you think if it were possible?

TP: As far as the refinements and as far as your conveniences, no. But as far as living, yes. I wouldn't be able to do without my refrigerator or my air conditioning or my electric stove or whatever I have at home or my car even. But I didn't have them and I would be satisfied. Sure.

TH: In this vein, I am thinking at the time you served it was a peacetime Army again. You know we were once again cut down to a small army at that time.

TP: I think the Army at that time I don't think it was more than 200,000 men. The Navy was bigger but the Army was cut down almost to the bone. I had seen some batteries where there was only 40 or 50 people in the battery.

TH: And the normal strength at that time would be what?

TP: 60 men.

TH: So it was below because it was peacetime.

TP: Yeah. I am talking about peacetime. Not at World War strength.

TH: Do you think places like Fort Wright, Fort Hancock at the time you served back in '28, '29 back in here would they have been a deterrent you know with a peacetime army if all of a sudden a navy did come sailing in do you think you could have done battle with them?

TP: In what way, what do you mean? You mean an enemy coming in?

TH: Yeah. Here you are in training and it's a peacetime army and you've got disappearing guns here. You've got the .155s and all of a sudden a foreign naval fleet tries to sail in and take over New York Harbor. I am wondering if...

TP: In those days I don't think things moved so fast. They didn't move so fast. Say for instance, take the hostages today. Take the hostages today. If it had been in those days in the first place you would have a couple of regiments of marines right in Iran, right in there, see. Now we did a lot of we had a lot of trouble with the south American republics at one time. Before World War I we had trouble with Mexico, see. Now we didn't procrastinate in any way. We just sent people down there to do the job and that was it. We didn't take any nonsense. Today we are diplomatic and if we have had hostages 81 days now. They wouldn't have lasted more than about a week. We'd have some people

down there already taking them. I remember 1924 or '25 I transferred over to, I am a licensed pilot I think I told you that. My license is 17060. Today it runs in the millions so you can see how far back it is. We sent, I don't know if you ever heard of it in Nicaragua we had a little trouble in Nicaragua they were killing some of our planters down there which we took away from them naturally. We are not the nicest people in the world when it comes to taking things. We took it away from them and they got a little upset about it and that man Sandino his name was we bombed the hell out of him. We sent bombers down there. We threw bombs at him. Chased him up in the hills and that was the end of it. It only took us about three weeks and we had him. That's all. Down in Mexico and just around World War I General Pershing chased what's his name all over Mexico.

TH: Pancho Villa. I am just wondering, you know, we take visitors out here when the park was open and you get people come out here and see the massive fortifications and even without the guns they are, you know just awestruck that we the United States had such massive defenses around New York Harbor and most of our harbors. You know, the rangers will point out San Francisco, Boston, Chesapeake Bay.

TP: That's right. All you big cities.

TH: Yeah. We were all protected.

TP: The reason for that was because everybody had a Navy.

TH: Yeah. And that is how you showed your strength.

TP: That's right. Now if anybody wanted to get here they couldn't come over and send a bomber over. They had to send ships or as soon as they came out, like everything else we had military attaches in places. Actually a military attaches in nothing but a spy, a military spy. Let's put it, I don't care if he is Russian, French, English, Italian, American or what he is he is nothing else but a spy. What he has to do is report any new military weapons or anything that is happening. Now whenever they held a maneuver of some kind we would send people there. We would send military men at any maneuver that Germany would have, that Russia would have, France would have, England would have. We send them down there to inspect and see what they were doing which was SOP in those days. Now if a country was going to attack us like Japan did, we would positively have some inkling and we did have some inkling at what happened. This is a lot of baloney that we didn't know what was going to happen. We knew months ahead of time at what they were going to do. As a matter of fact, Yamamoto was military attaché he was a captain at that time in Washington and we were holding maneuvers in the Pacific and he took those maneuvers and reversed them to attack us. So, we would know and we would already be alerted right here. And the Navy would have ships out searching for him if they got through the Navy then they would have to come to us. And in those days up until even World War II it wasn't the case that they were going to come over and attack us. If they were going to attack us first they would attack the Navy first because once they had eliminated the Navy they would have access to us.

TH: Then the Coast Artillery is...

TP: Well, you Coast Guard is nothing less than a revenue at that time.

TH: Yeah. A very small service.

TP: It was nothing right here and St. George in Staten Island. You had nothing here.

TH: And I earlier said that the Coast Artillery is behind the Navy is a first line of land defense.

TP: Defense, that is right.

TH: I am also wondering, it must have been a deterrent too backing up an American Navy you have got your harbor ringed with fire. I am wondering if you view it as such.

TP: Well, if the Navy was small and the ships were, the enemy ships were bigger the navy would actually retire behind in the harbors here and be used as stationary forts more than likely and we would be the first line of defense protecting the Navy. As a matter of fact we would at that point in time protect the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

TH: You are right, yeah.

TP: Because and once the Brooklyn Navy Yard if they got through us, forget the Brooklyn Navy Yard. They could just destroy it in no time. They could destroy New York City. They could destroy Newark.

TH: The industrial.

TP: Or anyplace they wanted. They could land an amphibious force anyplace.

TH: We are thinking of the impossible yet it is possible.

TP: What's that?

TH: Of being invades because is a peacetime situation I always think you know the enemy comes from any country you know you have got one ocean on one side an the Pacific Ocean on the other and you feel safe yet during wartime all of a sudden your ships are sailing right out of a harbor and are being sunk. Your enemy is out of the water and could well be above it if they so chose.

TP: Well, do you know a US Cruiser was sunk in Long Island in World War I?

TH: Yes. *USS San Diego*.

TP: The submarine came right straight through the net and sunk a cruiser right along Long Island.

TH: Off Fire Island.

TP: Sure. German submarines landed people right on our coast on Long Island.

TH: Yeah. The Montauk Point.

EH: Which reminds us, there are so many rumors connected to having submarines here, wasn't there.

TH: To having a submarine shell Fort Hancock back in 1918 but...

TP: The submarine what?

TH: A German submarine shelling Fort Hancock in World War I.

TP: I never heard that but it could be because a Japanese submarine shelled San Francisco, the oil fields or whatever it was in Frisco

TH: It was in Washington.

TP: Washington?

TH: Fort Flagger and Fort Casey in the Puget Sound. They protected the sound up there.

TP: I mean anything is possible. Don't forget you have hundreds of miles of coastline.

TH: Coastline, yes.

TP: On both sides and you can't put a ship on every mile. The only time that you know is if something happens.

EH: That's right.

TP: And then they don't tell you the truth anyway. How many people do you think know that a Japanese submarine shelled the west coast? Not many.

TH: Not many.

TP: And not many people know and I didn't know you were talking about German submarine bombing here.

TH: Well, it's a rumor that..

EH: It's a rumor that we are always curious about.

TP: It's a possibility. I wouldn't be a bit surprised although submarines, well you had the Dutchman which was a German merchant type submarine. Came here loaded with a lot of medical stuff and when right back to Germany. At that time we were at peace with Germany and that was something unheard of that a submarine coming all the way over but then the submarines got to be pretty good and they came packed and did a lot of damage. You would be surprised. We almost lost World War II.

EH: What barely made it from a loss?

TP: Us coming into it. England was ready to give up the coast and move to Canada. They had already shipped all their gold and what do you call it over to Canada. If we hadn't given them 50 destroyer, we sold them 50 destroyers. You remember that?

TH: Yeah. Lend Lease.

TP: I don't know if you remember but you read about it.

TH: Yeah. I read about it. The Lend-Lease. And you remember it as I didn't live it. But I have studied it. But people today, they have no conception. They have no conception of how bad times were with like the depression. I have only felt it because my parents lived it. My father was veteran of the Marines in World War II so I understand what he went through because he told me. But being a ranger and telling school children you know we have got future generations coming through here looking at these old gun emplacements and at our lighthouse you know you are trying to instill what it is like what it is all about. But are you reaching anybody. I don't know if they understand it.

TP: The only thing you are doing with those children when they come here if they listen to you is something like you were saying there is man in Mars.

TH: Yeah. (laughter) It is very distant. Yeah.

TP: A man in Mars and he looks like this and the only thing he at that moment is possibly visualizing something and then he forgets about it. That is something too far away. It's too much for them to concentrate on or try to think about. Its really, people don't unless you have been in it, it does not make an impression on you.

TH: Yeah. You are right.

(Interview ends with no conclusion.)

END OF INTERVIEW