

Sandy Hook, Gateway NRA, NPS
Oral History Interview with Chuck Schneider
1959-1962
71st Air Defense Artillery, Nike Launch Site
Interviewed by Billy Yirce, Monmouth University student intern
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Transcribed by Mary Rasa 2010



Chuck and Judith Saxe Schneider at Fort Hancock Bowling Alley, 1961.



Chuck Schneider's photo from 71st ADA roster, 1962.



Chuck Schneider on left and Terry Daniel on right, outside of Barracks 74 after a very good day of fishing. Top three photos courtesy of the Schneider Family.



Chuck Schneider in 2003 at Fort Hancock on Cold War Day. Photo courtesy NPS.

BY: This is oral history of Chuck Schneider taking place at Fort Hancock in Sandy Hook National Park. Where and when were you born and where did you grow up?

CS: Born in 1940. I grew up in Illinois.

BY: Okay and how did you end up coming to Fort Hancock?

CS: I was stationed in Spring Valley, New York at a Nike Site and they closed that and sent me over here.

BY: Okay. Where did you live when you were serving here?

CS: What building?

BY: Mhhhuh.

CS: I don't know which one. The horseshoe shaped one.

BY: Okay. Where the enlisted men...

CS: Yeah. Building 74 I think it is now.

BY: Okay. What do you remember about the area during that time? What sticks out in your mind? Anything?

CS: The beach. It was nice. It was pretty good. Winters were cold.

BY: Do you remember any storms in particular?

CS: Hurricane Donna. We were there for that. That was bad.

BY: Yeah. Lot of flooding?

CS: Lot of flooding and we had a lot of fun too.

BY: Did you know anything about Fort Hancock before being sent here?

CS: No.

BY: Nothing at all?

CS: Nothing.

BY: Okay. What was your rank and title when you left the military?

CS: My papers say E-4 so I must have been E-4.

BY: Okay. What was your job when you were here?

CS: I was in the Launch Control Trailer.

BY: Okay and what was that like?

CS: It coordinated between the site and the launching site. I was down at the launch site.

BY: Did any of these jobs help you in the future when you left the military?

CS: No.

BY: Do you remember anything about the food here when you were here?

CS: About what?

BY: About the food.

CS: The food?

BY: Yes. Good bad.

CS: A lot of garlic. The cooks were all Puerto Ricans so we got a lot of garlic. It was good

BY: Well, what about the social activities? What was there to do for fun?

CS: Well, we had the beach. We had quite a bit to do. We'd go to town and everything, so...

BY: What town was the town to go to back then?

CS: Highlands. There was a big hotel right there in the corner. They had a good tavern.

BY: What was the beach that you went to when you went to the beach?

CS: Anywhere we wanted to go down here.

BY: Anywhere. Now you met your wife here, right?

CS: Yeah.

BY: How did that happen? How did that occur?

CS: I don't even know. I was fishing with her Dad. That's what it was. I went fishing with her Dad.

BY: Now her Dad was the Chaplain, right?

CS: Right.

BY: What were the religious services like when you were here? Do you remember anything about them?

CS: Not that much. It was a strictly military service, you know, it was all written down.

BY: Did you ever go into New York City when you were stationed here at all?

CS: No. I did when I was in Spring Valley. I didn't like it so, I had no reason to go. It was hard to get there then.

BY: Yeah. That's why I was asking because...

CS: Yeah. Yeah. It took a long time to get there. No ferries.

BY: In your opinion, what was the most interesting thing about working at Fort Hancock?

CS: Well, the beach. The guys we were working with were all good guys. We didn't have any trouble with them. And it was pretty well, laid back, you know. It wasn't real strict military.

BY: Now do you still keep in contact with any of the men that you served with?

CS: A few of them.

BY: Ah, that's good. When's the last time that you visited Fort Hancock?

CS: I was here last year.

BY: How much has it changed since you left?

CS: Oh, from last year?

BY: No. No. No. From when you left the service.

CS: Ah, gee, a lot. An awful lot. There were no civilians out here at all. I mean it was all closed up.

BY: And what year did you leave the military?

CS: '62.

BY: What did you go into? What did you do?

CS: I went home and I had a business out there that I run.

BY: Oh, sounds good. Well, I just wanted to thank you for coming.

END OF INTERVIEW

(Editor's note: Chuck Schneider was in the U.S. Army from October 1958 to September 1962. He served first at the Nike Site at Spring Valley, New York, NY-99. He came to Fort Hancock on January 2, 1959 and served there until discharged, which took place at the Brooklyn Army Terminal.)