

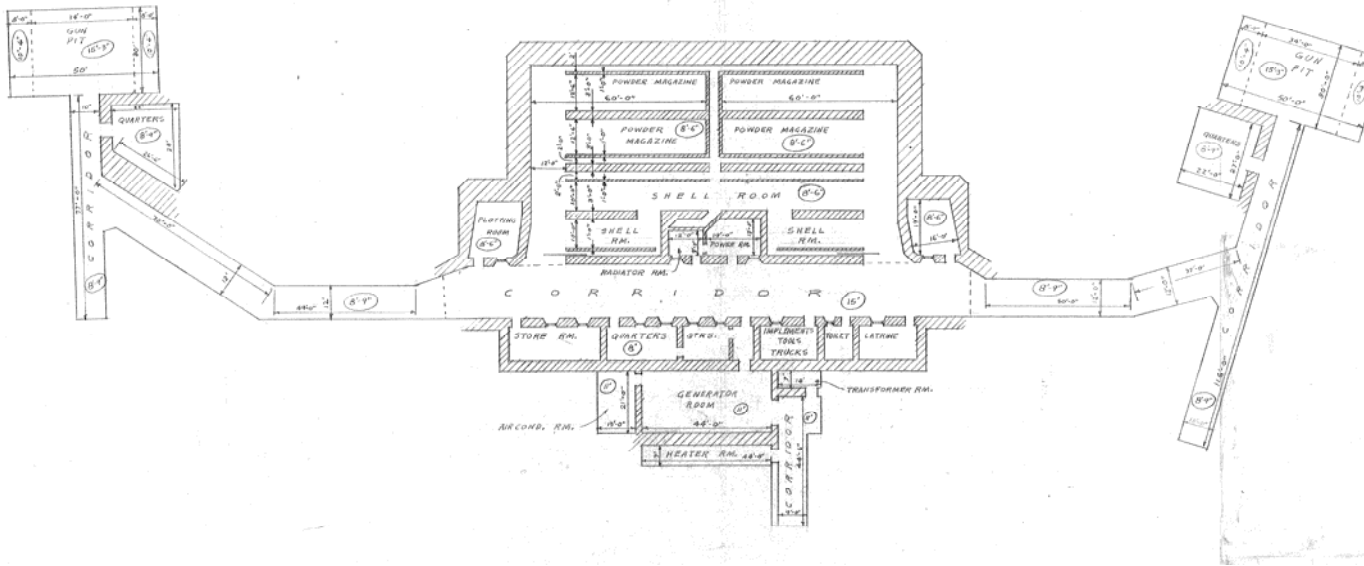
Sandy Hook, Gateway NRA, National Park Service
 An Oral History Interview with Fred Schneider, Henry Tuting and William Tuting
 245th Coast Artillery Battery F

1935-1945

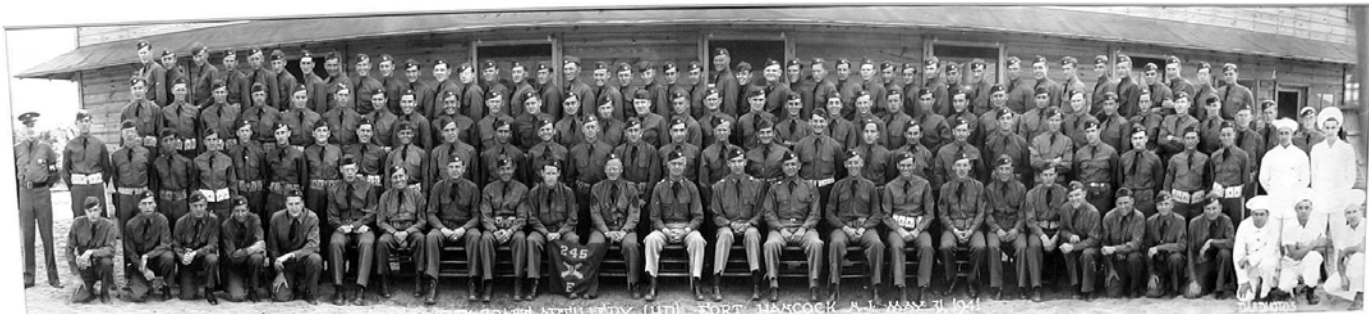
Interviewed by Elaine Harmon and Tom Hoffman, NPS

May 17, 1987

Transcribed by Mary Rasa, 2012



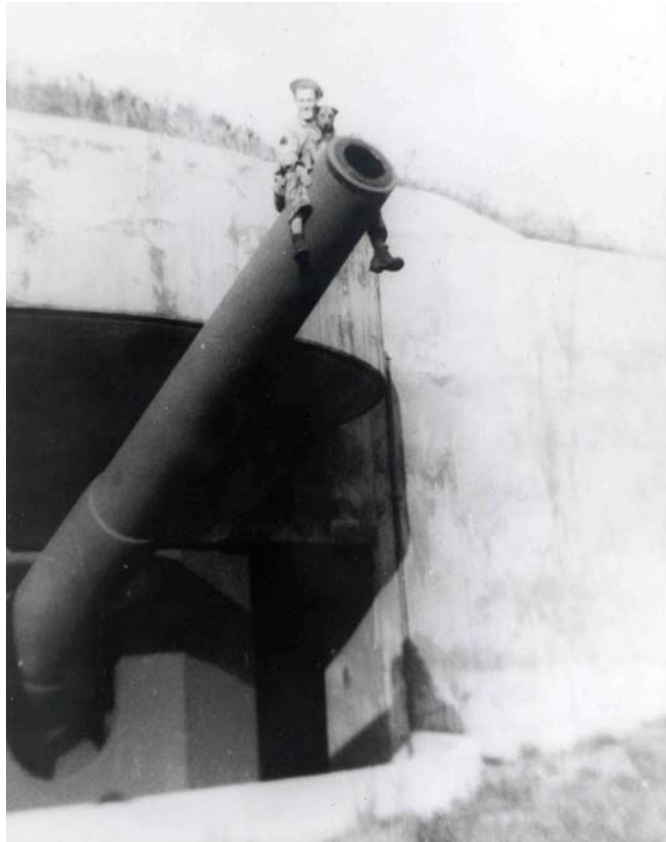
Drawing of Battery Kingman completed in the 1950s. Drawing was completed by Fort Hancock Post Engineers Office because it was a possible location for a fall out shelter.



245th Coast Artillery, Battery F May 31, 1941



Photos cropped from the 1936 Roster of the 245th Coast Artillery Photograph.



William Tuting on Battery Kingman's gun with his dog Scotty in 1945.

All images are courtesy NPS/Gateway NRA

Editor's notes in parenthesis ()

EH: ...Museum Technician Elaine Harmon and we are interviewing Bill Tuting, Henry Tuting and Fred Schneider, all veterans of the 245th Coast Artillery. We are presently down on site at Kingman-Mills. The date today is May 17, 1987. This got cut off at the very start. Park Historian Tom Hoffman will tell exactly where we are standing right now.

TH: Bill Tuting, where are we? (laughter)

WT: Gun 2, Battery Kingman.

TH: This is Gun 2. We are on the north side of Battery Kingman and this is gun #2. And is this your gun emplacement?

WT: Our gun emplacement. Ours

TH: Ours.

FS: Our gun battery. One battery took care of both guns.

TH: But you were commander so you took care of which gun?

WT: Gun #2.

TH: Gun #2 so this is your side. And I think it's quite a treat. We've got Bill Tuting, his brother Henry Tuting here and we have got Fred Schneider and they remember it well. Could you tell us a little bit about the operation right inside the casement, Bill? What it was? What went on here?

WT: Well, actually to maintain the guns all the time, you know.

TH: Right.

WT: And you come down here practically every day especially when there was real firing. You would come down here everyday. (We) spent about 4 hours in the morning. Clean the guns. Make sure it is clean and practice and you practice over and over again. You have about 15 men here at the gun crew, 15-18 men all together. And you practice in the morning and you keep on practicing. The main thing was to get the trucks that carry the shell had to be properly lined up to the breech and because you always had a little lump, little bumps over there and you have to come in fast and you have to brake as you come in with the truck. We used a dummy shell. It's the same weight as a regular shell. Everything is the same except it has no powder on the inside and you rammed this thing as a shell, as a firing shell, you know, and you do the same thing. However, you pull the shell out after each shot. It's a (inaudible) shot. There's a sleeve on. And this sleeve weighs about 20 pounds on this dummy shell. And this sleeve always broke back and forth. So what do you do? You push it in and you slam it back. Push it in and slam it back. Finally after about six or seven times the shell finally comes out. In other words you rammed home inside the (inaudible) and powder.

FS: Because there's rifles in there.

WT: Yeah.

FS: Because that's what it is. It's a rifle. People always think it's a smooth bore. But it has rifling in it and to the right. Am I correct?

WT: Yep.

TH: On the right side?

FS: Traverse so when you shells barrel travels.

WT: They found it would travel further and faster.

FS: Just like you would...

WT: Rotates, the shell rotates.

FS: When you have a football and you...

TH: A pass, yeah.

FS: It's the same difference. It twist and it gives you better control of accuracy, you know.

(inaudible)

TH: Richardson. Richardson was 12-inch disappearing. Kingman was barbette.

WT: Well, these shells weighed about 1,000 pounds. We used nitrocellulose powder which weighs 240 pounds. Each powder bag was 60 pounds, weighed 60 lbs. You put four of them in there after the shell has been rammed home and behind the last bag of powder is a red patch of five pounds of what they call black powder. So, when you closed the breech block everything is in there. The shell is in there. The powder is in there. The black powder is in there. Close the breech block. They put a primer in there. That's when they fired the primer. It shoots a flame. And it brings it to the black powder. Now the black powder goes off.

TH: That small bag is first.

WT: First, yeah. And that puts the compression against the shell. Once the explosion takes place and the powder, not the force of the shell. It has to go somewhere, you know.

TH: Did you have shielding around the gun? There were big shields in here.

WT: We had them after they casemated the place. Before this, (the guns) used to be out in the open. This used to be completely out in the open. You could bomb it from the air easy and see the target.

TH: Okay. That's when the guns were out on the huge concrete, the round concrete platform out in the open.

WT: Right.

TH: And you were here when they started casemating the guns?

WT and FS: Yeah.

TH: So, you were here before. That was probably a lot of work and everything. Did you have to like suspend drills when the workmen were building the casemates.

FS: Yes.

WT: What we did, actually close one section down. We used the other guns.

TH: So, you would go over to, would that be Mills or?

WT: We, the first couple of (inaudible) we went over to Mills.

FS: We went over to Mills.

WT: And then when they finished Kingman we came here.

FS: Well, they had also been, can you remember they had also been workers here and what they did? They alternated sand and diagonal strips of concrete up here. Remember? And they kept putting sand and concrete on top so that if a bomb did fall onto it there would be a deflection. In other words....

WT: The sand would do it. It would probably go through the first layer and hit the sand.

FS: The same would be the wells here. They used to have fellas here that used to work all night long draining these wells out here, if you remember.

WT: Yeah.

FS: They used to have pumps out there when they were casemating and physical changes on the shields and so forth. And the concussion too was a whole lot stronger once the casemating was done. Remember? When it was on the (inaudible). You fired them and you had a sort of a non rush of air. And it would be like a muffled boom but when it was in here, it reverberated all the way through the, and I tell you...

TH: Down in back inside.

FS: Oh yeah. And I tell you when I guess not as much as when we fired this as when we fired the disappearing guns but even in the range section which would be in the area when that thing actually went off and you were lying on a plotting table you had a target in your hand marking the spots it would actually move you, you know.

TH: Yeah. Move you right off your spot on the table.

FS: From the spot and you would have to start to orient yourself.

WT: Now of course, there were times we didn't fire. Some other company fired. So, we were invited to watch this. Well, we would watch them aside the hill over there. We were humans, you know. I'd make sure to take all my four dogs with me. I just set them aside there, you know. I'd have all the dogs get down here and everything else. Once the gun goes off the dogs took off. (laughter) Sure. (inaudible)

FS: If I am not mistaken, in the beginning we didn't have all of the, all of the tracks.

WT: Yeah.

FS: You have all of the tracks.

EH: The monorail?

TH: The overhead monorails.

FS: That carried the shells out here.

WT: Well, we didn't have this.

FS: That's what I am saying. You didn't have this. So the shells had to be physically carried on the carts from the ammunition room...

WT: Hmm mmm. From way inside.

FS: It had to be brought to it where as later...

WT: Brought them out and line them up.

FS: But later they started to stack them out.

WT: We used to stack them up right inside.

FS: In the vestibule. Inside and outside the vestibule.

TH: The corridor that goes...

WT: Yeah, that corridor.

FS: Because they would start moving them in so actually in a sense you could fire faster because now you didn't have to track from way back in the ammunition room.

WT: I've got the picture. Hold this. (Tape stops and starts) This was allowed. Just before firing.

(Conversation going on in background)

WT: However, they do not have explosive powder inside the shell, so if it lands in the water it wouldn't explode. They may skip on the water.

EH: We are looking at a photo incidentally. Where is this taken?

WT: Fort Wright.

EH: Fort Wright. But it a similar situation where the shells are on the shell cart.

WT: On Fishers Island, right.

EH: And like a processional going into the gun battery.

WT: Now you see I seven, I think we fired 10 rounds that time. Of course, it costs a lot of bucks to fire. Because this is a waste, you know.

EH: Sure.

WT: Mortars however, come like this. Come down like that.

EH: Exactly. It's a lobbing.

WT: Once they hit the water they don't skip.

EH: Right.

WT: These guns that we have here the barbettes, they skip if they hit the water, especially the disappearing guns.

FS: Don't forget too, Willie, you mentioned the fact that when you used to fire these with rifles as opposed to the mortars when you had the target ship out there the target ship had to always go from right to left. And the reason for it is because if you had a normal skip to the right and if you had the, if you were going from, let's see...

WT: Left to right.

FS: You mean right to left.

WT: Yeah.

FS: And if you went the other way and if you had a near miss you could possibly skip and hit the tugboat that's pulling the line. They lined up everything carefully.

WT: There's no explosive inside the shell but the powder is on the inside.

TH: Another ammunition cart had the powder.

WT: Right.

TH: But the shells came out in a line. I would like to ask, in your opinion, was this valuable to casemate the guns over having that full field, that full circle of fire? Was it better to have a full circle of fire or to be protected from aerial bombing?

WT: Well, a good section of here, back here you could, but the thing is they worried about the planes.

FS: From a tactical...

WT: In World War I they didn't worry about planes.

TH: Right.

WT: Now they had to worry about planes.

TH: With World War II breaking out.

FS: They could turn these guns onto New York or to New Jersey.

WT: This is what happened, like in many section like in France.

FS: In France it happened.

WT: In France, and many section the guns could fire 40 degrees, 80 degrees no further.

TH: Left to right.

WT: That's right. Limited.

TH: Well, here it looks like you could still fire out towards New York. Brooklyn is out in that direction.

WT: No. No. No. You got your stop about a foot away from the wall. The Coast Artillery couldn't use the traverse that 360 degrees. (Inaudible talking)

FS: The thing is they recognized that tactically the airplane could come over. Now you know first of all, it was detectable and second of all if it was taken over by an enemy the enemy could come and direct us out to whether it was back here in the Highlands or back into lower Brooklyn or Staten Island or so forth.

WT: I believe before casemating, they could have used this gun, about 80% to turn it before it was casemated because the other 20% was the hill.

TH: Yeah. Where your ammunition storage was there? That blocked you...

WT: Yeah. I would say 70-80%.

FS: Yeah, because you did have quite a hill on either side.

TH: Yeah, this hill right outside between the casemates.

FS: Because that's where your range section was down there and then your powder chambers and your ammunition chambers.

TH: I wanted to ask what their routine would have been through the year. Like in, did you drill in January?

WT: Oh yes.

TH: Did you drill at this time of year, spring? Did you drill in the summer? Did you drill in the fall?

FS: All the time.

TH: All the time.

WT: Yeah, but these, some days they say two days a week they didn't want to do it, you know.

FS: And then small arms.

WT: Small arms fire. You get involved with other things, you know. At least once a week we came down here, but sometimes we were here for weeks, especially preliminary for firing you know.

TH: Well what happened...I am sorry...

FS: I was just going to say that the one thing to point out in those five years that there was a change in picture. In other words, none of the assignments we had were continuous for five years. So, the routines that we had the day we came here, was a lot different toward the end.

WT: Oh yeah.

FS: Toward the end you fellas were on what?

WT: Maintenance.

FS: Were you on the 155 (mm guns). You were on anti-aircraft for a while.

WT: On 90 (mm) on 90s.

FS: On 90s.

WT: At the end the last year it was all maintenance here.

FS: Just maintenance on the guns. That's all.

TH: In 1945?

WT: Yeah. I think we had the searchlights down here. Start the generator motors down there.

FS: But there was no tactical purpose to the...

WT: No. They found it was obsolete. They found that by 1943 these guns were obsolete. I think the last time we fired them was in '42. Yeah.

TH: Really?

WT: Yeah.

FS: The same with the ones up in Twin Lights up in the back of Twin Lights. They were obsolete as soon as they were put in place, right?

WT: Yeah.

TH: Battery Lewis. That's Battery Lewis up there.

WT: I was up there for two months and we never fired them.

TH: Never fired.

WT: The shells, let's see the shells weighed 2,000 lbs.

TH: One ton.

WT: It took 600lbs of powder.

TH: For the 16-inchers?

WT: Oh they were big.

TH: How about down here? What was the range of your 12s at Kingman?

WT: 25-30 miles.

TH: 25-30 miles. That's over the horizon out there.

WT: What it was 40,000 yards? Wasn't it?

FS: Yeah. We used to fire something like 14-15 miles I mean...

TH: For target practice.

FS: For target practice. Yeah. But once you got down 10,000 yards or so then it was obsolete because here again you had to have a trajectory and you couldn't defense again. So you had the backups would be the 10s and then you had the 6s and then the 155s and got down to the small ones

WT: And you don't fire on destroyers. They are too fast.

FS: No. This had to be heavy cruisers or battleships. That's the only, the other targets...

WT: The big stuff.

TH: I would like to ask. Did Kingman work in unison with Mills?

WT: Yes. Absolutely.

TH: Was there like a staggered system of firing where maybe the south end down there at Mills would start first and you would move up? Could you maybe explain...

WT: Yes. I don't know. We just get the order to fire the gun, you know. #1 gun fires on the first bell, #2 gun fires on the third bell. There's a pause in between. You could hear the bell, you know.

TH: That were right in here?

WT: Yeah.

HT: I have a question. Did the two of them fire (inaudible)

WT: No. Never together. Always apart.

TH: So like gun #1 would fire first on the first bell and then that would be followed by a third ring.

WT: Bing. Bing, Bing. You know we could hear the first bell going off.

TH: Right.

FS: Well, we were in the same battalion. E and F (Batteries of the 245th Coast Artillery) was in the same. E handled mostly Mills.

WT: Mostly Mills.

FS: And we had Kingman. I mean that was in the original.

WT: In the beginning we had Mills too.

FS: Yeah but E took over Mills and then we had Kingman. Well, what did we have? We had a compliment of about 250 fellas.

WT: About 200 men.

TH: In the battery?

WT: Yeah in the battery.

TH: And your battery is...

FS: Well, we were F Battery.

TH: F Battery.

FS: Our assignment, but originally we had 12-inch, what was the...

TH: Disappearing.

FS: Disappearing gun. What was the one we had up here?

TH: Richardson.

WT: We had the ones at Fort Wright. Disappearing guns.

TH: Up there but down here I bet you were over at either Bloomfield or Richardson because the 245th...

(inaudible)

WT: Because you worked on them when you went to camp here. I was still at...

FS: That's right. You are right. That was where the little break room was. (inaudible) We did have Bloomfield because Bloomfield was the ones we fired when we were on camp here.

WT: I saw them during the war years cutting up these disappearing guns. Big things like this with acetylene torches just cutting them. Then a big crane came along and picked them up and put them in a truck.

TH: Everything was cut up.

WT: Yeah.

TH: The barrels, the carriages.

WT: The waste that goes on here. All the money they spent.

FS: Well, of course it's always its waste in after thought in Monday morning quarterbacking but like, you know, I feel confident about the time we put here because an awful lot of people said huh, what are they going to do with these things? And my god what do they need these things for. Well, in retrospect, you know, you have to realize that that was the fortifications of the time. We were fortunate that there was no invasion. There could have been. It's possible.

WT: It just pains you, you know, they could have left it the way it is.

TH: Yeah, I know but that was the war effort. They probably scrapped especially the old disappearing guns that you remember being scrapped up there.

WT: Yeah. I remember. I saw them being scrapped up there.

TH: The steel shortages and the scrap drives and everything. That's probably why they went and wasn't considered worth saving. Can you remember your first impressions in seeing these guns when you first got here?

WT: Well, it was the same as when we were at Fort Wright.

FS: We had done this for five six years.

TH: You were used to it.

WT: Yeah. Since 1934. Of course, it was awesome when we first came as recruits in Fort Wright when we saw the mortars.

FS: Well, remember in the Armory what was, they used to have the dummy. They used to shoot this thing and boom. There was this shell. It was rubber I guess. What was it they shoot out of it or was it nothing?

WT: All they did was put a primer in there.

FS: Yeah a primer. But it was a boom.

WT: We had a regular dummy shell in there. Regular dummy shell, the same.

FS: But we had the whole routine. We plotted the course. We did all the things the meteorological messages. We did everything. They set their gun. They set the azimuth elevation and direction and everything. It was just as if...

WT: The main thing was that the barrel was made of wood.

FS: I don't recall exactly.

WT: But everything else was steel just like here.

TH: What were the guns painted? Was it standard olive drab?

WT: Oh, olive drab, yeah. Sometimes kind of a darkish olive drab and sometimes a little lighter you know.

TH: So the shade would vary a little bit.

WT: Well, they didn't do much camouflaging. We didn't do no camouflaging of the guns.

FS: No. No. Well, the other thing too is that you talk about dummies and so forth. If you remember when we first came here we came here or the draftees came here with the 19- or the First World War clothing, number 1, right. The rolled collars and the leggings and so forth.

WT: Oh you had the leggings.

TH: The wrap arounds, yeah.

FS: Well, when we came here the only armament that we had, the small arms, the general soldier had a 1903 Springfield rifle.

WT: It was a good rifle too.

FS: The only other things that we had was the first three grades carried an automatic .45. There were no carbines.

WT: Later on we got carbines.

FS: There was, the only thing that they had was a Browning automatic rifle, right and a Browning automatic rifle we took those to Bendix, NJ. Now, where were you when the War was declared? Were you here?

WT: I was here. I was hiding. (laughter) I heard it on the radio, yeah.

TH: About Pearl Harbor?

WT: About Pearl Harbor. I had a girlfriend here at the time.

FS: I was in Bendix, New Jersey. I was there with a cadre. We were on strike duty. It was something like 800 of us down at Teterboro Airport. We were at the Bendix Aircraft Corporation and there was something like a Nazi inspired strike going on at the time and what they did was they were holding up production because there they were making universal nuts and screws for the Patten Tanks and for aircraft. So we had to go down there. But it just shows you how inept we were at the time. We went down there with machine guns. We didn't have water cans. These are water cooled .30 caliber machine guns. We set them on the roof of the plant. We had no water cans. We'd fire maybe 10 rounds the thing would seize up on us.

TH: The machine guns, yeah.

FS: Inside the plant we had fellas walking patrol in the plant either with a Springfield rifle or the Browning automatic rifle walking around the plant watching that there was no more than three people and that's where I was when War was declared. We were at that plant.

WT: See he stayed there three months. I was there two weeks.

FS: Oh, did you come there?

WT: Yeah. I got there..(inaudible)

FS: But the thing is that I was, what happened when War was declared we were called into the commander's tent. We were told that this is now war. They read the articles of war, you know. If you go AWOL you were subject to death and all this nonsense. I don't think he was through and Sergeant Bruin said to me, "Well, let's go." I says, "Go where?" He said, "Go home." So you know, me having a mind of my own I went along with him. So, we went back home and I visited my wife in Queens and here blasting all over the radio is all servicemen return to their camps. And as we are going through the Holland Tunnel, the Lincoln Tunnel, they stopped us and they wanted to know where we were coming from. We told them we were with the 245th but we were stationed in Brooklyn. So, they let us through. So, of course, our families being all excited we went back the next day. And the captain called me into, not the captain, I guess it was a lieutenant colonel called me in and told me that he understands that I was missing. And I can't trust you and he shipped me back to Sandy Hook. And that's the time we moved. We moved to different barracks.

WT: Yeah. We moved to Camp Lowe?

FS: I don't know. We moved to different barracks. Something I don't recall.

WT: We moved down here. We moved down here. We were sleeping at Mills.

TH: I was gonna bring that up because December 7, 1941 is a memorable day. It plunged America into World War II and then the next day you weren't staying the barracks anymore.

WT: No.

TH: You were moved right down here.

WT: No, at the guns and they kept cots up there.

FS: The cots we used to place in piles and then each night we used to place the cots in the chambers we called them. Remember? And then in the morning we had to pick all the cots up and fold them. There were no mattresses by the way. And they were portable cots.

TH: The canvas.

WT: Canvas cots.

TH: Wooden frames.

FS: I think once a week we were permitted to go back to the barrack and spend the night and wash up and take care of your toiletries and so forth.

WT: You were allowed on pass. 15% were out on pass. The includes the colonels. 15% of one company but I think the first week or two nobody went.

FS: And the thing is like most encampments anyway like the first three grades would get a little preferential treatment. You always had a Class A pass and you were on your honor. Here, no one had a Class A pass. You just did not get a Class A pass. So everybody was here relegated to 15% and in most cases you were not permitted to leave until your replacement was back. So in other words, you know, so very often a lot of people who used to miss the boat going back to the city because now you had to wait for that replacement to get off the boat in town and sometime within an hour in a half hour it would sail back to the city. So what would happen that night you would lose your place. So it was trying. You were fairly close to home but you got quite a big term to leave didn't you?

WT: Yeah.

FS: I know I did because we got very little furlough didn't we?

WT: Yeah. Very little.

FS: Very little furlough.

WT: I think I had like 72 or 90 days coming to me.

FS: Yeah. (tape stops and restarts)

WT: (inaudible) But after a while it came like it gives you a good feeling umm you know especially when (inaudible)

FS: The only thing one time it was broken. Willie, tell them about one time you were practicing and we had some movie stars come here and someone says, home ram the shell and what happened to the shell.

WT: Well, that was Sergeant Whitman. I was standing inside. I was exercising. I had my gun crew over here. They were at the number one gun. What was the actress?

TH: Nancy Carroll.

WT: Nancy Carroll. (inaudible) They came over here and wanted to see a gun show. And they put on a show for them and what happened, the truck for a shell was on slightly missed the breech and probably hit the breech block first. A nice kink in it. And what happened the shell just slipped forward. Instead of going right into the powder chamber it slipped right down the well.

TH: That's this well here that's filled in.

WT: Yeah. Its about 8 feet down. That's where she goes.

FS: With all intricate mechanisms down there like steel.

WT: Yeah, you have cable supports on them. You know you have a traversing arm going from one side to the other. That was always smashed. Every once in a while we were training with a shell, with a dummy shell you get new guys on the truck. They gotta be good. As soon as they get in there by the powder chamber they put on the brake. And it goes back and (inaudible) or maybe they got nervous and they hit the breech block and the shell fell down. Eight feet down. Boom Boom. (inaudible) She thought the darn thing was going to explode.

FS: And the very interesting thing is that Willie, they brought Mr. Simpson from the engineers.

TH: Johnny Simpson.

FS: When he came down I recall he had the fellas who were assigned to do the work and the one thing that he made certain was that, "Nobody speaks except me. I don't want to hear a word out of anyone and when I give directions I want directions followed and I want no one to speak," and he brought that thing out by bringing that into by moving it

over bringing it up and that thing came out without any real serious effect on it. But I can remember how professional.

WT: He was.

FS: That they did it. That they took it out. The thing to point out too was that even if you had a live shell and that happened it would not explode.

WT: That's right. If a live shell falls down, falls on the floor it won't explode. Because it has to do this.

EH: Rotate.

WT: Set off one of the centrifugal timing and the second timing is on impact. The second later or half a second later.

FS: And the reason for that too is Willie, is that the head of the shell you had a steel armor piercing cap on the shell that when it impacted onto a ship...

WT: It opens up.

FS: It would hit. It would open a ship and that's famously those two safety mechanisms and then the shell would explode but it would not happen like dropping it because it's not an activated shell. So many people had the feeling that this is an explosive. It had the ingredients but it will not...

WT: That's the fuse. It had electrical fuses, mechanical fuses.

TH: That's in the base of the shell.

WT: Yeah. Right. In the base of the shell.

TH: That must have been a very embarrassing moment.

WT: Oh it was. (laughter) I was glad I wasn't gun commander at that time. I wasn't in charge. It was Whitman who was in charge. What happened, you had a guide a guide rail that was only about 4 inches wide over here. (inaudible) Like a little platform about this high and a shell go into it but sometime (inaudible). What happened, the shell moved forward and tipped it. Down she went. The cart was up in the air. (inaudible)

TH: Down this square opening?

WT: Yeah. Yeah. This is what we call a greaser clump down here.

EH: Grease clump?

WT: All the grease from there come down the well and accumulated in here and maybe once in a while we had to clean it out.

TH: This acted as a drain?

WT: From the greasing hole would come down here.

TH: From down below the gun right in and collect down in here.

WT: (inaudible) at the same time I liked him. We had to clean the gun after firing. We had to come down here every day for about three weeks and clean the guns. They put about 8 men on the ramming detail 8-10 men.

TH: You had a big sponge head for that right?

WT: Sponge head. You had a steel wire brush.

TH: Steel wire brush.

WT: They used wire brushes as you go along. At the beginning you used wire.

TH: Where would all this gear be kept? Was it kept like...

WT: Here.

TH: Right here inside.

WT: Inside, way inside and you would have to do that for like I say two or three weeks. You uses fall soda (mostlikely soda ash) to wash it out.

TH: What was that?

WT: Fall soda to clean it out and after you every day you have to clean it out with fall soda and (inaudible) the gun barrel and then you put in your ramrod and the (inaudible) heavy stuff.

FS: Heavy grease.

TH: Before I forget, up on the casemate out in front are two rings up here are two rings and I am wondering if they have anything to do with the other rings we see here in the casement.

WT: You know what it is? You fire 90 rounds with these guns. The barrel gets kind of weak. They don't take a chance. About 90 rounds no more. They keep records of it. So after about 90 rounds or so they take a look at it. They check on it about 50 to see what

the guns look like. Then they take that barrel out. We never used them. We never used them. Of course, we never replaced the barrel.

TH: Because you didn't fire that...

WT: That often. No. We fired this after it was casemated maybe twice. That's it.

TH: But the actual 12-inch projectiles but you probably had sub-caliber drills?

WT: Yeah, sub-caliber.

TH: To save the rifling.

WT: Yeah. One pounder because it was cheaper. When you practice with the, it's like practicing with dummy ammunition but it isn't dummy. It does go out about two or three miles. About two or three miles isn't it.

FS: Yeah. Because it was a very short...

WT: And the firing crew gets a lot of practice. The gun crew doesn't get to much practice.

TH: But you always you would have to...

WT: All we do is slap the same, the (inaudible) is about this long. One pounder.

HT: At 90 shots or more the barrel with the...

WT: The barrel would start to deteriorate. You don't want to take a chance.

TH: Now after this was casemated your gun was going out of the casemate and you didn't have that armor plating, right? That came later. Those big armor shields.

WT: Well, they put that on too. I can't recall. We fired with that.

TH: The shielding on. Okay.

WT: The last time.

TH: Was that fixed shielding or did it move somehow?

WT: It moves with (inaudible)

FS: It was fixed on the traverse.

WT: The traverse yeah. It was attached to the whole gun platform. The gun platform moves, that moves with it.

TH: That would give you protection. Protection also from the, because this is an open area.

WT: From shrapnel.

TH: From shrapnel. That must have been some sight to see that gun. That gun went down right down.

WT: And the recoil.

TH: The recoil and still you could still see the barrel right out when you was this your positions right back here in the casemate room when fired. Would you be standing?

WT: Yeah. I was standing right here.

TH: On the north side.

WT: There was two things I had to watch when we were firing. You had to watch the breech and I had to watch the recoil. I had to watch the recoil to make sure it was smooth, you know. There was so much bang and then somebody would have to holler cease fire.

FS: Well, we were talking about iron man Dunn. Wasn't Dunn over the years the guy that done the breech.

WT: He was the breech man, yeah.

FS: He was the breech man. This guy had a pair of arms that were like sledgehammers. But when you saw a fella close the breech on these guns the thing is this as soon as that powder was rammed in then the primer on and then he would slam the thing and then it was bru bru bru (sound of the gun crank). Boy that guy would...

TH: Was that a crank on the back?

FS: It was a crank handle and that guy would I believe his command was lock. In other words, when he was through that it was locked and now you knew that it was now ready.

WT: (inaudible) the breech block was very heavy too.

TH: Piece of steel.

WT: (inaudible) alone I think weighed 75 pounds. (inaudible) I would say that the breech block weighed about 300 pounds. (inaudible)

TH: After the breech block was closed and locked the primer man came up with the primer.

WT: Primer.

TH: Did you have elevation men on the carriage?

WT: Once the primer and then the elevation man. You could do it two ways. By hand. It was usually by electricity.

TH: You mean you could actually move it by electric?

WT: Oh yeah. To elevate the gun however, the traversing it was not done by electric it was done by the fellas downstairs. They had earphones down there.

TH: Down in the well. How many soldiers were down in the well?

WT: Three.

TH: To actually move the...

WT: Yeah.

TH And EH: Wow. (laughing)

FS: That's what I am saying. They had the traversing mechanism down below.

HT: Excuse me, like Bill said, you know, its music to him when they go off. The louder the more beautiful.

TH: You tell me that a lot of these guys prayed.

WT: Oh yeah. You always had a certain, there was always a couple of them scared to death.

FS: That you just couldn't keep them here.

WT: No.

TH: Well, how much gunpowder again one round?

WT: 240 lbs.

TH: And there's three guys next to it right down below.

FS: But am I right, Willie. I was mentioning it this morning when you fired like these 12- inch guns it was more of a boom then, a concussion rather than a crack like the 155s (mm guns). The 155s

WT: Yeah. Tremendous, tremendous.

FS: Whereas this is a big boom. In the environment, that heat.

TH: That heat that comes out of the muzzle and just out of the air.

WT: And everything seems kind of reddish, pinkish reddish.

EH: The glow?

WT: Yeah. Glow. It comes right in here. You can sense it. You can feel it.

FS: Well, did you mention it Willie? What was the instruction they gave to a lot of the people in the beginning about how they should stand.

WT: Yeah. Slightly on the toes.

TH: Open the mouth.

WT: Yeah. Open the mouth. Not too wide. As long as the mouth was open. You know.

FS: And cup your hands toward the back. Toward the back. Over your ears toward the back.

WT: Slightly on your toes. Don't do this because.

EH: It would knock you over.

TH: Because if you stood flat footed just like with your mouth closed.

FS: It would knock you it would kick you. (Tape stops)

EH: Today is May 17, 1987 and we are talking with Henry and William Tuting and Fred Schneider. This is a continuation of tape #1 which began to get unwound in the machine and we hope to continue a walking tour of Battery Kingman and Mills, 245th Coast Artillery as remembered in the 1940s by the Tuting brothers and Fred Schneider.

TH: Before we leave the casemate, a couple of things I want to ask. Was this wall painted to the best of your knowledge?

WT: No. No.

TH: It was just cement.

WT: It was cement and they left it that way.

TH: And then the monorails here. Could they push this along? Would the soldiers push the shells?

WT: Oh yeah. Yeah. They could move the shells. Yeah. They could move the shells.

TH: Was it just the shells?

WT: This was basically for the shells. Now, I think about these hooks here which we never used.

TH: Right. On the walls here.

WT: Now actually, if anyone wants to take the gun apart over here they used these hooks all the way down the line. Actually you have a railroad back there.

TH: Yeah the railroad line. Right.

WT: Okay, now the railroad line used to be closer. When they casemated it they moved it back further. The shells and everything on the train used to go right into the powder room, outside the powder room.

TH: They run it right in.

WT: Right in.

FS: Oh, that's right because we had the big steel doors. They used to bring it right in because that's where my plotting room was, right off the track.

WT: That's right.

FS: You have pictures somewhere that I have my plotting section in the...

TH: In the room itself.

FS: No. Well, that also, but also there was like a concrete wall on either side where the train track came through and I have a fella standing outside on the tracks right outside the door of the plotting room. So I do recall.

WT: I think they oughta do something out here putting no admission signs in here because this...

TH: We are gonna do that.

WT: Somebody, this could fall on their heads. You know.

TH: Well, you see these gates right here? Remember I called you about four years ago and asked you if you had bar gate type doors and we were talking about this on the phone. Here are the new doors and look at them. They have been here for four years.

WT: We never had no gates here. We didn't have no gate here.

TH: Well, what is interesting is there was something here because look at here. See this frame here. This has always been here and they must have put something in here. Maybe later on, some kind of framing. This is...

WT: This we used to go in here (inaudible)

TH: No that's really... there is no smoking thing stenciled right on your wall right here. You see these right here.

WT: Oh yeah.

TH: No smoking. Now I want to point out something and Bill is going to remember this I am sure Fred will too. Look down where and this is the high water line it says.

WT: September 1944. Yeah.

TH: September 1944, September 14.

WT: That's what happened.

TH: What happened on that...?

WT: We had a hurricane here. Yeah. I marked it on gun 1 because that time was maintenance. We practiced a little bit. We didn't practice. It was mostly maintenance then.

TH: And this whole place was flooded I guess.

WT: Yeah. Flooded right through.

TH: The water from the bay came in here.

WT: Yep. From the Bay.

FS: Do you remember where I was that day Willie? I was down at Camp Lowe and we were pulling the trailers out of the Camp Lowe area because of the water coming over the

ocean and I don't even recall, I know we pulled them back but we were up fairly close to the ocean. Remember all the van, the radar vans and so forth.

WT: Yep.

FS: And we pulled them all back. In fact, one of the colonels, I don't even recall who it was. I don't believe it was Glime but one of the colonels was right there with us. Here we are in the height of the storm and this wind blowing and he was one of them getting into the cabs of the trucks and driving the cabs out. In other words he was showing that he was part of it. So...

WT: Yeah. Yeah. Some of these guys were good.

TH: And here is your corridor. Here is where the tracks originally came in?

WT: They came in straight this way. Now because there is original straight line. Now see your curve here. It wasn't this way before. He's making curves. (inaudible)

TH: Isn't this something? This is not how it was when you were here. And there are openings in the floor so we have to watch.

WT: No. Here is where the railroad came. Straight out this way.

TH: Okay. Right through here.

WT: In a straight line.

TH: From about this bend. This is what was added on in I guess...

WT: No. They were added on from over here.

TH: Okay.

WT: All this was added on right here.

TH: Watch the floor. You gotta watch the floor for openings. I guess that was a dehumidification system that was boxed. Here is a lot of it right here. Can you see the...?

WT: Yeah. We had a dehumidifier here.

TH: And that used to be right up over in here I believe on that.

FS: All the powder, the powder had to be kept at a certain moisture level.

TH: Bill, there is a truck here you are passing a...

WT: Here Freddy, and it ended right here. Here is the spot. It ended right here. Here is where they started to move it see.

TH: This is right near the plotting room right here.

WT: This is where Freddy would do nothing. (laughter)

TH: I think we are going to have to go sideways into the plotting room. We are going into, right now we are going into the north side plotting room.

WT: There's the dehumidifier right there. See it?

TH: Okay, that's a dehumidifier up there in the right hand corner.

WT: The plotting room was right here and this table area. Freddy knows, right.

FS: So, you can very well understand that while we were in here we wouldn't very well see what was going on with the guns. I mean we were isolated in a dark room.

WT: You couldn't hear much.

FS: Yes. You would hear the, and I said to you, you get particularly a concussion like. You get....oh, that is all asbestos.

WT: This is asbestos? Sue the government. (laughter) I just buried a guy the other day, what was it Friday from asbestos. He died from asbestos.

TH: Really.

WT: Yep. He was working for some harbor and he got cancer of the lungs.

(Inaudible as they are walking and talking)

FS: The railroad tracks and this wall wasn't here, right Willie?

WT: Yeah.

FS: This was wasn't here and we had, I know we had like a little, like maybe an eight foot retaining wall with a little porch on it at one time when the train came through here.

TH: Really?

FS: Yeah. Willie, don't you remember there was like a retaining wall over here because then you, they didn't have a mound here.

WT: No. No.

FS: That's right. They didn't have a mound.

WT: We used to sleep in here, the first couple of months right in along here.

FS: This is where we slept and then we used to store the cots in here again, there were still cots in I guess the boiler room.

WT: One of these rooms. This is where we used to keep all our supplies in here.

TH: Okay. This is the first room on the right when you walk in.

WT: (Inaudible.)

TH: It was like a tool room?

WT: Yeah. A tool room. We had kinds of span of wrenches, you know.

TH: So this is on the backside of the gun battery, the west side. And I can see radiators up on the, this is up on the...

WT: Here we had this huge like a pegboard, not a pegboard, (inaudible)

FS: Well, you remember Willie we used to go on if you recall right after the War (was declared) you couldn't have any lights on so when the fellas used to sleep in the corridors they used to give them the courtesy of having the lights out and probably minimal lights and you remember a bunch of the guys used to hang out in a place like this in here and the coal, you had a coal bin up here and some of the fellas were from Kentucky and Tennessee and so forth. They used to sit in here and they used to play their guitars and sing some of them mountain music.

TH: Really?

WT: That was the first bunch of draftees that came in after....

FS: Came from Kentucky, Tennessee and what they did was they used to play cards in places like this for recreation because you had nothing. This was where you lived.

WT: Yeah. They played hillbilly music.

TH: Now you sleeping was right out here in the main corridor?

WT: Right all in a line all the way down.

TH: Well, how far back down did it go, Bill?

WT: Right along here.

TH: Right in through here.

WT: Right along here on both sides we had it because we had so many of them with two guns you know.

FS: You had maybe I guess 250 men somewhere in that category.

TH: And most of them were in here?

FS: Oh yeah. You would have a little cadre back in up at the barracks because you have to understand like I said before over the course of the five years there were changing factors so none of this was a fixed nature but we spent what in here, five months?

WT: Yeah about that, yeah.

FS: Five months, right through the winter.

TH: Well, that's because after Pearl Harbor we were losing the Philippines and everything. That fell in May so you were probably here right until this time of year.

FS: We were on a complete alert system. In other words we had...

WT: It lasted up until March, April. Wasn't it?

FS: It was about five, six months.

TH: Did you pull any sentry duty?

WT: Oh yeah. Him and I together one time. Right over here. Him and I.

TH: Did you walk around or were you just posted at certain parts of Kingman?

FS: Just the road out here because most of your patrolling within the Post area itself you had the guard duty. That was only the perimeter of Hancock area.

WT: Inside the Post.

TH: Yeah right.

FS: But then the rest of it was patrolled by MPs. It was military police. That was their duty. Military police was for security but then we had our own for a reason an example there was one point in time that a newspaper was bragging that they could get into the defenses.

WT: That's why him and I had to do guard duty. We were sergeants, both of us.

TH: And you are doing the guard duty.

WT: Yeah.

FS: What they did was they bragged that they could get into any of these fortifications and that is was just open for any kind of sabotage and so forth. So what they did was, they had an officer come in here by an ambulance in uniform lying in the back of an ambulance and when they pulled into the gate. He did get in, but it was a reporter as I understand it did at the time. So, we had been forewarned. So, we were on like he said two hours on two hours off. And it was miserable because you know you were living under terrible conditions.

WT: We were in camp cold, you know.

TH: Was it like it is now?

WT: Cold, damp, outside yes.

TH: Oh, outside in the winter, in the wintertime.

WT: I think this happened in April. Wasn't it?

FS: Well, no. Because it was right after the war (started). December and that's the time you fell asleep.

WT: It wasn't April, the War started in December. Yeah. We were away from the guns that time. We didn't live down at the guns no more.

TH: But it was right through the winter that...

FS: I honestly don't recall. I don't recall because there were so many different variations. See this does go down. It is similar. It is duplicative down this half then it would be back here.

TH: Yeah the same layout. You had rooms over here like the latrines.

WT: Okay. Let's go further. Go this side. Where was the...here's where the officers I think slept.

TH: The officers?

WT: Yeah, you remember the one guy who was sleeping with the (inaudible)

FS: That wasn't exactly the Ritz neither. (laughter)

TH: No.

WT: They slept here. The officers slept inside. We were given sometimes a big officer came. Some major from the British Army came and inspect the Fort. He was sleeping in there. I forgot what his name was though.

FS: Well, we had some fellas from the South African Navy come in to visit us too.

TH: The South African Navy?

FS: White people, yeah the South African Navy.

TH: So, this is where officers would get...

WT: Yeah, that was only for the war years.

TH: Yeah. How were the floors kept clean? Did you hose them down?

WT: You could eat off the floor.

TH: Did you hose them down to get, because I notice little drains and stuff.

FS: Oh yeah. (inaudible) We had what's his name, Piccolo, was in charge of the steam room and that guy used to have all of that equipment painted and the floor painted.

(inaudible)

FS: The boiler room would be back there.

TH: The generators, generator room.

WT: He is where Tassie hang out. Tassie, he was killed in the battle of the Bulge, Tassie. He worked in there, yep. Tassie was his last name.

TH: In the generator room here?

WT: Yep.

TH: We are walking in. This is the west side of the gun battery into the generator room. What was the asbestos lining for?

WT: I don't know.

TH: Was that for fireproofing?

WT: I guess so.

TH: Because this is the generator room but you also had it in the plotting room.

FS: Yeah. I guess it was a form of insulation used at the time. It was Piccolo who worked here too.

WT: You know I was hardly ever in there. I was only in there once in all the years. Once or twice, that's all.

FS: The only time I came in here was when we borrowed a pump to steal gas out of the engineers' truck. (laughter)

WT: You know I still feel bad about that. We stole gas. Don't you feel bad about that?

FS: Yeah. I will give them \$1.40 a gallon. (laughter) I think ten gallons.

TH: I think Fred told me that story when we were here last, last year.

(Inaudible)

TH: I guess this is for the generator operation for the oil, fuel oil?

WT: Fuel oil, that's right.

TH: Now this was apparently another generator room.

WT: Yeah. Yeah.

TH: Now, this was for what, making your electricity?

WT: It could be. All kinds of power.

TH: How was the lights system in here? Was it bright enough to....

WT: Oh yeah.

FS: Oh yeah. You had plenty of light.

WT: The only thing it was not hot enough in the winter. Not warm enough. We had a chill.

TH: Yeah. It was still cold in here.

WT: They used to bring the food here. It was not quite warm, you know.

TH: You mean from the Post? They used to bring it down?

WT: And after the War when things started to calm down a little bit (inaudible).

TH: Are these for drainage?

WT: I guess they are some kind of drains. I never paid much attention to it.

TH: Because I have noticed wires or pipes there. Can you see the pipes?

FS: Cables and feed lines. You know.

TH: Let's go down to, we will make our way around. Let's go down into the, we got more here. There's another one of your carriages there. Right there.

WT: You know what that is that is...

FS: That's the transporting shells. Transporting shells.

TH: That's for shells?

WT: Yeah. That's not for firing though.

FS: That's not for firing. That's just to transport the shells from the...

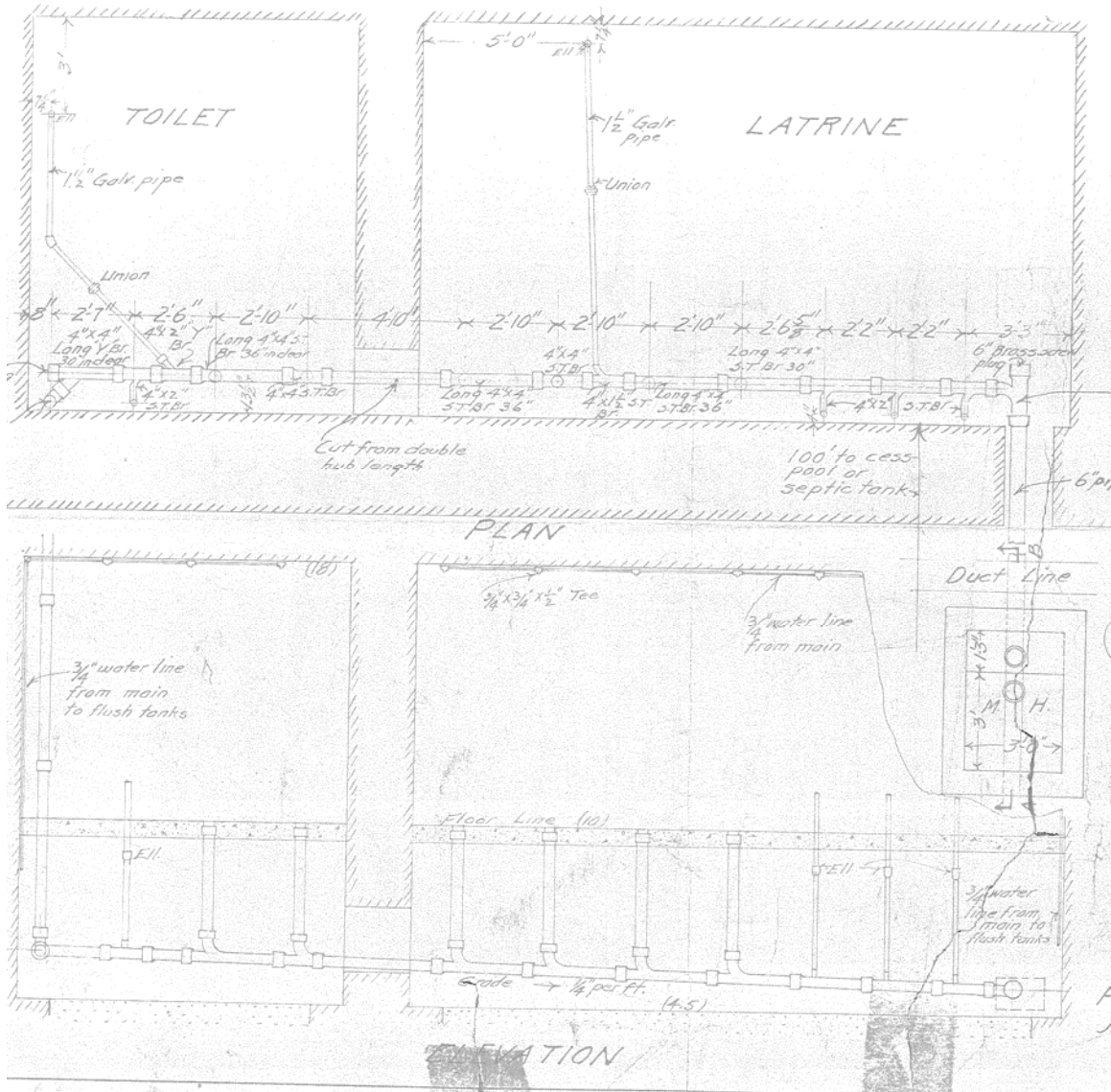
TH: Rooms in here.

FS: Ammunition room. Right up in here. I remember it well was the, was the boiler, like we used to store the coal. There was a big coal bin in here.

TH: A big coal bin. (Inaudible) one of these here is the latrine. I am wondering... there it is.

WT: I helped the boys put all the latrines in.

TH: Look at theyou know a lot of this has been vandalized in the time I have been here because you could walk in and you could see the broken toilets and everything and these stalls these are slate, these were all intact. They were all intact. I talked to a fella, he used to Boy Scout out here and he claimed even in the late 1960s there were sinks in here that were still working. The water would come on. Okay this is the other plotting room.



1917 Plumbing Plan of Battery Kingman and Mills shortly before the batteries were named.

WT: This is the other plotting room yeah. Same thing.

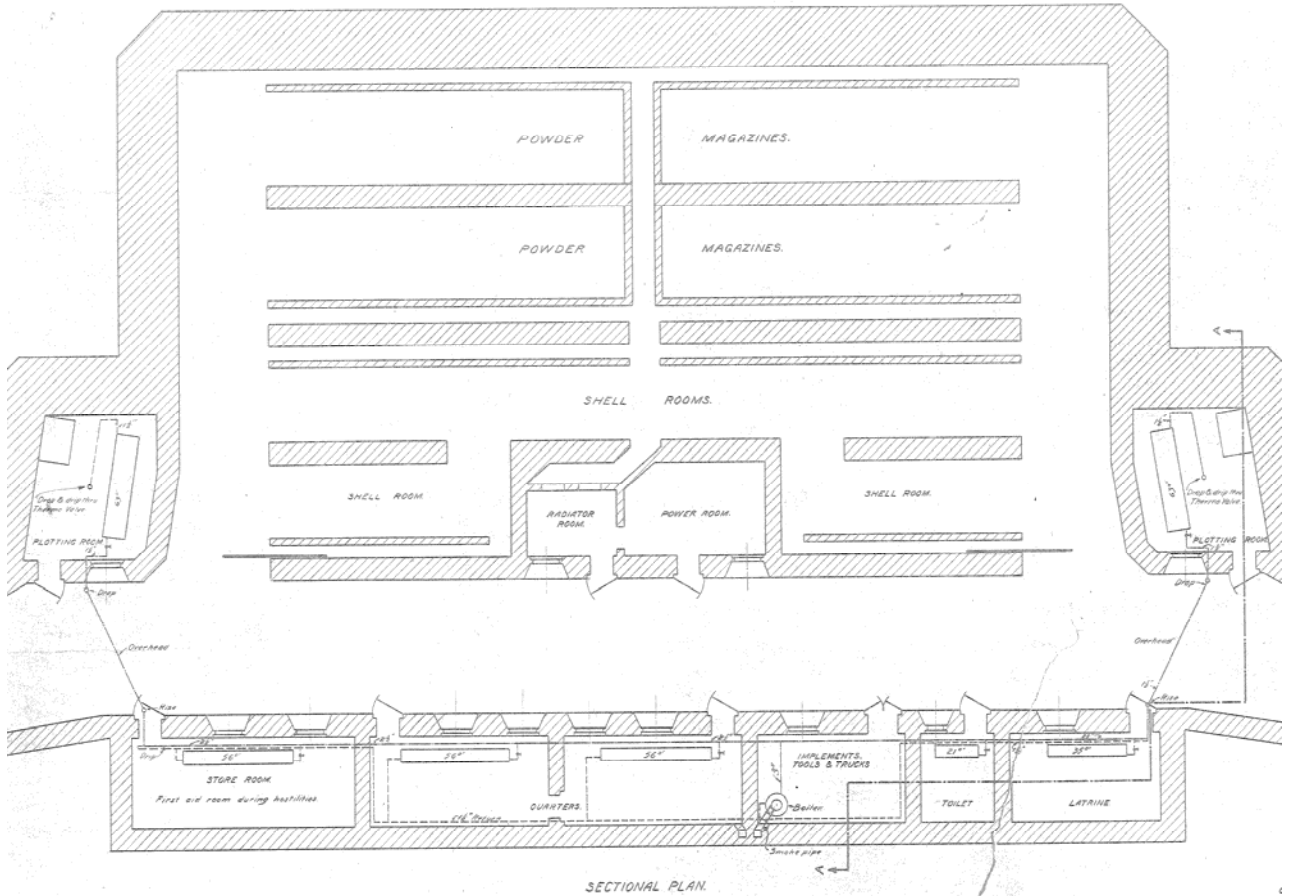
TH: And this is an airlock here, right in here this is the airlock in case of poison gas.

WT: I think they built this when the casemated it. This was outside.

TH: Was part of your equipment gas masks back then?

WT: Oh yeah sure.

TH: Let's just go down quickly into the ammo storage. (walking)



1921 Drawing of Battery Mills showing shell and powder rooms in center and top. On bottom right are the implement room, toilet and latrines.

WT: The shells were all lined up this way.

TH: This was an old door that I guess used to roll back and forth here to seal off the main corridor.

WT: Yep.

FS: I am trying to think because I know they louvered the doors. Is this one of the doors? When we had the first fire they had a little now I don't know what these plugs are.

TH: These rivets?

FS: Yeah. Remember I told you that some of the doors had buckles and then they decided that you just put a certain amount of louvers, not louvers but holes to equalize the pressure.

TH: So, it wouldn't happen. It wouldn't buckle off.

FS: I remember they talked about it being 5/8th steel. No this is this seems to be fiberboard.

TH: Yeah. Probably fireproof and then that's the steel outside door. (Inaudible) So your shells were in here first.

WT: Yeah. Shells were first. The powder were in the next two. These two were all shells.

FS: You never stored them together.

TH: And this is where they were stacked, one row on top of the other?

WT: Right.

FS: And you had skids. Oh no, they were crated.

TH: This is your, is this your ramrod racks, here?

WT: Yes. That could be it. Keep the ramrods in there. Well, we usually get them to the tools.

TH: In the back there on the west side. Okay. Here's an overhead hoist up there. Can you see it way in the back?

WT: They got two of them on this side. Do you notice?

TH: I wonder what these are?

WT: They might be for the storage of shells.

TH: Yeah right there. Do you think it might be for the shell storage?

FS: Yeah I think so.

TH: There's another hole here.

FS: What was the packing crates that we had? Was that the shell crates? Remember you had the big about four inch long on the other end?

WT: Yeah that was for shells, strictly for shells.

FS: Crates for on either end I guess for the shells.

WT: Well, what you had to worry about too was the brass...

TH: The rotating...

WT: The rotating bands. You had to protect that. That was very important.

FS: This here is a motor.

TH: Yeah see the motorized, I guess this was like a trolley. One of these used to have a chain hanging down from one of the sides. I forget which side.

FS: Well, they did use it after a while Willie. They used the motorized thing to carry the shells.

TH: Here is a part of a chain right there.

FS: You recall it now, Willie?

WT: Yeah. I recall it but not too much.

FS: Well, there was so many phases.

TH: Well, they just kept improving it right through the war.

WT: It more or less stayed the same in here except for the air conditioning put in there or your humidifiers.

TH: Did that help any when they put that dehumidification system in?

WT: Well, they had it, you know. They had it but I think they improved it.

FS: Well, that was for the powder, to keep the powder...

TH: To keep the powder dry.

FS: Yes.

TH: And that was stored in what, airtight canister?

WT: Airtight and you had litmus paper in the inside so every once in while every year or every two years you open a can and you take the litmus paper out and if it turned then you know you need more gas in there and the powder is getting stale.

TH: Stale, yeah.

WT: Litmus paper is what they put in.

FS: A very interesting thing about the litmus paper is we had an obstacle course and we had a machine gun fire over your head and we had to go under barbed wire and so forth.

WT: Oh yeah. Yeah.

FS: What happened at one time is that they had to fire live ammunition. So what they did to be sure that nobody was going to tolerate the elevation of the thing they had the muzzle of the machine gun placed on a horizontal board so that it would keep that same elevation. But what did happen was that the supply sergeants all had to keep .30 caliber shells, cartridges by lot number. So, when they had inventory every month they had to give lot number 1942, lot number 1941 and 1928 and whatever it was. An instance in our outfit the guy had and I don't know it might have been 20 varieties of ammunition so now there was .30 caliber machine gun bullets were issued in one big lot number. So what the guy did was he took that lot number and put it into his inventory and then took the shells that was in his inventory that was varied lots. What they did was now they used it on the machine guns for this purpose. There was an investigation at one point because somebody got hit, he got hit in the shoulder and when they checked the shells there was these various lot numbers of shells so I don't think the fella was ever court martial because it was not a malicious mistake of any kind. It shows you the seriousness of what lot number has to do with you know the charge.

TH: Before I forget how many, in each bay here, roughly how many ammo handlers do you think they used?

WT: Well, you need at least at a very minimum four to six for powder, four to six men for the shells. Then you need along the line you may need another four guys.

TH: To get it out there?

WT: To get it out there to the gun proof. We used a bomb from a different company from a firing service. We called it a firing service you know. You want to go out his way.

TH: Yeah we are going to go into gun emplacement number 1 correct.

WT: Mmm hmm.

TH: Yeah another plotting room. Just watch the floor.

WT: Now you took the ammo straight ahead. We were going straight ahead.

TH: And straight out

WT: To Mills.

TH: Just watch the floor here because hatches were removed from the floor here. Was there ever anybody on top of the gun battery up on the earthwork.

WT: Oh yeah.

TH: Well, did you have any defenses up there or any fire control?

WT: Yeah. I think at one time we had a few guns up there.

TH: What kind was that?

WT: A Browning.

TH: Was that water cooled?

WT: Water cooled. Oh yeah.

FS: It was a .30 caliber water cooled.

WT: Yeah. I come to sweep this place from time to time. (laughter)

TH: I hate to tell you this but the last time we had a total sweep out was is now going on 10 years ago. We had Boy Scouts that were camping here sweep it out.

WT: I know when my son comes down he makes the boys clean up. Doesn't he? That's what he tells me.

TH: Not in here. I don't think in here.

WT: Well, wherever he goes he makes them clean up. He is always strict about that.

TH: Remember when you used to have a bulkhead in here?

WT: Here is where I took my little Scottie dog. I would take him in the bay.

TH: The Scottie that you have got the pictures of?

WT: Yeah. That's all gone.

HT: Didn't it have to be a certain temperature 66 degrees.

FS: Oh yeah. That's what I was saying.

HT: Didn't powder have to be at a certain temperature?

WT: Oh yeah. 66 degrees.

FS: That's what he is saying. That was the reason for the humidity and why it was so important for the temperature in there for the powder.

WT: (inaudible) And it was beautiful. I mean it was, you know, it was all tarred. It was nice.

FS: This is where the officers, like I was saying Gray was out here with his two revolvers and you had the bottom of the crates. They were huge things were. There were about four or six inches thick. He would place them on his side. He would use them with his two .45 revolvers and boy he would hit those one after the other. Right hand, left hand, right hand and finally would fire his twelve shots right out of the revolver. Boy, that guy was crazy.

TH: They were allowed, you could shoot...

WT: Well,

TH: He was an officer. He could pull it off.

FS: Yeah exactly.

TH: Okay. The, was there ever a guard house back in here between Kingman and Mills?

WT: Yes, there was a guardhouse and we used it as a kitchen. Right over there right beside the gun by...

FS: Right alongside the roadway. Going towards Mills there.

TH: Mills.

WT: There was a house there, a shack.

TH: A wooden building.

WT: And they used it as a kitchen.

FS: That was where. That was where there was a terrible thing happened one time. They were gonna have all sorts of investigations. Somebody tried chopping down the, what is the trees they have here? They have, not the mulberry...

TH: Cedars? Oh, hollys, holly trees.

FS: They had a tremendous investigation.

WT: Oh a lot of hoopla they made out of it.

FS: Because that was the time that we were sleeping here I believe on the guns then somebody wanted to make it seem Christmassy. They took the tree down.

WT: I remember the things they made big hooplas you know.

TH: Of course. Now would you have your machine gun emplacement on the middle or up on the...

WT: On one of the starts we had a machine gun and especially I remember Mills the most because by the time we got back here this was fully casemated.

TH: Right.

WT: We didn't have to do all that extra stuff you know. We went back to our barracks because they figured well, they can't get over here by planes and so on.

TH: Was that a, was that a sand bagged position? Would they have like sandbags all around it?

WT: They had sandbags up and top.

TH: This here.

FS: We had machine guns and this was on the ocean side. This was too.

WT: Over here and this was Spermaceti Cove and they were so stupid what we had to do they didn't give them material. They had engineers working down here around I guess Spermaceti Cove, one of those places engineers were putting up temporary bridges so we went down and we stole the lumber from their bridges to make some machine gun nests over on the ocean side because we had no material to make them with.

HT: By the way, before I forget how come all this here, this was never here all this concrete.

TH: This has been put in here because the erosion is where you see right in here. We lost all where we are standing on and everything. The erosion went right into the side of Kingman.

HT: And where did they get this stuff from?

TH: Concrete, gravel and stuff, they were construction projects around and they were breaking up old foundations and stuff and they dumped it right in here to stop the erosion for now.

WT: Oh by the way, the summer we stayed here we had a clam, we had a party. We bought some beer. The first summer we were still living here. We were still living by the guns and we caught clams here. We had a clam party.

TH: A clam bake.

WT: Yeah.

TH: Were those .50 caliber water cooled machine guns that you had here?

WT: Oh yeah. Oh yes. Absolutely.

TH: Would it be men of the 245th that manned them?

WT: 245th. You had the 52nd here for a while. You had a lot outfits.

TH: And the 7th. But basically this was battery let's see, you were Battery F. And then Battery E also at Mills. Okay.

WT: Once the War started everything kind of dissipated, you know.

TH: And were tents ever put up in this area because the guardhouse was somewhere. This is where you come into...

FS: We didn't live out here.

TH: No tents. Just that one.

WT: That one shack that we had over here. That's where I had the dogs sit while we watched them fire. Look how it is all overgrown.

TH: Oh its all poison ivy there now.

WT: Oh yeah.

TH: It would be this, would be on the south side of the road coming in here to Kingman Mills and you got a lot of poison ivy over there. And some of the spur line is right here. You can see that rail.

WT: Right.

TH: And you can find a lot of it in the sandy road going behind Battery Mills. The spur line is still in the ground.

WT: See, we spend four and a quarter years here. That's a long time. Well, Freddy, five years and one month.

TH: How did you ever deal with that hurricane? That must have washed in through here and flooded Kingman and Mills.

WT: Yep. Well, what happened I think I was mostly at the barracks but I came back here. I had to do something quick. I forgot what I done because we came back in the afternoon and it was raining like hell, you know. It was really coming down.
(Conversation about trash in water not transcribed)

WT: When they casemated they had these dredges right out here. They would make big mounds and as they were coming out also clams were coming out.

TH: Out of the pipes?

WT: Out of the pipes, yeah.

TH: The dredge pipes to, that sand was used for...

WT: For casemating, yeah.

TH: Casemating.

FS: Yeah. That was where all the sand was gotten from.

WT: See that any of them that's Lido docks over there.

TH: Yeah that's the Navy (Earle Naval Weapons Station).

WT: Three miles out. Isn't it three miles out?

TH: Yeah. Three miles, almost three.

WT: I tried to get a job there during the War but I couldn't get the time out and I had no car.

(inaudible)

WT: There's a beautiful Hofbrauhaus over here.

TH: Right there. Right there.

WT: We used to go up there all the time. I knew the owner and we got the food and drinks all for nothing.

TH: Really. (laughter.) Do you see it up there? That's it right up there.

WT: His name was Dampano (spelling?). It was Mr. and Mrs. Dampano. There's a new owner there now. That I know. And of Friday nights, Saturday and Sunday they had nice music there. Oh, they had a beautiful band. And how it came about, a buddy of mine had the night off before he found out about it. He said, "I found all lansman. He's got a beautiful place. He's got one of them Hofbrauhaus's. So he says, "Well, how about going up there tonight?" I said, "Sure. Why not? I am off." So I went up there. He introduced me and I spoke German to him. Oh he got a kick out of it. "Oh you gotta have dinner on the house. You gotta have drinks on the house." Oh we had a good time up there.

TH: I never get that such luck. (laughter)

WT: See. I remember German, you know.

TH: Before I forget how did you arrive down here? Was it by railroad or truck?

FS: Here we walked.

WT: Most of the time we probably walked but when we first came down in the first winter we took a flatbed open. Oh was that awful.

TH: On a train?

WT: Yeah. From tent city and you sit out in the open on these benches and they took us down here and here's where we would get off and we were cold even before we left the tents, right?

FS: Yeah. They had seats that would be made almost like, they were flat seats almost like when you go to a grandstand but they would go parallel to the tracks. They would go in line from one end of the car to another. And it was about three deep or something. We sat on those damn things. Like you said it was cold. It was actually better marching you know.

TH: Yeah at least you are moving and you are keeping warm but boy that at tent city you could probably get on. Wasn't the railroad right there on that one side.

WT: Oh yeah. That's where we picked it up. And the thing is our clothes weren't warm enough for this kind of weather here in the winter.

FS: Well, we didn't have parkas or anything.

WT: No. We didn't have no parkas for guard duty. I felt sorry at that time, you know, I was a non-com. I didn't have to go out for guard duty except to check the guard. But it was cold.

FS: You didn't use your overcoat. You had, you didn't have back in the very beginning we did not have parkas. We did not have, and we had the cotton type of fatigues.

WT: Underwear.

FS: Underwear, we didn't get winter underwear until...

WT: Until it was over. No we didn't get it.

FS: I guess maybe it was the first year or the second year but we actually had cotton underwear. I remember I even have pictures. I guess I gave it to the museum where we celebrated a whole gang of us...

TH: With you first issue...

FS: Oh long underwear.

TH: Of the long underwear.

FS: We were thrilled you know. We never had it.

WT: A joke you know.



New long underwear issued and displayed in Tent City at Fort Hancock.

TH: Where did you pull your guard duty? Was that out here somewhere or on the same side?

WT: Well, during the beginning of the War was mainly here, you know.

TH: Just around the battery here?

WT: Yeah.

FS: It wasn't even the perimeter. You really didn't worry about it. Did you Willie?

WT: No.

FS: To the edge of the roadway.

TH: It wasn't this overgrown because in your pictures you could see everything is down to what grass practically.

WT: Yeah.

TH: The muzzle blast must have been terrific and must have shot out of here into the woods.

WT: Oh yeah.

FS: And I tell you a beautiful sight too was when you stand behind those rifles, you could see the shell.

TH: Yeah. Okay right.

FS: You could actually see the shell. Right Henry? Like particularly on the disappearing guns.

HT: Yeah. Yeah.

TH: The mortars too. I was gonna ask Henry.

HT: I think as I recall it was 1900 feet per second.

TH: Like a whining sound.

HT: 1900 feet per second and this was 1900 feet per second coming out. The rifle is 27 feet and especially on the disappearing guns when you used the, you could see the target. You were on the top of the hill and another battery was firing. You would watch. You could see when the shell lands. It makes a splash and then skips.

TH: Like a skipping stone. Wow.

HT: See the reason the mortar had a greater concussion and noise was due to a short barrel.

TH: Yeah. Very short about 11 foot long. Yeah you were in the pit. The concrete.

(inaudible)

TH: I notice there is like a yellowish color to the wall here. This is gun emplacement 1 right.

WT: Yeah.

TH: We are on the south side of Battery Kingman and I that's not any paint.

WT: No. No.

TH: The casemates were not painted. Huh.

WT: It could be from the trees, you know.

TH: Yeah.

WT: I see this canopy is not falling apart like the other one.

TH: The other one is in bad shape. This one is staying intact for some reason.

WT: They gotta do something. Put signs up here.

TH: We have got a whole plan for that.

(Conversation about putting signs to keep out of batteries not transcribed.)

TH: At some point somebody painted it white. That's why I asked you if you ever painted inside.

WT: No.

TH: It's was just plain concrete. The soldiers did all fatigue work like cutting down the grass?

WT: Oh yeah. Yep.

TH: Oiling painting.

WT: We did it all here. There was no need for much here you know.

TH: Did you have regular because I noticed in your pictures you are wearing Army fatigues?

WT: Fatigues, yeah.

TH: What was that?

WT: Denims. Army denims.

TH: Blue or would it be...

WT: A dark blue.

TH: Dark blue. And this is the area you had all out in front of each gun emplacements this was cleared.

WT: Cleared and the fire department even from the outside, we had our own fire department come here. They hosed it down.

TH: From the local towns.

WT: They hosed it for four or five hours just hosing it down.

TH: Hose all the grass down.

WT: Mmm Hmm. They hosed all the grass up there if there was any you know of course these trees weren't here.

TH: Yeah this has all shot up since World War II. How about, where were your hydrants? I guess you had hydrants back in here?

WT: Gee I forgot. You had hydrants on the inside. All these need was a 100 foot of hose, right. (laughter)

TH: Yeah. How often would you be like Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday was it all the time you would be down here or just certain times during the...

WT: Well, it changed in the years. When we were assigned to this gun this was our gun as far as training was concerned. We would come down here practically every day except Saturday or Sunday. Saturday morning there is inspection. If you pass inspection and it's your turn to go on pass you go on pass. If you failed inspection and it was your turn to go on pass you didn't go. You skipped and inspection could be a nuisance especially if you get a one of those stickler officers you know.

TH: It was probably a peaceful quiet place here, you know outside of practicing and you know actually shooting weapons. Any alert? Any sightings?

WT: Alerts we got fairly often. That's why Freddy got mad at me one time about an alert, you know. In 1945, one of our last alerts of guarding New York it was on a Sunday morning. On Sunday morning you know you could sleep to 8:00 here. You know the war is over.

TH: Right.

WT: And he called alert and I was mad when I got out of bed. It was 6:00 in the morning, you know. So Freddy was the senior sergeant so he was in charge as far as the company is concerned. So we all get out (inaudible) Then the trucks come down to take us to the guns. So Freddy said okay get in there. Get in there. He says, did you say load and lock Freddy?

FS: Yes.

WT: He said load and lock. Yes. I said do you mean the Japs are coming right around the corner. Load and lock. He got mad at me.

FS: Well, just for the paper. The only reason I got angry was because we had been given orders that there would no longer be any false alert.

WT: Well,

FS: But the thing is this, they said there would no longer be any false alerts. So the proper thing to do if you are going to be responding and going to the beach you are going there for some reason, right. And if you want to look in retrospect as I said before you could say okay nothing happened. But suppose there was something there. Who the heck knows? You know, so this guy here he's making fun of the soldiers, cowboys and Indians.

WT: To me it's the same old bull, you know. To think we had them in New York. To think...

FS: Yeah. But you don't know. Am I right?

TH: Right.

FS: So anyhow that is when...

WT: He got mad. I don't blame you for getting mad because sergeants are supposed to stick together. I was making a fool out of him in front of the privates which isn't nice. You know but...

TH: Do you remember when the German saboteurs were landed by U boat out in Long Island?

WT: Oh yeah. Yep.

TH: How...

WT: Well, that was about, that was three years before this last...

TH: Oh yeah. That was 1942. But what was the reaction like? How did the high command, you know, how did the brass?

WT: They started tightening up quickly, you know. They didn't land in a military section. They landed in a beach somewhere.

TH: Yeah. Way out near Montauk Point.

WT: What are you going to do you know? If they had a mind they would get in here you know. The thing is how many more got in besides that they didn't catch. They happened to catch these punks.

TH: I once asked I think that was at his last reunion you know Captain Yates, I asked him if he had ever heard of any German U boats you know. There was always those rumors of U boats operating right off Sandy Hook out here in the Ocean and I believe his brother in on...

WT: Yeah Vincent.

TH: That they actually had a sighting some where off Sea Bright and they went in for the kill but he said he didn't know. I would have to talk to his brother. His brother is still living, right?

WT: Yes. Vincent as far as we know...

TH: I don't think I have ever met his brother but Captain Yates was always coming to the reunion.

WT: He was here one time.

TH: He was?

WT: Yeah. He was here one time to the Officers' Club yeah.

TH: Were there any rumors during the War of U Boat activity or...

WT: I don't. Was there Freddy?

FS: Well, yes. Two things, #1 was that I don't know but we do know that a Navy ship was hit out here.

WT: It exploded.

FS: Well, that was never even really sure. It exploded out here and then a bunch of the casualties were brought here into the Post Hospital.

WT: Well, this was when the War was almost practically over.

FS: I know. But then you recall, I think it was Whitman. I am not even sure was on duty up in that tower up in Deal and we used to report to the 3rd Naval District to on the hour say and every half hour we used to report to the Harbor Defense Command and he said he sighted a silhouette out there which looked like a submarine. We were called on an alert that night or that morning. We go out on the beach. We cursed him down. We said that son of a gun. This company clerk and all this kind of nonsense but he did I don't know whether it was four months later, five month later did receive a commendation. I believe it was from the Navy command.

WT: He was a good guy. I liked him.

FS: They said that the commendation was such that due to his alertness and so forth had to do with sighting an enemy vessel or something and disposing of same or taking proper action. It never come out specifically. But he did say he saw a silhouette out there. So you know, I am sure the commendation was not false.

WT: Another time they had the dummy submarine that they pulled along.

FS: I didn't hear that.

WT: I heard that they pulled a dummy submarine along back and forth and nobody spotted it.

FS: Look how many times the minefields were closed up here at the harbor, right. I mean there were times where we would want to come back on one of the boats coming back to camp from the battery and we would get down to the Narrows and the minefields were closed and then the boat would have to turn around and we would have to find alternate ways of coming back to camp. So hear again was it called for. Was it a reality? We don't know.

TH: In 1942, though was everybody pretty tense after Pearl Harbor when you slept here by the guns?

FS: I don't think so. Do you Willie?

WT: The only thing that I thought of was gosh darnet why did it have to happen to me to get stuck with this nonsense, you know? You were strict up to a point much more than you were before.

TH: Right.

WT: And you had to do things that you didn't like to do. I mean you hated it, you know.

TH: Yeah, but you are really in the Army now. (laughter)

WT: And then they get all these ideas that we called chicken stuff, you know. They popped up and you got involved in that.

FS: I think that was more the resentment. Wasn't that Willie? I mean it was just that the fact that why if it was gonna be an enemy ship well hell you certainly would have 10 minutes with an enemy ship that sighting. Why couldn't you come back which was three miles away and get down here? In other words, the inconvenience of sleeping here. I don't know if the alert would be that quick. You know if it was an aircraft or some kind of a missile coming. But at that time the only thing that we would fire on was heavy, was a battleship or heavy cruiser. Right?

WT: He can't go any faster than them.

TH: Yeah. They were too fast.

WT: If they got close, where's our Air Force if they got that close you know?

FS: And you were only limited in firing from probably four or five salvos, right Willie and then you were through.

WT: Yeah, because there were out of range.

FS: They would come too close of range.

WT: Because the only, the most you could fire in 5 minutes is five shots, each gun.

FS: And that was it. That was your limitation.

TH: But that's pretty quick for...

WT: Well, one a minute.

TH: Yeah. One a minute.

FS: Well, it was but the thing was you were limited.

TH: Was this road like the thing we walked down, that wasn't here?

FS: No.

TH: You could only go in the back and you'd have the railroad in the back.

WT: Yeah.

FS: This was just a field out here.

TH: This was just a field.

WT: The path walking around where a little path about this wide you know but we didn't use it because of the poison ivy.

TH: Did people like General Gage or Ostrum ever pull a surprise inspections on you?

WT: Yeah they pulled inspections. They come around. Sure. But then you had to watch. You always had a guy you know.

FS: Well, you always got a tip off. Somebody would know.

WT: You always got a tip off.

TH: That's amazing. Somebody like the guard down at the road.

WT: Yeah. And sometimes even an officer would tell you, "Hey Ostrum is coming." Maybe the lieutenant finds out, you know. He gets a call here by the guns. "Hey, Ostrum is on the way over."

(Inaudible)

FS: He was just asking about a fella, Barron and I think that Willie and I and Henry too, of course, the fact that he was gun commander he did have a good number of men that he was responsible for and I had a good number of men that I was responsible for only because I used to call the roll. You know, in the morning I would call the form the company and you got to know them. It's not that our memory is that great. It's that the ordinary guy that is in line he had no occasion to know how to spell a guy's name that was three places down from him. So, and the one little thing that I recall down here, we were talking about clothing and armament. When we first came here I told you all we had was 1903 rifles and then there was a shortage. Everybody didn't even have a rifle down here. And when we would put on little mock drills the carpenter had the biggest assignment in the place. He was making ratchet guns. You remember they would use a jeep and have machine guns on top and use the ratchets?

WT: Yeah.

TH: To simulate machine gun fire.

FS: Yeah. The same with target practice, you remember how they made the sighting instruments? Remember the carpenters made them.

WT: Oh yeah. Oh yeah for rifle practice yeah.

FS: For rifle practice we were using sight bars made out of 1x 2s or whatever they were making them out of and that was the kind of stuff we were using. This was after we were all into the service, you know.

WT: We already had so many years in back of us.

TH: Sure you had been used to this.

WT: We had five or six years or seven.

FS: Used the trainees when they first came here they all came with it.

TH: The Navy was somewhat involved with Harbor Defenses too because they operated Floyd Bennett Field with the Navy Air Station.

FS: Oh yeah and here.

WT: The Coast Guard.

FS: No the Navy. Right here.

TH: Over at Earle.

FS: They had the Navy Barracks right in back of ours when we were manning the 12-inch guns.

WT: That's right.

FS: In fact, we were running a business. The first sergeant the supply sergeant and myself remember when we were washing clothes and we were pressing them? We would use the Navy's washing machines and I guess for a nickel or a dime we used to wash about 7 sets of cotton khaki and then each of us would take a turn putting the two creases in the front and the three in the back.

TH: Right.

FS: We used to get something like 20 cents and item. So we had a rum and coke fund. We used to buy rum and have coke and we would invite the WACs over.

TH: That's great.

WT: Up when we started messing around with the WACs this was (inaudible) Hang out with the WACs, bad boys.

TH: I am getting this on tape. Do you want me to stop it? (laughter)

WT: No. No.

TH: I know you had WACs out here and Army nurses. And I have always been told that those folks were locked away from the soldiers.

WT: There is an old saying that if you play with the WACs you are going to get wacked.

TH: 40 wacks.

FS: One thing we feel proud of is that we replaced the WACs for overseas duty. The WACs came here and then they were shipped overseas and we stayed here. That was our contribution. We kept them happy. (laughter)

TH: It's rather quiet today and you mentioned where was our Air Force if they got in close you know where was our Air Force. It's a rather quiet day. Was there much air traffic over the hook back then?

FS and WT: No.

FS: The big thing was the drone planes.

TH: Oh for target practice.

FS: Yeah. The drone planes used to fly over for the searchlights and the anti-aircraft guns. But that was no, we never had any...

TH: There is one other question. I don't think I asked you Fred but maybe I did did they ever make any movies here. Like Movietone or any of the radio stations like NBC or CBS. Did they ever come down here?

FS: Well, we did have the USO. We used to have, they did, there used to be like a set radio program that used to show some of the USO shows. Not show them but broadcast them and they did broadcast some of the shows from up here. Do you remember one saying that we had, "OHIO." Do you remember that? Did you remember the terminology that everybody used to holler, "OHIO" in Tent City. It meant over the hill in October.

WT: Oh yes yes. I remember that expression.

(Explanation of the expression "OHIO" is later in interview during the public tour.)

TH: I would have figured they would have at least photographers on hand for somebody like Nancy Carroll or was that restricted.

WT: They did. They probably had that stuff.

TH: I am wondering did they ever have any training films showing a casemated gun battery somewhere?

WT: I think they did. But you know in Bataan it was just like here open.

TH: Same yeah. Open.

WT: Same thing.

FS: You said that one time yourself that the fortifications around the entire United States as well as the possession were all very same.

TH: Very similar yeah.

FS: Same design.

TH: You were at Fort Wright. You were at Fort Wright with the same disappearing gun.

FS: The only thing with Fort Wright when we used to go there that was a very exclusive town, Fishers Island and it was very, very wealthy people.

WT: It was like the Caymans now.

FS: When we would go down there they used to go to the movies that we went to and they used to come in with evening gowns. They would drive up in chauffeured limousines and so forth and here we were guys in our old woolen uniforms. We never had cotton khaki.

WT: They found out those leggings were the worst things for varicose veins.

TH: Probably cut off your circulation if they were too...

WT: They had the uniform for many years with the leggings.

FS: Remember when we used to march, we used to march on Bushwick Avenue in the (inaudible) Parkway and you thought you were being real meticulous and looked good and got your leggings nice and tight but after the first mile your legs you'd feel that you were walking on wooden stilts and your circulation was cut out and you'd have to drop out and loosen up your leggings. Now you look like a slob.

WT: Yeah and they would loosen up and you would be dragging your leggings and you would have to keep marching in the lines.

TH: Yeah. How did you ever working around greasy guns and everything how did they ever get the, what did they call them denims fatigues?

WT: We had a laundry system. I remember Freddy got along we sent about a dollar and half something like that.

FS: Like a dollar and a half a month and they used to have this prospect laundry I think it was that used to come in from Brooklyn and they used to come down here in mass and then it was taken out of your pay at the end of the month. In fact, Murphy that was his brother in law or father in law or something. He was the one that got that contract.

WT: Not Duze?

FS: No. It was Murphy.

WT: Little Murphy. (inaudible)

FS: They did a good job.

WT: Yeah they did.

FS: We used to send our clothes down and they did a very good job. They would all your underwear and everything else all your clothes.

WT: Yeah the fatigue clothes really got dirty, especially on the guns. I used to send one guy Czary, you know, at the big powder chamber which is about 14-inches this way. The powder chamber...

TH: In the back of the gun.

WT: Yeah. And sometimes you would see them rust up there you know in the powder chamber and the only guy you could get was skinny and small and dirty and he especially got Mr. Hayes. We'd shove him in there.

TH: I notice the guy like in the grease pit all the guys...

FS: Czary. In fact, that fella we had some unpleasant men. I wouldn't even venture it on tape but we had some unpleasant adjectives that we used in front of his name and that guy I guess maybe ten years after I was out of the Army I happened to be going past a nightclub in the Howard Beach, Queens and here I look up there and I see you remember his alias was Jimmy Vincent. That was his professional name. He was an accordionist, you know. He was a real good musician and I saw his name there. I said, "Oh my god," I said to the owner of the place, "that's," and I used the expletive Jimmy Vincent. I said, "I know. We used to call him," and I said what we called him. He said, "You mean Mr. Vincent?" You know, he was now an accomplished musician. And he wrote a song for the Coast Artillery if you remember but he was dirty. Dirty filthy and obnoxious and all the other things. We would have him cleaning out the trap in the mess halls.

WT: All the dirty work we gave to him because he always got himself into trouble one way or another.

FS: But the shame of the whole thing when you had an inspection you always had to use your best men. And that was a shame, right. You had to bypass all the guys that were the goof offs.

TH: Yeah, I was gonna say the screw ups.

FS: When you had an inspection to be made you had to use the best men and that was unfortunate and they had to do the dirty work too.

TH: Yeah make up for the guys who slacked off.

WT: Like this guy Swoba. He almost hit one of the inspecting officers in the face with a rifle. The inspecting officer he was a little guy about this big you know. A comedian but he doesn't belong in the Army. The inspecting officer come along and I guess he was a major or something. He took a look at his rifle and he hung onto it. What happened he left with one hand and almost hit this guy, the inspecting officer in the head.

(Tape stops and start)

(Tape ends) (Audio begins with Tom Hoffman talking to a tour group in the Fort Hancock Museum Building 28. Some text irrelevant to the veterans was not transcribed and is noted as such.)

TH: The first one to arrive, Fred Schneider, we were talking about the storm and then the Tuting brothers showed up and we were talking about the storm and then we went down to their old gun battery which is not on the map but I am getting ahead of myself here. We get quite excited when we get veterans back because they can tell you a lot of first person history. Let me introduce myself. I am Park Ranger historian, Tom Hoffman. Please call me Tom. I have been here for a number of years. The reason why everybody thinks I am so knowledgeable about the history of Sandy Hook and the Army history of Fort Hancock is because of men like Colonel Mulhern who has been talking to you and the veterans who will talk to you today. You can listen to them and you get so much history that has never been recorded in any history book. There just simply is not an Army history here. Today, this morning we spent most of morning for about three hours down at Battery Kingman which is two guns. Right here, Battery Kingman alongside Battery Mills and two of the gentlemen Mr. Schneider and Mr. Tuting spent World War II at Battery Kingman so I had a tape recorder in hand and we tape recorded their memories of what it was like to serve at the gun batteries which we will be talking about today, this afternoon. I have been here for quite a number of years and to me it has been like a blink in my eye. It doesn't seem like over 12 years has gone by. But that's how long I have been here just for the sheer history of it. It's an overwhelming historical place. (Not transcribed) If you have red you are in the artillery. The gentleman that are here with us today are veterans guests would wear this type of hat (campaign hat). They remember it well. One of them, let me introduce them. Fred Schneider is right behind

me. How did you wear this hat? You can wear it better than I. how did you wear this hat? Show us how you did it.

FS: That's how we young bucks were a bunch of wise guys. (laughter) and we were drill sergeants. We wore them like this so we gave the impression of tough guy and what I say goes. That was the hat band on the hat that we wore at the time.

TH: (Not transcribed) I think Army drill instructors still wear it.

FS: They do.

TH: (Not transcribed) I have introduced Fred Schneider. Let me introduce the Tuting brothers. William Tuting and his brother Henry Tuting and they are going to be telling you some really great stories. We were talking up a storm all morning long and it is Fred and Bill here who spent the entire time, even before World War II you were here for summer maneuvers. Their unit was the 245th and this was the New York National Guard, correct when you came down here.

WT: Right.

TH: When you first came here. The New York National Guard from over the water in Brooklyn and they came down by boat and then what year was it '40 or '41 that...

HT: September 1940.

TH: You will never forget that because as Fred was saying this morning there was a saying that the soldiers were yelling out amongst tent city down here, the camp and the huge tent area and everybody was yelling what?

FS: Very unusually a great deal of us had been in since 1935 and we had a few years of service. But we recruited in 1940 that we were recruiting for one year enlistment and those people happened to be recruited at the time we had the federalization and we all come into service so they had actually had signed for one year. When we came into service then an emergency was declared in September 1941 two or three months before the War that all enlistments would be extended 18 additional months. So, now all of these fellas that had enlisted for one year and were supposedly getting out at the end of the year their enlistments were now extended so the big cry was, "OHIO." O-H-I-O and you would hear that all over the camp and a chant, "OHIO." What that meant was, "over the hill in October." (laughter) In other words, if we don't get out in September we are going to leave.

TH: They are going over the hill and leaving here without permission in October.

FS: And by the way nobody did.

TH: Of course not. I find it interesting. The world has forgotten what a terrible time the late 1930s were because the world was marching towards another war and what you had here was gentlemen who had joined, you were in early since 1935 and as you got into the late 1930s the world exploded into World War II in 1939 and of course, we were talking about this, this morning we were plunged into it on December 7th 1941 and people have forgotten that we were just not ready for fighting that war and our first line of defense in America after the fleet had been more or less destroyed at Pearl Harbor in the Pacific were places like these Army forts fronting on the Atlantic Ocean and the Pacific Ocean and that 1942 was an extremely dark year. A time when the 245th now they were called when you were federalized they were called the 245th Coast Artillery Regiment and you can see these red painted signs up here these are guidons. The real thing was like a linen banner, made of linen.

HT: Yeah.

TH: And the fancy ones were made of silk and each battery of about how many men. 200?

FS: Roughly 200-225 men.

TH: 200-225.

FS: Yeah. The very important thing is that like fellas like us we were in no way were, you know, we weren't heroes. We weren't in combat. We just lived here and that was our life. But we were quite fortunate the fact that we had fired these guns for so many prior years. As we kept getting regrouped and as we kept getting drafted into the service you always needed a nucleus. Now Willie here was the gun commander and he was responsible for firing these huge 12-inch guns and we fired a good many of them here and Fishers Island (Fort Wright). So we had a lot of experience. I was the plotter. I was in there where we did the computation to determine where the ships were and so forth so it was more or less for chance the fact that we did have the experience. We stayed here. So, we happened to be one or two of the two of us two of maybe 12 of 2,500 or 2,600 men that came here and was discharged from here. So, we were very fortunate. It was the fact that we did work together and we did have the experience.

TH: Yeah. These were their batteries. That's why I am pointing to our red guidons. There was a Headquarters Battery of the 245th. SL stands for Searchlights. There was a battery, they had searchlight towers up and down Sandy Hook. Huge 60 inch arc searchlights that could light up the Atlantic Ocean and New York Harbor like daylight incase of attack. (Talking repeating information) Everybody was sent out to everywhere else throughout the world.

FS: Every Theater.

TH: Every theater. Here they stayed and experienced World War II. Then Henry here came here after the War. Was stationed more or less in his brother's footsteps?

NH: 1950.

TH: In 1950. By then the big guns were gone. (Condensed information) In their place, Henry was manning....

HN: 120.

TH: 120 mm anti-aircraft guns which is a big weapon too. But the emphasis now of the Korean War period of the early '50s was to knock out the bombers and fighters as they flew over. (Not transcribed) (Tom is telling the tour that Fred Schneider lived in tents, wooden barracks and Quarters 29.) Bill was telling me he never got a nice dinner there.

FS: Oh yeah. This guy as skinny as he is, the biggest chow hound. He could eat six to eight hot dogs at a time.

TH: Six to eight hot dogs? (laughter)

FS: And he is never gonna reach 49. He is gonna have some problems.

TH: I could see why he never invited his best buddy, his best friend from childhood over for a dinner all during that time. Boy, did I hear about that one this morning.

FS: By the way, we went to public school together too. High school and we were thrown out of church together. We were to ring the bell and the minister didn't like the way we rang the bells so he threw us out of church. I will tell you a very interesting thing is the room that you are in, this is where we put a 24 hour guard and they would take it from each company for a 24 hour period. In this room it would be ringed with double stacked of metal beds and during that 24 hour period whoever was on guard duty would sleep in here and you didn't take your uniform off or anything. In here, if anybody didn't look in here you got the jails in here and of course at the end you have the...

TH: Shower.

FS: No. I meant the three...

TH: The solitary confinement.

FS: The solitary confinement. There were tenants in there. There was some bad guys that you really had to throw in there. (Story about a prisoner "Yardbird" is on the other Schneider interviews.)

Visitor: I want to ask you about what those two signs mean, Battery Halleck (and Israel Richardson)?

TH: Oh they have got some fond memories of Battery Richardson there. Henry was asking about Battery.

WT: We fired that gun Richardson. 12-inch disappearing and took 240 pounds of powder and a shell was 800 pounds and had a range of about 20 miles at that time.

FS: Yeah. And we used those, we didn't use it but the purpose of those was only to pursue a battleship or a heavy cruiser. They were limited and you only had a certain range to shot those because within about 10 minutes it was obsolete. In other words, by the time you fired at it if you missed it, it was over because they you didn't have airplanes. You didn't have missiles. You didn't have any other means so then you would go to the 10-inch guns. You would go to the .155s and 90mm and so forth.

TH: Yeah. There was a staggered type of defense here. They were the first line, Bill Tuting and Fred here. They were in Battery Kingman with a range of way over 20 miles your four guns down here. They are called 12-inch rifles referring to the diameter of the shell and there is a yellow shell outside, the middle shell is a 12-inch round that weighs half a ton. They were the first line of defense. They had to fire their guns along with Battery Richardson, Battery Bloomfield, Battery Halleck, Battery Alexander. Nine disappearing guns were here. (Not transcribed) These gentlemen came running forward and opened up the breech. The back end was a huge block of steel and they would revolve it around. They had one big fella. What was his name? What was that fellas name? That big strong guy.

FS: Danny Dunn.

TH: Danny Dunn. What was his nickname? He had a nickname.

FS: Well, the ironman. He had arms like you know and he could turn that thing in a couple of seconds, the breech block. He could just turn that thing around.

TH: It's a huge block of steel and it had grooves in it because it rotated in. it screwed itself into the back end of the cannon to block the breech, breech block and this big strong fella could revolve it with a hand crank so quickly and this huge thing that weighed several thousand pounds at least, a couple of thousand.

FS: You mean the breech block? No it would be about 500-600 pounds.

TH: 500-600 pounds. Would rotate out so quickly and open and then you would have your soldiers rushing forward with the half ton bullet, projectile on an ammunition cart about waist high about? About here?

FS: Yeah.

TH: And put it right in behind the open breech and they would ram it in with the ramrod and then they just don't ram it. You would do it with force to get that shell seated or tight

inside and then they would withdraw the ramrod and then they would rush forward again with bags of gunpowder. At Battery Kingman, how many was it?

WT: Four.

TH: Four bags. How much was each bag?

WT: 60 pounds.

TH: 60 pounds each bag. Those are some big firecrackers. And each bag was then rammed....

FS: No. The four together.

TH: Four together, all four together. Then you put a smaller bag.

Both FS and WT: It's attached to the last bag.

TH: To the last bag was a small bag. Then they would close the breech behind it. The primer man would rush forward and put a tube of powder. Insert it right into the back because there is like a tiny little tunnel between the tube of powder to that inner bag of gun powder inside. That's why, have you ever seen them fire a cannon, they pull a string. You see these old movies of soldiers on the battlefield pulling a string. Well, they are igniting the tube of powder which is called the primer. That shoots a flame of sparks inside through that little tunnel in the breech block right to the inside where you have that massive powder charge. All takes a split second. And in that split second there is a tremendous explosion inside the guns sending a half ton bullet way out over here out over the gun and out towards the ocean.

Visitor: Was that an explosive shell or a solid projectile?

FS: No. That's what we were saying before. That shell if it would have dropped or was to be hit would not ignite. The, there would be, there is a mechanism in there that would be set by centrifugal force. In other words, the rifling was just like a regular rifle in the gun has grooves so when that shell goes out it has a natural turn. Now as now that starts getting propelled out it releases one of the safety's. Now when the shell hits, hopefully hits the steel of a battleship there's an armor piercing portion that is made of a titanic, titanium type of steel, whatever it is.

TH: The nose of the shell.

FS: The nose of the shell. And as that hits it will penetrate hopefully and on impact it will now trigger the second igniter and then the shell will now explode. So just like a lot of nuclear devices. You know people think that the nuclear device is gonna explode. It's not. Other things would have to happen and that's what would happen to the shell. So you could drop a shell, even in loading it there might be an accident where we have had it

happen where we have practice shells and you have some new crew men and we had a bunch of celebrities one time that the fellas were kind of nervous that we had a bunch of officers there one day. One time one of the shells fell off the tray and fell down into the gun well. Well, no problem. You know it's just embarrassing. But it's not something...

TH: It's very embarrassing because the movie star and you probably if you are older remember her, younger people like myself, Nancy Carroll, she was called carrot top. She had red hair. I guess she wasn't a real famous movie star but semi-famous. They came down to Battery Kingman to see the boys load up the big 12-inch gun and to the embarrassment of the gun crew standing there as the shell was coming out. Was it on the ammunition truck?

FS: Yes. It was gonna be put into the gun.

TH: It was gonna be put into the breech of the gun, the back end of the gun. It went forward.

WT: It hit the stop. It hit one of the stops and the shell went down into the well.

TH: It went into the well. This was not a disappearing gun but if we could just part through the crowd, the lower right hand photograph. Can you see the smoke coming out of the gun? That's the very gun they were loading. That gun right there and as you can see the back end of the cannon is right down into the ground. Well, that was called a well. That was about eight feet deep you were telling me this morning. You are standing here. It's filled in with dirt now. They had three soldiers down there and those soldiers were the ones who rotated the gun. They moved the gun so it could fire in different directions. When it fired off they were down there.

WT: Down in the well.

TH: Down in the well. And were they down in it that day when the shell went down from ground level where they were?

WT: Oh yeah.

TH: But they had safety backup systems. The gun was fired through the cannon. The spiral grooves inside the cannon are called rifling so your long shell goes down that barrel. It's starting to spin around and when it leaves that's the first thing that's triggered. Of course, the second thing that's gonna be triggered inside the shell in the fuse which is at the back end of the shell, the base end of the shell is when it plows into you armor plating of a battleship penetrates goes inside the second thing is triggered and it explodes. So inside the middle part to the back end was hollow. That was filled with high explosive. The nose was solid steel. That's the punch to punch through.

FS: Just one thing you mentioned those guns. We were just down there. You would never recognize it because that now is casemated which means that a huge concrete

mound with just a little vision, a little opening in the front. Now when the War first started they found that in Europe that some of the guns were transferred were turned on Paris, could be turned on some major cities because the guns were made and made on a eraser that could turn 360 degrees. And it could fire north east, south and west, you know. So these guns here were a couple of the most powerful guns we had. They too were capable if the enemy did get here and took over this fort they could turn these guns on New York City which is roughly 20 miles away so they could shoot up Manhattan. So later I guess in 1942 after the War, they decided that now with the sophisticated missiles and the planes coming in and so forth that they casemated them. They put tons and tons of concrete. Tons and tons of sand on top and they had only about a 30-40 degree bearing set out you could shoot out only over the ocean. So those guns are not, they were not that way towards the end. But everything became obsolete within months.

Visitor: (inaudible)

TH: Let's go outside and gather around those artillery shells. (Group leaves museum.)

FS: ...On post was the MPs. The MPs patrolled the entire area. This was the secure our little village here which was, that's Officers' Row. All the general lived up I don't know which house it was.

TH: #12. #12 was over there.

FS: The general lived over there. Then you had the colonels and the majors and then you had the second lieutenants living down here with their families. Now as far as guard was concerned, what we did was we had guards at various posts around the perimeter of this village area more or less. You would have a sergeant of the guard that would be here, stationed here and then you would have the fellows and each one of them was assigned their particular area to patrol and in the event of any problem they would call out post # so and so and you would have to respond to it, where the difficulty was. It was more or less of a ceremonial kind of thing really because security was really by the MPs. Now this area in here was usually the first three grades that might have the opportunity you notice there is only a little number of these larger homes here but the first three grades like a staff sergeant and up might be assigned to one of these houses if there was room for you. In the back over here it might be the buck sergeants and then there was a regular class system you know. The officers had the huge homes, the first three grades here and then you had the sergeants and then some places that were no better than shacks some of the very small homes back here maybe a fellow as low as a corporal might get into it. Discrimination back in that time it was involuntary discrimination. We didn't know. This it he way we lived. This was the time. This was the way it was. On this post there was no colored people integrated into any of our outfits. The only assignment that the colored people had was in the transportation, right?

WT: Mmm hmm.

FS: And we were living in back just as you came to this area here there is an area you might see a bunch of trailers. That was tent city. That's where most of us were billeted. Even there the colored did not live here. I don't even recall where it was.

WT: They had one of the barracks back here.

FS: They even had a little tent city. They had an area back in here somewhere. We used to call it Harlem. Now the guys from Harlem were not permitted to come into our area. But if we had any pool hustlers they used to go over to Harlem and some of the guys from Jersey City especially, some of the good pool players and they would go over there. But that was a form of discrimination that you had. But that was it. We didn't know. We accepted it because that was just the way things were. We couldn't get away with it today you know. Back there we had the original WACs come to this Post. But at that time they were WAAC. Women's Auxiliary Army Corps. They were not, even they were not accepted as members of the Army. Later on they changed to Women's Army Corps which was part of the Army but we had maybe 100 of them back here and the most wonderful thing was that we'd have masquerade parties once in a while and that gave the WACs the opportunity to take their uniforms off and wear street clothes. Boy, were they delightful. (laughter) It was a wonderful thing because you got to see these gals in the olive drab with the short heels and the long skirts and olive drab blouses. Boy, when they let their hair down with gowns you know and that was the masquerade party.

TH: And you notice Fred still remembers where the barracks are after all these years. (laughter)

FS: And a very funny thing is if you had a date and you went there you would go and ask for Mom. You had to see Mom first. She was the first sergeant. And mom now would holler up the stairs, Ethyl your date is here." So, it was somewhat like home.

TH: Any fond memories of the main parade field. Did you ever have drills out there or any parades?

WT: Well, you had the guard mount out here.

TH: Right here.

FS: And you have the ceremony out there.

WT: And then you come here and you eat. Guard duty was usually 24 hours. Change every day.

TH And taken from soldiers who were stationed over here at the barracks.

WT: Right.

FS: Something very interesting there that applied to these two fellas. These two fellas were excellent runners. Both of them were very good miles. They ran in a lot of the AAU. They ran in Madison Square Garden. They ran in some of the big meets, the college meets and so forth. They ran in athletic meets so they did have a track back up in here. You participated in some of the events up here. So, we also did use that field for baseball. We used it for we had they used to get the whole regiment, not the whole regiment but the entire Post, the 52nd, the 7th and so forth and we used to have calisthenics out there. We'd have a fella up on a platform and he would conduct the calisthenics every morning for a period of time. It wasn't a constant thing. But it was a delightful place. As you can see we probably, we loved it. It was our home for a good many years.

TH: Do you remember the time in the spring of 1943 when the New York Giants Baseball team came here and played an exhibition game and I think the day before or the day after the New York Yankees?

FS: I don't.

TH: You don't remember that. How come I remember that? I wasn't here. (laughter)

FS: But a very interesting athletic thing was this was the one YMCA.

TH: Right here. This was the gym.

FS: It was the gymnasium and we had a real fine basketball team that used to play inter-post like Monmouth and Fort Dix and so forth. But this was an excellent, excellent place for recreation. Then, of course, down the other end at the time the USO was here we had the service organization. We had the recreation up here and we had people like Bob Hope. He (William Tuting) met his wife here at one of the events. I used to go out with her before he met her. (laughter) I never told him until now.

TH: I just point out the Yankees and the Giants because they used to have shows here, USO. Would you call USO shows? Joe Lewis was here twice. We just got some...

FS: Bob Hope.

TH: Bob Hope was here.

FS: Jerry Colona.

TH: Yeah with Bob Hope and I am trying think of the other prize fighter besides Joe Lewis, Jack Dempsey, Jack Dempsey. We have some pictures of him in that gym when they had a bond, war bond when they were trying to raise money for the war effort. He made and appearance here with the USO show right here in the gymnasium. A number of famous personalities came through. Henry did you want to say something?

HT: Yeah. Tom Mix was here too.

TH: Yes. Did anybody know or hear of a fella by the name of First Sergeant Tom Mix? Who is Tom Mix?

Visitor: He was a cowboy entertainer.

TH: Okay. I asked it that way because you know you could have a group of school children out here during the week, you know. The first famous people to be here at Fort Hancock was Tom Mix. (Not transcribed.)

TH: (Explaining Fred Schneider has photos and is showing them to the audience in front of his former quarters 29B.)

FS: I have an exterior shot with my little daughter and a little girl at the time a little Army brat. (inaudible audio with moving around)



Fred Schneider's daughter and friend.

FS: This is the commissary and this is where you had your meat and your supplies and so forth. We actually had a butcher in here and any of the residents that lived on post could purchase your...(inaudible)

EH: Did you tell the story about the man, the soldier with amnesia?

FS: Um. No. We will get in the shade.

EH: Oh we have an anecdote that is priceless. Did you tell your Pabst story? Can we do a few of the jokes.

FS: Yeah we will do it right up here in the shade. Maybe if we stay in the shade here.

EH: By popular demand. Oh, the three ones would be the way you forged the pass with the eraser, the collection for Pabst and the soldier with amnesia. We have some, you know, humor.

FS: I guess that I have always taken the light side of life. In other words, I just don't like, in fact, I don't watch an awful lot of television because I don't like all the damn rotten news you have and all the violence and stuff and maybe I have treated life too lightly but I have always treated life as a lot of fun. So, a couple of stories came to mind because we were showing pictures before but we had one fella that was a cook and he was of Italian extraction. Probably many, not too many years from Italy so he had a very strong Italian accent. So what we used to do if we possibly could we used to rotate the fella so that maybe most of the cooks could be off on the weekend. There was one period of time and what we would do was have one fella cover the entire weekend. So this one particular fella, this Italian fella Crupi he was assigned to work and in the meantime somebody said to him he could have off and take his place. At the last minute, they decided they weren't going to take his place and he was relegated to work. So what happened Sunday morning came about and all of a sudden the dining room orderly comes running into and says, "My God we have no cook around and we have no one to cook the food." So, I asked him where this kid Crupi was and to make a long story short we got things and we took care and everything. Monday morning this guy Crupi comes in and I said to him, "Where the hell were you? He said, "Sergeant, honest, I wake up on the beach. I walked along and I think I got the amnesia." He said, "I am walking and I don't know where I am." He says, "I wake up today and I am on the beach." I said, "You are a liar." He sergeant, "I swear." I said to him, "Look you are lying." So, what does he do he takes his crucifix out. He kisses his crucifix and he says, "On my mother's grave, I swear I had amnesia. I know where I was." About a month later, I hear him confessing to somebody that he went into the city. So, I says to him, "You know Crupi, you took your crucifix and you swear on your mother's grave." He said, "When you lie you gotta lie all the way." (laughter) One other quick story is this when the draftees first came in here nobody could appreciate it. You were a civilian and suddenly they throw you shoes and a uniform and you come here and you are all confused and now we put them in tent city and they are isolated. They are in quarantine for what is it three weeks or four weeks or so. So these poor guys came and we were wise guys. So now we are a couple of days from payday and broke and we felt like having a couple of beers. So somebody came up with the bright idea. Let's get a couple of beer carton and they put on this thing for Sergeant Schlitz who passed away. And we put a slot on top and these poor guys were falling for it and we drank beer I guess for the whole weekend. So that's the kind of things you can think of. Let's see a private made \$21 a month. If you became a first class private you made \$30. If you were fortunate enough to become a corporal you made \$42. If you were fortunate enough to become a sergeant you made \$50. If you became a staff sergeant you got \$72. That's a month. So you know, and the way it operated is this when you went to the pay table and you got your pay there was an order of business. You'd have your...(Tape ends)

FS: This road here and a whole stream of guest and here they are playing here comes the bride and the groom and we trudged into the mess hall and that was his entertainment. That was a real nice.

EH: Didn't you forge a pass one time using a pencil?

FS: Well, I did everything.

EH: He's done everything in the book.

FS: Well, the last story I am going to tell you what they did is they had a secret code on the passes that nobody could forge a pass. They had to be an authenticated pass. So the genius that devised the system didn't realize it was too damn easy to duplicate because the secret mark was nothing more than using an Eberhardt pencil and the rubber eraser on top you cut an X into it and took a stamp pad and stamped it and made that x on the pass. Well, I think everybody in the company had a pass pencil with an x on it. So in one instance I made a phoney pass and I was so proud and now its 7 miles to the gate and you had no transportation. So we used to get out and try to hitchhike so whose car came along, the first car but my company commander. Now, he knows he didn't sign a pass for me. So he says to me, "Okay, sergeant get in the car." We get out to the gate and naturally being an officer they saluted him and went through the gate. As soon as we were outside the gate he said, "Don't ever do that again." (laughter) So it wasn't too bad.

EH: You got off light that time.

(Inaudible)

FS: We had a big coal yard back in here because that's what we heated most of the buildings with coal.

(Inaudible. walking tour group on road)

FS: That's where they issued all of the GI equipment. The next building was the bake shop. The Army always had the best bread. Really it was wonderful.

(Not Transcribed about Battery Potter) (Tape ends.)

END OF INTERVIEW