

Sandy Hook, Gateway NRA, NPS
An Oral History Interview with Fred Voorhees
Post Engineer's Office
1938-69

Interviewed by Tom Hoffman and Elaine Harmon, NPS
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Transcribed by Mary Rasa 2011

Editor's notes in parenthesis ()

EH: Today is September 30, 1984 and we have a special guest, Mr. Fred Voorhees who now lives in Jupiter, Florida who is visiting his daughter Alita Hendrickson out in Marlboro, New Jersey. We came upon Mr. Voorhees through a donation of four photographs donated originally by John Mills of Holmdel who in conversation told us that they were originally in the possession of Fred Voorhees' daughter Alita Hendrickson. Mr. Voorhees was an employee at Sandy Hook from September 14, 1938 to October 30, 1969. Can you give us, give us an impression of your beginning here?

FV: Well, I started as laborer here and the first job that I was put onto was the installation of the bulkhead at Kingman-Mills area. From there I always, whenever I could improved myself I always went and stepped as much as possible. So, I took care of running the pile driver and air compressors and all that sort of thing and from then I kept going forward.

TH: I was wondering, when you came, when you started on the job was that a project that they were just starting?

FV: That was really the job I was hired for. They needed extra people to accomplish that work. So I worked, I started with Mr. Simpson, Johnny Simpson.

TH: He was on the project there, in charge?

FV: He was the overseer of everything. He was directed from New York. They called it District Engineer at the time. He worked for them and the man that was in charge over him was Mr. Swift. He used to live in Red Bank and I met him several times. He was a nice guy. And it took I guess the better part of a year to accomplish that job. It was a job. That thing was 1,800 feet.

TH: I was going to say that was a tremendous bulkheaded wall.

FV: It was hard work, but we accomplished it. It was cold and warm both. (laughter)

TH: You were mentioning that sometimes if the weather was bad you didn't work.

FV: That's right. I wasn't civil service at that time see.

TH: You mentioned your pay as?

FV: We got 50 cents and hour.

TH: Was that good wages at the time?

FV: Four dollars a day and we worked five and half days and we got \$24. We got double time for Saturday.

TH: And we have to remember that it was depression in '38.

FV: I was glad to get a job 'cause I was working on the water, you know, clamming and lobster fishing and all that sort of thing.

EH: How old were you then when you started here, roughly?

FV: Oh, well you are putting me on the spot now. (laughter) I was born in 1910. 28 (years old).

TH: It must have been cold work if you were proceeding during the wintertime. You had just come on the job and that is when the hurricane hit.

FV: That's right. It hit in September, that month. I think the last of September somewhere. And I remember the Menhaden boat, (inaudible) came up on the beach.

TH: Back where you were working?

FV: Right by the bulkhead was built. Of course, the bulkhead wasn't there at the time. It came up and it took quite a while before they finally got it off.

TH: Was any damage done to those gun batteries?

FV: No.

TH: Because you were building the bulkhead to protect it, correct?

FV: Oh yeah. But nothing damaged in there. Nothing damaged whatsoever. At that time the guns were out in the open and then '41 to '42 they had a contract from the U.S. Engineers up in New York to come down and cover them over.

TH: Big huge concrete roofs.

FV: I think they are still there aren't they?

TH: Yes they are. (laughter) They are probably going to be there forever.

FV: I can remember occasionally I would go down when they were shooting the guns in later years. I could see when they shot the guns the barrels of the rifles you could see the projectile go out as far as you could look you could see it go out, curve. You wouldn't believe that, but it is the truth.

TH: Yeah, because they were huge.

FV: That flame would catch all the berries and berry trees and everything else on fire out there, you know.

TH: The muzzle blast.

FV: Tremendous, you know, tremendous explosion.

TH: What did that area there, when you built the bulkhead, was that all, did you fill it in also? You built the wooden bulkhead was it filled in behind it.

FV: No. We got that right off the beach. Right up the beach we built a little railroad for the pile driver and went right on the rail. So, we could pull it along, move. Right over top, right over top of the piles to connect. We could put a pile down about every five feet I can remember. Every five feet we put a pile down and then we move it five feet and keep going then they come behind us and put the whalers on and the planks, you know, the heavy planks in the ground, jet them in you know.

TH: You were mentioning working there in the winter and then in the summer also and the mosquitoes and the heat. How did everybody like yourself and the other workers how did they cope with the cold?

FV: We were rugged then in those days.

Mrs. Voorhees: They put long johns on.

TH: In the winter.

Mrs. Voorhees: And they put heavy sweaters, heavy shirts.

FV: I can remember one incident there, one man we used to put the pipe and suction out the water, you know, for the pump the piles down. Every morning we get to take this pipe off. This four inch pipe with a rubber hose on the end of it. This pipe was long and the man was down and broke his leg right across the leg. (inaudible)

EH: There is a story that John Simpson had a brainstorm, a brilliant idea of lifting the guns from Battery Kingman, putting them on blocks of ice, letting the ice melt and then the guns were in position for the new casemate. Do you recall anything of that?

FV: No. No.

EH: This is a sort of tale that...

FV: That was before my time.

EH: That Clarence Moore, said...

FV: I don't put any truth to that. (laughter)

EH: That a whole team of engineers came and had a very expensive, you know, sophisticated technique that in fact John Simpson took one look and said, "Hey just put the guns on blocks of ice."

FV: In the first place, blocks of ice would never support a gun.

EH: I was always puzzled so that is why I am...

FV: I don't believe that.

EH: I don't know if that is an old family story.

FV: A 12-inch barrel is quite heavy. You know, those two guns, the last two they cut up there was from the *Battleship Arizona*. (Battery Lewis' guns were not from the *USS Arizona*.) It was sunk from Pearl Harbor. Do you have records of that?

TH: No.

FV: That is where they came from.

TH: That was down at those gun batteries?

FV: No. Those guns that were put on the hill. Those two guns that were put on the hill.

TH: Way up in Hartshorne woods.

FV: Yeah. I am getting ahead of myself. They were put on the hill. Those two guns that were down there, they stayed here from installation and cut them up.

TH: I've got to ask you, you mentioned just getting back to bulkheading starting in September of '38 and then working also into the next year. It took that long to complete that and then I am wondering 'cause you mentioned that they built those concrete roofs over the guns, were you working on that project?

FV: Oh yeah. I didn't work on that. I could have gone down there as foreman. I received better potentials here.

TH: Up in the fort?

FV: Because I knew that was going to be a short time job, maybe a year or two and I'd be done. Here I stayed and I kept going up until I got to be head of the Post Engineers construction and all that sort of thing. Maintain the buildings and road, heavy equipment painting and all that sort of stuff. I was in charge of all that. We got as high, when we first started in 19, let me see, I would say in roughly about 1950 we had closed this place.

TH: Right.

FV: Closed it and turned it over to the New York District Engineers to get rid of it. Then the Korean War came about. War, they didn't call it a war they called it an action of some kind. So, then they started rehiring people 'cause at the time when I was here there was another an, Ainsley Wright. He only had 16 people out here maintaining this whole Fort. That was including the fire department, guards, (and) water plant personnel.

TH: When the Post was closed?

FV: When the Post was closed. There were 16 of us here. We had to do anything that came up we had to do it, you know. There were two people taking care of all the repairs and all that sort of stuff. So, we took care of it. So then we started I would say the early part of '51. Don't quote me exactly but somewhere about that then they started getting people in here to support the Post because it went back to a post again.

TH: For the Korean War?

FV: That's right.

TH: I want to just mention still back at Horseshoe Cove way down south of the cove at the very end of the bulkheading they built two TNT storage bunkers which they called Igloo Bunkers because they are domed shaped. Did you see those built?

FV: Oh Yeah.

TH: About when were they built? World War II?

FV: World War II, '43, '42, something like that neighborhood, oh yeah. And they built two more over here in the road. It used to be where Fort Monmouth had their radar installation out there. Are they still there?

TH: They are still there, right.

FV: There are four they built there.

TH: We noticed, speaking of that, we noticed that across the road on the other side of the road from the storage bunkers are the machine gun, those concrete machine gun

emplacements. There are two and I was told by a person who worked out here at that time to build the radar buildings where they were testing the radar there that those were checkpoints. Do you know anything about that?

FV: I don't know. I don't remember that. I can remember working on those. I forget what they call them now. Those bunkers down there. I used to have to go down and put little things on the window because if a fire started on the outside it would melt, close it down so they couldn't get into the bunker, you know. It had an air shaft in the back.

TH: Oh yeah, the air shafts.

FV: Is that still there?

TH: Yeah, it is up on the top.

FV: Yeah. They used to have metal things, I forgot the name of them. I mean don't ask me for names of stuff because I forget.

TH: Right.

FV: They used to be soldered together and when the heat hit it from like a fire if the bushes started burning...

TH: Yeah, if there had been a brush fire.

FV: The damper would go down so that nothing would go in the building.

TH: To close off the air shaft.

FV: Front and back.

TH: Huh, because they had air shafts built on top of that to provide air.

FV: To provide air for circulation inside.

TH: That is something. I was wondering if getting just back to Kingman and Mills? Did you see them scrap the guns?

FV: Oh yeah.

TH: After World War II.

FV: They burned them up with these long lances. They called them air (inaudible) lances. Burnt right through the barrel lengthwise and then they cut them in sections. Dropped them down. They weigh tons, you know.

TH: When abouts was that to your memory? I know it was just after World War II. Do you have...

FV: I would say around '45, '46. Somewhere in around there.

TH: 'Cause I guess there was just no need for the Coast Artillery anymore?

FV: No. No need. There was lots of new missiles and stuff coming in and Nike stuff and all that stuff, you know.

TH: Now, you were here during World War II and what was it like? I mean this place must have really been...

FV: Tent City they had down there. Do they still have those buildings from Tent City?

TH: Oh, like the mess halls and latrine buildings, yeah they are still along the road. It goes out to Battery Gunnison.

FV: Hundreds of tents up in the area.

TH: So, this place was really jumping during World War II.

FV: It sure was and they built all these temporary barracks at that time too.

TH: The wooden barracks.

FV: '40, '41, right after the War started.

TH: Well, with a big war like that then all of sudden we went back, we won the War and it was peacetime. What was it, was it quite different as the Army started to...?

FV: The Army was still out here but they started dwindling down, you know.

TH: I was wondering it seems looking at old maps maybe you could help us here. A lot of buildings after 1945, the Army built an awful lots of barracks and mess halls and all kinds of buildings to support the troops and then somewhere between 1945 and a map we have 1951, about the Korean war, a lot of buildings...

FV: Ripped down.

TH: Torn down. Do you remember any of that when they started to...

FV: Oh yeah, I remember all of that. Sure, I was here for a lot of that. I was down there giving the wood away, selling it, anything they could do with it.

TH: Really?

FV: Oh yeah. They each come in and help themselves.

TH: Local folks from the communities would come in and get wood?

FV: (inaudible)

EH: Where were you living? I am just curious.

FV: Where was I living? I was living at 48 Miller St.

EH: In Highlands?

FV: In Highlands, yeah.

TH: How would you... the Army railroad was operating wasn't it?

FV: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

TH: Would you come in by railroad or by bus?

FV: No. I came in my own car.

TH: Okay.

FV: Yeah. We drove our own cars at that time. Before that though they used to take a train out every morning and pick up the people at Highland Beach and drive them in and took them out at 4:30, 5:00 at night.

TH: You must have remembered, because I met him at Thanksgiving, with Mr. John Mulhern, was Jim Pike?

FV: Oh yeah.

TH: You remember Jim Pike?

FV: He's dead down. Didn't he die? He was 90 some years.

TH: 93.

FV: 93. Yeah I mentioned Tom Colcannon, Pea soup too, what was his last name, Gullivan. He was here for awhile.

EH: Pea Soup?

FV: Nickel and Pea Soup.

(inaudible)

FV: That was in the Roundhouse, they had their Headquarters in there. They used to drive the locomotive, cranes. Jim Pike used to always operate the cranes.

TH: Is there a Tom Kelly?

FV: Yeah. There was a Kelly, but that was before my time.

TH: Really? He goes further back.

FV: I remember Mr. Simpson talking about Kelly.

EH: Could you describe Johnny Simpson just for our curiosity?

FV: Well, he was...

EH: A living legend, 52 years.

FV: He was a short wiry man. He wasn't too heavy. I would say he was 5' 6" may 5'7" maybe that. He wasn't too tall and he was full of fire. It didn't matter if your grandma was there. If you didn't do what you was supposed to he would let you know.

EH: Full of fire in a sense of demanding and rough?

FV: Demanding yes and very rough with his voice too. But I always admired him. I mean, I had nothing wrong. I said I knew he told me something wrong I always come back and tell him and he admired me for that if I could show him where he was wrong.

TH: We have had some folks tell us that he would always be wearing a hat.

FV: Yeah. He would slam it down in the ground. (laughter)

TH: One person told me that's how he got his name, "Jumping Johnny" because he slammed the hat as you say. Slam it down and jump on it.

FV: I will never forget the time he told, there was a man who came in named Roy Max. He told him to go put water in the boiler and., you know, how you put water in the boiler you put it in an injector. He went down and through the stove he put it in the smokestack. He put the fire out (laughter). And boy he just flipped that time.

Mrs. Voorhees: He used to play cards.

FV: Oh yes. He used to play cards.

Mrs. Voorhees: One night he came to our house to play cards and there was so much cigarette smoke.

FV: And he used to like to nip, you know.

TH: Well, he was a hard working man.

Mrs. Voorhees: Well, Ainsley Wright he is still living. He is 83 in California.

FV: He worked with him long before I did.

TH: Really? And who was that?

FV: Samuel Ainsley Wright. He is in California now. He may even have photographs or something. I don't know.

TH: Where was Johnny Simpson's office? Was it up here?

FV: Inside the enclosed area, is it still enclosed with a fence?

TH: Where the red brick buildings are?

FV: It used to be a little blacksmith's shop. The main office was right there and across from it we had this big building where we kept the trucks and stuff.

TH: Where the red brick buildings are way up at the north end of the Post.

FV: The red brick was the mine command. I mean I don't know what there is now.

TH: I am trying to place this.

FV: I haven't been there. I could come with you and it would be easier if you want me to. They told me they tore a lot of them down.

TH: Yeah a lot of buildings have been.

FV: I don't know what is left. I haven't been down there in 15 years.

Mrs. Voorhees: The boats used to go out from the point.

TH: Over here where the docks are?

Mrs. Voorhees: No. No. The first boat used to go out from where the wireless station used to be and we got that one.

FV: The *Chauncey de Pew* used to go out here, (and the) *Ord*.

Mrs. Voorhees: The little boat for the officers' wives.

TH: They had a special little boat for the officers' wives?

EH: You talked about restructuring the Post Engineers around... you said after you came after...

FV: Yeah. I think that was about 1941. After the War started.

EH: Well, just describe briefly what changed in the structure.

FV: As I say we worked through New York. We got paid from New York.

EH: Right.

FV: Then they made it combined all the people that were Post Engineers. I think they did the same thing at Fort Monmouth at the same time.

EH: Around 1941.

FV: I think it was around there, do you remember?

Mrs. Voorhees: No.

FV: I think it was in '41. I think it was right after the War started. I think it was more efficient. Everybody in one (inaudible).

EH: Consolidate. Do you recall Lana Turner being here in '41?

FV: No. I heard about it but I don't know.

Mrs. Voorhees: The King and Queen. Do you remember when the King and Queen came out?

FV: Oh yeah. Roosevelt. I remember him coming through here. I was on the docks meeting the ship.

EH: You did see FDR here?

Mrs. Voorhees: Mmm hmm. They laid the red carpet out for the Queen. I wasn't out here. I was working over at (inaudible). I was by the bridge over there. And we served I don't know how many breakfasts. Some of the cars got out there and the car went out and went Zoom. I couldn't even see nobody.

TH: Came right by and that was it.

(inaudible)

EH: What about FDR's visit though? What do you remember?

FV: Well, just like she said they went right on by.

Mrs. Voorhees: They went out to the boat though didn't they?

FV: Oh yeah. They came across on a destroyer.

TH: But he just got right off and got into a limousine.

FV: He got off and got into a limousine, you know. I think he went on off post. Where he went I don't know. I don't remember now. I don't recall.

Mrs. Voorhees: I remember the King and Queen went to Broad Street in Red Bank.
(inaudible)

FV: You might get some information from him. He worked here much longer than I did. In 1951 or '50 when they started closing the Fort down and taking everything out, he transferred to Fort Monmouth and I stayed here because the District Engineers wanted me to stay because I had a lot of knowledge and I knew how to do a lot of things and they said, "Stay here." It was a gamble. I wasn't civil service at the time. So, I stayed here until the Korea business came about and from then on the colonel, it wasn't a colonel it was a captain came back to establish everything. It was a Captain Haddigan. So he said, "I am going to make you the boss." He says, "You know more about this than anybody." He put me in charge of everything here.

EH: During the Korean crisis you are talking about?

FV: When they started building up, you know. It got so that they couldn't handle everything. I guess we had close to a hundred people working for us. I spoke to the colonel at the time and I said, "According to regulations, First Army, there should be two foreman, one for buildings and grounds and one for roads and support. I said, "I think you should take some of the load off because I have got too much." So he made (inaudible) because he was in the plumbing line. So, he did it. And it kept on going from there.

EH: We are up to the state park then. You have brought us up to the state park in '62.

FV: '62, see that was years later. And the Army Reserve was in here too. Are they still in here?

TH: They pulled out last year, last November.

FV: Then they had the marine over there in Building 19.

EH: The marine laboratory.

FV: Marine laboratory. That was there.

EH: They will be celebrating their 25th anniversary this coming spring.

(inaudible)

FV: They were here just before I moved out of here. Well, it did come back for awhile.

TH: During the Korean War I am sure.

FV: Yeah. I did come back but it wasn't too much doing here. They came back but then they closed up and went out too.

TH: Would that be say after the Korean War?

FV: I would think it is but don't hold me to it, but I think it was in that neighborhood, yeah.

TH: What about the Post School out here? Was that still in operation?

FV: Oh yeah.

TH: In the 1950s they still had...

FV: They had it in 1950.

TH: Was Pearl...

FV: Pearl and another one (inaudible) Conover's wife.

Mrs. Voorhees: Yes. She is still living.

FV: She is a teacher too.

TH: And is she in the local area?

Mrs. Voorhees: She lived over there in Red Bank. I will tell you how to get in touch with her through somebody else.

EH: Her name is Conover?

Mrs. Voorhees: (inaudible) Conover. Wasn't it?

FV: Violet might tell her.

Mrs. Voorhees: Miss Murray, call Miss Murray

EH: I would love to get Violet Murray together. We know her through Manny Masciale.

(background noise)

TH: One thing we would like to establish is when it closed down like the hospital because this is like a community and you know they had some pretty big things here like the school for children. You had the movie theater. You had the hospital and little by little these things were phased out. Where were the dances held?

Mrs. Voorhees: I don't know where the recreation was. I was never allowed. I wasn't old enough.

TH: Oh you had to be a certain age?

Mrs. Voorhees: Well, I was younger. Jule White and them they used to send the train out on Friday night and pick them up.

TH: Girls, women, huh.

FV: Right next to them was dancing. I forget the name of it now. What was it? It was an outfit.

EH: Like a club, a social club.

TH: Was it the NCO, was it down at the south end of the post? The YMCA.

FV: YMCA.

EH: Okay.

FV: I couldn't think of it. YMCA, that's it.

(talking in background)

TH: There were three, according to folks who went to school there was a wooden building as a school which was later condemned. And then at some time they later moved it over into the big red brick barracks, Building 102 for a short time it seems. And then it went over to what is now, Building 123, (Building 109) the yellow building on the corner when you go into the Coast Guard now. It's a big yellow brick building.

EH: The old ordnance laboratory.

TH: Yeah. It was an ordnance lab back when it was a Proving Ground.

FV: Yellow brick?

TH: Yellow brick building right at the corner right up here way at the end of the street where you go left now to go towards the Coast Guard. The big yellow brick building and the sign is still there. They painted over the said, "Fort Hancock School," and yet through the paint you could see those letters over the door and I don't know they might have cleaned the building out, but I went in there years ago and desks, students desks were all piled up in there. And they were the more modern type. They are not the old fashioned wooden type with the hinged top. But these were chairs with the one side the right side has the area where you put your arms for your books.

FV: I think I remember right they came under Navesink school.

TH: Right, under the school system?

Mrs. Voorhees: Middletown.

FV: Middletown, well that's the same, Middletown, Navesink.

EH: What do you remember as very outstanding events, such as hurricanes, storms what does you mind? It is 1:00 I think. Mr. Voorhees is it 1:00?

FV: Yes.

EH: He has to go but I will stay. What do you recall? (tape stops) Tom Hoffman was asking Mr. Voorhees about the WWII period how busy it was here and also the introduction of black soldiers to Fort Hancock. What do you remember about that?

FV: I remember (inaudible) underground. I think there was more of less a construction battalion if I remember right. The banner had a picture of a rattlesnake and said, "Do not tread on me." Don't tread, they bite back.

EH: You said the division was the 389th?

FV: 369th.

EH: 369th. Excuse me and it came from where originally?

FV: That I don't know.

Mrs. Voorhees: New York.

FV: It could be, yeah probably New York, but I don't recall.

EH: Was it looked upon in any different way than other ordinary soldiers? Were they equally?

FV: No. No. They had a colored commander. He was a colonel a full colonel.

EH: Full colonel, hmm. Were they assigned a particular barracks?

FV: They lived, the officers lived in quarters over here and some small houses in back of here and other places. I don't have much memory of all that stuff.

EH: How large was this contingent roughly would you say?

FV: I think it was a full battalion.

EH: Really? Isn't that amazing. Oh my goodness. And what was it like during the peak of World War II? There was supposed to be 18,000 soldiers here. Is that conceivable to you? That there was a real tent city.

FV: Including Tent City, yeah.

EH: And what were the tasks? You said you reached a point where you had to...

FV: At that time we were building up the mine command with an observation tower at that time. We were building them all over the place. Some on the ground, some several stories high. I don't know if they are still here or not. Are they still here?

EH: No. We have the blueprints of them. Are you talking about the searchlight towers? Is that what you mean? We have only the blueprints. What remains are some of the concrete platforms that they were on but the actual structures are gone.

FV: There used to be one down here by the Fort Monmouth Beach Club. They used to come out from Fort Monmouth to swim here, you know. It was a beach for them.

EH: Yes. I know. It was a special privilege I was told.

FV: And then over here there was a beach club for the Post here.

EH: North beach, Officers' Club?

FV: Officers' Club. That's it.

EH: Or officers' beach rather.

FV: Officers' beach. In the '60s.

EH: Of the guns that were scrapped as Tom was talking, how did certain guns remain here such as Gunnison? You were talking about the fact that it was called Peck and Battery Peck moved up to Nine-gun. How did certain guns remain here?

FV: That's the only reason they left them here to patrol the traffic out there. It's a 5 or 6-inch barrel. I think it is a 6-inch. As I say I have been there when they was firing. And I see them fire out in front of these boats, these ships, you know, and they wouldn't adhere to their signals to stop.

EH: As a warning then. I see.

FV: As a warning yeah. I don't know what it was right in the middle of it sinking.

EH: And then do you remember the name change? That is kind of bewildering. Why was the name transferred from there? (Battery Peck's guns were relocated to a renovated Battery Gunnison and took the name with it being called New Battery Peck.)

FV: That I couldn't tell you. I don't know that.

EH: Do you recall that the gun batteries were immaculate basically. They were you know, in such good condition overall.

FV: Well they maintained them a lot. They kept everything painted up. They had soldiers doing that all the time.

EH: The sheet metal signs are the remains of all the sheet metal signs that apparently walked away when it transferred to the State Park and the National Park from the Army whatever. In fact, were they all labeled with sheet metal signs? We have one that says, "Battery Halleck," in the Museum and "Israel Richardson." Those were retrieved.

FV: There used to be one in every one of them. Battery Urmston, Halleck and Richardson and Peck and Gunnison and so I can't remember all the names now.

EH: Well, there is nine guns. It's just incredible number but were they, one says "Battery Halleck," and the other one just says, "Israel Richardson." It doesn't say Battery anything. Did they have the full name like that isn't that unusual?

FV: I always just remember them we just referred to them as Battery Halleck and Battery Richardson. We always had to do work around them, you know.

EH: The sign we have has a full name.

FV: Finally I had to send welders over there and weld everything up because people were going through them when they were closed. Everybody was looking into them and we had to keep people off of there.

EH: In the '50s?

FV: Yeah.

EH: In the Korean crisis, they were welded actually?

FV: Yeah some of them were welded tight so they couldn't get in. We used some of them for storage and put locks on them. We had constant civilians on the gateway out I think I showed you.

EH: I was just thinking. Of the photos that you brought, one of them shows the south park entrance with the old kiosk which is Building 439 which is no longer standing and you mentioned that you constructed the gates. There's a stop sign with gates and these two arms these huge arms that came up and down to permit the entry of cars. But do you recall all these brick walls of each side of the park entrance? How interesting. And there are two MPs standing there looking very official. (Tape stops and starts again.) Mr. Voorhees was just looking at the 1950 photo and he said the two MPs standing outside of the original 439 Kiosk just to their left was the MPs office originally which is now our fee collection office because the modern age has now come to Sandy Hook and we have now four toll booths and a plaza. Excuse me?

FV: And over in the jail where you are they had an office too.

EH: The MPs office, ah huh do you know when the jail stopped being a jail? Do you have any idea when it was sort of phased out as the Post Jail which is our Museum building, 28?

FV: I don't think they used it too much anyway, but it was a jail. It had been a jail for years. I guess when they had a lot of troops they used it occasionally when they had someone unruly they put him into it, but I don't recall any incidents of anybody being in jail. Things like that.

EH: You mentioned you knew Philip S. Gage who was a very prominent General Gage during World War II. What do you remember of General Gage?

FV: I only know when we had that Command Post under the, is that still there?

EH: In the Mortar Battery?

FV: Behind that wall.

EH: Yes it is.

FV: We put cable in there and we built the whole thing inside. We put stuff on the walls. The asbestos if I remember it must have fallen down by now.

EH: Yes it is crumbling. Right. Good memory.

FV: And we made an office for him in there. Occasionally he would go up to us too and say, "How are you doing fellas?" He would talk. You know, he was a regular down to earth man. And I can remember when one time he picked up a sledgehammer and started breaking up the concrete. Well, we were breaking it, you know, just to show he would do something.

EH: My gosh.

Mrs. Voorhees: What was the captain's name or major?

FV: There was many of them. Morgantee?

EH: Morgantee, he was the Post Engineer.

Mrs. Voorhees: Who did you go to dinner with that night?

FV: That was Colonel Thayer. He was in # 7 over there.

EH: Gee, you remember the numbers of houses and such.

FV: I used to know every number. Of course, you would see number just like that and tell you but now I am lost.

EH: One of the most interesting people that we have ever tape recorded is an elderly man by the name of Kincheon Bailey. Did you know Dr. Bailey and his family?

FV: I had heard of him but I never met him.

EH: We tape recorded him. He was here for a family wedding. He lives out in Virginia and brought his now in their 40s and 50s, his whole family the sisters and brothers who lived here around 1928 to '33. That is why you don't know him. He remembered every family name on Officers' Row. He went from House #1 up to 19 and named every family. Do you remember the Post Surgeon or doctors at the time? You remember Max Duze in the tailor shop?

FV: Oh Max Duze.

EH: You know him very well.

FV: That building is torn down too.

EH: No that building is still there.

FV: It's still there?

EH: The tailor shop is Building 77, which became the laundry but that was Max Duze's shop.

FV: His son was Bernie Duze.

EH: Bernie Duze is still hanging around.

FV: Bernie Duze was over in Fort Monmouth but he still kept this place over here too for storage or something I don't know.

EH: Do you remember the Post Baker, Master Sergeant Murray.

FV: No. I haven't gotten to much involved with the baker.

EH: Was the Officers' Row called Officers' Line or Officers' Row?

FV: Officers' Row.

EH: There is a raging battle between some people who insist it is Officers' Line.

FV: Officers' Row we always referred to it.

EH: Do you recall Herbert Hayes? Do you know him, the last commanding officer?

FV: Herbert Hayes, when was that?

EH: Colonel Herbert Hayes. I guess it was beyond you.

FV: The last one that I met was McArdle

EH: You left in '69. You knew McArdle?

FV: Oh yeah.

Unknown voice: What was it like during these storms like in '62?

EH: Okay, 1962.

FV: That was the time right after Thanksgiving, remember?

Mrs. Voorhees: There was a storm November the 8th.

EH: '62 really.

FV: It was like all the other hurricanes you know, lots of water. Trees down.

Mrs. Voorhees: We used to sit on our porch in Highlands and watch the Atlantic Ocean come across the peninsula and up the Shrewsbury River and come right up Miller Street. (laughter) and you couldn't see the Cadillac in front of our place. We lived upstairs but our downstairs was ruined.

FV: I took the pictures of the Cadillac went right down too. It and water was going over top of it and the next picture I took it was completely covered.

EH: Oh good grief.

FV: Right in the street.

EH: What about the September 14th storm? You were talking about in 1944 when you stenciled the water mark in Kingman-Mills on to the wall.

FV: I didn't do it. The military did that and they had stencils. They showed where the water was on the walls. They put a mark on the wall and the day and date.

EH: How high was this water?

FV: Well, quite high in areas. 'Cause we had a lot of water out in this area from just rain especially in this area by the old library. The thing used to stop up all the time that library and then we had to put a drain out in the river to the bay and carry the water out.

EH: Who were the other people? Mr. Britton, was he one of the people that you worked with?

FV: No. That was way before us. That was around 1900.

EH: Okay, but the other associates were Tom Pike, Simpson, Colcannon, Wright and, excuse me.

FV: Well, Colcannon and they worked for the quartermaster. Pike, Colcannon, (inaudible.) She started down here but then she got transferred up to the engineers.

EH: Gladys West. Dorothy West is that the same woman?

(inaudible)

EH: Marge Anderson.

(Inaudible)

EH: Shirley DeCamp, who was she?

FV: She worked for the Quartermaster.

EH: Did you know Florence Hedaire? She worked... oh really you knew her. She is one of our best volunteers at History House.

FV: Oh really?

EH: She still lives on Portland Road.

Mrs. Voorhees: She died.

EH: Oh, Florence Hedaire's mother, okay. Okay. We know her daughter, okay. Florence Hedaire, the daughter worked at the Quartermaster building. What did it look like inside by the way? Because I know it was, people tell me that the bars on the window of the QM, we call it the QM building was the pay office. Is that correct? It was a paymaster on one end of the building where it is barred up and what is the rest of the building like?

FV: They had storage in there.

EH: There are two entrances. Is that correct?

FV: For storage and other things. Anything to do with quartermaster supplies.

EH: Furniture and linen and papers.

FV: They had furniture, bedding and all that sort of thing.

EH: In the Museum we have quite a lot of the dishes and all that are white porcelain and stamped QM on bottom. Is that correct?

Mrs. Quartermaster.

EH: Is that correct though. I mean it would be the white porcelain ware and just silverware. It was nothing really extraordinary.

FV: The Quartermaster was a supply organization.

EH: Right.

FV: Anything that they needed.

EH: But it was also the paymaster there that I was told in the building. I guess it is next to the bakery, 32.

FV: We used to go to the dock, the pay office.

Mrs. Voorhees: Wasn't the pay office at the dock?

FV: We used to go over there and get our pay.

EH: Were you paid in cash? You started out at 50 cents a day. Can you imagine?

FV: Yeah. We were paid in cash.

EH: Even not up through '69 was it?

FV: No. No. We were paid by check long before that.

EH: Right. Sure.

Unknown voice: I noticed this 1950 photograph there is fisherman. Apparently they let fishermen go out. Did they let bathers go out?

FV: Yes.

Unknown voice: To the first beach.

FV: To the first beach, yeah.

EH: We are trying to locate the two Sandlass people Henry Sandlass and his sister were in the newspaper and I tried to, I rang them on the phone and said can you please come and visit us and maybe tape record. We have a few things we would like to show them. We have some old photos of Sandlass Beach.

Mrs. Voorhees: Well, I had pictures of their beach and the ocean and the river.

EH: Oh, I would love to see that.

Mrs. Voorhees: And that building that was over on the beach was in the middle of the road.

FV: Yeah. We had to enter between those two building to go to work.

Mrs. Voorhees: To come to work. See they owned both sides and the road went through and the railroad tracks.

EH: People have told me about squatters on Sandy Hook in tar shacks. The tar shacks being near the Visitor Center now which is the old Spermaceti Cove Life-Saving Station.

FV: It is possible.

EH: Has it ever been told to you that it was.

FV: I have heard about it but I seen it.

EH: Old shacks. Okay.

Mrs. Voorhees: I remember when the Bay used to freeze over and you could walk across.

FV: Walk out here in the horse and wagon to unload the supply ships that come in here. The ice would be three foot thick.

EH: My goodness.

(inaudible)

EH: What was the vegetation like? Was it much more lush? Especially at the south end of the park? You know, full of holly and much more dune growth.

FV: They cut I guess, half of the holly down.

EH: That's right. That's what I was trying...

FV: For the sites up there, missile sites.

(inaudible)

EH: That's what people have mentioned how it was very green it appeared as you approached the middle of the Hook. It was very green with the '50 and the beginning of the Korean Crisis so much was literally mowed down and...

FV: It was the largest stand of holly in the world at one time. Now, it isn't further down there is holly some of those threes are four hundred years old, holly trees.

EH: How were they, how was the age determined at that time?

FV: Some of them was cut down and they took the rings.

EH: Really and they discovered it was four hundred years old? Good grief. Was there a tradition that maybe you can verify for us that cedar trees were cut down in like the holly

forest area and delivered to the houses along Officers' Row just before Christmas? That every family received a fresh cedar. That was what I was told.

FV: They didn't do it when I was here, but I heard about it.

Mrs. Voorhees: But they did in my time at Christmas time they would give you a permit to bring holly home.

FV: I know years ago before I went to work here they used to come in by boats and cut a whole holly tree right down and cut the limbs off and put it in the boat and go with it. Yeah a waste, you know.

EH: How big was the staff? Just give me an idea. The Post Engineers division, are you talking about many, many people?

FV: About 140 in that neighborhood

EH: 140 when you went down?

FV: No. No. No.

EH: Can you give me a time frame?

FV: Well, during the War, I would say there were more than at other times. During the War period there were more soldiers as well. Of course, with more soldiers you need more people because you have to handle supply and so forth and work and everything. I think in '47 we installed boilers in all the buildings. They were all coal burning at one time. We put oil burners in.

EH: Did you maintain a big book called the Fort Hancock Record Book which is now in the museum safe right now a huge volume?

FV: I found that book.

EH: You did?

FV: I was in here in the office when this place was closed. And all the prints (were here). I called the District Engineers. I told them when they come down I had some things I wanted to show you.

EH: Well, luckily that book survived. I don't know if George Moss personally rescued it. I know that George Moss did rescue the blueprints.

FV: I asked you on the phone. I said, "Is Moss still involved," and you said, "no."

EH: No. He is not.

FV: But he was quite much into it getting all the history he could.

EH: He sort of faded out of the picture because he felt the Park Service or actually it was 1968 that the Army should offer him a museum curator position, which for him was just a formality. That he just actually came in and brought photos in and established the Museum without any salary. So he felt the Army never offered him and then the National Park Service never offered him a curator position. So, he sort of faded out of the scene by the '70s, you know. He, in fact, did rescue the maps and blueprints. That is why I was curious about the Historic Record Book.

FV: He started this thing over here as far as I recall.

EH: Yes he did. You are absolutely right.

FV: I used to make things for him.

EH: A little while ago I just very briefly want to not take too much longer. You talked about removing the Postal Telegraph Tower at the north end. Do you remember much about the north end of the Hook, the Western Union Tower, the Postal Telegraph Tower, the residences? What it appeared to be like, the Weather Bureau?

FV: It was all there.

EH: All lined up. Yes I know.

FV: We converted some of those quarters to quarters for the soldiers. We repaired them and painted them.

(inaudible)

EH: Do you recall the moving of the Western Union tower? It was actually moved on logs with a team of horses. There is a big fable as I said with the ice block of Kingman-Mills.

FV: No. They just cut the top story off of it.

EH: Ah huh because Manny Masciale says he, his house is the base of that tower.

FV: Like I said they perfectly cut off.

EH: Right. That's perfect. That matches a few stories that we have heard. We always try to double check different stories.

(inaudible)

FV: I forget the number of the building now but I did know it at the time.

EH: But wasn't it moved because of the range of the guns? Wasn't it one of the reasons why in fact, the Western Union Tower was in fact moved I am told according to Tom.

FV: I couldn't say. That was in the direction of the guns anyway.

EH: That it was literally in the range I think of the Proving Ground. Could that be? No it was in the range of the Nine-Gun Battery. That's what it was.

FV: Why would it be in the range? They weren't shooting out towards South Amboy that way. They had for the protection of this (Sandy Hook) Bay they had mines, you know. I had seen mines explode many times out there in practice. In fact, we were up there.

EH: Do you remember the mine cable testing building?

FV: Oh yeah, is that still there?

EH: The big tanks, yes.

FV: Those big tanks are still there, oh yeah. I worked on those pumps. In fact, I even put a pump out here near the dock with a Cadillac engine I hooked it up.

EH: That is ingenious.

FV: The Cadillac engine was to get in World War I in a staff car. Brand new motor was in the crate. We had it in our storehouse up there for years until they finally decided the motor went bad on the electric feed and they wanted a combination motor and electric feed. The pumps ran the mine command tanks ups.

EH: Do you know who was the commanding officer in charge? It was the 5th Coast Artillery became the 7th Coast Artillery which was the mine planting unit.

FV: You got me now.

EH: Any names?

FV: You got me now. Like I say you can't retain all those names and dates.

EH: I know it is impossible. Some times it pops into you head and maybe you write it down. (inaudible)

FV: The mine command used to be in the big red brick building. Yes. That was the mine command.

EH: That is 102, I think.

FV: Is it still there?

EH: It certainly is.

FV: Up on a mound. Is it still up on a mound?

EH: Yes.

(inaudible)

FV: Well, there used to be two docks. There was a Mine Engineer Dock which was a straight one right out and they used to load the mines. That was the mine command and there was one on the left that used to come out with an L shape. Is it still that way now?

EH: No. It's entirely different.

FV: Its Coast Guard now. It used to be Quartermaster Dock.

Mrs. Voorhees: I remember the boat that used to come in and I remember the boat that took the officers' wives to New York.

FV: Well, the *Chauncey de Pew*.

Mrs. Voorhees: It was a great big boat.

FV: It used to be the troops from New York down here all the time.

Mrs. Voorhees: It was the officers' wives. They used to take the officers' wives to New York once a week.

FV: No. That boat use to run I think every day to New York.

(inaudible)

EH: Well, you might know. What was the Officers' Club like and where did all those things disappear to in the Officers' Club? We have photographs.

FV: Who knows?

EH: It is so amazing we have a few photographs that show the Officers' Club with huge portraits. You know we salvaged Winfield Scott Hancock bless his little soul. He is in History House. This gigantic portrait but other paintings. I mean there was elaborately carved furniture, chandeliers.

FV: Some one punched the face of that one. You didn't see how it was repaired?

EH: Yes, why is that?

FV: Somebody thought they were smart and punched the face right in.

EH: And Winfield Scott Hancock he was got a crack. I thought he was cracking because...

FV: No. No. No.

EH: ...environmental factors.

FV: Someone punched a fist right through.

EH: Were they just vandalizing?

FV: The painter fixed it up the best he could.

EH: I'll be darned. Did you know Harry Haddon?

FV: Oh yeah. I know him well.

EH: He created the map in the Museum, the diorama map and did the mural. He was one of your... you know he died.

FV: He did?

EH: Yes he did. What is interesting is it said he left no survivors.

FV: He was very talented.

EH: Apparently he had no.....

END OF INTERVIEW