Sandy Hook, Gateway NRA, National Park Service
An Oral History Interview with John Joseph Patrick and James Leo Mulhern
Sons of Fort Hancock Pumping Station and Power Plant Chief Engineer
1908-1927
Interviewed by Elaine Harmon, NPS
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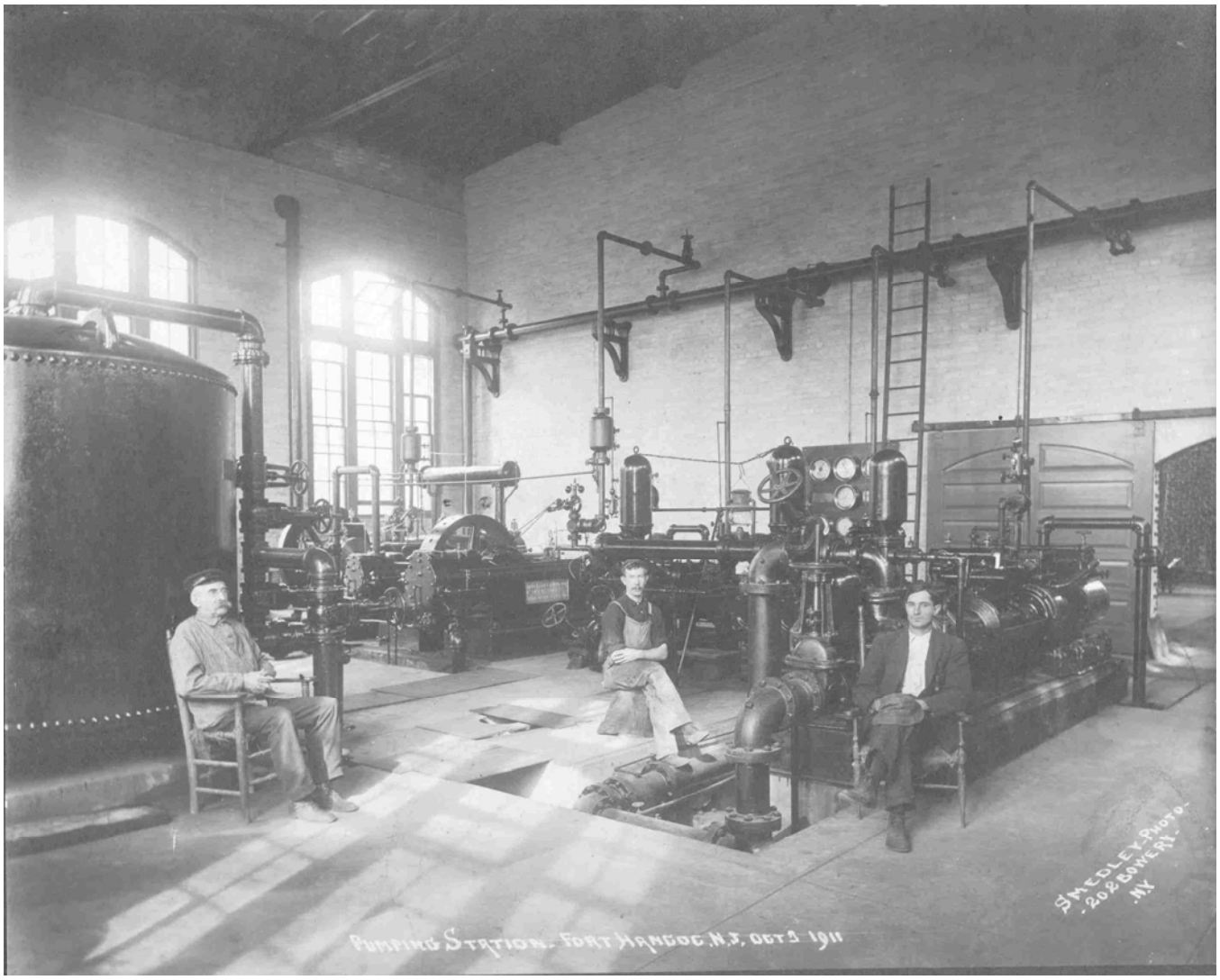

The Fort Hancock Pumping Station in 1911 when John Francis Mulhern worked there.

John Mulhern in ROTC uniform at Battery Arrowsmith c. 1925.
Photos courtesy of Gateway NRA/NPS

Editor's notes in parenthesis ( )

EH: Today is August 14, 1982. We have the honor of having as our guest John Joseph Patrick Mulhern and James Leo Mulhern. It is August 14th and my name is Elaine Harmon. I work at the Sandy Hook Museum as Park Technician, Museum Services.

JLM: I am James Leo Mulhern. I was born on Sandy Hook on January 1, 1912. At least that is what the birth certificate says although there is a bit of argument as to the exact date. The certificate was issued by a doctor at the old Post Hospital and it indicates that I was born at the Post Hospital but we believe that I was actually born in my parents' home at Camp Low. My father at the time was an employee, a civilian employee, of the Army and he was working at the old Power Plant and Pumping Station at Camp Low. And we lived in a house immediately across the street from the plant. The number of the building I do not know but the house is still there. I was the youngest of four children and of the four I was the only one born at Sandy Hook. My brother, John, will be speaking and he was at that time several years older as he was the oldest child and I was the youngest. I believe John would like to say something about his recollections of the day that I was born.

JM: This was the older brother, John Joseph Patrick Mulhern. And it seems to me that I remember very vividly when the impending event was about to take place, namely Leo's birth. The three of us, Mary, Tommy and myself were ushered out of the house since apparently no witnesses were required for this austere birth at that particular time. This happened as Leo pointed out at the end of January or the first of February. Cold, snowy weather however, I guess we were just moved out of the place and we probably went over to the Pumping Station where my dad was, and of course, being a steam operation there the building was always reasonably warm and I guess that was the place where we spent the next few hours.

JLM: And then of course, they returned home and found they had a new boy in the house and I suppose I was looked upon with mixed emotions. Maybe they were happy about it but probably they felt it was one more burden they would have because in households at that time older children took care of younger children as the parents usually were terribly busy. But my recollections of my early childhood at the Hook are quite vivid. Unfortunately, I was a very, very sick boy for the first several years of my life. But that didn't seem to stop me from enjoying life. I guess the very earliest recollections I have was of a day it must have been at about the time that the United States entered World War I. This seems to me that there was quite a flap going on about protecting the entrances to New York Harbor from the Hun and all that sort of stuff and the military felt that the Pumping Plant and Electricity Generating Station should be more carefully guarded. So, they ordered my parents to leave the place so that troops could be quartered in the building. And we did. In those days, the prime mover in the Army were mules and an Army transport wagon finally arrived and the soldiers very roughly loaded all our belonging on board and we took off to go to the nearest civilian place which was Highlands, New Jersey. And that's where we lived for a couple of years. But it was with great joy that when the War finally ended we all came back to the Hook. And in those years from then on until I became a teenager I really enjoyed life at Sandy Hook. There was always something to do. I attended the Post School. I got into every kind of mischief that kids at the Hook could get into and I suppose we were a pain in the neck to all the military personnel and adults generally. And perhaps John would like to remark on those years following World War I.

JM: I have recollections of those days too. I guess we felt we had the freedom of Fort Hancock and we went wherever we liked. Whether it was to the gun batteries, whether it was to the Commissary to do some family shopping, whether it was walking back and forth to school and nobody worried, I don't think about what happened at the gun batteries or what happened at the post commanders towers. If we wanted to move one of the big guns, we would move it. They were all well balanced, well lubricated and of course, when the soldiers came back the next day they probably said those Mulhern kids are moving the big guns again and they restored everything to normal. As far as damages are concerned, I am sure that we never wrote any nice little stories on the gun barrels or in the battery construction of any kind. I think we were reasonably good kids. I still feel that way about it.

JLM: Well, I recall very definitely that we got into various kinds of mischief. That it was never malicious and it was never destructive. We just didn't do those kinds of things. Life was a lot more fun if you didn't get into serious trouble because discipline was the order of the day and I guess we were smart enough to keep from blotting our copy books as the English would say. During those years a lot of exciting things happened. There was the prohibition amendment which meant that people couldn't drink theoretically and the United States Coast Guard was charged with the responsibility of preventing the forbidden alcohol being imported by boat. And to that end they had the Coast Guard Stations here at Sandy Hook equipped with some very fine high speed chaser boats that were rather heavily armed and nightly they would go on patrol. And you could sometimes hear the guns sounding off Sandy Hook as they tried to run down the rum runners. The boats were very sophisticated vessels for their day and equipped with rather complicated high powered gasoline engines. And before each mission the Coast Guard man in charge of a particular boat would tune the engines and take them on a trial run. Well, we kids who were friendly with the Coast Guard people would always try to go on those trial runs and frequently we did. There was a big price to pay. When the boat came back, the spark plugs all had to be taken out and checked and so forth because they didn't want any foul ups when they were on the actual run. And the engines, there were two engines in each boat, and it was a dual ignition system. There were 12 cylinders in each engine. So you could do your arithmetic and you could see there was an awful lot of spark plugs to clean at the end of the day. But we kids did that sort of thing and we thought we were well paid. I recall as I advanced in age a little bit I ran the newspaper delivery business at Fort Hancock. I had morning newspapers and evening newspapers.

EH: What was the name of the paper?

JLM: Well, I delivered and was responsible for the distribution of all of the New York City newspapers. The *World* and the *Herald* at the time, and the *New York Times* and the *Daily News* and the *American* and any others. And looking back on it, I had a real sweet racket going (laughter) in that the morning newspapers were delivered to Fort Hancock and they were dealt with on a subscriber basis. Individuals subscribed to those and they were simply put in their boxes at the Post Office and the subscriber had to go to the Post Office and pick up his own newspaper. I had never saw the morning newspapers because I had no physical contact with them at all but for every one of those that was delivered I made money because I was responsible for collecting at the end of the month. But I had to deliver the evening papers and the Sunday papers and that was pretty tough job. The newspapers would be put on a train that ran from Highlands to Sandy Hook in the afternoon and coming back from school, I was then going to Leonardo, I would get the newspapers and sort them out and get on the bicycle and start delivering. And I had customers all over Sandy Hook. I delivered a lot of newspapers. And being perpetually starved type at the time, I knew at which company every evening was being served the best chow. So, I always arranged to deliver papers to that company last so that I could go to the Mess Hall and start eating the things that the soldiers ate. And lots of times my customers would be sick. They would be at the Post Hospital. I would have to go there. We had some small boats here called the L boats that they used for target towing and cable work and I remember I had a sergeant who was in command of one of those boats.

And frequently the boat wouldn't be at the pier. It would be out in the Bay someplace tied to a cable for the night. So, I would have to borrow a rowing boat from the Coast Guard Station and row out to deliver the paper to the L-40, I think was the name of the vessel. So, we had lots of fun. It was in those days, it must have been shortly after World War I that I became somewhat interested in aviation because at that time the Army, no the Navy was thinking of trying to fly some airplanes across the Atlantic Ocean. They were flying boats and they were calling them C Class and there were several of them. They did their training right here in the Bay at Sandy Hook. Eventually they did take off to go across the Atlantic. And out of the entire group, one finally made it to Europe and that was the famous NC-4 which I guess was the first flying machine to make it across the Atlantic Ocean. So, those were rather stirring days. Life went on. I attended the public school here and went as far as the 6th Grade. Then I continued at Leonardo Grade School and Leonardo High School and oh, as a small child I can remember walking from the Post School back to our house down at Camp Low then. I always managed to go past the Post Bakery and I was on pretty good terms with Sergeant Murray who was in charge there. If I minded my Ps and Qs he let me hang around there for a while and sniff all the delicious odors and finally there was always some kind of a special thing a piece of bread that had some icing on it or some sort of thing so I was quite a panhandler in those days. (laughter) Some say I haven't changed much. Anyhow that was a delicious recollection on a cold afternoon to go past the Post Bakery and go on in there and talk to the bakers and Sergeant Murray and finally get something to eat and then go on home. And I think my brother John did a little of that too.

JM: Yes. We seemed to have that mission when we were going to school of getting the bread for the family and at that time bread was made up in a standard one pound loaf. You would present the bread tickets at a cost of three cents a piece to Sergeant Murray and for as many tickets as you had you could have as many loaves of bread. Once in a while, the bread would be so tempting too, nice and fresh out of the oven, and it was so interested to reach into the package and take some of the inside of the loaf out. That nice soft warm bread and eat it. It wasn't an approved practice as far as my folks are concerned. Maybe we eventually learned the lesson that we were supposed to bring the whole loaf of bread home.

JLM: Going to school in those days was a lot different than it is now. The Post School was a small place and if I remember correctly all six grades were dealt with in one room by one teacher. I recall my favorite teacher was a woman by the name Pearl Murray. I think I am still in love with Pearl Murray. She was a great teacher. She would somehow manage to keep those six classes in one room in their little rows, desks in order while she got on with the business of trying to build some learning into our brains. But we were not coddled in any way. We lived at Camp Low and from Camp Low to the Post School was a pretty long walk. We were expected to do that all the time, even in bad weather. If it got really bad and there was quite a bit of snow on the ground, the Army would break down and they would get a driver and he would hitch up a mule team to a wagon that had a canvas enclosure and some hay in the box of the wagon. He would make the rounds and pick up the kids that lived a long distance. So, I don't know about the rest of the kids but I used to think that snow was the best thing in the world because it meant I got to ride

to school instead of walking. Of course, being a water area we kids always had boats. We always went crabbing and fishing and clamming and we went frost fishing in the wintertime and all those good things. It seems to me we didn't do much of that for fun. We did it because that was part of the food supply. We simply if my mother felt that we should have fish she said, "Well, go catch some fish." So we'd go catch some fish and that is what we would have to eat that night. If clams were the order of the day we'd go dig clams. We had a marvelous way of dealing with the clams while they were still fresh we would take them over in a bucket over to the plant and my father had arranged a steam connection on one of the boilers so that he could put a cardboard cover on the bucket with those nice clams in it and introduce a jet of live steam into the bucket full of clams and you had instant steamed clams. The broth, of course, formed in the bottom of the bucket and was delicious clam broth. Those were some of the food aspects of life in those days. As time when on the vendors from the outside world, from Highlands used to come and I remember there was a man who used to come by with ice cream. What kind of ice cream was that, John, do you remember? Was it Hershey's or some other ice cream?

JM: I can't say that I remember that little incident.

JLM: Castles or something like that and as they went by Camp Low if we kids were on the alert and our parents were receptive we managed to flag this man down so that we could buy ice cream. Sort of an early version of the Eskimo pie type of thing except this would be in a box.

EH: Did he come by horse and wagon?

JLM: No they were by that time there were motor vehicles coming in here, various kinds of trucks and whatnot. Of course we traveled on the government train all the time from Fort Hancock out to Highlands where we transferred to the Jersey Central to go wherever we were going. And between Fort Hancock and New York there was a regular service by boat, by Army boat. Various boats were in that business. John knows the names better than I. Quite often my mother would take all or some of us and we would go to New York to visit relative, to go shopping and so forth. You could go up in the morning and come back in the evening or stay overnight and come back the next day. Of course that was a real big event if you could make a trip to New York. Ride on the subway and street cars and all that stuff. John, tell us something about those old boats?

JM: Oh, like the *Harvey Brown* for instance or the *General Miegs* of the *General ORD* or the steamer *Ordnance*. One of the boats that was equipped with wireless at that time was the *Harvey Brown*, which was about the size of a fair harbor tug and it really was intended to be a tugboat however it acted as a cargo vessel and freight that could be moved by boat from New York to Sandy Hook often was on the *Harvey Brown*. Passengers to New York on the Harvey Brown would either have to sit in benches alongside the engine room or sit on any place that they could find to sit on the deck or some of the freight. In the aft section of the *Harvey Brown* there was a little cabin that was generally reserved for officers and certain civilians and immediately adjoining that

little cabin was the radio room on the *Harvey Brown.* So, if the operator found it necessary to use the wireless as it was called on route from New York to Sandy Hook the little cabin would be filled with strong ozone from the spark transmitter that the radio sergeant had. It was exciting at times. One particular night we were coming out of New York and it became very foggy. Of course, there were no direction finders. It was a dead reckoning business. On the way down we became conscience of the fact that we were sort of coasting along in a fog. In the meantime, the wireless operator had his little spark transmitter going talking to WUB (the radio station) here at Fort Hancock and probably the other Army radio stations in the neighborhood. But we finally made it after a kind of lengthy and slow transit. A couple of the other boats that were larger, they had the big *Ord,* the big *Miegs* had more passenger accommodations but they too were more intended as Mine Planters or freight vessels so by sufferance the Army would use them as passenger vessels for trips to and from New York and the adjoining forts. You might be on a milk run for instance from Fort Hancock to New York but on the way you would stop at Governors Island. First of all, you would probably stop at Fort Hamilton, Fort Wadsworth. You might even go over to Fort Tilden then back to the harbor into New York into Governors Island and eventually wind up at Pier 12 on the East River. That could be a reverse trip for you sometimes too. The normal trip to Governors Island was about 2 hours from Fort Hancock but if you were on the milk run it might be 4 or 5 hours for single transit from Sandy Hook to Pier 12. Yachting one might say.

JLM: The boating aspects of life on Sandy Hook in those days was fascinating. The pier up here, the main pier up here by where the Coast Guard Station is now was widely used by lots of military vessels. They seem to be coming in there all the time and commercial tugboats would come in there quite frequently. And as I said (I) learned early on that food on boats generally speaking was very good. So, when I wasn't otherwise engaged I would go up to the pier and just loaf around there and wait a nice big Moran tug or some other vessel would come alongside. And I was Johnny on the spot to take the dock lines and help them tie up and all that sort of stuff. I developed the ability to look real hungry and sure enough pretty soon somebody would invite me on board and they always had lots of good food in the galley so I was able to do my panhandling act and make a real great day of it. I think my parents often wondered why it was that when I got home that I really wasn't hungry anymore. That's the way it was and it was a lot of fun. And also on this boat business, of course, in those days this was a Coast Artillery base and from time to time they had to exercise the guns and that was pretty realistic. They would have a great big floating target which was drawn by boats like the L-40 and they'd go pretty far offshore and the guns would shoot at them. This was done at night and this was a very, very realistic operation. Well, being a good friend of the sergeant in charge of L-40, I recall at least one time I was able to go on the L-40 when it was towing targets. I thought that was pretty good fun. But when I got home at a late hour and it was late and my parents found out that I had been riding on the tow boat for the targets. They took a dim view of that. So, that didn't happen anymore. I think my father felt that the gunners were just as apt to hit the L-40 as they were the target and he didn't approve of that.

EH: Can you recall the distance of how far the floating target was?

JLM: What would you say John, twelve miles out?

JM: At least.

JLM: About 12 miles out, yeah.

EH: I was going to ask John Mulhern about the peanut brittle making that he had written out for the newsletter but has not recorded.

JM: In the very early days of our living at Fort Hancock in the absence of artificial amusement and entertainment you know, no TV, no radio broadcasting, none of the things that are so exotic for everybody today or maybe common place for everybody today. The local people would provide their own entertainment of various sorts. Down by Battery Arrowsmith there were three or four little cottages over there occupied by people who were not authorized quarters on the Post but were permitted to live in their own little houses. In those little houses would be the weekend entertainment or the Saturday evening entertainment. And one of the popular things to do was to make molasses peanut brittle and peanuts and molasses and I suppose vinegar and the usual things that go into peanut brittle would be transported by the neighbors over to either Sergeant Wells house or someone else who lived in the neighborhood. And for some time after the arrival of all of the guests the peanut brittle manufacturing business would go on. It was sticky gummy stuff. The peanuts were always fresh and good. The molasses I am sure was government standard. I am sure as candy it was perfectly alright. I don't know if any of us ever lost a tooth in masticating that sticky gummy stuff but it provided an evening entertainment by the people who participated in the molasses peanut brittle making. There were other little things that happened over in that little community too. Someone either read in the newspaper or a magazine the responsible to manufacture your own butter so if you bought or hired or requested one of these fancy churns and you put the necessary milk in it which was a whole operation you would make your own butter. I am sure that just as today, somebody paid too much for that little churn. Anyhow at the given time a number of friends assembled and they probably all brought bottles of milk along to make their own butter. But then as now, really all the butter fat was gone from the milk by the time the customer got it. I don't know how long the churn churned, but butter never appeared. That was another evenings entertainment. I hope it didn't result in some ridicule for the person who organized the meeting at that time.

JLM: Getting away from the food things during the summer months, Sandy Hook at Fort Hancock used to be used as a training base for military units from elsewhere, National Guard units and so forth. They would come here. They would live in tents. Incidentally, I did a great business with them on my newspaper because a lot of them were from the New York area and they would pay almost any price to get today's newspaper at the end of the day's drilling. I was a pretty good entrepreneur I guess. I did pretty well in the summertime. As a result of this training, there was a lot of target practice going on especially with the Army rifles which were the Springfield 30.03. That thing fired a pretty good sized bullet and the cartridge case held a lot of powder and, of course, these people were very, very careless with their weapons and ammunition. So we kids sort of

used to scavenge around the target range and the barracks and everyplace else collecting unused bullets. So, pretty soon we would have a terrific collection of these bullets. One of the things we used to do was we would pry the bullet out of the cartridge case and empty the powder out into an appropriate container. Then we would go over to the beach, the ocean beach and one of the innocent things we did and not particularly dangerous we would make a trail out of this powder in the sand and maybe you would write your name and maybe what we thought of was a real bad word or something and you would light on end of it and it would burn real rapidly to the other end and burn that word right into the nice clean sand. So, we thought that was fun. But in every group of course, there is somebody that has to do it better or that nature. So, we finally found the really good thing to do we thought. We would get a narrow neck whiskey bottle of which there was always many floating up on the beach and we would pour into it the powder from the bullets to a depth of a couple of inches and then the bottle would be buried in the wet sand with just about a inch of the neck protruding above the surface. So then the group would decide which one would have the honor of carrying on the rest of the experiment. The others would all go away and hide behind the sand dune or a pile of driftwood and the hero for the moment would go to the whiskey bottle and drop a lighted match down into it and get out of there real quick. The result always was and we were very lucky in this that the gunpowder would ignite and eject a great plume of smoke and flame until it was exhausted. That was the end of the experiment. We were fortunate that we never hit exactly the right combination to get an explosion instead of a relatively slow burn because with that amount of powder under those conditions the explosion could have been pretty important. But we did all those sorts of things and survived and it was a lot of fun. Then I think you were asking us….

EH: What was the punishment if you were caught red handed?

JLM: It was a free and easy way of living I guess, but there was real discipline. My father, John Francis Mulhern was a good disciplinarian. The rules were pretty well fixed. As long as you stayed within them everything was fine but if you went beyond there was swift punishment. He had been a fireman in boiler or steam plants so his hands were very rough and very hard and I recall once instance where I did something wrong and he decided that I needed to be paddled. He put me across his knees and proceeded to do so. Every time that that hand hit me it was like he hit me with a baseball bat. Occasionally, if we did something that was just slightly wrong we might get gently backhanded and that was like being kicked by a mule. But we learned fast and we learned what we could do and what we couldn't do and generally stayed within the limits. There were no, in that environment as I recall there were no petty punishments or petty anti approaches to solving disciplinary problems with the children. You were told what you were supposed to do and you did it. If you didn't do it well punishment was there. There was no committee approach to it or any debating or anything like that. So, I think we got along very, very fine. The discipline among the children on the base was very good. As in every group there were good kids and there were bad kids. But the bad kids were never really very, very bad and minor differences of opinion among individuals was settled in a nice clean fast fist fight and that was the end of that. I think in the school, I think there wasn't much problem in keeping kids in line. Kids tended to keep themselves in line.

There was not much business of keeping kids after school or making them do extra homework or any of that stuff. Just it seems to me it wasn't necessary. Isn't it that the way you remember it, John pretty much?

JM: Well, that is generally so. I guess however of course, your mischief might have been more sophisticated than mine. (laughter) It wasn't hardly that. My academic accomplishments weren't as outstanding as some of my compatriots and I can remember very well when I was having trouble with long division in the fourth grade I guess it was I had a very fine teacher, Miss Anna E. MacDonald and she realized that I was having trouble with all the functions that go to making a long division problem so I was invited to stay after school and I think that went on for, it must have been six or seven months of that year. Every day after school I would have a long division session with Miss MacDonald. But I can tell you I don't have any trouble with long division now.

JLM: Was that because you were really having a problem with the arithmetic or because you like the teacher?

JM: Well, Miss MacDonald was quite a nice girl. (laugther)

EH: Could you both describe your parents? It's something we have never asked you. What they looked like? You know what was their temperament? What was your mother's full name?

JM: Ann Moran, Annie Jane Moran.

JLM: Father's name was John Francis Mulhern. They were both born in Ireland. They were born in the county Longford, Ireland. My father first came to this country and I am not too sure I know what year it was but it was late in the 1800s.

JM: 1889.

JLM: 1889, I think I saw a paper once saying and as many another Irish immigrant of the day he took whatever job was offered and he managed to find work pretty much all the time. He worked on the old street railway system in Brooklyn, New York. He was what they called a fireman at the old Arbuckle Sugar Refinery Company up on the East River in New York. I think he worked as a servant for wealthy families for awhile. He saved money and then he went back to Ireland and then he got my mother and they got married and he brought her over here. They settled down and….

EH: How did they stumble upon Sandy Hook? That is what intrigues me.

JLM: Well, he was, as I get the story. Of course, I wasn't there at the time but they were living in Brooklyn, New York and I suppose he was probably working for the street railway company at the time. The BRT I think, Brooklyn Rapid Transit Company and the way the story comes to me he heard through somebody of some kind of an examination for a job with the government. He took that examination and he passed it. He got on

whatever the civil service list of eligibles must have been at the time and lo and behold suddenly there was a job assignment. It turned out to be this mysterious place called Sandy Hook, New Jersey. I can imagine what the scene must have been like in their home in Brooklyn, New York when all hands suddenly got the word that they were going to pick up and move to this outlandish, unheard of place. Things then were not like they are now. You didn't just hop in a car and in a couple of hours you were there. It was an expedition. So, they came to Sandy Hook and we built a whole life here. My father was a very intelligent man. Women tell me that he was very handsome and I would say that he was handsome also. He was the tallest of all of us. None of we children ever grew as tall as my father. He was very, very straight man. He was pencil straight. He was tall. He was rugged. He worked hard and he was a good executive. He wound up in charge of the plant.

EH: What was his full title?

JLM: Post engineer, wasn't he John? Chief engineer, chief engineer. And after he left here they changed the set up here and they didn't require people like him anymore so he was transferred to what later became Mitchel Air Force Base. He was in charge of all utilities if I remember correctly out there and stayed on long after the usual retirement age because he worked there well up after World War II. He stayed until '72. I believe he was always a civilian employee of the Army. He was never in military uniform. When he finally retired at Mitchel Air Force base I believe he was the only civilian employee of that base that was ever given the honor of taking the entire troop contingent in review.

EH: Wow.

JLM: That was a pretty wonderful day. He was a fine man. Typical of a lot of people of the day.

EH: And what was your mom like? What was her…

JM: I guess she was just a good hard working woman who took of everything that had to be taken care of whether it was cooking the meals, making sure we had clean clothes feeding the chickens, making sure we got out in time to go to school in the morning making sure there was always something to eat in the house for a family or for a stranger who might happen by.

EH: Was laundry day a big process?

JLM: Laundry day was a horror.

EH: Okay. Can you describe?

JLM: My recollection anyhow. The house that we lived in at Camp Low, oddly enough we were way ahead of the times compared to many, many people including some of the

upper crust because the place was immediately adjacent to the plant which was a steam operated affair. We had steam heat in our house which was pretty wonderful. But in the kitchen, the cooking was all done on a old fashion range. Usually using driftwood and sometimes coal and it seems to me on laundry day there was a big container of water, a tub like affair probably made out of copper or something of that nature that went on the stove and was filled with water and after a long time the water was boiled and a lot of the clothing went into that thing and go boiled. Then she went to the hand scrubbing routine and finally rinsed the clothes out and hung them on the line and they dried and then she ironed them with an iron that was also heated on the range. Laundry day in my recollection was miserable because the house got so hot in the kitchen area. Of course, in the wintertime it was great. You know, they called that boiler a wash boiler.

JM: That was the name of it. Yeah. One day, when I was around where our garden used to be down there looking for artifacts or what kind or another or what I might find that would relate to our old house. I found a number of things including the top of one of my old Edison battery that I had, the little radio station. Also I found the bottom of one of those wash boilers and I guess it is over in the Museum now. You know that big piece of oval metal. Now the upper part of it must have either rotted away or if it happened to copper somebody probably took it. But the bottom was not rusted. It seemed to be some kind of hot dipped galvanized or some thing like that because it hadn't rusted and that is over in the Museum right now. So, that was one of the wash boilers that she probably used for boiling the water in. We had hot water that was in the house that came from the stove, the kitchen range there was a so called water bank built in the range and a thirty gallon water tank behind that and as long as there was any fire in the stove, water was gradually getting warm. But there were times when you needed more warm or hot water. She wanted to have it boiling. Part of that was, as part of my dad's work he sometimes had to do some very dirty work. Some of his working clothes were mighty dirty so she wanted to be sure they were clean and that's how you did it.

EH: Were you all decked out in starched clothes? You know looking very, for Sunday, was that?

JM: Oh yeah. We got pretty well gussied up on Sundays and other special occasions but normally I have seen some photographs of we children and we were pretty much on the ragged side. (laughter) I might say.

EH: Can you discuss for us religion and Chaplain Arnold?

JLM: Well yes, this post like all the others of the day had at least one chaplain to look after the religious requirements of the personnel and most of the time the chaplain assigned here at Fort Hancock was a protestant minister and the protestants services were usually conducted over in the YMCA building. When that was the situation for Sunday the spiritual needs of Catholic people were taken care of by a priest who came from Highlands or one of the other nearby communities and he would say one or more Masses at the Post Chapel. But then finally we got a new chaplain and his name was William R. Arnold, a captain and he was a Catholic priest so we didn't need to have a priest come

from outside. And he conducted the Masses at the Post Chapel every Sunday. One Sunday we were hearing Mass or about to hear Mass and suddenly we could hear the sound of marching feet and military commands being given and they seemed to get louder and suddenly we realized they were just outside the church. There were some commands shouted and the sound of rifles crashing to the ground and so forth and the doors were flung open and in marched some guards with their guns and a troop of prisoners. Now, up to this time anybody who was unfortunate enough to be a prisoner in the local jail the Guardhouse was not permitted out on Sunday to attend divine services. But Father Arnold had decided that maybe they should be given this privilege and so this was the first time it happened. We people in the church, of course, were startled because we didn't know it was going to happen but he explained it all and instructed the guard to put their weapons in the corner of the building and to sit down and he would tell them when it was time to leave. And so at the end of the Mass they assembled their troop of prisoners and much shouting of orders and so forth they marched them back to the Guardhouse. But that was maybe the first time it happened anyplace in the Army and subsequently Chaplain Arnold went on to be the chief of chaplains in the Army during World War II. He was then a general. He was largely responsible for the wonderful participation by religious people of all kinds in ministering to our troops and others abroad during World War II. You know, it was sounded like there used to be that there was a minister or a rabbi or a priest practically in every foxhole and that was largely due to the efforts of Chaplain Arnold. But that was the way religion was conducted here. I cannot recall that we ever had a rabbi here. Do you? Did we ever have a rabbi here?

JM: I don't recall any rabbis here at any time.

JLM: But there was always a chaplain and to the best of his ability he did try to take care of the spiritual needs of the people. But the Army did have that blind spot about people being in jail. If you were in jail you were not entitled to anything much. Well that's about all of that.

EH: What was it like to go to church with your family? Was that a big procedure?

JLM: That was a biggie. Oh yeah.

EH: Can you both collaborate on that?

JM: I think it was a pleasant experience. We had to walk from down where we lived in Camp Low up to the church.

EH: St. Mary's Chapel (Building 123).

JM: St. Mary's Chapel. There was always an organ in the church. There was always somebody to play it, either one or the other of the Stanton girls. It was either Gertrude Stanton or Margaret Stanton and one of them would play the organ and perhaps the other one would sing or vice versa. It was always that something like that went on. There was a time that I remember vaguely when somebody who played a violin also played with the

organ at church. There was a certain amount of social ability that went with the business of going to church too. And once a month when it was the usual thing for us to attend Holy Communion as it was called and is still called in the church ceremonies we would be invited to stop at the Brown's house which was two blocks from St. Mary's Chapel and Mrs. Brown would always have buns or coffee or tea, probably tea for us to sort of keep us alive and on our feet until we got to Camp Low. And some of the associations that happened in those days with tea on a Sunday after Mass with the Brown family still can exist and the Brown family three of the Brown family live down in South Jersey or are there in the summertime and two years ago we went down there and had tea and crumpets with them. That was like reviving those occasions when we stopped in at Tommy Brown's house after Mass on probably the first Sunday of the month for tea and buns or whatever Mrs. Brown was going to have for us for breakfast on that day.

JLM: Changing the subject a little bit, during World War I the United States put a ban on the operation of all amateur radio station in the United States. There weren't very many but they were banned. I mentioned earlier we moved off Fort Hancock during World War I. immediately there after moved back and about that time the federal government of the United States lifted the ban on amateur radio stations and lo and behold one of the very first amateur radio stations to be on the air after the ban was lifted was station 20P which was owned and operated by my brother John. It was located in a little shack by our house where we lived and if I remember correctly you had to have a very big antenna system to do anything and to get the poles he some how liberated from the government and I hope the statue of limitations has run out on this what I guess had been ramrods for big guns, weren't they?

JM: Yeah. You are right.

JLM: And they could join together and he erected those as the poles and properly guide them. From someplace else on the post he found the copper wire to make the antenna and the lord only knows what else, and he was in business. I can recall I was still a very young kid then and I can remember standing there listening to radio stations. Radio stations were noisy things in those days and spark transmitters did make noise and there was a smell of ozone as a part of the process. It was all pretty mysterious and I can remember standing there watching him tapping away on the telegraph key and I couldn't believe that he was actually communicating with somebody at a distance but he really was. That was pretty historic event for New Jersey. You weren't the first one in the state I guess but you were very close to the first one weren't you?

JM: I was the first on Sandy Hook.

EH: What year was that?

JM: 1919.

JLM: 1919.

EH: How did you make all these midnight requisitions? (laugther)

JM: I think the truth may be stretched by my otherwise honest brother. I am sure that some the ramrods that I used were ramrods that were no longer serviceable or that needed to be replaced or some other change. At that time, I guess the Army could get supplies better than our modern civilization. I am sure that I could find wire someplace that nobody would ever miss. It was the same way with the ramrods that were probably used. Serviceable for my purposes anyhow, those are some of the elements that constituted the first radio station on Sandy Hook, the first little amateur radio station on Sandy Hook. And I always had friends at the radio station who would provide when the time became appropriate, storage batteries for the operation of the transmitter and receiver and the Sergeant Fitzpatrick that would recharge the batteries when they needed recharging. When I needed dry cell batteries in the form of B Batteries when he no longer considered them of serviceable standards for the Army communication system he would allow me to have those for my amateur activities.

EH: Where was this located? Could you give us a little…?

JM: The little radio station was right alongside of where the fire hydrant is now at our quarters down there at Camp Low.

JLM: So, that was a very important thing for me. It got me interested in that field. Later on for many years I made my living as a commercial radio operator in ships and on aircrafts. I still am a first class licensed radio operator and so forth. But I think we might as well wind this up.

EH: Do you remember any really dramatic events? Something, important people coming here or some really outstanding events? Anything?

JM: I can remember when the general used to come from Governors Island for an inspection that everything that was on the Post which was normally maintained in good order got an extra measure of spit and polish for the visit of the general. When the general would come there was always the matter of the courtesies afforded him of firing the saluting cannon alongside the flagpole out here by the Headquarters. It was always an important kind of a thing that went on and it happened only occasionally.

EH: Were there ever unannounced visits?

JM: No.

EH: Okay. You knew he was coming.

JM: Oh yeah. Everybody knew he was coming.

EH: You remember who, which general in particular name?

JLM: I can't recall any generals' names.

JM: General, oh they named a camp out for him on the west, a signal camp out there. Camp, well the name misses me at the present time. However, I do remember the name of the vessel that he used to come visit on. It was called the General O'Donnell and it was a little powered craft about 60 feet long which was normally housed at Governors Island. A very sharp looking little motorboat.

EH: Do you recall any major storms or fires or any really…?

JM: I remember when the oil storage warehouse caught fire in back of the present Quartermaster Office. It had stored cans of oil and paint cans and drums and whatever and the quantities of material they had and of course it started to burn and I guess there wasn't any CO2 available at that time to put out fires but it burned for three or four days. It would burn for a while and then there would be another explosion of a can of paint or oil and the fire would start again and that was a really terrific fire. That was the only one that I remember of that nature. Also remember when a four masted schooner ran ashore on the ocean beach. It was probably down off of what presently Battery Gunnison. The vessel was loaded with dressed lumber from probably South or North Carolina. It came up on the beach in a terrific storm. The snow, wind, storm and the vessel had blown high on the beach and some meager efforts were made to take it off but I guess it was considered very early in the game that it was not a proper location from which to try and retrieve a vessel. Anyhow the four masted schooner remained for quite some time and it finally broke up from the pounding of the sea. However in the meantime a number of soldiers who wanted homes for themselves at Fort Hancock, soldiers who were not authorized quarters helped themselves to the dressed lumber on this ship and moved it from the deck of the vessel into the woods where it was stored for some period. Until the heat and excitement I guess of the investigation was over. And then oh, I don't know how long the vessel was there but a considerable amount of lumber had been removed and then mysteriously one night again in another wind storm the vessel caught fire and burned to the water line. For many years the stem of the vessel was protruding from the sand there and the anchor chain was down into the sea. That was there for years and years and I see no trace of it now and I have been along the beach a number of times. It probably went the way of all stems.

JLM: But we had of course, being Sandy Hook and being the Atlantic Ocean there were lots and lots of storms but we sort of took that in our stride I think. We expected to have storms. That was a way of life. It just happened. It didn't bother us very much. I am sure it inconvenienced us in some ways.

EH: Do you recall Sir. Thomas Lipton's famous race?

JLM: Oh yeah. I remember going up to the Twin Lights to watch the race.
(Tape ends abruptly.)

END OF INTERVIEW