

Sandy Hook, Gateway NRA, NPS  
An Oral History Interview with  
Mrs. Jean Rafy, Sonny Rafy and James Rafy, Wife and Children of  
James Rafy Sr., Provost Marshall, U.S. Disciplinary Barracks  
Interviewed by Elaine Harmon, NPS  
December 19, 1987  
Transcribed by Mary Rasa, 2011



Quarters 8, where the Rafy family lived at Fort Hancock.



Guard watchtower at U.S. Disciplinary Barracks, Fort Hancock.



Group photo of USDB Guard Company, 1946.

Photos courtesy of NPS/Gateway NRA

Editor's notes in parenthesis ( )

EH: This is 1987 and I have the pleasure of introducing Mrs. Jean Rafy whose husband was James Rafy Senior, Provost Marshal of the Disciplinary Barracks and career military person who died in 1969. The date again is December 19, 1987. With Mrs. Rafy is her daughter Sonny Rafy who lives in Eatontown and her son James Rafy Jr., the second who lives in Summit, New Jersey (laughter). You have just walked through History House and now that you happened to be at one of our programs and again was sort of reminiscing about how History House, Building 1 compares to Quarters #8 that you lived at in 1947. So what was it like to be there? Tell me.

JR: As soon as we walked in through the back door which we used all the time. It was too windy to use the front door.

EH: Right.

JR: And I see a light with a light fixture and I says, "This is where Mr. Rose hung our dry cleaning up." (laughter)

EH: Who was Mr. Rose by the way?

JR: He took care of the dry cleaning here.

EH: And he delivered to your house?

JR: Right. If we weren't home that is where he hung it up, the dry cleaning.

EH: That's great. And you didn't lock your door?

JR: No. Apparently not, if he got in.

EH: Isn't that amazing.

JR: Unless we locked the kitchen door. That I don't remember. But anyway as I walked in I could see the kitchen the way it was. The stove looked a little different. I don't know whether we had gas stove at the time but it appears to be electric. And then going to the pantry, then the dining room, the, my sewing room which was originally the lieutenant's office.

EH: Oh, how interesting. So, that was your personal sewing room. Was there a bathroom on the first floor too?

JR: As I remember, yes.

James: The one thing you didn't mention was that there was a sink in the butler's pantry. There was a sink where the decorations are.

JR: Quarters 1 didn't have one but I am sure we had it. It was not a regular sink. It was aluminum or copper. Remember Sonny?

SR: Yeah. Just for glasses.

EH: Just for glasses?

SR: Yeah. Just for glasses but you are in the butler's pantry. That's where the butler would wash glasses. Not in the sink where the dishes were.

EH: Did it appear to be original to the pantry or is it somebody else who before you installed the sink?

SR: No. I think it was built into the..

EH: That's...I never heard that before.

JR: Yeah. And let's see naturally a fireplace in every room. Anyway, these Quarters 8 was the same as Quarters 1. To me, 1 seemed a little different than 8 the one that we lived in.

SR: We didn't have the fireplace in the (inaudible). That was where it was blocked off.

James: That's where (inaudible).

EH: That's right. So, you had four fireplaces then out of five.

JR: Yeah. We had them upstairs in the bedrooms.

EH: Right.

JR: Anyway what was I gonna say. It seems to me we had a spiral staircase from the living room. Now, this one was stripped isn't it? Yeah.

EH: Oh really? So there was a curving banister that was very different from the one in History House, my goodness.

JR: Oh, it seemed so huge.

EH: So, there were two master bedrooms upstairs like History House.

James: Yeah. The upstairs was the same.

JR: Yeah. There were four bedrooms up there. Lots of space.

SR: And the dresser built into one of the closets. The first bedroom off the stairway.

EH: Right. Now did you have the old fashioned cast iron tub on the second floor, that there is now on the third floor now in History House? Did you have the chicken ball foot?

JR: The kind with the legs?

EH: Yes.

JR: Oh yeah.

EH: Okay. Okay. Because there today is a very sort of modern rectangular 1950s bathtub in its place today. Now downstairs did you have like a laundry room? Did you have an actual laundry room?

JR: The laundry room was in the cellar.

EH: Gigantic, isn't it?

JR: Very. Now you never worried about hanging clothes outside in the wintertime because you hung them up one day, the next day they were dry because there was a huge, huge furnace. And what did we have, two tubs down there?

SR: Yes.

EH: With a triple wash tub, right.

JR: With a washboard. That's when I was interrupted and was told to go. There was a lady in need, you know.

EH: Oh yeah.

JR: Our neighbor was having a baby.

EH: Let me just finish the house and then we will go onto people.

JR: Okay.

EH: The top floor was maid's chamber.

JR: Supposedly. Yeah they used to have what, the sergeant living up there? With his family and they would help take care of the house and whatever.

EH: You had another officer living there?

JR: No, before us. Some people did have them.

EH: Did they rent it out or?

James: No. The enlisted man worked for the officer.

EH: I see. Oh really.

James: He lived on the third floor and his family lived up there and they were like the maids and butlers.

JR: Yeah, they just helped to keep the place.

EH: Oh I didn't know that. I didn't know that the enlisted men actually had jobs on the Post that could even involve that. How interesting?

JR: I don't think they got paid and they didn't pay any rent. It was just they lived there so they could help.

EH: It was in exchange. Right. You had nobody on the third floor. Is that right?

JR: No. No. Really.

EH: Tell me about the ghost.

JR: Really when we moved in the windows were loose and whatever and it was a windy day and we were scared to death but we went up there to you know to quiet things down.

James: We all went up together.

(inaudible. Everyone talking together)

James: Yeah I remember that. I was six years old. That's right.

JR: Well, that was because the wind howled and it was really spooky.

James: I don't think there were any lights up there either. I think we had candles.

SR: No. There was one light in the hallway. None of the other fixtures.

EH: It's very eerie actually if you are in the house by yourself which I am occasionally.

JR: Oh yeah.

EH: It is an eerie feeling.

James: Didn't we have the coal bin downstairs? Wasn't there still coal?

SR: No, because that was where fluffy used to sleep.

James: But we had a big...

JR: I don't know what kind...how did we heat the house? Was it with coal? I don't remember going in there.

James: No. I don't remember. I remember it was pitch dark in there.

JR: It must have been with oil.

James: I think there was like coal in there.

SR: Because Fluffy made her bed in there.

EH: Who is Fluffy prît ell?

Son and daughter: My dog.

EH: Okay.

SR: And he was very white so had their been coal down there he would have been filthy and he wasn't.

James: But we did have the big ball of tin foil. You know like every 1940s home had. It was down there. I remember it in the cellar. I remember that.

JR: You mean from all the chocolate you ate. (laughter)

James: Yeah. I remember having the German measles in that house because we had to keep the lights down.

JR: That's right. That's right. As we were coming towards the house I said to Sonny, "It seems to me that the front porch was enclosed," because that's where Sonny had her, what 10<sup>th</sup> birthday, 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> birthday.

James: It was screens.

JR: See, alright.

James: It was screens.

JR: He had the measles so the party had to be out on the porch. You know, kids weren't allowed in the house.

James: Because we had quarantine signs then.

EH: Did you really?

James: That's when it used to be quarantine. You weren't allowed in there so the Post Doctor used to give us the quarantine signs. You had to put them on your door. This house is quarantined.

EH: Oh my gosh. I am sorry. What's the color scheme that you remember? White tin ceiling, original tin ceilings.

JR: Oh you mean as far as paint went?

EH: Yeah.

JR: I think it was all one shade, one color.

EH: Everyone tells me it was all buff and white, like a beige.

JR: Either white or what do they call that, light beige or off white or whatever.

EH: Right. And what was the floor covering. We are curious was it like tile, checkerboard tile?

JR: I don't think so.

SR: All wood.

EH: Oh, so it was oak. So, you had the original.

JR: How about the kitchen?

SR: The kitchen had tile and linoleum. Not tile, tile like we have now. It was one sheet linoleum.

JR: One color.

EH: Cut linoleum. How interesting.

SR: But the rest of the house all you had was throw rugs and braided rugs you need because it was all the original floors. It was all the original wood.

JR: We didn't have parquet.

SR: Not parquet. Wooden floors.

JR: You know, when you are in the Army and you live in so many places it is hard to focus on one.

EH: Oh, I can imagine. 22 years, no less. Was the exterior trim the same color green that you see there?

JR: Yes.

EH: And you see battleship grey porch steps.

JR: Yes.

EH: Right. Were you allowed flowers in front of your house? A lot of people ask us was it typical?

JR: I think just a few bushes planted and I don't think anybody did anything. Maybe it was allowed or whatever the story I don't remember. I had an azalea there or something like that. It wasn't.

SR: I think it was just green.



JR: Just bushes.

James: Where was the women's club when you had that picture taken?

JR: Ask me.

James: I mean did you go, where was it, where was the Officers' Club?

JR: Yeah. Probably in the Officers' Club, yeah.

James: Where was that?

JR: It was quite a distance down there somewhere.

EH: Exactly. You are right. Up the block and you are going from your Quarters #8 down to #1 there is a big black cannon. At the cannon, you make a right. About a half a block on a hill all set aside by itself is the Officers' Club.

JR: Is that closed off?

EH: Yes.

JR: Yeah. I remember going with the bus.

James: You would take the post bus?

EH: Was there a shuttle bus on Fort Hancock?

JR: No. I don't think so. I don't think so. I don't think so. No. I am talking about that snowed in New Year's Eve.

James: That's where the party was. You have a picture of that at home. It was a New Year's Eve party. Dad is sitting with his pinks and greens and you are sitting looking at him. The picture was taken.

JF: I don't know if that was there or if that was where that little boy was lost. (inaudible) that was (inaudible).

EH: Okay, now who were your neighbors? Give me an idea.

JR: Okay. On one side was Klein.

SR: That's was 9, Quarters 9.

JR: What was his first name, Raymond.

James: Raymond Klein.

EH: Good for your.

JR: Ray and Betty Klein.

James: She still has the thank you letter.

EH: Okay and that's the family you delivered a child during a blizzard.

JR: Right. Yeah. They had two sons, oh what 8 and 9 or 7 and 9. One was Douglas, what was the other one?

SR: Ray Junior.

JR: Ray Junior.

EH: And you delivered the little girl.

JR: Yes. Sheri Lynn Klein.

James: During the blizzard that was in March.

JR: No. No. December 27<sup>th</sup>. (inaudible)

James: The blizzard in '47 was in March.

JR: We had a big snow, whatever it was anyway. When we went to the club they were all teasing me about being a midwife and all that stuff.

EH: And so who lived in Quarters 10 on the other side of you?

JR: No. That would be 9.

EH: Yes, who lived on the other side.

Sonny and James: 7.

EH: 7, Excuse me I am sorry.

JR: I just can't remember.

James: Belvin lived in 12. Colonel Belvin was the company, was the what you call it was the commanding officer. Belvin, we know, we can name names but I don't know if we know the quarters. Like Gross, Major Gross.

SR: Captain Wright.

James: Wright. Ware was a lieutenant.

SR: Lt. Ware.

JR: What was the name you just mentioned? One of the Jimmy's, Harlor.

James: No. They lived here.

JR: Captain Janskey. He's passed away also.

James: She lives out in Pennsylvania, Enola, Pennsylvania. I think the other kids that I, I hung around four Jimmy's. Four Jimmy's hung around together. Jimmy Preston, Jimmy Simpson Jimmy Harlor, Jimmy Rafy. I think Jimmy Harlan and Jimmy Rafy's were officer and Jimmy Preston and Simpson lived right over there in the enlisted. Their father's were sergeant.

EH: Harlor was the name?

James: Harlor, H-A-R-L-O-R.

EH: And who was the...I have...

James: Simpson, Preston and myself. I think Simpson was the one, it must have been his grandfather (Civilian employee who worked at Sandy Hook for over 40 years, Johnny Simpson) who died. He was a couple of years older. You have the picture...

EH: Right in History House.

James: And you used to babysit for Gross, right?

SR: Maxine and I were the same age.

James: Maxine was the same age, that's right.

EH: So your playmates were Maxine and...

SR: Maxine Gross and (inaudible) but they were teenagers.

James: You were what, 12 here?

SR: I celebrated my 12<sup>th</sup> birthday here when you had the measles.

James: So, do you remember some of the kids who were at the party.

SR: No, because I didn't hang around with one of... most of the kids who came to my party were from Leonardo School.

JR: Oh that's right. Well, you went to school here.

James: Yeah.

SR: Well, he went to school here on Post.

James: Mrs. Flood was my teacher. That was Kindergarten.

SR: It went to 6<sup>th</sup> grade here. When you went to 7<sup>th</sup> grade you went to Leonardo.

James: You had your communion on Post right?

SR: Confirmation.

James: Confirmation, I am sorry.

JR: Yeah we went to St. Agnes.

SR: No. We had our classes here in the Chapel. The nun would come from St. Agnes.

JR: Were you catechism here or was it Jimmy?

SR: Jimmy was the communion and I was the confirmation. The nun would come here but we were confirmed at the church.

James: Was Father Cush the priest here?

JR: No. That's the father, who was the priest who baptized you?

SR: Who he chased around the church. (laughter)

James: They chased me around the church.

EH: That's unusual isn't it?

JR: We were never one place long enough for him to be baptized. And they finally caught him when he was three and he refused to go to the priest.

James: I think the church was next to the school. The little white building was the chapel.

EH: That's right.

James: I went to school right next door with Mrs. Flood. That was Kindergarten.

EH: And what was there for the children to do. I mean did you have a lot of playmates or was it very isolated?

James: We roamed the Post.

SR: That's it. The Post was open.

James: We would go to the Fort and play. I mean they are finding bombs and everything.

JR: Yeah, but we didn't see it then.

James: Nobody knew of it then.

JR: You know, what this little guy would do at 5:00 (pm)? He would always be home naturally for supper. He would stand on those steps there for retreat. Are those steps still there? Walk to the flag and stand there and salute.

SR: The cannon would go off at 5:00.

EH: For a fact?

SR: And he stood there for retreat, yeah.

EH: Did you have a Post Bugler, an actual bugler?

SR: No. It was a recording.

EH: Oh really?

SR: Yeah because it used to go off track every once in a while and at 6 in the morning you would hear this...

James: We would have reveille and we would have retreat and the cars would stop wherever you were.

SR: You would stop whatever you were doing.

JR: It was such a nice site.

James: And you would hear (sound of music) and then you would here BOOM and the cannon would go off.

JR: The military would get out of their cars and stand at attention and all.

EH: The cannon was fired once a day?

James: Twice a day. In the morning....

SR: Reveille and retreat.

EH: Is that right? What time?

SR: When the flag went up and when it came down. Reville was at 6:00 (am) because the first day we were here we didn't know that cannon would go off. All four of us...(laughter inaudible talking)

Sonny and James: Because it was right outside our door.

EH: Oh sure. That's right. It was right near the flagpole.

SR: We thought we were under attack.

EH: I can't believe they had it tape recorded back then.

SR: It was tape recorded, not tape recorded, a recording. Tapes didn't exist at that time.

James: A record with a loudspeaker.

SR: It was a loudspeaker and it would go off and you would here the shoo shoo. It's the thing when the needle would start.

James: And then the flag would go up and at night they would fold the flag.

EH: What time was taps?

James: Well, it was usually 5:00 in summer and 4:00 when the time change.

JR: In the winter with the time change.

James: So, it was still light.

SR: 4:00 and 5:00.

James: And everything would stop. All the cars would stop on the road. You had to stop and get out of the car.

EH: Is that true?

SR: Oh absolutely, to show respect for the flag.

James: So, if you were driving down the road and you heard that.

JR: Civilians and military alike. It wasn't just military. And ladies would get out in those days and put their hands over their hearts.

EH: No kidding. Did you have an automobile of your own? Did you family have a car?

JR: Yes.

EH: And did you use the garage on the side of the house? There was a little attachment.

JR: I don't remember if there was just a driveway.

SR: No. We had a garage but I think he put it in there in the wintertime because the winds were so fierce but he usually in just the driveway.

EH: What was your impression first coming to Sandy Hook? Was it like no man's land?

SR: Yes. That's it. It seemed like it took forever from the Gate.

JR: All those miles before you got in here.

EH: And where did you actually come from before you got here?

JR: Fort Niagara.

EH: You arrived in September so that's kind of nice time of year.

JR: Yeah and when we arrived you know all of our possession were in route and no, you were like a man without a county without a home because you are leaving one place and don't know where you are gonna live. The first place we stop was at the what, Quartermaster or wherever they assign.

SR: To get beds.

JR: No. Where they assign the homes?

EH: Right. What exactly did the Army provide you with? I am curious. Were you provided with, the Quartermaster is usually issuing your uniform, but also dishes?

JR: Yes.

EH: Did you have the white porcelain dishes?

JR: In Germany, we had dishes.

SR: Yeah, but if your things were enroute and you were in quarters without anything they would let you use things.

JR: And you know what else we got. Tin cups that you would use when you go camping, something like that. Well, that and GI pots.

James: Where was the Commissary here?

SR: Right here.

EH: The Commissary is up this street after Sergeants' Row.

JR: I remember walking home.

James: Oh, you had to walk to the Commissary.

SR: Yeah.

James: They didn't have baskets did they? Did they have baskets?

JR: We had to have baskets. I mean how can you shop for a family.

James: Grocery shopping.

JR: You had this basket and you had those baskets.

EH: Because I don't think shopping carts were invented.

James: No.

JR: Then how did we shop?

SR: You bought thing usually every day.

JR: So, you had a few items and you bought them. Yeah

EH: Exactly. Were you issued furniture because we still have a lot of furniture here stamped on the back U.S. Army like the old bureaus? Do you remember mahogany bureaus?

JR: While our stuff was enroute they would let you use what they had. They would give you the couches that they would use in the dayrooms of the companies.

James: We had a piano

JR: That was our own.



James: Was that our own.

SR: Yeah.

James: Oh, I didn't realize that.

EH: And how long were you camping out until your furniture arrived from Fort Niagara?

JR: It was only a week or two.

EH: So, it was loaned until you got settled more or less?

JR: All I remember getting here was dining room furniture.

SR: And cots because we didn't have any beds.

JR: ...some of the empty bedrooms upstairs.

EH: So, then you started school. It was September you began school both of you. Was it a strange... You were in Kindergarten and you were in

SR: 7<sup>th</sup> grade.

EH: Okay. So was it a strange feeling.

SR: No, because at the end when my Father retired, I had attended 24 schools and four of them were high schools.

JR: So, there was nothing new.

SR: There was nothing new. I was always the new kid on the block. It was always the same sensation. You just got to know the kids when Daddy got orders again.

James: I only went to 13 schools and two high schools.

EH: (laughter) You have to be the most flexible people on earth.

SR: Well, we were together. We were always together. And so we never felt uncomfortable or like anything was wrong with us. Dad and Mom were always there. We were always a family.

JR: It didn't phase her. They both skipped grades.

James: No. I didn't skip.

JR: Yes, you did.

James: No.

JR: Then Daddy must have said, "Don't let him skip." But Sonny skipped the 5<sup>th</sup> grade and you were supposed to unless they decided against it because the child does miss out on a lot, you know, when they skip a grade but every place we went the schools were more advanced. So, you know when you got to another school...

(inaudible talking.)

EH: Now did you walk to school? Right, okay.

JR: Yeah.

EH: Along Officers' Row. You must have blow away in the winter I bet.

James: Yeah.

JR: There was a school bus for the kids wasn't there?

James: No. I don't remember a school bus.

SR: Not that I remember.

James: No. You just kind of get there.

EH: Mosey along.

SR: Because the other kids were walking too.

James: Yeah. We didn't have street signs here either. There were no street signs where we lived. Our address was just Quarters 8 Fort Hancock. You know, we noticed the street signs. We didn't have a name for our streets.

EH: We are curious to know when the Army did designate the names of the streets. We have no record.

SR: It was not in our time.

EH: No one knows why Magruder Road, why Kearny, why Kessler?

SR: Isn't that in the Archive?

EH: Well, I don't know. Our historian, he hasn't tackled all the question yet. I don't know but we were curious to know if there were street signs.

SR: No. There were no street signs. There was Officers' Row, Enlisted Row, you know.

James: The other thing I remember is we would go all the way down by the Kindergarten there was a boardwalk. Well, not a boardwalk but a pier that was pretty active. People used to go fishing. Is that still in effect?

EH: That's the Coast Guard, no.

James: I remember the pier out there.

EH: I had a question a second ago. What was it like to be growing up as, you know, military children. What did you feel like ping pong balls and all?

SR: No. See I never felt that way because we always, whenever we went anywhere we traveled as family. We traveled together. We were together whether it was in one motel room or hotel room or quarters. The only time we separated was when Dad was in Korea and we couldn't go with him because it was still active at the time.

JR: But of course you kids were older.

SR: But we were also older. The only thing that ever bothered me was that I was always the new kid on the block and as I say that didn't bother me. It was the fact that I would just get to know the kids and we would get orders to go somewhere. But I loved it. I loved it. I don't know of about Jimmy because Jimmy was five years younger than me. Was five years younger than me.

JR: So he caught up with you. (laughter)

James: Being a male, I used to have to fight. I used to get picked on all the time. I used to have to fight.

SR: Because he was always the new kid.

James: Because I was always the new kid. They used to test me. But this was my favorite place of all the place we ever lived.

SR: Me too. Me too.

James: I probably have the best memories of here and Germany because we were in Germany right after here. But I remember going out with Mom to the water out there and putting a pole with a string on it and coming back the next day and it was gone. I was crushed. I couldn't...

JR: What were you...

James: Fishing. I couldn't understand where it went. I didn't know about tides then. I didn't know about things like tides.

JR: I remember one time I was making dinner. "Where's Jimmy? Where's Jimmy?" Jimmy is not to be had. I looked and I see him over the fence. Was there a fence at the time?

James: No.

JR: It was wide open right?

James: Yeah.

JR: Okay but further away past Quarters 8 and I see him there with all the birds and whatever and another kid and I figure, "Oh my god." I was afraid they were going to go in the water. So, there I am cooking. I don't know what I had on the stove. I didn't stop to shut that off. I just ran to get Jimmy thinking he was you know.

SR: He was okay.

JR: He was alright but my stuff burnt and there was a good thing there was snow on the ground or whatever. I just threw it out, you know.

SR: You know but being military kids being an Army brat, everything you did reflected on your Father.

EH: Yes. I was just going to ask you.

SR: And everything that was negative was put into his permanent record. So, that followed him all over. And ours was even more so because he was a military police officer, which was like a police chief.

EH: Right.

SR: And you kids had better be good. Like the chaplains kids had better be good.

EH: Right.

SR: So, we were always on our guard and anything we ever did because his MPs were all over the place he knew about it before we ever got caught. That was rough. But I was crazy about the traveling. I loved the traveling. As long as we were together. As long as the family was a family unit that was terrific. And we were very lucky that he, a lot of the kids I knew like Navy kids that were stationed here they didn't see their father for months and months because he was aboard ships. So, I felt very lucky that my Dad was here.

EH: What was the rank system like? Did it discriminate against, you know, you didn't socialize with the lower...

SR: Oh yeah.

JR: Not very much.

SR: At my age they did. In fact, the colonel's daughters didn't associate with the lieutenant's daughters.

JR: Wait a minute. I remember that...

SR: It was always that. Always that. Always and you know that an officers' kid did not fool around or associate with an enlisted people.

James: Well we had, I had a couple of them.

SR: Yeah. I know but what I am saying is that the usual.

EH: That's right.

SR: Because this was such an isolated community I think we stuck together more than in other military posts we had been in.

James: Sergeant (inaudible) remember

SR: He wasn't here.

JR: No. He wasn't here but when you said about the actions whatever. He was my husband's sergeant for years. And he had, naturally I heard his name but I never met him. When I finally did it was as if I was Madame so and so, you know. His actions I mean it must have been a leftover from the earlier days when you don't fraternize or whatever. You know.

SR: Dad was an enlisted man in the Army in the early '30s and an enlisted man would cross the street so not to walk next to an officer and his lady. They just did not do that. It was not permitted. Again when the Second World War came I mean everybody was...(tape stops and restarts after telephone rings.)

EH: Do you remember going to the theater, you know?

JR: Yeah.

SR: A lot of movies.

EH: Okay and how much was the movie back then?

SR: It was 10 cents.

EH: And was there a new movies I am told every day, every week?

SR: No, no, no. You got like a new film in twice a week it was. It played for two nights and then another one came in two nights later. That was Army policy though because no matter where we went that seemed to be.

EH: And you all went by yourselves I mean there was nothing like the whole family had to go to the movies you just walked off.

JR: I don't know.

SR: Dad was on duty a lot so he had to be at the (US)DB (Disciplinary Barracks) so we kind of did movies with Mom. It was seven o'clock.

JR: For some reason I can't remember being in the movie house.

EH: Were there other like planned activities where you had baseball certain days or?

JR: No.

EH: Really?

James: We didn't have anything like that. There was no such thing as Pop Warner or Little League. You just go out and play wherever there was a spot.

JR: Kids just played.

EH: So, there were no organized activities.

SR: No. There was a lot of beach combing. Most of the kids went out to the beaches because of the shells and sea weed and animal life.

EH: Right.

SR: The younger ones it was perfect because of all the cement bunkers all around here.

EH: Didn't you worry about them in a way because of like just the falling off of these tall bunkers and steps and stuff like that?

SR: She didn't know. (laughter)

JR: If you don't know.

EH: No kidding.

JR: No, before they left the house it was always you know.

SR: But as soon as we got out of ...

EH: Little did she know. No kidding.

JR: I should have tied ropes on their ankles or something.

EH: Yeah. Put a string on their toe or something. Follow them out.

SR: I really don't think she was concerned. Mom was concerned about falling into the water or anything because for some reason she trusted us that we wouldn't go near anything but I was on the beach a lot. I don't know about Jim.

James: I don't remember being on the beach a lot or that much. Well, I played down on the end but we could just play baseball, you know, on the Parade Ground, football, you know, of hide and seek, you know whatever.

EH: Did any of you get into trouble? You know do something really outrageous?

James: No.

SR: We didn't dare because as I say that reflected on your father's record and you didn't dare do it.

JR: They would get (inaudible) in a hurry.

EH: Do you know where the Disciplinary Barracks was located exactly? (The US Disciplinary Barracks was located at Camp Low, Horseshoe Cove from 1945 to 1950.)

SR: It was down the line but I can't, I know it was past your school. It was far away from the area.

EH: North of Officers' Row?

SR: Oh yeah. It was...(tape cuts off and starts.)

SR: Sing Sing, it was a federal prison. When the War was over, they had an awful lot of GIs who had killed, who had raped, who had done things. Deserters, lot of deserters, robbers, muggers, well they didn't call them muggers then. They used to attack people and rob them and beat them up. They spent time. They just weren't in a guardhouse with a six month sentence. They were put in there for years sentenced as if they were civilian. There were so many that Fort Leavenworth couldn't hold them all so they borrowed the annex from Sing Sing to put the military prisoners in. Dad was provost marshal up there.

Now Sing Sing was becoming overflowing with their prisoners and they required that space. They took the prisoners. They broke up the units and they put part of them from Green Haven, Brooklyn and brought them to Hancock and that's when we were here. Now, if my memory serves me correctly it seems like there was a lot of space between quarters and where the (US)DB was. It was just nothing and they put these people in there and that's where they were away from living.

JR: Did we have escapes here?

SR: Yes we did. We had the one that hid in Quarters 10.

EH: Really?

SR: In the basement of Quarters 10.

JR: I remember in Green Haven...

EH: You are kidding?

JR: Yeah. Escapes and alerted. That is why to this day I close the door and I lock it. I don't have to. I lock all the time.

EH: So how were you alerted? By telephone?

JR: Well, you husband would call, you know, "Lock everything up. Watch the kids." And all that stuff.

SR: Don't let the kids out if somebody is loose.

James: Dad went to work with a .45.

SR: Always, always. Even when he wasn't OD (Officer of the Day). But this individual escaped and there are all outside entrances to the basements to the quarters and he...(Telephone rings and tape shuts off and restarts)

EH: Do you remain in touch with any of the people you knew here at Fort Hancock? Are you in touch with any of them?

James: No. No.

EH: Were there any outstanding personalities that you remember? Oh the quirks of this person or the eccentricities of another person or someone who was a real so called character? Was there anything that kind of stands out in your mind of oh, what an odd duck this one was? We are talking about personalities.



JR: You know what I thought of, Colonel Ostrander. He was the, everybody saw him. They froze and he used to walk like this (stamp feet). He was the big deal of the Post here. Remember?

EH: Ostrom. OSTROM. Colonel Ostrom, yes.

JR: Ostrum?

EH: I don't know him but his name has come up several times in recording. I know him almost as if I had met him. He used to walk with a very rigid type of style?

JR: That's right. Ostrum. Yeah. Yeah.

James: And Gross. Major Gross was a comedian. He reminded you of Myron Cohen.

EH: Is that right?

JR: Yeah.

James: He was bald headed and he had a funny accent. He used to put on...

JR: And then we were stationed together in Germany. Wasn't it?

James: That's right.

JR: We used to play cards.

EH: Really? Were there any like major scandals like someone ran off with someone's wife or someone was an alcoholic?

JR: If it was it was hush, hush. It wasn't a big deal like they do now.

SR: Nothing was public.

JR: I remember people getting a divorce or they weren't getting along but there was no gossip. You just you know.

SR: No. I don't remember anything major.

EH: Okay and you talked about the blizzard. What was that like? Well, okay you talked about the snow storm and you were sent next door to deliver a child.

JR: Yeah.

EH: How high was the snow? I mean usually snow doesn't accumulate much on Sandy Hook.

SR: We were not able to get on or off the Hook for a few days.

EH: Wow.

JR: She had intentions of going to Fort Monmouth to have the baby but if you can't get out of the house naturally you are going to have it at home.

EH: That is a major snow storm then.

SR: Yes. It was.

JR: So, we had a doctor. I don't remember his name, captain. We were lucky to get him and I assisted. I am not a nurse, nothing, just a friend and neighbor.

EH: My goodness its kind of a...

JR: It's an experience.

EH: Strange.

SR: But you were there before the doctor got there.

JR: Right. Right. Right. Got her prepared. Got the things ready for the baby, (like) where we were going to put the baby and whatever.

EH: You mentioned a photo of the women in the Officers' Club.

JR: Yeah.

EH: Could you just describe that to me and who those people were?

JR: Well, we were all standing in front of a table a group, the whole group. Now if I see the faces I may remember the names. But like some of the people we mentioned here.

James: Felden, Mrs. Felden, Mrs. Janskey

JR: Mrs. Janskey. Don't forget Mrs. Rafy, she was there.

EH: Mrs. Rafy was there and Mrs. Ware.

JR: Yeah. Betty Ware.

SR: Rice.

James: Rice, Gross.

EH: Were you all dressed up, you know to the maximum?

JR: Yeah. Oh yes.

EH: And looking very chic.

JR: Oh yes, yes. I don't know. Did we wear hats?

James: You didn't have hats on you were wearing you know black dresses with ruffles and things like that.

JR: Conservative but dressed up.

EH: What was the occasion? Tea?

James: Probably a tea.

JR: It was tea. Now, I don't think this was for a holiday or honoring somebody, you know, if somebody was leaving.

EH: Or welcoming somebody even. It could have been welcoming.

JR: Right. But now in my old age I write dates and years and everything. This way when you look at something you say sure, you know. Years ago naturally you remember. You don't write nothing and you forget even where it was.

EH: Do you recall the interior of the Officers' Club? For example the portrait in History House originally stood the portrait of Winfield Scott Hancock stood in the Officers' Club originally.

JR: I don't remember a thing about the Officers' Club. All I remember is dancing there.

EH: Did you ever have any occasion to go in there?

James: (inaudible) I don't remember any recollection of the Officers' Club.

EH: Its one of our biggest mysteries is we have seen old newspaper clippings of people in the Officers' Club and there were portraits all over the walls of famous, famous you know military people and we wondered where those portraits go. Because when Fort Hancock was transferred to the National Park Service in November of 1974 apparently a lot of things including the warming ovens and the portraits and the fancy dinner ware, the silverware all were graft.

JR: You know this reminds me of something we had in Germany, yes.

EH: Right, a warming oven also.

JR: Right when I was making bread I let it rise up in there.

EH: It's a super idea actually.

James: Do you remember the inside of the Officers' Club (to sister)?

SR: The inside of the Officers' Club? No. I don't think we were in there.

JR: No. I don't think we were in there too much.

EH: Did you have one of these in your house in Quarters 8?

JR: Not that I remembered. I remember having it in Europe.

SR: We had that in Europe.

James: We had radiators but not.

JR: Because that is how we had the heat.

EH: You left in June of '48.

JR: Right.

EH: So you spent approximately 10 months or so at Fort Hancock? Is that right?

James: We were going to leave anyway because (inaudible)...

EH: What was sort of like your feeling? Were you sorry to leave here? I mean what was it like back then?

JR: Yeah. You know, we like the place and you hate to leave but you have no choice. Wherever your husband goes that's where you go. That was orders.

James: We got orders to go to Germany so we were on the boat going to Germany.

EH: And how long did that voyage take you?

James: 8 days.

JR: 10 days, 9 days.

James: 9 days.

EH: Wow.

James: On the (*USAT General*) *Edwin D Patrick*.

JR: But there were ships that took...

EH: That was the name of the vessel?

James: Yeah. It was a Navy transport. We passed the *Vance*. The *Vance* took about three days longer than us so we passed them in mid ocean.

JR: And they started before we did.

James: and we came back on the *Alexander M. Patch*.

EH: How long were you in Germany?

JR: Three years.

EH: Really?

JR: On my 9<sup>th</sup> birthday.

EH: I neglected to ask you, your Husband gave 22 years, can you give me the time frame from what year to when was his 22 years?

JR: When he started in Panama. When he enlisted he went to Panama.

EH: What year was that?

James: '32.

JR: 'Cause he came back when?

James: He was in the military. I mean he was first an enlisted man and then he came out and went to OCS (Officer Candidate School). He went back in.

JR: Wait a minute I met him in '34 and he spent three years there. That was his first experience with the Army.

James: In Panama.

JR: Then he came back home. That's where we met, got married. In '41, this little guy was a year old when he enlisted and he wanted a different...

James: He went to OCS at Fort (inaudible). Then I was born in '41.

JR: So, we were at Fort (inaudible) for a short time. Niagara, we were there for at least two years. And it never seemed to interfere with the kids schooling.

EH: That's amazing to me.

JR: It really was. And it seemed like we never left in the middle of a semester, you know, and let's see...

EH: Was it considered to be prestigious to be assigned to Fort Hancock? As people tell me it was sort of the cream of the crop that came to Fort Hancock. Is that your general impression?

JR: I imagine so because you would think only the rich and famous have places where it is wide open with few people you would say, you know.

James: It was the nicest place we ever lived, military.

EH: Really?

James: Oh absolutely, that is why we remembered so much.

JR: Oh and we had nice quarters.

James: We had nice quarters in a lot of places but nothing like this. This was like the best. And our Christmas tree was 12 foot.

EH: Is that right? Where did you put it?

James: In the hallway.

JR: The foyer. You know, we had the high ceilings. What is this about 12 feet or more?

EH: I don't think so.

JR: No.

James: Well, whatever this height.

EH: Yeah.

JR: That's eight feet.

James: Whatever this height was this was the height of the tree.

SR: About 12 foot.

James: The tree was incredible.

EH: Did the Army have any traditional programs for Christmas? Did they do anything special?

JR: Well, they would get holly, the kids and I were talking about it as we were driving in. We were looking. Where's the holly? Well, we saw it. My daughter says that they didn't pick it from here.

EH: We can't.

SR: There was a 500 dollar fine.

EH: Is that true?

JR: But it was picked for us and I don't know if we went to get it if we wanted it or...

EH: Delivered to your...

JR: I don't know if they delivered it.

SR: Yeah. You had to go pick it up at a central point.

James: It seemed to me as a kid they had someone dressed up as Santa Claus that came...

SR: Came to each quarters.

James: Yeah. Gave you a little present.

JR: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

EH: How nice. Did anyone go caroling?

SR: Yeah.

EH: Was there any community spirit is basically what I am saying?

SR: Well, the church people and the chapel, the Catholic groups went caroling. There wasn't anything... I think they had the officers' Christmas party for kids because we used to go to that at every officers' club.

James: And the Halloween party.

SR: And the Halloween party and all the kids were dressed up.

James: And we had a picture of that too. I was a pirate.

EH: Oh my goodness. You even remember that. That is fantastic.

JR: You won a prize.

SR: I went as (inaudible).

James: Because the movie was out.

SR: And my outfit was made all out of crepe paper.

JR: Out of crepe paper, can you imagine, wasn't that dangerous if somebody got near her with a cigarette.

EH: I guess people didn't think of that in those days.

James: She was only 12 and she was smoking then. I am surprised she didn't burn.  
(laughter)

SR: No. I didn't start until we were in Germany and I was 15.

EH: Did you have an Easter egg hunt?

SR: They might have for the young ones but we were a little, I think Jimmy was a little older than most of the kids.

EH: Did you associate much with the Coast Guard?

SR: No.

EH: Were they off limits?

SR: They were so far down and away from us.

JR: They were a separate unit, right.

SR: Yeah.

EH: And how about the civilians? Were the civilians also a different mentality that you really didn't socialize that much with civilians?

James: No, because they didn't work here and the kids weren't here and they lived, I don't think we had civilians.



SR: Well, we had nurses and we had people working in the Commissary and things like that but they just came to work and left. There wasn't any socializing. There might have been but not that I was aware of.

EH: Was the Commissary a complete store? I mean you actually found everything you pretty much needed?

JR: I guess so. I must have been...

SR: No, because we used to do our heavy duty shopping at Fort Monmouth. We used to go right down Ocean Avenue. We went to Fort Monmouth. We used to stop at Mario's or Freddie's for pizza on the way back.

EH: You have a very vivid memory. Good heavens how funny. (laughter)

SR: They had the basics here but anything, a lot of things...

EH: Was the bakery in operation?

JR: Not here. There was a bakery here?

EH: Oh absolutely. I am told it had the most heavenly bread.

JR: No.

EH: Probably much prior to your time.

JR: We had civilian stores for some of the shopping but I remember going every day or every other day. I didn't drive at the time and as you said you don't think they had carts. I still would like to know how we shopped unless we picked something up and put it on the counter.

SR: That was about it.

EH: It probably was so often also that you got your daily needs here and there and that was it.

JR: Yeah. Yeah.

James: We have to wrap it up here because we have to leave.

END OF INTERVIEW