

Sandy Hook, Gateway NRA, NPS  
A Telephone Oral History Interview with Ruth Weaver Halpern  
Daughter of Hospital Administrator, Col. Weaver

1942-45

Interviewed by Mary Rasa, NPS,  
January 19, 2006

Transcribed by Mary Rasa, 2010  
Editor's notes on parenthesis ( )



Officers' Row Quarters 16 in 1940.  
In 1942, the Weaver family moved in.



Fort Hancock Post Hospital in 1940.

Photos courtesy of Gateway NRA/NPS from the Fort Hancock Post Record Book.

MR: Today is January 19, 2006. My name is Mary Rasa. I am the Sandy Hook Museum Curator. I am doing an oral history interview today and please state your full name.

RWH: Ruth Weaver Halpern.

MR: And are you giving your permission for the National Park Service to use this interview?

RWH: I certainly am.

MR: Thank you. Okay, tell me a little about when and where were you born?

RWH: Okay, I was born in San Antonio, Texas in 1924 on a Military Post, Fort Sam Houston.

MR: Okay. Tell me a little about your Father?

RWH: My Father was a doctor in the Medical Corps, Regular Army.

MR: And when did he get into the service?

RWH: At the time of the First World War.

MR: And he stayed in?

RWH: And he stayed in. He had just graduated from medical school and the War began about that time. And he went in thinking, you know, he would return to Kentucky, to the University of Louisville, where he had gone to medical school. But as it worked out, he liked and he stayed. Then retired at Fort Monmouth which was his last station. Prior to that he had been over at Fort Hancock on Sandy Hook.

MR: So after the time you were born, did you go to other military bases before Fort Hancock?

RWH: Oh, sure. We went to...we were in Denver for a couple of years. And then back down to what's now called Fort Clark Springs (Texas). It was Fort Clark. It was a Cavalry Post on the, to protect the Mexican border against bandits.

MR: Oh okay. And when did you come out to Fort Hancock?

RWH: I had finished high school in New York State, (at) Plattsburgh Barracks, New York State. (I) Went off to college in September 1942. The attack on Pearl Harbor, of course, was December 7, 1941. So about nine months later I finished high school and went off to college. So then that probably December of 1942, my parents moved from Plattsburgh Barracks, New York to Fort Hancock. And then when I came home, it was either the end of '42 or the beginning of '43. I came home on vacation, of course, to Sandy Hook.

MR: Oh, okay.

RWH: I spent about three summers there. Two, three summers I guess.

MR: Do you remember which house you were in?

RWH: I think I had a rather clear memory I went back and had this wonderful visit last year, I guess it was. And I do want to go again as soon as I can make arrangements. I remember that our house was third, our quarters was third from the hospital. Of course, I discovered when I was out there last year that the hospital has burned. I'd be interested in knowing how that happened, but it was three, facing the bay of course, three, I seem to remember three quarters down from the hospital.

MR: If that's correct, then it would be House 16, because the last one is 18.

RWH: Okay. 16, 17, then 18. They all look very different because in the days that I lived there. The front porches were screened in, which was wonderful. A wonderful benefit to be able to sit on the porch, you know, at night we could read out there or whatever. And also the houses were quite beautifully landscaped with the shrubs and, of course, all of that is gone now with the salt water and salt air. So it looks, they look different to me, but I went in, when I was there last year, I went in the one that's open and it was just, I could have walked around the house with my eyes closed. (laughter) Where the staircase was and the bedroom upstairs that was mine and it was just a wonderful experience.

MR: Tell me a little bit about did you ever use the third floor for anything? Did your parents use that for storage?

RWH: Most people had help in those days even during the War. So, it was actually, what do you call it, the maid's quarters. I don't even remember who it was but I remember my Mother did have help.

MR: Oh, they did have someone living there then?

RWH: Yeah.

MR: It was a woman, wasn't it.

RWH: Yes. Yes. And sometimes it would be an enlisted man, someone in an enlisted man's family that was there.

MR: Oh, okay. It would be living there.

RWH: Not assigned, but she, perhaps an older woman was there because she, I don't know, I'm guessing that her son was in the Army or whatever. And she, I don't remember if she was there say on the weekends but it was her area where she take a nap in the afternoon. And when I was out there, just last year, I didn't go up to the third floor, I would do that the next time I would go. But, it was her area, where she would go and put her things. There was a bed if she slept over, I know some of the time.

MR: And did you have one of the bedrooms facing the water?

RWH: Yes. (laughter) And I used to climb out the window, because there was the blackout. The searchlights of the Coast Guard Station were constantly crisscrossing the sky and the water and I can remember often, I would just sit out on the roof of the porch you know, just step out of my bedroom window on the roof of the porch and watch it. It was just beautiful.

MR: Hmm. And were you the only child?

RWH: No, my brother was nine years older and I guess he was...

MR: So, he wasn't around there at all?

RWH: He wasn't, well they came to visit summers, but he was also on a hospital ship going back and forth from Charleston (SC) to I guess Birmingham (England).

MR: So he was a doctor as well?

RWH: Yes.

MR: So, what were your Father's duties at the hospital?

RWH: He was I guess, the Commandant of the hospital. I was trying to remember if that was the case. I think they called it the Post Surgeon, but it meant the Chief Administrator.

MR: What was his name?

RWH: Logan Mitchell Weaver.

MR: Okay. And do you know what his rank was?

RWH: Colonel.

MR: Okay. So, he basically was the administrator, he wasn't a day to day doctor at that point in time.

RWH: That's right. He had been what they called Eye, Ears, Nose and Throat years ago. And that had been his specialty. But he was, I'm pretty sure by this time, you know, I know that by this time he was Chief Administrator, CEO. They didn't call it that of course.

MR: Do you know how large the hospital was at that point in time?

RWH: No. You know I don't know that at all.

MR: Because, I know that later in the War...was he there, how long was he there until?

RWH: I think it was about three years, by the time I had graduated from college. I graduated from college in '46. The war was over in '45, I guess probably three years because he was transferred to Fort Monmouth.

MR: So he was there 'til about the end of the War then?

RWH: Close to the end of the War.

MR: Because I know at some point in time they started using the closest barracks as a hospital annex and I was just wondering do you remember?

RWH: I don't think that was happening then. Well, how did the hospital burn?

MR: An arsonist burned it in 1985.

RWH: In '85, in other words after it was a park.

MR: Yeah. It was actually being used by NOAA, (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) the federal laboratories that are actually in the barracks across the way now.

RWH: Oh my goodness.

MR: I'll tell you more about that later.

RWH: Sure. But I was telling, I think at some point, I was telling maybe you or somebody else one of my fondest, fondest sounds strange but we used to since I was going to school in New York City. I was going to Barnard at Columbia University. The Q-Boat that the Coast Guard had, that was how we got into New York, on the Q-Boat. (Q-Boats were heavily armed vessels disguised as merchant ships in World War II.) They had I guess several runs in the morning and I guess several runs coming back in the evening so, I'd come home on weekends or Thanksgiving or other times and I always took the Q-Boat. And I, of course, don't know the size of it, I think it must have been called a Q-Boat, I know that. It would kind of fit, 14, 16, 20 people, I don't know, in addition to the crew. And it came out of the Battery. It would go to the Coast Guard Station to the Battery in New York. And one of the stories I always loved to tell people and tell my children and others was that sometimes they would put, there was a submarine net, I guess basically where the Verrazano Narrows Bridge is today. And this submarine net, some of the time you'd get on the boat in New York and start out and the net would be closed. The submarine net would be closed. You'd have to sit there for sometimes a long time, hours and thinking about the submarine that had been spotted on the other side. (laughter) It was kind of exciting. It sounds, somehow it sounds gruesome now. But at the time for a young person it was kind of an exciting thing. And then when the net was opened, they'd let the Q-Boat through, sometimes they wouldn't

let other ships through because they'd open it a little bit for the Q-Boat to get through and they went zipping across.

MR: Now would you see the net come up or was it...?

RWH: No. You couldn't see it. I don't remember ever seeing it. There must have been something on the surface that pulled it. I don't know.

MR: Oh okay. I guess some Coast Guard were out there that were stopping traffic and then they would tell you when to go?

RWH: I don't remember how it worked except we would pull up to that area. Why they hadn't know when they left the Battery, but I guess maybe it closed up after they left the Battery. They had the nets across and they'd have to wait. You kind of never saw the action, but you know I was sitting there on one side you know imagining what was on the other side.

MR: Well also it's pretty exciting, you know that area, you could see all of New York as well.

RWH: Sure. And then speaking of submarines, you know, that was another memory of like three summers. I did some volunteer work in the summer, but you couldn't, it was difficult, there was no job really for a college student. I did some tutoring and that kind of thing. Unless you went into Red Bank or Atlantic Highlands, they (the Army) certainly didn't offer any summer jobs so I pretty much spent the summers on the beaches. Well, not the beaches, the Officers' Beach.

MR: Where was the Officers' Beach? Was that up in the Fort area?

RWH: Oh. Yes.

MR: Okay.

RWH: Again, I'm not quite sure. I know there are several lovely beaches now.

MR: Because I've heard at different points in time the Enlisted Mens' Beach was down further and that alternated.

RWH: They were separated. Those were the days that absolute class.

MR: So it wasn't far for you to get there?

RWH: No. It wasn't. You went by car though. It was too far to walk, of course. But often you would go and if you went to the beach early in the morning, you know 10 o'clock or so, you would see oil or whatever had come up with the tide. And you would know that, the story was that a tanker or something had been torpedoed that night. And

then the water, after it flowed it was washed away as the day went on. It was mainly in the morning when you would see it and you would know that a ship had gone down. And then from the beach there you could see that, what, *Queen Mary*. Ah, *Queen Elizabeth*, I guess *Queen Mary*.

MR: Probably *Queen Mary*.

RWH: Yeah. *Queen Mary* that was been used as a troop transport ship. And it would come out of New York all by itself because, you know, it was faster than any of the other ships. And you would see it, you know, see it you were at the beach. See it whenever it came out. It seemed a number of times in the summer we would spot it leaving, you know, full of troops. And then we saw a lot of other shipping and whatever going out but it would always be accompanied by I guess other smaller ships of the Navy or Coast Guard. But the *Queen Mary* was always, that was another thing. But in addition to the oil there would be whatever had been sunk washed up.

MR: Like wood and things like that?

RWH: Wood and metal and the beach would have to be cleared. And then most of the time the water was wonderful. I mean it didn't happen often and it didn't interfere with the great pleasure of the water.

MR: Were there lifeguards?

RWH: Oh yes. Yes. Definitely lifeguards up on sort of stand the way it looks now on the Jersey Shore. They were enlisted men.

MR: And were there some concessions or anything to buy?

RWH: No. No. Nothing like that. You always had to float out in the water anchored by big barrels. That was not such a great idea because some people were not strong swimmers to start out to the float. If the tides were changing there was often a, not really a riptide, but kind of a tide that you had to know how to swim with the ocean water to get back in or you would be swept on down a little farther. I think two words, the Enlisted Mens' Beach that wasn't that far. You could see from the Non-Commissioned Officers' Beach to the Officers' Beach you could see easily. There was just some kind of little small space between the two. At this Officers' Beach, there was no concessions, but I think there was a snack bar.

MR: Something along those lines.

RWH: Very, very minor, but no advertising but a place where you could get crackers and a Coke or something. And a kind of primitive changing area.

MR: Okay. Like a little trailer type thing or something.

RWH: Ah, no. It was wooden, a kind of a shack painted, kind of unpainted. A place where you could go change. It was not, when you think of resorts now, nothing like that.

MR: Would there be a lot of people out on the beach?

RWH: Yes.

MR: A lot of wives I guess?

RWH: Wives and children and nurses and on the weekends of course, the men. Children playing on the beach. I don't remember any umbrellas. I don't know how the children kept from getting sunburned but... So I was like 18, 19, 20 when I was there. And of course there weren't too many unattached women so the beach was a place where you met a lot of people. (laughter)

MR: I guess so.

RWH: A lot of men. And the Officers' Club of course. They had a dance there every Saturday night. When I look back on it, it seems like it was a sort of amazingly carefree, you know, lifestyle considering the fact that the War was going on and ships being torpedoed.

MR: Right.

RWH: You know the blackout at night and all the rest of it. I can't remember. I know we had to have a blackout. But I can't seem to remember. I remember in the Officers' Club which I guess is closed now because they don't have funds to, because I wanted to go in there to look around when I was there but I guess they are trying to get funds together to fix it. But I remember there was a big sun porch there. And I can't remember that there were blackout shades, you know, pulled down at night.

MR: There would have had to have been I would think.

RWH: There would have had to have been and I also in driving, you know we drove around at night and I can't remember special lights or anything on the car.

MR: What type of car did your family have?

RWH: What kind of a car?

MR: Yeah.

RWH: I don't remember, probably a Buick.

MR: Just curious.



RWH: Yeah. Probably.

MR: Now did you meet, were there a number of nurses there at the time?

RWH: Yes. A lot of nurses.

MR: Did you get to meet some of them?

RWH: No. But there were others, the people I was dating different guys and the other girls that I knew were also in my same position, you know, grown college age daughters of Officers who where stationed there.

MR: Were the other Officers on Officers' Row mostly higher ranks at that point?

RWH: No. I think there was a sort of townhouse area. I don't know if it is still there or not. Townhouse for want of a better word where they quarters adjoined. One of them adjoined the other. They were sort of Captains and Lieutenants. I think most of the people in the quarters (Officers' Row) were Majors and on up.

MR: Oh. Okay.

RWH: I think the Commanding Officer; I think was General Gage is the name that comes to mind.

MR: Yes. He was there at the time.

RWH: Is that right? Gage.

MR: Yep.

RWH: His daughter was a friend of mine. She was older than I was. It seems to me he had a larger, his quarters.

MR: His house was bigger than the house you lived in.

RWH: Yeah. Yeah. I think it was noticeably different.

MR: Yeah. It's almost twice the size.

RWH: Yeah. There you go.

MR: Anything else about the house that you remember?

RWH: The house?

MR: Things like where did you have the telephone? Was it in the hallway?

RWH: Probably, because I was thinking of Fort Belvoir and Fort Monmouth. I was thinking of them to recall of course. I remember that the quarters that we lived in at Fort Monmouth were exactly like the ones that we lived in at Belvoir, Virginia. And there was a little kind of recessed area in the hall where the phone was which you wouldn't see anything like that now. One of the things I remember loving when I came into the house for the first time. We had come from Plattsburgh, New York which was upstate New York near the Canadian border, but a big quarters also. But they had just one fireplace. But I remember how charming it was that there were several fireplaces in this house at Fort Hancock.

MR: And were they functional?

RWH: Ah, yeah. Oh yeah. We didn't use them all. We used the living room fireplace. If they are still there or if I am remembering correctly, there was a fireplace in the dining room and different parts.

MR: In the two front bedrooms and the hallway. Yeah.

RWH: Okay. Good. I'll take another look when I go. But I just remember it was just charming to have all these fireplaces. (laughter) And let's see what else. I remember that I took great pleasure in the front porch. Oh, we had a teapot table out there on the porch on one side. It was very shady and protected by plantings. So that was the....

MR: Did your Father have an office in the house?

RWH: Oh, no. But in the hospital of course, but not in the house.

MR: Because there was a room that was the Officers' Office originally. I was just wondering if he liked used the place as his little study or do any work.

RWH: Well, we didn't have, when you said office you meant like den?

MR: Kind of. A place where he could do some work.

RWH: He had something of that sort. Not an office in the sense of anyone coming there.

MR: Well, no. Right.

RWH: No. Okay. My father always had something that was his own. What else about the house? Oh, I know that when my friends from college came down, that was part of the summer too. They would come to visit, because they loved for obvious reasons kids loved to come visit there. The beaches and the whole way of life. They were just amazed that I lived in such a place. You know, 25 eligible men to every 20 year old girl. (laughter)

MR: There were good odds. Did any of your friends end up getting married from visiting?

RWH: No. But then at Fort Monmouth there were some couples that did. They moved onto to finish about the time we were finishing college. They met some people at Fort Monmouth through coming to visit me. Some marriages did take place. (laughter) Well, let's see, what else about the house.

MR: Did you ever go to the movies?

RWH: Oh yeah. We went to the movies all of the time. It was an easy walk. And of course, the movies were probably a penny or something. It was so cheap and usually first run. You know good titles. We went to the Chapel on a regular basis. My Mother did on a regular basis, which I recall was sort of where the Coast Guard Station is. I loved the house. It was a marvelous location. Oh, I can...we would often, my friends and I would sit on the rocks there. You know, go across the road. I guess there was a road there.

MR: Yes.

RWH: Because the other was kind of a back alley type thing. Ah, sit on the rocks at night with you know the water, the stars and moon. As I say it now strikes me as how strange in the middle of this War. (laughter) And then of course retreat is at five o'clock. You know and then revelry in the morning.

MR: Did your Mother hang your laundry out in the back?

RWH: Well, she didn't hang laundry. Somebody else, whoever the help was.

MR: Oh, okay.

RWH: I guess so. Yeah. It could have been.

MR: I've seen some photographs of clotheslines behind the houses so I was just curious if you remember anything like that.

RWH: Yeah. I think. I just don't know for sure. She must have. I don't think it was hung in the basement. I can't remember the basement. There had to be a basement.

MR: There is a big one.

RWH: A big one and I guess the furnace was down there. I can't remember that space at all. I don't remember the staircase at all. When I came in the house from the back it all looked so familiar. I mean in very good condition and updated and you know and whatever. But we just loved the footprint of the house. It's so familiar, but I don't remember the basement at all.

MR: And were the pocket doors working when you were in there?

RWH: I think so. I think so. Oh yeah. Definitely they were. I always loved the staircase. It just seemed like a lovely staircase.

MR: It's beautiful, beautiful presentation.

RWH: Right.

MR: Do you remember getting very cold in the wintertime?

RWH: No. No. I really don't. But then I was a skier and an ice skater. I never really minded cold weather. But I remember the strong winds. Here in Philadelphia this past weekend we had some very strong winds and we lost our power for two days. And it was when it was very cold. So, I was very reminded of the winds there that were very strong. But the house, I don't remember if they had old fashioned, did they come around with old fashioned storm windows on? You know that old solid.

MR: I believe they did at that point in time.

RWH: Because everything, you know there was so much done even in wartime. My Father had a striker.

MR: And was he an enlisted man?

RWH: Oh, yeah. And he polished, I guess his brass, boots and whatever and did things about the house. And then of course the lawn, the maintenance of the lawn was all taken care of.

MR: Now the striker, do you remember how much they would get paid or how they were...?

RWH: I have no idea. I don't think they were actually assigned. I think they surely had some choices as whether they wanted to do that. And then it was extra pay for it. I just don't remember. I guess it was the...

MR: Do you remember how often they would come over?

RWH: I remember at Fort Belvoir in Virginia they came every morning.

MR: Really.

RWH: Yeah. I don't know how long. I don't think necessarily very long. They'd check the furnace because at Belvoir I think it was a coal fired furnace or whatever. Nothing

automatic about it but I think it needed a lot of attention. But I don't know about this other at Fort Hancock whether he had some responsibility with the furnace or not.

MR: Typically a striker, by definition, a striker is someone who would work on the coal furnace, but then a lot of times they would do things do some valet type services.

RWH: It was more like I would think of strikers more like valet services, because it had to do with polishing shoes and boots and particularly when my father was with the Calvary you know all the paraphernalia. But he didn't do household things. I mean it wasn't someone that my Mother would say to, "Would you please take out the garbage."

MR: Right. Right.

RWH: It was nothing like that, of course. But in terms of storm windows in fact of where we were, things were just always done. You didn't even know necessarily when they were coming. They might just show up someday if we had storm windows which I can't recall. They would just show up and do whatever it was. They would show up and cut the shrubs or you know, they were assigned.

MR: Okay. So they did take care of the shrubs that were around the house.

RWH: Oh. Sure. Oh sure. And the grass and all of that.

MR: I don't know because some of the time, I assume that the Officer's family might plant their own flowers.

RWH: I'm sure that they did in little flower beds. I don't think they (Army) wouldn't weed a flower bed I don't think, but they cut the grass and trimmed the shrubs. I can remember going back to Fort Belvoir. I was ten. We came back from the Philippine Islands and I was ten years old and I lived at Fort Belvoir until I was 15. So, that was '34 that we came to Belvoir. I remember in those days, I mean the Quartermaster, what we call the Quartermaster furniture. The houses had a skeleton furnishing with the dining room table and chairs and funny old sofas, you know, like wooden with leather covered seats. But I remember that the light bulbs for instance. When a light bulb was burned out, this was Belvoir and that was '34, you didn't throw out the light bulb you kept your light bulbs in a box and you took them I guess or somebody came and took them to the Quartermaster and the Quartermaster gave you back 15 new light bulbs or whatever you turned in. (laughter) Unbelievable. Unbelievable now. Can you imagine?

MR: That is interesting.

RWH: Yeah. I was thinking about that the other day.

MR: So, in the house you lived in at Fort Hancock would, your parents would have brought a certain number of furniture but then that I guess some would have....?

RWH: Well, we had a lot of furniture because we had brought things back from the Philippine Islands. We had our own beds and of course, our sofa and easy chairs. But the houses in those days were such that an Officer could move in and there would be in fact you would have to have some of the Quartermaster furniture, you would have to have some of it taken out if you had your own things.

MR: Oh okay.

RWH: We never had, my parents never had a dining room table. They always used the Quartermaster dining room table and chairs. Because it was always carried with us, you know tablecloth whatever. But the dining room set, there would be a desk, whatever the study was, there would be odd chairs, a buffet, this is the dining room and sometimes I think there were Quartermaster beds you could have had too. So, you could move in and live there with you know a bare minimum of furniture. But no one did, I mean everyone came with lots of stuff of their own.

MR: Well, I guess if you didn't have that many children you might have the spare bedroom might be provided by the Quartermaster Corps because you didn't have a spare bed or something.

RWH: Exactly. And you know it's from the earlier days when there was so much moving around and people just... Of course, the moving was paid for by the government too. I mean it wasn't that you had to pay for your own, if you had your own furniture you didn't have to pay for shipping it. And any time you had been out of the country, the furniture always came back in crates. The labor that went into that was unbelievable. When a new family showed up on a Post you'd see a mountain of...(tape is cut off). When I think about the cost of shipping, of course a lot of stuff went by ship, a simple chair was completely enclosed in wood. Not solid wood, but slabs of wood, I guess think of a pallet, a wooden pallet. As you put four wooden pallets together to make a box to ship... Amazing.

MR: Would the Army actually provide people who packed everything for you and you didn't have to do anything?

RWH: Absolutely. Yes. Amazing.

MR: And, do you remember what it was like moving into, well you probably weren't there, you were probably in college when they moved in?

RWH: When they moved into Fort Hancock? I don't remember there, but everywhere else I was there, you know. When we moved in the house was always immaculate. It was wonderfully clean. It had no necessarily just been painted or anything of that sort. But in good condition. Clean and if there had been any marks on the walls or whatever that was taken care of.

MR: Anything else about the...living on Post type thing?

RWH: I loved it. I really, I don't just mean Fort Hancock. But I loved the whole, my growing up years in general. And my Mother felt sure she went, you know after the First World War she was at Leavenworth and she was all over Kansas and other places and they stayed in some Posts, you know a very short time. But by the time I was born we were staying longer. We were five years in Virginia. Three years in the Philippines and about three to four years at Fort Hancock. So, I loved it and every time we came to a new Post, it was always there were some children that I had known probably, very often somewhere else when I was a smaller child. We had known families at other Posts. And there was such a, in the years between the wars, it was such a bonding of families. It was, there was a real closeness people had with each other. Despite the rank differences, you know, that were certainly there. I don't mean of the Commissioned and Non-Commissioned Officers' families were close, they weren't.

MR: Right.

RWH: But within the Officer Corps, there was a real 'esprit de corps' that occurred. And then the custom of calling which you are familiar with, I'm sure.

MR: Could you tell, I'd like you to explain a little bit about that because I've read a lot about it and I'd like you to explain what would happen.

RWH: Well, a new family would arrive at Post and they would have cards that would have Major and Mrs. something something and then the man's card too. Every officer had, always had these sets of cards. And when they'd arrive at a new Post, they called on all the senior officers. A Captain would have his calls, make his calls on all the senior officers. And I think, I am not, I don't think that the juniors, say the Lieutenant officer's didn't have to call on the new one. The whole calling thing went on for about six weeks when someone arrived at the Post. And you always knew, I mean the children in the family always knew that they shouldn't be playing in the living room between like seven and eight (o'clock in the evening). The hours were pretty strict, whatever they were. So it sounds like it must have been seven, seven-thirty to maybe eight-thirty or nine on weeknights. Because you might have a caller. So, people needed to be, you know the parents needed to be dressed and you know, ready to receive. And the call, they would leave their cards. There was at the front door there was a little brass tray, I remember, where they didn't hand the card to you, they told my parents who they were and put the card in the tray and came in and sat for probably not more than fifteen minutes. So it was paying the call. I know it would have had to have been....

MR: I know it would have to be returned.

RWH: Yes. That's right. That's right. But then again, the rank came into it too. There was some, I mean when they called on the General, obviously the General didn't have to go calling back on the people who had called on him.

MR: Right.

RWH: So whatever the protocol of the whole thing I don't remember that well. Calling was an absolute required duty on the part of new Officers.

MR: Now would the Officer's wife have to provide refreshments?

RWH: No. Nothing at all. Absolutely not.

MR: Okay.

RWH: No. That was not a part of it. It was more business like somehow. Although you can be business like and have refreshments too, but it was not that at all.

MR: Some of the things I read about ...

RWH: You didn't know when they were coming. I mean, this is before, you know, this was a while ago. The customs have probably changed.

MR: It was interesting to read though because I read something that said that if you had just arrived on Post, it didn't matter if you had boxes in your living room, they would be coming to say hello or something.

RWH: It's the other way around. The biggest job, was the newcomers having to make their calls. I guess the junior officers did call on say a Captain and his family came. But I suppose maybe the Lieutenants did come in and make a call. Oh, you returned the call, that was the way it was. You were called on first and then you paid back the call. (laughter) But no refreshments and no advance warning. You just knew you had a roster, I guess, because I was never involved in the calling. But I guess my parents had a roster and I guess they must have checked off the calls they made, you know.

MR: To see who was left to come.

RWH: Who else was going to come and it's such a weird thing.

MR: It was funny because I read one that said even if you called on the Officer and they weren't home, but if you left your card, then it counted.

RWH: Oh, yes, yes. I remember that. I remember that. Oh yeah. That was wonderful when you would go out and you would, a couple would make, you know, eight or so calls. If you were going to go calling on say Tuesday and Thursday night, you would hope to leave your card or get in at several different places on that one night. That was an obligation that was no variation. It had to be done.

MR: Now, I heard during, as World War II came, they couldn't do that as often. Do you remember if your parents had to when they went to Fort Hancock?



RWH: I remember it most of all at other, you know at Plattsburgh Barracks and at other places. I think by the time we were at Fort Hancock it was certainly modified.

MR: There was also something called, "Hails and Farewells" that were at the Officers' Club.

RWH: Oh yes. Yes. Well, that was sort of a custom for people who had been overseas because there had always been a gala because you were over the hump. You know you were halfway to being able to come home. Because I didn't know how old you are, but when I think about it now how these people, both of my Mother's parents died and my Father's mother died when they were overseas. You know, you went by Army transport. It was a month long trip. And you certainly didn't, you had Western Union, but you didn't telephone or you didn't fly home if somebody got sick. No one flew anywhere in between the wars. It was strange, but I remember in the Philippines particularly, once a month at the Officers' Club there was a real soiree for the people who were over the hump and the ones that were going to be leaving and everybody would go down to Manila to see them off. Throw streamers across to the transport and as the ship pulled out the streamers would break. (laughter) It's like out of another life, you know.

MR: It's very interesting.

RWH: It really is.

MR: What year did your Father retire?

RWH: I think '47.

MR: Okay. So it was pretty soon after the War.

RWH: Yeah.

MR: Did he go back into medicine or did he just completely retire?

RWH: He went back, they hadn't been down to Kentucky in a long time so they went down to see some of the relatives they had left. And my Father went to the medical school and many of his classmates had been on the faculty and they said, "What do you mean, you are only 64 or 65," or whatever age he was. They said, "Well, you aren't going to retire." Their plan was to go to Washington, to retire in the Washington area. And when they went there they found it was so, you know, drastically changed that they didn't think they would do that. One reason was because of Walter Reed. I mean a lot of regular Army people did retire around Washington and Walter Reed Hospital was one of the reasons why they were there. And then San Antonio was the other big mecca for retirement. And they decided that it had been so many years since they had been in Texas that they really didn't want to go back down to San Antonio. So they were visiting in Kentucky and my father's old friends said, "Why don't you do Public Health." So he still had his license or whatever in Kentucky. So he did Public Health from whatever age

he was when he retired which was 64 or 65 until he was 70. And he was, been retired from that and he lived 'til he was 85.

MR: Oh wow.

RWH: So he has a nice long life. One of his favorite stories was that during the First World War he wouldn't have been here, he would always say if it hadn't been that he had never had measles or chicken pox or something and he got sick. He was assigned to the British and was at the Front and became sick and he didn't know what was wrong with him and then finally he was diagnosed and was sent back, you know, and that next day or whatever that Front position was destroyed.

MR: Oh.

RWH: (laughter) So he would have never had the change to be 85 if he had had the chicken pox as a child.

MR: There you go.

RWH: There you go.

MR: Okay. Is there anything else you would like to say?

RWH: Have you seen the Woody Allen movie, "Matchpoint."

MR: No.

RWH: Have you heard about it?

MR: No.

RWH: Oh. Look for it. (laughter)

MR: Okay.

RWH: It's the luck one way or the other making such a difference in your life. We saw it last night.

MR: Oh. Okay. Anything else stand out in your mind about Fort Hancock?

RWH: Fort Hancock. What stands out...just the beauty of the place. I mean, you know the, I remember one of the things we would sometimes drove into Red Bank, of course. I remember the much fog many times. That's why you remember it but as you would drive in, drive out on the peninsula sometimes you could barely see the road. I don't know if it is still ever that way.

MR: It is.

RWH: It is.

MR: Oh yes.

RWH: But the fog. The general beaches, the beauty of the whole area. Plattsburg was lovely. It was on Lake Champlain, but I've always loved the water. And what else stands out...really a great fun time in many, many ways. Then again, I had friend, acquaintances and friends who didn't. Who were killed of course. And stories would come back of someone who had been in my circle of friends. That's the sadness and whatever was, I guess when someone is in the midst of something and going through it it seemed like a great fun time much of the time. So there you go.

MR: Okay. Thank you very much for your time and...

RWH: It's been great fun for me.

MR: I'm going to stop the tape now.

RWH: Okay.

End of Interview