

Sandy Hook, Gateway NRA, NPS
An Oral History Interview with Larry Wigdortz
U.S. Army Reserves
298th Army Security Company
1967-73

Interviewed by Melissa Kozlowski, Monmouth University student intern
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Transcribed by Mary Rasa 2011
Editor's notes in parenthesis ()

(Interview is taking place outside. Some audio is difficult to understand.)

MK: This is Melissa Kozlowski with Larry Wigdortz at Fort Hancock on May 15, 2004. Mr. Wigdortz served here with the Army Intelligence from 1967 through 1973. When and where were you born?

LW: Neptune, New Jersey in 1944.

MK: Where did you graduate from?

LW: High school? Asbury Park High School.

MK: Okay. College?

LW: Rider College.

MK: Okay. Was your father or grandfather in the military?

LW: My father was a World War II pilot, a bombardier who was shot down over Germany and spent fourteen months in a prison camp and recently just passed way.

MK: How did you become involved at Fort Hancock?

LW: When I was in college I signed up to get into an intelligence camp which was a, which was called the 298th and it was a reserve unit and I was accepted an after school I joined.

MK: And what was your start and ending date approximately at Fort Hancock?

LW: Let's see. We were at Fort Monmouth for a few months, maybe four so I would think it was approximately September of '67 that we came here and I was mustered out in approximately September or October of, excuse me, '73.

MK: Okay. Did you know anything about this place before you came?

LW: Yes, because I worked at Sandy Hook as a park ranger my last year of high school and two years of college.

MK: Okay. What did you know about the type of job that you would be performing when you got here?

LW: What did I know? All I know is that it was supposed to be something in intelligence.

MK: Okay.

LW: When I found out what we were supposed to do was do radio intercepts of certain areas and find out what people were saying.

MK: Okay. What was your rank or title?

LW: I was a sergeant or E-5. When I left....

(other people in background and laughter)

MK: What unit or department did you work for?

LW: That was the 298th.

MK: Okay.

LW: It was called ASA, Army Security.

MK: Okay. What type of training did you receive before coming here?

LW: First stop was at Fort Dix, New Jersey. That was in sometime in '68 and that was for Basic Training. They would teach you how to be a (inaudible) I know I was there March or April of '68. That's where they get you in shape. Army Regulations. (inaudible talking with another person) Alright, then I am sorry. Maybe it was later than that.

MK: Okay.

LW: Maybe it was in late '67.

MK: What type of work did you do after leaving the service?

LW: I worked in New York at American Express in marketing and printing and currently work at the Asbury Park Press.

MK: Okay. Did anything that you learned while here aid in your future work?

LW: No.

MK: Not really. (laughter) While you were here were there ever any alerts of potential enemy attacks?

LW: Not, yes, but not here. We were down in Fort Bragg, North Carolina. It was during the presidential campaign and...

Unknown voice: The Riots, Chicago Convention Riots.

LW: Yeah, but this was later, this was when they had the Republicans were in Miami and they asked us to monitor traffic, radio traffic from Cuba because a lot of the other front line guys were already on other duties. So, we had to intercept from Cuba and we did pick up some interesting things and I think we got a(n) accommodation. I think they followed up on a couple of things.

MK: What building did you primarily work in out here?

LW: They used to have vans that we could do our stuff in. There were two buildings over here and over there. That's where we used to eat either in that one or the next one. (referring to Mess Halls 58 or 57)

MK: Were you working primarily with military, civilians or both?

LW: Both.

MK: Okay. Were there any social activities at the Fort that you could take part in?

LW: We started out at Fort Dix. After we graduated from there, which was usually eight to ten weeks, then we were sent up to a place called Fort Devens which was in Massachusetts and that was where we learned our trade.

MK: Were you able to go to the beach while you were here?

LW: Yes.

MK: Did you make any excursions to New York City while you were here?

LW: No.

MK: Did you know of any servants, minorities or women who worked at the Fort either in civilian or military jobs?

LW: No. I think we had every, there were all types of different people but I don't remember any women here at that time.

MK: Okay. Just in conclusion, what stands out in your mind about Fort Hancock?

LW: It was beautiful. Even in the winter, summer it was just fantastic to live here. It really was.

MK: Okay, is there anything else that we haven't covered in the interview?

LW: There was, made a lot of good friends, you know, even today I am in contact with, I would say about three or four of the guys.

MK: Okay.

END OF INTERVIEW