Sandy Hook, Gateway NRA, NPS
An Oral History Interview with
Louis Brignola, Post Barber 1929-1974
and Joseph Tomaine, Civilian employee, 1938-1953
By Tom Hoffman, NPS
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Transcribed by: Jo Anne Carlson, NPS volunteer 2006

LB: There was a barber shop down at the Highlands. We wanted to get into the city. We're from Cliffside Park, N.J., and we trade shops, barber shops. We traded to the Highlands. This was back in March. This is back in 1929 in March. It was too early in the season, before the rush started, and it was my Dad, my brother and I. The three of us. I was only sixteen years old at the time, and of course there was no business and this place at that time was the Seventh Regiment of the Coast Artillery at the time. It was pretty busy, and of course they had the ordnance here and they were just about at that time moving out to Aberdeen, Maryland.

TH: Well, from what I read, I understand they moved out in 1919, like Bernie Duze will tell me and you'll tell me that in 1929 you still remember the ordnance still being there.

LB: Right. The ordnance and everything was still out here. They were moving it at the time.

TH: Even in 1929?

LB: Yes, in '28 and '29, 'cause I came here in '29.

LB: Everything was still here in 1929, I came here in '29. They were just getting rid of the ordnance in the north part of Sandy Hook. And they were moving it all down to

Aberdeen. And some of them went out to Carlisle Barracks (PA), some of the outfits. The seventh coast moved to Fort Sill, I think its in Texas (Oklahoma). They moved out there. In the meantime, the early part, in May of 1930, the 52nd Coast Artillery, it was made up of C Battery, E Battery, Headquarters Battery, the band, came to Ft. Hancock from Ft. Eustis, Virginia. And that's how the 52nd came about here. And this happens to be the home base of the 52nd. Even when the, back in 1956, when they reorganized the field artillery, when they came back here. They call it the 52nd, no wait a minute, the missile outfit.

TH: Artillery Brigade. The 52nd Artillery Brigade.

LB: Right. And they took it from the 52nd Coast Artillery.

TH: So yeah...

LB: And that's how we started our little, base here. And 52nd stayed from 1930 right on through World War II.

LB: Of course they were using the batteries out along the coast here. At that time was only the, barbettes and disappearing guns. The sixteen-inch gun, the twelve-inch gun and eight-inch guns….

TH: From what I've read of all the defenses here, the largest guns they had were twelve-inch.

LB: Twelve-inch. Wait a minute, I'll take that back. The sixteen was out in Fort Tilden (NY).

TH: Yeah, right over here. Fort Tilden, right across the harbor…

LB: There were two big sixteen-inch guns. And there was one place, no, that was put up during World War II, Joe.

TH: Right, they had them up on Highlands hill here.

LB: Does that sound familiar to you?

TH: Yeah that… I'd like to know where you came down here and set up a barber shop.

LB: Okay alright, now, what really happened. You don't mind, it gets to be a little risque too?

TH: No. The full story, if it's alright with you, I like to hear the full story.

LB: So I went to work for this barber, a fellow by the name of Frenchy. He was in the service at the time, and they had battery barbers. They done away with battery barbers

and they made civilian barbers. This Max Ajoulay (sp) was a G.I. and he bought himself out, at that time, you could buy yourself out.

LB: And he became a barber here. He opened up the barber shop right in that little corner.

TH: This building here. It used to be the PX.

LB: No. It used to be the gymnasium (Referring to Bldg 70).

TH: Back then, yes, the old gymnasium.

LB: The PX came at the 19-, World War II, that's 1941 or 42, right Joe? This used to be the PX here?

JT: The beer garden was downstairs.

LB: The beer garden was downstairs. The lunch room.

JT: Yeah, the beer garden was downstairs, and the lunch room.

TH: Building 53, here, right.

LB: Right, and that's building 70. (Laughter) How well I know it: I been in that room there for 44 years.

TH: That would be the, let's see, that's the south west corner of the building, here, the front of it, the southwest corner.

LB: Southwest corner, right. Well, anyway I worked with this Max. He was fooling around with women. He got into trouble with one and he started writing out these checks that bounced back. And of course, the Post Exchange would not stand for it. He sent a few to the PX, and they caught up with him and they threw him out. Now, what happened in the meantime, the fellow that we traded barber shops with, that traded our shop in the city came down here. He took over the barbershop here and of course I was working for him. I stayed on. See I, in other words, I was borrowed from my Dad, and I stayed ever since. I never moved out of here. Well, I worked with him for about two years and he was starting to fool around with the women, too. He opened a little beauty parlor in the corner there, and he started playing around with the hairdresser, and they took off, and he ran off. Just took off and the barber shop was closed. In the meantime, I had to come to work. I had to crawl through the window to get the shop opened. There was a Colonel Magruder at the time. He was the Post Commander, and I was seventeen years old, I was eighteen rather, yeah, just 18. He says, "Louie, I can't depend on anybody that comes up here, I want you to run the shop." So I told him on one condition that I run the shop, that I have my Dad and brother up here. I said, "We have the equipment and all". He says,

"Fine." So that's how I ran the shop. We moved out of Highlands and up here, and we ran the shop since.

TH: That's from 1929 to---

LB: Well, I came on here in 1929, and my Dad came here in 1934.

TH: Right, a few years later.

LB: In fact I still got the contracts, from 1934, as Post Barber till the present time, up until 1974. Oh!, I been out of here one year that's correct. In 1950, they closed the shop.

TH: It was deactivated.

TH: It was deactivated, and---

JT: They closed this place too.

TH: The gas station right here?

JT: Yeah.

LB: And I moved to, well, I opened my shop at the Berkley-Carteret in Asbury Park. That was 1950. Yeah, 1951 when they activated it again. This was when the anti-aircraft outfit came in. Colonel Woods. He was a C Battery Colonel of the 52nd and he happened to come here as the Commanding Officer of the post. And, the Post Exchange of Fort Monmouth called me up, and he says, "Lou, do you want to come back to Fort Hancock again." I says, "I'd love to." He says, "We're activating the post and we want you to open up the shop again." So I came in with all my equipment and opened up again. And of course, I knew the commanding officer, because he was a captain of the old 52nd, he became the commanding officer of the post. And of course you know, Col. Woods' boys. And his brother recommended one of Colonel's sons to West Point. He made it. Today he's a Colonel. And I recommended another fellow, what was his name, now. I recommended two West Point…

JT: English, No. Greenley

LB: No, no, not Col. Greenley.

JT: His son.

LB: No, oh you know I can't remember. Hardening of the arteries.

(Laughter)

JT:—One other thing, if I may interject.

TH: No, please do, because you're…

JT: In 1938, they really activated the post. I mean a lot of National Guard…

TH: Units were being called up.

JT: … and at the same time the orginal 52nd, as we knew it, on the post was absorbed by the 245th Coast Artillery. They came from Brooklyn. And then, there was a lot of disappointment, because they though they were Regular Army and then to be absorbed by a National Guard Unit. They were heartsick.

TH: Yeah.

JT: But they were all good soldiers. They griped a bit but nothing ever… I mean they appreciated it.

LB: Yeah, and at the time when the war broke out, they made all groups and they shipped them all over the world.

TH:They needed more men then.

LB: Yeah, that's right. And they formed new men.

JT: They were some of the first outfits to go overseas, and a lot of them were annihilated. A mean a lot of them that went over they were never heard of again because they were, you know, during the early years of the war, they went to the Pacific. That's where they went. They were annihilated. I mean most of the 52nd, as we knew it.

LB: Right, the original 52nd.

TH: I was just going to ask. You were here at the gas station, and you were the barber was close by. I was wondering what were the prices back then?

LB: Very, very cheap!

JT: Three cents for a sandwich.

TH: Right here down in the basement?

JT: Yeah. Well here, and then they had another little, snack bar, was it here.

LB: Yeah in the first building.

JT: Snack bar.

TH: First mess hall?

JT&LB: Right.

TH: Here opposite 53.

JT: Well, they had a lot of money because they all in the batteries on the post were sort of shareholders in the money that the PX was making, or putting together. And then they had, at the end of the year, they would either distribute the money or have a big party and things like that. Sometimes when they had the surplus of funds instead of giving the money away, they would sell sandwiches and ice-cream or…

LB: Give it back…May I interrupt on this one? PX ran was self supporting itself. Each post had their own PX, they had their own PX officer, their own steward and their own employees. They had the G.I.'s work. If it was a PFC, he was getting half of his pay. In other words if it was $21 a month, he was getting $11 more, because he was working in the PX. The Steward was the same way. He might be a corporal he was getting $53. He would get half of his pay. That would be $20 some odd dollars and that was his pay. Now all the excess funds, I mean all the excess profits, the profits were so little, only made one or two cents on each item, used to go back into the batteries, they would get so much percentage. And the same with my percentage. I used to cut hair for twenty-five cents. Every $.25 I used to give them ten percent of my take. If it was $100 a month, I'd give them ten dollars. Each battery would get it. And they'd take it and they'd put it in their battery funds and they can use it the way they please with. Until the Post Exchange became nationwide, and then it went into one central fund.

JT: Out of Baltimore.

LB: And that would give it back to the batteries, whatever, you understood that? You knew about this.

TH: No I didn't know about this setup.

LB: And that's how the Post Exchange ran at the time, because each one was independent. And of course, they used to go toward athletic funds to buy equipment with it or during their recreation, I mean their regimental celebration, they'd have, of course a beach party or picnic and invite the families and on and so forth. It was great. It was nice for the families living out here. It was just so beautiful. Hey we're cooking under the sun here. Can't we go in the shade?

TH: Yeah, let's …. I want to know the starting gas prices for gasoline back then.

LB: Joe can tell you on that.

JT: It was 13 cents to start but then it went right on up. They had to keep it less than the outside. We couldn't compete with the outside. We couldn't sell to civilians. We could only sell to G.I.'s. So things weren't as good as we thought.

TH: Why is that? Is this the Army policy?

LB: No, that wasn't it too, Joe. May I comment on that? The stores, the merchants in the Highlands or the surrounding areas were complaining.

JT: Well, that's what I'm saying. We couldn't compete with the outside. We had to keep all our prices, polish, gas, tires, antifreeze, batteries, had to be below the outside. We weren't in competition but we still…we were stymied because we couldn't sell to the civilian help. They used to have a heck of a lot of civilian help out here. But we weren't allowed to sell it. Only G.I.'s.

LB: We managed. I managed very well. I raised a family.

JT: We didn't get rich.

LB: I was very happy… to tell you the truth, I enjoyed every year I was out here. I really enjoyed it.

TH: What were your prices starting here?

LB: 25 cents.

TH: For a hair cut?

LB: Haircut, yeah. Then it went up to 30, 35, 40, 50 (cents). When I left here, it was $1.25. That's back in 1974.

JT: I think the most we ever got for a gallon of gas was 18 cents.

LB: And I remember cigarettes. Two packs for a quarter at the time.

JT: Beer for a Nickel.

TH: There seems to have been…this whole area right in here with the P.X….

JT: The YMCA opened right here.

LB: In the back here, that's the old "Y".

JT: This was built during World War II, you know, the old building, the old "Y". And there used to be on the other side, you know where they had the hand ball court? There used to be a little gym.

TH: Yes, there was a wooden structure there.

JT: Right there. Turn that off…

LB: You said that had 18,000.

TH: That's what I've read.

LB: Actually it's 17,000. That's 1,000 men less. And I had 22 barbers working for me. This one here, this used to be the officers' shop. Then Building 56, no Building 23, I had eight chairs, an eight chair shop. Then I had another barber shop over in the "Tent City" area with three barbers and another one up in the (Battery) Bloomfield area, where the Officers' Club is.

TH: Oh yeah, where the Officers' Club is, Battery Bloomfield…

LB: And I had another barber shop with four barbers up there. Each place where the barber shop was, they had a P.X. We worked in all the areas. I really was busy. They had me going. And, of course, at the P.X. we had an officer, Lieutenant Dowd. She was an officer in the P.X.

LB: If I could only remember names.

JT: There's a lot of other things that maybe you wouldn't want to print.

TH: Well really, you hate to talk about it but it still is part of the story.

JT: Well, I'll tell you of one incident…

TH: Maybe we could keep walking because of the mosquitoes…Were they really this bad?

JT: and LB: Yes.

TH: They seem to be the scourge of Sandy Hook.

JT: Sandy Hook is noted for mosquitoes.

LB: If the G.I.'s were on guard, they had to have the mosquito bars on their heads.

TH: The netting?

JT: It used to be the old guardhouse here.

TH: We'll go in here to escape some of these mosquitoes.

LB: And I could tell you some stories in this guardhouse too.

TH: There were black soldiers during World War II?

JT: That's right.

TH: And the Unit designation again was…?

LB: Well, they didn't break those units up until…

JT: No, they made cadres out of them and they put most of them together.

LB: No, no Joe… This came in when the anti-aircraft outfit came in.

JT: Well, that was the 52nd Coast Artillery. They were anti-aircraft.

(Muffled talking)

LB: Shut that off and I'll freshen Joe's mind on this.

LB: Was it before the war broke out?

JT: Yes, the 245th:

JT: October 1938.

TH: The 245th came in?

LB: Right. The whole regiment of the 245th:

JT: From Brooklyn.

LB: From Brooklyn, yeah. Let's see, there was one, two, three, four…four battalions. A, B and C; D, E and F; G, H and I; J, K and L. Okay?

JT: They were the batteries.

LB: They were the batteries. When we were set up with this barbershop, we were right there where Duze (Post Tailor) used to be. We had 16 chairs in there and they were coming there. This one fella, one colored man, he was a master sergeant, was Col. Glimes' orderly and nobody knew how to cut his hair. Phil Latini was the one.

JT: Yeah I remember him.

LB: When he wanted to step into the barber, the barbershop, they had one chair open, one of the barbers refused to cut his hair, not because he didn't want to cut his hair but he didn't know how. So Phil Latini says, "I'll cut it." But then there was a stink first because the sergeant walked out and he went to Col. Glime. Col.Glime came to me because I was running the shop and he says 'That man, he's no different from anybody else and if you refuse to cut this man's hair, I'll have every one of your barbers out of here and none of my men will get haircuts here. So Phil Latini says "Oh, I'll take care of him, Colonel". So I explained it to the colonel that we didn't know how to cut colored people's hair which we never did. That's the truth. So, finally, Phil Latini cut it and that was the only colored man at the time.

JT: I remember that.

LB: That's why I don't remember any colored outfits during World War II. They came in… you can shut it off…

JT: There wasn't a colored outfit. They came in with the 245th but they were more or less set on their own in one particular area. They had their own barracks.

TH: They were part of the 245th?

JT: Yes, they were…I don't know if Bernie Duze remember it.

JB: No he was in the service.

JT: No, he was in the service. But then I had to run the business for his father because I was very familiar with him. The whites didn't want to have anything to do with them at the time, but later on it was all intermingled.

TH: Integrated, yeah.

JT: They were in one outfit or the other, there was no more… like the cadre set up just for colored. It didn't happen anymore, because they all intermingled with the other outfits, you know, with the white, Indian, Chinese or what. But at the very beginning it was brutal for a while.

TH: I know. I've done a lot of reading on the subject.

LB: At Fort Hancock this outfit from Texas came up, anti-aircraft outfit, that was the 120 (mm).

TH: They were with the anti-aircraft guns.

LB: They were all anti-aircraft guns.

JT: They replaced Coast Artillery…

LB: - The old colonel in charge of the whole works was Colonel Woods, and of course, he was captain of the old 52nd Coast Artillery. And he was in charge of the anti-aircraft outfits.

TH: I have to ask you. Do you recall any of the guns being scrapped? I read where they were just torched up, used for scrap metal, the disappearing…?

JT: They were used as scrap.

TH: Never used against an enemy, but I'm talking about…do you recall the junk men coming in?

LB: The war guns? They were scrapped, yes.

JT: Even that great big 16 they had on the hill.

TH: Right.

JT: They had a helluva time getting it up there. But when it came down, it came down in pieces and they never fired one shot out of it. Every once in a while in the papers you would read, on a certain date, at a certain hour, open your windows. Remove glass, remove dishes from you counter. We will fire such and such a gun from the hill. But it never materialized. They never fired that gun and they finally cut it up and scrapped it.

LB: I watched them fire these small guns. I watched them fire many times, the disappearing gun, the one in Granger.

TH: Battery Granger, right.

LB: Yeah. I've watched that fired many, many times. I've watched the boys work on it. Do you want me to describe it?

TH: Yes, please.

LB: They had these observation towers within a couple of miles apart. They used the azimuth instruments to check their target. The target is towed by tugboat. It's on a raft with a red tent. It looks like a tent from a distance. And it's towed 150 feet by a cable or maybe 250 feet. It's towed along the coastline. And when they "spot" the target, it's called into the gun, the rangefinder and they throw instrument numbers on them and whatever number they call in, they use that on the big gun until they get it into line of fire. And they use three types of powder. When they open up the breech block, one powder is the firing powder, that's black. And the next is yellow, that's the gas. When they close the breech block, they have a little firing pin. It's up to the captain, when those two targets when those two instruments work together spotting the target of course up in the towers… fire to the captain. And when the captain sees its fit to fire, they fire it.

When they fire it, the gun goes over the wall and they have the man on the breech he has a cord or a rope around his waist. When the captain says to fire, he just pulls over the side. It hits the fuse, whatever is the cap, and it burns out the gas, makes the flame, and it shoots out the projectile. It's such a concussion that the whole place vibrates. I've seen, this is no lie, I've seen the britches, these fatigue pants fly right off a man's body.

TH: Ripped right off from the concussion.

LB: From the concussion. And the "sight man" – I've seen blood come out of his ears. It's such a terrific concussion.

TH: That kind of answers my next question. I always though these things went off with such a terrific bang, these guys must have really…

LB: And there's a lot of men in the well loading up the projectile for the next shot. And they do it so fast. And, of course, when they aim it at the target, they try **not** to hit it.

TH: They come near it but don't hit it.

LB: They come close because they feel a battle wagon is…

TH: Really big.

LB: 400-5000 feet and if they go to within 1,000 feet, that's a hit, within the range. And if they hit the target, that means another day shot, because the tugboat has to come all the way back in, pick up another target and go out again. So that's and all day affair. It's something to see. It's something great to see. I used to enjoy it.

JT: The mines were the same way.

TH: The underwater mines.

JT: The underwater mines. They had them casemate their… You could see the water out there. He would be down in the hole. But he would know. He would just push a button but he would know by instruments and by words he would get from an observer you know. And he would blow that thing.

LB: And I also watched the ones down at Kingman and Mills.

TH: Yeah the real big 12-inch guns.

LB: That's the 12-inch down there. I watched them fire that. That's something to see, too, where they use the ramrod.

TH: To ram the shell in.

LB: Right. They used eight men to do it. Eight men, In fact, I've got pictures…

TH: Really? We're trying to collect photographs… I asked you about if you personally saw them scrap guns like Granger.

LB: No, Granger, no. Granger's still there. Isn't the gun still there?

TH: No. They scrapped that around '43, 1943, according to what…

LB: They had one until not too long ago.

TH: The disappearing gun, Granger, was supposed to be 1943, according to the official Army reports.

LB: Didn't they have one before I even left here? Is there any guns up there now? Nothing at all?

TH: Battery Granger right down.

LB: Right back to the lighthouse.

TH: It's totally gone. There's nothing up there.

LB: Well, it was there in the late '60's.

JT: They had a lot of guns like S. There used to be cables. You'd want to see the piles of cables… They were attached to the mines out there. And they had these junk dealers come in and out all the time and the great big anchors that they were part concrete part iron.

LB: You mean for the mines. We also had minefields out there.

TH: You might be confusing Granger with Gunnison, Battery Gunnison. Two 6-inch guns.

LB: Are they still out there?

TH: Well, you know, the Smithsonian was looking for armament for their museum collection and the Army gave them the two six-inch guns in 1962. They never got money for the exhibit to put these on display and they were laying out in the field in Maryland for 14 years. And we just got them back in February and you should see them now. We sand blasted the rust, we primed them and now we've repainted them an olive drab color. We've got them back in February. They're not disappearing. They're barbette pedestal-mount base guns.

LB: I've watched them fired, too.

TH: Would the concussion tear off a man's hand? Would they go off with a tremendous boom, a crack, what would you say?

LB: It's a roar. It's not a crack.

JT: Yeah, but the whole area would shake, like heavy thunder.

TH: Right even here in the fort area?

LB: We'd get the whole concussion.

JT: Its sand, I imagine it was transferred through the ground.

LB: Granger was a disappearing gun. And Gunnison was the barbettes. Then, of course, the barbettes were down at the Kingman and Mills.

JT: That was on the right side down there. I remember that.

TH: Yeah, we passed it and they casemated those.

JT: That was one of the last they built. I remember when Simpson who worked for me at the gas station. What's his first name?

LB: Pete. He worked there.

JT: Yeah, Pete… He was the foreman. He was here for many many years.

TH: – He's been back.

JT: Well, his father was here in '98, I think it was. I remember him and all of a sudden… we don't need your services anymore.

TH: Johnny Simpson, like Bernie Duze.

LB: I knew that whole gang.

TH: Yeah. Bernie was saying that he was a tremendous engineer. No college education but he knew how to…

JT: He was self-taught. He was everything. He was the bricklayer, the mason, the carpenter, whatever, he was.

TH: I wasn't here the day his son but…

JT: Which son?

TH: It was Pierre, Pete? What kind of man was Johnny Simpson? Was he a likable fellow?

LB: Oh yes. They all liked him. Tall and thin.

JT: He didn't have too much to say. But when he said something, you knew it was no baloney. It was all true –like he knew what he was talking about.

TH: What was a regular day here for a soldier. Or even yourself. How would you start your day?

LB: Well, you mean to start work? Eight o'clock in the morning and I would get busy until 4:30, 5 o'clock.

TH: By the way, were you living out here?

LB: No. I lived in the Highlands at that time.

JT: 'Til he got married.

LB: 'Til I got married.

JT: '34. '36.

LB: We used to have - I guess it could be revealed now - getting all our medical attention with the medics there because we had our own hospital here.

TH: Yeah, the old post hospital.

LB: Right. Well, we used to… There was just the three of us, my father, brother and I. We had to go once a month and once every six months for a Wasserman and once a month to get our tests because we worked in the barber shop. And I had an awful big growth of tonsils. So he examined me and he says, "You know, these tonsils have to come out." I says, Colonel, "I don't have the time" And he says, "That's all right. You don't need no time on this. Just forget about it." So it went to Friday night. He calls me up and says "Tomorrow morning I want you to come to the hospital. Don't have any breakfast." And I wondered what the heck he's up to now. So I did that. All GI's worked there. A G.I. gave me a shot in the arm. Went upstairs. Put me on a chair and said "Open your mouth:"… and took my tonsils out. Just right there and then. Shoved me in bed and he says. "You stay in bed." He says, "Tomorrow we'll let you go." The next day I got up.

JT: They ordered you to sweep the room out.

LB: Yes. Every G.I. had their own chores to do, sick or good. They had to sweep under their own beds, make beds. Didn't have no orderlies then. Didn't have any orderlies. Well anyway I went home. I came to work three days later. He called me up on the phone. He says, "you own me a bill." I says, "How much?" He says "Would $1.50 be too much for you?" You know what he charged me? He charged me $1.00 for the room, staying overnight. And 50 cents for medication. And that's it… That was in 1936. I wasn't married. You were here, weren't you?

JT: No it was two years before.

LB: I wasn't even married yet?

JT: I got here October, September or '38.

LB: That was 1936. I had my tonsils out here. No bother, no trouble.

TH: You would ride a car to work and to come out?

LB: Yes.

JT: And they had all kinds of insurances. We were checked by the provost marshal's office and you had to have all kinds of coverage.

LB: This was a restricted area.

TH: Top secret area.

JT: We always had guards at the gate. You had to stop at the gate.

TH: That's right down by the (Route) 36 Bridge. The Park entrance was at 36.

JT: Right where the wall, the seawall is.

JT: The first gate.

TH: It's interesting, you mentioned that when you got married, where did you live? Because you where living in the Highlands and you commuted until the time you got married.

LB: I lived in Long Branch. I married a Long Branch girl. That's how I …got him interested up here.

JT: We married two sisters…

TH: You certainly had a lot of business here with all these soldiers, correct?

LB: Yes.

TH: And you started your day off at eight o'clock? Men were sent, would they be sending them to you?

LB: They couldn't come during the time they were working but they used to come in shifts. And every week was an inspection, Saturday morning inspection. So Friday from eight o'clock in the morning until seven, eight o'clock at night, continuous working. They had to get their haircuts. And at that time we were working on coupons and credit. No money passed. No money. If I make in a week's time, in cash, $5 a week in cash, - the only ones who paid me in cash was the first sergeant, the master sergeant and officers. Even the officers used to sign a slip. Officers had coupon checks, PX checks. And every week I used to paste them, give them to the PX and at the end of the month they give me cash for it. And all the credit I gave, those little cards, would be $1 credit. $1 they'd get four haircuts out of that. They want more. $2. They can get a shave, whatever they need if they want to be extravagant. So at the end of the month I used to get my salary.

JT: Another thing, if I may, in between here, when a man was discharged or transferred, he had to come around with a slip. He had to go to the different concessions- the Post Exchange, the barbershop, laundry, gas station. And you had to okay it. If he owed any money, you would put a certain amount of money that he owed you and before he cleared the post, they would take that money away from him. And we would receive the money.

LB: That's right. I've had checks coming in from Hawaii, from Panama from…

JT: From Corregidor.

LB: Corregidor. That's in the Philippines. Right. Panama, Philippines and Hawaii. Checks coming in from those areas where they didn't have the money or were transferred to Hawaii, they sent me my check. Never lost a dime on it.

JT: You could almost say that a lot of men that were on Corregidor may originally have started here at Fort Hancock.

TH: That's right. They had Coast Artillery.

LB: The same with (?) and Balboa……and Panama. They were all Coast Artillery men. And Hawaii, too. I can name you all the places. Armstrong, Kamia-mia, DeRussy. They were all Coast Artillery camps. I used to know. Guys would come in, you know. They'd talk about them. I knew as much about all those areas as those fellas over there. They'd say "How do you know all these things." Well, I'd hear it in the barbershop.

JT: You'd hear a lot of stories.

TH: How was your barbershop laid out? What was the type of arrangement?

LB: Well, I changed it three times. When I first came up there, I had wooden chairs, big mirrors. Then when we took over the shop, when we moved in from Highlands to here, then I had all of this marble, marbleized.

TH: Really? On an army post.

LB: Then I changed again. Then World War II broke out. Then we had brand new fixtures. They said "Well, you made a lot of money." Yes, we made a lot of money but when it broke out, all of a sudden you get 15,000 men coming at one time. They weren't coming at once. Five thousand would come in at one time. Then about two or three weeks later, another two or three thousand men. Well, we had to keep adding chairs. We had to keep hiring barbers. I had to go out and buy it. Well, I ran up a bill of $35,000 for chairs.

TH: Just chairs?

LB: Barber chairs. Well, each chair ran four or five hundred dollars.

TH: They're expensive.

LB: And all the mirrors… Well, by the time the war was over, I paid all my bills - I made good money. I had 22 barbers working for me –I didn't get too much out of it. All of a sudden, boom, the place goes down, builds up, goes down, builds up, goes down. And that's the story of Fort Hancock.

JT: And another thing concerning the barbershop-because I used to, we were related, you know, more or less-they'd bring these National Guard outfits in fresh from the streets of Brooklyn. They had that long hair, fluffy old wavy hair. And all of a sudden they'd come up and they'd line them up on the outside. Inside the building around the back and they'd have all these barbers and there'd be a sergeant there and they would start cutting hair… closer, closer. By the time they got through they would have a crew cut and they would almost bawl and cry.

LB: They'd want to hit me.

TH: Really?

LB: Good thing the sergeant was there. Boy, they were rough. There were all these beautiful locks. From Brooklyn and all. I'll never forget the time they were bringing them in. See, they had a quarantine. Right in back of the tailor shop there's a big…

TH: Tent City. That's where the trailer park is. That's where they had a layout of tents back there.

LB: That's right. The first bunch came in-there was about 1,000. They were quarantined for six weeks. After three weeks another bunch came in. So the first bunch that was quarantined they bring in the same place and they had to start over again. This happened three times. Over 3,000 men. So the first group had to wait for the last group. So, you know how long the first group was in. Two months already. You know how long their hair was. I'll never forget Colonel Reid, medical officer, he says "Lou, how many men you got? How many barbers have you got? I had eight barbers here. He says "Fine. This barbershop is closed tomorrow to anybody." "Why?" "We're letting out the recruits. They're coming out of quarantine and they all need haircuts." "Okay." He says, "What time are you coming in?" I says "What time do you want us to come in?" "The earlier the better." So I told the boys, "What time do you want to come in tomorrow. 7 o'clock? Fine. You want to come 6? That's all right, too." "No, we'll come in 7." So they came in at 7. They lined those boys up. You have no idea."

JT: Did you ever hear of the two-minute haircut?

LB: You have no idea. We burned out four clippers. We burned out. The men they all had hats on. By the time they threw their hats in the air it was finished.… Those boys were cutting hair in a minute's time. Believe me. And we were wading in their hair up to our knees. And that's no lie. Three thousand men; eight barbers. We took care of them all. We worked until 12 o'clock that night. Those boys were pooped. We got 'em all.

TH: What were you paying your men?

LB: They were commission. They were all commission. The more haircuts. Boy, they were knocking them out. They didn't care. Up and down.

TH: And you were going to say, the colonel…

LB: He commended me on doing such a good job. And everybody was warning, "When are you going to open up that barbershop?" They all needed haircuts. Well, then the next day we opened up our regular trade.

TH: You must have been tired the very next day your men there?

LB: Yes, they were. They were really tired. Remember that gang, Joe?

TH: So during World War II, you said you had marble finish in the…

LB: I set a nice set up, a beautiful set up. All mirrors on one side, mirror on the other side.

JT: Mirrors on the wall.

LB: All around.

TH: Did you have a barber pole over here in the corner?

LB: They had one. They took it out of here.

TH: Really? What kind of equipment did you use back then?

LB: The same – electric clippers.

TH: Today as they use now, yeah?

LB: The same thing. Very seldom we used the scissors. All clipper work. No scissors.

TH: Right. By the way, you mentioned they started at eight. Did you end at five, was it a regular 8 to 5…?

LB: Our regular hours were from eight in the morning until five. Then on Saturdays from eight in the morning until one. Sundays, sundays closed. All holidays closed. All. Every little excuse. One day would be Regimental Day, that would be closed. For Flag Day, it's closed. Any government holiday, it was closed.

TH: I imagine all topics of conversation were covered at the barbershop just like they are today?

LB: Exactly. I'm telling you, at the time you talk about, listen, when I first came here, if there was boys coming into the barbershop, sitting out for a haircut. It didn't make any difference. Any officer could walk in that barbershop, any senior G.I., would get attention, regardless of where they were, this is when I came up here in 1930. And he was next on the chair.

TH: Officers had the respect.

LB: Right. He had the authority and he had the respect. And that went throughout the whole post, not only in the barbershop, even in the PX. There was no line.

TH: But they stopped it later on.

LB: This happened when World War II broke out. And he had to wait in line.

TH: The officer paid too?

LB: Of course. Oh yes. They paid. In fact, the officers paid more. The officers at that time were paying 30 cents a hair cut and the G.I.'s were paying 25.

TH: I'm sure you used clippers on them. Or scissors too?

LB: The works. Sanitation, couldn't beat it. Once a week we had the officers from the medics come in and they examine the barbershop. They go through the tools, they go through the floors, mirrors. Everything had to be spotless.

JT: You had to keep tools in formaldehyde. And everything in the sanitation, they would…

TH: Check your fingernails?

LB: And that was something though, no G.I. would have to worry going into a barbershop.

JT: About getting the creeping crud.

LB: That's exactly what's true. Then once a month we had an inspection, not only by the medics, by the commanding officer. He comes, inspects the Post Exchange, the barbershop, the tailor, restaurant. Whatever concession was on the post the commanding officer is responsible for. He'd go around with white gloves. If he didn't like it, he'd make you he'd make you do it over again. And if he didn't like it again, he'd close you up.

TH: Was there a difference in the Army before World War II and then after?

LB:& JT:Yes. Very much.

LB: It's just like we right now would say "when we were kids, it's not like you kids growing up. We had to obey our parents. It's exactly the same way. The old G.I.'s.

TH: The old Army.

LB: The Old Army. It's true.

JT: On the road passing an officer. Now they get by with "Hi" or something like that. In those days…

LB: That's true. Each colonel that comes in the post, that takes over the command, he has his own ideas and his own way. That's how they are. I'll never forget Colonel Kessler. The fact is there's a movie theater named after him. He used to love to go around the parade grounds or around the place, had to be spic and span. If he sees a match there, anywhere, he'll call up all the batteries and say "There's a match stick on the post." And he'd call up all the troops out looking for that matchstick. He wouldn't tell them where it is.

TH: But he'd seen it.

JT: And no passes until it's found.

LB: And they'd go out there and they'd say they got it they policed it up. And that matchstick, its still there. You'd see the grass like velvet, and the grounds. The boys got so used to it, when they were smoking, they used to break their butts and sprinkle the ashes around. The paper they would put in their pockets.

JT: Every Saturday they had to get the garbage cans and they took them down here. It was like a steam room, put them in, and those things were really sterilized. But once they got back to the back porch over there, they had to actually be polished. Did you ever see a new one coming out of a hardware store? After many uses, a lot of uses, they had to resemble the pail as it was when it originally came out of a hardware store.

TH: Brand new.

JT: Brand new. They had to be sterilized and polished.

LB: That old guardhouse here. These boys when they come in on any kind of an excuse, he's in there for a month. No week or two. Thirty days.

TH: You mean a soldier offender on anything at all was stuck in the guardhouse here?

LB: One month. If he refuses an officer to salute him back.

JT: They didn't salute an officer.

LB: I'm talking about an officer – they disobeying him or something like that.
End of Tape #1.

(There appears to be a gap in the conversation between the first and second tape.)
Begin Tape #2.

LB: They didn't have oil burners at the time.

TH: Coal?

LB: Coal. They used to go down the cellars, pick up these coal... what they call ashcans.

TH: Cinders.

LB: Cinders. And dump them. They did have trucks. They had mules. They had to dump them in these mule carts and go along. All the officer's row and all over the post collecting coal ashes and fill their bins with coal. That was their job. Secondly, they had to cut the lawns. With the mules now, they didn't have any ….

TH: Lawn mowers.

LB: They had these great big mowers but the mules used to…

TH: Drag them around…

LB: They used to cut the parade grounds. And incidentally, that used to be the polo grounds. This was the parade grounds here. They'd play polo here.

TH: The field behind Headquarters building was Polo?

LB: That was the polo grounds.

TH: The Army officers would play?

LB: Army officers would play officers from different camps-Fort Dix, Fort Jay, Fort Tilden…

TH: What about Fort Monmouth?

LB: Fort Hamilton. No, no, Fort Monmouth wasn't active at the time. It was there but it used to be Camp Vail.

TH: That was more a school. Yes, signal corps.

LB: They didn't have artillery.

JT: This was a bonafide Army post, I mean.

LB: And right there where the Officers' Club is, just the right of it, used to be the barn, the stables where they used to have horses. And where the officers, no…

JT: The quartermaster corps…

LB: No, the EM Club.

TH: The Enlisted Man's Club.

LB: That used to be the mules stables.

TH: Okay. I know down here, right down the street, the big black cannon, the Rodman.

LB: That used to be your stables.

TH: That used to be the old stables (bldg 36). Now back in '74, when I came here, I got treated to a beer in there by an Army officer and that was an open mess. But that's originally the stables?

LB: Mules.

TH: Mules were kept in there. And the horse stables?

LB: Corrals were in the back of it.

LB: Right in the back of it there. Down further near the ocean, used to be the regular horses, pony horses.

TH: The stables for that…you know Battery Potter out there? The stables were out behind that area?

LB: Before you get to Battery Potter, it's just beyond…on this chart here…it's right down by the Officers' club though. Right there but south of that.

TH: I know where it is an empty field.

JT: The Quartermasters' Barracks were right at that fork, you know where there's like a circle? They had a stable before the building was put up. Now I'm not saying that the (inaudible). That's a brick building in there now but previous to that they had a wooden building and they had the stables there.

LB: Now that's where all the horses were, the polo ponies.

TH: For the Officers.

LB: And where the EM club is, that used to be the mules. And talk about mules being trained I remember old Gordon. He used to be a mule skinner.

JT: Yes, I remember him.

LB: You know how a stable smells like?

TH: Yes, I've been in a barn.

LB: If you'd go in there, you'd never know.

TH: It was spotless.

LB: The troughs, the troughs where the mules…you can drink water out of it. That's how clean it was. All you smell was hay. That's all you smell in there. You couldn't smell any… nothing. That's how clean that place was. They used to scrub them down, comb them. I've seen old Gordon, a mare, clean inside of her.

TH: Yeah, the rear end. The Army mule was sacred in the old Army. That's why.

LB: Cleaned every part of that mule. That mule would work from 7:30, that's when they start, 7:30 to 11:30. No matter where it's at, everything is by bugle at that time.

TH: Bugle calls.

LB: Yeah, everything. First call, mess call, the reveille, retreat, its all calls. In fact, in front of that parade ground they had a big horn.

TH: A megaphone.

LB: Yeah, the megaphone. And they'd blow that bugle in that megaphone and it went all over the place. Mules knew everyone of those calls. 11:30 they'd stop dead. They won't go. You can whip'em, do anything, they won't go any further. They'll turn around and go right back to their stables. And that's the truth. I mean that. They'll have their rest and when they're feed and watered, at 1 o'clock they're ready to go out again. 4:30…that's it.

TH: About how many did they have here?

LB: Mules?

TH: Yeah, mules.

LB: Let's see. I think they had about 12.

TH: From like between '29 through World War II?

LB: Right up until they started mechanizing.

JT: I don't remember them when I was here, Lou, '38. It was just before that when they got rid of the mules. Didn't they have a fire or something?

LB: In the barn?

JT: So I was told. A couple of mules were burnt and after that they didn't have the mules. I was here in '38 and I never remember seeing a mules. But I had heard, there was a lot of stories about them. But I never saw them.

LB: Oh, I remember them.

JT: Well, you were here a lot longer.

LB: Everything was by mules. The only trucks we had was the chain-drive trucks, you know, those big delivery trucks with the chains. The rest was all mules and we had a bus to go back to Highlands, bringing the G.I.'s back and forth. And the train. That's it.

TH: And the boats to New York. That must have been nice.

LB: Oh, that was nice…the *DePew*.

JT: Before that we had the *General Yates*. What happened to the other one?

LB: *General Yates, Chauncey DePew*, and there was a third but I don't remember that one.

TH: The *Ord* .

LB: No, the *Ord* was the mineplanter. That's the one I used to go back and forth to New York on every week. It didn't cost us anything.

TH: There's one called *Meigs, General Meigs*. Of course, that was probably way back because they had a lot of old steamers.

LB: And the commanding officer had his own boat.

TH: Oh, really?

LB: Had a yacht. Colonel…

JT: Well, he had it made, you might say, with these mine-laying boats. A lot of mine-laying boats.

LB: They had three of them. He had a Navy and an Army, the McKinley, the Ord and I can't remember the other one.

JT: Yes, there was another one that went across.

LB: The minelayers. It was something how they operate.

JT: A lot of GI's were hurt on those things. They were working with cables and sometimes they would snap. They weren't free movement, you know.

TH: You mean electrical cables? Right, chained to the anchors.

LB: It was nice to watch.

JT: Sometimes they would get jammed up and they would purposely blow in the water and blow them up because it would be detrimental to the navigation.

JT: Kill the fish all around the area when they blew them things.

TH: Well, the soldiers back before World War II, this is like a general question. What were men like back then as compared with more modern fellas you were familiar with in the ’50;s, ‘60’s, ’70,s? Same type of men coming from all over the United States? The soldiers here, were they nice to you? Like there’s one guy wanted to hit you.

LB: Not because he wanted to hit me, it’s because he wanted a haircut that he thought he could get away with. And I couldn’t do it. I had to follow orders. Because his sergeant told him, he says “We got strict orders that they got to get haircuts.” And I says, “But, sergeant, they don’t want it.” And he says, “That’s an order!” And that’s it.

TH: I thought maybe the level of men. Did you get better men?

JT: Those that were drafted begrudged the fact, most of them. Like they said, “the drafted soldier was a good soldier.” But they were always griping, you know. They always didn’t like this, they didn’t like the food, they didn’t like the cleaning and they hoped they could go to the outside. But they were all good kids. They were only 18,17,19.

LB: All good kids. I mean, never had any trouble.

JT: But they were, you know, they were displaced, you might say, from one regiment to something…to regimentation.

LB: And that’s another thing, too. They were pulled away from home. And they were on their own. Some G.I.’s would take advantage of a meek man or pick on him. No one to go to. Things like that. But that was normal. First time you’ve been away from home and someone tries to take advantage of you or try to… Well, they do the same thing with the G.I.’s.

TH: I’m thinking that when you came here in the late ’20’s here there must have been some even old time soldiers then.

LB: Oh, definitely. World War I soldiers, everyone of them. The war was only ended seven or eight years. Ended eight years when I came over here. Well, (Max) Duze was a World War I.

TH: What was the feeling back then? I read it’s “the lost generation, “disillusioned with fighting over in Europe, coming home and they were unemployed, a lot of the veterans. You know, the time. I’m talking about the time.

LB: At my time it was just about starting the Depression, you know.

TH: Yes, the stock market in ‘29.

LB: Right. And the men a lot of them were in it for adventure. They’d want to go to Hawaii, the Philippines.

TH: Go around the world.

LB: And this is what made them get into the service. None of them were drafted. It was all volunteer. And then, of course, others would get in trouble outside and instead of getting in deeper trouble, they enlisted in the service. And things like that.

JT: They loved the rugged life, always, I mean it was haphazard, I mean free loving and everything like that.

LB: It was something that they wanted to do. It was their own choice. And, of course, the reason for that and this is where the sergeant took advantage of it. They'd say, "You do as I tell you because we didn't tell you to come into the service. This is the way it's done. You gotta do it. Don't step on me. **I** can step on you."

JT: I still think it was the caste system among the older soldiers. If you were a PFC, you were the low man on the totem pole. And they would say things. "You did this." And when you were a corporal, boy, you were starting to advance. And a corporal was a corporal maybe for ten years. He thought he was moving up. It may take him 10-12 years to make Buck Sergeant. In those days, there was a Buck Sergeant, and Sergeant First Class. They didn't have classes like they do now, you know first, second, third, fourth or fifth sergeant. You know, it was a caste system.

TH: A lot of veterans that served here told me you don't go by Officers' Row. If you were a private and the sergeants were over here in the row, enlisted men, that's it…

LB: Yes, out of bounds. If you're married and you live in that area, it's okay. If you're not married its not okay. Even if a sergeant is caught with a PFC playing cards, the sergeant gets busted…

JT: They had quite a code in those days.

TH: I have to ask you, you mentioned the barber when you first came here fooling around with a lady. There were a lot of civilian workers out here. Sex was nothing new, I'm sure it went on back then. The '20's were a "swinging generation" just like the '60's or '70's.

JT: It was worst during the war.

TH: I've been told that. My father. A lot of guys were put in the service. There was a war on. They were young. You didn't know. If you were sent over, that could be it. That could be the end of you life and I guess you'd try to cram everything in.

LB: Well, I'll tell you. During World War II different outfits came from all over the United States. The 72nd came here.

JT: Medics.

LB: They were from Fort Sheridan, Chicago. They came here. And, of course, they brought their women.

JT: Camp chasers.

LB: Some of them were prostitutes.

JT: They were working on post.

LB: Either on the post or down in the Highlands. 'Cause they got left here. When the outfit, regiment, was called away, they got left here. Different outfits came in and, of course, they took over.

TH: Any Army Post, you are going to have that. I was told by veterans. They said Highlands was a real red light town.

JT: When they started working for the PX and the Officers' Club and other places. They took a Wasserman, bing, out the gate they went.

TH: They'd had it.

JT: Disease.

LB: You'd say, "What happened to so and so?" "I don't know."

TH: Mentioning about a lot of soldiers being brought in here, the 72nd was a Coast Artillery?

JT: That was a medical outfit.

TH: A medical outfit.

LB: No, there was another Coast Artillery that came in. It was an artillery post, I think Fort Sheridan.

JT: I think it was the 70th medical outfit from Chicago. And the 72nd artillery, that was anti-aircraft.

LB: That's right. Anti-aircraft.

JT: That was the one had a lot of colored boys in it.

LB: And they were called out three times, right?

JT: The 70th, that's right.

LB: To go overseas.

JT: They got to (Camp) Kilmer and they had to be able to handle a gun. Now, they were all medics and they couldn't. They didn't know what end the shell came out of. So they kept them back at the embarkation port. And they were brought back here and they went out to the range.

LB: They built a, what do you call it, an obstacle course where the monument is.

TH: Halyburton Monument. The Revolutionary War monument. On Horseshoe Cove.

JT: Yeah. There was an obstacle course there.

TH: Part of Camp Lowe?

LB: Yeah, that's where they trained. Well, they had to come back. And then the second time they went up, too much words were going out that they were going overseas, they held them back because you know the word got out. Whisper. You know?

TH: Loose lips sink ships.

LB: So, they held them back. So then the third time they went out. We went home. We went home and when we came back, they were gone. Just overnight like that. Disappeared.

JT: But the Army did a lot of messing up with some of these outfits when they sent them out. Some outfits were forgotten right here. They didn't know whether they were going out or were going to stay or what happened.

LB: Well, that Florida outfit.

JT: Well, that was another outfit. They came up. Well, then they were in the warm climate, the came up here and they issued I think, now wait a minute, it was Serge, the Class A uniforms. So then they were going to be shipped out, so they pulled. 'Cause I picked them up by the truckload. They pulled their Class A uniforms and they gave them cottons. You know where they ended up? In Alaska with cottons.

TH: Yeah, in Alaska with cottons. This sounds familiar. I've read a lot about Germany. They sent the German armies into Russia wearing summer uniforms and they were stuck like that in the Russian winter. And the same thing in our Army. It's really ironic that it's all over, it seems.

LB: And that was a Florida outfit, too.

TH: From Florida.

JT: But he was a great man for his men, but he was a Colonel because of politics.

LB: Colonel North?

TH: He fought for his men. You know all these units coming here, what was Fort Hancock's main role in World War II? Embarkation point?

JT: More or less. Training. Troop training.

TH: Not boot camp though?

LB: Yes, they did boot camp too. Remember we were telling you about the quarantine.

TH: And that was right into the Army and boot camp.

LB: They gave them uniforms, and they taught them, and they build that obstacle course, and they had that… down by where your first, where you come in now – that little bend.

TH: South beach, in there.

LB: That used to be the rifle range. They used to fire over the wall.

JT: Into the water, towards the ocean.

TH: Oh, the rifle range that's down at the end of the seawall? There's still a big concrete wall there for the old…

LB: That's where they used to fire the guns.

JT: They had the barbed wire there, and they had these kids crawling underneath.

LB: That's the obstacle course.

JT: With the machine guns, you know. Live fire.

LB: Yeah, they had boot training too.

JT: That was really something.

LB: And then they shipped them out.

TH: How did they ship them out of here? By train?

LB: Boat.

TH: Right up to New York City?

JT: Well, trucks, too.

JT: They only had to go to Kilmer most of the time when they were leaving. After Kilmer they went in any direction.

LB: They didn't know where they were going.

JT: They didn't know where the hell they were going.

TH: I was born in 1950, There's a spirit to every generation. My mother and my father, we were a close knit family. I am their only son. And I like to say this, because they've told me a lot about their growing up in the '30's. My Dad is a Marine Corps vet, World War II. It was the era of, you know, the jitterbug, the big bands. And it seems that we were really unified by Pearl Harbor. And Fort Hancock, right at the entrance to New York Harbor, was the jumping place. Both socially and militarily, it was the place. You saw it all, so to speak. Was it like that? Was it really popular and a big buildup of men pouring through here?

LB: Propaganda was big here.

TH: Really?

LB: And don't forget this was a strategic post.

JT: The Harbor Defenses of New York.

TH: New York City.

JT: It covered…protected Philadelphia and New York.

TH: Your main defense was anti-aircraft by then.

JT: By that time, yes.

LB: That's all we had – anti-aircraft.

JT: Of course, then the Coast Artillery was on the way out.

LB: And another big mess they made here –when the war ended and they were bringing the troops back

JT: That was on the re-up…

LB: Oh, that was a mess.

JT: That's when I made money.

LB: They brought men. They didn't know where to put them. They were sleeping in trucks, sleeping on the ground. No room for them.

JT: They had a pocketful of money, though.

LB: They were paying them off here. Paying them off and shipping them out. They were coming in by the thousands. And they had so much money on them because they didn't, some of them didn't get paid for six months, some of them didn't get paid for a year.

JT: And then they were giving them an incentive to re-up. They were giving them $1,000 $1500 to re-up.

LB: If you had rocks and say "I want to sell this for $10," they'd give you $10 for it.

JT: I happened to be at the gas station at that time. And they would come in if they had cars, like antifreeze and tires were hard to get, they would offer me $10, $12, $15 for a gallon of antifreeze. But I couldn't do it because I had an allotted number and I was working out of the PX and I couldn't afford to take those chances. They would pay me anything, they would double the prices, but again, I couldn't do it.

LB: It got so that they had to move it to Dix. They just couldn't handle it here.

JT: They were loaded with dough. They didn't know what the hell to do with it. I mean it was something.

LB: What a mess that was though.

JT: You think they would have sent some of it home, you know, to their parents.

TH: Parents instead of…

JT: Put it in the bank for their own use at a later date.

TH: Young and foolish.

JT: They were that.

JT: They had just come back from the wars. They were glad to be alive. They didn't want to be. Highlands. There used to get a flood of beer every night. They use to guzzle that beer until it came out of their ears.

TH: How much was it during World War II? Was it still about a nickel or a dime then?

JT: What?

TH: Beer, to get a beer – glass or bottle?

LB: A dime.

JT: Ten cents a glass.

LB: A bottle, I think, use do to be 20 cents.

JT: Twenty cents.

JT: Two bits a bottle.

TH: Talking about sleeping in the trucks and all, did they have tent cities too when they were coming back?

JT: Yes.

LB: They were filled up. They had no place for them. Every night the tents used to burn up. They had to have the fire department out there for putting out the tent fires.

JT: There was an incident about money...

TH: I don't see why not.

JT: Well, anyway they had Camp Lowe area. It was a massive barracks there. They had a Post Exchange there. So they happened to have one of these young fella there, he was Hispanic, Spanish, and he had – you know, there used to be two floors – so he used to sleep on the second floor. He was an orderly, you might say, kept the PX floors clean and everything but once a month, say, from after the first, he'd have, let's say, from five or six girls come down from Brooklyn, stay with him, and he'd have his own private brothel.…

TH: A cathouse, yeah.

JT: And he made a fortune. But it only lasted a couple of months.
The go him right away. LOL

LB: They had a line up about a mile long.

JT: He got a DD out of the service.

TH: We had a fella come down here and tell me. I believe, he believed, - you know 30 years is a long time – Sandy Hook… When we were coming up the road, I asked him "Does it still look the same?" Sand dunes look the same. He couldn't remember where a sergeant out here had set up a cathouse, and old abandoned bungalow or something along the main road.

JT: Well, this was on the main road. It was a barracks. But he was Hispanic. He was a G.I.

JT: He got these girls the same as his own. They were also Hispanic. And he had five or six girls up there and he had these cots and…next….

LB: He was outside collecting the money.

TH: That's something. He was trying to make an honest buck, I mean. (Laughter) I have to ask you about famous personalities. I had heard, veterans had told me like Bernie Duze has a photograph of Lana Turner.

JT: She was called the sweetheart of Fort Hancock, right?

LB: And another one, too – Carol – I ran into her.

TH: Was it Carol Lombard?

LB: No.

JT: I don't remember her here. Lana Turner I remember.

LB: Yes, Lana Turner was here.

JT: Oh, General Eisenhower.

TH: That I was going to lead up to because in the article you mentioned…

JT: Yeah, he was here.

(Inaudible)

TH: I think you mentioned in the newspaper article that Ike was here. That was after World War II?

LB: Yes, He was still in Supreme Command.

TH: Supreme Army Commander.

LB: I tell you what came through here – the King and Queen.

JT: They were here.

TH: Of England. That must have been a big event.

LB: I gave a picture to Colonel…

TH: George Moss.

LB: Has he got it?

TH: He gave it to us. It's a snapshot, a small one, small wrinkled snapshot of the King and Queen at the railroad station.

LB: I gave him that. That's mine. With Colonel Swartzkof in there. Was he in there?

TH: The soldiers and state police. There's a state policeman in the photograph. Yes, I guess he's in there too. They're all important.

LB: Captain Woods? Is the captain in there? He was the commanding officer of this post. Who'd I give it too now? I gave it to the colonel to give it to…

TH: You probably gave it to the colonel. Was it Colonel Hayes?

LB: No, it was the colonel just before that.

JT: Well, Colonel Hayes was the last one, wasn't he?

TH: Was it Woodward?

LB: Woods?

TH: Not Woods.

JT: Woods was the chaplain.

TH: It seems the Army was given a lot of things, like you probably gave it to them.

LB: I gave him that photo.

TH: Well, George Moss set this museum up. He's a local Rumson man. And it seems when you would send something to the Army, the Army would just turn around and give it to George Moss.

LB: I gave it to this colonel. He says, "It'll be in the museum." I said I'd like to have it so everyone can see it. I had been looking around for it. I can't find it. You got it?

TH: It's just this one little picture and it's in the library up here right across the street in headquarters is our park headquarters. And we've got a library up there and we've got photos that veterans give us and we've got it in the photo file.

LB: I could tell you a story on that. When they got off the train in Red Bank, they had a motorcade.

JT: It went through Sea Bright.

LB: Through Sea Bright. And at that time there was a mayor by the name of Sweeney.

JT: Mayor Sweeney.

LB: He was going to present the Queen with a big bouquet of flowers. All roses. And he stayed right by the bridge there.

TH: The 36 Bridge?

LB: No.

JT: Sea Bright bridge.

LB: Sea Bright bridge.

TH: Oh, down by Rumson-Sea Bright.

LB: It was near Sea Bright there.

JT: He never lived that down.

LB: There he was and he wanted to stop the motorcade so he could present this big bouquet to the Queen. They went by him so fast that he don't know…. So they're coming up here. They had the 17th or the 19th Infantry lined up along the highway. So many feet apart, all the way up had up to where the monument was. We had a fella by – what the heck is his name now. I can't remember names. He was in charge of the YMCA.

JT: Harris?

LB: Yes, Harris. He had a tripod with his camera on it. He wanted to take a picture of the King and Queen.

TH: At the monument?

LB: No, no. Not at the monument. If he was there, he would have got it. But he was right on the course, on the road, there by the hospital where the marine labs are.

TH: The old hospital building. Just before that small brick building.

LB: That used to be the YMCA…

JT: Residence.

LB: Residence.

TH: And that's where he would live.

JT: They moved that house away.

TH: I see, a wooden structure.

LB: Yeah, a wooden structure. They moved it to Highlands. So he had this tripod and everything there. He was going to take a picture of the King and Queen. Thought they were going to stop for him and he would take a picture. Well, they went so fast. They nearly knocked the tripod over. They were afraid. Could be a gun in that camera.

TH: It was really security. Wartime. Yeah, it was '39. Was it '39?

LB: Yes, '39. We were at war with Germany at the time. Boy, they went by so fast. They got onto the battlewagon here and they took them to Hyde Park.

JT: It was a destroyer. It wasn't a battlewagon. It was a destroyer.

LB: Was it? Destroyer, whatever it was, it was waiting for them right there at the dock. They got on that, boy, and went right up to Hyde Park.

JT: Up the Hudson.

LB: But nobody could have gotten near the. Nobody could have gotten near them. Nobody. This was just a route for them to get there. They weren't going to go visiting. They weren't visiting at all.

TH: They did not stop at the monument down at Horseshoe Cove then?

LB: They stopped. She presented a bouquet there at the monument.
But talk about the …they kept right on going. We couldn't go near that place. We couldn't go near the road, none of us.

TH: You mentioned the Infantry. Did they line the whole route.

LB: All along the route. All along.

TH: In Sandy Hook here?

LB: Yeah, the whole six miles.

TH: All six miles? That's an awful lot of men, even though they are spaced.

LB: It was the 19th Infantry from Fort Dix.

TH: Was that a Division, a whole Brigade?

JT: No. We had a…They were National Guard. They were all…

TH: Everybody was assembled.

JT: So they had plenty of men to pick up the…

LB: Nobody could have gotten near them. That's why they didn't want to stop for Sweeney's roses. There could have been a bomb in there. Like the cameraman, we knew who he is.

TH: Yes, but they didn't know.

LB: Even so we don't even know. That guy could be acting as an agent, somebody's agent, you know. You kill a King or a Queen… We were responsible for them.

TH: There was Lana Turner, the King and Queen. Was Bob Hope every out here?

LB: No. I don't remember it. I saw another one, Carol…and she was supposed to entertain the troops.

JT: Terry Moore, I think, was here.

TH: Who was that?

LB: and JT.-Terry Moore.

TH: An actress?

JT: I think it was Terry Moore.

TH: I was told that Robert Preston, the movie actor, was stationed out here.

TH: I don't know. I don't remember.

LB: Stationed here.

LB: No.

TH: 'Cause then you would have known about it, right?

LB: I would have, right.

JT: Well, in those days, he could have been here and you wouldn't have known who the hell he was…

TH: I don't know that he was an actor then. Maybe after he got out of the service he became an actor.

JT: He played the minstrel man, didn't he?

TH: Yes.

LB: The minstrel show, the minstrel man.

TH: Right.

JT: He could have been here.

LB: I know Fort Monmouth had a lot of celebrities.

JT: They had a lot of shows in the Army. That's why…

LB: No, we didn't get too many…

TH: Actresses or actors. How did Ike get to come down here?

LB: Well, this is a great place for duck-hunting.

TH: We know. Yes. We see a lot of them during the fall.

LB: And, of course, Ike at one time probably knew these generals at Fort Jay "Be my guest. Let's go out to Hancock." They built a blind for them out there. Let's see, just below Camp Lowe on the other side of Camp Lowe.

JT: Spermaceti. There's Horseshoe.

LB: Yes, it was in this area. Right about in there.

JT: Right about there, I think it was.

TH: Well, Kingman and Mills.

LB: Just before Kingman and Mills. Must be in this area.

TH: Mills is here and Kingman is there. Here's a road that goes up.

JT: That's about where it is.

LB: It was in this area, right there.

TH: That's just north of Battery Kingman?

JT: Right.

LB: Is this the old railroad.

TH: Yeah, the old railroad.

LB: And that's that old road.

JT: Then they had a railroad back in here.

TH: Yeah, Battery Gunnison. And Granger is over here. The lighthouse is right there.

LB: That's right.

JT: And they had the motors on the flat cars too. (inaudible)

LB: The 52nd Coast Artillery was a Railway Artillery. They shot most of their railway… They used to go to Fort Lewes, Delaware to fire the guns, you know.

LB: That's right. That's why the rails were there to get their guns off. And you don't see how they work on them.

JT: Well, they had all spurs. They had one track and then they had a spur that went out to the water. You couldn't see them. Oh, there was like a jungle back in there.

TH: Let me ask you…

JT: All the lovers used to go out there.

TH: Must have been many. I have to ask you about the soldiers back then. You met thousands of them. Did they actually think that they could repel a battleship fleet if they came in there? Did anybody ever remark "Yeah, we could with our armament out here."

LB: Oh, I'll you the old Artillery thought they could do it. They wouldn't penetrate the harbor.

TH: They were secure enough?

LB: Yes. Yes.

TH: I asked that question because I bring a lot of visitors in here and my main story is the harbor defenses. And people ask the question about were we ever attacked. And I go, "No. But according to veterans I talk to today, they feel that they could have beaten…

LB: Yes. We could have beat the hell out of…

JT: Yes, because it actually happened. We came in here one morning, a foggy, rainy morning. As we came in off of the seawall and in the gate, there was blankets, there was ambulances, there was… That morning the USS Taylor (Turner) was blown all to heck…the destroyer. In fact, a friend of mine was on that thing. They never found him. It sank right away. He's still in it. He was a cook. You said about protection. That was a German submarine right off the coast. And that was within sight because it was in the Narrows. And that's the time they had the little incident with Monmouth Medical Center.

TH: Monmouth Medical Center?

JT: You don't know that one?

TH: No, I don't know the story.

JT: Well, this place was jammed. We had helicopters.

LB: We had ambulances from all over.

TH: When the destroyer was hit?

JT: That's right. And they were transferring some of the worst cases out of this hospital and to Tilden and down to Fort Dix there…Walson . What's the name of the hospital there?

LB: At Dix, you mean?

JT: Dix, yeah. Well, anyway they needed blood and they found out that Monmouth Medical Center had an abundance because they were getting it, getting blood from different people, volunteers. They refused to give blood to the Army. And there was quite a stink about it at the time. But finally, I mean a little public relations…they tried to offset it a little bit, but they always held it against them all through the war because they refused to give blood to American boys who were in dire need of plasma.

TH: What year about was that?

JT: I think it was about ’43, ’44. It was latter time…

LB: Just at the ending of the World War II.

TH: War II.

JT: Because I had a friend…he was my neighbor. He lived two doors from me. Tried to enlist in the Navy and was turned down because he either had flat feet or (inaudible) he turned him down and he joined the Army and he went to Europe in the Navy and he became a cook then on board ship. And on the way back, he saw Long Branch as he came up but when he hit right off here, east of the….

TH: The channel out there.

JT: The channel there…it blew up. It was a horrible moment. I remember that like it was yesterday.

LB: Yeah. Here, this is some familiar buildings right there. The Western Union and the…

JT: Yes, that was over in the Coast Guard area.

LB: And what is it?

TH: The Postal Tower.

JT: Telegraph.

TH: Did you know the Goulds?

JT: Yes, sir, I knew the Goulds.

TH: Tommy’s been here. We were talking about that over the phone. Bill and Tommy have been here.

JT: How about the Barnetts?

TH: Who?

JT: They were here. They were in charge of the Western Union, too. You know Harvey Barnett and…

LB: Yeah, the Barnetts. Yeah.

JT: They were here for years. You never contacted any of them, did you?

TH: No. They were in the…

LB: & JT: Western Union, along with the Goulds.

JT: I've been up that tower many times to watch those boats come in and out.

TH: What was Jim Gould like?

LB: He was a little guy, wiry, very nice. Nice guy.

TH: He was here for an awful long time. Seeing all those ships.

JT: Oh, yes.

JT: There was quite an article about him in the paper.

LB: He used to communicate with every ship that went in and out of that harbor. He used to keep the data: the name, the number. Every ship that came in and out. The Postal (Telegraph) was more of the same. They were the ones that went out first. And then they (Western Union) stayed on.

TH: They were here into World War II but that ended it, I think…

JT: That's when they ended it. Then they went for wireless, the wireless station. Sergeant Miller. Remember that Miller.

LB: Big Miller, Yeah.

JT: Big. Fat. He was in charge of all wireless.

TH: So, it's really sad. You know a lot of these things, as soon as it passes, they were just torn down.

LB: Yeah, I know. They were good landmarks, too. You could see them from out in the Bay. You could see those two buildings. This was down first and that stayed on for a while. You had to climb up those steps too. When you get to the top, there was a trapdoor. You had to open the trapdoor to get to the top. It was something.

JT: Then they had all towers along here, too.

TH: The observers.

LB: That's what I'm talking about there.

TH: Observation for…

TH: By the way the old railroad system, the system, did you ever get to use that? Or was that strictly military?

JT: Only time when I saw it, it only had freight cars or coal cars, but no passengers.

LB: It used to be before. They had passengers. Then they had the bus. The bus used to go back and forth.

JT: I can't think of that guy's name. An engineer for so many years and they put them in the coal car loading trucks. Had to have civil service. He was an engineer and they says, "You want a job? Go over and shovel coal." And he retired. He couldn't take it.

TH: We've got some photographs of the guns here. This is Kingman Mills.

LB: Boy, this is all by hand. Nothing electric there, boy. Those poor guys. Here's your ramrod.

LB: Eight guys had to do it. Eight guys. Remember the old fatigues they had there with the pancake hats.

TH: That's what they're wearing all right.

LB: Yeah, sure. Here's your old disappearing gun. That's how it goes.

JT: Largest gun ever built.

TH: Did you hear stories about Tom Mix being out here.

LB: Yes, He was first sergeant out here. I heard about him. In fact, he was right in this guardhouse here. He was a deserter. And he went out to Hollywood and made money.

TH: From the service record which we have found out, we've got a biography, a book on him he was here in 1901 and 1902, even before World War…

JT: Oh, sure.

LB: They say he was first sergeant here, on this base.

TH: 'Cause I figure if you came in here in 1929, may be somebody would have…

LB: Well, I heard about him.

JT: (?) in Long Branch. He was stationed here during the first World War. He lives Long Branch. If you ever try to contact him.

JT: His name is John Slanjack. Maybe you could find it in the directory. S-l-a-n-j-a-c-k, I believe it is. Slanjack. He was in the Ordnance.

JT: Remember this was an Ordnance Post.

TH: I'd like to talk to him.

JT: Course, I think he's retired. He's along in years. He must be close to eighty or better. He was a G.I. on this post.

LB: He was a G.I. on this post and he was in the Ordnance. I had to give them haircuts once a month free.

JT: I wonder where that guy was that finally got put out of the service.

LB: Oh, Yeah.

JT: He used a bowel movement in a sock.

TH: Anything to get out.

JT: He finally did get out. They gave him a D.D., I mean.

TH: Unbelievable. Well, if the walls could talk. You see it's these stories, I'm sure this place…

LB: This has a …this could talk a lot. The guard walks around this.

TH: Yeah, I know. That's why they built it. For any offense you were saying before?

LB: Anything. They could… Thirty days in the guardhouse didn't mean a thing. Thirty days. Anything they do.

TH: They would get all the… details.

JT: All the details.

LB: All the dirty details.

TH: Were they…I know they were under guard by armed guard. Would they have shackles?

JT: No.

TH: Just under armed guard.

JT: But you know sometimes they would throw the guard into the… You know what happens. Armed guard and he's going along like that and if an officer comes along and saw you he says "Well, what's to keep that guard from taking a gun? So he say, he calls another guard, head of the guard. What did they call them?

TH: Sergeant of the guard.

JT: Sergeant of the guard. Throw them both in.

LB: Any little offense, anything.

JT: No, he's supposed to keep his distance,

TH: Mentally alert.

LB: If a prisoner is walking ahead and you happen to cut across between the guard and the prisoner, the guard could kill you.

TH: He would have the right. I guess they would have orders to shoot the men that he was guarding.

LB: Oh, yeah. And if he gets away, you take his place.

TH: The Military.

LB: That's right.

JT: I know of another little funny incident maybe you would appreciate. Well, they had this anti-aircraft. They were along the seawall and first mile. They were firing at this roadblock. They had this – what the hell do they call them – it's a small plane but it's controlled by radio.

LB: Drone.

JT: So this one day they're firing at it and there's a lieutenant controlling it. But he must have been 100 miles away and he didn't move properly. And these guys are firing. Bing. Hit the damn drone instead of the target. So he was court-martialed. And I don't know what the heck they did with him. They said, "Oh, he was transferred. But a lot of times, you know, when the baker or the milkman used to come here and they used to see this drone going in all direction and they can –(inaudible) and all kind of… they'd say "What the hell? That guy must be crazy up there." They thought there was a pilot, but there was never a pilot. It was radio-controlled on the ground.

LB: Another incident. When they were firing at anti-aircraft with machine guns, they carried that sock.

JT: Yes.

LB: They come in colors. It's all according to the type of day it is – in green, they come in yellow and in white. When they released those targets, you know how they did, they better find that target before the family finds it. Because it's one made out of Irish linen. If the family on the Post finds that target before the GI finds it, it's lost. About a week later you'd see the kids would have the Irish linen underwear on. It's silk. They made shirts out of them, skirts out of them.

JT: I had a motor until about a couple of years ago. From one of those drones. I thought I could get it to work but I never could get it to work.

LB: It's all run down.

JT: It was a gas engine. Some of the parts were broken and you couldn't replace them.

TH: I would like to know – you were talking about the anti-aircraft gun batteries. In the Korean War they had a 90 mm.

LB: A 90 (mm) and they had 120 (mm).

TH: Were they sited out here? Could you point that out on the map?

TH: I don't know. I know where all the concrete gun batteries are.

LB: All right. Okay now. Where's your… One was sited back here.

TH: That's the mortar batteries, the old gun pits.

LB: No.

TH: Yeah, that photograph on the wall there shows the guns firing. See where the shells are leaving the guns, the big…

JT: The second one, the middle one.

TH: The big middle one, yeah. Big pits over in here. This is the lighthouse here.

LB: Across from the lighthouse, it's a – what do you call it. During the war Joe it used to be the Headquarters.

TH: That's it. Used to be the Headquarters, the old mortar battery.

LB: A 120 (mm) was in there.

TH: Right in the pit?

LB: Right in there. In the pit. And let's see…

TH: Camp Lowe would be down there.

LB: Yeah, there was a couple down there, in the Camp Lowe area.

JT: Then they had some down by the lower seawall, didn't they?

TH: In the Korean War era?

LB: I think they had some down in the – whaddyacallit? – the Coast Guard area.

JT: I wasn't too familiar but by '51 I had left and my brother ….

LB: You had two guns down here. They were 90 (mm)'s.

LB: And they had a few up in here too. You know where, Joe, this is the road that goes down to the end of…

JT: Oh, yeah, the tracks.

LB: This is the area that.

TH: By the pumphouse. The radar site. South of the radar site.

LB: Yeah, you had anti-aircraft guns in here. You had searchlights up in here. Remember the searchlights? You had anti-aircraft guns in here, 90 (mm)'s.

TH: You know it's back up in here – let me point this out – there are these wooden platforms. They were big round pilings and a wooden platform built on all these (inaudible). Well, I think there were five out there altogether. It's like, one here, one there. One is still out on the top of the sand dune. One is washed away. And one was in the middle. It was like an, X pattern, like a crisscross pattern. And I was just wondering whether… They're still out there. They're made out of wood. They're wooden platforms.

LB: There were searchlights down behind the seawall. Also there were guns down there too 90(mm)'s. And there were a few up in here, 90 (mm)'s.

TH: Around Battery Gunnision? South of it?

LB: Right. And I think there was one down at that end.

TH: Probably at the tip, sure.

JT: Another thing that they had here that nobody ever knew, was that they had frogmen here. Especially when they were doing a test. If the cables got jammed up….. They would attempt to dislodge it. If they couldn't they would blow it up. But they had a hell of a lot of nerve.

LB: During World War II they were patrolling all this area here.

JT: That was Infantry.

LB: Coast Guard too.

JT: Yeah but they had an Infantry too. I'm pretty sure it was the 13th Infantry. They had from here down to South Jersey somewhere. They patrolled the beaches.

LB: The destroyer was right here.

TH: At Horseshoe Cove.

LB: And Westinghouse was right in here.

END OF INTERVIEW