

US Army Corps  
of Engineers®

*Prepared for:*

Department of the Army  
New England District, Corps of Engineers  
696 Virginia Road  
Concord, Massachusetts 01742-2751

## **Total Environmental Restoration Contract (TERC)**

**FOR THE INVESTIGATION, REMEDIAL  
ACTION, AND RESTORATION OF DAVIDS  
ISLAND-FORT SLOCUM  
New Rochelle, New York**

**DAVIDS ISLAND-FORT SLOCUM  
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

**OCTOBER 2008**

*Contract Number:*

**DACW33-03-D-0006  
TASK ORDER 2**

*Prepared by:*

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**Jacobs – Tetra Tech EC Joint Venture**  
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**TETRA TECH EC, INC.**

2008-O-JV02-0046

USACE CONTRACT NO. DACW33-03-D-0006  
TASK ORDER NO. 2  
TOTAL ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION CONTRACT (TERC)

## Oral History Project

**Dauids Island-Fort Slocum, City of New Rochelle,  
Westchester County, New York**

**OCTOBER 2008**

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New England District

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**“And by golly I’m so proud of being part of this military life:”  
Conversations with Members of the Fort Slocum Community**



**Dauids Island-Fort Slocum Oral History Project**

**Cover Photo Credits:**

**Top: Parade Ground Drill circa 1945, Fort Slocum. From collection of Fort Slocum Alumni and Friends, Michael A. Cavanaugh, custodian.**

**Middle: Women's Army Corps basketball team circa 1945, Fort Slocum. From collection of Gladys Borkowsky.**

**Bottom: Children at Rodman Gun Monument circa 1960, Fort Slocum. From collection of Fort Slocum Alumni and Friends, Michael A. Cavanaugh, custodian.**



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From June 2007 to June 2008, Tetra Tech EC, Inc. (TtEC) conducted 19 interviews involving 29 individuals for the collection of oral histories about the former U.S. Army post Fort Slocum, located on Davids Island, New Rochelle, New York. Interview participants included ex-military personnel, military family members, civilian workers, and civilian visitors to the island. Interviews were recorded on audio tape, with approximately 20 hours of taped interviews. Subject matter captured on tape includes descriptions of the island and military facilities, daily routines and assignments, living quarters, family life, recreational activities, and historic events, among other topics. Barbara Davis of the New Rochelle Public Library interviewed two individuals whose descriptions of Davids Island have been incorporated in this report.

Oral history interviews represent one means of investigating and preserving evidence of the lifeways of the Fort Slocum community as it existed prior to the decommissioning of the post in 1965. The experiences and memories of the individuals associated with Fort Slocum are an invaluable resource for understanding the events, social landscapes, community structures, and patterns of activities that are not readily manifest in the archeological or historical records. The oral histories conducted for this project represent the recollections of individuals who were residents of or visitors to Fort Slocum from circa 1930 to 1965.

Interviews were primarily conducted at participants' homes in eight states. A group interview involving six members of the Fort Slocum Alumni and Friends organization was held at the New Rochelle (NY) Public Library after an Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)-sponsored tour of Davids Island. Another interview took place on Davids Island during an earlier USACE site tour. Three sets of family members who had been co-resident at Fort Slocum participated in the project. Several interview participants brought photographs and other documents relating to their period of association with Fort Slocum, some of which has been donated to the New Rochelle Public Library E.L. Doctorow Local History Collection by the participants.

The interviews revealed the existence of widely held values and common experiences among the participants, as well as some key differences in viewpoints and memories. Some of these differences can be related to personal status, military rank, age, and other ascribed traits that differentiated individuals within the island community. Overall, the interview participants expressed deep fondness for Fort Slocum and their time spent on the island. Those who had been children at Fort Slocum uniformly felt the post to be a real home town, a safe and exciting place to live that exuded the best characteristics of the U.S. Army. Interviewees who were military personnel at Fort Slocum appreciated the unique traits of serving on a small island-post within a short train ride to midtown Manhattan. The Fort Slocum facility resembled a New England village in many ways, with residences, offices, workshops, and recreation fields arrayed around a central green. It was nonetheless a hierarchically organized community with a military mission that contributed to America's homeland defense and war fighting capabilities for a century from the Civil War to the Cold War.

The report contains an introductory section which details the project's general purpose, its objectives, and methodology. Section 2 provides short biographical sketches of the project participants. Section 3 presents five topics, or common themes, that emerged from the interviews, and includes discussions regarding housing, officer/enlisted relations, the impact on Fort Slocum of important world events, the island from the perspective of its children, and the history and role of the US Army Band. Transcripts of each interview are included as an appendix, along with supplementary e-mail correspondence between the participants and TtEC that helped to clarify certain issues and questions.

## Acknowledgements

Tetra Tech EC, Inc. (TtEC) wishes to acknowledge the important role of the Fort Slocum Alumni and Friends group in providing names and contact information for the Fort Slocum Oral History Project. This project would not have been possible without the efforts of the group, in particular its webmaster and custodian, Michael A. Cavanaugh of Los Angeles, California. TtEC also is grateful for the enthusiasm of all interview participants who contributed their time, energies and personal memorabilia to the project. This document is their story.

Additional thanks are due the New Rochelle (NY) Public Library and the Library's Community Relations Coordinator, Barbara Davis, for hosting the group interview on September 13, 2007, and for agreeing to be the repository of interview tapes, transcripts, and memorabilia donated by interview participants; and the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), for encouraging and supporting this project from its inception. Key personnel at USACE who were involved in this project include Greg Goepfert, Nancy Brighton, and Mark Anderson.

Dr. Sydne Marshall served as TtEC Project Supervisor and George Willant was TtEC Project Manager. Barbara Davis interviewed Helen Stark and Jon Cary in New Rochelle, New York. Robert M. Jacoby developed the questionnaire, conducted all other interviews, and authored the report. Brittany Transcription, Morristown, NJ, transcribed the taped interviews.

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 General Purpose of this Study

Tetra Tech EC, Inc. (TtEC) under contract to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) conducted an oral history study of the former U.S. Army post, Fort Slocum, located in New Rochelle, New York. Under terms of the USACE Total Environmental Restoration Contract (TERC) for the remediation and cleanup of Davids Island-Fort Slocum, and pursuant to provisions of the August 2005 Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between USACE, the City of New Rochelle, the County of Westchester, and the New York Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, which functions as the New York State Historic Preservation Office (NYSHPO), the oral history study was one of a series of study elements to mitigate the impacts of the demolition of the Fort Slocum Historic and Archeological District, a historic property that has been determined eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). As stipulated by the MOA, TtEC arranged 16 interviews for the study.

This report complements the findings of the Davids Island-Fort Slocum Phase IB Archeological Surveys, the Salvage of Architectural Elements, the Historical Documentation of Buildings, and the Historic Landscape Elements Study performed by TtEC for USACE (TtEC 2006a, 2006b, 2007, 2008a, and 2008b.). Davids Island, located in Long Island Sound about one-half mile off the New Rochelle mainland, was the site of nearly continuous military use by the U.S. Army and U.S. Air Force from 1862 to 1965, first as a hospital and prisoner-of-war camp during the Civil War, and thereafter as recruitment and embarkation depot, training schools, coastal defense battery, administrative headquarters, and air defense battery. Known as DeCamp General Hospital in the Civil War era, the post became Fort Slocum in 1897 to honor Major General Henry Warner Slocum (1827-1894) who led the first Union troops into Atlanta in 1864, and who later represented New York during three terms in Congress. Decommissioned in 1965 and abandoned by the Army, the post's buildings and facilities deteriorated badly over the following 40 years, as weather, arson, tree growth, and lack of maintenance all took their toll. At the start of remediation activities in 2005, the buildings on Davids Island were largely in ruins.

The aim of the David's Island-Fort Slocum Oral History Project was to collect those vivid memories of the place that would illustrate past events, social landscapes, community structures, and patterns of activities that are not readily manifest in the archeological or historical records. The historian David Lowenthal (1985:249) has written that routes to a full understanding of the past run through 'history, relics, and memory.' Oral history is presented here as an essential means of salvaging some of the memories of those individuals who were associated with Fort Slocum during its years as an active United States military post. Their collective thoughts, impressions, remembrances, and stories are principal avenues towards re-animating the ruins of Davids Island in ways that archeology and architectural history cannot. Because archeological and architectural analyses primarily rely on the observation and interpretation of artifacts and structures, these investigations tend to be mute on the issue of identity and personal history, often generating discussions that appear devoid of any human presence at all. The oral history program is meant to address this gap in the documentation of Davids Island-Fort Slocum.

Oral history has a long tradition in the U.S. Army as a means of complementing and verifying unit combat histories. The earliest use can be traced back to the spoken depositions of Minutemen after their participation in the Battle of Lexington in 1775. Two centuries later, oral histories have become a standard technique, known as the End-of-Tour (EOT) Interview Program, in creating a repository of insights by retiring senior officers on tactics, strategy, and leadership (Lofgren 2003). Post-combat interviews now are also a common method by the U.S. Army to evaluate the execution of military operations. As one example, the Army's XVIII Airborne Corps conducted oral histories among its units after Operation Desert Storm in 1991 to document and assess its actions and responses during that conflict. Many of those oral histories have been made available online (U.S. Army 2001). The increased

status of oral history as an academic discipline can be gauged by the creation in 2005 of the Center for Oral History in the Department of History at the United State Military Academy (West Point) “to promote the education, training, and inspiration of cadets and to enrich the study of the history of the U.S. Army” (U.S. Army 2008). The U.S. Army Center of Military History is actively archiving first-person accounts of current operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, and is developing a Web-based digest of available military oral histories. Through its History Office, the USACE has conducted EOT interviews with senior staff since 1979, and have made available a number of these to the public.

There has been increasing use of oral history as a counterpart to archeological investigations, particularly in the study of subordinate or muted groups. Muted groups are those groups outside of the dominant social order, such as women, minorities, and children, whose stories and lives have been largely overlooked by traditional lines of history and inquiry (Little 1994:196). An example of this fusion of first person narrative and archeology is the study of Middleburg Plantation near Charleston, South Carolina, which utilized the oral traditions of slave descendants to investigate the function of building remains variously described as either jail cells or schoolrooms, depending on one’s cultural milieu (Barile 1999:1). Another example of this sort of dual approach in studying past societies is the Outer Coast project at Kenai Fjords National Park in Alaska, which sought to provide data on ecosystem change and human responses during a period of global chilling that ended circa 1900 (Crowell 2002). The children of Inuit hunters, now quite elderly themselves, were interviewed to describe the lifeways of their parents as a means of explaining patterning in the archeological record.

## 1.2 Project Objectives

The touchstone for every interview was the participant’s association with Fort Slocum. For each person, the island would have been a place of residence, a jobsite, a posting, or a point of visitation. Each interview, then, was an attempt to reveal the significance of *place* as an important organizing principle in the relationship between the island and its various inhabitants. The individuals who lived and worked at Fort Slocum were very much a community in terms of social networks of people with common sets of routines, traditions, and concerns. Yet, this island-post was atypical of most American “hometowns” in its chance collection of single persons and unrelated families united under temporary circumstances of military preparedness. Moreover, while this island community had all the amenities and physical elements of a real town (for instance, a movie theater, bowling alley, bars, houses, and beaches) there was an absence of such ordinary features as the elderly, kin groups beyond the nuclear family, and complete freedom of movement. Finally, as an enlistment center and later as a training post, Fort Slocum always had a surplus of transient strangers, another point of contrast with most non-military hometowns.

An objective of this project was to illuminate how various versions of the past are transmitted in society by overlapping interest groups. Some of these versions may, in fact, be in conflict with one another, and their interrelationship and resolution is what the anthropologist Robert Redfield (1956) referred to as the “social organization of tradition.” Redfield recognized that even homogeneous communities contain competing traditions that seek to become the dominant voice of the group. When this happens, the losing sides become secondary, subordinate or discarded versions of history. Cultural, economic, or political change may reverse the order of these traditions, even reviving versions that appeared to be dormant or forgotten. Because most versions of received history have strong oral traditions associated with them, it is appropriate that recorded interviews be used to document and preserve their contents.

Memory is a fragile construct, subject to the effects of time, age, and personal history. Unless recorded in a written or oral medium, first-hand accounts eventually disappear with the individual. For those individuals who were at Fort Slocum during the 1930s and 1940s and who are now in their 80s, recording their remembrances at the present time was critical. To varying degrees all memory is vulnerable, which is why it was important that even the youngest of the interview participants, now in their mid-50s, have

their stories recorded and added to the archive of Fort Slocum history. Personal first-hand accounts can reveal details of both the everyday and the extraordinary dramas of life.

Memories of Fort Slocum as a living place are now more than 40 years old. Even the most observant memoirist must rely on thought-images manifested by countless recollections or re-tellings of the past, a process that subtly transforms memories of experiences and events in indeterminable ways. For the collector of oral histories then, there is built-in uncertainty about the veracity and accuracy of every interview, of every story, and of every memory. Nevertheless, arriving at some objective truth was never the point of this project, for memories rarely conform to such scrutiny; there will always be gaps, misinformation, misunderstandings, and other disruptions of information that have contributed to memory creation, and which will be forever opaque to the interviewer. It is the role of the interviewer to mediate between these conflicts in a manner that orders the often messy and non-linear recollections into a coherent narrative that effectively illustrates the patterns, values, and impacts of the Fort Slocum community.

### **1.3 Project Methodology**

Representatives of USACE, TtEC, and the New Rochelle Public Library met at the Library on June 22, 2007 to discuss general procedures for conducting interviews and contacting prospective participants. As a result of this meeting, TtEC developed a list of potential interviewees who lived outside the New Rochelle area, selected from the members' roster of the Fort Slocum Alumni and Friends organization provided by Michael Cavanaugh. Barbara Davis, Public Outreach Coordinator of the Library, undertook additional interviews of individuals residing in or near New Rochelle. TtEC contacted members of the Alumni and Friends group in 2007 and 2008, requesting their participation in the project, and received positive responses from most of these individuals.

To produce a coherent oral history study, a standardized questionnaire was created to elicit from participants their memories of Fort Slocum during each person's time on the island. The use of a standardized questionnaire was intended to structure responses around common themes that could serve as a basis from which to compare and contrast individual experiences and memories. The questionnaire was organized to capture experiences and routines common to all who resided or regularly visited the island, as well as those experiences and routines that were determined by one's status and rank. Shared experiences such as riding the ferry, watching drills on the Parade Ground, or hearing reveille in the morning are relevant lines of inquiry regardless of one's rank, age, or function at the post. Other lines of questioning targeted specific groups, including service personnel, the children and spouses of servicemen, civilian employees, and more casual visitors to the post. Typical of this second set of questions are inquiries about childhood activities on a military post, descriptions of duty assignments for service personnel, and the roles and expectations of officers' spouses.

The questionnaire was not intended to be used strictly on a question-by-question basis, but rather as a guide that would permit a large measure of latitude in each interview. The process of memory recollection is idiosyncratic, as some elements are layered with deep significance while other details of the past are de-emphasized or forgotten entirely. This aspect of memory storage and recall helped to shape each interview in a variety of ways, compelling the interviewer to approach subject material on the basis of each participant's grasp of past remembrances, as well as on their reach of experience and knowledge. Interviews were also structured by participants' display of special interests and concerns, such as the role of religion in community relations, or the history of military service units.

Issues of privacy, compensation, and ownership of intellectual property arise when recorded conversations are donated to the public domain. While all interviewees were voluntary participants in this project, it was necessary to clarify and safeguard their legal rights regarding uses of the tapes and

transcripts, and to limit any future claims for compensation or damages. TtEC developed a standard waiver in consultation with TtEC legal counsel to legally transfer tapes, transcripts, or any other material such as photographs and memorabilia, to a principal responsible party release that satisfied the provisions of the MOA, the intentions of the project as envisioned by USACE, and TtEC's contractual obligations, as well as the rights of the interviewees. Prior to the start of each interview, all participants were requested to sign and date individual releases. A sample of the release developed for this purpose is included as Appendix B.

Most interviews were conducted in subjects' homes, usually at the kitchen table or in the living room, to create a comfortable and convenient setting. One group interview of Fort Slocum Alumni and Friends members was conducted in a meeting room of the New Rochelle Public Library in New Rochelle, New York after the group had toured Davids Island escorted by USACE and TtEC staff. Alumni and Friends founder Michael Cavanaugh, himself an ex-“army brat” of Fort Slocum, was interviewed on Davids Island during another USACE-sponsored tour. Every interview was recorded on normal bias Type I cassette tape, and varied in length from about 30 minutes to 2 hours. The first four interviews utilized a Radio Shack CTR-121 battery operated portable tape recorder, with the remainder recorded on a battery powered Marantz PMD101 model. The interviewer provided introductory information regarding date, location, purpose of the interview, and the names of all participants, and then initiated the interview with a question about the participant's association with Fort Slocum. Maps and photographs of Fort Slocum were brought to the interview by the interviewer and many of the interviewees, and proved helpful in the process of recollection, especially with regard to specific buildings, areas, or terrain features that played a role in the experiences of the participants. Some of the participants have chosen to donate their photographs and memorabilia of Fort Slocum to the New Rochelle Public Library's E.L. Doctorow Local History Collection.

In all, 29 individuals were interviewed by TtEC cultural resources specialist Robert Jacoby during 21 interview sessions. Two individuals were re-interviewed due to technical recording difficulties during the original sessions. Two interviews involved multiple family members. Interviewed in San Diego, California, the Castagneto family comprised Anne Castagneto and three of her children, assembled for a single interview session. Annie Ekman joined her sister Christa Mueller for a joint interview, in Williamsburg, Virginia. Separate interviews were conducted with brothers Bob Sisk and Tom Sisk in North Carolina at the suggestion of Bob Sisk, who felt that responses to questions would be more forthright without the filter of the other's experiences and memories. At the time of his interview, Alan Grieve chose not to have his comments recorded on tape. Barbara Davis of the New Rochelle, New York, Public Library interviewed Helen Stark in 2007 and Jon Cary in 2008.

Approximately 20 hours of interviews were captured on tape. Upon completion of each interview, the tapes were professionally transcribed by Brittany Transcription of Morristown, New Jersey. Copies of all transcriptions will be available among other resources of the project at the New Rochelle Public Library. For the purpose of ensuring long-term archival preservation, the recorded interviews were digitally transferred to CDs as a more stable information medium. Historic and current photographs of the interviewees have been included with the archived recording tapes. Putting a face to the recorded voice or written words is an important means of bringing the focus of the project back to the individual, and away from the concerns of the interviewer.



## 2.0 INTERVIEW BIOGRAPHIES

The interview participants come from a variety of backgrounds and were resident at Fort Slocum or in New Rochelle for different periods of their lives from the 1930s to the mid-1960s. The majority of interview subjects were associated with Fort Slocum as the children of military or civilian personnel attached to the post. Several individuals were themselves posted to Fort Slocum for military duty, while a small number were civilian adults either working on the island or married to military and civilian personnel. In addition to family members, a few of the interviewees were familiar with one another as friends or acquaintances from time spent at Fort Slocum. This familiarity was a useful device in asking follow-up questions about events that involved multiple interviewees.

Biographical sketches of each of the oral history participants are included to illustrate the range of backgrounds, experiences, and the types of association each had with Fort Slocum. Biographical information was gleaned from the interview transcripts, from introductory telephone conversations with many of the participants, and from follow-up e-mail correspondence between the interviewer and some of the participants. Many of the participants contributed historic photographs of themselves taken at Fort Slocum or from the period of their association with the post. These historic photographs have been paired with current photographs.

### 2.1 Fort Slocum Alumni and Friends Group Interview: Bill Carlson, Susan Edwards, John Pardon, Pat Skelly, Bill Waterhouse, and George Willhite- Interviewed September 13, 2007 at the New Rochelle Public Library, New Rochelle, New York.

Eight members of the Fort Slocum Alumni and Friends group journeyed to Davids Island as guests of USACE and TtEC on September 13, 2007. After spending about three hours touring the island, six of the group joined Robert Jacoby for a joint interview in a conference room at the New Rochelle Public Library, New Rochelle, New York. The group represented a wide spectrum of associations with Fort Slocum, and included Pat Skelly who was there as a child in the early 1940s, Susan Edwards who was married to a post commissary employee in the island's Chapel of St. Sebastian in 1965, and Bill Carlson,



Figure 2.1 (front, left to right) Harold Crocker, George Willhite, Susan Edwards, Bill Carlson, Pat Skelly. (back, left to right) John Pardon, Joel Simons, Bill Waterhouse. September 13, 2007, Davids Island. The Commanding Officer's Quarters (Building 1) stands at right. Harold Crocker and Joel Simons did not participate in the group interview. From digital image posted online by Harold Crocker.

John Pardon, Bill Waterhouse, and George Willhite who all served in the U.S. Army at Fort Slocum in the early 1960s. The conversation ranged from descriptions of barracks and work duties, to world events

such as Pearl Harbor and the Cuban Missile Crisis, to general impressions of the island. Prior to the visit on September 13, 2007, none of the participants had returned to Davids Island since they last saw it, in the 1940s for Pat Skelly and the 1960s for the remainder of the group.

**Bill Carlson.** Originally a native of Rocky River, Ohio, from 1959 to 1962 Bill Carlson served as an instructor in journalism at the Army Information School located at Fort Slocum. Upon separation from the Army, Mr. Carlson worked as a professional journalist and photographer for several publications, including the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, *Dayton Journal-Herald*, and *The Plain Dealer* of Cleveland, where he was an editor. Bill Carlson and his wife currently split their time between Arizona in the winter and Lakeside, Ohio during warm weather.

*“One of the joys of being at Slocum was the access to New York City. Many a night or weekend we’d take the New Haven Railroad into the city. Go to the USO on West 43<sup>rd</sup> Street. Get free tickets to shows, ballgames. And that was one of the wonderful things about being at Slocum.”*

**Susan Edwards.** A lifelong resident of Westchester County, Susan Edwards was married in the Fort Slocum chapel to a civilian commissary worker in 1965. Ms. Edwards currently resides in Croton-on-Hudson, New York.

*“We got married in the chapel and we moved to the officers’ club afterwards for a party and we had a wonderful time. And I’m sorry to see that the Fort’s not there any longer.”*

**John Pardon.** As a 24 year old recruit, John Pardon was assigned to the Army Information School at Fort Slocum in 1962. He arrived at Slocum on the eve of the Cuban Missile Crisis, and recalls the heightened security and full alert that was imposed on the post. Mr. Pardon was a newspaper sportswriter for several years before going to work for the Department of Veterans Affairs. Now retired, he lives in Croton-on-Hudson, New York.

*“I hope something of the island can be preserved. The issue for anybody is access, how do you get to it because there’s lots of memories and lots of history. And I hope we can figure out how to keep some of it.”*

**Pat Skelly.** As a young boy Pat Skelly lived at Fort Slocum from 1940 to 1942 with his mother and father, who was then an Army major and Deputy Commandant of the Army Bakers and Cooks School. Mr. Skelly served in the Army himself, and by his own account did not “settle down” until he moved to Phoenix, Arizona in 1965. In the late 1950s he worked in the Computation Laboratory of the Army Ballistic Missile Agency at the Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Alabama, which was headed by the legendary rocket designer Werner von Braun. His professional career has been in the maintenance, design, testing, and systems management of large computer systems from the era of vacuum tubes to circuit chips. Since 1994 Pat Skelly has lived on Cape Cod.

*“There was a day Major Skelly got a call; ‘Major, your son is riding his bike through the Retreat formation. Please take care of it.’ As that kid who was riding his bicycle around, I had been well enough indoctrinated into the Army system. That cannon went off, you dropped your bike and stood at attention.”*

**Bill Waterhouse.** Bill Waterhouse was 22 in 1961 when he was assigned to the 1207<sup>th</sup> Army Garrison detachment at Fort Slocum. Upon arrival at the post as a private he earned \$85 a month, not allowing much opportunity for off-post activities. Mr. Waterhouse recalls that every two weeks he had to pay for a haircut and laundry. Born in Uxbridge, Massachusetts, Bill Waterhouse returned to his hometown after military service, and has been involved ever since with the local historical society.

*“I was assigned to Fort Slocum and I had no idea where it was. I went to the library and there was a little dot on a little tiny island in Long Island Sound and that was Fort Slocum.”*

**George Willhite.** George Willhite arrived at Fort Slocum as a student at the US Army Information School in 1961, and stayed on as an instructor in journalism until his discharge in 1964. He has worked for daily newspapers in Illinois and North Carolina, and in 1976 became editor of a trade publication for the American Oil Chemists’ Society, a job that took him around the world. Now retired, Mr. Willhite lives in Champaign, Illinois and follows the often heartbreaking results of the University of Illinois football team.

*“I was the top ranking student in the class, but since most of the kids were out of high school and I was older and had finished college with a B.S. in journalism and had a year and a half experience as a cub reporter for a daily newspaper, I had an advantage.”*



Figure 2.2. U.S. Army Information School graduation ceremonies, Fort Slocum, New York, July 14, 1961. Army Private George Willhite is at center. Assistant Secretary of Defense Arthur Sylvester is to left of Willhite. At right is Army Information School commandant and Fort Slocum commanding officer Colonel Frank C. Castagneto. From collection of George Willhite.

**2.2 Gladys Woodard Borkowski**—interviewed October 8, 2007 in North Haven, Connecticut.

Raised in Greenfield, Massachusetts, Gladys “Woodie” Woodard Borkowski enlisted as a private in 1943, and was in the first unit of WACs to arrive at Fort Slocum during the height of the manpower shortage of the Second World War. Promoted to staff sergeant, she remained at Slocum until 1946, where her duties included war bond drives, publicity programs, and drilling of WAC personnel. It was in the latter role that she achieved some renown from a 78-rpm disk recording of her leading WACs in a version of the “Jody Chant,” or “Sound-Off” drill, at the post in 1945. A taped copy of that recording has been donated by Mrs. Borkowski to the New Rochelle Public Library.



Figure 2.3. Gladys Woodard Borkowski (at right) with a fellow WAC sergeant at Fort Slocum, 1945. From collection of Gladys Borkowski.

Sergeant Woodard served a tour of duty in occupied Germany from 1946 to 1948, leading WAC drill and parade teams in Wiesbaden. Transferring to the newly organized US Air Force in 1948, she became a military recruiter in New England, responsible for Connecticut and western Massachusetts. In 1960 she married, and retired from the military in 1963. Today, Gladys Borkowski lives in North Haven, Connecticut.



Figure 2.4. Staff Sergeant Gladys Woodard (at left) assisting in WAC medal ceremony on Fort Slocum Parade Ground, May 1945. The male officer is Colonel Bernard Lentz, post commanding officer. From collection of Gladys Borkowski.



Figure 2.5. Gladys Woodard Borkowski, 2007.

*“I went in [the Army] with very little knowledge of life. I think I was not like the teenagers today. And even though I was 22 when I went in, I matured in the service.”*

**2.3 Castagneto family (Anne Castagneto, Esther Bolger, Carla Cain, Jim Castagneto)—**  
interviewed December 15, 2007 in San Diego, California.

The members of the Castagneto family—Anne (mother), Esther Bolger (daughter), Carla Cain (daughter), and Jim Castagneto (son)—lived at Fort Slocum from 1961 to 1964 when Anne’s late husband, Colonel Frank Castagneto served as Fort Slocum commanding officer and commandant of the Army Information School. A Georgia native, Anne Castagneto followed her husband from post to post as he rose in the ranks from enlisted private to full colonel. By the time the family occupied Quarters 1 at Fort Slocum, there were five children ranging in age from 18-year old Esther to 3-year old Theresa.

Upon retiring from the Army in 1964, Colonel Castagneto and family moved to San Diego, California, where Anne continues to live. Frank Castagneto passed away in 1982. The three Castagneto children who participated in the interview also live in southern California.

*Carla: “The Army was his life in one half of it, and the other half was us. And I don’t think he divided it. But you could tell, he had been in the Army longer than he had known any of us.”*



Figure 2.6. The Castagneto family at Fort Slocum, circa 1963. (right to left) Frank, Anne, Esther, Carla, Angela, Jim, and Theresa. From collection of Anne Castagneto.

Jim: *“Some of my fondest memories were during the winter. My father would tell his other people that worked for him to go fill the tennis courts with water and we would ice skate on there.”*

Esther: *“My very first day on that island, the very first morning I wake up, I was on the second floor when I first got there, I looked out and there’s a mist hanging over the island. So I got dressed and I went out, it was June. Went out and started walking on the post, and it was just hanging there, and it was quiet. It was the most quiet I had been in a long time. And just walking down that eerie thing with those huge trees and the parade field, and those old houses, I said, I was Scarlet O’Hara all over again.”*



Figure 2.7. (left to right) Esther Bolger, Anne Castagneto, Carla Cain, and Jim Castagneto, 2007.

(Interviewer: Do you remember what your husband’s salary was?)

Anne: *“No, he never told me. Even after he retired he didn’t tell me. I didn’t ask, because he was so conscious of saying he didn’t have, you know, didn’t have enough for us to do things.”*

**2.4 Michael Cavanaugh**—interviewed June 26, 2007 on Davids Island, and December 16, 2007 at Rancho Santa Fe, California.



Figure 2.8. Michael Cavanaugh (right) at age 7 in 1957 with friend in rear yard of Cavanaugh family's NCO Quarters (Building 30). In the background is the Quatermaster Storehouse/Post Engineer's Office (Building 20). From collection of Michael Cavanaugh.

A self-described “army brat,” Michael Cavanaugh lived at Fort Slocum in the late 1950s during the period his father served as master sergeant in the US Army Chaplain School. The Cavanaugh family moved frequently between postings to Japan, Germany, and stateside but the three years spent at Slocum were for Mr. Cavanaugh, from the age of four to seven, the period he has come to recall as his “hometown” years. Many years later, after obtaining a PhD in sociology from the University of Pittsburgh, Michael Cavanaugh began inquiring about the history and military uses of Fort Slocum as a means of clarifying his own association with the place.



Figure 2.9. Michael Cavanaugh (left) interviewed by Robert Jacoby on Davids Island, June 26, 2007.



In 2005 Dr. Cavanaugh founded the Fort Slocum Alumni and Friends organization to share memories of island life, and to act as an umbrella group with which to influence the pattern of future developments there. Presently living in Los Angeles with his wife Elizabeth, Mike Cavanaugh works for the Los Angeles Unified School District and teaches philosophy at Los Angeles Community College District.

*“Yeah, it was a beautiful island, but it was also the artificial product of Army socialism. My friends on active duty might not like to hear this, but the Army is the last bastion of the penetration of socialism into American society; subsidized commissary, subsidized PX, subsidized housing, and so forth. And [the] Army, of course, made use of a lot of cheap soldier labor and sometimes cheap civilian labor to build a place like this.”*

**2.5 Harry Victor Dutchyshyn**—interviewed October 18, 2007 in Johnstown, Pennsylvania.



Figure 2.10. Harry Victor Dutchyshyn as an infant, 1930, with his parents, Harry and Marie Dutchyshyn, camping in the Hudson Valley. From collection of Harry Victor Dutchyshyn.

Although he was never a resident of Davids Island, Harry Victor Dutchyshyn was born in the Fort Slocum hospital in 1930, the son of an enlisted man. As a hobby, his father purchased a box camera and began taking pictures of his fellow soldiers, selling the photographs to the men to send home as souvenirs. He eventually became post photographer, operating a photo studio in Raymond Hall (the Gymnasium) as a concessionaire to the Post Exchange. Throughout his school years, Mr. Dutchyshyn was a frequent visitor to the island, often assisting his father’s efforts in the studio. Seeing soldiers in parade formation had a profound influence on the young man, who went on to be a West Point graduate commissioned in the Army Corps of Engineers. Various assignments took him to Germany, Taiwan, and South Vietnam, and with the rank of colonel, Harry Victor Dutchyshyn became commandant of the Philadelphia Engineering District. Today, he and his wife Val live in Johnstown, Pennsylvania when not traveling around the country.



Figure 2.11. Colonel Harry Victor Dutchyshyn, US Army Corps of Engineers, 1978. From collection of Harry Victor Dutchyshyn.

*“I was raised in the Army. I had 30 years in the Army. I was brought up in the Army. I used to tell people the color of my blood was olive drab.”*

2.6 **Pete Fuller**—interviewed September 27, 2007 in Perkasio, Pennsylvania.



Figure 2.12. Pete Fuller (right) with his father Sergeant First Class Sydney Fuller at Neptune Dock, New Rochelle, NY, in 1965. Pete is dressed for his high school prom. From collection of Pete Fuller.

A teenager in the early 1960s, Pete Fuller lived at Fort Slocum while his father managed the post commissary and then the NCO Club. During a time of severe housing shortage at Fort Slocum, the Fullers occupied a small second-floor apartment above the post motor pool (“bedroom not much bigger than a walk-in closet”). Upon college graduation Mr. Fuller joined the Army Reserves, entered Officer Training School, and earned his wings at flight school. After 20 years of active duty as an aircraft maintenance officer and helicopter pilot, Pete Fuller retired from the Army with a rank of lieutenant colonel and went to work for the Boeing Corporation outside Philadelphia.

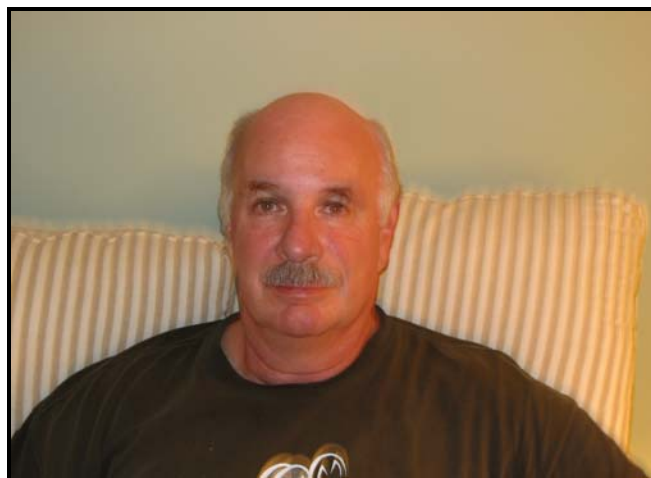


Figure 2.13. Pete Fuller, 2007.

*“Everybody knew everybody. And it was a very, very, small, tight-knit community. Pete Parker’s father was a full colonel. Herb Bradley’s father was an NCO. It didn’t make any difference. Everybody just palled around”*

2.7 Joanna Geer—interviewed October 17, 2007 in Toledo, Ohio.



Figure 2.14. Gebhard family, Fort Slocum, circa 1944. (l. to r.) Wesley Jr., Joanna (Geer), Lillian, Geraldine, Chaplain Major Wesley Gebhard, and Pauline. The Parade Ground is at left. Out of view to the right is the family quarters, Building 3. To the right rear are Buildings 1 and 2. From collection of Joanna Geer.

Joanna Geer, daughter of the post senior chaplain, spent her junior high school years at Fort Slocum during the Second World War. From the somewhat detached viewpoint of a teenager, she witnessed the arrival and transfer of large numbers of troops to battle theaters in Europe, and got to see first hand the effects of impending combat on young men not much older than she. For Mrs. Geer, one of the joys of living at Fort Slocum was walking around the post with her father during the evenings when fog and mist shrouded the island. At the close of the war her father returned to the ministry and the family moved to Cornwall, New York. When she married, Joanna Geer followed her husband to Ohio, where she worked many years for the City of Toledo.



Figure 2.15. Joanna Geer, 2008.

*“The enlisted men—most of them that were assigned to their posts were very nice to us kids. Even the MPs that we used to drive crazy—they still were nice to us. Except every now and then you’d get one hard boiled one that didn’t want to play but most of the time they did.”*

**2.8 Rich Lowery**—interviewed October 23, 2007 in Midland, North Carolina.

A native of North Carolina, Rich Lowery arrived at the Fort Slocum Nike Missile Battery as a 21 year old recruit in 1959, and remained until the Battery was deactivated in 1961. Trained as a radar operator, Mr. Lowery served during the height of the Cold War when the missile battery was prepared to fire within 15 minutes of an alert. Regarding themselves as frontline warriors, the men of Nike Battery 15 had a high esprit de corps, and interacted infrequently with the chaplain and journalist trainees at Fort Slocum. Coming from a small town in the Carolinas, he was intrigued by New York City, and spent most weekends in the city. Rich Lowery returned to North Carolina after his military service, working for many years in the insurance industry. He and his wife presently live outside of Charlotte.



Figure 2.16. Rich Lowery as Specialist 4th class, at Fort Slocum Nike Battery barracks, circa 1960. From collection of Rich Lowery.

[Describing an unexpected full-alert at the Fort Slocum Nike Missile Battery]: *“Everybody was busy doing whatever their job was and there was no undue anxiety. Everybody was just simply a little on edge.”*



Figure 2.17. Rich Lowery, 2007.

**2.9 Christa Mueller and Ann Ekman**—interviewed November 19, 2007 in Williamsburg, Virginia.

Teenaged daughters of the Fort Slocum senior chaplain in the mid-1950s, Christa Mueller and Annie Ekman were typical of children from military families in their frequent moves between postings. Yet they recall Fort Slocum as their favorite childhood home. The family lived on Officers' Row in Building 2, which had a large porch facing the Parade Ground, and which the sisters have always felt was the finest military quarters they occupied. Both women married Army officers and accompanied them to assignments around the world while raising families of their own. Their brother Peter became a US Navy Captain. Residing in Williamsburg, Virginia, Christa Mueller and her husband Fritz volunteer at the archeological excavations of nearby Historic Jamestown. Annie and Mike Ekman live in Waynesboro, Virginia.



Figure 2.18. Christa Mueller (left) with friend Ginny Brown at Fort Slocum Rodman Gun Monument, circa 1955. From collection of Christa Mueller.



Figure 2.19. Annie Ekman and brother Peter Huchthausen along Fort Slocum Parade Ground, circa 1955. Peter is in the uniform of a Valley Forge Military Academy cadet. Fang poses in foreground. From collection of Christa Mueller.



Figure 2.20. Christa Mueller and Annie Ekman, 2007.

Annie: *“The bugle calls for Reveille, Retreat, and Taps were such a part of our lives that if we didn’t hear them we missed them.”*

Christa: *“Friday evenings momma and daddy usually had a cocktail party to go to. And it was a lively little social life on the post for them. For us it was—it was nice. There were not many kids, but it was a small group and we all knew each other.”*

**2.10 Rivka (Randy) Olley**—interviewed October 1 and November 1, 2007 in Pikesville, Maryland.

Arriving at Fort Slocum in 1956 at the age of ten and staying for the next six years, Rivka Olley formed a close attachment to the island community. Her father, Chief Warrant Officer Cornelius Olley, supervised the post motor pool and ferry service, often taking the helm of a passenger or freight ferry. From their quarters on Officers' Row, the Olleys had an unobstructed view of the Parade Ground to the front and Long Island Sound to the rear, the sights and sounds of which retain an enduring tug on Ms. Olley's memories. Prior to their Fort Slocum assignment, the Olleys lived in Yokohama, Japan, providing Rivka Olley with an appreciation of foreign cultures at an early age. As an adult, she obtained a PhD in psychology, currently works for the City of Baltimore school system, and lives in nearby Pikesville, Maryland.

*“My mom wasn't a big social person. My mom didn't even really--once a year my mom went out to the officers' club with my dad where it was, you know, a big night out. People didn't have a big social life that I remembered. I mean, the guys went to the officers' club, had their drinks and then went home and stayed in with their families for the night.”*



Figure 2.21. The Olley family. (left to right) Rivka, Harriet, Chief Warrant Officer Cornelius Olley, and brother Donald at their Fort Slocum quarters (Building 12), 1962. From collection of Rivka Olley.

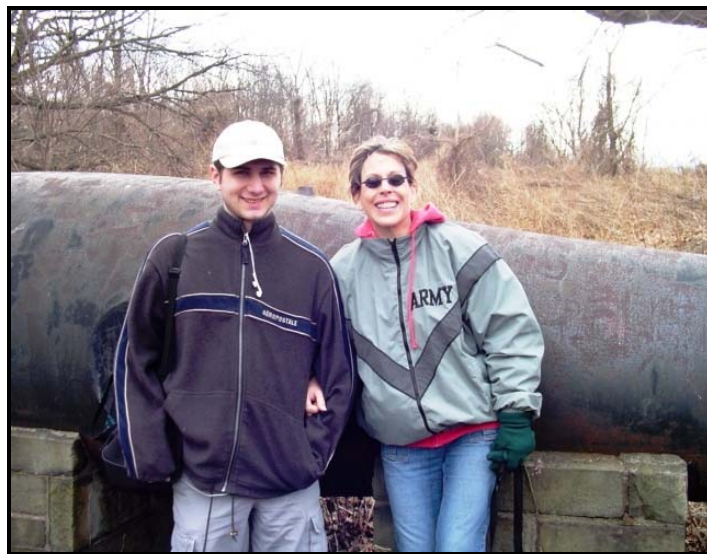


Figure 2.22. Rivka Olley and son Mark Olley Rohan at Rodman Gun Monument, Davids Island, March 20, 2008. From collection of Rivka Olley.



**2.11 Ken Rought**—interviewed October 1, 2007 in Bear, Delaware.

Ken Rought arrived at Fort Slocum in 1939 as an 18 year old recruit from Binghamton, New York. Initially slated for infantry deployment to Panama, he was diagnosed with flat feet and was reassigned to the post's permanent Quartermaster detachment. While at Fort Slocum, Pearl Harbor was bombed, and the contingencies of war permitted quick promotions for Mr. Rought to supply sergeant, first sergeant, and then warrant officer junior grade. During his posting to the Quartermaster corps, he met and then married his late-wife Norma, a New Rochelle-native. The newlyweds lived for a time in a small third-floor apartment on Officers' Row, where Mrs. Rought was employed as cook and maid for a colonel. After the Second World War, he served as an agent in the Army counterintelligence corps, with overseas duty assignments taking him to Germany and South Vietnam. A project manager in the plastics industry after his military service, Ken Rought now lives near Wilmington, Delaware.



Figure 2.23. Private First Class Ken Rought at Fort Slocum, circa 1940. From collection of Ken Rought.



Figure 2.24. Ken Rought, 2007.

*“1940 or 1941—a contingent of Polish and British troops came through there [Fort Slocum]. I understand that they had evacuated the Far East, came across country and were stationed, just for a couple days or so at our place and were on their way to England. It was a very interesting time.”*

**2.12 Bob Sisk**—interviewed October 24, 2007 in Raeford, North Carolina.

Eleven years old when his family arrived at Fort Slocum, Bob Sisk lived on post from 1951 to 1958 while his father served as First Sergeant for the Army Chaplain School. Describing the island as a place of endless adventure for a boy, he held part-time jobs in the snack bar and as a pinsetter in the bowling alley, earning 10 cents a game. The family lived in the non-commissioned officers' family area at the southeast end of the island in Building 104. Bob joined the Army upon graduating from New Rochelle High School, serving multiple tours in Vietnam as a paratrooper. After a long career in the Army Mr. Sisk retired to Raeford, North Carolina with his wife and daughter.

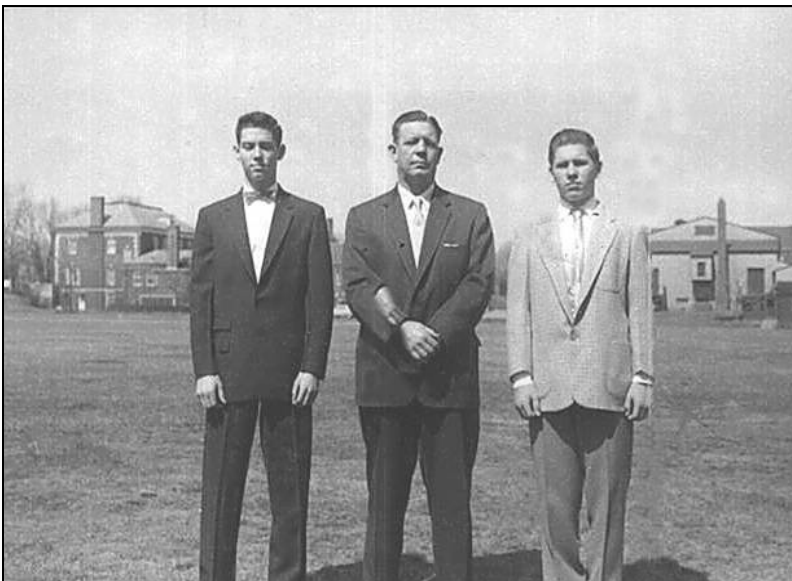


Figure 2.25. (left to right) Bob Sisk, age 18, Sergeant First Class Edgar Sisk, and Tom Sisk, age 15, at Fort Slocum recreation field, circa 1958. The YMCA is at left. From collection of Bob Sisk.

*“I learned to spit shine shoes from watching the MPs in the barracks. I learned to shoot pool in the day rooms. Used to make a little money shooting pool--and other things. There was a lot of gambling that went on, on pay days.”*

**2.13 Tom Sisk**—interviewed October 24, 2007 in Fayetteville, North Carolina.

Three years younger than his brother Bob, Tom Sisk felt fortunate to have spent so much of his boyhood at Fort Slocum. Not only was the post a fascinating place to live in and explore, but its proximity to New York created many opportunities for enrichment. He remembers seeing the opera *Rigoletto* when he was in 8<sup>th</sup> grade and going to Dodgers games at Ebbetts Field, both of which he enjoyed. After high school, Mr. Sisk enlisted in the Army and had a long career in its Criminal Investigation Division, serving in South Vietnam, Europe, and stateside. Tom Sisk and his wife currently reside in Fayetteville, North Carolina.



Figure 2.26. Bob and Tom Sisk on Davids Island, 2005. From collection of Fort Slocum Alumni and Friends.

*“Not many people do [know about Fort Slocum]—I haven’t talked to anybody in several years who even knew of its existence, outside of New Rochelle or something like that.”*

**2.14 Chris and Ed Vincik**—interviewed December 16, 2007 in Rancho Santa Fe, California.

A Texas native, Ed Vincik was 19 when he enlisted in the military and assigned to the First Air Force Headquarters at Fort Slocum. It was while serving there that he met a local girl, Chris DiBetta, who worked in the post intelligence division, and a few years later in 1951, Ed and Chris married. With Mr. Vincik's discharge from the service, the couple moved to California then to Massachusetts then back to California where Ed Vincik worked as a postal carrier and later in the real estate business. Presently, the Vinciks reside in Palos Verdes, California.

Ed: *"It [Fort Slocum] was wonderful. It was a pleasure being there."*

Chris: *"[In New Rochelle] we all had to be careful of the soldiers. The reputation at the time, you don't go out with a soldier. Well, I went out with a soldier and I kind of worried about him, and I told my mother and she said well, don't tell your father."*



Figure 2.27. Sergeant Ed Vincik at his Fort Slocum office circa 1949. From collection of Ed & Chris Vincik.



Figure 2.29 Ed and Chris Vincik 2007.



Figure 2.28. Chris Vincik at Fort Slocum seawall, circa 1949. From collection of Ed & Chris Vincik.

**2.15 Carl Wenberg**—interviewed October 9, 2007 in South Yarmouth, Massachusetts.

Growing up in New Rochelle, Carl Wenberg often visited Fort Slocum during the 1940s when his father worked for the post engineering department. Exploring the post was a great adventure for Mr. Wenberg and his friends, and the experience of seeing military drill teams on the parade ground was a factor in his decision to enlist in the Air Force after high school graduation. He worked as an air traffic controller, first in Iceland for the US Air Force and later in the United States for the FAA, before moving to Cape Cod and joining the local utility company. Today, Carl Wenberg, his wife, and their two dogs split their time between the Cape and Florida.

*“Our main hangout was the shooting range, digging for old bullets and shell casings or whatever. And that’s when the MPs used to get a little upset. They didn’t want us hanging around there.”*



Figure 2.30. Carl Wenberg, 2007.

2.16 Zoltan (Zip) Zantay—interviewed June 3, 2008 in Lakeville, Connecticut.



Figure 2.31. The Fort Slocum Jazz Band circa 1944 in YMCA. Zoltan Zantay in front row, far right. From collection of Zoltan Zantay.

Zoltan (Zip) Zantay was raised in East Harlem in New York City, and when 16 years old won a clarinet scholarship to the New York Philharmonic Scholarship Ensemble. He found work with local bands after graduation and in 1942 enlisted in the Army where he was assigned to the newly organized 378<sup>th</sup> Army Service Forces Band. Primarily a clarinetist, Mr. Zantay also played saxophone (see above photo) and flute in both the small dance combos and large broadcast ensembles that became the mainstay of the band.

After the Second World War, he worked for a number of big bands including the Vincent Lopez, Carmen Cavallaro, and Les Baxter outfits. One of the highlights of Mr. Zantay’s professional career was a two-week stint at the Paramount Theater in New York that was headlined by Louis Armstrong. In addition to giving private music lessons, he owned and operated a summer camp in the Berkshire Mountains in Massachusetts for many years. Currently, Zip Zantay lives in northwestern Connecticut where he plays the clarinet daily for his partner Marion, and their dog Otis.

*“...but always behind it [good times of Fort Slocum] was the fact that you could be shipped out, that you could go where you could die. It was always in the back, no matter we were living in paradise. One of our conductors, a guy would hit a bad note, a sour note, he’d say—‘Guadalcanal for you.’”*

2.17 Alan Grieve—interviewed June 4, 2008 in Pittsfield, Massachusetts.



Figure 2.32. Corporal Alan Grieve, at right, during concert outside the YMCA at Fort Slocum, circa 1941. From collection of Alan Grieve.

Alan Grieve was a young trumpet player employed in and around his hometown of Pittsfield, Massachusetts, when he saw a poster at the local union hall calling for musicians to enlist in the U.S. Army. He did so in early 1941 and was detailed to the Army band at Fort Slocum. The band performed at flag ceremonies, marching formations, public concerts, YMCA dances, the Officers' Club, and weekly broadcasts from Raymond Hall (Building 57) on local radio station WFAS. Mr. Grieve left the band in 1942 to join the post's MP detachment, later serving as unit sergeant in the Transportation Corps.

At the close of the Second World War, he returned to Pittsfield and played in several local bands in addition to giving private music lessons. Building on his first-hand experience of the local music scene, Mr. Grieve has compiled two books about the history of dance and jazz bands in the Berkshire Mountain region of Massachusetts. Before putting aside his trumpet playing for good in 2006, Alan Grieve frequently played taps at the request of the American Legion and VFW for veterans' funerals in the Pittsfield area.

(Interviewer: Was playing taps a hard thing to do?)

*"Yes, very hard."*

2.18 **Paul Tanner**—interviewed June 6, 2008 in Carlsbad, California, by telephone.



Figure 2.33. Paul Tanner as member of the Glenn Miller band, 1940. From collection of Paul Tanner.

Raised near Wilmington, Delaware, Paul Tanner was a professional musician while still in his teens. The bandleader Glenn Miller discovered him while he was playing trombone in an Atlantic City striptease club, and for the next four years Mr. Tanner toured with the legendary Miller band across America. When Miller entered the Army Air Corps to start up a service band, the Army approached Mr. Tanner to lead a band at New Castle Army Air Base in Delaware. After this offer was rescinded, he enlisted in 1942 and joined the Army band at Fort Slocum. At the end of the Second World War, Mr. Tanner started a long association with the Tex Beneke big band, a touring group that played over 300 dates a year and continued the “swing” sounds of Glenn Miller. In the 1950s he settled in California where he obtained a PhD in music at UCLA and worked for many years as a session musician in the recording and movie industries. Along with writing text books on jazz and teaching at UCLA, he developed an early electronic musical synthesizer, the electro-theremin, which he can be heard playing on the Beach Boys’ hit song “Good Vibrations.” Paul Tanner resides in Carlsbad, California.

*“The musicians, the players themselves, they didn’t stand much for another player having an ego, because there was always somebody that could play just as well. But it was almost always fun, you know, so I enjoyed playing.”*

2.19 **Raymond Crisara**—interviewed June 13, 2008 in Austin, Texas, by telephone.



Figure 2.34. The 378<sup>th</sup> Army Service Forces Orchestra dinner in New York City, September 14, 1945. Ray Crisara is indicated by circle. From collection of Ray Crisara.

A native of Cortland, New York, Ray Crisara learned to play trumpet at age 10. Within a few years he was proficient enough to join the Cortland city band, which was conducted by his father, a tool and die maker in a local manufacturing plant. After three years of music study at the University of Michigan, Mr. Crisara took a position as first trumpet with the Metropolitan Opera in New York City. He remained at the Met for two years until drafted by the Army in 1942, and beginning the following year he served with the 378<sup>th</sup> Army Service Forces orchestra stationed at Fort Slocum. Shortly after leaving the service in 1946, Mr. Tanner secured a position with the NBC Orchestra under the baton of Arturo Toscanini, followed by jobs at the ABC network, freelance commercial work, and some teaching. Among his varied recording sessions were dates with Leonard Bernstein, Glen Gould, Alice Cooper, and Paul McCartney. In 1978, he joined the music department at the University of Texas-Austin, and remained a professor of trumpet there for 25 years. Today, Ray Crisara is an avid University of Texas football fan and recently received an honorary doctorate from his hometown university at SUNY-Cortland.

*“The way Fort Slocum was important for me is, it turned me completely around from one kind of a career into another kind of career that turned out to be fun, good experience, lots of money, and everything else.”*





Figure 2.35. Zoltan (Zip) Zantay and Otis, 2008.



Figure 2.36. Alan Grieve, 2008.



Figure 2.37. Paul Tanner circa 2005.  
From collection of Paul Tanner.



Figure 2.38. Ray Crisara, 2000.  
From *International Trumpet Guild Journal*, March 2000, p. 33.

**2.20 Helen Stark**—Interviewed February 17, 2007, in New Rochelle, New York.

Born 1909 in Mahanoy City, Pennsylvania, Helen Stark lived in a Philadelphia orphanage after her father died in a coalmine accident in 1912. Mrs. Stark and her siblings remained there for ten years until her mother married a Fort Slocum soldier and brought the children to the island, where her stepfather, Arthur Hales, was bandmaster of the Fort Slocum band during the 1920s and 1930s. In 1929 Helen married Carl Gunnard Stark, himself a Fort Slocum soldier, and delivered her first son, Thomas, in the Fort Slocum hospital. From 1925 to 1940, she worked at the post laundry. After the death of her husband during the Second World War, she moved off-post to New Rochelle and lived there and in Pelham, New York for the next 65 years. Following in the family's military tradition, Mrs. Stark's son Thomas and a granddaughter both are graduates of the United States Military Academy at West Point. Helen Stark died on January 3, 2008 in New Rochelle at the age of 98.

*“We ate at home...just a little house, a little building. It was a wooden building...You'd come in the door here. And they had a little place where they had a little icebox.. And you'd get your ice in there. And then you could come in and had a nice big kitchen. You had a bathroom and another room alongside of that...Then we had a big room and another side room with an oil stove. And we had a potbelly stove. And then we had a little porch.”*

**2.21 Jon Cary**—Interviewed June 25, 2008 in New Rochelle, New York.

Jon Cary, a resident of the upstate New York town of Chenango Forks, was the Tetra Tech EC, Inc., Site Superintendent for the Army Corps of Engineers-sponsored remediation and cleanup of Davids Island-Fort Slocum from 2005 to 2008.



Figure 2.39. Jon Cary, 2008.

*“Well, when we first arrived there was quite the challenge to get the area opened up so you could move around. We were like a single line of marching army ants trying to whack your way through the weeds to find things. And then one of our first tasks was to locate everything, locate the roadways and measure buildings up and get physical dimensions.”*



### 3.0 COMMON THEMES

Every interview began in similar fashion, with the participant being asked to describe their association with Fort Slocum. From that moment on, each interview ran its own course, covering similar but divergent ground, becoming more and more the creation of the interviewee as the interviewer attempted to steer the narrative along a format that best suited each case. From the many hours of tape, however, a few common themes surfaced that help to illustrate the everyday concerns of Fort Slocum's inhabitants, as well as their reactions to events that remind us that despite its small size and isolation, Fort Slocum was indeed interconnected with the outside world.

#### 3.1 Status, Rank, and Housing at Fort Slocum

A characteristic of nearly all communities is differential display of status and rank through the size, appearance, and location of residential units. Military posts, with their emphasis on a command hierarchy, are no exception to this practice, and land use patterns at Fort Slocum reflect the traditional segregation by rank that is a characteristic of the U.S. military, creating separate residential enclaves for officers, non-commissioned officers, and enlisted personnel across the landscape of the island. The privileges of rank are also apparent in the housing available to the different ranks, expressed in increasing floor area and ornamentation, and preferential site location with advanced rank. Residential areas for officers and enlisted personnel were separated by the broad expanse of the Parade Ground, a spatial ordering that has its origins in the large-scale building episode of the 1870s. The officers' residential area, or Officers' Row, extended along the western edge of the Parade Ground from the commanding officer's quarters (Building 1) to the Post Administration Building (Building 13), while housing for the enlisted personnel occupied the northeastern quadrant of the post. The principal residential area for non-commissioned officers was located at the southeastern end of the island, adjacent to the defense and support facilities, with supplementary NCO housing scattered around the island.

Among the enlisted ranks, housing consisted entirely of barracks, the largest of which, Building 59, was designed to house over 300 troops. Even the smaller barracks, such as Buildings 130 and 131, were intended to provide room for several dozen soldiers in large, open rooms. These two barracks were built in late 1943 for the first detachment of WACs posted to Fort Slocum. Upon arriving on post in 1943, the WACs were assigned quarters in a section of the hospital that had been unoccupied for many years.

*“And we landed on the island and the Army police told us to go to the hospital. So we went to the hospital, which hadn't been used since World War One. There were spider webs and mice and everything, and they put us in one of the wards. We had double-deck beds, bunk beds, and there was 30 of us in the group, and we settled down, cleaned it up, got our beds in order, and so forth.”*

-Gladys Borkowski

The concept of women soldiers was difficult for many in the Army to accept in the 1940s, particularly by old-school officers such as commanding officer Col. Bernard Lentz. But the contingencies of the Second World War and the personnel shortages that attended it made the enlistment of women a necessity.

*“Well, they had it in their minds that we were there to replace them to go overseas, so we weren't very popular. There was no abuse or anything to us, but they just ignored us completely.”*

-Gladys Borkowski

*“Well, there weren't that many. The first time I ran into the WACs was, they were working at the post headquarters in the message center and they had other jobs. And we*

*were looking at them with a raised eyebrow, saying my God, women soldiers, what are we gonna do now?"*

-Ken Rought

Initially opposed to their appearance at his post, Col. Lentz authorized the construction of the new WAC barracks to accommodate the women, but also to sequester them at the far south end of the island in a desperate attempt to keep the sexes at arms length. He was heard to be as concerned for the safety of the women as he was for the morale of the men, believing that women on a small isolated post such as Fort Slocum was akin to having them on shipboard—no good could come from it. But the WAC detachment proved indispensable in carrying out many of the duties that previously had been done by men alone, and if not all male officers appreciated their efforts, Col. Lentz did.

*"Colonel Lentz was great. After he got used to us, he said 'They came, I saw, and they conquered.' So, he was great to us."*

-Gladys Borkowski



Figure 3.1. Col. Bernard Lentz and WAC officer inspect new WAC barracks (Building 130), late 1943. Note the double-decker bunks. Original in National Archives, College Park, MD; digital copy from Fort Slocum Alumni and Friends Collection, Michael A. Cavanaugh, Los Angeles, CA, custodian.

*"And they were capable and appeared to be very competent women who had really wanted to help the war effort. And of course, that relieved male soldiers who were then being transferred overseas."*

-Ken Rought

For the enlisted soldier, barracks life was short on privacy, with shared sleeping areas and toilet facilities, and often a common area, or 'day room,' available for leisure activities. It should be noted, however, that prior to 1950, the average floor space of the American home was about 900 square feet, and the concept

of personal privacy was relatively unknown as most people shared bedrooms with one or more siblings or other family members for much of their lives (Wright 1988:34). Enlisted personnel in the Army of the 1940s would have been familiar with this type of proximity imposed upon them, even if engineered on a much larger scale. Yet, there were distinctions among the enlisted ranks as well.

*“It was two-story, and it was a long building, bunk beds, double bunk beds. I was on the second floor, being a corporal I got a private room. We had bathrooms and showers. And we had a nice room for washing our clothes and ironing. And we had an outside line to hang our clothes. Sometimes our clothes were stolen off the line for souvenirs by some of the soldiers.”*

-Gladys Borkowski

The 1930s offered opportunities for enlistees to escape the confines of Depression-era hometowns, and for these individuals Army life often appeared to be significantly better than their prior circumstances. Steady employment, plenty of food, and fellowship within the ranks were welcome features of service, and the scale, orderliness, and discipline of the Army regimen were viewed by many soldiers as sufficient replacement for the families they had left behind.

*“It was a beautiful barracks [Building 69]. We had all single bunks and it was nicely polished and had a nice, big latrine and it was a large day room where we could read. And there was a pool table in there. We could play pool at night. And the library occupied the other wing, facing the Parade Ground.”*

-Ken Rought

If close quarters were the norm for enlisted personnel through the Second World War and immediate post-war period at Fort Slocum, there appear to have been increased amenities for soldiers during the last phase of military activities there. By the 1950s, Fort Slocum had largely transitioned from a recruitment depot to an educational center for military chaplains and journalists. The change in focus and the smaller detachments assigned to the post permitted alterations to some of the barracks that offered greater privacy and comfort to the trainees (Figures 3.3 and 3.4). The day room has been given the intentional appearance of a residential living room or hotel lounge.



Figure 3.2. Sgt. Ed Vincik, at right, in barracks, circa 1949. This photo illustrates the ad hoc nature of personal space for Air Force personnel at Fort Slocum. From collection of Ed & Chris Vincik.

*“The barracks were not crowded for us since we had a limited amount of personnel in the 1207<sup>th</sup> HQ detachment. Some of the married men lived in apartments in New Rochelle. And the officers had their own building. We always had some vacant rooms for incoming or transient personnel.”*

-Bill Waterhouse

*“These were very plush quarters for enlisted guys. Each barracks room had two Hollywood beds, two desks and desk chairs, two large metal wardrobes, and an older but comfortable chair. There were similar sets of rooms off the island side of the day room. Thus, a total of eight rooms, each holding two persons.”*

-George Willhite



Figure 3.3. Personal quarters, Building 64, 1958. Record Group 342, National Archives, College Park, MD. Note the half-wall room divider.



Figure 3.4. Day Room, Building 64, 1958. Record Group 342, National Archives, College Park, MD.



The last remaining front-line troops at Fort Slocum, those assigned to the Nike Missile Battery, were not as fortunate in their accommodations. The men of the Nike unit found themselves billeted in the old WAC barracks, located immediately adjacent to the missile command and control facilities, wooden barracks that were meant to be temporary when built in 1943, but which by 1960 were showing signs of weathering and lack of maintenance.

*“Our barracks was an old World War Two WAC barracks that was right on the edge of the island. The Barracks was very old. They were not substantial buildings... We had a coal fired furnace in a room that was right there near the front of the barracks. And there were times when somebody might forget to put that coal in there and the barracks would get pretty chilly.”*

-Rich Lowery

In the hierarchy that determined residential assignments, the non-commissioned officer (NCO) with family occupied the next rank. Yet, even within this group there were profound differences in the type of accommodations available to personnel. The NCO Family Housing area comprised seven duplex two-story houses (Buildings 101 to 107) that were built in two episodes, 1909 and 1930. The brick quarters were stripped down versions of folk Victorian and colonial revival styles. While small, these utilitarian residences were similar to what one might find in working class and lower middle class suburbs of the period.

At around 800 square feet of floor space, the second series of NCO quarters consisted of two bedrooms, living room, kitchen, and screened-in porches on each floor that often were utilized year-round as spare bedrooms. From 1951 to 1958, Sergeant First Class Edgar Sisk, his wife Ethel, and their three sons lived in the south half of Building 104. Recalling their first day at Fort Slocum:

*“We went into the quarters. There were army cots for the kids, and they hadn’t had all the furniture in yet. The place was freshly painted and the smell of enamel paint stays with me, you know. I remember that.”*

-Bob Sisk

The three brothers shared the second bedroom on bunk beds, and both Bob and Tom Sisk recall moving into the upstairs sun porch, at different times, as they got older. Furnishings were a mixture of army issue and items assembled by the family at previous postings. Most military families took certain items with them when going to a new duty assignment, leaving behind what they didn’t want.

*“In Carlisle Barracks [Pennsylvania] all the furniture was mahogany, exceptionally fine quality. And virtually the whole house except for a piano and a sofa and one or two chairs, was government. And when we got there [Fort Slocum] we pretty much furnished it ourselves.”*

-Bob Sisk

Because military personnel and their families, in general, rotated through postings on three-year cycles, little attention was paid to changing or personalizing one’s quarters.

*“Back then you didn’t paint quarters, you know, and took them as they were. And you left them as you found them. No, the Army wasn’t that sensitive to personal schemes and things back then.”*

-Tom Sisk



Figure 3.5. NCO Quarters Building 107, in 1939, similar in design to Sisk family quarters (Building 104). Record Group 77, National Archives, College Park, MD.

Due to a housing shortage at the post in the 1950s and early 1960s, some NCO families were squeezed into an assortment of billets that were judged to be substandard. Sergeant First Class Sydney Fuller spent most of his long army career in food services, and was brought to Fort Slocum by the post commander, Colonel Frank Castagneto, in 1962 to manage the NCO Club and the post commissary. Strings were pulled to bring Sergeant Fuller to Fort Slocum, yet once there, the only available quarters was a small second-floor apartment above the post motor pool garage (Building 110). For two and a half years in the mid 1960s, Sergeant Fuller, his wife, and teenage son Pete, made do with these NCO quarters that measured not much more than 600 square feet of floor space.

*“It was two bedrooms. Actually, you had to walk up a metal flight of stairs to get to it. It was a very small landing. And, as I said, it was above the garage. To the left was the kitchen, a very small kitchen. To the right was my bedroom. It was not much bigger than a walk-in closet. Down the hall, the next room was a bathroom. You only got one bathroom. To the right, down the hall was my parents’ bedroom. And on the left side was the living room. And that was it. It was a very, very, small, small area. There wasn’t much of a yard. And they did consider that very substandard housing.”*

-Pete Fuller

Billet assignments were based on rank and seniority, but families were seldom transferred to lesser quarters to make room for senior NCOs. The family of Master Sergeant Bob Cavanaugh felt luckier than many in being assigned quarters within the converted passenger ferry waiting room (Building 30), despite being isolated from the rest of the NCO community.

(Interviewer: Did that satisfy your parents, living there as opposed to the other NCO quarters?)

*“Oh, they were happy, because you always took what you got. It seemed big to me at ten years old, but how two adults and two, and then three, children lived in there---it was two bedroom, you know, basically a cottage. It had a huge backyard though. And that suited*

*my father very well. My father was very protective of us children, didn't want us to associate with other children, afraid we'd get into trouble. So we had our own swing set, had our own beach, and I guess from that standpoint he was happier to have us there. "*

-Michael Cavanaugh

The Cavanaugh's quarters were only somewhat more spacious than that of the Fullers', but looked out onto Long Island Sound instead of being set amidst the post's support facilities. Like many military families, the Cavanaugh's furnished their quarters with items acquired at previous postings in Germany and Japan, including rattan furniture and art work.

Further down the NCO ranks, personnel found themselves assigned to mobile-home trailers, about a dozen of which were parked between the Quartermaster area and the seawall in the mid 1950s and 1960s. The majority of these trailers accommodated young married NCOs without children.

*"And the trailer camp was like near the sea wall, not too far from the dock as I remember. When I was first there, I still had enough Japanese that I would go and talk to some of the Japanese wives. They seemed young and cute and they were fun, you know."*

(Interviewer: They must have been somewhat isolated there.)

*"Oh, they were. You know, they absolutely were. I mean, they had each other [but] most of them were enlisted and they were on the wrong side of the base."*

-Rivka Olley

A number of married NCOs lived in New Rochelle, the Bronx, or elsewhere on the mainland, often staying with family members; military salaries, particularly at the NCO rank, were generally insufficient to independently pay off-island rents. Spouses of servicemen sometimes sought employment on the post, working at the PX, in the YMCA, or for officers, to supplement the family's income. Ethel Sisk, for instance:

*"She worked at the post tailor shop for a while and then she worked in the PX for a long while just about we left. And mother was fairly well known around the post and most people liked her. The wage then was 90 cents an hour."*

-Bob Sisk

It was not unusual in an earlier period, for married NCOs to occupy upper floors of buildings along Officers' Row. In 1941, the Roughts moved into the third floor quarters of a Col. McCord (Building 5), for whom Norma Rought worked as a cook and maid. The arrangement provided the young couple with extra cash, free meals for Norma, and a roof over their heads. They were always aware, however, that they were only visitors on Officers' Row.

*"It was just a bed and a little bathroom up there with a slanted ceiling because we were in the third floor under the roof. But it was convenient. We came up and down the back stairwell. Of course, you didn't enter an officer's quarters by the front."*

-Ken Rought

Officers' Row at Fort Slocum, as at all U.S. military facilities, was a residential area set apart from the rest of the post to accommodate officers and their families. The buildings along Officers' Row were

constructed between 1878 and 1910, and varied considerably in design, materials, and size. The northernmost of the officers' quarters, Building 12, was a 2 ½-story brick apartment complex that served four low-ranking officers, later increased to six officers with the utilization of the attic floor. The four primary quarters measured around 1,000 square feet of floor space, with three bedrooms, living room, dining room, and kitchen. Chief Warrant Officer Cornelius Olley and his family, wife Harriet and two children, lived in Building 12 for the six years he was posted to Fort Slocum.

*“And we were on the top floor, because there was such a limitation on quarters, so we got the top floor. And of course, our goal was to get out of the top floor. But I loved the top floor. It had one of the old bathtubs with the claw feet. We went from that top floor when someone left the unit on the right side, second floor, that’s where we moved into and that’s where we stayed until we left.”*

-Rivka Olley

All the officers' quarters along the Row faced onto the Parade Ground, creating an expansive park-like extension of the front yards. Although the Olleys' quarters were not as spacious as those of more senior officers, Building 12 was uniquely situated such that the rear faced directly onto Long Island Sound. The combination of Parade Ground in front and Sound to the rear created strong emotional ties to Fort Slocum.

*“It [flagpole] was almost out my window, it was the prominent thing. It was just off to, slightly to the left of our building and you could see it from New Rochelle. The flag was up when you went to school in the morning and the flag was there when you came home.*

*You know, [the waves] hitting the seawall when it was lower tide. You could always hear it. It was always present. And, I still fall asleep really well to that sound. It was, it was always, always there. Well, of course, you couldn’t get away from it. It was everywhere.”*

-Rivka Olley

At the opposite end of Officers' Row from where the Olleys lived were three, nearly identical wood-frame quarters that housed senior officers, with each residence accommodating two families. These spacious, two-story quarters, usually reserved for majors and lieutenant colonels, had measured floor space of about 1,800 square feet, including such amenities as 2 ½ bathrooms, four bedrooms, a food pantry, front porch, and on Buildings 2 and 4, an attached first-floor sun parlor to the southern quarters. From 1941 to 1945, Major (later Lieutenant Colonel) Wesley Gebhard, senior post chaplain, his wife Lillian and their four children occupied the south half of Building 3. Described by his daughter as “a poor country preacher,” Gebhard joined the Army Reserve to help make ends meet and was called up to active service before Pearl Harbor. Almost overnight the family's situation changed radically, moving from a small rural church and parsonage to a large home situated at the epicenter of prestige and rank.

*“Of course, my mother was very unsophisticated to say the least. And they had formal dances which she went to. And it was quite an interesting experience for her. But she was active in the ladies clubs and they used to ask her to speak. Whatever topic they were talking about; I mean Christian things.”*

(Interviewer: Now, all the furniture, was that Army issue?)

*“Most of it was, for us, because my parents had lived in parsonages and they did not have much furniture. So most of the furniture we had, yes, was Army issue.”*

(Interviewer: Did you have a radio?)

*“Yes. We had a radio before we moved to the service [Figure 3.6]. I can remember listening as a family. And we had some shows we listened to together. Stella Dallas is one that comes to mind.”*

-Joanna Geer



Figure 3.6. Geraldine Gebhard, Joanna Geer’s sister, in family quarters, circa 1944. Note the table radio behind her. From collection of Joanna Geer.

The senior chaplain at Fort Slocum during the mid 1950s was Lieutenant Colonel Walter Huchthausen, who with his wife and three children, lived in the northern section of Building 2. Unlike Chaplain Gebhard, Huchthausen was a career Army officer, serving at posts overseas as well as stateside. He did share with Gebhard the certainty that along with advanced rank came certain privileges, such as substantial quarters.

*“Our quarters were probably the best ones that we ever had on a military post in the United States. They were old, and large, and they faced the Parade Ground with a nice big porch on the front. The back was toward the ferry.”*

-Christa Mueller

*“Oh, it was fun because we had two stairways in the house, a front and back that was the servants’ stairway.”*

-Annie Ekman

*“The kitchen was very nice. It had a fireplace that had been closed in and made into a cupboard with two doors, and that’s where daddy kept his bar. And in the middle of the room we had a sawbuck table that daddy had built, and it was a roomy, roomy kitchen.”*

-Christa Mueller



Figure 3.7. Building 2, right side occupied by Huchthausen family, mid 1950s. Record Group 77, National Archives, College Park, MD.

Although lieutenant colonels could claim decent quarters, the status of rank did not come with high pay; three children, college tuition, and supporting a mother-in-law had their costs.

*“He said that he had to take a loan from Army Emergency Relief because he didn’t have enough to pay my tuition.”*

-Christa Mueller

And yet, it was uncharacteristic for officers’ wives to work on post, except in a voluntary capacity. Mrs. Huchthausen sewed at home, baked bread, and was a Girl Scout leader for the small Fort Slocum troop. Among her expected duties were teas and coffees with other officers’ wives, but not bringing home a paycheck.

*“She wore high heels all day long, to clean in, she never wore flat shoes. She was always dressed. She didn’t very often wear trousers. She wore dresses, skirts, and an apron.”*

-Annie Ekman

The largest single-family residence at Fort Slocum was known as Quarters One (Building 1), the home of the post commanding officer. It was intended as an imposing building, constructed of patterned masonry in the Romanesque style, and situated on the central spine of the island which guaranteed prominent sightlines from the dock as one disembarked the ferry. This first view of Fort Slocum was meant to encapsulate the command hierarchy of the post in a single glance.

At around 4,000 square feet of floor space, the residence ensured that the CO and his family would be quartered in spacious comfort. The ground floor included a large formal dining room, reception room, breakfast nook, and a library. Bedrooms, a family room, guest rooms, and enclosed sun porch occupied the upper floors. The rear and side yards, too, were inviting and well-maintained.

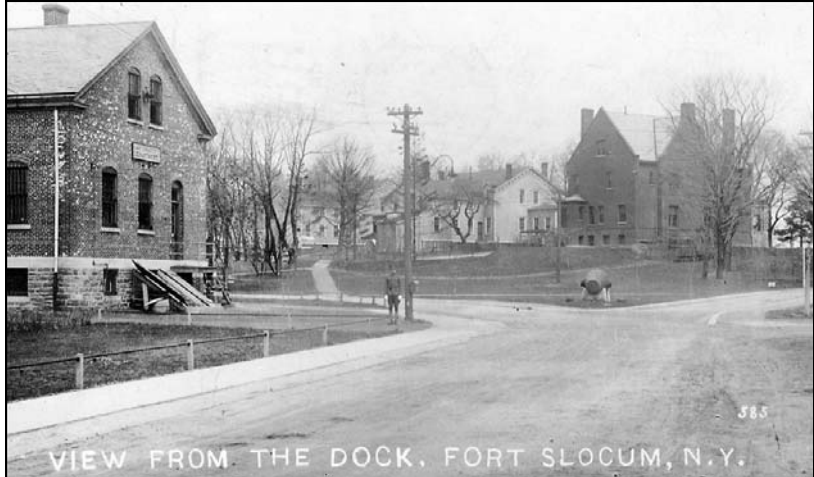


Figure 3.8. Commanding Officer's Quarters (Building 1) at right, circa 1910. View northeast. Fort Slocum Alumni and Friends Collection, Michael A. Cavanaugh, Los Angeles, CA, custodian.

*“...and the stairs going down to a small patio with a picnic table and chairs and benches. The backyard was absolutely beautiful; lots of old trees. Upstairs, from that lovely staircase, was a hallway...two bedrooms, one of them we used as a family TV room. Also in the front was a porch, an enclosed porch, sunroom... So it was a place to explore because they had all kind of storage rooms off the bedrooms, off the basement rooms.”*

-Anne Castagneto

A large house and command rank obligated Col. Castagneto to host dinners and receptions for the post officers and wives, for New Rochelle business elite, elected officials, and other notables. While they were expected to perform this role, the Army nonetheless did not assist the Castagnetos in paying for these affairs, leaving it to the family to personally carry on a proud tradition of military hospitality.

*“Well, we were not allowed any money for that. That had to come out of our pocket.”*

-Anne Castagneto

*“So, she was the hostess, but she was cooking the dinner too, because they couldn't afford to go to the Officers' Club every single time, because the Army didn't give enough money to cover that many dinners. And then after it was over, there would be Dad and Mom and Esther and me in the kitchen doing dishes.*

*...dinners that had to be given when these officers would graduate, dad was not given enough money to really cover that, --you know, people will think 'oh, an officer made lots of money.' Five kids that you are putting in Catholic school--. And if we wanted piano or ballet, he would do whatever it took to have that. Mom and Dad would sacrifice for that.”*

-Carla Cain

Anne Castagneto tells the story that shortly after her marriage to Frank, he informed her that ‘The husbands have rank, the wives do not,’ meaning that the strictures and expectations of military rank were not to be imposed upon her. Perhaps because her husband had begun his career as an enlisted private and worked up the ranks, she was uneasy in overusing the perquisites of that rank.

*“...some of those officers' wives expected her to be June Cleaver always, and they would show up at the door and there she is in capris or pants and a shirt and hair in curlers*

*trying to clean a three-story house and take care of a baby. And they were just horrified that she wasn't June Cleaver all the time."*

-Carla Cain

If the reality of being the Colonel's wife was less glamorous than generally assumed, there were still many duties that were expected of her as the unofficial First Lady of the post, above and beyond her family responsibilities.

*"There were what we called obligation parties that we had to attend. My duty was just be there. And I'd go to the Women's Club meetings, and the luncheons, and you're supposed to show an interest. And then when there was kind of trouble between wives I would try to ease that down. And there were a few. Always have it about women."*

-Anne Castagneto

### **3.2 The Thin Red Line: Officer and Enlisted**

The social hierarchy created by the military command structure touches upon more than just housing; it in fact permeates all aspects of life at a military post. The uniformed ranks rapidly learn codes of military etiquette during basic training or in service academies, especially the standards that regulate conduct between officers and enlisted personnel. Aside from the manuals and codes, moreover, military personnel absorb the unwritten rules and traditions that govern behavior and which establish the separate and unequal realms between officers and enlisted. These codes of behavior are widely disseminated among non-uniformed members of the military community through the processes of socialization, yet for spouses and children of military personnel the perception of whether the divide between officer and enlisted was permeable or a wide gulf was a matter of individual experience. For some, the divide was re-enforced by class differences that were characterized by educational level and geography.

(Interviewer: Did you notice class differences between the families of officers and the families of NCOs?)

*"Absolutely. I mean, we lived on Officers' Row...When I lived at Fort Slocum I only had one friend who was an enlisted man's daughter and that didn't last because we just had differences. And what was expected of me and what was expected of her were very different. And so my parents would kind of frown on some of the things I wanted to do with her. I remember going to her house and the decorations weren't as nice and the, just the way they were, it wasn't the same."*

-Rivka Olley

*"In my house we knew there was a caste system. Officers had special privileges. And so we knew that socially there was things that as enlisted people we did not engage in. One thing you learn as an enlisted person or the son of an enlisted person is unless you know somebody on officers' row you just don't arbitrarily start walking around officers' row."*

-Bob Sisk

Inculcated in that caste system, Bob Sisk was initially prevented from going to the officers' beach by his father's sense of propriety.

*"But I think that was not because he wasn't welcome at our beach—it was his father's desire that they not intrude on the officers' beach."*

-Christa Mueller



Bob Sisk, nonetheless, became close friends with officers' children and put the circumstances into the context of Fort Slocum's unique location and size.

*"As far as the children went on that particular post, children were not in the Army. We knew it. We all got along well together. No one ever made any kind of comment about being an enlisted man's kid or an officer's kid or anything like that. On a larger post it might take place."*

-Bob Sisk

In separate interviews, Bob and Tom Sisk confirmed this distinctive nature of Fort Slocum with regard to the lives of its children.

*"Since there were so few children, the adults kind of accepted that we would all hang out together...And they kind of suspended the very harsh separation of ranks between enlisted and officer for that aspect of our lives."*

-Tom Sisk

One's perspective on this issue was colored by personal history and character. Ken Rought's off-hand comment about not entering an officer's quarters from the front reflects a worldview from the perspective of the lower ranks. What for Sergeant Edgar Sisk was an attempt to maintain the proper distance between officer and enlisted man, was for Colonel Castagneto the reason to break down that divide, at least in part, and establish a more equitable arrangement of individual rights and responsibilities. Shortly after assuming command at Fort Slocum, Colonel Castagneto abolished the long-held custom of separate beaches for officers, NCOs, and enlisted. Not all approved of this decision.

(Interviewer: Were there people uncomfortable with that situation?)

*"I believe we knew some of them that lived just a few doors down from us, that were very into who they were and their rank, and that their kids were also part of this."*

-Esther Bolger

The people referred to by Mrs. Bolger were officers and their families, who stood to lose some prestige by this contraction of their privileges. And while this 'liberation' of sorts was clearly intended to benefit the enlisted ranks, it is uncertain how this was perceived by them and whether they were any more comfortable in the company of their officers than the Castagneto's neighbors were with them. In response to an e-mail question posted by Robert Jacoby after the interview, Bob Sisk wrote "I went to the officers' beach everyday but always feeling as a guest and was prepared to leave instantly if one officer or his wife wanted me to. It never happened." The elimination of separate beaches was not a storming of the Bastille for the enlisted personnel, it did not diminish the distance between the ranks insofar as demanded by protocol. Nonetheless, Frank Castagneto succeeded in softening the social gap between the ranks by his and his family's behavior.

*"...and he never forgot what it was like to be enlisted. He expected and maintained the rules of military life when it was work hours. After work, we could be at the bowling alley...it didn't matter, this was social."*

-Carla Cain

*“And people felt comfortable around him doing that. They were just like, ‘Oh, hi Colonel, how you doing?’ It wasn’t like, ‘Oh gosh, we have to be on our best behavior.’”*

-Esther Bolger

*“And when my dad retired, some of the MPs told me that there were very few dry eyes in the ranks of the soldiers on the parade field because they respected my dad’s respect for them...there were probably some of the officers who didn’t agree with this.”*

-Carla Cain

For some, the matter of rank appeared to account for little. As a teenager:

*“I had NCO kids who were friends and I had officers’ kids as friends. My best friend was a major’s son, Don Reglin. It made no difference...”*

(Interviewer: So rank didn’t have an effect on the children?)

*“No, not in the least.”*

-Pete Fuller

### **3.3 The World Invades Fort Slocum**

Fort Slocum’s small town feel and relative isolation was a thin veneer that could not insulate it from the events of the outside world. Repeatedly, at the onset of conflict, Fort Slocum rapidly shifted from a somewhat sleepy Army outpost to a place of frenzied activity as it responded to the foreign policy needs of the nation. The effects of these transitions were profound on the character of the post.

*“When the war started, December ’41, when we all went on alert because there was the possibility of enemy craft coming into Long Island Sound, we weren’t quite sure, so, soldiers were issued rifles with live ammunition.*

*We no longer were permitted off post in civilian clothes. We had to wear uniforms all the time. We suddenly, it seemed suddenly, it was within weeks we started to get a lot of what we called draftees coming in.”*

-Ken Rought

On individuals, too, the events of December 7, 1941 had a profound effect in ways that were remembered six and a half decades later.

*“...and I was in the kitchen and Colonel McCord came in and he says, ‘the Japanese have just attacked Pearl Harbor.’ That didn’t mean a thing to me. I had no idea where Pearl Harbor was. And then I found out that it was part of the Hawaiian Islands. And I said, ‘oh my God...’ And life in every respect changed.”*

-Ken Rought

Children, if not quite apprehending the implications of such events, were nonetheless affected by the reactions of their parents and other adults, particularly in the context of a military post with its already built-in martial atmosphere.

*“And we got the announcement, we were at my grandparents’ house and then we got the announcement. We immediately all piled in the car and came back to base. But I do remember that day, being in Brooklyn and Fort Slocum. It’s a day you’ll never forget.”*

-Pat Skelly

*“I didn’t know much about where it was. But I knew it was in Hawaii and I knew it was an island. And I knew what war was because all through the thirties at mealtime I was reminded to eat all my food because poor little Chinese kids in China were starving because Japan was at war with China.”*

-Harry Dutchyshyn

(Interviewer: You were only a young girl, but you must have been aware of the war and the news?)

*“Oh, absolutely. Yes we were. And when D-Day came I mean there was great, great celebration. And I know when President Roosevelt died it was a very sad, sad, somber mood there on the island.”*

-Joanna Geer

In a situation as all encompassing as the Second World War, extraordinary events were often those that affected only a few people at a time, but which eventually touched everyone.

*“My mother’s youngest brother was a navigator on those B-17s that flew over Germany from England. And he was on his next to last mission when it was shot down. The enlisted men parachuted out but all the officers blew up with the plane. So we lost my Uncle Dick. Yes, everybody—during World War Two everybody felt—we were at war, and everybody was at war.”*

-Joanna Geer

As senior chaplain at Fort Slocum during the Second World War, Joanna Geer’s father would have counseled many troops just prior to their deployment overseas. Chaplain Gebhard was able to leave his office each day without bringing the difficulties of his job home with him. Mrs. Geer recalls no particular distress, simply his fondness for the troops.

*“You know, I don’t know if it was hard on him. He had a lot of compassion for those men. He really did. And he was very good at it...I know a lot of those men were afraid. And they knew that they were headed—because the next stop was over in the battle in Europe. He was a good counselor and I know that he was very good with the men.”*

-Joanna Geer

Extraordinary events tend to imprint themselves on our memories in ways that everyday experience does not. They can be brought to the surface of reflection instantly and often in a practiced manner. Perhaps it is part of the collective re-telling of the event that reifies the moment, but for many it is the emotional current, not the sequence of events themselves, that they tap into when recalling the past. One witness to the last flight of the zeppelin Hindenburg in May 1937 remembers:

*“Came right over Fort Slocum where the laundry where I was working. We were all outside and we were waving at it and waving. And here five minutes after, they were all*

*gone... Directly right over where we were. It was—I mean everybody was—we all went out of the laundry and we all waved.”*

-Helen Stark

It didn't matter that the Hindenburg crashed in Lakehurst, New Jersey the day after its overflight of Fort Slocum because for Helen Stark, the memories of seeing it in person and the vivid memories of seeing newsreel footage of its fiery destruction had merged into a seamless recollection of that day.

More than 40 years after the assassination of John F. Kennedy, the emotions were still raw when recalling November 22, 1963.

(Interviewer: What was the effect at Fort Slocum?)

*“Very somber. Their Commander in Chief had been killed...The post, being very small, was very, very tough. It was hard. Nobody could believe it.”*

(Interviewer: What was your father's reaction when you got home?)

*“We prayed. Daddy did call us together to pray for the President.”*

-Esther Bolger



Figure 3.9. Col. Frank Castagneto, commanding officer, addressing the Fort Slocum garrison on the morning of November 23, 1963 regarding the killing of President Kennedy. Fort Slocum Collection, New Rochelle Public Library, New Rochelle, NY.

(Interviewer: It was a heavy responsibility for your father to say something to the assembled troops?)

*“Well, that is the way my father was, he was a very, very—religious is too calm a word for my father’s faith. And so in the long run he always was able to bring his faith to bear...And I think by the time this would have been done, he would have been able to do what he needed to do and get it done. And I’m not sure that was the military part of him or the...sure he was very emotional.”*

-Esther Castagneto Bolger

George Willhite, a journalism instructor at the Army Information School at the time, remembers aspects of the assembly that cannot be read from the photograph alone. In an e-mail response to a question he wrote:

*“It was a cool, windy day so as Colonel Castagneto read his statement, deputy post commandant Lieutenant Colonel Babcock held a bullhorn which he kept moving from left to right and back again so that Castagneto’s voice would carry over the wind. I do not remember what he said—it sounded at the time like a typical military announcement...”*

During Rich Lowery’s two-year assignment as a radar operator, the Fort Slocum Nike Missile Battery twice went on full alert, both times due to incomplete or faulty information rather than from escalating or breaking world events. Had Soviet bombers ever materialized over New York City, Rich’s unit would have been involved in attempting to shoot them down. The battery was decommissioned in the summer of 1961. A little over a year later, in October 1962, the Cuban Missile Crisis developed into the most dangerous episode of the Cold War. Although shorn of any combat responsibilities, Fort Slocum went on full alert. Amidst the tension and confusion of those two weeks, there was a certain amount of equanimity among the troops, perhaps ameliorated through the lens of time.

*“I was there during the Cuban Missile Crisis, which I believe was in 1962. And we were put on a full alert at the time.”*

-Bill Waterhouse

*“And it was an interesting time because it was during the Cuban Missile Crisis. But I wasn’t there long, but I have good memories of the island.”*

-John Pardon

The possibility of imminent nuclear war cannot be discerned from these simple statements of fact. For others, the tension was either magnified by the actions of an adult or softened by the very different concerns of being a teenager.

*“I remember right about that time, Dad taking the whole family and saying, ‘You know this full basement we have down here, if we have to, this is a safe place to come. You need to be safe and this is where you can be safe, underneath.’ Because that was the only part of the basement that was so secure that if the house collapsed, it wouldn’t.”*

-Jim Castagneto

*“Yeah, I had forgotten about that. But yeah, Cuban Missile Crisis, like I said, at the time it happened I was in high school and I didn’t know as much about politics and things*

*going on as I do now, the full impact...But I knew something was going on. All the details of what was going on and the impact, I don't remember that, I was 15, 16."*

-Carla Cain

In the few years prior to its closure, Fort Slocum hosted a number of foreign military officers at its Army Information School, a time when the United States was becoming involved in Southeast Asia. American personnel, too, from the post were transiting to assignments overseas, and there was an awareness among Fort Slocum's population, far earlier than among the population at large, that Vietnam was going to be America's next conflict.

*"I just remember they [Asian military officers] were there. And, I remember the adults talking about Vietnam and that, you know, these people were associated with Vietnam. And it wasn't long after that my father was, they wanted to transfer him to Korea, something to do with training troops for Vietnam."*

(Interviewer: What were people saying about Vietnam?)

*"It was going to be a big deal. It was going to be another war."*

-Rivka Olley

### **3.4 Forever Young**

Fort Slocum's raison d'être was its role in the defense of the nation. It had been a training base, embarkation depot, army medical facility, and gun and missile battery at various times in its existence. There would appear to be some irony, then, in the juxtaposition of its warfighting role and the presence on post of children, as the United States has no official tradition of sending minors into combat. In fact, however, the Army has a long history of domiciling the families of service personnel on military facilities and providing for their social, educational, and medical needs. If there is a paradox in the presence of children at Fort Slocum, it was in the multiple guises they could assume depending on the viewpoint of the observer.

For many stationed soldiers, children on post were, on the whole, invisible.

*"I don't recall seeing children. I guess they were there, they just weren't allowed to run around if they were there. I suppose some of the NCOs had, must have had children. I don't recall them though."*

-Ken Rought

*"So, I rarely, if ever, saw any children. I'm sure they were there, I just didn't—either didn't see them or just didn't pay any attention, and it never crossed my mind."*

-Rich Lowery

From a very different perspective, children could seem to be everywhere (Figure 3.10):



Figure 3.10. Easter egg hunt, 1962. Building 1 is at left. Fort Slocum Alumni and Friends collection, Michael Cavanaugh, Los Angeles, CA, custodian.

Among military families, there is a strong belief that the children of professional soldiers will exhibit greater discipline, maturity, and goal orientation than children elsewhere. After all, they live in communities inhabited by adults whose sole function is to carry out often difficult orders from a command structure that they have pledged to obey. Carl Wenberg, himself not an ‘army brat,’ recalled that “looking back, I think they were a cut above the average student intellectually.”

*“My father was so impressed with the military that he hung a picture of West Point cadets over my bed and it seemed like forever. It hung there until I went to West Point in 1948.”*

-Harry Victor Dutchyshyn

(Interviewer: As teenagers, you two were aware that your conduct reflected on your father?)

*“Absolutely. Actually, we knew that all our lives. The respect that was due them, was also to be respectful outside the house to whoever and whatever situation.”*

-Esther Bolger

*“It was Mom’s southern background, his military, and that’s what you do. You show respect for people no matter what their station in life.”*

-Carla Cain

There was also the realization that their behavior could have repercussions for their parents, especially in terms of their career advancement and status.

*“I also knew that if my behavior was bad my father would be ordered off of the post and have to live in town. I was careful never to let that happen.”*

-Bob Sisk

*“But you feared the MPs and you feared what might happen to your father if there was, you know, you got in trouble...They’d get a phone call from the commanding officer that your kids weren’t doing what they were supposed to be doing. And that was never a good thing.”*

-Rivka Olley

But with the discipline and structure also came a fairly broad latitude for play that frequently stretched the envelope of permissible behavior.

*“When you came up from the dock there was a main road. If you turned to the right it took you to the school. If you turned to the left it took you to New York City. And we’d get a new driver and, of course, he’d say ‘which way?’ and you can know what we did. We said ‘to the left.’ And we took a little cruise before they caught on.”*

-Joanna Geer

*“Well, my friends, we decided that it would be funny if we could roll that French howitzer down the parade field and point it at Admiral Binford’s house—not for any malicious purpose, just to have a laugh. And just as we started to lay into it an MP happened to come out of the provost marshall’s office...and he hollered...the long and the short of it is he put me in a cell there for about 15 or 20 minutes. I do recall that I did not like being locked up.”*

-Bob Sisk

On post there were structured activities, such as the rifle range in the basement of Raymond Hall, a carpentry shop, and trips to the 1964-65 World’s Fair in Flushing Meadow, Queens. A teen club in one of the post buildings containing a jukebox and ping-pong table was used in a casual fashion, largely it seems to satisfy the expectations of a colonel’s wife under whose aegis it was established.



Figure 3.11. Fort Slocum Junior Rifle Club Badge, circa 1960. From collection of Rivka Olley.

Chaperoned dances were held both at Fort Slocum and at other area military posts. For the most part, however, children were left to their own devices to occupy their time and energies. Swimming, boating, and fishing were popular, and of course exploring the mortar batteries and tunnels, though these were officially off-limits.

*“And we had heard a number of tales, be careful going through here. Someone’s buried. And we didn’t care. We had fun though. We’d challenge each other to run because there were different areas you could get in.”*

-Jim Castagneto





Figure 3.12. Rivka Olley fishing off seawall, Fort Slocum circa 1957.  
From collection of Rivka Olley.

Proximity to New York City lured teenagers to venture around the city, sometimes skipping school to do so. At the time, there was much greater fear of one's parents than of the city.

*"When I was 13 years old I went down and walked around Broadway by myself. I can remember that very clearly. Don't know that I'd do that today."*

-Tom Sisk

*"We'd get on the bus. We'd tell the privates to let us off at the New York/New Haven railroad station. And he'd finish going on to the high school with the kids who weren't skipping school."*

(Interviewer: So he was part of your conspiracy?)

*Absolutely...but I felt so guilty. I was so afraid I was going to get caught. And I knew my father would kill me. I believed he would kill me."*

-Rivka Olley

Though life at Fort Slocum could be largely carefree for children, the realities of the adult world did intrude from time to time. Joanna Geer's reflections on the combat death of her uncle in the Second World War, mentioned above, are one example. Living on a military installation during a time of war would have exposed children to everyday stories of hardship and tragedy not ordinarily experienced in civilian communities. To be a teenager anywhere is fraught with the anxieties, peer pressures, and uncertainties that accompany the social and physical transition from childhood to adulthood.

Compounding the angst of teen years, in a small island community especially, there was no escape from the cultural attitudes of the larger society.

*“When I got to be a teenager and, because of everybody being Baptist and all and my being Jewish, they really weren’t allowed to date me...There was stuff that was painful, because of being Jewish and, you know, not always being accepted.”*

-Rivka Olley

On the whole though, interview participants who were at Fort Slocum as children expressed a deeply felt emotional tie to the island and its military mission. For many, it was a sense of possessing the place:

*“...and I think most of the kids that were there, that’s what we called it, this is “my” island. This is my world. And by golly I’m so proud of being part of this military life. I wanted everyone to know, I live here.”*

-Carla Cain

For others, it was the safe and nurturing environment of a small community of common purpose that represented a special time in their lives:

*“It was clean, it was secure, it was open. It was bright and sunny even in the wintertime. And for a boy it was a place of endless adventure.”*

-Bob Sisk

### 3.5 And the Music Never Stopped

Music and warfare have been closely associated ever since Joshua’s trumpets knocked down the walls of Jericho as recounted in the Old Testament. American military history is replete with its own musical references and associations. The iconic image of George Washington’s Continental Army is the trio of fifer and drummers leading American troops against the British (Figure 3.13). Fictional in content, Archibald MacNeal Willard painted “Spirit of ‘76” a century after the Revolutionary War for America’s centennial celebration. Drawing upon American ideals of an egalitarian society, Willard depicted heroic commoners in the frontline instead of the customary scene of a general on horseback.

The picture illustrates the two primary musical instruments played in military units during the Revolutionary War, the fife and drum. Armies of the period relied on fifers and drummers to communicate battle orders, to provide accompaniment for marching and drilling, and for the morale of the soldiers (Howe 1999:87). One account of the Battle of Bennington has Colonel John Stark ordering his fifers and drummers to “play



Figure 3.13. “Spirit of ‘76,” by Archibald MacNeal Willard, 1875. Original is in U.S. Department of State, Washington, D.C.

into the very teeth of the enemy” to rally the Americans to victory (White 1944:31). Musicians played important tactical roles, yet were generally unschooled in military training and discipline. In 1812, the Army organized a “school of musical practice” at Governor’s Island in New York Harbor to provide training for musicians and to establish a higher standard of musical competency within the ranks (Howe 1999:105).

During the Civil War many regiments fielded bands that followed their units into battle (Figure 3.14). Bands were typically called upon to perform at concerts, dress parades, and flag ceremonies for encamped troops, and to play the camp calls such as reveille, mess call, and tattoo that mark important times of day. When required, musicians functioned as stretcher bearers and messengers, but generally were not assigned to combat situations (Davis 2003:469). Nevertheless, drummers and buglers found themselves close to the front lines when they sounded an advance, retreat, or other actions to the troops, and were often exposed to enemy fire. At the Battle of Five Forks in Virginia, Union General Philip Sheridan is said to have exhorted his musicians to keep playing in the face of heavy fire and remarked to an aid, “Music has done its share, and more than its share, in winning this war” (White 1944:74).



Figure 3.14. Band of the 8th New York State Militia, Arlington, Va., 1861. From McGranahan (2006).

The post-Civil War years saw an extraordinary growth in the popularity of brass bands and marching bands both in America and Europe. The advent of keyed and valved brass instruments earlier in the nineteenth century allowed the brasses to play full chromatic ranges and melodies rather than simple harmonic accompaniment (Humphreys 1987:24). Ensembles now were capable of playing more complex musical form and band leaders began to assemble large numbers of brass instruments to amplify the sound of bands. This trend was solidified at the National Peace Jubilee held in Boston in 1869, when thousands of choristers and a 1,000-strong orchestra gathered for a five-day festival of music in front of an audience of 50,000 (Humphrey 1987:24). The most popular bands of the day clothed themselves in elaborate military-style uniforms, setting the pattern for present-day high school and college marching bands. Following the Civil War, congressional appropriations for the military declined until the late

1870s, a drop in funding that must have taken a toll on the support given to military bands. It appears the Army resumed the practice of recruiting musicians around 1880 when appropriations allowed the flashy spectacle of military marching bands to flourish. Large synchronized bands lent themselves to parading and drilling, activities that were considered an essential element of military discipline and training. In many parts of the country a military band was the only form of organized entertainment and culture available to local residents (White 1944:90).

The Army's interest in enlisting musician-soldiers in this period is evident in the 1880 federal census returns for Davids Island (U.S. Census Bureau). These records indicate the presence of 66 musicians, accounting for nearly one-third of the post's military complement. The musicians were led by a drum major, equivalent in rank and pay rate to a second-lieutenant of infantry (Kautz 1865:72). The drum major's duties included parading the band, supervising their military and musical instruction, and selecting and arranging music. At Davids Island, the Army provided individual quarters for the drum major located between the docks and Officers' Row. The placement of the drum major's quarters nearby Officers' Row indicates his overall status as a type of junior officer. Edmund Hughes, the drum major in the 1880 census, was accompanied by his wife and six children, and in contrast to the regular officers posted to Davids Island, the Hughes household did not include servants. The terms 'drum major,' 'chief musician,' and 'band leader' were used somewhat interchangeably in the U.S. Army Handbook (Kautz 1865) to describe the rank and function of the individual in charge of a band or a unit of musicians. Maps of Davids Island prepared by the Office of the Quartermaster General variously used the terms 'band master' (1872), 'chief musician' (1884), and 'band leader' (1889 and 1892) to describe the quarters of the ranking bandsman. Quarters for the band were depicted at the southeastern corner of the island in 1872, and quarters for the band sergeants were at the northeastern end of the post on the 1884 and 1890 maps. Neither of these buildings survived the new construction program of the 1890s.

Repertoires of military bands varied with the experience and musical taste of the band leader and the skills of the band members, as well as conforming to the designs and needs of commanding officers. A concert program of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Artillery Band at Governor's Island, New York, given in 1881 lists a march, waltz, and polka, plus operatic selections from Bellini, Kreutzer, Suppé, and Verdi (White 1944:92). Such variety on a program was probably not uncommon among the better bands. Special military bands, like the United States Marine Band or United States Army Band, became symphonic organizations around the turn of the twentieth century in addition to maintaining their more traditional marching routines.

A good military band brought prestige to a post, and military commanders were keen on embellishing their reputations by enhancing the sound and appearance of their bands. Because of the low wages paid to bandsmen (13 dollars a month in 1899), however, it was typical to have band ranks filled by a good number of beginners and unskilled musicians (White 1944:90). The large number of German-born bandsmen at Davids Island listed in the 1880 census might be seen as an effort to recruit competent, European-trained musicians to the post. Around 1908, a covered bandstand was constructed on the eastern side of the Parade Ground in front of Building 70 (Figure 3.15). The open-sided, octagonal structure seems to have served as a focus for regularly scheduled musical programs to entertain post personnel and visitors from New Rochelle. The bandstand was removed around 1940.

Due to declining appropriations, the Fort Slocum band dwindled from around 40 members in 1917 (see Figure 3.15) to only 12 musicians on the eve of the Second World War. Helen Stark, a resident of the island whose step-father was bandleader during the 1920s and 1930s, remembered there being as few as six musicians in the band at one point (Appendix U). The band at this time was classified as an unauthorized unit, and received only minimal funding. According to trumpeter Alan Grieve, who arrived at Fort Slocum in early 1941, the band initially performed in traditional military rituals such as flag ceremonies and formation marching (Figure 3.16), as well as giving concerts (Figure 3.17) and playing at the Officers' Club.



Figure 3.15. Historic postcard showing the Fort Slocum Band at the bandstand, 1917. Building 69 is at rear. View northeast. From collection of James Sexton.



Figure 3.16. The 378<sup>th</sup> Army Band on the Parade Ground at Fort Slocum, 1943. Note that the marching band is comprised of about only 18 musicians. Technical Sergeant Abraham Small, at far right, was the bandleader from 1941 to 1943. From collection of Alan Grieve.

*“We paraded every week, almost every week while I was in the QM detachment [1939-1943]. And later, Colonel Lentz had a band come in so we had an army band that would perform at these parades.”*

-Ken Rought

*“You’d wake up in the mornings on Saturday to the marching band right out in front of your house, marching by.”*

-Joanna Geer

Popular American music from the late 1920s to the mid 1940s was under the sway of two great influences, jazz and radio. Emphasizing a propulsive rhythmic beat that became known as swing, jazz became synonymous with dance music. Radio enabled this music to reach a wide audience, creating a nation-wide interest in jazz. Almost overnight, popular musical tastes and the sudden American entry into the Second World War thrust this music and the musicians who performed it into important roles in the war effort. Though the soldier-musician was no longer needed to sound the charge because of the use of battlefield phones and radios, he remained an essential morale booster in military camps, on the frontlines, and on the home-front.

*“We were called out for different types of duties. One of them was to go into New York to the ports and play music while these kids were going overseas. We did that a lot. We did a lot of bond selling. Morale building was our main thing.”*

-Zoltan Zantay

Figure 3.17. The Fort Slocum Band in an outdoor concert at the YMCA, circa 1941. The trumpeter Alan Grieve is seated second from left. Bandleader Abraham Small is seated at left in the saxophone row. From collection of Zoltan Zantay.



The war was a great stimulus for the Fort Slocum band. In June 1942 the band received authorization from the War Department to become a formal army unit, the 378<sup>th</sup> Army Service Forces Band, and it rapidly expanded to 28 personnel (*Casual News*, June 17, 1942) (Figure 3.18). Further increases followed, and by mid-1944 the 378<sup>th</sup> Army Band numbered about 78 musicians and had become a full-range orchestra. Post commander Colonel Bernard Lentz encouraged the expansion of the band (“...*he loved that band so.*”-Zoltan Zantay) and broadened its role from marching and concertizing at Fort Slocum to radio broadcasts, first locally, and later on the NBC national network. Because of its proximity to New York City’s cultural and media outlets, the Fort Slocum band became a magnet for professional musicians serving in the armed forces.

*“We got people coming in, string players and everything, from the Boston Symphony and from the Philadelphia Orchestra, from Hollywood, from anywhere in the country.”*

-Ray Crisara

*“...for example, the first bassoonist with the Philadelphia Orchestra wanted to join, and he did. Yeah. So we had some very, very fine musicians.”*

-Zoltan Zantay

Band members continued to march on the Parade Ground, play at Retreat, and perform at YMCA dances on the post (Figure 3.19), but as the war progressed the primary role of the 378<sup>th</sup> Army Band changed from Fort Slocum-related activities to doing studio work at the National Broadcasting Company in New York City. This work included performing on the weekly *We Who Fight* radio program, recording music for V-disk distribution to troops, and producing sound tracks for Army newsreels and training films. Other broadcast assignments included a jazz combo playing on the *Major Bowes Amateur Hour*, a popular radio program of the period (Figure 3.20).



Figure 3.18. The 378<sup>th</sup> Army Band at Fort Slocum, 1942. Zoltan Zantay is seated far left, Alan Grieve is seated fourth from right. From collection of Zoltan Zantay.



Figure 3.19. A dance combo of the 378<sup>th</sup> Army Band playing at Fort Slocum YMCA dance, circa 1943. From collection of Alan Grieve.

*“We had a few [dates] at the Officers’ Club, not much. But we had to do all forms of radio programs, propaganda things. And a lot of, we recorded for the movies and everything.”*

-Paul Tanner

*“And slowly, the band of course evolved into a very good orchestra. The difference was we had strings and we were delegated to go to Studio 8-H, which was Toscanini’s favorite studio at NBC. And there we spent the rest of the [war]... Yes, it was a hazardous duty as they say.”*

-Zoltan Zantay

*“One time orders came out for me when I was at Fort Slocum, to report the next day to RCA Victor Recording Studios in New York City. And when I got there, I found that I was to be there to record all of the bugle calls in the bugle call manual in the Army.”*

-Ray Crisara

For a professional musician, nothing beat regular appearances with a working band. The Army offered plenty of opportunities for capable musicians during the Second World War, and several well-known musicians including Glenn Miller, Artie Shaw, and Jack Leonard took commissions to lead service bands.





Figure 3.20. Members of the 378th Army Band on the CBS Network *Major Bowes Amateur Hour* radio program, circa 1944. Edward Bowes is at left. From collection of Alan Grieve.

Miller lost his life in the war, but the vast majority of uniformed musicians spent the war years stateside at posts like Fort Slocum or Fort Hamilton, contributing to the war effort by playing their instruments. This was satisfying and steady work, and each interviewed musician spoke positively of the time spent at Fort Slocum, yet their comments communicated a certain ambivalence about their war-time assignments. They were neither apologetic nor regretful about their duties, but they acknowledged their fortune in being kept away from combat.

*“But somebody had to do it. You know, we had the talent of music and someone had to do it. Music was a very, very important morale booster. Very important. And we did a good job. We did a very good job”*

-Zoltan Zantay

*“I think everybody else probably felt, well, we’re doing a big job here in New York City and they tell us it is very important, well, then we should be here. Of what value would we be by comparison if we were in the Battle of the Bulge?”*

-Ray Crisara

*“And there were seven male members of our immediate family, there were four in the Army at one time. And so I was just, it was just the thing for me to do. My dad was an officer in World War I and World War II.”*

-Paul Tanner

The Army wanted musicians but it also needed soldiers, especially after the Normandy landings in 1944 and the looming prospect of an invasion of Japan in 1945. Every uniformed soldier during that period understood that changing fortunes of war could send them into a combat zone, and the 378<sup>th</sup> Army Band musicians, regardless of their talents, were not immune from this possibility.

*“All you want to do is stay alive. But always the specter behind you, that is, you could be shipped. You’re in the Army. You could be shipped and you could die.”*

-Zoltan Zantay

The 378<sup>th</sup> Army Service Forces Band was transferred from Fort Slocum to Fort Hamilton in Brooklyn sometime during the second half of 1944. The timing and circumstances are uncertain but the last mention of the 378<sup>th</sup> Army Band in extant copies of the Fort Slocum newspaper, *Casual News*, was in the September 21, 1944 edition. A number of the bandsmen had already moved off-post to take apartments in New York City to be closer to their full-time assignments at the NBC studios and elsewhere in Manhattan, and some chose to live with family members nearby, so that by early 1944 it appears that the association between the 378<sup>th</sup> Army Band and Fort Slocum had loosened considerably, with many of the unit musicians having little contact with their home post.

*“We finally wound up, I was living at home already. You know, I’d sleep at home and we’d go [to NBC] every day.”*

-Zoltan Zantay

*“And we went from Fort Slocum into New York for times when we had to work. But also we were in New York to the degree that some of the fellas had lived there and some of the fellas also had taken apartments there and all. And I was one of them that lived with two other fellas on 98<sup>th</sup> Street on Fifth Avenue. And we, we spent overnight many times in New York thanks to the Salvation Army, who put us up and everything else.”*

-Ray Crisara

*“I had a bed assigned to me out on the island. But I got an apartment right off the island for my wife and myself.”*

-Paul Tanner

The Army set a fast pace for the bandsmen assigned to the recording studios and radio broadcasts, with little time for the kind of off-duty relaxation or fraternization offered at military posts.

(Interviewer: Did you get to know many of the soldiers who were not in the band?)

*“No. The band was that busy that I think probably our lifestyle was around what we were doing.”*

-Ray Crisara

(Interviewer: No time for playing baseball?)

*“No. The band didn’t get involved with any of that.”*

-Paul Tanner

Serving one's country during wartime was an accepted duty for these men, but a military career was not the route to success for a talented young musician. With the war concluded there was little incentive to remain in the Army band when the music business beckoned.

*"Well, they wanted us to stay in the Army... 'Look, if you stay in, your rank will be First Sergeant,' so on and so forth. But all of us had our heads down. We wanted to get out of the Army as soon as possible."*

-Zoltan Zantay

*"Well, we were all anxious to get back to being civilians and being competitive and working again, you know."*

-Paul Tanner

*"And he said, 'I've heard interesting things about you and I think probably we want to really seriously consider signing you to a contract to be on the staff here at NBC'. Well, I was flattered by that and I was real pleased because I found that within a little bit over one week's time I was in the Army and I was also, had a job at NBC."*

-Ray Crisara

As it happened, the Army itself showed little incentive to maintain the high number of quality military bands that formed during the Second World War, nor even to remain at Fort Slocum. In 1946 the island was transferred to the First Air Force as its administrative headquarters. First Air Force supported the 581<sup>st</sup> Air Force Band at nearby Mitchel Field, but whether the band ever performed at Slocum Air Force Base is not certain. Chris Vincik was a civilian employee at Slocum Air Force Base in 1949 and then at Mitchel Field on Long Island when First Air Force transferred its headquarters there.

*"...and then at Mitchel Field, they [581<sup>st</sup> Air Force Band] played for us during lunch. And it was very nice."*

-Chris Vincik

The military chaplains and journalists who were posted to Fort Slocum in the 1950s and 1960s for training seem to have marched to their own cadence, without a marching band. This was fitting; because it was at Fort Slocum in 1944 that Private Willie Duckworth (1924-2004) introduced and improvised the marching cadence chant known as "Sound Off," also referred to as the Duckworth or, Jody Chant. Evolving through numerous verses, the 'jodies' quickly became a standard call and response accompaniment to army drilling that continues to be used as a training exercise by the American military (Stevens 1951). Many of the original verses were written by Duckworth and Fort Slocum's commanding officer Colonel Bernard Lentz, who jointly copyrighted the lyrics and melody in 1950.

In 1945, a Rehabilitation squad and WAC unit made a V-disk recording of jody chants at Raymond Hall (Building 57), illustrating the wide variety of styles and verses that had been created in a very short period. Gladys Borkowski, who participated in that recording session, recited a verse in 2007:

*"Head and eyes off the ground,  
40 inches covered down,  
Sound Off--  
Cadence Count--  
One, two, three, four."*

*“And when we made the recording of the Duckworth Chant, that took a little time. I had to learn the different phrases and make up some of my own about the women and so forth.”*

-Gladys Borkowski

*“And they had the soldiers running around all the time doing that sound-off thing, you know, that Colonel Lentz had copyrighted with that sergeant...That was just an everyday part of life that was going on all the time...you could hear the chant constantly.”*

-Joanna Geer

There were no lunchtime concerts at Fort Slocum when the Army resumed operations on the island in 1951. Although the Department of Defense continued to support bands in various units within each of the armed services, none were re-organized at Fort Slocum, and recorded music replaced the live performing bands. Former residents of the post from the mid-1950s to early-1960s remember:

*“My summer memory is of a lazy summer day, going outside to sit under the elm tree, and hearing the recorded band music over the Parade Ground.”*

-Christa Mueller

(Interviewer: Was there a military band?)

*“If there was, I never saw it...And certainly the marching they did, there was no band while they were marching.”*

-Rivka Olley

Changing military priorities denied Fort Slocum a marching band during the final two decades of its operational existence. Nevertheless, the post kept a lively cadenced beat to the sound of jody chants on the drill field and recorded music on the Parade Ground. The band did not play on but the music never stopped.

## 4.0 CONCLUSIONS

This project was an effort to collect the oral histories of individuals associated with the former Army post Fort Slocum as a means of preserving these remembrances for future audiences and as a method of better understanding the lifeways, events, social interactions, and physical characteristics of the place. Much of the past is irretrievable, but these oral history interviews are invaluable resources for connecting us with a particular time and place because it is through the telling of stories that people create meaningful narratives that inform who they are, where they have been, and where they are going. The foregoing discussion is not intended as a chronicle of events at Fort Slocum, but rather as a narrative of some of the relevant themes that surfaced from the collected interviews of a group of individuals and families who lived and worked on Davids Island during the final thirty five years of its active military life.

The pathway to this study has been a highly selective process of collecting and sifting personal memories. Analytical approaches and editorial choices were made that examined and transmitted a set of narratives about Fort Slocum that describes some of the important concerns and experiences of the project participants. These are only a few of the many possible narratives that could be drawn from the raw material of the transcripts, for as William Cronon (1992:1368) has written, “we inhabit an endlessly storied world.” Perhaps this signals that our attempt to cede center stage to the interviewees has been only partly successful, for much of this report is the result of the way in which the interviewer framed the questions and weaved the answers into a cohesive series of stories.

Any attempt to draw a picture of Fort Slocum solely through the use of oral history interviews must be viewed as a highly selective characterization. Of the thousands of individuals who spent some time at Fort Slocum and who might possibly be alive today, this project engaged only 31 of them in conversation. While providing a great deal of useful and interesting information about life at Fort Slocum, such a sample size can only hint at the full range of experiences, events, and dramas that played out on that small island in the middle decades of the twentieth century. Absent from the list of interviewees were any persons of color who may have been able to shed light on the impact of race on military rank and advancement, on relations between races, and on the historic changes after 1948 that transformed a highly segregated military into the multi-cultural Army that we recognize today. Also absent from the project were chaplain trainees of the U.S. Army Chaplain School, a training facility that was headquartered at Fort Slocum from 1951 to 1962. Among active duty personnel, these trainees would have been uniquely positioned to speak to the religious attitudes of the Army and the common soldier, and might have offered insights into the dilemmas faced by military chaplains in providing spiritual guidance to troops preparing for combat.

Another group from which there are no representatives include the units known as ‘Honor Battalions,’ which consisted of court-martialed and disciplined soldiers undergoing rehabilitation and re-training in the period 1944-45. Graduation from these units enabled the soldier to be honorably discharged from the Army or to be reassigned to active duty. Placement of these units at Fort Slocum was controversial at the time, with opposition voiced by some New Rochelle residents about the presence near their community of ‘troublemakers.’ Even the Army recognized the potential problems with such troops, and families at Fort Slocum with teenage daughters were encouraged to send them off-post to boarding school (Joanna Geer, Interview Transcript, Appendix J). Little is known of the details of rehabilitation training or the routines of the men involved in this program. These gaps in the representation of different groups among interview subjects were unintentional, a consequence of the small sample size and the selective involvement of only those individuals who were on the roster of the Fort Slocum Alumni and Friends organization. Despite these shortcomings, however, the project did manage to interview a range of individuals that was representative of male and female service personnel, children of NCOs and officers, military wives, and civilian employees. It is significant that the project participants were at Fort Slocum

in each of the five decades from the 1920s to the 1960s, a period of major international events, important domestic public policy debates, and tremendous shifts in the way Americans viewed one another.

All the stories generated from this project are told from a personal perspective, yet lying in the background was always a place known as Fort Slocum, serving as the main point of departure for every remembrance. A glance at the photographs collected from interviewees reveals, even if narrowly, some aspect of the island that gives the story its particular flavor and setting. What appears simply as background scenery in personal snapshots is in fact the main stage upon which the actions of all involved was played out. In this sense, Fort Slocum was not merely exterior to peoples' lives and concerns, not merely an address or location—it was very much at the center of whatever it was that individuals, families, or work units were attempting to accomplish in their lives.

The process of collecting information did not end with the oral history interviews. Most of the interviewees were re-contacted once or several times for clarifications of statements, or to expand on some of their experiences that were only touched upon in the interview session. Each interview generated further questions that were either overlooked during the face to face meeting or which time did not permit to pursue. As the narrative developed from the individual conversations, it led the interviewer along new and unsuspected paths that demanded further information and explanations from the participants. To make the documentation of this report as useful as possible, copies of e-mails from interviewees detailing clarifications and responses to questions have been added as appendices to the interview transcriptions.

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## Dauids Island-Fort Slocum Oral History Project Questionnaire

My name is Robert Jacoby representing Tetra Tech EC, and I am speaking with \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ [location], on \_\_\_\_\_ [date].

This interview is part of a program sponsored by the United States Army Corps of Engineers and the New Rochelle Public Library to collect oral histories about the experiences and memories of people who were associated with the former U.S. Army base Fort Slocum located on David's Island in New Rochelle, New York.

Q: Mr/Mrs/Ms \_\_\_\_\_, please describe how you are associated with Fort Slocum. Were you there as a child or adult?

**[if a child]→ the following Qs:**

Q: How old were you when you lived on the island? What year or years was that?

Q: Do you remember the first time you saw Davids Island? What was your impression?

Q: What was your father's military rank? Did it change over time? What were his assignments while at Fort Slocum?

Q: Was there a specific building or area of the island where he usually worked? Did he have occasion to travel off-island for his work? Was he overseas while you were on the island?

Q: Describe your mother's daily routine. Were all groceries obtained at the commissary? How often did she go off-island to do shopping? for entertainment? for visiting?

Q: Did your mother work or volunteer in any capacity on the island? How frequently?

Q: Did your family eat all its meals together? Always eat at home? Ever eat in a mess hall?

Q: Describe your family's quarters. Did you have your own room?

Q: Did island families get together? How frequently? What activities?

Q: Did families of differing ranks socialize or keep apart? Did it affect who you made friends with?

Q: Where did you go to school? What grades did you attend there? How many Ft. Slocum pupils were there? If traveling to the mainland, were you accompanied by an adult?

Q: How often did the weather prevent you from leaving the island? Returning to the island? Were you ever stranded on the mainland? What happened and where did you stay?

Q: Where did you receive medical and dental care?

Q: Did you ever visit New York City? How often? What were the occasions? What were your impressions of the city? Do you recall how your parents or other adults felt about NYC?

Q: Were there other regular or periodic destinations off-island? Given the island location, was sailing or boating a big activity? Who organized it? Was there a swimming area on island? On the mainland?

Q: Did you have a bicycle? Did most kids on the island have bikes? Did adults use bikes to get around?

Q: Where did you play? What kinds of activities did kids do on their own? Were there parts of the island that were off-limits to children? Were you ever caught in those areas? What happened? What about the mortar pits-- was that an area kids played around?

Q: Describe hearing reveille and taps. Was it a recording or live? If live, who blew them? What time were they blown? Could one hear it everywhere on the island?

Q: What kinds of activities were there for children in the drill hall-gymnasium? At the YMCA?

Q: Describe relations with kids from New Rochelle. Did they visit the island? Was there much dating between island kids and those from the mainland?

Q: Were you ever in the Post Commander's Quarters? What was the occasion? Did the Post Commander know your name?

Q: Describe picnics or outings.

Q: Describe your Thanksgivings and Christmases on Davids Island.

Q: Were movies shown on the weekends? Where? Was it open for all? Do you recall any of the films?

Q: Was going to Chapel a part of your island experience? Describe. Did you attend church on the mainland?

Q: How often were there island-wide gatherings or assemblies? Describe them. Was Armed Forces Day one of these?

Q: Did the island seem quiet to you? Noisy?

Q: Were there times when the island was particularly busy or crowded with recruits and trainees?

Q: Describe any construction activities undertaken while you were there. Were there any changes made to buildings, roads, or other facilities?

Q: If you were on the island during World War Two, do you recall any particular feelings or events connected to the war?

Q: Were you at Ft. Slocum during the Cuban Missile Crisis? Describe the atmosphere on the island.

Q: Were you at Ft. Slocum when President Kennedy was shot? Describe the reaction of the base personnel and families.

Q: If you were on the island during the time of base closure, do you recall any particular feelings or events associated with it?

Q: Do you recall how your parents felt about the island? Were they eager to be posted elsewhere? Did they think of it as home?

Q: How did you refer to this place; as Davids Island or Fort Slocum? What were the circumstances when one or the other term was used? Was there a nickname for the place?

Q: When you left the island for good did you stay in touch with Fort Slocum friends? Did your parents?

Q: What do you think of the current state of the island and plans for its future?

**[if an adult]→ the following Qs:**

Q: Were you in the military, a civilian employee, or a military spouse when at Fort Slocum?

**[if military]→ the following Qs:**

Q: What was your rank? What was your unit?

Q: If an officer/NCO, did your family accompany you?

**[if yes]→ the following Qs:**

Q: When did you enter the armed forces? Describe the circumstances.

Q: Where did you complete basic training?

Q: Did you enter an officer's training program? When and where did you complete your training?

Q: Describe any other advanced training you took.

Q: Where were you posted before Fort Slocum?

Q: When were you posted to Fort Slocum? How long were you posted there?

Q: What had you heard of Fort Slocum prior to getting your orders? What were your expectations?

Q: What were your responsibilities and assignments at the base? Did these responsibilities change over time? To whom did you report? Did you supervise others?

Q: Describe your routine on a typical day.

Q: Describe your equipment. Was it new? Did it need frequent repairs?

Q: Describe any construction activities undertaken while you were there. Were there any changes made to buildings, roads, or other facilities?

Q: Were you transferred to overseas duty?

Q: How did rank affect your relations with fellow officers? With NCOs?

Q: Were women stationed on base while you were there? Were they all officers? Where were their quarters? How much fraternization was there between military males and females? How much was allowable?

Q: Tell me about island gossip. What kinds of things were talked about? What kinds of things were hinted at?

Q: Did you arrive at Fort Slocum prior to your family? Did the Army arrange for all your moving?

Q: Describe your quarters. Did you fix them up in any way? How did your family personalize them?

Q: How many children did you have? How old were they?

Q: Where did your children attend school? Were they accompanied there by an adult? Did bad weather ever keep them from going to school? Were they ever stranded on the mainland? What happened?

Q: Were parts of the island off-limits to the children? What about the mortar pits? Could your children visit you at your duty station? What about your wife?

Q: Did you get leave? How frequently? Where did you go? Was it difficult to get a day pass to the mainland? Was New York City a destination?

Q: Describe Thanksgivings on the island? Christmases? Was Armed Forces Day a big event? Any other holidays?

Q: How did you get around the island? Did you have a car? Keep a car on the mainland? Bike? Did you walk everywhere? What about other families? Was this is function of military rank? of service time? of family finances?

Q: How much was your pay? Was it adequate to take care of your family? How did you bank it?

Q: How did you get mail? Was it delivered to your quarters or did you pick it up?

Q: Where did you receive medical and dental care?

Q: Describe hearing reveille and taps. Was it a recording or live? If live, who blew them? What time were they blown? Could one hear it everywhere on the island?

Q: Describe how the base families got along. Were there many common activities?

- Q: Describe how the island felt as a community? Were people close? Supportive?
- Q: Did NCO families mix with Officer's families? What effect did your rank have on others' expectations of your behavior?
- Q: Describe the sort of recreational activities provided on the island. Were these at the YMCA or the Drill Hall? Were movies shown on the weekends? Were they open to all military and civilians?
- Q: What was your family's religious affiliation?
- Q: Was Chapel a requirement of military service? If not required, was it expected? How often, if ever, did you attend services? Who led these services?
- Q: Were you at Ft. Slocum during the Cuban Missile Crisis? Describe the atmosphere on the island.
- Q: Were you at Ft. Slocum when President Kennedy was shot? Describe the reaction of the base personnel and families.
- Q: Were you on the island when the decision was made to close the base? What was the general reaction? What were your feelings?
- Q: Describe the island's general reaction to any other notable event.
- Q: How did you refer to this place; as Davids Island or Fort Slocum? What were the circumstances when one or the other term was used? Was there a nickname for the place?
- Q: Where was your next posting? What were your feelings about leaving Davids Island?
- Q: What were your family's feelings about leaving Davids Island? Was the island frequently mentioned in later years?
- Q: After leaving the island, how frequent was your contact with other families stationed at Fort Slocum?
- Q: What are your feelings about the present state of the island and plans for its future?

**[if not accompanied by family]→ the following Qs:**

- Q: When did you enter the armed forces? Describe the circumstances.
- Q: Where did you complete basic training?
- Q: Did you enter an officer's training program? When and where did you complete your training?
- Q: Describe any other advanced training you took.
- Q: Were you at Ft. Slocum to attend a training school? Which one?

- Q: Was Ft. Slocum your first posting? If not, where posted before?
- Q: Had you ever heard of Fort Slocum prior to getting your orders? What were your expectations?
- Q: What were your responsibilities at the base? Did these responsibilities change over time? To whom did you report? Did you supervise others?
- Q: Describe your routine on a typical day.
- Q: Where were your quarters/barracks?
- Q: How was the food in the mess hall? Did you have access to other food, for instance at the PX, Commissary, YMCA, packages from home?
- Q: How much was your pay? How did you bank it?
- Q: Where did you receive medical and dental care?
- Q: Describe any construction activities undertaken while you were there. Were there any changes made to buildings, roads, or other facilities?
- Q: Were there portions of the island considered off-limits to personnel of your rank? Was Officers' Row one of these areas? Did you need special passes to be in certain locations?
- Q: In a given day, how many hours were spent drilling, training, or on work detail? What did you do the remainder of the day?
- Q: Describe what drilling was like. Describe training. Did you find it difficult?
- Q: What did you do during your time off?
- Q: Did you get leave? How frequently? Where did you go? How difficult was it to get a day pass to the mainland? Was New York City a destination?
- Q: Describe the sort of activities provided at the YMCA. Were movies shown on the weekends? at other times? Were they open to military and civilians?
- Q: Describe hearing reveille and taps. Was it a recording or live? If live, who blew them? What time were they blown? Could one hear it everywhere on the island?
- Q: What is your religious affiliation?
- Q: Was Chapel a requirement of military service? If not, was it expected? How often, if ever, did you attend services? Who led these services?
- Q: Would you describe military discipline as administered at Fort Slocum as strict? Can you give any examples? What sorts of infractions wound up in the Guard House lockup? Did you witness any? Describe them.

Q: Tell me about island gossip. What kinds of things were talked about? What kinds of things were hinted at?

Q: Were you able to obtain alcohol? Was it generally forbidden?

Q: How much time was devoted to learning army regulations and protocol?

Q: On a small island such as Fort Slocum, was interaction with officers and their families unavoidable? Was it forbidden?

Q: Were women stationed on base while you were there? Were they all officers? Where were their quarters? How much fraternization was there between military males and females? How much was allowable?

Q: Do you recall seeing children on the island? Where? Did they seem out of place for a military base, or was that a commonplace occurrence elsewhere you served?

Q: How did you refer to this place; as Davids Island or Fort Slocum? What were the circumstances when one or the other term was used? Was there a nickname for the place?

Q: What was your overall impression of Fort Slocum as a duty post?

Q: What are your feelings about the current state of the island and plans for its future?

**[if civilian employee]→ the following Qs:**

Q: Where were you raised? Did you attend school there?

Q: Was this your first job? Where was it?

Q: Did you serve in the military?

Q: When did you start working at Fort Slocum?

Q: How did you get the job? Were there any special background checks by the military or government?

Q: What work did you perform at Fort Slocum?

Q: How long did you work there? What years? How old were you at the time?

Q: Where did you live when employed at Fort Slocum?

Q: What happened if you were late to the boat? Did it make frequent trips back and forth to the island?

Q: What time did you have to report to Neptune Dock? Did adverse weather often affect the boat ride to the island? Were you ever stranded there overnight? What happened?

Q: Were you supervised by military personnel or civilian? If military, were they officers or enlisted rank?



Q: To the best of your recollection, how many civilians worked at the base? Were most of them from New Rochelle?

Q: What building(s) did you work in?

Q: Describe any construction activities undertaken while you were there. Were there any changes made to buildings, roads, or other facilities?

Q: What was the pay scale when you started? When you left? How did you get paid? How often?

Q: Did you think of this as 'just another job,' or was working at Fort Slocum different? Explain.

Q: Did you have much contact with the military families? Did you get to know many of them?

Q: Did the civilian employees ever participate in assemblies, gatherings, or other activities with base personnel?

Q: Tell me about island gossip. What kinds of things were talked about? What kinds of things were hinted at?

Q: Were you eligible for medical or dental care on base?

Q: Were you able to walk around the island freely? Were there areas that were off-limits?

Q: Were you on-island for daily reveille and taps. Was it a recording or live? If live, who blew them? What time were they blown? Could one hear it everywhere on the island?

Q: How did you refer to this place; as Davids Island or Fort Slocum? What were the circumstances when one or the other term was used? Was there a nickname for the place?

Q: Were you employed there when the base closed? Describe your feelings about the closure. Do you recall how others felt?

Q: What did you do after leaving employment on the island?

Q: Did you ever return to the island after the base closed? What were the circumstances? What were your feelings?

Q: What are your feelings about the current state of the island and plans for its future?

**[if a military spouse]→ the following Qs:**

Q: Where were you born? What year?

Q: Where were you raised? Did you graduate high school? College?

Q: Where did you meet your husband?

- Q: Was your husband already in the service when you married? How long?
- Q: Where was your first posting as a military spouse? How long were you there?
- Q: Where were you posted prior to Fort Slocum?
- Q: When did you arrive at Fort Slocum? How long did you stay there?
- Q: Had you ever heard of Davids Island/ Fort Slocum before being assigned there? What were your expectations about the place?
- Q: Do you have children? How old were they? Where were they born?
- Q: Where did your children attend school? Were they accompanied there by an adult? Did bad weather ever keep them from going to school? Were they ever stranded on the mainland? What happened?
- Q: What was your husband's rank and assignment at Fort Slocum? What building or part of the island did he work in? Could you visit him during the day? Could the children?
- Q: Aside from your family, did you know anyone there when you arrived? Did you know anyone who had been posted there?
- Q: Describe your first sighting of the island. Were you surprised at its small size? How was it alike other military bases to which you'd been assigned? How was it different?
- Q: Where were your quarters? Describe them. Were there any ways in which you personalized them?
- Q: How did you personalize the yards around your quarters? Did you have a garden? Was there community garden space somewhere?
- Q: How much was your husband's pay? How often did he get paid? Was it adequate to care for your family? How did you bank it?
- Q: Did you do all your shopping at the commissary? Was it well stocked? Were there things you couldn't get? Did they give credit? Did you ever shop in New Rochelle? Anywhere else?
- Q: What meals (if any) did your husband eat in the mess hall? What about the rest of the family?
- Q: Describe Thanksgivings on the island? Christmases? Was Armed Forces Day a big event? Any other holidays?
- Q: How did you get around the island? Did you have a car? Keep a car on the mainland? Bike? Did you walk everywhere? What about other families? Was this is function of military rank? of service time? of family finances?
- Q: How did you get mail? Was it delivered to your quarters or did you pick it up?

Q: Where did you receive medical and dental care? Describe the level of care. Were all the medical needs of your family seen to by the Army?

Q: Describe any construction activities undertaken while you were there. Were there any changes made to buildings, roads, or other facilities?

Q: How did you refer to this place; as Davids Island or Fort Slocum? What were the circumstances when one or the other term was used? Was there a nickname for the place?

Q: Describe hearing reveille and taps. Was it a recording or live? If live, who blew them? What time were they blown? Could one hear it everywhere on the island?

Q: Describe how the base families got along. Were there many common activities?

Q: Describe how the island felt as a community? Were people close? Supportive?

Q: Did NCO families mix with Officer's families? What effect did your husband's rank have on others' expectations of your behavior?

Q: Describe social gatherings hosted by the Post Commander's wife? Did the Post Commander know your name?

Q: Were women stationed on base while you were there? Were they all officers? Where were their quarters? How much fraternization was there between military males and females? How much was allowable?

Q: Tell me about island gossip. What kinds of things were talked about? What kinds of things were hinted at?

Q: Did the frequent rotation of recruits and trainees create any problems? To the best of your knowledge did the MPs have their hands full?

Q: Were there areas of the island off-limits to you? To the children? Did they play in the mortar pits? Was that ever a worry?

Q: Describe the types of activities at the YMCA.

Q: Were there movies, dances, concerts? Who attended these?

Q: Was boating, sailing, swimming an activity? Who organized it?

Q: What was the family's religious affiliation?

Q: Did you attend chapel services? How important was this to you? Was chapel required? If not, was it expected that you go?

Q: Do you recall any births occurring among military families during your stay? Was the birth performed in the post infirmary or on a mainland hospital?

Q: How often did you go off-island? Where did you go? Did you go to New York City? Had you ever been there before? What were your impressions of the city?

- Q: How frequent was leave given to visit home towns and relatives?
- Q: Were you at Ft. Slocum during the Cuban Missile Crisis? Describe the atmosphere on the island.
- Q: Were you at Ft. Slocum when President Kennedy was shot? Describe the reaction of the base personnel and families.
- Q: Where was your next posting? What were your feelings about leaving Davids Island? Did you stay in touch with other island families?
- Q: Were you on the island when the decision was made to close the base? What was the general reaction? What were your feelings?
- Q: What were your overall feelings about Davids Island when you were there? Do you think they've changed over time?
- Q: What were your children's feelings about Davids Island? How often does the topic come up?
- Q: What are your feelings about the current state of the island and plans for its future?

## Fort Slocum Oral History Project - Interviewee Release Form

I, \_\_\_\_\_, am a voluntary participant in the Davids Island/Fort Slocum Oral History Project (“Project”) undertaken by Tetra Tech EC, Inc., for the United States Army Corps of Engineers.

1. I understand that the purpose of the Project is to collect audio-recorded oral histories of Fort Slocum’s military veterans and others formerly associated or familiar with the post. The Project is also intended to collect selected related documentary materials, such as photographs and manuscripts. The oral histories and related materials obtained through this interview will provide a record of the Davids Island / Fort Slocum experience and will serve as a scholarly resource for the United States Government, its designees—including, but not limited to, Tetra Tech EC, Inc., and the New Rochelle Public Library—and the general public.

2. I further understand that these materials will be retained permanently in the files or collections of the United States Government, the New Rochelle Public Library, and/or other facilities designated by either party (“Repositories”). The products of my participation in the Project may include, but will not be limited to, interview recording(s) and transcript(s), photographs, statements, name, images or likenesses, voice, and written materials (“My Collection”). The Repositories will associate My Collection with my name and will make use of my name for identification of My Collection and for other purposes related to its storage and use.

3. I understand that My Collection, and information and material derived from it, may be made available to members of the public, subject to the Freedom of Information Act, Privacy Act, Department of the Army Information Security Program, and the applicable policies and regulations of the Repositories.

4. I hereby grant to the Repositories ownership of the physical, electronic and photographic property comprising My Collection. Additionally, I hereby grant to the Repositories, at no cost, the perpetual, nonexclusive, transferable, worldwide right to use, reproduce, transmit, display, perform, distribute, and permission to authorize the redistribution of the materials in My Collection in any medium. By giving this permission, I do not give up any copyright or performance rights that I may hold. I also understand that this grant of ownership does not preclude my personal use of these materials, subject to security restrictions.

5. I hereby release the United States Government, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the New Rochelle Public Library, Tetra Tech EC, Inc., and all of their assignees and designees from any and all claims and demands arising out of or in connection with the use of My Collection, including, but not limited to, any claims for compensation, copyright infringement, defamation, invasion of privacy, or right of publicity.

ACCEPTED AND AGREED

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Interviewer \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Interviewer \_\_\_\_\_

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PRIVACY ACT STATEMENT:

**Authority:** Title 10, USC 3013, Secretary of the Army; Army Regulation 870-5, Military History: Responsibilities, Policies and Procedures.

**Principal Purpose:** To obtain historical information that focuses on persons, events, and topics of historical interest to the U.S. Army.

**Routine Use:** This information may be used by the Department of Defense as source material for publications or other historical works.

**Disclosure:** Voluntary; however, failure to provide the requested information may preclude participation in the Army oral historical program.

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**ROBERT JACOBY:** — representing Tetra Tech and I'm speaking with a group of people who lived at Fort Slocum in the 40s, 50s and 60s. This interview is part of a program sponsored by the United States Army Corps of Engineers and the New Rochelle Public Library to collect oral histories about the experiences and memories of people who were associated with the former US Army post, Fort Slocum, located on David's Island in New Rochelle.

I pass the mike to —

**SECOND SPEAKER:** George Willhite. I was at the, Fort Slocum from 1961 until 1964, arriving as a student in May of 1961 when I was 23. I came to (inaudible) the instructor until (inaudible) February of '64. One of the guys who taught me was —

**BILL CARLSON:** Bill Carlson and I was there from late 1959 until 1962 as an instructor in journalism at the information school. I was a young guy, hired not on the basis of my experience in journalism. I taught first and I got my experience later.

**BILL WATERHOUSE:** My name is Bill Waterhouse. I was there from 1961 until early 1963, and I was 24 years old when I left there. I was with the 1207<sup>th</sup> US Army Garrison Headquarters Detachment, which comprised all of the personnel that took care of the island, the motor pool, the medics, the MP's, the cooks and bakers, the commissary workers and other people that stayed on the island regardless of which group came and went to school there. We were permanently assigned to the post.

I was there during the Cuban Missile Crisis, which I believe was in 1962. And we were put on a full alert at the time. It seems we got the orders from Washington. I think every post along the east coast of the United States was on a full alert at the time because of the Russian missiles being in Cuba, 90 miles from Florida.

I came here from Fort Benjamin Harrison in Indiana, where I took my training. And I was assigned to Fort Slocum and I had no idea where it was. I went to the library out there and looked in the list of army posts in the United States and there was a little dot on a little tiny island in Long Island Sound and that was Fort Slocum.

So when I came here, the first day I was here, they took me in to see the big deputy post commander who was a lieutenant colonel. And I was kind of scared when I went in there, because I'd never met anybody that was such of a high rank. And he was Lieutenant Colonel Arthur J. Nealand of Lincoln, Massachusetts. And that's two towns away from where I came from.

And he had four teenaged children that went to school in New Rochelle. And one of them had a cousin in Massachusetts. And I used to be able to get out early on Friday afternoon to take her up to see her cousin at least once a month. So I had a good contact there. And I tried to get a hold of the other children in the family and we got in these reunions. But I, I have their addresses and so forth, but I haven't got any response from them.

And I know of three other people that worked in my office for a year and a half. And I contacted them, but I haven't been able to get a response from them. And they're within reason, like Bridgeport, Connecticut and Massachusetts and so forth.

I enjoyed myself. I got a promotion just before I was ready to get out. They wanted me to re-enlist, but I turned them down.

**JOHN PARDON:** Hello. My name is Jim Pardon. I was at Fort Slocum for two months or more in the fall of 1962, attending the army information school. And it was an interesting time because it was, as the gentleman said, it was during the Cuban Missile Crisis. But I wasn't there long, but I have good memories of the island.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Right. It's reversed. I know.

**SUSAN EDWARDS:** It's reversed? Okay. Sorry about that. This is Susan Edwards. I didn't live on post, but I married a civilian worker out on the island and that was in June 1965. And we got married in the chapel and we moved to the officer's club afterwards for a party and we had a wonderful time. And I'm sorry to see that the Fort's not there any longer. All the buildings are falling down. But it was a beautiful well-maintained place (inaudible).

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Would you describe what your husband did?

**SUSAN EDWARDS:** He was a civilian that worked in the commissary. And they kind of, everybody kind of did whatever needed to be done. He didn't have specific job. One day he was a butcher, another day he was with fish and loading trucks and fixing trucks. And he just kind of did whatever needed to be done out there. And when the fort closed in 1966, I guess that was, they wanted him to go to Fort Totten, transfer over there. But he said that that fort was going to be closing in another year or so and he just didn't want to be bothered, so he just left the Army's employ at that time.

**PATRICK SKELLY:** I'm Patrick Skelly, military family, or as we used to say, Army brat, who was at Fort Slocum from 1940 to 42. I didn't bring the notes of the actual months. My father was Captain and later Major Walter Skelly, Deputy Commandant of the Bakers and Cooks School Second Corps at Fort Slocum. I don't know just when they changed the name to Cooks and Bakers, but in 1940 it was the Bakers and Cooks. We lived in Quarters 13. I was able to see the foundation of it today. I was not the best behaved child of my family.

But I do remember my, in looking over my father's records, that as one of the new officers in the staff on the post he was assigned to do these, you know, library officer, courts marshal officer, morale officer, whatever you have. At the time he left he was the Deputy Commandant Bakers and Cooks. He went on to the infantry school and became a battalion commander, first in the States and then in combat.

But at the time we were at Fort Slocum, I remember it as a kid would. There was a day Major Skelly got a call. Major, your son is riding his bicycle through the retreat formation. Please take care of it. And another day, I guess this was first grade, when I was taking the ferry over to New Rochelle, the guard down at the dock called my parents at 5 o'clock and said he's here, he doesn't want to be late for school.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Pat, what school did you go to?

**PATRICK SKELLY:** I don't remember the name, but I believe it would have been near to the dock because I know also when we came here, initially we were at 13 Lee Court. And I found that on the map and it's only a couple of blocks from the ferry. So, so whatever elementary school was probably closest to the dock.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And were you accompanied on the ferry by an adult or did just the kids alone go?

**PATRICK SKELLY:** Just the kids plus whatever Army personnel were running the ferry. And, you know, that was it. I don't really remember anything of the school time, but I do remember the time on post and enjoying it very much.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** George, could you describe what your typical day -- I'll repeat that. George, can you describe what your typical day at Fort Slocum was like?

**GEORGE WILLHITE:** A typical day would be, you know, (inaudible) you got up in the morning, got yourself ready. If it was an inspection morning, you made sure the floor hadn't gotten scuffed and the latrine was nice and clean. Otherwise, there was a morning formation. Friday mornings there was an inspection to make sure you had your brass on the right collar and so forth. Off to breakfast and off to the office.

The journalism offices were on the third floor of Building 59. There were usually two enlisted instructors in each office. You'd look to see what you were supposed to be teaching that day and if you hadn't finished some grading, you went ahead and read students' papers.

Usually, you had one newswriting class, a two-hour class, two hours in the lab with the students. And we'd give them notes and asked them to write a story or there might be, having to ask some questions and construct a story based on the answers you provided. Otherwise, you didn't make the lecture, you might get another day or grading papers you received that day.

Basically, in the evenings, go have supper and then you're pretty much on your own except for any grading you had to do and so forth.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** As a journalism instructor, did you go over the day's events with, with students?

**BILL CARLSON:** No. The journalism course we were teaching was to train these fellas, or fellas and gals, to be writers for post-war newspapers, basically. And some of them had been assigned (inaudible) before and come for additional training, some were fresh out of basic training. Some of them knew where to put commas in sentences, some didn't. Our job was to teach them how to construct a sentence and paragraph properly, how to figure out how to (inaudible) story, it was important to, how to make it interesting.

No, we weren't discussing current affairs. That's a separate department called MUSWA, which is Military US and World Affairs. You need a heavy dose of history and current affairs and geography in MUSWA.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Bill Carlson, would you describe what any possible interaction you had with the families, like Pat's, that were on the island? Did you come into contact with any of the kids or, or the NCO families?

**BILL CARLSON:** We didn't have a lot of contact with the families, although, I did have a part-time job running the base theater over at Raymond Hall. So I would see families coming there. I'd get to know some of the kids that, some of the officers or, or personnel because a lot of them would come to the movies. So aside from that, we didn't have a lot of contact with, with families and personnel.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Moving over to Bill Waterhouse, Bill, can you describe what you did during your off time when you didn't have military duties?

**BILL WATERHOUSE:** Okay. Well, everybody pretty much had a schedule. After we'd get out of work at 4 or 4:30, go back to the barracks and maybe take, we used to pick up our mail at the post office in the building I worked in and take it back, drop it off in your -- we had cubes that we slept in with two bunks, two beds in each cube. And they had a partition that went up about 8 feet, but it didn't go to the ceiling. So it was a big room with little bedroom sections in it.

And then at 5 o'clock every day, there was a retreat, which they shot a cannon blast off and lowered the flag on the main flag pole at the end of the parade field. And everything had to come to a complete stop on the island at that time. Everybody, if you were riding a bicycle, you had to stop, get off and salute the flag. And the automobiles had to come to a stop.

And in the headquarters detachment, we had to play the *Star Spangled Banner* on a big 12" record on a commercial turntable that went out over a PA system that you could hear over the whole island.

Then after we, then we could go into the chow hall and have supper, come back and we'd have a big day room with a tv set in it. Some guys would play cards. You could do your housekeeping in your area if you had to do, shine your shoes or polish your brass and things like that. And some guys would do laundry and other things and watch tv. And the lights out, I think, were at 10 o'clock. And then we hit the sack because we had to get up at 6 o'clock in the morning every day Monday through Friday. Weekends were you could sleep late.

**BILL CARLSON:** I'd like to add something, if I could

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**BILL CARLSON:** This is Bill Carlson. One of the joys of being at Fort Slocum for a, was the access to New York City. And so, there were many a night and during the weekends on weekends when we'd go up to the New Haven Railroad station and catch the train into the city. Once in awhile there was someone who had a car. And that was a luxury. He could go in by car.

But we'd catch a train into the city and go to the USO on West 43<sup>rd</sup> Street and get free tickets to concerts, shows, we went to ballgames, we, we just really took a lot of advantage of the many attractions and advantages of being in New York. And so that was one of the wonderful things about being at Fort Slocum.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Pat.

**PATRICK SKELLY:** Pat Skelly. And as that kid who was riding his bicycle around, I had been well enough indoctrinated into the Army system, that cannon went off, you dropped the bike and you stood to attention. And I think all the kids tended to gravitate up toward the flag pole at that time so we could be present at that ceremony. And of course, in '40, '41, '42, it was even more important to us.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Pat, you lived there in 1941. Do you remember Pearl Harbor at all?

**PATRICK SKELLY:** I remember that night, coming back from my grandparents' house in Brooklyn, New York, or that day, in the car with the family. And we got the announcement, we were at my grandparents' house and then we got the announcement. We immediately all piled in the car and came back to base. But I do remember that day, being in Brooklyn and Fort Slocum. It's a day you'll never forget.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** John Pardon, I'd like to ask you to describe what you think about the military chow while you were at Fort Slocum.

**JOHN PARDON:** I have no memory of the chow that I ate at Fort Slocum. However, although I, because I lived on the other side of the county, I was one of the two people who lived in civilian life very close to Fort Slocum, and I remember helping out a couple people on Thanksgiving while they were doing their KP so they could either get home or get off the island for a few days. And those are good memories.

I can say that I do remember the Cuban, in the Missile Crisis, from the point of view that when I came back on Monday from the weekend, all the cadre had changed and we really didn't know why.

One of the things I do remember from the classwork is learning a lot about Viet Nam. I guess we (inaudible) people there, they were living in tunnels and some of the abandoned weaponry that they had. Again, this was 1962, we were just beginning to gear up for that event. We didn't know a lot about it. And I think the civilians knew less, little than I, little did I know (inaudible) at this time.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Susan, you mentioned that you came to the island periodically for visits.

**SUSAN EDWARDS:** Yes, sir.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Can you describe what some of those visits were like?

**SUSAN EDWARDS:** Sure. Although I was very young, I was just out of high school and I was working split shifts at the telephone company (inaudible). And so, in between working 7 to 11 in the morning and I'd go back at like 4 in the afternoon I think. So I would walk down to Fort Slocum dock, take the ferry, which was always wonderful, and go meet my friends and my husband there at the commissary. And we were allowed to walk around.

Sometimes we'd go to the Officer's Club and have a cocktail and my husband would get (inaudible) there for socializing. Sometimes we would go to the beaches. You know, we were allowed to do that. We weren't allowed to go into any of the other buildings, you know, like that guards the station or anything like that. But as a civilian you could get permission and could go around. And it was nice.

And sometimes, I was there, you were talking about, you know, ceremony with the flag and all that. I remember that. I wasn't on the island often at that time, because I was usually off island at that time, but I do remember that. And it was very, very moving and everybody stopped. It didn't matter civilian or in the army, whatever. You just stopped and you faced that flag and you put your hand over your heart. It was wonderful. That's the days when it was important. Now it's just garbage.



**ROBERT JACOBY:** I'd like to ask about special events like Christmas or Easter. George, did you, did you have, do you have any memories of what, of being on the island at Christmas or on a special occasion?

**GEORGE WILLHITE:** One Christmas I did take a charge of duty for a friend so he could get off the island. But you mentioned Easter. And one year, the first year I'd been on the island I guess, John Purcell was there, a sergeant. Purcell was Elvis Presley's sergeant in, in Germany. And he was an old-time army sergeant. He looked like a shorter Alfred Hitchcock in profile.

And shortly before Good Friday, they announced that our unit had to have post cleanup on Saturday between Good Friday and Easter. We had a lot of married couples who wanted to get away with their families back home for Easter and they were not gonna be able to do it because of that. People were pretty upset.

My mother had sent me a box of Easter candy. And so I went to our (inaudible) quarters. I got the key to John Purcell's office, this hard-boiled army sergeant. Bill Carlson and I went in there and there was Easter candy hidden around Purcell's office. So he came in the next morning on Saturday and his office was visited by the Easter Bunny.

Bill and I were out trimming grass with clippers. The next morning, the Easter Bunny went flying past us. Purcell had checked and found out who had been responsible for the visits.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** That brings up an issue of Army discipline. Did, were you ever a victim of Army discipline, Bill Carlson, or can you describe what that meant to you as a young soldier?

**BILL CARLSON:** Well, I was, before I was in the real Army, so I didn't, as far as discipline was concerned because things were pretty relaxed as far as military formality was concerned. We had to be respectful to officers and salute them and I don't recall any serious infractions by too many people that I served with, any disciplinary problems. So it wasn't anything like you hear in some other circumstances.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Bill Waterhouse, you were on the island today. Was this your first time back in many years and would you describe what your feelings were seeing the island as it is today.

**BILL WATERHOUSE:** Yes. This was the first time I did actually set foot on the island since 1963. When I got out I went back to Massachusetts and within a year I was involved with starting a local historical society in my town. And I've always been interested in local history. And recently, when I found the Fort Slocum website on the internet, I became very interested in what was going on down in here. So we came down a year ago and got this started.

And we rented a boat and went out from the Slocum dock out in a fairly large boat. And I think it was low tide because he couldn't get very close to the island. But we went all around it. We could see the buildings above the tree line and we talked a lot about what was there. And I thought that I had to come here this week because I wanted to see the building where my office was before it was demolished.

There was some talk about, three or four months ago, that they were gonna implode the buildings like they do in the cities, using explosive devices, but it looks like they're just tearing them down piece by piece. But I did get to see it and I took some pictures of it. And I worked in the office, in the personnel office, for five days a week for 18 months. So I was very familiar with that building and the people that worked in my general area. And I was really glad to get there today.

And I saw part of the mess hall. The building that I slept in, I lived in, was getting torn down. But I did see a sign that I painted. I'm a draftsman by trade. And they had me paint the sign in front of the barracks and the one in the photographs that Barb Davis had here today. I saw that sign in there.

That was probably there before I got there, but it was all faded and the paint was peeling, so they asked me to redo the whole thing, so I did. And that was there when I left and it was probably there up until 1970 or so, whenever it got knocked down by some tree falling on it or something.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. Pat, your father was a major. Is that right?

**PATRICK SKELLY:** Yes. Initially a captain, but he had gone through civilian military training camps in the early '20s. He was commissioned in '24 and (inaudible) Infantry, called to active duty in '40 as thousands of the officers in the organized Reserve Corps were. And in large part, they were gearing up to bring in all the National Guard divisions at the beginning of '41 for their supposed one year of training, at which point they would go home.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did you father go overseas after Pearl Harbor?

**PATRICK SKELLY:** When he left Slocum in '42, he went down to the Infantry School for the battalion commanders course, then served at a number of posts throughout the country. Let's see, he was born in 1903, so he was basically 40. The goal for battalion commanders was to be 35. He was too old for combat until 1944. He was young enough.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** George, I want to ask you about women on the island. We saw some photographs earlier about of WACs on the island. You were there as a young guy. Was there much interaction between you and your fellows and the women?

**GEORGE WILLHITE:** Yes. Basically there were WACs that came through the information school. I can remember a WAC officer was part of the faculty. We had Lieutenant Colonel Lane Carlson, who was head of the journalism (inaudible) for awhile. Alice Howell was in the policy plans department, Major Howell. And there were some others as well. But there would be some classes would be zero WACs, some would be one, two, sometimes there would be three WACs.

One of them (inaudible) fellow students. Instructors were no (inaudible) other places that they didn't (inaudible). It wasn't forbidden, but you had to be very circumspect, knowing that (inaudible) special treatment. I had two WACs in my class at one time (inaudible). And the other wound up going to the Philippines, if I recall.

No, they, they were there and there were dances. There were social events and they were at those. Everything seemed to go well. I don't recall any incidents. Actually, I think some of the officers were dating some of the WACs.

**BILL CARLSON:** But there, there were guards around the WAC quarters, you know, to kind of discourage any unauthorized entry into the women's barracks.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Does anyone have any final thoughts on your experiences or perhaps what you saw today? This is John Pardon.

**JOHN PARDON:** I sort of had mixed emotions about coming back. It had only been 40 years since I'd been on the island. And I found myself, as we took the tour, what you remember from 40 years ago. You're looking through the trees and you're hoping to see it, but you're not gonna see it, because in 40 years lots of things have happened like nature. Trees grow. Shrubbery grows. Buildings get grown over and buildings fall down.

But I'm very glad I came and I hope something of the island can be preserved. The issue for anybody here is access, how do you get to it because there's lots of memories and lots of history. And I hope we can figure out how to keep some of it.

**PATRICK SKELLY:** My first reaction, Pat Skelly, my first reaction on seeing the post again after 65 years was the jungle canopy. And I realize now as I've looked at the older photos of it, at Slocum the parade ground was lined by tall trees. In fact, the quarters and the left side and the barracks and so on on the roof side. And so that is what came in to take over the parade ground.

Most of the other posts that I remember, parade grounds were fairly clean in terms of being surrounded by trees. And so, our beautifying Slocum is what today has turned it into a jungle canopy.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Bill Carlson? One second, Bill, I'm gonna.

(END SIDE ONE. BEGIN SIDE TWO.)

**BILL CARLSON:** Bill Carlson, you had asked earlier, when we looking at some of the slides, if I had a camera when I was there. And I mentioned that I did not. And I mentioned that as a young man, I had to record not only personal memories, but just the beauty of the place.

At the time that we were there, it was really like a college campus with brick ivy-covered buildings and tree-lined walks that Pat was talking about. And you watched the sunrises and the sunsets over the water and the boats out on the Sound. And it was just an idyllic kind of a place to be, very unmilitary-like in many ways, but a very special time in my life.

(END RECORDING.)

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Patsy Hamilton, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and accurate transcript of the taped proceedings as transcribed by me on the date hereinbefore set forth, to the best of my ability.

---

Dated: 09/30/07 Patsy Hamilton - Agency Transcriptionist



William Carlson  
01/23/2008 12:24 PM

To Rob Jacoby

Subject  
Re: Ft. Slocum

Rob,

Some info about me:

When I was at Slocum, my hometown was Rocky River, Ohio, a western suburb of Cleveland.

I later lived in several places around Ohio, first returning to Miami University in Oxford and then as a journalist (always had the intention of working elsewhere in the country). The towns included Painesville, Dayton, Cincinnati, Columbus, Cleveland and, for 24 years, Solon, a southeastern suburb of Cleveland. In February my wife Nancy and I are moving to Arizona, but we will be snowbirds, returning in summer to our cottage along Lake Erie at Lakeside, Ohio.

Over the years I worked as a reporter/photographer at the Painesville Telegraph, editor of the Mentor Monitor, reporter for the Cincinnati Enquirer, copy editor and reporter for the Dayton Journal-Herald and reporter and editor at The Plain Dealer of Cleveland. All but the Enquirer and PD are now defunct--either they couldn't get along without me or I killed them.

I have a photo from my Army years that was taken a few months before I got to Slocum but I didn't change much during those years ('59 - '62). I'll try to find it and send a copy of the baby-faced kid.

I really enjoyed the visit to the island last fall and chatting with you at the New Rochelle Library. Thanks for your interest in helping preserve the history of this special place.

Best wishes,

Bill Carlson



john pardon  
12/21/2007 03:52 PM

To Rob Jacoby

Subject  
Re: Ft. Slocum interview

Hello Rob:: Re inquiry about Fort Slocum posting. I am from Croton-on-Hudson, NY, maybe 25 miles plus from Ft. Slocum (on the Hudson River in the northern part of Westchester County). Was 24 yo at the time and assigned to the Army Information School. After the service was a sports writer for a couple of newspapers for nine years or so before going to work for the Department of Veterans Affairs. Now retired. Hope this helps. Give a click if you need more info. Would like to see what you put together when finished.

Have a Merry Christmas.

Regards, JFP

john pardon  
03/04/2008 09:59 PM

To Rob.Jacoby

Subject  
Re: Ft. Slocum interview

Hello Rob: Believe I was off station the weekend the event happened. When classes began all new instructors were in place and when we asked why and where they went got no answer. Think someone later said they had gone to Washington, DC, but not sure. Hope this is of some help. I was at Ft. Slocum as a student so they would not have told us a thing.

Regards, JFP

--- Rob.Jacoby@tteci.com wrote:

>  
> Hi John-  
>  
> During our interview last fall you mentioned that  
> you were at Slocum during  
> the Cuban Missile Crisis. Do you remember whether  
> your duties as a soldier  
> were affected in any way by the alert? Were there  
> extra watches, anything  
> like that?  
>  
> Thanks  
>  
> Rob>



Patrick Skelly 12/21/2007 06:41 PM

To Rob Jacoby

Subject  
Re: Ft. Slocum interview

Rob -

For my first twenty-five years, Brooklyn NY was my permanent address of record, but I last 'lived' there sixty years ago. After we left Fort Slocum in 1942, I didn't really settle down (Phoenix AZ) until 1965. I've been on Cape Cod since 1994, but still travel extensively.

My professional career has been in the maintenance, design, test, and systems management of large computer systems, from vacuum tubes to integrated circuit chips. My own military service was 'capped' in the late '50s as NCOIC of the Computation Laboratory, Army Ballistic Missile Agency - the von Braun team. I'm now 'just' a user of computers: historian for the 34th Infantry Division Association and senior historian of the Gold Star Museum, Iowa National Guard. I also create websites for various veteran groups and 'own' the Military History Network, <http://www.milhist.net> My current focus is World War II and Cold War history in the Mediterranean region, principally Italy.

And now a question for you: who was it that you interviewed on Cape Cod?

- Pat



William Waterhouse 02/26/2008 02:50 PM

To Rob.Jacoby  
Subject  
Re: Ft. Slocum

It looks like Building 57 on the 1952 map. And I worked in Building 59, second floor south. We could leave the island during the day and evening, we just had to sign out in a book in the company office. Lights out was at 11 PM. The TV was on from 7 AM till 11 PM, 7 days a week. There would be 2 to 15 guys in the day room watching TV at any time, mostly in the evenings. The cooks had two shifts, First shift for breakfast and lunch, then another shift from noon to 7 or 8 PM. Remember, some of the cooks had to get food ready for the next day and oversee cleaning up after supper. We didn't go into town very much since we only got paid once a month and then we only got \$85 to \$100 to last for a month. We had to pay for our haircuts every two weeks and our laundry and snacks in the PX or the EM club. We did go into NYC to see plays and visit the USO club, but that was only a few times a month.

Bill

Rob.Jacoby wrote:

Thanks for your reply Bill. What barracks was that? Could you come and go as you please, or did you have strict lights out and curfew? You mentioned the so-called day room; was it used much? or did you guys head into town or the city alot?

Rob

William Waterhouse  
02/26/2008 01:36 PM  
To Rob.Jacoby

Re: Ft. Slocum

Hi Rob, I was located on the first floor, north end of the building. There were high ceilings, and there were 8' high wall partitions between each room, no door. There were two beds in each room, against the interior walls, with a table in between by the window. Note: we could have put bunk beds in each room, but we didn't need to. We had a foot locker at the foot of each bed and a wall locker for each person. Yes, it was cold in the winter. There were no storm windows and I doubt if there was any insulation in the exterior walls. We had a coal fired furnace in the basement with a electric power stoker, but we had to keep the supply hopper filled with coal every 4 hours or so. We had a day room (so called) with TV (b&w) and a pool table and some card tables and chairs. I don't remember if the south end of the building had the same floor plan. I imagine the second floor was hotter in the summer, being closer to the attic, but it was probably warmer in the winter, due to heat rising upwards. I don't remember if the heat was hot air or steam, but I'll say steam because that's what we had over in our office building and I think we had a radiator in each room.



The barracks were not crowded for us since we had a limited amount of personnel in the 1207 HQ Det. Some of the married men lived in apartments in New Rochelle. And the officers had their own building. We always had some extra vacant rooms for incoming or transient personnel. Anything else?

William Waterhouse  
03/05/2008 12:59 PM

To Rob.Jacoby

Subject  
Re: Ft. Slocum

Hi Rob, As I remember, we were restricted to the island, (no leaves or passes) and had to pull guard duty for 2 or 4 hour shifts, 24 hours a day, walking in pairs around the perimeter of the island with our rifles and ammunition. We were like the auxiliary police, since we had a group of military police assigned to the post. They were able to ride around and check up on us every half hour or so. This only lasted a week at most.  
Bill

Rob.Jacoby wrote:

Hi Bill- During our interview last fall you mentioned you were at Slocum during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Do you remember how much, if at all, your routine as a soldier was affected by the alert? Any special duties, extra watches, during this time?

thanks

Rob



George Willhite  
12/21/2007 10:54 PM

To Rob Jacoby  
Subject  
Re: Ft. Slocum Interview

Rob:

After basic training early in 1961 at Ft. Leonard Wood, I was sent to Slocum to attend the Army Information School, I think our class started in May, finished eight weeks later in July. If it is worth noting, I was the top-ranking student in the class, but since most of the kids were out of high school and I was older and had finished college with a B.S. in journalism and had 1.5 years experience as a cub reporter for a daily newspaper, I had an advantage.

Upon finishing the course, I had a choice of staying at USARIS (U.S. Army Information School) as a journalism instructor, going to the information office at West Point, or heading to Europe for whatever the Army wanted to do with me (no guarantee of a post in informtion, but that's probably what would have happened--but I didn't know that). so I stayed at Slocum, serving as an instructor in the Applied Journalism Department. Lt. Col. Earl Browning was department commander. Bill Carlson--also one of your interviewees--was one of the AJ instructors when I joined the department. I was discharged in February 1964 and went back to Chicago, which is where I grew up and where my folks lived. I went to Northwestern and obtained an M.S. in journalism, the worked for daily newspapers in Charlotte, N.C., Carbondale, Illinois, and Champaign, Illinois, before joining the American Oil Chemists' Society (AOCS) in Champaign in 1976 as editor for the members' monthly publication. The "oil" refers to animal and vegetable fats and oils, not petroleum. During the next 25 years I worked for AOCS I visited virtually all over the world--Beijing to Istanbul, all over Europe and North America (but nor South America, one of my writers had served in Peru in the Peace Corps and spoke Spanish, so she covered events there).

I'm now retired living in Champaign. After the Watergate episode spurred journalism school entries, I was an adjunct instructor in journalism at the University of Illinois for a year to help accommodate the enrollment surge.

do you need any more?

best,

george





George Willhite 02/21/2008 04:47 PM

To Rob Jacoby

Subject  
Re: Ft. Slocum Interview

it was a great place to be in the army. i remember looking out my window one night at a full moon when a flock of either geese or ducks flew (v-shape formaation) across the moon's face.

one time the guys next to me (bill ellison and tom madden) discovered an empty bird's nest twixt their inside window and the storm window (something had warped to prevent a tight fit). so they put a small sign there saying "nest for rent." when they checked several days or a week later, there were some eggs. we assumed it had to be English sparrows if they were able to read the small sign.

the barracks obviously were not in the best shape. the hot water radiators didn't always keep the rooms warm in winter time. it could get very warm in the summer. but it was far more comfortable than what most two- and three-year enlisted men had in those days.

we were spoiled and knew it.

best,

george

George Willhite  
02/26/2008 02:07 PM

To Rob Jacoby

Re: Ft. Slocum Interview

Rob:

These were very plush quarters for enlisted guys.

The buildings, you may or may not recall, were shaped like the charter for pi--a long spine, two ells sticking out. The inside of the U had concrete porch areas with round iron railings.

On building 58 (if I remember numbering system correctly--the southernmost building of the Triad), the southern half of the second and third floors were barracks. (First floor, on north, was USARIS library; south half had USARIS bookstore.) I don't recall what was on parts of second/third floors that weren't barracks. That may have simply been empty, unused space.

I lived on the third floor. At the north end of the barracks area was a large room--maybe 18 x 12 or so, where there was a pool table. Just off this room toward the island side was a smaller room that was our TV room. Lots of old, but comfy chairs.



There was a hallway from the pool table room to the south. Along the sound side were three or four individual rooms for senior NCOs. On the other side was our latrine area--showers, toilets, sinks, urinals. The stairway up ended at the hallway just outside the southernmost NCO room. To the right, as you came up the stairs, was a doorway into another common room. This was similar to pool table room/tv room, but there was no separating wall, so this one was consider longer. In the projection to the south, there were two doors to barracks room. Each barracks room had two hollywood bed, two desks and desk chairs, two large metal wardrobes, and an older, but comfortable chair. Beyond the first barracks room was a doorway to another room. Thus, you had to go through the first barracks room to get to the second. The rooms on the outside edge usually had windows on two walls (one of mine looked over the sound, the other over the athletic field). This pattern was repeated behind the other door off the "day" room. There were similar sets of rooms off the island side of the day room. Thus, a total of eight rooms, each holding two persons.

The buildings had been built many decades before we were in them. No central or window air-conditioning, so if it got really hot outside, we would be hot inside. Similarly the hot-water radiators did a good job for normal cold--but it occasionally became a bit chilly if we had really cold weather. Long Island Sound, however, probably served as a moderating factor.

The second floor barracks probably was the same as ours. As I recall, the third floor were people largely by folks who were instructors at USARIS, the second floor probably had more of the non-instructors (company clerk, mailroom personnel, operations workers).

I'm going to send a copy of this to Bill Carlson, he may remember some things more accurately than I do, or have some other observations.

Best,

george

GeorgeWillhite  
03/04/2008 10:33 AM

To Rob.Jacoby

Re: Ft. Slocum Interview

oh my--the cuban missile crisis..

as far as i know, only two Slocum soldiers moved to the southeast U.S. as part of that alert. Major Thomas Hughes was an instructor in the MUSWA Military, U.S. and World Affairs) department. And the post photographer--i'll try to recall his name--also went South. there may have been others, but I didn't know about them.

Hughes apparently suffered some type of nervous breakdown for when he came back he was much altered in personality. One night when the post bowling league was scheduled, rather than come in the front of Raymond Hall (the post theater/lecture hall/bowling alley/shooting range building) and down the stairs, he climbed in through one of the ground level half-windows.



Not too long after that, he was gone from the post.

There was an effect on those of us on the post. The Army wanted apparently wanted all military units to have at least half of their personnel immediately available for mobilization if needed. Our small detachment of enlisted men (maybe 40-50 people) included many who were married and living off post. So if we had to have 20 to 35 people on post at all times, and the married guys were off-post every weekend, it meant the rest of us no longer could go into New Rochelle, New York, or wherever whenever we wanted to, as we were used to doing. If we had 15 married guys (a very rough guess) that meant the 20 to 25 people on post had to come from the remaining 35.

We had no weapons available to us. Once a year we were bused to West Point to qualify on the rifle range, but we used carbines, not the M-1 rifle that was standard issue at the time. Those of us in the journalism department mused that if the Cubans did try to land on the enlisted men's beach, we could throw typewriters from our newswriting labs at them. No Cubans ever showed up in Long Island Sound--or at least not on our beaches.

We recently had received some Polaroid cameras that the students could use for practice in developing articles w/pictures. To stave off boredom from the enforced weekend island stays, we took some photos of each other. Soe where I have one of a row of toilets in the latrine, with door closed and beneath two doors you can see Army boots, and the third shows someone's forearms and hands--as though he is standing on his hands inside the booth. Etc. etc., and so forth..

Classes continued as normal, meals, movies, recreation programs. i have no idea what was going on at the security level--i suspect the MPs were on heightened alert as well, do not recall anyone from our detachment having to walk guard duty around the island perimeter at night, but someone from the garrison unit might know about that.

best,  
george

George Willhite  
03/04/2008 09:01 AM

To Rob.Jacoby  
Subject  
Re: JFK assassination

Rob:

Yes, and I remember it well. I can provide contact information for at least three others--Bill Ellion, Paul Van Nevel, and Tom Madden--who were journalism instructors at that time.

I was teaching a class on newswriting (laboratory sessions where we passed out notes, then the students had to write a news story) shortly after the lunch hour--probably shortly after 1 p.m. i had finished the briefing to



the students and they had begun their work when Capt. Harry Heath (one of the officer journalism instructors) came into the classroom and asked me, "Have you heard about President Kennedy here?" My initial thought was "why is Kennedy here? he's supposed to be in Texas." But I replied, "No." "He's been shot," Heath said.

We had an Associated Press teletype wire in the central area on the first floor of our classroom building--the center building among the triad--but I forget if that was Bldg. 59 or 60.

We headed out there, where students and instructors from other classes already had gathered.

It wasn't too much longer until classes for the afternoon were cancelled--before my class would have ended, but I don't remember how long.

One of the Canadian sergeants in my class asked me who could have done it. I said it probably was one of the anti-integration fanatics in the South (Kennedy had not yet been declared dead yet).

I had a ticket to see "How To Succeed in Business Without Really Trying" on Broadway that night. I decided to go on into New York rather than stay on the island. Broadway, of course, shut down for the night. When I got back later that night--probably between 11 p.m. and midnight, I found out that after I had left, all passes, etc. had been canceled.

The next morning, the full student detachment, USARIS detachments, and post headquarters detachment (MPs, cooks, personnel office, etc.) were assembled on the parade ground. It was a cool, windy day so as Col. Castagneto read his statement (and I don't know if it was a common statement read to all Army personnel, or one written at Fort Slocum for those of us stationed there), deputy post commandant Lt. Col. Babcock (maybe his first name will occur to me before I finish) held a bull horn which he kept moving from left to right and back again so that Castagneto's voice would carry over the wind. I do not remember what he said--it sounded at the time like a typical military announcement, not anything that eloquent politicians such as Kennedy, Reagan or Obama would say.

The barracks TV room was pretty full the following days. I was there when Ruby shot Oswald, and we watched the funeral. I have forgotten when we resumed normal schedules--probably sometime after the funeral.

**MR. JACOBY:** My name is Robert Jacoby, representing Tetra Tech, EC. And I'm speaking today with Gladys Borkowski at her home in --

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** North Haven.

**MR. JACOBY:** North Haven, Connecticut.

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Connecticut.

**MR. JACOBY:** On October 8, 2007. This interview is part of a program sponsored by the United States Army Corps of Engineers and the New Rochelle Public Library, to collect oral histories about the experiences and memories of people who were associated with the former US Army Post, Fort Slocum, located on Davids' Island in New Rochelle, New York.

Thank you, Mrs. Borkowski for participating in this. Would you tell me, first of all, what your association with Fort Slocum is?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Well, right now, I've only had contact by mail, and I haven't been back there to visit or anything, so once I left there in January of 1946, I have never been back.

**MR. JACOBY:** You were there in the US Army?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yes, I was. I was a WAC.

**MR. JACOBY:** And what was your rank?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Well, I was a Private, and I got my first promotion in October of 1943 to Corporal. I missed being a Private First Class. I was a little disappointed when the promotions came out and I didn't get it, because I was very active, but then in October I made Corporal, so I was very pleased with that.

**MR. JACOBY:** And how long were you at Fort Slocum?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** I was there until January of 1946. I got out under the point system. By then I was a Staff Sergeant.

**MR. JACOBY:** What were your responsibilities while you were there?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Well, I was a drill sergeant and I carried the American flag in some of the parades. Went off on bond sales, savings bond sales, and any program that needed publicity asked me to participate, which I did. And I also worked for the police department there for Fort Slocum, because it was a staging area for Italian prisoners of war. And many times we would check one out and take him to New York City and show him all the sites of New York City.

**MR. JACOBY:** Oh, so they were allowed around?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** They weren't treated like a prisoner?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Oh, no. No, no. They were free to walk around the post.

**MR. JACOBY:** Um-hum. And there were no Germans there, were there?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** No, no.

**MR. JACOBY:** Just Italians?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** No, just the Italians.

**MR. JACOBY:** A little while ago you were telling me about when you joined the service; would you remind repeating that again?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Okay. I was living in Greenfield, Massachusetts. My mother went to the post office on her shopping, getting postage stamps and everything, and I was working. And the Army recruiters were at the post office, so she picked up a piece of literature and came home and had it by my plate when I came home for dinner. And I said, what's this? She said, "I'm going in the Army." I said, not -- "you are not going in, I'll go." Ten days later I enlisted, went to Fort Devens, which was in Massachusetts.

**MR. JACOBY:** And from then?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** From there I went to Fort Slocum as my first assignment.



**MR. JACOBY:** Tell me what the WACs were?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** The WAAC was a W-A-A-C, Women's Army Auxiliary Corps. And we were not a real part of the Army, we were just an auxiliary, but a year later they made us a part of the Army, so we became the WAC, W-A-C, Women's Army Corps. From there on it was known as the WAC rather than the W-A-A-C.

**MR. JACOBY:** And you were an official part of the United States Army?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yes, I was.

**MR. JACOBY:** With all the rank and privileges and --

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Right.

**MR. JACOBY:** -- responsibilities?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Right.

**MR. JACOBY:** How many WACs were there at Fort Slocum?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Well, when I got there we were the first group of 30 to arrive there, and I don't know how many ended up there. I left in 1946 and it made a bigger group there.

**MR. JACOBY:** Would you say there were several dozen?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Well, there was more than that, probably in the hundreds, maybe.

**MR. JACOBY:** In the hundreds? How many were you responsible for?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Well, it depended what I was doing. I was picked to help with the chemical warfare and go through the chambers and I would take groups of 12 through. I would go through first to make sure that it was all right, and then at the end I would check them out.

**MR. JACOBY:** What do you mean by chambers?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** The gas chamber.

**MR. JACOBY:** In --

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** With gas masks. Put the gas masks on and test them.

**MR. JACOBY:** What building was that in?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** I can't remember the buildings at all.

**MR. JACOBY:** If I showed you a map of the island would you have -- be able to pinpoint where it might be?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** I don't know. I've got some maps myself. But I wouldn't remember, I don't think. That's 60 years ago.

**MR. JACOBY:** Yeah. Where were the WAC's barracks?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Okay, when we got there, Colonel Bernard Lentz was the commander, and he hadn't really officially wanted women in the military. So he wasn't prepared for us when we arrived. And of course, being an island, we had to go by boat, and carrying duffle bags. And we landed on the island and the Army police told us to go to the hospital. So we went to the hospital, which hadn't been used since World War I. There were spider webs and mice and everything, and they put us in one of the wards. We had double-deck beds, bunk beds, and there was 30 of us in the group, and we settled down, cleaned it up, got our beds in order, and so forth

**MR. JACOBY:** Was there a woman officer in charge of the WACs?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** There was. Her name was Marjorie Powers. I forgot her rank, I think she was a Major.

**MR. JACOBY:** And any other officers?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** There was lieutenants, but I can't recall their names.

**MR. JACOBY:** What were you at that time, when you first got to Fort Slocum, were you still a private?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** I was a private, yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** And then --

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** I was in charge of the group from Fort Devens down. And when we landed in -- by train, in New Rochelle, nobody was there to greet us. So, I had the telephone number to call, so they sent a truck. And the truck was so high up we couldn't climb in, so I had to go into one of the stores in New Rochelle and get a ladder so that the girls could get up into the truck.

**MR. JACOBY:** No kidding?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** It was an experience. But I don't know why I was chosen to do it.

**MR. JACOBY:** Were most of the other WACs new recruits or --

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** They were all recruits.

**MR. JACOBY:** All recruits.

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** All recruits. Basic training from Fort Devens.

**MR. JACOBY:** Now, you said that Colonel Lentz didn't particularly want WACs at his post?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Right.

**MR. JACOBY:** What was the opinion of most of the male Army personnel?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Well, they had it in their minds that we were there to replace them to go overseas, so we weren't very popular. There was no abuse or anything to us, but they just ignored us completely. And Colonel Lentz had said many, many times that they came, I saw, and they conquered.

**MR. JACOBY:** He gave in.

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** I always like that.

**MR. JACOBY:** Oh, good. And would the male servicemen salute the women officers?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yes, I think they did, but they know they had to.

**MR. JACOBY:** Uh-huh. And did any of them serv under women officers for any reason?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** That I couldn't say. I don't think so, because the women officers were strictly taking care of us.

**MR. JACOBY:** So there was pretty strict segregation between the WACs and the male servicemen.

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Right. I never had a problem with any of them.

**MR. JACOBY:** Give me a description of a typical day at Fort Slocum for you.

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Well, I was a drill sergeant, so many times I was out on the drill field with new people that were coming in and getting ready for the parades and different things, but I did have an office job. I worked in where they were making the shipping lists for overseas, getting the lists made up with ranks and names and so forth. And then I went into the Provost Marshal's office to work for the Italian prisoners. But I was still taken out when I was needed for drilling. And when we made the recording of the Duckworth Chant, that took a little time. I had to learn the different phrases and make up some of my own about the women and so forth.

**MR. JACOBY:** Um-hum.

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** It was strictly -- we were told to do something and we did it. It's not like civilian life where you can talk back to your boss. You don't do that in the service.

**MR. JACOBY:** Right. Pretty strict discipline?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yes. It was very good.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you find that most of the women enjoyed their time as a WAC, or was it strictly something that they had to do?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** No, I think most of the women -- it was all volunteer, so ...

**MR. JACOBY:** They weren't drafted?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** No, they weren't drafted. It was all volunteer. Some of them were discouraged. Some of them didn't make it physically, or mentally, but the majority of them did.

**MR. JACOBY:** And what was the service time, a year for a volunteer?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** It was for the duration of the War, plus six months.

**MR. JACOBY:** Wow. Uh-huh. So, most of them stayed on -- most of your WAC detachment stayed with you the whole time or was there a lot of movement?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Well, there was some movement. But most of them stayed there until it was time that they were giving discharges in January of '46 for the point system. I took it. I was debating, should I stay or should go home? I went back home. But I decided in six months that I really liked it. So I went back in. I got my rank back and everything.

**MR. JACOBY:** You mentioned that your barracks were in the old hospital, did they remain there?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** No, they didn't. Shortly after Colonel Lentz authorized a building of a two-story barracks for us, and it was down by the shore and closer to the dock to get in.

**MR. JACOBY:** Describe them, the inside.

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** It was two story, and it was a long building, bunk beds, double bunk beds. I was on the second floor, being a Corporal I got a private room. And I had the room at the top of the stairs.

**MR. JACOBY:** And these quarters had bathrooms or --

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yes, they did, and showers. And we had a nice room for washing our clothes and ironing. And we had an outside line to hang our clothes. Sometimes our clothes were stolen off the line for souvenirs by some of the soldiers.

**MR. JACOBY:** And did you eat in the mess hall with the men?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** We ate in the mess hall with the men, but later on, after I left, they built a mess hall just for the WACs.

**MR. JACOBY:** So, when you went into the mess hall, were you generally at one table? All the WACs would be --

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** You could sit anywhere.

**MR. JACOBY:** You sat anywhere.

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** And if you had a male soldier that you knew, you could sit with him.

**MR. JACOBY:** Tell me something about your off time, either in the evening or on the weekend?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Well, I was pretty much a-stay-at-the-base. I wasn't much about going on. All of the facilities there included a bar and grill and a club and so forth, which we enjoyed.

**MR. JACOBY:** This was -- were you an NCO as a sergeant?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Well, when I got sergeant, yes, after corporal, I went to sergeant, went to the NCO Club.

**MR. JACOBY:** You could go to the NCO Club?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yes, right.

**MR. JACOBY:** And tell me about that, where was that?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** I can't remember what the building was, but it was on the first level of the building, I remember that. And it was like an oversized livingroom would be, with a bar. And you could sit at the bar or sit at the tables.

**MR. JACOBY:** And it was open every evening?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yes, uh-huh.

**MR. JACOBY:** What did they serve, beer and alcohol?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** And alcohol. The only thing I didn't like about it, the latrine was for men.

**MR. JACOBY:** So where did you have to go?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Into the mens -- in the mens bathroom.

**MR. JACOBY:** Little difficult?



**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yeah, right. In fact most of the buildings where we worked it was strictly for men until after a while they put in one for the women. But it worked out all right.

**MR. JACOBY:** What about other recreation facilities, what was there available?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** There was a tennis court, I remember, there was a bowling alley. I'm not in the sport line, so I didn't participate in any of that.

**MR. JACOBY:** Um-hum. What about movies?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yes, there was a movie house.

**MR. JACOBY:** And how often were they shown?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** I think it was two or three times a week they were open.

**MR. JACOBY:** And it was free for --

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Oh, yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** -- everyone there?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** And what about swimming facilities?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** I don't recall a swimming pool, but you could swim in the ocean because it was an island. There was areas for the enlisted and an area for the officers.

**MR. JACOBY:** And the two didn't mix?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** No, they didn't, no.

**MR. JACOBY:** You mentioned that life on the island was not that segregated between men and women, what about between officers and enlisted? Was there a strict dividing line?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yes, there was. There always has been, and I think there still is. I found that true later in life too.

**MR. JACOBY:** And I suppose you had then little contact with the officers? Or --

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Well, the ones you worked with you had contact in the office and everything.

**MR. JACOBY:** Um-hum.

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** We had some women that fell in love with an officer and eventually they married.

**MR. JACOBY:** And that wasn't frowned upon?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Well, yes and no. It worked out, though.

**MR. JACOBY:** Um-hum. Once it happened, it happened.

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Right. Right.

**MR. JACOBY:** Would those women then leave the WACs?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yes, they did. Once they were married they had to get out.

**MR. JACOBY:** I see, so only single --

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Not now.

**MR. JACOBY:** No. Only single women?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** And was there an age limit?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yes, there was, 18 was the lowest age, and I can't remember what the upper age was.

**MR. JACOBY:** Um-hum. Do you recall there being women serving with you who were 30s and 40s?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Older. Yes. Yes. They were older.

**MR. JACOBY:** Uh-huh. And did they go through the drilling as well?



**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yes, they did. Yes. Some of them were very good.

**MR. JACOBY:** Describe the drilling as a drill master.

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Well, it's all by cadence now. When we were there, so there was somebody singing the cadence most of the time when you were in the drilling. But if you walked three or four together it would be by twos. You couldn't monopolize the whole sidewalk and everything by groups. You'd be in formation no matter where you went, two or three people.

**MR. JACOBY:** And did the WACs drill everyday?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** I would say, yes. Yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** And was it for discipline or were they doing in front of officers, or was it --

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Well, it was on the drill field and in the center of the island, so anybody could watch while we were out there. And some men were drilling also.

**MR. JACOBY:** Uh-huh. I'm going to put you on the spot and ask you if you can remember the cadence, would you sing a little bit of it?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Oh, boy. Head and eyes off the ground, 40 inches covered down, sound off. And then the groups would say sound off. And I would say sound off again. And they would say sound off. And then I'd say cadence count. And they'd say, one, two, three, four. And I have tapes of it.

**MR. JACOBY:** Good. Maybe we'll listen to that a little later.

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yeah.

**MR. JACOBY:** You were there during World War II.

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** So the news of the War must have been ever present.

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yes, my brother had been drafted. So, I was very much aware of what the Army was doing, because he was in.

**MR. JACOBY:** Were you -- did you have radios there or --

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Oh, yes, we could have radios. No TVs.

**MR. JACOBY:** No. No, TVs. And you had newspapers?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yes, we had newspapers.

**MR. JACOBY:** So, most of the news that you got about the War you got from either newspaper or the radio?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Or the radio. Right. My parents subscribed to the hometown newspaper for me, I got that in the mail, so I knew what was going on there.

**MR. JACOBY:** And you arrived in '43?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** April of '43.

**MR. JACOBY:** And you stayed three years?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yes. Until January of '46.

**MR. JACOBY:** Can you -- do you remember what the feeling was like during VE Day? When the news that the Germans had surrendered?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** I can't remember what my feelings were, but everybody was celebrating.

**MR. JACOBY:** And the same would have been true for VJ Day?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yes. Yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** At the -- when the Japanese surrendered? At that

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Right. Right.

**MR. JACOBY:** At that point did you realize that your time on the island was near over or --

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Oh, no, no. I never realized that. Because up until the time I was offered to get out on the point system I was strictly Army. I went in with very little knowledge of life. I think I was not like the teenagers today. And even though I was 22 when I went in, and I matured in the service.

**MR. JACOBY:** Um-hum. So, you graduated high school, what did you do between high school and when you were --

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** I worked in an insurance office for an insurance agent. And he treated me like a daughter. He had never had children. So he was very sad when I left, but very proud. In fact, he gave me a year of salary every month when I first went in.

**MR. JACOBY:** Wow. This was in Greenfield, Massachusetts.

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Right. And then I went back to him in January of '46 when I got out. He always told me that he'd have a job for me, and I worked for him for the six months that I was out.

**MR. JACOBY:** And then you re-enlisted?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** I re-enlisted. The Army personnel from Fort Devens used to go through my town of Greenfield, it was Rt. 2 going from Boston to New York, and go to their place in New York where they did their summer training. And when we'd see the troops going through we'd hang out the window of the insurance office and wave to them and throw lollipops. And he was right along, helping us do that. And I think that was probably one of the things that encouraged me to go back in again.

**MR. JACOBY:** Was it that you were bored with civilian life?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** No, no. I had an active life.

**MR. JACOBY:** But you found fulfillment in the Army?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** Tell us where else you served after Fort Slocum.

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** When I left Fort Slocum I went back to the insurance company, and then when I re-enlisted I had to go to Springfield, Mass to re-enlist, they let me go back in at the rank of staff sergeant. And I enlisted to go overseas. So I went to New York and New Jersey, Fort Dix, New Jersey, and I forgot the other name in New York, and I shipped out there to Germany. I was in Wiesbaden, Germany for two years.

**MR. JACOBY:** And what was that like?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Military. We paraded. Every time we'd be in parades in the military going up and down the streets. We lived in a hotel that had been bombed. We weren't supposed to be on the third and fourth level which was bombed, but we'd go up there and sunbathe and we were wondering why all the pilots were flying over so low, and it was because we were sunbathing. And I was dating an officer at that time, and we'd made trips to Luxemburg and Italy and so forth.

**MR. JACOBY:** So you did quite a bit of traveling?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yes. And I went with another WAC to Holland, visited the Dutch country.

**MR. JACOBY:** Now, that sounds like you changed a little bit from when you were at Slocum, because you said you didn't go into New York City much.

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Right. Right. I had matured a lot by then.

**MR. JACOBY:** Let's go back to Fort Slocum a little bit. Describe to me what the Army food was like?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Well, I can be easily satisfied with food, different servings and so forth. My mother and father both were good cooks. In fact, my father was a mess sergeant in World War I. In fact, I had my parents down for a Thanksgiving dinner to Fort Slocum and they stayed on the New Rochelle side in a home, and came over for Thanksgiving dinner. So I knew the mess sergeant, so we toured the back of the mess hall, and they ate there and my father said it was very good.

**MR. JACOBY:** So, you always had as much food as you wanted?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yes. And you could always go back for seconds.

**MR. JACOBY:** But you had to eat everything that you took?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yes. No lipstick on the cups, I can remember that. No lipstick on the cups.

**MR. JACOBY:** Was makeup and lipstick forbidden to WACs?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** No, no, we wore makeup, not heavy makeup, but light makeup.

**MR. JACOBY:** Right. You mentioned Thanksgiving, did you spend most holidays at the Post?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** No, I went to Massachusetts, easy to get to New Rochelle to the train. The train ran into Springfield and somebody would come from Greenfield to pick me up. I went home frequently and took girls with me.

**MR. JACOBY:** How often were leaves given?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** You'd get a three-day pass every month, and you get a week's vacation to start with and then two weeks it ended up.

**MR. JACOBY:** And generally you went back to Massachusetts?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** To Massachusetts, right.

**MR. JACOBY:** Let's see, let me show you a couple photographs that we have, and you tell me what you see here. I'm showing you a picture of WACs in formation at, I believe at the dock. Does that look familiar?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** No, it doesn't.

**MR. JACOBY:** At that Fort Slocum.

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** I don't see me there. But there's some -- I have some pictures where I'm with the officer.

**MR. JACOBY:** Okay.

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** The hobby hats.

**MR. JACOBY:** Is that what you wore generally? Here's a photograph of, I think Colonel Lentz showing a WAC officer the barracks; does she look familiar?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** No. She doesn't.

**MR. JACOBY:** But are those the type of barracks that you recall?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yes, yes, double-deck beds. Colonel Lentz was great. After he got used to us, as I say, he said, "They came, I saw, and they conquered." So, he was great to us.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did he know who you were?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yes. Yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** He knew you by name?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** Was he good to the WACs?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Oh, he was very good to us, yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** Treated you respectfully?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Right. And if we wanted something he didn't hesitate to try to get it for us.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you ever meet his wife?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** No, I didn't.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did the wives of the officers stay apart from the WACs or --

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** No, they didn't participate in anything we -- the Red Cross used to come there frequently with treats.

**MR. JACOBY:** For you?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yes. Well, for everybody.

**MR. JACOBY:** What do you consider a treat?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Oh, they sometimes had handmade sweaters for people in OD, olive drab. And they'd bring goodies.

**MR. JACOBY:** What were your uniforms like?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Well, when we started out we had mostly men's clothing. I know in basic training I had men's slacks and men's shirt, and men's coat, because April we were still given the winter clothing, and I was wearing mostly men's clothing. And the underwear we had was OD, the panties and the bra and the slippers were OD color, olive drab. And stockings with seams up the back, and cotton.

**MR. JACOBY:** And you had to wear those all the time?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yes, yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** Even in the summer?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** Were the length of the hems at a specific height?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yes, they were just below the knee.

**MR. JACOBY:** And would one of the officers go with a tape measure and --

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** No, no, no.

**MR. JACOBY:** It wasn't that strict?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** No. Because what was issued was what you wore.

**MR. JACOBY:** Were you always in uniform?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** At that time, yes. During the war we had to put on the uniform all the time.

**MR. JACOBY:** What about on leave? When you were home in Massachusetts?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** When I was home I wore civilian clothes.

**MR. JACOBY:** I'm going to show you another picture. It shows Colonel Lentz, and it says "Captain Powers."

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yes, that's Marjorie Powers. I'd forgotten what she looked like. Yes, that's Marjorie Powers.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you recognize where they're at?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** No, I don't.

**MR. JACOBY:** I believe it's the -- a WAC room --

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** See the skirt length here is just below the knee. Yeah, Marjorie Powers was the -- in fact, there was one weekend we had a party and we had it in Marjorie's apartment. She was away for the weekend so she allowed us to have a mixed group party at her apartment. She was very good to us.

**MR. JACOBY:** Was she strict?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Well, Army strict.

**MR. JACOBY:** Um-hum. She was the regular Army --

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yes, yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** -- old-school Army?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yes, right.

**MR. JACOBY:** There's a picture here that shows a building with a sign on it, "WAC Beauty Shop."

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yes, we had a beauty shop. The first sergeant, can't think of her name offhand, worked there sometimes.

**MR. JACOBY:** And did you have a professional beautician or --

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** I can't remember. I know she worked there sometimes, so maybe it was all WAC, I don't know.

**MR. JACOBY:** In fact, here's another picture. It looks like it's the beauty shop with the gigantic hair dryers.

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** That's the way they used to look like.

**MR. JACOBY:** How often would you go in for a --

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Well, I didn't, I did my own hair, or had it done when I was up in Massachusetts. I don't think I ever went there myself.

**MR. JACOBY:** Uh-huh. Now here's an interesting picture to me. It shows WACs drilling.

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yeah, I've got that picture too.

**MR. JACOBY:** What are they doing there exactly?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** That's our exercises. Those are imitation rifles that they're holding. And to look at it you'd think it was a real rifle, and we could do the over our shoulder and march with these as rifles.

**MR. JACOBY:** Were you ever given rifle practice or --

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Not shooting actually, no. The only contact we had was these imitation ones. I was hoping I could get one of those when I left but I didn't.

**MR. JACOBY:** Now, tell me about this picture.

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** It's the typewriter.

**MR. JACOBY:** Who is that?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Me.

**MR. JACOBY:** You're sitting at a desk at your duty office?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Uh-huh.

**MR. JACOBY:** And the typewriter's in front of you. You spent a lot of time in that office?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Oh, yeah, we had regular hours. In at 8 and off at 5 with lunch break. I don't remember which office that was because I was in several. This could have been later with the prisoners of war because I've got a rank on here. My staff sergeant rank.

**MR. JACOBY:** You worked with Italian prisoners of war, did you get to learn any Italian?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** No, no, none. When we took the boys into New York City to take them around, they couldn't speak English either, so we had a great time in telling what to eat and everything, trying to explain what it was. So, sometimes the waitresses would bring a sample of what we were trying to explain what it was. But some of them spoke English.

**MR. JACOBY:** Were they overall pretty happy to be prisoners here in America?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** They were. They were. They were treated beautifully.

**MR. JACOBY:** And do you recall where they had been captured?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** No, I don't know.

**MR. JACOBY:** Here's another picture of WACs in formation. They're receiving a salute from two male officers, and what kind of parade would you call this?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** This was maybe lowering the flag, or raising the flag one day. I don't, I don't recall that.

**MR. JACOBY:** One of the WACs is saluting the men.

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** That's the officer.

**MR. JACOBY:** So, what would this be, one platoon?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** Every platoon had an officer?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Um-hum.

**MR. JACOBY:** And during parade formation that one officer would salute the flag?



**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Right. That's a nice collection of pictures.

**MR. JACOBY:** This is all from the New Rochelle Public Library collection.

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** And I understand some of the displays and everything that they had at the museum

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(End of Side A).

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**MR. JACOBY:** That's an interesting picture to me.

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yeah, I have this too.

**MR. JACOBY:** Tell us what you see there.

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** That's the basketball.

**MR. JACOBY:** The WACs basketball team?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Um-hum.

**MR. JACOBY:** And that's you on the right?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** This is me right here, yeah. That's Winifred Mercer there. This is the first sergeant here. I don't know those.

**MR. JACOBY:** Who would you play against?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Local teams and other WAC teams. I know we went to Fort Dix several times, and Mitchell. No, not Mitchell, that was Air Force. I can't remember. How did you know that was me?

**MR. JACOBY:** It looks like you.

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Oh. You mean I still look like that?

**MR. JACOBY:** Well, I compared it to the picture of you sitting at the desk.

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yeah.

**MR. JACOBY:** I mean, when I was -- I didn't know it was you, but I saw this photograph and I thought, that looks like Mrs. Borkowski.

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** I played basketball in high school, and so I was on that --

**MR. JACOBY:** Uh-huh. How good was the team?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Very good. Very good. Yeah. There's some pictures in some of the bulletins that came out telling that we were a good team.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you remember your record?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Oh, no, I don't remember that.

**MR. JACOBY:** Here's another picture of you.

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yeah, that's me. I've got that too. I don't remember where that was taken. See that was later too.

**MR. JACOBY:** You're in a Garrison cap in this picture, right?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yeah.

**MR. JACOBY:** Was that your general --

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** That's what you wore unless you were dressed for parades or something, then you wore the hobby hat. I still have it up in the attic. I looked for my uniform, but I don't know where that is.

**MR. JACOBY:** When you left the service you were given the uniform or --

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Oh, yes, yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** But it must have changed from the time that you were at Slocum in the '40s until you retired, right?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yes. Because retired, you could wear civilian clothes, you know, quite often.

**MR. JACOBY:** But didn't the uniform itself change much over the years?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Oh, yes, yes. The skirt's length went up and down.

**MR. JACOBY:** What about the color? Were they all olive drab?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yes, and the tan. In the summertime it was tan. Most of my memories was the Air Force because I was in there longer.

**MR. JACOBY:** Tell me something about being in the Air Force?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** It was very interesting. Of course, I had matured a lot by the time I went to the Air Force. And when I was in Germany they decided that the Army Air Corps was going to be the United States Air Force to be equal with the Army, Navy and Marine Corps. So the qualifications were higher to go into the Air Force than the Army, so I thought, well, I'll go there, which I did in 1948. So when I came back to the States then I went to Westover Air Force Base first, which was in Massachusetts and had frequent trips home until I was assigned to Washington D.C. Trying to think of the name of the place, now it's out of my mind. Andrews Air Force Base. And I stayed at Andrews Air Force Base from then until -- from 1948 to '52. 1952 I was selected to go on recruiting service. I came here to Connecticut as a recruiter, and I had the whole State of Connecticut and the Western Massachusetts to cover. Very successful job. It was a good job.

**MR. JACOBY:** When did you meet your husband?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** In 19 -- we were married in 1960. Probably '58, 1958. He was in a restaurant and it was across the street from the recruiting office, and all the male recruiters went there for coffee. So while they were in there, he was a Disabled Veteran, he would sit with the recruiters and talk, and I came in one day and he poked one of the Air Force recruiters and said who's that? And he said hands off, she's ours. Nobody gets her, because I was one of 60 members in the group. And they really looked after me as a big sister. And so, later on this one recruiter made the blind date with him and he said that night, he said I'm going to marry you. So four years later we married.

**MR. JACOBY:** Great.

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** And then I retired in 1963.

**MR. JACOBY:** The WACs, did they have a comparable outfit in the Air Force, or by the time you were in the Air Force there were just men and women in the Air Force together?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Right. Right. Right.

**MR. JACOBY:** So there was no separation?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** No. No. We lived in Hotel Metropole in Germany and we stayed there until I came home in September of -- when did I come home, '48.

**MR. JACOBY:** So, Germany must have been quite different from Fort Slocum?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Oh, yes, yes, it was. At first they didn't like us at all, the German population. And they would follow the people that were -- the Americans that were walking and get their cigarette butts from them. And the children would be out asking for the cigarette butts before they would butt them. And the opera house was bombed out, and when we went to the opera we were sitting -- the whole side of the building was blown out.

**MR. JACOBY:** So there was still quite a lot of destruction caused by the War?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Oh, very much so.

**MR. JACOBY:** And economic downturn? People have told me that Fort Slocum was like a country club in the way it looked.

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yes, I would say that. It probably would have been a good resort for some wealthy person. I don't know what they've got there now, I've never been back there.

**MR. JACOBY:** So when you left in '46 that was the last time you ever saw --

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** That I was there.

**MR. JACOBY:** Have you been keeping track of the developments on --



**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** No. No.

**MR. JACOBY:** -- Fort Slocum since then?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** No.

**MR. JACOBY:** Okay. The Army abandoned the Post in '65 and then it basically fell into disuse.

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yes, I heard that. Yeah.

**MR. JACOBY:** And at this point most of the buildings have been torn down.

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Who owns that? The government?

**MR. JACOBY:** New Rochelle officially owns the island. They bought it from the Army, I think for a dollar.

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Really?

**MR. JACOBY:** And they wanted to turn it into some sort of college campus or develop it into something.

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Still only by boat? Did I hear my doorbell?

**MR. JACOBY:** Yes.

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** It could be ... over here.

**MR. JACOBY:** So the WAC barracks, you're pointing now, are at the south end of the island?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yeah. And to carry the duffle bags to there --

**MR. JACOBY:** From the dock?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** All the way up there. They were heavy.

**MR. JACOBY:** And the men didn't volunteer to carry them?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** No.

**MR. JACOBY:** If they had would you have let them, or did you want to prove that you were capable?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** I don't know what I would have done. I probably would have let them. Because if a man offers to hold a door or something for me even now I let them. And I usually say, one gentleman left in the crowd. Yeah, this is where we ended up over here.

**MR. JACOBY:** And were there areas on the island that were off limits to you?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yes. They had swimming areas for the officers. See infield through here.

**MR. JACOBY:** That's at the east end of the island?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yeah.

**MR. JACOBY:** Where was the officers' beach?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** I can't remember. Never went there. Here's the officers' beach way over here.

**MR. JACOBY:** On the west side.

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yeah.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you often go walking on officers' row, or was that sort of off the beaten track?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** No, I can remember walking around, but I don't remember whether it was restricted or not, because there was areas that we could walk around, all the way.

**MR. JACOBY:** Was it a pleasant place to --

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Oh, I thought it was nice. I thought it was very nice.

**MR. JACOBY:** Describe what the winters were like?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Cold, foggy. Wind, a lot of wind. I don't think I did much swimming there. I don't remember doing too much swimming in the summertime. And of course, the barracks was close to the dock so we didn't have far to walk to the docks. So...

**MR. JACOBY:** When it snowed did the WACs help out shoveling the snow?



**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** No, no. It was all done by -- I don't know whether they were military or not, I can't remember. But no, everything was done. There was more rain than there was snow out there.

**MR. JACOBY:** I have a photo here of male and female personnel on a Jeep. It looks like they're at the automotive school. Would --

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** I don't remember anything like that.

**MR. JACOBY:** -- were any of the women trained --

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** They were truck drivers. Truck drivers.

**MR. JACOBY:** Truck drivers and auto mechanics as well?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Um-hum. Not at first, but after I was there for a while the women were doing those jobs. Most of the women, when I first went in were in office jobs, or medical jobs. But then gradually they went into everything else.

**MR. JACOBY:** Was that because of the shortage of men?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** I would imagine. Because it was known that we enlisted to take somebody's place to go overseas, which didn't make you very popular.

**MR. JACOBY:** Um-hum, right. Did you drive a truck?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** No, I didn't. No.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you know how to drive?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yes, I had my license, right.

**MR. JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** I had my first car when I was stationed at Andrews Air Force Base in Washington D.C.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you get much mail while you were there?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Oh, yes. Yes, my family corresponded with me all the time.

**MR. JACOBY:** How often was mail call?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Everyday.

**MR. JACOBY:** Everyday?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Everyday.

**MR. JACOBY:** And where did you get the mail?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Right at the first sergeant's office.

**MR. JACOBY:** You went in and it was --

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Um-hum.

**MR. JACOBY:** -- in a little box for you or?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** No, they had it on the desk, at the desk for you. Sometimes they'd bring it to the barracks.

**MR. JACOBY:** And was that something that you looked forward to getting?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Oh, yes, yes, always.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did your family send you --

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Packages.

**MR. JACOBY:** -- packages of food and clothing and things like that?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Right. Yeah.

**MR. JACOBY:** Now, you mentioned the uniforms earlier, how often did you get new clothes from the Army?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** As needed, but I think we took care of our clothes, got them dry cleaned and so forth, kept them up. As needed. If you got heavier you needed something bigger. If you lost weight you'd get something smaller. They dressed us well.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you get to know any of the people in New Rochelle?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** No, I didn't.

**MR. JACOBY:** You said that you didn't go to New York City much, did you go to New Rochelle often?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** No, I didn't. No. There was a nice family that had rooms to rent right by the dock, where my family would stay when they came. I don't even remember their names, but they were very pleasant, very nice. The accommodations were good.

**MR. JACOBY:** Tell me something about chapel. Did you go to chapel?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** I did go to the chapel. I wasn't very religious at the time, so I didn't go often. But the chaplain was there for us if we needed.

**MR. JACOBY:** What was your denomination?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Protestant.

**MR. JACOBY:** Uh-huh. So, where was the chapel was it -- for the Protestants?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** I can't remember, but it was a small walk just from the barracks.

**MR. JACOBY:** Um-hum. Did many of the WACs go to religious services?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Oh, yes, yes. Of course the Catholics were more prominent in the churches than the Protestants were.

**MR. JACOBY:** Would you say that of the WACs there were more Catholic than among the men or --

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** I don't think there was any distinction of that. I don't think it played a part of anything.

**MR. JACOBY:** Um-hum.

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** At least it didn't with me.

**MR. JACOBY:** Right. Do you have anything that you'd like to add to your experiences?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Well, it was a great experience and being very timid and I don't think I was very experienced when I went in, if I was told to do something I did it. And I didn't find much activity outside of that, because I really enjoyed what I did. And we would pull KP and, unfortunately, for some people, fortunate for me, I never pulled a day's KP in my life. So I volunteered to serve on Thanksgiving Day and I heard my parents were coming so I asked to beg off, so I begged off. And that was the only time that I would have been on KP while I was in the service.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you celebrate Thanksgiving with your parents on the base?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yes, I did. Yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** And was there an extra festive atmosphere?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Oh, yes, everything. They had fruit and everything that we didn't usually get.

**MR. JACOBY:** During the War fresh fruit was hard to come by?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Right. Right. We had plenty of food.

**MR. JACOBY:** Um-hum. And what about Christmas, did you spend that at home mostly, or --

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Most of the time I went home, yes. I don't think I ever spent Christmas, except when I was in Germany, away from my family.

**MR. JACOBY:** Was Armed Forces Day a holiday in the Army, do you recall?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Not that I recall.

**MR. JACOBY:** Um-hum. Were there any special activities for July 4th?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Oh, I imagine there was. We probably paraded someplace. We paraded a lot in New Rochelle. I paraded in New York City with the group too.

**MR. JACOBY:** Oh, during --

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Different celebrations.

**MR. JACOBY:** -- Memorial Day or --

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yes. Yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** -- July 4th? Well, Gladys Borkowski, I want to thank you very much for --

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** The nickname is Woody.

**MR. JACOBY:** Woody?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yeah, Woody. That's what everybody calls me, Woody.

**MR. JACOBY:** Woody -- Woodward was your name?

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Yes, right.

**MR. JACOBY:** Sergeant Woodward.

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** Right.

**MR. JACOBY:** Well, I want to thank you very much.

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** I'd like to have you go through these, see if there's anything there --

**MR. JACOBY:** Sure.

**MRS. BORKOWSKI:** -- that you would like, if you have duplicates, you can have whatever the duplicate is.

**MR. JACOBY:** Oh, well, thank you very much.

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Paula Brokaw, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and accurate transcript of the taped proceedings as transcribed by me on the date hereinbefore set forth, to the best of my ability.

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Dated: October 19, 2007 Paula Brokaw  
Agency Typist



**MR. JACOBY:** My name is Robert Jacoby, representing Tetra Tech EC, and I'm speaking today with Anne Castagneto at her home, along with her daughters, Carla Cain and Esther Bolger in San Diego, California on December 15, 2007. This interview is part of a program sponsored by the United States Army Corps of Engineers and the New Rochelle Public Library, to collect oral histories about the experiences and memories of people who were associated with the former US Army Post, Fort Slocum, located on Davids Island in New Rochelle, New York.

Well, I want to thank all of you for inviting me here and participating in the oral history. I'd like to begin with you, Mrs. Castagneto, please tell me, what is your association, and your family's association with Fort Slocum?

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** When we went there my husband was Post Commander and Commandant of the Information School. It was a lovely place to be. The conveniences of the commissary and the PX, exciting and enjoyable, going across on a ferry to go to school. The children went to school over there. Esther worked on the island, and then later worked off the island. The club was very nice. All of the associations we had, we could remember it and enjoy. So, it was a wonderful three years for me.

**MR. JACOBY:** Okay. What years were they?

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** 1961 to '64, in August '64. My husband retired from 32 years in the Army there.

**MR. JACOBY:** Can you describe what your house looked like?

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** Oh, it was a three story with a full basement, with rooms in the basement. The first story, you enter a storm door entrance in the front, and long hallway with a little powder room to the right, and the stairway was two landings, stairway going up to the second floor on the right. Then on the left was the 19-by-22 living room, 19-by-12 library behind that. Past that, 19-by-12 dining room. Beyond that, 19-12 breakfast room, with a lot of cabinets, counters. Then onto the right of that was the kitchen, about 17-by-17 room, then a back door with a storm door there, and the stairs going down to a small patio with a picnic table and chairs and benches, big trees. The backyard was absolutely beautiful. Lots of old trees.

Upstairs, from that lovely staircase was a hallway. Then we had two bedrooms toward the front, one of them we used as a family TV room. Also in the front was a porch, an enclosed porch, sunroom. Then down the hall to the left was the room for our youngest child, next to that was the room for our son, beyond that was a bathroom. To the right of that was a guestroom.

Then you go up a winding stairway to the third floor, 22-by-19 bedroom in the front. Another bedroom that another used that was about 15-by-15, then there was a bathroom, old-fashioned bathroom with a tub on legs and a chain water closet up on the wall. Then to the right of that, you could enter from the hall, was a room that had been a bedroom, I'm sure in years past, but had also been used as a kitchen for the servants when the different officers who were there could have servants. So you had to be careful coming down those winding stairs, and then it went to the first floor, and then it wound around again to go, with a platform, to go down into the basement.

So, it was a place to explore because they had all kinds of storage rooms off the bedrooms, off the basement rooms. I didn't explore very much.

**MR. JACOBY:** Compared to other posts that you were at with your husband, how was Davids Island and Fort Slocum different?

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** Well, because it was very old. In Atlanta it was old, but we were living in new quarters. And of course, in Japan, same type of thing, it was newer quarters over there. In New Jersey we had to rent a house ourselves.

**CARLA CAIN:** It was also because it was an island.

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** Yes.

**CARLA:** We never lived on an island. And that was different.

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** In his position, of course, we lived on the island. But it was completely different from any other place we had been. And we loved the fact that all the buildings were so old and enjoyed. And there was a lady who lived in Tappan, New York, up the river on the west side, who had been there as a child. So when she came over to visit with her husband, she had never been in the Commander's home, so she wanted to see the whole house. And it's an interesting place.

**MR. JACOBY:** Can you tell me what your husband's duties involved?

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** Well, as commander of the school, was to have the programs for information, because there was just not the Army Information School, it became Armed Forces Information. And they had 20 or 30 officers that would come sometimes from Cambodia, or just in the States, the American Army, was to help those men know how to give information, it was public information, plus troop information. So they had the classes where these men learned in their duties, in the Army, how to present information to the public and to the troops.

Then he was Post Commander. So that he enjoyed because he could go around and see everybody, the yards were beautiful. The parade ground was kept nicely, and all the buildings. That was a real pleasure for him. And his staff for the school was separate of course, it was staffed for the Post. But he loved it.

**MR. JACOBY:** Was it more than an 8 to 5 job for him?

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** No. Unless, we had one time, in the winter, when some icy sludge got into the ferry and it was unable to come to land. So I'll let one of you tell you that.

**CARLA:** Yeah, it was a time when the winter -- it was -- I mean, salt water just doesn't freeze, but this one winter it did. We couldn't get off the island to go to school. It wasn't safe, and the ferry engine just got jammed with all this ice and started floating down the sound. So then he does get a call in the middle of the night, and I don't even remember if it was a weekend or a weekday, but he'd get a call and they had to do something. And they sent the Coast Guard after it, and some of the water jimmied the boat and the ferry went up and damaged the Coast Guard cutter. And then they finally got it docked somewhere down there. And then it just -- I don't remember if it was towed back or had to wait, and then they fixed the engine and it was able to come back.

So, most of the time Dad would get called away maybe on a weekend or a night, only if there was some type of emergency that related to weather. Otherwise it was a Monday through Friday job.

**ESTHER:** And it was great because that hadn't happened before. A lot of his other duties he wasn't the commander. So being at the beck and call of a commander, you sometimes are carrying on things that the commander -- so, now he was in the position to be home every night. It was important to him. Family was very important to him. The Army was his life in one half of it, and the other half was us. And I don't think he divided it. But you could tell, he had been in the Army a lot longer than he had known any of us.

**MR. JACOBY:** When he was home he was in civilian outfits?

**CARLA:** Oh, gosh, yeah.

**ESTHER:** Absolutely. My dad was never a military man at home.

**CARLA:** No, and even on the weekends too. I mean, there was just -- he came up through the ranks. He enlisted as a private, he hit every rank from private to full colonel, he even branched off to warrant officer, came back in, hit all the ranks all the way up, and he never forgot what it was like to be enlisted. And so at -- he expected and maintained the rules of military life when it was work hours. After work hours, we could be at the bowling alley, and it wasn't only the officers could use it at certain time, it was anybody with bowling, whether it was the officers, the enlisted, their kids, it didn't matter, this was social.

**ESTHER:** And people felt comfortable around him doing that. They were just like oh, you know, hi, Colonel, how you doing? It wasn't like oh, gosh we have to be on our best behavior.

**CARLA:** Because the Colonel's here.

**ESTHER:** Yeah.

**CARLA:** Right.

**ESTHER:** Because the post was small enough that we were probably the first time because the Army headquarters in Atlanta was huge. You're just lost. Pentagon was huge. You're lost. Now here we are in this little 88-acre island, or whatever it was, just -- everybody knew everybody. And that was new.

**MR. JACOBY:** I've heard from others that your father removed the barriers for the beaches.

**CARLA:** He did.

**ESTHER:** Said there was no such thing.

**CARLA:** And there was an enlisted beach which was on the -- the larger side. And the Officers' Beach, which was on the side facing New Rochelle. And the Officers' beach, being more protected, it was a nicer beach, it had sand, it had a -- it was raised up, and then you went down some steps to get to the actual water. And when he got there he said there is not Officers' Beach, Enlisted Beach, use whichever beach

you want. Well, then everybody got comfortable with that, and they all came over to the "Officers' Beach" because it was a nicer beach. And it didn't matter.

**MR. JACOBY:** Were there people uncomfortable with that situation?

**ESTHER:** We -- I believe we knew some of them that lived just a few doors down from us, different areas, that were very into who they were and their rank, and that their kids were also part of this.

**CARLA:** Right.

**ESTHER:** Our youngest -- our brother, our only brother, he went fishing with the MPs and just it was --

**CARLA:** I had a date with one of the MPs.

**ESTHER:** -- my best friends were an MP and his wife. And this was not a -- I mean, you still had the breakdown, you didn't go -- I could go to their home, but having them over socially would have to be to see me, not come to something my family might be doing. Not that my father wouldn't want -- it was definitely, you've got to meet him.

**CARLA:** But we never had parties where you --

**ESTHER:** No, no. I mean, I probably had a few more only because I was 19 by the time, or 18 then.

**CARLA:** But it was a party that you were having, it wasn't --

**ESTHER:** I was having, it wasn't a family party.

**CARLA:** -- family thing you're inviting and --

**ESTHER:** -- a family party thing my friends.

**CARLA:** And one of the MPs, Jack Dragsa (phonetic), I had five dates with him before Dad retired and we moved. But he came to the house to pick me up to go to the movie and he came to the backdoor because that's what you do. And when he came to the backdoor, my dad met him at the door and he said, son, you've come here to see my daughter, not me, come to the front door to pick up my daughter. You're not here to see me. You're here to see my daughter. You come to the front door.

**MR. JACOBY:** That sounds like a new attitude.

**ESTHER:** For an older officer, that had -- for an older Army man.

**CARLA:** And in the '60s.

**ESTHER:** In the '60s.

**CARLA:** And in the '60s.

**ESTHER:** Well, my first husband, I met him there. He was -- he was running the bowling alley, he was enlisted. His father was a retired Lieutenant Colonel, but he was in the Army, you know, was drafted. And I met him there, and we started bowling, we were bowling as a family and on different teams. And I met him there, and of course, he would come to the house and pick me up. And we were married in the chapel after he got out of the Army two months before Dad retired. But it was -- all that -- see that never existed in our house anyway, I think because Daddy was enlisted eight years. He didn't feel all that separation.

**CARLA:** Well, I never knew.

**ESTHER:** You know that --

**CARLA:** I mean if you asked me ranks, I could say, well, I know that you're a major then a lieutenant colonel, a colonel and then there are four levels of general, and I have no idea what they are. We didn't know. I mean, rank was never ours. It was always my dads, and it was in the office. When you're socializing -- the Easter egg hunt was every year, and it wasn't on the parade field, like okay, we can't come on property, it was in our backyard, our big side yard.

**ESTHER:** But Daddy would never have had an enlisted man and his wife over for dinner.

**CARLA:** Not at their home. No.

**ESTHER:** Well, I mean, though they -- and they couldn't go to the -- since officers can go to the enlisted, but -- but they have to be invited, but even an officer can't really invite, you know, an EM to the Officer's Club if there's a function.

**MR. JACOBY:** So he respected the protocol?

**ESTHER:** Absolutely.

**CARLA:** Exactly.

**ESTHER:** And I mean, we even had, when I was going to get married the sergeant who was going to take the pictures, he called my dad and he said, sir, I have to get into the Officer's Club to see what kind of setting (Inaudible) go in. And my dad said, oh, yeah this is the wedding, but there's still protocol within the ranks. So...

**CARLA:** Right. But the day she got married, because we had the breakfast room and the dining room, it was so funny because the women in the wedding and some of the men -- some of the men were enlisted, so the day of the wedding, in the morning, there's my dad in his civilian clothes, and the women were in the dining room and all the wives or the -- the wives of the men in the wedding, and the girls in the wedding, were in the breakfast -- were in the dining room, the men were in the breakfast room, and my dad's fixing them ham and eggs and fixing breakfast for them. And son, you need some more, because that's what he always did, was son, do you need some more? And then he'd ask and these guys were like, this is my Post Commander. He was still their Post Commander for another month.

**ESTHER:** (Inaudible) cooking me breakfast.

**CARLA:** And he's out there fixing me breakfast. But it was like, I'm the father of the bride, my daughter's getting married, that doesn't exist right now. And that was one time when the enlisted were at the Officer's Club, because that's where the reception was. So...

**ESTHER:** And that was like a total break. Usually wouldn't have allowed that.

**CARLA:** And when my dad retired, some of the MPs, some of the guys, told me that there were very few dry eyes in the ranks of the soldiers on the parade field because they respected my dad's respect for them, because he didn't forget what it was like to be -- he respected the protocol, but he wasn't better than anybody else. And I think like Esther said, there were probably some of the officers who didn't agree with this, because some of those officers, their kids would tell me when we first got there, and Dad had told us, you ride over on the ferry, you do not go up in the wheelhouse, that's not allowed. And we were on the ferry coming back one day and some of these officers' kids said, let's go up in the wheelhouse, and I said no we can't. And they said, well, just tell them you're the post commander's daughter, that's what the last post commander's kids did and we got to go up there. And I said, no, I won't do it.

Subsequently, because we wouldn't do it, if we were the only kids on the ferry, the Captain would bring us up. He'd say, come on up. Because we were the only ones there. He wouldn't do it if when other people were there, but if we were the only kids on there for some reason, he'd take us up, because that was my dad's rank, it wasn't ours.

So, there are probably a few officers who did not agree with my dad's approach to doing that.

**ESTHER:** And I found out because I worked off post, the last two years I drove to White Plains, so when it was cold the crew invited me into their little place to have coffee. And it was great, I got to know them all, and everything. And one of them after he kind of got comfortable with me, he says, boy, he said -- said the last commander and the daughter of another high-ranking person there would never had dreamt of going in there. And I said, shoot, you've got the coffee.

**CARLA:** Yeah. Mom used to go in there and sit to be warm when she'd go over with Theresa, and Theresa would sit there and tell jokes to the crew.

**ESTHER:** Well, then we had numbers on our cars, you know, the stickers. Well, Dad was one. They gave me 100 because there weren't 100 cars, but I was -- when I got a car. And so, I was -- if everybody came in line, if Dad was there, he would go on first, because then he'd be first off.

**CARLA:** Go on last. To be first off.

**ESTHER:** Go on last, well, if it was the new ferry, the old ferry yeah, but the new ferry, it was, they went around the building, yeah, and he'd be the first one to be getting off. But he didn't know, it was like, just put people on. You know. And so they would do that to me, and I'd tell them, I don't -- that's great if there aren't a lot of cars, but if there are a lot of cars I'll just take my place in line. And one day one of the guys came back and he says, you sure you don't want to come up? And I said no, just leave me here. But somebody in the front had seen them do it to me, and actually walked up and said, I hope you're not going to let her on. And it was like, okay. So, this exists everywhere in the service. But we probably -- I don't think I'd ever seen it before, because that's what being on a small post would do. But it didn't matter to us because we all liked everybody, and pretty much, I think that they thought we were okay.



**CARLA:** I baked cupcakes for the MPs and took them over there one time, it's like, okay, I'm going to take these over to the enlisted men, and dad had no problem with that. You know? It was just, okay. And I worked in the Post Exchange there one summer, and there was one guy who was coming through to pay, and he was fairly new to the island, and the guy behind him knew who I was. I'm in there checking people out, I mean, it was tiny, tiny PX, me and the manager, that's it, that worked there. And the one new person to the post who was talking to me says, oh, so you've been here a while? I said, oh, yeah, I said two years, you know, probably one more year. And he said, oh, gee, how long -- you know, your dad's been in the Army a while? I said, oh, yeah, over 30 years. He said, gosh, he must be up there in rank? I said, yeah, yeah, he is. He said, well, is he a major? I said no. He says is he a lieutenant colonel? I said, no. The guy behind him was just cracking up. He said, he's a colonel? I said, yeah. And he said there's only one full bird colonel on this island. I said, yeah, I know. That's my dad.

But it was just -- it surprised him, I think, the Post Commander's daughter -- I needed money too. You know? I mean --

**MR. JACOBY:** I asked your mom earlier to describe your father's duties, maybe you want to -- I'd like to ask you, were there expected duties for you as the Colonel's wife?

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** Absolutely. There were what we called -- there were obligation parties that we had to attend. See, he was -- for three years, at Fort McPherson at Atlanta, that was Third Army Headquarters, he was Information Officer there, and he also was an interpreter for the general there at one time, when they had 20 officers from Italy. So, the officers from Italy had an interpreter for their general, so my husband was the interpreter for our general. So, he did that, and he very often had to go -- well, he had to travel around the seven southern states for recruiting -- visiting recruiting officers, I knew that. And one time there was some kind of problem at Anniston, Alabama, and he had to go over there and arrange to meet with all the reporters that were coming from all over the country and give them the information they needed.

**CARLA:** Was that at Slocum though, too? That was before Slocum.

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** That was in Atlanta.

**ESTHER:** Right. But --

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** Because the trouble was in Anniston, Alabama. So, then he went from there to the Pentagon, and was the Information Officer there. He was third in command at that. And then he went to Fort Slocum for three years.

So, he told me when we first married, the husbands have rank, the wives do not. And so he didn't ever talk about, and he was not ever supposed to talk about what was happening during the War. And of course, all his letters, I have 480 letters from the 18 months he was in Europe. He kept records, so he had a chance to write, so I have all those. Same thing when he went to Japan.

**ESTHER:** But were your duties then --

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** My duty was just be there. And I'd go to the Women's Club meetings, and the luncheons, and you're supposed to show an interest, but he kept his work at the office. When he was home he was not an officer. He was just my husband and their father. That was all the time.

**ESTHER:** But your jobs, being the post commander's wife --

**CARLA:** To go --

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** I had to go to --

**ESTHER:** Right. But I meant -- right.

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** -- receptions. They had -- the school ran this class, the course was eight weeks, so when there was a graduating class, a group, we had a dinner for them at the Club, and I was there, and some of the officers were there, and their wives. I was not a member of -- official member of the Women's Club, I was ex-officio president. But I had to be there. And then when there was kind of trouble between wives I would try to ease that down. And there were a few. Always have it about women. So, I did what I could there. But I did not direct anything, anywhere.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you feel that you got to know some of the other officer's wives?

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** Oh, yes, I got to know them, but I was so busy with my five at home, and especially one of them being an infant, and I should have used the nursery, but I used it only one time in three years.

**MR. JACOBY:** How old were your children when you arrived at Slocum?

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** She was 17, 18?

**MR. JACOBY:** Esther was.

**CARLA:** I was 15.

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** And 15, 12 --

**CARLA:** Twelve.

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** -- and nine -- Jimmy was eight?

**ESTHER:** He's 10 years younger, he was eight.

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** And Angie was six months old. So, with the varied things, she went to work, she was in high school, the other two were the lower -- next two were at grammar school, all in New Rochelle, and then the baby at home. And no domestic help.

**ESTHER:** None at al.

**CARLA:** None.

**ESTHER:** We had to keep our rooms. We had to do things, dishes and stuff. But the general -- overall cleaning was mother.

**CARLA:** Yeah, and when Mom says her duties were, you know, to be there and be the hostess at these things, these dinners that had to be given when these officers would graduate, dad was not given enough money to really cover that, and here he -- you know, people will think oh, an Army officer made lots of money. Five kids that you are putting in Catholic school, so he paid for us to go to -- to get a really good education, at private school. And if we wanted piano or ballet, he would do whatever it took to have that. Mom and Dad would sacrifice for that. Dad was always -- they were always parents to say, here's my paycheck, here's what the expenses are, this is what's left.

Well, having all these dinners at the Officer's Club was expensive. So it came down to having these dinners in our home.

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** A few.

**CARLA:** There were a few. So here Mom is taking care of five kids, thank goodness there was a spiral staircase up the back, but you had to skip certain steps because they would creak, so you knew people would know you were going up and down the back steps.

So, the way the house was set up, they'd have several of these dinners were at home, so you had the living room, the library, the dining room had a nice big table you could expand if you needed it. Or two tables. There's be two tables in there, maybe one in the library. Wherever it took at get everybody there. So then Dad would hire one of the MPs to be the bartender. So they would set up a bar in the breakfast room, so the MP was there.

Well, of course, there's a door between the breakfast room and the kitchen. So, Mom would have dinner going in the kitchen, and --

**MR. JACOBY:** So you made all the food?

**CARLA:** -- she was cooking for them and --

**MR. JACOBY:** -- not from the mess hall?

**CARLA:** -- no. And being hostess. But what she would do, because I'd be taking care of the kids upstairs, Esther might be out.

**ESTHER:** I was sometimes a date for a single officer.

**CARLA:** Yeah.

**ESTHER:** Not a date --

**CARLA:** Sometimes she'd be there as a dinner guest, because she was old enough, so she would be a dinner guest for a single person.

**ESTHER:** Or their wives went with them.

**CARLA:** So, then Mom would have the dinner going, and she'd put dishes in the kitchen and each dish would have a label, potatoes, the vegetable, you know, what went into -- the serving pieces. And she'd have a time table of what went in the oven, when and everything.

**ESTHER:** And came out.

**CARLA:** And so, I would be up and down the back staircase helping her to get dinner going, so that then Mom and I would get in there and get everything in the serving dishes, and voila, here's your dinner for this dinner party.

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** Become a buffet.

**CARLA:** So, she was the hostess, but she was cooking the dinner too, because they couldn't afford to go to the Officer's Club every single time, because the Army didn't give enough money to cover that many dinners. So, she was the -- and then after it was over there would be Dad --

**ESTHER:** Then it was mass cleanup.

**CARLA:** -- and Mom and Esther and me, whatever, in the kitchen doing dishes. So my dad's in there helping, and after it's over, up until whenever it's over, to get the kitchen cleaned up.

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** Well, (Inaudible) the morning because we had to do the crystal by hand.

**CARLA:** Crystal by hand.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you remember what your husband's salary was at the time?

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** No, he never told me. Even after he retired he didn't tell me. I didn't ask, because he was so conscious of saying he didn't have, you know, didn't have enough for us to do things. But we also had an obligation New Year's Day to have a party at the Club, and you have 400 guests. And they come in and get hor devours and a drink, and then leave. They would usually stay 20 -- 15 to 20 minutes. That's general, that's the way it is in the service.

**MR. JACOBY:** I have a photograph of you and your husband at a big table spread, I think it might --

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** That was in the Officer's Club.

**CARLA:** Yeah, that was one of the New Year event.

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** That's where we would always -- so obligated and grateful to soldiers.

**MR. JACOBY:** So, you were the host and the hostess for everyone on the Post? Just the officers? Okay.

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** The officers and some of the civilians.

**MR. JACOBY:** Civilians?

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** Because he was active in New Rochelle.

**CARLA:** Yeah, you'd have like the key people in New Rochelle organizations and political, like the Mayor, City Council, and that type.

**ESTHER:** Just big wigs.

**CARLA:** A lot of the groups from New Rochelle would come over and use the Officer's Club for some of their dinners. Dad would allow them to come over and use it. And my last year there, Sgt. Star let me be the coat check girl, and I'd sit there and check coats for people coming in for parties, and you'd have a little tip jar out, and it would get too much money, he'd say, take some of that out, Sgt. Star would. And then I would just wait until people were leaving and check their coats out. But they'd be people coming over from New Rochelle. So, on New Year's Day that reception included all of these key people --

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** Yes. There would be 400 people.

**CARLA:** -- from the City.

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** Well, we were not allowed any money for that. That had to come out of our pocket.

**CARLA:** Yeah. That was all Dad's. He was expected to have it. So Mom not only had to be there to hostess these things for some of these dinners just because of monetary reasons, she was cooking too. So, cooking and serving -- well, it was set out like a buffet, but still, everything was set out. So, what people never saw was that we were helping her to get it on the table, Esther would serve as a dinner partner for

someone, one of the men who didn't have a dinner partner so it was even, and I was helping her get it on the dinner...

(End of Side A)

**ESTHER:** ...clear, you know, even if I was a partner, I was doing that. Because it was just --

**CARLA:** Oh, yeah, to clear like the hor devours, and then take in --

**ESTHER:** Yeah, to clear the hor devours out, or to clear after the soup or the salad, or whatever, to clear each one. And it didn't seem odd, that was just the way it was in our family. Because the way Daddy and Mother were.

**CARLA:** And that was towards the end of the three year -- I mean, like after we had been there about a year or so, and so by that time, all of the officers who were there all the time, they just knew and expected that was what was going to happen. And when Mom talks about what was expected of her, some of those officers' wives expected her to be June Cleaver always, and they would show up at the door, and there she is in capris or pants and a shirt and hair in curlers trying to clean a three-story house and take care of a baby. And they were just horrified that she wasn't June Cleaver all the time. But she never left the house that way, you know, you leave the house and everything, you're dressed nicely.

**MR. JACOBY:** As teenagers, you two were aware that your conduct reflected on your father.

**ESTHER:** Absolutely.

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** Oh, yes.

**ESTHER:** Actually, we knew that all our lives. We knew that it would reflect on him, but we knew it would reflect on him as our dad. We knew that what both Mom and Dad deserved was -- and what they taught us, we just all were that way. The respect that we were due them, was also to be respectful outside the house to whoever and whatever situation.

**CARLA:** It didn't matter. Yeah.

**ESTHER:** So, it wasn't a matter of doing it because of his Army career, but because of his personal commitment to us, and Mom's personal commitment to how we were as individuals. So, if -- I do know there were kids who were absolutely wild as could be, but they could turn on the charm when they thought it mattered, because their fathers -- I think their fathers brought it home. If a father brings it home then you're raised with this military attitude, you go out there with this military attitude, which this is a front, and this is who I really am. Well, this is my dad and this is who he really was.

**CARLA:** And like Esther said, we didn't have a, "you have to behave this way because it reflects on my career," it's "you have to behave this way because this is the way people behave." Not -- and that's the way we were brought up. And we were brought up with -- we always, yes, ma'am, no, ma'am, yes, sir, no, sir. And that had nothing to do with how it would look for his career. It was Mom's Southern background, his military and that's what you do. You show respect for people no matter what their station in life. And we were never taught that one was better than another. And so, like Esther said, how we behaved really was not -- you behave this way because it will affect him, it's this is what you're expected to do.

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** I'll give you an example too. When Esther was 14 we were in Atlanta. And they had this teen club, wonderful teen club at Fort Slocum --

**ESTHER:** No, Fort McPherson.

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** I mean, Fort McPherson. And they had a sergeant that was there, she had her office, but she was the oversee, and they could -- they had all kinds of games and things, ping-pong, things they could play. Well, they had certain nights was for certain age children. On Friday night it was -- I think the younger children. Saturday night was the high school kids. So she had -- she was in school with eight girls from eighth grade through high school -- through two years of high school there. And most of the girls 14 were allowed to date, and a lot of the boys that were there, 16, 17, were -- they had cars, but she was not allowed to date.

I said, when you're 16 and you have your driver's license, then you can date. But the other girls would say, oh, Mrs. Castagneto, come on let Esther go. No, she's not to go anywhere with a teenage driver yet. So we go to the teen club and one of the girls called me one night, we want to go over to the drive-in, and Esther says she can't go. I said, she's right. Oh, Mrs. Castagneto, she begged me. Well, the thing that made it easy for me is she respected what we said.

And so, I also didn't allow her to go into a sorority in high school. And even when you -- my youngest daughter, I told her, don't go into a sorority. She went to USC. If it's an academic, that's different. But for just pleasure.

**CARLA:** That's was just how we were brought up, so that's what -- it was always that. And we always had the backing of our parents, how we'd behave. If we ran into a situation, they would always back us up and help us get an out to let us save face. But it was just, this is how you're expected to behave, so nothing was --

**ESTHER:** Well -- yeah, and I don't think we ever really -- I only had one time that someone else tried to pull rank, a child. And this didn't happen at Fort Slocum because I was an older person anyway, in fact, I was (Inaudible) to date the Second Lieutenants, you know. But anyway, we were on a bus in Atlanta going from the post to school, and I had been out sick and a new girl had gotten on and she had told some of the little kids who used to sit in the front to move, because her father was major. And I get on the bus the next day and I didn't know anything about it yet, and I just sat down, she said, that's my seat. And I said why? And she said my father's a major. I said, mine's a colonel. She went and sat down. I didn't pull rank, but I was so taken aback when she said my father is a major that I went, huh? So? You know.

**CARLA:** There was one time you pulled rank. It was in Atlanta, and again, this is the only time, pulling rank. She went to the teen club, and this new kid on post, and she wanted something there, and she said, well, my father's a colonel therefore I say what we do. And so when Esther got there they told her. So Esther went over and said my father's a colonel too. She said, well, my father's been a colonel longer than yours. And Esther said when was he promoted? And my dad outranked him by about three months. She shut up. And then that was fine.

**ESTHER:** But it's so silly.

**CARLA:** It was stupid. Silly.

**ESTHER:** And at Slocum I don't think it happened so much because there was a nice atmosphere. A homey atmosphere. Daddy gave off in one way, but I think the rest of the family gave off in another way, that we weren't going to be drawn into these little skirmishes that some of the kids might have, or the wives. I know this was very hard for Mother. Mother's not really a, you know, I'm going to go out and look who I am. She's just never been that way.

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** Too busy.

**ESTHER:** But even not busy, Mom, it's not your -- her thing. So, on that post, being so small, the bad side was it was so small, the good side was it was so small. We could have fun there. I mean, I think we all loved Army life. I wanted to stay in. I wanted to join the Army so I didn't have to get out, but it was a matter of how the atmosphere on the post was. And it was great. My very first day on that island, when we first got there, I had come from Washington where I was still in school, when I got out I came up. The very first morning I wake up, and on that -- second floor, I was on the second floor when I first got there, I looked out and there's a mist hanging over the island.

**CARLA:** Magical.

**ESTHER:** So I got dressed and I went out, it was June. Went out and started walking on the post, and it was just hanging there, and it was quiet. It was the most quiet I had been in a long time. And just walking down that eerie thing with those huge trees and the parade field, and those old houses, I said, I was Scarlet O'Hara all over again.

**CARLA:** And it was something about it being out in the Sound. You'd get that mist, you'd get that fog, the foghorn, you could hear the water. It didn't matter where you were on the island, you could hear the waves. And if it was stormy you could hear that. And it had a magical -- because it's so small and you're out in the middle of this water.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you remember your first sighting of the island?

**CARLA:** I don't remember other than just being wow, this is cool, I'm living on an island, and that we had to get on this ferry boat to get across. I thought this is really neat. And just -- there was something -- on Armed Forces Day, there would be a lot of military displays and Dad just opened up the island, and people from New Rochelle would come over. And I just remember feeling really proud that I was part of that, that I was part of this military life, and just like this is my island. This is -- and I think most of the kids that were there, that's what we called it, this is "my" island. This is my world. And by golly I'm so proud of being part of this military life. I wanted everybody to know, I live here. You know, you're just visiting. And it was just different, I think, because it was an island, and because it would get that fog and the mist, and this magical quality.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you explore all parts of the island?

**CARLA:** No, I wasn't an explorer. Anna and Angie --

**ESTHER:** I wish our sister, Angie was here, she was the explorer.

**CARLA:** She was. And Jim.

**ESTHER:** She and our brother.

**CARLA:** Jim isn't here.

**MR. JACOBY:** They probably went into the gun pits?

**CARLA:** Oh, yeah. Oh, my brother did.

**ESTHER:** They went everywhere. My brother was everywhere. Well, he was eight till he was 11 there, and he was rambunctious little boy, and so outgoing, everybody loved him, they still do, and he's an old man now.

**CARLA:** That might be the old man coming in now.

**ESTHER:** He just had a ball.

**JIM:** Hello.

**CARLA:** It's the old man.

**ESTHER:** Oh, oh, it's the --

**MR. JACOBY:** Jim Castagneto has joined us, son of Ann. I'd like to ask you a question, Jim. What kinds of things did you do -- first of all, how old were you when you lived on -- at Fort Slocum?

**JIM:** Eight, nine and 10.

**MR. JACOBY:** And what kinds of things did you do as a kid there to entertain yourself?

**JIM:** Oh, well, one of the most fun -- well, we used to do some pretty strange things. One was after the DDT was sprayed we'd run through it and try to miss the trees. But as far as on the island itself, one of the most things that we as children did was we went back to where the turrets were, to where the ammo barracks were. And we had heard a number of tales, be careful going through here. Someone's buried. And we didn't care. We had fun though. We'd challenge each other to run because there were different areas you could get in, and we would run all around half of it, until you came out the other side. And we'd play inside there with flashlights.

**MR. JACOBY:** You'd get flashlights?

**JIM:** Right. And go inside the little side rooms. That's what I remember. And we used to do that quite a bit.

**CARLA:** I never went to any of that.

**JIM:** Oh, that was fun. That was a lot of fun.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you fish?

**JIM:** As a matter of fact I did. The -- not the officer, the enlisted man, I think it was, who took care of the coal bins, we'd go down and just behind the coal wall, coal bin, fish off of the seawall.

**MR. JACOBY:** And bring it home for your mom to cook?

**JIM:** Actually, the only -- I'd only catch one or two, and the few that I remember were called clam crushers, and he would tell me, he'd say, oh, you don't touch those, you slam it down on the concrete, it will break your hand, because they literally could break your hand if they bit you, break your knuckles. So we never did that. Never took them home, but I had fun doing that.

**MR. JACOBY:** Were there many kids on the island your age?

**JIM:** Oh, next door neighbor. No, they were older. One, two, three, I only remember maybe five or six. There were a lot more I'm sure, but only five or six that I really played with.

**MR. JACOBY:** Carla, did you go into New York City much?

**CARLA:** Not a lot. I used to -- not really. The only time I went in -- I mean, I'll back up. Anytime we moved any place, Mom would always make sure she knew what were the places we need to see and the sightseeing. And within our first year of being assigned there we had seen all the sights we needed to see, because you never knew when the Army was going to change orders. You'd expect it to be about three years. So when we first got there with Mom and Dad we were in New York a lot to see, you know, the Rockefeller Center, and all of the stuff. We went to a show at Radio City Music Hall, the Rockettes, we had to be sure we saw that, the UN building and things like that.

After that my only trips into the City would be if we had to go in there shopping for something, uniforms for school, if we had to go into New York City. The eye doctor where I got my contact lens was in New York City, because nobody had contact lenses then. And then the only other time I would go in would be to go to a play, because you could get -- the enlisted men could get tickets to go to the plays, and they could get two, one for themselves -- or even enlisted or officers, one for themselves and one for a date. Well, I wasn't always the date of an enlisted man, but two enlisted men wanted to go see some show, they'd get two more free tickets, so then I'd go with some family that was going in, and I saw My Fair Lady, and I don't even remember what else. So, I would go in to see a play --

**ESTHER:** Julie Andrews.

**CARLA:** She wasn't in it when I saw it. But, so occasionally to see a play. When I was in high school, our high school graduation pictures were taken in New York City, so I went in for that. But to go into New York City was not --

**ESTHER:** I did.

**MR. JACOBY:** You were the oldest, and you went into New York often?

**ESTHER:** Yes. I went to the garment district at least once a year. We'd get tickets to go to the garment district and go in the warehouses. You go in these old warehouses that looked dilapidated and you got on an elevator, had to have an invitation thing, and I usually got them from someone at work, I don't know how, and you'd go in an elevator and you'd go up and it would open to this lavish showroom of clothes. They were seconds from Saks Fifth Avenue, and all the major stores. And then you'd go in a backroom with racks and try them on behind racks. It was all women, of course, where we went. So I did that. Usually got about one Easter outfit or so a year from that.

Then my husband, or before we were married, my ex now, but at the time we went into New York City, we went to the Shakespeare festival in Central Park. You could walk through that and not get molested. And we went to plays, off Broadway, on Broadway, walked down through Times Square and just -- and shopping in New York City in the winter was a delight when you're young and single. We would park from Times Square, blocks from the play and walk, you know, midnight, 1:00 after you get coffee or something, and you walk blocks. And your car was not only still there, nothing had been done to it. So --

**MR. JACOBY:** Was the World's Fair going on?

**ESTHER:** Yes.

**CARLA:** Oh, I went to the World's Fair. Our high school sang --

**ESTHER:** I went to the World's Fair. Well, the Jordanian Band -- was staying at Fort Slocum and one young Jordanian Band member wanted my soon-to-be husband to adopt him. So he could -- he was older than us by 10 years. But that was an experience because we got to go down there by ferry.

**CARLA:** Yeah. By ferry. The people ferry.

**ESTHER:** The people ferry. You know the one that was -- we had the people ferry and the car ferry. People ferry was usually for dignitaries or if my dad had been off post, didn't have a car, just wanted to get back quickly, whatever, but we got to go down by people ferry and get off right there and go to the World's Fair. I mean, we must have gone.

**CARLA:** We went to the World's Fair several times. But the thing was, the people ferry wasn't running to take people from the post to the World's Fair, it was running to take the Jordanian Band down so that they could be there, and when it came back. So, if you wanted to go down on the people ferry, you would have to go when it was leaving to take the Jordanian Band down and then come back when they came back. But they were staying on Post, and they would be practicing on the parade field.

**ESTHER:** Oh, that was -- and that was such a World's Fair.

**CARLA:** But yeah, 1964, my glee club did a performance there at one of the pavilions. So, I went to St. Gabriel Catholic Girls High School.

**ESTHER:** It was neat. Yeah, those (Inaudible) they were funny.

**CARLA:** And when you're talking about things my dad did, and his rank and everything, he was PTA president for two years at St. Gabriel where I went to high school, I was there sophomore, junior, senior, and he was the president junior and senior year. And there would be a breakfast that the school would put on, and they needed to get set up for the breakfast, or set up for the prom with tables and chairs, and set up in the gym, and they needed help. So my dad would get some of the enlisted men from the post would volunteer, he'd ask for volunteers, they'd go over. And I remember my friends at school were like, the Army has landed, the Army has landed. Oh, Carla, you get to live over there with all these cute guys. You know, it was just --

And I mean, my dad would be over there with them, helping to set up because this was like, this isn't a military activity. This is at my daughter's school. I'm in there helping you set up. So this was where he separated that. They still respected him there, and they'd call him Colonel, and every thing was still you're my boss, but it was a different atmosphere.

**MR. JACOBY:** I want to show you a photograph. You may have seen it before. It's of your father. Do you remember what that is? I know what it is. This was the day that President Kennedy was shot.

**CARLA:** Kennedy died. Yeah.

**ESTHER:** Oh, yeah.

**MR. JACOBY:** And he's addressing the troops who were assembled. Do you remember that day?

**ESTHER:** I was at work at GMAC in White Plains New York, and someone called someone and said, and it just -- it was a big open office and everybody was going, they killed the President. They killed the President. You know, you're kind of going, we're isolated in this building. And pretty soon it became so aware the whole building lit up with no, it can't be, you know -- oh, yeah, I remember. I almost remember the person I was talking to on the phone.

**MR. JACOBY:** What was the effect at Fort Slocum?

**ESTHER:** Very somber. I think their Commander in Chief had been killed. And this was a time with the military, even though it was a time of being drafted, once a man got into the service he respected why he was there. And so I think the men these days probably do even more because they're volunteer. But in this respect, the post, being very small, was very, very tough. It was hard. Nobody could believe it was true.

**MR. JACOBY:** Were you in school, Carla?

**CARLA:** I was in class, in chemistry class. And the principal came on the overhead PA system and announced that Kennedy had been shot. And we were in -- we were in shock over it, and she came on and said he had died.

**MR. JACOBY:** What about you, Jim? Do you remember?

**JIM:** Oh, we were at Blessed Sacrament Catholic School, and we were all called into the auditorium. Everybody was assembled first. And even myself, and a number of the other 10-year-old kids when it happened, I don't think there was a dry eye in the auditorium. Couldn't believe that he had been assassinated.

**MR. JACOBY:** What was your father's reaction when you got home? Did he try and comfort you?

**CARLA:** You know, I don't remember exactly.

**ESTHER:** We prayed. We (Inaudible) prayers, I remember Daddy saying that we needed -- we used to have family prayer every night, and at Fort Slocum we had really gotten away from it because everybody was going in 18 different directions on an every night basis, and Daddy did call us together to pray for the President.

**CARLA:** And see, I don't remember that. I just was --

**ESTHER:** Well, by then we knew he was dead.

**CARLA:** Right.

**ESTHER:** All of us, when we were at work or at school it was like he had been shot. And people were assuming he was dead, but at that point nobody had had the --

**CARLA:** No, see we knew before we left school. We got the absolute word. I was in chemistry department and they said they were sending everybody home. So we all left to go home early. And I do



remember all of us being glued to the TV every day and watching the funeral and everything, and watching all of it. And I have memorabilia at home that I collected, all the stuff that came out in the paper about Lincoln and Kennedy, where Kennedy's secretary was Lincoln, Lincoln's was Kennedy, and the date and everything that mirrored.

**JIM:** All the similarities, right.

**CARLA:** Everything that was so similar. And I think it was the biggest thing was just shock. Because like this doesn't happen. This is not what would happen. But I remember, but like I said, I don't remember Dad's immediate reaction when we got home, I just know that we all sat around the TV watching everything on TV.

**MR. JACOBY:** It's hard to tell from this single photograph, your father's expression, although some of the officers behind him look very downcast. But I'm sure it was a heavy responsibility for your father to say something to the assembled troops.

**ESTHER:** To do that. Right.

**CARLA:** He had had --

**ESTHER:** Well, that is the way my father was, he was a very, very -- religious is too calm a word for my father's faith. And so in the long run he always was able to bring his faith to bear in how he would bear something, or hold up under it. And I think by the time this would have been done, he would have been able to do what he needed to do and get it done. And I'm not sure that was the military part of him or the --

**CARLA:** And yet, he was also very emotional. He was Italian.

**ESTHER:** Sure, he was very emotional.

**JIM:** I think there's a big part of our father that because of what he did in the Fourth Division Infantry, having to write the Dear John letters home --

**MR. JACOBY:** During World War II?

**CARLA:** Right.

**JIM:** Yes, correct. I think because of that and some of the things that my mother told us about, he was so -- and I've seen his writing, he was so eloquent in his writings. And even though I was very young when he retired, I remember how forthright, matter of fact, not stern, not cold, he carried that same demeanor, in his speech, in his presentation.

**CARLA:** Yeah.

**JIM:** Which was really -- I mean, that's why I feel blessed to have had him.

**CARLA:** Yeah, I think the thing, like Jim said --

**JIM:** The way he was.

**CARLA:** -- he had had to do when he was in World War II, as he told us, when we joined him in Japan he still had a handgun and he had told us that had been his, just like when he was in World War II, he had had one. He had one then for unexpected company, as he called it, because he was behind the lines. And Mom has some of his records that show where he kept the records of which men were killed, how many were killed, how many replacement troops they needed and he did have to write a lot of those Dear Folks, I'm sorry to tell you about your son.

**MR. JACOBY:** Where was the Fourth Infantry?

**JIM:** In France.

**CARLA:** France, Germany, Belgium. His letters say --

**JIM:** He served under General Bradley for a while.

**CARLA:** Yeah, he was under Omar Bradley.

**JIM:** He already --

**CARLA:** Well, and when we were -- he actually took the letter to MacArthur telling him he was being relieved of his duties. Because MacArthur's aid couldn't do it. And my dad delivered that letter to him.

So, he had been in situations prior to Kennedy's assassination where he had to be the one to deliver bad news.

**MR. JACOBY:** Bad news. Did he ever tell you what MacArthur's reaction was?

**ESTHER:** I don't remember --

**MR. JACOBY:** No? That would have been fascinating.

**ESTHER:** -- hearing it.

**JIM:** He didn't tell -- I don't remember that at all.

**CARLA:** He probably told Mom.

**JIM:** However, after the movie Patton came out and we had seen that and we reviewed it, my father made a comment, he said, this movie doesn't even hold a candle to the way he really was.

**CARLA:** Oh, my dad -- but he loved it.

**JIM:** People really respected and loved Patton. My father said he was just -- he was by the book. And this is off from Fort Slocum, but that's just the way my father was. And part of that, when he carried it over to this, yes, they look very somber in that and very shocked, and very respectful of Kennedy, and when they brought that back out, yeah, that's my dad and bringing that out, I'm -- I didn't have the honor of being there to hear him deliver that --

**ESTHER:** No, I didn't either, because --

**JIM:** But I can only imagine that his was very supportive of everything that was going on. I know the men at my dad's post, I know they respected him too quite a bit.

**CARLA:** Yeah, well, I said when he retired one of the guys told me there wasn't a dry eye in the troops because dad respected them. Never forgot what it was like to be enlisted and they knew that. And so they were losing a post commander who gave them the respect they deserved. In fact, one Thanksgiving we went over and ate at the NCO. It was the NCO or the enlisted Club. We went over, because I remember going through the line with a little tray and getting all of our --

**JIM:** Enlisted Club.

**CARLA:** Enlisted Club.

**JIM:** That was the Enlisted Club. I remember that one.

**CARLA:** You know, so -- yeah. So, I mean, that was just the idea that dad, like we say, it's the military part is the military, and the social, then it's like we're all people. We're all people.

**MR. JACOBY:** Carla, do you remember the Cuban Missile Crisis?

**CARLA:** Oh, yeah.

**MR. JACOBY:** Can you describe what that was like at Fort Slocum?

**CARLA:** Well, we weren't at Fort Slocum at the Cuban Missile Crisis. That was just before we went. It was my -- oh, no, we were. We were.

**JIM:** Yeah, we were.

**CARLA:** I was at St. Gabriel. I didn't understand all that was -- the impact of it, but I remember having an air raid drill at the high school. At Fort Slocum --

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you know if the Fort went on alert?

**CARLA:** It probably did. I wasn't as aware of it because there were things that would happen, because I remember a May Day in Japan when we were very little, when things were tense, and Mom and Dad, not to shelter us from it, but they didn't want to frighten us. So, they would just say, this is an event, so things are tight. I don't know if the post went on a lock-down type thing because the MPs knew I lived there and I had no trouble getting on the island. So, I don't know if other people would have, I imagine it did to some degree. But I remember us going downstairs at St. Gabriel. Yeah, and we had like an air raid drill. And some of my classmates were frightened. And I just thought, hum, I had air raid drills when we lived in Japan because of the Korean crisis was going on. So, I thought, I know what's that's like, no big deal. This is what you do.

**JIM:** I remember part. Now I know -- I'm old enough to know what I'm referring to. But I remember right about that time Dad taking the whole family and saying, you know this full basement we have down here --

**CARLA:** That's right.

**JIM:** -- and he took us down there, and he said this full basement, when you got downstairs the basement was a full size of the plan of the house. And there was a huge room, the furnace room, and off to one side there was another room. If I remember right, there was another room back like a storage room.

**CARLA:** There was. There was a furnace room and the washer and dryer and then the other two rooms.

**JIM:** And I remember him taking us (Inaudible) there, and then if we have to, this is a safe place to come.

**CARLA:** I forgot about that. Yeah.

**JIM:** And it was. Now I know what it was about. I didn't -- I forgot about it completely.

**CARLA:** So did I, because --

**JIM:** Nine years old, I'm not thinking, eight, nine years old I'm not thinking what that's all about.

**CARLA:** I mean, I was old enough to realize it was important.

**JIM:** You need to be safe and this is where we can be safe, underneath. Because that was the only part of the basement that was so secure that if the house collapsed it wouldn't.

**CARLA:** That's right. It was the side room.

**JIM:** That was a little side room in the back.

**CARLA:** The little side room.

**JIM:** Off to the back.

**CARLA:** Yeah, I had forgotten about that. But yeah, Cuban Missile Crisis, like I said at the time it happened, I was in high school, and I didn't know as much about politics and things going on as I do now, the full impact. I mean, I was very aware of Communism and Socialism and everything, and the bad things that go on, and I guess because when we lived in Japan we had had air raid drills, I mean, at school, we had fire drills, earthquakes, and air raid drills. They were just standard, this is what you do. And so, it wasn't -- it was sort of like, oh, gosh, I haven't had one of these in a long time. And I didn't take it lightly, but it didn't frighten me because it's like, okay, hopefully we aren't going to need this. But I knew something was going on. All the details of what was going on and the impact, I don't remember that, I was 15, 16.

**MR. JACOBY:** Earlier you mentioned that the Jordanian Band was at the post for a while when they played at the World's Fair. Do you remember other foreign troops at the post for school?

**JIM:** Well, who was it that when Dad was there, Dad was -- oh, he was a great host to different areas. Who was it that gave him that dress dagger? Was that the Jordanians, or was that somebody else?

**CARLA:** That's the Jordanians, I think.

**JIM:** Okay. Because I still have that.

**CARLA:** And he was a Jordanian. It was a dress dagger. And then he also has the sword from a German soldier.

**JIM:** I have the German dagger also.

**CARLA:** Yeah.

**MR. JACOBY:** That he brought back from Europe?

**JIM:** Correct.

**CARLA:** Yeah, when he was in Europe, they just doing -- the Allied troops were kind of coming in and the War was ending, and they went in on a German officer, who I guess, knew he was going to be caught and he had his dress uniform on --

**JIM:** Oh, wait, you forgot something, he was in the shower at the time.

**ESTHER:** He was in the tub.

**CARLA:** He was in the shower. Yeah, well, I mean, he knew. He had his dress uniform out, and well, he just got dressed in something else because --

**ESTHER:** They took everything.

**CARLA:** Dad and his fellow people helped divide up the uniform. My dad actually has, and it's very scary to hold, and I know this has nothing to do with Slocum, but something that he brought back from there, which is just part of my dad. He brought back the dress dagger from the German officer, and Jim has that, and he actually had...

(End of Tape)

**MR. JACOBY:** ...private?

**JIM:** Oh, this is the dock where we'd go down to it. As a matter of fact, this is the second ferry. These are the new ferries. Not the old wooden ferries, before my -- when we first got there.

**ESTHER:** What day was that, Jimmy? Look at it. Look at how old Theresa is.

**JIM:** Oh, my gosh.

**CARLA:** Do you recognize what day that is?

**JIM:** Well, I'm not in it.

**ESTHER:** Yes, you are. You're back here with Charley Gray. That's the last day we left.

**ESTHER:** A little secret --

**JIM:** Oh, Charley.

**ESTHER:** I wasn't in it. I wasn't in it.

**CARLA:** This was the day after Dad's retirement and we were leaving the island for the last time.

**MR. JACOBY:** Looks like you were getting a grand sendoff.

**CARLA:** Oh, we did.

**ESTHER:** I was gone.

**CARLA:** Esther wasn't there.

**MR. JACOBY:** What's your memory, Carla?

**CARLA:** My grandmother, my mom's mom and my cousin, who was living with my grandmother, that's why you don't see --

**JIM:** That's Charley Gray right there. That's why I see him in the background. That's Charley Gray, and I'm right behind.

**CARLA:** They're in the background.

**MR. JACOBY:** Who's Charley Gray?

**CARLA:** He's our cousin, and he and my grandmother had come up to the island for my dad's retirement. So that day, a car was taking them to the airport to fly back to Georgia, and we were heading for California. So we went down to the dock, I mean, everybody on post came down to send us off. Everybody was there. People were crying, we were sad to leave, but at the same time we were excited because, as I said, every time we left a place, we'd be sad to leave our friends, but Mom would offset that by saying -- she would have researched all the new stuff we were going to see, so here Dad's retiring, and this island -- in a way, it wasn't sad because we knew it was going to be closing, and I didn't want to be there when it closed. I didn't want to be among those last people to leave. So when we left it was going full tilt.

**MR. JACOBY:** But it was --

**CARLA:** But we knew it was going to be closing shortly after we left, within a year after we left. So when we left it was still gung-ho. Everybody was still working. Everything was up and running. So everybody came down to the dock. We all walked on, our car was already on the other side. The car had been taken to the other side. And so everybody got on the ferry, and as it left the dock at Slocum, the Captain made it circle, and made a U-turn and came back by the dock a second time. And as he came back by the dock a second time. And as he came back by the dock the second time, I grabbed a little splinter of

wood and I ripped it off. And I still have it to this day. So there is a part of the dock at Fort Slocum that has not gone into the Sound. I have it. It's about an inch-and-a-half, two inches long.

It came around, and then they docked and we came up on the other side, and my grandmother and cousin got in the car to go to the airport, we said goodbye to them, then we got in the car, and everybody is goodbye, good luck, and we headed off to California, and that was the last day.

**JIM:** I just remember a ton of people.

**CARLA:** Yeah, everybody came.

**JIM:** And it's funny --

**ESTHER:** Well, whenever you see daddy in his civilian clothes, he's off duty. Definitely, but he's really off duty there.

**CARLA:** Yeah, because he had retired.

**MR. JACOBY:** They look beaming.

**CARLA:** Oh, yeah.

**MR. JACOBY:** It looks like they really appreciated the affection of the post.

**CARLA:** Oh, yeah. It was really neat. It was neat, because -- and there was this excitement of this new life coming, and this retired life. And here we are driving across country, and I remember Dad thinking oh, my gosh, we don't have to rush and get --

**JIM:** Anywhere.

**CARLA:** -- and get anywhere. So we can take our time to drive across country, we can sightsee, because any other time it was -- in New York to get down to my parents -- my grandparents in Georgia was a two-day drive. So it was like two days down, you have to get so far, get a hotel, or motel room, stay overnight, get up there because you've got to get back to work, we had to get back to school, whatever was going on. So, usually, we only went down to Georgia in the summertime when we were out of school. But any time we had taken a road trip, we didn't take vacations that way. In fact, we didn't take big family vacations, they couldn't afford it. So, a lot of what we did was just little things --

**JIM:** I remember this day.

**CARLA:** -- most of our vacations, when we took it, were to go see my grandparents in Georgia. But we never went on a vacation. And that's just the way we were brought up. This was great, vacation is go home and see the cousins and the aunts and the uncles and the grandparents.

**JIM:** This day in particular.

**CARLA:** That day --

**MR. JACOBY:** Tell me about what you remember, Jim.

**JIM:** Oh, what I remember, I just remember being -- seeing all my friends coming by and saying goodbye. And I remember a lot of my friends thinking, and telling me how lucky I was. You get to leave, you get to -- you know, that kind of thing. You're going -- where are you going? You're going to California? No way. And I remember them being jealous, for the fact that we got to leave, not only the military, we got to leave the island, you're going to leave New York and you're going to a new place. So, but getting in the car -- at that age, yeah, I miss some of my friends, but I don't remember crying a lot. I just remember about being excited about getting in the car and going, all right, we're gone.

**ESTHER:** (Inaudible) because, like Carla said, Mother -- we knew Army life, we knew that if we were lucky we'd stay someplace three years. That was fine. But we also -- I think we made friends that way. We didn't make friends thinking they were going to be life-long. And it wasn't sad. If we made them it was great, but you know, we just -- we were going, and like you said, Mother would tell us about the wonderful new things we were going to see. When we were going to go to Japan, Carla and I waited, Angie was too young, but Carla and I were just, my goodness we're going to join Daddy --

**CARLA:** We have to join Dad.

**ESTHER:** -- it's a year-and-a-half away. So then after we got back, and Jimmy was with us too, it got to be where it was just another new adventure. So, California, because I got married the month before and I was headed for California. So we weren't sad being separated either, because we were all going to California. I had no idea how big California was and that we could have been hundreds of miles apart.

**JIM:** And this is why we're all so quiet and shy, because we moved every three years.

**CARLA:** No, but it was just -- Mom always did it. And I do remember the longest place we lived anywhere was Atlanta, and that was because Dad was regular Army enlisted, but he was reserve officer, active duty, 32 years. So, when we were in Atlanta they were coming out with a lot of the active duty reserve, they were going to either retire them or put them on non-active status. And Dad just thought, okay, I'm reserve, they're going to do that. So, oh, let's buy a house, we'll settle in Atlanta. They bought a house and he was reassigned for three years.

**ESTHER:** To the same post.

**CARLA:** To the same post. So that's -- he had been in recruiting the first two years, I guess, or first years, that's when he switched to information. So that was the longest we lived anywhere. And all of our friends, most of our friends, at least for me, were non-military families, because we went to school off post. So the people I had fun with, and I, you know, would go off post to visit their houses, or they'd come to my house on base.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did that hold true in New Rochelle as well?

**CARLA:** Oh, absolutely.

**MR. JACOBY:** So, most of your friends were -- lived in New Rochelle.

**CARLA:** Lived in New Rochelle, Pelham, Yonkers, because I went to a Catholic girls high school, so they'd come from all around that area, Pelham, Yonkers, New Rochelle, the Bronx. And in Virginia the same thing, because we didn't live in military housing. So they were all non-military.

**ESTHER:** There's no military post for the Pentagon people.

**CARLA:** Pentagon. So our friends were non-military. And there was -- so you made those friends knowing that you were going to be moving.

**MR. JACOBY:** I want to ask all of you about New Rochelle, but before I do that, I have a question, do you think your father was disappointed that he didn't get a star?

**ESTHER:** Yes.

**JIM:** Yes.

**ESTHER:** We know he was. But we didn't know it until the time. It wasn't until later that it really, you could hear him talk about it, it was like -- but he was realistic. He knew that reserve officers didn't get -- didn't make general. And so he was realistic. But I think he was only 55, so his age and grade made to retire from something he loved. Made to retire. This was difficult.

**CARLA:** And it was physical, because of health reasons.

**ESTHER:** Well, it was -- he was age in grade.

**CARLA:** Age in grade, too.

**ESTHER:** He couldn't go any further.

**MR. JACOBY:** So, it's up or out.

**ESTHER:** Fifty-five -- 55, Colonel, you're reserve, bang. And he had 32 years and 28 as a -- about that, or 26, as an officer, but as a reserve officer, always with that thing that he could be bumped back to warrant officer any time the military felt like it.

**CARLA:** And I thought it was mainly medical that he was retired.

**ESTHER:** It was mainly age in grade, because it was like, now you --

**CARLA:** Well, I just remember when he retired -- I remember before he retired and he'd talk about -- I remember before he retired and he'd talk about promotions, and he'd know that he was like -- his name was the next in line, you know, he knew, to be promoted. But he said, I've been on enough promotion review boards, that I know active duty reserve will get passed over before a regular Army, even if they're next -- you know, at a lower priority. Because they're regular Army, they will get that promotion before an active duty reserve. So he knew, that he said, even though he was like the next name on the list to be promoted to general, he knew that wasn't going to happen because he was reserve. And he just said, it's not going to happen. Not going to happen. So...

**JIM:** Well, even before then Mom was telling me that -- Mom had told me a long time ago that when he was working in the Pentagon, in the Adjutant General court, my dad -- the people that he worked for said you are too valuable doing what you're doing for us. Well, having been in public, I imagine that 90 percent of that is true, but there probably a part of it that I would take that now they weren't going to promote him. But I know how organized he was and how valuable he was, and how knowledgeable he was, about everything that he did. That like Carla said --

**CARLA:** He accepted it.

**JIM:** You're not going. But when we got out here and he retired, I think he finally -- it finally settled in and we settled into work here, we settled into things here. So, but back then --

**MR. JACOBY:** And when your husband got his posting, had you ever heard of Fort Slocum?

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** No.

**MR. JACOBY:** It's a small place.

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** No, I only knew of Fort MacPherson in Atlanta and -- I had not been out of Georgia, except once, went to Tennessee. But I didn't -- Columbus is 300 miles west of Savannah, and I had never been to Savannah. My mother used to take us to Florida because it was cheap in the summer to take all the kids to Florida.

**CARLA:** But all we knew is it was close to New York City. So, Mom found out, oh, well, look at what you could -- because we had been up near New York City when I was a baby. So, Mom knew what we could see. So, again, it's you're leaving Atlanta to go to the Pentagon. Now, look at all you can see in Washington D.C. Then you're leaving the D.C. area, look at everything that's available in New York. And we were very fortunate in Dad's career to live in or near three of the largest cities in the world. We were outside Tokyo, Japan. We were right at D.C., so we could get into Washington and see everything. And back then it was safe for a 12-year-old to get on the bus and go.

And then here we were right outside New York City, which even though I didn't go into New York a lot, it was perfectly safe if I wanted to, to get on the train in the subway and just go. So we -- and yet we did see everything. So, we were really, really fortunate that his -- Dad's military career took us to places that had historical value.

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** When he came back from overseas, we were first at Durham, North Carolina, he -- being the AG officer of the division, he had to --

**MR. JACOBY:** What's an AG officer?

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** Adjutant General. They keep the records of the headquarters, for the division. Of course, there were other officers in there with him. But he -- we came back and he had to -- they were inactivating the Fourth Division, so he had to be the one to give the guys their orders, or give them their -- they were getting out. So Division is 15,000 men, so we were there seven months while he did that. We lived between Durham and Chapel Hill, and Esther was a baby, two years -- two-and-a-half. So, he was 29 miles away to go into that, and he finished that, then I was already pregnant with her.

**MR. JACOBY:** With Carla.

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** And the doctor -- with Carla, six months. So my doctor said, if you don't have a definite place to live right now, his orders were pending, then I think you should go home. So I went back to mother's. He went then over to Raleigh for a little while. And then they sent him up to First Army, in New York, on Fort Jay that's in the Harbor there, and he was secretary to the general staff for three years while we were there. We lived at Camp Shanks which was on the west side of the river. So he would get on a ferry and go over to Manhattan, drive up West Side Drive, went to George Washington Bridge, cross over the other side, come up 15 miles to this little village where we lived for three years. So it was interesting there too.

**MR. JACOBY:** What was New Rochelle like when you lived there?

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** Well, it was very nice in that there was a restaurant that like having -- inviting us to dinner. And of course, it was an Italian restaurant.

**ESTHER:** And there was Bloomingdale's.

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** Yeah, it was nice. And then the kids, there were things they could do. But I (Inaudible) --

**CARLA:** (Inaudible) town than I imagine it is now.

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** Yeah.

**MR. JACOBY:** It's pretty large now.

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** Well, the thing was, when Frank was -- when she was in high school there, her sophomore year -- her junior year, and senior year, Frank was president of the school board.

**CARLA:** PTA.

**ESTHER:** Yeah, she told him.

**CARLA:** I told him about that, and I said, yeah, and when the Army would come over and help set up for things and my friends would say, the Army has landed. They were so excited to have them --

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** But we had to arrange -- I had to be the hostess for 390 people for breakfast, twice. And so, I went to the restaurant that had gift at his restaurant, and I said, I have no idea how we can cook for 390 people, breakfast. He said, I'll let you use one of my cooks. Okay. Well, they had a wonderful kitchen in the school with the warmers and everything, so that was no problem. And then he came over himself, 5:00 in the morning, started cooking bacon on a great big grill. So I had to make sure we had coffee. Well, we had two big urns of coffee. So I started that going. Then I had recruited 10 mothers to pour the coffee, I didn't want the girls doing it. So the 10 mothers grab a pitcher, get the coffee, go pour the coffee. Then I had 10 girls who would take a plate and get the bacon and the eggs, and whatever else. And they served two plates at a time. And it worked out beautifully. I just stood there and enjoyed.

**ESTHER:** We're going to run into a time --

**CARLA:** Yeah, we're going to have to get --

**ESTHER:** -- whatever questions. No, we have plenty of time but just --

**CARLA:** What other questions do you have, and then --

**ESTHER:** Yeah, that's what I want --

**MR. JACOBY:** Does anybody have any final comments about their life at Fort Slocum?

**CARLA:** Well, one other thing that happened, that just was not necessarily because he was at Slocum, but because we were at Slocum, the -- he was a retired Army officer, but now a producer with 20th Century Fox. And he had to come to New York for something, and what was he --

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** Two weeks.

**CARLA:** Oh, two weeks ROTC, or something that he had to do. So he stayed in our --

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** He was the head of Fox.

**CARLA:** Yeah. He stayed in our guestroom at the house. And, as my grandfather said, I was 30 when I was born, so at 16 living on this island, I was not a typical teenager, and most of life was just with my girlfriends. I didn't really date. All girl high school, and I loved TV. And I used to help Mom with ironing and stuff, so I'd watch TV, and I was a TV-aholic. So we were at dinner talking to this man, and I can't -- I've got his name there, I can't remember what his name is, but he was amazed, because I could tell him a TV show, the names of the stars, the name of the character they played, and the --

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** Producer.

**CARLA:** -- the TV headquarters, the company that produced it, whether it was MGM or 20th Century Fox, or Paramount. I could tell him all of that. And so, he said, give me a list, who would you like autographed pictures of? Who would you like? So, Angie, my younger sister, she has the one that's worth a lot of money, mine aren't worth as much money. But we gave him a list, he was so impressed that I knew so much, so I have a personally, hand-autographed photo of Richard Chamberlain.

**MR. JACOBY:** From his Dr. Kildare years.

**CARLA:** I was in love with Dr. Kildare. He was surprised that I wanted a picture of Sam Jaffey, who was an older actor, but I said, I liked him as an actor. I have Donna Reed, I have Vince Edwards and Robert Taylor, from the TV show, The Detectives, Barry Sullivan from the Tall Man, and Mark Goddard from the Detectives. This ones -- it's Raymond Massey, it's not personally autographed. Angie has a picture, because of this man, that's worth a mint. It is personally autographed of the original cast of Bonanza.

**MR. JACOBY:** Everyone --



**CARLA:** Personal autographs, and they're all gone.

**ESTHER:** And everybody's gone but Pernell Roberts.

**CARLA:** And so -- and I don't remember who else she has. But if that man hadn't -- he came to the post because he had to do this military duty, and he happened to be a producer with a show. And then I loved the TV show, *The Naked City*, you know, "eight million stories in the Naked City, this is one of them," because of the island. And it had a small boat, they wanted to use the dock and part of that to film one of the episodes. So knowing I'm a big fan, my dad got me down there, and I got all their signatures. And it's like, yeah, we were at Fort Slocum, they needed to use it, had nothing really to do with the island, it's just something that happened while we were there. So...

**ESTHER:** Well, I had the best thing, because I got married there.

**CARLA:** Yeah, in the (Inaudible) Chapel.

**ESTHER:** And that was a family affair, because on this little chapel, we had a choir, it was me and Carla, and Jimmy, and Theresa and a couple of other people.

**CARLA:** Theresa didn't sing, she just went along for --

**ESTHER:** Not Theresa, Angie. Angie. It was just like --

**CARLA:** Eight. Choir of eight.

**ESTHER:** Yeah, and we sang and we just had a ball. But when I got married there, it couldn't have been any -- old, you know, with all the old statues and everything very -- very neat. And then leaving from the post, from the chapel, of course, going to the Officer's Club, the best man had come out from California, and he had a convertible, so we rode in that and then going into -- the only thing I do remember is there were 250 of my nearest, dearest friends, who I knew about 10 because --

**CARLA:** As post commander --

**ESTHER:** -- now this was one, as his position, all the officers and their wives had to be invited and the people from New Rochelle that didn't know me, and everything --

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** But they knew us.

**ESTHER:** -- and it was July, and it was hot --

**CARLA:** No air conditioning.

**ESTHER:** No air conditioning. But I'll tell you it was still, on the island, that little chapel, and it was -- it was really fun. And with everything in my wedding, Mom was the only one not involved. He was an altar boy (Jim), she was my Maid of Honor (Carla), my sister (Angie) was a bridesmaid, and my dad, you know, walked me down, and my little sister (Theresa) was my flower girl. And so, we had -- it was really, really wonderful.

**CARLA:** And then one other thing, too, is the last Christmas we were there, when I think about living in California and no snow, what we did is -- it was a multi-denominational, the Protestant choir and us, at Christmas, we got together two years in a row and just put on a Christmas program for everybody. And it was in the chapel that was used, the main -- the main big chapel that was used by the Protestant, because it was the only one big enough to hold everybody, and we put on a Christmas show.

And the last Christmas we were there it snowed, on Christmas Eve, and we went Christmas caroling. And I think it's because the island had so few roads, you didn't get roads plowed over with -- a lot of the snow stayed pristine and clean for a long time, and I remember the snow was so white, and we had a full moon that night, it had stopped snowing, full moon, no clouds, the white snow was blue. It had a blue tint, it was so gorgeous. And we went Christmas caroling around the island. And it was peaceful and quiet because you didn't have cars rushing by and City traffic, because you're on an island. And so it's that quietness of the island and that Christmas Eve has stayed with me forever, because it was like, gosh, couldn't we do that in San Diego, and then just have all the snow disappear. But get that feeling of the cold and the snow, and so clean, and so white it's blue with the full moon on it. I'll never forget that.

**ESTHER:** Well, see, my first impression was in June with mist and an ethereal feeling of peaceful, and her last really wonderful memory, was of Christmas of the year that we all left. Or the year before we left.

**CARLA:** And yet I will go back, when I went to look at colleges with Anna and she wanted to look at Fordham University back East, and we went on the campus in the Bronx, and it was early morning when we got there, and it was slightly hazy, and the mist. And then we also stopped at Notre Dame, and my

immediate thought was Fort Slocum. This is Fort Slocum on a spring morning, early in the morning. This is Fort Slocum.

**ESTHER:** Yeah, smells will (Inaudible) that's what I'll think about. You know, a lot of them came from Fort Slocum because the rest of them were big cities that we lived in, or a bus to school, or even when I -- because when I worked off post, I commuted to White Plains with three other women, well, we shared, and it was -- they always -- they had to pick me up. Some of them would meet at one house, but they had to pick me up sometimes, because my car would be on the island, the tide went too low and I couldn't get it.

**CARLA:** Or too high.

**ESTHER:** Or too high, either one. You couldn't get your car on or off. And so you had some memories of just life went on that island as if it was alone. As if we were the only ones in the world, and it was kind of nice because we never had that on any other Army post. That just didn't happen. You had too many -- too many people, too many outside influences. So it was wonderful to be --

**CARLA:** Yeah, and it was -- there were times, I mean, you know, the waves were too high and the water was too rough, and they'd have to call all the schools and say the Slocum kids aren't coming in today. And we'd go, yes. We got to not go to school when everybody else had to because it was too dangerous. But that didn't happen too often, maybe one day a school year.

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** But I was usually up about 4:00 when they would, on the radio, would announce that they would have to close all the schools.

**CARLA:** Yeah, but these were days --

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** When they were woke up, I'd say, schools are closed, yea.

**CARLA:** But even not even the days the schools were closed, that day that the Sound froze over, it wasn't safe enough to let us off because the ferries couldn't go back and forth safe. So it's like, okay, you're not getting off the island. Another time there was just a big storm and the water was high, and there are some pictures showing how the areas around the edge of the island were just flooded.

**MR. JACOBY:** The low parts on the --

**CARLA:** Yeah, the low parts.

**MR. JACOBY:** -- on the Sound.

**CARLA:** Yeah. And it's like, okay, we can't get off the island, it's not safe. So, when that happened, it would be, Slocum kids aren't getting in. Schools are open in the City, but we're not getting in because we couldn't get off the island. So, it's like, oh, we can't get off the island.

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** I don't know if you would even want to record this, but my husband was enlisted for seven years. He was working for Bank of Italy, and Bank of Italy merged with Bank of America, so he lost his teller's job, he was 21 when his mother died, so he was 23. So when he lost his job, he went down to be recruited to go in the Navy. They wouldn't take him because he had flat feet. So he went next door and enlisted in the Army. And they took him right away, and he went to this five weeks of training first, but he told them, I would like to join if you'll just send me away from San Francisco. So they sent him to Hawaii. Well, he had had two years of college, so when he was landed in Hawaii, this captain said, Castagneto, where are you? And he raised his hand, he said you are my company clerk. Because in 1932 and before, most of the enlisted men were not well educated. And having had two years of college he could type, he knew how to keep records, he could write a sentence. So he was the company clerk.

Well, the second year he was there, this captain said, you know, you could get a reserve commission if you take a three-year correspondence course. So he did. So after having been there five years, one night a month he put -- he took off his sergeant's shirt, put on another shirt, put his bars on the soldiers and went to reserve officer meeting. So, he came back in 1940, he was called to active duty as a second lieutenant, and he was never off active duty after that.

When we went to Atlanta, a list came out that all reserve officers who had over 20 years service, would be required to retire when their category was up. Well, Frank had three more years on his category. So that's when we said, well, we better go buy a house, because we're probably settled here. Well, this general had been -- he got out of the Army, and Carling's Brewery wanted him to be the head of Carling's Brewery in Atlanta. He was hiring all those that were pushed out. And he was ready, the flag would go up every morning and every night, he ran it like the Army.

So he would have hired Frank right away. Then another man wanted Frank, so he would have had a job. So we bought a house, and then six months later the list came out again. Well, his name was on there but



there was an asterisk by his name. So he looked at the bottom of the page, and the asterisk said, "unlimited duty." So he didn't have to retire.

**CARLA:** And they just gave him the extended time right there at Fort MacPherson. I was telling him how the list came out and he thought, okay, I'm active duty reserve, they're going to make me retire, let's buy a house and then he just got to stay there for another three years. So...

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** And so they went to Washington, and then New York. So when the Army wanted him to stay with the school when it moved, because he said we're moving it in six months, stay with it until we can move. But he just felt like that would be the middle of the school year, and it wouldn't be good for the kids moving like that. So he said no. But he loved being in the service.

**CARLA:** And we loved military life. It was never -- a girlfriend of mine said, oh, how can you do that, you know, because she lived next door to a Navy family and the dad was gone so much, and you move all the time. And I said, I love it. I don't know any other way. And if you -- I think with any type of life, whether you're settled or you move a lot, if you just find the positives. You know, what are the benefits of this? And I think how lucky we were to experience what it's like to move, what it's like to have to make new friends, what it's like to be able to see all these other cities and all these other places that it's -- you can't replace that. You can't replace that. And, so I mean, military life was not anything that we didn't -- that we were, gee, my dad's in the Army, I have to move ...

(End of Side A)

**JIM:** When you asked me before what we used to do on Fort Slocum, some of the fondest memories were during the winter, my father would tell his other people that worked for him to go fill the ice skating -- fill the tennis courts with water and we would ice skate on there. That was our skating --

**CARLA:** It was snow.

**JIM:** -- rink.

**CARLA:** It was snow. It was snow and he had --

**JIM:** Because it was -- let me finish.

**CARLA:** Yeah, go ahead.

**JIM:** But he would fill that with water and that's where we would go ice skating, because you couldn't go off the post to go anywhere. So, we would go down there and ice skate, and that was absolutely wonderful during the winter.

Other times, something that I had, and other -- everybody else on that post, we had an indoor shooting range for 22's. And -- 22-caliber rifles. And that was at the other end of the post, below the theater on the right-hand side. So, 8, 9 and 10, I was learning how to shoot a rifle, gun safety, appreciation of another skill. And we had people there who were able to help us out. So, by 10 I was -- it doesn't really matter, I mean, I had earned quite a bit, but the fact that I was able to do that before I was 10.

**CARLA:** Sgt. Matthews --

**JIM:** Three years of all this experience. We used to go bowling, they had a -- did you tell him about the bowling alley?

**CARLA:** They had four lanes.

**JIM:** Four lanes of bowling, and that was the most -- that was fun, the theater was fun, the island in and of itself was a city, a community within itself, because we had all the food we needed right there, we had backup food from the cafeteria, from the PX. So, being able to do that, and even though I was the post commander's son, I wasn't treated any different than any other kid. So, if I was walking down by the enlisted man's beach on the other side, down on the lower parade field, or any of that, I wasn't restricted to go down there, I couldn't go down there, I could go anywhere I wanted to. And the other kids could go anywhere they wanted to.

And that's part of the air of Fort Slocum and the way our father ran the post. Like my sister said, my father treated everybody equally. Well, part of it, the biggest part of that is my father. But the part that made it so unique was the island itself. It wasn't -- it was isolated from the mainland, but we had a certain air of togetherness.

**CARLA:** I told him it was my island.

**JIM:** Even though -- even though we had some people who we didn't get along with, you're going to have that in any community. They weren't enemies, and it was because you didn't have a chance to be, because you had to work with them all the time. The parade field was absolutely wonderful to play on. I remember the docks and the fun part about the docks was getting on and off the boat. And like she said, during the high tides, we could go down to the dock, but we had this -- we couldn't even go in -- well, yeah, we could, we could go into the boathouse and we could watch the waves in safety. And that was a lot of fun.

The coal bin, something -- a lot of kids out here take -- don't even know what a coal bin is. Being able to experience that, and the way the bin was formed and the way it was protected, and it was so old, and the people knew what they were talking about. So, the island itself was a wonderful place to live. And anybody who could have lived there would experience the -- now, because I studied architecture and I've designed homes, when I think back on that three-story home, the brick, the craftsmanship inside, how that building was built and I can still see it in my head. It was absolutely wonderful. Absolutely wonderful.

**CARLA:** I told him, I said it was like, all of us that lived there, it was my island.

**JIM:** Yeah, and we all kind of felt that.

**CARLA:** My island. But -- yeah --

**JIM:** But overall, overall, things we got to do were unique that a lot of kids our age would never be able to experience. And I'd say most people, everything we experienced on that island, we experienced more than most military kids on different posts because it was so enclosed.

Anyway, I just wanted to let you know that those beautiful things that we did --

**CARLA:** Yeah, no. Well, we did before that, but I'm glad you brought up the bowling alley and everything, because we talked about it before he started recording.

**JIM:** Oh, yeah. Right. There was something else --

**CARLA:** Because you could have the shooting range --

**JIM:** The island -- the big cannon down there, we used to go play on that too. There was a big -- a huge --

**CARLA:** It's still there.

**JIM:** Yeah, is it still there? Is that still in one piece?

**MR. JACOBY:** Yeah.

**JIM:** Fantastic.

**CARLA:** That was the one that was right behind our backyard.

**JIM:** It just bothers me -- it just bothers me that so much of it would have been let go. I was hoping as I got older, I was hoping somebody would have bought it, kept it up, and turned it into a small resort, because you very easily could have, even without -- to maintain the ferry back and forth would have been a lot less than building a bridge, and they could have made that one heck of a resort. But the church also I was an acolyte, an altar boy, and the church, I remember it being all the dark wood and so beautiful inside. And even though I was only 10, I remember it very well. And I would have -- I can't trade anything I've experienced for it. It was wonderful.

**MR. JACOBY:** Well, I want to thank everyone in the Castagneto family, and Esther, Carla, Jim, for participating in the oral history, it was wonderful, very fascinating talking to you.

**CARLA:** Thank you for letting us share.

**ANNE CASTAGNETO:** Thank you, Robert.

(NOTE: TAPE QUALITY IS EXTREMELY POOR. SECTIONS ARE INAUDIBLE AND CANNOT BE TRANSCRIBED).

**MR. JACOBY:** My name is Robert Jacoby, representing Tetra Tech EC and I am speaking today with Michael Cavanaugh at Fort Slocum, New Rochelle, New York, on June 26, 2007. This interview is part of a program sponsored by the United States Army Corps of Engineers and the New Rochelle Public Library, to collect oral histories about the experiences and memories of people who were associated with the former US Army Base at Fort Slocum, located on Davids Island in New Rochelle, New York.

Michael we just got on the island, where the passengers docked, and you mentioned that the building foundation that we're standing on, was your home, right?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** That's right.

**MR. JACOBY:** And how long -- how old were you when you lived on the island?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** Well, (Inaudible) in February '57, I just turned four years old then, my father actually was stationed here the previous summer. And we stayed until May of '63 when I was 10 years old.

**MR. JACOBY:** Can you describe what the quarters looked like while you were here?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** Sure. Actually, let's go (Inaudible) that building was built on the post in 1938, and at that (Inaudible) built (Inaudible) really divided into three sections. This is a waiting room here where we're standing, but we're going to (Inaudible) area, (Inaudible). (Inaudible) we had two brick walls, it was all (Inaudible) up and (Inaudible). And this replaced an earlier passenger waiting room on the dock itself, and those went back at least until 1884. They were removed in the '30s, about '36 or so, and (Inaudible).

And it served as such for (Inaudible) and after the second (Inaudible) the first (Inaudible) opened (Inaudible) for a couple years, 1946 to '49, and (Inaudible). Well, the first engineer after World War II, his name was George Hollenweger, Sr., was really off post but the commute was a little long for him, so he asked the base commander if he could have quarters on post. The post commander who was Colonel Twitchell at the time, gave him this building here, and then Hollenweger took out the garage doors in the middle and basically divided the middle section into bedroom space, which was two floors. That was "A" on that side closest to the dock, and "B" side where we were.

So this is the two bedrooms (Inaudible) over here, and living room is here where we're standing. Kitchen was actually where the former toilet was in the waiting room, my mother's kitchen. Bathroom was here, and there was a (Inaudible) was the boiler room, it actually was (Inaudible). It went down to the coal shed and pretty much like all Army posts, they were small. And coal was delivered every day and the residents had the responsibility to keep the boilers going.

**MR. JACOBY:** Was your family the first family to reside in this structure?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** We were not. We were the second. Again, the Army provided quarters to the particular officers and enlisted. Having a civilian on post is unusual but basically he [Hollenweger] said, "I'll come back on condition that..." So he was the first one to use it, the second (Inaudible) before us. And I'm not sure who replaced us afterwards. After Hollenweger left, T.L. Nipper established residence. And the last resident was Sgt. Rosario from Puerto Rico.

There really have been families who have lived here for most of the time (Inaudible). The beginning (Inaudible) were converted from the time from various uses. For example, the (Inaudible) done in the (Inaudible) and the (Inaudible). You could (Inaudible) that particular (Inaudible).

Very quickly between officers and even the (Inaudible). A lot of the buildings in this (Inaudible) housed four chapels under one roof. (Inaudible) history, and almost everyone had an Army (Inaudible) there was a (Inaudible) synagogue. Most posts that had chapels had a single chapel. But they were a democratic (Inaudible). There was a (Inaudible) the synagogue (Inaudible). You know, you used to (Inaudible) about the '60s to the '80 something (Inaudible).

(Inaudible) entirely (Inaudible).

**MR. JACOBY:** Let me quickly ask you how did your mother make this a home? Did she make curtains or (Inaudible)?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** Oh, oh, I mean, (Inaudible) and a lot of things came back from Japan and Germany, we had a lot of Japanese things (Inaudible) and Tokyo before, but there's a (Inaudible) in Tokyo (Inaudible), a lot of Japanese stuff, you took your household goods from place to place.

Moving down into rented apartments is a very common sight, especially in countries where you do get expenses for the family. In the 19th century that was limited by rent when enlisted men might only get so many dollars and they really had to make due. But -- and also (Inaudible) you know, (Inaudible).

**MR. JACOBY:** What was your father's rank?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** My father was actually a Master Sergeant at least some of his time, but he assumed the role of Sergeant Major for over (Inaudible), and he did that for exactly four years, 1956 to 1960.

**MR. JACOBY:** What was his assignment?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** He said it was the roughest job he's ever had in the Army. He was a (Inaudible) guy. He was an NCO in the Chaplain school, the (Inaudible) I think (Inaudible) found video of him drilling troops in the summer of '56. You know, when the chaplains came into the school, the school (Inaudible). It was assumed that each staff member was (Inaudible) by denomination, but (Inaudible), how did you reach (Inaudible). And then they also had a lot of the (Inaudible). And he actually (Inaudible) in addition to (Inaudible). But he used to go (Inaudible) administrative, (Inaudible) the administrator and then (Inaudible).

**MR. JACOBY:** What happened -- what were you feelings when you first saw Davids Island?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** We got here about sunset when the tide was low. My father went out here on the sand drift, picked up a piece of rock that looked, for all the world, like a piece of petrified bacon. That's what he called it. I still have it. But my brother, I guess, he wasn't out here because he didn't see the island, the tide came up. The next day the tide went down and he saw this little island there. And my brother was three-years-old at the time. Oh, I've discovered an island. So he called it Billy's Island.

But previously it had another name, it was called Itch Island because some of the teenage kids who were here in the '50s would go out there and go swimming and once they took some brush out to build a campfire to keep warm. Well, it had a lot of poison ivy, and it was thereafter Itch Island.

**MR. JACOBY:** Let me ask you a question about where you -- where kids mostly played?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** Well, you know, the Army was a beehive. And officers in-country, and enlisted in-country were generally pretty separate. So, I'm a little bit of an exception because my father was worried about his children falling in with bad company, so he tried to keep us by ourselves. And we -- my brother and myself played by ourselves here, and that was our beach, sort of our private beach right there.

But the NCO beach per se, is where we're going now, by the NCO quarters and it had it's own little wading pool for the small kids, beach houses, everything. On the other side of the island, from the middle of the 19th century was Officer's Beach. And only by special permission could enlisted kids swim at Officer's Beach. They did give permission every once in a while, but you know, it's sort of humiliating to have to go ask the planning officer if we can swim on the beach.

The last CO, Colonel Castagneto, finally abolished that, then the beaches were open to everybody. But like everything else in the Army, you know, it's segregated by rank. In fact, I have a map from World War II that cautions enlisted men against walking along in front of Officer's Row. You shouldn't be seen there. If you walk along the back or on the other side of the parade field, fine, but don't walk in Officer's Row.

**MR. JACOBY:** Were you ever allowed to play in the mortar battery?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** I was too young. Every other kid that I know in our alumni group did. In fact I only discovered the existence of the mortar battery in the last couple of years. But if I had known I certainly would have. It was a great opportunity for a lot of mischief. Some ammunition was stored in there, and there was an incident once where hand grenades were stolen. The wrong kids got blamed for them, but there was that kind of trouble to get into.

**MR. JACOBY:** So, it was officially off limits?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** It was off limits to everyone, yes. Gated up and -- now the mortar pits, I don't know if it was mentioned to you earlier, the mortar pits go back to about the time of the Spanish American War, and don't think about what we think about mortar in little tubes that you can hump in, these were breech loading 12-inch big guns, 16 of them. And basically they would fire upwards in an arcing pattern. It was like, basically a shotgun blast with tons of ordnance bits coming down on ship deck at one time. And so anything that was coming between Long Island and here would not have gotten through. Unfortunately, there was no Navy in the world that was interested. The Spanish had nothing to put in here, during the Spanish American War, the British were no longer interested in conquering the space and the buildings weren't ready for them.

So the guns were here from about the mid 1890s until early in the century, about 1917 they finally were removed. And never a shot fired in anger. I think they didn't even fire them in practice, because when they fired into a (Inaudible) they broke so many windows nearby that they complaints, and you know, had to stop that. So they would do their practice firing on (Inaudible) ground.

**MR. JACOBY:** We're standing in front of the chapel. Michael, was this a place where your family regularly attended religious services?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** No, it wasn't. There was no THE each chapel because we had several chapels. I think I mentioned that earlier. This was called the Chapel of St. Sebastian after the martyred soldier. It was donated by the Parish of Blessed Sacrament in New Rochelle. They paid for it entirely, there were no government funds involved. And it was used as the post chapel, although it was dedicated by Archbishop Farley, Archbishop from New York, and still, you know, remained for the Catholic officers for the years. The Protestants used it and the Jewish Chaplains School, Jewish servicemen, strangely enough they met at the YMCA, but it was a general Christian chapel.

Now, when the Chaplain School opened in 1951, they (Inaudible) that's a (Inaudible) chapel. At that point this chapel became specifically a Roman Catholic chapel. So, my family was Protestant, to be able to worship, we worshipped in the general Protestant chapel. (Inaudible) that rule. But this was dedicated to the Catholics.

The Chaplain School moved out in 1962. After the Army left the island, the parish took back the furniture, the pews and some of the stained glass windows, and distributed them here and there to parishes in the Bronx, I'm not sure which ones, probably around Fordham because Fordham priests, after the Chaplain School left, came out here to say Mass. There was only one post chaplain left (Inaudible). But (Inaudible) then in '64 there was (Inaudible), so probably it had something to do with (Inaudible).

Strangely enough, the guy who was in charge of the moving was also in charge of the facilities at Blessed Sacrament, so he had to write a letter to himself asking if he would like the windows, and the response is yes, I would. (Inaudible).

**MR. JACOBY:** Was religious participation a requirement of those on the island?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** No. No more so than, you know, any other Army post. And (Inaudible).

**MR. JACOBY:** But it was common?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** Yeah, there was always, you know, there was always the Catholic service on Sunday, several times usually. It's been traditional in the Army though that most soldiers really don't, unless they truly, really, you know, are ordered to. But otherwise they don't have it. That's been that way since the 1950s now. Maybe not in foxholes.

**MR. JACOBY:** We've been walking around, there's been quite a bit of heavy equipment operating in the area. But as an active military base, do you remember this as being a particularly noisy area?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** No, it wasn't noisy. We had a motor pool and you know, (Inaudible) buildings where it didn't (Inaudible). It was an Army base, so it was pretty quiet except for Idlewild out there, now JFK. That was actually (Inaudible) that I particularly liked because I used the facility to (Inaudible). But that, you know, it was not noisy, pretty quiet.

**MR. JACOBY:** And for when the troops were training or drilling, that was a pretty common activity, and would you watch that as a kid?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** Well, there were always parades. Not as much when I was a kid as before, for example, typically in the early 19th century to about the middle (Inaudible). Every Saturday we had a band concert, but there's a gazebo on the parade field until about 1936, but having an Army band was much less important in the Cold War, for whatever reason, I don't know, than it had been before.

Then we boasted about, you know, commanding officer trying to steal musicians, that sort of thing. But not when I was a kid. The marching that was done when I was here was mostly (Inaudible). This was the (Inaudible) to the country. It only (Inaudible). And this, the school here (Inaudible), and (Inaudible) already has (Inaudible) military been, you know, (Inaudible) the 1950s (Inaudible). So it wasn't the (Inaudible) military (Inaudible).

Then in the second war, the (Inaudible) maybe (Inaudible), and because of the (Inaudible) for the competition for (Inaudible), said that every man, even though he had a desk job, be (Inaudible), be totally (Inaudible). This is (Inaudible) why would (Inaudible) a lot more parades and a lot of pictures from that period be (Inaudible). And before that period it was common at the time, many days, for example, when I

was here years ago, there was something (Inaudible) called a retreat. Five o'clock the field gun would go off, the (Inaudible) you'd stop. If you were driving your truck or car, you'd stand at attention waiting, and the flag would go down. There was no formation as such. You hold on to (Inaudible) and the guard changing (Inaudible), less than (Inaudible).

**MR. JACOBY:** Would you repeat the same thing at taps?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** No, taps ==

**MR. JACOBY:** That was at night?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** Taps was at night, basically, it was lights out. In the morning we have reveille, it's a wake-up call, and then you had to get the colors and (Inaudible) call when you were walking around, come to attention and (Inaudible). (Inaudible).

**MR. JACOBY:** And were these live buglers or was it tape?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** Almost never. There might be a person around, in fact I think World War II, one of the things that (Inaudible). (Inaudible), yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** Mike, where did you attend school?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** I started at Jefferson School, which was up in New Rochelle. We would take the ferry across in the morning and then the school bus would pick us up (Inaudible) with a black (Inaudible) buses (Inaudible) back over. And I think it was (Inaudible) junior high I (Inaudible), high school (Inaudible) and (Inaudible) school, (Inaudible) university (Inaudible).

**MR. JACOBY:** Were you accompanied on the ferry by an adult or you just --

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** Just kids. We had safety patrol, older kids would stand in for the adults. Yeah, no adults, just pretty much just kids.

**MR. JACOBY:** Tell me something about how the island kids interacted with New Rochelle kids.

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** They were friends there was no (Inaudible) kind of flexibility. You got (Inaudible), you know, and some parties. Some of the island kids would swim over to the yacht club there. It used to be a good relationship.

**MR. JACOBY:** Thank you.

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** Um-hum.

**MR. JACOBY:** Were you ever stranded on the mainland because of weather?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** I never was, although I know people who were. And there was a case of the flood in 1954 when cars couldn't be brought across. See the island, much of this island had been flooded. The high ground on the island was pretty much exempt. But this area here, things were (Inaudible) number of (Inaudible) that washed (Inaudible).

Where I lived this whole thing had to be evacuated by tractor for the public health. A lot of cars over on the mainland that couldn't be gotten to in time and the Army had to replace them all. But there were times when people were stranded. There were also times when people were stranded by the ferry, missed the boat and swam over too. And some people actually survived that.

**MR. JACOBY:** We're standing behind the mess hall. Michael did you always eat in your quarters, or did you sometimes eat in the mess hall?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** We did, always in our quarters. And I can't think of any place where military families are in the mess halls. No. I read a memoir called "Army Brat" about the '30s, by William Smith, and they used to get loaves of bread from the mess hall in the summer, it's kind of a (Inaudible) military family. But we never did that. Some of the older kids would come by and the mess Sergeant would give them ice cream that sort of thing, but not us per se.

**MR. JACOBY:** So, your father came back to his quarters for lunch everyday?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** Yeah, definitely. It was a short walk.

**MR. JACOBY:** Where did your mother buy all her groceries?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** Well, they obviously used the commissary because it was subsidized and we all depended on that. If there were some specialty item, you know, we couldn't get on post we'd go off. But actually, the commissary officer was pretty accommodating, if you asked him for something he'd order it.



And it wasn't fancy, you know, cold cuts and, you know, chickens and roasts and hamburger and that kind of thing. But we also had fish, my father was a great fisherman. And (Inaudible) I'll tell you the story about the chaplains doing the fish fry.

**MR. JACOBY:** Sure.

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** But I talked to George Hollenweger yesterday. And they used to eat ckans. Now, I think that's odd, we were warned against doing that. They found that even today they contain a lot of pollution, (Inaudible). So we thought nothing about eating the fish. Black fish was the staple, stripers, porgies, flounder, eels. So, you could really supplement your diet just being on the island. In fact, (Inaudible) even during the Civil War, this was a (Inaudible) hospital and then after (Inaudible) hospital, but a prison camp for Confederates. It was not Andersonville, it was "Club Fed", and though they were confined on the island they could go out and fish and so they ate fairly well for prisoners, very little security.

**MR. JACOBY:** Were there any gardens that people grew vegetables?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** Definitely, yes. That's pretty (Inaudible) and flowers too. But there was a vegetable garden up by the chapel we walked by in the '50s, and various people, particularly officers took care of their own plots.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did your mother grow vegetables?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** My father, actually. He was the gardener.

**MR. JACOBY:** Thank you.

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** Sure.

**MR. JACOBY:** We're standing in front of Building 55. Michael, describe what you see.

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** Well, what you see is a ruin. But I see the beyond the ruin. This is one of four buildings here that was built in the 1880's, the first permanent brick building to go in. Originally it was a barracks, and it was L-shaped with an Italianate tower and then it had some wings added a little later, about 1890 1895. It was the third similar building to be built. The first one, again, the one with (Inaudible), basically comparable to that building, a building in the middle with a square tower then the next building was built around an octagonal tower (Inaudible) and then the wings, and then the (Inaudible) was built (Inaudible) on each side with the mess hall in between. But this is an example of how buildings changed function. This was originally barracks, but this is the one during the 1950's they became the chapel center. And housed four separate chapels under one roof.

General Protestant, Catholic chapel, the liturgical Protestant chapel and the Jewish chapel. When the building was used in that respect it was the only one like it, possibly in history, for different denominations. Nowadays the Chaplain School at Fort Jackson, isn't authorized to build chapels anymore. They don't have a chapel for Jewish worship, they don't have a chapel for any specific. I mean, that's the (Inaudible). So in a way that was (Inaudible) and now we've really gone backwards from (Inaudible) religious affiliates. This was the highwater mark right here.

**MR. JACOBY:** Now, you mentioned that your father worked in the next building, in the hospital, what used to be the hospital.

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** Yeah, that became the Chaplain School. The rest of our medical equipment was shipped to a hospital in Queens. And we had a small dispensary here, the building which has now been demolished. And then the (Inaudible) the hospital itself (Inaudible) in school, the classrooms. And the chaplains themselves, they (Inaudible) chaplains (Inaudible) knowledge (Inaudible).

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you visit your father when he was at work?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** Oh, often, yes. (Inaudible).

**MR. JACOBY:** Sure.

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** I could show you where my father worked. He was standing there, this was (Inaudible) that (Inaudible). And the time we got out of school, which had been Friday, (Inaudible) a window. (Inaudible). And, you know what, we could have (Inaudible) the guy, but we (Inaudible). So, they decided to send me to (Inaudible), right. There were (Inaudible), now my father left his calling card (Inaudible), comes up, stops, kind of (Inaudible) the problem, and this is (Inaudible) found out. Because (Inaudible) my father was down there looking for (Inaudible). That's why (Inaudible) around and a couple of the others (Inaudible). But (Inaudible) a part of his career was (Inaudible).

**MR. JACOBY:** (Inaudible).

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** And he was (Inaudible) really. (Inaudible) the fisherman would go (Inaudible) fish fry. Well, the cooking this very, very slowly, but there's a kitchen next door, and we have the keys, and we opened it up and we got some more fish frying next door. This, as it turns out, was the kosher kitchen. The rabbi's wife was distinctly unamused, and my father was Sergeant Major of a large ecumenical school and knew nothing about kosher, kosher kitchen, right?

**MR. JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** (Inaudible) somehow that originally the hospital building was in '98, which replaced the previous hospital in (Inaudible), and, excuse me, (Inaudible) all around the outside was a wooden fence about eight feet or so high, there. And the building was kind of funny because the entrance there was offset from center, and the (Inaudible) was in the center. My father's office was right in here, it's been (Inaudible) since then (Inaudible). But that was (Inaudible). And there was a (Inaudible) from (Inaudible) all the way back to the additional building (Inaudible), including the upstairs. So it was pretty crowded.

The chaplains came through for basic classes every six weeks or so. And there was stuff (Inaudible). There's not a lot of (Inaudible).

**MR. JACOBY:** Now, you've mentioned that these were people who were already trained as clerics.

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** That's right.

**MR. JACOBY:** And in this position they were being trained as Army clergy?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** That's right. That's right. They were learning basic military drills, military courtesy, organization, command. And these were things, there's a video shows class out here, they would even have classes outside. And map reading orienteering for chaplains trying to find troops in the field, you need to know how to get around those fields exactly when cut off from your troops (Inaudible). So they then (Inaudible) that. And also, how to improvise field altars, they did that back behind the school on the shore. You take a Jeep and basically a briefcase sized box and you turn it into a place of worship.

**MR. JACOBY:** Who did your father report to?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** He reported -- let's see, gosh, now I don't know. He might have reported directly to the commandant, being a Sergeant Major, but I'm a little hazy. I'm not really sure myself. I don't know.

**MR. JACOBY:** And do you believe that your father viewed this as a very good position to be in? Or did he yearn to be sent overseas or to some larger Army facility?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** Wide shoes. He loved the island living, he loved fishing. This was a perfect location. As many people have described it, very few people were chosen to write or speak about that time on David Island, had anything but good things to say. And the few who had bad things to say were trainees being rushed through at some of the worst periods in history. Now, of course, that's self-selected evidence, there are lots of people who haven't chosen to leave any record.

My father was among those who did leave positive record. He wrote a letter to his aunt after he left here, that was one of the few letters that survived, he didn't write a lot to begin with. But he said, this is the hardest four years I've ever spent in the Army, I love it but I hope never to see it again. And he did go on because he went on to Munich after that, so (Inaudible). But, you know, this was -- this was a country club. Everybody who's recognized that quickly and did the best they could.

**MR. JACOBY:** And your mother agreed with that kind of assessment?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** I'm not sure what my mother thought. My mother felt differently than my father did. But I think she was happy enough.

**MR. JACOBY:** In later years, after they retired from the military did they talk about Davids Island and Ft. Slocum much?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** Yes, they did. But they talked about a lots of things. And I talked to some other residents who (Inaudible) that we talked about Slocum our entire life. And one of our members, actually she's never been out here, but her mother grew up here from 1922 to 1926. And all her life she heard about the island from her mother. So, yeah, it did make an impression on a lot of people.

**MR. JACOBY:** When was the term Davids Island used as opposed to Ft. Slocum? Or was it always just referred to as --

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** Davids Island -- okay. The island passed through a number of private hands, including the Rodman family, strangely enough the Rodman's left (Inaudible), also the Rodman gun. (Inaudible). So it's ironic then that it was left on Rodman's Island. But there were probably a dozen or more names of this island until the mid-19th century. David, Thaddeus Davids, was the last private owner of the island, Thaddeus David is the last private owner before Simeon Leland who sold it to the Army, which kept the name Davids Island Military Reservation until the United States government (Inaudible). Since that time it's reverted to Davids Island again. Donald Trump owned it recently and wanted to rename it Trump's Island of course, after (Inaudible). But that didn't happen. Probably will be Davids Island.

**MR. JACOBY:** Well, for those of you who were here during the military life of the island, it was probably --

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** Because it was a fort, yes. And Davids Island was the particular location of the fort. It was the island first (Inaudible) what formerly was referred to by the original owner (Inaudible). (Inaudible) both.

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(END OF SIDE A).

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**MR. CAVANAUGH:** At an Army post the senior officer is usually the commanding officer, not always, but the Information School that was here during the '50s, the senior officer was Admiral Binford. So he ranked-out the post commander was only colonel. He was a rear admiral, and he got Q1 (Quarters 1)

**MR. JACOBY:** Where'd the Colonel go?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** The Colonel took quarters up the Ros. I'm not quite sure where he lived. (Inaudible).

**MR. JACOBY:** Were you ever inside Building 1?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** Never was. It's funny, because I know the next to last commander's family fairly well, and he, Colonel Castagneto, he's dead now, but he was a ranker, he enlisted in the Army became an officer afterwards. But he was sensitive to those class differences and would not make enlisted men come to the backdoor like some of them, he would not treat his kids -- it was first to (Inaudible) the officer's kids went -- outranked enlisted kids, the Colonel's kids outranked the Captain's kids, etc., that was generally known. And the previous Colonel apparently played it that way, but Castagneto didn't.

And then we have a good laugh because when I was here, not (Inaudible) within the (Inaudible), the Colonel would have us -- would have kids up for Trick or Treat and I was afraid to go. I must have been four years old, even at that early age I learned that Colonel's were scary. And I never met the man, I never (Inaudible) but I didn't want to go up on his porch. (Inaudible). Couldn't do it. That's how I (Inaudible).

**MR. JACOBY:** Did the Colonel know your name?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** I very much doubt it. And did Colonel Jackson know my father's name? Doubt it, probably not.

**MR. JACOBY:** Probably one of the more distinctive buildings on the base, it's got all kinds of ornamentation on the cornices and it's almost like a Dutch style --

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** You got me there, I don't know that much about architectural details, but it is a very distinctive building, and this porch here is a later addition, the earlier photo of 1893 doesn't show the porch, but it does show the railing ornaments that set back onto the main building. And the porch is probably shortly before World War I. And it was very nice inside. Admiral Binford had a special shower put in. His wife didn't want her hair to get wet so he put a shower with jets from the sides. That was (Inaudible) a nice (Inaudible) area, that (Inaudible). So spacious, several fireplaces. It would be very comfortable. He had a -- Admiral Binford had some Chinese house boys, and they had the entire upstairs to themselves, so he put in a kitchen for them. And later on it was turned into a, made that into second floor.

**MR. JACOBY:** We've spent at least two hours walking around the entire island, do you have some final thoughts about the island as it was, and as it is now?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** I don't have any final thoughts, but --

**MR. JACOBY:** Present thoughts?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** General thoughts about the place? Yeah, it was a beautiful island, but it was also the artificial product of Army socialism. I'd like to put my friends on active duty might not like to hear this, but the Army is the last bastion of the penetration of socialism into American society, subsidized commissary, subsidized PX, subsidized housing, and so forth. And Army, of course, made use of a lot of cheap soldier labor and sometimes cheap civilian labor to build a place like this, and to maintain it. I was just talking yesterday with the son of the Post Engineer about just how much time and labor it took to keep this place up, a tremendous amount.

So that once the Army left, yeah, it might have made a nice campus about here, but I'm not sure (Inaudible), but even (Inaudible) the campus, (Inaudible) could even reach it. So, that I think it was inevitable that the Army would go eventually, and once the Army went that the place would become more simple. Nobody really imagined that it would get to this place. Even when I was a kid my father was talking about the local yacht club, so you know if the Army ever left the place the island would just go to a developer.

It was preserved from civilian development for over a century, and so, you know, it had sort of an artificial existence. And then it got to the point that mostly an agency could possibly hope to maintain it, it probably be developed in (Inaudible) way, which would have been a tragedy historically. Fortunately, I mean, it's gone to wrack and ruin today looking at the destruction. A lot of it remains, you could hope to save some of it, you know, but most of it will be gone within a matter of years, months if not years. At least it's part of the public process now, and it can be debated, with checks and balances and so forth. I think if Donald Trump had really gone forward, or if Con Edison actually had it for a nuclear power plant, none of this would have been here to talk about.

So, in a sense we spent the afternoon in a (Inaudible), but it probably would have come to some kind of ruin anyway, and (Inaudible) possibly (Inaudible). And it could also have been ruined, incidentally, had the Army kept it, because we were running out of space, the pressures to build higher and uglier. And this place which was beautiful could have really been out of the 19th century. It's a view of the 19th century Army as it was. That would have been done. You wouldn't see the big ugly boxy buildings that you see in some of the other places today, that would have been a (Inaudible). So here we are. We can only do the best we can with the remains that are left. I hope we do.

**MR. JACOBY:** You were 10 years old when you left, when did your interest blossom into researching the island?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** Well, we got (Inaudible) for that space, but what really crystallized it for me. My brother was killed in 1981 and we both grew up on the island, and it was something we had in common. I came back that summer on a trip out here, just an hour I think, but I sat where we grew up before the (Inaudible). And I began to collect some maps and photos. And in 2003 with the Internet available I began to Google some names and look for some other people and saw that (Inaudible) list of residents. And that in turn led to, you know, the limited influx of photos and maps and collections, and documentation that Fort Slocum alumni and friends now have. That's pretty much what the story is.

**MR. JACOBY:** Michael Cavanaugh, thank you very much for this interview. Very enlightening.

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** Are we done? It's a pleasure to do it. And I wish you good luck in your research. There are plenty of people out there who have all kinds of interesting memories and I hope you do get a chance to talk to a lot of them.

**MR. JACOBY:** I will. Thank you.

**MR. JACOBY:** ...representing Tetra Tech EC, and I'm speaking today to Michael Cavanaugh at the home of Brian Vincik in Rancho Santa Fe, California, on December 16, 2007. This interview is part of a program sponsored by the United States Army Corps of Engineers and the New Rochelle Public Library, to collect oral histories about the experiences and memories of people who were associated with the former US Army Post, Fort Slocum, located on Davids Island in New Rochelle, New York.

Thank you, Michael for sitting down with me and talking about your experiences. Let's first set the stage. How old were you and what years were you at Fort Slocum?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** Good question, because particularly in terms of the first question you were asking about officer, enlisted interaction. I was very young. I was -- let's see, my father was stationed at Fort Slocum exactly four years from the 20th of May 1956 to 20th of May 1960. He was there that early, my mother and my brother and myself stayed with her family in Wisconsin that summer, so we didn't get to New York until about Thanksgiving time, didn't move into quarters on Post until February of '57. So, we stayed there until my father was transferred in May of '60, so that was just a little over three year's time. And I was again -- I turned four years old in '50, so in February, so from 4 to 10 years old. And so, a lot of my memories, you know, reflect that time period.

So I can tell you a little bit about what I remember about the officer-enlisted interaction. I can also tell you some general things that I know by way of background having studied the history. So, if you'd like --

**MR. JACOBY:** Let's start with what you know directly.

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** Good. Okay. Well, let's see, first of all, the obvious thing to say, which is true of Fort Slocum, as it was with any Army post, is that quarters tended to be segregated between officers and enlisted. There was the proverbial officers row, and we had one on Fort Slocum, as many posts did. Running northward from Quarters 1, which is the senior officer's post -- senior officer's quarters on Post. Usually the post commander, but in one notable instance when Rear Admiral Binford was there in the '50s, he took it over and bumped the Post CO, but usually Post CO. And then the field grade officers, the higher officers up from there, the company grade officers farther up. And NCO country, as it was called, was on the eastern -- southeastern part of the island, there were a number of duplex quarters there which dated from the early part of the 20th century, to the 1930s.

My family lived in an unusual situation, we occupied a duplex also, but it was neither fish nor fowl. We weren't in officers' country, we weren't in NCO country. The building in question had been a waiting room for the ferry dock, and when the ferry services transferred from the smaller dock to the larger dock after World War II, with the introduction of more and more privately owned vehicles and the need for heavier docks to carry that traffic, then that building was converted by then post engineer into duplex quarters. And he, although he was a civilian, this was his deal with the post commandant at the time, to be able to come back as post engineer, he would have quarters on post. Usually that wasn't done. He occupied half until about '57 and there was a doctor, who would have been an officer, of course, who occupied our quarters, and then when my father came on post the quarters were kind of ambiguous, so my father was a Master Sergeant, Sergeant Major of the Chaplain School, we were put in there.

Subsequently, there were NCOs from the chaplain School, and also from elsewhere on Post, in the A set of quarters, the other set which was the post engineers. And I'm not sure who occupied my quarters after we left. So that was sort of an ambiguous situation.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did that satisfy your parents living there as opposed to the other NCO quarters?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** Oh, they were happy, because you always took what you got. So, I've been back there subsequently, and I was amazed how small the place had become since I was a child. It seemed big to me at 10 years old, but how two adults and two of then three children lived in there, it was two bedroom, you know, basically a cottage. We had a huge backyard though. And that suited my father very well. My father was very protective of us children, didn't want us to associate with other children, afraid we'd get into trouble, and so on and so forth. So we had our own swing set, had our own beach, and I guess from standpoint he was happier to have us there.

Between where we were at Officers Row there were substandard housing in the form of trailers. Those were exclusively NCO, lower ranking NCOs and even some basically corporals and so forth, Spec 3s.

**MR. JACOBY:** Were the trailers there the entire time that you were there?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** The entire time that I was there. During the time the Air Force was there the trailers were located up by the water tower, and I think sometime in the mid-50s, before we got there, the trailers were going to be relocated down to that area by the dock, and stayed there, as far as I know, until the end.

There was another set of quarters, and I'm still working on this now, I'm not sure whether they were enlisted or NCO, they were the old quartermaster building, just kind of north of my quarters. So, with some ambiguity, there was definite segregation between officers and NCO quarters, although actually, the northern most set of officers quarters, the building still standing, six apartments, was originally designed as NCO quarters, as were the other officers quarters there. And eventually they were incorporated into Officers Row. So there's been a bit of shifting. But over the years, as I've studied it, by and large, there have been segregated NCOs, segregated officers areas. As far as housing is concerned, that's been a standard rule in the Army until -- until perhaps very recently.

This applied also to the club facilities, and the beaches. There was an officer's beach from at least the late 19th century onwards, stayed in the same place. NCO beach was on the other side of the island, at least from that time. There's a funny story, a young girl who grew up there wrote her memoirs later, grew up in the 1880s, and they had a visiting composer who went skinny dipping on what was then NCO beach, and he heard his composition being played, so he stood up. And of course, caused a lot of embarrassment to whoever was hanging around the beach. But even then that division of beaches was there. There was also a separate enlisted men's beach, that was for lower ranking enlisted men who were not NCOs, not sergeants and so forth.

Strangely enough, there was a skeet range right by that beach. I don't know why, but they got the kind of short end of the stick.

**MR. JACOBY:** You mentioned that you had a private beach off of your quarters.

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** Yes, basically, just by default there was a nice little beach area there, and we'd go clamming, you know, could go swimming.

**MR. JACOBY:** Is that were you did swim?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** As much as we ever did. I wasn't much of a swimmer. I had a little, you know, wading pool in the backyard, but I remember I was scared of the water. My father took me out on a friend's boat, right off our beach one day, and you know, with a life preserver and I didn't want to go in. But, you know, insofar as we ever went, stuck our feet in the water, you know, that was where we did it, yes.

And the rest of the NCOs, a very nice beach, the NCO's beach, with a pier and the whole thing. And of course, the officers had a very nice beach there also.

This extended also to the clubs. There was an officer's club, and again, this is something that was on post from the 19th century onward. The location changed over time. There was after -- starting about World War II I think was the first instance of an actual NCO club. And Woody, who you interviewed, was one of the founding members of that, actually.

**MR. JACOBY:** Gladys Borkowski.

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** Gladys Woodward, as she was at the time, Staff Sergeant, and married Borkowski later. And that subsequently went down to one of the temporary wooden buildings, the then subsequently went into the basement of the YMCA building. And there was -- that was also the enlisted club, but after the NCO club went into the basement of the EM club and the NCO club kind of emerged. But definitely officers, you know, generally didn't go to the enlisted bar. There were two basic pubs, so even though this was a village, it wasn't quite, you know, like an old English village where the landlords, you know, and the tenants all drank at the same pub, definitely segregated.

Something also I noticed in retrospect about this, the Officers' Club on our post, and I think this was probably true of other posts, was a place for families, whereas the NCO Club was a place for single men, or for the men to drink basically, and the women and children, you know, stayed at home.

**MR. JACOBY:** So, your mother never went to the NCO Club?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** Only if there was a party and she went with my father. My mother would never drop into the NCO Club by herself. I think with any of the NCO wives, but that was not true of the officers wives, and the officers' children, for example, there was a television lounge upstairs with a color TV, it was a big deal, you know. And the kids would all go and watch, you know, Mickey Mouse and whatever it was they watched. And we didn't have anything like that comparable at the NCO Club. We watched Mickey Mouse on our little black and white TVs, you know, in our quarters. So...

In those respects, I do remember there was some definite segregation, and of course, that's just -- it's been a feature of the Army for a long time. Colonel Castagneto, the next to last Post Commandant, apparently abolished that distinction as far as the beaches were concerned, which was a rather unusual thing to do.

And I could also mention that in World War II, the post map that survives from that time, explicitly tells enlisted men not to walk on the sidewalk in front of Officers Row, take the other side of the parade field, go out of your way. And I've heard other people, Bobby Sisk, for example, tell me anecdotally, that was a general rule on various posts. When he went to visit friends he'd grown up with at Fort Slocum who were officers when he was an enlisted man later, in later years, he went to their quarters but he was, you know, he was a little worried, because he knew this rule had been enforced, and here he was an enlisted man walking up Officers Row to visit his friends who were now officers. So, what was true at Fort Slocum I think was true, generally, of the Army at that time.

I don't have regular contact with the Army anymore. I don't know, I've been told that this kind of distinction has been relaxed nowadays, if so, I don't know why or how far, it's possible it may have.

**MR. JACOBY:** You were young, but do you recall your father talking about this segregation much?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** I don't recall him talking about it. It was just something that was taken for granted. But as his education peers might talk about the hidden curriculum, you know, children learn things by inviting, that they don't -- aren't necessarily told in so many words. And I remember for example, Halloween, this was when Colonel Cron (phonetic), was there, so this must have been '57, probably the first Halloween I was there, and the Colonel of course, you know, had candy for all the kids on post, but I was afraid to go up to that house on the hill, you know, the Colonel's house was up on a hill, we were kind of in the -- down in the boondocks, because I knew Colonel's were scary people. And I didn't want to go. My parents encouraged me to go, you know, they had no problem with that. But I had somehow learned at age four or five, four at that time, you know, that there was some distinction there.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you ever go in Quarters One?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** Never went in. In fact, this summer I went to Fort Warden, which is a coast artillery post, similar to Slocum in some ways, there's a clone of one of our buildings there. It's kind of eery because some of my friends in the alumni association had lived in that building, and I actually got to visit the building because it was open for rental for the weekend and I called them on my cell phone and said, you know, I'm in your house. But I actually -- I walked into Quarters One at Fort Warden and it occurred to me that's the first time I'd ever been in Quarters One on any post, ever in my life. So I didn't at Slocum or anywhere else. And it wouldn't have occurred to me to do it, to go into Quarters One. That was just, you know, that was where the Colonel was.

**MR. JACOBY:** Were the Castagnetos there when --

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** No, they were later. They came in '61, I think.

**MR. JACOBY:** You were already gone?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** We were gone by '60, yes. So, Colonel Jackson was the last CO, Colonel Cron before him.

**MR. JACOBY:** And did these colonel's have children?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** Jackson did. I didn't know them, Cron, I think may have had some older children. I remember hearing the story about Jackson's children, they would pull rank and it's funny because sometimes the wives would do this too, they had absolutely no entitlement to this, but you know, captains' wives would order around lieutenants wives, because their husbands outranked the other husbands. And of course, that's perfectly illegitimate, but some of the wives, you know, did it anyway. And the kids, you know -- I don't remember an experience myself, any experiences myself, but I've heard from others, that's been the case.

**MR. JACOBY:** There were a number of training schools at the post, some of them had foreign troops; do you remember seeing any?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** I don't. My main involvement would have been with the Chaplain's School, which was my father's school, and the Information School, which was the other school, I didn't have much involvement with. No, I've subsequently seen photos and rosters and so forth. And the Chaplain School did, from time to time take in foreign chaplains, although I don't recall meeting any of them myself.

**MR. JACOBY:** I want to move on to your interest in the history of Fort Slocum. Tell me how that began?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** Right. Well, like so many people that I've run into since, I never forgot the place, and I'm always impressed, with very few exceptions, and there's one very notable exception, Frederick Albert Pottle who later became a Sterling Professor of English at Yale, and was very articulate about this, came to Fort Slocum in the winter of 197-, absolutely hated the place. And the end of his first chapter

goes something like, I was so glad -- and we were all so glad to leave the unalleviated horror which was Fort Slocum. But, you know, with that exception of maybe one more, most of the people who have chosen to describe their time, whether they be soldiers or children, or wives, have had glowing things to say about it, and there were some very nice things about the island. I myself never forgot it.

And my brother died in 1981, he and I grew up on the island, and we were, you know, constant companions, and again, because my father kind of discouraged us playing from other children.

**MR. JACOBY:** He was younger or older?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** He was younger, about a year-and-a-half, almost two years younger than I am. When he died I went back to the island and I managed to talk Harbor Patrol into letting me go out, and they carried me out there actually for only an hour, this was before the great fire though, so I walked through my quarters, which still had been destroyed and the buildings were intact. And I didn't really have a very developed memory, I didn't have a map with me, I wish I had done so much more --

**MR. JACOBY:** Was it covered with vegetation at that time?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** It was -- not so much as it is today. The parade field though was definitely covered with tall grass and some of the Norwegian maples starting, but you could pretty much tell, you know, where the trees were and where the grass had been. The hedge, neatly trimmed hedge by my house, which had been about three feet high, was about six or seven feet high at this point and all scraggly. So, yeah, a lot of vegetation had gone haywire, but it was recognizable.

A funny thing, I remember I had only an hour so I took off running toward what I thought was my house, and realized I was on the other side of the island before I stopped. The island had gotten so much smaller, you know, since I'd been there. But in any case, after that point I would go back to New Rochelle periodically and check things out in the library. I got articles from the *New York Times*, get various artifacts together. And without really any, you know, intentions to do anything with it except just for purposes of nostalgia.

**MR. JACOBY:** Had your father passed away at this point?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** No. But that's the story that's coming up. My father died in '99. And the Chaplain who conducted his funeral was one of the former commandants of the Chaplain School who had also been involved with the Chaplain Museum. And he asked me if I would go through my mother's papers and see if they had some documents or photos or artifacts that could be used in the Chaplain's Museum. And I said, yes I would. So at that point I began to look through my father's papers, and the few things that I've collected, and my father was a great storyteller, and he had some great stories about his time at the Chaplain School, very funny. He was a raconteur, what could I say?

So, I thought, I collected those together, and then I sketched from what I had a brief history of the island, and my background is in sociology of religion, and I remembered some peculiar things about the religion of the Army at the time. But basically, if you weren't one of the exotic faiths, if you weren't Catholic or Jewish, if you were just Protestant you were what was called General Protestant, GP. And it was funny because the church services, the religious beliefs were kind of the lowest common denominator, Protestantism, that wouldn't offend anybody, but basically, God was on our side, and I guess (Inaudible) doing battle. This was before Vietnam, and really before Korea had sunk in, but that was our basic lesson.

And if you were, of course, Catholic or Jewish, you had your separate services, but everybody else is GP, including actually during World War II, the Buddhists. The Buddhists were classified as Protestants and the Greek Orthodox, Eastern Orthodox, generally, were classified as Protestants, because they weren't Jews or Catholics, so they were General Protestants, GP. And I thought that was a peculiar religion --

**MR. JACOBY:** Must have been surprising to the Buddhists.

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** At least they gave them a place, I guess, I don't know. In terms of a thesis and sociology of religion known as American Civil Religion, I thought this was peculiarly good example of that. So, I wrote a speculative essay, that was the third part of my book, you know, purely desktop published kind of thing, which I was going to, you know, leave to the Chaplain's School archives along with the documents. Well, I kind of shopped it around to a couple of Chaplains, several of whom took great umbrage at what I had to say about the religion of the Chaplaincy in the 1950s, which, I guess, means they were paying attention, and probably I was doing my job as a sociologist, but I thought, well, actually, I've got three separate documents here, the speculative piece on religion I can do as a conference paper in sociology and that could go this way. The stories, my father's time there, those -- the history part, the middle part was growing by leaps and bounds.



So I began to work on that as a piece in its own right. And we had actually, very few photographs in my family collection, maybe two dozen, it was probably less than two dozen, a number of which I had taken with my Kodak Brownie at age 5, you know, blurry and askew and so on and so forth. And I thought, well, gee, you know, if I wonder if I try to get a hold of some of our friends from the Island, you know, we have some addresses, I could probably look some people up, maybe I could collect, oh, perhaps two or three dozen more photos and at least we'd have, you know, a general view.

So, I began in February 2003 by Googling a couple of names, one of them Garth Bloxum, Colonel Bloxum now, you know, how many people in the world are named Garth Bloxum, and I got a hit and it was Garth, and he had some photos. And so we had exchange, and he was in touch with a friend, and you know, he was in touch with a friend. So pretty soon I began a snowball list of people, and this was the basis for the Fort Slocum Alumni and Friends. And I call it the Alumni and Friends because it is just that, people who were there, a lot of the people are kids who grew up, but we do have some of the younger GIs, unfortunately some of the older troops have died, some of the wives are still around, but it's, you know, the kids who grew up there when the Post was still active 40-some years ago are now in their, you know, 50s and 60s, and some cases older than that. We have one member who was born on the post in 1922, so the age range is kind of between there.

**MR. JACOBY:** How many people have you contacted?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** I'd say total of just upwards of 100, but not all of those are still active with us. And I say Alumni and Friends because there are a number of people who, some of them New Rochelle residents, Westchester residents, who are fascinated with the island for various reasons, may never have seen the place during its heyday, only seen it when it's in ruin, but are interested in collecting memorabilia.

After beginning to snowball the list of Alumni, I began searching E-Bay and every time someone would bid on an item from Fort Slocum on E-Bay I would e-mail them and say are you connected? Would you like to join? Do you have any photos for us, would you like any photos from us? And met some people there in local New Rochelle, and even some Manhattan people who were interested in the island, hence the friends and not the alumni. But that then began to snowball.

In 2004, late 2004, I finally got a Web presence, and since that time people have been looking for me, and I'm getting lots of interesting stuff. Prior collections that would have just sat in attics, or you know, been thrown out. Also, there's a lot of stuff, I mentioned E-Bay, there are a lot of postcards floating around there with, you know, enough that we can put together some good views of the island. And then there are archival photos and other documents, National Archives has a lot, but regional archives has some scattered things.

**MR. JACOBY:** How many photographs have you been able to assemble?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** I would say conservatively 5,000 different images, including maps. Not simply documents but images, maps, and photos and so forth, about 5,000, in five years, which astounds me, you know, because my goal was to get a couple dozen, as I said, in the beginning. And there's still big gaps. We're always looking for more, and of course, we talked earlier about the Dutchyshyn collection, which we hope to get soon. But we have some large collections and small collections, and you know, basically, every little bit helps.

**MR. JACOBY:** When did you realize that the US Army Corps of Engineers was approaching the island?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** I think Bobby Sisk told me. This would have been late 2004, about the time I was starting the Web site, and so I got in contact with Nancy at that point, and became part of the process when the public meetings began from March 2005, and have been involved with that ever since on behalf of the Slocum.

**MR. JACOBY:** What were your hopes as far as having involvement with the Army's plans?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** Well, are you asking me personally, or are you asking on behalf of the collection?

**MR. JACOBY:** Either.

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** I think there are different point of view within the collective -- I'm fairly -- I've kept tabs, you know, and have been out there several times since 2005, and I do participate in the process, by conference call, not always physically, during the periodic meetings. I was hoping, first of all, we'd get the history written, and I probably should have mentioned that middle part of my history is now becoming a full-length book, I've got nine chapters blocked out and I've got about half of that book drafter so far, and I have about three weeks now free to flesh out some more.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you have a title?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** Not -- no, the History of Fort Slocum or something on that order, I haven't really worked out a title yet. But I intend it to be a general social history of the post. My criticism of some of the early efforts on the part of the Corps of Engineers, as far as documenting some of the buildings is concerned, I'm glad they're doing it, and I'm glad there's a public process. If Donald Trump had kept control of the island, for example, I think he said in an interview at some point, I want all the old junk swept away. It would have been. Without any documentation. So I'm hoping that whatever happens physically to the island at least there will be documentation.

But my criticism of the documentation is, the buildings changed functions over the years. As with any Army post Slocum was always (Inaudible), always reinventing themselves, and the problem with -- one of the problems the military faces is after they win the war they then lose the peace because a lot of military installations become redundant there are cutbacks. We see this all the time. We've seen it recently as well. Fort Monroe, for example, one of the old, old forts in the Army has just been slated for closure. Many others have gone that way, including Slocum. And I thought it was important in documenting the history of the buildings, to document the changes in the uses.

So, when I'm writing my history, I'm writing it as a history of bricks and mortar, but I'm also writing it as a history of changing organization. The island has gone from being a Civil War hospital to being the major recruiting station for the US Army in the Eastern part of the US, and that was the US Army at that time. Until about 1890 it was coast artillery post, a very powerful coast artillery post for a brief period of time, about a decade, until it became obsolete. It floundered about, for other purposes, became a major recruitment depot during the first war. Became a school and a prison at some point. Was a major trans-shipment point during the second war, almost was sold and closed, then it became an Air Force Base, the only Air Force Base that you could reach only by boat routinely. They closed it. It was abandoned for a year. The Army took it back for 15 more years. It was then abandoned, so on and so forth.

So, the history that needs to be told of Fort Slocum is not just what buildings were built here and you know, what organizations were here when, but how those two sides interacted to keep alive this Army post for more than a century. We mourn the fact that it passed, but it's equally amazing, I think that it lasted as long as it did, because it had been closed -- not many people know this, it had been closed for four years in the 1870s, and was about to be sold, was almost closed about a century ago, was definitely -- well, it was almost closed in 1946, and it was definitely closed in 1949, and then finally in '65. And so it dodged a lot of bullets. And I think the history of how it dodged a lot of bullets is simultaneously the history of buildings and facilities, but also organizations. So that's what I intend my book to do. It's a little tough, you know, but --

**MR. JACOBY:** Has its recent fate been inevitable?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** Yes, I think -- I think it has. Inevitably it would have fallen to bits. And there are a number of ways in which the post might have been ruined and the way in which it was ruined was only one. If the Army had kept it what would have happened? Well, I think -- the island was already -- the facilities were already pushing the physical limits of the island, and as with islands what you tend to do is build up. So, we had a nice little 19th century post with buildings no taller than three stories, that was the one exceptional building built in 1940, most of them are two stories, it would have given rise to boxy high-rise, concrete block structures of exactly the sort you see at -- well, not to pick on Fort Jackson, Fort Worden, etc., but yeah, a lot of posts throughout the US.

It might have been taken over as a gated yuppie community. It might have been taken over as a big box store if there had been the possibility of a bridge out there. All sorts of ugly commercial uses that would have impacted unfavorably on the Sound. All kinds of ways it could have been ruined. But yes, inevitably the Army would have left at some point.

That it had to go to rack and ruin in exactly the way that it did was, I think, far from inevitable. Had there been a way to get out there and develop it commercially, but basically, until or unless there could be a bridge, and the Corps of Engineers will not allow that, never would, there's no way to get out there, feasibly. In the Army we would wait for ferries. They ran every half hour, but you know, hurry up and wait is something you do. If you have a half-million-dollar condo, you don't want to hurry up and wait for the ferry, you want out there now. And so, even Donald Trump's plans recently to build this god-awful, huge Trump tower on what he would have named then, he would have named, not Davids Island but Trump Island, I think would have come (Inaudible) in the long run.

So, some sort of demise from what we knew was inevitable, although this particular one, I think not. But to go back, you asked the question about what I was thinking in 2005. I knew that there would have to be a lot of destruction. I was hoping that some buildings could be retained. I do agree with Barbara Davis that it would be an obscenity to sweep it all away, and we need to find some way not just of marking and

memorializing and doing a history, which I think is very important to do, and which I'm glad to be a part of myself, and I'm glad you're doing these oral histories, and my colleague Chris Borstel is also doing his bit, and others are as well. That's all very, very important, but there needs to be some physical remains.

My concern -- main concern at the moment, is as I've discovered, the set of barracks built in 1880s, very, very unique, nothing like it anywhere else that I can discover in Army architecture. We have some buildings, I mentioned one from Fort Worden, that are building on a cookie-cutter plan, they're clones. The oldest buildings, the oldest quarters, which were demolished the last of this year, three sets have counterparts elsewhere, they were -- our oldest ones, they're gone.

But the set of buildings, and again, the numbers, I don't have -- okay good. You've got them -- I'm referring to the Corps of Engineers current map, Buildings 55, 68 and 69, and the mess hall complex, 67, also is part of that, designed by Captain George Hamilton Cook, uniquely for Davids Island, recording some very innovative ideas that he had, interaction what a couple of post commanders, antagonist interaction with one of them, but they got built, and they got built in an interesting way. And they form a complex which is unique in American military history.

I'm hoping that that complex in particular, can be preserved. And a couple of other -- I have a couple other things, you know, those are the remaining that I'd like to see.

**MR. JACOBY:** Speaking of --

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** But I think something should -- something should remain physically as well as historically.

**MR. JACOBY:** Speaking of unique buildings, I want to ask you about the post's chapel. The only building on the island built in a Mediterranean Spanish style. What's your research brought up about why it was built in that way?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** I don't know why it was built in that way, but I can tell you how it was built and by whom. The Chapel along with the YMCA, two buildings that the Army did not build, they were gifts. The YMCA was a gift of Margaret Slocum Sage, paid for purely by her own self, and the chapel was donated by the local parish of -- oh, gosh, the Immaculate Conception I want to say, I could find it, I could get the reference, but in New Rochelle, basically. They -- actually at the behest of their priest at the time, Father McLaughlin, the younger, his uncle Father McLaughlin the elder, had also been priest in the parish and administered to the troops in the Civil War...

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...unusual, and there were some plans earlier. During the Civil War there was a full-fledged chapel, Chapel of St. Luke, the physician, but as with all Civil War buildings it was pulled down well by 1878. For that time between 1878 and 1909 when the Chaplain you mentioned, Chapel of St. Sebastian, was built, no post chapel per se. they used the school for church services if they did them at all, and I think some of the Catholics went across to the mainland for Mass, but there was no chapel per se. The parish of the Immaculate Conception donated everything, building, labor, architectural plans, their own architect who designed their church on the mainland did that. Pews --

**MR. JACOBY:** What style was the mainland church?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** You know, it's -- it's some sort of modified gothic, I believe, I've seen pictures of it, I've never actually -- I've been meaning to go over and see it, but it doesn't look at all, you know, it's not a squat Mediterranean sort of building. Why they did it this way --

**MR. JACOBY:** Was this whimsy?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** -- it might have been for all I know. But it's a very good question you ask, and it's actually one I want to ask. There may be some papers in the parish archive. I know, they did take the pews back and the organ when the chapel was decommissioned, and they took some of the windows. And there are three of the windows now in one of the halls in that church, and I think Fordham may have some, and some of the other Catholic churches around the Bronx area may have some as well.

But that was -- it was donated by a Roman parish, but it was for the use of the entire post. And until the Chaplain School came along it was the post chapel. So for example, Chaplain Gebhard during the Second World War, Protestant Chaplain, used it routinely for services, and his Catholic counterpart did also. Jewish, the worshipers met strangely enough, in the YMCA. But typically, I understand later on, there weren't that many Jews in the garrison, Jewish personnel tended to go, again, to New Rochelle, to synagogues there.

When the Chaplain School came along, one of the things that they did with that unique Building 55, previously a barracks building, and it had some other functions, it was a WAC beauty salon, etc., it was turned into the Chapel Center for All Faiths, as they called it, and there were four separate chapels. The first floor, a large Protestant chapel, a large Catholic chapel of equal size, and upstairs a liturgical Protestant chapel for the Lutherans and the Episcopalians would use those for distinctive services, and then there was the Chapel for Eternal Light, is the Jewish chapel, also upstairs, which I understand was used mainly by the Jewish student chaplains. There were enough to form a minyan, in Judaism you have to have a certain number, 10 people to have services. There weren't that many Jews in the garrison per se, and they didn't participate -- the services in the synagogue were only held in the morning for the student chaplains, and there weren't services on Shabbos outside, so that was done off post.

But it represented sort of a high-water mark for the chaplaincy. I don't know of any other specific Jewish chapel anywhere in the history of the US Army, and I can tell you today, in the current Chaplain School, at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, does not have separate facilities for Jewish worship. They're not authorized to. The bureaucracy has changed. In 1950 they could build these chapels, now they can't, even in the Chaplains School.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do they all share a single building?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** Well, there's a single building on post. And I guess it's available for use. But if the student chaplains want to have their own worship, they use conference rooms and classrooms. They don't have any space set aside for a specific chapel. So, this building was probably unique in Army history, and may even have been unique in world history as having housed four separate houses of worship, different houses of worship within -- under one single roof.

**MR. JACOBY:** And is that the building that your family worshiped in?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** My family went to -- when we went to services to the Protestant chapel, we were GP, General Protestants. Funny story -- well, not apropos, but the Army raised me as an Episcopalian because I learned subsequently that the GP service was largely the Episcopal, you know, Book of Common Prayer, pretty standard.

I learned that my wife was very high church, and when we were married, baby boomers that we were, we wrote our own wedding service, and the Provost of the cathedral where we were married said, oh, yeah, this is all in order. The lesson, the gospel, the song. And I said to myself, where did I get that from? And I realized I got that from the chapel, that the order of service in the General Protestant chapel was right out of the Episcopal church. Not, surprising because the religion of the officers, you know, traditionally, you know, has been the Episcopal church.

Nowadays things have changed. I mean, again, I'm not in close contact with the Army, but it's much more evangelical, you know, they'll do baptisms, for example, by emersion in the Army today. That never, never would have seen that. It was all very, very high church. And of course, the religion of a lot of the enlisted men was probably, you know, fundamentalists, you know, Protestant, Baptist, low church kind of stuff, but the religion that they got in the chapel was very much the religion of the officers.

When the chapel center became the center of worship around the Chaplain School, then the Chapel of St. Sebastian, the one you were mentioning originally, the 1909 post chapel donated by the parish, became a specifically Catholic chapel and I remember some of the Catholic families would worship there. In fact, they would mostly worship there and the Catholic students would worship in the chapel center, although sometimes the families would come to Mass there as well.

**MR. JACOBY:** When the Chaplain School closed, was there an official post chaplain?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** Yes, there was. And in fact, that was Chaplain Little, Gene Little, he was a Baptist, Colonel Castagneto who was Roman, had the prerogative to appoint the post chaplain, and even though that wasn't his religion, he did a survey and decided that most of the people on post were Protestant, so he appointed a Protestant chaplain. And that was a typical situation on most Army posts. You had one chaplain for the entire post, and you know, had to be of some denomination or another, but chaplains are cross trained, you know. A Protestant chaplain can give Catholic Last Rites, Jewish chaplains are trained to do Christian services, Christian chaplain is trained to do Jewish services if necessary. Because in the field you may be, you know, the only chaplain for a whole diverse -- and at that point diverse meant there were 73 official religions recognized by the chaplaincy, 72 of them were Christian. Now, there are more than 500, so the job is a lot more difficult. But the point is generally that, yes, the average post has a single chaplain, maybe a second chaplain if they could get it. Whereas when Chaplain School was there, it (Inaudible) with chaplains, they were all over the place. You know, every priest had to say Mass once a day, so you know, that chapel was kept constantly busy. Mornings before classes began, classes began

fairly early, I think about 7, 8:00 in the morning, prior to that there was an hour of worship in the chapel center, each of those chapels. So it was pretty heavily used.

**MR. JACOBY:** So, after the Chaplain School closed, was as Catholic priest brought in on Sundays?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** From the mainland, they would bring priests over from Fordham to say Mass in the Catholic chapel, yes. I don't think they had a Catholic chaplain per se. So -- and that's an interesting thing. I don't know much about that, but I know -- I get little bits and snippets, there was an ongoing relationship among the Catholics on the mainland and the Catholics on the post, over the decades. And I've heard recently about the synagogues and the Jewish personnel, I don't know how far back that goes, I think probably World War II certainly, you know, maybe even earlier than that, but that's kind of hazy.

**MR. JACOBY:** Before we finish, I want to go back a little bit to your work creating the Friends and Alumni of Slocum, you mentioned earlier that your personal opinions might be different from some of the other members.

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** Yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** What kind of diversity of thought have you found?

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** Well, some people would like to go back and reconstruct the post as it was. I would like to, my heart of hearts, I'd like to go home again. I've actually had inquiries from some people saying does the ferry still run? And can we go out -- and they really expect to get off the ferry on the dock and see the immaculately kept lawns and hedges and buildings and so forth that they last saw in 1955 or 1960 or '63. And you know, obviously, that's not going to happen.

I've -- you know, I realize a lot of damage has been done, and there's going to be a lot of destruction. I'm hoping that the destruction can be minimized and that we can at least keep some physical remnants. I also recognize that I myself, on behalf of the Fort Slocum Alumni and Friends, and most of our members, are not taxpayers in Westchester County, and are, in that respect, kind of carpetbaggers, so we don't have that much to say. The county, obviously, is going to have to take it over and is going to have to keep up what is there.

On the other hand, it is a historic district. And apart from just the sheer legality of it being an historic district, it is an historical part of Westchester County, and I would hope that the citizens of Westchester County and New Rochelle would recognize that fact. You know, so much of Westchester history has been swept away. There were important Revolutionary battles in the county and the battlefields are now golf courses, and you know, they've been paved over and you know, a lot of damage has been done.

Here's a chance to minimize some of the damage, at least, and I hope advantage is taken of that. Although I'm not as, perhaps, as optimistic as some of our members would be, you know, like to bring it all back. And I would like to bring it all back too. But you know, part of me says yes, but you know.

**MR. JACOBY:** Well, Michael Cavanaugh, thank you very much.

**MR. CAVANAUGH:** You're welcome.

- - -

(End of recording)

Michael A. Cavanaugh  
01/29/2008 01:25 AM

To Rob.Jacoby  
Subject  
Re: Interview Question

Hi Rob,

Yes, obviously, I was trying to say (in general) that the O club was for families whereas the NCO club was for single men.

Let me elaborate. I was thinking about this issue in terms of what (in my book) I am calling the "anthropological oddity of post & village." Slocum, like all Army posts, resembled a village in that it was small, intimate and yet extremely hierarchical; but unlike a village, was populated by transients. Village elders, such as they were (including those repositories of local history and lore) were, if anyone, the civilian employees, entirely outside the community in one sense, and certainly outside the chain of command (and so unlike village elders per se). There are of course different sorts of villages. I had in mind the model of the small English village of the last several centuries, one in which there is at most one village pub. The pub is the haunt of men (typical sociology of the English working class: men club together in the pub, women gather separately in hen parties, women rarely go to pubs and certainly not without their husbands). The village pub is usually the haunt of working men, though it is part of noblesse oblige that the squirearchy patronizes from time to time (though typically the upper crust drinks with their peers not in a public house but at home).

The analogy I was attempting to draw is that the NCO club was much like the village pub, except that the squirearchy rarely if ever visited. (Col. Castegnato [sic] did, for example, help with if I recall a Thanksgiving dinner.) And that separation is one of the things that distinguished a post from a village. There were always two pubs (three, actually, wherever there was a separate EM club) rather than one. So I would say by analogy that the NCO club was something like the village pub, minus the squirearchy; whereas the O Club was more like the American country club (where the upper class drank together, rather than just entertaining at home). Mostly the NCO Club was where men drank together, especially single men; in the late '50's & early '60's, Sp7 Bob Scara from the Chaplain School, M/Sgt Fitzgibbons of the Info School, etc., were there nightly for cheap highballs & steak dinners. But married NCO's came by too, e.g., 1/Sgt Ed Sisk of the Chaplain School (who also tended bar there). My parents went there together from time to time; it was convenient, just a short walk from our quarters. (Though they did go into the City too -- rather odd for my father, but often to the Village, which was more of an effort.) (Almost 50 years later my mother recalled paella at Restaurant Sevilla & even recited the address, 4th & Charles; I think it was a haunt of the Chaplain School.) At the NCO Club, wives were welcomed to parties, occasional dances & celebrations (such as retirements), but I doubt that an NCO wife would ever show up at the club, for any reason, without her husband. It was single men, married men alone, or couples only (on specific occasions). And it was not a place for kids to hang out. It had the stigma of a Bar (rather than a Club).



The O Club, on the other hand, was more Country Club than Pub. It did have a bar where men drank together. But it also had space where wives' groups (e.g., the Chaplain School faculty wives) would get together for coffee. I think it no more likely that an O wife would go the the O bar alone than would an NCO wife to the NCO bar, but they would go in groups with or without their husbands. And there were various receptions (wives as well as husbands) after working hours; in this as in other respects the O club was modeled more on a Country Club (to which the officer class aspired) than on a pub. At Slocum during my time there was a TV lounge upstairs, with a Color TV (wow!) , where O kids would gather together. (There was also a teen club where O kids & NCO kids mixed, but generally I think NCO kids were not welcomed to watch TV together with O kids, go figure. So perhaps the O Club was also sort of like the sorority in an American university: whereas the fraternity was a boy's club run by the current boys & their older brothers who came before them, the sorority was controlled by the parents as a way to insure that daughters did not meet inappropriate boys?) At the Slocum O Club, there was a pool table in the basement, where fathers might take their kids to play pool. And the O Club was connected to the family-oriented O beach (at least by proximity) in a way that the NCO club was not connected to the NCO beach. Remember, I was very young (ae. 4-7) when I was there. Others could tell you more. Rivka could probably tell you more about the O club. Maybe Joanna Geer too. Surely the Castagnetos. Bob Sisk could tell you way more about the NCO club than I can, likewise Pete Fuller (whose father ran the NCO club). They were all teenagers when they were there and so could tell you more than I about typical youth culture.

Ask Bob Sisk. I remember he told me a story about cold-cocking an NCO, at the NCO club, who swore in front of his mother; this implies to me that somehow Bob & his mother were there without his father (who presumably would have handled the situation -- had the NCO in question dared to swear in the presence of the 1/Sgt.) Maybe it goes without saying, but a brief history of the clubs: Officers' clubs go back to the 19th c. on various posts. Slocum had one at least since the 1890's when they took over the former post trader's buildings (when traders were expelled in favor of Army-run PX's). Later it moved over into the BOQ building on O Row, where it remained until the end. By contrast, the first NCO club was not formed until WWII. It was located at first (I think) in the YMCA/Service Club (maybe the PX?). When the Army took over the post again in 1950, it was located in one of the WWII temporary buildings on the SE side of the island; by 1958 it had moved into the basement of the YMCA building. So the NCO club was always something of an afterthought & a stepchild.

Incidentally, I've spoken recently to Woodie, and it was not Col. Lentz but T/Sgt Felice who spoke the introduction to the VDisc with the Duckworth chants. (Damn! I was hoping you'd discovered a recording of Lentz himself, but alas, not.) She sent me not only a cassette tape (which I was prepared to digitize) but also had the record converted to digital format. In the meantime I have worked on it a bit, and added some later versions which I have compiled into a CD. I'll send you a copy soon. It's interesting to hear the 3 rather different versions which emerged as early as 1945. Woodie seems to take it for granted -- I think she underestimates her own importance -- but in any case very few people have ever heard the whole VDisc. (I have also located several other VDiscs from Slocum; one conducted by Harry Salter, who originated Name That Tune.)

Best,

Michael

From: Rob.Jacoby  
Sent: Jan 28, 2008 1:36 PM  
To: "Michael A. Cavanaugh"  
Subject: Interview Question

Hi Michael-

I've a question for you about your interview. We were discussing officer/NCO segregation, and you stated:

"Something also I noticed in retrospect about this, the NCO Club on our post, and I think this was probably true of other posts, was a place for families, whereas the NCO Club was a place for single men.."

You obviously meant "Officers' Club" (or perhaps Enlisted Men's Club?) for one of the observations, but which one? I didn't catch it at the time otherwise I'd've asked you to clarify.

regards

Rob





**MR. JACOBY:** \*\*\* Tetra Tech EC (ph). And I am speaking today with Harry Dutchyshyn at his home in Westmont, Pennsylvania on October 18, 2007. This interview is part of a program sponsored by the United States Army Corps of Engineers and the New Rochelle Public Library to collect oral histories about the experiences and memories of people who were associated with the former U.S. Army Post Fort Slocum located on Davids Island in New Rochelle, New York. Thank you very much for participating in this today. Would you tell me first off what is your association with Fort Slocum.

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Well, it starts I was born in the station hospital on Davids Island at Fort Slocum on April 26, 1930. So that's where right from the beginning my association goes to Fort Slocum. My father was an enlisted man. He was the company carpenter in Company I of the Sixteenth Infantry stationed at Fort Slocum. And that's where I go back to.

**MR. JACOBY:** What was his rank?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** I believe he was a private first class, but it was like he was acting corporal. And he used to tell me that's equivalent of a major in today's Army.

**MR. JACOBY:** A lot of responsibility.

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Yes. But he loved the Army. And he was 22 years old when I was born. And he loved the Army. And he knew a lot of people on Fort Slocum because he lived in town. And in those days a soldier would come to the dock and go to the island, go to the Fort, put on a uniform at eight o'clock, and at four o'clock take it off and then go back home.

**MR. JACOBY:** Where was your father originally from?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** My father was originally from a place in Canada called Province of Saskatchewan, a town called Regina.

**MR. JACOBY:** How was it that he came to the United States?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Years ago when he got his first shoes he ran away from home and went to \*\*\* Let's see, where did he go first. He was in the Detroit area. And at 14 he lied about his age and joined the Detroit police force, and they found out that he was a kid and kicked him off because he loved to ride the motorcycles. And somehow he ended over in Buffalo, New York. And when he was in Buffalo, New York he saw a recruiting sergeant with a motorcycle. And the guy said, "Hey, kid, do you want to ride this motorcycle? Join the Army." So my father lied about his age again and joined the Army and became a soldier.

**MR. JACOBY:** And it didn't matter that he wasn't a U.S. citizen or they didn't do too much checking back then?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Well, back then on his first enlistment papers he said he was born in New York.

**MR. JACOBY:** Oh.

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** And then the second \*\*\* When he reenlisted he changed his date of birth partially and he changed where he was born. And then finally on his third one I think it got down to where he made corrections to the official records because he served about eight years.

**MR. JACOBY:** And where is your mother from?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** My mother is from the Ukraine, Setafencia (ph) in Ododenko Province and came about 1926 I believe – came to Canada. And she met my father the first time in Windsor, Canada which is across from Detroit in Canada. And then later on she met him again in New York City where she was playing a mandolin in a Ukrainian band.

**MR. JACOBY:** And they got married and \*\*\*

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** They got married in New York City in 1929.

**MR. JACOBY:** And he must have been already at Slocum at that point?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** So you were born in 1930 at Fort Slocum. How long did you live there altogether?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** I did not live in Fort Slocum. We lived in New Rochelle.

**MR. JACOBY:** Mmm hmm.

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** I remember we changed residences. We lived in New Rochelle first which was very close to Fort Slocum. Right on Wayman (ph) Avenue was a grocery store and a tavern and upstairs they rented out an apartment. And my folks lived there, a place called Hoffmans. And then they moved to Mount Vernon where my brother was born. And then they moved to Pelham Manor, and then they moved to Park Ridge Drive, 27 Park Ridge Drive which is located right behind Jefferson School on Wayman Avenue. And we lived there until 1941 or 1942. I think it was 1942 we moved to New Jersey.

**MR. JACOBY:** You went to Jefferson School then?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Yes. I went to Jefferson School through – and I guess I was in the sixth grade. I moved the summer after I finished the sixth grade.

**MR. JACOBY:** Some of your classmates must have lived at the base.

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Not that I can remember. I can't remember any of the kids that I went to school with that were associated with the base. But I used to go to \*\*\* My father got hooked on a sale of a camera. And the guy bragged about it. He took that country boy from Canada. So my father learned how to use the camera, a box camera, and take pictures. And he took pictures of soldiers sitting on motorcycles and made extra money, and that's how he started in the photography business. And he became the post photographer for Fort Slocum, but he started taking pictures while he was in the military. And I believe roughly he was in eight years from about 1928 to 1936. And in 1936 they said you couldn't have a civilian job and be in the Army too, so he got out of the Army after his third enlistment was up and became a full time photographer in Raymond (ph) Hall. And I can remember \*\*\* Well, I visited the post a lot of times and I used to play in one of the \*\*\* There were one or two sets of quarters that had kids that I would play with and they had model trains. And so at Christmastime I would visit and we would play with their model trains. One family was the Tow (ph) family. Their father was probably a captain or a major. I don't remember. And both those kids went to West Point and one of them went to West Point with me. But I tell you my father was so impressed with the military that he hung a picture of West Point cadets over my bed and it seemed like forever. It hung there until I went to West Point in 1948.

**MR. JACOBY:** Tell me about your father's career as a photographer at Slocum. What was it that his assignment primarily was?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Well, it really was a military assignment. He was a concessionaire in part of the PX. I remember going to the Raymond Hall on paydays. And the soldiers would get their money or coupons. And I forget what they called that stuff – script, which was like paper that was equal to money. And people would stand at the end of the pay line, different people, to collect payments. And my father would collect payments for pictures as the people would go through the line. But I also heard stories if you ran out of money \*\*\* You only got 21 dollars a month in those days. But you could borrow four dollars during the month when you ran out of money and on payday pay back five dollars to the sergeant who loaned you the four dollars.

**MR. JACOBY:** Were men mostly having their pictures taken to send home as mementos or postcards?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** Were some of these made into postcards?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Yes. Some of the pictures would become postcards and there would always be a special. And I remember my father getting special advertising blotters made. And there would be a picture of a father and mother looking at a picture of a soldier and that was part of the advertisement. Because people were proud to be members of the military and be in uniform and they would get pictures for their family. You could get – one special would be like three dollars or four dollars. There would be an 8 x 10, a couple of 5 x 7's and some 3 x 5's. And then if you wanted a ten dollar you could have two 8 x 10's and some 5 x 7's and 3 x 5's. And then if you wanted the big \$12.95 that's the ultra super special you could get three 8 x 10's and 5 x 7's. And so my father took pictures of all the people. Later on he became a photographer at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey when we moved in 1942.

**MR. JACOBY:** Doing much the same thing?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Doing the same thing. But he kept the studio in New Rochelle. And eventually one young man who came back after World War II that worked for him before, Larry Caviola (ph), he became the post photographer and my father gave him the concessions that he had built up there at Fort Slocum.

**MR. JACOBY:** So his dark room wasn't at the base, it was \*\*\*

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Oh, the dark room was at the base.

**MR. JACOBY:** Oh, it was.

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** At Raymond Hall?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** In Raymond Hall. And over the years my father would just keep rebuilding it and making it better and bigger and it became part of the system. And actually the post exchange would get 20 percent of the concession receipts as a commission for being there.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did he also photograph weddings and other events that took place on the island?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Yes. But in those days I think they came to the studio for the weddings. They didn't take wedding pictures \*\*\* They didn't go to the wedding to take the pictures like they do now. The wedding came to the studio to take the pictures. In fact, even my parents wedding was in some photo studio in New York City.

**MR. JACOBY:** Mmm hmm. Very formal looking.

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Well, it was a big deal.

**MR. JACOBY:** Mmm hmm.

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** That's my grandpa, and that's my Uncle Steve, and that's my Aunt Bella, and that's my mother's brother Uncle Norman. But I haven't been able to identify \*\*\*

**MR. JACOBY:** What's the date?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Nineteen twenty-nine, June the 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**MR. JACOBY:** Mmm hmm.

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** But you can see \*\*\* And, you know, I looked at a picture in one of the albums last night and it was of a room in the house where they lived in town on 27 Park Ridge Avenue. And the only picture on the wall was a giant wedding picture 14 x 22, just their wedding picture hanging on the wall.

**MR. JACOBY:** This same one?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** No, no. A picture of just the two of them.

**MR. JACOBY:** Just the two of them, mmm hmm. But the same day.

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Yes. The same \*\*\* I'm sure that this is the group at the wedding. And I remember I got on here the best man was Sergeant Morsky (ph) from Fort Slocum. And Sergeant Murphy and Mrs. Murphy are in the picture too.

**MR. JACOBY:** What became of all the negatives from your father's work?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Eventually all the negatives were destroyed. But there was an effort made at the beginning to sell the negatives for like five bucks to the soldiers. They would send out letters. Also my father got into taking pictures of groups. And I remember working with my brother. My father would pay us five cents an hour, and then one time he upped the thing to ten cents an hour for putting labels on the tubes that the pictures would be rolled up and put in the tubes to mail it to the people.

**MR. JACOBY:** So the negatives were destroyed simply because there were too many of them and \*\*\*

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Yes, too difficult to \*\*\* Well, actually first it's a business attempt. What do you do with the negatives? They keep piling up over the years. Because he was a photographer from whenever he started in the thirties until about 1965. So you're talking over 30 years of being in the business and the negatives pile up.

**MR. JACOBY:** Mmm hmm.

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** And at first they were able to keep track of everything. And then eventually those people who didn't want to buy the negatives, the negatives would be destroyed.

**MR. JACOBY:** Now I've seen many photographs of soldiers in formation, drilling, marching, photographs of buildings. Did he do any of those types of shots?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** That I can't tell you. I really don't know. Basically, when you look through all these albums my brother and I are in 95 percent of the pictures.

**MR. JACOBY:** Mmm hmm.

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Just the two little kids. And it's just like any family. I notice we had a big album for our first son and a smaller album for the second son. And the number of pictures dwindled. We're still looking for pictures from the fourth child.

**MR. JACOBY:** Now you mentioned that you didn't live on base but you were there on occasion or often?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Frequently.

**MR. JACOBY:** Frequently.

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** I'd frequently visit. We would ride over on the boat. We'd take either the Q-11 or the General Barnett (ph), the names of the two boats.

**MR. JACOBY:** What would you do when you were on the base?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Oh, I would visit my father, you know. With the exception of the times I'd go to play with the kids who had the trains I would visit my father at Raymond Hall where the thing was. And I would walk around the base and see some of the sights.

**MR. JACOBY:** Tell me about some of the sights that you remember.

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Well, getting off the boat the first thing is the giant coast artillery cannon that was sitting right there. And I think I have one of the pictures of that. I have a bunch of postcards because as we got into the war there were a lot more pictures. But I remember the soldiers that would come during World War II. I forget whether it was the Dieppe raid or Dunkirk. The British and Canadian soldiers would run around the post in running formations wearing those little blue shorts, the same

type. Because in those days the American soldiers also wore blue fatigues for duties that they would get dirty in before the combat uniforms came into play.

**MR. JACOBY:** Now how did you know these were British and Canadian soldiers? Someone told you?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Yes. Someone told me. But you could see they would wear their boots when they'd run. And I used to take pictures of them. Because one of the things I learned to do when I was a little boy to take pictures. And because I would visit the dark room I knew how you developed the negatives. And then I knew how you printed the pictures and developed, put the pictures in the different chemicals, the developer and then the hypo for the fixation of the salts and then dry them out. And I learned to take pictures. And, in fact, I believe it was 1939 my father took me to West Point and I took pictures of a retreat formation of the flag coming down. And the band \*\*\* And then I got real close to the band. The band marched off and we walked \*\*\* I was right in front of it and taking pictures. And they went both sides of me. And when I got caught I was brushed up on a drum and got hooked on West Point and have been hooked on it ever since.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you remember any instances of retreat at Fort Slocum?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Yes. Now that you mention it, you know, it wasn't in my memory, but I have a picture of the flagpole. And I believe the hospital was behind that flagpole and the hospital where I was born. A little story about the hospital. My mother had to go on the boat several weeks early because she didn't know when the baby was – the day the baby was going to come or when I was going to come. So she lived in the hospital until I was born.

**MR. JACOBY:** Mmm hmm. Describe what retreat is like.

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Well, retreat is where I learned everybody stands at attention. The bugler sounds retreat and the soldiers at the base – at the fort all stop, face the flag, stand at attention and salute.

**MR. JACOBY:** Soldiers and civilians?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Soldiers and all civilians too. Because the civilians who worked there – Shongo (ph) was the barber. He was an Indian chief from Buffalo. He was \*\*\* I think he was first in the military, and then I don't know if he did a part time job working as the barber or full time. But everybody would stand at attention and salute the flag.

**MR. JACOBY:** So as a young boy you learned to do that.

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** I learned to do that. And, of course, in 1939 I learned the Cub Scouts too in New Rochelle, pack number four. Because I could see some pictures where I was wearing a number four. In fact, my brother joined too.

**MR. JACOBY:** Tell me about playing in the mortar batteries. Did you ever do that?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Tell you the truth I don't remember anything about the mortar batteries. But I do remember that great big cannon right there near the dock when you got off the boat and walked toward the main post. But that was another unique thing about where the dock was on one end of Davids Island – Raymond Hall was on the other end. We had to walk all the way across the whole place. But everybody walked. It was a very short \*\*\* Well, the distance wasn't all that long. But in those days everybody walked.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you remember cars on the island or vehicles?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** I can't remember seeing vehicles on the island. But I'm sure \*\*\* I saw a picture of a ferry boat. And I don't remember anything about that ferry boat. But it looked like the ferry boat was approaching the dock at Fort Slocum. So maybe there were cars or trucks or something and I just don't remember.

**MR. JACOBY:** What about bicycles? Do you remember soldiers riding bikes around?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** No. But I know my father started out taking pictures of motorcycles. There were people on motorcycles.

**MR. JACOBY:** Mmm hmm. Did he have a motorcycle himself?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** That I don't remember. When I go through some of his papers I might be able to find that out. But I don't know if he ever bought one or he just borrowed them or paid people to let him use their motorcycles. But I know he had a love for motorcycles. And I know when we would go to places like Rye Beach recreational areas he would like to ride in that airplane that would turn in all – the ride that turns in all directions, turns you upside down and stuff. Because he liked to mess around with those things that would turn him upside down. And I think he even went for a ride in an airplane in the thirties.

**MR. JACOBY:** I want to ask you about some specific events that occurred. Do you remember the airplane crash on the island?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Yes. I remember \*\*\* I have three pictures. This one is dated March 22, 1936 – a picture of Raymond Hall. And you can see the wreckage down below and a piece of the wreckage hanging off the roof.

**MR. JACOBY:** Your father took these pictures?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** I'm sure he took these pictures and two closeups of the wreckage itself. But these are black and white photos. I remember yellow. Everything was yellow. There was so much yellow paint from the surface of the aircraft. And in those days I was only six years old. In fact, this is a month before I was six. And I don't remember thinking about the pilot or what happened to people.

**MR. JACOBY:** There's no air field on the island and there's no air field that I know in New Rochelle. Do you have any idea why the plane crashed?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** I think it was just flying too low in a fog.

**MR. JACOBY:** Mmm hmm.

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Because we did have fogs and that would reduce the visibility. But it's just like in the picture of Raymond Hall you can see the water in the background and see the opposite shoreline. But we did have sea planes. And sea planes landed in the water between Fort Slocum and Glen (ph) Island casino.

**MR. JACOBY:** Looks like the plane is completely shattered.

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** But it doesn't look like Raymond Hall is that damaged does it.

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Yes. It looks like it just completely disintegrated. Sort of weird. Why would it disintegrate. And it doesn't show any sign of a fire. It just \*\*\* Whatever the way it was made with all the wires and little ribs just completely disintegrated. So it might have been traveling at a high rate of speed when it disintegrated.

**MR. JACOBY:** Let me ask you about December 7, 1941. Where were you?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** I was \*\*\* In 1941 I was 11 years old. We were at 27 Park Ridge Avenue in New Rochelle. And it was a Sunday and we were playing in the living room and we had visits from the Larkin family. They were not \*\*\* I don't know if Mr. Larkin had a job at the post but he was not a soldier. And somebody said on the radio that Pearl Harbor has been bombed.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you have any notion what that meant or where it was?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** I didn't know much about where it was. But I knew it was in Hawaii and I knew it was an island. And I knew what war was because all through the thirties at mealtime I was reminded to eat all my food because the poor little Chinese kids in China were starving because Japan was at war with China.

**MR. JACOBY:** Describe the reactions of the adults to that day.

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Well, that's pretty hard to do because as kids we were involved with kids activities and not tied to that. I do know my father worked very long hours taking pictures. And when World War II came along he expanded his business into Fort Monmouth, New Jersey and Camp Kilmer, New Jersey because Camp Kilmer was big when the troops came home from Germany and they were taking pictures. And my brother and I would go there and see soldiers and they would give us souvenirs that they were bringing back from Germany – bayonets, helmets, German artifacts and stuff like that.

**MR. JACOBY:** After Pearl Harbor was it more difficult to get on the ferry to go to Fort Slocum? Do you recall at all?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** I don't recall any difficulty. I continued to go on the boat to \*\*\* And I think we \*\*\* I don't remember the ferry. I do remember the little boat Q-11 and the Barnett (ph). In fact, I found some pictures last night of the Barnett, General Barnett sitting in the water that's semi-sunk.

**MR. JACOBY:** Tell me about the Barnett.

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** That was a bigger boat. And I can't tell you really \*\*\* Everything is big to a little kid. New Rochelle looks so small now compared to when I was a little kid and the streets were so big. But we used to ride both boats to Fort Slocum back and forth.

**MR. JACOBY:** And what happened to the Barnett?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Well, I just saw it sunk. But I don't know. I imagine they just repaired it and put it back into service.

**MR. JACOBY:** The boat \*\*\* It was the ferry to go back and forth from New Rochelle to Fort Slocum.

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** And it sunk from some mishap.

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Right.

(End of side A)

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** \*\*\* remember one highlight about the Q-11 that there was a kid I knew whose father – Buster Cage (ph) whose father was a sergeant first class that worked on the Q-11. And the Q-11 sunk and his father drowned. And I remember that was a sad time when Buster’s dad drowned. But that’s what I remember about those boats.

**MR. JACOBY:** Tell me about New Rochelle. It’s your home town.

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** You went to school there until you were how old when you moved?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Grammar school. In 1942 I was 12 years old.

**MR. JACOBY:** What was the town like?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** I remember the highlight of the town was going to the five and dime store on weekends with my mother. And she would give me a nickel and my brother a nickel and we could pick out a tin soldier to buy. I know my brother had the doctor. His was a man Dustin White was a doctor and mine was an officer holding a piece of paper in his hand and we called him the general. And so when we would play soldiers in the basement we would have our two leaders of our armies to play with.

**MR. JACOBY:** Downtown was fairly built up?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Oh, I remember a new post office. Because where we lived on 27 Park Ridge Avenue right behind us was the hill going down. And below us was the Humane Society, and on the other side of the fence the first thing was the little gas chamber that they put the animals to sleep. And my father decided to start filling in the back yard and try to build it up. And so my Uncle Steve and Uncle Lloyd at one time before he joined the Navy – Uncle Steve would work down in there. And my father would get the rubble from the old post office that they tore down and build a brick wall and stone wall across the bottom and then fill in as it would rise up. But here again is the imagination of a little kid. I used to think that we called the hills there mountains. And we would go down into the valley and then climb up on the next mountain. But in later years going back it’s just little bumps.

**MR. JACOBY:** Were you aware as a child of different ethnic groups or religions living in New Rochelle?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Not to speak of.

**MR. JACOBY:** You mentioned that your heritage is Ukrainian, or at least partly Ukrainian.

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** Was there a Ukrainian community in New Rochelle?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** No. There was no Ukrainian community. My father mixed with all different people. In fact, his best friend was Charlie Lobrette (ph). And Charlie Lobrette started selling tools in a hallway of a building in New Rochelle and graduated into becoming one of the biggest hardware dealers in America and winning all sorts of prizes. And his two sons went into the hardware business, and I know Charlie’s brother was also in the hardware business too. I remember another big thing in New Rochelle was the first Howard Johnson’s where they gave away free ice cream. And it was the summertime. And you’d go down there and you’d stand in line for hours to get up to where they would give you the free ice cream cone. And that was a big thrill. And I don’t know how long they gave away that ice cream, but I remember the crowds. It was like at a football game everybody got down on the field.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you go back for seconds?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** No. I think we would want to. But that was as a kid a big treat in the family in New Rochelle was to go to the movies and then go nearby to an ice cream store because you couldn’t have ice cream at home.

**MR. JACOBY:** Why not?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Because the refrigerators didn’t have freezers. And it started they were able to make ice. And I remember when that started my Aunt Bella started making homemade ice cream and making it in the freezer where the ice trays were.

**MR. JACOBY:** How much was the movie?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** I don’t know. It was all I think of ten cents on Saturday.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you remember any of the movies that you saw?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Oh, we saw “Tom Mix,” “Roy Rogers,” “Dick Tracy.” And we used to listen on the radio to “I Love A Mystery,” “Jack Armstrong” and others I just can’t recall at the time. Because the radio was \*\*\* This is no TV. I remember my Aunt Bella used to work for somebody that had a TV set from Dupont or Dumont – Dumont I think it was. And Mr. Barber was his name. He was a big executive in New York.

**MR. JACOBY:** What year would this have been?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Oh, I couldn't pinpoint it. But I remember when I was in high school after we left New Rochelle we got one of those first RCA four hundred dollar TV sets and watched basketball. And I remember Harry Boycoff (ph) of St. Johns. I used to think the only place they played basketball was New York City.

**MR. JACOBY:** Well, it was a big center of basketball at that time.

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Yes. And he was \*\*\* Harry Boycoff was St. John and he set the record with 54 points.

**MR. JACOBY:** After World War II started a lot of soldiers were coming into New Rochelle to go to Fort Slocum and then be transferred overseas. Do you recall the city being full of soldiers?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** No. I don't remember. I know we had \*\*\* I don't remember seeing soldiers on the streets in New Rochelle – just at Fort Slocum there were lots of soldiers. A

**MR. JACOBY:** Your father had his darkroom at Raymond Hall and he did most of his work there. But you mentioned that he had a studio in New Rochelle.

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** No.

**MR. JACOBY:** No?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** The studio was in Raymond Hall.

**MR. JACOBY:** Okay.

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** And that's where they would take the pictures, they would develop the pictures, and in the finishing room we would put together the pictures in the frames. And just like earlier you told me about you saw somebody with my father's name on \*\*\*

**MR. JACOBY:** It was a class picture I think from seventh or eighth grade in a nice frame, a paper frame with H. Dutchyshyn in sort of a script right on the front.

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Yes. I don't recall my father taking pictures of graduations or grades. But he always took pictures of my eighth graduation from Little Silver in New Jersey and high school graduation from Redbank High School in New Jersey.

**MR. JACOBY:** So he went to the island every day and then came home. Did he come home for dinner every night or what were his hours?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** His hours were pretty long. And frequently he would have a late dinner after our dinner. And that just persisted all through high school too as well as grammar school.

**MR. JACOBY:** Was your mother able to make use of the commissary at the base?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** No. My mother \*\*\* We had no military privileges. My mother helped by learning how to retouch pictures. And she would \*\*\* At the school she learned how to \*\*\* A newspaper is sticking out of a guys pocket in his coat. She would remove the newspaper from the coat using a little razor blade to remove the material on the negative and then fill it back in with a pencil. And she would also take wrinkles out of faces and that sort of thing – change things on pictures that were displeasing to people.

**MR. JACOBY:** Mmm hmm. So she went to Raymond Hall to do this?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** No. She would do it at home in a little part of the – a little room off the bedroom was like a closet. And that's where she would do that. And then even when we went to Fort Monmouth and moved to New Jersey she would continue being a retoucher. My aunt also did – My Aunt Rose also helped with retouching too.

**MR. JACOBY:** Would your Aunt Rose have perhaps helped in the studio at Raymond Hall?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Yes. My Aunt Rose helped there in Raymond Hall and she also helped in Camp Kilmer and during the war or after the war and also briefly in Fort Monmouth.

**MR. JACOBY:** And your dad spent much of his day at the base. Where did he eat? In a mess hall, or did he bring a sack lunch?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** My father would take sack lunches. Because my father wouldn't eat in the post dining hall, or in those days we called it the mess hall.

**MR. JACOBY:** Mmm hmm. What about yourself? When you went there to visit or play did you ever eat in the mess hall?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** No. I have no recollections of the mess hall. But I remember being in other buildings. I've been in the barracks buildings and the P Ex area. And I think there was a bowling alley. I don't remember. I'm not sure.

**MR. JACOBY:** Yes, there was.

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** I remember the barber shop. That's where Shongo worked.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did Shongo cut your hair?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** I'm sure he must have at one time or another. And my father had a lot of friends that were sergeants. And one of the things my father did in early years – he joined the Masonic Order and became a mason. And we have pictures of a group of officers at Fort Slocum in one of the albums and my father wrote on there “all masons.” And I know that he had lots of visitors at the house where we lived, different sergeants who'd come over. And there were a lot of visitors. And these sergeants – a lot of them were masons too.

**MR. JACOBY:** What was the attraction to being a mason among the NCO's?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** I have no idea what it was then. But I know that my father was a mason for all of his lifetime after that. In fact, he raised me in the \*\*\* I joined the lodge when I was 22. And he raised me, and then I raised my young son when he went to West Point and graduated in 1981.

**MR. JACOBY:** Are you still active in the Masonic Lodge here?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** I have not been to the lodge here in Johnstown for many, many years. We just moved back to Johnstown a year ago.

**MR. JACOBY:** When was the last time you were in New Rochelle?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** I can't tell you the year, but I remember Charlie Lobrette telling my father \*\*\* My father and mother lived in Florida. And Charlie invited them up and he said, “We'll take you over to see Fort Slocum.” We were in some kind of a boat. We drove around. But we looked at the dock and it was so dangerous to get off we just stayed on the boat.

**MR. JACOBY:** This was after the base closed.

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** It's after the base closed. So it was probably in the eighties or – yes. Because my father died in '85 so it was probably in the early eighties.

**MR. JACOBY:** What were your impressions of the island at that time?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Oh, I was shocked to see it like a jungle. I mean you couldn't see anything except the trees and the bushes were growing right up to the edge.

**MR. JACOBY:** Could you tell whether many of the buildings were damaged?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** I didn't see any buildings.

**MR. JACOBY:** It was that thick.

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** It was that thick all around the place. I imagine if people are doing things to buildings there now they must be – they had to cut paths to \*\*\* I can see how trees grow. And I imagine trees were growing everywhere. Because they used to have the center part of the island was all parade ground. That was after you passed the cannon and you had the officers row on one side and the barracks on the other side of the parade ground.

**MR. JACOBY:** Have you been keeping track of events in the last say 25 years about the island? Any other news?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Not really. I had heard at one time, and maybe it was from Charlie Lobrette, that somebody was going to buy Fort Slocum and Davids Island and put a bridge over to it and make it a guarded residential community. Oh, I should mention \*\*\* I mentioned Charlie Lobrette. He's passed on now. But his son Arthur ran a couple of hardware stores in New Rochelle, New York. So both generations \*\*\* And I understand that the younger kids, grandkids are involved.

**MR. JACOBY:** So they're still active.

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** I'm sure there's still Lobrette Hardware in New Rochelle, even though I haven't visited.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you have any thoughts on what became of the island?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** No. I don't know. I remember it becoming a chaplain school and then just closing. And I don't know what they're doing with it.

**MR. JACOBY:** You went to West Point in 1940 \*\*\*

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** In 1948, yes, 1948. At that time we had been living in Redbank or Little Silver, New Jersey for six years. I finished seventh and eighth grade in Little Silver Grammar School and finished four years of high school in Redbank. We would ride the bus to and from. But because we were associated with the Army post, as my father was a post photographer there at Fort Monmouth, that's the signal corps school. And he was taking a lot of group pictures then. That's a clock in the other room that has bird calls. And I had four years of Redbank High School. We would commute every day on the bus several miles to get into town where that school was.

**MR. JACOBY:** When you were a child in New Rochelle or in Redbank did you ever or often go into New York City?



**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Oh, yes. It's funny you asked. I remember going to New York City to see "The Merry Widow" play and I don't remember if \*\*\* New York City – my father would take us like once a year to Macy's in New York City and buy clothes, because they tried to dress my brother and I like we were twins. We're a year and six months apart. April four, September is nine – a year and five months apart. And we would always get the same kind of navy suits or the same jackets or winter jackets. And we would make shopping trips to New York City just about every year.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you take the train or did your father have a car at that time?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Oh, my father had a car.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you remember what kind?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** I don't know for sure, but I remember my parents talking about Buick. I see the pictures and I have no idea what the pictures \*\*\* But I remember my father used to take movies when we were quite small from about 1934 time frame maybe. And my mother would get into the car and you'd see her picture in Pelham Manor driving off. And then here comes the car. The next scene is the car is coming around the corner and she stops the car and gets out. So she'd been around the block in the car. But my father did have a car. But I remember in 1941 we had a Ford car. And I don't remember what year it was, but it was like a Volkswagen. And we went on a trip to Florida, and a corporal or a sergeant went with us and his wife and they had a brand new baby. So here we had in a tiny car my mother and father \*\*\* Maybe it was Sergeant Cheesham (ph) and his wife and little kid. We drove as far as Key Largo south of Miami and across the windshield was just covered with bugs. We'd have to stop the car and clean the windshield off of the bugs. But in those days the drivers just kept shifting around and you could drive all day and all night.

**MR. JACOBY:** What's become of those movies that your father took? Do you have any idea?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** I put them on DVDs. I had them transferred over a number of years now, so I have them all on DVDs.

**MR. JACOBY:** Great. Well, do you have any final thoughts on your experiences in New Rochelle or Davids Island?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** No. But, you know, I was born there. I was raised to be in the Army. I had 30 years in the Army. My father had eight years, loved the Army. And my oldest son went to the Air Force Academy and served for 30 years – retired a couple of years ago. He was a fighter pilot and a test pilot. My second son went to West Point and became an infantry officer and served 20 years. He was in Germany and he retired in 2001. That's six years ago. My daughter married, had a military wedding. So the first three weddings for the kids were military weddings – one at the Air Force Academy for my infantry son, one in California at an air base for my Air Force son, and my daughter married a boy that went to Gettysburg College with her – graduated in '81. And he spent five years in the Army. And when I retired my daughter said, "No more moving." He had to get out. Jimmy Sweeney had to get out of the Army too. And then my youngest boy who is 14 years younger said, "My older brothers are doing my share." Butch played soccer for the Air Force Academy. Doug played football for West Point. And the youngest boy was a fullback – was a starting fullback for two years at Cornell. And he's an engineer.

**MR. JACOBY:** Would you say that your exposure to the Army at a young age at Fort Slocum was a big impact on your own Army career?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Absolutely. And I was brought up in the Army. I used to tell people my color of my blood was olive drab. My first company command was at Fort Ladderwood (ph) Missouri when I departed to go to Korea for the Korean War. And they gave me a pair of GI undershorts. They were olive drab. And they pasted stickers all over it and put down RA for regular Army.

**MR. JACOBY:** You entered the Corps of Engineers right out of the Academy?

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** Yes. I was commissioned in the Corps of Engineers and spent 30 years there. I commanded troops and engineers – a lot of troop duty and then served in the Pentagon. I was the discom (ph) commander of the First Infantry Division when we went to Reforger [Return of Forces to Germany] in I think 1974 or five, somewhere like that. And then I was the Philadelphia district engineer from 1975 to 1978. And then I became a project manager for the production base, munitions production base modernization and expansion program. I served at Picatinny Arsenal for four years. I was spending a million dollars a day, had seventeen thousand people working on projects all over the country.

**MR. JACOBY:** Well, Harry Dutchyshyn, I want to thank you very much for participating in this program.

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** I thank you very much, Rob, for inviting me to participate. And I'm very glad to help out. And I'll go ahead and make copies of the pictures or you show me how to use that machine.

**MR. JACOBY:** Okay.

**MR. DUTCHYSHYN:** We can make some pictures for your program.

(End of Tape)

CERTIFICATE

I, Lin York, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and accurate transcript of the taped proceedings as transcribed by me on the date hereinbefore set forth, to the best of my ability.

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Dated: October 25, 2007 Lin York

Agency Typist



**MR. JACOBY:** My name is Robert Jacoby, representing Tetra Tech, E.C. And I am speaking today with Anne Ekman and her sister, Christa Mueller at Christa's house in Williamsburg, Virginia on November 19, 2007.

This interview is part of a program sponsored by the United States Army Corps of Engineers, and the New Rochelle Public Library to collect oral histories about the experiences and memories of people who were associated with the former US Army Post, Fort Slocum, located on David's Island in New Rochelle, New York.

Well, thank you both very much for participating in this. Let's establish first, who is who. So, Christa, why don't you speak first and tell me what years you lived at Fort Slocum and how old you were.

**MS. MUELLER:** We had come to New York the beginning of my sophomore year in high school. But there were no quarters for us available at Fort Slocum so that year, which I think was 1953, we lived first in Mamaroneck, and then moved onto the Post. I left in 1955, in the summer when I graduated from high school and went to college, but our parents, and Anne, went to Germany that December. So I only returned to Fort Slocum that Christmas and never since then.

**MR. JACOBY:** Anne, how old were you?

**MS. EKMAN:** I was 10 when we lived in Mamaroneck, so that when we moved onto Fort Slocum I must have been 11. I must have been 10-and-a-half when we moved there. And I was 12-and-a-half when we left.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you remember the first time you saw Fort Slocum?

**MS. EKMAN:** I do on.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you, Christa?

**MS. MUELLER:** I don't think I do. In my mind's eye I see the island across the water, the profile of the island. That may have been the first time and it may have been each and every time after that.

**MR. JACOBY:** Um-hum. Christa, tell me about your father, what was his rank, and what were his assignments?

**MS. MUELLER:** Daddy was a Lieutenant Colonel in the Chaplaincy, and he was the director of training at the Chaplain School.

**MR. JACOBY:** And where did he work? Where was his office?

**MS. MUELLER:** He worked in the building that, I believe, used to be the old hospital.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do either of you remember going to visit him?

**MS. EKMAN:** Well, I remember going to meet him at the entrance, I don't remember going into his office. But I remember --

**MR. JACOBY:** Um-hum. Ever?

**MS. EKMAN:** No, I don't have a memory of that.

**MR. JACOBY:** Neither of you?

**MS. MUELLER:** Yes, I did go in once. In fact, I have that one photograph of daddy sitting in his office. And I think that's at Fort Slocum.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you take that picture?

**MS. MUELLER:** No, I didn't. It must have been this one.

**MR. JACOBY:** Um-hum. So, what were his duties on a day-to-day basis?

**MS. MUELLER:** I don't know exactly what a director of training does. I know he had a lot to do with the curriculum that was set up for the Chaplains.

**MS. EKMAN:** I know that he instituted, along with the sergeant who was the senior enlisted man of the Chaplain School, decided that the students should have inspections and monthly parades, which was much to their regret. But he was very adamant about that, the fact that the Chaplains should also be military. And I can remember the parades. And I can remember our father being so excited that he was being in the parade and then turning right when everyone was told to turn left.

**MR. JACOBY:** This was on the parade ground?



**MS. EKMAN:** It was. It was. Yeah. And the little dogs would run in and out of the marching feet. Yeah, it was always fun.

**MR. JACOBY:** Christa, describe what your quarters were like?

**MS. MUELLER:** Our quarters were probably the best ones that we ever had on a military Post in the United States. They were old, and large, and they faced the parade ground with a nice big porch on the front. The back was toward the ferry. We were quarters No. 3, which was one half of a duplex that we shared with No. 2. No. 1 was a single-family house, much larger, where the ranking office on the Post usually lived.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you have your own bedroom?

**MS. MUELLER:** No. Anne and I never had our own bedrooms in our lives.

**MS. EKMAN:** Yeah, that's right. We shared always. But it was such a large room that she had her section and I had my section.

**MR. JACOBY:** So, tell me something about the other rooms in the house.

**MS. EKMAN:** Oh, it was fun because we had two stairways in the house, a front and back that was the service -- the servants' stairway. And Peter, our brother, slept in the lower bedroom, just above that second stairway. There was a three-step down into his area and there was a bathroom, and then he had his room and I think even the ceiling was a little bit --

**MS. MUELLER:** I think so.

**MS. EKMAN:** -- slanted. Sloped. And to this day, when I'm in a house that has a similar floor plan I turn to the right to go down the back stairs and there aren't any. Because of that house.

**MR. JACOBY:** What did you see out your front windows, out your front porch?

**MS. MUELLER:** The front porch was the parade ground, we could see the ocean with -- or the bay with a bunch of rocks. Do you remember the name of those rocks? That momma painted?

**MS. EKMAN:** Yes -- no.

**MS. MUELLER:** And off to the, hum, I'm trying to remember. The ballpark was probably just opposite us.

**MS. EKMAN:** It was, but I was low.

**MS. MUELLER:** But low. Yes.

**MS. EKMAN:** We couldn't see it.

**MS. MUELLER:** On a lower level. And then beyond that the end of the NCO quarters row.

**MS. EKMAN:** Um-hum.

**MR. JACOBY:** Was the furniture in your house Army issued, or did your family, your parents, accumulate that through their lives and bring it with them?

**MS. MUELLER:** No, they were our -- it was all our furniture.

**MS. EKMAN:** Was our diningroom set? Seems to me that we had quartermaster diningroom set.

**MS. MUELLER:** That may be, because we never had a diningroom set of our own.

**MS. EKMAN:** I think so.

**MS. MUELLER:** The kitchen was very nice. It had a fireplace that had been closed in and made into a shelf, a cupboard, with two doors, and that's where daddy kept his bar. And in the middle of the room we had a sawbuck table that daddy had built and then it was a roomy -- a roomy kitchen.

**MS. EKMAN:** It was like a country kitchen. And there were fat, squat radiators under the windows, and whenever I was cold I would sit on them. It was very nice, and the windows were low to the floor, about three feet --

**MS. MUELLER:** Wasn't there a basement?

**MS. EKMAN:** I don't remember a basement.

**MS. MUELLER:** I think there were stairs that went down to a coal room, or a furnace room.

**MS. EKMAN:** Could be. But I don't recall that.

**MR. JACOBY:** You had a radio?

**MS. MUELLER:** Well, we -- I don't recall a radio before daddy bought the console with the first television and the first phonograph.

**MR. JACOBY:** Was that exciting?

**MS. MUELLER:** It was very exciting. But I still remember better -- we must have had a radio because I remember gathering on Sunday evening listening to "20 Questions", "Our Miss Brooks" --

**MS. EKMAN:** "The Shadow."

**MS. MUELLER:** That was a daily program, I think. Maybe it was.

**MS. EKMAN:** I remember that from another place.

**MR. JACOBY:** Was it something that you did as a family, all together?

**MS. MUELLER:** That's -- we always had our meals together. And that Sunday evening, tuna salad and biscuits and "You Are There" and "Our Miss Brooks" were all -- that was all part of our Sunday evening.

**MS. EKMAN:** Um-hum.

**MS. MUELLER:** Friday evenings momma and daddy usually had a cocktail party to go to. And it was a lively little social life on the Post for them. For us it was -- it was nice. There were not many kids, but it was a small group and we all knew each other. We all rode the school bus --

**MS. EKMAN:** Yeah, there was tons of visiting back and forth. And you know, we'd walk into each other's houses. We'd knock first and walk in, as I recall. Our evenings were spent reading, I guess, or playing games. Chinese Checkers and Pollyanna.

**MS. MUELLER:** Or going to the movie theater, which was --

**MS. EKMAN:** The movie, yeah.

**MS. MUELLER:** -- on the far corner of the Post from where our house was. And I think they cost 18 cents until you were an adult and then they were 25.

**MR. JACOBY:** Every night there was a movie?

**MS. MUELLER:** Well, we didn't go every night, but weekends we would frequently go.

**MS. EKMAN:** I remember them being 25 cents until you were 12 and then 35 cents, but this might have been the last year.

**MS. MUELLER:** Still a lot cheaper.

**MS. EKMAN:** Because I was a very skinny little girl and I looked 10 until I turned 12, and so I continued to pay 25 cents until my conscience began to bother me, and one time I said, I'm 12 now. And they said, you're so honest, you can still pay 25 cents.

**MR. JACOBY:** What's your memory, Anne, of the separation between officers and enlisted men?

**MS. EKMAN:** The only -- the only difference I noticed was that our good friend couldn't come to our pool -- our beach, because he was an enlisted son, an enlisted man's son. And that was the only time it touched me, otherwise I wasn't aware of it.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you remember anything, Christa, about that?

**MS. MUELLER:** No, I don't. But I think that was not because he wasn't welcome at our beach.

**MS. EKMAN:** Oh no, he was our good friend and we wanted him to come.

**MS. MUELLER:** Yeah, it was -- it was his father's desire that they not intrude on the officer's beach.

**MS. EKMAN:** Sure. And we thought the whole thing was ridiculous.

**MR. JACOBY:** His father was an enlisted man?

**MS. EKMAN:** Yes. Yeah. And we didn't even know that really until this came up, and he was explaining to us why he couldn't come there. And so we worked to get that changed.

**MR. JACOBY:** So, your friends spanned the children of officers, NCOs, everyone?



**MS. MUELLER:** I can't recall an NCO high school student, child, they were all officers' children that went to the high school.

**MS. EKMAN:** It could be when we were there that -- that Bob and Tom were the only enlisted kids of that age at that time.

**MS. MUELLER:** At that age, I think that's the key thing. There may have been younger ones that we --

**MS. EKMAN:** Yeah. I think there might have been.

**MS. MUELLER:** -- didn't meet or pay attention to. I babysat for officers' children, I didn't ever babysit for anybody in the NCO quarters.

**MR. JACOBY:** You mentioned that your parents went to lots of cocktail parties. Who would attend these? Mostly officers, I suspect.

**MS. MUELLER:** They were always at the Officers' Club and there was an Officers' Wives' Club and I don't know large it was, but our cookbook would give us a hint if we counted the names that are included in the old cookbook.

**MS. EKMAN:** And that was just an Officers' Wives' cookbook.

**MS. MUELLER:** Yes, it was.

**MR. JACOBY:** Anne, tell me something about holidays at Fort Slocum, Thanksgiving, Christmas?

**MS. EKMAN:** Well, I remember the sunrise services on Easter were always outside in one spot, not far from our house, and it was always cold and damp and sometimes it snowed.

**MS. MUELLER:** Windy.

**MS. EKMAN:** Yes. And it was windy. I really don't remember Christmas celebrations outside of the church service. And Fourth of July, the only thing I can remember is that one day, one year, the Post commander set up a boat ride, with the ferry boat, from Fort Slocum to Coney Island, where we had music and we danced on the deck, and we got there and went on the rides, and then we came back sometime in the evening. And that was one of the best --

**MS. MUELLER:** Times.

**MS. EKMAN:** I don't remember fireworks for the Fourth of July. I don't remember special picnics or anything.

**MR. JACOBY:** Armed Forces Day, was that a special day?

**MS. MUELLER:** I don't have any recollection of that either, although I have that program from it.

**MS. EKMAN:** There probably were parades, but I --

**MS. MUELLER:** I remember there was an essay contest once for Armed Forces Day, and I happened to be one of the winners. It was a contest at my high school --

**MS. EKMAN:** Oh.

**MS. MUELLER:** And I was one of the winners, and the prize was a tour of Fort Slocum. And that's what one of those photographs is.

**MR. JACOBY:** Christa, Anne mentioned going on a trip to Coney Island. What's your recollection of going into New York City?

**MS. MUELLER:** I don't remember that trip that she is talking about. Possibly because I was working at my first job that summer.

**MS. EKMAN:** On the mainland, right?

**MS. MUELLER:** But we did go to church in the Bronx every Sunday, where daddy often assisted with the services at Our Savior Lutheran Church. But daddy had the idea that we should go and eat at a restaurant, a different restaurant as often as we could from a different ethnic background. And we did it once. And I still remember we went to Sokohl (phonetic) House, which I think was a Hungarian restaurant.

**MS. EKMAN:** I don't remember that.

**MS. MUELLER:** It's the only one I remember. I don't remember spending a lot of time in New York City.

**MR. JACOBY:** You and your friends didn't go down there?

**MS. MUELLER:** I would go to West Point, which meant that I got on a train in New Rochelle and changed to a bus at the Port Authority in New York City. My experiences in New York usually were after I was in college.

**MS. EKMAN:** I remember going shopping with our mother in New York City. She would take me to Bloomingdale's and Saks Fifth Avenue. And before we left Fort Slocum she bought me a winter coat, and it was an alpaca, and it was from -- it was either from Saks Fifth Avenue or Bloomingdale's.

**MS. MUELLER:** I remember that. I got one, an alpaca coat too, but I think I got it from either Bloomingdale's or Arnold Constable in New Rochelle.

**MS. EKMAN:** Oh. Oh.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you remember going to any Broadway plays or Radio City Music Hall, anything like that?

**MS. MUELLER:** No.

**MS. EKMAN:** No. Not at that time.

**MS. MUELLER:** My -- our father didn't have a lot of money. When he joined the Army he had three children already. And I think his first pay was very, very meager.

**MS. EKMAN:** That's right. It was a struggle for our mother.

**MR. JACOBY:** Even as a Lieutenant Colonel?

**MS. EKMAN:** Oh, yeah.

**MS. MUELLER:** Well, we were more expensive because we were bigger.

**MR. JACOBY:** Yeah.

**MS. EKMAN:** And they were supporting someone in Chicago.

**MS. MUELLER:** Our mother's mother.

**MS. EKMAN:** Our grandmother.

**MS. MUELLER:** Partially. They were contributing to her support.

**MS. EKMAN:** And then when Peter went to Valley Forge that took some more. So we were always, I think, on the edge.

**MS. MUELLER:** And when I went to college, daddy told me later, my second year, that I insisted on returning from Germany to go to my second year. He said that he had to take a loan from Army Emergency Relief because he didn't have enough to pay my tuition.

**MS. EKMAN:** Yeah.

**MR. JACOBY:** Where did you get medical services?

**MS. MUELLER:** At Fort Slocum we had a little clinic. Our orthodontic work was done at West Point. And momma and daddy -- no, that was years later when they went to that Navy place in New York City.

**MS. EKMAN:** Well, when I got hit in the eye with mud while we were swimming, I had to go to St. Albans.

**MS. MUELLER:** Yeah.

**MS. EKMAN:** I went to the dispensary but they couldn't help me. And so they took me -- or I guess our parents took me, to St. Albans. That's where serious things were --

**MR. JACOBY:** Was that a military hospital?

**MS. EKMAN:** It was. I think it was a Navy hospital.

**MS. MUELLER:** And I -- I remember --

**MS. EKMAN:** It was in New York.

**MS. MUELLER:** -- years later they would go there, even from the Catskills they would go down to St. Albans regularly for checkups and --

**MS. EKMAN:** Right.

**MR. JACOBY:** Christa, tell me what you remember about a typical day for your mother?

**MS. MUELLER:** I was a teenager. Do you think I paid attention to what my mother was doing?

**MS. EKMAN:** I bet I can remember better than Christa.

**MS. MUELLER:** Okay. Well, my mom was a good cook.

**MS. EKMAN:** Because I was there.

**MS. MUELLER:** And she was very domestic and she sewed. She sewed a lot of our clothes. Those are things I specifically remember. But she had teas and coffees to go to, also.

**MR. JACOBY:** With other officers' wives?

**MS. MUELLER:** Yes.

**MS. EKMAN:** She had -- she wore high heels all day long, to clean in, she never wore flat shoes. She was always dressed. She didn't very often wear trousers. She wore dresses, skirts, and an apron. And she would do her work, and then she would --

**MS. MUELLER:** Bake bread.

**MS. EKMAN:** -- read a little bit. She baked bread. We had a butler's pantry between our kitchen and dining room and that was her sewing room. And it was always filled with projects. And she would be there, and that's where she spent a good part of every day.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did she do any volunteer work on the -- at the Fort?

**MS. MUELLER:** She had been a Girl Scout leader.

**MS. EKMAN:** She was a Girl Scout leader, yeah, at Fort Slocum.

**MS. MUELLER:** But did she do that at Fort Slocum too?

**MS. EKMAN:** Oh, sure, Barbara Keating was her best Girl Scout.

**MS. MUELLER:** Okay.

**MR. JACOBY:** What do you remember about her cooking, you said she was a good cook? What kinds of things would she make for dinner?

**MS. EKMAN:** Once a week we would have a rolled rib roast. I remember that. And then nights when she had Girl Scouts we would have Kraft dinner. Which was what I thought was spaghetti.

**MS. MUELLER:** She was such a brave person, she -- before church, she would to put the oven -- the roast in the oven and we'd come home and have dinner at noon. And I would be afraid to do that.

**MS. EKMAN:** And in those days we didn't have the, you know, the timed cooking where it would shut off.

**MS. MUELLER:** That's right. She baked bread, probably once a week.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you girls help with any of those dinner?

**MS. MUELLER:** Oh, yes.

**MS. EKMAN:** Oh, sure. And we always had to help wash dishes. Make the salad.

**MS. MUELLER:** And she would -- she had a lot of Christmas baking that we both carry out to this day.

**MR. JACOBY:** So, tell me then about Christmas, because Anne said that she doesn't really remember it. What about you, Christa? Where did you celebrate Christmas, in the house? Or relatives?

**MS. MUELLER:** Our Christmases were always very German and very elaborate. And we -- my parents, that is, the Christ child, or St. Nicholas, or somebody, would get things ready the day of the 24th. That night we would go -- I think we would have our gift sharing first when we started going to midnight Masses, and we would go to the midnight Mass in the Bronx and then come home at 1:00.

**MS. EKMAN:** Yeah, our Christmas was always Christmas Eve. And then on Christmas Day it was --

**MS. MUELLER:** Big dinner.



**MS. EKMAN:** -- laughing and having a big dinner.

**MR. JACOBY:** Big dinner at home. You didn't eat at the Officers Club?

**MS. EKMAN:** No, it had nothing to do with Fort Slocum, as I recall.

**MS. MUELLER:** No. No.

**MS. EKMAN:** That was our own family --

**MS. MUELLER:** Thanksgivings we sometimes ate in mess halls, and I don't recall if we did that at Fort Slocum, or if it was just at Fort Lee?

**MS. EKMAN:** I don't know. I know Mike and I did that often.

**MS. MUELLER:** I think I've done it. I've done it twice in our time in the Army. But I don't recall if it was Fort Slocum or not.

**MR. JACOBY:** Anne, tell me something about playing on the island. What kinds of things did you do?

**MS. EKMAN:** Well, I did a lot of running around and riding my bicycle, and climbing on the rocks along the seawall. There were other children that did that too, but mostly I remember doing it on my own. But we would have races and we would play games like baseball, I suppose. What do you call that, 500, and hit the bat? Games like that, and hide-and-peek. And just pretty much what normal children do all over.

**MR. JACOBY:** Were there areas of the island that were restricted?

**MS. EKMAN:** We were not supposed to go to the gun pits. And of course, we would make a beeline over there. But on the whole, my friends and I were a little afraid of the tunnel. But the bigger boys would like to go in there and explore.

**MR. JACOBY:** Christa, tell me about the teen club?

**MS. MUELLER:** I didn't have much to do with the teen club, because I think that I was one of the officers at first, and we tried to organize, you know, something fun, and it was always the same group of people and this bare room. And I think I was not probably very good at organizing that.

My activities were different. I had a dog that --

**MR. JACOBY:** What was his name?

**MS. MUELLER:** His name was Fang. He was a collie. And I would spend time with him. And I read a great deal. I was very interested in history and archeology, and I had a long and interesting correspondence with a historian in California who was quite an old man then. He actually knew some of the troopers that had fought in the Seventh Cavalry, because he wrote several books about that. And my -- or if I hung out with the von Voigtlander girls.

**MS. EKMAN:** Yeah. And you had your stamp collection too, remember?

**MS. MUELLER:** Yes, but that didn't take a lot of my time.

**MR. JACOBY:** What kind of sports activities were you interested in?

**MS. MUELLER:** I was not an athlete. But I participated with the baseball team on the Post. I kept score. I think I was on a basketball team once.

**MR. JACOBY:** What about swimming, Anne?

**MS. EKMAN:** Oh, yes.

**MS. MUELLER:** Oh, yes.

**MS. EKMAN:** We were avid swimmers.

**MS. MUELLER:** Yeah, we were both swimmers.

**MS. EKMAN:** I remember the first day I was in the water and I was by myself with the lifeguard watching and the wind blew up, and I was still a new swimmer, I was only 10, 10-and-a-half, and the current was pretty strong, and I was on the float because off of our dock, off of our swimming pier, there were two floats, and you could swim to them. Well, I was at one and it was time to go back, but it was against the current, and I can remember to this day swimming and swimming and swimming, and then not getting anywhere. And then I saw the lifeguard sitting on the edge of his chair, and I knew he was going to jump

in and save me and it scared me so badly that I quickly got there all by myself. And forever after I was a good swimmer.

**MR. JACOBY:** Who were the lifeguards?

**MS. MUELLER:** Soldiers.

**MS. EKMAN:** Moonlighting, I guess. Didn't they get extra pay for that, do you think?

**MS. MUELLER:** They might have. I don't know.

**MS. EKMAN:** I don't know.

**MR. JACOBY:** Christa, describe what Retreat meant?

**MS. MUELLER:** Retreat was an important time of the day. And this was always true on Army Posts that we lived on, but because Fort Slocum was small, wherever you were you could hear the first call, and you prepared yourself for Retreat. If you were driving a car you stopped and you got out of the car.

**MS. EKMAN:** If you were on a bike you got off your bike.

**MS. MUELLER:** Yes. Wherever you were you stood at ease waiting for the cannon, and then you stood at attention as they played the Retreat. Did they play the Star Spangled Banner, I don't think so. It was just Retreat. Star Spangled Banner was special occasions.

**MS. EKMAN:** You know, it's interesting that I remember our father telling us not to salute, that we should stand with our hands to our side. And I never really understood why.

**MS. MUELLER:** I was reminded of that recently when I think somebody accused Obama of not putting his hand over his heart during the national anthem. And I remembered that daddy told us that civilians should only stand at attention.

**MR. JACOBY:** You're speaking about Barack Obama?

**MS. MUELLER:** Yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** Anne, were there real buglers there, or was this all piped in?

**MS. EKMAN:** It was a recording. But occasionally our brother Peter would make arrangements ahead of time, and if it was the night before he was going back to school after he started attending Valley Forge, he would play the bugle at 11:00. He had his own, and he would go out into the middle of the parade ground and play and they wouldn't use the recordings.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you remember Reveille?

**MS. MUELLER:** Oh, sure.

**MR. JACOBY:** Describe that.

**MS. MUELLER:** You got to get up, you got to get up, you got to get up in the morning.

**MS. EKMAN:** I don't think I heard it too often.

**MS. MUELLER:** Oh, yeah.

**MS. EKMAN:** I must have been a real sound sleeper.

**MS. MUELLER:** It was, you know, welcoming the day. We had Reveille, we had Chow Call, we had -- I think there was a call before Taps, Call to Quarters maybe? I used to know the calls. I don't recall them all anymore. And I think during the day there was Assembly and they Had Chapel Call on Sundays.

**MR. JACOBY:** So the various calls separated the parts of the day very clearly?

**MS. MUELLER:** We weren't always sure which ones they were, and I could not repeat them at all, except for Taps and Retreat and Reveille, those, of course, are imprinted on us.

**MS. EKMAN:** And if they -- they were such a part of our lives that if we didn't hear them we missed them.

**MR. JACOBY:** Um-hum. Um-hum. What about the flagpole, was that a special place on the Post?

**MS. MUELLER:** Well, that's where we had the Retreat, and any ceremonies that were held.

**MS. EKMAN:** Oh, and we always watched to see what flag was being flown.

**MR. JACOBY:** Why?

**MS. EKMAN:** Because there was the storm flag, which was a very small flag, and therefore, wouldn't be damaged so much, and then there was the large flag for important ceremonies and holidays. And then there was the normal flag, which I guess was called the Garrison Flag.

**MS. MUELLER:** I couldn't remember which was called the Garrison Flag.

**MR. JACOBY:** Describe the flagpole, what did it look like?

**MS. EKMAN:** Well, it was tall.

**MR. JACOBY:** Was it painted a special color?

**MS. EKMAN:** It was white, I think and had a gold -- a brass knob on the top?

**MS. MUELLER:** Yeah, I think so.

**MR. JACOBY:** Could you see the flag from everywhere on the island **MS. MUELLER:** Yes.

**MS. EKMAN:** Just about.

**MS. MUELLER:** Unless you were behind one of those big elm trees.

**MS. EKMAN:** Or, you know, behind a building. You might not (Inaudible) to see it only.

**MR. JACOBY:** Describe what it was like going to school. What went on?

**MS. EKMAN:** Well, we would -- we'd all have to go down to the ferry. I don't think we caught the bus on the island.

**MS. MUELLER:** No.

**MS. EKMAN:** That's not my memory. We would take the ferry across, and on the other side, on the mainland...

- - -  
(End of Side A).  
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**MS. EKMAN:** ...remember you going across with us. Did you take a --

**MS. MUELLER:** I think it may have been a different ferry.

**MS. EKMAN:** Maybe.

**MR. JACOBY:** So, there were no adults going with you that you remember?

**MS. MUELLER:** Not with us.

**MR. JACOBY:** But you remember having an MP?

**MS. EKMAN:** Um-hum.

**MR. JACOBY:** And was he your pal or --

**MS. EKMAN:** Oh yeah, he talked to us and he was always a good fellow.

**MR. JACOBY:** Um-hum.

**MS. EKMAN:** And he would look at me and tell me that there was something wrong with my eyes because sometimes I would get dried on my eyes and he'd -- I mean, they were our friends. Yeah.

**MR. JACOBY:** Um-hum. What school did you go to?

**MS. EKMAN:** I went to Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson Elementary School, and then to Isaac Young Junior High School.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you have many friends in New Rochelle?

**MS. EKMAN:** Oh, yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** Or were most of your friends on the island?

**MS. EKMAN:** I had many friends on New Rochelle, and sometimes I would invite them to Fort Slocum, but not usually. Usually they were my school friends. And I would go to their houses. But I wouldn't invite them to my house, because -- I don't know why. That was --

**MR. JACOBY:** Was that your situation, Christa?

**MS. MUELLER:** That probably was, because it was inconvenient to make the arrangement to pick up and deliver. Our closest -- my high school was very large, New Rochelle High School. And so your -- your friendships, you had to select from in that huge number. My best friends were living on the island.

**MS. EKMAN:** But they were your age, weren't they?

**MS. MUELLER:** And they were my age.

**MS. EKMAN:** I had no one my age on the island. They were younger or older. So, my classmates were my friends on the mainland, but it was like I had a different life as soon as I got home. It was different.

**MR. JACOBY:** How many kids do you remember being at Slocum?

**MS. EKMAN:** I remember about 10 or 11 --

**MR. JACOBY:** Was that true --

**MS. EKMAN:** -- of all ages.

**MR. JACOBY:** True in your grade?

**MS. MUELLER:** Well, there were a lot of smaller children because I babysat.

**MS. EKMAN:** Yeah, the little ones.

**MS. MUELLER:** And I think probably --

**MS. EKMAN:** Three and four-year-olds.

**MS. MUELLER:** -- there weren't more than 15 of between say 12 and 18.

**MS. EKMAN:** Oh, I'm even thinking between 10 and 18. Like Jimmy Keating and that Eric Krauser's brother, Haywood.

**MS. MUELLER:** Remember the Wyands? The Wyand family had about eight children.

**MS. EKMAN:** Yeah. Um-hum.

**MS. MUELLER:** They came a little later.

**MS. EKMAN:** Yeah. Frances Wyand was one of the girls who was a Girl Scout.

**MS. MUELLER:** Was she the oldest one?

**MS. EKMAN:** I don't know, I don't remember.

**MS. MUELLER:** I'm trying to remember.

**MS. EKMAN:** I haven't even thought of her name for years.

**MR. JACOBY:** What schools did you go to, Christa?

**MS. MUELLER:** I just went to, first Mamaroneck High School and then to New Rochelle High School.

**MR. JACOBY:** Um-hum. And you graduated from high school?

**MS. MUELLER:** I graduated from high school that year -- that -- in 1955 and went to Mary Washington College.

**MR. JACOBY:** And you really never came back to Slocum, did you?

**MS. MUELLER:** Only that Christmas, the following Christmas. Our parents had gone to Germany with Anne, and Peter and I went to stay with the minister who ran the church and the school on Williams Bridge Road in the Bronx. And we did spend one or two nights on the island with friends. I think with Patsy Hogan's family. And that's the night Peter crept into our old quarters, which were unoccupied at the time, and told me about it much later.

**MS. EKMAN:** Yeah.

**MR. JACOBY:** Christa, you said that you didn't go into New York City much, but what about New Rochelle? Were you there?

**MS. MUELLER:** I worked in New Rochelle the summer after I graduated. I worked on the main shopping street. We would go shopping in New Rochelle, and every now and then I would have a date to a junior assembly or some special -- I think they were kind of society dances, because they weren't regular dances. And I don't know why I would go because I would dread it and I would hate it. But I think I didn't know how to say no to the boys who often were very shy boys who probably had to get up their nerve to ask me. And so we were both uncomfortable every time.

**MS. EKMAN:** I remember something you did that was very exciting. One year, I guess it was either before Christmas or Halloween, you were in a contest in New Rochelle, you painted the shop windows, the store windows --

**MS. MUELLER:** We decorated them.

**MS. EKMAN:** Yeah, each one had a theme and they were judged.

**MS. MUELLER:** Yes.

**MS. EKMAN:** And I remember going to watch you paint your window.

**MS. MUELLER:** You know that, now that you mention that, we did -- that was -- I painted the window around, and inside was the Creche that I had made, and momma helped me make the figures for the Creche.

**MS. EKMAN:** I don't remember that.

**MS. MUELLER:** But I also remember an art contest where the art was displayed later down in New York City, the people whose art was selected, and I did have one. One piece that was --

**MR. JACOBY:** What kind of town was New Rochelle?

**MS. MUELLER:** It was a kind of a sprawling, mostly residential. I feel like there were -- like the shopping street wasn't very -- we had Arnold Constable's, we had Bloomingdale's. We had Enterprise, where I worked. And the only reason I got that job was because as the man walked away from me after saying, "Well, if we have an opening I'll call you." He walked away and he read the list of places -- addresses I had had in my life, because I listed them all, and he turned around and he came back, and he said, "Well, maybe we can find a spot for you."

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you have any jobs while you were at --

**MS. EKMAN:** I sold Christmas cards one time on Fort Slocum. I did that all by myself because I wanted to earn enough money to fly to Chicago to visit our aunt. But of course, I was never allowed to do that. But I did sell the Christmas cards. But I was in the band and so was Peter when we were in junior high school, I guess the one year for Peter. And we were in the marching band, and so -- actually, I think Peter was already gone, he had marched the year before, but I got to march in the band, and that was fun. It was in New Rochelle. But really, that's about all I did other than visit friends.

**MR. JACOBY:** Christa, Fort Slocum was primarily a Chaplain School while you were there, and the Army Information School. Did you get to know many of the soldiers or officers that came through?

**MS. MUELLER:** I knew quite a few soldiers because I was involved with the baseball team, and I was that age. And there were no other -- there were really no appealing boys on the island.

**MS. EKMAN:** At your age. For your age. **MS. MUELLER:** That's right. And there was one Chaplain's son who the family was no longer living on the Post and he was somewhere in town. And he would come and see me once in a while, but I really think he was floundering, and I don't know if he even survived. It was one of those people that just decided to cut his ties with his family.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did it bother your parents that you might see a soldier?

**MS. MUELLER:** Well, we had that discussion, and it -- they didn't mind if I went to the movies with a soldier. And Marta and Marlana and I would sometimes go to the Service Club dances. And I don't think daddy was really comfortable about it, but I think he would rather have me do that than go off into New Rochelle. There were -- there were a couple of soldiers that I would go out with more often. And one time, it was the night of Carol, the hurricane, I had a date with a soldier whom I really never went with, I often saw him at the movies, or met him other places, but I finally had a date with him and we had a hurricane warning. And daddy said, the wind was really terrific, and daddy said, I think you're going to have to stay home tonight.

**MS. EKMAN:** I remember that.

**MS. MUELLER:** And I said, all right, then you'll have to call the barracks and tell them that I'm not coming. So what does he do? He calls the barracks and says, "This is Chaplain Huchthausen calling for Bill Powell." And you know, terrified, and of course, everybody turned around and looked, he told me later, and wondered what he had done. But that was the night that the tree in front of our house was uprooted. And it was probably right about the time we would have been walking to the movie. So, it was not a bad thing.

**MR. JACOBY:** You were a bit younger, Anne, did you -- do you think that the Post CO -- who was the Post CO while you were there?

**MS. EKMAN:** It was Colonel Kraft.

**MR. JACOBY:** Colonel Kraft? Did he know who you were?

**MS. EKMAN:** Well, I think he did, although he may just have seen me as one of the many little children running around, but he knew my family, certainly.

**MR. JACOBY:** Were you ever in his quarters?

**MS. EKMAN:** Yes, I was in his house, because we would -- I think we went in --

**MS. MUELLER:** Well, Nicky was often in our house.

**MS. EKMAN:** Yeah.

**MS. MUELLER:** Nicky Kraft.

**MS. EKMAN:** And his mother was someone we all knew. She was very friendly. I may have gone into his house only once or twice, come to think of it.

**MR. JACOBY:** What about you, Christa?

**MS. MUELLER:** I don't think so. I don't think I ever was in their house.

**MS. EKMAN:** But Admiral Binford's house, we went into.

**MS. MUELLER:** I went in that house when Colonel Brown was there.

**MS. EKMAN:** True. That's right.

**MS. MUELLER:** Because he was a photographer and he wanted to take pictures. And I have a lot of nice portrait pictures that he took of me one day when I went -- but I don't remember anything about the house.

**MR. JACOBY:** Now, when you talk about Admiral Binford and Colonel Brown, you're referring to Quarters 1?

**MS. MUELLER:** That's right.

**MR. JACOBY:** Because at the time they outranked -- or the Admiral outranked the CO. So, the Colonel was what -- you were in Quarters --

**MS. EKMAN:** Three.

**MS. MUELLER:** Three.

**MR. JACOBY:** Three, part of the very next building.

**MS. EKMAN:** Yeah. They were farther down, but their quarters were quite large, much larger than ours.

**MS. MUELLER:** A single house.

**MS. EKMAN:** And I think they were three floors. I feel like they're -- they were probably in Quarters 14 and 15, I would think. Or possibly 10 and 11.

**MS. MUELLER:** Who? Who, Anne?

**MS. EKMAN:** The Krafts.

**MS. MUELLER:** Oh.

**MR. JACOBY:** Who lived next to you in the other part of the house?

**MS. MUELLER:** First Chaplain Koch and then Chaplain Devoe who had two sons, two teenage sons. And they became a part of the crowd too. And this was a black family. There was -- that was one thing about the Army among the officers, I don't think there was any discrimination among the kids, certainly.

**MS. EKMAN:** Certainly not. No.

**MR. JACOBY:** Were there may blacks on the post?

**MS. MUELLER:** I don't know.

**MS. EKMAN:** Well, Billy was our only black friend there. John --

**MS. MUELLER:** John Allen --

**MS. EKMAN:** -- John Allen was, I think in college.

**MS. MUELLER:** Maybe he was. He wasn't in high school either.

**MS. EKMAN:** He wasn't always there. We didn't know him very well.

**MS. MUELLER:** So, that's true.

**MR. JACOBY:** You mentioned earlier that you had a dog. Were there many dogs at Slocum?

**MS. EKMAN:** There were dogs. Oh, sure. My friend Lynn Cheetham (phonetic) had a little dog, and Chaplain Evans, or that -- the neighbor on the other side of us had a dog, a poodle. And there were a couple of other dogs that would come by our house, and when our dog was out our cat would chase them away.

**MS. MUELLER:** And somebody had a dog that they named -- it was an English Setter that they named Christopher, and Pastor Sam would come to the house and he'd say, I can't imagine somebody naming a dog Christ-bearer."

**MS. EKMAN:** But Admiral Binford had a little beagle and that little beagle was a character. He would carry a basket to the commissary when the cook would go shopping, the little beagle, whose name I can't remember, would always go along and come back home carrying one thing in his basket. And whenever he was sick he would come and scratch on our back door and our mother would let him in and he would go into our father's study, which was the maid's room behind the kitchen, and hop up on the daybed there and sleep until he got better.

But then, our cat used to go to the Admiral's house when he had a party, that was Gussy, and he would walk around the livingroom and visit all the guests. And then he'd leave.

**MR. JACOBY:** Dogs were allowed to roam the island?

**MS. EKMAN:** Sure. Sure. Do you remember we met a soldier who said that one day, long before, he had been walking by our house and Fang was out front, and he raised his hand, or he was walking with a stick, and Fang came up and he jumped back and he raised his hand with the stick, and Fang bit him.

**MS. MUELLER:** Oh --

**MS. EKMAN:** Yes, he told us that.

**MS. MUELLER:** -- I can't remember that.

**MS. EKMAN:** And he said, but I understood why, he said, and I never said anything about it. He said it was because I raised my arm holding the stick. And I should have known better. But we all felt terrible, because that's a bad thing anyway, but it wasn't reported, and so nothing ever came of it.

**MS. MUELLER:** Could that have been after I went to school?

**MS. EKMAN:** Yes, it could have been.

**MR. JACOBY:** Where was the vet?

**MS. EKMAN:** He was down at the end near the dental clinic.

**MR. JACOBY:** So there was a vet on the Post.

**MS. MUELLER:** He was the food inspector.

**MS. EKMAN:** Oh, he came to our house when our cat got real sick. He made a house call.

**MR. JACOBY:** Anne, you actually came back to the post for a civilian job.

**MS. EKMAN:** Yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** Tell me about that.

**MS. EKMAN:** That was the summer I graduated from high school in Virginia and I got a job --

**MR. JACOBY:** So you had moved away?

**MS. EKMAN:** We had moved away, and we knew that we were going to be moving back up to New York to the Bronx at the end of the summer. So, my father worked it out with a friend that I got a job at the Chaplain School as a clerk typist. So, they put me on a plane and I flew up to New York and Chaplain Hunter, who was then the commandant, met me at the airport and got me onto Fort Slocum. And then, I guess I made arrangements to stay at the BOQ, or maybe my father did. Not the BOQ, the WAC barracks. And so I checked into the WAC barracks, and I pulled my KP duties along with the other soldier was there.

**MR. JACOBY:** Who else was in the WAC barracks? Were there WACs?

**MS. EKMAN:** There was a Lieutenant Colonel living upstairs, and there was one other female, and she must have been a soldier, I don't -- I really don't know.

**MR. JACOBY:** What was it like being -- not being a child on the island, but having a job and working there? Did you see it through different eyes?

**MS. EKMAN:** I think I saw it through eyes of someone who didn't want to stop being a child anymore. I didn't enjoy it. It was -- there were so many memories of my happy childhood, and there I was all alone without my family, and it was -- it was not fun. I enjoyed my job though.

**MR. JACOBY:** How long did you stay there?

**MS. EKMAN:** About -- only about two weeks, probably.

**MS. MUELLER:** Oh, oh --

**MR. JACOBY:** Oh, really?

**MS. EKMAN:** Maybe longer. Maybe -- it seemed forever. Maybe it was a month. It's hard to say. It was until my parents moved up and then I moved in with them. So, no, it was not -- it must have been more than two weeks because I got to know some of the other civilian employees and we would go out into New Rochelle in the evenings, and they kind of took me under their wings, and showed me the night life of New Rochelle that I never knew existed.

**MR. JACOBY:** Christa, what are your overall memories of the island, your time there?

**MS. MUELLER:** It was an idyll, I think. I was comfortable living there. We had nice quarters, I had some good friends. I didn't like my high school, it was just too big and intimidating. Although senior year I was in "Arsenic and Old Lace" and that kind of opened doors for me. But my summer memory is of a lazy summer day, going outside to sit under the elm tree when the night had been cool, maybe this is early summer, and hearing the recorded band music that we would hear over the parade ground, and sit there under the elm tree, sometimes I think I might have even dozed off, or I would read a book. It was just a wonderful, pleasant memory that I have of a summer day at Fort Slocum. Of course, once I was graduated from high school I had to get a job. But those other summer days were lovely.

**MR. JACOBY:** And you never returned to the island after high school?

**MS. MUELLER:** No.

**MR. JACOBY:** Were you aware of what was going on at the island after it closed?

**MS. MUELLER:** Yes, I've met -- we had some friends who we knew who were from Mamaroneck and who belonged to the yacht club there, and they would tell me all the latest. I knew about the development ideas that were brewing and I knew about the fire, the big fire, I guess. But somewhere I had also heard that they used the island to impound, or quarantine circus animals briefly. And I don't know who originally told me that, or if it's true.

**MR. JACOBY:** That's a nice story.

**MS. EKMAN:** Interesting story.

**MR. JACOBY:** Anne, putting aside your time as a clerk typist, which you didn't enjoy so much, what are your general thoughts about growing up at Fort Slocum?



**MS. EKMAN:** Oh, I think also that it was idyllic. And it was what I consider to have been during my formative years, though it was only three years, when I look back on my childhood and my growing up, I think of Fort Slocum more than any other place. It was happy, and carefree. There were no stresses there.

**MS. MUELLER:** No dangers.

**MS. EKMAN:** No dangers. It was fun, it was beautiful.

**MS. MUELLER:** Pleasant society.

**MS. EKMAN:** It was like being in a small town and feeling safe. That's how I remember it.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you get that feeling at any of the other Posts where you lived?

**MS. EKMAN:** No.

**MR. JACOBY:** What about you, Christa?

**MS. MUELLER:** I always lived -- loved living on Posts, but because Fort Slocum was so small it was -- it just was unique.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do either of you have anything to add? Any final thoughts?

**MS. MUELLER:** I'm glad the development didn't happen. I think making it a park is a very nice idea. I am tickled to death that Michael Cavanaugh has gone to such lengths to dredge up every picture he could find and every bit of information. What a precious package that is. What it matters to anybody, I don't know. But I love history, so I can -- I can just see the value of it for that reason.

**MR. JACOBY:** Anne?

**MS. EKMAN:** Well, I just hurt inside when I think of those beautiful quarters no long being there, because they were even historically significant having being built before the Civil War. But I too think that it's would be a wonderful thing to have that as a park and have a little museum, just to keep the memory going, because it did play an important part in our country's history.

**MS. MUELLER:** I can't imagine it overgrown with vines and woods.

**MS. EKMAN:** No. Well, when I saw the vines growing up over the water tower it was very, very hard to look at. We didn't spend too much time there.

**MR. JACOBY:** Well, Christa Mueller, Anne Ekman, I want to thank you very much for participating in the oral history project, and for inviting me into your home. Thank you.

**MS. MUELLER:** I can just imagine what we're going to dream about tonight. You're so welcome.

**MS. EKMAN:** Yeah. Yeah.

- - -  
(End of recording).

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Paula Brokaw, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and accurate transcript of the taped proceedings as transcribed by me on the date hereinbefore set forth, to the best of my ability.

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Dated: November 27, 2007 Paula Brokaw

Agency Typist



**ROBERT JACOBY:** This is Robert Jacoby, representing Tetra Tech EC. And I am speaking with Pete Fuller at his home in Perkasio.

**PETE FULLER:** Mm-hmm.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Pennsylvania. On September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2007. This interview is part of a program sponsored by the United States Army Corps of Engineers and the New Rochelle Public Library to collect oral histories about the experiences and memories of people who were associated with the former US Army post Fort Slocum, located on Davids Island in New Rochelle, New York.

Mr. Fuller, thank you very much for participating in this.

**PETE FULLER:** You're more than welcome.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Please describe your association with Fort Slocum.

**PETE FULLER:** My association with Fort Slocum actually started in 1957. My father was a sergeant first class in the Army back then. And he was stationed in Fort Monmouth. He'd been in Fort Monmouth before the, before the Korean War and after the Korean War. And he was there so many years it was time to transfer. So he looked around and he found Fort Slocum, and they were more than willing to have him. He transferred into Fort Slocum in 1957.

We did not live on Fort Slocum at that time. We lived in an apartment complex in New Rochelle called the Harbor House at 35 Davenport Avenue. Don't ask me the apartment number. That I don't remember. But we lived there until 1960. My father actually went to Germany in '59. We followed in '60. In 1962, he was transferred back, supposedly to go to Fort Polk.

My father was a very smart individual, a very smart man, highly intelligent. When he, he visited Fort Slocum -- we got back because we had leave -- and our family, my mother's family was, my mother's side of the family was all from New York. They lived basically in the Bronx and in Brooklyn and in New Jersey, in the Fort Lee area of New Jersey.

So we stayed, we stayed in New York visiting relatives. One of the things you did was you stopped out at the island. And he happened to bump into the post commander. I'm not sure if it was Castagneto at that time or, I'm not sure. It might have been. I don't remember. I really don't remember. But they wanted him back because they knew he was very, very talented. So they pulled some strings and got his orders amended to get him transferred back, back to Fort Slocum.

At that time I believe he started as one of the commi-, he was the commissary manager. Back then they had a military commissary manager for awhile. I know eventually they switched to civilians, but at that time, that's what he was doing.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** What was his rank?

**PETE FULLER:** Sergeant first class, SSE. He was E-7. Back then, we said the commissaries were run by military, but eventually they were managed by civilians. His almost entire military career was in food service of one sort or another.

After that stint he also, he'd wind up taking over as the manager of the NCO club. And he did that for the rest of his stint on Fort Slocum until it closed. So he was the commissary manager, I don't remember just how long, maybe a year, not quite a year, then he took over as the club manager.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** The NCO club that was attached to the back of the YMCA. Is that right?

**PETE FULLER:** It was a, it was a new building if I remember right. I have a picture of it.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Okay.

**PETE FULLER:** Because you see, I'm not sure if it was attached to the, the Y or not. I thought it was --

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PETE FULLER:** To my, my recollect is it was a separate building.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Okay.

**PETE FULLER:** It was over, it was over on the east side of the island.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So you never lived on the, on Davids Island?

**PETE FULLER:** Yes, I did.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Oh.

**PETE FULLER:** In 1960, when we came back in '62, we, we lived on post.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Okay.



**PETE FULLER:** We first moved to New Rochelle for a short period of time until an apartment became available. Actually, it was a substandard apartment. We were in the apartment that was above the, I think it was the post, I think it was the post garage at the time.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PETE FULLER:** There was a small apartment above it. I could show you, I have a --

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Not far from the docks?

**PETE FULLER:** No. A good distance from the docks, actually.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Oh, really? Okay.

**PETE FULLER:** I have a picture of the, an aerial shot of the island. I can point out my apartment.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Sure.

**PETE FULLER:** I'll show you.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** I have a map here, too. Here are the two docks.

**PETE FULLER:** It was somewhere, it was over here.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Okay.

**PETE FULLER:** Right over here.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Okay. Here were the NCO quarters.

**PETE FULLER:** I know.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Right in here. But you were?

**PETE FULLER:** We were, I was, see these, see this building right here?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**PETE FULLER:** That, that was the garage. There was also an apartment right above that.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Okay.

**PETE FULLER:** Right there. On that corner.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So you're pointing, you're pointing to Building 111 as numbered on the map.

**PETE FULLER:** Mm-hmm.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** How old were you?

**PETE FULLER:** I was 15, 15 when we moved there in 1962.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** What was your first thought when you saw the island?

**PETE FULLER:** Boy, is this gonna be dull. Because they were kind of isolated. But it turned out not to be the case. One thing about undergrads, they welcomed me with open arms. A lot of times, especially at 15, just entering high school, kids can be cliquish, very cliquish, but not army brats. We're too used to moving around. So when somebody new comes in, it's hey, come on it. Join us.

And, as I think I told you over the phone, one of the things, even though it was a small island, there was a lot of teenagers within a three-year age span, because we were all beginning boomers.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PETE FULLER:** I was born in '47. The boomers started being born in '46. Of course it was, you know, a decade, a decade or so, but the --

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PETE FULLER:** -- first three years after the war, there was a lot of us born. So there was a lot of teenagers on that post. And we had a teen club and it was very active. We had dances, you know, a pool table. We had plenty to do. Also, there was also, of course in the summer, swimming. I was a life guard. I got my, went to the YMCA and picked up my life guard badge when I was there.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Were the beaches still --



**PETE FULLER:** Segregated.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** — segregated back then?

**PETE FULLER:** There was an officers', officers' beach and an NCO beach.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And you were?

**PETE FULLER:** I was a life guard at both.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Oh, you were.

**PETE FULLER:** Yeah. I worked at both.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So you could go to both.

**PETE FULLER:** Not just that, I had, the kids weren't restricted from going anywhere.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. Okay.

**PETE FULLER:** Because we were all friends.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PETE FULLER:** Most of my, I had NCO, NCO kids were friends and I had officers' kids as friends. My best friend was a major's son, Don Reglin. It made no difference.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So rank didn't have an effect on the children of the?

**PETE FULLER:** No, not in the least.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PETE FULLER:** There was a TV show last year, I watched it all the time, called The Unit, where they said that NCO kids don't play with officers' kids. That's horse hockey.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah.

**PETE FULLER:** That is crap. There's a teen club, not an officers' kids teen club and an NCO club. It's one. You know, it was, I mean, there was no such thing. We were at each other's houses, had dinner, played together, dated. Made no, rank had no distinction and nobody cared.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Tell me about going to school. How did that, how was that arranged?

**PETE FULLER:** Okay. We, obviously, we had to get the ferry in the morning and there was a school bus. Actually I got to, I got to ride on the short bus to school. The old joke about riding on a small bus.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah.

**PETE FULLER:** Again there were like 20, small, 20 passenger yellow buses. They took us to school. Until I got, I think it was my junior year, I had a friend who had a car, Rick Covey, he was a senior. So actually, I think his father was a lieutenant colonel, I believe. Yeah. So he had this old clunker, like a 50 Chevy or something, but he had a car. I drove to school with him.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** He kept the car on the island?

**PETE FULLER:** Yeah. It was very rare that you couldn't bring a car on the island, unless there was a super, super high tide or a super, super low tide. The ferry was usually able to accommodate all the cars to come on the island.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** It's not a big island, so were there some restrictions on whether servicemen could have cars?

**PETE FULLER:** I really don't remember that.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PETE FULLER:** I don't think so. If my memory serves me correct, I don't think they, I don't think there was too much of a hassle. It might have been sergeants and the lower-ranking enlisted weren't allowed. That I don't remember. I really don't remember that.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PETE FULLER:** We had our cars. Of course, you had to keep it to 10 miles an hour.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PETE FULLER:** And I illegally drove at 15. My mother taught me how to drive and I drove over the island, because I could never get it, I could rarely ever get it out of second gear because it was a 10 mile an hour speed limit that I was supposed to adhere to.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. Let me go back to school. All the, the students, the children went on the, the ferry unaccompanied by adults. Right?

**PETE FULLER:** Just the bus driver. Yes.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Just the bus driver and, and the kids. You look after the, the younger ones or did they take a, a different ferry?

**PETE FULLER:** They, they, well they just, school probably started earlier or at different times. Normally, they were different times.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PETE FULLER:** I think the high school and the junior high started a lot earlier than the grade school. Also, some kids, they did take a bus. There's two schools, two high schools in New Rochelle. There's New Rochelle High School. There's also Blessed Sacrament. And a couple of the kids did go to Blessed Sacrament, excuse me, Blessed, Blessed Sacrament. And the kid's picture, I can't remember, his father was post commander in '64 and '65. So it was Anthony Castagneto. Whoever the post commander was, if you have his name, that's who, that's who those kids are. I know it. I just can't think of it right now.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Michael Cavanaugh should know that.

**PETE FULLER:** Well that, I don't know if you've ever, if you have gotten a hold of Tito Rosario or not.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** No, but I know who he is. Yeah.

**PETE FULLER:** Okay.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** He's the son of one of the sergeants.

**PETE FULLER:** Yes. Actually, Tito now, he, he did live on Puerto Rico. After high school he, he went, he was a year younger than I am. I was friends with Tito and he had a brother named Nestor, who was actually my age. They winded up going to Fort Lee, just like my father did, only I didn't know they were there at the time to be honest with you.

See, I went away to college. In '65, in late August, September I went away to college. When I came back, my father was at Fort Lee and I didn't know they were there. I didn't find out they were there until years later. But he joined the army, both of them joined the army, went to Viet Nam, came back.

Tito went to the University of Puerto Rica on GI Bill and stayed in Puerto Rico. However, now, about eight months ago he, he quit, he got a job with the government, a civil service job and was training at the Defense General Supply Center in Richmond, Virginia. So he's in the States now.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** You mention the Rosarios. Have you kept in touch with many other, with friends that you made on the island?

**PETE FULLER:** I found, well, I found in, in the early '90s I found Don Reglin. Actually, his name was Clinton Donald Reglin, Jr. His father was Clinton Donald Reglin, Sr. I, I happen to have, even though he was like 92, 93, I had a program that had the entire phone book of the entire, entire United States on it on disk.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Hmm.

**PETE FULLER:** And I was just doing a search because it's an unusual, it wasn't Regland. It's R-e-g-l-i-n.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PETE FULLER:** I did a search and I found Clinton Donald Reglin in San Antonio, Texas. And I called and it turned out to be Don's father. He remembered me. He was kind of shocked. At that time I was a major in the army waiting to make lieutenant colonel. He was kind of shocked that I joined the army myself. But he gave me Don's number and I called and we got, we talked.

And then in '97, I was, I went TDY for the army down at Fort Hood. And I called at that time, colonel, he was, he retired as lieutenant colonel. He was still alive and I called him. He gave me Don's phone number. He lived in Austin and he came down and saw me. However, we have lost contact since then.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Explain what TDY means.

**PETE FULLER:** Temporary duty. It's temporary duty. I just, I was just down there observing an exercise.

RM: Mm-hmm.



**PETE FULLER:** At that time I was a lieutenant colonel myself. Then I found, actually I found Tito on Classmates.com. I sent him an email through Classmates and by the time I got home from work, I was already retired from the army by then. I was working at Boeing. He had already called the house. He called back and we talked for gosh, an hour and a half in catching up. And he told me, he told me that he had found some old friends.

I did correspond briefly with Angela Castelino. We were friends. And actually, she was dating a friend of mine, Pete, Peter Parker. His father was a colonel, I think a full colonel. We corresponded a few times and then we kind of lost contact. I also did contact a girl living in North Carolina named Diane Blake. Actually, her father was the photographer. And apparently had a, just a whole load of photos that he took of, on Fort Slocum.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PETE FULLER:** And they were actually supposed, they had a reunion last year and we all, in September. Mike organized it. They were trying to get a tour of the island. It didn't work out apparently. But at the last minute we couldn't go for whatever reason. And Diane and her father were supposed to go and bring pictures. Only at the last minute, I think he got sick or something, and they had to back out also unfortunately.

I don't think I ran across anybody else. I've been trying over the years. I'm always looking in Classmate and Googling people's names.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Let me ask you about your quarters. Describe your family's quarters for us.

**PETE FULLER:** Extremely small. It was two bedrooms. Actually, you had to walk up a metal flight of stairs to get to it. It was, it was a very small landing. And we, as I said, it was above the garage. When you got, when you opened the door, when you opened the door, to the left was the kitchen, a very small kitchen. To the right was my bedroom. It was not much bigger than a walk-in closet.

Down the hall, the next room was a bathroom. You only got one bathroom. To the right, down the hall, if you went down the hallway, was my parents' bedroom. And on the left side was the living room. And that was it. It was a very, very small, small area.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** You had no brothers or sisters?

**PETE FULLER:** I have a sister but she's, she was married with kids by then.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Describe the furnishings. Did the army supply all furniture?

**PETE FULLER:** We had our own. They would supply furnishings. However, we had our own. There was a lot we had to put in storage being that it was so small.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Was that common for military families to just have their own furniture and?

**PETE FULLER:** Sure. Usually, when they just start out in life, for instance, when we were in Germany the apartments were all furnished because it was too expensive to carry the stuff over. The army paid to keep our stuff in storage while we were, while we were overseas. And we came back and took it out and we put what we could in the apartment. The rest of it went back into storage.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did your mother have a garden outside or any flower beds or anything like that?

**PETE FULLER:** No. Because it was really, we had a little park area across the street from where we lived because there was big paved area where they drove their vehicles.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PETE FULLER:** There wasn't much of a yard. And they did consider that very substandard housing.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And you stayed in those quarters how long?

**PETE FULLER:** I believe we lived on post, it might not have been, we might have moved after the first of the year in '63. Or if it wasn't it was just before, like in December. And we were there, as I said, I left in the August, late August/early September timeframe 1965. I think my father left there in the beginning of December of 1965 and went down to Fort Lee. Because very shortly thereafter the installation closed.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Now did you father eat in the mess hall ever or were, did he always eat with you at, in your quarters?

**PETE FULLER:** In quarters.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So, describe a typical meal that your mother may have made. Did she get all her food at the commissary?

**PETE FULLER:** Yeah.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** She never went to New Rochelle?

**PETE FULLER:** Not, not for food shopping.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PETE FULLER:** Not that I remember. If, if you remember, my father was the commissary manager.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** That's true.

**PETE FULLER:** If there wasn't, if there wasn't the food stuff my mother wanted, she told Dad and he made sure it got ordered. My mom was, my mom was Italian, second generation Italian.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**PETE FULLER:** We cooked a lot of Italian foods. My father was from the south. He was born in Atlanta, Georgia and liked southern cooking. My mom learned both. She knew how to cook fried chicken with, with white gravy over rice. She made, I loved it.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PETE FULLER:** She was also a very good Italian cook. So it was, and she picked up some recipes in Germany.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** You were on an island. Did you do much fishing?

**PETE FULLER:** Sure.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah?

**PETE FULLER:** There was a lot of flounder fish, a lot of flounder out there. And we used to fish off of piers. A couple of the guys had small boats and we'd go out in small boats.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So you ate a lot of fish? It wasn't just sport fishing.

**PETE FULLER:** Yeah, we ate.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah.

**PETE FULLER:** We caught it, we ate it.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm

**PETE FULLER:** I didn't start throwing back fish until I got, I started fishing with my kids.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** I'd like you to describe a, a scene on the island, on the parade ground. Was there much drilling or parades that went on?

**PETE FULLER:** Not that I remember. For a special occasion like Flag Day, Fourth of July, there might have been something going on. But I really don't remember that much drill and ceremony going on at all.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Or training of those, those men that were there.

**PETE FULLER:** No. Well, first off, you have to remember, the major — when I was there, it was a chaplain school.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PETE FULLER:** I think it was the MP school for a period of time also, but that might have been before we got there. But when it was a chaplain school, you had nothing but, and the army information school. You were training a lot of officers or senior NCOs. And that type of training didn't have anything to do with pomp and circumstance or drill and ceremony.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PETE FULLER:** The enlisted personnel that were there were mainly garrison type people that were there for support. They really weren't warriors. So there really wasn't that much going on in the way of, of drill and ceremony that I ever remember seeing.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** What about discipline? Do you think that it was a well-disciplined place? Were the kids that you were with well-behaved compared to those on the mainland?

**PETE FULLER:** Pretty much so. We had our share. I remember, there were some abandoned buildings even back then. And I remember, course it was big fun to explore abandoned buildings for teenagers.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PETE FULLER:** And I think, if I, it was Tito Rosario because he reminded me. We were exploring, a bunch of us were exploring one of these closed buildings. And apparently, somebody saw the MPs coming. And Tito shouted out, follow me, we'll never get caught. With that, he opened the door and ran right into the arms of an MP. Little things like that.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And so what were the consequences?

**PETE FULLER:** Slap on the wrist. Back in the '60s they didn't cart you off to jail.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah.

**PETE FULLER:** They called your dad, who came in and he tanned your hide. That was, that was about it. I mean, it was, there was really no discipline problems.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did you play in the mortar batteries?

**PETE FULLER:** Of course.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah.

**PETE FULLER:** Were we supposed to? No.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did you go into those tunnels in the rooms on either side?

**PETE FULLER:** You betcha. Yeah. They, actually, the motor barriers were right behind my house. There was some kind of scrap metal yard right behind my house. There was a berm and a fence that you could crawl under because there would be, the chain, the chain link didn't go all the way down and we dug underneath it. It was directly behind my house. Yes, we, we toured the tunnels.

That was, I was a rookie. You gotta remember, we were talking about 15-, 16-year-old kids.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PETE FULLER:** That kind of stuff is just fascinating.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah. Yeah. Did you ever eat in the mess halls? You said that you ate at home.

**PETE FULLER:** Not, not that, no. The only time I ever ate, well, obviously I ate in the mess halls when I joined the army. But prior to that, the only mess hall I'd ever eaten in, my father had been a mess sergeant on Fort Monmouth. Actually, as I said, his entire career, he started, he got drafted during World War II.

He had been a dining room manager at Georgia Tech. They asked anybody with food service experience to raise their hand. My father raised his hand. They said, what's your experience? And he told them. They made him acting mess sergeant. He never had to drill basic, a minute of basic training. They had pencil whipped it all. They said, you do a good job, you'll keep your stripes. And he did a good job. He went from private to sergeant.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And how long was he in for?

**PETE FULLER:** Twenty-two years. He got out after World War II, then got back in. He retired in '67.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** You said that you took the ferry to school. Were you ever prevented from coming back to the island because of inclement weather?

**PETE FULLER:** Not coming back to the island, but there was times when you couldn't bring the cars. As I said, if there was very high tides. And when I was 17, of course in New York you can only get a junior license at 16. However, if you, if you had driver's education, you could get a senior license at 17. Just about everybody took driver's ed because back then they were teaching it at school. You didn't, you didn't have to pay for it yourself. You went to summer school and took it.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PETE FULLER:** So I got, I never did have a junior license, I had my, I waited until I got a senior license and that was it. So I went on a date, usually it was off the island because a lot of dated girls from New Rochelle. And there were occasions when I came back I had to leave the car, rarely, but I had to leave the car and take the ferry home. But I really, I'm sure there must have been some occasions, but if the weather was that bad, we didn't go anywhere.

We did, we did experience some really, oh, I don't want to say, no a hurricane, but some really hellacious storms.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Well, I lived in New Jersey. And Hurricane Donna came through in '61. Were you?

**PETE FULLER:** No, we didn't.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** You weren't there then.

**PETE FULLER:** We didn't live in New York City.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And I think that's the only hurricane of any force that's come up this way.

**PETE FULLER:** Yeah. There were some bad, bad storms. And you thought twice about (inaudible) not going anywhere.



**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PETE FULLER:** So you stayed and watched TV.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. But you said you went out on dates on the mainland. Did you meet, you weren't in the military obviously, but did you need permission to go on the ferry? You just went?

**PETE FULLER:** Every, it was such a small place all the MPs knew all the kids.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PETE FULLER:** They knew everybody. You know, everybody knew everybody. And it was a very, very small, tight-knit community.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did you go into the city, New York City.

**PETE FULLER:** Yeah. A couple, I remember one time a couple of us in our senior year cut school and went down to Manhattan and did the Empire State Building and all those things, just walking around.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Is that the only time you can remember going into New York or were there other times? Did you go to the World's Fair?

**PETE FULLER:** Yes, '64?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PETE FULLER:** Yes, we did. We went to the World's Fair. We also use to go to, what was it? Playland I think it was. It was an amusement, amusement park that I used to go to. But yeah. I do remember going to the World's Fair.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So you were on the island in 1963? Do you remember the day President Kennedy was shot?

**PETE FULLER:** Sure do

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Can you describe what that was like on the island?

**PETE FULLER:** It was very somber. When he, when he got shot, we were all in school. I remember, I was, everybody remembers, when you were that age, if you were, if you were old enough to have a memory, you remember where you were. It's like, where were you when 9/11 happened?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PETE FULLER:** I know you, everybody remembers that. The same thing with Kennedy. I was in Study Hall. Needless to say, they called off school and sent everybody home. The bus ride from, back was horrible. The girls were crying and guys were very sad. And we got on the island. Everybody just seemed very sad. I do know that Colonel Castagneto called a formation and told everybody.

I'm sure people knew before that, because it was on the new. He made a formal announcement, but everybody already knew what it was all about. But I have a Pic-, I have that picture. I'm sure you've seen it.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PETE FULLER:** Where he was telling everybody.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did you attend that formation or was that just for the military personnel?

**PETE FULLER:** It was, it was probably before we even got home from school.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PETE FULLER:** We just went home and everybody stayed glued, everybody stayed glued in front of their TV sets, watching what was going on.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PETE FULLER:** Watching the (inaudible), LBJ being sworn in and just watching the stiff upper lip that his widow had, Jackie had. Watching John John and Caroline. Of course, in black and white.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PETE FULLER:** Hardly anybody had color back then. But everybody stayed glued in front of the TV sets. And that I remember.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** The year before, the Cuban Missile Crisis occurred. Were you on the island at that point? That would have been, I think --

**PETE FULLER:** No.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** — November or October of '62?

**PETE FULLER:** No. We were in, I think the Cuban Missile Crisis was a little bit before that. Wasn't it?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** I think it was October '62, but I, I may be wrong.

**PETE FULLER:** It may, may have been. I think it was just before we got back from Germany. We were still in Germany.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PETE FULLER:** Because we were on alert to move families out. Everybody was on a high state of alert. And my father was getting ready to rotate back to the States. So we came back in October. He did come back in October, but I think it was the latter part of October, which might have been the very beginning. But I remember my dad calling us and saying, pack suitcases, because they were that worried that they might go to war, that they shipped their families out of Germany.

Luckily, everybody stood back and took a breath. But at that time, I was in Germany.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Do you remember the tension? Did you feel it yourself?

**PETE FULLER:** Oh, yeah. Everybody was scared shitless.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah. Yeah.

**PETE FULLER:** It was a, remember, back in those days, they gave you that ridiculous exercise of duck and cover.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**PETE FULLER:** Like sitting out in the hallway with your head, with your head buried between your legs was gonna save you, or under your desk. The only thing bending over would do is maybe you could kiss your ass good-bye. That would be about it.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. Do you recall any other national events or things that happened while you were on the island?

**PETE FULLER:** No, not really.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** What about things like the World Series? Was that something that, that you kids paid a lot of attention to? You said you moved around a lot. Did you have teams that you rooted for?

**PETE FULLER:** Well, back then, even as an army brat, most of my family was routing for New York. So I obviously rooted for the Yankees back then.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. Yeah. So when you were there, they were pretty good most of the time.

**PETE FULLER:** I was gonna say, back then, the Yankees were a dynasty.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PETE FULLER:** Even if you didn't root for them, it was, who is the Yankees gonna play in the World Series?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Right.

**PETE FULLER:** I mean, they had so many years in a row. Because that was back in the day of DiMaggio and Whitey Ford and Yogi Berra and Mickey Mantle. You know, all the superheroes.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did you go to any games?

**PETE FULLER:** No. Our father wasn't a very big sports fanatic at all. You know, he may watch the ballgame on, watch it on TV, but as far as going to them — I think I went to a couple of games and that's when my sister took me and that's when I was even younger. I was probably 10, 11, 12, before we went to Germany. She and her husband, my brother-in-law played minor league ball for the Yankees in the late '40s.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** What city and what team?

**PETE FULLER:** Rocky Mountain. He was a first baseman. He broke his arm at the elbow. That ruined his career.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Oh.

**PETE FULLER:** There is a funny anecdote about that though. I was in, in the mid '60's I was caddying at Bonny Briar Country Club in Largemont, New York. That's how I picked up extra money. And occasionally I used to caddy for Joe Garagiola and White Ford. They were members. And I was telling my brother-in-law and he said, oh, he said, I played with them in Rocky Mountain. So the next time I was caddy for them, I —

(END SIDE A. BEGIN SIDE B.)



**PETE FULLER:** — really funny. They didn't treat you like a servant. They were great guys.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**PETE FULLER:** I'm just trying to, that's about it.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did you play golf yourself?

**PETE FULLER:** No. I learned the game because I to, at times I would even say, you know, tell the golfer what he should use. You know, use a wedge on this shot, use a nine iron.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** But did you know what you were talking about?

**PETE FULLER:** Yeah. I learned. I just never applied it to myself.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**PETE FULLER:** It was a good way of picking up extra money because I used to make, usually \$20 on the weekend. And \$20 in '63, '64 was good money.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah. There were tennis courts and a baseball diamond or two on the island.

**PETE FULLER:** Mm-hmm.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did you play much?

**PETE FULLER:** Just pick up games, really. There was, there was no organized teams as far as the kids were concerned. There were, if you wanted to join a team, you had to go into New Rochelle. And to be honest with you, it was too much of a pain in the butt with the ferry.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PETE FULLER:** So hardly anybody was on any teams because it was just a logistical nightmare. Now what teens, what we used to do, and I told you, we had a teen club. And there was a juke box in the teen club and there was pool tables and ping pong tables and a little snack bar area.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** What building was the teen club in?

**PETE FULLER:** I don't remember.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PETE FULLER:** But we also used to have dances, with bands. And there was, there were chaperones. The, the parents would take turn chaperoning. And it wasn't just in our, our location. We would travel around. We had buses. Our teens, there might be a dance on Fort Jay and there would be busloads from Fort Totten, Fort Jay, they'd all, I mean, Fort Slocum. We'd go there and dance there. And then they'd come over to our island.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PETE FULLER:** So all, there was several bases right around the lower metropolitan New York area. And we used to travel round to the bases, going to various dances. It was usually a dance somewhere. At least three weekends a month there was a dance going on somewhere.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Right near Fort Slocum was —

**PETE FULLER:** Glen Island?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** — Glen Island Casino. Was that still active when you were there?

**PETE FULLER:** Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Was that a place that you went or that your parents went to?

**PETE FULLER:** My parents went. I went with them upon occasion, but not that often.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So there were big bands playing there and dancing?

**PETE FULLER:** There was, there wasn't a big band like they had the Tommy Dorsey Band or Glen Miller Band, I mean, not them. But you know.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PETE FULLER:** But there are bands. My parents grew up in that era. They liked the swing music.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.



**PETE FULLER:** And they would go to, to, you know, to listen and watch them dance.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Do you, you left the island before it was decommissioned.

**PETE FULLER:** Yes.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** But you sort of had some sense that its days were numbered or?

**PETE FULLER:** We knew, when I left, we knew it was closing.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**PETE FULLER:** It was on early BRAC [Base Closure and Realignment Commission] list.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PETE FULLER:** They closed several bases down at that time in the, in the mid-60s.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And was that a sad thing to you and your parents?

**PETE FULLER:** Oh, yeah.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah. I couple people have told me that they felt Fort Slocum was like being posted to a country club.

**PETE FULLER:** It was. There was a spirit of accord and comradery for people who had lived out there. As I said, there was, little rank distinction. Nobody cared. I mean, everybody was very friendly and warm. I really remember it just being a place that was, it was, we had how many people live on an island and have a beach? I mean, I, I could hear, I could look out and see the water —

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PETE FULLER:** — every day. During the summer there was swimming. We had great swimming. As I said, boating, fishing, I was scuba diving. Of course, in the Long Island Sound, scuba diving isn't pristine, because you can't see but this far, you know, about two inches in front of your face.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Right.

**PETE FULLER:** But it was still fun. And it was, and there was so many teenagers. And parents were warm and friendly. I mean, I remember being, having many a lunch or a dinner at friends' houses. Pete Parker. I mean, his father was full colonel. Herb Bradley's father was an NCO. It didn't make any difference. Everybody just palled around. It was great. I loved it.

To have, to be 15 to 18 years old, it was a great place to be. It really was. I enjoyed, I really, immensely enjoyed it. Made some friends. Unfortunately, because of the nature of being an army brat, you lose contact, but I was fortunate enough to find a couple of them over the years and find out, you know, what happened to them.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So you left the island. And then did you enter college?

**PETE FULLER:** Yes.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Soon thereafter.

**PETE FULLER:** Well, I entered college from the island. Remember, my father left in the beginning of December. I left, I don't remember if it was late August or early September when I went to college. I graduated from Rochelle High in '65.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PETE FULLER:** And then, and then went to a small college in Wisconsin, Carol College. That's not where I graduated from. I, I bounced around.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PETE FULLER:** Finally graduated from Virginia State University. Um, I think most of us on the island, everybody went off to college. I know Don Reglin wanted to follow in his father's footsteps and become an army officer. And when he tried to join ROTC it turned out he had flat feet. He was 4F.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** When did you join the army?

**PETE FULLER:** Okay. Actually, I joined, my father, my father came down on levy to go to Viet Nam in 1967. He'd already fought in World War II and Korea. He said, third time's the charm. I can retire. I'm retiring. Also, back at that time, we had some friends who came back, not from Nam and said, Sid, you don't want to go to Viet Nam. It's too screwed up. So he retired. He didn't want me going to Viet Nam.

So in 1970, we had a lot, I'd finished college and I was draft bait. I wanted to join the reserves, not to go to Viet Nam. At least, so I didn't have to go to Viet Nam. I'd been around the army long enough to know that it's a whole lot better being an officer than it is enlisted. So I did go to, I joined enlisted. I went to basic training IT and came back.

However, being that I had college, I qualified for OCS. And the reserves had a special program, OCRC, Officer Candidate Reserve Component. It was a nine week course at Fort Benning over the summer. So I, I planned for it, got it. In 1971 I went to OCS, in the summer of '71, and got commissioned to second lieutenant. At that time I was in the reserve.

I was still only gonna put six years in and get out. But after the six years I was a captain and the money started to get good. I wasn't a captain, I was a first lieutenant. But the money was good. Initially, they paid us once a quarter. Then they started paying you monthly. And they said, but don't figure it into your budget. Yeah. Right. So I stayed in cause I enjoyed it.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** What were your responsibilities?

**PETE FULLER:** At that time I was signal officer. I ran the (inaudible) which, I was just a reservist back then. However, I put in, I found out we had a slot in our unit. It was an aircraft maintenance officer slot. The guy who had been in it wasn't a pilot. But back during Viet Nam, they had walk in commissioned officers as maintenance officers, like they had walking (inaudible). But they stopped that.

In order to be an aircraft maintenance officer, you had to be a commissioned, you had to be a pilot. So we had the slot and I put in for it and I went to flight school. And, in 1981. I was 33 years old and I went on the old boy program.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Meaning?

**PETE FULLER:** Meaning, I was the second oldest guy in our class. Most of them were kids out of West, actually, half our class were recent West Point graduates.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. So you were at the top end of age of those who were qualified?

**PETE FULLER:** There was no age, no age restriction back then. If you could pass the flight aptitude selection test, pass the flight physical, if you had a slot to put it against you could go. Because there was actually a guy from, my roommate had a warrant officer candidate from his unit who was there who was 47 years old.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm.

**PETE FULLER:** But back then, there was no age restriction as the carrier was Viet Nam based and they never took it off the books. So I became a pilot. So then they paid me to fly. And then in '83 they asked me if I'd heard of the active guard reserve program. I said, yeah. I actually had qualified for it, but never got called. Well, that changed.

I went on active duty in 1984 as an aircraft maintenance officer, pilot. And I stayed on active duty and retired in 2001. It was just under, because all of my schooling, a lot of military army schooling, I had just under 22 years of active service.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So where were you posted while you were serving?

**PETE FULLER:** My first post was actually a reserve unit in Green Castle, Pennsylvania. I flew out of Hagerstown. I was there for three years then I got transferred to Willow Grove Naval Air Station. That's how we wound up here. It was 1987. I was there four and a half years and then I went down, I went to Fort Meade, Maryland.

We put the house on the market, but in '91, this is '91, the housing market was flat as a pancake. You had to practically give a house away. And we didn't do this. I just traveled home on weekends. Then I was back in this area for two years. Then I went to Fort Drum. I was in Fort Drum from late '96 through 2000. In 2000, I transferred to Fort Dix and I retired out of Fort Dix in 2001.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** What, you mentioned earlier that you had been to David's Island. In 2003 you snuck on the island. What were your thoughts about seeing the buildings, the island in that state compared to when you lived there?

**PETE FULLER:** Very disheartening. It was a, a travesty that this island that really held such esteem of being such a great place to live when we were young to have fallen into that kind of rubble. It was, it was devastating. It was horrible. And the, also vandals coming on, I don't know why people want to do that kind of crap, walk around and look around. You know, you don't have to destroy stuff. And I know there's that big fire they had also.

Tried desperately to find my old apartment. And I'm sure I walked within five feet of it, but it, the jungle was so dense it was, really it was like trying to -- well, if you were there in '86 you know what I'm talking about.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

**PETE FULLER:** This was, this was almost 20 years later. It was even worse. You couldn't move. I mean, it was just so bad.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** I want to go back a second. You mentioned that, when you were a teenager, you and some of your friends investigated some buildings that had been abandoned. Do you remember where those buildings were? Which buildings?

**PETE FULLER:** Not exactly. It was over --

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Would the map help?

**PETE FULLER:** Yeah. It was over in this, in this area over here.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** You're, you're pointing to the quadrivium, the old barracks?

**PETE FULLER:** Yeah. It wasn't, it wasn't the quad near the water.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PETE FULLER:** It was a little bit further in over here if I remember correctly.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So the old barracks, the quadrivium of buildings 54, 64 to 61. Something like that.

**PETE FULLER:** Something like that.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah. I didn't realize that they had been abandoned before the base closed.

**PETE FULLER:** I guess they were scaling back.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PETE FULLER:** They might have been consolidating.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Pete, tell me something about chapel. Was that something that your family went to?

**PETE FULLER:** Yes. Every Sunday. I was raised Roman Catholic. They did not have Roman Catholic chapel on the post. They brought a priest in from New Rochelle to say mass. And everybody, all the parishioners took turns having the priest for brunch after church on Sunday.

So we'd go to church and then maybe once every eight weeks we'd have whatever the priest, I can't remember his name now. Usually the same, it was the same one. It was a priest about in his 40s, would come over for brunch Sunday after mass. But everybody, just about everybody went to church.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. It wasn't required, but it was a custom.

**PETE FULLER:** Yeah. Very much so.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Tell me something about --

**PETE FULLER:** Especially at a chaplain school.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Right. Describe what Thanksgivings and Christmases were like on David's Island on Fort Slocum.

**PETE FULLER:** Usually we had, I started telling you, the only place I ever ate in a mess hall was at Fort Monmouth when my father was a mess sergeant. We'd go out and have Christmas dinner and Thanksgiving dinner at the mess hall.

Primarily, we used to have Christmas and Thanksgiving dinner at the NCO club because my father ran the club. And they usually had some kind of, you know, big feast going on. They'd have, you know, a party, a get together. As I said, and the NCOs were tight because they were, aren't, there weren't that many NCOs. But everybody was close-knit. You get to an installation today, you know, like at Fort Drum. There was 10,000 soldiers. Nobody knows anybody except in your own unit.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hm.

**PETE FULLER:** But in an (inaudible) climate, everybody knows everybody.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And you considered them your family?

**PETE FULLER:** Extended family.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah. Yeah.

**PETE FULLER:** Very much so.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PETE FULLER:** They were fun times. They were very enjoyable. If memory serves me correct, we mainly ate at the club on those, on those holidays. Now there was pretty strict segregation back in those days from the NCO and the officers' club. There is more of a blurred line now. Most installations have a consolidated club now. NCOs and officers and, and officers go to the same club. I think that's economics.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PETE FULLER:** But back in the day, the clubs were segregated and the beaches were segregated. I think that's all gone now. Everybody goes to the same ones, facilities.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. Well, Pete Fuller, I want to thank you very much for sharing your thoughts and memories about Fort Slocum with us.

**PETE FULLER:** As I said, I enjoyed, it was a great place to live and I'll talk to anybody about it, about Fort Slocum and what it was like to live there. It was kind of funny, I had, I use, I have a picture of the island as my screen saver at work and somebody was standing over me and said, where the heck is that? And another guy there, he said, that looks like Fort Slocum. I went, what? Turned out I'd known the guy for two years and didn't realize he grew up in Mount Vernon. That was, that was kind of funny.

(END RECORDING.)

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Patsy Hamilton, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and accurate transcript of the taped proceedings as transcribed by me on the date hereinbefore set forth, to the best of my ability.

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Dated: 10/07/07 Patsy Hamilton - Agency Transcriptionist



**MR. JACOBY:** \*\*\* Tetra Tech EC (ph). And I am speaking today with Joanna Geer at her home in Toledo, Ohio on October 17, 2007. This interview is part of a program sponsored by the United States Army Corps of Engineers and the New Rochelle Public Library to collect oral histories about the experiences and memories of people who were associated with the former U.S. Army Post Fort Slocum located on Davids Island in New Rochelle, New York. Thank you very much, Mrs. Geer, for participating in this oral history. Tell me first how you are associated with Fort Slocum.

**MRS. GEER:** My father was the chaplain. He was the senior chaplain on Fort Slocum from 1941 to the end of 1945. He had been in the reserve, officers reserve from when he was in Margaretville, New York. They had a CCC camp. And my father liked working with the men and he used to go over there all the time. And the commanding officer of that CCC camp told him, he says, "You know, if you would join the reserve Army we could pay you for coming out here." And since my father was a poor country preacher at that time he did that, and he did stay and he worked there at that CCC camp until we moved from Margaretville. And then during of course world war – when the war started he was called up into active service. And that's how we got \*\*\* We were living in Bloomingburg, New York at the time that he was called up. And at that time I was in the sixth grade. And my father went down there and then he got housing in New Rochelle to start with. And we lived there a few months before we moved onto the Army post. And then we moved \*\*\* We lived there at Fort Slocum then until he got out of the Army.

**MR. JACOBY:** When he was still in New York State, did he have a regular congregation?

**MRS. GEER:** Oh, yes. He was a Methodist minister.

**MR. JACOBY:** Mmm hmm.

**MRS. GEER:** At that time it was the Methodist Episcopal church. And he usually had two or three churches that he, you know, took care of at one time. But at the time in Margaretville we just had the one church. It was just there near the Catskills and that CCC camp. And I know my father talked a lot. He really liked going up there. And then, of course, from Bloomingburg which was just a little bitty town we moved to New Rochelle which was quite an experience. Because I know the first day he took me to school I got lost.

**MR. JACOBY:** How old were you?

**MRS. GEER:** Sixth grade. I probably \*\*\* Oh, I don't know how old I was in sixth grade, but I was probably about 11 or 12. But my father had taken and shown us how to do it. But we'd never lived in the city before. We'd always lived in small towns. And my younger brother and sister they got home just fine. But with me when we came out of the class everybody else went the other direction. So I thought I was wrong. So I followed them and got hopelessly lost, and my father found me and got me home. That was a traumatic experience. But when we moved onto the Army post that began a very nice life. We took a ferry boat to school every day. And we had \*\*\* The Army provided transportation to the school.

**MR. JACOBY:** By bus?

**MRS. GEER:** Well, sometimes it was by a bus they had. Sometimes it was by recon cars. Sometimes it was Army trucks. Sometimes it was back jeeps. We'd go in \*\*\* I think we went to school in about everything except the tank.

**MR. JACOBY:** So somewhat of an adventure.

**MRS. GEER:** Yes. And, of course, children being children sometimes we'd get a new driver. When you came up from the dock there was a main road. If you turned to the right it took you to the school. If you turned to the left it took you to New York City. And we'd get a new driver and, of course, he'd say which way and you can know what we did. We said to the left. And we took a little cruise before they caught on. But during the war at that time everything was top secret. And everything from Fort Slocum was an overseas staging area. When the men came onto that island they never set foot back on mainland. The troop transport boats came in and picked them up at Fort Slocum and took them out to the ocean to the big transport to take them over to Germany. So the school was informed they were not ever to question us, because when those troop boats were in the docks were covered. You couldn't get on or off the island. So if we were late or if we didn't even appear they were not to tell us any – they couldn't ask us anything because it was really secret movement. So we took full advantage of that. And then let me tell you about the ferry boats. Because we had \*\*\* There were three boats. One was a freighter. And that was just a freighter. That's where they moved things in. But now and then they used it for passengers. Then they had this two story boat which they had the officers quarters at the top and the non-com and the enlisted men on the bottom. Well, they usually put us all in one place so they could keep tabs on what we were doing. And then they had this yacht. And we called it the Weeks but I don't think that was its name. But that's what we called it. And they had – it was a passenger lounge which was very comfortable which was for the officers. But down \*\*\* And then they had steps going down into a hole which was for the non-commissioned and enlisted men. Well, they put all of us down there because they put one MP at the entrance. And they had one MP down there with us because we used to stick our heads out the portholes and they were afraid we'd get hurt. They had to \*\*\* With us children they had to keep us pretty much together because it's the only way they really had control. And their idea was they wanted to protect us from getting hurt, and our idea was to do what we could to \*\*\*

**MR. JACOBY:** How many kids were there?

**MRS. GEER:** I would say \*\*\* Let's see, there were two girls my age. And then my brother – there were some kids about his age, boys. And then in the high school there were probably maybe \*\*\* Well, there was one family, the Huffmans – he was an



old staff sergeant, an old master sergeant there. He had three sons and they were all in the high school. They were there. And then there was another young man I remember. There were a couple kids my sisters age. She was a sophomore in high school I think when we came there. She graduated from Isaac Young High School. And my younger sister – I don't remember who she played with to tell you the truth. And the Morgan boy, Frankie Morgan was one of my brothers friends and Chuck Hotchkiss. And I've had contact with him. And he (Inaudible) around my brother. But all us kids – maybe 15, 20 at the most – we played baseball in the parade field lots of times. And we'd get out there \*\*\* Of course, the three Huffman boys were very good athletes over at Isaac Young. We'd play, and us girls were always getting our fingers smashed or something. We'd run down the hospital. They'd tape them up for us. Then we used to play kick the can and things like that on the parade field. We used the parade field for a lot of stuff.

**MR. JACOBY:** What about swimming and boating?

**MRS. GEER:** Okay. We didn't do any boating but we did swimming. And they had three beaches – one for the enlisted men and the non-coms and then the officers beach. They had two lifeguards assigned to the officers beach who both of those men – they were big Joe and little Joe to us. And they taught us to swim and to dive. They were lovely. They just were so nice to us. And they were our friends, I mean they were our buddies.

**MR. JACOBY:** They were enlisted men or NCOs?

**MRS. GEER:** Yes, or whatever. I don't know. I never even paid attention to their ranks. We saw them in a bathing suit. But they were there. And there was a raft off the pier that we could swim to. And I know that's when I learned to swim. That's when they tried to teach me to dive – never successful but we tried. And then sometimes there were rocks, there was a rock that was out a ways. And every now and then they'd take the life boat and they would row beside us and let us swim out and back so we could, you know, practice long distance swimming.

**MR. JACOBY:** Were there areas of the island that were off limits to you?

**MRS. GEER:** Well, we weren't supposed to go up into the gun pits but we did.

**MR. JACOBY:** Mmm hmm.

**MRS. GEER:** There was nothing off limits to us. And I understand some of the stuff the kids did after we were gone were much worse than what we did. But we used to ride our bikes through those tunnels up there sometimes. And the MPs – they'd always – if they'd see us they'd come and chase us.

**MR. JACOBY:** Were they fenced off?

**MRS. GEER:** No.

**MR. JACOBY:** But you were told not to.

**MRS. GEER:** Yes. We just weren't supposed to go up there. That's the only place I know of that we weren't supposed to go.

**MR. JACOBY:** And basically you roamed all over the island.

**MRS. GEER:** Yes. Well, it was a small island.

**MR. JACOBY:** Mmm hmm, sure.

**MRS. GEER:** Yes. We'd \*\*\* Oh, yes. And we had friends wherever we went. The enlisted men – most of them that were assigned to their post were very nice to us kids I mean regardless. Even the MPs that we used to drive crazy – they still were nice to us. Except every now and then you'd get one hard boiled one that didn't want to play but most of the time they did. And we had the theater. And we'd go to the theater and I think it cost a dime to get in. We had all the first run movies coming out of Hollywood and all the wartime movies. They came to us before they even got down to New York City because \*\*\*

**MR. JACOBY:** Was the theater in Raymond Hall?

**MRS. GEER:** Yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** Yes.

**MRS. GEER:** Yes. We had \*\*\* At Raymond Hall they had a Christmas pageant every year and us kids were all in that. My sister I think usually was Mary. And my brother and other sisters – we were shepherds and wise men and whatever. And they did that.

**MR. JACOBY:** Tell me about picnics or get-togethers among the families.

**MRS. GEER:** We never did anything like that. What we did \*\*\* I mean on Sunday we went to the Officers club to eat every Sunday. And, of course, a lot of the other officers did likewise because it was very, very cheap to eat. And I mean in the commissary on the base I think bread was four cents a loaf, something like that. I mean it was very easy to live there. But we had the run of the Officers club too. And we could go down there when we wanted. And all we had to do was sign those little

chit things and then our fathers were presented the bills at the end of the month. But we used to get pretzels and coke and stuff like that. And we'd go down. They had pool tables and we'd go play pool sometimes when we wanted to.

**MR. JACOBY:** Now some of the children were children of officers and other children were children of NCOs.

**MRS. GEER:** Right.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you play with everybody?

**MRS. GEER:** Oh, yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** There was no differentiation between officers \*\*\*

**MRS. GEER:** No. I mean we broke through the lines. We never paid any attention and they never bothered us. As kids we ran around in a pack. And that was that. I mean the kids – there was no question. I mean we were just kids is what we were. Well, and you know, when we went to school there was no difference there. And like I say, those Huffman boys – they were good looking boys. In fact, the one – I had a big crush on him. But he was a senior and I think I was just a little seventh, eighth grade, ninth grade. (Inaudible) much of that made me big stuff at school because all the girls my age all had a crush on him too And I knew him personally. I talked to him. So that was then.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you have crushes on any of the soldiers?

**MRS. GEER:** No, no. But what we used to do – we just thought we were so smart. We'd go over the YMCA. Of course, we had troops coming through all the time. You know, we had Australian troops and the English RAF, Canadian troops. We had some French troops, some Polish troops, all different kinds that were coming through. And, of course, the YMCA was really right across the parade field from where we lived almost. But as kids we'd go over there and we would get an insignia from them. You know, I used to have quite a collection. I don't have it anymore. I lost it through the years. And we'd trade in money and coins and we'd just talk to them. And then us girls \*\*\* Now here I was what – I wasn't even in high school or barely in high school. And we'd go over and we'd pass and try to makes dates with them. And, of course, we'd never show up and we'd just look to see if they'd show up. Sometimes they did. But I mean they probably knew we were just kids. I don't know we thought we were fooling.

**MR. JACOBY:** So maybe they were the first foreigners that you ever really met.

**MRS. GEER:** Well, not exactly. Because I had met foreigners because my parents – my father being a minister, he always had missionaries coming through from different lands and stuff.

**MR. JACOBY:** The Methodists were big on missionaries.

**MRS. GEER:** Well, my father – my parents were. I don't know if the Methodists were. They do have mission programs and they did. But my mother had – she was from Saint Paul, Minnesota. She had worked as a companion for a retired missionary from China in Saint Paul. And that couple was very good to her. They put her through school. And when my mother and father got married in Minnesota they helped them a lot. They gave them their first apartment at a very reduced sum and everything. Both my parents were from Minnesota but we lived in New York. But anyway \*\*\*

**MR. JACOBY:** I'd like to ask you about your father now.

**MRS. GEER:** Okay.

**MR. JACOBY:** He was a chaplain and he was also an officer. What was his rank?

**MRS. GEER:** When he went into the act of service he was a first lieutenant. When he left he was lieutenant colonel. So Colonel Lentz (ph) and my father got to be very good friends, and Colonel Lentz saw he was just promoted as fast as he could promote him. Because Colonel Lentz liked my father. Well, my father liked Colonel Lentz too. And I did too. In fact, one time that his daughter Louise Lentz – she'd had an operation on her tailbone. And the Lentz's had to go someplace, and they asked me to come down and stay with her because she couldn't move – she was immobile. So I did babysit their baby who was older than me, but I babysat. But I did a lot of babysitting on the post at that time. The young officers that had – especially down at those apartments down at the north end – they had a lot of them. They had me come and babysit for the little children. And I enjoyed that. I did babysitting then all through high school.

**MR. JACOBY:** Would you get paid?

**MRS. GEER:** Oh, yes. They paid me.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you remember what you got?

**MRS. GEER:** Oh, I don't remember. I couldn't remember now. Probably like a quarter an hour or something like that I mean. And, of course, there was no cars. You had to walk. And I had \*\*\* In gym class in the eighth grade I had a very bad fall. And I landed on my back and my spine, and I had a lot of pain in the sciatic nerve after that. And at that time they didn't have mylograms (ph) or anything like that. They didn't know what \*\*\* They knew something was wrong in there but they didn't know what. So there were times that I barely could walk. And I'd be babysitting and I couldn't walk home. And my father had

to come and help. Everything was on bikes. It was very interesting. But after that I had problems for a long, long time after that. And they never found out what happened but it went away. So I'm not bothered in the last 40 years. I've been fine.

**MR. JACOBY:** Tell me about your fathers responsibilities as chief chaplain.

**MRS. GEER:** Okay. He had to \*\*\* He was responsible to provide services for all the denominations – the Catholic, the Jewish and the Protestant. And, of course, they had a Catholic chapel on the base. And the Protestant services and the Catholic services were both used in that building, and then they had Jewish services in the YMCA for the Jewish boys. And I don't know when, but my father had to arrange for like rabbis to come and stuff like that. And he had to make sure that, you know, what the chapel needed was taken care of. He was in charge of making sure that everyone had, you know, access to their religion. And I do know in that chapel Sam Stewart (ph) was the organist. And, of course, we all had to go. But I know that the Huffman boys and my brother and my younger sister \*\*\* It wasn't my older sister. She never fooled around. And, anyway, we'd sit in the back row and read the funny papers during church. But it was dark in there, you know, and my dad couldn't see. My mother always sat down front so I don't know. But my father he had weddings. He did a lot of weddings. And, of course, he counseled a lot of men. I know one time he was talking about this man that \*\*\* Because they were sending men over very quickly at that time at the beginning of the war. And he had a man that has his trigger finger \*\*\* He didn't have one. And he hadn't really had much training I guess in how to use a gun. And I remember my father thought that was just terrible that they were going to send that man to battle. And I know he worked with the Red Cross very, very closely when these men would come to him and they had real problems and hardships in their family and stuff. So he tried to get them \*\*\* Some of them he did get so they did not have to go overseas. They were put back or discharged or whatever. And I know at the end of the war when they started to bring the boys home, that last year that we were on the island the commanding officer wanted all the teenage girls off the island if possible because they were bringing back the guys that had gone awol and were shell shocked and mental imbalanced because of their fighting and that stuff.

**MR. JACOBY:** They were part of the rehabilitation?

**MRS. GEER:** The rehabilitation, yes. So what my parents did – my sister, she was ready to go to college. So she went off to Hamline University. And they put me in a boarding school in Pennsylvania my sophomore year, the beginning of my sophomore year. And the last I was on the island then \*\*\* We went in September. I came back Christmas, Christmas vacation. That Christmas vacation was the last. That was in '45. But I don't know what they did with my friend Maryann. She was a little younger than I was so I don't know if she went or not. But anyway it was a precaution. My dad sat on the board. They had a psychiatrist, psychologist, doctors and just all kinds of people that evaluated these men whether they were stable enough to go home. And my father was on that board. That was the end of the war. And then the beginning of the war the counseling with these men, of course, a lot of them were scared to death obviously. And he really did. He came home with stories that really were very heartbreaking on different hardships in their families and, you know, what they had to leave behind.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you ever get a sense that this was hard on your father as well to have to deal with – to counsel men in that situation?

**MRS. GEER:** You know, I don't know if it was hard on him. He liked \*\*\* He had a lot of compassion for these men. My father liked working with men. He really did. And he was very good at it. My father was a very, very wise man. And I don't know. It was just a natural for him. He just was naturally good at it. And what I remember, you know, when they had the troop boats come in – and on that road that came up from the dock there \*\*\* And you've probably seen the pictures where they had them all with their bags. And they handed out New Testaments, he and Chaplain Smith. That was the Catholic chaplain. And I remember that. I was very good at \*\*\* Because I know a lot of those men really were afraid. And they knew that they were headed \*\*\* Because the next stop was over in the battle over in Europe. But beyond my father, he really was – he was a good counselor and I know that he was very good with the men. He really, really enjoyed what he was doing then. In fact, at the end of the war the chaplain corps – they offered him if he would stay in the Army they offered him a full bird colonel if he would stay. But my mother didn't want to. She wanted to go back to the church where she was happier.

**MR. JACOBY:** Let me ask you about your mother then. Describe what a typical day for her was like.

**MRS. GEER:** I have no idea because I was busy at something all the time. But I will say this. You know, they had where they came, you know, when you called on people when we got there \*\*\* You know, the officer and his wife would come and they had a tray where they left their calling cards. And I can remember that. Of course, my mother was very unsophisticated to say the least. And they had dances, formal dances which she went to. And it was quite an interesting experience for her too. But they had what they called strikers. That's what I remember. And they were men that earned a little extra money by coming and housecleaning. So my mother had this striker. And she liked him because he didn't smoke. He was worthless at cleaning. And the thing is he came from someplace in Georgia. I couldn't understand a word he said. And the family got the biggest kick because every time he'd come in the room I'd have to quickly run out because I couldn't talk to him because I couldn't understand him. And they just thought that was funny which made me very uncomfortable. But he was very nice. And my mother, she just thought he was the nicest young man and she just loved him. But \*\*\*

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you help your mother in the kitchen?

**MRS. GEER:** Never remember doing that.

**MR. JACOBY:** So she made all the meals for you.

**MRS. GEER:** Yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** You ate most of your meals at home, but on Sundays you ate at the Officers club.

**MRS. GEER:** Officers club, yes. And I always remember that. Well, one thing too I remember, you know, the baking. They baked their own bread right on the island. And they used to make these cinnamon rolls too. And there again when you'd come you could just smell it all over. You'd get off the boat, you know, coming home from school. And sometimes we'd go over and the guys would give us cinnamon rolls and stuff. And then we had friends with everybody. We went over to the Armory. And the guy that had the sports equipment, he always let us have whatever we wanted to play with. And he'd talk to us. He was real nice.

**MR. JACOBY:** Now some ministers wives have sort of unofficial duties, going out and counseling people themselves. Did your mother do anything like that?

**MRS. GEER:** Not on Fort Slocum. Not when we were there. When she was in the church now she never did the counseling part or anything like that. But she was active in the ladies clubs and they used to ask her to speak.

**MR. JACOBY:** What would she speak about?

**MRS. GEER:** Whatever topic they were talking about or wanted to, I mean Christian things.

**MR. JACOBY:** Devotionals?

**MRS. GEER:** Yes. Stuff like that, yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did she have any hobbies?

**MRS. GEER:** Oh, my mother had all kinds of hobbies.

**MR. JACOBY:** What were they?

**MRS. GEER:** Well, she collected coins. She collected buttons and postcards and stamps. And she was very shrewd and very good at it. I know when my father died my mother wasn't old enough to get any benefits anyplace. And she lived off of her collections for two years. And the button collection – she had some very valuable buttons from prehistoric, pre Civil War and Civil War era and things like that that she had picked up from people in the churches where we had been and where we had lived and stuff. And then her postcard collection – when she died I got that, and I was able to sell that for eight hundred dollars. So I mean it was worth it. But her coin collection – that was worth a lot of money too.

**MR. JACOBY:** Now did she socialize with other officers wives who were there?

**MRS. GEER:** You know, thinking back on it I was thinking, you know, it was funny. We never really had people going into each others homes like they do today and like my friends would always come. It was only when they had these formal visits when they left their calling cards. And I'm sure they had teas and stuff at the Officers club and stuff like that, but I don't remember my mother having a friend coming to the house where they, you know, just gabbed back and forth. I don't ever remember that.

**MR. JACOBY:** Were you ever in Colonel Lentz's house?

**MRS. GEER:** Well, that time I took care of Louise.

**MR. JACOBY:** Any other time?

**MRS. GEER:** I don't remember any other time being in there. In fact, I rarely went into Maryann's house and I don't remember her coming into mine. And I don't know just why that was because we did – we were together a lot of the time doing things like when we went to the beach, and playing baseball and games and stuff and all that kind of stuff. But I know here house \*\*\* They had a fireplace in their house which we didn't have. There was a little difference between them. And she was in two on the north end, so we were just right next door.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you think that Colonel Lentz or any of the other officers knew who you were, knew your name?

**MRS. GEER:** Oh, yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** Yes.

**MRS. GEER:** Oh, definitely.

**MR. JACOBY:** Mmm hmm.

**MRS. GEER:** Well, I'm sure that Colonel Lentz did because they called and asked for me to come babysit – I mean take care of their daughter.

(End of Side A, Tape 1)

**MRS. GEER:** I can remember that when things went a little too far. And I can remember him calling the fathers in and telling them if they couldn't control their children he would. And we thought it was hilarious so we were even worse.

**MR. JACOBY:** What kind of mischief did you get into?

**MRS. GEER:** Oh, just \*\*\* Well, like one day we cut school. We got together all of us and went over the YMCA and we spent the whole day over there. But, of course, the man that was in charge, I think his name was Mays, he was a good friend of the colonel and my father. They knew exactly what we'd done – and things like that, I mean just silly stuff. We used to – like when we went to the theater at Raymond Hall. And they had those coke machines with the cups that came down. Well, we'd get up there and reach and get the cups and then we'd smash them with our heels going home and leave a trail behind us. And, of course, the MPs would come and have us pick them up. And we used to roller skate. And then the officers that had little kids used to complain because we made too much noise. And we'd ride our bikes. Well, we didn't \*\*\* We had one bike per family that we had to share which my brother and sister and I, mostly my brother and I shared it. Because during the war you couldn't get them because, you know, a rationing was on. And things like shoes – my mother had a hard time keeping shoes on us kids.

**MR. JACOBY:** Because you outgrew them?

**MRS. GEER:** Yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** Or they wore out or both?

**MRS. GEER:** Well, because we outgrew them and wore them out. And I have a very odd size foot and it was hard to even get shoes for me. So she was always looking but she managed. But the bike – we had one bike because of the metal. That was it. That's all we were allowed.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did she buy all the food at the commissary?

**MRS. GEER:** Yes, mostly.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did she ever go shopping in New Rochelle?

**MRS. GEER:** She did for department store stuff and that kind of thing. And there was the Methodist Church in New Rochelle. My mother and father were friends with that pastor and his wife. And we used to go there – like the young peoples clubs. I went to the junior high whatever it was. But in the evening we had services. And I know at that time that's when we joined the church, I mean confirmation classes and stuff at that time in the Methodist church for that. And we all did that over in New Rochelle.

**MR. JACOBY:** So you attended Sunday church on the island and then you also went to the Methodist church in New Rochelle every Sunday.

**MRS. GEER:** Yes, a lot.

**MR. JACOBY:** A lot.

**MRS. GEER:** I wouldn't say every Sunday but a lot. The young people things met at night. And I remember I did go to confirmation classes and I was confirmed in the Methodist church over at that church there in New Rochelle. So most of the time we went on the base but \*\*\*

**MR. JACOBY:** Did your father ever conduct services at the Methodist church in New Rochelle?

**MRS. GEER:** Oh, I'm sure he did. I'm sure he did. And I know my mother and father \*\*\* I mean, you know, it was the Army way. I had a picture when Mrs. Lentz christened the boat. Well, my mother and father were there. I mean anything social like that that was involved my father was usually present. In fact, if you look through those pictures during that era my father is in a lot of those pictures because he was a very – I mean he was just that's the way it was in those days.

**MR. JACOBY:** He must have had long hours.

**MRS. GEER:** Sometimes. Sometimes, yes. He kept hours \*\*\* His office was over in the library in the library building. And then he had one clerk that worked for him there in his office.

**MR. JACOBY:** Would you visit him at his office much?

**MRS. GEER:** Not a lot, but I was in his office. But I used to go to the library. I like to read. I've always been an avid reader. And I remember "Gone With the Wind." And I got that book out. And I can remember I sat at home I think for three days, and I sat in this one chair – I scarcely ate or went to bed – and I read "Gone With the Wind." It was a big book (Inaudible).

**MR. JACOBY:** I'd like you to tell me about your quarters. Describe them.

**MRS. GEER:** Well, they \*\*\* Oh, my. Coming in you had the stairs going up and then this long hall. And off of that hall you had your livingroom and diningroom which were kind of open. And then the kitchen was beyond that. But beyond that was a

little back – the doorway to the back door and a little hallway. And they had built on beyond that a room for like the maid quarters or something and it had a half bath and a bedroom. And upstairs \*\*\* And it had a back stairway too upstairs. So over that there was also a bedroom up on the upper floor. And then there were a few steps upstairs from that back bedroom and then going to the two large bedrooms. There were two big bedrooms. So at one time my sister, younger sister and I shared the big bedroom. My older sister got that lovely room in the back upstairs. When we first moved in I claimed my rights and I wanted the back bedroom downstairs. Well, that was fine until one night a rat ran across my face and scared the living daylights out of me. So the next day \*\*\* Because the rat \*\*\* You know, those are very old buildings remember. And, you know, the only way they could get in it was if the door was open sometime or something they got in. The next day I went out and I told my brother I said, “How would you like to trade rooms?” And oh, yes, he was all for it because he loved to sneak things and read at night and stuff like that.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did he have his own room?

**MRS. GEER:** No, he was upstairs with my younger sister. Because there were just the one, two, three bedrooms between us kids so somebody had to share. The one bedroom was big. It was really large.

**MR. JACOBY:** Now all the furniture. Was that Army issue or was that \*\*\*

**MRS. GEER:** Most of it was for us because my parents had lived in parsonages and they did not have much furniture. They had some but they did not have a lot. So most of the furniture we had, yes, was Army issue.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you have a radio?

**MRS. GEER:** Yes. We had a radio before we moved to the service.

**MR. JACOBY:** Was it one of those big table size radios?

**MRS. GEER:** It was about like that.

**MR. JACOBY:** Mmm hmm.

**MRS. GEER:** I can remember (Inaudible) when I remember listening as a family. And we had some shows we listened to together.

**MR. JACOBY:** What did you like to listen to?

**MRS. GEER:** I’m trying to \*\*\* “Stella Dallas” is one that comes to mind. But that one with the creaky door and “Amos ‘n Andy.” Those were the ones that we would \*\*\* My mother liked those. She was very good like that. Yes, we had a radio and we used to play \*\*\* As a family we had the dining room table. And our family game was “Rook.” We always played “Rook.” And my grandkids to this day come over and we play “Rook.”

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you remember what color the inside was painted?

**MRS. GEER:** No. I really don’t.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did your mother make the curtains or were they issued?

**MRS. GEER:** I don’t remember. I don’t think my mother made them. She might have bought them but she didn’t make them. I do have some pictures, a couple pictures from the interior. I can show you those. I did get these out. This was something. I did copy this. I wanted you to see this. That was the boys, my brothers.

**MR. JACOBY:** Describe the picture.

**MRS. GEER:** This is my brother right here on the end.

**MR. JACOBY:** You’re all lined up.

**MRS. GEER:** And that’s probably Frankie Gorman. And I don’t know which one is Chuck Hotchkiss but he’s in that.

**MR. JACOBY:** And they’re all wearing helmets.

**MRS. GEER:** Everything. I don’t know where the picture was taken, but Colonel Lentz outfitted those boys. That’s the kind of man he was. He was really good. He was a good man. And \*\*\*

**MR. JACOBY:** There are five children in this picture lined up in military uniforms.

**MRS. GEER:** Yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** Full military uniforms.

**MRS. GEER:** Yes. And Colonel Lentz had put that all together and I don’t know where it was. It couldn’t have been on the island because I don’t remember that place. But \*\*\*

**MR. JACOBY:** Looks like they've got bedrolls or sleeping bags.

**MRS. GEER:** Yes. Then he might have taken them out. Yes. And I know Chuck Hotchkiss – we've talked about that. He was there. But I can't remember where he told me where it was. But I just thought that was \*\*\* In fact, I never knew this until just recently when I think Mike showed me the picture or something and asked me about it. But my sister-in-law does have the picture so my brother knew, but we had never talked about it because it's just part of it, you know, and our lives were attached but detached. You know how brothers and sisters are. But I thought that was a really nice thing that Colonel Lentz did, but that's the way he was. He was a good man.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you remember other things that he did with children?

**MRS. GEER:** No, just when he threatened \*\*\* One time he threatened to put us in the guard house and we thought that was a hoot. But, you know, I never did anything that bad. I mean I was kind of a little rambunctious but nothing really serious. But it was the Huffman boys and Freddie – I can't remember his last name – I think were the ones that he was really \*\*\* I mean they were older and able to cause more problems. You know, what really makes me \*\*\* Oh, you said you wanted to see a picture of \*\*\*

**MR. JACOBY:** Oh, that's you?

**MRS. GEER:** Yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** How old are you?

**MRS. GEER:** Probably eighth or ninth grade there.

**MR. JACOBY:** Would this have been during your time at Fort Slocum?

**MRS. GEER:** Yes. That was taken at the photographers place on Fort Slocum.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you remember his name, the photographer?

**MRS. GEER:** It was a lady. I think it was a lady as I remember it. Wait a minute. I want to show you. Because I've got \*\*\*

**MR. JACOBY:** Would the name have been Dutchyshyn?

**MRS. GEER:** I don't remember. I have no idea. But, you know, like everything else, everybody on that island that worked there – they were very nice to us kids. I mean everybody was nice to us. I mean we had the run of the place. It was like living on a country club is what it was. This is Maryann Regan (ph). That's Major Regan's daughter.

**MR. JACOBY:** Mmm hmm.

**MRS. GEER:** And I know he had other children but I don't know just what because I don't think they lived with him.

**MR. JACOBY:** H. Dutchyshyn.

**MRS. GEER:** Oh, okay.

**MR. JACOBY:** Now his son is Harry Victor Dutchyshyn, and I'm going to go talk to him tomorrow in Johnstown, Pennsylvania.

**MRS. GEER:** No kidding.

**MR. JACOBY:** Yes.

**MRS. GEER:** All right. Now this is Mary Jane. That's the other girl. That's the three of us. We were there one day and she just told us to come on in. I'm pretty sure it was a woman. She said come right in and she took our pictures.

**MR. JACOBY:** It looks like this came in the same type of frame.

**MRS. GEER:** It did. I don't know where that is though. I mean maybe it was taken out for something or other, you know, I don't know exactly. But I thought you might be interested to see those. And here – this is a very nice picture of the chapel.

**MR. JACOBY:** And here's a picture of the ferry boat.

**MRS. GEER:** Yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** Was this the one that took the children to school every day?

**MRS. GEER:** That was one of them. That was the two story one. I had a picture someplace of the Weeks (ph) too.

**MR. JACOBY:** Who are these people kissing in the chapel?

**MRS. GEER:** That's a wedding my father performed. He did a lot of weddings there.

**MR. JACOBY:** A lot of men about to be sent overseas were getting married?

**MRS. GEER:** Yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** Mmm hmm.

**MRS. GEER:** Yes. This is just \*\*\* Oh, this is my dad I think when he reserve corps with reserve Army.

**MR. JACOBY:** This is an identification card, Officers Reserve Corps, Wesley Gebhard.

**MRS. GEER:** Mmm hmm.

**MR. JACOBY:** That's your father.

**MRS. GEER:** Yes. That was before the war. I don't know how \*\*\* You know, I'm not really organized anymore. This is the YMCA, which I'm sure you've seen a lot of pictures like that. But here is the football team from Isaac Young. And here is Bert (ph) Huffman – that's the one I had the crush on. And his brother Bobby is in this picture here. This is Bobby Huffman. Get an idea what these guys looked like. And the youngest one played baseball. They were all athletes but they did different ones.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you stay in touch with the Huffman boys after that?

**MRS. GEER:** No, no. When we left the island, you know, I never heard from anybody anymore. Well because, you know, the way it ended, you know, they put me in that private school away. And I came home just that Christmas. And everybody was disbanding and stuff. I don't even remember too much about that last winter, last Christmas I was there actually.

**MR. JACOBY:** Now when Pearl Harbor occurred you hadn't yet come to New Rochelle.

**MRS. GEER:** I don't believe so. I'm trying to think. We were I think \*\*\*

**MR. JACOBY:** Can you tell me what the war news was like while you were living on the island? I know you were only a young girl, but you must have been aware of the war and the news.

**MRS. GEER:** Oh, absolutely. Yes, we were. And when D-Day came I mean there was great, great celebration. And I remember that. In fact, my sister I think was in New York City. Because she was old enough to date I mean. And I think she was there when it happened and it was, you know, a madhouse, bedlam. But I remember when President Roosevelt died and, you know, it was really a sad, sad day there on the base.

**MR. JACOBY:** Was there any special service or announcement?

**MRS. GEER:** I think they announced it down in front of headquarters. But, you see, they had ceremonies going on all of the time on that parade field really during the day. Because they had I think it was the transportation school \*\*\* This is the bridge going to Glen Island. Oh, here's a picture. No, that's not the one. I had \*\*\* Here's what I was looking for. This is inside – there you are inside.

**MR. JACOBY:** This is inside your quarters.

**MRS. GEER:** Yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** Oh, there's the radio that you were describing.

**MRS. GEER:** Yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** It's a wooden radio with a circular top.

**MRS. GEER:** There's my mother and father. Here's another one. Here's at the dining room table.

**MR. JACOBY:** Who took these pictures?

**MRS. GEER:** I have no idea. My mother maybe.

**MR. JACOBY:** Mmm hmm.

**MRS. GEER:** And now this picture – I believe it was a Colonel Todd that was the head of the hospital. And this was his little boy and I used to babysit him. I don't even remember his name. But he was a cute little kid and I really liked him. And it was a funny thing, but Colonel Todd later on in life when we lived in Cornwall, New York which is right near West Point – and my dad used to go down there on his reserve time to spend, he'd spend at West Point. Colonel Todd was at that hospital down there. And then when I was just out of high school or my last year in high school I guess, I don't know. But I know that my girlfriends mother had my girlfriend and I – we were on the hostess list at West Point. And I used to date down there the cadets and things. And, of course, (Inaudible) Colonel Todd there. I was in a West Point wedding and everything, all that stuff. So these are just random pictures that we had in front of the house. They're just my brother and sister, the younger ones.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you spend much time on the porch?

**MRS. GEER:** No. What I remember on that porch – Once in a while they had real bad storms. And one time there was a real bad hurricane. I don't even know what that says myself.



**MR. JACOBY:** It says Wesley, Lynn and Pauline, October 1, 1944, Fort Slocum, New York.

**MRS. GEER:** Okay. Anyway, my dad liked storms. He grew up on a farm. And he had had us out there. Because we could see the Sound from our porch because there was an open area there. In fact, I had a picture of that from our front porch. And he had us lined up out there right up against the wall. And the door to the chapel had blown open. We could see the chapel from our front porch. And I remember him walking over there to get that closed and then back. And he was telling us not to move, you know, because it was really bad wind. At that time a lot of the yacht clubs near by and stuff they had a lot of damage to them. It was really bad. But I used to love the storms. That was another thing. My dad, he used to walk around the island every night. And, you know, the chaplains weren't allowed to carry weapons. But he had what he called a swagger stick which I have someplace, but I don't know what I did with it. I don't know where I put it. But it was like a walking stick, and it had a snap and you'd pull it out. It was a weapon. And that was the only one they were allowed to carry. So he'd walk every night. And one of the nicest memories of my life with my family is every now and then one of us would walk with him, and walking around the island with my dad. And I used to like it especially when it was kind of misty and damp. It was just a nice experience. And, of course, we had the loudspeakers with the calls, bugle calls coming all the time. And at five o'clock when they took the flag down everybody had to stand still and come to attention, and they played the thing on the bugle and take the flag down.

**MR. JACOBY:** Was there also a cannon shot?

**MRS. GEER:** A gun salute, yes. That was every day, every day. And, you know, and thing – oh, it was so nice. Here's Maryann again. And waking up like in the summertime when it was nice – you'd wake up in the morning on Saturday morning to the band, marching band right out in front of your house marching by. And they had the soldiers running around all the time doing that sound off thing, you know, that Colonel Lentz had copyrighted with that sergeant \*\*\*

**MR. JACOBY:** The Duckworth Chant (ph)?

**MRS. GEER:** Yes. That was just an everyday part of life that was going on all the time.

**MR. JACOBY:** And would you watch it often?

**MRS. GEER:** You'd hear it if you didn't watch it. If they came by my house I'd watch it. But they used all the roads, you know, behind the house and down the parade field and whatever. But you could hear the chant constantly.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you ever see WACS do that as well?

**MRS. GEER:** The WACS came on the island while we were there, and I never paid too much attention. I know my brother made friends with some of the WACS. And I remember when they put those barracks up for them. I don't particularly remember the WACS doing the sound off but I'm sure they did it. I just didn't differentiate. I mean the WACS were there – WACS, soldiers, it didn't – to me it was just all the same. But that was something that was really nice, really nice. And I have a very nice memory. I really treasure the years I spent there because they were just so unique and they were just happy, you know. Like my friends at school – I had a lot of friends at school. Well, some of them they belonged to country clubs over there in New Rochelle which there were several. And they'd invite me to spend the day with them at their country club. Well, then I'd invite them to my private country club. I mean it was just as nice and it was just like it, and it was really nice.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did many kids in New Rochelle come over and play on the island?

**MRS. GEER:** Only when they were invited. They had to be invited. And I brought friends, I wouldn't say all the time, but I did bring friends. And I know that sometimes they'd spend the night with me or they'd come for the day. But we'd go swimming or go down the Officers club and do whatever we wanted to do and whatever girls did at that age.

**MR. JACOBY:** Tell me about Thanksgiving or Christmas on the island.

**MRS. GEER:** We'd go down to the Officers club for all the holiday meals.

**MR. JACOBY:** Who would make the meals, the \*\*\*

**MRS. GEER:** The soldiers. And in that scrapbook I told you I have menus, the menus. And that's \*\*\* But Mike has all those right now. But my mother kept all those. She had newspaper articles and different signs that they put up. She did all kinds \*\*\* She had all kinds of \*\*\* They had a thing about haircuts that was really kind of funny.

**MR. JACOBY:** Tell me.

**MRS. GEER:** Well, I don't remember. I sent it to him. But I know it was funny when I saw it and I never knew it was there. But it was about getting their hair cut. It was a cartoon that they made and had up so that the soldiers would know they had to get their hair cut. I don't know. You know, as really a preteen or just young teen my world was kind of self-centered. I mean I have to say the only thing I know is the contacts that I actually made.

**MR. JACOBY:** You mentioned that D-Day there was a lot of celebrating. Were you on the island when the war ended or were you at \*\*\*

**MRS. GEER:** Yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** Were you off at your \*\*\*

**MRS. GEER:** Now wait a minute. Let's see. I must have been on the island when it ended.

**MR. JACOBY:** Can you describe what it was like?

**MRS. GEER:** I just vaguely – It's just I remember my sister being involved in that celebration in New York City. But I don't remember any big thing I was involved in. My parents probably did. I know that there was \*\*\* I know that there was a lot of excitement and happiness that it was over. And I know when President Roosevelt died it was a very sad, sad, somber mood there on the island. And I know that they had announced it formally down in front of headquarters. But that's where they made all the announcements. They probably did that with the end of the war too. When did the war actually end? I don't even remember the day.

**MR. JACOBY:** Well, the war in Europe ended in May 1945 and then against Japan in August.

**MRS. GEER:** Well, I was on the island at both times. I would have had to have been because I didn't go to school until September that '45. And then I was there for Christmas. And that's when it changed because it was after the war. Instead of sending them over they were coming back. That's when they started to come back.

**MR. JACOBY:** You mentioned that you were an avid reader. There was a post newspaper called "The Casual News." Did you ever look at it?

**MRS. GEER:** Not then. But Mike had sent me copies that I have read.

**MR. JACOBY:** Mmm hmm. But not while you were living there.

**MRS. GEER:** No. I wasn't interested seriously. I liked like "Gone With the Wind" and I liked mystery novels. I read a lot of those. I liked to read mysteries. But I did like to read. I did really like reading. I can't do it so well now anymore because I've got macular degeneration and it's a little difficult.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you remember ever going into New York City?

**MRS. GEER:** Oh, yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** Tell me about some of your trips to New York.

**MRS. GEER:** Oh, here's Isaac Young High School. Oh, here's the view from our house too. That's what we could see. See that's the Sound out there that I was telling you about. Here's a picture, a family picture in front of our house. Yes, I do have a very specific one. On my eleventh birthday my parents took me to New York City. And Sonja Henie was at Madison Square Garden. And they took me to that. And I remember they were shopping for some shoes for me. And, as I said, I had an unusually narrow foot. It was really hard to find a shoe that would fit. And I think we went in about every store in New York trying to find a shoe that fit – a dress shoe. And that was very special because shoes were rationed and stuff. So I do remember that. And that was a very special time. And I remember Sonja Henie and I remember her out there on the ice, and it was a very nice birthday. But I mean, of course, see after the war we moved to Cornwall, New York which is north up the Hudson River, probably about a 40 minute ride or something. So we used to go to the City then too. And, oh, another time too when I was in New Rochelle through the school I was in the a capella choir my junior year in high school, eighth grade. And the reason they let my girlfriend and I both come in – you were supposed to be ninth grade. But they were short altos, so they let my girlfriend and I come in the a capella choir. And the a capella choir at the New York Metropolitan Opera House, they had matinees, special matinees from the metropolitan area for school kids. And in this a capella choir the director coached us on the opera. And the first opera I went to in the eighth grade was "Aida." And my girlfriend and I \*\*\* And they had, you know, the seats were really drastically reduced. We were I think in the first balcony. We had excellent seats. That was my first opera and I fell in love with opera. And I am an opera buff. To this day I love opera. And the next year we saw Patrice Muncel (ph) when she made her debut that year at the opera house. And we saw her. And I can't remember which opera it was that she was in. But that was very special. Both times then we went with the school to take us. So there were a lot of nice things that happened along the way being there on the island and in the New Rochelle school system.

**MR. JACOBY:** What do you remember about the town of New Rochelle?

**MRS. GEER:** Very nice. I remember, oh boy \*\*\* When we first went there I was in the sixth grade. And I went to Trinity Place School. And, of course, the first year was when I got lost. And I had been in a three room schoolhouse before New Rochelle. And the three room schoolhouse I had the same teacher for the fourth, fifth and part of the \*\*\*

(End of Side B, Tape 1)

**MRS. GEER:** \*\*\* a very different experience for me from where I had come from. And in sixth grade I went to the school. I was behind. I was really behind. And I was always \*\*\* School was very easy for me. I never had a problem. But the end of that sixth grade \*\*\* I had to work in the seventh grade. That's the only year I can ever remember really working at my school work because I was behind.

**MR. JACOBY:** Was this after you hurt your back?

**MRS. GEER:** No. This was before I hurt my back. But anyway, their (Inaudible) in the seventh grade and the end of the sixth grade. At the end of sixth grade I lived in New Rochelle so I didn't have to stay there for lunch. But in the seventh grade we were living on the island and I went in the morning. I had to stay for lunch. Well, all the other kids went home. They had it divided. And I mean I don't want to sound racist or anything, but it's the way it was at that time. They had the Black children in one class and pretty much the White children in the other class. And everyone in my class went home and I had to stay. And it was mostly Black kids that were there. And I had never really been around Black people. It was very frightening to me. And this one Black girl, she was a great big huge gal. And she liked me. And I was scared to death of her, I mean petrified. And I mean that's just the way it was. And I have to tell it and it's not, you know, \*\*\* And so anything she'd ask me for for my \*\*\* She'd see something she liked, she'd ask and I'd give it to her. Hey, I was afraid to say no to her. But, you know, she wouldn't let any of the boys bother me. She took care of me. She watched over me. And I can remember going to the movies one time in New Rochelle with one of my friends and she was there. And I just \*\*\* I remember that because \*\*\*

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you remember her name?

**MRS. GEER:** No, I don't. But she was my guardian angel really and really took care of me. But I did not like that when I was in the grade school. Now when we went to the high school, of course, it was different. In the eighth grade they had the eighth, ninth and the two years of high school over at Isaac Young. And that wasn't a problem. Everybody stayed, you know. But it was just that year that seventh grade in Trinity Place that the lunch hour was a problem to me because of that. And I say God took care of me. Because, you know, some of those \*\*\* Because that drew from some really good sections of town and some very poor sections. And some of those boys were kind of boisterous and, you know, I was afraid.

**MR. JACOBY:** Were you ever stuck in town because of bad weather – the ferry wouldn't go? You don't remember any \*\*\*

**MRS. GEER:** Never remember that. No, no. Because I think if it was bad weather they'd take that freighter and they'd get us over there. I never remember that being a problem. Never.

**MR. JACOBY:** What did you do during the summertime? You didn't go to school. So you basically played all day on the island?

**MRS. GEER:** Sure. We went swimming a lot and, like I say, we could play tennis – we could get the tennis \*\*\* And not that I did that a lot, but we played baseball on the field. I mean because all us kids were there (Inaudible) to do what we did. I can remember a group of us going horseback riding one time down in Pelham Manor. And I remember because we came back. We were hot and sweaty and tired and going and jumping off the pier with our clothes on. We thought that was funny.

**MR. JACOBY:** You made a little money babysitting. Did your father give you an allowance?

**MRS. GEER:** No. I don't think so. No. I know he didn't. But I always made money babysitting. I always had some. And I saved money. I was not a spender – I was a saver. And I liked babysitting, as I say. Then when, you know, we moved to Cornwall there were a lot of officers from West Point that lived nearby, and they all liked to have me as their babysitter. And we had \*\*\* In Cornwall we had a lot of military schools. We had that young boys United States Military Academy. And the teachers, a lot of the teachers had me babysit there. And then Colonel Stanton had a preparatory school right across the street from our house for boys trying to enter West Point. And when they had affairs and stuff and they needed babysitters they always called my younger sister and I.

**MR. JACOBY:** That's where you graduated high school when you were in Cornwall?

**MRS. GEER:** Cornwall, yes, mmm hmm. That's where I graduated from.

**MR. JACOBY:** What did your father do after the Army?

**MRS. GEER:** He went back into the ministry.

**MR. JACOBY:** Oh, he left the Army in 1946?

**MRS. GEER:** Yes. He had terminal leave from the time he left in January of '46 – around right there because it was after Christmas. And, see, originally my mother and father were both from Minnesota. So they took everything, packed up and went to Minnesota. And he had about four months of terminal leave coming to him. And that's when they had left me in Pennsylvania. As I say, they deserted me. And my sister – the college she chose to go to was where my father went – Hamline University in Minnesota. So the whole family was out there. My father came and got me the end of my school year. And he had belonged to the New York Conference before the war so that's where he was going back.

**MR. JACOBY:** What brought them to New York State from Minnesota?

**MRS. GEER:** My father's brother had gone to Drew University to get his theology degree. And so he liked it so well there in New Jersey, Madison, and so he wanted my father to come. So my father and mother took my older sister and they went to Drew. And then he got a student charge, what they called a student charge at South Rondo (ph), New York which is right near Kingston, New York.

**MR. JACOBY:** What's a student charge?

**MRS. GEER:** He went to school, and he had this little tiny church that gave him some money.

**MR. JACOBY:** Oh, I see.

**MRS. GEER:** And he'd be there weekends, but he'd be down at school all week. And they had a group of men, young men like himself, and they used to car pool together. But my mother was there alone with us kids all week. And she had me and my other two siblings at that time, and she was there with whopping cough and all kinds of stuff that she did. I have to hand it to my mother. She did not have an easy life. But she never really complained about it. I mean she had to strain all the baby food. And, you know, you think about it. And she had to wash by hand and carry water and put a wood stove. That's what we had in South Rundo.

**MR. JACOBY:** What was your mother's name?

**MRS. GEER:** Lillian.

**MR. JACOBY:** Lillian.

**MRS. GEER:** Lillian Gustafson. She was born of Swedish parents and she was the first generation American. So was my father.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did she speak Swedish?

**MRS. GEER:** No, she didn't. And it's funny that she didn't because my grandmother did very fluently. And not only my grandmother but her mother, my great-grandmother – they lived with my mother. But she never \*\*\* She knew a few words but she never really got into it.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did your mother keep a garden at Fort Slocum?

**MRS. GEER:** No. But we did. My father \*\*\* My father grew up on a farm in Newel (ph), Minnesota. He was of German descent. And they had victory gardens during the war. And over behind the chapel all the people that wanted to have a garden plot had a garden plot. Well, my father had a garden plot. And I can remember going there in the evening especially and picking the tomatoes and rutabagas and just different things that he had planted that he liked.

**MR. JACOBY:** A lot of people kept a garden?

**MRS. GEER:** Yes. And we'd talk, you know, a social thing there. They were all, you know, had string around them and plotted out.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you remember exactly where it was behind the chapel? Was it near the gun, the gun batteries?

**MRS. GEER:** No, it was before that. I mean the chapel sat here. And I'd say the victory gardens were over here.

**MR. JACOBY:** So a little to the west?

**MRS. GEER:** Yes, and maybe a little bit, you know, back – going back but from that main drag back probably up.

**MR. JACOBY:** Right.

**MRS. GEER:** And then the gun pits sat over to probably the left of the gardens, yes. Yes, there were quite a few of the officers and I guess the non-commissioned officers too that had them.

**MR. JACOBY:** So did that really supplement your meals?

**MRS. GEER:** I wouldn't say that necessarily. I don't know. I just remember that we used to like to go. Because like I can remember eating the rutabagas and I can remember the tomatoes. And they tasted good. I mean we just went and picked them. They probably did beans and stuff, and I'm sure whatever they did they cooked, yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** What were some of the meals that your mom made?

**MRS. GEER:** I don't remember from there. I know when we lived in Cornwall I can remember she made – what did she make. She used to burn the potatoes all the time. But she used to make donuts. You know, they used to make them and fry them in deep fat. And I can remember her doing that and I remember her making grape jelly. You know, they had that thing that you put in – a cone like thing and swirling it around and smashing them.

**MR. JACOBY:** Were grapes grown on the island or she bought grapes?

**MRS. GEER:** No. This was after. We had grapes \*\*\* We had a ravine behind our house. And she made applesauce and dumplings that I remember that I liked. And she made this tomato soup that she used – I don't know how she did it. But I know it was milk and tomatoes which, of course, milk will curdle. But she put baking soda and it stopped it from curdling. And I loved that soup, just loved it. And I remember that. She used to make pancakes a lot.

**MR. JACOBY:** During the war was it easy to get eggs and fresh milk or were those rationed?

**MRS. GEER:** Well, I think that we didn't have any problem because we were at the commissary. And I think things were easier to get. I don't remember everything that was rationed but I know there were \*\*\* Well, meat was hard \*\*\* They used that Spam all the time. We ate a lot of Spam. I do remember that. She'd fry it and it would taste better, but it wasn't very good.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did your father have a car?

**MRS. GEER:** Yes, he did. And finally about half way through the war he sold it because it was deteriorating from the salt water there because they parked it outside on the mainland. You couldn't bring your cars on the island.

**MR. JACOBY:** Oh, no?

**MRS. GEER:** No.

**MR. JACOBY:** No cars on the island.

**MRS. GEER:** No.

**MR. JACOBY:** But there were vehicles, military vehicles on the island.

**MRS. GEER:** Yes, yes, a few.

**MR. JACOBY:** But no private cars.

**MRS. GEER:** No, no private cars at all.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you remember what kind of vehicle, what kind of auto he had?

**MRS. GEER:** He had a Nash. And I remember that because he had bought that I think about a year before we went into the service. But I know we went to Minnesota one time. And we used to visit Minnesota every summer because my mother got homesick. And my two aunts – I had two aunts that had cottages up on the north shore of Lake Superior. And the one year we were there we had the Nash then. My cousin got appendicitis attack. And, you know, we were ninety miles from nowhere. And they made the bed. The Nash was the first one that you could make that bed. And they made a bed and took her down to Duluth to the hospital where they had her operated on. So that's why I remember that because that was – they didn't know what they were going to do with Selene (ph) because of that. But then, as I say, it was some time during the war he sold it because it was just – the salt was eating it out, you know, the metal and stuff. And we never used it anyway really because Dad was confined there to the base. He didn't get much leave time of any kind. And the only thing is, you know, when we went to New Rochelle or New York. But we had train service and bus service and there was no problem for transportation ever that I remember then.

**MR. JACOBY:** Was your mother ever concerned that he might be sent overseas during the war?

**MRS. GEER:** I don't think so. Because I mean that was his first base. They sent him to chaplaincy school before or brief training, you know, for active service. And then he was sent there. And the fact that he came at a time \*\*\* I don't know. Colonel Lentz liked him. I mean I think that \*\*\* I don't think that that subject ever came up. Although I had an uncle that was a chaplain during the war. And he did – he was over in Iwo Jima and he was just sent all over the place. But he was in the Air Force, not the Army. And I had two other uncles in World War II that were enlisted – well, one was an enlisted man. He lived. But I had an uncle – my mother's youngest brother was a navigator on those B-17's that flew over Germany from England. And he was on his next to last mission when it was shot down. The enlisted men parachuted out but all the officers blew up with the plane. The plane blew up and they were in. So we lost my Uncle Dick. I remember that. My mother was, you know, felt very bad. And my older sister was closer to him than I was because she was older again and she felt \*\*\* Well, they did. Yes, everybody \*\*\* During World War II everybody felt \*\*\* We were at war, and everybody was at war. And there was no question about it. I know one of the ladies up here – my granddaughter had to interview somebody 80 years or older about World War II. And I wasn't quite old enough, so we went over here to this lady and she talked. But she worked in a factory. And she was saying they had to work seven days a week. And the only way you could get off is if you had a doctors excuse. And it was very interesting talking to her what they went through from the civilian end of the war which I had never experienced or heard before. So everybody in America knew we were at war. Everybody was at war. It was a very interesting time. But I know all those signs, you know, about sinking ships. And my mother has some of those posters in that scrapbook too. I don't know. It just was a very special time in my life and I wouldn't change it for anything. I was fortunate. I had a very nice family and I had a good life. I had a lot of interesting experiences in my life that were just kind of unique because of the fact of just where we happened to be and what was there. I know in Cornwall, you know, they had all these private schools and everything. And, of course, my father – there he was one of the leading clergymen in town. And the mayor was his friend, the principal was his friend – everybody liked my father. My father was a very likeable man. And, as I say, in fact my boyfriends – we'd break up and my boyfriends would still go see my father because they'd tell all their troubles to him. And that's the kind of guy he was. I mean my friends all liked him.

**MR. JACOBY:** After you left Fort Slocum did you ever return?

**MRS. GEER:** No. No, I never have been back. I don't even think I've been to New Rochelle. My younger sister – she stayed out east. She was the only one in the family that stayed east. The rest of us all moved out west for one reason or another. But she lived in Connecticut and Massachusetts. Her husband was an engineer. But he was a boater. He graduated from the

Maritime Academy and that was his hobby. And he always had boats. So I know that they took their boat in there, and I know that they boated around the island and observed the docks and everything. And she would write and tell me, you know, how it had changed and that kind of thing.

**MR. JACOBY:** So you were aware of the abandonment of the island \*\*\*

**MRS. GEER:** Yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** And then its decline.

**MRS. GEER:** Yes. And then I had a friend here in Toledo where I – I worked for the City of Toledo. That's where I retired from. And she had a daughter that lived in Mamaroneck maybe – one of the towns right close to New Rochelle. But her daughter had graduated from the college there in New Rochelle. It was a Catholic school. And she lived close by. Well, her daughter – when her mother told her that I had lived there she would relate all the news about the island and New Rochelle. So I got a lot of information that way.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you have any feelings about what became of the island?

**MRS. GEER:** I feel very sad. You know, the more I think about it – the history of that island is important to the history of our country and the Army. And the more I read about it and realize how important it was through the different eras on the defense and, well, I understand it was a hospital there during the Civil War. And it just has a very old and honorable history of use and service to this country. And to have it abandoned and just let all of that go like it never happened, that makes me sad. It really does. And I think most of the people that ever lived there feel the same way. I mean it was a jewel – very, very special jewel that you don't encounter too often in life. Because it was pristine when I was there. The parade field, everything. Everything was taken care of and maintained so well. And then to think \*\*\* And I see these pictures where they've just rotted away and everything is gone. It makes me very sad. It really does. I hope that they \*\*\* I really hope they make a park or something out of it or have a museum there with some of the artifacts and things for its history. I think it should be preserved historically. I definitely do. I think it would be just like throwing something valuable away in the garbage for nothing. That's how I would feel about it if they don't do something. In fact, I mean, you know, when I'm daydreaming, you know, there are times I've thought boy, if I had all the money I'd love to take and buy that island and build myself a mansion on it and live on it. I mean that's how I felt about it. I mean that's preposterous daydreaming. But, you know, we do do that sometimes. I do. Anyway, in fact, I have started \*\*\* Every now and then I get nostalgia. And I am kind of writing a little piece but it's an emotional – it's from the emotions and feelings about the smell of the sea and the sound of the waves and the ripples and the expressions. I mean everything that came on that island I mean have just left such a lasting impression on me. And like I love storms. I just love the rain. I love the water, being near the wear. It's very, very peaceful to me. And I gathered that I mean from my Fort Slocum years living on the island because we were so close. And the sound of the seagulls and the squawking. I mean they're special sounds and smells and things and it creates a mood. So I have some \*\*\* Some day I might finish it some day. I don't know if I ever do or not now. I don't even know what I'd do with it. But I like to express myself in writing. I do that.

**MR. JACOBY:** Well, Joanna Geer, I want to thank you very much for participating in this Fort Slocum oral history project.

**MRS. GEER:** Well, you're very welcome. I probably enjoyed it more than you.

(End of Tape)

### CERTIFICATE

I, Lin York, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and accurate transcript of the taped proceedings as transcribed by me on the date hereinbefore set forth, to the best of my ability.

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Dated: October 29, 2007 Lin York

Agency Typist



**MR. JACOBY:** ...Tetra Tech E.C., and I am speaking to day with Rich Lowery at his home in Midland, North Carolina, on October 23, 2007. This interview is part of a program sponsored by the United States Army Corps of Engineers and the New Rochelle Public Library, to collect oral histories about the experiences and memories of people who are associated with the US Army Post, Fort Slocum, located on David's Island in New Rochelle, New York.

Good afternoon, Rich. First of all, would you tell me how you're associated with Fort Slocum?

**MR. LOWERY:** After getting out of basic training in April of '59, I was assigned to the Nike Air Defense Battery on Fort Slocum.

**MR. JACOBY:** What was your rank?

**MR. LOWERY:** Upon arrival I was Private.

**MR. JACOBY:** And what were your general duties?

**MR. LOWERY:** I was a radar operator for the Nike system, operating the target track radar, or as we call it TTR.

**MR. JACOBY:** Were you trained at Fort Slocum in this?

**MR. LOWERY:** It was all OJT, on the job training.

**MR. JACOBY:** And describe for me an average day in your assignment.

**MR. LOWERY:** We would arrive probably at about 5 in the morning, about 5:30 in the morning. We would have a formation out in front of the barracks. We would do essentially a head count. We would be read any kind of pertinent information that we needed for that day, any kind of special assignments or anything that might be going on that we needed to be aware of. So, just a general announcement, usually lasted no more than a few minutes. And then we would go for breakfast at the mess hall.

Coming back we would go up and -- to our assigned work area which we called "up on the hill" because it was up on that bluff, kind of a bluff area overlooking the southeastern part of the island. So we would go up there and we would begin working on that Nike system, just to make sure that it was -- each day, that it was in tune, that it was, you know, the accuracies were checked for all the radars. Computers were checked. We would go and first thing we would do would be to go out to the antennas and make sure they were level. They had little bubble levels on each of the legs of the antenna and we would go out there and check, raise up a little lid and look down at the level, and if the level was off we would have a big wrench that we would turn a screw and it would raise or lower the leg of the antenna, and you'd watch the bubble and turn it to make sure that the bubble then became in the very center.

So the very first thing we'd do is make sure that the antennas were physically level, so that all other checks and measurements from that point on would be predicated on the antenna being at a good starting point. And we would also check for what was called the "azimuth" or the horizontal direction of the antenna. There was way out in Long Island Sound, way up in sort of the northeastern part of Long Island Sound, a good distance away was a lighthouse. And on top of that lighthouse was a lightening rod. And what we would do would be to take a telescope that was about two or three feet long, and there were some clamps on the side of the antenna, and we would clamp that telescope to the antenna, and we would insert a cable into the power box of the antenna, and you had a manual knob that you could turn, and you could physically turn that antenna around.

So, what we would do would be to go up and look through that telescope and point it to that lighthouse. And not just to the lighthouse, but to the lightening rod on the very top of the lighthouse, and we set the cross-hairs of that telescope on that lightening rod. And that point had been surveyed at some point and was to be a known, accurate azimuth.

So what we would do when we got that antenna turned where that telescope was dead on that tip of that lightening rod, we would go down and look at the dials on the base of the antenna, and see if read the right azimuth. If it did not there was a little allen wrench adjustment that you could do to physically turn that dial and force it to read the azimuth that it was supposed to be reading.

**MR. JACOBY:** This was done everyday?

**MR. LOWERY:** This was done everyday. That way the antenna, you knew, was level, was accurate in an azimuth plane, or horizontal plane. Once we were satisfied that all of that was accurate, and the same thing would be done on the missile track radar too, because there was two radars involved there. And identical checks would be done on both of them. We would assure that the azimuth was exactly the way it was supposed to be.

**MR. JACOBY:** Tell me the purpose of the Nike base.

**MR. LOWERY:** The Nike base was one of a number of air defense batteries around the New York Metro area that was in place at probably the height of the Cold War for any kind of aircraft threats that they thought might come from the Soviet Union or elsewhere. So there were batteries all around the New York area, all out on Long Island, over into New Jersey, on up into Connecticut and they were all strategically placed so that each battery would have what was known as a sector of fire, that it was basically responsible for.

And our sector of fire was kind of sprayed out on the northern portion of Long Island Sound. It was also placed there because if you ever had to fire the booster that was a part of the missile would be jettisoned. So they had to always keep in mind, if there was a firing, where would that booster fall? They didn't want it to fall into any kind of populated areas. So, in our case it would have fallen basically into Long Island Sound. So, there were considerations, I don't know all of them, but there were considerations about where each sector of fire was assigned to each battery.

**MR. JACOBY:** How big was the detachment?

**MR. LOWERY:** We had probably -- we probably had maybe 150 men, overall, in both areas. Our battery was split, physically split by Long Island Sound, in that our fire patrol area was on the southeastern portion of Slocum, and the launching area where the missiles were actually contained, was on the northern tip of Hart Island. So, combined, the personnel at Hart Island and on Slocum probably was about 150.

**MR. JACOBY:** And which part were you in?

**MR. LOWERY:** I was in the fire patrol section of -- that was located on Slocum.

**MR. JACOBY:** Who was the commanding officer, do you remember his name?

**MR. LOWERY:** When I arrived there was -- the commanding officer was a Captain by the name of Captain Wisnack (phonetic). I'm not sure of first names because the military, you generally deal with last names only. So, Captain Wisnack was the battery commander. And then over the course of time we went through several changes. At one point we had a Lieutenant Ledbetter that was our battery commander. And at another point we had another Captain, I think he was -- if I'm pronouncing it right, I think it was a French sounding name, Captain Guy Deshadines (phonetic).

**MR. JACOBY:** 150 men, how many were officers at any one time?

**MR. LOWERY:** Officer complement was probably -- probably maybe 10. I'll guess at maybe 10. We had a battery commander, we had an executive officer, then we had -- we had some people that were technical people that were officers also. But most of those were known as warrant officers. They weren't true commissioned officers, they were officers that were, I guess the rank of officer was conveyed upon them because of their technical expertise in certain areas. So, we had some maintenance people and technicians that were warrant officers because of their expertise.

**MR. JACOBY:** And the number of sergeants?

**MR. LOWERY:** Sergeants, we probably had -- probably on our side of the battery, on the Slocum contingent was probably about five or six. Or maybe more, maybe eight or 10, I'll say. We had some maintenance people that were master sergeants. We had a battery -- a first sergeant -- our battery first sergeant was a master sergeant. And we had several master sergeants that were technical maintenance people.

**MR. JACOBY:** You said that you worked on the radar.

**MR. LOWERY:** Right.

**MR. JACOBY:** How many other men worked on the radar?

**MR. LOWERY:** A crew that would probably consist of maybe eight or nine men. And of those eight or nine, maybe four of them would be radar operators. And the rest might be computer people. So I would say maybe four or five would be the ones that would work on the radar themselves.

**MR. JACOBY:** Now, did you have a single assignment, or could you rotate through several different tasks?

**MR. LOWERY:** No, it was pretty much a, you know, a single task, because you had -- you had your particular spot on the duty crew, and that was -- that was pretty much the part that you worked on exclusively. You wouldn't change, for example, from a radar operator to a computer operator. Because they were kind of specialized areas and you really couldn't switch from one to the other.



**MR. JACOBY:** But within the radar section you could -- you said there were four radars in any one --

**MR. LOWERY:** Yeah, there would be about four or five people that would be radar operators. And you could -- they were somewhat interchangeable. So, you could, if you worked on a target track radar, or what they call a TTR, you might work on the MTR, which would be the missile track radar. So, they were very similar. One of them just simply tracked the missile and one of them tracked the target plane.

**MR. JACOBY:** Was the post manned 24 hours a day?

**MR. LOWERY:** It was. It was. There was -- we would have like three crews. One of the crews would be physically there all the time, 24 hours a day. You might have another crew that might be on standby that would not actually be physically up at their station, but might be still on the grounds, in the barracks or on the island. And then you'd have another crew that would be completely off. They might have left the island on pass or something.

**MR. JACOBY:** So, basically three shifts through each day?

**MR. LOWERY:** Three shifts, yeah.

**MR. JACOBY:** Were there any alerts while you were there?

**MR. LOWERY:** We had -- we had drill alerts all the time. There would be periodic drill alerts where you'd go through a simulated shoot status. But there were occasions -- there were two occasions that I remember when we had actual alerts that came down from the higher command. One was when there was some northern lights activity up over Canada and they weren't sure exactly what they were, so they -- the North American Air Defense Command issued orders to bring some batteries up to alert status, ours being one of them. Lasted for maybe a couple of hours. And it was determined to simply be an electrical disturbance, atmospheric disturbance that they just couldn't identify. So, to be on the safe side they went ahead and brought their batteries up to alert status.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you remember being scared or anxious at that time?

**MR. LOWERY:** I remember we all kind of -- you know, when the siren went off and then we found -- we went up and, you know, went through our procedures. We eventually heard what the circumstances were that brought us up to alert status, so we were probably a little bit anxious. And one of the things I think that did kind of make us a little more anxious, was that under normal drill circumstances, whenever we'd go through our drills and practices, there was a connection to the missiles themselves called a booster squib. And that was a connection that actually was inserted in the tail of the booster that actually ignited the booster material to make the missile take off.

Well, in normal drills, they would -- everybody would report in, their duty station would report in that this station is ready for action. Then another station would be ready for action. And we would get on -- over the radio we would get a notice that the missile launch area was ready for action. And usually in drills they would always say that, you know, missile launch ready for action. And they would always include the statement, "booster squibs have not been connected." And that was to make sure that, you know, they didn't have them inadvertently done for any kind of accident.

Well, on this particular occasion, when everybody reported in their duty station ready for action, they mentioned about booster squibs had been connected. So when we heard that, we did get a little nervous, because, you know, that had never been done before. And that was an indication that they meant business. When they connected the booster squibs that was an indication that, hey, we're ready to go.

**MR. JACOBY:** And at what point was the alert called off?

**MR. LOWERY:** I would say we remained on alert maybe 30 minutes, maybe 45 minutes, as best I can recall. And then there was a stand down. We would get orders that, you know, we could stand down from A-status.

**MR. JACOBY:** Was it strictly business, or did the officers go around to the enlisted men trying to calm you down or at least talk to you?

**MR. LOWERY:** No, there was none of that. Everybody was busy doing whatever their job was, and there was no -- no indication of, you know, any kind of undue anxiety. Everybody was just simply a little on edge, that's all. But no, no widespread anxiety or anything like that.

**MR. JACOBY:** You mentioned a second alert.

**MR. LOWERY:** The second alert, as best I can remember it, was that there was supposedly, and I don't know who actually would have done this, but there was supposedly some sightings of possible submarines

in Long Island Sound. And being at the height of the Cold War, and everybody knew that Soviet and US submarines shadowed each other and probed each other and so forth. So, this one alert was because there supposedly had been some submarine sightings in Long Island Sound. So, we also got notification from our battalion to go on alert in that occasion also.

**MR. JACOBY:** What were the dates that you were at Fort Slocum?

**MR. LOWERY:** I was there from around May of 1959 till approximately August, I would say, of 1961.

**MR. JACOBY:** A little over two years.

**MR. LOWERY:** Right.

**MR. JACOBY:** When and where did you enlist?

**MR. LOWERY:** I enlisted in Rock Hill, South Carolina, that's a little town about 30 miles south of Charlotte.

**MR. JACOBY:** And what was your first assignment?

**MR. LOWERY:** First assignment was at Fort Slocum. Well, first assignment was a Fort Jackson for the basic training. I was there for about 10 weeks or so for the basic training at Fort Jackson.

**MR. JACOBY:** Had you ever heard of Fort Slocum before?

**MR. LOWERY:** I had not.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you remember your first impression on seeing it?

**MR. LOWERY:** Well, my first impression was that it was nothing like Fort Jackson. Fort Jackson had the old World War II style, kind of yellowish wooden barracks buildings. It just kind of had that atmosphere of a World War II base. But Slocum seemed just worlds apart from that. Slocum did have that appearance though, just a nice university campus or college campus, old buildings, nice grounds. So, I was impressed at how un-military like it looked.

**MR. JACOBY:** Was there much association between the Nike detachment or the permanent party or any other force at Fort Slocum?

**MR. LOWERY:** There was very little interaction. Being down on that one corner of the island and the nature of our mission, you might say, made it such that we didn't mingle too much, or have much contact with the folks at the rest of the island. We did use their mess hall. And we did take advantage of things like the Service Club and the NCO Club, and some of the activities of the island. But as far as mingling, or having much to do with the others, we just really didn't have it because of the nature of our -- we were physically isolated from the rest of the island. We were down on just one corner of the island. So, from a physical standpoint, we didn't have much -- we had a good long ways to walk to get to the mess hall. And --

**MR. JACOBY:** Was the Nike post fenced off from the rest of the island?

**MR. LOWERY:** It was. It did have a fence around it. It did have guards posted 24 hours a day. So from that aspect of it it was what we always considered, or what was termed to kind of be a line outfit, that was kind of determined to be different from the schools and things that were going on at the rest of the island. We were -- we were more or less -- I want to say we were kind of a combat-ready type outfit, just by the very nature of the battery.

**MR. JACOBY:** And that really set you apart from the --

**MR. LOWERY:** It did. And I'll have to say it might have been a little bit of a pride issue, too. You know, we might have thought of ourselves as a little more than just information school students or that sort of thing, because, you know, it was just a little -- kind of a little ego trip, too, I'm sure.

**MR. JACOBY:** Describe your quarters?

**MR. LOWERY:** We stayed -- our barracks was an old World War II WAC barracks that was right down on the edge of the island. We were separated from the seawall by just a road. There was a road that went around the perimeter of the island. Our barracks was right at the edge of that road. Then you could go across the road and across the seawall and you were down at Long Island Sound. People used to go down there and fish sometimes. The barracks were very old. They were not very substantial buildings, because I guess being built back in the World War II area they just -- they were not likely buildings on the rest of the island. Not brick buildings or anything, frame buildings.

**MR. JACOBY:** How were they heated?

**MR. LOWERY:** We had a coal fired furnace in a room that was right there near the front of the barracks that was simply known as the furnace room. And it was heated by radiators. It might have been steam I guess -- yeah, probably steam radiators. And whoever was on the guard duty in the wintertime, it was their responsibility to make sure that the coal was always put in that heater. And there were times when somebody might forget to put that coal in there and the barracks would get pretty chilly.

**MR. JACOBY:** Everybody rotated through some form of guard duty?

**MR. LOWERY:** They did, yeah.

**MR. JACOBY:** Describe guard duty.

**MR. LOWERY:** Guard duty, you were issued a weapon. It was a little 30-caliber M-1 carbine rifle. Kind of a short version of the regular M-1. And I think you were given a clip of live ammunition, and you simply walked the perimeter of that area. It was fenced in, like I say, it had a cyclone type fence enclosure with the barbed wire on top, and you would just simply make the rounds. Your tours of duty on that, I think were like two hours on, and four hours off, or some such schedule. So, you'd go out there for two hours and then you'd be off for four hours, and you might have to go back on and do it for two more hours. So, sometimes you'd be out there, you know, in the wee hours of the morning.

**MR. JACOBY:** How many guards would there be at any one time?

**MR. LOWERY:** Just one. Just one. But we would also have -- we would also have some people that might be on duty that might actually be working during the night hours too.

**MR. JACOBY:** Would there be passwords given out a day or --

**MR. LOWERY:** No.

**MR. JACOBY:** -- when someone approached you, what would your -- what did you have to do at that point?

**MR. LOWERY:** I guess you would -- you would certainly challenge them. If they approached they would be outside the gate. So if they were outside the gate you really didn't have probably much of a concern. I suppose that if they -- if they actually tried to come in the gate, which would have been locked, I guess you could have had a confrontation at that point. And like I say, we did have a weapon and we did have live ammunition. So, I guess if pushed come to shove, you could probably challenge somebody. And of course, the island had an MP contingent there too. So, you know, we could have -- if you got into any kind of an awkward situation before you really did anything drastic, you could alert the MP contingent there too, and then they would certainly show up.

**MR. JACOBY:** Was the Nike post lit up at night? How bright was the area?

**MR. LOWERY:** That wasn't lit up. You know, it didn't have any unusual lighting or anything. I think there was a light pole maybe out by the gate. No unusual lighting at all.

**MR. JACOBY:** You were near the beach, at the south end of the island.

**MR. LOWERY:** Right. We were separated from the -- actually it was more rocks than it was beach. But we were separated from the water basically by just a road and the seawall.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you patrol the shoreline as well?

**MR. LOWERY:** No, this was only within our fenced area. And I guess theoretically the MPs would patrol the island per se.

**MR. JACOBY:** Now, you mentioned drills that dealt with the actual equipment, the radar, etc., the missiles. What kind of training did you periodically do with -- for rifle firing? Or marching, etc.?

**MR. LOWERY:** We would -- every year we would go down to Fort Tilden, down on the lower end of Long Island, out beyond Jones Beach, in that area, south end of Long Island. And we would go down there every year for the annual qualifying with the weapon. In other words, everybody had to go once a year to re-qualify, you know, that you could fire, you know, and fire effectively and so forth and so on. So, we would go down there once a year and stay two or three days and shoot at targets, you know, and re-qualify them for the weapon.

**MR. JACOBY:** What about more physical training? Calisthenics, things like that?

**MR. LOWERY:** We would do that. We would very often, not everyday, but maybe once every other day, we would, as a part of our morning routine, we would maybe go out on a run, and we would run maybe the entire perimeter of the island. So we did have some physical activity there.

**MR. JACOBY:** There were some sports facilities on the island, tennis courts, baseball field. Did you make use of that at all?

**MR. LOWERY:** We did. We had a softball team, and some of the permanent party people on the island also had softball teams, and we would play them in softball games. In fact, I think it was about 1960 or so, we played and we won the post championship for softball. So we all had a big beer party out in the yard after that. So...

**MR. JACOBY:** You mentioned beer, how easy was it to get alcohol?

**MR. LOWERY:** You could go up to the NCO Club and of course, they had full facilities there. You could even get food there. You could get -- a lot of times we would go there and get snacks or hamburgers, or things, and they had a bar that, you know, you could go and have a beer if you wanted to. So, there was those facilities there. I don't recall -- I don't recall how people would deal with having it in the barracks. I don't recall anybody actually having beer and that sort of thing in the barracks, but I'm sure, you know, some people might, probably did. Because I know that when we had our beer party after that softball game, we had that down in our battery area. So we must have brought it back from the service club or something to have it there.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did any of the officers participate in your party?

**MR. LOWERY:** They did. In fact, we had some officers that was on the ball team. So, to that extent, I guess there was kind of violation of the no-fraternization rule that the Army has about officers co-mingling and fraternizing with enlisted men. We had that all the time. We had a very good rapport with our officers and some of them were -- turned out to be very good softball players.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you have to report to any officers outside of the Nike post?

**MR. LOWERY:** We did. We were one battery out of four, I think, that made up the battalion. We were in the first missile battalion, and I think the headquarters for that was at Fort Totten, Long Island, which was just across -- basically across Long Island Sound from Slocum. It was right out there near Bayside Queens. So, they were kind of the headquarters of our battalion. And I'm not sure exactly which batteries comprised our battalion, but I do know that the one in White Plains, New York was in ours, and we were in it.

And there might have been one or two out on Long Island, like Hicksville, or Amityville, they might have been in it too. But there was four batteries in the battalion, and the battalion headquarters was in Fort Totten. So, we would receive -- we would sometimes be subject to inspection by that battalion. And they would come to Fort Slocum, they would come across on the ferry. I'm not sure what rank they were, but they came in by helicopter.

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**MR. JACOBY:** ...battalion commander would have been?

**MR. LOWERY:** I think the battalion commander might have been a major. I'm not exactly positive, but it was above the rank of captain, I'm almost sure. It could have been a colonel. And you know, I'm not sure whether it was a regular colonel or what they call "full bird" colonel, but it was either major or colonel, I'm sure. Now, one of the aspects of the inspections, kind of a little side story on that, was whenever we were going to have an inspection, and people from battalion who would be coming, we would obviously, go through, you know, a little exercise --

(Pause in tape)

**MR. JACOBY:** ...did you have to report to any other facilities of the battalion, or Totten, or Hart Island?

**MR. LOWERY:** We never -- we would never really go to any of the other facilities, such as Fort Totten. We would -- if there was any kind of inspections or anything, they would basically come to us. And -- because usually, the inspection would be a barracks or that sort of thing, so they would necessarily have to come to us. So I never really went to the other places, until after -- after the battery had been phased out and I got reassigned, then I did go to some of these other places.

**MR. JACOBY:** The battery, the Nike battery was phased out while you were there?

**MR. LOWERY:** It was phased out in, I guess around mid summer of 1961, and it was being closed down, so all of those people that still had time to go on their enlistments had to be sent somewhere. So, I got sent out to -- I got assigned to a battery out at Rocky Point Long Island, somewhere out towards Mantauk. Pretty far out on the island.

But there was a group that was stationed out of Fort Totten over there in Bayside, Queens, that was -- there was a special outfit, kind of a public relations outfit, that took a missile display around to schools, county fairs, and that sort of thing. So, I went down there and got interviewed for that and I got assigned to them, because at that point I only had about nine months left to go in my enlistment.

**MR. JACOBY:** What rank were you at this point?

**MR. LOWERY:** I was an SP-4, or the equivalent of corporal, Specialist Fourth Class they call it. So I got assigned to -- I got assigned on paper out to this Rocky Point battery, which was a Nike Hercules Battery, that second generation battery, but since I only had about nine months to go, I got assigned at what they called TDY, which was temporary duty, to this display unit out of Fort Totten. And we took the missiles, we had several missiles that we took on trailers. We took some actual physical equipment that was out of one of the batteries. We took it around to schools, county fairs, and so forth. So I did that for my last nine months.

So, even though I was technically assigned to that Rocky Point Battery, and I was carried on their roster, I never actually reported out there. I got shunted off to this PR outfit instead.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you enjoy it?

**MR. LOWERY:** I did. I did, because we went -- we went to a lot of different places. We went to the Hamburg County Fair up near Buffalo, New York for a week. We were in one of the exhibit buildings there. We were at the Eastern States Exhibition in Springfield, Mass for a week. We went out to, I think it was Convention Hall in Atlantic City for a week. We went to various schools and the schoolchildren, of course, loved these sort of things.

**MR. JACOBY:** Would you do a simulated --

**MR. LOWERY:** We did a simulated shoot. We would actually go through -- we actually had a little script that we would go through a complete simulated battle stations type thing, you know. And we even had a missile that we would bring inside the building, and it could be raised on its launcher.

**MR. JACOBY:** Full size?

**MR. LOWERY:** Full size. It could be raised up on its launcher and pointed up in the air. And of course, the school kids were always mesmerized by this. And we would go through, just like you were going to do a shoot. They would go through and say, "Okay. Target track radar, ready for action. Missile track radar, ready for action." and they'd say, "Okay. Battery ready for action." You know, and all the lights would be coming on on the consoles, and the kids would be, you know, just mesmerized by it. And then they would raise the launcher.

And they would then count down and say, "Okay, ready to fire." You know, and then they'd say, "Five, four, three, two, one, fire." And at that point somebody backstage would have a little charge that they would set off in a bucket. And it would go, pow, you know. Kids would jump out of their seat almost. And at that point, there was a big screen where they would have a movie, that old demonstration movie that I guess everybody's seen back at that time of a plane being destroyed by one of the missiles.

So, it was quite a thing. And we got to travel around quite a bit and see different things. So, that was great duty.

**MR. JACOBY:** When the battery was closed at Slocum, what happened to the equipment?

**MR. LOWERY:** I don't know. I can't say what happened to it, I just don't know.

**MR. JACOBY:** You weren't involved in tearing it down?

**MR. LOWERY:** I wasn't involved. The only thing that they did when I was there was that we basically just shut it down. We went through all of our procedures and so forth to protect all the circuits and things that was in the system, and basically the last thing we did was turn off what we called the main power switch, and everything just kind of hummed down to a stop.

And at that point, a lot of the guys at that point had already gotten out. Some people that had what they called an ETS, which is the end of their service time, they could get -- they got what they call an early out.

If they only had a month or so to go, they went ahead and got an early out and just left the service. Others that were assigned to other batteries at various times, there would be people leaving to go to this battery or that, and then, I think I was probably one of the last ones there before I got shipped out to that demonstration outfit. And so I don't really know what took place after that.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did the Nike Post have a separate power source from the rest of the island?

**MR. LOWERY:** As a part of our facilities there, we had a generator building that had, I think it was two, possibly three, huge diesel generators that generated all of our power. They were huge. They must have been about seven or eight feet tall. I don't know whether they were Caterpillar diesels or Buddha diesels, but they were very large, and they had big generators on them, and those could be cranked up and provide all the power that we would need in case there was an emergency. In case of emergency and civilian power was cut off, we could still operate on our own independent power. And those generators had the capacity, probably, to run the entire island if necessary.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you ever remember equipment breaking down or failing?

**MR. LOWERY:** The system itself, since it was pretty much all electronic, and at that time it was all electronic tubes, there was no -- virtually no solid-state circuitry in existence then. So all the tubes, they all lit up and you could see them, you know, glowing and so forth. So there was always tube failures. There was always tubes burning out, had to be replaced. And the system itself was constructed in a kind of modular fashion, so that if one particular tube, or something, burned out and you couldn't quite figure out what it was, they could pull that whole module out and just stick a new one in. And then ship that one off to be analyzed and checked. But if it was just a tube failure, they'd just plug another tube in. And we kept a complement of vacuum tubes on site.

**MR. JACOBY:** Was it warm in the room because of all the tubes?

**MR. LOWERY:** It was. It was always very comfortable in the wintertime, very warm and since that system operated on a different frequency from the house current, I think it operated on, I want to say 400 cycles instead of the 60 cycle commercial power. So it made a kind of a little high-pitched hum all the time in there. So the combination of the warmth and the high-pitched hum going on would make it very comfortable in the wintertime. So, we would always not mind being up there a lot of times in the wintertime.

**MR. JACOBY:** I want to ask you a few questions about the island itself, and the facilities. Describe the chow in the mess hall.

**MR. LOWERY:** The chow was, I want to say, probably average. There were sometimes when it might be a little below average. We ate there, and it was a very large, it was what they called a consolidated mess. So, it supplied basically the entire island. All the contingents on the island was supplied by that one consolidated mess. So, it was large. They had to, you know, produce food in fairly large quantities. So, the quality was, I guess -- I guess was a victim of a little bit of the scope of the meals that they would have to prepare. It was certainly adequate. I have no real qualms about it.

But it was just -- the launching area mess hall that they had over on Hart Island, which they had their own mess hall, was very small and as a result it was very good. And whenever we had occasion to go over to Hart Island for anything, we would always try to arrange it during a mealtime so we could eat at their mess hall instead of our own. But we had -- you know, it got us through.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you make use of Raymond Hall for any activities?

**MR. LOWERY:** Raymond Hall?

**MR. JACOBY:** That was the gymnasium up at the north end.

**MR. LOWERY:** We did. We would -- we went up there on occasion. The battery, in addition to having a softball team also had a basketball team. I was never on that, I was on the softball team. I was never on the basketball team, but they would go up there and play in a post-league basketball league.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did they show movies on the base?

**MR. LOWERY:** They did. They had a movie theater. I very rarely went to it. In fact, I don't recall ever going to it at all. But, several people did go. And I'm not sure exactly which building the movie theater was in, but I know they had it, and I know a lot of our people would go there.

**MR. JACOBY:** Now, you were aware that there were families living on the island, officers' families and some NCO families. Did you have occasion to meet any of them or associate with them?

**MR. LOWERY:** We did. We didn't. Beyond our own contingent of folks there at the battery, we very rarely had any contact with any of the other folks there. The doctor, we would go and see, you know, the post doctor occasionally. But you know, the barber shop and so forth. But for the most part we wouldn't have any contact with any of the other folks.

**MR. JACOBY:** Would you see kids on the island?

**MR. LOWERY:** I very rarely saw any kids. I know, sometimes I suppose I did. But, usually, you know, we would be working during the day, and at night we probably wouldn't have occasion to go up into that part of the island. So, I rarely, if ever, saw any children. I'm sure they were there, I just didn't -- either didn't see them or just didn't pay any attention, and it never crossed my mind.

**MR. JACOBY:** For a time the US Army Chaplain School was at Fort Slocum, and there was a chapel not far from the Nike Post itself, did you go to church or chapel on Sundays?

**MR. LOWERY:** I didn't myself, because I would either be on duty, which would pretty much restrict me from, virtually anything else on the island, or if I was off, I would generally leave the island and go into town or down into New York City or someplace. So, I very rarely had occasion to be there during times that, you know, you would have gone to there.

**MR. JACOBY:** So, chapel was not a requirement that the Army had?

**MR. LOWERY:** No. Now, for our battery they would have a visiting chaplain that would come around about once a month, and we would all assemble in a day room there, and of course, they didn't call it any kind of chapel or religious service or anything, I guess they had to kind of stay away from that, they called it "character guidance." That was the official title of that chaplain's visit. And they would have chaplains come, I guess the different denominations. I only recall one chaplain that was a -- must have been Irish Catholic, Chaplain Sullivan, I remember was his name. But, they would come to our battery, and they would hold what was called character guidance classes rather than true religious services.

**MR. JACOBY:** Were there other training sessions in which you were lectured or taught about citizenship or American history, or anything of that nature?

**MR. LOWERY:** No. We did have, on occasion, we would have, similar to the character guidance, we would have kind of historical type things where they would show movies of various parts of the services. They would show, for example, some old documentary films of World War II, for example, we'd show that in the day room. But as far as just any kind of -- any kind of historical -- I mean, any kind of classroom type things, we didn't have that.

**MR. JACOBY:** Um-hum. How old were you when you got to Fort Slocum?

**MR. LOWERY:** I was 21.

**MR. JACOBY:** Tell me something about some of the other enlisted men that you worked with.

**MR. LOWERY:** At that time, the Army had a program that if you enlisted you could pretty much pick your area of duty, your duty station. It was kind of commonly referred to as a backyard system. A lot of people could enlist and request to be stationed near their home. And a lot of people did that around the New York area. So, we had a lot of people in our battery that actually lived down in Long Island, or Brooklyn, or Bronx, or different places. They would just work there and on their time off they would go home, during the times that they could be off.

Our first sergeant lived down in the Bronx, and would basically leave everyday at the end of the day and go home.

**MR. JACOBY:** Were there men of a variety of different ethnic groups, or religion?

**MR. LOWERY:** We did. We had a Jewish kid, we had -- we had a number of African Americans, we had people from all over parts of the country. We had -- in my crew we had one fellow that lived down in Brooklyn. One fellow was from out -- somewhere out in Queens, out near Flushing somewhere, I'm not sure where, but -- and then we had one fellow from Iowa. One was from New Bedford, Massachusetts. So, they were scattered all over, and just different, it was a mix, typical Army mix.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you go to the homes of any of the men that lived nearby?

**MR. LOWERY:** I visited a couple of times, I was friends with one of the maintenance sergeants we had. He was a Master Sergeant. Been in the military many, many years, and he was a maintenance man, and very personable fellow. I think he was Hawaiian, his name was Vincent Manili, and he lived over in New

Rochelle, had an apartment, I think, over in New Rochelle, and his family was there. So I went over to his house once or twice, I think.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you know if he ever volunteered as a lifeguard at the beach?

**MR. LOWERY:** I don't know that. I never heard that.

**MR. JACOBY:** Okay. I'll tell you why later.

**MR. LOWERY:** Yeah, he was -- I think he was -- he had been in the military, he must have been, at that point, maybe in his late 40s I want to say. And he had been a World War II Veteran, and he was a full fledged Master Sergeant, so he'd been in a number of years, and he was a maintenance man that had gone through the schools down at Fort Bliss in Texas for that kind of system. And I think he was Hawaiian. He was either Hawaiian or Filipino or something, because of that name, Manili, was kind of a Hawaiian name.

**MR. JACOBY:** Okay. Tell me what you did during your off time?

**MR. LOWERY:** During my time that I was free to go, I would go, being from a small town in the Carolinas, I was intrigued by New York City. And being that close to New York City I just -- I would go down there, because it was just a subway trip down. Subways were only a nickel then. So I would go down into the City, and there was a place down at 37th and Lexington, right down below Grand Central Terminal, that military people could stay for \$1 a night. It was called the Soldier Sailor Airman's Club.

So I could go down there, be right in the middle part of Manhattan and stay for just a nominal fee. They even had a little restaurant down in the basement and you could get some food there. They had kind of a social thing on Saturday nights, they would have dances, and they'd have a little band that would come in, and they would have a lot of ladies that would come in from Long Island and around, very nice. We would have dances there, and I made a lot of friends there, and enjoyed it.

And of course, being in New York in the military, you were -- you had available to you the USO. And I can't say enough about the USO. They treated you very well. They could get tickets for ball games, Yankees baseball, I used to go to Yankee Stadium quite a bit, Rangers ice hockey. Just plays, all kinds of Broadway plays, we could go and see for free. And it was just a great, great deal. There was just nothing not to like about that.

**MR. JACOBY:** Were you in uniform when you went into the City?

**MR. LOWERY:** No. I would always dress in civilian clothes when I would go down there. And most of the places -- there would be a few places that you would -- that if you were going to go by way to the USO you would have to be in uniform, but those were very few. Plays, ball games, things like that, you didn't have to wear a uniform.

**MR. JACOBY:** So how often would you get off post?

**MR. LOWERY:** I would go -- in a month's time I would probably go, probably at least two, and probably most often about three weekends out of the month, and then one weekend I'd be on duty and have to stay.

**MR. JACOBY:** And you could go overnight. You didn't have to return.

**MR. LOWERY:** You could go overnight. I would go, there would be a ferry that would leave Slocum, it was always known as the 5:00 boat. And everybody would scramble, if they were going to leave the island, to try to make that 5:00 boat. And then the last boat that you could catch, coming back, was 6:00 in the morning.

**MR. JACOBY:** And that was full of -- full of men?

**MR. LOWERY:** That was full of hung over people trying to make sure they got back, because we would have a formation -- I'm sorry, it would be the 5:00 boat. And the formation that we would have at the battery each and every morning was 6:00. So, 5:00 was the last boat that you could catch and ensure that you made that 6:00 formation. So, if you were out you had to scramble to be back.

**MR. JACOBY:** What would the consequences be if you missed that boat?

**MR. LOWERY:** If they had formation and you weren't there, you would probably get put on restriction. They had a -- they had one level of punishment under the, you know, Uniform Code of Military Justice, called an Article 15, and that was a punishment -- it was kind of a low-level punishment, and it basically restricted you. You were basically, maybe put on barracks arrest, you might say. And you were not able to leave or do anything. And I'm not sure what other consequences went along with Article 15, but I know restriction was one of them. And I guess if you had too many of those that accumulated you could -- you



might be busted down a rank or something, you know, which would cost you in the pocketbook. So, you know, you --

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you witness that ever?

**MR. LOWERY:** I witnessed some people being put on restriction. I don't think I ever witnessed anybody -- I think if you went anything above that Article 15, that's kind of a company type punishment. That's kind of a local punishment that's kind of confined within a company or something, you know, that the commander could do on his own. If you went above that level of punishment you were into the thing then of Court Martial. You could either accept whatever other punishment they might want to mete out above and beyond the Article 15, or you could probably request a Court Martial and really, really get into it.

**MR. JACOBY:** There was a brig, a guardhouse on the island. Did you ever know anyone that spent the night there or --

**MR. LOWERY:** I never knew -- I never knew they even had it. I knew they had a contingent of MPs there, but I never even was aware of a brig there.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you get leave to go back home?

**MR. LOWERY:** I did. We would -- depending on how the scheduling would work, I would come home at Christmastime. I think there was probably one Christmas that I didn't come home, but the other times I did. I could catch the train out of there to Washington and then south.

One Christmas there was a sergeant in the battery that lived not too far from where I'm living now, that we would come home together and drive the distance together. He had a family there, so we would come with his family.

**MR. JACOBY:** How long would you get?

**MR. LOWERY:** You could get 30 days, or two weeks. You might want to do two weeks. But you had 30 days of leave a year coming to you. So you could do it all at one time, or I guess you could break it up. And I would usually take maybe a week's leave time during Christmas.

**MR. JACOBY:** Describe some of the other holidays that you spent on the island, like Thanksgiving, July 4th. Were there any special foods, dinners, etc.?

**MR. LOWERY:** I can't recall -- I can't recall any special activities of that nature. I just -- I'm sure they probably had them, but I just don't remember them. They might have had, maybe at Thanksgiving, they might have some, you know, special meals in the mess hall, but --

**MR. JACOBY:** What about Armed Forces Day? Was that something that was had special connotation?

**MR. LOWERY:** No. I don't recall anything special going on for that. I do remember one occasion we had, I think it was -- I think it was some school, probably in New Rochelle that brought some school children out there to the battery, and I don't know whether this was in conjunction with any type of Armed Forces Day, or whether it was just a field trip that they decided to take. But they came out and actually, you know, toured the area.

**MR. JACOBY:** What was your pay rate when you first got into the Army?

**MR. LOWERY:** When you first arrive, of course, you're nothing but just a recruit, and that's the lowest of the low. And you -- I think I made something like \$78 or something, as a recruit.

**MR. JACOBY:** A month?

**MR. LOWERY:** A month. And after I think I was there a while, the first thing you get after getting out of the recruit status is you become a Private. Which is no stripes of any kind. They raise your pay maybe \$5 or thereabouts. The next status is you become a Private First Class, which is the one stripe that you get on your arm, and I think you get a little pay raise on that, and it probably brought me up to -- I want to say maybe \$85 or so. And then the next step up from that would be the equivalent of Corporal, which would be two stripes, but in our case they had gone to what they called a Specialist type of ranking then, so I became Specialist Fourth Class, which was the equivalent of Corporal, and I maintained that, basically, until I got out. And I think that carried with it a pay raise up to about \$125 or so a month, I want to say.

**MR. JACOBY:** And you got paid once a month?

**MR. LOWERY:** Once a month. They would set up a pay table in the day room, pay officer would go down to, I think Fort Wadsworth, or some finance center and they would pick up the payroll. They would

bring it back and they would set up a table, it was paid in cash -- and they would set up a table in the day room and everybody would line up, and pick up their pay.

**MR. JACOBY:** And what would you do with your money?

**MR. LOWERY:** Basically, I would just simply, you know, save it for the rest of the month. And if I was going to go down into the City I would save it until I was going to go down there. I had my activities pretty much planned out to where I would run out of money just about the time the next payday would come around. So I lived from payday to payday.

But as I told you earlier, one of the funny aspects of payday was that they would set up the pay table, and there was various things that you would do on the post that you could do on credit. For example, the NCO Club, you could run up a tab at the NCO Club. So they would always have a table set up there for the NCO people to collect. And then they would have -- usually the town of New Rochelle, or Westchester County would always be having some type of charity drive like United Way or some such charity. And being good neighbors and so forth, we were always suggested that we would contribute to these causes. Well, they would have a table a lot of times that was set up there, they'd be collecting for United Way or whatever it was.

And then you'd have a table that you might have gotten something on credit from the tailor shop, or just -- barber shop or something, so they would have a table set up. So, we always joked about how the first table giveth and the subsequent tables taketh away. Because by the time you got your pay then you hit all these creditor tables, you know, you're pretty much tapped out.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you have to pay for laundry?

**MR. LOWERY:** I did. Laundry was done...

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(End of Tape).

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**MR. JACOBY:** ... the laundry?

**MR. LOWERY:** Yeah, the quarter master laundry. During the week, I think you would -- you had a laundry bag on the end of your bunk and you put all your dirty clothes in that laundry bag, and then I think on one day of the week, I don't know whether it was Friday or whatever, but they would come around and pick all that laundry up and take it to, I don't know where, whether it was on Post or some other place, but it would go for cleaning and then they would bring it back. And they did charge you, I think taken out of your pay was the quarter master laundry fee, and I want to say that was about \$3 or \$4 a month.

And -- but I think at that time you were also given a little extra uniform allowance too, because I think they did try to take into account the fact that over a period of time your uniforms, you know, would get worn, and you might have to reuse them. So they did give you a little bit of a uniform allowance each month with the idea that you might have to replace some uniforms. So you did have that. So, in some respects the charge they would charge you for quarter mastering laundry would be offset a little bit by the uniform allowance that they would put in your paycheck each month.

**MR. JACOBY:** You had to pay for the barber?

**MR. LOWERY:** We did. The barber shop -- I think the barbershop was run by civilians on the post. And so they were -- you had to pay.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you remember what a haircut and a shave cost?

**MR. LOWERY:** I don't. I really don't. We would have to go, I think once a month to do that, and it was just, I never really remembered about it. I'm sure it was just a nominal amount.

**MR. JACOBY:** Would an officer come up to you and say, Lowery, your hair's too long, get a haircut. Or was this just --

**MR. LOWERY:** Well, they would -- sometimes, during the formations they might just make an observation and say it looks like -- this looks like some of you may need to make a trip to the barbershop, just make sure you do that this month. Or, if there was going to be any kind of an inspection that was going to be coming up by either our own battery commander, or these battalion people, they would get a little more insistent on it. They would want to make sure everybody had a fresh haircut before that inspection.

**MR. JACOBY:** They would know when inspection was due?

**MR. LOWERY:** Oh, yeah, they would get -- they would know about it in advance. And you know, we would go through a -- you know, a good cleaning deal. We would have to, you know, wax all the floors and clean everything and so forth.

And another funny aspect about these inspections is that since our barracks was separated from the seawall by just a road, if there was going to be an inspection, we would take all of the things out of our rooms, and we did have kind of -- almost kind of seamy rooms, being an old WAC barracks, they actually had -- they were not full-fledged rooms, there were kind of partitions that would have a little opening at the bottom and a little at the top, but it was your space. And you know, you do accumulate personal things, you know, maybe some radios or record players or something like that.

Well, right before inspections we'd always take that stuff and hide it over there on the other side of the seawall. And then after the inspection we'd go over there and haul it all back.

**MR. JACOBY:** You were not supposed to have a radio?

**MR. LOWERY:** Well, I say a radio, I'm just -- I'm just saying anything that would be adding to the clutter of our rooms that, you know, just might not --

**MR. JACOBY:** Anything non-regular Army?

**MR. LOWERY:** Yeah, just you know, some people -- I don't know what they might have, they might have some softball trophies or something, you know, just anything that we just didn't want to have. I guess they just didn't want it to be too homey looking. So, we'd haul it all over there over seawall, and then after inspection we'd haul it all back.

**MR. JACOBY:** You were telling me earlier that payday had a festive feel to it. You described a little bit about the pay tables. Tell me about gambling and card playing.

**MR. LOWERY:** Well, paydays were kind of festive because, you know, that -- a lot of people would be eagerly anticipating payday, and of course, that had kind of a festive air to it. And after everybody would get paid, as soon as they would leave the day room, you know, and leave the pay tables, a lot of people that would be off duty would head into the barracks and there would be a lot of card games and things, start going on. And you know, a few dollars might change hands here and there.

I have heard of occasions where some people might lose their entire month's pay in one afternoon in those barracks. Because they would have some wild card games. And then used to play a lot of cribbage. I don't know, haven't heard that much in recent years, but there used to be a lot of cribbage games that would go on in the barracks, and a few dollars might change hands.

**MR. JACOBY:** You've talked about going into New York City, what about New Rochelle?

**MR. LOWERY:** New Rochelle, I never spent very much time in New Rochelle. My trips through New Rochelle was basically just that. It was "through" New Rochelle. I was going to a train station, heading for the City. So, I really spent very little time in New Rochelle. Not enough time that I could even tell you much about it.

Now, some of the people did. We had some people in our battery that actually had some part-time jobs over there in New Rochelle. We had a couple fellows that was bussing tables at a place called Giovanni's, an Italian restaurant.

**MR. JACOBY:** Was that regulation?

**MR. LOWERY:** Sure. Yeah, I mean, they could do that. During their off time. I don't know whether that restaurant is still there or not, but it was an Italian restaurant called Giovanni's and they would hire some -- they had some of our people that would bus -- you know, for very little money, but some money, that they'd go over there and work maybe four or five hours in the evening, bussing tables and -- and a lot of times we would -- we'd get them to bring us back something, you know, from there, like some kind of meatball sub or something like that. I remember standing up there on guard duty or something at night, and it would be cold, and that would taste mighty good, to have them bring back a real hot meatball sub from Giovanni's. And some of the guys worked there.

**MR. JACOBY:** Were any of the guys in your unit married?

**MR. LOWERY:** There were. A number of them were married. Some of the -- well, just about all of the NCOs, the Sergeants, just about all of them were married. And they either lived in a trailer park that was down there near the Slocum dock, or they would live in New Rochelle, or in some cases they lived over --

the First Sergeant lived over in the Bronx. And so a lot of them had their -- you know, married and had their families there.

**MR. JACOBY:** How did they deal with the possibility of having to get to the base quickly if they lived in the Bronx or elsewhere?

**MR. LOWERY:** Well, if they were on what's called stand-by duty and had to be on the island, they wouldn't leave, they would have to actually be there. So, they might have to spend the night there. But now, the ferry -- the ferry, I'm not sure what the schedule was for that ferry. It seemed like it ran about every 15 or 20 minutes. So, I guess theoretically somebody over in New Rochelle could get back. But, like you say, they couldn't make it back in a drill type time frame. They couldn't do that. So, I think if we were on alert status, or what's called A-Status -- because out of -- out of our battalion, out of the four batteries, that was in our battalion, I think one of the four had to be on a kind of alert status all the time. In other words, being ready to shoot in 15 minutes.

So you had to have a complement of men there to do that. Then, I think there would have to be another battery that would be kind of a standby battery, that if that first battery went out of action for something, had a malfunction, or had some kind of maintenance issue, that they couldn't maintain their A-Status, then the next battery that was on standby would have to step up and assume that A-Status for them until they'd get back on line, or whatever.

Then you had another battery in the four that would be on a maintenance status, for example. In other words, they weren't expected to be able to be on A-Status and be able to fire. They were in a maintenance mode. They might have a system torn down and being worked on or something.

And then there was another battery that would be on even a lower echelon of maintenance yet. So, out of the four batteries you had two that would be on maintenance, one that would be on kind of a semi-maintenance stand-by status, and then one that would be on A-Status.

**MR. JACOBY:** And this would rotate?

**MR. LOWERY:** This would rotate around.

**MR. JACOBY:** Weekly? Monthly?

**MR. LOWERY:** Seemed like it was weekly. I want to say weekly. Or maybe -- maybe some odd time like every 10 days or some such time, but it was periodic, we'll say that.

**MR. JACOBY:** So, those high status batteries, your work would be perhaps a little bit more intense than if you were on standby or maintenance?

**MR. LOWERY:** Yeah, we would have to -- we would have to assume -- you know, we would have to have that 15-minute window to be able to fire if we had to.

**MR. JACOBY:** Now, how did you maintain communication with the firing facility at Hart Island?

**MR. LOWERY:** There were phone lines there. And there may have been some radio contact too. I'm not exactly sure. I know there was phone cables, they were probably laid under Long Island Sound that went from Slocum over to Hart Island.

**MR. JACOBY:** Dedicated lines?

**MR. LOWERY:** Yeah. Because I know, you know, whenever we would be in a kind of an operational deal, we would be going through our checks, we all had headsets on and we could all hear everybody else, what they were saying. And that's the way we heard in that one case them say that, you know, "launching area, ready to fire, booster squibs are connected." That's the way we heard that over the common phone line. So there was phone communications. And I'm not sure if there was -- undoubtedly there was some kind of backup, maybe radio communications. But for the most part all I ever knew was really basically phone-type communication.

**MR. JACOBY:** Were there any live firings from Hart Island?

**MR. LOWERY:** No.

**MR. JACOBY:** Launches? When you were there?

**MR. LOWERY:** No. No.

**MR. JACOBY:** Tell me --

**MR. LOWERY:** There wouldn't be any live firings from any of the batteries. Because you would have major problems if you had a live firing. For one thing, the entire region would be upset, quite a bit, because everybody would see it and hear it. And then you would have the, you know, you'd have the problem of what happened to the booster? You know, where did it fall? Because the booster disconnects from the missile after a certain number of seconds, and then it falls away.

**MR. JACOBY:** So there was a high confidence that the system would work?

**MR. LOWERY:** Right. In fact, that's what -- that's what our main function in going up there everyday was for, was to make sure that all the systems were within the parameters that they had to be in order to shoot. We would test for the accuracy of the radars, the computers, everything was -- everything was tested just as if you were going to shoot, stopping short, just short of actually shooting. In other words, stopping just short of connecting those booster squibs.

Because the booster squib was a device similar to photography's flashbulb, and that was inserted up in the bottom part of that booster which was a solid propellant. Gunpowder if you want to call it that. And that's what ignited it, you know, whenever you would put the voltage to it, that flashbulb type thing would go off, and it would ignite that propellant. So that's why they always -- they always simulated connecting the booster squibs, because they didn't want any kind of little accident, any kind of little static charge or anything just accidentally getting to that booster squib to set it off. So they would actually simulate the shoot, they would actually put little clothes pins, they would attach clothes pins on there and that was supposed to be connecting the booster squibs. There's no wires actually went into it, just paperclips.

**MR. JACOBY:** No chance of those going off. But you had live --

**MR. LOWERY:** They were live.

**MR. JACOBY:** -- launch? You had launch practice elsewhere?

**MR. LOWERY:** Each year one of the batteries in the battalion would go down to Fort Bliss, Texas, and then over into White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico, and we would fire three of the missiles. We'd fire them in what was known as a salvo shoot of two in rapid succession, and then a single shoot which would be just one. So there's three altogether. A one shot and then a salvo shot.

**MR. JACOBY:** Describe what one of these Nike missiles was like when it's launched.

**MR. LOWERY:** Unlike the missiles that you see on TV that kind of set there and for a second just kind of rise up slowly and gather speed, these are more like the Fourth of July rockets that you see. These things just go swoosh, just like that, and they're gone. Because they have to get up to speed very quickly, because you're dealing with an incoming enemy combatant, and there's no time to waste so you've got to have a system that could get a missile off the ground and up to where they need to go in virtually hardly any time.

**MR. JACOBY:** Were they supersonic?

**MR. LOWERY:** Yeah, they were. In fact, I don't know whether it's true or not, but I always heard the rumor from the launching area people, that by the time that back end of that booster left the end of the launcher rail which it was resting on, by the time it cleared that, it was probably going about 1,200 miles an hour in just that short of time. And we -- when we went down to Texas and we had some time to kill, and so we watched some of the other batteries doing their test firings down there, too, and one of them had a launching area that was reasonably close to us and we could watch them, and it actually shook the ground.

**MR. JACOBY:** How large were these missiles?

**MR. LOWERY:** They were a foot thick and 20 feet long. And then the booster, I think, was about -- I want to say about 10 feet long. And once it launched and that booster got it up and going, and when it burned out it was jettisoned, it just simply dropped off and there was an engine, rocket engine in there called a sustainer motor, and when that booster dropped off it pulled a little arming lanyard and activated the rocket motor in the missile itself. And then it took off on its own. So, it was pretty effective.

**MR. JACOBY:** On Hart Island, were these kept underground, or how were they covered?

**MR. LOWERY:** They were. They were underground storage facilities for them, and there were elevators that would bring them to the surface and then there were launcher rails that they could -- they could roll the missile out onto a launcher rail. So they could have one out on a launcher rail while they were bringing another one up from the pit on the elevator. And the launcher rails would raise them up to not quite a vertical angle, not quite 90 degrees, but just tilted slightly below 90 degrees, because when it took

off and that booster was disposed, you wanted to make sure it was going at an angle where that booster could then fall in an area that you wanted it to fall into.

**MR. JACOBY:** So, one could --

**MR. LOWERY:** Could be --

**MR. JACOBY:** -- and only at one time.

**MR. LOWERY:** One at a time. And that was one of the drawbacks of the Ajax system. You could fire -- I think you could fire probably about one a minute. And then the very last one could actually be fired from the elevator that brought it up. So, you could fire, you know, fairly rapidly, but still one at a time. And if you pointed the missile straight up, 90 degrees and you fired it when that booster fell, could theoretically fall back on you. So they cocked it at a little bit of an angle so that when it went up it would have a booster disposal area that would be way down somewhere else.

**MR. JACOBY:** And under whose authority would they theoretically have been fired?

**MR. LOWERY:** The battery commander I think was probably the only one that had the authority to push the button.

**MR. JACOBY:** And was there an actual button or a switch that the Captain or whomever would push?

**MR. LOWERY:** The very last thing in the firing sequence would have been the actual launch button, and that -- but that would be a button that would only be able to be pushed after a certain number of other sequence buttons were enabled. In other words, the -- when you went through all your checks -- when you went through the check, on say the target track radar, for example, and once you were satisfied with all those checks, you could declare that the target track radar was ready for action.

Then the missile track radar, it would be going through its checks at the same time, and then that operator could declare that missile radar are ready for action. Then computer operators might say that the computer is ready for action and so forth. And at that point, the computers -- at that point the computer's pretty much got command of the situation. Everybody has all done their jobs, they've locked on and so forth, and all the information is being fed into the computer.

And the computer then goes through a sequence, and the computer determines whether or not everything is in order to allow for firing, the missiles -- the range of the plane is within, you know, a range that the missile can actually reach it. All of that sort of thing is determined, and the computer will then give a series of lights, you know, target track ready to fire, missile track ready to fire, and then they'll -- then there was something like maybe battery ready to fire or something like that.

Well, when that ready-to-fire light would come on, that would be the only time that a firing, or launch could actually be done. Even the battery commander could sit there and push that button all day long, and if the computer had not determined that everything was in order, nothing would happen.

**MR. JACOBY:** And how long would that sequence take?

**MR. LOWERY:** Probably just -- well, the entire thing from the time the siren would go off till the time you would launch would be 15 minutes. So, all of this would have to take place within a 15-minute span.

**MR. JACOBY:** And that's what you drilled for? That 15 minutes?

**MR. LOWERY:** That's what we drilled for. We would drill constantly to get everything done and to be within that 15-minute frame.

**MR. JACOBY:** And the battery commander was independent of authority from the Fort Slocum Post commander?

**MR. LOWERY:** He was. Fort Slocum, the other personnel on Fort Slocum, basically, had nothing to do with the battery. It was a completely autonomous, isolated operation.

**MR. JACOBY:** I want to finally ask you about some of your impressions about being on the island, sights, sounds, smells?

**MR. LOWERY:** Basically, I know we were there in the winter of 1960, which was probably one of the worst winters they've had, snow was very deep. And our walk up to the mess hall when we'd go to eat, I remember the snow was probably about shoulder high there. I remember --

**MR. JACOBY:** Did that interfere with your radars?

**MR. LOWERY:** No. No. We would all clean that off and there was no problem there. Now, some of the Hercules batteries, that next generation of batteries, they had actual what they called ray domes that were actual fiberglass domes that actually enclosed the radars, so they were protected, but these were not. I know in using their mess hall when we would be going up, a lot of times we would be going up and we would have to stop because they would be having the flag lowering ceremony there at the parade field, and we would all have to stop you know, and salute the flag.

**MR. JACOBY:** Retreat?

**MR. LOWERY:** Retreat, yeah, that's it exactly.

**MR. JACOBY:** So, when you heard retreat, even those on duty at the missile control had to stop, or --

**MR. LOWERY:** No.

**MR. JACOBY:** No? You were --

**MR. LOWERY:** This would be anybody out there on the grounds in proximity to it. And I know one of the things that we used to always kind of get a kick out of was that since the chaplain school was there, and just about all the chaplains were inherently officers, we would always be passing them back and forth on the sidewalk going up to the chow hall and so forth, but it was almost one constant salute, you know, because there would be so many of them that you almost never even broke a salute. It was almost just one that you'd almost hold until you got there, because you'd be passing so many officers.

So, and I remember, you know, there was one ship I remember that got stuck out there on Long Island Sound because it froze around it, and the ship stayed out there for days before they could get it loose. And a lot of the guys would fish. They would go down on the rocks, you know, and fish. I don't know what they'd catch down there, but...

And we would --

**MR. JACOBY:** You were busy with your duties, or you were in New York City. Did you get the feeling that you were on an island much?

**MR. LOWERY:** By use of that ferry, we -- indeed. I mean, everything kind of revolved around when you could catch that ferry coming and going. So, that did dictate, you know, when you were -- when you would go, when you would come back.

**MR. JACOBY:** Rich Lowery, I want to thank you very much for participating in the Fort Slocum Oral History Project.

**MR. LOWERY:** Thank you.

**MR. JACOBY:** There's something you wanted to add?

**MR. LOWERY:** Yes. We had an officer, one of the officers in the battery by the name of Lieutenant Richard Block, and he was sort of a boating enthusiast, and somehow or other, he was able to get a boat from, I want to say the Philadelphia Naval Yard. He brought it up to the battery, we were going to use it for, I guess for people to go back and forth to Hart Island, but it was also just simply the battery boat. And it was kind of an old boat, and I'm not sure exactly what its function was in the Navy. It must have been about maybe 20 feet long or so and it had an inboard engine.

So he brought that boat to us and we made that kind of a project. We worked on the boat, we put new planking in on some of the sides, painted it, worked on the engines, and we just kind of made it just a little project that we worked on for months.

**MR. JACOBY:** Where did you keep it?

**MR. LOWERY:** We kept in -- it was actually docked -- actually we would put it up on the beach down there to do our work on it. So I guess maybe the beach became our dock, more or less. But we would work on that boat, and anybody that wanted to, and was going to be authorized to use that boat, they had to take a boatman's course.

So, several of us took a little boatman's course in order to receive authorization to drive the boat. And we would take it out sometimes on the weekends and it was just kind of a nice diversion, you know, of something that we had.

**MR. JACOBY:** You just showed a certificate that says, "New York State, Young Boatman's Safety Course. This is to certify that Richard D. Lowery has completed successfully the Young Boatman's Safety Course." And it's dated, "12 August, 1960." And did you take the boat out yourself?

**MR. LOWERY:** I did take it out a couple times.

**MR. JACOBY:** How long was it?

**MR. LOWERY:** The boat was about 20 feet long, had an inboard engine in it. And we did take it out, you know, sometimes on the weekends. And we -- one of the warrant officers took it out one day, and I think he might have hit one of the rocks out in Long Island Sound and kind of broke the hull a little bit. So, we drug it back up on the beach and we were going to repair it and keep it going. Well, about that time a hurricane hit, I'm not sure whether it was Hurricane Carla, or a major hurricane that kind of got up to the East Coast at that time, well, that was the end of the boat. It dashed it against the seawall and it just tore it all to pieces. So, the end of the boat saga was a victim of that hurricane.

**MR. JACOBY:** Thank you.

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(End of Interview).

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Paula Brokaw, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and accurate transcript of the taped proceedings as transcribed by me on the date hereinbefore set forth, to the best of my ability.

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Dated: November 5, 2007 Paula Brokaw

Agency Typist





**ROBERT JACOBY:** My name is Robert Jacoby, representing Tetra Tech, EC, and I am speaking today with Dr. Rivka Olley at her home in Pikesville, Pikesville, Maryland on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007. This interview is part of a program sponsored by the United States Army Corps of Engineers and the New Rochelle Public Library to collect oral histories about the experiences and memories of people who were associated with the former US Army post Fort Slocum, located on Davids Island in New Rochelle, New York.

Dr. Olley, thank you very much for participating in this. Would you describe your association with Fort Slocum?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** My father was stationed there. We moved there, I think it was around April of my 4<sup>th</sup> grade year in school and we left in August after my 10<sup>th</sup> grade year.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So how old were you?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** When we moved there or when I left?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Both.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** I was 16 when I left. And, um, I don't know, 10 or so when I moved there.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. What was your father's rank and —

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Chief Warrant Officer 4.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And his unit?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** He was with Transportation. We had been at Fort Eustis before we were transferred there.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh, do you remember the first time you saw Davids Island?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** I can't say that I remember the first day I went there, in terms of like looking over the island. I don't remember that. But I do remember getting off on the island and, you know, it was like another army base. You know, there were military police and all of that. Um, and we were at, I remember that we went to, uh, where, you know, the building that we ended up living in.

And we were on the top floor, because there was, there was such a limitation on quarters, so we got the top floor. And of course, our goal was to get out of the top floor. But I loved the top floor. It had one of the old bathtubs with the claw feet.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** — which back then were not in style like they've had come in and out since. And it was so deep it was like being in a pool because I was tiny enough that it was huge. So I loved it. Plus it had a hallway that connected the, the main area to that bathroom, which was in the back of the building and my mom and I would tapdance there.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Who lived there?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** In the upper?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** In your quarters. Did you have a brother?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** I had my brother, yeah. My, he was 15 months younger than me.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** You each had your own room?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** We had our own room. The way it was laid out was like railroad flat, so in the front of the building, the, if you're looking at the building it would be actually on your left, my parents had the first room on the left. Then there was the living room and then a kitchen with a table and then my brother's room and my room. I was, I looked at Headquarters, at the Finance Building.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So this was Building 12?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** I think that's what the number was. Yeah.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** You'll, you, your quarters were always in 12?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Yes. We went from that top floor when someone left the unit on the right side, second floor, that's where we moved into and that's where we stayed until we left. My father retired.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Um, your furniture, was this army issued furniture or were these things that your parents purchased at other postings?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Um, my parents' furniture was theirs. The living room was my parents'. But my brother's furniture and my furniture and the dining room were all army issued.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did you have a television.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** We had a television and it was in the front hallway, and, which, you know, was a connector between where you came into the place. My brother's room was on the right. And then the living room and dining room, and across from the living room, the hallway, that's where the tv was. And there was a phone on a little table not far from it.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And, of course, a black and white tv?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Absolutely.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Tell me who else lived in the, in the quarters. You know, on the other floors.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Um, I can't tell you names.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm, were they —

**RIVKA OLLEY:** That's the amazing part of childhood memory.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Were they all families?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** All families, yes. And they, some of them came and went while we were there. We, we seemed to stay longer than just about anybody else. Um, but there was one family that lived downstairs, uh, that I remember them well. She had like six children, so I got to work as a mother's helper.

I was too young to be a babysitter, but I was a mother's helper so she could sew all the clothing for her children while I watched them, because there wasn't enough money for her, you know, to clothe all of the kids. And she was really good. And I actually learned a lot from her because we had to take sewing back in those days. So I learned from her how to do sewing as well.

Um, there was also a family that moved in not too long before we retired that had, um, an older boy, whose name was also Randy — and he was away at college, but came home — and had a much younger child who got muscular dystrophy. And I remember that. And I think I have a picture somewhere, actually, of that little boy with his mom sitting outside the building with my mom.

Um, there was another family moved in upstairs at one point with a teenage daughter. But we were just far enough apart in age that we really weren't close friends, although, we kinda like, you know, hung with the same crowd, but I was a little bit too young for them. So, there's like a difference in some of what people may remember. You know?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Hmm. Describe what your father's assignment was.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Um, he was with Transportation there. And he was in charge of motor pool and all the vehicles and if anybody needed some, a vehicle to go off island for military purposes, if they had to go down to St. Alban's Hospital, because that's where we would go. And he also was responsible for the captains on the ferry to make sure that they had their schedules, that they were showing up. If they didn't show up, then my father had to take their, their duty as well as do his regular job.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did he have a regular office or building that he was in?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** He had an office. And it was interesting because when I, I, I made contact with some of the other brats from the island recently — excuse me — after writing an article for, I was president of my state association, and I wrote an article called the *President's Pen*, you have to, you know, four of them you have to do. And I wrote it about military children and working, as a psychologist, working with children of deployed parents, which I was interested in doing because I went to a workshop at my national association.

As a result of that, I decided to put in the URL bar "Fort Slocum". And boom, up popped these websites.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** I was like, they've got to be kidding, you know. And so by getting, talking with some of those people, some of my friends as a kid online, I discovered that I never went to my father's office but maybe once or twice. So when Michael and I, who's done a lot of the work on Fort Slocum, were talking about it, he said, now which building was your father in, I went, I don't know. You know?

I mean, I was just so busy being a kid that it wasn't, you know, I can remember riding my bike to his office one day and it was a typical, you know, small office and he had his, this on the wall and the certificate and a couple of other things. And it had an army desk, you know —

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** —those greenish, kind of like you see in the movies. You know, nothing spectacular. Files and lots of papers. I said whatever I wanted to say to him and I left. And that was about, you know, I had no real interest in his office or what he did or, you know, what was going on there.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Describe a typical day for your mother.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** She would get up, make sure that we were fed, you know, when I think of typical, I usually think of school year. The summers, of course, were a little bit different. But she, you know, she'd get early, she'd make sure we were fed, get us off to school. I'm not sure exactly when my dad got up and left to go to work, but it probably was after we left.

Um, I know from talking with her later on, that what she would do every day she would read the *Daily News*. And she would sit with her coffee, read the *Daily News*. When she was done doing that, she would go make my bed and my brother's bed, her own. You know, do a little cleaning, take the dog for a walk.

For years, actually, we were allowed to just open the back door and let the dog out. But, uh, I think it was when Colonel Castagneto came to the base, he said that no dogs could be without a leash. So, then my mother had to walk the dog. So prior to that, that wasn't part of what she had to do. Out Duke went. But, but then that was part of what she did.

And you know, she'd walk, she had a little basket she'd carry, you know, pull behind her. She'd walk to the commissary. As a kid I remember that commissary seeming so far away. And yet, when I was there recently, I realized it wasn't very far at all, you know.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** I, I used to think the island was much bigger than it is until Michael said, oh no, it's only so many miles. You know, but, I went, no, I thought it was like this. And he said, no, you'd've been standing in the water. So it seemed so far away. But she would go and I remember when she finally said, one day she was sending me and I felt very grown up. But that's, that was part of what she just did. Or she actually had to go to the PX, but I know she didn't go there very often.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** She purchased most of the goods at the commissary? Did she ever go shopping in New Rochelle?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** We would go to New Rochelle only for like clothing, um, stuff that, you know, a lot of stuff we might get at the PX, but there was like a lot of stuff for myself that they just, they didn't carry, so you know, for herself, so we would go into New Rochelle.

And there was a Bloomingdale's and an Arnold Constable at the time. And I think there may have even been a Lord and Taylor, but I'm not sure. But I remember Arnold Constable and Bloomingdale's. And, um, a lot of shoe stores and, so we would, there was like a whole like a main street with all of this stuff.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And my mom never drove, so we would, you know, take the, take the bus from the, the dock in to shop.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did your father have a, have a car?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** No. My father didn't have a car while we were at Slocum, which, you know, we just, you didn't need it to get around.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And, um, I'm not sure what we did when we actually went places off base, but our life was really on the base.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** That was what was so amazing, too, and I think back on all of that and I said to Michael, I, as a teenager I started having some friends in New Rochelle, but our life was basically on the island.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** You mentioned that you had a dog, were, did many dogs reside on the island?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Not many, but there were dogs.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And the way we got Duke, and if you, if you watch that brat's film, actually they talk about it in there how, you know, the people get transferred but the dogs don't.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And the dogs stay behind.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** So Duke was —

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Why was that?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Because you can't take your dogs to new bases or to new countries. There's like, you know, three-, four-, five-month, you know, delays in the dog being able to be released into the new country.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** So you, you know, some of these, the brats, they talk about having had ten dogs, you know. My mother never let us have a dog because she didn't want to go through that with us, with the tears and all of that.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** So Duke was born to, there was actually, someone had a Boxer and someone had a Great Dane. And they were not, they both were gonna be bred, well, they got together and they, that was the end of breeding for them. And Duke was born from that mating. And he was one of 11.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And he was the runt. He was the one that looked most like a Boxer, kind of half-squished in face, but he was a little bit taller than a Boxer. But we thought he was adorable. We wanted him when he was in the litter. My mother said, no, no, and we couldn't convince her. But then when the family, it was an officer's family that owned him, and I recall the family being the officer in charge of the officer's club, they got transferred to Greenland. Well, the dog wasn't going.

So we tried to talk my mom into it and she refused. So my father helped us come up with a plan, my brother and I. We put the dog on the back porch, closed the, the back door, put the little latch on the porch and we left. And of course, then he'd start crying. She came. Oh, what did they do, you poor, you know, petted him. Well, of course then, you know, he wanted a little something to eat. It didn't take but a few days, then the dog lived with us.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And my parents had him till he died. I think he was 11 or 12 when he died. So, and he was her baby.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Your, your father was a Warrant Officer.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Yeah.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Describe the relationship of warrant officer to commissioned officer. What's the difference?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** He is a commissioned officer.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Okay.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** His commission comes from Congress and it's, my understanding as a kid growing up, I'm not talking, you know, as an adult, which I never changed that because I never pursued looking at it. But as a kid, my understanding from my mom was that the Congress would have specific jobs that the Armed Forces needed and so if you had that skill, then they would give you a commission as a Chief Warrant Officer. And that my father had the skill with the ships.

And so he actually, he'd been in the service as an enlisted man. My mom refused to marry someone in the army. He came out. They went through the Depression together and then just before World War II, a few years before, he said, the war's coming. I want to go in as a commissioned officer and I want to go in, you know, with this. So that's how he went back in the service and then, you know, stayed. Um, and she became an army wife.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** As a kid, did you notice class differences between the families of officers and the families of NCOs?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Absolutely. I mean, we lived on Officers Row.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And when we lived, I mean, I remember at Fort Eustis and even in Japan, um, that we didn't necessarily associate with enlisted kids except in school. In Japan, of course, we went to the DoD schools and everybody was, I mean, when you were in school everybody was the same. But you went back to officers' area. And so all the kids there were officers' kids.

When I lived at Fort Slocum, I only had one friend who was an enlisted man's daughter and that didn't last because we just had differences. And um, what was expected of me and what was expected of her were very different. And so my parents would kind of frown on some of the things that I wanted to do with her.

Um, but there was also some differences in rank. You know, I mean, even just, we had four units, five units in one building, but we would never have been in one of the places that a major or, or a colonel would be in. So that just wouldn't happen.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So your parents, too, probably didn't associate that much with people of different of ranks?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Well, no. That's not true for my father. My father associated with enlisted men and officers. He'd go to either club.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** He didn't care. My mom didn't associate. She associated only with officers' wives. And very, she was very limited in who she associated with. But primarily, she associated with officer's wives.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** But my dad, he, he worked with a lot, you know, directly with the enlisted men. So it wasn't like he was in an office with one guy he was working with who would then, you know, working with enlisted men. He worked with them directly. So he had more of a relationship and he would —

**ROBERT JACOBY:** He had a foot in each world.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Yeah. He really did. He really did. And he really believed in knowing his men and supporting his men. And, um, I remember he, they played on a, a softball or hard-, I don't know if it was regular baseball or if it was soft, but he played on that team and he didn't care which team he was on, you know, and just was out there having fun. So he, he did live in both worlds.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Some people have described sort of an unwritten rule that enlisted men did not walk on the side of the parade ground that was Officers Row. Are you familiar with this or were you conscious of that at all?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** It's funny, until you just said it, I would never have thought of it, but I don't think there were enlisted men on that side of the, of the base. They really didn't come over there.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. Certainly the, their quarters were on the eastern side of the base, but —

**RIVKA OLLEY:** But I don't remember them coming past our place directly.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. They were more or less instructed not to —

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Mm.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** — from, from what I understand.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** But as a kid I wouldn't know that.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Right.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** But now that you've said it, it was always the officers. You know, it was, there was a lot of, um, officers because of the Army Information School, who were single, you know, young guys out of college just drafted. And I would see them around a lot, but not the enlisted men.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Unless you went to the movies or the bowling alley or.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Right. At Raymond Hall?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And you know, I don't even know what it was called.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** We called it the theater or the bowling alley.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Right. Did you ever eat in the mess halls?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Um, actually, yes. Um, there was a, a lifeguard and we nicknamed him "Pineapple", he was from Hawaii. He was there for many years and he would be the lifeguard for the officers' beach. And he introduced us to the mess hall. So we would go in after the guys would go through and we'd get to get whatever we wanted. And, you know, then my mother wondered why we weren't hungry.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** But —

(END TAPE ONE. BEGIN TAPE TWO.)

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Going to school, how was that arranged?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Me going to school in New Rochelle?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** When you say arranged, I'm not sure what you mean.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh, you went on the ferry?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Oh, okay. Yeah. The army bus came around in the morning and picked, went around the whole island, picked us all up and, um, when I was young, we always would ride the bus. And mostly even when I got older, because it was morning and you just got on the bus and it took you down to the ferry. Rode the ferry over in a different bus, took you up to school.

When I got older, when we'd come home, my friends and I would walk, um, along, you know, up to where we lived. The younger kids usually would ride the bus. We were told not to walk on the sea wall.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** But when we got older, we walked on the sea wall as well.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** It was faster. It was a lot faster to walk on the sea wall than to come off the dock and go up to the road.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Were you accompanied by adults on the ferry other than the ferry captain?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And the deck hands?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** No.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** No? You just went and --

**RIVKA OLLEY:** We all just got on the boat and went.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And then you were met on the other side by another bus.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Well, we just got on, well, we were met. I mean, there was a private driving the, the bus --

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** -- waited for us there and then took us to, um, Jefferson Elementary, Isaac Emmett Young Junior High and then over to New Rochelle High School. Those were the three schools that we went to.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Were you friendly with many kids in New Rochelle?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Not until I got to junior high. Um, and even then, it was, um, you know because they were off island it was hard. But as I got older, um, more, I had more friends off island than on the island, primarily because, um, I have like, I said last time, the kids on the island were primarily Southern Baptist or Protestant. And a lot of them were associated with the Chaplain School and I was Jewish and we were just different. It's not that I had all these Jewish friends in town, but, but there wasn't that big distinction of "you're the Jewish family".

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** So.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. Um, tell me about your classes. What do you remember about them? Do you remember any teachers?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Um, yeah. The, my fifth grade teacher was Mrs. Sacks and, um, who was my, I don't remember who the fourth grade teacher was because it was my third school that year. But Mrs. Sacks put me in the first row by the door. She, she sorted you by who, who passed, you know, who did well on a math test. And I think I told you, I worked my way over to the window in the row with the people who did the worst. And it didn't take long.

Um, my big accomplishment that year was that I walked up and down the stairs properly. I didn't tell you that, that was my big accomplishment. She had me go out and demonstrate to the class how to walk quietly up and down the steps because, you know, they were all banging their feet coming down the steps.

That was also the year I had braces put on and then I had all the bad, all the silver taken off and had my tonsils out and then had to have all the silver put back in my mouth. It was not a fun time. It was not a good year.

And then the next year I had Mrs. Short. No, that was in twelfth grade. She was short, too, but that wasn't her name. I'd have to go look. I have the report cards. But, that was sixth grade and pretty much was the same kids. You know, the end of fourth, fifth grade and sixth grade, the same group of kids.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did you go to their houses to play?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Never went to anyone's house at that age.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** No?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Not until I went into middle, to junior high. Um, I would just get on the bus and go home.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** All the play was on the island.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** You, you got home, you took off your school clothes and you went out and played. You know? I, I don't really remember. I mean, we were looking a minute ago at, um, the island and talking about, you know, hurricanes and the pictures I showed you were the snow and the ice. I don't remember a lot of snow. I don't, you know, I remember there was winter and it was cold and we would, you know, wear -- I even remember my father making pancakes and liver gravy which would keep us warm when we went out to play.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Liver gravy?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Oh, fabulous. It's an old Irish thing. Um, you make liver with onions and you make a gravy out of it and you make enough so that the next morning when you make pancakes you put the leftover liver gravy on. And I'll tell ya, it keeps you warm at least till noon.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** But I don't remember a lot of snow. I remember a few times when we had really heavy snow and you know, but it was rare to have that much snow.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** You don't remember sledding then? There's really no place to sled on the island.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Well, there was. Yeah. There was, actually.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Where? Down at the mortar battery?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Um, no. We would go sledding over here by the, uh, uh, the Chaplain School.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Oh.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** This was actually a hill. And that hill was enough to just, you know, have a little sled go down it.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** You know, we didn't need much to entertain us and then you'd drag it back up and you'd sled down it again. And, um, that was actually where I went when one day my dog got off the porch and he, you know, he learned how to lift the latch so he could get off. And that was one of the times when there was like, you know, the snow was up to my, above my waist.

And, um, I was sent out to go find the dog. And every time I'd get near Duke, he'd run, you know, further. And in the meantime, I cannot step over the, I mean it's so deep that it's like in the movies where you're like, you know, trudging your leg up and down. Up and down. And this is where I finally caught up to him and I hit his nose, because I was, Duke, I'm so angry. I hit his nose and it bled. I never hit him again. I mean, I was like so appalled that I had hurt my dog, I never hit him again. I cried. I was like, oh Duke, and you know, tears. And, um --

**ROBERT JACOBY:** He forgave you.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Of course. You know, I put snow on his nose to make it cold and, you know, he went through all that. And then I grabbed his leash, he had a choker collar, and I grabbed it and I said, come on, and we went home. Um, and I was sopping wet. So was he. My mother was thrilled. But I was sent out to, to go get the dog. I don't know why my father wasn't sent out. But I was sent out, my dog, I guess.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Tell me what were some of the things that kids did on the island.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** We rode our bikes, played tennis, climbed the rocks. I went fishing a lot. I don't remember the other kids fishing a lot. Um, walked around, went in the mortar pit area, you know, got into things you weren't supposed to do. Um, we were always busy.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Were those off-limits, the mortar pits?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Of course. We weren't supposed to go anywhere, you know, that was like the business area of the island.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Um, but you know, we would go to the gymnasium. Sometimes there was a big trampoline in the gymnasium.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** This, this building --

**RIVKA OLLEY:** I think that was it.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** — 78.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Yeah. Yeah. I think that was it.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And, um, there was a big trampoline. We used to go and just bounce on the trampoline, you know. And when you're, you know, a kid, you can do that for hours.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** What about hobbies?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** You mean like what did I do —

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Like, well, was there like a hobby shop or a woodworking shop?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** No. Nothing —

**ROBERT JACOBY:** That they allowed you to —

**RIVKA OLLEY:** No, no, no, no. I mean, if there was, the boys may have known about it.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Um, we had Cub Scouts on the island and I used to go to the Cub Scout meetings because I insisted on going and —

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Cub Scouts?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Cub Scouts. But I also was member of the Brownie and then the Girl Scout troop in New Rochelle, but they didn't have one on the island. But there was the National Rifle Association, um, and, um, that one of the, and I showed you the article last time it was in, that, that I had saved, which was surprise to me when I found it recently, um, that one of the, uh, officers on the post started and, you know, he headed up. And so a whole bunch of us belonged to that and we used to do competitions.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Where did you shoot?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** In the, in the theater, underneath was the bowling alley on one side and on the other side was a rifle range. So we would go and practice there, you know, guns and rifles and —

**ROBERT JACOBY:** At targets?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** At targets, yeah. We didn't, no. We weren't shooting any squirrels. But, um, and then we had archery club that someone started and we did for awhile, right on the parade ground, right by the flag. And, um, like I said, there were tennis courts over by the officers' beach. This is the officers' beach right here. And, um, so we would play, you know, tennis. And I don't think we were playing tennis like you're supposed to play tennis, but we'd hit the ball back and forth. And in the winter it was an ice skating rink.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** There was a teen club?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** There was a teen club that started actually in Building 42, I believe it was. And, you know, on this map.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** What'd they have in there?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Um, it was in the back, downstairs in this small room. And we had a hi-fi and we had a soda machine, the kind you open it —

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** — the kind you open it and slide the soda. And I don't, I don't think we paid for the sodas. I think that the, the post commander kind of wanted us all away from everything so he, I think he stocked the soda because I don't remember ever paying for it.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Were you, were you chaperoned in those?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** No. No.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** No. You just?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** But nobody did anything either, you know?



**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah. Yeah.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** I mean, I think the most we ever did was at the gymnasium when, um, a few of us kissed each other. It was like, that was the big deal, you know.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** When you kiss someone. But we never, you know, we never really did anything. I mean, it's like I told you last time, some of the stuff we did was, you know, sneaking out and coming down to this end of the island and, you know, the big deal was to just be out past curfew.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And as soon as we knew the MPs were coming and we jumped over the sea wall and then we went home. You know? We just never really did what I thought, nowadays, I mean it was like nothing.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** But you feared the MPs and you feared what might happen to your, you know, your father if there was, you know, you got in trouble.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Because their, their reputation would be sullied?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Well, they'd get a phone call from the commanding officer that, you know, your kids weren't doing what they were supposed to be doing.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And that was never a good thing. Now I'm looking at this map and it says tennis courts over here, but I don't remember tennis courts over there.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** I never played on them. I only played on these. Um, I do remember there was an actual baseball field over here in the drill and athletic field. There was actually a baseball, because my father played softball with the team that they had. I think it was enlisted against —

**ROBERT JACOBY:** I don't know that you can see it in this picture. In other aerial shots you can see the diamond.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Oh, can you? Okay.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Somewhere in here.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Yeah. They were close to the, the service club. This looks more like it might have been a track.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** I think it was.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Yeah.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** I think it was originally.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And who knows? There might have been a track there, but I remember the baseball field, you know, and that that's —

**ROBERT JACOBY:** It was probably part of the training.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** It was down the hill. It was down.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Because that was very hilly on this —

**ROBERT JACOBY:** There was a slope right here.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Right. Yup.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm

**RIVKA OLLEY:** That slope went down to where the baseball diamond was. And it was funny, because when I was out there in August with Michael, um, and we were walking past the service club and as I'm walking and I could see the path down the hill, because we were up more towards the parade ground, and I said, oh, I don't remember that it was as far down as it really is.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** You know, in my mind, I didn't remember it being that far down, but it was. And it had a path and I don't remember the path particularly, but I remember that it was downhill, you know, there, so. I'm really amazed at how much I do remember. But there are distortions, you know, a kid's distortions. Or maybe just old age.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Um, let me ask you about medical care.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Okay.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Was there a dentist on the post that you visited?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** There was a dentist. Um, obviously, the doctor. There was a vet. And, um, um, when we first got Duke he wasn't eating and I remember my mom took him to the vet. No, my dad. My mom made my dad take him to the vet. And the vet said, don't worry, you know, he's spoiled. He's been eating the, you know, stuff left at the officers' club, steaks and whatever. If you put the food down, he won't starve to death, he'll eat it, which he did.

Um, and then the dentist, my mom always insisted we go to the dentist in town. But I did go to the dentist when I was having terrible pain in the back of my mouth. I had orthodontal work at the time and, um, my dad just took me over and had the dentist take x-rays to see why I was in so much pain. And I was getting my wisdom teeth —

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** — at like 14 or 13 years of age, from the orthodontal work.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** So I was told at the time that the dentist used the x-rays to write a paper to get published.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Wow.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** So my teeth ended up in a journal somewhere.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** All the orthodontal work was done off-island?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Off-island. Yup. And it was two doctors, they were brothers, Fingeroff. Both, I don't remember their first names, but they turned out to be quite famous. And a lot of the stuff they used on me was stuff that they still use. They kind of invented it.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** So, of course, I just thought it was torture at the time, but they kind of invented it. They did a great job, I mean.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Why did your mother not want you to go to the post dentist?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Well, she didn't trust army doctors and dentists.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And I don't think she had real good reasons, but she, you know, she just wasn't sure that they were gonna care enough to, you know, to take good care. And yet, the dentist I go to now, right, was in the army. You know, I mean, like all dentists back then, he, which was probably around the same period, he was in the army, but stationed in France. And now he's my dentist all these years later, my mother wouldn't have let me go to him, you know, so.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Do, do you recall whether medical treatment on the island for yourself and your mother and brother was free?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Um, I don't remember really going to the doctor much. Nowadays people go to the doctor a lot more than they did back then anyway. I know my mom went to see the doctor. Um, I, you know, we didn't even do like yearly physicals back then. My mom went because they diagnosed her with lumps in her breast and then she had to go to St. Albans and see the doctors there. And they did biopsies because they didn't have, you know, MRI's and that kind of stuff back then. All were benign. She had to go twice to have them. One time she had ten of them removed.

And while she was having, the second time she went, was when, you know, humiliation of humiliations, I had, when my mom was in having the second surgery, because they had lumps in the breast, I decided that I would examine my chest, which looked a lot like this piece of paper at the time. And I found a lump. So my dad dragged me in and then the doctors examines me and then he has me go in his office and my dad's in the office. And he said, um, your daughter's developing breasts. I wanted to die.

So that's the medical care I remember.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** I don't remember really getting, I knew that I used to get sick a lot in first grade. I had measles, mumps and chicken pocks. I had strep throat infections, tonsilitis, but we didn't live near an army base or at least my mom couldn't get to

one. My dad was in Korean and we had, my mother always, a German doctor is what she'd say. We had this German doctor who would come to the house with his nurse and take care of us at home. And, um, and when we were in Japan, I don't remember seeing a doctor.

I remember going to get my eyes examined. And, um, the army, um, ophthalmal-, whoever, optometrist, ophthalmologist, I don't know, told my parents that when she, by the time she's 21, she'll need glasses for astigmatism, which I got at 17. So I figured he knew his stuff. But I don't remember going to doctors other than that in the fifth grade I had my tonsils out. I must have gone to doctors.

I remember in Japan that we took my brother to the doctor a few times. I remember going down to, I think it was on Chamber Street in New York, when we had to get our shots to go to Japan. You know, which was military. And, um, there's not a whole lot of memory of going to doctors.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Maybe you weren't sick that often, so.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Well, I was sick until fifth grade.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** You know, because I was constantly having strep throat infections. But it was a doctor in New Rochelle that my mother took us to, took me to to get the examinations and the decisions to make the — she must have taken me a few times for, you know, tonsillitis, because they finally said she's sick enough to, you know, she needs to have them out. But other than, you know, that, I don't remember really spending time at doctors offices or using the doctor. And once I had the tonsils out, I can't remember going to the doctor, you know.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Describe the flag pole and its importance.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Other than the fact that it was like almost out my window, it was the, you know, from our dining room which we really didn't eat in, but it was the prominent thing. It was like just off to, slightly to the left of our building and it was, I mean, you could see it from New Rochelle. The water tower and the flag pole and the flag was up when you went to school in the morning and the flag was there when you came home.

And when the, you know, the end of the day, you all, you know, they would bring the flag down. Everyone had to stop, get off their bikes, whatever you were doing, stand at attention. And if you didn't, it got reported. If someone saw that you were still playing, it got reported.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** This was at retreat?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Yup. And —

**ROBERT JACOBY:** What color was the flag pole?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** White.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And I wouldn't have to see a picture to know that. I know it was white.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And, I never remember anyone painting it, but it always looked fresh, you know.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And it was right in front of the chaplain school, um, and it, it just, it had a cannon in front of it. And it was just there. It was the, you know, like one of the big landmarks, that and like I say, the water tower.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Not that we hung out at the water tower.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And were there assemblies at the flag pole that you remember or was it the center of certain events?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Well, it was for Armed Forces Day.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** You know, because they would put the missile there and they would have, you know, a big ceremony taking the flag down and that everybody could come to. And there were, you know, they'd put out the big trucks and stuff.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** For that, you know, so people could come and see the different things that there were, military type. And we weren't like a military base where you had a lot of big equipment.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** You know? I mean, it was really, if you think, it was the Army Information School, what are you gonna put out a bunch of guys with, you know, cameras and books?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Right.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And the Chaplain School, you know, okay. Like here's a little chaplain's kit. You know, people didn't come to see that.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** A Bible.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Right. They didn't really come to see that stuff. I know that there were times when they, you know, had the guys practice, you know, marching, but not very often. I think the parade ground was mostly just there.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Because army posts always have a parade ground. But I can't say that I remember much, that they ever went out. You know, they'd have them all assemble out by the barracks. But --

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So drilling was not something that you remember?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** It wasn't. Not, not a lot.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Was there a military band, a post band?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** If there was, I never saw it.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** You know, there could have been, but not one that I saw, you know.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And certainly the marching they did, there was no band while they were marching. I don't remember one. And you know, it's funny, because even if they had had -- I'm thinking about this now -- even if there had been something going on, I would probably have been off playing somewhere instead.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** You know, I mean, it was just every day it's the island.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Were you aware of much of what the adults were into?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** No. You, you know, I think I told you last time, I hardly, I remember going to my Dad's place and I couldn't even tell you where it was. I thought it was down near the docks, but I don't think I went there more than once, maybe twice.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** To where my dad worked. And um, I man, I really was just a kid on the island.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. What about --

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And it just happened to be a beautiful, wonderful, safe, nice place.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** What about gossip? Did, it's a small island. There are families there. Would things about people get spread around? And I don't mean, you know, about, gossip about little kids, but you know.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** What do you mean? What were kids saying about each other versus what were the adults saying about each other?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Well, I mean, people will talk. Like, I think we talked last time about the, I think it was the captain, maybe it was a major, who drove off the end of the dock. You know? So everybody, you know --

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Tell me about that.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Well, this was, it was funny, because when Michael and I were talking about it, I said, I remember that. You know? He said, you remember? I said, well, I don't remember, I wasn't there seeing it, but I remember everyone talking about it. I remember my parents guffawing about it.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** He was intoxicated?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** He was intoxicated. He thought the ferry came in and he drove right off the end of the dock. And apparently he did it a second time. And, of course, Michael and I have since said, well, I'm sure he didn't get promoted after that.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** You know, bad judgment once, but bad judgment twice, same bad judgment. So twice he went off the dock. But, I mean there was other things that people, I mean it was a small island. Everybody knew what was going on with everyone. And, um, you know, I remember things like my mom actually taking somebody under her wing. And I don't think we talked about this last time. Because this was somebody, I don't think she was somebody's wife.

I think she was somebody's sister who lived on the island with him and, but it could have been his wife, it's the childhood little detail that's missing. And she did not wear, she had false teeth and she didn't wear them. And she didn't get her hair fixed. And she, you know, my mother took her and said, you gotta wear your teeth. We'll get you new teeth. You've got to get comfortable teeth. You know, it's not, he's an officer, you can't, um —

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Was this an older person or?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Well, she probably was, yeah. I mean, she was older than my mom.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** She was probably in her 50s. And back then, you know, people let their teeth rot and then they pulled them. So she had no teeth. And, um, I went off to get, you know, he's an officer. You have to have a certain level of how you dress and how you look and how you act.

And so she took her and, and, and, um, told her where to go to get her hair done and about makeup and the woman looked so much different. It was amazing. And you know, it made a huge difference. And my mother then would have to just say, every once in awhile, come on, you gotta keep it up. Can't, you know, can't let it go, get the teeth in. But that kind of stuff would go on.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Comportment was very important?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Oh, yeah.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** If you look at the few pictures I showed you of my mom, you know, on the island —

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** I don't know if I showed you the ones with Duke and my mom.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Walking to the commissary, outside the officers' club. Well, she was always dressed. She always had her hair done. All of the women, I can't remember them ever looking like, you know, slovenly.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** They always looked presentable, you know?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** My mom would get totally dressed. And I wouldn't say, you know, dressed up in pearls, but totally dressed, makeup and everything, to go the PX.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** You know, and if she wasn't, she'd send me. But she would not go out without being dressed.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** That was a reflection, also, on your father.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** His status and everything.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Absolutely. You know, and the other thing I think I mentioned the last time, too, was, in terms of status and all that, that even though we were Jewish and we didn't celebrate, you know, the holidays. You know, on Sunday we were not allowed to go and play until church was over. And if we did go out, we had to be dressed up, you know, and we couldn't go ride our bikes and do stuff like that until the, everybody was out of church.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And on Easter Sunday, if we wanted to go out, we were dressed in Easter clothes and a hat, you know. So it, you know, even if you didn't go to church, you had to fit in with the group.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did your mother take you to religious services?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** In New Rochelle. But it was mostly for training, more than that my mother would go to services. So we would go to Hebrew school.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And, um, those Hebrew schools, the second one we went to, actually conducted services for the kids on Sunday, because we, Sunday school, because you don't do it on Saturday. You don't work on Saturday. You don't teach on Saturday.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** So our schooling was on Sunday, you know. But our holidays and stuff would then interfere with some of those Sundays so you didn't have Sunday school. And that was off-island. So that, easily you came back when everyone was out of church.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Your mother was Jewish. Your father was?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Catholic.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Catholic. And they made a decision that you would be brought up Jewish?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Jewish. Yeah. And, and, um, the reason for that as the story goes was that my father was raised very religious and my mom was Orthodox. And um, my father said that, you know, it was really important to him that we have God in our lives and that we have some religion. But he didn't care which.

So he said that since he was away on shifts a lot, that it made more sense for my mom to do it, but that if she didn't want to, that he knew the priests would be happy to come and, you know, take us and make sure we got our religious training. So she said, that's all right. I know Judaism, I'll do it. But we got exposed to both.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** We have a Christmas tree and a menorah.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So, you, were you the only Jews on the island at some point?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Um, there was always a Jewish chaplain. There was a Jewish family, I remember. And there may, the Jewish chaplain may have always been married, but I didn't, I don't remember all of them. But the one family that I do remember, um, one of the kids was having difficulty learning to read and the wife asked my mom to tutor him because my mom had tutored a kid who had had some limited IQ skill and had actually taught the kid to read.

So it kind of got around the island that my mother had been successful in doing that, so she asked her if she would help, which was, you know, when I grew up thought was kind of interesting because the woman was college educated, my mom didn't graduate high school. And she was asking my mom to tutor her kid.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Natural teacher.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Yeah. She was. She was really good. And um, um --

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Were you conscious as

a --

**RIVKA OLLEY:** People didn't know that she wasn't a high school graduate.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Were you conscious as a young person of being the only Jewish family or almost the only Jewish family on the island?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Yeah. I was conscious of it even in Japan when we were living there, that we were the only Jews in our area. And, um, and in Japan, my cousin, who later studied to be a rabbi, actually was stationed in Japan at the same time. And he would come and get us for all the big holidays. So he would take us to, you know, synagogue and he got us some religious training. But it was far away.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** It wasn't like near where we were. But yeah, we were the only Jewish family. And most of the time, I never played with other, you know, the Jewish kids because like they were always so much younger. The rabbi's kids were so young. And then when we got older, my brother was supposed to study for his bar mitzvah, the rabbi refused to train him so.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Any reason?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Um, he said he didn't do that.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** No?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** He didn't teach, he was there for the servicemen, not, not for the families and the kids. So, you know, if we wanted to have my brother have a bar mitzvah, he'd have to go take his lessons off-island.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And at the same time, and I think I remember telling you this, Colonel Saunders said to my father, he started up with him. It wasn't like he said it once. I mean, he was like at him, that how could you let these kids get away from the church. So he stirred problems in the marriage around that. And I remember my parents arguing about it. And my brother never had a bar mitzvah.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** So.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Do you think he regretted that as an adult?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** I think he did for awhile and then, I mean, he married a Catholic girl.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** I married a Catholic man.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** So, um, talk about you do what your parents did.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** But he raised his son Catholic, you know, I think after time, you know, it wasn't as important to him.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Um, whereas I raised my kids Jewish.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** So, it was important to me. And I did, as an adult, in my doctoral program, go in and study for three years with nine other women and had a bat mitzvah.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Is that when you took the name Rivka?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** No, Rivka was given to me at birth, but on the birth certificate they put Randy because they wanted me to be very American, you know. And, um, my grandmother's name was Rivka and, um, so they named me after my mother's mother Rivka and then my father's mother Isabel. They called me Randy Isabel Ollie, which is a great name, but the marines wanted me and the army wanted me and the boy's locker room and all that, so I started using Rivka after. That was the ice maker.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** You were known by your friends as Randy when you were growing up?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** When I was growing up, yeah. Yeah. But as an adult, everyone knows me as Rivka. So it's kind of like a schizophrenic world.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** But yeah. The kids from back when I was growing up that I've now found on the internet remember me as Randy, you know.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And the funny thing is that my, it turns out that, first of all they did Randy with a "y", which is part of the problem. They spelled Rivka without an "h", but my grandmother had a --

(END SIDE A. BEGIN SIDE B.)

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Let me ask about going to New York City. Did you do that often?



**RIVKA OLLEY:** Oh, yeah. You mean when Barbara Neil and I skipped school? Yeah. Um, I did it ten times. But I have found out recently that Barbara Neil encouraged Judy Farquhar. I felt guilty and I said, I can't do it anymore. But I think there may have been one time when I went with Judy and Barbara together, but then I stopped going.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** You weren't found out.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** No. The way that New Rochelle High School was set up was that the parent was supposed to call to let them know that you weren't coming in that day. So Barbara would call for me and I would call for Barbara and I would say I'm Mrs. Neil and Barbara won't be in today, blah, blah, blah.

But what happened is, we'd get on the bus. We'd tell the privates to let us off at the New York/New Haven railroad station. And he'd finish going on to the high school with the kids who weren't skipping school. And we'd get on, go down into the city.

And it's not like we went all over the city, because you only have so much time and then you have to get back on and, you know, meet the, and the private would pick you up and take you home like you'd been to school.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So he was part of your conspiracy?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Absolutely. Absolutely. And, um, like I said, I did it about ten times. I don't even know over what period of time, but I felt so guilty. I was so afraid I was gonna get caught. And I knew my father would kill me. I believed he would kill me. Then I just, it wasn't worth it.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And what, what would you girls do in the city?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Nothing exciting. I mean, we would walk around, look at the big buildings, sometimes go to the New York, the main library on 42<sup>nd</sup> Street. Like I say, you know, we'd get off Grand Central. And it's not like we went all over Manhattan. We sort of stuck where we could walk because it wasn't like we had a lot of money, you know.

So we had like a little few dollars from babysitting or something. We could get a hotdog or something. And we might walk into a couple of store and get back on the train and go back. You know, it was not anything really, you know, extravagant. I think the furthest we ever walked up was maybe to like 59<sup>th</sup> Street. I know we went into Sacks Fifth Avenue once. You know, walked over to Rockefeller Center.

I mean, it wasn't like anything big deal except that we were in New York City and not at school. You know, that was the big deal.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. Right.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** We didn't even know where to go. You know?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did you go into the city with your parents?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Um, I went in with my mom sometimes, not my dad. But my mom and I went down a few times. We'd take the train down, because my mom didn't drive. And I remember there was a place on 42<sup>nd</sup> Street and 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, the building was taken down God knows how many years ago now, but upstairs was a Russian, um, a tea room, a Gypsy tea room.

And we would go up there and the woman would read the tea leaves. And you know, so my mother would always say, this is nonsense, this is just for fun. And you know, so they'd read the tea leaves and we'd have these little sandwiches and.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Do you remember what they told you?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Well, I remember what she told me when I like about 17 or 18. You know, I was gonna meet, you know, this guy and he wasn't gonna be the right guy. And I'd meet this other guy and then this other guy and I would go on a long trip. And you know, none of it came true.

But, at 18 I was like, oh, wow. Yeah. Meet a guy. You know, I'm gonna go on a long trip. Where? You know. But it was just, it was for fun and we just, you know, had a good time. And then we'd just go shopping. You know, my mom would like to, you know, just go into — she loved concrete. She'd say, give me concrete. And so we would just go into some of the stores, the same ones we could go in in New Rochelle, Bloomingdales and Arnold Constable and like that.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Your dad didn't enjoy the city?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Um, he, he wasn't a shopper, you know, like most men.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And we would do this usually during the week, you know, in the summer or something. It wasn't, you know, my mom and I, I remember we did go one time and I don't think my dad went with us, we went down to see a Broadway show with Henry Fonda.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Hmm.



**RIVKA OLLEY:** And I don't remember what show it was, but I still remember what Henry Fonda looked like on that stage. It was so impressive. And I remember she took me a few times to see the Rockettes. And of course I wanted to grow up and be a Rockette, but you know. I remember she took me and the, you know, the, the Christmas Show and you'd see the Rockettes and it was like so exciting.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And that's about —

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Do you remember going to Greenwich Village?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Yeah.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did you ever make it there?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** I did, but I think I was a little bit older.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** I don't remember a whole lot about Greenwich Village. There were hippies and beatniks and you know. And you know, it was one of the, it was a "this is not a good thing" kind of place. You know, there's beatniks and that. They're not following the rules, they're you know. So it wasn't like, I mean, when I got older it was more fun. But not, not with my mom fun, you know.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. You mentioned earlier that your father did not have car.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Nope. We did not have a car. Um, our, our life was very much on Fort Slocum. Excuse me. And if we went off, there was the bus and, or we had an army vehicle. My father was in charge of the Transportation Department.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** So, um, you know, if we really needed to go somewhere, we had an army vehicle to go.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Where would you go?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Sometimes to visit family that were in the Bronx.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Your mother's side?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** My mother's side of the family. Well, my father had some, you know, siblings still living in the Bronx and some in Westchester. He had family in like Yonkers and that area for years and years. And um, and so they were close to the family in the Bronx. It was like, you know, just over the border kind of thing. It wasn't very far. I mean it was like, you know, you just, there you were.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Do you remember taking off and going out into the country for the day?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Never.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** No?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** No. They, they didn't do that.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** This was the country.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm, mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** So, I, I, and you know, it's like right now I don't remember that they would do that. I remember when I became a teenager, I liked when my father did get a car after we left Slocum, I would get in the car and go for a ride.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** But my parents never did that, you know. We didn't have a car in Japan either.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Yeah. I think we had a car in Virginia. My father had cars on and off through the years.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did other people have cars who were at Slocum?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** It was, well, there were people who had cars you know on, some were allowed to bring cars on island, but there was limitations. They'd only let a small number of cars on island. And then, so some people kept their cars, by the dock. There was a parking lot, which is a parking lot now in New Rochelle.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Um, but very few cars were actually on island. Everybody walked.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** You know?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** My mother would go to the grocery store, to the commissary, um, with one of those, you know, drag behind things and she could. I mean it was not that far.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** You know.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did people have bicycles?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Not the adults that I knew. It was all the kids.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** I mean, you could, the island isn't that big.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** As a kid I thought it was gigantic, but --

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** I said to Michael actually, I said, I think there only must have been like two and a half, or three and a half miles, you know. He said, no, it was smaller than that. I said, it was smaller than that? You know, it seemed so big at the time.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** But no, we didn't.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Um, the, the post --

**RIVKA OLLEY:** This was like camp. You were at camp, you know.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Compared to where you were in Japan?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Well, Japan you were really restricted where you could go.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** What base were you at there?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** I, you know, we were in Yokohama.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And all I remember is what's called Area X.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Really?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And I think it was for Area 11. And, and, and I remember that we were in like an area this big it seemed. And when you crossed the street over here it was a huge -- because we actually tiptoed over and got in there once -- it was just all those huge army trucks where they transport the guys, you know, in them. I mean, there must have been hundreds of them parked there. They were just there all the time.

But you could also get, um, we were on the top of a hill and you could wind your way down and get down to the ocean. So we would sneak away as kids and --

**ROBERT JACOBY:** But were you --

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Do we sound like we were bad? We were always sneaking away. But, you know, the Japanese didn't like us, so we learned a lot of curse words.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Huh.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** You know, they didn't want us coming off, off that little area.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did you get to travel in Japan much? Did you see much of the place?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Only with my cousin. I mean, I could see, um, Mount Fuji --

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** — from my bedroom window. But we never went there. You know? Any travel I did was when my cousin took us someplace.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** You picked up some Japanese though?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** I did, well, from the first day. The, um, the maid started talking to me, Kasika. She started talking to me. It was gonna rain and she started to teach me about, you know, it's going to rain. And she taught me how to get around because my mother didn't learn a word, so I could tell the taxi drivers if we were going someplace. You know, don't take us in circles, I know my way around. Then she started teaching me the names of foods.

And you know, she, she would just talk to me. She would take me to her family and they would talk. So I started to speak, you know, but a kid's level of speaking.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** We were there two years and at the end of the tour I wanted to stay, my dad wanted to stay, my mom wanted to go. I don't remember my brother having a vote in this, but I might intentionally not remember including him in things. My mom won. She had a little more power over my dad than I did. But I was just learning to start to write. And I think if I'd been able to stay the two years, I probably would have increased my knowledge and been able to write at least on a, you know, an elementary level and maybe I would have kept it. But it's like, I can't.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** You know, it's just not there. There's nothing.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Do you recall eating Japanese foods?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** All the time.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Oh?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Yeah. We weren't supposed to, you know. And there was like, you know, there actually were movies that you were supposed to watch about, you know, when you get to this foreign country and if you look them up, they really exist, you know. You'll have dry milk and you'll, you know, I don't remember having dry milk or my mother having to mix water with, you know. But don't eat the local vegetables, it'll kill you, you know, kind of feeling.

But my cousin, you know, sort of said, oh, that's ridiculous, you know. And so we introduced some of that stuff. But I can't say my mother really ate Japanese food, but my dad was adventuresome and I would go with him. So we would go into the villages and we would eat.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Sushi and other things?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Oh, everything. Everything. That's how I discovered, excuse me, I had an allergy to oysters. My dad and I would go and eat oysters. And one day we sat down and got a tray of like 36 oysters and I was eating away and my throat closed up.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** So I don't eat oysters any more. Um, but yeah, I liked Japanese food a lot.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did you interact at all with Japanese kids?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Nope. Not at all.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So your schooling was at an army school?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Well, it was the, um, DoD schools, you know.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** What are they called? DoD, D or something, the Department of Defense.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Those schools. Um, so —

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Have you been back to Japan as an adult?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** No. It's something I thought of doing, but I've never gone back.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.



**RIVKA OLLEY:** You know, I mean, it would be, I wouldn't even know where to go look for where I lived.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** I mean, it would just, I, I'm sure where we lived is gone, you know, so.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** You —

**RIVKA OLLEY:** But it was interested, as to right out my back window was a little hill and there was Japanese housing right there. So it wasn't like we were separated completely from the Japanese, but there were no kids. And if there were kids, we certainly weren't interacting with them. And down the hill in front of us was a huge house and German Bob lived in it.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Who is German Bob?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** A boy named Bob whose family was from Germany.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And, you know, he, they weren't in the army. What they were doing there after World War II, you know, Korea, I don't know. But, um, that's where German Bob was, because we also had Big Bob and Little Bob. Big Bob was the one who beat me up on my bike. That's how I got boxing lessons. And German Bob was down the hill. And we had a pretty bad earthquake one time and a tree fell on their house.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Hmm. Tell me about your boxing lessons.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Well, what happened was that Big Bob, my father took me and got a bicycle that now you say, my God, it was this huge, I mean they had to put multiple blocks on it, you know, for me to be able to pedal it. And, I mean it was just, it was an Amazon type thing. But it was like the latest thing and it was Japanese and it was this latest thing, you know. So anyway, my father wanted me to have it so I could grow into it. I still had it at Fort Slocum. I don't think I ever grew big enough for it.

Big Bob wanted to ride it and I said, no. So he literally pulled me off my bike and I started to try to fight him and he just held me out like this and pummeled my face. So when I got, my dad got home, he asked what happened. I said, Big Bob, da de, da de. Told him the whole story. He took me to the PX and bought boxing gloves and he taught me how to box so that I never was defeated again until I was 16. So from age 7 to 16, no one beat me up.

My father was a boxer at one point in his life, so he knew what he was doing. I learned, my brother, who he tried to teach was a hopeless cause, so.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** At Slocum there was the Army Information School. You mentioned that you saw some Asian officers there. Can you tell me something about that?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** It's interesting because, yeah. I remember when we talked about that the last time. And, um, Michael has that picture now. Did you send him the picture —

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** — or I sent him the picture?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** He sent me, he sent me two pictures.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** He sent you two pictures. Right. Because I mentioned to him about that and, um, you know, I don't remember faces.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** I mean, I just remember they were there. And, um, I just remember the adults talking about Viet Nam and that, you know, these people were associated with Viet Nam.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And I know that it wasn't that long after that my father was, they wanted to transfer him to Korea, something to do with training troops for Viet Nam.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** What year would this have been?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Well, my dad retired in '62, so maybe '60?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mmm. Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** '59, '60. Probably '60.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** What were people saying about Viet Nam?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Well, just that it was gonna be, you know, it was gonna, we were gonna get in their full.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** It was gonna be a big deal. It was gonna be another war.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Were you aware of where it was?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Somewhere over where Japan was.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And I'd been there.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** You know, but my dad definitely didn't want to go back to Korea. He'd been there. And my mom didn't want him to go because I was, you know, gonna be 16 going over there. And she figured she was having enough trouble keeping me away from the enlisted men anyway.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** So, she said, you know, I remember she said to him that, there'll be nobody for her to date there but enlisted men. You know, you can't do that. And my father said, he'd seen the mud. He didn't need to see it again.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** So that's how he retired.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Um, you didn't speak to any of these officers, foreign officers?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Mm-mm. Nope. Even, even if they were on the ferry with me I wouldn't speak with them.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. You mentioned earlier that you had, um, made friends or at least spoken with some of the foreign wives in the —

**RIVKA OLLEY:** In the trailers. Yeah.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** — in the trailer camp.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Yeah. Right. Yeah. And the trailer camp was like near the sea wall, not too far from the dock as I remember. When I was first there, I still had enough Japanese that I would go and talk to some of the Japanese wives. Um, and, you know, like I said before, I sort of at some point stopped doing that. But in the beginning I would go and talk with them a little bit that I could talk, you know. And, and I remembered that some of them were, they seemed young and cute and they were fun, you know. Where some of the other officers' wives were all like older, you know.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** They must have been somewhat isolated there.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Oh, they were. You know, they absolutely were. I mean, they had each other —

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** — and to begin with, most of them were enlisted and they were on the wrong side of the base. You know, and —

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did they speak English?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Broken, you know.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** It was one of things where I spoke a little Japanese, they spoke a little English and, you know, we managed to, you know, um, get along, but.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did, you went over on your own accord just to meet them and?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Oh, yeah. I didn't really go to meet them, but saw and so I started talking, you know, to them in the little Japanese I had, you know.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And they were sweet and, you know, they were kind to a kid who was trying to talk in their language.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** You know, if you think about it, here I was, what 9, 10, 11 years old and these were women coming from another country to this country and, you know, here was this scrawny, buck toothed little, you know, kid trying to talk to them in her limited Japanese.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** So I can't imagine what they were thinking, but, you know. At some point, I sort of don't remember them being there any more either. I don't know if, you know, as they got rid of the trailer or they just moved on and, and who moved in. But they were gone, you know.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** It's funny I hadn't thought about that until just now. The things that you know you, this is very interesting, this process. And doing it a second time, it's like more memories come back.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Wow.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** What do you remember about New Rochelle? What kind of town was it?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Okay. Um, New Rochelle. Um, that's interesting. Um, it seemed to me like a rich town. All I know, it wasn't only a rich town. But it always seemed like there was a lot of money people there. Uh, even Glen Island, which was really a park and anyone could go, it just seemed like it was a special place. And if you looked at the school, like Isaac Emmett Young, I mean, it had this gorgeous campus around it. It had the, you know, the school uniforms. It had this incredibly beautiful building. And yet we were on the side of town that wasn't the rich side. There was another junior high on the other side of town which was the, the more affluent. But it was, you know, um.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** The friends that you made in high school, junior high school and high school, were they all different ethnic groups?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Well, the way the town was divided, I was on the side of the town that primarily Italian and I think there were some Irish and more working class. And the other side, the other junior high, was more affluent and was a larger Jewish community over there. So that was more the monied side of town. And um, I think I told you last time, I wanted to, when I got to high school, to join one of the sororities and they wouldn't let me in because I wasn't Italian. And the Jews wouldn't let me in because I wasn't rich. I had no place to go.

But I only went to New Rochelle High for one year. And um, the friends that I had in, um, when I was in Isaac Emmett Young, I had some Jewish friends. And back then there were country clubs that didn't let Jews in, so the Jews had their own country club. And some of the girls would invite me to come to.

So here I would leave the island, which had its own beach, take the ferry, have their parents pick me up, drive me around, you know, just around to where, I mean here's the ferry dock and you can see, you know, right along here is where the beaches were that I was going to. I could spit to them practically, but you know, I'd have to go all the way around and, and to go to the Jewish beach club, you know,

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And that's where I learned to water ski, was actually through the kids that the parents had a little more money and you know.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And they were always very nice to me, but, um, I mean clearly I didn't have the resources they had. But I never felt poor.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** I think I told you that last time. I never felt like we didn't have stuff. And like I said, when I went back and looked at that kitchen that, you know, we had, and it wasn't as big as this, this kitchen, you know. I mean it was, if you ended the kitchen where that it, it was that big, you know. And yet, our refrigerator was in there, the stove was in there, the sink was in there and the table. You know? I mean, everything was in that little space and then there was just a little tiny pantry closet that held the food.

I don't know how my mother did it. I mean there wasn't a million cabi-, there were no cabinets like this. There were a couple of little shelves. That was it. How did people live? But I never felt like we didn't have stuff, you know. It always seemed like there was more than enough.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** When did you leave the island?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Um, I think it was July or August of '62.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And this was because your father had decided to retire.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Mm-hmm.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Now, what were his plans after that?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** He wanted to move to Florida and that's where we moved.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** So his plan was to move to Florida. And then when we got down there, he figured he'd look around for some work. And, um, he didn't do anything for awhile. He was just glad to be retired.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** How long had he been in the army?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Well, he'd been in for seven years, out for a period of time and then back in before World War II. That's my understanding. Um, and so total, 28 years.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Do you recall how much he was making when he retired?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Oh, it, that was adult business.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** It was never discussed in front of us. I never, you know, I know that my father would borrow against his life insurance policy from time to time to pay for things like my orthodontal work or things like that. And then he'd have to reimburse the, so he wouldn't lose the benefits of the life insurance policy. But I only knew that as an adult. My mother would say, well, this is how your father financed us through, you know, all that stuff.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Um, and I know that he had, um, because he was concerned that if he should die before my mother that he had an annuity for her. So when he was retiring, he took what, however you do the retirement, and I really don't know the details again because it wasn't kid business.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** So my mom never wanted for anything, you know. I mean, she had enough. My mom and dad, my dad would tell you my mom was extravagant, but in reality my mom was, you know, not extravagant. But, um, she was able to live and, and not spend all of what she got every month because he had planned it well and you know.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And then they had lived on his retirement very nicely. It was enough.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** So whatever he was making, whatever, you know, he, he was taken, his 28 years and his two wars, you know. He always felt the government gave him back, you know, for what he gave them.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did he talk much about the army after, afterwards?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Well, not that he wouldn't talk about it.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** You know, it was just not a big topic of conversation.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** He'd always go to the, the VFW and the, what's the other one?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** American Legion?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Yup. Yeah. He, he, I mean he enjoyed being around the other, you know, retired military.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Still would go to the, um, West Point. You know, to shop. When we were down in Florida he'd go to, was it Home?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Homestead?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Homestead.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Which is where I was diagnosed with anemia.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** So we'd go down there to the doctor's a couple times. So, I mean, and he's buried in a military section of a, a --

**ROBERT JACOBY:** In Florida?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** No. In, um, in upstate New York, not far from Mahopac. There's a, a large cemetery and there's a large section of it for military. And that's where he and my mom are buried.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. He chose that?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Mm-hmm. Yeah. And he chose it, he said, because he wanted a view of the mountains. He said, your mom got to have concrete all her life, I'm getting the mountains in death. So my dad was a wanderer. He settled down for my mom.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** You know, but.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So you left in '62. You didn't see the island again until?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** August 11th of this year.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Of 2007.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** My brother had sent me some emails, you know, along the way, once we had email, and a couple of letters and then talked to me a couple of times on the phone about stuff that, like when Con Edison wanted to take the island and different things. And he said, he, he spoke to me when there was the fires and stuff and he said, it's a tragedy.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Your brother lived locally?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** He lived in Yonkers.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And, um, well, he lived in the Bronx and then in Yonkers. And, um, he said that, you know, he would just say, it's a tragedy. It's just a tragedy what's happened to the island.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And, you know, it never really dawned on me when he said it was a tragedy until I saw it and he was right. It's a tragedy. You know, and I don't think he ever went back to the island himself.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** But you know, there would be pictures and stuff on the news and such. And, um, I know it made him sad.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** But I never saw that stuff. So Michael had sent some stuff before we went, but it didn't have meaning until I was there. And, um, it's just --

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Describe what you felt when you saw the island.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Well, just standing by the, in the parking lot with, you know, and looking over and you could, all you could see was the water tower and a forest. You know, and it was like, all those beautiful buildings and, you know, that view that you used to have of all those beautiful, strong, sturdy buildings that was the island, they were, you couldn't see them.

And, um, that's when I realized, oh my God, this is why they couldn't find the Roman ruins. No wonder the Aztec stuff was buried. If this happened in 40 years, imagine a hundred and fifty years from now or oh, how about a thousand years from now?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And, um, and then when we got on the island, uh, with, you know, it was kind of tricky getting there because they don't really want you to go. Of course, you know, we, we'd go over in a kayak, right. And we'd hide the kayak. When we were leaving the island, you know, two families, you know, the fathers and the kids had come over on a kayak. They'd leave them right on the beach and they're going for a hike on the island. And I'm like, Michael, I don't think we really had to be that concerned.

But it was, we put the kayak by the one wall that's left from the coal pile, which we used to play in because we weren't supposed to.



**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And just even seeing that that was gone, you know, which of course, even if it was a working base the coal pile would be gone. But just to see that's gone and the gas pump's gone and the, the building that, you know, you stayed in because it was freezing cold in the winter and you wanted to be warm next to the little tiny heater, you know, kind of thing. And, and it was all gone.

You know, the roads were covered, you know. Every time I could discover a piece of the road, I kept like, I don't remember the road being that narrow, but you know actually it probably was always that narrow. And we used to go behind the DDT trucks.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** What's that?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Did Michael tell you about DDT?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Oh, the DDT trucks?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Yeah. They used to come around to spray in the summer for the mosquitos. And the enlisted man, go away, go away. They would always be yelling at us. We'd ride our bikes behind it and breathe it in, you know. Or we'd be running behind it, breathing it in.

You know, we're probably all genetic mutants in some way. But, you know, even Michael remembers doing that and he was so little, you know. But it had this kind of sweet smell and we all loved it. And, you know, I mean they'd tell us to go away, but nobody, you know, the MPs never came and, and, you know, called us off or anything.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** So, and they were going three miles an hour, you know. I mean, you could be asleep and follow behind it. But we would, we would follow them around part of the island.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Hmm. Were mosquitos bad, do you remember?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** No. How could they be? They were always spraying DDT. There was no mosquitos. I never remember any mosquitos. But they must have been if they didn't do it, because otherwise I don't think they'd've been bothered. We did have, I mean, like, from what I understand, the guy who, the commanding officer, the last one there, was very frugal about stuff. You know, he'd buy the coal in the summer so it would cost less and stuff like that.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** He would send out notices saying, you know, hang your stuff out to dry, don't use a dryer. My mother didn't have one, it wasn't a problem. You know, um.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Who was the CO when you were there?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Oh, God, what was his name? Castagneto? Was that it?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Castagneto?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Yeah. Yeah.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did he know who you were?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** You know, yeah. I mean, he knew who I was. We weren't, you know, I mean, it wasn't like I talked to him a lot. He knew who I was if he saw me.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** I—

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Were you ever in Q1?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** I never was inside. I mean I was outside and I told you the story about my dog, the day that he, when he first came to the post and he said the dogs had to be on a leash all the time, they couldn't be running free. The dogs, the few dogs that were there were allowed to run free until he came. So we all immediately didn't like him because we had to put the dogs on a leash and stuff. And that's why you see Duke in all those pictures on a leash.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. So why was there a vet if there were so few dogs?

(END TAPE TWO. BEGIN TAPE THREE.)

**ROBERT JACOBY:** — at Fort Slocum?



**RIVKA OLLEY:** Yes. I mean, I first got interested in boys, period, when I was in 6th, 5th grade. Um, and there was a guy named Rudy in the class and I wanted to get to know Rudy. So that's how I came to play the flute, because Rudy played the saxophone. So I wanted to take up the saxophone so I'd be in band next to Rudy. But they'd had enough saxophone players, so I had my choice, flute or something else. I said flute. Um, Rudy never was interested, but I dated his friend Todd, dated, you know, like 6th graders date.

But eventually as I got really, you know, dated, um, there was a guy named Randy who lived in the building I lived in. His family did. Um, he was away at college and he came home for the summer. And the big dating was we, you know, went to the movies a few times on base and went for walks occasionally, went to the beach occasionally, which meant walking out our back door, you know.

And we would walk down, um, over here and sit on the rocks and, and make out, which meant, basically, we kissed. That was, that was the big deal.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** So that was the dating. Um, I—

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Was there a place on the island that was known for it, for like a Lovers Lane or something?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Not that I knew of.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** I think that probably everybody did kind of like what I did.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** You know, you go on the oh, by the sea wall.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** But others may have different stories. Um, you know, I think I told you last time that part of what happened was when I got to be a teenager and, because of everybody being Baptist and all and my being Jewish, they really weren't allowed to date me. And, um, you know.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And they told you that or you found out?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Yeah. And actually Keith actually told me that.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** You know, that, that he, he wasn't allowed to date me because I was Jewish. And then when he called me, when I moved to Florida and he was going to the University of Miami and he found out I moved there and he called me. And I said, well, he wanted to know if I wanted to go out and I said, I can't go out with you because I'm still Jewish and your father wouldn't be happy. And I told him that recently and he said he doesn't even remember that, you know, so.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** But you know, selective memory, so.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Were the, the servicemen on the island were only a, some of them were only a few years older than you.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Mm-hmm.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did you think about dating them or was that sort of verboten?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Well, it was sort of verboten, but nonetheless, it didn't stop any of us from thinking about dating them. I mean, Judy Farquhar actually did date one of the guys on the island, but then she went to St. Albans to have, she was sick and she went to St. Albans and actually met the man she's been married to ever since in the hospital, St. Albans. And he was in the Navy at the time.

And a couple other girls dated guys on the island, you know, enlisted men on the island. And, um, we all had a crush on Michael Santori, who was an MP. And who knows how old Michael Santori was.

Um, and then there was a guy named Sandy who was an MP. And he and I went to the movies a few times and, um, there was another guy. I don't remember his name. He was a couple years, he was too old. So he must have been like 21. Um, and my parents didn't know, but I went out with him a couple of times. I think I kissed them both. I mean, that was the big dating. But nothing that, you know, was ongoing.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** There was another guy whose name I can't remember.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Would they have been upset?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** My parents?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Yeah.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** You know, because it's a small post, you don't, you know, blah, blah. Reputation. That kind of stuff.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** The thing that got my parents the most upset was that I was having trouble in 10th grade learning Shakespeare. I did not understand that stuff at all. And we were reading *Romeo and Juliet* and, you know, and we had to read like three of Shakespeare's plays that year. And I was totally lost. So my father went to the information school and asked if there was someone who had majored in English would teach his daughter.

So whoever the guy was, I mean I can remember his face but not his name, and, um, he tutored me and I really got to understand it. And, um, he asked my parents' permission to take me to Greenwich Village. And so, we went down on the train and walked around, went to different book stores and art and you know and that. And it was really exciting and heady for, you know, a girl who was 15, not yet 16.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And, I mean, he's a college graduate and, you know, in the Army Information School. And I just thought he was like, oh, my God. You know? And he was cute and Jewish. I mean.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Ooh.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** He had every quality.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Was he an officer.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Uh, yeah. Yeah.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Huh.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Because they came in as officers if they came out of the, out of college, you know, and into the Army Information School.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** So he had, I mean, but he was way too old. My mother, you know, immediately was hysterical.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** But he, there was a book that was very popular back then and it was on the human race. And it had pictures of pregnant women and stuff like this. And he bought it for me. It was the most popular book of the time. My mother got hysterical when she saw it and threw it away. So, of course, years later I had to buy it for myself. But she got hysterical. She didn't want him to have any more contact with me and stuff. So of course, then I was determined to have contact.

And I remember, even when we moved to Florida, and I found out where he, he had been stationed next, which was in Georgia, I think. Anyway, I was friends with a girl who lived on the other side of town, so we arranged to, I wrote to him and gave her address, thinking that the letter he would write back would go there and she would just give it to me at school.

Well, duh. Okay. When you're 16 you think this is gonna work. It didn't work. Her parents got the letter in the mail and said, why is this guy writing to her here. So they called my parents and said, we've got a letter from this guy. Well, that was not a good time. So, um.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** How'd the Shakespeare go?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Shakespeare was great. I learned a lot.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Yeah. I also learned to be more sneaky. So I never, and I don't even remember his name now. But I never did ever, you know, I mean I lost track of him after that. My father basically called the commanding officer there and said, you tell him not to be in touch with my daughter. Of course, that was, you know. I actually did, I remember I did find out how to get a call to him. I saved up all my pennies and called him and he told me that, I can't talk to you, you know. Your dad, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. So of course I hated my father for that.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** He knew better.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** So, um.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Well, this brings up the topic of how officers and enlisted got along or what the, what were the fault lines there. What were they supposed to do or not do?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Well, I think last time we talked about the friend that I had had a friend who lived, I think, in one of these houses.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** The NCO daughter?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Yeah. Briefly. And, um, I remember that, um, at first my, my mom didn't, you know, she didn't care because my father had come up through the ranks.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** But there were differences and I was encouraged not to continue the relationship. It would almost be like, and I hate to say this, and I don't want this quoted, but, it was almost like, that's white trailer trash and you don't go over there, you know.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And we just, so I just stopped playing with her.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** You know, um —

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Means you were —

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And she was different. I remember she was, you know, her standards and her, it didn't fit with "us".

**ROBERT JACOBY:** With Officers' Row?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** It didn't, yeah. It just didn't fit. It was different. Her, her, you know, um, her way of thinking and how her family lived was different. Um, but on the other hand, my parents were never one to say that anybody wasn't okay. So it was like this kind of weird standard thing.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And yet, the army, as you know, is so social. It's like soc-, um, what do you call it? Caste almost, you know, system. You've got your officers and the different ranks, and you know, how big your house is is where, you know, based on your rank. And, and, and not just how many kids are in the family, but your rank. And, um, but it never felt uncomfortable growing up until there was that, you know.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And there was a difference. I remember going to her house and, you know, the, the, the decorations weren't as nice and the, the, um, just the way they were, it just wasn't the same, you know.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. Do you remember where they were from?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Haven't a clue.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm. Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** No. Don't remember. I can't tell you her name or anything except that she and I got along well on the ferry and so we started to play together. But it was, it was literally as if this was two different worlds.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** You know, it was the other side of the world.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm. Who did your parents socialize with?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Um, my mom wasn't a big social person. She really wasn't. She kind of kept to herself a lot.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Um, if they did, I mean, my mom didn't even really, I mean, once a year my mom went out to the officers' club with my dad where, you know, it was really like, you know, a big night out.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** That was New Years. Other than that, I mean, occasionally she'd go and have a bite to eat with him, you know. And if somebody was around they, you know, might have eaten with them. But it wasn't, people didn't have a big social life that I remembered, you know.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** You mean families getting together or?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Yeah. I mean, there wasn't --

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Cocktail parties at night with the officers?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** No. I mean the guys went to the officers' club, had their drinks and then went home and stayed in with their families for the night.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And your dad did that?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Every night.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Every night?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Yeah. Every night. On the way home he'd walk past the officers' club, go in, have a couple of beers and then come home.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** You know, that was, that was the routine. Um, and I remember, even in, you know, going to other homes after dinner, you know in the summer when the sun was still up, and the fathers always seemed to be there. And I don't remember there being a lot, you know, I'm sure people did socialize more, but my parents were not big social animals.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And, um, so here I am, I'm like Miss Social. Um, they just didn't. I mean, occasionally, they might do something with someone. But it seemed like mom was always there. She was always around, you know.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Do you think they were happy at Fort Slocum?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Yeah. I think they were as happy as they'd be anyplace.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Anyplace.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** I mean, you know.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** It was just another post?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** It was, well, I mean, my mom liked the post, but it was another army post, you know.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And, um, you know, if you got transferred we would have been at another post. If we got transferred, we would have been at another post.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Um, I mean she certainly liked it because it was close to her family. She liked the fact that occasionally her family would come to visit, which wasn't very often, but they could come. And I think she felt safe. And it was beautiful. You know, it really, I mean I think she appreciated that and that everything was right there, you know. I mean, literally, she could tell me to go out back and get apples for apple pie.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** If she wanted to see if I was down at the beach, she could go look out her bedroom window or the bathroom window and see that we were there, you know.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** If you closed your eyes, could you smell the ocean and the sound?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Oh, ab-, are you kidding? You could hear it. And I think I told you last time, that when Michael and I went, um, back and we went off to the end, we walked all the way around and all the way over to the NCO beach. And well, we went like through here, no. How did we do this? Okay. I know what we did. We went down through here and over and then we walked back this way and then this way back.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** You're pointing at a photo --

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Right.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** — that’s showing the directions.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Yeah. So this is the, this is what we did. And then we went through where the N, the theater had been and the NCO, the enlisted men barracks.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And then down at the beach. And when I went in the water I remembered that water. And there’s never been water, and I’ve been, you know, I’m a scuba diver and I’ve been to the Caribbean. I’ve been to St. Thomas and Barbados and Puerto Rico and, um, Bon Air and Grand Cayman and Turks and Caicos and, you, everywhere in Florida. I have never, there’s something special about that water.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And I cried the last time when I talked about it. And I told Michael that, you know, and it was, there’s a certain smell to it and a certain feel to it. And it’s like the best water in the world. And, but, I fell asleep to it every night.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** You know, hitting the sea wall or hitting, you know, when it was lower tide. You could just always hear it. It was always present. And, and I still fall asleep really well to that sound, you know. It was, it was always, always there. Well, of course, you couldn’t get away from it. It was everywhere. And you know I fished. So I was that, that picture of me with my first fish I was that big.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did your mom cook the fish that you would bring home?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** If I brought home flounder.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** She would cook the flounder, yeah. Never got sea bass back then. Now I eat sea bass a lot, you know, if I catch it. But flounder, she loved flounder.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Do you still fish?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Um, well, when I go scuba diving, I spearfish. Not a spear gun, but a spear. I spearfish.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So you just hold a spear in your hand like an arrow?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** No, it’s um, the spear is probably as tall as me.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And then, um, at the top of it, you’ve got, you know, like, um, the, um, tubing you would have in an operating room that has, you know, stretch to it?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And so that’s on the top

of the spear and you put it around your wrist and then you pull it taut so you’re holding onto the, near the bottom of the spear. And when you see the fish you let it go so it “pew” —

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Oh, well.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** — and it hit a fish if you’re lucky.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And you can, and, and —

**RIVKA OLLEY:** If you miss, the fish keeps going and you know. But that, that’s how you, that’s how you do it. So it’s a little more than, you know, if you have a spear gun it’s easy. It’s like shooting a bullet, you know. But this is a little bit more of a challenge because you have to be able to, you know, hold it, get the right angle. You know, it’s more like hunting, you know, where you —

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Can you get more than one on the spear?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Not usually.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** One after another?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Well, no. What you do is you put them in a catch bag.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Oh.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** So once you’ve caught it, you have to literally, um, get them down into the sand.



**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And they you get the bag underneath and you scoop them into there and then you pull the spear back out of them, close up the bag and go for the next one. The only time I've seen two at a time was a friend of mine who saw a, um, a fluke, which is like a flounder but their mouths are a little different and the eyes are set a little bit differently. But they basic, they taste the same, bigger though usually.

Anyway, he saw this fluke and when he speared it, the spear went through that fluke and into a bigger fluke that was underneath. So he had now this huge fluke and that. And I was with him and I saw the two of them and he was struggling because they're very strong. So I went up above him and pushed down on the spear further so that we could keep them from getting away. And they were, one of them was just huge, you know.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And you brought it back to eat?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Oh, of course.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Don't leave it at the bottom. You know, it was hard stuffing the thing, it was so big, into the bag.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did you have boats at Slocum?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Um, I, I think I told you that —

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Like rowboats or canoes or something?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** No. No, there was no —

**ROBERT JACOBY:** I mean for, to go out and just play.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** No.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** No?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** No. Some —

**ROBERT JACOBY:** I know you had ferries and a variety of different things.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Yeah. Right. Yeah. Well, yeah, ferries but they weren't for play. Um, I know someone had a boat because my brother used to go out on a boat. So one of the officers had a boat and had either a son or a nephew that my brother would go out with. And I know they had like a little sailboat. And that's how my brother fell in love with sailboats and (inaudible). Um, because of that.

But I never went. I wasn't interested in being with my brother. I wasn't interested in being with his friend. Who could care? You know? And, um, I think I told you the story about my brother had built a raft with one of his friends. And, you know, my, my thing was to make they didn't die on the raft. And of course, then I had to go get the MPs to go get them and the whole story.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Because they dropped a little paddle they had. Um, but, you know, it's odd when you think about it. Here you are on an island and nobody used the island as a place to keep boats. I don't know if there was rules that you couldn't. Um, but nobody had rowboats. Nobody, you know, that I ever saw or, you know, saw anyone use. Kayaks, no one used kayaks back then, you know.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** I don't think we even knew the word.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Probably not.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** So, um, no. There were no boats that I remember at all.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** I just want to ask you one —

**RIVKA OLLEY:** There must have been a rowboat for the, the beaches. You know, in case you drowning they could throw the rowboat in.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** I think there were those, but.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Who was Pineapple?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Pineapple was the, um, lifeguard at the officers' beach for several years. And he was from Hawaii and Hawaiian decent. And, um, so we called him Pineapple. He said his name was too hard to say, just call him Pineapple. So we called him Pineapple.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Yeah. Yeah. And I told you last time, he was the one that would get food from the enlisted men's mess, the stuff that was left over, and bring it over for my dog. And I said, great. We taught the dog to eat dog food, now you're giving him, you know.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Sometimes we'd siphon some of it off for ourselves. If it was not stuff that was thrown out, but rather stuff that wasn't eaten, I'd eat it.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** It was good stuff.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** We've had two episodes of thinking about Slocum and remembering things. Is there something else that you'd like to mention? Some final thoughts about your--

**RIVKA OLLEY:** There's a million. There's a million thoughts. I, we started to say, I think we had changed the tape before, that, um, this whole process has really, um, I mean, it's caused a lot of havoc in some ways with my emotions because there was so much that was so neat and wonderful. There was stuff that was painful, because of being Jewish and, you know, not always being accepted.

And I think I told you also last time about how sometimes the kids would pick on my brother because he was this fat little Jewish kid and they put his bike up in the tree and I'd have to go beat them up for him and stuff. Which is what you did. I mean, you know.

And we didn't grow up to be, you know, axe murderers and stuff. I mean we, it was just what you did.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** But your boxing lessons helped you?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Helped. Oh, yes. Tremendously. Um, but you know, it was like, you were like family. You know, you didn't get along and you did get along and you know, it was just, um. Everybody was, every, you know, knew everybody. You weren't -- Eddie stop. You weren't friendly with everybody all the time, but it was a big family. And it was a beautiful place.

I told you last time, I mean, you, you, I knew as a kid this was a special place and that these buildings were special. And, you know, I mean, I learned, I grew up there. I went from being a little buck toothed skinny kid to being a cute young woman. And, um, I learned how to bake pies and cook, you know, make cake. And um, I mean it just, play touch football and, um, I learned how to ice skate and play tennis and you know, just how to really fish.

And then, you know, to go back this year and to see all of that that was so important to all of us in our lives just because it was our lives. I think if my father was alive, he'd, he'd be just absolutely in tears to see that. And, um, you know, again, this also coincided, of course, with so many things that happened this year, my getting to testify in Congress, all kinds of things that I wish my dad was here to see.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** And this would be such a tragedy to him. You know, we always remembered Fort Slocum with, you know, um, positive thoughts and what a pretty place it had been.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** As many places as you did grow up in, was Slocum the one place or, most important place that you think of as home, home town?

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Oh, it's absolutely home.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** Yeah. Partly because it was, I was there longer than any place else that I lived. Um, but it was a small hometown community. You went off island to go to school, but everything else was there. I mean I literally didn't have to leave the island.

If I wanted to go to the movies, I could. If I wanted to go bowling, I could. If I wanted to play tennis, I could. If I wanted to go ride my bike, I could do it. If I wanted kids to play with, I just had to walk out the door. If I needed a library, I had the Army Information School library to go to. You name it, it was there. You know, if I was really sick, I'm sure I could have seen the doctor, you know. It was all there. And then all the things we did that we shouldn't do. I mean it was all there, you know. So you didn't have to go anywhere, you know.



**ROBERT JACOBY:** Well, I want to thank you very much, Rivka Olley, for participating in the Fort Slocum oral history project.

**RIVKA OLLEY:** It's my pleasure. As I told you, it's just, it's been an interesting adventure for me.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Thank you.

(END RECORDING.)

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Patsy Hamilton, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and accurate transcript of the taped proceedings as transcribed by me on the date hereinbefore set forth, to the best of my ability.

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Dated: 11/15/07 Patsy Hamilton - Agency Transcriptionist



**ROBERT JACOBY:** My name is Robert Jacoby, representing Tetra Tech EC and I am speaking today with Ken Rought at his home in Bear, Delaware on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007. This interview is part of a program sponsored by the United States Army Corps of Engineers and the New Rochelle Public Library to collect oral histories about the experiences and memories of people who were associated with the former US Army post, Fort Slocum, located on Davids Island in New Rochelle, New York.

Good morning, Ken. Would you please describe for us what your association with Fort Slocum is.

**KEN ROUGHT:** Sure, I'd be happy to. I originally enlisted in the army on 8 September 1939, Binghamton, New York, and was in, for assignment overseas to the Philippines. And I left Binghamton on the 9<sup>th</sup> of September on the Erie Railroad and arrived in New Rochelle that day, finding my way across New York. And that's the longest trip I ever made in my life by myself.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Had you ever left Binghamton before?

**KEN ROUGHT:** Oh, yeah. I was in the CCC before that, but that was close by. It was not more than 50 miles or so away. So I arrived at Fort Slocum and I was very surprised, to say the least, that Fort Slocum was on an island. I wasn't aware of that.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Was that the first time you'd ever heard of Fort Slocum?

**KEN ROUGHT:** Oh, yes. Yes. I arrived at the MP shack at the Neptune dock and was told that I would board the ferry, which I think was leaving at 8 o'clock that morning. And so I sat and finally boarded the ferry, the Colonel Barnett was the name of the ferry at the time. And I was, I, I was picked up by a casual soldier on the other side and escorted to the casual detachment.

And I presented my orders and they immediately, or very soon after my arrival, made me my dog tags, which were in those days a little, two circular disks which were hand punched with your serial number. In my case it was 6976945. And with name and I believe that's all that was on there. The serial number was on the one side and these two disks were separated with a piece of tape that could be removed in case of being wounded in action, so forth, they told me. I, I still to this day have my disks, my, my dog tags.

And then shortly thereafter we started to get shots. I mean shots. I got very sick and laid down and, along with many others, in bunk beds. And we were taken out and given something to eat later on in the day. And that's all I recall, basically the first day.

And the next day we were taken over to a barber shop, got haircuts. And then we were marched to the supply building, QM supply building, which supplied us with uniforms and, which were all thrown into a duffel bag. The uniform in those days consisted of a large garrison cap, a service cap for going off post or something more formal, and then what they called an overseas cap at that time. We were also issued shoes, two pairs of shoes, and a pair of leggings which date back to World War I.

We then were marched to a, a tailor shop where we had, were fitted to the uniforms. A few days later we picked up the uniforms and began to feel more like soldiers.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** How old were you when you arrived?

**KEN ROUGHT:** Eighteen. Let's see 1930, yes. I was eighteen and I didn't become nineteen until November.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And this was in 1939?

**KEN ROUGHT:** 1939.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did you have any idea, had war broken out in Europe at that point?

**KEN ROUGHT:** Oh, yes. It had started just about the time I enlisted. I remember hearing or possibly even reading about Hitler's occupation of Poland and Czechoslovakia and I'd heard some stories about the Japanese doing things on the, in the Far East.

Of course, in those days, that was far removed from any reality as far as we were concerned. Because, after all, we were just teenagers and we were going into a new, exciting life.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Exactly. Did you have any idea that this might lead to war for us?

**KEN ROUGHT:** Oh, no. No. No, no, no. I had no idea at that point. But I'd, Fort Slocum at that time was an overseas staging area, I'd learned. And it supplied replacements to Panama, Hawaii and the Philippines. I'd originally been scheduled for the Phil- , for Panama. But when the doctor examined me at the recruiting station I found out I had flat feet.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Hmm.

**KEN ROUGHT:** Well, the assignment in Panama was gonna be with the infantry. And infantry folks don't walk on flat feet. So I was turned down. But the sergeant immediately said, well, hey, I got another, have another assignment in the Philippines in the field artillery and your flat feet will not have any bearing on your assignment there.

Well, I had no idea where the Philippines were anymore than I knew really where Panama was. But I thought, that's great. I won't be walking around too much and I'll be firing big guns and, and I'll be going to a new, new, new place in the world.

Well I started with some basic training there at Fort Slocum. We learned of, we went up to Camp Smith up on the Hudson River and fired the rifle, an old, old 3 Springfield, I think it was. And come back with sore shoulders and deafening ears and --

**ROBERT JACOBY:** How long did this last?

**KEN ROUGHT:** The basic training portions?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**KEN ROUGHT:** I don't know, months. It went on and off.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**KEN ROUGHT:** We would be given policing duties or KP duties, something to keep us busy. And in between we learned to march, we learned to salute and we learned to recognize officers and we learned the ranks and we learned to salute and when to be quiet. And we were given the reading of the articles of war, which told us of all the bad things that's gonna happen to us if we don't behave ourselves.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Were you testing on that?

**KEN ROUGHT:** No. It was just, it was just a reading that took place maybe an hour. And everybody had to undergo that. In fact, I think they required the reading about every year after that for some time.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Why don't you describe what drilling was like.

**KEN ROUGHT:** Well, drilling, a corporal was in charge. He was our little god at the time and --

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Do you remember his name?

**KEN ROUGHT:** No, I don't remember. But he would have us out there on the drill field marching, learning about the left foot from the right foot and learning to stay in cadence and, and learning to run with the rifle, with the rifle in hand and, and also some basic drills with the rifle and learning how to present arms and parade rest and so forth, for participating in the parades.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Was it tough, was it a tough?

**KEN ROUGHT:** No. It wasn't extremely tough. It was, well, for young kids, I guess, it was out of the ordinary and it was, they did run up pretty ragged for awhile. But in between, they tried to keep us all busy. And they would assign us, like I said, KP duty and so forth. I got picked, I don't know how, to work in the Quartermaster Detachment Utilities Office, which was the office was located down near the dock.

And I reported there and Sergeant Hank Lewis was my, was in charge of that office. And I learned that they, you received phone calls, mostly from the officers' wives when they had problems with their plumbing or electrical or whatever. They would call you and you would write up a work order and get it over to the proper shop that would handle that.

These work orders had to be prepared on a typewriter, which I'd never seen in my life before then. But I learned to hunt and peck type with the typewriter, preparing these work orders. And they were then signed by Sergeant Lewis and I learned to perform, to listen to, or take phone calls and to listen to the complaints and learn to be phone attentive. And everyone seemed to think I was doing a good job.

Somehow, this caught the attention of Sergeant Pinkerton, who was the first sergeant of the QM Detachment at Fort Slocum, Sergeant John Pinkerton. He, he, one day, in those days, on Wednesday we had the afternoon off. Before the war, Wednesday afternoon was a half a day off. You could do whatever you wanted. I chose to go, because I had nothing else to do, I chose to go back to the office and learn to use the typewriter.

Well, Sergeant Pinkerton noticed that, because he had an office also there in the QM, in the Quartermaster's office. And he noticed this and he brought me a booklet one day and he said, here, this will teach you how to touch type. And so I began to learn touch typing. Well, needless to say, I was very surprised that I was able to touch type after awhile. In fact, later in the military career, I learned I was doing 40 to 50 words a minute in typing. And I use touch typing to this day on my computer.

So, anyway, John, John Pinkerton was such a nice fellow. And one day he said, Ken, he said, why don't you, would you consider transferring to the QM Detachment? And I loved Fort Slocum. It was a beautiful post with green trees and everything was kept up so nicely. And the people were very, I'd never had really close associations up to then. And everyone I worked with was so friendly and helpful and I said, yes, sure. That'd be a great idea. I wouldn't mind transferring to Fort Slocum.

So we submitted an application, which I learned went to Governors Island in New York for approval. And this was about, well, let's see, it probably would have been in August, September, I suppose of that year. And in November an approval came through for me to transfer to Fort Slocum. But almost simultaneously orders came through transferring me to the Philippines.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm.

**KEN ROUGHT:** Which were rescinded in view of the fact that I'd been approved for transfer to Fort Slocum. And thank God for that, because later on I would have been in the Philippines when the Japanese occupied it. So I'm very grateful for John for the assistance.

But I then left the Utilities Office and John appointed me, made me, whatever, I became the company clerk. And I worked up in the post headquarters as the company clerk and I would prepare the morning report, which indicated who was present and who was sick and who was on leave and, and new arrivals and that sort of thing.

And I worked with John and the, I don't think I worked with the company commander at that time who was Captain Sam Silver. My company commander was Captain Sam Silver. He, he was also the commissary officer and his office was in the commissary. He, the only time, I think I only talked to him a couple times really. Anyway, I was a company clerk for awhile and then John Pinkerton, the First Sergeant, had me take over as supply sergeant.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So you were promoted at that point?

**KEN ROUGHT:** No, I was still a private. I was a private specialist 5th class and then I think it, specialist 4th class, and then they started to change the ranks gradually after that. But up at that point I was still a private. And I became a PFC, Private First Class, sometime after the first of the year I guess it was.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Where were your barracks?

**KEN ROUGHT:** My barracks was in the building next to the post exchange. And I see from the map you've shown me that would be Building 69, the wing facing the post exchange. And we occupied that entire wing, the QM Detachment occupied that entire wing.

It was a beautiful barracks. We had all single bunks and it was nicely polished and had a nice, big latrine and it was a large day room where we would read. And there was a pool table in there. We could play pool at night. And the library occupied the other wing, facing the parade ground.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did you make use of the library?

**KEN ROUGHT:** I don't recall making use of the library, no. We, after, when we, when I arrived finally at the QM Detachment for permanent duty, we were issued a chit book, which was a \$5 chit book which allowed you to buy items at the PX because we had not received any pay yet, of course.

Then I learned that that five bucks would come out of your pay at \$21 a month at that time, minus \$1.25 which went for your laundry and .25 I believe it was for the old soldiers' home in Washington. So \$1.50 a month was taken out of our pay of \$21. But I thought, heck, this is not bad, \$21 a month, what we called, \$21 a month, \$21 a day once a month. That's how we referred to it.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And of course, you got all your meals.

**KEN ROUGHT:** Oh, yes. At the mess hall. We occupied a little bit different area from the casual detachments coming in. And food was good and —

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Describe the chow.

**KEN ROUGHT:** Well, I don't really remember too much about it except it was good. And I remember on Saturdays the, Saturday night the cooks would be off. They'd always put out cold cuts and there were canned sardines and all kinds of stuff like that. And that was your evening meal. You just made, you put it together yourself.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And could you eat as much as you liked?

**KEN ROUGHT:** Oh, yes.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** As long as you finished.

**KEN ROUGHT:** Yeah. Absolutely. That was the important thing. Take what you want, but you finish what you take.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**KEN ROUGHT:** They didn't want to see, in fact, they used to have a man, I think, at the trash barrel to make sure we weren't throwing out a lot of food. I seem to recall that. But I became a supply sergeant in, sometime after the first of the year. But an important thing happened to me at the first part of the year in about January, February, March. It could have been in that period.

I was in the day room one night and I, the phone rang and there was only a few of us in there. And no one picked up the phone and I, I answered the phone myself. And there was a young lady on there and she wanted to speak to someone who wasn't there. So I was kidding around with her a little bit on the phone, which I'd never done before because I really didn't have a girlfriend much before then. And we chitchatted and it eventually led to us meeting at the YMCA on post a week or so later.

Her name was Normal Thaule, T-h-a-u-l-e. She lived in New Rochelle with her parents. And at that point, we began to see each other on a regular basis. And, as being a member of the permanent party now, I had a permanent pass, so I could leave post any time I was off duty.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**KEN ROUGHT:** So that was very, very handy. And so I and Norma got together very frequently and we would take the trolley. At that time there was a trolley. It was five cent fare and we would take the trolley for a ride down to 240 First Street in the Bronx and we could pick up a subway for five cents. And we'd go into the city and walk, just walk around.

We had no money to speak of, so that was our, that was our entertainment. And sometimes we'd walk the streets of New Rochelle and around the New Rochelle college. And we always made it a point then on my payday, which was the last day of the month, we always made a point of going to Woolworth's and having a banana split. That was big time in our life at that time.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Do you remember how much that cost?

**KEN ROUGHT:** Oh, I think it was a quarter or something like that. It wasn't much with the little money I had. I can remember buying a beer for a five cents. So it, times were, and five cent fares on the bus, so on. Times were cheap at that time.

Anyway, I continued to work as a supply sergeant and we, Captain Silver got transferred off somewhere. And Captain Thomas Martin took over as the commander of the QM Detachment. He had formerly worked, I understand, in a brass factory up in Connecticut and had been called to active duty as, because this is the time when the draft began and the so-called draftees came in in droves in Slocum. We became crowded with all these new faces.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Where were they kept?

**KEN ROUGHT:** They were the casual barracks down at the other end, away, down toward the hospital area. That's all I remember down there. They occupied all that. They were in double, double-decker bunks and that sort of thing. So they crowded them in.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did you get to know any of them or?

**KEN ROUGHT:** No, no. I was so busy with my own life with the QM Detachment.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm

**KEN ROUGHT:** And occasionally going to headquarters and for tasks up there. No, I didn't know any of them. I do recall that during that same period, I think it was 19-, let's see, 1939, 1940, 1941. I don't remember. It was in that period when a contingent of Polish and British troops came through there.

I understand that they had evacuated the Far East, came across country and were stationed, just for a couple days or so at our place and were on their way to England. It was a very interesting time. I didn't get to, of course, you didn't get to meet any of them. They were kept completely separate from us.

In 194-, let's see, in 1941, Norma and I, Norma and I got married in September of 19-, no. It was 1940 we got married. September, September 8th, 1940.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Where?

**KEN ROUGHT:** At the Episcopal church in New Rochelle. We, Norma was still living with her parents and we lived with them at that point. But then somewhere along the line, we heard about a job with Colonel McCord. He wanted, he wanted a maid or someone to help do kitchen work and so forth. And Norma said she would do that. So she got the job working with Colonel McCord and I, we were given a bedroom up on the third floor of his quarters.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Was McCord the post commander?

**KEN ROUGHT:** No. He was the, jeez, I don't know. What is, what is? No. Colonel Lentz, L-e-n-t-z, was the post commander. Anyway, Colonel McCord left in the middle of '42.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** You were still in the quartermaster service?

**KEN ROUGHT:** Yes. Yes. And we lived there and unfortunately Norma had a terrible accident. Her apron caught on fire and burned her, severely burned her back. Colonel McCord rushed in and put the flames out and Norma was in the post hospital. And she remained there for several weeks. I think this was in 1942 when this happened, in February of 1942. And she was there for several weeks and then she went to live with her parents shortly, for a short while, until we found some place to live outside in New Rochelle.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Let me just ask you to point on the map, what building did you and your wife live in above?

**KEN ROUGHT:** I don't know if I can point it out exactly. It would have been, I don't know. Maybe, possibly the one, 9 on here. It was 8 or 9 on this map.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So somewhere along Officers' Row.

**KEN ROUGHT:** It was in Officers' Row, yes.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**KEN ROUGHT:** It was in Officers' Row.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And describe your quarters.

**KEN ROUGHT:** With Colonel McCord?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yes.

**KEN ROUGHT:** It was just a bed and a little bathroom up there with a slanted ceiling because we were in the third floor under the roof. But it was convenient. We came up and down the back stairwell. Of course, you didn't enter an officer's quarters by the front.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**KEN ROUGHT:** But I remember Colonel McCord had a dog, Spike. And Spike was a very friendly dog. He'd be up there to see us and we played around with him. We enjoyed it. That was part of our, just a part of being, sort of part of their family more or less, you might say. Because, when they went away, which they might do for a day or two, we would take care of Spike.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Now, where would you eat when you were married?

**KEN ROUGHT:** Norma, Norma ate there, but I would, I would eat at the mess hall.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Norma ate in your quarters?

**KEN ROUGHT:** In his quarters, yeah.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Oh, okay.

**KEN ROUGHT:** Yeah. She ate in the kitchen there. That was part of her wages, her salary.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**KEN ROUGHT:** I don't know what she, I don't remember, I have no idea how much she was getting back in those days. It wouldn't have, it wouldn't have been an awful amount. Maybe \$15 a week or something like that. I don't know. But it was a little bit that would help because we were still, I was still a poor little soldier yet.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** What did you do with your pay? Did you have a bank account or did you just keep it in cash?

**KEN ROUGHT:** We lived hand to mouth.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**KEN ROUGHT:** That's all we did. Buy a little bit at the commissary.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**KEN ROUGHT:** Because that was the, the less expensive place to buy your food. And we didn't eat all that great amount. Even when, after Norma's accident and we moved off post, we would buy little things at the commissary. And we sometime would buy some things for Norma's family, too, because we were living with them at that time, for part of the time. So, and that was the, that was the events up to then.

And then the, in January of '42, '42, no '43. January of '43. We were getting, of course, people were leaving for overseas and there was all kinds of things going on. The battle, I think, was going on in Africa at that time. And they were looking for warrant officers. And I made application along with the First Sergeant at the time. John Pinkerton had been promoted to, I think, Captain and he had left. Sergeant Ralph Gurrowitz took over as the First Sergeant. And at the time, the old supply sergeant was John Bulette.

Well, they, we all three made application for Warrant Officer. And we appeared before a board and I did receive a letter indicating I had been approved.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Describe what a warrant officer is.

**KEN ROUGHT:** A warrant office is a step above a non-commissioned grade and just below commissioned grade. Although, at that time we were receiving, as a warrant officer junior grade, you were receiving, I believe, the same wages as second lieutenant.

Prior to this happening, I have to go back just a step here. John, Sergeant Gurrowitz and John Bulette received their promotion to warrant officer and they took off for distant places. I kept touch with them over the years, but they, they were gone, so I became the supply sergeant. And then the First Sergeant position opened up and I became the First Sergeant.



And all this happened in the space of approximately one month. I was, quickly went, jumped from grade to grade to grade. And all of a sudden Sergeant Gurrowitz left and I was recommended for promotion to First Sergeant. Now that was unheard of. I was a Buck Sergeant three-striper and I would be passing over the grades of Staff Sergeant and Tech Sergeant to First Sergeant. That was tremendous promotion.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** You must have been, that must have felt pretty good to you.

**KEN ROUGHT:** Oh, it did. I, and I have the copy of my original orders yet and a copy of which Michael Cavanaugh has, too. I've sent them to him because he asked me for it. And I was promoted from Sergeant to First Sergeant.

Well, two weeks later or thereabouts I received a call and told to report to the Brooklyn army base to be interviewed by Colonel Hugh Doyle for possible promotion to warrant officer. So I quickly made a trip to Colonel Doyle's office in the Brooklyn army base.

And I was interviewed by him, returned to Fort Slocum, and the next day I received an indication that I was gonna be promoted to warrant officer, if I would accept it. I had to send a Western Union telegram to Brooklyn army base indicating that I did, in fact, accept the promotion to warrant officer, which I gladly did.

And the 23rd of August, 1943, I was promoted to warrant officer, junior grade. But because of the promotion, you could no longer remain on post. You had to go, be transferred elsewhere.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So it was a little bittersweet because you enjoyed being at Fort Slocum.

**KEN ROUGHT:** Absolutely. I hated to leave, but there was no way that I could remain there because then you became, you were friendly with all the enlisted personnel on post. And so I was transferred to the Adjutant General's office, Brooklyn army base, under the command of Hugh Doyle, Hugh Doyle. It's ironic.

And I was quickly, had to apply for a classified clearance for work with classified documents which came through there.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** You were still living in New Rochelle?

**KEN ROUGHT:** We were still living in New Rochelle, but we quickly made, we found quarters in Brooklyn.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**KEN ROUGHT:** At McCabe Place in Brooklyn, which was about a 20 minute or so, maybe 30 minute walk from the Brooklyn army base. And we set up housekeeping in an apartment house there.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And how long did you stay at that post?

**KEN ROUGHT:** I was there, Colonel Doyle, who selected us, had, had the, there was, absolutely no one left him during the war. I understand he had some in with the Adjutant General in Washington. So I stayed there until September 1945. In the, I was in the Adjutant General's office. I first worked in the classified mail section. And then I worked as a, I worked for the assistant —

(END SIDE A. BEGIN SIDE B.)

**KEN ROUGHT:** I was working at the Adjutant General's office and I proofread documents and so forth until I had five, five or six typists that worked for me. And I worked with, for Colonel Doyle up until September 1945.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Do you remember what your pay grade was at that point?

**KEN ROUGHT:** Oh, I have no idea how much I was getting. I do have my pay slips around someplace from way back.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** But presumably it was more than the 21 you were making?

**KEN ROUGHT:** Oh, yes, yes. I was making probably a hundred and some odd dollars a month then.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So that was fairly good pay.

**KEN ROUGHT:** Excellent. Excellent. Yeah.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** For yeah.

**KEN ROUGHT:** I think our rent at that time was, as I recall, somewhere around \$40, \$45 a month for an apartment. One, I think it was a one-bedroom apartment we had there.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** I want to go back and ask you a question. When you were working, first working for the quartermaster, is it the quartermaster service, the quartermaster —

**KEN ROUGHT:** The Quartermaster Detachment.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Detachment. You had some contact with officers. Did, describe the relationships between enlisted and officers.

**KEN ROUGHT:** Well, yeah. Well, there was no relationship. You met an officer; you saluted. If he called for you, you went into the office and reported. And he would tell you what he wanted. You'd say, yes, sir and away you'd go. That brings to mind an event that took place about '42 or thereabouts.

We had a small ferry called the Q11, which had, I understand had been a, used as a sub chaser during World War I. And the Q11 crew were assigned to the quartermaster detachment. We had very little relationship with them because their hours were entirely different from ours. But in any case, they were ferrying the Q11 to the, down to New York for repairs and unfortunately they ran between a tug and the, the tug boat and tug and there was a huge rope or wire connecting the two and it sheared off the top of this Q11, which sank in the East River. A tragic time.

And I recall, at that moment the Quartermaster called me on the phone and said, bring me the Q11 statistics. I didn't know why he was calling me. So I said, yes, sir. And then I waited and said, where am I gonna take these? And the phone rang a few minutes later and he says, bring me, this is Colonel Tisdale, bring me the quartermaster, the statistics on the Q11.

We had a book on every single building and every, on post, with pictures in many cases. And the Q11, the Colonel Barnett were in there with the, I just pulled that page out and quickly ran over to the office and reported.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Were there any casualties?

**KEN ROUGHT:** They all died.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Huh.

**KEN ROUGHT:** Yeah. The, there was even pictures, I recall, I wish Michael could have had these, pictures of the early days of the post. Just before I got there, they'd just gotten rid of the last horses. They had horse-drawn vehicles. And we had no vehicles on post except the post commander's car would come aboard the boat and come on post. But no one was allowed to have cars on post.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Were there trucks?

**KEN ROUGHT:** There were some trucks, yes.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** For, for goods?

**KEN ROUGHT:** For transferring goods on and off post. Cars were parked in the parking lot at the dockside.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So everyone, enlisted and officer, got around by foot basically?

**KEN ROUGHT:** Basically by foot and by boat.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Were there any bicycles?

**KEN ROUGHT:** I don't remember bicycles. There might have been some, but I don't remember them.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did you have access to a telephone often?

**KEN ROUGHT:** There was a telephone in the YMCA. I think it cost a nickel to make a call. And that's where I would call Norma when I first met her. And another, something else just came to mind. I remember when, after Norma and I were married, I was looking for ways to make extra money. We had a new second lieutenant who became the officer's, the officer's club, he was in charge of the officer's club and he needed some help with the bar.

I, I had never worked at a bar in my life and I had no idea the difference in whiskeys. But he took me up and I worked there for a few days pushing beer and whiskey for the various officers. And I had no idea what I was doing.

Well, right after that, an opening came at the post theater and the, the chief, the projectionist there had first, had formerly worked at the Roxy Theater in New York. And the Roxy Theater was a real high class theater in those days. And he'd been chief projectionist there. And he taught me the chores of being a projectionist and I loved it. But unfortunately, it would keep me there until 10:30 and late and the last ferry was, I'd be running down to catch the last ferry to get over to New Rochelle to be able to be with my then wife.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Where was the theater, in Raymond Hall?

**KEN ROUGHT:** Raymond Hall. Yeah.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**KEN ROUGHT:** They had a bowling alley there, too, and I bowled there a few times. But —

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did you go to the Y often?



**KEN ROUGHT:** Oh, yeah. Well, before I met Norma I used to go there to write all my letters and —

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Describe the Y.

**KEN ROUGHT:** Well, they used, they, the Y was a two story — I'm trying to recall. And it seemed to me there was a, a, sort of a basement area where they had, they put on shows that were, they would find talented people among the enlisted people and they would put on shows or they would sing or whatever. So there was some kind of entertainment going on there. I didn't get too involved in that.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Were there dances?

**KEN ROUGHT:** There were dances at Raymond Hall.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**KEN ROUGHT:** And that's where I took Norma before we were married and she, and I'd never danced in my life. And she was trying to teach me to dance. And of course, I was all over her feet.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**KEN ROUGHT:** And we, but we had a good time. They had a, they had an orchestra come there and they had occasionally visiting orchestras coming in, sort of USO type sponsored orchestras. I mean, I remember one time there was an all-girls orchestra came in. Um, and then we started to get WACs, female soldiers. Well, unheard of.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** When did they show up?

**KEN ROUGHT:** Oh, they started, I don't know. About late '41 or early '42. I just —

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Set the, set the scene before they showed up, there were really no women on the base other than a very few wives?

**KEN ROUGHT:** Wives. And it was a few secretaries working up in the post headquarters. And I think there were some women working down at the post laundry. But that was way down at the other end of the island and that's where the NCOs' quarters were located, in old wooden buildings down there. I never really got down there much. They were down by the big gun emplacements.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** By the mortar batteries?

**KEN ROUGHT:** Yes. I, I visited them a number of times. Hank Lewis took me there and one time we were there and we found a box of dynamite had been left over by the WPA. Now the WPA were workers, Waterworks [sic] Progress Administration. It was organized by President Roosevelt to give jobs to people that were really hurting during the depression days. And we had WPA workers on post. And they were doing various work on post, carpentry and electrical and so forth.

And, but anyway, Hank Lewis and I were down there at the gunning place and one day we found a box, opened it up and it was dynamite. Apparently it had been left there by the WPA, although I have no idea why they would use dynamite on post.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** What did you do with it?

**KEN ROUGHT:** We called, we called someone, I don't remember now who, but they took care of it for us, probably sent in ordinance people or something to care of it.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** I want to get back to the WACs.

**KEN ROUGHT:** Yeah. Oh, yes.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** When they showed up, how many were there about?

**KEN ROUGHT:** Well, there weren't many. The first time I ran into the WACs was they, they were working at the post headquarters in the message center and they had other jobs. And we were looking at them with a raised eyebrow, saying my God, women soldiers, what are we gonna do now?

And they were capable and appeared to be very competent women who had really wanted to help the war effort. And of course, that relieved male soldiers who were then being transferred overseas.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did you ever see them drilling?

**KEN ROUGHT:** No.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Or parading?

**KEN ROUGHT:** I can't, I can't remember ever seeing them parading. We paraded every, every week, almost every week while I was in the QM Detachment. And later, Colonel Lentz had a band come in so we had an army band that would perform at

these parades. And they would also sometimes have a formal guard mount, because we also as an extra duty would be selected to perform guard mount.

Because I think I was a corporal at the time, so I would work in the post headquarters as a corporal of the guard or something like that where the privates and PFCs would be walking post around the perimeter with a rifle.

And that became very necessary when the war started, December '41, when we all went on alert because of the possibility of, being located in the middle of Long Island Sound, there was a possibility of enemy craft coming into Long Island Sound. We weren't quite sure, so, and they were, soldiers were issued rifles with live ammunition.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Describe your memories of December 7th, 1941.

**KEN ROUGHT:** Norma and I were, Norma was working at Colonel McCord's quarters and I had gone there to, it was on a Sunday, and I had gone there to pick her up. We were gonna go to town, probably up to her parents'. And Colonel McCord came in, and I was in the kitchen and Colonel McCord came in and he says, the Japanese have just attacked Pearl Harbor. That didn't mean a thing to me. I had no idea where Pearl Harbor was. And then I found out that it was part of the Hawaiian Islands. And I said, oh my God.

So everything began, sort of high speed. We got on the boat and we went into town and there was a lot of reaction from the people getting the word. And we went to Norma's family's and listening on the radio, reports coming in from Pearl Harbor. And immediately after that, life began to change.

We no longer were permitted off post in civilian clothes. We had to wear uniforms all the time. And the uniform had changed at that time from the old olive drab to the green, black, with the black shoes and, and we no longer wore the leggings of the bygone days and the brown shoes. And we no longer had the campaign hat. And life in every respect changed.

We suddenly, it seemed suddenly, it was within weeks we started to get a lot of what we called draftees coming in. Some filled new spots in the QM Detachment. We were originally about 50 men in the QM Detachment when I joined. We soon became closer to 75 or so and we had to move from that building.

We moved to behind us to another building, a wing in another building which I believe was Building — just a minute, let me look at this map here — 61. I believe we were in this wing of Building 61. This would be the south wing, I guess, of Building 61, first floor. Second floor, the band was up there.

And we rapidly began to take in an awful lot of the new men. And it was, serial numbers began, began with a three. That was the thing that set you off from the regular, the old regular army people, because our serial numbers began with a 6.

We had one World War I soldier yet in the detachment. He was in charge of the QM warehouse, Sergeant Everhart. And he had a serial number that began with an R, which indicated he was from World War I. He was the only one we had around. He didn't, he, he was close to retirement at that time anyway.

Back in the days before the war, Fort Slocum would be almost considered a country club. You could, when not on duty, you could leave the post any time you wanted. And I think the ferry, the last ferry came to Fort Slocum, I think, around 10 or 11 o'clock at night. If you missed the ferry, you slept on a hard seat at Neptune dock until the next morning. And I did that a couple times, too, so I know/

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Were you ever stranded on the island because of bad weather?

**KEN ROUGHT:** There were times when we did have fog and the ferry would be delayed, yes. And I was on that ferry a couple of times when we were very slowly moving through the fog. It was a, there was a lighted obstacle somewhere out in the middle of the harbor there that would blink, with a red light on it, I remember. And you had to keep to the right of that. And I think there was shallows there, stones or something, but.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Do you recall who operated the ferries? Was, was it an army operated?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Oh, yeah. They were military. They were, they were a part of the QM Detachment.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**KEN ROUGHT:** Although, I think on the Colonel Barnett, I believe that was a, that was much larger boat and you could take vehicles aboard that, small sedan, the commander's sedan would be taken back and forth on that and trucks that would bring supplies to the quartermaster, the commissary and post exchange and that sort of thing. But no other vehicles were permitted on post at that time.

And if coal came in, we were all, everything was heated with coal and the coal would come in on what they called the coal docks, which were down below the regular docks. But that came in by barge and would be unloaded at that point.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Who maintained the boilers for each building? The people that were quartered there or was there a separate detachment?

**KEN ROUGHT:** Oh, no. I there was, I think they had people that were hired as what we call firemen, I guess. They'd come around and take care of your, the officers' quarters and all their, all their boilers and the ones in the headquarters and the QM Detachment, too, I guess, because I never really thought of it. We were heated. We were warm in the wintertime and yet, I, I don't recall. Just funny. That's something that caught my attention.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Let me ask you about the post commander, Colonel Lentz. Did you ever meet him?

**KEN ROUGHT:** Oh, yeah. Yeah. In fact, I'm not sure whether he's the one that awarded me my warrant officer promotion. I had to go to post headquarters to be sworn in as a warrant officer and I was in the, but I don't remember, I don't remember who swore me in there, whether it was Colonel Lentz. But I did meet him.

He was sort of an odd, sort of marionette. He had, he had various things going on. He'd have the half, half the permanent party personnel up in Raymond Hall and he'd have people up on stage practicing saluting and, and doing all kinds of wild things. And he loved his parades. We'd be parading all the time.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Very old school.

**KEN ROUGHT:** Oh, yeah. Yeah. He was an odd duck. He loved being a big, a big frog in a small pond.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Do you think he knew your name?

**KEN ROUGHT:** No. No. I'm sure he didn't.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Even though you were there a few years?

**KEN ROUGHT:** Oh, yeah. I don't know that, I forget who the adjutant was at that time. It was a major, I believe, was the adjutant. But I don't think he knew my name really.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**KEN ROUGHT:** I was in and out of post headquarters. My, personnel was on the second floor and I just went in and upstairs to the second floor and downstairs are the commander and adjutant's office. Those are people that an enlisted man doesn't have any contact with. Enlisted are called upon.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So you had, you were never in Q1 in the, the post commander's quarters?

**KEN ROUGHT:** No. No. No. I was never in there. Um, I meant, I thought of awhile ago, when I was a company clerk and had a, prepared my morning report, which had to be prepared by about 8 o'clock in the morning, Sergeant Isadore Pink, Needleman, Isadore Needleman, was the personnel sergeant.

And when he was ready for your morning report, he would holler at the top of his voice, quartermaster! And you darn well moved fast and you reported to his desk and he examined your morning report to make sure that it was correct, there were no errors. And then he would make notes, take notes from your morning report, but.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** I have a question for you about chapel. Was that a requirement?

**KEN ROUGHT:** No. No. No, post chapel was a, just a whatever your feelings were about that, whether you felt like you wanted to go to church or not. No, that was not a requirement.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Were Protestant and Catholic services held in the chapel or were they?

**KEN ROUGHT:** Oh, I'm sure they both were held there.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**KEN ROUGHT:** They were, alternate, maybe early morning for the Catholics or the Protestant, and then later in the day for the other sects. But no, I, yet I remember, I don't think I was ever in the post chapel. I was, I went to the church in New Rochelle, but I don't think I ever went into the post chapel at all.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** You said that you were married in the Presbyterian church.

**KEN ROUGHT:** Yes.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** That was your denomination.

**KEN ROUGHT:** Yeah. Yeah. As a matter of fact, I think I remember that it was the, let's see, Episcopalian. I'm wrong. Married in an Episcopalian ceremony at Trinity Church in New Rochelle on 7 September 1940. And strangely enough, this was a, I, I refer to this as my second time that September played a part in my life because I enlisted in the army in September, I got married in September and my left my here in September. So all that, September played a very important part in my life.

And Norma had originally, her, her father originally had been a soldier at Fort Slocum, but he and her mother were divorced somewhere in the early 20s, so Norma was raised by her stepfather, Harold Thaule. And Harold and, had originally came from Norway. And during the Depression days, Norma went over to Norway for two years to live and went to school there.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Hmm.

**KEN ROUGHT:** Yeah. Here are Colonel McCord's quarters, yeah. I don't have a number for the house, but there, September, December 7th, Sunday, Pearl Harbor. And in 19-, it was February of 1942, Norma had her accident where she, her back was so badly burned. In fact, there was an article in the Fort Slocum Casual News, which I received a copy of from Michael, in which they reported that. And I'm still a private at that time. They indicated my name. In fact, my name shows up as a reporter on that paper, too, for the QM Detachment.

Back in '42, I think it was, we went from khaki, brown tie, brown shoes to a green uniform, black tie, black shoes. And we were no longer the brown shoe army. The sand brown belt was no longer a part of the uniform. And shortly afterwards the Ike jacket became a preferred or a required member of the uniform.

And there were no longer, when the war began, things changed so rapidly, Slocum was no longer the real staging area anymore for overseas shipment because they opened up Camp Shanks in New York and Camp Kilmer in New Jersey. And people from Slocum were being transferred to begin the foundation for the, for those camps. And those camps were then used as the overseas replacement depots at that time.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So you, you left Fort Slocum in '43, late '43.

**KEN ROUGHT:** August '43.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** To go to the Brooklyn army?

**KEN ROUGHT:** Army base, yes. New York Port of Embarkation.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did you ever return to Slocum?

**KEN ROUGHT:** I think I was there a couple times just to go to the commissary or PX or something, but that would have been, um, that was probably after, oh, probably after I come back, about '47, '48 maybe. Something like that.

I remember, before I left Fort Slocum, the transportation school came to Fort Slocum. The reason I recall that is, we had one of the men of our detachment, he was one of the new recruits. And he, he applied for and was accepted to officer's candidate school. And I'll be darned if, three or four months later, he showed up at Fort Slocum as a second lieutenant at the transportation school for additional training.

I don't recall his name now, but I remember him. He'd, I remember him because he'd worked in New York on Madison Avenue and he was earning over a thousand dollars a week at that time. And that was a tremendous amount of money. And I recall that because I was, as a company clerk or a first sergeant, I forget what I was at that time, but I thought, boy, there's a man who's really making money.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Before the war, do you remember seeing children on the island? Did officers have families there?

**KEN ROUGHT:** I don't recall seeing children. I guess they were, they just weren't allowed to run around if they were there. I suppose some of the NCOs had, must have had children. I don't, I don't recall them though. They were probably kept very close, because they lived down in another section of the island, down close to where the post laundry was located. And the officers? I don't, they were, now like Colonel McCord I know had a grown up son. I think he was going to West Point at the time or, or might have been in college. I don't know. But certainly, I don't recall any children.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** You were talking earlier about the segregation between enlisted men and officers, generally speaking.

**KEN ROUGHT:** Mm-hmm.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yet you and your wife for a time lived on officers' row.

**KEN ROUGHT:** Right.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Was officers' row off limits for most enlisted men or?

**KEN ROUGHT:** You normally did not even walk the sidewalk in front of officers' row. You normally stayed over on the opposite side of the parade ground, which was considered enlisted territory.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Was this an unwritten rule or were you told?

**KEN ROUGHT:** It was unwritten, yeah. There was no. I don't recall anyone saying you can't do it.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**KEN ROUGHT:** I, I know I did a few times because when I went to post headquarters you had to be over on officers' row to go to post headquarters. So I know I did it myself, but it was not a thing you did ordinarily.

Strange thing happened to me, too. I was, I left Fort Slocum and years later I was at Camp Kilmer. I was waiting to be shipped overseas. And a staff car pulled up alongside me and stopped. And an officer got out and I thought to myself, by God, now

what? And it turned out to be an officer, his name was Major VanBanskoten or something similar to that. He was an old cavalry officer. And I remember because he wore leggings. He wore leggings at that time.

He stopped and he said, he asked me how I was doing and I said, good. I can't, I don't remember ever really talking with him at Fort Slocum, and yet he remembered me for some strange reason. And we chatted for a few minutes and he took off. It was a strange coincidence.

And when, when we moved from the old barracks, we moved across the way, we were, the detachment increased to about a hundred men at that time. And, um, we were, we were losing men as fast as we were getting them. As I recall, people were coming in and people were leaving. And most of the old timers had already gone. I was one of the last to leave. Captain Silver, or Captain Martin, who was the company commander at that time was there yet when I left. And that was in August of '42, August '43 rather, 23rd of August '43 is when I got promoted to warrant officer.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Was the quartermaster corps at Fort Slocum one of the bigger detachments?

**KEN ROUGHT:** No. We were considered small. They had other detachments there that I'm not quite certain what all they did. But they, some of them were a couple hundred people I know. I don't recall now what they, what they really did. There was a lot of things going on there at the time and, yeah.

It was, let's see, I'm looking. I worked at the officers' club as a bartender shortly. Then I worked as a, in July '42 I was promoted to sergeant, July '42. And that was great because Norma and I really could use the money. We needed the money. At that point we just had a new baby.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** When did you leave the army?

**KEN ROUGHT:** Permanently?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Permanently.

**KEN ROUGHT:** I retired from the army on 31 March 1969, 30 years after, I returned from, in my, 194-, let's see, '48. 1948 I think it was. I applied for and was accepted at the counterintelligence school at Fort Holabird, Maryland. And I, I, I worked as the um, in the school to become a, an agent for the counterintelligence corps, which I succeeded in doing. And I worked in Germany then.

I stayed with the counterintelligence corps right up until the day I left, retired in 1969. My last overseas assignment was in Viet Nam from 1967/68. I was in Ben Hoi and with the intelligence unit there. Yup.

I'm trying to think of anything else that might be of importance.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Let me just quickly ask you about alcohol. You mentioned that beers were a nickel.

**KEN ROUGHT:** Yeah.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Were soldiers able to get alcohol on base?

**KEN ROUGHT:** They, they had an NCO club at the, in the PX building and it was restricted only to enlisted men and NCO, I believe it was just NCOs. I'm not sure. But it was what they call 3.5 or something beer. It was a very weak beer.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** 3-2 beer.

**KEN ROUGHT:** Strong tea, more or less. And you could buy that there. But that was the only place you could possibly buy a beer. They did have a few occasions when it got out of hand. I guess they drank a little too much, but normally it was a very quiet, very quiet area.

(END RECORDING.)

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Patsy Hamilton, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and accurate transcript of the taped proceedings as transcribed by me on the date hereinbefore set forth, to the best of my ability.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dated: 10/17/07 Patsy Hamilton - Agency Transcriptionist



**MR. JACOBY:** My name is Robert Jacoby representing Tetra Tech EC (ph). And I am speaking with Robert Sisk at his home in Raeford, North Carolina on October 24, 2007. This interview is part of a program sponsored by the United States Army Corps of Engineers and the New Rochelle Public Library to collect oral histories about the experiences and memories of people who are associated with the former U.S. Army Post Fort Slocum located on Davids Island in New Rochelle, New York. Thank you for being part of this, Bob. First, tell me how you are associated with Fort Slocum.

**MR. SISK:** Well, my father was the first sergeant of the enlisted detachment in the chaplain school. And we went there in February of 1951 and I left in June of '58 when I graduated from high school and went straight into the Army.

**MR. JACOBY:** So how old were you when you got there and you left?

**MR. SISK:** I was 11 years old when I got there. I just turned 11. And, of course, I was 18 and a half when I left because I waited for graduation. And six months later my stepfather retired. And I came back for the retirement ceremony and that's the last time that I was there up until 2005.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you remember the first time you saw Davids Island?

**MR. SISK:** Yes. And I also remember what my mother told me. We were in Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, again with the chaplain school. She told me we were going to this place and we would have to take the ferry boat. And when we left the dock on the right hand side was a little island and it had a beautiful statue of a stag. And that was Glen Island where Glen Island Casino was located. Surely enough I saw the stag as we went across on the boat. They pointed it out. It was a gray day, kind of cold. We went into the quarters. There were Army cots for the kids, and they hadn't had all their furniture in yet. The place was freshly painted and the smell of enamel paint stays with me, you know. I remember that.

**MR. JACOBY:** Describe your barracks in general, your quarters.

**MR. SISK:** Our quarters were built around 1930 about. They were duplex. They had a basement. They were brick, extremely well made, had slate roofs. The fundamental living space was 800 square feet, which did not include the basement and also did not include an enclosed upstairs sun porch and a downstairs exposed sun porch. So they were relatively small. But at the time they were built people did not live in large houses. They were heated by coal fired furnace and with steam heat, and the hot water was supplied by a smaller coal fired stove strictly for the hot water.

**MR. JACOBY:** Who stoked the coal boiler?

**MR. SISK:** For a long time we did, mostly my father. But a few years after we were there there was a fellow from the mainland who would come in, and for ten dollars a month he would keep your furnaces stoked all the time. And so I would have to take cinders out in big five gallon buckets, but the stoking was eventually done by someone else.

**MR. JACOBY:** Where did you dump the cinders?

**MR. SISK:** I just set them out in the back of the house. I don't know who collected them. I really don't.

**MR. JACOBY:** And how often were you delivered coal?

**MR. SISK:** As you needed it, which wasn't very often, you know. They would back a five ton dump truck up. And we had a coal bin, a coal room called a coal bin with a chute through a hole through the wall at ground level. And the peat coal would be poured in off the truck.

**MR. JACOBY:** How many were in your family?

**MR. SISK:** There were five of us – my mother, father and myself and two brothers.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you share a room with your brothers?

**MR. SISK:** On and off. Sometimes I slept on the enclosed porch upstairs. We had bunk beds. Then after a while I had a room by myself.

**MR. JACOBY:** You mentioned when you first got there the furniture hadn't arrived. Your family was issued Army provisions for furniture?

**MR. SISK:** Yes. You had that option. And, for instance, in Carlisle Barracks all the furniture was mahogany, exceptionally fine quality. And virtually the whole house except for a piano and a sofa and one or two chairs, you know, stuffed chairs was government. And when we got there we pretty much furnished it ourselves out of preference.

**MR. JACOBY:** Bringing the stuff from Carlisle back.

**MR. SISK:** Right.

**MR. JACOBY:** Including the piano?

**MR. SISK:** No. We left the piano. I don't know what they did with it. I'm sure they sold it.

**MR. JACOBY:** Who played?

**MR. SISK:** Well, my mother did. She played. She taught herself and she did quite well.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you remember what color the walls were painted inside?

**MR. SISK:** Standard military fare. It was sort of an off-white, you know, an enamel paint.

**MR. JACOBY:** Your father was a first sergeant in the chaplain school.

**MR. SISK:** That's correct.

**MR. JACOBY:** What were his assignments?

**MR. SISK:** Well, I'm not that familiar, except that being a small detachment first off he was a first sergeant of the enlisted detachment. Now the chaplain school dealt with officers. But when they came into the Army many had no Army experience so they had to be taught. They had to learn about formations, they had to learn how to march and they had to learn basic military courtesies – how to salute, when to salute and all this. That was part of his duty was to teach these things. And the enlisted detachment itself was quite small. It wasn't large. And so he didn't have a lot of administrative duties pertinent to individual troops. So the rest of his time was spent working down in the publications department helping to get publications ready for the officers classes as they would come in because many manuals were involved. And if you had a couple hundred people in a class you had to get all these materials ready for the class and for the students.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did he have an office on the base?

**MR. SISK:** Yes, he did. But I never went into it. I didn't go over to his place of business.

**MR. JACOBY:** When he was working you left him alone.

**MR. SISK:** That's correct. That's correct.

**MR. JACOBY:** Well, describe for me what your mother's typical day was like.

**MR. SISK:** Well, mostly when we first got there as it had been she got us ready for school, did the normal house chores and cooking. But after a while she decided she wanted to go to work. She was looking forward to trying to get something ready for retirement. She worked at the post tailor shop for a while and then she worked in the PX for a long while just about we left. And mother was fairly well known around the post and most people liked her. She was a nice lady.

**MR. JACOBY:** Your father's posting seems rather long. Was that unusual?

**MR. SISK:** Yes, it was. Well, let me put it this way. When he first went into the Army it was not unusual for a man to stay in the same regiment for 30 years. In fact, he was a private in A Company of the 29<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment I think it was in Fort Benning for 11 years. Okay. So it's not unheard of. Plus there was some of who you know. Now how he actually got assigned to the chaplain school I have no idea. He came back from the Italian theater at the end of World War II and was assigned to the chaplain school as the first sergeant with the duties I described in late '45. And we stayed in Fort Ogelthorpe (ph) Georgia there where the chaplain school was then located until about October, November of '46. Then we moved to Carlisle barracks. So it was a good job for him. It was easy duty, you know. And he worked at the bar at night, tended bar. So I don't really know all the implications, and so forth and so on.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did he ever mention to you his like or dislike of Fort Slocum?

**MR. SISK:** No. He never did. As far as I know he was satisfied with it, except that I think he got \*\*\* He was not a political man. He was not \*\*\* He had a good firm eighth grade education, which back when he was a boy was considered good. In fact, it was as good as a high school education is now if not better. But he was not a man of politics. And he would often speak his voice and sometimes people didn't like it. And the Army was changing around 1956 and '57 and '58. They had introduced a new enlisted pay grade. Up until that time a master sergeant was an E-7. Well, they decided to make a master sergeant E-8 and call him a sergeant major. And he saw that he was not going to be a sergeant major I think. He tried one time I think to get off the island to another assignment but it didn't work out. So he decided just to go ahead and finish out his time there.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you have any idea what his pay grade was when he retired?

**MR. SISK:** Yes. He was a master sergeant E-7.

**MR. JACOBY:** What would he be getting a month?

**MR. SISK:** Oh, gee, I honestly don't know. I think the base pay a month at that time for a master sergeant – the base pay was three hundred dollars a month.

**MR. JACOBY:** Mmm hmm. Was that considered sufficient?

**MR. SISK:** Oh, yes. Well, a colonel only made seven hundred dollars a month.

**MR. JACOBY:** So your mother's working in the P Ex – that was more to satisfy her desire to keep busy than to make a little extra money.

**MR. SISK:** Well, that and make a little extra money. And so they worked for \*\*\* The wage then was 90 cents an hour. I even worked in the snack bar for 90 cents an hour.

**MR. JACOBY:** You mentioned to me earlier that you worked in the bowling alley setting pins. What would you make there?

**MR. SISK:** Ten cents a game or ten cents a line. Every person that bowled paid me ten cents. That was common and standard. So if they played, you know, three games you'd wind up, you know, with not too much – three, four dollars, five dollars.

**MR. JACOBY:** Tell me about being a kid at Fort Slocum.

**MR. SISK:** Well, it was a really, really great place. It was clean, it was secure, it was open. It was bright and sunny even in the wintertime. And for a boy it was a place of endless adventure. We would go and play at the gun pits and the tunnels on top of the gun pits. We would go and explore the dump and look all through there. And there was the water. We would swim, we would dive, we would boat. And some of the things were a little bit risky but all kids do that sort of thing. And it was really great.

**MR. JACOBY:** Were there areas \*\*\* Were there areas that were off limits to you?

**MR. SISK:** Well, not per se. On Army posts there's no such thing as private property. And unless a place is restricted by signs or indoor fences or armed sentries you're pretty much free to go there. Now the common sense will tell you that you just don't wander into a bunch of barracks – not on a large post. But on a little post like that where we knew almost all of the permanent party and they knew us I often went into the barracks. I learned how to spit shine shoes from watching the MPs in their barracks. I learned to shoot pool in the day rooms. Used to make a little money shooting pool. And did a few other things. There was a lot of gambling that went on on pay days.

**MR. JACOBY:** Tell me about that.

**MR. SISK:** Well, you see, troops get behind in the rear of the barracks on the porches outside and they'd be shooting craps. Now I never did that. But in the post gymnasium two sergeants that ran it used to have a poker game once a month. And they'd go into the back back there – the dressing rooms, and set up a table and put a GI blanket on it and play poker. And I used to go up there. And some of these guys would need some money and I'd lend them a few dollars, and I collected GI rates back on it. And, of course, the guy that run the poker game, he got a little bit of cut too for the house. And I never had to worry about people not paying me because these two fellows that ran this thing were big fellows. I did that a little bit until my old man found out about it. There was one time he did speak to me in sort of a respectful way for discipline purposes and he just said that's not right. I don't want you to do that again. And I said okay and I never did.

**MR. JACOBY:** Mmm hmm.

**MR. SISK:** Never did it again.

**MR. JACOBY:** There were baseball fields and tennis courts. Did you make use of those?

**MR. SISK:** Yes. As a matter of fact, we played softball, we played baseball, we played football, we played tennis. And matter of fact Father Joe Sheehan, a Catholic chaplain, and Father Sampson, the one who wrote the book about the jumping padre – they both gave me tennis racquets. And Father Sampson gave me my first tennis racquet. And, in fact, I gave one of them to my friend Pete four or five years ago. That's the first time I had seen him since 19 – almost 48 years, something like that. And so we also used to take our bicycles up on the tennis courts – take the nets down, take golf clubs and tennis balls and play bicycle polo on the tennis courts. As a matter of fact, we were doing that one day when hurricane Hazel –



the effects of Hazel hit us which happened to be mainly storm surge. We were up there and I saw the water ease up over the sea wall and start inching forward across the athletic field. And we noticed it and I said, you know, I don't know how deep this is going to get. I'd better go home now. So I rode my bicycle through the water up to the house. Now fortunately our house did not flood in the basement. But these houses close to the water did flood in the basement. So, yes. And Nick's mother taught me a lot about tennis.

**MR. JACOBY:** You mentioned some interaction you had with soldiers. Was it common to know the soldiers? Did many of them know your name?

**MR. SISK:** On a little post like that yes, because the 1207th Service Unit – one of their functions was to provide the military police for security. So it was a small detachment and they rotated their duties. They rode the school buses with us. So they got to know us on the school buses and we knew them.

**MR. JACOBY:** Every day they were with you?

**MR. SISK:** Yes, yes. And then they were always at the dock. So when you came and went you had MPs on both docks – the island dock and the mainland dock, usually at least two on duty. So we got to know them through everyday conversations.

**MR. JACOBY:** What about the officers? Do you think that the post CO knew who you were?

**MR. SISK:** Oh, yes, pretty well because we played with their children. And we generally \*\*\* We played a lot up in the officers row on the parade field next to the officers row. And we went into their houses. We had little parties at their houses. We would dance and things like that. But everybody just knew everybody.

**MR. JACOBY:** Tell me about the interaction between enlisted men and – the interaction between enlisted men and officers and how this effected the kids of each.

**MR. SISK:** Well, I'll speak for myself – no one else. On the enlisted side in my house we knew there was a caste system. Officers had special privileges. Their spouses were called ladies and an enlisted mans spouse was called a wife. And so we knew that socially there was things that as enlisted people we did not engage in. As far as the children went on that particular post, children were not in the Army. We knew it. We all got along well together. No one ever made any kind of comment about being an enlisted man's kid or an officer's kid or anything like that. On a larger post it might take place. I saw it once or twice. But I never did feel \*\*\* I would not just arbitrarily go into some officers house without knowing that I was welcome. And fortunately we all knew everybody and I was always made welcome. However, one thing you learn as an enlisted person or the son of an enlisted person is unless you know somebody on officers row you just don't arbitrarily start walking around officers row. And if you're an enlisted soldier you don't walk around officers row unless you've got business with a specific officer. And seldom will it ever take you to his quarters. It's just one of those things. And that sort of came home to me many years later. As well as I knew Pete Huchthausen and his family and as well as they treated me and as much as I liked them, I had the opportunity to see Annie again many years later – about, I don't know, four years later for the first time because she was married to Colonel Mike Ekman. And he was a battalion commander in the 82<sup>nd</sup> and I learned that they were at Fort Bragg. So I went over to their house and I was in uniform. But I felt uncomfortable, you know, just walking up there as an enlisted man.

**MR. JACOBY:** No one said anything to you.

**MR. SISK:** Well, I didn't see anyone. And I knew no one was going to, you know, really get on to me about it or berate me or anything like that. But it was just the idea.

**MR. JACOBY:** Something that you grew up with and learned about. Tell me about the types of food that your mother made for dinner. She bought all of the food at the commissary?

**MR. SISK:** Yes. And it was standard fare, anything you wanted. I mean you had chicken, steak, beef, pork. Mama was a pretty good cook. But dinner for me was never a big thing. I was too busy outside. I wanted to be outside going somewhere doing something.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did families get together for occasions for dinners or parties?

**MR. SISK:** No, not as a rule – not as a rule.

**MR. JACOBY:** Mmm hmm.

**MR. SISK:** It was a small community. They worked with each other all day long. Sometimes they played cards – canasta or something like that but, you know, not \*\*\* We lived in such close proximity – the wives

would see each other every day over coffee and all that sort of thing. The men would see each other at work. No, not as a rule.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did your father ever eat in the mess hall?

**MR. SISK:** Not on a routine basis. We always would go there for Thanksgiving or Christmas dinner.

**MR. JACOBY:** What was that like?

**MR. SISK:** Oh, it was marvelous. I mean it was just absolutely marvelous. It's the one time that cooks really outdid themselves. Everybody worked hard decorating the mess hall. Turkey, dressing, mashed potatoes, gravy, the whole nine yards. Fruit, nuts, just absolutely marvelous.

**MR. JACOBY:** And was everyone on post invited?

**MR. SISK:** Oh, sure.

**MR. JACOBY:** From the colonel on down.

**MR. SISK:** That's right. In fact, the leadership – it was part of their duty to be there and to support the troops, you know. Plus it was a great feed. It really was. As a matter of fact, that's another thing. Especially in the wintertime we'd be playing outside and it would be cold. We'd be playing football and we'd get thirsty. So we'd go to the mess hall. And we'd just walk on in. And they used to have ice cream in there in little blocks wrapped in paper. It was vanilla, strawberry and chocolate striped. And we'd put that in bowls and put sugar on it and get milk out of the dispenser and we'd eat that. And then, you know, we'd take the dishes to the scullery and then we'd leave. Nobody ever said a thing in the world to us.

**MR. JACOBY:** The mess sergeant sort of treated you kids well.

**MR. SISK:** Well, I never saw the mess sergeant, you know. But we knew some of the guys that worked in there in the mess hall. And Pete used to deliver papers in there. I did too at one time. So we knew pretty much everybody.

**MR. JACOBY:** Tell me about retreats.

**MR. SISK:** Oh, great thing. Retreat is a two part episode – well, correction. You have call to colors, okay. Then you have retreat. And when retreat plays at five o'clock, I don't care who you are – man, woman or child – you were taught to stop and face the flagpole and put your hand over your heart. If you were driving an automobile you stopped, you got out and you rendered a hand salute. And if retreat was playing and somebody was saluting and you didn't stop they would holler at you and tell you about it. And so it was a respectful and reverent time and tradition for all of us.

**MR. JACOBY:** How was retreat sounded? Was it music or a cannon shot?

**MR. SISK:** It depends. In our time I can't remember \*\*\* Oh, some places they did use a cannon. I don't remember at Slocum if they fired a cannon. I think they did. And then they'd play retreat. But usually it was done over a loudspeaker with a record and it could be heard all over the island. However, I remember at Carlisle Barracks taps. Taps is a two part episode. The first is a quarter of – I think it's ten or quarter of eleven. I don't remember which now – quarter of ten I think. It's called the quarters. Fifteen minutes later taps is played and lights are turned out. At Carlisle on the athletic field up by the big water tower was a huge megaphone – not battery powered, just a big megaphone on a stand. And I remember the first time I heard taps. It was snowing and I could see the snowflakes reflected in street lamps in front of the house. And I had the window open, cracked open, and all of a sudden I heard taps. And it was just beautiful. And so after that, you know, I would listen for taps. And at the time it was a live bugler. And he would go out there. He'd play it twice – once in one direction, then turn around 180 degrees to the other direction.

**MR. JACOBY:** Was there ever a live bugler at Slocum?

**MR. SISK:** Not for the purpose of playing taps that I know of. Now there were buglers, and sometimes they would play at military funerals. You usually had at least one bugler somewhere.

**MR. JACOBY:** Tell me about reveille.

**MR. SISK:** Well, now reveille usually is at five thirty in the morning and it's played. I don't remember hearing it because, I don't know, I think I got up around six thirty. But you couldn't hear it in the house. So I don't know that they played reveille. I just don't remember hearing it there.

**MR. JACOBY:** Now did lights out apply to your house?

**MR. SISK:** Lights out pertained to the barracks and not to individual quarters.

**MR. JACOBY:** Tell me something about going to school. How did you assemble?

**MR. SISK:** A school bus came around the whole island and picked up every kid and took them to the dock. The bus drivers name was Oscar. He was a Black fellow. We'd all get on the ferry boat, go over to the mainland, and Oscar would have another bus on the other side. We'd all load into that and he would make the whole circuit around New Rochelle to the schools and drop us off. He would then turn around and repeat the same process to pick us up and bring us home.

**MR. JACOBY:** Was he the only adult with you? Earlier you mentioned that there were MPs.

**MR. SISK:** Early on there were MPs. And sometimes they rode and sometimes they didn't. I never did understand why they did and why they didn't. All I do know is many times they rode with us.

**MR. JACOBY:** Mmm hmm. And what school did you attend?

**MR. SISK:** I attended Jefferson Elementary first off. I finished about a half a year at Blessed Sacrament in the fifth grade – sixth grade at Jefferson Elementary. Seventh, eighth and ninth at Isaac E. Young and the rest of the year \*\*\* Let's see – tenth grade at New Rochelle High School, eleventh grade I went to a school in Virginia and left there and finished that year in North Carolina and then came back to New Rochelle for my senior year.

**MR. JACOBY:** Why did you go to school elsewhere?

**MR. SISK:** I went to a military school in Virginia. And I got in some trouble there and they asked me to leave. So I left and I went to school in North Carolina.

(End of Side A)

**MR. JACOBY:** Were you friendly with many kids in New Rochelle?

**MR. SISK:** Not a large number. Friendly in the sense of classmates with whom we shared classes in school, yes. Socially outside of school maybe a dozen or so kids that I knew pretty well. And I knew them from small parties that the girls would have at their homes. And this started around the age of 11 on up until, you know, finished and graduated. One thing about it – we always had, at least I always had to be back on the eleven o'clock ferry, you know. So I always had to keep that in mind and my host had to keep it in mind until such time as I was old enough to navigate on my own.

**MR. JACOBY:** There were consequences for you from your dad?

**MR. SISK:** Oh, not really. It just worried him a lot, you know. Once in a while, you know, it would happen and I would call him from the dock and say hey, I missed the boat. I'm here, you know. So that would be all right.

**MR. JACOBY:** Mmm hmm. Were kids invited to come to Fort Slocum to play and go to dances, etcetera?

**MR. SISK:** To some degree. I didn't invite any. I don't know anybody that did. I do know that some would come, okay. Some of the girls I think would invite some of their girlfriends. Once in a while we'd have a little softball game, you know, sort of informal – boys and girls, you know. They would come for military celebrations, you know, Veteran's Day or something like that – Armed Forces Day, you know, or something of that nature. But as a general rule they didn't come too often and it was not a regular occurring type of thing.

**MR. JACOBY:** Was there some kind of team club on the island?

**MR. SISK:** Yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** Tell me about that.

**MR. SISK:** Down in the \*\*\* I can't remember the building now but I think it's the end of the main chapel right about in here I think \*\*\*

**MR. JACOBY:** Building 55?

**MR. SISK:** I think it was 55, right about in there. In the basement we decided we wanted a place where we could play records and stuff and dance, you know, in the wintertime, you know. We'd do it in the summer on somebody's front porch, you know. And this was the time I was about 14, and Pete was 15, Nick was 16 and the girls – there were some girls about the same age. And we were learning how to dance and, you know, rock and roll was getting started and Bill Haley and the Comets and "Rock Around the Clock" and all that kind of stuff, and so we thought that was great. Well, I don't know who arranged it. I think it was the post commander's wife arranged for us to use that facility down there in the basement. So we started that thing, and I understand it continued on long after we left. And that was a pretty good thing.

**MR. JACOBY:** And what kind of things were down there?

**MR. SISK:** Actually nothing, you know, just a few seats and a record player, you know, at least when we were there now I mean, you know. Now we didn't go there all the time. We'd just go there every now and then, you know.

**MR. JACOBY:** Tell me about chapel. Did you attend services every Sunday?

**MR. SISK:** For a while, yes. In fact, my brother and I were altar boys in the Protestant chapel. And my mother made us black robes and white albs like the chaplain did, Chaplain Leverentz (ph), a Lutheran chaplain.

**MR. JACOBY:** Where was the Protestant chapel?

**MR. SISK:** Well, it was down at the big building 55. When you went in the front door it was to the right, it was the wing to the right. The Catholic chapel was the wing I think to the left and upstairs was the Jewish synagogue.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did your parents attend service with you?

**MR. SISK:** No, not very often, no.

**MR. JACOBY:** Mmm hmm. Do you remember there being weddings on the post?

**MR. SISK:** I don't recall. I mean I know that a few did occur but I don't recall any.

**MR. JACOBY:** Mmm hmm. I want to ask you about the flagpole. Was that an area of special ceremonies or particular reverence on the post?

**MR. SISK:** In general the flag is a symbolic heart of the post. It represents all of the authority, the power and what the country stands for and the freedom that we enjoy. Okay. So, yes, the flagpole is very important symbolically.

**MR. JACOBY:** Describe it. What did it look like?

**MR. SISK:** This particular pole?

**MR. JACOBY:** Mmm hmm, at Slocum.

**MR. SISK:** Well, at the time I don't know how tall it was. But it had a concrete base level with the ground. I don't know how thick the base was and I don't remember exactly now how big it was – maybe two feet square. The bottom of the pole was round. It was a steel pole. It was hollow inside. As you went up about five or six feet the pole tapered inward maybe an inch at about 45 degrees or so. And then from that point up to the ball it tapered slightly as the geometry would require. Now in the Navy I don't believe you have a ball on top of a flagpole unless you might on shore. The purpose of a ball, and it's sometimes called a truck or a dome as well, is that sometimes flags will become caught in an updraft and be pushed over the top of the pole. This dome or ball helps it to slide back down again. At sea you don't normally have that problem. That high up on a mast there's usually some kind of breeze so you don't much worry about updrafts. That's the best of my knowledge. I mean I'm not a sailor. But we had three types of flags – a storm flag flown in bad weather, or high winds would rip it apart if it was very large – a garrison flag flown every day and – correction, a post flag flown every day and then a garrison flag flown on special occasions. Now I remember the approximate dimensions. This is approximate. A storm flag is fairly small about four and a half by nine feet. A post flag is about roughly nine by 18 and a garrison flag is somewhere around 18 by 36. Now 18 by 36 is a lot of material. It's like a huge sail. So the flagpole has to be quite substantial to hold it.

**MR. JACOBY:** What were the special occasions that the garrison flag was flown?

**MR. SISK:** You know, I really don't remember what the protocol was – Armed Forces Day and things of that nature.

**MR. JACOBY:** Was the flagpole painted?

**MR. SISK:** I believe it was. I believe it was white.

**MR. JACOBY:** Mmm hmm. And were there objects around the base of the pole?

**MR. SISK:** Well, at one point yes and one point no. I never did understand why anything was changed and I don't know when it was changed. Initially there were guy (ph) wires going to the ground. And these guy wires connected I guess maybe a little more than halfway up the pole to a round circular ring which was attached to the pole. And these guy wires were attached to that ring assembly and that was its primary

function. Now there was also a ladder, a cable ladder with I guess steel rungs, I don't know, that went all the way up to that ring from the ground. The only purpose in that that I could figure out was to go up and adjust the cables. Later on those things disappeared.

**MR. JACOBY:** What detachment was in charge of raising and lowering the flag?

**MR. SISK:** Usually the MPs. They belonged to the 1207<sup>th</sup> Service Unit.

**MR. JACOBY:** Mmm hmm. And was there a howitzer (ph) at the base?

**MR. SISK:** Yes, for a long time they had the French 75 millimeter howitzer with the wooden wheels.

**MR. JACOBY:** Yes.

**MR. SISK:** Later on they, and I'm not sure when, they changed it out to two small 75 millimeter pack howitzers. I don't know when they changed it.

**MR. JACOBY:** Were these operable?

**MR. SISK:** Oh, yes, yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** You mentioned before something that you tried to do with one of them.

**MR. SISK:** Oh. Well, my friends Peter Huchthausen and Nicky Kraft we decided that it would be funny if we could roll that French howitzer down a parade field and point it at Admiral Binford's house – not for any malicious purpose, just to have a laugh. Well, one day not long after this hasty scheme was devised Nick and I happened to be walking down that way. And I said, "Nick," I said, "Let's see if we can budge this thing and the blocks and see if we can get it off the blocks – see how hard it will be." He said, "Okay." So he got hold of one wheel and I got hold of the other wheel. And just as we started to lay into it an MP by the name of Spec. 4 Hector Fonseca (ph) happened to come out of the provost marshal's office and saw us from the front porch of the office. And he hollered. Well, Nick ran, but Hector knew me too well for me to run. So I went on up there, and the long and short of it is he put me in a cell there for about 15 or 20 minutes, you know. I do recall I did not like being locked up. And I was more worried about him telling my old man, you know, than anything else. But he just let me go and, you know, he said he wasn't going to tell my old man. But that's all that about it too.

**MR. JACOBY:** Compared to other posts that you lived at, was military discipline tight at Slocum?

**MR. SISK:** Military discipline in two aspects. As far as people doing things and getting punished, there wasn't too much of it going on. A very small community. I really \*\*\* I don't see that it was any different than about anywhere else.

**MR. JACOBY:** You spent 15 minutes in the brig. Do you remember people commonly being in there, soldiers for fights or drunkenness?

**MR. SISK:** No. It was seldom ever occupied. I do remember that during Christmastime we would walk around and sing Christmas carols. And we would go by the stockade and some guys would look out through the bars in the window on the outside wall as we were singing. But you didn't normally have too many people in there. Very seldom.

**MR. JACOBY:** Describe what New Rochelle was like.

**MR. SISK:** Well, New Rochelle was a place in Westchester County. Westchester County had the highest per capita income in the world at the time. Nice homes, all well kept. You also had the working side of town. Many people from Broadway and the arts and the opera and the movies, every form of entertainment lived there. In fact, Dennis James lived five or six houses above a friend of mine over on Davenport Neck or Davenport – yes, Davenport Neck Road. And it was not too crowded. Today it's about three times the traffic it was then. The roads are well worn from excess traffic – a lot more litter, a lot more people. The entire north end of town which didn't amount to much back then is now foreigners, Latinos and who knows what else. I mean, you know, it's just changed.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did your mother shop in New Rochelle often?

**MR. SISK:** Not very often. Not very often – sometimes.

**MR. JACOBY:** Mmm hmm. Would they sometimes go to dinner on the mainland?

**MR. SISK:** Not very often.

**MR. JACOBY:** Mmm hmm.

**MR. SISK:** Not very often. Not really.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you ever go into New York City?

**MR. SISK:** A couple of times they took us into New York City. We went to RKO Radio was it \*\*\*

**MR. JACOBY:** Radio City?

**MR. SISK:** Radio City Music Hall, yes. We saw "Singing in the Rain." I remember that and the Statue of Liberty. And I went down there. As I got older I went down there on my own.

**MR. JACOBY:** And what would you do?

**MR. SISK:** Just mess around.

**MR. JACOBY:** Okay. What about ball games? Did you go to Yankee Stadium?

**MR. SISK:** No, I did not. Now what we would do is once in a while we would go with a post baseball team when they played baseball at another Army post. And we'd ride on the bus with them because we knew them all anyway. And we'd go to New (ph) post and go to Fort Totten (ph), Fort Tilden, Fort Hamilton, Fort Jay (ph), Governors Island, you know, Fort Lee.

**MR. JACOBY:** Were there dances at these other posts that you would go to?

**MR. SISK:** I didn't go to other posts to dances. They had a few there at the service club there at Slocum. But now I was only, you know, 17 just turned 18, you know and a skinny kid, you know. Nobody wants to dance with me. But I'd go anyway. I just liked to be around people and the music. And one time they had a ferry boat ride with a dance on the ferry boat at night. And I went on that just for the heck of it and it was nice. One of the pleasant memories is in the summertime eight or nine o'clock at night it's dark. And over on the officers side of the island in the officers beach area you could see the lights from Glenn Island casino and you could hear the big bands playing. And the music came across the water, and it was just a marvelous sight and a marvelous sound.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you ever go to Glenn Island casino?

**MR. SISK:** Not \*\*\* Yes, but not to go in the casino as a guest or anything.

**MR. JACOBY:** Mmm hmm. What about your parents?

**MR. SISK:** No.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you go camping with other kids like out into the Catskills or up the Hudson River or anything like that?

**MR. SISK:** No, not at Slocum. The only time I was camping was in Pennsylvania. When we were at Carlisle about 1948 my mother had to go to the hospital. And they farmed me out to a place called Camp Thompson up in the northeast part of the state next to West Virginia at Laurel Lake for a week until my mother could be brought home.

**MR. JACOBY:** Being an island, did you have much chance to sail?

**MR. SISK:** Well, nobody had a sailboat. One fellow had one but we didn't know to work, you know, we didn't know how to sail – didn't know how to tack. In fact, I didn't even know to put the keel down. And so no, we didn't do that. However, we did have a boat or two.

**MR. JACOBY:** Tell me about that.

**MR. SISK:** Well, the first episode was right after a big storm sometimes little boats would break loose and drift. Maritime law allows you to take those boats and secure them for your own because the boat is in danger of destroying itself and it is a hindrance to navigation to other vessels. So one day I was down in the little beach in front of the house where Cavanaugh used to live. And I saw this white thing floating in the water about 100 yards maybe 150 feet out. I knew what it was. I swam out and I pulled it back to shore. And it was a dingy off a yacht. So I turned it over and let the water out. And I figured I'd come back the next day and let it dry out, you know. Well, the next day I came back. And as I was turning the boat over two GIs from the Nike (ph) battery asked me if I wanted to sell it. I said sure. So I sold it to them for five dollars – to me a lot of money, you know. It's like 50 bucks today. And the next day I was walking up the seawall towards the Nike battery, and sure enough these two guys had that little boat and they were putting it into the water in the little lagoon like area and they were starting to fish. And their buddies were up on the seawall watching them. Next thing you know one of them started to cuss and sweat and the boat started to settle in the water quite rapidly. Apparently it had a crack in the hull and I didn't know it. But everybody laughed at them, and they got out of the boat and walked to shore.

**MR. JACOBY:** And you kept the five bucks.

**MR. SISK:** Oh, yes, sure. I mean, you know, \*\*\* But the other episode was a year or so later. Nick and Pete and I used to swim from a point just north of the officers beach across the channel to a beach club, you know, thinking well, you know, maybe we can meet some girls – at least get some good food or whatnot. So that’s what we would do when we knew they were having a big beach party. We’d swim over there at night and come up out of the water as if we’d been there for a while. Didn’t meet many girls but got some good food. Then we’d swim back. Well, pretty soon we had another storm. And a green ten or 12 foot, about a 12 foot flat bottom rowboat came around. We captured it. And I got some green paint from post engineers and we painted it green. We used to rowboat and go across the channel a couple of times to make things easier. Well, another storm was coming. So I said, “Hey, let’s sink this thing next to the pier at the officers beach.” Put rocks in the bottom. That way it won’t smash itself against the pier or get blown away. That’s what we did. The storm went. Next day we went down there to take a look at the boat and get the boat out from the bottom of the ocean, and the only thing left was a pile of rocks sitting on the bottom. The gunnels and sides had all broken loose and floated away we don’t know where. That was the end of our Navy.

**MR. JACOBY:** You left Fort Slocum when?

**MR. SISK:** I graduated I think on the 26<sup>th</sup> of June and on the 27<sup>th</sup> I was in the Army.

**MR. JACOBY:** Of what year?

**MR. SISK:** Nineteen fifty-eight. And I came back just for about a week or two after my first eight weeks of basic training at Fort Benning, Georgia. And then I came back one more time in the last week of December of 1958 for my father’s retirement ceremony.

**MR. JACOBY:** Mmm hmm. And you didn’t return to Davids Island until \*\*\*

**MR. SISK:** April of 2005.

**MR. JACOBY:** What did you think? Describe what you saw in 2005.

**MR. SISK:** Well, I knew what to expect because I had seen aerial photos of the place. But when I hit the ground and saw the total ruination I was deeply saddened. It’s \*\*\* Everybody that has ever lived there that liked the place feels a sense of ownership with it, a sense of unofficial possession, a sense of unofficial entitlement – entitlement to relive the memories and the pleasantness. And when you see the sea walls completely deteriorated, roads are rotted away and covered with trees, and the place was a 40 year old growth of woods with a lot of canopy – so much undergrowth in some places you couldn’t walk a straight line if your life depended on it. The gun pits just overgrown. The concrete itself is in pretty good shape. It’s, in fact, in excellent shape. But the openness of the place was destroyed. The neatness and manicured state of the place gone forever. The house where I used to live did not fill me with emotion even though, you know, I knew that the place was in ruins.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you walk inside or were you even able to walk inside?

**MR. SISK:** I was \*\*\* They didn’t really want me to go inside, you know, they cited safety. I didn’t really want to go inside. There was no inside left. But I would have liked to have at least sat down on the steps a second or two, you know. But be that as it may, I’ve been back to Carlisle to the house I used to live which is extremely well maintained. And twice as a matter of fact. Once I went into it about 1984 and somebody was living there. They were kind enough to let me come in. But it was an intrusion, you know. This was no longer my old home. They really didn’t care I used to live there. They had a few questions about the place. Then I went back again with my brother in 2005, and we were fortunate enough – there was no one in the house. It was vacant. We were fortunate enough to be allowed in to walk around and capture any old memories. But it was, in fact, just a building. Okay. So I learned from my trip back to the island that for me while the building is a reminder and a stimulus it’s the actual geography, the feel of the sun, the feel of the elements, the look of the ground, the feel of the ground, the smell of the air, the smell of the trees and the water – those are the things that for me constitute memory, pleasant memory in this case. Plus the memories of the people that shared this common existence, this common experience. Only they know what we mean when we talk about the place, you know. It’s like combat soldiers, you know. I could tell you all day long, but you still could not grasp it because you couldn’t see it, feel it, smell it, hear it. So it’s a shared experience that only a few walking the earth today are privileged to have.

**MR. JACOBY:** Mr. Bob Sisk, I want to thank you very much for sharing your experiences and memories about Fort Slocum with me.

**MR. SISK:** Well, it’s been my pleasure. Thank you.

(End of Tape)



C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Lin York, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and accurate transcript of the taped proceedings as transcribed by me on the date hereinbefore set forth, to the best of my ability.

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Dated: November 5, 2007 Lin York

Agency Typist





**From:** Rob Jacoby  
**To:** Bob Sisk  
**Sent:** Friday, February 29, 2008 12:36 PM  
**Subject:** Ft. Slocum

Hi Bob-

I hope your winter's been pleasant. Anticipating snow here tonight. I've a question for you. When I went down to Williamsburg in Nov. to interview Christa Mueller and Annie Ekman, they told me about your father's wishes that you not intrude into the officers' beach. A few years later Col. Castagneto abolished the separate beaches. How do you think your dad would have reacted to that? Did he think it was more acceptable to maintain a proper distance between officer and enlisted?

Take care

Rob

robert sisk  
02/29/2008 04:55 PM

To Rob.Jacoby  
Subject  
Re: Ft. Slocum

Rob,

Nice to hear from you. Winter OK not out of the usual except for drought.

I don't doubt the words of Annie and Christa. I just don't remember him having told me that but I wouldn't doubt it because he was very class conscious. It must have happened very early on when we first got to the island because I never did go to the officers beach until I met the Huchthausens. The whole family treated me very well almost like one of their own. I went to church with them in the Bronx and Peter and I were good friends. Let me say this based on my own observances and no one else's.

The Army (all services) operate a two caste system. Officers and enlisted personnel. Officers wives are referred to as the Officer's Ladies. NCO (enlisted) wives are referred to as NCO wives or enlisted wives. Women were automatically demoted socially if the husband was enlisted. She couldn't be a lady regardless of her education and background. A lady in the sense of public address or identification. If you were an enlisted man's child you learned quickly that the world is divided into two groups. Those with higher abilities and those with lesser abilities. The higher abilities were officers. They held their own parties etc and enlisted people were not invited and vice versa.

The period right after WWII brought a change in the army family demographics. This is because so many men were in the army and so many young enlisted men rose to high NCO ranks very early during the war. After the war you had far more higher ranking NCOs the before the war. These men could afford families and marriage. Large numbers of enlisted



families on a post became the norm as opposed to many enlisted men not authorized wives and government quarters, but instead what some may call camp followers who lived off post.

Regardless of the caste system all children were treated kindly by any officer or officer's wife I ever encountered. The child after all can not be held accountable for the fathers place in the system. I am sure from time to time some officers may have made despairing remarks of enlisted children with in the earshot of an enlisted person. This could be relayed to the enlisted ranks. However it was common for enlisted children to hear there fathers talk derisively about some officer from time to time. So it was a tie game. Children being what they are fend for themselves and learn to navigate this social stickiness usually by ignoring the fathers rank and just getting along and having fun. Of course regardless of which side of the fence you were on if you slurred some ones father you had a fist fight on your hands. So kids pretty well accepted each other on the their own individual merits and not those of the father.

My father just didn't want me to get my feelings hurt. He was a 16 year old boy when he went into the army and the old lessons stuck hard.

On the other hand when I was in officer country I was there as me and no one else. I also knew that if my behavior was bad my father would be ordered off of the post and have to live in town. I was careful never to let that happen.

I think that those of us who grew up then and got along so well and later became professional soldiers brought with us the seed of wider acceptance of children wives and families regardless of rank. In fact today the army spends great fortunes to care for enlisted and officer families alike especially when the husband is deployed to combat. Today a private can come to a post with a wife and children. when I was in the army you had to be an E5 (sergeant) and get the company commander's permission to get married or even register an automobile on post. With out his permission you could get married but you wouldn't receive separate rations or quarters allowance and you would have to live off post all at your own expense. You could buy a car but have to leave it parked off post. It's all different now.

Yes, my father made me very aware of the caste system if not through a direct statement then by his every day actions and comments which were unguarded.

I went to the officers beach everyday but always feeling as a guest and was prepared to leave instantly if one officer or his wife wanted me to. It never happened. There was only one time I rebelled against the officer phonon.

There was a Teen Club on post housed in the basement of one of the buildings near the chaplain school. Neutral ground. One day the post commander's wife Mrs. Brown wanted to have a teen dance and hold it at the officer's club. I let it be known that I would not go to the officer's club. Instead we should have it at the teen club. There weren't many of us older teen age boys so the absence of even one would be noticed. Mrs. Brown called my mother and pleaded for her to convince me to come. I relented and went. Mrs. Brown was extremely nice to me and thanked me very very much for coming and that she understood my feelings



completely. Every thing went well. I just took it as one of those things; neither big nor small, important or unimportant. The important thing was that I obliged the lady so as not to cause her any possible embarrassment if such would have issued from the event. It was only an hour or so out my life anyway.

I don't know how he would have reacted to the abolishment of separate beaches. Probably with some mild confusion about how greatly things change over short periods of time. Hoped this helped.

Respectfully,

Robert A. Sisk



**MR. JACOBY:** My name is Robert Jacoby, representing Tetra Tech EC, and I am speaking with Tom Sisk at his home in Fayetteville, North Carolina, on October 24, 2007. This interview is part of a program sponsored by the United States Army Corps of Engineers, and the New Rochelle Public Library, to collect oral histories and memories of people who were associated with the former US Army Post, Fort Slocum located on David's Island in New Rochelle, New York.

Thank you, Mr. Sisk for participating in this interview. Tell me first, what is your association with Fort Slocum?

**MR. SISK:** Well, my father was the First Sergeant of the chaplain school there, and we moved there when the post was activated in 1950. And the chaplain school and the US Army information school, moved there, and those were the two primary units stationed there. I was eight years old at the time, and we moved there and lived there until my father retired in January 1959.

**MR. JACOBY:** And what age were you at that point?

**MR. SISK:** Just 16, or about to be 16.

**MR. JACOBY:** What were your father's assignments there?

**MR. SISK:** He was the First Sergeant, so he was in charge of the enlisted detachment there, and he was also responsible for drill and ceremonies of the Chaplains -- Chaplain students that passed through the school.

**MR. JACOBY:** Describe for me what a typical day for your father might have been?

**MR. SISK:** Well, he would go in, to the detachment, he'd get there about 7:30, and make sure the barracks were in order, which was right behind the Chaplain school, the enlisted barracks I'm talking about. And then he would go to his office in the main building, which also was the publications center.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you remember what building that was? What building number?

**MR. SISK:** No, you know, I really don't. It was right -- it was the one that was parallel with the flagpole at the end of the island. But I do not remember the building number.

**MR. JACOBY:** Would it have been the Post headquarters?

**MR. SISK:** No, the Post headquarters is to the -- if you're looking out the front door of the Chaplain School, Post headquarters would have been to the right, that building immediately to the right. The -- what turned out to be the Provost Marshal's office, the Military Police barracks is to the left.

**MR. JACOBY:** I have a map of the island.

**MR. SISK:** Okay.

**MR. JACOBY:** And that might help.

**MR. SISK:** Yeah. This was the Chaplain School.

**MR. JACOBY:** So, Building 46. Okay?

**MR. SISK:** Um-hum. Yeah.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you visit your father at his office?

**MR. SISK:** Not very often. Not very often. We were at school, of course, which was in New Rochelle. And then we would come back and stay around our quarters and play, or go to somebody else's house and play.

**MR. JACOBY:** Describe what your quarters looked like.

**MR. SISK:** It was seemed to me at the time to be a pretty big place, but having been back one time, I realized it wasn't really all that big. But it was a duplex, two-story apartment. We had 32-B, was our quarters number. I believe that it had four bedrooms, small living room, kitchen, of course, no garage or anything like that. But it did have a basement with a cal-fed furnace, which, of course, we were responsible for.

**MR. JACOBY:** Who was in your family?

**MR. SISK:** It was my older brother, Bob, which you've already met, my younger brother, Don, and of course, my mother and father.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you share a bedroom with your brothers?

**MR. SISK:** At first yes. Later I moved. They had a dual sun porch on those quarters, upstairs and down, and I moved out into the upstairs sun porch, was my bedroom, and it was pretty nice.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you have a porch?

**MR. SISK:** Um-hum.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did the family spend time on the porch, or kids on the porch?

**MR. SISK:** Mostly kids, other neighborhood kids, or sometimes. There weren't that many children on the island because the staff wasn't that large, you know, for all the major units combined. So there weren't that many kids within the same age groups, you know. I imagine, let's see, I would say a little later when I was about 12 or 13, there were maybe five of us that same age group, within a year or two.

**MR. JACOBY:** And they were the kids that you hung out with most?

**MR. SISK:** Primarily, yeah. Yeah.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you have a television?

**MR. SISK:** Yes. Yes, we got one.

**MR. JACOBY:** Black and white set?

**MR. SISK:** Black and white first, yeah. Yeah, I don't think we got our color set until maybe after we moved down here. Yeah, it was just primarily black and white.

**MR. JACOBY:** The furniture, was that all Army issue, or did your parents bring it with them from elsewhere?

**MR. SISK:** Most of it was, but my mother bought some things.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did she make the curtains in your house, or do you remember anything about that?

**MR. SISK:** I don't think so. But I don't recall that she did or didn't.

**MR. JACOBY:** Was it standard Army color inside, or did your father paint it?

**MR. SISK:** Well, the walls were -- no, no, no. Back then you didn't paint quarters, you know, and took them as they were. And you left them, you know, as you found them. No, it wasn't -- the Army wasn't that sensitive to personal, you know, schemes and things back then.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did your mother plant flowers outside or a garden?

**MR. SISK:** Yeah, yeah, she had some flowers out front, yeah, she sure did.

**MR. JACOBY:** What about a vegetable garden?

**MR. SISK:** No. No, we didn't do that.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you remember anyone having a garden?

**MR. SISK:** No, I don't. I think -- I think somebody tried. There was a hill behind our house, just to the west of the road, and there were some door-less garages up there, and I think somebody tried to plant a garden up there one time, but that would have been right -- let's see, it would have been right up in this area.

**MR. JACOBY:** You're pointing to the southeastern part of the island.

**MR. SISK:** Right.

**MR. JACOBY:** Right.

**MR. SISK:** Yeah. There was a hill here and --

**MR. JACOBY:** Did your dad own a car?

**MR. SISK:** Yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** Where did he keep it?

**MR. SISK:** In one of those garages, he was assigned one of those spaces there.

**MR. JACOBY:** What kind of car was it, do you remember?

**MR. SISK:** At first we had a '48 Chrysler, and then we got a '53 or '54 -- '53 or '54 Dodge.

**MR. JACOBY:** And where would he go with it?

**MR. SISK:** Well --

**MR. JACOBY:** Not much place on the island to drive.

**MR. SISK:** No, he usually walked to work which wasn't that far. We usually walked anywhere on the island we wanted to go. It was only -- I think the whole island's like 80 acres or something, it's not that big.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did your mom drive?

**MR. SISK:** No.

**MR. JACOBY:** No?

**MR. SISK:** She did when we were much, much younger, like when I was a baby. We were much younger, out of necessity, because my father was in the second World War, and he was stationed in Italy at that time. But, everybody that knew her said they were afraid to ride with her. So, after he came back he did all the driving anywhere we went.

**MR. JACOBY:** Describe for me a typical day for your mother.

**MR. SISK:** She usually tried to work at the Post Exchange, which was this building right here, number --

**MR. JACOBY:** Building 70.

**MR. SISK:** -- 70, yeah. That was a two-story building which housed the post exchange upstairs, and a barber shop. And downstairs was a snack bar and one other small shop of some kind. I don't remember.

**MR. JACOBY:** What did she do there?

**MR. SISK:** She worked as a clerk in the Post Exchange.

**MR. JACOBY:** She saw you off to school and --

**MR. SISK:** Yeah.

**MR. JACOBY:** -- then she went to work herself.

**MR. SISK:** We got picked up and it was an Army bus that picked us up and --

**MR. JACOBY:** You didn't walk to the dock?

**MR. SISK:** Not very often. Occasionally we would, but if we did that we'd just meet the bus there.

**MR. JACOBY:** Were you accompanied by any adults on the ferry?

**MR. SISK:** Just the driver.

**MR. JACOBY:** Just the ferry captain or --

**MR. SISK:** Yeah, well, yeah, sure, there was a crew and captain. But if we -- if we were going off either by ourselves or something, there was no relative with us or anything like that, usually. But they would drive us -- drive to the different schools in town and pick us up and bring us back. So the Army provided that bus service.

**MR. JACOBY:** What school did you attend?

**MR. SISK:** We started at Jefferson Elementary School, which is still there. Did Bob tell you that we were in New Rochelle a year-and-a-half ago?

**MR. JACOBY:** In 2005?

**MR. SISK:** Yeah. Yeah. We started at Jefferson -- well, let's see. Let me take that back. I started at Blessed Sacrament, because I'd gone to a Catholic school when the school was at -- when the Chaplain School was at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. And we thought we got a better education there. So I started at Blessed Sacrament Elementary School in New Rochelle, and then transferred over to Jefferson.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you remember why?

**MR. SISK:** Yeah, I do.

**MR. JACOBY:** Yeah?

**MR. SISK:** I had been sick for about six months in '49, the winter of '49. I caught mononucleosis when the GIs were coming back from Asia. And at the time they didn't know very much about it, or that particular strain of it. And I was -- so I was sick for about six months, and you know, fell behind in school. So when we went to New York and enrolled in Blessed Sacrament, one of the nuns there had grabbed me by the ear, and pulled my hair, and told me I was the dumbest kid she had ever seen.

**MR. JACOBY:** What precipitated that?

**MR. SISK:** Well, I guess I wasn't, you know, reacting to what she wanted or as quickly as she wanted, or whatever. To give you another example of that, I wasn't used to the language, because one of the nuns who was a very nice lady, asked me to bring some books to the library. Well, I stood there with them in my hand -- in my hands by her desk. And after a minute or so, she said, well, what are you waiting for? And I said, oh, I thought you wanted me to bring these with you to go to the library, but she meant just bring them, as northern's mean to go ahead and take them on.

So, you know, there were a lot of things that may have precipitated that. I guess I wasn't responding to her very well, or whatever. But my mother came in, of course, and that was the end of that. And we went to public school from then -- or I did. Which is too bad in a way, because, you know, we were exposed to Latin and all of those things that would have been much more useful to me later in life, as I know now.

We went to Jefferson, and let's see, started there in the third grade, through the sixth. And when to Isaac Young Junior High School at the time, now it's Isaac Young Middle School, I think. Still there though. And then, first half of '59 I went to New Rochelle High, high school.

**MR. JACOBY:** And then your father --

**MR. SISK:** He retired.

**MR. JACOBY:** -- retired from the Army and you moved?

**MR. SISK:** We moved to Concord, North Carolina.

**MR. JACOBY:** Um-hum. Were there ever times when you were stuck on the mainland because of bad weather because the ferry couldn't get across?

**MR. SISK:** No. There were a few times when we were -- when the ferry was delayed for one reason or another. Or it could not -- could not leave for one reason. They usually operated two ferries. One going, one coming, during the day. After 6 p.m. they cut it to one.

The only thing I remember about the ferries, in particular about the ferries, was the winter of '57, I think it was, the Sound froze over. And of course, the Long Island Sound and salt water, that's quite a feat, you know. And they had to keep the ferries going all night long, and they brought a Coast Guard cutter up from New York City to run, that had a reinforced bow on it and all.

**MR. JACOBY:** To break the ice?

**MR. SISK:** To run, to make sure the ferries could go. It was a very cold winter that winter.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did anyone venture on the ice to the mainland?

**MR. SISK:** Not that I know of. I don't think that anybody did. I just remember that they had to keep the ferries and that ice cutter going, or that Coast Guard cutter.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you tend to stick with the kids from Slocum or did you have friends in New Rochelle?

**MR. SISK:** No, I had a few friends, there was Hiram Taylor was a friend of mine. We were at Jefferson together and went on and I started playing football at Isaac Young, and that's when I found out that -- I got hit one time and couldn't get up for quite a while, and that's when I found out one of my vertebrae -- or two of my vertebrae are fused, been that way since birth, but I didn't know it until that time. And the doctor told my parents that if I continued to play football I could be crippled for life. So that was the end of that. But he played football and we hung around together. And there were some others, and I was trying to remember some names the other day, and it's just really hard.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did they ever come over to the island to play?

**MR. SISK:** No, not to -- they would come over for special events like Armed Forces Day and things like that. Rarely can I remember anybody ever coming over just to play, even when I was younger. It wasn't a closed post by any means. People from New Rochelle could certainly come over. But I just don't remember that happening very often.

**MR. JACOBY:** Tell me what it was like being a kid at Fort Slocum?

**MR. SISK:** Well, you know, since you contacted me I've been thinking about this quite a bit, and really it was very, very nice. The drawbacks were, of course, you weren't exposed to very many people of your own age in a social setting. You got that at school. But we were pretty much protected. We didn't have thugs or anything roaming the island, you know. It was closed in that respect. I mean, they just didn't let -- and the MPs were on both docks and didn't -- just didn't let everybody on.

**MR. JACOBY:** Were there areas off limits to you as a child?

**MR. SISK:** No, not really. The didn't want us -- there were so old -- old caves that they built back in the Civil War that were gun battery caves to fire out into Long Island Sound. And they didn't want us down there much, but we went anyway, you know. That was one of our play areas. We didn't -- we found enough to do on our own without worrying too much about how much mischief we could get into. The Armed Forces School, which was these couple of buildings here --

**MR. JACOBY:** You're point to 61 --

**MR. SISK:** Sixty-one and 62, and I think 60, these may have been barracks. I think the main school -- I'm sorry, these two buildings, 60 and 59 was the school. But in Building 60, in the basement they had a carpentry shop with a lot of tools and things, you know, power tools. The fellow that ran the place, the only name I can remember is his first name, and his first name was Clem. And he was an older guy, but he would let us come down and show us some things about carpentry and stuff. Of course, he made all the visual aids for the Armed Forces Information School. And Sergeant Ambine, (phonetic) I told you about, Rudy Ambine, he made the visual aids for the Chaplain School. But Clem was very good and he made big signs, and three-dimensional signs with the letters that stuck out about three inches, you know, very good.

**MR. JACOBY:** Were there organized activities for kids like softball and --

**MR. SISK:** Yeah, we -- no, not so much that, we did that on our own. But there was Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts.

**MR. JACOBY:** So, you had your own troop on the island?

**MR. SISK:** Yeah. Yeah. As a matter of fact in one of these books I found a ticket to the Army, Virginia game in '53, I think.

**MR. JACOBY:** You had an organized trip up to West Point?

**MR. SISK:** The Boy Scouts went up there and saw the game, which was my introduction to West Point, and I fell in love with the place. And then later we went to a couple of other games too. But, West Point was only about 60 miles from us.

**MR. JACOBY:** Was there some sort of teen club that you could use?

**MR. SISK:** Yeah, we had our teen club.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you remember what building that was in?

**MR. SISK:** That was in the basement of -- I want to say that was in the basement of the Post headquarters.

**MR. JACOBY:** And what was in that?

**MR. SISK:** Not too much. There were some chairs, a ping-pong table or so. No pool table. Some couches, record players. And that was usually chaperoned by some of the mothers there.

**MR. JACOBY:** Were there dances?

**MR. SISK:** I think they tried once or twice, but it didn't go over too -- you know, most of the time we would get together. There were a group of us that ranged in age from 17 to 13, that kind of hung around together.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you try and follow your brother, Bob to do what he was doing?

**MR. SISK:** No, not too much. Not really. I'm sure I hung around when I was younger, I'm sure I hung around when he didn't want me to. But we kind of did our own thing, pretty much, up there. He had different friends, of course. Well, he had older friends than I had. And then he went -- he went away in, I want to say '57, to a military school. And then he came back about six months later, was there for just a little while and then he joined the Army.

**MR. JACOBY:** Whereabouts --



**MR. SISK:** Or, no, no -- I'm sorry, he went to North Carolina. He came down here and stayed with my mother's first cousin and his wife.

**MR. JACOBY:** To finish high school?

**MR. SISK:** Finish high school down here, and then he would join the Army in '58.

**MR. JACOBY:** What about swimming and boating activities, was there plenty of that?

**MR. SISK:** Plenty of that. Referring to your map again, our quarters were what's numbered now 104, back then it was 32-B. The enlisted beach was this area right in here --

**MR. JACOBY:** Um-hum, the east side?

**MR. SISK:** -- yeah, the east side of the island, just parallel to the drill and athletic field. The officers' beach area was about in here, on the west side of the island.

**MR. JACOBY:** Could you go there?

**MR. SISK:** Yeah, and often did. Which was surprising but -- for that particular time in the history of the Army, because as you may have known, or found out, enlisted and officer ranks were very segregated.

**MR. JACOBY:** Well, tell me more about that. How did -- how did the officer and enlisted separation affect the kids of officers and NCOs?

**MR. SISK:** Well, since that was one of the nice things about Fort Slocum, since there were so few children, the adults kind of accepted that we would all hang out together, for lack of a better term, that we would play together and we would do things together and that kind of a thing. And they kind of suspended the very harsh separation of ranks between enlisted and officer for that aspect of our lives.

**MR. JACOBY:** At larger posts, would the children of officers not associate with the children of NCO's?

**MR. SISK:** Not necessarily. We were at Carlisle Barracks prior to going to Fort Slocum, the Chaplain was there for four-and-a-half years. Carlisle Barracks was a fairly large post, much bigger than Fort Slocum. And there were scout troops there that we were involved in, of course, I was much younger, but there were scout troops there that we were involved in, the swimming pool, there was one major swimming pool by the athletic stadium, and everybody went there.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you think that the -- at Slocum, do you think the Post CO knew who you were?

**MR. SISK:** Who I individually was?

**MR. JACOBY:** Your name, um-hum?

**MR. SISK:** No. I don't think so.

**MR. JACOBY:** No? Were you ever in the house?

**MR. SISK:** I was in his quarters. Yeah. Yeah.

**MR. JACOBY:** What was the occasion for?

**MR. SISK:** Well, Colonel Brown who was there for a while, and I don't remember exactly when, I don't know if you have a history of Post Commanders or not, but Colonel Brown was there for a while, and his son, Rastus (phonetic) was probably a year younger than...

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(End of Side A).

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**MR. SISK:** ...Rastus, of course, were in his house at that level. And then later on when -- I can't -- may have been Colonel Coch, C-o-c-h. I think he had a daughter named Nina, and Nina was about Bob's age, but we -- Nina and I got along very well. I was about four years, maybe three years her junior. But we got along very well, and she invited me to their house a couple of times.

Right next to them, Colonel Morrison lived, in -- of course, they had Building 1, which was this -- that was the Post Commander's house. And then Colonel Morrison lived in one of these two, I don't remember --

**MR. JACOBY:** Two or three? Building 2 or 3?

**MR. SISK:** Yeah, it was either two or three. And he had a son named Steven and one named Michael, I think. Mike was about my age, and Steve was about maybe a year older than us.

**MR. JACOBY:** Would there be picnics or get-togethers between NCO families?

**MR. SISK:** Yeah, you know, back then the service club was very active in providing things for the troops, for the enlisted troops particularly. And they would organize weenie roasts and things like that on the beach. A lot of activity like that. We often went to the Service Club, which was the building right beside the Post Exchange, which was Building 71. We'd go up to the Service Club, which was a three-story building, including the basement type story. There were pool tables, there were games, there were things you could check out to do. There were very, very early model machine games.

**MR. JACOBY:** Pinball?

**MR. SISK:** Like pinball, or they had one where you could shoot down airplanes or something. And it cost about a nickel, I think to play it. It had those things --

**MR. JACOBY:** Was there a movie theater?

**MR. SISK:** Yes, there was. That was down -- that was Building 57, down here.

**MR. JACOBY:** How often were movies shown?

**MR. SISK:** Every night, I believe.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you have to pay?

**MR. SISK:** Yes. I think children's tickets were a dime, and adults were either 15 or 25, I don't remember.

**MR. JACOBY:** Would you frequently go?

**MR. SISK:** Yeah. Well, not -- probably not with any -- you couldn't say you'd go to two or three every week, but I went to several. And then they would -- the USO would organize name people to come in and entertain in the same building.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you remember who?

**MR. SISK:** They had a stage -- yeah, the one I remember particularly was Vaughn Monroe. I don't know if you're familiar with him or not. Vaughn Monroe was a very popular singer back in the '40s and '50s. Had a very -- had a deep rich voice, "Ghost Riders in the Sky" is one of his songs. But, Chesterfield Cigarettes would sponsor these people to come in and put on shows and there were others, but I don't -- he's the one I remember most. And then they would throw out these little sample packets of cigarettes to the audience, four cigarettes in them. Of course, they were filter-less back then. Chesterfield cigarettes.

**MR. JACOBY:** I'd like to ask you about some of the traditions on the island. Tell me about retreat?

**MR. SISK:** Traditions followed military traditions everywhere back then. There was reveille at 6 and retreat at 5. Retreat is a bugle call, as you may have heard which signifies that they're bringing the flag down for the evening. You're not supposed to display an American flag, at night, unless it's lighted. So they -- every Army post brought it down at night. They were usually live buglers that sounded these calls, and any other bugle call that was being used at the time. There was mess call, there was pay call, once a month, and there was, of course, retreat and reveille. I believe there, though, they didn't have a live bugler. They used a record. But they'd fire the cannon at retreat and bring the flag down.

**MR. JACOBY:** And what would happen at retreat?

**MR. SISK:** Everybody stops. No matter where you are on the island, if you're in your car, if you're walking, everybody stops and faces the flag pole, and if you're in uniform you salute, otherwise you just stand at attention.

**MR. JACOBY:** And children were well trained and --

**MR. SISK:** Children were indoctrinated into that. You know, you just picked things up. I mean nobody -- well, I mean, somebody may have said along the way, you know, stand still or something like that. But if you're with your father or something, and retreat sounds, you know, he's going to turn around and salute. So, you pick those kinds of things up. So, it just becomes part of what you do.

**MR. JACOBY:** Was there special ceremony or reverence to the flag pole?

**MR. SISK:** No, not --

**MR. JACOBY:** The flag itself?

**MR. SISK:** None other than the fact that it was the symbol of our country, and you know, military are sworn to protect the country. So, I don't know that the military has any more over -- I don't know the word I'm looking for, but I don't think it regards the flag any more preciously than many people do, you know.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you recall seeing troops drilling or on parade?

**MR. SISK:** Yeah, both. My father, as I said earlier, was in charge of drill for the chaplain students and the enlisted detachment that was there at the school. Also, the students that came to the other schools would, you know, drill up on the parade field or on the athletic field. There were organized parades at times for various reasons. Commanding officers leaving, or, you know, and the new one coming in.

**MR. JACOBY:** Was there a post band that would play?

**MR. SISK:** You know, there was, and it's funny you mentioned that, because I didn't think about that until just now, there was a small band. Yeah, there sure was.

**MR. JACOBY:** And where would they play and why, and when?

**MR. SISK:** Up at the -- usually at parades, that was about it. There may have been other times that I wasn't aware of. Officer's Club may have had them play for dances or something, but I don't know that to be true. But there was, there was a small band, come to think of it.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you ever eat at the mess hall?

**MR. SISK:** Yes. Usually the holiday meals, Thanksgiving, at least Thanksgiving, and usually Christmas.

**MR. JACOBY:** Describe a Thanksgiving meal.

**MR. SISK:** Oh, all out. Of course, they fed all the troops and many of the families ate there, turkey, and ham, and mashed potatoes and dressing, peas and candy and nuts, and well decorated.

**MR. JACOBY:** And the Post CO would be there?

**MR. SISK:** Oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah. That was -- the mess hall was open to all of the units there. It was in, let's see if I can remember correctly now. I think this was the mess hall. One of these two buildings, 68 or 67 was the mess hall, and I don't remember which, but it was one of those two.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did your dad eat lunch at the mess hall or would he come home?

**MR. SISK:** I don't think so. Well, I was usually at school, so, the days I might have been off from school that he was working, I don't -- I don't know where he ate lunch to tell you the truth.

**MR. JACOBY:** Now, you said that you ate at the mess hall, would you go there other than holidays, like sneak in or -- did you know the mess sergeant, or some of the men --

**MR. SISK:** No, no, no. Usually we didn't. We may have gone up there a time or two. I don't remember. The mess hall, other than the holiday meals, I remember supplied sandwiches for the baseball team, and I was the bat boy for the baseball team. And I remember one time we went down to Ebbets Field where the Dodgers played, which of course, is long since gone. Went down to Ebbets Field and played an exhibition game with the Dodgers and they supplied meatloaf sandwiches with mustard on them for the trip.

**MR. JACOBY:** Now, you say you played against the Dodgers themselves?

**MR. SISK:** Well, the baseball team did. Yeah, I was the bat boy.

**MR. JACOBY:** Uh-huh. So, did you meet any of the Dodgers?

**MR. SISK:** I'm sure I did. I'm sure I did, but I wasn't aware enough at the time. I was kind of caught up in being the bat boy, and I wasn't aware enough to get any autographs or anything like that. I know my dad went down to several games, professional games at, probably, the Yankee Stadium and Ebbets Field.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you recall going into New York City for other things?

**MR. SISK:** Yes. I remember when we were in -- I'm going to try and get this right now. I think I was in the sixth -- I was either in sixth grade, or the seventh grade, we went down to New York City, had a tour of the City, and went to the museum of art and the museum of history, had lunch and came back. Another time we went down, and I believe this was in junior high school, probably my -- probably eighth grade, went down to the opera, New York opera house, and saw --

**MR. JACOBY:** How'd you like that?

**MR. SISK:** -- well, I thought it was great, but then you know, rock-n-roll was coming in and all Elvis and all of that stuff. So... We saw *Rigoletto* and they would do -- the schools would do things like that in that era. You know, take advantage of the City and the cultural things that it had to offer. Now, if the kids get a field trip is usually to the mall or something, buy Christmas gifts for the teachers or whatever.

**MR. JACOBY:** As you got older would you go down to the City by yourself or with friends?

**MR. SISK:** I did. When I was 13 years old I went down and walked around Broadway by myself. I can remember that very clearly. Don't know that I'd do that today, but I did when I was 13.

**MR. JACOBY:** What do you remember about that?

**MR. SISK:** I just remember all the theaters and you know, the hustle-bustle, and mainly that. All the shops, and you know, the stores and things.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did your parents go into the City?

**MR. SISK:** Not too often. Not that I recall. Usually we did any shopping that we had to do off post, you know, for things that we couldn't get, like furniture and things, was done in New Rochelle. I don't know that they went to the City very much. My father was not a -- he was not an educated man, I mean, other than -- he was smart, I mean, don't get me wrong, but he wasn't culturally inclined. His idea of going to the City might have been going to a baseball game. My mother, of course, liked movies and she was somewhat educated beyond high school, and liked certain movies. But she would go to New Rochelle, maybe, and see certain ones. There were two theaters in New Rochelle as you -- I don't know how familiar with New Rochelle, but there were two theaters, one right across the street from each other. They're still there.

**MR. JACOBY:** Describe your memory of what New Rochelle was like.

**MR. SISK:** New Rochelle was very clean at the time, very clean, bustling, large town. Of course I went there much more, especially as I got in my teenage years, I went there much more than into New York. Although it was very easy to get to New York, you know, it was very easy to get to New Rochelle too. And New Rochelle had just about everything I was interested in as a teenager. So, I spent a lot of time -- it was a clean -- I remember it being fairly clean. I mean, it wasn't as clean as some cities I've been in, but it was fairly clean and --

**MR. JACOBY:** Did it strike you as being upper class? Or working class?

**MR. SISK:** Well, you know, I wasn't very attuned to that -- to the classes back there. I had my friends, some of which -- some of whom's parents were rich, and some weren't. Some were working class and others were in the entertainment industry. As you may well know, New Rochelle was a bedroom community for the entertainment industry of New York back then. A lot of stars lived in New Rochelle, or Westchester County.

But I wasn't very tuned into that back then.

**MR. JACOBY:** Your father was a Sergeant for the Chaplain School.

**MR. SISK:** Chaplain's school. Um-hum.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did that put extra emphasis on your family to attend chapel?

**MR. SISK:** No.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you attend chapel?

**MR. SISK:** We did, but it wasn't because of that. There was a chapel which wasn't far from our quarters. It's this building here, 108, which is still standing, or at least it was when we were up there. That was the Post Chapel.

**MR. JACOBY:** Is that where you attended services?

**MR. SISK:** Went there a few times, but later we got involved with a Lutheran church in the Bronx, in the northern part of the Bronx. It was a high Lutheran church, which is about as close to the Catholic church as you could get. We were confirmed there, my brother and I both were. Several of the -- well, a few of the other kids were too. One of the Colonel's -- or two of the Colonel's daughters were in our same class. And so we started there, going there.

**MR. JACOBY:** Would it be every Sunday, or nearly every --

**MR. SISK:** I was an altar boy for a while. I remember going fairly regularly for a while. I don't recall my parents attending that regularly, except maybe my father to pick me up or something.

**MR. JACOBY:** So how did you get to the Bronx?

**MR. SISK:** He'd take us. Yeah. He'd take me. I think that lasted, you know, I want to say probably six months. And then kind of petered out, for whatever reason, I don't know.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you recall what kind of meals your mother prepared for you?

**MR. SISK:** She was a pretty good cook. We would have various things.

**MR. JACOBY:** She got most of the food at the commissary?

**MR. SISK:** Yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did she ever shop in New Rochelle for any reason?

**MR. SISK:** Not for food. For things that we couldn't get. There was only a limited supply. The Post Exchange was pretty small and just didn't carry very many things. So, clothing, furniture, things like that we had to buy in New Rochelle. Food we got at the commissary. And I wanted to say there was a bakery on Post, but there wasn't. That was -- that was the Carlisle Barracks, there was a bakery there, Post bakery.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you have any summer jobs, odd jobs?

**MR. SISK:** Yep, sure did. In the bottom of the theater building, which was 57, there was a bowling alley, had eight lanes in it, I think, and the pins were set by hand, and I did that for a while.

**MR. JACOBY:** How much would you make?

**MR. SISK:** Ten cents a line, ten cents a game, basically. And -- had to get a Social Security card to do that.

**MR. JACOBY:** Who paid you? The bowlers themselves or --

**MR. SISK:** The bowling alley did. No, the bowling alley did. They would tally up. And then the real money came on league night. And you know, they'd tip you. And sometimes they'd tip you during the normal bowling, but usually league night they'd tip you pretty well. And I think we had a -- it was either 15 cents or a quarter a line then, something like that. But it was pins were set by hand initially, and after a couple months they got the pin-setting machines in, which all you did was take the pins and put them in the machine and then manually set the machine down and it spotted the pins where they needed to go. But you still had to pick the ball up and send it back by hand. So, I had that job.

Later on I worked for a while, very short while, there was an Italian guy who had a cleaning shop in the basement of one of the barracks buildings, right across from the Post Exchange, and I worked for him for a while. Did odd jobs. When the reserves would come in in the summer they would pay people to make their beds up and stuff for them in the barracks, and paid pretty good for that. So, what the enlisted soldiers didn't get then we got, you know.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did your dad give you an allowance?

**MR. SISK:** They did sporadically. It wasn't -- I guess they did more than not, more often than not. But it wasn't a sure-fire thing every time. You know, I'm sure they had money problems too bringing up kids and --

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you remember what your father's pay was?

**MR. SISK:** No, I don't. Sure don't. That's one area we didn't get into.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you ever get the sense that money was tight or was there always the feeling that you had what you needed?

**MR. SISK:** I think at times it was. My mother's working certainly helped. But we, you know, we'd take vacations and things. We would travel.

**MR. JACOBY:** Where would you go?

**MR. SISK:** One time we went to Quebec, Canada. Traveled up through Vermont and up through that way.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you camp while you were doing that, or stay in --

**MR. SISK:** No, we would stay in motels. Then, of course there was a time of two that we would travel down to Shelby, North Carolina.

**MR. JACOBY:** You still had relations there?

**MR. SISK:** Yeah. Oh, yeah, yeah, most of my father's people were there, lived there, his brothers, his sisters, aunts and uncles, I think his mother and father had died earlier on before he went in the Army. He went in the Army in 1928 when he was 17, I think. One of his relatives had to sign for him to go in. But, we traveled, I mean, we went to -- you know, even went back to Pennsylvania a couple times.

**MR. JACOBY:** To Carlisle?

**MR. SISK:** Yeah, we went to Carlisle, Harrisburg and all.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you have a dog?

**MR. SISK:** Yep. Her name was Lady. She was a mixed cocker and spitz. She was primarily white.

**MR. JACOBY:** Were there many dogs on the island?

**MR. SISK:** No more than --

**MR. JACOBY:** Were there regulations about having a pet?

**MR. SISK:** No. No. No, it was an individual family choice type thing, you know.

**MR. JACOBY:** When you moved from Post to Post did you bring the dog with you or --

**MR. SISK:** We brought Lady with us when we left. But that's the only animal I can ever remember bringing. I know when we first started with the Chaplain School at Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, in '45, dad - - so I was three years old, but dad somewhere along the line picked up a German Shepard and that dog scared me to death. But we didn't take it when we left there and went to Carlisle Barracks, we didn't take the dog with us. I don't remember having a pet at Carlisle. But we got Lady later on at Fort Slocum.

**MR. JACOBY:** You -- your father retired in --

**MR. SISK:** '59.

**MR. JACOBY:** -- '59.

**MR. SISK:** January.

**MR. JACOBY:** Is that when you left Fort Slocum?

**MR. SISK:** Yeah.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you go back to Fort Slocum after that?

**MR. SISK:** I went back about a year later. I worked at a drug store in Concord, North Carolina and saved as much money as I could and I went back for a short visit. And then in 1980 when I was going to a drug enforcement school, I was with the Army Criminal Investigation Division, CID, I was going to a supervisor's school in Washington -- I'm sorry, 1979, I went to a Hostage Negotiation School in New York City and they were pretty much the experts at the time, and my wife went with me, and when we left there, it was a week-long course, when we left there we drove up to New Rochelle and out to the dock area, New Rochelle dock area.

And I talked to some City workers, utility workers who were there, and they said the Post, you know, there's no way to get out to the Post. And the guy told me you wouldn't want to go out there anyway, it's all torn down, it's falling down, in big disrepair. And he said he could remember as a kid going out there on Armed Forces Day and all. And he said it would break your heart to go out there. So, that's as close as I got, and that was in 1979. And then a few years ago, Bob connected with the Corps of Engineers and we ended up going up there and actually going out on the island with them.

**MR. JACOBY:** What was your reaction seeing the place?

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(End of Tape No. 1).

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**MR. JACOBY:** Continue with your description of the island as you saw it in 2005.

**MR. SISK:** Yeah. Most of the buildings were pretty dilapidated by then. The Post Commander's quarters, Quarters 1, was still standing but showed signs of probably not very much longer. The chapel was still there, all four walls were still standing. Most of the roof was still on it. Most of the quarters, and the quarters we lived in had fallen down by then.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you walk into your quarters?

**MR. SISK:** No. There were some safety concerns on the part of the Corps of Engineers and since we were there at their invitation we didn't want to get too far out of line. But I would have loved to have picked something up from there, but we could only get within about 15 feet or so of them.

**MR. JACOBY:** It was quite overgrown?

**MR. SISK:** Yeah. It was very overgrown. More so up on the parade ground than around the quarters. But, there was some pretty dense growth there too. We did get back to the gun caves. That was something my brother, Bob, was particularly interested in doing. Because being two years older he was a little more aware of, you know, what was going on than I was.

So, we did go back in there. They did allow us to go into there. And then we left that area and walked -- walked up the east side of the parade field and it was very overgrown then. The Service Club was still standing. Service Club had four columns out in front of it, it was a very nice building. I'm sure in an earlier life it was probably something else, but I remember it as the Service Club. A few of the other buildings were still standing. Part of the Chaplain School was still standing. I think the west wall area was still standing. Post headquarters was pretty much intact. Probably wouldn't have wanted to go inside of it, but the building itself was pretty much intact.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you get the sense that here was a great resource, that something could have been done with, and nothing was, or was it just inevitable?

**MR. SISK:** Yeah, you know, if somebody said, here's all the money you need, do something with this, I would turn that place into a university campus, college campus, and rebuild some of the buildings that you would need, including some of the larger buildings. That's what I would do with it. And keep it a ferry service, not build a bridge to it. I think part of the discussion when we were there was they were thinking about building a bridge from New Rochelle to there, but keep it a ferry service so as to keep it a little more private, and have a school there. That's what I would have done with it.

**MR. JACOBY:** Compare your experiences at Fort Slocum to the other posts that you lived at, both as a kid and as an adult.

**MR. SISK:** Okay. Well, I've been in quite a few places as an adult. We moved around a lot more than we did as a -- when I was a child, because we only went to Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia for a short time, Carlisle Barracks, four-and-a-half years, Fort Slocum, nine years. And just a few years after that I was in the Army on my own.

**MR. JACOBY:** When did you enlist?

**MR. SISK:** I went in right after high school in 1961, in June. I was in the Army National Guard in Concord. I went in for six-months training, got out, or came back from that, met my wife. We were married in '62, February. In September I went on the active duty Army and from then on I was in the Army.

**MR. JACOBY:** Your father was a professional soldier, you lived at bases growing up.

**MR. SISK:** Right.

**MR. JACOBY:** That must have certainly influenced your decision to enter the Army.

**MR. SISK:** Yeah.

**MR. JACOBY:** When you would speak with people and say that you served at Fort Slocum, did they even know where that was?

**MR. SISK:** Not many people do. Very few people -- I haven't talked to anybody in several years who even knew of its existence, outside of New Rochelle or something like that.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you remember the first time you saw the island?

**MR. SISK:** Yeah, we drove up from Carlisle. We got there in the evening. It was starting to get dark, so it was in -- you know, I want to say -- well, I don't know. I don't remember what time of year we went

there. But it was starting to get dark. The couple next door to us, the Hattens (phonetic), he was also in the Chaplain School, they got there before us and already set their quarters up, they had us over for dinner.

The next day the bottling companies in New Rochelle had all gotten together and they brought us four cases of soft drinks, out to every set of quarters to welcome, you know. There was a lot that New Rochelle did to try and welcome the re-opening of Fort Slocum, and welcome the people that were going to be there. I was very happy about it. I thought it was a great place.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you get the sense from your dad, maybe in later years -- did you get the sense from your father, speaking with him later, that for him being posted to Fort Slocum was special?

**MR. SISK:** No. We didn't talk much about, you know, his career or anything like that.

**MR. JACOBY:** He was there a long time, was that unusual?

**MR. SISK:** Yes. In fact, he had orders when the Korean War broke out, he had orders at one time to go to Korea, and he got out of that and stayed at Slocum.

**MR. JACOBY:** What about your mom, did you feel that she felt comfortable at Slocum?

**MR. SISK:** Yeah, I think she was happy there. She was -- several of the people that were at Carlisle, of course, moved with the school up to Fort Slocum and she knew a lot of those folks.

**MR. JACOBY:** It was somewhat isolated, but at the same time, if she wanted cultural things in the City she could get it.

**MR. SISK:** Oh, yeah. She could easily --

**MR. JACOBY:** So that was her feeling?

**MR. SISK:** Yeah, we were 20 minutes from New York City by train. So, she could get anything she wanted like that. I mean, if she needed anything. They played cards, canasta and stuff, and the senior NCOs, we all lived there pretty much in the same set of housing area, associated with each other. So -- and junior NCOs stayed away. There was only a few of those who were considered family friends. One was a Corporal and he was Irish by birth, very likeable fellow, and very knowledgeable, very smart man.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did your parents keep up the friendships after he retired with people that were at Slocum?

**MR. SISK:** There was some correspondence that I'm aware of. And of course, when he died several of those people came to his funeral.

**MR. JACOBY:** What year did he die?

**MR. SISK:** '73. So he was 63 when he died. But several of those people, including the Chief of Chaplains came down for the service.

**MR. JACOBY:** That's quite an honor?

**MR. SISK:** Yeah, well, we think so. Yeah.

**MR. JACOBY:** Well, Tom Sisk, I'd like to thank you very much for participating in this oral history project.

**MR. SISK:** That's quite all right. I was glad to do it and anything else I can do, you know where to get a hold of me.

**MR. JACOBY:** Thank you.

**MR. SISK:** Good.

(End of Interview).



C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Paula Brokaw, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and accurate transcript of the taped proceedings as transcribed by me on the date hereinbefore set forth, to the best of my ability.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dated: November 10, 2007 Paula Brokaw  
Agency Typist



**MR. JACOBY:** ...representing Tetra Tech EC, and I'm speaking today with Chris and Ed Vincik in Rancho Santa Fe, California on December 16, 2007. This interview is part of a program sponsored by the United States Army Corps of Engineers and the New Rochelle Public Library, to collect oral histories about the experiences and memories of people who are associated with the former US Army Post, Fort Slocum, located on Davids Island in New Rochelle, New York.

Well, thank you Ed and Chris for inviting me here to talk about --

**MR. VINCIAK:** You're welcome.

**MS. VINCIAK:** It's our pleasure.

**MR. JACOBY:** Ed, can you tell me when you were at Fort Slocum?

**MR. VINCIAK:** 1940 --

**MS. VINCIAK:** '48.

**MR. VINCIAK:** '46 to '48?

**MS. VINCIAK:** '48.

**MR. JACOBY:** What branch of the military were you in?

**MR. VINCIAK:** First Air Force.

**MR. JACOBY:** And what was your rank?

**MR. VINCIAK:** Staff Sergeant. I got out Staff Sergeant.

**MR. JACOBY:** Can you tell me, what was your impression of the island? What did it look like?

**MR. VINCIAK:** It was wonderful. It was a pleasure being there.

**MR. JACOBY:** Uh-huh. Did you live in a barracks?

**MR. VINCIAK:** Yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** And what were your duties? What was your assignment while you were there?

**MR. VINCIAK:** I was first -- I mean, excuse me.

**MS. VINCIAK:** AG Library.

**MR. VINCIAK:** Hum?

**MS. VINCIAK:** AG Publications Library.

**MR. VINCIAK:** Publications, you know, with the First Air Force.

**MR. JACOBY:** Um-hum. Chris, when was the first time you saw Fort Slocum?

**MS. VINCIAK:** I saw Fort Slocum in 1949.

**MR. JACOBY:** What was your impression of the island?

**MS. VINCIAK:** I thought it was a very beautiful island. I was very happy to work there. Everyone was so pleasant. We had good clean air, and we were all happy.

**MR. JACOBY:** What was your assignment there? What were your duties?

**MS. VINCIAK:** I worked for several places when I was hired. I worked for the Adjutant General, the Provost Marshal, and then Director of Intelligence.

**MR. JACOBY:** And was this all for the Air Force?

**MS. VINCIAK:** Yes, First Air Force.

**MR. JACOBY:** So, who did you report to?

**MS. VINCIAK:** I reported to a few officers in each job. I remember mainly Captain Flynn at the time. And I worked also with Mr. Salerno, he was a civilian in one job, and I can't recall the Adjutant General's office.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you remember what building you worked in?

**MS. VINCIAK:** It was -- it was all near the garrison near the water.

**MR. JACOBY:** If I showed you a map would you be able to point out the building?

**MS. VINCIAK:** Yes. Yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** Okay. Here's a map of the island. Here were the docks.

**MS. VINCIAK:** Yeah, we were -- we were --

**MR. JACOBY:** The Post Headquarters was Building 13 up here.

**MS. VINCIAK:** The parade

**MR. JACOBY:** And this rectangle is the parade field.

**MS. VINCIAK:** It wasn't near the quartermaster, it was up further.

**MR. JACOBY:** So --

**MS. VINCIAK:** Isn't the -- it's kind of hard. Well, we were near the barracks, really.

**MR. JACOBY:** Um-hum. The barracks were on this side. So, maybe one of these buildings perhaps.

**MS. VINCIAK:** Yeah. I think 56 may ring a bell. Do you remember the barracks? All right.

**MR. JACOBY:** Now, what years did you work there, Chris?

**MS. VINCIAK:** '49 to '51.

**MR. JACOBY:** And then you returned at some point?

**MS. VINCIAK:** First Air Force moved to Mitchel Field, and I went to Mitchel Field in '51.

**MR. JACOBY:** Um-hum. And was that the last time you ever saw Fort Slocum?

**MS. VINCIAK:** No. I went to California when he was discharged, then I returned to Mamaroneck 1954, and then I went to Slocum and worked for the military personnel, but they also had the Chaplain School there.

**MR. JACOBY:** And what did you do there?

**MS. VINCIAK:** I worked for Director of Intelligence.

**MR. JACOBY:** I'm surprised that a Chaplain School had a --

**MS. VINCIAK:** Well, it --

**MR. JACOBY:** -- an intelligence unit.

**MS. VINCIAK:** Well, it's not -- it wasn't part of the Chaplain's School, it's like the military side, and I was in the -- with the garrison.

**MR. JACOBY:** So, you were investigating --

**MS. VINCIAK:** Investigating -- special investigations.

**MR. JACOBY:** Um-hum.

**MS. VINCIAK:** And I couldn't talk about it much. I never talked about it, but I did my job, and my boss never said much. Can I mention his name?

**MR. JACOBY:** Sure.

**MS. VINCIAK:** Major Turner. We had, of course, no one could enter the office. Major Turner had his office, I had mine. And Major Turner had a cocker spaniel, and he was a good intelligence dog too, he never said much.

**MR. JACOBY:** What kind of security clearance did you have to have?

**MS. VINCIAK:** I had to have secret, and if I had stayed I would have been eligible for top secret. And one thing that was interesting, I had to give the storm warnings each day, had to call each department there before the end of the day, and give them the storm warning, which was interesting.

**MR. JACOBY:** Ed, you're from Texas. Had you ever been to the New York City area before going to Slocum?

**MR. VINCIK:** No. No.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you go into New York City much?

**MR. VINCIK:** No. No, I wasn't too fond of New York City. I'm sorry.

**MR. JACOBY:** What about you, Chris, did you --

**MS. VINCIK:** I loved the City.

**MR. JACOBY:** You went in often?

**MS. VINCIK:** Yes. And I worked there also for about two years for the American Society of Civil Engineers. And I loved it. And it was right off 5th Avenue, West 39th Street. And I loved every minute of it.

**MR. JACOBY:** Why don't you give me a description of a typical day that you had working for First Air Force at Fort Slocum. What time did you have to get the ferry?

**MS. VINCIK:** Okay. I believe 8:10, and I had to take a train to New Rochelle at the time, and then my friend and I would go to church, and then we'd walk down to the dock, and when we arrived we would go to the PX and have coffee with four teaspoons of sugar and a crumb bun that we loved so much. And then, when it was time to report to the office we walked over and went to the office. So, it was a beautiful start, beginning.

**MR. JACOBY:** And did you eat in the mess hall for lunch?

**MS. VINCIK:** No, I didn't. I -- you know, I think that sometimes I had lunch at the PX and other times, I would bring -- we called it the PX, because Ed would come around. I didn't know him that well, and he would come around and ask me if I'd like something. He claims it was love at first sight. So he kept coming around and my girlfriend would be sitting next to me and I'd say, don't ask him to sit down. Because I had a previous boyfriend who I didn't -- I wasn't ready to go steady right then and there, I was young, and I broke up with him, so at the time, I didn't bother much with him, but he was persistent.

**MR. JACOBY:** You worked for First Air Force.

**MS. VINCIK:** Right.

**MR. JACOBY:** How many civilians would there be at the post, at the base?

**MS. VINCIK:** I don't know, but there were a lot.

**MR. JACOBY:** More than there were uniformed personnel?

**MS. VINCIK:** Well, I don't know. And you know I would say yes. Um-hum.

**MR. JACOBY:** And who was the highest ranking officer at the base?

**MS. VINCIK:** I think First Air Force we had a Commanding General. Yeah.

**MR. JACOBY:** Who was at Slocum?

**MS. VINCIK:** Yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you ever meet him?

**MS. VINCIK:** Yes. I mean, we know of him and he would go through the -- he wouldn't talk too much, the officers, they came in a lot and talked with us.

**MR. JACOBY:** Now, there was a YMCA at Slocum, did you ever go to dances there? Do you remember going to any, Chris?

**MS. VINCIK:** Oh, yes, he invited me to a dance. They had boat rides, but I never went on boat rides. I was brought up pretty strict, because the base has been here a long time, and the young girls are not to go with soldiers. You know, the whole Westchester, New Rochelle and all, oh, boy, you don't go with soldiers. So, I didn't go to many events. But I did go to a dance when they closed -- I mean, when they moved to Mitchel Field.

**MR. JACOBY:** Where was the dance held?

**MS. VINCIK:** At the Noncommissioned Officers Club.

**MR. JACOBY:** And describe the dance.

**MS. VINCIK:** Oh, it was beautiful. At that time we wore long black dresses, kind of fancy with big sleeves.

**MR. JACOBY:** Was there a live band?

**MS. VINCIK:** Yes, there was a live band, and everybody was just having a good clean fun time.

**MR. JACOBY:** Now, when did you first hear that Slocum was going to close, do you remember?

**MS. VINCIK:** Well, when we were working there. Just like all government bases you get so -- so much news and everybody panics and worries, and some leave before that, and some just stay and hope that they get transferred.

**MR. JACOBY:** So, it was -- where were you living when you worked at Slocum?

**MS. VINCIK:** Well, I lived in New Rochelle for about two years, and that's when I worked at Fort Slocum.

**MR. JACOBY:** And then did you move to Long Island to Mitchel?

**MS. VINCIK:** No, to Mamoroneck, New York, and then I commuted to Mitchel Field in a car pool.

**MR. JACOBY:** Oh, that must have been a long ride.

**MS. VINCIK:** Yeah, it was a lot of fun though, we would go to the Whitestone Bridge, I forget the name of the radio announcer, for some reason he knew about us, and when we got to the bridge he said, hey you sitting in the back, why don't you pay for the toll on the bridge? And it was really funny, and we never knew how that happened. And we had lots of fun driving to Mitchel Field, and it didn't seem long to us.

**MR. JACOBY:** When did you get married?

**MS. VINCIK:** I got married April 30, 1951.

**MR. JACOBY:** And did you continue to work at Mitchel?

**MS. VINCIK:** Yes. Yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** And was Ed working at Mitchel?

**MS. VINCIK:** Yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** How long did you both work at Mitchel?

**MS. VINCIK:** Till 1954.

**MR. JACOBY:** And then --

**MS. VINCIK:** Then we went -- I'm sorry, when did you get discharged, '53?

**MR. VINCIK:** April 8th.

**MS. VINCIK:** Yeah, April 8, 1951, and then he got discharged, and we came to California, and then we moved back to New York, and then I went for a job, again, at Fort Slocum, and I was hired for the Director of Intelligence then at Fort Slocum.

**MR. JACOBY:** Now, there were families living at Slocum, wives and children of officers, did you ever come in contact with them?

**MS. VINCIK:** Not too much. We knew the military but we didn't know the wives. They sort of kept to themselves, but I could see the children play, and you didn't see too much of the wives.

**MR. JACOBY:** Um-hum. Did you get to explore the island much?

**MS. VINCIK:** I walked a lot around it, and it was just a beautiful place, beautiful parade grounds, and lots of beautiful squirrels, believe it or not. And they minded their own business too. And everything was just beautiful.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you remember what your pay was when you worked?

**MS. VINCIK:** Oh, it wasn't much. I think at that time if you made \$6,000 a year you were rich. And if you were at \$10,000 then you were super rich. I think mine probably was around \$3,000.

**MR. JACOBY:** And did you get to use the PX?

**MS. VINCIK:** No, I didn't use the PX.



**MR. JACOBY:** That was just for military personnel?

**MS. VINCIK:** Yes. Um-hum.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you think that your time at Slocum was a fun part of your life compared to --

**MS. VINCIK:** It was a happy part of my life. I loved my job and the island, like I said, just beautiful, summer, spring and winter. It was just -- you were just a lucky and fortunate person to be working there.

**MR. JACOBY:** You would have some winter storms, did you ever get stuck on the island that you couldn't get off?

**MS. VINCIK:** No, but I was pregnant when I worked there, pregnant with my son, and I remember we had a stormy ride and they had these, I don't know what you call these, ladders that were like rope, and you had to climb up the ladder to get on to the base from the dock, and I kind of slipped, and oh, the commanding officer found out and he said that I would have to be examined because I was pregnant. So, I was very shy and they took me to the hospital there, and I told the doctor, I'm not going to -- I don't want to get examined. And he said the commanding officer said you have to get examined. Well, I talked him out of it. I probably got him in trouble. But I didn't get examined. And I called my doctor up and he said oh, that baby is very secured in your stomach, and don't worry about it.

**MR. JACOBY:** Slocum was a big part of the economy of New Rochelle, tell me about New Rochelle, what kind of town was it?

**MS. VINCIK:** New Rochelle was a nice town. The main street had nice movie theaters and people loved to shop, and Bloomingdale's was there, Arnold Constable. And first it was Wares, then it was Bloomingdale's. And everyone loved to go to the movies and shop, and go around town. But we all had to be careful of the soldiers.

**MR. JACOBY:** How so?

**MS. VINCIK:** Well, like I said, the reputation at the time, you don't go out with a soldier. Probably because so many married soldiers, I think the parents didn't want to lose their children.

**MR. JACOBY:** But apparently you didn't listen, because you went out with a soldier.

**MS. VINCIK:** Well, I went out with a soldier and I kind of worried about him, and I told my mother and she said well, don't tell your father. And then I had a couple of dates and I had him come and meet my parents, and I told my father a soldier's coming. He said, what, where's he from? I said Texas. Texas? So, Ed came to the door, introduced him, and I wouldn't go out until I found out what they thought of him. So I went in the bedroom, my mother and father's bedroom, and I said well, what do you think? And they said, he's nice.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you remember that date?

**MS. VINCIK:** No? He didn't know what was going on. So that did it. I didn't have to worry.

**MR. JACOBY:** There was a movie theater and a bowling alley at Slocum, did you ever partake of that?

**MS. VINCIK:** No, not the movie, but possibly the bowling alley.

**MR. JACOBY:** With Ed?

**MS. VINCIK:** No, alone.

**MR. JACOBY:** By yourself?

**MS. VINCIK:** Because I didn't date him while I worked there. I met him in Hudson Park one night swimming, and I was with my friend, and there were a few soldiers in the back of us and one of them said, this is Chris, there's Chris. And I looked and turned around and it was Ed with his friends and he came up to talk to me. And he said he was going to Texas on vacation, and I said, well, I'm going to the Poconos and he said I'll drop you a card, and I said I'll drop you a card. And that's how it started.

**MR. JACOBY:** At the post, do you remember if there were a -- an address, public address system? Would there be announcements made through the day?

**MS. VINCIK:** I don't remember that too much? Do you? No.

**MR. JACOBY:** What -- were you -- how -- when was your working day from? You said you got the 8 --

**MS. VINCIK:** 8:10 boat, as far as I remember.



**MR. JACOBY:** And when did you leave?

**MS. VINCİK:** 5:10.

**MR. JACOBY:** Were you there when they had the Retreat Ceremony? Do you know what that is?

**MS. VINCİK:** I do know. I don't remember that too much though.

**MR. JACOBY:** They would fire the cannon and everyone would stop.

**MS. VINCİK:** No, I never heard the cannon. No, I know, Michael mentioned it, and of course he lived there, but I don't remember that.

**MR. JACOBY:** What about other ceremonies?

**MS. VINCİK:** I remember the parade grounds, them marching.

**MR. JACOBY:** Was there much marching while you were there?

**MS. VINCİK:** I didn't see much, but I remember that.

**MR. JACOBY:** What about a marching band, did Slocum have a band?

**MS. VINCİK:** I just remember the First Air Force band, because they would practice a lot.

**MR. JACOBY:** On the parade ground?

**MS. VINCİK:** Yes, and then at Mitchel Field, they played for us during lunch. And it was very nice.

**MR. JACOBY:** When the operations moved to Mitchel, what were your duties there, pretty much the same, or --

**MS. VINCİK:** I worked with the Director of Intelligence, again, and then they assigned me to Historical Services because they were going to write a book on the First Air Force. So, my boss was Dr. Arthur Alexander, he was a civilian. And I didn't know anything about footnotes, I learned. And I have a nice letter from him saying, (Inaudible) the close application she mastered it, which I thought was nice.

**MR. JACOBY:** Was he a historian?

**MS. VINCİK:** Yes. He wrote a book on the Revolutionary War, and I was his first and only secretary. That was nice.

**MR. JACOBY:** And, what was the history of First Air Force? When did it start, do you know?

**MS. VINCİK:** No, I don't know that, I just typed. I don't recall too much. But I typed, you know, with a typewriter, pages and pages and footnotes. And then one day the general's aid walked in the office there and I was shaking. And he said did you type this up? I said yes, I did. He said, well, I have no errors. Then I felt relieved. I mean, that was an honor.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you remember the name of the book?

**MS. VINCİK:** No, I think it was just history of First Air Force.

**MR. JACOBY:** You don't have a copy do you?

**MS. VINCİK:** No, I wish I did. But we have a Colonel Spalding there, and he looked at it and he said, you know, your typewriter needed some cleaning. That was funny.

**MR. JACOBY:** So, was it an active base with lots of flights in and out?

**MS. VINCİK:** At Mitchel Field?

**MR. JACOBY:** At Mitchel?

**MS. VINCİK:** I didn't -- there were planes going out and people, but I didn't pay too much attention.

**MR. JACOBY:** Have you been keeping track of what's happened at Fort Slocum, at Davids Island since you left.

**MS. VINCİK:** Yes, I heard Trump wanted to purchase it. And then they decided to make a park out of it, and I was very happy about that, because it's a beautiful place for everyone to enjoy.

**MR. JACOBY:** When was the last time you set eyes on the island?

**MS. VINCİK:** When my son was born, I never went back to take him there or anything. I couldn't go back to work because I had to get up at 6:00 in the morning, and at that time, women didn't work much. I was one of the first women that went to work, and I remember my family and my brothers being very upset with me because they told me their wives don't work and you're not supposed to work. But --

**MR. JACOBY:** Ed didn't complain about that?

**MS. VINCİK:** No. No. I was happy to go. I liked being active, and I took good care of my son. He was well taken care of at the most prestigious summer camps and nursery schools at the time in Westchester. I can name a few, Pengilly, was at Quaker Ridge Road, and then he went to a non-sectarian camp in Mamaroneck, at (Inaudible). And I was lucky, I had friends and he had the best care.

**MR. JACOBY:** Now, there was a chapel at Fort Slocum, a Catholic Chapel. Did you ever go to Mass there?

**MS. VINCİK:** No.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you know if there was a post chaplain who served the Catholics on the island?

**MS. VINCİK:** No. All I remember is a chaplain, which is a sad story, that lost his little boy. A big truck came there to deliver stuff and the little boy was playing -- this was near the dock, and that was just awful. That's all I remember. I didn't talk to much to the chaplains, because I was mostly with the intelligence military personnel. I didn't say too much to anyone. And the last day when I left I was on the boat and this gentleman came up to me, I never saw him before, and he introduced himself as an OSI agent, and he said I just want to tell you that you did a very good job. I said thank you and that was it. I didn't get his name or anything, but I thought that was nice. I know that -- I'm sure that I was watched a lot. You know, because when you --

**MR. JACOBY:** Because you had security clearance?

**MS. VINCİK:** Yeah. But I never, you know, mingled in.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you remember if there were posters up that said to keep quiet or what -- how did they -

**MS. VINCİK:** No. No, you mean as far as the intelligence?

**MR. JACOBY:** Yes.

**MS. VINCİK:** No. They never said much, and my boss never said much, we just all understood what's expected of us. There was no talk, nothing. And if you want to believe this, I had 104 temperature one day and I didn't say a word and we had to go and burn classified material. And what you did was you had an enlisted man, an officer and myself, and we would throw the papers in the furnace and we'd watch them burn.

**MR. JACOBY:** Was that a common occurrence?

**MS. VINCİK:** Yes. Yeah. Not often, but you know.

**MR. JACOBY:** Once a month?

**MS. VINCİK:** I don't remember, but it was whenever then needed to. And I do remember this, I was sent to Governor's Island by a staff car, and we had a good driver, he was very likeable and known, he was a little older, so they gave me papers, I didn't question it, it was all sealed. Takes me to Governor's Island, I asked for the officer. I walk in and I go, this is from Fort Slocum. Looks at the envelope, says thank you. I get back in the car and I get driven back to Fort Slocum.

**MR. JACOBY:** Slocum was unusual in that it was an Air Force base without an airfield.

**MS. VINCİK:** That's true.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you remember officers talking about that, or disliking Slocum because of that?

**MS. VINCİK:** No, I don't remember. A lot of the soldiers were quite happy. They probably thought it's temporary. Yeah, real nice.

**MR. JACOBY:** Ed, of all the posts that you were at, was Slocum one of your favorite?

**MR. VINCİK:** Very favorite. Very favorite.

**MR. JACOBY:** Yeah. Because it was a nice location?



**MR. VINCIK:** It was a nice assignment. You know, it was a very nice assignment. To go over by boat and -- it was very nice.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you go fishing?

**MR. VINCIK:** No. No.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did other airmen fish that you remember?

**MR. VINCIK:** I'm sorry?

**MR. JACOBY:** Did soldiers fish while they were posted?

**MR. VINCIK:** I don't know, I don't think so.

**MR. JACOBY:** Okay.

**MR. VINCIK:** I don't remember anybody fishing.

**MS. VINCIK:** No, but I remember there were boat rides. Maybe they fished off the boat.

**MR. JACOBY:** What about baseball and football, were there games at the post?

**MR. VINCIK:** I didn't participate in any.

**MR. JACOBY:** Okay.

**MR. VINCIK:** I suppose there were. I don't remember.

**MR. JACOBY:** Chris, do you have any final thoughts on your time at Slocum?

**MS. VINCIK:** Yes, it was a beautiful time in my life, and I was very fortunate for my age to have such a position there. And people were all lovely.

**MR. JACOBY:** Well, I want to thank Ed and Chris Vincik for participating in the oral history project. Thank you very much.

**MR. VINCIK:** You're very welcome.

**MS. VINCIK:** Thank you, it was our pleasure. Thank you.

Ed and Chris Vincik  
02/22/2008 01:15 PM

To Rob Jacoby

Subject  
Re: Ft. Slocum

Hi Rob

I asked Ed the questions you need to write up your report and they are as follows:

1. Ed was about 19 years old when he first came to Fort Slocum. ( He enlisted in the Air Force at March AFB in Riverside, Ca. )
2. He stayed in the Air force four years, one year extension included in the four years due to the Korean War.
3. When he left the service, we moved to California where he joined his brother's business. He did not like it, so he joined the Post Office in Manhattan Beach, Ca.

After working for the Post Office, he received his Real Estate license and did Real Estate both in Palos Verdes and the Central Coast area in California.

If you have any other questions, please let us know.

Thank you for writing to us. Hope you get an early beautiful spring back east.

Best regards,

Ed and Chris Vincik



**MR. JACOBY:** My name is Robert Jacoby, representing Tetra Tech, EC. And I am speaking today with Carl Wenberg at his home in South Yarmouth, Massachusetts on October 9, 2007. This interview is part of a program sponsored by the United States Army Corps of Engineers and the New Rochelle Public Library to collect oral histories about the experiences and memories of people who were associated with the former US Army Post, Fort Slocum, located on Davids' Island in New Rochelle, New York.

Welcome, Mr. Wenberg, thank you very much for participating. Why don't you tell me how you're associated with Fort Slocum?

**MR. WENBERG:** Well, my association with Fort Slocum dated back, I imagine 1939 or 1940, as a very small child. My uncle, a civilian, taught soldiers bookkeeping and typing, and I believe it was under the WPA Program at the time. And I remember, vaguely remember him taking me over for a visit, and that's the first time.

Then going through the elementary schools on the south side of town were a lot of the Army "brats" attended, became my chums. And I would go over to the Fort at that time and do a lot of playing on Saturdays and such, rooting through the old Fort looking for old bullet shells and having the MPs chase us all over. But obviously, they couldn't catch us, but they tried hard and they did their job, but, that was the beginning.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you remember the first time you saw the island?

**MR. WENBERG:** Yeah, like I say, it must have been 1939 or 1940.

**MR. JACOBY:** And was it sort of adventurous?

**MR. WENBERG:** It was -- yeah, it was. It was big. It was Army, and of course, as a young boy I was very young at the time, soldiers. I mean, it would just, you know, appeal to that age group. And that was at that time. Then, like I said, I went over and played a lot on Saturdays with my school pals from the old Trinity Elementary School, which they attended. And that was then. Then my father, after World War II -- going back, I remember the Fort being used in the war years as a prisoner of war camp for I believe, Italian prisoners of war, they weren't Germans. And a lot of foreign soldiers, a lot of British, Scottish, such, would walk by our house, and I remember my father having conversations with them over the fence as they walked to the Fort.

After the War my father returned from the Navy and went to work at Fort Slocum as a civilian employee. I could backtrack here. My older brother left school to go in the Army Air Corps during World War II, but prior to that he had to wait for a while, so he worked at the Fort in the PX, Post Exchange, just as a clerk.

**MR. JACOBY:** He was a civilian?

**MR. WENBERG:** He was a civilian, yeah. Then he entered the Army and --

**MR. JACOBY:** How much older is he?

**MR. WENBERG:** He passed away. He would have been 80 -- he's about 14 years older than I am, so he would have been in his 80s now.

**MR. JACOBY:** And when were you born?

**MR. WENBERG:** 1935.

**MR. JACOBY:** So your first images of Fort Slocum you were probably about six years old?

**MR. WENBERG:** Yeah, approximately. Approximately, yeah.

**MR. JACOBY:** Something like that. You mentioned that you went over and played on the island. Did you need permission or did you just hop on the ferry?

**MR. WENBERG:** Usually -- usually what we would do, if I didn't go over with my school friends, after school I would end up at the dock and give the name of one of my friends who -- believe it or not the names have just been lost. And that's all you had to have at that time. But they, you know, someone was there that you knew and nobody ever asked any questions of little kids.

**MR. JACOBY:** And did you wander around the entire island?

**MR. WENBERG:** All over the place. All over. In the old gun battery pit, the shooting ranges, I remember going under the old hospital building. They had a hobby shop for the soldiers, and civilians that lived there, and I remember going in there and purchasing little models at a very inexpensive price with my friends that were living there at the time.

**MR. JACOBY:** And what did your father do?

**MR. WENBERG:** My father worked for the base installation, or engineering department, whatever. He was a painter by trade, and what he did was he restored and painted all the interior of the homes. Worked on a lot of the officers' quarters, interior and exterior. Really did a great job. And at the time he was doing that the War had just been over. And it was a prisoner camp at the time for American prisoners who had got themselves in a little trouble, but not real serious enough to go to Leavenworth, but had to have a little rehabilitation. So, one of his helpers was a prisoner, a trustee. They had a big graduation ceremony when these prisoners finished their rehab training, and I remember going over for that. Big demonstrations of drill, hand-to-hand combat, these sort of things.

**MR. JACOBY:** It was open to the public?

**MR. WENBERG:** By invitation. And this soldier that worked with my father invited my mother, of course, my father and my mother and myself, as a young boy. And we went over and did this. And after it was all over he was given a leave and we took him to the train station in New Rochelle. We had dinner in New Rochelle and took him to the train station. He lived in Pennsylvania. I don't know his name, but that's the story of him.

**MR. JACOBY:** After graduating from rehabilitation class, do you think they were rejoined into the Army?

**MR. WENBERG:** That's a part I don't know. I think they must have been, because I don't think he went home with a discharge. I think he still had to serve some time in the Army. How long I don't know. And we never heard from him again.

**MR. JACOBY:** Now, did you ever join your father while he was working?

**MR. WENBERG:** No. No, I was too small, and I don't think the Army would really like that too much.

**MR. JACOBY:** But he went over everyday on the ferry?

**MR. WENBERG:** Everyday on the ferry. Worked eight hours a day, came home, weekends off. Just regular civil service employee.

**MR. JACOBY:** And how long did he do that for?

**MR. WENBERG:** He did that for about three years and then he went back to where he had worked prior to going in the Navy in World War II.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you notice anything special about the kids that were from the island, the Army brats? Were they different than the New Rochelle kids?

**MR. WENBERG:** Yes, I think -- I think in my -- looking back, I think they were a cut above the average student intellectually. I remember that. I think they were good students, you know, as a whole they were very good students.

**MR. JACOBY:** And well-disciplined?

**MR. WENBERG:** I don't remember any of them ever being, you know, any problems. Not with me anyway. So...

**MR. JACOBY:** You went over to play three, tell me something about your memories of the island, what did it look like, what did it sound like?

**MR. WENBERG:** Okay. It was -- it was very clean, obviously, being an Army post, very picked up. Going out and playing in the old gun batteries was an experience because these were not only old but new to me and new to most everybody else, even the Army brats I was playing with, I mean, they hadn't been playing around that. And everything was an adventure. I mean, it just was an adventure.

**MR. JACOBY:** There were tunnels in the gun batteries.

**MR. WENBERG:** All kinds of things. And we -- our main hangout was the shooting range, obviously when it was not being used, and digging for old bullets and shell casings or whatever. And that's when the MPs used to get a little upset. They didn't want us hanging around there. So we used to kind of get on our bikes or start trying to run away, get lost. They were -- that's all, we didn't cause any trouble, it was just child play, that's all.

**MR. JACOBY:** And did you go swimming?

**MR. WENBERG:** I didn't. But I know where they had two swimming places. They had one beach on the island was for officers, and one beach on the other side were for enlisted men. I remember that. But for some reason or another, I didn't go over there swimming.

**MR. JACOBY:** And did the children of Army personnel come into New Rochelle and play with you at your house, or --

**MR. WENBERG:** Not necessarily. I went over there more than they -- they didn't leave the island that much other than go to school or with their parents. As teenagers, I don't remember. I'm talking preteen. So they didn't really leave the island too much. They went to school and our little extracurricular activities at school, and they had a special bus, they went back to the ferry and back over to the island.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you ever wish that you lived on the island?

**MR. WENBERG:** I really don't know. I never gave it any thought to be truthful with you. Not really, one way or the other. It was just an adventurous place to visit.

**MR. JACOBY:** How long did you live in New Rochelle?

**MR. WENBERG:** Up until the time -- I was born there, stayed there till 18, enlisted in the Air Force and never went back after that.

**MR. JACOBY:** Your parents stayed there, till they passed away?

**MR. WENBERG:** Stayed there -- no, they stayed there and moved to Cape Cod around 1957, '58, to retire. But prior to that my father had been born there. My mother had been born in Mt. Vernon, New York, so it was close.

**MR. JACOBY:** Um-hum. What made you choose the Air Force to join?

**MR. WENBERG:** The Air Force to join? Well, I was always interested in aviation, remember the Civil Air Patrol in New Rochelle as a young boy. My idol was my older brother who spent time in the Army Air Force in World War II, saw a lot of combat on a bomber crew during World War II. He was my idol. So, obviously, that's where I went.

**MR. JACOBY:** And what year was it when you enlisted?

**MR. WENBERG:** 1953.

**MR. JACOBY:** And you stayed in the service till?

**MR. WENBERG:** '63.

**MR. JACOBY:** Where were you serving?

**MR. WENBERG:** Started off basic training in upstate New York at Sampson Air Force Base, Mississippi for a technical training school. Germany for three years. Came back from Germany, went to California for a while. I got out for a short period of time then went back in. Then I went to Michigan, then I went to Iceland. Iceland I came back, got married, went to Montana. Montana, the Cuban crisis kicked off and they sent some of us to Key West, Florida. At that time my wife, not being really a military person, didn't really want to travel. We had just had our first child, and I said, that's the end of it and went to work for the Federal Aviation Administration for a short period of time.

**MR. JACOBY:** What were your assignments in the Air Force?

**MR. WENBERG:** I was a radar air traffic control person.

**MR. JACOBY:** And for the FAA as well?

**MR. WENBERG:** Yes. Yes.

**MR. JACOBY:** And how long did you continue with that?

**MR. WENBERG:** Very short period of time after I got out. I worked at Logan Airport in Boston and I didn't want to live in a metropolitan area. I just didn't want to do it. So I just -- we fell in love with Cape Cod, my parents had retired here, and it was at that time you couldn't commute, there was no -- other than drive, there was no way to go. There wasn't even a bus at that time for commuting. So I just said goodbye to the FAA and came down here and took my chances.

**MR. JACOBY:** Um-hum. And what did you do while you were --

**MR. WENBERG:** I ended up working for a utility company for 37 years, which I don't regret in the least.

**MR. JACOBY:** You've kept in touch with the news about what was going on at Fort Slocum, do you have a sense of what that means historically?

**MR. WENBERG:** If they go through with what they plan on doing I think it's fantastic. The only sad part is they waited too long. The place has been just, from what I see, devastated. It almost brings tears to my eyes. My memories of those old buildings and I'm a very historical person and I'm a military person somewhat, and to see those buildings and what they meant, and in the condition they're in now, and the whole island, it's just sad. It's very sad.

**MR. JACOBY:** Now, you said your brother was your role model, you being on Davids' Island at Fort Slocum often, you must have come into contact with lots of -- or seen military people, do you think that had an effect on your future career?

**MR. WENBERG:** It could have been. It could have been. Although I wasn't going to pick the Army for some reason or other, the Army didn't appeal to me. The military life did, but not the Army. That's why I went Air Force.

**MR. JACOBY:** You haven't been back to Davids' Island since, what did you say, '60s?

**MR. WENBERG:** Well, the last time I was there was, I think I would say 1959. I returned from Island, overseas assignment, and I had all my records with me, and at that time if you had your pay records with you and it was pay time, we got paid every two weeks, you could stop at any military establishment that had a finance department and you could draw from your pay. They would open your records, check it, and give you what you were due at the time. So I did go over there for that in '59. I also did the same thing in '57 when I came back from Germany I went over there and got paid. So I went there twice while in the military, not being assigned there, just to get paid.

**MR. JACOBY:** Do you have any memory of what those visits were like? Now, you were in the military yourself, rather than just being a small kid, did you have more appreciation for what was going on or --

**MR. WENBERG:** No, not really. I mean, it was just -- to me at that time, just another military place to get paid. But it did feel a little strange the first time, going over there in uniform, as a military person, because many times I'd been over there as a young man, or young boy, as a civilian, and it was a strange feeling, somewhat. They asked for my I.D. and check your pass or whatever, you know.

**MR. JACOBY:** And what were you doing in Iceland?

**MR. WENBERG:** I was at a radar station in northeastern Island on a mountaintop.

**MR. JACOBY:** That must have been pretty isolated.

**MR. WENBERG:** It was. It was an isolated tour. There was about 120 of us there, for 365 days.

**MR. JACOBY:** How far from Reykjavik were you?

**MR. WENBERG:** Miles? Well the only way we could get there was fly. Oh, God, we were on the most -- the northeast, the farthest northeastern peninsula in Iceland, from Reykjavik, complete opposite end of the island. I was on what they called the Langanese (phonetic) Peninsula at a radar station. We had four of them around the island. I was on the northeast part of the island.

**MR. JACOBY:** So, basically, you were there and stuck there?

**MR. WENBERG:** That's it.

**MR. JACOBY:** There were no locals?

**MR. WENBERG:** We had a fishing village about 15 miles away, down the side of the mountain. Which, actually, they set up a tour for us and visited the little village. And everything up there is cooperative. Their fish freezing plants, and their sheep, they have a lot of sheep that roam the island. And we saw the slaughter house and the freezing of the cod fish. And it was just a day out of isolation. But it was very controlled. You couldn't go there yourself, you had to go there as a group and come right back. Icelandic government was very strict about this, they didn't want our troops messing with their economy, throwing money around and it's a very small place.

**MR. JACOBY:** So on your off days you couldn't just hop in a Jeep and tour around?

**MR. WENBERG:** No, no way. Not at all. Not at all. Off days?

**MR. JACOBY:** Were you basically working seven days a week?

**MR. WENBERG:** No, I really don't remember. Sometimes we did depending on what was going on. We worked shifts, 24 hours a day. We had different crews that worked -- always was on duty at the time. But we had a lot of hobbies, photography, we had a library. We had first-rate movies shipped up to us with the mail if it didn't -- if the weather was okay for the plane to get in. And we had our own AM radio station. So we all posed as diskjockies and --

**MR. JACOBY:** What kind of records did you play?

**MR. WENBERG:** Oh, we had big extended from the Arm Forces Radio Service we had -- this -- we had a few friendly battles, friendly battles. Whether you were from the Northeast, at that time I started to get interested in a little progressive jazz, Dave Brubeck and all this sort of thing. And a lot of the Southern boys really didn't take to this, they wanted their country western music. So we would play a little progressive jazz and double lock the studio, they were banging on the windows. But it was a friendly --

**MR. JACOBY:** Describe what the base looked like.

**MR. WENBERG:** The base in Iceland? The base in Iceland was, like I say, on the top of 1,000 foot mountain, glacier, whatever. No trees. Barren, just rock. All cement prefabbed low, one-story buildings, all connected with -- they weren't tunnels, they weren't underground, but they were all connected. So you never had to go outside. The winds used to blow so hard at certain times of the year that you couldn't go outside. And we had all iron grates on the windows in case rocks flew, the few windows we had. We had a couple of outlying buildings without tunnels -- without the connecting buildings, and they were our radio and communications buildings. They were probably, at the most 50 feet from one building to another. And I remember at times the snow -- and the snow wasn't too bad, but when it did come, it came. And blow where you couldn't see. You had what we called the lifeline from one building to another, we just held on to that, because you couldn't see three feet in front of you, and you just guided yourself with the line to the other building.

**MR. JACOBY:** You were in air traffic control, was this for civilian flights or --

**MR. WENBERG:** No, this up in Iceland was military.

**MR. JACOBY:** Purely military?

**MR. WENBERG:** It was intercept control and traffic control. We did all the intercept of unknown aircraft or whatever.

**MR. JACOBY:** Presumably Russian, whatever?

**MR. WENBERG:** Yeah, we intercepted a lot of Russian aircraft at the time. I could tell you that now, I mean, it's history. And a lot of Russian aircraft would come down, check Greenland, come down over Iceland and head down towards the east coast of Canada and off the east coast of the United States, and we would pass them on down, and different units would intercept them as they came down, just to keep a watch on them. Bit Russian bear aircraft, they were big long-range bombers.

**MR. JACOBY:** You grew up and went to school in New Rochelle, tell me a little bit about New Rochelle during your childhood?

**MR. WENBERG:** New Rochelle was a city with a small-town atmosphere. It was a neighborhood city, different neighborhoods, north, south, east and west. I grew up on the south side, right along Hudson Park, Echo Bay, Fort Slocum, that whole area. So we roamed there quite a bit. I fished out there as a young boy with my father. And around Davids' Island or Fort Slocum, Pine Island, all of them out there in a row boat in my early ages fishing. Execution Rock where the lighthouse is, I remember that.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you do much boating?

**MR. WENBERG:** We did -- my uncle owned a little rowboat and that was about it. But we were out in it a lot. Later on, my later year in high school, my father was -- they were members of Echo Bay Yacht Club, my father had a little inboard skiff that he used to use. But nothing real big. But I had a lot of friends that had boats, and this is where I used to be a lot, awful lot.

**MR. JACOBY:** Was fishing a common sport?

**MR. WENBERG:** Well, it was just -- it was a food sport, really. It was flounder fishing, of course, on the bottom, bottom fishing. And the elusive bass, everybody trying to get that stripped bass.

**MR. JACOBY:** Your mom cooked the fish that you brought home?

**MR. WENBERG:** Oh, yeah. Or my father. Coming from a Scandinavian background, everything that was in the ocean or in the water was edible. So, and I didn't agree with a lot of that, but that's the way they thought.

**MR. JACOBY:** What were some of the ethnic groups living in --

**MR. WENBERG:** Okay. It was really great. Looking back at it, it was fantastic. That is why it's hard for me today to see the world problems, why people can't get along. We got along tremendously. Some of my best friends, write down was, Catholic, Irish, Norman Gold was Jewish, I was Anglo-Saxon if you want to call that, Protestant, or Swedish extraction, Protestant. A lot of Italian kids that I played sports with from West New Rochelle, turned out to be great, wonderful people. And we all got along. I just can't imagine not getting along with different diverse groups. It was great.

**MR. JACOBY:** Were different parts of town known as maybe the Irish section, or the Italian section?

**MR. WENBERG:** Well, yeah, the Italian section, up around Columbus Avenue was West New Rochelle. They lived predominately up there. And there was no Irish section. I mean, Irish were all over. Other than the -- there was a black section at that time, called Negroes, the black section up around Lincoln Avenue I think it was, my memory, they had their section there, predominately, it wasn't their section, it was predominately black. And the north side was always considered the side with the money, so to speak. South side was a mix of everything. Lot of Irish, lot of German, lot of Scandinavian. Just working-class, blue-collar people. And everybody got along, as far as I remember.

**MR. JACOBY:** How did people get along when it came to rooting for baseball teams?

**MR. WENBERG:** It was funny. I'm a diehard Red Sox fan now.

**MR. JACOBY:** Even then?

**MR. WENBERG:** No. Never -- never a Red Sox fan nor a Yankee fan. My father was a diehard New York Giant fan. So, I vacillated between the Giants and the Dodgers. I mean, that's kind of a funny combination, but I was a National League guy and my father was -- just loved baseball. We would sit in the -- we had a big country kitchen, so to speak, and we would sit at a table with a little AM radio listening to the baseball games in the evenings, and my father narrating for me and telling me who played here when he was a kid. It was fantastic. It was just great.

**MR. JACOBY:** So, you hated the Yankees all your life.

**MR. WENBERG:** I didn't hate them, I didn't really like them. I always thought when I think of them today, just a big money team. You know, of course, the Red Sox aren't far behind.

**MR. JACOBY:** But there must have been friends of yours that rooted for the Yankees, for the --

**MR. WENBERG:** Oh, yeah, of course.

**MR. JACOBY:** -- for the Dodgers or the Giants.

**MR. WENBERG:** We had a lot of Dodger fans. It seems to me a lot of the fellows I hung around with were Dodger -- in fact, my wife has got a baseball, we've got it now, signed by the whole Dodger team, 1952, '53 National League champions, with all these signatures on it.

**MR. JACOBY:** Great.

**MR. WENBERG:** So, that's quite a thing. We've had it in the family -- it's hers, actually, she got it as a young girl. She's quite a baseball fan also.

**MR. JACOBY:** She grew up in New Rochelle?

**MR. WENBERG:** Correct. Yeah.

**MR. JACOBY:** Did you -- were you high school sweethearts?

**MR. WENBERG:** No. She was three or four years behind me. Her family goes way back. Her maiden name was Scott, and her great uncle, Harry Scott, was mayor of New Rochelle back in the 20s, three or four times. They owned a business there since the 1840s.

**MR. JACOBY:** What kind of business?

**MR. WENBERG:** They were in seed, fertilizer, coal type thing. And then with redevelopment and everything, my father-in-law inherited it, and his brother, and they just sold it all out because of redevelopment.



**MR. JACOBY:** How did you meet your wife then?

**MR. WENBERG:** I met my wife through my cousin who was a classmate of hers. I was home -- I had just gotten out of the service the first time, in from California and was visiting my aunt's house, and she happened to call up to speak to my cousin, and my aunt was quite a character. She was a great lady. She says, there's a girl for you, talk to Marian. So I talked to her on the phone, and we made a date. It was off and running ever since.

**MR. JACOBY:** And she followed you on all your --

**MR. WENBERG:** Well, she was in nursing school for the first -- when we were engaged. We were engaged when I was in Iceland. When I came back from Iceland and we got married she still had six months to go in nurses training. So she stayed in Greenwich where she went to training, and I went out to Montana for a while without her. And then after she graduated she came out and we traveled from Montana to Florida and then I got out, so she didn't travel that awful far.

**MR. JACOBY:** And then shortly after you moved to Cape Cod?

**MR. WENBERG:** Yeah. Right. Right.

**MR. JACOBY:** And did she remain a nurse here?

**MR. WENBERG:** Just retired about three years ago.

**MR. JACOBY:** Oh, great.

**MR. WENBERG:** Yeah.

**MR. JACOBY:** So, do you spend the winters on Cape Cod?

**MR. WENBERG:** In the last five years we've bought a place in Florida. We have been going down January, February, March coming back first week in April. But as we've gotten older it's gotten a little boring, little tiresome. So now I usually rent it to a friend of mine for the month of January and we go down in February and March. So, we've got two animals so we have to drive. If we could fly down, maybe a little easier, but we have to drive. And it gets old after a while.

**MR. JACOBY:** Must get pretty busy here on the Cape in the summertime.

**MR. WENBERG:** Yeah, of course, now that I've been retired for the last six years it doesn't bother me, because when I worked it was kind of testy at times. But you love them, but you can't be without them. I mean, you can love them and hate them, but you need them. And you know --

**MR. JACOBY:** The economy of the Cape runs around tourists.

**MR. WENBERG:** It's based quite a bit on tourism. And you know, we need them. So come.

**MR. JACOBY:** Okay. Is that an invitation.

**MR. WENBERG:** You better believe it. And bring all your friends and family with you. We used to have a saying, keep Cape Cod green, and a little -- we'd say, "keep Cape Cod green, stay on the other side of the channel and throw your wallet across."

**MR. JACOBY:** Well, Carl, I want to thank you very much for participating in this interview. And your insights have been very helpful.

**MR. WENBERG:** Well, I hope so. I hope it was a fruitful trip for you. And a different way of looking at things.

#### C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Paula Brokaw, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and accurate transcript of the taped proceedings as transcribed by me on the date hereinbefore set forth, to the best of my ability.

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Dated: October 19, 2007 Paula Brokaw  
Agency Typist



**ROBERT JACOBY:** My name is Robert Jacoby, representing Tetra Tech E.C., and I'm speaking today with Zoltan, I'm sorry, Zoltan Zantay at his home in Lakeville, Connecticut on June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2008. This interview is part of a program sponsored by the United States Army Corps of Engineers and the New Rochelle Public Library to collect oral histories about the experiences and memories of people who were associated with the former US Army base, Fort Slocum, located on Davids Island in New Rochelle, New York.

Well, thank you very much for having me here today. You were telling me that your, the name people mostly call you is Zip.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yes.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So that's what I will call you.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yeah.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Tell me when you joined the Army, how old you were.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Well, I, I enlisted, Number One. Most of the men enlisted because we knew we didn't want to get killed and this is the perfect place, Fort Slocum, they called it another thing, Davids Island.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Davids Island.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yeah. That's right. Yeah. And it was wonderful. There was a nine-hole golf course, and we had an idiot for a colonel who loved the band, you know, named Colonel Lentz. All he wanted was to have concerts on the lawn. We were losing the war to Japan at the time. But this guy, all he wanted was, we were playing to the squirrels. There was nobody there. So anyway, you know, but he loved that band, so.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** What year did you enlist?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** In 1942.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And did you go directly to Fort --

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** To, directly, right. Directly.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So tell me about your musical background growing up.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Well, I, I lived mostly in New York at the time. And we lived, you're looking at this place, this is on 14 acres that we have a view of 15 miles. We lived in a cold water flat on 118<sup>th</sup> Street in New York between 116<sup>th</sup> Street and 125<sup>th</sup> Street. And there was one more street below First Avenue. It was called Pleasant Avenue. It was not very pleasant. This was, from 116, this was an Italian neighborhood. I used to get my brains knocked in every, every day.

And we were living in a cold water flat with one toilet on a floor for four apartments, just a toilet. I have five toilets. I don't know which one to go to. So that was, that's where I lived. And I won a scholarship on the clarinet to the Philharmonic Scholarship Ensemble. And I couldn't even afford a clarinet. They bought a clarinet for me. I still have it.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Is that your parents?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** What?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Your parents bought a clarinet?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Oh, no. They couldn't, they, they couldn't afford the right kind. No, no.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** We lived in a, we lived in a cold water flat. My brother and I slept in the bedroom, my grandmother. And we had one toilet on that floor for four apartments, just a toilet. Now I have five toilets here, I don't know which one to go to first.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So you, you played what instrument in high school?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Clarinet.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Clarinet. And did you join the Army right after high school?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** No. No. No. No. No. No. I, I was 16. I graduated high school at 16 and then I went on, I won a scholarship to the Philharmonic Scholarship Ensemble. And my teacher was Simeon Bellison, who was the first clarinetist with the Philharmonic Scholarship, with the, with the New York Symphony. And that led me on, you know, gave me impetus to go on. And I studied and I won the scholarship and they bought this clarinet for me. I couldn't even afford a clarinet.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Hmm.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** I still have it.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Hmm.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Same clarinet.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** What kind of music were you playing at that point, mostly classical?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Mostly classical, yes. And in high school I cut my teeth on the, the musical that this music teacher loved. It was Gilbert and Sullivan, and I cut my teeth on that. And then, once I got into the Army, I started to play jazz.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. What kind of jazz really --

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Dixieland.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So, Louis Armstrong or?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yes. Yeah. As a matter of fact, I worked with him.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Oh.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yeah.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Tell me a little bit about that.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Well, I was in New York. If you're not familiar with it, the Paramount Theater was a very big place where you had all the named bands. At that time, I was with a band called Les Baxter, he was from California. And Louis Armstrong was on the bill and we worked together two weeks, I think, at the Paramount.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Was that fun?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Oh, yes, very much. Yes.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Part of, a very nice man, very nice guy.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So you came to Fort Slocum in 19-

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** '42.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** -42. And did you have basic training? Were you --

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yes.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did you think of yourself as much of a soldier?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Oh, yes. They, they tried to give us basic training. It didn't get too far. For example, they found out one day that the band never had training for live ammunition. They had packed us all into a truck, couple of trucks, took us to a rifle range and then the machine gun was set up permanently, permanently and it started to shoot live bullets. And we were crouched in a little bit of, a little bit of a valley and you were supposed to go over and under these bullets.

The rumor was that if you go under and you meet a snake you may get up, you'll be shot to death. So the windup was not one band, not one of the guys in the band ever got over the summit. They were crouched until they got rid of the bullets. They said, all right. Come on, you dummies. Get back into the truck. And they took us back.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Was that basic training at Fort Slocum or someplace else?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** It was someplace else. Yes.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Oh.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** It was a, a rifle range that they were working with, with live ammunition. And it scared the hell out of us. But that's as far as we ever got. Although, yes, we went through basic training and we got our diploma and all that stuff.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And what was your rank when you -

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Corporal.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Corporal. Throughout?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yes.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. Do you remember what your pay was?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Not clearly. It was less than a hundred dollars a month.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** I don't know what the hell.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Now, tell, give me an example of what your routine on a typical day was. Were you practicing every day?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Oh, yes. You mean while in the Army?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yes, but we were called out for different types of duties. One of them was to go into New York to the ports and play music while these kids were going overseas.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** At the ships?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yes. We did that a lot. We did a lot of bond selling.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** All over the place.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So morale --

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yes.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** -- boosting?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Morale building was our main thing.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** And slowly, the band of course evolved into a very good orchestra.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** The difference was we had strings and we were, we were delegated to go to Studio H, which was Toscanini's favorite studio at NBC. And there we spent the rest of the, gobbling up all of the free dinners, free shows that they gave us. Yes, it was a hazardous duty as they say.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So how often were you going into New York to play at Studio H?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** We finally wound up, I was living at home already. You know, I'd sleep at home and we'd go every day.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Oh, so you never spent the, you never lived in the barracks at Fort Slocum?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Oh, yes, we did. I lived there for two years.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Oh, okay.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** And then, finally, towards the end, I joined in '42, about '44, '45, we spent at NBC because the band evolved into an orchestra. We had strings. We had the finest musicians that you could think of.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm. Mm-hmm. Did, did musicians who were about to enter the Army say, I want to join the Fort Slocum band? Was that something that they could request?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** No, because at that time we were pretty full and, but there were guys that came, for example, the first bassoonist with the Philadelphia Orchestra wanted to join and he did. A couple of violinists that were soloists that joined. Yeah. So we had some very, very fine musicians.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Tell me about the beginning of the band, when you first got there. What was, what was your day like? You would spend it in the band room practicing?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Oh, yeah. Practicing, shooting pool. Every one of them had a pool table.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** And, that's the way we spent most of the days. But then we went, certainly we went to, we went to New York to the ports to play these soldiers off. All these big troop ships were there. So that was a big thing.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And were you also a, a dance band?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yes, we had a dance band and we used to broadcast locally from the Fort.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh. You had a regular radio show?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yes.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Is that right?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yes, we did.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Do you remember where the broadcast was from?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yeah. It was right, right from, what was it called, something or other, I don't know.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Raymond Hall?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yes. That's what it was. Yes.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh. Uh-huh. And while you were playing, was there dancing going on around you?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** No. No. It was just strictly a broadcast.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Strictly a broadcast.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** What's, what, what's your first memory of seeing Fort Slocum?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** It was beautiful. It was beautiful. It was nine-hole golf course. How bad could it be? People were getting shot and killed and here we are, we all, I enlisted, and certainly it was the best thing that I ever did in my life.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. And how long did you stay at Fort Slocum?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Oh, 1942, '43, '44. And then from '44 to '45, we spent most of our time at NBC.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** That's Studio H, which belonged to Toscanini.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh. Who organized the band? Who was in charge of it in the beginning?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Well, he was a wonderful First Sergeant. His name was, let me think of what it was. Sheesh, I can't, you know, I'm 87 years old. Give me a break.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Okay. Was this Abraham Small?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Well, Abraham Small was the, he was the organizer at the beginning.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** With the, with the marching band. But slowly it evolved into a First Sergeant by the name of, what the hell is, do you have a couple of pictures?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Well, I have some issues of the Casual News newspaper. And it might list his name in it.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Danny, Danny Lapidos.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Dan Lapidos?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yes. He became the First Sergeant and he was a delightful, delightful person. I don't know if he's still alive. I hope he is. Yes.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And --

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** He was the one.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So did he pick the music and he was --

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yes, he picked the music and the dance band and I have a picture of the dance band, he's leading it. He plays saxophone.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** He's a very fine musician.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Was it a, did you have a lot of what we would call now riffs or did you have solos that you took?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yes, yes. We had regular music that was, that Glenn Miller used to play and Benny Goodman played, Artie Shaw. But we had arrangements from that era.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yes. We did a lot of riffing. Yes.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Didn't one of the members play for Glenn Miller?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Paul Tanner.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Paul Tanner was the one, yeah. A very fine trombonist. Yes.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** We became good friends and we developed a Dixieland band which I'm gonna play for you and you'll hear me play on it.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Okay. Tell me how the band developed to something that eventually you were broadcasting from NBC.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Well, it became an orchestra.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** An orchestra.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** See, because the band as you know it at Fort Slocum, we used to retreat parades.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Okay.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** We did when the flag came down in the evening. We did marching like that. And then, of course, we did a lot of bond work in and around New Rochelle. And of course we went to the piers in New York where the troop ships were and this was a big item.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So at first it was a sort of all-purpose band?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yes. Yes.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** You did ceremonial things.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Mm-hmm.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** The flag lowering.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yes. Yes, this was at the Fort.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And did you also march as a band or like, was it a marching band?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Oh, yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. I played the piccolo.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And was it in tight formation, that kind of thing?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Tight formation, yes. To give you an example, Colonel Lentz had a problem. He says, why aren't the trombones all playing in unison, the same way. You know, each guy had a part, second part, third part. So they all, you know, all over the place. He wanted everything in unison.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** But it, it sounds like he had, maybe he was little peculiar.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yes.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** But he gave the band a reason for being.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** He gave the band a life.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. Were there many such army bands in the New York area?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Oh, yes. Yes. I'm sure there were. We were very good musicians. We had the Artie Shaw group. That was, that was in the Army.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** And Glenn Miller was in.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did you have the opportunity to hear Glenn Miller and Artie Shaw play?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Oh, yes. But that had nothing to do with, I mean, we had our own group of guys and all were very good.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** And all worked high class jobs, you know.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** So, you know, it was unfortunate that we, some of us wound up in the Army. Others, although, Artie Shaw did it and so did Glenn Miller.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. So it became, it started as an all-purpose band, marching band, dance band and then became an orchestra.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yes. As soon as we brought the violins in.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And at that point were you out of Fort Slocum mostly?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Mostly, yes. We were at NBC.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** What was the name of the band? Did it have, of the orchestra, did it have like a service name?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yes. Yeah. You have it there.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Of some unit designation.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** 375<sup>th</sup>, something like that.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Okay.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yeah.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So tell me what it was like playing in Toscanini's studio.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Well, that was delightful. We had all the biggest names, Frank Sinatra. Anyone you name, we, we did work for.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So you backed up --

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yes.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** -- the biggest names of the day?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And this was for live broadcast?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** There was somebody you should know that was a brilliant arranger. His name was Cy Oliver. You ever hear of him?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** I've heard of him.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Cy Oliver arranged with Tommy Dorsey and he wound up in the Army with us. And he started to arrange for us and he was wonderful.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Wonderful man.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. Who were some of the big name acts that came to Fort Slocum to play for the troops?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** At Fort Slocum? Not many. We were strictly local broadcasting. When we wound up in New York, of course, there were Frank Sinatra, you name it.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** There was an article in the Casual News, the newspaper from Fort Slocum about Bunny Berigan coming to the Fort. Do you remember him being there?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** No.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** No. I, he could have been, yes.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. So you were playing at, for the biggest names of the day.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yes.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Do you remember what you were doing when VE Day happened?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Let's see. My God, no I don't.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** What about any of the other big events, like the invasion of Normandy, D-Day?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Oh, we were, we were in New York playing music for the guys going overseas. There were troop ships all over the place. That was really something. Yeah.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. And what about when the war ended? VJ Day, did anything strike you? Do you remember?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Well, they wanted us to stay in the Army and we had visitors come and say, look, if you stay in, your rank will be First Sergeant, so on and so forth. But all of us had our heads down. We wanted to get out of the Army as soon as possible.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And what did, did everyone become, go into the musical field?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Oh, yes. Most of them did, yes.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** They were fine musicians.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And what did you do right after the Army?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Right after the Army, I went with a band called Dick Stabile. And I also worked with different bands. I also played with, some of these bands are, and I played at the Paramount Theater with quite a few. Well, one of the bands I was with featured Louis Armstrong. And I, that was with the Les Baxter Band. And they came out of California. And this was in Manhattan. He played at the theater there. What was the theater again?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** The Paramount.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Paramount. Yes. Oh, and I worked with a very nice band, the leader played the piano. You know, I can't, I, I worked with Vincent Lopez. I worked with --

**ROBERT JACOBY:** What was the Vince Lopez Band like?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** That was at the Hotel Taft.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And what kind of music was that?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** It was strictly society music.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.



**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** I, I can't think of the band that I really worked with, also I played at the Paramount Theater, was, he was called the Poet of the Piano. We were the peasants; he was the poet. What the hell was his name? I can't think of it. You want to shut it off for a minute, I'll find out.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Sure. You were telling me who you played with.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yes, that, this is with a wonderfully talented pianist called Carmen Cavallero who worked at the Paramount Theater, again, with him besides the one with Les Baxter. And then I worked with a couple of other bands, Dick Stabile who played the saxophone. Let's see. Who else? The Hotel Taft with Vincent Lopez. Yeah. I played with a lot of bands.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So these were, this was the era of the big bands?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yes.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And how big were these orchestras?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** These orchestras, 15 band members. Generally 15, yeah.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. And what happened to these big bands? Did just tastes change?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Well, more, more important, you see, you have to go out on the road to be able to do anything with the big bands. And it prohibited, financially, to do so after awhile. So it dissipated.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Were you on the road often?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yes. Yes.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** All, one-night stands here and there?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yes. You don't want to hear about my one stands, one-night stands, do you? You can't do that on the air.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Okay. Let me ask you about Fort Slocum itself. There were WACS at the post. So there were women around for the dances. Did, did women from New Rochelle come, come for the dances as well?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** I think so, yes. But that wasn't, that was not the big thing. We used to broadcast once a week, twice a week out of Raymond.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Raymond Hall?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Raymond Hall.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** And it was nice.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** And one of the guys was the broadcasting, was George, not George, but Bill.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Bill Hoffman?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Bill Hoffman. I understand he died recently.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh. And what was his role?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Mimicking every guy in the band.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** He was unbelievable. He was a funny man.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And his, his brother played.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** His brother was a wrestling enthusiast. He had me once on the mat, I thought I was gonna die. But he's all right. He's still around I understand.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yes, he lives in Maine.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Good. Really?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yes.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Huh.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So when you were not recording or broadcasting or practicing, you had a lot of spare time it sounds like.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Oh, yeah. Yes. Yes.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And did you stay on the island? Did you go and, into New York?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** No. I went into, no, I went, I lived in the Bronx at the time, so it was very convenient for me to go home.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** So I did.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** But you must have come into some contact with soldiers who were recruits at Fort Slocum and were on their way to --

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yes. These were called casuals and they would stop off in Fort Slocum and then they would go on or they would be coming back from Africa to stay for awhile. And so that's, yes, that's, it was like a staging area.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So it was a busy place?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Oh very, yes. Yes.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh. And most of the people that you knew were in your outfit? Or did you know many people from other units?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** No. No. You only, you were very, very segregated.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. And did that apply to the WACs as well? Did you see them much?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yes. We did like to hit a little bit more, no, you don't want to hear about that now. Go ahead.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** I interviewed a woman who was a WAC during World War II at Fort Slocum and she told me that at first the men were very --

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Hesitant.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yes. Hesitant, cool to their being there. They didn't think that they would do a good job, perhaps.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Oh, they did a very good job, yes. No, no, no. They were really needed.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yeah. They worked all kinds of jobs. Yeah.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. Overall, your experience in the Fort Slocum Army Band was a good one?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** It was the best thing I ever did in my life, because I'm still talking to you here.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** You know, I could, I could have been somewhere else.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** I don't want to think about it.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Right. And did you stay in touch with many of those people for awhile?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** No. It's unbelievable. As soon as we got out of the Army, we separated.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Completely separate. Even though we didn't get a day and night for three years, having a lot of fun, mimicking each other to death. George, Bill Hoffman was one of the leaders in that. He was good at that.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Well, do you have any, any other reminiscences of the band that you'd like to tell me?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Well, there was once, when we finally got the violinists in, we were still living at the Fort. This kid would be practicing day and night. He was a pain in the ass. So, so we finally took his bed, hung it out the window and moved all the beds in proportion again. And when he came in, he found out his bed disappeared. So we started like that. His name was Avram Weiss. He was a good violinist.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So you guys weren't easy on --

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** No, we were not easy, no.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** -- newcomers.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Not at all.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And did the Army provide your instruments?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yeah. Some of them. The piccolo that I played, yes. Which is a very good Haines piccolo.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** It's worth about \$2,000 now.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Do you still have that?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** No.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** No? You had to give that back?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yes.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh. Uh-huh. And when --

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** You're bringing back a lot of memories, you know. Most of them was good, very good, but always behind it was the fact that you could be shipped out, that you could go where you could die. It was always in the back, no matter we were living in paradise. And some guys, one of our conductors, a guy would hit a bad note, a sour note. He'd say, Guadalcanal for you.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** You know, so they would bullshit like that. But other than that, it was there, the specter was there that you could be shipped out.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And did you keep close read on the war news?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Oh, yes. You couldn't help but that, yes. I mean, in '42 and '43, Japan was doing a number on us.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yeah. It brings back a lot of vivid memories, some of them that I can't talk about, but most of it was nice.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. I understand.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** And it did save my life.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** There's no question about it.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And you, you remained a musician for the remainder of your life?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yes, yes.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** At some point though, you became an owner of a summer camp.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yes. I decided that, gee, if I break one of my fingers, what am I gonna do? I was playing ball and I wound up spraining one of my fingers and I couldn't play. I said, I've got to get something else. So I wound up buying a piece of property. Well, it was a children's camp in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, Monterrey. And I stayed there from 1960, '70, '95, until '95 and then I sold it.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did you emphasize music at this camp?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** The first year I did, but I knew that was a losing proposition, so we wound up, I had 14 horses at the camp and water skiing was big, tennis was big. So you know, I had to graduate into something that the kids liked.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Because it was too difficult to force them to practice all the time over the summer?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** I had 50, 60 students, private students. And I lived on Long Island and I taught in the, where did I teach? I taught in a very exclusive neighborhood of Long Island, Roslin, Great Neck. And these were, when kids went to camp --

(END SIDE ONE. BEGIN SIDE TWO.)

**ROBERT JACOBY:** You mentioned that you had private students?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Oh, yes. Yes.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Was that your bread and butter?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yes. Yes.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** For much of those years?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yes.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** All right.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Quite awhile. Paul Tanner was the leader of it. He wrote the arrangements and, well, you'll hear it. You tell me what you think.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** We were good.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** We were very good.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Tell me something about the interaction among the band members. Some you obviously were very close with, but like any, any group of people put together, they're --

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Well, they were mostly Jewish.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** And we were condemned from the beginning. People hated us. I'm not Jewish, but, the rest of the band, most of the guys were, you know, Danny Lapidos and so on. And they hated us.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** When you say they --

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** The rest of the soldiers. A bunch of Jews hiding behind the instruments.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** So, this is what it is, so the hell with it.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh. And that was something that you had to deal with that entire time you were there?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yeah. There was two words that we used, but it wasn't happy birthday.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Okay.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Two of them. Are we still, are we still on?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Oh, okay.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Well, I want to thank you for sitting down with me and talking about the --

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** It's a pleasure really.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** -- Fort Slocum Band and Orchestra.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** It's unfortunate that it has to be done with the fact that you know that Fort Slocum is slowly disappearing into dust. It's a shame, because it was a life energy, vibrant. It was unbelievable.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** When was the last time you saw the, the Fort?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** When I was young. When I was 25.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And you --

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Then I decided to go back. And so when I contacted New Rochelle, they said, forget it. The place is a dump.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** That was it. We should have bought it. We could have bought it. The guys in the band could have bought it.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And done what with it?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** I don't know. Put up (inaudible) I guess. I don't know. But it was a beautiful island, a nine-hole golf course island.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** I want to ask you one more question. You have mentioned a few times Colonel Lentz and his somewhat peculiar notions of what --

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** A band should sound like.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did he pick the music?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** No. We catered to him. Sergeant Small really kissed his behind. He wrote music for him. Sasha Small was a very talented man.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** He had perfect pitch. He had a lot of things going for him and he had diabetes. And he loved to eat sweets and you would go out to the piers and, of course, the ladies would throw candy at us, doughnuts. And we used to entice him with it. It was pitiful. He just ate it up. But we loved him. He was a nice man. And he had no grudges, none at all.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** And Danny, Danny Lapidos was the same way.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did you play at parties for the Colonel?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yes, yes.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Can you describe what one of those was like?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Well, those were all for the, those were for the officers, officers. We worked with a small band. It was not a big.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So the, the small combos for the officers was by invitation only?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yes. Yes. That was for the officers, yes.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And would they take place in the Colonel's home or in the --

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** No. It was, it was in the Officers' Club. It was in the Officers' Club.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And did you do similar things for the enlisted men? Was there some sort of enlisted men's club?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** No. There was, they were called casuals and they would come in and out. They would be gone, overseas, Africa. They would be coming back from Africa.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So they weren't there very long.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** To give you an example of the way these guys acted, these guys when they came back from Africa, you know, they would, they were a bloody thirsty bunch. And they would give them a little bit of exercise. And this one time the sergeant at Fort Slocum told the guy, he said, listen, you're down there now. Tell me what are you gonna do, I've got a bayonet in my hand, I'm ready to stab you. Well, what are you going to do.

So the guy didn't say anything, he just stood there for one minute, picked up some sand, threw it in his face and the guy was down and he had him by the throat very quickly.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** You don't screw around with those guys.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** When they come back from duty like that.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Well, they were combat veterans.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Oh, yes. Yeah. Forget it.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Do you remember many incidents with the MPs and troops?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Well, not too much, no.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** No.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** I think I said enough. I don't want to say anymore.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Okay.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** I think I said my, I might crucify myself.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Okay.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** But I do want you to listen to this band.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** I will.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Because this was, we had, Paul Tanner was the leader. He played trombone. There was a pianist, very fine pianist. What the hell was his name? He's dead since. And another kid that didn't even know how to read music and he played the trumpet. His name was Dick Readerbush (ph.), a very talented musician out of the west. And there was me on clarinet. And Paul Tanner, of course, was on trombone. Let's see, who was on bass? Well, you, you have the names down on the original list someplace. But, one of the things that we did do and I had, I was working with a band called, what the hell was the name of it?

We were at the, and these were civilians. Where you couldn't get any good musicians. We were in the Army, you know, most of us were in the Army. So these guys, they'd try to hire us and I'd be out of uniform. I'd be honest, this was at the Hotel, one of the big hotels in New York. And who's dancing by and me I'm playing the saxophone in civilian clothes, we're losing the war to Japan. The commanding officer. He's going like this to me. Like my throat was going to be cut.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** This was Lentz?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** No, this wasn't Lentz. This was another one, ah, geez, his name was, oh fine.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** What did you think was going to happen?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** I don't know. They could line me up and shoot me. You know, you were in the Army, you were --

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** You're losing the war to Japan and here you're out of uniform.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So did he recognize you, was that it? Mm-hmm.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Nothing happened.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** We did a lot of things. Crazy days.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** What did you, what was your take home pay for that, that civilian job. Do you remember?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** A couple of hundred dollars.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Really?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yeah.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** That was quite a bit of money back then.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Oh, are you kidding? Yes. Yes. Yes.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So, at the class of musicianship that you were at and the Fort Slocum Band, you guys did pretty well.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yes. Yes, we did. Took advantage of a situation, we really took advantage of it. But, you know, at that age, you don't have too much of a conscience.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** All you want to do is stay alive.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** But always the specter behind you, that is, you could be shipped. You're in the Army.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** You could be shipped and you could die.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So you didn't want to mess up too badly.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** No. No. Try to, yeah. You try to stay clean, yes.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** But somebody had to do it. You know, we had the talent of music and someone had to do it. Music was a very, very important morale booster. Very important. And we did a good job. We did a very good job. We had fine musicians. How could you miss?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did you ever meet anyone later who was overseas and said, you know, I, I heard a broadcast and it really was important to me? Anything like that?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** No. No.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Well, once again, thank you very much –

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Not at all.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** -- for talking to me.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** You're doing a beautiful job, I must say. Wait for the music or you can shut it off.

We'd either be marching reveille or we'd do retreat parade, which is in the evening you would bring down the flag and so on. And then if you were being shipped out, the buses would be ready to take us to New York. And we would go to the piers and play there. Let's see, what else?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And did you have to look sharp when, when you were playing?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Oh, yes. Yes. Yes. Yes.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** You were always in uniform?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yes. We were seated, we were seated when we played. Everybody was on pot at the time.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Really?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Oh, sure. Everybody was loaded.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Oh?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Oh, yeah.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Where, where did it come from?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** I don't know. I'm trying to think. It came from somewhere.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So you mean all the musicians?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yes, of course.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah. I was going to ask you --

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** No, I wasn't. I, I refrained from that. For some reason or other, I don't know why, but I didn't smoke.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** So I didn't take to it.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Just didn't.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** That was pretty common for musicians at the time?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Oh, yes, yes, yes.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And what about alcohol?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** All alcohol's being used.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Where'd you get alcohol on the base?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** They sold it.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Oh, okay.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** They had beer and they sold that, too.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** But they, what would happen is the casuals, when they came in from overseas, all the mouthwashes, anything that had anything to do with, disappeared from the shelves.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** What they used to drink. Guys used to drink torpedo juice. It'd blind them.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** What is that?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** It would come out of the torpedo and it was about, about 150 alcohol.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Like grain alcohol?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Oh, geez. It was powerful stuff.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** And the guys drank it, you know, some of them didn't do too well.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** One thing I wanted to ask was, what was the age of the orchestra? Were they all young guys like you?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yeah. Yes. We were all young.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** You were, so in 1942, how old were you?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** 20, 22 maybe.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** 22. And most of the other guys were also?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yes. They were the same, about the same ages. But then, of course, we had guys in the band that had been there since World War I, I think.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Oh.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Trombone player like Abe Small and a couple others.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** But he was unusual in that.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yes, he was. And he was a fine musician and he was a gentleman.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** And he never, never took rank.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hm.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** How could he, he was being intimidated by us.



**ROBERT JACOBY:** Now, there were a couple girl bands at the time. Did you ever play with women in, not in the army, but, they were pretty rare as far as --

**ROBERT JACOBY:** No. Yes, very rare.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** -- popular music.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Yeah.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Except for singers, I suppose.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** (Inaudible) had a girl band. But that's the only one.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. Tell me again that you've played with Frank Sinatra.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Oh, yeah. And I worked with Les Baxter and I worked with Louis Armstrong, a gentleman, a very nice guy.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Very small vocabulary. He had no vocabulary.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** I guess he talked with his trumpet.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** That's what he talked with. You knew who it was when he blew. Talking, every other word was a curse word. You know, after all, he came from a, he was brought up in an orphanage. Who were his friends? They were all in, where was it, in St. Louis?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** New Orleans, wasn't it?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** New Orleans. New Orleans. And these were all hookers and --

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** -- people that aren't considered the finer people in the world.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** What was Frank Sinatra like to work with?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Well, he knew what he wanted.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Even as a young guy?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** Oh, jeez. Yes. He had a wonderful ear and he knew what he wanted. And he was a very fine musician. Very good.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did you ever come upon him after the war?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** No.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** No?

**ZOLTAN ZANTAY:** No.

(END RECORD.)

CERTIFICATE

I, Patsy Hamilton, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and accurate transcript of the taped proceedings as transcribed by me on the date hereinbefore set forth, to the best of my ability.

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Dated: 06/16/08 Patsy Hamilton-Agency Transcriptionist



**ROBERT JACOBY:** My name is Robert Jacoby, representing Tetra Tech E.C. and I'm speaking today with Paul Tanner on the phone at his home in Carlsbad, California on June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2008. This interview is part of a program sponsored by the United States Army Corps of Engineers and the New Rochelle Public Library to collect oral histories about the experiences and memories of people who were associated with the former US Army post Fort Slocum, located on Davids Island in New Rochelle, New York.

Thank you very much, Mr. Tanner, for participating in this. First, tell me what year you arrived at Fort Slocum and how old were you.

**PAUL TANNER:** Well, I was born in 1917, so let's figure that out. Let me see, I must have joined in, must have gone in the service about the end of 1942.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And did you enlist?

**PAUL TANNER:** Yes, uh-huh.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Where were you living at the time?

**PAUL TANNER:** On the road.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Oh, so you were already a professional musician at that time?

**PAUL TANNER:** Oh, for many years.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**PAUL TANNER:** I played trombone with the Glenn Miller Band. They stood as a civilian band.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PAUL TANNER:** Which had to be from '38 on up to the summer of '42.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So in the summer of '42 you were, what? About 25.

**PAUL TANNER:** Somewhere in there. I joined Charlie Spivak for a couple of months and then I went in the Army.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Why'd you join?

**PAUL TANNER:** Why'd I join?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah.

**PAUL TANNER:** Well, Rob, in our family, I had a large family mainly boys. And there were seven male members of our immediate family, there were four of in the Army at one time.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm.

**PAUL TANNER:** And so I was just, it was just the thing for me to do. My dad was an officer in World War I and World War II.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**PAUL TANNER:** And so it seemed like I should be in the Army.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Right. It was your duty.

**PAUL TANNER:** Uh-huh.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So you enlisted. And did you have basic training somewhere?

**PAUL TANNER:** Yeah. They gave me basic training there at Slocum.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So you enlisted and immediately went to Fort Slocum?

**PAUL TANNER:** Yeah. That's right.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Do you remember what your first memory of seeing the island was?

**PAUL TANNER:** Well, I thought, it's, I, I remember the Glen Island Casino and when I played there with Glenn. Of course, there, that's a way across the water from Slocum. So I knew the area a little bit.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** What'd you think of the island?

**PAUL TANNER:** I thought it was just great, yeah.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So it was almost like a country club, wasn't it?

**PAUL TANNER:** Yeah. So it was.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So you arrived. And were you treated like any other soldier or?

**PAUL TANNER:** Oh, yeah.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah?

**PAUL TANNER:** I took the basic training.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh. And you were placed in with the band. How big was the band when you arrived?

**PAUL TANNER:** Oh, it must have been around 30 some guys, I guess, maybe more. I don't know.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did you know any of them at that point?

**PAUL TANNER:** No. Eventually, I knew a couple, Ray Crisara was a trumpet player and I believe was with the opera.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**PAUL TANNER:** And Dick Readerbush (ph.) a real fine trumpet playing in Dixieland style. I mean, we got very chummy and had a good time.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So here you were already a professional –

**PAUL TANNER:** Yes.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** -- coming into this organization. What was your thought about how, how good they were?

**PAUL TANNER:** Well, they were better than I thought at first. Some of the guys were, were just fine musicians that had experience with name bands and, they never had quite the luck I've had, but then there is luck involved.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PAUL TANNER:** Um, but they were good players.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Who was leading the band when you got there?

**PAUL TANNER:** Sadowski.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Eddie Sadowski?

**PAUL TANNER:** That's right, yeah.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So Abe Small had already left?

**PAUL TANNER:** That's right.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Was, was he still around? Or do you know why he left and Sadowski took over?

**PAUL TANNER:** No. I never got into that.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh. So did Sadowski pick all the music that you played or how was that arrived at.

**PAUL TANNER:** He would, I think he was kind of a junior officer. And he chose everything and led everything; he was in charge of the band.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. Who, who did the arrangements?

**PAUL TANNER:** All the, they were bought.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh. So these were standards, there were things on the Hit Parade?

**PAUL TANNER:** Yeah. Right.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So what, what were the kind of affairs that the band played at?

**PAUL TANNER:** We played a parade every afternoon. But, sometimes it didn't get played because they had us doing something else. But they always played for, when they loaded or unloaded the ships in Los Angeles We would go and play for that.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. Now you said Los Angeles. Did you mean New York or?

**PAUL TANNER:** Oh, yeah. I'm sorry. Yeah.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah. Okay.

**PAUL TANNER:** I meant New York.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah. So these were when they were deploying overseas, right?

**PAUL TANNER:** Yeah. And whenever they were coming back.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Okay. And so you went out there and, and played them off or onto shore.

**PAUL TANNER:** That's right.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did you also have gigs at the Officers' Club and things like that?

**PAUL TANNER:** We had a few at the Officers' Club, not much. But we had to do, let me see, we'd do all forms of radio programs, propaganda things.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Right.

**PAUL TANNER:** And a lot of, we recorded for the movies and for television and everything.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Um, did you also play for simple things like raising and lowering the flag?

**PAUL TANNER:** No, I don't remember that.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh. Okay. What about playing for the, the general public at Slocum or in New Rochelle? Did you give concerts?

**PAUL TANNER:** Not so much. We were actually pretty busy.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh. Mostly busy with your broadcasts and other?

**PAUL TANNER:** Yes, uh-huh.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh. So describe for me what a typical day was like. You know, did you have practice quite a bit?

**PAUL TANNER:** No. Very seldom.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Oh, why was that?

**PAUL TANNER:** Well, because when we did, this was like, when we did, for example, a TV or any kind of show like that, well, you would practice the stuff that you were gonna do.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PAUL TANNER:** And there was a conductor there named Salter, Harry Salter.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PAUL TANNER:** That conducted us on the occasional thing. And you, you doing just what you were gonna do. So there was, but the guys, the guys were all professional.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PAUL TANNER:** So they took care of rehearsals at home really.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Right. How did you get instruments? Were, was this, did you have your own trombone or did the Army supply you one?

**PAUL TANNER:** I had mine, a Bach instrument, they sent me another one anyway.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Do you recall whether big name acts came to Fort Slocum to play for the troops?

**PAUL TANNER:** No, I don't. Nuh-uh.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**PAUL TANNER:** A big act, we would go to it.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Right. You were the big act, I guess.

**PAUL TANNER:** Well, we, we furnished the music.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Right. Who were some of the singers that you accompanied during that time?

**PAUL TANNER:** Not much that I can remember. I'm sorry.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Okay. One thing that, well, tell me about the Solid Seven. What was the Solid Seven?

**PAUL TANNER:** It was a Dixieland group. And we started just playing together on the base when, I guess, they had some things for us to do. Let me see, Dick Readerbush, trumpet, because he was a good Dixieland trumpet player. And, and Zip Zantay played the clarinet horn. And bass and piano and drums, you know. And since there were seven of us and we started just to play for our own amusement in the basement. And the first thing you know, we're busy.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So you did some broadcasts as Paul Tanner and his Solid Seven?

**PAUL TANNER:** I don't know how many broadcasts we did. I know that, that they'd use us as a change of pace in the Army program.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. So was Dixieland your favorite kind of music or was that just something that came up at the time?

**PAUL TANNER:** Well, it was something that came, something that came up at the time because this kid, Readerbush, was so lonesome and unhappy that I thought well, we could do something to cheer him up. And well, that was Dixieland. So that's the reason we started to do that.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And you have a recording of that, don't you?

**PAUL TANNER:** Yeah. Uh-huh.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah. Zip Zantay played it for me on Tuesday.

**PAUL TANNER:** Oh, yeah. You talked to Zip, huh?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Right.

**PAUL TANNER:** How is he?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** He's doing well. He's doing well. He played a little clarinet for me. He says he plays every day.

**PAUL TANNER:** Yeah. Well, he was a good player.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Who else was in that, that combo besides Zip and?

**PAUL TANNER:** Ray Barr, piano player.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**PAUL TANNER:** He was a good, good player. The bass changed a couple times. And then a tenor sax player named Jimmy English. But I don't know what in the world happened to him.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Now at some point the Fort Slocum Band did quite a bit of broadcasting from the NBC Studios. Is that right?

**PAUL TANNER:** Yes, that's right.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Was this a live radio broadcast?

**PAUL TANNER:** Yes. Or it would be a TV thing.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**PAUL TANNER:** You know, we would furnish the accompaniment. It really, usually you get all the TV shows in between the people acting, you know. So that was what we did.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. So that must have been pretty grueling doing that pretty often, driving down to the city and then back up to Slocum. Is that where you had your barracks at Fort Slocum or did you live off the island?

**PAUL TANNER:** I, I had a bed assigned to me out on the island. But I got an apartment...

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**PAUL TANNER:** ...right off the island for my wife and myself.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Oh, I see. When did you get married?

**PAUL TANNER:** The first time?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** When you were at Slocum during those years.

**PAUL TANNER:** I got married long before that. I got married in like 1939 or so. And then she passed away in '82 I guess. And now in '84 I got remarried.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. Did your first wife accompany you on many of your road trips or was that something the women just didn't do?

**PAUL TANNER:** You mean before the service?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah.

**PAUL TANNER:** Oh, yeah. We were together all the time.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Oh, really?

**PAUL TANNER:** And then she, she developed a heart problem.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**PAUL TANNER:** That they weren't gonna be able to solve. So she passed away.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Oh. Now tell me a little bit about your remembrances of what the island looked like. Did you have any spare time there? I know, it sounded like you were pretty busy.

**PAUL TANNER:** That's absolutely right. We were busy.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah. So no time for like playing baseball on the island or just?

**PAUL TANNER:** No. The band didn't get involved with any of that.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** The island was a center for recruiting. And I know that there were troops that were coming back from Africa and Europe, rotating through. Did you happen to come into contact with, with guys who were coming back from overseas?

**PAUL TANNER:** No.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh. Where, were did your brothers serve, by the way? Were they also musicians?

**PAUL TANNER:** Yeah. That's right. Let me see. One of them was, was in Riverside. And the other one was in Washington, DC. And I don't know where the other one was. And my dad was very busy. He was a colonel.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. Did you get to see your brothers and father much during those years?

**PAUL TANNER:** No. I, I didn't see them hardly at all. You know, I was in, I was busy and they were busy.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Right. Now you mentioned that you were married at that time. Um, for the other guys in the band, was there much fraternizing with the WACs that were on the base?

**PAUL TANNER:** No. We were too busy to do any of that.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** All right.

**PAUL TANNER:** And, you know, we were going into New York City very regularly.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So you met them there. You were, did you, did you have things that you did on your own or was that not allowed?

**PAUL TANNER:** Well, it supposedly wasn't allowed. You weren't supposed to compete with the civilians at the time.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**PAUL TANNER:** You have to give them a break, too, you know.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Right. Right. But music was, seems like it was quite important during the war years.

**PAUL TANNER:** Oh, sure. Absolutely.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Everyone was into swing music or other types of music. It was sort of a morale builder. Would you say that?

**PAUL TANNER:** Yeah. Of course. Absolutely.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Tell me what your, where were you when you got word about D Day?

**PAUL TANNER:** You mean that the war was over?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** No, on Normandy, the invasion of Normandy.

**PAUL TANNER:** Oh, the invasion. I don't know. I was with Miller then. I guess I was with him till the latter part of 1942.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh. What about when the war ended? What was that feeling like?

**PAUL TANNER:** Well, we were all anxious to, to, to get back to being civilians and being competitive and working again. You know.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. So almost immediately did they, the service band break up?

**PAUL TANNER:** It was pretty fast.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So you were, pretty soon after the war ended, you were released and you went back. What was the first thing that you did when, your first job after the war?

**PAUL TANNER:** Well, I didn't know who was paying well with the bands. So I went over to New Jersey to Frank Daly. Does that name mean anything to you?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Not to me.

**PAUL TANNER:** He had a club called the Meadowbrook over in New Jersey.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** I've heard of the Meadowbrook, though.

**PAUL TANNER:** Yeah. Well, that was Frank Daly's. And he, I, I knew him because I had worked with Frank. He cashed checks for all the guys in the band. So I knew he was paying well. So I went over and talked to him. And then he said, well, he suggested I go with Les Brown.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm.

**PAUL TANNER:** Because he was paying well. And he, he needed a guy who did the kind of things I did. So I went ahead and joined Les the day I got out of the service.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh. Was that more road work or was it a lot in one place?

**PAUL TANNER:** It was road work.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah. At some point in the late 40s, the big band sound started to be less popular. What was your sense of why that was?

**PAUL TANNER:** Well, you're talking about with Elvis Presley?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Or the Bebop Jazz that was sort of a shift in jazz from big, big large bands, you know --

**PAUL TANNER:** Yeah.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** -- to the kind of thing that Charlie Parker was doing.

**PAUL TANNER:** Well, the public didn't pick up very much on that.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**PAUL TANNER:** For a long time. With Dizzy Gillespie.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah.

**PAUL TANNER:** Not for quite awhile. And so the big bands were still very popular for quite a good time and the leaders paid a lot of money.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So it was really with Presley and the beginning of Rock and Roll that things started to change for you?

**PAUL TANNER:** Yeah. Uh-huh. And rightly so, you know.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Times just have a way of changing styles and, and --

**PAUL TANNER:** It always goes in cycles.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh. So it was about that time that you went back to school. Is that right?

**PAUL TANNER:** No. You remember, I went with, let's see, I jotted down a couple of answers in case you asked. I went with Les Brown, but then, you see, before Glenn broke up he had me sign a contract I would work for him for at least a year. Well, he didn't come back. So I --

**ROBERT JACOBY:** You're talking now about Glenn Miller?

**PAUL TANNER:** Yeah.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Because he disappeared in a plane.

**PAUL TANNER:** That's right. And then he had Tex Beneke's contract. So therefore, he would want me to join Tex's band.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PAUL TANNER:** So I did and I stayed there for six years. My contract was only for one year.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And you, was that a very enjoyable experience?

**PAUL TANNER:** Oh, yeah. Tex, Tex and I were good buddies.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah?

**PAUL TANNER:** And the price was right.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And did you travel all over the country?

**PAUL TANNER:** Yeah. Sure did.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah? In a given year, how many performances would you play?

**PAUL TANNER:** Oh, about seven a week.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Wow, so that's a hectic schedule.

**PAUL TANNER:** Yeah. But I didn't mind, because I was used to it. That was what I did.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Right. Right. And, and did your wife still come with you on those?

**PAUL TANNER:** Yeah. She sure did. And when she passed away about '82 --

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PAUL TANNER:** And then I remarried in '84.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh. Probably for my generation, one of the, and I'm, I'm 54, your, your contribution to the Beach Boys might be something that is, is interesting. Why don't you describe for me how they contacted you.

**PAUL TANNER:** Wilson called me on the phone, that's all.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Brian Wilson?

**PAUL TANNER:** Yeah. I was at a record date at the time. So, my wife just called. And when she said the Beach Boys want you to come play for them, so I said okay. And so that was a strange acquaintance and to play with them because they didn't, they really didn't know what they were doing.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Were you aware of who they were?

**PAUL TANNER:** Well, yeah. Sure. You know.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** You knew about them, but what did you think of Rock and Roll in general?



**PAUL TANNER:** Well, I thought it was very simple, you know, very plain.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So what was your contribution to, to the Beach Boys? Describe that for me.

**PAUL TANNER:** Well, did you know I had invented an electronic instrument?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** I am aware of that. Tell me what that is.

**PAUL TANNER:** Well, do you know what a theremin is?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Well, I think it's an instrument that uses feedback to create a sound.

**PAUL TANNER:** That's close enough. I was on a recording session and they wanted to see, how do you describe it? You don't touch the instrument, you just wave around it, you know.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PAUL TANNER:** And it makes sounds. And they're all, some of them are very ghastly, some of them are very pretty. And so there was a guy on this record deal I was on that was playing a theremin. So I'm sitting there and he, he didn't know what in the world he was doing. He came over and said, Paul, how is such and such a note sound?, so we'd have something to start from. And so I, I figured that there must be a better way to do this. So I, I put one together. I worked with it for quite awhile.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PAUL TANNER:** Do you wanna know how come I stopped working with it?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Sure.

**PAUL TANNER:** All right. I, I got, you know, disenchanted with it. Because, you know, I'm a trombone player, that's what I did.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Right.

**PAUL TANNER:** So, I gave this instrument, see they started to have instruments that were based on higher electronics and all than a theremin is.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** You mean like a synthesizer?

**PAUL TANNER:** That's right. They started as synthesizers, so I figured well, they can do anything I can do and a lot more. I decided to hang that up. So I gave it to a hospital.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Hmm.

**PAUL TANNER:** Because they could use it for testing hearing because it would go out of hearing range in full durations high and low. And so then, they had it in a store room in Santa Monica. And then all of a sudden there was a big storm there and the store room they had it in collapsed and it broke it up and that was the end of the theremin.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So there was only one model?

**PAUL TANNER:** Yeah. Because I had put it together.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh. So how, how long was the session for the Good Vibrations song?

**PAUL TANNER:** It varied because they had no idea what was happening. No planning and no arrangements or anything. Brian would say to me, play this and then sing it to me. The first time I said, well, write it down, I'll play anything you want. He says, write it down? We can't write down music. You know, so, that gives you an idea of how organized and disorganized it was.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Right.

**PAUL TANNER:** When I heard the record, this was, we were working on a thing called Good Vibrations. And when I heard it, I thought, gee, that's a very good record, so.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** It must amaze you that more people have probably heard that song than, you know, most of Glenn Miller's songs, which were much, much more complicated and interesting songs.

**PAUL TANNER:** Well, Glenn was actually, by far, the most popular attraction in the music business.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PAUL TANNER:** That includes, he sold more records than the Beatles and Elvis Presley put together.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh. You can probably still be driving around in your car and hear Good Vibrations once in awhile.

**PAUL TANNER:** Yeah. I can be walking around in a food market and hear it being played. You know, and of course I recognize me because the thing they had me do was up very high in pitch.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah. It's very prominent in the song.

**PAUL TANNER:** That's right.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And after awhile, at what point did you get your degree in music?

**PAUL TANNER:** Well, let me see, after, with Tex, his band was mainly at night and schooling was mainly in the day time. So therefore, I was able to go to some classes.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PAUL TANNER:** I enrolled in UCLA as a Freshman. I was the oldest Freshman in captivity. So I stayed there and they had me start to teach. And just as soon as I got my, my Bachelor's Degree, they hired me on faculty.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mmm.

**PAUL TANNER:** And after I was hired is when they had me do, they gave me or had me earn a Master's Degree and a Doctor's Degree.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So that pretty much ended your days on the road when you, when you joined the faculty.

**PAUL TANNER:** Well, yeah. When I was with Tex in New York, I was so busy doing Tex's stuff on hours that didn't conflict with what was happening in music, because most of their stuff is at night.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PAUL TANNER:** But, let me see, how do I explain it? I was so busy doing what they call freelancing and I, they hired me on the ABC network, the American Broadcasting Company.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yes.

**PAUL TANNER:** It was the other staff now and they hired me on there. And I was with Tex on there at the same time and freelancing at the same time. And I was trying to go to school at the same time. So everything got all pretty busy.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** No time to sleep.

**PAUL TANNER:** Nope. I didn't get any time to sleep.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So it must have been here you are working as a professional musician, mostly in the evenings, but also sometimes during the day. And in between you have to study. And you, you were studying --

(END SIDE ONE. BEGIN SIDE TWO.)

**PAUL TANNER:** Well, I wrote 30 or so books on jazz.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm.

**PAUL TANNER:** When I was there at UCLA. And I started to teach, I've counted up 75,000 students in a course called the Development of Jazz.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Wow.

**PAUL TANNER:** And I wrote an awful lot of books about it.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** This course, you must have used a lot of your own tapes or things that you had done with Glenn Miller and Tex.

**PAUL TANNER:** Well, you didn't do, do too much from Glenn Miller music on the history of jazz. You know, you were a little more with Rock and -- not Rock and Roll, but the jazz guys were playing.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PAUL TANNER:** You know, and that's not what the Miller Band was all about.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So you started with, even before Louis Armstrong I guess?

**PAUL TANNER:** Yes, that's right.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And did you ever play with Louis Armstrong?

**PAUL TANNER:** I played on the same program with him.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** What was that like?

**PAUL TANNER:** Oh, it was a thrill, you know. Because he was, mostly because he was an awfully nice fellow.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**PAUL TANNER:** In the second place, he was like, you know, the, the beginning guy.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Right. And at it for quite a long time.

**PAUL TANNER:** Yeah. He sure was, yeah.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Tell me a little bit about the fraternity of musicians. You played with a lot of different guys, a lot of groups. Was it always easy or were there a lot of egos at play?

**PAUL TANNER:** The musicians, the players themselves, they didn't stand much for another player having an ego, because there was always somebody that could play just as well.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PAUL TANNER:** But it was almost always fun. You know, so I enjoyed playing.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Right. Do you still play today?

**PAUL TANNER:** Oh, no. I'm 90 years old.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** But I mean, take out the horn and just --

**PAUL TANNER:** No. I don't even have a horn.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** No?

**PAUL TANNER:** No.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** You didn't keep your mouthpiece?

**PAUL TANNER:** No, sure didn't.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Aw. Um, Allen Grieve told me that when he was at Slocum, Bunny Berigan came, Bunny Berigan and his band came to Slocum and Berigan lost his horn somewhere along the way. But he had his mouthpiece. And he borrowed Allen's horn for the engagement.

**PAUL TANNER:** That is strange, isn't it?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah. It's kind of funny.

**PAUL TANNER:** You couldn't really depend an awful lot on what Berigan was doing unless he was playing.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**PAUL TANNER:** And then you paid attention.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Was he a top-notch?

**PAUL TANNER:** He certainly was.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah. Yeah. Tell me what some of your favorite musicians were. Who did you style, did you style yourself after anyone or was it?

**PAUL TANNER:** Well, I did an awful lot of listening. In fact, that's, that's how I improved. I kept listening. But with the trombone, you've got to figure Tommy Dorsey and Jack Teagarden.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PAUL TANNER:** And Will Bradley. And guys all like that were, just anything that you heard you, you tried to incorporate that into what, what you could do.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** When did you start playing the trombone?

**PAUL TANNER:** I think I must have been about, oh, eight or nine years old.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Was that your first instrument?

**PAUL TANNER:** Well, in our family, my dad was an excellent piano player. In our family, each of the guys had to work up a certain amount of proficiency on the piano and then we could choose whatever instrument that we wanted. So I decided I'd like to play the trombone.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** What about the trombone attracted you?

**PAUL TANNER:** Well, let's face it, they're fun.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah?

**PAUL TANNER:** This is only in reform school. My dad was the superintendent of the state reformatory in Delaware.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Oh.

**PAUL TANNER:** So one of the reform school kids told me how to hold the horn, how it blew, you know.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh. And did, did you take private lessons?

**PAUL TANNER:** No.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** You just were self-taught and listened to the radio or?

**PAUL TANNER:** Well, I had one lesson, that was with Will Bradley. And I called him and asked him, I told him I was going to California and I said, would you listen to what I do and give me some suggestions on what I need to work on?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PAUL TANNER:** So he said, I'd be glad to. So he did.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** When did you have your first professional gig?

**PAUL TANNER:** I guess when I first started.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** How old were you?

**PAUL TANNER:** I must have been, maybe 12 years old was all.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Really? That, that young? So what was that like? I mean, you were still in school.

**PAUL TANNER:** Yeah. I was just listening to what the other guys did, that's all.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh. And was that in Delaware?

**PAUL TANNER:** Yeah. Sure.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Wilmington?

**PAUL TANNER:** Yeah.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**PAUL TANNER:** On the outskirts.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah. And so tell me how you hooked up with Glenn.

**PAUL TANNER:** You really want to know this, huh?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Sure.

**PAUL TANNER:** Well, let me see, it was in the summertime, back east. If you're a musician and you don't have a job in the summertime and you're back in that part of the country, the thing to do is to go to Atlantic City because in Atlantic City there, there are a lot of little joints you can play. And you know, cause there were, you could, you could maybe play for an evening and pick up enough for dinner. You know?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PAUL TANNER:** Or whatever. And there are also two, two big attractions there for bands, the two piers. Million Dollar Pier and the other one.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** The Steel Pier?

**PAUL TANNER:** Steel Pier, yeah. So there was a different band there every time. And you, you know, if somebody needed what it was you could do, you had a chance of being picked up.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PAUL TANNER:** I was going around to the different clubs and playing. I'm at this one club -- have you read anything that I wrote?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** No.

**PAUL TANNER:** Well, this is what is known as a strip joint. Do you know what that is?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** I think so.

**PAUL TANNER:** All right. At your age, I'd say you do. I walked in there and I sat and played with his guys and they were very impressed. They went to the owner of the place and they said, we really need this guy. What you do is you play for the ladies to disrobe for the entertainment of the guests. Okay?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PAUL TANNER:** That's called a strip joint. So I was sitting there playing. And I had just played some nice pretty high solo and I look out there in the audience, which is just a little club, you know, a real crummy joint. And I looked out there and there was Glenn Miller and his wife. And I knew who he was because he did what I wanted to eventually do. So after I got off the stage, he called me over to his table.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Hmm.

**PAUL TANNER:** And he asked me some questions and he was very complimentary. And I asked him if I could use what he said as a recommendation. He said, well, he said, why don't you come with me? And I said, oh. He said, are you, how soon can you go. I said, how soon do you leave?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** How old were you at that point?

**PAUL TANNER:** I must have been around 18. That's all. I went with him then and stayed with him until he broke it up.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm So he, he joined the Army and broke up the civilian band. Is that right?

**PAUL TANNER:** That's right. Yeah.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** There was no opportunity for you to, to follow him with the military band? How did that work?

**PAUL TANNER:** Oh, I didn't want to.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Oh.

**PAUL TANNER:** I had some other things I wanted to do.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**PAUL TANNER:** So he asked me to sign a contract to work for him for at least a year after the war.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PAUL TANNER:** I said, okay. He showed me what he had booked and I said, oh man. That's great.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And what did you learn from Glenn Miller in terms of musicianship?

**PAUL TANNER:** Discipline I think more than anything else. You, you decide what you want to do and work on it.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh. And so this was a full-time job. You know, it was a, not just something to fool around with.

**PAUL TANNER:** Oh, no. It was a full-time job. No question about it.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So at what point, earlier, did you tell yourself, you know, Paul, I'm a pretty good trombone player. When did that sort of strike you?

**PAUL TANNER:** I never thought that.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Oh, okay. But you, you must have gotten a sense that you were, you were good enough.

**PAUL TANNER:** Never.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** No?

**PAUL TANNER:** You, that kind of guy can slide backwards.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh. So you were, during your active years, you practiced all the time?

**PAUL TANNER:** All the time. Yup.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Tell me what you've been doing lately.

**PAUL TANNER:** Well, I'm, since I left the teaching, I've written three books on being with the Glenn Miller Band and what it was like to be out on the road and everything.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**PAUL TANNER:** And then I wrote one book about my dad, because he was a real inspiration.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh. What's the name of that book?

**PAUL TANNER:** The Colonel.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh. Where, where did he serve?

**PAUL TANNER:** All over the place because, especially in the Second World War. He spent a lot of time in the South Seas and everything.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. But you were not a typical Army brat going around from post to post, right?

**PAUL TANNER:** No, not at all.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** You were, he, he had one, one house. You said you lived near Wilmington.

**PAUL TANNER:** Yes.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Well, I want to thank you very much, Paul Tanner, for participating in this. Do you have any final thoughts, perhaps, on your years at Fort Slocum and the Fort Slocum Band?

**PAUL TANNER:** Gosh, I don't know. I know that after you stop you should stay busy doing something, writing or, or helping other trombone players or something, you know. And if you don't, and if you aren't lucky enough to have a wonderful wife who will really look after you, well then you're in trouble.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Well, thank you very much, sir.

**PAUL TANNER:** Okay, sir.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** It was a pleasure talking to you.

**PAUL TANNER:** Me, too. Tell those guys you talk to that I say hello.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Oh, I will. Okay. Have a nice day.

**PAUL TANNER:** All right.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Bye-bye.

(END RECORD.)

CERTIFICATE



I, Patsy Hamilton, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and accurate transcript of the taped proceedings as transcribed by me on the date hereinbefore set forth, to the best of my ability.

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Dated: 06/16/08 Patsy Hamilton-Agency Transcriptionist



**ROBERT JACOBY:** My name is Robert Jacoby, representing Tetra Tech E.C. and I'm talking today with Ray Crisara at his home in Austin, Texas on June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2008. This interview is part of a program sponsored by the United States Army Corps of Engineers and the New Rochelle Public Library to collect oral histories about the experiences and memories of people who were associated with the former US Army post, Fort Slocum, located on Davids Island in New Rochelle, New York.

Mr. Crisara, it's a pleasure to be talking with you today. First off, why don't you tell me how old you were when you enlisted or were drafted into the Army.

**RAY CRISARA:** Well, the best thing I can do with that is, let's see, I was born in 1920 and I would probably have gone into the Army, '41, probably '42, 1942.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Were you born in Texas?

**RAY CRISARA:** No, I was born in Cortland, New York, a small city up in upper New York state.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RAY CRISARA:** And brought up there and grew up there and all. And the main thing that I would say about everything is that Fort Slocum, well, in first place, the infantry was a kind of a negative experience, as you can well imagine and all. And I was finally, I was transferred up to Fort Slocum, to the band up there, and I would say that that probably took place -- well, I went into the Army just before Christmas of 1942.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RAY CRISARA:** And I was at Fort Dix there until I was farmed out to where I was going to become an active part of the Army and finished up in an infantry division in Fort Jackson, South Carolina.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Quite a long way from home.

**RAY CRISARA:** Yes. And that, that adds up to it also. Because of the, I was in New York working professionally with my trumpet and everything else as a soloist with the Goldman Band and first trumpet player with the Metropolitan Opera House Orchestra.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So you were a professional before you joined the Army?

**RAY CRISARA:** Yes. But of a very short time, because I went into, I went into the Army, I think it was probably the, oh gosh, I think probably the end of '42.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RAY CRISARA:** Because I think Pearl Harbor Day was the end of '42. Is that right?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Right. December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1941.

**RAY CRISARA:** That's right. And I was taken into the Army and probably a little bit of one year later than that, from, just being a working professional musician, and then finished up in Fort Jackson, South Carolina. And I was there and I, on weekend leave I happened to go to New York City and I stopped at a concert of the Goldman Band, where I had been a member, to see some of my friends and all.

And one of my colleagues there said, asked me about my Army background. And when I told him, he said, well, he said, he said, Ray, that's crazy. You don't belong in the infantry. So he said, I'm gonna make a phone call and we'll see if we can get things set aright. So he called me on the next Saturday, I guess, and he said, I want you to call Sergeant Small that leads the band at Fort Slocum and I want you to make an appointment with him.

So I called Small and went up to Fort Slocum and made the little boat ride that everybody takes to get to the island and all. And the band at Fort Slocum at that time was just leaving by bus to go to New York City to do a radio broadcast. So he suggested that I go with them. And --

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did you have your trumpet with you?

**RAY CRISARA:** No. I was just, I was a bona fide Army member and, and all.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm.

**RAY CRISARA:** So, but we finished up the NBC Studios and someone there suggested that I should meet a Colonel, oh Lord, maybe you know his name better than I do, the fellow that was in charge of all the Army or all the service musicians at that time.



**ROBERT JACOBY:** No, I don't know.

**RAY CRISARA:** Well, that may come, may come to me. But anyway, I was introduced to this man and I was introduced as, this is such and such, this is Private Crisara and he's in Fort Jackson, South Carolina and we need him up very badly here in New York City. And the fella said, well, that's fine. If you need him, he said, I'll work it out and I'll have him transferred up to Fort Slocum.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And you didn't have to --

**RAY CRISARA:** And many months after that, I was conducting, I guess, some physical drills with our band and a fella came by and he said, you're supposed to go immediately to the Adjutant General's office of the 101<sup>st</sup> Division.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Hmm.

**RAY CRISARA:** And so I went there and he said, I have orders here for you to be transferred to Fort Slocum. How do you feel about that? And I said, well, I guess probably that would be maybe a move that I would, would like. And he said, well, where is your home town compared to here, talking about Fort Slocum. And I said, about 225 miles away. And he said, well, that's far enough away. We don't like to transfer people close to their home towns.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RAY CRISARA:** And so that went into making me transfer from Fort Jackson to Fort Slocum.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And you didn't have to audition for this?

**RAY CRISARA:** No, I guess probably my credentials were such that they felt that with such credentials I would not have to audition for them.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Had you ever heard of Fort Slocum before talking with Sergeant Small?

**RAY CRISARA:** No. I didn't know it existed until I happened to run into this colleague who was in the Goldman Band and suggested that he would call Sergeant Small because he thought I should probably be at a place like Fort Slocum.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Do you have any memories of your first view of Fort Slocum?

**RAY CRISARA:** Yeah. I have a strong one. Uh, when I was in Fort Jackson, we lived in tar paper huts that had live stoves, little stoves in, based on sand at each end of this hut where we lived. And we were awakened by our First Sergeant, who went through at six o'clock in the morning, clanging the cymbals together. And that's how we, that's how we lived down there.

So I was transferred to Fort Slocum and left all my stuff at, at Fort Jackson, and got up to Fort Slocum and all of a sudden took this boat to the island. And in place of tar paper huts were great big brick buildings where everybody was housed. And I thought, whoa, this really is something. And then I was really shocked by going up to the band quarters and there was a great big sign on their quarters. And it said, everybody out of bed by eight o'clock.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** No sergeant coming by with cymbals?

**RAY CRISARA:** Exactly. That was my first experience. And I thought, wow, this is a, you know, this is a country club by comparison. But anyway, I was taken into the band as a private and everything else and became part of that band. And I can't tell you exactly when it was, but there was a period of time, there had to be, when the band got some orders to be enlarged. And all of a sudden, a marching military band started to become the size and the orchestration of a symphony orchestra.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So you said that originally it was a marching band. Is that, was that your primary duty early on?

**RAY CRISARA:** The kind of band, and when I was first there, you know, would be there for Reveille and for marching the soldiers into wherever they had to be and that kind of thing. It was really a military band.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So it changed very dramatically it sounds like.

**RAY CRISARA:** Well, it, it really did. We got people coming in, string players and everything, from the Boston Symphony and from the Philadelphia Orchestra, from Hollywood, from anywhere in the country where they felt they had musicians of such caliber they could be part of this organization that was going to be stationed at Fort Slocum but working primarily in New York city doing all kinds of classical and commercial work for the Army.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So Fort Slocum, it sounds like, became one of the primary locations for a military band during World War II.

**RAY CRISARA:** Right. That, that was true. And the, the, I guess the responsibilities of that band gradually grew to the point where all of our work was practically in New York City. And that was doing music for films for public -- I guess -- instruction; and doing films for education of, of different soldiers and soldier groups; making all kinds of recordings down at RCA Victor for, recordings that were made for the service and they were called, they were alphabetical names. Hold on just a minute and it'll come to me, I'm sure.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Okay.

**RAY CRISARA:** But anyway, the, the, the responsibilities of this orchestra became high class recordings, all kinds of films, films with people, Marian Anderson, conductors like Stokowski, Andre Kostelanetz and all. So that we were very much in the swim of things for the entire life of the band at Fort Slocum, doing all this kind of work in New York City.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** What kind of music did you primarily play?

**RAY CRISARA:** We, I would say probably it was for, I would call it mostly commercial, recordings, films, all kinds of radio broadcast.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** What kind of sound was it? Was it swing music or?

**RAY CRISARA:** A combination of both.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hm.

**RAY CRISARA:** A combination of both and it had the personnel to handle both things. Within the orchestra were some very well known jazz musicians and people in big bands, orchestras and stuff like that, were also of very high caliber. So the band was a very, very convincing and I guess listen-able kind of situation for almost anything that they were called upon to do.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Let me ask you about your musical background and your musical tastes. When did you first start playing an instrument?

**RAY CRISARA:** Uh, I started to play trumpet when I was ten years old. And my dad was a, a tool and die maker for the Broadway Motor Truck Company in Cortland, New York. But my dad, as just another thing, was the conductor of the city band. And I became a member of that city band and also went through high school in Cortland, graduated from there when I was fifteen years old and then went off to music school.

And music school led to, first thing was becoming a part-time faculty member at the University of Michigan under William Ravelli. And then from there, auditioning to become a member of the Goldman Band. And then in the summer where I was working in New York, to audition for a position in the Metropolitan Opera House. And I was chosen for that position.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Tell me about the Goldman Band. Who, who was Mr. Goldman? Who was, who was that?

**RAY CRISARA:** Franko Goldman, going way, way back, was an instrumentalist, a coronet soloist and all, so, with the Souza Band.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm.

**RAY CRISARA:** And then when he settled in New York and everything else, he formed the Goldman Band and got a, some kind of monetary help from the Guggenheim Foundation and did concerts in Central Park and in Prospect Park every summer in New York.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm. So --

**RAY CRISARA:** I became a soloist of that group. And people that knew of me, just even shortly, recommended that I would audition for this job at the Met.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm.

**RAY CRISARA:** And I did and I was given the job. And that's where I, that was my first really major professional position.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Had you been familiar with opera music before that?

**RAY CRISARA:** No, but I, part of my contract said that I had to spend a little bit of time tutoring with some of the, the Met conductors through that summer so that I would know about that repertoire, because I did not know that repertoire.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. And did you know any Italian or German, which was the common language for many operas?

**RAY CRISARA:** I was an English-speaking trumpet player. But anyway, I was taken in, I did a whole season at the Met and then started the second season, which was in, which would have been '42 I believe. And I was taken into the Army at that time. And that's where I finished up at Fort Jackson.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Now, tell me about your band mates at Fort Slocum. What, what kind of people were they? Did, did you --

**RAY CRISARA:** Well, when I first got there, most of them, a good number of them were New York musicians, and mainly doing sort of club dates, kind of work, which was work playing for bar mitzvahs and for weddings and for that kind of thing. But I think a good number of those fellas were that kind of people.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RAY CRISARA:** But then gradually, as the band enlarged, then we got a high, very high level of professional musicians to come in. And then, with that kind of membership and everything else, then we were assigned all different kinds of playing from classical concerts to all kinds of radio work, all kinds of recording, all kinds of films and everything else, and an important part of the military life right there in and around New York City.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So increasingly, you were less and less at Fort Slocum and more and more in New York City?

**RAY CRISARA:** Well, the only, our, our, we lived in Fort Slocum.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RAY CRISARA:** And we had our meals there. And we went from Fort Slocum into New York for times when we had to work. But also we were in New York to the degree that some of the fellas had lived there and some of the fellas also had taken apartments there and all. And I was one of them that lived with two other fellas on 98<sup>th</sup> Street on Fifth Avenue. And we, we spent overnight many times in New York thanks to the Salvation Army, who put us up and everything else. But the other time was in Fort Slocum.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Um, who picked the music for your various playing? Was it Sergeant Small?

**RAY CRISARA:** No. The people that were our bosses and everything else were at a very high level of the classical and commercial life in New York City.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** I see. And they provided you with the arrangements and scores?

**RAY CRISARA:** We, well, we had fellas assigned to us who did some of the writing.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**RAY CRISARA:** Like, I can give you a for instance. One of the fellas that worked for us was Cy Oliver.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RAY CRISARA:** Now, Cy Oliver was one of the outstanding jazz arrangers, arranged for people like Benny Goodman, Tommy Dorsey and for their recordings and all. And so that we played at that level.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** I believe he was stationed nearby at Camp Upton for awhile, wasn't he?

**RAY CRISARA:** No. We were not stationed at Camp Upton. The only thing we had with Camp Upton is, we had a regular Monday night broadcast from Camp Upton. We were taken up to Upton for the entire day for rehearsal and we had a broadcast on Monday nights. The conductor was Walter Gross, who had been a staff conductor at Columbia Broadcasting Company.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Hmm. So you were certainly surrounded by professionals of all, of all levels in the music field.

**RAY CRISARA:** Yeah. And that opened up my playing experience and my musical experience to a very wide degree and made, as it turned out, being in the Army and at Fort Slocum a very valuable thing to me.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Tell, tell me about Fort Slocum, what your memories are of how it looked and, and what it felt like.

**RAY CRISARA:** Well, the, there was a small golf course laid out on the parade ground.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RAY CRISARA:** That was part of the lifestyle. I remember, I remember very well, Thanksgiving dinner at Fort Slocum and all of our meals were wonderful. We lived a very high life military style.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So when you said earlier that it looked like a country club, you weren't kidding?

**RAY CRISARA:** That's right.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Um, but it, was it, was it a busy place?

**RAY CRISARA:** Well, I, I don't know what it served when I first got there, but I do know that it was, our band was transferred and I think that the, the, Fort Slocum became a base for the Transportation Division of the, in the Army.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did you get to know many of the soldiers who were not in the band?

**RAY CRISARA:** No. The band was that busy that I think probably our lifestyle was around what we were doing.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. What about returning veterans? I understand Fort Slocum was sometimes used to rotate returning veterans coming back from Africa and Europe. Did you meet any of those people?

**RAY CRISARA:** I don't recall that. And I don't remember that as a major function at Fort Slocum.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Let's talk for a minute about the war itself. You obviously heard the news about the war all the time. Was it in the back of your mind ever that you could have been shipped out to one of the theaters?

**RAY CRISARA:** Well, I think that the, anybody in the military is certainly in the military, he's there at the beck and call of anybody that has a beck and call.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. Do you recall where you were and what you thought when you heard about the invasion of Normandy?

**RAY CRISARA:** Yes. I, I'm sure I was in Fort Slocum. And the way I can tell you that is this, at Fort Slocum, the commanding officer was a Commander Lentz. L-e-n-t-z I think it is. And he was the boss of the thing. And oddly enough, one of the fellas in the band was a young trumpet player from Wisconsin. Lentz came from Wisconsin originally. And I know that the Battle of the Bulge took place because this young friend of mind was the kind of moral and, I guess probably, thinking person about the war.

And he went to Colonel Lentz as soon as he, we heard about the Bulge and there was going to be extra people sent over there. And Dick went to Colonel Lentz and as a friend and all, even back from Wisconsin. He said, I don't want to be in the band any longer. I want to be shipped out and I want to go to the Bulge, because that's where I belong.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Hmm.

**RAY CRISARA:** And that was, yeah, the Battle of the Bulge, that's how I remember that. That's how I remember that.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Was he alone in that feeling? Was there a sense of --

**RAY CRISARA:** No. I think he was alone.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**RAY CRISARA:** I think everybody else probably felt, well, we're doing a big job here in New York City and they tell us it is very important, well, then we should be here. Of what value would we be by comparison if we were in the Battle of the Bulge?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** It sounds like music was a very important part of the war effort, of morale building. Was, was that how you sensed it?

**RAY CRISARA:** Yes. I think that we were used that way. We did many films, sound tracks for films, that would be released to regular public commercial theaters. And we had records that we made that were also made for, not to be sold or anything else, but sold for the service.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** The, the --

**RAY CRISARA:** One of the things, I can say this to you just quickly. One time orders came out for me when I was at Fort Slocum, to report the next day to RCA Victor Recording Studios in New York City. And when I got there, I found that I was to be there to record all of the bugle calls in the bugle call manual in the Army.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Hmm.

**RAY CRISARA:** And so I recorded all of those. And there, the, the way it happened, I know about this, is I had a number of letters and calls from fellas that I had known from even my home town or from fellas that I knew at Fort Jackson saying, we had your records. They're being played at our base here.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Oh, that's great.

**RAY CRISARA:** And your name is on them and I thought you would be interested to know that the project that you're on is getting world-wide attention.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Do you still have any of those disks?

**RAY CRISARA:** No. I don't know that I ever had. I don't know that I ever, you know, put in for them or had the, maybe the ego that made me feel that it was kind of important, you know.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did you play the bugle at Fort Slocum for Reveille and Taps?

**RAY CRISARA:** No. That was all done on, that was all done on trumpets or cornets.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**RAY CRISARA:** And those were all done there, at the time that I was there, we were, we were, we did those things live.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** But did you do them on trumpet or cornet?

**RAY CRISARA:** Well, I would have done them on, I was playing coronet at the time, so I would have made them done it on cornet. Those that were playing trumpet, probably would have done their share of it on trumpet.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did you rotate amongst you doing the Taps and?

**RAY CRISARA:** Yeah. That's right.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Tell me your memories about the end of the war, VE Day and VJ Day.

**RAY CRISARA:** Well, the end of the war, we were transferred out of Fort, out of Fort Slocum at one time as members of the Transportation Corps. And we were stationed at Governor's Island.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** You were taken away from Fort Slocum?

**RAY CRISARA:** Slocum. Yeah. And that was at the very tail end of the war. And then I don't know that we did very, very much of what we had been doing while we were at Fort Slocum, but we did some. But, actually, it wasn't a long time that we were at Governor's Island before our forces were being depleted by fellas being eligible for release.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** I see. So when did you actually get discharged?

**RAY CRISARA:** I was discharged in the early, I guess early spring, it would have been probably of, wait a minute, let me just put the years together. I would say probably, that was probably '25. [1945]

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh.

**RAY CRISARA:** I was in the service I think a little over three years?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So at the end of 1945?

**RAY CRISARA:** No, it would have been at the beginning of '45.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Oh, okay.

**RAY CRISARA:** And I'll tell you how it happened to me personally and how Fort Slocum was important to me. When it came time for my release, I found that I was very much taken with the kind of music and the kind of things I was doing in the service from Fort Slocum. I, I had, before that, my experience in music had been the Goldman Band and the Metropolitan Opera House.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. Very classically oriented.

**RAY CRISARA:** Yes. Well, and Fort Slocum opened up a whole other musical life to me. And so I remember that I got out, it must be in very early February. And at that time I made a decision that maybe I'm not going back to the Met. Because, you know, you're eligible to go back to the job that you left to go in the service.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RAY CRISARA:** So I thought to myself, you know, I'm not sure that I'm, I'm really excited about going back to the Met. If I could make my living in a job that gave me the same kind of experience and challenge that my Army experience at Fort Slocum was, I think that probably that's what I would like to think about doing.

So I remember that I went, I was out of the Army in time, that I was out of the service on Lincoln's birthday. And on Lincoln's birthday, I decided this is the day where I am gonna go see the three heads of the major networks in New York, NBC, ABC and CBS. And luckily for me, it turned out that all the secretaries were out of the office because Lincoln's birthday was a holiday.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Hmm.

**RAY CRISARA:** And so I got to talk to all of those three guys and told them what I would like to do and so forth, and wondered if there was any opportunity for that. And it was a strange kind of that the fella from ABC said, I have nothing, but would you like to play a concert Friday night at the Waldorf Astoria. This is a completely civilian affair.

So I said, well, of course. And so I did that and the word got to the guy at NBC that I had done this concert and had done it well. So he called me and wanted to know if I could do a radio broadcast at NBC. So that evening, he assigned me to that radio broadcast. And the very next day after I had done that, he called me and he said, I'd like you to come in and talk to us.

So I went, the very next day, I went to NBC to talk to this fella. And he said, I've heard interesting things about you and I think probably we want to really seriously consider signing you to a contract to be on the staff here at NBC. Well, I was flattered by that and I was real pleased because I found that within a little bit over one week's time I was in the Army and I was also, had a job at NBC.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** You didn't waste any time, did you?

**RAY CRISARA:** Well, I just happened to go to the places that I thought were important and meet the --  
(END SIDE ONE. BEGIN SIDE TWO.)

**RAY CRISARA:** -- NBC.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Was, now this was the NBC Orchestra, that Toscanini heading?

**RAY CRISARA:** Yes. In fact, at the time that I signed my contract I spoke to the boss and I said, you know, I wonder if I would ever stand a chance to ever be in the NBC Orchestra. That's the one that Toscanini had. So he said, well, I don't know about that. He said, that's in the future. And oddly enough, it turned out that the fellas on staff got a two-week holiday in the summer and many of them would go away. And their regular first-trumpet player went away on vacation.

And they had been in the habit at NBC, hiring the first trumpet player from the New York Philharmonic to take his place. Well, the boss called me in and he said, we're not going to hire Bill. You're going to substitute for Harry and you're going to play with the NBC Orchestra for the time that Harry's away. So that's what I did.

And at the end of that time, he came to me and he said, we're moving you into the big orchestra with Toscanini and all of that. And that's when I started my time with the NBC Orchestra in the fall of that year.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** That must have been quite a thrill.

**RAY CRISARA:** Well, it was. But it was also an indication that when it's time for you to move or it's time for you to get an opportunity, you'd better be very well prepared to do that opportunity.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm. Mm-hmm.

**RAY CRISARA:** And so I had played a concert and I played one radio broadcast. I had a contract with NBC. And from that, I had a steady job at NBC.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** How long did you remain there?

**RAY CRISARA:** Well, until Toscanini died.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Which was when?

**RAY CRISARA:** Mid to late 50s.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh. And you, so you lived in New York City.

**RAY CRISARA:** The way Fort Slocum was important for me is, it turned me completely around from one kind of a career into another kind of career that turned out to be fun, good experience, lots of money and everything else.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Hmm. Let's go back a few years to the Slocum time.

**RAY CRISARA:** Yeah.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Were you playing, did, did the Slocum band play dance, at dances on the island?

**RAY CRISARA:** Well.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And in the area?

**RAY CRISARA:** They had, out of that band they made a dance band also.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Were you part of the dance band also?

**RAY CRISARA:** Yeah.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Tell me about the WACs on the base. These were women in the Army --

**RAY CRISARA:** Yeah.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** -- called in to help out during the war time.

**RAY CRISARA:** Right.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did you get to know many?

**RAY CRISARA:** There were none, there were none in our performing group.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RAY CRISARA:** Not until, until they were moved in probably after everybody was gradually being depleted and women were coming in.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** I see. Were they, how did the men at the base think of the WACs? Were they doing a good job?

**RAY CRISARA:** I don't think that we ever talked about them.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RAY CRISARA:** Because I think they weren't even around and I don't think that they were in the service in time so that anybody could draw any evaluation of them.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** I see. Um, now when you were playing in, at, still in the Army --

**RAY CRISARA:** Yeah.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** -- but playing for the movies and the radio, were you always in uniform?

**RAY CRISARA:** Uh, whenever we went on a regular uniform, I mean a regular thing with the band or, I guess probably, showing that we were military people, we always were in uniform.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And did the Army provide you with a trumpet or cornet or did you have your own?

**RAY CRISARA:** Yes, no. I think I used my own. But there were instruments that were available to us.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Were you so busy that you couldn't listen to, go to concerts on your own in New York?

**RAY CRISARA:** I went to concerts. What came out at that time was a group called the USO.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RAY CRISARA:** And when we were in New York, many times I was, we were gonna be in New York in the evening or something like that, in the afternoon I'd go over to the USO and see what they had in the way of tickets for me.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And what, what sort of concerts did you go to?

**RAY CRISARA:** Oh, I would to the New York Philharmonic. I might go to a Broadway show.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RAY CRISARA:** I could go to any number of things.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Even baseball games? Things like that?

**RAY CRISARA:** If it's available, I guess, to the public, it's to some degree, was also available to service people through the USO.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Tell me about Abe Small. He was the leader of the band when you got to Slocum. What was he like?

**RAY CRISARA:** An elderly man who had been in the Army. He had been what people call a, I guess an Army man, a serviceman that had been there many years.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. Was he a capable musician?

**RAY CRISARA:** I would say, probably for what he was doing at the time, he filled whatever they needed. But he certainly was inferior or unable to do the kinds of things that we finished up doing.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Then who took over leadership of the band when it enlarged?

**RAY CRISARA:** Uh, when it enlarged we had a warrant officer assigned to us. Warrant officers went to a special warrant officer school and all. And the fella that was assigned to us had been a trumpet player and had been a commercial trumpet player in New York City.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Do you remember his name?

**RAY CRISARA:** Yes. Edward Sadowski.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh. And so, he, he was your, the leader of the, the band and also played in the band?

**RAY CRISARA:** He did things that were band things on the post or something that was connected with the service. When we went to New York, we were always conducted by a well-rounded commercial conductor or composer.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm. I see. Um, one of the leading swing musicians of the day was Glenn Miller, who joined the Army.

**RAY CRISARA:** Yeah.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Do you remember hearing about his loss?

**RAY CRISARA:** Yes. In fact, I was close to the, well, I knew and had as a very, very close friend Paul Tanner.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RAY CRISARA:** Who I think you have talked to.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yes. I spoke with him last week.

**RAY CRISARA:** Yeah. Well, we were very good friends and we were even good friends after we got out of the service, where he was back into civilian life and I was into civilian life. In fact, I'm still connected with Paul every Christmastime.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Now Paul had played with the Miller Band --



**RAY CRISARA:** Yeah.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** -- before Glenn Miller joined the Army, right?

**RAY CRISARA:** Uh, no. I don't know how all of that happened, but Paul was not in the Glenn Miller Military Orchestra.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** But the civilian one, before the war?

**RAY CRISARA:** Yes.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** So do you remember hearing about, what, what happened, Glenn Miller's plane went down I believe?

**RAY CRISARA:** What? I probably know what everybody else knows from TV or books read or, or documentaries, you know, written about such a thing.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RAY CRISARA:** And I think that it, it finishes up that nobody knows exactly what happened.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Right. Right. Let's talk a little bit about what you did after the NBC Orchestra.

**RAY CRISARA:** Well, the NBC Orchestra I was there for a great length of time, many years.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And did --

**RAY CRISARA:** And I did my schedule at NBC as those needed to be broadcast and everything else, or some little programs where they start with the exploration of TV and all of that and all. So I did whatever NBC wanted to assign me to. And with, if anything came along that was of, what I thought was important to me, I could very readily go to my boss and say, could I sit in as substitute so I can do this particular thing? And there was that kind of situation.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Were you teaching students at the time?

**RAY CRISARA:** Uh, no. Well, yes, I was. I did some teaching in the Music Department of New York University.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RAY CRISARA:** I also did some teaching up at the University of Hartford.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Classroom teaching or were these?

**RAY CRISARA:** No, trumpet teaching.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Right. Private lessons for?

**RAY CRISARA:** I taught in my home as I had time and as I wanted to. And pupils ranged from pre-high school to first class professional level.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Do you have any stories about some of your students who went on to the professional ranks?

**RAY CRISARA:** Uh, let me see if I. Well, yes, I had students that were like in the New Orleans Symphony.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RAY CRISARA:** And I have had pupils that were playing with various orchestras in New York City and all and they were making their living at it. Various students that were playing the Broadway Circuit, the Broadway shows and all and making their living at it and all.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RAY CRISARA:** So that many of my students went on to become, you know, even colleagues.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** When did you leave New York City?

**RAY CRISARA:** I left New York City, well, do you want to know when I left the environs on New York City and my work in New York City or when we moved away from New York City?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh, well, you said that you left the NBC Orchestra in the mid-50s. Did you stay in the New York City area?

**RAY CRISARA:** Then I became a staff member at ABC.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Uh-huh.

**RAY CRISARA:** I was transferred over to that. And that was doing really pretty much the same kind of lifestyle as I had at NBC. Nothing with quite the important as the NBC Symphony and Toscanini and all those conductors. But you know, certainly one of the bona fide major pieces of work in New York City.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And at, at some point you decided you wanted to change?

**RAY CRISARA:** Well, at one time, the union negotiations with the various networks were such that all staff jobs were, were stopped.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Hmm.

**RAY CRISARA:** So after the staff jobs were stopped, I made my living as a freelance commercial and classical trumpet player and had a reputation that was enough so that I was doing very, very nicely on that basis.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Basically, being a studio musician?

**RAY CRISARA:** That's right.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** But still in the New York City area?

**RAY CRISARA:** Yeah.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** And at what point did you move to Texas?

**RAY CRISARA:** Uh, let's see. I think my wife just reminded me of this when I asked her a question today. I think that I came to Texas in 1978.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RAY CRISARA:** And I had, I was busy enough in New York and all, but many times, walking around from studio to studio and everything else, I would say to myself, how much longer are you gonna do this? This is hard work. Very intense and everything else. So, a Saturday afternoon – no. I first had a letter from a trumpet teacher at the University of Texas. And he wanted to know if I would be interested in coming to Texas to teach.

Well, knowing me, I put that on my desk and forgot that I had it until this one Saturday afternoon. My phone rang and it was the head of the College of Music at the University of Texas. And he said, I'm calling to find out how you would feel about coming to Texas to teach. And I said, well, I don't know because I've never had a job like that. I don't know what it entails or anything like that. And I said, I would feel that I needed to probably know more about it.

So he said, well, let me tell you this. If you come down, if you're interested in coming down, he said, you will be expected to teach 18 hours of trumpet. You'll have your own studio. You will come down as a full professor immediately and you will have immediate tenure.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Wow.

**RAY CRISARA:** And I didn't even know what those things meant. So then he explained what it was and everything else. So he said, if you decide that you're willing to come, that's what the package is. And he said, if you're interested at all, we'll take care of it. You come down and we would like everybody to talk to you and you talk to them and then you can make up your mind if you would like to do this.

So I did. I, I, flew me down to Austin and they took me around to everybody that I guess was important, they thought, for me to talk to. And it ranged from, you know, various heads of various colleges on the campus to various departments and everything else and the heads of those departments. And they said, well, how do you feel about coming down here? And I was saying, well, I want to, I'm doing this right now just to get a good feel of what it's all about and then I probably will make up my mind.

So I went back feeling quite positive about the whole thing, because the idea of tenure is, I found out, is, you know, rather valuable and leads to the kind of lifestyle that gives you kind of a nice comfort in what you're doing.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** A good deal of security.

**RAY CRISARA:** Yes. That's exactly right. Well, it's the kind of job that, I explained this to somebody. I said, the only way you can lose that job is to parade around the hallways with no clothes on. And that's

almost the God's honest truth. But, no, I came down and I thought well, I can't make up my mind. Certainly, I would want my wife to come down and see Austin and see what we're talking about.

So they said, all right. You and your wife come on down and give us a look see and see if she likes it or if she wants to do it. And so my wife did come down with me and we made the rounds of the whole campus and everything else. So I said, well, honey, what do you think of this? And she said, well, if you like it and you want to do it, then I think that it's fine. And she said, it would be fine for me, too.

So at that time, we made up our mind and we signed contracts and worked out the money business and everything else. Then in 1978, in the Fall Semester, the beginning of that, is when I came and became a member of the faculty.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Now, did you continue playing as a musician in various orchestras or bands while you were in Austin?

**RAY CRISARA:** No, I chose not. And this sound a little bit smart, but I, I didn't see any reason to make my life so complex that it would get that way that I would not enjoy being in Austin and enjoying being at the university. So somebody came to me who headed the Austin Symphony and said, well, what would you think of being in the Austin Orchestra? Would you like to do that? And I said, well, I said I think I need a little bit of time to think that over. And I took a little time to think that over and I decided against that.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RAY CRISARA:** And other things that were open to me and everything else, I decided that if I come down to Texas and I fill up my life like it is in New York and find that I don't enjoy doing all that I'm doing, well then you're an idiot to put up with it.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Right.

**RAY CRISARA:** I decided against that and found that I lived very, very nicely on what I was doing at the university. And it, time to run my own studio to my own like and dislike and so forth. And time with my wife. And time with my children, because by that time I had four children. And so they became part of our Austin existence.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did you continue to play for your own pleasure at home?

**RAY CRISARA:** Well, I played, the amount of playing that I did was, I did some recitals at school. We had a faculty brass quintet at school that played some recitals and played around town. But if someone wanted me to do something special, well then I would probably consider doing it if I felt that I wanted to do it. But I never got myself really in a very busy swim of the music situation in Austin.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** You've been down there 30 years now. Do you consider yourself a Texan?

**RAY CRISARA:** I, I'm pretty proud to say that. I'm much prouder to say I'm a Texan than a New Yorker.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Do you ever return to New York?

**RAY CRISARA:** Oh, every year.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Yeah.

**RAY CRISARA:** And I, I, I have family and I have friends and I have my old colleagues to visit with and everything else. And then it's wonderful to get back. But also, I think when I finally set my feet in the airport in Austin, I say, well, I'm glad that I'm home.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Hmm.

**RAY CRISARA:** And because this is a good city and a very nice job, nice people, nice faculty, everything else that I could say that, if I wanted to change any of this, I would say well, you have to be out of your mind.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Are you still teaching?

**RAY CRISARA:** No. I retired oh, five or six years ago. Any teaching I do, I do on a basis of some of my former pupils would call and say they're in a little bit of trouble. If I come up, would you, could I sit and talk with you, maybe you could help me. I said, well, just come on up and we'll talk it out or something like that. And then for awhile, I had a number of students working in Austin coming for lessons or something like that. But gradually I sort of stopped that because it got so I didn't schedule any more.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm, mm-hmm. Before we finish up, I want to ask you, when you were at Fort Jackson, early in, in your Army career --

**RAY CRISARA:** Yeah.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** -- were you able to play trumpet at all?

**RAY CRISARA:** You mean trumpet? More than the military band?

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Oh, you were in a military band at Fort Jackson?

**RAY CRISARA:** Yes, I was.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Oh, okay. I thought for, while you were --

**RAY CRISARA:** Oh, I didn't think I did anything in Fort Jackson that was lowly me, I think if we did anything it was done as our Fort Jackson band.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** I see. Okay. So you kept up with it. Because it would have been difficult coming from the Metropolitan Opera just be a GI and not have any trumpet.

**RAY CRISARA:** Well, that's the reason that I decided not to play in the Austin Symphony.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Right.

**RAY CRISARA:** Because, you know, if you come from something that is first class, we'll say, and that sounds a little smug and I'm not smug and I don't intend to be. But if you come from something that is really first class and everything else, it's kind of hard to sit down and work with a conductor who you may even differ with and he's probably trying to tell you how to play. And your first initial thing is to tell him to go to hell.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** What kind of music do you listen to these days?

**RAY CRISARA:** Um, I would say that I listen to symphony music. I listen to, I go to the, to various things. I don't go to the opera here yet. My wife hasn't gotten me to go to that. But I do go to hear the symphony maybe once in awhile and anything that comes through town, like if the New York Philharmonic were here I would certainly go to hear their concert.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Did you duties at the university involve you with the, the football marching band?

**RAY CRISARA:** I enjoy it and many of my students, my university students play in it and all, and I guess they enjoy it and all. But no, I don't have any written rule with it, although conductors of it are very, very good friends of mine and they might ask my opinion about something or something like that. But I don't have any direct connection with them from the way of having any ideas to give them or any ideas not to give them.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RAY CRISARA:** Stuff like that.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Do you go to football games?

**RAY CRISARA:** Yes. All of them.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Oh, wow.

**RAY CRISARA:** I go to all the football games. I go to all the basketball games and some of the baseball games. And yes, I'm a real fan.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RAY CRISARA:** And I enjoy every bit of it. And so that's part of our lifestyle that makes Austin nice.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Oh, it sounds lovely.

**RAY CRISARA:** Well, it's, it really is and I just, I like the people here. You know, I could just say certain things that, my students, when I had my old studio and everything else, they were a gift. They were wonderful.

Like, I would say, one of my students, he came in all dressed up. He had a jacket on and a tie and shirt and everything else. And I said, James, you look like you just came from buying a bank. What's going on? He said, this is the day of my trumpet lesson. That's what I'm, I'm dressed for my trumpet lesson. And that was over and over and over again.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Well, that shows they respected you and took it very seriously.

**RAY CRISARA:** Yeah. Well, I still have students that are out in the teaching field at the college level and at the professional level and they write me and they call me and everything else and they say, there's probably not one day that goes by that I don't think of you, of all the things that you taught me, all the things about living that you taught me. Every bit of it, every bit of it is valuable. Well, that's them saying it. I don't know that it's valuable at all.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RAY CRISARA:** But they feel that way and I'm in touch with almost everybody. I, when I was given my, let's see, I'm trying to think of when I was given my doctorate. That was, I was, a school of the New York state system gave me an honorary doctorate. And that was the time that my, some of my students came long distance just to be there.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Was it from your home town of Cortland?

**RAY CRISARA:** From my home town.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** From the Suny Cortland School?

**RAY CRISARA:** Oh, yeah.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Oh, terrific.

**RAY CRISARA:** Yeah. Yes. And I was treated very nicely. My whole family was there and all my family that could come from distances and all. Many members of them were there. And I've been blessed with an awful lot of things from this school here. I belong to, I'm a member of the, goodness, what's the word? I'm, yeah, a member of the Academy of Distinguished Teaching Professors.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Mm-hmm.

**RAY CRISARA:** And that's something that everybody sort of thirsts after. And any number of things. I have, I have a very nice chair that was given to me that gave me an extra annual amount of money and all. And any number of things. And any number of other things were to, I do lecturing around the country as I see fit and do clinics and everything else. I've been to various conventions and all and invited to them. And so that life is good. Life is full.

And it's, it kind of feels kinda nice to come to, up to 87 years old and say, well, this is all very, very nice and I really feel that I've worked hard and earned every bit of it.

**ROBERT JACOBY:** Well, Ray Crisara, I want to thank you very much for participating in the Fort Slocum oral history project.

**RAY CRISARA:** I will look up some more materials.

(END RECORD.)

#### CERTIFICATE

I, Patsy Hamilton, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and accurate transcript of the taped proceedings as transcribed by me on the date hereinbefore set forth, to the best of my ability.

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Dated: 06/24/08 Patsy Hamilton-Agency Transcriptionist



**MS. DAVIS:** Today is Saturday, February 17, 2007. I'm Barbara Davis, and I'm here talking to Mrs. Helen Stark at her son's home in New Rochelle. Hi, Mrs. Stark.

**MRS. STARK:** Hi. It's nice to meet you.

**MS. DAVIS:** Nice to meet you too. You were just telling me that you were born in 1906?

**MRS. STARK:** I was born in 1909.

**MS. DAVIS:** Nineteen nine. Oh, okay.

**MRS. STARK:** Nineteen zero nine.

**MS. DAVIS:** Oh, okay.

**MRS. STARK:** I had an older sister Mary who was born in 1907 in June I think. I had a younger sister Harriett Ann Davies, and she just passed away before Christmas.

**MS. DAVIS:** Oh.

**MRS. STARK:** And she was 96.

**MS. DAVIS:** Oh.

**MRS. STARK:** Yes.

**MS. DAVIS:** So your maiden name was Davies, D-A-V-I-E-S?

**MRS. STARK:** Yes. But over at Slocum we were called Davis all the time. So how my name—They took the E out of it. My stepfather's name was Hales, H-A-L-E-S. See. I came to live over there when I was 14 with my sister Mary who was 16. We came from an orphanage in Philadelphia.

**MS. DAVIS:** Oh.

**MRS. STARK:** She was there 11 years. I was there ten. My father was killed in the coal mines of Pennsylvania.

**MS. DAVIS:** Oh.

**MRS. STARK:** So mother had three girls.

**MS. DAVIS:** And she couldn't care for you so you were temporarily in an orphanage until she married Mr. Hales?

**MRS. STARK:** She couldn't—Yes, that's right. Then my mother remarried later to Mr. Hales, H-A-L-E-S.

**MS. DAVIS:** And what was his first name? Do you remember?

**MRS. STARK:** Arthur.

**MS. DAVIS:** Arthur. And what was your mother's name?

**MRS. STARK:** Amelia.

**MS. DAVIS:** Amelia. And you were saying you were of Welsh descent?

**MRS. STARK:** Welsh.

**MS. DAVIS:** Mmm hmm.

**MRS. STARK:** My stepfather was English but my father was Welsh.

**MS. DAVIS:** I guess a lot of people from Wales when they first came over went into the coal mining.

**MRS. STARK:** Yes.

**MS. DAVIS:** A very tough existence. I mean that's how he - - Do you remember when he was killed? Do you remember?

**MRS. STARK:** Nineteen twelve.

**MS. DAVIS:** Nineteen twelve. So you were only three years old.

**MRS. STARK:** Mmm hmm. And when I was four I went in the orphanage. But Mary, my older sister, she went in the year before.

**MS. DAVIS:** Mmm hmm. Do you have any recollection of the orphanage?

**MRS. STARK:** Sure. It was a nice home.

**MS. DAVIS:** Nice home?

**MRS. STARK:** It was an Episcopal orphanage, and it was a very nice place. But, you know, we were all a bunch of kids, you know, about 150 kids.

**MS. DAVIS:** Oh, my.

**MRS. STARK:** The girls all by themselves and the boys all by themselves.

**MS. DAVIS:** Mmm hmm.

**MRS. STARK:** The boys had a part of the building and we had the other. It was nice. But, you know, the same kids – you do this, you do that. You do this. You don't dare do that.

**MS. DAVIS:** So when you came to Fort Slocum it was 1923. Is that correct?

**MRS. STARK:** No. I went to Fort Slocum - - Let me see. I was 14 years old I guess. Yes. Because my mother had remarried and my stepfather's name was Hales.

**MS. DAVIS:** Right.

**MRS. STARK:** And that's the one in the picture there.

**MS. DAVIS:** You have a picture here.

**MRS. STARK:** Yes. He was in charge of the band over at Fort Slocum.

**MS. DAVIS:** Oh, a very impressive band. That was a very important band.

**MRS. STARK:** Yes.

**MS. DAVIS:** We have a picture of it, I believe, right over here. I can show you a number of these pictures. Here's the band playing in the parade.

**MRS. STARK:** Yes. But that's I guess before his time. That doesn't look like \*\*\*

**MS. DAVIS:** I think this is probably in the teens and you were there in the early twenties.

**MRS. STARK:** Yes.

**MS. DAVIS:** Yes. So do you remember arriving at Fort Slocum?

**MRS. STARK:** I only remember my stepfather coming down to the orphanage and picking my sister up and I. That's all.

**MS. DAVIS:** By train?

**MRS. STARK:** By train, yes. I said - - Yes, train.

**MS. DAVIS:** So then you must have come into New Rochelle by train and then taken \*\*\*

**MRS. STARK:** I got out of the orphanage when I was - - I was 14 years old when I went to Fort Slocum.

**MS. DAVIS:** Right.

**MRS. STARK:** So Mary was – my sister Mary was going on 16. She was two years older than me – not quite two years older. But some of it wasn't, you know, - - Oh, it was so pretty when we were over there. I liked it over there.

**MS. DAVIS:** Well, tell me about what it was like to live there.

**MRS. STARK:** We lived right behind the Y.M.C.A. You know, they had a great big parade ground.

**MS. DAVIS:** Mmm hmm.

**MRS. STARK:** The hospital was on one end \*\*\*

**MS. DAVIS:** Right.

**MRS. STARK:** And the other part was the tennis court. But I mean there was a roadway between that end of it and the tennis court. But I mean that was when I went to - - I went to New Rochelle School. I went to New Rochelle High School when I came when it was on North Avenue, the old, old one.

**MS. DAVIS:** Where City Hall is today.

**MRS. STARK:** Yes.

**MS. DAVIS:** And how would you get there?

**MRS. STARK:** By trolley car.

**MS. DAVIS:** Mmm hmm.

**MRS. STARK:** We came over on the Colonel Barnett.

**MS. DAVIS:** The ferry?

**MRS. STARK:** The ferry. And sometimes we used to take a little launch, you know, when the weather was bad. It was nice.

**MS. DAVIS:** Yes. The launch would take you off the ferry and bring you in because they didn't want the ferry to crash into the pier.

**MRS. STARK:** Yes. Sometimes they came - - Yes. But we also lived on the far side on the island - not the one facing \*\*\*

**MS. DAVIS:** Right. I know where that is.

**MRS. STARK:** There's execution lighthouse (Inaudible).

**MS. DAVIS:** Mmm hmm. Sure.

**MRS. STARK:** Well, I could sit in the dining room where we lived, and they had a buoy that went around every night. And then a boat came from New York to Boston every night, and at seven o'clock it would come right by that buoy. And I could sit at the table and eat my dinner and see the boat come by.

**MS. DAVIS:** Mmm hmm. Well, this must have been something for you growing up in Pennsylvania and all of a sudden being on an island in the middle of water.

**MRS. STARK:** Well, it was nice over there. We had the Colonel Barnett was the boat. And we had a couple of - - Then they had a coal dock which was closer.

**MS. DAVIS:** With a conveyor belt? Do you remember the conveyor belt?

**MRS. STARK:** No.

**MS. DAVIS:** That must have come later.

**MRS. STARK:** No. No. They had what they called a coal dock. And that was by itself and then up further was for the pedestrians. And we could sit on the bottom deck. But the other people, the officers and stuff, had the upper deck.

**MS. DAVIS:** Would the soldiers be on the same level as you or they were on the upper deck?

**MRS. STARK:** They were a higher level.

**MS. DAVIS:** Higher level.

**MRS. STARK:** Yes. But I mean it was nice. But this looks like it was long before I got there.

**MS. DAVIS:** Some of them were before you. I actually have a lot of pictures from the thirties but they were taken - - Here's some of the ferry boats. This I think is from World War I period. Here's the Y.M.C.A. Oh, no, this is the PX. I'm sorry, the PX.

**MRS. STARK:** A lot different from the one I remember.

**MS. DAVIS:** Really? And here's \*\*\*

**MRS. STARK:** The Post Ex - - We lived behind - - We lived in one of the quarters. They were a wooden building with two families. And we lived right behind the Y.M.C.A., the PX.

**MS. DAVIS:** Okay.

**MRS. STARK:** And that was - - They were up higher than we were. We had a set of steps to come down to where we lived and then the ballfield was right there, right to our - if you were coming down it would be to your right coming down the steps. It was nice though over there then. Let's see if I see anything that looks like anything.



**MS. DAVIS:** Well, this is Officers Lane.

**MRS. STARK:** Well, they had a nice one.

**MS. DAVIS:** This I think is a little earlier too.

**MRS. STARK:** I think so, yes.

**MS. DAVIS:** The guard mount, fourth company.

**MRS. STARK:** And I have a nice little picture of the hospital.

**MS. DAVIS:** And here's the \*\*\*

**MRS. STARK:** My oldest son was born there.

**MS. DAVIS:** Oh, he was?

**MRS. STARK:** Yes.

**MS. DAVIS:** Now how did that happen?

**MRS. STARK:** Well, I lived over there.

**MS. DAVIS:** So you got married when you were over there?

**MRS. STARK:** Oh, yes. I got married. I couldn't get married in New Rochelle because the minister that my husband wanted, his son got shot. So one of the what's their names at Slocum came in the place where we lived and married my husband and I. My husband was a Swede from Sweden, a young boy. He had no father, no mother. He had a mother but he had no father. He was an only child. He had no sisters, no brothers.

**MS. DAVIS:** Had he enlisted?

**MRS. STARK:** And he enlisted – the First World War.

**MS. DAVIS:** Okay. And so he was still stationed at Fort Slocum when you met him?

**MRS. STARK:** And we had nice quarters to live in. You could get your groceries and everything, you know.

**MS. DAVIS:** You bought your groceries right there on the island.

**MRS. STARK:** And then we had - - The barracks were close to where we were. And they had a Catholic chapel, but that was at the end of the parade ground.

**MS. DAVIS:** That we have the picture of – St. Sebastian. Let me show you the picture of that. But you didn't get married there because that was Catholic. That was part of Blessed Sacrament. It has a lot of ivy on it there.

**MRS. STARK:** Yes. And then there was quarters, non-commissioned officers quarters right close to that that came down on the path. And there was a post laundry. We had a laundry over there. I worked over the laundry for 16 years.

**MS. DAVIS:** Oh, you did?

**MRS. STARK:** Yes, I did. Yes.

**MS. DAVIS:** I have some pictures of the laundry.

**MRS. STARK:** And that was near the place where they had all the guns and stuff. But we weren't allowed back there, that part.

**MS. DAVIS:** Were there parts that you weren't allowed in?

**MRS. STARK:** The laundry closed over there in 19 – shortly after I left, about three years after I left.

**MS. DAVIS:** So maybe it was the same time. There's a women who comes into the \*\*\*

**MRS. STARK:** This was at the end of the parade ground.

**MS. DAVIS:** Mmm hmm. You know it's still there.

**MRS. STARK:** Is it?

**MS. DAVIS:** Yes.

**MRS. STARK:** Oh, my. Mmm hmm. But what a mess it looks with the boat or anything.

**MS. DAVIS:** Yes, it is. It's very derelict, except that the chapel I think has the most possibility of getting restored.

**MRS. STARK:** Yes.

**MS. DAVIS:** It's still in pretty good shape.

**MRS. STARK:** It was just a small chapel.

**MS. DAVIS:** It was built the same year you were born.

**MRS. STARK:** Yes, Catholic chapel. And it was very nice. And, as I say, my stepfather had a little band there – about four men, six men and himself. He was the head of it.

**MS. DAVIS:** What kind of music? Was this parade music?

**MRS. STARK:** Yes, and whatever they wanted.

**MS. DAVIS:** Right. And that was – his official duties was the band?

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** I think he must have been in the Army and then did this on the side.

**MS. DAVIS:** Right.

**MRS. STARK:** He played for different little things over the island when we were over there.

**MS. DAVIS:** Now how did you meet your husband over there?

**MRS. STARK:** Huh?

**MS. DAVIS:** How did you meet your husband when you were over there?

**MRS. STARK:** Well, he used to have a whole bunch of young soldiers out there. He was in charge of a whole bunch giving them exercises. And I met him. Well, you meet them through different things. They had a little PX, and they had a little place where you could go in for soda and ice cream and stuff like that.

**MS. DAVIS:** And that's how you socialized.

**MRS. STARK:** And one bowling alley. And then the top of the - - That was the – not the PX, that was the \*\*\*

**MS. DAVIS:** Y.M.C.A.?

**MRS. STARK:** The other part. What was it?

**MS. DAVIS:** Raymond Hall?

**MRS. STARK:** The church had, you know, - - See, I forget things too sometimes. But it was very nice.

**MS. DAVIS:** Now so when you had your son he was born in the Fort Slocum Hospital?

**MRS. STARK:** My oldest son was, yes – Thomas.

**MS. DAVIS:** Mmm hmm.

**MRS. STARK:** I have a picture of him somewhere, Thomas when he was a baby. He was born in the hospital over there. And this was - -

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** Yes, that's Mr. Hales there.

**MRS. STARK:** This is my stepfather.

**MS. DAVIS:** Mmm hmm.

**MRS. STARK:** He was an Englishman.

**MS. DAVIS:** Well, you know, it's something that they got married and were able to go back to the orphanage to retrieve you girls after all those years.

**MRS. STARK:** Right. He's the one that brought us away from the orphanage – came down to Philadelphia and picked us up and brought us over to Fort Slocum.

**MS. DAVIS:** Now had it been a long time since you had seen your mother?

**MRS. STARK:** Hmm?

**MS. DAVIS:** Had it been a long time since you had seen your mother?

**MRS. STARK:** My mother \*\*\*

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** About ten years, right?

**MRS. STARK:** My brother - - How old was - - My oldest sister - - When my father was killed in the coal mine my older sister was going on five, I was going on three. I wasn't quite three, and my other sister wasn't quite - she was only 16 months old.

**MS. DAVIS:** So did all three of you end up at Fort Slocum together?

**MRS. STARK:** We were all together.

**MS. DAVIS:** You all came. Right. Okay.

**MRS. STARK:** Mmm hmm.

**MS. DAVIS:** Tell me about going to school in New Rochelle. What do you remember about that?

**MRS. STARK:** It was great. We'd get on the Colonel Barnett. We sat down on the bottom there. And they always had the boat there. It had two decks, you know.

**MS. DAVIS:** Right.

**MRS. STARK:** And then when we got over to land we had the open trolley cars and the other trolley cars. We went to - - We did everything like that. And at night the stores were open on Main Street, and we could go in the shops and get something. My mother would want something or we'd do a little shopping.

**MS. DAVIS:** What were the stores that you remember? Do you remember the Boston Spa on Main Street?

**MRS. STARK:** Oh, sure.

**MS. DAVIS:** Mmm hmm.

**MRS. STARK:** Yes. We had some nice stores in New Rochelle.

**MS. DAVIS:** Yes, a lot. Do you remember going to the movies in New Rochelle?

**MRS. STARK:** Hmm?

**MS. DAVIS:** Do you remember going to the movies?

**MRS. STARK:** Oh, yes, once in a while - years ago though. But I lived in Pelham too once. I remember that more than I do \*\*\*

**MS. DAVIS:** When did you leave Fort Slocum?

**MRS. STARK:** I left it in 19 - - Oh, I forget - 19 - - My husband was transferred. My stepfather died. He was on a furlough with my mother. They went to Wales and England. My stepfather's English.

**MS. DAVIS:** Right.

**MRS. STARK:** My mother is Welsh. And they spent three months over there and on his way back he died.

**MS. DAVIS:** Oh.

**MRS. STARK:** So he died in 1933, because my oldest son was born in Fort Slocum Hospital in 1931.

**MS. DAVIS:** Now Thomas - did he end up staying \*\*\*

**MRS. STARK:** Thomas \*\*\*

**MS. DAVIS:** He ended up being a fire - - Who was the fireman?

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** That was a cousin of hers.

**MS. DAVIS:** Oh, okay.

**MRS. STARK:** Yes, I had a cousin.

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** Thomas Pew (ph).

**MS. DAVIS:** Oh, a different Thomas. Okay, right.

**MRS. STARK:** But I mean it was nice. I had a lot of pictures but \*\*\*

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** Well, I'll have to go through some of them.

**MRS. STARK:** Yes, right. But, you know, - - There was a cute little chapel, though, that they had, a Catholic chapel. It was very small.

**MS. DAVIS:** Father McLaughlin who was the pastor at Blessed Sacrament had it built.

**MRS. STARK:** Yes. Of course it didn't have all the trees and everything around it. But I mean it was nice. And that came up from the - - That road came from where the dock was. It came up alongside. And the end of the parade ground to one side is where this was.

**MS. DAVIS:** Mmm hmm. Do you remember seeing any of the formations on the parade ground when they would march or do drills?

**MRS. STARK:** Oh, I was out there all the time because my stepfather would play.

**MS. DAVIS:** Play. So you would watch that.

**MRS. STARK:** Just a little band that played for the \*\*\*

**MS. DAVIS:** I understand they were quite good.

**MRS. STARK:** Yes.

**MS. DAVIS:** And that sometimes \*\*\*

**MRS. STARK:** There were about six men altogether.

**MS. DAVIS:** Mmm hmm.

**MRS. STARK:** A couple of Englishmen and all kinds, you know, two different kinds.

**MS. DAVIS:** Now when you say it was so nice at Fort Slocum was it because it was an island, or was it because it was well kept or it was a nice community?

**MRS. STARK:** Well, it wasn't too crowded. And we always had - - When I first went over there was no movie house. But they put one on the far end of the island back where the hospital is.

**MS. DAVIS:** Right.

**MRS. STARK:** But I mean down in the back.

**MS. DAVIS:** Would you eat in the mess hall or would you eat in your own home?

**MRS. STARK:** Oh, no, no. We ate at home. And we used - - It used to be nice. We'd have a little - just a little house, a little building. It was a wooden building. It had in it - - You'd come in the door here. And they had a little place where they had a little icebox. And you'd get your ice in there. And then you could come in and you had a nice big kitchen. You had a bathroom and another room alongside of that in the beginning of the thing. Then we had a big room and another side room with an oil stove. And we had a potbelly stove. And then we had a little porch.

**MS. DAVIS:** And the porch looked out over where execution lighthouse was?

**MRS. STARK:** No. That's where I could see the lighthouse. That was in \*\*\*

**MS. DAVIS:** Inside the dining room.

**MRS. STARK:** Yes. It was off the dining room.

**MS. DAVIS:** Right.

**MRS. STARK:** And then we had another room. It was a living room with a potbelly stove with a little bedroom. Then we had two bedrooms. But the bathroom was way in the corner. You had to go through the whole thing to go to the bathroom.

**MS. DAVIS:** Oh, really? Not so convenient.

**MRS. STARK:** But I mean it was nice.

**MS. DAVIS:** Yes. It sounds very nice. It sounds very nice.

**MRS. STARK:** It really had - - It really was \*\*\*

**MS. DAVIS:** And then when you married did you have your own quarters with your husband?

**MRS. STARK:** No. I stayed with my stepfather and my mother. And my younger sister - - I had a younger sister Harriet – the one that passed away a couple of weeks ago.

**MS. DAVIS:** Would your husband – he would have stayed in the barracks otherwise? Before he married you was he in the barracks?

**MRS. STARK:** Oh, yes.

**MS. DAVIS:** Yes. So this gave him an opportunity to get out of the barracks also and for you to start your own \*\*\*

**MRS. STARK:** Oh, he was allowed to live in the quarters as long as my parents were there, you know. I got married at home. The minister that was going to marry us in New Rochelle – his son got shot.

**MS. DAVIS:** Yes. I wonder who that was. I'll have to look that up.

**MRS. STARK:** It was a long time ago.

**MS. DAVIS:** That sounds like a real \*\*\*

**MRS. STARK:** Methodist church it was.

**MS. DAVIS:** What year were you married?

**MRS. STARK:** I got married in 1929.

**MS. DAVIS:** Twenty-nine. Okay. I can look that up.

**MRS. STARK:** And what did I say?

**MS. DAVIS:** Thirty-one when you had your son Thomas.

**MRS. STARK:** I got married in 1931.

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** No.

**MRS. STARK:** Where we lived. We had the wedding in the house. And then some of the girls – they were young girls – they gave us a nice little party after.

**MS. DAVIS:** Mmm hmm.

**MRS. STARK:** I mean I can tell you it was really nice.

**MS. DAVIS:** Yes. Do you remember any storms out on the island?

**MRS. STARK:** No. It wasn't that bad.

**MS. DAVIS:** No? You don't remember \*\*\*

**MRS. STARK:** The ballfield was right outside of where we lived.

**MS. DAVIS:** Right.

**MRS. STARK:** And the Y.M.C.A. was right across the street. And the PX was right across the street. But I mean it was a roadway, no paved. It was dirt road, you know. And it was fine. We got good service. They gave us ice every day.

**MS. DAVIS:** Right.

**MRS. STARK:** Shoe pennies. They'd get your groceries with the mules and the wagon and bring your groceries.

**MS. DAVIS:** Oh, isn't that something.

**MRS. STARK:** I mean it was nice.

**MS. DAVIS:** Yes.

**MRS. STARK:** Couldn't have it nicer.

**MS. DAVIS:** Do you remember any winters, any cold or difficult winters?

**MRS. STARK:** It was cold.

**MS. DAVIS:** Because some people remember the sound freezing in 1924 or 1926. I can't remember which it was. But you don't remember any \*\*\*

**MRS. STARK:** See, that was - - When I got out of the orphanage I was \*\*\*

**MS. DAVIS:** And it might be that it didn't impact you that much or it didn't seem - - Because winters were all cold.

**MRS. STARK:** Yes. It was very cold. It was cold. But we always had - - The snow sometimes would be like a big - just a big pathway.

**MS. DAVIS:** Right.

**MRS. STARK:** They'd shovel the snow to come up the hill off the boat. And they had electric lights. You could see up. I mean it was nice.

**MS. DAVIS:** Did they treat all the soldiers well on Fort Slocum?

**MRS. STARK:** Yes. I think so, yes. Yes. We had some, you know, that didn't behave themselves. But we always get some of them.

**MS. DAVIS:** Yes, any place you are, Fort Slocum or not.

**MRS. STARK:** Yes.

**MS. DAVIS:** So you were sad to leave to move to Pelham or it was time to get your own house.

**MRS. STARK:** Well, my stepfather and my mother went on a trip to Wales and England. And on the trip back my stepfather died.

**MS. DAVIS:** Mmm hmm.

**MRS. STARK:** So then my husband wasn't an officer or anything like that, so I had to move out of the quarters and give it to someone else.

**MS. DAVIS:** I see.

**MRS. STARK:** See, there was two families in that building.

**MS. DAVIS:** Right. Right.

**MRS. STARK:** So then I moved to New Rochelle. I was on Main Street - - I mean I was on \*\*\*

**MS. DAVIS:** Pelham Road or \*\*\*

**MRS. STARK:** I was in four or five places in New Rochelle.

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** You were on Bayard (ph) Street and what was the other one.

**MRS. STARK:** And I lived in Pelham. But I lived in Pelham a long time.

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** She lived in three places in New Rochelle down at the other end.

**MS. DAVIS:** On the south end.

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** Yes, where the Y.M.C.A. is now.

**MS. DAVIS:** Right.

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** Two different streets there.

**MS. DAVIS:** Mostly Irish in there at that time. What happened to your mom? Where did she go after?

**MRS. STARK:** Well, she was with me.

**MS. DAVIS:** She stayed with you.

**MRS. STARK:** She stayed with me after my stepfather died.

**MS. DAVIS:** And your younger sister \*\*\*

**MRS. STARK:** He died the third - - After he came home from that trip. Thomas was born what '31, and my stepfather died in '33. Thomas was just a couple of years old. And we had a couple of dogs we had in the house and a cat. And I mean it was nice for today.

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** But after you moved to New Rochelle you still went to work over there.

**MRS. STARK:** I worked over there.

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** She used to take a boat to the laundry.

**MS. DAVIS:** To the laundry. Do you remember the name of the person you worked for in the laundry?

**MRS. STARK:** I don't remember.

**MS. DAVIS:** I don't either. I have it written down. I said I can't remember either. I was hoping you'd remind me.

**MRS. STARK:** I worked there for 16 years. But the man I worked - - I worked for a couple of different ones. And my sister, my older sister worked there too until she got married and disappeared.

**MS. DAVIS:** Oh.

**MRS. STARK:** I don't know where she is.

**MS. DAVIS:** Really?

**MRS. STARK:** I don't know to this day.

**MS. DAVIS:** Now there's a woman who comes into the library. And her father worked in the laundry and she used to help also. So I've got to remember her name.

**MRS. STARK:** You don't know her name?

**MS. DAVIS:** I'll have to call you up and tell you because I can't remember. I want to say Nelson, but I'm not sure if that was the last name.

**MRS. STARK:** There was a German woman worked there. There was a colored woman there.

**MS. DAVIS:** These were German. He was German.

**MRS. STARK:** And I had - - I was the floor lady when I left.

**MS. DAVIS:** Mmm hmm.

**MRS. STARK:** I was there 16 years.

**MS. DAVIS:** Now when you lived in New Rochelle you would still take the trolley down to the ferry and then take the ferry over to work?

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** Yes.

**MS. DAVIS:** Yes.

**MRS. STARK:** My mother lived with me after my stepfather died.

**MS. DAVIS:** Yes.

**MRS. STARK:** And so my mother took care of my two boys \*\*\*

**MS. DAVIS:** Boys so you could work.

**MRS. STARK:** And then I lived in New Rochelle several places. I lived on Rhodes (ph) Street, \*\*\*

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** Bayard Street.

**MRS. STARK:** Bayard Street and where the old school, the young school is down near Glen Island. It's off Glen Island somewhere. I mean it's \*\*\*

**MS. DAVIS:** Oh, Jefferson. Near Jefferson School.

**MRS. STARK:** And I lived on Bayard Street. Oh, what's that other street. I liked the street. I worked two different - - I mean I lived two different places there.

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** Rhodes Street?

**MRS. STARK:** Rhodes Street was where my sister used to live.

**MS. DAVIS:** That's Bayard - - Bayard would have been Neptune, Tom, Morgan, Emmett?

**MRS. STARK:** Isn't that awful. I know the name of the street but I can't think of it.

**MS. DAVIS:** Drake?

**MRS. STARK:** No, it's not near Drake. It's off – near Glen Island.

**MS. DAVIS:** Right.

**MRS. STARK:** I used to go over the (Inaudible) bridge. We used to go when it was the old bridge.

**MS. DAVIS:** Right.

**MRS. STARK:** And then they didn't have no bridge for a while.

**MS. DAVIS:** That's right. The bridge went in in 1929.

**MRS. STARK:** Mmm hmm, yes. But, see, we lived on – that would be on this side - - We lived like on the other side.

**MS. DAVIS:** I'm familiar with that.

**MRS. STARK:** You could see the water all over, you know.

**MS. DAVIS:** It's beautiful. You could see Long Island and the shipping lane for the boat to the shipping lane.

**MRS. STARK:** Every night I'd look for the boat.

**MS. DAVIS:** Do you remember when Fort Slocum closed in 1968?

**MRS. STARK:** No.

**MS. DAVIS:** No.

**MRS. STARK:** I saw it in the paper.

**MS. DAVIS:** You had moved on and weren't thinking \*\*\*

**MRS. STARK:** I saw a couple of pictures of a couple of men that I used to know and used to (Inaudible) in the hospital – Charlie Messler (ph) his name was. He would be friendly with everybody that was around.

**MS. DAVIS:** Mmm hmm. And you remembered him.

**MRS. STARK:** Yes.

**MS. DAVIS:** There's a man in Pelham who I think you've met who was at Fort Slocum many years later. But he still lives in Pelham. His name is Mr. Reilly, Norman Reilly.

**MRS. STARK:** Oh, I know him. I see him. He knows me too.

**MS. DAVIS:** Yes. He's a very sweet man.

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** He lives in those apartments. He's right down \*\*\*

**MRS. STARK:** Yes. He lived up the street and I lived down.

**MS. DAVIS:** Because he's given me a lot of pictures of Fort Slocum from that time. But he was there in the forties and fifties during when this information (Inaudible).

**MRS. STARK:** Well, I was - - I came out of the orphanage when I was \*\*\*

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** Fourteen.

**MRS. STARK:** Yes. So I went to \*\*\*

**MS. DAVIS:** I can imagine it was a big shift to go from an orphanage and be back with your mom and living in this place that's all taken care of.

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** I never heard anything bad from Fort Slocum.

**MS. DAVIS:** Right.

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** Everything was always just great. Everything was so much better at Fort Slocum.

**MS. DAVIS:** I can see why. I can see why.



**MRS. STARK:** We were going to go out to - - We could go to the movies. We had movies. And, as I say, there was a bowling alley. We took a chance. It was only across the street. And we could go - - It was only two lanes in it, but at certain times of the day I mean and evening you could use it. And then they had services, church services in the Y.M.C.A. It was in the Y.M.C.A. building.

**MS. DAVIS:** Mmm hmm.

**MRS. STARK:** And that was right where we - the back was right where we lived.

**MS. DAVIS:** Right.

**MRS. STARK:** That was there. And that was up on the parade ground though. Everything faced the parade ground.

**MS. DAVIS:** And they're beautifully manicured I understand with flowers and beautiful grass.

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** It's a nice place to live to have quarters there.

**MS. DAVIS:** Yes. Do you remember any of the commanding officers, the people in charge?

**MRS. STARK:** No, only the colonel. The colonel - - When I had my son Thomas he had someone bring me in what kind of a dinner - a fish dinner that somebody caught a fish. And I was in the hospital two weeks, not that I - I just was there two weeks. They had a couple of nurses.

**MS. DAVIS:** That's what they used to do in the olden days. Now they kick you out after two days.

**MRS. STARK:** At first they didn't have nurses. And my mother got sick. And my mother knew one of the fellows from the hospital that worked in the hospital. And he got blankets from there that they brought down from the hospital. And then when my son Thomas was born I was in the hospital two weeks, and I paid what - \$22.00.

**MS. DAVIS:** Wow.

**MRS. STARK:** And they had everything just nice. They had nurses at that time.

**MS. DAVIS:** Who was the colonel that brought you the dinner?

**MRS. STARK:** Colonel - - I can't think of his name. It begins with an S. He was very nice. I mean I got treated very well.

**MS. DAVIS:** Yes.

**MRS. STARK:** Mmm hmm. And the nurses were nice. They had I think four nurses.

**MS. DAVIS:** They probably lived in New Rochelle and then took the ferry.

**MRS. STARK:** No. They lived in the - they had quarters there.

**MS. DAVIS:** Mmm hmm. I've met a few women who were nurses there but later on.

**MRS. STARK:** But I think none of them were there that I \*\*\*

**MS. DAVIS:** Well, you know, everybody has the same experience.

**MRS. STARK:** They didn't have any nurses. So my mother used to stay \*\*\*

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** She was like a midwife.

**MS. DAVIS:** Oh.

**MRS. STARK:** Officer's wife. My mother would go and take care of them.

**MS. DAVIS:** Oh.

**MRS. STARK:** And one of them was Mrs. McGlendon (ph). Now I remember her name, McGlendon. She took care of my mother. And she said one time she turned around and she said there was a doctor standing there looking at her watching her from back. And he said, "Go ahead, Mrs. Hales, that's all right. You can do it. You're doing fine."

**MS. DAVIS:** And she was delivering the baby herself?

**MRS. STARK:** She was taking care of the baby and everything herself.

**MS. DAVIS:** And he just stood back and let her do her thing.

**MRS. STARK:** Yes.

**MS. DAVIS:** Oh, isn't that something.

**MRS. STARK:** But I mean it was nice over there then. And when I see what a mess they made out of it.

**MS. DAVIS:** Well, it just deteriorated. They abandoned it.

**MRS. STARK:** And that old water tank thing - - We had a nice movies at later date.

**MS. DAVIS:** What did your husband end up doing for a job?

**MRS. STARK:** My husband stayed in the service.

**MS. DAVIS:** He did stay in the service.

**MRS. STARK:** Yes. He stayed in the service. He died while in service.

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** They (Inaudible) up in Fort McKinley (ph), Maine. Where was it in Portland, Maine you were - Portland, Maine you were in Fort McKinley, Maine?

**MRS. STARK:** Yes. We lived in Fort McKinley, Maine and we lived in Portland, Maine. We lived in \*\*\*

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** And he was in Texas also but she stayed in New Rochelle. She didn't go.

**MRS. STARK:** This was the time they couldn't have no lights at light.

**MS. DAVIS:** Oh.

**MRS. STARK:** At the Second World War.

**MS. DAVIS:** Right.

**MRS. STARK:** He died in 1943.

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** Yes, up in Maine.

**MRS. STARK:** Mmm hmm. It was nice.

**MS. DAVIS:** Your husband died in 1943?

**MRS. STARK:** Mmm hmm.

**MS. DAVIS:** Wow.

**MRS. STARK:** Yes. My son - - I have two sons. My oldest son is 75.

**MS. DAVIS:** Wow. That's a long time to live without a husband.

**MRS. STARK:** And he went to West Point.

**MS. DAVIS:** Did he?

**MRS. STARK:** Yes. And my \*\*\*

**MS. DAVIS:** So he came from Sweden and \*\*\*

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** No, no, no, not her husband.

**MS. DAVIS:** Oh, the son went to West Point, Thomas.

**MRS. STARK:** My son Thomas. And then my granddaughter - - I have a granddaughter graduated West Point too.

**MS. DAVIS:** Oh, wow.

**MRS. STARK:** She - - When was it in '94 and the other was \*\*\*

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** Fifty-four.

**MRS. STARK:** One was '54 and one '94.

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** (Inaudible) graduated '54 and she graduated in '94.

**MS. DAVIS:** Isn't that something.

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** They did everything in - - Ninety-four was the big year for everything. One big anniversary. Yes, 25 years \*\*\*

**MS. DAVIS:** Wow.

**MRS. STARK:** I mean it was nice then. But when I see (Inaudible) I mean what a beautiful place. They messed it up so. How could they do it. But all the \*\*\*

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** Fort McKinley (Inaudible) they put nice buildings and condominiums, you know, not these high rises.

**MS. DAVIS:** Right. Well, you know, I think there's still a chance that - - Well, I don't know.

**MRS. STARK:** Do you remember when one of the zeppelins \*\*\*

**MS. DAVIS:** I remember hearing about it. It went over New Rochelle and that day it crashed.

**MRS. STARK:** Came right over Fort Slocum where the laundry where I was working. We were all outside and we were waving at it and waving. And here five minutes after they were all gone.

**MS. DAVIS:** Right.

**MRS. STARK:** That's the one that was \*\*\*

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** We saw that crash.

**MS. DAVIS:** 1930 I forget nine? I think it was - - I just did interviews with all these kids who were in school at the time. They just had their 60th high school reunion. And they told me every single one remembered being out on the playground at Mayflower, at Roosevelt (ph). Every single school had seen the Hindenberg flying over.

**MRS. STARK:** Directly right over where we were.

**MS. DAVIS:** Right.

**MRS. STARK:** The laundry was under here. They were right - - And they had the \*\*\*

**MS. DAVIS:** The fans. You could see the fans.

**MRS. STARK:** No, their hands out the window.

**MS. DAVIS:** Oh, the hands. Oh, my God.

**MRS. STARK:** Yes. And I said five minutes after they were all gone. Yes. That was one of the later dates.

**MS. DAVIS:** One of your last - - You were working there then, not living there.

**MRS. STARK:** It was - - I mean everybody was - - We all went out of the laundry and we all waved.

**MS. DAVIS:** So were you working at the laundry during World War II?

**MRS. STARK:** Mmm hmm. Yes.

**MS. DAVIS:** And that was a very busy time for Fort Slocum then.

**MRS. STARK:** I worked there for 16 years.

**MS. DAVIS:** Right. Okay. But that was a busy time for Fort Slocum, wasn't it, with all the men going through the processing?

**MRS. STARK:** No. The laundry was at the end of the - - When you come off the boat where the church go by there was quarters. Then it goes back. And then all the old artillery they had that was in the back part \*\*\*

**MS. DAVIS:** Right.

**MRS. STARK:** That's where the laundry was - right around there.

**MS. DAVIS:** Okay.

**MRS. STARK:** But we weren't allowed - - We never went around the back.

**MS. DAVIS:** Right. Well, this has been so nice talking with you about Fort Slocum, and I hope you let me come back another time. I'll get some of the names \*\*\*

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** Actually, if it's good on a Saturday if the weather isn't so bad I could bring her down to the library.

**MS. DAVIS:** Okay. And then we'd have more pictures for you to see.

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** Yes. Because I can get in - - You can go in (Inaudible).

**MS. DAVIS:** Oh, yes. And then we have all the pictures there.

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** Maybe I'll bring her down to the library.

**MS. DAVIS:** That would be great. That would be terrific.

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** Okay.

**MS. DAVIS:** Because I have so many pictures and I think you'd enjoy seeing them - later ones. These are very early. These are the ones I had I just grabbed.

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** Right.

**MRS. STARK:** And Norman - - I remember the little chapel. Of course, it didn't have all the greenery around it.

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** Maybe we can see if Norman - I could pick him up and bring him down if it's on a Saturday if you have in between.

**MS. DAVIS:** Absolutely. That would be great.

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** Yes. I can do that.

**MS. DAVIS:** Okay. When it gets a little nicer. I don't want you going out.

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** Yes.

**MS. DAVIS:** And maybe - - If you bring your pictures I can scan them.

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** I'm going to go through (Inaudible).

**MS. DAVIS:** But I can scan them and then give them right back to you.

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** Mmm hmm. Sure.

**MS. DAVIS:** So that would work also at the library.

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** I'll try to go through some of them this evening here.

**MRS. STARK:** But that was right at the \*\*\*

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** She doesn't have too many \*\*\*

**MRS. STARK:** The tennis court was here. The tennis court was over here and then I think there was a roadway.

**MS. DAVIS:** I have good maps to show you also.

**MRS. STARK:** (Inaudible) was right there.

**MS. DAVIS:** You can show me exactly where your house was on the map. I have a big map.

**MRS. STARK:** We were down behind the Y.M.C.A.

**MS. DAVIS:** I know I went out with two men who grew up on the island. And they lived in one of those wood frame houses and they said it was two families. So I know exactly where it was. Not far from the - - Well, there were two tennis courts. There was one at the very end of the parade field and then there was one over \*\*\*

**MRS. STARK:** No. There was no tennis courts around where we were.

**MS. DAVIS:** I think it was put in later.

**MRS. STARK:** We were in like the middle of the island more or less, because all the artillery and all that stuff they had at that end. And then they had the hospital and that was at the other end.

**MS. DAVIS:** Do you remember the Rodman (ph) gun, the big cannon? That was over at the end towards New York City, at the end towards New York City. You don't remember that?

**MRS. STARK:** They did a lot after I left.

**MS. DAVIS:** Yes. But it probably wasn't impressive to a young woman.

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** Probably that could be.

**MRS. STARK:** I left there in 1940.

**MS. DAVIS:** In 1940 \*\*\*

**MRS. STARK:** I left there in 19 - - I worked over there for 16 years. I went there when I was 16 years old. I was supposed to be 18 but I was 16.

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** Yes. She didn't finish high school.

**MRS. STARK:** And, as I say, I worked there 16 years. All I had to do was run down the thing to go home for lunch and go, you know, \*\*\*

**MS. DAVIS:** Very convenient.

**MRS. STARK:** Yes. Yes. And the ballfield was right there. It was nice - PX. But I never bought much in the PX. And I didn't go in the Y.M.C.A. too much. But we did use the bowling alley when we could.

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** She liked to bowl.

**MRS. STARK:** Yes. Because I used to like to bowl.

**MS. DAVIS:** Mmm hmm.

**MRS. STARK:** I used to go to New Rochelle to bowl.

**MS. DAVIS:** When we had a bowling alley.

**MRS. STARK:** Not anymore.

**MS. DAVIS:** There is one in the basement of the curtain shop.

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** Oh, there is?

**MS. DAVIS:** Yes. It was called the Arcade. And it was a building that had these big - - They just redid it. They took the old yucky facade off and fixed it all up. It looks gorgeous. And there is a bowling alley. And it turns out there was a Y.M.C.A. there in 1909, and we think the bowling alley stayed ever since.

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** Oh.

**MS. DAVIS:** It's not used but it's there.

**MRS. STARK:** Like the had one - - They have a nice one up at West Point, bowling alley for the kids.

**MS. DAVIS:** Did you go - - You went up to West Point when your granddaughter was there?

**MRS. STARK:** Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** When her son was there too.

**MS. DAVIS:** Her son, of course when the son was there.

**MRS. STARK:** They had two girls. But she's not up there no more.

**MS. DAVIS:** Where is she now?

**MRS. STARK:** It's ten years ago since she graduated.

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** She's in Kentucky. And she just got out of the service. She was almost big up on the list to be shipped out again. And they have two girls and he's over in Iraq right now.

**MS. DAVIS:** Oh, dear. So he's a West Point \*\*\*

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** He said you'd better see that you - - It's just - - The girls are taking it hard with their father.

**MS. DAVIS:** Oh, I'm sure.

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** And then if she has to go this year again she says, you know, you have to get rid of everything within a month - get your house sold. And she said it would be just a total nightmare - get them out of school. And I mean they would - - We signed so we would take care of them.

But she said it was just too much emotional upheaval, you know. She only had seven more years to go but she says I can't chance it, you know. Other situations you probably could have taken a chance that it wouldn't be so, you know \*\*\*

**MS. DAVIS:** Right.

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** So she just - - She put in her papers I think in November and wrote a real, you know, sob letter that would really \*\*\*

**MS. DAVIS:** Oh, my.

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** It really would be hard for us. I mean I would do it. I still work and my husband is 71. But he's having \*\*\*

**MRS. STARK:** Her husband comes from a family of, you know, \*\*\*

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** And then we have, you know, we have - - It's very difficult now with everything. So I'm glad she got - - She just got - - Last week she got her notice that she's out of the Army, I mean she's out of the reserves now.

**MRS. STARK:** Yes. But, you know, years ago my mother used to be down there. My mother used to be there years ago. My stepfather was \*\*\*

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** In Kentucky. Mmm hmm, in Fort Knox.

**MRS. STARK:** He was in Kentucky. The same place. He was down at the same place.

**MS. DAVIS:** Isn't that something, you know, all these different generations repeating in the same way from very different parts of the world for different reasons, you know, that your mom would end up with this Mr. Hale, Hales. There's an "s" at the end. It's really something.

**MRS. STARK:** It's a strange world we have today. It's a lot different.

**MS. DAVIS:** Yes. It's a lot different.

**MRS. STARK:** Mmm hmm.

**MS. DAVIS:** Well, I thank you so much for giving me this time.

**MRS. STARK:** Oh, you're quite welcome. I'm glad \*\*\*

**MS. DAVIS:** We'll continue again in the spring when it's a little warmer.

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:** Yes. When it's a little warmer we'll take a Saturday. And we'll call up Norman. (Tape ends abruptly).

(End of Tape)

#### C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Lin York, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and accurate transcript of the taped proceedings as transcribed by me on the date hereinbefore set forth, to the best of my ability.

Date: July 8, 2008 Lin York

Agency Typist



**MS. DAVIS:** My name is Barbara Davis. I am the city historian for New Rochelle, and I'm part of the oral history project for David's Island. Today I'm meeting with John \*\*\*

**MR. CARY:** Cary.

**MS. DAVIS:** Cary. Can you spell your last name for us?

**MR. CARY:** C-A-R-Y.

**MS. DAVIS:** C-A-R-Y. We're at the New Rochelle municipal marina, and today is Wednesday, June 25, 2008. This interview is part of a program sponsored by the United States Army Corps of Engineers and the New Rochelle Public Library to collect oral histories about the experiences and memories of people who were associated with the former U.S. Army Base located on David's Island, and in this case we're speaking to a member of the demolition crew who's been out working on the island for the past \*\*\*

**MR. CARY:** Since 2005.

**MS. DAVIS:** Since 2005.

**MR. CARY:** Almost three years.

**MS. DAVIS:** So, John, where are you from?

**MR. CARY:** I'm from upstate New York – a small town, Shenango Forks, which is south of Syracuse and north of Binghamton, New York.

**MS. DAVIS:** Mmm hmm. And so you started what month was that in 2005?

**MR. CARY:** September of 2005 I believe we started.

**MS. DAVIS:** And you worked for a company hired by Tetra Tech?

**MR. CARY:** No. I work for Tetra Tech.

**MS. DAVIS:** For Tetra Tech.

**MR. CARY:** Yes. We've done other island demolition jobs and other island work. I've been on a number of islands.

**MS. DAVIS:** Oh, really? Which other islands?

**MR. CARY:** Well, on Gould Island we did a demolition of a torpedo facility, manufacturing facility. That's in the Narragansett Bay. And then off of - - We've been to Nomans Island which is off of Massachusetts. And that was a former Naval facility, as was the Gould Island project. And then I can't recall the name of the one island but it's off of New London. We took the ferry out to it. And Christopher Reeves has a place on that island. I can't recall the name. But we've done some work out there.

**MS. DAVIS:** So you're sort of an island specialist.

**MR. CARY:** Oh, I wouldn't call me a specialist, but I know what to expect as far as getting stuff there.

**MS. DAVIS:** So when you first started - - Maybe you could just walk me through a typical day. You have a crew of how many?

**MR. CARY:** Well, right now we have four laborers, three Teamsters and we have four operator engineers. And we have an admin staff of three people – myself. We have a health and safety QC man, and then we have a person that is like a waste management person. He handles our disposal, and then he also functions as like a coordinator to get in supplies and equipment.

**MS. DAVIS:** And your title is –

**MR. CARY:** I'm a (Inaudible) Superintendent.

**MS. DAVIS:** So is it always - - Since you started work on the island it's been about this level of number of people working on it?

**MR. CARY:** Well, every now and then we gear up with subcontractors. In the beginning part way through after we got underway we did some abatement which was subcontracted out. And then also other people who support the project from Tetra Tech as far as archaeological and the historians, they're out from time to time. They've done quite an extensive project out there getting everything documented prior to our start. And then there's also a city of New Rochelle contract where they're doing some soil investigations. But that has nothing to do with \*\*\*

**MS. DAVIS:** With your crew. Tell me – when you first arrived at the island what did you find there back in November 2005?

**MR. CARY:** Well, when we first arrived there was quite the challenge to get the area opened up so you could move around. We were like a single line of marching army ants trying to whack your way through the weeds to find things. And then one of our first tasks was to locate everything, locate the roadways and measure buildings up and get physical dimensions.

**MS. DAVIS:** Did you have maps to go by?

**MR. CARY:** We had maps. But it was heavily overgrown and it was quite a challenge to get everything located with the amount of growth that was there.

**MS. DAVIS:** And the growth - - Would you - - How would you describe the growth?

**MR. CARY:** Well, there were vines. There were trees that fell, branches that had broke, heavy poison ivy. I mean the poison ivy out there is pretty healthy.

**MS. DAVIS:** Robust.

**MR. CARY:** Robust.

**MS. DAVIS:** Are you allergic to poison ivy?

**MR. CARY:** Well, yes. But I mean, you know, I react to it. But we take a lot of precautions. But, you know, that was – I'd call it very heavily overgrown.

**MS. DAVIS:** Mmm hmm. When you first went out had you been given prior information about the island and what it had been used for over the years?

**MR. CARY:** Yes. I read the - - You know, we have a history in the front part of our work plan which gives you a description of, you know, what the island was used for. It's very interesting.

**MS. DAVIS:** Mmm hmm. And when you saw the buildings on the island were you struck in any way? Did you have - - What was your initial reaction to these various buildings that were out there?

**MR. CARY:** Well, I was looking at - - There was quite a bit. I mean there was a lot of building on 80 acres. And some of them were large. The barracks were large buildings. And they were well constructed, the barracks. They were some of the newer buildings. And just the architecture, the shapes that they put in the brick and stuff and some of the tile work that they used. They were very nice buildings.

**MS. DAVIS:** Mmm hmm. So the crew takes a work boat out to the island.

**MR. CARY:** We start - - We work basically for ten hour days, Monday through Thursday. Friday is a makeup day if we get blown out by weather which we've been fortunate. We've had a couple cancellations with some storm events, but we typically work four tens. And we start at six thirty here. We launch, and then we return for five o'clock quit time on the mainland.

**MS. DAVIS:** So you pack your lunch, and there's no resources out there for you. You have to be self contained.

**MR. CARY:** Yes. And we've got two trailers out there – well, actually three. One's a decon trailer for our asbestos work, but we have an office trailer, we have an equipment conex (ph) style box, and then we have what we call the craft trailer and that is a break area. We have bottled water. We have generators.

**MS. DAVIS:** Generators, mmm hmm.

**MR. CARY:** And we have a defibulator. We have all the first aid equipment you need, and we have emergency plans in place in the event of any emergencies.

**MS. DAVIS:** And how does all the equipment get out to the island?

**MR. CARY:** We're using Miller's launch, and they're located in Staten Island, New York. And they've got a nice launch facility and tugboats, and we've set what's called a spud barge that has a ramp on the end of it at the island. And then actually if you start at the island there's a ramp that is attached to the spud barge, and that has these big posts that hold that in place. And then at the end of that \*\*\*

**MS. DAVIS:** Posts that go down into the water.

**MR. CARY:** Into the water. And then at the other end of that spud barge which is the water end is another ramp. So when our tug comes in with a barge it simply butts up to the one end, they lower that ramp onto the barge that just came so you can go from that barge that just came across the ramp onto the barge that's



the spud barge and then from a ramp onto the island. And that takes roughly 20 minutes to get situated once she arrives. So it's a \*\*\*

**MS. DAVIS:** But once the equipment's there it stays there throughout the year?

**MR. CARY:** Yes. We have a secure - - We have a fenced in lay down area that's lockable. We've had a couple vandalism incidents, but everything's been minor.

**MS. DAVIS:** And what kind of vandalism?

**MR. CARY:** People writing comments and stuff like that.

**MS. DAVIS:** Graffiti.

**MR. CARY:** Yes, graffiti.

**MS. DAVIS:** Kids graffiti.

**MR. CARY:** Not much.

**MS. DAVIS:** And what equipment is out there?

**MR. CARY:** We have three 330 excavators with attachments. And they're excavators that can either have a digging bucket on it. And we have some straight cutting edges welded to our digging bucket so we don't till. And we aren't really out there digging, but we work with the rubble and we're doing a lot of material processing. We process the rubble. We have hammers attachments that will break large blocks and break the foundation walls. We have grapple attachments which - - That's our primary demo tool. We push the walls over. We segregate wood and brick and metal. And we have a loader that does some material handling. That has a set of forks on it. We have what we call an end dump. It's a altering dump truck, and that's 25 ton capacity. That basically shuffles material around. And we have a roll-off truck, because all our waste goes out in roll-off containers covered. So that truck handles that. And then we have a water truck. We use a lot of water. We use the sea water for dust control suppression.

**MS. DAVIS:** So basically, one of these trucks goes and uses the grapple to knock the walls down. And then the materials are sorted before they're put into the containers?

**MR. CARY:** Yes. We have an excavator. That's the excavator that does the demolition. The trucks primarily just move stuff from point A to B. But what we're doing out there is we are segregating. The building comes down. Basically in a building you have asbestos waste, you have metal. You have construction debris which consists of wood, any non-asbestos tile and wood lathe and plaster and stuff like that. And basically we segregate - - The asbestos waste goes in its own dedicated container. That goes to a landfill for disposal. We send our construction debris which is our wood which has nails in it and it's basically the construction part - floor joists and stuff for the building. That gets crunched up so we can process it and maximize our load in our roll-off container. That also goes to a landfill as construction debris. And then we take the rubble material that's generated from the building and we stockpile that.

**MS. DAVIS:** That would be the brick and the masonry?

**MR. CARY:** The brick and the masonry. And we bring in a crusher and we crush that to three inch minus, and we utilize that in our footprint in the upper layer of where we \*\*\*

**MS. DAVIS:** To build up where the foundation \*\*\*

**MR. CARY:** Yes. When we backfill it we use that. We put fabric down. We basically bring the - - We place excess rubble inside the foundation footprint once it's clean. We put it in there. We bring that to 18 inches below grade, so there's still 18 inches to be filled. We put fabric down, because fabric is a separation layer between the regular non-processed construction debris. And then above that we place a foot of construction debris. And during the process of opening the land up so we can get around to opening the roads, clearing to actually do the demo, we try very hard to minimize any disturbance to trees. But we've generated a lot of wood. And what we do is we bring in a Morbark (ph) grinder and we grind that material twice. First we grind it down to a three inch minus. And then we grind it down to what they call a half inch screen, and it makes a mulch like material. And then they sent that material initially when we did the first grinding out to get some organic tests run on it and figure out what's the best blend for restoration on the island. And we actually have a five yard loader bucket and that loader mixes our mulch. We import sand on barges and we blend clean sand - two buckets of clean sand to one bucket of mulch.

**MS. DAVIS:** Wow.

**MR. CARY:** So going back to how we restore an area - - You've got the 18 inches below the existing grade around the footprint of the building is all construction, clean construction, the masonry product. Then we

put a layer of fabric down. Then we put in a foot of our three inch minus crushed construction material which is masonry concrete rock, and then we restore the rest to the six inches with this mulch blend. So we've actually recycled some of the construction debris and we've recycled our organic material that we actually had to clear from the area.

**MS. DAVIS:** Right.

**MR. CARY:** So that was - - Those two decisions to use those - - In the original bid there was imported crusher run product which we've substituted with - we've made our own out of \*\*\*

**MS. DAVIS:** I know the Army Corps went to great lengths to see if anybody wanted the bricks and it just wasn't worth it because they weren't clean. It was not cost effective to cart it off which was a, you know, - - We know where some of those bricks over in Croton where you're (Inaudible) there are major brick works there. We could identify them by the name on them. Now some of the buildings - - There was originally - - There was talk that they were going to be imploded. And then that changed, the reason because - - What was the reason. I think the barracks were slated to be imploded.

**MR. CARY:** There was cost considerations, and just the cost of using explosives in this area. Another problem - the buildings simply didn't have the height to them to have enough weight to actually get us what we looking for. What we wanted to do was reduce the overall height of the barracks, three main barracks buildings - 58, 59 and 60. And we, you know, they went through that. Vendors came out. We got some prices from them. And then what we did was we mobilized in a PC-600 Kamatsu (ph) excavator, and that had enough power and reach to do these buildings. We had to bring it in in pieces - put it together on the island.

**MS. DAVIS:** Really.

**MR. CARY:** It's that heavy. It's a big machine.

**MS. DAVIS:** I saw the machine when I was out there. How will the water tower be \*\*\*

**MR. CARY:** Well, we've got our plan. It's in for Army Corps approval. Tetra Tech is a company nationwide. We've done a number of these. And we had Rod Reese from the west coast come out, and him and I went through the procedure. They're basically all the same. And you pull the two front portions - - You prep the two front legs. And there's some other prep work to do. But you basically pull it over with cables. You pull the legs - the pieces that you prep out from under it \*\*\*

**MS. DAVIS:** Sort of pulls up from underneath it.

**MR. CARY:** And you have one more cable up on an upper point on the water tower. And it simply - - You pull the legs out and it falls in the direction.

**MS. DAVIS:** Now this in comparison to the other islands that you've done work - were there any surprises for you along the way or, you know, as far as the buildings you came across and things that occurred with them or the island itself?

**MR. CARY:** Well, it's been very nice working here. We've had a lot of support from the city. We've had a lot of support from the police. And this launch, this municipal launch, and working for the Army Corps has been a pleasure. I mean I've had other experiences with the Army Corps and this has been real pleasant. I mean the job's went well and everybody's worked well together. I guess we got a lot of support on this job.

**MS. DAVIS:** Did it go faster than you thought it would?

**MR. CARY:** We've gained some ground. We've got a cost under run. Our goal is Tetra Tech is to do what the client wants and do it safe. That's number one. And the job's gone well.

**MS. DAVIS:** I guess also - - Well, the weather has been - - The weather could have been a big factor also. But you had a mild winter so you were able to \*\*\*

**MR. CARY:** Well, we were crushing during the winter months. So we save work that weather really can't impact because guys are inside heated cabs. I mean extreme cold temperatures would slow anybody up, but we haven't had that extreme cold for any length of time. So the weather. The weather's been \*\*\*

**MS. DAVIS:** And you were there - - So you were there 12 months out of the year. Okay.

**MR. CARY:** Yes. We've been around the horn. Got through a couple winters.

**MS. DAVIS:** What about the wildlife you've seen out there?

**MR. CARY:** We've had some interesting experiences. The geese are now starting to – their young are moving on. I mean they've already hatched out. But the first thing we did when we arrived to the island was relocate an osprey nest which was on the freight pier. And what we had to do was relocate that nest in its entirety onto - - We constructed a platform. Rich Woodworth (ph), the project manager, built it in the parking lot at the Radisson. And that came - - That's nothing that we invented.

**MS. DAVIS:** Right.

**MR. CARY:** I mean they did a lot of research to get it straightened out. And then we found the perfect tree in a location that was far enough from the demolition activities so it wouldn't be impacted.

**MS. DAVIS:** This is on the south side of the island?

**MR. CARY:** Yes.

**MS. DAVIS:** Southeast side.

**MR. CARY:** Yes. And it's like a hand and it held the platform perfect. We went out and cut the top out of it. And the tree's still alive. So we're going back and pruning it occasionally to keep the branches from going up into the nest. And we do that at the end of the - - Then we've wrapped the base with a metal flashing that doesn't hurt the tree, but it prevents any animals from getting any footholds to do any climbing. So we've done a nice job on that nest, and I think two sets of young have already come through the nest. So that was a success story.

**MS. DAVIS:** Were you able to see them?

**MR. CARY:** Oh, yes, they poked their heads out. We basically avoided the area. But they have this distinctive call that you \*\*\*

**MS. DAVIS:** It's sort of a \*\*\*

**MR. CARY:** It's like a whistle.

**MS. DAVIS:** Yes.

**MR. CARY:** And so - - And there's also been another nest starting to be constructed in a telephone pole that's on the eastern side there or on the western side of the island. And we had a deer that actually come right up to you. And it at one point had walked down the ramp, got on the – we were leaving for the day – got on the barge and I swore it was looking to get on the boat. Now I had to get off the boat and I sort of shooshed it off the ramp back onto the land. But that deer one day just showed up in our lay down which is a fenced in area. He came right in, looked around, laid down. And it was approachable and you could pet it.

**MS. DAVIS:** How odd.

**MR. CARY:** Yes. And it was only there \*\*\*

**MS. DAVIS:** And what is it living on? I guess they're \*\*\*

**MR. CARY:** Oh, there's a lot of food.

**MS. DAVIS:** There's enough green. I think there's some laurel. Yes, there's enough food.

**MR. CARY:** But that was interesting – the deer. But he was around for a couple weeks and then he was gone. He must have either swam someplace because we didn't see him. But he was interesting. And then, you know, raccoons are out there.

**MS. DAVIS:** Not too many squirrels though.

**MR. CARY:** There's a few. But I mean it's - - There's deer there. I mean we see deer tracks, but you don't see the deer now. And there's probably a couple, but you can see the tracks occasionally in the dirt. And they must avoid us, so they probably go to the southern end.

**MS. DAVIS:** Any water rats?

**MR. CARY:** No. I haven't seen any.

**MS. DAVIS:** Because we've always heard about them swimming from Long Island over to our shores. And if they wanted a break that would be a good place for a break. I can almost envision them on a little log. While you were working out there I know you were very concentrated on your task. But did you ever think about – imagine what the island had been like as a fort or even before?

**MR. CARY:** Well, we were fortunate to see from a historian a collection of photographs. And he put it on like a slide show on his laptop. And he had some old photographs. And by reading the history, you know, going back to a confederate prison and then even further back we were out there digging test pits for the archaeologists. And they actually found a stone point and they found a few things. And they found a lot of napping chips, so there was some activity out there. So you're always constantly thinking about what it was like.

**MS. DAVIS:** What about the future? Have you thought about - - What would you envision?

**MR. CARY:** Well, we go to Joey's Subs every now and then, and he's a business owner in New Rochelle. And he was interested where you work and we told him where we were working. And, you know, he started throwing his opinion. He would like to see a revenue base, some taxes come out of there to help his taxes get lowered. It's a very tough island for everybody - - I feel as a New York State resident it's very tough to add an island because only a few would be able to really enjoy it. And they would be the people who had the money unless somebody put together a lot of opportunity for lower income kids and stuff to get out there - programs to take boat trips or however they were going to use it. But I would think that if you could generate energy or use it for the city in some way like that because you do have the Con Ed line out there which is a pretty important electrical line. So if you were to use that island to either generate wind energy or use it for a sewage treatment or whatever, I mean that would be my recommendation because of the Con Ed presence.

**MS. DAVIS:** Mmm hmm.

**MR. CARY:** It's a pretty important utility line. And if something were to go wrong with that line it would probably make a pretty big mess.

**MS. DAVIS:** Right. Right. And I know you're ending up having to take down all the buildings because that's the way things went. But of all the buildings that you became acquainted with, would there be any that you would have felt like preserving over others? Were there any that you took a particular \*\*\*

**MR. CARY:** Well, if there was an unending budget.

**MS. DAVIS:** Yes.

**MR. CARY:** None of them were in the condition to save. But the admin building with the sandstone - I believe they were sandstone columns \*\*\*

**MS. DAVIS:** The Post headquarters?

**MR. CARY:** Yes.

**MS. DAVIS:** Mmm hmm.

**MR. CARY:** That was a nice building. And there were also some little buildings of interest. The old forge building that had the hood still in there and, you know, the place for the fire and the bellows.

**MS. DAVIS:** Right.

**MR. CARY:** And then there was a building that was half buried. I mean they were all interesting. I mean every building has interest in it. I mean they were interesting. But out of all of them I'd say the admin building if I had to pick just one.

**MS. DAVIS:** And how much longer are you going to be out on the island?

**MR. CARY:** We're going to be into December, January time frame. I mean we will complete - - We will be right towards completion before the next year. But it's going to take all that time to get the restoration, make sure everything we've done is acceptable and, you know, to get the city people out there with the Army Corps and say we're done.

**MS. DAVIS:** Right.

**MR. CARY:** I mean that is a process - - We've already got our punch list started.

**MS. DAVIS:** Right.

**MR. CARY:** George Willent (ph) gets his punch list started pretty early, so we're already trying to close the job out right now and we still have to work till December.

**MS. DAVIS:** I know I asked you if you had any surprises. Were there any artifacts or material things that you came across?

**MR. CARY:** The area is pretty well stripped.

**MS. DAVIS:** Had been stripped.

**MR. CARY:** I've got a bottle, a Knickerbocker beer bottle. It says 1848 on it. It looked like it was a corked style bottle. It's a New York brewery I guess, Knickerbocker Beer. And we found that under a slab of a building that had to be from the 1800's. That's in our office. I mean it's waiting on Nancy Brighton (ph) from the Army Corps to come. We'll turn it over to her. But sad to say \*\*\*

**MS. DAVIS:** Not much else.

**MR. CARY:** That's it, you know. The buildings – the copper, any valuable metals, anything of value has been stripped from that island.

**MS. DAVIS:** Were you struck at all that there were some wood frame buildings still standing out there – that you had to take some wood frame – given the fact there have been so many fires?

**MR. CARY:** It was odd that some buildings didn't get torched. But some of the wood frame buildings like the warehouse had a wood floor in it that was at least four to six inches thick. So it was a very substantially built building. Everything was substantially built.

**MS. DAVIS:** No matter what the era.

**MR. CARY:** So by looking at the construction I'm not surprised the stuff's still standing because it's all well built by craftsmen. I mean that was a well built place.

**MS. DAVIS:** So are you going to miss the trip out and back every day? It's a pretty nice ride out there.

**MR. CARY:** Well, as a job you want to see a job end after three years and get something else started.

**MS. DAVIS:** Right.

**MR. CARY:** There's satisfaction in this work. It's been a nice job. It's been nice people. It's been nice people to work with. And that's not a rarity, but you do have those jobs that you hope they're going to end.

**MS. DAVIS:** Right.

**MR. CARY:** But I'd like to see it end just because we've got to get it done and get out of here. And we're looking at an under run, and we're looking at that as a success. So we want to leave money on the table and get done.

**MS. DAVIS:** Great. Well, John, thank you so much. Thanks for your hard work and thanks for agreeing to be interviewed.

**MR. CARY:** Thank you.

(End of Tape)

#### C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Lin York, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and accurate transcript of the taped proceedings as transcribed by me on the date hereinbefore set forth, to the best of my ability.

Dated: July 9, 2008

