

Sandy Hook, Gateway NRA, NPS
Oral History Interview with Theodore "Ted" Narozanick
Soldier on Fort Hancock Baseball Team, Spring 1942
Interview by Billy Yirce, Monmouth University Student Intern
April 9, 2003
Trancribed by Danny Gutch 2010



Ted Narozanick in front of barracks at Fort Hancock in Spring 1942
Photo courtesy of NPS/Gateway NRA



Monmouth County Freeholder Narozanick's photograph
Photo courtesy of Mr. Narozanick

Editor's notes in parenthesis ()

(Theodore "Ted" Narozanick served as a Monmouth County Freeholder from 1985-2006. To view another oral history interview of Mr. Narozanick: <http://www.visitmonmouth.com/oralhistory/bios/NarozanickTed.htm>)

Billy Yirce: This is an oral history interview of Ted Narozanick on April 9, 2003, taking place at the Freehold Office of Records (Hall of Records) for the National Park Service. Where and when were you born?

Ted Narozanick: I was born in Englishtown, New Jersey on October the 22, 1920.

BY: And where did you graduate from?

TN: I graduated from Jamesburg High School.

BY: Was your Father or Grandfather in the military?

TN: No.

BY: And what was New Jersey like growing up as a child?

TN: Well of course, where I was born and raised in Englishtown that was primarily an agricultural area. We did not have any of the developments today. We did not have any of the major highways. We did not have any of the strip malls. And we did not have any of the great malls for shopping purposes today. It was real country living at that time.

BY: Okay, and what led you to joining the military?

TN: Well in 1940, there was a lot of discussion about the War and about what was happening in Europe. And as a matter of fact, many of us in my little community of Englishtown, we all had one confectionery store, which was an ice cream parlor where we used to meet all the time. And that was always a topic of discussion as when we might be drafted, when we might go into the Army and so forth. And of course, in the latter part of August of 1940 in one of our major discussions that we had as young men, someone indicated that we ought to join the Army and do a year, and then we would come out after the year and be held in reserve. So, in early September, we had another discussion. And I'm talking about a discussion that would entail maybe anywhere from 10 to 14 young boys, young men. And one night we decided in late, in early September, that we would go to Freehold on Court Street here where there was a Recruiting Office and sign up and join the Army at that point. And we did. As a matter of fact, the week of September the 16, 1940, we all got in cars and came to Freehold on Court Street here. We went into the Recruiting Office and indicated, there were about 12 or 13 of us that same night, indicated that we wanted to enter the service and we signed up. They swore us in. We signed all of our necessary papers. And the Captain that was in charge told us to go home and report at 5 o'clock the next morning. They would provide us breakfast, lunch, and dinner and we ate in a little restaurant right across the street here. At that time

was called Conway's Restaurant. Well, that night when the, I returned home I told my folks, my Mother especially, that I had joined the Army and she was overcome by it and really fainted and I was really sorry about that. But I said, "I've got to eventually go in the Army, so I might as well." On September 16, 1940 when we reported here to our Recruiting Station, 'cause each day we would do our training, drills, they would give us a, teach us how to be a soldier before we got to camp, you know. We work here and drill during the day, eat our breakfast, lunch, and dinner, go home and sleep, come back the next morning. On September the 16th 1940, when we reported here at the Recruiting Station, there were a series of Army trucks located on Court Street. The Captain told us all to join, get in the Army trucks and they took us to Fort Dix. We were the first troops to occupy Fort Dix since World War One. There was nothing there for us. We had no uniforms. We still had to be in civilian clothes. When we got to Fort Dix, my first duty, they told me was to get on a truck and go around to the farms and collect as much straw as I possibly could so we could use that as mattresses to sleep on and while we were at Fort Dix. We stayed at Fort Dix. They taught us to be a soldier with close order drill, how to do guard duty and everything else necessary to be a soldier. We did not get any uniforms until December of that year, 1940. That's when we first got pieces of uniforms to wear. From that point on, from September the 16th, 1940, when we were inducted into the Federal Service, we were soldiers. We then went on maneuvers down to the Carolinas and on the way back from Carolina we bivouacked overnight just to spend a night at the Gettysburg Battleground before returning to Fort Dix. That's when we had heard the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. Then, that was in December 7, '41.

BY: What was your reaction of you and the men?

TN: We knew then that we were not gonna be going home and being held in reserve. We were in the Army then. So, we went back to Fort Dix. We did more training. We did more maneuvers up in Pennsylvania and then finally in the spring of '42, we, our company, moved to Fort Hancock at Sandy Hook.

BY: And what was the start date at Fort Hancock?

TN: Beg your pardon?

BY: What was your starting date?

TN: The spring of '42. 'cause I know they called for people that were interested in playing baseball. And I was a pretty good semi-pro baseball player during those days and I went out for the team at Fort Hancock and I made it. I was a second baseman and I still have my photos home wearing the baseball uniform with "Fort Hancock" across the front. As a matter of fact, those pictures should be at Fort.

BY: Yeah. I think I've seen some of them.

TN: Yes.

BY: The baseball team

TN: Yes. So then of course, we worked to train with baseball there at Fort Hancock and before our first game, I think we were gonna play Governor's Island, before that first game came, our Unit was transferred back down south. Some of us went to, Charleston, South Carolina, some went to Myrtle Beach. I think (some went to) was Virginia. We were put all along the coast to watch for any submarines or any activity that might be comin' from the Atlantic Ocean. And, of course, when I was in Charleston, South Carolina, I was stationed at what they call a little area called Stoney Field. That was on the outskirts of the Charleston, or, the Citadel, which was a Military Academy at that time. And of course in September of '42, I applied for Officer Candidate School and I was accepted and I went from Carolina to Fort Lee, Virginia and I entered the Officer Candidate School and I was successful. For three months they made you a gentleman and an officer, and at the end of three months you were then graduated as a second lieutenant. And after my graduation on December the 11th of 1942, I was given a week's furlough, which I came home and then I went back. Reported back to Virginia and was assigned to truck or transportation company. And I stayed there for some time and then there was an officer that was stationed in Camp McCain, Mississippi, Grenada (County). And he was taken ill and they needed a replacement and my name was put in as a replacement for him and then I was transferred from Camp Lee, Virginia, or Fort Lee, Virginia to Camp McCain, Mississippi, Grenada (County). And I trained there with the troops that they assigned me. I was a company commander, although I was a second lieutenant, I was still a company commander which calls for a captain. I trained with my troops and then in February of, you'll have to forgive me on the dates, but I think it was in late '43 or early '44. I can't swear right now, but we were given our deployment orders to go overseas. And of course, we took the, we were at the piers in New York. We boarded a ship, which was the, a British ship at the time, the S.S. (RMS) *Aquitania*, and that took us over to Europe. We landed in Scotland, and from Scotland we were transported by train and truck to, England on the outskirts of Bristol. And there we trained again our troops for the Normandy invasion. And then in Decem--, June of 1944, we went sent orders to France for the Normandy invasion. And I think we went in on either D plus 2 or D plus 3 'cause I remember very dramatically really when we hit the shore, the paratroopers, the American paratroopers were just coming back because they had landed on D-Day early in the morning, and when they were coming back they had the big jumpsuits on with all the pockets and every soldier had a bottle of champagne or a bottle on Cognac in the big pockets along with German Lugers. That's the pistols that the Germans had, 'cause everyone wanted a German Luger, ya know. And we watched them as they came back to the beach and we were going in then. And then we stayed right in France, in Belgium, Holland, Luxemburg, and I stayed right with the troops, all the way through 'til December 1944 when we had the Battle of the Bulge, which was the last big push that the Germans wanted to exer-get their exercises in. And they thought that they could defeat us at the Battle of the Bulge that was around Bastogne, St. Lo (France) there, but nevertheless they called General Patton in, who had the Third Army at that time, an Armored Division. When he came in, things really changed. That was really the end of the War then. So that's very briefly my experience as a soldier. I had various promotions. I went from 2nd lieutenant to 1st lieutenant. Then from 1st lieutenant, I

went to captain and that's where I was discharged as a captain. I came back home to Englishtown.

BY: That's good. I have a couple questions about when you served at Fort Hancock. How long was the period of time you were there? You said spring of '42.

TN: Spring of '42 and I guess maybe 2 or 3 months, something like that. I don't recall.

BY: Did you know anything about Fort Hancock before you were assigned there since you lived in the area?

TN: Oh, I lived in the area. I knew of Sandy Hook and Fort Hancock but I was never able to go there, you know, and participate in anything until I was in the Army then we were transferred there.

BY: What kind of job did you perform at Fort Hancock besides being on the baseball team?

TN: At Fort Hancock we did a lot of close order drilling. We used the quite Parade Ground quite extensively. We did a lot of guard duty, things like that.

BY: Were there any ever serious alerts of enemy attacks at Fort Hancock?

TN: No. No. No.

BY: What building did you do most of your work in?

TN: Well, it was a two-story barrack. I think there's a couple of them left there yet. But, I, most of them I suspect are gone by now. But we were in the regular wooden two-story barracks. And I think there's are few left as you almost get to the Coast Guard Station, in that area.

BY: Were there any other social activities you participated in besides the baseball team?

TN: No, that was about all. That was it.

BY: Did you ever go to the beach while there?

TN: Oh yeah, sure.

BY: Which one?

TN: I don't remember which one but it was close to there. But yet it was not that warm that we could go in the water. But through our exercises and marching and what not and drilling they'd take us down to the beach.

BY: Did you ever attend any religious services at the Fort?

TN: No, no.

BY: In your opinion, what was the most interesting part about working at Fort Hancock?

TN: Well, of course, for me personally, it was an opportunity to be back in Monmouth County. And not only that but I, but my Wife or Wife-to-be eventually, well she lived in Matawan so it was not a very difficult problem for her to use the car and go down Route 36 from Matawan right into Sandy Hook and into Fort Hancock.

BY: Were there any storms you can remember while serving at Fort Hancock?

TN: No. No.

BY: Do you still keep in touch with any of the people you were friends with at the Fort?

TN: Unfortunately, no. I would have no idea where they all are today. Some have disappeared. Some of them are deceased now, so I have no contact with any of them right now.

BY: Did you follow any of the activity that occurred there during the '70's and the '60's with the Nike missiles?

TN: No, absolutely not. No.

BY: Have you returned there recently? Do you go back at all?

TN: Well I go back there, sure. Every once in a while, I take my Wife for a ride. We go down Route 36. We go into the road to Sandy Hook, go down into Fort Hancock, circle around. I try to find some of the areas where I was acquainted with. I know where the History House is. The Post Theater, some of the buildings, as a matter of fact, a few years ago I was able to get House # 4, which is on Officers' Row for our senior citizens organizations in the county here so they could go spend the day and make a reservation through our Office on Aging because right now I'm in charge of Human Services, Health, and Transportation. So our senior citizens had an opportunity. But now that they are going to try to remodel and have a renaissance there at Fort Hancock we no longer have use of the house.

BY: Well that's about it. I thank you for the interview. And it was a pleasure speaking to you.

END OF INTERVIEW