

MONTAUK PIONEER, July 4, 2003, Page 16

PICKING UP THE PIECES

Searching For Old Artillery At Camp Hero State Park

By David Lion Rattiner

Next Thursday night at 7:00 p.m. the United States Army Corps of Engineers are going to have a public information meeting for the Ordnance Removal Action at Former Camp Hero in Montauk. The word ORDNANCE refers to any leftover weapons, artillery, or ammunition that could be hanging around in the old Camp Hero.

For those of you that don't know, Camp Hero is now a registered historic ground that was once used as a defensive location that the Army designed in order to protect against an invasion. The base was set up along with sixteen inch naval guns that stood hidden and aimed out to sea hidden underneath bunkers. The basic plan back then was that if any ship were to come into shore, they would see them from the bunkers and shoot at them. If a U-boat showed its head, they would shoot at that. When the war was over, the guns were taken out of the site along with the munitions.

Just one year after the guns were taken out of the bunkers the Army and Air force manned the area conducting training exercises along with the construction of the first radar which went through several changes and upgrades. It was not until 1962 and the looming threat of the former Soviet Union and all out nuclear war, that a giant seventy-five foot radar tower was built with the sole purpose of detecting any enemies of the United States. The tower had the ability to detect any threat up to two hundred miles away from the shore line.

The radar tower became useless however. In 1981, a brand new FAA operated radar could out match the mighty beast ten fold. The new station was constructed in Riverhead. The old station in Montauk, though it looked pretty cool, was completely worthless to the Army and thus abandoned leaving it subject to vandalism.

As mentioned before, there have been training exercises in the past conducted there where live ammunition has been fired. What the Army Corps of Engineers is worried about is having someone go out to the fifteen acre site which is just a mile away from the Montauk Lighthouse, pick up an old rusty piece of artillery and get themselves hurt. As far as we know, there could be anything down there. There may be old grenades, old bullets, maybe a helmet or two, whatever kind of stuff that has to do with the Army and the Air Force. I doubt that there is an old working fighter plane down there, but hey, you never know.

In order to find this out further, I decided to take a little day trip down to Camp Hero to see if I could find anything for myself so that the readers of this newspaper could know what kinds of things were down there.

While heading out to Camp Hero my Dad stopped me to let me know that I could get seriously hurt if I were to step on an old mine or if I were to find a grenade and accidentally blow it up. I walked out to my truck and he stopped me, "Son



I think that you should re-think what you are doing. You might get hurt."

I looked at him directly in the eyes, "Dad, this is for the Montauk Pioneer. I know it's dangerous but I'll be okay, you don't have to worry about me. Besides, what if I find a really cool weapon? This could be my last chance, they are going to clean the whole place out next week."

He looked at me, shook his head, and walked back inside of the office. He then came back out, gave me a hug, as if it was the last hug he was ever going to give me, then went back inside. I was waiting for the dramatic music to start playing, but nothing happened.

When I got to the site it was amazing how run down everything is. There are old fences and old buildings boarded up. There are also signs showing you where you can and cannot go. Everything seems run down, it looks really strange, like something out of an old movie. It is really remarkable.

I started to walk around looking at the ground. So far there was not really anything. I saw a rock that I thought looked as if it could be a camouflaged hand grenade. I picked it up off of the ground, shook it vigorously, and threw it as hard as I could at the ground expecting an explosion. I got nothing.

I did a little bit more searching. There were

more fences and buildings, I couldn't help but think that they were doing more here than what they said they were doing. All of these buildings couldn't be bunkers, they had to have some other purpose to them. Maybe they were doing something totally different than their so called military training exercises. Maybe this was some huge conspiracy.

I searched around for about two hours and didn't find one hand grenade, not even a bullet. I got kind of disappointed but then at the same time I guess it is a good thing. At least nobody else will find anything and hurt themselves.

I drove back into town, sat out on the gazebo and got to thinking. If I didn't find anything in the past two hours that even remotely had to do with some sort of ammunition that I could have bragged about to everyone at the office, what the heck was the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers going to find? Why all the sudden go in now? Why didn't they go in ten years ago or last year or back when they were actually doing the training exercises? Seems to me that it would make the most sense to have gone in looking for live ordnance immediately after the training exercises, or at least a year or so after the training exercises. There were no training exercises last year. There haven't been any training exercises in the past fifty or so years. What were they really up to?

I started thinking that maybe the real reason that they are going to go into Camp Hero is not for anything that has to do with weapons or at least the weapons that you and I are thinking of. Maybe it has to do with something completely different. Maybe they know exactly why they are going to go into Camp Hero.

Here is what I'm thinking. They are just saying that they are going into Camp Hero as a white lie to cover up their real reason for going into Camp Hero. I'm thinking that they are going into Camp Hero this year in order to uncover a time sensitive experiment that was conducted fifty years ago. I'm guessing that scientists fifty years ago were doing something big. Maybe an alien, maybe time travel, whatever it is, they had to wait fifty years for it to be completed. Maybe they are growing something so important that it takes fifty years for it to be fully grown. Maybe they are growing some sort of giant genetically built super army. Whatever it is, it is in Montauk, slowly growing, just a mile away from the lighthouse at Camp Hero.

I got up out of the gazebo a little concerned and cautiously walked back to my truck. I looked out the window, checked for government spies, and drove off.

200.1e

C02NY002404_08.08_0006



* 07110074 *