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Robert Lippincott:  
Oakland Army Base Oral History Project

Interviews conducted by  
Ann Lage  
in 2008

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Interview #1: December 11, 2008  
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Lage: I'm interviewing Robert Lippincott on November 21, 2008. And this is an interview for the Oakland Army Base project. I'm Ann Lage, with the Regional Oral History Office. We always start with the easiest question: your date of birth, where you were brought up, and just a very brief bit about your family.

01-00:00:34

Lippincott: I was born May 12, 1918. Family residence was Tippecanoe City, now called just Tipp City, as it always was, but they shortened the name. It's in Ohio, about sixteen miles north of Dayton. So that was where most of my family lived. My grandparents on my mother's side lived in Tipp, as it was called, and I pretty much grew up there. Finished high school in '35, went to Wittenberg College in Springfield for one year, two semesters.

Lage: Is that close to Tippecanoe?

01-00:01:22

Lippincott: It's in Springfield, about forty miles east, towards Columbus, the state capitol.

Lage: What did your father do?

01-00:01:34

Lippincott: My father was a super salesman in the paper products area. Mother had been a bookkeeper when they got married, but she was strictly a mother/housewife the rest of the time that she was married.

Lage: When you say super salesman?

01-00:01:56

Lippincott: He could sell, literally, by reputation, electric refrigerators to Eskimos. Unfortunately, his reputation was such that he changed jobs frequently. Because he'd get a better offer. Higher commissions or a better salary.

Lage: Did that put him on the road a lot?

01-00:02:21

Lippincott: He, on several occasions, road sleepers that would leave Sunday night and come home Saturday morning. He frequently had the whole eastern half of the United States as his territory.

Lage: So your mother had the burden of raising you.

01-00:02:43

Lippincott: To a large extent.

Lage: Did you have brothers and sisters?

01-00:02:46

Lippincott: Unfortunately, I had two brothers, born one a year after me and one about ten years later, but they were preemies, and in those days, they did not save preemies. So I grew up as an only child. Lost my dad to a stroke when I was fifteen, and a junior in high school.

Lage: And that was right in the midst of the Depression.

01-00:03:14

Lippincott: Very much. 1933. And I graduated in '35, at age sixteen, because I had skipped a grade. Wittenberg was a Lutheran Church sponsored school—in fact, it still is—and was number one cannon fodder for the Ohio State Buckeyes opening game every year.

Lage: You mean they played against Ohio State?

01-00:03:48

Lippincott: They went up against over to Columbus for the opening game. They were good enough to show up, but they never won.

Lage: Did you play football?

01-00:04:00

Lippincott: I played football in high school, and I have knees to prove it. But unfortunately, they didn't get operated on until I was in my seventies.

Lage: But you didn't play in college.

01-00:04:13

Lippincott: I couldn't even draw a uniform; I wasn't big enough. I had played line in high school, and I was about twenty pounds light and two or three inches short. They have big linemen. So I played intramural ball with my fraternity. Which was Phi Gamma Delta, better known as Fiji.

Lage: Right. I've heard of the Fijis. Now, tell me, you stayed only a year in college—

01-00:04:52

Lippincott: Because I couldn't afford to go back. I had worked in a restaurant for my meals and a pittance, which paid my room rent at the fraternity.

[recording stops & re-starts]

Lage: Okay. We were saying how you had to leave college after the year.

01-00:05:22

Lippincott: Okay. I worked in restaurants for a year, and then I got a job with a printing ink company in Dayton, Ohio. So I commuted. By this time, I was living in Xenia, which is X-E-N-I-A, southeast of Dayton. Mother had decided she had to get out of Tipp because there were too many memories. She had started a

beauty shop in the house. The bank foreclosed on the house, so we moved in with my grandparents that summer of '35. And when I came home in '36, that's where I stayed. Unfortunately, I now know that I came home with mono. I didn't know that's what it was, but all I did was eat and sleep for six weeks. And that's the typical symptoms for what's commonly called mononucleosis. After getting semi-well, I moved to Xenia, and found a job in an all night restaurant. And then it was from there I got the printing ink job. I was being trained to be a color matcher, coming up with special ink formulas. Worked with a small balance scale. Didn't make very much money, but this is a trade that's old European craft, not trade unions. And you can tell by your salary, your level. And fortunately, I made journeyman in three years, so my salary went up. And then in '41—March, to be exact—I got drafted in the army.

Lage: Oh. That ended your printing career.

01-00:07:33

Lippincott: I was the first draftee out of my draft board. They had gotten volunteers up till then. And two of the four that went March the 6<sup>th</sup>, like I did, were volunteers. But another guy and I were the first two draftees.

Lage: Had you thought about volunteering?

01-00:07:52

Lippincott: No, ma'am. Because I was supporting my mother, to a large extent. And I still was, even though the starting salary in those days was \$21 for four months, each of the first four months.

Lage: In the military?

01-00:08:11

Lippincott: In the army. Well, in the military, yes. But it went up to thirty, which was a huge raise, after the fourth month. From basic training, I was assigned to an MP battalion that was just being activated. This was up at Fort Sam Houston, Texas. Anyhow, I was assigned to Company B. And then Company B got sent to Iceland, so I got transferred to A, Company A. And it was over there that I ended up— They found out I could type, so I was doing backup work in personnel part of the battalion headquarters. From there, they decided they needed a clerk typist in the dispensary, so I went over to the medical detachment. Doctor over there said I needed some medical training, so he sent me up to the dental clinic to work with our battalion dental officer. Up there, I worked in prosthetics, fill and clean, and also got to help out in surgery. Because they found out that because of my mother, I had some degree of use of my left hand. And I was very advantageous to the surgeon with the hammer, when he was doing impacted teeth. So every time he'd get a— Well, he operated four chairs, and he had three assistants—one for each pair of chairs and one to do the records. And then he'd have me come down to be the

hammer man because my left hand was much more out of the way than somebody with the right hand standing over him trying to do it.

Lage: And what did you do with the hammer?

01-00:10:20

Lippincott: He had a chisel. And they're taking out impacted teeth, they have to break the enamel, and get in so that they can go in. Basically, in most cases that are double rooted, they go in with an instrument that's got a handle, and then a prong sticking out. And they call it an elevator. They go in and turn it, and it elevates the tooth. And they reach in with their hand, their fingers, and take it out.

Lage: And you hand—

01-00:10:48

Lippincott: I did the hammering—

Lage: The hammer part.

01-00:10:50

Lippincott: He'd say, "Hit," and I'd just follow the hammer. But because I had a degree of dexterity with my left hand, I was in a lot of interesting operations. And he had a rogues gallery standing around the chair that time. But it was an impacted L-3, which is the third tooth on the left side. And it was laying up in the roof of the mouth and we had to chisel it out.

Lage: So the army was doing a lot of sort of remedial dental care for these new people that came.

01-00:11:33

Lippincott: That's right. In fact, many of the old army had very poor mouths. And working in prosthetics, we went through giving a lot of people full dentures.

Lage: And this was all just before the war started?

01-00:11:54

Lippincott: This was in '41 and '42. I went to OCS [officer candidate school] in August of '42, so I worked up there until July.

Lage: How did you happen to go to OCS and into the military police?

01-00:12:08

Lippincott: Well, I applied for it. And our battalion sent over a hundred people to OCS. They had quite a program on it. But when they selected us out of the basic training, they were looking people five-ten or taller, 200 pounds or heavier, in good shape coming out of basic training—you had to be in good shape—and at least one year of college. So they had a lot of non-college graduates, but with college. So my one year probably helped me qualify.

Lage: And you were 200 pounds.

01-00:12:54

Lippincott: I weighed 198 pounds in those days, so I was close enough. And I've always worn at least a forty-four, if not larger, coat. So I've always had the breadth.

Lage: Now, was that the requirement to go to MP school? Or to go just to officers candidate?

01-00:13:17

Lippincott: No, those requirements were to get into the MPs, originally. They went for, hopefully, smart but relatively big people, because you had to work so many places alone. You answered calls. You didn't have a backup. And when you're out walking a beat, you didn't have a partner.

Lage: Yeah, yeah. So tell me a little bit more. We want to focus on the Oakland Army Base, but I want to hear about what your assignment was during the war.

01-00:13:50

Lippincott: Well, during the war, after OCS, I was assigned to a training outfit at Fort Custer, Michigan. I did not meet Jane then; I met here the next time I was in Custer. But I got a platoon out of the hills of Kentucky and Tennessee, and they weren't very bright. I even had six illiterates in my platoon.

Lage: So they weren't the year of college. [laughs]

01-00:14:25

Lippincott: They were MP qualified; they were bodies. And they were going to send this company to Iceland, and I wanted no part of that.

Lage: You didn't want a part of Iceland, or of this particular company?

01-00:14:42

Lippincott: Of that company. I was trying to train them, and the only thing you could train them was close order drill, because that's all rote. But I put in a request for {no individual?} overseas assignment. And within a matter of six weeks, I got orders to go to Panama. So I spent the year in the Panama Canal department, which was actually more stateside than anything, although it was loaded with— every {halo had?} guns, search lights, and barrage balloons.

Lage: Because of the canal?

01-00:15:22

Lippincott: To protect the canal. There were numerous alerts. There were lots of airplanes down there. They had four fields on the Pacific side and two on the Atlantic side. And so they had lots of planes around, flier squadrons as well as bomb squadrons. So it was well protected. But there were a number of alerts, but no attacks. It was an interesting place to be. I had learned to ride a motorcycle as

an enlisted man, so down there, I had a motorcycle as personal transportation, as well as a Jeep, when somebody else was going along.

Lage: And you didn't command a unit there?

01-00:16:18

Lippincott: I was only a platoon commander. I had a command assignment. We had a detachment up in David—it's spelled David, but the Panamanians call it [accent on second syllable] David—which is where all the money is in Panama. 98 percent of the wealth and less than 1 percent of the people. So that's where the elite and the rest that you know publicly, that's where they're from. But we had a small air station up there, and so we had a small MP detachment to police the town. And they kept one officer up there for thirty or sixty days at a time. So I got that assignment. That was the only real command assignment I had, because it was always in a company with a company commander, who was a captain. And while I made first lieutenant in six or seven months after OCS, captaincy was a long time coming because of the long war—unless you were in the right spot, you didn't get promoted. If you were in the right spot, you could go up real rapidly. Like in the Air Force, in the bars, the officers club, they used to have—full colonels have to be eighteen years old to order a drink. And that was not intended as a joke. There were a lot of nineteen- and twenty-year-old full colonels, particularly in the Air Force.

Lage: Now, tell me about after Panama.

01-00:18:02

Lippincott: I'd been in school at Fort Sam Houston, Texas. It's when Jane came down from Battle Creek, and we got married in San Antonio.

Lage: And Jane is your wife.

01-00:18:19

Lippincott: Jane is my wife, now of sixty-three years. We have three children—boy, girl, boy—sixty-one, fifty-seven, and fifty-three. Daughter, the middle one, lives with us. Has for a number of years. She's never been married, and of course, has no children. The oldest one, John, is a political activist, among other things, in Davis, California. Has his own TV program up there once or twice a week, in which he interviews well known people in the community. And Jim, the youngest one, is a practicing medical officer, doctor, in Providence, Rhode Island. He's a primary care type.

Lage: I see. And the political activist, then, what are his issues?

01-00:19:29

Lippincott: Making Davis a better place to live. Actually, he's a double major, econ and poly-sci, so he's more economics than political.

Lage: Okay, now let's see. We have your family. Let's get to, just quickly, your other assignments during the war, and then how you happened to decide to stay on after the war.

01-00:20:01

Lippincott: I'd rather not tell you that. Simply because—and I'll say it in one sentence—my mother never accepted my wife. And they were like this all their life, so they're left unsaid.

Lage: So you thought it was best to be away from Ohio?

01-00:20:23

Lippincott: I could survive with her. Otherwise, I'd have lost a wife early. And I just thought that I'll just stay in the army; I know what I've got there. I checked out my old job, and I wasn't going to get the promised sales job that I had thought I would, even—I'd been gone for four and a half years and he had just moved on. And he picked up his son-in-law for that job. And he had two sons in the business. Well, I didn't have the prize potential to go ahead. So it just made better sense to stay in the army. I knew my job. I thought I was pretty good at it, doing town patrol and riding a motorcycle, doing traffic. And it turned out that I was right. And of course, going to criminal investigation school didn't hurt because that put me into the investigative side of jobs.

Lage: Which you did later.

01-00:21:34

Lippincott: Yes, which I continued. Okay, after three years in Munich, we came home to Fort Holabird, Maryland, which is on the outskirts of Baltimore. And I was stationed there, with the bureau that had all the enemy prisoner of war records for World War II, German, Japanese and Italian. And because of my degree of education, I ended up being the claims officer for all the claims that came in from the PWs.

Lage: Claims of—?

01-00:22:18

Lippincott: From the PWs. Excuse me.

[recording stops & re-starts]

Lage: Oh, you were talking about the PWs. So they were making claims—

01-00:22:42

Lippincott: Oh, yeah. They were making claims. PWs, if they worked, got paid ten cents an hour, and they got eighty cents a day for [the] PX, whatever they wanted to buy. It was a charge account, really. But at the end, they either got a COCB, certificate of credit balance, or if they were in the States, where there was a fiscal officer, we'd go to the trouble to get them a special check for whatever their account showed. So as part of the treaty, USA gave Germany, or what

was to become Germany, millions of dollars; but they were to settle the PW claims. So we certified how much they had coming. And we didn't go the check route; we just used a standard form of paper and across the top, "certificate of credit balance." And then it was name, amount, date, signature. And I ran the processing section. And I had about sixteen people working for me. But we had 2400 file cabinets of records. So it took searchers to go out there and marry up— Somebody'd send in— And sometimes, all you had was their name and address. Well, there're a lot of common names in German— Schmidt and Wagoner being a couple, more common than Johnson and Smith and Jones in the English side. But we'd go back. If we had their birth date and where they'd been stationed, we could usually— I shouldn't say stationed. Where they'd been interned. And many of them never came to the States. Although, at Fort Custer, we had a whole bunch of them that were captured in North Africa, in May, 1943. So they had been interned a long time.

Lage: And they had pretty good credit balance.

01-00:25:20

Lippincott: Some of them did. Three- and four-hundred dollars. Particularly those that— I had a company for a while. It was the equivalent of four army military companies, it was the mess hall and three barracks per company.

Lage: You were in charge of them all?

01-00:25:45

Lippincott: I was in charge of that whole—

Lage: And were you still a lieutenant?

01-00:25:49

Lippincott: I was still a lieutenant. I didn't make captain until 1950, after Korea started. They froze promotions.

Lage: I see, I see. So you did a lot of really administrative work?

01-00:26:03

Lippincott: Well, I had learned personnel work, and at the PW camp, after a while, I ended up as the adjutant, which is the chief administrative officer in an army headquarters. And I also was an adjutant in Europe, in Munich for six months, until the colonel decided that I was wasted and he set me over to C Company. When somebody came home unexpectedly—actually, his unexpected departure, we learned later, was to escort Von Braun, the man that went to NASA in— where is it, Arizona? No, Mississippi, I guess. So he was the personal escort for that man. And I got his company in Munich. But the highlight of that summer was Truman integrated the army. And on a given day in August, I got fifty black troops.

Lage: Now, where were you then?

01-00:27:23

Lippincott: In Munich.

Lage: You were in Munich, still.

01-00:27:27

Lippincott: And a black lieutenant. And we integrated them into our company. We were in a German {kassern?}, which is what they call a compound for troops. And they had private rooms for two and three beds. So we had an empty bed in each one of these rooms, and so we had the lieutenant take these men around and assign the men to the room.

Lage: So you really did integrate these bases?

01-00:28:00

Lippincott: We integrated that day.

Lage: How did that work? And how did people react to it?

01-00:28:07

Lippincott: Well, it worked because we had a battalion commander from Mobile, Alabama, who I can't mimic him, but he had a very deep southern drawl. And his comment to the officers was, "There will be no problems."

Lage: Interesting.

01-00:28:31

Lippincott: And he told us to tell our troops that. And incidentally, there were no problems, except by one black man who started a fight with his two roommates. It was broken up, he was escorted to my office. I got a driver and a Jeep pull up to the door from the motor pool, and sent him to the next higher headquarters, which was across town. Since I'd been in personnel, I knew people. And I called and I said, "I've got a transfer that's got to be out of town today." And I told him what had happened. He said, "Send him up. Tell him to report to me." We never saw him again.

Lage: Were you sure that he was the cause of the dispute?

01-00:29:29

Lippincott: Yeah, because I interviewed every one of them separately.

Lage: I see.

01-00:29:33

Lippincott: I said, "What's this all about?," to him, when he was in my office. And he said, "Oh, they were picking on me." I said, "How?" "I don't know, I thought they were picking on me." So I did each of the white guys separately. And he said, "He just started cussing us, and we said, 'That's no way to talk to your roommates.' And then he came over and took a swing at one of us. And we

never actually hit him, we just pinned his arms and held him, and called for his lieutenant, who was— ” He spent most of his time up there pacifying these guys. They were not happy to be integrated.

Lage: Oh, really? That was your impression?

01-00:30:15

Lippincott: Yes. But within a month, we got them out riding patrol with us. We never assigned two blacks to a patrol together, unless there was equal number of whites. It was always one on one or two on one, but not two of them, simply because they didn't have the experience, where our guys had been riding patrol for months.

Lage: And they had not had security experience and—

01-00:30:53

Lippincott: They'd had no MP training at all. They learned strictly on the job.

Lage: So you were also training them as MPs, as well as integrating?

01-00:31:01

Lippincott: That's right. And most of them turned out well because they had a higher degree of education than many thought. But it was an interesting assignment. Then after that sort of settled down, they sent me to investigation, downtown in the provost marshal's office. And so I worked down there the last year.

Lage: And then you came in and did the POW thing.

01-00:31:33

Lippincott: No, the POW was before I went to Europe.

Lage: Oh. Oh, before Munich.

01-00:31:38

Lippincott: Yes. From Munich, I went to Baltimore and the PW records bureau.

Lage: Oh, that's what I mean.

01-00:31:44

Lippincott: Okay. I had two PW assignments, the camp at Custer and the bureau at Holabird.

Lage: Okay. I didn't get the camp at Custer, I guess. That was a PW camp, POW.

01-00:31:57

Lippincott: Yes. We actually had German PWs there. Two-, three-, maybe four-thousand

Lage: And was part of job policing them?

01-00:32:08

Lippincott: Well, interning them.

Lage: Interning them, I see.

01-00:32:11

Lippincott: But many of them went out to work unescorted. We had a detachment up where Gerber baby foods were made. They worked in that. And that was a big German community, so there were problems with some of the young ladies getting too familiar with the German PWs.

Lage: Did you have to deal with that?

01-00:32:40

Lippincott: No, wasn't our job. We had a guard detachment there, as far as security. But if the ladies get romantically involved with them, they can do things like that privately and it shows up later on.

[recording stops &amp; re-starts]

I was out on one field assignment. I went up to Bay City, where we had PWs out harvesting sugar beets. And I learned more about sugar beet harvest than I cared to know. It's tough work. Each beet probably weighs three to four pounds. And you walk down double rows and you pull a beet from each of two rows, and then throw it in one of the aisles between the rows. And this was in the muck off of Lake Huron, up out of Saginaw.

Lage: I think we should move from that.

01-00:34:08

Lippincott: Why?

Lage: Because we only have a limited time and I don't want to cut short the later years. So I'm glad you told about the Munich experience. And let's just quickly move you to Oakland, if we can.

01-00:34:25

Lippincott: Okay. From Maryland, I went to Korea, where I was stationed at {Yang Dong Po}, known as the Jersey City of Seoul. And I had an MP company there that was responsible for guarding the {high level?} bridge across the Han River. That's H-A-N. From there, I rotated to Okinawa, where I was able to apply to have my family come over, and where my third child was conceived and born. I was the adjutant there, setting up a brand new organization for the provost marshal office. Ended up I got a commander in who was from Cincinnati, Ohio, so we had a lot in common. And turned out—I learned this later, he'd been a school teacher in St. Mary's. And one of his cohorts was Neil Armstrong's mother.

Lage: Oh, my!

01-00:35:40

Lippincott: Anyhow, in Okinawa, I moved from the adjutant job when I made major in September of '44, to—

Lage: Must not have been '44. '54.

01-00:36:00

Lippincott: '55, I'm sorry. And took over operations, which was running the MPs and the processing desk for my last three, four months. And amongst the other things that I did in that job, we had civilian guards that patrolled the depots. These were primarily Japanese, although they were called Ryukyuan, which is the name of the island. The Ryukyu Guards. They worked for twenty cents or so an hour. Anyhow, we trained them to direct traffic at the key points when commute time arrived. We put them out on half barrels, so they could be seen. And they learned to be very efficient, very good traffic controllers. We also trained them, when we were losing dog handlers, to be sentry dog handlers, which we used on the American housing areas. They walked the fence line on the inside. We also had them on the gates.

Lage: How did the American military get along with this basically former enemy, the Japanese?

01-00:37:42

Lippincott: Actually, the Ryukyans weren't that much a part of the Japanese army. And the Japanese that they hired, while, they'd been in the military, they were making more money than they could make on the civilian economy. And they were very proud people. We had them in a separate uniform. And they had enough insignia and they— They could make sergeant and corporal and {DFCs?} and— They were very proud people. {They carried carbines?}, and we took them on the firing range once a year so they got to keep proficiency with the weapon they carried. They didn't carry ammunition in the gun, but they had it in their pocket. So never had any problems with them that way. It was an interesting assignment. From there, I came home to an assignment which turned out to be Oakland Army Terminal, as we called it, although everybody knows it as Oakland Army Base. That was the name of the land. But the organization was part, with Fort Mason, of the Bay Area Transportation Terminal Center. We had a full staff, with a commanding officer and S's one through four.

Lage: Now, what does S's one through four mean?

01-00:39:24

Lippincott: Staff. At the higher level, where a general commands, it's G's one through four. One is personnel, two is intelligence, three is operations, and four is supply.

Lage: I see. And that's the transportation corps.

01-00:39:40

Lippincott:

That's standard through the army. Because they had no intelligence officer at the base level, I sat in the two jobs. So the S-1 and the S-4 were lieutenant colonels. There were two bird colonels, full colonels, EN-3. The exec officer was a full colonel, and the CO was a full colonel. So there were four full colonels, two lieutenant colonels, and me as a major, that was the inner staff.

Lage:

The inner staff for this Oakland Army Terminal.

01-00:40:22

Lippincott:

Yes. That was a military organization. And then they had lieutenant colonels in charge— Well, first off, there were piers four through seven, so that's four; but it had nine ocean going berths. And then there were seven warehouses on the other side of the main drag, Maritime, where they brought supplies in. In the early days, it was on pallets, strapped, and then they moved to conex boxes, the big metal boxes. And they used the warehouses for those, and then trucked them or forklift[ed] them from there to the piers, when the ships were docked and being loaded.

Lage:

I see. And what was your responsibility in this operation?

01-00:41:20

Lippincott:

Security and police. Basic MP assignment.

Lage:

And you were the chief of police.

01-00:41:29

Lippincott:

I was the chief of police, which the army called provost marshal. P-R-O-V-[O]-S-T, marshal, with one L. That's common throughout the army. It goes back to European days when the crown had a provost—they pronounce the S-T—who will have a horse. And he represented the crown, going around to the various duchies or whatever, where a count or a duke or somebody had a sheriff. And he tried to keep them straight. That was the job of the provost. So that's where the name came from.

Lage:

How many men did you have under you?

01-00:42:19

Lippincott:

I had about 100 civilian guards, about ten civilian clerks, and fifty MPs.

Lage:

So you were over both civilians and military.

01-00:42:32

Lippincott:

That's right.

Lage:

That's interesting.

01-00:42:33

Lippincott: Now, the MPs were not assigned to a company that I had anything to do with. They had a headquarters company that had a company commander. Turned out the first sergeant there had been my first sergeant in C company in Munich. So he and I had a first name basis relationship.

Lage: So are you saying that the military people had a different line of command?

01-00:43:09

Lippincott: As far as command is concerned, they reported to the company commander, who reported to the exec officer. I reported to the exec officer.

Lage: That's very interesting.

01-00:43:21

Lippincott: Well, it's just the way it was set up.

Lage: And did it work because of this personal—

01-00:43:25

Lippincott: No, it worked because we made it work.

Lage: [laughs] I see.

01-00:43:33

Lippincott: We ran the duty roster. The company could not assign any of the MPs to other duties without getting permission from my operations sergeant. They got a copy of the daily roster that was put out for assigning the MP duties. They'd send them two copies every day. They put one on the bulletin board and they'd have one in the office to check. So we coordinated it. But you talk, anyhow. You're friendly, in an official capacity. And it works. You make it work.

Lage: And when you say security, were you responsible for things like preventing theft on the piers?

01-00:44:19

Lippincott: Yeah. I had guards walking the piers, I had guards at the gate. We had to institute a new pass system. Exchange. The longshoremen that came in had only their longshore cards. They turned those in and got a bright yellow numbered badge to wear. And they had to wear it openly. So you could walk down and watch a gang working a hold or a forklift of the davit, as they call it, the crane; that's the ship name for that thing. And their yellow badge had to be on their collar or in the front of their shirt, where it could be seen. And we exchanged for that going in, and then they had to turn them in, going out.

Lage: So if you saw some monkey business, you'd be able to identify—

01-00:45:16

Lippincott: And they furnished them buses. So they'd bus them from the pier to the gate. And the bus would pull out and they'd get their pass and go out and get on the bus. But after they got off, we'd search the bus. And if they'd come out carrying anything, we'd check it. We had four, six men there.

Lage: Was that a big problem?

01-00:44:42

Lippincott: Could be. In the early days, when everything was palletized and just strapped, it was very easy to get into things. Once they went to the conex boxes, it almost ceased.

Lage: Did they go to the conex boxes while you were there?

01-00:45:58

Lippincott: Very definitely. The second year.

Lage: But that's not containerization?

01-00:46:04

Lippincott: That's what they called the containers.

Lage: That seems early for the containers.

01-00:46:09

Lippincott: Not in the army.

Lage: Ah, so you started early on.

01-00:46:12

Lippincott: Well, the army did. But what made them so good was they found that putting seals on railroad cars protected those cars. So they started putting the railroad seals on conex boxes. And the longshoremen wouldn't touch it if it was sealed.

Lage: So that helped the security end.

01-00:46:37

Lippincott: Totally. But we still had walking patrols. The ships, when they were tied up, had crewmen going on leave. And one of our more common events, for them to come back to the ship inebriated and miss the gangplank and go in the water.

Lage: [laughs] Oh, no!

01-00:47:02

Lippincott: And unfortunately, many of them didn't survive.

Lage: Oh, really?

01-00:47:05  
Lippincott: Well, they'd either hit a piling, the ship, or the pier.

Lage: Now, did this happen frequently? As you describe it, it seems so.

01-00:47:15  
Lippincott: It wasn't unusual.

Lage: Were these civilian?

01-00:47:19  
Lippincott: Yes.

Lage: They were employed by the ship?

01-00:47:20  
Lippincott: From, usually, the ship crew type.

Lage: Did you do anything to try to prevent that?

01-00:47:30  
Lippincott: Well, there wasn't anything you *could* do. They had their gangplank. They just had to get to it and find it and go up it. If they came in inebriated, we drove them. We had at least two, and sometimes three truck patrols with our civilian guards, so we could give them a ride to the ship and help them find the gangplank. But it happened too often.

Lage: Yeah. What other kinds of transgressions did you have to deal with?

01-00:48:08  
Lippincott: Well, we had a criminal investigation detachment of two warrant officers and two sergeants. And we were responsible for any felony type offense investigation locally on the army base or over at Fort Mason.

Lage: So what would that be?

01-00:48:30  
Lippincott: Well, from assaults to more serious things like bigamy. That was a very common one.

Lage: Bigamy!

01-00:48:43  
Lippincott: Yes. Soldiers had a bad habit of taking a second wife and going through the ceremony.

Lage: And that was part of the responsibility of the army?

01-00:48:54

Lippincott:

Well, if that was picked up somewhere along the line. And frequently it was, because the second wife would file for dependency allowance and somebody'd get back and here'd come a letter. We have this information that he has a wife so-and-so; here's a copy of the marriage certificate. Whatever you want to do about it. And you'd assign it to an investigator. And usually, the guy'd say, yeah, I did it; she wouldn't sleep with me unless I married her, so I married her.

Lage:

Would they be court-martialed for that?

01-00:49:32

Lippincott:

Yes. Now, it may be a suspended sentence, but we'd also take care of that. But I couldn't sit on court-martials because I was involved in everything. I had been a trial counsel, running special courts in Munich, because of my investigative job over there, so I had a lot of court-martial experience. But I never got to sit after I was Oakland Army Base.

Lage:

Yeah, I guess the chief of police can't sit on a court-martial.

01-00:50:08

Lippincott:

Yeah. Well, I had prior knowledge of everything! And if you have knowledge, you have to say, I have no opinion. I couldn't say that, because I'd signed the report. So I had to have formed an opinion, because I had to edit to approve.

Lage:

Did you have any AWOL problems?

01-00:50:34

Lippincott:

No. It was a prized place to be assigned.

Lage:

Tell me why that was.

01-00:50:45

Lippincott:

Well, I had one sergeant that had been there seven years. And he'd made a home here. They ran a dew line re-supply trip every good weather, June to September. And this sergeant would volunteer to go on the dew line assignment, so when he came back, he was on a new assignment. Every year.

Lage:

So that allowed him to stay in Oakland. What is dew line? D-E-W?

01-00:51:24

Lippincott:

That was the early warning line up across northern Canada. The radar that was operated out of, I think, Denver.

Lage:

Oh, I see. So they'd re-supply the outfit.

01-00:51:38

Lippincott:

Yeah, they'd re-supply the outfit and do any mechanical repair that was needed on the radar up there.

Lage: So tell me more about why Oakland was considered a good assignment.

01-00:51:52

Lippincott: Oh, it was routine jobs. We didn't have to put up with a lot of trouble from the drinking group. There was an enlisted club and an officers club, so you only had two places. Well, both places policed itself. The club officer—and there was an officer in charge of the NCO club—policed it pretty well. And they'd usually have big bartenders so that they could roust somebody if they— And that meant taking them back to the barracks.

Lage: If they'd over-indulged or got out of line.

01-00:52:37

Lippincott: Yeah. So we rarely had any serious trouble. Our biggest problem— The main drag was over a mile long, came off of the freeway off ramp from the Bay Bridge, long, straight, four lane, almost freeway, into naval supply. And that was a speed problem. And we wrote lots of speeding tickets there. But we had a US commissioner that came out every other Thursday and held court, so we referred them all there, and they got to pay their fines to the US commissioner. And he had the US marshal as his assistant. And if they couldn't pay the fine, he got to take them to Oakland Jail.

Lage: Would these be civilians, then, you mean?

01-00:53:36

Lippincott: Yes. Yes. Not enlisted. We took care of the enlisted. And if we had to book somebody, we had to take them to the Presidio. So it was not a simple thing to do.

Lage: So you didn't have a jail on the Oakland Army Base.

01-00:53:52

Lippincott: No, not even a one-cell. We usually took them to the unit and put them in arrest of quarters, which means that they're really in trouble if they walk out the door. And so that sufficed, if it was after midnight. Before midnight, we didn't hesitate because we'd have at least two and three patrols on during the day shift, which changed at eleven.

Lage: And then you'd take them over to the Presidio.

01-00:54:25

Lippincott: Yeah. We had a half a dozen people that had done it more than once, so it was a snap. Just go do it. But I had an experienced crew. I had one other officer. And between he and I and a third officer, who was stationed at Mason but lived on the— Oakland, who pulled our night duty, took the calls, if they needed an officer at the desk. And we had an SOP that the desk sergeant just flipped to the right page and items one through maybe twenty. And unfortunately, the first person to call was the OD or the PM.

Lage: Oh, that's you. [laughs] You mean if there was a problem, you would get the call.

01-00:55:22

Lippincott: And many times, I had a twenty foot extension on the receiver of my phone, because I wasn't allowed to have jacks but only one place in the apartment. And that extension phone would go anyplace in my house. So regardless of where I was, including the bathroom— I wouldn't take it in the shower—but I could be in shaving and they'd bring it in to me and I'd stand there and— I had a rule—the desk sergeants all knew this; it was written on the front page of this—if you call after midnight and you get a quick answer, hang up and call back and repeat it. And then if you get the same answer, argue with me.

Lage: Because you have trouble waking up?

01-00:56:24

Lippincott: Well, I might not be fully awake. And I might not give them the right answer.

Lage: I see. Tell me what kinds of calls you'd get in the middle of the night.

01-00:56:38

Lippincott: Oh, a drunk driver, for one. There's a break in here; there was fire here; there's a man in the water. We had a number of fires. In fact, the one, one of our MPs spotted it early. And I got a call, and it was in the block across from where my apartment was. I told him to call my assistant, who lived in an adjacent apartment building. We went over and the fire department was just getting there. They laid the first hose and Mac, my assistant, and I manned that hose until the Oakland Fire Department got there. They laid a second hose. We didn't save the building, but we saved it from spreading. But we manned the hose for fifteen or twenty minutes.

Lage: So you didn't have your own fire department, you had to rely on the Oakland [Fire Department]?

01-00:57:45

Lippincott: We had, well, almost a volunteer. We had, I think, two men. I think there were four or five men, a chief and four. And two and/or the chief would work twenty-four, and then the other two would come in. So there were always two there, so they could drive two trucks. But they could only handle one hose, because if you put fifty pounds pressure on a fire hose, it takes two people to hold it. And so that was the more interesting assignment.

[End Audio File 1]

Begin Audio File 2 12-11-2008.mp3

Lage: Okay, we're back on, tape two with Robert Lippincott on November 21, 2008. Now, let's see. We were talking about being called in the middle of the night. But I'm interested in what kinds of emergencies came to you.

02-00:00:23

Lippincott: I think I've mentioned all of them that come to mind. One of the more interesting events while I was there, we shipped \$90 million to Okinawa when they converted to the greenbacks, while I was PM. And they brought ninety-six boxes of currency into one of my warehouses, by Loomis truck, and they packed them, as many as they could, per conex box and eventually, took them to the pier to load them. They also brought in pallets of bags of coins. No pennies, but nickels, dimes and quarters. No half dollars. But they would have, as I remember it, forty bags in a pyramid on a pallet, and they'd use a forklift to move them out of the truck and into the conex box. They had extra bags there. And they had two men assigned that if bags broke, they had to repack the coins. The ship that they sent them out on was the Patrick, which was a personnel carrier used to move dependents and troops to the Far East. We escorted the lowboys that they loaded them on to take them to the ship, and then they swung them aboard into the hold. And in the hold, they had welded the doors shut; but they welded them, with a bar, to each other. They turned the doors towards each other and then welded them. They weren't welded to the ship, they were welded to each other, interestingly enough.

Lage: Did you notice this at the time?

02-00:02:44

Lippincott: Yes, because I went down to see what they were doing. I was in and around the warehouse most of the day because I had a patrol car on each end, with two men, and I had four men inside.

Lage: Inside the ship.

02-00:03:03

Lippincott: No, no, no. Inside the warehouse. And we were walking guard inside, around the operation. Plus having the mounted patrols outside.

Lage: Horse mounted?

02-00:03:19

Lippincott: No, no. With a pickup truck. Radio cars.

Lage: Oh, I see. Okay.

02-00:03:24

Lippincott: That's being mounted.

Lage: That's mounted.

02-00:03:26

Lippincott:

Yes. Interestingly enough, six weeks later, when the ship came back with a load of troops, I was down at the port watching the offloading operation and the captain came down. And he recognized me and he said, "Aren't you the provost marshal?" And I said yes. He said, "What the hell did you ship to Okinawa?"

Lage:

Oh, they didn't know what it was.

02-00:03:56

Lippincott:

No. They were in the dark. It was a top secret operation.

Lage:

Oh, I was wondering.

02-00:04:02

Lippincott:

And he said, "I was greeted by about twenty troops with Thompson submachine guns." He said, "I never saw so much artillery. What in the devil was it?" And I said, "\$90 million." He said, "No!" I said, "Don't you remember reading that they converted to greenbacks in Okinawa?" And he said, "Yeah, I saw that. I wondered how they got them." He says, so I took them over there. I said yeah. He said, "It was amazing. I never saw such an operation." And he said, "Did they get it all?" I said, "I had a message from the local people that I had worked with that the finance officer over there signed for every penny."

Lage:

Oh, so that was a successful operation.

02-00:05:04

Lippincott:

It was totally successful.

Lage:

Now, did the men who were patrolling the warehouse know what was in the shipment? Or was it completely secret?

02-00:05:13

Lippincott:

No, no, they had to know.

Lage:

They knew.

02-00:05:15

Lippincott:

Yeah. Well, you could see the money bags.

Lage:

Oh, I see, you could actually see that it wasn't—

02-00:05:19

Lippincott:

And you could see them loading— There were footlocker-sized wooden boxes that they had made up someplace.

Lage:

Did the longshoremen know?

02-00:05:31

Lippincott:

No. No. In fact, nobody outside of my office really knew. I didn't even tell my exec officer, who I reported to, until the morning after it left.

Lage:

Wow.

02-00:05:49

Lippincott:

I said, "It's still a top secret operation, but I think you ought to know what we did yesterday." He said, "Yeah, why didn't you tell me ahead of time?" I said, "I said top secret, didn't I?" [Lage Laughs] He said, "I'm cleared." I said, "I know, but—"

Lage:

The fewer people that know—

02-00:06:06

Lippincott:

Yeah. The thing that I mentioned to you earlier, there were a lot of non-army units, as well as at least one large army unit on the station that were not apart of the army terminal organization. There was a military transport operation, Department of Defense, that was staffed by army, navy and Air Force. Had a four-striper navy captain in command over in wing one. There was an Air Force traffic control in wing two. Our traffic control was in wing three and part of wing four. And I was stationed in second floor, wing four. I had the same desk and office for all four years. I was there, actually, from August '56, until I retired, the end of April, 1961.

Lage:

So over four years.

02-00:07:21

Lippincott:

Yes.

Lage:

So you were saying that there were Air Force, navy, and army all there?

02-00:07:34

Lippincott:

They controlled the paperwork on their shipments that were going through the port. And the Department of Defense one controlled the shipments going through all the ports on the West Coast. It was western management, the DOD. Navy shipped their things out of naval supply center, which was the next installation. Air Force shipped theirs through army terminal, as did the army. The Air Force generally trucked it in from wherever their supply depots were. And I'm not familiar, don't remember those, where they came from. The army primarily came from Sharp General Depot, out by Modesto, although some came from the Signal Depot in Sacramento. Ammunition, of course, was handled out of Benicia, and so we were no part of that. That was a separate paper operation.

Lage:

And shipping operation, too?

02-00:08:51

Lippincott:

Yes.

Lage: So you didn't ship ammunition.

02-00:08:52

Lippincott: Out of Port Chicago, where they had more than their share of problems, which is well known historically.

Lage: Well, were there problems with this kind of multiple command?

02-00:09:10

Lippincott: No. They were tenant agencies, and I was the police of the place, the whole station. So I was in and out of their places all the time.

Lage: So you would serve as their police?

02-00:09:27

Lippincott: Yeah. If they had anything, they came to me. They reported to my office, just like the army types would. But I had reserved parking responsibilities all over the place, so I controlled those. I had a couple of sergeants that did it, but it was my office responsibility. But I was a small town police chief, is what—

Lage: That's what it sounds like.

02-00:09:55

Lippincott: That's what I was. In fact, my DD-214, which is my retirement paper, says, "Qualified to be small town chief of police."

Lage: How interesting. Now, did you interact with the Oakland community and city police?

02-00:10:15

Lippincott: Well, we had a working relationship that if we had a civilian that had to be booked, regardless of what the charge was, the city police would send a patrol out and take authority, take the person to jail. We booked them en route to the US Marshal. We couldn't do any more than that. We could arrest them and book them, and we could jail them, but we had to turn it over to the civilian authorities at the Oakland Police Department. And they'd send out a patrol car and away they'd go.

Lage: What kind of things would civilians get booked for on the base?

02-00:10:59

Lippincott: Anything that was going to be investigated by a criminal investigation. Pilferage was the bigger one.

Lage: Like a longshoreman or—

02-00:11:09

Lippincott: Yes, yes. But also traffic violators who would not sign the ticket. A refusal to sign, you're going to go to jail. You can't do that. And I said, "Watch us." I said, "Simple. Sign here. You're not admitting anything. You're agreeing to

appear when you get the papers. Or post bail and then let it be forfeited. You're not agreeing to anything else." I had one long haul truck driver who was adamant and wouldn't. This was on a Friday evening. He spent Friday evening through Monday morning in the drunk tank at Oakland Army— I mean at Oakland City Jail. And he came up and he says, "Please don't do that to me again." I said, "Remember our conversation Friday evening?" Said, "You tried to get me to sign. I refused." He hits himself in the head.

Lage: Had he been drinking?

02-00:12:15

Lippincott: No!

Lage: You just put him in the drunk tank.

02-00:12:18

Lippincott: He was pulled over for speeding. He was only doing forty-five on my four lane highway. Empty bedded truck. And they get out of there, they're in a hurry to get to the freeway and they're freeway speed before they know it. But it was not uncommon. From retirement, I had the job three months ahead of time.

Lage: Let's save that, retirement, because I have some more questions about the time at the Oakland Army Base. Would you have anything to say about troop movements? Did you see a lot of troop movements from the base or on the base?

02-00:13:06

Lippincott: There was what we called a "repple-depple", a replacement [depot] center. So all troops going to the Far East in those days went through the army terminal and the personnel center there. This was a Sixth Army function, commanded by a full colonel that reported directly to the G-1 personnel at Presidio. Had nothing to do with him, other than he was on the station there. And they would ship upwards of two-, three-thousand troops a month, in and out.

Lage: Now, would they take them on ships or planes?

02-00:13:54

Lippincott: Largely on ships, in those days, just like the one that took the money. That was going to Japan and Okinawa, when it left. The army had four personnel carriers, as they call them, that were primarily to move troops. My wife came to Okinawa on the one that carried the money. The same ship had been hers, earlier.

Lage: Did you, as chief of police, have anything to do with, or any problems with troops coming and going?

02-00:14:32

Lippincott:

Rarely. Because most of them were either anxious to get out of here to go home or get out of here to get to their overseas assignment and find out what their job was going to be. Even going to Korea. Because when you got over there, you hit another replacement center pool, and you were assigned there based on your MOS, military operational specialty. Everyone had a up to four digit number. I was a 9110, which says military police officer. It's just a code way that here's your name and here's your number, and they don't have to go through a lot. Oh, they'd probably have a date of entry into service, so they know how many years you got in.

Lage:

By the time you left, did you see any movement over to Vietnam? Or was that too early for that?

02-00:15:33

Lippincott:

They were sending, in those days, the advisors. Individual type. But by then, by the time I left, they were primarily shipping them by air, out of Travis. And the army, the personnel center, had a detachment at Travis. And so the orders shipped, the guy coming in from, say, Ord or whatever, right straight to Travis. And they reported to that detachment. So they discontinued shipments outbound. They were still bringing them in by shiploads.

Lage:

Bringing them home?

02-00:16:19

Lippincott:

Yes. Because they had the vessels. But they'd largely ship them out of Seattle, by that time. Which was also a port, an army port. And they had an army logistical support in Long Beach, as well as San Diego.

Lage:

Okay, a couple more questions. Did you live on the base?

02-00:16:47

Lippincott:

I was required to live on base because I had to be on call.

Lage:

Okay. Tell me something about the living quarters, and what it was like for you and your wife and children, I assume.

02-00:16:57

Lippincott:

We had a nice three bedroom apartment, third floor in the apartments that were probably ten or fifteen years old. I inherited the same apartment that my predecessor had been in for five years. Got to spend a week in a local motel, because they wanted to repaint it. So we moved into a repainted apartment. It turned out to be very lucky. My downstairs neighbor was the local doctor, that was married, without children. So we had him available just downstairs. The CO of the personnel center lived on the first floor. And our S-4 also was my next door neighbor. So it was my—

Lage:

Was it a roomy apartment? You had three children?

02-00:18:02

Lippincott:

I had three bedrooms. We had a double bed in the second largest room, for the boys; and then daughter had the small bedroom. And plus mother and I had a big double bed in the bigger room.

Lage:

So you didn't complain about your living conditions.

02-00:18:20

Lippincott:

No. And we had a large combination living/dining room. Then while I was there, they built some new apartment buildings, and I got fifth or sixth assignment. Ended up in the prized doorway, diagonally across from the commissary. So if you wanted to go shopping, you'd just walk across the street. Had even bigger bedrooms, a nicer bath. In fact, it had a small second bathroom, a lavatory and sink only, but had a second one. And we had an equally large living room/dining room, small kitchen. But it was arranged, this one, so you come in the front door and turn right, and there's the kitchen. So when you came from the commissary, you didn't have a long way to go. Sliding door at the other end, and there's the dining alcove.

Lage:

So it was well planned.

02-00:19:34

Lippincott:

Yes. And then one large room that was the living room/dining room. And we ended up, found a large, probably a twelve foot oak table, old antique, that sat over in that corner. And she decorated it with something. So it looked good, and when you had company in, you could sit around that. Well, one year for Christmas, I had a stand-up cocktail party for fifty people, and we had plenty of room.

Lage:

Yeah, nice. What was the base like as a community? Was it pretty tight knit?

02-00:20:19

Lippincott:

Yes and no. A lot of cliques. This was particularly noticeable to me, because there were only my assistant and I that were MP officers. Everybody else was primarily transportation corps officers. Although the commissary officer was from the quartermaster. Paul and I were good friends because we were outsiders.

Lage:

The commissary—

02-00:20:49

Lippincott:

At the commissary. The other outsider was the law officer. They call them JAGs, judge advocate general. Remember the movie, or I mean the TV show, *JAG*?

Lage:

Yeah.

02-00:21:03

Lippincott:

Okay.

Lage: It's interesting that you call yourself outsider, in that respect.

02-00:21:11

Lippincott: Well, I wasn't a transportation corps officer.

Lage: When you had your party with fifty people, did you invite the transportation corps?

02-00:21:18

Lippincott: No, I liked the people. We got along and I worked with them every day. But it was a strange arrangement. I had a couple of MP officers at Mason and a few at Presidio; but I didn't really have a lot of associates. Yet I'd been in the MPs all these years. In those days, they had an MP roster of all the officers in the army. And I was like 310, starting with the generals down through where I was.

Lage: In length of service or in rank?

02-00:22:00

Lippincott: Date of rank. Rank and date of rank.

Lage: I see.

02-00:22:03

Lippincott: And I knew many of the people that had higher numbers and quite a few lower than me.

Lage: So that was the core community, in a sense.

02-00:22:12

Lippincott: That I belonged to. Because we're the ones that had things in common. We were police trained. We were policemen.

Lage: Right, right. So tell me, when you had your party and you had the fifty people, who did you invite? Did you have the transportation officer?

02-00:22:32

Lippincott: Oh, yes, strictly. I had literally the post people that I associated with every day.

Lage: I see. So you were friends with all these people.

02-00:22:40

Lippincott: Oh, yes. Yes. I worked with them. I even invited the hardnosed navy captain from the DOD outfit. He was a nice guy to have around because he played the piano. Well. You'd name something and he'd play it.

Lage: How did your wife like living on the base?

02-00:23:04

Lippincott:

She liked it to a point. When we first got there, she was always active in wives clubs, so she joined there. The only MP officer's wife. Within a month, they asked her to be president. Now, they needed a president, and she came home and told me and she said, "What should I do?" And I said, "Well, you wouldn't hurt my career if you did it." She says, "Okay, I'll do it." I says, "Well, when you going to call them?" And she went right over and called the colonel's wife. Next day, I got a call from the colonel, who was my big boss. He says, "Tell your wife thanks for me. You made my wife very happy." I said, "You're welcome, sir. I had only approval. She didn't say, 'Do I do it?' She says, 'Do you want me to do it?' And I said, 'Certainly.'" And he said, "I know." It turned out good later, because there was a bit of rivalry between the major that was PM at Mason and me. And he wasn't going to give me a very good efficiency report. And the endorsing officer was my big boss. And he called him in and said, "I refuse. No do right by him. You know he's a better officer than that."

Lage:

Now, the colonel, was he an MP, or he was transportation?

02-00:24:45

Lippincott:

He had worked on the piers in a management job before the war. And the operations officer that we had had worked the piers in Oakland. In fact, his family name's on a street down there, his family's that famous in Oakland. But he worked the piers. If I looked at a map— It's down off of High Street, just east of MacArthur. I don't know, I can't— I've been trying for weeks to think of his name, and Jane couldn't even come up with it. It's just that it's in the background. But it happened. But their mission was to move cargo.

Lage:

Right, right. And your mission was security.

02-00:25:40

Lippincott:

And police.

Lage:

And police. How about your children? Did they go to school on the base?

02-00:25:48

Lippincott:

The kids were bused into Oakland. First graders went to Emerson, which is in about 45<sup>th</sup> and Telegraph. And junior high went to the one down on Franklin. Is that right? Yeah. Just off of 26<sup>th</sup>. Real nice school, across from— back of a church, and across from the Buick agency. And then high school, they went to Oakland Tech. But they were bused in. Even kindergarten.

Lage:

How did that work out?

02-00:26:29

Lippincott:

Fine. My wife took a job at the personnel center, as a clerk typist, after a year or so. And so the kids would come home, and she got another wife to be their baby sitter. They reported in and then they had to tell her where they were going to be or what they were going to do. And they could go home if they

want, and stay there, play with— or have TV on. Or the older one usually went out and played some kind of ball. The apartments were in a quadrangle, so there was a sort of a secure playground in the inside.

Lage: And were there a lot of other children?

02-00:27:23

Lippincott: Oh, yes. Probably fifty or sixty apartments around a city block, enlisted on that street, officers on these two streets.

Lage: Was there any sense that the officers' children should play with the other officers' children?

02-00:27:43

Lippincott: No, they went to school together.

Lage: They went to school and played together.

02-00:27:45

Lippincott: No, there was no rank among the kids. And there wasn't supposed to be among the wives, although some of them did.

Lage: Was the wives club both officers and enlisted?

02-00:27:55

Lippincott: No, no, no. It was strictly officers.

Lage: Now, how did the wives interrelate, enlisted versus officers' wives?

02-00:28:03

Lippincott: Oh, because of PTA, they interrelated well. But my kids always studied at home. They never went out to study. Strange as it may seem, I was going to night school at the time to try to get my bachelors degree.

Lage: Well, I see here you got your bachelors degree while you were on the base.

02-00:28:30

Lippincott: I had done thirty units of work through UC extension, who sent visiting profs to Okinawa, through I and E, information and education. And they'd come over and in eight weeks time, they'd run a full semester. And you'd go three hours, one night a week. So in eight hours, you had sixteen classes. What do you get on campus? Sixteen, isn't it? Sixteen weeks?

Lage: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

02-00:29:03

Lippincott: We did a week a night. And I'd take two classes. So in over two years there, I earned thirty credits through UC extension.

Lage: Did you have pretty good professors?

02-00:29:18

Lippincott:

Yeah. Well, many of them were straight from the campus. I thought in those days, I needed language to graduate, so I took two semesters of French. And with my deep voice, you can imagine how much of a disaster I was. I got B's because I could write; but [to] enunciate was difficult. But I took a lot of history, sociology, anthropology, poly-sci kinds of things. And a physics course. And he taught it with only a ball of string and a yardstick.

Lage:

This is in Okinawa.

02-00:30:02

Lippincott:

In Okinawa. And a blackboard, pieces of chalk. And he was excellent. And the cute thing about him was his name. And he was not unhappy with it. His name Smuck. S-M-U-C-K. But he was a nice guy. And he knew what he was teaching.

Lage:

And then when you were at Oakland, you went to San Francisco State? Or you had come to Oakland—

02-00:30:32

Lippincott:

They brought profs out to the Presidio, and I took night classes out there. In both cases—

Lage:

And what was your—

02-00:30:41

Lippincott:

Both cases, it was a six-thirty class, two and a half plus hours. We took one fifteen minute break, so we got the fifteen minutes at the end, rather than in the middle. And sometimes it was a ten minute break. And they were anxious go to, too. But I ended up, if you saw my pieces of paper, it says, "social science general." But I primarily am a history major and a psych minor. I had taken a number of psych courses, and I also took some subject exams through the Armed Forces Institute, someplace in Wisconsin. They'd send you books and you'd read them, and then they'd send you a subject exam.

Lage:

Distance learning.

02-00:31:43

Lippincott:

I took weather classes from the Air Force University in Boulder, Colorado. I think I got six or eight weather units. Not anymore, because I don't do it all the time, but I was taught to read a weather map. Which is not a bad knowledge, because my job as a civilian was 70, 80 percent outdoors. So you plan to do what you do based on the weather.

Lage:

Did you do the BA degree as a way of advancing in the army, or general interest? Or did they encourage you to do it?

02-00:32:27

Lippincott:

The army said all officers should have a college degree. When I went to OCS with one, I was a freak. There weren't that many in OCS that had even the one.

Lage:

Even the one year schooling?

02-00:32:40

Lippincott:

That's right. That stood me in good stead. But they kept putting out notices every year about two years minimum. So that's why I started going to the night school. And by the time I got thirty [units] from UC, I figured I had my two years. And I submitted that transcript back to Wisconsin, and they sent me a certificate that I was junior level. And about halfway through Presidio— And by this time, I had accumulated all the other credits. And in their evaluation, you got some credits for OCS, and I got credits for going to advanced training—criminal investigation training. And then I did six weeks of schooling the summer we got married. So got three and six hours out of these things. So I had a lot of accumulated credits. By the time I had fifteen units at the Presidio, I was able to get out of Wisconsin, a certificate that I was a senior level student. So I figured I was in, I just had to finish it. So I had enough credits at the end of June. But they added an interesting course that I wanted to take, so I took one more, July and August. So that's why my degree is dated in August, because that's when they conferred it. That's why I didn't file for it until I was into this other course. And of course, in the office there, office of admission, they knew my record pretty well. I was only there twice. Once when I started, to get familiar, and once when I went in to sign a request for my degree.

Lage:

At San Francisco State.

02-00:35:06

Lippincott:

And oh, I had to go again the day of graduation, to get the actual certificate. Because when they graduated, they just gave you the portfolio.

Lage:

Did you go through the graduation ceremony?

02-00:35:17

Lippincott:

I did.

Lage:

Great.

02-00:35:18

Lippincott:

I'm also proud to say that my two warrant officers graduated with me. I had drug them along. They had more college than I did, to start with. But they finished up the same time I did; we all three stood graduation together. They asked us to wear our uniforms. It was summertime, of course, and we were all in our dress tropical worsted blouse. It's not dress, but it's semi-dress.

Lage:

And were you graduating with the other people at San Francisco State?

02-00:35:55

Lippincott:

We were the last ones through. And Jane and my three kids were sitting in the audience, up on bleachers. I guess it's kind of the football field. John was a boy when we came out here. He'd just finished seventh [grade]. Daughter was four. Yeah. And Jim was just finishing kindergarten, about to go into one. So I made a joke as we got to the car. I said, "Well, the diploma says I'm a bachelor. What's that allow me to do?" And she says, "Don't even think about it." [they laugh]

Lage:

Now, did your wife go on to go back to school or—

02-00:36:44

Lippincott:

No. She had two years of college in Tri-State. That's down in the most northern town of Indiana, above Fort Wayne. And the name never sticks with me. But her hometown, Coldwater, is the first city above the Indiana line, about twenty miles up. So she carpooled to Tri-State, she and her sister both.

Lage:

But she didn't go on to—

02-00:37:23

Lippincott:

No. She got a job, went to work, met me, went to Munich. Only worked in— Well, she worked in Baltimore at the Signal Depot for a while, and then she worked in Okinawa for a year, right after Jim was born. The maid brought in her cousin to be a maid for the house, and the maid took over day care of the baby, when he was six weeks, two months old. She was bored. She didn't like the thought of getting involved with the army wives over there, which was going to be required, because I was one of two majors. I was literally the fourth ranking MP officer on the island, so I had more than a little status. And the wives— she was going to have to.

Lage:

So the wives sort of have an obligation to become active in the wives organization?

02-00:38:40

Lippincott:

Well, many of the wives had never even been around the army. Their husband may have been in, but they hadn't been— maybe just married them, or they hadn't gone along on assignments. And here they are overseas, they don't have their own family. So the wives club sort of becomes your family of cousins and aunts and uncles, if you know what I'm trying to say.

Lage:

Right, right. And was that the case, also in Oakland, do you think?

02-00:39:10

Lippincott:

Yes, very much. In the old apartments, there were six apartments for doorway, address. In the new apartments, there were four. So you always had three next door neighbors that entered off the same hallway. And there— Well, in the old one, the washer room was in the basement. So all your washers were down there, plus a coin drier. And we had our own drier, which I had in our storage locker; and with a long extension cord, we could use it at night. We had a

baby, so we had to use it every other night. Diapers, you know. And I did diapers all the time.

Lage: Oh, you did? Well, that was good.

02-00:40:13

Lippincott: Well, because she wouldn't have to climb the two and half flights of steps early on, and then I just got in the habit and it was easy enough.

Lage: So are you saying that this was a way you got to know people, having these common hallways and the common—

02-00:40:28

Lippincott: And the washer room and—

Lage: So people got pretty close.

02-00:40:31

Lippincott: Yes. Strictly on a first name basis. The bird colonel that handled the personnel center, in the building, he was Warren. At the office, sir.

Lage: Interesting.

02-00:40:48

Lippincott: I'd walk in and he'd say, "Hi, Bob." "Hi, colonel." He said, "Close the door, and you can call me lord." But I had a full colonel that lived above me that was damn noisy. Think I complained?

Lage: You couldn't, right?

02-00:41:10

Lippincott: The base commander was in the first one on the front, on my left. He had a hi-fi. He had a room fixed up with draperies and heavy carpet. I mean real heavy carpet. The army, of course, put it in for him. And he played, I swear, the hi-fi at maximum volume. I had been in there once, and I said, "That hurts my ears." So he cut it back, but not very far. I said, "Colonel, you're giving me a headache." I like music, but I don't like it that loud. I said, "Are you hard of hearing?" And he said, "Yeah."

Lage: So you couldn't complain.

02-00:41:58

Lippincott: Either way. He's my boss. In fact, he's the second signature on my efficiency report.

Lage: He's the one that could make a recommendation?

02-00:42:08

Lippincott:

Well, Colonel Jones, my exec officer, and I bowled together. We had kids the same age. And his wife and my wife played bridge together, and the four of us played bridge together at night, on occasion. So no, we were good friends.

Lage:

Did people get transferred a lot?

02-00:42:30

Lippincott:

No. This was static time and budgetary time. The army went through a reduction of officers in like '58, in which they shorted out any number of people like me. I was vulnerable. You had to have ten years commission to retire as an officer. So I had to get to '61 to qualify.

Lage:

But they might've been able to turn you out before?

02-00:43:08

Lippincott:

No, I'm sorry, '62. Yeah. Oh, they would— But initially, they offered him to come back as six strippers, master sergeant. Not first sergeants, which is also an E-6. But within a short time, they changed the offer to—I'm sorry, that's an E-7—E-5, which is a staff sergeant, which is one arc, a lot less pay. So I knew some lieutenant colonels, transportation corps, who came back as staff sergeants.

Lage:

To get their time in, their retirement.

02-00:43:48

Lippincott:

To get their time, get to the twenty years.

Lage:

Well, how did you get to twenty years?

02-00:43:53

Lippincott:

I stayed on active duty.

Lage:

I see, you were able to stay?

02-00:43:57

Lippincott:

Yeah.

Lage:

But you said you were vulnerable.

02-00:43:59

Lippincott:

Well, in this period, until I got to my twenty years, on November 20.

Lage:

Of '61.

02-00:44:09

Lippincott:

'61, I think, yeah.

Lage:

You said you retired in April. Was that '62?

02-00:44:19

Lippincott: No, 1961.

Lage: Yeah, it must've been, because you did get your twenty years.

02-00:44:23

Lippincott: Yeah. And I got a letter early on, at eighteen years, "Don't plan on staying past twenty. You have earned officer retirement." It didn't say it, but what they meant was, count your blessings.

Lage: Yeah, yeah. So you knew you were going to have to be getting out.

02-00:44:44

Lippincott: Yes.

Lage: Let me just ask you one or two other things. You mentioned the integration of the armed services. On the base, was it a multi-racial environment there?

02-00:44:57

Lippincott: Oh, very much.

Lage: How about officers?

02-00:45:02

Lippincott: The officers were always multi-racial. Transportation corps had a lot of black officers. It was one of the places that they seemed to send them, because one of the units at the transportation corps were truck units. And truck drivers in the army, in those days, were largely black. So they had to integrate that the other way.

Lage: I see, yeah. And they did, are you saying?

02-00:45:35

Lippincott: And they did, yeah.

Lage: Well, how were race relations on the base?

02-00:45:40

Lippincott: No problems.

Lage: No problems.

02-00:45:42

Lippincott: Well, we're right next to 7<sup>th</sup> Street, which is about as black as Oakland gets.

Lage: Was there much interrelation with 7<sup>th</sup> Street and the rest of West Oakland?

02-00:45:53

Lippincott: Not really. Not that I know of. And of course, there were— Our kids had about a half black class in the schools they went to. And of course, the bus was about half, maybe less.

Lage: Coming from the base?

02-00:46:17

Lippincott: Yeah. But race relationship was never a problem.

Lage: Did the kids play with each other?

02-00:46:29

Lippincott: Yes. Yeah,

Lage: Good.

02-00:46:31

Lippincott: But you see, I had spent one early part of my life where I did the grade skipping. Dad took a job in Columbus. We ended up in an apartment there that I was in a black school neighborhood. Mother made him move the next month, and I moved into a school that was about half black. And it was there that I did third and fourth grade in the third year. But a whole class, not just me.

Lage: Yeah. It wasn't unusual?

02-00:47:09

Lippincott: No, and this lady liked to do this. She fast taught. Anyhow, when I get back to Tipp, from my fourth year, superintendent said, "Well, you're too smart to go in the fourth grade. Let's put you in the fifth and see how you work out. Good luck." And of course, I've told you that I graduated with good grades. And in those days, I applied for college and they sent me a sheet that said, "Make out our curriculum and send it in." I never saw a counselor until the second semester. I did it all at home, talking to my superintendent of schools for what I took. Oh, sixteen, maybe seventeen units. If I took seventeen, I took sixteen the second semester.

Lage: Now, you were telling me this in relationship to the race question I'd asked. You had said you'd had kind of an integrated—

02-00:48:24

Lippincott: Well, I was in school with—

Lage: Yeah. So you felt like you could handle that. It wasn't new to you.

02-00:48:29

Lippincott: Yeah, I learned early on that they're people. You treat them as people. Forget about skin color. It didn't do anything for you.

Lage: It sounds like it worked pretty well in the army, as you describe it.

02-00:48:43

Lippincott: Yeah. Well, when you get ordered to make it work, what are you going to do? You're not going to fight the system. You're only going to cut your own throat. And especially when you want to stay in to get to a certain goal, you better do it.

Lage: Now, they don't say the same thing today about gays in the military. Do you think that would work, if it was just ordered?

02-00:49:21

Lippincott: If they just ignore it.

Lage: Was that ever an issue in your time?

02-00:49:28

Lippincott: If they found out anything about gay, they were gone. There was a special discharge paragraph. You didn't have to do anything but give them a letter that they're terminated.

Lage: No court-martial or investigation?

02-00:49:45

Lippincott: Oh, investigation.

Lage: Did you have to deal with that at all?

02-00:49:53

Lippincott: And I had to provide the letter that the colonel would sign. And then I'd frequently taken along my blackest of sergeants. Deliver it.

Lage: It doesn't sound like there was much sympathy in those days.

02-00:50:13

Lippincott: Oh, no! Not at all. No, no. Because basically, it all goes back to, if you remember World War II history, a number of the traders, particularly in England, were gays. Well, if they know you're gay and nobody else does, then they use that to blackmail you. Once it's known, you can't be blackmailed. And if somebody says, "But I'm gay," so? Are you vulnerable to blackmail? No.

Lage: As long as it's out in the open.

02-00:50:59

Lippincott: So that's the theory. Or at least it was then.

Lage: Was this a frequent problem, or just an occasional?

02-00:51:10

Lippincott: Occasional. Until when I had gotten involved in Okinawa and did one of the interviews, there was a cell of lesbians. Two of them had been recruiters in New York City. And they went out and recruited a whole bunch of their kind.

Lage: Were they in the army or were they—

02-00:51:37

Lippincott: And enlisted. These were enlisted recruiters. And there turned up to be a cell at Fort McPherson, which is the WAC center. And I had to interview one in Okinawa, who'd been identified. I remember that from my assignment there. And then they found a couple. There were a couple in the WAC detachment at Oakland Army Terminal. And all these got sent to McPherson, Alabama. And it was their problem.

Lage: You didn't have to do anything about it?

02-00:52:22

Lippincott: No. Is that enough about the terminal?

Lage: Let me think if there's anything else. I think, unless you have something else to say about the terminal that will give me an idea of what it was like, I think we've covered most of it. So tell me very quickly, what happened after your retirement? You had a long career, I know, after that.

02-00:52:57

Lippincott: Well, I didn't have that many jobs. I was hired by the US Civil Service Commission to work on background investigations that were used for top secret or like Q clearances at the radiation lab, either Livermore or Berkeley. But there were other reasons to do a background. One of the more lengthy ones was when they were going to pick new astronauts, we had to go out and trace their careers. And there was about a twenty to thirty page interview report of all the questions that you had to ask knowledgeable witnesses. I ended up getting a reference to interview in Fremont. He and the applicant had been midshipmen at the naval academy, in the same class. Graduated together, went to pilot training together, served literally in the same squadrons through getting to be full commanders, which meant they were squadron commanders, when they had to, of course, go to separate squadrons. Even served together— They made special arrangements for both of them to be assistant commanders in a squadron, to keep them together. They each married a nurse at Florida air base. They were each godparents to all the others' kids, and had been best man for each other. They split when my guy went commercial. He came out to be the project officer for new airplanes at one of the plane manufacturers over off of Moffett Field. And the other man went to special flight test training— I'm sorry, flight testing, up out of Washington, up at the base up there. And so they had parted ways, although they still got together for holidays. But you can imagine. He could have detail after detail for all these years. Knew the names of every kid, knew all the birth dates.

Lage: You did a thorough interview.

02-00:55:36

Lippincott: I got a written commendation for the thoroughness of the interview, because I covered so many things that other people couldn't cover. Who would remember him aboard a ship that the squadron had been on? Who'd remember him at this air base way back in flight training? They just couldn't do it. Here's a companion that had been his buddy all these years.

Lage: Did the fellow get to be an astronaut?

02-00:56:05

Lippincott: No.

Lage: Oh, too bad.

02-00:56:08

Lippincott: But he was one of those that was a potential. But that was the more interesting one that I—

Lage: Interesting. So you did that and you did Lawrence Livermore Lab security clearance?

02-00:56:20

Lippincott: Yeah, those were straight backgrounds, which—

Lage: Any other type of work? I thought you mentioned EEO complaints?

02-00:56:29

Lippincott: Well, that was another thing that we got involved in, but that was for other agencies, on a contract basis, between our agency and theirs. They paid X number of dollars to get these reports, in which you had to go out and interview the complainant, the employee designated as the aggressor or— the basis of the complaint, and then companion witnesses. And numbers become important, but for me, it was outside of those two, I wanted three or four on each side of the aisle.

Lage: To get the full range, a picture.

02-00:57:12

Lippincott: To do it. And I had a different technique than most of them, because I could type. I took a portable typewriter with me. I would swear the witness, after we had introduced ourselves, and then type the interview as they were testifying.

Lage: I see. So you didn't record, as we're doing now.

02-00:57:37

Lippincott: No. If I would've recorded, then I'd have had to go back and type. And what am I going to type from? The recording.

Lage: Right. But you could type fast enough just to keep up.

02-00:57:47

Lippincott: I, in those days, was forty-five plus. And every so often I'd go like this, they'd start talking, I'd type a little and say, "Go on." And they'd say, where was I? So I'd read the last line or so. The moral of the story is many times you interview somebody, and they realize they've said something that's damaging one way or the other. And they say, "I don't want to say that." And I said, "You're editing it. Line it out. Just line it out, but initial all line outs and corrections." Well, I'd deliberately make some mistakes typing. Sometimes not deliberately, but misspell a word or so. And so they had to initial. And then they had to initial at the bottom of the page. When you looked at the finished affidavit, they couldn't say they didn't know what was in that affidavit. And anybody reading that knew.

Lage: That they'd read it.

02-00:58:49

Lippincott: And if you got called to the hearing, is this what they said? Yes, sir.

Lage: Interesting.

02-00:58:59

Lippincott: You're positive? I said, "I am positive."

Lage: Our time is just about out. Do you have any just general reflections on your career in the army? Are you glad you took this direction?

02-00:59:16

Lippincott: The army was the most interesting and best way I could've gone. I don't know what I would've done as a civilian, since the printing ink potential was not there. I would've been hard pressed to go into police work, although I probably had to because that was my experience. But I couldn't have lived in Dayton, so I would've had to go elsewhere, because my wife and my mother did not get along very well.

Lage: Did it provide a good means of advancement for you, do you think, as you look back?

02-00:59:55

Lippincott: Oh, it was. Eventually, it has provided great retirement. I didn't retire at much, as I mentioned early. First month's retired pay was all of \$315. Fortunately, I had gone to work, so I was salaried. But I worked at that job. I worked for the Civil Service Commission; then I went to work for Health and Human Services, both in the regional office personnel; and then out at the Richmond payment center, where I finished up in personnel there.

Lage: And you retired in '85, right?

02-00:60:36

Lippincott: Yes.

Lage: Very good.

02-00:60:37

Lippincott: The end of April.

Lage: Okay, I think we have to cut off because we're out of tape.

02-00:60:43

Lippincott: All right.

[End of Interview]