

Regional Oral History Office  
The Bancroft Library

University of California  
Berkeley, California

Mary Myers:  
Oakland Army Base Oral History Project

Interviews conducted by  
Ann Lage  
in 2008

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Interview #1: 07-08-2008

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01-00:00:06

Lage: Today is July 11, 2008. And I am Ann Lage interviewing Mary Myers.

01-00:00:13

Myers: Mary Myers.

01-00:00:14

Lage: And that's M-Y-E-R-S.

01-00:00:16

Myers: Unh-huh. M-Y-E-R-S.

01-00:00:18

Lage: Very good. Okay, Mary. We're interviewing you for the Oakland Army Base project. We're trying to get an idea of the work of the base and kind of the life of the base, the kind of community that was there and how it changed over time.

01-00:00:39

Myers: Okay. Great.

01-00:00:40

Lage: So we're going to start, the simplest thing. Tell me where you were born and something about the family you were born into.

01-00:00:49

Myers: I was born here in California. And I'm the oldest of eight kids. And what's funny about it is that when I was a young girl I always used to play army, and then I grew up to work for the Army. My family thought that was really fun.

01-00:01:03

Lage: Yes! Where did you grow up?

01-00:01:06

Myers: Here in the Bay Area.

01-00:01:10

Lage: Was your family military in any way?

01-00:01:12

Myers: No. No. But everybody played army back in that day. We lived next to a field, so we could dig ditches and have our little army things and—

01-00:01:22

Lage: When were you born?

01-00:01:23

Myers: I'm a baby boomer.

01-00:01:25  
Lage: Okay. So that was sort of the brink of the Korean War.

01-00:01:29  
Myers: Unh-huh.

01-00:01:29  
Lage: You probably don't remember the Korean War.

01-00:01:30  
Myers: No. Yeah.

01-00:01:32  
Lage: But there was a lot of military play among the kids?

01-00:01:34  
Myers: Oh, yeah, in our neighborhood, for sure. Everybody—

01-00:01:37  
Lage: Boys and girls?

01-00:01:38  
Myers: There wasn't any money for toys. We all played with sticks. But they were real to us. Yeah, we dug foxholes and—now there's a house where that field is, so other kids can't play like we did. But we sure had a good time.

01-00:02:06  
Lage: Okay. So what kind of a neighborhood was it?

01-00:02:10  
Myers: There was a lot of kids. Of course, and we were just a few blocks away from the Catholic church. And so Catholics have a reputation for having a lot of kids, and there was a lot of kids. [laughs]

01-00:02:20  
Lage: And was your family Catholic?

01-00:02:21  
Myers: Yes. Like I said, eight kids. And I was the oldest of all. And—

01-00:02:25  
Lage: What did your parents do to support these eight children?

01-00:02:29  
Myers: Well, my dad was an accountant, and my mom just stayed home and took care of us. Yeah.

01-00:02:36  
Lage: Very good. Was it a diverse neighborhood, racially?

01-00:02:39  
Myers: Actually, it was, yeah. I didn't realize it at the time. They were just kids. But if you went across the street, then one of the houses would—one mom would be

making tortillas because they were Hispanic, and then there was a German family and—it was very diverse, actually. But like I said, you didn't realize it then. It was everybody was just who they were.

01-00:03:02

Lage: It wasn't commented on that much?

01-00:03:03

Myers: No.

01-00:03:05

Lage: Were there black families?

01-00:03:07

Myers: I don't recall any black families, but there was just about all the other kind of flavors of people.

01-00:03:13

Lage: Right, right. [laughter] And what is your ethnicity?

01-00:03:17

Myers: I'm Irish.

01-00:03:18

Lage: Yeah. I wondered.

01-00:03:19

Myers: Yeah, Irish and English.

01-00:03:20

Lage: Mm-hmm. Okay. So maybe that—growing up, do you think it had a bearing on your future work life?

01-00:03:30

Myers: As far as working for the Army?

01-00:03:32

Lage: Yeah.

01-00:03:33

Myers: You know what—?

01-00:03:33

Lage: The growing up in that kind of an environment.

01-00:03:34

Myers: Environment? I'm sure that everything we do in our lives affect where we go next. Like they say, the universe is always working in our favor. And so it was really weird how I ended up at the Army because I didn't have any intention of working for the Army. But I had just finished—I was a single parent, desperately trying to get my first AA degree in transportation. Because the Port of Oakland actually provided that for us for free. So I was looking for—

01-00:04:06

Lage: Now give a little background there. What do you mean the Port of Oakland provi—?

01-00:04:09

Myers: The Port of Oakland were desperate for transportation-savvy individuals, whether they be male or female. There was a huge shortage. And so they provided the thirty units that you needed for a degree in logistics, transportation logistics, for free.

01-00:04:27

Lage: At what school would it—?

01-00:04:28

Myers: You would have to go to the Port of Oakland. They had some of the classes there. And then they also had it at Oakland Army Base, the Port of Oakland and Oakland Army Base worked together. And a lot of the classrooms were in the classrooms located directly on Oakland Army Base. Because there was actually a school there, with several classrooms. It was two stories, actually.

01-00:04:47

Lage: Was it overseen by an established college, the local junior college?

01-00:04:51

Myers: Yeah. You actually got your degree from the Alameda junior college. Yeah. College of Alameda or whatever.

01-00:04:59

Lage: Yeah, College of Alameda, part of the Peralta district here.

01-00:05:01

Myers: Exactly. Right. And so you would do—

01-00:05:03

Lage: Now when was this?

01-00:05:06

Myers: That was, I think, 1986 or something. I have the degree hanging on the wall back there.

01-00:05:10

Lage: Right. Okay. So mid-eighties.

01-00:05:12

Myers: Yeah. And so that really got me started.

01-00:05:18

Lage: Is that why you went into the field, because here was this opportunity? Or—?

01-00:05:22

Myers: And I started working for the Navy. Because I thought, okay, well, I'll start working for the—well, what happened was—what really happened was, right

after I got my degree was simultaneous with the deregulation of transportation. And all the companies I thought that I was going to be able to work for, like System 99, and they all went out of business. And so I thought now what do I do?

01-00:05:47

Lage:

Now why would that have put them out of business, deregulation?

01-00:05:50

Myers:

Because deregulation actually threw away all the tariffs, and so companies were competitive now. They were competing against one another. And they couldn't maintain their businesses. So they were just dropping like flies. Trucking companies were going out of business. Truckers were having to give up their trucks. It was really a nightmare for the trucking industry, for the small guy. The big guys seemed to just do okay. But it was just—it was really kind of sad for a lot of these companies.

And so then I go, okay, well, now I've got this degree; now what do I do? So somebody said, "You should go work for Military Traffic Management Command." And I thought, okay, well, I'll go over there and check it out. But they weren't going to hire me. And so I said, "Okay, well, I'll just go work for the Navy, over on the other side, in Alameda, and then wait and see what would happen." Right? So I got a job as a secretary, even though I had this education. But I got my foot in the door, as my—that was my first federal job.

And so I worked there for about six months and the navy commander over there said, "Why are you here? You need to be over at Oakland Army Base." And I go, "Yeah, I know but they won't hire me." So he wrote a special letter—and back then the jobs were pretty plentiful at Oakland Army Base. And I'm a single mom, trying to put food on the table for my kids. Because I wasn't getting child support. So I'm a desperate woman, here, trying to get my career going. So he goes, "Let's see what we can do." So he wrote a letter.

And I got my first job in transportation as a shipment clerk, GS-5. I started as a GS-4 secretary in the Navy and then went over there as a GS-5. And then just started working my way up, very quickly. In fact, my resume would show I would be working for six months in one job, six weeks in another job. As soon as I got a job, I would start looking for my next potential, that was going to keep pushing me up. And I was able to get to GS-12 within eight years, from a GS-4.

01-00:07:54

Lage:

That's probably the record.

01-00:07:55

Myers:

That's a desperate woman.

01-00:07:56

Lage:

[laughs] Yeah, right!

01-00:07:56  
Myers: That's a desperate woman!

01-00:07:58  
Lage: Let's back up just a minute. And where did you have your pre-college education? Did you go public schools or Catholic?

01-00:08:07  
Myers: Well, I went to Catholic school for my first eight years, and then public junior college and high school. Social butterfly.

01-00:08:13  
Lage: And, what, would it have Richmond High?

01-00:08:16  
Myers: Richmond Union High School, class of '67—navy blue and red, their—

01-00:08:21  
Lage: Now there you were, class of '67. Vietnam War's heating up.

01-00:08:27  
Myers: Yeah, but I was in love. I was oblivious to that war.

01-00:08:30  
Lage: Oh, you were in love.

01-00:08:31  
Myers: I was oblivious to that war, other than it was fun to go hear the concerts and—we did get gassed sometimes in protesting. But it didn't really—my first child was born in 1970. So I was more preoccupied being a mom. And when I was married, my husband preferred to watch *Star Trek* instead of the news. So we didn't really realize.

I didn't really learn about Vietnam, really, until maybe ten years ago, where I really, really understood what really happened. I understood about a lot of the people that came back were pretty messed up, emotionally. And it makes me sad to think of the kids coming back now too, because I know that their families—these young families are just torn apart by the ravages of the mental things that happen to these kids. But anyway, that's a whole other story.

01-00:09:26  
Lage: Well, it is.

01-00:09:26  
Myers: But it's heartbreaking.

01-00:09:26  
Lage: But you have a window onto it.

01-00:09:27  
Myers: It's heartbreaking. It's heartbreaking.

01-00:09:29  
Lage: Yeah. Yeah. So you grew up in this kind of, in a way, antimilitary world of the East Bay.

01-00:09:38  
Myers: Yeah.

01-00:09:38  
Lage: I know it's not a unified antimilitary thing, but you can't help but be touched by it.

01-00:09:44  
Myers: And you know what's interesting? Is that most all of the military guys that I've ever worked with, and the civilians, of course, we all hate war. We hate it. It's just one of those necessary evils. And these guys are so willing to go there and do what they've got to do.

01-00:10:01  
Lage: Right. Okay. So as a mom, did you work?

01-00:10:09  
Myers: Yeah. I had to.

01-00:10:11  
Lage: Before you got—

01-00:10:12  
Myers: Oh, yeah, yeah. Yeah, I always worked.

01-00:10:14  
Lage: As a newlywed.

01-00:10:14  
Myers: Yeah. Yeah.

01-00:10:16  
Lage: Mm-hmm. Okay. What kinds of jobs would—?

01-00:10:18  
Myers: What did I do before this?

01-00:10:19  
Lage: Yeah.

01-00:10:20  
Myers: Let's see.

01-00:10:20  
Lage: Just real quick. [laughs]

01-00:10:21  
Myers: I worked many years for AAA, the car insurance company. And I did all the variety of jobs there. And I was head of the Underwriting Department when I

left. But I worked in the Berkeley office and the San Pablo office and moved with them. Actually, they were in Richmond, then moved to San Pablo. And now they're in a whole other spot. But I've been away from them for many, many years. And I did underwriting, and I was a travel agent. And I got so good, I could actually map out your trip with the map upside down.

And let's see. What else did I do there? You had to do all the jobs, pretty much, when you were there for that many years. So I did that. And I was a cashier for Payless. Mostly I did the bookkeeping for them, not so much cashiering. And what other jobs? I paid insurance claims. I worked for an insurance company. That was one of my first jobs I ever did.

01-00:11:21

Lage: You had a lot of experience by the time you hit the Oakland Army Base.

01-00:11:24

Myers: Yeah, I did.

01-00:11:26

Lage: Yeah.

01-00:11:27

Myers: Yeah, I did.

01-00:11:27

Lage: Great. How many children did you have?

01-00:11:29

Myers: Two.

01-00:11:29

Lage: Two.

01-00:11:30

Myers: Yeah, I had two sons.

01-00:11:30

Lage: So all this time, while you're building your career, you're also—

01-00:11:33

Myers: Having kids. And they're eight years apart too. So. Yeah. Yeah, but you just do it, one day at a time.

01-00:11:40

Lage: That's right.

01-00:11:41

Myers: And it's almost time to retire. [laughter] Well, you can't afford it, so you've got to be working!

01-00:1146

Lage:

That's right. Okay. So I think we have a nice overview of your work life and family life. You described the job at Oakland, but how long did it take you to work up to the position where you seem to have a very responsible position, by the time the base closed.

01-00:12:15

Myers:

I did. And you know what? It's like that was one thing I did for myself, I didn't take that job—I didn't take it seriously. Because if I did, I would have freaked out. Because it was so much responsibility.

01-00:12:29

Lage:

And what was the title of it and the scope of it?

01-00:12:32

Myers:

The deputy of the Cargo Operations Division. You're pretty much the mommy for—the number of people changed from like sixty to 110, and it moved all around, depending on—we kept inheriting groups of people. And then we would close down their operation. So that would require me to go and do the farewell ceremonies, which were very, very—it was very draining. But the job, at first, was really so much fun, because I came in right at the very beginning of Desert Storm.

01-00:13:03

Lage:

Okay. So about 1990.

01-00:13:05

Myers:

Yeah. The very beginning of that. And I was the first woman who actually was the deputy of that division. And mostly everybody that worked in that division under me were men, whether they be civilian or military, whether they be reservists or active duty military. Back then there was a lot more active duty. And then we got a lot of reservists when the war kind of picked up.

And those stories, the military guys would come—and women—would come for like two years at a time. And they would leave their families. A lot of them came from the East Coast, some of them maybe just from Washington, up north. But some of them would have their families come and spend time with them. But you're their family when they're not there. And even just living a war like that, we're all family. You know? It's amazing.

01-00:14:04

Lage:

That's really nice, to have you describe it in that way. So let's talk about it at the time of Desert Storm. Because I know it was changing, especially as they're closing things down. What would be the ratio of reservists, active duty, and civilian people working, in that sixty- to 100-person unit?

01-00:14:31

Myers:

Now, the people that were working for us, there was probably—I'd say one-quarter of the people that were working with us were either reservists or active

duty. The active duty people were the people, usually, at the top, like the sergeant major, the major, who was head of the division. And then we'd have a couple captains and a couple lieutenants. And then towards the end we started to get Navy people in too. So a lot of people, what they do is, they need their card punched. And this was one of the requirements.

01-00:15:08

Lage: And what does this mean?

01-00:15:09

Myers: Well, when you're in the military and you're trying to advance, then you have to have certain requirements, kind of like getting a college degree. But you have to have certain experiences. And so this was one of the experiences that a lot of guys needed to get promoted.

01-00:15:28

Lage: They needed experience with cargo transport?

01-00:15:29

Myers: Transportation movement, yeah. To get promoted.

01-00:15:33

Lage: Promoted within a certain type of military unit? Or just in general?

01-00:15:37

Myers: Just as rank, lieutenant, captain, lieutenant colonel, colonel.

01-00:15:40

Lage: So you'll see people kind of—they'd cycle through there to get that experience.

01-00:15:46

Myers: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

01-00:15:48

Lage: So what did they contribute to the ongoing work?

01-00:15:50

Myers: You know what's amazing? What's amazing to me about the military is that they have this ability to go in on day one and just give it their 100 percent—150 percent. And I don't think that there was any of the military guys that I could say that slacked. And they would be out there for how many hours you needed them. And actually, civilians, during the war, we were the same way. We were doing the same thing.

And I hear stories of Vietnam. I wasn't there then but one of the girls was telling me that she literally almost had a nervous breakdown. She was a civilian. But they had a constant flow of hearse; constant, twenty-four hours a day, of dead bodies coming into the morgue. And which required all kinds of documentation and manifesting and stuff. And that was one of the things that

she did. And they would have bodies literally stacked in the warehouses. And there was one warehouse in particular that they stacked a lot of the bodies in because they had too many to process all at once and they could on—the morgue wasn't really that big.

Anyway, it would be great if you could interview somebody who was there for that, because that was a really—oh, my God. That just goes to show you what those civilians were going through back then. Because people just think, oh, government workers don't do shit. But you know what? I'll tell you, we were so committed. And in my mind I'm always thinking, we've got to get the stuff to the guys that are over in the theater, or in the war zone. And so then it just propels you. It just gives you all this extra energy. And you just continue to work twelve-hour days or seven days a week, if a train is coming in and you've got to receive it. Or whatever. You just end up doing it. And you know what was interesting too about on the waterfront is, the job was so friggin' fun, you'd rather be there than home watching TV anyway. So [laughs] it was great!

01-00:17:53

Lage: Describe the job, for people who really don't know what you were doing.

01-00:17:59

Myers: Well, I was the mommy. And all of my little children would be out there making sure that the ships got loaded, that the trains got loaded or unloaded—same with the ships. We had—

01-00:18:14

Lage: So you have ships come in. You have to unload.

01-00:18:15

Myers: Ships, trucks, trains.

01-00:18:15

Lage: And then you—

01-00:18:17

Myers: One time we even had helicopters that came in, as what they call a supercargo, which means that there's also military that travels with them. And they un-cocooned them. They cocoon the helicopters so that—I know I'm going all over the place, but it's just so exciting. What they do for the helicopters is that they make sure that the military guys go with them. And it's called a supercargo. And what they're doing is they're babysitting the helicopters. Because they're really very expensive. And they cocoon them, which means that they—it's like shrink-wrapping the meat, but they shrink-wrap the helicopters.

01-00:18:55

Lage: Blade and all?

01-00:18:56

Myers:

It depends. Okay. But anyway, they cocoon it. And what was neat about it, when the war first started, when Desert Storm first started and they were shipping all those overseas, the guys would be finishing doing it and then they would take the spray paint and they'd write on the cocoon, "Hi, Mom," or make faces on the helicopters. In fact, those pictures are with the—I gave pictures of that to the military museum. And you guys really need to have that in this video, because it was very—when I saw them the first time, I just totally—I lost it. I was out at the pier crying.

01-00:19:41

Lage:

So this was spray-painted on these huge—

01-00:19:43

Myers:

On the cocoons, yeah. It would give these helicopters personalities. Because they had little happy-faces and big eyes and, "Hi, Mom." And it just kind of showed you that these are kids, they're going over there, and they're going to try to fight this war for us. And it's just really—it's very emotional.

01-00:20:06

Lage:

Did you interact with those supercargos? [laughs]

01-00:20:09

Myers:

Yeah, the kids. Yeah. They would come in. But they're mostly babysitting, and actually very focused on their mission. And they're very dedicated. They don't slack or anything like that. So unless I was out there talking to them, I wouldn't really see them. And my job was really inside the office. But I would go out to the pier almost every day for what they would call a briefing. And we would have to make all these Power Point slides. And so we'd say, "Okay, these ships are coming in, and these ships are departing, and this ship is 25 percent full. And we're having problems on the outside, because—oh, my God—the tanks weigh too much and they're eating up the asphalt. And now we have to get pieces of plywood and lay them down on the asphalt so that these sixty-ton tanks can run over this plywood so it doesn't eat up the asphalt." And we were literally making a path to the ship for all of these tanks.

01-00:21:16

Lage:

And was that roll-on/roll-off type operation?

01-00:21:17

Myers:

Yeah, roll-on/roll-off. Yeah. Ro-Ro is the—

01-00:21:21

Lage:

Were they heavier than most—the tanks that had been—? I'm just wondering why the asphalt was challenged.

01-00:21:24

Myers:

Well, tanks are heavy. But that was the operation called Heavy Metal.

01-00:21:34  
Lage: Oh, you mentioned that you had names for these operations.

01-00:21:37  
Myers: Yeah. We sent a whole bunch of tanks. Yeah, we loaded them up and we sent them over.

01-00:21:42  
Lage: So they're loaded onto ships.

01-00:21:42  
Myers: Yeah. And they tie them down with D-rings on the floor of the ships. They chain them down. Depending on the ship, it has a bunch of levels. And there's a ramp that goes up to each level, so that you can drive whatever you need to drive.

01-00:21:59  
Lage: Like a big parking lot.

01-00:22:00  
Myers: Yeah. It's exactly that. It's like, if you didn't know where you were, you would think that's where you're at.

01-00:22:05  
Lage: Now would the supercargo of military fellows go along with the tanks also?

01-00:22:12  
Myers: Yeah. It depended on the operation. I only really saw them with the helicopters. But the marine cargo specialist could probably tell you a lot more stories about the supercargos.

01-00:22:22  
Lage: We'll try to get some names or—

01-00:22:23  
Myers: Yeah.

01-00:22:24  
Lage: So the marine cargo specialists worked under you.

01-00:22:27  
Myers: And they were on the waterfront all the time. They're right there shoulder-to-shoulder with the longshoremen, that the contractor. They're on the ships. They're writing down everything that's loaded. Each piece, as it's loaded, needs to be noted. Each piece, as it's departing the staging—there's a staging area. What happens in an operation is that first you receive what you're going to be loading on the ship. Comes in usually on trucks or a train. Then we plan on how we're going to discharge the train and the trucks. Where exactly on the ship are those pieces going to go?

01-00:23:03  
Lage: Is that your job, to kind of strategize that?

01-00:23:05  
Myers: That's a marine cargo specialist does that.

01-00:23:07  
Lage: Oh, the marine cargo specialist?

01-00:23:07  
Myers: They worked under me. Yeah. And so they make sure that they, and those transportation operations people, that was on that list—I've got to get you that other list that actually tells that. But they're on the ground too. And—

01-00:23:21  
Lage: And did they work for you or—?

01-00:23:23  
Myers: Yeah, they're all working—it's just a gob of people. It's like me and a whole bunch of other supervisors. And so on the waterfront, everybody that's on the waterfront is working under the marine cargo specialist. We had wonderful railheads there, where the rail could just pull right up and we could just roll everything off. And it was just wonderful. But we lost all of that with the BRAC of OARB.

01-00:23:45  
Lage: Right.

01-00:23:45  
Myers: Really bad.

01-00:23:47  
Lage: Okay. I kind of interfered with your telling me what the marine—

01-00:23:51  
Myers: Oh, the staging.

01-00:23:51  
Lage: —cargo specialist—how they planned out—

01-00:23:54  
Myers: How they figure out how to do it?

01-00:23:55  
Lage: Mm.

01-00:23:55  
Myers: Yeah. What they do is they actually figure out—it's kind of like a crossword puzzle for a ship. And what they do is they figure out the weight of each item that they know is going to loaded on the ship and where it will best be put on the ship for offloading at each port. Because it usually goes to a whole bunch of different ports. And then they want to make sure that the weight is

compatible, so that the ship doesn't list one way or the other or roll over. It's not going to roll over. Well, it could roll over. But that's another story.

01-00:24:29

Lage: Right.

01-00:24:30

Myers: But anyway, make sure that you load it in a way so that it can actually withstand the ocean and the transportation, transporting it to Korea or wherever they're going, Desert Storm, in support of Saudi Arabia—and that port.

01-00:24:47

Lage: Well, what were the various destinations that you saw come through at that time?

01-00:24:53

Myers: During the war? Well, you know what was interesting about when the ships would come back after the Kuwait oil—when the oil wells—the oil things got—they caught them on fire, the—? Well, what was interesting is that, when the ships would come back to our port to discharge broken pieces or whatever and then load back up to go back again, it would have this huge oil line on the ship. And I thought, oh, my God, all the way from Kuwait.

01-00:25:22

Lage: Yeah.

01-00:25:24

Myers: Wow!

01-00:25:24

Lage: You saw a lot.

01-00:25:24

Myers: It was a trip.

01-00:25:26

Lage: Mm-hmm. Now what about Saudi Arabia? We were sending things—?

01-00:25:30

Myers: Yeah. We actually had a lot of stuff—at the very beginning of the war we had a lot of stuff. There was a port there. And that was really before we got it together with the new documentation that they have now. But we learned a lot of lessons from that. And one of the lessons that we learned is that—there were other agencies besides our agency that were sending stuff over there in support of the warfighters. And what they didn't realize is that, if the guys at that port in Saudi Arabia didn't know what was coming on that ship, it was just a box. It was just a container. They had no idea what was in it. And so that happened a whole lot. That was a huge fiasco. Did anybody tell you about that?

01-00:26:18

Lage: No, I think you should. [laughter]

01-00:26:20

Myers: Yeah.

01-00:26:21

Lage: I'm not sure what it is you're revealing but—

01-00:26:23

Myers: Well, this was like a lot of years ago and we've fixed that since. But the Defense Logistics Agency is an agency that, they actually buy stuff directly from the vendors. And that's what they were doing. Sending containers full of whatever, suntan lotion, toilet paper, orange juice, whatever.

01-00:26:45

Lage: And you'd know what was in it.

01-00:26:47

Myers: The guy at the port literally had a city of containers that he had no idea what was in. And they kept coming every day, every day, every day. And the G.I.s would come and say, "Where's my such-and-such?" And he goes, "Look in the containers and find it. Because I have absolutely no friggin' idea."

01-00:27:03

Lage: So it wasn't marked or numbered?

01-00:27:08

Myers: And that wasn't Military Traffic Management Command that did that fiasco. Because we had everything documented. The guys knew what they were getting when we sent something over there. But they were loading ships commercially. Defense Logistics Agency would say, "Okay, American President Lines or—" They did a lot of the work there, at Sealand. "Okay, we're going to send over a bazillion containers of whatever this is, and send it over to Saudi." Right? Well, none of it was documented. So.

01-00:27:38

Lage: Interesting that there wasn't procedure in place.

01-00:27:41

Myers: Well, for us there was, but for them it wasn't. And then the Southwest—there was one operation after that segment of the war where two of my reservists—one was this little teeny Italian guy, the greatest guy. Okay, after that segment of the war, they said, "Okay, you guys, get everything out of this country and you can go home." Right? So the G.I.s guys were just throwing everything in the containers mixing it up.

01-00:28:13

Lage: This is when we were coming home without taking Baghdad?

01-00:28:16  
Myers: Yeah. They were mixing everything up. They had soap with food and—oh, it was just a—it was really—it was crazy. Because they wanted to go home.

01-00:28:24  
Lage: Yeah.

01-00:28:24  
Myers: And they didn't really know how to load it. They were told to do it, but there wasn't anybody over there to do it. They were just doing what they could do. So when those containers came back, I had to have one of my guys literally go—there one guy on the ground at the container door and this little teeny Italian guy that maybe was 100 pounds, sopping wet but just full of energy. And he would literally slither all the way to the end of the container and back again, just to see what was in it. And then he could determine by that—

01-00:28:56  
Lage: So he'd go into one of these big containers?

01-00:28:58  
Myers: One guy would be there, just to make sure he didn't like fall in a hole or something. And he would literally slither over the top of all this stuff and just evaluate, to see if any of it could be donated to charity. They donated gobs of leftovers to charity, gobs!

01-00:29:14  
Lage: Food items or—?

01-00:29:15  
Myers: Food items, clothing items, just anything you could think of that we would need normally to live. Because these people were literally living over there. So just the simple things we take for granted we had to send over there for these guys even though they were still roughing it. But anyway, that's what he did all day long. 6,000 containers, he did, 6,000.

01-00:29:35  
Lage: One person!

01-00:29:37  
Myers: 6,000.

01-00:29:39  
Lage: He earned his reserve duty credit?

01-00:29:43  
Myers: That's what he did eight hours a day. Yeah.

01-00:29:46  
Lage: That's a pretty amazing story. One of our interviews that I read about this era talked about some feeling that there might be dangerous chemicals or—the fear that we were going to have a chemical war over there—

01-00:30:05

Myers: Oh, yeah, over there.

01-00:30:06

Lage: —either biological weapons or defense against biological weapons. Were you aware of any of that kind of shipment?

01-00:30:13

Myers: But over there, no here, though, right?

01-00:30:16

Lage: Well, being shipped here, to go there.

01-00:30:17

Myers: Oh, being shipped here? Oh, you always have to worry about that, even now. That's not going to go away. The thing is is that what are you going to do, you know?

01-00:30:26

Lage: But did we ship over things that would defend against biological weapons, that kind of—?

01-00:30:32

Myers: You know what? I'm not really sure. I couldn't even tell you about that. I'm sure that we did, to help our kids. [phone rings] We would do anything. What do I do now?

[break in audio]

01-00:30:48

Myers: Okay. Well, you were talking about chemical weapons. We were only really shipping out—we did a lot of military vehicles. That was the prime thing that we really shipped out. We shipped out some containers. But, of course, there's always going to be some protection for our guys. And a lot of the vehicles back then were supposed to be really protective for the guys. And they would have night-vision devices on them, which was a big deal, because they were very expensive. And we had to always make sure that we kept close tabs on those because—

01-00:31:26

Lage: Yeah. Yeah.

01-00:31:27

Myers: One of the things too that would happen on a lot of the vehicles too, as they were coming through the small towns on rail cars to be shipped to Oakland—some of the little towns where the kids don't have anything to do, I guess, they would actually throw rocks at the different vehicles. So we would actually ask the people that loaded the trains where they were departing to do things like put cardboard and things like that to protect the windows.

01-00:31:57

Lage: Mm!

01-00:31:57

Myers: What's interesting about wars is it changes transportation—the way things are moved. And one of the things that happened is that they now have railcars that you can just drive in. And it's got these graded sides. And they can stack vehicles in them three at a time or they can make the levels change if they don't want to put that many in. But now they have protection against these kids throwing rocks. Because they have these railcars that are made specifically to protect them against rocks. Isn't that amazing?

01-00:32:32

Lage: Yeah. Yeah.

01-00:32:32

Myers: I know. Or even containerization was a result of Vietnam. The thought of containerization, because everything was break-bulk then, was just appalling at first. And then, because of the demand of Vietnam, it became the norm. It became the norm, and completely changed the way—

01-00:32:54

Lage: And changed the Army base, although you weren't there in that era, I guess. But didn't that—?

01-00:33:00

Myers: Well, one of the things about the Army base is it never really had a real container crane. We always did it with the break-bulk cranes. So.

01-00:33:06

Lage: But I'm thinking then you had to contract out more.

01-00:33:09

Myers: Oh, yeah.

01-00:33:10

Lage: Is that right?

01-00:33:10

Myers: Well, what happened with that is that—well, first of all, our base always did do break-bulk stuff, even when containerization was the thing. The Port of Oakland was loading just nothing but containers. But we're over here loading really odd-shaped vehicles and all kinds of other stuff that needs to be picked up. And it's a really big deal. And it wasn't really that many containers, as far as container ships, that we were loading over there.

01-00:33:37

Lage: Right.

- 01-00:33:37  
Myers: A lot of them were just ships that would, really, help us to get what we needed to get over there. Now, these commercial companies would really try to push—"Put everything in a container. Put everything in a container." But the thing is is that it's okay to load it here in Oakland with the container crane but, when you get to some weird little port in far off wherever, they may not be able to get that off.
- 01-00:34:02  
Lage: Yeah.
- 01-00:34:03  
Myers: So.
- 01-00:34:03  
Lage: Well, what kind of weird little ports—?
- 01-00:34:08  
Myers: [laughs; break in audio]
- 01-00:34:09  
Lage: Okay. Now, you're saying that the break-bulk system was better for certain things.
- 01-00:34:16  
Myers: For military cargo, yeah. Even though the—after the first thing about Desert Storm, the commercial industry would come over and say, "You need to put tanks in these wonderful containers. And we think we can just do this wonderful job." Because they were looking for the work, of course.
- 01-00:34:34  
Lage: Right.
- 01-00:34:36  
Myers: And we would always say, "Okay, then what do we do with all these containers?" Because they don't tell you that they charge demurrage for every day that they're over in some friggin' country. And a lot of times they'll just sit there, because maybe somebody decided they wanted to make their house out of it, because there's no shelter. Because there's a lot of different things that happen with this stuff that—and then we ended up buying a lot of—or settling out with a lot of the containers for the commercial carriers, with the Saudi thing that happened, to the point where—so we wouldn't have to pay as much demurrage, to save taxpayer money.
- 01-00:35:17  
Lage: Pay as much to do what? Demurrage?
- 01-00:35:20  
Myers: Well, when you use a container from a commercial industry, say Sealand or American President Lines or something, they have to make their money, right? And what they do is they charge you a certain price for the use of the

container. And then there's another price to ship it over to wherever you're—like an airplane ticket. Okay, but you also have to pay for—like you rent a car. Well, you're renting a container.

01-00:35:50

Lage: Right.

01-00:35:50

Myers: And that's called demurrage.

01-00:35:51

Lage: Demurrage.

01-00:35:52

Myers: Mm-hmm. And if you don't have it back at a certain time, you've got to start paying a daily rate. Well, when you have thousands and thousands of containers sitting at the Saudi port, then it racks up a lot of money! So they decided that, "Well, maybe we should just purchase them." They did an agreement. Yeah. And so anyway, it worked out okay. But it's complicated to work with commercial industry. It's extremely expensive. It's very lucrative for the commercial industry company, but it's very expensive for the military. And I think that a lot of people don't realize that we have a budget too. We don't have a deep pocket. You know?

01-00:36:34

Lage: Well, the idea, I thought, was that it was supposed to be cheaper to use private industry. Wasn't the rationale originally?

01-00:36:43

Myers: Well, it is, on one hand. But when you're talking about a war—and a lot of times, in war, things don't come back as nice as when they got there. Just because.

01-00:36:59

Lage: The container being as— [laughs]

01-00:37:01

Myers: Yeah, the container itself or even the equipment too, when they bring them back. But this is military equipment. But the container may not be in the best shape. Or it may just—people are desperate for homes in a lot of these areas and to them that's like a house. You know?

01-00:37:22

Lage: Yeah, sure. Some of them just disappear.

01-00:37:25

Myers: Yeah, they disappear.

01-00:37:27

Lage: And then the military pays Sealand or American President.

01-00:37:30  
Myers: Yeah.

01-00:37:31  
Lage: Was there any problem with theft in the port itself—not the port, the Army base? Was that something that you had a responsibility to be sure didn't happen or—?

01-00:37:41  
Myers: We had military security. And amazingly enough, no. One time we freaked out, because we thought we lost a night-vision device. And but we found it. You know? Because there was—

01-00:37:57  
Lage: You were telling me—

01-00:37:57  
Myers: —what they call hand receipts. And because I was the deputy of the division, I had to sign the hand receipt for all of my divisions, for all of my people, you know? And I was really hoping, after I had to leave the Army, that I would be able to clear my hand receipt. Thank God, it was okay. Because I had this amazing sergeant major who made sure that he kept track of everything. But everybody would help each other keep track of everything. So we never really had thefts.

01-00:38:25  
Lage: Hm.

01-00:38:26  
Myers: You know?

01-00:38:26  
Lage: You mentioned to me that people had to sign off exactly on the bill of lading.

01-00:38:34  
Myers: Yeah. Whenever a ship—

01-00:38:34  
Lage: This was before we were recording. Tell about that process.

01-00:38:38  
Myers: Whenever a ship sails, before it sails, just like an airplane, there's a manifest. And it tells exactly what is on that ship. If it's hazardous, it tells all the information about the hazardous. And that the marine cargo specialist usually is the one that signs off on this, saying, "I'm certifying that all of this stuff is on this ship, and that all this hazmat is perfectly loaded and documented, and it's all in its—"

01-00:39:06  
Lage: That's hazardous material—

01-00:39:07

Myers:

Right. Yeah. Yeah. And that everything's perfect and you're ready to go. And I'm signing my name. And if the Coast Guard, who now I work for—but [laughs] if the Coast Guard—or if it's found not to be correct, then that person who signed their name, being just a regular person, like me or whoever, they would actually be financially liable for any of the fines that were put against them. Luckily, we everybody was so careful that we never had any problem.

01-00:39:40

Lage:

Mm-hmm. And to what level of detail would this be described?

01-00:39:45

Myers:

Everything that's inside the container would be documented. See, there was us, the Operations Division, then there was the Documentation Division. And that was a whole 'nother division. But without those people, that ship would not sail. Because if that documentation wasn't right, then that person couldn't sign the manifest, and that ship would just sit there. It would not be allowed to sail.

01-00:40:08

Lage:

So someone else was really preparing the documentation and your people were checking it against—

01-00:40:13

Myers:

And they would make sure that it was right. They would check it off. Right. Mm-hmm. Yeah. It's a huge documentation system that they use, that is actually worldwide. And I don't know if they changed the name but, back in the day—because it's been over ten years since I worked for them—it was called the Worldwide Port System. And it was the documentation that, anywhere in the world somebody could add some stuff to it, to make sure that all of the information was correct on these things.

01-00:40:46

Lage:

Wow. Now during the time when you were there, were computers making a change in how you did things?

01-00:40:54

Myers:

[laughs] That's funny. What's really amazing is, before I got the job as a deputy—and I've told you that I was running around trying to get all these jobs trying to feed my kids. Well, one of the jobs that I applied for and got was an intern training position job. And that took me from a GS-7 all the way to an 11.

01-00:41:12

Lage:

In one jump?

01-00:41:14

Myers:

Well, in two years.

01-00:41:15

Lage: Oh, two years.

01-00:41:15

Myers: Yeah. And so the first job that I took after I was supposed to get my first real GS-11 job was a job in what they call the IT Division, which was the computer type. Back in that time, it wasn't really that complicated. And so then the job came open downstairs in the ocean terminal. Because I worked for the headquarters upstairs—at Oakland Army Base was all the headquarters, upstairs. And then downstairs was the ocean terminal, where everything was really happening.

01-00:41:50

Lage: Where the work was being done. [laughs]

01-00:41:51

Myers: Where the real work was being done. And I got a job as the IT person there for the ocean terminal. Now let me tell you. All we really had back then was CPUs. Nobody had PCs at their desk. And I really didn't know what I was doing. I knew enough to be real dangerous. I would always carry around a screwdriver. And mostly what I would do is unplug it and plug it in. And they would think I did some friggin' miracle, because I had a screwdriver in my hand.

It worked great! And then from that job is where I put in for the GS-12, for the deputy. And I'd already established a really good relationship. And while I was doing the computer job, I discovered that the person who was in that position before me had developed an offline computer system for my warehouses. It wasn't yet my warehouses then. But what I discovered when I was in headquarters is that the world was seeing that Oakland Army Base wasn't really—or at least the ocean terminal wasn't really processing that many containers. Only, I knew they were. And so I actually got that procedure changed, so that the world could see what we were really doing, which was, I think, really one of the reasons why they hired me. They could see that I really was a little bit on the ball. [laughs]

01-00:43:18

Lage: So what did you do? Can you describe more how you got everything on board?

01-00:43:22

Myers: Well, the person that was doing this was looking for a solution for the people in the warehouses to keep track of the cargo that was in the warehouse. And he developed a really good database. It was before Excel. Is it a dBASE?

01-00:43:43

Lage: I think that's just database.

01-00:43:43

Myers: It was a system before Excel. It was even before Excel.

01-00:43:46

Lage: Access?

01-00:43:47

Myers: What?

01-00:43:48

Lage: Access maybe?

01-00:43:49

Myers: No. I think it was called a dBASE system. Anyway, it calculated like an Excel spreadsheet. And it was a really great concept. It was a very good concept. And it worked really well on the ground. But the problem was is that they didn't realize that, because I had worked up in headquarters and I saw the paperwork that was coming through here and how confusing it was to the world, really—I thought, when I go down there, down to the ocean terminal, if I do get that job, then I'm going to try to change that; I'm going to try to fix that. And so I worked with an Army captain that was working for the Operations Division. And I said, "Dude—" We called everybody dude and dudette.

01-00:44:34

Lage: Uh!

01-00:44:34

Myers: I was the dudette. Everybody else was "dude." It was just really fun.

01-00:44:38

Lage: And all levels, the major—?

01-00:44:40

Myers: All levels, colonels—everybody was "dude." And anyway, for me, okay, I got away with a lot, because I was about the only girl. And plus I knew everything that was happening too. In fact, I have a coffee cup from one of the reservists, who actually made me a coffee cup that has "Dudette" on it. And anyway, so I told him that, "This is what I saw when I was upstairs, and I'd really like to help you change this," and that we need to convince the guy who's the deputy at the time that he needs to change it. Well, of course, he had serious ownership of this program. And so we finally convinced him that what he was doing was really good on the ground, but it wasn't really revealing everything that was to be done. So we did change that procedure. And then we did start getting seen, about how much work was being done at the Army base.

01-00:45:38

Lage: So you developed, in this case, your own system, or the Army base developed their own system.

01-00:45:43

Myers: The Army had already developed the system. But the warehouse seemed to think that it was just too—it wasn't working for what they needed it to do.

01-00:45:52  
Lage: I see.

01-00:45:52  
Myers: So they went to this other system, that worked for them really well on the ground.

01-00:45:56  
Lage: Yeah.

01-00:45:56  
Myers: And it did work for them really good on the ground. It was really brilliant. He did a really brilliant job with it. But the problem was the big computer system that the world saw didn't have all the information.

01-00:46:04  
Lage: It didn't fit in.

01-00:46:06  
Myers: Yeah.

01-00:46:06  
Lage: Yeah. Yeah.

01-00:46:07  
Myers: So we had them go back to entering it—we allowed them to do both of the systems, the one that worked well for them on the ground and also the one so that they could update so the world could see what they were doing.

01-00:46:18  
Lage: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. To give a better picture.

01-00:46:20  
Myers: Exactly. Because everything was just a computer report.

01-00:46:23  
Lage: I'm looking for—oh, here it is. Tell me if this is partly what you're talking about. LOGMARS?

01-00:46:32  
Myers: Yeah!

01-00:46:32  
Lage: Automated Army cargo tracking?

01-00:46:34  
Myers: Yeah.

01-00:46:36  
Lage: Is that the system of the Army itself—?

01-00:46:38  
Myers: Yeah. Yeah. And it fed the Worldwide Port System. I was part of the group that actually helped them establish their barcode system. And I think probably some of that LOGMARS stuff, that was part of the computer system that—you know how they scan barcodes?

01-00:47:00  
Lage: Sure.

01-00:47:01  
Myers: Well, that's what they put on the cargo now.

01-00:47:03  
Lage: I see.

01-00:47:03  
Myers: They put some really superduper-sticking labels. And it'll tell what that piece of cargo is, what the TCN number—Transportation Control Number is in the computer. And when you have that, you can find everything that you need to know about that particular piece of cargo, where it's supposed to go, all about it the weight, where it came from.

01-00:47:24  
Lage: And hopefully, the person over in Saudi Arabia can tell what it is?

01-00:47:28  
Myers: Yeah.

01-00:47:28  
Lage: So this must have come after Desert Storm.

01-00:47:30  
Myers: No, before.

01-00:47:33  
Lage: What about CODES, the computerized method of stowing cargo? What is that?

01-00:47:40  
Myers: No, that's are actually for the marine cargo specialists. They're the ones that could answer a lot of questions about that.

01-00:47:47  
Lage: Yeah.

01-00:47:47  
Myers: I know enough to be dangerous. I'd rather not say too much about those.

01-00:47:49  
Lage: Okay. [laughs] But it was something that came on board while you were there.

01-00:47:53  
Myers: All those were developed all because of the wars, different ways of handling cargos, different ways of documenting cargos. Right after the first leg of Desert Storm, there was all of these after-action reports done and big, huge meetings and conferences. And how can we do this better? What did we screw up on? And it was amazing what was developed after that, just amazing.

01-00:48:22  
Lage: And this must have been taking place at a higher level than just the Oakland Army Base.

01-00:48:29  
Myers: It was. But I was part of that, because I was in management. So I got to be part of that. Yeah, those meetings.

01-00:48:34  
Lage: And would you go elsewhere to have meetings and—?

01-00:48:37  
Myers: Oh, yeah. I spent a lot of time in Washington, D.C.

01-00:48:39  
Lage: Oh, you did?

01-00:48:40  
Myers: Oh, yeah.

01-00:48:40  
Lage: Okay. Well, let's be sure and come back to that, too. [laughter]

01-00:48:44  
Myers: Okay.

01-00:48:45  
Lage: We've talked about Desert Storm. And you were fairly new on the job then, right?

01-00:48:52  
Myers: I was.

01-00:48:52  
Lage: But you did have this job as division head at that time.

01-00:48:55  
Myers: Yeah. Yeah.

01-00:48:58  
Lage: Okay. Is there more to tell me about the operation, what change it brought to the base?

01-00:49:07

Myers:

Well, we got really good at it. Because you've got to remember it was a twenty-four-hour operation, in all types of weather. And when it would rain real hard, we would have to like pull stuff out of the mud, out on the pier. One of the things that's really interesting about the port, which I thought was just—I'll tell you a funny story about a captain, he's a reservist captain, but he was there for two years. And he did just a great job. Great transporter. Anyway, out at the pier there's a staging area, and the acronym for that staging area is SPIT, S-P-I-T. And whenever he would be giving briefings, he would always talk about, "Yeah, these pieces of cargo are out on the SPIT," and he would always go "ph!" [laughter] when he would say that, when he was giving briefings in front of these people, really high-ranking officers. I would know he was doing it. But these, it would just go right over their head. They wouldn't ever notice that he was doing it. Whenever he would say the word "SPIT," he'd always go "ph!" [laughter] And I would have to keep a straight face, right, because I was the only girl in the whole conference room. And so you're already a goldfish in a bowl, when you're the only girl. And so I would have to just keep a straight face. But he would just crack me up when he would do that. But we would have to do little pieces of humor like that just to make our day.

01-00:50:29

Lage:

Sure.

01-00:50:30

Myers:

Because it was really hard work. But we had so much fun doing it. We really did.

01-00:50:33

Lage:

And you were sort of supervising a twenty-four-hour a day operation.

01-00:50:38

Myers:

Yeah.

01-00:50:38

Lage:

So you had people working around the clock. Right?

01-00:50:40

Myers:

We did, yeah.

01-00:50:41

Lage:

Yeah.

01-00:50:41

Myers:

And so you'd have to find out what was happening on the tv news in the morning and—and back in the day, I had my jogging thing. What do you call it, where you stand—? You stand on it and you jog.

01-00:50:53

Lage:

Oh, the—

01-00:50:54  
Myers: I know. I forgot the name!

01-00:50:55  
Lage: [laughs] Right!

01-00:50:56  
Myers: Yeah. Anyway, you know what I'm talking about.

01-00:50:58  
Lage: Yeah.

01-00:50:59  
Myers: Anyway, I would exercise in front of the news in the morning. And rule number one, stay out of the media. So I would always have to report in the meeting if we got in the media, or whether it was good or bad or whatever. Yeah. Because a lot of people—

01-00:51:15  
Lage: Oh, oh, you mean you watched the news, to see—

01-00:51:16  
Myers: The real news, yeah. Because our operations were on the news a lot.

01-00:51:19  
Lage: Now why did you want you to stay out of the media?

01-00:51:24  
Myers: Well, because—not all the time, but there was one time where, when we were starting—during the BRAC—I'm just hitting all these different timeframes. Okay.

01-00:51:35  
Lage: The BRAC is the shutdown. Okay.

01-00:51:37  
Myers: The BRAC started. So we had to move our reefer operation to Alameda.

01-00:51:45  
Lage: Now, say what reefer is.

01-00:51:48  
Myers: Okay. Refrigerated warehouse operation.

01-00:51:56  
Lage: So you were shutting down the base. So some of the operations are continuing.

01-00:51:59  
Myers: They're starting to move it to other locations. Right. Okay. Alameda did not want the Army there.

01-00:52:06  
Lage: Because they were so Navy oriented? Or—?

01-00:52:09  
Myers: Well, they just didn't want the Army there. Plus we did have small arms there, even though we told them—and we had to go to a lot of their city meetings and stuff. But the small arms that we had were no more than what is sold at Kmart. So it wasn't even that big of a deal. But because it had the Army name on it, they were just convinced that we were doing something weird. Which we weren't. We were so open. But it's interesting, though, why they made such a big deal about it. Because it was—

01-00:52:48  
Lage: I think of Alameda as being more welcoming to the military.

01-00:52:51  
Myers: It wasn't. It really wasn't.

01-00:52:54  
Lage: And what was the end result then?

01-00:52:55  
Myers: It had a lot to do with the small arms. And there wasn't even that many. But it was a dry warehouse and a reefer warehouse.

01-00:53:04  
Lage: And dry warehouse means—

01-00:53:06  
Myers: Just regular dry cargo.

01-00:53:08  
Lage: Mm-hmm. Which might include small arms.

01-00:53:10  
Myers: Yeah, small arms. That was such a small, minute part of what they did.

01-00:53:14  
Lage: Overall, you didn't ship too many weapons from what I understand just tanks.

01-00:53:20  
Myers: The big guys.

01-00:53:20  
Lage: Yeah.

01-00:53:21  
Myers: The big guns.

01-00:53:22  
Lage: Right.

01-00:53:23  
Myers: Yeah, a lot of vehicles, a lot of vehicles, all kinds of vehicles, Hummers, everything. Everything. Yeah.

01-00:53:32  
Lage: And then food, clothing.

01-00:53:33  
Myers: Yeah.

01-00:53:35  
Lage: What other kinds of thing?

01-00:53:35  
Myers: Well, it really depended, too, on whether or not the vendor would have a full container. And sometimes it would just be put on another ship that wasn't even being loaded at Oakland Army Base. It would depend. The situations are real different, depending on the particular operation. And then I already told you about Defense Logistics Agency, how they would just send gobs of stuff. But all of that's changed now. And it's because of the mistakes that we look at after a war. They take them extremely seriously, any kind of bump in the road. The military is so dedicated to keeping their troops safe and getting the stuff that the troops need there in the best, most efficient way, so that they can collect what they need in the theater, in the war theater. Because you could be dodging bullets to get to the port and you can't find your stuff. And you've got people that need band-aids or medication or something and they can't get it. And that's what you keep in your mind as a civilian.

01-00:54:50  
Lage: Yeah.

01-00:54:50  
Myers: You've got to get the stuff to the kids.

01-00:54:51  
Lage: How did this get transmitted, this sense that you have of being a part of the big operation, the mission. How did—?

01-00:55:01  
Myers: Now I'm going to start crying. [laughter]

01-00:55:02  
Lage: That's okay if you do.

01-00:55:03  
Myers: Because we all were. Yeah.

01-00:55:06  
Lage: You were all—

01-00:55:06

Myers: We all—it's not just me!

01-00:55:10

Lage: That's what I want you—

01-00:55:10

Myers: All of us there in my division, everybody, even the people that were documenting stuff, our hearts were there for those troops, to make sure that we get those kids what they needed. We knew our mission was important. If we didn't do what we needed to do, they wouldn't get their vehicles, they wouldn't get their food, they wouldn't get all of the stuff that we sent over through our port.

01-00:55:30

Lage: So you felt that the people you worked with, who worked under you, they didn't have to be taught this or—

01-00:55:36

Myers: Oh, we all knew.

01-00:55:37

Lage: —have it instilled in them in some—

01-00:55:38

Myers: We all knew. That's why it was so hard when the BRAC closed us all down. Because what was interesting about the BRAC is that the people that were on the BRAC committee, with all due respect for them, they didn't understand our mission at all. And they kept saying, "Well, you know, all the Desert Storm, all the desert wars, they weren't on your side of the world and so you weren't needed anyway." But we were working twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Military Traffic Management Command has got—well, at the time; now it's changed. But it's got a West Coast and an East Coast. And they literally, well, pretend like the world is an orange. And you cut it right down the middle, which is the Mississippi River. And we're the West Coast. And then Sunny Point took care of the East Coast.

01-00:56:27

Lage: Which Point was—?

01-00:56:28

Myers: Sunny Point, Bayonne, and all of those ports would take care of the East Coast.

01-00:56:32

Lage: They had more than one.

01-00:56:33

Myers: Oh, yeah. There was so much stuff being shipped over there, over the years. And even now they still support— [phone rings]

[End Audio File 1]

Begin Audio File 2 07-11-2008.mp3

02-00:00:00

Lage: Okay. This is tape two with Mary Myer, for the Oakland Army Base project still continuing on July 11. You were saying how misguided the BRAC people were.

02-00:00:22

Myers: Oh, my God!

02-00:00:23

Lage: Or maybe they didn't understand.

02-00:00:24

Myers: They didn't understand what we were doing. Because that war was so big. That our real purpose is to take care of the western part of the world, which would be Korea and places like that. And we were doing all kinds of things for Desert Storm.

02-00:00:43

Lage: And how were they shipped? It does look like it's on the other side of the world.

02-00:00:45

Myers: It is.

02-00:00:47

Lage: What was the routing over to—

02-00:00:53

Myers: Where the ship went?

02-00:00:54

Lage: Yeah. Did it go through the canal and—?

02-00:00:58

Myers: You know what? I don't even know. The marine cargo specialists could tell you that. I just knew that it was going there, and it would always come back. [laughs]

02-00:01:04

Lage: Yeah. It could go either way, go west or east.

02-00:01:09

Myers: I'm not really exactly sure how it went over there, to tell you the truth, the path. The marine cargo specialists could tell you that.

02-00:01:16

Lage: But a lot did go from here to the Persian Gulf.

02-00:01:17  
Myers: I just know that it went there, and it was destination Persian Gulf.

02-00:01:20  
Lage: Yeah. Yeah.

02-00:01:21  
Myers: Yeah. And it would come back from the Persian Gulf. And you could tell, after the Kuwaiti oil field incidents—they were just covered in oil—covered—it was really weird. I just remember that so distinctly, that it would be like about, oh, probably a couple feet worth of an oil line all around the ship.

02-00:01:39  
Lage: Good heaven. Yeah. From all the oil that just leaked out into the—

02-00:01:44  
Myers: Well, what happens is that, when they're loading the ship—the oil is, of course, all over the ocean there. And as the ship is being loaded, it goes lower and lower into the water. And then when it's unloaded, it goes up again, right? So you can see those oil lines.

02-00:02:01  
Lage: Yeah.

02-00:02:02  
Myers: It's just amazing.

02-00:02:03  
Lage: Like a bathtub ring.

02-00:02:04  
Myers: Yeah, exactly. It was really amazing.

02-00:02:08  
Lage: Well, let's leave the BRAC committee and talk about that towards the end of our interview.

02-00:02:13  
Myers: Okay.

02-00:02:14  
Lage: You know. There are so many questions about that. But I think we should continue to try to get an idea of the—

02-00:02:21  
Myers: The operations?

02-00:02:21  
Lage: The operations and the spirit that you talk about.

02-00:02:26  
Myers: Well, what I can tell you, though, is in the Operations Division, like I said before, it's like you didn't really mind being there that many hours, because it was fun, even though you were working your butt off. It was—

02-00:02:39  
Lage: Now what was fun about it?

02-00:02:39  
Myers: —like your family. It was just like family.

02-00:02:42  
Lage: The people?

02-00:02:43  
Myers: The people.

02-00:02:43  
Lage: Or the war?

02-00:02:44  
Myers: Even though we worked our butts off, we would all have a good time doing it. We all knew what we were doing. We all knew that we were supporting each other. We had to get that ship loaded or the train offloaded or the trucks offloaded or unloaded or—and there would be different—it was actually really fun just to determine how to do these operations in a way that would be—for instance, since we were doing twenty-four operations—the longshoremen only work, at the max, twelve hours a day. So then you would have a change of shift. Well, there was a few times where the night shift would undo what the day shift did and so we would have to do it all over again.

02-00:03:26  
Lage: Now how is that? Was this a make-work kind of thing?

02-00:03:27  
Myers: Yeah. Because all the longshoremen were contracted. And so, because of a miscommunication to the contractor, or a misunderstanding, I think, by the contractor, that they undid everything that the day shift did, so that we had to redo it all over again. And little things like this: one of the remedies was, okay, we're going to color-code the cargo. Sounds like a brilliant idea, doesn't it?

02-00:03:56  
Lage: Yes, it does.

02-00:03:56  
Myers: Color-code the cargo. All the red ones go over here. All the blue ones go over here. All the orange ones go over here. But did you know that one-fourth of all men are colorblind?

02-00:04:05

Lage: [laughs] I didn't realize it was that high.

02-00:04:07

Myers: So do you know how many things got in the wrong color?

02-00:04:11

Lage: Oh.

02-00:04:11

Myers: So that did not work. [laughter] And that was a brilliant idea by just about every single major that came through as the commander of our division, and I'd always have to say, "Do you know that one-fourth of men are colorblind?" [laughs]

02-00:04:23

Lage: You would have to tell them?

02-00:04:24

Myers: Yes. I said, "We tried that already. It didn't work! Do numbers! That works better."

02-00:04:33

Lage: That's great. Tell me more about the commanders coming through, and how you related to the military commanders.

02-00:04:41

Myers: Oh, God. I know. I just had the greatest—they were all Army majors, all of them that came through. And all of them, actually, got promoted to lieutenant colonel, colonels, over the years.

02-00:04:52

Lage: After they left there?

02-00:04:53

Myers: Yeah.

02-00:04:54

Lage: And how long did they serve?

02-00:04:56

Myers: I had some that stayed as short as six months, but usually they would stay for at least a year, a year-and-a-half, or two years. And, in fact, right now I just went to the retirement of one of the majors that came through when we had already moved to Concord Naval Weapons Station. And I went to his retirement. And it was just so neat to be there. He left as a major when I was still working there ten years ago and went and did all of his other duties, wherever he went, all over the place. And then he came back, as his last tour of duty, to be the commander of what was left of the ocean terminal.

02-00:05:35

Lage: Ah.

02-00:05:36

Myers: So he actually was over the entire thing, not just the Operations Division but the entire ocean terminal, to include the documentation section.

02-00:05:45

Lage: So you would have a major who was under the commander.

02-00:05:49

Myers: Right. There would be a commander, who was head of the entire ocean terminal. And then it would branched off to the Operations Division, which was us, the Documentation Division, which supported us, and then the Contracting Division, which was a small division but they were very important, especially now, since almost all the jobs were being contracted out. That was really a very, very, very hard, traumatic time. The first contract that was contracted for my Cargo Operations Division was the privately owned vehicle lot.

02-00:06:22

Lage: Oh.

02-00:06:23

Myers: And that meant that the people that were over there—there wasn't a lot, just a handful, I want to say like seven or eight.

02-00:06:31

Lage: Seven or eight people who worked there.

02-00:06:32

Myers: Civilian workers. Their jobs were going to be contracted out. And then, jobs were pretty plentiful at Oakland Army Base. So it was actually okay. They just didn't get to do the job they really liked. They got moved to another job but they didn't lose pay, they didn't lose their benefits or anything like that. They just got moved to another site. And this was the very first contract that we did. Then Mount Pinatubo—I can't say that word right. It exploded, a volcano.

And when she exploded, that left over 1,000 damaged vehicles that belonged to the military that needed to be moved to our POV lot. That contract was only one week old when they started bringing those cars in that were covered in volcanic ash. They were really crapped out. [laughter] And it was a very exciting time, actually. Those kinds of things are really disgusting, and it's really sad, but it's exciting to develop fixes for these things. Anyway, so that contractor said, "I can't handle 1,000 vehicles. I quit." And so, luckily, our government workers just went happily back to their old positions, saying, "Oh, yay! Contracting's never going to work!"

"Contracting's never going to work!" Well, it took at least a year, I believe, later before they actually got another contract in place to do the POV lot, and then those people got moved out again.

02-00:08:02

Lage: Now POV means—

02-00:08:04

Myers: Privately Owned Vehicles.

02-00:08:05

Lage: Privately Owned.

02-00:08:06

Myers: And that's the operation that, we received the military vehicles, and the civilian people too, when they have to go change their duty station. What they do is they turn in their car and we make sure it gets to their next duty station. And then they go to the other POV lot located close to their duty station and pick their car up.

02-00:08:25

Lage: I see. So you may be transporting it where, how far?

02-00:08:29

Myers: All over the world.

02-00:08:32

Lage: But mainly on the west and the Far East?

02-00:08:33

Myers: Well, they would receive them on the west, but if they're—yeah, Far East, Europe, wherever. We could take them from all over the world. And the one's that would be handled on the eastern side, the Military Traffic Management Command Eastern, we would rail those over there for them and then they would load them up on their end.

02-00:08:53

Lage: Right.

02-00:08:53

Myers: Yeah. We—

02-00:08:55

Lage: That's something you'd never think of, this privately owned vehicle operation.

02-00:08:58

Myers: Yeah. A big deal.

02-00:08:58

Lage: But that got contracted out.

02-00:09:00

Myers:

That is a very, very sensitive operation. Because these young kids, even we as grownups, our car is one of our most important things, next to our house. And these guys don't really have a house, because they're active duty military, living all over the world and having to change where they live about every two years. And so they want to make sure their car gets there okay, you know? Even if it's a crapped out car, it's important to them.

02-00:09:24

Lage:

Yeah. [laughs]

02-00:09:24

Myers:

So we take really care to make sure that we take care of the military members when they do come in, to turn their car in and also to pick them up. And we try to provide a nice little area so that the kids have a place to play. And we have coffee for the guys that come in. Because a lot of them are taking taxicabs, literally, from airports to come get their cars.

02-00:09:45

Lage:

Hm!

02-00:09:46

Myers:

So all kinds of stores about that. Yeah.

02-00:09:49

Lage:

Tell me a story about that. I think that's part of the human interest story.

02-00:09:54

Myers:

It was. That was the story in Oakland, at Oakland Army Base, at the POV lot. And like I said, finally it did get contracted out. I'll talk a little bit about those vehicles that—we had a lot of different things happen to vehicles. Another incident that happened was—I want to say that it happened—oh, God. I can't remember the port. I have it written down somewhere. But there was a ship that actually collided with another ship. And luckily, the ship captain was able to get the ship close enough to the shore where it didn't completely sink. But I saw an aerial photograph of the accident and the containers that contained privately owned vehicles of our military, it looked like somebody threw up pick-up sticks. And those were forty-foot containers. The aerial photograph was just phenomenal. It was just phenomenal. It was just amazing to see that. Anyway, so they had somebody go there onsite to that location, someplace in the Far East somewhere. And the valuated which cars were kind of okay. And so we had to hire a car evaluator to estimate damages to come and actually evaluate the cars to see which ones were just really hopeless. But those containers that came from this ship—remember, they're all looking like pick-up sticks, right?

02-00:11:27

Lage:

Yeah.

02-00:11:27

Myers:

Well, by the time they got a lot of those containers to us, they had huge dents in them, where it actually—the containers are just like—they're not that thick metal. And so when you got a big dent in it and there's a car real close to the side of the container, the car's going to have a big dent in it. So anyway, our guys would actually have to try to pull these cars out of these containers. And a lot of those containers had been submerged under the ocean. And so I would tease them. I'd go, "Hey, you guys, first one who finds a fish, I want to see it." And so nobody brought me a fish. But I was out there to watch the operation. What was really interesting is that the guys would literally have to—they would literally get two POVs, usually, in a forty-foot container. That's normal. And then they would block and brace them so they wouldn't move. And then it could just move by commercial containerization. Well, when they were unloading them, the guys normally have to, even when the container is straight—they would slither over the car, literally slither over, and then turn on the car to back it out. And check it out, make sure everything's okay and remove the dunnage and stuff, and then back out the first car, normally, and then the second car. Well, this situation, because they had been in the ocean, all of the wheels and everything were just totally frozen. They would have to like bang them and try to loosen it up so that they could even move the car. They had to tow most of them out, bang out the dents in the container so that they could actually pull the car out. Oh, this was a hilarious story. I just worked with the greatest people. It's just they just kept such a sense of humor over the stuff they had to do.

They started wearing raingear to remove these cars because, when they would sit on the seat, it was just totally saturated with stinky, stinky, stinky, stinky seawater, that had been fermenting for Lord knows how long. And anyway, so they would tell me all these real—and what was really interesting is that, when they would pull them out, the headlights would have water, like an aquarium, from the sea. It was just friggin' amazing, absolutely amazing.

02-00:13:46

Lage:

Amazing. And it seems like there really—

02-00:13:48

Myers:

It was amazing, amazing.

02-00:13:50

Lage:

How many of them could be salvaged?

02-00:13:53

Myers:

Well, not a lot of them were. But we actually gave—some of them, that maybe could be salvaged, we let the service member decide—because it's their baby.

02-00:14:03

Lage:

Yeah.

02-00:14:04

Myers:

You know? It's just you want to give them the opportunity to say, "Oh, forget it," or, "Okay." You don't know what the story is behind each one of these cars. It could have been something that was given to them by their dad or something—you know what I mean?—some really great sentimental value.

02-00:14:17

Lage:

Yeah.

02-00:14:17

Myers:

So you want to give them the opportunity of looking at it. But while these vehicles—and there were so many of them. They were like lined up. And we actually selected a part of the property of the Army base where that we could just like store them, like a big parking lot until the guys could come, the service members could come and tell us whether they wanted them or not. But then all of a sudden we had this big infestation of these little teeny weird little—they were like flies but they were weird! And I don't know if they were from the Far East or what. But all of a sudden we had this infiltration of all of this really weird—these weird insects. So we had to handle that. And it's just all of this—

02-00:14:53

Lage:

This is a good illustration of the—

02-00:14:54

Myers:

Yeah, of all the interesting things that happen, where you would never really think that it could be that amazing. And even just the cars that came back that were covered in ash from the volcanic eruption, just to see those were just—that was a mind-blower, to see how much damage ash can do. It was really very amazing. And again, we let the guys come and determine whether or not they want to keep their car or not. Because it just infiltrates. I guess it's kind of like the 9/11 thing.

02-00:15:23

Lage:

Yeah.

02-00:15:23

Myers:

You know how all that—the building falls and all there is is just ashes everywhere?

02-00:15:28

Lage:

Right, just like Twin Towers.

02-00:15:28

Myers:

Yeah. It's the same thing with the Mount Pinatubo.

02-00:15:31

Lage:

And then how did you get rid of the ones, in both cases, that were not wanted?

02-00:15:36  
Myers: We had a contractor that got rid of it. And then the G.I.s would actually file a claim and they would get the value.

02-00:15:46  
Lage: Get reimbursed.

02-00:15:47  
Myers: That's why we actually hired a professional person who could evaluate what the car would be worth.

02-00:15:54  
Lage: Mm-hmm. Well, became an expensive operation.

[break in audio]

02-00:15:59  
Lage: Okay. Little break here. We're going to have another ten minutes or so and then maybe stop for today.

02-00:16:06  
Myers: Okay.

02-00:16:07  
Lage: I'm not sure where to go next. As you say, we're kind of jumping all over.

02-00:16:13  
Myers: We are.

02-00:16:13  
Lage: But we're getting the picture.

02-00:16:14  
Myers: Yeah.

02-00:16:15  
Lage: Yeah. I had asked you, and I don't think we followed up on this, about your relationship with the military officers that you worked basically for.

02-00:16:24  
Myers: Yeah. That I worked for and—you know what's interesting? Is that, even though they were colonels, they were just the dudes.

02-00:16:32  
Lage: Yeah. [laughs]

02-00:16:32  
Myers: They were just part of the family. [laughs]

02-00:16:33  
Lage: How quickly did that relationship come about? Did it start out more formally?

02-00:16:37  
Myers: I never was and still am not really paying that much attention to people's ranks. I call everybody sir. That kind of gets me out of a lot of things, especially when I was a deputy. Now I don't have to worry, because I have a job where I'm not really—I don't have to worry about that. I'm just a contracting officer. For the Coast Guard. And I don't have to worry about that.

02-00:17:02  
Lage: But how did it go from sir to dude?

02-00:17:04  
Myers: The problem was that my guys that worked for me, they all knew that—we worked on the waterfront. There was a lot of F-words being said. And that's just the way it is. Because the work is like—whenever you work in transportation—anybody who works on the ground like that will tell you that it moves at rocket speed. And you're trying to juggle ten million balls, and you've got to make sure you don't drop any of those balls, because if you do the whole thing could fall apart and your ship has to stay another day. And that's thousands of dollars for each day that your ship is alongside.

02-00:17:46  
Lage: Right, yeah.

02-00:17:48  
Myers: So anyway, my relationship with the guys that worked with me was "dude."

02-00:17:55  
Lage: This is the marine cargo specialist.

02-00:17:57  
Myers: This was the military—

02-00:17:58  
Lage: Everybody.

02-00:17:59  
Myers: Everybody.

02-00:18:00  
Lage: Were the marine cargo specialists all civilian?

02-00:18:03  
Myers: All of them were civilian at that time. There were some that came to assist the marine cargo specialists, that were military, that were reservists.

02-00:18:10  
Lage: Because when you had a big push—

02-00:18:11  
Myers: And there still is.

- 02-00:18:13  
Lage: —like Desert Storm, I would think you would need—you're going twenty-four hours a day. You must need more marine cargo specialists.
- 02-00:18:19  
Myers: Well, what would happen is that the marine cargo specialists would do—remember I talked about the crossword puzzle?
- 02-00:18:26  
Lage: Mm-hmm.
- 02-00:18:26  
Myers: It's like a ship-load, a ship-loading thing? And then what they do is they mark where everything's supposed to go. And then they instruct the military guys and the civilian, whoever's going to be there, to assist them in making sure that things really get there. Because things are being loaded simultaneously in different parts of the ship all at the same time. And you can't be everywhere at one time. So everybody gets a copy and everybody's literally checking off, okay, that piece is there and that piece is there, and to make sure that all the pieces got on there, and it's the right piece going in the right place. You want to make sure that that's—otherwise, you're going to have something that needs to be dropped off at the port that you're at, and you've got to offload half the ship because it got in the wrong spot.
- 02-00:19:11  
Lage: Yeah, yeah.
- 02-00:19:11  
Myers: Not a good thing. [laughter] So but that's what the marine cargo specialists make sure—and the military would help them do that.
- 02-00:19:17  
Lage: Okay. So during times of big rush, you'd have assistance from the military.
- 02-00:19:22  
Myers: Yeah. And then remember too that, during Desert Storm and all of the wars, really, there, that the longshoremen were all contracted out by then. That was all a contracted operation. When I got into my position there, it was already a contracted operation.
- 02-00:19:45  
Lage: So the people actually loading were contracted out, the longshoremen.
- 02-00:19:50  
Myers: Contracted out. Yeah.
- 02-00:19:52  
Lage: And your people were—
- 02-00:19:52  
Myers: The ILWU. They were ILWU. It was a contract, that was actually—

02-00:19:56  
Lage: Did you have any relationship with them?

02-00:19:58  
Myers: Well, the way the ILWU works, they actually have a—not all the same people always come. But there are certain people that were head of the contract that, yes, I did have a working relationship with them. But as a government employee, it's strictly business.

02-00:20:16  
Lage: You didn't have the "dude"—

02-00:20:18  
Myers: No, no, no, no, no. No. No.

02-00:20:19  
Lage: That seems to be where the division was, not between military and civilian.

02-00:20:24  
Myers: Yeah. Well, you have to do that, though.

02-00:20:27  
Lage: Yeah.

02-00:20:27  
Myers: You can't show any kind of special treatment to contractors. And I'm learning that even way more, now that I'm a contracting officer, you have to be very, very careful. You have to make sure that you keep everything on an even playing field, and only just work with the black and white that's in your contract—and make sure you've got a good contract. Otherwise you might need to have something done and you ain't going to get it done [laughter] unless you add more money to it. But, no, the relationship, for me anyway, was strictly with—the really close, close relationship, family relationship—it was a family. It's still a family.

02-00:21:03  
Lage: Was with what?

02-00:21:06  
Myers: The military and the civilians that were there.

02-00:21:10  
Lage: Of all ranks?

02-00:21:12  
Myers: All ranks.

02-00:21:12  
Lage: Are we talking about all ranks?

02-00:21:13  
Myers: All ranks.

02-00:21:13  
Lage: What was the hierarchy like? I always think of the military as being a bit stuffy about hierarchy.

02-00:21:19  
Myers: Military is a little bit stuffy about hierarchy. But during a war, people really work together. And when we were having our briefings, we try to be really professional but as soon as we get out of the briefing room it's, "Hey, dude," [laughs] "don't forget to get that done. Do this. Do that. Do that." But in the briefings we try to be very professional. And especially during a war, you have a lot of visitors. A lot of generals want to come. All the big generals—two-star, three stars, want to come and play.

02-00:21:55  
Lage: When you say play, you mean observe or—?

02-00:21:57  
Myers: Observe, yeah.

02-00:21:58  
Lage: Yeah. See what's happening?

02-00:21:59  
Myers: Well, they want to be where the action is. And that's where the action was.

02-00:22:05  
Lage: If you weren't over there fighting the war.

02-00:22:08  
Myers: Yeah, the action was at the port.

02-00:22:11  
Lage: Yeah.

02-00:22:11  
Myers: It was just a blast. Yeah. It really was. It was hard work but we knew we were doing it for a reason. And it just energized us and brought us really close together.

02-00:22:20  
Lage: Mm-hmm. Now after Desert—I keep wanting to ask more questions, but we still haven't answered how you got to know the military—

02-00:22:33  
Myers: Well, you know what?

02-00:22:33  
Lage: —your boss, in effect—

02-00:22:37  
Myers: Okay, my major?

02-00:22:38

Lage: Your major, who would come in every six months to two years. You'd have somebody new!

02-00:22:41

Myers: Well, they knew I knew all the answers. They already knew. I would always introduce myself. I would always be a little bit leery about the new guy, but I never got one major that I didn't get along with. And I always honored their position as the division head. But they honored me as the one who knew everything. And I would always tell them that, "I'm right here to give you all the answers that you need. I have all kinds of files and we've done all kinds of stuff—a lot of these operations before." And I say, "And I will tell you that you're about to embark on the funnest job you're ever going to have in your whole career." And they would always say, "You were right."

02-00:23:23

Lage: Really?

02-00:23:24

Myers: "You were right." Yup. In fact, the colonel that just retired that was at one time a major of the Cargo Operations Division, that—

02-00:23:36

Lage: That you went to his retirement.

02-00:23:37

Myers: —I was his deputy. Yeah. I said, "Now wasn't it the funnest job?" And he goes, "Yeah, it sure was." And he was done with his career already. Yeah. Because it was. I just feel so grateful that I had the opportunity to do that. Because I did it for twelve years.

02-00:23:52

Lage: Can you tell a little more about why it was so much fun?

02-00:23:56

Myers: Well, you knew that you were doing something really important, and that you were helping thousands and thousands of kids that were wherever they were fighting, in the theater, or even just—we sent a lot of stuff to Southern Korea and stuff, and Pusan, and all different places all over the place, where you were supporting the warfighters. And not that any of us were into war, but we know that sometimes it's important, that sometimes you really do have to do this to defend our country, and that we need to help protect these kids and help make sure they get what they need. Because if we weren't going to do it, it wasn't going to get there.

02-00:24:44

Lage: Yeah, yeah. But that explains—

02-00:24:47

Myers: It just brought us together.

02-00:24:48

Lage: —the sense of mission, but the sense of fun—

02-00:24:50

Myers: But the sense of love and—well, the military people have a way of—they don't wait around, like we do, to make friends. They don't feel you out, that much. They just kind of plunge into relationships. You know?

02-00:25:09

Lage: You think because they're transferred so much?

02-00:25:11

Myers: They don't have time! They're only going to be there for a year or maybe two. And they don't want to be lonely. And a lot of the guys, they're like single young guys that are missing their family. And I was the mommy.

02-00:25:26

Lage: Yeah. Tell me more about that, how you were the mommy.

02-00:25:29

Myers: I'll tell you a really sad story—a really sad story. This was right towards the end of my career with the Army. Because my division had already been contracted out, there was just a handful of people left. They didn't need a deputy any more. And one of the guys that worked for me was—he was a captain in the Army, David Connelly. And he was a little bit outspoken, and people weren't really sure how to take him. But he was in his thirties, came from a really, really strict Irish Catholic family. And not very many people knew this but he did have a shamrock, a big shamrock, tattooed on his leg.

But anyway, he would come and I would try to—what I would say—keep him out of trouble. And one day he came to my office and he goes, "Mary, I'm getting ready to get out of the military, and I'm thinking about being a lawyer." And I said, "Dude, the way you like to argue, go for it!" [laughs] "You'd be a great lawyer!" So he got out of the Army and he got in law school. He was from Boston. And while he was in California, though—I'm very, very active in the Bay to Breakers in San Francisco.

02-00:26:37

Lage: Oh, you are?

02-00:26:38

Myers: My sister and I have competed many times. In fact, this year we were part of the advertising campaign, and we had posters of us in our costumes all over the place. Anyway, I introduced Dave Connelly to the Bay to Breakers. And so he did it the first year he was in California. And then, after he went back to Boston, him and a bunch of his Boston friends from college would come all the way to California to do the Bay to Breakers. And even there would be 80,000 to 100,000 people in this huge mammoth crowd—I don't know if you know about the Bay to Breakers—

02-00:27:05

Lage: Yeah, yeah, I do.

02-00:27:05

Myers: —but there's gobs of people. We would always seem to find each other every year. And anyway, so two year—I guess it's been maybe three years. I'm losing track of my years. But anyway, one of the years, he couldn't be there because he was taking his exam for his law degree. And he passed it. He passed it. So he was a lawyer.

Then his reserve unit got called back, and he had to go over to Iraq. And he—now I'm going to cry. He was killed in a helicopter crash. He was helping to bail out a bunch of guys that needed to be moved, and their helicopter crashed and he was killed. But it was really sad. But you really get to love these guys, and you really get to know about their families. And they need people to talk to too. And you just love them, because they're just so open. They open their hearts to you. And it's so hard not to open your heart to them. You know?

02-00:28:08

Lage: That's lovely. And I think you really have helped me understand this.

02-00:28:12

Myers: Yeah. They're a different kind of people. They don't waste time. And we can learn a lot from that. We can learn a whole lot from that.

02-00:28:22

Lage: That's very nice. I think that's a nice way to end for today.

02-00:28:25

Myers: OK. [laughs] Me crying?

02-00:28:28

Lage: [laughs] Yeah.

[End Audio File 2]

Interview 2: 7/18/2008

Begin Audio File 3 07-18-2008.mp3

03-00:00:00

Lage: Okay. We are starting out second interview with Mary Myers. And this is July 18, 2008, the Oakland Army Base project.

03-00:00:16

Myers: Right.

03-00:00:17

Lage: Mary, I warned you that I was going to ask the most mundane of questions, which can give us an idea of the organizational structure of the Oakland Army Base. I don't think we really have it laid out anywhere.

03-00:00:29

Myers:

The Oakland Army Base was actually, in its heyday, probably about five years before it actually closed, was a real bustling place. Not only did it have the ocean terminal but it also had Military Traffic Management Command's headquarters upstairs. And so the whole top level of the Building 1 was a headquarters. Downstairs was the ocean terminal. Plus there was properties that the ocean terminal used to load ships and trucks and trains and run their POV lot, which is Privately Owned Vehicle. That was just a small section of the Oakland Army Base.

Then you can go down the road, and there was a bowling alley, there was a morgue, there was an arts and craft place. There was an entire school, with two stories of classrooms. And actually, that's where the Port of Oakland worked in conjunction with Oakland Army Base. And where I received half of my units for my AA degree in transportation logistics—

03-00:01:27

Lage:

Were right there on the base.

03-00:01:28

Myers:

—was right there in those classrooms. That was before I ever came to work for the Army. Isn't that weird, how things work? Yeah.

03-00:01:35

Lage:

Was that—?

03-00:01:36

Myers:

There was a gas station.

03-00:01:37

Lage:

Someone I interviewed had taken classes under Columbia College, I think she called it. Would that have been there?

03-00:01:42

Myers:

They may have changed the name to Columbia towards the end. But it was just—they called it Jacobs Hall.

03-00:01:50

Lage:

I see.

03-00:01:51

Myers:

And then—I'm trying to remember what the certificates—I actually have many of them. I could look and tell you what the name of it is. I can't recall any more.

03-00:01:59

Lage:

So a lot of it was—

03-00:02:00

Myers:

We just called it Jacobs Hall. And there was actually a place there where people could stay if they were coming in. Because people would fly from all

over the world, really, and come and go to school there. What else did they have there? They had a motor pool there. They had—then you would go across the bridge and it would be the Naval Supply Center. We were right next door.

03-00:02:24

Lage: Right next door.

03-00:02:25

Myers: So the Military Sealift Command was right across what we called the bridge, on the naval side. And we worked very closely with them.

03-00:02:31

Lage: Did the naval side use Jacobs Hall, for instance, or share these facilities?

03-00:02:34

Myers: Oh, sure. Yeah. Everybody shared those facilities.

03-00:02:38

Lage: The bowling alley and all of that.

03-00:02:40

Myers: Yeah, cafeteria, all the places to go get junk food.

03-00:02:43

Lage: Right. Now, those were open to both civilian and military.

03-00:02:48

Myers: Yes, as long as you were employed with the bases, you were allowed to go in. And you would have to show what we call our military ID, but it's civilians. It'll say the word civilian on it.

03-00:02:58

Lage: Were there other things that kind of shaped a social life on the base that you can think of?

03-00:03:04

Myers: Sure. Once a year they would have a thing called Humanities Week, and we would actually compete over who could have the most incredible theme and produce an amazing booth. And we would pick a country and we would build, literally build, with wood—we would be out there building with wood on the lawn—our booths. And bringing in whatever we would need for—one year we did the Philippines. Or Hawaii or China or some different country. And everybody would just kind of join in and try to make their booth the best. And there would actually be a ribbon. And you could display your ribbon for the rest of the year and—

03-00:03:49

Lage: Was it mainly an international theme or did it also—

03-00:03:51

Myers: International.

03-00:03:51

Lage: —go to different races in the U.S. that—?

03-00:03:54

Myers: Well, international is different races. But yeah. Yeah, it was an international theme for it. And what's interesting is that a lot of the people that were on the committees would maybe be, a lot of them—maybe two would be from the Philippines or one. And they could actually tell us a lot of the little intricacies of that particular country. So we would learn about those countries too.

03-00:04:16

Lage: And did you get really involved in this? You told me off camera last time about your involvement in Bay to Breakers and the costumes and—

03-00:04:24

Myers: Oh, yeah.

03-00:04:24

Lage: So I could picture that maybe this was something you enjoyed.

03-00:04:29

Myers: Oh, yeah, I love that kind of stuff. Yeah. So it would really be fun. But all of us would collaborate. And we would all try to respect each other's ideas. And then we would try to pick the best one. Because we wanted to win. And then we'd have one full day of just this Humanities Day, and it was just so much fun. And you wouldn't have to bring your lunch, because all of the different booths served foods from whatever their country was. And so you'd just walk down there with your plate and go to each one of the booths. And you'd know everybody. So it was just—wonderful, happy family.

Of course, that faded as the fewer people were left on the base. And when the ocean terminal departed from Oakland Army Base, that was a lot of individuals. There was hardly anybody left by then.

03-00:05:12

Lage: Okay. Okay, let's go back to the ocean terminal, then. And that was the core of the working base? Is that what I'm gathering?

03-00:05:22

Myers: It was, yes. And—

03-00:05:22

Lage: And what were the divisions there?

03-00:05:25

Myers: Well, within the ocean terminal there was, of course, the commander, who was usually an Army colonel. And then there was a deputy commander, which was usually a Navy commander. And then under that was the divisions. There

was a Cargo Operations Division, which I was the deputy of and was headed by a major. Anyway, he thought that he was heading it but it was really me.

03-00:05:47

Lage: We'll come back to [laughter] that!

03-00:05:50

Myers: And then there was the Documentation Division and a Contracting Division. And the Documentation actually, really, supported what was going on outside, within the Operations Division. Everything needs to be documented.

03-00:06:04

Lage: And then contracting worked with outside contractors?

03-00:06:07

Myers: Yes, they did. In fact, they actually were the ones that hired the longshoremen contract, the stevedore contract—that actually loaded the ships—and actually did a lot of the rail operations. A lot of the things still were done by the military, so they would continue to be able to be trained. And they did a lot of the management, outside, in the ocean terminal, so that they could learn how to do things too. Because one of the things that we were training them for was to go to other countries and receive this cargo and also load ships. So they were learning from our marine cargo specialists, who were civilians, and who also, then and now, especially now, are going all over the world to load and discharge ships and do other kinds of cargo operations for the break-bulk things that are unique to the services—

03-00:07:01

Lage: Okay. That's very good.

03-00:07:02

Myers: —sixty-ton tanks and—

03-00:07:02

Lage: Now what about things like personnel? Was there a personnel office in the ocean terminal? Or—?

03-00:07:08

Myers: There was a personnel office upstairs in the headquarters. The headquarters oversaw a lot of that kind of thing. They developed computer systems. They would update regulations. They would be working with our headquarters on the East Coast. Because even though there was a West Coast, the East Coast, as we always know, closest to Washington, D.C., is usually the last word. And they're the ones that would direct us—and then the word would come down from them. And I actually was in the intern training program with the headquarters, so I got to learn a lot about what went on up there. And there was a lot of different divisions up there that was dealing with—a lot of documentation, not touching cargo but documentation. And that is a huge part of before you even touch anything.

03-00:08:07

Lage:

Now you said it didn't touch cargo. So what was the documentation?

03-00:08:12

Myers:

It was cargo movement. There was, at one time, before they developed a computer system, there was actually a cargo Booking Division upstairs in the headquarters and people would call from all over the place on the western side of the United States, and also in the Pacific. Like I said before, if you take the world as an orange and you chop it down the middle, with the Mississippi River being the cut, we're the western half of the world. So anybody from within the western half of the world. And then, if the East Coast needed help, they would call our Booking Division and they would book cargo on ocean ships. And those people were cargo bookers who worked directly with the commercial ocean carriers, meaning APL, Sealand, Matson. Those were the three primes. And then, of course, during the war, we were using a lot of break-bulk ships, that I don't even know where they got some of those boats. It's like they'd be like in the movies. You wonder how in the heck they even made it to the Persian Gulf. [laughs]

03-00:09:16

Lage:

Oh, really?

03-00:09:17

Myers:

Yeah. But they did. And they'd be coming back, doing the route. It's sort of like—

03-00:09:22

Lage:

So they were pretty ancient.

03-00:09:23

Myers:

Yeah, because nobody ever really used break-bulk that much. And we needed it because of the types of cargo that we had. And so some of these ships and these old salts that were the captain of these ships, we—it was just like some weird movie from Indiana Jones or something. And they would come, and we'd load up their ship. And they'd take it to the Persian Gulf. And then we'd say we're hoping that they are able to come back. Because these were all contracted out sort of like a sub-hauler, like a—well, it was a sub-hauler but in the ocean world—is what these ships were. So they would—

03-00:10:06

Lage:

So they weren't part of the fleet of American President Lines, but someone that they—

03-00:10:09

Myers:

No. They were contracted ships. Military Sealift Command would contract these ships out. And they were supposed to have certain standards, but when you look at them you wonder if they did. But they made it back and forth. They never broke down. It was amazing. It was really amazing. Yeah.

03-00:10:24

Lage: Well, that's interesting. Okay. That's a good overview.

[break in audio]

03-00:10:30

Lage: Okay. We're back on. We talked a lot about Desert Storm. Were there other missions that you'd want to mention? Did this base get involved with any of the humanitarian missions to—

03-00:10:47

Myers: Oh, yes. Yes, most definitely we did.

03-00:10:51

Lage: What did you see relating to those?

03-00:10:51

Myers: Just for instance, Katrina—

03-00:10:55

Lage: Oh, okay, Katrina.

03-00:10:55

Myers: —even as early as—like Katrina. And all of the really—

03-00:11:00

Lage: But that came after it closed.

03-00:11:03

Myers: It did, but our guys were still involved in it.

03-00:11:04

Lage: I see.

03-00:11:06

Myers: Just because they're not at Oakland Army Base—they were still over there. And then any kind of—like that we talked about the Mount Pinatubo—

03-00:11:16

Lage: Oh, yes.

03-00:11:17

Myers: Yeah, the volcanic eruption.

03-00:11:18

Lage: Okay. Anything with—?

03-00:11:19

Myers: They would go up there. And any kind of humanitarian—I'm trying to think of the one that happened when we were still at Oakland Army Base. It's been a long time ago since I worked there. And I remember going with my major, who is the head of the Operation Division. And we actually went over to the

Port of San Francisco to look at a warehouse where the public had donated clothes and food and everything. And they were talking about—they wanted to actually contract out a ship to take one load over to this destination. And I'm sorry, I cannot recall the destination.

03-00:12:03

Lage: It could have been Afghanistan, the earthquake—or Pakistan, the earthquake.

03-00:12:07

Myers: I'm not sure.

03-00:12:10

Lage: Or the tsunami, perhaps.

03-00:12:09

Myers: You know what? I can't really recall, to be honest with you. But anyway, what was decided—after I crunched all the numbers and everything, which was part of my job, to make sure that we're spending the money wisely, it was decided just to containerize all of that stuff and just send it over on a regular commercial vessel. And the reason it was decided that is because to contract out a ship for one drop is astronomically expensive. Whereas you could just go ahead and throw it in a container. And then, if you have more a couple weeks later, put it in another container. And it would still be way—a miniscule amount compared to how much it would be to contract a ship to go to a far off destination.

03-00:12:57

Lage: Okay. So that was part of your job, the costing out.

03-00:12:59

Myers: Yes.

03-00:13:00

Lage: Yeah. Interesting.

03-00:13:00

Myers: Yeah.

03-00:13:01

Lage: Well, do you have any recollections relating to Somalia or Bosnia? Or would that have been East Coast? That was in—both of those in the nineties.

03-00:13:11

Myers: Well, we actually had people that went over there.

03-00:13:12

Lage: To Somalia?

03-00:13:13

Myers: Yeah. And they would actually live in tents—these are civilians—

03-00:13:20  
Lage: Oh, civilians.

03-00:13:21  
Myers: —that would go over there and work right along with the military.

03-00:13:24  
Lage: And unloading, would this be?

03-00:13:27  
Myers: Yes, it would be doing ship operations or scanning the cargo. We talked about how everything is on a barcode now. And that automatically gets fed into the computer, which will tell people that, okay, we received this piece. Gosh, there were just so many of them. A lot of what the marine cargo specialists would do, they have to sign a document saying that they're willing to go wherever in the world that they need to go to—they will go. And they have to sign that before they actually get accepted for that job. And they have to actually go. So they have been literally all over the world.

03-00:14:10  
Lage: So they have. I hope you tried to think of a few names of people we might interview, marine cargo specialists.

03-00:14:19  
Myers: Yeah, I have.

03-00:14:20  
Lage: Maybe we can talk about that after.

03-00:14:22  
Myers: Yeah, okay. Yeah.

03-00:14:23  
Lage: That would be great. Okay. You said you'd come up with some memories to share.

03-00:14:28  
Myers: Yeah!

03-00:14:29  
Lage: Do you want to do that? And then I have some maybe more focused questions and—

03-00:14:33  
Myers: Okay. One of them is we were talking last time about the military and the civilians, and how they interact, and how close we got, and how it really was a heart-to-heart relationship, even though they were there for just a short time. And there was one captain there. Now this is when the Army base was bustling. And there was a really nice gym there, and a lot of the retired military people would come there and work out. It was their place to go. And

they would go and just still use the facilities, because it, I guess, just make them feel more, I don't know, in touch with the military.

And anyway, one of the captains there, who—he was just an amazingly creative guy and just a really wonderful family guy. And anyway, there was three separate times within a six-month period where he was—just the angels just put him there—was required to give people CPR because they had heart attacks. And he lost two of them, and one of them survived. And I asked him about it, quietly. He came over to my desk and we were talking. And I said, "Do you need to talk about this or anything? It's kind of intense. It's kind of funny how the angels put you there to just be with these people." And the look on his face, like if he said a word he would just burst out in tears. And he had to just shake his head and walk away. But he didn't have to say any words. I already knew.

But we were always there to help each other. And when you think about somebody trying to give CPR three times in just a short window of time, it's like, wow, what kind of luck is that?

03-00:16:38

Lage:

Well, you mentioned that you were like a family. And it's easy to say. But it's nice that you have some stories to kind of illustrate it.

03-00:16:44

Myers:

It was just amazing. Yeah. And then another thing that happened, that I probably won't get through this without crying, because it really—it impacted my family, my dad was in the Korean War. Well, he was actually in the—he was World War II. He was in all those wars. He couldn't wait to join the Navy. And my grandmother was really upset because my grandfather had already died, and he was like the man of the house, and he was the oldest son. And I remember stories of them saying that he was running and jumping down the street with his papers, saying, "Yay! The Navy accepted me," and, "Yay!"

And so anyway, so he finished his time in the Navy and also did—well, he was part of the Korean War also. And I guess he had gotten—all of the medals and stuff that he won was awarded in the appropriate manner except for this one medal from the Korean War. And I didn't know anything about that until about six months before I—and my mom had mentioned that he never got this thing officially awarded to him, and he always felt kind of ripped off. And I thought in my mind, you know what? One of my really good friends is a Navy commander; maybe I can make this work.

So we had this huge family day at Oakland Army Base. And it was for the ocean terminal to present Army tanks and all these wonderful vehicles. And one of the guys that worked for me—we nicknamed him Mad Dog. He was just the nicest family guy but because he was just really fun. Anyway, he was

the one who was supposed to drive the tank. And I said, "Dude, make sure you kick up a lot of dust for the kids." And the show was just really wonderful. And I was in charge of the show, so I wanted it to be really, really good. And I was the emcee and introducing all these people.

But I had made arrangements with this commander to have a quiet—just kind of go out in the corner during all of this and have a quiet ceremony where my dad could actually be awarded the Korean medal. Now by this time, he was already really heavy into his Parkinson's and a little bit of dementia. But when the commander came over to me, and he goes, "You ready to do it," and I go, "Yeah." So I had my parents go in the corner. This is where I'll start crying. [crying] And all the Army officers that knew that this was going to happen, they kind of—I guess he maybe gave them a heads up.

Anyway, we went into a corner with the Navy commander, and all the Army guys surround us to make it more of a private ceremony. And he addressed my father. And for a moment, my father was nineteen again. He saluted him just like he was nineteen. His aura was just completely changed in front of the Navy commander. And so the Navy commander gave him the medal. And I felt like that was the greatest gift I ever could have gave my dad.

Then—it gets even better. [laughter] Except I need a Kleenex. And then when my father died, the Navy commander came to the funeral. And he talked about my dad. Because he said that he was grateful that he was able to meet a man like that, and that he felt really honored to be able to give him that medal, so many years earlier, and that he greatly deserved it. But those were the kind of things that we did for each other.

03-00:20:28

Lage: Yeah, that's a lovely story.

03-00:20:29

Myers: You know? Told you I'd be a basketcase after this one!

03-00:20:32

Lage: You're getting me choked up too! [laughs]

03-00:20:35

Myers: It was very emotional. And it still is.

03-00:30:39

Lage: Yeah, I can see that. Yeah. That's lovely. Oh, my. Okay.

03-00:20:45

Myers: And after that one!

03-00:20:47

Lage: Right!

03-00:20:49

Myers: Oh, boy.

[break in audio]

03-00:20:51

Lage: Okay. You mentioned the show. Was that an annual affair?

03-00:20:58

Myers: No. Every once in a while sometimes I would think things up. Sometimes the military would think things up. Because we always would have new majors come in as the commanders of our division, and they would think these things up. Because we tried to interact with the community. And, yeah, there was one time where—I don't know if I told you this already. But we did have a school that we actually interacted with on a regular basis.

03-00:21:29

Lage: Was that the Ralph Bunche School?

03-00:21:30

Myers: Yes, it was the Ralph Bunche School.

03-00:21:30

Lage: You mentioned that.

03-00:21:32

Myers: Yeah. And one of the things that we used to do for them is we would bring—we did it a couple of times while I was there. And we would bring them in and we would let the kids tour around the ocean terminal. And we would take them outside and put them on a bus, because it's kind of dangerous out there. And we would show them all around the different things. They were all on the bus, so they were safe on the bus, but we actually took them on a roll-on/roll-off ship, where we drove on the ship and we went up to the different levels. And it was really very exciting for the kids, very exciting.

03-00:22:05

Lage: They must have loved that.

03-00:22:07

Myers: And we took them on a tour of the inside of the ocean terminal too, which included the WIN site, which was like this secret place where you do top secret information. And we, of course, had to cover everything in the WIN site. But we allowed them to walk in the WIN site. And I got what they call a top-secret cover, which is a piece of paper. And it's just a piece of paper, but it's a regulated one. And it says "Top Secret" in red, in big letters. And so I let them touch this piece of paper. Nothing was under it. But they got to touch the cover. And you couldn't believe how excited they were! They probably still, to this day, talk about that. They were very excited about that.

03-00:22:51

Lage:

Yeah. Were there other ways that you interacted with the community? Would this be the immediate West Oakland community, or just general?

03-00:22:57

Myers:

Yeah. Unh-huh. It was just close by where we were. Yeah. And then during certain times of the year, we would go read to the kids. And I couldn't get involved in that too much, because I was too busy doing other things, but there was a lot of people who would. And it would be not only the ocean terminal but also the headquarters.

03-00:23:21

Lage:

And both military and civilians got involved?

03-00:23:23

Myers:

Yes. Yeah. Yeah. One big happy family, I'm telling you.

03-00:23:27

Lage:

Yeah, right.

03-00:23:27

Myers:

Yeah, we were.

03-00:23:29

Lage:

It doesn't sound, from you say, like there was a sense of division between the two.

03-00:23:33

Myers:

No, there was not. There was not, believe me. You would always respect them, because they—well, not even that they were the military. But usually the military were the ones that were in high command. But I had a lot of military that worked for me. And I just treated everybody equal. I tried not to be one of those big old pushy managers anyway. I was more the mommy. And everybody knew they could come to me. And that, I think, really played—I think it made it a little easier during the BRAC. But the BRAC was really, really hard on everyone.

03-00:24:07

Lage:

I'm going to save that for a minute. But you brought up something I did want you to talk about, and that was your managerial style. Can you talk a little bit more about that, and how you came to develop that style?

03-00:24:18

Myers:

Well, like I said, my job, if I read my job description it would friggin' freak me out. So I tried not to focus on that too much. I tried to just focus on keeping the day-to-day operation going and making—my job was really like the mediator between the workers and the major, who was the head of the Operation Division, and also the headquarters and the world, literally. So what I would do is make sure everybody got the right information. And when they

didn't know the answers, I'd get the answers for them, or I'd make decisions when I needed to make them.

03-00:24:58

Lage: But did you have to supervise and evaluate your employees?

03-00:25:00

Myers: I did. But I evaluated the supervisors who were under the small little sections under our Operations Division. So it was the major, who was head of the Operations Division—but they would keep coming and going. I was second in charge. It was actually the continuity. And then below that was several other divisions. There was the Cargo Operations Division, the Break-Bulk branch. There was warehousing branch. There was a POV lot. There was two POV lots at one time, when we had to take over Southern California and shut those guys down too.

03-00:25:42

Lage: And so each of those had a supervisor that you evaluated.

03-00:25:44

Myers: Yeah. Right.

03-00:25:46

Lage: And did you hire also? Were you responsible—?

03-00:25:49

Myers: Yeah, I would make decisions on hiring. Yeah. But we would actually make that a collaborative effort for a lot of people, especially because those jobs were really important. The people really kind of needed to know what they were doing. Because people could get killed out there, moving cargo. You have to be really, really careful. And on a ship, you could be standing there and somebody could drop a rope from the other side and not even see you there, and you get sliced in half. It's very, very dangerous.

03-00:26:19

Lage: So the hiring decisions were collaborative with—?

03-00:26:22

Myers: Yeah. Yeah. Unh-huh.

03-00:26:23

Lage: With the people they were going to be working with?

03-00:26:24

Myers: But then, just like any federal job, you would have to qualify and then be part of the few that what you could select from. And then we would interview and—yeah.

03-00:26:37

Lage: Did you have affirmative action goals that you had to measure up to?

03-00:26:42  
Myers: Well, of course, we did. But we tried not to focus on that too much. Because you have to really look at the people. We didn't have to worry about that. Mostly everybody was other than white anyway. [laughs] So it was no big deal. It just sort of happened. It wasn't like a color thing. We try not to look at color too much. Sometimes, I think, people can be racist in other ways.

03-00:27:10  
Lage: Like—? [laughs]

03-00:27:11  
Myers: Like just intensifying yourself too much on what color people are. When people stop looking at what color each other is, I think it will be a much happier world.

03-00:27:25  
Lage: Was the diversity of your group of workers ever a challenge? Or did it seem like a positive thing to you?

03-00:27:33  
Myers: No. Because I never looked at their colors. It was always their personalities and their hearts. And there was a lot of people that worked for us that were actually retired military that came back to work for the army base. Yeah.

03-00:27:48  
Lage: Okay. You got your BA while you were at the base.

03-00:27:53  
Myers: I did.

03-00:27:54  
Lage: And was that something that was encouraged among the employees overall? Did that happen very frequent—?

03-00:27:59  
Myers: Well, of course, the military could not pay for your entire degree, but they could pay for a majority of it. And I'm a single mom. I'm trying to do the best I can. And whenever there was free education, I tried to take advantage of it. And even my AA degree I got through the Port of Oakland. That was actually 100% funded through the Port of Oakland. Thank you, Port of Oakland. [laughs]

03-00:28:22  
Lage: Yeah, I'll say. [laughs] And then the other was partially funded—

03-00:28:26  
Myers: Yes, through the Army.

03-00:28:27  
Lage: —the BA—in managing—

03-00:28:28  
Myers: Yeah, it was all—

03-00:28:28  
Lage: Was it not?

03-00:28:29  
Myers: As you completed each class, then they would reimburse you. But it's against the law for the military to pay for your degree. So they can pay for a lot of your classes, as long as they're related to your job—and they will assist you, just like any other agency. All agencies are the same like that.

03-00:28:48  
Lage: Do did you encourage your employees to—

03-00:28:52  
Myers: Oh, sure.

03-00:28:52  
Lage: —further their education?

03-00:28:52  
Myers: Yeah. But a lot of them weren't interested. You have to remember that most of the people that worked for me were blue-collar people. And a lot of them, the only thing they've ever done—ever did in their whole life was drive a forklift. And that's why it was so traumatic for them when the BRAC did happen, because there wasn't that many forklift jobs any more. But on the other hand, it forced a lot of them to go back to school.

03-00:29:18  
Lage: So that's interesting.

03-00:29:20  
Myers: Unh-huh.

03-00:29:21  
Lage: Let's talk a little bit more about gender. [laughs]

03-00:29:26  
Myers: Okay.

03-00:29:26  
Lage: I love the various references you've made. You said you're the only woman in your group and the "dudette."

03-00:29:35  
Myers: Yeah, dude.

03-00:29:35  
Lage: And you called yourself the mommy.

03-00:29:36

Myers: Yeah.

03-00:29:37

Lage: Talk a little bit more about how you, as one of the few females, conducted yourself and managed.

03-00:29:45

Myers: Well, one of the things that—well, because I was the female and blonde and twenty years younger—

03-00:29:51

Lage: Were you only one at the head of these divisions who was—?

03-00:29:54

Myers: Yeah. Yeah.

03-00:29:56

Lage: Okay, go on.

03-00:29:57

Myers: So one of the things I had to really be careful of—because there was all kinds of men. They were all different kinds of sizes and shapes and ages. And a lot of them were single. And I was single. So the number one rule for me was never get romantically involved with any of them or give the illusion that I was. So that was number one thing. And knowing that I really was living in a fishbowl and that, because I was the first woman doing this position, they were going to be very critical and very watching what I was going to do, and how was I going to react, and did I know what the heck I was doing, did I understand what a ship was and a railcar and—and I knew enough to be real dangerous, but I learned pretty fast too.

So they respected the fact that I respected them, that I already realized that a lot of them had been doing their jobs for a very long time. And my number one priority was safety. Because right before I came to take that position there was a man who had, I think about a few weeks before he was going to retire—and he was literally killed by a forklift rolling over him. And that was done at the pier. So it was very devastating. And so I always kept that in mind, to make sure that my guys were really practicing safety and—and then I had great supervisors, that were working right directly under me. So.

03-00:31:25

Lage: But did you have trouble—

03-00:31:28

Myers: Communicating with—?

03-00:31:28

Lage: —maintaining authority?

03-00:31:29

Myers:

No. No, because we had a great respect for each other. I didn't really see them as the guys and they really—and they just saw me as the person who was really there to support them.

03-00:31:48

Lage:

But you did say you were the mommy, which wouldn't be—I wouldn't imagine a guy supervisor in your position saying, "I was the daddy." So it seems like—

03-00:31:55

Myers:

Ah! Okay, let me say this. One of the things of our division is that the world was literally watching everything that we did. So if you screwed up, everybody would know about it. So I would try to make sure things wouldn't get screwed up and pretty much—I hate to say keep them out of trouble, because that's not really a good statement. It's like saying that they didn't know what they were doing. They totally knew what they were doing.

But in operations where you're under the gun, you're twenty-fours a day, seven days a week, and you're loading these really complicated pieces of different types of cargos and trying to make sure the operations are done in a timely manner, because every minute that a ship is alongside is costing you big bucks, that you just need to make sure that everybody had what they needed and, if they didn't, made sure they got it, and then, if things weren't going like planned, be able to defend what happened.

Because we had a great crew. Oh, my God! We just had an amazing crew. And they were so dedicated. And it was just a heart-to-heart group. We were all family. We really were family. When they say the Oakland Army Base family, they really mean it. They really mean it.

03-00:33:28

Lage:

Interesting. Yeah. Did they put you through your paces when you first—? Did any of these guys kind of—?

03-00:33:35

Myers:

Sure they did!

03-00:33:36

Lage:

How did they—?

03-00:33:37

Myers:

They did! But you know what was cool? Is that I had an incredible captain, that actually was part of the group that hired me. I had to go in a conference room in front of about a dozen people to get interviewed for that job.

03-00:33:56

Lage:

Mm-hmm. And they were all male.

03-00:33:57

Myers: So it wasn't like, "Let's give it to her because she's the white girl." It was because [laughs] I was the best qualified.

03-00:34:08

Lage: Do you remember anything about that interview?

03-00:34:09

Myers: Well, I just took a deep, yogic breath and went in there and just answered all the questions, I guess. I don't know. It was a little intimidating, because there was a lot of military people. But I had already worked with a lot of military people already, being in the intern training program. I would go to all kinds of different places within the divisions and the headquarters level. And I was already working with colonels and—you know? There was a general. It was like—

03-00:34:38

Lage: You weren't intimidated.

03-00:34:38

Myers: —you pass them, going to the bathroom. It's like, big deal. You know what I mean? They're all just people. They take off their pants the same way. And you have to respect who they are but, on the other hand, they're all just people. And I think maybe that's why I was able to pull that job off and not get to spun up about how much responsibility it was. Because it was a lot. It was really a lot. And that's why I tried not to think about it too much. I just thought, well, just take care of business, take care of business, take care of business. And you're moving so fast anyway, because transportation moves at the speed of sound.

03-00:35:14

Lage: Mm-hmm. When you were interviewed, did they bring up being a woman and whether it'd be difficult for you? Or they didn't address it?

03-00:35:23

Myers: No, but I was a tomboy, so I was used to guys anyway.

03-00:35:25

Lage: Yeah. That helps, doesn't it? [laughs] You meant—were there other women? You told me no, in managerial positions.

03-00:35:33

Myers: Not in the Cargo Operations Division. Now there is. In fact, what's really exciting is that—for many, many years there was never any women marine cargo specialists.

03-00:35:45

Lage: Yes, I wondered about that.

03-00:35:45  
Myers: Then there was one. She was in the intern training program. And she said the guys just put her through hell and that she didn't know she could do it. She came to talk to me one day about it. Because I was already head of the division. And I said, "You know what? You just keep on keepin' on. Because you're going to be good at this." Well, you know what? She paved the way. And there's one picture of her that, whenever I think about her, I think about this. She was inside of a tank with her head popped out of the tank, with a hardhat on. And it had some caption under—the first female marine cargo specialist. And I thought, she did it.

03-00:36:27  
Lage: That's fabulous.

03-00:36:27  
Myers: Right on. And right now she is head of the marine cargo specialists. Now she's head of that division. So.

03-00:36:35  
Lage: Now she's someone we should interview.

03-00:36:36  
Myers: You should.

03-00:36:36  
Lage: Wouldn't you think?

03-00:36:37  
Myers: Yes. She's an amazing woman, amazing. And she's been all over the world loading ships. And there's other women that came underneath her then, that also got in that field. But she was the first one.

03-00:36:53  
Lage: She broke the barriers—

03-00:36:53  
Myers: She broke the barrier.

03-00:36:54  
Lage: —just as you did, really.

03-00:36:55  
Myers: Yeah. She broke the barrier.

03-00:36:57  
Lage: Were there many women among the military on the base?

03-00:37:00  
Myers: Oh, yeah. Unh-huh.

03-00:37:01  
Lage: Because you hadn't mentioned that.

03-00:37:03

Myers:

Especially during Desert Storm there were a lot of women that came. In fact, one of the women was the one that made me that coffee cup I showed you last week, that made that "Dudette" coffee mug. And they're out there on the ground. They're dressed in their fatigues, and they're getting just as dirty as the guys, and they're just doing the same thing as the guys are. And they're really forces to be reckoned with. They're just really great people. They're just right there on the same level. And a lot of them are just as strong as the guys! [laughter] So. Yeah.

03-00:37:38

Lage:

And so did you observe—? You do hear stories, and about the problems in the Army. Sometimes it's sexual harassment. Or just plain harassment. Was that anything you observed?

03-00:37:50

Myers:

No. People really respected each other. And a lot of the people in the military, even though they were there for their reserve duty, a lot of them were married or had other relationships. And people respected that. You couldn't really involve romantic relationships when you're trying to do the work that we had to get done, and under the pressure that we had. There wasn't that many days where you could kick back and look and see who was cute. Mostly we were held to the gun, and we had to report to our headquarters and also to the world what ships were being loaded, what was being sent, and why this ship was delayed one day. Oh, my God. Because that's a lot of money, not only for the ship alongside but also to pay for the contractor. Because you're going into overtime. Yeah.

03-00:38:44

Lage:

When you say report to the world, what do you mean?

03-00:38:46

Myers:

We would do a thing called a SITREP, which is a situation report, which would be to—it's like a message to the world. And it's done in military time, which is what you had to learn—I had to learn. [laughter] 1400 is 2:00 p.m. And you do those on a daily basis whenever you had a ship in. And that would go through the WIN site, which was a top-secret site. And it would be disseminated again to whoever needed to see it, which could be where the ship was headed, headquarters on the East Coast, whoever needed to see it.

03-00:39:29

Lage:

Mm-hmm. WIN site. Tell me more about WIN site. Is it S-I-T-E?

03-00:39:35

Myers:

W-I-N.

03-00:39:36

Lage:

W-I-N.

03-00:39:36  
Myers: Oh, yeah, the WIN site.

03-00:39:37  
Lage: S-I-T-E.

03-00:39:37  
Myers: Yeah. Yeah, what it's the secret room And all secret documents are handled there.

03-00:39:48  
Lage: But what kinds of documents were secret?

03-00:39:50  
Myers: Actually, I can't tell you that or I'd have to cut your head off. [laughter]

03-00:39:55  
Lage: Well, some of it was where the cargo—

03-00:39:56  
Myers: And I will tell you that most secret information is extremely boring. But the bits of information, put together, can jeopardize national security. So—

03-00:40:07  
Lage: If you fit it all together, you'd have a better picture of where the military was going.

03-00:40:12  
Myers: Sure. And things like that shouldn't be discussed. Yeah, but you're not the—

03-00:40:16  
Lage: Okay. But it's interesting.

03-00:40:16  
Myers: —first one who's asked. Because everybody thinks it's like 007. But it's really boring, very boring!

03-00:40:24  
Lage: Interesting. Okay. You've mentioned another thing that always—I wanted to follow up on—it's intriguing—how you worked for the major but really— [laughs]

03-00:40:36  
Myers: The major worked for me. [laughs]

03-00:40:37  
Lage: The major worked for you. Now, talk about that, and maybe how that worked out over different majors.

03-00:40:44  
Myers: I had probably eight different majors.

03-00:40:46

Lage: Every two years you'd get a new one?

03-00:40:47

Myers: Every two years. But then some of them would only stay for a year, some of them six months. It depended on what they were being assigned. So some of them would stay. Some of them wouldn't. And they would all have their ideas on how to change the operations. Because it's a very exciting, very dynamic job. It was the funnest job I ever had, I have to admit. And for them it was too. But they always wanted to make changes where we had already tried those things.

We talked last week about how they did at one time—color-coded all of these operations, only to realize the very next morning that everything got all screwed up because one-fourth of all guys are colorblind. Now who would have ever thought about that? On paper it looks like it would really work. And it was a really exciting, dynamic way we were going to do things. And it ended up being a total disaster. And those are things that you have to—

03-00:41:45

Lage: So that would come up again.

03-00:41:47

Myers: And those are things that—people are trying very hard to get the operation done. And those are the things where the mommy would have to go and smooth the feathers of headquarters or whoever. "Why in the hell did that happen?" Or the colonel or the general upstairs in headquarters. "What the hell you guys doing down there?" So they would understand why it happened, and not that we're just twiddling our thumbs.

03-00:42:12

Lage: Mm-hmm. Can you recall any kind of a description of meeting one of the majors or breaking in a new major or something that will sort of illustrate the relationship?

03-00:42:26

Myers: Breaking in a new major. Well, let's see. Breaking in the majors were always about—it was usually about the same story anyway. These guys were coming from all over the place, all over the world. And then they were coming to do their little stint, as a—

03-00:42:39

Lage: And they weren't necessarily transportation specialists.

03-00:42:42

Myers: No, a lot of them knew nothing of transportation. And so that's what they were there for, to learn it. And so I would show them the office, show them where all the files were. They didn't really have that many files. I had all the documentation. And so when they needed something, they would come and talk to me.

But I would just tell them that they're about to embark on one of the funnest jobs they'll probably ever have, and that they have a really good team already, and that they really know what they're doing and there's not a lot of direction, but basically what their job would be, to just be able to present the operations that were going on and to defend that in front of our headquarters or whatever, because everybody always has their—especially generals—"Why are you doing this? Why are you doing that? Why don't you do it this way? Why don't you do it that way?" And they've never even been on the ground when it comes to ship operation. But they would have certain ideas that they got in their head of the reason why they thought maybe we should do certain things a certain way. And we would have to respond to that.

But those were the kind of things that the majors would have to handle. Plus they get to go outside and have fun while I stayed in the office and did all the drudgery.

03-00:43:52

Lage: Did any of them have problems coming to you for how do we do this or—?

03-00:43:59

Myers: No, no. They never did. I don't know. I guess I just had that—they knew that they had to respect my knowledge, because I already had a handle on everything. And if they didn't have me, they were going to kind of be up Shit Creek anyway. So.

Plus I was there to write all the—I wrote everything. I'm pretty good at writing, thank God. That was one of the prerequisites of that job, is to be able to write. And so I would write the awards. I would write the worldwide messages. I would write everything. And so I would be the one that would actually keep track of everything, the reports, and gather all the information to put together the sometimes weekly, depending on what was happening, sometimes daily briefings. And we would actually do these—back then we didn't have as many—well, I guess they still do PowerPoint briefings. But we did so many PowerPoint briefings.

03-00:44:57

Lage: Oh, you did?

03-00:44:58

Myers: Oh, my God. So you got really good at that.

03-00:45:02

Lage: Briefings of the colonel?

03-00:45:04

Myers: The ship operations. Yeah.

03-00:45:05

Lage: But you'd be briefing the—

03-00:45:05

Myers:

Operations or whatever we were doing. We would brief the colonel. We would brief the generals. We would brief whoever needed to be briefed on the operation. And the colonel who was head of the ocean terminal, he would always want a brief on ship operations while a ship was in port. And so we would have to put together. And I would have to make sure there was no spelling errors, so that wouldn't be ten feet up on the wall with a wrong word. You always tried to go for perfection when that—

03-00:45:30

Lage:

And then would you do the briefing, or would the major do it?

03-00:45:32

Myers:

It would depend. Sometimes I would do it. Sometimes he would do it. Remember I told you the captain that did it? Whenever he would talk about the SPIT area, which was the layout of how we would load the ships, whenever he would say the word "spit" he would always go "ph!"

03-00:45:47

Lage:

Yes. [laughs]

03-00:45:47

Myers:

And nobody would ever know that but me and him! That was just hilarious. But we would do these little senses of humor, as you know, just to make it through the day, because it was so—it was crazy insane, crazy insane fun. And like I said before too, it was so much fun that you'd rather be there anyway because TV was boring, man. And more fun by loading a ship or loading a railcar or doing those kinds of things.

03-00:46:12

Lage:

You mentioned last time going to D.C. a lot.

03-00:46:17

Myers:

Yeah.

03-00:46:17

Lage:

What kinds of things would take you to D.C., or other places?

03-00:46:22

Myers:

Well, they used to do a lot of education over there too. But then I would also go for meetings, to talk about different things that were happening in our ocean terminal. Especially after Desert Storm, they did a lot of briefings and conferences and collaboration with all the different agencies, because there was a lot of things that could have been done a lot better if we had better communication, which has hugely enhanced what we do now. You won't see what happened, now, what happened back then.

03-00:46:58

Lage:

In terms of the Saudi Arabian problem—

03-00:46:59  
Myers: In terms of the—

03-00:47:01  
Lage: —you told me about?

03-00:47:01  
Myers: The container city, literally, there, where they didn't know what was in those containers. And there were thousands of them, and they were coming in every day. Every day, ships were coming in with another load of containers. And finally it's, "I don't know."

03-00:47:18  
Lage: So you had meetings to set that right and—

03-00:47:21  
Myers: And it's right now. That'll never happen again.

03-00:47:24  
Lage: [laughs] That's good to know.

03-00:47:25  
Myers: Yeah. Yeah.

03-00:47:27  
Lage: Now we just have to worry about how they install the electricity in Iraq.

03-00:47:32  
Myers: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

03-00:47:35  
Lage: A side point. Okay. We talked a little bit about base's community. Is there any more with that? Would you have friendships that extended back to home? Did you develop friendship—have people to your house and things like that? Or was it mainly—

03-00:47:53  
Myers: We did a lot of that.

03-00:47:53  
Lage: —during these twenty-four-hour days?

03-00:47:54  
Myers: I didn't really do that that much, but a lot of the military would open their homes on a regular basis. And, in fact, my farewell—because by the time I left, there were so few people left in our division that they actually had my farewell party at the commander's house.

03-00:48:16  
Lage: That's very—

03-00:48:17

Myers: It was very nice.

03-00:48:19

Lage: Now, that leads in, really, to the decommissioning of the base, if that's the right terminology. Does the bat come before that or after that?

03-00:48:30

Myers: Oh, the bat comes before that.

03-00:48:32

Lage: [laughs] Okay.

03-00:48:33

Myers: You have to get introduced to the Motbat. This is the Motbat, which looks like just a plain old Halloween bat, which originally was what it was. Because I was really one for props and decorating for holidays to keep morale up. I'm a big prop person when it comes to keeping my people's morale high.

And when the war started out, when Desert Storm started, a lot of our colonels and our captains and our majors would have to fly all over the world to meet with others to convey—and talk and try to solve the world's problems. And then we would have a briefing when they would come back, and they would talk about these horrible things that would happen at the airports. And they got stuck hours and hours and hours.

So we were at that time Military Ocean Terminal, Bay Area, which is the acronym MOTBA. So I added a T, for the Motbat. This is the Motbat. This Motbat has been all over the world. And this Motbat brought colonels and majors and captains and sergeants and lieutenants good luck when they traveled. They would come get the Motbat, and they would just keep it in their suitcase. They would have no problems. And it worked every single time. [laughter] And it was used many times. So—

03-00:50:00

Lage: That's quite amazing.

03-00:50:01

Myers: —this Motbat—I wish I could have kept track of all the places in the world this Motbat has been. But anyway. It's been with me for all these years. And it's still real special, very special.

03-00:50:15

Lage: Another camaraderie evidence that—

03-00:50:17

Myers: Yeah.

03-00:50:17

Lage: Yeah, very much so. Anything else like that you want to tell about before we go into the closing of the base?

03-00:50:24

Myers: Well, we did Exercise Crocodile, and I got a crocodile and kept—not a real one, but one that looked a lot like a crocodile—and I left that on my desk. And whenever we had certain operations—one of the operations, one of my favorite names that we ever did—we were moving the M1A1 tanks. And they called that operation Heavy Metal, which, I just loved that. I loved it. It was just one of my favorite names.

03-00:50:52

Lage: So they all had names.

03-00:50:53

Myers: They most all had names.

03-00:50:54

Lage: And usually clever?

03-00:50:56

Myers: Very clever. Yeah. And I would always try to get some prop to depict that, so that it would just—it just enhances people's, I don't know, fun—

03-00:51:09

Lage: Commit—?

03-00:51:10

Myers: —commitment to the operation, when you have a little something. And the supervisors and everybody would usually come by my desk anyway, and I'd always try to have—whatever the holiday was, I'd just decorate disgustingly all around my desk, and have certain theme candies and things like that for people. So that in a way, that's how I think I felt like I was the mom, and that maybe a guy who was doing that job may not have gotten into it as much as I did. But I felt like my enthusiasm just kind of poured into the whole operation and it just made it a lot happier place.

03-00:51:45

Lage: Yeah. I'll say. I can see that. Okay, well, let's see where we are here. I'd like to talk about the process leading up to closing the base, as you observed it.

03-00:51:58

Myers: Yeah, that was—

03-00:51:59

Lage: When did you get the first inkling?

03-00:52:02

Myers: Well, we knew, about four years before, that actually we would have to leave. We knew that the ocean terminal would survive, in a sense, but we knew that

probably the majority of the people that were working for us would no longer have a job, which was definitely the case. We went from—

03-00:52:18

Lage: Well, at first you weren't on the list. And then you got put on the list. Were you—?

03-00:52:22

Myers: The BRAC committee came and—

03-00:52:24

Lage: Well, tell about that.

03-00:52:25

Myers: And we all met in the auditorium.

03-00:52:28

Lage: How many people met with them?

03-00:52:30

Myers: The whole auditorium was full. And it was like a town hall meeting. And the only thing that we really cared about as an ocean terminal and me, as the Operations Division deputy—we felt like it would be actually okay if they moved the headquarters. It's not really that important that it was left. But there was one pier, Pier 7, that is right at the mouth of the Pacific, and plus the SPIT area, which is the lay-down area, and the railheads that were right there. It was perfect for our break-bulk operations. And that still exists. It now belongs to the Port of Oakland.

But we could never figure out why they would want to give that up. Because we actually tried to talk sense into the BRAC committee, telling them that, "You're saying that we didn't do that much during Desert Storm. Well, hey, that wasn't our side of the world. It wasn't our side of the orange. That's not western area. That's eastern area. Even though we were working twenty-four hours, seven days a week. We were supporting them." And really our job was to support like the western part of the world, to include Korea. And so they just didn't think we were that important.

03-00:53:54

Lage: Do you think they felt we weren't going to have any more challenges on the eastern side of the world or—?

03-00:53:59

Myers: I think that probably they already knew—in my opinion and a lot of other people's opinions—because the BRAC committee knew nothing about what we did. They didn't even know about transportation. They didn't even know what they were doing.

03-00:54:12

Lage: Who was on it?

03-00:54:12

Myers:

I think they were just a face to say, "Yes, we're the BRAC committee. We're the evil, wicked, mean, and nasty—and we're going to make a decision." Well, I don't even think that they even knew what the hell they were doing, if you really want my—

03-00:54:27

Lage:

Were they congressmen or—?

03-00:54:29

Myers:

They were just a bunch—they actually have a list of those people. And some of their positions, it's like they don't even know what they're doing! I don't even think any of them were even military. They were just these off the wall people that they got together and called them the BRAC committee. And it's like, whatever. And maybe they were penny counters, accounting people or something. I don't know. But there is actually a list of those, and you might be interested to actually talk about that in these videos. Because I can't remember offhand what they are. I just remember that when I saw the list I thought, these guys don't even know what they're doing; how can they make a decision?

So even though we were pleading for at least the Pier 7 area—and we thought that we made a really good plea. And I stood up and I spoke for my division, and for several minutes, actually, about the importance of that pier. But it made no difference, in my opinion. I think they already had their decision made. And so then we—unfortunately—I say that, "unfortunately," because I think a lot of people got really fearful, to include myself—because I'm a single mom. I might lose my job. Then what, right? Because even though I was doing all of this huge amount of responsibility, I still didn't get it that I was doing all this and I had all this experience. Anyway, so I was a little bit fearful about losing my job too, you know?

And then, the last four years that we were there, we saw some really bad sides of people. As the manager, I would have to deal with a lot of what I call questionable sexual harassment and worker's comp claims. I had to actually hire a worker's comp investigator. And actually, when I got permission to do it I spread the rumor throughout my division that we were going to get one and, miraculously, I didn't get one worker's comp claim after that. So—

03-00:56:34

Lage:

So who were filing them? Your marine cargo specialists? Or the people that worked under them?

03-00:56:38

Myers:

No, just a lot of my blue-collar workers.

03-00:56:41

Lage:

Mm-hmm. The men working under the marine—

03-00:56:43

Myers:

The men and the women. And it was just questionable whether—maybe it was for real. Maybe not. But it just seemed like there was a hell of a lot of things going on that was really hard for me.

03-00:56:57

Lage:

And the sexual harassment also. You'd said really didn't have a problem with that, but it did turn up. Or accusations turned up.

03-00:57:05

Myers:

Accusations turned up. Because there was big money in that. If you can prove that, that's \$300,000 in your pocket. So it just seemed like everybody was freaking out. You know? And a lot of them—most all of them, actually, got jobs, or either retired. I tried to get as many people as possible the \$25,000 incentive.

03-00:57:31

Lage:

And what was that?

03-00:57:33

Myers:

If you left the government, then you would qualify for a \$25 incentive.

03-00:57:41

Lage:

Twenty-five—

03-00:57:41

Myers:

\$25,000 incentive. But you couldn't come back to work for the military or for the feds, I think, for two or three more years after that. And there were several people that took that. And there was one woman—this was one of the hard parts. There was one woman that had applied for that, and I worked really hard trying to get that for her. Finally I got it but I got it a day too late, because she passed away from cancer the day before.

And there was no way I could reverse that. They didn't even want to tell me that. They knew I was going to just really fall apart when they told me that. And I did.

03-00:58:17

Lage:

How did they qualify for that? What did you do?

03-00:58:21

Myers:

If she was still living, even though she was dying of cancer, she still would have qualified for it, because she could have signed and quit. But she was gone. And she had a child and a husband, and it was devastating. I worked so hard trying to get that done and just by one day, one day she missed that. It was very sad.

[End Audio File 3]

## Begin Audio File 4 07-18-2008.mp3

04-00:00:00

Lage: Okay, we are back on, with tape four with Mary Myer, for the Oakland Army Base, July 18, 2008. And we were talking about BRAC and the leading up the closure, what happened. Were you aware of efforts made by city officials or people like Ron Dellums or anybody to intercede on behalf of Oakland Army Base?

04-00:00:30

Myers: There could have been that happening, but I don't remember if it was. Because I was too busy putting out fires where I was. Because it was getting rather challenging towards the end.

04-00:00:41

Lage: Were the military, the colonel and major and all, were they making efforts? Or did they just kind of accept it, do you think?

04-00:00:48

Myers: Well, the BRAC committee actually had all say. And even though they were interacting with the BRAC committee and trying to defend what we do there, what was said was that, "You can move somewhere else and do the same thing." But I don't really know everything they were doing. Because, like I said, I was busy taking care of things here. But when they did decide that, "All right, we're definitely going to close down the ocean terminal. You guys have lost it. It's time to relocate. Find a place." So that was one kind of—actually, that was kind of an exciting time, because I got to shop around with the major and the colonel on where to go. And we got to go in a—

04-00:01:36

Lage: Because people agreed that you needed a terminal—right?—you needed a place to do some of the shipping?

04-00:01:41

Myers: Yeah. And what was really cool is that I got to—there was one time where we actually had a helicopter come and land at Oakland Army Base, and I got to board, and my captains and the colonel and the major. We all went in the helicopter. And also the public affairs guy came so he could videotape it. I've still got the videotape. And we looked at a bunch of places. We actually went over the Port of San Francisco, Concord Naval Weapons Station, and a few of the other ports that are local, to look and see where we could go, Benicia and places like that. And it was decided that Concord Naval Weapons Station would probably be the best place.

04-00:02:30

Lage: Do you remember what basis that was, why it was the best?

04-00:02:35

Myers: It was the best because they were already doing ship operations there. They had piers there. They had a lot of lay-down space. And they were continuing

to do ammo-loading oper—the Navy was doing ammo operations there, as far as loading the ships there still. And we could share their rail. Because they already had folks that were doing rail already. And there was other services, the fire department—we could share their fire. We could share a lot of the different things. And it was decided to be the most cost-effective and reasonable place was for us to go to Concord Naval Weapons Station.

04-00:03:15

Lage:

So really the unit moved. It wasn't like everybody was—

04-00:03:18

Myers:

We moved before they ever shut down the Oakland Army Base.

04-00:03:21

Lage:

I see. So when did you move?

04-00:03:23

Myers:

We moved, I think, in 1991, early in 1991, I think.

04-00:03:29

Lage:

No, not '91.

04-00:03:30

Myers:

Was it nine—? It wasn't?

04-00:03:31

Lage:

Because that was still Desert Storm. Well, I have the closure was announced in '95.

04-00:03:37

Myers:

Well, we moved—I have the exact date in one of these books and I could tell you. So do you need me to look it up, real fast, or—?

04-00:03:45

Lage:

No, we'll just—we'll fill it in.

04-00:03:48

Myers:

Anyway, we moved a long time before, at least a year or more before everybody else evacuated the army base.

04-00:03:55

Lage:

These are my notes: Transfer of battalions to Concord and Beaumont, '97 and '98. That might be something different.

04-00:04:05

Myers:

I think that's the name change.

04-00:04:06

Lage:

And then the base actually closed down, 1999.

04-00:04:09

Myers:

Okay. Was that the name change?

04-00:04:11

Lage: I don't know.

04-00:04:12

Myers: We kept changing names. We went from the 1302nd to the 834th.

04-00:04:17

Lage: But at any rate, you moved.

04-00:04:19

Myers: At any rate, we moved.

04-00:04:19

Lage: That means your cargo specialists moved.

04-00:04:21

Myers: It's been a long time ago, so I can't remember—all those years.

04-00:04:22

Lage: I know. I'm like that with dates.

04-00:04:23

Myers: Yeah. But we moved way before they ever closed down the army base. And it was a very hard transition for a lot of my people, because my different branches were used to having their own little what I call world. They would have their own warehouses and their own privacy and—and then we moved to Concord Naval Weapons Station, and they had to move in the same building with us. And so they weren't used to being trapped in a—and they were used to having more of their own—being outside and having more freedom. And so that was a really hard adjustment. But they did make the adjustment very well and—and it was an adjustment for all of us, actually.

04-00:05:10

Lage: Yeah. What kind of an adjustment for you? What changed?

04-00:05:14

Myers: Well, just trying to keep all my forces calm. And then one good thing for me was that the only available office had its own private bathroom. So that [laughter] was cool! That was very cool. Except for if I wasn't in my office, and they heard me flush the toilet, they knew what I was doing.

So that was kind of fun, just to have that. But the buildings were pretty old there, but it was still—it was actually kind of a fun place, to work at Concord Naval Weapons Stations, when we moved. But by the time we had moved there, we were totally downsizing, big-time. We had operations all over the place. We moved the ship operation and the people that worked in the offices to Concord Naval Weapons Station. But still had a POV lot in Richmond. We had dry warehouses in Oakland and reefer warehouses in Alameda. We were all over the map.

04-00:06:15

Lage: And were you still in charge of all those places?

04-00:06:17

Myers: Yes. And I was in Concord. So it was a challenge. It was a challenge. And that lasted for until we were able to—we shut down our warehouses, which was devastatingly sad.

04-00:06:30

Lage: Now why was it so sad?

04-00:06:32

Myers: By then I had already worked there for ten years. And we had all worked together for so long and we had all done—whenever you do war or two together, even if it's in California, you just really establish a really tight relationship. And I had to go, of course, do all the award ceremonies. And the first award ceremony that I had to do was for my warehouses and—the dry warehouse. And—

04-00:07:04

Lage: And tell me, what was the award ceremony? Like recognizing a—?

04-00:07:10

Myers: Recognizing all of these people that—

04-00:07:12

Lage: That were actually leaving employment.

04-00:07:14

Myers: —that were leaving—yeah—that deserved certain special act awards and stuff. And anyway, so the first time I had to do that, even though I was really experienced in public speaking, I knew I was probably going to cry. And you have to remember that I was about the only woman in the whole crowd, right?

04-00:07:36

Lage: Mm-hmm.

04-00:07:36

Myers: So we had a whole—there was probably maybe forty people that were in the audience, that were part of the warehouse. And this was a farewell and the last award ceremony that we were going to have there. And so it's mostly all guys. And so I start doing it. And, of course, you already see how easy it is for me to cry. And so I was trying to keep it together, but I was crying. And then I realized they were crying too. All the guys were crying too. And I thought, you know what? I just said it out loud. I go, "Hey, man, this is really sad. [laughs] Let's just let it be." And it was just—

04-00:08:24

Lage: Most of those guys staying—?

04-00:08:26

Myers: They were losing their jobs.

04-00:08:27

Lage: They were losing their jobs. They weren't—

04-00:08:28

Myers: They were losing their jobs.

04-00:08:29

Lage: —staying in government employment somewhere.

04-00:08:31

Myers: Some of them got jobs elsewhere, but a lot of them were losing their jobs at that moment. And then they eventually all got jobs. I kind of kept a watch on them all. Either that or they retired. And we all did okay. We all landed on our feet, here and there. There was some things that happened that—but things were really rockin'. We had a lot of part-time warehouse people, and they all lost their jobs first.

And I remember getting one letter—and, of course, they look at me, because I was management and a civilian. And I remember getting this letter from this man that—and in the letter it just stated, "I can't believe that you're laying me off. I've worked for you guys for all of these years. And this is the first time in my life I am not going to be able to support my wife." Little things like that really make it hard when you're in management, when you know that you're being directed from the BRAC god, who's directing the other higher-ups that are within our headquarters and our ocean terminal. And a lot of the word that we got, we would hear just about the same time that we got to tell the people.

So it was a lot of uneasiness, for the last few years. A lot of people were mistrusting management. And I would tell them as soon as I could. But there was just a lot of—people weren't used to getting laid off in a federal job. You were supposed to be able to retire from a federal job. That's why you went to work for the feds. But that's not the way the world is any more. Everything's being contracted out.

04-00:10:21

Lage: How long did you stay at Concord Naval?

04-00:10:26

Myers: I left there in 2000. I was there for a couple years.

04-00:10:33

Lage: And then why did you leave there?

04-00:10:35

Myers: Well, by then my division was dwindled down from 110 to seventeen people. I had already laid off everybody.

04-00:10:39

Lage: Oh. So while you were there, you were really—

04-00:10:41

Myers: And while I was there, to compound it—I was in this wonderful office, with the bathroom at Naval Weapons Station. And the Navy was laying off their people. So all of those people were coming into my office, trying to beg for a job. And all I could tell them was, "Dude, I'm sorry, man. I'm losing my job too. We have no more jobs. And if I could give you one, I would, but I can't. I don't have jobs."

04-00:11:08

Lage: Such a contrast from what you described earlier, with the fun of it all, and that now it—

04-00:11:12

Myers: Oh, it was night and day. It was the worst four years, I think, of my life. It was, on one hand, rewarding, because there was just an incredible amount of challenges. I was finishing up my Bachelor's degree at night. Well, I was doing an accelerated program with St. Mary's. And I was flying back and forth to Southern California to shut down our Compton privately owned vehicle warehouse, where I also had to stand in front of those people, forty-something-odd people, and give their award ceremony. And I wasn't as attached to them, so I kind of kept it together a little better.

But it was difficult. It was really difficult. And all of those people lost their job but two. Only two were able to remain. And those weren't chosen by me. They were chosen by our civilian personnel, who had to go through all of these different formulas and play checkers with all these people's experiences and whatever, and who was left, and all kinds of different formulas that they had to go through. It was very complicated for them. They really went through a lot too, to make sure that they got the right person who was going to be able to stay.

But anyway, I had to shut down that Compton warehouse. And I was flying back and forth, trying to make sure I made my classes, so I could complete my Bachelor's degree. And there was many a night I was doing the homework on an airplane or in a hotel room.

And not only did we close down the Compton warehouse, which was a huge warehouse, in a very bad neighborhood, I might add, where the Compton contractor there said many a time he would go up on top of the roof and pick up bullet shells—but anyway, we moved from there to San Pedro Fueling Depot, and we set up a temporary privately owned vehicle processing center for the military vehicles, whereas we actually literally—and I was on the ground, moving the temporary trailers, going, "Set it right here." And we were marking the asphalt for the parking stalls for all of the vehicles and trying to make it as comfortable as possible for the military families when they would

come in and pick up and drop off their vehicles. But we literally set that up in the middle of an open field. And there was a parking lot where we could lay down—to make the parking spots. But that was a—in fact, I used that operation, closing down and setting up that POV lot, as my project for my St. Mary's College project. And everybody was—

04-00:14:00

Lage: For your management degree.

04-00:14:02

Myers: Yeah, my management degree. And they were very impressed. But that was really exciting, because there was a lot of different things—a lot of different challenges, and I was able to—I got an award, because I was able to notice that we were paying way too much money for an installation for the phones, and I was able to save \$10,000. So I got a little award for that. It was kind of interesting working that out, making phone calls from my hotel room, saying, "No, I don't think this is right," and—because that was before cell phones.

Yeah, it was cool, very cool. But it was hard to say goodbye to everybody. And there was a lot of people that were really upset about the fact that they lost their federal job because they weren't supposed to lose federal jobs.

04-00:14:43

Lage: And they might have focused that anger on you, at times, I would guess.  
Yeah.

04-00:14:46

Myers: Yeah, and blame and—but I was actually happy that I was going to lose my job too, because there wasn't anybody else to manage any more. They were all gone. And I lucked out, in a way, because the commander at the—the deputy commander of the whole terminal, at that time, was a female lieutenant commander. And she was retiring, and she got a job at the American President Lines, doing electronic data interchange. That's like writing programs so that you can electronically communicate shipping document information between whoever your factory is to where you're going to ship it to—a lot of important stuff. And she called me up after she had already gotten that job and said, "I think you could do this job. Why don't you come over here?" And so that's where I went after I left the Army.

04-00:15:41

Lage: So you didn't have trouble getting resituated.

04-00:15:44

Myers: No.

04-00:15:44

Lage: But you mentioned the job wasn't as much fun.

04-00:15:46

Myers:

I hated that job. It was the most boring job I ever had in my life. I went from the funnest job in the whole world to the most boring job I ever had in my life. And I did that for almost four years. And thank God that APL contracted all those jobs out to India. So I got a big fat severance package. And I just had a really good time for about five months—and knew that I wanted to work for Homeland Security. Because this was after everything started happening after 9/11. And I was working for APL during 9/11. And I felt like I needed to go back and support the military. And anyway, it didn't feel right to be in commercial industry. I felt like I needed to go support the military.

And so once I lost that job—I couldn't get the smile off my face when they told me I was getting laid off. In fact, I remember, when they told me at APL I was getting laid off, there was these two managers and they were all solemn and they started telling me that I was going to get laid off. And I go, "Hey, let me make this easy on you. I've had to be on your side of the table more than once. Just tell me what the benefits are." [laughter] And so they did. And so I got laid off and had a wonderful time, and got the job with Homeland Security as a contracting officer, which I now do.

04-00:17:08

Lage:

So where do you work, in that—?

04-00:17:09

Myers:

I work at Coast Guard Island in Alameda. And I'm back working with the military again, and I really enjoy it.

04-00:17:17

Lage:

And why Homeland Security?

04-00:17:20

Myers:

Homeland Security, Coast—well, Coast Guard defends our borders.

04-00:17:23

Lage:

Oh, I see. Coast Guard is part of Homeland Security.

04-00:17:27

Myers:

Yes, it is. It's not Department of Defense. It's actually Homeland Security. We're our own department.

04-00:17:33

Lage:

So what do you do as a contracting officer?

04-00:17:35

Myers:

What?

04-00:17:36

Lage:

What do you do as a contracting—?

04-00:17:37  
Myers: What I do is I actually procure and manage contracts for Homeland Security, in support of Coast Guard operations. Yeah.

04-00:17:48  
Lage: Very good. So is it fun?

04-00:17:48  
Myers: It is, yeah. It's challenging. Sometimes it can be just a real pain, because there's a lot deadlines and things. But I really enjoy working with the people I work with.

04-00:18:00  
Lage: Yeah. Is it more paperwork—

04-00:18:02  
Myers: It is paperwork.

04-00:18:03  
Lage: —than your previous—?

04-00:18:03  
Myers: It's not outside. But I work on an island. And there's actually—

04-00:18:08  
Lage: What island do you work on?

04-00:18:09  
Myers: Coast Guard Island, in Alameda. A lot of people don't know about that little island. But it's even got its own little stingray that kind of circles the island at certain times of the day. And you can go look in this one section, and you can watch this little stingray come and eat whatever it's eating off the side of the shore. It's really neat. All kinds of beautiful wildlife and—

04-00:18:31  
Lage: Is it near the old naval base? Or naval air base, I guess is what I'm thinking.

04-00:18:39  
Myers: You could see it. I used to be on a whaleboat rowing team for American President Lines, and it is really in the—what's ironic about it, before I came to work for the Coast Guard—is that their whaleboat is right there right next to Coast Guard Island, at the piers there. So.

04-00:19:02  
Lage: Did you say whaleboat?

04-00:19:03  
Myers: Whaleboats, yeah!

04-00:19:04  
Lage: A rowing of a whaleboat?

04-00:19:05  
Myers: Yeah! Whaleboat rowing team. And those are real—

04-00:19:07  
Lage: Are you still on that?

04-00:19:09  
Myers: What?

04-00:19:10  
Lage: Do you still do that?

04-00:19:11  
Myers: No, I can't, because I broke my tailbone. So—and you really need to—you have to slide on the bench.

04-00:19:16  
Lage: Oh, yeah.

04-00:19:16  
Myers: And I can't do that any more. But, oh, boy, we had some fun. It was really, really fun.

04-00:19:21  
Lage: That does sound like fun.

04-00:19:22  
Myers: A lot of competition. There's a lot of whaleboat rowing that's done competitively, in the Bay Area. In fact, if you pull it up on the Internet, you'll be really surprised. There's actually a thing called BAWRA, Bay Area Whaleboat Rowing Association. I love that acronym, BAWRA.

04-00:19:37  
Lage: Yeah. [laughter] Okay, that's very good. Now, let me just ask—I'm looking at pictures over there and I see someone with a sailor's hat.

04-00:19:48  
Myers: That was my dad.

04-00:19:49  
Lage: Oh, this was your dad! Oh!

04-00:19:52  
Myers: So if you can imagine that young man—well, that old man that turned into that young man when he got that award, when he got the Korean medal awarded to him by the commander. And then to have the commander come to his funeral was just—and actually come in his dress whites and do this wonderful, wonderful, heartfelt speech.

04-00:20:14  
Lage: Wasn't that lovely?

04-00:20:15  
Myers: And it was very, very—it just said everything about what was happening at the Oakland Army Base. Yeah.

04-00:20:26  
Lage: Did any of your children go into the military?

04-00:20:29  
Myers: No.

04-00:20:29  
Lage: How many children do you have?

04-00:20:31  
Myers: I have two boys.

04-00:20:31  
Lage: Did we get that? Two boys.

04-00:20:32  
Myers: Nobody went into the military. Nope.

04-00:20:35  
Lage: Did they see your life on the base, or were they already kind of grown?

04-00:20:39  
Myers: Well, because I always had to have a top-secret clearance. And so when I was raising them—because I'm raising two boys on my own, right?—I would always tell them, "You guys better watch out, because the feds are watching us. I've got a top-secret clearance, and they're always watching. They're listening to our phone calls and everything." And I don't even know if they really were, but they always wondered about that. [laughter] It was a good help in raising kids.

04-00:21:03  
Lage: Yes! I can see. But they weren't attracted to military life or—yeah.

04-00:21:08  
Myers: No, neither of them were. Yeah.

04-00:21:11  
Lage: Okay. Well, tell me. Is there anything we've missed or that you want to add that I've neglected to ask or—?

04-00:21:17  
Myers: One thing I did want to talk about is how long sometimes it takes things to happen. Before we decided to go Concord Naval Weapons Station, the Concord Naval Weapons Station was actually trying to get container cranes at the Concord Naval Weapons Station, install the big gantries. And finally they got it approved. It was almost ten years later.

04-00:21:40

Lage: Good.

04-00:21:41

Myers: And I had followed that. Here and there it would come up, and I would have to make sure it was on track and everything. And so finally it was time for them to install the gantry cranes. But I had already gotten my job at American President Lines. But the commander called me and he goes, "Hey, Mary, we're installing the gantries. Want to come and watch grass grow?" Because it's that slow!

04-00:22:04

Lage: Yes!

04-00:22:05

Myers: But I said, "Hell yes!" So that's what—remember I was telling you that it's funner to be on the pier than it is watching TV?

04-00:22:13

Lage: Mm-hmm.

04-00:22:13

Myers: Well, I would go there after work and we would watch this gantry being—there was two of them that were installed. And it is such an incredibly slow process, but it's an amazing process. And so, even though those gantries—and I'm not working for the Army any more, those are still my gantry cranes.

04-00:22:32

Lage: Yeah. [laughs]

04-00:22:33

Myers: And it just gives me great satisfaction when I drive by there and see those.

04-00:22:39

Lage: And is it a deep enough water port to take these big container ships?

04-00:22:43

Myers: The problem with the Concord Naval Weapons Station is that they have to be very careful about—they have to cross under a bridge, so they have to make sure that whatever goes through there, they have to wait until the draft is low enough so that it clears the bridge but high enough so it doesn't bottom the ship out. Whereas, Oakland Army Base, Pier 7, you could go there any time of day or night. It didn't matter how big you were. You could just go in there with ease. And it was so easy.

They still do operations there. They contract it out. The contract now, the stevedore contract, includes making sure that you coordinate with the Port of Oakland so that you can use that for certain operations. And so they still have operations there. And one of the marine cargo specialists, or the people that work there, they'll just go there and they'll make sure all the pieces are

showing up and they'll oversee everything. And yet a government contractor is still doing the work out there

04-00:23:46

Lage: So somehow that confuses me, that they still have—

04-00:23:51

Myers: The operations there.

04-00:23:52

Lage: —the operations there, [laughs] if they're—

04-00:23:53

Myers: Yeah.

04-00:23:54

Lage: But totally overseen by a—

04-00:23:56

Myers: Yeah. Army is actually—want me to wait until that's done? I don't know what it is. Oh, there, you've got your message now. Okay. Anyway. [laughs] All right. What's happening and what has been happening for a very long time since they moved over to Concord Naval Weapons Station, is that—that pier is perfect. That Army—they never should have got rid of it, in my opinion. But they did. Okay, so, oh, well.

So the stevedoring contract for ship-loading operations that the Army has includes, "Okay, contractor, we may have to use that Pier 7, and we may have to use that lay-down area out there, and we may even have to use the railhead. It's up to you to make the communication and the agreement with the Port of Oakland. Because it is the Port of Oakland's now. And then, once you do that, and then you have to do it in a certain timeframe, so that we can make sure that we can get these ships loaded, and so on."

04-00:25:13

Lage: I see. So it's almost totally an outside operation.

04-00:25:17

Myers: It is an outside operation.

04-00:25:19

Lage: Port of Oakland and the contra—

04-00:25:19

Myers: But it's the Army's cargo. It's the Army's cargo. And they're hiring these longshoremen that deal with the Port of Oakland. And that way, they can use that pier. But the Port of Oakland really doesn't use break-bulk that much. They don't want to—and it's really hard, a lot of times, to get people to work on those operations, because they really don't want to work that hard. Doing break-bulk operations is really—that's old school. And containerization

happened during Vietnam War. They thought it was just really kind of weird. What do you mean put it in a container? That sounds weird. And so what happened was, once it caught on—because it's intermodal. They don't have to—because it lost a lot of people's jobs. People used to put things—

04-00:26:07

Lage: Longshoremen.

04-00:26:08

Myers: Yeah, longshoremen used to put things in nets and pull it up, and then another guy used to be there and take everything out of the net and move it—literally move it on a forklift somewhere in the ship and tie it down. Whereas now, all of that operation would be in a container. And so during the Vietnam War—usually during wars you'll see incredible improvement in transportation. And that was one of the things that happened during Vietnam.

04-00:26:34

Lage: So there are not too many old break-bulkers left.

04-00:26:36

Myers: No. In fact, the only break-bulk pier that the Port of Oakland has is so broken down—and I've been there, years ago. I can imagine what it looks like now. Big huge gaping holes where you've got to make sure you don't fall in. They don't even use it. It's not really usable.

04-00:26:54

Lage: Goodness. Okay, well, I think we've pretty well covered things.

04-00:26:59

Myers: Great.

04-00:26:59

Lage: And you made a tremendous contribution.

04-00:27:01

Myers: Great.

04-00:27:01

Lage: I appreciate it.

04-00:27:02

Myers: You're welcome.

[End of Interview]