

Regional Oral History Office  
The Bancroft Library

University of California  
Berkeley, California

Dave Toner:  
Oakland Army Base Oral History Project

Interviews conducted by  
Ann Lage  
in 2009

Copyright © 2009 by The Regents of the University of California

Since 1954 the Regional Oral History Office has been interviewing leading participants in or well-placed witnesses to major events in the development of Northern California, the West, and the nation. Oral History is a method of collecting historical information through tape-recorded interviews between a narrator with firsthand knowledge of historically significant events and a well-informed interviewer, with the goal of preserving substantive additions to the historical record. The tape recording is transcribed, lightly edited for continuity and clarity, and reviewed by the interviewee. The corrected manuscript is bound with photographs and illustrative materials and placed in The Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley, and in other research collections for scholarly use. Because it is primary material, oral history is not intended to present the final, verified, or complete narrative of events. It is a spoken account, offered by the interviewee in response to questioning, and as such it is reflective, partisan, deeply involved, and irreplaceable.

\*\*\*\*\*

All uses of this manuscript are covered by a legal agreement between The Regents of the University of California and Dave Toner dated January 12, 2009. The manuscript is thereby made available for research purposes. All literary rights in the manuscript, including the right to publish, are reserved to The Bancroft Library of the University of California, Berkeley. No part of the manuscript may be quoted for publication without the written permission of the Director of The Bancroft Library of the University of California, Berkeley.

Requests for permission to quote for publication should be addressed to the Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, Mail Code 6000, University of California, Berkeley, 94720-6000, and should include identification of the specific passages to be quoted, anticipated use of the passages, and identification of the user.

It is recommended that this oral history be cited as follows:

Dave Toner, "Oakland Army Base Oral History Project"  
conducted by Ann Lage in 2009, Regional Oral History Office,  
The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 2009.

## Discursive Table of Contents: Dave Toner

Interview date: January 12, 2009

[Audio File 1]

1

Birth in 1959 and childhood in Providence, RI—enlistment in army in 1977 with plans to join the Boston Police Department—father’s WWII service and army education benefits influential in decision—basic training at Fort McClellan in Alabama, then move to Oakland Army Base—pleasant surprise at the “non-military” living quarters in Building 650, shared by both sexes and people with different jobs—military police training, contrasts with civilian police academy—examples of transgressions handled by OAB MPs: traffic tickets, mentally ill transients—handling of returned Jonestown bodies in 1978, having to keep family members out of the mortuary: “it was a difficult deal”—working port security—more on base living facilities: eating establishments, auto hobby shop, church, etc—guarding Building One—collegial relations with civilian DOD employees—gender and race relations on base—the Crosswinds club—traveling to other CA bases with the softball team—meeting wife Gail in 1992—decision to not reenlist, thoughts on military authority—memorable sexual harassment case—discovery of warehouse graffiti by troops bound for Vietnam.

[Audio File 2]

31

Thoughts on marijuana use on base: “probably more people smoked pot than did not at the time”—closing thoughts.

Interview #1: January 12, 2009

Begin Audio File 1 toner\_dave\_1\_01-12-09.mp3

01-00:00:06

Lage: Okay, we're ready. Let me put the date on. Today's January 12, 2009, and I'm interviewing Dave Toner for the Oakland Army Base Project. I'm Ann Lage from the Oral History Office at Berkeley. Dave, we've got to start first with some personal info to sort of find out about you and what led you into the Army when you joined. So just start by telling me when and where you were born.

01-00:00:32

Toner: I was born in Providence, Rhode Island in December 5, 1959, and I pretty much stayed in the southern New England area until the day I turned eighteen, is when I entered the Army. And I enlisted in Boston to be a Military Policeman.

01-00:00:47

Lage: Oh, okay. So just to back up a minute, what about your family? Were they from that—

01-00:00:54

Toner: They were from New York, basically.

01-00:00:56

Lage: New York?

01-00:00:56

Toner: Between New York and Providence, they've pretty much lived their lives.

01-00:01:00

Lage: And what did your dad do?

01-00:01:02

Toner: He was an elevator repairman. He worked for Armor Elevator and a few other companies in that area—Otis Elevator, I think, for a while.

01-00:01:09

Lage: And your mother? Did she work outside of the home?

01-00:01:11

Toner: She was a telephone switchboard operator in New York City when she met my father, and then she pretty much became a homemaker after that. That's kind of what you did in those days.

01-00:01:21

Lage: That was the tradition. Absolutely. [laughs] Okay, so you went to school in Rhode Island?

01-00:01:27

Toner:

I went to school in Massachusetts, actually—Rehoboth, Massachusetts—Dighton-Rehoboth Regional High School. A very small town. At the time, we had three police cars, one traffic light, and a very rural community. It's between Providence and Boston. Three towns went to one high school, that's how small they were. And at the time, I wanted to be a police officer, and I felt that the Army was a good way to do that, and also, I got the old GI Bill, which paid for a college education after that. So that worked out.

01-00:01:59

Lage:

Were you recruited?

01-00:02:01

Toner:

I pretty much initiated the interest. Yeah. They had recruiters, but I had pretty much already thought it through and decided that's what I wanted to do.

01-00:02:11

Lage:

Was your dad in the Army?

01-00:02:13

Toner:

Yes, he was. He was a paratrooper just after World War II ended. He occupied Italy as a member of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne. He was a paratrooper and actually a glider pilot, which is [laughs] fairly rare. They had no motor. The wooden, canvas gliders that they'd bring a squad of troops in—one time. [laughs] So he did that, and he was in the military for three years.

01-00:02:41

Lage:

And was that a source of pride or—

01-00:02:43:

Toner:

Yes, yes, it was. Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

01-00:02:44

Lage:

Were a lot of your friends and the cohort you went to high school with thinking about the Army?

01-00:02:52

Toner:

No, actually, it was a fairly unpopular thing to do in 1977.

01-00:02:57

Lage:

So the Vietnam War was—

01-00:02:58

Toner:

The war was still fresh in everybody's mind, people were fairly anti-military and anti-establishment, so it was kind of bucking the trend a bit at the time.

01-00:03:09

Lage:

What do you think made you want to buck the trend?

01-00:03:12  
Toner: I wanted some practical experience. I was kind of tired with education at the time. I says, I'd like to do something as opposed to go to school to do it. And it was a good way to get money to pay for college later. And it was the adventure thing. A small town, and let's go out and see something. So I did.

01-00:03:30  
Lage: Did you think you'd go into the police force later?

01-00:03:32  
Toner: Yes. Oh, no, that's what I specifically went in for. So you can pretty much ask to be whatever you want to be as long as you pass the tests. And I could have been anything—the door was wide open—but this is what I chose.

01-00:03:45  
Lage: Okay, so this was '77.

01-00:03:46  
Toner: Yes. I actually went on my birthday, December 5, 1977.

01-00:03:53  
Lage: When you turned eighteen.

01-00:03:53  
Toner: The day I turned eighteen.

01-00:03:55  
Lage: Were your family supportive?

01-00:04:56  
Toner: Yes, they were, but Mom cried. It's oh, my baby's leaving, that type of thing. So it was a little emotional, and a big step for somebody who really hadn't been far. I think the farthest I'd been was Canada, upstate New York, things like that. [laughs]

01-00:04:15  
Lage: Was that part of it? Did you want the opportunity to get some travel?

01-00:04:17  
Toner: I did. I did. What I specifically wanted was California, and they pretty much said, Okay, we can put you in California.

01-00:04:29  
Lage: You mean they would give you that much—

01-00:04:31  
Toner: Within reason, they would do their best to do that.

01-00:04:37  
Lage: And why California?

01-00:04:39

Toner: Warm weather, and the sun. Girls. Yeah.

01-00:04:42

Lage: Because it also had the sort of the anti-war counter-culture.

01-00:04:47

Toner: Yeah, and the mystique of California. If you're from New England, it's like, Whoa, California—sun, sunshine, and beautiful girls.

01-00:04:52

Lage: Yeah. And you hadn't been there.

01-00:04:53

Toner: Right, right. And I came into Oakland. What's really interesting was I went in December—fifth—went to Fort McClellan, Alabama, which is where the Military Police training takes place. It's called OSUT—it's One Station Unit Training—where you're going both for your basic training and for your AIT or Advanced Individual Training. So your company pretty much stays together, both in boot camp and in our training. We were there for three months, and with all the same people. But as the holidays approached, they wanted to basically shut the facility down or have as few people there as possible, so they really encouraged everyone to go home for the holidays. So I'd been in the Army about two weeks, two to three weeks, and they said, "Well, why don't you go home now for a vacation?" [laughs] So I had to get a plane ticket and fly home... And it was fine. I went back with a crew cut, which was very, you know, not so much in style in 1977.

01-00:05:53

Lage: Oh, that's right. Had your hair been long before?

01-00:05:56

Toner: Yeah, pretty long. Not exceptionally so, but over the ears. And so then I went home for vacation, saw all my friends again, and then had to go back to Alabama. And finished up my training in March of '78, and then they flew me to California. Well, what they didn't really tell me was that when I flew to California, well, I was going to have to make my own way from the airport to the Army base. And I had no idea of this. And I had spent all my money on vacation. I had no money. I mean, I didn't make much—it was like \$300 dollars a month or something back then. So here I am at Oakland Airport like, well, okay, where do I go now?

01-00:06:37

Lage: I'm kind of surprised they just left you.

01-00:06:38

Toner: So they still had USOs there, so I went to the USO, and they said, "Well, let me call the base." And so they called the base. And, "Yeah, this is Private Toner, and I just arrived, and I don't know how to get there, and I don't have any money to get there." "Okay." So I ended up talking to the First

Sergeant—First Sergeant Ed Young, who was an Asian-American, and he came down and got me. Which was a fairly, you know, high-ranking enlisted man—he’s pretty much the highest-ranking enlisted man on the base—came and got me, personally.

01-00:07:09

Lage: And was he an MP?

01-00:07:10

Toner: No. The First Sergeant is like the company First Sergeant. So he was more of an administrator than an actual Military Police. They have what they call a Provost Marshal as the leader of the Military Police—kind of a separate function. You have your billeting, and then you have your job. So he was more in charge of the billeting of the base. And he was a wonderful guy, just a very nice man, real sweet guy. And he came and got me, and [laughs] he said, “You should have been able to...” I was just barely eighteen years old—I had no idea. But it was very interesting. So we arrived at Oakland Army Base, and I was expecting like barracks—like thirty guys in a bay or something like that. And where we were was Building 650, which was called Jacobs Hall, was what used to be a guest house. So basically, everybody had their own room, and you shared a bathroom with one other person—the person in the adjoining room. So you shared a common bathroom. And both women and men were on the same floor. They did not share bathrooms, but it was a surprise to me that it was so different than what I’d seen in basic training. It was like completely different, you know.

01-00:08:28

Lage: Did it throw you that the women and men were so closely—

01-00:08:31

Toner: A little bit. I didn’t think it was a bad thing. I thought it was a very nice thing, you know, but I just didn’t expect. It wasn’t what I perceived, that’s for sure.

01-00:08:38

Lage: Now, were you just with other Military Police, or were you with—

01-00:08:41

Toner: No, we were with administrative personnel and supply personnel and everyone else. Yeah, we weren’t segregated in any way.

01-00:08:47

Lage: Yeah, interesting. Well, how did that work out—the relationships between the men and women?

01-00:08:51

Toner: Really well. As a Military Police, one of the first things they tell you and the first things you learn is that you don’t mess with people in personnel or in finance, if you don’t want them to have a grudge against you. They could send you some place, or they could hold up your paycheck, or they could do other things. And everybody really got along real well. There was no animosity. It

was almost like a college campus atmosphere. We worked an eight-hour-a-day job, five days a week—either day shift, swing shift, or midnight shift—and—

01-00:09:30

Lage: Did you switch around between the three shifts?

01-00:09:32

Toner: Yeah, we did. They'd keep you on this one for a while, and move you to that one for a while. So I ended up doing all three shifts. Midnight shift was very, very quiet—not much going on at all. Pier Seven was a bustling port. There was a lot of longshoremen and Teamsters, and so you'd have to watch for them stealing and things like that. We had gates that we manned and patrols. It was three patrols that took different areas of the base that they used that. That was their patrol area. But as far as like being an active military base, it was probably the least active military base in the—that I've come across.

01-00:10:11

Lage: The war was over—the Vietnam War was over, but wasn't there some—

01-00:10:15

Toner: Yeah. Well, right. It was a supply. It's Military Traffic Management Command, so all the material and goods shipped to basically the Pacific theater for the Army and the Air Force went through Oakland Army Base, including everything sold at the PXs—all those kinds of goods—and supplies—you know, regular supplies to keep the military going. So that was basically the job, was guarding that stuff. And they had a lot of civilian employees that worked on the base, and so you'd check badges as they came in and make sure they didn't take anything on the way out. But it was just an eight-hour-a-day job. We had one formation a month, where the whole company get together and stood out at attention, and the Captain spoke to you. But if you worked day shift as a Military Police, you didn't have to go to that. So it was just very un-military.

01-00:11:06

Lage: Was it sort of like being a security guard, in a way?

01-00:11:10

Toner: It was more like being at a college campus where everyone had an eight-hour-a-day job. That's basically what it was. I mean, the seventies were—the late seventies—were fairly lax as far as the military was concerned. The war was over, there wasn't as much stress on everybody, and things got a little lax. That was the Carter administration. Things got a little lax during that, which was fine by me. [laughs] I enjoyed it. In fact, you didn't have to stay on the base; you could apply and go get an apartment of your own off base somewhere. So actually, I lived in Berkeley, up on College and Derby up there, in an apartment there for a while.

01-00:11:50  
Lage: Oh, you did? Right in the midst of the college.

01-00:11:54  
Toner: Yep, yep. And up on Park Boulevard, I had an apartment there, different times. So I probably spent a year, year and a half living off base. And yeah, so.

01-00:12:03  
Lage: And you were there for a total of...?

01-00:12:04  
Toner: Three years.

01-00:12:05  
Lage: Three years.

01-00:12:06  
Toner: Well, two years, nine months. Not counting the basic training and the AIT. Yeah.

01-00:12:10  
Lage: Okay, I just want to be sure we get as much detail as we can. In your training, is there anything to say about your training, and what kind of—

01-00:12:18  
Toner: As far as the Military Police training and the...?

01-00:12:20  
Lage: Right. I'm sure you had some basic training to start with.

01-00:12:22  
Toner: Yeah. Well, you do your shooting, throwing hand grenades, and doing a lot of marching and running, you know.

01-00:12:29  
Lage: That would be standard for everybody.

01-00:12:31  
Toner: Yeah. Pretty much, yeah. The base was fairly new—this was Fort McClellan, Alabama—so there wasn't a lot of landscaping and whatnot. It was a fairly barren-looking place. It had just been built. But the Military Police training was very much like you'd see in a normal police academy—weapons training, searching training. And a lot of studying military justice. Just like you would study the motor vehicle regulations and any other laws. A lot of bookwork, a lot of rote memorization. You had to specifically know each aspect of a crime, what makes it a crime, and are all those aspects there in this situation?

01-00:13:17  
Lage: Was there attention to protecting people's rights and things, like you'd think of in civilian {inaudible}?

01-00:13:21

Toner:

Yes. Yes and no. [laughs] What was interesting, I found, was that the military, in their training—like with baton training, for instance—they kind of assumed that you were going to be interacting with other military. So they wanted you to hit them in like the thigh or the upper arm or things like this—you know, where you wouldn't really injure them so bad. More of like trying to subdue them without hurting them. After I got out of the Army, I went through the Oakland Police Academy, their reserve program—it's like an 800-hour program—and their object was pretty much to hit them in the knee [laughs] or in the elbow, or to disable them. So it was just a different school of thought. The Army was almost trying to protect them a little bit. But it was fairly stressful because if you didn't pass a certain segment, you were kicked out, and then they could do whatever they wanted with you. You had to go into supply or into infantry or something else. And ex-Military Police didn't do as well. Other military kind of frowned on you for the most part. More of a generalization.

01-00:14:27

Lage:

Now, what do you mean? They didn't do as well in getting promoted?

01-00:14:31

Toner:

Well, no. It's like if you were a policemen and now you're not, other people in the community may not look favorably on you.

01-00:14:39

Lage:

I see.

01-00:14:41

Toner:

Just more the era. There was a lot of anti-police sentiment in that time—riots and whatnot—you know, post-Vietnam. So there was a little bit of that fear. But if you didn't pass, they would boot you right out. So there was some stress as far as... You had a couple chances to do it, but, we lost quite a few people along the way. Probably about a third of the class was lost due to attrition.

01-00:15:11

Lage:

So it must have been fairly rigorous.

01-00:15:12

Toner:

It was, but it wasn't really difficult if you applied yourself.

01-00:15:16

Lage: Had you been a good student in high school?

01-00:15:18

Toner: Medium. I was B's and C's. If I'd applied myself more, I'd have been a little better, but I had other things on my mind—girls, and playing, and having fun, and sports and whatnot. So I could have done better, but I passed, and I did fine.

01-00:15:34

Lage: And you did fine in the Military Police.

01-00:15:37

Toner: Yeah, I was third in the class or so.

01-00:15:39

Lage: Very good. Okay, let's talk more, if we can kind of get into dredging up your memories [laughs] on the Oakland Army Base. Let's talk first about the work that you did—the kinds of transgressions, maybe, that you would look for and find—even give a couple examples, if you can remember some.

01-00:16:00

Toner: Yeah. One of the things. When I first started, I was on midnight shift, and that's kind of where they broke the new MPs in. So I'd ride around with somebody who was maybe five or six years' experience. Just ride with them. You had to learn a ten-code—all the radio signal signs and all that stuff. And Oakland Army Base has one main street, Maritime, that has concurrent jurisdiction with the Oakland Police Department. So on that street, both the Military Police and the Oakland can enforce laws. So that was a good place to learn how to pull vehicles over and issue citations—mostly warnings and whatnot. But yeah, we'd spend a whole night just pulling people over. More as a learning experience than giving actual tickets. I mean, sure, they were speeding or whatever, but it was more of a learning experience than anything else. And so we'd write tickets.

01-00:16:53

Lage: If only the drivers knew that...

01-00:16:56

Toner: It's mostly truck traffic. What was very interesting is we had a lot of homeless people end up there.

01-00:17:02

Lage: Oh, you did?

01-00:17:03

Toner: This was when I guess it was Edmund Brown released a lot of people from the hospitals—Napa, whatever—all the mental institutions, and there was a lot of homeless people wandering around. And these guys were 5150. They were definitely unable to care for themselves.

01-00:17:24

Lage: And this was down in—

01-00:17:24

Toner: They just made their way down there somehow—I don't know how. But I mean, there was probably a couple of them a week that we'd have to turn over to an ambulance to—the Alameda County.

01-00:17:34

Lage: Would they be on the base itself or—

01-00:17:36

Toner: Yeah, and wander around, and just not belong. A lot of the time, it was you were basically watching the jackrabbits. There was not much to do. A big aspect of the job was checking badges for the civilian employees that came and went out of the warehouses—the AAFES warehouses—that's the Army & Air Force Exchange Service.

01-00:17:59

Lage: So you'd stand there at the door?

01-00:18:00

Toner: You stand at the gate, and all the civilian employees would have to come through, so you'd have to show your badge. On the way out, they'd have to open their lunchbox or whatever to make sure they weren't stealing anything. This was all the goods that were sold in the PXs, so shavers and cameras and...

01-00:18:11

Lage: So did they have to show receipts?

01-00:18:13

Toner: No, no, just to make sure they're not taking anything out. That was Buildings 803, 4. 805 was the mortuary warehouse. That was where the Guyana bodies came through—the Jonestown bodies.

01-00:18:28

Lage: Oh, my goodness.

01-00:18:30

Toner: Yeah, that was '78, I guess. I guess that was spring of '78. We had to lock ourselves in this warehouse—these are those quarter mile-long warehouses—redwood warehouses—and one of them was a mortuary for people who came back from the Pacific theater. The morticians were just wonderful guys. They were very funny, friendly guys. And they had a full assortment of uniforms to dress the bodies in. So when these bodies from Jonestown came, there was always a Military Policeman in the warehouse with them, and we'd have to lock ourselves in.

01-00:19:07

Lage: And why did you lock—

01-00:19:09

Toner: At night and during the day. Well, people—family members of the Jonestown victims wanted to get to see them, wanted to get to their family, wanted to... They were at the gates. And I don't know who made the decision, but... It probably went on for a month, month and a half, that we were doing this extra duty. And since you locked yourself in, you could take a nap; you could bring a radio. There was really nothing to do. And I remember falling asleep on one of the gurneys—the gurneys that they haul the bodies around on. And I wake up, and one of the morticians is rolling—"We got another one here; let's wheel him in!" [laughs] It was real funny, though. They were really nice guys. It was a bit creepy.

01-00:19:51

Lage: It must have been kind of gruesome work. Yeah, creepy.

01-00:19:54

Toner: It was. Well, it was stacked up. There was like 600 or 800 caskets, and they were these aircraft caskets that have these vents on them, and I specifically remember them. Just the amount of them was really...made you think.

01-00:20:07

Lage: Overwhelming. Yeah.

01-00:20:08

Toner: It was, it was. And you know, for somebody young, it's like... Didn't really understand the whole thing, you know.

01-00:20:14

Lage: I wonder how they happened to be handled by the Army.

01-00:20:16

Toner: I'm sure that was the only way to get them back, and the only facility big enough, really, to handle them. You know, those big old warehouses. And they were underused at that point, at least the mortuary warehouse was. They'd find some missing remains, bring them back, the morticians would prep them, and send them on to the family.

01-00:20:33

Lage: And then was the family kind of kept—you said it was very difficult.

01-00:20:36

Toner: They were kept out of the... It was a difficult deal. These people would come down in their Sunday clothes and try to get through the gate, and physically try to walk through against orders, you know. And it was—

01-00:20:50

Lage: And you'd have to—

01-00:20:50

Toner: And you feel for them, I mean, you really do. "But you can't come in," you know, "I'm really sorry. There's other avenues you've got to go." It was a traumatic time, for those families. Terrible.

01-00:21:04

Lage: Well, that's quite a—something I hadn't expected.

01-00:21:07

Toner: It is. Well, it was right at that time. And I can vividly remember some of those people wanting to see their family and distraught.

01-00:21:16

Lage: Did you have to deal with the press around that? I would imagine that—

01-00:21:19

Toner: No, they have officers that do that. The press were only allowed to be certain areas. Military has a little more pull than the average business on the street, so they could limit them and whatnot. But yeah.

01-00:21:34

Lage: Okay. You mentioned security—or watching longshoremen for theft. Was that a frequent problem?

01-00:21:43

Toner: Yeah. Well, it was just something you had to watch for. So the longshoremen would unload the ships basically nighttime, daytime, whenever the ships came in. So this would go on twenty-four hours a day until the ship was unloaded. And at Pier Seven, a lot of that stuff was break bulk cargo, so it was things that had to be actually craned off the ship—big skids of stuff. Now it's all containerized, you know, but it wasn't at that point, or at least this terminal wasn't—Pier Seven. And you'd have to make sure that they had their badges and that they came through—and again, checking to make sure they didn't take anything on the way out.

01-00:22:22

Lage: So you kind of inspect their belongings.

01-00:22:24

Toner: Yeah. They had to come past you on the way in and way out. There's a gate. It was really pretty boring work, honestly. There wasn't much to do. There was a few incidents there. One rainy November night, a longshoreman got run over by a car and drug about a quarter mile under this car. And we heard about it {with?} there was reports of us driving around looking for him. And I was actually on desk duty at the time—at the patrol desk—and he came walking into the Military Police station. And his clothes were just shredded—this poor man. And we got an ambulance for him, but I remember—

01-00:23:01

Lage: But he was walking?

01-00:23:03

Toner:

He was walking, but he had been through a lot. Pretty injured, and in a state of shock. Yeah. Tried to make him as comfortable as possible. There wasn't much we could do, but an ambulance got there pretty quick. But it was something I'll never forget. It was a real—

01-00:23:22

Lage:

Now, would one of your jobs have been investigating how that happened?

01-00:23:26

Toner:

They had what they called Military Police Investigators, who were basically the detectives. That was MPI. And then they had another one was CID—CID? Is that what they called it? Well, it's kind of a step up. They were like more high-collar crime—white-collar crime and things like that. There were investigators. We as Military Police wouldn't do that so much. We'd do a lot of traffic accidents, a lot of traffic reports, a lot of fender-benders. And you had to draw traffic diagrams, and you know, this many feet, and this car, apparently—vehicle one—impacted vehicle two in the right rear quarter. Things like that.

We had a longshoreman at 7:00 in the morning—I'd just got on day shift. Day shift was like 6:30 to 2:30, 2:45—caused a three-car pile-up—ran into the back of another car. And nicest guy in the world. Smelled of alcohol. I had to take him down to OPD to give him a Breathalyzer test. And I'm telling him, "You know, I'm sorry. I've got to take you down. You know, you caused an accident." "I know, I know." So I mean, we're talking, and he was just the nicest guy. I mean, he felt bad that he did that. But he invited me over to his house later. [laughs] He said, "Why don't you come over and meet my family?" "Ah, you know, that's okay." He wasn't that drunk, but he was drunk enough to get a ticket for DUI. But that's one of the things that would happen. There's a lot of that kind of stuff—more smaller crimes, nothing too traumatic. Another thing you did was you limited access to the base itself. So Gate Fourteen was—where the Building 650 was, where all the main—

01-00:25:11

Lage:

Now, tell me what 650 was again?

01-00:25:11

Toner:

650 was the guest house. It was Jacobs Hall. It was where our barracks were. That's where we stayed. The cafeteria was there. Well, it wasn't actually a cafeteria—it was called the Crosswinds—it was a restaurant. And they only served lunch and dinner, so if we wanted breakfast, we were bused to Treasure Island. Well, on weekends. On weekends, I'm sorry. It wasn't open on weekends. So we'd get a stipend. You know, we'd get a stipend. We'd get six dollars a day for meals on a Saturday or—so we got paid a little extra. But if we wanted breakfast, they'd bus us to Treasure Island, we'd go have breakfast there, and come back. Let's see. That was on the base, the auto shop, the craft shop, the church was there, and basically all the parts that make up a

town. All the things you need for a town were in that part of the base, through F. So you had limited access to that. We got a new General. I was working Gate Fourteen on a Sunday morning, and I had my paper—you're not supposed to have a newspaper—had my paper out. [laughs] And I didn't hear a car come up. And I, "Oh, oh," and put it down. I salute. It was the General. And needless to say, I got a little bit of grief for that one. There's a brand new General on the base and—

01-00:26:21

Lage: And you're reading the newspaper.

01-00:26:22

Toner: —and I'm reading the newspaper. Yeah. So. I didn't get into too much trouble, but I got a stern talking-to about that one.

01-00:26:27

Lage: Right. And who talked to you, your commander?

01-00:26:30

Toner: Right. Actually, the Military Police Captain at the time, the Provost Marshal, would have given me some grief about that.

01-00:26:39

Lage: Yeah, yeah. And he probably got grief from the general.

01-00:26:41

Toner: It wasn't the best first impression, that's for sure.

01-00:26:44

Lage: Did you have much interaction with that level, the General and the headquarters staff?

01-00:26:49

Toner: Yes and no. Oakland Army Base was about a hundred enlisted men, supply, personnel, Military Police, that sort of thing, and probably about fifty officers that ran different functions of moving the traffic or the goods. And they got ship logs coming in, and how many tons of cargo went out here, and it was a lot of paperwork.

01-00:27:16

Lage: It was heavy on officers.

01-00:27:17

Toner: Yeah. Heavy on paperwork—a big paper-pushing building. Another one of our jobs was we had to spend all night in Building One, which was the big building that—there's a helicopter pad out front—directly across from the Military Police station. It was the biggest building on the base as far as office building. And that's where all the civilian employees worked, for the most part, and the officers. And our job was to guard that building, too. So you'd

have one post in the middle of this building, down in the lobby, and basically nothing to do all night.

01-00:27:53

Lage: Because there was nothing happening at night.

01-00:27:53

Toner: There was nothing. Nobody was going to walk in. They also had a sergeant and an officer who spent the night there. They were on call in case anything came up. They had actually a little room they could sleep in—two separate rooms. And one interesting thing is my buddy, Sergeant Gene Hardman, met Lieutenant Bobb, who was a very pretty blonde officer who was new to the base. They shared duty one night, and they kind of hit it off, and they started dating. But they had to keep that really quiet, because an enlisted man and an officer...

01-00:28:31

Lage: You don't do that.

01-00:28:32

Toner: No. And so he finished out his tour and retired from the military—he was a Military Police sergeant. And she went on to do her twenty years. She worked in the Pentagon for a while. And he followed her around, basically, and raised the kids and whatnot.

01-00:28:44

Lage: So they married.

01-00:28:46

Toner: They met at Building One and married. Mm-hmm.

01-00:28:50

Lage: And married after he...

01-00:28:51

Toner: After he resigned from the military, yeah.

01-00:28:53

Lage: Oh, that's interesting. Yeah.

01-00:28:54

Toner: And they were very good friends of ours. In fact, I still get letters from him periodically. Which happened at Building One, you know, [laughter] is that they worked together.

01-00:29:03

Lage: Romance. Yeah. So on this whole base, there were only a hundred enlisted men, and fifty—

01-00:29:12

Toner: And about fifty officers. About. Yeah.

01-00:29:13

Lage: They had so many facilities, it seems.

01-00:29:16

Toner: Yeah. Well, a lot of civilian employees. Quite a few DOD—Department of Defense—civilian employees. We also worked with Department of Defense civilian guards, who were paid by the military but were civilians, worked for the Department of Defense. And most of those guys were ex-Navy, ex-military of some sort. Retired, and now they're working again. And there were some characters. Let me tell you—there were some crazy... Guys would wrap their sandwich, put it on that motor of the car to warm it up for later. You know, just very interesting guys. A lot of them went to work security for the Coliseum—the Oakland Coliseum—after the base closed down.

01-00:29:58

Lage: It sounds like you kept in touch.

01-00:30:00

Toner: Well, we'd see them. We'd go to A's games, and "Hey, Mr. Edwards, how are you?" You know, and "Earl Washington!" you know. And a lot of these guys—great old guys, you know. Leo Eichelburger—always a cranky old man, but he was a fun guy. Just some real characters. But they were older. They were like fifty to sixty, and we're eighteen, twenty years old. So there was—

01-00:30:19

Lage: How did the interaction go? It sounds splendid.

01-00:30:21

Toner: Some people had some issues, but I get along pretty well with most everybody. I don't have too many problems with most people. And someone had smelly feet or somebody—you'd be in a car with them all night, a heater going. But they were, for the most part, fun to work with. They didn't hold you back. They maybe weren't the most aggressive guys out there. They'd kind of lay back when something was going on.

01-00:30:48

Lage: Right. Let you do it.

01-00:30:49

Toner: Yeah. But they were great. Fonts of information and stories and whatnot—very interesting.

01-00:30:54

Lage: So if you enjoyed that, that was good.

01-00:30:57

Toner: Oh, very much so. Yeah.

01-00:30:58

Lage: But they didn't pull the age card on you or....

01-00:31:01

Toner: If you were a brand new private, they would, but there was—you would sometimes listen... it depends on the situation. But for the most part, there wasn't very many issues. No, everybody got along. And there wasn't that much to do, honestly. You spent a lot of time sitting there, drinking your coffee and staring blankly out into the space.

01-00:31:24

Lage: [laughs] Wondering what are you doing here.

01-00:31:27

Toner: Yeah.

01-00:31:27

Lage: How about race relations? Were the Military Police pretty diverse, racially?

01-00:31:33

Toner: Yes, they were. Yes. And we all got along really well. There was very little issues with that. There was a few people from like the Deep South or whatnot who may have been racist but didn't really let it affect their work. I mean, because you'd hear them talking and whatnot. It was very interesting. When I went through Alabama—when I was in Alabama—I was told by some white guys down there that the only thing worse than a guy from—a Yankee—is a person of color down here. You're just almost as bad [laughs] because you're fairly more educated. So there was some tension there. In Alabama, there definitely was. But Oakland was a very diverse city at that time, and there was very little problems with race relations. You'd live next door to black MP women. And we all got along really well.

01-00:32:39

Lage: So you did have women as Military Police?

01-00:32:40

Toner: Yeah. Oh yeah. Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. Very much so. In fact, in basic training and AIT, there was quite a few women who were a lot better than most of the guys. You've got to have pretty good common sense, you've got to be pretty aware, and some of the guys were not. And be in shape, and you needed to be a fairly aggressive personality in some aspects. And there was quite a few women who I'd rather have as a partner than most of the guys, honestly.

01-00:33:07

Lage: Really?

01-00:33:07

Toner: Yeah, honestly. Yeah, honestly.

01-00:33:08

Lage: And do you think the other guys felt that way, too? Did you sense tension around gender?

01-00:33:14  
Toner: Not really. I was eighteen. I was pretty happy to have them around. [laughter]

01-00:33:18  
Lage: Of course.

01-00:33:18  
Toner: This was—

01-00:33:19  
Lage: You were in California.

01-00:33:21  
Toner: Yeah. Oh, yeah, I was having a great time.

01-00:33:23  
Lage: Now, why did you move off the base?

01-00:33:26  
Toner: A little more freedom. It was only an eight-hour-a-day job; you had sixteen hours a day to go play, to go do things, to go carousing.

01-00:33:36  
Lage: It was more like a job than a—

01-00:33:37  
Toner: Drinking age was eighteen at the time, and [laughs] so. I actually worked as a bartender in Berkeley at the Come Back Inn, which is now LaVal's Pizza on Durant—College and Durant. It's downstairs. If you know where—what's the name of that burrito shop?

01-00:33:59  
Lage: I know where it is.

01-00:34:00  
Toner: You know where? Okay. Just down the street from Top Dog. Yeah, I worked as a bartender there for probably about six months while I was also an MP. So you could have off-base jobs; you could do quite a few things. You had a lot of free time. And if you worked midnight shift, you'd get off work, and maybe you didn't want to go to sleep. We'd go to Stinson Beach, spend the day at Stinson Beach or Half Moon Bay or something, and then kind of take a nap, and come back home, maybe get three or four hours' sleep before you went on duty at midnight shift. And you didn't have to do much on midnight shift, so you could probably take a nap while you were there. [laughter] They had another warehouse, eight-oh—I guess it was 804—was where all the munitions were stored, so bullets and bombs and whatnot, and you would lock yourself in that warehouse also. And you had a little shack, and—

01-00:34:48  
Lage: Now, why the lock-in there? What—

01-00:34:51  
Toner: Well, so that nobody else could get in. You would be the only one who could let somebody in. And if you had that job that night, you could sleep all night. If they wanted to come in, they'd call you on the radio. So you just kept the radio right there. You could bring your boom box with you, you could bring all the books you wanted. That was a nice job. That one was nice.

01-00:35:08  
Lage: Yeah. Good assignment.

01-00:35:09  
Toner: Good assignment, yeah. Post Eighteen, that was called—Post Eighteen.

01-00:35:14  
Lage: Were there many non-base people who came on? One person I interviewed was saying that what used to be the Officers' Club was open to the community.

01-00:35:25  
Toner: Yes, it was. That's the Crosswinds.

01-00:35:26  
Lage: Oh, that's the Crosswinds?

01-00:35:28  
Toner: That was our cafeteria, and it was a club, and they served food.

01-00:35:32  
Lage: Did they have music?

01-00:35:34  
Toner: They had music and dancing and... But it was geared—

01-00:35:36  
Lage: Did they have live music, or...?

01-00:35:37  
Toner: I don't think. You know, they may have; I don't recall that, though. But it really wasn't our generation. It was more for people a bit older. It was kind of loungey. It was kind of dark and loungey. But that was where we were served our food during the week. The chef was Mr. Lett, and he was a gruff old black guy. "What do you want? Hm? How about ribs today?" [laughter] We had our standard fare, but once a month or so, or twice a month, he'd have something special—steaks or ribs or something like that—and it was great. He did a really good job. Yeah. But it was again, very un-military-like. Because we're sharing kind of facilities with civilians. And yeah, civilians could go to the club, and that's basically who went there.

01-00:36:28  
Lage: Off-base civilians.

01-00:36:28

Toner: Yeah, would come in and could go on the base. Mm-hmm. That's why I say it was not really quite the real Army at the time.

01-00:36:37

Lage: It was more like a little city or a little town.

01-00:36:40

Toner: And just an eight-hour-a-day job.

01-00:36:43

Lage: Oh, interesting. Okay. [pauses] I'm kind of at a loss what else to ask you here. I'm looking at my notes. [laughs]

01-00:36:53

Toner: Another story I might tell you about—

01-00:36:55

Lage: Please.

01-00:36:57

Toner: We had a base softball team—we also had a flag football team—but a base softball team. And we would travel all over northern California and play all the other Air Force bases. So we'd go to Beale, we'd go to Mather, we'd go to Travis. These were fairly long bus rides, and because we only had a hundred enlisted men to choose from, our team wasn't that good. We lost every game for three years that I was on active duty. We'd play two games on a Saturday. And we'd have a case of beer for the ride home. [laughter] And the military bus driver was a great guy. He'd let us drink, and that's fine. But we lost every game for three years straight. Because these guys had bases with 10,000 people, you know, so they had good players and whatnot. And actually, if you came in Gate Fourteen and went all the way straight, the softball field was on the left. That's since been leveled. But after I got out of the military and I worked for the security service, I played one more season with them, so we lost every game that year, too. So for four years in a row, we did not win one softball game. We'd lose big. But we had a great time coming back. [laughter]

01-00:38:06

Lage: On the other bases, they probably had some things to say, right?

01-00:38:09

Toner: They loved to see us coming. Yeah. I remember being on I guess it was Travis, hearing the SR-71, Blackbird, come in. "What's that?" "Oh, that's the Blackbird. That's the fastest plane in the world." "Really?" Because it make this horrendous—I mean, just the biggest roar you ever heard. But it was interesting. You got to drive around and see other bases and other people and whatnot. We also spent a lot of time at Presidio, because that was basically our headquarters. Seventh Army is what that's called. That's the Western theater, and we were part of that. So a lot of our personnel stuff was over there. Letterman Army Center, if we needed any hospitalization, that was

there. So we spent a lot of time over there, which was nice. Beautiful facility. We got to swim there, and we got to do different things.

01-00:38:59

Lage: And then Treasure Island for breakfast.

01-00:39:01

Toner: Yeah, which was interesting. Yeah, I don't know. And our dental work was done at Naval Supply Center.

01-00:39:06

Lage: Huh.

01-00:39:07

Toner: Yeah. Go figure.

01-00:39:09

Lage: Did you do much in the community just surrounding the base there?

01-00:39:13

Toner: We would go down to Seventh Street quite a bit. We went to Sandefords Liquors to buy our beer and whatnot. We would go to the Taco Bell on West Grand. That was kind of on our avenue. We also went to the Hofbrau, which was on West Grand and—is it Telegraph or is it Broadway?

01-00:39:33

Lage: Broadway.

01-00:39:34

Toner: Broadway, yeah, yeah. That old Hofbrau. Great Hofbrau. Wonderful. Bertola's, up Telegraph. We'd go there quite a bit. Yeah, we definitely went out in the community. We'd go to Berkeley, down Telegraph, for bagels all the time. That's on a Sunday morning.

01-00:39:50

Lage: Did you go in uniform?

01-00:39:52

Toner: No, not so much. Although we would go pick up food and bring it back to the base in uniform.

01-00:39:59

Lage: But other than that—

01-00:40:01

Toner: But generally, no. If you're off duty, you take it off. Why? [laughs]

01-00:40:05

Lage: Well, I was just saying.

01-00:40:06

Toner: And Berkeley at the time, doesn't really.

01-00:40:07  
Lage: That's right, it doesn't. Did you run into any problems with how people reacted to you as a member of the military in those years?

01-00:40:16  
Toner: Not really. Not so much. You might get a second look because you had short hair, but that was about it. We didn't—well, at least my group of friends—never were very antagonistic or anything like that. We were just going to a club for a night or something like that.

01-00:40:41  
Lage: Did you date any of the college girls? You lived right there by campus.

01-00:40:44  
Toner: Mm-hmm. Actually, I dated one of the security guard—the DOD civilian's daughter for a while. Dated her for a while. And yeah, yeah. You'd get out in the community actually, and...

01-00:41:01  
Lage: Did you find the California girls as beautiful as you'd anticipated?

01-00:41:02  
Toner: [laughs] Yeah. Yes, I did. I did. [laughter]

01-00:41:05  
Lage: You've married since then?

01-00:41:08  
Toner: Yes. My wife, Gail, is a native San Leandran—was born and raised here.

01-00:41:14  
Lage: And when did you meet her?

01-00:41:15  
Toner: I met her about 1992 or so, through a mutual friend who I'd been in the Army with, who still lived out here up until this year. Finally moved back east with his family, but... They're displaced Massachusetts natives also. So though them, I met my wife.

01-00:41:33  
Lage: Later.

01-00:41:34  
Toner: Much later, yeah.

01-00:41:35  
Lage: Is there more to say about the living quarters and how that all worked?

01-00:41:43  
Toner: It was basically just like a guest house. You came in through the front doors in the parking lot, and off to the left was the clerk. So you had an office clerk, who basically ran the functions of the building, made sure that everybody got

their allotments of this, that, the other thing. Next to him was the company commander or the First Sergeant, who basically ran the enlisted men. His office was right there. [phone rings] Directly across from his office was the supply sergeant. Do you want me to pause that for a second?

01-00:42:20

Lage: Yeah, I can pause.

[Break in recording]

01-00:42:20

Lage: Okay, we're back on here.

01-00:42:22

Toner: And the supply sergeant was Johnny Wells, this short, rotund black guy who was just a wonderful man. He ended up being a Berkeley reserve police officer for about fifteen years after he got out of the military. And he was just a wonderful guy. Just the nicest guy in the world. And that was basically everything except rooms for people to stay in. And they allotted you a bed, you had a dresser, you had a desk to write at, and then pretty much, you could put anything else on the walls you wanted to. You could have rock memorabilia; you could have anything you want. But they inspected your room once a week, so you had to have it neat and tidy, and your bathroom cleaned and scrubbed and whatnot. They'd come around for an inspection. And one of the other things you had to do was once a week or once every two weeks, you had some sort of duty in the building. So you either had to buff floors or sweep or do something outside or something. You had to do a little additional work, too. But people would be blasting their stereos and playing music on guitars. It was very un-military.

01-00:43:31

Lage: It doesn't sound like a bad assignment.

01-00:43:33

Toner: No, it really wasn't. And that's why I say it wasn't really like the military. It was not quite as hard as it can be, that's for sure.

01-00:43:41

Lage: Yeah. Of course, it was that time, also, where there wasn't a war going on, and...

01-00:43:46

Toner: Right, right.

01-00:43:49

Lage: Did you think about reenlisting?

01-00:43:53

Toner: Briefly. [laughter] Briefly. I had pretty much gotten what I wanted out of it—some practical experience, I had the old GI Bill, which they had just changed

right after that, where you had to put money towards it. In my case, they basically paid for everything. And I also used the VA Home Loan to buy this house, which was nice.

01-00:44:11

Lage: Ah. Well, that's nice. So all those things were available to you even though you weren't in war—what do we call it?

01-00:44:20

Toner: I was what was considered a Vietnam-era vet, so I fell under the old GI Bill. Anyone who went in '77 or later fell on the new GI Bill, which was you had to pay towards it. But you could still get the guaranteed home loan. They guaranteed like \$40,000 of loan or something like that. And by that time, I was pretty tired of authority. One of the problems—

01-00:44:39

Lage: Yeah. Well, you don't talk about much authority. Tell me about that.

01-00:44:43

Toner: Part of the problem with the military is especially at that time, it was still very fat with people who were either just mean or ignorant—couldn't see the forest for the trees. You know, there was some people who really didn't do things in an equitable way, let's say. And so there was some injustices. You wouldn't be treated right, or this isn't the way you should do it. This isn't the way you treat people. But in the military, you can't say much about that. There was some issues in that regard. Some people who were probably clinically depressed or something but in charge of you and telling you what to do. And it's like, well, this is a stupid thing to tell me to do. And you can't say that. So I got in a little bit of trouble for stuff like that.

01-00:45:37

Lage: When you say “fat with people,” did you mean—were these officers?

01-00:45:40

Toner: The military was very heavy. E-6, E-7 sergeants. So sergeants who had been in ten or fifteen years and were hoping to stay in twenty. That's when they started pushing a lot of people out of the military—guys who hadn't achieved as much as they should have in that amount of time. And they're the ones who basically had the bad attitudes. And I guess it's kind of, you're not going to advance much more, and I'm sorry about that, but [laughs] that's not my fault.

01-00:46:12

Lage: Don't take it out on me.

01-00:46:13

Toner: Right, right.

01-00:46:14

Lage: Had some of these guys been to Vietnam?

01-00:46:15  
Toner: Oh yeah, absolutely.

01-00:46:17  
Lage: So do you think it was—

01-00:46:19  
Toner: Possibly.

01-00:46:19  
Lage: Did you get stories about Vietnam, or...?

01-00:46:22  
Toner: Not so much, but one of the softball players had post-traumatic stress, and he had an affection that he would just blink a lot, and he'd just start running. He'd just run. This was some sort of trauma from the war, and that's what... His brother-in-law—they married sisters, him and—these two sergeants. They were great guys, wonderful people. But that was from the war, his—almost like a Tourette's kind of a thing. But it wasn't; it was from the stress of the war.

01-00:47:00  
Lage: And was it identified then as post-traumatic stress?

01-00:47:04  
Toner: We just talked about it, and that's what we talked about. You had good company commanders, you had bad company commanders; you had good First Sergeants, you had ones that weren't that great; some real sticklers for detail, and some that weren't. So it's like anything else.

01-00:47:19  
Lage: What level are company commanders? What rank?

01-00:47:23  
Toner: They're Captains. Captains. And a Captain is kind of that mid-rank. They can go either way at that point. Either you kind of fast track, and you'll be Major, Lieutenant Colonel, Colonel, or you kind of stay there. So that's another one of those kind of make-or-break grades.

01-00:47:39  
Lage: And you could discern the tension around it?

01-00:47:41  
Toner: Well, how old they are, how long have you been a Captain? Or like the same thing with like an E-6—a Staff Sergeant.

01-00:47:47  
Lage: So you learn all this.

01-00:47:50

Toner:

Yeah. You know what? It just takes all kinds. Just like anywhere else, there's people you like and there's people that you don't get along so well with. But that really wasn't that big an issue. You just had to basically do what they say.

01-00:48:06

Lage:

And sometimes that's hard. [laughs]

01-00:48:08

Toner:

And sometimes that is hard. Yep, yep.

01-00:48:10

Lage:

Did you ever have any strong kind of philosophical differences, being asked to do something you thought was wrong, or...?

01-00:48:18

Toner:

Not really. I was pretty okay with the job. I may not have liked to arrest that guy, but you did something wrong, and you've got to go to jail. I was actually pretty good at diffusing situations like that, not escalating things. Some people tend to be more escalators, and I was a pretty good diffuser. So no, there were fairly few problems. My buddy Kevin from Chicago, who now flies helicopters for—or he was working for Chicago PD flying helicopters. But he was fairly racist, and he got in a big brawl with one of the guy civilians going on the base who didn't have his badge that day. Well, he knows the guy—he's seen him every day—but ended up getting into a big struggle, and you know, fighting, and... you didn't need to do that.

01-00:49:07

Lage:

And this was racially...

01-00:49:09

Toner:

This was racially motivated, yeah.

01-00:49:10

Lage:

So what happened with that?

01-00:49:13

Toner:

I'm pretty sure he got a letter of reprimand, because he didn't handle it as well as he could have. But yeah, that was probably one of the few incidents—racial incidents—that I saw.

01-00:49:26

Lage:

So it did exist?

01-00:49:26

Toner:

Oh yeah, it definitely did exist. We had an incident where a gentleman was making obscene phone calls with the base who wanted to talk to people in uniform—men in uniform. And he'd offer to do things that were fairly graphic—

01-00:49:43

Lage: Is this sexually, or are we talking—

01-00:49:44

Toner: Oh, yes; oh, yes; oh, yes. And so my desk sergeant at the time said, “Let’s try to get this guy to come down here”—because he’d been doing it for a couple of weeks—“Let’s try to get him to come down here, and we’ll arrest him.” So I said, “Okay.” So I get the call—I’m at Gate Fourteen—and he says, “I want to do this to you” for so much money. I go, “Really?” I said, “Well, payday is a long way away, and I could use some money, but we’ll have to be quiet about it.” So “Okay, okay. So where do you want me to meet you?” “Well, why don’t you meet me under the overpass?”—the West Grand overpass. So where if you took West Grand up and over to get to the Bay Bridge, under there, there’s a big concrete overpass.

01-00:50:19

Lage: And is that on the base or...?

01-00:50:21

Toner: This is on the base, mm-hmm, but it’s where Maritime is, so you can access it without going through any gates.

01-00:50:26

Lage: I see.

01-00:50:27

Toner: I was on midnight shift at the time, so about 2:00 a.m.... I said, “What kind of car are you going to be driving? I’ll be driving this. I’ll be in a military—you know I’m a Military Policeman, right?” “Yeah, it’s okay. I like guys in uniform.” “Okay, all right.” So my desk Sergeant was hiding in the truck. We had Chevy Ten pickup trucks were our Military Police vehicles at the time. So he’s hiding down in the truck, and I’m parked there, and this guy pulls up, and he says, “Are you so-and-so?” I say, “Yeah.” He said, “Oh.” I said, “Now what are we going to do?” He says, “Well, I’m going to pay you so much to do this.” “Okay.” [laughs] So at that point, I had come out of the car and was talking to him at his window. And I reached in, turned his car off, took the keys, and I said, “Well, you’re under arrest.” [laughter] So he goes, “Oh, no.” He was a waiter from Mill Valley. And I still remember his name—I guess I shouldn’t say it.

01-00:51:18

Lage: No.

01-00:51:19

Toner: No. But I completely still remember his name. So we cited him into court for soliciting acts of prostitution and obscene phone calls. He had no warrants—we ran him for those—so we let him walk back to his car and drive away. Well, one of our Military Police buddies—from the Deep South—said, “Well, we can’t just let that guy...” So he wanted to go over there and give him some hell. So he ends up driving down there, and the guy’s walking back

to his car, and he ends up doing donuts around the guy, said, “You so-and-so, don’t you ever come back here,” and blah-blah-blah. Anyway. I didn’t see it, but I heard about it. And that was somewhat of a racist thing to do also. I mean, there was no physicality at all, but just verbal abuse.

01-00:52:09

Lage: And was this fellow a black man?

01-00:52:11

Toner: No, no. He was Filipino, actually—part Filipino. So he got cited in the court. We had to go court—District Court in Oakland. And he showed up, and we pressed for just probation. And he ended up getting six months’ probation and six months’ counseling for that, but—

01-00:52:31

Lage: Was that uncomfortable to have to testify, or...?

01-00:52:33

Toner: Not really. I felt a little bad, but he’s the one calling.

01-00:52:40

Lage: Yeah, right.

01-00:52:41

Toner: And we didn’t abuse him. And he was pretty resigned to the fact that: yeah, I guess I shouldn’t have done that.

01-00:52:46

Lage: Interesting that he did pick on this military base.

01-00:52:49

Toner: Well, that’s what I told him. Well, he liked guys in uniform. It was an interesting story. So I got a lot of ribbing for that one, [laughs] you know, from the other guys.

01-00:53:00

Lage: Was there any problems on the base itself with sexuality or—

01-00:53:07

Toner: You had some promiscuous women who would kind of make the rounds, and you had some guys who would get jealous, but nothing—no big dramas or altercations that I can recall.

01-00:53:18

Lage: There weren’t cases of women accusing men of sexual harassment?

01-00:53:22

Toner: Actually, yes, there was. One of my friends was a Military Policewoman. One of the DOD civilians—he was actually in a position of authority—he was a Captain of the DOD civilians—made sexual advances towards her. And they told her to document this stuff. You know, get some documentation, let’s see

if we can't record him or something. Anyway, what she did was she just went down and wrote everything out in one sitting. And it didn't really fly. But she was adamant that he propositioned her many times and would say bad things to her. Unfortunately, nothing ever really became of it. One of those—

01-00:54:04

Lage: She wasn't able to make it stick?

01-00:54:07

Toner: She just didn't logically present her facts in a nice format, and dated, and times, and incidents, and whatnot. It was kind of after it happened a few times, and then once I think he got wind of it, then it stopped. But yeah, so there was some of that, mm-hmm. Yeah.

01-00:54:24

Lage: Well, in any community, as you say.

01-00:54:26

Toner: Right. We also had other incidents go on. We had an armory in the Military Police station, where you checked out your 45 and/or your shotgun—whatever job you were doing—and there was M-16s in there. And one of the assignments occasionally was to be the armorer. You'd check out the guns, and sign for this, check it out. And you had to clear your weapon in the barrel outside. You took your magazine out, make sure the gun was empty, and shot it to make sure—to make sure there's no bullets in there. Well, one time I left early, and I left my gun with a desk Sergeant because the armory wasn't open. I said, "Can you take care of this?" He goes, "Yes, I can." So I had to go—I don't know, I guess to play softball or something. So I left. So my gun made it into the armory, but it didn't get cleared. So when the armorer puts it in there, he rattles around and boom, shoots it off. Bullet went ricocheting around the armory. And it was my gun, so I got a little bit of grief for that, but the desk sergeant really got in trouble for that one, because he didn't handle the gun properly.

01-00:55:29

Lage: Yeah, you hadn't had a transgression in leaving it with him.

01-00:55:32

Toner: Yeah, but he also outranked me. So he should have said, "No, we need to do this." Things happen all the time. [laughs] Yeah.

01-00:55:42

Lage: Well, any other memories like that that you think we should record?

01-00:55:45

Toner: Hmm. Another thing that I remember very vividly was—there was a POV terminal—personally-owned vehicle terminal—where they would ship cars for enlisted men or officers to whatever base they were going with—basically western Pacific. And there was a bunch of cars that came down from Seattle that had Mount Saint Helens dust all over them—ash from Mount Saint

Helens. So I was like, “Wow.” It was so funny. I was like, “Wasn’t that interesting.” [laughs] It just sets it in the time frame, you know. What else was there? I remember there was a Russian ship docked at—not Pier Seven. It must have been at the Sealand facility, which was right next door. And my desk sergeant said, “Go take all the information you can on that ship. Why is a Russian ship here?” [laughs] And it was no big deal. It’s no big deal at all.

01-00:56:44

Lage: Only to your desk sergeant.

01-00:6+:44

Toner: Yeah, yeah. What else went on? There was... Let’s see, Pier Seven, the reserve facility, down by East—you know where East Bay MUD has their office?

01-00:56:55

Lage: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

01-00:56:56

Toner: There’s a red brick building there, the reserve building, and they have a range in there. And one of the things the Army promotes is they have what they call a triathlon. You do running, swimming, and shooting. And I got to train for that. I didn’t get to go, but I got to train for that. So we’d swim at the Letterman pool, we’d shoot in the range, downstairs in that building. And we ended up sending one guy to there, and that wasn’t me, which was too bad. But you could do a lot of different things. One of the Captains on the base, an officer, was an Olympic kayaker on the Olympic kayak team in like ’80 or ’84. I don’t remember. Well, it must have been ’80. Which year did we boycott? It was one of those?

01-00:57:40

Lage: I think that was ’80.

01-00:57:42

Toner: It was one of those two, I think. Yeah. So in ’84, he was in the Olympics. But you know, I’ll tell you, you could do a lot worse.

01-00:57:49

Lage: Yeah, [laughs] I’ll say.

01-00:57:50

Toner: You know? I mean, eight hours a day, and pretty easy duty.

01-00:57:54

Lage: You mentioned before we were on about finding [graffiti] in the warehouses. Tell me about how you happened to notice that and what you thought.

01-00:58:02

Toner: What I was told was that when the troops were heading to Vietnam, they would come in by rail and go right into the warehouses that border the naval supply center—right where the commissary was, there were two big

warehouses there. And from what I understood, they would not see the light of day until they were put on a troop transport and gone overseas, because there was a lot of people going AWOL and, you know, deserting. And they had bowling alleys inside. They basically did not have to leave this building for the four or five days that it took to process them to get them to go to Vietnam. And I was told that there was quite a bit of graffiti etched into the redwood of these people's thoughts and feelings before they went overseas. I mean, that was a pretty poignant time for them, I'm sure. A lot of angst, a lot of worry about what's going to happen. And so I'm really glad that I heard that that was saved. I'm very, very happy to—

01-00:59:02

Lage: Did you go over and take a look at—

01-00:59:03

Toner: I did not get to see. In some of the other warehouses and whatnot, there was some, but not specifically the troop transport. No, I did not go to see that.

01-00:59:10

Lage: But it was no one on the base?

01-00:59:12

Toner: Yeah. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

01-00:59:13

Lage: I'm going to change the tape.

01-00:59:16

Toner: Okay.

[End Audio File 1]

Begin Audio File 2 toner\_dave\_2\_01-12-09.mp3

01-00:00:03

Toner: I'm trying to think of what else. Well, it's funny, my wife works for Kaiser Permanente. She works in physician education and development, and she's worked there for thirty years now.

01-00:00:21

Lage: We'd been thinking about whether you could come up with any more thoughts, and you will after I leave, but...

01-00:00:25

Toner: I probably will, but...

01-00:00:27

Lage: But I think you've given us a really good picture of what it was like when you were here—

01-00:00:29

Toner: Well, it's been very fun.

01-00:00:28

Lage: —and I appreciate it. [laughs]

01-00:00:31

Toner: Well, you're very welcome. Thank you.

01-00:00:32

Lage: Okay, thank you.

[Break in recording]

01-00:00:35

Lage: Okay, now we're back on because we thought of something else as we—as you were showing me some pictures. And you mentioned your friend that got busted for marijuana. So let's talk a little bit about drug use and—

01-00:00:47

Toner: There was drug use going on in the Army at that time. Basically pot smoking, which was pretty prevalent in California at the time, anyway.

01-00:00:57

Lage: Right. And was prevalent in Vietnam.

01-00:00:59

Toner: It was prevalent in Vietnam. People would—in the guest house, especially on the second floor, would put fans in their window that would blow outward, to carry the smoke out. And so that worked pretty well.

01-00:01:10

Lage: So you didn't have the scent as you—

01-00:01:13

Toner: It didn't float out into the hallway, right. But it was pretty prevalent, I would say. I'd say fairly prevalent at the time. We had a desk Sergeant come through the gate with an ounce and get arrested because his girlfriend turned him in, which was kind of a shame. You know, it's—

01-00:01:27

Lage: Now, who arrested him? The MP?

01-00:01:29

Toner: Actually, the Military Police investigators arrested him, so one step above the Military Police.

01-00:01:36

Lage: Now, what would have happened to someone like that?

01-00:01:38

Toner:

Well, what's very interesting is at the time, the Army did not really have a drug policy. All they had available was AA programs—alcohol abuse programs—and those were in Fort Ord. So they would have to take anybody who was arrested or... They just started testing for drugs as I was getting out of the military, and a couple of people who I knew had to go through the program. And the program was you needed to stand up and say, "I'm an alcoholic." And he'd, "But I'm not an alcoholic; I'm a drug addict." [laughter] So the program wasn't even geared towards that; it was geared towards alcoholism. But I guess it was any substance-abuse problem. It's probably a similar program. But that's all they had as a time.

01-00:02:22

Lage:

But they treated it more as a substance abuse problem than as an offense?

01-00:02:24

Toner:

Right, right. It was just as it was in California, as a misdemeanor at that time. So it wasn't the military. It was not a big deal. You could get caught having some on your possession, be given an Article 13 as a form of punishment, where you were relieved of duty for maybe three months. And you had to do some other duty for three months, and then after that time, you were back on patrol.

01-00:02:49

Lage:

You didn't get thrown in the brig?

01-00:02:560

Toner:

No, nothing like that. No, it was basically just like a cite-and-release. Show up in court, but now you're showing up in a military court—but not like a court of law, more like a court of peers. Your Captain would make a letter, [laughs] and you'd have to sign it, and you had limited duty, and you couldn't do some of the things you might want to do. But yeah, it was fairly—I would say pretty prevalent. Probably more people smoked pot than did not smoke pot at the time, I would say.

01-00:03:21

Lage:

And do you think the officers on duty were overlooking it, pretty much, or...?

01-00:03:26

Toner:

I think that a lot of the officers were in the same situation.

01-00:03:31

Lage:

They were also—

01-00:03:32

Toner:

I believe so, yeah. I don't know that for a fact, but you can kind of tell. People who are a little less... Now, of course, not everybody had the same liberal views that some of us do, and especially in California at the time, but there were some instances—

01-00:03:47  
Lage: What about on duty? Were there instances...? Did people smoke pot on duty?

01-00:03:50  
Toner: There were instances. Yes, yes. I probably don't want to get into specifics, but yes.

01-00:03:56  
Lage: No, no. I wouldn't expect you to.

01-00:03:56  
Toner: Well, when you're in a midnight shift and you've got nothing to do but look at jackrabbits for eight hours, it gets kind of boring, and I'm sure that that happened more than once.

01-00:04:06  
Lage: Well, that's interesting, and I don't know whether it's come up or not, but it's an important part of the military, in those years at least.

01-00:04:16  
Toner: Mm-hmm, it was. Yeah. They had just started testing for drugs when I got out of the Army, you know. They hadn't really developed—

01-00:04:20  
Lage: And what kind of testing would they—

01-00:04:23  
Toner: Urine test.

01-00:04:23  
Lage: Like on a regular basis, or...?

01-00:04:25  
Toner: Yeah, or spot checks. Like once a month or something, once every couple of months, they would do it. I think the tests were fairly in their infancy, and it may have been fairly pricey to do it—too expensive—I don't know. But yeah. But then they'd get to go to Fort Ord for a couple days. [laughs] They'd be out in Monterey, spend a little time.

01-00:04:42  
Lage: Interesting that it didn't seem to affect—

01-00:04:45  
Toner: It really wasn't so much a punishment, you know what I mean? I think there's worse things you could do. [laughter]

01-00:04:53  
Lage: Were there other kinds of drugs that might have been abused, or...?

01-00:04:55

Toner:

There probably were, mm-hmm. Yeah. I probably saw something going on, like coke use, but it wasn't as widespread as marijuana. Marijuana was probably the most widespread.

01-00:05:09

Lage:

Okay. Anything else along those lines, or anything else I've overlooked, or...?

01-00:05:16

Toner:

Yeah, I think that's probably about it. Yeah, that's about it.

01-00:05:20

Lage:

Okay. [laughs] Thank you.

01-00:05:22

Toner:

You're welcome.

[End of Interview]