

Interview with Lou Myers

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Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: Today is Friday, December 31, 2010—last day of the year. We're here at the residence for Louis Myers, Colonel Louis Myers, at Lake Petersburg, near Petersburg, Illinois. Good morning.

Myers: Morning.

DePue: I'm excited about doing this one. You're a Korean War veteran. I should probably say upfront I've known you for many, many years because of our association in the Illinois National Guard, but we're here today to talk primarily about growing up in Central Illinois and especially about your experiences in Korea. What's different about your experiences from a lot of other people I have interviewed about the Korean War is you spent the war, your time in Korea, working with the Korean people with the ROK Army, Republic of Korea Army. That's going to be a very interesting perspective for us to get. But let's back up a ways and start with telling us when and where you were born.

Myers: Well, I was born in Macomb, Illinois, 1928. A little house—

DePue: Specific date?

Myers: May 9, 1928. In a little house there in Macomb. But in 1932, we moved out from there and Dad bought a farm south of Tennessee, Illinois. That's where

the rest of my young life resided, and did the normal thing of growing up on a farm.

DePue: Well, you were born right before the beginning of the Great Depression and moved in 1932 to the farm. What was your father doing in between that time?

Myers: Well, he actually worked in a little factory there in Macomb. When he first got married, he was in Davenport, Iowa, and he worked in a broom factory up there. Also he was quite a musician. He played in a band, played a saxophone. My Uncle Ted was in Macomb. That's where the family really originated there. They actually originated in Fulton County and then moved to Macomb. He came back there and had married a gal that was a sister to my mother, and so they [Mom & Dad?] got together, and that's how they got married. So he [Dad? Uncle Ted?] moved there to Macomb, and they stayed with her—he was really her uncle—but we always called him grandfather, Dunifon. He had this home and his wife had died, and he kept my mother when they moved from Nebraska back to Macomb. She [Mother] was born in a sod hut in Nebraska. And so that's how they got together. And it was him, Grandpa Dunifon, which, as I said, was really her uncle, gave her the house for keeping him.

When they got this opportunity to move to the farm, they sold that house and they used that as a down payment on the farm. Then when they moved out there to Tennessee, Illinois, we just had about a hundred acres, and it was timberland, very poor, and they could barely skin em by, but they did keep making the mortgage payments, and gradually they rose and paid off the mortgage. It was the 1970s before they ever got the mortgage paid off.
(laughs)

DePue: Wow. Well, and again, this is some very tough years for almost everybody. I assume one of the reasons of going to the farm was because employment in town just wasn't there anymore?

Myers: Well, it wasn't much, no.

DePue: You grew up on the farm, then.

Myers: All my life, or all my young life, till I was about eighteen, I was on the farm.

DePue: Tell us a little bit about what it meant to be growing up on the farm—chores-wise, let's start with that.

Myers: Well, we had hogs and cows and horses. Initially we did all the work with horses, and then we gradually got into the mechanized age, and we had an old Allis Chalmers—little Allis Chalmers that Dad constructed, took horse equipment and constructed on it so we had a cultivator and different things like that. He actually fabricated them onto the tractor. And then the chores: why, we milked cows. We only had ten or twelve. And so I milked as soon as

I was big enough to hold the bucket, and fed the pigs and so on as we grew up. And we had some lambs and things like that, a normal farm.

DePue: Well, that wouldn't be a normal farm anymore.

Myers: No.

DePue: Very typical for that time.

Myers: But it was a family farm type. And in those days, since you didn't have the labor, the neighbors all went together. During harvest time, whether it was, you know, combining, it was the striking machine, and you'd cut the oats and put them in shocks, and the wheat. The neighbors all came in, and they carried the stuff in from the field and ran it through the threshing machine. It was a fellow that had a big threshing machine; he went around the neighborhoods and did this. So the women would cook a big meal, and you had a big dinner and pies and all that kind of stuff and then went out to the field. At that time, I was just big enough to carry the water jug, so I was in charge of getting water to the men out in the field. We had old pottery jugs with a corn cob in it as a stopper (laughter) and burlap bag around the outside, wetted to keep it cool. That was the way we did things.

Same way with putting up hay. Everybody got together, and you cut the hay and had it all raked, raked it up into rows, and then you picked it up and hauled it into the barn and had this big hay fork to come down and grab it and pick it up, take it into the loft, dump it, and you had men in there to spread it out. That's how we put up the hay.

In the fall, during the fall, you butchered, and sometimes—

DePue: Butchered the hog?

Myers: Butchered hogs and that. And they had the neighbors in again, and sometimes several of them brought their hogs in to butcher all at one place. Normally you had three or four different places that everybody went to do the hog butchering. Everybody worked together so that you could have enough to do the chores of butchering and lard rendering and all that. And then once you did that, then it was up to each individual to take care of their meat. We had an old kitchen, we called it the old summer kitchen, and we put planks down and salted the meat with Morton salt to prepare the hams and the bacon. So on the rest of it, we cut up and cooked and canned, what they call cold packed, or actually it was just putting it in glass jars and heating it up and cooking it and then canning it. Your canning in those days was Mason jars, and we had an old storm cellar that we'd put it in so it wouldn't freeze over the winter, and that's where we kept the canned goods or the jars of food—peas and corn and all that.

DePue: Apparently you didn't have electricity.

- Myers: We did not have electricity till I got back from Korea in the 1950s.
- DePue: Wow.
- Myers: And we had—
- DePue: So Rural Electrification didn't work for that part of the state.
- Myers: It didn't because the war came and because of shortage of copper and so on, they just couldn't get the lines run. And so it was after the war, World War II, and then Korea came along and it kind of slowed. But we finally got that, and we finally got an indoor toilet at that time. The rest of the time, it was an old—well, we had an old shanty out there, outhouse, you called it, and then WPA came along in the thirties, and they built these little prefabbed toilets that had a concrete slab and ventilation on them, (laughs) a little tube that went up the roof, and so we had one of those.
- DePue: Was that attached to the house, or...?
- Myers: No, no, it was out and had to have a hole for the waste to go in. And it was pretty bitter cold out there when it was, you know, twenty below or so.
- DePue: In the kitchen, did you have a water pump?
- Myers: Yeah, we had a cistern, a little hand pump. Everything else had to come from the well, that you pumped and brought it in a bucket. That's how you brought the fresh water in.
- DePue: How often did you get a bath?
- Myers: Once a week, on Saturday night, generally, and it had to be by the old kitchen stove where you heated the water, and it was wood or coal. Of course, we didn't have coal, so we just burned wood all the time, corn cobs and whatnot. That's what Mom cooked on and heated the water. We had one big brown bath—well, it was a tub—and then the youngest kids got first, and then everybody... (laughter) It was quite an affair. But that was the only warm place in the house, practically, because that's all we had, was the kitchen stove, and then we had a warm morning stove which heated the living room. And that was it. And then we had registers through the floor to the upstairs where we slept, and that let the warm air up there, more or less, but it got pretty cool up there in the upper region.
- DePue: This sounds like hard living.
- Myers: It wasn't exactly comfortable, but we made it.
- DePue: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

Myers: I had two brothers and a sister.

DePue: Where were you in the birth order?

Myers: I'm the oldest. And they seem to be having problems. I lost my youngest brother this last year, and my sister had a stroke, and she's going through that, and my other brother has had a time with his hips and prostate cancer and so on, and he's still alive, but he's having a tough time now. They all live over there, or did live. Roger lived at Industry, and Myrna, and my other brother lived at Fandon. That was the capital of Forgotonia at one time in the early part of last century.

DePue: Forgotonia?

Myers: Forgotonia, yeah.

DePue: That sounds like there's a story connected with that.

Myers: It is. A guy running for that—Western Illinois, as you may know, was the Military Tract of Illinois and most of it originally settled by getting military tracts, and...

DePue: So retirees from the military?

Myers: Or service people. And it was called a Military Tract. Everything west of the Illinois River, northwest of that. So your early settlers in there were—not all, but principally—either that, or they sold their claim to somebody. And as usual, some of these entrepreneurs collected up a lot of these claims and ended up with a lot of land over there. So the big landowners over there really picked up those claims at a dollar an acre or something like that.

DePue: How many of the hundred acres that your father had were under cultivation?

Myers: About half of it, and then later on he bought another sixty and another forty, so he ended up with about two hundred acres.

DePue: What was the cash crop during those tough years of the thirties?

Myers: It was mostly corn or wheat or beans. We didn't do too many beans at the first; it was mostly corn, wheat, oats, and alfalfa, because we had livestock, so we had to have some hay. We were one of the first conservation plans as the conservation service came into the county, and so we went into a normal rotation of that: corn, wheat, or oats, and alfalfa.

DePue: Was the cattle and the hogs that you had primarily for the family use, personal use?

Myers: Yes, yes. We did sell some, but mostly the dairy type of it—we had Guernseys mostly, that we used to milk. And then we had a DeLaval, I think it was, cream separator. We'd separate the cream and take it to town, which was Tennessee. It was about a mile and a half in there, and they had a grocery store, and they bought the cream. We didn't sell the milk; the milk we drank or made cottage cheese or fed the whey to the hogs or whatever, you know, the byproducts. And, of course, Mom did a lot of baking. Actually, there when we first started, we actually had a burr mill, and we ground the wheat to make the bread and ground the corn to make cornbread and things like that.

DePue: This sounds pretty close to a subsistence-level farm.

Myers: It was, it was. And at the same time, we seemed to enjoy it. (laughs) We hunted. We had a lot of squirrel and young groundhogs, and we could take—in those days, the county had a bounty on groundhogs. I never did know exactly why, other than they dug into the fields and the horses would step in the groundhog hole and were liable to break their foot, you know. And so it was a disaster—a war against the groundhogs. I think it was twenty-five cents we got for the ears and the top portion of the scalp that you had to take to the county. Well, that twenty-five cents would buy the ammunition that you used to kill, and kill the squirrels. And we had a lot of squirrels. I killed over a hundred squirrels a year—that's what was part of our meat, and the chickens, of course. Chickens and squirrel, and we did have some turkeys and ducks along the way, basically then for Thanksgiving and that. But we had quite a menagerie of animals on the farm.

DePue: The squirrels, were you hunting them primarily to eat—

Myers: Yes.

DePue:—or because they were destructive, or...?

Myers: No, eating.

DePue: Okay. See, this is a far cry from the lifestyle we live with today.

Myers: And that was only just a few years ago, you know. People don't... But it was hardscrabble is what you called it, and that's the way we lived. But at the same time, we had 4-H clubs, and we tried to advance and do things better.

And then we had another little thing that a lot of people don't have today: we had a schoolhouse. Lawyer School was the name because old man Lawyer, back there in the eighteen hundreds, gave the land for the school, a one-room school. That's where I spent the first eight years of my school life, in that one-room school. During the winter, you know, the school year, we would have, once a month at least, we'd have a get-together and have a potluck supper, and we had a piano in there, and we had a songfest, and people—some banjo players and guitar, but mostly just ukulele or mandolin or

banjo and piano. And we sang hymns, and we... That was our church, our community center, and whatnot, as well as the school.

DePue: When you say "we," did you mean the church congregation/community center?

Myers: Yes. There was no church in the area, and so—

DePue: How far was the school from where you lived?

Myers: I think it was about a mile and a half. It was maybe two miles.

DePue: When you were going to school, how'd you get to school?

Myers: Walked.

DePue: When you were going to church, which happened to be at the same place, how'd you get to church?

Myers: That same way, but we really didn't have such a thing as a church; it was just one night a month that we would get together. In the winter they put on plays, and the local residents would get together and some kooky play. And then they'd have to practice, so we'd have to go to somebody's house. In the winter it got pretty serious sometimes getting there through the snow or that. Dad fixed an old chassis of one of those early Model T's, where the springs went on, and made kind of a sled out of it, and with the horses, why, we could load up and go over to so-and-so's to practice on the play. They generally had two or three or four practices before they put on the play at the school. People from other areas would come in when they heard that we're going to have this thing. So we'd fill the schoolhouse, and sometimes it got so full that they'd have to stand on the outside and look in the windows to see the play. It was quite a social affair. (laughs)

DePue: When was it that the family got a car?

Myers: It was about—in the late thirties, we finally got a Model T, and I suppose '36 or '7, maybe '8. I can't remember exactly when the year was.

DePue: So this Model T had to be at least ten, twelve years old at that time.

Myers: Well, yes, and then we finally went to Model A, which was a little later model, and we had a sedan type because we had several kids (laughs) and the folks. When we got the car, we began to go to Macomb once a month, maybe. Macomb is about twelve mile away. And we'd go to Colchester once in a while, but normally just up to the store, which is a mile and a half up to the...

I remember I think it was in '36 that we had such a terrible winter—it just snowed and snowed and snowed. We had snowdrifts as high as the hog

house, and the roads were full. And we'd scoop out the roads, and there'd come another wind and snow and fill it up clear to the fencepost. And so they finally gave that up, and they cut the fences in different places and went through the fields wherever the lower level of snow was, and that's how we got up and down through the community. One lady got pneumonia that winter, and it was clear at the far end of the community, and the doctor came, and we were the first house south of Tennessee, that mile and a half, and we went up and got him and got him there and to the next neighbor. The next neighbor had his horses hooked up and took him down a ways, and that's the way we got him down there. He stayed there for about three days and saved her. Can you imagine a doctor (laughs) doing that nowadays?

But anyway, that's how we did, and the same way with groceries. They'd start the thing from the farthest end of the community and bring a list of groceries, and the next one would add on and so on till it got up to ours, and we'd take it into Tennessee and get the groceries and start the trail back, and that's how we... It was about three or four months. It was terrible. I think it was over thirty days it was below twenty below zero. But people don't remember those things much anymore.

DePue: Mm-hmm. Well, that's why we do these interviews, isn't it? Let's get up to a little bit farther, then. Where did you end up going to high school?

Myers: I went to Colchester Community High School, right in the little town of Colchester, which is about six mile away.

DePue: How'd you get to school?

Myers: I rode a bicycle. We did finally get some bicycles. In real bad weather, Dad would let me take the old car, or if I had to stay for a play practice or something. I got involved with some of the drama in high school, and I played in the band. So in my junior and senior year, I did get to drive the car some.

DePue: I remember what I wanted to ask you. Growing up at that time, did you consider yourself to be poor or disadvantaged compared to everybody else?

Myers: Absolutely not. Everybody was the same, you know. And we had enjoyment, as I said, of these things at school and our 4-H clubs. I actually had the outstanding heifer in the county fair. So we really worked to try to do the best we could. I say it was a happy time in my life. I never had a sadness.

DePue: Did you lack for any necessities?

Myers: Not to my knowledge. We had patched clothes and so on that way, but we always had covered our bodies. Mom did a lot of sewing.

DePue: I suspect in that respect you weren't any different from anybody else?

- Myers: No. We were all the same. There wasn't much—what one had, the other one had.
- DePue: Well, it probably was about the time you got into high school or got past the eighth grade—do you remember when Pearl Harbor happened?
- Myers: Yes, I do.
- DePue: Had you been thinking much about what was going on in Europe? Had the family discussed any of that before then?
- Myers: No, no, we really didn't get involved much in that, because all we had was a radio, and we had no electricity, so we had to have a battery, and we had a wind charger that charged the battery, and we had two batteries. And always when something got interesting, the battery would run down. Dad would have to run out to the old shed where the wind charger was on, get the battery, and run back in. (laughs) Joe Louis and his fights, Dad always wanted to listen to that, and it seemed like about the time he'd get that, the battery would go down, and we'd miss out on the knockout that they... (laughs) But it was interesting. We did have a few programs that I was allowed to listen to: *Jack Armstrong, the All-American Boy* when I got home from school. It was about fifteen minutes. And I can't remember another one. Ah, it escapes me now, but it was the—where the train came into New York City or something; it was the main thing that started out. But I always had to listen to that, and then I had to go do my chores—cut the wood and chop some wood and milk the cows and do those things.
- DePue: Well, I had started by mentioning Pearl Harbor. What do you remember about Pearl Harbor, when that happened?
- Myers: All I remember—I think it was Sunday afternoon, as I remember, and the telephone rang—it was a rural line, and so everybody had a ring. Ours was two longs and two shorts. But then if something was very important—and that was very few times it ever happened, then it would be just constant ringing, ringing, ringing, and everybody was supposed to get on the line. And that's what they did, and told us, and then we turned the radio on and heard about it.
- DePue: You were probably about thirteen at the time. Did you have any sense at all of what this meant?
- Myers: I don't think we really did, we just kind of was irritated that the Japs would do such a thing. (laughs) But we really didn't have, other than my uncle had been in the World War I, and Dad didn't go to World War II, but I had an uncle and his son and several of us, you know, several in the family—my other uncle was in the Navy in World War II—and so we were aware of the Armed Forces.

DePue: How did life change for you and for people around that area once we got into the war?

Myers: I don't think it changed very much, because we were still basically slaving away on the farm, you know. We did have things like rationing of sugar and that. But what we were getting was mostly off of the farm, so we really didn't have [less than before], other than sugar, I suppose, and that kind of ate into our baking, but we managed to do that. And then the rationing of gas, which we never went anywhere, hardly, anyway, so the only thing we needed was gas. That's when we started then getting the factories in Macomb and that began to pick up. Hemp & Company, which was originally a Thermos jug company, got a contract for making bands for bombs and made them out of paper and took big rolls of paper and rolled them around a roller, and then they cut them into strips and then chopped them so that the metal clamp that they put around a bomb to carry it had a sort of a cushioning, I guess, with this piece of paperized cushion that went inside this metal clamp. Then they put a little factory up in Tennessee, out in an old, oh, kind of a foundry like that the guy poured castings and so on. They took it over and made a shop, and I did work there in that. Made good money making bomb bands.

DePue: Bomb bands. Okay, so we got cushions for bombs and bomb bands.

Myers: Well, bomb bands were the cushion. And then my grandfather, too, he worked in there part of the time. But that did give us some income. And of course, everything that I earned went to the family. We just pooled everything that we had.

At the same time, during the war, I was starting in high school, of course, and the juniors and seniors got involved in this V-6 or V-12, I can't remember the name of it, the Navy ad, where they signed up and then as soon as they graduated, they went in and became Navy pilots. And I wasn't that old, but I was just under that.

DePue: Was there a part of you that was wishing you were a couple years older?

Myers: No, I don't think so, because I was always busy. I worked and was in my junior year in high school, I got involved with the—we were always in this conservation mode, and I worked with the Department of Conservation. We actually raised two big cages of pheasants one year for the Department and turned them loose out there where they didn't survive, (laughs) but... I was aware of and with the conservation officer. I also got involved with the sportsmen's club. Even at that age, I became secretary of the county sportsman's club and worked on a procedure which—Illinois had gathered quite an amount of money—I can't remember how many million—but it was in the hunting and fishing license count went into this fund, and nobody had expended it. It could only be expended if it was passed by the state legislature. Dwight Green started this program of building lakes in Illinois, and he thought

that they could use this fund. They also got some national funding from the federal [government], and so they put out a program of building lakes. There was (laughs)—they asked for suggestions or proposals. I think they got seven or eight hundred proposals from the various 102 counties we had in the state. We had some pretty astute politicians in our county, and they worked up a program for Argyle Hollow State Park, which at that time was just an old mining hollow. We actually got support I think from seven counties finally, that that would be the best site, and we could get the site, but you couldn't condemn any land; you had to go on the market and prepare it. So I got involved in preparing the options on the land there, and we finally got that developed in 1948 as one of the three—I think he built to start with. I worked on that and Siloam Springs, extending the acreage there. And Le-Aqua-Na, which is now the name of it, up in Stephenson County, and a little bit on Calumet Lake up by Chicago that I worked with the department.

That was in the spring, and then during the summer, they liked what I did and they had a project they wanted to do in northern Illinois, so they sent me to the University of Illinois for water [analysis?], and I learned titrate, dissolved oxygen content, and things of that sort for about a week or two, and then they sent me out all across northern Illinois on a trout stream survey, where we tested the turbidity of the water, the speed, and the type, and the dissolved oxygen content of each stream. I did most of northern Illinois that summer.

DePue: You say “they.” Who was “they”?

Myers: Well, it was the Department of Fisheries, Department of Natural History Survey, and Department of Water Survey. It was kind of a combination.

DePue: These were state or federal?

Myers: State, state.

DePue: Okay. Going back to World War II, did you follow the events of the war pretty closely?

Myers: Yes. We began to because we had people involved in World War II, so we were concerned. I was in the last draft of World War II, and my Uncle Ted that I told you about before, was the chairman of the draft board, so I knew that if my number came up, I was going. I would have been gone, except the war ended just before they were ready to call me, and so I never did go into World War II.

DePue: Did you follow the events in Europe or in Asia more closely, or about the same?

Myers: I think we had people in both of them, and so we didn't... Mostly we were just, again, doing what we had to do to survive, and with this extra help. Dad

did work in the wintertime; he worked in the shop in Macomb. When we got the car, why, he could go up there. That was in this American—well, they were steel cutting. What they really did was they built brooders for chickens, where you had a kerosene globe on one end and a burner on the other and a hood over it, and you put the baby chickens in there to keep warm. That was the product that they built. And that was an interesting thing. I think I was about thirteen or fourteen—it was about that time—that he picked up this—you know, first they just stamped out the metal, and it's sort of like a banjo case, and then they put it on this great big press, and it crimped the edges down and made it into a base for this brooder. And he picked these—somebody had left them laying there, and he picked them up to set them over into a bunker, and it slid down and cut his arm about a third off, cut the tendons. And he was out—in his right arm—and so I had to do all the farming that year, under his direction, but... That's when we did get the tractor, and he actually put a battery in it and a generator and put lights on it so I could work at night. And the neighbors thought, Oh, Lord, what is going on here? (laughter) But that was the first tractor with lights on. That was an interesting part of my life.

DePue: Well, it sounds like you kept very busy.

Myers: One of the final things in high school was this—I got involved with the county superintendent of the schools because he was a sportsman and he was in the sports club—is that we started the Junior Conservation Clubs in the high schools. Once a month we'd come down to Springfield—he had an old Buick, and he wanted me to drive, and that was really the ultimate, you know, that I drive this Buick. We went down to Springfield and met in the Abe Lincoln hotel with Vernon L. Nichols, who was state superintendent of public instruction.

DePue: Vernell?

Myers: Nichols. Vernon L. Nichols. He was the state superintendent of public instruction, and Osbourne—I can't remember his first name—who was the director of the Department of Conservation. It seemed like there was somebody else. We met with book publishers, and we tried to get ABC blocks into—rabbits and squirrels and different things—into the textbooks to increase the awareness of wildlife to the children of the state of Illinois. Then we set up these Junior Conservation Clubs in each of the high schools. During the summer, then, we took representatives of those to Fox Lake to the Deering mansion up there that had been left to the state, and we had schools for, oh, about two weeks up there, and I helped with that in training people in conservation. It was quite an affair. It's one of the things I got involved with in the church. Because I had never joined a church, and when I was up there on the middle weekend, everybody had to go to church. Well, we had some Catholics, and there was nobody of the staff that was Catholic, so they asked

me to take the kids to the Catholic church. And that's how I got somewhat involved in religion, which will come up here a little later, but...

DePue: But you talked about the family using the old schoolhouse as the place where they'd have church.

Myers: Well, we didn't really have church as such, but we did sing hymns, and we talked a little. We all had Bibles, but that's about it. That's about the churching that I had up until... In high school, also, one of my buddies was in that same class, his dad was a minister of the First Christian Church in Colchester. That was a fundamental Christian church. I did attend a church service or two, several, with him. But that's about my churching until I got through high school, really.

DePue: Your last year in high school, what did you think you wanted to do with your life at that time? This was about the time the war was ending.

Myers: Yeah. I was still pretty heavy in conservation. I thought that's the area I wanted to go into. Because we had worked with the Conservation Department and got our plan. We had the first woodland farm in the county where we actually had a plan on the woods that we had, which was about half of our farm. And we, you know, did a program where we cut the mature trees, and Dad did the cutting, and we sawed the lumber, and we did sell some lumber, but most of it went to do what we wanted to do on the farm. We started a program in 1950 when we got Argyle Hollow started. I helped plant the first pine plantings on Argyle Hollow. The state had one of these planters and they trained me to use it, and then I did a good bit of the planting on there. And they had trees left over, so we planted trees on our farm. And multiflora rose, of all things, was a thing for fencing, and we had about two and a half miles of multiflora rose planted on our farm, which we're sort of still living with it today because it just spread like wildfire unless you kept it...

DePue: This isn't like a regular rose?

Myers: No. It blooms in June or thereabouts—beautiful, sweet-smelling—but it's thick and sticky. Even the deer wouldn't go through it. They'd find a hole to get through. Or the fox. It was so thick that you had to have a hole for them to get through; they wouldn't tackle it. So we plowed that off, and we don't have it in our boundaries, but back in the woods, it filled the whole timber hardly with these roses.

DePue: What did you do, then, when you graduated? You graduated June of '46?

Myers: Forty-five, I think it was. And in '46, then, or that fall, I went to Western Illinois University. I started in conservation, and that was under the chairman of the geography department. Oh, boy, I can't remember his first name—Dr. Tillman. That's what I thought I was going to major in.

DePue: This was Western Illinois State College. Was that still a teachers' college at the time?

Myers: No, it had become a state college. I took geography, geology, and biology, and all those—and math. And I did very well in it. That first year, I also took German, and, you know, [that was] the normal procedure in those days. Then in 1947, the next year, I got either the flu or something, a really knocked-up schedule. They were on the quarters, you know, instead of semesters in those days, and that was thirteen weeks. I was knocked out of school for about seven weeks. I was really in pretty bad shape. Also at that time, the ag department had undergone a lot of changes because we had Dr. McVicker, John McVicker, who was a Navy lieutenant commander, I think, in World War II, and he was a doctor. He came back and took over the ag department, and he was a charger, just a hundred miles an hour. He was just trying to expand the ag department. Director Olthout had been there for years and years, and oats in the drawers had weevils. I mean, it was just a mess, the ag department, and really charged full on. He tried to get me to go there. I did take some courses in ag because I was interested in that. But then when I lost so much of this quarter, he and Dr. Tillman both suggested that I withdraw or I would really hurt myself, because I couldn't make up all that work. During that winter, Dad and I had attended a night school with the Ag director at Macomb and the new soil conservationist. So when Dr. McVicker said, "You know, they're looking for somebody down in soil conservation. You go with me." He says, "I know you'll come back, but you need to get yourself together and get... And he knew my circumstance as far as money-wise, because I had to put myself through college.

DePue: Yeah, well, that was another question I had, because you weren't coming from a lot of money—

Myers: No.

DePue: —to go be going to school.

Myers: I was working at filling stations, and I worked for my uncle at plumbing and heating business at night and did his calls. So what I did was go down there, and he took me on immediately, the soil conservation, WAE That's wage—hourly wage. And then they sent me to Coshocton, Ohio. I went through my probationary appointment. They sent me to Coshocton, Ohio to learn surveying and soil management and all that, and I came back then and became a soil conservation aid at Macomb. At the same time, what a lot of people don't realize that was going on with the Congress, the U.S. Congress, at that time was, What do we do to take care of our defense in case we get into another problem? And the debate was universal military training, everybody take two years of service. They never did get that off the ground, but it was about like this last thing that we had with the Medicaid or whatever we want to call it.

DePue: Health care?

Myers: This health care bill. One week it was this way and the next week it was that. Well, most of my senior members, seniors in high school, had already joined the Air Force, because they got tired of whether they were going to go. We all knew that we were hot on the list because we were the last to not go into World War II. So they had already joined the Air Force. And it was something else. You didn't know what your next week was going to be, whether you were going to go in the service or not. I'd already served my probationary appointment and that in the Soil Conservation Service. But I went in one day to the boss and said, "Look, I'm really getting tired of this. I think I want to go join the service." He said, "Well, with your situation, we need to go to the state director and see what..." Well, he came back and said, "I really appreciate your willingness to serve our country, but," he said, "what we have invested in you and what you have invested in it with your probationary appointment being completed, if you go and voluntarily join the service, there's no protection for you coming back here or keeping your credits in the soil conservation. And we'd hate to lose you, but if you really want to do that, we suggest you join the Reserve, and right now the law will protect you. If it is called or if you're drafted, then you are protected and you can come back, and your service will count as serving in the Soil Conservation Service."

So I went down, and the local Reserve was the National Guard—that was the only thing there in Macomb—and I joined the 3637th Ordnance. That was in 1948, in June. In those days, the National Guard was not given basic training; it was all done within the unit. And of course the 3637th was filled basically by World War II sergeants and so on that way. So I took my basic training at Camp Ellis in 1948. I had been out to Coshocton, Ohio with that, and so I'd missed all the shots that you get when you went in the service in those days, so they gave them to me all at one time (laughs) as I went out to the Camp Ellis, and that was really something else. I mean, you know, all that series of shots.

And the first thing in the world, I was on KP, and the sergeants—the first sergeant and a couple of the other sergeants—took all the young recruits—I think it was about thirteen or fourteen of us—out of the company—took them out in the field for an overnight or two and teach them how to put up tents, how to patrol, guard duty and so on. I wasn't one of those, and I felt sort of left out, so a couple of the old sergeants thought I should go out and see what it's like. So they took me out there, and the first thing you know, they got me lost. And there I was by myself out there in the—and I knew the area somewhat—but I could hear them talking. I finally figured out where our unit was because I heard the first sergeant's voice. You know how you can identify people. I didn't know whether to go in there or not because I wasn't supposed to be out there. The next morning, I thought, Well, I'd better do it. In the meantime, after they left me, the old sergeants went in and captured

several of the carbines from these young recruits and took them and then stirred up the camp. Of course the first sergeant then had a formation and found out they'd lost weapons, and oh, he was very... Had this semi-circle—it was big, tall weeds and grass out there—made a circle and made them march all night (laughs) to protect the area. Well, the next morning I had to do something because I was on KP, and so I went over, and of course he was very happy with me. (laughs) He put me on mowing weeds around the compound area for three days, and with those arms like that, with the size you can imagine. But it was interesting. But that's where I got my...

DePue: Camp Ellis—was that in Ohio?

Myers: No, no, it was right in Illinois. We really missed the boat in Illinois.

DePue: That's right, that's very close to—

Myers: Table Grove, Ipava. And they had about, I don't know, thirty thousand or so, I think, German prisoners there, as well as training recruits, you know, basic training.

DePue: You say there were thirty thousand German prisoners—

Myers: I can't remember—

DePue: During the war or at the time you were there?

Myers: During the war. That was in '48. Or, no, no, it was... Yes, they were still—no, there weren't German prisoners there then. That was during the war the German prisoners were there. And this then was going to be a camp, and then it—and so the Guard was using it. We had the 33rd Division come down, and they used it.

DePue: Were the people you were going through basic training with, was this a National Guard—run basic training program?

Myers: Yeah, it was just a unit, 3637th, and each unit did their own.

DePue: But you just happened to go to Camp Ellis to do that.

Myers: Well, that's because that's where the 3637th spent their summer. Because they had the 33rd come down from Chicago, and they'd gotten all these old GMCs, you know, deuce-and-a-halves, and they blew enough tires, because the tires were rotten. We spent all summer—then that's the rest of my summer, was spent knocking off the tires off of those rims and putting on new tires. And we had tires stacked all over the place, old, blown-out... We finally got enough of them together that we got enough vehicles that could run to get the 33rd back to Chicago in the two weeks.

DePue: How long were you at Camp Ellis in this summer training?

Myers: Two weeks.

DePue: So the standard two weeks training period?

Myers: Yeah.

DePue: And that was the extent of your basic training?

Myers: That was it. As well as in the unit, but...

DePue: What kind of training did you get in the unit, then?

Myers: Well, most of it was with manuals, and we didn't have any formalized training, it was just, you know, working. That's where the Guard maintenance shop was -- at Camp Ellis for the state. So they had me—first they found that I was more competent in learning than the sergeants, because a lot of those didn't have a real high education; they were just drafted in World War II, and they knew their job, but they didn't... And we were starting to get new pieces of equipment and so on. So they put me in carburetion, I think, electronic and carburetion. I did a series of work in the manuals in that, and I got pretty good at that, and then I could train them. Then they put me into transfer cases and transmissions. But then, all of a sudden they were going to close Camp Ellis down, and so they took the 3637th and moved to Springfield, to the Lincoln Ordnance Depot. Well, the only other unit that was left in Macomb was artillery, and it was 233rd Artillery Battalion, and a headquarters there, and we had service battery in Bushnell, A in Carthage and C in Canton and B in Havana. So they transferred me over to that, and since I knew surveying—and there again, the Guard didn't have any training, and we had the university, so most of those in math were in surveying or fire direction, but they still didn't know anything about military. Since I knew surveying, they made me the survey sergeant.

DePue: Where did you learn surveying, in the conservation work?

Myers: Yes, out in Coshocton, Ohio. I mean, as far as using scope and the transit and all that to survey for ponds and that. I did do that. I built ponds and so on in McDonough county—terracing and tiling and contouring and all that. So I was corporal by then, I think, and then along came 1951 when we really began to get serious. Still, the Guard was only authorized 50 percent of personnel in those days. They could not exceed 50 percent of their combat strength in people, and they were supposed to have 50 percent equipment, but we had no ways near that.

DePue: I want to back up just a little bit here. Somewhere in this process, from what I read in your own records, that you'd earned a civilian pilot's license as well.

Myers: Oh, yeah. That is true. Darwin McClure was a senior when I was a freshman or sophomore, a sophomore, I believe, and he was one of those seniors that went under the V-12 program or whatever in the Navy, and he became a pilot. He came back, and his uncle had a big farm north of Tennessee, and he set up a grass landing strip, and Darwin earned his certification as whatever the pilot trainer is, and so he was taking students and training them. So I knew him very well, anyway, and so I took that and a Piper—no, it wasn't a Piper Cub, it was Aeronca, I think. It was a two-seater, one behind the other, a hand stick in the middle for controls. I learned to fly there and did some cross-country and so on, and finally I warranted my license. Then I bought a Cub aircraft and flew until Korea. And then, of course, going over I knew that I couldn't—I didn't know how long or whether I'd get back, so I sold the Piper Cub. I did fly a few times after I got back, but I got so busy in all the other things that I never did keep it up. But I did have my private pilot's license.

DePue: During this time, did you have any girlfriend or were you dating or anything like that?

Myers: I did some in the Royal Youth. I was active in the Royal Youth And when I went north that summer, I was in northern Illinois on the trout stream, I met a girl up there in Lena, Illinois and was not going steady—and then when I went overseas we wrote for a little bit, but then gradually the letters quit coming and I finally found out that she'd gotten married. (DePue laughs) So I was really pretty upset with that for a while.

DePue: Nineteen fifty, June of 1950—you've been in the National Guard for a couple years, you're well established in your work, you hear about this dust up over in Korea with the North Koreans invading. What was your reaction at the time you heard that news?

Myers: Well, we didn't think too much about it other than we'd begun to get more pressure out of the Army with the Guard, because, as you know, at that time the Army had no troops. They had the 25th and the 1st and a few others.

DePue: They'd gone down from millions and millions to—

Myers: To nothing.

DePue: —something like five hundred thousand.

Myers: Oh, it was terrible. And not only that, but most of the people they had were in occupations, they were clerk-typists and all that kind of thing. They really didn't have combat training, *per se*. They were really in serious shape. So they went to Truman and said, "We've got to have some people." That's when he called I believe five or six Guard divisions. The 45th and the 40th were the first to be activated, California and Oklahoma. We really didn't hear much about that down in our level of the area, but we did notice that the training was more intensive, and we started having these Army tests that we had to

fire—you know, for artillery, you had to fire in so many minutes and go along and come off the road and go into position and shoot and things like that. It was really Army training tests or whatever they call—ATTs, I believe it was.

Then in '51, they had a full 44th Division at Camp Ripley, and we had—oh, the governor was there, Adlai Stevenson. We waited on the parade field for four hours for him to arrive. It began to look like something was happening for that. That's when we got back from annual training in September 1951 and we were alerted to go to Korea, or, well, to go onto active duty. And that was Camp Cooke, California is what it ended up.

DePue: What were you doing at that time in the National Guard? What was your specific assignment?

Myers: Well, I was still the survey chief, but I had done a lot of volunteer work—which, that's the way the National Guard operates. Most people don't realize. At least in those days, we only had one unit administrator, and any work—

DePue: One full-time person.

Myers: One full-time person. So anything that had to be done, it had to be done voluntarily. So I put in a lot of time down at the Guard Armory, which was an old bakery there in Macomb. When this came about, he says, "I don't know what we're going to do. We got to have this requisition in for equipment," because, as I said, we didn't have near half of the equipment. We had to order all of the equipment for the battalion to have when we arrived at Camp Cooke. I went on active duty voluntarily the twelfth of November 1951, and I spent two weeks going through all the catalogues and ordering the equipment for the battalion. At that time, they decided that they wanted to make me the operation chief. But I felt that I didn't have the training for that, so I volunteered to go to Fort Sill to operation and intelligence school. I went down there I think about the twenty-fourth of November and went through and graduated I think the first of February and was sent directly from there to Camp Cooke to prepare for the unit to arrive. The 44th Division didn't really get activated until the middle of February. I can't remember—

DePue: February fifteenth was the official mobilization date.

Myers: Yeah. That's when they mobilized at their local armories and that.

DePue: You were in headquarters battery then at the time?

Myers: Headquarters battery.

DePue: What was the equipment that the 233rd was supposed to have, as far as their main weapon?

Myers: One-oh-five.

DePue: One-oh-five Howitzer?

Myers: Yeah. And so that's what we did. I got all those requisitions in, went down there, and I really had no trouble with the course. I think I graduated first in the class, actually, in February. I did get a Christmas leave and came home, but as soon as I graduated from there, I didn't get to come home; I was sent straight on to California. I got out there in California, and here we had about 250 what we call RCPs, rotated combat personnel—master sergeants, sergeants, privates, corporals—mostly, though, they were NCOs—that came back from Korea and served so many points over there, and they came back to help fill up the unit. See, we were only 50 percent strength, so 50 percent of the division had to be new people, draftees and whatnot. So that's what I had, and by that time they had made me sergeant first class, and that's what I remained all during the time that I was in, because they stopped all promotions on anybody except those in combat during that time, or pretty nearly that. Even people in 8th Army were not supposed to be promoted. But anyway, I was there and set up I think it was a thirty-two week program of training the 233rd at Camp Cooke.

DePue: On anything and everything to do with being a field artillery battalion?

Myers: Yes, everything. And, of course, we had to have POR, prior overseas...

DePue: Requirements?

Myers: Requirements. And, you know, through the infiltration course and all these things, which most of our unit had never had because we were never given basic training. Then we had all the elements of the new artillery firing and so on. You put the round in, pull the lanyard, basically, is what most of them knew. So then, long about after maybe eight weeks or so, we got orders that we were going up to Hunter Liggett, which is the old Randolph Hearst estates, up at—well, the closest town was Jolon, I think, J-o-l-o-n, I believe it was, about forty miles, and we were back in this...it was like a desert. Because of the coastal range, the moisture would come up and rain on the coast side, and then as it would come over, it was dry, and it was just—oh, it was dry up there. And the closest place was—Lord, I can't remember the name of that camp. There was a camp prior to that there at—I just can't...

DePue: That's okay.

Myers: But anyway, this was separate, and we were in tents. We would range out. We were tented back on the east side of the coastal range, and then during the day we were moving out in the maneuvers. We went through the 8th Army test for our battalion out there. We didn't have enough wire yet in the communications, so they worked out a deal where the local telephone company had a few spare lines, and we'd hook into them and then extend our wire off from that. It was a Rube Goldberg operation, but... At that same

time, then, they got this idea that because we were National Guard, we had familiarity with our people, and so they did a big shuffle with everybody of the higher level NCOs, and I became the first sergeant of service battery. Imagine, now, with my training as an operation intelligence chief, I began... And the first sergeant became the operation sergeant, and he was a World War II sergeant who knew nothing (laughs) about... He was a good guy, you know, Morris Kessler. But it was just idiotic, but that's what happened. And then, long about June, we started getting hit with overseas replacements. And so instead of taking—

DePue: They were arriving or they were leaving?

Myers: No, we were going. We had gotten that much in. And what happened was, instead of sending the division over as a replacement, they decided to leave the 40th and the 45th over there and just replace the personnel with Guard personnel. We had the 32nd, I believe, of Wisconsin, maybe.

DePue: Thirty-second Division.

Myers: Yeah. And Ohio, I can't remember what that—but Ohio and... Anyway, what happened was that they didn't get a hold of me until about August, and then they levied me as an operation chief for overseas. They did give me a few days at home before I went overseas, but I came back here and then left on the train to go to Camp Stoneman, California, and flew overseas.

DePue: Well, at least you got to fly overseas instead of going on a ship, huh?

Myers: Well, I came back on a ship. But no, it was quite—it was just—oh, I mean, like it was death do us part that we were supposed to get over there immediately.

DePue: Up to this time, before they started to take the individual replacements out to ship overseas, do you think the Army's thought to begin with was that the 44th would go over as a division?

Myers: Well, originally when they called, they were going to send more over there. But again, as I tell you, in 1952, Congress thought, well, everything was settled. You know, we had the big skirmishes. And so they started cutting funds, so they just couldn't do that. And not only that, but they thought they were going to sign the truce any day.

DePue: Did you have some active duty personnel—oh, you said you already had a lot of people—

Myers: Oh, I had master sergeants, and being an SFC [Sergeant First Class], you can imagine what—but I was in charge of the campsite until the battalion got out there.

- DePue: Did you have a sense that some of the regular Army types were kind of looking down their noses at the people that...?
- Myers: Oh, they thought it was worse than hell to have to be assigned to a Guard division. But gradually they found that I knew what I was talking about, and that, in the—because I was leading a lot of the classes on fire direction and all these other things. (laughs) And I did it. You know, down in Fort Sill, you had to do it. We'd go through a thing, and one minute you'd be a wireman and the next minute you'd be chief of communications. You just had to go through all these different stages. Anyway, I got the—what should I say?—I got the support of some of these senior sergeants when they found that I did know what I was talking about; I wasn't just a pimple on the horizon. And so they really helped me during the time I was out there alone. Then, of course, as the whole group came out, by then we had a lot more—we had first sergeants and master sergeants and so on, and most of those were World War II, trained in the 44th Division, that were up senior sergeants, and so they were pretty capable, as well as these RCPs [Remote Communications Processor]. And some weren't worth a damn—or, dime. (laughs)
- DePue: That's okay.
- Myers: But most of them were in pretty good shape once they got into the mood and found that we were training for real. So that's how it came out that...
- DePue: Well, the reason I'm asking the question is it sounds very much that you had quite a crash course in anything and everything to do with—
- Myers: Artillery.
- DePue: —artillery.
- Myers: That's exactly...
- DePue: And that was going to come in very handy down the road, wasn't it?
- Myers: And so I was shipped over as an operation and intelligence chief for the 40th DIVARTY [Division Artillery].
- DePue: When were you shipped?
- Myers: Well, I think I got the levy in August, and I went over in October, the last of October. I think I got over there in November.
- DePue: Okay. Yeah, the orders were 21 October 1952.
- Myers: Yeah, yeah. And so what happened is we left—we were supposed to fly directly to Korea, I mean, and process through—what was the name of the...?—Camp Drake I believe, at Tokyo. There was a three Pan American

clipper convoy of aircraft. We went over from—well, we went at Stillman and were processed through and then out to March Air Force Base and flew out of there to Hawaii. Then one of the planes had some problem, I don't know whether it was the engine or what, and we had to stay there for three or four hours, but we couldn't leave the base or leave the airstrip. Then we got on and ended up at Wake Island at midnight, and it had just had a typhoon through there and blew everything down. The operations tent was an old tent—the operation headquarters had blown off and they just had a tent there. (laughs) Then we got on board, and we ended up in Tokyo in the morning. And we saw Mount Fuji as we come in.

We got in there and started processing, and then this typhoon that had gone through Wake was then approaching Japan. Well, they suddenly put us on alert, but then they decided not to try to fly out of there, and even ships were told not to come into the harbors in Japan. We waited there for it seemed to me like ten or twelve days till this typhoon had gone around. It was several days, anyway. And anywhere we went, even to go down to the latrine, (laughs) we had to sign out on this sheet. We were on a thirty-minute alert there all the time. Finally they decided, well, the air was still bad, they weren't going to fly, so they brought the *General Walker* in, unloaded it, and put us on it at Yokohama.

DePue: *General Walker* was a troop ship?

Myers: A big troop ship. It had been a converted ship, but it was a triple-stacker or something. It was humongous. I think we had seeming like about seven thousand troops on board stacked in there just like sardines. I don't know how many bunks it was, but you had to go by start at the bottom and then you just filled it up. And if you had to get out of the top bunk, you had to get everybody—or the bottom bunk, you had to get everybody out to get out of the bottom bunk. It was the darndest thing. Most of the people just wandered around, you know. You couldn't get on the deck because the seas—we went out into the Yellow Sea, and the end of that typhoon was still out there, and it was just horrendous. That ship would leap out of the water, and we had eighty, ninety-foot waves. It was the most horrible thing. Even the Navy would not get out on the deck unless they were totally tied, and they only went out there in an absolute emergency. There were only a few Navy men; most of it was Merchant Marines that ran the ship.

When we finally got into Inchon, we had to dock way out in the ocean or in the bay because that tide is twenty to thirty feet—it's a horrible tide—and they couldn't get that big ship in. It was churning up mud when it finally stopped. We had to open up the side of the ship and go out, and they built a platform out there and then they docked those landing craft—you know, those that drop the front—and they packed us on there just as tight as they could pack us and went in. They started at four o'clock in the morning, and it was night before we got on shore at Inchon. We get into Inchon, and that was the

first, what should I say, surprise. There were about six of us that our names were not on the list, and this corporal who was running the King Simon, you know, running the—getting people to the right place and so on, said, “Why weren’t you listed?” And so he goes through this whole—I think it was about seven thousand, this roster—could not find our names on this list. And we wondered what in the world was going on. And he said, “Well, you must be supposed to be over at this other place.” Well, it was about a mile away, we had our full duffel bag, steel helmet, M-1, the whole works, and no taxi. We had to walk over there, march over there, whatever. We get over there, and of course we get the riot act there because we weren’t—and we were on that list. And so they give us a can of cold C-Rations, put us on this old train that was board benches and so on. You know, it was strictly not modern. They had four guards, one on each door, corner, with ammunition. We had no ammunition. They said, “Now, we’ll take care of it in case we get attacked.”

DePue: Were these Americans or...?

Myers: Yeah, they were Americans, yeah. Chuncheon or go through all the night. The next morning about sunup, we arrive at Chuncheon, central Korea. And here again were all these units picking up their troops and so on. Guess what? Six of us sitting there. Nobody knew where we were supposed to go. We still didn’t know that we had been reassigned. But I saw the 40th Division trucks there, and away they went. A sergeant was there, and he says, “You got to go up there to the Repo Depot.” It was up on a hill and across from the airstrip that was there. I can’t remember what the name of it was, but they had an airstrip there at Chuncheon. So we start across this field, and “Oh, no, you can’t go there. You have to go around that strip.” So we had to go around the strip here with all this, get up there, and nobody knew where in the world we were supposed to be. And they didn’t tell us, either. So we sat there for a while, and finally, a day or so later, they said, “Well, you’re supposed to go to 5th Group Artillery, but we don’t know where it is.” (laughs) Can you imagine? Well, the reason they didn’t know where it was is the 5th Group Artillery was acting as 2nd ROK Corps headquarters, artillery headquarters, and they were training the ROKs to become, you know, a command headquarters, and that’s what they were known as, the 2nd ROK Corps headquarters.

So anyway, it was about three days later, here comes an old two-and-three-quarter-ton truck down that said “5th FA” on it. So we got on that and got up there, and I spent a few days with them, and then I found out that I was assigned to the 8220th Army Occupant—Army...

DePue: Augmentation.

Myers: Augmentation – au – 8th Army. That’s about all we knew. Then we got up there in operations, and I worked with them for a few days and then they said, Well, you will be going up to the ROK artillery to be a liaison from 8th Army

and us to do whatever it takes to train them for four months until they can become a DIVARTY for an infantry division.

DePue: DIVARTY being...?

Myers: Division Artillery for an infantry division. I don't know whether they TDYed [Temporary Duty] me or something to the 987th Field Artillery. It was an eight-inch self-propelled artillery that was behind the front in support, direct support of the front of the 2nd ROK Corps. I found out that there were two other American artillery outfits, and they were self-propelled—I believe one was self-propelled and I believe the other was towed artillery. That was the only American support in the 2nd ROK Corps.

DePue: Now, I'm sure in this process of talking here, you've told us exactly where you found out that you're not going to be assigned to an American unit but to a ROK unit. But when, roughly, was that? How long had you been in Korea when you found that out?

Myers: Well, it was several days because we came to Chuncheon. I think we were there three or four, maybe five days.

DePue: And still at that time you're thinking, "We're heading to an American unit."

Myers: Yeah, because the 40th were on the right side of us, and—

DePue: The 45th wasn't that far away, either.

Myers: No. But they really didn't tell us anything, and apparently they didn't know. I mean, they were dealing with units that they had on the board. But anyway, I get up, and I wasn't to the 987th, and I went directly up to the—I think it was 5th Korean Artillery Group just leaving the front, and we were getting a new one; the 9th Field Artillery Group was coming in. I didn't know—nobody seemed to know who was in charge of me. Apparently it was 8th Army. There was a KMAG advisor there, but he really wasn't in command of me, as I understand.

DePue: KMAG?

Myers: Korean Military Assistance Group. It was Major Sullivan and he didn't know what his authority was over me, because they apparently didn't brief him on it either. It was just kind of a—all I know is when the phone rang, I had to answer it, and if something was wrong somewhere, I had to fix it or get it fixed or get them the information. It was really a chaotic situation for a while.

DePue: I want to back you up just a little bit, and then we'll get into more once you actually arrive and start working with the Koreans. But I wanted to get your impressions, if you can recall, your first impressions, having arrived at

Inchon, of Korea countryside, Korean cities, the Korean people, or were you just too confused about what the Army wanted to do with you?

Myers: No, I wasn't necessarily that confused. It was just terrible, you know. All the to-and-fro battle had just torn up Seoul, and the cities were wrecked, and the countryside was just little old thatched huts, and the road was terrible—gravel at best—and it was just a real backward country, I mean, as far as anything modern. There was nothing of modern significance in the country. Then this old train that we went on at night was a terrible coal-burner or whatever, and it would go through the tunnels, and it'd just about choke you till you got out the other side. That was the situation. It was all dark, so I couldn't see anything until the next morning. When I got into Chuncheon, I saw that there had been some sort of new huts built with some lumber, and there were little kids and people on the streets; not too many, but they were there. There were some that wore really brightly-colored dressed. Most of them were black-and-white. I was told that those with color were prostitutes, basically, and they learned that young men at that age were (laughs) available, and that was a way of making some money, I guess. But you could definitely see them, and I do have pictures that we can—you can see the difference in the population. So that's basically it, and we just sat there (laughs) and waited until somebody told us what in the devil was up, because—

DePue: Before this time, how much instruction had you had on Korean culture or the Korean people or the Korean language?

Myers: Zilch.

DePue: Nothing.

Myers: I had no knowledge that we were being changed. When I got to the 5th Field Artillery Group, they did give me a little brochure of Korean, you know, a directory, and they did tell me—sort of went over the front and showed me what units were there and things like that, the normal thing that you do as an operation chief. I sort of worked as an operation chief there at 5th Group for I think maybe a couple or three weeks at the most until I was sent forward. I got up there, and then everything was in this main bunker. I had nothing but a small wall tent is what they had set up for me to live in. I had no vehicle. The only way I could get around was either go with the Koreans or, once in a while, the KMAG officer would—he had a vehicle. I was supposed to apparently feed back at the 987th, but that wasn't made apparent to me. It was about four miles back, and you can imagine if I was going to do it... Most of the time it was just one crisis to the next every minute, and you went, a lot of times, twenty-four hours without any stop.

DePue: The 5th Field Artillery Group—was that an American unit?

Myers: It was actually the old Fort Sill unit that was sent over there, and it became the 5th Field Artillery Group.

DePue: But once you left the 5th, is that when you now became assigned to the Korean unit?

Myers: No, I was assigned to the 8220th, and it was just temporary or TDYed at 5th, and then I think it's TDY—I was going to look at it before you got out here—to the 987th, but I don't know that there's anything that said that I was to be up at the Korean unit.

DePue: The Korean unit, then, was that the ROK 9th Artillery?

Myers: The first major one that I was with was the 9th Field Artillery Group.

DePue: What was the situation for the 9th ROK Field Artillery Group?

Myers: Well, they had taken a cadre out of some front-line units sent back to the training center in southern Korea, and went through I don't know how many weeks, but the recruits had been through basic and then advanced individual [training] and then put together into a new unit.

DePue: This is a new unit you're working with?

Myers: Yes, absolutely new. They had never fired a live 105 round when they arrived at the front. They fired thirty-seven-millimeter subcaliber, which was a device set into the 105 tube at, we figured out, about three or four thousand yards. It was a little powder-puff smoke in it.¹

DePue: Strictly for training purposes?

Myers: Training. And that's the training they had. The first time they pulled that trigger on that 105, they about went out of their... Of course, (laughs) those thirty-two cadre or something knew about it, but the rest of them never heard a 105 round, I don't think. It was just the first week or so; you didn't know what was going to happen when you called the fire order down, because, remember, everything was printed in English on the thing, and they had interpreters, but he couldn't be everywhere. I think the biggest problem I had in the beginning, anytime I got new units up on the front, was time of fire, because if you didn't send down a time on the fire order, they figured that you should set the time at zero. I don't know why.

DePue: You're talking about in the fuse for the artillery.

Myers: The fuse, yeah. And you know what a zero time setting is.

¹ The 37 mm sub-caliber device was used to train new artillerymen on firing the 105 mm howitzer. The sub-caliber device would fit inside the barrel of the 105 mm howitzer, which allowed the crew to replicate the gun's firing procedures. (Source: Mark R. DePue)

DePue: That's not good.

Myers: Well, you have a few seconds, because the thing has to rotate so many—about a half a second or so before the opening of the fuse comes down to detonate the shell. So we had muzzle bursts, practically, is what it amounted to. And of course there was infantry there, and imagine what they liked about that. Oh, it was a disaster for a while. But they learned very rapidly. I mean, I was really surprised.

DePue: How closely were you working with the—this is going to take a long time to answer. The fascinating part for me in terms of our discussion here—the kind of training, the kind of involvement you were having with these Korean troops. Were you back in headquarters and training them, or were you training the people on the gun lines themselves, or...?

Myers: Anywhere that they had a problem, whether it was there at the unit or... But most of my time was in what we called the FSCC. This was a big bunker that they'd built with logs this big around and sandbags—I don't know how many sandbags thick it was.

DePue: FSCC?

Myers: FSCC, Fire Support Coordination Center is what they called it. That took them and it was where all the operation, the intelligence, the photo interpretation—although we did that in a tent outside. We had coverage of the front. When it wasn't raining too much, we had aerial coverage of the front with aerial photos of the front, and we had to do our—because that was part of their training, to be able to do photo interpretation and intelligence from the aerial photos. And then front FOs. I was up on the front with the FOs, and—

DePue: Forward observers.

Myers: Forward observers. Probably the biggest problem we had was communications, because all this equipment, remember, it was World War II equipment; it wasn't the modern radios and so on the Americans had. It was these old tube radios, and they had to be calibrated at least once a day and sometimes more. If you jarred them, they seemed to go out of calibration. I was the farthest-most northern unit in that sector. There's a big bulge out in that sector.

DePue: And the sector, at least according to the maps—and you had given me one of these maps here—which one of the ROK divisions were you primarily working with?

Myers: Eighth ROK, and that was in Finger Ridge and Capitol Hill area.

DePue: Okay, so that's between Kumsong and—it's right basically in the center of the line, isn't it?

Myers: Yes, and the 2nd ROK Corps was in between 9 and 10 Corps, U.S. corps. They had the 1st ROK Corps on the east coast, and that was basically training infantry. They would train regiments of infantry over there, and we were training artillery, and then as we got them so-called trained, then we'd match them up and form a new Korean infantry division. That was the idea of the thing. We did a lot of those. Every Korean infantry actually came—the artillery came out of this and the infantry came out of the 1st ROK Corps.

DePue: Okay, this is a slightly indelicate question, but when did you become aware of the reputation that the American troops had for the Korean troops, the Korean units?

Myers: Almost immediately.

DePue: After you arrived in Korea—

Myers: Yeah.

DePue: —or did you hear about that even back in the States?

Myers: No, I didn't pay that much attention to it. (laughs) But what happened there was we sent them in, very poorly-equipped with this old World War II stuff. Actually, the Jeep that I normally rode in was—the interpreter had one. And the wheel, some of the lug nuts were welded on because they were so... The tie rod was welded in one end because the threads were already gone. It was just one thing after the other, but it operated. But when you're going over those little passes where it's about a thousand feet down and no rail, you kind of wonder (laughs) how good your life was with it. But anyway, that was the thing that I found, that the Koreans were not initially a war-loving people. Their language had no war words in it; they actually had to use our words. And what I found was Korean is a sound language; it's not a...

DePue: It's not like Chinese or Japanese.

Myers: No. The diagrams are not—what do we call that?

DePue: I know they used Hangul, that's the written language, and that's a phonetic language.

Myers: Yeah, phonetic. They had twenty-four sounds and four double sounds. And they could write down anything that you said phonetically. They didn't necessarily know what it meant, but... A lot of them, by that time—because, see, they were released from the Japanese in 1945, and by this [time] in '50, some of them had education. One of the things that the Koreans had started right after the war was English. So those that had education had some knowledge. But you had to write English in capital letters. They had a hard time determining it if you wrote in upper- and lowercase.

- DePue: Had they been literate? Most of these people, were they literate in their own language?
- Myers: No, no, because they hadn't had the Korean language during the thirty-six years that the Japanese... It was all Japanese. So only the older people knew the Korean language. In lulls of battle, we had the seniors who were educated giving Korean language lessons to the young recruits and so on.
- DePue: Well, we've talked about this before, but I think this is a very important point. Again, why didn't they know Korean?
- Myers: Because the Japanese forbid them to speak, sing, or write in anything but Japanese.
- DePue: Because...?
- Myers: Occupation.
- DePue: They were going to make that into a Japanese colony?
- Myers: That's as I understand it, yes.
- DePue: So here you are, an American that doesn't speak any Korean, trying to teach Koreans, who speak some English but aren't really literate in their own language, how to use pretty complex and dangerous equipment.
- Myers: And do all the things it takes to fight a war. It was just... (laughs) I thought it was idiotic when I first went up there. But gradually we worked together, and we had sort of a pidgin language that we began to speak with each other, and it worked out. But boy, when you've got a new unit up, it was disaster for a while, but...
- DePue: What percentage of this brand-new unit was American advisors? Were you considered a KMAG?
- Myers: No, I was not. There was only one KMAG officer for each battalion, or there's one for this training group. And they were just fit to be tied. They had to be everywhere, and of course these batteries strung all over and in this gulch and then over here, because we had something like twenty-seven—and I think it even ranged up in the thirties sometimes—battalions with artillery in this what we called Artillery Valley. It was along the Kumsong River valley. And they just had their hands full, and the problem was that in getting these KMAG advisors, the active Army would not accept those positions, I guess, unless they were forced into it, because it really didn't have any gain on their promotion possibility, because they really didn't command this outfit, they were only advisory. So the high levels took that as not a command position. To get it filled, they used National Guard officers that they'd called in and they used retirees. And that's what Major Sullivan was—he was from New

York, I believe—but he was a retiree and been retired for a good many years. The last one I had was a colonel, full colonel, and he had been in the artillery when it was drawn by horses. He was called back, and I think most of them got two weeks at Fort Sill and were sent over then as KMAGs.

DePue: How many people like yourself, then?

Myers: I think we had about sixty individuals in the 8220th, and we never saw each other. Far as I know, we had no commander—I never knew of any commander.

DePue: That's sixty people who are spread throughout the entire...

Myers: Front.

DePue: Not just the 8th Division?

Myers: No, no. See, normally you had about five infantry divisions in the 2nd ROK Corps, and we had people with that. We had people back at the airstrip. I had a master sergeant out of my outfit, was back there at the airport, because that's how we got actual observation. It was awfully hard to get observation on the front. You could only see just principally what was in front of you, and you couldn't see over the hill on the back side of it. And so we had to use these little L planes, we called them—a little bigger than a Piper Cub, but about that. They flew up, and then they got shot at a lot, but they could take a lot of bullet holes; unless you hit the pilot, he could keep flying. They couldn't fly in bad weather, you know; that was our problem. But this Sergeant Higgins was back there, about twenty miles back, I expect, or maybe ten. But the rest of us were just individually, at each of these group—

DePue: So you're an American fish swimming in a very Korean pond. Would that be an appropriate analogy?

Myers: I guess. But basically, the other thing that happened was that we had all these problems, and then the fifth group, which was Corps headquarters, would ask for what was happening or what was going on. Well, I had to report what I got or what I heard or what I knew, and then if they didn't concur in that, they wouldn't believe it. That's the reason I have a terrible feeling with Army Intelligence. It just seemed like that they're on a pedestal somewhere, and they only know what's right and what's wrong.

DePue: Why do you think they were discounting what information you were passing on to them?

Myers: It was this thing that you alluded to at first, why the Americans didn't trust the Koreans, because they what they called boogied out or whatever. Well, it was generally because they ran out of ammunition or they were just simply overwhelmed because they'd never seen that kind of action before. But at the

same time, they had a terrible thing. If a commander, American commander, in the American area, had lost in an action a Jeep or something, he was charged with that. So he would go over into—and we had Korean outfits, you know, strung across the whole front that they had become an official Korean infantry—they'd go over and steal one off the Koreans and repaint it and do it all up and replace that. Well, the Koreans learned that pretty fast, and so they did the same thing to the Americans. It was just tit for tat. (laughs) So a lot of the bad stories and stuff of the Koreans came out of this deal where the Americans started it first but the Koreans did it better.

DePue: Well, and you're getting there—this is essentially towards the end of the second year, into the third year of the war. All of this that you're describing now apparently had been going on for a couple years already.

Myers: Yes. After it settled down more or less across the thirty-eighth parallel, then it was just this nightly incursion between the—because we were just supposed to protect the line, as I understand it, basically, and the Chinese then would attack wherever they thought.... And during those times, the American commander actually was just to put it _____(??), because if he lost any equipment, he had to replace it.

DePue: Do you have some specific stories or anecdotes that really can illustrate the nature of what you were doing there?

Myers: (pause) About all I can say is that I ran—because I was the farthest-most unit and communications was such a problem, I had twenty-some radios in there, and I can speak with every artillery battalion, whatever it was, they brought a radio up, and an operator or two, and in this FSCC. And for us to get communications—you know, in those days, the FM—I ran a position up on the hill behind this FSCC and put a remote up there, so I could speak to practically everybody in that whole corps. I set up a corps operation map, a complete map with acetate over it, and at night, I would keep that thing current as to what happened here, there, and what was going on and all that. So the division commander nearly every morning would come up and have me brief him, and a lot of times, the corps commander would come in, because he said it was the best—because I kept—and I had it because I was the only one available with all... Now, back at corps headquarters, they didn't have all that.

DePue: Now, we're talking the ROK Division, the ROK Corps.

Myers: No, we're talking the American, 5th Group, which was corps headquarters. Because they didn't have all this communication.

DePue: Which American corps was that, then, the 9th?

Myers: No, it was the 2nd ROK Corps, but the 5th U.S. Group was 2nd ROK Corps artillery.

- DePue: So these are Americans that you're briefing.
- Myers: No, it wasn't Americans, it was Korean. They would come up and look for what night, and if I had a problem or I thought something needed to be looked at, and that's how they took their briefings. Not every morning, but nearly every morning.
- DePue: Tell me a little bit about the ROK officers that you served with.
- Myers: The ROK officers were mostly, maybe not 100 percent, but mostly from North Korea, because when this whole jingjang went on, North Korea was the industrial base of Korea.
- DePue: During the time the Japanese were developing it?
- Myers: Yeah, yes. And they had good education in that. The south was just rice paddies and rice farmers. The only piece of equipment they had was probably a two-wheel cart with an ox on it, and most of them didn't have that. Only the more well-to-do farmers had transportation, and that was the transportation. Everything else was on foot or on back. They had this little back rack that they carried everything on. I've seen them carry a full fifty-five-gallon barrel of fuel on their back.
- DePue: The North Koreans, you said. I assume these—
- Myers: Well, the North Koreans, then when this happened and they saw that they were losing, they got out of there, and they came south.
- DePue: During what timeframe? Before the war began?
- Myers: No, this was after the jingjang of the first initial combat. Those that could get south came south because they saw what was going on. And some of those had doctor's degrees, some of them could speak French, German, Russian, and Chinese, as well as Japanese.
- DePue: Wasn't there an issue of loyalty in a lot of these people?
- Myers: No, they were loyal for Korea. It was absolutely no problem. You could trust them. Because they had given up—if they didn't get their families out, but they tried to bring their families out—but whatever, they were there to try to save Korea, and they were very bitter in the end when we signed the truce because they thought we should have went back and taken Korea back over.
- DePue: From your impression, then, this officer corps that the ROK Army was starting with, did they have the potential to be a very good officers' corps?
- Myers: Oh, yes. And I would—well, I had to trust them with my life. They told me that if the Chinese could get a hold of me, you could collect a ten-thousand-

dollar reward on me. And I know they knew that I was there, because on the loudspeakers they would say, “Sergeant Myers, come over. We got hot women, good food.” And I was on the... I don’t know how they knew I was on the front, but they would know that.

DePue: How about the ROK noncommissioned officers? Now, the traditional strength of the United States Army for generations has been in our Noncommissioned Officers Corps, and that’s where all of the resident knowledge and experience resides that makes the Army work. How about the ROK’s NCOs?

Myers: They had some pretty good NCOs. Most of those were Japanese-trained. General Song, who was major general of the Capital ROK Division—I believe it was Song—he was a monster. You know, the Koreans have two basic people, they have some little short, I would say, kind of dumpy, and then they had these big Mongolians or something. They were humongous. General Song’s hand was almost as big as my two hands. I mean, he was just like (makes noise; laughs). And he was a big guy. In fact, he couldn’t sit in a Jeep seat; he had an overstuffed chair built in his Jeep, and painted glistening black. Everywhere he went, he had two or three Jeeps with machine guns on them, all black. He was quite a general, but he was a master sergeant in the Japanese Army. In that last push that happened before the truce, he came over—they give him in charge of the area. They brought him out of the Capital ROK and came over, and he took charge to try to... You know, he had, I don’t remember how many notches on his pistol, and every one of those was a senior officer that he’d shot for disobeying command or not doing what he’d told them.

DePue: South Korean officers that he’d shot.

Myers: Yes. That’s how they operated, and that’s how, I say, the Oriental way of life: if you make a mistake, you must pay for it. You can’t absolve yourself by saying I’m sorry. That’s one of the things that I found in dealing with this. The commander came up one day shortly after I got up there, and said, “Sergeant Myers,” he says, “I know you know this artillery, and I know”—and I could sense when they made an error, even though I might not have heard the words, and I would correct it. And he said, “You’re just killing my people. They are ashamed that they made a mistake and you did not punish them.” He said, “You must punish them. I don’t care if it’s my officer or what. If he makes a mistake, I want you to let him know that you...” And so I did. I had to learn to whack them, you know, knock them off the chair, and then they would get up and salute, and then they at least felt that they had absolved themselves of their mistake. They were just in terrible condition of not being able to do that. If the Americans ever knew that, I would have probably been court-martialed. But we got along, and they just loved me. I mean, they protected me day and night.

One of the things that I think I showed you in the picture there, Christmas, first Christmas, is that we had been up for I think around eighty or ninety hours. The Chinese were trying to take Finger Ridge and Capitol Hill. Finally, just about daybreak, they backed off. We'd killed a lot of them, and they backed off. I came out of this bunker, this FSCC, and they'd found these trees somewhere, back somewhere, and decorated them, and sang "Silent Night" to me in English. That's how grateful they were that we had survived and stopped it.

The other thing I didn't tell you about when I first got up there that was kind of a surprise... I told you about my Christian life, which I had not joined a church. This commander of the 9th ROK Field Artillery Group had become a Christian, and he wanted to tell me about Jesus. He set one of his five tents aside as a chapel, and then when you have sometimes a spare moment or a delay in the action, then I would go... I went down to this 987th captain, and he gave me some hymnals and that, and that's how I... I did have a little booklet that the Army gives you when I got there. That was the other thing I used. And we had sessions. And finally, then, we got Korean chaplains trained, and so they took it over. But it was really (laughs) a shock that they would ask me to do that.

DePue: How well-trained did you feel in that particular area?

Myers: Not very well-trained, but as I said, I just relied on the chaplain; he couldn't come up there, but he did help me some. He was a Catholic chaplain, Father Quinn, a lieutenant. So when I got back from Korea, I did join the Colchester Christian Church, because that was the closest thing I was associated with in high school.

DePue: It's a different way of coming to the church, isn't it?

Myers: It's foxhole religion, I guess is what they call it.

DePue: Do you think the Koreans were sincere in wanting to hear about Christianity?

Myers: Oh, absolutely. Of course. A little squad tent, and we had to lift up the sides, and they'd sit around the hillside. (laughs) It was really interesting.

DePue: How well did you learn Korean during this process?

Myers: Not very well, but I could fire artillery, and I knew—I don't know whether I could do it now or not, but—

DePue: Did enough of them know English well enough that you were able to cross that language barrier, then?

Myers: No, most of the time I had to either do that or through an interpreter. The interpreter sometimes had a hard time interpreting because—and again to tell

you—they didn't have the words of war in their language. It was just crazy. But they had been at peace for a long time until the Japanese attacked. They had been the power of the Asian area for many years. And most people don't realize that.

DePue: Well, like a lot of ancient cultures, they have a very rich—and they're proud about their history and their heritage.

Myers: I couldn't hardly believe how within four months that they could pass an Army—we had to pass the Army Training Test or whatever they called it then, and they had to learn to fire the artillery and in cooperation—we had to fire a corps TOT. And I'm one of the few probably that's fired a corps TOT. I don't know whether they did down in Vietnam or not.

DePue: Corps TOT being Time on Target?

Myers: Time on Target.

DePue: Which means all the rounds have to land at the same time.

Myers: Everybody that's in the area that can hit this target has to fire, and you're supposed to have it from the first round to the last round I think was about twenty-six or thirty seconds, something like that.

DePue: And it's not when they fire, but it's when it hits the—

Myers: When it explodes.

DePue: When it hits the target, okay.

Myers: The ground would just—the whole mountains and so on just vibrate when that... And you'd hear them (makes sounds), you know, and then all of a sudden... Some were high angle and some were low angle, and it's just beyond imagination. We didn't have computers, you know; (laughs) it was all done by slip stick² and paperwork. And that was another problem we had up there: the Koreans did not have the money to buy supplies, simple supplies—paper, pencils. It was just ridiculous. So what they did—with knowledge of us—was they used their trucks—we had to put in an order: "You must have at least one truck for every gun, and you must have one truck for maintenance and personnel and things of that fire direction," but they would take the rest of them and go back to Seoul and run black market materials; they'd get paid, and they used that to buy the paper. (laughs) It's just beyond imagination what was going on over there.

DePue: Some of the things that we're discussing here, I probably should mention also that here you have a field artillery guy interviewing a field artillery guy. But

² slip stick: a device similar to a slide rule, used in the computation of firing data

the fire direction skills and the surveying skills, and even forward observing skills, require a certain amount of mathematical knowledge and experience and sophistication. Where did they find those kinds of people?

Myers: That's what I said; these people were from the north in the most part, or they'd been on the line long enough that they could learn....

DePue: Pick up skills.

Myers: Yeah.

DePue: Tell us a little bit about the average Korean soldier that you experienced, then. What were they like?

Myers: They were just human beings that loved their families, and they respected when somebody was killed or—and I'm sure they did at home. And if at all possible, they wanted to be buried a certain way—I think the feet to the east or something like that, feet to the East(laughs) and the grave mound, instead of just making a grave, sort of mound it up like that in a mound over the head. That was the old custom. I don't really know what they did there because we didn't bury anybody in that area because we'd get so much incoming at the time. I assume they took them to their home area; I don't know.

DePue: How loyal were they? How dedicated were they to their cause?

Myers: We had very little problem because of the extreme measures that they took. If you deviated—I mean, the first sergeant carried a club about three foot long. I mean, he'd beat the tar out of anybody that got out of line. If they had found somebody that was trying to defect, you know, and go to the other side, it was a horrendous thing. They'd bring them back. One day, they brought this soldier back, and they had everybody that was in reserve on this hillside, and they sat there and harangued and hollered about, you know, protecting country, and then they made everybody in his unit fire into him, and then the company—it was the infantry—all the company, and then all the senior officers of the division. It was just nothing but a mass pulp. They had him tied to a post. I mean, it was beyond imagination how they strictly enforced discipline.

DePue: Did you understand that?

Myers: Oh, yes. (pause)

DePue: Did you have difficulty trying to explain some of these things to other Americans who weren't living with these Koreans sometimes?

Myers: I never had other Americans, other than visiting generals and stuff, come up to the area. There was nobody that came up to my area. They didn't want to live up there. It smelled terrible. You see, I didn't get rations. I was supposed to go

back to this 987 They wouldn't give me C-Rations, so I ate kimchi³ and rice. I kind of hated it because they were very limited in the amount. They could only get one bowl and something else a day, but they always fed me. And I smelled like that. And so they didn't understand how you—but, you know, after a while, it's just part of—you don't notice it as much as what you'd think you would.

DePue: Did you have a sense sometimes that you were kind of forgotten by the rest of the Americans?

Myers: I absolutely did. I wasn't paid for three months because nobody could figure out whose payroll I was on. Of course, I didn't need the money; (laughs) I couldn't spend it if I had it. Most of it I sent home in an allotment back to my dad. But I never—and I didn't have time to worry about that because, as I said, it was just one minute to the next, there was something else that was happening. One day the kid came in and says, "Sergeant Myers, you got to come out." I went out there, and they'd dumped a deuce-and-a-half⁴ over on its side, took poles and actually turned the deuce-and-a-half over on its side so they could work on it. Of course, the battery acid and everything else... It just seemed like it was never-ending, what could happen. But we gradually, after four months, other than the last one, the 12th Group, which was the last Field Artillery Group I worked with, and that was starting in about April, and then the Chinese began to push. That's when we knew something was coming up, but the 8th Army didn't seem to know that.

I need to take a break.

DePue: Okay. And we will pause—

(pause in recording)

DePue: We took just a very quick break, and we're back at it again. I wanted to spend a little bit more time about some of the specific artillery-related skills that you were helping them master as the Koreans became much more proficient. And let's start with—you spent most the time, it sounds like, in the operations center, FSCC, you've been calling it. One of the things that we haven't talked about much, though, is the intelligence side of that. Did you get into that as well?

Myers: Yes, and that was basically through either the nightly excursions we had, we would collect information, and at some times, when it was critical, they would give us that they wanted some specific intelligence on something, they would ask us to get a prisoner or more and bring him back. And you have to understand that the Koreans, because of the terrible situation the Chinese gave to our Koreans, if they were caught, it was just inhuman what they did to

³ Kimchi: the archetypal everyday dish of Koreans, consisting of fermented cabbage with lots of garlic

⁴ Deuce-and-a-half: Army slang for a two-and-a-half-ton truck

them. And so the Koreans, if they took Chinese they never made it back to the headquarters unless they were ordered to bring them back.

DePue: Were these always Chinese on your sector of the front?

Myers: Yes. Well, after the initial thing, everything, practically, in the front was Chinese. The North Koreans were almost totally demolished after this up-and-back a couple of times, and so the Chinese took it over. So what they would do is ask us to get these prisoners, and so we did that. But most of our intelligence was basic intelligence that you would have in an artillery outfit, and that's what's going on directly in front of you: artillery positions, mortar positions, infantry encampments, things of that. And the Chinese did the same as the Koreans. We had nothing to enclose. There were no buildings or tents or anything. They just drilled holes in the hillside, and they lived in caves on the back side of the hill, obviously, to keep from getting hit so much. And that's how all of the infantry and the artillery even, and those at the headquarters... We only had one ... And they built a little hootchie, I'd call it, and sandbagged it for the KMAG advisor. I had a small wall tent. The Koreans didn't like that because they were afraid I was going to get hit. But they did put sandbags up around, but of course if it came in the tent, then I wouldn't have been here. But that's how they protected me. But then this AGL group that I was talking about in the brief here.

DePue: AGL is air—

Myers: Army Ground Liaison.

DePue: Okay.

Myers: Air Ground Liaison, I guess it is. No, Army Ground Liaison. And then the Air Force had a team that—this was later in the spring when activities began to step up—they set up two enlisted people to help put in air strikes. They had this big Air Force radio we had mounted in this Jeep. There was only room for the two of them and the radio. They would go up toward the front, and then we had to relay it up the hill, up the OP⁵ as we did with Army radios, so we could speak to the pilots. But to do that, to get the information on what we should be shooting at or what we should be having air attacks on, we had weekly coverage—pretty much weekly coverage—of the front with aerial photography that we could use for 3-D looking at the area in front of us. We could determine from that, generally, whether there was a mortar position there, artillery, or whatever, or whether it was a renewed activity or some new activity. At the same time, when you look down and got this perspective of the depth, sometimes you could tell that they were piling up supplies. One in particular I remember was a small old graveyard that was there, and I suddenly started sensing that the thing was building up, even though it looked

⁵ OP: observation post

just still like they'd kind of made it look like the graveyard. And I began to complain about that. I thought they were storing ammunition in there.

DePue: This is by very close observation of the photos?

Myers: Weekly observation. It seems crazy, but when you do that every week, go over the front area, your mind sort of crystallizes that in there and you can see changes. You don't believe it, but you can actually see changes in the terrain and changes in the vegetation or whatever.

DePue: Did you have something that would help you kind of pick up elevation differences and things like that?

Myers: Well, other than just looking at it, you could... No, the only thing I had was this one little lens that you set up, just set about four inches off of it, and you had two of the same maps, one was a little different, and so when you looked in there, you got a 3-D dimension of it. Finally it got to be a chore of going through all that, and the lighting was not good. We had a tent that we did this in outside the FSCC because there wasn't room enough to do it in there. And we had no electricity other than a little old portable generator that we ran, and we didn't have electric wire; we used commo wire, WD1, to run the juice, and we had a few light bulbs in the FSCC and one or two in this tent that we did the photo interpretation. But I got so I could focus my eyes straight ahead, each straight ahead, so that I got the 3-D image in between that would come up, and I got so I could do that.

Well, this graveyard kept giving me fits, and I kept on 5th Group, which was 2nd ROK Corps Artillery on it, and their photo interpretation team, at first they didn't believe me, and gradually they became convinced that yes, it was building up. They had better equipment than I had. So we finally got it authorized to put an air strike on it. The Air Force had this what we call Mosquito—it was an AT 6 Army trainer—or a Navy trainer. He went up and marked the area with smoke, and I said, "Yes, that's the place." So they brought the Air Force in, and only one flight, I think, they had four planes, and they bombed that thing and it went up like skyrocket. It was ammunition that they were storing in this graveyard. That was one of my successes, (laughs) but it took about a month to get that thing finally settled and everybody agreed to do it.

One of the other things that happened in this was that we did have some prisoners of war. I never did get to interrogate them; that was all done by the Koreans. But that was before—I don't know whether we want to get into it right yet or not, but that was before the push came. But things did begin to pick up in April of 1953. We were getting hit every night, practically, by the Chinese. And then it increased into May and June, and we were really getting hit pretty heavy. In one case, just before the truce attack started, which I think was about July the thirteenth, twelfth or thirteenth, they hit one of the

infantry divisions real heavy and knocked out almost a regiment. So this is where some of those stories get about bugging out. They shipped us fourteen or sixteen hundred replacements—can you imagine?—in one regiment in one day, and they got hit that night. Well, those people came back, because they had never been in that kind of a firefight, and that's when they brought the general over, General Song from the Capital ROK. He went up there and sprayed the area with his machine guns and stopped them and gave them a talk in very succinct terms (laughs) and turned them around and put them back into the front. But it was such things as that. Even an American army, you put that many new replacements in and you're not a unit. You can't be.

DePue: Well, some of the stories from the early months of the war, there were lots of American units that have a pretty poor record in the same regard because they'd been pulled off of occupation duty in Japan or were fresh recruits and...

Myers: And it's just impossible. People do not understand that war is hell, and you have to train it that way. The Marines, I still say, is probably the best-trained force we got because they do take some chances. They get a lot of congressional investigations because they killed somebody or wounded somebody in training, but they do train for what it's about, and that's killing people. And people don't seem to understand that that's what it's all about. It's terrible, but if somebody's willing to go in—and they weren't willing, the Chinese weren't willing. That's the other thing I found. They would dope them up and send them into the line. I mean, with actual dope.

DePue: Marijuana.

Myers: I don't know what it was, but they would just be out of it. We had one individual on our front there that was shot thirty-two times and was still breathing. I don't know how he could have lived, but—

DePue: You talking a Chinese?

Myers: Chinese. It was ugly. But he certainly wasn't alive, but he was still—his heart was pumping and things of that nature. And the other thing is the way they attack, in the wave of attack. The first wave would have weapons and ammunition, and then they'd have at least three or four lines behind that would just carry nothing but ammunition, so if the first one fell, they picked up his weapon. That's how they attacked. You had to just simply dissolve that whole thing if you're going to stop the attack.

DePue: I wonder if we can talk a little bit about—you've already gotten into it—about how much combat you personally saw because of your role that you had with training in the division, how close you got to the front lines.

Myers: Well, I was in the front training the FOs. And we'd get a new FO up. I'd generally spend a day or two at least with him.

- DePue: And where were the FOs in relation to the front line?
- Myers: Right on the front line.
- DePue: Or were they sometimes forward of the front line, these observation posts?
- Myers: No. Mostly the front line was a ridge line that ran, and then you'd have the valley in front of you. Then the Chinese would be over on the next—it wasn't mountains, but they were two or three thousand feet in elevation.
- DePue: Well, they'd call them mountains in Illinois, wouldn't they?
- Myers: Yeah. (DePue laughs) But that's basically how the thing was. Then when you got in the valleys and so on, then it would just be a trench line.
- DePue: Were you there some evenings, some nights as well?
- Myers: Yes, yes.
- DePue: Did you participate in any patrolling yourself?
- Myers: No, I did not. I only stayed there at the OP, because they told me that I was too sensitive, I guess, to go out there and be trapped.
- DePue: That you'd be the wrong guy to capture.
- Myers: Yeah.
- DePue: Were you on the front lines any time when the Chinese attacked?
- Myers: Yes.
- DePue: Do you remember any of those?
- Myers: Well, one time I was there at the base of Finger Ridge, and I put eight-inch shells in and about two or three hundred meters from me, overhead, (laughs) and hoped that they'd all hit the Finger Ridge ahead of me, and they did, and we stopped the attack.
- DePue: Was this a night attack?
- Myers: It was in the evening, yes.
- DePue: Most of the action was going on at night?
- Myers: Most of the action—sometimes it didn't start until maybe eight or nine or ten o'clock at night, and if it went beyond four o'clock in the morning, you knew it was a major attack. But normally it would end at three or four in the

morning, and then if they backed off, well, then, you knew that was it for the night.

DePue: Did you get injured?

Myers: I did, but not officially, apparently; there's nothing on my record. I checked St. Louis, and they say there's nothing there.

DePue: What happened when you got injured?

Myers: Well, one of the times—I think it was in April of '53—I was up and firing at a Chinese gun position on the opposite ridge. They had burrowed through the mountain, and they had a seventy-five or seventy-six millimeter gun that was firing at us. They knew that we were the only ones that could see them, and so we were firing back and forth. It was a tit-for-tat thing. I had an eight-inch Howitzer that I was using to try to put a round in that hole, you know, a good many meters out there. That's something that I doubt if any artilleryman today knows about, a quarter of a mil board. There's sixty-four hundred mils in a circle, but the mil wasn't close enough definition to move that round, and so they had a board that they used on the sighting pole, and they could move one quarter of a mil, and we'd fire eight rounds for it, in fact, and then we'd adjust and fire eight rounds, and we could finally generally get a round in that if the climate didn't change suddenly. If there was a sudden wind change, then the round may have missed by a thousand yards. I never saw anything like it. You'd think that the crew had made a mistake, but they didn't, just the air and all this would change and it would blow that round off. It would just make you irritated. But anyway, I had a round come in in front of me, and I don't know whether it was a round, a piece of the round or the rock, because we had rock up there to detonate the round, but it came in and hit me here in the nose and broke my glasses.

DePue: Right in the bridge of the nose itself?

Myers: It's right there. You can probably see a little chunk there out of it. Anyway, that was nothing unusual because I had been hit across the thumb once with a piece. And then I took Scotch tape and taped the lens because they didn't send me back, and it took two or three weeks before I got back to get my glasses fixed. And they never did pay any attention to this because I fixed it myself. I had a first aid kit, and the Koreans had first aid, and they helped me.

Then the only other time was the night of July thirteenth, or twelfth or thirteenth, and I was up—they'd miscarried or dropped off the weekly photos at 987th instead of to our place and so I had to go up—and we were behind because we had started to move back because we were running out of ammunition. So I went up there, and coming back, a round hit ahead of me and one behind me. Well, that generally in the artillery tells you, a single

round that way, you're going to have an explosion. I mean, you're going to have—

DePue: The next one's coming on you.

Myers: Yeah, or you're going to get a battery round, and that's what happened. But I did pull over to the side of the road and got out of the Jeep because I didn't want the round to hit the Jeep. Whether it killed me or not, it would have blown it up, you know. I was driving in blackout—it was night—and so I got out and jumped into this ditch, and it was about full of water. It had just been raining for two weeks steady. And a round hit—one hit in the center of the road, and another one hit up on the thing, and I think it was the one that hit up on the side of the rock there—but it was a piece of artillery that went into my leg. And I didn't know—it just hurt, and I found it there, and there's still a little hole there, just above my boot top. But I of course had a wire kit—you know, knife and pliers and stuff like that. I think it was a ricochet off the rock. I don't think it hit directly from the explosion, because it just dug through my fatigues and lodged in there. I took the knife and dug it out, took the band aid that was in this first aid kit, you know, and the sulfa powder or whatever and put it on there and got back in the Jeep and went on down the road, and then I got help from the Korean medic. But there's no record of that. But anyway, that was the closest. I was not paid combat pay because I was 8th Army; I was not promotable because I was 8th Army, even though I was in the front lines. Finally in this last attack in July, they did pay me combat pay because they ran over the headquarters and everything else up there. We went back twenty miles until we finally got ammunition from Chuncheon, because 8th Army was insisting that they were going to sign the truce, and they didn't resupply the forward ammunition supply point. Finally we had all those battalions of artillery and no ammo. And so we began to fall back, and that's when 2nd ROK Corps got hell from 8th Army for falling back.

DePue: I wanted to talk a little bit more about how things really started to intensify in June and July, but before we get there, kind of a general question: How much was this war, by the time you were in it, an artillery-type war?

Myers: It was, almost. There were these major attacks, you know, Pork Chop Hill and some of these others, that the Chinese tried to knock the Americans off. But most of the action really was in the 2nd ROK Corps, because that was right in the center and they were trying to decimate the Koreans, the Chinese were. I think two Chinese armies were in front of us, something like that. That's when there was a reservoir behind us that they really wanted to have before they signed the truce, you know, a big lake and that. That's what, as I understand, was their objective. Then the other one was to get this bulge out of the line. You know, as any war operation, you don't like to have bulges in the line because you can get artillery from three sides on you, and so you want to keep it as much of a straight line as possible. Well, except now, in these types of wars we're doing now, there's no line, and you get it from everywhere.

- DePue: Yes, we're sitting here looking at the front line trace right in front of you, and there is a little bit of a bulge—I'm sure it felt like a much bigger bulge—that was in the line. It was basically this 2nd ROK Corps area that was described by the bulge.
- Myers: Yes. So the line I think now goes right about through like that, because the Kumsong River is on the line, and we were north of the Kumsong River. That's the reason they wanted to...
- DePue: So as a result of that July offensive, right before the armistice was signed, the ROK did fall back to the Kumsong River line?
- Myers: No, we went clear back here to—
- DePue: South of the line?
- Myers: Yeah. It was this line about through here. And then, as I said, we got ammunition from Chuncheon, and so we took back, and we were up into here.
- DePue: North of the original line.
- Myers: Yeah. We were over in here, and that's when 8th Army said, "Get back." So we had to tell the Koreans to fall back to this.
- DePue: Let's put a little bit more context, if you don't mind. The last few months of the war—I mean, the peace talks, the armistice talks, had been going on since July of 1951, so you're close to two years beyond that point, and I'm sure there were a lot of people saying, This thing is never going to end. They're going to continue to argue over at Panmunjom until we're all dead or we're all—
- Myers: How high the flag post was on the north or the south—that was one of the big arguments. I was in later, went back over there had some. (DePue: What did you guys think about what was going on at Panmunjom?)
- Myers: We thought it was ridiculous, I mean, the Koreans did, because they wanted to take Korea again, reunite it.
- DePue: You have no question in your mind that was their opinion?
- Myers: Absolutely, yes. They were very upset. Especially when we had taken back this amount, and I think we could have gone to the Yalu, because we really had to manage that. It was a hundred thousand attack, and we actually was credited with killing eight divisions, which is about eighty thousand people.
- DePue: Okay. What happened then is they did get closer, and the official armistice was signed on July twenty-seventh. But things got much more intense those

last couple months of the war, and it was all coming from the communist side, was it not?

Myers: Yes.

DePue: So there was a major June offensive that was right in the II Corps area, I know. Was there anything in particular that you remember about that June offensive?

Myers: Other than it was just long battles at night, and the battle would last two or three days, and then there was not much that we could do because we didn't have the ammunition to shoot. Congress had cut off funds in '52 for funding the Korean operation.

DePue: Well, I hear what you're saying, and I know you also (laughs) are aware that June of 1953 was the highest expenditure of artillery throughout I think the entire war; there was two million, seven hundred and ten thousand rounds of artillery expended in just that month of June, and the Chinese and North Koreans were—they had obviously a lot less of a supply situation, but they had over three hundred thousand rounds coming your direction at the same time. So this sounds like it's a pretty intense artillery dual, if nothing else.

Myers: Well, one of the things that happened was—and I didn't mention this before—but when we'd gotten these big, heavy battles, then 987th would generally send up the G3—or the S3 for the battalion would come up and help in the actual fire direction section in the FSCC. The first guy that I had there that was the commander of the 987th—I'm trying to think of his name—but he had been there since the beginning of the days of the first battle and really knew the Chinese and the Koreans upside down. He could take and fire his artillery in what he called “wiping out the draws” and stop an offensive by not a lot of artillery, but proper placement and proper amount. Then, along in about early '53, we got a lieutenant colonel Pell from 7th Army Europe came in there, and he was a hot spit in a bucket (laughs) as far as I'm concerned, and did not know artillery, but he thought he did. So whenever we had an offensive, he wanted to be up in the offensive, you see. And he would start firing battalion ten volleys, which is just goofy, I mean. We really fired a lot of ammunition up.

DePue: Battalion ten volleys would be...?

Myers: Eighteen guns, ten volleys, 180 rounds, just (makes sound effect). Or no—yeah, a hundred... And then he would go, and these middle seats that I didn't tell you about before, but what we did with the photo interpretation is, we found all these mortar and artillery locations. Then he would just take and maybe give them a half a dozen to this battalion and another and just fire all over the place. I assume, many of the other commanders may have done that, later commanders. And that didn't necessarily kill people; it just put up a big

racket, you know, and did kill some. But that also expended our ammunition, and that's the reason why I think some of those—and I assume it was going on not only in our sector but everybody, because the Chinese were putting on a push, and it was raining. Before this final attack, it had rained I think almost two weeks in a row, almost every day, and the rivers were all up. You had only a few places you could cross, and they were going for this reservoir. There was only one main supply line that came out of that valley, came up over the hill, and we had to get all those five divisions and twenty-seven battalions of artillery over there to get over the hump to get on the next defense line.

DePue: Well, with all that rain and all those artillery rounds and that rugged terrain you guys are fighting in, this is a great prescription for lots of mud and awful conditions.

Myers: Thank heavens they had maintained that route; it was gravel, and that's the only way we—one of the things that I did while I was there—and this is another one of those things that you can't really speak much about because it wasn't authorized—but I scrounged up radios and made up some extra forward observers, or taught them, so at least they could tell us what's going on, and I put them up in the hills around us, because I knew when this attack came, that we were going to lose our forward observers. Every time you had an attack, you lost forward observers. That was the first thing they tried to get. So we had those out, and so I knew the Chinese were coming and basically where they were coming, and so we could back off, you know. The only one that didn't do it—I had another new commander of this self-propelled 105 outfit, and he'd just come from Europe and took over. And, of course, 8th Army told us, Stand and hold at all costs; don't give ground, you know, one of those deals. Of course, they're back there at Seoul. So he was taking that very liberally [*sic*], that he shouldn't move out of there. I called him and I said, "The Chinese are up here just on this hill, and if you don't get out of there, the only way you can go down is down the river and across that bridge, and if you don't get there, they're coming up that valley. You need to move." Well, he didn't. He'd just been resupplied with all the new Jeeps, the M3 or whatever, the rounded hoods, and new artillery and all that, and he lost every bit of it because he didn't do that. And finally, the Chinese came over and they got him in there, and they blazed the bugles and all screaming and yelling. Well, they ran the SPs into the river, and ran across on top of them. That's how he saved his men. Then they dumped barrels of fuel all over the place and got over and fired tracer into it, and it just went up in a big thing, and of course the Chinese thought they were (??), went into them. But then they had to run for their life and get back because they had no vehicles.

DePue: Were these Korean troops or American?

Myers: Oh, American. That was one of the three American outfits. That's the only one we really lost.

DePue: Which division would that have been from, do you recall?

Myers: It wasn't a division; it was part of the three American artillery battalions. It was one of them. And the 8th and the 987th got out of there, and the 176th was the other battalion. I think this was the 300th I believe was the name of it.

DePue: So this would have been part of what we would refer to as corps artillery units?

Myers: Yes, support of the corps.

DePue: You mentioned that you guys basically knew the Chinese were coming and in general—

Myers: Thirty days in advance.

DePue: How did that happen?

Myers: Well, because 8th Army told us to—they knew things were building up. The reason we knew is they were building these supplies up just out of our artillery range, and our L plane could get up, and through the holes in the clouds and so on, he could see that they were. So what we did to try to stop that is we moved the eight-inch up to positions as close to the front as we could and fired as far as we could, and we called those elephant positions. (laughs) I don't know why, but that's what they called them.

DePue: Elephant positions?

Myers: Elephant positions. They were just surveyed in, you know, so they could run up there. But they couldn't stay there very long because the Chinese found out where they were, and as soon as they started shooting there, it wasn't very long [before] you started to get a flak of incoming. (laughs) And of course the self-propelled were just open, they weren't armored. They were self-propelled, you know, so they couldn't stand it very long or they were going to get clobbered. So they would shoot as rapidly as they could, and then they'd high-tail it out of there. But we knew this. And the Air Force couldn't get in because of the clouds. They could attack them on the roads and so on, but they were still building up supplies. They just had them packed up there behind that line, and so we knew this was coming. So 8th Army said, Well, get us some intelligence. So we ordered them to bring ten prisoners back, and they did, and they'd give us the coordinates—apparently that's what they got out of them—and where it was. Of course, it was the old standard thing in military operations: you attack on the corps boundaries. That was the east side of the 2nd ROK Corps, and the west side of the 2nd ROK Corps, where the Triple Nickel was and all that, and that's what, of course—

DePue: The Triple Nickel, that's the famous incident involving the 555th Field Artillery Regiment? They got overrun.

Myers: They got overrun because the Chinese hit over there with a big... One of my sergeants was in the 233rd—and I believe it was in A Battery—and it was a self-propelled—no, I mean a towed eight-inch, and was on that where the attack was. They fired point-blank with eight-inch, and all the men in the company, bakers and everybody else, (laughs) had their weapons and machine guns and everything else. They fired this eight-inch into the Chinese point-blank, and they stopped the Chinese for a little bit, that one battery. Then the only way they get out is over a goat trail, and imagine that big, cumbersome... But they got some reinforcement up there, and then they pulled out. That was John Ring, who has since passed away, but he was, I think, one of the crew chiefs or something there in the A Battery of the four-deuce-four, 424th.

DePue: Some of the other things that were going on—well, you still have the armistice talks, things are getting much hotter, as you're describing here. It was June eighteenth, though, and I suspect you might remember this, when President Syngman Rhee, the president of South Korea, directed his people to release twenty-seven thousand North Korean prisoners, just kind of open the gates of these prison camps in the south and let these prisoners walk out. You remember that?

Myers: Yes, I do.

DePue: The reaction of your soldiers with that?

Myers: Well, (laughs) we really were fighting tooth and nail; we didn't have much to say about it. But actually, his problem was that he was so upset with our negotiations at Panmunjom I think was what was behind it, and that he did not want to have the truce signed. And this was his way of sort of slapping the Americans in the face: (laughs) If you want these, take care of them. But I don't know—

DePue: But as I understand, though, we're talking about twenty-seven thousand prisoners being released in the southern part of the country. That would sound awful, except—

Myers: Except most of them wanted to stay there, as I understand.

DePue: Yeah. Overwhelmingly, this group wanted nothing to do with going back to the north.

Myers: Oh, no. And that's what people don't understand. Even with our officers that we had that came south, and they wanted to stay there; they wanted a combined, unified Korea, and that's what they were fighting for.

DePue: They wanted a non-communist unified Korea.

Myers: Yes. (laughs)

- DePue: Okay. I don't want to put words in your mouth, but...
- Myers: No, no, but that's true. They did not want to be under the North Korean communists.
- DePue: Okay, you've done a great job of explaining how this all started to really intensify in those last couple months of the war. Anything else you want to say about that time period then? You'd made some mention about the casualties, and again, I've been reading from *Truce, Tent, and Fighting Front* by Walter G. Hermes, but it's actually the official Army history of the Korean War that they finally finished, I don't know, a couple decades afterwards. That's when they finally published the thing. But most of this was based on official Army records during the war. But talk about the casualty rates that you reported, and then we can talk about what the official casualty rates were. Okay, you're grabbing a certificate you received, I believe.
- Myers: This is the award that I got, and I think it says here (pause) that "you have been (pause) the reason that we have destroyed enemy large attacks and annihilated enemy few divisions." This is 8th Division, and the division of Chinese were ten thousand. During the attack, we had an estimated hundred thousand Chinese in the attack, and we were credited, or at least the Koreans credited with eighty thousand. I don't know that they counted them individually, but they were stacked up like cordwood, four or five foot deep, just in...
- DePue: Most of those, you think, would have been casualties of infantry weapons or artillery and mortar?
- Myers: Artillery.
- DePue: This is just one ROK division that's claiming that they had destroyed basically...
- Myers: Well, several divisions is what he says.
- DePue: Several divisions of enemy troops. The official records—and I don't mean to challenge this, but—
- Myers: No, I—
- DePue: —there's a good teaching point in here. The official casualties for July, communists—this would have been both North Korean and Chinese for the entire front—was seventy-two thousand. So the numbers you're talking about are well in excess in that.
- Myers: I think we counted in our 2nd ROK Corps killed at least that many. So that's the reason why—and again, as I said earlier, I don't trust the Americans because they would not get themselves embedded with the Koreans and get to

the place where they could trust them. That's one of the things that I worry about in our wars even today, because it's awfully hard to trust somebody when you have one of them turn on you and kill you, as they're doing in Afghanistan and that. But if you're going to fight with them and learn, you just about have to put your life in their hands, and you have to learn to criticize them when they make mistakes as well as trust them when they tell the truth.

DePue: But from your perspective, you don't think the higher American command trusted what they were being told by the ROKs?

Myers: Absolutely not. Even our 2nd—the corps headquarters, artillery headquarters, which was 5th U.S. Field Artillery Group—those intelligence people down there, the S2s and so on, would not believe a lot of the things that I would send back down there, even though I personally seen them with my own eyes. But they wouldn't come up. I said, "Well, come up here; I'll show you." They wouldn't even come up to the front. That's what irritated me probably the most of all. (laughs)

DePue: What did it tell you about the Chinese, the communists, and the way they were sending their troops into these battles?

Myers: They were dedicated, and it wasn't like the American Army, it was just simply, "There's the place, there's the rock, you go to that." That's it. I mean, it was very simple instructions. And sometimes not only did they, as I said before, they drugged them, but they also fired their own artillery and mortars behind them so they couldn't turn back. I know we had areas across this valley, from between their high point and there, there was a valley, and we had everything staked out in there so that when they come across that, we fired for effect, you know, with several battalions, depending on how many, into that area and just slaughtered them. We were getting ready to do that; we had a pretty good attack coming on—and this happened to be in the daytime. We didn't have very many attacks in the daytime; they normally started at night. But in this case, it had been going on and they were making this major attack. And I was up there and I had everything keyed to go. As soon as they got in a certain place, then we would pull the trigger and let them fire for effect, because we'd, you know, fired in adjustments ahead of time. Your normal things that you do with artillery is you fire and get your computation so that you know that it's going to hit that area. We were getting ready for fire for effect, and I was getting ready to call that; all of a sudden, artillery started landing out there right behind these people. I thought some of our units had fired ahead of time. I called back and said, "Who in the hell is firing?" and so on. I didn't hear anything going overhead. And they said, "We haven't fired." And that's what it was: they were shooting just behind their people. It was just very primitive fighting, the Chinese. So I went ahead and since that, and they were about to the area where I wanted, and we just pulled the trigger, and just annihilated several hundred right there in front of you.

DePue: Okay. July 27, 1953, then, is the official date—

Myers: Signing the armistice.

DePue: —that the armistice is signed. Armistice.

Myers: Yeah.

DePue: And they still have just a truce and no peace treaty.

Myers: That's right.

DePue: Your thoughts?

Myers: Well, immediately they started redoing the front, went all to, and we were pulled back. We went back to what was the old official corps headquarters, 2nd ROK Corps headquarters—not artillery, but the corps headquarters—that's where the forward supply areas were. And guess what? Back there were two blocks, ten foot high, of C-Rations. (laughter) That was really irritating. But the only thing good about it was, they had eggs and steak and everything for breakfast and so on. We set up in tents. We sat there for a few days, and then it wasn't very long before we started processing to go back to Pusan to ship out. It wasn't very long, about less than a month before—from the end till I was on the way out of Korea.

DePue: You said the Koreans themselves were very upset, that they didn't want to have the war stop with basically a tie, with them not having a unified country. How did—

Myers: No, because some of them had their family still in the north, and they're probably still there today.

DePue: How did you personally feel?

Myers: I felt the same way. I thought it was just... First of all, I felt that the war, it wasn't prosecuted after the initial, and we settled on the thirty-eighth parallel. It wasn't a war, it was just the Chinese attack and maybe we would lose some ground, so we'd attack to take it back, and artillery and mortars, *boom-de-boom, boom-boom, boom-boom*. It really wasn't a war, per se, I mean, as far as logistical or tactical. And that's the way I felt about it.

DePue: Did you have a chance to see or hear much about the prisoner exchange that was going on after the war?

Myers: Very little, because I had no way of having information. I had no radio. All I knew about what was going on in my area.

DePue: I assume that later on you heard about some of the stories that started to filter out about the conditions that the Americans and the Brits, some of the other U.N. troops, were in prison camps in the north, the allegations that some had collaborated with the communists, things like that.

Myers: Yes.

DePue: Any thoughts on that?

Myers: Well, you know, it's pretty hard to put yourself in the shoes of a prisoner as to what they go through, and really, knowing the Chinese, I know that they put them through torture that you can't even believe because of what I saw with the Koreans that made it back out of the—a few of them; most of them never made it back. If they got captured, that's the last we knew of them. The Chinese were just brutal, that's all. So I don't give that a great deal of credibility of what they did, those that turned coat, maybe, but I don't know what I would have done in that situation. I think you have to fill that shoe if you're going to criticize.

DePue: Now, you got yourself—you were at the front enough, you saw the action close enough. How did you deal with the fear, or did you have fear when you were in that situation?

Myers: I didn't have as much as you would say of fear. It was just there was so much going on and so many things you had to try to take care of that you didn't have time to worry about yourself, hardly. It just didn't appear that... You know, you were just thankful that you'd get a respite here and there. The only way I bathed is the Koreans got me a tin pan that I put on the stove and it held water, and what we call a whore bath, but that's about it, and I very seldom got that. Then in the summertime, we did have a little spring come out of the hillside, and they put two boards in it, and you'd get under that spring in fifty-four-degree water, and it was...refreshing, (laughs) but it was... Once in a while, one of the guys would come up from 987th and take me back, and I could get... There, they'd made a barrel and heated it up and they had all kind of shower and so on, so I'd get back there once in a while. They had a little PX where I could buy toothpaste and a few things like that. That's one thing I found that if you wanted something, not myself personally, but those of us Americans, when this AGL team and the thing, we had, what, maybe five Americans scattered around, and we had a little houseboy, they called him, Charlie, and he did my laundry and things like that. And so to pay him—money didn't mean anything, but they liked toothpaste and a few things like that. That's how...

DePue: Cigarettes?

Myers: Cigarettes, I believe. I never did smoke. I did smoke a pipe. One of the things I found, that the Koreans could not grow a mustache. They had little stringy

hairs, most of the Koreans. And so I grew a mustache, and I smoked a pipe. The old papa-san of the village, he smoked a pipe. And that give me—this is what the commanders told me, they said, You, you know... And I had a—it's a very small one now, but it was pretty big—a gold cap. I was in a swimming pool in Macomb one day, and a kid jumped in just as I was coming up, and smacked my tooth in and really splintered it, so the dentist put a gold cap on it. That was more of an interest to those Koreans. I was wondering whether they were going to go in at night and dig it out of my mouth or not. But they would look at you and...

DePue: Well, that made you a very important man.

Myers: Oh, I was important. I tell you, they bowed when I come in in the morning or any time I entered the room, officers and everything. They just treated me almost like a king. It was something else.

DePue: Do you think that respect that they paid you was sincere?

Myers: Yes, it was. They would just do anything that they thought... One day after I first got up there—the entrance into this FSCC was low, and you had to really stoop down to get in there—I didn't have my helmet on and I came down, and there was something going on, and they hollered for me, and I went in, and I raised my head a little too quick and hit one of those logs over my head and knocked me down flat on the ground. Oh, you'd have thought the end of the world had come. They all grabbed me and went on and just apologized and everything else. The next day they went in there and tore that thing out and made the hole bigger. And I mean, it was a production, because they had these workers up there, and they were laying these sandbags, and they had to be laid like twill, you know, very carefully. One guy put it in wrong, and they took an ammo rod and nearly beat the kid to death for putting a sandbag in wrong. That's where I was first indoctrinated about the discipline in that outfit. But they made that so I could walk in there.

DePue: Were you able to find ways to communicate that you respected them as well?

Myers: I think everything I tried is basically what their commander asked me to do or not, and they really seemed to appreciate what was going on, and they just would bend over backwards to do whatever they thought it took to satisfy me.

DePue: Mm-hmm. This is one I ask everybody, and you had a unique experience, so this might not really apply to you, but I wanted to get your impressions of the recently integrated United States Army. Did you have enough exposure to really see blacks and whites together working in American units?

Myers: Yes, I did. When we went to California, you see, we got a big influx because we had to be filled up. Also there were a few blacks that were rotated combat personnel from Korea. I had very little problem with them. Some of them were just no different than whites; they were just not soldiers. When you go

with draftees, you get that, you get the whole gamut of society. But I really found that those that really wanted to work and do the job, that's all that was required. That's what is required of a soldier. If they do that, then they earn your respect, as well as you should respect them. That was the beginning of the integration of the Army, of black and white. You know, the 44th Division was a real example of that, because we had, I think, one or two blacks in the whole 44th division, and that was a sergeant that the general had, and he was from Cairo. He had no desire to have blacks, and so he was relieved shortly after we got to Camp Cooke.

DePue: Well, that might take a little bit of explaining. As I understand, Illinois had two National Guard divisions at the time, 33rd Division, which was—

Myers: And then 44th.

DePue: —the northern part of the state, to include especially Chicago, and then the 44th for the rest of the state.

Myers: And we had one black regiment, I think, or two, maybe, in Chicago. The 178th, I believe it was.

DePue: One seventy-eight.

Myers: And that's where most of the blacks were in Illinois.

DePue: Okay. Let's go back to the units you served with in Korea, these Korean units. How would you evaluate their morale, their *esprit de corps*?

Myers: Initially, it was sort of an awe. because they'd never, other than those cadres that they sent back to organize these units, had never had any type of combat experience. I don't know how the infantry was because that was over on the 1st ROK Corps. But our infantrymen that had been there—and they were good fighters, from what I could tell—they would pretty much follow what we had ordered or what was commanded of them to do. One of the problems we had was, again, communications. When you're having close air support, as we had there, and artillery fire, you had to have a marker because it was just nothing but jungle down underneath you, or rock. So we had these panels out, and every day you had to change the panels so the Chinese wouldn't catch them and have on their side. You had the red this way and the white that way or whatever, X or whatever. We had to change those every day, and to get that word down to the unit on the front sometimes was a problem. They would get hit then, with either artillery or air strike. The other thing that we had a problem with is that most of our air came from carriers, and so they'd take a whole deck load of aircraft off, and instead of spreading those out along the line, they'd set them all in one area. Well, you try to put in that many planes—and they were very short on fuel in those days. They could only go over and they had to get back or they'd never make it back to the carrier.

DePue: Yeah, you're in the center of the country.

Myers: And we were in the center of the country. So it was very short period of time we had to get those aircraft in. What we were concerned with was bombs. Of course, they had all this twenty millimeter and whatever machine gun on board, and the pilots wanted to get rid of that. They didn't particularly care to try to land on a rough sea with ammunition and stuff on their plane, and certainly bombs. So that was the first order, to take and put the bombs in. Then they would go in sometimes on their own and do some spraying of (laughs) And sometimes they didn't get in the right place. And that was a real challenge. I think that the Navy did wrong in doing that, or air-ground—whatever, 8th Army or whatever, sending a whole flight load into the same area. And that was sometimes a terrible problem, because once you hit the Korean infantry, then you had to stop everything and try to get around why that happened and all this sort of thing, all kinds of...

DePue: Not good for anybody's morale.

Myers: No, no. But basically, the morale that I saw of them, they were in good shape. They made good soldiers. We found that out in Vietnam. I understand that they were some of the top fighters.

DePue: Did you have any experiences with civilians, Korean civilians?

Myers: No, other than KSCs, Korean Service Corps, were all those I think over forty-five or something like that, and they were the ones that maintained the roads and so on. They were just grunts. You know, they carried the gravel on their back and did things like that.

DePue: You had mentioned already that especially when you first got there, the Army kind of lost track of you once you got out to the unit. Were you able to keep track with what was going back here in Illinois with your family?

Myers: Very little. Once in a while we'd get a *Stars and Stripes* would come. I don't know how it—I think the Air Force brought it up to the front. I told you these pilots would come up. Things like that, that's about the only information I got. I'd just grit my teeth at some of the stories because they were not telling what really happened or what was happening.

DePue: I'm not sure I follow you here, which?

Myers: From the press corps.

DePue: Oh, you get press releases from the United States or...?

Myers: Well, you know, in the paper, the *Stars and Stripes*, or once in a while the folks would send me something in mail, and (laughs) I'd just generally grit my teeth because they never seemed to get the story right as to what was

happening there, at least in our area. But that's the way it is, and I think it still is today. You were having a hard time telling what was going on, even in Afghanistan and Iraq, from the stories that you read in the daily newspaper.

DePue: Well, the difference perhaps is now they can e-mail and instantaneously their relatives at home get that.

Myers: At home know. Yeah, they know, but the public doesn't know.

DePue: Did you get a regular mail delivery?

Myers: Yes, they did get some mail, and I do have some letters—I haven't got them out—you know, that we sent back and forth, and they're in a box up in the top of the garage out here.

DePue: Did you get a chance to go on R&R while you were there?

Myers: One time, and I was really surprised at that. It was in, I think—boy, it was in the spring of '53, and they sent me out, and I got back to Japan, Tokyo, for a week, I think, or thereabouts, and then back. When I was leaving, we had a big artillery barrage going on, (laughs) and I thought they'd probably call it off, but they didn't. I don't think they sent anybody up there to take my place while I was gone.

DePue: Okay. We've been at this for a while. These are some great stories. You remember anything that happened that is on the humorous side?

Myers: Let me think about that. Let's take a little break.

DePue: Okay.

(end of interview #1 interview #2 continues)

Interview with Lou Myers

VRK-A-L-2010-055.02

Interview # 2: January 18, 2011

Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: Today is Tuesday, January 18, 2011. My name is Mark DePue, the director of oral history at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. This afternoon, I have the opportunity to have a second session with Louis Myers. How are you, Lou?

Myers: I'm fine.

DePue: Well, let's explain why there was a big gap between this session and the last session when we stopped that last session we promised that we'd be right back. We were out at Lake Petersburg; it was the last day of 2010, and unusually for this time of year for Illinois, right about the time we took a break, a tornado went by, what, about a mile or even less than that—

Myers: Only two hundred feet away, it took a tree down from us, and the next neighbor, it turned his tool shed upside down. But we really missed the big brunt of it. The golf course, took the roof of it and strung golf balls all the way across to Sangamon River on the other side. And about a hundred houses were damaged, several of them completely destroyed. It was a real tornado.

DePue: Yeah, so I guess I'm not invited up to Lake Petersburg any time in the near future, (laughs) because last time I was there, they had a tornado. Of course they lost power, and we weren't able to complete the interview.

Myers: That's what stopped us.

DePue: But as oftentimes happens when you have a chance to reflect on some of the conversations we have, people like yourself, you find out that there's more things that you recall because we're kind of dredging this stuff up from fifty, sixty years before. So I wanted to start with a couple things here, and I know

that you've had time to go find some letters, and I'll kind of turn it over to you here, Lou, and let you talk about some of the letters that you found and maybe read some of the passages from these.

Myers: Okay. Well, the first one I start off here is when I arrived in Korea. I think it was about the fourteenth of November. I ended up finding out that I had not been assigned to the 40th Infantry Division but to the 5th Field Artillery Group. And nobody seemed to know where that was, but we went across and finally ended up getting there. At the sixteenth of November, I arrived at the 5th Field Artillery Group. I said here in this letter, "As you can see"—I was writing to my folks—"my address is not the 40th Infantry Division. No, I was reassigned in Inchon and am at the 5th Field Artillery Group headquarters several miles from the front. I got here yesterday evening and haven't been officially assigned to a section as yet but probably will be an operations sergeant." Anyway, the thing was a tent camp with these bunkers built into the side of a hill for the operation, and I did become an operation sergeant for two weeks, from four to midnight, learning the terrain and area. And it's just mountain to mountain to mountain. I talk about that in the letter, that ever since I got to Korea, all I saw was mountains, and they were straight up and down, it seemed like.

Then on about the second of December, I believe it was, that the deputy group commander and all of his officers came and talked to me about four hours one morning and said, Well, we've only had two weeks to know you, but we're going to send you on up to the Koreans out at the front line to do your duty as a liaison and helper to the Koreans to get their job done and learn and train to become a division artillery. They were called a field artillery group. And so I do have some letters on that, but I will not go into too much detail there.

I did have my first big meal at the headquarters because it was Thanksgiving, and we do have a menu that I found. (laughs) I didn't realize I'd kept it.

DePue: Well, this is Christmas Day.

Myers: Well, this is Christmas, but we had one on Thanksgiving, and it was similar. What they were doing is also building a chapel at this time when I got there, the sixteenth November, and they dedicated it on Thanksgiving. They had everybody and all the big wheels and so on in and dedicated the farthest-most northern chapel in Korea. That was where I was at. And this was Christmas, but we had about the same thing in Thanksgiving. They had stuffed celery sticks, olives, pickles, roast young tom turkey, poultry dressing, giblet gravy, cranberry sauce, snowflake potatoes, glazed sweet potatoes, buttered green

beans, coleslaw, hot Parker House rolls with oleo,⁶ hot mince pie and fruitcake, apples and tangerines and oranges, and assorted candy, nuts, coffee, and milk. It was a tremendous dinner. I did not eat at 5th Group. They did bring me in and took me to the 987th. One of the officers came up and got me for Christmas dinner there.

DePue: Now, when you look at this kind of a menu, you don't really think about it much except to say, How many thousands of miles did all of these items have to be shipped overseas? It tells you a lot about the logistical tale that the military had at that time. And I'm sure it astounded the communists to think that you guys were able to eat like this. But you didn't eat like this most of the time.

Myers: No. (laughs) Once I got out of there, then it was catch-as-catch-can. For the first month or so I was getting some rides back to the 987th Field Artillery, which was the eight-inch outfit that was in direct support of the Koreans, and there were two other 105 outfits also in there; everything else was Korean infantry and Korean artillery. I did bring today a little book that was the training manual I got. It's a few pages on Korea, about their culture and what to do and what not to do. I think in this, that we had a problem of they did not like to be called "Gooks," the Koreans didn't. That was a very bad word. But if you asked "What is an American?" or "You're American?" it was "*Miguk saram, ye, ya.*" That's what you said when they asked you if you were American, and I think that's where the "Gook" thing came up, "*Miguk saram.*" And I really feel that's probably what the normal Americans heard, and so they started calling them Gooks.

DePue: Well, if you don't mind, we're going to go ahead and make a photocopy of this and include it into the archives—

Myers: No, I don't mind.

DePue: —in the audiovisual department, because I think this is the kind of stuff that otherwise gets lost to history.

Myers: That was published by the U.S., and I think it says "national publication."

DePue: Okay. Some more letters, then, here, Lou?

Myers: Well, then here's one on the seventh of February. "I'm tired as all get-out. The last two nights we have had more or less false alerts on attack. That is, squads appear here and there along the front, fire a little, and then move back. They broadcast propaganda to the Koreans and then open up on them with mortars and machine guns. So far, nothing very significant has happened with the exception that this evening, the Koreans in my sector have captured a Red

⁶ Oleo was the original shortened name for oleomargarine. At interview time it's usually called, and labeled, margarine.

who has deserted his army. This is generally the tip-off of an attack as some of them come over to one side rather than fight. They also tell nearly everything they know, and most of the time it is true. So far it has not been very much like the other wars where we have actually sent men over to give false information. We haven't gotten a report as yet as just what the dope⁷ is, but we should soon." I thought that was most critical, because that was one of the problems I had with Americans back at higher headquarters, is when we did capture some of these people who came across, they wouldn't believe what they were telling them. And that's what happened in the big push before the war ended, is that we had thirty days' notice that there was going to be attack and where it was going to be, and 8th Army did not want to accept that, and so we took the brunt of it.

Let's see. I think that there's one here. This is on the first of January. This is shortly after I arrived. This is the first of the year. "I was just getting up to start the new year and am rather tired because we have been up late last night. We had captured four POWs early last evening, and they said there would be an attack around midnight, so we stayed up, not taking any chances. At midnight, we also fired every gun in the whole corps, (laughter) artillery. Of course, we had selected areas to fire on, but we did fire, and that was our New Year's round to the Chinese." So that's kind of what went on around things up there. We did have some times that we did something. (laughs) Also the other times that we fired the corps was as these units were trained, they had to pass an ATT, what we call Army Training Test, and one of those was Time on Target. They had to get all the rounds to arrive within I think twenty-five or thirty seconds; it should all burst at the same time. You had all these high-angle and low-angle and everything else firing. It was quite a feat. And so we did fire the corps several times that way, and I'm one of the few, I think, that has fired a corps, dropped five zero and fire for effect and have a corps ToT. But it is really something. The ground shakes and rattles, both where it's landing and also from taking off, from the artillery batteries.

DePue: I don't think, unless you've been through the United States Army Field Artillery Officer Basic Course, do you have a full appreciation of everything that's got to come together and how many scores of guns all firing at the same time for a Time on Target. It's incredibly complex.

Myers: The time of flights and all that. Then I have one the twenty-sixth of June, which kind of gives—the thing was just before we had the major push. "Well, I realize you have not—you have been"—no, I don't want to read about that. (laughs) That's the folks **being stressed**. "And please feel that I am in good hands and will be home *mo skosh*. That's Korean for, I would say, 'safe and sound.'"

DePue: "Mo skosh"?

⁷ Dope: slang for information

Myers: *Mo skosh.* That was Korean-American-Japanese. I don't know really what. But that's what we said. "As it stands at present, we are busy being pressed hard but holding fairly firm and well under the stupendous numbers of Chinese. We are being shelled and of course laying back the lather to them. So far they haven't hurt us much, but let us hope that they don't. Well, enough of this, as we all know who the boss is and the conditions." And that was the June the twenty-sixth. But everything from May through June, we were having pretty heavy, and that was also the reason why we had a lot of artillery expenditures, because the Chinese were hitting the Koreans. And then they also wanted to try to make a breakthrough, because this was a big lump up in the line and they wanted it straightened out, and they also wanted to go as far as the Wachan Reservoir, which was behind us.

DePue: Well, I know that before we got started, you were talking that you'd like to make a couple more comments about the ammunition expenditure that we talked a little about last time as well.

Myers: Well, I got to thinking after we recorded this and you brought up that so much—that publication you said that so much ammunition had been fired in June in that era. What really came to me is that when I got there, all the commanders had been there from day one of the Korean operation, and they knew the Chinese pretty well, as you learn in combat—you learn their ins and outs—and they could take care of it with a fewer number of rounds. They knew where to fire and when to fire the rounds in these valleys and on the ridge tops, and they could pretty well stop an attack. But then, finally the Army wanted to rotate them out and bring in new people to give them, I think, combat experience. So they were bringing officers in from 7th Army Europe, and they became the new commanders of the artillery and even in the group headquarters. Colonel Mayo was taken away and Colonel Wheaton took over.

They were of the occupation-type army and had not been, I don't think, schooled very (laughs) strongly in combat, really, because they came up and they started firing ammunition like crazy—battalion ten volleys on each concentration. Because we did have knowledge and had actually put on a firing sheet the location and coordinates of where all the artillery and mortars that we knew of, and routes of transportation and so on; we had that all laid on, and so all you had to do was pick up the sheet. And he would call off about ten numbers to a battalion and say, "Ten volleys on each point." Well, that's several thousand rounds there. And it may have been (laughs) somebody there and there may not, and so a lot of wasted ammunition really. But that's what happened when we suddenly just changed all this command to greenhorns, I would call it. (laughs) We wasted a lot of ammunition there in the last—and then when a big attack came, which was July the thirteenth, we were out of ammo because the 8th Army had not resupplied the forward ammunition supply point. So we had to ship those up from Chuncheon. And they didn't have ammo carriers back there, they had dump trucks.

There was another item that we discussed earlier about what I thought about the integration of the Army. One of those things was that many of our black troops that we took in, because, probably their education and so on, they were assigned as truck drivers and—which they could do—and maintenance and things of that nature. So those transportation companies back there were practically all black soldiers and drivers. And so we had to get the ammunition up there, so they loaded these dump trucks up with ammunition. Now, imagine the average individual who had never been in combat and now that he had a whole truckload of ammo in the back and headed to the front. Then as soon as the first ones got up there—because we had fallen back about twenty miles, we were just parked along the side of the road anywhere we could get an artillery piece in—and they come up and just dump the ammo on the ground and then took off to go back. But what happened was, of course, when you're getting incoming and you have ammo open, some of it's going to go up in the air and blow up, and that really makes you a big fireworks display. After about the first thru of that, those people didn't want to come up there. So they would get lost turning off the road, and we had to put MPs on each road corner to get them up there. And boy, I mean to tell you, once they dumped their truck, you better get out of the way, they were headed back. I'm not saying that against the black soldiers, it's just that they were not—they would have been, whether they're white or yellow or whatever, not having any experience and having all that tension (laughs) on them, I can understand what happened. But those that we had in the unit, I had no trouble with them; they were just as... I very seldom ever met with them because I was by myself up at the front.

DePue: Yeah, you're talking about a timeframe that... Most people know that the Army had been integrated from 1948 on, but especially in the early years of the Korean War, there was still an awful lot of pure African-American units, black units. And even as you're talking about, there was that lingering effect in some of these supply and quartermaster units, even though the front-line infantry units, I think by that time—we're talking '53 now—were probably pretty well integrated.

Myers: Yes, yes.

DePue: And that's why it's important to get these stories from somebody who was actually there to kind of set the record straight, so all of this has been great information. You're talking about the rotation of officers. I wanted to go into the overall Army's rotation policy. When you got there, did you think or did you know that you're going to be there for just a certain period of time?

Myers: It didn't take very long till I found that, yes, that everybody had a calendar of when they were going to be rotated. And you've got to understand that when the 44th Division went to California, we had a lot of RCP, rotated combat personnel, out of Korea to fill us up, because at that time the national defense policy was not to only have the National Guard division at 50 percent

strength, and so we had to fill that up to make it, because we thought we were going to go over as the 44th Division. Well, it ended up then things started settling down and we got the thirty-eighth parallel, and so they decided to use us as replacements rather than a division. But in the meantime there was draftees and these rotated combat personnel came back from Korea to fill up our ranks and make us as a division, which instead of five or six, eight thousand, I think it was, we had that day I think the division was around twelve thousand. So that's what they were doing: after you was there about eleven months, they would bring those people out and put new people in. And so the 40th Division and the 45th Division, which was the California and Oklahoma division, were no longer National Guard, they were all Army, you know.

DePue: What determined, then, when a person who just got to Korea would rotate back to the States?

Myers: I think it was eleven months. I've got some stuff I saw in some of my letters; I said, "I have forty-seven more days." (laughs) And that was always on your mind, is when you would be able to rotate.

DePue: Well, as I understand, they had the point system, that you earned a certain amount of points for each month that you were in...

Myers: And it depended on whether you were in combat or back in the others, I think. I believe there was a difference between those in full combat and those that were back.

DePue: Based on where you were assigned, were you earning the maximum you could per month?

Myers: No, not necessarily, because I was actually considered to be 8th Army, and I was not given combat pay or that, even though I was shelled most every day. And I did get—for some reason or another they paid me combat pay that last month or whatever it was when we got overrun and fell back for twenty miles before we took it back. (laughs) But I don't know how that happened. I never questioned it.

DePue: Well, I'm sure, from your perspective, Army bureaucracy was a mysterious thing.

Myers: It was tremendous. You see, apparently, officially, stuff had to go through 8th Army to 5th Group to 987th, and then whenever they got around to it, they would get it up to me. And the only other thing is my direct communications was with telephone, and then I had to go through 5th Group to get back to 8th Army at Seoul, and that's how we communicated.

DePue: When you arrived there, then, that was November of '52, you said?

Myers: Yes.

DePue: So was it your expectation that by October or November of '53, you'd be heading home?

Myers: Yes.

DePue: Okay. Now, you're not around most other American GIs, but apparently you're around them enough to know that the rest of your buddies were counting the months and the days?

Myers: Well, and I began to do that too when I found out about it.

DePue: Did you have a calendar that you marked things off?

Myers: Yes. Yeah, everybody kept a calendar.

DePue: What do you call a person who's getting close to the time that he's heading home?

Myers: There was a name, I just can't recall it right now.

DePue: Was it a short-timer?

Myers: Short-timer. That was the word, yes. And one of those cases—when Colonel Pell first came on there, we had one of our 987th forward observers killed up at the front line, and he wanted to go up and see where he was killed. And so we went up there. His driver only had about two or three days left before we rotated, a young fellow, a PFC or a corporal, and he was married and had a child he hadn't seen yet. (laughs) He was very upset about having to go up there, but he was his driver. And Colonel Pell gets up there, and with his silver leaf on his helmet, and of course the Chinese knew what that was, and we started getting incoming, so we had to get them out of there. He wanted to go across this one creek, then I told him not to go through there because we had wire in there to keep but he did and got stuck, and so I had to get out and cut the wire, since I had my wireman pliers (laughs) with me, and got out of there and got them to another road, and we finally got back. But that's one of the things with short-timers: everybody gets really grumpy when they get close; they don't want to get hit. And nobody wants to get hit, but... That was interesting.

DePue: Was there a derogatory term for the new guys who showed into the tours?

Myers: Well, it was really irritating because they didn't seem to know what to do, and they did what they thought would do, and it was not really correct. Even the older officers that were there were upset with it, but they couldn't do anything about it because he was a senior commander.

DePue: Do you remember any particular term that was used for these guys who were brand-new in the field?

Myers: No, I don't know that we did use them. All I know is that the FSCC—that's what we talked about before' that's Fire Support Coordination Center—was where we trained and operated, and since we were the farthest north of any of them, I had all the radios of all the battalions, twenty-three or so radios, in this thing. And so when we really got in battle, then that was really the combat center of the 2nd ROK Corps, because we had communication with everybody. One of the things that Colonel Pell did when he got there is he... Normally in the past, Colonel Sparrow, who was the commander, would send his operation, G3, up—or S3 it was in the battalion. He was—oh, I can't think of his name right now—a major. And he came up and would operate the fire direction board, at that time. And that's the way, unless it was a real big one, Colonel Sparrow hardly ever came up. But when Colonel Pell came there, he wanted to be there himself, and he didn't even bring one of his officers a lot of times; he'd just come up and start shooting. And so he put a buzzer in his bunker down at 987th and had us have a buzzer there, and if we didn't push that button when we had problems, he would give us the devil. And so we pushed the button, and that's when I think—before, I told you, we'd "push the button and run like hell; here comes Colonel Pell." (DePue laughs) And that was sort of an interesting little thing that happened. But we knew what was going to happen when he got there, and we knew what would happen if we didn't push the button and he'd start hearing all the artillery start shooting. He wouldn't know what was going on. (laughs)

DePue: Okay. I wonder if you can kind of walk us through the sequence of events that brought you home, first from when you found out and your rotation out of the Korean theater, and if you stopped in Japan, and where you landed in the States, and then finally meeting the relatives at home.

Myers: Okay. Well, after this big push in July the thirteenth through the twenty-seventh, when they signed the so-called truce, then we had been moved back, even 5th Group, where this thing, when I first got there, that was overrun. So we were clear back at corps headquarters, which is about twenty miles back. And we stayed there for a few days, and then it wasn't very long after that that we started—this was in August—that they were starting to move people out and back. And we went back by truck, as I remember, maybe—I believe it was truck—all the way to Pusan, and then we were held up with that Korean deal where Syngman let—

DePue: Syngman Rhee?

Myers: Was it Syngman that let the prisoners out and all that? That held us up twenty to thirty days. (laughs) And we finally got on a boat and came back then on an APA. I can't remember what it stands for, but it's really an attack, where you have Marines or that on board and you have all these boats on the side that

you go in to make a landing. I'm trying to think of what it stands for, but the APA.⁸

DePue: We'll figure that out.

Myers: Anyway, it took us nineteen days to come back to the States from Korea. We left Pusan. We had one ship that was having engine trouble, and it would only run about six knots. So we all had to stay together; we had a three-ship convoy.

DePue: You didn't make a stop in Japan on the way back?

Myers: No, no.

DePue: Or Hawaii or anyplace else?

Myers: No, straight across the Pacific.

DePue: How comfortable a ride was that?

Myers: Oh, it was something else. There were so many on board, because they just packed them in there like sardines, the one on the bottom, everybody had to get out for him to get out, and the same way at night. You loaded it up. It'd go bottom first, next section. I think we were six high in those things. It was terrible. So most of us just took our bag and slept up on the deck if we could find a place up there to. And the weather wasn't bad, the seas weren't bad, it just—we had this one ship that just crippled along. And we finally got into San Francisco, went into Stoneman, and then they did a few processing at Camp Stoneman there in Oakland. And then we got on a train and went to Camp Carson, Colorado. We got there on Friday. They wouldn't process us, so a few of us rented a car, and we drove around and did some scenery in Colorado till Monday, and then we got processed and I came home.

⁸ In the early 1940s, as the Navy expanded in response to the threat of involvement in World War II, a large number of civilian passenger ships and larger freighters were acquired, converted to transports and given hull numbers in the AP series. Some of these were outfitted with heavy boat davits and other arrangements to enable them to handle landing craft for amphibious assault operations. In 1942, when the AP number series had already extended beyond 100, it was decided that these amphibious warfare ships really constituted a separate category of warship from conventional transports. Therefore, the new classification of Attack Transport (APA) was created and new numbers were assigned to fifty-eight APs (AP #s 2, 8-12, 14-18, 25-27, 30, 34-35, 37-40, 48-52, 55-60, 64-65 and 78-101) then in commission or under construction. As part of the 1950s modernization of the Navy's amphibious force with faster ships, two more attack transports (APA-248 and APA-249) were converted from new "Mariner" class freighters. "Online Library of Selected Images: U.S. NAVY SHIPS -- Listed by Hull Number" *DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY -- NAVAL HISTORY AND HERITAGE COMMAND*. <http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/shusn-no/apa-no.htm> (accessed October 19, 2012)

DePue: Do you remember meeting your parents or meeting family once you got home?

Myers: I'm trying to think of that. I think I came home by train, and I believe it was Burlington, Iowa, that I got off. And that's where I went to California. Before I went overseas, I had a few days' leave, and I came back and went on a—you had to get on at Burlington and went to California, then, to Stoneman there, where I went out. But then they flew me over in a Pan-American Clipper. And we did stop at Hawaii about three hours because one of the planes—we had a three-plane convoy going over, and one of them had some engine trouble—and so we had there about four hours, but of course we couldn't go anywhere. And then we hit Wake Island after a typhoon and then finally got into Tokyo the next morning.

DePue: You had been in the National Guard before you were brought on to active duty. When you were coming back, and your last couple weeks in Korea, what was your intention as far as the military was concerned?

Myers: I really never thought too much about it. One of the things that happened there that last few days in August is they wanted me to take a commission and go to Vietnam in civilian clothes to help the French, since I had done this with the Koreans, and they thought I would be a good candidate. I did not take that, but I did think about—I still had a term on my enlistment I think a few days, and so I already came back. In the meantime, during this Korean conflict, is when Illinois had started their building, because Senator Scott Lucas and the Adjutant General, General [Leo M.] Boyle, had worked out a deal and got a bill through, Public Law, I can't remember, 690 or something like that, where the federal government would begin assisting the states to build armies. So they had built a new army at Macomb, and I was sort of interested, because when I went in, we was in an old bakery building. I had done a lot of volunteer work in the unit before I went in. I had ordered all the supplies for the unit, I think I said earlier in the thing. So I was still kind of tied to the Guard, and I had the Soil Conservation Service that I was coming back to, that since I was called, I was protected, you know, under the agreement. I intended to stay probably in the Guard, and so when I came back, I did. I helped reorganize the unit there in Macomb. Of course, all the units that were activated in the 44th were not released until it was either late—I think it was '54. So we had to pick up different names for the artillery and so on, the 210th and something else. We were the 133rd at the time. Then they did away with the 44th Division, so then (laughs) we had to go through another reorganization. But we moved into this new army in Macomb, and I was the first sergeant then of the unit. I finally did take my commission July 5, 1955, I believe it was.

DePue: These first couple years after you returned for Korea, then, were you full-time with the National Guard or part-time?

- Myers: No, no, no. I was part-time. I worked with the Soil Conservation Service and...
- DePue: So you went back to the same job you had before?
- Myers: Yeah, yeah.
- DePue: Okay. What I'd like to do for the rest of this time then is just general reflections on your experience there. And we've already talked quite a bit—this has been a very useful interview for us—but just kind of reflecting back on some of the larger issues. First of all, did you have an opportunity to use the GI Bill when you returned home?
- Myers: I got a little bit of it, I think, in—I had one year at Western and about a year and a half at the University of Illinois. But it was certainly not like the bill is now, but it did help.
- DePue: Refresh my memory—had you earned your college degree when you went over?
- Myers: No, I was paying for it myself.
- DePue: No, so when you came back, did you earn your degree, then, and get a Bachelor's degree somewhere along the line?
- Myers: Yes, at University of Illinois, Agricultural Science I think they called it.
- DePue: Okay. Did you have any problems when you came back adjusting to civilian life from being in this very different kind of an intense experience that you had in Korea?
- Myers: I know we talk about a lot of that today, and I don't remember that—the only thing that really bothered me much (laughs) was lightning sometimes would be set, and all of a sudden that sharp crack would cause me some problems. I know I was sitting on the back porch one day and the lightning hit a tree about a quarter-mile away and blew it all to thunder, and I nearly jumped off the porch. You know, that loud bang. It's things like that, but that's about the only thing that I remember. And I said in these letters—I didn't cover everything here today—but when I first went over there and I stayed the two weeks in 5th Group, and they told me all about these Koreans and so on that way, and I got more or less the same opinion as what a lot of Americans did think of the Koreans, of being what we'd call slicky; they'd pick up anything they could get their hands on and that. But I really found out that it wasn't really that bad at all. But I did find out—and I had one that I was going to share with you, but I don't seem to put my hands on it—what it was when I went up there in January especially, where we've got this new commander and everything else and it all was ship-shape, and I found that the Koreans had an awful time of accepting that they'd make a mistake. They could not resolve theirselves just

saying, Okay, I'll do better the next time. And especially the officers would try to (laughs) not be—they would just take it terribly if you talked to them when they were with a superior or even an inferior. You had to talk to them privately if you were going to talk to them very seriously. If they did make a mistake, they expected to be punished for it. And the same way with the enlisted people. They just had to have some kind of a way to resolve their mistake, because they thought that everything, and their commanders thought everything should be perfect when it wasn't, why, they flew off the handle. And old General Song, I think I'd told you before, had several notches in his pistol where he'd shot commanders, full colonels, for not obeying what he wanted. So that's what I had to do up there. The commander told me, he said, "Look, Sergeant Myers, you're going to have to punish these people. They just can't accept it when you tell them that they've made a mistake." And so you had to knock them off the chair and that, and they'd get up and bow and salute you. I found that that's when they respected you, is when you took care of the situation at the time, including the officers. Now, imagine a sergeant knocking (laughs) a major or a captain down. If the Army knew it, I would have probably been (laughs) court-martialed. But it was just one of those things that it was terrible, but that's—when we are dealing with culture—and this is one of our problems, I think, today in the world, we don't understand the culture of the population that we're dealing with.

DePue: One of the first tenets of anybody who's studying combat, especially soldiers going into combat, is, Know your enemy. And in this case, it's not—

Myers: Know your friend. (laughs)

DePue: Know your friends; know the culture you're dealing with.

Myers: That's right. And there was a little bit of that in this book.

DePue: He's referring to *A Pocket Guide to Korea*, which I guess every soldier going into Korea received, and again, we'll—

Myers: I don't know, but that's what they gave me when I got there.

DePue: This is the one we're going to go ahead and photocopy. Lots of photos, lots about the culture that's there. And here's a picture, just looking at one page—this is page thirty-two—and this little sketch of a bunch of Koreans, two different groups of Koreans, standing on either side, and the caption underneath: "Koreans delight in a joyous stone fight."

Myers: (laughs) Yeah, and stick fight. They loved to beat each other with sticks. I can't remember what they called it, but (laughs) it was really something else. Talking about a collision of culture—you certainly had it up there.

DePue: Okay. Did you form some lasting relationships, either with Americans or maybe some of these Koreans you worked with, that you were able to stay in touch with folks?

Myers: No, not very much. They were scattered, and when I got back, I had all this and trying to catch up, and I was put down into this deal down at Pike County, and (laughs) I just sort of—

DePue: You got busy with your life.

Myers: Yeah, yeah.

DePue: Okay. Looking back now after all these years, do you think that the war that we fought in Korea was justified? Do you understand why we were there?

Myers: Well, I understand why we were there. I was really upset that it happened that way in World War II where we put the thirty-eighth parallel. I thought that was a very bad mistake. But the Soviets got in about the last three days of the war, and then the Chinese insisted that everything north of the thirty-eighth parallel, that that had to be turned over to the Russians, and south of the thirty-eighth parallel was turned over to the United Nations. And that's what began it, and it's still there today.

DePue: What do you think about the way—and we might have mentioned this, but I don't think so—what do you think about the way at the end of the war the armistice just kept that nation divided?

Myers: I don't think it was even necessary, because when the Chinese made this big push of about two hundred thousand Chinese—we had about a hundred thousand on our border on the east side, and there's about a hundred thousand that hit us on the other, through the Triple Nickel I told you. And when we finally got ammunition and got back, we were five to ten mile north of the old line, and I think we could have gone on, and we should have at that time. But the United Nations was hollering about the costs and our Congress was hollering about the costs. And in fact, in 1952, they started cutting the cost of appropriations. And so we as a people don't seem to like anything that continues on over (laughs)—I guess it's maybe our television society now, that everything has to be over in sixty minutes or it's not... And I really think that our population is not based on long-range looking at a problem. It doesn't mean you have to do everything in fifteen minutes, but you should really look at the overall population.

DePue: You stayed in the Army a long time after that, always with the Illinois Army National Guard. But ten years later—well, you mentioned yourself—you were invited to go to Vietnam, work with the French. Of course, in '54, 1954, the French were defeated decisively at Dien Bien Phu.

Myers: I would have been there if I took that, I expect.

DePue: Yeah, that kind of sends shivers up your spine, I bet. What'd you think about our experience in Vietnam, then?

Myers: It was terrible. We didn't have the control in Korea by Congress as we did in Vietnam. It was presidential war, almost, that the commanders were not allowed to fight as an army. And that's what really made Vietnam as bad as it was.

DePue: Do you think it was a mistake for the United States to be involved in Vietnam?

Myers: No, I do not. We had a commitment of the alliance down there, and—

DePue: SEATO, Southeast Asian Treaty Organization.

Myers: Yeah. And the other thing was that most people don't seem to understand, that the north was trying to go into the population, and they were killing thirteen to fifteen hundred people a week in those communities to take them over. They'd start with the mayor, and they would take his child out and slice him in two and throw him in the middle of the street, and then if he still didn't go, they'd walk right up through his family, and finally they would take his head and put it on a post out in the middle of the thing. It was really brutal, going on in Vietnam before we really got involved in it.

DePue: By 1969, 1970 timeframe, many Americans, maybe most, had pretty much given up on Vietnam, thinking it wasn't winnable. Was that your—

Myers: It wasn't, the way we were doing it. In fact, I was pretty active in—by that time, I got back and pretty active in politics. One of the fellows I worked to get into Congress (laughs) was Paul Findley, as our representative. I told him that we should bomb Haiphong and knock it off the map, because that's where the Soviets were sending supplies in.

DePue: Haiphong? Haiphong Harbor?

Myers: Haiphong.

DePue: Yeah, okay.

Myers: And he thought, Oh, no, we shouldn't do that. But I really didn't... And I know that he was probably as moderate as anybody in the Congress at the time. But I really felt that we certainly did not fight that war as a war, it was just—just kept escalating and pouring more people in and not allowing common sense or tactical reasoning to be used.

DePue: I know that you had an opportunity in 1987—and you were married by this time—and you and your wife had an opportunity to actually go to Korea. Can you tell us about that?

Myers: Yes. We went in this Korea revisit program where we paid our way over to Korea and then they put us up in a hotel and took us in tours of the thing. We went up and went—

DePue: “They” being the Koreans?

Myers: Korean.

DePue: They paid for that?

Myers: Yes, what they call the Korean Veterans, which was Korean veterans, and the government, and I think they still do. They pay for in-country expenses. And they’re still doing it, in appreciation for those countries that had troops over there that served them in that period of time. We went up and went over to Inchon to General MacArthur’s statue, and we went to a war museum, and we placed a wreath on the Korean memorial where all the names of a lot of the Koreans are on, similar to the Vietnam wall, only this is a big sort of a palatial area that they call the memorial. Then we went up to the front, went to Pyongyang—went to the Peace Village.

DePue: Panmunjom?

Myers: Panmunjom. And looked to where the soldier had been hacked to death there where that tree was cut down and had that big incident.⁹ It was just absolutely terrifying to look out—and North Korea, just nothing, no crops, you couldn’t see anything, and South was all green, beautiful fields and so on. They had this one village where nobody lived in, except in the day they shipped people in. It’s just across the line.

DePue: Is that the one they call Peace Village?

Myers: Yes. And they had loudspeakers and blasting away stuff and so on. It was interesting. The building that they had was about ten or twelve foot wide and looked like a palace, but just wasn’t very big. (laughs) It’s across from where ours was, and we just had a pagoda, I guess you’d call it, on our side. But we did go into that building where they did their negotiations. One of the people

⁹ The demilitarized zone (DMZ) separating North and South Korea was established in 1953 and has mostly been empty except for those attempting to cross the border. In the 1970s, there were still 42,000 American troops stationed in South Korea and conflicts between North and South flared up occasionally. On August 18, 1976, the two sides came closer to war than any time since the Korean War armistice. A party of nine South Koreans, two U.S. officers and four U.S. military police ventured in to the DMZ to prune a poplar tree which hindered the view between the two U.N. checkpoints. A North Korean lieutenant demanded that the party halt its work, an order that was ignored. A truckload of North Korean reinforcements showed up and the conflict resulted in two American soldiers being beaten and then axed to death. In response, the U.S. sent 26 helicopter gunships, three B-52 bombers and numerous fighting jets to South Korea. Three hundred soldiers entered the DMZ to finish cutting down the poplar tree. North Korea’s President Kim Il-sung later expressed official regret over the incident. *An Axe Fight Nearly Triggers War*, A synopsis of “North Korea – Suspicious Minds” PBS Frontline/World, <http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/northkorea/1976.html>, accessed October 26, 2012.

that was with me was a former senator, [Robert] Mitchler¹⁰, from northern Illinois, and he would—during that time, he was lieutenant colonel in the Navy, or lieutenant commander in the Navy, and he showed me his desk where he sat and worked in there while they were negotiating. They negotiated how high the flagpole would be on each flag, and it took them several months to get that settled.

DePue: So even in 1987, there were still negotiations?

Myers: Yes, and they still had meetings in there to talk things over.

DePue: You know, after how many years, there wasn't much to...

Myers: I suppose they still do today. I don't know.

DePue: Yeah, I know that they do. And that kind of stretches the imagination, too.

Myers: Yes.

DePue: Talk about the contrast you saw between when you left in '53 and what you saw in '87.

Myers: It was just like a miracle almost. The old gravel roads were now highways, and the dilapidated buildings in Seoul were now high-rises and hotels and beautiful shopping centers and so on. It just, like overnight, almost—of course, it was quite a while—but, you see, again, I think as I told you earlier, that the industrial area was North Korea and the agricultural area was South. And so all the industry had to be built up in the south. And, of course, with the terrible situation they have in the north, they have an awful time with their industry because they don't have the economy to support it. They don't have the economy even to feed their people. But the Army is pretty well fed, and they also have one of the largest armies in the world.

DePue: North Korea does today.

Myers: Yes, right now.

DePue: Did that experience of going back and seeing how vibrant South Korea was and then going up to Panmunjom and gazing across that border, did that change any views or solidify any views about why we were there in the first place and what you had done to be there?

Myers: Not necessarily. It just gives you a bad feeling that those people on the north are suffering so much because they're not united.

¹⁰ Senator Robert Mitchler was interviewed about his World War II and Korean War experiences. Those interviews are available in the ALPL *Veterans Remember* Oral History project. He was also interviewed about his many years in the Illinois State Senate. The interview is available in the *Illinois Statecraft – Legislators* project.

DePue: Okay. What do you think the United States and Americans in general should remember about our involvement in Korea?

Myers: I think that we should really think seriously about when we get engaged in a war that we turn it over to the military to operate and give them the resources they need and then tell them to win it, and get out of the way and let that happen. That's not happened even during Korea, and it hasn't happened in anything since. Probably the closest we came was in the invasion of Iraq in the Kuwait/Iraq situation. And there it took them six months or so to get things in order and get ready, but then because the United Nations—this was a United Nations effort—when we got them pushed back into Iraq, that's all they wanted done, and so I think we wasted a lot of effort there of not going in and knocking Iraq out at that time.

DePue: Mm-hmm, not taking Saddam Hussein out at that time.

Myers: Out at the time. But that seems to be the way we're at now, and people don't seem to understand the real need for an all-out—and I think like Colonel Powell said, if you're going in to win, then you need to be ready.

DePue: We're going to pause here.

(pause in recording)

DePue: Well, that was a very quick break compared to the last one we had, Lou.

Myers: (laughs) Yes.

DePue: Just a couple more questions. Do you think your experiences in Korea changed you? Did you come out a different person than when you arrived there?

Myers: Oh, I know it did. As I told you, I think, in the beginning, when I got up there to the Koreans, they wanted me to teach them about Jesus Christ, which was kind of a shock to me because I'd never been in a church as a church member—I'd been in a church, but... And as I worked through that, I became—I guess it's called foxhole religion, but I really came, and of course, when I got back, the first thing I did was join the church, and I've been in the church ever since. But it really changed my aspect, both from what happened there in Korea as well as at home. There were several things. My brother got drafted and he got married and had a bad thing and he got divorced and several other things. So there was a lot of things going on at home at the same time I was over there, and that's what—a lot of this stuff is in the letters. But I tried to counsel and do that since I was the oldest. But it really has benefited me in my life as far as having a faith and trust in whatever we want to call it. As far as I'm concerned, it's God, but whatever whoever wants to call it that. But it really did help me to feel that there was somebody looking out for me even when it was pretty (laughs) at a dismal time when you get stuff thrown at

you at all... I can remember that there were a few times that we went maybe two or three days without any sleep, and just constant barrage going both ways. And yet several cases, I have no explanation for it, but there were just times when things happened that were not natural that I would be alive, and I was.

DePue: What do you think about what happened in the American consciousness after the war, where it wasn't too many years afterwards that—and once you got into Vietnam—that Korea was largely forgotten; in fact, it's been called The Forgotten War.

Myers: The Forgotten War. Well, even when we came back, there wasn't very much... People just were not involved in it. And that's the other thing, I think, about war. If we're going to have a war, we need to involve everybody in it. And that wasn't done in Vietnam. There was more because there were a lot of big drafts. That draft is mostly what put on—and I think that was another mistake in Vietnam: they did not call the Reserves or the Guard till almost the very end, and that's when the Vietnam did come to the table, because if they thought we were going to totally mobilize, they figured it was going to be over for them. I really feel that's what happened.

DePue: In the last, oh, ten, fifteen, twenty years, the World War II generation has gotten an awful lot of attention, and, you know, we've been calling them the "Greatest Generation," and it's "the Good War." Your thoughts about that compared to how the Korean War veterans were treated?

Myers: I don't think we were treated nearly as bad as the Vietnam veterans, but people sort of, Well, so what? (laughs) I think that's about the way we were treated. At least they didn't have protests and all that going on. But other than your relatives and those that knew what went on, and, you know, they were interested, but that's about it.

DePue: What would you like to have people remember about your experiences in particular?

Myers: My thoughts are that I'm glad that I was called and served and that I did what I could do, the best I could do, and I think that's what we all should do, whatever our job is. Either it's civil society... Somehow or another, we need to get our people to understand that we have an obligation, we were put here for some purpose, whatever that may be, and we ought to use our talents to the best of our ability.

DePue: This has been an important addition to our collection of interviews on the Korean War. I hadn't before this time talked to somebody who was working as intimately and as closely as you were with our South Korean allies. So I've really enjoyed the experience and appreciate your telling us the stories and

fleshing out and having a better understanding of that. Any comments you'd like to make in closing here yourself, Lou?

Myers: Well, I do think that it is things like this that we need to get out for people to understand what we go through. And we've been through a lot in the over two hundred years that this nation has... And people right today do not understand what many in the Revolutionary War went through, certainly, to get us on the track of becoming a nation. And it's just too bad, but I think some way we need to have more ability to actually get down and feel the feelings of people, civilian as well as military. That's what's happening in these occasions. And maybe we can learn from it. If we don't, we're going to repeat (laughs) the same things again.

DePue: Thank you very much, Lou, for giving us the chance to learn a little bit more about your piece of the war, an important piece that's oftentimes overlooked. Thank you.

Myers: Thank you.

(end of interview)