

1 Interview of Mary Myers on her service in the U.S. Army Nurse Corps during and after  
2 WWII

3

4

5

6Interviewer: This is an interview, uh, by Elizabeth Booker of Mary Myers for the  
7 Women's Over-, Overseas Service League oral history project. Okay,  
8 Mary. Uh, would you tell us, uh, your name, address, your branch of  
9 service and years of service, and a little bit about your background before  
10 enting-, entering the service.

11

12Mary Myers: I am Mary Myers, and I, my years of service were 1944 to 1946 with one  
13 year of overseas duty, 1946 to 1950 was active duty stateside. And that,  
14 most of that was spent in Camp Pica-, or Camp Kilmer, New Jersey.  
15 Those two years.

16

17Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh.

18

19Mary Myers: And [sigh] my background?

20

21Elizabeth Booker: Mm-hm.

22

23Mary Myers: I graduated from McKeesport High School, um, McKeesport's a small  
24 community and, uh, a very close, and then I went in training in  
25 Wilkinsburg, Columbia Hospital, which is a very small hospital. And, uh,  
26 graduated, and for a year I did, uh, general staff nursing at Columbia  
27 Hospital, and then I went into industrial nursing and occupational health  
28 and at that time that was quite a big thing. It was a well-paying job. Then,  
29 I, uh, began to think all my friends were leaving for the army, which was  
30 about 1943, '44, and uh, whether it was, uh, patriotism or, uh, motivated  
31 by excitement or, uh, uh, whatever influence by two brothers that had  
32 enlisted, so I decided I would enlist in the army.

33

34Elizabeth Booker: Good. [2:21] Uh, what, uh, prior experience, uh, experiences prepared you  
35 for this sort of as-, uh...

36

37Mary Myers: Well, other than my nurse's training and, um, working as an industrial  
38 nurse where you had emergencies, that was...

39

40Elizabeth Booker: That was good preparation. Right.

41

42Mary Myers: Preparation.

43



1Elizabeth Booker: [2:42] So after volunteering, wa-, was there some special preparation for  
2 your later overseas service?  
3

4Mary Myers: Yes. Uh, we had one month basic training at Fort Meade in Maryland and  
5 then a one month, uh, we went up to, uh, Camp Pickett, which was in  
6 Virginia, and we had some training and [drill 3:07] there and we worked at  
7 the hospital.  
8

9Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh.  
10

11Mary Myers: The station hospital there.  
12

13Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.  
14

15Mary Myers: For a couple, two months, and in November, we went up to Boston and we  
16 sailed overseas.  
17

18Elizabeth Booker: Oh, great! [3:22] Uh, would you describe the circumstances of your trip  
19 overseas? [laughter] Y'know, anything, when you left and how you —  
20

21Mary Myers: Well...  
22

23Elizabeth Booker: — traveled and...  
24

25Mary Myers: We left, uh, in November of, uh, '44 from Boston.  
26

27Elizabeth Booker: Mm-hm.  
28

29Mary Myers: We left from Boston, and, uh, we were out at sea, oh, about, uh, 10 days,  
30 and, uh, of course there were very closed quarters which I had not been  
31 accustomed to.  
32

33Elizabeth Booker: Mm-hm.  
34

35Mary Myers: And, uh, uh, the food was rationed, of course —  
36

37Elizabeth Booker: Mm-hm.  
38

39Mary Myers: — but there was plenty of it, and we, uh, landed in Marseille, France.  
40 That's where we had the staging area, in Marseille.  
41

42Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh.  
43

44Mary Myers: And, uh, then we went up to, um, Epinal, France.



1  
2Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh.  
3  
4Mary Myers: Dijon was close by, but in Epinal, uh, uh, is where we had a, uh,  
5 evacuation hospital, but we were formed into the 236th General Hospital  
6 that was in the staging area, and there were —  
7  
8Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh.  
9  
10Mary Myers: — people, I was, uh, I was the only one really from Pittsburgh. The most  
11 members of the group came from Texas, and there were a few nurses  
12 from, uh, Philadelphia. The one girl had joined from Philadelphia, but she  
13 was a, a nurse from Braddock, was Patty [Clumen 5:06] —  
14  
15Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh.  
16  
17Mary Myers: — and she joined us, but, uh, it was a Texas group.  
18  
19Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh.  
20  
21Mary Myers: The commanding officer.  
22  
23Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh.  
24  
25Mary Myers: Um, uh, Christmas Eve found, uh, myself and the others on detached  
26 service in, near Paris, France, and we went to, uh, of course everything  
27 was a blackout. We went to midnight, uh, church services under a  
28 blackout, and while we were there, the German planes came and we were  
29 strafed, and that was really a frightening experience.  
30  
31Elizabeth Booker: I bet that was scary.  
32  
33Mary Myers: And, uh, we, uh, all were very much shaken after just being overseas —  
34  
35Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.  
36  
37Mary Myers: — a month, and wondering what the future held for us.  
38  
39Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh.  
40  
41Mary Myers: Naturally, we were homesick for our loved ones at home. When we got  
42 back to our, uh, quarters, the loc-, there was an air force unit that were  
43 close by, and the greatest thing that day, Christmas Day, we had were  
44 Cokes. I hadn't seen a Coke since I left the states.



1  
2Elizabeth Booker: [chuckle] I bet that was fun.  
3  
4Mary Myers: But, um...  
5  
6Elizabeth Booker: Okay. [6:29] Uh, can you tell me a little bit about some of your  
7 assignments and, uh, do you, special tasks you had, the hours you worked,  
8 your pay, and anything about the conditions of your service?  
9  
10Mary Myers: Uh, yeah. They, um, it was, uh, of course our quarters were always very  
11 primitive and, uh, uh, basic. Uh, they provided the best facilities for us  
12 possible, and one thing now as I take a shower and bath, I'm reminded that  
13 to stay clean, they had a shower set up in the center of the hospital  
14 compound, and, uh, we all had to wear our raincoats down and stand in  
15 line two at a time, males on one end and the females on the other, to have  
16 our showers.  
17  
18Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.  
19  
20Mary Myers: That was not in the winter, of course. This was in the, and in the winter,  
21 we used our helmets, y'know, with water.  
22  
23Elizabeth Booker: Wow [chuckle].  
24  
25Mary Myers: That's right. And, uh, our, the duties, of course we were takin' care of  
26 POWs and, uh, our, uh, prisoners, or our own soldiers. There were long  
27 wards. As I recall, I had never, um, one thing that always stands out in my  
28 mind, I'd never attempted even, uh, starting an intravenous, and, uh, you  
29 were just expected. You were shown once and that was it.  
30  
31Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.  
32  
33Mary Myers: Uh, but there was the, an awful lot of hepatitis along with the casualties  
34 that we cared for. They were long hours.  
35  
36Elizabeth Booker: Mm-hm.  
37  
38Mary Myers: They weren't always 7 to 3 or 3 to 11.  
39  
40Elizabeth Booker: Mm-hm.  
41  
42Mary Myers: Um, we, uh, were well protected. The soldiers were always very, very  
43 gentleman-like.  
44



1Elizabeth Booker: Mm-hm.  
2

3Mary Myers: We were never abused or never, I never met any, uh, one that, uh was  
4 [smart 8:44]. Including the prisoners of war. The Germans were very, very  
5 respectful —  
6

7Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh.  
8

9Mary Myers: — in what they would do, and they were very sick. Um, then, um, we, uh,  
10 all ate in one mess hall. There were no, no differentiation for enlisted men  
11 or officers. We all ate together at long tables.  
12

13Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh.  
14

15Mary Myers: And, uh, one thing stands out in my mind, too, when I was a student nurse  
16 at Columbia Hospital, Dr. King, uh, was, um, the chief of our surgery at  
17 Columbia, and, uh, we all looked up to him of course, and when we  
18 scrubbed in the OR, he was the roughest.  
19

20Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh.  
21

22Mary Myers: And one morning we were having breakfast in the mess hall in, uh, Fra-,  
23 in Dijon, and, uh, that was the day I was promoted from 2nd lieutenant to  
24 1st —  
25

26Elizabeth Booker: First.  
27

28Mary Myers: — lieutenant, and, um, who was sitting there but a, uh, colonel, two  
29 colonels across the way, and I looked over and I thought, oh my gosh, that  
30 can't be Dr. King. But it was.  
31

32Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh.  
33

34Mary Myers: He came over. Of course we had quite a reunion. I'd have been frightened,  
35 [chuckle] shaking in my shoes, but we were, y'know, very —  
36

37Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh.  
38

39Mary Myers: — and then, uh, several days he was there for consultation.  
40

41Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh.  
42

43Mary Myers: Uh, then, uh, we, uh, this was the pretty much the routine until August,  
44 and the unit was slated, we, uh, we closed our, um, hospital compound



1 really about June, and we were staging again in Marseille, France, uh, with  
2 a lotta time on our hands.  
3  
4Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.  
5  
6Mary Myers: And, uh, in August, uh, some of us went on detached service and then, uh,  
7 we went, uh, we were given liberty to go to, uh, Fran-, to Paris and for a,  
8 um, so many days.  
9  
10Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh.  
11  
12Mary Myers: And then to, uh, Cannes, France. We got to go there.  
13  
14Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh.  
15  
16Mary Myers: To the Riviera. And then about August, the middle of Au-, the 8th or 9th  
17 of August, we were slated, the unit was going to the Pacific, and we were  
18 just aboard ship —  
19  
20Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh.  
21  
22Mary Myers: — when we were rerouted. It was VJ Day.  
23  
24Elizabeth Booker: Oh, great. Great.  
25  
26Mary Myers: And, uh, okay.  
27  
28Elizabeth Booker: Oh. [11:39] Were, uh, do you remember VE Day?  
29  
30Mary Myers: Yes. We were in France.  
31  
32Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh.  
33  
34Mary Myers: And there was quite a celebration.  
35  
36Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.  
37  
38Mary Myers: And every person was, uh, they, every, there was [inaudible 11:54]...  
39  
40Elizabeth Booker: Cheering and yeah.  
41  
42Mary Myers: Yeah, it was an awful lot.  
43



1Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh. Okay. [11:59] Um, you have any other memorable experiences  
2 that you would like to share with us? You've already told us a lot of  
3 interesting...  
4

5Mary Myers: No.  
6

7Elizabeth Booker: ...things. No? Um, okay. Were there any, um, or would you describe your  
8 perception of the contribution your service made to America's efforts for  
9 peace. Do you feel it was...  
10

11Mary Myers: I, I feel that, um, perhaps I helped to, uh, uh take care of some, y'know.  
12

13Elizabeth Booker: Yeah, sure.  
14

15Mary Myers: Or provide some nursing care.  
16

17Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.  
18

19Mary Myers: But it was, uh, there weren't that many nurses, y'know?  
20

21Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh.  
22

23Mary Myers: Many, they were pulling, we were general hospital, and they were always  
24 pulling people for detached service to the evac hospitals.  
25

26Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.  
27

28Mary Myers: And, um.  
29

30Elizabeth Booker: So, y'know, you really di-, didn't always know what was gonna happen  
31 next, right.  
32

33Mary Myers: Uh-uh, no.  
34

35Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh.  
36

37Mary Myers: Um, or, [arriving 13:01] and plans of course in the cold [inaudible 13:03],  
38 I've never —  
39

40Elizabeth Booker: Right.  
41

42Mary Myers: — been so cold in my life.  
43

44Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh.



1  
2Mary Myers: We survived.  
3  
4Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh. That winter of '44 was really rough, wasn't it?  
5  
6Mary Myers: Very rough.  
7  
8Elizabeth Booker: Okay. [13:12] Uh, would you, uh, compare your service then with what it  
9 might be like today?  
10  
11Mary Myers: Oh [chuckle].  
12  
13Elizabeth Booker: In the service, or...  
14  
15Mary Myers: Uh, reserve duty as I saw it post-war, incidentally, we, uh, when we came  
16 home, uh, we came to, um, near bri-, vir-, near Virginia Beach there.  
17  
18Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh.  
19  
20Mary Myers: And, uh, [throat clearing] then we were all sent to Fort Dix. Uh, you could  
21 stay in.  
22  
23Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh.  
24  
25Mary Myers: It-, you had an option to stay in or be discharged. And, uh, I chose to be  
26 discharged, but it was —  
27  
28Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh.  
29  
30Mary Myers: — just for a short, not too many, uh, not too long, too many months, uh, I  
31 was recalled. And I was recalled to, uh, Fort, uh, Camp Kilmer.  
32  
33Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh.  
34  
35Mary Myers: I don't know there was some, uh, problem but, uh, there was going, they  
36 were recalling many people at that time.  
37  
38Elizabeth Booker: Oh, I didn't know that.  
39  
40Mary Myers: There was a potential war —  
41  
42Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh.  
43



1 Mary Myers: And, uh, then after I was in for, uh, 6 months, I had an option again to be  
2 discharged. And I chose, because I had made so many moves and I hadn't  
3 made a decision about working for the short period I was home to be  
4 established —  
5

6 Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh.  
7

8 Mary Myers: — and then I stayed in.  
9

10 Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh.  
11

12 Mary Myers: Until, uh, '46. And...  
13

14 Elizabeth Booker: [14:49] Did you, did you stay in the States during that or...?  
15

16 Mary Myers: I was at Camp Kilmer.  
17

18 Elizabeth Booker: Camp Kilmer [inaudible 14:53].  
19

20 Mary Myers: In, uh...  
21

22 Elizabeth Booker: In New Jersey. Uh-huh.  
23

24 Mary Myers: Many, many nice friends and many cultural opportunities. We got to New  
25 York several times a week.  
26

27 Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh.  
28

29 Mary Myers: And, uh...  
30

31 Elizabeth Booker: [That's interesting 15:05]. Uh...  
32

33 Mary Myers: You asked about the pay, Betty, earlier.  
34

35 Elizabeth Booker: Yeah. Yeah.  
36

37 Mary Myers: I don't remember; however, things were so reasonable and everyone was  
38 giving you, the Red Cross —  
39

40 Elizabeth Booker: Yeah.  
41

42 Mary Myers: — everybody was so kind and generous and...  
43

44 Elizabeth Booker: Your housing and —



1  
2Mary Myers: Everything.  
3  
4Elizabeth Booker: — room and board was taken care of —  
5  
6Mary Myers: Yes.  
7  
8Elizabeth Booker: — so you didn't really...  
9  
10Mary Myers: So really...  
11  
12Elizabeth Booker: You didn't worry about it that much, right.  
13  
14Mary Myers: Yeah.  
15  
16Elizabeth Booker: Okay. [15:31] Uh, did the government provide any benefits following your  
17 service that you were able to utilize?  
18  
19Mary Myers: Yes, uh, I, the government provided me, and thank the lord today...  
20  
21Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh.  
22  
23Mary Myers: ...with, uh, paid for all my tuition —  
24  
25Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh.  
26  
27Mary Myers: — for my baccalaureate in nursing degree at the University of Pittsburgh.  
28  
29Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh.  
30  
31Mary Myers: And partly, part of it for a master's degree.  
32  
33Elizabeth Booker: Oh, uh-huh.  
34  
35Mary Myers: And to me, that was an awful lot of compensation 'cause my family  
36 couldn't provide it.  
37  
38Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh.  
39  
40Mary Myers: Y'know, tuition then was still...  
41  
42Elizabeth Booker: Okay. [16:06] Did you use the home loan bene-, uh...  
43  
44Mary Myers: No. No. Just, uh...



1  
2Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh.  
3  
4Mary Myers: ...I, uh, used the, uh, to, y'know...  
5  
6Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh.  
7  
8Mary Myers: ...to enroll at the University of Pittsburgh.  
9  
10Elizabeth Booker: [16: 17] But you did stay in the reserves for...?  
11  
12Mary Myers: I stayed in the reserves, which was very good. We had, uh, drills. I, uh, I  
13 feel I benefited for my own, uh, job post-graduation.  
14  
15Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh.  
16  
17Mary Myers: Uh, we were, um, 2 weeks, uh, reserve duty every year. Um, for about 5  
18 years, we were at Walter Reed Hospital.  
19  
20Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh.  
21  
22Mary Myers: And what a better place to learn.  
23  
24Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.  
25  
26Mary Myers: And, uh, we were at the various different installations —  
27  
28Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh.  
29  
30Mary Myers: — and assigned duty comparable to our civilian —  
31  
32Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh.  
33  
34Mary Myers: — duty.  
35  
36Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh.  
37  
38Mary Myers: Which was good.  
39  
40Elizabeth Booker: Great. Uh [17:01], are there any other thoughts you'd like to share with  
41 us?  
42  
43Mary Myers: Um, other than I don't think you could buy that experience for all  
44 thousands —



1  
2Elizabeth Booker: That's right.  
3  
4Mary Myers: — and I relive and there were memorable, and I, I just think that, um, uh,  
5 the assignments were —  
6  
7Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh.  
8  
9Mary Myers: — protected, and I'm sure today they have many more opportunities —  
10  
11Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh. Right.  
12  
13Mary Myers: — but I thank god for mine.  
14  
15Elizabeth Booker: Uh-huh. Okay. Thank you very much, Mary.  
16  
17  
18/jw  
19