

Bernice Shafer Oral History Interview

CHARLIE SIMMONS: This is Charlie Simmons. Today is the 18th of May, 2012. And I'm interviewing Ms. Bernice Shafer. This interview is taking place in Fredericksburg, Texas at the Nimitz Museum. This interview is in support of the Center of Pacific War Studies, archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Historical Museum for the preservation of historical information relating to this site. First of all, Bernice, I would like to thank you for coming in today and bringing in your magnificent display here that we're going over. And if you would please start by stating your name, your place of birth, and your date of birth, and we'll take it from there.

BERNICE SHAFER: I am Bernice R. Shafer. My date of birth is Ackley, Iowa, December 26th 1922. I was born during the Depression. I can remember my dad coming home one afternoon and telling mom, "The banks closed." I remember the expression and the silence at that time. From that time on, life was very difficult. Difficult. Times were hard. I come from a German-Irish family. Very, very strict, Methodist. We spent a lot of time with family time. I graduated from high school in 1941 from Ackley High School.

CS: What did your father do?

BS: My dad was a mechanic.

CS: Okay. Did you live in the town or in the countryside?

BS: Lived in town. Always lived in towns, small towns.

CS: Did you have brothers and sisters?

BS: I had two brothers and three sisters. All but one survive.

Most of the family stayed. I was the only one that left home. But I wanted to be a nurse. And my mother told me that from the beginning, when I started talking career, I wanted to be a nurse. There were no nurses in the family. I had no idea why I wanted to be a nurse. I'd tell people I saw pictures of them in the Sears Roebuck catalogue, and maybe that's what told me I was going to be a nurse.

CS: So when you were growing up, you never were exposed to anybody that was in the medical profession?

BS: Never had anybody -- not until I was a junior in high school did I meet a real nurse. And she was married to a doctor, and they lived next door to us. That was the first time I had met someone who had been a real nurse. But she was strictly a wife and a mother. There was no nursing action that she took part in.

CS: So she gave up her career when she got married.

BS: Yeah. And they were our family doctor. And I had the normal childhood. Nothing real special. Had to work hard.

CS: You said you moved to different cities or towns --

BS: No, no. I lived in the one town, Ackley.

CS: In the one town, okay.

BS: Ackley, Iowa. It wasn't until after I left home that the family moved. But I stayed -- as far as I'm concerned, Ackley is my hometown. And from there -- I graduated from high school in 1941. In August of 1941, I entered Mercy Hospital School of Nursing. And at that time, to get into -- nurse's training, they called it -- you had to be in the top 10 of your class. I made it. It was a hospital. We had -- our dormitory was attached to Mercy Hospital. And the Mercy nuns were -- had the administration of the hospital.

CS: The Nuns? This was a Catholic hospital?

BS: Catholic hospital and it was all nuns. There were no -- there were two, maybe three civilian nurses on the staff as head nurses.

CS: And what town was this in?

BS: This was in Des Moines, Iowa.

CS: Des Moines, okay. And how did you -- were you able to support yourself? Did your parents give you --

BS: My parents gave me what they could, which amounted to a small amount of spending money. But we were so busy, we didn't need -- when we weren't working, we were in class.

CS: So this was an apprentice program then. You kind of worked for the hospital --

BS: No, you didn't get paid. You were in school. It was actually a school. It was a school. The day started by going to chapel. And then you went to classes. You had break for lunch, and then it was back to classes for the first four months. December -- and I also am one of the nurses. We had a capping exercise after we had been there, I think, two months. And we were accepted for the school. And then we had a very formal capping exercise where we had to walk up to the stage, and a cap was placed on our head. It was a great day. A great day. All the parents came to see us. Then -- and I went in in 1941. December 7th, 1941, Pearl Harbor. Everything changed. Everything changed. We already were on duty seeing patients. But only for a couple hours a day. And at that time, I think there was a total of maybe six RNs on the staff working as charge nurses. And then, of course, there was a nun assigned to each department.

CS: And were you an apprentice nurse, a licensed vocational nurse --

BS: I was a student nurse.

CS: You were a just student nurse.

BS: We did not get any --

CS: Okay, not titles or anything.

BS: No. We were a student nurse. We were given our uniform. We were given our board. And we were given our room. And we were given our meals.

CS: How many people would have been in it? Were there any males, or was it all females?

BS: It was all females in those days. That was 1941. Males didn't come in until late. I think -- I don't think males started becoming nurses until after World War II. I think it was after World War II that they became nurses. But I was already seeing patients. We were maybe three hours a day. And then we'd go to class. When Pearl Harbor happened, and the RNs left -- I think we only had two RNs that were department heads. After World War II, the 3:00 to 11:00 supervisor and the 11:00 to 7:00 supervisor were both RNs. And then the nuns took over as charge nurses on 7:00 to 3:00. And we would work on the floors, the different departments we were assigned. And then we'd go to class. Not much time for play. It was -- our day always started -- if you were going to breakfast, if you were, say, on the day shift, you always went to chapel first. Every day you lined up and went to chapel. I sang. And then all their Catholic holidays, they formed a choir. And so I've sung at many high masses and festivals and

coronations.

CS: Were you a Catholic growing up?

BS: No, I was a Methodist growing up. A lot of Protestant nurses. Lot of protestant nurses. They were good schools.

CS: How many girls were in the schools?

BS: I don't know how many were in the school. There were three classes. And I think there were 35 in my class.

CS: Okay. And they would start a class every four months or six months? Or every -- once a year?

BS: What do you mean start?

CS: Well, you said there were three classes.

BS: Oh, I can't remember. It was just an automatic --

CS: I was just wondering how many --

BS: Yeah, every year a new class came in and you just went up. There wasn't any real formal thing to it. It was just a rotation. And our graduation -- it was a three-year course. Our graduation was very, very unique. It was six blocks from the hospital, Mercy Hospital. And our school was attached to the hospital. We marched -- all three classes marched with police escort to the cathedral in Des Moines. And from there, there was a service for us. And in the service, each nurse was called to the front. The bishop was sitting there. You knelt. You kissed his ring. He gave you a blessing, and you walked back to your pew.

Each graduate student nurse did that. So I had --

CS: Now, was this an RN -- was this making you an RN?

BS: No, no. You had to take -- after all of this, then there was a date where the state board was taken. And the state board -- nurses from all over the state of Iowa came. And it was held at the capital. And that's where we took the exam. And the exam was two days long.

CS: So the RN was -- could not be granted by a private institution. It was given by the state.

BS: Yeah.

CS: Is that still the case?

BS: Yes.

CS: I didn't realize that.

BS: Yes, but they don't do it that way anymore. They sit down to a computer and they know within an hour whether they passed or not. It took me from -- let's see when did I take the -- I think I took the exam in August, September, something like that. And I didn't hear whether I had passed until October. And I was waiting, because I had already signed up for the Army, but they couldn't take me until I had passed state board. And so I passed state board, and I was off to the Army.

CS: So this was a full three-year course that you did?

BS: Full three-year course.

CS: So you were graduating then in 1944?

BS: Uh-huh.

CS: Okay. So you -- what made you decide that you wanted to go in the Army?

BS: Well, I didn't -- I really didn't decide to go into the Army. I wanted the Navy. My family was all Navy. Someplace in the close relationship there was an admiral in the Navy. And he lived -- he was retired and he lived near us. I wanted to go into the Navy, but I was too small. I was too short. The Navy wouldn't have me. So I went into the Army. And the Army didn't want me. I was half an inch too short. I was 4' 11 1/2". And I told the man that was doing all this measuring and everything, I said it's not -- I went in fighting. It was not for him to decide. And everything came -- decisions came out of Omaha. I said, "You send my papers to Omaha. The general surgeon will decide whether I can come in or not." He said, "You've got to sign a waver." I said, "I'll sign a waiver." I signed a waver on half an inch, and it came back approved. I got into the Army. And off to Camp Carson.

CS: They can't measure how big your heart is.

BS: Well, that --

CS: So you're off to Fort Carson and boot camp then.

BS: Yeah. They didn't call it boot camp, though. It was

called basic training.

CS: Oh, of course, of course. You would be becoming an officer, so.

BS: Yeah. And (inaudible) it was -- we wondered why we went through all we did. The mornings started very early, before breakfast. We marched to a gym. We had exercises. We were dressed in fatigues. We went back to the nurses' quarters in formation, dressed in the duty uniform. Went to breakfast, then after breakfast we went to classes. We had classes until lunchtime. Then we went to lunch. After lunch, we dressed in fatigues and we were taught to march by sergeants.

CS: And the classes would be covering what sort of subjects? Just general Army discipline and rules and regulations?

BS: That's right. How to be an Army nurse. The rules and regulations of how the hospitals operated, how you operated as an Army nurse, what the rules and the regulations were. It was very, very strict. It was very, very strict.

CS: Do you remember how you got from Iowa out to Fort Carson? Did you ride a troop train?

BS: Yeah, it had to be a train. Had to be a train. I don't remember that it was a troop train, though.

CS: So you took a train. And this was what time of year? You got there in, what, January or so?

BS: I got there the first part of November, because I was there for Thanksgiving. I think I got there in October.

CS: Up until that time, had you ever been that far away from your home in Iowa?

BS: Never. Never been away from home. But I never -- well, when I got into nurses training, yes, then I was homesick. But after I -- my mom and dad talked to me, German-Irish, I decided I wouldn't get homesick anymore.

CS: Well, but when you were going through that three-year course of nursing -- how far away from your hometown was Des Moines?

BS: I think a hundred -- well, it was the center -- Des Moines is the center of Iowa, basically. And my family was over on the Mississippi. Probably 150 miles, I think, from home. And the --

CS: How often were you able to get home?

BS: Not very often. You weren't allowed to go home. No, because you didn't have the time off. You were there.

CS: For three years you were hitting it pretty solid then.

BS: Yeah.

CS: Did your parents get to come -- any of your siblings or your high school friends or anything come down to see you?

BS: I didn't have the time to visit with them.

CS: Well, the war was on, so I guess everybody was pretty busy

then.

BS: Yeah. Well, and the education -- the way we had it at the hospital, it wasn't like it is today where you can get out and visit with the people and that sort of thing. It was strict. And you were so busy studying and working, when you got away from the hours on duty, then you better study. In fact, our chemistry class, everybody -- the professor was from Drake University, and everybody in my class flunked chemistry. The nuns fired the university professor and passed all of the students under him. That's how I got through chemistry. It was that strict. No, there wasn't a whole lot of fun time. Because -- and after the war, of course, the hours on duty became longer. Second year of my nurse's training, I was working, I would say, probably -- if I didn't have classes, I was putting in an eight hour day. And we worked 3:00 to 11:00. And there was a shift. We'd go on at seven o'clock at night. We'd have a couple hour break during the middle of the night, and then we'd go back on duty and be there at six o'clock to get every -- all the six o'clock duties done. The 3:00 to 11:00 -- by that time the nuns were in charge of the wards during the day. We had a 3:00 to 11:00 supervisor who was normal. And we had an 11:00 to 7:00 supervisor that was not a nun. Junior students -- I would work -- when I worked 3:00 to

11:00, you work an eight-hour shift. Work 3:00 to 11:00. I had a senior nurse as my partner. I worked the urology department then. And I remember one incident. The senior nurse and I always seemed to get 3:00 to 11:00 and 11:00 to 7:00 together. And this on the urology floor, when we were working 3:00 to 11:00, one evening -- and of course techniques that they used at that time were a lot different than we do now. But anyhow, urology. For some unknown reason, a patient had had prostate surgery and there was something about an irrigation bottle or -- it was very complicated. But anyhow, the orderly said, "I'll go with you." And the senior nurse was sitting at the desk. And how this man, who was the 3:00 to 11:00 and 11:00 to 7:00 orderly, had rope in his pocket -- I think he must have been working with an orthopedic patient prior to coming to help us. We decided, since this nurse was asleep at the desk, we'd tie her there. We tied her there. And when we went in and we were very busy working, and we heard somebody say, "Miss [Delaplane?!]" And we heard the chair rattled. The supervisor caught us. I don't know what happened to the orderly. But I know that we couldn't have any freedom for six months. (laughs) We didn't go out anyhow. It didn't make any difference. But that was just one time. Another time I was working with her on the

medical floor, again 3:00 to 11:00 or a split 7:00 to 7:00, and we decided -- the medical floor had also a full kitchen where we used to cook some meals for diabetics and so forth. Well, this night, it was kind of boring, and we decided to make some fudge. Again, the supervisor found us. And it happened to be the night supervisor. She was working a double shift. So once again, Miss Delaplane and I were tied down. We had no privileged. But those were the mischievous days.

CS: Well, yeah, it sounds like you --

BS: But it was -- we learned a lot. The doctors taught us, and we were taught. And it's still a practice I take seriously. When I'm working in the hospital and I need a doctor, I don't just say hello. It's, "Hi, Dr. So-and-so." We were taught that we would know the name of every doctor. And when we met him anywhere on the floor, we would greet him and call him by Dr. So-and-so. That happened on every department.

CS: Well, I think that sounds like it would be a good habit.

BS: They need some of it now. They need some of it now. But that got me through nurse's training, and I passed state board.

CS: How did you feel about your exam when you took the RN exam? Did you think -- did you feel pretty confident, or was it

really tough?

BS: I was scared to death. It was two days of writing. The entire student body from Iowa came to Des Moines. And we took the exams for two days in the House of Representatives. And I don't know if you've ever been in a house of representatives. It's very formal. If I remember correctly, I went back a couple years ago to see what it was really like, but all this red velvet and dark mahogany. That was enough to scare the living daylights out of us if the exam didn't. But we -- it was for two days we wrote. And then we all after the last day, we all went to -- there was a favorite bar in Des Moines. And I think that we all went to Babe's and had a big party, because we all knew we flunked. But then I went home. After that, I didn't want to work at the hospital. I knew I was going into service. And I went home and I didn't hear until October or -- it was the first part of October that I heard I had passed state board. And immediately I was on my way to Camp Carson.

CS: So they were just waiting for that --

BS: All they [needed?] was the authorization.

CS: Now, World War II is going on here. What were your siblings doing at this time?

BS: Oh, they were all younger than I. They were still in

school. Dad was a mechanic, had his own gas station and garage. But no, my siblings -- I'm the oldest of six. So they were all in school. And they were still -- mother had six. So the babies, the last two children, were still in school.

CS: So even when you got out of nurses training, they were still too young to really be eligible for the draft.

BS: Oh, yeah. Nobody was -- no. I was the oldest. I was born in '22. And how mother and dad arranged this, I'll never know. We were all born in even years. I was born in 1922. My next sister, '24. My brother, '26. My next sister -- what?

CS: Twenty-eight?

BS: Twenty-eight. And then a brother, and then another baby. There's exactly ten years between me and my baby sister. But no, none of them --

CS: And you weren't around them much after you got out of high school, because you were locked into school in Des Moines for that three-year period, and then you went off to the Army, so.

BS: Yeah. I never really knew them well. But they knew when I came home that I was the oldest and I was in charge.

CS: I imagine after all the nurse's training you had, you knew how to discipline people.

BS: Yeah. But none of them went into the service. Well, my brother went into the service for -- I can't remember which -- was it for the Korean?

CS: Probably Korea, yeah.

BS: But he --

CS: Well, so back to Fort Carson, then. You're in basic training, and you're doing basically your classes and --

BS: Classes and working as a nurse in the hospital. That's where you learned your rules and regulations, what was against policies. And this happened in -- at Camp Carson. It seems that I was -- that we were giving back rubs. And the ward officer called me in and said, "Why are you ordering so much alcohol?" They thought we were drinking it.

CS: Well, it's isopropyl. You use it for --

BS: But anyhow. They said, "These guys don't need back rubs. They're up and about. You nurses stop giving them back rubs." That was the first time I got called on the carpet. But it was regular duty. We took the -- we didn't have a nurse above us to tell us what to do. We had been taught in school and we were in charge of the ward. And of course these seasoned military men, most of them had been overseas. They gave us a bad time.

CS: So this was a -- sounds like a fairly new hospital setup

that you're going into then. Because you don't have any senior nursing staff to give you --

BS: It was all Army nurses. All Army nurses. They were duty. They had already been through basic. This was their assignment, to be at Camp Carson. My after basic, I went to Winter General.

CS: And where is that?

BS: That's in Topeka, Kansas.

CS: Okay. So how long did your basic training last then?

BS: I got there in October, and the second of January, I went to Topeka, Kansas. And all of this -- well, to travel -- when we went to -- I guess it was a -- we went by train. And the military had one car to themselves. We weren't mingled with others. Now, whether the whole train was a troop train, or whether it was just our particular train that was --

CS: But you had a group of nurses that you went with?

BS: Oh, yeah. This group right there, they were the ones. They were all with us at Camp Carson.

CS: Okay. So you -- that was your -- sort of your class then in basic training?

BS: Yeah. You were considered a class. You had a graduation, and you passed in review.

CS: You got your commissions?

BS: There wasn't anything formal about the commissions. When you went in, you were immediately an officer. There was no big ceremony or anything like that. You were immediately a commissioned officer. And they had to respect you as such.

CS: Okay. So in January then you went to Topeka. And that was going to be, as far as you knew it at that time, you regular duty station then?

BS: We were on -- yes. We went there, but we all anticipated -- we were -- you know, you have your feelings. We knew it wouldn't be long before we would be seeing active duty. So when we go there, and after our first formal meeting, we were told, "You're on the alert." And it was just a matter of time. And we were sent out. I can't remember the exact month. When was it, that -- April of '45. It was in April. See, I got there in January --

CS: So from January to April, you were at Winter --

BS: Topeka, Kansas in Winter General.

CS: And that was another -- it was an Army hospital similar to the one that you had been in at Fort Carson?

BS: Yeah. All of your Army hospitals were set up the same during that period of time. It was -- well, they were set up. Let's see if I've got a picture here someplace. More or less this is a routine setup for an Army ward. Except that if it was in a building, you had -- the wards were set

up. When you left the hall and went in, you had the office for the nurses in charge right there. Then you went in -- I think there was four private rooms, two on each side, that were private rooms for patients that needed privacy. Then you went into the ward, which was set up with 10 beds on either side.

CS: Now were the soldiers in the hospital there then, were they just general --

BS: They were --

CS: -- problems, health problems? Or were they combat veterans? Were there a lot of wounds? What sort of mixture did you have?

BS: We had medical wards, which were malaria -- oh, I can't re-
- just regular sicknesses. Then you had wards where there were wounds and surgical orthopedics, that sort of thing.

CS: Burns?

BS: Don't remember any burns. Most of World War II was abdominal wounds, chest or head injuries. When I was at basic training -- I mean when I was at Winter General, I was assigned -- well, I was in charge of three wards. And all three wards were medical. They were convalescing patients, patients that had had surgery, and that sort of thing. And the patients that were convalescing were all battle-oriented. And they -- how I ever had in it to do as

I did, because they were an unruly bunch. A ward officer called me in and said he was giving me -- I had two wards, regular wards. And he told me he was going to send me to this convalescing ward to be a charge nurse. And he said, "It's strict. They're tough." He said, "I think you can handle it." He said, "I want you to go down there, and I want you to get them to the Army way." These guys, all combat. And their attitude was -- you know, the world owes us a living now.

CS: Really?

BS: Cocky bunch. And --

CS: Well, perhaps some of the -- came from the fact that they didn't think that they would probably be alive long enough to get back to the US (inaudible).

BS: Oh, those -- and there was no -- there's no rank in a hospital. And the colonels -- the first thing I did, I put a colonel on KP to let them know that I meant business. The second thing I did was I had the ward offic-- or the ward corpsman call the group to attention. Well, when you call a ward group -- they probably don't do this anymore. But when you call them to attention, those who are able are to be up beside the bed. Those who are not able to get up are to be on their back in the bed. Well, this bunch, when the corpsman called them to attention, they just looked at

him and went about their business. I told him, "Call it again." And they kind of idled around a little bit. Didn't know what they were going to do. So this little second lieutenant with bright shiny bars walked out in front and called them to attention. And then I got their attention. And then from that time we didn't have -- we had the usual pranks of putting cereal in their beds when they've gone off someplace and did all kinds of things. But to show the colonel that you didn't have any rank, I put him on KP. And then he was a pretty good guy after that. When I went overseas, though, I signed up for the operating room.

CS: Had you done any specialty work up until then?

BS: Uh uh.

CS: So pretty much all just wards --

BS: Just routine --

CS: Routine nursing?

BS: Yeah. And I don't know why, but I was always assigned either convalescent or medical. I was never in the post-operative areas. Some of the nurses worked -- and that's where all the injuries were. And I do not remember an amputation in the --

CS: An amputee, you mean, in the wards that you were in?

BS: Yeah.

CS: Do you think those might have been segregated into particular hospital?

BS: Didn't have them. There were, I think, occasional. But not like you see now. Because the major amount of injuries, World War II, as I remember it, abdomen, chest, and head. In fact, I have a flashback to a head injury. It was in -- when I was in the Winter General hospital in -- outside of Manila. I had been transferred from the general hospital to a hospital that was for surgical patients only. And I think that if the bomb had not been dropped, I would have been en route to Japan. I think it was a jump-off for me. But anyhow, there was a young soldier that had a head injury. And we did not have a neurosurgeon. And so I sat with this young man until he died. And to this day -- and I guess I look back at it. I was used to death then. And I didn't really think if I had -- knowing now, I should have gotten his rank and -- well, I knew his rank at the time, but I should have contacted his family. Found out -- to contact his mom and dad that I had been with him when he died. But that's a flashback that I have on occasion. And I can remember the young man. I can remember him vividly. And that's the only thing in my military experience that will give me flashbacks. But I chose the operating room. When I left the operating room

as a student nurse, a surgeon said, "I hope she doesn't go into surgery. She doesn't know a thing about how to be a surgical nurse." So I chose operating room, because there was a good-looking corpsman. And this corpsman taught me how to be a good operating room nurse. After the first time I scrubbed, he said, "Now you can be an officer if you want to be. Or if you let me, I'll teach you to be a surgical nurse." So I let him teach me to be a surgical nurse. That's how I became an operating room nurse, was because of the good-looking corpsman. I don't think he's on any of these pictures. And I learned. We were teams. We had a surgeon. We had the assistant. We had a scrub person. And we had a corpsman. And the surgeon that I was assigned to was a man by the name of Shafer. Tall, dark-haired man. Nasty disposition. Temper. And then the other man that was a first lieutenant -- Shafer was a captain, and the assistant was a lieutenant. I was a second lieutenant, maybe first lieutenant by then, because I got my promotion soon after I got to Manila. And then the corpsman --

CS: Well, wait a minute. You're in Manila here?

BS: Yeah.

CS: Okay. I'm sorry, we skipped from Winter -- we were back in Winter, and I didn't realize we had gotten all the way to

the Philippines.

BS: Yeah, we got all the way to the Philippines.

CS: We might have to backtrack a little bit here, but go ahead.

BS: Well, everything at Winter General was kind of just dull.

You know, just routine. You were a nurse. You were waiting for the day that they said you're going to go. And then you were alerted, and you couldn't do this, you couldn't do that. We were able to take a leave and go home. And then you came back. And finally in April you shipped out to San Francisco. San Francisco, I've got a story about San Francisco. It rained. It rained, and it rained, all the time we were there. We had to be Class A uniform. You never got out of uniform in World War II. We would march to the meetings and then march back. You couldn't send your clothes to a dry cleaners. You just hoped they'd dry. Because you're on the alert. You might have an hour's notice that you were leaving. Well, every day we marched. Every day we had a lecture. And every day the lecture ended with, "I have advice for the nurses" -- and of course there were no females -- "I have advice for the nurses. If rape is inevitable, relax and enjoy it." Every lecture ended with that. And I don't know if you were in Texas when a governor -- I think his name was Williamson -- was running against Perry for the

governorship. And he gave that expression. Well, a Dr. Hawkins heard it, and said, "Oh! What a horrible thing to say!" And I said, "Well, Dr. Hawkins, that's nothing new." And he looked at me, so I told him about the lecture and all. He said, "Well, that's not right." I said, "That was the military. You just took it and kept on walking." Now I imagine if an officer or -- would be reprimanded for saying something like that. But then, no.

CS: Okay. Well -- and back again to the end of your stint at Winter General. When you got your orders to report to San Francisco, you were given a leave, home leave?

BS: We had -- I think I had a week at home.

CS: Now, was that the only time then after -- since you had gone into the Army that you had a chance to go home?

BS: Right.

CS: Even though you were in Topeka, and it was only a few, maybe [four hundred miles?]. So you got to go home, and then you saw all the folks --

BS: Well, see, I was only in Topeka for four months.

CS: Okay. So then from there you went to -- you went by train out to San Francisco.

BS: Yeah, we were on the troop train going from Topeka to San Francisco.

CS: And then in San Francisco you were on standby there,

waiting for --

BS: We were on alert from -- and I don't remember really how long we were there. In a letter that I've got -- well, here. This is the history of our hospital, the 311th General. This is the entire history of it. It started from Camp Carson. I think that was in -- oh, that was in Illinois. But that's where it started, and then we ended up in Manila. And this tells of the entire [journey?].

CS: So you formed a hospital from Winter General then --

BS: When we went overseas, we formed the 311th General Hospital.

CS: Okay. The month of November in '44.

BS: That's when it started joining. See they had -- the corpsmen were one place. The nurses were all -- well, we were scattered to different hospital areas. But the only time that the entire unit was together was when we got to San Francisco.

CS: So when you got to San Francisco, you came together as a hospital unit.

BS: Right.

CS: Okay. This is -- that's good. Do you remember about how many people would have been in that --

BS: Lord no. It was a general hospital, so you can imagine that it was one of the larger groups to get together.

CS: And it was just people now. No equipment at all?

BS: No equipment. Nothing. Just -- and we were on the SS Monterey.

CS: Did you know what your destination was going to be at that time?

BS: No. We all had a good idea that it was the -- leaving from San Francisco that it would be an island in the Pacific. And we all figured that we'd be going into Manila, because that's where the activity was.

CS: And this was -- what month did you --

BS: This was in April.

CS: April, okay. Now Okinawa had been invaded.

BS: Oh, yeah. All of it was -- right then, Okinawa -- no, Okinawa hadn't been invaded yet.

CS: The invasion started in Okinawa in April.

BS: Okay. Okay. Yeah. Iwo Jima.

CS: Iwo Jima was in February of '45.

BS: Yeah, well that's when we were waiting to go. We were waiting to go then.

CS: Okay. So then you got your orders to ship out. And you went to Dutch New Guinea.

BS: We stopped -- we just docked. We stopped at Pearl Harbor. And the sailors, the Navy personnel got off at Pearl Harbor for 24 hours and came back. And then we went to New Guinea

and Hollandia, I think. And then into Manila Bay.

CS: And when you got to Manila Bay, do you remember about the date that you would have --

BS: No. And you know, I had a friend -- she's deceased now -- she told her family that when we got to Manila that we had to go down a rope ladder onto a little carrier -- I can't remember what they were called -- to get to shore. But I don't remember that. I remember that we pulled up to the dock and we went down. And I do not remember. But she swore that we were not at the dock, but that we went down a rope ladder into one of these little things that they -- but I don't remember that. And then from there, once we got down -- and the trip over was not -- there wasn't a whole lot of fear. I know that sometimes this man -- this ship was alone. He never had an escort. And according to reports and everything, he zigzagged across the Pacific. And I can remember nights -- you were never -- it was never quiet. You could always hear the engines. And sometimes I'd wake up at night because it was so still. And I'd ask one of the Navy men. I said, "Why was it so quiet last night?" And I don't know whether he was pulling my leg or whether it was actually true. He said, "We stopped when we are in submarine territory." And this man zigzagged across. He didn't make a straight -- I heard that. I

talked to the staff a lot about things that were going on.

CS: And during all this time, you haven't done any nursing, per se, since you left --

BS: We sat on the deck. Just had a good time. We formed a chorus. And there's a song that still just rings in my ear. Are you familiar with the hymn, "Were You There When They Crucified My Lord?" Our choir formed. And we ended every choir performance with that song. That was our last song. And this year -- I have for years wanted Linda [Ables?] at the First United Methodist Church to sing that song. It's too difficult. Too difficult. This year -- and I wasn't able to take -- I belong to the choir. But somebody talked me into being an usher. And the choir sang that song at Easter this year. But that song -- and we had a choir on board the ship, and that was the song we ended our -- I don't know if we had music. I can't remember. I can't remember how it started. But every day we sang a group of songs. And it was a very quiet time. We never felt fearful.

CS: Well, the Japanese Navy by that time had been pretty much eliminated.

BS: Oh, yeah. You didn't have -- there was always the fear. The ship was always blackout. You always had the fear --

CS: Well, it'd be a normal precaution on that, sure.

BS: But yeah, a Japanese soldier committed hara-kiri in front of our administration building. The war was over. We had another one join or mess hall. He got in the food line.

CS: Okay, so --

BS: Now where are we?

CS: Well, you left Hollandia and Dutch New Guinea, and then you were on your way to the Philippines. Now, when you came into Manila Bay, when you got off the ship in Manila Bay, your hospital group --

BS: No, the nurses all went -- I think that it might have been a school of some sort. It was a Catholic school where -- see, this is where the nurses went. This was a building. And it was -- and I don't have another picture. Off on the back of this building, there's a picture of a grotto with the virgin Mary statue there. And I used to go out there. I guess I already had Catholic blood in me after three years. I used to go out there and say prayers. But that's where we spent our time. And at that time, I don't know where the males were. But they were busy setting up all the hospital. And we did not meet them until our tents were set up and the fence was set up.

CS: And how far away from Manila was this ten hospital that you went to?

BS: Miles and miles.

CS: So you got on trucks, and went out to the hospital, and were introduced to your new home. And a pretty muddy, messy place, I imagine?

BS: Yes.

CS: Hot and sticky?

BS: Yes. Yeah, it was mud. We didn't have any walks. And the rainy season, it was -- well, you can see here. There's some of the mud right there.

CS: Yeah, that looks like a real mess, yeah.

BS: And I have a picture of a couple nurses walking. We wore fatigues most of the time. But when -- I got a picture of a couple of the nurses coming towards me walking in this muddy -- my mother said, "Did you find the deepest mud you could find?" And mother, that's the way we lived. We had that old latrine there. We lived in tents. The men set up the hospitals. And they'd bring the beds in. We set the beds up. They'd just bring them in in piles and we set them up. Then they'd bring in the mattresses, and we'd take the mattresses and put them on the beds. Then, of course, we'd put all the linen on. And when we first met our hospital, that's the way it looked right there.

CS: Do you remember the time frame for this? After you left Manila. You said you were in Manila for several weeks, and then you went to the hospital.

BS: I have no idea. I have no idea. Time -- I don't even remember having a calendar. It was -- every day was the same.

CS: Well, you were in San Francisco in April. So it takes you a month or so to get over there, and a month or so in Manila. So April, May, June. You're looking at June, maybe -- it was almost July?

BS: No, it was during the rainy season. It was during the rainy season. So it was fairly early that we got there.

CS: Okay. And how long was it before you started receiving patients? And where were the patients coming from?

BS: They were coming from all over. And I cannot remember -- see, I never saw a patient. I never talked to a patient. I was in the operating room.

CS: And let's go back to your story now, now that we've gotten you to Manila. Go back to your story about the --

BS: I may have to make another appointment.

CS: Go back to your story about you -- this is where -- during this process you join the operating team because of the cute corpsman. And you are going -- you've got your group together. And you've got a captain surgeon and a first lieutenant assistant surgeon. And then you were going to tell a story. We got sidetracked back to Winter General.

BS: Oh, I was talking about Captain Shafer having such a

horrible temper. And I had scrubbed that day. And of course, I'm Dutch-Irish, too. And I had learned -- well, it didn't take me long to say, "You know, you may be a lieutenant and he's a captain, but you've still got rights." And that day he had -- his temper was horrible. And my corpsman had taught me how to slap instruments into the surgeon's hand so it burnt the hand. So I started snapping instruments into his hand. And he finally caught on that I wasn't happy. And he told his assistant, "We'd better calm down. Our nurse is angry." So when we were finished, I took my instruments and I went to the back table and was getting things separated and all. I didn't even bother to take my mask down, and I was ignoring everybody. And Captain Shafer came up behind me and took my mask down. He says, "Let's kiss and make up." And he gave me a kiss on my cheek. And that was the end of that operation.

CS: Okay. So did you stay with the same surgical --

BS: Stayed with the same surgical team until we all separated. They went home early and different things. But no, I stayed with the operating room. We kept the -- you know these old-fashioned green oxygen tanks? Well, we kept one in the -- where we made up all our supplies and everything, so that if you came into scrub, like in the middle of the

night, and you'd been partying, you could go over and take a whiff of oxygen to clear your brain and then go on in and scrub. But it was much pretty -- you got down -- every day was the same. Every night. When we lived in a tent, we did not have electricity. We had lanterns. We didn't have high-class type lanterns. So I dated a supply officer for one reason; I needed a lantern for our tent. So I got it. But it was much -- you got into a routine. You got very much -- and I think it was -- I can't remember. I think it was Clark Field that was near our base. And so when the -- and the pilots and the officers would get rest, you know, to come in. And they came into Manila. And our group of nurses had a good reputation, because we were not allowed to go away from the hospital in just sloppy dress. We had to go out in Class A uniforms, what was considered Class A at that time. And so they'd come out to the lounge where we had -- once we got all set up, fancy-like. And we actually had a lounge. They'd come in, and somehow or another, we'd meet up with someone. And that was our date. We liked dating the Air Force boys, because they had beautiful homes that -- they had taken over the Filipino homes. And you could go out there and party. They had -- the Filipinos were working as their maids. These guys had it made. They had it made. But that was my time in

Manila.

CS: Were there any -- did you specialize in any particular type of surgery?

BS: No. Our surgery was all -- the surgery we had was battle-type surgery. Wound injuries, that sort of thing. I can remember scrubbing for abdominal surgery a lot. This might make you kind of sick, but the first time -- and we took care of the Filipinos, too. The Filipino guards when they came in. And the first time we had an abdominal wound and had to do surgery, we got kind of sick, because when we opened up -- and his -- it was a mess. But there also were all these little intestinal worms swimming around. And it took all of us just a few minutes to get our act together to go on with the surgery. But then we got accustomed to it when we had the Filipinos. But it was always abdominal.

CS: The Filipinos tended to have internal parasites a lot?

BS: Uh huh. A lot of it. A lot of it. I don't think we ever operated on one that didn't have them.

CS: I'll be darned.

BS: They were in the intestines. Probably from what they were getting to eat. But I can't remember. I can remember one -- doing one chest surgery that was very, very difficult. Oh, and we also -- if they had an ingrown toenail, and they would remove a toenail, I have never been able to watch

that. And this particular day, the first time I ever saw one, and they peeled that toenail off. The next thing I knew, my favorite corpsman was carrying me out in the hall. I said, "Put me down, we're on duty!" (laughter) But, you know. But it got to be just status quo. We had -- you were on call 24 hours. We had a Filipino guard that was supposed to be guarding the nurses at night. But when the operating room nurses we by him, he was asleep. And I ran -- I had an interesting experience when I went to college after my Army career. The nurse -- I was at Marquette University, and I spent time in the operating room as a nurse. The nurse that was circulating, we got started talking about our experiences as an Army nurse. She had taken my position at 311th General in the operating room. And she also had my room.

CS: Well, I'll be darned. Small world.

BS: Small world. And it all started, the conversation started -- I was scrubbed in that particular day. She was circulating. And the lights and things just kind of -- and Milwaukee had had -- they said afterwards it was like a tremor, a small earthquake. The doctors had all been surgeons overseas. And they said, "You know, did somebody drop a bomb someplace?" And that's the way we got started talking about our military experiences.

CS: Well, that's amazing. Half a world away.

BS: Yeah. But it was all -- it got down to pretty much status quo. It was very boring after the bomb was dropped.

CS: Now, so you had been there for quite some time when the bomb was dropped.

BS: The bomb was dropped in August of '45.

CS: August 6th. That's the first one.

BS: And we did not -- we were not aware. We didn't -- you know. And that particular night, when -- it was August 14th. We were all out at a party with GIs. And we got word the bomb had dropped, and everybody knew the war was over. And they went wild. They went wild. And we were out -- that particular night, we were out with a group of corpsman. And they started pulling our rank off. They started grabbing a hold of us. They'd never kissed a nurse. And so our dates that were medics from the unit, they said, "We're getting out of here." And so we left and went back. But it was wild. It was wild that night. And I don't know how, but we got word immediately that that bomb had dropped.

CS: It's pretty scary that they would lose control.

BS: Oh, they lost complete control. There were deaths that night because of the way they were firing and so forth. And here we were. Thank God, we were way out -- we always

were isolated. We never had a lot of anything around us, even to the end. And then most of my friends -- well, there were two of us. This nurse here and myself went to another hospital

CS: Do you remember her name?

BS: Agnes Langley. She died not too long ago. She became demented and was in a nursing home. She had a horrible time.

CS: You went to another hospital in the Philippines?

BS: Yeah. It was supposed to be set up as a general hospital, surgical patients only. I never remember a surgical case where I scrubbed in. I never remember doing anything at that hospital except sitting with this one young man. And he was blonde, and he had the head injury.

CS: The head injury. So that's when that incident occurred, was while you were at that hospital.

BS: Yeah. And I never -- it was going to be a surgical hospital. Only surgical patients. Ag never could remember it, but I know she went with me.

CS: Were you just there a short time, then?

BS: I can't remember that. The only thing I remember about that is that patient and sitting there. I remember that we were transferred there. I don't remember how we got there.

CS: So it must have been a very short period of time.

BS: It was a very short period of time. And then we got word that we were going home, and I can't remember where they took us in Manila. And we had to wait for a period of time in Manila. We came home on the USS *West Point*. And they waited -- we had to wait there in Manila for a long period of time, because the -- I don't know what his rank was of that ship. Admiral or whatever. He had never had a female on board a ship, and he wasn't about to take one. And so they informed him he might [rot?], because he wasn't going to leave there without the nurses. And so, finally, we got on the ship. And we were so glad to see the Air Force come on board. It was a Navy ship, and Navy corpsman, Navy -- everything was true Navy. And they had the Navy -- I don't know what they called it, but the Army used to call them PXs. Well, the Navy had their private PX. We, as a troop, couldn't go to it. The officers could, male officers got down there, the air corps. But when they came on, their [Valpaks?] -- they had in their Valpaks one complete dress uniform. The rest was all liquor. They would go own to the Navy PX and get [milkshakes?], and then come back up on deck. And so we had good times on the deck with spirited milkshakes. There were a few romances with the Navy men behind the lifeboats. But it was just -- and we traveled from -- it took us as long to get home as it took us to get

to Manila. We traveled from Manila. And here's where I have confusion. I don't know whether we saw Pearl Harbor that time or not. Maybe not. But we traveled to the Panama Canal. And we did not know -- we were alerted that if the ship could not get through the canal -- they thought the ship might be too wide to go through the Panama Canal at that time -- that they would take us all the way down around South America and then up. We were going to New York. Why they didn't take us into San Francisco, one will never know. But we went through the Panama Canal, and it took us all day to go through the Panama Canal. In '45, you know. But they had closed the canal to all traffic, and our ship went through. And they fill up the locks, and then they'd open up the locks, and the force of the water would push our ship through. And it was like this close. And of course, the canal in that time was nothing but forest on both sides. Just beautiful green forests. And I got seasick when we went into the Pacific, because we hit a storm. Every time we get on a ship we have a storm. So I went into -- from the canal into the Pacific. And I was working -- I had volunteered to work as a nurse in sick bay.

CS: You're coming back from Luzon, so you would be going into the Caribbean from the canal, right?

BS: No, we were going into the South Paci-- we were going into the Atlantic Ocean.

CS: Into the Atlantic, yes.

BS: Into the Atlantic and up the Atlantic -- that coast. And smack -- we hit a storm the day we left the United States. We hit a storm when we left the canal and went into the Atlantic Ocean. And I was a nurse working midnight to 4:00 and was taking care of the female patients. Didn't have a whole lot of them.

CS: So you were doing hospital duty on board the ship?

BS: Voluntary. Yeah, because I was bored. And one night I went down -- I didn't have anything to do. There weren't very many female patients. So I went down one night and I asked the corpsman if I could help them, because they were swamped. And they kind of looked at me, "Lieutenant?" I said, "I'm a nurse." I said, "I'm not one of your Navy nurses. I'm a nurse. I know how to give shots. I can work." So I helped them. But then one night, they weren't busy, and I wasn't busy, and I made the mistake of putting my head down on the desk and going to sleep. And I woke up when a Navy man was giving me a kiss. He said, "Navy nurses learn not to sleep on duty." And then when they found out that I was seasick, that's the time they said, "Are you hungry?" I said, "Yeah, I'm hungry." "We'll

bring you a sandwich." It was an open sandwich, had a very greasy pork chop on it.

CS: Oh boy.

BS: That was another episode that they weren't really nice to me. And then one night they came and they said, "Lieutenant, are your portholes secured?" Well, a lieutenant's not going to tell a corpsman that she doesn't know. So I said, "Certainly, they're secured. I checked them." I should have let him check them. Because we hit a storm, and the portholes came open, and the ocean came in. And we had beds to change. So whenever they asked about the portholes, I said, "Would you check them please?" But then it was an ineventful trip from then on. Nothing really much going on.

CS: So what port did you come into then on the US east coast?

BS: New York City.

CS: New York City.

BS: Saw the Statue of Liberty for the first time.

CS: Pretty nice sight, I'll bet.

BS: Disappointing.

CS: Really?

BS: Green, ugly. You know, you think of it as a -- well, when you think of a statue, you think of something glamorous or beautiful. She was green, green as they come. And of

course, it was February. And we went into a base in New Jersey. And again, there -- I can't remember if they had -- I think it was some kind of a train that took us from New York to New Jersey. And cold, it was so cold. We had -- we were two to a room. Cots to sleep on, Army cots. Each of us had an Army blanket. And [we'd like to?] froze to death. We were covering up with our jackets, whatever we could. And then from MacDill -- and I can't remember how long we stayed there. Then we went by train to Chicago to [Sheridan?] base. And we all had dismissal physicals, went home, and then for a leave. And I think that I was home for a week. And then I went back to Camp Sheridan and got my discharge. And I was madly in love with someone. So instead of -- they wanted to know if I wanted to stay in the Army and I said no. I should have stayed in the Army, but I was in love.

CS: Now when you had your physical there in Chicago. That brings up a question. Did you ever come down with any diseases? You or any of the nurses? Like with Malaria or anything while you were in the Philippines?

BS: I don't remember any Malaria.

CS: You don't --

BS: We took Atabrine all the time, and we had mosquito netting. But I don't remember -- I remember one corpsman died

because of Atabrine, and it affected his brain. And he was from my hometown. That happened while we were stationed at the 311th General outside of Manila. But that's the only thing -- that's the only time. I don't remember ever having any malaria. Any nurses --

CS: So basically you had a pretty healthy existence then while you were --

BS: Yeah. The one thing that we had, the nurses had, was impetigo. Because we had no deodorants. And the soap we used to bathe with was green soap. I don't know if you've ever heard of green soap.

CS: No, I haven't.

BS: It was a real harsh, hard soap. We used green soap for scrubbing for surgery. It was a real harsh soap. We didn't have any of the nice soaps. And we had absolutely no deodorants. And that's where -- there were a couple of the nurses that got bad infections, impetigo infection.

CS: Okay. Well, back to Chicago, I guess. You went back and they tried to get you to re-enlist or re-- or stay in the Army, I guess it would be for an officer. Now, how did you happen to fall in love then? You said you were in love with somebody.

BS: Well, I had fallen in love with a patient at Winter General. And we had corresponded all the time I was gone.

And I was going to meet him, in fact. And I did meet him. And after the service, it was a difficult time. Life was so, so different. And I went from -- after I got out of the service, I went to a VA hospital to work, and I worked in the operating room. But you had to start at the bottom. We felt like we weren't being recognized. And I know I went from the VA hospital to the Michigan University hospital, I and another nurse. And when I was at the VA hospital is when I was having so much trouble getting used to everything. He and I broke up. And I and this other nurse then went on to Michigan, to Ann Arbor. And I worked in the operating room. She was a medical nurse. And we finally decided we didn't like Ann Arbor, so we went to Detroit to the Ford Hospital and were talking to the chief nurse about working there. And when she talked to me, she said, "You military nurses are all having the same problems. You're not able to adjust to coming back. You've done so much, but we don't know what you've done." So basically she was telling us, "You have to prove yourselves. We can't give you a top position. We can't. Because we don't know. We can't get a resume on you. We know you've done a lot, but" -- and my friend had graduated from the University of Iowa, and she told her to go back to school and get a graduate course. And she told me, she

said, "You go to college for at least six months and get knowledge that way. And then look for a job." So I went to Marquette University for a semester, and I took a course in operating room supervising, technique, and management. And I also took a basic course. Then after that, when I went for my first -- my first civilian job was in Fort Sheridan, Illinois. Not Fort Sheridan. Evanston, Illinois. Evanston, Illinois I went to from Marquette University. And when I appeared there, I thought I was coming on as a staff nurse. But the assistant to the operating room nurse had been fired. She boiled the doctor's chainsaw. Believe it or not, we were using small chainsaw for amputations. And she boiled it. It should have been dry autoclaved. He just said, "You're fired," and she was gone. Because then anything a surgeon said was tops. She was gone. So I was the nun's assistant. And whenever there was a problem, the nun went to chapel to pray and left me in charge. And one day this famous orthopedic doctor had a balcony full of dignitaries. And the circulating nurse was having trouble. So I went in. And he wanted this, and he wanted that. So I got the instruments, and I sterilized them the way I was supposed to. And I took them in, knowing fair well he was going to start screaming and yelling at me. I walked in. He

started screaming and carrying on. I just dropped all the instruments. All sterile instruments just went all over the floor. And so I picked up the instruments and looked at him and I said, "I will sterilize them." And I went back and I sterilized them. And I took them back in and gave them to the scrub nurse on her table. And we had a perfect surgeon for the rest of the day.

CS: Sounds like you really know how to put them in their place.

BS: I'm part of the team. You need me as much as they need you. And the nuns taught me this. The nuns taught me this. Because as a student nurse, we had a Methodist doctor that would come over to -- bring a -- had a patient in. And he didn't like Mercy Hospital. And he didn't keep his good instruments there. He had all nasty instruments. And I was scrubbed one day when his instruments weren't just exactly as nice as he wanted, but they were his. And this one didn't work, so he'd fire it, throw it. Doctors -- surgeons used to throw instruments. And this particular day after surgery was finished, Sister Pauline came in, and she said, "Doctor, if you want instruments for your next surgery, you'd better pick them up, because my nurses are not going to pick them up." And she walked out of the room. Two nurses, and we just stood there. Pretty soon she came back. She said, "I need you in another room."

And so we went into another room. I don't know if doctor picked them up, or if she gave him a tongue-lashing and picked them up for him, but we didn't pick them up.

CS: Well, good for her for standing up for her nurses.

BS: Yeah. But he was the only one I ever worked with as a nurse that -- in the operating room that threw instruments like that. And he did, he pitched them right and left. Doctors used to do that. Surgeons --

CS: I've heard of that, yes.

BS: Oh, yeah. In the old days surgeons were horrible. It was nothing for them if you had the wrong instrument to hit your hand with the instrument. But then after that I settled down. I spent -- I don't know how many. I was in -- oh, I was at Evanston, Illinois until -- can't remember what year -- '51 -- '49, '49 I left Evanston and went to St. Louis. That's where one of my team members had married a man and was living there. So I went to St. Louis and I worked as an operating room at Barnes Hospital.

CS: This is one of your Army team members in St. Louis?

BS: Yeah, I can't -- right here. It's this one right here. She came from my hometown. And she was there. She was married, had a child. She told me, "Come on down." So I went down there and went to St. Louis U. And then that was about the time of Korea. And I got recalled. I was a

reservist, and I joined the Air Force nurse reserves. So I got recalled for the Korean campaign and came to Texas to Fort Worth, to Carswell Air Force Base. And that's where I met my husband. And he was a staff sergeant, and they kind of fraternized on enlisted and officers. So I decided, "Well, I'll get out of the service." So I got out of the Air Force to marry the sergeant.

CS: You were at Carswell?

BS: Uh huh. That's when the B-36s were so popular. I was the only nurse in the operating room. Well, there were too nurses in the operating room. One was a nurse anesthetist. And then I was the operating room supervisor. And then we had corpsmen. And I was on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If I wanted a vacation, then they'd pull somebody in to take my place. And it wasn't much fun, because we didn't have these little beepers then. And whenever I went out on a date, I had to call back to the corpsman and tell him where I was. But every time a B-36 took off or a B-36 came in, I was alerted, because they didn't know whether taking off they were going to land in Lake Worth, or if they came in, they were going to land in Lake Worth, or if they were going to crash.

CS: I didn't know those things were that unreliable.

BS: Oh, they were horrible. They were called the flying

boxcar.

CS: Really?

BS: Yeah. They were very unreliable. They were very unreliable.

CS: Well, they stayed around for several years. Seems like they --

BS: Well, that's the only thing we had. But what was it, the 52 that came in?

CS: Well, the 52s came along after that. But they had the B-29s, which were -- had [the same level?] --

BS: But they weren't as big and clumsy as the 36.

CS: Yeah. Well, the B-36 had a longer range. They were 10,000-mile bombers.

BS: Yeah, they were big things. They were huge. When my husband was stationed in Puerto Rico -- we spent three years in Puerto Rico at that Air Base.

CS: So he stayed in the Army?

BS: Huh?

CS: Your husband stayed in the Army?

BS: No, he was Air Force.

CS: Oh, he stayed in the Air Force, and you resigned your commission so that you could get married.

BS: Yeah. But I kept up with the military. I worked independence clinics up until -- Dyess Air Force Base,

1965, is the last military experiences I had.

CS: Nineteen --

BS: Sixty-five.

CS: Nineteen sixty-five.

BS: Ended my military nursing completely. Then it was more or less -- I was a civilian. I wasn't military. My military experiences stopped in '53.

CS: So your husband left the Air Force in '65?

BS: No, he retired in '65.

CS: He retired in '65.

BS: Yeah, he retired in '65. He was career.

CS: What did you do after he retired then?

BS: He was in Spain, and I was in Spain when he retired. And we came back first to Forth Worth. And I went back to the hospital I had worked in before there. But he couldn't find work. He was a -- he had been in the mess hall and head officers' clubs. He was charge of officers' clubs, or charge of the dining room and the kitchen in the Air Force. Beautiful, beautiful club in Puerto Rico. But he retired. We came to Fort Worth, and they had a bad -- well, an officer had been in charge of clubs, and so he got a job as a civilian in civilian clubs, and he messed up royally. So when my husband tried to get a job, they said, "Uh uh. We've been down the road with the military." And we got a

call from a chef at the Inn of the Hills. And he had been a chef someplace for my husband. I cannot remember where. I guess it was when we were stationed in Abilene. But anyhow, we got a call from him. He said, "There's something down here that you might be interested in." They were looking for an assistant food and beverage manager, which was club and restaurant. And we got the map out. Well, we knew where Fredericksburg was, because he had been hunting. You couldn't find Crewville on the map. And so we came down to the Inn of the Hills, March '65, pleasantly surprised. And he was one of the first food and beverage managers at Inn of the Hills. And I started working at Sid Peterson Hospital. And that's my career. And I'm still working but not nursing. (laughter)

CS: Well --

BS: I look back at my life I've been a very fortunate person. I've had an interesting career. I've seen a lot. I've done a lot. I've met a lot of people. And I'm just going to keep trying. Keep on meeting interesting people.

CS: Well, it sounds like you have indeed lived a very, very interesting life. Lived all over the world, done so many different kinds of jobs, worked as --

BS: I've even lived in Palma, Majorca. You know where Palma, Majorca is?

CS: Well, that's -- it's pretty ritzy kind of resort area.

BS: My husband was charge of an officer NCO club there. That's very, very ritzy.

CS: Wow. Well, Bernice, I know that there are other stories in there, and perhaps we can come back and do this again, and you could relate another set of episodes to us. Because I'm sure you must have a thousand of them. But I want to -- first of all, I want to tell you how much we appreciate you spending some time with us here at the museum today to let us have this record for our files. And I'll tell you -- I need to tell you too how much we appreciate the fact that you and so many other people served the country the way that you did. And we don't tell you enough sometimes how much we appreciate it. But I would like to take that chance to --

BS: You know, I've had -- to this day -- and I have all along -- when I see a military person, I've always greeted them and that sort of thing. But now -- and it happened at the hospital one day. I was leaving and an enlisted Army man came in. And I stopped him to congratulate him and thank him. And I looked at him and I said, "You know what? I was an Army nurse in World War II." And so we got started talking. And he went to shake my hand, and I said, "I never got to do this when I was an Army nurse." I said,

"But I can hug you now, because I don't have rank."

(laughter) So I -- and to this day, when you see a man with the caps on, they'll have something on the bill of the cap, you're missing some good stories. Because every time -- if I'm in a situation where I can, I say, "Where were you?" And I have met one person who was in the Philippines at one time.

CS: Well, and we've got yours today. And again, I appreciate it.

END OF AUDIO FILE