JANET A. BACHMEYER

Denver, Colorado Unit

Transcript of an Oral History Interview

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Janet A. Bachmeyer

PREFACE

This transcript is the product of an interview conducted on 21 April, 1986, for the Women's Overseas Service League.

Signed, dated agreements of release and biographical information accompany the original cassette.

Transcribed by Patricia Siggers

Lansing, Michigan

1 June, 1989

WOMEN'S OVERSEAS SERVICE LEAGUE

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Oral History Project

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JANET A. BACHMEYER

8 Denver, Colorado Unit

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| 10 | **MB:** | **What is your name?** |
|  | **JB:** | **Janet A. Bachmeyer.** |
| 12 | **MB:** | **When did you join the Denver Unit of WOSL?** |
|  | **JB:** | **In July of 1978.** |
| **14** | **MB:** | **Were you in the Service?** |
|  | **JB:** | **Yes, I served in the United States Army Nurse Corps** |
| **16** |  | **from January, 1944, to June, 1974.** |
| **18** | **MB:**  **JB:** | **What made you decideto come into the Army?**  **Well, at the time Igraduated from nursing school,** |
|  |  | **in 1943, it was during World War II. I definitely** |
| **20** |  | **wanted to serve in the Army, plus it was quite a** |
|  |  | **patriotic thing to do at that time, which I** |
| **22** |  | **definitely believe in.** |
|  | **MB:** | **Before you came into the Army, what did you do?** |
| **24** | **JB:** | **I attended the Evangelical School of Nursing in** |
| **26** | **MB:** | **Chicago.**  **What were your primary duties in the Service?** |

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JB: Well, at the beginning it was staff nurse, or ward

28 nurse; then supervisor; and then I went into chief nurse situation.

30 MB: How long were you in the Service? JB: Thirty years.

32 MB: Where did your travels take you?

JB: For my overseas assignments, I was in England during

34 World War II; then in Korea and Vietnam; and I had two tours in Germany; and of course, many stateside

36 ass ignments.

MB: Can you tell me what kind of housing you had when

38 you were in the Service?

JB: The housing was quite a variety. Of course, when we

40 were in the field and during any of the wars, we were in tents as a rule; and then we had the

42 contowment structures in the United States (or stateside), and usually had our own rooms with maybe

44 a connecting bath. Then nurses' quarters were also in permanent buildings. After (we'll say) about

46 twenty years ago or so, we field grade officers could move off-post and have our own apartments.

48 Then it got to the point where they were encouraging everybody to move off-post, so we had apartments in

50 the houses.

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MB: What was the nature of the medical care available to

52 you?

JB: Well of course, being assigned to a medical unit, we

54 had full medical care including dental care also. It was always available even when we were in the

56 field.

MB: Tell me about your uniform?

58 JB: There again, that depended on our assignment. When we were on duty in the States and on wards and in

60 permanent hospitals, we wore white duty uniforms. In the field, it was fatigues. Then in supervisory

62 or administrative areas, we wore our Class A's.

MB: Can you please tell me a couple of your more

64 outstanding experiences that you had in the Service? JB: Well, one of them that came to mind was bivouac that

66 we had in Texas, and this is while activating our unit for overseas in 1944. We were on a forced road

68 march, and having to pass downwind from the fertilizer plant (about a mile)--by the time we

70 finished that, we were a little bit green: And I can honestly say that we did step up our marching

72 pace (laughter) quite a lot!

Then there was another one, when we were

74 enroute from New Jersey to New York. On a tender to a dock to board our ship to England, it was very

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76 late at night -- very dark, and the only sound was the water lapping against the tender. Just as our

78 chief nurse set foot on dock, a band which nobody saw burst forth with Pistol Packing Mama! It just

80 paralyzed all of us. We didn't know where all this noise came from (Laughter).

82 Then the third memorable thing was, I happened to be in London and on pass for a few days just as

84 VE-day was declared, and on the night after Churchill's famous speech — it was the first time

86 that every light in London was turned on, and believe me, it was quite a spectacular sight. That

88 was the first time since 1939, and this was 1944. It was the noisiest celebration throughout the whole

90 night that I had ever heard, or ever attended.

MB: What was the biggest adjustment you had to make when

92 you came into the Service?

JB: Well, I think it was really being away from home for

94 the first time, and over in England -- for the holidays, in particular. That was about the biggest

96 adjustment I ever had to make, but then I think anybody has to make that the first time away, and of

98 course, we had people to help us with it because we were all in the same boat.

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| **100** | **MB:** | **When you came into the Army, did you expect to make**  **it a career?** |
| 102 | **JB:** | **No. I hadn't really thought that far ahead, but as** |
|  |  | **I stayed in -- I did get out of the Service for a** |
| **104** |  | **little while and I retained my reserve, so when I**  **went back in I was still credited with it. I think** |
| **106** |  | **being at that age and still being under supervision,** |

etc., from home to training, to the Army; we had

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quite an adjustment to make getting out. I was out for awhile, and then when the Korean situation came along I decided I wanted to get back in; and I never regretted it.

MB: After your tour of duty in the Service was concluded, what did you do?

JB: I retired, and since then I've been volunteering. I didn't want to travel at first, but after a couple of years (I thought I never wanted to pack another suitcase again), then I got the traveling bug. I'm active in some organizations. I also like to do a lot of handiwork, and I read. I got reacquainted with the family and friends; and making new friends out here in Denver.

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122 MB: What has being a member of WOSL meant to you?

JB: I knew you were going to ask that (laughter).

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Really, I thought about that, and I think our purpose states it very well: To keep alive and develop spirit, comradeship, a sense of obligation to community, state and nation, and to those who are less fortunate; and to foster and promote friendship and understanding between our nation and others of the world. That’s really what it does mean to me.

MB: O.K., thank you very much.

End of Interview

Transcribed by Patricia Siggers

Lansing, Michigan

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