

JANET A. BACHMEYER

Denver, Colorado Unit

Transcript of an Oral History Interview

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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

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WOMEN'S OVERSEAS SERVICE LEAGUE

Oral History Project

JANET A. BACHMEYER

8 Denver, Colorado Unit

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.

MB: What made you decide to come into the Army?

18 JB: Well, at the time I graduated 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
Chicago.

26 MB: 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 assignments.

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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52 MB: What was the nature of the medical care available to
you?

54 JB: Well of course, being assigned to a medical unit, we
had full medical care including dental care also.
56 It was always available even when we were in the
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?

66 JB: Well, one of them that came to mind was bivouac that
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!

74 Then there was another one, when we were
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
108 quite an adjustment to make getting out. I was out
for awhile, and then when the Korean situation came
110 along I decided I wanted to get back in; and I never
regretted it.

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

114 JB: I retired, and since then I've been volunteering. I
didn't want to travel at first, but after a couple
116 of years (I thought I never wanted to pack another
suitcase again), then I got the traveling bug. I'm
118 active in some organizations. I also like to do a
lot of handiwork, and I read. I got reacquainted
120 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).

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

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

132

End of Interview

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136 Transcribed by Patricia Siggers

138 Lansing, Michigan

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