

BETTY BOWMAN

Denver, Colorado Unit

Transcript of an Oral History Interview

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Betty Bowman

PREFACE

This transcript is the product of an interview conducted on 17 March, 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

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WOMEN'S OVERSEAS SERVICE LEAGUE

Oral History Project

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BETTY BOWMAN

8 Denver, Colorado Unit

NOTE: Betty is being interviewed by

10 Marjorie Brown of the Denver Unit.

MB: What is your name?

12 BB: Betty Bowman.

MB: When did you join the Denver Unit of WOSL?

14 BB: I'm not sure, but I think it's been about ten years.

MB: So that would be about 1976?

16 BB: That sounds good.

MB: What branch of the Service were you in?

18 BB: Well, they kept changing the numerals, but two
different ones in the Army. The last I recall was
20 as a dietician in Women's Medical Service Corps, and
then later in the Army Nurse Corps as a nurse.

22 MB: What made you decide to come into the Service?

BB: A combination: travel, pay, security, patriotism.

24 MB: What year did you come into the Service?

BB: As a nurse, 1951.

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26 MB: What did you do prior to your coming into the
Service?

28 BB: A nurse in New York City, and prior to that, a
dietician.

30 MB: What jobs did you have in the Service?

BB: I was medical-surgical nurse; so that meant I worked
32 in all departments, just about in all capacities
except anesthesia.

34 MB: How long were you in the Army?

BB: Twenty two plus years.

36 MB: While you were in the Service, where did your
travels take you?

38 BB: Japan, Iran, Germany, Korea, and six U. S. states.

MB: What kind of housing did you have when you were in
40 the Service?

BB: It varied from tent, quonset-hut, dormitory style
42 with nine roommates, contowment, shared bath; later,
own apartment, civilian, off-base.

44 MB: What kind of medical care was available to you?

BB: It varied from disappointing to top-notch.

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46 MB: Tell me about your uniforms?

BB: Mostly the white nurse's uniform, fatigues, and
48 green uniform for office work.

MB: Can you tell me a couple of your more memorable
50 experiences, whether they be funny or sad or
whatever was important to you?

52 BB: Well, I just thought all the travel experiences were
so enriching, and many times there were very
54 fascinating celebrities visiting. One of the most
touching was the visit of Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt to
56 see the patients in Japan. She saw the ones that
were scheduled, but she went out of her way to look
58 over at the much more tragically wounded ones, and
you could see her deep concern for them: Plus the
60 gratefulness of patients, and I remember the Korean
lepers; men, bowing to us for expressing their
62 appreciation for their care by our hospital unit.

MB: Were you in Korea during the Korean War?

64 BB: No, I was in Japan.

MB: Tell me what was the greatest adjustment that you
66 had to make when you came into the Service?
Before we talk about adjustments, let's go back to
68 memorable experiences, O.K.?

BB: One of the saddest things for me, of course, were
70 some of the tragic casualties; the most severe ones.

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But I'll never forget visiting an orphanage in Japan
72 and seeing the forlorn, tragic, sad faces of the
children; of the Eurasians or Amerasians (the very
74 definitely children who were half Asian and half
American-Caucasian). I knew they were considered
76 and treated in the Oriental countries as non-persons
and non-citizens. I'll never get over seeing them
78 and I couldn't return to face it another time.

MB: Now tell me, did you have any problems adjusting to
80 the military?

BB: Oh, yes. I hated basic training. The regimentation
82 felt like one of the proverbial sheep in the herd;
and as a nurse anywhere, adjusting to hours--
84 constant rotation of shifts, particularly three to
eleven in the evening to come back at seven in the
86 morning -- I felt was like permanent jetlag and
actually was dangerous for everyone.

88 MB: When you came into the Service, did you plan on
making it a career?

90 BB: Yes.

MB: What prompted you to decide to make it a career?

92 BB: Probably many of the reasons that I stated
previously for joining; but I did usually love my
94 work and found it fascinating, along with the

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travel, plus security, and good pay was very
96 important.

MB: After you retired from the Service, what did you do?

98 BB: Well, it was nice to participate in things that I
had put off or wasn't able to do, especially when
100 you couldn't join -- For instance, I would take
adult education courses, because you could plan
102 ahead more than just a week at a time, and you could
be in regular attendance.

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

BB: Well, I've liked the comraderie of being with people
106 with similar experiences.

MB: Alright, thank you very much.

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End of Interview

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112 Transcribed by Patricia Siggers

114 Lansing, Michigan

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