

RITA GEIS

Denver, Colorado Unit

Transcript of an Oral History Reminiscence

All rights, title, and interest in the material recorded are assigned and conveyed to the Women's Overseas Service League for the purpose of publication, use in teaching, or other such uses that may further the aims and objectives of the League, such use and participation to be acknowledged in appropriate fashion and with due credit to:

Rita Geis

PREFACE

This transcript is the product of a tape-recorded reminiscence conducted 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

1987

RITA GEIS

2 Denver Chapter

4 RG: I was a conscription nurse; I'd serve one year, and then
6 be through. Instead, Pearl Harbor came along in
8 December, so I remained in the service. Most of my time
10 in the service was done in the surgical nursing depart-
12 ment; I also did supervision and ended up as chief nurse
14 of a general hospital. In this time, (it was three-and-
16 a-half years) my experiences were in World War II; in
18 Europe and Korea; in Japan; and all over the USA, moving
20 approximately every three years.

22 Our living conditions weren't always the best. I moved
24 from tents to barracks; to apartments; to my own house,
eventually. Our uniforms varied in this time. We proba-
bly had about five or six changes in my three-and-a-half
years.

Many interesting experiences; one that was a great chal-
lenge to me was to take the hospital unit overseas during
wartime. I got my chance in 1965, going to El Paso,
Texas, taking the 106th General Hospital which had 40
nurses, and some of these (about five or six) were male
nurses. We arrived in Yokohama, Japan, on the 15th of
December, and we were ready to take patients by the 31st.
We had four huge, concrete buildings. We set up a thou-
sand beds in this area. I really should say, we took

26 over a recreation center which had a gymnasium, church,
mess hall. The buildings were there, but it took a lot
28 of hard work to get it in shape to see patients. Almost
from the day we opened up the hospital and all the while
30 I was there for two years, every week we received a bou-
quet of flowers from an unknown donator. To this day, I
32 don't know who it was. We never knew.

MB: How many patients did you average a day while you were
34 there?

RG: Well, most of the time we had about seven or eight hun-
36 dred, but during the TET offensive we were filled up--and
we had only the GIs; the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines
38 and Coast Guard.

One amusing thing happened one day. I went through the
40 wards, and there was quite an uproar going on. We asked
who it was, and some GI put up his cast and said, "Look,
42 who did this?" There was "Navy" written across all the
casts in the ward! (Laughter) Many other unusual things
44 happened since that time.

I retired in 1971, and since that time I have done quite
46 a bit of volunteer work including with the Red Cross, the
church, and various clubs. I am now Commander of the
48 Women's Metropolitan Post 206, of Denver, which is the
only women's post in Colorado.

50 I enjoy traveling quite often to various places I haven't
seen. I've enjoyed the WOSL groups, and especially their
52 friendship. I was President in 1976 till 1978, and had
to be retired. This concludes tape 1 of the Denver Unit.

54

Transcribed by Patricia Siggers

56

Lansing, Michigan