SOPHIE STEFFER

Denver, Colorado Unit

Transcript of an Oral History Interview

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:

Sophie SteFFer

PREFACE

This transcript is the product of a tape-recorded interview conducted on 1 March, 198E, 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 May, 1988

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **0** |  | **SOPHIE STEFFER**  **Denver Unit** | |  |
|  | **MB :** | **What is your name?** | |
| **4** | **SS:** | **fly name is Sophie Steffer.** | |
|  | **NB:** | **When did you Join the Denver Unit of WOSL?** | |
| **B** | **SS:** | **I Joined the Denver Unit in 1950.** | |
|  | **MB:** | **What branch of the service did you serve in?** | |
| **B** | **SS:** | **I Joined the Army Nurse Corps.** | |
|  | **MB:** | **Did you volunteer?** | |
| **10** | **SS:** | **Yes, I did.** | |
|  | **MB:** | **Why did you volunteer?** | |
| **12** | **SS:** | **By the patriotic Feeling that existed at that** | | **time, I had** |
|  |  | **the Feeling oF being leFt behind. When other** | | **nurses were** |
| **14 joining through the Red Cross, I was declared essential** | | | | |
|  |  | **in the civilian hospital.** | **ThereFore, my application was** | |
| **16** |  | **rejected by Washington For** | **two years.** | |
|  | **MB :** | **What did you do beFore you** | **came into the Army Nurse** | |
| **10** |  | **Corps?** |  | |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **SOPHIE**  **SS:** | **STEFFER, Denver Unit** **2**  **I took my nurses training at the New Asbury Hospital in** |
| **BO** |  | **Minneapolis; a course in operating room technique at the** |
| **EB** |  | **Michael Reese Hospital in Chicago; and then, before I went into the service, I worked as superintendent of a private hospital in New York City.** |
| **B4** | **MB:** | **What did you do in the Army Nurse Corps?** |
|  | **SS:** | **In the service, I worked mostly in the operating room,** |
| **BG** |  | **and occasionally in the delivery and labor rooms.** |
|  | **MB:** | **How long were you in the Army?** |
| **BB** | **SS:** | **I was in the Army for twenty years.** |
|  | **MB:** | **Where did your travels take you?** |
| **30** | **SS:** | **I went to India during the last part of the war; and to** |
|  |  | **the Philippines, Germany, and Japan with the occupation** |
| **3B** |  | **forces.** |
|  | **MB:** | **What kind of housing did you have when you were in the** |
| **34** |  | **service?** |
|  | **SS:** | **In India, we lived in contonment-type houses with** |
| **36** |  | **thatched roofs, and screened windows and doors, and** |
|  |  | **cement floors. They were comfortable except for the** |
| **38** |  | **termites and bugs. During the rainy season, the water** |

came through the roof. Our quarters in the Philippines

**40** were Quonset hut-type, and comfortable; but during

SOPHIE STEFFER, Denver Unit 3

typhoon season, we moved into more solid quarters. The

42 quarters in Germany and Japan were apartment-type, with two or three nurses living in each apartment.

44 MB: What kind of medical care did you get when you were in the Army?

46 SS: I had good medical care when I needed it.

MB: What kind of uniforms did you wear?

4B SS: During the war, we wore regulation uniforms both on and off duty and during the occupation, we wore our civilian

50 dress off duty.

MB: Tell me some of your experiences?

5S SS: There were many experiences. I will mention two. When the war was over in India, I was sent to ”DY” in

54 Calcutta. There we processed all the Americans who were

prisoners of Japan. These were soldiers, sailors, and

56 missionaries; and all other civilians ever imprisoned. The largest number of sailors on my ward came from the

**58** Battleship Houston, who had been prisoners for four years.

50 In the Philippines we tried to help the leper colony by purchasing beds and other items for them.

58 In Germany, one Christmas I recall; we adopted a small town and exchanged Christmas gifts with them, and in

SOPHIE STEFFER, Denver Unit 4

64 return, we were treated to a wonderful Christmas program. It was all in German.

**66** MB: What required the greatest adjustment for you when you went into the Army Nurse Corps?

68 SS: Learning to salute, and keeping the enlisted personnel ranks separated.

70 MB: What did you do after your Army Nurse Corps service was concluded?

72 SS: I worked in a nursing home for a few months, and then took retirement.

74 MB: What has being a member of WOSL meant to you? Any thoughts you would like to share with us about belonging

76 to WOSL?

SS: I enjoy being a member of WOSL. Our members are of

78 various groups of Red Cross and enlisted women. I think it is important for many retired, single women— many that

80 do not have relatives close by, and have someone that cares and when they become ill, who will see that they

82 are not left all alone.

The conventions are always enjoyable and something to

84 look forward to each year.

MB: Thank you very much, Sophie.

SOPHIE STEFFER, Denver Unit 5

**86**

Transcribed by Patricia Siggers

88 Lansing, Michigan