

Interview of Peggy Likewise??? on Army Nurse Corps

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4Lois Collette: Good evening. May 5, 1983. I'd like you to meet Peggy Likewise. Peggy was
5 overseas during World War II with the Army Nurses Corps. I am Lois
6 Collette. Both Peggy and I are members of the Detroit Unit of the Women's
7 Overseas Service League. Peggy, Why did you enlist in the Army Nurse's
8 Corps?
9
10Peggy Likewise: Well, I've always been interested in the military, and, um, I wanted to, wanted
11 to join. In fact, it took me twice to, to get in because I was somewhat
12 overweight, so the second time I had to sign a, a waiver, which I did at
13 Selfridge Field.
14
15Lois Collette: [00:51] Uh, Peggy, when did you enlist? I understand you enlisted really
16 before those, uh, second America ju-, went to war this, in the second World
17 War.
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19Peggy Likewise: I, uh, enlisted in, uh, January of 1941.
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21Lois Collette: [1:10] What had you been doing before you enlisted?
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23Peggy Likewise: I'd been working in the hospitals as a nurse in, in the, at Harper Hospital, as a
24 matter of fact, was the last place I'd worked.
25
26Lois Collette: [1:25] I, uh, I understand that you enlisted before the war, as I mentioned. Uh,
27 when you enlisted, where did you go? [laughter]
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29Peggy Likewise: I, I was, uh, I enlisted and was, uh, inducted at Fort Custer near Battle Creek.
30
31Lois Collette: Yeah?
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33Peggy Likewise: And, uh, that's where we stayed. The, uh, hospital there was a wooden
34 hospital, and, uh, we used to call it the Eagle Lake Health Resort. [laughter]
35
36Lois Collette: [1:58] And you had your basic training?
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38Peggy Likewise: Basic training – we didn't have basic training like they do now, but, uh, we
39 went to work in the hospital itself.
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41Lois Collette: [2:05] And then how long was it before you went overseas?
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43Peggy Likewise: Uh, I went overseas in May of '42, 1942. Uh, during the Coral Sea Battle
44 before the Battle of Guadalcanal, and there was seven ships in the convoy, and

1 when we got to Fiji, two of the ships were let off at the Fiji islands because
2 they were afraid that the Japs might take the canal and then would come down
3 and take Fiji, so the rest went on to New Zealand. I was with the 51st Station
4 Hospital, which was, took over the, uh, hospital in Fiji in Suva, near Suva,
5 Fiji, and, um, from the New Zealand.
6

7Lois Collette: [2:47] And you received the wounded from where?
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9Peggy Likewise: And, well, we got the wounded from Guadalcanal. They came over by
10 hospital ship, and we kinda more or less put them back together, uh, if they
11 were able, and then some of them were able to go back to the war, and others
12 had to be, uh, went back home on the hospital ship, and, uh, they had very, to
13 be taken care of further depending on the type of wounds they had.
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15Lois Collette: [3:18] You said there was a fairly small hospital unit, right?
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17Peggy Likewise: We got 400 casualties with only, uh, 14 doctors and 27 nurses, and it was, we
18 really worked hard on'm and then a month later when we got most of them
19 ready to go back home or to go back to the war, uh, we stood there crying as
20 they were getting into the, into the, uh, ambulances because we had worked so
21 hard with them to make them well enough.
22

23Lois Collette: [3:48] Did you, uh, g, did you work with the, the Fiji islanders at all? Or, uh...
24

25Peggy Likewise: They, they did, they did work in the compound. They worked at the hospital,
26 but, and they were beautiful people. And, uh, they have such strong feet they
27 can walk on coral or they could kick a man to death with their feet.
28

29Lois Collette: Oh.
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31Peggy Likewise: And they had done, a lot of them had gone up to the, to fight in some of the
32 islands and done a tremendous job.
33

34Lois Collette: It must've been quite an experience for you coming, y'know, a young girl
35 coming from Detroit, um, into this not only war area, but also, um, an area
36 where the, completely foreign environment. [4:16] Uh, did you have a hard
37 time adjusting to this?
38

39Peggy Likewise: Well it, just like the army, when we were waiting to come overseas in San
40 Francisco, we were given a muffler and gloves thinking that we were going to
41 Alaska and ended up in the Fiji Islands [laughter] without any, any nets, any
42 mosquito nets, so we got a few bites.
43

44Lois Collette: [4:52] Um, but did you get ho-, y'know, did you get homesick, or...?

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2Peggy Likewise: Well, the first, well, we were there in, in May, and the first Christmas we were
3 very homesick because, uh, that was when, uh, *White Christmas* came out,
4 and of course, that made us a little more homesick.
5
6Lois Collette: [5:07] Were most of the other nurses in your, uh, army hospital from Detroit,
7 or...?
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9Peggy Likewise: No. They were from various areas. We came from Fort Custer, so.
10
11Lois Collette: But they...
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13Peggy Likewise: Most of them were in, in and around the area, but not necessarily from
14 Detroit.
15
16Lois Collette: [5:21] Uh, how long did you stay the-, in, uh, Fiji?
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18Peggy Likewise: I was 2 ½ years in Fiji, and, uh, came home on leave. When I came home on
19 leave, I, I was aboard a ship to, which took me to New Caledonia and from
20 there I took the ship home.
21
22Lois Collette: [5:40] And I understand you, you were, uh, when we were talking earlier, you
23 said that when you, um, came back home for a few months, you did recruiting
24 and, uh...
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26Peggy Likewise: Yes, I was, I was lucky. I came h – I had a month's leave, and instead of
27 having everybody wait at, when they didn't have enough ships to take you
28 back overseas, they had you stay at home and they kept telling me I could stay
29 at home, so I had two months at home. And during that time I was recruited,
30 uh, or was asked to talk about recruiting nurses at, uh, WJR radio. I still have
31 the script someplace. [laughter]
32
33Lois Collette: [6:21] And so then you went back overseas in what, what month?
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35Peggy Likewise: I went back, I went back overseas, let's see, I, I went back in January of '43
36 and, uh, it was towards the end of – yeah, it was in January, and, uh, I was
37 supposed to go to Guadalcanal, which we had gotten by that time, but my
38 outfit was in New Caledonia, so I had my orders changed and I went to New
39 Caledonia where the chief nurse, uh, was going home on leave, and I was
40 acting chief nurse, to get our outfit ready to go up to Okinawa.
41
42Lois Collette: [7:01] Now at New Caledonia, did you have, um, a, a regular hospital? Or was
43 it...
44

1Peggy Likewise: No, we, we were, we were not attached to any hospital. We were just waiting
2 as a unit to go up to Okinawa.
3

4Lois Collette: And so, and that...
5

6Peggy Likewise: Waiting for orders because at that time they, as they took various islands, they
7 had you move up that much.
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9Lois Collette: [7:21] So then when you, uh, when you finally got your orders to go up, um,
10 did...wa-, was, uh, did you, how did you live? Did you live in tents? Or...
11

12Peggy Likewise: Uh, uh, of course on the...
13

14Lois Collette: Oh, you, you were telling me about how you disembarked.
15

16Peggy Likewise: We were 59 days aboard ship because we [raided 7:41] several atolls, and
17 [throat clearing], Eniwetok was one of them, where they since had an atom
18 bomb test, and then we [throat clearing], uh, got in and we had to go down
19 the, the rope netting on the side of the, of the ship into the LSTs and then go
20 on into the beach.
21

22Lois Collette: [8:05] And wa, when you, uh, got to your hospital, was, was the hospital a tent
23 hospital?
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25Peggy Likewise: It was a tent hospital, yes. It was, all of us in tents, and in, we weren't there,
26 they were always having blackouts because, uh, the Japs were – they hadn't
27 cleared all the Japs off the island and some a, about ten days after we were
28 there, we had, uh, Condition Black, as I say, the Japs were parachuting in, and
29 we were supposed to go in the foxholes, but nobody wanted – everybody
30 wanted to see what was goin' on with the air war, and, uh, either you got,
31 you're so busy puttin' your pants on you might've put'm on backwards
32 [laughter], then you run around the tent thing and fall over it, or you pick up
33 your helmet and forgot, had forgotten to take the water out of it and put it on.
34 [laughter]
35

36Lois Collette: Oh no. [laughter]
37

38Peggy Likewise: So we had a lot of interesting scenes with that one.
39

40Lois Collette: [8:59] And you'd mentioned that there were some of the natives would build
41 fires?
42

43Peggy Likewise: Well, that was in Fiji, yeah.
44

1Lois Collette: Oh, that was when you were in...
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3Peggy Likewise: Yeah, the Hin- – the Hindus were partial to the Japs, I guess, or used to build
4 the signal fires in Fiji.
5
6Lois Collette: When you had...
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8Peggy Likewise: We had blackouts there too, but they, uh, fortunately didn't come down and
9 we did take the canal.
10
11Lois Collette: [9:22] Now, in Okinawa, y, you were again with a field hospital? Is that right?
12
13Peggy Likewise: Mm-hm. Yeah. We were, uh, we'd get – there, we got, um, the wounded off
14 the field because they still had, a, what they termed gooks, which were the
15 natives, some of the natives, uh, even the children would throw hand grenades
16 at the [inaudible 9:42] they had gotten around, and, and the, and the whole
17 island was flattened.
18
19Lois Collette: [9:47] How long, uh, how long was it then be, after the island had been
20 retaken that you occupied, uh, that you, you went in?
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22Peggy Likewise: Oh, we went in D-Day plus 23, but they were still doing it when we went in.
23
24Lois Collette: But it was only 20 – it was D-Day plus 23, which wasn't very much time
25 though.
26
27Peggy Likewise: We, we, no, we didn't have much time. And every time that you were tryin' to
28 give a shot, uh, a hypo where you, you'd have a blackout and of course you
29 couldn't use your flashlight [laughter] 'cause they could see it, so.
30
31Lois Collette: [10:19] And, and so after, um, once you got established there and, uh, the, war
32 on that island stopped, then where did, where did your troops come from?
33
34Peggy Likewise: Well, the, uh, the...
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36Lois Collette: [Inaudible 10:33] the patients.
37
38Peggy Likewise: ...the U.S. [inaudible 10:34]. V-J Day was, happened there, uh, some of the
39 fellas unfortunately got killed because everybody was shootin' guns off
40 everywhere and...
41
42Lois Collette: You mean they shot each other?
43

1Peggy Likewise: No, no, they didn't do it on purpose. They, uh, they, uh, were so happy they
2 were shooting guns and there were hills there and there was, um, um, tents on
3 the hills, and somebody'd be standing on a hill, you see. And for, and didn't,
4 not [inaudible 11:03].
5

6Lois Collette: Yeah, but it did happen on occasion.
7

8Peggy Likewise: Yeah.
9

10Lois Collette: [11:07] Well, you must have a couple of, uh, events that sorta stand out in
11 your mind during the, how many years was it? Five and a half or four and a
12 half?
13

14Peggy Likewise: Well, I was in...
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16Lois Collette: All together.
17

18Peggy Likewise: All together five, but I was 38 months overseas.
19

20Lois Collette: Seas.
21

22Peggy Likewise: And while, when, when V-J Day came, then they, we, uh, quite a few of the,
23 uh, prisoners that the Japs had taken were brought to...
24

25Lois Collette: Oh, that's right. Yeah.
26

27Peggy Likewise: They were brought to Okinawa, and it was, it was very emotional, the, the, a
28 lot of the brothers would find their brothers, y'know, or they would know
29 somebody and find that they, they weren't dead after all, that they had been
30 prisoners. But the poor prisoners had been mistreated and, uh, were so, had
31 not been fed very much, and were regular scavengers even though they knew
32 that they would get [the food 11:59], and as a matter of fact, we were all went
33 on canned rations so that they could have the fresh food, and, uh, they'd go
34 'round with their little bags and keep picking up things and, 'cause, y'know,
35 some of them had been there as many as four years. And they were, uh,
36 blacks, Dutch, black and white Dutch. There was American blacks, there
37 were, uh, there was, uh, uh, Eskimos. And, uh, and all kinds of British and,
38 and any of the countries around that area that, uh, that the Japs fought in,
39 y'know, they, they would.
40

41Lois Collette: [12:38] Uh, did you find living in the tropics very difficult or were you so
42 busy working that you didn't even have time?
43

1Peggy Likewise: Uh, well, it was rather interesting in, uh, in Fiji, uh, uh, it'd be 110 in the
2 shade in the daytime and go down to 72 at night, and you'd swear it was
3 gonna snow. In fact, on night duty, I'd wear, uh...
4

5Lois Collette: Oh, really?
6

7Peggy Likewise: ...fur-lined [laughter]...
8

9Lois Collette: Really?
10

11Peggy Likewise: ...[white 13:02] boots.
12

13Lois Collette: When it was 72 you got so acclimated to the, to the warm weather that you –
14

15Peggy Likewise: Y'know.
16

17Lois Collette: – you, yeah.
18

19Peggy Likewise: Y'know, it's just, it's a lot like the desert, y'know, where it gets so cold at
20 night.
21

22Lois Collette: Right.
23

24Peggy Likewise: Y'know, and, uh, it would, it would get kinda hot [and everything 13:19].
25

26Lois Collette: [13:20] Um, how long did you stay, uh, at Okinawa before you went home,
27 Peggy?
28

29Peggy Likewise: I went home, I was about eight months there. Uh, before I went home. I had
30 enough points to go home every, people were going home and part, part of my
31 outfit went on to Seoul, Korea, and even at that time, they'd write back and
32 tell us how much problems they were having with the communists at that
33 time, or the Russians. Because the Russians had had all the, the access to all
34 the coal there, C-O-A-L, and, uh, they weren't giving it to them and it was
35 cold.
36

37Lois Collette: [13:58] Uh, were you, were you a war, you weren't an operating nurse. You
38 were a ward nurse. Is that right or am I...?
39

40Peggy Likewise: Uh, no, and I was chief nurse when I went up there. I was acting chief nurse
41 when I went...
42

43Lois Collette: Acting Chief.
44

1Peggy Likewise: ...to Okinawa to, to the other. Uh, I, I, as far as while I was overseas, I even, I
2 worked in the operating room. I did everything, y'know, so it, depending on
3 where they needed you.
4

5Lois Collette: [14:22] And depending upon, I know, the situation, uh, I'm sure it varied, but
6 say, a, a busy day, how many hours would you work a day?
7

8Peggy Likewise: Well, in, in, in Fiji, [coughing] excuse me. In, in Fiji, uh, it would be ten,
9 twelve hours depending on the number of patients we had, when we had so
10 many, then it was either feast or famine. Either you were working on many
11 hours or not too many of them.
12

13Lois Collette: [14:51] And you, you hit, you were working with corps men and...
14

15Peggy Likewise: Oh, yeah.
16

17Lois Collette: ...yeah, all the time. [14:58] Uh, did, did you always have enough medical
18 equipment to work with? Or, uh...
19

20Peggy Likewise: Yes, we were very lucky. We, we did most of the time, y'know, I, I don't
21 remember ever not having enough. Except in Fiji, what we had too much of
22 were the cockroaches. [laughter]
23

24Lois Collette: Oh, really?
25

26Peggy Likewise: Yeah, everything was cockroaches all over the place.
27

28Lois Collette: I guess we all hate those. [15:25] Um, then, uh, Peggy, after the war, you
29 came home and you got married and you raised a family and you're, you're, t,
30 you [inaudible 15:34].
31

32Peggy Likewise: I, I...
33

34Lois Collette: ...went back to nursing again.
35

36Peggy Likewise: I went back to nursing. In fact, I, up until 1981, I worked 20 years [inaudible
37 15:43] just before [that time, 20 years 15:44].
38

39Lois Collette: We are, we are very proud to have someone like Peggy Likewise who spent so
40 many years in service during the war. I think the, from the very beginning to
41 the very end, there aren't too many of us that have done that, and then even
42 now that she's home and retired, we are very proud because she is doing
43 tremendous service with the aged in the hospital, and I wanna thank you,
44 Peggy.

1

2Peggy Likewise: Thank you.

3

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5/jw