

**MARTHA MARSHALL BAKER**

**Denver, Colorado Unit**

**Transcript of an Oral History Interview**

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**Martha Marshall Baker**

*PREFACE*

*This transcript is the product of an interview conducted 22 March, 1986, for the Women's Overseas Service League, by Marjorie Brown.*

*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*

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*Oral History Project*

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*MARTHA MARSHALL BAKER*

**8** *Denver Unit*

10 *NOTE: Interviewer is Marjorie Brown of  
the Denver Unit.*

**12** *MB: What is your name?*

*MMB: Martha Marshall Baker.*

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

*MMB: In 1972, I believe it was.*

IG *MB: Were you in the Service?*

*MMB: Yes.*

18 *MB: What branch?*

*MMB: Army Nurse Corps.*

20 *MB: Why did you come into the Service?*

*MMB: I was looking for a change from civilian nursing. I*

**22** *had only spent six months in the civilian life. I  
had heard about the Army, and I thought I'd like to*

24 *see what it's about.*

*MB: What did you do before you came into the Army?*

26 *MMB: I worked as a nurse for six months.*

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

28 m m b : I started as general duty, and after one  
year I changed my specialty to  
operating room nursing.

30 This was my primary duty until the last six years  
of active duty, wherein I spent time  
in central supply.

32 My final years were in administration as evening  
and night supervisor.

34 MB: How long were you in the Army?

MMB: Twenty years.

36 MB: What kind of duty did you have overseas? Where  
did you travel?

38 MMB: My first overseas assignment was Germany  
fantastic assignment! My next overseas assignment  
40 was Hawaii (but I was out of the continental United  
States), and I spent thirteen months in Korea,  
and

42 five years on the island of Okinawa, and one year  
in Vietnam.

44 MB: Where were you stationed in Vietnam?

MMB: At Long Bien.

46 MB: What kind of housing did you have in general in  
the Army?

48 MMB: Overall, I felt that it was adequate. I felt that  
my first overseas assignment -- I was surprised  
at  
50 the type of housing we had. I was a  
bit disappointed when I left Germany and returned  
to

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52           Letterman (Army Hospital) to find that our  
             housing wasnot quite up to the same standards  
             that it was

54           overseas, but it was adequate.

          MB: How did you feel about the medical care that you  
56           received?

          MMB : Excellent. No complaints.

58    MB: What kind of uniforms did you wear?

          MMB: When I joined the Army, I must say I was terribly  
60           disappointed to have to wear what was called a taupe  
             uniform. Pictures I had seen was of the pink and  
62           green, and that's what I envisioned myself wearing.  
             I forget the length of time that we wore the taupe,  
64           but it was a brown uniform and many styles, many  
             articles that could be worn with this uniform but to  
66           me, it was unattractive. Then came the green  
             uniform and other variations of green uniforms. I  
             'm  
68           still wearing a uniform today, and I am very proud  
             of it.

70    MB: Can you relate a couple of experiences that you  
             thought were particularly appropriate or exciting or  
72           funny to you when you were in the Service?

          MMB: There have been so many, but one of the most  
74           prominent in my mind, that I think I 'll always  
             remember is: Being in Okinawa and watching a  
76           patient progress from the time he was sent from Camp



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78 Kue (Army Hospital) for his treatment to return to  
the United States. He was a 19-year old young man  
who was interested in the priesthood, who lost all  
80 of his limbs except his right arm. I visited him on  
the wards and I found out the most important thing  
82 to him would have been to have his hair washed. I  
worked in supply, and I was able to ask the nurse's  
84 permission to take him down to our department and  
wash his hair; and I found that that meant so much  
8 to him. This was at a time when all the wards were  
6 overcrowded with patients, so of course the nurses  
and the staff didn't have all the time to give these  
88 patients.

90 Anyway, this progress continued for about two  
weeks. Soon, it was time for him to depart. The  
92 day he was departing was on a Sunday, and he was so  
nervous; and he said, "Oh, if I could just have my  
94 hair washed!" I did this, and he said, "Will you  
make sure you come to the ward before I depart?" As  
96 it happened, when I returned he was on the bus  
waiting evacuation to Hickam to be evacuated to the  
9 States.

8 I boarded the bus, and there he was on the lower  
level, and when I came near him he beckoned to me;  
100 and with his one arm, he just placed it around my





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102 neck and he kissed me. That was something I'll just  
never forget. Of course, I did hear from this young  
104 man after he returned to the States. I think he  
adjusted real well to the things that happened to  
106 him, but I don't know what has happened since.

There have been so many experiences; things that  
108 I would never trade, in my lifetime, for what I did  
in the Service.

110 MB: When you first went into the Service, what was the  
biggest adjustment that you had to make?

112 MMB: I can't say I had any adjustment at all. I just  
found it exciting. It was a far cry from what I had  
114 done as a civilian all my life. It just seemed to  
open all doors and avenues; the people I met. I had  
116 trained in a multi-storied hospital-medical center  
complex; and my first assignment was Fort Dix, a

118 sprawling contowment type building, but that didn't  
seem to matter. It was just the people I was caught  
12 up with being in the Army Nurse Corps.

MB: What did you do after you left the Army?  
5

12 MMB: For five years I did nothing much, except volunteer.  
I became a tour guide at the Denver Botanic Gardens.  
124 I worked with Big Brothers-Big Sisters. I did some  
volunteer work in schools as a school nurse; as a

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126 school aide. I did six weeks of training for Blue  
Cross-Blue Shield.

128 Then, at the end of the five years, I was asked  
if I would like to teach ROTC. Of course, I knew  
130 nothing about ROTC, but the person that asked said,  
"Oh, you can learn." I have been involved with the  
132 Junior ROTC program now for almost eleven years.

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

134 MMB: I enjoy meeting the ladies from the different  
Services; the different walks of life that had  
136 served overseas, and I found out we had so much to  
share and relate to. I must say that I've lost a  
138 great deal of it by being caught up in the job that  
I have; that I cannot give it the time and continue  
140 with meetings and being involved as I should, but I  
feel that it's a worthwhile experience.

142 MB: Thank you very much.

144 < End of Interview >

146 Transcribed by Patricia Siggers  
148 Lansing, Michigan



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