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 15 June, 1989

## 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 Uni t.

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 was not 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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Kue (Army Hospital) for his treatment to return to

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

Anyway, this progress continued for about two

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

I boarded the bus, and there he was on the lower

level, and when I came near him he beckoned to me; and with his one arm, he just placed it around my

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neck and he kissed me. That was something I'll just never forget. Of course, I did hear from this young man after he returned to the States. I think he adjusted real well to the things that happened to

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

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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 done as a civilian all my life. It just seemed to open all doors and avenues; the people I met. I had trained in a multi-storied hospita 1-medical center complex; and my first assignment was Fort Dix, a

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| **118** |  | **sprawling contowment type building, but that didn't**  **seem to matter. It was just the people I was caught** |
| **120** |  | **up with being in the Army Nurse Corps.** |
| **122** | **MB:**  **MMB:** | **What did you do after you left the Army?**  **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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school aide. I did six weeks of training for Blue Cross-Blue Shield.

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

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

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

MB: Thank you very much.

< End of Interview >

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| **146** | **Transcribed by Patricia** | **Siggers** |
| 148 | **Lansing,** | **Michigan** |

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