

1 **Interview of retired Lieutenant Colonel Mary Templeton Gates on her twenty-year service**  
2 **in the U.S. Army Air Forces and later U.S. Air Force**

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4  
5 Ruth Stewart: I am going to change this though. [inaudible 0:05] Mary Templeton Gates  
6 is being interviewed today as a member of the Women's Overseas Service  
7 League. This is April 7, 2004, being recorded in San Antonio, Texas, at  
8 the Army Residence Community. Ruth Stewart is interviewing. [0:27]  
9 Mary, could you go on and start by telling us where you were born and  
10 grew up and a little bit about your younger life?

11  
12 Mary Gates: Yes, I'd be glad to. I was born in Julesburg, Colorado on the 28<sup>th</sup> of  
13 January 1914. I was the 1<sup>st</sup> of 3 children. When I was about 10, my  
14 parents moved to Ohio because my grandfather had died and my father  
15 had to be there with him. Both my grandfather and father were doctors.  
16 Uh, from Ohio we stayed there several years and then moved to Georgia  
17 because of my father's health. He was very sick at that time and could  
18 very, could very, do very little. In Georgia, we children grew up and  
19 loved it. It was a very nice place to grow up. We lived in several little  
20 communities there, Ellenton, Georgia, on the western side of Georgia, and  
21 then down right on the border between Georgia and Florida and that's  
22 where I went to school primarily through col-, through high school and it  
23 was from there that I went to nurses' training in Atlanta, Georgia at the  
24 Grady Hospital.

25  
26 Ruth Stewart: That's a historic place for sure. [2:06] How did you get interested in  
27 nursing?

28  
29 Mary Gates: Because my father was a doctor. My mother had planned to be a doctor,  
30 but, uh, she got married and got – I came along and a few things like that  
31 and she never got back to doing that. Uh, it's my [inaudible 02:31], you  
32 know. She, uh, she was a marvelous woman. And after my father got so  
33 sick that he couldn't work, she taught school and that was what, what we  
34 lived on when I was in, uh, grade and high school in Georgia. There was  
35 no money for me to go to college, just absolutely none, so I decided that I  
36 would be an RN rather than, uh, just get married. I looked over the  
37 different hospitals that I knew of there in Georgia and decided on Grady  
38 Hospital because it was a big hospital in a big city and I thought it would  
39 be interesting. It was a very good reason for going. I graduated from  
40 Grady Hospital in 1938 and took a short, very temporary job at Rutledge,  
41 Georgia.

42  
43 While I decided on what I was going to do, I knew I wanted to go to  
44 college, so I looked over the places that I could go that would help me go

1 to college and go to work too because I had to work. I decided on New  
2 York City. The other one was, uh – oh, I've forgotten the name of it, but  
3 New York City was the best. I went up there and thoroughly loved New  
4 York, loved my job there. And I went to Teachers College, which is part  
5 of Columbia University, uh, while I was there.

6  
7 My first job, which I got from writing in to jobs available from the small  
8 nursing magazines, was at Saint John's Hospital in, on Herkimer Street in  
9 Brooklyn, New York. It was an Episcopal hospital and I'm an  
10 Episcopalian, which just was incidental. I liked it. Uh, I stayed there for  
11 about a year I guess, and at that time I was commuting up to Teachers  
12 College. It was a mile – it was an hour's ride both ways on top of  
13 working. That was rather long, so after about a year I decided I might find  
14 something closer. I answered another advertisement and interviewed a  
15 lady doctor for Inward House, which was a home for unmarried girls. She  
16 took me. I thoroughly enjoyed it. This, this – incidentally, Inward House  
17 is on 15<sup>th</sup> Street right in the center of town, and it was nice for, for that  
18 reason for us, for young people. I enjoyed that work. The doctor gave me  
19 quite a bit of extra work to do there and it was nice.

20  
21 Ruth Stewart: [06:11] What kind of things did you do with the girls?

22  
23 Mary Gates: Oh.

24  
25 Ruth Stewart: Or the young women I should call them I guess.

26  
27 Mary Gates: Yes, we, we took care of them before and after delivery and we took them  
28 to hospitals, different hospitals to deliver. We were, went by, uh, taxi and  
29 always gave the taxis a good tip so they would be glad to come back. It  
30 was rather interesting. And, uh, when the Prince of Wales and his wife  
31 came to New York, she came to see us and I have pictures of that, while  
32 he went to see some other people in, the men, there in New York. And it  
33 was rather interesting that visit. But, uh, after several years of that, uh,  
34 working at Inward House, I decided I'd like to take a postgraduate. I  
35 enjoyed surgery and obstetrics and decided on obstetrics because you had  
36 patient contact which you did not have with surgery patients. Uh, I went  
37 to New York Hospital for my postgraduate in obstetrics and about that  
38 time the war was going pretty good. I was told at first no, that I was not to  
39 go to war, war, that I was needed there. I was a Red Cross nurse, but they  
40 thought I should stay there.

41  
42 Uh, I decided I had to go to, to the service, so I went down to the  
43 enlistment area and joined the army. I told them that I would be ready to  
44 go, uh, about mid-January, and I took my oath of office on 8 February

1 1943. I had asked if I could stay in Fort Arnold because I liked New  
2 York. They said, uh, no, they weren't filling any spots right there in New  
3 York, but they thought if I would like to, uh, write Washington they'd  
4 probably fill it, let me stay. I asked them what spots they were filling at  
5 this time and they said Gulfport, Mississippi. I looked it up overnight. It  
6 was a winter resort, fishing, hunting, swimming, what have you. I called  
7 up and said you may send me there, that's fine, so I went to Gulfport,  
8 Mississippi. It was a new base. It had just – and it was an army air base,  
9 not an air force base. And I reported there on 8 February.  
10  
11 It was a nice base. Most of the – it had just, just been activated and they  
12 were still getting a lot of their personnel there. I went on duty the first day  
13 after they had given my clothing and so forth that you do in the service (or  
14 you did in those days) and the next day I went on duty. I was struggling to  
15 see what I was supposed to do as everyone does when you're new in a  
16 place and this great big man, blonde fellow came in and I was at the desk  
17 and I stood up for him because I saw he was a doctor and he started asking  
18 me questions, sitting on my desk. And some of the questions I thought  
19 were very personal, but I answered him primarily because I was new,  
20 otherwise I might not have.  
21  
22 Ruth Stewart: You didn't know any better.  
23  
24 Mary Gates: That's right. I might have told him it was none of his business otherwise.  
25 But I answered very, very nicely. When I went off duty that night, I found  
26 a little note on my bed asking me to go see the chief nurse. I went to, went  
27 to her place and she said "You saw Dr. [Schrader 11:15] today." And I  
28 said "I saw a lot of doctors. Which one was he?" And she said "big  
29 blonde." And I said "Yes, I saw him." And he says, well, she said "Well,  
30 he is the chief of surgery and he wants you as his surgery supervisor so  
31 that is what you will do tomorrow." She said "By the way, you will wear  
32 a band and a half on your cap." I don't know whether people knew except  
33 the old ones that when we were in whites then we had army caps and on  
34 them if you were, uh, someone of, of designated difference than just a  
35 ward nurse you had a band or maybe 2 bands on your hat. The chief nurse  
36 wore 2 bands; her assistant wore a band and a half. I was the third one and  
37 I wore a band and a half. I told her I couldn't do it because I didn't have  
38 the bands. She said "I can do that." So she gave me one of her full bands  
39 and she called her assistant and asked for one of her thinner bands.  
40  
41 Ruth Stewart: [12:39] Narrower half was the width not the length.  
42  
43 Mary Gates: Width, yes.  
44

1 Ruth Stewart: Okay.  
2  
3 Mary Gates: And they go over the, uh, white cap. So with fear and trem-, trembling the  
4 next day I went to surgery. Everything was fine. We had a good surgery.  
5 They liked me, my staff liked me, and we, we had a group of doctors from  
6 Charity Hospital in New Orleans. They would come in. It was excellent  
7 work. We had people – the work we did was outstanding and I was able  
8 to judge that because my different placed I'd been.  
9  
10 Ruth Stewart: [13:26] Tell me what kind of patients. Were, were you getting in  
11 casualties from the war?  
12  
13 Mary Gates: Oh yes. We were getting war, war casualties.  
14  
15 Ruth Stewart: Uh-huh.  
16  
17 Mary Gates: In fact...  
18  
19 Ruth Stewart: [13:34] For their surgical care?  
20  
21 Mary Gates: Uh, orthopedic man – orthopedics were told, uh, to, uh, operate on – the  
22 orthopedics when they had to amputate in 2 sections rather than 1 because  
23 some of them had trouble, not our man. He said that's just making the  
24 patient go through trouble twice. He said "I'll do it the way it is. Uh, I'll  
25 do it." He said "I'll do it my way and that is 1 time." So when  
26 Washington came down to inspect us, we stuck all of those patients in a  
27 ward in the back so that they wouldn't see it. And they asked about them  
28 so we showed them, the doctors did, showed the patients and they okayed  
29 his work and told him he could continue doing it the way he wanted.  
30  
31 I was – about that time, we sent a few people overseas and both nurses and  
32 men wrote back saying that they needed more training. They needed to be  
33 able to suture and to do IVs and things like this. So this doctor said to me  
34 "Okay, you and I will train, train our people." So we started, except you  
35 and I meant me. He was busy. And I had classes first in th-, the  
36 technicians. And at that time, the nurses were pretty good. They didn't  
37 ask for any help. Uh, technicians were, they were gluttons. They wanted  
38 to do anything and everything. Turn them loose, you know. So, uh,  
39 everybody was happy for a while and then I noticed that some of the  
40 nurses looked long-faced and I said "What's wrong with you?" They said  
41 "Well, if a tech should be able to close a patient, why shouldn't we?"  
42 Closing means doing the last sutures on an operation.  
43  
44 Ruth Stewart: Hm.

1  
2 Mary Gates: And I said "Okay, you can." So I talked to them and after that, the doctors  
3 were assisted very well. We then sent quite a few people overseas. I was  
4 fortunate they liked my work so that in 1 year they put me in for first  
5 lieutenant and I made it. Our chief nurse was a first lieutenant. She had  
6 been in the service many years. Uh, they all knew that I wanted to go to  
7 flight school. That was my reason for going in. I had been asked to join  
8 Presbyterian in New York and I refused simply because I wanted to be a  
9 [inaudible 16:56] and go to flight school. So during my second year there,  
10 there was an opening and I took the physical for flight nursing and passed  
11 it and was sent to Bowman Field in Kentucky to flight school. There were  
12 4 of us who were first lieutenants at that school at the time and we were  
13 very peculiar in that one day we were told that we were just students and  
14 we had no, no rank at all and the next day they said you are going to have  
15 to take a squadron overseas so you're first lieutenant, you're chief nurse.  
16 That was a chief nurse in those days.  
17  
18 Well, after, uh, we finished, I graduated from Bowman Field, the school  
19 was ordered to Randolph Air Force Base in San Antonio and they asked  
20 me to stay with the school and teach and I told them I didn't want to, but  
21 about that time I had a bad back. My back went out and I was rather  
22 crippled for a while, so I had to stay with the school. We brought – I  
23 brought the school down – I came with the school down to Randolph.  
24  
25 Ruth Stewart: [18:37] Now Randolph was still army at that point, wasn't it?  
26  
27 Mary Gates: Oh, we're all army.  
28  
29 Ruth Stewart: Yeah. It was later [inaudible 18:41].  
30  
31 Mary Gates: It was everything army.  
32  
33 Ruth Stewart: Okay.  
34  
35 Mary Gates: Yes. It was different between army air force and army, army ground I  
36 guess you call it. So, um, we came down to Randolph and at Randolph I  
37 kept asking for a squadron and so they gave me the next one and I took the  
38 831<sup>st</sup> Squadron out of Randolph to the Pacific. I don't remember the time.  
39 Uh, it was in the second year we activated the squadron at Randolph. And  
40 because I was chief nurse for the squadron at that time, I made another  
41 promotion and was captain in my second year, which was unheard of. I  
42 just happened to be in the right place at the right time.  
43  
44 Ruth Stewart: I guess. [chuckle]

1  
2Mary Gates: So we went to the Pacific, took a train out of, uh, Randolph. Right outside  
3 the gate there was a train. It waited for us and we got on it and went up to  
4 San Francisco. And San Francisco at Hamilton Field we flew to Hickam  
5 Field in Hawaii. I was told when I got there that I would go, that the  
6 squadrons were already split up to a certain extent and that I was going to  
7 be chief nurse of the Guam section, Guam, the island of Guam, uh, as soon  
8 as it could be built. At the present moment it was not an island. They had  
9 just taken it over from the Japs. In fact, at a party one night, General  
10 Harmon asked me if I would like to go down and see where my nurses'  
11 place would be. I could pick out a place for it. And I told him no because  
12 I had something else I had to do, which is not what you ask – tell a  
13 general. But in this case it was very good because when he went down  
14 there his plane was lost and it was like I was not supposed to be killed at  
15 that time. We never did find him.  
16  
17Ruth Stewart: Hm.  
18  
19Mary Gates: However, the field at Guam was named Harmon Field and that is the  
20 lower field that was, uh, closed later on when they had a field that went up  
21 over the fields. It was a little easier for the pilots to fly in and out of. So,  
22 uh, I went to Guam, thoroughly enjoyed it. We were kept in a cantonment  
23 type [inaudible 22:00] even from our soldiers we had to have barbed wire  
24 around and, uh.  
25  
26Ruth Stewart: The nurses because they were female.  
27  
28Mary Gates: Uh-huh, it was for females and they were protecting us. And, uh, we  
29 could not walk base without, there'd be 2 men, but with 2 men you could  
30 go. And there was a nice swimming area not too far from the base that we  
31 went to. Uh, the navy headquarters were there as was the 20<sup>th</sup> Air Force  
32 and, uh, it was a good station.  
33  
34Ruth Stewart: [22:45] What was your living like in the cantonment?  
35  
36Mary Gates: Uh, we had, first we had, uh, 8-man square tents with a, with a wooden  
37 platform. Almost immediately after that we were given Quonset huts.  
38 They were very nice. Uh, they kept the heat out. No, after the tent we  
39 went into prefabs and they were not so good because there was no  
40 insulation. And, uh, very often we, if we weren't flying that day and just  
41 had to stay on base, we would crawl under the house because there was, it  
42 was on a hill and we would play cards under the house because that was,  
43 that was it.  
44

1 Ruth Stewart: Got some air there.  
2

3 Mary Gates: And, um, then we got the Quonsets and they were nice.  
4

5 Ruth Stewart: [23:53] And your food, what was it like?  
6

7 Mary Gates: Uh, it was bad. [chuckle] Really it was. Uh, we went to the mess hall  
8 and, uh, they did as, as well as they could; but in a hot area, it was hard. I  
9 don't think much of many of us complained. I know that, uh, they would  
10 give us a certain – I think we were able to have 5 [inaudible 24:31] a week  
11 per nurse and they gave us some for transients that would come through  
12 because I had a transient group also that billeted with us. And, uh, if they  
13 took more than 2 in a night we were very unhappy with them, but, uh, we  
14 couldn't complain. We didn't complain about the food and, uh...  
15

16 Ruth Stewart: [24:59] Were the cooks by local people or by G.I.s?  
17

18 Mary Gates: G.I.s, all were G.I.s. And, uh, if we wanted to, we could cook little things  
19 in our quarters because they gave us lovely quarters. When we got into  
20 the Quonsets, uh, we had kitchens and we could cook some things, not too  
21 much, but a little bit. And we were in and out so much. From Guam it  
22 was like spreading fingers, you went to so many different places.  
23

24 Ruth Stewart: [25:34] This was evacuating patients?  
25

26 Mary Gates: Right.  
27

28 Ruth Stewart: [25:36] Tell me a little bit about that.  
29

30 Mary Gates: We flew in the B-54, which is a 4-engine plane that had to have extra gas  
31 tanks put in between the pilots' compartment and the patients'  
32 compartment in the back. They were always used as cargo planes going  
33 into a combat area. Anywhere from the States on they had cargo along for  
34 people traveling. We were able to [inaudible 26:24] in the plane 4 deep  
35 and those were the patients going out back to the States. It was a long  
36 haul. It was always harder and longer to go to the States than it was  
37 coming from, but it wasn't too bad.  
38

39 Ruth Stewart: [26:54] So would you fly from Guam to these other locations?  
40

41 Mary Gates: We would fly to, from Guam to Kwajalein. Well, we would fly – it  
42 depended. On Guam we went down under then we came back to Guam  
43 and the theory was that a new person would take over at Guam and take  
44 the plan on in. The crew was changed also. Uh, the next stopover was

1 Kwajalein and the crews would change there. The next stop was Hickam  
2 and then the States. And Hickam to the States was the longest trip.  
3  
4 Ruth Stewart: [27:35] But the patients stayed on the same plane?  
5  
6 Mary Gates: Not always. Uh, sometimes the patients would, uh, if they had been –  
7 depending on type of patients. Uh, if they had been there a long time and  
8 needed help, you could offload them and put another patient on. Or if that  
9 patient was doing well, you would put him on a plane and let them go on.  
10 And at Hickam most of the time patients were changed and there was a  
11 new roster made for the plane there. It was good. You had a nurse and 2  
12 techs and you had a group of very sick patients most of the time so that  
13 you worked very hard on the way back. Going down we were able to rest.  
14 And it was very – we always were happy when we could be on a cargo  
15 plane because on that one we could find a place on the floor, put your  
16 pillow, put your purse down for a pillow and rest. If you were in a troop  
17 plane going down, it was loaded with patients, with people, G.I.s and what  
18 have you. And sitting there for any length of time was difficult because  
19 your feet swell [chuckle] and you couldn't, you didn't dare take off your  
20 shoes because you couldn't get them on, back on, things like that, but it  
21 was all right. We were all young and this was one of the things couldn't  
22 do it now, but in those days you could.  
23  
24 Ruth Stewart: Mm-hm.  
25  
26 Mary Gates: I guess that's it.  
27  
28 Ruth Stewart: That would be a very interesting experience but also very heart-  
29 wrenching.  
30  
31 Mary Gates: It was. I'm telling you, some of them – we had some very sick patients. I  
32 never lost a patient. And, uh, we had a couple. The ones that gave us the  
33 most trouble were the psychotic patients. I had one I, I got from Japan and  
34 he was so wild, he was a manic depressive in the manic stage and I said I  
35 can't take him. He was so wild. So the doctor gave him a heavy dose of  
36 medicine and then I said, well, I can't take him. I'm not sure he's going to  
37 live. And – but he came out of the medicine and so I took him and we had  
38 to go from Japan to Okinawa [inaudible 30:54] and then from Okinawa to,  
39 uh, Guam because of weather. And en route this man who we had  
40 strapped down and I had strapped with the technicians down on leather,  
41 broke the straps and started to get up. So I called my tech and said "So-  
42 and-so, come here. We're, we're in trouble." And I landed on the patient  
43 with my knees because he was trying to get up so he bit me on my leg. It  
44 wasn't funny at the time, but it was later on. Uh, from Guam on, he was



1 in a depressed stage, no problems. I shouldn't have taken him. I should  
2 have had them keep him, but I didn't [inaudible 31:54]. Uh, let's see.  
3  
4 Ruth Stewart: [32:00] So then how long were you in Guam and doing [inaudible 32:03]?  
5  
6 Mary Gates: I was there until the war ended.  
7  
8 Ruth Stewart: Okay.  
9  
10 Mary Gates: And then I came back to the States and I went to Washington to see  
11 whether I wanted to stay in or whether I wanted to, uh, go out and be a  
12 G.I., uh, be civilian. They offered me Bermuda as a job, so I accepted. I  
13 went to Bermuda. It was a good duty station.  
14  
15 Ruth Stewart: [32:42] It was a hospital there that you ran?  
16  
17 Mary Gates: Yes. It was a hospital.  
18  
19 Ruth Stewart: [32:46] And what...?  
20  
21 Mary Gates: It was a, a beautiful hospital that they had built with, uh, sand from the  
22 beach that had salt in it so that it was falling apart, but there were parts of  
23 it that we could use, which we did. And we didn't have the staff, the  
24 number of patients after the war that they had before. As far as the station  
25 was concerned, we couldn't ask for nicer. We had the beaches, Hamilton.  
26 Um, our commanding officer at the base had his own ship, uh, I think  
27 about a 30-footer, a boat not a ship. And we'd go out and play bridge on it  
28 and things like that. Uh, it was a nice station. It was difficult in that we  
29 didn't have a lot of staff and we worked very often on 12-hour duty  
30 around the clock, but it worked out. We...  
31  
32 Ruth Stewart: [34:10] Were most of these just people that were stationed there that you  
33 were taking care of or...?  
34  
35 Mary Gates: They were this group from the field, yes.  
36  
37 Ruth Stewart: [34:18] You didn't have still war casualties...?  
38  
39 Mary Gates: No.  
40  
41 Ruth Stewart: ...there at all?  
42

1 Mary Gates: [inaudible 34:22]. It was all the base and people coming through. Not too  
2 many came through because most of the planes in and out of Europe went  
3 the northern route to Newfoundland, which I did later.  
4  
5 Uh, we had one interesting, uh, patient at, in, while I was in Bermuda, a  
6 lady which you couldn't see was pregnant, lost her baby and they just  
7 thought it was a stillborn, so. All of a sudden during the night the nurse  
8 said the baby started mewling so we had this baby the next morning  
9 handed to us that you could put in a cigar box about like this and shut the  
10 door. And we had nothing, absolutely nothing so we – she had taken a  
11 [inaudible 35:30] box and put hot water bottles around it, engineering a, a,  
12 a hot, uh, incubator for the baby with lights underneath to turn it and  
13 regulate the heat. And we used a medicine dropper with a rubber tip on it  
14 for feedings. We put a 4 x 4 under him for a diaper. We didn't try to  
15 wrap it on him. And we watched him because his little respiration wasn't  
16 developed and you had to watch him to stimulate him if he stopped  
17 breathing.  
18  
19 We sent him home. This was her first baby. We sent him home at 5  
20 pounds after we had, she had been with us for 1 week in the hospital  
21 taking care of that baby because after we had worked as hard as we did,  
22 we insisted that she know how to take care of her baby and she did. She  
23 said that – and he was spoiled rotten because he would be crying and you  
24 would be coming toward his – well, he was right down back of the nurses'  
25 station. You'd be coming toward the nurses' station and he'd stop crying.  
26 Then if you walked on by, he'd start again. And she said that when she  
27 got him home that she had to put him where he could see her because he  
28 wanted to see what she was doing, but that was the only really interesting  
29 patient we had. Others were somewhat normal. I've often wondered  
30 whatever happened to that baby.  
31  
32 Ruth Stewart: I'll bet you do.  
33  
34 Mary Gates: But I know it was a, he was a good one.  
35  
36 Ruth Stewart: Yeah. I'll bet you wondered about that.  
37  
38 Mary Gates: And...  
39  
40 Ruth Stewart: You had a lot invested in him.  
41  
42 Mary Gates: We did. Oh, we were on 12-hour duty just standing there watching him  
43 breathe and then being ready [inaudible 37:37].  
44

1 Ruth Stewart: Yeah.  
2  
3 Mary Gates: Um, from Bermuda they sent me back. I was off flying status then, you  
4 know. I went back to Westover Field.  
5  
6 Ruth Stewart: [37:51] Where is Westover?  
7  
8 Mary Gates: Uh, in Springfield, Massachusetts, and it is a big [inaudible 37:56] for the  
9 European base at that time. And it was – and we were flying a number of  
10 flights out of Westover Field. I...  
11  
12 Ruth Stewart: [38:15] Back on flight status then.  
13  
14 Mary Gates: Back on flight status and loving it. Our, our big flight was to Europe. We  
15 went into, uh, Germany, [inaudible 38:27], Germany and – most of the  
16 time. And then a smaller plane would take patients in to [inaudible  
17 38:35]. Uh, the next longest flight was down the southern route to, um,  
18 Georgia and Mobile and San Antonio up to Hamilton Field and a round  
19 robin that way going to the south. And the other was small, uh, 47 planes  
20 that would pick up patients from different bases in the States. We, we  
21 were busy because it was, uh, action all the time. And, of course, we  
22 enjoyed the European flights very much so. We liked the others also.  
23 [throat clearing]  
24  
25 From Westover Field, they decided that they were going to have, uh, a  
26 flight in Germany – I mean in Georgia. So I was sent with 6 nurses and  
27 around 15 men for a little flight there at Warner Robins, Georgia, uh,  
28 picking up patients along the route there and having them ready for the big  
29 plane coming in. This was good. I enjoyed it. Uh, then I went off flying  
30 status again and went to Hunter Air Force Base, [inaudible 40:14] Air  
31 Force Base, I guess you call it a field, in Savannah, Georgia. That was  
32 interesting. I enjoyed Savannah. I didn't get to stay there very long.  
33 They decided (Washington did) that some of their older nurses (I, I guess I  
34 was considered an older nurse by then), uh, needed to have some general  
35 hospital training so they put me on, uh, to the army. We're still all, all  
36 army. No, we're not. Up here somewhere when I was in Westover Field I  
37 went air force before Warner Robins. I, I was flying at the time, so I  
38 decided I, uh...  
39  
40 Ruth Stewart: [41:22] You had to initiate a change did you?  
41  
42 Mary Gates: Yes. And we, we took a physical and, uh, they tested us and what have  
43 you. And surprisingly enough, 2 of the girls there did not make it. I've  
44 often wondered why they didn't. Anyway, uh, we were air force at that

1 time at Hunter. I went to the general hospital that the army had then in  
2 Athens, Georgia, and I loved it. I'd never – I hadn't been in a big hospital  
3 since I left training. Well, no, since I'd left New York because I took New  
4 York Hospital, uh, [inaudible 42:07] and that's a big hospital. Uh, I  
5 thought the general hospitals were delightful. And the chief nurse at the  
6 hospital there at Athens told me that if I would come back to the army  
7 she'd see I got a promotion. Uh, she said we like you. We'd like to have  
8 you army. But at that time Korea broke and I was given 24 hours to report  
9 on flying status again to Brookley Air, Air Force Base in, um, Mobile,  
10 Alabama.  
11  
12 Ruth Stewart: [43:01] What does it mean to go back and forth from flight status to non-  
13 flight status? Is it paperwork mainly?  
14  
15 Mary Gates: Mostly just paper. I suppose they would look at you if there was anything  
16 wrong with you, but there wasn't anything obviously wrong, and so – and  
17 they knew I liked it and I guess I gave satisfaction. The pilots liked to fly  
18 with me and all that. And I liked to fly with them. I'll tell you something  
19 later if you want on that. Uh, so from Brookley in Mobile, I was sent to –  
20 I was grounded again and sent to, um, Craig Air Force Base in Alabama,  
21 Selma, Alabama. Then I met a man and married him and that's where the  
22 gates came in.  
23  
24 Ruth Stewart: Mm-hm. [44:09] And did that mean the end of your air force career?  
25  
26 Mary Gates: No, no. I thought it would because I intended to have children, but they  
27 didn't come so as long as – about that time, just about the time we got  
28 married and had a nice house on base and everything like that and we took  
29 a 30-day leave, uh, they sent him overseas to a remote assignment in – out  
30 of Alaska. And so since I couldn't go anyways, it was, it was just one of  
31 those things where we were separated. And when he came back to the  
32 States, they moved both of us to Reese Air Force Base in Texas.  
33  
34 Ruth Stewart: Reese.  
35  
36 Mary Gates: Reese, R-e-e-s-e. That's at Lubbock, Texas. We're getting to the end.  
37 Uh, he had a heart attack there and the doctor said that if he didn't retire,  
38 which he did not want to do, he was going to die because tension and all  
39 the work would be something that he couldn't stand, so. [throat clearing]  
40 They alerted me about then that I was ready for an overseas assignment  
41 and I asked them for 6 months to get my husband retired, which they gave  
42 me.  
43

1 At the end of 6 months, I had orders to the Philippines and I enjoyed that.  
2 It was a good station. Um, at that time we were friendly with the  
3 Filipinos. There was no problem with fighting or anything like that. The  
4 Filipinos would steal you blind if they could, but aside from that  
5 everything was all right, so. Uh, my husband didn't care for the  
6 Philippines though. He was civilian by then and he really had a nice time  
7 of it because he'd go down to operations. Aside from that, everything was  
8 all right, so. Uh, my husband didn't care for the Philippines though. He  
9 was civilian by then and he really had a nice time of it because he'd go  
10 down to operations and they'd take him in where they were going and that  
11 wasn't enough after all of the [inaudible 47:01]. He decided to go to  
12 Australia, so he took some money and a roundtrip ticket and went to  
13 Australia. It took him about 3 months to go broke [chuckle] then he came  
14 home again. He also left the Philippines before I did. Uh, came home,  
15 visited all his relatives, all of my relatives, all of our friends. And when I  
16 came home he said we can go to your next [inaudible 47:32] station. I've  
17 seen everybody. We went to see all my people anyway.  
18  
19 Ruth Stewart: Yeah.  
20  
21 Mary Gates: Uh, I was reassigned from the Philippines to Bergstrom in, in, um, Austin,  
22 Texas. Oh, I forgot to say that at Craig Air Base somewhere in, in about  
23 '53. No, it would be '51 I guess, I made major. And at Bergstrom out of a  
24 clear sky they made me an LC.  
25  
26 Ruth Stewart: Hm.  
27  
28 Mary Gates: I wasn't very happy with that because I knew it would mean a move.  
29 Bergstrom was too small for...  
30  
31 Ruth Stewart: [48:29] What year was that?  
32  
33 Mary Gates: This was [pause].  
34  
35 Ruth Stewart: About.  
36  
37 Mary Gates: Let's see, probably about '59 or early '60 that I made LC. They ordered  
38 all of us down to headquarters and I was very quiet and somebody said  
39 "Why are you so quiet? I said "I don't think I like what's happening."  
40 And they said "Why?" And I said "It's a promotion." And they said yes  
41 it was. But it was nice to have it. And from there, um, I was fortunate in  
42 2 doc-, 2 men asked for me. The commanding officer at Wilford Hall and  
43 the one at Carswell both asked for me and Wilford Hall got me, so I stayed

1 at Wilford Hall for about 2 years. By that time my husband was telling  
2 everybody I'd retire or he'd divorce me, so I retired.  
3  
4 Ruth Stewart: [49:51] And that was in?  
5  
6 Mary Gates: '63.  
7  
8 Ruth Stewart: 1963 when you retired.  
9  
10 Mary Gates: Mm-hm.  
11  
12 Ruth Stewart: [49:59] Then was that the point of which you moved in here?  
13  
14 Mary Gates: No.  
15  
16 Ruth Stewart: No, because that was quite a few years later.  
17  
18 Mary Gates: Oh yes. He wanted to travel. Uh, he was a little bit – he likes things and  
19 then he, he loses his [inaudible 50:16].  
20  
21 Ruth Stewart: Okay.  
22  
23 Mary Gates: Uh.  
24  
25 Ruth Stewart: I understand those people. [chuckle]  
26  
27 Mary Gates: They do. So he – by that time when we were at Bergstrom he bought 5  
28 acres of land on Lake Travis and built a home. After he got the house  
29 built he found out that there were no telephones out there and I'm in a sad  
30 face. It has to have a telephone. They made it. They got me a phone out  
31 there so that I had – from walking across the street to go to work I had 20  
32 miles of driving every day, winding roads too. But that was fine because  
33 he was happy at, at Lake Travis. Uh, by the time I retired, he was ready to  
34 travel so, uh, and we could not travel with a home on Lake Travis. It was  
35 impossible. There was too much vandalism and what have you, so we  
36 sold the house at Lake Travis and bought a home in Austin (and I insisted  
37 on that to have a base) and we traveled. We had a very good time  
38 traveling to Mexico part of the time and all over Canada in the summer, in  
39 the States too, coming and going. I thoroughly loved it.  
40  
41 Um, the last couple of years he wasn't feeling so good and he had a bad  
42 heart, you know, so, uh, a friend of ours told us about the Army Residence  
43 Community opening. And he said "Well, I've been thinking about going  
44 down there just to be close." Because he was being taken care of, both of

1 us were, at Wilford Hall. So we went, came down here and we checked  
2 the Air Force Villages, both of them, and the USAA Towers that were not  
3 built yet but they had the, the plans and all, which he looked over. And  
4 then we came over to the ARC and he fell in love with it, so, uh, he  
5 signed, he wrote a check for \$10,000 and said "C'mon hun. We got to go  
6 home and put some money in the bank." [chuckle]  
7  
8 Ruth Stewart: That's scary.  
9  
10 Mary Gates: Well, no. It was coming out of, um, uh, out of, um, savings into checking.  
11 And, uh, we moved in here the day it opened. We could have moved a  
12 couple of days earlier, but we didn't know that, so we just waited until  
13 they opened a few days later and we [inaudible 53:36]. He liked it. He  
14 lived 3 years.  
15  
16 Ruth Stewart: Good.  
17  
18 Mary Gates: And he enjoyed every minute of it. And that's it. I hope that other isn't  
19 on there, the last part.  
20  
21 Ruth Stewart: [53:54] Mary, did you get into any military groups or veterans groups after  
22 your retirement to the Army Residence Community?  
23  
24 Mary Gates: I was, of course, a member of the, um, Retired Officers' Association.  
25 When we were in Austin, we were both members of the, um, oh what is it?  
26 They had an active one [inaudible 54:28].  
27  
28 Ruth Stewart: Okay.  
29  
30 Mary Gates: I mean the, uh...  
31  
32 Ruth Stewart: Retired Officers.  
33  
34 Mary Gates: Retired Officers.  
35  
36 Ruth Stewart: And Women's Overseas Service League.  
37  
38 Mary Gates: Yes.  
39  
40 Ruth Stewart: Okay, okay.  
41  
42 Mary Gates: I was too busy taking care of [inaudible 54:43]. By the time we moved  
43 here, he was not [inaudible 54:47].  
44

1 Ruth Stewart: Well, this has been a very interesting career that you [inaudible 54:55].  
2  
3 Mary Gates: I have enjoyed it thoroughly.  
4  
5 Ruth Stewart: You really did enjoy your career in the army and air force and it was a  
6 rewarding one obviously. And you obviously contributed a great deal  
7 throughout that [inaudible 55:07].  
8  
9 Mary Gates: I enjoyed it.  
10  
11 Ruth Stewart: Yeah, so. Well, I thank you very, very much for your...  
12  
13 Mary Gates: I wo-, I wondered, I'd love to hear that thing.  
14  
15  
16/mlc