

MARGARET E. OAKS

Denver, Colorado Unit

Transcript of an Oral History Interview

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Margaret E. Oaks

PREFACE

*This transcript is the product of an
interview conducted in April, 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

Oral History Project

Margaret E. Oaks

Denver, Colorado Unit

NOTE: Special thanks to the interviewer,

Marjorie Brown, of the Denver Unit.

MB: What is your name?

MO: My name is Margaret E. Oaks.

MB: Do you know approximately what time you joined the
Denver Unit of WOSL?

MO: I'm not real certain, but I think it was around
somewhere around 1978.

MB: Were you in the Service?

MO: Oh, yes, I was in the Army Nurse Corps, and I retired
as a lieutenant colonel with 21 years service,
in
1970.

MB: What made you decide to come into the Army Nurse
Corps?

MO: I came in the 3rd of July, 1944. It was during the
War, and it seemed like the right thing to do; but
also, that type of life appealed to me. I liked the
challenge and the travel and all that goes with the
Army.

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28 MB: Before you came into the Army Nurse Corps, what did
you do?

30 MO: I was about 6 months out of nurses' training.
I graduated from nurses' training in January,
1944, and

32 came into the Army in July.

m b : What were your jobs when you were in the Army Nurse
34 Corps?

MO: Overseas, we acted as an air evac hospital and
36 received everybody in direct from the front.
I worked on almost everything except,
probably,

38 psychiatry. Certainly OB, general surgery, TB,
medicine, supervision. I guess that covers almost
40 everything except psychiatry.

MB: How long did you say you were in the Service?

42 MO: For 21 years.

MB: Where did your travels take you?

44 MO: I was stationed first for my basic training at
Camp Whitein Medford, Oregon. Then I went to
Madigan

46 Army Hospital in Fort Lewis, and from there I went
overseas, to Europe.

48 We landed in Scotland; went down
through Scotland, England, France, and served
there, in

*Mourmelon-Le-Grand: Then came back to the States and
went to Fletcher General Hospital in Cambridge, Ohio,*

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52 and when that closed, I went to Crile General
Hospital in Cleveland, Ohio.

54 When that closed, I went to Halloran General
Hospital on Staten Island, New York. We closed that,
56 and I went to Madigan Army Hospital at Fort Lewis,
Washington, for five years; went back to Europe and
58 was at Fontainebleau, France, and in Stuttgart,
Germany: Came back to the States to the seven month
60 administrative course at Fort Sam Houston (Texas).
Then five years at Fitzsimmons Army Hospital, one
62 year at Tooele Ordnance Depot (Utah) after I was
married. Then I got out of the Service there because
64 of pregnancy.

 I went back in when Beth, my daughter, was four
66 years old and went to Frankfurt, Germany. I came
back to Fitzsimmons Army Hospital for another year
68 and a half, where I retired in 1970.

MB: Tell me about the kind of housing you had when you
70 were in the Service.

MO: It depended on where you were. During the War, you
72 were in monasteries, old caserns; just about anything
the Army could take over and make livable. As far as
74 at the main hospitals, we were in usually one room
with bathroom facilities down the hall. No cooking

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facili husband and daughter were with me, and we had some
 ties, housing at the HICOG Apartments in Frankfurt, which
 as were very nice. Before that, on our last tour there we
 such. rented a home out in Massenheim, near Frankfurt. Other
 We than that, just barracks style; sometimes just open-
 ate in bay, depending on where you were overseas.
 the What was the nature of the medical care that you had?
 mess For me? I have no complaints about medical care in
 hall the Service.
 or out Tell me about the uniforms that you wore?
 at When I went in, in 1944, there were still a few of
 restau the two-tone blue ones that were being issued. They
 rants were recalled very shortly, and we were given green
 when class A's, and then we bought the pink skirts and
 we green blouses, which were our class A uniforms (dress
 wanted uniforms). We had the brown and white seersucker
 to. duty uniforms, which we used for some years -- I
 T can't remember how many. Then we went to whites.
 he Our class A uniforms changed to the taupe uniforms (I
 last don't remember the years), but we wore them for some
 time I years. Then we changed back to green class A's, and
 was then into our dress blues.
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102 MB: Can you tell me a couple of experiences that were
particularly touching, or funny, or important, in
your career?

104 MO: I think the first thing that ever really hit me
that I always remembered was when we got off the boat
106 coming across the channel. We came across at night,
during the War; got off at Le Harve, in France, and
108 marched in formation to the train station.

110 As we got off the boat, and looked, the city was
just a mass of rubble. As we marched down through
112 the town, there was nothing but concrete foundations
and columns and just rubble, every place. It
114 occurred to me immediately that we in the United
States don't even know what war is. We lose people
116 from our families and our friends, but we never have
had to suffer the destruction of everything else that
118 we own. These people over there -- everything was
just utterly demolished, including their families.

120 MB: What required the greatest adjustment for you when

MO: you came into the Service?

122 I didn't have to adjust at all. I came directly
after six months out of training and it was pretty
124 much the same: Rules, regulations, hours to be in.
I did pretty much as I was told, the same as I had
been. To me, it was nothing detrimental or unusual.

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126 MB: When you first came into the Army Nurse Corps, did you
plan on making it a career?

128 MO: I don't think anyone thought about careers during
World War II. We were just there because we were
130 needed. Then it became evident that we were going to
have occupation forces, and we were going to have a
132 lot of casualties left that would be needing care.
It just seemed to me the thing to do to stay in --
134 the benefits and the travel, which to me was the
greatest, and the challenges and the new people to
136 meet constantly, to me were a great way to live.
When it became evident that people could stay after
the War, that was fine with me.

MB: After you left the Service, what did you do?

140 MO: My husband and daughter and I settled here in Aurora,
and my husband died in April of 1980. I still live
142 here. My daughter is now almost 25, and she's an RN,
with her bachelor of science. I do volunteer work at
144 Fitzsimmons, I drive for Meals on Wheels, I do a lot
of church work, work with the Channel 9 Health Fair.
I guess that's the main things.

146 MB: What does being a member of WOSL mean to you?

MO: I think it's satisfying to me to know that we
148 pinpoint certain patriotic things that we support.
Also, I've enjoyed knowing several families that we
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