

**Interview of Mary Agnes Rust Gruetzman on her service as an  
American Red Cross nurse in France during World War I**

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5 Interviewer: An interview with Mary Gruetzman for the Women's Overseas Service  
6 League Oral Histories. Mary is a member of Peninsula Unit in California  
7 and, uh, she is being interviewed by Nelva Gillette and Mae Marie Irons  
8 of Peninsula Unit. Mary Agnes Rust Gruetzman served in World War I in  
9 France as a Red Cross nurse. Mary is now 93 years old. She is living at  
10 the [Sequoias 00:50], which is a Presbyterian retirement community in  
11 Portola Valley just south of San Francisco, California.  
12

13 Interviewer: [01:03] Mary, we would like you to tell us some of your experiences in  
14 World War I.  
15

16 Mary Gruetzman: There'll never be another war like World War I with the spirit and  
17 everything. The spirit of the man. I think that's the thing that, uh,  
18 inspired me because they were so wonderful. [Inaudible 01:34].  
19

20 Interviewer: Thank you Mary for showing us, uh, your scrapbook that you saved, uh,  
21 since 1917. You told us that, uh, you had lived in Oregon and then you  
22 went to nurses training in Chicago and when you finished your training  
23 you joined up with the Red Cross and, uh, went overseas to France. I  
24 believe this, uh, part in your diary would cover what you did, uh, while  
25 you were in France until, through the war, until you got home. [02:24]  
26 Nelva maybe you can help her by reading some of that.  
27

28 Interviewer: April 8, left Lakewood. April 26 arrived New York City at Saint Andrews  
29 Hotel. Horrible. Left port of embarkation Hoboken, New York, New  
30 Jersey, May 23. Headquarters base section number 5 Brest, France, April  
31 30. Left Brest June 6. Reported at La Mole's June 7. Left La Mole's  
32 June 11 for hospital in Paris. Reported at hospital for temporary duty.  
33 Left hospital in Paris, arrived at La Mole's. [Inaudible 03:27] France  
34 August 7 to August 13. Had flu November 12 to December 10.  
35

36 Mary Gruetzman: What, what was the date?  
37

38 Interviewer: November 20, 21 it is. December 11 went on leave to Niece and Paris.  
39 December 23 returned to duty in La Mole's. [Inaudible 03:58] to visit  
40 front. Verdun, uh, Reims and Chateau-Thierry. Left La Mole's. Arrived  
41 Camp [inaudible 04:08], number 91, [La Baule 04:13], France. Left,  
42 arrived at Brest on the Maur, on the Mauretania. Arrived in New York  
43 1919. Went to Boise, Idaho. Went from Boise to Seattle.  
44

1 Interviewer: [04:34] Mary, would you tell us a little bit about the hospital where you  
2 took your training.  
3  
4 Mary Gruetzman: [Inaudible 04:40] supposed to be one of the best in the country. It had the  
5 reputation of being one of the best in the United States. Yes, I [inaudible  
6 04:54] was asking everybody, doctors and nurses, what's it like. Is it  
7 better than others? So [inaudible 05:03] 3 years. Yes. I finished that. I  
8 hadn't gone through very long.  
9  
10 Interviewer: [05:15] When did you go overseas? Do you remember?  
11  
12 [Laughter]  
13  
14 Mary Gruetzman: Oh, gosh. I should have looked up. Let me see. 1916. I think that was it.  
15 So this then should have been about 17.  
16  
17 Interviewer: [05:48] And of course you went by ship?  
18  
19 Mary Gruetzman: What?  
20  
21 Interviewer: You went by ship. You didn't go by plane.  
22  
23 Mary Gruetzman: [Laughter] No I don't think we did. I didn't go in a plane 'cause I was  
24 afraid to ride in it.  
25  
26 Interviewer: [06:01] Do you remember how long it took you?  
27  
28 Mary Gruetzman: No. I'm not very good at those things. I mean those aren't the things that  
29 impressed me [at the time you see 06:11] I don't remember, I don't  
30 remember how long it took.  
31  
32 Interviewer: [06:23] Then you went directly to France?  
33  
34 Mary Gruetzman: Yeah. How big a hospital?  
35  
36 Interviewer: Mm-hm.  
37  
38 Mary Gruetzman: Oh, I read something about that. Another day [inaudible 06:39]. I think it  
39 said [70 06:45] and the one that, uh, and I think that I worked in 2 or 3 of  
40 them. One of. One of them was [inaudible 07:03]. I just happened to find,  
41 uh, something. I don't know what it was. Made some remarks.  
42  
43 Interviewer: [07:11] Do you remember the town?  
44

1 Mary Gruetzman: Uh, well it was, uh, La Mole's is the town I remember.  
2  
3 Interviewer: [07:27] [What's] your duties? You remember how long? How many  
4 hours you had to work or...  
5  
6 Mary Gruetzman: No, I don't remember the, uh, remember hours and the duties. [Inaudible  
7 07:46].  
8  
9 Interviewer: [07:49] Did they come from the battle? The wounded soldiers.  
10  
11 Mary Gruetzman: The wounded.  
12  
13 Interviewer: [07:55] Did they bring them right to you from the battlefield or did they go  
14 to some place else first? Were you near the front?  
15  
16 Mary Gruetzman: Yeah [it 08:08] was in 2 or 3 hospitals. And, uh, ours was the first you  
17 see.  
18  
19 Interviewer: Oh.  
20  
21 Mary Gruetzman: So, uh, we got the worst. So they brought them right to the hospital. Well  
22 now I can tell you one story. What was the boy's name? Anyway, I was  
23 trying to get him all [inaudible 08:44] up because he was, I don't know, if  
24 he was gonna pass out or not. But anyway, uh, his, uh, major, or one of  
25 them was, uh, coming to pin his medal on him. He had done something. I  
26 forgot what it was. And so I wanted to get him [inaudible 09:11]. Now I  
27 can't even think of his name. Isn't that awful. I said just think your own  
28 major is coming to pin that medal on you and what do you think his  
29 answer was.  
30  
31 Interviewer: What?  
32  
33 Mary Gruetzman: And what will I do with the medal?  
34  
35 [Laughter]  
36  
37 Interviewer: [09:33] [Inaudible 09:34] little girl, you didn't live in Illinois, did you?  
38  
39 Mary Gruetzman: No. No. but I had my training there.  
40  
41 Interviewer: Yes.  
42  
43 Mary Gruetzman: And that was the, uh, the only reason, uh, what was the name of our  
44 woman there that was head of it and she encouraged me to go but, uh.

1  
2Interviewer: [09:56] Where did you live as a little girl?  
3  
4Mary Gruetzman: Where did I live as a little girl? In Oregon.  
5  
6Interviewer: Oh, then you came way east.  
7  
8Mary Gruetzman: I'm an Oregonian.  
9  
10Interviewer: Oh.  
11  
12Mary Gruetzman; Yes. No, I went back there. I didn't have any contact back there  
13 [inaudible 10:15].  
14  
15Interviewer: Oh.  
16  
17Mary Gruetzman: But, uh, I don't see it as anything worthwhile to mention.  
18  
19Interviewer: Well we wanna know about, a little more about your overseas. [10:29]  
20 What else but what else can you...  
21  
22Mary Gruetzman: Uh?  
23  
24Interviewer: Overseas. [10:32] What else can you remember?  
25  
26Mary Gruetzman: [Inaudible 10:35].  
27  
28Interviewer: Mm-hm.  
29  
30Mary Gruetzman: I wasn't there too long. I liked it.  
31  
32Interviewer: Mm-hm.  
33  
34Mary Gruetzman: And I don't know. To me it was interesting. It isn't, uh, and I think the,  
35 uh, the other nurses felt the same. It was, I don't remember any  
36 complaints about anything. So it must have been, but of course everything  
37 was new you see. And even, even like the hospitals. They hadn't had  
38 them going very long so it was...  
39  
40Interviewer: You said you weren't there very long. [11:27] How long?  
41  
42Mary Gruetzman: Yes, how long? [Inaudible 11:30].  
43  
44Interviewer: One year?

1  
2 Mary Gruetzman: Huh?  
3  
4 Interviewer: One year?  
5  
6 Mary Gruetzman: Uh, I think it was less than a year. And I know it wasn't more.  
7  
8 Interviewer: [11:41] Did you come back to Chicago to the Presbyterian Hospital  
9 afterwards?  
10  
11 Mary Gruetzman: No. Then, uh, then I came back home. Back here. 'Cause I remember the  
12 Presbyterian Hospital. I don't know. And the nurses. I don't remember  
13 their names now but, uh, I liked all the nurses. The ones that were  
14 [inaudible 12:24] and our [inaudible 12:27] in Chicago. It was nice about  
15 living [inaudible 12:40] even after, uh, after I came home. [Inaudible  
16 12:50]. My mother was not too happy [inaudible 13:10]. But, uh, I don't  
17 know, I just liked the different experiences. We couldn't keep a diary you  
18 see.  
19  
20 Interviewer: Oh, they didn't want anything in writing. Yes.  
21  
22 Mary Gruetzman: [Inaudible dangerous 13:33]. So I couldn't do it. So I took this, uh, to the  
23 hospital and I had the boys write in it.  
24  
25 Interviewer: Mary showed us a small book, uh, that had had blank pages and, uh, the  
26 cover said, lest we forget. She'd intended to use it for a diary but, uh,  
27 most of the time she was not allowed to keep a diary while in France and  
28 so she had the boys write in it and it has some remarkable drawings and  
29 messages in it from the boys that were in the hospital.  
30  
31 Mary Gruetzman: [Inaudible 14:19]. 'Cause they must have been boys that had had some...  
32  
33 Interviewer: This is the end of recording on this side of the tape. And this concludes  
34 the interview with Mary Gruetzman, World War I, Red Cross Nurse who  
35 served in France. She is now a member of Peninsula Unit California. The  
36 remainder of the tape will contain songs and information about World War  
37 I.  
38  
39 [14:55] Music playing  
40  
41 Interviewer: End of recording on this side of the tape.  
42  
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