

1 Interview of Anna Lisa Moline on her service in the U.S. Army Nurse Corps during WWII

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4Marjorie Brown: [0:01] What is your name?

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6Anna Moline: My name is Anna Lisa Moline.

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8Marjorie Brown: [0:06] When did you join the Denver Unit of WOSL?

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10Anna Moline: I joined it in, uh, May, eh, April of 1986.

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12Marjorie Brown: [0:18] Uh, what branch of the service were you in?

13

14Anna Moline: I was in the Army Nurse Corps.

15

16Marjorie Brown: [0:24] Uh, what made you decide to come in the Army Nurse Corps?

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18Anna Moline: Uh, I was w-, uh, working as Assistant Superintendent in, uh, for the
19 Department of Hospitals in New York City, uh, in charge of a 300-bed
20 pediatric building. Well I had been there, uh, a-, since training off and on, uh,
21 and one of my friends joined the, uh, Army Nurse Corps in, uh, early in 1941.
22 She was on this – a, a boat that went down, uh, uh, the first, uh, uh, boat, uh,
23 uh, with nursing personnel that went over in 19, uh, of '41 I believe, uh, and it
24 was, uh, shipwrecked off the coast of Ireland, and I was so, uh, enthusiastic
25 about her valor that I [chuckle] joined the Army Nurse Corps. And then also,
26 the American Red Cross had a big rally at the Commodore Hotel early in
27 1941. The period, uh, prior to World War I when there was an emergency, uh,
28 uh, status, the army, uh, no, the Red Cross was then recruiting, uh, nurses for
29 the Army Nurse Corps. Uh, it was a beautiful ceremony. Flags were furled,
30 and, uh, uh, they, uh, the discussion was held relative to the need for army
31 nurses, and I joined immediately. This was in April 1941.

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33Marjorie Brown: [1:55] What did you do before you came in the army?

34

35Anna Moline: Before I was in the army, I was, um, uh, first I was supervisor of met-, at
36 Metropolitan Hospital, and then I attended schools evenings. No, I was
37 evening supervisor. I attended schools mor-, uh, school morning at new yor-,
38 mornings at New York University. And in 1940, I received my BS, BS degree
39 in nursing education. Uh, after that, I, uh, continued. Uh, I went for a small
40 time, uh, to Greenpoint Hospital, which was supposed to be the garden
41 [chuckle] spot of the earth in New York City. Uh, it was an Italian district full
42 of crime. [laughter] Uh, then I went back to New Yor-, uh, to Metropolitan
43 Hospital, and when I, uh, joined the army, I was a s-, I was n-, I was titled as
44 Assistant Superintendent of the Pediatric Building.

1
2 Marjorie Brown: [2:59] Uh, what did you do in the service?
3
4 Anna Moline: Uh, first I was assigned to, um, [Pine 3:04] Camp a – to – as assistant chief
5 nurse to Beatrice Quinn, a beautiful Lieutenant Colonel Army Nurse Corps.
6 There I was only there for about a year, and then I was transferred to Fort
7 Hamilton as chief nurse, and at Fort Hamilton, uh, after about 8 months, I said
8 I would like to go overseas. And I was assigned to the 3rd Auxiliary Surgical
9 Group. Uh, and about, um, oh, November of 19, uh, 42. [No 3:44].
10
11 Marjorie Brown: [3:46] Uh, where did that, where did that surgical group go?
12
13 Anna Moline: The 3rd Auxiliary r-, uh, uh, Auxiliary Surgical Group, uh, was, um, s-, uh,
14 initiated or set up at Fort, um, uh, San Antonio. Uh, let's see. Fort, uh, w-,
15 what's the name of the hospital in San Antonio? F-, uh – after that, uh, we in
16 November – no, early in December/latter part of November of 1942, we were
17 activated at, uh, uh, Fort Dix, which is actually Fort, uh, um, what is Fort Dix
18 – [background noise]
19
20 New York City, and we left, departed on the Queen Mary on December 7th,
21 exactly 1 year after war was declared in 1942. And on the Queen Mary, uh,
22 we were unescorted, uh, eh, because of the size of the vessel [throat clearing]
23 and, um, because we were unescorted, uh, the, um, uh, vessel had to
24 crisscross, keep crisscrossing to keep out of the line of fire, uh, of the army.
25 And between that and the storm, uh, storms at sea, we had 40,000, eh, 4,000
26 sick, sick troops. [background speaker] Uh, when we arrived in, um, uh,
27 Scotland, uh, there was a rumor that, uh, the Queen Mary had been, uh, sunk
28 w-, because we were several days late getting into, uh, the Firth of Forth in
29 Scotland. Uh, actually, we had been hit one night. There was all this, uh,
30 rushing and screaming and, uh, pounding as we lay in our berths [tapping] uh,
31 for the – because of the size of the Queen Mary, they were able to repair the,
32 uh, the vessel, the ship, and it, uh, went on to the Firth of Forth. After that, we
33 were rushed in the dark of night to Oxford, England, by train, and we were
34 stationed there, uh, uh, to be assigned out as needed.
35
36 Marjorie Brown: [6:05] Uh, where were – where were your other assignments when you were
37 in the service?
38
39 Anna Moline: Eh, over then, uh, I was with the 3rd Auxiliary Surgical Group and, and I had
40 to go down to, uh, Truro in Cornwall because we had a hospital set up there to
41 take care of air-raid casualties, uh, from across the channel. After that, uh, I
42 was assigned to the 3rd, uh, 30th General Hospital, uh, and there, uh, when I,
43 uh, was assigned to the 30th General Hospital, I went to Hull to set up a
44 hospital in a bombed out Catholic school. We scrubbed and cleaned debris,

1 and uh, eh, because it was partially demor-, uh, uh, [chuckle] d-, destroyed.
2 We lived in a house next to, uh, the school, the Catholic school, which was
3 also practically destroyed. Uh, after I had been in Hull for about, um, eh, 4
4 months, I was called by, uh, eh, eh, s-, uh, Central Office, which was in
5 London, uh, and asked if I was, uh, willing to go to, uh, an area where the
6 only, uh, transportation we would have would be by, uh, air. And they asked if
7 my uniforms were in good condition, condition, if my health was good. I said
8 yes. So they, uh, called me back and said, uh, would another girl like – nurse
9 like to go with me. So a friend of mine, Hilda Nevin, and I received orders.
10 Uh, we did not know where we were going. Uh, uh, it was, uh, absolutely
11 secret. We went down to London.
12

13 And then they in the dark of night also again they put us on the sleeper and we
14 went to Land's End. From Land's End, we left, uh, one morning. We were
15 told then that we were going to Russia on a, um, mission that was set up, uh,
16 during the conference between Churchill, um, uh, Stalin, and, and Roosevelt
17 relative to the shuttle bombing that was to occur, uh, over Poland from – by
18 the 8th Air Force and, and by – over, um, Romania, uh, by – from planes
19 stationed in Italy. Um, of course, we were quite excited about this. Um, we
20 left then on a bomber, uh, plane, uh, for Russia, uh – no. W-, uh, for – we left
21 one night, leaving Land's End on a, um, oh, n-, not a bomber plane – carrier
22 and, uh, we landed in Casa Blanca the next morning. Uh, with the birds
23 singing and spring [laughter] in the air. We were thrilled after the long, uh,
24 dark days in England. We stayed in, uh, we then went to – on to Tehran, uh,
25 stopping in, um, in, uh, Tripoli for lunch, I remember for tea. And then we
26 drove o-, we, uh, flew on to, um, Tehran. At Tehran, uh, the nurses were
27 assigned to relieve in the hospital. And, uh, we wa-, we were waiting there for
28 about, uh, 3 weeks before we could get into Russia because, uh, as you know,
29 the Russians were in control, and every time that, uh, the pilots would go into
30 Russia with supplies, they would demand another visa.
31

32 So they ran c-, uh, short of visas. We had to wait for visas. And about the, um,
33 last of May, we finally did, uh, receive orders. And we flew over, um, that
34 gorgeous, uh, uh, land, uh, eh, from, uh, Tehran into, uh, [Inaudible 10:16],
35 Kiev, over the Caspian Sea, and uh, the, uh, Ukraine, the, eh, beautiful land,
36 which is similar to our prairies, uh, in South Dakota where I was born, where I
37 was reared. [chuckle] We were stationed, um, I mean we set up, uh, a hospital
38 unit, a hospital unit there with a complete operating room. Uh, eh, we also
39 had, uh, to, to set up hospitals at 2 other bases, one at [Myrhorod 10:54] and
40 one at [Inaudible 10:55]. Now [Myrhorod 10:57] and [Inaudible 10:57] were
41 fighter bases, and Poltava was a, uh, bomber base. We awaited for casualties,
42 uh, the missions to begin, but, uh, because the, um, bombing was delayed –
43 the bombing of England was delayed, the missions were delayed, but finally
44 there was a mission from Italy across Romania, and we were ready, uh, for

any casualties that might, uh, be on the planes. And, of course, there was great excitement because this was considered, uh, quite a, um, historical [effect 11:41], that we would have the shuttle, uh, bombing occur and us be stationed in Russia. Uh, of course, we did receive casualties, uh, uh, from the planes as they came in.

Uh, pilots that were shot and, and wounded, uh, in the, in the bomber bases, uh, bomber, bomber [what] [inaudible 12:04] of their planes, in the bomber, um, pits of their plane. [background speaker] [throat clearing] Then, um, we continued, uh, they, they would, uh, the, uh, pilots of the planes – the planes would refuel in Russia and return again to their base in, in Italy and bomb as they went back. This was so that they would not have to carry, uh, a larger load of bombs t-, to, uh, uh, to make the trip back and, uh, over Romania and into, uh, Russia and back again. So this was, uh, one of the prime purposes, uh, of the, uh, this, uh, plan, uh, was that they would refuel and go back. Now there were several trips made between, uh, England and, uh, between Italy and, uh, Romania – over Romania into Russia. But about, uh, on the 21st of June, uh, the 8th Air Force, uh, made a raid over Poland. Well by that time, the Germans were quite aware of where we were, and they followed us, uh, in – they followed the planes in.

About, uh, 11:00 at night, we heard a, a air raid siren, but I – we had heard so many air raid sirens in England that we didn't pay too much attention to it, but about midnight the bombings started, and we were bombed the whole night in the trenches. Fortunately, the Russians had built, uh, trenches that were about 3 feet wide, in which we could bring the patients from the hospital, and, and we were there, uh, until dawn being, uh, bombs falling all around. I am sure that the Germans [inaudible 14:05] [laughter] knew where we were because, uh, the, the flares were as light as day, but they did not bomb us in the trenches. They knew that there were women there. However, they bombed Russians not more than about 2 blocks away, and the earth from the bombing flew over our heads, hit our heads and our helmets.

Marjorie Brown: [14:31] When you came in the service, what was the biggest adjustment you had to make?

Anna Moline: Adjustments? [laughter] My mother said that this was good for me because I complained that we didn't have na-, uh, tablecloths on the – [laughter] in the mess. Uh, this was a, a, a somewhat rough li-, uh, living was, uh, rather hard. The mess in, in, uh, eh, in Russia, we, uh, after our bombing, we were on the ground. We didn't even have a wooden floor, uh, wooden floors in our tents. Uh, the aunts would get into our bedrooms l-, our leather slippers that we used to, um, uh, walk to the, um, latrine. Uh, the latrine, [laughter] uh, setups were not always very, uh, delicate situations. [laughter] And, uh, in, uh, in England,

1 the food was not, uh, good. Eh, eh, it was at the height of the war. The
2 English people had little food. For breakfast one morning, the first morning,
3 [inaudible 15:48] us – some heated, uh, tomatoes over a, a, a piece of bread.
4
5 Marjorie Brown: [Inaudible 16:00].
6
7 Anna Moline: Not because of myself but because of my 70 nurses. We never had, uh, other
8 foods. Of course, we never had eggs or butter nor milk during the whole
9 period. This I missed. However, when I was at Hull, this – w-, we were taking
10 care of, uh, men from, um, navy, so once in a while, we would – they would
11 give us an egg. [chuckle] This was a luxury. Actually, I adjusted quite well to
12 the rough living.
13
14 Marjorie Brown: [16:31] When you went in the service, did you plan to make it a career?
15
16 Anna Moline: Yes, I had hoped to, uh, but when I came out, they were discharging everyone.
17 I had been in 6 years, and they were discharging everyone who was not
18 regular army. However, uh, Lieutenant Colonel Danielson who – with whom I
19 had served, uh, eh, on my last assignment, uh, in her office a, a, at Versailles,
20 uh, out of Paris, knew me. I had worked with her about 6 months before we
21 came home. I came home with her. She called after I had, uh, eh, eh, made my
22 application to the Veterans Administration and asked me to return, uh, excuse
23 me, to Walter Reed or later, she said, I could be assigned wherever I wished
24 because they were needing nurses then again in the army. Uh, but because I
25 was 35 years, uh, old at the time I entered, first entered, I thought I would be
26 overage as, as a – and afraid that I would not be, uh, kept in the regular army
27 if I returned. And this proved to be a fact because one of my friends who went
28 in was separated. And you can only, uh, well follow one path in this world,
29 and I chose the VA.
30
31 Marjorie Brown: Okay. [17:55] After you got out of the service, um, you went into – w-, you
32 went into VA nursing is that right?
33
34 Anna Moline: No, I really came back as Assistant, um, Superintendent at the University of
35 Pennsylvania School of Nursing, but, uh, because of my, uh, chest condition, I
36 became ill, and I really could not tolerate, uh, that climate, uh, and, uh, eh, I, I
37 still had a lot of stress from my army experience. So I, uh, went down to
38 Washington to see Colonel Danielson, and she encouraged me to apply to the,
39 uh, uh, for the Veterans Administration, uh, trying to get out, uh, leave, uh, p-,
40 uh, Pittsburgh [inaudible 18:43] smoky section, and, um, I was accepted in the
41 Veterans Administration.
42
43 Marjorie Brown: [18:53] Uh, what prompted you to join WOSL?
44

1 Anna Moline: I love [laughter] the army and my life in it, and I have known some beautiful
2 women in the service. Rita Geis, uh, Lieutenant Colonel Danielson,
3 Lieutenant Colonel Beatrice Quinn, and I thought it would be a refreshing
4 thing to, uh, reach – to have associations with, uh, women who had formerly
5 been in the Army Nurse Corps.
6

7 Marjorie Brown: Okay. That's just great. I thank you very much.
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