

1 **Interview of Marion Steinhilber on her 27 year career in the U.S. Army Nurse Corps**

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4Ruth Stewart: ...being interviewed as a member of the WOSL, San Antonio, Texas unit
5 at the San Antonio...on October 21st, 2003. Ruth Stewart is interviewing,
6 assisted by Carol Habgood. [00:17] Marion, tell us about your joining the
7 service.
8

9Marion Steinhilber: Well, I was, um, finished training and uh, a friend of mine at the hospital
10 said she was going down to the Red Cross one afternoon after work –
11 would I go along with her and we could go out to, out to eat and maybe to
12 a show later. So, we went. And I sat in the Red Cross office waiting for
13 her and uh, periodically someone would come out and say, “What are you
14 here for?” And I told’m I was waiting for a friend. And she said, “Well,
15 why don’t... Would you like to be interviewed?” And I said, “No, I don’t
16 think so.” That happened several times. And then we left.
17

18 Well, the funny part of it was, the girl that was being interviewed that day
19 joined; and I did – or did not join – and I did, which was kind of a... Well,
20 the lady asked me – she came in and said, “Well, why don’t you take these
21 papers home with you and look’m over, you know, see what you think.” I
22 said, “Oh, alright”. And I always kind of laughed about it because, uh,
23 blondie didn’t ever go into the service and this one did.
24

25Ruth Stewart: [1:35] Where were you at that time in the hospital for your nurses
26 training...
27

28Marion Steinhilber: I was working in the hospital as a...
29

30Ruth Stewart: [1:40] But where?
31

32Marion Steinhilber: In uh, Buffalo, New York – Mercy Hospital.
33

34Ruth Stewart: Okay.
35

36Marion Steinhilber: And, um... So, I sort of waited and waited and I, tra-, trained with the
37 nuns. Of course, and they get very perturbed when you’re going
38 someplace like that. And the Red Cross called me up several... There
39 was... This was in the fall of the year 1943. And uh, they kept calling me
40 and saying, “We haven’t gotten your papers back.” And I kept going to
41 the chief nurse and saying, “You didn’t send my papers back yet.” And
42 they kept saying, “Oh you don’t want to go. Have you read that book
43 [inaudible 2:18] and giving me all of these gory details?” And I finally
44 pushed them and said, “They need my papers”, you know. “I have to go.”

1
2
3 So, I did get the papers and I went before a notary at home and got sworn
4 in. However, I didn't go on active duty until April of the following year,
5 because we got a letter saying that they were – the army was setting up
6 several places in the United States or they were having basic training for
7 the nurses, because before that, they just got assigned to a hospital and that
8 was it. And that as soon as the, um, the classes started in, um, the first
9 service command, which was in New York and, uh, [ISC 3:05], uh, New
10 England states kind of area. And that's where we would go. And as soon
11 as they got the basic training set up, then I would get orders to go; which I
12 did.

13
14 I went in, uh, the middle of April and I was... We went to, um, Atlantic
15 City, which was the place. It was, uh... They used all of the hotels at that
16 time along the island – or along the boardwalk. And the hospital was in
17 Haddon Hall Chalfonte Hotels and it was called England General
18 Hospital.

19
20 We were billeted in a very fine residential hotel behind the hospital. And
21 uh, there were 146 of us in the class. We were class number seven. Uh,
22 we spent six weeks there, having classes, getting uniforms, um... At that
23 time, we were phasing out the blue uniforms that the army nurses wore
24 and we were going into OD's. And they had some of the, um, the
25 seersucker striped uniforms. So, we all got a little bit of everything that
26 they gave us.

27
28 Uh, I had two capes – blue one and a big one I used to call the Bat Man
29 cape, cause we could hold our arms out and it still fell right in the middle.
30 And we had white uniforms and, uh, they fixed them for us, you know.
31 And we wore the OD uniforms with the khaki shirts and ties and a visor
32 hat. We did not have the overseas caps the way we had eventually. We
33 used to wear the mens.

34
35 We had classes all day long, about army structure and all of this; uh,
36 nothing about working in a hospital, you know. And we went out and
37 drilled part of the day, a couple hours of the day down Pennsylvania
38 Avenue in Atlantic City. And uh, we had, um, after the first two weeks,
39 we had a 10-mile hike; and we went through the, um, ooh, what's that
40 course you go through? I had it in my mind, but anyway. The ones that
41 the fellows go through, you know, where you have to climb a wall and all
42 that kind of stuff.

1 And then at the end, we had a 20-mile hike out to Brigantine [bath 5:25]
2 pass, which is out near the ocean – full fueled pack, full uniform, fatigues,
3 you – the whole bit. And uh, we walked down the boardwalk out to
4 Brigantine. We did have some ambulances following us, because it was
5 pretty rough. And uh, they brought food for us. And we were going to be
6 strafed. Well, you can imagine after 20 miles, our feet were sore. And we
7 got to the beach and we took our shoes off and we went wading in the, in
8 the water. And all of a sudden, they yelled, “Gas”.

9
10 So, we had to run back; and I think we all inhaled about a pound of sand
11 putting on the gas masks. And then they had planes strafing overhead.
12 And uh, a couple of days after that, we had a big celebration. We were
13 graduated in full white uniforms – the white duty uniforms. And uh, we
14 had a nurse – I never saw her again after that – [Molly Utah 6:22] her
15 name was. She was a major. She was in charge of our group. And then
16 we had, uh, I was in the 2nd platoon. They divided us into four platoons.
17 And we had a really nice guy, Sergeant Bailey was our platoon leader. He
18 was a real fine fella.

19
20 And they had to put up with us, you know, of course. And when we
21 came... When we came back from the beach after being strafed and all,
22 they took some of the people... We had blisters all over our feet and some
23 of them went back by ambulance. And uh, when we got to the boardwalk,
24 all of the hotels had patients out in the balconies, you know. It was just
25 after D-Day – or it was around, just before D-Day, I guess. And uh, we
26 got all kinds of wonderful cat calls, cause we had to walk back – march on
27 the boardwalk in attention for the next two miles. So, we got a lot of claps
28 and cat calls from all the patients that were sitting outside.

29
30 And then we got our assignments. I was assigned to Halloran General
31 Hospital in Staten Island, which was a place that had just been built. It
32 was built for, um, exceptional children and adults. They had never used it,
33 so the army took it over for a hospital. It was a huge place. Big buildings
34 – two and three-story buildings. And uh, I was assigned to the female
35 wards [chuckle], which made me very happy as you can understand.

36
37 Colonel [Bletch 7:58], who became one of the finest chief nurses and she
38 got a lot of accolades when she was [in the lead 8:03] for help with the
39 POW's and so forth – was our chief nurse. There were five of us from the
40 New York area that got to be very friendly and we got – we were real
41 buddies. And one of the nurses went down to the, um, nursing office one
42 day and saw this sign. They were asking for nurses to go, uh, ship, you
43 know, work on ships. So, Stevie said... She came back and she said she
44 put all our names down, because, “You wouldn't want to be left behind if I

1 had to go.” So [chuckle] we had one of the gals that’s in her 30’s already
2 when she found... Of course, she, she was alright with it, except when she
3 found out where she was going.
4

5 We were only in Halloran about a month and we got orders. Um, I had to
6 go to the dentist and have some teeth pulled, because they were... As far
7 as I’m concerned, they were pretty good. But they said, “No. Where
8 you’re going, you might not have a dentist. So, we have to pull these.”
9

10 They gave us five days leave to go home. I was very brave. I went down
11 to LaGuardia and got myself on a plane for the first time and went home.
12 Didn’t tell’m I was coming. Go on the bus; got off the bus and went to the
13 house and my mother was very surprised. And finally, she said to me,
14 “Why are you home?” You know, “They don’t give you leave like, you
15 know. You’ve only been in there for...” So, I had to admit to her that we
16 were – had orders for overseas.
17

18 We got back to Halloran; we had to pack footlockers and stuff and get’m
19 on the way. And then because there were a lot of people coming into Fort
20 Dix and the training stations, they decided, um, we had to go by plane,
21 because all this business in fixing the ship for females is a little hard. So,
22 we were stationed and sent to the Westbury Hotel, which is right next to
23 the Central Park in New York. We were there for about 10 days. And you
24 had to sit around and wait until you got called. We had a lieutenant – 1st
25 lieutenant nurse that was put in charge of us.
26

27Ruth Stewart: [10:10] What was your rank?
28

29Marion Steinhilber: 2nd lieutenant. Everybody started out as a 2nd lieutenant in those days.
30 And uh, she got to the stat-, she was very upset with us. Our orders said
31 you’re going to a temperate climate. So, and it had been D-Day. We had
32 already gotten patients from D-Day. So, we start... We’re going to get
33 right over in the thick of things. So, one day she called us in. She had an
34 apartment; we had two in a room. And said, “Well, uh, we’re having a
35 good time. We could go anyplace. I’ll just call in every hour on the
36 hour.” And there were some young officers, uh, there, so we really had a
37 ball.
38

39 So, she called us in and she said, uh, “You’re all going to take turns
40 answering my phone for an hour every day.” Okay – while she sat right
41 there. And then she said, “And you think you’re all a bunch of smarties
42 that you’re going right over to Europe. Well, I’ll tell you where you’re
43 going.” That’s what she said. “You’re going to India.” So, we all sat
44 there and said, “What are we going there for?” [chuckle] So, as I said, we

1 sort of waited and waited. It took us about 2-1/2 weeks getting on and off
2 planes, different places, to finally get where we were going.

3
4 We uh, spent about a week in, uh... We went out of New York up to
5 Gander, which is in Newfoundland. We went over to Casablanca. We
6 stayed there for about four or five days in the nurses' quarters. Had a
7 good time there too. We didn't have to do anything till we got called.
8 Then we got on a plane and we went to Cairo. They billeted us outside the
9 city. We were, um, restricted to post, so we didn't go anyplace. We
10 couldn't even go into the city and see anything.

11
12 We watched the kids out in the dust and the sand, uh, falling like flies
13 because it was Augu-, July, August. And they were, uh, training. And
14 I'm out there, well, you know... Then we got on a plane and we went to,
15 uh, Abadan, which is in the Indian Ocean. It's supposed to be one of the
16 hottest places in the world. We stayed there overnight. We were able to
17 change our clothes. By this time, we were traveling in the, uh, seersucker,
18 uh, slacks, which the boys fondly called us – they all called it our pajamas.

19
20 And it was so hot there, I want you to know, that we got out of our clothes
21 and they had us in a compound with a big fence around, so nobody could
22 see us; got in a swimming pool, took all our clothes off and washed'm.
23 And by the time we finished horsing around, our clothes are bone dry.
24 Went to the mess hall, stayed overnight the next day. This was a refueling
25 stop.

26
27 We got on the plane and the next thing you know, we're in Calcutta. We
28 landed at what they call Dum Dum Airport. And, you know, the plane
29 steps are kind of small in those days. You throw your luggage... We were
30 able to take our, uh, duffle bag – use that bag; and one small suitcase.
31 And you can see all of us climbing down off of that [inaudible 13:24] and
32 stuff.

33
34 We got to the – into the airport to be processed. We still didn't know
35 where we were going. And then they called us all together and said, "You
36 gotta go back on the plane." [chuckle] "There are some reporters here
37 from the United States and they want to see you coming off the plane." So,
38 that's what we did.

39
40 And then from there, they took us to Karachi. We were at Karachi for
41 about 10 days. We stayed at the hospital. It was the 142nd General. Uh,
42 we were way down in the boondocks in a building that had very little
43 amenities – about a half mile up to get food. And we weren't working, of
44 course. And we were beginning... You know, the word gets around,

1 there's new nurses in the area. So, we had all kinds of people coming to
2 the doors wanting us to go out and have a... So, we did.

3
4 But the chief nurse got a little upset with us, so she put us to work. Um, I
5 was assigned to the malaria ward. Knew not a thing about malaria. All I
6 did all day was take temperatures, give out ice water, cover up people,
7 change beds, you know. And then, we finally got orders, uh... There were
8 about eight or nine of us of the group that got orders for the 20th General.
9 We were replacements to the University of Pennsylvania in Upper Assam.

10
11 As usual with the military, we got to this place called Chabwa, spent over
12 night and then they took us to Ledo by plane. We had a small airstrip in
13 Ledo. Um, got there about 10:30 at night, raining cats and dogs. The
14 monsoons had started. Trudged through the mud into this little shed. Had
15 to call the hospital. Nobody knew we were arriving. And by the... The
16 poor chief nurse – by the time they put us in this big building, which was
17 a, a recreation building... At that point, the nurses had been there 2, 2-1/2,
18 3 years. And they were in sort of permanent-type buildings. They were
19 out of tents and the big buildings that they had put up for the hospital and
20 different things.

21
22 So, here she comes to greet us [chuckle] and didn't know where to put us.
23 So, we were shifted into some of the rooms the other nurses had, which
24 made them very unhappy, because they had to give up their little sitting
25 rooms to accommodate a bed for each one of us. And she said that, you
26 know, after a couple of days, she'd make other arrangements. And uh,
27 which she did. We lived in [bashes 16:12], which were, uh, bamboo huts,
28 you know, kind of... Very, very nice quarters, except there were a lot of
29 bugs and snakes and stuff around.

30
31 Uh, she put us to work right away. And then there were five of us that
32 were real chummy, as I said – from basic. And uh, there was this building
33 down at the end of the compound that had been the old MP ward. It was
34 nice. It had five little bedrooms and two kinda sitting room types areas.
35 And the latrine in back was all boxed off. You couldn't use it anymore.
36 And a little place that looked like the kitchen. She asked us if we'd like
37 that, because we were friends. And she said, "Do you think you'd... That
38 building is empty." So, I said, "Sure, why not?" And it was fine. We
39 each had our own little bedroom. They gave us, uh, the usual kind of bed
40 and one little stand. No other kind of furniture. Um, except a table that
41 was in what we called our kitchen, because they had a faucet running out
42 from the outside. And uh...

43

1 First day I went to work, we wore our, um, seersucker uniforms – the old,
2 uh, tie thing – and that – usually our [Li'l Abner's 17:24] in socks. We
3 were very attractive going on to... Uh, no stockings. We didn't have to
4 put any slip under those things. So, you, you know, you were quite
5 comfortable. No hats, because you couldn't wear hats. They would flop
6 down. No way you could get'm starched.

7
8 And I was assigned to the officer's ward. Well, I got on duty; said good
9 morning; told'm who I was; and, I finally said, "Well, what do we have to
10 do?" "Well, there's patients that have to be bathed or..." And I said,
11 "Well" [chuckle] like a dummy, "Where do you get the water", you know?
12 "You don't." It's on the... You know those little stoves that you took to a
13 picnic? Those kerosene stoves? You had two buckets on there. "There's
14 your water", she said. "But don't take too much because it takes too long
15 to get hot." Fine. And then she said, "Because of you, my friend was
16 transferred" ... And apparently, they didn't send these people home that
17 we replaced; they sent them to other units. So, "Because of you my friend
18 was transferred out." So, it was a nice greeting.

19
20 So, I went about my business with two inches of water in the basins for
21 people to wash. And uh, a lot of them had to have IV's. So, we got – set,
22 set all those up. Uh, and then I go like a dummy again, I go asking her,
23 "How do I" – [chuckle] "How do I get the doctor to do these things",
24 because, you know, in training in those days we were not allowed to do
25 IV's. And she looked at me and she said, "You don't – you do it
26 yourself."

27
28Ruth Stewart: [19:01] Were these patients casualties of the war or...
29
30Marion Steinhilber: No, they were...
31
32Ruth Stewart: ...just...
33
34Marion Steinhilber: Well, we had... In India we had a lot of engineers and quarter master
35 troops. And, if you ever heard of Ledo Road or the Old Stilwell Road that
36 the engineers put up taking supplies across to China – across the, um, the
37 pass into Burma and into China. And we had a lot of injuries from those
38 and we had a lot of plane – because the planes went out of Ledo to go
39 across the hump with supplies. So, you had a lot of, uh, plane injuries and
40 accidents along the road. We were not in any fighting at that point. They
41 still... The Japanese were in Burma, but we were 50 miles, uh, from the
42 Burmese border.

43
44Ruth Stewart: [19:44] What year was that?

1
2 Marion Steinhilber: 1944. So uh, we did have slit trenches all around the place. In fact, we
3 used to put our garbage in 'm. [chuckle] But uh, a lot of burn... We had a
4 lot of burn patients. Um, and uh, the doctors were tremendous, really.
5 Uh, but I, I weathered through. I started all the IV's. By the grace of God,
6 I went through with [much 20:12] saying a prayer, hoping I'll get into
7 everything without any problem. But I got real annoyed at this kind of
8 work. And you get, you know, getting somebody a shot and the officers
9 would like to tell you where to do everything. So, you had to say, you
10 know, "This is my job. I'll do it."
11
12 Ruth Stewart: [20:32] What were a couple of your most memorable experiences during
13 that period?
14
15 Marion Steinhilber: Well, I suppose one of them was, one of the gals came down and said,
16 "The chief nurse has a notice posted on the bulletin board. They're
17 looking for people to give anesthesia." Anesthetists were not, they
18 weren't sent that nurse-for-nurse period. Nurse-for-nurse... Uh, dietician,
19 you didn't get those. If a dietician went, a nurse was – done it. And the
20 PT the same way. So, three of us brave souls, we went up and we decided
21 we'd all... We didn't like what we were doing, so we volunteered. So, we
22 did. So, for the next 12 months, I guess it was, I gave anesthesia. And uh,
23 worked with some really fine people. Uh, the anesthesiologist, we had
24 little sessions here and there, you know. But he'd watch over us very
25 carefully. And uh, we had two big – our hospital had 500 beds for
26 Americans and 500 beds for Chinese. General Chiang Kai-Shek's 138th
27 Division was over there at that time and we took care of a lot of his
28 patients.
29
30 Uh, it wasn't bad. The weather wasn't what we wanted, but... And we
31 were way up in the boondocks in the [inaudible 21:54] Hills. That was
32 head hunter people from many years before. We had little villages around
33 the area. We had to walk down to Ledo. We wanted to get doughnuts for
34 Saturday and Sunday or hitch a ride. But, you know, we were, we made
35 out very well.
36
37 And I think I enjoyed... I had never done a lot of work in the operating
38 room and I, I really... Those doctors from that university were
39 tremendous. I'd never seen doctors work so beautiful.
40
41 Ruth Stewart: [22:27] Which university?
42
43 Marion Steinhilber: University of Pennsylvania. And being, um, OJT, sort of, they were very
44 nice to us. And but – colonel, uh, Major Gleason said, "Now don't take

1 anything from'm. If they want to start and you're not ready, you just
2 tell'm you're not ready to start yet." Because we got into trouble once
3 when the chink OR, the Chinese OR had two operating rooms.

4
5 And uh, this young [inaudible 22:55] boy was in for surgery; and we had
6 to get him down to intubate him; and he almost went on us, because the
7 doctors didn't show up when they were supposed to. So, we had him, you
8 know, over-anesthetized. And uh, the boys helped. And when Major
9 Gleason came in – they called him. And he looked at me and said, "I
10 didn't know whether to give something to...[chuckle] give CPR to you or
11 the patient, cause I never saw anybody so white in all my life." But we
12 revived him and everything...

13
14 And then from then on, he gave the doctors strict orders that we didn't
15 start anybody on anesthesia until that doctor walked in the room. And
16 they had to pay attention to it and not say, "Well I'm ready now", you
17 know, and then give you guff because the patient wasn't down. Um, it
18 was just different being in such a, a strange civilization. Uh, although we
19 wanted to go to Europe and be in the thick of things, you went where you
20 were sent. You had no choice in those days; and uh, we did get to the
21 villages and they did give us a...

22
23 While we were there, we had two rest, what they called rest leaves. We
24 could either go to Calcutta or we'd go up to Chalon. Uh, we chose,
25 several of us, to go to Calcutta and to the big, [chuckle] the big city. And
26 uh, they had a big, uh, British club there. It was civilian and military and
27 they allowed us to come to use the swimming pool and, you know, all that.
28 We stayed at a couple of the big hotels. The army had one which they
29 called [Kenrny Estates 24:40] and then the Big Eastern was there.

30
31 We stayed at the Big Eastern the day that we, uh, we heard that President
32 Roosevelt had died. Uh, that was kind of a shock. And they said, "Who
33 was going to be President?" And we all did at that time, when they
34 mentioned the name Truman, we said, "Who's he?" [chuckle]

35
36 But uh...

37
38Ruth Stewart: [25:00] What about the medals and citations you received Marion?

39
40Marion Steinhilber: We just got, we got a unit citation – a little thing that you put on. Uh, oh
41 we got the usual – the, uh, the CBI, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Ribbon; uh,
42 one battle star; and uh, then the other usual things that they always did
43 when you came in. I don't remember all of that stuff. You should have
44 told me.

1
2 But anyway, uh, it was a very interesting assignment; and I don't think I
3 would give it up for anything in the world today, because uh, it was a
4 different civilization.

5
6 Ruth Stewart: Mm-hm.

7
8 Marion Steinhilber: The people were nice to us. We had uh, we had to hire a [berra 25:51] and
9 a sweeper. In those days, the cast was very strict. And we had to pay
10 them rupees each a month, which is 33 cents is a rupee. And uh, they...
11 Abdul was our [berra 26:04] and he did the, the better things. He took our
12 laundry down to the laundry on the village; and they did our, did our
13 laundry. And uh, he made sure the sweeper swept up the things in the
14 rooms. And he made our beds. And we could trust him. He'd come back
15 and give us our slip and our change from the laundry. And uh, we taught
16 him to, uh... We fixed up our kitchen and got a hot plate, so we could
17 make coffee in the morning and we taught him to boil the water for us and
18 get the coffee made. Uh, they had to watch for the...
19 We didn't have doors on our baths, so we had what we call these hessian
20 cloths. And because... One day we came in and the place was flooded
21 with water and they were... He and the sweeper both were... And we
22 looked at them and they said, "Cow came in mesa". [chuckle] They had to
23 flush the whole place out and sweep it. But uh, then they went down to
24 the bazaar. We gave them money and they brought back furniture. We'd
25 get wicker furniture in our little living room and uh, in the other room
26 chairs and... We uh, got material. We made curtains for our little
27 windows, cause all our bedroom windows had bars on 'em, you know? And
28 uh, I must tell you that uh... We had to take atovaquone every day. When
29 you went to the mess hall, they handed it to you. Some of us got very
30 yellow, uh, but I must say, the atovaquone did a good job dying our
31 curtains. It made the most beautiful color of yellow you ever saw in your
32 life. So, we had curtains and we had things around our little thing, uh,
33 stands that they gave us. And then they, we got some, uh, chest of
34 drawers. They were nice. They were about this high [inaudible 27:56]
35 things; and the boys brought them back from the village for us. We could
36 go down and have clothes made; we could have shoes made.

37
38 And uh, the one thing about it was that we didn't get our footlockers for
39 ten months. So, we had to do with what we had. And what we didn't
40 have, we went up to the quarter master and they gave us all kinds of things
41 that... They gave us the blue seer-... Before the war, they, they had blue
42 seersucker uniforms. Sort of like this blue. Two different styles; some
43 that buttoned down to the waste and some that were straight down – had a
44 big belt on 'em. So, when we went up to get extra uniforms, this is what

1 they gave us. We had all sorts of things – blue slacks, white top.
2 Anything that they had that would fit us, you know.
3
4 And uh, I went several times cause I gained a lot of weight there. Uh, but
5 they used to laugh at me when I'd go up to get 14's, because I was a size
6 10. Then I went up to a 16, because I couldn't fit into the uniforms.
7
8 Ruth Stewart: [29:00] Was the food that good?
9
10 Marion Steinhilber: No. I don't know if you can put this in a thing, but the boys in the OR
11 used to kid me sitting on the little stools. They kept saying, [chuckle] they
12 were going to put little ledges on the side of the stool because [chuckle] I
13 was getting so big. And then, the chief, Major Gleason, talked to me one
14 day when we were sitting... When we had time, then we'd sit and talk
15 about things and he would give us some lessons, uh, very informally.
16
17 And he said to me, uh, "Are you [pregnant 29:35]?" And I said, "Yes".
18 And uh... But, I said, "It's great." The fellas built a little swimming pool
19 with a little 2x4 thing. And I said, "I can even go swimming all year long
20 cause I don't have any problems now." So, he... My period, of course,
21 had stopped and he said its very normal in this kind of, uh, climate. But
22 he said, "When you get home, if nothing happens you better go see
23 somebody." So, I guess that was the weight that I put on because I was
24 getting all the fluid in there.
25
26 Ruth Stewart: [30:10] How did you keep in touch with your family and friends?
27
28 Marion Steinhilber: We wrote, uh, V-mails. That's, that's the only way we could, uh, was
29 writing. And then, I had my old – my father's and mother's old box
30 camera. I took a lot of pictures. I've got a lot of the kids when they went
31 different places. And the fellas in the operating room, a couple of'm
32 would get supplies from home and they would, uh, at night when they
33 were on call, they would, uh, did all of our pictures for us.
34
35 We got, uh, uh, rations once a month. And we'd go down to the end of
36 our area. And they'd have one room there and one... And they'd put all
37 the stuff on a big table and they had signs on them, "One of these", "Two
38 of these", "Four of these" you know, whatever. Candy, uh, razors, razor
39 blades, cigarettes... And they'd tell you how many you could have of
40 everything.
41
42 So really, what you did was you took one or two of everything. And we
43 would bring a box along and then we'd trade them. We'd trade cigarettes
44 with fellas if they were doing our things for us or... And we were

1 allowed... We got two bottles of liquor and we got beer. And the boys
2 only got beer. So, if we wanted the photos done and stuff, we'd get a fruit
3 jar and give'm a little hooch, you know? And uh, but, uh, we learned to
4 smoke a corn cob pipe, because we got these little corn cob pipes and
5 these little packages of, uh, what do you call that stuff? Tobacco. We
6 would sit around and smoke a little corn cob pipe. [chuckle]
7
8 And uh, we commandeered, uh, a photograph from somebody. You have
9 no idea what the GI's are like when you're in a place like that – because
10 you got so you didn't mention the fact that you might want something.
11 Because if you did, you'd get it. And we had a phonograph and records.
12 And we got it from one of, uh... Harriett worked up in the receiving and
13 uh, a fella brought us a phonograph. And somebody fixed, uh, the
14 engineer fella fixed a sink for us out in the back – half drum, you know...
15 Put legs on it. We had to take it out and wash it every now and then, but
16 we would put it under our, under our faucet. And we fixed the back with
17 rocks and stuff, so the water would flow out very nicely.
18
19 And uh, what else did we get from them? I didn't like the, uh, field
20 jackets that we had, because they were the kind that were sort of bunchy.
21 I liked the ones that were stretchy [inaudible 32:46]. Next day, at my door
22 wrapped in newspaper... But it was the other kind of field jacket. Uh, just
23 if you wanted anything, you know. And you got to the point where you
24 didn't say anything, because it was there for you.
25
26 Ruth Stewart: Wonderful experience.
27
28 Marion Steinhilber: Yes. They were great. They were a great bunch of fellas. They really
29 were. The doctors, uh, as I said I was... I watched some of these fellas do
30 this surgery on, on burns and... Who was it? Colonel Johnson. He was a
31 big chest man at, at uh, University of PA. And uh, you had to watch him.
32 He was a little [inaudible 33:32]. But he'd tell you what he was doing,
33 you know, opening up the chest. And I had not seen surgeries like that,
34 you know. At home, we had three months in the operating room, that was
35 it. And who was it? Colonel [Graff 33:46], who was the head man, uh,
36 doing head surgery. I used to say, "If I had anything wrong with me, boy
37 I'd get him in a minute. He could open me up no worries." They really
38 were... They were fine, fine surgeons.
39
40 Ruth Stewart: [34:00] How long were you in the service?
41
42 Marion Steinhilber: I was there for 18 months, I guess, 24 months by the time I got back. And
43 uh, we came back at, uh, right after V-J Day. This is, this is taken outside
44 the chapel on V-J Day. We all had to go to mass. We made all the kids

1 go. They were drinking all kinds of stuff. They really got potted. Uh, and
2 we finally got orders. We had, we had to go home by points and... So
3 many points a month... I think it had to be 32 finally. Some of the gals –
4 or it was two of the gals that we were with were older. They were in their
5 30's when they, you know, came in. So, they got to go home before us,
6 because their – you got so much for age too.

7
8 And uh, we all, uh, finally got orders. We weren't doing anything. They
9 sent the 25th field down from – 25th went up into Burma and then they
10 were coming down closing out... And uh, they came down to close out
11 our place. They had us marching and drilling, because they said we were
12 going home by boat and it would be Christmas time and you had to look
13 good when you came off the gang plank, you know? And uh, we did ask
14 for leave and they let us go. About six of us... We went up to Kashmir.
15 And that's the most beautiful place on the earth. It's just like being up in
16 the Swiss Alps when you go up in the mountains there. Uh, I had a
17 wonderful time. Came back.

18
19 We finally had orders. And they had one of the gals working down in the
20 general's office doing paperwork. And she found out we weren't going
21 to... She used to see the orders, see. And she had a – she put a bug in one
22 of the general's ears that we were over there; and we should be going
23 home. So, what do you know, we did get orders. And general – what was
24 his name – Pick, Peck.

25
26 Ruth Stewart: [36:04] When did you get out of the service then?

27
28 Marion Steinhilber: In May of, uh, came home in '45 – '46. We all came home. We were sent
29 to Fort Dix – bunch of people. And I don't know how they figured this
30 out. To this day, I don't how the army worked this out. All of my good
31 friends – two of them were sent to... We thought we were all getting out.
32 We were not got – we never got out. We were never discharged, we were
33 separated. There was a difference. Two of them were sent to, uh,
34 Fitzsimons; one was sent back to Halloran in Staten Island; Mack and I
35 were from Buffalo. We got 45 days rest and recuperation leave. Went
36 home; we went to New York to watch the 82nd Airborne come home and
37 stayed with our friend over in the Bronx; and her mother called.

38
39 We were up all night, cause we had some friends that were in the 82nd.
40 [chuckle] They said, "We have to go back. We have to leave on the train
41 at 6:00 in the morning." So, we stayed out with them all night. Until we
42 got a call from Stevie's mother saying, "You better come here right away,
43 because your mothers are calling us on the phone. They are calling you in
44 Buffalo tellin' you you gotta go back to Fort Dix." So, I don't know how

1 they figured out how who did this and who did that. So, we go back after
2 45 days of rest and recuperation leave and they separate us from the
3 service. We didn't get reassigned. They just separated us. We had to go
4 all the way back to Buffalo, get our orders, all the way back. That was it.
5
6 Ruth Stewart: [37:51] And then what?
7
8 Marion Steinhilber: Then I went back to school. I went back home; and I went back to work.
9 And uh, in the summer of that year, Mack and I went down to
10 Washington, D.C. and we both decided we'd go back to school; and we
11 went down there to look for a place to live and we signed up to go to
12 school.
13
14 Ruth Stewart: [38:10] Where did you go to school?
15
16 Marion Steinhilber: Catholic U...
17
18 Ruth Stewart: [38:11] To get a bachelor's degree?
19
20 Marion Steinhilber: Bachelor's in public health nursing, yeah.
21
22 Ruth Stewart: Mm-hm.
23
24 Marion Steinhilber: And uh, we were considered inactive reserve at that... We were ROC. I
25 don't know the difference between all of these either, but we were ROC;
26 and then we got to be reserve. And the people at the... Of course, they
27 were all military, ex-military... They were going to school in those days.
28 The GI's and all of us were veterans. Uh, they kept wanting us to come
29 back on active duty, you know, active reserve. And we kept saying, "No
30 way. We spent all this time in school", you know, "What's going to
31 happen to us?" "Oh, we won't... We'll let you stay." And we said, "We
32 don't believe you." So, we have our...
33
34 When I went back home after I graduated, I went back to work with the
35 county and we had two – three units in Buffalo. Um, I joined one and then
36 they tol-, then we went to one meeting and they told us that was going to
37 be disbanded and we had the choice of two other units. And before we
38 had a chance to join either of the two units – this was just after Korea
39 started – we had orders to go back on active duty. That was in 1951.
40
41 Ruth Stewart: [39:36] So you've had an extensive military career?
42
43 Marion Steinhilber: I had, I graduated [chuckle], I retired with, uh, 27 years – 25 for active and
44 27 for pay purposes. I stayed in then. I came home after three years and I

1 went to Camp Polk, Louisiana. Oh, what a place that was. And then to
2 Germany. And when I came home, I decided to stay in. They wanted –
3 they were trying to get people for regular army. One of the nurses came to
4 Germany and said why wasn't I in the regular army? And I said,
5 “Because, ma'am, according to your regulations I'm too old.” But then
6 they, uh, approached us again when I was at Fort Jay and I decided I might
7 as well. So, I went. And then I went home and, uh, got my money out of
8 the county treasurer and uh, decided to stay put.
9

10Ruth Stewart: [40:34] Have you maintained friendships with any of the people that you
11 worked with?
12

13Marion Steinhilber: All of those five people that we were... Yes, over the years we have
14 visited, we have visited families, we have kept in touch by writing and
15 we've seen them. In fact, Stevie got married. While we were at school,
16 she met this engineer over there. They got married and then we skipped
17 out of school to go up to New York and to the Bronx to go to her wedding.
18 And uh, we went to a couple of, uh, oh reunions. And um, but those five
19 people, I have... Of course, there is only two of us left now. Uh, but
20 we've kept in touch over the years. The two that got married, I've kept in
21 touch with their families. I've seen them and uh... They were very good
22 friends. I miss them very, very much. They were like sisters. Well, you
23 know, living together like that and uh, having to do like...
24

25 Stevie would get her... Her father worked for the *New York Times*. So, we
26 used to get the papers... We used to get the funny papers every week.
27 [chuckle] And Stevie would sit and cry over her mother's letters. And her
28 mother wrote to her and said, “Now, if you're un-...” This is it... “If
29 you're unhappy, you just tell'm to send you home.”
30

31Ruth Stewart: [laughter]
32

33Marion Steinhilber: And uh, a couple of the girls in the unit go in the, uh, pregnant and had
34 problems and had to be sent home. And Stevie said, “I'm never going to
35 have that kind of a problem.” She was a real humble girl. We said,
36 “Stevie, you know, there but for the grace of God go I.” You know... And
37 you had all kinds of time and you had all these people coming and wanting
38 to take you... We did have a good time and we met some very nice
39 people. But uh, you had to be careful. The boys took their rings off. But
40 of course, they had tans. And we'd say to them, “Don't give us that bunch
41 of bologna. I see the mark where the ring was.” Even though you went
42 out with them and danced and, uh...
43

1 We had a nice club over in Margarita, which was one of the small towns.
2 And the pipeliners... The engineers got together. We had the pipeliner
3 orchestra. Wonderful music. We could drink, uh, what is it, gin and
4 grapefruit juice warm. [chuckle] But uh, you know, the fellas are good.
5 So, a couple of the fellas we got to know very well. They were married.
6 They'd come down. We'd play cards and we'd listen to the records and...
7 You know, uh, in fact, we went to see the PX officer. He was really good,
8 because he got things in the Ledo PX that we... We couldn't get pads,
9 you know. We used to send home... And our mothers packed everything
10 up in [V-pads 43:36]. We couldn't open up a package when there were
11 any men around because everything was packed in those things. We used
12 to use the big pads from OR. If you didn't get down to the PX, you didn't
13 get'm. So, Hank used to... When they came in, he'd bring them up to us.
14 [laughter]
15
16 And then when we were at school, my friend used to date him. And he
17 was there in Washington. And he invited us over to his house for dinner.
18 And his wife – Winnie was his wife's name. And when we walked in, she
19 said, "Now don't tell me which ones you are, cause he's showed..." She
20 said, "Cause I've seen all your pictures." And she knew exactly who we
21 were. She gave us... We visited quite a few times while we were going to
22 school. And uh, nice man.
23
24 Ruth Stewart: [44:24] Did you join any military veteran's organizations after you left the
25 military – or during?
26
27 Marion Steinhilber: I was with the Forty and Eight, um, the [inaudible 44:34] Post in Buffalo
28 while I was at home. But then, after I went back in the service, I didn't
29 have time for that kind of stuff. I didn't until I retired.
30
31 Ruth Stewart: [44:46] Do you now belong to some...any?
32
33 Marion Steinhilber: Yeah, I belong to the Legion. Yeah, mm-hm. I was with the Legion in
34 '40... The only [inaudible 44:54] Post I think there was left in the country
35 was the one in Florida; and I belonged to that. And uh, our army nurse
36 group, of course. And uh, I did go to some of the CBI. Uh, of course, you
37 know, being in India was the CBI – China, Burma, India – got to be the ID
38 Theatre after a while, because one of the other generals went over there
39 and they separated us. But uh, there's not many of us left. I still get the
40 CBI bulletin every month. Some people in California write it.
41
42 Ruth Stewart: [45:25] Are there reunions?
43

1 Marion Steinhilber: There are reunions. I don't go. I don't... I haven't gone to any of their
2 reunions, no. I don't want to see these people. [laughter]
3

4 Ruth Stewart: [45:35] Did your experience throughout your career in the military
5 influence your views of war or the military?
6

7 Marion Steinhilber: I don't know as if I had any views at that point, you know, when I went in
8 there. But right now, yes it has. I, I uh, I backed whatever the President is
9 doing; and I get very annoyed. Now I took some articles out of a CBI
10 magazine that I just got. I, I uh, gave it to one of men here that belong to –
11 that was in China. And they had questions of some of the people that
12 write in about what they thought about should we or should we not be in
13 this war. I made copies of those because every single one of them are
14 behind the President and what he's doing. And I was very impressed,
15 because I am too.
16

17 You know, people – people complain today... Husband's been over six
18 months. Well heck, some of the people that we replaced, they had been
19 over when we got there for 2-1/2 years already. My brother was overseas
20 for five years with General Patton's 3rd Army, with a field artillery unit.
21 Uh, nobody at home squawked because their people were gone that long.
22

23 Of course, it was a different situation. It was a different civilization we
24 grew up in. Uh, our families weren't pampered, you know? We weren't
25 brought up the way these kids today are brought up; and you didn't
26 squawk about anything. When you went to school... My mother never
27 went to school when anything happened and when we were kids. If we
28 came home and complained, she'd say, "Well you must have done
29 something." You know... So, you're not going to complain about it. Uh,
30 and if you had stuff to do at home, you did it. You didn't squawk, because
31 that was part of being a family. And I, I, sympathize to a certain extent
32 with these people, but I say to myself, "Your husband's gone for six
33 months. So what?" And then the two of them are away. Well, they asked
34 for it. If you join the military, you have to go with the flow.
35

36 Ruth Stewart: [48:04] Is there anything else as we finish up here – anything else you'd
37 like to add as we wind up?
38

39 Marion Steinhilber: Well, all I can say is I enjoyed the military... Ah, a few things. But for the
40 most part, I enjoyed my career very much and I wouldn't give up – give it
41 up for anything in this world. And despite the fact that I didn't go to
42 Europe and be with the fighting and that was going on, uh, I appreciated
43 where we were and what we saw and what we did. Uh... Met some fine

1 people – fine people. And uh, I had a good career. I don't regret anything
2 I've done at all – never. Uncle Sam has...
3
4 Ruth Stewart: Thank you very much Marion.
5
6/al