

1 **Interview of Virginia Emrich on her experience running Red Cross recreation clubs in**
2 **Australia for U.S. troops during WWII. Part 2**

3
4

5 Virginia Emrich: Interview of Virginia Emrich. Uh, continuing on my memories of Darwin,
6 uh, there was one time when the Red Cross man in charge of that area took
7 4 Red Cross girls up to an island, the name of which we never did find out,
8 where a LORAN station was, uh, situated and it was serviced by American
9 servicemen. I don't know exactly whether they were airborne or army or
10 just what. But, uh, we went by seaplane, which was piloted by, um,
11 Australian pilots. And since there were so few of us on the plane, each
12 one of us at different times were allowed to go up into the cockpit and
13 even put our hands supposedly on the wheel it was then, uh, which flew
14 the plane. We were taking to this island mail which these men – and I
15 think there were not more than about 28 men on this island. They had not
16 received their mail for quite some time, so we had their mail with us. We
17 also took fresh vegetables and, um, cases of beer and anything fresh that
18 we could get our hands on as a Christmas treat. This was in December,
19 uh, shortly before Christmas.

20

21 We stopped on the flight up there and pulled into a little, very small island.
22 Down to shore came an Australian man to welcome us and we went
23 ashore and he greeted us and was so happy to see us and he offered to us
24 what he thought was a great treat, raw oysters. Well, I had never tasted a
25 raw oyster in my life and, and didn't know whether I could [inaudible
26 02:19]. Um, a couple of the girls just refused to consider them and walked
27 away. And I felt badly for th-, the man's sake and I said yes, I would have
28 some of his raw oysters. And he had a [inaudible 02:35] and he had little,
29 little dishes that we could put the oysters in. And I ate them, found out
30 they weren't as bad as I had always thought they were. I talked 2 of the
31 other girls into trying them also and made the gentleman happy. Then I
32 learned to like oysters from that point, and I still like them and I still eat
33 them raw.

34

35 When we arrived on the island where the LORAN station was, the boys
36 met us with loud cheers. And the greatest thing to them was the fact that
37 we had mail from home for them. And as soon as they received their mail,
38 most of them went off to read it. While we got the, the supplies that were
39 on the plane, um, onto land and later on they sent a truck to pick it up and
40 take it to the kitchen. As soon as the supplies arrived at the kitchen, the
41 cooks went through it. In fact, I think there were more than cooks there.
42 Everybody was, uh, curious about what was coming in. And they found
43 potatoes and they started peeling potatoes, and it seemed like they peeled
44 every potato that we had taken up to them. And, um, by the end of the

1 day, they had gotten a meal together that was really unexpected in a place
2 like that. And also after dinner we put on a little show, that is the Red
3 Cross girls did, and found some, some people who could play a piano they
4 had up there and we had dancing and a general hilarious time. This was,
5 uh, the Christmas for the men who were stationed at this LORAN station,
6 which was then a secret operation and, uh, we didn't understand it too well
7 ourselves.

8
9 We were taken and shown all the installations, but, uh, we knew it was a
10 type of, of alarm system or one that is similar to radar which we were
11 familiar with. We stayed at the island 1 night and then flew back home
12 the next day and we felt like it had really been a tremendous trip. All of us
13 expressed our, um, feelings to the Red Cross man and said we'd like to do
14 it again sometime, but there never was an occasion to do it.

15
16 To show the ingenuity of American servicemen, um, at Christmastime
17 when we went out into the woods and looked for anything that might
18 resemble our Christmas trees that we had back in the United States. We
19 found trees and we chopped them down and took'm back and set, uh, we
20 had 2 of them, set 1 each in the 2 Quonset huts, which were our recreation
21 halls at Darwin, but then we were puzzled as to how to decorate it. We
22 didn't have any ornaments. We couldn't see anything there to use.
23 Nobody came up with any thought until 4 Mexican American sailors came
24 up and said did, could I get hold of any construction paper, colored
25 construction paper. I said I'd certainly try. They said, well, if, if I would
26 give them some of that, they would make ornaments. So I did manage to
27 find by going over into an office, um, which was run by the army. I found
28 some construction paper or I was given some construction paper in various
29 colors and gave them to these 4 men. And in about 3 days they came back
30 and they had made miles and miles it seemed like of paper chains, just the
31 same sort of thing which our kindergarten chil-, children make. And it
32 was bright and it was, did cover the trees well and, uh, we made them the
33 hit of the Christmas party in the, um, rec hall.

34
35 About the end of April, the navy group moved out, moved up to, uh,
36 another island. I don't know exactly where they went because I never had
37 any further contact with them. And I was put on a temporary basis over at
38 the, the 52 88th Air Base Command and their rec hall, and they combined
39 this with the 380th Bomb Group which had partially moved out of Darwin.
40 This rec hall also was a Quonset hut, but it was larger than the ones the
41 navy had (where the navy had 2, they only had 1), and we had the same
42 setup there that we'd had for the sailors. They remained until June, at
43 which time the, the whole Darwin base was being closed up and I was
44 shipped on to the Philippine islands.

1
2 In June 1945, I was flown from Darwin, Australia, uh, to Luzon Island and
3 to, uh, Manila where I was billeted with other Red Cross girls in a
4 bombed-out building called the castle. And it really looked like it might
5 have been a castle at one time, but it was in rather bad shape now. It had
6 been, uh, repaired as much as they could in that we did have showers
7 indoors and bathroom facilities indoor, but there were no, no doors
8 anywhere. And something that we were not accustomed to was constantly
9 taking place which caused a little, uh, uproar among the girls at first.
10 There were Filipino men, and boys mostly, working as, um, cleanup
11 people, repair people, maintenance people, and they had a habit of just
12 walking into any room at any time without warning you. And we were all
13 women billeted there, but it didn't matter to them. So whenever we went
14 to the shower room or the bathroom, we usually had to have someone
15 stand guard for us to prevent being walked in on unexpectedly.
16

17 At this castle in the evening we would hear guns and see lights in the sky.
18 There was still a battle of sort going on up in the mountains of Luzon
19 Island because some of the Japanese had holed in and they just couldn't
20 get them out of there and they were still, uh, sending troops up to try and,
21 and capture them and bring them down. I was sent to the 11th Airborne
22 Division rest camp which was down between 2 little towns called Lemery
23 Taal. You hardly knew when you left one tow-, town and were in the
24 other. And there, huge bamboo buildings on a beach had been put up and,
25 um, it was my job and they did send another Red Cross girl to help me.
26 We had to decorate the rec hall and put the supplies in, decide where
27 things would be placed and that sort of thing, so. Uh, we also had Filipino
28 girls who worked for us; we paid them a small salary. One of the things
29 we acquired in that rec hall was an ice machine. It was quite a novelty,
30 but it was welcomed. General Swing came through the rec hall one day
31 and, uh, we met him. We were talking. He said how was everything? We
32 said fine, except that the drinks we had were lukewarm. We didn't have
33 any ice for our drinks. He said, okay, uh, you'll have one. And we did, it
34 wasn't too long after that.
35

36 The rec hall was decorated in parachutes. They were vivid, beautiful
37 colors and huge things which the 11th Airborne Division had on hand.
38 And, uh, it was quite a job getting them up because this was a tall
39 building, but we would do a little bit at a time, just whenever we could fit
40 it in.
41

42 The other Red Cross girl and I lived about a block away from this rest
43 camp which the 11th Airborne had set up there on the beach. We lived
44 with a, uh, a Filipino lady called Josefa [Casilla 12:53]. She had been a

1 teacher at the college in Manila and she was a wonderful person. And,
2 um, one of the things that we did for each other was we would take white
3 bread from the kitchen at the 11th Airborne rest camp and trade it with Ms.
4 [Casilla 13:16] for her dark bread. Each of us thought the other was so
5 much better than what they had. We also had a laundress who – an, uh, a
6 girl who came in to clean up at Ms. [Casilla's 13:32] home. And, um, I
7 was getting from home Lux Flakes and Ivory Flakes and that sort of thing,
8 so I gave those to her to do my laundry and I kept wondering why she
9 would, went out, ran out so quickly. Finally, one day I found out she was
10 doing our laundry in a stream on the side of the house, throwing the flakes
11 in it. Of course, they washed down with the current, so thereafter I
12 showed her how to use the flakes in a big, um, old tub that we found.
13

14 A peculiarity of that part of the Philippine islands was that earthquakes
15 occurred often. We didn't know this. They weren't heavy earthquakes,
16 but it was enough to make things rattle. Uh, the first one that I
17 experienced was during the night and I was lying in bed. It was an army
18 cot bed, but I had mosquito netting tucked in around me. And I started
19 rolling from side to side in the bed, the mosquito netting kept me from
20 rolling out, and it scared me to death. I got up and Ms. [Casilla 14:50] got
21 up and came to us and told us it was nothing to worry about, that it
22 happened quite often, so we actually got used to these little occurrences.
23

24 The mess hall which was attached to the, the rest camp was nice to us and
25 gave us lots of snacks and leftovers. And we had food available or snacks
26 available most all the time in the rec hall along with the usual games, the
27 reading libraries, we had records to listen to, and, um, the men were free to
28 go in to town. They didn't have to stay at the, um, on, on the premises,
29 that is. They had to sleep there, and they came to us by orders because
30 there was no place in town for them to find rooms so they would always
31 return at night, but they would come and go. Of course, our beach was
32 inviting to them, though it was quite different from the beaches in
33 Australia. It was black volcanic sand which, uh, was quite different from
34 the beautiful white sand of Australia.
35

36 We in time started having dances at a school in the town of Taal. The
37 principal of that school was quite a benefactor of ours and he did
38 everything he could to help us where we needed. He invited the girls for
39 the dances. And the first dance we had was almost chaotic because we
40 didn't know what to expect. We sent buses out to pick up the girls to
41 bring them to the dance and along with each girl was at least 2 to 5
42 members of her family who came along. Well, we were told – when they
43 arrived we were told that these girls must have chaperones, that they never
44 went out alone. We thought if this was the custom, all right, we'd have to

1 put up with it some way or other. At intermission time when we had food
2 out, the guests were the first to go to the table. And by the time the 11th
3 Airborne men came up to the table, there was not much left because the
4 family members had not only eaten on the spot but had also put things into
5 their pocket to take home with them. We learned thereafter and we, um,
6 held the chaperones down to 1 chaperone per girl and, um, we let the men
7 go to the table along with the girls and their chaperones and usually
8 everybody that way got some of the food.

9
10 We were at a dance one night when, uh, about 3 airborne men came
11 bursting in in a jeep and ran in and said that the war with Japan was over,
12 that Japan had been defeated. And there was much yelling and hootin'
13 and, and carrying on and joyful expressions and everybody hugging
14 everybody else [inaudible 18:24], but when we got back to camp that night
15 after the dance was over, we found out that this was a little premature. It
16 had not been officially declared, and the official declaration came about 10
17 days later.

18
19 Another part of the dance which we had to step in and do something about
20 was the fact that the girls came in their high, very high-heeled, wooden,
21 sandal-type of shoes and they could not dance in these. The boys were
22 jitterbugs. They were used to fast dancing and the girls just couldn't
23 manage, so we passed the word around among the girls in a nice way that,
24 uh, it would be better if maybe they wore low-heeled shoes the next time
25 for the dance. It would be easier and they could learn the dances that the
26 boys wanted to teach them. Most of them showed up in tennis shoes from
27 then on.

28
29 This rest camp for the 11th Airborne was for the enlisted men as well as the
30 officers, though the officers did not use the recreation hall. They had a
31 club close by that they went to, but they did sleep and they did eat at the
32 rest camp when they were, uh, sent there. And by officers being at the rest
33 camp, I had an opportunity to go into Manila with some of them at the
34 time that the, the peace pact between Japan and USA was signed on the
35 USS Missouri. This was in the Manila Bay. We were quite a distance
36 from the ship itself. It was out in the bay and we were on the wharf, but
37 we, uh, everyone had binoculars or anything else that they could get
38 together to help us see the event and it was something that impressed all of
39 us very much.

40
41 Shortly after this, the, um, 11th Airborne got word that they were going to
42 be sent further up into the Philippines islands, or rather not the Philippine
43 islands, but were going to be moved to Japan to Sendai, which was up in
44 the northern part of Japan. And we were given a choice, the other Red

1 Cross girl and I, of going with them or not. Well, I said no because I don't
2 like cold weather and I was much happier in the type of weather, though
3 most everybody expressed it as miserable, down in the Philippine islands
4 that I thought I would be in cold weather, so. The – we had about 48
5 hours in which to break camp. We had to take down all the beautiful
6 parachutes that we had just gotten the last one up about 5 days before this.
7 We had to get all those down, pack all the equipment that was in the rec
8 hall, and the boys, um, put'm on trucks and we saw them pull away.
9

10 But there was a, uh, headquarters rec hall which was at Batangas and this
11 was for kind of a skeleton crew that was left behind to, to close up
12 everything. And, uh, I was sent over to Batangas then, which was a small,
13 um, bamboo building that they used as a rec hall. When this group, or the
14 final part of the 11th Airborne Division moved up to Japan, I then was put
15 on, um, temporary duty helping some other Red Cross girls set up and
16 start clubs. And I lived at a, uh, in a stockade at Batangas, which was a
17 different way of living for me. And we had to sign in and sign out
18 because, I didn't know the reason at first, but I found out that they were
19 afraid of the Japanese who had been in hiding of wandering down where
20 there might be food or might be clothing or something of that sort so we,
21 they had to know at all times where we were and, uh, consequently the
22 security was set up there.
23

24 At Lipa, um, this was where we started the club and, uh, we used an old
25 building there instead of putting something up because we suspected that
26 there wouldn't be too many troops left in the Philippines as time went on.
27 So we requisitioned some whitewash and whitewashed the inside of the
28 building and painted it and, and found things wherever we could. The
29 furniture for the most part was whatever we could find around the town or
30 what broken down things people would give us and that we could repair.
31 And it was just kind of a stopping, sitting place. By the time I left, there
32 wasn't much in the way of equipment for fun and games, though they
33 were working on that.
34

35 After 4 months in the Philippine islands, I was sent to Japan for
36 reassignment. All the travel now is by air. Whenever we went, uh, from
37 one island to another, I would travel by plane. And even in Japan when
38 we went from one spot to the other, if the distance was any length, we'd
39 travel by air. I was taken to Yokohama and, um, the airport there was
40 called Tachikawa. I was the only one, uh, who moved from the
41 Philippines to Japan at that time. And when I got in to the airport, there
42 was nobody there to meet me. I didn't know where I was to go. For 7
43 hours I sat around until finally somebody said there's a GI truck out here
44 that's going into Yokohama and we can take you to the Red Cross billet,

1 so I climbed aboard. And it was raining at the time, there's no top for the
2 truck, so we were cold and wet and I felt lost.

3
4 The Red Cross women were billeted in what was called the international
5 settlement in Yokohama, and in that section of town there had been
6 precision bombing and things were in pretty bad shape. But there was a
7 building that wasn't too bad that had been taken over by American Red
8 Cross and our girls were put in temporarily until they had permanent
9 assignments or some of the girls were, who were assigned in Yokohama
10 were still living there. I found out that the Japanese were not as slant-eyes
11 that I thought they would be nor as yellow, but they did hiss and they did
12 bow, and they smiled a lot. The, uh, this was September of 1945, and the
13 cold weather was settling in to Japan, but I had no heavy uniform as yet. I
14 was still in the clothes which I had been wearing in the Philippine islands,
15 which was tropical climate.

16
17 My first duty was at the service club in Yokohama where I worked at the
18 information desk with a Chinese American girl; a beautiful, young girl.
19 And, um, I was only there for 1 week when I was sent down to Kamakura
20 to the Kaihin Hotel, which was a very interesting place because it had
21 been the seat of the German Bund activity. There were certain closets as a
22 matter of fact that were still locked in this hotel which no one had key; but
23 before I left, the lieutenants who were in charge of the hotel had broken
24 the door open. We found Nazi, uh, material, flags, and standards, and
25 papers that we couldn't read such as that.

26
27 The Kaihin Hotel was a, a 2-story hotel in the shape of a U, and it had a lot
28 of accommodations for activities. There were outdoor basketball areas,
29 um, also some tennis, golf to tee off places, and, um, the – we were over a
30 beach. We had a stairway down to the beach and our private beach. And I
31 got there the day before it was officially opened and we decided we would
32 have a Halloween party with costumes, so we managed to get costumes
33 together. And the second day the boys began arriving, and the program
34 really built up from the boys' suggestions. These were American enlisted
35 men.

36
37 We had some great sightseeing spots around there. One of them was the
38 Daibutsu, which is the second largest Buddha in the world, and another
39 was a golden goddess statue which was 12-feet tall, and there was a
40 Hachiman shrine. There were shops and there was an island about 12
41 miles down from our hotel, Enoshima Island, where there had been shops
42 open in, before the war, and there were several temples, but those were
43 closed. We did visit some of the temples, but on the top of the mountain,
44 or the island which was the mountain, there was an inn and we would take

1 the boys to the inn. And because the weather was cold, we ordered the
2 only thing we could get which was hot, Japanese tea. To me it was the
3 world's worst. It was a green tea, uh, repulsive to look at in my
4 estimation, but it was hot and, of course, the cups were the type that had
5 no handles and we could warm our hands with it. We sat outside on the
6 balcony because the view was so beautiful there, even though it was chilly
7 most of the time. And I always managed to get a seat at the edge of the
8 balcony over which I could pour out my tea little by little so the boys
9 didn't notice it. I didn't want them to feel also that it was bad tea. They
10 were enjoying it.

11
12 We also had riding horses and bicycles and the usual activities which we
13 had at the beach club in Australia. The GIs had more leisure time and
14 more time to think in Japan than they had in any of the other locales I'd
15 been to. They, for the most part, had seen their fighting days and now
16 peace had come and they were for the cleanup portion or the security.

17
18 The Japanese loved sports and our GIs used to play baseball with the little
19 Jap boys on the beach. And they eventually had a sports day for the
20 Japanese, which was the first that had been held since war had been
21 declared. And the Yanks participated in some of the events, but they were
22 guests of honor in others. These events took place on the beach, which
23 was very deep and broad and quite level.

24
25 The boys who came to us, uh, were members of the 8th Army and were
26 sent there on leave with orders. They also had the freedom of going into
27 towns if they wanted to and did take advantage of it. They loved the
28 Kaihin Hotel and I did too and another Red Cross girl who worked with
29 me there.

30
31 The Japanese customs were introduced at the club to the boys and we had
32 dancing, singing. We had a violist. We had tea ceremonies and flower
33 arrangements, every day a demonstration of something of this type which
34 made us appreciate the Japanese people much more than we had before.
35 Also, their robes were beautiful and they brought on different occasions to
36 us all the clothing that the women wore and showed us how they dressed
37 and how the obi was tied. And eventually they let one of the GIs dress the
38 Red Cross girl to see how good he'd be at doing these things, but it was –
39 it turned out to be more comical than beautiful.

40
41 Mount Fuji could be seen from our club and this was a, a scene of
42 wonderment. The men seemed to like to sit out on the verandas and out in
43 the yards and look toward Mount Fuji when the clouds were not low and
44 covered it. But there was snow on the top of Mount Fuji when we first got

1 there, but by the time I left in February, there was snow covering the
2 whole mountain.

3
4 We had a custom at the Kaihin Hotel that if anyone had a birthday we
5 tried to make a big celebration out of it. On one particular day, which was
6 December 15, 1945, um, one of the visiting enlisted men had a birthday
7 and in his honor we first of all took a group that he particularly wanted to
8 go down to the island, Enoshima Island, and we did some sightseeing.
9 And we got back to the hotel after the regular dining room was, had been
10 closed and the rest of the personnel and the boys staying there had eaten
11 their meals, but there was a special birthday dinner for this particular
12 birthday man and his friends. We gathered into the dining room and I on
13 that occasion wore my dress uniform. Ordinarily, I wore GI pants and GI,
14 [throat clearing] GI clothing for the most part, but in honor of the
15 occasion, I had dressed up.

16
17 We were sitting in the dining room and I think the ice cream and cake part
18 and blowing out candles and laughing and talking and enjoying ourselves
19 when the lights suddenly went out and we were shocked at first. Nobody
20 said anything. Then we saw come running out of the kitchen one of the
21 Japanese chefs with 2 knives in his hand. We thought perhaps he had
22 gone berserk and everybody scattered, went outside of the hotel on the
23 front lawn, and noticed that the lights were out all over the hotel and
24 suddenly somebody yelled fire. A fire had started. We don't know
25 exactly where it was, but, um, a lot of the wiring had been put in
26 temporarily because during the time that Japan was under siege so much
27 of the wiring had been taken out and the electrical equipment taken out
28 that they used where it was considered more necessary than in a hotel.
29 Well, everybody scurried around trying to see what could be done.

30
31 Everybody got out because somebody did pick up the log at the front desk
32 and we could call the roll and everybody was accounted for whether they
33 were actually there that night or if they weren't there, somebody knew,
34 else knew where they were, so. Some of the boys had jumped from the 2nd
35 floor windows and had some sprains and ankles twisted and some hair
36 even singed from the fire they had been so close to it. I had not gotten
37 back to my room, but one of the, a couple of the boys had gone into my
38 room, grabbed up just a handful of clothes, just as much as they could
39 carry, and brought to me and also somebody brought a little dog which
40 had been given to me, a pet. This little dog was called, it was a mongrel
41 but it was a puppy, and we had called it [Crisento 38:19] and it was quite a
42 favorite among all the boys staying there.

43

1 When the firemen came, they turned out to be quite a shock to us because
2 they were the biggest, tallest Japanese men we had ever seen over there.
3 They were good-looking, brawny, strong men, and obviously proud of
4 what they did. But nothing was done until the head fireman and the head
5 of the hotel had met and bowed and smiled at each other. Then when they
6 returned to their equipment which they had come with and hooked up their
7 water lines, nothing but a little trickle of water came out the lines, so there
8 was nothing to be done and the hotel burned to the ground.
9

10 The men who were staying at the hotel, uh, had their papers returned to
11 them and they were allowed to either find, um, a place to sleep overnight
12 in Kamakura or could go back to Yokohama, the closest big town, or
13 return to their division or wherever they were situated. The Red, other
14 Red Cross girl and I were taken down the coast from Kamakura to a hotel
15 which also was run by the Red Cross for officers. It was about 10 miles
16 from us and we were put there, put up overnight, and, uh, we were put
17 there temporarily to help for about 3 days. The clothes which had been
18 brought to me during the fire disappeared in all the excitement going on
19 for the next hour or so around the hotel, uh, I assumed that the Japanese
20 people, which there were hundreds from the town of Kamakura and from
21 the places along the beach had gathered. And, uh, even my little dog
22 disappeared, and I always sort of grieved for him because I didn't know
23 whether they were kidding me or whether it was the truth I'd heard that
24 particularly during the actual time of battle in Japan that the Japanese
25 people had eaten their dogs.
26

27 After a few days of recuperation at the other Red Cross hotel on the beach,
28 I was taken into Tokyo and there put up at a small hotel which was used
29 for nurses and for Red Cross people who were passing through Tokyo.
30 And, um, word had gotten around that I was coming and that I had no
31 clothes except what I had on my back, and different Red Cross women put
32 things on a particular bed which I would use after I got there. I had
33 clothes of all shapes and sizes and toilet articles. And out of the goodness
34 of their heart, I did have another change of clothes. The funniest thing
35 though was a t-shirt from one of the girls which I used as a nightgown
36 because she was quite larger than I was.
37

38 Since it was so close to Christmas and the big club which had been, it had
39 formerly rather been a restaurant and a, or a group of restaurants in Tokyo
40 that the Red Cross had taken over and made a club out of 6 of the 7 floors
41 that there were in this building. I was given the duty of finding
42 decorations for Christmas for the 1st and 2nd floor. The other Red Cross
43 girl who had been at the Kaihin Hotel with me was along and together we
44 found enough greenery and enough Christmas decorations. Of course,

1 most of the Christmas decorations are made in Japan we know now so we
2 found plenty. And we worked hard to decorate the club and we thought
3 had it looking very beautiful, and as a reward we were given a week's
4 leave.

5
6 We were sent to Miyanoshita where there was a gorgeous hotel in the
7 mountains. It had indoor swimming pools, outdoor swimming pools, and
8 it had all sorts of spring waters and baths. It had ballrooms and it was an
9 interesting place. Besides being beautiful, it had people who were
10 interned there, people from Italy and from Thailand and other countries
11 who had been caught in Japan at the time the war started and were not
12 allowed to go home. They and their families lived in one part of the hotel
13 and the Americans had about 50% of the rest of the hotel for leave
14 purposes. They had a beautiful dining room where they served very fine
15 food. There were opportunities to hike up into the mountains. And it was
16 cold, we didn't use the outdoor pools, but that was taken care of by the
17 indoor pools.

18
19 Every night there was some social function, dances, movies. And we did
20 have opportunity to ta-, talk and mingle with the permanent residents
21 there. The foreign men were most anxious to dance with the American
22 women and at all the dances we were much sought after. It was very rich-
23 like, they approached us and bowed to whoever was with us at the time,
24 asked if they could dance with us. We went on the dance floor and danced
25 properly. Most of them were very good dancers and then returned very
26 properly to thank and they would walk away. The Americans, that is the
27 officers and the women in the Red Cross and nurses such as that, were
28 allowed to take auto trips up into the mountain but the women were not
29 allowed to go out without escorts who had guns with them because they, it
30 was felt that it was dangerous to get too far into the, the deserted areas
31 because some Japanese still had an unfriendly feeling for us.

32
33 We returned to Tokyo after our wonderful vacation and were considered
34 as floaters. Wherever the Red Cross needed our help we went, but, uh,
35 within a few days we were permanently assigned to the Tachikawa
36 Airfield which, uh, where they wanted a canteen established. So we
37 worked at getting the, uh, all the necessary things, the paint to fix up the
38 building which was already there and to get it cleaned up, to get curtains
39 in it, and to again go out and try and find whatever we could in the way of
40 magazines, reading materials, games, music, writing materials, anything
41 and everything that, that we could get our hands on. And every day we
42 drove 30 miles in an open jeep in freezing weather to this assignment.
43 When it was finished it, uh, did our hearts good because the men really
44 appreciated it. They had nothing at the airfield and, uh, it just so happened

1 they liked everything so well that so much of it walked away. We had a
2 library, we thought a fairly good library established, and all the books
3 eventually were borrowed but never returned as were some of the games
4 and things which we don't know exactly where they ended up.
5

6 Since the fire, I had felt that I didn't have enough to exist on over there. I
7 didn't have enough clothes and I couldn't get any more clothes. All my
8 money had, had, which I had, just kind of in a down mood plus the fact
9 that I had heard that my mother was ill and possibly would not linger too
10 many years so I decided to request passage home and – in order to resign
11 from the Red Cross to be at home with my mother. I went to what was
12 called the repple depple and, to wait for a plane home, but after being
13 there for about 5 days they told me that, that planes were not available.
14 Too many planes had been lost recently. For some reason, there had been
15 a rash of air accidents which never were explained, so it was decided that I
16 would go home by ship as I had gone over there. And eventually the USS
17 General Ernst, one of Mr. Kaiser's boats got me back to the United States.
18 The seas were very rough and it was cold and my orders had been that I
19 was to go to Seattle, Washington, but again somewhere along the line it
20 got changed and we went to San Francisco instead, and I was glad we did
21 because I'd been to San Francisco before and kind of knew my way
22 around.
23

24 Uh, among the first things that I did when I got on the U.S. soil was to
25 take my uniform and have it dry cleaned because that was the only true
26 Red Cross uniform I had. In the meantime, I had to wear, um, pieces and
27 parts that, that other people had given me and it wasn't strictly Red Cross.
28 And I was walking in town one day in the out-of-uniform outfit when I
29 was stopped by somebody, uh, an official of the American Red Cross, and
30 asked why I was on the street in th-, the non-uniform which I had on. I
31 explained to them what had happened and they told me to go back to my
32 hotel and stay there until my uniform came back. Well, I didn't follow
33 that because I was getting out of the service and I thought I couldn't lose
34 anything by ignoring that rule.
35

36 Instead of going straight back to my home in Louisville, Kentucky, I took
37 a side trip to Oshkosh, Wisconsin, to visit a brother and his family. Uh,
38 my brother had been in the hospital in Chicago as a result of an accident in
39 England while he was in the service and he was recuperating at home, so I
40 stopped by and visited him.
41

42 I got back to Louisville in February of 1946 and resigned immediately
43 from the American Red Cross. Within the 6 months after I returned home,
44 uh, I had a newspaper interview and a radio interview and also they

1 [inaudible 51:50] me out to about 5 different speaking engagements for
2 clubs and schools and such as that.
3

4 And one of the most enjoyable moments after I returned home was on a
5 Saturday afternoon in, about 1 year later, a friend of mine who was in a
6 camera shop called me and said "You must get down here right away,
7 Virginia." And I asked him "Why?" He said "Oh, you'll be glad you
8 came." He said "Come on down." And I rushed downtown and met him
9 at the camera shop and he showed me a copy of a book called the U.S.
10 Camera 1947 and in it was a picture of, um, a visit I had made to a
11 Japanese family's home along with 3 American servicemen and the
12 Japanese-Russian interpreter, a woman who worked at the club where I
13 was in Kamakura. This picture had been made at the request of an
14 American Red Cross camerawoman, she wanted to use it for our Red
15 Cross history and information, but somehow or other the picture had been
16 picked up by this magazine and there was an article accompanying it about
17 fraternization and we were an example of the fraternization that took place
18 in Japan.
19

20 This wasn't the, the reason at all for the picture being made first, and it
21 was not a horrible example of fraternization because I don't think
22 fraternization was that terrible, but it had been a very happy occasion and
23 a little girl was having, um, I don't think it was their birthday. I think it
24 was one of the feast days for children which they have in Japan. We had
25 been invited through the interpreter to partake of a meal in her honor. Her
26 mother and father were in the background for the most part and the little
27 girl was in the pictures and was much the center of attention at the time we
28 were there. The time had come to eat. A meal was put on a low table.
29 We sat on the floor to eat and chopsticks were presented to us. Well,
30 nobody knew how to use chopsticks and we looked at one another in an
31 embarrassed way. And pretty soon we heard some snickering and turned
32 around and looked in the doorway of the kitchen and the mother and the
33 father were standing there with knives and forks in their hands ready to
34 pass on to, us but they just wanted to see how we reacted to the
35 chopsticks. Needless to say, I bought that, uh, magazine and still have it
36 today.
37

38 For the next 3 years, I helped nurse my mother who died of cancer in 1949
39 and ran the house for my father, who was a doctor and had his offices on
40 the same pre-, premises as our home. After I had settled down to the point
41 I realized I could do something other than help with my mother and my
42 father, I took a job as speech and drama teacher for a girls' private high
43 school and I held this job for 8 years. This kind of position gave me
44 freedoms to take care of the, the, uh, necessary things at home. My father

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14/mlc

died in 1958, and at that time I returned for a refresher course at a business college and then took a job in, in an office again and held this job for 25 years as administrative secretary to United Cerebral Palsy of Greater Louisville. Just recently as of January 1, 1983, I resigned that position and now am totally retired and enjoying it tremendously.

In getting the memoirs of my service overseas, I think I probably told only of the good, the fun, the happy occasions. There were times when I was homesick, times when I was cold, not never hungry though I can truthfully say that, but, uh, times when I was tired and times when I was sick, but I always felt like I was doing something worthwhile.