

**Interview of Elizabeth Phillips on her service
in the U.S. Army Nurse Corps in Europe during WWI**

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3
4
5 Elizabeth Phillips: [Inaudible 00:04] was here. But, I would like to go?
6
7 Interviewer: Mm-hm.
8
9 Elizabeth Phillips: And I said yes sir indeed and I jumped out of bed, got myself clothed and,
10 um, gathered enough things together and at that time the girl who was
11 giving me the anesthetics was with us and so she went too and we went
12 down to our nurses, uh, office and she had breakfast there ready for us and
13 he had a beautiful [inaudible 00:42] car that we drove in all the way to the
14 front.
15
16 Interviewer: Mm-hm. Mm-hm. [00:47] And where was this?
17
18 Elizabeth Phillips: This was at [inaudible 00:49] on the, Channel, English Channel.
19
20 Interviewer: Right.
21
22 Elizabeth Phillips: And we drove, uh, up and on the way, we stopped and, uh, got ourselves
23 tin hats out of a [inaudible 01:02]. They called them dumps. And this big
24 pile of tin hats, I found a French, uh, uh, you know.
25
26 Interviewer: Helmets. [01:17] Were they helmets?
27
28 Elizabeth Phillips: Um, a helmet.
29
30 Interviewer: Mm-hm.
31
32 Elizabeth Phillips: A French helmet that fitted my head and, uh, the other, uh, nurse found
33 one too and then we drove on again and all the people were coming down
34 from this big city that we were headed for called Avignon.
35
36 Interviewer: Avignon.
37
38 Elizabeth Phillips: And, um, they were walking in the gutters and the, the highway had in and
39 out, you know. And just crowded with, with ambulances and all kinds of
40 vehicles.
41
42 Interviewer: [01:56] Well what were responsibilities and how much training did you
43 have?
44

1Elizabeth Phillips: Well I was a regular, a registered nurse.
2

3Interviewer: Mm-hm.
4

5Elizabeth Phillips: Operating room nurse and that's what I was gonna do when we got up to
6the front.
7

8Interviewer: Mm-hm.
9

10Elizabeth Phillips: You see, when, and, when we got there, why, um, I went on duty right
11away and had a table in this large room that, had, um, building that was,
12um, recently completed by the French for an insane asylum. So all the
13doors locked when you went out of them so we had to have, uh, a brick so
14that Ms. [Keller 02:34] and I had a room and there was great activity in
15and out. We were 5 miles behind the front.
16

17Interviewer: Mm-hm.
18

19Elizabeth Phillips: And every night the German war planes were flying over and bombing
20Paris.
21

22Interviewer: Mm-hm.
23

24Elizabeth: And, uh, we'd see 18 fly over every night and we worked, uh, on one of
25these operating tables on the wounded that were coming right from the
26front to the first station that they got to was our place and they were given
27the first treatment there. It was day and night service.
28

29Interviewer: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.
30

31Elizabeth Phillips: And, uh...
32

33Interviewer: [03:16] Did you get much sleep?
34

35Elizabeth Phillips: Not much. And when we had a chance to sleep, we had to put the brick in
36our door, uh, somebody might get in and shut the door and we couldn't get
37out because it was a modern building, great big beautiful place, that had
38just recently been completed for the insane and mentally ill people. And it
39was right outside of the city of, uh, uh, Avignon, 7 miles. So in the
40meanwhile, there was a mix up and we shouldn't ever have been there
41because already we had a unit at the front but I wasn't with that. And, uh,
42when this doctor came down from the front and asked for a team why we
43would, we went with no authority to do it you see. So they were looking

1 for [inaudible 04:18] and finally located this was where we were and we
2 were told to return to our base.
3
4 [Laughter]
5
6Interviewer: [04:28] So did you work mostly with men then?
7
8Elizabeth Phillips: What?
9
10Interviewer: [04:31] Did you work mostly with men or with women?
11
12Elizabeth Phillips: When I was at the front?
13
14Interviewer: Mm-hm.
15
16Elizabeth Phillips: Yes. That was, I worked that, that doctor who came and got us. We were
17 the team.
18
19Interviewer: Mm-hm.
20
21Elizabeth Phillips: And I worked with him all the time. And then when I went back to our,
22 uh, we had to drive up to Paris and then go down the [inaudible 04:52] and
23 when I got back to [inaudible 04:56] why I was in charge of, uh, of a ward
24 of 130 patients. And, um, and then I was transferred from that ward to a,
25 a, uh, those were several convalescents. And not many bed patients. But
26 we changed every 2 weeks. And, uh, very active. And then I was
27 transferred from that ward to, uh, an operating room surgical ward and
28 then came the awful, uh, flu epidemic. And I don't know if you ever
29 heard how, they died like flies. The men on the steamers going over died
30 like flies. The flu epidemic in 1918 was, uh, throughout our whole
31 country.
32
33Interviewer: Mm-hm. Yeah, I recall. Just, just barely.
34
35Elizabeth Phillips: Yes.
36
37Interviewer: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.
38
39Elizabeth Phillips: Well, uh, ...
40
41Interviewer: [05:58] Did that affect you at all? Did, were there inoculations?
42
43Elizabeth Phillips: Yeah. Why of course.
44

1Interviewer: Mm-hm.
2

3Elizabeth Phillips: We would take, have a funeral every afternoon and 4 and 5 ambulances 4
4 boys dead and each ambulance taken' up to the little local cemetery and
5 there a service was held and we would have to go as escort, you know.
6 And, uh...
7

8Interviewer: [06:30] To escort the ambulance?
9

10Elizabeth Phillips: And the 4, the ambulance, they would have a little service in the local
11 cemetery and then they had the bugle play Taps and the French people
12 came and joined us in the service and our, we had, uh, what do you call it,
13 he wasn't a priest but he was a pastor.
14

15Interviewer: [07:07] A chaplain?
16

17Elizabeth Phillips: A chaplain.
18

19Interviewer: Mm-hm.
20

21Elizabeth Phillips: And he would conduct the service. That was a harrowing experience.
22

23Interviewer: [07:16] Was that the most frightening experience for you?
24

25Elizabeth Phillips: What?
26

27Interviewer: [07:18] Was that the most frightening experience for you?
28

29Elizabeth Phillips: Oh no. When I was right there at the front it was frightening because they
30 were bombing over our heads all the time.
31

32Interviewer: Mm-hm. [07:26] Well what were you thinking during all that time? I
33 know you...
34

35Elizabeth Phillips: I didn't have time to think but to do my job.
36

37Interviewer: Right. Right.
38

39Elizabeth Phillips: And, uh, worked.
40

41Interviewer: Mm-hm. Mm-hm. [07:38] Well how did the men respond to you as a
42 woman in the service? As a nurse?
43

44Elizabeth Phillips: Oh, no trouble. The men, our corpsmen?

1
2Interviewer: Yes. Mm-hm.
3
4Elizabeth Phillips: No trouble at all. No but I know that other units did have troubles because
5 the nurses were not organized at that time.
6
7Interviewer: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.
8
9Elizabeth Phillips: And we had no rank when I was in the army. No rank. And they have a
10 big, they had, uh, in Washington, a, a book about that [inaudible 08:07]
11 called the Army Manual. And in only 2 place, one place in that big Army
12 Manual were the nurses even mentioned and they mentioned nurses and
13 [pet dogs 08:17] and that's all.
14
15Interviewer: [08:19] In the same category?
16
17Elizabeth Phillips: Yeah. [Chuckle] Yes. And then when the war was over we came back.
18 The nurses on the Atlantic, thousands of us went to Washington and we
19 went through Congress, the House and the Senate like a hive of bees
20 reorganizing the Army Manual and we said to those congressmen the
21 nurses want rank.
22
23Interviewer: Mm-hm.
24
25Elizabeth Phillips: We have to have rank in order to control conditions in the wards. And,
26 um, oh it was like drawing teeth. They didn't want to do anything for
27 women in those days and, uh, we gave us what they call relative rank.
28
29Interviewer: Mm-hm. [09:12] Which was?
30
31Elizabeth Phillips: Which was relative rank. It wasn't equal. When World War II came
32 along, we went to Washington again and all the nurses organized on the
33 Atlantic Coast went into Washington again and said see now we want
34 equal rights for nurses in the army.
35
36Interviewer: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.
37
38Elizabeth Phillips: We are in charge of the wards, not the corpsmen, and, uh, sergeants or
39 any, we, the nurses are in charge. The we got it from Congress so then we
40 got equal rank and when the nurses came into the army in World War II
41 they were lieutenants and so forth and rose up and now we have people in
42 Washington, D.C., a general. I don't know her name. She's a new one.
43 But the nurses in the army now everywhere in army hos, and navy
44 hospitals all have rank.

1
2Interviewer: Mm-hm. Mm-hm. [10:14] And that occurred after World War II then?
3 That occurred after World War II?
4
5Elizabeth Phillips: Yes. It was in World War II that we got equal rank.
6
7Interviewer: [10:24] What did you enjoy most about your work?
8
9Elizabeth Phillips: Oh. [Inaudible 10:28].
10
11 [Laughter]
12
13Elizabeth Phillips: I, I liked the work that I was doing 'cause I felt I was useful and needed.
14 And I liked doing it.
15
16Interviewer: Mm-hm. [10:47] When exactly was that?
17
18Elizabeth Phillips: What?
19
20Interviewer: [10:49] What was the most significant part of that for you? Was it talking
21 with the soldiers, with the GIs?
22
23Elizabeth Phillips: Oh no. [Inaudible 10:55] with regular nursing. I was in charge of a ward
24 and, uh, then that experience of being at the surgical table when I was up
25 at the front and, uh, that was all meant a great deal to me.
26
27Interviewer: Mm-hm. Mm-hm. [11:16] What did you like least?
28
29Elizabeth Phillips: What? Oh, I can't tell you what I liked least.
30
31Interviewer: [11:21] Why not? [Laughter]
32
33Elizabeth Phillips: Well I don't know anything that I took. I'm not that kind of a person to
34 take likes and dislikes.
35
36Interviewer: [11:29] Really?
37
38Elizabeth Phillips: No.
39
40Interviewer: You just feel you have to do what you have to do. [11:32] Is that correct?
41
42Elizabeth Phillips: Yes. I had a duty to do and, uh, I was regimented and had to, uh, do as I
43 was told.
44

1Interviewer: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.
2
3Elizabeth Phillips: But, at that time, we were so thankful that we could do something and be
4 of use. Then it wasn't a personal thing at all. Look at all the things I got
5 for my birthday. These are for my birthday yesterday.
6
7Interviewer: Yes, I heard. Happy birthday.
8
9Elizabeth Phillips: 98. This and that one up there.
10
11Interviewer: Excellent. They're beautiful.
12
13Elizabeth Phillips: And all these white flowers.
14
15Interviewer: They're beautiful.
16
17Elizabeth Phillips: Yeah.
18
19Interviewer: It's, you must be commended for what you've done.
20
21Elizabeth Phillips: I don't know.
22
23 [Laughter]
24
25Elizabeth Phillips: I'm a very modest person. I, I don't go around blowing my horn or
26 anything like that. But people have been very kind to me. Is this all going
27 on tape? Oh gosh.
28
29 [Laughter]
30
31Interviewer: Well since you mentioned regimentation, that's my next question. [12:29]
32 How did you adapt to regimentation? Was it difficult adapting at all?
33
34Elizabeth Phillips: No.
35
36Interviewer: No?
37
38Elizabeth Phillips: No.
39
40Interviewer: No.
41
42Elizabeth Phillips: No, we were working hard for our country. I forgot about myself. I didn't
43 worry. I wanted to do my job.
44

1 Interviewer: Mm-hm. [12:50] So that was most important to you? Is to do your job.
2
3 Elizabeth Phillips: Oh yeah.
4
5 Interviewer: Mm-hm. [12:55] Were you ever married?
6
7 Elizabeth Phillips: No.
8
9 Interviewer: No. [12:59] May I ask why? I know that's personal but may I ask why.
10
11 Elizabeth Phillips: I'll tell you a story. I had a family that and this Irishman was president of
12 one of the banks in New York and he liked, he often tease and he used to
13 tease me and he would say Ms. by choice I hope. [Chuckle]. I was Ms.
14 by choice.
15
16 Interviewer: By choice.
17
18 Elizabeth Phillips: Yes.
19
20 Interviewer: [13:31] So it was your choice then?
21
22 Elizabeth Phillips: It was my choice. Yes.
23
24 Interviewer: [13:34] Was it because of your dedication to the service?
25
26 Elizabeth Phillips: No, not necessarily. I just didn't wanna get married I guess.
27
28 Interviewer: Mm-hm.
29
30 Elizabeth Phillips: Mm-hm. Those personal questions they shouldn't ask anyway.
31
32 Interviewer: [Laughter] Well, well I, I'm concerned about...
33
34 Elizabeth Phillips: Who, uh, can we turn this off for a minute? The Presbyterian Hospital
35 Unit of New York City in which I was, uh, a nurse overseas, sailed on the
36 14th of May, 1917 and we were in France on the 30th of May and at that
37 time no provision had been made by the US Army to feed the nurses.
38 Fortunately, our commanding officer had taken along 8 thousand dollars
39 which had been given him for any emergency that would arise and the
40 welfare of the nurses. Immediately our commanding officer who was a
41 colonel surgeon, Dr. [inaudible 14:51], he saw to it that we could have
42 something to eat but for 3 days we lived on British rations that were left
43 over from the, the British, uh, nursing corps that had moved out from this
44 hospital and we had tea and, um, ...

1
2Interviewer: Crumpets.
3
4Elizabeth Phillips: ... canned salmon and bread.
5
6Interviewer: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.
7
8Elizabeth Phillips: And our commanding officer then immediately began spending the money
9 to get food for us and eventually the army did take on the responsibility of
10 feeding the nurses.
11
12Interviewer: Mm-hm. Mm-hm. That's incredible isn't it?
13
14 [Laughter]
15
16Elizabeth Phillips: Do you like that for the story?
17
18Interviewer: Yes. It's very good. Thank you. [Chuckle]
19
20Elizabeth Phillips: Yeah.
21
22Interviewer: [15:39] How do you think the, being in the service as, as a nurse, how did
23 that affect your self-image? How did you see yourself when you were
24 over there?
25
26Elizabeth Phillips: I was glad that I had something to contribute for my country.
27
28Interviewer: Mm-hm. Mm-hm. That's excellent. I know you mentioned to me, um,
29 earlier that you were on the front line.
30
31Elizabeth Phillips: What?
32
33Interviewer: You were on the front line. You mentioned that to me earlier.
34
35Elizabeth Phillips: Right behind the front line.
36
37Interviewer: Right. Right behind the front line. So I'm sure you were in a life or death
38 situation. [16:17] But have you ever considered, um, could you ever kill
39 for your country?
40
41Elizabeth Phillips: [Inaudible 16:23]
42
43Interviewer: [16:24] Could you ever kill for your country in a life and death situation?
44 Could you ever do that?

1
2Elizabeth Phillips: Why, of course not.
3
4Interviewer: No?
5
6Elizabeth Phillips: I wouldn't be called upon to do anything like that. I don't understand that
7 question.
8
9Interviewer: Well there are some women...
10
11Elizabeth Phillips: Who made these questions up?
12
13Interviewer: Well, there are some women who are in that situation where they could
14 and can go into combat. Um, and I know throughout history a lot of those
15 women have been ignored, um, but there are, there can be a situation
16 where you have to, to fight for your own life. And I was just concerned
17 that since you did serve perhaps, um, if you were to join today that you
18 could possibly kill for your country. It's just a question. Just a
19 philosophical question more or less and I was just curious whether you
20 could or not.
21
22Elizabeth Phillips: Too old.
23
24 [Laughter]
25
26Elizabeth Phillips: 98.
27
28Interviewer: [17:19] Well do you think you could when you served in the first World
29 War.
30
31Elizabeth Phillips: If anything, if anything happened, uh, for instance if we had an earthquake
32 here and I could help, regardless I would help if I was able. Yes. Of
33 course.
34
35Interviewer: Mm-hm. Mm-hm. Okay. I know that you have just numerous stories
36 about your experiences overseas and [17:52] can you give us some, some
37 examples or anecdotes of some of the funny things that happened to you
38 while you were there?
39
40Elizabeth Phillips: I know, uh, I can't think of them right now. Oh, I have to have a
41 preamble.
42
43Interviewer: Okay.
44

1Elizabeth Phillips: In 1917, active and on the front, um, held up for the American Army to get
2 over there and fight. But we had, uh, still many convalescents and on my
3 ward, I had, uh, 137 or 8 beds and many of those patients were ambulatory
4 and wore the convalescent hospital uniform of blue cotton flannel pants
5 and, and white [inaudible 19:06] flannel jackets. And the Aussies and the
6 [inaudible 19:12], the Scotch boys they're pretty lively young men. And
7 the, uh, priest that we had would take them for long walks and they never
8 came back empty-handed. They would steal the chickens right off the
9 farms [laughter], wring their necks, put them under their coats and when
10 they came back from these walks of 15 to 20 miles they always had
11 something for me. [Laughter] So then we'd have to see about getting
12 those chickens plucked and cooked for them.
13

14Interviewer: [Laughter] Oh that's really very good. All while the priest was walking
15 with them, right?
16

17Elizabeth Phillips: Yes, and the priest he couldn't control them. And then eventually those
18 priests were superseded by men who understood men and they got men
19 who had been in this country selling tobacco.
20

21Interviewer: Mm-hm.
22

23Elizabeth Phillips: And cigarettes. And they understood, uh, better the young men who in the
24 army and so that, uh, the discipline was better.
25

26Interviewer: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.
27

28Elizabeth Phillips: When they went on their walks. But apples, they'd bring back anything
29 they could steal from these farms. [Laughter] Ran – they don't call them
30 ranches and they don't call them farms. I guess they call them farms.
31 And, uh...
32

33Interviewer: [20:53] Did you keep a diary while you were there?
34

35Elizabeth Phillips: No, I was, we all had 12-hour duty and we'd go on at 7 o'clock in the
36 morning and come off at 7 o'clock in the evening. And if we had a
37 moment we could go back to our quarters at 5 o'clock in the afternoon and
38 have a cup of tea and then go back to the ward and serve the meals and put
39 the patients to bed. But, uh, that was when I was at base hospital number
40 2.
41

42Interviewer: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.
43

1Elizabeth Phillips: And, uh, that was 12-hour duty every day of the week. Sunday's included
2 and, um, ...
3

4Interviewer: [21:39] What did you do in your free time? Any free time that you had.
5

6Elizabeth Phillips: Maybe walk around the little town. Make friends with the, uh, local
7 French people and, uh, they would give me beautiful bouquets of flowers
8 for my room out of their gardens and, um, we would take them things to
9 eat. They were short rationed.
10

11Interviewer: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.
12

13Elizabeth Phillips: The local people were and, uh, if we had anything that we could spare we
14 would sneak it down and take it to them. [Chuckle] And, uh, sometimes
15 we would go to the French church for Sunday meals, Sunday service. Uh,
16 if we had any time off we might ride into, in an ambulance, the city of
17 [Mohave 23:07] 20 miles away and, uh, see some Americans there and
18 they would spoil us by giving us a big dinner to eat.
19

20Interviewer: Oh, really.
21

22 [Laughter]
23

24Interviewer: [23:19] Did religion play an important part in your life?
25

26Elizabeth Phillips: What?
27

28Interviewer: [23:22] Did religion play an important part in your life?
29

30Elizabeth Phillips: Religion?
31

32Interviewer: Mm-hm.
33

34Elizabeth Phillips: Well I've always pretended to be a good church woman.
35

36Interviewer: [23:29] Is that Catholic or Protestant?
37

38Elizabeth Phillips: I'm Episcopalian.
39

40Interviewer: Episcopalian.
41

42Elizabeth Phillips: Yeah. And, uh, is this on tape?
43

1 Interviewer: [23:45] Well what's, do you have a philosophy of life then? Do you have,
2 um, a world view. How do you see yourself and your purpose?
3

4 Elizabeth Phillips: In the world view?
5

6 Interviewer: Mm-hm. [23:59] How do you see yourself?
7

8 Elizabeth Phillips: I'm a very, I'm a very uh, patriotic person and I'm a republican and, uh,
9 since I retired I've become very, uh, conversant with activities in
10 Washington, D.C. and have through magazines. But now I can't read
11 them anymore. I have to use a magnifying glass for reading and I read,
12 uh, big print books.
13

14 Interviewer: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.
15

16 Elizabeth Phillips: But, uh, I had to give up *U.S. News & World Report* and, uh, uh, 2 other
17 republican magazines or papers you might call them. And, uh, can't
18 remember what the names were but I kept the *U.S. News & World Report*.
19

20 Interviewer: [24:59] Do you have a philosophy of life though? How do you see your
21 role in the world or your purpose in the world?
22

23 Elizabeth Phillips: [Inaudible 25:05]
24

25 Interviewer: [25:05] How do you see your role or purpose in the world? Do you have a
26 philosophy of life?
27

28 Elizabeth Phillips: Is this on tape? I think as I've gotten old I've become more tolerant of
29 people. Not so critical and more inclined to, uh, forgive.
30

31 Interviewer: Mm-hm. Mm-hm. [25:35] If you were to pick, uh, a time in your life that
32 was really significant throughout your entire life, a period of time that was
33 most significant to you that perhaps changed, was a turning point for you
34 or changed your view of yourself for the world, what time would that be?
35 The last 10 years? The last 20 years? The last 40 years?
36

37 Elizabeth Phillips: Well, after seeing the misery and hardship that was everywhere around us
38 during World War I overseas experience, I never wanted to see a country
39 in the war again. And when World War II came along I tried to get in
40 some branch of service. I ran up against the statement, oh yes, we'll take
41 you but not just yet. One of these [inaudible 27:09] anyway I didn't have
42 a chance to do anything till all of a sudden I went up to, went up to
43 [inaudible 27:21] and my mother and sister was living, were living, and
44 my sister said to me Mr. [Logan 27:33] an Englishman who lived there in

1 [inaudible 27:38] has had a letter from, uh, a nephew he has never seen
2 who's a POW and of the Germans and is in a camp in, in Germany. And I
3 said I'm going right over to see it. I went over and saw the letter and I
4 said to Mr. [Logan 27:58] let me have that. I was on duty at that time in a
5 public health job that was from 3 o'clock until 11 o'clock at night. And,
6 uh, I came back to the city and went right to the Red Cross the next
7 morning before I went to work and I said what, I've got, here's this letter I
8 have. What can I do to help? And, uh, the Red Cross woman said we
9 have parcels of food already made up that can be sent to the POWs in
10 Germany or anywhere and, uh, I said can I make them up myself
11 [inaudible 28:48] and she said yes. The Red Cross said yes and gave me
12 the directions, 2 pages, and I went home and read them. Went out and I
13 bought enough to fill 4 boxes and they went for free and in each box I put
14 something significant like a fountain pen or a picture or a little book,
15 story, and I wrote a letter to this young man named [Moon 29:20] who's a
16 POW and it went to the Red Cross in, uh, Switzerland and he got the
17 boxes and in my letter to him I said, uh, what did you find in your box that
18 you couldn't eat? Write and tell me. So all those 4 boxes divided with his
19 friends and I got word from them they got the pen and they got the little
20 storybook then I knew for sure that they had gotten the boxes of food.

21
22 Interviewer: That's right.

23
24 Elizabeth Phillips: Which was what happened. So then through the Red Cross and, uh,
25 newspaper articles in the papers, *The Examiner*, *The Chronicle* right here
26 they wrote up the story of what I was doing and people began calling me
27 up. I wanna help. How can I help? And I had it all typed out for them.
28 How they could pack boxes and send them, tie them 4 ways on 4 sides.
29 One of the requisitions of the government. Special box. Special size.
30 And, uh...

31
32 Interviewer: And you just thought of that on your own?

33
34 Elizabeth Phillips: Yes. And I kept it up for 2 years. And I went to work all the time.

35
36 Interviewer: That's incredible.

37
38 Elizabeth Phillips: And I had all that, uh, correspondence with the, they had in a magazine
39 called POWs. It was published in, uh, Scotland. One of these POWs
40 wrote home to Scotland and told about an English woman, an American
41 woman was sending these parcels of food in the camp. And that was
42 written up in the POW magazine and that magazine was the only piece of,
43 that I knew about, that went to the prisoners of war in, in, uh, Germany
44 and so the English people began writing to me, I have a son in this camp. I

1 have a son in another camp. Can you send them any food? They're
2 hungry. So I got people to help me.
3
4Interviewer: Wonderful.
5
6Elizabeth Phillips: And I had people from the Atlantic to the Pacific on my lists sending food
7 and we did it for 2 years and then American Red Cross and army took it
8 up in a big way and they would send carloads with the boxes already fixed
9 and I got word from Washington, D.C. to stop. You're not permitted to do
10 this anymore and I wrote to everybody, congressmen that I knew.
11
12Interviewer: [32:28] Did they give you a reason?
13
14Elizabeth Phillips: And I wrote to Ms. Roosevelt, Anna Roosevelt. Isn't that her name?
15
16Interviewer: Mm-hm. Eleanor, right?
17
18Elizabeth Phillips: Eleanor.
19
20Interviewer: [32:37] Did they give you any reason?
21
22Elizabeth Phillips: Yes, the reason was that the government was doing in a big way and they
23 were just supersede, taken over my work.
24
25 [Laughter]
26
27Elizabeth Phillips: So I, and Ms. Roosevelt wrote back the letter that she wrote back to me is
28 up in the Eisenhower Museum with all that stuff, all the records that I kept
29 and all the letters that I had from the POWs and from the families in Great
30 Britain and in this country. People right around [inaudible 33:13], down
31 the peninsula, wrote to me how come I sent something to my son or my
32 brother and I would tell them well that my contact all stopped because of
33 the, and it was right in a way 'cause they superseded and did it in a big
34 way. And sent the, uh, food. Then 6 months later I had a letter from the
35 Board of Economic Warfare in Washington, D.C., if you still have your
36 lists of the POWs that you send food to you may be permitted to send
37 them books. And they, if you send any books, you have to do it under our
38 direction. Okay. They have to be, um, tied the same way and books of, of
39 a...
40
41Interviewer: [34:24] Where did you get the lists of POWs and how did you get the food
42 to Germany?
43

1 Elizabeth Phillips: I think I told you about, uh, going to [inaudible 34:34] one day and getting
2 the list of a POW from his uncle who was a neighbor of ours and then, did
3 I give you the story of going to the Red Cross? I went right to the Red
4 Cross that night. At that time, I was working in a large factory evening
5 hours. So I had time in the day to do things and I was working, uh, from 3
6 in the afternoon until 11 at night over in, uh, Oakland. I drive there from
7 San Francisco. And then the rest of the day I could devote to all this work
8 that I suddenly got into, getting parcels promised to me through the Red
9 Cross to go to Germany.
10

11 Interviewer: [35:38] And where did those parcels go to?
12

13 Elizabeth Phillips: Hmm?
14

15 Interviewer: When you addressed them. [35:41] Where did those parcels go?
16

17 Elizabeth Phillips: Oh, I went to, when I, came, heard from, got the letter and went to the Red
18 Cross in, um, San Francisco on my way home that morning and they told
19 me that they had parcels already prepared to go for \$2.40 a piece. And I
20 said well could I send parcels myself. They said yes. And we will give
21 you the directions. So I went back and I bought enough stuff and filled 4
22 boxes. And I sent the 4 boxes over. I wrote to this boy, [inaudible 36:23]
23 and sent him 4 boxes. And in each box was something significant. I had,
24 uh, from that time on after I sent the first 4 boxes the story was written in a
25 Scotch magazine that was allowed in the camps called POWs. There was
26 a little story about an Englishwoman living in California named [Elsa
27 37:03] Phillips who's sending them parcels of food. And the little article
28 thanked me for doing it. Those little magazines went into the camp so the
29 only literature that was allowed by the Germans in the POW camps. And
30 with that I had a flood of letters asking please send me some food. And I
31 would save these letters from the POWs that were only allowed 2 postal
32 cards and 2 letters, formed letters, a month for them to write home. They
33 were very precious to them but they would spend one of those, send me a
34 postal card asking if I could, see that they got some food.
35

36 Interviewer: Mm-hm. Mm-hm. I'm sure you made plenty of friends, uh, while you
37 were overseas.
38

39 Elizabeth Phillips: Yes, I did. And I kept in touch with them but they're all gone now but me.
40 Myself. I'm the last member of my unit that went to France.
41

42 Interviewer: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.
43

1Elizabeth Phillips: And, uh, all of the people that I took my training with to be a nurse have
2passed away. I've lived too long.
3

4Interviewer: [Chuckle] No. No. You don't look a day over 75. [Chuckle]
5

6Elizabeth Phillips: Well, uh.
7

8Interviewer: [38:44] So what does that feel like to you?
9

10Elizabeth Phillips: I feel very grateful.
11

12Interviewer: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.
13

14Elizabeth Phillips: I can't do much anymore.
15

16Interviewer: But you have glorious memories.
17

18Elizabeth Phillips: But, well I, of course I have the memories. I came from a big family, 4
19sisters and 2 brothers, all grew up to die in their 80s and 90s.
20

21Interviewer: Mm-hm. [39:19] Anyone living?
22

23Elizabeth Phillips: No, they're all gone. And, uh, my mother lived to be 95. My father was a
24graduate of Columbia University in New York City and was an attorney
25and an athlete. There he is there. And he died at 40 years of age because
26of a heart condition that they didn't know how to take care of in those
27days. He would have lived longer if they'd known what they know now.
28But he left my mother with 7, 8, 7 children [inaudible 39:58]. We all lived
29useful lives. But all are gone now. I'm the last one.
30

31Interviewer: You mentioned after the war, after the first World War that you worked in
32a factory. [40:12] Where was that?
33

34Elizabeth Phillips: Oh, after the first World War I, went to Wyoming and I was on a dude
35ranch and in a boys boarding school for 11 years.
36

37Interviewer: [40:29] What were you doing?
38

39Elizabeth Phillips: I was a nurse and it was a school for boys in the wintertime and a dude
40ranch for guests in the summertime and I was the assistant manager and
41the, uh, we were 40 miles from up town and, uh, I took care of sick people
42on the river. They would ride horseback down or up which ever way they
43were [inaudible 41:00] and, uh, we were at the end of the telephone line,
4440 miles, 2 miles from town. The town of Cody, Wyoming. And

1 [inaudible 41:13] down there. We were on a ranch line. [Inaudible 41:21]
2 call was 2 shorts and 4 long and whenever the other people on the line
3 would hear that click they all listened to what was going on at the dude
4 ranch.
5
6 [Laughter]
7
8 Elizabeth Phillips: And we could hear them, uh, answering. So, uh.
9
10 Interviewer: So this was a resort then during the summer? [41:49] Is that what it was?
11 A resort during the summer? The ranch.
12
13 Elizabeth Phillips: Was it what?
14
15 Interviewer: Resort during the summer?
16
17 Elizabeth Phillips: What's that word?
18
19 Interviewer: A resort. A place where people go.
20
21 Elizabeth Phillips: A resort for dude people. A dude ranch in the summertime. And we
22 would have, yes, we had cottages all through the woods and, uh, near the
23 river, beautiful grove. And, um, it was very expensive for these people.
24 Most people came from outside of Chicago or New York City and the
25 suburbs of Boston. And my boss was a, uh, are you taking this down?
26 My boss was a, um, Princeton man and he would go back east and visit 2
27 or 3 cities and line up dudes for the summer and boys who'd been kicked
28 out of some good schools in the east, [throat clearing], were our first
29 school boys and they each had their own horse and we had 4 masters to
30 teach them and college board examinations were given for them in the
31 spring and everything was going along well and then came the crash.
32 What year was that?
33
34 Interviewer: '29.
35
36 Elizabeth Phillips: Yes, big crash of '29. Um, big project was overextended financially.
37 Absolutely. I think it's being misunderstood in places and badly handled
38 but in the long run it will come and get straightened out. Don't you think?
39
40 Interviewer: Mm-hm. I agree. [43:56] Did you experience any discrimination when
41 you were, um, serving?
42
43 Elizabeth Phillips: No.
44

1Interviewer: No.
2
3Elizabeth Phillips: We'd had, with us when I was in France we had medical students from the
4 College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York City. They volunteered
5 immediately and so our corpsmen were mostly intelligent...
6
7Interviewer: Professionals. Right?
8
9Elizabeth Phillips: Not, uh, doctors, young men training to be doctors.
10
11Interviewer: Mm-hm.
12
13Elizabeth Phillips: And had volunteered to help in any capacity to get overseas and work.
14 And they did the call work. We had a young man named, uh, [Draper
15 44:44]. His brother was on our unit as a doctor but he was just a call man.
16 And he had a beautiful tenor voice and he would sing for any parties that
17 we had, he would sing, and, uh, one thing that was funny that happened.
18 He and 2 or 3 other boys were on this ward, not my ward but on another
19 ward, in the casino of the town that had been turned into a hospital. They
20 made up a story themselves and called it the bedpan parade.
21
22 [Laughter]
23
24Elizabeth Phillips: And they came on in the afternoon and they put on a show and they
25 carried the canvas cover for the bedpan on their arms and the bedpans in
26 their hands and got up on the stage in the casino and put on a show for the
27 sick patients in the beds.
28
29Interviewer: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.
30
31Elizabeth Phillips: I didn't see it. But I heard about it because I was not in that ward. But it
32 was hilarious. And all of those were highly, uh, uh, trained intelligent
33 men preparing to be doctors at the medical school in New York City but
34 had gotten on the unit as volunteers to do anything and did anything. That
35 was a funny story for you. Do you want to, do you like that story?
36
37Interviewer: Yes [chuckle] I have another question, um, which is somewhat unrelated.
38 I'm just interested in any social restrictions that you had. [46:39] Did you
39 have social restrictions as a nurse, um, while you were overseas?
40
41Elizabeth Phillips: Social restrictions?
42
43Interviewer: Restrictions. Yeah.
44

1Elizabeth Phillips: Oh yes, I was in the army and we had to conform to all army rules. We
2 had to be in at 10 o'clock at night and, um, over there I don't know as you
3 know, they have these long twilights last till 9 and 10 o'clock at night.
4 And so we weren't allowed out after 9 o'clock. The doors were locked.
5 We accepted all those army regulations and rules because we were doing
6 the type of work which we wanted to do and that was to help the people
7 and the, uh, our own soldiers who were wounded in the war.
8
9
10/la