

**Interview of Alice Nordly on her service  
in the U.S. Army Nurse Corps during WWII**

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Neola Spackman: This is continuing with the tapes for WOSL Orange County unit and I'm going to interview Alice Nordly, and I will let her tell you who she is.

Alice Nordly: Yes, I'm Alice Nordly. I resided in Los Angeles at the time of my – uh, that I went into the Service. I w-, took my oath of office at – on February the 23rd in 1942 in the, uh, Army Nurse Corps, uh, Reserve with, uh, the 2nd Lieutenant rank – relative rank because it came under the Red Cross and we were not regular army. The oath was taken at the Federal Post Office Building on the 14th floor, uh, in Los Angeles and, um, uh, by Lieutenant Colonel [Allen 0:52] from the medical corps. He was in charge of the saw-, southern California medical – m-, military district. Tsk. And, uh, I served – uh, the unit was activated, uh, uh, in March, uh, 16, 1942, and my date of separation was, uh, February 4, 1946, so that was just short of 2 years – I mean 4 years.

Neola Spackman: [1:24] What unit did you serve – uh, what unit did you go overseas with?

Alice Nordly: Uh, we were with the 73rd Evac Hospital, and it was organized in the summer of 1940 by Colonel Albert McEvers. He was the commanding officer, but it was not really activated until January of '42.

Neola Spackman: [1:44] And where was it activated?

Alice Nordly: It was activated d-, h-, in Los Angeles, and there were a staff of 52 doctors and about 52 nurses. The doctors all came from the Los Angeles County Hospital, and – or affiliated staff from the hospital, uh, you know, that were in the local area, and the nurses all came from the major hospitals in the local area. Uh, so, uh, we then went – uh, we – when were activated, we went to Camp s-, uh, Luis Obispo in, uh, March – on March 16th in 1942, and we were there for 53 days. We were um – uh, went up by train, the whole group of us, and, uh, we, we had – at that time, our salary was \$70 in subsistence and clothing issue. And while we were at this – uh, at the Camp San Luis Obispo, we received, of course, our immunization for smallpox, typhoid, tetanus, and yellow fever, and we had our, uh, clothing issues. Uh, uh, are you interested in our – what...

Neola Spackman: Yes.

Alice Nordly: ...our clothing issues were?

1Neola Spackman: Yes, I am.  
2

3Alice Nordly: I listed them all, all here, and I think it's kind of interesting because we had  
4 several changes, uh, and th-, our original, uh, one was of the dark blue, uh,  
5 wool, uh, dress uniform and the skirt was teal and the top was a, a dark blue  
6 with a, a kind of a wine trim on the jacket, a grade, and we had a navy,  
7 heavy overcoat, uh, a cape which was lined with w-, uh, kind of a wine  
8 color, and the cap and the tights and the accessories that went with that.  
9 Tsk, we also got gas masks and helmets and bedrolls, a canvas utility bag,  
10 canteens, mess kits, and all the equipment for our field unit. Tsk, uh. We  
11 then later received some blue seersucker, uh, dresses, uh, n-, like a uniform,  
12 uh, t-, uh, too. Uh, we had, uh, our white uniforms. We were issued white  
13 uniforms as well.  
14

15Neola Spackman: [4:14] Were they the, uh, WWI issue...  
16

17Alice Nordly: Well...  
18

19Neola Spackman: ...that had the long, pointed collars and the...  
20

21Alice Nordly: Yes, yes...  
22

23Neola Spackman: ...[crease 4:21] down the front? [laughter]  
24

25Alice Nordly: ...the WWI issues, that real o-, old...  
26

27Neola Spackman: With the wide belt?  
28

29Alice Nordly: ...style and with the wide belt. Mm-hm. And, uh, of course they made  
30 some improvements later on. Tsk, but, uh, the interesting part of it was that  
31 when we were here at San Luis Obispo, we went on a bivouac. And what  
32 do you think we wore on the bivouac? Our white uniforms and shoes. And  
33 we were dressed, uh, w-, with those but we h-, and our white shoes, but we  
34 wore our helmets and our gas masks just in case. [laughter]  
35

36Neola Spackman: [laughter] [4:54] What made you decide to go into active duty?  
37

38Alice Nordly: Well, I was, uh, more or less, uh, recruited by some of the local doctors. I  
39 had been, um, working in, um, Chicago at, uh, Illinois [reserve 5:09] for  
40 about 6 months and I practically froze to death, so I came back here and,  
41 um, they were at that time trying to recruit nurses from the local hospitals  
42 and of course, I had worked here before so I knew some of the doctors and it  
43 seemed that they thought I was just the right material for the – to join the  
44 Service, so I finally did.

1  
2Neola Spackman: [5:33] Did you have any other members of your family in the Service at that  
3 time?  
4  
5Alice Nordly: No, no. No.  
6  
7Neola Spackman: [5:38] Um. Prior to going o-, on active duty, you had been working as a  
8 registered nurse?  
9  
10Alice Nordly: Yes, I worked as a registered nurse. Uh, I did private duty in Minneapolis  
11 for a while and then I had worked in the Los Ann-, um, the California  
12 hospital here, but I went back to Chicago and worked for 6 months pr-, just  
13 previous to it, so I had been doing general duty, uh, there. [throat clearing]  
14  
15Neola Spackman: [6:09] Uh, did you expect any of the experiences you were gonna have in  
16 the military service to further your career in nursing or did you just, uh...  
17  
18Alice Nordly: No, I...  
19  
20Neola Spackman: ...not even think about that part of it?  
21  
22Alice Nordly: ...I was not thinking about that at all. I just m-, felt that I, I was, uh, was  
23 free as anybody else to go in and there was no reason why I shouldn't serve  
24 as long as the other people needed to, and the boys were going and  
25 everything, so I, I felt it was more or less my duty to go.  
26  
27Neola Spackman: [6:39] Did anything that you did in the Service or learned in the Service help  
28 you in any way after you got out in your nursing career?  
29  
30Alice Nordly: Well, I don't know whether it did or didn't, uh, particularly. It probably  
31 changed my life quite a bit because you can't, uh, go through four years of a  
32 army career and – uh, or, or the experiences that we had without changing  
33 your attitude. Who knows how much it would've changed? Another thing  
34 that, uh, probably changed it, I did go through on the G.I. and finished my,  
35 my col-, uh, got my B.S., uh, from USC at – on, uh, the veteran's bill, so I, I  
36 did change that.  
37  
38Neola Spackman: [7:24] You did take advantage of the G.I. bill then?  
39  
40Alice Nordly: I did take advantage of the G.I. bill [coughing]. It was very helpful to me.  
41  
42Neola Spackman: You were fortunate to be in a place where you could do it and in a position  
43 where it were possible to [inaudible 7:36].  
44

1 Alice Nordly: Well, I went to work for the, the Board of Education a-, as a school nurse  
2 and my qualifications were not, uh, uh, sufficient to qualify, uh, as, as I was  
3 supposed to, so I was more or less compelled to it. But, uh, on the other  
4 hand, I got my public health, uh...  
5

6 Neola Spackman: Certificate [too 7:59].  
7

8 Alice Nordly: ...certificate...  
9

10 Neola Spackman: Mm-hm.  
11

12 Alice Nordly: ...through that and I was very grateful for it. It, it has helped me [coughing]  
13 [inaudible 8:05] ever since.  
14

15 Neola Spackman: Mm-hm. [8:07] Did you find that there was any, uh, discrimination about  
16 the fact that you were a female veteran as compared to a male veteran when  
17 it came to the G.I. bill?  
18

19 Alice Nordly: I didn't feel that there was. I had no problem whatever about, about using  
20 the...  
21

22 Neola Spackman: Nobody ever...  
23

24 Alice Nordly: ...the bill.  
25

26 Neola Spackman: ...nobody ever said, uh, you aren't a veteran? [laughter]  
27

28 Alice Nordly: No, no. Nobody ever had a-, I never had any problem at all. I, I used it  
29 freely and, uh, it only took me nine years of, uh, night schools, summer, and,  
30 uh, [laughter] extension courses to g-, to attain my goal.  
31

32 Neola Spackman: [8:43] Because you worked all the while that you were...  
33

34 Alice Nordly: 'Cause I was working all the time.  
35

36 Neola Spackman: Mm-hm. [8:47] You worked full time while you were going to school.  
37

38 Alice Nordly: Yes.  
39

40 Neola Spackman: [throat clearing] [8:52] Now, um, what kinda housing did you have in the  
41 States as...  
42

43 Alice Nordly: Well, uh, when we – we li-, when we were at San Luis Obispo, why we of  
44 course had, uh – uh, lived in the barracks there, but then we – from there, we

1 went to Sawtelle National Military Home in, in, uh, in Los Angeles and, um,  
2 there we, we lived in the psychiatric wards with bars on the windows and  
3 the baths were either taken in, uh, huge therapy tubs or – we used keys t-,  
4 where we had to use keys to turn the water on and off or else we had a  
5 shower room which was eight by eight feet, uh, in size. It contained four  
6 shower heads. There were no curtains, and again, the water was controlled  
7 by the use of keys. And we had a colonel at that particular time who felt  
8 that it was necessary for us to be k-, work up our endurance, so we slept on  
9 canvas army cots and, uh, uh, we had that all the time we were at Sawtelle.  
10  
11Neola Spackman: Did you sleep...  
12  
13Alice Nordly: We were, we were 12 in a room and we had our footlockers at the end of the  
14 cot, uh, uh, which held all our treasures and we had a metal, uh, wardrobe,  
15 uh, s-, for our clothing.  
16  
17Neola Spackman: [10:19] At, uh, San Luis Obispo did you have, uh, separate rooms in a big  
18 barracks or did you have an open bay type of sleeping facilities?  
19  
20Alice Nordly: Well, we had, uh, uh, w-, we, we had an open barrack but, uh, not as, uh, not  
21 as large as some of them. We had, we had some rooms that weren't – uh,  
22 they weren't all the same. Some of'm I think that are – when I – the one I  
23 had was only two in it. But, uh, it was the – it was a regular bed and, uh,  
24 really had no problem [inaudible 10:52].  
25  
26Neola Spackman: [inaudible 10:54]  
27  
28Alice Nordly: While we were at Sawtelle, we got another clothing, uh, issue and this was a  
29 complete new change because they changed the colors and everything. And  
30 at this time, why, we switched to olive drab and we had issues of both the  
31 winter weight and the summer weight, uh, with all the accessories and, um,  
32 we also got, um, a beige, uh, summer weight, uh, uh, dress uniform. Uh,  
33 and course we got brown oxfords along with the – this issue. And at that  
34 same time, we also got, um, tsk, brown and white striped seersucker, which  
35 were supposed to be suitable, uh, uh, dresses, uh, which were like our duty  
36 uniform, in other words, with a cap. And, um.  
37  
38Neola Spackman: [11:50] Was that the wraparound type?  
39  
40Alice Nordly: The wraparound type of, uh, uh, of, uh, apron. It was more like an apron,  
41 really. And, uh, uh, we got that issue. And, um, tsk, uh, during the time we  
42 were there at, uh, at, at Sawtelle, we functioned more or less like a station  
43 hospital. We serviced the people that were training in the southern  
44 California area and there about 600 major surgical procedures as well as

1 many [fractures]. [And 12:21], uh, the admiss-, uh, ad-, all the admiss-,  
2 medical admissions were made. There were about 470 that suffered from  
3 infectious hepatitis! Tsk. And they were due to prior immunizations with  
4 the yellow fever vaccine containing pooled human plasma.  
5  
6Neola Spackman: Made by [Lily 12:40]. [laughter]  
7  
8Alice Nordly: Hm, yeah. Mm-hm.  
9  
10Neola Spackman: [12:43] Did you – uh, what assignment did you have in the military? Were  
11 you in the operating room or in general wards?  
12  
13Alice Nordly: I was on, I was on general duty, uh, uh, for, uh, the whole [coughing] time.  
14 Tsk. Uh, let's see here, I had that all written out here like I had it, but, uh, I  
15 was on general duty, uh, both medical and surgical, and in all different  
16 areas, uh, except that I, I did serve as a, a night supervisor, uh, uh, on  
17 medical wards, uh, when I – we got to Karachi, India, tsk, and...  
18  
19Neola Spackman: [13:28] What, what hours did you work? Did you have a...?  
20  
21Alice Nordly: Well, we had rotating, uh, uh, we had rotating hours. We had, uh, uh, three  
22 shifts usually. And, uh, no matter where we were, uh, we had the rotating  
23 shifts.  
24  
25Neola Spackman: [13:47] Did you move fairly frequently while you were overseas or did you  
26 stay in one location for a long time?  
27  
28Alice Nordly: Well, uh, after we left Fort Ord, which – we were there for 15 days, again.  
29 Uh, we were, uh, th-, we were at Sawtelle for seven months, then we went to  
30 Fort Ord and we were supposed to be preparing ourselves again for overseas  
31 duty a-, and we there for 15 days, and then we went to, uh, tsk, uh, the  
32 Hilton Hotel in, in Long Beach, uh, and w-, the nurses stayed there for 15  
33 days but the men, of course, had to stay on an army post. And that was  
34 before we, we sailed overseas. Uh, we were gone, uh, at sea for 43 days.  
35 We boarded at San Pedro on the ship Monticello; it was an – uh, Italian, uh,  
36 transport that had been converted to a troop ship. And they called it a  
37 miracle ship because it, uh, w-, had no convoy and it only had 20 percent  
38 chance to get there. And the destination was unknown to most of us. Uh,  
39 s-, I – uh, there was somebody that knew where we were going, but...  
40  
41Neola Spackman: Hopefully. [laughter]  
42  
43Alice Nordly: ...uh, th-, uh, there were 8000 passengers, uh, 700 crew. Uh, our crew – uh,  
44 we had, um, tsk, a general hospital and two evac hospitals, uh, among, uh,

1 others; the quartermasters and engineers. Uh, we [throat clearing], um, tsk,  
2 crossed the equator, of course, and had the initiation of the pollywogs on  
3 deck, and there were a lot of people that m-, got seasick. We landed in New  
4 Zealand at – on February 6 and we were in port for two days there, and we  
5 had a, a trip out to look around. We were excited because we were told we  
6 were gonna ice cream and it turned out be iced milk. [throat clearing] And,  
7 um, uh, it was, uh, uh, when we went to the Tasmanian Sea, it was very  
8 rough at 20 feet of high, uh, uh, waves and, uh, it was so cold because we'd  
9 gone south to avoid the Jap activity. Uh, dishes were flying all around like  
10 mad. Tsk. Uh, and by February 17th, we got to Fremantle, Australia, and  
11 we were there in port for three days. One day we were able to get into  
12 Fremantle, and one day we went – we were – had shore leave to Perth, and  
13 the third day they didn't permit us to, uh, go ashore at all. We just watched,  
14 uh, all the ships in, in port, and there were ships from everywhere. Uh, we  
15 were escorted by a destroyer and a plane leaving these various ports, uh,  
16 because of the activity – uh, the Japanese activity.

17  
18 We landed in Bombay on March the 4th in 1943, uh, and, um, we had one  
19 day, uh, uh, in Bombay. Uh, we had a chance to, uh, visit the Taj Mahal  
20 hotel and some of us had, uh, a little activity going on there. We saw many  
21 people that were dressed in colorful saris and, uh, well, [inaudible 17:36]  
22 and cared for natives, but en route, we had also seen – uh, had a chance to  
23 see, uh, uh, the, uh, untouchables and the purple – uh, the, uh, uh, low, lower  
24 caste Indians and, uh, we were actually introduced to the caste system.  
25 There were so many of'm. Uh, the, the beggars were everywhere. Uh, dirty  
26 youngsters was pi-, uh, looked pitiful. S-, uh, they were just skin and bones  
27 and ulcerations on their legs, and I'll never forget how some of'm were  
28 crippled and crawling on their hands and knees. Tsk. We then went to – the  
29 nurses were then sent to, uh, Pune, India. We went by way of train and, uh,  
30 we were there for five days. It gave us a chance to, uh, to clean up our  
31 clothes and get ourself organized a little bit. We had some social activity  
32 there because there was some British, uh, soldiers, uh, uh, located there. We  
33 were able to do a little shopping. This is where Gandhi lived and was on his  
34 fasting, uh, tsk, at that particular time and they – he was so ill they thought  
35 he might even die.

36  
37 Tsk. After that, we, uh, took – on March the 8th – by March the 8th, we  
38 were en route on the train for eight days going to our, our location in  
39 Margherita, and, uh, uh, we traveled, uh, across India and the rapport of [us  
40 in our 19:27] compartment – this is quite a unique experience because there  
41 were no, no passageway between the two – the cars, so every time we  
42 wanted to eat or anything, we had to get out and, uh, get our food at the side  
43 of the train, and, uh, w-, we would eat out of our mess kits and, um, uh, also  
44 we w-, washed our mess kits in huge containers of hot water before we got



1 back on our, uh, on our cars – our trains. And our food supply was very – it  
2 varied a great deal depending upon what the British had delivered. One  
3 breakfast we had baked beans in – of the canned variety and pear sauce. Uh,  
4 and of course at each stop there were always, uh, a lot of natives asking for  
5 [bucksies 20:24] and, uh, uh, whole families would be there with absolutely  
6 no clothing. And, uh, some of the boys would – particularly would be  
7 running around with a just a string around their waist and it had some kind  
8 of religious significance.  
9

10Neola Spackman: [20:46] What would be the American interpretation of [bucksies 20:48]?  
11

12Alice Nordly: [Bucksies 20:49] would be um, you know, beggars.  
13

14Neola Spackman: Handouts.  
15

16Alice Nordly: Beggars. Hang-, handout. Yeah, they wanted money. They wanted money  
17 or something to eat or something. It just, uh, uh, really just beggars is what  
18 they were. ‘Course, that, uh, that was a, uh, that’s their caste, you know, the  
19 untouchables.  
20

21Neola Spackman: Yeah.  
22

23Alice Nordly: That’s what they’re supposed to do. That’s, uh, and the, the untouchables  
24 are beggars so that is perfectly normal for them. That’s – uh, all they ever  
25 do is, uh. We went through – uh, uh, as we got nearer to Calcutta, we went  
26 – we got into more vegetation with some, uh, banana trees and bamboo,  
27 monkeys and there were elephants in the backyards [doing tour 21:39].  
28 And, um, uh, w-, our train, w-, uh – we changed to the narrow-gauge trains  
29 and we crossed the Ganges River and, um, tsk, uh, then we finally got on a –  
30 uh, the Brahmaputra River, uh, on a boat called the [inaudible 22:02] and,  
31 um, tsk, uh, we had – uh, it was pretty small so there were very few cabins  
32 on it, and most of the people had to sleep on – in their sleeping bags on the  
33 deck. Uh, there a few cabins, but, uh, we went on this for a while then we  
34 w-, we finally got to Guwahati, uh, where we stopped in a, in a, uh, tsk, in a  
35 Baptist mission. It had, uh – it was a, a Baptist mission and finally, uh, was  
36 taken over by the army and, um, tsk, it was practically a year to the day  
37 when we – a year and a day when we finally got to Margherita in Assam  
38 province from the time we went into the Service.  
39

40 So, uh, uh, when we were – got to Ledo, uh, we had, uh, w-, we lived in, in  
41 – uh, the basha that I lived in was made of bamboo and it held 38 nurses.  
42 Actually, that – not a building, uh, uh, this basha was later converted to the  
43 hospital ward and when they were able to make more buildings, as they  
44 were building all the time, uh, why, uh, uh, then the – these wards that we –



1 well, they turned out to be wards, uh, why then they became hospital, uh, uh  
2 – part of the hospital. And that took, uh, to April 26th for the hospital to  
3 open and, uh, so, uh, we moved into our new bashas, uh, a, a few days  
4 before that and, um, tsk, well we then had, um, two, two to a room and, um,  
5 um, a, a washroom at the back – a kind of a washroom at the back. But in  
6 our original buildings, we were 38 of us in the, in the basha, uh, to begin  
7 with and we had our, our bedrolls, uh, and, uh, as mattresses but we did  
8 have, um, beds with springs on it.  
9

10Neola Spackman: Oh!

11

12Alice Nordly: We had beds with springs in but we didn't – but we had our sleeping rolls...

13

14Neola Spackman: Uh-huh.

15

16Alice Nordly: ...our canvas sleeping roll and, a, a sleeping bag on the cot – on this, uh, bed  
17 that – the single bed with a spring in it.  
18

19Neola Spackman: [24:52] And all of your clothes in the sleeping bag?

20

21Alice Nordly: No, no...

22

23Neola Spackman: [24:55] No? [laughter]

24

25Alice Nordly: ...no, we had our footlockers. We had our footlockers and, um, we finally  
26 got some metal, uh, metal things that, uh, to – wardrobe things to hang our  
27 clothes in, so, we did have that. And, um, tsk, we were – uh, we had slip  
28 trenches all around our, our, our area, and we were always alerted for Jap,  
29 uh, Jap, uh, patrols around. We started a Jap – a Chinese class, uh, in, in,  
30 April too soon after we got there and, um, uh, the – we serviced mostly  
31 troops, uh, in – uh, that were in the a-, in this area and they were – many of  
32 – most of the patients were Chinese soldiers and we had – but we had  
33 interpreters, uh, that were available attached to these units and we s-, we had  
34 a lot of malaria and dysentery and tropical ulcers and a fever called  
35 tsutsugamushi, uh, scrub typhus, and it was a very, um, difficult disease to  
36 control, and it was caused by a mite, of course, and many, uh, men – if the  
37 Americans and White personnel got it, it was practically almost fatal, but the  
38 k-, the natives seemed to be able to, um, to just...  
39

40Neola Spackman: Shake it off.

41

42Alice Nordly: ...shake it off better.

43

1Neola Spackman: [26:49] Did you have combat, uh, casualties there too or was it just mostly  
2 medical?  
3

4Alice Nordly: Not much combat. M-, mostly medical here in this area. We really didn't  
5 have an awful lot'a combat, uh, service. Most of ours was, uh, connected  
6 with people who were in, in Service and in the building of Ledo Road and  
7 there were, um, quartermasters and engineers that were building this road  
8 over time, you know...  
9

10Neola Spackman: Mm-hm.  
11

12Alice Nordly: ...uh, for the Ledo Road, so, uh, we had a lot of, uh, diseases – uh, medical  
13 – mostly medical diseases...  
14

15Neola Spackman: Yeah.  
16

17Alice Nordly: ...or accidents that happened.  
18

19Neola Spackman: I can remember reading about the Ledo Road...  
20

21Alice Nordly: Yes, yes.  
22

23Neola Spackman: ...and apparently it was quite a undertaking.  
24

25Alice Nordly: Yes. It was over a thousand miles long then – uh, when they were done and  
26 finished but i-, i-, it was a, a – it was quite a place.  
27

28Neola Spackman: [27:45] I wonder if it's still in use.  
29

30Alice Nordly: I don't think it is. Uh, i-, you know that from the time – when we moved  
31 from, uh, Ledo to Shingbuiyang, it was raining so hard all the time that it  
32 took us a whole day to drive about 100 miles. They had to keep rebuilding  
33 the road as you went along and th-, they had to, uh, fill it in with, with tr-,  
34 tree trunks and things of that nature. It – uh, uh, rained just constantly on  
35 our whole trip up there. We went by, uh, by convoy in a, in a six-by-six,  
36 you know, and it was quite a tour, [inaudible 28:28] tell ya. We were in, in  
37 Ledo, Assam, for about one year. We were there a year and, uh, then we  
38 took this, uh, convoy and went up to Shingbuiyang, which was in the  
39 northern part of Burma, and here it was considered a combat, uh, zone. Uh.  
40 When we got there, why, we lived in tents for a while and, um, tsk, there  
41 were, uh, uh, four of us in a tent, and, uh, it w-, it rained so hard all the time.  
42 We had 626 inches of rain in 6 months' time and it rained so much that they  
43 had trenches around the, around the tents so that, uh, it wouldn't run back  
44 into the tent...

1  
2Neola Spackman: Mm-hm.  
3  
4Alice Nordly: ...itself – you know, there was trenches around. Tsk. And ‘course we had  
5 raincoats and rubber boots and, uh, uh, which we lived in [inaudible 29:28].  
6  
7Neola Spackman: [29:28] What was the temperature?  
8  
9Alice Nordly: It was very hot. In fact, sometimes we’d get so hot that we – we didn’t care  
10 whether we – whether we wore – uh, got wet or not because, uh, we  
11 couldn’t stand to be wrapped up.  
12  
13Neola Spackman: It was more comfortable than the raincoat.  
14  
15Alice Nordly: Yeah. Yeah. The raincoats just got – we had raincoats that were, uh, sized  
16 for men anyhow, so they were always very big. We had, uh – it was an  
17 interesting place, though. This was in the thick of the jun-, the jungle and it  
18 was very beautiful and, uh, we had a lot of monkeys we could hear running  
19 around. Before we fini-, before we left, we fine-, they finally had built us  
20 some bashas, but we were so far out in the jungle that we were almost  
21 afraid. And, uh, our showers were built outside, tsk, in, uh, little tents, you  
22 know, uh, everything we had to – you know, to go to the bathroom, we had  
23 to walk, uh, about a block, you know.  
24  
25Neola Spackman: Oh yes.  
26  
27Alice Nordly: And, and, um, a-, at night, [laughter] it was very scary, you know. You  
28 didn’t really go to the bathroom at night, actually, because you...  
29  
30Neola Spackman: You hoped you didn’t have to. [laughter]  
31  
32Alice Nordly: [laughter] Anyway, there were – [coughing] you could hear all kinds of  
33 animals, jackals and animals and, and monkeys chattering away. Uh, uh, so  
34 we were, we were really kinda afraid and of course the, uh, the – it was so  
35 muddy out there all the time that we had to make, uh, bamboo walks – you  
36 know, instead of sidewalk, they had bamboo walks.  
37  
38Neola Spackman: Mm-hm.  
39  
40Alice Nordly: So, when you walked along those bamboo walks, it – say, you would get a  
41 little ratta-tat-tat, you know, as we walked along. [sniffing] After a while,  
42 they decided that, uh, this was the worst living conditions that any nurses  
43 ever had lived in, uh, up here in Burma, so, uh, quite a number of the nurses  
44 were transferred out and, um, some other people too, but, uh, I, I was t-, one

1 of a group of about 10 people that was transferred to Karachi, India, and I –  
2 then I was assigned to the 181st General Hospital. Tsk, and, um, I was there  
3 for, uh, a total of nine months, uh, including two months that I had – uh, that  
4 I went to – on a detached service to, uh, Subathu, India, which was a U.S.  
5 Army rest camp [inaudible 32:05]. And that was a, a real interesting and,  
6 uh, wonderful rest to get there. Uh, we had, tsk, uh, we had, uh, one doctor  
7 there and two nurses and a bunch of corpsmen, and, uh, we had wonderful  
8 food. We had bearers take care of us and, uh, we were real happy to come  
9 out of the jungle and be able to go up there to that place.  
10  
11Neola Spackman: [32:35] Was your weather better there?  
12  
13Alice Nordly: Oh, it was great! It was just really wonderful. We, uh, uh, of course when  
14 we went to Karachi, uh, from – um, we had been in Burma, you know,  
15 where we had 626 inches of rain in 6 months' time, and, uh, I can tell you  
16 exactly what the temperature was, but when we got to Karachi, of course,  
17 we never had rain ever and the temperature ran about 120 degrees. But you  
18 see, uh, uh, Subathu is up in the Punjab area and so we were up in the  
19 Himalayas and we really had a – uh, this was a real vacation.  
20  
21Neola Spackman: [44:14] Were all the personnel allowed to rotate through this, uh, detached  
22 service or just did, uh...?  
23  
24Alice Nordly: Well, they – no, not everybody. Uh, the strange part of it was, you know,  
25 that the nurses didn't seem to want – a lot of the nurses didn't want to go  
26 there. This friend of mine, uh, Dorothy, and I had been together the whole  
27 time and we thought it was great, but, uh, they had offered these, um, tsk,  
28 assignments to some of the nurses that had been there before and they didn't  
29 seem to want to go, but we thought it was just great. We really had a real  
30 beautiful, uh, experience there. We went through Lahore and were able to  
31 stop there on the train and see some of the points of interest in Lahore, India,  
32 and [Guwahati 34:02] was beautiful and I don't know how many people  
33 ever hear of Simla, but it's a beautiful place, um, up in the mountains where  
34 people went for, for rest – uh, the natives, you know – uh, not the natives so  
35 much but the British went there. And, uh, we were able to – on our way  
36 back, w-, we took the – sort of a, a leave on our own and went to see the Taj  
37 and had a, an experience in Agra which was, uh, uh, not exactly army-  
38 related, but...  
39  
40Neola Spackman: Well that's fun, too. [laughter]  
41  
42Alice Nordly: ...but it – but, [laughter] but we had a really – a wonderful experience there.  
43  
44Neola Spackman: [34:46] Where were you when the war actually ended in, in, uh...

1  
2 Alice Nordly: [inaudible 34:52]  
3  
4 Neola Spackman: ...i-, in the – uh, in Asia?  
5  
6 Alice Nordly: Well, I don't know if it ever ended in Asia. We, we were, uh, um, we were  
7 rotate-, I was rote-, they started rotating back in May and, uh, uh, a-, as far  
8 as the part of India, there was not active service there, you know. And, and,  
9 uh, it wasn't 'til they had, uh, V-J Day, you know, which I was home at that  
10 time...  
11  
12 Neola Spackman: [35:26] You were home at that time.  
13  
14 Alice Nordly: ...by that time, and I was in Casablanca on V-J Day trying to get home, but  
15 we were detained there because ETO was tryin' to get of, uh, there, so we  
16 were delayed there. But, um, I, I – it took us quite a while to, uh, get away  
17 from Karachi because, um, uh, there was too many other people that were  
18 tryin' to get home from the ETO. See, the, uh, tsk, uh, that rotation came in  
19 just about the time that we were coming home.  
20  
21 Neola Spackman: [36:04] How many months did you spend in India? Or on overseas duty?  
22  
23 Alice Nordly: I was gone for – I was gone, uh, overseas for 30 months altogether including  
24 transportation time.  
25  
26 Neola Spackman: [36:16] Then you had perhaps six or eight months in the American – or in  
27 the United States [inaudible 36:21]?  
28  
29 Alice Nordly: Well, I, I had, uh, I had, uh, just a few days short of four years' service in  
30 all.  
31  
32 Neola Spackman: [36:27] You got out shortly after you came back to the States?  
33  
34 Alice Nordly: Um, well, I s-, I, I came home in, uh, July and then I went on duty at the  
35 Schick General Hospital in Clinton, Iowa, tsk, for a while, and then I had  
36 some, uh, leave afterwards, you know, that, uh, they, uh – so I didn't – so  
37 my dis-, uh, my separation date was in February, uh, of, uh, '46.  
38  
39 Neola Spackman: [36:59] So then it was almost four years or it was four years.  
40  
41 Alice Nordly: It w-, just, uh, well, it was just a little short of four years. I – actually it was  
42 four years as far as my oath was concerned but, but you see, I didn't go on  
43 active service 'til March 16th, so.  
44

1Neola Spackman: [37:13] What kind of counseling did you receive from the Veteran's  
2Administration w-, when you got out of the Service.  
3

4Alice Nordly: I never saw any of'm at all, actually ever.  
5

6Neola Spackman: This was one of the things that, uh, they, they make such an issue of now.  
7

8Alice Nordly: Yeah.  
9

10Neola Spackman: And apparently in WWI and probably during the Korean War, the veterans  
11were not counseled and particularly not the female veterans.  
12

13Alice Nordly: I never even thought about it. I didn't, uh, figure that I, uh, particularly  
14needed any counseling but, but anyway. I forgot to turn this one on, didn't  
15I?  
16

17Neola Spackman: Oh, I was thinking in terms of what they, uh, might have told you about  
18what benefits you might have coming, uh, the G.I. Bill, uh, what to do...  
19

20Alice Nordly: Well we...  
21

22Neola Spackman: ...with your service life insurance and things of this sort.  
23

24Alice Nordly: No, we came through Fort Sheridan in Illinois and we were just given a  
25reassignment to go to – um, we were supposed to have 30 days at our home  
26and then we were to go to, uh, Miami on, on a detached service but, you see,  
27during the time that I was, um, tsk, uh, home, uh, V-J Day came and so our  
28orders were changed not to go to Miami anymore but to go to Clinton. And  
29so then I went on active duty there but I didn't stay there long, tsk, uh,  
30because – uh, well, they would like to have had us stay longer, but, I mean,  
31uh, there was several people that wanted us to remain in the Service, but,  
32um, I, I was ready to leave, so, tsk, I didn't avail myself of that privilege.  
33[laughter]  
34

35Neola Spackman: You weren't among those that – now, those coming home from Europe...  
36

37Alice Nordly: Yeah.  
38

39Neola Spackman: ...were literally shuffled out of the Service at the port of debarkation. They,  
40they were discharged as they got off the ship.  
41

42Alice Nordly: Oh really?  
43

44Neola Spackman: It's what it amounted to.

1  
2Alice Nordly: Yeah.  
3  
4Neola Spackman: Whether they wanted to stay or not. Even some regular army, and they had  
5 to fight it...  
6  
7Alice Nordly: Oh really?  
8  
9Neola Spackman: ...to stay on active duty.  
10  
11Alice Nordly: Oh my goodness. They, they begged us to stay on. The chief nurse at  
12 Clinton, uh, tried to get us to stay on. There were four of us that came from  
13 India and they called us the four musketeers, and, and she just begged us to  
14 stay on.  
15  
16Neola Spackman: I think there was a great deal of difference between those who were assigned  
17 to stateside hospitals and those that were just coming through the ports  
18 because the personnel at the ports were not military – I mean, were not  
19 medical...  
20  
21Alice Nordly: Hm.  
22  
23Neola Spackman: ...and therefore, their, their job was to discharge everybody and send'm  
24 home. [laughter]  
25  
26Alice Nordly: Yeah, I suppo-, I suppose.  
27  
28Neola Spackman: Um. [throat clearing] [40:00] What did you find the most unpopular  
29 regulation that you encountered in the Service? Was there anything in  
30 particular that [bothered 40:08] you?  
31  
32Alice Nordly: Well, uh, uh, I suppose, uh, the, the thing that, that I always, um, got a little  
33 tired of was this continual hurrying up and waiting around for something  
34 and all this regulation. It never felt like you were on your own, you know,  
35 you had to – we always, uh – as, as if you didn't really – weren't even  
36 capable in thinking...  
37  
38Neola Spackman: [laughter]  
39  
40Alice Nordly: ...for yourself at all, you know? Everything had to be done...  
41  
42Neola Spackman: Mm-hm.  
43  
44Alice Nordly: ...done some other way.



1  
2Neola Spackman: Yeah, do it the army's way or don't.  
3  
4Alice Nordly: Yeah. Mm-hm.  
5  
6Neola Spackman: Um. [40:51] Were there any things that you – well, other than they – trying  
7 to adjust to the military way of doing things, did you have any other great  
8 adjustment to have to make to going into military service? Living with a  
9 bunch of people instead of living in a room of your own and...?  
10  
11Alice Nordly: Tsk, well, I think that that's always a little traumatic. Uh, we, uh, were  
12 thrown into positions where you had really no privacy for even dressing,  
13 you know, if you'd move into a barracks where you have, uh, uh, w-, 28 and  
14 30 people in it, why, you're about as, uh – um, you know, 'course after a  
15 while, you get used to it. Uh, and showering and...  
16  
17Neola Spackman: Yep.  
18  
19Alice Nordly: ...everything a-, a-, and in such, uh, public. 'Course I'd been in nurse's  
20 training, so it wasn't all that strange to me.  
21  
22Neola Spackman: [41:37] But you'd had a period of time in between that you had been able to  
23 live as a human being with some privacy, no doubt. [laughter]  
24  
25Alice Nordly: Yes, yes, [laughter] I wasn't quite accustomed to that. I don't know that it  
26 was that traumatic to me.  
27  
28Neola Spackman: [41:50] And you stayed in nursing after you got out of the Service?  
29  
30Alice Nordly: Yes, I worked for the veterans for a little while and then I went into school  
31 nursing, and I worked at the – for – as a school nurse for 30 years before I  
32 retired.  
33  
34Neola Spackman: [42:06] If, uh, if you were to counsel a, a young nurse coming out of nurse's  
35 training now and there was a, an emergency situation in the United States,  
36 would you s-, uh, convince them that they should go into military service or  
37 would you tell'm forget it, it's not worth it?  
38  
39Alice Nordly: Tsk, well, I would say that it was an interesting experience. Uh, I had, uh,  
40 many very good experiences, and I had many experiences that were not so  
41 good. We lived under some very trying situations, about as, uh, rugged as  
42 anyone could possibly want to find anyplace, tsk, and I also had some  
43 experiences that were very pleasant and, um, and, uh, some beautiful things  
44 that we, uh, pl-, uh, [stopped 43:03]. We had – uh, I had practically all

1 extremes I would say, tsk, so I'd – I think that, uh, [throat clearing] any  
2 experience like that is certainly worthwhile.  
3  
4Neola Spackman: [43:19] You – uh, do you feel that the people coming out of nursing schools  
5 now – of course, they don't come out of nursing schools anymore they come  
6 out of college programs, uh, would be emotionally capable of handling the  
7 situations that we were put into?  
8  
9Alice Nordly: Tsk. Well, uh, that's hard to say because, um, our experiences in life, uh, a  
10 long time ago w-, were quite different from what they are now and, um, I  
11 think that m-, my early life I was not accustomed to having a lot of the  
12 advantages that people have these days and, uh, tsk, so I think that – but I  
13 think if you really – uh, if they're really put to it, uh, that they can do it. I  
14 do think they can – they could do it.  
15  
16Neola Spackman: [44:25] Now, is there anything else you want to add, Alice?  
17  
18Alice Nordly: Tsk, well, I think I've added quite a bit. I don't have any – I can't think of  
19 anything else. [coughing]  
20  
21Neola Spackman: Alright. Thank you very much.  
22  
23  
24/ad