

**Neola Ann Spackman talks about her service in the
Army Nurse Corps during WWII**

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Neola Spackman: I am recording this tape for WOSL Oral History Program, Orange County Unit. My name is Neola, N-E-O-L-A, Ann, Spackman, S-P-A-C-K-M-A-N. Maiden name Thurneau, T-H-U-R-N-E-A-U. I was an Army nurse in WWII, a regular Army commission. My entry into nursing service was not accidental. My father had 3 sisters who were nurses and my mother and one of her sisters were practical nurses. I grew up with the idea of becoming a nurse and practiced endless hours with my dolls. Entry into the Army was not premeditated. I had not even considered it up to that point. Two of my dad's sisters had served with the Army Nurse Corps in WWII but that field had not been one of my aims. I wanted to travel and in the 30s many programs were opened to RNs. The airlines were new and employed only RNs as stewardess's. The trains were beginning to employ nurses and the resort hotels all had nurses on the staffs. The opportunities were endless and exciting. And as we approached the end of our last year in nursing training, we were definitely encouraged to become part of the Red Cross Disaster Nursing Service and many of us joined. We received certificates and pins and, if a flood, tornado or other disaster occurred in our community, we were relieved of normal duties and worked with the Red Cross for the fantastic \$5.00 per day, per diem which was [inaudible 2:05]. There were no specified number of hours. Suddenly, in 19, late in 1940, the first men were drafted and reporting to hastily constructed Army bases all over the United States. The Office of the Surgeon General U.S. Army approached Mary [Board 2:28]] of the Red Cross for a list of nurses available for extended duty. And she complied. No one I knew even heard of this new development that would have such an, an influence in our many lives.

I had graduated and gotten my license to practice nursing in 1939. I worked in a small hospital in Minnesota that winter and when spring came I decided to leave the cold country and applied for a position as an operating nurse in Fresno, California. In June, I was headed west. Out of the snow and into a new adventure. I also applied to American Airlines for stewardess training. Early in 1941, I received a notice from the Chief of the Medical Service U.S. Army requesting that I report for a physical if available for service in the Army Nurse Corps. I did not feel available and ignored the letter. Very soon I received, received a second letter and also a letter of acceptance from the American Airlines for a class to begin in mid-March in Jamaica, Long Island. I agreed to be there. Mid-March brought a notice from Major Julia [Flicky 3:49] of the Army Nurse Corps that I would report in mid-April to Fort Ord, California for service with

1 the Army Nurse Corps. A retired colonel, medical department [inaudible
2 4:01] whom I knew advised me to comply without protest. The Army had
3 priority over the airline. As I rode the train that April day from Fresno to
4 San Francisco, I wondered what I was getting into. I had really never even
5 heard of the Army Nurse Corps. My aunts lived too far away in my adult
6 years to talk to them about their war stories even if I had been interested.
7 Soon after a brief stop in Sacramento, the porter came through the car I
8 was in asking for people whose names appeared on my travel orders. He
9 said [Chris 4:43] wanted to see us all in the club car. There were 6 or 7 of
10 us on that train and, by the time we arrived at the little station in Del
11 Monte, we were fast friends. A truck ride of a few miles and we were
12 unloaded bag and baggage at a wooden barracks setting on bare sand.
13 There were 5 such buildings on each side of a center drive and more
14 behind them endlessly and all sitting alone and unattached in the base end.
15 We were met by a beautiful lady, Lieutenant Claire Washington. She was
16 to be our chief nurse. A veteran of many years in the Army Nurse Corps
17 and at one time a prisoner in China. We didn't know that for a long, long
18 time as she never talked about it.

19
20 A few months in the service that were, the first few months in the service
21 were very different. We learned to live in barracks that had no wall
22 coverings, only the framework showing. We had a bed, lamp, chair, chest
23 of drawers, and a wardrobe made of planks with a rod for hanging
24 clothing, and a shelf for other items. Room inspections were Saturday
25 morning recurrence and everyone did their own janitorial service. The
26 baths, one for each end of the barracks were cleaned by everyone, as were
27 the dayroom and the kitchenette. There was a telephone in each
28 kitchenette. A record player, chairs, divan, and lamps in the dayroom, and
29 a folding card table. In the following months, I worked in many areas of
30 nursing and I stayed at Fort Ord for 2½ years. I never did get back into
31 the surgery department.

32
33 My experiences were invaluable then and still are. I learned about
34 electrocardiograms, x-rays, skin diseases, heart diseases, and all different
35 types of medicine along the way. I was trained in supervisory,
36 administration and personnel management. We began service with a
37 relative rank of 2nd Lieutenant with the pay of \$75.00 a month. Room,
38 board, uniforms, laundry, and medical and dental care were added. We ate
39 our meals in a mess hall and this was paid by a [inaudible 7:19] allowance.
40 [throat clearing]. We received and turned into the mess hall \$31.00 per
41 month. Our opportunities for service were equal if you were in the right
42 place at the right time. Education, well a formal education is never
43 offered nor was time allotted for it. Education was gained by experience.
44 Army nurses at this time were all women so there was no discrimination

1 among ourselves as we saw it. We later learned that the male nurses who
2 were available for military service at that time were drafted as medical
3 corpsmen and not given officer status. The acceptance of male nurses on
4 equal status did not come until 1940, 55.

5
6 There was also covert and often overt discrimination in regard to color.
7 Of course, prior to 1942, colored troops were segregated completely and
8 the officers in charge were white. Eleanor Roosevelt was very active in
9 finally des, desegregating military personnel.

10
11 I would say that during my entire military service housing for the nurses
12 was very substandard. But we were young and it was a big challenge and
13 I never heard any complaints. There was always gripping and bitching but
14 no one ever considered complaining to anyone in authority. No one on
15 base lived any better and a great many not as well as we did. We had
16 private rooms. For several months, after our arrival at Fort Ord, we wore
17 the uniforms we had worn in civilian life. Then we were issued white
18 duty uniforms and capes that were relics of World War I. They had been
19 shortened to 12 to 14 inches from the floor and a navy cap, cape, with
20 maroon lining was issued. At a later date, we received many 2-piece,
21 many of us received 2-piece suits. A squashy, [inaudible 9:35] cap and an
22 odd version of the male field service cap. All in navy piped with maroon.
23 We wore white shirts, black ties and shoes. We also received an overcoat
24 at some point in time. A one-piece navy dress was designed, shirtwaist
25 style, with [inaudible 9:57] piped in maroon and 4 gold buttons on the
26 blouse. These items were our uniforms. After 7 December 1941, we had
27 to wear a uniform if we were off-base on orders. But would, we were still
28 allowed to wear civilian clothing on our own time.

29
30 There were great balls at the officer's club every Saturday night and even
31 after December 7th this continued with some restrictions of lighting,
32 closing time, bar time and so forth. During this interval, I requested
33 transfer to regular Army and then received orders to leave for the
34 Philippines. The ship was to sail in October without me because the
35 regular commission was still pending. I was heartsick. However, on
36 December 8th, I no longer regretted the change of plans and later when I
37 met the nurses who had been lucky enough to leave by submarine from
38 Corregidor to Australia, to the, then to the United States, I realized what a
39 very fortunate stroke of faith that had been. The 7th of December is a date
40 that will live forever in my mind. We were all attending an outdoor
41 amphitheater show where Mickey Rooney and, um, Judy Garland were the
42 feature players from the USO. During the course of the show, they started
43 calling different groups to return to their barracks. Finally, there were
44 only the service personnel, the supply, the hospital, the quartermaster and

1 such left in the amphitheater. And then an announcement came over the
2 loud speaker that all of us were to report to our duty stations. It was not
3 until we returned to our, uh, units that we learned that Pearl Harbor had
4 been bombed and that the United States was at war. This was an
5 occurrence that none of us had really given much thought to. We knew
6 that, that it was pending. We knew that it could happen but that it actually
7 would none of us had considered. As regards medical and dental care we
8 were given very good care. Hospitalization was up without charge to
9 anyone who happened to be ill. There were very few cases in which a
10 quarter status was permitted so if you were ill you were hospitalized. You
11 could not remain in quarters for more than 24 hours and be off duty
12 because you were ill.

13
14 You ask about memora, memorable experiences. Heavens there were 6
15 years of exciting and memorable experiences. The night of the opening
16 ball at the new officer's club at Ford Ord. General and Ms. Stilwell were
17 the honorary host and hostess. Everyone was in dress uniform and all the
18 ladies in formals. It was a very gala and festive evening. I was very much
19 in love. No, I did not marry the man. In that time spent, a choice had to
20 be made. Marriage or a career. I had agreed to stay 1 year and as before
21 stated I'd applied for regular Army. At the moment, I felt my
22 commitment had to be filled. Marriage was for a later date. I was only 23
23 at the time, much too young. We are, we are still very good friends.
24 There were days at the beach and evenings of movies, dancing and dinner
25 and an 8-hour shift of nursing duties, 5 days a week and 2 days that we
26 worked half days. On holidays, we also worked a half day. After the
27 declaration of war, the months dragged. The troops we knew were gone.
28 Scattered all over the western states and some en route to the South
29 Pacific. New divisions came and went. Processing for the port of
30 embarkation was a very hurried affair. Dances were still held at the club
31 but few people had dates as such. We walked over in groups with gangs
32 of officers from the troops present. The evenings were causal and a few
33 lasting friendships regarded from these evenings. No one had cars and if
34 we could not walk or take a bus we stayed on base. Finally, orders did
35 come.

36
37 And in September '43 I was en route to Camp Kilmer in New Jersey.
38 There were still some great evenings, [female 14:41] only in New York
39 and New Brunswick and one day in Fort Hamilton and then on board the
40 USS Brazil. We were assigned to what was once a small stateroom. It
41 now held 9 cots. Three above each other, held up with chains on the 2
42 corners. Floor-to-ceiling poles on the other corners. There were 3 such
43 rooms of cots. All our baggage, a footlocker, duffle bag and one Musette
44 bag, helmet, canteen and so forth were all stowed for each person. Two

1 such rooms shared a bath or shower where saltwater only was available for
2 bathing. Two hours in the morning and 2 hours in the afternoon. This
3 meant that 18 women shared 1 bath with water a total hour, total of 4
4 hours a day. The ship was so crowded that during boat drill which we had
5 every day if one fainted on deck there was no danger of them falling.
6 People were too close together. It was an 18-day trip traveling in a large
7 convoy. There were sub alerts often and the North Pacific in November is
8 unbelievably rough and cold. Everyone was seasick. The dining room had
9 good meals but it was a rare occasion to make the trip down to that deck.
10 The lower decks were incredibly crowded and the poor men down there
11 were very seasick and did not have access to the promenade deck as we
12 did. More of the segregation bit. Officers and enlisted personnel did not
13 fraternize.

14
15 Landing in England was a thrill. It was a cold, foggy, dark night and there
16 on the deck in Liverpool was a British military band playing *A Pretty Girl*
17 *Is Like a Melody*. They were wearing wool gloves on their icy fingers.
18 The 8 months in England were boring. It was a time of waiting. There
19 were dozens upon dozen of hospitals. Some in organized hospital stations,
20 some where the personnel were billeted with English families and we
21 waited. We rode our bicycles all over the midlands. We rode trains to
22 visit people we had known in the United States, either in or out of the
23 service. In May, the grapevine rumored system had word that the 160
24 [vac hospital 17:18] would arrive and be billeted very near us. My sister
25 was with the unit. I then received word that my father had died. He had
26 been ill since January and Eleanor, my sister, had visited him just before
27 she reported to Boston for embarkation. My family wanted me to tell her
28 personally. I put my sleuths to work and the next day I was told that our
29 mail courier service would go to that village every other morning and
30 return in the evening. The following day I spent with Eleanor. And
31 during the next 3 weeks I saw her frequently. I requested transfer from the
32 rehabilitation unit that I was assigned to, to a field or Evac hospital that
33 would go to France. This was a real problem. My CO was not willing to
34 release me. A few strings were pulled. I had learned by then to pull
35 ropes. And eventually I was to be transferred to the 130 Evacuation
36 Hospital and promoted to First Lieutenant.

37
38 D-Day, 6 June, 1944. We were awakened long before daylight to find the
39 skies overhead us black with aircraft literally wing tip to wing tip. We
40 knew that things were finally beginning to happen. I doubled my efforts
41 to make my orders for transfer effective at once. Time moved very slowly
42 when you wait and in the military one hurries up and waits a great deal.
43 Finally, in late July, I was sent to Blackpool only to learn that the 103rd
44 had departed. I went to London to find what their whereabouts was. And

1 it was not known. I should return to the previous unit to await further
2 instructions. Eventually, I went to Exeter and then was attached for
3 transportation purposes to an infantry regiment. In Southampton we were,
4 Southampton we were boarded on a British ship, the HMS [inaudible
5 19:25]. And imagine the surprise of the British Captain when he learned
6 that Lieutenant ANC was female and the only female on board. The
7 Captain moved in with the executive officer and for that night when we
8 anchored off the Isle of Wight I used the Captain's suite.
9

10 We landed on Omaha Beach on 5 August 1944 and I was attached to the
11 Battalion Aid Station until my hospital could be located. Again, I was the
12 only female. A group of chaplains escorted me to the latrine area on
13 demand standing guard for me. They also created a blanket tent for me for
14 my daily [helmet 20:08] bath. Several days later, Colonel Sullivan said
15 that they had located the 130 Evac at [inaudible 20:14] and assigned a
16 driver and ambulance to deliver me to my unit. When we reached
17 [inaudible 20:21], the hospital had moved on according to a Red Ball
18 Express driver. He said that there was a hospital unit setting up near
19 Remiremont and he did not know which one. But soon we were on our
20 way and we found that it was the 103rd. I was assigned to share a squad
21 tent with 4 other nurses. Met Captain Beth Veley, a survivor of Bataan.
22 She was our Chief Nurse and also Colonel Paul Martin our commanding
23 officer. Then I was taken to the operating tent where I met Major Graham
24 and Captain [McCuen 21:04], specialist [inaudible 21:05] and specialist
25 Smith. We were, I would be the scrub nurse on that team. The next
26 months were a haze of 12-hour shifts, fast tearing down, a truck ride a
27 quick setup and back to work. Ambulances were generally waiting for our
28 arrival at a new site. Five days was a long setup. A hundred or more
29 people were treated in the OR on a 24-hour basis every day in each area.
30 When we moved, our non-transportables were left with a holding
31 company. Generally sent ahead by the 106th. The next move, our holding
32 unit would take the non-transportables for the 106th and they would
33 leapfrog ahead. Thus, I was able to see my sister every 5 to 7 days as a
34 rule.
35

36 In mid-September of that year, we were in [inaudible 22:00] when because
37 of the demands of General Montgomery for increasing amounts of
38 supplies for his ongoing [inaudible 22:09] offensive, General Patton's
39 Third Army was stranded without gasoline or rations. This put us in a
40 holding pattern also. For weeks we waited. Then we were loaned to the
41 Seventh Army to support troops coming into Southern France from Italy.
42 In November, we were returned to General Patton's command and were
43 once again on the move every few days. Just before Christmas, we were
44 moving from Metz area to the Ardennes and then came the big German

1 offensive in Bastogne. We moved back into Luxembourg and were joined
2 by another hospital unit which had been evacuated from Belgium. And
3 how we worked. Bed check Charlie pulled a strafing run over the hospital
4 area every night. More propaganda than damage. If it wasn't propaganda,
5 he was a mighty lousy shot. Bastogne was liberated and we were moved
6 to Cologne and across the Rhine by air from Kassel Air Force Base to
7 Gottingen, Germany to be on hand when the American's and Russian's
8 met [inaudible 23:18] before takeoff from the airfield in Kassel with one
9 of the pilots killed, one plane put out of commission and one of our
10 medical corpsmen received a slight wound. On the Elbe River we
11 celebrated the end of the European war at least a week ahead of the troops
12 to the rear because we knew the Russian's had met us. We moved into
13 Czechoslovakia in time to see thousands of terrified Czechs moving
14 [inaudible 23:54] they could to leave the territory destined to be
15 controlled, [inaudible 23:58] to be controlled by the Russian's. The end of
16 the war held no trace of peace in their minds. They had been through this
17 before. They went west to be in the American zones as homeless
18 wanderers.

19
20 The next months gave me much free time. We had leaves to go to the
21 Riviera, to Rome, to London and to Paris. We were now having the grand
22 tour. In October, the 103rd was alerted for return to the United States and
23 to rooms we went. Then I learned that as regular Army my tour of
24 overseas duty had to be 30 months and I had less than 28. I was again a
25 free agent. I was assigned as Chief of OR to a station hospital in Bavaria
26 and enjoyed skiing and some of the most gorgeous country in all the
27 world.

28
29 February 1947, or 46. Operation to visit the United States. I was required
30 to sign a statement that I would not seek a stateside assignment nor release
31 from duty during that period of time. I had orders to report to Fort
32 Sheridan, Illinois for leave orders and to return there no later than 3 April
33 1945 for transportation back to Bavaria. While I was at my mother's in
34 Colorado Springs, Colorado, I received orders from the Medical
35 Department U.S. Army in Washington, D.C. to report on 14 April 1946 to
36 Percy Jones General Hospital in Battle Creek, Michigan. All previous
37 orders were cancelled. I was authorized to have personal equipment left in
38 Bavaria shipped to me at Percy Jones. When the time came, I found
39 myself first to travel by ground transport. Planes out of Denver had been
40 grounded by snow. I sent a telegram to the CO at Custer, Michigan and to
41 the Chief Nurse at Percy General advising them that I would be 12 hours
42 late in reporting. I arrived at Battle Creek Railroad Station to be met by
43 Margaret [Loman 26:17], Major Army Nurse Corps whom I had known at
44 Fort Ord. She informed me that the Chief Nurse was carrying me as an

1 AWOL since 30 March. They had orders from Fort Sheridan, Illinois
2 placing me on duty there at that date. I did never, I never did receive a
3 copy of those orders. The Chief Nurse and I were off to a bad start. I had
4 to see the Provost Marshall at Camp Custer. Both parties admitted
5 receiving my telegrams and that the Provost Marshall agreed that my
6 orders from Washington, D.C. held priority over those from Fort Sheridan.
7 The Chief Nurse never did expect, accept this explanation and we were at
8 sword-point the entire time I was there.
9

10 In mid-May after volunteering for every overseas assignment posted, I
11 finally had orders for Camp Stoneman, California for transport to Oahu,
12 Hawaii. Thank heavens. Seeing these young men after 2 years still
13 having surgery, still undergoing reconstruction and prosthesis
14 rehabilitation or psychiatric treatment was very, very hard to take. I would
15 go to my room in tears nearly every night and I was extremely depressed.
16 I needed to get away from Percy Jones, any work to be away from there.
17 My trip to Hawaii on the hospital ship [Thistle 27:51] [inaudible 27:53]
18 was pleasant and we had a brief stay in California. I was able to return to
19 San Francisco and to visit old friends. Duty at [Old Trooper Hospital
20 28:05] was a pleasure. I was assigned to acute, an acute postoperative
21 ward and critical care medical facility. In the next months, my ward
22 surgeon, Dr. James Connors from San Bernardino, California, and I set up
23 what would become a model of critical care units in the Army Hospitals.
24 There were the usual dances, dinner dates and movies. And then I was
25 notified that I should not be overseas. I did not, I had had enough months
26 served outside the continental United States to be back on the mainland. I
27 had to sign a waiver to remain in Hawaii. At a dance in September, I met
28 the young veteran then working for Civil Service whom I would marry a
29 year later. Before Christmas, he returned stateside and went to work as an
30 accountant for, in Salt Lake City for General Electric.
31

32 In the spring, I resigned my commission and came home. After waiting at
33 Hickam Air Force Base for space available on a military flight that never
34 materialized, I purchased a ticket and left for San Francisco via Pan Am
35 clipper. At Fort Mason, I was very quickly processed out. I was paid
36 travel pay and my home of records still listed in North Dakota and placed
37 on terminal leave orders until 14 August 1947. I was advised to see a VA
38 counselor when I got home. I must say that the advice given me by the
39 VA was bad, bad, bad. I was advised to take a payout on my National
40 Service Life Insurance. It would be too prohibitively expensive to convert
41 to a non-service policy. Boy was that wrong. I was also advised to apply
42 for employment insurance for the next 52 weeks. It was being done by
43 everyone, so I was told. I applied and was handed a bundle of nursing
44 jobs available in the state of Colorado. At that time, there were at least

1 2,000 openings and told to take my pick. I was back to work within 2
2 weeks and could have been employed the following day had I so desired.
3 Nurses were not really veterans per se and were not entitled to
4 employment insurance payments. These 2 bits of very bad advice were all
5 I ever received from the VA. It was only in listening to others and reading
6 that I learned of any of the other benefits to which I could be entitled.
7 There was of course the old double standard everywhere.
8

9 I was married in September and a wife did not leave the hearth and home
10 to go to school in some distant place. It was off to work in the community
11 but approval of school elsewhere was not looked upon with favor. I never
12 did use the educational benefits. I did get a payoff on my insurance and I
13 received a very nice veteran's benefit from the State of North Dakota. To
14 me, there were few adjustments to make to military service. I had grown
15 up during the depression, lived through the Dust Bowl years of North
16 Dakota, 3 years of nursing training when all students were firmly
17 controlled. The terminology was no challenge. I loved history and
18 logistics so that was easy. The lack of freedom was not, was none
19 existent. We had had far more restrictions in nurses training. Perhaps the
20 most unpopular regulation was the one later retracted forbidding married
21 nurses from active duty. And of course, the marked differences in
22 promotion and assignment that were made between regular Army and the
23 personnel of the United States Army Reserve.
24

25 When I was out of the service, I returned to civilian nursing and the next
26 35 years I worked in various fields. Surgery, emergency room, obstetrics,
27 childcare, allergy, blood banking and office nursing. Even had a 2-year
28 stint as, in an outpatient clinic as a civil service nurse on the Island of
29 Guam. My husband had been recalled to active duty in January 1949 and
30 retired in 1964. I worked whenever, wherever he was assigned when
31 possible. We had a son and years later became the guardian of a 14-year-
32 old niece. Our son is a graduate of the Coast Guard Academy and a career
33 officer and our daughter is a registered nurse. We have 3 delightful
34 grandchildren and I retired in 1982. I still work as a volunteer 1 day a
35 week at a military hospital as an aide in the recovery room. In 1941, I
36 tried to become a member of the VFW and was told I would have to join
37 the auxiliary with the veteran's wives. Women were not veterans. I was, I
38 have never joined any veteran's organizations. If I wasn't equal then, I'm
39 not equal now. I'm a member of WOSL in the retired Army Nurse Corps.
40 I had not enrolled as a reservist on becoming a civilian because they
41 would not accept mothers with small children. Later to stay with an Army
42 hospital unit, I would have had to drive 60+ miles on canyon roads at
43 night and weekends or I could transfer to the Air Force. I was stubborn. I
44 was Army and so I lost out again. Never have I regretted 1 hour of my

1 service time. It was a period of challenge, value and hard work. It was
2 worthwhile. I would never want to do it again because I pray never to see
3 another need for it. Not for me. Not for anyone else ever, ever again.
4

5 In 1951, or 1950, while I was working in the State of Idaho and my
6 husband was in England with the Strategic Air Command, I received a
7 letter asking about my availability from the Army Nurse Corps. I wrote
8 back and told them that I would gladly return to active duty except that I
9 had a 2-year-old son, and the only way I could accept active duty at that
10 time would be if I were allowed on-base housing and be able to have a
11 fulltime sitter with me. I received a very nice thank-you note from the
12 Army Nurse Corps informing me that nurses did not live in on-base
13 housing nor did they have dependents living with them. The only way that
14 I could return to active duty would be to find someone stateside with
15 whom I could leave my son and be assigned to wherever they wished to
16 send me. If I were assigned at a stateside base, I could have off-duty
17 quarters, or I could rent an off-base apartment for my son and his sitter
18 and I could visit them whenever it was convenient. But I could not live
19 with them at that time. Today, that has changed and changed a great deal.
20 Today, you see nurses in the service with small children. You see nurses
21 in the service who are pregnant. You see nurses who are married and
22 continue on active duty. These discrepancies were hard to take when we
23 were in the service. They're even harder to take in retrospect. I do find
24 however by reading a paper recently that one area in which discrimination
25 is still very, very marked is that of fraternization between the officers and
26 the enlisted men, or enlisted personnel. This is particularly true in the
27 Marine Corps. I read just the other day where an officer had been
28 dismissed from the service because he had dated an enlisted woman in the
29 Marine Corps and then she had been court-martialed rather than being
30 allowed to resign. She is fighting it. I hope she wins.
31

32 I did not have an interviewer for this particular tape because I live a long
33 ways from where the unit as a whole lives. Therefore, it would be very
34 inconvenient for me to try to get together with another group of people to
35 be interviewed and to have the history done. I hope that this will be
36 satisfactory for your purposes. Once again, this is a tape made by Neola
37 A. Spackman, Army Nurse Corps. Dates of service April 1941 to April
38 1947.
39

40 I realize that I did not say anything about the uniforms that were later
41 issued to us. Prior to going overseas in October 1943, we were issued a
42 green uniform of a different type of material than the blues had been.
43 They had khaki colored shirts and ties and brown shoes. We were given a
44 different type of cap and an overseas cap which we wore more than we did

1 anything else. We were also issued a helmet, seersucker uniforms which
2 consisted of a wraparound-type of dress, slacks and bush-type jackets. We
3 were given field jackets with a fur lining or blanket lining to wear in cold
4 weather. We were allowed to purchase for our own use a regulation-type
5 officers overcoat which was a very good-looking garment. We were
6 issued a dark green cape or rather some of us were. I understand many of
7 the nurses never did receive a cape. These uniforms were designed or re-
8 designed by the Army Nurse Corps after the advent of the WAAC because
9 Hattie Carnegie had personally designed the uniforms for the WAAC at
10 the, uh, request of Oveta Culp Hobby who was the head of the WAAC at
11 that time. It then was so evident that the nurse's uniforms were World
12 War I vintage that, uh, it became more or less mandatory for them to come
13 up with a new type of uniform. There was very little change in the styling
14 from what the blues had been. And it was not until after the end of World
15 War II, in 1949, that the, um, nurses were actually given a classy-looking
16 uniform by standards of the time and this also was, uh, designed by Hattie
17 Carnegie. We were also issued, prior to going overseas, fatigue uniforms
18 which was a, a pair of slacks or pants and a jacket. We got several pair of
19 these. We were given long-legged underwear and long-sleeved
20 underwear, high top boots, a helmet made of steel with a liner to wear
21 under it. The liner became our everyday headgear. During our time in
22 England, we were permitted to purchase at the, uh, the officer's clothing
23 store dark green slacks and shirts to match which we wore with beige, uh,
24 ties and our field caps and field jackets. This was a very classy-looking
25 uniform for more or less dressy purposes. Eisenhower jackets designed,
26 uh, were tailored at our own expense from other uniform jackets to match,
27 to go with the type of jacket that General Eisenhower wore, the short version.
28 This was our dress uniform during the war years because skirts were very
29 impractical getting in and out of trucks. We wore fatigues more often than
30 we wore anything else. We wore high top boots and it was a rare occasion
31 when we wore shoes. The boots were even part of the Class A, the dress
32 uniform which was the slacks and shirt in the dark green flannel materials.
33 After the war was over, and I received by orders to go to the Tropics, I
34 was permitted to buy a beige uniform which was a 2-piece suit with a
35 white shirt and a black tie. It had the usual maroon piping but was a very
36 fine material. It was, it was a tailor-made uniform that I purchased with
37 my own money. There also was a beige shirtwaist dress that we could
38 purchase to wear not as a Class A uniform but as an off day, off-duty
39 dress. Because at that time we were still not being allowed to wear
40 civilian clothes any place except to formal events at the officer's club in
41 the evenings.
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I shall finally close this tape now after 2 or 3 false starts and a number of stops and starts again. I hope that this is satisfactory for your purposes.
Thank you.