

SOPHIE STEFFER

Denver, Colorado Unit

Transcript of an Oral History Interview

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Sophie SteFFer

PREFACE

This transcript is the product of a tape-recorded interview conducted on 1 March, 198E, For the Women's Overseas Service League.

Signed, dated agreements of release and biographical information accompany the original cassette.

*Transcribed by Patricia Siggers
Lansing, Michigan*

1 May, 1988

SOPHIE STEFFER

0 *Denver Unit*

MB : What is your name?

4 *SS: fly name is Sophie Steffer.*

NB: When did you Join the Denver Unit of WOSL?

B *SS: I Joined the Denver Unit in 1950.*

MB: What branch of the service did you serve in?

B *SS: I Joined the Army Nurse Corps.*

MB: Did you volunteer?

10 *SS: Yes, I did.*

MB: Why did you volunteer?

12 *SS: By the patriotic Feeling that existed at that time, I had*
 the Feeling oF being leFt behind. When other nurses were
14 *joining through the Red Cross, I was declared essential*
 in the civilian hospital. ThereFore, my application was
16 *rejected by Washington For two years.*

MB : What did you do beFore you came into the Army Nurse
10 *Corps?*

B0 SS: I took my nurses training at the New Asbury Hospital in
Minneapolis; a course in operating room technique at the
EB Michael Reese Hospital in Chicago; and then, before I
went into the service, I worked as superintendent of
a private hospital in New York City.

B4 MB: What did you do in the Army Nurse Corps?

BG SS: In the service, I worked mostly in the operating room,
and occasionally in the delivery and labor rooms.

MB: How long were you in the Army?

BB SS: I was in the Army for twenty years.

MB: Where did your travels take you?

30 SS: I went to India during the last part of the war; and to
the Philippines, Germany, and Japan with the occupation
3B forces.

MB: What kind of housing did you have when you were in the
34 service?

SS: In India, we lived in contonment-type houses with
36 thatched roofs, and screened windows and doors, and
cement floors. They were comfortable except for the
38 termites and bugs. During the rainy season, the water
came through the roof. Our quarters in the Philippines
40 were Quonset hut-type, and comfortable; but during

typhoon season, we moved into more solid quarters. The
42 quarters in Germany and Japan were apartment-type,
with two or three nurses living in each apartment.

44 MB: What kind of medical care did you get when you were
in the Army?

46 SS: I had good medical care when I needed it.

MB: What kind of uniforms did you wear?

4B SS: During the war, we wore regulation uniforms both on and
off duty and during the occupation, we wore our
civilian
50 dress off duty.

MB: Tell me some of your experiences?

5S SS: There were many experiences. I will mention two. When
the war was over in India, I was sent to "DY" in
54 Calcutta. There we processed all the Americans who were
prisoners of Japan. These were soldiers, sailors, and
56 missionaries; and all other civilians ever imprisoned.
The largest number of sailors on my ward came from
the
58 Battleship Houston, who had been prisoners for
four years.

50 In the Philippines we tried to help the leper colony
by purchasing beds and other items for them.

*In Germany, one Christmas I recall; we adopted a
small town and exchanged Christmas gifts with them,
and in*

64 return, we were treated to a wonderful Christmas program.
 It was all in German.

66 MB: What required the greatest adjustment for you when
 you went into the Army Nurse Corps?

68 SS: Learning to salute, and keeping the enlisted
 personnel ranks separated.

70 MB: What did you do after your Army Nurse Corps service
 was concluded?

72 SS: I worked in a nursing home for a few months, and
 then took retirement.

74 MB: What has being a member of WOSL meant to you? Any
 thoughts you would like to share with us about belonging
76 to WOSL?

 SS: I enjoy being a member of WOSL. Our members are of
78 various groups of Red Cross and enlisted women. I think
 it is important for many retired, single women—many
 that

80 do not have relatives close by, and have someone that
 cares and when they become ill, who will see that
 they

82 are not left all alone.

 The conventions are always enjoyable and something to
84 look forward to each year.

MB: Thank you very much, Sophie.

SOPHIE STEFFER, Denver Unit

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Transcribed by Patricia Siggers

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