

**Interview of Dorothy Early and Sarah Leach
on their service in the U.S. Army Nurse Corp during WWII**

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5Interviewer: [00:02] This week, uh, you've probably seen and heard a lot about what was
6 going on 40 years ago. And I have two ladies in the studio this morning. I've
7 talked with one of them before, and this is my first opportunity to sit down
8 face to face with Dorothy Early, who is the president of the Kansas City unit
9 of the Women's Overseas Service League, and Sarah Leach, who is an [Iron
10 00:27] Member. And Dorothy and Sarah were both nurses assigned to the 77th
11 Evac Hospital in Germany on V-E Day, 40 years ago. Welcome to you.
12 Thanks for being here. Open your microphones and tell me some things about
13 this.
14
15 [00:41] Dorothy, you brought this wonderful book this morning, *Medicine*
16 *Under Canvas*, it's called. It's a war journal of the 77th Evac Hospital, and I
17 had just a couple of minutes to look at, at some of the things that were going
18 on. I'm astounded at the amount of work that you all had to do, the number of
19 casualties that were coming in just prior to V-E Day. Seventy-one hundred in
20 a – [audio cut off].
21
22Dorothy Early: Well there was a lot. I think the last of the war. At this time, we were taking
23 care of German prisoners.
24
25Interviewer: Mm-hm.
26
27Dorothy Early: And they just admitted anybody that was sitting on the curbing, they emptied
28 their mental hospitals and everything, and since we were there, we were to
29 take care of them.
30
31Interviewer: [01:24] Where were you located exactly?
32
33Dorothy Early: Well it was Munchen-Gladbach in Germany.
34
35Interviewer: Uh-huh.
36
37Dorothy Early: And, of course, we'd already been overseas three years, and they kept sayin'
38 the war will be over and finally it was.
39
40Interviewer: Finally, it was. [01:37] Sarah, do you remember how you got the news that the
41 war was over? Do you remember what was happening and what kind of
42 atmosphere there was for you?
43
44Sarah Leach: Yes, I recall very well.

1
2Interviewer: [01:48] What was going on?
3
4Sarah Leach: We were all expecting it because we had gone across Germany pretty rapidly
5 and had been told to wait for the Russians. We had one nurse with us who was
6 a German-Jewish extraction and who had gotten out of Germany, and I
7 remember he waking me and asking me – poking a bottle of liquor in my face.
8
9Interviewer: [laughter]
10
11Sarah Leach: “Have a drink. Germany has fallen.” And that’s what I recall about it.
12
13Interviewer: [02:23] Was there a lot of celebration?
14
15Sarah Leach: Within our ranks –
16
17Interviewer: Mm-hm.
18
19Sarah Leach: Of course.
20
21Interviewer: Yeah.
22
23Sarah Leach: It [wouldn’t 02:31] – there was a great deal of celebration. We were glad it
24 was over. We didn’t know what our future would be. We had been told that
25 we might go on to the CBI. We’d hoped we would at least be allowed to stop
26 at home. Someone told us they wouldn’t permit that ‘cause they’d never be
27 able to get us together again.
28
29Interviewer: Hm. [02:53] Now, what’s the CBI?
30
31Sarah Leach: China Burma India Theater.
32
33Interviewer: Ah, okay.
34
35Sarah Leach: On the other side of the world.
36
37Interviewer: [02:59] So what happened for you then? Did you stay in Germany a while
38 longer and then move on?
39
40Sarah Leach: We stayed in Germany. Apparently, Headquarters could not decide what to do
41 with us. And they pulled us back to France to wait. We were not too far from
42 Reims, and we waited in the camp there. Wasn’t that called Camp San
43 Antonio?
44

1Dorothy Early: You mean [Meslay the camp 03:24]?
2
3Sarah Leach: Yes.
4
5Dorothy Early: [Meslay 03:26].
6
7Sarah Leach: We were near Camp San Antonio.
8
9Dorothy Early: Mm-hm.
10
11Interviewer: Mm-hm.
12
13Sarah Leach: To wait for their dispensation of us. And that's where we were when V-J Day
14came.
15
16Interviewer: [03:36] How many of you were there at that time?
17
18Sarah Leach: A full complement of nurses was 52. We didn't always have a full
19complement. I believe we were close to it, if not at it, at the time the war
20ended.
21
22Interviewer: [03:50] What made you decide to go?
23
24Sarah Leach: I was single. I had no dependents. I could go, and many nurses could not go
25because we got very little pay. We did not have a full rank in the army. We
26got about half the pay of a second lieutenant in the army. So not many could
27go. Many of our male members of our family were going including my
28brother, so I went. There was nothing really to hold me, but it – even though
29my salary wasn't great at that time, the army paid me even less.
30
31Interviewer: Yeah. [04:30] Dorothy, how about you? What prompted you to go in the first
32place?
33
34Dorothy Early: Well I was doing public health, which isn't hospital work. And I thought that
35would be my life's work, but I had a girlfriend that worked at Providence
36Hospital, and she talked to me. She said, "They're forming a unit and we'll
37really – you'll enjoy it." And I said, "But I don't wanna go alone." She said,
38"Oh, we'll all stay together." Well she never did get in. She ate bananas and
39tried to gain weight and never made it, but I got in the 77th.
40
41Interviewer: [05:01] And you went from where to where as you got started? Do you
42remember?
43
44Dorothy Early: We went to Fort Leonard Wood.

1
2Interviewer: Mm-hm.
3
4Dorothy Early: I was the first nurse there from the 77th. And they asked me, “Do you wanna
5 work or would you like to wait?” And I didn’t know that you could sit around,
6 so I said, “Oh, I’ll work!” [laughter]
7
8Interviewer: [laughter]
9
10Dorothy Early: But it was very interesting. I wouldn’t’ve missed it for anything.
11
12Interviewer: Now, that’s looking back. [05:25] I’ll bet there were times along the way
13 when you felt, “What have I gotten myself into?”
14
15Dorothy Early: Well we couldn’t complain. The patients were so seriously injured that, you
16 know, how could you complain when you knew they were in much worse
17 shape. And then the sergeant in the orthopedic department said, “I don’t
18 wanna hear any complains. You volunteered.”
19
20Interviewer: [laughter] [You said 05:48], “But, but, no, wait! I had a girlfriend who twisted
21 my arm and she didn’t make it, and here I am!” That’s great. [05:54] So you
22 trained at Fort Leonard Wood and then went overseas directly?
23
24Dorothy Early: We went to Indiantown Gap in civilian clothes, and we got our uniforms and
25 things on the docks. We didn’t know where we were going, really.
26
27Interviewer: [06:07] And they shipped you out?
28
29Dorothy Early: Mm-hm. Went to England and stayed there. Was that Thanksgiving Day that
30 we arrived? No?
31
32Sarah Leach: About. I think it was Nov – or we arrived in August.
33
34Dorothy Early: August the 5th.
35
36Sarah Leach: England.
37
38Dorothy Early: We had a luxury liner that was really elegant. It hadn’t been changed, and, uh,
39 we were in a convoy, and it was exciting. Of course, anybody from Kansas
40 hadn’t seen that much water ever, but, uh – well I guess it got worse after that,
41 all these ships that we were on, but that was a luxury liner, the very first one.
42
43Interviewer: [06:46] When did the two of you meet? At the very beginning of all this?
44

1 Sarah Leach: I think we met in Fort Leonard Wood, though we both were from Hutchinson,
2 Kansas.
3
4 Interviewer: [06:56] Is that right?
5
6 Sarah Leach: Mm-hm.
7
8 Interviewer: [06:58] And So it was after you got to the fort that you met?
9
10 Sarah Leach: Uh, yes, in Fort Leonard Wood.
11
12 Interviewer: Uh-huh.
13
14 Sarah Leach: And, of course, we were together from then on along with all the others.
15
16 Interviewer: [07:07] How much time did you do altogether in the service?
17
18 Sarah Leach: It was over three years. About three years and three months, wasn't it?
19
20 Dorothy Early: Well we were overseas 37 months.
21
22 Sarah Leach: Overseas 37 months.
23
24 Interviewer: Mm-hm.
25
26 Sarah Leach: And actually, we were only in Fort Leonard Wood six weeks. Then after we
27 came back, we were to have reassignment, and before the time for us to report
28 to another camp came up, we got our conditional discharge in case they didn't
29 need us. And they never did.
30
31 Interviewer: [07:43] They never needed ya?
32
33 Sarah Leach: Hm-mm.
34
35 Interviewer: [07:44] Were you relieved?
36
37 Sarah Leach: I, I presumed so because we had other things to do. *I* had other things to do
38 with my life, and I wanted to get on it.
39
40 Interviewer: [07:53] By that time you were, you were beyond the stage of being single and
41 footloose and fancy free? You wanted to get on?
42
43 Sarah Leach: I was still single, but I had, uh, started work on a master's degree before I
44 went, and now I wished to go back and finish.

1
2Interviewer: [08:07] Did you?
3
4Sarah Leach: Yes, I did.
5
6Interviewer: Very good. Very good. Compare that period of time in your life with anything
7 else that has happened. [08:20] I mean, is there anything else that compares in
8 terms of the amount of experience and the, the new things that happened and
9 came your way?
10
11Dorothy Early: I don't think so. Um, that's why people in the United States or people that
12 haven't been in a war situation, they really don't understand it. And I think if
13 I'd have seen *M*A*S*H*, maybe I wouldn't have gone.
14
15Interviewer: [laughter]
16
17Dorothy Early: Because I remember one time in Africa, they said the, um, paratroopers were
18 in our area and they thought that my tent made and I should move into the big
19 tent. And I said, "Oh, no. We're real safe." We tied the rope on the inside, and
20 we went on to sleep. The next morning, it was just that the Arabs had stolen
21 our Geneva cross, the sheets we had out on the pasture.
22
23Interviewer: Oh.
24
25Dorothy Early: And there really weren't paratroopers, but we were sure we were very secure.
26
27Interviewer: Do you feel – Well you said if you had seen *M*A*S*H*, you probably
28 wouldn't have gone.
29
30Dorothy Early: [laughter] Oh, I don't know.
31
32Interviewer: [09:17] When you see things like that, you know, this is all foreign to me. The
33 only thing that I know about this time is what my parents have told me and the
34 experiences they went through. And I think there – of course, today there are
35 so many of us who don't know what it was like during World War II, what it
36 was like to come home, what it was like to have friends and family fighting a
37 war that the country believed in.
38
39Dorothy Early: Oh, yes.
40
41Sarah Leach: There was a great deal of loyalty at that time. I, I am afraid that we're missing
42 some of that now.
43
44Interviewer: [09:47] Some of the patriotism is gone, isn't it?

1
2Sarah Leach: At times. I think so. And we're making a great deal of little things. I've been
3 particularly aware of this with the situation over Bitburg, which to my way of
4 thinking really doesn't matter 40 years after those people are dead.
5
6Interviewer: Uh-huh. Interesting, interesting.
7
8Sarah Leach: And if we *really* were thinking about loyalty to our country, I don't think that
9 would make *one bit* of difference one way or the other.
10
11Interviewer: It's, it's something that Janet and I were talking – Janet's my producer, and
12 we were talking earlier this week, I guess, one of the – or last week, one of the
13 articles that came out, and it just seems sort of nitpicky to me.
14
15Sarah Leach: Yes, I, I agree. I agree.
16
17Interviewer: You know, little bits and pieces of information that are coming out and are
18 being sort of blown up and – I guess, we have a right to know those things,
19 and is not that I, I wouldn't – but it – [we seem to nitpick 10:34].
20
21Sarah Leach: Those people, those people were misinformed. They, they *really* were. I saw
22 that in the patients we had, German prisoners.
23
24Interviewer: Mm-hm.
25
26Sarah Leach: They really didn't know as much of what was going on as we did. And
27 possibly, had we been in that situation, we might've been SS troopers too.
28
29Interviewer: Mm-hm.
30
31Sarah Leach: At least that's my feeling.
32
33Interviewer: That same kind of loyalty.
34
35Sarah Leach: Yes.
36
37Interviewer: Present in a different way, a different culture.
38
39Sarah Leach: Right.
40
41Interviewer: There was something in the, in the book that I did see here before we got
42 started about the German prisoners, and I wanna see if I can find it again and
43 share that with them. It was a quote about Hitler scraping the bottom of the

1 barrel, that, uh, the prisoners that you saw, some were on, were on crutches,
2 some were –
3
4Dorothy Early: Oh, yes.
5
6Interviewer: Blind, some were deaf. I can't put my [finger on it 11:30].
7
8Sarah Leach: I had one that was dying of cancer.
9
10Interviewer: Tuberculosis patients.
11
12Dorothy Early: I know. We had one with a long, white beard. But right at the last, we
13 accepted prisoners of war from a German camp. And I was the only nurse on
14 duty, and I walked across the field to a burnt down factory, and our men had
15 prepared it for their own use for the Germans. There was one German ward
16 boy, and the rest of them were prisoners. And as they marched in in platoons,
17 they didn't help one another. Americans would help the sickest but not the
18 Germans. And that night, I gave, um, uh, sulfaguanidine, which was a
19 medicine for diarrhea. And we'd give them their pills and a cup of tea. And I
20 remember, uh, the medicine came in large bottles from the pharmacy, and
21 there was 1000 in each bottle. And we were just starting on the seventh bottle,
22 so that's the biggest dose of medicine I ever gave at one time.
23
24Interviewer: Oh.
25
26Dorothy Early: We'd count'm out, and the ward boy said, "Hand me the medicine so you
27 won't [get lice 12:40]."
28
29Interviewer: Oh, for heaven's sake.
30
31Dorothy Early: He could speak English. And I remember one German dropped a pill and I
32 *insisted* he pick it up. I said, "You know, American sailors brought that across
33 to you. Don't you destroy that." [laughter]
34
35Interviewer: [laughter]
36
37Dorothy Early: He popped it in his mouth and he took it. He took it.
38
39Interviewer: We need to take a quick break, and we'll come back and talk some more about
40 this. Dorothy Early and Sarah Leach are with us. Both were nurses assigned in
41 the 77th Evac Hospital in Germany when armistice was signed. And they're
42 here and available to you. If you have memories you wanna share with them
43 are questions you'd like to ask about their experience, please feel free to call

1 us here, 576-7781 is the phone number, and will return with you shortly on
2 News Talk 81, KCMO.
3
4 Sarah Leach and Dorothy early are in the studio with us. And Sarah and
5 Dorothy were with the 77th Evac Hospital – [13:30] is that the way to say that?
6 Okay, for little better than three years, some 40-plus years ago. Now if you
7 count back, it's little more than 40 years ago. [13:39] Does it seem possible? I
8 bet the time has just flown? 40 years, that way, there you go. [laughter]
9
10Dorothy Early: Well it has for me. I can't believe that it really has been that long.
11
12Interviewer: [13:52] Sarah, how about you?
13
14Sarah Leach: Well this happens with all of life.
15
16Interviewer: Yeah?
17
18Sarah Leach: Doesn't seem but yesterday when I did many things that I did during World
19 War II and even prior to that. Life goes pretty rapidly.
20
21Interviewer: Mm, it does. You mentioned something about going in and the pay scale for
22 you is that you did not have full army status and nurses [inaudible] 14:14].
23
24Sarah Leach: That's right.
25
26Interviewer: [14:15] Now, is that – was that true throughout the time that you were
27 serving?
28
29Sarah Leach: No. The WACs were formed, I believe, in Iowa first by Mrs. Oveta Culp
30 Hobby, and she was quite, um, an autocratic lady and a very vocal lady. She
31 felt that her WACs should have the same army rank that male members of the
32 farm, of the army, the armed services had. And she got it. And when they, she
33 got it for the WACs, she also got it for us, and it was retroactive. So we were
34 in Africa where we had nothing to buy and we got – I don't remember,
35 must've been \$300 or \$400 in cash.
36
37Interviewer: Oh.
38
39Sarah Leach: In Francs.
40
41Dorothy Early: [Isn't that funny 15:09].
42
43Sarah Leach: At that time, back pay.
44

1Dorothy Early: I thought the reason they wanted us to be full officers was so they get an extra
2 liquor ration. [laughter]
3
4Interviewer: [laughter]
5
6Sarah Leach: [laughter]
7
8Interviewer: [15:20] What came with the status then?
9
10Dorothy Early: Oh, we had to salute.
11
12Sarah Leach: Additional pay.
13
14Interviewer: More money
15
16Sarah Leach: More money [is a big thing 15:28].
17
18Interviewer: Had to salute.
19
20Interviewer: Liquor rations. [We earned this one 15:29].
21
22Dorothy Early: I think we got about \$18 or \$19 extra for being overseas, a month.
23
24Interviewer: A month.
25
26Sarah Leach: In addition to a second lieutenants' pay. Most of us at that time were second
27 lieutenants. As I recall, the overseas pay for a second lieutenant was about
28 \$150, wasn't it? And our pay as Red Cross nurses, which we were labeled
29 before, was 60 or 65. I've forgotten which.
30
31Interviewer: [15:57] And that's \$65 or \$60 a month?
32
33Sarah Leach: Mm-hm. That's right.
34
35Interviewer: [16:02] Now, did you need money most of the time?
36
37Sarah Leach: Not there, no. We didn't need it. There wasn't much of any place where we
38 could spend it. Buy a few eggs from the Arabs and, or a chicken and that was
39 about it. But most of us had a fair-sized allotment being sent home in order to
40 pick up our, you know, pick up our lives when we got back. Many of our unit
41 went back to school, if not for more work in nursing, more work in some other
42 career choice. Some of them changed careers.
43

1 So the money was being used. And some of'm were assisting other members
2 of the family with their money, which they had been doing in civilian life.
3 Younger siblings going to school. One nurse I know, had, uh, uh, parents who
4 were ill and in trouble, and most of her money was going to assist them. So it
5 wasn't that we [were spending it 17:04], but we weren't spending all our own
6 money in civilian life.
7
8Interviewer: Yeah.
9
10Dorothy Early: Hopefully.
11
12Interviewer: [17:10] What were the – I, I hate to say a normal day, but what was the
13 routine like? What time did you get up? What kinds of things did you do?
14 Were they long days? I bet they were given some of the numbers I've seen.
15
16Dorothy Early: They were 12-hour duty almost all the time, even when we weren't real busy,
17 they never would cut the hours.
18
19Sarah Leach: And we'd go to 18 hours when we were busy, when we were taking care of
20 battle casualties.
21
22Interviewer: Mm-hm. [17:34] Lots of those times? Lots of times with a lot of battle
23 casualties for you?
24
25Sarah Leach: Well we have seven battle scars, so –
26
27Interviewer: [laughter]
28
29Sarah Leach: You know, it'd depend on the length of time that the battle lasted. But, um, we
30 emptied out patients every morning and every night. So the night nurse and
31 the day nurse in that area would work. The day nurse would come on early.
32 The night nurse would stay on late, until they had all patients loaded on the
33 planes or trains that could go out. And then, hopefully, we'd get them pretty
34 well loaded before the ambulances would be coming in with new ones.
35
36Interviewer: [18:14] And that was your job then? You took care of men as they came from
37 the Battle Aid Stations?
38
39Sarah Leach: Right.
40
41Interviewer: And then send them on to –
42
43Sarah Leach: That's right.
44

1Interviewer: Uh, major hospitals, or better hospitals, wherever they could go?
2

3Sarah Leach: You see general hospitals in the rear, sometimes station hospitals, and many
4 of them were eventually coming home to the United States.
5

6Interviewer: [18:33] What was your job, Sarah?
7

8Sarah Leach: I was, um, I guess, you would call it a general duty nurse. I was in a tent, or
9 tents as they were lashed together at times to make them bigger, with
10 corpsmen working with me. And, um, well that's what I did. To care of the –
11

12Interviewer: [18:56] Giving medication, changing bandages?
13

14Sarah Leach: Whatever needed to be done. Yeah –
15

16Interviewer: Whatever it was.
17

18Sarah Leach: Cleaning up. Um, uh –
19

20Interviewer: [19:05] Did you do any surgery?
21

22Sarah Leach: Putting pressure on them. No, we did no surgery. We did start IVs, which was
23 new. Nurses didn't do that then in civilian life. Of course, that's old hat now.
24 Many of the things that are being done in nursing today, which are much more
25 advanced than they were prior to World War II, started during World War II,
26 even early ambulation of patients.
27

28Interviewer: [19:30] Is that right? That was – prior to that time, that was not something a
29 nurse could do?
30

31Sarah Leach: It wasn't something we did with patients. We kept 'm in bed so long that many
32 of 'm did get emboli. And we found, because we had to get them up in the
33 army, they did better. So we started doing that in civilian life for many
34 patients who'd had injuries of some kind or surgery.
35

36Interviewer: [19:54] Now, you came back and got your master's?
37

38Sarah Leach: Yes.
39

40Interviewer: [19:57] And continued to nurse for quite some time thereafter? Did you stay
41 in the profession?
42

43Sarah Leach: I retired seven years ago.
44

1 Interviewer: Stayed in the profession. [laughter]
2
3 Sarah Leach: I stayed in it.
4
5 Interviewer: [20:08] Dorothy, how about you?
6
7 Dorothy Early: Well I was a nurse anesthetist, and I got to go on a surgical team, and, uh, we
8 were sent on. They call it detached service, but I always called it distinguished
9 service. [laughter]
10
11 Interviewer: [laughter]
12
13 Dorothy Early: And there was a nurse and two enlisted men and two doctors. And we were
14 gone for a month, yeah, when I think we'd been pulled back to Belgium to
15 rest. So that was kinda different. But I enjoyed givin' the anesthetics. And, uh,
16 I didn't talk to my patients as much since I was in surgeries. You [wrote it on
17 a board 20:42].
18
19 Interviewer: Mm-hm.
20
21 Dorothy Early: But, um, I remember trying to put the German prisoners to sleep. And I was
22 raised in a small German town, and I knew how to speak a little Eng –, uh,
23 German. And So I'd use about five phrases, and it was Low Dutch where I
24 was raised. I'd say, "[Brauchst du narkose 21:01]?" And they'd nod.
25 "[Brauchst du schtechen 21:04]? [Brauchst du schlafen 21:09]," which meant
26 sleep, [the way I say it 21:12], and then, "[Brauchst du okay 21:13]?" And
27 he'd say, "Okay." And I'd use the [panthenol 21:17], and, you know, put him
28 right to sleep, but you were to get the confidence of the patients, no matter if
29 they were American or German. So –
30
31 Interviewer: [21:26] Was there any difference in the way they were treated, Americans and
32 Germans?
33
34 Dorothy Early: Not in our hospital. We did have a ward that Dorothy Osgood was telling
35 about. One of our nurses, uh, they had a German doctor, and this patient had a
36 very severe illness and wasn't going to likely live. And he wanted to give him
37 an overdose so they could use the bed. And she said, "We don't do that in our
38 hospital." And our own doctor came on the next morning and had a very
39 serious talk with this German doctor, "That is not the way the Americans treat
40 patients."
41
42 Interviewer: [22:05] So there was significant difference –
43
44 Dorothy Early: Oh, yes.

1
2Interviewer: In between the American treatment and the German treatment? [22:10] Did
3 you have much of an opportunity to observe how the Germans were treating
4 their patients in the time that you were there? Or just really after you saw the
5 prisoners you could, you could see?
6
7Dorothy Early: They were just different. They were raised to be on their own and be
8 independent, and they weren't buddies that I observed. Not in the – the one
9 night, they were all wandering around, and there were 40 patients, and I often
10 did night duty. And they didn't seem to settle down. I knew some of them
11 [inaudible 22:41], and I could understand that they were – by mainly by the
12 tone of their voice, they were upset. And I said, "All right. Everybody get to
13 bed. You'll get one blanket that's [going to 22:51] the Geneva Convention,
14 and I'm cold to, and so I don't want any more of this conversation. Everybody
15 get to their cot," because, you know, it kinda frightened me that they were all
16 standing around and really discussing things.
17
18Interviewer: Yeah.
19
20Dorothy Early: But I think they were kinda surprised I could understand a little –
21
22Interviewer: [laughter]
23
24Dorothy Early: Of German.
25
26Interviewer: Enough to stand your ground anyway.
27
28Dorothy Early: [Well not really 23:14].
29
30Interviewer: [23:16] Sarah, did something – was there something you wanted to add?
31
32Sarah Leach: I was just going to say I think there was quite a difference in the attitude of the
33 German physicians according to whether they were regular army or whether
34 they were civilians who had been drafted into the German army. Many of
35 those civilian doctors, or I should say several of them, were very hopeful that
36 as prisoners, they would get sent to the United States. They were wondering
37 how they could get here. And one young man I remember even said he was
38 not going to rest until he did after the war was over. So I think their attitude
39 was somewhat different.
40
41Interviewer: [23:56] They were surprised by the kindness that was apparent among the
42 Americans?
43

1 Sarah Leach: I think they were surprised by that. Also they had heard that the Center of
2 Learning for Medicine was in the United States, no longer in Austria, and that
3 was true.
4

5 Interviewer: We learned a lot of lessons in World War II about medicine. You were talking
6 about the ambulation, early ambulation of patients.
7

8 Sarah Leach: Yes. All was not lost.
9

10 Interviewer: Yes. We need to take another quick break. We'll do that and come back and
11 talk a bit more with Sarah Leach and Dorothy Early. Both were nurses
12 assigned to the 77th Evac Hospital. And we're available to you here, by 576-
13 7781 on News Talk 81.
14

15 And have been good enough to come in and talk with us today. It's a
16 fascinating conversation for me because I think many of us don't stop to
17 consider the number of women who were actively involved in the service and
18 in serving the troops during World War II. Dorothy and I met by phone, just
19 around Veterans Day last year when she called to talk about the Presidential
20 Proclamation for Women Veterans. Now, I hadn't heard anything about it, and
21 I'll bet most of you hadn't heard anything about it either. And So we're gonna
22 kinda right that wrong and talk about that a little bit. There is some
23 [movement afoot 25:17] to recognize women veterans [25:19] and there are
24 benefits to women veterans, which probably are not discussed very often,
25 huh?
26

27 Dorothy Early: Well that's very true. It was for recognition of women of all wars, and that's
28 why I was so disturbed, you know, that the first time in the history of the
29 United States. But we did get some publicity in Kansas. We went to the
30 governor office and had a proclamation signed with several representatives.
31 And then the different cities around were very generous. And I wrote all my
32 relatives, and they got their cities all stirred up.
33

34 Interviewer: [laughter]
35

36 Dorothy Early: But the main reason, we wanted to encourage any woman veteran that needs
37 help to realize that she can contact her service officer. They are not
38 necessarily near a VA Hospital. They might be in their own small town or
39 county seat.
40

41 Interviewer: Mm-hm.
42

1Dorothy Early: But there is help available, and, uh, they have – there’s even help to find the
2 records if you’ve lost your records. I know Senator Dole’s office in Kansas
3 will make a search and send you your records.
4

5Interviewer: Very good. Very good. So if, if there’s nothing in particular, if you can’t find
6 her service officer, you can contact your Congressional representative –
7

8Dorothy Early: Yes.
9

10Interviewer: Or your senator and –
11

12Dorothy Early: Right.
13

14Interviewer: Get some assistance through that.
15

16Dorothy Early: That’s true.
17

18Interviewer: [26:42] So help is available?
19

20Dorothy Early: Right.
21

22Interviewer: Okay. Tell you what, if you’ll slip their headphones on, you can do it this
23 way. We have Doris standing by on the phone. We’d like to take a minute and
24 it say good afternoon to her. Hi, Doris
25

26Doris: Hello. I am enjoying your fascinating guests, but – and I had two questions,
27 and then I will hang up and listen, [27:05] but I wondered if they knew [Betsy
28 27:04] Walker in the unit and if they know where she is today? And the other
29 thing, I wonder if they would discuss a little bit their experiences in the
30 Sicilian Campaign?
31

32Interviewer: Okay. Very good, Doris. [We’ll take care of those 27:19]. Thank you. 576-
33 7781 is the number here. You’re welcome to call with your questions. [27:24]
34 [Betsy] Walker?
35

36Sarah Leach: She lives in Lenexa. She’s doing well and she comes to a lot of our annual
37 reunions.
38

39Interviewer: Okay. [27:36] and how about your experiences in the Sicilian campaign?
40

41Sarah Leach: When we were in Sicily – by the time we reached Sicily, most of the
42 campaign in Sicily was over. And we were there for a mopping-up process.
43 We stayed in Licata, Sicily for a while, and as soon as patients there were able
44 to be shipped out, taken care of, and shipped someplace else, we were moved

1 up to Palermo where we were belted in tents on what was known as Mondello
2 Beach, waiting dispensation of the army as to what they were going to do with
3 us next. General Patton visited us there, and then we were sent on detached
4 service, at least some of us were, to assist station hospitals who were over and
5 who had a rather large workload. So we worked, not as the 77th Evac in
6 Palermo, but in a station hospital that was established there in the University
7 of Palermo until we left to go back out of the Mediterranean and go back up to
8 England.
9

10Interviewer: [28:52] What was Patton like?
11

12Sarah Leach: He was a showman. Had a great deal of devotion from his troops. He led
13 troops in battle. I think what he was best known for was that sometimes he
14 seemed to be almost inhumane in his treatment of them, but he drove them so
15 that, um, as he said, at least in driving them, they got through alive rather than
16 dead. [audio cut off]
17

18Dorothy Early: [Inaudible 29:21], and our uniforms looked so much better than the British,
19 um, women. So the Americans, you know, I thought of all the things we had it
20 best, even though we weren't at home.
21

22Interviewer: [29:35] Do you remember missing anything particularly, Sarah?
23

24Sarah Leach: I remember not liking Spam.
25

26Interviewer: [laughter]
27

28Sarah Leach: And fruit cocktail. To this day, I won't eat either one.
29

30Interviewer: [laughter]
31

32Sarah Leach: We had *lots* of that, and dried eggs. Everything was dried. Dried vegetables.
33

34Interviewer: We have –
35

36Sarah Leach: No fresh meat, except once in a while, once in maybe six months, some way
37 or other they'd get refrigeration through. We didn't have adequate
38 refrigeration to keep meat.
39

40Interviewer: Yeah. [30:11] Dorothy, you started to say something again?
41

42Dorothy Early: Well don't forget our C-rations. We had either hash or stew or beans, and you
43 could have one for a meal with crackers in a little tin. There were several
44 kinds of rations. A was a little nicer, and I don't know if there was a B, but we

1 had the C; the ones you carry in the field. And when we went from England to
2 Africa on board ship, they said to take enough for two or three days, and I
3 thought they were kidding. Where could I be that I wouldn't get any food?
4 But, you know, when I got to Africa, I didn't miss the food. [laughter]
5

6Interviewer: [20:51] Why's that?
7

8Dorothy Early: Oh, it was just difficult, you know. We landed and, I guess, our men had to
9 walk several miles, but they took us right into the port in a small boat. But the
10 port had been bombed, and all the ships were sunk in the harbor. So the big
11 ship liners couldn't come in to Oran Harbor.
12

13Interviewer: We talked about the camaraderie of the American soldiers. [31:16] How about
14 among the women?
15

16Dorothy Early: Oh, that was the same.
17

18Interviewer: [31:20] You took care of each other?
19

20Dorothy Early: Oh, yes. We're still, you know, real good friends. You had to like them, they
21 were there forever. [laughter]
22

23Interviewer: [laughter] [31:29] You better get along, huh? Too busy fighting the Germans
24 to fight each other?
25

26Dorothy Early: Well I think our group were more mature. We worked in other jobs. We
27 weren't just right out of training. And, um, nurses, I think, had it easier
28 because they had a job that they were trained and disciplined, you know, as a
29 nurse. And it is different. It does sort of help the rest of your life.
30

31Interviewer: Well good. I'm just delighted that you could come in on such short notice and
32 be with us today. It's fascinating for me, let's do this again.
33

34Sarah Leach: It's been a pleasure. Thank you.
35

36Dorothy Early: It has been. Thanks a lot.
37

38Interviewer: Sarah Leach, Dorothy Early, [both 32:07], thank you. [32:08] Gonna do
39 anything special to recognize the anniversary, 40 years?
40

41Dorothy Early: Well the only thing, we are hoping to have all the local branches of service of
42 woman veterans try to get together this November. And then we try to help in
43 the VA hospitals if there's assistance needed for woman veterans there.
44

1Interviewer: Good. Lemme know.
2
3Dorothy Early: Okay.
4
5Interviewer: If you need to –
6
7Dorothy Early: Mm-hm.
8
9Interviewer: Make some announcements here –
10
11Dorothy Early: Well thank you.
12
13Interviewer: About who to get in touch with.
14
15Dorothy Early: [Fine 32:35].
16
17Interviewer: We'll help you out with that.
18
19Dorothy Early: Okay.
20
21Interviewer: Well good. Thanks again. Sarah and Dorothy, both nurses assigned to the 77th
22 Evac Hospital were in Germany, um, V-E Day. Uh, you'll be hearing more. I
23 also recommend, too, the special issue of Life Magazine on World War II. If
24 we have time later this week, we'll book a *Between the Covers* of this
25 magazine and share some of that with you. In the meantime, relax. The news
26 is next. We'll return with [Billy Ramsberger 33:03] and talk about office
27 politics. That and more, on News Talk 81, KCMO.
28
29
30/tl