

EUELYN BARBIER

Denver, Colorado Unit

Transcript of an Oral History Interview

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Evelyn Barbier

PREFACE

This transcript is the product of a tape-recorded interview conducted on 4 March, 1985, 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*

EUELYN BARBIER

B Denver Unit

MB: What is your name?

4 EB: Evelyn Barbier.

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

B EB: In 1953.

MB: Were you in the service?

B EB: I was .

MB: What branch of the service were you in?

10 EB: The Army Nurse Corps.

flB: When did you Join the Army Nurse Corps?

12 EB: In 1941.

14 MB: What made you decide to go into the Army Nurse Corps at that particular time?

IB EB: The impending war. In 1940, it seemed sure that we would be going into war, and I had several Friends who me to go in at that time.

18 MB: Before you went in the Army, what did you do?

E 0 EB: I was a registered nurse. I was a delivery room
supervisor, and then most recently I was assistant to
an endocrinologist; a French doctor.

EE MB: What did you do in the service?

24 EB: I was in the Army Nurse Corps, and I think I did just
about everything from general duty up to Chief Nurse, and
a few things in between; such as Director of the Cadet
2B Nurse program, which was very helpful as a recruiting
program. I was also instructor at the medical
2B training center in Germany.

MB: How long were you in the Army Nurse Corps?

30 EB: Twenty years.

32 MB: While you were in the service, where did your travels
take you?

34 EB: Panama. Panama was interesting because at that time it
was fairly sure that the Germans and the Japanese would
meet at the Canal; and we were told when we first got
36 there, in 1942, that we could not expect to go home.

MB: What were some of your other assignments?

38 EB: Well, I was in Germany; in Japan; in Guam; and in

60 there in '48, and we treated every case. The epidemic
was taken care of during three months by teams of one
62 Army nurse, and the other members of the various teams
were Navy corpsmen, and we got through that epidemic with
64 only eleven deaths. And the eleventh, we Just took
because we were generous. We didn't really think it
was
66 measles.

MB: Any other experiences?

68 EB: Then, when I transferred up to Siapan, the day after I
arrived in Siapan the island was hit by a direct hit by
a
70 typhoon. So we had to get all our patients in the
typhoon shelter, and I started off from my quarters to go
72 to the ward where I was needed. I was told not to use
my Jeep, because it was going to be needed for something
74 more important than my transportation. I got beyond the
shelter of my quarters and was lifted clear off my feet
—
76 nothing to hold on to. I only weighed 102 pounds.
Nothing to hold on to, and floating toward me on a
direct
78 course, was a big GI can full of garbage. I decided I
was not about to meet it and I willed myself down,
backed

80 *off, got into my jeep and drove off for about the
distance of a block, and by then I was just
soaked*

82 *through to the skin; although I wore our nice
raincoat. We had the crew of one of our B-17's had flown
in from*

84 *Okinawa to seek shelter on Siapan, so they got right in*

86 the midst of the typhoon. One of the crewmen— the only
one who managed to save a personal belonging— was a young
88 airman who had bought a sewing machine For his wife, and
he said that machine would stay with him no matter where
80 he was, because he had promised his wife to bring her a
sewing machine. So if he died when they crashed near
us,

88 she would know that at least he had gotten the machine
because that would be saved for her. CLaughterl

84 MB: What was the greatest adjustment you had to make when
you came in the Army Nurse Corps?

3 EB: I can't say that I had any difficulty whatsoever. I
6 had traveled a great deal before I joined the Army.

38 MB: When you came in the Army Nurse Corps, did you plan
to make it a career?

100 EB: I wasn't sure that I would make it a career because at
that time they were only promising one year of service;
108 but I found out that a couple of nurses who were at Fort
Jackson, where I went in, got out. They went home, and
104 we helped them get their things home because they
happened to live in Columbia.

10 This one particular girl went home on December 6.

6 That was Saturday, so she was going to get
home for the weekend. And
we all know what happened on Sunday,

December 7. They sent us back to bring her back on the

Monday, the 8th. Then I decided: Sounds as though
110 they're going to keep us longer! So, the longer I went
the more I was sure I was going to stay.

112 MB: After you retired from the Army Nurse Corps, what did you
do?

114 EB: I tried civilian nursing, and after twenty years in Army
nursing, I just couldn't stand it. I did try. I helped
116 to open a nursing home. It was being built; it was Just
a hole in the ground when I joined them, having been
118 referred by our chief nurse at Fitzsimmons.

The owners wanted it to be the best nursing home in town,
120 and they gave me carte blanche to do whatever I wanted to
organize it. We had a pretty nice thing going.

122 Everybody came to see it because it was considered a
showplace.

124 After one year, the owners decided they weren't making
enough money. So they wanted me to cut down on the
126 help;

the best in town, you can't cut your proportion.

128 MB: O.K. Besides the nursing home, what did you do?

EB: Then, I decided to do something entirely different, and
130 for ten years I worked as a travel consultant in a
travel office.

132 MB: What does being a member of WDSL mean to you?

134 EB: When I First Joined the Unit, there were only two other
136 members of the WW-II generation. All the other members
were From WW-I, and I was extremely interested in talking
to these members and Finding out how very diFFerent our
experience was to theirs.

138 The organization was oF great interest to me because it
applied to a very special group oF women, who during
140 WW-I, had a much more diFFicult experience than we had.

MB: O.K. Thank you very much.

142 EB: CLaughterD You're very welcome.

144 Transcribed by Patricia Siggers

Lansing, Michigan