**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

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| **B** |  | **EUELYN BARBIER****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 advised** |
|  |  | **me to go in at that time.** |
| **18** | **MB:** | **Before you went in the Army, what did you do?** |

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EB: I was a registered nurse. I was a delivery room

*E* 0 supervisor, and then most recently I was assistant tc an endocrinologist; a French doctor.

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| ***EE***  | **MB:****EB:** | **What did you do in the service?****I was in the Army Nurse Corps, and I think I did Just** |
| **24** |  | **about everything From general duty up to Chief Nurse, and** |
| **2B** |  | **a Few things in between; such as Director of the Cadet****Nurse program, which was very helpful as a recruiting** |
| **2B** |  | **program. I was also instructor at the medical training center in Germany.** |
|  | **MB:** | **How long were you in the Army Nurse Corps?** |
| **30** | **EB:** | **Twenty years.** |
|  | **MB:** | **While you were in the service, where did your travels** |
| **32** |  | **take you?** |
|  | **EB:** | **Panama. Panama was interesting because at that time it** |
| **34** |  | **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 1342, 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 Siapan.** |

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FIB: What kind of housing did you have when you were in the

40 Army?

EB: Everything From bad to good.

42 MB: Did you ever have any duty in a tent?

EB: Not for any length of time, but brief times in the field.

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| **44** | **MB:** | **What can you say about the medical care that was available to you in service?** |
| **46** | **EB:****MB:** | **Excellent.****What was your uniform dress. What did you mostly wear?** |
| **4B** | **EB:** | **When I first went in, in ’41, they had no uniforms** |

available for us; so we wore civilian clothes, and from

50 that time on, every uniform that was allowed from 1941— late ’41, until I retired in 1961.

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| **52** | **MB:** | **Tell me about some of your experiences that were especially memorable to you?** |
| **54** | **EB:** | **Well, I think I should mention two. One was when I was in 6uam: I worked with the Guamanian natives during a** |

56 measles epidemic, and I should explain that measles was very dangerous to the Guamanians. In a previous

50 epidemic, it had killed over two thousand because they had had no contact with this type of disease. I was

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BO 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?

6B 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

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the midst of the typhoon. One of the crewmen— the only

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

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

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

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

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

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

This one particular girl went home on December 6. That was Saturday, so she was going to get home for the weekend. And we all know what happened on Sunday,

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

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Monday, the 8th. Then I decided: Sounds as though

110 they’re going to keep us longer! So, the longer I went

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| 112 | **MB:** | **the more I was sure I was going to stay.****After you retired from the Army Nurse Corps, what did you** |
|  |  | **do?** |
| **114** | **EB:** | **I tried civilian nursing, and after twenty years in Army** |
| **116** |  | **nursing, I just couldn’t stand it. I did try. I helped****to open a nursing home. It was being built; it was Just** |
|  |  | **a hole in the ground when I joined them, having been** |

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referred by our chief nurse at Fitzsimmons.

The owners wanted it to be the best nursing home in town, and they gave me carte blanche to do whatever I wanted to

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| **122** |  | **organize it. We had a pretty nice thing going.****Everybody came to see it because it was considered a** |
| **124** |  | **showplace.****After one year, the owners decided they weren’t making** |
| **126** |  | **enough money. So they wanted me to cut down on the help;****the aides and LPN’s and RN ’s. I said, If you want to be** |
|  |  | **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 off ice.

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

EB: When I First Joined the Unit, there were only two other 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.

The organization was oF great interest to me because it applied to a very special group oF women, who during

WW-I, had a much more diFFicult experience than we had.

MB: O.K. Thank you very much.

EB: CLaughterD You’re very welcome.

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