WOMEN VETERANS HISTORICAL PROJECT

ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

INTERVIEWEE: Marie Mason

INTERVIEWER: Therese Strohmer

DATE: March 19, 2011

[Begin Interview]

TS: This is Therese Strohmer and today is March 19th, 2011. I am in Raleigh, North Carolina, with Marie Mason. This is an oral history interview for the Women Veterans Historical Project at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Marie, how would you like your name to be on the collection?

MM: Marie M. Mason.

TS: Okay. Marie, why don't you go ahead and start off by telling me when and where you were born?

MM: I was born in Swan Quarter, North Carolina, July the 29th, nineteen and sixteen.

TS: And what was that area like at that time, Swan Quarter?

MM: It was—we lived on a farm about five miles from Swan Quarter, in the rural—we lived in a rural area.

TS: It was a real rural area?

MM: Yes.

TS: What was it like, growing up?

MM: I was real happy growing up. There wasn't enough hours in the day to do all that I had planned to do.

TS: [laughs] What kind of things did you have planned to do?

MM: Well, we had our chores, but when we finished our chores, we could play. And I had dolls and all that goes with the doll, the doll houses and so forth. My sister was two and a half years younger than myself, so we played together a great deal.

TS: Did you have any other brothers or sisters?

MM: I had two sisters and four brothers.

TS: And where did you fit in that number, seven?

MM: I am—let's see. I am number five from the top.

TS: Number five? Okay.

MM: Number five. There were seven in all.

TS: I talked to a lady yesterday, she was also number five. That's right. Now, what did your father do for a living?

MM: Well, we had a farm and we also had a lumber company, sawmill, lumber company. Bought logs and—but he sold lumber, but this was not in a town or a city, it's just out in the rural area.

TS: So people came to him to—

MM: Came to him.

TS: So they knew where he was and things like that. And then, your mother, did your mother work outside the home?

MM: No.

TS: With seven kids—

MM: Not with seven kids.

TS: And the farm, what kind of farm was it? Vegetable farm, or?

MM: Well, we had a large vegetable garden. We had all kinds of fruit trees, we had nuts, my dad raised soy beans and corn. No tobacco, no cotton.

TS: Did you have to work out in the field at all?

MM: No, not much. With four brothers, you know.

TS: They did a lot of the work?

MM: Yeah.

TS: Did he hire anybody else?

MM: Yeah, we had the African-Americans that helped us.

TS: Doing the harvesting and the—

MM: Yes, and planting.

TS: Planting and things like that. So you had a busy place going on, it sounds like, probably.

MM: Yup.

TS: It was pretty busy.

MM: Yup.

TS: And you enjoyed it?

MM: I enjoyed it immensely.

TS: We talked a little bit before we started the tape about someone, you said, asked you "How about your longevity?" and the success of that. And what was it that you told me?

MM: Hard work and good food. [laughs]

TS: And you said that the good food came from all those vegetables, right?

MM: Yes. And then I've tried to eat the right kind of diet, you know, vitamins and so forth.

TS: Well, what was it—so you were a young girl growing up, really, in the '20s, in the 1920s. so if you were born in 1916, you know, you're a young girl, like ten years old, in '26 or so.

MM: Yes.

TS: What kind of things did you do for fun, then?

MM: Hm. Well, we played ball a lot, played ball.

TS: What kind of ball did you play?

MM: Baseball, softball.

TS: Baseball and softball?

MM: We played ball a lot. I had a bicycle, rode the bicycle a lot. My brother had roller skates, and I never could—I never did learn to roller skate.

TS: [chuckles] What'd he roller skate on?

MM: The highway.

TS: Oh, is that right?

MM: Yeah.

TS: I was going to say, be kind of rough to do that on like gravel or a dirt road or something.

MM: Yeah.

TS: Now, did you—were you in an area where you got any snow or anything?

MM: Very little snow.

TS: Very little. So you didn't really have much of a winter?

MM: No, not much cold weather. [background noise of birds chirping]

TS: Well, did you—how did you like school? What was that like?

MM: I loved school.

TS: What'd you love about it?

MM: I guess everything. I loved history.

TS: Did you? Okay.

MM: I loved—I still love history. I guess that was my favorite subject.

TS: Did you have a favorite teacher?

MM: Well, I went to school to my older sister.

TS: Your older sister was your teacher?

MM: Yes.

TS: Oh!

MM: For one year.

TS: Is that right? How was that?

MM: That was good.

TS: It was a good experience?

MM: Yeah.

TS: Did she give you favorable treatment?

MM: Yeah.

TS: Did she?

MM: Yeah. And I helped her with, you know, whatever I could, with her records and so forth.

TS: Yeah. So what kind of school was it, can you describe, was it a—

MM: Well, it was two rooms, I think the [grade] one through four was probably in one room and four through seven, maybe, in the other. And then we were consolidated to the high school.

TS: After that?

MM: Yeah. That was right near our home, but we were consolidated to the high school in Swan Quarter, we rode a bus.

TS: You rode a bus in. For elementary school, did you walk to that, or—

MM: Yes.

TS: You walked to that. About how far away was it, very far?

MM: Not very far.

TS: Not very far, just down the road or something?

MM: Yeah.

TS: So about how many kids do you remember, at all, maybe attended that elementary school?

MM: Hmm. One through four grades, let's see. Maybe twenty-five.

TS: It's a good number for a rural area like that. Sure. So you liked school, and you enjoyed maybe playing some baseball or softball.

MM: And playing with the dolls.

TS: Oh yeah, the dolls. That's right, playing with the dolls. And so, did you have a sense of what you were going to do when you were—oh, and high school, how'd you like high school?

MM: I liked high school.

TS: Yeah. Did you still like history, or did you find another subject that interested you?

MM: Yeah, I liked history, and I liked math, and I liked science.

TS: So you liked just about everything. Is there anything you didn't like?

MM: No.

TS: No, just enjoyed going to school.

MM: I was valedictorian in our graduating class.

TS: Is that right? Congratulations, that's really great. So did you have a sense about what you wanted to do after you graduated from high school?

MM: Yeah, I wanted to be a nurse.

TS: How long was it that you felt like you wanted to be a nurse?

MM: About all my life.

TS: Oh, and why did you have that feeling?

MM: I just wanted to help people.

TS: Yeah.

MM: Yeah.

TS: So did you—when you graduated, did you have a plan with all the—you know, how you were going to be able to go to become a nurse?

MM: Yeah, I—I graduated when I was sixteen, and I left—I was sixteen when I went in nurses' training. I was seventeen in July, I think I went in June, I was seventeen in July.

TS: So you turned—so, seventeen when it started, or something?

MM: You're supposed to be eighteen.

TS: So you had an early start.

MM: Yeah, early start.

TS: And where did you go for nurses' training?

MM: It was Park View Hospital in Rocky Mount.

TS: And how'd you like that?

MM: I liked it.

TS: What did you get to do?

MM: Well, there, you went through the different levels of training. You were probationary for, I think, how long—four months. And then, then after, they say—when did—you got your cap after—after one year.

TS: Oh, okay.

MM: As a junior, it was—you got the cap. And then the third year, you were a senior, you got the black band on your cap.

TS: Oh. So there's like, stages of being able to go through the training.

MM: Yeah. And you went through all the departments, medical, surgical, operating, OB [obstetrics].

TS: Was there a particular department that you enjoyed more than another?

MM: Yes, surgical.

TS: You liked the surgical?

MM: I liked the operating room, and then the patients on the floors, I didn't like the medical floor because nobody ever got well and went home. On the surgical floor, they all got well and went home.

TS: Oh! [chuckles] So they're all sick on the medical floor, and just—

MM: Yeah.

TS: So you could see progress in surgical.

MM: Oh, yes.

TS: Was that one of the things that you enjoyed about that?

MM: Yeah, yeah.

TS: What kind of things—now, I imagine that surgery has changed over the years.

MM: Oh, yes. See, we didn't do open-heart surgery at all.

TS: What kind of surgeries do you remember that you saw a lot of?

MM: Well, accidents, you know, people coming in all broken up. And that was my operating room experience. And just regular—gall bladder, appendicitis, intestinal obstruction, whatever. People having burns.

TS: Different ailments.

MM: Yeah, different ailments.

TS: So when you—when you—how far away was this from where you grew up? Rocky Mount?

MM: I'd say a hundred and fifty miles.

TS: Oh. Were you homesick at all, being there?

MM: Oh, my, I thought I'd die.

TS: Is that right? [chuckles] What'd you do when you got homesick?

MM: I never—when I grew up, I never wanted to leave home, I just stayed. I stayed home. My younger sister would go away to spend the night with her best girlfriend.

My mother said "Don't you want to go?"

I said "No, I'd rather be home."

TS: [laughs] So you must have had a tough time, then, being away. How long was your training, for nurses' training?

MM: Three years.

TS: Now, did you stay like in a dorm room or something?

MM: Yeah, we had a nurses' home.

TS: Nurses' home?

MM: Yeah. It was right across the street from the hospital.

TS: So pretty close by.

MM: Yeah.

TS: Did you go home very often, then?

MM: Not very often, no. Well, they—you had to stay a while before you could go home. I think they thought we might go home and stay. [chuckling]

TS: Wanted to make sure that you got through the training. So once you finished your nurse's training, what was the next step that you took?

MM: Well, I did private duty for a while, and I didn't like that.

TS: What didn't you like about it?

MM: Well, it was more or less—private duty—more or less being a maid. They weren't that—they didn't need, you know, they didn't need—private—they were not that ill.

TS: I see.

MM: You know. When I nurse, I want somebody that needs nursing.

TS: So it's not like you were helping them, take care of them, get better, you were just kind of like cleaning up after them?

MM: Yeah. They had flowers, and you know, they had help to fix their hair, they had these pretty—what'd they call them. Mid-something. And all these fancy kinds—

TS: Wasn't for you.

MM: That's not for me.

TS: So what'd you decide to do after that?

MM: [pause] What did I—I worked—I worked as a night supervisor at the hospital where I trained.

TS: The Park View Hospital?

MM: And then I worked a while as head nurse on the floor. I was paid by the hospital.

TS: Oh! Nice.

MM: Then I decided I needed a liberal arts education, which you don't get in nursing.

TS: Okay.

MM: So I resigned and went to Campbell College as a freshman.

TS: And about what year was that, do you remember? Or how old you were, maybe.

MM: Nineteen thirty-nine.

TS: Okay.

MM: I was older than the regular. So I went two years to Campbell. Then I went back a year as phys ed for women at Campbell. And then I went back to—to—I went back to—oh, I—in Raleigh, I went to a summer school at Meredith [College], and then I did night duty at another hospital.

TS: While you were going to school?

MM: Yes. And then I decided I couldn't do night duty during school, so I went in service, in '43. I served out '42, doing night duty.

TS: Yeah.

MM: So I dropped out of Meredith, because I couldn't do the work.

TS: Just too hard to keep up with both?

MM: Yeah.

TS: Yeah. Well, let me ask you why you thought you needed a liberal arts education, or why you wanted one?

MM: To appreciate—to appreciate the world! [laughs]

TS: Yeah. You were very curious about your education, and—

MM: Yeah. You know, all my friends, you get off duty, and they'd talk about their bad day in nursing. All they knew was nursing. There's something in this world besides nursing.

TS: [laughs] So you wanted to expand your knowledge of things, and—

MM: Yeah, yeah.

TS: I see. Well, so you went into the—into the Army Nurses' Corps in '43, but before that, let me go back a little. What—when—were you aware of what was going on with the war in Europe or anything, before?

MM: Yeah. My brother was a pilot dropping bombs on Europe.

TS: Oh, was he? Was he with the Royal Air Force, or?

MM: He was with the air force.

TS: With the United States Air Force?

MM: Yeah.

TS: Okay.

MM: And I thought, if he gets hurt, I hope somebody takes care of him. And I said "Well, why don't you go do your part?"

TS: Oh, so that's how you got thinking about it.

MM: Yes.

TS: Well, do you remember when Pearl Harbor happened?

MM: Yes.

TS: Can you tell me what you remember about that?

MM: Well, I was—I was working at Campbell College, and I was a college nurse, and I had the phys ed for the women, that was my job. And I remember a lot of our students there volunteered, I remember that.

TS: To go into the service?

MM: To go into the service.

TS: Do you remember what you thought about the attack on Pearl Harbor at the time?

MM: Yeah, I was furious. [chuckles]

TS: You were furious?

MM: Yeah.

TS: What'd you think was going to happen?

MM: Well, I thought it was—we hadn't done anything to them, why were they so mean to come over here and kill all of our sailors and everybody? We hadn't done anything to them, you know, what was their reason? And I said, well, being a Christian, you're supposed to forgive everybody. I said, this is a hard one, I'm going to have to work a little while. [chuckling]

TS: Well, did you—so you, but you stayed at the hospital for a little while before you went in. And then you said your—one of your older brothers went into the—

MM: No, the very youngest brother.

TS: Oh, the youngest one, I see. Did any other siblings serve besides him?

MM: No, because they were married, and at that time—they went into shipbuilding.

TS: Oh, they did? Okay.

MM: They did—they'd rather have them building ships.

TS: So they did war work in that way.

MM: Yes.

TS: I see. What about your sisters?

MM: What was—my older sister was married and lived in Los Angeles. And I think my younger—my younger sister—oh, she was in a theological school. She was a minister.

TS: During the war, and after?

MM: Well, no, I think during the war she was still in school, after the war she was—

TS: I see, then she became a minister after. Well, had your father been in the service before?

MM: No, he—

TS: So you and your brother were the only ones.

MM: We were the only two in the family.

TS: I see. Well, tell me then, a little bit, when you decided—you know, what you said about, your brother's over there serving, and if he got hurt, you know, you'd want somebody to help him. When—how did you go about, if you remember, deciding, okay, I'm going to do this?

MM: Back going over—going over—

TS: To go in the Army Nurses' Corps. I mean, can you kind of talk me through what you were thinking at the time?

MM: Well, I was—well, they kept threatening to draft us. I didn't want anybody to tell me what I got to do.

TS: [laughs]

MM: So I was doing night duty at this big hospital in Raleigh. And I just decided that I would go in the Army Nurse Corps. So I don't know, I don't know who I talked with or anything. Anyway, whoever I talked with and I decided to go, they told me to report to Camp Davis at a certain date.

TS: Okay. Did your family have any thoughts about you joining the Army Nurses Corps, or friends?

MM: Well, my mother died in 1940. And my father died while I was in Italy in '44. She had a malignancy, and he had—he was a severe diabetic, so. She was 60 and he was 64 when he died, so.

TS: But neither one of them had any reservations about you joining? I mean, I know that you're an adult and you can make your own decision, but did they say anything to you about it?

MM: Well, my mother wasn't living.

TS: That's right, your mother wasn't living. Your father.

MM: Yeah. No, he said, you know, "You do what you want to do." When my mother died, I was in college, and he was by himself, and I sort of didn't want to leave him by himself, so I stayed around a while, and he said "I'm telling you now, I want you to go back and finish your schooling."

TS: Good for him.

MM: He said "You've got your life to live, you go on back." So I did.

TS: So you listened to him?

MM: Yeah.

TS: Well, tell me now about—do you remember, you said you got—before we started the tape, you said how you got on a bus and went to Fort—

MM: Camp Davis.

TS: Camp Davis, right. Tell me about that experience, what you can remember?

MM: About the bus?

TS: Sure, the bus ride, or just arriving there and what it was like to—

MM: Yeah. He didn't—of course, he didn't go up on the camp ground at all. I think he dropped me off at a service station.

TS: [laughs] Your dad?

MM: Who?

TS: Who dropped you off? Oh, the bus driver, okay.

MM: Bus driver. And so he handed me my suitcase and I walked—I guess, down—it was at a service station, I walked down a while and then I got on the Camp Davis grounds, and I asked somebody where was—what was I looking for? Whatever I was looking for, I asked somebody. And they showed me. And then I was assigned a room.

TS: Okay.

MM: And we went into basic training, how to march, went—we had to—how to use a gas mask, they filled a tent with this—I don't know what kind of gas it was, but we had to go in, take our gas masks off, and put it back on again. And I got burned around my collar, whatever that was.

TS: Not a really wonderful experience.

MM: No. And we—let's see, did we—yeah, we did nursing therapy.

TS: You did?

MM: Yeah. Yeah. We went into the hospital, I can remember, I was on night duty—well, I went in February and left in August, so we were in that hospital.

TS: So maybe you went through your training and then you went to your first duty station there, too, or was this all part of your training?

MM: It was part of the training.

TS: Part of the training?

MM: Yeah.

TS: So was there anything particularly hard that you were doing in your basic training? Besides that gas mask, doesn't sound very pleasing at all.

MM: We—and they told us, you know, first thing they told us, you're not supposed to think, you're supposed to do what you're told to do.

TS: How'd that go over for you?

MM: I thought "Okay. Have it your way, I can do that." Be punctual, don't ever be late for a meeting, you know. Learn how to salute properly. So. And let's see, did we—we had our dress uniform, you couldn't leave the camp without your dress uniform.

TS: Always had to be in uniform.

MM: Then we had the nursing uniform when we were—

TS: Oh, I see, okay. So if you went off the base, you had to be in dress uniform.

MM: Yeah.

TS: I see. Now, what were you thinking about your decision to join the Army Nurse Corps at this point?

MM: Well, they called us in and said they need nurses in England. They wanted some volunteers. I said "I ain't going to England." [laughs]

TS: Why not?

MM: I didn't want to go—I didn't want to go overseas.

TS: No?

MM: No. So, the group left. A few months later, we got called in again. Somebody go to Italy. I don't want to go to Italy. So—well, you can either volunteer, or you're drafted. Now, which do you want to do? I said "I'll volunteer." I don't want anybody to tell me I got to go.

TS: [laughs]

MM: I volunteered.

TS: So was that something—what was the reason that you didn't want to go overseas?

MM: I don't know, because I had already said that—talking about my brother. I don't know why. I guess I was happy where I was. [both chuckle]

TS: Well, you had said earlier how you like to stay close to home.

MM: Yeah.

TS: Maybe had something to do with that, too?

MM: Yeah, yeah.

TS: But—so you volunteered with a little nudging.

MM: Yeah.

TS: And so tell me about the experience. Now, did you take a ship over?

MM: Oh dear, yes.

TS: How was that?

MM: We—we went to New York. And we got there about six o' clock, seems like, in the evening. We didn't go to bed. We—at four o' clock in the morning, we boarded the ship, and I remember standing on the deck just as the sun was coming up, and I looked over at the Statue of Liberty. And I said "Dear lady, I hope I see you again." [laughs] But I never did, because I came home on the other side.

TS: That's right, because you went all the way over to—

MM: Never seen her since. But oh, that was a long trip.

TS: Do you remember the name of the ship you went over on?

MM: It was either—what was it. It was either Elizabeth or Mary, which one of those ships? One of them.

TS: One of them, okay.

MM: Lot of GIs on them.

TS: Now, do you remember when you were going over? What—

MM: In August.

TS: August of—was this '44.

MM: Forty—'43.

TS: Forty-three?

MM: Yes.

TS: Oh, you went over in '43?

MM: And we were in a convoy, and everybody would go this way, and then we'd go this way, because our route was full of submarines, and we—we went to—all around—I found that on the map, all around—I believe it's—is it in Liberia? It's one of those African countries that face the Mediterranean. And—let's see, there's—

TS: Libya, maybe?

MM: There's Morocco and then—I—

TS: So you went to Morocco?

MM: No, we went on past—we went into the Mediterranean Sea.

TS: Past it, into the Mediterranean Sea. Okay.

MM: I can look on the map and find out which country that was. But we—this—we got there, where we were supposed to come ashore.

They said "The ship's not going any further, there are mines out there. You got to get out and wade."

I thought "Well, we don't want the mines either." But they put us on this landing—they call them L-S-something. And then we had to get out and wade on in. I didn't like that.

TS: No? Were you carrying anything when you walked in, when you waded in?

MM: Yeah, we had some kind of bag. Then we—

TS: Well, let—were you really nervous crossing the ocean, then, on the ship?

MM: I was, yeah.

TS: You were nervous? And then also when you got in the Mediterranean, with—

MM: Yeah.

TS: Okay.

MM: And then, we went to a tent, waiting for the front line to go up the boot of Italy. So we stayed in the tent, I mean, we had a cot and a blanket. And it—in the desert, and when the sun goes down, it is cold weather. So I remember, two of us would sleep on one cot so we'd have two blankets. [laughs]

TS: Stay kind of warm together.

MM: We hung on the edge of the cots, and you couldn't eat any fruit, because their fertilizer was human. But we had to get up every morning for roll call, and I can't remember anything we did while we were waiting. And then they told us to get ready, we were going to cross the Mediterranean to go into Naples. So they put us on a ship. We had to wear fatigues and a steel helmet and a gas mask, then they put us off the ship, "You're going to go get on another ship," so they put the nurses in the middle ship. There were three going. And so, all night, we sat with our—well, you could lay down and use your gas mask for a pillow, but we had to have the steel helmets on. And we came into Naples, and I remember we went to this—just an empty building. And we had no more got there when they had an air raid. [sighs]

TS: Were you a nervous wreck?

MM: Yeah. And we slept on the floor, because I can remember, there was nothing there to sleep on, or anything. So the front line in Italy would go up, then back, up, and then back. So our hospital set up sort of up the boot of Italy, boot of Italy a ways. So we finally were told we could go set up the hospital, in a little town called Aversa. Aversa, Italy.

TS: What was that like?

MM: It was just a little dirty town. The Italian people—this is public, but the Italian people were dirty people. [laughs]

TS: As in, like, not washing, you mean? In that way.

MM: Yeah. We—we hired some to help us clean, but the German people were clean, clean people. So we were—we set up right next to a prison camp. So for about a year, we had the Allied soldiers, but then they gave us the German and Russians.

TS: To treat?

MM: Yes. We became a prison hospital. And the Germans, they were so—we had corpsmen who were German. We had a few beds, we called them beds, but they didn't have cots. So the sickest patients got on the beds, and we had some sick Russian. And the German corpsmen would move them to the cot every night. I'd come back on duty, they're—I'd say "Get these back over there in those beds." Okay. Next night, they'd put the Russians on the cots. [chuckles]

TS: Why were they doing that?

MM: They didn't like them.

TS: Just every night, they kept moving them.

MM: Move them over to the cots.

TS: Now, the corpsmen were working for you? They were—

MM: They were prisoners.

TS: But they were still helping you?

MM: Yes.

TS: I see. Well, what was that like, working in that kind of an environment? I mean, you went from where you were in the United States, head nurse of a couple different shifts, and then now you're in a military zone. What was that like?

MM: Well, you have to have the—your attitude, you know, your attitude determines your behavior. So you get the right attitude, you know why you're there, you know what you're supposed to do, and you do it. And you're not unhappy about it. I had—I—this is going back to the medical ward [board?]. I had worked on the medical board. I had—I had six wards, and every one of those men had some kind of venereal disease that they got from those Italian women. So we gave them penicillin. And I got me a big syringe and a handful of sterile needles.

And I told them, I said "When you hear me coming, you pull your pajamas down and you turn over on your stomach, I'm not going to stand here and wait for you, because I've got a hundred to do."

"Yes, ma'am."

So I'd shoot that one, put another needle on and shoot that one, put another needle on.

TS: You're all business.

MM: Yeah. There was one fellow, he looked like he wasn't over eighteen, he got discharge. He said "I want the raggedest[sic] needle you have."

I said "What you going to do with a needle?"

"Well," he said "I'm going to put it in my pocket, and when I start to do something I'm not supposed to do, I'm going to look at that needle."

TS: [laughs]

MM: Oh. Nineteen and forty-four was a rough year in Italy, I don't know about—we ran out of food, with the submarine warfare. We didn't have supplies, and they made the Anzio beachhead up on the—about the midway up Italy on the west coast. And there was a monastery up on the hill, and they're trying to make that landing, and they had those big 88[mm] guns, just shooting them down. They couldn't—so it was a monastery, and the Allies didn't want to bomb the monastery. We were—I was on psychiatric ward, and we were getting those men that were alive, and they were just as out of this world as they could be. So finally, the Allies decided they'd bomb that monastery, and they blew it to pieces. Germans and guns and everything. So that—that ended that warfront there on the Anzio beachhead. We went on R&R, rest and recreation, we went to Rome one time. And I said the biggest thing you could see that was there was a big toe of a statue. [laughs]

TS: Yeah, that's all that was left of it?

MM: That was all that was left of it.

TS: Well, when you were in that—you said it was like a psychiatric ward? How—what did you do to try to help the men in that ward?

MM: Well, we had medication, wasn't much you could do, you know. One night, about midnight, we had an air raid. These men got up out of bed and ran out the door, just running. I ran after one of them, and first thing I knew, there was shrapnel coming right in front of me. I thought "You can stay out here all you want to, but I am going in."

TS: So you went back in. My goodness, how close were you to that shrapnel?

MM: About six inches.

TS: Oh, my.

MM: So, I wouldn't be here.

TS: If you'd run any faster, right?

MM: [chuckling]

TS: So did you stay in the—stay inside during the rest of the air raids, after that?

MM: Yeah.

TS: Why were they running around?

MM: Just didn't know, that's all they knew to do. They were so emotionally ill. The young—they just had grey hair, young people. Most—they came from Anzio beachhead.

TS: You know, today we know a lot more about the post-traumatic stress disorder.

MM: Yeah.

TS: And so, they were probably suffering from that sort of thing.

MM: Yeah.

TS: And you had done training, later, did you think back about this time, with your—you know, the psychology PhD that you got?

MM: Yeah.

TS: About—about that? Do you think the treatment has changed over time, for how we help soldiers with that?

MM: See, what we did, too, we knew that their fighting days were over. We were a stationed hospital, we sent them back to a general hospital in Naples, and they sent them to the States, and that's where the treatment started.

TS: I see, so you're just kind of in a holding pattern.

MM: Just a—yeah.

TS: Hmm. What other kinds of patients did you treat?

MM: Well, we had a—we had a lot of bottoms, [chuckles], the buttocks, they would sit on a mine or somehow they got in contact with a mine. I worked in the operating room. They

taught us how to skin graft, you know, buttocks just torn all to pieces. But I don't think we got this—I think probably the more serious cases went to the general hospital.

TS: Hmm. Well, you would have been one of the more, I guess, experienced nurses, I would think, because you had been—it had been a while since you'd been in nurses' school.

MM: Yeah.

TS: Did you—were there a number of—how many other nurses did you work with over there, in this hospital?

MM: We had, I'd say twenty, in our—we were sixty—262 Station Hospital.

TS: And who—was—who was in charge of it, the hospital?

MM: We had a nurse in charge, and then of course, the main—I guess he was a major that was in charge of the whole hospital.

TS: So were you pretty close to the front lines, then, if you're getting the shrapnel and things?

MM: What—in Aversa, we were on the main road to the front line, carrying supplies and everything. And what—the Germans would strafe that front line. They'd turn around over our hospital, which had a big red cross, but they kept the guns going, to turn around. So after trying just to look after the patients, we had to look after ourselves, you know, our—the guns came—we never had an air raid, but we had those strafing guns.

TS: So they're shooting on the, like, the periphery of the hospital grounds or something, is that what they're doing?

MM: They didn't turn the guns off, [unclear] back up there. Yeah.

TS: How'd you feel about that?

MM: Well, I didn't like it. [chuckling]

TS: Yeah. But you were also taking care of patients who are German and—right then, essentially the enemy, and then you got them shooting at you.

MM: Yeah. The first German patients we got were these SS troops. They were proud, you know, they couldn't even imagine that nurses could be an officer. See, all the nurses were officers, and they just couldn't take that at all.

TS: So, what'd they—how did they treat you, then?

MM: Well, just as ugly as they could.

TS: Can you give me an example, do you remember anything in particular?

MM: No, not—just their whole attitude and all.

TS: I see.

MM: But that didn't—that didn't last long. In the later part of that time, we got old men and eighteen year old boys. Those other men were gone. And the men would say "We didn't want this war." We talked to the older men, a lot of them could speak English. They said "We were against this war, we did not want it."

TS: What about the Russian soldiers?

MM: There were not many of those, and they could not speak any English.

TS: Had they been, like, prisoners of war for the Germans? How did it end up that you had Russian soldiers in your—

MM: They picked them up when they picked up the Germans. See—

TS: Because they were fighting on our side.

MM: The Russians were—they were with the Germans.

TS: No, they were our allies.

MM: Yeah, yeah, that's right. But they came in—when they brought us the prisoners, they brought the Russians.

TS: They brought the Russians with them? I wondered if maybe they had been prisoners, then, of the Germans at that time, maybe.

MM: I don't know.

TS: That's interesting.

MM: Even from France, they brought us—they brought us prisoners from France.

TS: Did they?

MM: But the Germans, they didn't pick up, they did not pick up their wounded men. Some, they had picked up, and you know, when you do an amputation, you have shorter bone than you have skin, you need a flap. When they did an amputation, they did just like this.

TS: Straight across?

MM: And the skin grew up, I mean—

TS: So the bone would show?

MM: Yup.

TS: I see.

MM: Yeah. So we had to do them over again, and cut it, and have a flap there—

TS: To close it over the bone?

MM: Yes.

TS: Oh, I see. Interesting. I didn't know that you had to do it that way, for an amputation. Did you have to do a lot of amputations?

MM: Yeah. I didn't know why we would get all these German patients. Well, I guess because the Germans—they couldn't pick them up, maybe.

TS: Hm. So what was the hardest part about being in this hospital with all these wounded men, prisoners, and you know, American GIs?

MM: Well, you know, one of them, he had tetanus. And I went to do something for him, and he grabbed over, one hand here and one hand here, and he was going to break my arm. And about three of those Germans jumped up and held him.

TS: They were the prisoners, that had jumped up to interrupt him from trying to break your arm?

MM: Yes.

TS: Was that another German soldier, that was trying to—

MM: Yes.

TS: Oh, I see. Did—so, were you afraid, ever, with all these men around?

MM: No, I didn't ever think about it. [laughs] I guess I was too busy to be afraid.

TS: Is that right?

MM: Yeah, I didn't feel—especially on night duty, you know, you were there with—I was thinking to go back to Camp Davis when we were with the soldiers there, they had these long barracks, you know, with beds here and beds there. And we'd be taking medication down to the far end, some of them would say "Hut-two-three-four," you know.

I says, "You stop that."

"Hut-two-three-four."

I said "I'm not going to give you any more medicine."

"Hut-two-three-four."

[laughs] They got a big kick out of that.

TS: So you—go ahead.

MM: My brother that was a pilot on the bombers, he was—he said he had an eleven-man crew, and he said in all their raids, every member of that first crew was killed except him.

TS: What'd he think about that?

MM: Yeah. Well, I was thankful. He said they came back—and he said what the German fighters would do, these big bombers would go over, bombing Berlin, they knew when they were returning to England. The fighters would come to just outside of England to shoot them down.

TS: As they were coming back?

MM: As they were coming back. He said he came back one day, and the general was—he had landed his plane, was getting ready to go to the barracks. And the general said "I need a pilot, I need a pilot, somebody's got to go back." And he said he ran through the door fast as he could go. [laughs]

TS: In the other direction?

MM: Yeah. [chuckling]

TS: Didn't want to volunteer on that one, huh?

MM: No, no, no volunteers on that one.

TS: Did your brother make it back, through the war?

MM: Yeah, yeah. He's—he was regular air corps, and he retired—he came—came home, I wasn't there, I was still over there. He came home, and after the war was over, you know, they blockade Berlin, and he flew supplies in from England, over. Or, they divided Berlin up, didn't they? That was it, yeah.

TS: Yeah, had the four sectors, at first.

MM: Yeah. He did that for some years, then he retired.

TS: So he stayed in for a—into the—he went in the air force, then, after the Army Air Corps?

MM: He was in—when did he go—he went in, I guess in '39. But let me tell you something that happened. I was at Fort Sheridan [Illinois], being separated, and this other nurse was with me, and we were walking to the dining hall on this street going this way. And there was another fellow walking that street, coming—

TS: On the opposite sides of the streets, and going in—

MM: —meeting each other.

TS: I see.

MM: We were here, and he's here. And he kept looking.
I said "Don't look at him, he's just trying to flirt." And finally, we saw him, it was my brother.

TS: [laughs] So did you talk to him after that?

MM: So he stayed with me, he went there, he knew that's where—

TS: Oh, was he looking for you?

MM: Yeah. He—

TS: I see.

MM: So he recognized me before I recognized him.

TS: Well, it sounds like you were trying to keep your eyes off of him, so, hard to recognize.

MM: Yeah. So we got on a train in Chicago and came to Cincinnati, rode all night. And—well, first of all, I'll back up. We were in the Philippines, we were in the middle—no, we were in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. And we get where they dropped the atomic bomb. Well, I thought that ship was going to turn around and bring us home, you know, where were we going? No. And we threw our gear overboard. [laughs]

TS: Oh, no! Did you, really?

MM: They almost court martialed us.

TS: How many of you did that?

MM: About a half a dozen.

TS: The nurses?

MM: Then I'll back up still more. The war was over in Europe. We knew we were coming home. But MacArthur said he wasn't going to invade Japan with new recruits, so we had to go. And there were nurses in the States, civilian[?], to go. But we had to go—

TS: He wanted experienced nurses.

MM: Experienced people. So we packed up and left from Naples. Went through the Panama Canal, and there was a navy band there just playing, and we booed them and booed them. They thought we'd lost our minds, you know. "Booo!"

TS: But why were you booing them?

MM: Because we wanted to go home!

TS: Oh, you didn't want to go through there, huh?

MM: [laughing]

TS: That was another non-volunteer volunteer job, huh?

MM: They thought, what in the world is wrong with those people? [chuckling]
[end of audio file 1, beginning of audio file 2] So they let us—they let us off ship in the Panama Canal Zone, and they had MPs [military police] all the way around, so—

TS: Keeping an eye on you, huh?

MM: Yeah.

TS: How many of the nurses went over on that?

MM: Every one of us.

TS: About twenty-some?

MM: Yeah. So this black man, he said—he says "I don't know where I's [sic] going, but it can't be any worse than where I came from." He said "They don't need an MP for me." [laughs] But we got off, and we ate all this fresh fruit. And every one of us got diarrhea.

TS: I bet you did.

MM: So we went through Panama Canal, and—

TS: Now, this was in—

MM: Forty-five.

TS: Forty-five, after—so, like July or so, maybe?

MM: Well, I'd say—I'd say June.

TS: June, okay.

MM: And it must have been July, because I think they dropped the bomb about the middle of August.

TS: Well—August, the beginning of August, yeah.

MM: Yeah. So we went on to the Philippines. Three days, we stayed on the ship, because you couldn't see anything but ships. Fighters and tankers, we couldn't even get off—all gathered there to go to invade Japan.

TS: And that was all—there was a whole, like flotilla, I guess, of—

MM: Yeah. Couldn't go in the port, for three—

TS: So you were just stuck on the ship, for?

MM: Yeah, wouldn't make room for us to get off. So we got out in a rice patty in a camp.

TS: This was in the Philippines?

MM: Yeah.

TS: And this is after they dropped the bomb.

MM: Yeah.

TS: Well, what'd you think—well, I know what you thought, you thought "I don't need this gear anymore!" [laughs] But then, what else did you think about that, dropping of the bomb? Because there's, you know, been some controversy about whether or not we should have dropped it.

MM: You know, somebody asked me what I thought? I said it was their life or mine. If I'd gone to Japan, I'd never come back. I knew that.

TS: Hmm.

MM: But my father died in 1944 while I was in Italy.

TS: Oh, that's right. How was that? It must have been very difficult.

MM: It was, very difficult.

TS: Because you had just lost your mother a few years earlier.

MM: Yeah. My sister told me, and she didn't know that—he told her he would never see me again. And she didn't know whether he meant he would be gone, or I would be gone.

TS: Oh.

MM: Probably, I think maybe he would be gone. [telephone rings]

TS: Here, I'll pause this for you. [recording paused]

MM: Okay.

TS: Okay, I'll go back, there. Well, Marie, we had a little break there, just short, but I wanted to take you back a little bit, to Italy, and you had talked a lot about the work you did. What about—and you mentioned, briefly, about having—not having a lot of food. So what were the conditions like, for you, not necessarily the work, but the living conditions?

MM: Well, we were in a room for four people, four nurses, and I was—I didn't have a place. So I was a fifth person in that room, and we slept on our mattress bags, that was—you know, all your belongings and everything was in this bag, this roll. So that was our mattress, we slept on that. But it was hard, with five people—[telephone rings] [recording paused?]

TS: It sounded like it. Okay, so you're in—you're the fifth one, in the room, what did you have to sleep on? Was it a cot, did you have a cot at least?

MM: Yeah, we did, yeah. A mattress roll. We had showers.

TS: Hot showers?

MM: Yeah, hot showers. The food—we had green eggs, powdered eggs. And one time, we almost ran out of food. We—one other nurse and I, we got a bicycle for somewhere, you know, and we were out in the country on the bicycles, and we'd find nuts, so we'd fill up on nuts. [laughs]

TS: Were they good?

MM: Yeah, yeah.

TS: Did you feel pretty safe, out there in the countryside?

MM: Yeah, well, it was that little town, Aversa, and the little kids, everywhere you went, the little kids were just following you around.

TS: Were they hoping that you would give them something, or just wanting to be around you?

MM: Oh, just curious about who we were, you know, and so forth.

TS: I see. Did you get much time to do anything like that? It seems like you worked a lot of hours.

MM: Well, there—there wasn't too much to do sometimes. We'd ride into Naples, but they'd always have an air raid. And we couldn't—in the air raid—you put that smoke up, you know, when air raids are coming. They turned on the emergency horn, and we'd go to Naples and we couldn't find our way home.

TS: Oh, because of the smoke?

MM: Yeah.

TS: So what'd you do?

MM: And really, there wasn't—there wasn't much to do. Oh, I—we went to—where's that, the volcano. Pompeii?

TS: Right, Pompeii. What was that like? That would have been interesting to see.

MM: Yeah. One Sunday afternoon, we went [to the top?], and it showed—you know, where the old city was, and where the volcano, you know, came down. In Naples—there was—I can't think where, this wasn't in—must have been in—[pause] A play, what was it. It'll come. And we—no, I don't know anyplace else that we went.

TS: You went and saw a play somewhere, though?

MM: We went somewhere to a play. Can't remember where that was. But we didn't have much time.

TS: Right. Maybe like a couple day pass or something?

MM: Oh, we did—we went to Capri, to the isle of Capri.

TS: How was that?

MM: That was nice. They had—I can remember the fruit, had a lot of fruit there. And beautiful isle, beautiful. And then, one time we went to Rome. And the Swiss guards at the Vatican, saw that. And the—not the priest, but what's he—

TS: Bishop, or cardinals?

MM: The cardinal—well, the head man. Whatever he's called. I'm Baptist, and there were several Catholic nurses. So—

TS: Oh, the Pope, did you see the Pope?

MM: The Pope!

TS: You saw the Pope?

MM: I saw the Pope.

TS: Where did you see him at?

MM: In his—in where he stays.

TS: In the Vatican?

MM: In the Vatican. And the—the Catholic nurses bought beads, and—

TS: The rosary?

MM: Hm?

TS: The rosary?

MM: Yeah, rosary, though I'm not a Catholic. And he—we're sitting here, [unclear] up, and he comes down and he blesses a rosary, and they send them home.

TS: I bet they did, yeah.

MM: The ones I was holding, you know?

TS: You had some too, you were holding for him?

MM: Yeah, everybody wanted me to hold some for him. I said "Well, will it go through me to the rosary? I'm not a Catholic." But, yeah.

TS: Well, that's a neat story.

MM: Yeah. And, let's see. We went there—I remember that trip and a trip to the isle of Capri.

TS: Now, you were—you would have been in Italy for almost two years? Is that right? That's a long time that you were in the war, for that part of the—

MM: Yeah. Yeah.

TS: —the world. Was it draining on you at all? Did—

MM: Yeah, in a way. But I tried to keep a positive attitude, you know. You can make yourself very unhappy if you want to, but.

TS: Yeah. Well, I was just thinking, you know, when your father died, you couldn't go back for the funeral or service.

MM: I know.

TS: That must have been very tough.

MM: Yeah.

TS: How'd you get through that period?

MM: Well, I knew that the way it was, it couldn't be any other way, you know, so.

TS: Did you try—did you ask for time? Or not even, you just didn't think that—

MM: No.

TS: Wouldn't let you go?

MM: No way. I mean, how would I—how would I have—I didn't want to come on a submarine.

TS: Oh, yeah. Would have been tough to get back, you mean.

MM: Very tough. Be impossible to get back.

TS: So you stayed in Italy until the end of the war in Europe. Actually, you were there before even D-Day, right? When they were doing the southern, like you say, through the boot of Italy, the southern strategy.

MM: We—they made an invasion on southern France, see, like—you know, they came from England, and then they came around southern France, and they flew all those patients to us in Italy.

TS: And you were a stationary hospital, is that right?

MM: Station hospital, yes.

TS: Station hospital?

MM: Station, yes.

TS: Did you notice, like, as the war was going, the flow of injured coming into the hospital—I mean, was there like—was there a constant flow of patients coming in, or was there like an ebb and flow?

MM: When we—it was sort of constant with the German prisoners. They'd call us and we'd know how many to expect. They'd fly them. And they told us a certain number, and we were missing one, and I kept asking about him, and nobody would tell me. So finally, they said he got disruptive and they pushed him out of the plane.

TS: Oh. Hm.

MM: You know. The nurses might have had more patience, but our fighting men, now, they didn't have much patience for anybody. [chuckling] No.

TS: Yeah, they saw some things up close and personal, too, there.

MM: Yeah.

TS: So, when you—a couple things happened, also, while you were in Italy. One of the things was that President Roosevelt died. Did you hear about that right away, or?

MM: Well, let me tell you about that. That was so funny. We were on night duty, and I—somebody got the message, in another war—I didn't know who got the message, but I know they told me I left my ward and went to where people—and my roommate, one of the five, she left her ward and went there. I've forgotten what her name was, now. So they told us he had died. And she started to cry.

I thought "Well, I know she didn't think that much of Roosevelt."

She said "That man that's going to be president doesn't even know we're over here, we won't ever get home." [laughs]

TS: That's why she was crying? [chuckles]

MM: I said "Well, we'll try to get word to him that we're here." [laughs]

But she said "We won't ever get home, because he doesn't know we're here."

TS: What did you think of President Roosevelt?

MM: I liked him.

TS: Yeah. Why, why did you like him?

MM: Hm?

TS: Why did you like him?

MM: I thought he did a great thing for our country in that Great Depression that I lived through.

TS: What kind of things do you think that he did that helped?

MM: Well, the—I know it helped my dad, what did they call it, the—not the CPA, the EPA or whatever it was.

TS: WPA?

MM: WPA. Everybody was to have an outside toilet or something, you know, had to have something. And he sold a lot of lumber to the WPA.

TS: [chuckles] For making those toilets, huh?

MM: Yeah.

TS: Did you happen to listen to him much on the radio when you were back home?

MM: Listen to?

TS: To the president? Before you went overseas? You know, how he did his fireside chats and things like that.

MM: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I listened. Now, my—I think my dad and one brother was a Republican. Yeah.

TS: Did they like Roosevelt or not?

MM: I can't remember much, but they probably didn't, since they were Republicans.

TS: Yeah. And did you—what did you think of Eleanor Roosevelt?

MM: I thought she was a busy lady.

TS: Busy?

MM: Yeah. Yeah, she got things done, yeah. Some people didn't like her, but I thought she did some good.

TS: You know, one thing I guess I didn't ask you was, at the time the army was segregated for the African-Americans and the rest of the soldiers. Did you see any of that during your time in the Army Nurses Corps? Did you have any African-American nurses that served with you? None?

MM: We—I know on the ship, now I don't know who they were with, but I saw some African-Americans on the ship when we all got off in the Panama Canal. But let me tell you more about coming home.

TS: Well, before—coming home to—from the Philippines? Can we go back to the Philippines first? Because you had stepped off into a rice field and that's where we left you, so I hadn't heard about what happened after that.

MM: Well, we stayed in that rice—in that rice field for three months, doing nothing but surviving. These Philippinos[sic] had motorcycles and we'd to hitch a ride on the back of a motorcycle and go into Manila. [laughs]

TS: What was that like, what was Manila like?

MM: Well, it had been bombed. It seems that a lot of bridges in the Philippines had been—and, like, you're here and you want to go here and here's the river, you've got to go way down here and come back.

TS: Go all the way around? Hm.

MM: We—I don't know anything we did. Well, we did do that.

TS: How were the people, the Philippinos?

MM: They were friendly. We had to—we had the outside toilets, you know, and they had an MP station—if, after dark, you needed to go to the restroom, you had to be escorted there and back.

TS: Why?

MM: Because they said there were soldiers that had gone AWOL, they were hiding out in the Philippines. And they didn't know the war was over, and they were afraid for us not to have some protection. I remember that. And the water was terrible, I remember that. And

it was hot. We had mosquito nettings on our cots, and in the morning you'd have to shake the lizards out of your shoes. [laughs] Now, that was roughing it.

TS: You had a lot of different climates that you were in, I would think.

MM: Yeah. And we—you got—the highest numbers came home first. How long you'd been in the service, how long you had been out of the States, how close you were to the front lines, and so on and so forth, added up your points. So our men, our corpsmen and doctors went to Japan to set up a hospital. And the nurses waited to come home. So we came—we came on a hospital ship.

TS: To come home?

MM: To come home.

TS: Were you treating patients, then, on the way home?

MM: No.

TS: You were just on the ship going home.

MM: There was a—there were bunks in this big room and there were Coke bottles and the ship would—all the bottles would go this way, then all the bottles—your skin was never dry in the Philippines, and my skin just broke down. My face, my arms, my chest, was just almost raw. So I—during that—they took me to surgery, I don't know what they did.

TS: What kind of condition, is that called something? Is there a name for that?

MM: We called it jungle rot. [laughs]

TS: Okay. That'll work. That'll work for a name. [chuckles]

MM: Not a nice name. Yeah, they thought I had jungle rot. So, we got into port and I guess it was San Diego. And I was all bandaged up and had on my uniform, as much as I could wear. So I didn't know where to go or what to do, so I went and sat down somewhere. And I looked at a tag, it said "Direct casualty from overseas".

TS: [laughs]

MM: And finally, some ambulance driver came by and picked me up and took me to a hospital at Riverside, California, I guess that's what it was. And I heard a plane coming, and I was sitting up in the seat beside him, and I jumped down in the floor. [laughs] I was so embarrassed.

He said "That's all right, lieutenant, they're not going to hurt you."

TS: Well, you had a reaction from being in a war zone, for—

MM: Only thing I knew to do was to get in the floor. So I—I went to Riverside and stayed there about a week. [clock chimes] Then we got on—there's another nurse—we got on a train and came to Fort Sheridan. And they let all the service people go to the dining room first on the plane—on the train. And some of those people just fussed and fussed.

I said "Well, I want to go back in service, we did look out for each other." Because they let us eat first. See, we didn't have to pay, so that was a consideration, I guess.

TS: Who was it that was fussing?

MM: The people on the train.

TS: Like the civilian people?

MM: Yeah, civilians.

TS: They didn't think you should go first?

MM: Yeah, I guess they wanted to go first. But anyway, we got to Fort—the train stopped right out in a field somewhere. And we had to walk up to—to Fort Sheridan. Then met my brother there, and we got to Cincinnati, and we were supposed to get there at a certain time. My oldest brother lived in Lexington, Kentucky, and he was going to meet us, and we weren't there and we weren't there, so he came back home. So I think it was Sunday morning, and we got a bus from Cincinnati to Lexington.

TS: You and your brother both got out at the same time? The younger brother?

MM: Now, let's see.

TS: Or maybe he was just traveling.

MM: He was on—yeah, he was on leave.

TS: Oh, that's right, because he stayed in, that's right.

MM: He stayed in.

TS: Huh. So what'd you think about finally getting out of the service? Did you ever give a thought to staying in?

MM: No, I did give a thought, and I thought I wanted to stay in. But then I wanted to finish my education. See, I had one year and one summer school left at Meredith College, to get my bachelor's degree. So—but I did—I worked in nursing, I was director of nursing in two

hospitals in Lexington, Kentucky. I guess, yeah, so I got to—got my bachelor's degree in '47.

TS: And did you use the GI Bill for that?

MM: No.

TS: Yeah?

MM: And then I went to Kentucky University and got a master's in sociology. And that was in '47—'49. And then, it seems like I went back into nursing.

TS: When did you get your PhD?

MM: In 1966.

TS: Little bit later.

MM: Yes. I was the director of nurses at this Baptist hospital in Louisville, Kentucky, and I resigned in '63 and went back and got the PhD in '66. And then I—I taught at University of Kentucky for three years.

TS: What'd you teach?

MM: I taught personality. And then I taught—it was in the—oh, I taught a master's—it was a master's program in rehabilitation counseling. Rehabilitation counseling. And I did my PhD on the anxiety level of mentally and physically handicapped patients, I think that's what it was. But after I did that, I thought the PhD, and you might not agree—but first of all, I had to learn—this has nothing to do with the war.

TS: That's okay.

MM: I had to learn to read two foreign languages, French and German. That was a requirement for the PhD. Well, French, I had no trouble. German, I didn't know the first thing about German. So I got a tutor. And so, passed those. But when I look back on it, doing a PhD is learning how to do research. And it doesn't make too much difference what your topic is, but you got to learn to do research, you know. I had five chapters. First of all, you know, why do you want to do this, what's the purpose of this, and so on and so on, I've forgotten all that. Then review all the material that's covered this, review all the literature. And then, tell us how you're going to do this, what method you're going to use and so forth. And then I'd begun to review all the information on that. And then, what your hypothesis is. You're going to prove it or disprove it. And so then, you go out and do your fieldwork. And then you come back and say how you're going to analyze this work. Now, is that what you think of a PhD?

TS: Sounds pretty similar, yup, actually.

MM: Yeah.

TS: Yup, sure does, sure does. Well, did you have any trouble adjusting back to civilian life at all, after?

MM: Yeah, I did.

TS: In what ways?

MM: Well, it started on the train. When people are—thinks about themselves, you know. Our whole thoughts and attitudes and work had been helping others, helping others, day and night, helping others. And I know I didn't have any hose. One of the girls had two pairs, she gave me one pair of hose, you know, things like this.

TS: Right.

MM: We helped. I got out in this society, everybody's so selfish, they think about themselves and they don't think about other people. Yeah, it was hard. I can remember, the first time I went in a grocery store, I sat there and cried because I saw all that food. I looked at all this food and I didn't have even one can.

TS: When you were over in Italy? You mean when you were over in Italy, you didn't have a can? Yeah. How long do you think it took you to cope with that?

MM: Not long. I often tell people that I'm so thankful for my training and education, I went into nursing. If I never made a penny nursing, I understood my body and how it works and how it doesn't work. And then I went into psychology, and I know what my hang-ups are and what I can do about them. I know what other people's hang-ups are, if they would do something about it. [laughter] So I learned my body and I learned my mind.

TS: That's right.

MM: Yeah.

TS: Well, do you think—and I—did you think of yourself as an independent type of person?

MM: Yes.

TS: All your life?

MM: Yes.

TS: Do you think being—anything about the military changed—and not just the experience, but the military itself, did it do anything, did it change your life in any way?

MM: Yeah. You know, the military rules, the procedures and all, yeah, yeah, you got to be prompt, you know. You've got to do what you've been assigned to do, and things like that, you know, in military.

TS: Had you been—did that help shape you in that way a little bit more, were you—

MM: Yeah. I was already—had some of those tendencies, but I think that sort of reinforced them. And then when I—I think other people wonder why they act like they do.

TS: In what way?

MM: Being selfish. Not being—not observing other people's needs. [pause] You know, when I was in nursing, I could go in my patient's room and look at them and know whether they were all right or they were not all right. And I'd sit them down, "Now, what's bothering you?" You know. Observing the expression on their face, their attitude, you know.

TS: You didn't necessarily need them hooked up to a machine to see that, right?

MM: Yeah, that's right.

TS: You could just look at them and tell, something's wrong.

MM: Yeah.

TS: Changed a little bit, today, maybe, huh?

MM: Yeah.

TS: Well, you had told me earlier, before we started the tape, I asked you if you'd ever used your GI Bill for getting a house, and you had a comment that you made about that.

MM: Yeah, I told you I used it.

TS: You said you used it for your GI—your education, but when you went to buy a house?

MM: Absolutely.

TS: What happened?

MM: I took a day off, drove all the way to Louisville, my husband and myself, we went in and we asked about it, and it was a very short answer with no explanation.

"No, you cannot get a GI loan, you may get pregnant. Goodbye." Now, some good people might think I'm just telling a tale. But I am not.

TS: So what did you do?

MM: I thought "Well, they sure appreciate my service."

TS: Was your husband in the service?

MM: No.

TS: So that's why you were trying to get it on your service. I see.

MM: But I was a female and I might get pregnant, not ever pay it back.

TS: And you had mentioned that that still irks you a little.

MM: Yeah. Now, what would have been—if that happened today—

TS: That would be discrimination. It probably was discrimination, actually, back then, too, because they could—

MM: That was about nineteen and fifty-two or three.

TS: Yeah, I think—I'm not sure on the details of it, but it might have been discrimination at that point, that particular lender wasn't following the rules. But I'm not sure, that's something I'd have to check out.

MM: It happened in Louisville, Kentucky, wherever they told us to go.

TS: Yeah. Well, was there anything that you think—any way that your life has been different, you think, because of your time in the military and the experience that you had in war?

MM: Yeah, it's been different. I think I tend to have a concern about people who are disadvantaged or in a crisis or, you know, like Japan, you know, I think that's—

TS: Japan where they just had the tsunami?

MM: Yeah.

TS: Yeah. And the earthquake.

MM: I give to World Vision, that helps people in fifty-four countries. I give to Samaritan's Purse, that's Franklin Graham's, he had all this—how many, thousands of supplies shown on television that's being flown to Japan.

TS: Does it make you look at the wars in Afghan—in Afghanistan and Iraq any differently, maybe?

MM: Yeah. I—in Italy, I had a ward right next to surgery. All of my patients were not expected to live, they came from surgery there. I stood and watched them die, and I thought "How I wish your mother or your wife or somebody—your father, could be with you where I am." You know.

TS: Was that one of the hardest things for you?

MM: Yeah. That was hard. They had a sign on the door. No admittance, you know, nobody come in that ward. And there was some entertainer from America, I forgot who he was, that came through the door with two or three people behind him, and the photographers with him, and all.

And I said "Can't you read? Did you read that sign?"

And he sort of gave me a hard look and went on out. [laughs]

TS: Chased him off, did you?

MM: Yeah. He thought "Well, do you know who you're talking to?"

And I thought "Well, I sure do know, you're not supposed to be in this room."

TS: Did you ever get to see any of those USO shows or anything like that?

MM: No, they never came where we were. I guess—well, I don't know. I see on television, you know, where they go, but—General Eisenhower passed, I don't think he came in. He was in a Jeep that came by our hospital one time.

TS: Who are you talking about?

MM: General Eisenhower.

TS: General Eisenhower, okay.

MM: Yup.

TS: What'd you think of him?

MM: I thought he did a good job.

TS: And what'd you think of MacArthur?

MM: No, because he wouldn't let us come home!

TS: I kind of had a feeling that's what you were going to say. [laughter]

MM: You can't imagine how disappointed we were.

TS: So what did happen do you when you guys threw your bags off the ship into the drink?

MM: Well, see, the greatest shock was when we were still in Italy.

TS: Why?

MM: They told us we couldn't come—we won our war. That's what—we won our war.

TS: Right.

MM: Why can't we go home? And the word comes back that MacArthur wants experienced personnel. Nurses here begging to go, they wanted to go.

TS: Here in the United States?

MM: Yeah. And then, we booed the navy band, and then we got about the middle of the Pacific, we knew that ship was going to turn right around and bring us home, because they dropped the bomb, and they surrendered. Yeah. And we got home in December.

TS: That took you a little while to get back home, then.

MM: Yeah.

TS: Well, we've talked—the other thing I was going to ask you, too, is—what do you think about yourself as a pioneer in the military, with the service that you did? Do you ever think about yourself as being like a trailblazer for other women that came after you?

MM: No, I guess—I guess not. I—well, you know, there were people before me, you know, Florence Nightingale. [laughs] I guess—well, they didn't have nurses in—well, I know they didn't in the Civil War, but World War I—did World War I have nurses?

TS: There were nurses in World War I, yes.

MM: And they were overseas.

TS: I don't think to the extent that—

MM: Were they officers?

TS: I think they've always been officers, yeah, I believe so. I think there were some Yeomanettes, too, that where in the navy, that—I don't know if they went overseas or not, though. Yeah.

MM: I don't know.

TS: So you see that some people were before you.

MM: Yeah, some people were before me.

TS: And then there's a whole lot that came after you, too. So a lot of people would say, you know, you were a pioneer.

MM: The—what did they call them. The non-officers that was in the war, they drove the jeeps and so forth. What were they called?

TS: Like the NCOs [non-commissioned officers]? The—not sure what you mean.

MM: No, they had a name.

TS: I'm sure they do. Were they women?

MM: They were women.

TS: And they drove—were they enlisted?

MM: They enlisted.

TS: I'm not sure what they were called. Not sure.

MM: And none of them—well, I guess their leaders were probably—but anyways, somebody would ask us if we were one of them and we'd say "Absolutely not."

TS: What would you tell them that you were?

MM: We would say we were nurses and we were officers.

TS: Were you proud to be an officer?

MM: Yeah, yeah. And—well, now, at our church, they put our pictures up and recognized all veterans. And I was the only officer.

TS: Is that right?

MM: And the only woman.

TS: Well, you outranked them all, then.

MM: Yeah. About thirty of us.

TS: And you were the only officer and the only woman?

MM: Yes.

TS: How about that.

MM: Well, and most of them were the Vietnam or the Gulf War, or now maybe—

TS: Iraq or Afghanistan? Yeah. Well, we sure have covered a lot of territory today. Well, what—oh, here's the other question. I keep thinking, what do you think of, today, about some of the roles that women play? You know, there's fighter jets now, that are women.

MM: Yeah. I like it.

TS: You like it?

MM: Yeah.

TS: So you don't have a problem with women in combat?

MM: No.

TS: I think you had that shrapnel six inches from you, so you qualify, for sure, for that. [chuckling] Don't you? Why don't you—because there's a lot of opposition to it. Why are you—

MM: To women in combat?

TS: Yes.

MM: Well, I think if that's what they want—I wouldn't want to have to carry a gun or, you know. I don't see—if they have as much ability to do whatever they want to do as a man has, you know, whatever it is, I think they ought to have equal opportunity.

TS: So if you'd had a daughter that wanted to go in the military, what would you say to her?

MM: If she wanted to do it, I would hate to say "No, you can't do it." Yeah. We got a—there's a family in our church, the son is married—do they have children? I don't remember whether—the son is married, and he—his wife—he's in Afghanistan but not in the service, he's with a company that does something.

TS: Like a contractor?

MM: Yeah. But he was home for two weeks and is going back, and his wife, she could not go to the airport to see him off, so his father took him to the airport. And he's—he's thinking about signing up for another year. And I just fussed about it. I said "People married are supposed to live together, not one in Afghanistan and one in Raleigh." And it just tears her to pieces every time the phone rings. And I don't—I don't think he's being fair to her.

TS: Makes it hard on her.

MM: Yeah.

TS: Well, is there anything—can you think of anything that we haven't talked about that you might want to add?

MM: [laughing] I think I've really done a good job.

TS: I think you've done a good job, too, yeah. You remembered a whole bunch of stuff, you said.

MM: Told you about everything I know

TS: Yeah. Well, that's—

MM: I—there was the dean at Meredith [College], on Memorial Day, he called and thanked me for my service, and he said he was talking to one of the reporters for the News and Observer and asked him did he want to interview me, and he said no, he didn't. I said, well—

TS: When was that?

MM: About a year or so ago.

TS: Is that right? Well, he missed out on a good story, I think. [laughter]

MM: Well, I get—I get in some funny situations, you know, and I like to talk about the funny situations I get in.

TS: But you had a difficult time, too.

MM: Yeah, but I don't have any bad results from it.

TS: That's good.

MM: Yeah. You know, I wanted to go and I go, and I did the best I could, and I don't regret it, and I would do it again. And I wouldn't throw my gear overboard.

TS: [laughs] Well, maybe you would, maybe you would. Well, Marie, if you don't have anything else you want to add, I think we can go ahead and shut the tape off, but I want to thank you very much.

MM: I was thinking, did I get into any more scrapes?

TS: Oh, did you?

MM: [laughing] I can't think of any.

TS: Let's see if we have any other ones. You probably have some things you'll be thinking about tonight, since we talked about it, so.

MM: Yeah. Oh, I had some more pictures, but maybe I could send—I don't know where I could find them, now, but I do have the one on the table there, of just—did you want to take that one?

TS: Yeah, let me go ahead and shut this off, we can maybe take a look at it then. So, thank you again.

[End of Interview]