WOMEN VETERANS HISTORICAL PROJECT

ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

INTERVIEWEE: Wanda Wills

INTERVIEWER: Eric Elliott

DATE: October 17, 2002

[Interviewee made significant changes to transcript. Some of these are indicated with brackets.]

[Begin Interview]

EE: This is Eric Elliott. It is October 17, 2002, and I'm in Bermuda Run, North Carolina, here this morning at the home of Wanda Willis.

WW: Wills.

EE: Wills. Oh, excuse me. Thank you very much. It's important to know who you're interviewing. I'm a double L, double T, and Mrs. Wills is a W-I-L-L-S, for the record.
I sure do appreciate you sitting down with us this morning. This is an interview for the Women Veterans Historical Project at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Miss Wills, I'm going to just start with you with the same simple question that I ask of most folks, and that is, could you just tell us, where were you born, and where did you grow up?

WW: I was born in Sparta, North Carolina, and grew up on a farm there. My father was a farmer.

EE: Great. So your mom, was she a housekeeper, or did she have other work?

WW: Yes, she was a housekeeper, although she had been to Boone. She could have been a teacher, but she stayed home and had children.

EE: Right. How many brothers and sisters did you have?

WW: I had two sisters and one brother.

EE: And you're oldest, youngest, in the middle?

WW: I'm the oldest.

EE: Let's see. You grew up in the twenties, I guess.

WW: Yes.

EE: What's your earliest childhood memory of life on the farm?

WW: That's hard to recall. I really can't. I can remember that my father planted the first tobacco in Alleghany County, and I can remember them being so careful about spreading the leaf out and grading it, and then going through all the rigmarole, because it was a new crop for farmers there, burley tobacco.

EE: Right. So you all had a smokehouse on your property?

WW: We don't smoke the burley. They cut it and hang it in barns.

EE: Okay.

WW: Different from down here.

EE: So you went to school there in Sparta.

WW: Yes. I went to Toliver, a one-room schoolhouse, until the seventh grade. Then I went to Sparta High School and graduated in 1935.

EE: Now, North Carolina was an eleven-year school back then, wasn't it? It wasn't twelve at that time.

WW: That's right. Yes, eleventh grade.

EE: Did you have a favorite subject in school?

WW: My favorite subject was history. Yes.

EE: Do you remember—because farmers may have felt it differently than folks living in the city—do you remember anything about the Depression, when it hit for you all?

WW: Well, I do remember that we had very little money. We didn't get an allowance. In fact, we grew practically everything that we ate, except sugar and coffee, because the farm and the garden were self-sufficient back then. They had millers to grind the meal and the flour. We had to work hard in the summertime, when the garden was in [due to a lot of canning.]

EE: When you finished high school, did you have an inkling of what you wanted to be when you grew up?

WW: I wanted to be a nurse.

EE: Now, how did you get this idea?

WW: I read about Florence Nightingale, and I think it influenced me. Nobody in my family wanted me to be a nurse, including my grandfather. How I succeeded in doing this, I don't know, but I recall that my grandmother came down and helped my mother make my uniforms, which consisted of a little blue chambray dress and a white apron and a white bib.

EE: But you actually had to go and you were at a hospital to take nurse's training. Was there one nearby in Sparta?

WW: No. I had to go away. First time I'd been away. No, I take this back. I had been to Pennsylvania, to Philadelphia. A friend of my mother's took me to Hahnemann Hospital in Philadelphia, into the chief nurse's office, and said, "My friend's daughter wants to be a nurse." Just like—

EE: [laughs] Here she is. Take her.

WW: And they said, "Well, we have classes in the spring and in the fall, and she has to apply." This was what my friend knew about nursing, even though they had lived in Pennsylvania for a long time. [I did not apply. Since I was only sixteen, I returned home, enrolled in school.] I went back to school and took chemistry because I wanted to go to the University of Maryland for the five-year program and it was required. They wore the Florence Nightingale caps.

EE: Oh, that was it.

WW: That was the reason for wanting to go to—as well as getting my B.S. degree. But somehow, and I cannot recall how I ended up at Sinai. I applied at Johns Hopkins, but they were trained for administrative jobs, and I didn't want that. Later, when I was affiliating for my psychiatric training at Shepard and Pratt, [I ran into some nurses who were wearing the Florence Nightingale caps from St. Thomas in London. They were University of Maryland students. The University of Maryland had the rights to the cap—as had bought the—whatever it was—the privilege to wear it, from St. Thomas's in London for $15,000. Their cap was all lace and it cost them five dollars to have them fluted.]

EE: That was a lot of money.

WW: —five dollars was a lot of money. That was about our monthly allowance, because we didn't make any money.

EE: You know, a lot of folks I talk to, the cost pretty much prohibited them from going much farther than their local area. Your family had to pull together some resources to send you.

WW: [I came from Advance, North Carolina to visit a friend with whom I attended high school through the tenth grade. Her father took us to Winston Salem to catch the Greyhound bus to Baltimore.]

EE: So you had somebody going up to Virginia.

WW: I had somebody to go with me, yes.

EE: Right. What's her name?

WW: Her name was Madeline Smith, and she is no longer with us.

EE: But she's from right around here at Advance.

WW: Yes, she's from Advance.

EE: And you met her during the chemistry course that you took?

WW: No, before that, in the high school. But her folks had moved down here from Roaring Gap, North Carolina.

EE: How was the nurses' training?

[Telephone rings. Tape recorder turned off.]

EE: What was your experience at the nursing school like?

WW: Well, it was a whole new experience, but we had very good instructors. We were taught the [Johns] Hopkins technique.

EE: Hopkins technique—what do you mean by that?

WW: We had several [Johns] Hopkins doctors there. It was the nursing [and sterile technique practiced and used by the Johns Hopkins doctors and nurses.]

EE: In other words, a way of keeping everything sanitary throughout the whole process. No infections.

WW: As well as ethics and [their entire teaching plan.]

EE: Okay, so a whole pedagogical way of doing it.

WW: Yes, that whole thing.

EE: Now, you're living, I guess they have a nurses' dorm right there. You're going to school and working every day.

WW: Yes, in the nursing quarters.

EE: First experience living with a large number of people not related to you.

WW: That's right.

EE: And how was that for you?

WW: Well, we had one roommate, and my roommate was from New Jersey. She was a very nice person. Of course, you know, she'd been living up north. [Since I was from a small mountainous county in North Carolina], she taught me a lot.

EE: I was going to say, you taught them about grits?

WW: Yes. Yes. But they preferred their scrambled eggs with ketchup [rather than grits] which we couldn't understand. But it was a whole different way of life.

EE: Right. When you were there, did you figure out—did you have a kind of nursing that you preferred one over the other? I assume they gave you kind of a tour of the different things.

WW: Well, we had to do everything. I always thought I wanted to do public health. That was the type of nursing I really wanted to do, but I never had a chance. We did medical, surgical, obstetrical, and we had training in each section.

EE: Now, did you have any kind of a scholarship help at that time, or was it—

WW: No.

EE: —you basically took your—did they pay you for what you worked?

WW: No. No pay.

EE: Wow. So you're pretty much on a tight budget.

WW: You had to furnish your own uniforms. They did your laundry.

EE: You said your family did the uniforms for you.

WW: Yes, that's right.

EE: It's a three-year course of study. When you get out from Sinai, did you come back to Sparta? Did you stay up there?

WW: No, I stayed there, and then went in that year in the service. I stayed there and worked on the obstetric.

EE: So you went in in '36 to Sinai, finished in '39.

WW: Yes.

EE: And did you tell me you had a short stint in the Red Cross?

WW: No. All we did, we got that Red Cross pin.

EE: You got the Red Cross pin.

WW: We joined the Red Cross. That's all we did.

EE: But you were still an R.N. on staff.

WW: Oh yes.

EE: There at the same hospital?

WW: Yes, same hospital. We joined the Red Cross [and were on call for major emergencies]

EE: Right. Some emergency, you were on standby to help out.

WW: Yes. You know, if your section could let you go. That's all that Red Cross had to do. We were just very proud of the pin.

EE: That's right. You're aged about twenty, I guess, by the time that you finish your training.

WW: Yes, I guess.

EE: Most twenty-year-olds don't really read the newspaper a lot, or what's going on in the world. How aware were you of world events as things were going on in Europe, and political stuff?

WW: Not very. Not very much aware.

EE: So how did you get the idea to join the army?

WW: In Baltimore they kept saying how badly they needed nurses. They were expanding the medical department in the army. [Henry L.] Stimson, who was the head of the War

Department, [spoke at a meeting telling us how badly they needed nurses. I was sworn in March 1940 in Baltimore and was assigned to Fort Belvoir, Virginia, which had expanded from a fifty-bed hospital to 1,000 beds.]

EE: When you signed on, you thought it was for a year commitment.

WW: That's right, one year.

EE: One year. So was its appeal for just one year out of patriotic duty, or were they giving you more money? How was the money, compared to what you were making before?

WW: The money was the same. Seventy dollars a month.

EE: Which won't go a long way these days. [Wills laughs.] They furnished everything else.

WW: They furnished room and board, and your uniforms.

EE: So that was like making extra money right there.

WW: Yes.

EE: Because you had to cover that yourself before.

WW: Yes.

EE: Okay. So you were thinking that you were going to be getting out in December of '41. Is that when you were planning on getting out, December of '41, or December of—

WW: Well, we were planning on getting out in March of '41—

EE: Right. You joined in March of '40.

WW: —when they declared war in December.

EE: Right. Right. But what happened was, I guess, is that when Germany invades, you're stuck—

WW: Yes.

EE: —because the war started in Europe and they're not wanting to let people go, because they're worried about needing to build up arms strength.

WW: Well, see, it hadn't come up yet.

EE: So when March of '41 comes around and they say, "We need to hold you for a while," what's your reaction?

WW: [laughs] Well, by that time we were liking the service. I mean, we were busy. Here I was a little second lieutenant, made a charge nurse of the NP section because I had worked at Shepard and Pratt [sic] with the Doctor Wagner, who was the head of it. And he put all three of us—from Sinai—on the NP section, because he wanted people that knew his technique.

EE: So you were in the right place at the right time, sounds like.

WW: Then we got in that psychiatric bit.

EE: Do you remember Pearl Harbor Day? Where were you Pearl Harbor Day?

WW: Oh, yes, I definitely remember. I was on night duty on the psychiatric ward, the locked ward we called it, or the security ward. I had a knock on the door and this patient [who had been granted special permissions to attend the movies, under guard, knocked on the door] and he wanted in. We were told to send him back to his outfit, and that's what we told him. He said, "Oh, I can't go over there. They'll shoot me."

And I said, "That's the orders. You can't come here. You have to go to your outfit." Definitely I remember that, because we listened all night to the news, and [everybody was ordered back to his/her post because of Pearl Harbor].

EE: So, immediately there was a change.

WW: Oh, immediately.

EE: You didn't have to wait for the president's speech the next day. You knew it was coming.

WW: No. We would have been given the orders. [All military personnel came back to their outfits]

EE: You ended up staying at Belvoir for another year and half, didn't you, through '43?

WW: Yes. Yes. Until '43, I stayed there.

EE: You were on the NP ward the whole time?

WW: Well, and then in the chief nurse's office.

EE: Okay.

WW: I had the charge—we had nine NP wards then, nine sixty-bed [wards].

EE: This is when it goes from a twenty-five bed—

WW: Well, see, they'll build it to a—

EE: A thousand.

WW: —a thousand beds, they were all barracks, that barracks-type building.

EE: What were the folks back home thinking about you being in the service as the war starts?

WW: Oh, they were very concerned about it, but I think they were kind of proud, too.

EE: Did any of your siblings join the service in any way?

WW: Well, my brother later was in the air force, but he was very young then. He hadn't even finished high school.

EE: Had your dad ever been in the service?

WW: No.

EE: So you were blazing the trail for the [unclear].

WW: I had an uncle who had been in, in World War I. Yes. But not my father. My father was married, so he didn't [have to go in the service. Also he was a farmer and they were needed to help grow food.]

EE: How did you get from Belvoir to McKinney, [Texas]? Was that a request you made?

WW: No. I was transferred [to a new general hospital because they were getting patients being brought from the South Pacific] with a lot of horrible diseases, and they needed nurses.

EE: So the things that your patients needed treating, you can follow the progress of the war by what's coming back on the floor.

WW: Well, somewhat, those from South Pacific had elephantitis and all sorts of diseases.

EE: So a lot of chronic problems, it sounds like.

WW: Yes, and wounds, too. They'd come in to Dallas by train. I guess they'd come in the West Coast by ship. At that time they were afraid on the West Coast of Japan, you see. You know, they had blackouts and everything.

EE: Here on the coast where we were, they had German subs off the coast.

WW: Yes. And they were moving patients inward. That's why they have the big hospital there at McKinney.

EE: Did you volunteer for the work that would take you overseas, or were you assigned to something?

WW: No, I volunteered for the field hospital. Yes, I waited, and that time I went with a friend, too. That was nice.

EE: So you all decided as a group you were going to go over to—most of the time you had no choice, though, where you were assigned. Here's a chance—

WW: No. Well, the chief nurse of the division came for a visit and we asked her about it. She said they were organizing personnel and I think she kind of got us on there. Yes, most of the time you were just assigned.

EE: Now, you didn't know if you were going to Europe or Africa or South—you just know it was overseas.

WW: We knew it was a field hospital, but we didn't know where we were going.

EE: You end up going back to North Carolina to get this prepared. You were at Fort Bragg. This was the 78th Field Hospital.

WW: Yes. Yes. We trained at Fort Bragg.

EE: How long were you there to do this?

WW: Not long.

EE: Field hospital has about how many people?

WW: Let's see. About seventy-five, I think. It had more than that. We had three platoons—-the headquarters, the second, a jump platoon, and then the third platoon. We had a headquarters and that was called the first one. I think we had twenty nurses and fifteen doctors, and I don't know how many corpsmen. I don't recall.

EE: But the whole idea was to be mobile.

WW: Yes. Ours was the leapfrog platoon, and we were really pleased with it, because we could move and set up within a couple of hours.

EE: You had to be ready to go within a certain amount of time.

WW: Yes. And then the others could follow, but we had to set up and be ready for patients.

EE: Before I get you to Europe, let me ask you a couple of general questions which I ask folks, and nurses have a different—for a lot of the folks who were going to the service, the relationship, they usually—the only woman with a male supervisor and they have

issues—the nurse-doctor relationship sort of stays the same, in and out of service. Doesn't it?

WW: Yes.

EE: It's sort of a team relationship. It's more of a teamwork kind of thing. But you never had any problem. Obviously, at this time, the military and the military lifestyle is suiting you.

WW: Yes. [The military was a big help to the nursing field.]

EE: And you were always treated professionally in that regard.

WW: Yes, we were. And the corpsmen were new to it, too, for the most part, because it was so big. They had very few [regular military then. Thousands of young men were drafted, and for the most part, assigned where needed. There was some sort of a system. But with so many thousands being called up,] we had no problems with the corpsmen.

EE: Are most of the people about your age?

WW: Yes. They were.

EE: So, early twenties.

WW: Yes.

EE: And the doctors are there, I guess, are younger doctors?

WW: They were younger, and there were some older ones. I can remember one doctor we had. They passed an act of Congress to get him in. [laughs]

EE: He was too old and they had to [make a change to the age requirement.]

WW: Yes. And he was a top psychiatrist. That's what they kidded and said, but he was a very well-known one. We had the tops of the medical profession there all through, because, they were drafted. [Doctors, surgeons, and all, as well as the younger ones were drafted for them to train.] It was an unheard of experience, something we'd never had before.

EE: You'd never gone out of the country before.

WW: No.

EE: You leave, this was in, must have been '44. Were you leaving Bragg for England after D-Day or before? You remember D-Day?

WW: Oh, yes. I do. I'm a little mixed up. I think it was before D-Day. It was Christmas Eve when we got on that ship. Christmas of '43.

EE: Usually people remember by whether they're wearing a coat or not. [laughs]

WW: Christmas of '43, yes.

EE: Well, Christmas of '43 would have been right before. It was June '44 was D-Day.

WW: Okay. That's the Christmas of '43, because we were in England.

EE: Okay. You were in England for D-Day.

WW: Yes. The way I recall it.

EE: And then where did you come in, in England? Did you come in in the southern part?

WW: No. We came in in Scotland. I'll never forget it, because we had to ride a train down. We were in Banbury [Oxfordshire, England]. At the old manor house, I think, where *Jane Eyre* was written. It had a hundred rooms, and we took a train from Scotland overnight, and everything was blacked out.

EE: Well, they were ongoing, constant bombardment from Germany at that time.

WW: Oh yes, yes. They were being bombarded constantly, which we didn't know about. It was the first time our unit had been back together since Fort Bragg, because we'd gone over on a navy ship, a rough crossing. A steward said he'd been on the sea for twenty years, and that was the roughest crossing [he had ever experienced.]

The reason I remember this because it was Eve Christmas—we sat down to dinner of mashed potatoes, roast beef, and gravy. The navy had the [table prepared with] china. I was sitting by a post, and that ship pitched and we rolled, and there were pounds of butter, mashed potatoes and gravy. [laughs] And two people, another girl and I, were sitting at the table. The rest had just slid, but I think this post kept me. It was the biggest mess. We never had another meal, a sitting-down meal, till we got to England. But it was really rough, that Atlantic. They lost planes and trucks. We were in a convoy, and they were washed overboard. It was a rough seas.

EE: Did you have any trouble with sub traffic following you, or ships?

WW: Yes. They took us up and showed us the radar. At that time they didn't tell us what it was. They said it was whales. So that night we heard ash cans dropping. They were submarines, German submarines. But we made it without losing anything except those things that were washed overboard in the heavy seas. I never wanted to come back on a ship.

EE: I was going to say that.

WW: I didn't get seasick. No, I said, "When I come back, I want to fly," because you'd go watch the waves and the ship in the back of us would go down. You'd hold your breath until they came back up. We didn't realize we were doing the same thing. And come to find out, I was assigned to come back on the sister ship to the one that [took me over and it wasn't going up and down.] Beautiful crossing coming back, but anyway, that was quite a while after that.

EE: But it only takes one of those to say you're going to swear off it for good, I'm sure.

WW: Yes. Right. I wanted to come home, so I [agreed to take the chance. Actually, I had no choice in the matter. You had to follow orders.]

EE: Were you afraid?

WW: I was afraid, yes. When I got to Southampton all I had was my musette bag and my bedroll on my back. Going to a foreign country, we were really afraid. We were scared. But we got to France, and we went to Verdun, and we had German POWs [prisoners of war], and got sort of organized. You know, the French people were very—well, they were happy to have us there, and we sort of lost our fear.

EE: The English, when you first got there, they were—how did they treat you?

WW: Oh, very, very kind. Very kind.

EE: And you must have been there for a couple of months, getting ready.

WW: Yes, we were.

EE: Were you stationed right outside of London, when you were in England?

WW: We were stationed at Banbury. I know, because I can remember that I tried to tell them at home where I was but it got cut out. You know, "Ride a cock horse to Banbury Cross, rings on her fingers."

EE: That's right.

WW: But they censored all our mail.

EE: You couldn't even come up with little creative—

WW: No. You couldn't do anything. They cut that poem out.

EE: It was too much of a hint.

WW: Yes. We didn't know about blackouts. I was starting to tell you, when we got there we tried to celebrate. We had fresh pork chops. We hadn't had fresh meat on that trip. We

had the lights all on and a bobby came riding up. He says, "You foolish people. You're going to get killed if you don't get those blackout curtains up." And [that night] they bombed that railroad station in that town. I guess if [that bobby] hadn't have come up, I don't know what would have happened.

But [the British people] were very nice. They were very low on food, [which was] rationed. [Each week they had a] small piece of meat for a family. I guess we helped save them.

EE: When you were there in England, were you actively treating patients then that were coming over?

WW: No. We were just organizing. Not until—after we got there, then they put us on temporary duty, TDY, they call it, with these general hospitals where we did treat.

EE: So you sort of were scattered to the different places.

WW: Until they got ready—yes, that's right, in the big general hospitals. And, oh, they were burn patients from tank burns [and] patients with chest wounds. I can remember this one ward I had. There was a patient from Tennessee. He was a schoolteacher [and] could only move his left arm. Everything else was casted and hurt. He was the "cheerer-upper" of the whole ward. Some of them had horrible wounds. This doctor, the best use I ever saw of medicinal alcohol was what he did to dress wounds, because you have to report it, see. He'd get the dressing cart out and put the bottle on the cart, and after they got their dressing, he would give them a shot. They loved that, and it kept them from having such pain. It kept their courage up. I thought he utilized it very well. [The patients would kid each other, laugh, and have fun. It gave them something to look forward to, other than their pain.]

EE: I wonder, it's also a sign of normalcy in some sense, you know. It's okay.

WW: Yes. And they would kid about it, you know, for like just a little shot of alcohol.

EE: How did you all deal with—you talk about so many people coming in with stress injuries, but that's a lot of stress for you all.

WW: It was. It was stressful.

EE: How did you all deal with the stress?

WW: Well, I think we shined our shoes and got dressed and just did the best we could, because when you had a patient like that, you were so busy, you hardly had time to be [aware of yourself]. I've thought about it later. I honestly don't know. Everybody had such horrible things to deal with. There was a rapport that's hard to explain. It's like I was saying, that doctor thinking up this idea: "When we're doing all this, we'll do something to pick up his spirits."

EE: You're getting from moment to moment, and you're just moving on to get through it.

WW: That's about all you could say about it. But it's odd. You know, today we seem to have so much stress, and I think we were so busy. If you're occupied maybe you're not stressed. I don't know. I have no explanation for it.

EE: Too much time or reflection is not a good thing. [laughs]

WW: Right.

EE: You followed the 3rd [U.S. Army] when you went to Verdun, was the first placement.

WW: Yes.

EE: Was that the first time you had met a German POW? Was it Verdun?

WW: Well, that's the first time we'd seen one. Yes. We had POWs.

EE: Did they work? I know some hospitals had POWs they'd put, you know, as orderlies or whatever else?

WW: They worked some for us. We didn't have much of a hospital there, just sort of a dispensary, because they were trying to get us into the flow. I cannot—it just gets sort of vague because at that time they didn't let us in on a lot of things. We didn't have the news media that you have today. *Stars and Stripes* was our only source.

EE: Regular source.

WW: —regular source of news, and that was very controlled, because I wouldn't say you didn't have freedom of the press, but they didn't want [to tell] a lot of [what they were doing].

EE: That's right. So did most of you find out how the war was going through word of mouth?

WW: That's about the way we found out. We knew some G-2 people who [told us news that was to be kept secret.] So we just knew our little area and what we had to do, and that's mostly what we did, because we were so busy with what we had to do.

EE: How long were you at Verdun when you went over?

WW: I really don't know. I can't remember. From there we went to Belgium, and then from Belgium we went to Germany, and we rode in—

EE: You were in Belgium during the Battle of the Bulge time in December of '44?

WW: No.

EE: Where were you then?

WW: Well, now, see, that came later.

EE: Because I know some folks who were following Patton—did you ever get anything that said what to do if you were captured? Were you all that close to it?

WW: Well, we were. They didn't give us any printed thing. They just told us a few things. I can remember some who went to the Pacific area were given the gun. We weren't.

EE: Did you ever have any training in how to shoot a weapon?

WW: No. Neither did the doctors, as far as I know.

EE: So that wasn't an ongoing fear for you.

WW: We were under the Red Cross, and that was supposed to be our [security].

EE: That was supposed to put you— [as medical personnel].

WW: Yes. All the tents, ambulances, and everything had red crosses on them. That was our protection. And see, the Germans accepted it, whereas the Japanese did not.

EE: There's mention that you saw [General George] Patton one day. Was that just the one time that you saw him?

WW: That's all.

EE: Were you in Belgium then, or was that in Germany?

WW: That was in Belgium, I think. I really can't remember where. Maybe it was Germany. I just don't know. It was very impressive. It must have been Germany.

EE: Kind of a surprise visit, he stopped in on you?

WW: Yes, he stopped in. I've forgot why he stopped. But we saw his jeep, that one with four stars on it. [He was dressed in his] shining helmet and his Eisenhower jacket, or whatever, that Ike jacket. Yes. We weren't presented to him.

EE: My generation grew up watching the movie about him.

WW: Oh yes.

EE: He's got such an imposing figure. Were people intimidated by him, or what was the feeling about him?

WW: Oh, he was imposing. He was. He was. And I think we owe a lot to him. I know when we went to the Remagen Bridge, I got a bolt. If he hadn't pushed—he's the one that pushed the people across and built that bridge across the Rhine. He got the first people across the Rhine, and there were about 250 when it went down, but he just kept them going. That's how he got our beachhead across the Rhine. That was later, as we were coming back, that we saw the Remagen Bridge. But he was a hero to me. [We owe him more than we realize.]

EE: Who else would have been a hero for you?

WW: Well, General Eisenhower was a hero to us. But the one [who was the soldier's general was Generals McNarney and Bradley. I got to meet him. I irrigated his throat one time, and he just died not too long ago. He was General Eisenhower's successor. I can see the fellow [with the big nose] who played him in the movie.

EE: The Karl Malden character. I know who you're talking about.

WW: He was a hero of mine. Isn't that awful, [how one's memory fails at this age]?

EE: I should know his name right off the top of my head.

WW: I do, too. He was General—

EE: But you got to see him in that same—

WW: Yes. I would see him in the Frankfurt dispensary, the headquarters. I wore that patch, the SHAEF [Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force] patch with the flaming sword. There are very few people who wore that patch in the dispensary other than the headquarters group. It was a small group. It wasn't McNarney, doesn't that name bother you?

EE: Yes. We'll come back to it. I'll start and say we'll find that man's name.

WW: And he was a hero to us.

EE: Wasn't Bradley?

WW: Bradley. Omar Bradley. General Bradley. Yes, that's who it was.

EE: Okay. Well, you see, it is funny, because you know, right here's the fellow like he's sitting in my chair.

WW: Yes.

EE: This is all in the course of about six months, you're making this transition, I guess, going across, aren't you, from France to Belgium to Germany?

WW: Yes, that was pretty fast, because that army went very fast.

EE: You told me before we started about when you finally got to Halberstadt [Germany] and to Giessen [Germany]. People are told to stay away from the Germans, but how much of the destruction are you seeing?

WW: Oh, it was all the bridges on the autobahn just out, and then there through Normandy and France, everything laid flat. I can tell you this because I went back at the fiftieth anniversary. You'd see those little kids running with their buckets, stealing milk from the farmers' cows, because they were so hungry. Now it's all built up, tall buildings, beautiful sunflower fields, orchards, everything.

EE: But as you're going across, you're dealing with only American wounded. You're not dealing with the local population at this time.

WW: Not until we arrived at Halberstadt. Then we got the displaced persons.

EE: Was it Halberstadt when you got the word that the war had ended?

WW: Yes. Three days later.

EE: Was that also where you met the Russians?

WW: Yes. That's where they were with the displaced persons. They had been taking care of them.

EE: Okay. So the Russians had already started that.

WW: Yes, well, the Russians were at the Magdeburg [Germany]. They had not met yet. But these two doctors who had been captured in '43 were not supposed to be captured, even scientific personnel.

EE: They were supposed to have been released and sent back.

WW: So they were hesitant to go back. One was a surgeon and one was a medical doctor [who had stayed with these people because of their need.] That's where we got the Russian and the German help.

EE: Was there ever a time while you were in service that you thought we would lose the war, during that time?

WW: No. I never—I just thought it would never end. We thought it would never end. We didn't really think we could lose it. Everybody was pretty positive about that.

EE: And then you got the word that the Germans had surrendered when you were in Halberstadt.

WW: Yes.

EE: And I think you said it rained and you were in the tents, but you still had a pretty good party.

WW: Yes, we did. We did. We had a really good party. [laughs]

EE: How soon after that did you start working with these displaced persons?

WW: We were working with them then.

EE: Oh, okay.

WW: Yes. We had a place full of them.

EE: These were Germans and other folks who had been displaced?

WW: Oh, yes. Czechoslovakians, French, just about every nationality. There were hundreds of them.

EE: But their main problem is more—

WW: Food.

EE: —food, yes.

WW: A lot of food. Well, some of them gained; one gal gained thirty pounds in two weeks. But they were starving, and we'd have to feed them soup every couple of hours until we could turn them loose, because there wasn't enough of us in that second platoon to take really good care of them. We put them to work, too. The Russian doctors helped us.

EE: How were the sanitation conditions?

WW: Well, we had a de-lousing tent. Before they ever came into the hospital, they had to go through that. Even the Germans did not know this was an airbase. We made a hospital out of a huge German airbase. They did not know about toilets and stuff. They'd use the drinking fountains. The Germans even refused to clean it up. They had to make them.

We got it cleaned up, and then we made them keep it clean, because the German people are very clean people. But these people had been living, just surviving, that's all. But anyway, after the de-lousing—we didn't let any of them in until they'd been through that tent, because that was a big job. We had a lot of tubercular. We had a really isolated ward.

EE: Any trouble with supplies?

WW: Oh, yes. Yes, yes. We had to try to get them from the local people. Even the food had to come from the local people.

EE: So you were doing a lot more work than just nursing at this stage.

WW: At this stage, yes. You were trying to feed people, too.

EE: What's your average day like at that time? Of course, a field hospital, you're working whenever the folks come in who are wounded. But, I mean—

WW: Yes. Well, we worked all day, twelve hours a day.

EE: But they have enough to rotate where it was basically a twenty-four-hour shift; you had twelve on, twelve off. Is that what they tried to do?

WW: That's what we tried to do.

EE: Right. And you were at Halberstadt. Did you stay there? You went down to Giessen after that.

WW: After that, yes.

EE: Were you at Giessen when you heard about the A-bomb?

WW: Yes. We were stationed there in tents. We had left Halberstadt.

EE: So that was sometime early that summer you went down to Giessen.

WW: Sometime, yes.

EE: Were they going to take the whole 78th and ship it out?

WW: Yes, the whole unit. They were going to ship us out as a unit. And then they got word that war was over with Japan. And then that's when I went to the 100th Dispensary at Frankfurt.

EE: This is the one that works at SHAEF.

WW: Yes, SHAEF Dispensary in Frankfurt. We worked in Class A uniform, because we had all kinds of German help.

EE: I was going to say, you were looking dapper at that point, after being out—I can imagine you all.

WW: Yes. In the field hospital with our boots and our fatigues.

EE: Nothing terribly feminine about it at that time, was there?

WW: No, nothing at all. Nothing at all.

EE: They didn't worry about staying in uniform at the field hospital, or did they?

WW: No. No. We wore fatigues. They did not want any white uniforms hanging out on the lines, they said, drawing the airplane. No. We had a brown-striped uniform for the hospital, but we didn't even wear that when we were in the field hospital. We wore fatigues and boots, combat boots.

EE: The mechanics of getting field hospital, before I leave that, because we're about at the end of that time—the field hospital mechanics. You get a wounded soldier and how long is that person at the field hospital before they're transferred back?

WW: As fast as they could be. Like a triage.

EE: You didn't have any helicopters. They had to be jeeped out or—

WW: No. They had to go by ambulance or jeep or whatever.

EE: But you triaged, and the first might go out as early as—soon as they were stable, you moved them.

WW: Yes, they would, because we didn't have the facility to—we had a shock ward, but we didn't keep them very long because—

EE: Well, they didn't have the surgical. There's nothing like the MASH [Mobile Army Surgical Hospital] unit in the Korean War.

WW: No.

EE: So how did you handle those kind of certain—you had to just make do with some improvised surgery?

WW: Well, we had a surgeon, but he didn't have the equipment. He had triage ability to stabilize them, and that's it.

EE: Right.

[End Tape 1, Side A—Begin Tape 1, Side B]

EE: And the aid station's right there on the field. Is that right?

WW: Yes, it's on the battlefield. Then the field hospital and then the evacuation hospital.

EE: Station? Station's back farther.

WW: Back further. I've forgotten.

EE: But there's three steps back from the station hospital.

WW: Yes. So it was more less just like today, like a triage, is what it was.

EE: I'm just thinking that in your five years experience there, you've gone from a pretty stable ward experience to dealing with all sorts of trauma. You went from stable ward experience to dealing with jungle diseases, to dealing with trauma, to dealing with public health, basically, sanitation and feeding people.

WW: Yes, that's what we did.

EE: You run the whole gamut of stuff, and that's a lot of stuff to do on the—do you feel like you're on the fly? You're just making it up as you go. Does everybody try to—I mean, you're calling on a lot of resources which you really, you know—

WW: I wasn't prepared for. We weren't prepared for it. And, are we prepared for it today? It's better. [General [William] Sherman described war and mankind seems not to learn from history.]

EE: It is better but, you know, I have two sons who are twelve and eight and I'm thinking, you know, in looking ahead, war is always awful. Awful.

WW: But don't you think that he described it very well? It is. It's awful, awful to mankind. And why they do it, I don't know. I do not know.

EE: Smart bombs don't make it less awful.

WW: No. It was General Sherman, I think, described it.

EE: That's it, one word.

WW: Yes, one word.

EE: SHAEF is obviously a much better experience.

WW: Oh, yes. Oh yes.

EE: I guess it's a nine to five almost, isn't that?

WW: Oh, it is. Yes. Oh, it was great. And we had a lot more to work with.

EE: Did you get to know the German people while you worked there?

WW: Not too well. The ones that worked with us, we knew. We had some that—but at that time, it was verboten.

EE: They were still, I guess, worried about the de-Nazification process, finding out if there was not any sentiment still there.

WW: Yes. They hadn't done that.

EE: You came back in '46, after a year at the dispensary. Did they discharge you from Germany?

WW: No. I was discharged from Fort Bragg.

EE: Could you have stayed in then if you wanted to?

WW: Yes, I could have. And I wanted to do public health. I wanted to—because I was in the reserve and I stayed in the reserve. But I'll tell you, it didn't take me too long after I was out to think about all those years down the drain, toward retirement. The military was very good for nursing.

EE: Well, nursing had already had a fifty-year history. I mean, the Army Nurse Corps goes back to the turn of the century.

WW: Yes. And it was good. I mean, it left us—before that, a nurse could not intubate a patient, could not do an IV—and they had to learn to do things that the interns and doctors had always done. The doctors made the decisions.

EE: So it was a chance to get more responsibility as a nurse in the military than outside the military, maybe, at that time.

WW: Yes, it was.

EE: Where they were kind of ahead of the curve, sort of like with a lot of things. I think the military forced social changes more than you would have thought would have happened otherwise.

WW: That's right.

EE: Because people needed the things.

WW: They needed to get it done.

EE: But you came back. You got your certificate in public health at Chapel Hill.

WW: Yes.

EE: You went back in. In ’48, Truman makes women a regular part of the service, not auxiliary or special.

WW: Yes.

EE: Does that help make the decision for you?

WW: Yes, it did.

EE: And you joined, you joined back not—well, you were, I guess—were you assigned to army air force before you got to—I guess that was when, was Ashburn General part of army air force?

WW: No. No. The army air force was just a part of the army. It didn’t matter—

EE: So you had no association with army air force, and then you decided to join back in the air force as opposed to regular army. Why was that?

WW: Well, no. I was stationed in Topeka, Kansas. They just sent you there. We were all together, and that’s when [the air force was formed.]

EE: Then all of a sudden it becomes the air force.

WW: Yes, it becomes the air force.

EE: So, all of a sudden, you’re air force.

WW: I’m air force, yes. [I was stationed at Forbes Army Air Force Base in Topeka, Kansas.]

EE: You don’t get a choice.

WW: No, no choice.

EE: Okay.

WW: Had nothing to do with it.

EE: And the kind of work you’re doing, you were chief nurse at the general hospital there at Topeka for three years? Is that what, when you start back?

WW: Yes. I wasn't chief nurse, not at Topeka. I was—well, I had the AFC, the specialty of a psychiatric nurse and a general nurse. But psychiatry, I had a specialty in that. And I had the rating of chief nurse, but I was not the chief nurse.

EE: Right. So you didn't go back to put that public health to work right away.

WW: No. No, I never put that public health certificate to work in the military. I did that in civilian life.

EE: Right. And then at Chatham, you went to Chatham in Savannah for a year.

WW: Yes.

EE: Where you were doing, it was also psychiatric nursing?

WW: General nursing.

EE: Then you have a chance to go back overseas with SAC [?].

WW: Yes. Chief nurse.

EE: What was it like being in the peacetime military? You'd been in wartime military almost the whole time.

WW: Well, yes. 857th, a medical group, was at Milden Hall in England, where I was stationed. We had these young people. [Our work involved the young and their dependents.] But it was just general nursing.

EE: People who had been in World War II, how did they get along with those new folks who were coming in who had not had that shared experience? Was there any tension in the service between those folks?

WW: No, not that I noticed, because they had basic training. Everybody had to go through basic training, so they learned a lot.

EE: They learned a lot about military.

WW: Yes, about the military, and there wasn't a conflict.

EE: So, unlike when you went in, even though you were a nurse, you still had to go through basic training, was the new thing.

WW: They didn't do a basic training when I was there. They just took them. [laughs]

EE: Having been a vet and having been overseas, when the Korean conflict kicked up, did you have any inkling about maybe wanting to go back and—

WW: Well, I had friends who went to Korea that I knew in the service at Fort Belvoir. But I was at Castle. If they had needed me, they could have sent me. They didn't call me.

EE: I have a feeling they probably figured that you had put in your time.

WW: Well, yes, they did count your overseas time, but that was the least to keep you from going.

EE: Right. But I guess you were there. Did it make any difference in the work schedules at the hospitals? Could you tell when the Korean conflict started, that it affected the regular operations any differently?

WW: No, it didn't in our hospital, because we weren't a general hospital at Topeka. We were just a station hospital. It only affected the general hospitals, based on their patient load. We didn't get any of them. We weren't like Ashburn General when they were bringing all those from the South Seas. But Korea didn't affect us much.

EE: I guess every couple of years you had to tell the army, "Yes, I'm staying here at the Air Force. I'm staying in again." You're signing, I guess, for what, every three years, or how long? Did at any one point you say, "I'm here till I get twenty?"

WW: No. No, we didn't have any of that. You could retire at twenty years. Because I had twenty-three years of service, I was out.

EE: Right.

WW: But no, I didn't have to sign up.

EE: So, you could have walked out at any time after you started back in?

WW: Yes, I suppose I could. Yes.

EE: You were in England, and you were the chief nurse there. Then you came back to Wright-Patterson for, what, probably two years or so?

WW: Yes. In Ohio.

EE: It's Dayton, isn't it?

WW: Dayton, Ohio.

EE: Were you chief nurse back in psychiatric then?

WW: No. I was the charge nurse of the general ward.

EE: Okay. And then you had a chance to go to Morocco for a year.

WW: Yes.

EE: What in the world do we have in Morocco?

WW: We had a huge navy base at Nouasseur [Air Base] and a huge hospital built out in the desert at Ben Guerir. This was the war plan, then. See, they have to plan so far ahead.

EE: Oh, this is in case we're in a big war somewhere near Europe or the Russians or whatever else?

WW: Yes. That was during the Cold War. A part of the war plan.

EE: Well, the Arabs under Nasser weren't exactly friendly back then.

WW: No, but Morocco was. Their king was pro-Western. They just didn't have that friendship with the French. They had one electrician in Casablanca and one doctor.

EE: Wow.

WW: But they just sent him out anyway. We were down there in Ben Guerir, and we had a huge navy base. Maybe I'd want to be careful about this. I don't know. This hospital was used for the people we had. This building contained a huge hospital, schoolrooms, and a little base.

EE: Right. Totally different culture than what you had been exposed to before.

WW: Oh, yes. Totally different.

EE: In the story you relate in the paper article about the camel were basically, I assume women in those cultures, still, it's—

WW: Oh, yes. Yes.

EE: You're supposed to be veiled.

WW: Yes. Their women are, but not us.

EE: Now, you know, today there's a discussion in Saudi Arabia whether the military personnel need to have their women veiled. Was that an issue then?

WW: Not with us, because one of the daughters of the king was for not wearing the veil.

EE: So she was a modern era—

WW: More modern, and it never came up with us. We drove cars over there with the public. But I know they have that in Saudi Arabia now. We wore regular clothes.

EE: After that you came back to—now, where is Castle in California?

WW: Merced.

EE: Okay. And you finished out your career there.

WW: At Castle.

EE: And you retired in ’64. What were you doing those last years in Castle?

WW: I was chief nurse of a hundred-bed hospital.

EE: What a wonderful career.

WW: I did have. The military was very kind to me. I had a wonderful career.

EE: Do you think that as a woman you could have had so many varied and interesting opportunities outside the military?

WW: Oh, I know I couldn’t have. I sometimes wonder how I had the courage to do that, leave North Carolina. [laughter]

EE: You do have to have a certain adventurous spirit, or a wanderlust about you, to want to try something different, don’t you?

WW: Yes, you do.

EE: Do you think the military made you more that way, or just brought out what you naturally had?

WW: Well, I think it just brought out what I naturally had. I always liked adventure.

EE: What did you do after you left the service?

WW: Well, let’s see. I had three stepchildren, three boys. And I helped them get through school, and then just general housekeeping.

EE: When did you meet your husband?

WW: In ’59.

EE: Fifty-nine. So, just before you left.

WW: Yes.

EE: Was he stationed at—

WW: He was stationed at Castle.

EE: And he had been a prisoner, you told me before we started, in World War II, at—

WW: Yes. He was shot down and captured on his first mission, shot down. He was a pilot.

EE: But you didn't know him until after.

WW: No, I didn't know him until after that.

EE: Did any of the boys go in the service?

WW: They went through ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps], and yes, they went in service. My middle son was in Vietnam. And Guy, the youngest one, retired from the army. He flew helicopters and retired as a major from the U. S. Army.

EE: So you've got a service family all the way around, then.

WW: Yes. And Don was just in for two years or however long is required for ROTC. At least they got through ROTC.

EE: Are they in this area?

WW: No. My oldest one's in Hawaii. He was a lawyer and then studied the ministry. He was a minister. The middle one, Bill, is in Texas, San Antonio. And Guy is in Williamsburg, Virginia.

EE: Well, I know when we lived in Philadelphia and Germany, my folks loved it because it was a great excuse to travel. [laughs]

WW: Yes, that's right.

EE: That's great. I ask people, and the question has only gotten more, with world events the last couple of years—when I started doing these interviews, the question I'd ask is, was the country more patriotic back during World War II than it is now? That question has changed a lot in the last two years with world events. But how would you compare the feeling about country then and now?

WW: It is quite different. I think that we've had a lot more. People seem to be thinking this doesn't happen to us, whereas then they didn't know what was going to happen. And they had had to do without, whereas today, I think we've had too much, and they are not, for the most part, aware of what could happen. I really feel that. Some of them are, I'm sure.

Can't take them in general, but I think then life was simpler. Definitely, it's more complicated today and we have more complicated things to deal with. And can we cope? I don't know. I love to push buttons myself, and I know that my children and my grandchildren don't know anything but to push buttons.

EE: That's right. But if we don't have the electricity tomorrow, could we cope? It's like these displaced persons. They had to do what they had to do to survive. Could we do what we had to do to survive?

WW: That's what I wonder. I sincerely wonder about that today, because everybody had a victory garden. It was almost universal, here and over there.

EE: You talk about being in a total war. It's an experience we just don't know about.

WW: No, we don't.

EE: Everybody had rationing, were saving, recycling for the cause. The victory garden you're talking about, stamps.

WW: Yes, everything.

EE: Doing stuff. I've talked with women at UNCG who were knitting blankets and sweaters for service people.

WW: That's right. And socks and all that.

EE: It's a focus that it's hard to imagine us shifting into. What about the fact that, you know, you talked about the draft changing things. There is no draft now. It's an all-volunteer army. What do you think about that?

WW: I don't know. I don't think we'll ever fight another war like that. I think it's going to be so different that maybe there is no comparison. I don't know how—the way this country is built, and now it's all so dependent upon mechanical things that if they go down, I really, sincerely don't know how we'll do it, how we'll cope.

EE: You're a vet. You're a military spouse, in a sense. You're a military mom. How has the military changed most in the years that you've experienced it, from those perspectives?

WW: I've seen very little of it. I belong to the Retired Officers [Military Officers Association of America], and we sort of stay the same. But I really don't know about the military, which has changed very much.

EE: Well, even the role of women. You know, two years ago, we were getting back in the Iraq mess, and they had a woman fighter pilot leading a raid on Baghdad, for heaven's sakes. We talked about the role of women going into the war. What do you think about the expanded role of women in the service?

WW: Well, I think it's a good thing up to a point. If we fought the way we did then, it wouldn't be good. But it's going to be different, so I don't know. But I think it's great for women. Yes.

EE: And good for the military as a whole, too.

WW: Yes. I think it is.

EE: If a woman were to come to you for advice, and say, "I'm thinking about joining the service," what would you tell her?

WW: I'd tell her I think it would be good. I think it would be good for her.

EE: What was the best thing that service did for you?

WW: The best thing, I guess, looking at things today, is the good retirement and the medical benefits, because just now are we getting old.

EE: Be glad you're not a state employee. [laughs]

WW: Yes. My sister is a teacher and retired. I know what's happening to her. But just now, it's the medical coming through with TRICARE, it's just now happening. We had to keep our supplementary insurance. Now they're doing that, when they had promised us to do it. Well, anyway, that is one of the big benefits, beside my experience.

EE: As a little girl, you like history. History takes you to other places and other times, and you got to travel to other places. And really, when you go to another country, it's like going to a history book. You go to another place.

WW: That's right. I did.

EE: And people look at the world differently, and you get a chance to see—

WW: Oh, entirely. You don't know how to appreciate being an American until you've lived in another country.

EE: Had you stayed in Sparta your whole life, it would have been a quite different experience, wouldn't it?

WW: Quite different, yes.

EE: I have some empathy for why Andy Griffith might have been a little hesitant to go back home, after seeing the world. [laughs]

WW: Yes. I do, too. Yes. I did a lot of things and met a lot of different people.

EE: There was some mention of a song. *Bluebirds Over the White Cliffs of Dover*—

WW: *White Cliffs of Dover*? Oh, yes.

EE: What are some of the songs that you remember most, or things that—or maybe even there's a movie that takes you back, that you think, "I remember seeing that, because I was there"?

WW: I remember *Patton*, that movie struck me, and then *South Pacific* was just the greatest. I just read a quote the other day. I don't know who did it, but, "In this world of fleeting pleasures, what endures is what we treasure." And when you think about it, that's pretty true. And I think we treasure our freedom and our wonderful country and the people we know. I've met a lot of people, and people are people all over the world.

EE: Apparently, you did a good job of keeping up with folks over the years, and even though those numbers may be dwindling, those people are still in your heart, I know, when you think about those times.

WW: Yes, they still are. Yes. When I went back to England a couple of years ago, I saw an English friend that I met over there, a librarian. She couldn't do enough for us. She took us to a Victorian theater, and everything in London is so expensive. She was a member of this Victorian Players. But there are people all over the world that just like us. I wish we could have a common brotherhood of man and do away with wars.

EE: It is a scary time. Today's headline was, "Nukes in North Korea," which didn't sound like too shocking a thing, because I think we've been thinking they've had it for a while. But we seem to be anxious to do some stuff with war, rather than waiting to do some stuff otherwise.

WW: Well, it's hard when they say that we are civilized, and the twentieth century is classed as the century of wars. Now, what are we doing? Civilization is civilizing?

EE: Is that what civilization means?

WW: I don't know. And you think that education—we're getting better educated, but maybe we need more of it. It boggles my mind to think the twentieth century is known as the century of wars. That's just what I read somewhere.

EE: Certainly, more people killed in them than has ever been before.

WW: Yes.

EE: And we hope that that's a record that our century doesn't pass. That's for sure.

WW: I surely hope it doesn't keep going.

EE: I can't do justice to a twenty-four-year career in ninety minutes, but I surely do appreciate you sitting down and kind of going over for folks who are going to look at it, your stops along the way. One of the things that kind of is outside of a chronology of things is, I know, you're talking about people, are there some funny stories or funny characters in your—I know, during like twenty-four years that's kind of a wide-open thing, but can you tell me a funny story or two about something that happened to you in the service?

WW: You know, as you grow older, your memory fades. I told you that one about the camel in Morocco. You've got that one. I know a lot of them, but I can't think of one.

EE: Well, I just thought the categories—usually it's the displaced southerner stories. You get grief for being a southerner. You get grief for being—some women got grief for being a woman, but that doesn't usually happen to nurses because there's more of a professional attitude to it.

There's the story, you know, about cultures, maybe, that you're in the wrong place, doing the wrong thing for that location. And there's just, you know, when you're in the service, you're mixed with people from all walks of life, all different religious and ethnic backgrounds, and you just sometimes run into things you just, funnily, don't expect. Well, if you can't filter more than twenty-four years, that's okay. Just think on it.

WW: I'll think on it. I may be thinking up one.

EE: I know it's hard to do, but I'm going to call it here, and then we'll go back and check some of these things. Is there anything I hadn't asked you about that you want to put on the record for our folks, because we do have a lot of people who will be coming by and wanting to know this story. Tell me about, you got a Bronze Star. Was that for your service?

WW: That was the Battle of—well, I guess, I don't know.

EE: So it was tied to a particular engagement, that you got that.

WW: Yes. To the outfit I was with. I've forgotten. I got a commendation medal, too. I know what that was for.

EE: Because you were exposed to danger during that event.

WW: Yes, right. The whole unit got it. I started to say the Battle of Britain, but that's not it. The European theater, that's what it was. The European theater, for being in the European theater during the war.

EE: Well, yes, you were following right behind. It wasn't a particular event. It was because of the whole service.

WW: Yes, the whole service.

EE: So you got that. Everybody got the ruptured duck, but those who were closest, in harm's way, got the Bronze Star as well.

WW: The Bronze Star for the medal.

EE: I wanted to make sure folks got that on the record, too, because that's—certainly do appreciate it. Well, on behalf of the school, thank you for your day.

[End of Interview]