

Wisconsin Veterans Museum  
Research Center

Transcript of an  
Oral History Interview with  
Helen Bartalan  
Nurse, 101<sup>st</sup> General Hospital, World War II.

2002

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**Bertalan, Helen**, (1917-2002). Oral History Interview, 1996.

User Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 40 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 40 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Video Recording: 1 videorecording (ca. 40 min.); ½ inch, color.

### **Abstract**

The Folsom (California) veteran describes her experience as a member of the 101<sup>st</sup> General Hospital stationed at the Santa Tomas Hospital (Manila, Philippines) during World War II. Bertalan, a Wedron (Illinois) native, touches upon her surprise and shock upon hearing of the bombing of Pearl Harbor and compares her reaction to Pearl Harbor to reactions of the events of September 11, 2001. Bertalan, an assistant pediatric head nurse, recalls her eagerness to join the army and basic training at Camp McCoy (Wis.). She touches upon the ranks and pay of women in the military as well as her hope of being stationed in England so she could serve near her husband. Transferred to Camp Swift (Texas), she describes caring for German prisoners of war (POWs) and receiving a painting as a gift from a POW. Sent to Camp Stillman (California) in preparation for overseas duty in the Philippines, Bertalan discusses watching film strips of German war atrocities and her belief that they were shown to show how “bad they [Nazis] really were.” Sent to Manila (Philippines) Bertalan worked in the orthopedic ward as a supervisor. She talks about recreation activities of woman nurses, taking quinine pills, her enjoyment of the Philippines, and interactions with Filipino civilians. She touches upon her work at Percy Jones Hospital (Michigan) where she worked with amputees, discharge in 1945 due to marital status, and working as a public health nurse.

### **Biographical Sketch**

Helen Bertalan, was a second lieutenant in the 101<sup>st</sup> General Hospital in Manila, Philippines during World War II. After the war, she worked briefly as a public health nurse and lived in many different states before settling in Folsom, California.

Interviewed by Dr. James McIntosh, 2002

Transcribed by Michael Chusid, 2006

Transcription edited by Hannah Gray and Abbie Norderhaug, 2007.

Jim: This is the 20<sup>th</sup> of June in the year 2002. Talking to Helen Bertalan. [My name is Dr. James McIntosh.] Where were you born, ma'am?

Helen: I was born on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March, 1917.

Jim: Okay. Let me stop for a second. Already forgot something. Ah, tell us again where you were born?

Helen: When I was born?

Jim: When and where.

Helen: I was born in Wedron, Illinois.

Jim: Tell me that name.

Helen: Wedron. W – e – d – r – o – n. Wedron. It's a little farming town in Illinois.

Jim: And when was that?

Helen: The 8<sup>th</sup> of March.

Jim: W – e – d –

Helen: r – o – n. March 8, 1917.

Jim: March 8, 1917?

Helen: Right. [Laughs.]

Jim: Now tell me what you were doing when Pearl Harbor Day arrived? What were you doing on that day.

Helen: On that day I was on duty at Children's Memorial Hospital in Chicago.

Jim: As a?

Helen: As a assistant head nurse I was there. General duty in pediatrics, of course.

Jim: Oh, yes. My daughter is head of intensive care at the Memorial Hospital in Oakland.

Helen: In Oakland! California.

Jim: Right.

Helen: Oh! Uh-huh! Well, that's interesting. Intensive care. Ha-ha-ha! Keeps you going!

Jim: So what'd you think?

Helen: What did I think? Of course, we couldn't believe it. You know, it's just like this 9/11 thing – it's a shock, overwhelming, you can't believe it. And of course we had to go about our business as usual. It was a beautiful, sunny Sunday morning.

Jim: You were surprised and shocked – that would be an adequate description?

Helen: Absolutely.

Jim: Well okay, so what transpired after that?

Helen: Well, of course I continued working there, but to tell you the truth, there was a great deal of patriotism. Great deal. Everybody was going to join in, because it was overwhelming for everyone.

Jim: Everyone. Everyone in the hospital?

Helen: Yes. Oh yes, the nurses and some of the doctors. And they wanted to go in. And I wanted very much to go in. But I had recently -- no, let's see. I was going to be married soon. Of course, I – In the meantime, I was recruiting my friends. I got two of them to join. And –

Jim: You just walked into the recruiting office and said, "Take me"?

Helen: Oh no, later on – yes, they used to come to Chicago to see me in their beautiful uniforms, and I thought that was the best thing in the world. So eventually I joined the army. I went down to the – We had our physicals downtown in the Civic Building. Wasn't the Civic Building – I think it was the Opera House. Downtown Chicago. And I barely made it, because my blood pressure was almost too low.

Jim: [Unintelligible.]

Helen: Yes. It was almost too low, but I made it. And in the following March –

Jim: March of '42?

Helen: No, no, no. It wasn't the following March. March of '43. I stayed working. Yeah, little more. March of '43 I was sent to Camp McCoy, Wisconsin. And that's where I had my basic.

Jim: Right. How many were there in the recruiting group?

Helen: Oh, there were about sixty of us.

Jim: All nurses?

Helen: In our -- Yes, just nurses.

Jim: Had they assigned you to a unit by that time?

Helen: Oh, no, no. At that time I really hoped I would be sent to England. That's one reason -- I had heard they were all being sent to England. And my husband was in England -- I wanted to go to England.

Jim: You had just gotten married a year before.

Helen: That's right. And he was gone. He was gone six weeks after we were married, immediately. Well, in 1942.

Jim: So then you just did what?

Helen: Well, Camp McCoy was basic training.

Jim: What does that -- Tell me about that?

Helen: You wake up -- You have to be out in the field at six a.m. and with calisthenics. Yes, and after calisthenics you had breakfast. Then after that we started learning how to march. And that was very difficult for me because they'd say: left, right, right, and I'd go the other way. But there was a lot of -- And we couldn't laugh, and our sergeants were -- We couldn't laugh if one of the girls made a mistake. Oh, no, no, you couldn't make it. And they'd all look at it, and they'd be kind of mad.

Jim: Male or female sergeants?

Helen: Oh, male. Very, very proper male -- very gruff, loud-yelling sergeants.

Jim: They were supposed to scare you and --

Helen: They did! They really scared us. We stayed there for, I think it was three months. Three months.

Jim: Did they show you how to shoot rifles?

Helen: No, they did not. Nothing about rifles. We had to carry one, just to carry. They showed us how to carry it.

Jim: And all of you in the barracks you were in were nurses?

Helen: We were all nurses.

Jim: And did they give you a sergeant's rating and pay level?

Helen: Oh, no. We were immediately made second lieutenants. All the nurses were made second lieutenants.

Jim: Not all of them.

Helen: Well, I don't know. They gave me second lieutenant, see? And most of us were second lieutenants.

Jim: Yeah, but they only gave you a sergeant's pay.

Helen: Yes, yes, that's part of it [?]. Oh, the sergeant's pay, yes.

Jim: You didn't get the same as the boy-second lieutenants.

Helen: No, I didn't care. I just wanted to be there. [Laughs.] But my mother was my dependent, and they did send her 75 dollars a month all the time I was in the army, which was a lot of money in those days.

Jim: It was right after the depression.

Helen: Exactly, exactly. But she was a widow, but I was – We were ready to ship out to [?] –

Jim: [?]

Helen: From there we went to Camp Swift, Texas.

Jim: We still haven't gotten to the hospital ward yet.

Helen: No, no. It was all training. It was all military training at that point. But we really didn't need any hospital training. When we got to Camp Swift, Texas, we right away became again nurses, which was very nice. And I was assigned to take care of the German prisoners of war. And I had a wonderful ward boy who could speak German.

Jim: Where was this?

Helen: Camp Swift, Texas.

Jim: I don't know where that is.

Helen: It's gone now, I think.

Jim: Where is it?

Helen: Down by San Antonio, Texas. You know where that is. And I had a great – Brennsaenger was his name. But he – The ward boys were our right hand men all through the army.

Jim: This was in a hospital set up for the prisoner of war camp?

Helen: Yes, and we took care of them. I remember giving out penicillin to so many of them. But one of the prisoners – they were most appreciative and very kind – of course; I couldn't speak German, even though I'd taken it in college. But Brennsaenger could, so he was very helpful.

Jim: Who was that?

Helen: That was my ward man, Brennsaenger, a sergeant. Yeah, but one of the prisoners of war gave me this painting. It is his last look as he left – The Nazis came and got him at two o'clock in the morning. At his home. And he was taken into the army. And he turned around. And this is his memory – the last, as he turned back at his homeland. And he painted it while he was a prisoner. So I don't know how he did it. And he gave it to me. And I gave it to Joe.

Jim: That's wonderful.

Helen: I think it's quite warping [?] now, but after all it's many years old.

Jim: How many prisoners would you guess were in that camp?

Helen: Oh. There were several hundred prisoners.

Jim: [Unintelligible.]

Helen: How many did I have to take care of?

Jim: No, no, no. How many were in the camp, do you think?

Helen: I would think at least a thousand.

Jim: And in the hospital – how many nurses were in the hospital? And doctors?

Helen: How many nurses? I think there were probably – Let's see: there were ten wards. So there were very many – we had about fifty in our ward. They were big wards.

Jim: Were there more than one nurse to a ward?

Helen: Oh yes. There were enough nurses, so that all we had to take care of is about ten patients, which is not bad.

Jim: Oh, you didn't have medics to take care of the patients?

Helen: The medics were with us too. That's what I mean my ward –

Jim: The nurses in the service take care of the paper work, and the medics –

Helen: Well, at this stage we were doing the nursing care too, but there were a half a dozen doctors for the whole camp.

Jim: How many beds did you have in your hospital for that camp?

Helen: I think about – I would say about two or three hundred.

Jim: Beds?

Helen: Yes, beds.

Jim: That's a pretty good size hospital.

Helen: It was – It was a good size.

Jim: Yeah, and how many doctors, did you say – ten?

Helen: About that.

Jim: Did you have an operating room?

Helen: Yes, we had an operating room. And everything else that we needed. It was a regular hospital.

Jim: You're right.

Helen: But if we had any problem – very severe cases, like burn cases, they'd go to Brooks. Yes, that was our center.

Jim: And how long were you stationed in that hospital?

Helen: I was stationed that hospital just three months, and then most of the nurses were sent to Camp Stillman in California for overseas duty. We were going to be sent overseas. From Camp Swift we went to Camp Stillman – it that still there?



Jim: I guess so.

Helen: It might be or have some other name. We stayed there until we were ready to ship out. In the meantime we were -- I remember we were told -- we were sent to the theater where they were showing us the pictures of the atrocities of the Nazis.

Jim: Wonderful.

Helen: Yes, it was. That was part of our training there -- looking at these movies. We were going overseas.

Jim: Yeah, but what did these atrocities have to do with what you were supposed to do?

Helen: Because we were supposed to have the feeling of how bad they were, I guess. [Laughs.] I don't know. But we'd see piles of bones from the crematoriums and things like that.

Jim: I think that's horrible if they did that. I'm sure they did.

Helen: Yes, they did -- they showed it to us.

Jim: I see no reason to scare people like that.

Helen: Well, we were supposed to have an appreciation of how bad they really were.

Jim: [Didn't do anything -- he just waited? Unintelligible.]

Helen: We waited until our ship came in --

Jim: When was that?

Helen: That was in November. About the end of November.

Jim: Of '43?

Helen: Yes. And we were sent to Manila.

Jim: That's where you went to?

Helen: To Manila, instead of to England. All the --

Jim: You were planning to go to England?

Helen: That was my own plan, not their plan. [Laughs.]

Jim: When did you discover that you weren't going in the right way?

Helen: Practically the day before. They didn't tell you. You had all your gear on that morning, and you better be ready.

Jim: That's when you find yourself on the high seas and you suddenly discover that you're looking in the wrong direction.

Helen: No, we went on the Mount Comfort. And that had over 1000 nurses on it. Over 1000.

Jim: And what unit were you assigned to then?

Helen: It was a general hospital – Santa Tomas Hospital in Manila, 101<sup>st</sup> unit.

Jim: 101<sup>st</sup> General Hospital in Manila.

Helen: In Manila. And it was in the old university. It used to be – It was an internment camp for the -- The Japanese had our prisoners in there before we took over.

Jim: You must have been there – If you went to Manila, you couldn't have gotten into Manila until 1944. [Unintelligible.]

Helen: I didn't. No, I was in there – When we got there, there were a lot of mines around, but we were in that hospital I know in '43, because –

Jim: Time flies.

Helen: It does fly. Maybe you're right – maybe it was '44.

Jim: Well, it has to be '44.

Helen: Yes, it was '44. You're right, you're right. But we got in there after everything was over. Well, I mean, it wasn't really all over, but we didn't –

Jim: It could have been '45 then?

Helen: No, no. I was discharged in '45. I was sent home because I was married. They decided then that they were going to send home all the married ones.

Jim: Okay, so was this a big hospital you were put in.

Helen: Yes. They had occupied it. Now I was in an orthopedic ward. It's a very large facility.

Jim: In Manila.

Helen: In Manila, right in Manila.

Jim: And did they – was it full?

Helen: Oh, yes. It was full.

Jim: They must have had a lot of acute wounded then?

Helen: We did have. And we had boys that were mentally disturbed and all kinds of things, you know. But I was in orthopedics, and it was a lot of that type of injury.

Jim: And you were the supervisor of an orthopedic ward at that time?

Helen: Yes, yes.

Jim: You were the boss lady?

Helen: I was the boss lady, and I had all these nice ward boys to do.

Jim: [Unintelligible.]

Helen: No, no, I came out as first lieutenant. Oh, yes. And some of the girls whom I recruited never made it. They never made first lieutenant, some of those I had recruited. I don't know, but it would be as a compensation – consolation. I didn't want to go, I didn't want to leave, but I had to.

Jim: Then you were there from April '44, you arrived?

Helen: Yes, I was there until March of '45 – well, until February of '45. Because then I was sent to Percy Jones Hospital. It was my last tour.

Jim: So you were in Manila about a year?

Helen: Yes, about a year.

Jim: How did you enjoy living in the tropics?

Helen: I enjoyed it, because I loved the difference in culture. And I loved the – We'd go outside the door to eat. I didn't like the showers – they were ice cold. And they were buckets, I didn't like that part. But we'd go out to eat, and there were monkeys around, you know, on the path waiting for us to get hand-outs. I liked that part – it was so different.

Jim: You have a banana tree growing outside in your backyard and all that?

Helen: All that, all that. And we slept in big barracks that had no windows – just screens, and we slept in mosquito tents – we had to have the mosquito tents over us when we were sleeping.

Jim: Took the malaria pills?

Helen: Yes, I took it and turned yellow, more yellow than I am. [Laughs.] I had a yellow skin like the rest of them, right. And we had some civilian filipina nurses – they were civilians, and they'd give backrubs. And they had tiny little hands. And my patients would complain, don't even send them in, 'cause I can't even feel them – their hands are too small. But they were very –

Jim: And who were your ward boys? Filipinos too?

Helen: We had medics, absolutely, plus some Filipinos that did other work.

Jim: You were never short-handed?

Helen: No, we were not. We were never short-handed. And what was so strange, doctor, about those – No matter what you said or did, they'd always say "Yes" and smile.

Jim: The impenetrable oriental smile. Well, it sounds like your experience was pretty good – you were busy all the time and –

Helen: Oh, yes. Oh, I loved it. I truly – Listen, I thought it was a vacation with pay. I liked it so much. Yes, I enjoy it and the people that I worked with.

Jim: Tell me about your food.

Helen: Oh, the food was excellent. Very, very good. We always had that can of –

Jim: Big mess hall?

Helen: Big mess hall. And we had of course a can of peanut butter in the middle of the table and jelly. Did you –

Jim: That's what we had aboard ship. [?]

Helen: [Laughs.] No, we had good food. Of course, I have a very good appetite, and a lot of them complained.

Jim: Now tell me how you were situated. You were with six girls in one room.

Helen: These were big – they weren't tents, they were barracks on the outside of the hospital. Wooden barracks, but no windows -- they had screens that opened out like that.

Jim: How many were in each barracks?

Helen: About ten or twelve. So they were quite big. And, of course, the sergeant would wake you up in the morning – Up and at ‘em! Rise and shine! Hour at us! Yes.

Jim: Need to holler back at him. Well, sure, he’s a [unintelligible].

Helen: Yeah, but he didn’t need to bark at us so loud. Maybe some of us did, I don’t know. So you see my tour of duty wasn’t any, no sacrifice for me.

Jim: You did a lot.

Helen: Well, I did, but I would have done the same thing – I was doing the same thing waiting to get in the army.

Jim: That was my next question. Did the army ask you to treat patients differently than a civilian?

Helen: Oh, no. No, no. It was just like I’d walked from one hospital to another.

Jim: There were no regulations that were new to you that you didn’t understand?

Helen: None, except for the wearing of a uniform and things like that.

Jim: And the docs – tell me about them.

Helen: Docs were good. As far as I could see, they were just as compassionate and carrying as I had ever known them. They never turned down anything.

Jim: Sure. You had plenty of medical help then?

Helen: Yes, we did. And as far as I know, we had enough medical supplies, ‘cause we passed out medicines all the time.

Jim: So tell me what we did after 4:30 in the afternoon?

Helen: 4:30 in the afternoon? It wasn’t always 4:30. Whenever. Well, first thing we’d go to mess hall.

Jim: That early?

Helen: I meant later in the evening. 4:30 – we probably went to our beds and fell on the bed [laughs].

Jim: Have a little drink?

Helen: No, we didn't. We used to go to Officers Club, maybe on weekends. We go, a whole group of us would go there.

Jim: Was that very far? Was that right on the base?

Helen: That was on the base, yes, right there.

Jim: Okay, I thought maybe there might be dances on the weekend.

Helen: No, they didn't do that. We'd go to the Officers Club and that was it – that was our big deal. And the big thing that we'd do, when we didn't have to be on duty, we'd get on one of those trucks where they have the benches on each side, and we'd go into Austin. I mean, into San Antonio. That was our big deal.

Jim: Oh, now we're back in Texas here now.

Helen: Oh, yeah, I forgot that. No, in Manila we could go in the army trucks if we wanted sight-seeing if we wanted to. But we could not go out alone on account of the mines that were around. And the best thing that I remember was a cemetery. You know, all the burials are above the ground in mausoleums – I had never seen that before.

Jim: Like New Orleans.

Helen: That's true. Like New Orleans. But that was our recreation in Manila.

Jim: Did most of the girls stay there for the whole year like you?

Helen: Yes, they did, they did.

Jim: So you went over as a group and returned as a group?

Helen: They were all there – The ones – maybe four or five of us -- Not many were married. We were the only ones that were sent back. The rest all stayed there. Yes, they decided that if the war was over then, wasn't it? Almost?

Jim: August of '45.

Helen: August of '45. Yes.

Jim: Well, everybody went home then, didn't they?

Helen: Yes, yes, more or less, I would hope so. We went home earlier.

Jim: When was then?

Helen: That was in –

Jim: The war was over in August, and you went home in the spring?

Helen: Oh, oh no, it was in the spring. I went to the other, Percy Jones in January or February.

Jim: Oh, then you went home a lot earlier.

Helen: Yeah, a lot earlier. They let us stay there for a while.

Jim: So you arrived in February and [unintelligible] – almost a year then?

Helen: Right, that's right.

Jim: So in January of '45, all American girls were told to take a hike and go home?

Helen: Well, they didn't – they went back to the states for some reason. And they were reassigned to Percy Jones, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Jim: That's a rehab hospital.

Helen: Yes, it was rehab. It was a very sad situation – so many of them didn't have their limbs when they –

Jim: When you were in the orthopedic corps, that must have been really unpleasant.

Helen: That I didn't like too much. I was only there a month, then I was discharged. In March.

Jim: Oho. Before the war was over. So what did you do when you got discharged?

Helen: When I got discharged? My husband, he came in his uniform to Ann Arbor, Michigan, and I was sent to Fort Sheridan for discharge. He had already been discharged ahead of me for some reason.

Jim: Oh, he got out early too?

Helen: Yes, he did. Am I wrong? He was in uniform – no, I may be wrong. [Laughs.] We went back to Chicago then.

Jim: In '45? Before the war was over?

Helen: I really did not have it hard at all.

Jim: Well, then that's alright. You worked hard, that's all.

Helen: [Laughs.] Well, I was wanting to do whatever they told me to do.

Jim: So what did you do then? Did you continue nursing?

Helen: Well, then we moved to – No, I did. I had a degree in public health, so I went in addition into public health nursing.

Jim: In Chicago?

Helen: In Chicago, and then in Washington, D.C. We finally settled in Washington, D.C.

Jim: Frank got a job there, and off we went?

Helen: Yes. And we lived in Alexandria, Virginia.

Jim: That's very nice. And how did you enjoy that? Was it like the Phillipines again, the weather?

Helen: Well, very much so. But not the atmosphere.

Jim: And did you continue nursing there?

Helen: No, I only nursed for a little while, because – I was working at Emergency Hospital in Washington. I was working for the Federal government in Washington, too. That was the best job I ever had. But once I realized I was pregnant, I quit working.

Jim: Sure.

Helen: And I never worked again. [Laughs.] My first job we went up to – on my baccalaureate service, with holding my little boy in hand.

Jim: Is that the little boy who lives here?

Helen: No, that's Ed, the older boy. [Laughs.]

Jim: And so you didn't stay in Virginia very long before you moved here?

Helen: Oh, yes. We lived in Virginia nineteen years.

Jim: Oh, my goodness!



Helen: Yes, that's where all our children grew up – in Virginia. In Alexandria, Mclean, Virginia. We lived in Mclean later. Right near those Kennedys. Our sons used to play with them, with Robert's children, because they lived right there. They had all their children there.

Jim: Okay, and then after the war, you didn't use your GI bill for anything?

Helen: No – well, I did, because I had to finish up some courses. I did use my GI bill in public health – I did.

Jim: Super.

Helen: Very nice, yes.

Jim: Yes, what else? Did you join any veterans organizations.

Helen: No, I didn't.

Jim: And did you keep track of the other girls -- any of them?

Helen: Yes, I just saw one of them last week. And the one that I recruited passed away last year. Yes, I kept track of some of them.

Jim: And the one that you visited last week –

Helen: I wish you could interview her – she's the one that remembers every detail.

Jim: She had every experience that you had, you were together all the time.

Helen: All the time. All the time from Camp McCoy, all that – we were very, very fortunate. I don't think we could -- Maybe that's why I enjoyed it so much. I had my buddy. I just saw her yesterday. She's going to pick us up Sunday, take us to the airport. She lives in Chicago.

Jim: I see. So after Virginia, when did you move west?

Helen: When my husband went to work for the University of Oklahoma. That's when we moved west. Norman, Oklahoma. We told the children – they didn't want to leave – don't worry: everybody there has a horse.

Jim: [Laughs.]

Helen: We didn't know no one has horses. And I used to say to my little daughter, "You behave now – I'm going to give you away to the Indians." And she told me later, that was an awful thing to say.

Jim: Yes, it was.

Helen: But, you know –

Jim: You're doing just what that army did to you.

Helen: Exactly, exactly. But I shouldn't say that to her, and she said, later on, she says, I really believed it, because we were going to go to Oklahoma where the Indians are. [Laughs.] She was just four or five.

Jim: I once knew a fellow I trained with who – he was born and raised in Virginia. And when he left the medical school, he came to Wisconsin for his internship. His grandmother packed a .45 in his baggage, because she wasn't sure how many Indians were still left out here.

Helen: [Laughs.] A .45, just to be sure!

Jim: So people have very strange ideas.

Helen: Yeah, I know it. I know it.

Jim: So then you were in Norman for how long?

Helen: We were in Norman for nine years. Then Frank took a position with –

Jim: How did you like Norman?

Helen: Oh, it's a delightful place. Do you know it?

Jim: I sent one of my kids to school there.

Helen: Oh, you did? Yes, so you know it pretty well.

Jim: She stayed for a while, then we dragged her back.

Helen: It's a great college community. [?] nice.

Jim: Seemed pretty nice. Pretty campus.

Helen: Then from there we went to Texas. Women's university – he'll tell you – in Texas. What he told you about.

Jim: And then you ended up in –

Helen: Well, from Texas, we went to San Diego. We stayed there for thir-.

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Helen: Frank retired then. That's why we – We rented a car and started out on the coast of California, and went all the way down to San Diego. That place!

Jim: Perfect weather.

Helen: I know it. And from there we went back to Texas, from Texas to Colorado, and then Colorado, Denver, we're back to California. I wanted to go to San Diego, but our daughter lives in the Folsom area. So that's –

Jim: How many children?

Helen: We have seven.

Jim: And how many grandchildren?

Helen: Seventeen.

Jim: And how many great-grandchildren?

Helen: None, none.

Jim: Well, see, I've got you beat finally. I've got two of those.

Helen: You've got two grandchildren.

Jim: Two great-grandchildren.

Helen: How many?

Jim: Two.

Helen: Two! Good, good.

Jim: But I only have six grandchildren.

Helen: Well, our oldest daughter – our oldest granddaughter -- is in medical school, going into her fourth year. But she doesn't want to get married yet.

Jim: Kids don't want to do that now.

Helen: No, they don't.

Jim: Where is she?

Helen: She's at Loyola, in Chicago.

Jim: Running out of questions here. Well, you say you didn't join any – You've been keeping track of two people and that's about all?

Helen: Socially, yes, yes.

Jim: But you didn't go to any reunions or anything like that?

Helen: Yes, we went to one reunion, which Ann this friend of mine arranged two years ago. And at that time I saw three or four of the other nurses. That was very nice. Some of us, you know, are getting very old – we're not here any more. [Laugh.]

Jim: We're all circling the drain, you see.

Helen: That's right.

Jim: Well, that's funny. Very good. Okay. Oh, you didn't get malaria or anything like that?

Helen: No, I didn't.

Jim: Tropical diseases – you managed to avoid all of those?

Helen: I don't know why – maybe because we only ate at the FA [?] mess hall.

Jim: Probably that's the reason. Lot of the other girls stay healthy too?

Helen: Well, the only thing, coming back – I mean, going over on that Comfort, they got so sick.

Jim: Sea sick, you mean?

Helen: Sea sick. So that no one was in the mess hall but me. Practically. Me and about four or five others. They were all terribly, terribly sick. But it took 28 days. If, you know, it went like this. Took 28 days to go from California to Manila – no direct route.

Jim: Now obviously, when I came back from Japan, [?], non-stop from Tokyo it was eighteen days on a direct route. It's a big ocean. On a hospital ship, we could only go about eighteen knots.

Helen: Which hospital ship were you on?

Jim: On the Haven.

Helen: The Haven, um-huh. Is the Comfort still around, do you know?

Jim: No, that was the earliest hospital ship. No, Relief was the first one, but I don't think the Comfort is still – Unless they've got another one and renamed it. That's a possibility.

Helen: There were over a thousand nurses on it. It had been bombed on the side previous to our – maybe that was why we were doing –

Jim: I think that that was one of the older hospital ships, and I don't think that that is still in service.

Helen: Um-huh. Probably not.

Jim: Most of them are of the kind we had – they were converted tanker-hulls that were turned into hospitals.

Helen: Oh, I see.

Jim: There were only three of them in Korea. Kind of rotated around. Okay? Thank you.

Helen: Thank you, sir, very, very much, doctor.

Jim: My pleasure.

Helen: You're a – doing this for – I think it's great. Now, would you have a cup of coffee or water or something?

Jim: Oh, no, I don't care for anything.

END OF INTERVIEW