

**Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center**

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
JULIA (MCCALL) LANNIN
Neurosurgical Nurse, Army, World War II
2015

OH
2053

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Lannin (McCall), Julia. (b.1921). Oral History Interview, 2015.

Approximate length: 2 hour 18 minutes

Contact WVM Research Center for access to original recording.

Abstract:

In this oral history interview, Julia (McCall) Lannin, a Pickens County, South Carolina native, discusses her service as a neurosurgical nurse with the 5th Army, 33d General Hospital during World War II in North Africa and Italy. She was stationed in North Africa for 10 months and Italy for 20 months during her time of service. The interview covers the majority of her time in service as well as some information about her life before and after the war. Lannin was one of ten children born and raised in South Carolina. She and her older sister Oliva attended nursing school and joined the Army Nurses Corps together in 1943. They were sent overseas in the *Empress of Scotland* in June of 1943, first to Casablanca (Morocco) and then to Bizerte, Tunisia (Africa) where they and their hospital were stationed for approximately 10 months. From Africa they were transferred to Italy, first to Naples and then to Rome after Rome fell to the Allied forces. Lannin recounts multiple stories about memorable patients with spinal cord and brain trauma that she worked with. The nurses continued to move around Italy, spending time in Viareggio, Pisa and back to Naples where Lannin was when the war ended. Lannin and her sister were supposed to be transferred to CBI but were able to avoid that assignment. After visiting Switzerland, Lannin and her sister were sent back stateside. Lannin remembers the trip back across the Atlantic on the *U.S.S. Randolph*, being extremely treacherous and unpleasant. Lannin was discharged in April 1946. Lannin reflects on how rare it was to talk about serving and World War II, even with her husband and siblings. She mentions ways in which she is receiving recognition for her service in more recent years. Other topics of note: Lannin talks at length about her interactions with the men assigned to the hospital and other servicemen she interacted with, including several she went on dates with. She met the man she would later marry while they were both stationed in Africa. Military family, relationships between men and women service members, overseas money and exchange, black market

Biographical Sketch:

Lannin (McCall) (b.1921) served as a neurosurgical nurse with the 33d General Hospital, 5th Army in North Africa and Italy during World War II

Archivist's Note:

Transcriptions are a reflection of the original oral history recording. Due to human and machine fallibility transcripts often contain small errors. Transcripts may not have been transcribed from the original recording medium. It is strongly suggested that researchers engage with the oral history recording as well as the transcript.

Interviewed by Ellen Brooks, 2016.

Transcribed by Charles Bellinger, 2016.

Reviewed by Rachelle Halaska, 2017.

Abstract written by Ellen Brooks, 2016.

Interview Transcript:

[Beginning of OH2053.Lannin_user_file1]

Brooks: Today is Thursday, January seventh, 2015. This is an interview with Julia McCall Lannin, who served with the Army Nurse Corps during World War II from 1943 to 1946. This interview is being conducted at Mrs. Lannin's home in West Allis, Wisconsin. The interviewer is Ellen Brooks, and the interview is being recorded for the Wisconsin Veterans' Museum Oral History Program. Okay. So, if we can start out with you telling me when and where you were born.

Lannin: I was born in Pickens County, South Carolina, in 1921.

Brooks: Okay. And can you tell me just a little bit about your early life?

Lannin: Uhm, we lived in a four-room house with outside privies, uh, a tin roof on the house. Uhm, we had a dog named Jack. Now I can remember all these, and I remember the— Uh, anyway, the—My dad drove a buggy to work, uh, about ten or fifteen miles. And my grandmother was staying with us one night, and it poured rain, and we heard a terrible noise down the roof of the house. And, uh, my mother started out the door to see what it was, and my grandma put her arm in front of her, and she said, “Honey, stand back. Gimme the shotgun.” So anyway, my mother gave her the shotgun, and it was a rat, [laughing] chewing on the [?] corn. Well, anyway, uh, what this place is now, uh, they—It was a very hilly area, and during the war, that was all dammed up, and there's a huge lake there now called Kewaunee [?], or Kewee [sp?]. Kewee Lake was used during the war as a bombing—a test for bombing. And, uhm, you know, the planes would fly over. And now it's just a beautiful lake, uhm, and from there we moved, uhm, we moved to another little town where my dad worked, and then I went—finally went to school— Oh , we'd moved again! And we finally went—I went—started this school, and by this time we're in Liberty, South Carolina, which was a, more of a nice little town, and we walked about a mile and a half just to school. And, one day my aunt forgot to wake me up for school, and I can remember running down that little dirt road with a paper bag with hot biscuits and cheese, [laughs] eating that on the way to school, but anyway, that night, my sister was born. And that one sister is still living today.

Brooks: Wow!

Lannin: She's the only one living out of ten children,

Brooks: Ten children. And where do you fall in the line?

Lannin: I'm third from the top. And uh, uh, then we, uh—When I graduated from high school, from Liberty, and I had—I graduated in 1938, which was too young to go into nurses' training, so I had to work a year, and I worked at a cotton mill in spinning, the spinning room. And the spinning room, you caught a bobbin. It had a big felt, light spool of yarn, very soft, and that spun into a tiny thread that they use for cloth. And you had to catch this bobbin, make it three hundred revolutions a minute, and if you didn't stop it

instantly it burned the skin off your hands. And so I learned to do that pretty good. And my first paycheck was, uh, seven dollars and forty-five cents. I got a nickel an hour. But, you know, a hot dog was a nickel, and a soda was a nickel. A very good spicy—They had to take the spice out of coke. I don't know if you know about that. That was a drug.

Brooks: M-hm. Yup.

Lannin: Anyway, uh, then I graduated from high school, and, uh, I went to, uh, I worked in this factory, for my sister Olivia to finish her high school. She was older than me, but had been crippled, and when she went back to school that senior year, I had to carry all her books because we had no elevators and she had to go up and down the steps, and I had to help her along the way.

[00:05:11]

And I'd come home from school and have to do all the laundry because my mother was always sick. And wringing out overalls from five kids—bib overalls—[laughing] That was a nightmare. I tell you I had a hard life.

Brooks: And what did your dad do for a living?

Lannin: He worked in the cotton mill. He was—He was what they called a second hand, and as second in charge, he was always in charge on the second shift. And, uhm, I'd run to school, run to the factory—I'd get home off and change my clothes and run all the way a mile and a half to the factory and do my work at two in the morning and my dad would drive me home. And then the next day I'd get up and go to school. That was another hard thing. Well anyway, my sister got very crippled from working in this mill. She went to work at the age of fourteen. At that time, that was the law. You could, but they changed that before I came along, thank God. I had to wait until I was sixteen. And, uh, but, when we were in school, I told you I helped her get up the steps, all her books. I helped her get dressed in the morning. And, uhm—

Brooks: I think we were talking about when she graduated high school.

Lannin: Yeah.

Brooks: You were waiting for her, right?

Lannin: Yes, right. And I took a course in chemistry, to sort of help me along in nurses' training. Well, I was not eighteen, so I could not go.

Brooks: Right.

Lannin: I couldn't do nurses' training until I was eighteen. Then finally we got all set up to go to nurses' training.

Brooks: And why did you decide to do nurses' training?

Lannin: Uhm, I don't know. My sister-in-law's father owned the hospital, and he charged two

fifty to visit the house. He was a very sweet man. Had so much stuff but gave it all away. Left his wife with nothing. No, she had enough to live off, but it was skimpy. Anyway, uhm, we just decided we wanted to go into nurses' training. And there were no nurses around us. And this hospital was six miles up the road, and that was a long ways on dirt roads with T-Model Fords. [laughs] And, uhm, the day we left for nurses' training, my father took us to Greenville to catch the bus. And he stood there and cried. I never thought Ben would cry. But he was losing his two older girls. Anyway, it cost us a lot of money to enter nurses' training: Fifty dollars. That included six white uniforms, a cap when you could wear that, a thermometer, a syringe, and a pair of bandage scissors. All for fifty dollars. That was our entrance fee. And after six months we got paid. They put us on the floor right away. The day after we got there we went to work in the hospital, and, uhm, we had our studies at night, and, uh, worked all day on the floor in the hospital, because we didn't have aides. We had nothing. The nurses did everything. Emptying those great big bedpans, and they don't even have 'em anymore. And, uhm, now we go to something else. 'Salright?

Brooks: Yeah, go ahead.

Lannin: Anyway, I enjoyed the nurses' training. I got kicked out of school.

Brooks: Oh.

Lannin: I, uhm, the most expensive room in the hospital was five dollars and a quarter, and it was like a suite. And it had a beautiful, great big bathroom. That was five and a quarter a month—a night. But anyway, uhm, once a month they changed us to a different floor, so we'd rotate and get everything in. and, uh, one morning I had been on this ward first, southeast, for two months, and they always gave me the same ward. And it was a four-bed, free ward. [phone rings]

Brooks: Oop. Should we pause? I'll pause for a second.

[Break at 10:13]

Brooks: There we go.

Lannin: Anyway, uhm, these people, they got so many flowers. Everybody got flowers. [laughing] Sometimes we'd have fifteen pots to put out in the hallway at night. And, uh, anyway, and we had to give them a full bath. They could not bathe themselves. And they stayed in the hospital for two or three weeks for everything. And, uhm, anyway, I always got the knots out of their hair and brushed their hair, changed their bed—Every day—they don't even do that anymore. Put the clean linen on every day, and I always pinned a little flower on their pillow. And everybody loved that. So this nun from Ireland—which I didn't understand; I thought she was head of the nurses—But she wasn't even a nurse herself. I didn't know that.

Brooks: Just a nun?

Lannin: She was a nun from Ireland. Hot-tempered. Anyway, uhm, first thing she said was that

we were to change. “Julia, you will go back to Ward Four.” And I said, “Sister, I’ve had that for two months. Could I please have a couple of private rooms, like the other girls?” Well, she said I would take the ward. Well, I went back to the ward, and she called me out; she said, “You know, I don’t like your attitude.” She said, “You get out of here and don’t you ever come back.” This was eight o’clock in the morning. Sunday morning; I’ll never forget that. And Sister Alphonse, God love her, she was from Ireland, too. And she was head of the hospital, and was going to a place out of town that morning, and she always had a driver. And what I did was I went upstairs and told my sister that I had to get out of Charlotte that day, that she told me to get out. And the head nurse up there, the one who ran the floor, was very strict, but she knew me, and she said, “You tell her, ‘She can’t go until somebody comes back here.’” So I went over to the—went over to my nurses’ quarters, and told another dear friend of mine, and her sister was head of the lab, who was also a nun. And, uh, what she said was, uh, “You’ve got to tell Sister Alphonse before she leaves.” So, uh, anyway, I went over to see Sister Alphonse. Well, she went up. She was shocked. And, uh, she told the driver to wait, and she went up to the operating room and got Sister Mary James, and told her that, uh, what had happened. And she said, uhm, to keep me there until she got back that night. And, uh, anyway, then in the meantime, this hardtack came over and told me to go back to work, and I said, “No.” I said, “You threw me out. I’m staying here until Sister Alphonse comes back.” And, uh, so, anyway, the next morning, I was going to breakfast, and Sister Alphonse waited for me at the bottom of the stairs, and she said, “You know, I know that this hit you awfully hard,” and she says, “She will always remember it, but don’t let it bother you.” And she asked me if I knew the public—the head public health nurse in Charlotte, and I said, “Yeah, I know her.” She said, “She pulled the same thing on her, threw her out.” And now she was head of the Public Health Department. Well, anyway, I went back to work, and I did go back in the ward, but she became one of my best friends.

Brooks: Who did?

Lannin: This nurse that threw me out.

Brooks: She did! Wow!

Lannin: She became one of my best friends!

Brooks: Huh.

Lannin: Well, anyway—

Brooks: So, you were in nursing—How long were you in nursing school?

Lannin: Thirty-six straight months.

Brooks: Mmkay.

Lannin: That was actually four years.

Brooks: M-hm.

Lannin: Uhm, when we got in nurses' training, we got in in September. And we only had a couple or three days off for Christmas, and we couldn't go home. And—can this be quick—

Brooks: Do you want to pause?

Lannin: No. Uhm—yeah.

Brooks: Pause?

Lannin: M-hm [yes].

[Break at 15:20]

Brooks: Okay, go ahead.

Lannin: We were in the same class, and, uhm, always competing with each other, and, uh, she got a bad curvature of the spine, and they put her in a full-length body cast for six weeks.

Brooks: Wow.

Lannin: And I had—Every night I had to take her mattress off the bed, put it on the floor, and, uh, help her get down. And help her get up in the morning, help her get dressed, and then put the mattress back out and we had to make the bed. Everything couldn't have a wrinkle. [laughs]

Brooks: And where were you living?

Lannin: In the nursing home.

Brooks: Okay.

Lannin: And, uh, anyway, I forget the name of the nursing home. Beautiful, brand-new place. And, uh, what happened, uhm, pause?

[Break at 16:20]

Lannin: Well, we went to class. We got up at four o'clock in the morning, got dressed, went to church at six, went down for breakfast after Mass, and, uh, then we went up to work. We worked our eight hours. We got two hours off during the day, and one time *Gone with the Wind* came out, and the theater was five blocks away, and we run to the theater, we'd watch a little bit. The next day we'd go back and pay a quarter, so it took us three days to see *Gone with the Wind*.

Brooks: It's a long movie.

Lannin: Yeah, it was a long movie. But anyway, very interesting. And then, I finally graduated. But first of all, we took our State Board. And when we took our test to go to State Board, we both flunked. [laughing] Well, anyway, we went to State Board, and went into Raleigh, North Carolina, and—Can you believe that she and I both graduated in the top five of the state?

Brooks: Wow!

Lannin: Uh-huh. And then we decided—Well, the war started, and we knew that my brothers would be going, and we decided to go into Service. And, uhn, it takes you about six months to really get in, a lot of things to do, and, uh, uh—

Brooks: What are some of the things you had to do?

Lannin: Well, you had to get things organized, uh, where you were going and when you got out. You had to see your family; you had to spend more than a day or two with your family in all this time, and, uhm, I learned to drink; I had to drink. Anyway, uh, I didn't drink much. Anyway, uh, we went in to Fort Jackson, on the fifteenth day of January, so that meant I was, uh, six months, and I did private duty, eight dollars a day, eight hours. A dollar an hour. Isn't that interesting?

Brooks: And you got to Fort Jackson in January of 1943?

Lannin: Yeah.

Brooks: Right. So the war had been, kinda, going on for a little bit at that point.

Lannin: Oh, yes. Yes.

Brooks: And is Fort Jackson where you did your Basic Training?

Lannin: Right,

Brooks: Mokay.

Lannin: And, uhm, after being there for—You'd go through these—all these malaria shots, and all the treatment for going overseas, and, uh, they get you ready. You have to go through all your clothes. In the meantime, you're working full-time. And as I said they had no aides, and these were boys anyway. [coughs] You had to work, and you went to—but we had fun in Fort Jackson. Uhm, even though we worked, Saturday night we went into town, and we went dancing, and we had a great big steak for two dollars, at two o'clock in the morning. [laughs] Wasn't that nice?

[00:19:58]

Well then, by June, we were getting ready to leave to go overseas. We did not know where we were going. In those days, everything was very secret, and you could only write to your parents and say, I had been there. Not, I am going, or anything. But, uhm, anyway, I had to have an appendectomy, and they put me in the hospital, and we had to leave. So they let me go, but I couldn't do nothing. And our bedrolls—Everything we

owned went in these bedrolls, plus a little duffel bag. And we took this train ride from—I think that was a Norfolk train—from Charlotte to Virginia, Camp Patrick Henry. And in the meantime, I met, at Camp Patrick Henry, I met a guy by the name of Bruce DeWor [sp?] and he was a Polish guy from Chicago. I'd never seen a lot of Polish people. So he gave me a lot; we just had more fun together. And, uh, at that time, the water would come up the dirt [?]-little ditches. There was nothing paved. Nothing was paved in those days. And. Uhm, terrible mosquito bites. Ooh, my God. Just terrible. And finally we boarded the ship to go overseas, still not knowing where we were going. And it was the *Empress of Scotland*, a British luxury liner converted to a British—to a troop train. Oh, God, You got linens. You had beautiful linens. Well, anyway, uh, we sailed out and that night they had roast duck for supper. And I went down and I got almost down there to smell that duck. Oh, I didn't get no further. [laughing] I ran back to my quarters. So, anyway—and the next day everything was of [?] beautiful glass. But I was going to tell you. I met this guy who was on the ship with me, so we'd play poker at night; I learned to play poker. So I won a lot of pennies. And uh, uh, we would—When we get —We were to—This was a five-day trip. And this luxury liner was loaded with ack-acks and—What were those other—The guns, with—There was ten or twelve to a—One shot. Well, anyway—

Brooks: That's okay.

Lannin: Anyway, uhm, had one of the biggest, uhm, guns on the back of the ship that I had ever seen. And, uh, the nose of that thing was this big, and, uhm, on Sunday morning—They always made us go out on the deck during the day, and I think that was the reason, but the —the water was gorgeous. And, uh, we were to ride at Casablanca—We didn't know where we were going, but we were going to arrive in Casablanca on Sunday afternoon. And Sunday morning this Bruce DeWor [?] helped me get on top of one of those ammunition boxes, and all of a sudden the alarm went off. Every one of those guns opened up. My God, we were going to be sunk . And by the time I got to the ladder to go down to my quarters, I was playing “Home, Sweet Home” [They laugh] and, uhm, we were down there about thirty minutes and the all-clear sounded. And what it was, uhm, three ships had been sunk and we were being chased, but we had a faster boat and could outrun them, so we had to change our course, and they never got us. But when we got to our staging area, there was some nuns and laypeople, and even a couple of little kids that had been saved from the three ships that were sunk. And, uh, we opened our bedrolls up, and—As I said, we had everything in there; all our personal items, our clothing—everything. And so everybody—There was about twenty-five of them, and there was a hundred of us, but we gave them enough that they would—They could manage until they got to the next destination. And that was it; that was the big scare. Now while we were there, our ship, with supplies, was sunk, and, uh, [coughing] one of our boys was killed, because they had guards around us, and, uh, when he crossed, they stabbed him to death.

[00:25:36]

Brooks: When he crossed what?

Lannin: Well, you know, they had a fence all around us, and these guys walked, and they crossed this way. One went this way and one went that way, and all the way around this staging

area, and, uh—Anyway, one guy was shot—uh, knifed—and killed, and, uhm—

Brooks: By whom?

Lannin: By one of the Germans, probably, or one of the Italians, you know. I think it was—Well, you know, everybody was at war. I don't know, but we could never go out in, uh, in Casablanca, without an armed officer with us.

Brooks: So you were in Casablanca when this happened?

Lannin: We were in Casablanca. See, Casablanca was an interesting town, but it, too was dusty. You see this, way back when? And, uh, anyway, they took us on a hike one morning, to keep us in motion, and I think it was twenty miles in a temperature of a hundred and twenty degrees. And at night you froze to death. You slept under four blankets, and you were still cold. But anyway, we only did that one time, [laughing] because our commanding officer stopped that and fast. Well, we came home crying, you know, we wouldn't even eat—Oh, it was terrible. And, uh—

Brooks: And how many nurses were you with?

Lannin: A hundred nurses, uh, three hundred enlisted men.

Brooks: Okay.

Lannin: Fifty doctors, and, uh—

Brooks: So you were, like, a medical troop?

Lannin: We were a general hospital.

Brooks: Okay.

Lannin: We were a general hospital. Well then, uhm, we had more training there, and short marches, and physical things to keep us up. And, uh, finally we decided to make a— They were going to send us [to] our next destination, and that was Bizerte, Africa. That was in Tunisia. You've heard of Tunis. And, uh, they sent us on a troop train. Now that story about that troop train ride's in this book. And it's really interesting. Mark and Candace said I should have finished it, put it in the book, but I didn't. And, uhm, on this troop train ride, and it was a cattle car. And they put six of us in one little compartment, and one row of seats was facing each other. And what we do, build up our duffel bags, and we'd sleep on that. You know, in between. And, uhm, some of us would have to sleep on the floor. And bedbugs. Oh God. There's a poem in there written by one of my girls about the bedbugs biting and they'd bite the rear—[laughing] Oh, it was funny. But anyway, uhm, on this ride, we would have only C-rations, three little cans of food. Like the size of a Vienna sausage can. One for breakfast, one for dinner, and one for supper. And it was different brands, so we'd rotate them. And in it was, uhm, lemonade powder, and we could make a drink if we could get the water, and they gave us—One would be coffee, and, uh, they gave us a cup of water for breakfast. And, uh, that was all we got,

was, uh, we'd fill up our canteen and that was it; we had to ration that one little canteen. That was little more than a pint of water for the day. And, uh, so anyway, uh, the food was bad. And, uh, you couldn't go to—There was things I don't remember, but, uh—Like, uh, I don't remember where the latrine was, or anything; I don't remember anything about that.

[00:30:04]

But, uh, what we'd do when the train would stop and get water, we'd run out with the helmet, we'd take the liner out of our helmet, and get enough water—that'd give us about a half a helmet full—and we'd sponge bathe, and we'd wash our underwear in it, and hang it out the train to dry. [laughs] And that's the way we went for six days and nights. And we got—We would trade—We bought grapes and things like that from the Arabs, and one time we run up in with a bunch of WACs, and I don't know where they had been, but they had some, uh, homemade bread and stuff like that, and jelly, real jelly. So they gave us their food, which was wonderful. We even traded our C-rations to the British for kidney pie. [Brooks laughs] Can you imagine eating that stuff? Well, anyway—

Brooks: Anything different, probably.

Lannin: Oh, it was wonderful. It was wonderful. And, uhm, then when we get to Bizerte, they pluck us down in a wheat field on top of a hill. And you know what the furrows are. Furrows are rows that are dug deeper than others. And we had these little pup tents to sleep in. Had to put up our own pup tent and unroll this bedroll in, and that was where we slept. That's where we did everything. And, uhm, anyway, uhm, the first night we were there, uhm, we were so thirsty that we took the liner—the liner out of our helmet—the worst thing a person could ever do is take the liner out. If the shrapnel had hit us, we would have been a goner. But anyway, uhm, there was a wine vineyard next door, and [laughing] can you imagine a hundred nurses hitting a wine vineyard? [still laughing] We filled our helmets with grapes. And we're starting back home, and Jerry came over—the Germans. We dumped our grapes in the dirt, crawled in the ditch until the Jerries they stopped bombing, and, uh, uh, the next day the man came over and said we had robbed his winery. Well, anyway, I don't know if you remember when the war started in Iraq, how the ammunition went up like this. The fireworks—We were laying down in these furrows in a pup tent—nothing really to protect us. And, uh, the Germans came over and they dropped the yellow flower flares to light the place up, and they came back with the red ones, and that was their target. And all the way around us was their target.

Brooks: What were they trying to hit?

Lannin: An ack-ack outfit, an ammunition dump—everything that we used was right around us! And, uh, our commanding officer—they always came over at 9:50 at night, and our commanding officer yelled to crawl on our bellies to the bottom of the hill. And we didn't get to the bottom of the hill until they quit firing, but we'd look out the window and we saw a German plane shot down by one of us. And I don't know who did it, but—I don't remember that, whether it was us or the British—or who did it, but anyway the next day we went over—I got so upset I would never go see one of those again. Somebody's boy got blown to pieces, and it made me heave —shouldn't have been there

in the first place. Well, anyway, uhm, after three or four weeks, we got our hospital. And then they brought us big tents. One of our girls got very sick, and—We had lots of lizards—sometimes they got big. But this one girl was death afraid of a snake, and she was in the hospital—We got diarrhea a lot, and, uh, so she was in the hospital someplace. And, uh, when they took her bedroll up, there was a snake under it. They never told her. They never told her. But anyway, then we went into these upright tents. Each one had a tent. And, of course, my picture's on this tent, with my African home [laughs].

[00:35:29]

Brooks: Did you share a tent or did you have your own tent?

Lannin: We had our own tent. And, uh, we slept on—They gave us canvas cots, and, uh—Oh, and, uh, they had a Nissen hut—You know what a Nissen hut is.

Brooks: M-m.

Lannin: It was a great big metal building, sort of dome-like, and that was our main dining room for everybody, all four hundred and fifty of us. And, uh—but we weren't all there at the same time anyway. And everything was dirt floors. It rained from September until April, so we wore—oh God—

Brooks: Boots?

Lannin: We had to wear boots. Uhm, our commanding officer was very good to us, and he knew we were getting so down and out with all this mud, working long hours, twelve hours a day, and, uh, yeah we grabbed a few times—good times—uh, and what he did one day, he called a meeting of the girls, and he said, “Write home, and have your parents,”—We used to wear long night—long gowns—and he said, “We'll have a dance.” And my mother sent me my white chiffon. I'll never forget that. So we went to the dance, holding our dresses up like this above our knees. We had a lot of fun. And another time is—I told you we were eating these C-rations. Uhm, every outfit had a quartermaster officer, and my future husband run the main quartermaster depot. And he supplied every organization with their food. Well, we still got C-rations, or we got canned cheese and canned butter. Stuck to the roof of your mouth. And, uh, our quartermaster guy came to me—His name was Al Riefer [sp?]. And he said, “Say, Julia, would you like to come down to my tent tonight?” And he says, “I've got a blind date for you.” I didn't ask any questions. I said, “No, Al. I don't want a blind date.” “Julia, he's bringing steak.” I said, “I'll go.” [laughs] Well, they put these steaks on this little grill, and then drop it in a bucket of butter. Good old cholesterol, you know. Then Jerry comes over, and we jump in the ambulance—'cause ambulances in those days had no windows—and with flashlights we'd sit, play cards, 'til Jerry left. And nobody ever got hurt.

Brooks: Oh.

Lannin: And, uh, anyway, uhm, one night, I was on the—First of all this young sailor came in one day, and, uh, he had, uh—Dragging his leg behind him. We knew he had a ruptured disc. He was eighteen years old. Had some, little smart aleck, he was, and he was from

the Navy. And I sent his breakfast tray to him the next morning, and he told my corpsman, he said, "I don't eat this slop. I'm from the Navy, and I get good food." And he came—He was hurt, and he came back and told me what he said, and I said, "Go get the tray." I said, "Give it to somebody else." So anyway, I went back when it was all over, and I told him, I said, "You don't like this slop." He said, "Well, I'm in the Navy; I get good food!" I said, "Honey, you're in the Army now, and when you get hungry enough you can ask for some of this slop, and take him home." But what happened, they finally operated on him—and by that time they'd put me on night duty—And my future husband was over there that night, sitting at my desk, never interfering with nothing I did, but he was just there, and, uh, we had this great big long tent, one patient's—You'll see pictures of it on this film. And, uh, uh,

[break at 40:23]

Lannin: They operated on that young boy in this [inaudible] [??]ectomy, and they put him right next to the desk. And he kept squirming around. I'd check him every few minutes. His temperature a hundred and five, which scared me half to death. Now mind you, we were in a canvas tent. Dirt floors—Anyway, I checked him every few minutes and made Gordon go home, go to his tent, and said, "I don't want you here." Well the doctor comes back, and so I wrote everything down, two or three times. And I gave it to my corpsman and told him to go to Bill Wary's [??] tent; he was the surgeon. And I said, "Don't you leave him until he's on his feet." So he came running over, and he took those stitches out, and the next day, uhm, next day they started him on the first penicillin that was ever used in our hospital.

Brooks: Wow!

Lannin: Penicillin had just come out, because other than that, all these terrible shrapnel wounds—and Africa seemed to have been the worst of it—We had so many bad shrapnel wounds, and only way we could treat them—I don't remember what we cleaned them—but—whether it was with peroxide or saline. I don't remember what we cleaned them with. All we had was sulfa powder to sprinkle over these wounds. And, uh, anyway, this kid got this penicillin, and it came in a little glass vial. You know about this?

Brooks: [Inaudible], yeah. I have an idea, but—

Lannin: Came in a little glass vial like this, and you had to shoot a little needle in there and pull it out, and then shoot it up into glass bottles—was no plastic in those days—everything was glass. And you shot it up in the IV with another syringe. And you counted—you couldn't let more than sixty drops a minute go in. so periodically you were checking these drops. And that smart-aleck lived, [laughing] I got letters in that scrapbook.

Brooks: From him?

Lannin: Yeah. He tried to fall in love with me. But see. I was four years older than him. Anyway, when he left, he did give me a navy blue sweater—navy sweater, uh, which I couldn't wear because it was wool. I was allergic to wool. And, uhm, anyway, he finally got to go

home.

Brooks: And when you were there, did you have a specialty, or was everyone just a general==

Lannin: I was strictly in neurosurgery, the brain and spinal cord. We had—And for tents, we did—they made—they put ropes up and sort of dropped like a sheet of anything they had, to screen off a critical patient. And this one, GI, he had a shrapnel wound in his spine, this big. And, uhm, he was paralyzed from the waist down. Never complained. Never complained. But we had an officer down the road, a few doors down, a few beds down. And, uh, all he did was complain about his pain. And he wanted attention right then and there. So anyway, I talked to the doctor about this, and I said, “We’re going to move his bed up here, and when you come in and help us dress this wound on your day, we’re going to have him there to see what’s going on.” Best thing I ever did. He never complained. I let him see what that boy was going through. The patients were wonderful, most of them, unless they had brain injuries. One took a poke at me once.
[laughs]

[00:44:54]

Anyway, that was it there. And as I say, Africa was nice. Uh, it rained a lot, but the days were beautiful. The most beautiful sky, millions of stars when it wasn’t raining, and, uh, then they decided that [inaudible]. Everybody got out—Oh. We would go to Tunis on a—like a Saturday night, and, my [inaudible] to me, and he played the drums. And we had beautiful dances, get home about two in the morning. You know, in those days—My husband wasn’t married then. But we would go out with a married man, but they were just so wonderful. They were lonesome too. So I never had any problem. I went out with several married men. But, uh—

Brooks: And you and your sister stuck together throughout all this?

Lannin: M-hm. I got to tell you about this one man I went with. He was in charge—He had a what do you call—a minesweeper. A minesweeper is a ship that clears the harbor of the mines. And he was captain of that ship. And, uh, I went out with him one time, and he invited four couples to come aboard ship. And, uh, we went all dressed up, wearing our gas mask,[laughs] and we had to take a little boat out to his boat, and, uh, we called them ships in those days; everything was ship; you didn’t ever call them a boat. Anyway, uhm, when we got in there, he invited me back to his bedroom. I didn’t want to go. You know, he wasn’t good-looking; he was so damn handsome. He told me sit down in his chair, a nice little comfortable chair there, and he picked up this eight by ten picture, and he wanted to introduce me to his wife. I loved it. I thought that was the most beautiful thing he could have ever done. Now—Well, I had this—As I said, it seemed there was so much happening in Africa. This one kid by the name of, uhm—Holden was his last name—He was from Texas. And, uh, he came in paralyzed from the neck down, and that was not a battle casualty. He got in a scuffle with another kid and he got shot in the back of the neck. And, uh, uh, when Hugh, this guy, he went out and when he came back, I was in the hospital as a patient, and, uh, he called up, and he talked to my, uhm, my head nurse, and, uh, she told him I was in the hospital, and he could come and see me; they had two nurses on at a time with me, I was so bad.

Brooks: What was wrong with you?

Lannin: I had an appendectomy, and then I had a Meckel's Diverticulum too. But they gave me codeine, and blew me up like a barrel[?]. I was in the hospital almost three weeks. And in the meantime, everybody—They were cleaning the hospital out. And when Hugh came, he felt real bad for me, and he couldn't bring me a thing. Nothing for me. He asked me if he could bring my patient some ice cream. He knew I had the most critical patients. And this guy Holden was in very bad shape, and he was the last one put on the ship. And, uh, the day they were loading all these patients, they left Holden to the last one. And somebody helped me get to the porch. We had this little deck of this little hut that I was in, and my corpsman saw me. And he came and picked me up. I didn't weigh a lot in those days. He picked me up and took me over there, and this guy was still there. And he managed to tell me, "Thank you for the ice cream." Well, you know what? He got real bad aboard the ship, and they wired for his family to meet him at the dock. And he died on the dock, right after they saw him. One of the nurses on the hospital ship came back and told me. We took a—We took—You know, these were babies, little kids. If you ever saw them—Can you imagine an eighteen-year-old being in this situation? And we just fell in love with all of them. And I was hoping somebody'd take care of my brothers.

[00:50:40]

Lannin: So anyway, then of course we came back— Oh, after I got better, and—I wasn't better—but they sent me to the general's villa up on another end of the lake—of the Mediterranean there. Beautiful place. Just for two or three days until they got my stuff aboard another ship. And we were going to move over to Italy. And at this villa, we had people waiting on us hand and foot. And every morning I had a big water glass of the most beautiful grapefruit juice. That was heavenly. I can't even drink it anymore. They won't allow that. But anyway, uh, when I got back, we boarded the *Shamrock*—the ship the *Shamrock*—and we took the ride over to Naples. And, uh, on that piece of paper that they keep a copy of, uh, but you didn't put on the tape, uh, it tells what day we went there. But anyway, uh, you could see Vesuvius and it had just erupted, and it was still spewing a little bit, and, uh, they put us at—put us in some sort of staging area, and in it they had what they called sulfur springs, and the water was yellow. And, uh, you could bathe in it—It was a little sticky, but you came in, but if you washed your hair in it, you couldn't get a comb through it, and you had to wash your hair in beer to get it—You know, and we'd use that water to wash with, and then we'd rinse it with beer. Isn't that funny?

Brooks: M-hm.

Lannin: Well anyway, uh, I didn't go back; we stayed there until Rome fell. And, uh, some of the girls had to go back to work at various hospitals around, and, uh—But I didn't have to go back to work yet—And, uh, I don't even remember how long we stayed there. Uh, it was such a gorgeous place. But then when Rome fell, uh, we moved up to Rome, and, uh—Oh, I meant to tell you about this, uh, food we had, uh—You know, cheese, cheese, and, uh, butter came in gallon buckets, and we called it axle grease; both of them stuck to the roof of your mouth. Nurses were losing a lot of weight. Nobody ate. But we had a sergeant who made wonderful bread, homemade bread. That was good. So anyway, they took the Greek sergeant from the—another mess hall and gave him to us, and he took

that spam, and he ground it up and made pickle relish—er, put pickle relish in—and made ham salad spread. He took the cheese and ground it up, and put pimento and mayonnaise in it, and you know what? That was the most wonderful food. Oh, it was absolutely wonderful. Anyway, uh, they had to clean out our hospital, because, uh, the Germans left it. They threw bedpans up to the ceiling. It was very badly damaged.

Brooks: Was this in Rome?

Lannin: This was right outside of Rome.

Brooks: Okay.

Lannin: Uh, 'bout six miles. And, uh, anyway, uh, we would go to work—As the place got cleaned up, we'd go to work. We're working sixteen hours a day straight, sixteen straight hours. And, uh, what was sad—They were so poor. The Italians were so poor. And, uh, the nuns would stand out there, and they knew we didn't have nothing for lunch. We would have peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. And they'd stand out there for the crust of your bread.

[00:55:11]

And, uh, one night I went off duty and we slept on the porch, and, uh, on an Army cot, and I was so exhausted that I burst out crying. Now, mind you, I wasn't even twenty-two years old. I burst out crying, and, uh, this one girl came up; she was down a ways on the porch—it was a big place, huge place—and she came up and she said, “Julia, you need a cigarette,” and I—That was my first cigarette over there. And I—She never asked me no questions; she knew what it was all about.

Brooks: Did it help?

Lannin: Yeah. I finally went to sleep, and got up the next day with the same routine. Well, anyway, uhm, we did get to go see the Pope, and we had an audience. They let two hundred a day go to see the Pope, and my sister and I went together. And he was very frail. And they said he would come down and talk to about six people, and not to let him ask any questions; that we were to tell him where we were from, our name, and our rank, and serial number, and from what place we were from in this country. And he came to me first, and, uh, he took my hand. Then he went to my sister, and when she said the same thing I did, except the serial number was one higher—I was Seventy-Three and she was Seventy-Four—and he put our hands together with his, and he said, “Sisters.” Now I have a plaque he sent to my mother. Beautiful plaque that he sent to my mother. M-hm. And—

Brooks: Were you raised Catholic?

Lannin: No. Uh, I never saw a priest until I was twenty or so.

Brooks: That's still a great—That's a good experience.

Lannin: Yes, right? Uhm, well anyway, after that, I did go back. Now they have a picture of that in—not the first time, but when the big claue group went in they have a picture of the

group that had this audience with the Pope, and, uhm—And we saw a lot around Rome. I should have got those little dishes out. Uh, there was a little town right outside of Rome. Not one building was left standing. All the rubble was this high. And this guy—I don't even remember who he was—We went down to see that place, and I began to dig through that rubble, and I got four little dishes. They were little tiny demitasse-like cups autographed in gold in the back, and they were sort of a champagne color with gold rim around it and green ivy leaves all the way around this plate. And I've still got those; I gotta get them out and be sure somebody gets them.

Brooks: How did you send them back?

Lannin: I brought them back with me.

Brooks: With you.

Lannin: Uh-huh. I brought 'em back. You won't believe how we brought some of this stuff back. I had a watch pin in my bra, which I don't wear. Well, anyway, uhm, my husband—my friend, my Gordon—he went to the Adriatic coast, and I went to the—I went to the west coast, he went to the east, and, uh—And as for the other guy, the one from Chicago, I kept writing to him, and then one day I got a letter back and it said, “Deceased”—He was shot down. He was a bombardier, and there was only one left—pilot was left, and almost a year later he came back. That was when I was waiting to go to CBI. He came back to tell me what happened to the—He was the only survivor of that plane. His name was Rip [?], and they called him Rip Grease. [laughs] Anyway, uh, as I said, we went to a lot of places around Rome. Uh, we went to the Catacombs, uh, I visited at, I bet you, about a hundred churches. Uh, I lived right across the street, uh—No, I didn't live there. I went to a photographer across the street, an artist, and I got my picture done in chalk. And I can't show it to you because that back room is a disaster, uh, but, uh, it cost us fifty dollars. We each had it done, and I was wearing a gold, gold blouse, gold-colored blouse. It was so pretty. And it was pure silk.

[01:00:48]

Brooks: Wow.

Lannin: Anyway, I just love that picture. If the glass breaks, the picture is gone. And we paid fifty dollars to have that done. It would cost a thousand dollars today. And so our colonel wouldn't let us do anything about it. He had that thing crated himself and sent home. And it's been traveling all over. [laughs]

Brooks: Wow.

Lannin: 'Sninety years old. And this was made—done—The artist was across the street from Saint Peter's Square. And Saint Peter's Square is built up now. It's beautiful. Well, it was beautiful then. Uhm, I went to Mass there one time. Are you Catholic?

Brooks: I was raised Catholic.

Lannin: Your like my sister-in-law, niece—raised Catholic.

Brooks: Not so much anymore.

Lannin: I don't get into nobody's business. I mean, my daughter's [inaudible].

Brooks: We can talk about it after.

Lannin: Anyway, uh, we were in Rome seven months, and we followed the station hospitals. But the neurosurgical patients were brought right back to our hospital because they needed care immediately. And we moved up to a place called Viareggio [??] or—There's another name for it in the book. Anyway, uh, that was right on the Mediterranean and very sandy, and we had an outside privy, and I was telling Dorothy, twelve seats on each side, and if you could ever imagine going out there when you had your period—Oh god, you wanted to die. That was horrible.

Brooks: Yeah.

Lannin: That was one of the worst things for me, was trying to go in—But it was a beautiful place, and it was three beautiful buildings right in a row, and you'll see 'em in this book, and it's on that film, uhm, surgical building and then there was the building that we lived in, uh, and then the first one was the medical building, and then surgical building was more like a ranch type thing. And that surgical building was the one I worked in. So we had to walk about a mile and a half to and from the hospital, three—twice a day—to get our food and what have you. And, uh, but that was all right; we never gave that a thought, and uhm, one morning—Oh, things began to pick up, uh, you know, we were near Pisa. You know where Pisa is. Uh, I went to two or three weddings at the Leaning Tower.

Brooks: Oh!

Lannin: Yeah I did. And one of us—One of our roommates—Anyway, uh, I met this guy by accident. Uhm, he came to our outfit and talked to our head nurse about any little thing going between—You know, introducing some of their boys to our girls. And, uh, I don't know; I must have come by. I was the youngest one in the outfit, youngest girl. And, uh, he said, “And I want that one right there.” And she saw his ring, and she says, uh, “I'm sorry, but she won't go out with you. She won't go out with a married man.” Well, when he came to pick everybody up, he had taken his ring off, and I didn't notice. I fell in love with the guy. I did.

[01:05:15]

Brooks: There's a picture, uhm, from your scrapbook that says, uhm, something like “This is the day my heart was broken.

Lannin: Yeah.

Brooks: Was that about him?

Lannin: That was about him.

Brooks: So is that the day you found out he was married?

Lannin: Yeah, and I don't know whatever hit me. Ask him that. We had so much fun together. And, uh, there's some beautiful—more pictures on this tape than I thought would ever be on it, and there's one of this Dennis fixing my tea, and he was the one who went out with my sister. And then my boyfriend—His name was Vernon Weber [sp]?, and, uh, he'd been out someplace and—Was about ten o'clock at night we came in and, uh, I said to him, uh—I don't know. Something told me and I looked him straight in the eye. Something told me, something, and I looked him straight in the eye, and I said, “Are you married?” And he said, “Yes.” I fell apart at the seams. Oh my god—Now I did see him after that, but it was in—you, know. Well, I wished he weren't married. Everybody thought he was a movie star. And he pitched baseball. We did everything together—Went to ball—I went to all his ballgames. Oh, and we went out together, and we danced together. We did everything possible to make life easier for everybody. I'll tell you this *M*A*S*H* story. *M*A*S*H*, when it first came out, that movie.

Brooks: Like that TV show, yeah?

Lannin: There was a movie made.

Brooks: Oh. Okay. M-hm.

Lannin: I hated that thing.

Brooks: Yeah?

Lannin: And I said I'm never coming again. 'Cause everything was so slapstick. And I said that wasn't it at all. It was never that way. One time, I uh, I was telling you this guy took a poke at me. Uhm, he had a bullet in the head, and, uh, we [inaudible]. He had a bullet to the head and I think we were still in Rome then. There was two incidents there. Uhm, I went over to give him his medicine, and, uh, somebody said to me he would get wild. He came in the night before, and the doctor walked in behind me very softly, and I didn't know it. And I tried to give him his medicine, and—God, he drew that fist back—He was going to get me in a—And that doctor grabbed his arm. He said, “If you hit her, something would have happened to you.” And he said, [laughing] “I hear you knocking!” [inaudible] I can hear him saying, “I hear you knocking!” Anyway, there was another little guy when we was in Rome. He came in with a bullet in the head—[inaudible], I think. It was where the bullet landed, and it affected certain things. And, uhm, nurses, if possible, try to check those guys over, by giving them the first bath, and they got a bath. Not a—They didn't get a washrag in a bowl. They got a bath. So anyway, I was giving him his bath, and, uh, all of a sudden—oh my god—he went into the worst seizure. Where's my kleenex? There it is.

Brooks: Yep.

Lannin: Thank you. He, uh, he went into a terrible seizure, and I couldn't hold him on the bed, so I threw my body across him and I screamed. And here all the doctors and the nurses

came running, 'cause they knew I was in trouble, and he went to surgery within an hour, and when he came back, uh, I was over talking to him a few days later. I said, "When have you written to your mother?" You know, I always thought—Mothers, they must be dying, you know and he says, "I can't write." I said, "Well you can talk, and I'll write." So I wrote a letter to his mother. And when I got—Then she wrote a letter back, and that's in the scrapbook. She was so tickled to hear from me. And, uh, he finally went home on a hospital ship, and, uh, about six months later, his sister wrote me another letter—Here I am, six thousand miles away, and she wants to—and she says he's going downhill; what should she do? She had that much faith in me, and what should she do? But I couldn't get a message to him fast enough, so I went to the Red Cross, and the Red Cross contacted his family, got him to a VA hospital in Philadelphia. Didn't hear from him after that.

[01:11:04]

But there was a lot of little incidents. And we'd get up to Viareggio [??], and we were closer behind the front lines, and, uh, usually, the patients when they're picked up, they go through an evac hospital. Then they go through a station hospital, and then they come to the general hospital. But not with our patients. The one I'm working in—Neurosurgical patients. The neurosurgical patients came straight back to our house, and one night I was on night duty, and can you believe, I got [inaudible - might be number of patients coming in?]. One was worse than the other. I'll never forget this one guy. I don't remember his name, but I went back to him, and I was going to check his temperature, and I touched his lips with a thermometer, and he screamed at me. I touched him here, and he kept screaming at me.

Brooks: When you touched his face?

Lannin: Uh-huh. This upset me bad, and I knew there was something bad wrong with him. So anyway, I called the surgeon, and, uh, this was about at seven o'clock at night. I called a surgeon and told him about this. He said, "Oh my god, Julia. Leave him alone; I'll be right there. But I'll call the operating room. He's got a bullet in the pituitary gland." And sure enough he did have. And he got out of there. He went home, but, uh, a lot of patients didn't. But you know? I don't remember too many dying. Uh, a lot of them went back to work. Oh, and we had this other, German guy, eighteen years old. I don't even remember his name. But you know, they didn't want to be in the war no more than we did. And, uh, he had a bullet in the head, and, uh, when he got better he wouldn't eat a bite of food. I couldn't talk German; all I could say was "no verstehen sie?" [I don't understand you] [?]. Couldn't understand anything he said. And, uhm, so anyway, I got our Catholic chaplain. Our Protestant chaplain didn't speak German, but the Catholic chaplain did. And, uh, I had him come over and talk to this kid to find out what was really wrong with him, that he wouldn't eat. And what he told him was that they were told that the Americans—If they got caught by the Americans, that they would let them get well, and then they would crucify them one day at a time. That's why he wouldn't eat. And it took a few days but we got him convinced he would get out of there, and he did go back home. And, uh, then one morning—One morning—I don't know—Must have been four o'clock in the morning—uh, as I said we lived right on the beach, and all the ack-ack machines and the big guns opened up, and we did not know what it was at that hour of the day, because by that time, they said they had—War was over. And, uhm, next day we heard that they thought Hitler was trying to get down the Mediterranean on

a ship at that hour of the morning. But that wasn't it at all. I—We don't know what it was. Now, there was an evacuation hospital up closer to the front lines, and, uhm, anyway, this evacuation hospital, uh, the Germans sprayed—Oh, god—and they didn't even have helmets—

[01:15:49]

Brooks: They sprayed gas, or—

Lannin: They sprayed guns.

Brooks: Okay. Bullets. Yeah.

Lannin: They sprayed bullets. So the nurses would drag these patients off and shove them under the bed, if they could get them off. But it was so terrible for the nurses that they were all going to have a nervous breakdown. And they sent three of them back to our hospital, and our commanding officer sent one to Rome on vacation, and, uh, come to find out she had a boyfriend down there. So it worked out just fine. And, uh, she went out drinking one night, and was very nervous. You have no idea how people got. Uhm, it was nerve-wracking, and, uh, the next morning—Well, that night she took a—what they call a Nembutal capsule—They don't even make that anymore. Uh, most of the medicines we used aren't made anymore. Anyway, she took a Nembutal and she didn't wake up the next morning.

Brooks: What's the capsule for?

Lannin: Make her sleep.

Brooks: M-hm.

Lannin: She took it on top of liquor. And that was a—See, I wouldn't dare touch a bottle of booze. I wouldn't touch nothing then, with nothing. I don't mix. And, uh, anyway, uh—Oh, I gotta tell you something interesting.

Brooks: M-hm.

Lannin: Going back to—Went back to—Rome and to Leghorn. All cigarette companies sent cases of cigarettes over for the GI's, but the Red Cross got hold of them and charged us two dollars a carton. After I went on this trip to Switzerland, they stole my coat. I had a brand-new green gabardine coat that I was going to wear home. And it was a size ten, but it was too big for me, and the Italian seamstress, she took all the seams out of that coat and did a beautiful job. This was the first time I wore it, and we hung it over at his—Guy by the name of Dale hung it over his camera, three hundred dollars, and when we stopped the train for Thanksgiving dinner, somebody came inside the window and stole my coat and his camera. And, uh, they searched the train, but they found nothing. And they found the footprint coming in from the outside, but there was—A pilot had an extra jacket he was going to sell in Rome—in Switzerland. And, uh, he was on a different tour from me. But there were three tours on this train, and, uh, he said, "It's gonna be cold up there." So instead of him selling that jacket—'cause you could only

spend thirty dollars, American money—That's the way they set it up. And, uh, he let me wear his jacket, and I was comfortable the whole time. And there is a picture on that tape of me sitting on a ledge in Switzerland wearing that jacket, that airflight jacket. But anyway, uhm—

Brooks: When did you go to Switzerland?

[01:19:49]

Lannin: After the war ended, and, uh—We'd get up in the morning, uh, and we're ready to go to CBI. And when they got us up at two thirty in the morning, and at three thirty we were down in the room eating our breakfast, which consisted of bread and blood sausage. Anyway, you get back up to your room and we wait. Now we had heard that the war ended in Japan, but it hadn't traveled all over. Nobody had orders yet, but, uh, it happened we, uh, we sat there, and about ten o'clock in the morning, it came and said that we would stay in Italy, but they let everybody go home but about five of us, and, uh—well there was only five of us went down. Yeah. Rest of the girls in our outfit got to go home, and, uh, they were going to send us, and they sent us to the Three Hundredth General, and I got sick, bronchitis, and I went in the hospital the next day. And I never did work another day from September until December. Never worked another day. But I was in the hospital five weeks.

Brooks: So when the war ended, you were still in Italy?

Lannin: Oh yes.

Brooks: Were you still in the Via Reggia?

Lannin: Oh, I was in Fifth Army. And that was General Eisenhower's—He was our big commanding officer.

Brooks: And then you and your sister got word that you were going to be transferred to CBI.

Lannin: Well, we were already transferred to CBI. We came down from Rome—er, from Viareggio—and, uh, we came down on the B17. And, uh, B17 was a big plane, and the pilot let us stand right in the nose of the plane—Oh, I'd never do it again. But we did; we took a lot of chances, and, uh, we stood and we looked over everything. And then when we got to, uh, to Naples, they put us at the 52nd Station Hospital. And then we worked just a little bit at that hospital before it was time to go to CBI, and then I forget what day we were supposed to leave in September, but, uh—And I don't even remember the date. It's in the book. Uh, the day the war ended.

Brooks: Yeah, that was August.

Lannin: Was it August? Okay.

Brooks: For the war in the Pacific.

Lannin: Oh, okay. See, I knew but I can't remember.

Brooks: Dates are hard.

Lannin: That's all right. But anyway, I do know that was in September, and, uh, I had this bronchitis, and, uh, this one doctor—I'll never forget him—Oh. In this picture book, on this film, it's me, I look like I'm hanging up diapers on the deck of this big hospital. And what it is, the GI's, it was their wives' babies, and they were at this hospital waiting to be shipped out. And, uhm, I stayed in the hospital five weeks with this bronchitis, but this this one doctor—I can't remember him. I didn't see his face. But anyway, he said to me, “Well, I'll carry you overnight.” He gave me something like a frederin [?]
—I forget what it was he gave me. Anyway, it's on my chart, and that I'm very allergic to the stuff. Well, the next day I almost died. Oh my god, I was white as a corpse for hours. I was so deathly ill. And then my chief nurse came up. She was on her way home. And she came up to see me before she left, and she said, “Don't you ever let him give you another bit of that medicine.” And he swore it wasn't the medicine, but it was the medicine. And, uhm, it was from there I went to, uh—Had everything ready. My sister went to, uh, Switzerland first, and when she crossed the line, the deportation [or station?] line, she was the two hundredth American to get into Switzerland. See, they'd recorded 'em. And, uh, they pulled her out and gave her a big celebration, big bunch of flowers, and she got an Omega wristwatch, lot of beautiful stuff.

[01:25:41]

Brooks: That's great!

Lannin: Now, when we were in Switzerland, we could not spend more than thirty dollars. I told you about my coat getting stolen. I needed something to wear home. I knew it would be cold in New York. So what I did was I paid two dollars a carton for cigarettes, and I very boldly went down to the—Where is—

Brooks: Is it the—Not the commissary?

Lannin: No. that's where I got the cigarettes. No, I went to the, uhm, bad place, and, uh—black market.

Brooks: Black market.

Lannin: Black market. Black market. And they asked me how much and I said, “Twenty dollars a carton.” They said, “Oh, no no no.” I said, “Okay.” I put 'em in the bag and started out. So he gave me the twenty dollars a carton. And I really only had sixteen dollars—Twenty, forty—Thirty-six dollars left. My coat cost me sixty-something dollars when I got to Charlotte. But, uh, anyway, I, uh, I thought I made out pretty good. I was going to tell you about my brothers. Uhm, one of my brothers went—And this is very important, because I don't have a picture of him leaving on the train from Columbia. And I stood at that track and waved him off, and he looked so ill. He was in bad shape. And he told them—he said, uhm, “I only feel it fair to tell you what's wrong with me.” He says, “I have rheumatoid arthritis.” But he said, “My sisters are going, and I felt I needed to go.”

So they took him, and they sent him to Florida. Then they sent him to Arizona, and out there he almost died, he was so bad, and, uh, he'd get up every morning and take a shower, and go to the dispensary, and they gave him two aspirin and send him back to work. And, uh, one day he couldn't take it anymore, so he went to his commanding officer, and asked him how he could get a medical discharge from Service. And he said, "Why don't you go to the dispensary?" He said, "I've been going there every day for weeks; they sent me back to work after two aspirin." He says, "Let's go." Well, they put—he never came home; they took him—put him to the hospital, and they did something called fever therapy. They raised his temperature to a hundred five, and that was supposed to kill out the arthritis, but it made him worse. And, uh, after about four weeks, they put him on a Pullman train with a corpsman, and sent him home to die. And when we came home from Service, he was so frail. You'd never know; he never complained. You'd never know how much pain he was in, except that he'd turned as white as a corpse. So we talked him going into the Furman University and getting a degree. He graduated with honors and became a multimillionaire.

[01:29:31]

Brooks: Wow!

Lannin: M-hm. He was the only one in the family, but, uh—Anyway, my oldest brother—He's right over me, and he had three children, so he never got into the firing because he went over a bit later. And he was in the Philippines, and, uh, I rolled my bed mattress, which was about this thick—I rolled it up, and sent it to him to sleep on, and he gave me [?] his cot. And, uh, we would write letters, and they said I wrote storybook letters. Anyway, uh, I sent him this mattress, and he was thrilled to death. And then, they sent over liquor. Well, I didn't drink liquor, but everybody was entitled to buy a fifth of liquor, for two dollars. And, uh, I thought, Well, I'm going to take mine, and, uh, every month I'd take a bottle of booze, and, uh—I told my brother about this, and uh, he said, "Send some over here!" Uh, plasma came in two-pint bottles, two a cardboard box, and, uh, we washed those plasma bottles out—They had screw tops—And, uh, filled them up with the booze and sent it over there. And they were having roll call at night, and everybody got Filipino beer—which was horrible. [Brooks chuckles] And when he got the package, he threw it up in the air and he threw his beer up, and he said, "There's my beer! You can have it! I'm going to drink straight liquor!" And he passed it around and everybody agreed it was liquor, but when they smelled it they knew it was. Well, anyway, sometime later, we were talking to this Greek sergeant in the kitchen, and, uh, he said he would package it up, he would make a loaf of bread, and, uh, split it, and put the liquor in there, and then pack this bread back around it. So we mailed that out—I think it was in October—And guess when he got it. Back in his home, in February. [laughing] He said that bread [inaudible] broke, knocked the house over with it, but anyway, he was glad to get that. Well, we did little things to make ourselves happy.

And now my other brother went in to Okinawa, and he was with the Marines, and the Marines took a beating. They were always the bigger fighters. He went into there, and his entire outfit got killed, except him and two others. And he had a nervous breakdown. And, uh, when he came home, he acted a little strange, and I don't think the family really understood—I mean they never crucified him or anything, but they just could not understand what the heck was wrong with him until we found out, after he died, he was

the most decorated one in our family. So anyway, it was a—My experience overseas, I wouldn't have missed for the world.

Brooks: Can you tell me again how you got out of going to CBI?

Lannin: Oh. Push that buggy over here.

Brooks: Yeah.

Lannin: My, uh—We let my father know.

Brooks: So you and your sister got orders.

Lannin: Yes. To go to China—er, India. Uhm, incidentally— [rummages through papers] See this one? [?] This is my entire life history. That's our nurses' group, this was orders to go, here [showing Ellen orders].

Brooks: That's August eighth of 1945.

Lannin: Yeah. And, let's see, this is the Action of the Adjutant General. This is the letter from the War Department. And this one was from Olin [??] Johnson [Olin D. Johnson??]. And you see I wrote what this was about. This is my Honor Flight.

Brooks: So this was a response to your father's letters requesting that you not go.

Lannin: That's right.

Brooks: Okay. And how did that end up?

Lannin: Well, the war ended. The war ended and we didn't have to go. Uh, these are my discharge papers. I just got my medals, this year.

[01:35:07]

Brooks: Wow. Took a while, huh?

Lannin: [Inaudible] they got it in a box now. And, uh, this was my—This was how much money I made when I got out. Gotta tell you something funny about that. I found my 1945, '46—I paid my taxes in—federal taxes in Colorado. When we came home we went to Colorado. And I didn't get married until '47. anyway, uhm—Now what was I telling you?

Brooks: I think you were saying something about your taxes or your payment.

Lannin: My taxes that year. My income was nineteen hundred and some dollars. One thousand nine hundred something dollars that year. And they had subtracted two hundred thirty-two dollars, but I got all that back.

Brooks: 'Cause you were in the Army?

Lannin: That was no money. You didn't make any money. This is all letters from the Honor Flight.

Brooks: So you, uhm—When the war ended, you were in Italy, and then you got sick, and then after you recovered you went to Switzerland?

Lannin: Yes.

Brooks: And is that where you got sent back home from?

Lannin: No, I went back to Naples.

Brooks: Wow! Okay.

Lannin: And there we had to pack up and get ready to go home—And oh my god—They put us on the, uh, *U.S.S. Randolph*, and that's a very famous aircraft carrier. And it picked up the first astronaut that was shot out into the Atlantic, and I'll never forget that. Alan Ladd was on that—Do you remember that? Well, he went up in this capsule, and the first test they made, they shot him out in the Atlantic. And he was in this capsule, and the *U.S.S. Randolph* aircraft carrier picked him up. Anyway, uh, an aircraft carrier, uh—There's a picture there someplace. Anyway, uh, it's in that book. No. it's—

Brooks: That's okay. We can look at it.

Lannin: Yeah. I'll show you. It's in this book. Anyway, uhm—What was I telling you about the aircraft carrier.

Brooks: Uh, I think—I'm not sure if you're going to tell me how many people were on it, or how big it was, or how it works?

Lannin: Oh. It was eight hundred—eight thousand people aboard the ship. Lots of enlisted men. And, of course, nurses from—Lots of nurses and Red Cross workers, therapists of different kinds; everybody was on this ship. And, uh, I'll never forget this captain. He came on and, uh, he gave us a lecture that there be no monkey business on that trip, and we would be in New York on the twentieth of December, and we'd orders waiting for us, to go home from there to be home for Christmas. We'd been gone three Christmases. And, uh, anyway, they put the nurses up in the bow of the ship, and that was the officers' quarters, and it was like—Most of it was bunk beds, little narrow bunk beds, but a skinny person was comfortable. And when those waves hit—Well, first of all, we started off and it was beautiful. When we hit the Rock of Gibraltar that night, about six o'clock—You passed through the Rock of Gibraltar, you're into the Atlantic Ocean. And it was very, very rough. And, uh—Oh my god, we kept chugging along and chugging along for days, and, uh, began to lose ships, and we'd be so deathly ill. We would float and—when the wave hit, you'd float in midair. Had no control of your body; you would just float in midair. And, uh, nobody could eat, and if you could stand on your feet, they gave you a bottle of thousand sleeping pills to give to people to try to make them sleep. I

don't even remember going to the bathroom. [Inaudible] you remember this?

[01:40:31]

Anyway, uh, one day, after about the fourth day out, I was going to try to get up and go to the—I thought if I could get some soda crackers, I wouldn't be so sick. And I got down to the bottom of the steps, but I don't remember coming back up. Somebody picked me up and brought me back to my quarters. And I never got down again until Christmas Day. And that had been ten days. Uh, we had that terrible Atlantic storm, and, uh, we were going to have to pick up other ships. A Liberty ship broke in half. We lost all of our life rafts, all of our ladders—We lost everything except one, one ladder, for eight thousand people to come down. And, uh, that morning, Christmas Day, we were to land in, uh—Oh. Orders were waiting for us to go straight home, but that was five days earlier, so there was no sense in going home and coming back to be—get our discharge. So, uh, when we got to—When we were coming into the harbor—Well, first of all, that morning, everybody struggled to get to the dining room. And, uh, you can have anything in this world to eat; they had enough on there to feed thirty thousand people. You can have pancakes, bacon, ham, sausage, grits, eggs, pancakes, French toast—They had it all.

Brooks: Was that 'cause it was Christmas?

Lannin: [laughing] Nobody had eaten anything during the whole trip.

Brooks: I was wondering if—which one it was.

Lannin: Yeah. Nobody had eaten anything. Even the crew got sick. And, uh—Well, anyway, we were—Then the colonel writes this letter. He printed something every day, and he was always in the Pacific; this was his first Atlantic experience. And he starts off, “Merry Christmas, and God bless all of you. This has been one hell of a trip.” He said, “Never in my life would I ever have experienced that.” And he thanked us all, and anyway, when we get up and went into Manhattan—Staten Island we landed in—and, uh, they pulled the one ladder that was left. They pulled the bus that was to pick us up. I don't know—Buses were lined up every place. And they had—They pulled this bus up right to the bottom of the steps, and somebody led you down; you couldn't get down by yourself. We didn't know what it was all about. And when we got on the bus, they even walked you and helped you sit down on the bus, and, uh, anyway the Red Cross came along and gave us each a little Christmas gift. Mine was a Zippo lighter. Wish I had that today. Be worth close to a thousand bucks. But anyway, uh, we got in to—From there, they sent us to Fort Dix, New Jersey, and, uh, the snow was beginning to melt, and the water was running in the ditch. And where the man parked, driving the bus. The nurses were following the first five girls down in the ditch and got wet. And, uh, they dropped us off at the dining room, and, uh, anyway he comes running out and he says, “Get to this bus up here, away from this water!” And, uh, so then they let us off. We still didn't know what it was all about. We couldn't walk. We had such rubber legs we couldn't walk. And, uh, anyway, uh, we get in this great big mess hall, and we're being served by Germans, German boys, prisoners of war. All the turkey—Anything in the world that you wanted to eat for Christmas dinner—if you can eat it.

[01:45:45]

Brooks: Could you?

Lannin: I think I did eat it. Uh, I was never—Well, you know, when you go that long without food, your stomach sort of shrinks up and—But, it was good food, and I did enjoy it. And, uh—

Brooks: What did you think about the—being served by the German prisoner of wars?

Lannin: Well, they were so polite. I never gave it a thought. Now, there is a man, a colored man, on this other tape, that Mark—You ever hear of Mark Kincannon? [?] He interviewed [?] me two years ago, and it's on tape too. But this man—This is called Meddle of Honor—M-E-D-D-L-E, meddle.

Brooks: M-hm. Is it this right here?

Lannin: Yeah, that's it.

Brooks: Meddle and Honor, the Veterans' Story Project—

Lannin: Yeah.

Brooks: —for, uh, Milwaukee Public Television.

Lannin: Yeah. Anyway, this one man, black man, tells about—

Brooks: Oh, you're on here.

Lannin: —when they got off the ship out west, the German prisoners were served better food than they were.

Brooks: Wow.

Lannin: Did you ever hear anything?

Brooks: I'm not very surprised, but—

Lannin: Uh, you know, this was not our war. This was Hitler's war. And I had told Dorothy I wanted to find a book put out by Reader's Digest, and I don't know where it is. I can't find it. See, I haven't done anything for three years. I've been under the weather for three years. And this book tells you that the war did not start in 1941—did not start in 1939. It started three years before that, when Hitler wanted to take over the world, what his plans were. And he and Mussolini—Mussolini was a character down in Italy, and they took over Ethiopia in Africa. But before we got there, Ethiopia was taken over by the—by their own country.

Brooks: How much did you know about all of that while you were in the Service?

Lannin: We didn't know anything.

Brooks: What did you think you were fighting for or fighting about?

Lannin: Well, they killed our people in Pearl Harbor. I knew we were—I was on night duty then, and we were allowed to keep a radio on all night, to know what was going on. You know, you didn't even have much time to read, you know, you were on the floor twelve hours, and then you'd go to class for four hours. So you didn't have time to read anything. And, uh, as I said, I don't even remember—All I knew was—Well, first of all, they took—You may have some day heard of the 38th Evac Hospital. That evac hospital was organized in Charlotte, North Carolina, and they took all of our doctors. And, uh, they took our doctors and a lot of our nurses, and I wanted to join them.

Brooks: And where was that hospital?

Lannin: That was in Charlotte, North Carolina, and, uh, they went over right away.

Brooks: Okay.

[01:49:45]

Lannin: Yeah. They went over right away. And, uh, we did hook up with them someplace over there. [laughs] There was a doctor from Charlotte. I forget his name now. Oh my god. In the operating room, he was swearing, cussing [?] everything in the book. And one of our book guys from New York got called up to go to the 38th Evac, and I was talking to him, and I told him about this stuff, and he was in on a scrub with him one day. And, uh, he kept swearing and swearing, and Ned [?] said he put his gloves down—he took his gloves off and [inaudible]. He said, “You can finish by yourself; I don't work with anybody this way.” But he got him straightened out. He got him straightened out. Then he came back and he told me.

Brooks: 'Kay.

Lannin: Well—But you know, the doctors worked hard, you know, to have—Can you imagine having three tables of operation going on at one time. Now that part of *M*A*S*H* is true, but, uh, in the movie, so much slapstick, uh—It was always very dignified, very dignified.

Brooks: So you were in New Jersey for Christmas.

Lannin: Yeah, uh, well, we had to wait there two days, I think. We had to have a physical, and they filled out a lot of papers for us, and, uh, then we went to, uh, oh, Charlotte, North Carolina. We went back to Charlotte, and my family was living in, uh, Anderson, South—Williamston, South Carolina that time, and, uh, when we went back, uh—Oh my god, we hit an ice storm. We hit an ice storm that was [inaudible]. Thousands and thousands of trees were just totally stripped, even of their big limbs, but, uh, anyway, Father O'Connell from their outfit had been to Florida, and he came by to see us. And he's—We were talking to him, about going in to this—seeing a little more of our country before settling down. And, uhm, he, uh, he suggested Colorado. Now I did love

Colorado. I cried for four months after I came here. I wanted to—I got married and came here. I miss Colorado.

Brooks: So you and your sister went out there for a little bit?

Lannin: Yeah. And we were out there fourteen months.

Brooks: Wow!

Lannin: And, uh, I was in charge of obstetrics and pediatrics. Uh, she worked in the—She worked in, uh, broken bones.

Brooks: I know I should know. It starts with an O, right?

Lannin: Orthopedics.

Brooks: Orthopedics.

Lannin: Yeah, sure. Now, you don't have to put this on TV.[?]

Brooks: Do you want me to pause, or—

[End of OH2053.Lannin_user_file1 at 1:53:39] [Beginning of OH2053.Lannin_user_file2]

Brooks: This is the second file of the interview with Julia Lannin, January 7, 2016. All right. So we were going to talk about, uhm, how you reunited with your husband. You're in Colorado fourteen months.

Lannin: Right.

Brooks: And at what point did you—

Lannin: Well, he went to California.

Brooks: Okay.

Lannin: And, uh, I don't know; I sort of lost track of him, and he lost track of me, because communication was different in those days. And one day, a priest by the name of Father Schmidt, came from St. Regis' Church, out to Colorado, because his sister was one of my students, and she was already thirty-two years old. But he wanted me to get—off the card table and do something nice. And, uh, so, he was talking to me one day, and I told him about—and he said, “Why aren't you married?” and I said, “Well,” never go push, [?] but, I'm twenty-six years old by this time, and, uh, I said, “I've lost track of my boyfriend.” So he came back here. He took the name, and he came back here, and he had a brother living in Shorewood, on Oakland Avenue. Anyway, uhm, he talked to him, and Gordon had just left there that day. Well, this was in January. On February Fourteenth, I get a dozen of those gorgeous red roses. And that was the beginning of our relationship again. And then we met in Omaha, Nebraska, and, uhm, he had given me a

filigreed gold bracelet with five rubies in it. And we went out to dinner in the Paxton Hotel. And I'll never forget what that elevator girl said to me: "That's the most gorgeous bracelet I ever saw." Do you know, I never saw that bracelet again. They locked the doors. They tore the rugs, they did everything to find that bracelet. They never found it. So I don't know what happened to it.

Brooks: And this was in 1947?

Lannin: Yeah.

Brooks: Mokay.

Lannin: Early '47. Anyway, uhm—

Brooks: [Noting background noise getting louder] I'm just going to pause, 'cause that—

[break in recording at 00:02:45]

'cause I think that's really important. So when you came back.

Lannin: We came back, uh, my sister and I came into Staten Island, New York, on Christmas Day, 1945. Uh, about five days later, my brother Pat came in to San Francisco from Okinawa. And, uh, about a week after he came in, my brother from the Philippines arrived in Seattle, Washington. We all got back together, but not a one of us mentioned the war. We were never asked any questions. We did our thing. My sister and I remade some of our uniforms into regular clothes, and, uh, went back to work within four weeks.

Brooks: Wow. Did you and your sister talk about your shared experience at all?

Lannin: Nope.

Brooks: Why do you think that is, that none of you ever talked about it?

Lannin: That was such a horrible war. There was a horrible war. Uh, you know, we seem to have been stronger than people are today. I think people—I often now think of my mother and father. They were so [inaudible—cuts herself off]. [laughing] I'll never forget when I got off the train, he said to me, "Julia, you look so poor." I was thin. [laughing] "You look so poor." But, uh—And of course my brother came home from Arizona, and he didn't know what we were going to be like, but we came in, and, uh, they were all tickled to death that we all got home, and not one of us had a scratch except my brother Pat. And that was worst than—What he had was worse, I think, than an injury.

Brooks: The psychological effects?

Lannin: Yeah.

[00:05:02]

Brooks: Did you and your husband ever talk about or reminisce about—

Lannin: No siree.

Brooks: No?

Lannin: No. One day, after he had the stroke, he—I kept him home for eight years. And, uh, he got up one morning at about seven thirty or eight o'clock, and I had had hand surgery. And, uh, he fell to the floor, and he wasn't going to let me call 911. So I said, "Well I'll call Dorothy and she'll come by to help me get you up." So I put a pillow under his head, and he had knocked his plaque of medals. I have to show you his medals. He got a lot of them. Anyway, uhm, he knocked that, that thing off the desk, and when the paramedics came in they started talking to him about that. He said, "That doesn't mean anything."

Brooks: Being a veteran? Yeah.

Lannin: M-hm [yes]. And we just never discussed it at all. I'll tell you, I think that Honor Flight—And I don't know—You probably don't know Joe Dayton. I know him very well. He's the one who started that [inaudible]—

Brooks: I think I know that name.

Lannin: Yeah. He's the one—He just retired from the Honor Flight. I gotta tell you what's sweet. My daughter and her husband—he's retired from the Navy, and, uh, they live—He lives very tight of the belt. Don't forget—Now, he does buy things, uh—But anyway, they don't squander money, and, uh, they don't know what to get me. And for Christmas—I really don't need anything, don't want anything—but you know what they do? They give the Honor Flight one hundred dollars in my name every Christmas.

Brooks: That's really nice.

Lannin: Very [?] nice.

Brooks: So you went on an Honor Flight?

Lannin: Oh, yes, that's this whole book.

Brooks: And when was that?

Lannin: 2010. I don't know where my picture book is, but you know it takes hours to go through all this.

Brooks: That's okay.

Lannin: But you know, the reason I got rid of all my books, they were so fragile that the papers were crumbling. And, uh, uhm, they said they could preserve them to a degree. The

Dryhootch—you ever hear of them?

Brooks: M-hm [yes].

Lannin: They came here to visit with me. In fact, that's where I got my electric walker over there.

Brooks: That's great!

Lannin: The guy who lives next door got it for me. Anyway, uhm, he had the girls come over, and then, three girls came from Madison to see me, and, uh, it's really been nice; I, uhm—What was I going to tell you about that?

Brooks: Well, you started telling me about why you donated the materials, and then the Dry hooch.

Lannin: Oh, he—Yeah. He came and asked me if I would use that wheelchair. At that time I didn't need it, and I said, “Well...” He says, “Tell you what.” He says, “I'll make a picture, and bring it over.” Three days later he comes with the whole thing. I gotta tell you now, I cannot walk out of the room without having that chair—or I mean a wheelchair. I can't walk anymore, and my oxygen level drops too low, and my AFib hits the ceiling. So I've got a lot of little problems, but, uhm—

Brooks: So you think it's been nice that people have started to recognize that you're a veteran, take interest—

Lannin: Oh, yes. Gotta tell you; we had a manager here, like, uhm, and, uh, she was very much for the veterans. Her husband works at the airport and still does, and she was a real estate dealer. You had to have a real estate license to manage here. Anyway, uhm, the flag out front had never been replaced. It was very ragged. And three of us got—two of us, I mean, and we were sitting down in the community room, at the table, talking, and I was on the walker, and the walker was behind me. And this one guy that was a Vietnam veteran, uh, when he got up—Is that anybody?

[00:10:18]

Brooks: I think Dorothea [?] might be back.

Lannin: When he got up, he collapsed and hit the wall, and, uh, I picked up my cell phone and was going to call 911, and Bob said to me, “Julia, don't do it! He'll come out of it!” And then I'd never asked, we'd never discussed anything. Well anyway, uhm, uh, the three of us had decided we would all put in twenty dollars apiece and buy the new flag. Well, this girl, this lady that was in charge of the building then, she went all out. You should have seen the occasion we had for Memorial Day. We had twenty-six riders outside here. We had a big ceremony out front, and my grandson—my great-grandson—played “Taps”. Anyway, uh, we had that, and then we had a service in the patio out here, and the choir from our church came here and sang, and, uh then we ate. You never saw such a feast put out in your life. Were [??] just two days fixing those trays, but we had a lot of food for everybody. And, uhm, then the next year, it even got bigger and bigger, and,

uhm—Did you ever hear that, Linhart, Lindrick? He works with the, uh, Quilts of Honor.

Brooks: I've heard of the Quilts of Honor.

Lannin: Well, I have one.

Unknown: Are you still taping?

Brooks: Yeah.

Lannin: Anyway, uh—

Brooks: Do you want me to pause? I can break.

Unknown: Just for a second.

Brooks: Sure. We're going to pause.

[break in recording at 00:12:24]

Okay. So you were telling me about the, uh, the other veterans.

Lannin: Well, anyway, he brought—They had all of us, the World War II vets, sitting on the front pew. There were about five of us then, and, uh, anyway, this Linhart came in, and they gave me a hug, because I had spoken at the Women's Club in Shorewood, and he gave me my quilt there. And there was a lieutenant colonel there; a nurse that had been to, uh Afghanistan, and the flag they flew over the hospital—while she was there; they took down and gave to her, and I have that flag. She gave it to me. Well, anyway, uhm, this Linhart came back, and he gave everybody that didn't have a quilt a quilt.

Brooks: That's really nice. So, can you tell me—'cause we're kind of running out of time—How did you end up here in Wisconsin?

Lannin: Uhm, well, my husband was from Berlin [Pronounced BER-lin] And he worked in Manitowoc at the aluminum goods manufacturing company, and, uhm, that year we decided—I met him—We got together in January, and then we got married August 20th of that year. And I came up here, and got six kids out of the deal.

Brooks: [laughs] What did you think of Wisconsin?

Lannin: I thought it was a beautiful state, but, uh, I was homesick. I was homesick, and I was homesick for Colorado. My family and Colorado. But we got home—I got home every two years.

Brooks: That's good.

Lannin: Yeah, and, uh, in those days it took us—We'd have to leave here Friday night, and then

get in a motel about nine or ten, and drive all the next day and get in on Sunday morning. But that's when the roads were little dinky roads. Boy, I tell you, God was sure taking care of us. I mean that.

[00:15:10]

Brooks: And then did you end up working when you moved to Wisconsin?

Lannin: I worked a short time at the VA hospital—Well, first of all, this state is very stinky, when it comes to get your license. And I came here, uhm—Same head of the nursing association was here in the state of Wisconsin as she was in Colorado when I was there. And she signed both my slips. Anyway, uh, my my cards to get my license, but, uh, to get your license, they made me work about two months at Children's Hospital; saying I needed more training. I could have told him what to do. Well, nevertheless, uh, to make a long story short, I ran into a nun from Virginia, and I talked about that, and she said they did the same thing to her. Now, I don't know what the reason with that was, but, uhm, the nurse that I worked with up in Kaukauna wasn't even a registered nurse. She went through six months of nurse's training, and when the war started, she started working outside and never went back to school. And, uhm, somebody got her a nurse—She had everything we had, was getting the same pay—'cept she'd come to me. I used to do night, do—along with these patients. There was a urologist living across the street, and, uh, when he found out I would work, he had me on all his schedule, he'd schedule all his patients, [inaudible] special [inaudible]. And, uhm, anyway, she would come to me and ask me to check her patients' blood pressure or to read the thermometer, do this and do that. And I got angry.

Brooks: And you ended up working at the VA, you said?

Lannin: Yes. When I came to Milwaukee, uhm, I worked three nights a week, and that included weekends. My husband was never happy. He was a forty-hour playboy [laughs], and, uh, he had to feed the kids. But I had to prepare the dinner, prepare the food, before I left. He never did much of that. But, uh, things are different today.

Brooks: And what was your experience like at the VA?

Lannin: Uhm, I liked it except we had so many patients. One time I was in charge of seventy-seven patients.

Brooks: Seventy-seven. Wow!

Lannin: Two wards.

Brooks: Does seem like too many for one person.

Lannin: One night we had about five accidents in less than two hours, and I worked overtime two hours to try to make out bad reports, but the doctor got screwed up on things, he's the one that caused it.

Brooks: And how long did you work there?

Lannin: I didn't work there but about fifteen months. And then I had another baby, and, uh, then I went back, and I worked four days a week, from five to twelve I think, and, uh, oh my god, my hospital bill turned out to be more than I had earned. So I never went back to work.

Brooks: Your hospital bill for what?

Lannin: Well, I had this little baby, and I got kidney stones. Almost died. My temperature hit a hundred and six. So, one of the students over at St. Mary's asked me if she could take me as her study. I said "Sure". And I did.

Brooks: And then you didn't go back to work after that.

Lannin: No.

Brooks: Was there anything about being in the Service, being in the military, that you missed after you got out?

Lannin: Not really. I missed the people. I corresponded—and their pictures are on that tape. I corresponded with, uh, two of them for fifty years!

[00:20:09]

Brooks: Were they nurses?

Lannin: They were nurses on my floor. In fact, one was my senior. She was one ahead of me. She was a tall girl with—She's buried in the military cemetery in Massachusetts, and, uh, her last name was Jordan. And then Dotty Vavra [Sp?]—I had a letter from her sister one day, and she was going to have her eightieth birthday. And they were gonna have a big party for her, and I was invited. But if I couldn't come, I should write a letter. So I did write a letter, and she died just before her eightieth. So, uhm, yeah, I miss some of the people. Oh, I gotta tell you what happened in Colorado. You know, I told you this was a place where you can get cured from TB. This one gal—her name was Hagedorn [Sp?]—uhm, she was in love with a GI, and, uh, he was cute, but I don't blame her. Anyway, uh, she got TB and they sent her to Denver. And when they were building this Penrose, Penrose Stadium wing, I recognized that guy as being in our hospital. My sister said, "Julia, there you go again! You're always seeing somebody!" I went over to him, and sure enough it was him, and he brought her down to see us. From Den—They were in Denver at the hospital. But he brought her down to see us, [laughing] and when we first came home from overseas and before we left for Colorado—My brother, I told you, was so sick—My dad never drank much, but if he drank it hit him hard and, uh, anyway, my sister and my brother and I decided we were going to Charleston to see the Xavier Gardens. And, uh, anyway, we each had fifty dollars, and could you believe we stayed there five days on the fifty dollars we had? And we stayed at the Graystone Tourist Home. That lady was so good to us. Anyway, uhm, one day we went out for a walk; we had no other transportation than walk, and the three of us was walking down this street and I saw this young little girl crossing the street way down. I said, "Olivia! That's our cousin Lorraine!" "Julia, what's wrong with you!?" I took off running, screaming,

“Lorraine! Lorraine!” She turned—It was Lorraine.

Brooks: Oh wow!

Lannin: She's a nun now; and she's in Nyack, New York; totally blind. And she's the only one left in her family.

Brooks: Wow! So you see people you know everywhere!

Lannin: Yeah, I do, I've got a good memory, and thank God I can still see, and I can hear most of the times. Sometimes I don't hear, because I shut it out. Selective—

Brooks: Selective hearing, m-hm. My Dad has that. Yeah, well, we should probably cut off soon, because you have your appointment, but is there anything else about your service that you want to make sure we mention?

Lannin: No. Just get in some of the pictures of my family, and, uh, now I don't know what you [inaudible]. This book here, this is the 33d General Hospital, and this was on television, and this [inaudible]—

Brooks: Oh, on the Internet?

Lannin: It's all on the computer now, and my, uh, my friend across the street—uhm, across the hall—Uhm, I was looking at this yesterday. I'm on just one or two pictures in here. And it doesn't matter, see. But I enjoy this book.

Brooks: So someone put that together for you, printed out all the—

Lannin: She printed it off the Internet and put it together.

Brooks: That's great!

Lannin: And then this is my, uh—

Brooks: Right, this is your whole life.

Lannin: That's my whole life.

Brooks: Is there anything else, uh, for the recording that you want to mention? Any kind of final thoughts on your service and what it meant to you?

Lannin: I don't think so. I wouldn't have missed it for the world. You know, meet a lot of nice people, and I wish people in the world today were like they were then. I do.

Brooks: Yeah. I think that's a good spot to end on, so I'll turn this off.

Lannin: Yeah, thank you.

Brooks: Thank you.

[End of Interview]