

NAVAL WAR COLLEGE, NEWPORT RI

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

HISTORY OF THE NAVY NURSE CORPS

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NO. 61

FLORENCE JOB

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1997

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NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND
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THE HISTORY OF THE WAVES

INTERVIEWEE: CDR. FLORENCE JOB, NC, USN(Ret.)

INTERVIEWER: EVELYN M. CHERPAK

SUBJECT: THE HISTORY OF THE NAVY NURSE CORPS

DATE: DECEMBER 9, 1997

C: This is the first oral history interview with Florence Job who joined the Navy Nurse Corps in 1944 and made it a career. Today's date is December 9, 1997. The interview is being conducted at her home at 67 Lambie Circle in Portsmouth, Rhode Island. Florence, I'm very pleased that you consented to give me this interview on your career as a Navy Nurse beginning with World War II and ending with Vietnam. I'd like to begin the interview by asking you where you were born and when you were born?

F: I was born in Schenectady, New York in 1922.

C: And did you spend your growing up years in Schenectady?

F: Yes, up until the time I went to nursing school. In fact, we still have ties there because we own a family home there, and we make trips back there.

C: What did your father do for a living?

F: My father worked for the army. He had been a sergeant in the army at one point and worked for the army until he retired.

C: And was your mother a homemaker?

F: My mother was a homemaker, and she also worked outside the home part of the time. She was a seamstress.

C: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

F: I have one sister, also a retired navy nurse.

C: Where did you graduate from high school?

F: I graduated from Mount Pleasant High School in Schenectady, New York.

C: And in what year did you graduate?

F: I think it was 1940.

C: Did you decide in high school that you wanted to be a nurse?

F: No. Actually, it was decided a long, long time before that.

C: How did you come to that decision and that choice?

F: I certainly feel like I never had a choice. I shouldn't say that because I'm certainly glad I became a nurse. My father had been in the army and I'm sure he must have been smitten by a nurse sometime or other, and the family tale says that when he saw me he said, "That's the next world war's nurse." So I was brought up with never any doubt in my mind as to what I was going to be. Today's world is a little bit different in that I don't think children have their goals set quite that early.

C: So you took to this idea of being a nurse?

F: Oh, yes. I wasn't forced into it by any means.

C: Where did you decide to go to nursing school when you graduated from high school?

F: I decided I was going to go to Buffalo, New York. Mother decided I was going to go to New York City. I had relatives in Brooklyn, and she thought it would be nice to have some family close by. It was Mount Sinai.

C: So you were right in the heart of it, in Manhattan. Was it a three-year school?

F: It was a three-year school.

C: So you graduated in 1943, during the war, during the very difficult days of 1943. Did you decide to join the Navy Nurse Corps at that point in time, or did you decide to work elsewhere?

F: I decided to join before I was out of school. In those days you joined the Red Cross, and they processed your papers and so forth, to see if you would be acceptable to join the service. So in essence you joined before you graduated; I think I joined in my senior year.

C: So you joined the Red Cross and just transitioned into the navy?

F: That is correct. I think after six months or something like that.

C: Did you work during those six months?

F: I had one private duty case, and that was all. I was waiting for my orders to go in, so I really couldn't take a job. Although in those days I guess you could work about anywhere because nurses were so scarce.

C: Why did you decide to join the Navy Nurse Corps?

F: Because it seemed like the best of the services. I did want to join because of the war and it seemed like the patriotic thing to do. Of course, as I told you about the story of my father, it was the natural thing to do.

C: How did your mother feel about your joining the military?

F: Oh, I think my mother was all for it, too.

C: When it came time for you to receive your orders, where were you sent?

- F: I was sent first to Portsmouth, Virginia. I remember a long train trip and a long ferry ride. It was probably the furthest I had been away from home at that time.
- C: Did you go by yourself?
- F: I went by myself, but I was a little more sophisticated than one of my friends in the Navy. She was told to report every place that she went, so that they could send her orders to her. So every time the train stopped, she sent a letter to the Bureau.
- C: You got to Portsmouth, Virginia, where there was a navy hospital. Did you have to have training and indoctrination there?
- F: The indoctrination in Portsmouth was all military. A lot of marching. We learned about navy forms and navy terminology. As I recall, that was for something like three weeks. Then I got orders to St. Albans, New York.
- C: Did you enjoy this training period, or did you have second thoughts about what you had done?
- F: I don't think I ever had second thoughts about joining.
- C: Then you were sent to St. Albans Naval Hospital, which is on Long Island, I believe. What year was this?
- F: 1944.
- C: While you were stationed there, what kind of nursing did you do?

F: I worked on a contagion ward, which doesn't sound very military. I remember one young patient we had who was just a little delight. He was a very, very young man – when I think about it, I was just a young girl too, but he was younger than I was. He had pneumonia and he told everybody that he was shipwrecked in the Atlantic Ocean and got in a lifeboat. Every night when I was on PM duty and I was making my rounds I would say, “JO, kiss me goodnight right here.” and point to the middle of his forehead. He was just a cuddly little thing that you wanted to do it.

C: So you were dealing with people with contagious diseases. What other kinds did you encounter, besides pneumonia, which I guess, is very contagious.

F: In those days it was, although now you don't consider it contagious because of the antibiotics and such. But in those days it was very serious, and that was one of the first uses for penicillin. The military was ahead of civilians in their use of penicillin. If you were a civilian you had to be very sick and it was a horrible thing to give because you had to give it with a great big long intramuscular needle. You had to warm up the beeswax and you would have to get to the patient right away or it would clog up in the needle. It was an interesting way to give it, you don't think much about it now.

C: So these were all navy people, navy officers and enlisted that you were treating there. How large was the facility?

F: Oh, my, thousands. It was a very large hospital, many different ramps. I only stayed there for six months.

C: Where did you live during that six months?

F: We lived in the nurses quarters that were on the hospital grounds. It was a very nice building, two to a room. And in those days...nursing has come a long way when you think about it. They used to have nurses assigned to the linen rooms, and assigned to the quarters. I hated that job, especially the linen rooms and the sewing rooms.

C: So you didn't do nursing?

F: No you didn't do nursing; That's what you did. Talk about wasting manpower. They outgrew that many years ago.

C: Did you have any problems with supplies at St. Albans, or did have everything you needed?

F: We had pretty much everything that we needed.

C: How many hours a day did you work? Was it a standard eight hour day, or did you have extra duty?

F: It was an eight-hour day, but you had every other weekend off. You didn't get two days a week off; you got two days every other week.

C: Did you find that stressful at all, working in the contagion ward?

F: No, I don't think I did. We might have had a few people die, but mostly you had young men as patients and they mostly got well.

C: Did you have to work hand and glove with the corpsman?

F: Yes, every navy nurse is basically a teacher and an administrator. You don't do as much hands on nursing as say the army nurses did with the patients. We taught the corpsman. We were there to supervise them, seeing that they did it right, and so forth.

C: So they did injections and that sort of thing?

F: I think back then, I think we did the medications at that point in time, but later on they did. As the corps schools got more active and taught more, the corpsman did more.

C: Yes, I gathered they did. So you did more administrative work and the corpsman did the actually nursing, so to speak. Did you face any challenges in this short-term assignment that you remember?

F: No, I don't really remember anything that was unusual or stressful. I remember one patient who was hallucinating quite a lot and when he fell out of bed, that was kind of stressful. I used to teach my students to always keep very good records about what happened, then probably about 20 years or so after that event, he looked me up to see if I would verify the fact that he fell out of bed, to help him get a navy pension. Isn't that interesting. I told him that you couldn't do anything after that length of time. It would be very questionable about anyone's memory

being that precise after that time, and I'm not even sure I was there at the time he fell. But I do remember the incident. I told him who to write to to, to get his records and have it verified. I certainly hope that it was in his records.

C: Did you have any time for recreation during that time? It seems like it was work, work, work.

F: No, we always had time for recreation. That's what kept you going. They had a beach club, a very exclusive beach club, that had been given over to the navy to use. Seems like we went over on buses, but we went there a lot. And then of course, New York City was close by, so we took advantage of that.

C: Did you have the standard white uniform?

F: We always wore whites on duty, and then off duty we had our navy uniforms. You weren't allowed to wear civilian clothes in those days.

C: Now, did you have a commission at that point in time?

F: When I first went in we had relative rank. I don't know how long I was in until the full commission came through. We were commissioned in a sense, but not really. Not according to the books.

C: You stayed in St. Albans for six months as you said. Where were you sent next?

- F: To San Diego. My first impression of San Diego was seeing poinsettias. At that time, Christmas time, we got poinsettias. I remember seeing poinsettias growing up to the roof and I just couldn't believe it.
- C: And you were at the San Diego Naval Hospital. That must have been at the end of 1944.
- F: Yes, and I was out there for a little over 27 months.
- C: Oh, for a little over two years. You were out there when the war ended. What kind of a ward were you assigned to at that time.
- F: I was assigned to a ward for arthritic and pneumonia patients. Isn't it odd, I don't think about it, but those are diseases that you don't hear a lot about any more? We had big, big, open wards with 50 to 100 patients all lined up. I also worked on a psychiatric ward. One of the wards was an open ward, 100 patients or so. But these patients were allowed to go on liberty, so they didn't require a great deal of care. But part of the time we would go across the way and work with the active psychiatric patients, and we used to give them insulin shock therapy. And it was traumatic to see someone go through that.
- C: Were these wartime casualties coming back from the Pacific?
- F: Yes, and at that time the places I'm talking about, these huge wards, were part of Balboa park. Balboa park was an exposition in the 1920's and 30's. They had this beautiful Spanish architecture in the buildings. The façade was Spanish. The inside was big halls mostly. Part was a museum. The newest psychiatric ward, if

you looked behind them, you could see these sarcophagi, the Egyptian mummies, that were piled up there during the war so that the place could be used as a hospital. The nurses quarters was in the House of Hospitality that I presume had been a restaurant before. They had a beautiful fountain in the courtyard that we used to toss pennies into. One day I got caught sitting on the edge of the fountain, because somebody wanted to make another wish, so I said I would get her penny for her. I rolled my sleeve up and that was a no-no, a navy nurse never rolled up her sleeve, never. And just as I'm reaching down, the chief nurse comes along and said "Miss Job, if you're that hard up for cash, I think we can get you some."

C: That sounds like an interesting setting you were in.

F: It was; it was beautiful. They had a big outdoor theater. I can remember Bob Hope coming. And many Hollywood stars would come. We had a gorgeous officers club. It was lovely for an evening. And I remember that they had gambling in those days. One-armed bandits, you know, right there. The ships store had many of the things that you couldn't get on the outside. One of the hard things to get at the time was cigarettes. I didn't smoke but I would always get my full allotment of cigarettes and send them home to my father or my cousin and they really loved getting them.

C: Yes, everyone smoked in those days. There wasn't the admonition against it as it is today. So you had little privileges in that way. Did you like the assignment? In the wards that you were in for the couple of years that you were assigned there?

F: Yes, I think I did. You know, I was new at the time and didn't know what was out there. We had a good time while I was there. Our rooms were really cubicles,

two to a cubicle. If both wanted to dress at the same time, one went out in the hallway.

C: That small? Well, you had opportunities for recreation?

F: Yes, we did. We used to go down to Mexico, down to Tijuana when we wanted. We were living it up.

C: And the beaches, of course.

F: Yes, the beaches were magnificent. I always loved the beaches in San Diego. I always planned to retire there, but I wouldn't want to go back. It's very overcrowded and the highways are horrendous to drive on, so I like Portsmouth better.

C: Oh, it's quieter, but you don't have the warm sunshine. Do you remember what your pay was at that time?

F: It was based on rank, and I was an ensign at that time, and I think I got the grand total of \$120 a month. And that was great, because at the nursing school where I graduated, nurses were getting \$90/month. I thought I was pretty rich.

C: Did you derive a sense of satisfaction from your work at San Diego?

F: Oh, I think so, yes. Later on I got into teaching, and I spent a number of years doing that, which I liked very much.

C: But you liked whatever hands-on training and administration you had to do. Was this assignment in any way challenging? Did you find it difficult?

F: No, it wasn't. It was pretty run of the mill, really. There wasn't anything great about it.

C: Did you find that the navy nurses had a strong bond, a strong sense of camaraderie?

F: Definitely, very definitely. They still do. They're a very tight group. Everybody remembers everybody from one station or another. And if you don't know somebody, you know somebody who does know him or her. Because the corps hasn't been that large.

C: That's what I was going to say, because it's not that large. Maybe large in wartime, but not everybody stayed once the war was over. You must have been in San Diego when the war was over, V-J Day. Do you remember your reaction to that? Or the reaction of your fellow nurses?

F: We were, of course, delighted. I remember seeing the whole city lit up. We could see it from this one hill that we were situated on in Balboa Park. Firecrackers going off, and that sort of thing. It was very exciting.

C: Lots of jubilation and that sort of thing. When you joined the nurse corps did you expect to stay in after the war ended, or did you feel that you would stay for the duration?

F: I didn't have any specific time frame in mind I don't think, because I got out. The end of the war came, and I figured it was time to try something new, so I got out. I went to college, St. Rose in Albany, New York, and then transferred to Catholic University in Washington, DC, where I got my BS.

C: So you got your degree from Catholic University. What inspired you to get your degree instead of just sticking with the RN?

F: Probably because of my mother, and one of her little sayings; you know how they do. "Silver and gold may vanish away, but a good education will never decay." So one should go out and get every bit of it you can, and I did.

C: That was very forward looking, because in those days most people stayed with the RN.

F: Yes, they did. I think a few of us were, I don't know if it was academically inclined or interested in learning, but we saw the handwriting on the wall, and I know that once I got my bachelor's, many doors were open for me. So, I've never regretted it.

C: Great idea. So you finally got that from Catholic University in, do you remember, what year?

F: 1949.

C: Was that a two or three year program?

F: Well, you got credit for being a nurse in those days, you took an exam, and depending on how well you did on the exam, you got so many credits. Then I had been to St. Rose for a year before that, then two years there so, again, I don't know how long it took, but I was a Catholic University for two years. But that was because I had credits to transfer.

C: Oh, that's great. So, you got out with your BS. What did you decide to do then, in 1949?

F: I did public health nursing. Went home to Schenectady. And it wasn't long, don't think I had been there for even a year, when I got called back into the navy. Korea came along. Oh, no, I was back at Catholic University; I had gone back in the summer to start my master's degree. I remember listening to Truman on the radio. It was starting the Korean war, and I got called back.

C: Oh, you did. In June 1950.

F: I got called back in from the reserves. When you got out of the navy back then, you were automatically in the reserves, for which I will be forever grateful.

C: Did you have to drill once a month?

F: No, I was in the inactive reserves. I had no contact with them whatsoever. I was doing public health, and I came home one day for lunch, it was a Saturday, and it was a half-day. I had a letter from the War Department and I said to my mother "Those are my orders." And she said, "Oh, no it's not. You open that." And I was feeling down in the dumps, and I was going to go out and buy a new hat, I

remember. So I opened it and they were orders, but I wanted to know where I was going. I was so excited that I couldn't read the writing, because it said Newport, Rhode Island. That's why I came back.

C: Oh, so you came back to the Naval Hospital here at Newport in 1950. So that wasn't taking care of war casualties, was it?

F: No; well, yes. There were the Korean War veterans coming back. And again, I worked on the contagion ward of the old hospital in the old building. That was only for two months, and then I got orders to teach at Bainbridge, Maryland. And that was interesting, because no one knew where Bainbridge was. I knew it was in Maryland, but then I went to the AAA and asked them for directions, because I was driving down there, and they said when you get to Port Deposit, you can ask.

C: Oh, how interesting. Were you happy to be recalled to the Navy?

F: Yes, I was. I think I missed it very much.

C: Oh, yes. You had been out three or four years. Was your sister in the navy at that time?

F: No. She didn't come in until...it's hard to put a time frame on it.

C: So you were assigned to Bainbridge from Newport, Rhode Island. So who were you teaching and what were you teaching?

F: I was teaching nursing to corpsman. And at that time it was a 16 or 18 week course. And again they were gearing up for Korea, and they needed corpsman; corpsman were always expendable, and you needed lots of them. So we had large classes, 50 to 100 students. In the beginning, you had 50, but halfway through you took on another person's class, so they were combined.

C: Huge classes. So what exactly were you teaching them?

F: Nursing arts, theoretical and practical things. How to give injections, how to make a bed, taught them about different diseases, nutrition. You carried one class through the whole sixteen weeks. That was a very interesting tour.

C: And did you like the teaching end of it?

F: I enjoyed it so much that most of my career has been with teaching. After I left Bainbridge I went to San Diego, and worked on the wards for a while. Again, I didn't realize I had so much contagion work. I worked on the TB ward there. It was a very difficult disease to control back then. Then I got transferred to the school for training corpsman in San Diego. We taught the same things there as in Bainbridge.

C: Did the navy give you a prescribed curriculum?

F: No, it's very interesting. When I first went to Bainbridge, they told us the topics to teach, but they never told us the specifics they wanted us to teach. They would say to teach nutrition, but not whether that was serving the food or elements of a good diet.

C: Did you have any books or articles?

F: When I first got to Bainbridge, they had just opened up their hospital and school. They were reactivating after World War II and getting ready for the Korean war. I remember parking my car as I got there outside the nurses quarters. First of all, nobody else on base, including the fire department, could tell me where the nurses' quarters was. I finally found it and I'm getting out of my car when the chief nurse and another girl saw me and came out to greet me and the first thing they said was "Did you bring any books?" I said, "Yes," and I mentioned a couple of the current novels that I had, and they said that they meant nursing books. They had opened up the school, but had no nursing books.

C: So there was no basic curriculum?

F: No. You see, the whole base had been shut down, so there was nothing there. It took awhile, but we got organized and got the things that we needed. We had our journals, but they weren't basic learning materials.

C: So you had to design the curriculum, and decide what you were going to teach.

F: In fact, when I was at San Diego, I started working on my master's degree, at San Diego State College. My thesis was a project rather than a thesis, and I wrote lesson plans for the nursing department, to standardize them. They were adopted by that school and the Great Lakes school.

C: That was a very worthwhile project, very practical.

F: The nurse on my degree committee wasn't too happy about it because she thought we were spoon feeding them. But I always thought that we should have a product for the corpsman when they went out of that school that stated what it was they could do. Up until then it was dependent on who they had for an instructor; you just didn't know. But this way we were able to label subjects and say this was it, this is what they should know when they graduate. From that we advanced to having standardized tests, which was a very good idea I thought because we could compare how well one class did to another.

C: Did you have to make up the tests?

F: Oh, yes. We created the tests.

C: Did you have a lot of homework to do with these teaching assignments?

F: Yes, you did. But then teaching is like that. You find yourself doing more at home than you do in the classroom. When your working on something designing it for use by more than one person it's more complicated. What we did basically was get lesson plans from almost everybody and then we would combine them and see what segments they had in common. We included in those, and those we thought were particularly good and omitted ones we thought should be dropped. I think by and large they were very well received.

C: Oh, that's great. Did you finish your master's degree at San Diego State?

F: Yes, I did. And I had a very nice chairman on my committee. I had completed the work and I had it typed but not bound, when I got orders to Guam and couldn't finish it. So he pushed it through the committee to get everybody to approve of it. I remember that he didn't particularly like the nurse on my committee, but he called her up and she said "Well, Laurie, whatever you want to do is all right with me." So he hung up the phone and said to me "I think there's hope for that girl." So he had the manuscript bound, and I got my masters.

C: Was this in the 50's then?

F: Lord knows, but I believe it was.

C: Did you request to go to Guam, or were you just ordered there?

F: No, I was just ordered there. Because in the navy you change duty stations every three years or so.

C: Well, that sounds interesting. How did you get to Guam?

F: I went by ship because I didn't want to fly. And it worked out beautifully because I had two weeks vacation while waiting for the ship in San Francisco, and I had an aunt and an uncle there. So that worked out very well for me. I had a nice, long visit with them and got to see all the sights in San Francisco.

C: That's great. So you went by ship to Guam, which is out in the middle of the Pacific. How did you feel about that assignment?

F: I was excited. I loved it. I remember coming into Guam and seeing this great big board "Welcome LT. F. K. Job" Back in those days they always knew when you were coming. They had a band out to meet us, there were other people also. I think our senior officer was a LT. My name was on top. Then they brought the leis out.

C: Because you were in the tropics. There obviously was a naval hospital there.

F: Oh, yes. It was a very lovely, modern naval hospital. I had a chief nurse who reported shortly after I did. She was a very astute individual and knew how to place people. In fact, she ended up being director of the corps, Ronnie Bulshefsky; a wonderful person. I think I was the only one to have a master's degree at that time. I'm sure she didn't have her master's at that time. I was the only one.

C: You probably were, because back in those days there were very few who had master's degrees.

F: So she said how would you like to head up the Education Department, the Inservice Education Department. So I said sure, that would be fine. I remember going in this one morning, I shared an office with her, and I remember thinking "Oh my, what am I going to do?" And after that there was so much to do that I never caught up with myself.

C: So what were you doing, planning programs?

F: Planning and teaching programs for corpsman and other staff members, for their inservice education. And for volunteers. I started a Red Cross volunteer program

there, and those gals were so tremendous. Before, I thought, "Ugh, volunteers." And the nurses would say those volunteers are more trouble than they are worth.

C: Were these civilian ladies?

F: These were navy dependents. They started and they were very good, most eager. And I remember one question I got was "What's the best time to come to work?" And I said if you want to come and act glamorous and just come as a social activity, then come at about 2:00 in the afternoon and spend some time with the patients. But if you really want to help take care of the patients, come to work at either 7:00 in the morning or 7:00 at night. You know those girls wouldn't think about coming in during the afternoon. They were there when they could help at 7:00 in the morning or 7:00 at night when the patients were getting ready for bed. I remember that Ronnie Bulshefsky and I were a little bit uneasy about how the volunteers would be accepted by the nurses. One day she answered the phone and signaled an OK sign with her fingers. A nurse had called to ask if she could have a volunteer in her ward.

C: We were talking about your volunteer program in Guam.

F: As I said, it was very well received. Years later I was on Guantanamo Bay and I started another program for volunteer women, junior volunteers. They were very, very helpful, especially when the Viking Princess burned at sea. We got the patients in, all six of them, but we had expected many, many more. We called out all the volunteers, and they all came and were very, very helpful.

C: Very dependable. So you had this assignment in Guam for how long?

F: It was over a year. I was held over, because I was supposed to rotate to Japan. In those years you went to Guam for a year, and then a year at Japan.

C: Is that considered hardship duty?

F: I didn't consider it hardship duty, which is funny because I always said "send me anywhere, but don't send me to an island." I think the job that Ronnie Bulshefsky gave me was so satisfying that I thoroughly enjoyed it. And of course the social life there was so tremendous because the ships would come in and there were so few females. Did you ever have a man so intent on keeping you in his possession at a party that he would walk you to the bathroom? So afraid that another man would take you away on the way back. But that was the sort of a life that we led.

C: Was it a big base there?

F: It was a big base, and they had Anderson Air Force Base. It's a big island, about 28 miles long if I can remember. Not that big, but there was enough people on it to keep it interesting.

C: And a lot of socializing.

F: A lot of socializing. Big parties. Went to the beach an awful lot. Go out in the jungle every once in a while.

C: Did you have any contact with the natives?

F: Only with those people that worked for us. It's kind of funny because just the other day I was cleaning out a closet and I found a little, very pretty handkerchief given to me by one of the maids just before I left.

C: Did you mind the tropics? Did you mind the heat?

F: Not really. It was prior to air conditioning, but the hospital was air conditioned. Our quarters were not. Our quarters were right across the street from the hospital and the only time you couldn't walk across the street was during a hurricane. We had a hurricane so bad once that the ambulance had to come to our quarters, and we all got into the back, and it took us to the hospital. I was on night duty at the time, and I remember making rounds and before that I always had one patient who couldn't sleep and at about two o'clock I had to give him some sleeping medication. And this was the only night he slept through. I think the winds throughout the day tired him out. And we had some natives who came in because their houses were so flimsy, and they were sleeping all over the floors, and we had to do rounds stepping over them. They were a good bunch, and you fed them and housed them until it was over.

C: Did you have any typhoons, or did they call them hurricanes?

F: The hurricanes are called typhoons out there, so I take that back. They were typhoons.

C: Did you get a chance to travel at all, get off the island during this year?

- F: Oh, yes I did. One trip to the Philippines, and Hong Kong as I recall. Then I made an inspection tour with Admiral Erdman of Chichi Jiwa, which is a fascinating island.
- C: What's fascinating about Chichi Jiwa?
- F: It had this very small naval base there. The Japanese had fortified it in case of an attack. The island was originally planned to house the archives of the Japanese government so they had these mammoth caves with humongous doors on them, twice the size of this room. The doors were so balanced though, that if you barely touched them, they would swing out. They never got to move their archives there, though the place is still there. The harbor was a semicircle and there were gun placements on either side of the entry so that any ship coming in would be caught in a crossfire. It was very interesting. And they had artifacts there from before the war. And lobster like you wouldn't believe. The natives didn't like lobster, they didn't eat it. And I was shipwrecked there. The CO had a boat and we went out to do some lobster fishing, part of our entertainment. We got out in the ocean and the next thing I know the CO was on the radio saying "Mayday, Mayday. We are in Harashimo Stratts." I wasn't frightened at all because I could see the shore and I was a pretty strong swimmer and I knew I could make it. There were four or five people on the boat, and Mrs. Erdman and I were the only females. So they sent an LCM out to pick us up. They got us off our little boat and into a LCM, it was exciting for a while.
- C: So that was part of your inspection.

F: From there we went to Iwo Jima which is fascinating because of the price we paid for that little piece of real estate. It is so small that you can stand on almost any point on that island and see the shore around you. And Mt. Suribachi is an overgrown molehill, it really isn't all that high. And when you think of the men that died there.

C: Yes, really. So you were going to all the old haunts of World War II?

F: Yes.

C: That's an interesting part of your tour in Guam. And now you say you were headed for Japan.

F: Yes, and I had a different assignment there; as a school nurse for the American dependents schools.

C: What base were you on?

F: I was in Yokohama with the army. I was the only Navy nurse there, the only Navy person there.

C: Oh, isn't that interesting. And this was for the dependent's school?

F: This was for the dependents school, and I had four or five schools, I can't remember the exact number. But I would go to one school each day.

C: Any navy children at those schools?

F: They were all dependents of America military personnel. Some would be Japanese because the wife was married to an American military person.

C: So you just took care of small ailments?

F: School kid stuff; colds. I ran an eye-testing program there. It was interesting from the viewpoint that when I went to talk to the men at the Yokosuka clinic to ask what parameters I should use for sending patients down, they told me whom to refer to them within certain limits. Well, I went back and raised the limits because I didn't want half the school to be sent down there. It was amazing the number of children who couldn't see. I thought, gee, did we read these wrong? But I'd send the kids down to the clinic, they'd examine them, and they'd come back with glasses. There were many that weren't recognized, so the program got it going.

C: That was a good program. So that was kind of different and creative of you to do. Did you work alone or were there any other school nurses there?

F: No, I was the only school nurse. But I was assigned to the army clinic at Yokosuka, so I would stand watch on my duty nights at the army clinic.

C: Oh, I see. Where did you live at that time?

F: I lived with the army at Yokohama on the base.

C: Did you notice any resentment of the Japanese to the military people there?

- F: Not the ones that we came in contact with. In fact, we had a Japanese nurse at the clinic who took me to see the Noh Theater and we had a delightful visit to her home. We were sitting on pillows at the table, and their houses are very austere, very simple; a big bouquet of flowers in one corner and a shoji screen. Her father had been an admiral in the Japanese navy and she wanted to show us some pictures of him. She went behind the shoji screen and I thought, I know why your rooms are neat and clean, because everything is back there.
- C: Isn't that interesting. So you went to a real Japanese home. Did you get to travel much during that assignment?
- F: Oh, yes. I had a car there. So I would drive from Yokohama to Yokosuka, most of my friends were in Yokosuka, the navy was down there so I spent a great deal of time there. We drove around the island.
- C: Did you get to Tokyo?
- F: Oh, yes. Many times, many times.
- C: Did you have any trouble communicating or finding your way?
- F: No. They were very, very helpful. A had a friend there and once when we were in Tokyo, the Japanese were notorious drivers, Emily would get very provoked by them and she would swear up a storm. Then she would look over at me and grin, and say, "I'm teaching them English."

C: That sounds like an interesting time. Did you like this assignment, which was something new for you?

F: Oh, yes. As I say, I liked all my assignments.

C: Was there anything about it you didn't like?

F: No, not really.

C: It sounds like a non-crisis type of situation.

F: Not with the idea of large numbers of casualties like we got in Vietnam, but you were putting a country back in order, so to speak, and things went pretty smoothly.

C: Where were you assigned after your year in Japan? This must have been in the early sixties.

F: Late 50's, early 60's. I went back to San Diego, at the hospital corps school again.

C: So you were teaching.

F: I was teaching. More of the same, which I liked very much.

C: Did you live off the economy then?

F: Oh, yes. Yes, I did. As I said I had bought a house in San Diego. I was very pleased to be able to live in it again. It worked out nicely because Jane was going to have duty out there. So I was looking for an apartment, and one of my friends said “Why don’t you buy a house?” And so I did.

C: That’s great. That was kind of unusual in those days, too.

F: It was. So much so that I got very provoked that I had to pay something like ten times the deposit because I was a single woman. I wasn’t considered a good risk. Yet the woman next door was married, and they weren’t married very long, they got a divorce and she was living there alone. They were married at the time so they came under the guidelines I guess. I had a full time job and I thought that I was a responsible individual, but I wasn’t married in those days, and if you weren’t married, too bad.

C: Yes, you really faced obstacles in getting a mortgage. Anyway, that was very wise of you. Was there anything outstanding that happened during this second tour, or third tour, I guess it was, in San Diego?

F: I can’t think of anything off hand.

C: Your teaching went smoothly? Your curriculum was more structured by then, I would think. Where did you go on to after San Diego?

F: I went to Great Lakes, and I was corpsman detailer for a while. I was also in service education again, at the naval hospital in Great Lakes. That was interesting, too. This was when Vietnam was just starting. I remember having a friend over

one day and Romaine Mentzer, another friend of mine who was in the Bureau at the time, had called up to chat. Jane, this other friend of mine wanted to go to Vietnam so badly, I remember her telling Romaine "I can swing from [those vines] just as well as any monkey." But she never got there, I don't think.

C: So you were teaching in the corps schools and detailing corpsman as to where they would go. Did you enjoy this assignment?

F: It was new and the detailing of the corpsman I had never done before, so it was different. I had to make a couple of decisions once in a while about who was going to go to Vietnam, which was not always easy.

C: I'll bet it was not easy. Well, you eventually got you to Vietnam, didn't you? Was this following on from your assignment at Great Lakes?

F: No, it was later. In between, I went to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

C: Now that sounds very interesting. We did and still do have a naval facility there.

F: Yes, and it was not too long after Castro had turned the water off. So things were pretty tight, the gate was closed. We couldn't go off the base itself, except when we got some R&R, and got to go to Haiti or Jamaica.

C: Were you teaching in Guantanamo?

F: No, I was chief nurse there. In charge of all the nurses, assigning them their duties, seeing that the nursing department was run properly.

C: And did you have a large hospital to contend with there?

F: No, it was a relatively small hospital. I think 100 to 200 people. It was small as navy hospitals go.

C: Yes, I imagine it's a small base there.

F: No, not really. It was pretty good size. Ships would come in for refueling. There was an airfield. And of course a certain amount of troops were kept on to keep the perimeter safe, and keep the Cubans out. We often talked about the number of people who swam across the bay from Cuba, to escape. I saw pictures of those who didn't make it. That was just horrendous. I remember we had a young girl who had made it, and they were shipping her out to the States. I guess there are alligators and all kinds of things in the water, plus the soldiers shooting at you if they see you swimming. But I remember this one girl we were transferring to the states. I was called in and told to be very, very quiet about it but they were going to transfer her up to the states the following morning and I could tell the night nurse, but that was all. So I called the night nurse, and told her this is under your hat and you don't say a word to anyone about this, but there thinking about getting her off the base. That night at least half the island came in to say good bye to her, so so much for this huge military secret.

C: Well, that was kind of an exciting thing to happen. Did anything else exciting happen?

F: We would get marines every once in a while that would step on land mines. The perimeter was planted with land mines.

C: Oh, I wonder if it still is?

F: I don't know, but I suspect so. They keep it up. I wouldn't want to go strolling through that area.

C: Did you feel isolated?

F: You know, you're so busy, you make the best of what you have, and we had a lot of good times. Lots of silly things going on, like masquerade balls. We would have trips out off the island, which was good. We'd spend time down at Haiti. They had a plane once a week that brought embassy personnel up from Haiti to Guantanamo Bay commissary to do their shopping, and they would fly us down, whoever was going that day. They would spend the day down in Port de Prince, and then they would bring the plane back with us in it and pick up their people and fly them back, so it was a nice arrangement. Just a day trip.

C: And did you have to make your own arrangements to go to the other islands if you wanted to for your R&R?

F: There no such things as making your own arrangements there because it was all military.

C: But you didn't take a military plane to Jamaica, did you?

F: Oh, yes, it would have to be because there were no commercial planes down there at all. Every once in a while, one of those ships would have a special trip for people, dependents, females, etc.

C: Oh, that's great. How long were you at Guantanamo?

F: One year. That was considered a hardship duty, so you went for one year. If you were married and had dependents, you went for two. But it was one year if you were single.

C: Now what was your rank by that time, since you were chief nurse, and you got promoted along the way?

F: I must have been a commander. Then I went to Charleston, South Carolina; that was interesting too. It's a beautiful place, very lovely.

C: What was your position there?

F: I was chief nurse there. That was a big 500-bed hospital, a good size one. And we had all range of medical facilities. They've got a brand new hospital there. I'd like to see that someday. We had the old one. But it was charming in its way.

C: How many nurses were under you?

F: Oh, I think I had about 100, 120. And with corpsman, of course, probably a number five times that.

C: So quite a lot of responsibility. Was this all administrative then?

F: Yes.

C: Did you have any problems, any outstanding problems there?

F: Yes, a few. Who doesn't. It was when drugs were just beginning to come onto the scene. And I remember the CO asking the staff if anyone had seen any evidence of drug use, and no one had at that time.

C: Among the personnel.

F: Among the personnel working there. Then a year or so later, at the base, I had this young nurse come to me and tell me that a corpsman had tried to sell her some. I don't know if it was pot or narcotics, or what. So we went to the Administrative Officer. He arranged for some narcotics men to come down, and we talked to her. And she agreed to try to buy some from him, to catch him. And she did, only he said I'll meet you out by your car. Anyway, the men from the narcotics division were keeping an eye out for her, were watching her, so she went out to the car. Well, he said I like to see people turn on for the first time, so lets go to your place and smoke it. So she said OK. She knew the narcotics men were following her. But I remember sitting in my office just biting my nails waiting for her to call me and tell me that everything was all right. But she got there and they got the fellow, so everything turned out right. But the sad part of that story was, when I was out in Vietnam, I got a letter from a friend who relieved me at Charleston, who said this young girl had committed suicide as the

result of a love affair. You think of someone being strong enough to go through something like that, catching a narcotics dealer... anyway.

C: Well, that was a problem you had to contend with. Drugs in the military.

F: Yes, you know. Understaffed and overworked, that bit.

C: How long was your assignment there?

F: Three years.

C: Oh, that was a good long tour then in a lovely city. Did you live off the economy there?

F: Oh, yes. I had a very nice house there. What I always said was "Four levels, four bedrooms, four baths. What every single girl needs." When I think of the price I paid for that house and what houses cost now, I wish I had kept it.

C: You've had a lot of very top positions in the navy by this time. Where were you assigned after Charleston?

F: To Vietnam.

C: Did you request this at all?

F: Yes, I did. Because I had never seen real action, and I wanted to know what it was like.

C: What year was this, do you remember?

F: 69 to 70. It was a one-year tour on a hospital ship. USS REPOSE. It was humongous. It was a 1000 bed hospital plus 1000 personnel to run the ship and the hospital.

C: Now were you head nurse there?

F: Yes, I was.

C: So again you were doing more administrative work and assignment rather than hands on.

F: Yes. One good thing is that I got to see everybody, in the whole ship. You make your rounds and you see people, see things going on. Of course we had many, many cases, sad, sad cases. When we airvac people, the corpsman would get them all ready, get them all on stretchers. We would take them out on deck and line them up in rows by twos, from the forward part of the ship to the aft. They'd just stay out, and the choppers would come and take some of them and come back and pick up others of them.

C: How far off land were you?

F: Not far. You could see land.

C: And you were off the coast of South Vietnam. So you had quite a few nurses you were responsible for.

F: About 40 nurses, and 100 corpsman.

C: That's quite a contingent. And you were all domiciled on the ship.

F: Yes, we all had our quarters on the ship. You lived there.

C: Did you ever get off?

F: Yes, and the nurses were more fortunate than anybody because they would get invited to parties and so forth. Of course, having a chopper pad on the ship, you could get off easily.

C: Where did you go?

F: We went to the different camps around the area. They would fly in and pick us up, and we would fly out to the party and come back.

C: It sounds kind of glamorous in the midst of all the carnage.

F: You had to be back, we always tried to be back by ten o'clock because after that it would keep the people awake. Because every time a plane came in for a landing, the 1MC would sound off so that everyone on the ship knew a plane was landing. So you didn't want to come in after people were asleep.

C: Did you ever feel claustrophobic in that environment?

F: That's a big ship and you can get around an awful lot. Your cabin was small. I was fortunate in that I was the chief nurse so I had a single cabin. Everybody else had two or three to a room. But no. And you had the wardroom where there was plenty of companionship. We would have our nightly scrabble game, and watch the movies down in the wardroom.

C: What was your relationship with the doctors like?

F: They were there to do the job. Can't complain about them. Again, I think being out at sea, you're isolated, so you have a kind of camaraderie with them. You had to work closely with people. If you didn't, you were out in the cold.

C: Throughout your career, was your relationship with the doctors close? Did they ever treat the nurses like second class citizens?

F: I think there were probably a few, but by in large, again, you're all in the navy; team spirit, family spirit. You know, you'd be at one base, and you'd transfer to another where you didn't know a soul you thought, until you landed and you got there, and all of a sudden "Oh, yeah, I remember her or him from such and such a place." It's a small navy in the medical and nurse corps.

C: Was the REPOSE the only hospital ship there off the coast of Vietnam?

F: No, there were two. One was the SANCTUARY. And, of course, there was quite a bit of competition between the two ships. One time we were leaving

Vietnam to go for overhaul down in the Philippines. We would go down something like every 80 or 90 days. And before we left we would transfer as many patients as we could over to the SANCTUARY so we didn't have the problem of caring for them in the Philippines. We brought over two of our children from the pediatrics ward over to the captain of SANCTUARY to baby-sit. We were playing tricks all the time.

C: Kind of lightening things up.

F: We'd have our field days; board each others ship. Just a fun day, games and visiting. You knew people aboard the other ship and they knew people aboard yours. We would either go to the SANCTUARY or the SANCTUARY would come to us. And at Christmas time, it was one of the most unusual Christmases I've ever spent. To start with, the nurses were the only ones with a Christmas tree, because there was a strike in Seattle, and the longshoreman didn't load the Christmas trees for the people in Vietnam. But someone from Washington, a woman, and I can't remember her name, but she sent one to us through the mail, for the nurses. So we were the only ones with a tree, and we decorated it and invited people to see it. But that whole season was so, so different. We didn't have trees so everyone was out on their own to decorate as best they could. You never saw such magnificent decorations. I remember one ward dyed a sheet navy blue, so it was like a sky. And then they had a moon on it, and stars, and an astronaut, because that was when the astronauts first landed on the moon. The OR had a fireplace, with a window with snow on it. The intensive care had a nativity scene that was almost life size, it was huge, and they had the cutest little baby lamb made out of cotton balls. Everyone used so much ingenuity and ability to do these things. And the best one of all was the orthopedic ward where they

had Santa Clause in traction. And they started a whole chart on him. He was in Olongapo, which is the red light district outside Subic Bay, when he broke a leg, and had to be brought to the ship for care. They had him in traction, and people would write notes every once in a while about what had happened to him. And then very mysteriously on Christmas eve, he went AWOL. He didn't come back until the morning. We sang carols. The Sanctuary came along side and we cruised together. It was a very beautiful night with the wake from the ships following us. We sang Christmas carols back and forth, and had a Mass up on deck. It was a lovely time, really.

C: Yes, it sounds like it was. Christmas in the tropics, and you had to create it yourselves, use your own ingenuity. When you were on the ship, did you work eight-hour shifts? Did the ladies and men working for you work eight hours shifts?

F: You worked as you had to work. The basis schedule was eight-hour days. But there were times. I remember one time when we were eating breakfast that an announcement came over the IMC that an amtrac had just hit a mine, we were to stand by to take on 28 patients, so everybody just gets up and goes. You don't say "Who's on duty?" You just go.

C: You just had to work your longer hours and take care of things as you could. How did the people handle the stress, and was it stressful for you personally?

F: It's stressful, yes, because you're there 24 hours a day. Anybody wants to know anything or do something, they come, your cabin is right there so you see them. The type of patients you got, you got some very hurt people. The operating room would be going with three patients at a time, having surgery. We had one time, I

had to be down in X-ray and the radiologist came over and said "Come with me, I want to show you something." There was the small Vietnamese boy we just admitted. They had done an x-ray of his leg, and you could see a gas grenade in it. It was live and could go off at any time. So they decided that they were going to do surgery on him. Everyone wanted to go down and help. They had a huge, black flexible piping in case the gas grenade went off, it would suction the gas off ship. Most of the people didn't know. Anyway, we were having dinner that night, and the chief of surgery said to the chief of the OR nurses, "Jean, I'm glad you're back was turned." She said "What do you mean?" He said, "They got the demolition experts in when they did the surgery, when your back was turned and they had just made the incision, the demolition man came over and stuck his hand in the wound and walked off with the bomb. And if you had seen him, he probably would have dropped that bomb from hearing you scream." She was a very strict OR supervisor and everything had to be just so; you followed technique as best you could. I'll never forget his saying "I can see him just sticking his hands in and just walking away with it."

C: Were you in harms way, ever in danger of being bombed or anything like that?

F: I can't honestly say I was never afraid. But we had times when we thought we had sappers. They were the men that swam underwater and put bombs under the ships.

C: Oh, Vietnamese, North Vietnamese.

F: Yes. We had North Vietnamese patients occasionally. We had one kid that we knew didn't trust us worth a darn.

C: Why did you take enemy patients?

F: You always took enemy patients. That's been ever since time began, I think.

C: I didn't realize that.

F: You didn't just shoot them off. Somebody had to take care of them. And there were enough people around that you didn't worry about them. And we had children on board. The last delivery I ever helped with was in the passageway of the ship. We had a Vietnamese woman who gave birth, didn't quite make it to the delivery room. We had a delightful little youngster as a patient. I often wonder what happened to Non, she was everyone's little sweetheart. And you think about it, she's probably in her 30's. Her mother had been killed and her father was in the army. And we did have her for a long, long time.

C: You get attached to people, like in the movie Sunday night "1000 Men and a Baby."

F: That's just what happens, everybody starts caring for them.

C: That sounds like quite an experience for you that year. Sounds like a very exciting time.

F: It was a very, very different time. So many things happened. It was an outstanding year.

C: I imagine it would be. And you had requested it, you said, because you wanted to be where the action was. Well, after that time was up, where were you assigned?

F: Before we leave that, I want to mention that I think I am one of the few women who received the Vietnamese Medal of Honor.

C: Oh, you did. Well, that is outstanding.

F: Just because I happened to be at the right place at the right time.

C: By the South Vietnamese Government.

F: Yes. I remember giving the report to the captain that morning and he said "How would you like to receive a medal today?" I said sure, any day. And it was true.

C: So, did the American government nominate you to the South Vietnamese government?

F: I don't know how it came about, really. But we were leaving Vietnam, the war was beginning to settle down, and we were leaving. They had this big show. We were one of the first ships to be officially detached. So they had airplanes in formation flying over, water spraying all over the place. It was quite exciting.

C: You received the medal that day.

F: Yes. And then I went to Great Lakes, Corps School again.

C: Did you have any vacation after Vietnam?

F: Oh, yes. In fact, I had R&R from Vietnam and went to Thailand, which was very interesting.

C: Florence, how did you get back to the United States after your Vietnam year?

F: Well, when the ship was detached from Vietnam, we sent the nurses who had not had a long period of time from the states to Yokosuka, Japan, the Philippines, and different places in the area. Three of us were fortunate enough to bring the ship home. So we had a great tour. We went to the Philippines for a while for overhaul. Then we went to Hong Kong, where we stayed for a few days and visited a British hospital, which was very interesting. The British nurses had invited us over to the hospital, and they asked us over for lunch which was very nice because they served sherry with their lunch. They can have liquor while we can't. We did a lot of shopping there. One time I got caught short, because we got there and I wanted to do some shopping. I had money in the bank, but didn't have any blank checks. So I had been sent a credit card in the mail. And I had never used it, but I thought now is the time. So I used it and got what I wanted. It was funny to be there and not be able to buy anything, heartbreaking [when you're in the mood] Then we went to Yokosuka, Japan. Had a nice time visiting there, and then we went to the Hawaiian Islands, and then to Long Beach. It was a nice trip back.

C: It sounds like it was wonderful.

F: It was a cruise. We only had to take care of the ship's crew if they were ill, and they weren't. The three of us had a nice, easy time of it.

C: Is the ship still in commission.

F: No. Afterwards it was made into an alcohol rehab center at Long Beach. It was there for a long time, but I don't know what happened to it. It may have been demolished by now.

C: Interesting. So you came back to the United States. It must have been the early 70's by now. And you said you were sent to Great Lakes.

F: Yes, I was sent to the Great Lakes Corps School.

C: Now were you head nurse there?

F: Yes, head of the nursing education department.

C: Was this more administrative duty rather than hands on teaching?

F: Yes. Strictly administrative. I helped plan the new corps school there. They started building the new corps school while I was there, but they didn't finish it until after I had left. I retired from there.

C: Were you in on the ground floor for the planning for this school?

F: Yes, and that was fun. I got to buy some of the furniture, and that sort of thing.

C: How many years were you at Great Lakes?

F: Four.

C: Oh, that was a nice, long tour then.

F: Yes, it was.

C: And you say you retired from there?

F: Yes, I did.

C: That means that you would have had about twenty-five years in the navy.

F: Twenty-six.

C: Twenty-six by that time. And when did you retire.

F: July 1, 1974.

C: Did you do any nursing in retirement.

F: In retirement, I was patient care coordinator at Newport Hospital. I started out doing utilization review, which was very new at the time. Basically, we were the

ones who decided how long you were going to stay in the hospital, whether the doctors could justify your staying there.

C: Oh, that sounds interesting. And that was at the Newport Hospital, not the Navy Hospital.

F: That's right. And then I took over admitting, pre-admission testing, social services department. I coordinated all of them. I had people doing all of them, trying to tie them in all together.

C: That sounds like a very responsible position. How long did you stay at the Newport Hospital.

F: Eight years.

C: Oh, that's quite a long time then. Then, you actually retired around 1982? From Newport Hospital.

F: It doesn't possibly seem that long, but yes.

C: Did you enjoy your job at Newport Hospital?

F: I enjoyed the work. There were some aspects of it I didn't care for. By and large the people were great that I worked with. I have no complaints about that.

C: Did you find working in a civilian hospital radically different than working for the navy?

F: Well, it is different in that everyone goes home at night, and there isn't the esprit de corps that there is in the navy. By the same token, I was given a lot of leeway in the things I did. I did a lot of things that I never anticipated doing.

C: Oh, well that's interesting. And challenging I imagine.

F: Some of the things never got off the ground like I wanted them to. I had been asked to develop a plan to integrate home care nursing, nursing case facilities and hospice care with care in the hospital. I had all the plans made out, but the powers that be said no, it's not feasible. So it was just dropped. Now they're doing it. Ten years later. They're doing something like what I had planned. You don't win every battle.

C: No, I guess not. When you were in the navy, did you ever write letters home describing your experiences?

F: Yes.

C: Do you have any of these?

F: If I have, I haven't any idea where they are. When "In and Out of Harms Way" was being written, I think of all the things that were on the tape. The author picked one thing out about me to include in the book. It wouldn't have been my choice, but it described the way I came aboard the REPOSE. When we were out in Vietnam, we used to say we used choppers like taxi cabs getting from place to place. The ship was out in the stream when I arrived, and I spent the night in

Danang. Arriving in Danang after a 24-hour flight over, you have this dirty, icky feeling. This very nice officer met me at the airport. A friend of mine who was very tired, was the chief nurse at Danang, so he offered to pick me up. I'll never forget. I got out to the jeep, and he took a sheet out to put over the seat so I wouldn't get dirty. Here I am feeling so utterly grimy and filthy, and he was being so careful I didn't dirty my uniform. He was a delightful person, a real gentleman.

C: I wanted to ask you why you picked Newport, Rhode Island, to settle in because you hadn't been here except for a very short time in your career.

F: My sister was stationed here. She was assistant chief nurse at the naval hospital, and I would come to visit her. And one time when I was here she said they were opening up a new area, and why didn't I go down to look at it. So I did, and said gee, I like it and why don't we build a house. So we did, and that's how we came to live here. It's close to our home in Schenectady, and it's close to the navy. So it's the best of both worlds.

C: Were you and your sister ever stationed in the same place at the same time?

F: Twice, a year each time. Both of the times, we were in San Diego.

C: Oh, that's great. What would you say was the significance of your navy-nursing career was for you in your life? How would you sum it up?

F: It was my life. What else do you say. And I don't think I would have chosen anything else. I thoroughly enjoyed it.

- C: Were there any high points and low points to your career? What would you say was the best experience if you had to, or the most unique experience?
- F: The most unique was the year in Vietnam. Very different. And I enjoyed teaching so I was very fortunate to get as many teaching assignments as I did.
- C: Yes, that was your forte. Do you belong to the national navy nurses organization?
- F: I certainly do. In fact I was a board member. The term is for three years.
- C: And you mentioned that there is a local organization in Newport, too.
- F: Yes, I was the first president of that, and my sister was the first treasurer. We're now into our second president and treasurer. And we're hoping to give some scholarships. We're working to write up our bylaws now. It will be interesting to see how that develops.
- C: That's interesting. Do you go to the national conferences?
- F: Absolutely. They happen every other year. Next year will be in San Diego.
- C: And is that for both active and retired.
- F: Yes, it is. A very large group. I can't remember the numbers, but it's a good many.
- C: Is there anything else you wanted to add about your career?

F: Goodness, I've been talking an hour and a half. I don't think we left any stones unturned.

C: That's great. I want to thank you very much for being interviewed on your career as a navy nurse, Florence. It's been a pleasure.