

Interview with Phyllis Law
July 15, 1995

Beginning Tape One, Side A

Question: Okay. This is **Nina Ellis** and I'm interviewing **Phyllis A. Law**. Today is July 15th, 1995. We're in **West Park, New York**. Excuse me. Please tell me, if you would, when were you born and where were you born?

Answer: I was born July fifth, 1922, in **Lakewin, Pennsylvania**, which is now a ghost town.

Q: Huh. Nobody lives there any more?

A: No.

Q: Oh. Little tiny place?

A: Used to be a big place, but it's gone.

Q: Oh.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Oh. And did you go to school there and through high school there?

A: No, no. I went to school in **Leroy, Pennsylvania** and **Troy, Pennsylvania** and **Grandville Summit, Pennsylvania** and **Newburg, New York** for my training.

Q: Nurse's training?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Where did you graduate from high school?

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A: **Saint Luke's** -- oh, high school? In **Troy, Pennsylvania** and then I came down here and graduated from **Saint Luke's** Hospital Nursing School.

Q: Why did you decide to become a nurse?

A: Well, that's a long story. When I was a kid, I wanted to be a librarian, but I did a whole lot of nursing all my life, with six siblings and I was the oldest. After I got out of high school, I was too young to go to nurse's training, so I did practical nursing in our neighborhood. So my aunt decided -- who was a nurse, decided that I need that I need to be a nurse. And I had no funds to go -- be a librarian, so I went into nursing. And I enjoyed it, yeah. So that's why I'm in it.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And after I graduated from **Saint Luke's** down here, then I took a job at **Saint Luke's**, until I went in the service.

Q: Uh-huh. Wh-When did you graduate from nursing -- nurse's training?

A: 1943.

Q: Oh.

A: Yeah.

Q: And how did you decide to go in the service?

A: Well, I was working nights with a friend and I didn't like the work. And I wanted to get in the service, so I had to keep fighting with my director and the Red Cross to get in. That was it, I wanted to go.

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Q: Did your family want you to go?

A: Oh, they -- they wouldn't -- I was independent [inaudible] family [inaudible]

Q: Didn't matter?

A: I'd been working since I was 12 years old, away from home, so it didn't matter, no.

Q: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

A: Worked my way through school and so forth.

Q: Mm-hm, mm-hm. Did -- what -- what -- what were you saying about the Red Cross and --

A: Well, at that time our director of nursing was involved with the Red Cross recruitment. She wouldn't let me go from the hospital for awhile.

Q: She wouldn't let you leave?

A: No, wouldn't let me leave the hospital job that I had. It was essential, they called it essential at that time. And after asking her two or three different times, she finally consented to let -- release me. So I entered in, yeah.

Q: Uh-huh. And where did you do your basic training?

A: I did my basic training in **Atlantic City**.

Q: Uh-huh. With a lot of these other women here?

A: Yes, with **Claire Fikes** was here, yeah. She was in my class. And [indecipherable] was in a class before me or after me. All **Atlantic City**.

Q: How was that? [indecipherable]

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A: Well, it was rough, because it wasn't nursing. We marched, you know, 20 miles and with a pack on your back, in the sand down there, in the hot sun in June and July. And we all had shots for all different kinds of diseases and after they gave us the shots they told us we could have a weekend home and nobody -- everybody was too sick to go home. So we just stayed in the hotels down there, where they billeted us until we were si -- reassigned.

Q: That was what, six weeks or so?

A: Six weeks we had there and then we were reassigned to different hospitals. And I was reassigned to **Tilton**, which is in **Fort -- Fort Dix, New Jersey**, near **Trenton**. And then when they got the 131st unit together, we were picked out to go down to **South Carolina**, to train again.

Q: And what kind of training was that?

A: And down there it was learning how to dig a foxhole and how to set up a tent. More walking, more training. That's about all I remember of that down there. Hot. Yeah, barracks living and -- when you're young it doesn't, you know, you take it as it comes. I came off the farm with no -- we had no facilities at the farm, so you know, camping was second nature.

Q: Didn't bother you?

A: No.

Q: Did you like it?

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A: Oh yes, oh yes. Yeah, I enjoyed the girls, you know, we all had a good time, yeah. We'd go into town, you know, after we were all finished and then we were -- had blisters on our feet and whatnot and we were tired, but we'd still go in and have a good time and those that drank, course, had a better time, I guess. I just went arane -- along for the ride because I never drank and -- and had to -- I had the -- what do you say, moniker of being the orange juice girl all the way through.

Q: Because you just drank orange juice when you went [indecipherable]

A: Because I enjoy -- when I went to a party of any kind, I drank orange juice, mm-hm, so --

Q: Then when did you go over?

A: Then we -- let's see, was December, before Christmas. We boarded the boat. We came up by train of course to Camp **Kilmer** and then onto **New York**, where we boarded the **Queen Elizabeth**. That **plancake** -- that gangplank looked pretty bad. We didn't want to go, when we got there.

Q: How did it loo -- how did it look?

A: Was a long way up and we knew we were leaving, you know and --

Q: Feeling sad?

A: The -- th-the final, the -- yeah, the final thing you know. Before that it was adventure, but at this point we were leaving the **USA** you know, and family. That

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made a difference, especially at Christmastime. Course we landed over there before Christmas, but -- and --

Q: What was the crossing like?

A: Crossing wasn't bad. We were only three or four days going over, you know, three -- nights. I had a harmonica that one of my neighbors had given me, so I entertained myself with that. Sat in the porthole, we had 17 in the stateroom. I took the top bunk and I was up under a ventilator pipe of some sort, you know, of the ship, but at least I was on top. The rest of them that were sick were on the bottom. And we went over fully clothed.

Q: Sleeping, you mean?

A: Fully clothed all the time.

Q: In case there was an evacuation?

A: And a -- yeah, with your life jacket on, yeah, because the submarines were chasing the -- there was always a sub pack chasing the **Queen Elizabeth** and she was a zigzagger and she went about 30 what do they call it? Hm. Not miles, but --

Q: Kilometers?

A: [indecipherable]

Q: Or knot -- 30 knot [indecipherable]

A: Knots. 30 knots, they call it. And she zigzagged all the time, so of course you're -- you're all like this all the time, but --

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Q: Was it a smooth crossing?

A: Yeah, we didn't have any -- other than the zigzagging, we didn't have any problems, that I know of, and --

Q: The ship was crowded?

A: 15,000 troops. Now they put 1500 on, you know, one of those ships, for entertainment, whatnot. So we were crowded. The boys slept on the deck, they swung from hammocks and slept along the railings and whatever, you know. We --we girls had the bunks, of course, but we were stacked -- I think it was four high and two sets going that way and two sets coming across this way, so you just had an aisle down the middle to the john over here and we all shared one little stateroom john.

Q: 17 of you?

A: The salt water in one -- yeah. And then we had to spend twice a day going up three or four decks to a meal. And by the time they got back down, was time to turn around and go back up for the other meal.

Q: Hurry up and wait.

A: Yeah. So it was two meals a day and -- British type, you know, it wasn't American style. Fish and chips and oh, all their fish din-dinners, yeah. And we sat with -- they had, oh, like a three or four inch ridge around the table to keep the di-dishes on the table, because of the zigzagging, and --

Q: To keep the dishes from falling off the table?

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A: Yeah, off on your lap, sure, yeah, yeah. And it was -- it was good food, it just was different, you know?

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah.

Q: And do you remember landing, when you --

A: Yeah, we landed in **Scotland. Greenock, Scotland.** And took a train down to **England** and they -- was beautiful country, but it was awful cold. And they landed us down in a -- below **Manchester** in a place called **Alteringham**, where we were assigned a -- a big house. All they had was little fireplaces in each room, very cold and the fire didn't keep the room warm. And in order to keep the fires going, we had to throw straw out of our mattresses that they had given us, to keep it going. And then eventually the house we were in got burned down and we had to move to another house.

Q: What happened?

A: Fireplace burned through. Got too big a fire in the fireplaces. And we had to move to another house. And then we were on quarantine all that time. I've forgotten just how many hours, but anyway it was over Christmas.

Q: What does that mean, on quarantine?

A: We couldn't go anywhere. We had to stay either -- in the perimeter of the house, see?

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Q: Why?

A: Or -- well, we weren't allowed out around anybody. That's -- quarantine is one of the things they do when you land in an area from here.

Q: Why -- why?

A: I suppose so we don't give diseases to anybody or pass anything along or -- to the enemy or whatever, you know. And -- so as -- we were billeted and had to stay there, except to go to our meals, which we -- we would walk to a certain place to get our meals, then walk back. I don't know -- was part of a mile. And so it came Christmas eve and we were still quarantined and the captain said, anybody that's Catholic can go to midnight mass, they allowed that. So everybody was Catholic, we all went to midnight mass. Snow all around, you know, up like this, and a beautiful, beautiful church. We couldn't all get in the church, so we were outside, but we went to midnight mass and we got away from the house. Protestants, Jewish, Catholic, whatever you were, you know. We were all the same the night. It didn't matter, it was Christmas eve, you know. And that's all I remember of there. All I can remember is the girls do with their helmets, they put their helmets on the bunks and filled them full of lipstick and incidentals and then when the sirens went off, they had to have their helmet on their head, everything got dumped on their heads.

Q: They have drills fo -- is that what the sirens were?

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A: No, just the sirens in the -- in the English area at the time, because there were -- be bombs and planes and so forth going over, so when the warning came, the sirens went off and you were supposed to protect yourself. That was the way we did it.

Q: Was the place where you -- the town where you were bombed while you were there?

A: Not that I know of, no, no. The only place I ever saw any bombs was in **London**. And -- while we were on leave once, that's all. But no, we were never bombed there. And eventually, the people in the town, around Christmastime, there, took us in for dinner. And we had -- I had a real good experience on one of those, because they invited three of us to dinner that didn't drink. And so we went to tea. And they didn't have much to eat, but before they did, they had what they call gin and tonics. We had no idea what they were, but we didn't dare refuse. So three of us ate gin and -- drank gin and tonics, promptly fell asleep. I'll never forget that. And boy were they mortified to find out we didn't drink, but they'd given us drinks, you know. But they thought all Americans drank, so. But anyway, we had a nice dinner and they were very good to us, you know. And we went to an English dance while we were there -- doing the hokey-pokey. I suppose you've heard of that? That's all you knew.

Q: Were you nursing -- doing any nursing

A: Let's see -- yes, well after -- see, af-after that, when they took us out of the quarantine time, we were all sent to detached service, different hospitals. And I was

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sent to one near **Chester**. And was assigned to a hospital, established hospital there and all of their wards went around a circle where the nurses were. There was ward -- like a spider, all the way around. And my job at the time, was this ward full of -- all these wards were filled with venereal diseases. All the boys that were, you know, **[indecipherable]** had parties.

Q: **GIs**?

A: Yeah. And so, I was assigned to give them penicillin. At the time, penicillin was just coming out. So I would take my little tray, about so big and a great big syringe, I'll never forget it, about that long and a -- a bunch of needles and that was full of penicillin, you go along and you'd just -- as you -- as you came out, the boys would just roll over. They knew they were getting it, so just roll over and be ready for you, you know? And that was my job, all the way around the spider, just to pass out penicillin. Supposed to be a cure, you know, until next time. And --

Q: Did it work?

A: I don't know, I never saw the boys again, you know, just one round after the other, by the time you got around here, why they were gone out the other way. So, that was my experience on detached service and living in cold, **Quonset** huts. Concrete floors and they were always wet, you know. And there was snow, of course, everywhere. And, so that -- I had a chance to visit **Chester** and the Roman wall and all the nice things like that, so -- so we really enjoyed that, you know. And from there we were

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sent back to **Alteringham**, where we all assembled and were sent overseas, eventually, in -- I think we went in March.

Q: Across the channel?

A: Across the channel on the **Sobiesky**. Yeah, we were overnight on the ship, which I heard later was bombed, I don't know.

Q: With troops that were going over also?

A: Well, I don't remember any troops going, it might have been -- our hospital unit might have [**indecipherable**] I don't know, but we were all sent over the channel and we were on it overnight, cause we slept on the ship and landed in **France**. And from then on we just kept traveling, yeah.

Q: You were the -- you went east and you went to --

A: We went to **Paris** and we stopped in **Paris** and got something to eat at lunchtime and all our gear. We went into a nice, beautiful restaurant, with waitresses with little -- little frilly aprons on and caps on, you know, and here we are with mud caked and -- and all of our outfit on, you know, as we were traveling. [**indecipherable**] bag on your back and all these heavy clothes. And we had dinner there and then they put us on trucks to go on to a -- well, we went to **Sedan** and **Sedan** is where we -- we did some drilling as far as our hospital unit goes and made -- made gauze packages and things for a hospital unit and got ready to have a set up. And trained from there on. And we --

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then we -- let's see, where did we go from the **Sedan**? We stopped at a boy's school overnight somewhere. That was a big French school. And --

Q: Do you know where sa -- is the name of the city **Sedan**?

A: **Sedan**, uh-huh

Q: Do you know where that is?

A: It's around **Reims**, **Versailles**, it's -- it's -- it was near your well known during the World War One.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And --

Q: Not too far from **Paris**?

A: No, not too far, no. And like I say, we went -- traveled there and then we overnight to another place and -- and on through **Luxembourg**. Oh, I've forgotten -- into **Germany**.

Q: So when you got to **Germany**, then [indecipherable] the first place they set up [indecipherable]

A: In **Germany** is where we first set up the hospital to use, yeah. And took care of our wounded **GIs**. And I had a post-op ward, so as they came out of surgery, they came into my tent. They were given all medications that they needed and bandage care and we did their -- we did their baths as we could, out of their helmets. They had to bring their own helmets and we did baths out of the helmets and I had one little German boy

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that had been throwing grenades and he had an arm taken off and course all these **GIs** didn't like him because he was a enemy. So I had to watch him carefully. And -- but I had a nice ward boy and he [**indecipherable**]

Q: Because you were afraid that they'd --

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: -- do something? But did they?

A: They never did, no, no, they were -- they were kind enough. But that was what we were always scared of, because you know, all of us hated them, really, you know, from seeing what they did to the boys. And whatever happened to him, I don't know, but they shipped him out from my ward. And our boys were shipped out as they -- as soon as we got them taken care of and they were ready to travel, why they went on out too, by plane, yeah.

Q: How -- how long would they stay with you in that ward?

A: Well, it depended on how bad they were. You know, some of them could go within a week and some could -- had to stay. But we were only set up for a short time anyway, you know, so I only saw a turnover a couple of times, really. And then they were transferred on to some other hospital, if they couldn't make the trip all the way across, you know. And th -- we picked up behind **General Patton**, and so, like we always said, we were the fastest moving hospital --

Q: Moving fast.

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A: -- in the **CTO**, you know? Because we just kept on going until we hit the concentration camp.

Q: Yeah. When you were caring for those men in that post-operative ward, y-y-you must have had a chance to talk with them?

A: Some, yeah, some.

Q: What did they want to talk about or --

A: Oh, they were just glad to see you, you know, and -- and sometimes you wrote a letter, if you could, you know, for them. We didn't have any Red Cross to help us. So you wrote a letter if you could or did what you could for whatever they wanted. But there really wasn't much time, you know, spent with them and I suppose some forward hospital could, you know, because we just didn't have the facilities, really. Just --

Q: Would it be just one person on duty there in that ward at a time?

A: Mm-hm, mm-hm, well, it'd be one nurse. They'd have a night nurse and a day nurse, I was a day nurse and I had a -- a corpsman that was very apt. He was a pre-med student. So he could give plasma or transfusions, so forth. So all I had to do was give medications and whatever care -- the bandages and so forth, that they needed. He went around and gave all the -- all the **IVs** and the plasma stuff, yeah. And -- but I did have control of the medicines, he would -- he couldn't give those.

Q: Did you like that work?

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A: Oh yes. That's hospital work, that's nurses work, you know, yeah. If you can ease their pain, you know, and make them feel -- but you know, when you're young, you can't be their mother, even though you're a nurse, you know, but you have to take their place, you know, and do the best you can. Big sister, whatever, you know and since I'd had a lot of it at home, why, you know, just comes second nature, yeah. And --

Q: And then you packed up and --

A: They packed us up in the middle of the night and shipped us off to a place near the concentration camp. I think it was **Bamburg**, I'm not sure, but I think it was there, where we were assigned to a -- a hospital that was already there, in the field and the colonel wouldn't let us go on with the boys. The boys all went ahead of us to take care of the camp before the nurses were taken in. And probably was at least a week before we were allowed in to the camp. And it was quite a shock, you know.

Q: Did they prepare you for that?

A: The colonel just told us we're -- that we're going and that we didn't have to go if we didn't want to. And that it was pretty bad. But we all -- we were there for a purpose, so we -- we went, you know.

Q: Did you discuss it among yourselves?

A: No. Was no problem, no problem. We were all waiting to go, you know? Sitting around there in the sun in **Germany**, we were just waiting to go. And we hadn't had

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that much activity, that one -- one set up, you know, was all we really had had of activity. It was a busy one at the time, but so short -- so short a time. But that's what an evacuation hospital is, you just keep on going. And --

Q: You can put that however you want.

A: Well, it just fell off there, I didn't want to pull anything.

Q: Yeah.

A: But -- so like I say, we moved and when they climbed out of the back of the truck, why it was -- was too much of a jump for me, I guess and too much weight on my foot, so --

Q: You broke your foot?

A: So I had what they call a march fracture. And since I'd never heard of a march fracture, none of the girls had, why he presented me to the medical staff. So I was the first guinea pig over there for that. And then I ran around -- as I say, I ran around with a ga -- pair of galoshes on and of course it was muddy and that rubber just pulled, you know, on that foot. It was no fun. But I -- I worked for about three days and --

Q: So, first three days of the --

A: So the first three days of -- that we were there --

Q: You were --

A: I was assigned to this ward **C** and we were all corralled in -- in a office and pumped full of **DDT** and --

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Q: They would spray it in your clothes?

A: Oh, in your hair -- we had turbans -- in your hair and down your clothes and down the waistband and into your legs and so forth, so you were covered, because these patients had typhus and all sorts of diseases. And then you were assigned a stack of medicine, which was sulfa at the time, the only thing they had was **sulfadiazene**. And a great big pitcher of water, there'd be two of you. One take a bigger -- big pitcher of water and the other all these pills and the guard, because a guard always had to be with us, we weren't to touch anybody. And the first -- my first **[indecipherable]** recollection of seeing them, was a great rack of three or four tier wooden bunks and as far back as that -- toward the wall, you could see was probably five or six patients at least, some on top of the other, all skin and bones and the fellas had given some of them **IV's** and transfusions and -- and plasma. And some of them were dead, with these things still running, you know and so anybody that looked like they were half alive, you'd ask them if they had diarrhea. If they did, you gave them a handful of pills to swallow with a glass of water, if they could get it down and how many others in that same tier and then you go on to the next one, you know. And they were just naked on - - on these things and of course naive little nurses, you know, I -- we'd had hospital nursing, but to see all these naked men and you know and all bones, couldn't speak, some of them. Of course, none of them could speak English. And -- real sad, real sad. Cause you knew you wouldn't see them -- next time, next round around, you wouldn't

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see those same people, they'd be dead, you know. Very few of them that came out.

And -- was real rough. But like I say, I spent about three days in and then we had this accident so, I didn't get back down to the camp, except to eat, you know. Three of us were laid up in the same room.

Q: Tell me about the accident. Well, **General Gavin**, 15th army had a -- was having a big party over in **Linz**, which was about 10 miles away and ever -- al-all the party girls of course wanted to go and they went and a lot of them had dates and whatnot. And the general sent -- was going to send transportation for us. And our group didn't want to go, we were going to stay --

Q: You weren't party girls?

A: We weren't party girls, we didn't drink, we didn't party. One of them was married - - two of them were married. And, you know, we just didn't want to go. And the captain, our chief -- our chief nurse, ordered us to go. So we had to get dressed -- all dressed up in our finery and our class **A** uniform and wait for the transportation and when it came, course we had to get in the Jeep we were assigned and the one that we got into, the fellow was drunk.

Q: Did you know that right away?

A: We didn't know it right away, til we got started. He had -- we found out that he had put water in the gas tank.

Q: Why?

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A: To -- well, I don't know the reason. I don't really know the reason, but anyway, since he put this water -- probably -- maybe cause he was drunk, he had put this in and he knew he had to keep up with the others, because he didn't know for sure whether he was going to make it or not. So he was driving a very fast pace. I wouldn't know how fast, I would say 80 miles an hour, but I don't know. But in this mud and slick stuff. And --

Q: It was raining and it was dark?

A: Raining and was black as ace of spades and we didn't even know where we were. And we were -- I don't -- I think maybe we were last -- last bunch out and as we went down the road, the one girl was Catholic, she was saying her rosary. The other two were ser -- praying in the back seat and the girl in the front seat was hanging on and all of a sudden we went right off -- it was an -- a big apple tree in this curve and we went right over -- sailed right over that apple tree and landed right down in -- a -- over a bank, I don't remember how deep it was. The girl in the front seat -- well, the driver was flopped out and he was all right, he was drunk. The girl in the front seat hit the windshield, she had a concussion. One of the girls in the back seat had a long gash in her leg and she was tied up under the Jeep. The other girl -- I don't know -- I don't remember what damage she had, but she and the other were under the back seats. I was thrown out, half my clothes off and I was the only one able to get up the bank and wait for somebody to come back and find us, when we didn't show up. **Lady Feldhusen**

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was one of the group that came back and found us. And to this day, they never put anything in the records. This makes us very unhappy. But, like I say, we were laid up then, taken back to the clinic and fixed up and taken up to our quarters, where we laid, side by side on cots in one room. Were taken down to meals, they came and sent a truck up and we were taken down to meals at the camp and then brought back home again and that's where we were until we came home. And then they told me -- I was on crutches and they told me that if I didn't throw the crutches away, I had to stay over there. Well, the rest of the group were coming home and one of the girls husband was over there, so she was going to stay. That was all right with her, but I wanted to come home. So I threw the crutches away and hobbled onto the ship when they finally got there. They were assigned to come home. They thought they were going to fly us home, but then something happened to the plane, so they brought us home by train, across the continent, in wooden -- wooden bench trains with no windows. And we slept on th-those overnight, you know, on the trips. And we stopped along the way and got our meals at a -- a tent camp, where they had food set up. Raining, pitchforks and hammer handles and your tray was full of peaches and mashed potatoes and whatever, all mixed up together and hailstorms and the tents were full of holes. I'll never forget it. And I've forgotten how many days we were coming across. Then they camped us on the banks of the **Seine** and that wasn't very -- very nice camp, but it was just a holding camp. And some of the boys from another outfit felt sorry for the nurses, so

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they invited us that -- to come over to **Deauville**, which was a resort, you know, originally and probably still is -- and spend some time over there in a hotel, so we had -- we spent some time in the hotel in the swimming areas and so forth, so we had a good time there -- until we were -- actually til we were aboard ships -- and aboard ship and we were sent a Navy ship, **US Navy, Bliss** and we had ice cream and everything we wanted coming home, nice clean sheets and everything, til we landed in **Boston**. And that was a good -- we had a good crossing, we had no problems with that either, you know. Til we landed in **Boston** and all the fire whistles and whatnot. Put us on a train and headed us for **Trenton** again.

Q: At **Gusen**, did you have -- did you have any impression at the time about who those people were in the camp? Did you know, or did any --

A: Oh, they were all foreign -- there weren't any -- if there were any that spoke English, it was probably broken English, so I had never heard any speak English. I know there were some there, because there were a lot of professionals there.

Q: Right.

A: But I never spoke to them, so I wouldn't know.

Q: But at the time, did you have -- did you know who they were and why they were there? Did anybody tell you?

A: Mm, not at the time we went in. Well, we learned this while we were there, you know. And --

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Q: You knew that it was a concentration camp?

A: Oh yes, oh yes. We were told that before we went there. And that it was so gruesome that we shouldn't go. And we knew this, because they'd sent the boys on ahead, you know. And it must have been bad. But you don't really comprehend until you actually are in it, you know? You see all these walking skeletons, no clothes and then, you know, they had some women there. Not too many around where we were. And then, of course we were taken on a brief tour of the crematorium and the -- and the gas chambers and that kind of thing. And you gradually understood what was going on, you know. But I've learned a lot more since, you know, since leaving there - - since the war.

Q: Did you know at the time, that this was going on in other places as well?

A: No. No, I don't believe I did. In fact I don't believe I'd knew about this until we actually got down there in **Germany**. Because we were following **Patton** and we were trying to take your own boys, you know, so you really didn't understand that these other things were going on until you actually got in there. I don't believe I ever did, no. And y-you just can't believe such things can happen, you know. Just can't. And that people on the outside never knew about it. Just -- it -- just impossible.

Q: Mean -- what do you mean?

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A: People -- farmers that lived, you know, right outside the wall. They were farming fields and everything right where we lived and everything and they didn't even know anything about it. You know, denial.

Q: They said that? Did you talk to them?

A: No, no, I didn't, no. But this was what was going on, you know. Some of the -- the fellas with the, you know, the armor division and stuff like that, they had linguists and stuff with them that could understand. But the farming went on just as normal as could be, around them and -- til the boys went out and rounded everybody up to come in and help at the camp and then I'm sure they knew, but --

Q: They brought in people from **Linz** to work --

A: Yeah. All around the area, they we -- just went out and whoever was loose, they brought them in and put them to work. This is before us girls came, help get the bodies in the graves and whatnot, and the -- so the chaplain could have his services and you saw the pictures of the big cemeteries of course, that we had, you know -- but he did a great job, but -- just weren't enough of our boys to do it all, you know?

Q: Yeah. I want to ask you one more question.

A: Mm-hm. What is -- having witnessed people who were victims of the Holocaust, what a -- what do you think about that now, 50 years later? What -- how did it -- how did it change you?

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A: How did it change me? Well, just going over there, I -- just a little bit more about **Europe** and seeing the pay -- the people with all their, you know, languages that I didn't understand, it was overwhelming, because you couldn't communicate. I don't know, I was just happy to see those that could leave and very sad about those that couldn't, you know? And I just hoped it never happened again and now it's happening again, you know, I just -- I couldn't even watch **Schindler's List** or any of those. I -- I watched this one they showed downstairs through once, I couldn't do it again. And --

Q: Why?

A: I'm an old sentimentalist, I guess, you know. Very sad, very sad thing. I can't even watch a funeral. I went to my aunt's funeral, but I had to get out fast, you know, I just can't -- I don't know what there -- what there is --

Q: You get too -- you get emotional?

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Can't do it. Didn't even go to my own father's funeral. But -- I got criticized for it, but I just couldn't do it. Yes, it's -- it -- like I say, when you're young at that time, it makes an awful impression and it stays with you.

Q: It stays with you?

A: Oh yeah, it will stay with you.

Q: You don't --

A: No.

Q: Forget about it?

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A: No way. No way. My grandmother denied it ever happened.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah, til the day she went to her grave, yup.

Q: Did you try and discuss it?

A: I showed her pictures, I talked to her and she was old, firm Baptist and nothing like that could happen because she just knew it couldn't happen, you know? There weren't people like that.

Q: There weren't -- people weren't that bad, you mean?

A: There weren't people like that wouldn't do anything to another human being. My mother never had an opinion and she hasn't to this day. She's 94 now. But my brother went over and he saw. He went over when I came home and transported a lot of them back home, transported the **POWs**, the Germans, different places and put them to work and he couldn't believe it either til he saw all these people walking around like skeletons, still you know, when he went over. All of them going back to their own homes. And so there are some, you know, that'll deny it forever, probably. Yeah. But I'll never forget it and I know the girls won't forget it either. You can't, anyway.

[inaudible]

Q: Yeah, the other nurses and you --

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Who were there.

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A: I'm sure they won't any of them forget it, you know?

Q: Yeah. Good. Is there anything else you'd like to say or --

A: No.

Q: That I -- perhaps something important that happened to you that I should ask you

[inaudible]

A: You mean in that area, or everywhere? No, I didn't have anything else. There were nice things happened and there were bad things happened in all. And you just take it in your stride. And like I say, the only thing that upset me was when it wa -- nothing was put into my record about the accident.

Q: How was that upsetting, because --

A: Because if you need this in the future, if you're disabled and you need this help in the future, you can't get it if you don't have some documentation.

Q: And you think they were covering up for that **GI** because he was drunk, or because they made you go to the party?

A: I don't -- well, why would -- I don't -- I don't think they'd cover up for him because he was drunk, because he was from another outfit. Why didn't our chief nurse put it in, or our -- our colonel? And that was one thing that hurt. They never even came to see you, you know. The three of us were up there. Course, we were able to talk and take care of each other, you know, up there. But at the same time, somebody should have visited us, you know, other than just sending a truck up and back. But that's life.

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Q: Okay.

A: Yeah.

Q: Thank you. This is the end of the interview with **Phyllis Law**. That's it.

A: Okay.

End of Tape One, Side A

Conclusion of Interview

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