

NARRATOR: Jacobs, Ruth
INTERVIEWER: Troy Reeves
DATE: June 18, 2004
LOCATION: Meridian, Idaho
PROJECT: Women in WWII/Veterans History Project

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START OF RECORDING

00:00	1	Introduction
00:30	1	Jacobs began the interview by giving an overview of her early years. She was born in Euclid, Ohio. Her father was a plumber and her mother was a homemaker. She went to schools in Euclid and graduated from high school there. She wanted to be a nurse; she was too young when she graduated from high school to enroll in nurses' training. She enrolled a year after she graduated high school in nurses' training at a hospital in Cleveland. Jacobs felt that she would go right into the U.S. Army Nurses Corps after she graduated. (She graduated in September 1943.) She would have, but an emergency appendectomy stopped her from enrolling in the military until April 1944. She said that being young on December 7, 1941 influenced her lack of memories about the event. As she has aged, she has thought about that date more.
04:00	2	Jacobs offered an overview of her nurses' training. She stayed in the dorms on the hospital grounds, enjoyed her three years of training, and attended with 32 or 33 other young women that all graduated. With prompting from the narrator, Jacobs discussed the reasons why she wanted to be a nurse. She noted that in the 1930s there were not a lot of professions open to women. She compared the myriad choices that women have in the 21 st Century to the few that she had in the mid-20 th Century. During her year between high school and nurses' training, she worked at a childrens' hospital; she said the experience did not dissuade her from becoming a nurse. She talked about the classes she took in high school and in nurses' training. She talked about how her daughter and granddaughter took courses in high school that were similar to the courses she took in college.
08:00	4	During a typical day of the first year of nurses' training, Jacobs and the others took classes only. Just before Thanksgiving, they put the students on the floor to work in the hospital. She remembered that because she did not get to go home for Thanksgiving. After they

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13:00	5	<p>were put on the floor, the amount of floor time rose and the classroom time shrunk. She noted that in her third year they worked in specialty fields, such as pediatrics. Jacobs did work different shifts in the hospital during training; she thought working the night shift affected her the next day at class. She recalled working in one particular ward at the hospital with private rooms. During the night shift, she would make the coffee and cut the grapefruit to prepare for the day shift. Those jobs were different than work on the other wards.</p>
18:00	7	<p>Nurses' training helped Jacobs learned how to get along with people. She noted that patients in hospitals are usually sick, making the job of getting along with them or dealing with them difficult at times. After she graduated and became a nurse, Jacobs did not like working in the pediatrics ward during her training. Part of that was due to the difficulty in dealing with sick children and due to the woman in charge of the pediatrics ward. Other than that supervisor of pediatrics, she got along with the other supervisors. For the most part, she was trained by women, except for classes taught by the male doctors. Jacobs befriended many of her fellow classmates, including Mary Mooney, Edna Daber, Genevieve Fortier, and Rita Schultz.</p>
22:00	9	<p>Jacobs did not recall any rivalry between the nurse trainees. She felt that everyone was learning the same thing, and it did not matter who learned it better or quicker. Jacobs thought they had a summer break, but she could not recall what they did. She discussed the distance between Euclid and Cleveland; she could take the bus and streetcar from the hospital to Euclid. That fact meant that she spent time at home during her training. During her non-work time, besides going home, Jacobs would go to the USO in Cleveland to dance with the soldiers and would swim in Lake Erie. Jacobs dated but had no steady boyfriend.</p> <p>With prompting from the interviewer, Jacobs continued to discuss nurses' training. She talked about not having a specialty that she enjoyed more than another. She noted that she thought about being an Army nurse as soon as the U.S. entered World War II. Jacobs did not have any family that went into the military after Pearl Harbor; her brothers were older and married. Jacobs described her graduation ceremony and showed the interviewer her diploma. Her family attended, and they went home for dinner after the event. Jacobs graduated in September 1943 and wanted to join the Army Nurses Corps. They did not need her right away, before she reported</p>

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		to the induction center, she got appendicitis and had an appendectomy.
27:00	10	After graduating and before entering the military, she worked at a hospital closer to Euclid. She had her appendectomy and recuperation at her training hospital, so she saw some of the nurses that were a year behind her in school. Except for her stay in the hospital, she stayed at her parents' home until she entered the Army. Jacobs entered the Army Nurses Corps on April 1, 1944. She took a train and bus from Ohio to Fort Benjamin Harrison, which was outside of Indianapolis, Indiana. [Note: at 29:50 the analog cassette copy moves from side one to side two.] Jacobs described the routine at the fort, including the fact that she had a room of her own. There was a hospital there, so very soon after she arrived, she started working at the hospital. She was there a month doing basic training, and she could not recall a lot about the training or any special experiences why she was there.
33:00	12	At the end of the month, she and the other nurses were sent to different places. She was part of the 5 th Service Command, and she was sent to Martinsburg, West Virginia, to an Army hospital. Jacobs noted that nothing really stood out in her mind about the train trips to Indiana and to West Virginia and about the Army food. With prompting from the interviewer, Jacobs talked about her time in Martinsburg, including getting stockings from a particular store there; the store sold the stockings to the Army nurses. Martinsburg is in the northeast corner of West Virginia; she recalled taking a trip to Hagerstown, Maryland. She said she went to Washington, DC, once while in Martinsburg.
38:45	13	Jacobs talked about her time in Martinsburg, including her accommodations and her work at the hospital. She showed the interviewer some pictures of the hospital and talked about the Army soldiers that recuperated at the hospital. While in Martinsburg Jacobs befriended Mary Jane Kilcoyne. She regretted not keeping in touch with Kilcoyne after the War. Jacobs and the interviewer talked about how much easier it is to stay in touch with people today. Jacobs stayed in Martinsburg for roughly five months.
43:30	15	Jacobs stayed in touch with her mother while in West Virginia. She knew that at some time she would end up overseas. While in Martinsburg Jacobs (and Kilcoyne) would spend time at the officers' club and dance. The officers' club had a nickelodeon, so she did not remember local bands playing there. Jacobs felt a certain excitement in being in the military; she did not feel too much stress. Jacobs

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		anticipated going to Europe, and she was glad to go. From West Virginia she thought she went to New Jersey before sailing out of New York on the <i>Queen Mary</i> . With prompting from the interviewer, Jacobs described her five-plus day journey on the <i>Queen Mary</i> . She discussed the accommodations, the salt-water showers, the emergency drill each morning, and the U.S. Army Air Corps men on the ship.
51:00	18	Jacobs recalled the speed of the ship and the way the ship zigzagged to avoid submarines. She did not experience any seasickness on the ship. She did not remember the food while on the ship. She remembered landing in Scotland around Glasgow. They left New York on Columbus Day in 1944; she did not recall much about her very brief time in Scotland or England before they embarked to France.
56:00	21	Jacobs did not feel the need to elaborate on anything she said during the interview. She said she felt anxious about getting to France and getting to work. She concluded by telling a story about volunteering at Gowen Field recently to help examine some soldiers. A young woman, who said she wanted to be a nurse, asked Jacobs about her nursing experience during the War. Jacobs told her about her time on the <i>Queen Mary</i> ; the young woman did not know anything about the ship.
59:45	22	END OF RECORDING

NAMES AND PLACES INDEX

Cleveland, Ohio

Euclid, Ohio

Fort Benjamin Harrison (Indiana)

Martinsburg, West Virginia

Queen Mary

St. Vincent's Charity Hospital (Cleveland, Ohio)

U.S. Army Nurses Corps

USO

World War II