

**NARRATOR: Klahr, Bonnie**  
**INTERVIEWER: Ellen Haffner**  
**DATE: January 13, 2005**  
**LOCATION: Parma, Idaho**  
**PROJECT: Women in WWII/Veteran's History Project**

<b>Tape Counter</b>	<b>Page No.</b>	<b>Summary</b>
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**TAPE ONE**

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| 0000 | 1 | Introduction.  |
| 0006 | 1 | Klahr began the interview by briefly describing her early life growing up in Pasco, Washington. Klahr spoke of the reasons she decided to become a nurse, especially citing her mother's influence. She had decided to be a nurse before she graduated for high school and took classes, like chemistry, to prepare her for nurses training. Klahr decided to attend school at Saint Luke's hospital in Spokane, Washington, because she had friends studying there. She did not recall the procedure for applying to the school.  |
| 0035 | 3 | Klahr spoke about her life in Spokane, and what it was like for her to be away from home for the first time. She shared a room in the nurse's home that housed about 150 total students. Klahr talked about some of the girls she lived with at the house, including Betty Goodpasture-Ketchum, whom she joined the Navy with. Klahr explained her schedule during her training. She described the work they did and the classes they took. It took three years for her to get a diploma in nursing.   |
| 0085 | 5 | Klahr continued by explaining what the students did in their free time. She often went swimming and even joined a city swim team at one point. They often went to town shopping together or spent time at the Natatorium Park. Klahr talked about the classes that the nurses took at Gonzaga University. They also used some of the lab facilities as Spokane Junior College. She graduated in 1942. Klahr remembered when she first heard about the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. People were running through the halls of her school yelling the news of the attack. Klahr spoke about the procedures connected to air raid warnings. If they were on duty the nurses were supposed to immediately fill all the bathtubs and wash bowls with water, because of the fear that the water supply might be hit in an attack. She never experienced an air raid warning, and they did not have any practice runs. Klahr could not recall observing any other major changes in Spokane because of the War. After her graduation she worked briefly as a nurse in Spokane before returning to Pasco in November 1942. |

No. of Minutes	Page No.	Summary
0140	8	Klahr talked about her decision to join the Navy. There was a Red Cross recruiter at the place where she took her state board exams, but Klahr left without talking to her. The next day the school director lectured her graduating class for not helping the war effort, and most of the nurses went back to sign up. Klahr chose to join the Navy over the Army because she had heard bad stories about the experiences of nurses in the European Theater, and she did not want to be stationed in a foreign country. Klahr explained that a roommate of hers had to join the Army nurses because she was born in Canada, and the Navy would not take her. This nurse ended up staying in California for the duration of the War, while Klahr was sent out to the South Pacific. In January of 1943, she was sworn in to the Navy but was not called in for active duty until March.
0170	9	Klahr explained her indoctrination and training for the Navy in Seattle, Washington. She described the Navy nurse's uniforms that they wore to work on the wards in Seattle. She explained the different types of uniforms that the nurses got at each stage of their nurses training. Their final graduation was a formal service where they received certificates for their degrees.
0235	11	Klahr described her work at the U.S. Naval Hospital, Seattle, Washington. She worked with both Navy and Marine soldiers, many of whom had been injured in the fighting in Alaska. The injuries she treated were mostly broken limbs. She mostly worked on the orthopedic ward so she did not see too many War casualties. Klahr went on to talk about a usual day for her while she was stationed in Seattle. The corpsmen did most of the hands-on work with the patients, like bathing and shaving. She oversaw the corpsmen and distributed the medication to the patients. The nurses worked in eight-hour shifts around the clock and rotated their shifts each month.
0290	12	Klahr discussed the housing for the nurses in Seattle. They lived in small rooms in a big dormitory-type building. The dorms had a few sitting rooms and a general living room where they could entertain guests. While in Seattle, Klahr rarely left the base. She occasionally visited her family in Pasco and Tacoma, Washington. The nurses went into town to shop or go to dinner about once a week. When on base, they ate in a formal dining room where the food was served to them at each meal.
0365	15	<b>END OF TAPE 1 SIDE 1 TAPE 1 SIDE 2 BEGINS</b>

<b>No. of Minutes</b>	<b>Page No.</b>	<b>Summary</b>
0392	15	Klahr spoke about her roommate, Pat Bacigalupi, and other friends she had in Seattle. After about a year in Seattle, their orders to leave were posted on a bulletin board. Klahr read a bulletin similar to the one that would have been posted.
0445	17	Klahr and the other nurses had to buy footlockers and stencil their names on them. They knew to pack enough to last a year but did not know where they were going. Before leaving Seattle, Klahr took a two-week leave to visit her family in Pasco. She then departed from Seattle for San Francisco, where they left for the South Pacific. Klahr described the troop transport they traveled on and their living conditions on the trip. She told about the life belts that they had to wear at night and explained that they had to be cautious because if they turned a certain way the belts would inflate. She said that most of the nurses were seasick most of the way. The nurses staged a sort of protest over the dress code on the trip. They were supposed to wear their dress blue uniforms for the entire voyage. However, they had difficulties sitting on the deck in these uniforms, so they refused to go to meals until they were allowed to wear their civilian clothes out of their quarters. Klahr explained that the showers were salt water, and they were only allowed to shower every other day. The nurses had very little contact with the men who traveled with them. They ate in their own dining hall and had separate living quarters guarded by Marines.
0505	21	Klahr discussed in further detail her time before departing the United States. She traveled by train from Seattle to San Francisco. They had to wait there for five days while those that did not know how to swim were taught at a local swimming pool. During those days, Klahr went to San Diego without permission to visit Jim Klahr, her future husband. Klahr described how she had met Jim in June of 1942 on a blind date, and had been in contact with him throughout this time. She explained where the two of them had been stationed during this period and how they managed to see each other a few times.
0575	24	Klahr explained that once on the ship the only way they knew where they were going was the direction of the sun and the moon each day. They traveled straight across the Pacific Ocean without stopping. The trip took them twenty-one days. To pass the time they played board games, wrote letters, and watched the porpoises that swam next to the ship. They had occasional lifeboat drills, but there was no boat assigned to the nurses. When they asked about this the officer said that if they were attacked the nurses could have their pick of lifeboats because the men would likely just jump overboard.

No. of Minutes	Page No.	Summary
0600	25	Klahr said that she mostly just wrote letters to her family while she was away. They did not have much access to news while on the ship. She explained that they never did know much about what was going on in other areas of the War. Klahr received a certificate naming her a member of Shellback, the group of those that had crossed the Equator. Normally, there is a ceremony involved in the induction, but the officers did not want to do this with females because of the potential hazing involved in the tradition. Klahr described the certificate for the recording.
0653	27	Klahr discussed her first impressions after arriving at New Caledonia. It was after dark when they reached their destination, and they took small motorboats to shore. The hospital compound lined the beach of an inlet. There was a highway that ran along the other side of the hospital. Navy guardsmen watched the base. In their free time, the nurses would sit on the beach, swim in the ocean, or ride bicycles. They mostly stayed at the hospital, but the nurses occasionally went into the nearby town of Noumea when they could get a ride to shop, eat out, or listen to music at the band shell.
0723	29	Klahr consulted a book she had about Noumea to ascertain the population of the town at the time she was there. She and the interviewer described the pictures in the book for the recording. She also read the population break down from the book. Klahr spoke about the terrain, the agriculture, and the types of people on New Caledonia. She also talked about the natives she interacted with, mainly the ones who worked on the base.
0800	31	<b>END OF TAPE 1 SIDE 2 ENDS TAPE 2 SIDE 1 BEGINS</b>
0801	31	The second tape begins with a brief introduction. Klahr and the interviewer spoke about the pictures and other items in Klahr's scrapbook of New Caledonia. Klahr talked about some Christmas cards sent as V-mail. She also had a thank you note from one of the native women who did laundry for one of the officers on the base. Klahr and three other nurses had taken care of the woman's grandson who had tuberculosis of the spine. The card was in French and came with a gift. She talked about pictures of some of the people who worked on the base, including one native couple who would pick and prepare fresh coconut for the nurses to eat.
0850	33	Klahr went into some detail about the difficulties the nurses had keeping their uniforms white. She had to wash her shoestrings and polish her shoes every night. Klahr also discussed further the nurse's quarters, the hospital wards, and the Quonset huts where newly arrived patients waited for a doctor to see them. There was an

<b>No. of Minutes</b>	<b>Page No.</b>	<b>Summary</b>
		Army base and a U.S. Marine base that shared the island with the Navy hospital. The scrapbook included pictures of the staff she worked with. Klahr explained how they indicated the different ranks by the nurses' uniforms. She also talked about an ambulance driver named Jack Gannon that the nurses called "Casanova."
0900	36	Klahr spoke about the differences in the bases at New Caledonia and Guadalcanal. She also talked about the Purple Heart awards ceremonies that were conducted at the hospital in New Caledonia. If a patient fainted the nurses had to leave him there and wait for the conclusion of the ceremony. Klahr discussed in more detail the hospital ward and the regulations they had to abide by. In New Caledonia they had to deal with a bad cockroach problem. She talked about what they did to combat the bugs.
0960	39	Klahr also spoke about the climate and weather on the island. Looking at the pictures prompted Klahr to explain in more detail some of their freetime activities, including going to movies at the outdoor theater and watching the shows of the USO troops that came to the island. Klahr had several postcards that helped her to describe in greater detail the vegetation and terrain in the area. With prompting from the interviewer Klahr talked about the ways the natives dressed, mostly in western style clothing.
1030	42	Klahr concluded the tape by discussing the remaining pictures in her scrapbook. She talked about the various buildings and their functions on the base. One picture showed some patients in the craft shop doing occupational therapy, such as weaving, and woodworking. The Red Cross put on parties and barbeques for the troops. Klahr also spoke about the church services held on the base.
1100	45	<b>END OF TAPE 2 SIDE 1</b> <b>END OF RECORDING</b>

**NAMES AND PLACES INDEX**

Bacigalupi, Pat  
Gannon, Jack  
Gonzaga University  
Goodpasture-Ketchum, Betty  
Klahr, Jim  
New Caledonia Island  
Noumea, New Caledonia  
Pasco, Washington  
Seattle, Washington  
Spokane, Washington  
U.S. Naval Hospital, Seattle, Washington  
U.S. Navy Hospital, Seattle, Washington