

NARRATOR: Klahr, Bonnie
INTERVIEWER: Ellen Haffner
DATE: January 25, 2005
LOCATION: Parma, Idaho
PROJECT: Women in WWII/Veteran's History Project

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TAPE ONE

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| 0000 | 1 | Introduction. |
| 0006 | 1 | Klahr spoke about the living arrangements for the native New Caledonians who worked for the hospital. She described a typical day at the hospital, including her duties and the work of the corpsmen assigned to her ward. She talked about the patients arriving by ship in what they called drafts. It sometimes took two or three weeks for them all to be evaluated and assigned to the wards. Klahr did not deal with the men until they were on her ward. When a patient was discharged the bed was quickly filled with the next man. |
| 0070 | 5 | Klahr talked about the mail system and the people who sent her letters. She mostly kept to her own area in her off hours but occasionally dined at other stations or visited with new friends. Klahr said that they received very little news about the War while at New Caledonia. Most of what they knew came from the patients coming in and the few radios at the hospital. While at New Caledonia, they did not have to worry about bombings by the Japanese because the front was farther north. They did not have blackout conditions or other such precautions. Klahr was in New Caledonia for nine months before receiving notice that she was being transferred. She did not know where she was going until she arrived at Guadalcanal. |
| 0125 | 8 | Klahr described her trip from New Caledonia to Guadalcanal. She traveled by Naval Air Transportation Systems in a C-47 airplane. She explained the seating and cargo storage in the plane. About twenty women transferred along with Klahr. This was Klahr's first trip by plane. |
| 0165 | 10 | Klahr discussed her first impressions of Guadalcanal. The base was surrounded by dense jungle, and they stayed in wooden huts. She shared some pictures of the place. Their quarters were surrounded by barbed wire. There were ships sunk in the nearby bay, and Klahr went with some others to explore the wreckage on a couple of occasions. Klahr talked about the problems they had with rats, spiders, and other insects while at Guadalcanal. They had to build |

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		special traps to catch the rats because they were so large. The spiders were also quite large, and they could jump quite high. The nurses had to keep their stockings in glass jars to keep the insects out of them, and they had to keep their sleeves rolled down after 3pm to keep the mosquitoes from stinging them.
0225	12	Klahr explained that the nurses and patients had to take Atabrine each day to prevent them from getting malaria or having a relapse of malaria. Many patients tried to avoid taking the drug because they preferred an attack of malaria over having to go back to war. Klahr talked about the pest control processes at the hospital. She further described the size and look of the rats and spiders. Klahr talked about their quarters. They had screened porches where they kept their footlockers and where they often sat out during their evenings off. About twelve nurses stayed in each housing unit, but Klahr could not recall how many total nurses were at the hospital.
0280	14	Klahr spoke about the jungles around their quarters. They used to go out and pick papayas and bananas in the area directly behind their huts. If they wanted to go anywhere on Guadalcanal they had to call for a transport. They only went to the beach if a group wanted to go. The beaches were black sand, and the water was not very clear. When the Navy was gathering forces before pushing further north, the personnel at the hospital watched as the ships rendezvoused in the nearby bay.
0320	16	Klahr explained that the Navy put up the barbed wire around the nurses' quarters after one nurse and her date were shot as they were leaving the hospital. After this incident no one could go out on a date unless there were two couples and one of the men carried a gun. Klahr did not date much because she was still corresponding with her future husband. She often went to the clubhouse to socialize with other nurses and some of the officers in the area. The barbed wire fence and other precautions made Klahr feel more secure because she knew that it protected the small number of nurses from the large number of American men on the island. There was no apparent threat from the Japanese on the island by the time Klahr was there.
0360	17	Klahr talked about some of the native patients they had at the hospital in Guadalcanal. They often had relatives that would stay with them and bring them their own ethnic food to eat. Many of the natives had bleached white hair because they used peroxide to fight lice infestations.
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0385	18	Klahr shared a story about a wild parrot that one of her patients had as a pet. It was a cockatiel named Rufus. The parrot rode on the sailors shoulder and ate mashed potatoes and ice cream. Rufus often ran along the floor and hid under the beds, calling out, "Where's Rufus? Where's Rufus?" Klahr did not know what happened to Rufus because he was still there when she left. When Klahr was supposed to leave Guadalcanal she tried to fly home, but the only available planes were Army aircraft. The Navy would not allow their nurses to fly in Army planes, so Klahr had to wait for a ship to pick her up. Once on the ship they had to pick up other nurses and the wives and children of servicemen at New Caledonia before heading home. The return trip took them 14 days.
0405	19	With prompting from the interviewer, Klahr discussed the temperatures at Guadalcanal. It was very hot both night and day, and the nurses had to make sure the patients always had a full set of pajamas on so that the mosquitoes could not attack them. The wards that Klahr worked on mostly dealt with patients with Malaria and other diseases. There were very few war casualties coming through their hospital. Klahr could not recall the size of the hospital because during her time there the Navy was in the process of closing the place down. Klahr spoke about the people she worked with at Guadalcanal. The nurses were the same that she worked with at New Caledonia, but the doctors were different. She also talked about the church services held on the base. The same people handled both protestant and catholic services. There was also a Jewish rabbi there that held services at the church for those that were Jewish. Klahr mentioned that the only holiday she remembered celebrating while overseas was the Christmas party at New Caledonia.
0460	22	Klahr described the dinning room at Guadalcanal as very basic, especially compared to the nice dinning area at New Caledonia. When at New Caledonia they ate a lot of lamb because most of the meat came from New Zealand or Australia. The cooks would often cook a birthday cake if they found out someone had a birthday. They did not exchange gifts for birthdays or Christmas. Klahr mentioned that she only got a few care packages from her mother, mostly containing books. At the store at ship's service they could buy most goods they needed and even exchange books at the small library there. Klahr recalled that when stateside she received a salary of \$150 a month, and when overseas, she received a bit more.
0520	25	Klahr explained that when she decided to come home, she gave away most of their clothing because she thought they were going to

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		fly home. The ship they traveled back on was an old luxury liner so it was a much nicer trip. She had less women to share her room with, and they got to sit at dinning room tables instead of long benched seating like on the trip over. They were caught in the end of a typhoon and were not allowed to go out on deck. She described the storm as the most horrible she had ever seen. They left Guadalcanal on June 4 and arrived in San Francisco on June 27.
0570	27	Klahr spoke about the things they would do to pass the time on the trip back. She read and played a lot of board games. They had to wear their dress blue uniforms to meals, but the rest of the time they could wear civilian clothes. Klahr talked about her beauty care while overseas. She got a permanent when she was at New Caledonia. Basically she just did the best she could with her hair, and she had a little bit of makeup her mother had sent to her that she occasionally wore. Klahr described the different people she traveled back with. Some of the nurses volunteered to help care for the children on the ship.
0630	29	Klahr shared about her relationship with Jim Klahr during this time. He had returned to the United States before Klahr came home. When she arrived it took awhile for her to locate him. When she could not get a hold of him at his station in Hutchinson, Kansas, she had to decide whether she should go to Kansas or home to Washington. Her last communication from him had been several weeks before this, and he was not returning her calls, so she took a trip to Kansas to find him. They married while they were there.
0690	0	Klahr had to report to Seattle, Washington, shortly after their wedding. One friend suggested that she send a telegram to the Secretary of the Navy to ask for an extension of her leave. When she went to pick up her luggage to go to the train station for departure, the hotel gave her a message from the Secretary, granting her extension. [Pause in the tape while Klahr looked for the telegram.] While Klahr was traveling from Kansas to Washington to receive her next orders, she heard the news of the bombing of Hiroshima. After a visit to Pasco, Washington, to see her mother, she reported for duty in San Diego, California. After the peace was declared, Jim was able to get out of the Navy in October. She was not able to finish her duty until November.
0750	33	Klahr explained how she ended up in Idaho. Jim had lived in Idaho and received his degree in agriculture and entomology at the University of Idaho. He decided that he wanted to return to the Notice, Idaho, area to begin farming. Their first home was fairly primitive, but in 1948, they moved to the corner of Highway 95 and

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		Klahr Road in Parma, Idaho. In 1971, they moved to their address at the time of the interview.
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0770	33	Klahr spoke about Jim's connections to Parma, Idaho. He grew up in Notice and Parma and graduated from Parma High School in 1936. He attended the Southern Branch of the University of Idaho, which is now called Idaho State University before transferring to the University of Idaho at Moscow, Idaho, to get his masters degree. When she first came to Idaho in November, 1945, she was not able to work because they only had one car that Jim needed for farming. Klahr did not know much about Idaho before coming here to live. She was shocked at how small the town was. Most of her time she spent caring for her house, knitting, and reading. She had not ever considered being a farmer's wife before moving to Notice because she thought she was marrying a Navy pilot and not a farmer. Jim and his brother bought several hundred acres of farmland in the area and worked together. They grew potatoes, sugar beats, corn, and grain, and they also raised cattle.
0830	36	Klahr explained that she did not participate much in the family farm business. She mostly stayed home with the kids. When she was 51, she went to work part-time at a surgeon's office in Ontario, Oregon. She shared the full time position with another nurse. The doctor, A.M. Tanaka, was glad to have Klahr working there because she was already experienced in the surgical procedures from her time as a Navy nurse. Klahr also spent part of her time golfing. Klahr said that the rural area she lived in has not changed much while she has been there. She has noticed the changes in Boise and rarely goes into the city because of the traffic. She has also noticed an increase in the traffic along Highway 95 but has not noticed much growth.
0890	39	The Klahr's had one son and one daughter. She talked about some of the culture shock she experienced when coming to Idaho. Their first home had no heating stove initially, and they had no plumbing for the first year. Their second home had a faucet at the back door, and they had to share the restroom with the public at the gas station next to their home. They decided to move to Parma to be closer to their farmland and feedlot business. Before arriving in Idaho, Klahr had never had any experience with farming or cowboy types so it took her a while to learn the life and settle in. She made friends through bowling and playing bridge.
0940	42	END OF TAPE 2 SIDE 1 END OF RECORDING

NAMES AND PLACES INDEX

Guadalcanal
Klahr, James (Jim)
Moscow, Idaho
New Caledonia Island
Notus, Idaho
Ontario, Oregon
Parma, Idaho
Southern Branch of the University of Idaho [Idaho State University]
Tanaka, A.M.
University of Idaho