

Transcription of interview with Christine Ward, interviewed by Rachel Ward, date of interview not known
Transcribed by Mary Meier on Nov. 7, 2007

Rachel:

South Effingham was in that same one that North Africa, Italy – you know about that don't you? – and all the way right through to Berlin. You're surprised. Did you get plenty of supplies to work with these men?

Christine: Oh yes. There weren't any shortages of supplies that I know of.

Rachel: Did the new drugs – I know they say they were developed in World War II like sulphur and penicillin. Did you get those?

Christine: We used the sulphur drugs and penicillin, yes.

Rachel: It's incredible to me that they got it to you that fast.

Christine: There would have been an awful lot more deaths from infection without penicillin. I know they used to make penicillin up by the thousands in litre or quart bottles and the lab used to go around and give everyone a penicillin shot every four hours. A routine shot before they went to surgery or while they were still waiting for surgery and afterwards on the wards. They just make rounds and gave penicillin every four hours because everybody was wounded.

Rachel: Everybody had the same need.

Christine: Right.

Rachel: I really hit a find in meeting you because we talked about where were we ever going to find nurses and we didn't find very many that were listed. That's great.

Frank Ward Jr. (?) One of the nurses used to run the camp over here in East Madison. She was from New York too. I don't know where she is at this point.

Christine: She's down on the coast.

Rachel: Tacoma Park Camp?

Frank: No, up farther.

Rachel: Waukeela?

Frank: Waukeela.

Rachel: Was it Tony Meserve?

Christine: No.

Rachel: See, my brother-in-law comes from right there, beside Waukeela. Richard Paul. He talks about Tony Meserve. I thought that's who it was.

Christine: Alice Gabriel.

Rachel: Alice Gabriel. So she was a nurse? Did she go to Europe too? When you came back from the war, were you assigned to a hospital in New York City again?

Christine: Oh, no. I was discharged from the Army and then Frank was stationed out in Lockmore (sp?) Air Force Base in Ohio, so we went out there and lived for about six or eight months until he got out of the service and then we came back here.

Rachel: Well, your experience up in North Conway has been a lot of broken bones, I know. They say that Memorial is the hospital of broken bones. So you came right into another situation.

Christine. Right. I've taken care of a lot of skiers over 30 years.

Rachel: I bet you have. That's interesting. In the army, was your food as good as he says his was?

Frank: No. She had to go on C Rations.

Rachel: Oh. Because you were in field units.

Christine: Yeah. We lived on K rations for the first three months that we were over in Europe. You'd weigh about 80 pounds.

Frank: Each morning we went on a mission we had eggs for breakfast.

Rachel (to Christine): And you probably didn't have anything but dry food.

Christine: I didn't see an egg.

Rachel: I know powdered eggs were developed during the war, weren't they? Did you get any?

Christine: We had powdered eggs but they weren't very ----

Rachel: Tasty. No, they were pretty bad at first, I thought.

Christine: We had spam for Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Rachel: Is that right?

Frank: They didn't have anything over there to heat at all.

Rachel: I don't even remember what was in C rations. I know they talked about it, but was in it?

Christine: We didn't have C rations. We had K rations, which was a box.

Rachel: You got a box for a meal?

Christine: Yeah, you had three boxes. One was breakfast, one was lunch and one was dinner. Breakfast had lemon juice and coffee.

Rachel: Lemon juice? Like lemonade?

Christine: Yes, the thing they developed at that time. It was horrible and I don't think it's in use now. And a few hardtack biscuits. Sometimes you'd get scrambled eggs in a can. For lunch you probably would have cheese in a can with a biscuit and some more of the lemon juice. In the dinner one there was more cheese and a hardtack biscuit and some coffee and a chocolate bar

which was the chocolate bar that didn't melt in the sun, so you couldn't eat it anyway.

Rachel: Hard. Like Baker's Chocolate.

Christine: Right. Every box had four cigarettes. Most everybody drank the coffee and smoked the cigarettes and forgot the rest after a while.

Rachel: And you slept out in tents, too?

Christine: Yes.

Rachel: So you got used to a cot?

Frank: A cot and a sleeping bag.

Rachel: And this was in the winter?

Christine: In the winter we were in Belgium and we were in a place that had been a TB sanatorium, so the enlisted men slept outdoors, but the officers got a bed somewhere in the building.

Rachel: It must have been hard to sleep out in the weather. All that fog and wet.

Christine: On detached service after the Battle of the Bulge along towards February we slept in tents with snow on the ground.

Rachel: Slept in tents with snow on the ground?

Christine: Oh, yeah.

Rachel: What kind of sleeping bag would endure that?

Christine: Regular sleeping bags. We used to get newspapers and put under them over the cots.

Frank: Sleeping bags in those days weighed about 40 or 50 pounds.

Rachel: Is that right? Did they have liners too?

Christine: No, just plain sleeping bags.

Rachel: Just ordinary. I don't know as I ever saw one up close.

Frank: I had a sleeping bag in my barracks and if it gone down to 100 below zero you could still get warm. It was heavy.

Christine: Mine wasn't down. We had to buy our own.

Rachel: Buy your own?

Christine: Sleeping bags, yeah. The army gave you three or four blankets.

Frank: There's nothing as cold as a G.I. blanket.

Rachel: It's rough. You don't feel like snuggling in it.

Christine: Most of us bought sleeping bags. That's what I did.

Frank: These weren't issue. Someone must have had them on the base. They kept passing them down and I got hold of one. I got done with it and I gave it to the Army chaplain as an extra.

Rachel: Well, I wove that cloth that you probably wore. I worked in a factory that made government order cloth and I was a weaver and I wove that beautiful O.D.

Christine: That was good and warm.

Rachel: And we did officer pants too.

Frank: I've still got that first pair of pants. They wear and wear.

Rachel: They're heavy. That was beautiful cloth. Some of the best I ever did.

Frank: I've still got the first blouse I ever wore. That was back in 1942. I wore it practically every day.

Rachel: We also did cloth for Russia. It was as thick as cardboard and that was blue-gray. They made the officers' coats. We made officer coat material for O.D. too, but it really wasn't as heavy as that which went to Russia.

Christine: I imagine it was cold over there.

Rachel: I felt peculiar about that ever afterwards, you know. I don't know that I'm glad I did that, but it was the times.

Frank: The way things have turned out, it's food for thought.

Rachel: Did you learn languages?

Christine: No, we didn't. I didn't really have time or opportunity to have much contact with civilians.

Rachel: You just stayed within your own unit? And most of those people did speak English anyway, didn't they?

Christine: Yes, they all wanted to practice English on us, the French or the Germans.

Frank (joking): The British all speak English anyway.

Rachel: Yes, even more so. With a greater vengeance --- I'll put it that way. Their English is more precise. Did you find that your's sharpened up while you were there?

Frank: I think I did. I thought about it a little bit.

Rachel: I think Americans use more slang. We really become more attuned to a better choice of words the minute we meet a Britisher.

Frank: You'll occasionally year a Britisher speaking on television. His language seems to be much better.

Rachel: Nearer the king's English. And in France you didn't try to catch any French.

Christine: We didn't have much of an opportunity, really.

Rachel: You were sleeping when you were off duty.

Christine: Just about.

Rachel: There were no French doctors to help you?

Christine: Oh, no. In fact we took care of a lot of injured French people, civilians, who had no hospital to go to because the hospitals had been bombed. The town was shattered at St. Lo and places like that. There was nothing left of them, so anyone who was injured came into Second Evac.

Rachel: Didn't your unit interact with the townspeople on going into a town?

Christine: Not during the war. I guess after the war they did. We were just there during the active part of the war. We didn't have that much opportunity.

Rachel: And besides being on a military assignment that's all you did, wasn't it?

Christine: That's right.