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**The Vietnam Archive
Oral History Project
Interview with Doris Cobb
Conducted by Kara Vuic
April 25, 2005
Transcribed by Cecily Darwin**

1 Kara Vuic: Okay, it started now. Okay, so this is Kara Vuic and I'm talking to
2 Col. Doris Cobb and you were in recruitment at Ft. Monroe from '65 to '68, is that right?

3 Doris Cobb: Right.

4 KV: Okay, and it's April 25th, 2005. Okay, I didn't want to miss anything. That's
5 why I interrupted you there real quick.

6 DC: Oh, okay.

7 KV: So you would've been in the Army Nurse Corps for a while before you got
8 involved in recruitment, is that right?

9 DC: I came—I had been in the Army in 1945.

10 KV: Okay.

11 DC: For eighteen months, approximately eighteen months and got out and came
12 back in the Army in 1956. I came back in February of '56 and I went in recruiting in
13 August of '56. I was in recruiting in Boston for three and a half years. Then I left
14 recruiting and went to the advanced nursing course down at Ft. Sam and did a lot of other
15 things. In 1964 Colonel Clark had just become the chief of the corps and asked me to
16 come back on recruiting down in Atlanta as the ANC (Army Nurse Corps) coordinator
17 for recruiting nurses. So we covered into the whole 3rd Army area which is the
18 southeastern corner of the United States. The nurse that was at Ft. Monroe had a heart
19 attack and I was moved from Ft. Monroe to—from Ft. McPherson, Georgia, to Ft.
20 Monroe to become the chief of the Army Nurse Corps recruiting. So I went up there in
21 1965, but I had already had experience in recruiting before I went there.

1 KV: Okay. Was this something that you liked, you liked being involved in
2 recruiting?

3 DC: No, I didn't want to go back, but Colonel Clark made it sound like recruiting
4 would fall apart if I didn't.

5 KV: So you were chief of the Army Nurse Corps recruiting and you were based
6 at Ft. Monroe, Virginia.

7 DC: Right. We left Ft. Monroe for a while and then we moved out to an old Nike
8 site and then we moved into Hampton proper in a building. The United States Army
9 Recruiting Command moved into this building on Mercury Boulevard in Hampton. We
10 were not at Ft. Monroe the entire time.

11 KV: Okay. So you worked with USAREC, with the U.S. Army Recruiting
12 Command.

13 DC: Right.

14 KV: Okay. Now, because I'm not in the Army and I've been getting confused
15 about, and I have tried to get a couple of people to explain it to me, but I always end up
16 confused. Exactly how this was organized, like when recruiting switched and it stopped
17 being done through the Office of the Surgeon General it became their responsibility of
18 USAREC.

19 DC: Uh-huh.

20 KV: Okay. USAREC, was that tied to the Continental Army Command?

21 DC: No, it was a separate command, but it was located at CONARC, at the
22 Continental Army Command at Ft. Monroe. It was located there, but it was not part of
23 CONARC although all U.S. commands came under CONARC eventually. It was a
24 separate command. U.S. Army Recruiting Command had its own commanding officer.
25 Nursing, up until that time Army Nurse Corps recruiting had been in a state of flux
26 because when I was in recruiting up in Boston, Mass, in '56 we came under the 1st Army
27 surgeon and under the surgeon general, but in some locations across the United States the
28 nurses had already come under Recruiting. They were located with Recruiting. We were
29 separately. We were in, in Boston, we were in a separate location. We were not
30 associated with Recruiting, per se. We were still under the surgeon general. Quite a few

1 of the areas were under the surgeon general, but as I said, some of them in some areas
2 had already gone under the recruiting and were located with recruiting.

3 KV: Okay. Then they moved them all to USAREC.

4 DC: I'm trying to think. Colonel Sherabee, Conder Sherabee was the chief of
5 recruiting at USAREC when we sent the first nurse at USAREC and I'm trying to think
6 she must've been there a couple of years before Colonel McAlten became the chief of
7 their nursing division. Maybe we came under—let's see, I went in '65, maybe it was
8 about '63 that a nurse was assigned as the chief of Army Nurse Corps recruiting at
9 USAREC.

10 KV: Okay, and they did all of this with moving it to USAREC because of the
11 build up for Vietnam?

12 DC: Right.

13 KV: Okay. They sort of anticipated that this was going to be a long-term—

14 DC: In order to make everybody—all of the procurement nurses, as we called
15 them at that time, recruiting counselors, we called them procurement counselors, to give
16 them all the same kind of a background and the same kind of support because when
17 you're out in the—when we were assigned to the surgeon general we were sometimes
18 downtown with no facilities available to us out in an office completely away from any
19 medical support or from any recruiting support. So in order to give us the support of
20 using the enlisted recruiters out in the field because we had many more male, well, I
21 shouldn't say male, enlisted recruiters out in the field, they helped us, but they didn't
22 have to. They didn't. They did it out of the generosity of their hearts. Once nurse
23 recruiting came under the direction of the Recruiting Command then we got all the
24 support we needed from them, facility-wise and everything else. We had a lot more
25 people that were willing to help us with publicity, for instance, and so forth.

26 KV: Okay. USAREC is the group that was responsible for all of the Army
27 recruiting.

28 DC: Right.

29 KV: Okay. So when you—let's see, so you were the, I guess, the top person in
30 Army recruiting or Army Nurse Corps recruiting.

31 DC: From '65 to '68.

1 KV: Okay, okay. Who did you work with at Ft. Monroe or in Hampton?

2 DC: What do you mean who did I work with?

3 KV: Well, I guess, what individuals or who did you have to report to or who
4 reported to you?

5 DC: Well, to begin with when I first went to USAREC, as I told you, Colonel
6 McAlten had been the chief there. Well, she had a heart attack so I was moved up from
7 Ft. McPherson to USAREC. When she returned to active duty she came back on active
8 duty—they thought when they sent me there that she would retire. She became the chief
9 again in her mind, but I had been assigned to the job by Colonel Clark telling me that it
10 was my job and I was to do whatever I felt was best for recruiting. I deferred to Colonel
11 McAlten because she was the current lieutenant colonel and I was a major at the time.
12 She did eventually retire and then I became the chief, but I reported, I was in the
13 recruiting division. We had different recruiting divisions and this was the recruiting
14 division that I came under. I reported to the colonel who was in charge of that and then,
15 of course, to the commanding general.

16 KV: What other kinds of things did USAREC do? If there was a recruiting
17 division what kind of other divisions were there at USAREC?

18 DC: Oh, the typical standards.

19 KV: Okay.

20 DC: We had a group section that took care of complaints. We had a legal officer,
21 whatever you—we had a support division that provided supplies and so forth. We had a
22 public relations division.

23 KV: Okay. So then recruiting was one of the divisions along with all of these.
24 Okay. So there was a colonel with—

25 DC: That was in charge of the total program and that included the enlisted
26 program, the WAC program, the—because at that time the WACs were still a separate
27 corps, the Women's Army Corps. Now they're part of the total enlisted force. They're
28 not a separate corps anymore.

29 KV: Okay.

1 DC: Their female officers become part of the—for instance, if they're JAGs
2 (Judge Advocate General) they're just part of the JAG. Before that they had been part of
3 the Women's Army Corps

4 KV: Okay. Then who did you have working under you in USAREC? Did you
5 have Army nurses or enlisted people?

6 DC: No, I was by myself at USAREC. I had a secretary.

7 KV: Let's see. How did you decide what kinds of things needed to be done?

8 DC: Well, we worked with the surgeon general's office, I don't mean the surgeon
9 general's office, the chief nurse's office in Washington. There was first an office there.
10 Col. Doris Ledbetter who was in charge of the procurement division. They worked
11 primarily with numbers that we gave them the—sent them the applications and they
12 either accepted or rejected the application, but they would come in and tell us how many
13 people they needed and what kinds of people they needed. Then we started the direct
14 appointment for an individual to volunteer for Vietnam. We also had special programs for
15 nurse anesthetists because we needed a lot of nurse anesthetists in Vietnam. But we
16 worked in cooperation with the nurses in the procurement office, first Colonel Ledbetter
17 then it was Colonel Kishbaugh, Barbra Kishbaugh. They would tell us what they needed
18 and then we would go from there in trying to divide the program. Now they had to work
19 with the surgeon general to get some programs like the warrant officer program had to be
20 approved by the Secretary of the Army because that was taking spaces from somewhere
21 else in the warrant officer program.

22 KV: You said the warrant officer program was basically designed to get more
23 men in.

24 DC: Was to give the men who had graduated from three-year programs—

25 KV: So, is it a back—

26 DC: The military, since we were accepting baccalaureate degrees.

27 KV: Okay. So this was a way to get men who had a diploma.

28 DC: Facing the draft and who already had a diploma in nursing.

29 KV: Oh, okay. What about the workings with the ad agencies? I asked Mary
30 Kennedy about this a little bit and she remembered some things that she said you might
31 know more about, what ad agencies the Army Nurse Corps worked with.

1 DC: The only I can remember is AIRS, I can't remember the initials because we
2 just called them AIRS. I did help with publicity. I can remember going to New York in
3 the wintertime doing some photos for a book that we were reproducing for posters, things
4 of this kind.

5 KV: How did that work? If you had the ad agency did they come up with ideas?
6 Did the Army come up with ideas?

7 DC: We would tell them we needed a poster and then they would tell us what
8 they could do. We approved the copy that went into the, for the book or on the poster. We
9 provided the technical support for uniform to make sure the uniform was correct and
10 that's why I was there, for instance, in Central Park in the wintertime to make sure that
11 the uniform was correct and they weren't trying to be like the uniform above the knees
12 and all this because we wanted them to meet the standards that we were requiring the
13 people to meet once they got on active duty.

14 KV: Uh-huh. Did they use real nurses or did they use models?

15 DC: Well, sometimes they used models, sometimes we used real people.

16 KV: Were they the ones who decided basically who to use?

17 DC: Most of the time they worked with model agencies and selected the
18 individual.

19 KV: So as far as—I've seen some of the brochures. There was one that says, you
20 know, has a picture of a bunch of nurses on the front and it says, "A new career, U.S.
21 Army Nurse Corps." There was one that has a, she looked really young, the girl on the
22 front. She's got her white uniform on and her nurse's hat and it says, "The bright
23 adventure of Army nursing," and I think they printed that one in '69 and in '71. Then I've
24 seen—there was one that was called, "Pride, prestige, and professional. The world of the
25 Army Nurse Corps," and basically it was a picture of uniforms, the dress blues, the
26 greens, the summer, the winter, all of the different uniforms. Do you remember making
27 any of those or working on any of those?

28 DC: Well, if it said '69 I would not have been there. I don't remember really and
29 truly whether we did the one on uniforms or not. We weren't so much interested in
30 uniforms at that point. We were more interested in numbers. I know we had a—they
31 came down and wanted us to have a program, a thousand nurse—recruit a thousand

1 nurses. That was not very successful either because we didn't get a thousand nurses. I'm
2 trying to think, it was called angel something, but I can not remember what it was.

3 KV: There was an Operation Nightingale.

4 DC: That's it, Operation Nightingale.

5 KV: Okay. Did that run basically through the whole war or was that from, I think
6 it started in early '63 and then did it cut off a certain point or did it just kind of keep
7 going?

8 DC: It just kept going.

9 KV: Okay. Let's see. I've ran across ads that like one-page ads that were in the
10 *American Journal of Nursing*, *Nursing Outlook*, and sometimes it would be like a, have a
11 picture of a nurse or something and then it'd have a little bit of information and
12 sometimes they would even have a little form you could put your name and address and
13 mail it in and get information on the Army Nurse Corps. Do you remember those? I think
14 AIRS produced some of those.

15 DC: We did do some of those probably because those little ads came into us.
16 That's one of the things we did was send out an awful lot of the literature.

17 KV: I've seen the ads in those two nursing journals. There was one called,
18 "Tomorrow's Nurse," but that only ran for a couple of years and then I found one of
19 those ads in *Life* magazine in September '67 and I found some in *Mademoiselle* and
20 *Glamour*. Do you remember if they were in any other magazines? I just kind of found
21 them by accident or references here, you know, and trying to track them all down, but I
22 wanted to see if that was really, if those were the only places those were placed or if there
23 were other places or if you remember.

24 DC: I'm trying to think. I think that's probably the primary ones because—most
25 of the time we did not have difficulty recruiting men. I can remember—when I was in
26 Boston, for instance, there was a male school of nursing located nearby and I had no
27 difficulty recruiting men because they knew they had to serve and they preferred to serve
28 as officers rather than enlisted people. So they wanted to come in and be commissioned.

29 KV: Do you think there was a lot of stereotyping about male nurses at that time?

30 DC: I don't think so as far as Army nurses were concerned, but probably in the
31 civilian field there might've been.

1 KV: But not so much in the Army.

2 DC: No, I think most of the nurses accepted the male nurse because many of us
3 had worked with them. We had worked with them as enlisted people because many of
4 them during World War II had had to serve as enlisted people. You were drafted and had
5 to serve because they were not being commissioned in the Army Nurse Corps. So we had
6 worked with them. I think that they were stereotyped as far as civilian nurses were
7 concerned.

8 KV: Do you think maybe the Army was kind of, that maybe some men went,
9 male nurses went to the Army to kind of counterbalance that stereotyping, that maybe if
10 he goes to the Army people won't think that I'm flighty or whatever?

11 DC: Yeah, I do.

12 KV: You know, it's interesting because there was a lot, percentage-wise there
13 were a lot more male nurses in the Army than in civilian population.

14 DC: That's exactly right.

15 KV: Huh, that's interesting. I've talked to a few male nurses who were in
16 Vietnam maybe six or seven, males, have interesting stories and things. I've met some of
17 those. Do you think that's because males sort of had to come into the Army anyways, was
18 that one of the reasons why most of the—

19 DC: One of the reasons was—yes, I think that one of the reasons they had to
20 come in the Army so they, I mean, they were going to have to be in the military so they
21 decided to join the Army or the Air Force. Many men were either at psychiatric nursing
22 or in nurse anesthetists. So they—the field in the Army was open. In fact, at one time we
23 were getting so many of them as nurse anesthetists we weren't leaving any space for
24 female nurse anesthetists.

25 KV: Wow. Let's see, did you ever—I guess, were you the person who would sit
26 down and talk with the AIRS ad agency or were there other people who would sit down
27 in meetings with them and look at ads?

28 DC: I assumed that our public relations did a lot of the initial work, but when we
29 were working on nurse brochures then I was the one that did it.

30 KV: Were there ever instances where the ad agency maybe proposed something
31 or had a draft of a brochure or something and you had to say, "No, that doesn't work"?

1 DC: Yes.

2 KV: What kinds of things would make it not fly?

3 DC: They would try to glamorize it too much, go off on sort on the deep end
4 when we knew it wasn't going to be that way.

5 KV: So as far as the text—

6 DC: If you start with the publicity promising things that you can't follow through
7 on you're dead from the very beginning. From the very beginning you've got to tell the
8 story and tell it right.

9 KV: How would you decide maybe what kind of things might be appealing to
10 nurses? Did you ever survey nurses or go and talk to people and say—

11 DC: We would have an applicant come in or when our nurse counselors would
12 go out in the field and go to the various schools. For instance, when I was in the Boston
13 area I visited ninety-five schools for nursing, colleges and hospitals with Palmer
14 programs. We could—from there we could tell, "Well, how did you find out about it,
15 about Army Nurse Corps career? What makes you think you would like to be in the
16 Army?"

17 KV: What kinds of things do you think were most appealing at that time?

18 DC: Well, a lot of them wanted to travel and wanted to get away from home.
19 They wanted to go into a specific field. Like we had the school—we had programs for
20 OR (operating room) nurses, pediatric nurses, different clinical fields that they could go
21 into because when you graduated from nursing school you're a generalist.

22 KV: So some of them wanted to go into a particular field.

23 DC: We also have what we called the registered nurse student program where a
24 nurse who graduated from a three-year diploma program could get a year of college, a
25 full year of college and get their degree. Of course, I'm sure that you've heard that we
26 had the Army student nurse program. A lot of kids, young people, came into that program
27 for the financial assistance.

28 KV: That was—I think I read in Sarnecky's book that that was the program that
29 got the most nurses in was the—

30 DC: The Army student nurse program, the best program we ever had, much
31 better than the Walter Reed program in my book as far as recruiting nurses was

1 concerned because we not only paid these kids for four years of schooling, but we took
2 forty or so nurses out of the hospital and put them in the school in rank to teach those
3 kids. That many did not stay on active duty. So it was an expensive program in my
4 philosophy having been on recruiting for seven and a half years in my career.

5 KV: What about recruiting minority nurses? Was there ever a program to try to
6 attract maybe more African American nurses or more Latino nurses or anything like that?

7 DC: No, nothing specific. We went to those schools because I know when I was
8 down in the 3rd Army area we used to go to Tuskegee and to Florida State University, not
9 Florida State, but it was Florida A&M I guess was a black college. Tuskegee School of
10 Nursing or Department of Nursing was a black school of nursing. We visited them just
11 the same as we did any other programs. I did, while I was in USAREC it was
12 recommended to the general that I go to Puerto Rico and see about the possibility of
13 recruiting Puerto Rican nurses. I went to Puerto Rico and I spent ten days down there. I
14 visited the schools of nursing, I talked to the nursing educators, I found out—their
15 training program they have—basically they have a three-year program similar to those in
16 America. They use American text books, English text books, but before most of the
17 schools other than Catholic University most of the schools are government programs. So
18 the requirement is that they must work for three years after they graduate from the
19 program for the government. They send them out in these little boondocks, little towns, to
20 work where people only spoke Spanish. So when they would get ready to decide that they
21 wanted to come in the Army we would give them the test and they could not pass the
22 English test. We had some come to the—well, I was the class advisor to the basic nurse
23 program here at Ft. Sam, excuse me, from '69 to '72. We had some Puerto Rican nurses
24 come into that program who could not pass the basic orientation course and we had to
25 send them over to Lackland to the language school so that they could come back and take
26 the basic nursing course. Their English proficiency just wasn't that good but we tried to
27 work with them as best we could. We decided there was not a feasible idea to send a
28 nurse to Puerto Rico on a routine basis to try to recruit nurses.

29 KV: Did you ever have like training sessions for the nurse counselors?

30 DC: Yes.

31 KV: Where were those held?

1 DC: First we started sending them to the—I went in 1956 to the Indianapolis,
2 they had a WAC recruiting course and we sent, let's see, I think in our first class we had
3 six nurses and two Army medical specialist corps officers in the class. We were in the
4 class with the WACs. So that's where we learned all of the, what you're supposed to
5 know about recruiting. We continued to send our nurses to that course. Now whether they
6 continued to do that today or not I don't know.

7 KV: Uh-huh, but they did do that during Vietnam?

8 DC: Yes.

9 KV: Was it every nurse recruiter had to go to this training session?

10 DC: Well, I'm trying to think because there was—the WAC program continued
11 at Indianapolis. So I'm assuming that they still all went there.

12 KV: So it was specifically set up for WAC recruiting, but they could send a nurse
13 there and she would get sort of general recruitment information or training.

14 DC: Mm-hmm, and they had some programs on nurse recruiting on how it
15 differed from WAC recruiting.

16 KV: That's interesting, huh.

17 DC: I think it was a month that we went there. I'm trying to think, I just saw the
18 certificate a little while ago. I'm going through to see what my letter that the medal I got
19 when I left recruiting what it said about recruiting and I'm trying to think and I just ran
20 across the one that said I attended that course. We were the first—there were, as I said,
21 six nurses and two AMSCs. Do you know what an AMSC is?

22 KV: Is that the Army Medical Specialist Corps? It's like physical therapists
23 and—

24 DC: You know more about the Army than most military persons do.

25 KV: Well, it's taken a long time to get all of this straight. All the abbreviations
26 can really mess you up if you don't know what they mean.

27 DC: Why did you get interested in this?

28 KV: Well, when I was an undergraduate, I'm in the history program.

29 DC: Yeah, that's what you said.

30 KV: I've always liked women's history and I've always liked history of the
31 Vietnam War. Then I realized one day that I can put the two together. So I got interested

1 in medical history then just in history of nursing and that sort of thing. It's just kind of
2 been a long progression, I guess. I'm going through the Army Nurse Corps archives and
3 learning all of the abbreviations and I think I spent to figure out what USAREC meant, it
4 just kept saying USAREC on all these papers over and over and I spent an entire day
5 trying to figure out what that stood for.

6 DC: The Army Recruiting—

7 KV: Uh-huh. I could not figure that out, nobody bothered to put the whole thing
8 because everybody just knew what it meant except me. Figuring that all out has been
9 long, a long process, but it's interesting.

10 DC: It will be interesting to read what you write, your dissertation when you get
11 through with it.

12 KV: Uh-huh. It just seems to me kind of looking back on it that's why I want to
13 talk to people who actually did the recruiting that with Vietnam that there would've been
14 a whole set of different issues, maybe, that recruiters didn't have to deal with in World
15 War II or in earlier periods especially as the anti-war movement builds up.

16 DC: You know that during World War II the Red Cross did the recruiting.

17 KV: Yeah, yeah. So it wasn't the Army doing it, I guess.

18 DC: The way I got into the Army in 1945 was that the Red Cross came to the
19 school of nursing and they had a senior student Reserve program which meant that when
20 I graduated from nursing school I would go into—I said I would join one of the two
21 services which was the Army or the Navy. I had joined that program when I was a senior
22 student. When I graduated I got a letter from them saying, "Which branch?" They didn't
23 say, "Do you want to go?" "Which branch do you want to go into?"

24 KV: Why did you pick Army?

25 DC: Well, as my director said to me she was getting ready to go in the Navy and
26 she said, "Why did you select the Army?" I said, "Because I'd like to travel and I don't
27 think the Navy is going send you anywhere but Ft. Smith, Virginia," and that's where she
28 spent here career, her time on active duty. Well, I got to England, France, and Germany
29 in a year and a half. So that sort of gives you an idea of where the nurses were going.

30 KV: Do you think with Vietnam that the controversy about the war itself affected
31 the way you had to recruit nurses?

1 DC: It did in the latter stages of the war. It did not in the early '60s and, for
2 instance, '65 to '68 it was not that much, but in the latter stages there was more political
3 fallout.

4 KV: How did that change recruiting?

5 DC: Well, I don't know because I left in '68. I left and went to Thailand because
6 I had volunteered to go to Vietnam and instead of going to Vietnam I went to Thailand.

7 KV: Did you think the women's movement affected the way recruiting had to be
8 done with people changing their ideas about you know the—well, I guess with the '60s
9 that women can be more than a teacher a nurse or a secretary, that you can do all kinds of
10 other things as well than that?

11 DC: Oh, yes, because certainly it had a difference because a young woman had
12 many more fields that they could go into and nursing schools suffered first and foremost.
13 That was the reason for the WRAIN (Walter Reed Army Institute of Nursing) Program
14 was to bring more students, try to bring in more students into the nursing field.

15 KV: Did you sort of have to convince any young women that nursing was still an
16 okay field for a girl to do? Did you run into any of that because she could do any kind of
17 other thing now? Did you have to say, "Well, nursing's not so bad"?

18 DC: Not really because I don't believe in trying to convince people of something.
19 If you want to do it, fine, but if a person told me they wanted to be a doctor then by all
20 means go into pre-med and become a doctor. I think nursing is a good field. I don't regret
21 that I ever went into it. I had a varied career, I did not have to stay twenty years in one
22 location, which I had classmates that did. Some of them even stayed thirty years in the
23 same spot. I guess from my short experience in World War II I had gotten wanderlust
24 because I'd take a three-year tour in a place that was pretty good, I didn't have a three-
25 year tour in a lot of them. It's just what people like. We had lots of fathers in the military,
26 for instance, who wanted their daughters—I can remember when I was in Okinawa and
27 because I had been in recruiting the nurses and everybody that wanted to talk about
28 recruiting to me to talk to me. I would find fathers who wanted their daughters to join the
29 WRAIN Program because it would help to save them some money to have their
30 daughter's four-year education paid for. But when I talked to the daughter they weren't
31 the least bit interested in joining the, going to the WRAIN Program. I said to the father,

1 “She has to serve the obligation, not you. So don’t push her. If she doesn’t want to do it
2 don’t push her because you don’t want her to fail and you don’t want her to end up owing
3 the Army something that she doesn’t want to pay for. If she ever comes around and says
4 yes she’d like to do it then fine,” but I wouldn’t push a single one of those girls contrary
5 to father’s wishes. Some of them had been military brats and had moved from place to
6 place and they wanted to put down roots. Don’t join the Army Nurse Corps if you want to
7 put down roots.

8 KV: Did you have to deal with any kind of stereotyping about Army women
9 when you were in recruitment in the ’60s where there’s still those awful stereotypes?

10 DC: No, not as much as some of the women that had in World War II.

11 KV: That had kind of died down.

12 DC: Although I did up in, not in—but in 19—of I guess it was ’57 or ’58 one of
13 the students that Mass General wanted to join the Army student nurse program. She took
14 the papers home for her father to sign them and her father said he wouldn’t do it because
15 he knew what nurses did during the war and how loose they were and all this kind of
16 stuff. I said, “When I was in the Army during World War II, not a long time, but I was
17 there.” I said, “I have yet to see one single nurse and one man doing anything that they
18 shouldn’t have been doing. So it’s my contention that only two people know what went
19 on between a man and a woman and those are the two that are involved.” I said, “Men
20 like to talk.” I have worked on a ward with men and I could hear them talking. I said, “So
21 tell your dad if he can come and tell me, give me the name of the man and the woman
22 that he knows that all this occurred with then I’ll agree with him.” She came back with a
23 paper signed.

24 KV: He gave up that argument, huh?

25 DC: Yeah, he gave up on that argument. But men did like to talk. It was—if an
26 enlisted man said, “I slept with a nurse,” that was the feather in cap and he liked to talk,
27 but who knows whether he did or didn’t. But the same thing was happening on the
28 civilian front, the woman that stayed at home their husbands were gone. Look how those
29 women got talked about, a lot of them. Men came home from the service and divorced
30 the wives right away because the women were involved with other people. I’m just—
31 maybe I’ve got blinders on.

1 KV: Maybe not.

2 DC: I just don't see things, I didn't see things, I guess, that other people thought
3 they saw.

4 KV: What were the biggest problems that you had to deal with when you were at
5 USAREC?

6 DC: Money to do the job.

7 KV: Did it cost a lot to work with the advertising agencies and come up with the
8 pamphlets and the brochures?

9 DC: Well, I guess it did. I didn't get involved in the money portion of it because
10 the PR people or the, what do you call them, the operations people I suppose were the
11 ones who were paying the bills. The number of brochures that we needed sometimes we
12 couldn't get because of the lack of funds. The travel—recruiting involves a lot of travel. I
13 traveled all over the United States visiting the Army Nurse Corps counselors out in the
14 field. I attended conventions of the American Nurses Association, the National League
15 for Nursing, things of that kind, but money was probably the biggest expense because
16 most of the money was going for the war as it should have for the—you can't fight a war
17 without weapons and ammunition and things of that kind.

18 KV: What kinds of things did you do on a daily basis?

19 DC: Process applications, send out information, work on statistics, work on
20 different kinds of programs, talk to the counselors.

21 KV: Were there any particular areas that were more successful in recruitment
22 than other areas or regions of the country or urban versus rural, things like that?

23 DC: Yes, urban areas were more successful. They have more—where you have a
24 larger population of nurses the recruiting was better because when I had been in Boston
25 there were more nurses per square foot in the New England area than there were in some
26 of the other areas of the country. So I recruited more nurses up there. It wasn't to say that
27 I did a better job than anybody else. It was just that there were more nurses and there
28 were more—and even though there were more nurses the pay scale in New England was
29 not as high as it was in some of the other areas.

30 KV: Was Army nursing comparable to civilian nursing in pay?

31 DC: No. It was, say, in New Hampshire.

1 KV: Did you mean the Army paid more or paid less?

2 DC: Paid more.

3 KV: Paid more?

4 DC: Mm-hmm. Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont were not high paying
5 areas. Massachusetts was better and then as you went down into Connecticut and Rhode
6 Island those (break in the audio) came out of Boston because the nurses from the New
7 England areas would come to Boston to work or to go to school.

8 KV: That was during Vietnam or during '65?

9 DC: No, that was back between '52 and '56, between '56 and '60, but I'm sure
10 that the same thing held true because the New England area didn't change that much. A
11 lot of those areas just—well, it's always a comparison, but when I was in Vermont during
12 the '56 area one of the recruiters, enlisted recruiters, said, "Well, we can't get any
13 publicity for you," when I was going to be in the Burlington, Vermont, area. I said, "Why
14 not?" He said, "Well, the editor is opposed to the recruiting of nurses to go to other
15 areas." So I said, "Well, see if you can make an appointment with me." I went in and
16 talked to him and I said, "In your newspaper, every time I look at it you have pictures and
17 articles about all these men that have enlisted from this area." I said, "Who do you think
18 is going to take care of them if they get sick? Don't you feel that you have an obligation
19 to provide some nurses also to help take care of them?" He said, "I hadn't thought about
20 that." So he started giving us a little publicity when we'd go up there. So it's a mindset I
21 think in some of those smaller areas, rural areas—because I certainly consider Vermont a
22 rural area—that we keep what we've got, but they had to send them in because the men
23 were being drafted.

24 KV: Was there—I've read that there was a plan, though it was never put into
25 action, but that there was a plan developed to draft female nurses during Vietnam.

26 DC: Well, the same thing was talked about during World War II. We were—if
27 there was a plan to develop we weren't told about it at the recruiting command.

28 KV: Did the recruiting command ever talk about it themselves that maybe if we
29 could draft nurses we wouldn't have this problem?

30 DC: No.

1 KV: I guess why was that never thought of or why did they never really consider
2 that?

3 DC: Well, if you talk—first of all, it would've been a bill to recruit one specific
4 group of people. We didn't have a bill to recruit one specific group of men. All men were
5 eligible for the draft. It didn't make any difference what their profession was. Secondly,
6 to ask the members of Congress when many of them were married to nurses where were
7 we going to put the stopper on, men who were married and had children were being
8 drafted. So was that going to eliminate women who had children? There were just too
9 many problems involved. The same thing is true in drafting women, per se. How many
10 congressmen you think are going to pass a bill that will draft their wives or their children,
11 their daughters, or their granddaughters?

12 KV: You think it was something, just the idea of women in the service because
13 they were drafting their sons and their nephews but—?

14 DC: Well, I think they always felt that men had an obligation to serve the
15 country. Yet we've had women that have served from revolutionary times if you go back
16 and read the history of nursing. So it wasn't unusual for women to be working with the
17 military. So I don't know why they felt they shouldn't have women.

18 KV: What about *The Recruiting and Career Counseling Journal*?

19 DC: The what?

20 KV: *The Recruiting and Career Counseling Journal*. It's like a little magazine
21 that came out or little journal that came out maybe every month, I think.

22 DC: They must've started after I left.

23 KV: Okay. Did anything change from '65 to '68 as far as recruitment? I guess
24 you needed more numbers, probably.

25 DC: Pretty much the same programs were going on just to get as many as you
26 could. At one time I can tell you that the surgeon general took the weight restriction off
27 of nurses. We were getting applications for nurses that were like eighty pounds over our
28 maximum, what we had allowed previously. Colonel Clark went to Vietnam and they had
29 nurses there that couldn't even get fatigues to fit them because they were so large. So she
30 came back and wanted us to, she said, "Something's got to be done." I said, "Well,
31 Colonel, your physical standards took the weight limit off. We didn't do it." I was able to

1 talk my commander into doing it, putting the weight restrictions back on. Then they can
2 only be ten pounds over the maximum which was a big leeway anyway, but that was one
3 of the things that did happen. So for a brief period of time there was no weight restriction
4 on people. But someone who's ninety-eight pounds over what our maximum was for that
5 height individual was just absolutely not capable of functioning in, say, in Vietnam or in
6 an Army hospital.

7 KV: That's not healthy.

8 DC: No, it isn't. They weren't healthy and they were unable to function. You put
9 someone who's ninety-eight pounds over the weight and, as I said, we already had a
10 pretty good weight maximum for a person and if you're ninety-eight pounds over that
11 you just cannot function in the heat.

12 KV: Well—

13 DC: Go ahead.

14 KV: No, that's all right, sorry.

15 DC: Well, I was just going to say that we did at the Recruiting Command put the
16 weight restriction back on as far as women were concerned.

17 KV: Did you have a lot of people who maybe were interested in the Army Nurse
18 Corps, but wanted to just go—just wanted to or I guess were just interested in it because
19 they wanted to go straight to Vietnam?

20 DC: Yeah. We had a lot of people who came on that was guaranteed assignment
21 to Vietnam. I'm sort of personally opposed to guaranteed assignments to a foreign
22 location and particularly in war time because when I was here with the basic course I was
23 able to see some of the people come through the program, the basic program, who were
24 just not capable of functioning in a war time zone. They should not have been given a
25 guaranteed assignment. I know I worked very diligently to try to get one young lady off
26 orders and was unable to do it in which she got surgeon—well, she had lied on her
27 physical, physical history. She had not said that she had been in a psychiatric hospital
28 where she—and she had been. I tried to get Washington to say, “Hey, this person does
29 not belong in the Army. She has told a tale and therefore we can discharge her now.”
30 Didn't do it, let her go to Vietnam and then a person that didn't get it changed was the
31 one that ended up with her in her hospital. So she writes to me and tells me all this and I

1 just delighted in saying to her, “You’re the one that didn’t keep them from going because
2 I worked as hard as I could to keep her from going. All I needed was for you to say that
3 she had lied because she was the one up in the surgeon general’s office.” So she went
4 over there and she was a problem. Now we end up with her as a medical retirement for
5 the rest of her life and we could have gotten rid of her at the basic level, at basic course.
6 That to me is something that why I’m not a believer in guaranteed assignments to a war
7 zone. I think you need to have that cooling off period there and let someone else evaluate
8 them in a military situation.

9 KV: Did you have people who were at kind of the other side of the coin and said,
10 “I’ll join the Army Nurse Corps, but I definitely do not want to go to Vietnam”?

11 DC: No. I don’t recall anyone saying that. They didn’t want it, didn’t ask for it as
12 a first assignment, but they knew that if the war continued there’s a possibility they
13 would go, but I don’t recall anyone ever saying, “No, I absolutely will not go.”

14 KV: A lot of these people who ended up going to Vietnam were quite young,
15 weren’t they/ I mean comparatively?

16 DC: Just new graduates from school of nursing.

17 KV: Was that a problem or a benefit?

18 DC: You mean with them going?

19 KV: Well, the fact that they were so young, I guess, was that problematic?

20 DC: Yes, I think so. I think if they had been seasoned in an Army hospital for
21 even three months it would’ve been a help to them, to the individual because when you’re
22 trying to get used to a new outfit and a new job and a new location and it’s a war time
23 situation all at one time is a little much even for a seasoned nurse. Now they’re having
24 some basic, I overheard them saying recently for young nurses coming in and going to
25 Iraq that they have a war time course that they put them through. They’re taught more
26 what to expect although we took them out in the field in ’69, we took them out in the
27 field and showed them how to work in a field hospital, a tent hospital.

28 KV: That down at Ft. Sam in their basic training?

29 DC: Uh-huh, but now they have a much more intensive program for those that—
30 and they’re sending new nurses to Iraq.

31 KV: I don’t think I’d want that to be my first job.

1 DC: I know I wouldn't, I don't think. I went to Europe, let's see, three months
2 after I came into the Army in January and I went over on the first of May and was on the
3 ship ten days and landed in England the day after war ended in Europe.

4 KV: Wow.

5 DC: So my time in England, France, and Germany was spent working with
6 patients that had been brought back and then I got to the Army of occupation in
7 Germany. At least I had had some experience with patients coming back from the war
8 zone before I got to Germany, before I—yeah, before I got to Germany.

9 KV: Wow. That's interesting. Let's see. I wish I had—I wish I could sit down
10 and show you some of these ads and see if you remembered any of them, if any of them
11 looked familiar.

12 DC: I was going to ask you, can you make a picture of them and send it to me
13 email?

14 KV: Yeah, yeah, I have a bunch that I could send you.

15 DC: Okay.

16 KV: Some of them are—I'll try to make the file size small so it doesn't crash my
17 computer when I open it, but I can send you some of those. (Editor's note: Personal
18 contact information removed). Great, yeah, that would be good because I've shown some
19 of these pictures to Marion Kennedy and some to General Hayes and some to Betty
20 Antilla and all and sometimes will look at them and I'll say, "Is this a nurse or a model?"
21 and everybody has got a different opinion. Sometimes there'll be pictures kind of like
22 candid pictures in a brochure of classroom setting or something and there'll be a person
23 that somebody knows. So you'll know that that's a real nurse, but then some of the other
24 ones one person will say, "Well, she's definitely a model," and then somebody else will
25 say, "No, she looks like a real nurse." I don't guess it matters. It's just interesting that
26 nobody knows, nobody knows who she is.

27 DC: Well, when are you planning to have this dissertation done?

28 KV: Um, I hope to be done next summer, not this coming summer, but hopefully
29 about a year from now to have it all written and going through the whole defense process,
30 but we will see.

31 DC: Have you, by any chance, talked to the nurse at the history?

1 KV: Yeah, yeah, several times. I've been over there I've actually met two nurse
2 historians since I've been doing this for so long. I met Major Peterson first, Jennifer
3 Peterson, and then Major Scott, Charlotte Scott. So I've gone through all the archives
4 there and I need to go—

5 DC: Is that the one that's down there?

6 KV: Uh-huh, yeah, Charlotte Scott. She's from Arkansas so she's got a Southern
7 accent.

8 DC: Well, I met one that's there now. She came down when one of the POWs
9 (prisoner of war) from the Philippines died and had a funeral and she was here for that.

10 KV: Huh, one of the nurses from World War II that had been in the Philippines?

11 DC: Yes.

12 KV: Wow.

13 DC: But what was the other girl's name, Cox?

14 KV: Yeah, Debra Cox. I think she was there before Jennifer Peterson, I think.

15 DC: Oh, okay, then now it's Scott.

16 KV: Mm-hmm.

17 DC: Okay. Peterson I guess I didn't know.

18 KV: She got transferred somewhere, I think she's somewhere in New England
19 now, I'm not sure. I appreciate this and I'll send you some of these pictures. I'll send
20 them in a couple of emails so each one is not so big, but I'll send you some of these and
21 try to tell you when they were in magazines so you'll know the years and things and see
22 if any of them look familiar or if you know anything more about them. If you remember
23 anybody that you may have worked with like at the advertising agencies or anybody else
24 that you think I should talk to I'd appreciate it. Anything that you remember or you think
25 might be helpful.

26 DC: Well, I was trying to think of some of the nurses that were on recruiting at
27 the time.

28 KV: Yeah, that would be good.

29 DC: But some of them are not—they're not better off mentally than I am.

1 KV: I've talked to a couple of recruiters. I have talked to Betty Antilla, and I've
2 talked to—there was one male nurse who came back from Vietnam and then went into
3 recruiting and was stationed at Beckley, West Virginia.

4 DC: Yeah.

5 KV: In that region. Then I talked to Audrey McLachlan who was at Pittsburgh a
6 little bit before Vietnam, like '60 to '63.

7 DC: Audrey was one of my recruits.

8 KV: Oh, really?

9 DC: When I was up at Boston.

10 KV: Huh. Yeah, she said she lived at Boston for a while.

11 DC: Yeah. She was a student at Boston College and she couldn't—she wanted to
12 come in on the registered nurse student program and she couldn't complete it in a year at
13 Boston College because of all the religious courses they require because she was
14 Catholic. So I said, "Are you dedicated to going to Boston College or would you go
15 somewhere else?" Well, I had just finished my master's at Columbia. So I called the gal
16 that had been my advisor down at Columbia and I said, "Would you talk to her?" and she
17 said yes. So she went down to Teachers College and they accepted her and she completed
18 her baccalaureate there.

19 KV: So you recruited a recruiter.

20 DC: Yep. They say you have to recruit your replacement so I did it.

21 KV: Wow. Yeah, I talked to her last week, I think. Oh, I just found one other
22 note to myself here. Do you remember anything about a, it's kind of a publicity group
23 called Ketchum, MacLeod, and Grove.

24 DC: Yes.

25 KV: Oh, okay, great. What did they do? I found a note in the Army Nurse Corps
26 archives that said that they coordinated some trip that two nurses were going on that had
27 been in Vietnam. I think one was Julie Clebaum and I forget the other one's name, but
28 they went around the country to different places on kind of on a recruiting trip, but that's
29 all I know that they did. It was just kind of a short note in the archives.

30 DC: Well, I remember the name of Ketchum and they must've—maybe they're
31 the ones that replaced AIRS.

1 KV: Well, I think they were before AIR, I think. They did this tour thing in 1965
2 and as far as I can tell AIRS came in, in about '67.

3 DC: Then we would've worked with them, too. Um, Julie what, Cleborne?

4 KV: Clebaum I think.

5 DC: Clebaum. Did you—have you talked to her?

6 KV: No, no, I haven't found her. I just found this note that says she went on this
7 tour around the country. They visited the White House, maybe talked with Mrs. Johnson.

8 DC: I don't remember that tour, but I do remember the Ketchum name now that
9 you mention it.

10 KV: Uh-huh, do you remember what they did in recruiting?

11 DC: Well, they must've been the publicity advertising agency previous to AIRS
12 then.

13 KV: Would they have come up with ads as well?

14 DC: Yes.

15 KV: Okay, so they would've—

16 DC: They would've done exactly the same thing. I know that when Colonel
17 Tierney came back from Vietnam she was honored as one of the ten American women
18 and it was in Detroit.

19 KV: Who was that? Colonel who?

20 DC: Mary Ann Tierney. She had been the chief nurse in Vietnam. I was at
21 Recruiting Command at that time and Colonel Clark asked me if I would go and
22 represent the Army Nurse Corps at this celebration. It was at Cobo Hall. I'll never forget
23 that and it was a lovely affair. They had one national person, I think, and one
24 international and ten national, ten people and Mary Ann Tierney was one of the ten that
25 was honored.

26 KV: She had been chief nurse in Vietnam?

27 DC: Uh-huh. She had been in an airplane accident and had helped to rescue some
28 of the people that were injured in the accident. Whether it was true or not, she always
29 said she was the most decorated American Army nurse in the Vietnam era. So she
30 might've been because she had served during World War II also.

31 KV: Do you know what year it was she got this award?

1 DC: Um, no, but it must've been—let's see, I was at Recruiting Command so it
2 must've been about '67, '68. I left in June of '68. So it must've been about '67.

3 KV: From recruiting, from USAREC you said you went to Ft. Sam Houston, is
4 that right?

5 DC: We went to Detroit, to Detroit, Michigan, and just represented the Army
6 Nurse Corps at that event.

7 KV: Oh, I'm sorry, I meant your next assignment after USAREC.

8 DC: After USAREC, no, I went to Thailand.

9 KV: Oh, that's right, that's right. And you were there for a year?

10 DC: No, about eighteen months.

11 KV: Eighteen months, huh. Then after that you said you went to Ft. Sam
12 Houston, is that right? You were involved in helping—

13 DC: I was in charge—I was the class advisor to the basic orientation course for
14 Army nurses and Army Medical Specialist Corps officers.

15 KV: What kinds of things did you do in that assignment?

16 DC: Well, we had the basic nurses—the new nurses just coming on active duty,
17 teaching them all how to be an Army officer and something about the Army and about
18 nursing in the Army as it differed from civilian life. As I said, we took them out in the
19 field and showed them how to—they learned to map read and do all kinds of things the
20 military officers are supposed to know.

21 KV: What were the differences between Army nursing and civilian nursing?

22 DC: It wasn't—it was the difference in the paperwork, let's put it that way, how
23 we keep records as compared to records that they keep for civilian hospitals.

24 KV: Were there other differences?

25 DC: Not really because as I said I came back on active duty in 1956 and I was
26 assigned to Ft. Jay, New York, to the hospital at Ft. Jay. I didn't have any difficulty
27 working in nursing care so I don't think there's that much difference in the care that you
28 give to patients just in the difference in how we do things. On an Army—in an Army
29 hospital when a patient is able to get up and make his bed he gets up and makes his bed.
30 In civilian hospitals you don't ask a patient to get up and make their own bed.

31 KV: Right.

1 DC: So the dependents didn't make their own beds, either. So I got them all to
2 making their own beds. I said, "Your husband, if he were in here he would be making his
3 bed." So I had them all making them, those that could.

4 KV: Yeah, that probably wouldn't go over too well at a city hospital here.

5 DC: No, it probably wouldn't make the city hospital. That's the difference.

6 KV: It might be good for some patients to get up and make their bed.

7 DC: They were just lying there and it was good for them to get up and get a little
8 exercise. It's a little different than civilian hospitals now. They're out of the hospital the
9 next day. Well, they're doing the same thing in the military hospital. You have a baby
10 today, tomorrow you're gone.

11 KV: Yeah. Well, let's see. I'm going to go through this and try to see as I go
12 through my notes and everything if there's anything I'm still confused about or
13 something I forgot to ask you then I will give you a call.

14 DC: Okay.

15 KV: I have to send you a consent form that Indiana requires. It's like an
16 institutional review board or human subjects company if you do research with people
17 then you have to send them a consent form that they sign that I just have to keep. I'll stick
18 that in the mail for you.

19 DC: All right. (Editor's note: Personal contact information removed.)

20 KV: Okay, I'll get that in the mail to you and I'll get the pictures sent to you on
21 email, too.

22 DC: Yeah, that'd be good because that way I can see what you're talking about.

23 KV: Uh-huh, okay, great. If I have any questions or I get confused I'll give you
24 another call.

25 DC: Okay, well, good luck with your work.

26 KV: Well, thanks and if you think of somebody I need to talk to, by all means, let
27 me know and I'll try to track them down.

28 DC: Okay, I'll do that.

29 KV: Okay, well, I appreciate it.

30 DC: Thank you.

31 KV: Uh-huh, bye.