

NEW YORK STATE MILITARY MUSEUM

INTERVIEW - JEAN KAHN PAUL

MARCH 18, 2003

MALE VOICE: This is an interview at the Comfort Inn, Brooklyn, New York. It is March 18, 2003, approximately 3:30 p.m. The interviewers are Mike Russert (phonetic) and Wayne Clark.

Could you give me your full name, date of birth, and place of birth, please?

JEAN KAHN PAUL: My full name is Jean Kahn Paul. Date of birth is 8/29/18. Anything else you want to know?

MALE VOICE: Place of birth, please.

JEAN KAHN PAUL: Oh, New York City.

MALE VOICE: All right. What kind of educational background did you have prior to entering the service?

JEAN KAHN PAUL: I was a high school graduate.

MALE VOICE: Okay.

JEAN KAHN PAUL: Oh, wait. No, wait a minute. A high school graduate, and then nurse training.

MALE VOICE: Okay. Do you remember where you were and what your reaction was to the news about Pearl Harbor?

JEAN KAHN PAUL: That's a difficult question

NEW YORK STATE MILITARY MUSEUM

INTERVIEW - JEAN KAHN PAUL

MARCH 18, 2003

because Pearl Harbor was what year?

MALE VOICE: 1941.

JEAN KAHN PAUL: '41.

MALE VOICE: December 7th.

JEAN KAHN PAUL: '41. So I was 22 years. I probably hadn't made up my mind as to what I wanted to do at that point. I was shocked like everybody else, but that's the most I can tell you about it.

MALE VOICE: Okay. Why did you decide to join the Army Nurse Corps?

JEAN KAHN PAUL: I wanted to get out of town. I was looking for something a little bit more exciting than just working in a hospital. I originally applied for a job in Peru, and my father said, "No way." This was a (inaudible) corporation, so I figured Peru, so I worked for a while, and then when this came up when they're asking for nurses I said this is for me.

MALE VOICE: So you had never left the New York area prior to that?

INTERVIEW - JEAN KAHN PAUL

MARCH 18, 2003

JEAN KAHN PAUL: Not really, no.

MALE VOICE: You just wanted to get out?

JEAN KAHN PAUL: Yes.

MALE VOICE: Okay. Could you tell us when did you go into the Army Nurse Corps?

JEAN KAHN PAUL: I went in in '42 I believe. Yes. I went in '42 or '43. I got out in '46. This I know.

MALE VOICE: Okay. Well, where did you go -- where did you sign up for this, and where did you go for training?

JEAN KAHN PAUL: I first went to Camp Kilburn (phonetic). That's where I was assigned, which is a (inaudible), however, I went there on limited service because I'm a little bit cockeyed, and at that time they were only taking people who were really healthy. So I stayed there on limited service for about a year, year and a half, something like that. I don't have the exact dates unless you need them.

MALE VOICE: No. That's --

JEAN KAHN PAUL: And then it got to the point where the chapter said they needed more bodies almost any place. So I went overseas. I wanted to go overseas, and I was

INTERVIEW - JEAN KAHN PAUL

MARCH 18, 2003

waiting until they would take me.

MALE VOICE: What kind of unit were you assigned to?

JEAN KAHN PAUL: An evacuation hospital.

MALE VOICE: And did you have any specialty as a nurse?

JEAN KAHN PAUL: Not at that time, no, but when I got into the hospital after a while I worked in the OR.

MALE VOICE: Okay. So you became a surgical nurse?

JEAN KAHN PAUL: Yes.

MALE VOICE: All right. Did you have any training for that -- specialized training for that or --

JEAN KAHN PAUL: Nothing except what we had in training in the nurse's training school.

MALE VOICE: Now, what unit were you assigned to? What --

JEAN KAHN PAUL: It was the 106.

MALE VOICE: Okay. Where did you go -- from the United States where did you go?

JEAN KAHN PAUL: We went to England.

INTERVIEW - JEAN KAHN PAUL

MARCH 18, 2003

MALE VOICE: And how did you get across to England?

JEAN KAHN PAUL: A big boat. We went to -- let's see. We landed in Liverpool, and they took us right down to Birmingham where we were filling in for a few months I think. I've lost track of that.

MALE VOICE: That's all right.

JEAN KAHN PAUL: And then gradually we worked our way down to the south of England, and right after the invasion -- actually, we were -- we got to France D plus '42. That was after the invasion. Where we were we could hear the gliders going over head all the time.

MALE VOICE: Before you went over to France, did your unit receive any of the casualties from counter landings?

JEAN KAHN PAUL: No, no. We had a ball.

MALE VOICE: What was your life like in England while you were there?

JEAN KAHN PAUL: It was fairly quiet. We didn't -- as I recall, we didn't have any special training. I guess it was assumed that we had all the training that was necessary because the unit that I joined had already been in training

INTERVIEW - JEAN KAHN PAUL

MARCH 18, 2003

in Tennessee. So I joined up, you know, sort of at the end.
We sort of just goofed off.

MALE VOICE: Now, were you commissioned as an
officer?

JEAN KAHN PAUL: Yes. I was a second lieutenant.
You go in as a second.

MALE VOICE: Now, when you went into France D day
plus 42 where were you assigned, and then what kind of work
did you do there?

JEAN KAHN PAUL: Our unit stayed together. We
started -- they started setting up our hospitals pretty soon
after we landed. I'm not quite sure. I think probably our
first -- our first town was Chavon Chavoun (phonetic), I
believe so, and we went from one cow pasture to the next one.
We just sort of followed the lines.

MALE VOICE: Now, what was the make up of your
unit?

JEAN KAHN PAUL: There were I think 40 odd nurses,
about 40 doctors, somewhere around that, and enlisted men, I
guess 100 or so. I don't remember the --

MALE VOICE: 100 enlisted men?

INTERVIEW - JEAN KAHN PAUL

MARCH 18, 2003

JEAN KAHN PAUL: Something like that, yes. Might have been fewer. I don't remember.

MALE VOICE: And were you set up in large tents?

JEAN KAHN PAUL: Yes. We lived in pyramidal tents, five or six of us in a tent with a stove in the middle.

MALE VOICE: So how often did you move, do you recall? You stayed pretty much behind the lines and moved forward?

JEAN KAHN PAUL: We moved fairly frequently. Sometimes we would be in one place for a couple of weeks. Sometimes we would be there only one week. We never knew. They told us, and the men would take our tents and set them up at the next place.

MALE VOICE: Did you have your own trucks with you or -- what Army unit were you assigned with?

JEAN KAHN PAUL: It was First Army until we got into Germany, and then we became part of the Third Army, General Patton.

MALE VOICE: Okay. Did you have your own trucks to carry your gear around with you, or were they --

JEAN KAHN PAUL: We rode in these big six by sixes.

INTERVIEW - JEAN KAHN PAUL

MARCH 18, 2003

MALE VOICE: Did they have the red crosses on them?

JEAN KAHN PAUL: What?

MALE VOICE: Did they have the red crosses on them?

JEAN KAHN PAUL: I think so. I hope so. Yes, I think most of them. Our ambulance and everything else had red crosses on them.

MALE VOICE: Were your tents marked that way too? Did you have red crosses on the --

JEAN KAHN PAUL: I don't know actually.

MALE VOICE: Okay. So you followed the front through France into Germany also?

JEAN KAHN PAUL: France, Germany, Austria, although in Austria we weren't set up in the hospital. We were just resting there I guess in lovely, lonely spot, and then Czechoslovakia, and when the war ended we were in Czechoslovakia.

MALE VOICE: Did you handle strictly wounded or did you handle others that were --

JEAN KAHN PAUL: Mostly wounded. Those were the ones who came to us because I suspect that the ones who were

INTERVIEW - JEAN KAHN PAUL

MARCH 18, 2003

simply sick, sick, sick, you know, and not wounded went to the station hospitals.

MALE VOICE: Could you describe the work in the surgical unit, if you could?

JEAN KAHN PAUL: It was -- we operated on anybody who came in. Did you ever watch "MASH?"

MALE VOICE: Yes.

JEAN KAHN PAUL: It's like that. It was like that. We worked in tents, and most -- at the very beginning most of our -- I think most of our patients did very well because they were young and they were healthy, and they hadn't been in too long. We assisted the doctors, and all you did was change your clothes and change your gown and go to the next table because they weren't separate units or anything like that, and we had enlisted men working with us who were fantastic. They were medical aides or whatever they called them at that time, kids who had never had any training, but they learned somehow, and I can't believe how much learned and how well they did.

MALE VOICE: Did you have enough medical supplies -

-

INTERVIEW - JEAN KAHN PAUL

MARCH 18, 2003

JEAN KAHN PAUL: Yes.

MALE VOICE: -- and medicines?

JEAN KAHN PAUL: I think so. I don't recall at any point being short of supplies.

MALE VOICE: Now, was your unit --

JEAN KAHN PAUL: If we did, they didn't tell us.

MALE VOICE: Was your unit involved during the Battle of the Bulge?

JEAN KAHN PAUL: Yes. At that time we were in Theinville (phonetic). That's right on the Mosel (phonetic) River on the border between Germany and France, and we were there over the whole Christmas/New Year's period, and we were getting patients in from there. It was the first building we were ever in.

MALE VOICE: I was just going to ask you how you kept the tents alarmed during --

JEAN KAHN PAUL: We were in a building that had been a school I think at one time. So we each had our little cubicle.

You mind if I use your bathroom?

MALE VOICE: Oh, no. Go ahead.

INTERVIEW - JEAN KAHN PAUL

MARCH 18, 2003

How would you say your -- you know, you mentioned the "MASH" television series. How was your unit compared to that? Was there --

JEAN KAHN PAUL: Well, they were a little closer. "MASH" was an immobile surgical hospital. We were an evacuation hospital, so I guess we were the next in line.

MALE VOICE: Okay. So those that were wounded went to a MASH unit, and then they would be brought to your unit?

JEAN KAHN PAUL: I don't know. That was Korea.

MALE VOICE: Yes, but I was wondering if --

JEAN KAHN PAUL: They had them set up I think.

MALE VOICE: Did they have something like that or were you the first?

JEAN KAHN PAUL: I think -- let's see. There were medical (inaudible) and then there was something between us and the front. I don't remember what it was.

MALE VOICE: So you received --

JEAN KAHN PAUL: We --

MALE VOICE: -- patients that had already been somewhat taken care of?

JEAN KAHN PAUL: A little bit, yes.

INTERVIEW - JEAN KAHN PAUL

MARCH 18, 2003

MALE VOICE: And then they were moved into your unit for surgical purposes?

JEAN KAHN PAUL: Yes. They got emergency care, and then they came to us because we had to remove shell fragments and things like that from them.

MALE VOICE: When you went into Czechoslovakia, I was just curious when I saw that you were with the Third Army, were you anywhere near when Patton was killed? Were you still there when he was killed?

JEAN KAHN PAUL: I don't remember.

MALE VOICE: Okay.

JEAN KAHN PAUL: I wasn't there very long because when our unit went to Czechoslovakia, at that point they were going to be assigned to the Pacific, and you haven't read my book, but at that point the man that I was sort of engaged to decided this is enough. He's tired of chasing me all over Europe.

MALE VOICE: Did you see Patton at all ever?

JEAN KAHN PAUL: I don't think so. I saw Ingrid Bergman because he -- my husband was a -- what they call a special service unit. They brought in all the entertainers

INTERVIEW - JEAN KAHN PAUL

MARCH 18, 2003

and people like that, the musicians, you know, keep folks happy.

MALE VOICE: So you got to see a few USO shows?

JEAN KAHN PAUL: Yes.

MALE VOICE: Can you tell us about some of those?

JEAN KAHN PAUL: The shows, I don't remember seeing any of those. I just remember seeing Ingrid Bergman coming in the morning for breakfast. She was gorgeous.

MALE VOICE: Okay. You received -- I notice you received four bronze stars.

JEAN KAHN PAUL: Our whole unit did from the -- what do they call it? I didn't get any personally. This was all from the places where we were.

MALE VOICE: Okay. When you returned to the United States, did you keep in contact with anyone that was with you in your unit?

JEAN KAHN PAUL: For a couple of years my unit was having reunions, and then we sort of lost a few of them, and but most of them were from out of town anyway, so I guess it wasn't very convenient for them to come into New York. I kept in contact with a few of them for a while, and then sort

INTERVIEW - JEAN KAHN PAUL

MARCH 18, 2003

of lost -- got notices that this one had died and that one had died. Getting older.

MALE VOICE: Did you join any veterans organizations?

JEAN KAHN PAUL: No, I didn't.

MALE VOICE: Did you make use of the GI Bill when you returned?

JEAN KAHN PAUL: Yes. When I came home I went to NYU for a couple of degree and got my pencils and notebooks and tuition and even a little bit of money I think.

MALE VOICE: Were you eligible for the 52 Quick 20 Club? It was like an unemployment insurance, \$20 a week for 52 weeks after the war?

JEAN KAHN PAUL: I don't think so. I don't know if I was eligible.

MALE VOICE: Yeah. I don't know if you've ever used it.

How about telling us about this person here?

JEAN KAHN PAUL: Who? Oh, please.

MALE VOICE: I notice those were both you thought taken in 1945.

INTERVIEW - JEAN KAHN PAUL

MARCH 18, 2003

JEAN KAHN PAUL: Yes.

MALE VOICE: Can you hold them up to the camera?

JEAN KAHN PAUL: Oh, please. That's kind of hard.

MALE VOICE: There's nothing wrong with those pictures.

JEAN KAHN PAUL: (Inaudible) showing Elizabeth Taylor now.

MALE VOICE: Do you know where those were taken?

JEAN KAHN PAUL: One was taken in Germany. I think this one was taken in Germany. This one I think was probably taken in (inaudible) because it's a formal uniform, and we didn't wear formal uniforms.

MALE VOICE: Now, in this book -- you kept referring to this book that I'm holding up. Now, you have a chapter in that book you said?

JEAN KAHN PAUL: Yes.

MALE VOICE: Okay. There's an interesting picture in there too.

JEAN KAHN PAUL: Oh, yes. Sitting in part of our -
- in our bathing suits, which we made.

MALE VOICE: Can you tell us -- if you hold it up

INTERVIEW - JEAN KAHN PAUL

MARCH 18, 2003

to the camera.

JEAN KAHN PAUL: These bathing suits were made from I think probably tablecloths in the German warehouse (inaudible), and I love to sew, so I made myself a bathing suit. Even used it to ride on the Rhine.

MALE VOICE: Now, why did you call this chapter of yours, "A Warm Body for France?"

JEAN KAHN PAUL: I didn't.

MALE VOICE: Why did --

JEAN KAHN PAUL: I think I told you that at the point where I thought I was going to be in Canitoma (phonetic) forever because I was on limited service, it had been decided that they needed services more badly, (inaudible) so they were taken anything that was warm.

MALE VOICE: Did you bring something else to show?

JEAN KAHN PAUL: No. This is just material (inaudible).

MALE VOICE: Okay. All right. Well, thank you very much.

MALE VOICE: Yes. Thank you.

JEAN KAHN PAUL: That's it? But my husband was

INTERVIEW - JEAN KAHN PAUL

MARCH 18, 2003

still in German with the Special Service Company, and he said he wanted to get married, and that was the only place. He was set up (inaudible) so they brought me over there. We got married there.

MALE VOICE: Now, he was an officer also?

JEAN KAHN PAUL: He was an officer, and he had sort of -- we had leapfrogged one another all the way across France and Germany. It was (inaudible) because he -- as an officer, he could only tell where my unit was stationed, so he could follow me, coming out of this big truck, and there he was.

MALE VOICE: Okay.

JEAN KAHN PAUL: That's it?

MALE VOICE: Yes.

* * * * *