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AN INTERVIEW WITH CECELIA SEXTON KOCH
FOR THE
VETERANS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF WAR AND SOCIETY
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INTERVIEWED BY
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PIEHLER: This begins an interview with Cecelia Sexton Koch, March 16, 2004 at her home in Hixson, Tennessee. With Kurt Piehler and ...

HAMILTON: April Hamilton.

PIEHLER: And her two daughters are also sort of observing and may occasionally prompt the interview and their names are.

GUFFIN: Jackie Guffin

COOPER: Joanie Cooper.

PIEHLER: Well let me begin, could you tell me a little about your parents.

KOCH: Oh...um, my father, I don't know much about, cause I was only a year and a half when he died. And my mother...I was born in England, in the county of Durham. And my mother brought us all to Canada. I was about six, I had two older sisters and a younger sister. And her sister and her other sister of hers, lived in Canada, and said that this was the land of opportunity and to bring the kids here and get them education. And anyways, that's what she did. She went to work keeping house for a man who she eventually married. And she had a son to him so ... the family was growing. (Laughs) He had a family and there were a lot of names in that group.

PIEHLER: So, your mother comes to Canada because, it sounds partly a family connection, a sister?

KOCH: Yes, yeah

PIEHLER: What part of Canada did she

KOCH: It was out in the prairies, Saskatchewan. Cold, cold country. Back then, you know, you didn't have any of the conveniences, you have now. We had to buy wood, chop it, melt the snow, wood fires and coal fires some too, but it was a rough life for a young woman, my mom was—I guess she wasn't forty, at that time, and she had four kids. Wait—yeah, four kids.

PIEHLER: So this sounds some thing like it was a leap of faith for your mother?

KOCH: She was really a pioneer... yeah.

PIEHLER: Now when you said you had to melt snow, I take it you didn't have indoor plumbing? If that ...

KOCH: No, we didn't. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: And what, what about, what about...how prairie, I mean, what was the largest city were you grew up in, what town did you grow up in?

KOCH: The town was, Saltcoats, Saskatchewan, 500 population and the nearest town was about 20,000—Yorkton.

PIEHLER: And how far was that?

KOCH: About twenty miles away.

PIEHLER: Okay, which isn't far, far, but it's not close.

KOCH: No. You can't walk it.

PIEHLER: Did you have electricity always?

KOCH: When we first went to Canada, we didn't. No, we had coal oil lamps.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm. Did you have an outhouse?

KOCH: Oh, yeah (Laughter)

PIEHLER: So this sounds like, this—did your mother comment about, is this what she expected?

KOCH: She said she wasn't going to live one more winter in that God-forsaken country, she was going back to England. She never went back, but she was always going back home.

PIEHLER: And you mentioned she sort of took care of a man's—someone's home as a housekeeper who became, in a sense became your stepfather at that... How long was she a housekeeper before they got—your mother got remarried?

KOCH: I don't know. Let's see—I don't know. Maybe five year, I don't know

PIEHLER: I guess how old—you were very young when you came from England?

KOCH: Six

PIEHLER: You were six, so, what do you remember about England?

KOCH: Not much. But, I remember going to kindergarten, just going but—maybe a few things about the house, what it looked like. And when I tell my family about it, I don't know if I dreamed it, or if it really happened.

PIEHLER: But if you have dreamed it or it did really happen, what are the things you dream were?

KOCH: Well, I know that outside our house there was a big—like a common area and apparently it was a play area, where kids went over there and played. And I remember we had a parlor and an upstairs and in England we did much better. We had electricity and indoor plumbing and the comforts that, uh...

HAMILTON: Did you have any transportation in England?

PIEHLER: Did you have a car?

KOCH: No, because—we had a car in Canada, but my mom drove it one time but I don't think she even had a real license, she just got in and steered it.

PIEHLER: Do you remember what year you left for Canada?

KOCH: That would be about 1926.

PIEHLER: That you left for—so you were born roughly around 1920?

KOCH: I was born 1920, December 13th.

PIEHLER: December, and you came to Canada in 1926. What—you use the term pioneer for your mother. And you even remember and—in some ways it sounds like England was much more comfortable in terms of creature...

KOCH: Oh, it was

PIEHLER: I mean, you noticed the difference?

KOCH: Yeah

PIEHLER: Your father who passed away when you very young, what career had he been?

KOCH: He was in the British Services.

PIEHLER: Was he killed in the...

KOCH: No, he was—in World War I, and he was gunner and he was—they referred to it as being invalidated out of the services, because of a heart condition, and I think he had enteric fever when he was over in Africa. And, anyway he died with his heart problem, so...

PIEHLER: So he had fought in Africa during World War I?

KOCH: Uh, yeah, and I believe he was in Italy too. He wasn't forty when he died.

PIEHLER: Well, what did your mother tell you, it sounds like you don't have any memory of your father?

KOCH: Just that he was the best man that ever drew a breath of life.

PIEHLER: That's what your mother always...

KOCH: Yes, yes, she was madly in love with him. He was a good man.

PIEHLER: And before the war what had he done?

KOCH: I don't know. I have no idea. His family had a tobacco store, over on the east coast of England somewhere.

PIEHLER: But not in...

KOCH: No, no, I don't think my mother ever knew his family.

PIEHLER: Had they met during the war itself? Was it a wartime romance?

KOCH: No, no, he was in the same town and they met at the—what did they call it—where a group of young people got together [ed. – mission]. It was probably associated with the church, and played cards and sang and that kind of thing.

PIEHLER: What were—was your mother Anglican?

KOCH: Anglican.

PIEHLER: Oh, so she—was she high church?

KOCH: I guess so. I didn't know about high church back then, but I assume...

PIEHLER: So they met at a church...

KOCH: I would think so.

PIEHLER: Now during the war [WWI], did your—in England did your mother work outside of the home? Do you remember, before you...

KOCH: Yes, in Canada she worked in the hospital.

PIEHLER: But in England?

KOCH: In England? No, she didn't work, no.

PIEHLER: No, no she didn't. Was she, do you know if she was on a pension or not, because your father had a service...

KOCH: I believe she got a pension from my father, of course when she came to Canada she didn't get it anymore, and then married, of course, and I don't know how much of a pension it was. She didn't have much, I know that. They had—she had a little store in England, that she bought—a little candy store after my father died, but it didn't go over very well. So I guess that was a source

of income for her at the time.

PIEHLER: You had a sense that Canada was an effort to—was a move—things were—that it was tough in England, is that a, you know—your mother really did go in search of opportunity is that a ...

KOCH: Yeah, I guess that's true

PIEHLER: You mentioned, though, that she often said that it was her last winter and ...

KOCH: Yeah, but she missed her people so much.

PIEHLER: She did?

KOCH: We're a very close family, always stayed in touch, and she was just so lonely. She had a very sad life, actually. When she was very young, my father, and my grandmother, and she had a son all die in one year. And she needed to do something, and of course I guess her sisters in Canada said, "Come on"...

PIEHLER: So your brother passed away?

KOCH: I had a brother die of diphtheria. He was about eight.

HAMILTON: So the whole family moved to Canada?

KOCH: Yeah, my mom and four girls. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: What do you remember of the voyage over?

KOCH: Nothing

PIEHLER: Nothing?

KOCH: Nothing.

PIEHLER: Oh.

KOCH: My sister lives across the street, and she remembers everything. She'll tell me when I'm wrong too. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: How old is your sister?

KOCH: She's a year and a half younger.

PIEHLER: So she remembers things like the voyage?

KOCH: She's got a better memory than I do, yeah.

PIEHLER: What were—I guess as a young girl, what were—you had some memories of England and then—what are some distinct memories you have of growing up in ...

KOCH: In Saltcoats? In Saskatchewan?

PIEHLER: ... yeah, Saskatchewan?

KOCH: Oh, I was as happy as I can be. We just skated in the winter, swam in the summer, and I had our brownies and our church deals, just like kids today have.

PIEHLER: And you were Anglican in Canada?

KOCH: Yeah

PIEHLER: So, it sounds like you liked a lot of outdoor sports?

KOCH: Yeah

PIEHLER: I mean, the ice skating and...

KOCH: Oh, yes

PIEHLER: And you were a Brownie.

KOCH: Oh, yeah

PIEHLER: And were you a Girl Guide too?

KOCH: I didn't get to be a Girl Guide, my sisters did, but I didn't.

PIEHLER: Why didn't you?

KOCH: I don't know. I probably failed the test. (Laughter)

HAMILTON: So you saw your mother working in a hospital when you were young? Did that inspire you?

KOCH: Now this was during the war—no, I was already in nurses' training.

HAMILTON: Were you?

KOCH: In fact I was, yeah, I was probably still in training. She and my eldest sister both worked in a local hospital

HAMILTON: So, it was after you became—well, started your training, they were into the hospital?

KOCH: Yes.

PIEHLER: Was it wartime? Did they work in the hospital?

KOCH: Yeah, it was wartime. I had an older sister who was a nurse. She's ninety-two now and lives in Austin, and she encouraged me to go into nursing.

PIEHLER: Was she a nurse in the services?

KOCH: No, We went to the—trained in the same hospital—St. Boniface in Winnipeg.

PIEHLER: How did the—how old were you when your mother remarried? Were you a teenager?

KOCH: I think I was probably a very early teenager.

PIEHLER: What was it like—it'd basically been four girls and your mother—to go to a ...

KOCH: Well ... he had married twice so there were two families there, and it was a big conglomeration of people. Barberry and Hutchins, and my mom had married once before she married my father and he died. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: So this was your mother's third marriage.

KOCH: Right, each husband died.

PIEHLER: Her first husband...

KOCH: My two oldest sisters were by him. He died with a lung—maybe pneumonia, or maybe TB, I don't know. But he was a young man, very young.

PIEHLER: It sounds like he died before World War I.

KOCH: ... Probably did.

PIEHLER: Yeah. I mean, you're going by hearsay evidence. So you're part of this very large family; what did your husband's—what did your mother's husband do?

KOCH: He worked on the railway. I think they called it the B&B gang; I don't know what that ever meant. (Laughter) Some kind of repair group that went up north, up to the northern part of Canada, in Alberta, and worked on the railway, and he'd be gone a lot. And then he and his brother owned a farm, and the brother operated it, but he had some connection there at the farm in Saltcoats.

PIEHLER: When your mother and you moved first to Canada, where did you live? Did you live in this household that your mother was caring?

KOCH: Yeah.

PIEHLER: So you were already part of the household.

KOCH: Yeah, and I was just a very mild disposition, easy-going kid, and just, things didn't bother me. I just was happy. (Laughs)

HAMILTON: Did you and your stepfather get along very well?

KOCH: He liked me okay, but he didn't like my sister. They didn't get along at all. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: It sounds like—how did the Great Depression affect your family?

KOCH: I didn't know there was a depression, and I think part of it maybe was because we had the farm, and we got ... produce from there, and I don't think parents back then told their kids a lot about what was going on in their life, and I wasn't aware of it. My friends weren't aware of it.

PIEHLER: Was your stepfather fairly regularly—did he always work for the railroad, did he have any time when he was home?

KOCH: He was a carpenter, and he would be home some.

PIEHLER: But it sounds like he had steady work throughout the '20s and '30s. You don't remember a time where he had lost ...

KOCH: No. I don't remember that.

PIEHLER: Growing up, before you entered the service, or when you went off to nursing school, how much did you travel?

KOCH: I'd gone to the next town twenty miles away. (Laughter) And I went to Regina one time. My sister was—that's the capital of Saskatchewan—went there to visit a sister one time, and that was it.

PIEHLER: But you'd never gone south to the United States?

KOCH: Oh, no.

PIEHLER: Or west to Vancouver, or east?

KOCH: No, no.

PIEHLER: So Regina was the big trip before?

KOCH: I guess that was it, yes.

PIEHLER: And of course, the trip from England.

KOCH: Yes.

HAMILTON: Do you remember what some of the prereqs for the nursing school were, like how long it took you?

KOCH: How long it took me to be a nurse, you mean?

HAMILTON: Yes, ma'am

KOCH: Three years.

PIEHLER: Politically—do you remember where your parents and Canada stood politically in the 20s and 30s?

KOCH: No. I don't know if they even were involved.

PIEHLER: How did they feel about McKenzie King? Do you remember the Prime Minister?

KOCH: Yes, I do remember him. Seems like there was a good feeling about him. (Laughter) But I really can't tell you much about him. Back then; we didn't have a radio at first. I used to go next door to watch the—listen to the radio with my friend and listen to *Inner Sanctum* and *Orphan Annie* and shows like that...And we got a paper, the *Free Press Prairie Farmer*, once a week, and that was about our contact with the outside world, other than our friends and family, you know, and the activities of the time.

PIEHLER: What about movies? Did you ever get to go to movies?

KOCH: We did start—they did start a movie theater. First they were silent, and then we got the talkies, but I don't remember too many of them. I remember *Hound of the Baskervilles*—*Baskervilles*, is that what it was? (Laughter) You guess? But then after that we went to the next town Yorkton, ten miles away, to see a movie, and that was a big event.

PIEHLER: It sounds like going to Yorkton was a big event.

KOCH: It was, and all during my life when we went home and I took my kids home, you know, when I was married, and I guess we would go home almost every year in the summertime, and the big event was, "Let's go to Yorkton." (Laughter).

PIEHLER: So you would go to the movies there; what else would you...

KOCH: Oh, eat, shop. Run into friends. It was a hub.

PIEHLER: And how much, growing up, were you in the church?

KOCH: Well, as a little girl ... it was a very little church, and sometimes on Sunday, my mother [and the children] would be the only one there. We'd have to go to the church, light the fires in the basement to warm it up, and sometimes the smoke would come up and you couldn't breathe. And there may only be half a dozen kids come, and she'd have a little singsong and, you know, a lesson. And then when I got older I played the pump organ, and, well, I figure I was pretty active in the church. [Ed. – Koch later states she belonged to the Anglican Young Peoples Association.]

PIEHLER: How did you—did you learn to play the organ in the church, or how did that...

KOCH: My mother started teaching me, and then I had a friend, who felt it was part of her mission to teach me. She was a piano teacher, so she taught me, and I was no pianist by any means, but I could play the simple hymns, and that's all we needed.

PIEHLER: It sounds like you had a very active childhood.

KOCH: Yeah, we did. We were always on the go, and of course you didn't stay up all night back then. But you know they used to have the old pipe organs that you'd have to pump. And we had a minister's wife; sometimes she'd go to sleep and forget to pump it, and ... disappointed when we didn't get music. (Laughter)

HAMILTON: Was your stepfather an Anglican, too, as well?

KOCH: He was too, but I don't remember him going to church very much. But my mother was very, very much involved in the church. She was a good living woman ... She used to help the ministers; they were poor as church mice, and they wouldn't have money to buy shirts sometimes. That was back in the days when she'd take a shirt, take the collar off it, and turn it, you know, turn it where—turn it around and put it back on. Or take an old coat that was bigger than the piece you were going to make, wash it and clean it, you cut it and re-cut it, and make a new item out of it. She did a lot of that. But she was good to those preachers. Sent her kids down there to clean the house often and cook.

PIEHLER: I'm curious. Do you remember your teachers? What are some of your memories of going to school? Particularly so, you remember kindergarten in England.

KOCH: Yeah. My teachers, let's see ...

PIEHLER: Any stick with you now?

KOCH: Oh yeah, I remember Mr. Clark taught us [in high school]. We had three grades in the same room: tenth, eleventh, and twelfth, and he was a good teacher and liked the kids, and we loved him. He taught us French though, and couldn't speak French. I took French for four years and can't speak a word of it. I know the grammar a little bit.

PIEHLER: You were born in England but now in Canada—did you think of yourself personally, even your family as English who lived in Canada, or as Canadians who had come from England? Does that make any sense, that?

KOCH: You mean today?

PIEHLER: No, then. Back then, when you were growing up, or did it even matter, that kind of way of thinking?

KOCH: I don't think it did, but we were Canadians.

PIEHLER: You were Canadians?

KOCH: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Do you remember ... when George and Elizabeth came on the royal tour in 1939?

KOCH: Vaguely. I went in training in 1939.

PIEHLER: Okay.

KOCH: In nurses' training. So, uh, I don't remember anything special except they were going to be in Regina and it was a big event.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm. But you aren't near Regina at that ...

KOCH: No. I was in the next province over, in Manitoba.

PIEHLER: Manitoba, in Winnipeg?

KOCH: In Winnipeg.

HAMILTON: Was there a final test?

KOCH: Are you in nurses' training?

HAMILTON: Yes, ma'am.

KOCH: Not that I recall. You had to be eighteen, I know that.

HAMILTON: And did you have to—require three years of education? Or if it was—or if you had some sort of training?

KOCH: You had to have a high school diploma. [Ed. – The diploma required Latin and chemistry.]

HAMILTON: It was just high school. So you started your nurses training in high school?

KOCH: No after I finished high school I went to the nurses training.

PIEHLER: Just backing up a little, why did you want to become a nurse? When did you know you want to become a nurse?

KOCH: Mostly because my sister was a nurse, and she just encouraged me and she'd tell me these exciting stories about things that happened. I thought it was going to be all excitement and fun saving the world! (Laughter)

PIEHLER: So what did—did any exciting stories stick out?

KOCH: Oh, I can't think of anything.

PIEHLER: But it sounds like she made into a very exciting and even glamorous ...

KOCH: Well she liked it. She liked nursing.

PIEHLER: Where did she practice?

KOCH: After she finished training she went to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester. She worked there for a while. Then she went to Cleveland, Ohio, and worked at the—Lorain, Ohio, I think, as hospital there near Cleveland.

PIEHLER: So—how did she get the Mayo Clinic position, do you remember?

KOCH: No. I don't know. But I know that the salaries were so poor in Canada then, and I guess even now they're better in the States than they are in Canada, so the girls, when the graduated, wanted to come to the States. And she and, I think, one or two of her friends came and applied to Rochester and were accepted.

PIEHLER: Did any of your sisters stay in Canada?

KOCH: My oldest sister, Kathleen.

PIEHLER: And what part of Canada; did she stay in Saskatchewan?

KOCH: Yeah, she did. She died there.

PIEHLER: So I don't forget to ask, your oldest sister was a nurse, is that ...

KOCH: Did I say oldest?

PIEHLER: Yeah. I'm not sure ...

KOCH: It was my second oldest.

PIEHLER: Second oldest. And your oldest sister, what did she—what was her...

KOCH: She worked in a TB sanatorium, I think she must have been a practical nurse, down in the Qu'Appelle Valley [in Saskatchewan].

PIEHLER: And then your second oldest sister ...

KOCH: That's the one, Connie, that was the one that's still living.

PIEHLER: Still living and a nurse with the Mayo Clinic and then...

KOCH: And then me, and then my youngest sister that lives across the street. She went in training in Yorkton, but didn't like it.

PIEHLER: Didn't like it?

KOCH: She didn't last 6 months. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: And did she have a career outside the home?

KOCH: She and her husband had a hunting and fishing lodge in northern Manitoba at the Pas, and then after they sold that they built a motel, Tamarak Motel. It's still up there at the Pas. And, uh, that was her outside career, and she worked hard ...

PIEHLER: (Laughs) That's very hard.

HAMILTON: It seems of all of your sisters, no one was in the Army or the Marines. What made you want to go into the Army as a nurse?

KOCH: Well, you know, it was the time. They were calling for nurses ...

HAMILTON: This was the draft?

KOCH: ... They really—show them that brochure—they really wanted nurses. (Gestures to a brochure) And I was working in Cleveland, Ohio ...

HAMILTON: At a hospital?

KOCH: ... in Mount Sinai, at the time.

HAMILTON: So you had already graduated...

KOCH: I'd graduated and been down in the States, maybe a year ...

HAMILTON: Working a year?

KOCH: ... yes. And, I thought well, I'm gonna do it, I'm gonna join the service.

PIEHLER: I want to back up a little and first talk about your sister in some ways was in some ways the trailblazer for nursing.

KOCH: She was the new triage. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: ... but, could you talk a little bit about, you know, your training—learning to become a nurse. Stories that—because you were, in a sense, hospital trained. A nursing school in the hospital.

KOCH: Yes, uh, diploma program. I don't think they have them any more, do they? Where you live in a nurses' residence?

HAMILTON: Some hospitals do. If you go to a hospital, they usually pay for some of your schooling, and in return, you are required to work for them and to live at their, you know, housing for a certain amount but ...

KOCH: Well we didn't get paid anything. We had to buy our own books and our cape

HAMILTON: Did they even help you out?

KOCH: No, that's not my—that's my Army cape.

PIEHLER: And again, the hospital you trained in, the nursing school you trained in—it was in Manitoba—what was the name?

KOCH: Saint Boniface Hospital.

PIEHLER: Saint Boniface in Winnipeg?

KOCH: Uh huh. It was run by the Catholic sisters. The Sisters of Charity, and they were very strict. We had uniforms twelve inches from the ground, no makeup, firm foundations as they told me one day.

PIEHLER: Firm foundations?

KOCH: Firm foundations under your uniforms.

HAMILTON: So completely sort of not appeasing to anyone.

PIEHLER: They didn't want you to tempt any patient, it sounds like. (Laughter)

KOCH: That's for sure.

PIEHLER: And it sounds like they were very strict. I mean you lived in the hospital ...

KOCH: Lived in the hospital and ...

PIEHLER: It sounds like it must have had a little bit of a nunnery feel to it.

KOCH: It did, it really did. But ... I'm very adaptable.

PIEHLER: Were you required to go to mass or ...

KOCH: No, there was no religious pressure at all.

PIEHLER: There was no religious pressure ...

KOCH: No.

PIEHLER: And it strikes me that some of the nurses were nuns, is that ...

KOCH: We did have, in our class we had a sister that was a nun—Sister O'Charley.

PIEHLER: Were some of your instructors and head nurses ... in Saint Boniface, were they nuns? How much of the staff ...

KOCH: No, I don't remember any nuns being our instructors. No, they were all RNs, and we had exercises in the morning before we went in for breakfast. (Laughter) [Ed. – Koch later states that the nuns acted as a supervisors in each department.]

PIEHLER: What type of exercises?

KOCH: Oh just, you know, calisthenics. (Laughter) And we danced a little with girls together with one another. And when we had a party, we could invite the interns, so that was a big concession.

PIEHLER: Oh, that was—now, that sounds like it was a recent concession.

KOCH: I guess so. It was closer to '42. (Laughter) And we'd have to go past the main desk when we went out, and that nun sat there at the desk, and saw right through you—what you had on, and where you were going, and when you were coming back, and all this. (Laughter) And you'd get checked when you came back in.

HAMILTON: Checked?

KOCH: Well, you know visibly you'd check in.

HAMILTON: Oh.

KOCH: Some of the girls had ways of getting around. They would—there was a—the hospital and the nurses' residence were joined by a tunnel, and they'd figured how to get over that gate in the tunnel, separating the two, so they could move back and forth unobserved. (Laughter) I wasn't very brave.

PIEHLER: So you started—just so I make sure—you started your training in 1939, and you finished in 1942. What memories stick out about—particularly learning how to care for patients? Because my sense of interviewing nurses is it's a very practical education, I mean ...

KOCH: Yes, and you know back then, there was no penicillin. We gave—did get sulfa. The nurses didn't even give what they call the deep intramuscular, you know, when you give an IM with a long needle. The residents, interns, had to give the deep IMs, we just gave the hypos, so our training was really basic. But it was good basic. You know, we learned the basics and learned it right.

PIEHLER: Well could you explain some of the basics you learned?

KOCH: (Laughing) Well I learned how to make a bed with a patient in it!

HAMILTON: I'm sure a lot more of hands-on care.

KOCH: Yes.

PIEHLER: What other—you said learn how to make a bed—what else did you learn how to do in terms of ...

KOCH: That was just so different. We gave treatments, and we'd bathe patients—everybody had to have a bath—and then we had to clean the rooms, and ... if a patient died we had to take care of them and get them ready for the morgue, and there were a lot of things that weren't fun.

HAMILTON: So you were basically the janitorial, and the clinical, and everybody else. Wow.

KOCH: When you had night duty, there were two of you on a ward, and the wards were named after St. Agnus, St. Marie, Youville, St. Anthony, St. Joseph—different names like that, not numbered—and there were two of you on duty. One would sleep while the other carried on, and we'd alternate. And there was a lot of charting. We had to ... recount everything the patient did and why he did it and when he did it and that kind of thing.

PIEHLER: What was the hardest thing you did in training—you know, learning to be a nurse in school? Does anything stick out—well, harder things ...

KOCH: I don't know.

PIEHLER: Well let me, even—while you think about that, dealing with—having to deal with dead patients ... and dealing with their body, what was that experience like?

KOCH: That was awful, scary. I mean, a young kid, never been anywhere—that was scary.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm. And when you say you had to take care of the body, what would you have to do? I mean ...

KOCH: Oh, we had bathe the patient.

PIEHLER: So ... could you describe how you do that? Because ... it's not just moving them onto a gurney and wheeling them out, it sounds like.

KOCH: Lord, I don't remember

PIEHLER: But that, that ... (Laughter) Well, what were the patients like that you cared for?

KOCH: Well, there were a lot of Polish patients, uh, poor patients, the Polish patients always had their garlic sausage on their bedside table. (Laughter) And we had a lot of French, because it was a French community. And ... they only had one private ward, it was called Youville. And everybody didn't get to work on the private ward. I guess you had to be special.

PIEHLER: Did you get to work ...

KOCH: I don't remember if I worked on it briefly or after I finished training, but I don't remember it specifically. But the others were usually poor patients with lots of things wrong with them, and we weren't doing a lot for them except for the physical ... daily care. Because we didn't have penicillin, and just barely had sulfa.

PIEHLER: Well, could you sort of explain what it is like to be in a hospital, in some more detail. Because the penicillin, I think—I'll give you a story, a doctor once told me. He was at Belleview in the 30s, late 20s or 30s, and he described there'd been a, was it a tuberculosis outbreak, or there was some sort of infectious disease outbreak, and he had a mortality rate of something like five percent. Some—and he said, he'd been able to keep it at this sort of mortality rate, and he said if you had a mortality rate today like that today, they'd thrown you in jail. But before penicillin, it was a very different ballgame. Could you talk a little about how you would think about patient care in the early—because you mention—it sounds like penicillin was a pretty dramatic impact you could see ...

KOCH: Well, they had lots of pills. You know, a lot of pills that some of them they even use today. But they didn't have antibiotics. And ... I don't know what else to say.

PIEHLER: What about concern over infection? Without antibiotics? And penicillin? Did that sort of change the thinking about ... you know, nursing—my sense would be that you would be very concerned with cleanliness because with infection ...

KOCH: Well, I don't know. We must have had more infection then they had, after they already got it. But...

HAMILTON: How was the sterilization in the Hospital?

KOCH: Well, we had an autoclave where we sterilize all of our own sets—you know, packs. And then they had a little ... sterilizer, water sterilizer, where you put your needles. Because, you reuse needles, back then. Syringes and stuff...

HAMILTON: Bandages?

KOCH: No, not bandages, but you did reuse needles and syringes, and all the instruments.

PIEHLER: One Nurse told me, at her school, she had to put a deposit ... for her syringes and stuff, and they were glass ...

KOCH: And if she broke them, she had to pay for them.

PIEHLER: Ah, so did you ever break one?

KOCH: Uh, I must have as clumsy as I am. (Laughter) But I also know you had to pay for your own thermometer. And they were glass. But even when I came to the states and work at Mount Sinai, in Cleveland ... They use to—they had a little—I guess it was a Bunsen burner, with a little, you put water in the spoon and boil it to give an injection. And you take your little pill, morphine or what ever it was dissolve it ...

HAMILTON: And you break it?

KOCH: ... and you draw it up with a syringe. Do you know about that?

HAMILTON: (Talking over) Yes, ma'am. I was shown that once by a nurse, and been told about that. Excuse me...

KOCH: Yeah, ok. I just wondered if it. Surely they don't do that in the modern day world.

HAMILTON: No, definitely not. It's all bags, all prepared

KOCH: Oh, ok. (Chuckles)

PIEHLER: So in a sense your nursing is, you actually mix up ingredients. I mean in a way, a nurse today would look at askance at you, and ...

KOCH: We did more of the bedside nursing. And ... I think that's what's lacking in today's nursing, is the bedside contact.

PIEHLER: What did you learn about bedside contact—I mean in nursing—what were the do's and don'ts you learned about this? Did anything stick out?

KOCH: Well, you had to be able to give a good backrub. That was the main stay of the bedside care.

PIEHLER: Why was that so important?

KOCH: Well, it was so comforting to a patient. You know, made them feel better. Even today, a patient will—well, not today, cause I haven't nursed in fifteen years, but patients would ask for a backrub every now and again—jokingly—knowing that that was just ... so important to their welfare.

PIEHLER: Anything else about the bedside, sort of dos and don'ts? Particularly directed at the future nurses, with one that is sitting in the room. (Laughter) Things that, you know, "I learned the hard way," or things—you know, "This is a good tip..."

KOCH: Mm, I have to think about that. You could probably tell me more.

HAMILTON: I know that there is not much hands-on.

KOCH: Yeah, you could almost nurse from the nurses' station, can't you?

HAMILTON: Almost. I've noticed a lot ... more writing and less contact. Almost like they've taken over the doctor's position, without, you know of course the signature and the authority. But, umm ... So, did you have any nurses' aides?

KOCH: We had practical nurses, yes.

HAMILTON: So you did have some help?

KOCH: Uh, huh.

HAMILTON: How big were you—were you in charge of a full—how many people were you in charge of? Do you see what I'm saying?

PIEHLER: When you were in training? When you were particularly at night when it was the two of you?

KOCH: I don't know.

HAMILTON: Probably a whole lot.

KOCH: A whole floor.

PIEHLER: And people were in big wards when you..

KOCH: Yes, yeah. Lots of wards, mostly wards.

HAMILTON: You probably had papers everywhere. Filing and ...

KOCH: Well they didn't do all the tests and things they do now and they didn't have to justify everything that they did. They did do a lot of nursing, nursing notes, but the nurses' notes have gone back and forth. For a while there you have to write everything, and then it went to you just had to write the main things about their care. And now I don't know what it is.

HAMILTON: So the ANA process, the nursing process, and all that, did you have to really incorporate that. I know there is a certain—with the ANA process—there are certain steps you have to take when you see a patient that you have to do. Were those steps...

KOCH: No we didn't have that, no.

PIEHLER: I'm curious, as a nursing student what about your relationship with the doctors.

KOCH: Oh, Ah! (Laughter) When I was a student you didn't get on an elevator before them, if they came into the room you stood up.

HAMILTON: Wow!

KOCH: I mean, they were God. They were really ...

GUFFIN: Wow!

KOCH: They were really... you've never heard about that? (Gesturing to her daughter, Jacky Guffin)

GUFFIN: No, not that much.

PIEHLER: So, you literally didn't get on an elevator with a doctor?

KOCH: If you did you were the last one on.

PIEHLER: So you, in a sense, stepped out of the elevator.

KOCH: You had to stand there and wait until the doctor got on, and anybody else, a nurse with a yellow band, or a blue band, or a black band. If you were a young student, you had to go out.

PIEHLER: So... the nurse—actually, what—because you mention it, it sounds very hierarchal, what was the black ...

KOCH: The black band was the graduate.

PIEHLER: Graduate. Then the other two ...

KOCH: Then the yellow band and the blue band. And I believe that's it, and the probationer just

had the cap.

PIEHLER: And what were the other two bands—you said the black band was the graduate—what were the other, the blue band and the ...

KOCH: The second year and third year.

PIEHLER: Okay. So you in a sense were—you have a deferred ...

KOCH: A low man on the totem pole.

PIEHLER: And then you gradually work your way up

KOCH: Right, yes.

PIEHLER: So, it was very—did you have any sort of—were new nursing students hazed at all, was there any sort of ... pranks or anything that you remember?

KOCH: No. The worst thing that we did was smoke.

PIEHLER: That was the big...

KOCH: Oh, smoking was not allowed. (Laughter) We use to keep out cigarettes in the little store across the street, where we went for Coke or something.

PIEHLER: And when you said you kept them there, how did you keep them at the little store?

KOCH: We'd just give them to the store manager, and he'd put them up for you.
(Laughter)

KOCH: Girls were expelled for having cigarettes in their room.

PIEHLER: Oh, so this was a serious...

KOCH: This was—yeah, very bad.

PIEHLER: This sounds like the real guilty pleasure?

KOCH: This was in the Dark Ages, wasn't it? That's when I learned to smoke, yes. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: You mentioned the parties with the interns, that that was the big concession—apparently it sounded like it had happened really recently before you got there. So where would you have the parties?

KOCH: In—I guess you would call it a recreation hall.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm. Sounds like you had a chaperone, though? (Laughs)

KOCH: Those nuns are always there. (Laughter) You could always hear their keys rattling, if they were around you. They probably did it on purpose, you know, to let you know.

PIEHLER: And you lived in the hospital, did you have a roommate in the hospital?

KOCH: Uh... did I? No, I didn't, no. I had a single room.

PIEHLER: And you took all—most of your meals in the hospital?

KOCH: Yeah, you ate in the shifts at a certain time, and you went to class in between time.

PIEHLER: And what did you do for spending money, cause you said you weren't paid.

KOCH: My sister sent me money. It didn't take much. You know everything was supplied: your food, you lodging... We only got a half-day off a week, so you can't spend much money in a half of a day—couldn't back then.

HAMILTON: What would you do on your half of days?

KOCH: Ride the streetcar into town. Maybe go to a movie, or go to a teahouse and have our tea leaves read, you know. That was fun.

PIEHLER: And how did you like being—Winnipeg is a much bigger city—how did you like being in the...

KOCH: Oh, I liked in the big city. I had a couple of friends who—I don't remember how I got to know them, through maybe my stepfather. They sort of took my under their wing and met me in Winnipeg when I went into training. And so on my off days, I would go and spend it with them. And have a good time.

PIEHLER: So you had some connections, you even had some connections in Winnipeg that ...

KOCH: Yeah, and then I had a friend that lived next door in Saltcoats who was in the class ahead of me, six months ahead of me. So, and I don't know if there was any other person I know. I guess that was it.

HAMILTON: Were there any friends that you've met in nursing school that you just became girlfriends, became really close with and that you kept through the years?

KOCH: Yes, one is in California, in poor health.

HAMILTON: So you still keep in contact with her?

KOCH: Just once a year, yeah.

HAMILTON: Okay.

KOCH: And then the girl that lived next door to me in Saltcoats. She lives in Winnipeg, and we keep in touch, and I've gone home to several reunions. The last one was the fiftieth. So ...

-----END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE-----

KOCH: For once in my life I don't remember, because I've never had an occasion to review it. Or even talk to anyone about it.

COOPER: Her memory is great.

PIEHLER: Well, you remember quite a bit. I wouldn't be so apologetic.

COOPER: Well, and we're learning things too.

KOCH: Well, some of it is not very interesting, you know. It's just ...

PIEHLER: What was your classroom instruction like?

KOCH: What was it like?

PIEHLER: What courses did you take, that you remember?

KOCH: I thought it was pretty hard.

PIEHLER: Did you take for example – How much Chemistry and Biology did you take?

KOCH: I don't think we took any in nurses' training. We took it in high school. (Laughing)

PIEHLER: But you didn't take something like organic chemistry...

KOCH: Kids today are smart, they're a heck of a lot smarter ...

HAMILTON: I just got done with organic chemistry.

KOCH: It's just a different world, just like my kids in school. My third and seventh grader, my grandkids, they know more than I did when I—today, for instance. One thing is you have access to a lot more, through T.V., and radio, books and all that, you know.

PIEHLER: Well, one thing I meant to ask you, it's before you started nursing. Do you remember the abdication of Edward?

KOCH: Mm hmm.

PIEHLER: Did your family listen to his abdication address? Do you remember?

KOCH: Let's see where was I. 19...

PIEHLER: I think you were still at home. Cause it was '37...

KOCH: Thanks for traveling along with me. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: And I meant to ask it before—I try to go in order, but I ...

KOCH: Yes, somewhere we heard about it, cause it was in 1936, wasn't it?

PIEHLER: I think its 3- ... I forget ...

KOCH: '37?

PIEHLER: Yeah, '36 or '37, I'm now forgetting the ...

KOCH: Oh, I know about it. That's for sure. And we didn't have a radio. We may have had a radio by 1936.

PIEHLER: It also sounds like getting a radio was also big—that was something you really were glad to have. Because you even mentioned the programs you had listened to.

KOCH: Those I listened to at my neighbors—the girl that went into training ahead of me.

PIEHLER: That's where you would listen to a lot of your radio?

KOCH: Yeah, yes.

PIEHLER: I wanted to—and if you think of something, don't worry, just bring it up. You were in Canada—you, in fact, were in nurses' training when the war broke out in 1939.

KOCH: Yes, yes.

PIEHLER: What do you remember sort of about the coming of war in Canada?

KOCH: Well it was—in Canada?

PIEHLER: Yeah.

KOCH: It was real... exciting time. We thought we'd maybe have to for two and a half years, because they would be needing nurses. Other than that—and of course, we saw all the troops around the town—the Australians, the New Zealanders, and foreign troops, a lot of Americans. And they had a big training school, Air Flight school, in Yorkton. In fact, my husband got his wings in Yorkton. And I didn't even know it.

PIEHLER: So, when you went back to Yorkton, you would notice all of these ...

KOCH: Oh, yeah. It was a fun time. Airmen all over the place. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Which it seem ... (Laughs)

KOCH: And a prevalence of males ... (Laughing)

PIEHLER: And it sounds like you did some dating.

KOCH: Uh huh. Oh, yeah. We had a good time.

PIEHLER: So, ... you would date these airmen in Yorkton?

KOCH: Uh, huh.

PIEHLER: Did you have any steady boyfriends? Or was it just lots of dates?

KOCH: No, I don't remember any steady.

PIEHLER: Well, when did you first start dating. In fact, if you don't mind me asking? Do you remember?

KOCH: I was still in high school, yeah, yeah. We dated—my girlfriend and I—dated boys from Yorkton.

PIEHLER: Oh, so is this one of the reasons why going to Yorkton is such a fond—is a much desired...

KOCH: Um, I guess so. Yeah.

PIEHLER: The war in terms of—you mention that you thought you might end your training early—did you treat, at the hospital at St. Boniface, did you ever treat any service people? Canadian or otherwise?

KOCH: No, not that I'm aware of.

PIEHLER: It sounds like the presence of the war changed Yorkton more than Winnipeg. Is that—did you see a lot of troops in Winnipeg?

KOCH: Yes, but I was in training during those years and I didn't get out very much, you know? You'd see them—in Yorkton they were more concentrated. They had the flying school there, so they had a lot of them. Winnipeg, yes, they had a lot of different organizations training in Winnipeg.

PIEHLER: You had close ties—you were born in England—what did you think of the war? In terms of—did you think, for example, it was something—was it Canada's fight, too, at the time?

KOCH: Oh, that was not a question.

PIEHLER: That wasn't even a question, that even ...

HAMILTON: Was there any ... different races with your unit, or with your nursing class? Japanese-Americans or African-Americans?

KOCH: No, I don't believe so. I was looking at that thing. (Gesturing to a yearbook for her unit) When I was in the service at Fort Knox, Kentucky, they listed—on Christmas day—the staff at the hospital and they had where one colored person listed as colored. I thought, I had never looked at it before, I guess. I thought that was unusual. No, I don't remember any Indians or anything.

PIEHLER: (Looking in her units book) Oh, ok. So actually they list it as a whole separate category. You mentioned—I guess I should have backed up—you mention in Winnipeg that you had a number of French-Canadian patients. What about in your hometown? Did you have any French-Canadian ...

KOCH: No, they were all British: Scotch [*sic*], Welsh, English. And we had Dukabo Polish, but it was mostly British. Yeah. [Ed. – “Dukabo” is slang for foreigner. Koch also stated later that there were some French since St. Boniface Hospital was in a French community.]

PIEHLER: So, Winnipeg was in a sense your first exposure to French-Canadians, is that ...

KOCH: Yes, yeah.

PIEHLER: Were you able to use any of your French—you mention how your French teacher, who ...

KOCH: No, I barely got through. (Chuckles) In fact when we visited France two years ago, I thought I could get—make my way around. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: And you couldn't?

KOCH: (Laughs, and shakes her head no)

PIEHLER: Is there anything else about training that you remember? Because I have a feeling that there are a few more stories lurking ... (Laughter) Particular how were your relationships with your teachers?

KOCH: Oh, they were just uppity. They were not on our level, there wasn't a—it was more of a caste system. You didn't socialize with them. At least I, me and my friends and I, didn't. They were teachers. They were looked up to, you know, somebody special. So I can't tell you much about that.

PIEHLER: And your fellow students, they were from—were they from ...

KOCH: Little towns from all over the province. From Manitoba to Saskatchewan, and they were mostly—we had a few friends from the States, but mostly they ... were ordinary families or poor families. Nurses were—there weren't many opportunities for young people back then out of nursing or you could be a telephone or a teacher. And I was directed to nursing.

PIEHLER: Have you found something else besides nursing before ...

KOCH: I thought I'd be a teacher. I don't know why.

HAMILTON: Was there any significant change of when you entered nursing through out your time as a nurse, as nurses were held to higher respect throughout the years? Or was it about the same?

KOCH: Well, you got a little more respect, because you had a different colored band around your cap. You know. (Chuckles)

PIEHLER: So, the band really made a big—in your particular hospital that was a key ...

KOCH: Oh, yes, to your importance and your responsibility and all.

PIEHLER: There was a question on the tip of my tongue, in terms... Looking back at it, at the time do you ever think, if you had had more opportunities you would have done this, cause it sounds like you really felt like you could only do a few types of jobs ... as a woman, because, as you mention, telephone operator, teacher, nurse. Do you ever look back and go, but I would have really would have loved to have done this, but they—or do you...

KOCH: No, I don't think so, because I loved my Army career, I just loved it. I felt like I was doing something worthwhile and it was exciting. I mean it was bad for the people who were fighting. But for us, it was just a great time to be around.

HAMILTON: Was there ever a male nurse or any males around?

KOCH: No, we didn't have any. We had ward boys, who could do just about anything we could do.

PIEHLER: So you had ward...

KOCH: In the service, this is.

PIEHLER: In the services, not in your hospital...

KOCH: In training—what was your question?

HAMILTON: In the hospital did you ever ...

KOCH: Oh, male nurses.

HAMILTON: ... other than physicians, who were probably mostly male, but were there any male nurses at all?

KOCH: No.

PIEHLER: Would you even thought that was a possibility when you were in school, a ...

KOCH: No, no. It was strictly a job for females.

PIEHLER: Did you think of enlisting when you were in nursing school, in Canada, had you thought of enlisting in the Canadian services?

KOCH: I thought about it yes, but they wanted nurses with experience. Apparently they had nurses, you know, enough of them. And I didn't go down and apply or really investigate thoroughly. I just knew they didn't need them. So I came to the States and worked a part of a year.

PIEHLER: So the Canadian military wasn't actively recruiting nurses?

KOCH: No, apparently not.

PIEHLER: Like they didn't come to your school and say we want you to sign up. It sounds like you really had to search them out if you wanted to join.

KOCH: Yeah, you did.

PIEHLER: Why did you—you've alluded to it earlier—why did you decided to leave Canada to ... work in the United States?

KOCH: Well, mostly the money. And my sister was working at Mount Sinai ...

PIEHLER: In Cleveland?

KOCH: Yeah, and she, at that time you had to have a job to come to the States. You couldn't cross the border and just take your chances. You had to have a position to go to. So she got me a position and a place to live. And said, "Get moving." I was having too good of a time and didn't want to move, but to the States but I did.

PIEHLER: Where were you having such a good time?

KOCH: In Winnipeg. I had just through nurses' training and had a little bit of money.

PIEHLER: So, were you working at the hospital after you finished?

KOCH: Yeah, I was. But that's the only place I worked.

PIEHLER: So, you worked after graduating. So, you were one of the black bands.

KOCH: Oh, yeah I was. I was a VIP.

HAMILTON: How long did you work in the hospital?

KOCH: Less than a year. I graduated in the spring of '42.

HAMILTON: So you were right at the beginning of the war.

PIEHLER: Well, the war for Canadians starts in 1939. So you really enjoyed being in Winnipeg, but it sounds like your sister again really pushed the way.

KOCH: Connie did, yeah, she did. I was just glad to be there. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: You hadn't really traveled much, and now you were going to Cleveland. Taking you back is to sort of compare Canada and the United States, back in the 1930s and '40s. What struck you as the differences between Cleveland and Winnipeg growing up. Did anything strike you as distinctive about Americans or distinctive about Canadians?

KOCH: I don't know. Americans, they had more fun. They were more up to date and fashionable and up on what's going on in the world. It seems like we were more reserved, and less into events, which isn't true I'm sure, which was just an impression ...

PIEHLER: Of course, you said growing up, you only got a newspaper once a week. So that...

KOCH: *The Prairie Farmer*. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: So you had a sense that Americans, at least when you were in Cleveland, were much, news was much more...

KOCH: Oh, yeah. They were living!

PIEHLER: And what about fashion? What do you remember about...

KOCH: Fashion. Oh, all the styles came through the States and then came up north. We were a season behind you all.

PIEHLER: Are there any styles that—are there any fashion styles that you remember growing up and as a nurse—because you said in Cleveland, you noticed they were much more stylish. Anything, any favorite outfits you remember, or styles?

KOCH: No, I don't believe I can remember.

PIEHLER: How did you like—before I ask you about the hospital, how did you like Cleveland?

KOCH: I liked Cleveland.

PIEHLER: Now, did you live in the hospital, or did you—where did you live?

KOCH: I lived in the nurses residence, yeah. And I worked nights and a friend and I would take off in the daytime. We would work nights and then we would go to ... Lake Erie, where they had a resort area, and a dance hall—you know, where you would just dance with just anybody or everybody. And we'd just spend the day there and have a good time, and go to work the next night.

PIEHLER : So it sounds like you weren't getting a lot of sleep?

KOCH: No, not much. You don't need much sleep when you're young.

PIEHLER: So, you did the night shift and it sounds like you'd take a little cat nap, and then you would go dancing, and I've heard of this area in Cleveland.

KOCH: I can't think of the name of it.

PIEHLER: Yeah, I can't think of the name – Detroit has an island, I know that is very similar, but, you'd go to the dance hall and pavilion.

KOCH: And we use to—during the war you could go to places without an escort. And we'd go to the Cabin Club, I think it was called, where Bob Hope use to hang out way back before he was popular. And just had a good time—went to the playhouse and then, of course, my sister lived there, and so I visited her and her family.

PIEHLER: So, she was married at that ...

KOCH: She was married, uh, huh.

PIEHLER: Was she still practicing nursing when she ...

KOCH: Yes, she worked at Mount Sinai also.

PIEHLER: So, she had a family and was still in ...

KOCH: Uh, yes.

PIEHLER: Who took care of her children when she was ...

KOCH: Let's see, did she have kids then? She didn't have kids then. No. And her husband, Howard, he was a medic and she was starting to think the best thing for her to do is to follow him around. You know, where ever he was transferred to.

PIEHLER: Oh, so did she follow him around?

KOCH: So she started to follow him around, yes. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: So, where are all of the places she went to?

KOCH : Oh, I don't know. All along the east coast, there. And then he was shipped overseas.

HAMILTON: Seems like you got a little bit more of free time then when you were in training.

KOCH: A little bit—it was another world. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: You mention an interesting point, that you felt you could, because of the war, you could go out without an escort. Was it before the war you felt you had to have an escort to go to say a dance hall or to a ...

KOCH: I guess that's the way it was, although I never—it wasn't in my lifestyle to go either way. But that was the way of life.

PIEHLER: And it sounds like you like dancing a lot.

KOCH: Oh, I did, that was my thing to do.

PIEHLER: And big bands—are there any big bands that you remember dancing to or listening to? Either in Winnipeg or in Cleveland?

KOCH: Live? No I don't remember. Can't think of any—no.

GUFFIN: Who was the one that died in a plane crash? That was in Europe, right?

KOCH: Oh, who was that?

PIEHLER: Glenn Miller?

GUFFIN: Yeah. Dad knew him.

KOCH: Just from the clubs and all.

HAMILTON: I love that kind of music. You probably did the Charleston and all ...

KOCH: No, the Charleston was a little before me. I couldn't do that. I could jitterbug.

HAMILTON: Jitterbug.

KOCH: That was the big dance. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: And what do you remember about rationing in Canada and in the States?

KOCH: It didn't involve me at all.

PIEHLER: Yeah, you don't...

KOCH: Never had to—never involved with rationing.

PIEHLER: Did you take meals at the nurses' residence?

KOCH: Yes. Remember, people didn't go out to eat like they do now. And we didn't have the money anyway, but we just ate at home.

PIEHLER: Did you do any dating in Cleveland, that you remember?

KOCH: Oh, yeah, I dated one guy. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Was he in the service or was he...

KOCH: No, no. Not much.

PIEHLER: It sounds like—in terms of nursing, what were you doing?

KOCH: Oh, back to nursing? (Chuckle)

PIEHLER: Well, if there's something else about Cleveland ... You'd said you worked the night shift. Did you have, in a sense, a basic ward?

KOCH: In Cleveland I worked in labor and delivery.

PIEHLER: Labor and delivery.

KOCH: So we had to—we had a ward, yes, and there was another nurse and myself. We had to give everybody a bath in the morning before we went off duty. You don't get that now. But we had to.

PIEHLER: Everyone got a bath.

KOCH: Everybody got a bath before we went off duty at seven o'clock.

PIEHLER: Now, were you involved in deliveries themselves?

KOCH: Yes, and labor, and post-partum.

PIEHLER: How much training had you had in nursing school for delivery?

KOCH: I don't know. I don't remember. Maybe three months?

PIEHLER: Three months.

KOCH: I liked that. That's what I did here at Memorial for about thirty years.

PIEHLER: Oh, so you did really take to ...

KOCH: Yeah, I liked that.

PIEHLER: What do you remember of your first delivery?

KOCH: (Laughs) I can't tell you. It was just wonderful and exciting.

HAMILTON: Of course they don't have any of the medicine or any of the machines ... I know some of the complications that come with the birthing process, and during those times. How did you cope with those kind of things, not being able to—I'm sure you had monitors, yes, to monitor the heart rates and ...

KOCH: Back then, no. No, we just—like the old fashioned midwife I guess, but everything—the doctor did the deliveries and you were an assistant with the delivery. So, and that's sort of the way it is now, in the delivery room—the doctor does it with a circulating nurse.

PIEHLER: Let me rephrase the question. How was delivering a baby in the beginning, when you were in Cleveland, when you first started your career as a nurse, different from when you retired? What was the difference in the process, and particularly the role of the nurse? Some things obviously stayed the same but ...

KOCH: Well, of course you have the incubators with the oxygen and the suction machine, and we could intubate a baby if we needed to now, and we didn't have anything back then.

HAMILTON: If the baby's a preemie, it was ...

KOCH: Well I don't remember that much about problems and such with them back then. Now, of course, if you were in a pinch and your doctor didn't get there in time, you could deliver it yourself, but I couldn't imagine doing that as a student.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm, or even as a young nurse.

KOCH: No.

PIEHLER: You very much were the assistant then.

KOCH: Yes, yes. Like a scrub nurse—handed him instruments and stood back and let him do it all.

PIEHLER: Really, that was much—and towards the end of your career, it sounds as if you were

much more involved. The doctor was still there, but you were much more—it sounds like, a team.

KOCH: Oh yes. You could do almost anything he did. We weren't supposed to. And we were supposed to time his arrival and all, right.

PIEHLER: Going back to earlier in the career, it sounds like the doctor was there much longer during the delivery process. Is that an accurate—when you first started out ...

KOCH: Well there would be a resident, probably most of the time in delivery.

PIEHLER: Because I remember once talking to a nurse who did deliveries, and she said, "Well they are the doctor barely made it there," and it wasn't like the panic, like, "Well we almost had to do it ourselves" but it sounds like—is this accurate—that when you started out doctors—you know, it was often the resident—he was literally there, not just like five minutes before.

KOCH: Oh yeah, he was in the building. And if the doctor wasn't there, like I said, they always had a resident that they could call.

PIEHLER: And so there wasn't the expectation that a nurse was going to ...

KOCH: No. In Memorial, we didn't have residents. So if we got in a pinch, we were supposed to call the ER doctor. But, we could do as well as he could.

PIEHLER: Well it also sounds like, in some ways, you knew more than he might.

KOCH: Maybe. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: Yeah. I mean you have a lot of experience in doing deliveries, and ... he may have done this in his rotations in medical school, but you do this every—is that a fair characterization?

KOCH: That's accurate. Yeah.

PIEHLER: Why did you—anything else about, you know ... you were also away from where you were trained, and—anything else about the differences ... (Telephone rings) What was the differences—you ... mentioned the strictness of the nuns at your school where you were trained in your hospital. What was Mount Sinai like, in terms of the rules and regulations—and admittedly you weren't a student anymore, but still ...

KOCH: Uh—and I don't live in the nurses'—did I tell you I don't ...

PIEHLER: Yeah, you said you lived in the nurses' residence in Cleveland.

KOCH: I don't remember if I did or not. I must have ...

PIEHLER: But it sounds like ...

KOCH: But it wasn't a Catholic hospital, so it didn't have that.

PIEHLER: It didn't have the ... curfews and the ...

KOCH: No. No, you were an individual with sort of ...

PIEHLER: You weren't going to lose you your job for smoking, you'd say? (Laughter)

KOCH: No.

PIEHLER: Because it sounds like you don't remember—I mean if there were ...

KOCH: Well, I do remember the director of nurses. She was a Canadian. Her name was Ms. Gillis, and she was a friend of my sister, so I kind of had an "in" there, plus, which made it a whole lot different toward my sister. That's all I remember about discipline that she was the one that ...

PIEHLER: I think we sort of indirectly alluded to this, even when you left school, could you talk about the way the nurses were supposed to dress—the expectations for dress?

KOCH: Oh, yes, very conservatively. You're not supposed to be seen out in public in your uniform. If you had to go—let's see, where was I—I guess it was when I was in Winnipeg, they had just started that you could ride the bus home with your uniform on, but until then, we were—you didn't wear a uniform outside the hospital.

PIEHLER: So you had to, obviously, wear it in the hospital, but then take it off.

KOCH: Yes.

PIEHLER: And the big concession's you could go home--

KOCH: Yes.

PIEHLER: Or ride the bus.

KOCH: And you know ... other than that, I—you know, made your own judgments as to how you dressed.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm. Before we...talk about going into the service I want to make sure, April, we've gotten all your sort of early nursing and training or any ...

HAMILTON: Do you remember what you started out ... as a wage when you got out of nursing school?

KOCH: I know it was more down in the States. Something like eighty dollars a months, board and room. That was in the States, and it was in a big city.

PIEHLER: In the States, and was ... Canada half of that roughly, or ...

KOCH: No I just ...

PIEHLER: You just can't remember, yeah.

HAMILTON: So you never really lived outside of the nursing housing. Did any nurses have their own apartments or ...

KOCH: In Winnipeg, we--my roommate and I—finally did get a place, near the hospital, and it was just a room, actually.

HAMILTON: Just a room, for both of you?

KOCH: Yes.

HAMILTON: Wow. Close counters.

KOCH: Yeah, and we shared a bathroom, it was just, you know, a place—that's what they did, they let rooms.

HAMILTON: Indoor plumbing?

KOCH: Oh yeah, oh yes. This was in 1942.

PIEHLER: You, you mentioned—how did it come about that you joined the American—you were Canadian—how did it come about that you joined the ... American ...

KOCH: Because I was living in the States and ...the Canadians didn't need nurses, it's ...

PIEHLER: Yeah, you'd mentioned that.

KOCH: So, I thought, "Well, I'll just apply and see what happens," and I talked my girlfriend into applying, and, so we went to ... Camp Erie Proving Grounds—Lake Erie—and no question about being accepted, you know. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Well you—it sounds like, because you have a pamphlet here, do you remember how you got the pamphlet about nursing?

KOCH: No, I don't.

PIEHLER: But you definitely—you got a sense you were being—there was real interest in getting women nurses for the Americans. Your girlfriend—who—do you remember her name?

KOCH: The one that joined the services with me?

PIEHLER: Yeah. And was at Cleveland.

KOCH: Oh. Marie Allen.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm, did she pass away, or is she still ...

KOCH: I don't know, after our unit broke up after the war. I never heard from any—I heard from two of the girls, and I stayed in touch, and after that, we stopped keeping in touch, and I haven't heard from anybody from the 105th Evac in years. Twenty years.

PIEHLER: But you were the—this was the friend who would go dancing with you, in the dance halls in Cleveland?

KOCH: Let's see. Marie Allen was, yeah.

PIEHLER: And stay up all—and you sort of talked her into going into ...

KOCH: Yeah.

PIEHLER: And you enlisted where, in Cleveland?

KOCH: In Cleveland, uh huh.

PIEHLER: And where did you—do you remember where you took actually took ... the oath ...

KOCH: No, I don't.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm. And ...you enlisted in 1943?

KOCH: Yes.

PIEHLER: And ... you mentioned going to Erie for ...

KOCH: To apply and for the physical and all that stuff.

PIEHLER: So you didn't actually have the physical in Cleveland?

KOCH: No.

PIEHLER: It was in Erie, Pennsylvania.

KOCH: Yeah.

PIEHLER: What was that sort of experience, that initial induction ...

KOCH: I don't think it was Erie, Pennsylvania. I think it was Erie, Ohio, on the Erie Proving

Grounds.

PIEHLER: Erie Proving. Okay ... because I know there's an Erie, Pennsylvania.

KOCH: Yeah, there is.

PIEHLER: So it's Erie Proving Grounds, not Erie Pennsylvania. My mistake. What was that sort of induction process like? Do you remember?

KOCH: Well it was just kind of scary.

PIEHLER: What was scary about it?

KOCH: Well my heart was beating so fast I thought, "Well maybe I won't pass that physical," it was just like when you go to the doctor. You get anxious.

PIEHLER: But you were sort of around doctors all the time, and nurses ...

KOCH: I know it ...

PIEHLER: But you were still anxious even the physical.

KOCH: Yep, yep.

PIEHLER: I mean this is sort of an odd question, but ... men who go into the Army, they really remember their physicals because ... there's a large room of them. How did they do the women's physicals? Did they put ...

KOCH: Well it was a very individual thing, I don't remember anybody ...

PIEHLER: You didn't have long lines like they did for the men? (Laughs)

KOCH: No.

PIEHLER: No, it's...once you were sort of going through this induction process, did you have any second thoughts about what you were getting ...

KOCH: No, I don't remember any.

PIEHLER: Well, You were obviously accepted. Where did you go to next after being inducted as in ...

KOCH: We went to Ft. Benjamin Harrison, in Indianapolis. We went there for some training. We worked with the station hospital, and that's where we were issued our uniforms and told that we were on our way I guess.

PIEHLER: In terms of your training what did you learn about Army life and Army discipline and Army ways of doing things—not necessarily directly related to being a nurse, but more, just the Army way of doing things.

KOCH: What did I learn about it?

PIEHLER: Well, did you for example do any marching?

KOCH: Yes. (Laughing)

PIEHLER: That would be Basic ...

KOCH: When we went to—we had training. We went from Fort Benjamin Harrison to Fort Knox, Kentucky, and then we were going to be assigned a unit, so we were put on a hospital train, and went down the east coast to New Orleans, and across to Yuma, Arizona, and there we went on desert maneuvers—and of course we had our uniforms and all—and we were in the Army then, and we supported—they had mock war games there and we supported this group, and learned to sterilize our water in a lister bag and that kind of thing. And it was mostly first aid type of stuff we had, you know. Then, from there they sent us to Ft. Jackson, South Carolina. And there's where they taught us to do the foxhole, and to clean the area for land mines. That was ridiculous

HAMILTON: Wait, they taught you that?

PIEHLER: That was at Ft. Jackson.

KOCH: Fort Jackson. Huh?

HAMILTON: They taught you all that?

KOCH: Yeah.

PIEHLER: How do you clean—how do you remember about cleaning ...

KOCH: All I remember is getting on my belly, and you know, like this like—sort of like a breaststroke ... (Laughter) And then we—what else? Oh, we went on marches. Not as severe as the guys.

PIEHLER: But how long would a march be for—

KOCH: Oh it's a few miles.

PIEHLER: Few miles. With pack?

KOCH: With our pack, yeah, and then we had a lot of classes, and taught us how to use our gas masks.

PIEHLER: Did you actually go into a room—did you have to use your gas mask in a room filled with gas?

KOCH: No.

PIEHLER: They didn't actually ...

KOCH: Nuh uh.

PIEHLER: Did they have any live firing? ... They didn't have you crawl under barbed wire?

KOCH: They had a variation of the infiltration course, but not like the GI's

PIEHLER: But they didn't fire live ammunition over your head.

KOCH: No, No, No. If they did I don't remember, and I think I would have remembered that. And ... what else did they give us there? I had it, but it's gone.

HAMILTON: Do you remember what was in your packs that you had to carry around as a nurse?

KOCH: Uh, no.

HAMILTON: Like basic bandages?

KOCH: Oh, no, none of that stuff.

HAMILTON: Nothing?

KOCH: Nothing medical, just whatever we needed for our—like we had a bedroll that we slept on. And a duffle bag that we had our underwear in.

HAMILTON: So, basically like in the Army but ...

KOCH: Well, yeah in the Army, and we had our helmets.

PIEHLER: Go just backing up, you went first before Benjamin Harrison, and you said you had some training and you had some hospital duty.

KOCH: Yeah.

PIEHLER: In terms of the training, what kind of training do you remember at Benjamin Harrison?

KOCH: I don't remember any particular training, it must have been classes.

PIEHLER: Classes?

KOCH: Yeah.

PIEHLER: So, classes in Army medicine? Or Army regulation?

KOCH: Procedures. Yeah, Army procedures.

PIEHLER: Anything you learned about Army procedures, that, you know, particularly initially stuck out as—because as the Army way, I've been told—there's the Army way of doing things, and ...

KOCH: Just that, you know, it's slower. And there's a lot of waiting, I mean a lot of waiting in the Army. Even the officers have to wait in line for things.

PIEHLER: When did you actually get your commission, as ...

KOCH: As ... at the time of induction.

PIEHLER: So, you were immediately commissioned?

KOCH: Yep.

PIEHLER: There was no training?

KOCH: No. We just got it.

PIEHLER: You just got it. So, as soon as you reported to Benjamin Harrison, you were an officer. [Ed. – 2nd Lt., Army Nursing Corps]

KOCH: And the guys, we thought we'd go to the Officers Club that night. And so the GI's are used to this, you know. And so they had to go out of their way to pass us and salute just to watch us stumble through a return salute. (Laughter) They would get a big kick out of that. I don't think anybody ever taught us how to salute. We had just got our uniforms and we were on our own. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: And you were sort of eager to go to the Officer's Club?

KOCH: Oh, yeah.

PIEHLER: So, you were in Erie and went to the...

KOCH: No, this was in Fort Benjamin Harrison.

PIEHLER: Were you commissioned in Erie, or was it ...

KOCH: I believe I was commissioned in Fort Benjamin...

PIEHLER: Okay. It was pretty quickly after you arrived.

KOCH: Yes, yeah

PIEHLER: Because you sort of imply that you got the uniform and were eager to ...

KOCH: Yeah, show off. (Chuckles)

HAMILTON: What were—what was the relationship like with the brand new nurses or the nurses and the GI's?

KOCH: GI's were wonderful.

HAMILTON: They respected you?

KOCH: Oh, yes! Very much so. Fun-loving, loved to laugh. I have great respect for those Americans who ...

HAMILTON: I'm sure they liked having the women around too.

KOCH: Oh, yeah.

HAMILTON: Like home.

KOCH: Yeah.

PIEHLER: What was it like to work—you were doing, it sounds like you were doing a lot of course work, classes at Fort Benjamin Harrison. But you did mention working in the Army hospital there. The base hospital ...

KOCH: Station hospital.

PIEHLER: What was that like, particularly this was your third type of hospital that you had worked in. You had been in the Catholic affiliated hospital, a big city hospital in the States, and now an Army hospital ...

KOCH: Well, it was the Army way. A lot of discipline, a lot of straightening up the linen, and keeping the bed straight, and all this passing out medicines, and keeping the guys from shooting pool and craps and all cause if a senior officer came by, they'd get it for that. So ... (Laughter)

PIEHLER: So, you literally had to—they really wanted to play craps and cards?

KOCH: That's all they had to do. (Laughter)

HAMILTON: So, in a sense, you guys had to almost be mama.

KOCH: Right. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Well, so it was—sounds like, particularly at the station hospital they really stress the fact that these patients are still in the Army. In terms of what ...

KOCH: Oh, yeah. Definitely. Yep

PIEHLER: What else about the Army way, particularly in the station hospital, struck you? Because you mention that you had to keep things rigidly neat and, also, that they couldn't play craps or pool if they wanted to.

KOCH: It wasn't real busy. There wasn't—you know, and they were all wards and private rooms. And it was just fun.

PIEHLER: What kind of cases did you—were there?

KOCH: Um, minor stuff, broken ankles. Maybe an appendix—you know, just general stuff like colds, infections, etc.

PIEHLER: So these were—the people at the station hospital were people who had really been injured—sort of, in a sense, a general hospital care that you'd get. These were not war injuries?

KOCH: Oh, no.

PIEHLER: No. But it was very much—appendicitis sounds something that could happen...

KOCH: Yeah, to the GI's ...

PIEHLER: Broken bones ...

KOCH: Yeah. Just something that happened on the base. Maybe a car accident, or something like that.

PIEHLER: And then, you started saying, after Fort—you went to New Orleans. Is that—you mentioned ...

KOCH: That was on the troop train, we went down to ...

PIEHLER: New Orleans. When did you join the unit that you were ...

KOCH: We got out to Yuma, Arizona...

PIEHLER: Not until Yuma. So, first you went to New Orleans. And how long were you in New Orleans?

KOCH: Oh, just overnight.

PIEHLER: Overnight?

KOCH: Overnight, or day actually. Just a day.

PIEHLER: And then you went to Yuma.

KOCH: Yeah.

PIEHLER: And that's were you joined your ...

KOCH: The unit. And the guys were mostly from California and Ohio.

PIEHLER: And did you join the unit from its beginnings? Or had it—did you come to an established unit?

KOCH: The nurses joined it there.

PIEHLER: That's were the nurses—so all of you nurses came in and ... Now were these the same nurses from Benjamin Harrison? Were you in a ...

KOCH: ... I guess maybe they were, yeah.

PIEHLER: So you traveled on this troop train with this group of nurses.

KOCH: Yeah, yeah.

PIEHLER: What was that—it sounds like you remember something of that trip ... to New Orleans ...

KOCH: It was slow! Went all through the hills of Tennessee and Kentucky and you know this little—and I had never seen anything like that, and around the mountains, you know. It was the real world and the rocks with the, "Prepare to meet God," and all that ... (Laughs) That was a new experience.

PIEHLER: Which is something like—you had grown up in rural Canada. I mean prairie Canada, but that ...

KOCH: I know, I know. But that's different somehow. I thought Canada was the only place that was so backward, where I grew up. I thought, goodness, there's no people living like this. But I found out they do. (Laughter) All over the world.

PIEHLER: You also were struck by these religion signs? The "Prepare to meet ..."

KOCH: Yeah.

PIEHLER: That was new to you?

KOCH: Yeah, I guess we were going through the Baptist Belt. (Chuckles)

PIEHLER: Did you get any time in New Orleans?

KOCH: We went to a place to eat dinner. I guess that's about all.

PIEHLER: In Yuma, which to my understanding it's desert ...

KOCH: It is the desert.

PIEHLER: Uh, its desert like...

KOCH: Beautiful sunsets, and ... Oh, I loved Yuma, it was so pretty.

PIEHLER: What time of year were you in Yuma?

KOCH: It would have been in the spring.

PIEHLER: Spring of '44?

KOCH: Yes.

PIEHLER: And that's where you started to do maneuvers, is that ...

KOCH: Yes.

HAMILTON: Did the relationship with the physicians change any when you went to Yuma?

KOCH: All the guys who were in our unit with us, were just, you know, one of us. It was entirely different in the service. There was no class distinction. No, we were just—we were a unit. Yeah, all together different.

PIEHLER: So, because it says in here you were—they arrive in Yuma, the unit begins to arrive in January of 1940 -1944. I just want to back up, in terms of—when were you in Kentucky at Fort Knox? Just to make sure.

KOCH: Right out I got out of—just after I got in to the service we went to ... Fort Benjamin Harrison, and then Fort Knox.

PIEHLER: Okay.

KOCH: And then Yuma, okay.

PIEHLER: And Fort Knox. How long were you in Fort Knox?

KOCH: ... Not long in any of those places.

PIEHLER: Yeah, we've somewhere had a program here from Fort Knox, but...

KOCH: Oh, that...

PIEHLER: But it's probably under ... (referring to a table full of memorabilia)

KOCH: That menu?

PIEHLER: That menu, I've just ... Well, it'll turn up.

HAMILTON: Oh, it's right there.

KOCH: (Signaling to Jonnie Cooper) That purple one, Joanie.

PIEHLER: Because it's—just to back up, because you were there for Christmas and New Year's it sounds like in 1943. The 150th, One Five Five O, Medical Section Service unit.

KOCH: When was that?

PIEHLER: This was Christmas dinner 1943. And let's see if we can ... (Looking at program) And your listed here as one of the second lieutenants. Cecelia Sexton.

KOCH: I saw that. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: Yes. But you don't—it sounds like you were here....

----- End of Tape One, Side Two -----

PIEHLER: This continues an interview with Cecelia Sexton Koch, on ...

KOCH: It's "Cook."

PIEHLER: Oh, excuse me, it looks—coming from the New York area, too. I see Koch and I just, it looks—okay. It's Koch, Cecelia Sexton Koch. On March 16th, 2004, at her home in Hickson, Tennessee, with Kurt Piehler ...

HAMILTON: April Hamilton

PIEHLER: And I should also note, that it's being—her two daughters are also occasionally participating and their names are ...

GUFFIN: Jackie Guffin.

COOPER: Joanie Cooper.

PIEHLER: And ... you don't remember, I mean it sounds like it did not leave an impression at Fort Knox, but Yuma's when you really joined the unit. And you mentioned earlier that this is where you started to get a sense of what you might be doing, as an evac unit. What do you remember about the maneuvers, in Yuma? You said you did a lot of first aid cases.

KOCH: That was about all we had, and ... there were simulated battle casualties. So ... there just wasn't a lot.

PIEHLER: Yeah, did you have to move around a lot, during the war game?

KOCH: No, no.

PIEHLER: So you weren't trying to, you weren't assigned to a particular army.

KOCH: We weren't following them.

PIEHLER: ...yeah you weren't following them, and there wasn't ...

KOCH: They came to us.

PIEHLER: (Laughs) And there wasn't a threat of capture. Like you weren't playing the war game, where your unit could be—you know, we have to evacuate otherwise we ... So in many ways, you were there, and the unit sounds like it was being formed and you were just ... you were doing first aid, and ... not part of the war game, as such.

KOCH: That's right.

PIEHLER: And you mentioned the sunsets were very pretty.

KOCH: They were beautiful.

PIEHLER: Did you ever get into Yuma itself?

KOCH: Yes, and we went to Mexico. We went to a bull fight, and I had crossed the Canadian border so much, and ... it was no big deal, so nylon hose was really a big thing back then if you could get them. And they had them in Mexico, and I bought some and didn't declare them. And they wanted to go through my bag. I was in uniform, too! And there were the hose. So they took me in this little room, and questioned me, and I thought they were going to throw me in the clink. They just fined me. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: So, you had to pay a fine for not declaring your ...

KOCH: And I didn't have enough money for the fine. I had to borrow it from one of the guys that

was with us. Anyway, that was Mexico.

PIEHLER: Where in Mexico did you go? Do you remember?

KOCH: Right across from Needles, what is it called? Mexicali, is it?

PIEHLER: I'm not sure, but it sounds like—you went to a bullfight. What did you think of that, was it what you expected?

KOCH: It was ... just a bullfight.

PIEHLER: But it sounds like you did some shopping that ...

KOCH: Yes, yes we did do some shopping and we had dinner.

HAMILTON: How was the treatment, when you guys got down to Mexico. Where you ... looked at as higher?

KOCH: No, I don't think that wasn't in the service showed us any particular ... respect for us one way or another. I remember that in California, there was this couple that was walking behind us said, "You know, I've never seen a good looking woman in uniform?" (Laughs) We heard them say it!

PIEHLER: When ... were you in California?

KOCH: When we were in Yuma.

PIEHLER: You crossed over into California, and ...

KOCH: But most of the time they just took you in as part of the ... and there were so many people in uniform, everywhere, in all kinds and shapes. And women too, they were all WACs. So it was—we were just one of the crowd.

PIEHLER: You—the hose thing, I think—I'm familiar with it, but give us just some sense of how valuable this hose is worth, during the war itself. Because I think students who are reading this interview don't have a sense of how difficult they were to get a hold of.

KOCH: Oh, well you couldn't get them unless you got them in the black market, in Mexico.

PIEHLER: So Mexico was ...

KOCH: So they were—nylon hose was the new thing. That was ... the new thing

HAMILTON: Were they pretty expensive?

KOCH: I don't, you couldn't buy them. Oh down there. I don't remember. I don't think they were

very expensive.

PIEHLER: Anything else you remember about Yuma or the area?

KOCH: Well—you know, things back then were happening so fast, and each day was different, you didn't know where you were going or when. You were just caught up in the wave and moved up. And a lot of things are just forgotten

PIEHLER: So you just conveyed a sense that things moved fast for you. What about this unit that's starting to form, this unit you served with for the duration of the war. What was your sense of the 105th as it was really being formed in Yuma? What memories sort of stick out about individuals or impressions?

KOCH: The camaraderie, you know, everybody was just in it for the same reason, and it was just a tight knit group.

PIEHLER: And you're an officer but also you're not a—how was the Army, could you say more about the Army doctor-nurse relationship in the army.

KOCH: The doctor/nurse relationship was so far apart. The days of class distinction were gone. We were all medic—in the Medical Corps.

PIEHLER: So you, there wasn't the notion of stepping off the elevator when you—because it's such a wonderful story. It says a lot about—so that would be ...

KOCH: Yeah, these guys, we had the highest respect for. They were all great guys.

PIEHLER: What were the backgrounds of the doctors you served with, do you remember any ...

KOCH: Well, not especially, no.

PIEHLER: How many were—how do I put it—fresh out of medical school or residencies and how many were older physicians?

KOCH: I couldn't tell you that. We had—it seems like we had a number of older ones. That's why I was thinking we were going into this dedication to this war memorial in Washington. And I thought, well, if I saw any one of these officers they were all older than I am. They may not even make it. If they do they're going to be real old, then. Because they were—it's got the pictures here—I'd say that they were older than us, anyway. And we were what, twenty-two?

PIEHLER: Yeah, I'm trying to find—well, one of the things it's so good at conveying is how complex this organization was. It's listing the sections—the mess, the receiving evacuations, the motor pool, the ward sections, the detachment headquarters, the supply and utilities section, the registrar—that this is a very large organization

KOCH: It was—we were supposed to be the second chain of evacuation, the Battalion Aid

Station, and then the ... evac hospitals or the field hospitals. But they couldn't find field hospital. And we just got them ready for transportation back to the rear or back to the states or somewhere.

HAMILTON: I'm just curious, and I meant to ask you this before and I'm sorry, but I've read that, and especially coming from a very close-knit family, what was it like for the first time leaving your mother, when you were going off?

KOCH: Well, I guess I was a little bit sad. But I was a—I was a pretty even disposition kid. I know that when my sister called me for the first time, in September and I had gone into training in March, I cried the whole time, so I must have missed her. (Laughs) But we were close, yes, but independent, like you said, to some extent.

PIEHLER: What did your mother think of you joining the service?

KOCH: She just said that there were some things you had to do. That we do what we think is right.

HAMILTON: How often were you allowed to keep in contact with them?

KOCH: No limits, no.

PIEHLER: Did you write often?

KOCH: No. (Laughter) I never was a good correspondent.

PIEHLER: After Yuma, you then went to, you mentioned—actually I can even—there's even a map ...

KOCH: Part of the map, I think is little here ...

PIEHLER: It looks like you went from Yuma, and there's—you went to Fort Jackson. And what happened at Fort Jackson? I think you said you remember—very clear, so you were basically on the ground and you had your arms out like you were swimming. And you got some training in gas masks.

KOCH: And some marches, and we learned to drill, and we did not, I don't remember being in a hospital.

PIEHLER: You were very much a field hospital.

KOCH: We were ready to...go across

PIEHLER: Did you have any sense where your unit was going to go?

KOCH: No, I didn't know.

PIEHLER: You didn't know if it was going to be the Europe or Pacific theater?

KOCH: No, no I didn't.

PIEHLER: Where would you, where did you want to go? If you had your choice at the time?

KOCH: Well, I just thought we were going to Europe, I mean, in my mind ...

PIEHLER: But you didn't know that for sure.

KOCH: Yeah, I was not a citizen at that time and I had to take the oath of citizenship to go overseas with the unit. So I became a naturalized citizen while I was in South Carolina.

PIEHLER: And how did you ...

KOCH: I just went down with the rest of them. And they were most—seemed to me they were mostly Mexican. There were a lot foreign people who couldn't speak English. And they asked this one guy why he wanted to be an American citizen he said he wanted to speak English. And I was glad they didn't ask me anything about American history, because I might have failed. (Laughter) But he didn't ask me any questions.

PIEHLER: Had you studied any American history in school?

KOCH: No, I hadn't. Oh, in school? Very little, because I think that came in the seventh grade, and for some reason we skipped the seventh grade. We didn't have a teacher, I guess.

PIEHLER: So the history you had had it been Canadian history?

KOCH: Canadian and English history.

HAMILTON: And if you didn't have a teacher, you just ...

KOCH: I don't know what the reason was. In my mind I decided that's why they combined the two grades—6th and 7th.

PIEHLER: I should probably put these dates on here, on the tapes. Camp Cook, the units began in Camp Cook on March 10th 1943 through January 4th 1944, and you weren't with the unit, then. You joined them in Yuma, Arizona, for their maneuvers, and their maneuvers were from January 5th 1944 to March 12th 1944. Then you were at Fort Jackson for a while, from March 16th 1944 to August 10th 1944. Then you went to Camp Kilmer from August 11th 1944 to August 27th 1944. I guess two questions that come out from the time you were at Fort Jackson is the summer heat. What do you remember about your first summer in the South?

KOCH: Well, I loved it.

PIEHLER: The heat didn't bother you?

KOCH: It wasn't a problem. Except, I did go home to—I went to Cleveland by train to visit—my mother came to the States, and I took the train. There was no air conditioning, the windows were down. The soot and stuff kind of blew back. Now that was hot, I remember that.

PIEHLER: So you—this was a ... coal burning train ...

KOCH: I guess so, yeah.

PIEHLER: ... because you remember the soot. And that's one of the hottest ...

KOCH: That's one of the hottest events I remember in Fort Jackson. We went swimming at somebody's pool.

PIEHLER: What else do you remember ... about South Carolina?

KOCH: Well, I was in love. It wasn't my husband, so we went to the movies and the officers' clubs, and we had dances. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: So he was a fellow officer?

KOCH: Yeah, from another unit—from the Yankee Division.

PIEHLER: So he wasn't a medical...

KOCH: No, it was called the Yankee Division, the YD—26th Infantry, actually. As I say, we weren't nursing. We were just training, getting ready for the ...

PIEHLER: Did you make it to the shore, the Carolina coast at all? You ever get a pass?

KOCH: Well, I was going to go to Myrtle Beach. That was the big thing. All the GIs wanted to go to Myrtle Beach. But we never went.

PIEHLER: Never made it? What else struck you about South Carolina? Anything else about—particularly because you haven't traveled much, and now you've lived in Cleveland, you've been out to Yuma and now you were in the South.

KOCH: They were different.

PIEHLER: What was so different?

KOCH: The speech, and the lazy, laid back ways. I liked it. I still love the South.

PIEHLER: So you found that it was more laid back than when you grew up in Canada.

KOCH: I guess so.

PIEHLER: What about the ... the segregation, do you any your memories or impression of that?

KOCH: No, I don't remember much about the black race at all. The only time I'd ever seen them as a young person was on the trains—the porters on the trains.

PIEHLER: Is this is Canada, too?

HAMILTON: Any Indians, or Japanese Americans?

KOCH: Oh, lots of Indians, oh yeah.

HAMILTON: Any Japanese women, or ...

KOCH: No, no Japanese, no.

PIEHLER: One thing I should observe in this picture map is cartoons about—at Camp Croft they have a lot of mosquitoes. (Laughter) Do you remember the mosquitoes at ...

KOCH: No, remember I came from Canada. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: I've heard that summers are very hot and mosquito-filled, so that wasn't a shock. What about going to Camp—and also, I guess, not did you take the troop train from Benjamin Harrison to New Orleans to Yuma, but then you took—you, I assume, went over as a unit to Camp—Fort Jackson and then to Kilmer. What were those train rides like?

KOCH: Well, it was just a lot of fun. I love the train.

PIEHLER: Now, were you on troop trains or did you ever get a Pullman on any of these ...

KOCH: Troop trains.

PIEHLER: So with the hard backed ...

KOCH: We rode across France in the Forty-and-eights, so we're train people.

PIEHLER: Now Camp Kilmer, what are your memories? You weren't there very long, but do you have any memories of being in Camp Kilmer?

KOCH: Just going on leave to New York.

PIEHLER: Was that your first time to New York?

KOCH: First time.

PIEHLER: And what do you remember about that?

KOCH: Just going to the clubs, the floorshows, the dancing.

PIEHLER: Any clubs that stick out?

KOCH: Let's see, what was it, Leon and Andy's?

PIEHLER: Well, the big one I always think of, the one that is always very pricey is the Stork club.

KOCH: I don't remember the Stork club.

PIEHLER: And I hear of a lot of people going to the Paramount for movies and shows.

KOCH: We saw ... *Oklahoma!* I believe.

PIEHLER: Oh you saw *Oklahoma!*?

KOCH: What was that club—what was the black piano player, it was his club—Lionel Hampton

PIEHLER: Lionel Hampton? You heard Lionel Hampton?

KOCH: And I saw William Holden walking down the street. I love William Holden.

PIEHLER: Did you go to the Stage Door Canteen?

KOCH: Was that in Hollywood?

PIEHLER: No, that was also in New York.

KOCH: Oh, was it? No, I didn't go.

PIEHLER: But you went to several New York clubs, you saw *Oklahoma!*. Did you see any other tours?

KOCH: No other tours. We didn't get in there every day.

PIEHLER: You mentioned having a romance in South Carolina with someone from the Yankee Division. What happened?

KOCH: He was killed.

PIEHLER: He was killed. When did he die?

KOCH: Their unit went over just ahead of ours. It was at the time of the push through Saint-Lô, Sainte-Mère-Eglise, in that area after D-Day. And I think he must have been killed in that—along in there.

PIEHLER: So you guys weren't engaged before that happened.

KOCH: Not formally.

PIEHLER: But I get the sense that if he had lived you might be husband and wife.

KOCH: I'd have been Ms. McGeehan.

PIEHLER: Where was he from?

KOCH: He was from Wisconsin.

PIEHLER: What was his first name, do you remember?

KOCH: Charles.

PIEHLER: Charles McGeehan. How did you meet?

KOCH: Blind date. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: So who was the one that fixed you up?

KOCH: Oh, one of the girls in the unit. Back in—I guess it was in Fort Jackson.

PIEHLER: Was he a second lieutenant?

KOCH: He was a second lieutenant.

PIEHLER: When was the last time you saw each other before ...

KOCH: In New York. I think he got off from his unit and I came in from Camp Kilmer and we met at one of the clubs.

PIEHLER: So it sounds like you were having ...

KOCH: A good time. (Laughs) This doesn't sound like a wartime account, does it?

PIEHLER: Well, we sort of do the whole war ...

HAMILTON: 'Cause you still lived through the war. Even though you're fighting, but you're still having civilian life.

KOCH: Oh, you've got to have your laughs.

PIEHLER: ... Particularly when you were at Camp Kilmer and you knew that you were going overseas, what did you sort of expect? And you had been through your training. What were your

images of what it would be like versus in a sense what it would be?

KOCH: No it was just ... sort of here today, here today.

PIEHLER: Did you think you could get killed in this?

KOCH: No.

PIEHLER: No, you didn't have any of those conceptions—no.

KOCH: We didn't have any of those fears at all.

PIEHLER: Should you have had some fears, looking back on it?

KOCH: No, no.

PIEHLER: You didn't have any close calls then.

KOCH: Well, we did. We were too young, and care free, and weren't serious about life—no responsibilities. Our hospital was bombed once, and one of our guys were killed, but not from the bombing.

PIEHLER: I guess, since you mentioned him, because I noticed this in ... your unit yearbook, there was a Haskell G. Sexton ...

KOCH: He was not related.

PIEHLER: He's not related. I didn't think he was, but ... he was born in May 26th, 1911 and he died March 21st, 1945. How was he killed?

KOCH: He just got too close to the front. He was in a Jeep with some body and that's what I hear.... And I guess a German .88 came over.

PIEHLER: What was his position in the unit? What were his responsibilities?

KOCH: He was not in the medical part. He was in the maintenance part.

PIEHLER: Maintenance part? And so it sounds like he was out in a jeep and it just ...

KOCH: Yeah, just got too close to the front. A German .88, or whatever it was, came over and just bombed him.

PIEHLER: You were not that far from the front?

KOCH: We could hear the heavy guns, we could hear the *ak-ak* and all that—everything.

PIEHLER: You mentioned, since we are on close calls and vivid memories, that you were bombed once. Where were you bombed?

KOCH: We were in Holland, Maastricht, Holland, and it was a place where the ... monks or the brothers lived, and they lived in the basement of the building where we set up. And it was Christmas or New Year's and they were trying for army headquarters with wherever the Germans were and they dropped two five hundred pound bombs right outside our window. And one of them was a dud—didn't go off, fortunately. One of them went off. Some people had flying glass injuries and things like that.

PIEHLER: This was just handed to me by April—by one of your daughters. I want to ask you about another incident, one of a sort of close call, because you raised the issue about—you didn't think you were going to be—you didn't fear any dangers. This was an award of a Soldier's Medal, which you receive for First Lieutenant Cecilia Sexton, N767711 Army Nurse's Corps, while serving with the Army of the United States, distinguished herself by her heroism and courageous action in Germany on 3rd of April, 1945. When a fuel oil heater caught fire and ignited a hospital ward tent, Lieutenant Sexton, voluntarily risking her own life, aided in the evacuation of the patients and the extinguishing of the flames. The heroism and courage of Lieutenant Sexton reflect much credit upon herself and uphold the highest traditions of the military service. So that sounds like another close call, is ...

KOCH: Well, you know—it sounds flowery. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: There was some risk involved here.

KOCH: But [I] never felt it.

PIEHLER: Never felt it?

KOCH: No. I never did. I've felt more scared in this house when somebody rings the doorbell at night than I ever was during the service. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: So, you were bombed once, and then you went into a burning tent.

KOCH: All of our hospitals were set up in tents and they were kind of connected.

PIEHLER: So you got the patients out?

KOCH: I didn't do much. (Laughs) I was there in the right place at the right time. They were all in litters, you know—on stands and we just kinda moved them over to one side and the GIs are the ones that really did most. They came in from pharmacy, from surgery, and they cut the tents loose so that the fire was separated, cut off. It could've been worse but it wasn't, but anyway our C.O. got us all a medal.

PIEHLER: What other sort of close calls have you had? 'Cause you mentioned the bombing and this is another. Were you ever in a V1 or V2?

KOCH: No.

PIEHLER: What about any artillery? You were never close enough for artillery?

KOCH: We'd hear the buzz bombs go over.

PIEHLER: Yes, so you did hear the buzz bombs.

KOCH: Yes.

PIEHLER: Did you ever get separated by your unit accidentally?

KOCH: No.

PIEHLER: No you were always in a ... Did you ever have a patient who was sort of a threat?

KOCH: No. I never had. I don't think we ever had.

HAMILTON: So you never worked on any enemy men?

KOCH: Yes, we had prisoners. But we just, when they took the prisoners if they needed something, we took care of them and then shipped them...

HAMILTON: But you never felt threatened by them?

KOCH: No.

PIEHLER: Well, going back sort of in order, I wanted to get some of your vivid memories. I guess, your boyfriend, did he feel the similar sense of invulnerability? Did you have that sense that you were both going to make it through?

KOCH: Yeah, I think so. We never talked about it.

PIEHLER: It sounds like you thought you were a little immortal at the time.

KOCH: I guess so. I didn't think is what it was.

PIEHLER: What was it like to go over on the *Queen Elizabeth*?

KOCH: That was an event. I mean, we didn't have first class accommodation.

PIEHLER: What were your accommodation like, could you describe ...

KOCH: It was just a little cabin, nothing special about it.

PIEHLER: Well it was a remarkably fast voyage.

KOCH: Five days.

PIEHLER: Five days. And you say you were in a cabin with how many other nurses?

KOCH: There were just two or three I believe, in with me.

PIEHLER: And you ate with the officers obviously?

KOCH: Oh, yes.

PIEHLER: So you would have table service on the *Q.E. II*?

KOCH: Yeah.

PIEHLER: How crowded was the ship that you went over on?

KOCH: It was wall-to-wall men. (Laughter) When we went over on that ferry, we were just jammed down on that ferry and all around was guys. (Laughter) You couldn't hardly see up over top of them, and you didn't know where you were going, you just moved along. Of course it says they were playing a little barrel poker, and we didn't know where we were going. We didn't know we were on a boat, we didn't know what we were on. We were on a little ferry, but it was just moving, and we were moving with it.

PIEHLER: And did you have any submarine drills going overseas?

KOCH: No, no drills, but apparently they picked up a submarine pack out of England—I read.

PIEHLER: Yeah, you read but you ...

KOCH: Didn't know about it. Well, I did. They told us to sleep in our clothes that night.

PIEHLER: And you did?

KOCH: We did.

PIEHLER: Did you get seasick at all?

KOCH: No, but I did coming back. Came back with my baby, Jackie—she was born in Germany—and my husband, Jim Koch. We came back on a hospital ship, and boy, paid for those guys to have that to come on that. It was a little one, a little one. We were all sick.

PIEHLER: Since you raised coming back, when did you come back?

KOCH: July, about '46.

PIEHLER: So you were in Europe for a while?

KOCH: Isn't that right? After the war—I got married after the war and stayed over there. Jackie was born—married in February, she was born in November, we came back the next July.

HAMILTON: But you still worked as a nurse in Germany, correct?

KOCH: Until I was five months pregnant, and then at that time, you couldn't get out of the service unless you were pregnant.

HAMILTON: Did you ever learn any German?

KOCH: Oh, I could get by. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Now, where did you land? Where did the *Q.E. II* dock?

KOCH: The Firth of Clyde, I believe.

PIEHLER: And how long were you in England?

KOCH: About a couple weeks. Got to see Fife and Cambria and the southern part of England.

PIEHLER: And you had been born in England, and you had some memories. What was it like to be back in England?

KOCH: I thought, it's not as pretty as I thought it was going to be. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: Really?

KOCH: Well, it must have been misty. That was my first feeling.

PIEHLER: Your accent—when you were in England itself, did people identify—would they have detected that you were from England if you didn't tell them.

KOCH: No, I don't think so. My mother and my older sisters both have quite a distinct accent.

PIEHLER: Any other impressions of England in wartime?

KOCH: No, 'cause I didn't socialize with the families as a lot of the people did, got to know families.

PIEHLER: No family adopted you?

KOCH: No.

PIEHLER: Did you go to the pubs at all? Or have tea?

KOCH: Yeah we did, I'm sure. We went to a club, the Lord Louis Mountbatten. It was his estate that had turned it into an Ulsters' club. And we went there one time and had the squab with the little feet hanging out, you know? This is a little girl from the prairies—didn't go for that. Where else did we go?

PIEHLER: Did you ever make it to London during the war?

KOCH: Later on I did.

PIEHLER: But not in this initial ...

KOCH: No.

PIEHLER: Did your unit do any training while you were in England?

KOCH: No, we were just waiting for our orders.

PIEHLER: So it was really a literally waiting?

KOCH: Yeah. So we had to find things to do. It had been a resort, so it was right there on the ocean. People played cards and talked and just found their own amusements.

HAMILTON: So technically, you didn't start your nursing in there?

KOCH: No, it was a long process before we got to do our thing. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: ... When you finally got your orders, how did you get to France, because you went to Normandy?

KOCH: We took those Forty-and-eights across France.

PIEHLER: ... But how did you actually get to Normandy, France?

KOCH: Oh, to France? We crossed the channel in a Dutch boat, the nurses did.

PIEHLER: The nurses. So you didn't go all ...

KOCH: No, the GIs went in an—I don't know what kind of boat. They had a rough crossing, really rough.

PIEHLER: So your crossing was not as rough?

KOCH: Not too bad. I don't remember being sick, so that was good.

PIEHLER: But they had one that was memorably ... (Laughter)

KOCH: Yes.

PIEHLER: And where were you—do you form up? It says in here Normandy to Belgium.

KOCH: Well, from Normandy we took the Forty-and-eights across France to Tongres, Belgium I believe it was. Isn't that what it says there? Tongres?

PIEHLER: ... The yearbook is very much like a yearbook because it sometimes can get you lots of fun stories but doesn't give you all the basics ...

KOCH: All the facts? (Laughs)

PIEHLER: It says, "Policing our way out of the station at Maastricht. Our first experience at hearing, 'Cigarettes for papa, chocolate for mama, and chewing gum for baby.'" It also says, "The nurses learning the can-can."

KOCH: I could start on that one. (Laughter).

PIEHLER: But following it says Maastricht and Sittard—is that where your first field hospital was?

KOCH: Yeah, I believe so.

PIEHLER: We'd love to have a copy of this, because it has a picture of a buzz bomb—a cartoon of a buzz bomb, with a guy sort of keeping his head down. It sounds like the buzz bombs left quite an impression, hearing them. Is that ...

KOCH: Well, you could hear them go over and never knew when they were going to land, and where they were going to land.

PIEHLER: Did any ever land close to you?

KOCH: No, no they didn't—but, you know, you just wonder.

PIEHLER: Where did you get your first casualties? It was in Holland?

KOCH: I guess so.

PIEHLER: ...What do you remember about—you've been training a long while now to actually be in the field. What do you remember about that?

KOCH: Well ...

PIEHLER: Well, I guess, maybe I should even ask it another way. Tell me a little bit about what a

day was like when you were actually in the field.

KOCH: Well, the casualties were brought in through Receiving and then they came in through our department and we were—where we prepared them for surgery or whatever they had to do. Most of them had already had first aid from the Battalion Aid Station. And we took care of X-rays and immediate treatments and got them ready to go into surgery. It was not as gory and terrible as I imagined, and in retrospect I don't remember it being that terrible.

PIEHLER: It's interesting because what you said, which even stunned, I think, your daughters, was in your hospital in Canada you had to prepare the dead at a very young age. I don't think your sister sort of prepared you. You say it was not as gory, what did you expect versus?

KOCH: I don't know what I expected, except I had a friend who I used to visit, a couple I visited in Canada, and he had been in World War I, and he said, "Oh, it's gonna be terrible! They put them in the boxcars and the blood oozes out." And so I expected the worst. He didn't think I'd make it.

PIEHLER: You really expected boxcars full of wounded and blood?

KOCH: Yeah, and from my position it wasn't that way. It was, more or less, an emergency room just like anywhere else.

PIEHLER: What kind of wounds did your hospital get? What was the range of wounds?

KOCH: I can't tell you that.

PIEHLER: Like, for example, how many people lost limbs? Was that a very common ...

KOCH: There was a siege there where there was a lot of amputations. And, of course, sometimes they missed us completely and went straight to the evacuation field.

PIEHLER: The field hospital, the evacuation—they would bypass you by completely?

HAMILTON: Did you ever have to do any blood transfusions?

KOCH: There was a lot of plasma. But the GIs could administer that as well as we could. They were well-trained in the first days.

HAMILTON: So you just had X-rays? Were there any other—I'm sure there weren't running CAT scans, but was there any other ways to, you know—any other machinery other than X-rays?

KOCH: I can't recall.

PIEHLER: When did ... you get access to penicillin? You mentioned earlier you didn't have penicillin, it's very clear that the arrival of penicillin ...

KOCH: It must have been when we first got into the service. We used to give it every four hours.

PIEHLER: Were you struck at what penicillin could do? Do you have any memories?

KOCH: Not specifically

PIEHLER: Not specifically, you don't have a case where you just were ...

KOCH: No.

PIEHLER: One of the things that I wanted to make sure I asked, since we've started to talk about the hospital, particularly in the field is—and even before I ask about the orderlies. Were you in Surgery? Was that a separate division among the nurses?

KOCH: Yes it was.

PIEHLER: So you were in a sense getting people ready for surgery. Doing X-rays, their care before surgery.

KOCH: Evaluation.

PIEHLER: Evaluation. Would you be involved with the triage process, or in a sense by the time they got to you they had already been in a sense triaged?

KOCH: Yes.

PIEHLER: Do you have any patients who were triaged like they were not going to make it when they got to your hospital?

KOCH: I sure did, but I don't remember. I sure don't. It seems like I blocked that all out, doesn't it?

PIEHLER: Do you think you blocked some of this because it's just bad memories?

KOCH: I don't think so, really. I think it's just bad memory-esque. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: What about the orderlies? Could you talk a little bit about the role of the orderlies, and your relationship as a nurse and as an officer with the male orderlies.

KOCH: They could do just about anything we could do. They just worked the along beside us. They could administer fluids. They had to have someone to direct them. That's about it. They were so good guys.

HAMILTON: Did you ever have a patient that just really struck you, just, you remember him, any of his stories?

KOCH: No, we didn't have them for very long.

PIEHLER: How long would you typically have a patient, roughly?

KOCH: You mean in the hospital?

PIEHLER: Yeah, the field [evac] hospital.

KOCH: I don't know. Because after we were through with them, they moved on, so I really can't tell you.

PIEHLER: It also sounds like you, once they went to being operated upon you didn't see them again?

KOCH: Oh, no.

PIEHLER: So in other words, you would get them and you didn't know what happened to them, quite literally they moved on, and if they stayed in your unit still internally, there was another group of nurses that took care of them.

KOCH: Yes. Post-op.

PIEHLER: Post-op. That was a very separate ... It sounds like you were very fond of some of your orderlies. Do any of them stick out in terms of orderlies you remember, or backgrounds? Where were most of your orderlies from?

KOCH: Mostly from California. A few from Ohio, but mostly California.

PIEHLER: California and Ohio were the big contingents.

KOCH: We had a—what's his name? Menacho? A Mexican guy—he was just a big cut-up and everybody liked him and he could do anything, and then another, Sergeant, I believe he was, Teddy Saverese, those two I remember.

PIEHLER: And they were orderlies that ...

KOCH: Yeah, they worked in Pre-op with us.

PIEHLER: They sound like they were a lot of fun.

KOCH: Yeah, they were. Well, the patients would come in on a stretcher, and I remember that one fellow, he raised up and said "Whoa! An American woman!" (Laughter) He was already ready to back into battle. He'd had his thrill for the day. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: How often would particularly wounded patients—how many were fresh? Sort of made ...

KOCH: I never had that problem.

PIEHLER: Really? You never had fresh comments directed at you?

KOCH: No.

PIEHLER: Do you think it was because you were an officer, or just that the patients you saw had other things on their ...

KOCH: Yeah, that's true.

PIEHLER: It sounds like you got people, they were—it would be fair to say, they were a bit dazed, quite still literally. Is that ...

KOCH: I would say so, yeah.

HAMILTON: Did you ever get any time off? Not having to serve in a hospital.

KOCH: Yeah, we got our days off.

HAMILTON: Did you? Just one day?

KOCH: I don't remember. Unless we were really backlogged with patients then we'd have to work double shifts, but we had time off. We washed in helmets and really roughed it there for a while. Didn't have our clothes off for a couple of days. Didn't wear a Class A uniform for weeks, when things were real busy.

PIEHLER: What was your busy time? You mentioned you had to wash in your helmet and didn't ...

KOCH: I guess pretty well our whole time over there once we got active.

PIEHLER: So December, January, and February? Washing with your helmets—that sounds like a distinct memory.

KOCH: Well, it's limited. (Laughter) A helmet is pretty deep. You can put quite a bit of water in the helmet.

PIEHLER: How often would you get a shower, typically, when you were actually in the field.

KOCH: Well, as soon as they set up the showers, you know. The GIs would set them up for us, whenever you wanted one.

PIEHLER: So that was, normally, pretty regularly—the showers. And how regular were hot meals?

KOCH: We had C Rations, which were hot meals—as soon as we were set up. But coming across France, we had K Rations. And they were—I love the cheese in those K Rations. I'm a cheese person, anyway.

PIEHLER: So the K Ration wasn't all bad to you?

KOCH: No.

HAMILTON: What is a K Ration?

KOCH: Well, it's a biscuit type thing that's got all the good nourishment in it, and cheese and that's about all that's in the package as I remember it.

PIEHLER: Yeah, that's pretty much it. Ideally, it's designed for people in the field, in combat, but it's gets widely used in ... (Laughs).

KOCH: Nobody likes K Rations. C Rations are like, you know ...

-----End of Tape Two, Side One-----

PIEHLER: Now you mentioned C Rations were more like regular food. Did your hospital have a chaplain?

KOCH: Yes, we did.

PIEHLER: What faith was he?

KOCH: What was his name? Bennett. Oh, I don't know. He was sort of all-purpose. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: He wasn't a Catholic priest?

KOCH: No, no.

PIEHLER: When you say he was all-purpose, what kind of services could he do?

KOCH: I never went to any of them, so I don't know.

PIEHLER: What about his interaction with patients, did he?

KOCH: He was an okay—kind of a low-key type person.

PIEHLER: But you never went to services while you were in the military?

KOCH: No. Can't say I did.

HAMILTON: Your housing—was that very close? Well obviously it had to be somewhat close to

the tent. I'm assuming that you guys were set up in cots, or where were you guys housed at?

KOCH: On the compound, yeah. We were in tents too and the hospital was ...

HAMILTON: Really close?

KOCH: Yeah.

HAMILTON: You technically didn't really get out of your compound much?

KOCH: No, it was like a big parking lot.

HAMILTON: Did you get to leave on your days off?

KOCH: I don't remember going anywhere except—but I'm sure people did go into the towns. Except, on leave—I went on leave to Paris a few times. People went to other parts.

PIEHLER: Did you ever get a leave to Paris?

KOCH: Yeah, two or three times. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: So it would be fair to say that when you could you had a good time? Is that fair?

KOCH: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Particularly I think for grandchildren, that it wasn't all-somber. There was some fun to be had. (Laughs)

KOCH: Absolutely, I recommend it. But see today's different

PIEHLER: Well, I guess, what's so different, what would you say?

KOCH: Well, I think there are more dangers, like the guys over there in Iraq, they're in danger every day of the world, every minute and I don't think they have as much comfort as we had. I don't know. I wouldn't want any of mine to be over there right now. I have a grandson in the Navy—I hope he doesn't have to go over there.

PIEHLER: Did any of your children serve in the military?

KOCH: No.

PIEHLER: So it skipped a generation?

KOCH: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Since you mention him—it's a little out of order but what have you told your grandson

about your military experience?

KOCH: Oh he loves to hear about it. When he was in high school, he called and asked me one day—he was living with his mom in Ohio—and he wanted to know some things and he'd just eat it up. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Do you know where he's deployed right now?

KOCH: He's in Iceland. Really likes it up there. I mean, he does like Iceland but he's a good seaman and he's won ... Seaman of the Year three times over in Italy. So he's applying himself.

PIEHLER: Is it going to be a career you think?

KOCH: I would think so. He's applying himself.

PIEHLER: Since we're in Holland—in this picture of Holland in 1945, there are three or four children, they look like Dutch children. Do you remember why this picture was taken?

KOCH: No, a military photographer took it. Always gave pictures like this they took and I don't know what they did with them, but they gave us a copy.

PIEHLER: I guess your helmet, you had the big red cross on it, is that right?

KOCH: Yeah, and we were just walking in the town and these little kids were sledding and we got the picture

PIEHLER: That's just how the picture—who is the person with you?

KOCH: This is me and this is, her name is Ogná Bash.

PIEHLER: Ogná Bash? And she was a friend of yours?

KOCH: From California.

PIEHLER: From California. What do you remember about her?

KOCH: She was very sweet and ladylike and seemed to have all the answers. (Laughter) She was older and more experienced and mature than the rest of us—although she wasn't that much older.

HAMILTON: Were you all very close friends?

KOCH: Yeah, I would think so.

PIEHLER: There were no rivalries that you knew of?

KOCH: No. Not that I knew of. Everybody liked to get a boyfriend, and there were plenty of them

to pick from.

PIEHLER: While you were in this unit, how much dating was there?

KOCH: A lot, because the Air Force's groups and different groups were situated roundabout where we were—as soon as they knew that there was a bunch of nurses in the area, they'd have a party and send over an invitation for all of us to come over. (Laughter) I told you it sounds like all fun and dancing and parties and stuff.

HAMILTON: So I guess the majority of the nurses dated the servicemen?

KOCH: Uh-huh, that's all they knew.

HAMILTON: No civilians?

KOCH: Not in the area. They were only intimate, well not that I know. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: How much contact—there's this great picture of you with some Dutch children taken by an Army photographer. How much contact would you have, both in Holland but then in Germany, with civilians?

KOCH: Some of the guys had lots of contact. I mean, they got to know people. Depending on how long we were in an area, they'd get to know the civilian families who would invite them over and they'd really socialize with them, but I didn't have that. I didn't meet any of the families that I can think of.

PIEHLER: Was this the enlisted men that mainly ...

KOCH: No, officers, too

PIEHLER: Officers, too. Was this just romantic interest or ...

KOCH: Not necessarily, just lonely I guess mostly, and interested in knowing about another country, but I don't think most of it was love.

PIEHLER: Yeah, most of it was not romantic, but there was some romance to be had in your unit.

KOCH: There was—three of them got married.

PIEHLER: Three people from your unit married other people in your unit?

KOCH: Married engineers from surrounding units that we picked up along the way. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: What about any marriages within the unit? Did that ever ...

KOCH: No, I don't think so.

PIEHLER: We asked you a little bit earlier about treating prisoners of war. What was—anything about that experience of treating prisoners of war that sticks out?

KOCH: I just knew we had to do it, but I didn't like doing it.

PIEHLER: Why?

KOCH: It was too fresh, you know, the war was too fresh. You look over here and see the guys, then you look over here and see the guys who did it. And it was hard to do.

PIEHLER: During the Battle of the Bulge, what was your sense of the battle? ... You earlier said, even before we started the tape, that you anticipated a lot of casualties but you didn't really get them.

KOCH: I don't know. I don't know what they wrote in there about the Battle of the Bulge.

PIEHLER: You know, they actually don't write a lot. They don't really write anything specifically. But it sounds like your unit was far enough ...

KOCH: Far enough south of there. I think we were.

PIEHLER: Because you had no evacuation during that. You didn't have to move out suddenly.

KOCH: No.

PIEHLER: When did you move into Germany, into Mühlhausen and Wolfen, do you remember?

KOCH: I guess it was right after Maastricht, wasn't it?

PIEHLER: It's after that. Was it in January or February? As I said, this book, it's a very detailed book and it doesn't give you some of the basic ...

KOCH: Is it on the last page or maybe in the front where they've got the ...

PIEHLER: Let me see if it says on the back that they ... Oh here, there's the table of events. It says you arrive in Omaha Beach on October 4th. You make it to Maastricht October 28th, 1944, and you open up the hospital—convalescent hospital, October 29th, 1944. Open up the evacuation hospital, November 16th, 1944. The 25th of '44 you closed hospital, then you have December 31st, 1944, New Year's greetings compliments of Jerry.

KOCH: That's when they dropped the bomb.

PIEHLER: That's when you dropped the bomb? See, your hospital is closed from the 25th of December to the 1st of January—you don't remember what happened in that period? And then it says, the hospital reopened, then on the 26th of January, 1945 Mary York married Captain Lubar.

Do you remember that marriage? Was Captain Lubar an engineer?

KOCH: Yeah, he was an engineer.

PIEHLER: And then you moved on the 9th of February you left Maastricht by motor, 1600 arrived at Sittard, Holland. Then on the 28th of February, 1945, Mary Jane Withers and Kenny Schweiter.

KOCH: Now he belonged to the unit. He was in the transportation part.

PIEHLER: And she was a nurse. So that was a marriage?

KOCH: Yes, that was in the unit.

PIEHLER: And then it was not until March of 1945, hospital closed and moved to Mühlhausen, first set up in Germany. Do you remember being in Germany, your thoughts of being in Germany, or did it even leave an impression?

KOCH: I don't know if it was when we were there, but we were around all these planes that the Germans had deactivated because they were fleeing, and that might have been right in there.

HAMILTON: Was it very hard moving the hospitals? Do you remember?

KOCH: I didn't have anything to do with it. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: So you just had to pack your bag.

KOCH: That's right, they did it all. The GIs set up the tents, and set up the hospital and we just had to be there, you know, with our stuff.

HAMILTON: I'm just curious, if there was ever a soldier that needed a serious transfusion, whether it be an internal organ or whatever, would you guys take care of it there or would they be sent ...

KOCH: They would be evacuated to the rear echelon or else back to the States.

PIEHLER: You mentioned, particularly in training, it was physically demanding work.

KOCH: Is that what I said?

PIEHLER: Yeah, you did janitorial work.

KOCH: Oh, as a student

PIEHLER: Yeah, as a student, but particularly when you were deployed in the field, it sounds like a lot of the things you did as a nurse, trained as a nurse to do, you weren't doing anymore. For example, did you ever have to wash patients?

KOCH: Oh, no. (Laughs) We didn't wash them. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: So that was something that wasn't even set up to do. What about making the beds, who would do that?

KOCH: Well, we didn't have beds.

PIEHLER: Yeah, the cots, who would change those?

KOCH: Whoever was taking care of the patient would take care of that.

PIEHLER: Would you do changings or was that something that you normally ...

KOCH: I never did, but it all depended on who was free. There was not a lot of class distinction in there.

PIEHLER: So you would still do hands on nursing. In other words, was there a separation of work between the orderly and what—you sort of implied that the orderlies could do a lot of the things that you would do.

KOCH: They could.

PIEHLER: Were the things that you traditionally used to do that now orderlies' were doing?

KOCH: No.

PIEHLER: Do you remember anything about your encounters with German civilians while the war was still going on?

KOCH: This old guy found out our unit, used to come and sell stuff to the personnel.

PIEHLER: (Reading caption) "Wilhelm: I buy everything, see me before making that sale, top-selling prices paid." This was after the war ended?

KOCH: This was toward the end of the war, yes.

PIEHLER: He was a German?

KOCH: He was a German, yes.

PIEHLER: Who would buy things?

KOCH: And he'd sell you things.

PIEHLER: What was he selling?

KOCH: He could get you anything. I never bought anything.

PIEHLER: What were some of the things he heard he could get you?

KOCH: No idea. Probably photographs, pictures, decorations, German medals, maybe German marks. They weren't worth anything so ...

PIEHLER: So if you were looking for souvenirs, Wilhelm was ... (Laughs)

KOCH: He was the souvenir man, yes.

PIEHLER: I should read a little bit more of the diary. "Easter Sunday, left Mühlhausen, 800 hours crossed Rhine River, arrived in Wolfen. April 3rd, 1945, fire in tents. April 10th, 1945, arrived in Bad Oeynhausien. April 11th, arrived in Hannover. May 8th, V-E Day. Diary shows no unusual occurrences. Two weddings: May 14th, 1945, Lieutenant Geeson married Lieutenant Perez." Were they ...

KOCH: He was an engineer and she was a nurse.

PIEHLER: (Continues reading from the diary) "And then the 5th of June, 1945, hospital closed. June 6th, 1945, Lieutenant Gonar was married to Ronald Bogart," another engineer, so the engineers was really the—"and on the 11th of 1945, June, left Hannover, arrived in Bad Nauheim, set up tents, music in the meadow, and then the 5th of August arrived in Bad Mergentheim—bus service deluxe." And I guess I should also note, units served, you served a number of units, including the 9th Army, 7th Army, and a number of infantry divisions and armored divisions. One of the things I've observed, in Germany it looked like you had quite a bit of rain. (Laughter) What do you remember about the conditions of ...

KOCH: Just mud, mud, mud, and rain, cold rain. It was hard that one place particularly, where we set up, they had to put down planks to get to the different wards in the hospital or you'd just sink up to your ankles in the mud. It was pretty grim.

HAMILTON: So I guess you got a lot of pneumonia cases?

KOCH: We should've, shouldn't we?

HAMILTON: Sounds like it.

PIEHLER: One thing that I observe here in Hannover they have a picture of a building, it sounds like you took over a building.

KOCH: We did. The Germans were—it was toward the end of the war. And the 87th Infantry, I believe, had moved into this Hannover, but they had just skirted it, and so we came in, in the middle of the town, through parts where Americans had never been through and the GIs along the road and all were surrendering to us. Medics don't take prisoners, but we had to do something, so

the—some of the GIs started taking prisoners, and we ended up with a whole compound full of prisoners. (Laughter) And when we got to the hospital the Germans were moving out, so we had to wait till they finished moving out before we moved in.

PIEHLER: So when you say they were moving out, they were moving patients out?

KOCH: Moving their equipment and just disbanding.

PIEHLER: Was this a military hospital or not?

KOCH: I don't know if it was or not. I think it must have been.

PIEHLER: Well it even says though, "105 Evacuation Hospital spearheads the infantry." And I guess I'm curious, it's sort of tourist to the nudist colony—art student attention, you don't remember that reference.

KOCH: I know there was a lot of looting. Oh, there was looting and I did some of it myself.

PIEHLER: What kinds of things would you loot?

KOCH: You know, the Germans had left, not all of them, but we went into their houses and took things out of their houses, we took their cars, and just anything they left behind.

PIEHLER: You just helped yourself to ...

KOCH: Yeah, several of the vehicles that we had were used to—the motor pool took over and used for their use. And then of course they issued an order from, I guess from the colonel, that there was no more looting to go on. But we didn't think it was bad at the time. They were the enemy. They were the bad guys. You know, they were gone.

PIEHLER: What did you loot?

KOCH: Some linen, and I felt guilty about it ever since. (Laughter) In fact I couldn't keep it, I gave it to my sister.

PIEHLER: What else did you—well, you mentioned some cars, which is big loot. What other things do you remember, anything that struck you as either very valuable or very ...

KOCH: No, but I remember it. It was really awful. This is part you should cross out. To go into this house, when you really stop and think about it, it was somebody's home, no matter who they were. And here there were people, GIs and officers and everybody, all over it—entering the house and taking what they wanted.

PIEHLER: There's also a reference here to, "Field Marshal Lucci, commanding his battalion of displaced persons. What a mess."

KOCH: Oh, that was one of the GIs I believe. It's just who they gave that title to, and he had all these prisoners. Isn't that what's written down there?

PIEHLER: Well, it says, "His battalion of displaced persons." Were these prisoners or displaced persons?

KOCH: No, these were the prisoners we took. But there must have been displaced persons also. I don't know who, who's that guy?

PIEHLER: Lucci, Field Marshal—it's put in quotes, L-u-c-c-i. You don't remember him. But roughly, how many prisoners did you have?

KOCH: A compound full.

PIEHLER: And you were now responsible for feeding them and ...

KOCH: Yes.

PIEHLER: How long did you have them? Yeah. I thought, maybe it would be—some pictures would trigger some memory. Just go through the album and if memories or stories are prompted, by all means—any stories that come up to mind. And I should say for those who are reading the transcript we're sort of going through a yearbook that was created by the unit.

KOCH: This is the GI I told you that worked in Pre-op with us. I really liked him.

PIEHLER: He was from Mexico, originally?

KOCH: I thought he was.

HAMILTON: He looks really dark.

KOCH: Menacho or something I think his name was.

PIEHLER: This picture here looks like it was in Yuma.

KOCH: It was.

PIEHLER: Were you also sleeping in pup tents there?

KOCH: Yeah.

PIEHLER: You were really in the field?

HAMILTON: Roughing it.

KOCH: Some of these pictures I don't even remember. (Turns pages) This is the head of the

motor pool that married the nurse.

HAMILTON: So Medics, and Receiving, and Evacuation—these are the different groups?

KOCH: Yeah. This is the rest, what else that we were doing besides X-rays, it doesn't ... remind us here—just reading X-rays and classifying the wounded as a priority for surgery.

HAMILTON: So did you learn to ski in Germany?

KOCH: I did later on, after I got married.

PIEHLER: (Reading from the yearbook) “Avenue ... Hermann Göring.” Is this the result of the bomb?

KOCH: Yeah.

PIEHLER: That's where the bomb ...

KOCH: Yeah.

HAMILTON: It didn't do much damage.

KOCH: That was the bomb ...

PIEHLER: The bomb that didn't explode.

HAMILTON: Oh.

KOCH: This is our chief nurse.

PIEHLER: Do you remember her name?

KOCH: Oh, Lord.

PIEHLER: Do you remember anything about your chief nurse and how she was as a leader?

KOCH: No, I don't. (Turns pages in the yearbook) Do you just want to look at the pictures?

PIEHLER: Like I said, if you have any stories that come to mind ... And it's interesting, we've encountered very few pictures of the nurses, I mean, this is a page now full of some nurses. I see a picture that says “Our Team.”

KOCH: That was when we were in Bournemouth, the southern part of England, getting ready to go over to the continent and we had a baseball team.

HAMILTON: You were a seal?

KOCH: My name is Cecelia [Ceel], and they called me all kinds of things.

PIEHLER: So you played baseball with the officers?

KOCH: Yeah.

HAMILTON: What was your favorite position?

KOCH: I was a pitcher, apparently. (Laughter) He was in charge of the GIs, she was one of our nurses. (Points at two photos)

PIEHLER: Lieutenant Paul?

KOCH: Uh huh. See now, he was older, you talk about ...

PIEHLER: Right, right. He's one of the physicians, and he's listed as Colonel D.

KOCH: Deborear. These are the guys—now they all look kinda oldish, don't they?

PIEHLER: Mm hmm. What is this reference to "Bring on the Canadian Nurses?" Is that ...

KOCH: This is when we were at that staging area and there was a group of Canadian nurses down staging, too, so apparently they got to know one another?

HAMILTON: (Hamilton and Piehler makes reference to some sort of lodge)

PIEHLER: What is this reference to, "Looks like Jimmy done it," do you know?

KOCH: No.

PIEHLER: This looks like you were in the field and you set up this tent and called it the "Store Club."

KOCH: I don't know. (Laughs, then points to another photo) These two girls, well this one—no, it wasn't that one either—we had two Red Cross girls with us. We were Red Cross nurses. We joined through the American Red Cross, but there were two Red Cross girls living here somewhere.

PIEHLER: Did you have a dog? There's a—did you have a little dog?

KOCH: Yeah, well they adopted it somewhere along the line. These are the two Red Cross girls.

PIEHLER: Those look like they're sunbathing, which ...

KOCH: Well, they are. (Points to another photo) These were the uniforms we wore at the station

hospital in the states.

HAMILTON: Did your uniforms change any from the following?

KOCH: Yes, when I joined, we wore a navy blue uniform, navy blue jacket, with a lighter blue skirt, and then black accessories.

HAMILTON: But in nursing school you wore the white, correct?

KOCH: Oh, I was talking about the service.

HAMILTON: Oh, yes, ma'am.

KOCH: No, in the training it didn't change. After you graduated you could wear pretty much what you wanted.

HAMILTON: But when you were in the service you had to wear blue?

KOCH: Blue first, and then it changed to khaki shortly after I went in. These were the weddings. Excuse me, there's the chaplain, what'd it say about him? That ain't somebody else, is it?

PIEHLER: No, this yearbook is clearly written for insiders in a lot of ways. (Laughter)

KOCH: There's a lot of things I don't know, like this page of names. I don't know who's who there.

PIEHLER: It also strikes me, that it's a big enough unit, where you would probably recognize almost everyone's face. You wouldn't necessarily know everyone's name or a lot about them.

KOCH: Yes, that's true. (Points to a photo) He was probably the youngest doctor.

PIEHLER: His nickname was—he went by Dickey.

KOCH: (To her daughter, who just entered the room) Well, I'm glad you made it!

COOPER: Had you given me up to France yet? (Laughter)

PIEHLER: We were actually going through ...

KOCH: We're about to surrender.

COOPER: Oh, okay. (Laugh)

GUFFIN: We started off one direction and went the other.

PIEHLER: Actually, we can—why don't we take a break?

PIEHLER: Well, I don't do this too often, but I had unplugged the recorder, and ... surprisingly my batteries weren't strong enough. So, I asked you a little bit about your husband, and I feel bad that we missed some of that on tape but I'll recap some of it. Your husband, he joined the Royal Air Force, he was originally from California, in junior college, he said he went up to Canada and tried to join the Navy, they didn't want him ...

KOCH: For some reason.

PIEHLER: And he joined the Canadian Air Force—Royal Canadian Air Force—trained all over Canada, with detail to the Royal Air Force. You mentioned that you, when you were overseas in Germany after the war, that you and a bunch of nurses wanted to go to China/Burma/India, is that

KOCH: Well...

PIEHLER: Well, I wasn't recording you, and your husband to be didn't think it was a great idea, and arranged for you to be in Frankfurt—your orders to be cut. One of the things which unfortunately—he also dropped you, through a parachute as he's just told us, a love letter with a little mini-parachute and it fell in the compound and they took it to—the prisoners passed it on to you. And you also said that it was very interesting that your husband was quite an adventurer, that he had remained in the reserves and squadron here in Chattanooga. He was a hunter, an avid hunter who loved to hunt in Canada. You also mentioned that he ... for competitions he was a judge, he bowled, he ...

KOCH: He raced boats. He raised pigeons.

PIEHLER: Yeah, he raised pigeons. But the one thing I want you to say on tape is how you met him, and how you were fixed up and I'm sorry to have lost that. It was a girlfriend of yours was dating him.

KOCH: Yes, and she wanted to date somebody else and decided that he would be right for me. And she though he was great, she said, "You've got to meet Cookie." He always had an angle, I mean, if he wanted anything or needed anything, he knew the right people and how to do it, and he was very popular. Anyway, so she made arrangement for us to meet, and we both liked one another and hit it off, and I think we were engaged about three months.

HAMILTON: How long had you know each other, before you got engaged?

KOCH: He asked me to marry him in about the third date. Which, you know things move fast in war times. Got to make hay while the sun's up. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: What kind of planes did he fly for the RAF?

KOCH: Well, he flew bombers. In fact, that's how he got British DFC, when he bombed that freighter. In the British DFC, does it tell you there?

COOPER: It mentions here that he “Finally got to fly the Thunderbolt today.”

KOCH: Yeah, but that was a pursuit plane. That was after the war. ‘45?

COOPER: No it wasn’t

KOCH: Excuse me. He was just doing that for kicks, on the side. (Laughter). A B-20...

GUFFIN: A B-20 ... (mumbling)

KOCH: She’s trying to remember the name of the plane.

PIEHLER: Did he fly Lancasters?

KOCH: I believe that was the plane he flew, yeah. Lancasters, Hudsons.

PIEHLER: And he flew at night on—did he fly mainly night missions? Did he ever tell you? What did he ever tell you?

KOCH: Nothing! (Laughs)

PIEHLER: He didn’t tell you about the air war he was in at all?

KOCH: No. Except when his plane was shot down ... over Gibraltar one time, and I guess it was in Spain actually. And they threw them in the clink, shaved their heads, and promptly they were released. And another time his plane was shot, and he was shot in the knee and had an injury. But you know, he could tell a story. I mean, he could tell a tale, but he never told me much. I’d listen to him tell other people.

PIEHLER: So he’d be more likely, if he were still alive and I could interview him, he would probably just tell me story after story

KOCH: You wouldn’t have time to get a word in edgewise. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Did he like to dance?

KOCH: Yes, oh yeah. We had that in common.

COOPER: He was a diver, too. Didn’t he swim? He dove?

KOCH: In college and high school.

PIEHLER: He was from California and ...

KOCH: From Oroville, California.

GUFFIN: Snow skiing ...

PIEHLER: You originally thought of going to China/Burma/India, and it didn't even matter at the end, because the war has ended, but he sort of did some finagling. Earlier, I think over lunch, your daughters mentioned he was in SHAEF Headquarters.

KOCH: Yeah, he was.

PIEHLER: When you met him was he in SHAEF Headquarters?

KOCH: I believe so and we were just sitting there in Mannheim waiting to do something.

PIEHLER: And it sounds like he knew how to use his influence.

KOCH: I would say so.

PIEHLER: Because he got you to Frankfurt. What did he do immediately after the war?

KOCH: Well, he stayed in the service, and we came to Shreveport, and he instructed in bombers, I think.

PIEHLER: But while you were in Germany—because you spent some time in Germany.

KOCH: Oh, he was—well we were married in '46 and came back the next year. He was in charge of Quarters and Accommodation, so he found places for the officers and finagled how to get this piece of furniture there and all that stuff. The best deals for his friends. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Well, it sounds like you could use that position to get a lot of favors in return. Is that fair?

KOCH: I would say so, yeah.

PIEHLER: Did he continue flying while he was ...

KOCH: In Frankfurt?

PIEHLER: Yeah.

KOCH: I don't know—probably did.

PIEHLER: But he had gotten to meet a number of prominent American and British generals it sounds like because of being at SHAEF, did he?

KOCH: Yeah, and he flew them. Flew a group over to Africa, and then over to Dakar. Seems I've forgotten, got to think about it.

PIEHLER: Now, while you were in Frankfurt what were you doing? What were your duties?

KOCH: In the hospital?

PIEHLER: Yeah.

KOCH: Just general nursing.

PIEHLER: General nursing. And it was American service men?

KOCH: Yes, and dependents.

PIEHLER: Dependents?

KOCH: By then, you know, all the service people's families were coming over.

PIEHLER: How—having come from sort of a field hospital what were the similarities and differences?

KOCH: It was just like nursing back in the States before the war. It was just your basic nursing.

PIEHLER: Did you have orderlies in the base hospital? In Frankfurt.

KOCH: I don't know what we had. Guess we did.

HAMILTON: Did it go back to how it was before, with the doctors, the physicians, and the nurses, or was it all just one group working together?

PIEHLER: How much do you think it was unique to your unit or unique to wartime, the sort of, we're all in this together?

KOCH: Oh, I didn't feel that anytime, except when I was in the service.

PIEHLER: So that was very much a service ...

KOCH: Yeah.

PIEHLER: It wasn't just your particular unit but it ...

KOCH: I think it probably applied to all of them.

PIEHLER: Yeah. Where did you live when you were in Frankfurt after you got married? Did you ...

KOCH: We had an apartment I guess you'd call it. 11 Loen Strassen. L-o-e-n. We went back, when did we go back to Germany a number of years ago

COOPER: Ten or fifteen years ago.

KOCH: I wanted Jackie to see where, she was born at the 97th General, so I wanted her to see her roots.

PIEHLER: ... With you staying in the service for—what were your thoughts?

KOCH: I wasn't thinking of getting out. We wanted to be where the action was and do something.

PIEHLER: So even after the war ended you still ...

KOCH: Went into Europe.

PIEHLER: Yeah

KOCH: We were ready.

PIEHLER: What were your impressions about—you were in Germany for quite a long time after the war relatively speaking—what were your impressions of Germany and Germans?

KOCH: Well, I had a maid who was the sweetest little lady ever was. And she really wasn't Nazi, she was just a friend. She spoke poor English, but she could make herself understood. And those that we had contact with were just nice people, but everybody, you know, claimed that they weren't Nazis. And then Jimmy has friends there at the golf course, like the caddy who wanted to come to this country with us. But those that we were in contact with were good people and I'm sure that they didn't have anything to do with the war, and I'm sure they weren't Nazis. But the others I didn't come across. I maybe rode next to them on the streetcar. I used to take a streetcar to work, and they would be on the car, but I never talked to them.

PIEHLER: I'm curious—it's sort of funny, I'm flying to Frankfurt. I'm going to be there Thursday morning. What's your memories of what Frankfurt actually looked like?

KOCH: It was in ruins. Frankfurt was just ...

PIEHLER: Now I'm struck, because you were looking at Frankfurt and one of your daughters was born in Frankfurt, and when you went back, with your daughter was that the last, had you been to Frankfurt at all?

KOCH: No.

PIEHLER: So what struck you going back, particularly compared to the Frankfurt you knew versus what you viewed?

KOCH: You'd never know there'd been a war.

PIEHLER: Really? Did that surprise you how ...

KOCH: Well, you know how they told you how in the papers and all how it had been destroyed?

PIEHLER: Yeah

KOCH: It was surprising that that would rise up out of the rubble. Oh, Germany's a beautiful country. Oh, it was clean and modern, and we loved it.

PIEHLER: And the Germany you had left, was—how would you describe it if you were asked in '46?

KOCH: Well, it was on the way out. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: Yeah, Frankfurt you described as rubble.

KOCH: Yeah

PIEHLER: What was your sense of the attitude of the Germans? What was your sense of the German morale?

KOCH: We used to go to a place, after the dependents started coming over. Was it called the Exchange Club? Where the Americans would take their things for barter—Barter Club, maybe that's it—and the Germans would bring their goods, and the value of a pound of coffee or a carton of cigarettes was about 45 dollars back then. Quite a bit, and we would get the equivalent in German goods. And I would say they were sort of indifferent, maybe a little standoffish. But I didn't buy anything, cause like I said, I had nothing to barter. (Laughter) But some of our friends got treasures. The Germans would give up anything—all of their treasures they'd have for a lifetime, just for a pound of coffee, or for cigarettes.

PIEHLER: I'm curious at the hospital, rates of venereal disease infection, did you have any sort of ...

KOCH: In our book?

PIEHLER: No, in post-war Germany, in the occupation. Do you remember any concern about that in the hospital?

KOCH: No, I don't

PIEHLER: What about fraternization of, like for example, other nurses and doctors. Did doctors or other people—were there a lot of German girlfriends that you remember on the part of doctors or orderlies or others?

KOCH: I don't really know. I'm sure that a lot of GIs would find them. And the Allies.

PIEHLER: Actually I ...

-----End of Tape Two, Side Two-----

GUFFIN: That's a nice story, because it tells you how the German people reacted to, you know, this American being in ...

PIEHLER: ... Let me just begin by saying this continues an interview with Cecelia Sexton Koch on March 16th, 2004 at her home in Hixson, Tennessee with Kurt Piehler ...

HAMILTON: April Hamilton.

PIEHLER: And her daughters ...

GUFFIN: Jackie Guffin.

COOPER: Joanie Cooper.

PIEHLER: And her wonder, actually, Jackie, I'll let you ask the questions. It's a picture of you here that we're referring to.

GUFFIN: Yes, my tale being about dad, when he went hunting in that small German village.

KOCH: Obermoos.

GUFFIN: There you go.

KOCH: He went boar hunting, and you know, during the war, the Germans didn't have any guns, so they couldn't hunt. There was lots of game, and apparently lots of fish in the streams too, cause he went fishing in the streams. But anyway, they went out on this one boar hunt, went in jeeps. And it was winter. I have a friend who wrote the story of that trip. "Christmas at Obermoos" or something. Wrote it real nice. Anyway, they would have beaters—you're familiar with that aren't you. That would beat the forests, and then the animals would come out and they got these three big boar. But the guys who were the beaters—he went up there several times and they knew him. And they were like "Capitan, capitan." (Laughter) He had cigarettes and stuff for them. They called him their "*Obermeister*." Isn't that what you say? Mayor? And they just loved him because he brought all the goodies. And they had a good relationship, even though they didn't speak much English. So he got the three boar and then, he had a big party—had the mess hall cook some of the boar meat, which is a little bit like pork, and lots of beer, and shared it with everybody. That's Obermoos.

PIEHLER: One thing about the hospital—did you have any Germans work in the hospital when you were in Frankfurt, while you were still a nurse?

KOCH: I don't know, there may have been.

HAMILTON: Have the progression of the nursing—the on-hand help, the bedside help—had that evolved or changed any from before you started in the war?

KOCH: No, I don't think so. I don't remember anything different about Frankfurt to any of my other nursing.

PIEHLER: It strikes me as it became very routine nursing again. Is that a fair ...

KOCH: Yeah.

PIEHLER: And a very regular schedule, is that?

KOCH: Yes.

PIEHLER: Your first daughter was born in Germany. What year was she born in?

KOCH: 1946, November.

PIEHLER: '46. And you mentioned earlier—I think you mentioned on tape but I'm not sure—that you could remain a nurse until five months pregnancy. Did you have to resign your commission then?

KOCH: I guess so, because when I went in to resign, I said I want to get out of the service and she [the chief nurse] said, "You know there's only one way you can get out." So I guess I would have had to resign.

PIEHLER: Yeah, I mean, pregnancy ...

KOCH: Oh, it wasn't tolerated in the service back then.

PIEHLER: So you had no choice ... How did you feel about leaving the service? Would you have liked to have stayed longer if you had had the opportunity?

KOCH: No, I was just happy with my life.

HAMILTON: Did you get any medals from the service?

KOCH: I got two Bronze Stars for participating in two battles, and a Soldier's Medal.

HAMILTON: What about the soldiers that you saved from the burning tent?

KOCH: That was the Soldier's Medal. It's given to non-combatants.

PIEHLER: For heroic ...

HAMILTON: Oh, okay.

PIEHLER: You're sort of downplaying that.

COOPER: She does that.

KOCH: But I think about the things that people do today and I didn't—not only in the military but in civilian life, how they put their lives on the line. There's thousands of people who deserve medals today. Hundreds of thousands.

PIEHLER: Now your husband, it strikes me, initially decided to make the military a career. I mean, he had been in the Canadian Royal Air Force since roughly 1940. Do you know which year he enlisted?

KOCH: I would say, probably '40.

PIEHLER: It was before Pearl Harbor.

KOCH: Yeah. Oh yes, before Pearl Harbor.

PIEHLER: ... And then—how long—when did you leave Germany?

KOCH: In 1947.

PIEHLER: And you went to Shreveport next?

KOCH: Yes, and he instructed in B-25s. In fact, I think it was mostly Japanese that he was instructing, Oriental—the pilots.

PIEHLER: Could it have been Chinese?

KOCH: Chinese, maybe. Chinese pilots, that's what it was. And awhile there I went home to Canada, cause he thought he was gonna get transferred, and I ended up spending the whole winter in Canada, and he was transferred to Lubbock, Texas

GUFFIN: But Jim was born in Shreveport.

KOCH: Yeah, that was before we went.

PIEHLER: So you have a second—in Shreveport you have a son?

KOCH: Yes.

PIEHLER: But you spent one winter in Canada, which must have been ...

KOCH: It was cold, but Jim came up from Lubbock, Texas, one weekend in his summer uniform. He bragged, he used to brag that it didn't get over forty below for the whole time he was there. And

it didn't. Yeah, my son Jim was born in Shreveport, and he now lives in Augusta.

PIEHLER: I've actually been to Shreveport twice, and you weren't the most fond of Shreveport, if that's fair to say?

KOCH: I did not like it.

PIEHLER: What about it didn't you ...

KOCH: The heat. He was gone a lot on cross-countries. And I had Jackie and then I was pregnant with Jimmy, and I didn't know anybody at first. And we lived—back then it was hard to get accommodations, and in order to get a place at all, we had to buy all the furniture in this little house. It was cheap furniture—kitchen, living room, two bedrooms. It was right near the railway tracks, and I had visions somebody getting off that track and killing us all. (Laughter) I was scared the whole time.

PIEHLER: So you didn't think the area around Shreveport was too safe?

KOCH: I didn't. You're right! You're right! (Laughs)

PIEHLER: And you had been in the war! (Laughter)

KOCH: The war didn't bother me. I didn't have anybody to worry about back then. That makes a lot of difference.

PIEHLER: Your husband, was he transferred to another ...

KOCH: When he went to Lubbock, he decided he just had enough of the Air Force.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

KOCH: They were getting too chicken, I guess. Decided that was it.

PIEHLER: Too chicken? Or in what way were they ...

KOCH: He just didn't like the way things were going.

PIEHLER: Yeah. So the reference to chicken, is that a reference to a certain GI term, I think?

KOCH: I guess so. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Your husband does stay in the Reserves?

KOCH: Yeah.

PIEHLER: And did he retire in the Reserves?

KOCH: He retired in the Reserves.

PIEHLER: And you mentioned—we were interviewing but the tape wasn't on—that he was the squadron commander. When did he retire? Do you remember from your ...

KOCH: Was it '66, '65? Or maybe when he was 65, and he was born in '20. So what that would be.

PIEHLER: Oh, so he really stayed in the reserves a long time. Was he ever called up in the reserves? Did you ...

KOCH: Uh, no. He was Active Reserve but he was never called up.

PIEHLER: He was never called up, say in the Berlin Crisis ...

KOCH: No.

PIEHLER: ... or the Cuban Missile Crisis?

KOCH: No, no. Lucky.

HAMILTON: I'm just curious, and I know this is a little bit back, but what was your thought on Pearl Harbor and how did it affect you?

KOCH: Well, I was in Canada, in nurses' training at the time. Just, you know, I guess it was a relief to people that this would bring America into the war. And that was a good thing—that was the only good thing.

PIEHLER: You mentioned, while we were having lunch, that you've been living in Chattanooga since 1950, though not in this home. How did you come to Chattanooga?

KOCH: Jimmy used to come here from Lubbock when he was on cross-countries

PIEHLER: So this was his stopover on his flights?

KOCH: Yeah, well he had a friend who lived here, and they would fly here, and they'd hunt, and fish, and goodness knows what.

PIEHLER: Now when you say fly here, hunt and fish, while he was in the Air Force. Some of this doesn't seem fully authorized. (Laughter)

COOPER: May not have been.

GUFFIN: Probably wasn't.

PIEHLER: Because your husband sounds like somebody who might be termed an “operator.”

KOCH: That’s a good term.

PIEHLER: So he came here extensively in the service on fly-overs, but spends—sounds like some significant time if you have time to hunt and fish.

KOCH: They came lots of times. And this friend of his—where did he meet Jim Killough?

PIEHLER: Was he a service ...

KOCH: Yeah, he was a pilot, too. I guess he probably met him in Shreveport, and they just liked the same things and when Jimmy decided to get out of the service—thought Chattanooga was a good place to settle down. So he decided, made all the decisions and chose it, and sent for us to come back from Canada. And he had a job and bought a house and was a civilian.

PIEHLER: So you didn’t have a say here?

KOCH: No, nothing. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: How did you feel about this?

KOCH: Well, I was pleased to have a nice house. But I, I thought I should have had some kind of say about it. (Laughter)

HAMILTON: I’m sure the weather was a little bit nicer.

KOCH: Yes. Oh, I love Chattanooga.

PIEHLER: But in other words, if this had not worked out the onus was strictly on your husband.

KOCH: Right, right! (laughter)

PIEHLER: I mean, that was fair, because you mention you’ve been very pleased to live here. But this was all your husband’s doing?

KOCH: Absolutely.

PIEHLER: And how—I mean, did it all go smoothly in terms of fitting, you know, settling into Chattanooga? Did ...

KOCH: I think so, yeah.

PIEHLER: Because, you’re not so fond of Shreveport? (Laughs)

KOCH: Oh, Chattanooga—it was hot as hell here, too. Wow! Those first summers when we first

came here, we're like in other parts of the country. The summers were hotter and the winters were colder. Excuse me.

PIEHLER: And you didn't have air conditioning, until ...

KOCH: In Shreveport. Well, didn't have it in Chattanooga for a while either.

PIEHLER: Yeah. Do you remember when you got air conditioning?

KOCH: Well, I remember when we drove from California to Shreveport, we had one of those air conditioners that fit on the outside of the car that you keep water in.

HAMILTON: Wow.

KOCH: And that was a first air conditioner. But in Shreveport, we had attic fans, and that helped some, and then in Chattanooga, we didn't have an air conditioner until your dad bought that one, and put it in the bedroom. I remember ...

HAMILTON: Indoor plumbing though?

KOCH: Oh yes. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: So was, it sounds like it was not till the late '50s that you got air conditioning?

KOCH: Yeah. I'd say so.

PIEHLER: Yeah. So summers must have been particularly hot.

KOCH: They were hot.

PIEHLER: And your husband worked for an engineering company—Chattanooga Boiler and Tank ...

KOCH: Electric Motor Sales.

PIEHLER: ... Electric Motor Sales. And did he do sales or ...

KOCH: He did sales and electrician work.

PIEHLER: Did he use the GI Bill at all, your husband?

KOCH: No.

PIEHLER: Did you ever use the GI Bill?

KOCH: Yeah, I did.

PIEHLER: Where did you use it?

KOCH: I took a beauty course. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Really? When did you take the beauty course?

KOCH: State Beauty School.

PIEHLER: Where?

KOCH: Here, in Chattanooga.

PIEHLER: In Chattanooga. For just ...

KOCH: I ran into a friend—a nurse that I was working with at Memorial, and she had been an Army nurse, and was going to do this. And I thought—I have two kids at the time and Jimmy wasn't very good about taking care of the kids, so I had to work it around that. And I went to night school. So it worked out fine. Never took the state board, but I had a lot of fun going to school. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: You enjoyed that ...

HAMILTON: So you just went to school?

KOCH: I thought I was going to use it to work in a nursing home, and give shampoos to the old folks. I thought that would be something I can do. But they don't like anybody just coming in.

HAMILTON: Who?

KOCH: The people who do it for a living like to do it. They didn't like other people ...

HAMILTON: Interesting.

PIEHLER: You eventually re-entered nursing ...

KOCH: Yeah.

PIEHLER: When did that happen, when did you?

KOCH: 1950, I went to work at Erlanger, briefly, and I ...

PIEHLER: Erlanger is a hospital in Chattanooga?

KOCH: ... in Chattanooga. I guess it's the largest. And then about '51 or '52, Memorial or Catholic Hospital was built and I went to work there part-time.

PIEHLER: So you didn't really take very long off with your children, in terms of not working?

KOCH: No, I didn't. About three years—and I didn't work full time. I had to work around the kids whenever they were ...

PIEHLER: Just to bring up, your husband was not very good about ...

KOCH: He wasn't a very good babysitter. (Laughter) He had other interests.

PIEHLER: It sounds like you were—how much of you deciding to teach, go back to nursing, how much of that was a desire to continue your career, and how much of it was you could use the money? Can you even sort something like that out?

KOCH: I think it's probably fifty-fifty.

PIEHLER: Fifty-fifty. You did really want to continue with nursing?

KOCH: Yeah, I enjoy nursing. I enjoyed it, but you know I don't miss it. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: I'm also not surprised—I don't know if I'll miss teaching after a certain point. Did you go back to delivery?

KOCH: When I first started, I did general duty. I liked post-op surgery, and that's mostly what I did. Then oh, maybe the end of the '50s I started in OB, and that's where I worked the rest of my time.

PIEHLER: And when did you retire?

KOCH: In '89.

PIEHLER: '89. So you did have a very long—when you consider you graduated in 1939.

KOCH: Oh, I graduated in 1942.

PIEHLER: 1942. But started nursing school in 1939 and you retired in 1989. That's basically 50 years in nursing with actually only a very brief interruption for a few years, in the late '40s.

KOCH: Yeah.

PIEHLER: How did you see the profession changing since ...

KOCH: Oh, from the Dark Ages to modern times? (Laughter)

PIEHLER: When you say dark ages to modern times, what particularly to a nurse-to-be, what about the Dark Ages that really strikes you as the changes—some of the biggest changes you've

observed?

KOCH: Well, the treatments and medications and things that are available to patients today—we didn't have any of this stuff back then. And the bedside nursing has deteriorated. But that hasn't improved, but everything else has. And I think now you have to have more education to be a nurse. All you needed was a high school education back when I trained. And, you know, decent grades, but you didn't have to be head of your class or anything like that—just make decent grades.

PIEHLER: You were in a sense a diploma nurse.

KOCH: Yes.

PIEHLER: Do you think in terms of your advancement in nursing, did you feel hindered by not having a B.A.?

KOCH: No, because all the girls I worked with were in the same boat. Now the girls that were coming in with the B.S. and M.S., they were getting the same salaries, which I think was a sore point, but we had to train them to do the job. I mean, they had the knowledge, they were smart as heck, but they didn't know the practical. They weren't getting enough practical training, so that was our observation.

PIEHLER: ... Because there's actually a nurse-to be in the room, what sort of practical things did you—I often—one of the reasons I like to encourage students to do these interviews with people in a certain profession is the things they don't teach you in school lessons. What were the practical things you would have to show these very highly, what you said, very highly educated classroom nurses. What were some of the practical things that they don't teach you in nursing school anymore?

KOCH: Well, a lot of the—we did all our surgery, C-sections, and then we started doing general surgery in the C-section when our OB started to drop off because they wanted to utilize all the rooms. This one nurse I'm thinking of particularly, didn't know much about sterile technique. I'm sure she knew it in her head. But you know, she'd scrub with her rings on, and put her gloves on with rings, and she didn't know how to catheterize the patient. And another one had two patients being catheterized at the same time and she was standing in the sun. (Laughs) I mean those things you learn at the bedside—those are some basic ... But, there are just things that you don't do, unless you do it on the site.

HAMILTON: You really did surgery, like, with the OBs?

KOCH: Yes, we did general surgery

HAMILTON: Right.

KOCH: We did some cancer and laparoscopies in the OB department.

HAMILTON: I didn't know that you did that all. Wow.

KOCH: This is as recent—well, the OB department was closed back in, probably the early part of the '80s. And then after they closed the department, I worked as an IV nurse, doing IV therapy. So, that's 20 years of improved knowledge. Yeah, we did a lot of things then. I wonder about today, cancer especially. It's not contagious I know, but you just don't do that in the same room with a C-section.

HAMILTON: When did the needles change?

KOCH: Sterilizing them?

HAMILTON: Yes, ma'am, and the glass—I mean, just the whole fact of using old ones. Did it happen when you were in the hospital.

KOCH: I would say that was probably in the early '60s.

HAMILTON: So you were right in the midst of the change?

KOCH: Uh-huh. Because when it all started we were still doing the autoclave thing, back in the little sterilizer. And boy, when you didn't have to sharpen your needles and sterilize your syringes—wow!

HAMILTON: I bet that was nice.

KOCH: We were modern. (Laughter)

HAMILTON: I don't understand how you could have so much one-on-one patient time with all those patients. I mean, and yet still have to do as much as y'all did. You know, from just the simplest to sharpening to changing, and yet you still had more patient hands-on.

KOCH: No, we had, in OB, we had nursing assistants and practical nurses, but still you didn't have a lot of ratio, patient to nurse.

HAMILTON: How many did you usually—what shift did you usually work?

KOCH: I usually worked the three to eleven shift.

HAMILTON: Okay.

KOCH: And I might be the only nurse with one aid.

PIEHLER: For how many patients?

KOCH: Well, you never know, but we delivered around 200 a month. We used to do a lot of OB—the most in Chattanooga. And then it dropped off because it started doing the tubal ligations, and you know, we didn't do abortions and that kind of thing, so people went to Erlanger hospital to

have those, especially tubal ligations. You can't come without a second baby, so everybody who had a second baby went to Erlanger.

PIEHLER: Because you were the Catholic—Memorial was the Catholic and you weren't supposed to do that.

KOCH: Yes.

HAMILTON: I'm curious, did you ever find any resistance, major resistance, with the young, new nurse—I mean, I'm sure you did—but with the educated nurses that just sort of, maybe not shunned you, but more less thought that they were more intelligent than you, and so were sort of harder at teach? Was there a lot of that or were they pretty open because you were ...

KOCH: Most of them were okay. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: I'm curious, could you say something about the relationship between of doctors and nurses over time? What's changed and what's sort of remained the same?

KOCH: Well, it's changed in that you're more on an equal footing with the doctors today than you were back then when they were God and you were lowly. (Laughing) But now the doctors are just really great to work with, especially OB doctors. We just had a really good rapport. And they depended on us a lot. They trusted us a lot. And they'd come and go to sleep back there in the room and you took care of the patients and they would have to depend on you. So it was a good relationship.

PIEHLER: So you thought that the relationship became much more an equal walk—of equal professionals of different professions?

KOCH: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Because your description of back then is just priceless, particularly just the elevator says a lot about the whole thinking of the nurses—you know, your standing. How were you able to balance, with your daughters here, so, how were you able to balance family and work? You mentioned it was hard because your husband wasn't the best at childcare at times.

KOCH: Well, when they were in school, I would work, what, three to eleven—is that how it worked—or nights. I tried to manage it so that I would be home when they were home from school. But the rest of the time, nights worked fine, because everybody was in bed, and I'd be at work.

PIEHLER: So what time would you start a night shift?

KOCH: Eleven to seven.

PIEHLER: Eleven to seven. So then you'd come home and it sounds like you'd be making breakfast. And then you would ...

KOCH: Go to bed.

PIEHLER: See everyone go, off, and then you'd go to sleep.

KOCH: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Did your children wake you up?

KOCH: I guess they did, right enough. Oh yeah, then my mother in law came to live here—when Joanie was a baby, came to live here, and she helped some. That's Jimmy's mother. It just changed all the time, depending on what grades they were in, and how—until one day Jackie says, "Mom, you need to be home with Joanie in the afternoon when she gets out of school."

GUFFIN: I did? (Laughter)

KOCH: I guess I was working three to eleven then, my favorite shift. But that's when I went back on nights.

PIEHLER: Why was three to eleven your favorite shift?

KOCH: I don't know. More relaxed, there was not as many supervisors, and people from the office coming through and all that. It was just a more relaxed shift.

PIEHLER: Night shift seems obvious why that would be a hard shift, because you're literally trying to stay awake. So that—were you ever involved in any professional associations for nursing?

KOCH: Yeah, I used to belong to the ANA—the American Nursing Association. And the Nurses Association of the American College of OB/GYN. Then they allowed nurses to belong to that group and so they called it NA OB/GYN.

PIEHLER: Uh-huh. And did you go to professional meetings at all?

KOCH: Yes, uh-huh, I went to quite a few of those. All the time, and of course the last number of years you have to keep up with ...

PIEHLER: You are required.

KOCH: You had to continue education, yeah.

PIEHLER: I'm curious, when you were a nurse, who knew you had been an Army nurse among your fellow nurses?

KOCH: I don't know that anybody did. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: You never really talked to them about it?

KOCH: No, let me think.

GUFFIN: Yeah, cause you had a friend that was also an Army nurse.

KOCH: Oh, La Valley. The nurse that took the beauty class with me.

PIEHLER: Is she still alive?

KOCH: No, she died a couple years ago.

PIEHLER: Oh, okay. So she was in the Army?

KOCH: Yeah, because you could've interviewing her. She was in England during the war in a station hospital. But we didn't talk about it.

PIEHLER: Yeah, so your fellow nurses or—what about patients? Did you ever have a patient that, particularly someone that had been an Army veteran?

KOCH: No, it was just like it was a gone part of my life.

PIEHLER: What about family friends? Would they have known you when your husband had been in the war?

COOPER: Who's from the Reserve?

KOCH: Oh yeah, the Reserve, we knew all those—the Reserve officer's group, but I didn't keep up with that after Jimmy died. The people at church—some of them at church. A few of the men had been in the Army or the Air Force, and one girl in particular had been in the WACS, but that's about it.

PIEHLER: Now at church, were you Episcopalians?

KOCH: Uh-huh.

PIEHLER: So that would've—had your husband been Episcopalian?

KOCH: He said he was. (Laughter) Yes, we claimed it, both of us.

PIEHLER: In Chattanooga, were you active in any organizations, outside of nursing?

KOCH: No. Was I?

GUFFIN: Mm hmm.

KOCH: I can't think of any.

PIEHLER: Were you active in the PTA? Or ...

KOCH: Oh no, I wasn't an officer. I went to PTA meetings, yeah. What else is there? Bible stuff at school.

GUFFIN: Kiwanis.

KOCH: I didn't go to Kiwanis.

GUFFIN: Oh, that must be dad then. He was a Shriner, too.

PIEHLER: Your husband was a Shiner?

KOCH: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Did you ever join a veterans' organization?

KOCH: WIMSA—Women in Military Service for America.

PIEHLER: Did your husband—did he join any veterans' organizations?

KOCH: I belonged to the Legion once. Yeah I did. I joined the Legion, but I didn't ever go.

PIEHLER: You didn't go?

KOCH: Jimmy belonged to the VFW. That's it, I think.

PIEHLER: You mentioned something I was very curious to hear, that your husband never went to any of his reunions, back in England.

KOCH: No. I wanted to go to one real badly, cause it was in Winnipeg and it was an RAF group.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm. Really?

KOCH: No, after the war was over, it was over. He had no ...

PIEHLER: He didn't maintain ties with people?

KOCH: No. Now he did with the Reserve.

PIEHLER: With the Reserve he stayed.

KOCH: Yeah, and those guys down there used to keep up with one another.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm. But the RAF group he just lost?

KOCH: Yup. Well, several of them—I think he had a New Zealander and an Aussie on his crew, so that would be two of them—but I never heard him talk about it.

PIEHLER: And he didn't maintain Christmas cards or ...

KOCH: For a while.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

KOCH: Let's see, what was I going to say? He had a friend, Colonel Biddle, who was a well-known New England congressman or something like that. He was in the service with Jimmy, and he didn't take any of the salary, it all just went back. He offered to give us our wedding. It was going to be at Kronborg Castle, cause that's where people were getting married in those days and he was gonna do the whole thing. But we didn't do it.

PIEHLER: You didn't do it. Where did you get your wedding? Cause you have some photographs.

KOCH: At a little church in Bad Nauheim.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm. And an Army chaplain married you?

KOCH: Yes.

HAMILTON: Who was your bridesmaid in that picture?

KOCH: She was an Army nurse that has since died.

PIEHLER: And you mentioned that you never really stayed in touch with any of the nurses you served with.

KOCH: No, a couple of them, I did for a few years ...

PIEHLER: Yeah.

KOCH: ... and that was it. I just stopped catching up.

PIEHLER: So hopefully we can get this interview on the web. You would be—there may be a nurse out there that would ...

KOCH: That would be fun.

PIEHLER: That's occasionally happened, but it sounds like you've lost touch with them.

KOCH: Oh yeah, yeah.

PIEHLER: I'm curious, is there any movie or novel that really captures your war, your experiences that you can think of?

KOCH: No, but I love *M*A*S*H*, that was as closest to it as I could think of. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: That was as close as you could think of? What about it that made it seem—with elements you could appreciate?

KOCH: Oh, just the team spirit, and the way everybody relaxed and had fun, and made fun of the other officers. (Laughter) That wasn't in our unit, but I just loved how dedicated they all were.

PIEHLER: But I do notice from your yearbook it strikes me at times it could be a very relaxed affair.

KOCH: Uh-huh.

PIEHLER: That is ...

KOCH: Just about out of questions?

PIEHLER: Almost. (Laughter)

COOPER: She's run out of information. (Laughs)

KOCH: I've said too much already.

PIEHLER: One thing that I wanted to also ask is—I think you mentioned at the part that got deleted, where I think it was over lunch—in Chattanooga, where did you live?

KOCH: Brainerd, which is across the dam.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm. Was that your first home?

KOCH: Uh-huh.

PIEHLER: And you lived in that home until ...

KOCH: 'Til, 40 years? 43 years.

PIEHLER: And then you moved out to this, to Hixson?

KOCH: Yes.

PIEHLER: And I think you said you've been in this house for twelve years?

KOCH: Nine.

PIEHLER: Nine years? The house in Brainerd, the Brainerd neighborhood, is Brainerd ...
(Attempting various pronunciations of Brainerd)

GUFFIN: Brainerd. (Pronounced *Bray-nerd*)

PIEHLER: Brainerd. Did your husband and you buy that on the GI Bill?

KOCH: Yes, everybody in the neighborhood was buying a house under the GI Bill. And we all had so much in common. It was our first homes, and we were just starting to raise our families, and everybody had served in the service.

PIEHLER: But did you ever talk about the war—when you—in that neighborhood of old GIs?

KOCH: No, because the women hadn't been in the service.

PIEHLER: So you were the only one besides you said you had one friend that had been an Army nurse, the rest had not been in the war. And it never came up, they were never curious about it?

KOCH: No, I don't think so. Well, maybe they knew.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

KOCH: Phyllis probably knew. Yeah, they probably knew.

COOPER: They all knew. I mean, they seemed to look up to mother. (Laughter) They did, when anything ever went wrong, as far as nursing and all ...

KOCH: Oh because I was a nurse, you know how that is. You'll be called on all the time.

HAMILTON: Before I even have gotten my diploma that says I'm a registered nurse, people are still asking, "What do you think this is?"

KOCH: They think you know everything.

HAMILTON: I haven't even graduated.

KOCH: When do you graduate?

HAMILTON: About a year or so.

PIEHLER: During the war, what did you think of the Soviets? Do you remember?

KOCH: Yeah, because we had some come through our hospital one time.

PIEHLER: Really?

KOCH: Yeah, there was a group of Russians and I don't know why. They were gonna have breakfast in our mess hall.

PIEHLER: You don't know why?

KOCH: No.

PIEHLER: They were not sick, they were not sick?

KOCH: Oh no, they were just passing through.

PIEHLER: They were just passing by. Were you concerned at all of during Korea or Vietnam that your husband might be called up because he was in the Reserves?

KOCH: No.

PIEHLER: That never got to that?

KOCH: No. I asked him one time I'm sure, if there was any danger, "Hell, no!"

COOPER: This is on tape. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: And I'm pretty sure, though I think it was earlier, one of the things I observed, your military service in terms of family skipped a generation, that you have a grandson now in the Navy. You've shared stories it sounds like, and he's currently based in Iceland.

KOCH: Right. Jimmy.

PIEHLER: Jimmy. And it's apparently been, we might as well put this on tape, he's apparently been Sailor of the Year for, in his unit.

KOCH: Yes. This is the second or third time?

COOPER: Second time.

KOCH: Second time

GUFFIN: One for all of Europe—or one to compete in Europe, for All-Europe, and then one for his base.

PIEHLER: I guess, one question I have in terms of this interview, how did this interview come about? Would you have done this, it's really your daughter's prompting. Is that fair?

KOCH: Absolutely.

PIEHLER: Yeah, did you go to Celebrate Freedom? Because I know that apparently had a key role in Pigeon Forge.

KOCH: Yes, I did. That was exciting. That was fun.

PIEHLER: Oh, good! But in terms of doing the interview, it was really your daughter's prompting?

KOCH: Yes. We went to Celebrate Freedom, there was a fellow from Georgia that was in the Navy that told the story—remember him?

COOPER: Uh-huh.

GUFFIN: Uh-huh.

KOCH: And then we heard the Candy man and the pilot of the *Enola Gay*. Oh, we heard Bob Dole.

PIEHLER: Yes, yeah, you didn't come down for Steven Ambrose when he ...

KOCH: No. When was that?

PIEHLER: That was a few days before Bob Dole. We had a lot packed in, those two weeks. And that sort of event was a last chance, cause a lot of those people have since passed away.

KOCH: Oh really?

PIEHLER: Who were there. For example, Steven Ambrose has passed away, and ... others.

KOCH: What was that, three years ago?

PIEHLER: It was now, four years ago.

HAMILTON: Really, wow!

PIEHLER: Yeah, it'll be four years in November. I'm curious since I have your daughters here, how much of the war did your mother tell you, and how much didn't she tell you over the years? A lot of this apparently, some of this you've heard before and some of it ...

GUFFIN: Well, I've been through the pictures and asked questions.

KOCH: She's always probing me. (Laughs)

GUFFIN: I'm the oldest one and I've always asked all kinds of questions, Joanie being so much younger than me, wasn't necessarily as inquisitive as I was.

PIEHLER: But it sounds like the questions were key. If you didn't ask the questions ...

GUFFIN: They didn't just volunteer.

PIEHLER: So in other words, they weren't going to start giving you lessons over the dinner table, "Well, when I was in the service—you're lucky to have this because when I served we didn't get those kind of ..."

GUFFIN: No, but we all knew how to make a bed.

COOPER: Yes we did.

GUFFIN: Every one of us in the family.

KOCH: You know how to deliver a baby, too. You were the one who used to say, "Mom, why do you have to talk ..."

COOPER: "... about it at dinner." Well that's true! We shouldn't have had! (Laughter)

GUFFIN: She wouldn't talk about World War II, but she'd talk about escapades in the delivery room.

COOPER: At supper, every night. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: So you would come home and talk about delivery?

KOCH: I guess I did, I wasn't aware of it. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Actually, I think you would appreciate this as a medical profession, and your daughters with—one of my colleagues who is doing the Normandy semester, she's taking a group over to France for the 60th anniversary. Her father was a pathologist, and apparently talked about work. They were used to him talking about autopsies. But apparently when boyfriends, and husbands, and fiancés came over that really was not—they were actually a little freaked about the whole discussions that they've become very used to. (Laughter) Well, is there anything I forgot to ask you about—about the service or about nursing in general? Any questions in terms of nursing that you ...

HAMILTON: Were you ever worried about the British medical camp, changing over from American medical care to British? I read several nursing books before I came and did the interview with you, and some of the memoirs, some of the nurses were a little shaky, just because we weren't as established with the new American care, as with the British. Because we were using the British care so much.

KOCH: Huh.

PIEHLER: ...This is a very random question, but one I meant to ask while asking about your field hospital—what do you remember about the colonel, your colonel, of the whole unit?

KOCH: Oh, he was very popular. Everybody liked him. He was just, one of the guys.

PIEHLER: Do you remember his name?

KOCH: Craig.

PIEHLER: Colonel Craig?

KOCH: Dale, I believe is his first name. He would be ...

PIEHLER: Actually, his first name is Kernal. K-E-R-N-A-L.

KOCH: No. Excuse me, I don't think so.

PIEHLER: No, wait a minute.

KOCH: He was a lieutenant colonel.

PIEHLER: Lieutenant colonel.

KOCH: There it is. He was always there when you needed him.

PIEHLER: Colonel Allen A. Craig.

KOCH: Allen Craig. Oh, how did we inherit this? (Points at a wine bottle)

GUFFIN: I knew you needed it.

COOPER: Did you want some?

PIEHLER: I'll have a little, I'm not driving.

GUFFIN: It's not especially good. It's the Sutter's Home.

KOCH: Will you have one Joanie?

COOPER: Thank you. I've gotta go home and get Jess and them in a few minutes.

KOCH: I'll see you tomorrow.

COOPER: Okay.

KOCH: April, you can't have a glass of wine?

HAMILTON: I can but I'm driving.

PIEHLER: Any questions about nursing that we've ...

HAMILTON: Not that I ...

PIEHLER: Well, I want to thank you very much for your interview, and I'm sorry. We're really going to get copies cause I read several things that have been written. I should also say, I have read several greetings that you have gotten from your friends from your hometown that were very sweet and affectionate—you were clearly well liked in your hometown. We'll definitely have to put it in our archives, but also put some of them, scan them in, and put them as part of your interview on the web.

HAMILTON: I want to thank you too. It was very interesting.

KOCH: Well, I hope you got something out of it.

HAMILTON: Oh, I got plenty out of it, it was great—very interesting just to hear how nursing has evolved and still is.

KOCH: What can I say, my memory isn't the best.

PIEHLER: Oh, you don't have to be so apologetic about your memory. (Laughter)

HAMILTON: I thought it was great.

KOCH: Well, you two make a person feel very comfortable.

PIEHLER: Well, thank you.

HAMILTON: Thank you very much.

----- END OF INTERVIEW -----