

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

AN INTERVIEW WITH HELEN TARR
FOR THE
VETERAN'S ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF WAR AND SOCIETY
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

INTERVIEWED BY
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JEFFERSON CITY, TENNESSEE
JULY 2, 2003

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KURT PIEHLER: This begins an interview with Helen Tarr on July 2, 2003 in ... Jefferson City, Tennessee with Kurt Piehler and ...

DENISE KOSAK: Denise Kosak.

PIEHLER: And before we begin the interview, you had mentioned that you'd like to first—you had prepared a few things that you would like to begin the interview with. And so before we ask you some questions, why don't you ... please read what you ... would like to put on the interview.

HELEN TARR: Well this will be the interview. (Laughter) I think what I have written here is what you want to hear. I graduated from high school, NFA, Norwich Free Academy, in 1939. In 1942, I graduated from nursing school, namely Saint Francis School of Nursing, in Hartford, Connecticut. March of '43 I enlisted in the Army Nurse Corps as Second Lieutenant, Fort Devens, Massachusetts. There we were inoculated for various diseases and I also made my first entry in my diary. "Oh my God, what have I done?" Basic Training until June of '43; left for New York, boarded the *Queen Mary*—a gray hulk—a troop ship. We zigzagged for five days, due to the U-boats in the waters of the Atlantic. Men were very seasick, being the crowded conditions in the hull of the ship. Nurses worked twelve hours duty; hammocks [were] in the staterooms in the bottom of the ship. We are arrived in England in '43 of June. First hospital was Tortworth Court, Fairford, England. Some time later, we were billeted with an English family until the hospital moved to Malmesbury, England. Then to Cirencester, outside of London, and here we prepared for overseas. Tents, hikes, some litter carriers, gas masks, and so forth. A German warplane was shot down. A young pilot had to have his arm amputated. We were a 69th Evac Hospital. We served the 82nd and the 101st Paratroopers, and also the ... 8th Air Force. Clark Gable, actor, was with the 8th Air force and was a very loyal visitor to his troops in the hospital. I could tell you more stories about Mr. Gable, but this is a war journal. In June, the night of the 5th, we thought the world was coming to an end. The sky was filled with planes. The night was very dark—no stars. They were English Lancasters. The roar was so great it shook the ground. We stayed outside looking and listening, trying to figure out what was going on. Next morning, we heard General Eisenhower on the radio, stating that the invasion had begun. We moved to Southampton, getting ready to cross the Channel to Le Havre, France. We arrived May the 29th of '45. We were a tent hospital—moved in trains, trucks, and weapon carriers, and so forth. Four nurses to a tent, potbelly stove in the middle, and I was cold most of the time. Woe be if that stove ever went out during the night. It seems that during those years, the winters were very harsh. Let's see now. There's a pause. Can you turn that off?

(Tape Paused)

PIEHLER: Then ...

TARR: Okay. The *Queen Mary* is now on museum in California. My son took me to see her, and I couldn't believe this beautiful ship was the same one that we went on to England. She was painted back to her original colors with the famous red smoke stacks. Inside were velvet drapes and the Queen Elizabeth statue and so forth. All the niceties were back on her. Now, in the bottom of the ship they did have a area set up, and I remembered it, with the Army personnel in

an operating room, very vivid and true to what I had remembered. All and all, it was a great experience to see her again. Number sixteen was vivid in my memory—must have been our stateroom. Alright, I was in 3rd Army of General Patton's army, and we were a prisoner of war hospital for six months. Uh, barbed wire enclosure—men were old and then young. Men who were, of course, in the front in ... Russia at that time. When going into the ward at night, I had to have enlisted men—three—to give them their medication of treatment. The men awakened them carefully, or they would go for the throat. Remember, during the war, everything was blacked out. Our flashlights would be on only when we entered the ward, the tents, and so forth. A hundred and forty-four patients [were] in a tent. Enlisted men did most of the work. We gave medications, changed bandages, gave blood and plasma treatments. Turn that off.

(Tape Paused)

Patton's 3rd Army becomes operational—first task to liberate Brittany. He led the Allied's Armies to break out into Central France. On the 26th of August in Paris—well Paris was liberated. On the 22nd of November the 3rd Army crossed the Saar (S-a-a-r) north of Saarbrücken. 6th of December, the Battle of the Bulge begins. During—22nd of December, the defense of Bastogne, helps bring the German Army's offensive to a halt, which was the forest. Also, you might remember, in the paper they uh, asked ... the German commander to surrender. Or the Germans asked us to surrender, and the ... response was, "Nuts," if you remember. That—I'm going to take just a minute to tell you about the time. That was the worst winter we have ever had, and the sorry part of all the boys that we got was the frostbite. They had these little Eisenhower jackets. They did not have the right boots and—to take care of that winter, which was so awful and the foxholes, you know, they had to dig into the snow and they had a blanket to try and cover themselves. But we—when we got them—what we did, 'cause the snow was so beautiful that year—so white and so pure—and we made snow cream for them using the jellies or whatever we had in the, you know, ... in the kitchen. That was I think one of the saddest things, and then of course, you know, we had that terrible Massacre of Malmédy, where ... The boys really were upset when they heard that, because they advanced and found them. See, they did not know that that'd happened. On the 27th of January, we—they ... continued advances by the 3rd Army—complete the elimination of ... Ardennes Offensive. The 3rd of February, all Allied forces advance. The 2nd of March Trier (T-r-i-e-r) is captured by Patton's 3rd Army. The 25th of March, the 3rd Army crosses the Rhine. 1st Army breaks out in Remagen Bridgehead. 12th of April, President Roosevelt dies, which we thought was one of the sorriest things. We wondered what was going to happen to our country after he died. The 17th of December of '45, we departed Camp Philip [Morris] into Le Havre POE. I remember that we ended in Munich, Germany in 1945. In a—of course we were in a pasture all the time we were in the service, and uh, we arrived in Munich and got into this beautiful woman's hospital. That was the first time we actually had a chance to be in a hospital. I guess we left—well I've got some more information here. On July of '45 we left Verdun's staging area for ... Bayern—southeast Germany. On the 24th of November we left the hospital to the 67th Evac Hospital. The evac hospital was the first hospital after the medics got through just doing what they could with the patient. Then we try to patch 'em up a little bit more, then they send them to what they call the 100—I mean, uh, station hospital and then to a general hospital. From the general hospital they're sent home. So we had a chance to see them at their worst. We arrived in France on the 1st of December '45. Transferred to the 200th General Hospital. Headquarters was the 67th Evac Hospital. 13th of December of

'45, the nurses' staging area, Camp Philip Morris, Le Havre POE. This is the time that we are being discharged and we came back on a ship called the *General Alexander*. I'll never forget it. (Laughter) We did not zigzag across the Atlantic coming home, and ... I was discharged from the Army of, uh—9th of March of 1946. Well, there's my—I was captain when I did leave the service. My three years in the service, 1943 to 1946—I was a captain when discharged—was a thrilling, exciting, and terrible experience to see so many young men mutilated. And you had to admire their bravery. War is hell. Nothing good comes from war except our devotion to our country and what they were fighting for. We must never forget our fighting men.

PIEHLER: Well, we ... we have a lot of questions to ask you ...

TARR: Good. I'm glad. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: ... and we ...

TARR: This was just something I scribbled out ...

PIEHLER: No, that's great. That's—that's really very helpful to us, and is a great way to open up this interview. We'd like to really go back to the very beginning. We want to first start by asking you a little about your parents.

TARR: Oh, okay. Well, I don't know too much about them. The fact they came over from Poland ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... when they were seventeen and eighteen years old. You know it's sad that we didn't ask them questions.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: We really never did.

PIEHLER: You never did?

TARR: There were seven of us in the family—five girls and two boys—and, you know, life just took on. He was a grocer. And during the Depression, I didn't know what a depression was because we had everything in the world to eat.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

TARR: We didn't suffer, you know, in any way. We had wonderful schools in our neighborhood. We had what they call neighborhood schools, and, uh, there we participated in a lot of track meets and things with the different schools. e don't have any like that around here,

which I am so sorry about because ... all of our children have to be transported by bus. See, we walked to school ...

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... all the time. We had a wonderful high school—wonderful high school—and there was a nurse in my—on my street. And that’s when I realized that’s what I wanted to do. She gave me a little cap and a little cape and I just thought I was the greatest thing in the world. And in my high school book—I remember I was reading and it said—what is that question that they ask you—for your future? What is that—does it ...

KOSAK: Where do you wish to be here in twenty years or something ...

TARR: No, just one—one sentence there. But anyway, I answered, “Woman in white.”

KOSAK: (Laughs)

TARR: I was way—I mean I knew what I was going to do. So, uh, as I say then, we went to high school. We had a wonderful high school—played basketball and field hockey. Those are my two things that I played in high school. And tennis. Played some tennis, but didn’t make the tennis team. But did play. And, uh, we had a lot of baseball. My brother was just going to—with the Boston Red Sox when he was called into the service, unfortunately. He was a pitcher—great pitcher and never could, you know. He ... developed malaria when he was in the Pacific, and ...

PIEHLER: So he might have had a career in the majors, but for the war.

TARR: Oh, of course.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: Sure, I talked to him just the other day. I asked him how he was getting along with his malaria. He said, “Well, you know. When you have it, you have it.”

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: He has the shakes sometimes. He’s eighty—I’m eighty-two. He’s eighty-four.

PIEHLER: Where does he live now?

TARR: In, uh, Connecticut. Norwich, Connecticut. That’s where I’m from, Norwich, Connecticut.

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

TARR: And ... after the war, I knew that I’d never go back to nursing, because why would you want to go back to bed pans after you’ve had a wonderful experience like I had.

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

TARR: And so, ... I was in New York with my sister, still in uniform, and I happened to pass this ... hotel that had a big sign in the front says uh, "Interviewing for Stewardesses." Well at that time, if you remember, you had to be a nurse. You couldn't be over 5'5". You couldn't weigh but such and such. And ... so when I went into the interview, and he said, "I'll take you tomorrow." Whenever you get out of the service. They were desperate...

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... you know, for flight attendants. Or I should say stewardesses. And so, after we had our school at ... Times Square—now they go to Tulsa—to ... have—the American Airlines is who I was with. (Laughs) And ... we had a house that, uh, about two doors down was a—a few pilots, and one of them happened to be my husband. (Laughter) And I'm not going to go on and tell you the story, but he tells it better than I do.

PIEHLER: Yeah. Oh no, ... he ...

TARR: But, he says that he looked out the window one day, and he saw this taxicab pull up with five quail, I think he calls them. (Laughter) That's what he called us. And he said, uh, "Terry, Terry, come and see what we've got coming up here." So, in a few days he came and made his appearance. He said, uh—I opened the door and he doesn't remember that, but I did. And he said that he was a Southern gentleman and that he was paying his ... hospitality. (Laughter) He said if there was anything that he could do, that he'd be glad to help us. Well, we did have some drapes and things to put up, which he did. And there was a carnival down the street in about a week or so and—well, I'll go back in just a minute. There were five of us and there would be three in, two out. You know, two in, three in, and two out, and so forth and so on. So this one time he came to the door and he said, "There's a carnival down the street." And, I don't know, I guess I—I just happened to open the door and he said, "Would you like to go?" and I said yes. Now remember, we didn't have a car. The grandchildren just get ... excited when we say that we walked a whole year that we dated. "You walked? What did you do? Where did you go?" We said, "We went everywhere. We walked. Nobody had a car." One man had a car and he could get to the airport—because he was lucky he had a car, and so they all paid him, you know, a certain amount, so they could take him everyday. Then, I got a little serious and he did to, so I was trying to get my trips very close to home instead of the eight-hour trips to Dallas. I was trying to get Washington and Boston so I'd—he was in for ten days, and then he'd be out for ten days, so I'd try to arrange my trips so I could be with him. And then, at Christmastime one year, he'd decided he—it was time for us to get serious, and so he gave me my diamond and said, "Do you want to have a big wedding, or do you want to go to California?" (Laughter) And guess what I said? "California." (Laughter) So—oh see, all the pilots had to take vacations in the middle of the winter when it was quiet.

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

TARR: There wasn't too many people traveling. So we called home, and of course everybody was just real upset, but, uh, we realized that we were grown, had been through the service, and we could do what we wanted, and we figured that's what we were going to do. So, we had a very private wedding, went on to California, ice was still on the car. We got to Dallas. We were in the Blizzard of '47 ...

KOSAK: Oh.

TARR: ... when we got married. I was one hour late at the church, and I had boots up to my knees. I did have a nice dress. I didn't have a veil or anything like that, but ... the preacher was at the door and I said, "Where is he?" and he said, "Ah, he's in the back. He's alright. He's been reading the paper back there." (Laughter) So, I took my boots off and put my little sandals on, and ... we had a lovely service and started our trip to California. Then, we decided—or he decided that—well luckily we were able to get a house in Levittown. Did he tell you all that?

PIEHLER: He told us a little but about it, but you were part of ...

TARR: Well this is so—this is so interesting because we paid \$7,500 for this nice house. There were five models, and they had—I don't know how many in this one area called Levittown, which is on the island, away from New York City, and ... had everything you needed in it. \$7,500 and you just pay your fifty dollars a month.

PIEHLER: Now was this on the GI Bill?

TARR: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: Yeah. Well, after we had our first son, then we moved two streets over to a two-bedroom house. \$10,500. Well, we left—well, he kept saying, "Now we're not going to raise our family here. Someday we're going to go back to Jefferson City." And I said, "Well, just, you know, whatever," and I said I was happy where we were, but he said, "No, I ..."—he said, "I liked where we lived down there and I think you will too." So, he kept seeing the Chevrolet man when he would come to visit, which I did not know. (Laughter) And uh, finally—and his dad died, who was a country doctor here in town—he went over to see the Chevrolet dealer and said ... whenever he was ready that he would like to buy the franchise. And ... about that time he said he was ready to retire. So, excuse me. (Cough) So anyway, we came to Jefferson City in '52. He was with the airlines about six years—commercial airlines—and flew, you know, to Germany and all these other places, and I think he was getting tired, too, because it was a long, long trip. He'd do fourteen-hour flights. There wasn't anything exciting about that. And so, when I came to Jefferson City, there were about 4,000 people here. One restaurant. (Laughter) I thought I'd come into the Dark Ages. (Laughter) You know, because I'd lived in a big city. But anyway, it was the best thing we ever did. This was a great place to raise children, and—as you can see how it's grown! We got sixteen eateries on one street ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... just going to where his dealership is.

PIEHLER: But a much smaller place when you moved down here.

TARR: It was 4,000. I think we're up to 8,000 now.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: See, so many of the Northerners come in to ... Dandridge, to the lake.

KOSAK: Yeah. (Laughter) They're all—that's my—near my house ...

TARR: Okay.

KOSAK: ... All my—all the people in my neighborhood ...

TARR: Sure.

KOSAK: ... are from somewhere else.

TARR: And they have all come from where?

KOSAK: Um, the North.

TARR: Sure. (Laughter) And they like it. It's beautiful and quiet, you know. And they are building these gorgeous homes. A lot of them are from Michigan, aren't they mostly?

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

TARR: Are you all from Michigan?

KOSAK: No, no. I am—I am from Dandridge. My family ...

TARR: Oh, you're from Dandridge.

KOSAK: ... grew up in Dandridge.

TARR: Yeah. But most of them come in from Michigan, see ...

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... and they can buy a house—I mean build a house like they couldn't build in Michigan.

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

TARR: And so we are flooded with Northerners. I was one of the first Yankees in this town.

KOSAK: I bet you got a hard time with that. (Laughs)

TARR: Well, I—I just can't tell you. (Laughter) My—my reaction you don't want to hear. (Laughter) But, I thought I had gone to the Dark Ages. You couldn't do anything. Uh, the girls at the college had to wear raincoats buttoned from their neck down to their ankles to cross the street, from the dormitory to their—wherever they were going to go into the gym. Now they can wear the shortest shorts they want, you know. (Laughter) And the boys ... he tells me that ... "Oh, you couldn't kiss a girl on the doorstep." He said they had to find a bush. (Laughter) But now, you see 'em—daylight, whatever. So ... we've grown a lot, in different ways. Going back to my family, though, it was real funny. We talked about this a lot. Why we didn't ask. Why when they came over—I mean they were just so happy to be here. And ... Mother and Dad got together right away. They were—she didn't have a family, but he had two sisters that came with him ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... and she got to them and he—you know, they married and had seven children. But we did not ask them, "What was—why did you come?" and all of this kind. And I wish now we had, but you just—for some reason you never did.

PIEHLER: Did—did your parents meet—they met in the United States.

TARR: Here, yeah.

PIEHLER: Yeah. In ... Connecticut.

TARR: Yeah. And married right there in Norwich.

PIEHLER: And you don't know why they picked ... Norwich, Connecticut?

TARR: Didn't ask 'em any questions, and I even asked my older brother. I said, "Maybe you asked?" and he said no, he never did. They never even thought about it.

PIEHLER: Do you know how they even met?

TARR: Yeah, I think through the—his sisters ... met my mom.

PIEHLER: So it was—yeah.

TARR: Yeah.

PIEHLER: They ... were introduced.

TARR: That kind of a thing because she came by herself.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: And she was such a beautiful thing. I can see why he married her.

KOSAK: Hmm.

TARR: She was.

KOSAK: Hmm.

TARR: She was just beautiful.

PIEHLER: Growing up, how much Polish would you hear growing ...

TARR: I never heard it.

KOSAK: Really?

PIEHLER: They never spoke Polish?

TARR: Never really.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: There was no reason to really, 'cause we were—he was a businessman and ...

KOSAK: So did you know if they even knew English before they came over, or did they ...

TARR: Didn't even ask.

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

TARR: (Laughs) You know what I mean we didn't even ...

KOSAK: So ...

TARR: Isn't that—that's awful isn't it.

KOSAK: So did you have any Polish culture? Did they keep any of it ...

TARR: No.

KOSAK: ... when ya'll were growing up?

TARR: No.

PIEHLER: What about—what about your ... parish. Was it a—was it primarily Polish congregation ...

TARR: Not necessarily, no.

PIEHLER: No? Was it ...

TARR: No, not really. I mean there was too many of other people there, you know, a lot of Italians and everything. It was a—it was a nice community, it really was. I know so many of the times kids say, “Well, did you ever learn to do the polka?” And I said, “No, not really,” ‘cause we danced in high school. (Laughter) We had what they call sock hops, you know. Uh, that’s where it started. At lunchtime, we did not have what they called a cafeteria. They—you could get sandwiches out of a machine and a drink, or you could go home if you wanted to. And so we’d go take our shoes off and then put a record on, and we had a little—what they call little dance hops. But when I said we came into Jefferson City, you see, you couldn’t play cards. You couldn’t—there were so many things ...

KOSAK: Couldn’t dance.

TARR: ... you couldn’t. Oh, dance!

KOSAK: (Laughs)

TARR: But that’s so funny ‘cause my husband said he did dance.

KOSAK: Oh.

TARR: There were some—some of these big mansions you’ll see ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: Those girls that lived there would have dances—you know, they were Methodist and everything else. They weren’t Baptist like we were, so ...

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

TARR: Um, that’s why they could do dancing.

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

TARR: But he said he danced every Friday night. Somebody had a little party, but he said his mother never knew. (Laughter) And I’ll tell you a cute story. When I moved into the house when he went to India to start an airlines, I was pregnant and he knew that he didn’t want to take

me because he said, “You know the situations there. We don’t know what you’ll pick up.” So I stayed with his mother, who was by herself. And so, we used to play that stupid game called Rook.

KOSAK: Oh I know exactly what you are talking about. (Laughs)

TARR: And so I said, “Well ladies.” They used to come every four o’clock in the afternoon. They’d play their little Rook. Sometimes I’d play with them. And so I said one time, “Ladies, let me teach you how to play canasta.” “Well, alright.” Well I’m telling you, in a month’s time, you heard nothing but that machine just *really* going in that living room. (Laughter) I mean really going at it. So after about uh, two or three months I said, “Now, I think ya’ll are ready to play some bridge.” “Bridge, oh no, no, no. We just can’t play bridge.” Now I said, “Tell me, if you can play canasta, why can’t you play bridge?” “Cause that’s gambling.” (Laughter) I said “We’re not gambling! (Laughter) We’re just—we’re playing bridge.” Well, they wouldn’t really. Well, the girls were awfully nice to me around here, so everyday I played bridge at some of the girls houses, so I had to say to her—Mother Tara, I called her—“I’m going to have to entertain these ladies. Now I’ve been over at their house everyday, and I need to have ‘em here.” And she said, “Oh, we can’t. I just don’t think we can do that.” And I said, “Well, I’m sorry, but we’re just going to have to.” And she’s finally relented, and then I said uh, “I also have to tell you that some of the ladies smoke.” (Laughter) “Oh, well I just don’t see how we can possibly do that.” Well you can’t tell them not to smoke, I mean that’s ...

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... their own business. So I put out a few ashtrays around and luckily they did not. They knew her I guess, and they figured it would be best to not smell up her house, you know. (Laughter) But she came in and enjoyed watching ‘em play, you know, and all that. But it was just such a step for her to have bridge in her house. She was a true Southern lady. I mean, such a genteel, lovely lady that I wanted my daughter to be around her all the time to get a little of that rubbed off on her. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: How much did rub off?

TARR: ‘Cause I wasn’t such a genteel. (Laughter) But she, uh—she was a—just a lovely lady.

PIEHLER: Hmm.

TARR: Yes, I think my daughter got a lot out of it.

KOSAK: Hmm.

PIEHLER: You’re, um—you mentioned—it sounded like your father did very well in the Depression ...

TARR: Oh ...

PIEHLER: ... in a sense that you ...

TARR: Oh Lord, yeah. Yeah, he was an independent grocer.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: And ... people came to him with orders, you know, and he—I mean, through the telephone. Then he'd deliver.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: It was just a small town, where I lived. And—but ... no it was—I never knew what they said ... “Depression.”

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: (Laughs) ‘Cause we—we didn’t suffer.

PIEHLER: Now your—your parents have a car, growing up?

TARR: Oh yes.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: Sure.

PIEHLER: And you had a telephone I assume then.

TARR: Oh yes. I mean we lived very well. Very well. We were not, as I say—Depression didn’t mean a thing to me when I hear people saying that they—just like when we came back and we heard ... all these people after the war saying, “Oh it was so awful during the war ‘cause we had sugar rationing, and we had this, that, and the other.” And I’m thinking, “Is that right? You should have been where I was. You wouldn’t be worrying about as to whether you got sugar or not.” But it was a thing! You couldn’t cook. You couldn’t do anything without your sugar, could you?

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: (Laughs) So it was kind of a trial.

PIEHLER: But I mean—but you had the reaction of being overseas. That sugar was one of the least of your worries.

TARR: Heavens yes. And the worst ... (Phone rings) Excuse me, there goes that ...

(Tape Paused)

PIEHLER: ... Were you—was your family growing up able to take vacations?

TARR: Not that I can remember.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: We had a beach close to us.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: Twelve miles away.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: I lived very close to New London/Groton, Connecticut, which is where the nuclear ...

PIEHLER: Yes.

TARR: ... submarines are. And we had a real nice beach, so we had ballgames. See, our son was playing—I mean our brother was playing, and we went everywhere wherever he went.

PIEHLER: This was your brother Frank ...

TARR: Yeah.

PIEHLER: ... That was—that ...

TARR: Hotdog Frank. Yeah. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: What ...

TARR: That's what they called him, Hotdog.

PIEHLER: Because of his baseball?

TARR: I don't know. We always knew 'em as Hotdog. (Laughter)

KOSAK: So, um, how diverse was your school? Was is about the same ...

TARR: We had the most beautiful high school. I didn't appreciate it at the time because it was like a university. In other words, if you were going into medicine or into the sciences—it was in the scientific building. If you were going in to be a secretary or something, you'd go into the commercial building. If you were going to be an artist, you'd go into the art building. And, it was spread out like a university—had a big park in the front. As I say, I didn't appreciate it because,

when I came here, we had ... five high schools, and nobody had anything. It was kind of sad in a way. There's no money. And Dandridge ...

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... got everything ...

KOSAK: (Laughs)

TARR: ... because Ms. Rainwater—Phyllis Rainwater—you know the Rainwaters at all?

KOSAK: No ma'am.

TARR: Well they were very prominent people in Dandridge, and ... she just—her husband was a lawyer and she got all the monies. But, somebody finally came up with this big idea. Consolidate these five counties and have one nice high school, which we have now—have a good football team and everything. So, but our school, we had a wonderful—we were called the Tigers, and we had a wonderful—well, everything was great about the school when I think back.

PIEHLER: Well you—you mentioned the sock hops. That ...

TARR: Oh yeah, I mean—and we had dances. We walked to the prom. Can you imagine walking in your evening dress up the street? (Laughter) We had snowball fights in the wintertime coming home from school. I mean we had a great time. We had a little river close to where I lived and we had ... skating ...out there ... and you know, we had fun to see—what did they call it when the ice was very soft and we'd see who was the bravest—to go in. (Laughter) We had a fire on the bank. We'd have some hotdogs and things. We just had a great time ... growing up because we didn't have TV and ... everybody found a way to entertain themselves. We just had a great time.

PIEHLER: Well you did have radio. How often did you ...

TARR: Oh listen! Gabriel Heater—I mean we all just ran to the—when Gabriel Heater was on, 'cause he was the—do you remember ...

PIEHLER: No.

TARR: ... hearing him?

PIEHLER: Now that he—him ...

TARR: Do you never—I mean you heard of him.

PIEHLER: I've heard of him, but ...

TARR: Oh yes, and that was the greatest thing in the world to go in and listen to Gabriel Heater. Then we had Eddie Cantor. Oh, and we'd sit there around the—we had this big radio, and everybody would sit around on the floor and just laugh, you know. We just had a lot of fun.

PIEHLER: Do you have any remembrances of listening to Fireside Chats—Roosevelt's Fireside Chats?

TARR: Oh yeah. Sure. Not as many, 'cause see I was in the service ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... but I remembered ...

PIEHLER: Before the war?

TARR: Yeah. When he would have—see, we thought an awful lot of Roosevelt.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: Uh, we just thought he was the savior of our country, and I guess he was, wasn't he—at that time? And when he died, everybody was so depressed.

PIEHLER: Were you—both your parents were—it sounds like they were classic Roosevelt Democrats, uh ...

TARR: (Laughs) Isn't that funny, how we talk to be Republicans and they're Democrats?

KOSAK: (Laughs)

TARR: My daughter is the only Democrat. She married a Democrat and that's how come she's—Warren Gooch, have you heard of him? He's ...

PIEHLER: Yeah. I think ...

TARR: Oh, you have to hear of him in—in ... Knoxville.

PIEHLER: Your husband has mentioned him ...

TARR: But one thing, we don't discuss politics here. There's no reason to, 'cause he's not a Clinton man, he's a Gore man, and ... I—one of our grandsons is kind of cute. He'd say, "Now Gram, you just—you voted for Nixon!" (Laughter) And I'd say I did. At that time he was pretty good. He got into trouble. We just don't discuss politics; there's no reason to. But my family—I never voted until after that war.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: 'Cause they say "Well how come you got to be a Republican?" Well it was because of Ike.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

KOSAK: Right.

TARR: See, that was the first time we had a chance to vote. We were twenty-one. There was another thing in the interview that we don't talk about. Uh, these young pilots that were around in the Air Force there going out everyday, and when we would ... wait for them to come back—'cause we were dating some of 'em—they'd come in and if their—if they had a wounded arm, they would, you know, flake their plane wings and let us know. The ambulances would be out there. And they'd get thirty-five missions and go home. And the boy I was dating, that I really liked, he was home and gone before we even went overseas. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: He made it through his thirty ...

TARR: Heavens, yes. Schweinfurt and all those horrible places. He'd come back and tell these horrible stories about the flak hitting the plane, you know, and all of that, but he survived, and I think I've got a picture of 'em. If you give me that red book, I'll show you. (Laughs) Quite a nice looking gentleman. When he came home, he came to my family and brought roses for my mother and all that, and told her how lucky I—you know, that—well, let's see. In England, you can see this is a tent kind of a—it's not a tent but what do they call that building though?

PIEHLER: A ward?

TARR: No. There's a name for it. It's metal.

PIEHLER: Um, a Quonset hut.

TARR: Quonset hut. See, that was our first hospital, and this is the operating room. And that was in England.

KOSAK: Did you take these pictures?

TARR: Uh, some of them apparently, and some of them I was given. This is the officers' club. It was still a Quonset hut. Now in England we didn't suffer too much, except we had to live in tents, you know.

PIEHLER: It looks like you had a trip to the—is that the British Museum? Um ...

TARR: I couldn't tell you unless I wrote it. Whatever it ...

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: ... was now, I ...

PIHLER: Yeah. It looks like you—it looks like you had a trip to London.

TARR: I would—I know what they say. “Why didn’t you write?” I said “Oh my Lord, children. You don’t realize we’re at war?” (Laughter) I couldn’t tell you ...

KOSAK: That’s true.

TARR: Yeah. They were getting ready for inspection. As you can see, the officers are getting ready. But this was in England, all of this here.

PIHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: And this is the way we worked—carrying ... you know—testing. Everyday, we walked, we hiked, we did all this little business to be sure we took care of the patients correctly, and then after the hike we’d eat and, you know, wash our mess kits and things. So yeah. But I wanted to show you that. It even—it even smells musty, doesn’t it, ‘cause we’ve been in a ... Someday I ought to go through this thing and really write down what it is. I think some of the—you can see I’ve always like dogs.

KOSAK: (Gestures with hands) Is this you?

TARR: Yeah, you can see I’ve always liked dogs.

KOSAK: (Laughs)

TARR: I even found dogs there. I did. I’ve always had a dog.

PIHLER: Did you unit ... have a mascot?

TARR: No.

PIHLER: No.

TARR: Not that I know of. Well, where are you, Howie? (Laughs) I pulled out a lot of pictures you can see that I didn’t want anybody to know after I married, as you can see. (Laughter) Well this was still in England, and we wore these horrible uniforms.

PIHLER: Why were they so horrible?

TARR: Well, they were, uh, brown and white with a little gingham, and then you had to tie—they came around like that, I guess because of the difference in the sizes of people, you know. You could pull and I—I had to almost to mine three times around me, ‘cause I was very tiny little person.

PIHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: And, uh—but these—see these men were not young me that were enlisted men that worked with us.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: That old gentleman—I can't even remember his name now—he was a jewel.

PIEHLER: How old were—when you say they weren't young men, how old were they?

TARR: I don't know, but he's got some age on him...

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: ... as you can see. We were twenty-one.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... when we went in. Got out in—I was twenty-four. ... Oh, I didn't tell you the most interesting thing. Here it is, right here. We crashed in a B-17. I was not that nice girl. The friends of our said, "Would you like to go on a dry run some night?" We said, "Yeah. Where you gonna go?" And they said "Oh, we just go to the coast and back." And coming in, he hit the runway the wrong way, and ... the prop went into the ground, you know and bent. And of course they had the ambulances come flying out. Well, we were called into the office, you know, and the colonel said—he was a Jewish man—and he said ... "What am I supposed to tell your family? Two nurses killed in an airplane." (Laughter) You know, and he was really giving it to us. Well we thought we were ... going to have to go home. We were scared to death! That was—her name was "Luscious Lady," that airplane. (Laughter) And we think that those pilots had to pay.

PIEHLER: 'Cause this—'cause this was completely unauthorized, it sounds like. (Laughs)

TARR: Oh! We had to stand behind the pilots and hold onto them. (Laughter) We had no seatbelts or anything. (Laughter) Well another interesting thing right here—well this is the way we traveled, you know, you can see some of the way we—so. We were in combat all the time—uniforms. You know, that's where our uniforms ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: And then, an engineer group, which was—we had people entertain us, you know, the engineers or whoever where near by. They'd invite us to dinner or some ...

PIEHLER: Where was this ...

TARR: This is ...

PIEHLER: ... this was actually just ...

TARR: ... this was still in England.

PIEHLER: ... still in England, yeah.

TARR: Yeah.

PIEHLER: 'Cause it seems very—it's very nice.

TARR: Oh yea, and you wouldn't see us dressed like this, but this was our dress ...

PIEHLER: Yeah, just ...

TARR: You had a white and kind of a drab green.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: And, uh, yeah, they even gave us corsages, you see. We're wearing corsages, which was quite nice. And Clark Gable would come to all of our affairs.

PIEHLER: And do—did you—and ...

TARR: But, he not would dance with anybody.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: And I'm talking about handsome.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: I mean, it's unbelievable how handsome that man was, and ...

KOSAK: Did you ever have a one-on-one conversation with 'em?

TARR: Oh, I said this was a war journal, so I'm not going to tell you all these nice things about Clark, but one day I had—I rode a bicycle, if you were supervising, to get around the area. We had these little English bikes. I don't—never did know what happened to mine. And, I saw him coming. (Laughs) I was twenty-one. (Laughter) And I just kinda—just about the time he arrived, I went over and he caught me.

KOSAK: (Laughs)

TARR: And, uh, I said I was hugged by Clark Gable. (Laughter) You know, we all had those ideas. Now I'm trying to find Howie, unless I took 'em out of here, but I thought there was a picture of him in here. But anyway, he was long home before I even went overseas, but he was nice to stop and see my family and tell—but you know, another good thing, my brother found me

right away, when I was in England. I got a call to come into the office and they said, “You had a visitor,” and I thought, “Well who in the world could be visiting me?” And it was my brother. He had found me.

PIEHLER: Where—what service did your brother do?

TARR: He was a medic in the military police.

PIEHLER: Oh, okay. And when—where did he contract malaria, was it in ...

TARR: In the South Pacific.

PIEHLER: South ...

TARR: After his tour of ... AT—I mean ETO, the European Theater, he was sent ...

PIEHLER: Oh he—oh, okay. So he was sent to the ...

TARR: Well listen. We were out there in a pasture on a mattress, I remember, waiting to hear, because see ... Japan had already—the war was over there. But we’re still in war and we’re waiting. And another thing, too. Let me tell you that ... Patton—we ended up in Munich, because he ran out of gas. Now you know, Eisenhower did not like Patton because of the situation in Italy ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... when he hit that soldier, and I could understand why he did it. Now that wasn’t the thing for a general to do.

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

TARR: But, you have to stop and think. We got a lot of these boys called NPs. They’d be whining and crying and all this.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: And some would come in and shoot their foot so they could go home.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: We called them NPs. They had neurological problems. And so he walks into the ward, Eisenhower—I mean, um, Patton does, and he ... hears this whiney person in the corner. And uh, he—I guess goes over ‘em and asks him, “What’s the matter?” And he’s crying and saying something ‘bout he wanted to go home or something, so he took his glove and hit him. And he says, “Leave here. I don’t want anybody in this ward except the heroes.” I mean I could understand ... Patton’s—that’s not the thing to do, but I think that just the fact that all these other

boys, you know, were injured, and ... here's this whiney somebody in the corner. Uh, I think he just lost his temper. Well of course that was a big spread in the little paper we called *Stars and Stripes*. And ... as we read it, we realized that we were getting patients like that, too, that ... were—like I say, would shoot their foot.

PIEHLER: When you—when you were in training, how aware were you of these—if you were to get these patients? What did they tell you about psychological casualties?

TARR: We really didn't. We just had that nursing. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: So it—so in other words, when these patients started coming in ...

TARR: We didn't have that many.

PIEHLER: You didn't have that many. But you—you do—did have some.

TARR: Oh we did. They would leave immediately, you know—would go.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: Our hospital was not that kind of a hospital.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: See, they would probably kept them in the ...

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: ... general hospital.

PIEHLER: Yeah, yeah.

TARR: Maybe talk to them there and get 'em back to the service, 'cause see they needed everybody.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: They didn't want anybody to go home.

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: And of course, if a girl ever got pregnant, she was going home, which I never heard of anybody getting pregnant in our area, so I was glad to hear that. But of course, when we were a prisoner-of-war camp, which was quite interesting ... the first few men we got were kinda

middle aged/older men. We were kinda—we couldn't figure it out, you know. This is German Army, they're supposed to be blonde, blue-eyed, and you know, real Aryan. And ... we found out that most of them, of course, had been to the Russian front.

KOSAK: Hmm.

TARR: That's where the big boys were—the young boys. Then, they started coming in to sixteen and seventeen—youngsters. Well, we got a lot of SS troopers, and if we got them, they didn't stay but just a few hours. They got rid of them as soon as they came in. And I was able to take a little—what is that caliber—.5, .25 caliber—.25 caliber gun. I did get that.

PIEHLER: And you kept that.

TARR: I kept it, and my husband swears it was his. (Laughter) And he tells everybody that's his. And I said, "You forget. It was mine. I got it." (Laughter) And then I got this beautiful Nazi flag, and—off of one of the officers, but when I ... came home from the service and left it at home, and after we got down here and the children were asking did I have anything that they could take to school for show and tell. I said yea. I said "I've got a Nazi flag." Well I called home and they said, "Oh." One of my sister's children had taken it to school, and they forgot to bring it home. So they didn't know where it was. But, other than that I didn't pick up anything, but my husband did. He got some things, and unfortunately Ms. Tarr's house was robbed, and they took that footlocker that didn't mean a thing to anybody. You know, it was his.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: Why would they take it? But they did. And he was just sick about it. But that was all I have and my uniform, and ... I got a skirt somewhere.

PIEHLER: Well you mentioned that the one souvenir that they didn't let you keep was the helmet.

TARR: I wanted the helmet so bad, because I did everything in the world in the helmet. You know, you wash up in it, you could sit on it. If you were anywhere you'd take it off and sit on it, 'cause it had a little liner.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: Uh, but I—I just loved my little helmet. And I tell all these stories to the kids—the grandchildren. Oh they just laugh and laugh. I say, "I did other things, too, in the helmet." (Laughter) "Like not getting up in the winter and going outside to the latrine." (Laughter) "Breaking the ice off the tent so you could go, you know." Oh they'd laugh and laugh. I did—I wanted my helmet of all the things. They could keep everything else, but they wouldn't let us have the—we had to turn in everything we had. See, they had your name and what you had signed for.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: And you had to turn back in ...

PIEHLER: Well, as an officer, didn't you—you had to buy your uniforms. You didn't have to buy your own uniforms as a nurse?

TARR: Oh no, no, no. We didn't buy anything.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

KOSAK: Where there any black nurses with you? There weren't?

TARR: Not in our unit.

PIEHLER: I wanna sort of back up just a little bit more about growing up ... because we talked about radio. What about movies? Uh, how often did you go to the ...

TARR: Uh, we ... had a—what do you call those—I'm trying to think of what it was called. It wasn't a bus, it was a tram ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... that ran—had the wires ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... that ran all the ...

PIEHLER: Yes.

TARR: ... way to town.

PIEHLER: They're streetcars ...

TARR: Streetcars! There it is. And for ten cents I could get on it and go all into town, and we would go to a movie on Saturday afternoon. And ... it was either a cowboy show or ... the Eleanor Powell, or real good movies—Fred Astaire, Ginger Rodgers. Good clean movies. But ... that's all I remember.

KOSAK: Gene Autry?

TARR: Yeah, oh. I—I mean all the boys liked that.

KOSAK: (Laughs)

PIEHLER: You weren't crazy for the ...

TARR: No.

PIEHLER: ... cowboy and what ...

TARR: I didn't care for the ...

KOSAK: (Laughter)

TARR: ... cowboy stories, but you know. If just to get away, you wouldn't ...

KOSAK: Right.

TARR: ... ten cents it cost you to ...

KOSAK: Right.

TARR: ... go to town. So ...

PIEHLER: Now I'm curious, 'cause you—you mentioned earlier ... Clark Gable. I assume—did you—did you see—how many Clark Gable movies had you seen growing—before the service?

TARR: Not too many.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: But let me tell you, this man comes in and he has a waist—literally you could put your hand around it.

PIEHLER: (Laughs)

TARR: And ... he was so—well the first time he came in, we had a little stove going in our unit there—in the office—what we called an office. And, uh, he came in and kind of pushed his—I remember he pushed his cap back and he said, "I'm Clark Gable. I'd like to see some of my boys."

PIEHLER: (Laughs)

TARR: And as if we didn't know who he was. (Laughter) So, we all shook hands. Went and asked him if he'd like a cup of coffee, which he did. He sat down, talk to us. Wanted to know where we were from, and so forth and so on. And everyday he came in, he'd come and have his coffee with us and tell us a little bit more of what was going on. Not so much of his personal life, and just about his boys and the service, you know, that he was with.

PIEHLER: Actually if you could hold on ...

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

TARR: ... because you didn't ask me what we did, you know. We worked from seven to seven or seven in the evening until seven in the morning. And we had to take a Nembutal, which was a sleeping pill, because ambulances were coming in so much you couldn't sleep with the noise. And so, if you ever took a Nembutal, you know, you were out like a light for—a good seven hours at least. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: You mentioned earlier that—in the interview, that you wanted to be a nurse very early in—early ...

TARR: Very early.

PIEHLER: ... in your life. I guess—could you go a little more why ... a nurse and ...

TARR: Well because my older brother wanted to be a doctor ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: And, uh, we had a nice hospital very close to us, and knowing this lady that was a nurse, and seeing her go out every morning with a little white uniform on and her cape ... just made a big impression on me.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: Uh, and I'd bandage everybody if they got hurt. (Laughter) And ... just always had medicine in the back of my mind, so when our two boys were growing up—the older boy, Bill, who's in the dealership with my husband—they always played with cars. And the ... second son would say, "Oh, I'll be in the office probably taking care of the money," or something like that. Well he came into about his ... junior year in high school and he said, "Mother, I'm not going into the dealership." And I said, "Well, I know you're not. You're going in to be a doctor." 'Cause he loved chemistry and he loved all these chemistry sets we'd get him for Christmas ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... and ... Granddad had a microscope he loved to bring in bugs and look through the microscope and all that, so I knew he was not going to be a dealer. And he's, you know—that was the right choice for him. You can tell children, growing up, what their interested in.

PIEHLER: You mentioned your older brother was interested in being a doctor.

TARR: Yes.

PIEHLER: That—is that John?

TARR: Yes, always wanted to be a doctor ...

PIEHLER: What ...

TARR: ... but unfortunately he couldn't.

PIEHLER: What happened?

TARR: Well, when war came, um, somebody had to help my father.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: He had the children at home, so he did not go into the service.

PIEHLER: So he stayed ...

TARR: And he stayed ...

PIEHLER: ... with his father?

TARR: And he stayed in the grocery store all those years. Yeah.

PIEHLER: How long did the grocery store continue? Uh ...

TARR: Until he retired.

PIEHLER: He readily ...

TARR: Dad died when he was seventy-five.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: And the—I guess they kept it until about seventy—when he was seventy-three.

KOSAK: Hmm.

TARR: Um, just he and my brother.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: And they had couple other men to help them, so it wasn't so ...

PIEHLER: So this—was this—this sounds very much like a corner grocery ...

TARR: Well , yeah, and then they had a little soda ... fountain on the side.

PIEHLER: Mm Hmm.

TARR: You know ... so we were very well off growing up.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: I sold a jerk for a little while on Sunday—Saturday afternoon and ...

PIEHLER: How—how much—I mean did most of the family work in the store. Is that ...

TARR: Not really, just putting up stuff .

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: At night, lots of times, the younger girls would ... you know—would have to go and help get the potatoes up or ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... in the bags and things like that, but not generally.

PIEHLER: What about your mother? Did she—she work on the store?

TARR: She couldn't work in the store. She had ...

PIEHLER: (Laughs)

TARR: ...children.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: All those seven children right in a row. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: And you didn't live ...

TARR: Two years apart.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm. And you didn't live above the store, did you?

TARR: We did.

PIEHLER: Oh you did. Okay ...

TARR: Well, we did when the hurricane ruined our house. We had a hurricane come through and ...

PIEHLER: So this was ...

TARR: ... break down this—we had this big two story white house on the corner and when it—the roof and everything was torn down. He built a store—I mean the apartment above with the store underneath. Yeah, he did.

PIEHLER: Do you remember the—I mean that was the hurricane of '38.

TARR: Oh it was terrible.

PIEHLER: Could you ...

TARR: I remember that because I helped people cross the street. Some of the older people couldn't get, you know, uh—I remember the large trees and things in the road, and the devastation was just awful.

PIEHLER: Did you have any close friends who died in the hurricane ...

TARR: No.

PIEHLER: 'Cause you were ...

TARR: Not that I remember. No.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: Nope. Nothing like that.

PIEHLER: Um, this is a little bit ahead, but in terms of the war, I mean being in the grocery business, what about the black market? How did that affect ...

TARR: I don't remember anything like that.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: I don't think I ever heard anybody say anything about that.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: Being an independent grocer was probably a lot different than if you were getting merchandise from, you know ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... a food chain or something.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: Um ...

PIEHLER: Um, after you finished ... the Free Academy, where did you ... go for ... your training as a nurse?

TARR: Uh, Hartford, Connecticut. Saint Francis School of Nursing.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm. What year did you enter?

TARR: '39. But you remember, at that time they didn't have a five-year course.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: Uh, you graduated in three years and you became a registered nurse. Now, almost everybody has to go through the five-year—two-year college and then three-year nursing.

PIEHLER: Where did you—now actually studying to be a nurse, what did—did it meet your expectations growing up? I mean what did you think of your training?

TARR: Oh, absolutely! I just loved it—loved it. And, of course when the war started, all of our graduating class—we all got together—not all, but half of us anyway ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: ...said, you know, we need to volunteer. Most everybody in the world volunteered. We had—we didn't have much of a draft. They said there was a draft, but I don't remember a draft. My brother volunteered. Lonus volunteered. We all volunteered.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: (Laughs) And little did we know, when you volunteered—from March until June, and I'm overseas, I mean, it was amazing. We didn't even know what was going on. We knew there was a war, but what were we going to do in the war?

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: We didn't know, but we found out in a hurry, didn't we?

KOSAK: Yeah.

TARR: That year in ... England was very exciting. It really was. 'Cause we met with, I say, all those pilots that were doing the real heavy bombing.

KOSAK: And you had never been outside of America before?

TARR: Oh no. Hadn't been out of the county.

KOSAK: (Laughs)

TARR: I mean really.

KOSAK: Oh wow.

TARR: No ...

PIEHLER: So ...

TARR: Nobody did.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

KOSAK: Yeah.

PIEHLER: So you had the—how many times had you been—growing up, how many times had you been to Boston?

TARR: Oh, we did go to Boston a lot, because my brother was real interested in the Boston Red Sox.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

TARR: And we'd go. We'd take that family car and pile in there. Everybody go to the ballgame.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: But we had a lot of games around ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... the area.

PIEHLER: What about New York? Had you gone to New York growing up?

TARR: No. No, I've never been to New York except when I was going into the—oh you know, when I was just visiting with my sister.

KOSAK: So did you go to Fenway Baseball Park a lot?

TARR: Yeah. Fenway. Yeah.

KOSAK: Oh, so you have really fond memories then.

TARR: Well, it was just a ballgame. (Laughter) With hotdogs and Coke. You know that's about all.

KOSAK: Uh huh.

TARR: But it was a family thing.

KOSAK: Right.

TARR: And ... 'course we were all interested in my brother ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: 'Cause he was really a—he was a—I got something here that shows him.

KOSAK: Where does he live now?

TARR: Oh he's ... in Norwich, Connecticut. He's the only one left there now and a widower. Well, I thought I had a picture of him somewhere. Let me see. Get me that—I got a little thing that—there's a ...

PIEHLER: This? (Gestures with hands)

TARR: No, not there. I've put it somewhere. There's a picture of him in the city—had this big story about him and me meeting in England. (Laughter) Well I knew it was in here. I'm just trying to think what did I do with that thing? I looked at it yesterday and I thought that they would be interested in seeing that.

PIEHLER: Go on, uh ...

TARR: Oh well. We did travel while we were in the service, and at Dachau, we got there right after they opened it up, and we could still see the blood on the walls, and the ... bones in the crematoriums. Pretty gruesome.

PIEHLER: Is this in April ... of '45 or May? Do you remember?

TARR: No. Unless I've got it in there I can't really remember. But it was uh, right after they went in there and opened it up, and ... that was the cages that they had the people and the dogs ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... they would let them out and they uh—it—it was pretty gruesome, but an exciting thing to see. And then we went up to—in Germany, we went into Hitler's ...

PIEHLER: The ...

TARR: ... area.

PIEHLER: Uh, Berch—Berchtesgaden.

TARR: Berchtesgaden.

KOSAK: Wow, that's really ...

TARR: And then you see I love dogs.

KOSAK: Hmm.

TARR: I found another one. This one ...

KOSAK: Did you have a pet dog growing up?

TARR: Always. (Laughter) We always had dogs. But you didn't ask me then, after we go into stewardess school after the war ...

PIEHLER: Well I haven't—we haven't finish—actually, I do want to ask you about stewardess school, probably 'cause my late father-in-law used to work for American Airlines, but I wanna—I want to talk a little bit more about being trained as a nurse in the late thirties. Because my senses—it was—well I've interviewed doctors and a few nurses—that training in the medical profession was very different from training today in a lot of ... ways.

TARR: I think the difference is they still go through the same procedures.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: For instance, when I had breast cancer—I was getting ready to go to bed, after everybody left, and this girl came in. 'Course she was wearing what I call a pajama top. I never knew if she was a Registered Nurse or ... LPN or whatever she was. And I said, "Well I'm ready for my backrub and my drink." And she said, "What?" I said, "I'd like my backrub and drink and then fix my bed. I'm ready to go to bed." She said, "I don't know what you're talking about." I said, "I know you don't. I was just teasing you a little bit because we—that's what we used to do." We would ... you know, give a backrub and fix the patient up, give 'em a drink, and get ready for bed. I got up out of bed and fixed my own bed and didn't get a drink ...

KOSAK: (Laughs)

TARR: ... but that's how things have changed. It's all more or less business now.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: The nurses are all in the office ...

KOSAK: Dealing with insurance claims and ...

TARR: Unless you—if you were really ill, unless you had a family member you would not get much care. Um, but when the patient came out of the operation room when we were ... in nursing, you stayed with that patient 'til he awakened. Now they have what they call recovery rooms. Everything's changed. They have what they call ICU, which monitors—everything is being monitored, so they don't have to have somebody sitting with that patient. So, a lot of the personal care is gone.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm. I'd also—when we look at pictures of nurses from the period, they're—you can definitely identify nurses. They're—the white uniforms and the ...

TARR: I'm just so sorry, 'cause I ask them all the time. I said, “Why are you all wearing these pajama tops?” And they said, “Well it was one of those things that was a lot easier to handle. Each floor has a different color.” I don't know if that makes a difference or not, but I said, “I'd like to know if you're a Registered Nurse or not. If you're not registered, you're not going to do anything to me, I can tell you.”

KOSAK: (Laughs)

TARR: “If you're just someone that's coming in.”

KOSAK: Mm hmm. Right.

TARR: You know, with medication or anything, you ... but ...

PIEHLER: In terms of the nursing program, what was the most difficult course that you had to take? Um, do you remember?

TARR: Oh pediatrics. I didn't like pediatrics. The reason I didn't like it is 'cause I was too sensitive. I could not stand to see children sick.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: And I didn't like babies.

PIEHLER: (Laughs)

TARR: I didn't even like my own little babies.

PIEHLER: (Laughs)

TARR: I liked it when they could ...

KOSAK: Do their own thing?

TARR: ... get into the tub and give their own baths, put their own pajamas on, and I'd go hear the prayer, or you know. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: So you didn't wanna go into pediatrics as a nurse.

TARR: No, I—I just don't like ...

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: ... sick children.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: I mean, I—even now I don't like to see sick children. They just, you know—bless their hearts. You just take—but there are some that just love their little babies and love those sick children, so that's good.

PIEHLER: Well, in '39 when you entered nursing school, what—what type of nursing did you think you wanted to do? Uh ...

TARR: Didn't even think about it.

PIEHLER: You didn't think like, "I wanted to work in a hospital."

TARR: No. I liked surgery. No, I like the surgery part. I probably would have ended up in surgery if I had ...

PIEHLER: Surgery if you ...

TARR: Yeah, if I had probably stayed with it.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm. Well in a sense you did end up in—in ...

TARR: Yeah, because see I like it so much my two other sisters went in, but the youngest sister ... she went into ... University of Connecticut for her masters degree in nursing.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm. Was that during the war or after?

TARR: No, I guess it was after.

PIEHLER: After the war.

TARR: No, I don't know.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: (Laughs) She's two years younger than I am, so she is about seventy something. So, I don't know.

PIEHLER: Did she enter under the Nurses' Cadet Corps?

TARR: One did.

PIEHLER: One did.

TARR: One did. And ...

PIEHLER: Which—which sister was that?

TARR: ... that was the second from the bottom.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: And she now, uh—well I mean was in the ... operating room for years and years and years. She loved it.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: That was her thing. She loved it. I don't know—I mean it was wide open. I know I didn't care for psychiatric nursing much.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: But ... I think surgery would have probably been my thing. Maybe that's why I like giving blood transfusions and plasma. You felt like you were doing something.

KOSAK: So when you—when you joined the Army you had to go through a whole 'nother set of training. Did ...

TARR: Well ...

KOSAK: ... they teach you to do anything differently?

TARR: Not in nursing.

KOSAK: Not in nursing.

TARR: No. Uh, all of it was Basic Training. Why we took all those hikes full field pack and then they'd throw tear gas at us and we'd have to put our masks on. And we did this all the time.

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

TARR: And then, you know, we had all those procedures to do in the field, and that's what it was all about. It wasn't nursing. I'm—what we did in nursing for a whole year in England was, except for that German prisoner that we shot down and amputated his arm at our hospital—was sore throats, appendectomies, you know, just normal things. Flu during the winter, you know. That kind of illness. It wasn't anything pertaining to the war at that time. But I must say this, after the invasion I think it was two days, if I remember, we got the first patient.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: Which was astounding to me.

PIEHLER: Because you got a patient so quickly?

TARR: So quickly. I don't know how they got 'em across that fast, you know?

PIEHLER: Mm hmm. You enlisted in March of 1943 in Fort Devens. How—after you enlisted, what happened to you? What was the first thing that happened?

TARR: Well, we had to go through certain procedures like inoculations.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: You'd go through this line and one of 'em would shoot your left arm, the other would hit you in the right arm. You didn't know what you were getting and why you were getting so many. Where were you going? Why did you have to have so many shots?

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: You know. And then, right after that, we started nursing. They had a—they had a hospital there when you went in.

PIEHLER: At Fort Devens?

TARR: You—everywhere we went, we nursed twelve hours.

KOSAK: Hmm.

PIEHLER: So you didn't—after you enlisted you didn't necessarily go to Fort—go to a Basic Training course?

TARR: Well that—that's what it was there.

PIEHLER: ... At Fort Devens.

TARR: Fort Devens.

PIEHLER: How long were you at Fort Devens, do you remember?

TARR: Well, from ... March to June.

PIEHLER: June.

TARR: And then we went right over to England.

PIEHLER: And what was like a daily—a day like at Fort Devens? I mean did you have any sort of ...

TARR: Sure, we got up and did calisthenics—six o'clock ... you got ... calisthenics. And we started right in with our hikes and whatever we had to do. We were in really good physical condition and probably, at eighty-two, I can still do what I do. I take care of my home. I take care of my yard. I play golf twice a week, and I'm not in the nursing home.

KOSAK: Right.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: And I tell even my children right now, "You have to stay busy. You keep your body." At fifty, everything's going down hill. Three of my children are in their fifties now. But it doesn't just happen. I mean, you have to take care of yourself, and luckily I have—my mother and dad were in good health. He died of a heart attack at seventy-five and mother died at ninety working in her roses, which is not bad.

KOSAK: No.

PIEHLER: Oh no. (Laughter)

KOSAK: Not at all.

TARR: With a stroke, so, um ...

PIEHLER: In terms of—did you, for example ... do any—did you have to go through ... gas—you know, gas chamber with gas masks? Did you do ...

TARR: No, no.

PIEHLER: You never ...

TARR: But they threw tear gas at us.

PIEHLER: They did throw tear gas at you?

TARR: Oh yes, and we got into ditches and whatever place to check our masks.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: That was the only reason for it.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: It was to keep checking our masks ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... to see if they ...

PIEHLER: See if they do. (Laughs)

TARR: Now they didn't do that everyday.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: But there'd be times we did not know when it was going to happen

KOSAK: Did you have any type of weapons training really or anything like that? No?

PIEHLER: How?

KOSAK: They never even gave you ...

TARR: Never carried a gun.

PIEHLER: How concerned were your parents about you enlisting? What did they say about your enlisting in the ...

TARR: They were absolutely furious. My father, I can see him now. He was livid. He said, "Do you know what you have done?" Well, I said, "I'm volunteering. The country needs me." "Oh." (Laughs) Yes, I did my duty, but—I mean we didn't know where going to have ... I wanted to be in the Navy. See we had Navy all around us.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: We had the Coast Guard Academy. We had ... a college for women with mostly Navy. And I really wanted to go into the Navy, but I knew if I did I'd be right there twelve miles from home in that Navy hospital. (Laughter) I wanted to see the world, you know. I wanted to experience something, so ...

PIEHLER: And then you didn't want to end up in New London. (Laughs)

TARR: No, I didn't want to—and I knew I—that's what was going to happen.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: Because they needed nurses there, too. And you know, for women—I know I've told this so many times. In fact from the ROTC, our grandson has—is going now through the Army to be an optometrist. He's in the UAB—the University of Alabama-Birmingham. Uh, I said to him at that time—I said, “Now Blaine, do you understand what you are going to go through? You have to go four years of your medical training and then you are going to give four years to the service. The only good thing about it is, you can look at it this way, that you will not be on the front line.” And I said, “No matter where you go, it'll be an experience and ...” But I told the ROTC men—I said, “women.” In fact there were two women there—girls. Oh I could just see it in their faces. They were ready to go into combat. And I said “Young lady I'm telling you right now. You do not need to be in combat. You can do just what they did during the war. Fill the WACS and the WAVES and all those did clerical work and did things that released the men from their duties and ... going to combat.” But they are in combat, which is terrible. Like that little girl that was saved. Lynch—what was her ...

PIEHLER: Jessica Lynch.

KOSAK: Jessica Lynch.

TARR: We don't even know what happened to her. Never ... will know if she can remember. Apparently now she's not remembering too much of what's going on. We don't need them in the front lines. Now Rosie the Riveter and all those women did their job, you know, during the war.

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

TARR: That's when the women became independent. That's when they did. They realized they did not have to stay at home.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

KOSAK: Could you tell a difference before when you left and when you came back? Or—or was it already taken ...

TARR: Not really, since I'd just married and, you know ...

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

TARR: The young people—where I lived most everybody was navigators and pilots ...

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: So, uh, we just stayed home. And ... it was safe where we were. We never even locked our doors.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: You know, it was a time when we could go play bridge at somebody's house and then whoever the dummy was, we'd go check that house to see if the children were okay. (Laughter) You know. Why you wouldn't think of doing something like that now.

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

TARR: So times have changed in many ways.

PIEHLER: I'm curious. Your parents—your parents were from Poland.

TARR: Yes.

PIEHLER: What did they think when ... Germany invaded Poland in '39. Did they ever talk about ...

TARR: (Laughs) Oh my gosh, I don't remember anything like that.

PIEHLER: They—they were ...

TARR: It so funny, we never discussed anything like that.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: It was always just what was going on at that time, you know.

PIEHLER: I'm sort of surprised at one thing. I don't think had mentioned to us, which is—is a real memory for a lot of people, Pearl Harbor. Do you remember where you were when ... the attack on Pearl Harbor came?

TARR: That was in, uh, '41?

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

TARR: December 7th of '41. Yeah. I was in the hospital. I mean ... training.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: See I didn't graduate until '43—'42, excuse me—graduated in '42. Oh it—we just thought it was the worst thing in the world if you remember.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: Anybody dared to attack our country? You know, and to come from—all the way from Japan?

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: And that's when everybody began to talk about volunteering.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: We heard that word—volunteering. Everybody was—had just ...

PIEHLER: Hmm?

TARR: For our country. It's so sad in our church right now, I even hate to mention this, that our flag is not displayed every Sunday in our church like we did growing up.

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

TARR: The flag was everywhere. They do it only on special occasions, and that's the way the church voted. And the reason they voted that way was 'cause the young people don't have that sense that we have of patriotism. There's no reason for them to have it, unless they were in the service or something. And I'm going to make a motion the next time we have a meeting, which we call the Ministries Night, where all the church gets together and discusses business, that we're going to put a motion in that the church—I mean the flag is to brought back into the church. Well they voted against it, of course, so I'm going to have to have them resend that other motion. But I am very, very patriotic because of what I have seen and what the boys did, and we must never forget.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: We must never forget, 'cause even the—Dr. Todd I call him now. I just get so tickled about him being a doctor—Blake. He says when he was doing his interning—he said he had all these Vietnam veterans coming in to have their eyes examined.

PIEHLER: Uh huh.

TARR: So, one day—in fact he called me from Johnson City. (Laughs) He called me. He says, “Gram, I talked to a World War II veteran today.” (Laughter) And he said that he had one eye shot out and the other eye was in very bad condition, but he said “I just enjoyed talking to him so, because everybody I've talked to has all been veterans of the ... ”

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: He didn't even mention Korean War as much as the Vietnam War.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: See, the younger groups.

KOSAK: Mm hmm. Hmm.

PIEHLER: In your—at Fort Devens, when, um—when did you leave—when did you sail ... for England? And when did you know you were going to England?

TARR: Well I thought I told you that in the beginning. I had it. It was in June.

PIEHLER: In June of 1943.

TARR: Oh yeah.

PIEHLER: What do you remember of—you mentioned briefly about the voyage, but ... how many men and women were on the ship you went over with?

TARR: We were so crowded that we slept in hammocks.

PIEHLER: So you even slept in a hammock, the nurse?

TARR: Oh yeah. The reason I said that number sixteen stayed in my mind on the *Queen Mary* is—see everything was done in red velvet curtains and just luxurious, like she was before a troop ship. The troop ship had nothing—barren. It was barren as it could be 'cause it was a troop ship. They were getting in many men ...

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: ... and those poor men downstairs. Oh, bless their hearts. Uh, that's where I learned to play bridge, of all places.

PIEHLER: (Laughs)

TARR: The beautiful staircase on the *Queen Mary*.

PIEHLER: Who—when did ...

TARR: When we were off duty, we'd play bridge on the stairway there. Um ...

KOSAK: Were there any rules about intermingling with the soldiers, or anything like that? There aren't?

TARR: You couldn't—they couldn't come up and you couldn't go down.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: If they were sick they came up. But we worked twelve hours and they had things to do down there to keep them—but they were so sick though. Bless their hearts.

PIEHLER: Well seasickness is—soldiers I've interviewed just ...

TARR: I mean, you know. Nobody knows. You know your zigzagging across. We didn't even know how many days it was going to take. We didn't know where we were going. Well I said, "France," well I didn't know we were going to France. Nobody knew where we were going. And so, uh—but all of that is kind of—I don't know, I kind of blocked out a lot of that.

PIEHLER: Did you get seasick at all during the voyage?

TARR: No, not really that I can remember.

PIEHLER: Where you able to eat? (Laughs)

TARR: Yeah. I mean I don't remember anything like that.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: So apparently being up like we were ...

PIEHLER: You were high enough.

TARR: ... we were in the air. See, we got air ... and we could walk the deck.

PIEHLER: Did you have your own messes on the ship?

TARR: Um ...

PIEHLER: ... Did you eat with ... any of the ... officers?

TARR: Oh, always with the officers.

PIEHLER: What ...

TARR: We didn't eat with anybody else.

PIEHLER: Yeah. So you just were ...

TARR: There was a distinction.

PIEHLER: So you didn't just eat then with the nurses. You—or did you ...

TARR: Officers. Nurses.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: They were all officers.

PIEHLER: Officers, yeah. So you ate—you eat—you ate with other officers.

TARR: The medical team was all the same.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: The enlisted men were the only difference.

PIEHLER: Yeah. With ... you said you were on duty for twelve hours. What could ...

TARR: Everywhere.

PIEHLER: Yeah. So it ... sounds like you got a lot of sea sicknesses ... Anything else?

TARR: That's about all.

PIEHLER: That was all you ...

TARR: Yeah, and well we did have some ... appendix probably—appendectomies that they performed.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: But, uh, usually it was regular stuff.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: The diarrhea or ...

KOSAK: And so how long ...

TARR: ... sore throat.

KOSAK: ... did it take you to—I know you said ...

TARR: Five days.

PIEHLER: And what ... port did you (run into)?

TARR: I also found a place in here that I said Scotland, and I think it was La Havre [France]. I ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: I don't really remember, but I think ...

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: I've wrote a lot of these notes a long time ago and ...

PIEHLER: Hmm.

TARR: ... it seemed like it was in Scotland where we ...

PIEHLER: Where you docked.

TARR: Where we docked and then left La Havre ...

PIEHLER: Hmm.

TARR: ... to come home.

KOSAK: And you usually only knew what you were going to do for that day. You didn't know what was coming in the next couple days or ...

TARR: We didn't even know where we were.

KOSAK: Hmm.

TARR: We just got up, put our uniforms on, and went to the station to care whoever's there. And as I say ... you know, hammocks. That's where the men slept in hammocks, too. Everything—it was just a bunch of people to get there as fast as they could get there ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm. After docking in Scotland, how long before you worked your first—you know, first duty assignment.

TARR: Oh, as soon as possible—as soon as they got the tents up.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: But the whole point was we stayed ... billeted for about six months. No, it wasn't that long. I think it was about three months with an English family, which was quite interesting because, bless their hearts, they wanted to be sure that they took care of you and they gave you

the eggs. And we said, “No, we don’t want that now.” You know, because the Army was billeting them with food, too.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: The Army was giving them food to take care of us, and they said, “Oh, we want you to have the eggs, you know, because we want you to take care of everything.” And they were so kind and so nice.

PIEHLER: What town—what town was this that—do you remember?

TARR: I think it was somewhere in Bristol, which was outside of London.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: And ... to help them—and when I got home I sent them *Reader’s Digest* and one other magazine ‘cause they wanted reading material.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: They—and whatever we got we gave ‘em. You know, they just wanted things like that.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm. What did the—the family you stayed with at, um ...

TARR: They had one child.

PIEHLER: One child.

TARR: She was about twelve years old at that time.

PIEHLER: And what did the husband do for a living in ...

TARR: Can’t recall.

PIEHLER: And the—did the mother—did the mother work outside?

TARR: No, I don’t think so.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: I don’t remember what he did.

PIEHLER: What ...

TARR: See we slept—we just slept there.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm. Yeah that was ...

TARR: Really that's all we did. They billeted us that until they got our tents set up.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: And uh ...

PIEHLER: What did you, um—what did you think of England ... 'cause you have some great pictures of—you obviously did some sightseeing.

TARR: We sure did.

PIEHLER: And you lived with ... a British family for three months.

TARR: We didn't sightsee with them at all.

PIEHLER: No. No, but you ...

TARR: The only thing I can remember—well, I mean I—I've been to England two or three times ...

PIEHLER: You have?

TARR: ... since then.

PIEHLER: But your initial impressions, what ...

TARR: Cold, wet, damp, and ... being in the tent. Um, it was just cold.

PIEHLER: Was it even colder ...

TARR: We had to go to bed with socks on and maybe a ski hat or something ...

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... and I never felt warm. (Laughs) That's why my husband says, "To this day you are never warm." But, I—I mean it was always—the dampness was so awful those years—that year.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: And the winter was very severe, but ... everything seemed like during the war was really bad. The snows were heavy and everything was bad.

PIEHLER: Well you originally started out billeting in a house and then you went to tents.

TARR: Oh we stayed in tents all the time. It was just that period of time that they were getting us ...

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: ... settled. But, uh, I tried to impress on the grandchildren—you can't imagine. Everything was dark. Everything was black. You did not show lights anywhere ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... even in the cities. Because, see, they didn't want them—the Germans to know that—where the lights were. So, when we went into Paris, I never knew Paris as the lighted Paris ...

PIEHLER: (Laughs)

TARR: ... until after we were married and went over there.

KOSAK: Hmm.

TARR: I mean everything was dark. We were in Paris, but nobody knew it was Paris.

PIEHLER: I'm going to have to—I get the impression that must have taken some getting used to it, 'cause ... I've seen photographs and people talked about driving ... in the war zone, because ...

TARR: But you know it's real funny. You adjust to everything you have to do.

KOSAK: Hmm.

TARR: You have flashlights, but you never put 'em on until you got into where you were going, and then you were banging around. You knew just barely ...

KOSAK: Oh.

TARR: ... where the latrine was but you'd be banging around trying to get there. And ... it was just the rule. That was a rule, but you—everything was always covered. No lights of any kind, anywhere, but the worst, I think, of the war that I remember so vividly is the boys talking like, for instance, when—that they were ambulatory and could walk, they'd come into the office, you know. We'd give 'em a cup—a cup of coffee and it was right after the invasion, the first group that I remember talking to the paratroopers. I loved those 82nd Paratroopers and 101st. And the reason I did so much was, because, if they were able after they were patched up in some way, they would leave a note on the pillow. "Thank you for your ..." whatever hospitality or whatever they'd write and then they'd say, "I'm going back to my unit." They had such a camaraderie with their fellow ...

PIEHLER: It sounds like when they are leaving you these notes, sometimes they had been officially discharged.

TARR: Hmm. Not really.

PIEHLER: They'd ...

KOSAK: (Laughs)

PIEHLER: ... just gotten up and ...

TARR: I know they hadn't.

PIEHLER: ... left you a note.

TARR: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Yeah I know.

TARR: Because there was such a camaraderie, and so when they'd come into the office they—we'd give 'em some coffee and I'd say, "Now tell me, you were talking about the hedgerows and the little clippers that you have, and if you clipped yours and you didn't a response, what did you do?" And they'd say, "We'd have our gun ready 'cause they were Germans. You knew they were Germans." If they were Americans, they'd have clippers too. They didn't call them clippers ...

KOSAK: Hmm.

TARR: ... though. I forget what they were ...

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: ... little frogs? But they—and that's the way they signal each other in the hedgerows. And then I said, "When you killed your first person," and ... you know, they'd look real strange there for a second and they'd say, "Well, it was either him or me." And they'd just go like that. (Gestures with hands) They wouldn't say anything ...

PIEHLER: They would just do a motion around their throat.

TARR: That's all they'd do. They'd just go like that, you know, and ... I'd say, "Well did you feel strange?" They said, "It was either him or me." And I mean that's—you have to look at it that way or ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

KOSAK: Just don't think about it.

TARR: No, I mean ...

KOSAK: Right.

TARR: I'm sure they didn't like to do it ...

KOSAK: Right.

TARR: But "it was either him or me." But we've gotten a lot of interesting stories from them and ...

PIEHLER: ... You'd mention that—I think one of the things ... I think it's hard, particularly I think of the students who read this interview is, we often ... even—particularly a lot of movies, you really can't convey ... what war does to peoples bodies. You had mentioned that earlier.

TARR: When I went to see *Saving Private Ryan* I could hardly stand those first forty minutes. Just to see the blood in the water ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: And because, see, these boys are telling us this. They'd say, "They drowned." They had this heavy equipment. They dumped them out before the even got to shore. And ... then they were shot, you know, and ... crawling, trying to find a place—it was terrible. That was terrible. Now I have a friend that I golf with. She's a German war bride that married an American, and her husband was in the first wave of the invasion. And I talk to him a lot. And ... he says to this day he has such a guilty feeling about the fact that he's alive. And I said, "Well why in the world would you feel that way?" And he said, "Because when I got off the ship and I found a niche under that cliff," he said, "I heard people calling for help, and some of my friends went to help them and they were shot and killed." He said, "I just crunched under that thing." And I said, "How old were you?" He said, "Nineteen." And I said, "Well what in the world were you thinking? You were trying to save your own skin." He said, "I know, but I can't forget it."

KOSAK: Oh.

TARR: He said, "I can hear them crying for help, crying for the medics." See, everybody calls for the medic, and nobody ever gives the medics any kind of—well, I guess they do give 'em credit, but not the credit they deserve.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: If I could tell you how those patients came in sometimes. For instance, I remember this one. As the ambulances came in, you'd check 'em quickly. You could tell right away if they needed, you know, instant care right away or you could just put 'em aside for minute 'til we took care of somebody else. (Laughs) He had a pen stuck in this lung with a condom on it. I mean he saved that boys life. Now what was he doing with a condom in his pocket? (Laughter) We didn't question that.

KOSAK: Right.

TARR: The fact that he had that to keep that lung open, see.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: I mean we give credit—we don't give the credit to the medics that they—not because my brother was a medic. It's just that I saw what they did, and ... at that time, another thing too, medicine was different. We only had sulfur powder and it wasn't until almost the end of the war when penicillin came in with a shot.

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

TARR: But see, the medics carried sulfur powder, and that's all they could do. They could put a compress on 'em with sulfur powder over the wound and try to keep it ... 'til they got to a station, you know.

KOSAK: You said earlier in the interview that you didn't know what you were getting into when you joined. When—at what moment did you realize that ...

TARR: When they were sticking me in both sides. I thought, "Where am I going that I have to have all this done." Honey, it was horrible.

KOSAK: Right.

TARR: As my husband says, he saw many a six-foot-three who'd drop to the floor getting shots. (Laughter)

KOSAK: Oh, just ...

TARR: But when knowing that fact that you, I mean, you know. Where were we going to ... go through all of this? We thought we were going to be in the hospital with uniform on taking care of patients.

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

PIEHLER: ... When you were based in England, did—were you ever in any air raids or any of ... the attacks? Did you ever ...

TARR: No.

PIEHLER: No. So you never ...

TARR: We heard.

PIEHLER: You ...

TARR: Oh you could hear ...

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: ... those, uh, air attacks, and my husband was right in London when ...

PIEHLER: Yeah. (Laughs) He's described ...

TARR: I mean he could tell ...

PIEHLER: Yes, he's described when ...

TARR: But no, we were—as I say, we were in a pasture.

PIEHLER: Hmm.

TARR: Always in a pasture.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: And everybody said, "Well where?" And I said, "I couldn't tell you where."

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

TARR: The city probably was, as I mentioned, three or four cities there, but ... we never got there.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: You know, we were always moved ... out of the pastures.

PIEHLER: In terms of your supplies, how well supplied were you in England? ... Did you even have a ...

TARR: We never wanted for anything.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: The only thing we missed I guess was milk. We had that horrible dry milk and we had ... dry ... eggs. You know, powdered eggs.

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

TARR: Um, no we had turkey. Do you know the front lines actually got a turkey dinner? That to me was one of the most amazing things. On the holidays you would have a turkey dinner with dressing and everything—pumpkin pie.

KOSAK: Hmm.

TARR: No, we ate well.

PIEHLER: So you never really—except for the powdered ... milk, you never ...

TARR: The only thing I remember is our teeth. Lonas said he came home he had seventeen cavities.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: The doctor told him he'd probably have false teeth by the time he would be in his fifties. He didn't, and I—I did have some cavities, but I've got all my teeth, so ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... whatever happened in that space of time when we didn't have the calcium ...

PIEHLER: That you—that you would normally acquire.

TARR: ... by the vitamins or something. ... I was only hospitalized one time ... with real bad flu or whatever it was that was going around at the time. Other than that, you know, we were lucky. We took care of everything and was well—stayed well.

KOSAK: You mentioned for six months that you took care of German POWs ...

TARR: Mm hmm.

KOSAK: ... and the one ...

TARR: We were called a prisoner of war camp.

KOSAK: The one difference you noticed was the age—the middle aged men. Was there any difference in the way they may have behaved, or were they so ...

TARR: Well, the first thing we did—we knew we were going to be a prisoner of war when we saw the barbed wire coming around .

KOSAK: Yeah.

TARR: I recall, "What are we doing? I mean we're going to be a prisoner of war camp? We're supposed to be taking care of our boys." ... They gave us a sheet with about twenty German

names and nouns or whatever you want to call it, and the only ones I remember are *schnell* which means move and *kommen Sie hier*, which means come here, and ... I can't remember what—but anyway there—we have to learn those words, because you did have to move 'em, and ... actually the enlisted men took care of 'em and the only thing we did was walk in with the enlisted men and gave 'em whatever medication they needed or treatment they needed, but actually we didn't have much to do with 'em.

KOSAK: Didn't have much contact?

TARR: If—I mean we did just take care of 'em, but what I meant was ... if they went outside, the enlisted men were with them.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: And ... they moved 'em out if they were SS as soon as possible. And they were the true Aryans. They were the blond headed, blue-eyed handsome people.

KOSAK: Did you ever—did the nurses or any of the people feel guilty for taking care of Germans when they felt they should be taking care of ...

TARR: They only thing I think we felt guilty is when we heard that ... the Germans were in the United States getting all of their—I forget the name of the boxes that they were getting. All this special ...

PIEHLER: Red Cross packages.

TARR: Yeah. Yeah I guess, and we heard that our boys were not getting 'em ...

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... and the Red Cross was not able to go see 'em and we were real upset about that. And that seemed to be more after that Malmédy Massacre. It seemed a lot of that was coming out—that the—our prisoners were not being taken care of according to the Geneva Convention.

PIEHLER: When did you learn about—the first time that you learned about the Malmédy Massacre?

TARR: Very soon after it happened because it comes out. We have this little paper called the *Stars and Stripes* ...

PIEHLER: Yeah. So you ...

TARR: ... that kept us informed and ...

PIEHLER: So you were a pretty regular reader?

TARR: Oh yeah. I mean well everybody wanted to know what was going on.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: We didn't even know where we were half the time.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: Were we in France, Belgium, Germany? Where were we? And ... so they kept us kinda—and then of course you know, uh—what was the artist that kept us humorous ...

KOSAK: Rockwell?

PIEHLER: Bill ...

TARR: No, no, no.

PIEHLER: Bill Mauldin?

TARR: Uh, Mauldin.

KOSAK: Mauldin.

TARR: And ... he always had those two ...

PIEHLER: So you liked Mauldin?

TARR: Yeah. Had those two characters, you know, that looked—the sad sacks.

PIEHLER: Willie—Will—oh okay. (Laughs)

TARR: Willie ...

PIEHLER: Willie and Joe.

TARR: Yeah. The sad sacks, you know, and ... he always had something to say about them, and that kinda kept us ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... you know, laughing and so forth.

PIEHLER: Could ...

TARR: But that was a lot of—see, all of our officers, the medical men, were in their either forties or maybe late thirties, but we were in our twenties, and—so half—I guess all of them are

dead by now. ‘Cause when they went home I’m sure they went back to their practices and we never had—I did write to two of ‘em.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: But other than that we didn’t have much contact except for these three girls. Two of us. Well actually our tent was called HENECOPA—Helen, Nell, Connie, and Pat. And ... I kept in touch with those girls. Well, see right after the war, two of them died with strokes. It was real funny and then this other girl died two years ago with a stroke. And this other one that’s in—where is she? In West Point, Nebraska—she writes me every Christmas and she had multiple sclerosis and is ... in real bad shape. And then when I write her and say, “I’m still golfing twice a week.” (Laughs) And she writes back and she says, “Oh, keep it up. Keep it up.” You know. (Laughter)

KOSAK: Oh.

TARR: She says she’s having such a hard time, but I didn’t go to any of the reunions, and the reason I didn’t is because the nurses weren’t going. The enlisted men were going and we didn’t even know half of the enlisted men.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: Uh, they changed so many times. You know they moved ‘em out, moved new ones in. The medical staff stayed pretty well together, but they were getting older and didn’t attend those reunions. The man next door says he goes to all of his reunions because he got to be president of his group, and he goes everywhere and says it’s—every year there is fewer and fewer, you know.

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

TARR: But I do want you to interview him.

PIEHLER: No, no, no. We will. In fact, I think it’ll be another ...

TARR: But it’s so funny, it’s funny...

PIEHLER: In a few weeks Denise and I will ...

TARR: One day I was out there and we were talking and he said, “Mrs. Tarr, somebody told me that you were with Patton.” And I said, “Yeah.” He said, “I was with Patton.” (Laughter) I said, “Really?” And he said, “Yeah.” And I said, “Did you go into the Battle of the Bulge?” He said, “Oh yeah.” And I thought, “There’s a hero.” But to me the heroes are not what I did or what those that are of us that are alive. It’s the ones that are under those crosses. They’re the heroes.

PIEHLER: Could you maybe talk a little bit about the differences between civilian nursing, what you had been trained for, and Army nursing?

TARR: Oh I couldn't go back. There'd be no way.

PIEHLER: What were—you'd mentioned that earlier. Why couldn't you ...

TARR: Because of ... medications alone.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: Oh I wouldn't even be able to tell you how to—I mean the medications they use now.

PIEHLER: Now but when you—back in the 1930s and '40s—I mean back ... in 1940—you know.

TARR: You mean after the war?

PIEHLER: Yeah. I mean ...

TARR: Well the reason I didn't wanna go back to nursing was, after being what I had gone through, to go back to bedpans?

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: At that time they were still giving bedpans.

PIEHLER: Yeah. Well you did the ... bedpans in your unit?

TARR: Well the enlisted men did all that.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: They did the bathing and we did the changing of the ...

PIEHLER: The dressings?

TARR: Of the dressings, you know. Changing—help change the casts and things like that, but we did not keep them long enough. As I said we were the first ones and then towards the end of the war we got to be called what they called 120th Station Hospital—kept them longer.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: And then, after they recuperated enough, they went to the general hospital. Then they went home. But we learned so much from the war. Then we got 'em up, and that was something they find out now. You get them up ...

PIEHLER: Hmm.

TARR: As soon as you have surgery. You don't keep 'em in bed. If you had a hernia operation years ago when I was nursing, you kept them in bed for twelve days.

PIEHLER: (Laughs)

TARR: You didn't move. If you had a cataract removed, you put sandbags on their neck and didn't let 'em turn their head.

KOSAK: Hmm.

TARR: I had my cataract removed, had one stitch, and was home. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: Well it's sort of funny. I've interviewed people who were in the hospital during World War II and they said how long they were in the hospital for a certain operation, and I am sometimes aghast at like—for operations now you'd be lucky to be in there in the afternoon.

TARR: You have just day surgery. Everything's—but they learned a big lesson. The sooner you got up, the recovery was faster. The blood—and the longer you lay in the bed, then you clot. So that's one of the big reasons—I think one of the reasons they get 'em up.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: And besides that we had to get 'em out. Others were coming in.

KOSAK: At what point did you know that you were with Patton?

TARR: Oh, I was with Patton the minute I got to England.

KOSAK: So you knew he would—you knew you were ...

TARR: I was in the 3rd Army.

KOSAK: What—what was your first thought? Like, had you heard any ...

TARR: I didn't know Patton. I didn't know him from any of the others.

PIEHLER: Had you known about the slapping incident when ...

TARR: Through the *Stars and Stripes*.

PIEHLER: *Stars and Stripes*.

TARR: Mm hmm.

PIEHLER: Um ...

TARR: Oh and then of course, you know, we were entertained. Now, we had Bob Hope and Frances Langford. They came and entertained, and here came James Cagney. And I can see him now with his fedora pulled down. He had a trench coat with his collar up. I could see him now and he says, "Bring the patients out." (Laughs) And everybody's just looking at him. "What do you mean bring the patients out? *You* go to the patient." We don't have anybody that can come to you. Well, he wasn't gonna stay around and he had to entertain patients he had 'em to come out. You know, like a stage.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: (Laughs) We didn't have anything like that.

PIEHLER: (Laughs)

TARR: Frances Langford and Bob Hope, those—they'd go around through the wards and talk to 'em, you know, and we didn't have a stage and they didn't perform.

PIEHLER: When did—the USO shows, was that in England or was that in France when ...

TARR: No, it was in France.

PIEHLER: In France.

TARR: Somewhere in France.

PIEHLER: Somewhere in France.

TARR: Yeah. And of course, Bob Hope, he was everywhere.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

KOSAK: Oh.

TARR: Uh, people just love that man. Just because of the fact that he went to them, you know, and ... and Frances Langford and Jerry Colonna. Was that his name?

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: Yeah. Colonna.

KOSAK: Would you know that these ... entertainers were coming or ..

TARR: Oh yes.

KOSAK: Oh, you would know.

TARR: Because some part of the service, they would have these people that booked ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: Mm hmm.

TARR: Now a lot of people talked about the Red Cross, but they didn't think that the Red Cross was doing a good job.

PIEHLER: Actually hold—if you could hold that thought for just a second.

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

PIEHLER: This continues an interview with Helen Tarr in Jefferson City on July 2, 2003 with Kurt Piehler and ...

KOSAK: Denise Kosak.

PIEHLER: And as the other tape was running out, you had mentioned the Red Cross and ...

TARR: Yeah, I—a lot of people have told me that they don't like to even give any money to the Red Cross and I said, "I'm sorry that you don't, because remember, if there's a tragedy of any kind, usually they are the first ones to find shelters and bring food and so forth." And during the service, we thought the world of the Red Cross. They did serve coffee and doughnuts, but they were wonderful. (Laughs) I mean the doughnuts and coffee were very welcome, because they would go around to different units ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... you know. And ... they took care of a lot of the entertainers and stuff, so they were part of the service.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm. Were you ever charged for your coffee and doughnuts?

TARR: Oh no. Somebody told me that they charged ten cents per doughnut and I said, "Well I can't believe that. That's for sure." Now they may do it here. I don't know.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: But during the service ...

PIEHLER: During the service ...

TARR: No such thing.

PIEHLER: So you have a very positive memory of—memories of the ...

TARR: Well they were great. They were doing their part just like anybody else. They were volunteers. They came over and, you know, that was their part. They drove ambulances.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: And don't forget now, a lot of the women drove ambulances. So, uh, I thought they were a great part of our service.

PIEHLER: You mentioned that when you were based in England, at one point you were treating ... an airbase—men from there, 'cause you mentioned Clark ...

TARR: 8th ...

PIEHLER: ... Gable.

TARR: 8th Air Force.

PIEHLER: ... How long were you—how long was your responsibility—your hospital unit—for the 8th Air Force? How long?

TARR: Until the invasion.

PIEHLER: Until the invasion.

TARR: Yeah. We—I mean we took care of that group—82nd, 101st, and the 8th Air Force ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: Which were booked close to, uh, you know—close to us, if they had any problems.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: And see, I told you, Clark Gable was very faithful coming everyday to see his men. They weren't seriously injured, but he ...

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: ... came to see 'em. That was part of his job. He was captain and—or major, I think, at that time.

PIEHLER: One of the things I've read about this sort of ... medicine from the Air Force at that time, you said, in a lot of ways, given the nature of the war—that a lot of people either made it or didn't. ... That it was not—it was very different casualties than say, when you got to France and you had battle casualties. Could you—have any recollections of that?

TARR: Well, not really, except the ... shrapnel was a ...

PIEHLER: New thing?

TARR: ... terrible thing.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: It wasn't just a single wound. I mean, he'd just got a bullet wound it'd be great.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: But the shrapnel was tears. Now Mr. Bishop—I was trying to think where he said his shrapnel—he was hit by shrapnel being a tank commander. ... You wonder how did that happen. It would be great to find out. I'd like to be in there when he's interviewed ... So it was a different kind of wound. And as I say they didn't come in sometimes with just one wound ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: They could take care of that. I mean, they'd be severe. I never really saw any—well, I do remember one patient. ... You know as sick as they were they always had a sense of humor, and ... this was at night, I remember going to his bed and he'd just had his leg amputated and—off to the knee probably, I think, because there was a stub there. He said, “Gosh.” He said, “My foot is itching. Will you just scratch my foot?” You know, how do you react to something like that? And I said, “Sure,” and grabbed the other foot.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: You know. But what he wanted was to let you know that it was itching there, 'cause they said the nerve endings were always there. I mean they could feel ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... something there. So—but they always had a sense of humor about everything.

PIEHLER: How many times did you lose a patient—that a patient died on you. Do you remember that?

TARR: Never had 'em long enough to have that happen.

PIEHLER: Did you ...

TARR: They came in body bags.

PIEHLER: You—so you did ...

TARR: We had body bags.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: We had a morgue.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: And ... I remember, somehow I got this little slip on an inspection of our morgues, and I tried to find it the other day to show Lonas and I couldn't find it. It's—I—it's somewhere, and what it was—they came in with talking of the terrible conditions that they found in this morgue. That the blood was everywhere, and all of this type of thing. And I thought, you know—I guess I got it because I wanted to bring it home and let people—I mean that was American blood that was being spilt there.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: It might have been horrible to be an inspector, whoever he was, but to us it was our young man, you know, 'cause he was twenty—nineteen—twenty-one years old like we were.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: These were not old men that we were servicing, you know? And to see those body bags everyday was not pleasant. But ... as the ambulances came in, and they came in fast—we got 'em out as fast as we could, too, because they were coming in that fast we couldn't keep that many. And ... it was just a busy time, and you didn't think about anything. You didn't think about home. You didn't—if it was Christmastime then we tried to go out and get some Christmas bows from the trees and make Christmas for them, but you just lived each day as it came in.

KOSAK: A lot of nurses say that—well I've heard—read that nurses feel like they're the only ... decent or wholesome thing that these men see, and so they would fix themselves up as much as possible for these. Did you ever experience that?

TARR: You mean ... they think ...

KOSAK: ... Like, did you feel that you had to like ...

TARR: With my combat outfit on? (Laughter) Oh I looked great. (Laughter) But when I went out, you see—when we were in England and had a chance to dress, sure. We had cologne on and, you know, fixed our hair and everything. We wore our makeup everyday, sure.

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

TARR: And—but, I mean, we looked glamorous I thought, because everybody else looked the same.

KOSAK: (Laughs)

TARR: They looked just like we did. We had boots on—combat boots—just like they did. I tell you what I wanted more. When we were a prisoner of war camp. I wanted to get a pair of those leather boots that those Germans had. You talk about fine leather.

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

TARR: We couldn't get them, 'cause we didn't strip them, you know. (Laughter) Somebody stripped them because a lot of the boys said they got things off of their uniforms and things, but we never—we never did. The girls did not. The women were not allowed that close to 'em.

PIEHLER: When you were—when you were going through ... France and then Belgium and Germany, how much kind—during the war itself, how much interaction would you have with civilians, or did you have any?

TARR: In Munich was the only time I had—we went into town, 'cause see we were just there. Everything was quiet. He was not moving. And you knew—stop and think before I say that. ... Had Patton moved into Berlin, like he wanted to, we wouldn't have had the Cold War. You see they—they wanted the Russian to come in for some reason, and they cut it like a pie. That's when all the trouble started. Patton knew what he wanted to do. If he had gone in—but Eisenhower didn't let him have the gas for some reason. I don't know. He just didn't like Patton. (Laughs) He took his army away from him one time.

PIEHLER: But you also mentioned earlier that you really liked Ike. I mean, it's one of the reasons you voted Republican ...

TARR: Well naturally. I mean, he was a savior, you might say. He was the top man, and ... all the stories about him and his secretary, now I don't know if all that was true or not. It probably was, but we didn't pay any attention to that. It was in the *Stars and Stripes* ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: Lot of it was in there. We heard more of it when we came home, about poor Mamie you know, having to go through all that. She was his driver, and you can take what you want with it. That was all I remember, except that that's the only reason I turned Republican when I voted. And then the next one that came in, I liked him, and so I stayed Republican. I don't think I even talked about it to my family as to whether we would be Democrats to Republicans. Actually, we're Independent, I think.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: I think more people are that way that are voting for the merit of person instead of the party. Oh I—what was the question you asked me before I got on that? You said that when, uh, we were in ...

PIEHLER: About civilians?

TARR: Oh yeah. In Munich, we went into town—can't recall what for, but as we went into the shop and ... I happened to turn around when we—just before we got to the door. And ... the salesperson spits. And I said, "That's exactly what they think of us." I said, "That's what they think of us." And that was all that was said. That was about the only contact we had with any German civilians, but my husband tells—and of course this girl who I told you was a war bride ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: She was in Berlin—and of course my husband was in the airlift and saved those people. And ... she says, "Oh, he saved my life. He saved my life." And I said, "Well I'm sure glad somebody thought that." (Laughter) We lost an awful lot of lives over there, and I think now that we think that France and Germany do not help us when we ask for it. I cringe when I hear that, 'cause if you went to the cemetery and saw those crosses ... I want them all brought home. I don't want 'em over there. They don't want us. They wouldn't help us, so there you go.

PIEHLER: ... Could you talk a little bit about the doctors you—in your unit? You mentioned that they were much older and ...

TARR: Oh yeah, they were.

PIEHLER: ... I guess ... I'm always—I've talked to a lot of doctors about physical—you know, their relationship with nurses, so I'd like to hear some ... of your reactions. The other side.

TARR: No, there was no romance.

PIEHLER: No, not even that, but just about—well I'll give you one story, and actually it's ironic. He was a doctor I interviewed on the—in New London, Connecticut. I actually had to go off the record, ... because he basically trashed nurses for about fifteen minutes.

TARR: Really?

PIEHLER: Now that was the extreme case. I mean that he is a typical, but ...

TARR: No, he sure didn't have the unit we did.

PIEHLER: But—he was also not an Army physician. But I'm curious in terms of what do you train for as a nurse, you know, and what you expected your relationship in—as a—with a doctor. I ...

TARR: It was just as professional as it was in the service—I mean ... when you were in the civilian hospital.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: We played bridge with ‘em. We danced with ‘em.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: When we were in England. (Laughs) We didn’t have time after that, but, you know the were ...

PIEHLER: What about sort of a working—I mean, how much respect did you think they had for your profession?

TARR: Well, they better. (Laughter) We did all the work. I mean, they knew that.

PIEHLER: So you didn’t feel as like you were being patronized.

TARR: Oh no. The surgeons—we would just remark at what they ... did and—no, we just had—we admired those men that gave up their time and—because they had families at home and ... You know, they’d show us pictures of their family and ... So no, we had great respect for them and I hope they respect for us. And I think at that time there was a difference in the feeling between men and women. I don’t think the women were as aggressive as they are now. At least that’s what my grandchildren tell me. I never called a boy in my life. Maybe I called Lonas. (Laughter) But I don’t never remember calling a boy, but I’d get calls all the time when the boys were in high school from these girls. And I wouldn’t even tell them they had the wrong number. I’d say, “Well see at school in the morning.” (Laughter) I mean I didn’t like the idea they were calling. They may have been calling just to get a homework assignment or something, but I ... didn’t like it. Our generation was a wonderful generation. We grew up in a wonderful country and ... I just feel so sorry now that we can’t do the things that we used to do. Can’t leave the door open. Can’t—you don’t feel safe going anywhere. Now it’s even worse with all these terrorist attacks. You don’t know from—so I’m sorry for the generation that you all are going through right now. We were happy people, you know. We really were. Happy growing up, happy—even in the service we were happy. We were. I don’t know about the Vietnam War. Apparently that was pretty bad, but I think the drug situation came in there that we didn’t have to contend with, and I think that’s when they came home as drug addicts. It turned everybody against them, and I was so sorry about that because they served their time and we should respect them just as much as anybody.

PIEHLER: No, I’ve heard that—that there was quite a bit of problem with morphine addiction in World War II. Did you ever—were you ever aware of that?

TARR: No, I don’t think we even had enough of it.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: But see the medics gave ‘em the morphine.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: Uh, and I mean ... I never even heard of such things.

PIEHLER: I'm curious in terms—did you—it sounds like you had a lot of respect for the doctors. Did they—none—you didn't have any duds assigned to your unit, or anyone who didn't make it as ...

TARR: Oh no.

PIEHLER: What about the nurses, did they all—what ...

TARR: No, I think we had a great bunch of nurses. There was one lady, we called her Maud Taylor, she was about thirty-five.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... She was the chief nurse. I could have been chief nurse, they told me later, if I had just had some age on me. And I said—well one day, during an inspection—we were all second lieutenants as we went in, and during the inspection this general came in he said, “Why are you still a second lieutenant?” I was with a hundred forty-four patients in my area that I was responsible for. And of course I said, “Well I don't understand.” He said, “Well you are going to be first lieutenant as of today,” which was quite nice.

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

TARR: So I got my silver bars. But you—you know, you didn't get promoted ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... like those who were in combat. They should have been promoted. If someone was killed and someone had to move up ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... and fill in that space, we didn't have that kind of thing. We were promoted I think with the years of service or something, 'cause when I left I was captain, which I didn't know.

PIEHLER: You mentioned, um, your—your particular tent of nursing. Where did the nurses—where did your nurses come from—your fellow nurses come from?

TARR: One was from Pennsylvania and ... one was from New Jersey. Most of them were from the Northeast—my unit.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: Most.

PIEHLER: And most were, as you'd said—you had one older nurse. Maud ...

TARR: Yeah, Maud Taylor.

PIEHLER: Maud Taylor.

TARR: She was the mother of us all. Oh, she was like a little mother hen.

PIEHLER: (Laughs)

TARR: She was, bless her heart, and I'm glad we had her, you know, 'cause if anybody was really unhappy about something they could go to her, you know, and she could, uh, help 'em. They had some problems with ... the girls that lost—I mean left their boyfriends at home and some were not able to adjust. The first year was hard, I think. England wasn't hard because weren't doing anything. I mean we were just there. But during the war there were a lot of difficulties, and ...

PIEHLER: Well, you see, you mentioned earlier that, I mean, even in England you did enormous amounts of training. You mentioned earlier ...

TARR: Oh, and we didn't know what we were doing it for.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: The word invasion was never mentioned, and we didn't know really what we were doing there. What was going on? Why are we here? Why are we doing this? We put the tents up. We took them down. We hiked everyday and we did all that ... trying to do those uh, carriers—to be sure we picked up the patients correctly and all of that. Everything was so important, and you got to remember it was so important. Everything we did was important, even the hikes were important to keep our conditions. Oh my goodness, when I think of it now. But, we were young and were able to do it, and ... I would not enlist again under the same circumstances.

PIEHLER: What—why do you say that?

TARR: It's a terrible experience. I mean it was terrible for—and, uh, to think we were all young.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: My husband was flying those things when he was twenty-one years old, you know. And all those boys that we met were bombing when they were twenty-one years old, uh ...

PIEHLER: Well it's interesting, 'cause you showed us some pictures and when you say young—and you showed us some of the orderlies, of the civilian—the ...

TARR: Yeah, the—I don't know ...

PIEHLER: Not civilian, the um ...

TARR: I know ...

PIEHLER: Not ...

TARR: I don't know how those enlisted men were so old.

PIEHLER: Well they don't look that old ...

TARR: Not all of them, but ...

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: ... but some of them were.

PIEHLER: Yeah, but—but old I think it's a relative term because ...

TARR: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Um ...

TARR: To us they were old.

PIEHLER: Yeah, to you they were old ...

TARR: They were.

PIEHLER: ... at the time.

TARR: They were really old.

KOSAK: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Yeah, I don't view them as that—I mean I ...

TARR: We were young.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

KOSAK: They could be twenty-eight years old and ...

TARR: And be old.

PIEHLER: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, but I think that's what they're very ...

TARR: But I'm talking about these in the thirties.

KOSAK: Right.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: And, uh—but they looked, to me, old. And ... they were probably regular Army.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: I don't know what happened to that young picture of Matt. See a lot of pictures I tore out, and I'm thinking, "Uh huh. You didn't want anybody to see those." (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Well, let me just continue. You've even sort of alluded to it. You did—particularly in England it sounded like you did have some real fun ...

TARR: Oh, we had a blast. Sure.

PIEHLER: (Laughs) Um ...

TARR: We got to know these young men and ... there were pubs around, like—you know, you didn't have to drink, but you'd go in and ...

PIEHLER: So you did like going to pubs when you got a chance?

TARR: Lord, yeah. And there were, uh—with the boys, you know. And we'd sit outside. They had little tables outside and they'd tell us about that day, and uh—and of course we always counted the planes that went out. We could hear 'em go.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: And then counted them when they came in and hoped that they were all coming back. And the stories they told were unbelievable.

PIEHLER: ... Any stick in your mind that ...

TARR: Well I mean, it's just the fact that the flak was so horrible, and they never knew if they were coming back or not.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: Each day they went out. But see they finished even before the invasion, the boys that we knew, and, uh, went home after thirty-five missions. When you say thirty-five missions—but those kind of missions were horrible.

PIEHLER: Because, the person you had dated—who dated through thirty-five missions—in his group, how many had ...

TARR: No, there weren't too many that actually finished the—but see, as soon as they lost somebody, there's somebody else coming in.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: You know, there was constantly ... replenishing of everybody. Uh, but you know we never had any so-called psychiatric people or anything ... that lost their minds or anything.

PIEHLER: Not—not in your ...

TARR: The only thing I can remember of Battle of the Bulge was the fact that everything was so cold. Those boys were so cold and they talked about it. They came in with frostbite and, uh, it was just this horrible situation that we did not have the—if you notice this war, how well dressed they are ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: And they even have vests that will protect them, but they have night goggles and they have—they have everything to save 'em you know. And ... our boys were—just not dressed properly. And they even say—talk about digging, digging the foxholes you know, and trying to keep warm and—pretty horrible.

PIEHLER: Um, where were you—where was your hospital when the Bulge—the first attacks occurred? ... I know—I know that Patton's Army was further south ... and how far did your unit ...

TARR: We were close to Southampton somewhere, because that's where we were leaving from.

PIEHLER: You, um—no, I mean this is during the Battle of the Bulge, um ...

TARR: We were in Germany.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: But—but where?

PIEHLER: Yeah. But ... I mean how fast—when the first attack came, how quickly did you move, because Patton did this very—he moved the 3rd Army very quickly.

TARR: Oh, well we had already been moving with him before we got to the Battle of the Bulge.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: You know. We'd come all the way through France.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: Uh ...

PIEHLER: Yeah. No, I know, but—but do you remember the actual movement during the Battle of the Bulge.

TARR: Nope. I just remembered that they called it the Battle of the Bulge and they—of course that word “Nuts,” was on everybody’s [mind]—“Can you imagine the commander telling the German nuts?” (Laughter) And they thought that was the greatest thing in the world that somebody had that kind of courage. Oh that was all through that ...

PIEHLER: Didn't ...

TARR: ... *Stars and Stripes*. It was wonderful. And about—the boy were beside themselves. They just thought that was great.

KOSAK: And you said ... you guys—you mentioned earlier you moved extremely fast. Did you ever move like stuff that you never even set up your tent or anything?

TARR: Oh no. No, we never moved that fast.

KOSAK: Oh okay.

TARR: Uh, but I meant we were leaving on trains or weapon carriers or whatever the convenience was to get us to the next point. I don't know how they moved us that fast to be honest with you. But, you know, Army can move. (Laughs) But the best service, the worship service—I tell my Sunday school class this a lot. They always ask me, they say, “What—being in the war, what were your services like?”

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: Well we had all kinds of services. We had Catholic, Protestant, and, uh, we had ministers, you know, from the different religions, but the best service we ever had was on a railroad track. We had stopped and a little rabbi got off the plane. It was just—not plane, a train. And we had the most wonderful service on that track that has always stayed with me. And I say “Why do we have Protestants, Catholics, when he can get up there and give us a service like that.” We didn't even know that he was Jewish. I mean he was a little rabbi, of course 'cause he wore a little, what do you call it?

PIEHLER: Yarmulke.

TARR: Yeah.

TARR: But it was wonderful, and we sang *Amazing Grace* and we had a—it was just a wonderful, wonderful religious feeling. You were actually in worship. Lot's of times I go to church and I'm thinking, "Oh, what am I gonna have for lunch today?" if he's not, you know, saying things I'm interested in. (Laughter) But I'll never forget that service. ... He was just wonderful.

PIEHLER: Uh, I'm curious, how often would you—when you were in the field, how often would you be able to go to services?

TARR: Oh, we'd have services every Sunday.

PIEHLER: Every Sunday.

TARR: Oh yeah.

PIEHLER: Did you have a permanent chaplain assigned to you, or did chaplains ...

TARR: There were chaplains of all the religions.

PIEHLER: In your unit.

TARR: Protestant, Catholic ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... and Jewish.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: Those are the only three.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: And ... as far as the Germans went—are you taping?

PIEHLER: Yes.

TARR: Oh.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: Well I'm going to say this. This was in England.

PIEHLER: In England, yeah.

TARR: Not in ...

PIEHLER: Not ...

TARR: During that war.

PIEHLER: ... Not in France, in England.

TARR: No, no. This was there in England. And they had time to go into town.

PIEHLER: ... How would—how often did chaplains get to see the wounded? ... Was that part of their ...

TARR: Oh yes. Especially those that were dying.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: Gave them the last rights for the Catholics and—oh sure. They called for them.

PIEHLER: Now had been—you had grown up in the Catholic Church.

TARR: I did.

PIEHLER: Had you—did you go to services at all in Europe, in England or in ...

TARR: I went to the Catholic service.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: 'Cause I was Catholic then. I didn't turn Baptist until I met my husband.

PIEHLER: Do you—you attribute ... this to the war, from what I've gathered.

TARR: I think so. And I was with a lot of—my friends were Baptist.

PIEHLER: Yeah. Um, I want to—it's a little bit out of ... sorts, but I can't resist asking anyone who has associated with the Air—8th Air Force. Did you ever meet—see Jimmy Stewart? Because I met ...

TARR: (Shakes head)

PIEHLER: Yeah. Just ... Clark Gable?

TARR: Clark Gable ...

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: ... was the only one.

PIEHER: Yeah.

TARR: No, he was the only one out of the movie group that I—we met, except for the ... ones that were entertainers like Mr. Cagney, which I despised after that. I figured he came all the way over there to ... do his part and didn't do it.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: He did another part where he could—where they could bring the patients out, but unfortunately, where we were, they couldn't do it. And ... he didn't have decency to go around the wards, at least see them, you know.

KOSAK: And Bob Hope went. He would ...

TARR: Oh yeah.

KOSAK: ... come to each person.

TARR: Yeah. And we'd have some that were ambulatory. We got 'em together in a room where he could, you know, talk to them and entertain them, and Frances sang, and Jerry Colonna rolled his eyes. You know, and that kind of thing.

PIEHLER: (Laughs) How often did you write home to ... your parents?

TARR: Not very often. Maybe once a month.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: But they wrote all the time.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: It was strictly an APO. They never knew where we were. And they say they got letters with great big holes in them.

PIEHLER: (Laughs)

TARR: I had maybe said something that was out of order.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: And see, everything was checked.

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

TARR: But you know what, mail call meant a lot to the boys, and we were glad to get it too, and we got packages and oh, my family was so good about sending things. You know, cookies and things like that, which we didn't need, because we had enough to eat. But it was nice to get it.

KOSAK: Oh.

TARR: Time—it seemed like it was endless. Uh, three years like a hundred years.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: One day went into the other. There was nothing that distinguished one day from another. We just got up and did the same thing everyday.

PIEHLER: What's the longest sort of—in those three years, what's the longest sort of leave or pass did you get? Do you remember?

TARR: The only thing I remember going was to Torquay, England. That was a resort area. A group of us went down.

PIEHLER: Now how long ...

TARR: Can't remember what we did.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: There wasn't anything there. I remember we took a bathing suit, but I don't think we ever went in. It was cold. (Laughter) You know, England has always been cold. But, uh, I guess we just rested. There wasn't anything that I can remember that—I think the men talked about playing golf—going somewhere and playing golf.

PIEHLER: So the unit went ... as a group went to the ...

TARR: Just a few at a time.

PIEHLER: Few at a time.

TARR: Yeah. But I can remember the doctors talking about playing golf.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: I wasn't playing at that time so I didn't. I didn't have any interest in it.

PIEHLER: When—when did you take up golf?

TARR: Oh that's a good, interesting story. When did I take up golf? I wanted to play ever since my husband was a Chevrolet dealer and every Wednesday the golfers—I mean they played golf, and the women played, and I didn't. And I'd have to sit and watch. And I'd say, "Now Lonas, I want to play." And he'd say "Nope. I'm not going to let you play until your—the children leave home." He said, "I know you, and you won't be happy. If you had a bad day, you'd be out there the next day and you'd have three children at home."

KOSAK: (Laughs)

TARR: I didn't know what he was talking about until I started playing. (Laughter) Then I ... realized if I didn't have a good game, I was going out there the next day to do it. But ten of us women were in our fifties. The children left home and we decided we were going to start playing golf. So we got a pro to come in and he gave us free lesson. We have a little golf course right here in New Market.

KOSAK: Lost Creek.

TARR: And the manager we'd drive—we'd drive him crazy because ...

KOSAK: (Laughs)

TARR: ... we'd be out there for six hours, and none of us knew any rules or anything and we'd be slamming—and this was a public course. (Laughter) And you know public courses are supposed to move. But anyway, he tolerated us until we got so we could stay out there maybe three and a half—four hours. But I love it and I'm still able to play and I'm still competitive. Just won a prize here, oh about a week ago. Came in second. (Laughs) Still plugging along. But really, it was a change for all of us, those that are playing. I mean we were all homemakers, you know—did our PTA, did all the community work we were supposed to do. And uh, then we started doing something for ourselves.

PIEHLER: When you mentioned ... when you were, you know—that you couldn't go back to regular nursing after what you had done. Have you—and you also told us about how you ended up becoming a stewardess. Have you thought of sort of using the GI Bill to do something?

TARR: Why yes. Lonas and I were dating, I'd say, "You know what we ought to do is go on to medical school." But see he was going to be a doctor.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: That was his thing. His dad was a doctor and he was in the medical—gonna be in the medical profession. And he said "Oh I just don't think I'll go that way now." But I really would have, probably, if I hadn't met him. I probably would have gone on with medicine.

PIEHLER: If you had ...

TARR: I probably would.

PIEHLER: ... become a physician.

TARR: Yeah.

PIEHLER: ... That you would ...

TARR: Yeah.

PIEHLER: That thought had entered your—your mind.

TARR: I didn't think stewardess was going to be my life,

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: I mean I didn't care—I wasn't that crazy about flying, 'cause see it was eight hours to go to Dallas then eight hours back and, you know, it wasn't that great.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: Although we had a wonderful time with the passengers 'cause we only had twenty-one passengers.

PIEHLER: And how many ...

TARR: Take you a long to serve them and you'd sit and you'd talk to them, you know, and all that, but it wasn't—to me it wasn't that great of a thing, even though their coffee, tea, and meals were supposed to be the thing.

PIEHLER: When you mentioned and I said I'd ask you about it, you—the flight training program left a real impression on you. You have some memories of being trained ...

TARR: As a stewardess?

PIEHLER: To be a stewardess, yeah. So what do you remember ...

TARR: Oh sure. I mean you had to have specifications. You were supposed to be from 5'2" to 5'5" because the, uh, upper deck of the plane was lower.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: Now they have it up a little higher 'cause the planes are larger, and ...

PIEHLER: But there was a reason for this height?

TARR: Yeah, and of course you had to wear a girdle. Oh my goodness you had to wear a girdle. (Laughter) And when you first went on a flight with a pilot, then he tested you by snapping your girdle to see if you had one. Oh this was the thing. (Laughter) It was one of those little silly things that happened between pilots and stewardesses, but they respected you, you know. That was just one of those things. When you first came on and the pilot ... knew you were a first ...

KOSAK: Did they ...

TARR: ... flight.

KOSAK: ... have any rules about marriage or anything?

TARR: Oh yes, we couldn't get married. You had to be a nurse first.

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

TARR: And—'cause you're the only one in the cabin. No marriage. Now they can be pregnant and everything else.

KOSAK: Was there an age limit?

TARR: I don't know about that, because they were young.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

TARR: I guess the—but there's one woman that's in her seventies still flying. Now why she wants to, I don't know, but she's still flying—'cause they don't get that many good benefits. They didn't even belong to a union when I was flying ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... but I think they do now.

PIEHLER: What did the—you had been through the war as an Army nurse. I mean you had seen an incredible lot. What did you learn about in stewardess school? I mean what—any ... recollections of that having been ...

TARR: No.

PIEHLER: ... been through a war.

TARR: No, there wasn't anything about that as much as ... servicing people.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: Um, there were certain procedures you followed.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: You had to go into the brink or something like that, you know, however ...

PIEHLER: Had ...

TARR: Get the plane, uh, shoot down and all of that first aid kind of thing. There wasn't anything about nursing really. Unless ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... somebody had a heart attack and you'd give 'em oxygen, which you could pull down, but we never had anything. Really had—oh there was one incident. I was flying to Toronto, I remember, and the captain called over on the intercom and said, "Do not serve. We're going to be running into rough weather in just a few minutes." And this one passenger just insisted he wanted his dinner. So I went to the cabin and told the captain there was one insisting. He said uh, "Go ahead and give it to him." Well, I don't remember if it was tomato juice or tomato soup, but just as he got the tray on his lap, he hit a bump—we hit a bump. And I mean that tray went up and I can just see the red on him now—all over him. (Laughter) Because the captain said, "Serve him and then sit in your seats. Get in your seats we are going to have some real bumpy weather." We were going over the lake and, uh, of course we—afterwards everything settled down. We cleaned him up and everything. We told him that the airlines would clean his suit. And I couldn't help but give him a little dig. I remember saying, "And you asked for it," which was not the way to—to do but ... (Laughter) He did ask for it.

PIEHLER: (Laughs) Oh, no. He—he certainly did. (Laughter)

TARR: But we never had any incidents of any kind. Everybody—at that time, only the very wealthy were flying. We had a different class of people flying—businessmen mostly. You know, and they were very kind, very nice—very few women flying. Very few.

PIEHLER: Well one of the things that I think—one of the things I—I don't know if you've seen the movie *Catch Me if You Can* ... but ...

TARR: No.

PIEHLER: But flying was very glamorous then.

TARR: Yeah.

PIEHLER: I mean I still remember that as ...

TARR: We looked glamorous.

PIEHLER: ... a small child. Yeah.

TARR: We looked glamorous. I mean we had to wear those little—I don't know if I showed a picture of it in there.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: I mean we had those little uniforms. They were very nice. They were tan with a white blouse and that little cap, you know, and ... now uh, you know, they wear a little dress or something and ... But I can see why. We had to wear heels, and that's why we all had bunions.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: Not from just flying. (Laughs) I meant I was just thinking that time, uh, when I had my surgery on my feet. I told them. I said, "You know, if they didn't make us wear those combat boots and those high heels, we wouldn't have had bunions," 'cause they just pushed your feet out with high heels.

PIEHLER: Hmm.

TARR: I mean you can't wear a heel like that all day long ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... on a plane.

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

TARR: And, uh—and I'd feel it. But I'm seeing the girls now. At least you got—your toes are open.

KOSAK: (Laughs)

TARR: But we had those pointy-toed ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

TARR: You can't stick your feet in a pointy toe like that.

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

TARR: I mean it's ridiculous that they're selling them even now.

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

PIEHLER: You'd mention ... uh, Levittown, because I mean that such a famous in American History that the Levittown homes.

KOSAK: It was great.

PIEHLER: And you also—you know, you had been in the Army—been an Army nurse and had seen a lot—and then—and you had also been a stewardess and quite—saw quite a bit of the country in that. What was it like then to become, in a sense, a housewife and go—to a much quieter routine ...

TARR: It's wonderful.

PIEHLER: ... it sounds?

TARR: It was wonderful. When you have a child, you have to take care of him.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: I couldn't drive. I didn't learn to drive until I came to Jefferson City.

PIEHLER: Really. So ...

TARR: And I didn't know that Jones Beach was just five miles away. (Laughter) I've been to Jones Beach.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: But see, we had no cars. People don't understand after the war there were no cars.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: And the children and the grandchildren have such a—they cannot understand that at all.

PIEHLER: Well they—I mean I—what I think they don't even understand is immediately after war there were literally no cars.

TARR: No. My husband had his name in every dealership there was, even in Connecticut. I told him to write Connecticut and have my parents and everybody see if they could get a car. Well luckily he got two in one week. He sold one to his neighbor.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: But he had to get to the airport, and which was quite a ways. And, uh—but there was the one man that had a car and they ... pooled. But listen, Levittown even had a wonderful shopping

center, and they had all these ... games for the children and everything—sandbox and everything—so we'd all go shopping in the afternoon ... with our little—whatever you called it. School—not uh—what do you call it?

PIEHLER: Basket?

TARR: No.

PIEHLER: Stroller?

TARR: Stroller. Yeah. And the stroller had a little place in the back where you could put your groceries, and we'd all go up there and all the family woke up—the children woke up at the same time. We'd go up there and let 'em play. And see, we were by ourselves for ten days, so we had to kind of get together with people and they would all have the same idea. They were either pilots or navigators and we played bridge. And ... we just had a good time.

PIEHLER: In your circle of women friends, how many had been in the service?

TARR: Not in my area.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm. Your ...

TARR: Mm hmm. In fact, I'm the only woman around here.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm. That—that's been in the service. Did—you never joined a veterans' organization?

TARR: I didn't see any reason for it.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: I mean really I didn't—I don't know what they do.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm. I'm curious, how often, particularly when you—in Levittown, how often did you talk about the war with say, your friends over bridge?

TARR: I never talked about it.

PIEHLER: Would they even have known—your friends in Levittown—would they have even known ...

TARR: I think they knew, but I never talked about it. In fact, I'm surprised I'm doing this much talking. I've been asked to do many different—I—you know, people don't understand. What do you want to know about it?

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: There's nothing good about the war. I mean what—actually, I mean, if the children are listening to this—the students or whoever's going to listen, what are they going to get from it?

PIEHLER: Well one—one question is everyone keeps calling it the “Good War”—or not everyone, but a lot of people call it the “Good War,” and you say it wasn't a good war.

TARR: It's a good war because it was a—everybody volunteered and did their part with a lot of patriotism. We felt like we had to do something for our country, and that's when Blane amazed me when he was inducted. I said to him afterwards—I said, “Blane, why did you want to do this?” He said, “Grandma, I want to do something for my country.” I said, “I can't believe it. I just can't believe it.” He said, “Well, I've heard you and Granddad talk about it, and I just feel that I want to do something.” I said, “Great. You're gonna give four years of your life, sure—of your life to the—to the service. Great.” And why more people don't take advantage of that, I'll never know—the young people. You can go through the Army and the Navy and give four years. Great way to go.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: Great way to go.

PIEHLER: Um ... also, you mentioned *Saving Private Ryan* ...

TARR: That was hard for me to take. The second time I enjoyed it.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: I couldn't watch the first part of it.

PIEHLER: Did you think ...

TARR: But that told you a little bit about the camaraderie.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: But, uh, even he didn't want to leave to go home because his mother ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... needed him.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: If you remember.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: He was asked to come home because the other boys were killed.

KOSAK: Yeah.

TARR: He said, “No, I’ve got to stay with my unit.”

KOSAK: So you saw it as a pretty realistic portrayal?

TARR: Sure it was. I saw it. I mean I knew what the boys—how they felt about each other. How ‘bout the boys that would fall on their comrades to save ‘em? We don’t know about all that. In an emergency, you don’t know how you’re going to react.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm. I felt that—you mentioned that when you first started talking that a lot of this you—you’ve blocked out a lot of things.

TARR: I think so. I don’t know why.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm. Well you also mentioned that you saw some pretty horrible things. You couldn’t really ...

TARR: Yeah, but it wasn’t the horrible things. I can’t even remember so much on the—of the trip on the *Queen Mary* ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... which was a, you know—just a ... troop ship but I can remember everybody talking about her zigzagging and the U-boats and I wasn’t even aware what a U-boat was.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: And they were saying how dangerous that all this was, you know, and you’re always kind of scared in a way. You were afraid to a certain degree, wondering, “When are we going to get there,” you know? “Where are we going? Does anybody know? Has anybody asked anybody?” And those were the kind of things that we asked to each other, you know.

KOSAK: Do you surprise yourself sometimes thinking back? Like, you said you never know you’ll do in an emergency. Can you—do you believe, like, you did what you did?

TARR: No. It’s amazing. Amazing that you could lift somebody so heavy. You know, you’re just amazed at what you do. I mean, you don’t even think about ...

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... you just do what has to be done. But everybody was in the same boat.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: I was not doing anything different that the others weren't doing. The boys were not doing anything different that they were called to do. And ... I just felt sorry for the doctors when they'd show us pictures of their family. We didn't have that kind of a feeling, 'cause you know we didn't have children or anything at home. And they were anxious to get home. Nobody knew how long we were gonna be in the war.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: And then the worst of us, we ended up in Munich and we were told we were going to the South Pacific, when we knew there were certain unit that were home after they had been over there for eighteen months. They were going home. We'd been over there for three years and we're not going home? We're going to the South Pacific? We just were shocked, I remember.

PIEHLER: So, your initial orders were to go to the South Pacific?

TARR: Oh, we were angry.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: I mean, what do you mean we're going to the South Pacific? We have been over here long enough. We need to go home. And, uh, we were getting on some age. You know, we were twenty-four. (Laughter) Everybody said you had to have a baby before you were thirty. (Laughter) That's what they used to say.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: Now the mothers are forty and forty-five and not worrying about, so ... Life is different. I mean I am glad for the experience. Don't misunderstand.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: I'm glad for the experience, but I hope that nobody would have to through it. And I don't think they'd go through that kind of a thing now.

PIEHLER: You ...

TARR: I don't think the hospitals are like that.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: They're not in tents.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... Although, in the desert, I saw them operating in a tent, and I could not understand the flapping of those—and the dust—how they could keep anything sterile ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... during this war. You know when they were showing us ...

PIEHLER: Yes.

TARR: ... and I thought, “Oh my goodness. How can they do it?”

PIEHLER: Well what about keeping sterile—things sterile in your war?

TARR: Well we just had equipment to do it. I mean we did, but there was no sand. When you’re talking to some of those reporters and things, you can see the sand on their ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... cheeks, and you think, “How could they keep things sterile if that sand is blowing in ...”

KOSAK: Yeah.

TARR: “... everywhere.” It must be out—now Lonas said he remembers some sand storms and they were pretty bad. So, I think medicine has changed in every which way. Although the injuries might probably be the same.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: But they’ve got everything to take care of ‘em now.

PIEHLER: One of the things that ...

-----END OF TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO-----

PIEHLER: ... I don’t—not if you’d been in the military, but it—what struck me is that the types of wounds you would see in your Army days would be far worse that you would likely encounter, in many ways—would you ever see in a civilian.

TARR: Oh no.

PIEHLER: ... or anything that you would encounter in training.

TARR: Never, never saw anything like that. What we saw were surgeons that did a good job.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: I mean everything was straight.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: These were jagged shrapnel wounds and, as I said they didn't come in with one.

PIEHLER: Yeah. But I think it's hard to convey that—that limbs are taken off. That you—you've alluded to that and ...

TARR: Well I mean, you know, head blown open and ...

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: ... loss of eyes and things like that ... that they're living with.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm. Well there—there's a remarkable, um, survival rate. Once people made it to your hospital, very few people ...

TARR: I know.

PIEHLER: Very few people ...

TARR: I never actually saw ...

PIEHLER: Someone—someone die?

TARR: We knew they were dying.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: Or they weren't going to survive.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: Uh, and they went on.

PIEHLER: They went on ...

TARR: Yeah.

PIEHLER: ... and ...

TARR: I didn't actually stay at a bedside when someone passed away.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: I could tell they were going, but uh ...

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: See we moved so everything was moving so fast. It's hard for people to—to understand that. We just took care of 'em with the emergency and ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... on they went.

PIEHLER: And you never had a backup? It never got to the point in—in a particular day because the roads were too snowy or the weather was too bad that ...

TARR: Ambulances were coming.

PIEHLER: ... moving up ...

TARR: No. Ambulances are always coming. And of course the patients that we were getting in England were the pilots that were on the planes ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: ...or they were sick with gallstones or appendectomy or something like that. There wasn't any emergency accidents except for that little German pilot, the young boy that cut his arm off. And oh, we needed to see if he was blond and blue-eyed, you know. (Laughter) And he spoke English, so that was good that we could ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... communicate with him. But he was doing his duty like anybody else.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: That's the way we—we thought about and the boys would say that they hated the fact that they were hitting another human being, because those people were doing exactly what they were told.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm. When you—you went to Dachau, were there any—were there still former prisoners in the camp—former concentration camp?

TARR: No.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: We had evacuated all those people.

PIEHLER: So when you saw it they—they'd—they'd ...

TARR: But the lines of blood where they stacked those bodies and then they had the bones in the crematorium.

PIEHLER: But the bodies were gone?

TARR: Oh yeah. And they had the little, uh, flower pots that they put the ashes in.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: My husband said the same thing. He got there probably after I did but, uh, it was—it was so horrible to think that somebody could do that to another human being. And the worst of it was, to me, those people in town could smell those smokestacks. If you ever smelt burning flesh, that's what I hated when were doing ... the brain surgery. You smell that bone ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: Uh, there's an odor to it that you never forget. Now those people could smell it, I understand, in the villages. And they probably never knew what was going on. But they got rid of a million people.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: How in the world did we ever allow such things?

KOSAK: Did—had you heard of it before, or ...

TARR: No, we just heard when they opened up the camp.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: That's when everybody heard.

PIEHLER: When—did you hear about it through word of mouth or was it through *Stars and Stripes*?

TARR: *Stars and Stripes*.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm. So it sounds like you were a pretty regular reader of *Stars and Stripes*.

TARR: Well everybody was. That was the only communication we had. We didn't have radios or anything.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: (Laughs) Whatever came in that little *Stars and Stripes* kept us posted on everything. But that to me was one of the most horrible costs of the war—that we did not take care of it.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: They knew something was going on with those people. They were taking ‘em somewhere. I mean, what Saddam did is terrible, but we allowed such a thing to happen?

PIEHLER: Um, you—you mentioned *Saving Private Ryan*. Is there any movie or novel, or even a—a memoir that, you know, if I were to say, “Okay, this is what I went through. This is my war.” Has anything ever been done that sort of reflects ...

TARR: No, not accurately. I don’t think anything has ever done on the nursing.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: Nurse Corps. Uh ...

PIEHLER: We could—we could ...

TARR: Why should we get any more credit than the WAC or the WAVE?

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: I mean they were over there doing their duty.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: They weren’t taking care of the patients, but they were doing their part, and they were over there too, just like we were. But I still think the medics need to get a little more ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... credit than they’re getting. The first thing the patient calls for when they’re hit or hurt—medic. That’s the first thing they call for. They don’t call for nurse.

PIEHLER: ... How many medics—I—a lot of medics got wounded. How often would medics—how—who ...

TARR: Well, why wouldn’t they get wounded. They couldn’t carry anything but, uh, their medic kit and they had a big red cross on their helmet and on their shoulder, but everybody knew they were a medic and so they’re gonna hit ‘em.

KOSAK: Oh.

TARR: But I can't remember any coming in, to be honest with you. In our unit, I can't remember any ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... medics coming in.

PIEHLER: Yeah that—that doesn't seem ...

TARR: No. Just the paratroopers and ... we got a lot of 80—82nd and 101st. And I really admired those boys. I'll tell you. When they tell you how they jumped into the dark the night before the invasion ...

KOSAK: Hmm.

TARR: (Laughs) ... they ended up in the church steeples. They ended up in trees and they ended up everywhere. And that little clicker was the only thing was the only thing they had to identify, you know, one another. And to me, they're the heroes.

PIEHLER: Um, you were ... um—you've been back—you've been back to England several times you've mentioned, and have you been to ... France and Germany?

TARR: Oh yeah.

PIEHLER: Well ...

TARR: But never back to the battlefield.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: No, no, no, no. This was strictly a Chevrolet trip.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: Good trip.

PIEHLER : But you said seeing Europe during the war, particularly England, where you spend a lot of time ...

TARR: Yeah.

PIEHLER: What—what's been your impressions having, you know, wartime memories versus did you go back to Europe after the war.

TARR: Well, of course in England, we didn't have too much to do with the people, and ... where we were was always a pasture.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: So, uh—but to get out and see, you know—I enjoyed going back to the pubs, to see what they were like. And those people in the pub were very nice to us—those English people.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: They were very nice and we had a good time talking to them.

PIEHLER: You had mentioned, like, going to Paris in—during the war you passed through Paris and it was dark.

TARR: Oh sure.

PIEHLER: When ...

TARR: Sure we went through Paris, but I never knew it was Paris. (Laughter) I mean, nothing was lit up or anything, remember. And that's one thing that I tried to impress on the children—the darkness. Everything was dark. The world was dark ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... over there. Europe was dark.

KOSAK: You mentioned earlier that your family was really upset that you decided to go to the—volunteer for the war effort.

TARR: Because I didn't talk to 'em beforehand.

KOSAK: Oh, so did they feel the same way about your brother?

TARR: No. No, they didn't. They just thought that was his duty ...

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

TARR: More or less. And my other sisters were going to join, too, if the war hadn't ended. They ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... they thought it was great, you know, to go see the world. I think everybody at that time had a feeling of being a good volunteer.

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: But, I tell you what, I still don't think women need to be in combat.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: I'm so much against it. I can't wait to hear what this Jessica—uh, what was her last name?

KOSAK: Lynch.

TARR: Lynch.

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... has gone through. (Laughs) And these two girls that were standing there when Blane was being inducted and I—I could just see it in their faces. They were just ready, and when I said what I did to them, I don't think they appreciated it. But ... they—they say this ROTC program is very difficult, um, and they say through a real hard Basic Training ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... just like the boys do. So they get a little taste of that. That should let them know as to whether they want to continue or not.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

KOSAK: Um, do you remember ... what it was like on VE day? When everybody—victory over Europe?

TARR: Sure. I was laying down on the mattress in Munich and everybody was doing all the kissing and jumping around and we were saying, "We're going to ..."

PIEHLER: Japan's ...

KOSAK: Pacific? Oh ...

TARR: Uh, we were—it didn't mean a thing to us.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: When you said VE you meant VJ.

PIEHLER: No, first we meant VE, I think.

KOSAK: Right.

PIEHLER: What about ...

KOSAK: Right, it was VE.

PIEHLER: VE. Yeah. The—what about VJ day?

TARR: No, VJ didn't mean a thing to us ...

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: ... because that was, you know—that was not ours.

KOSAK: So you thought ...

TARR: But VE—I can't remember anything about VE. That was in '45?

PIEHLER: Yeah. May of '45.

TARR: Yeah.

PIEHLER: You—you were in Munich at that point.

TARR: Yeah. I mean ...

KOSAK: You were just upset you couldn't ...

TARR: We didn't see anything. We didn't hear anything. We just knew, "Maybe we're going home," and then they tell us we're going to the Pacific. So, there wasn't anything, but we didn't have any champagne or anything to celebrate.

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

PIEHLER: One of the things that, it's interesting about your family, is in some ways military ... service has skipped a generation—that your immediate—your children didn't serve in the military ...

TARR: No.

PIEHLER: But it—but this—the current—your grandchildren, some of them ...

TARR: Well they're ripe right now ...

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: ... as far as age goes.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: But the two boys—there was a draft.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: And we would sit in the living room horrified as they got those numbers called. And luckily—'cause I said, "I'm taking them to Canada."

KOSAK: Oh, for your own sons.

PIEHLER: You didn't want them to serve in Vietnam?

TARR: I did not want them to serve in Vietnam.

PIEHLER: But you both ...

TARR: I didn't want them to serve, period.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm. But you—you and your husband had.

TARR: I told you. Our thoughts were different then. But see, Vietnam did something to us. But the country didn't care, and that was the most horrible, startling thing to me. Nobody cared about those boys, but they served just like—they were told to do what they were to do like we were. And to come home and to—well the way they came home. They were ragged looking, if you remember—long hair and they were disheveled looking. They didn't look—I—I don't mean all of them—but some of them. They came home and that's the first time we heard drug addict. They had to go into the different places to get clean and we didn't have that. I don't know. I just had such a fear of our boys going, and listen. I've asked our grandsons many a time. I say, "Now you're twenty-one. Could you do it?" They said, "Gram, if we had to, we'd do just what you did." And I believe it. I really do believe if you are called to do it, and you were trained, you'd do it ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... to the best of your ability. I'm just glad they don't have to have that mystique.

.

KOSAK: Hmm.

TARR: I—I'm hoping and praying that someday that nobody will ever even use the word ... war. When our war ended, if you were—maybe your parents told you this. Everybody said the same

thing. “We will never have another war. We must never have another war.” It’s at five. Five since then.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: So I don’t know when it’s going to end. The world is going to have to change in some way. I don’t know how, but ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm. When did you—it sounds like you didn’t ... talk much to your children growing up about the war. Did they ask, or you didn’t tell them, or—because your grandchildren—I mean you—just because people won’t see this on the tape—your—one of your grandchildren. ... She’s done a very nice display with your ... nurse’s uniform.

TARR: Oh yes. There’s every Christmas.

PIEHLER: So your—your grandchildren ...

TARR: Oh they sit here and they ask us, “Gram, tell us more. Granddad, tell us more.” And, uh, I think they’ve heard enough now, except this last time I told ‘em one thing that I had forgotten that I thought was so important. I said, “Children, I want you to remember one thing. The darkness. How dark everything was.”

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: And they just looked at me so funny and I said, “You don’t even understand what I’m talking about. There were no lights anywhere. No streetlights. No ordinary lights. No nothing. It was dark, and I said, “I want you to remember that.” It was one of the most awful things to go through. If we had even had a little slit in our curtains, everybody would get so excited, you know, you’re showing a light. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: But you—did you ...

TARR: That the was the main thing in my mind.

PIEHLER: But your children—they were not as curious, growing up?

TARR: Oh, yes. Oh, Bill Tarr, the oldest one. Oh, yes, yes, yes. Didn’t you—did you interview him?

PIEHLER: Um, no ...

TARR: Somebody did. Somebody interviewed him over there are the *Tribune*, um ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: Oh yeah. He knows the whole story.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: They both ... were—and Judy, too—she was real interested in it, but the younger ones I think—their more interested now because they see it on TV all the time.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm. Mm hmm.

TARR: Even the Vietnam War—we watch it on TV. But I never care to talk about it to be honest with you. There wasn't anything that, uh, I thought was of interest, you know. See a bunch of women in combat uniforms, and we looked terrible most of the time and, uh ...

KOSAK: What was the longest you ever went without taking a bath?

TARR: Oh heavens. We always took a bath.

PIEHLER: (Laughs)

KOSAK: Oh you did?

TARR: We always had our helmet.

KOSAK: Mm hmm. Oh, that's true. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: How often would you get a shower when you were in the field?

TARR: We had showers in the latrine. I mean there was a separate area,

PIEHLER: Separate area. So that was pretty regular.

TARR: Oh yeah. And I'd wash my hair and come out in that cold weather, and when I think of it now I just die! (Laughter) I wonder why I don't have the worst case of sinus and everything. (Laughs) Then we'd take a bath and put a towel around our head and run back to the little pot belly stove to get warm, but ... you lived normal lives.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: We had a PX, so you could go buy things if you needed it—you know, toothpaste and stuff like that. We were not that bad off, you know, as far as comfort goes.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: We were taken care of except for it was cold and, uh, it was always cold to me. I was always cold, and when the men would come in and talk about how cold they were—I mean they were cold. And ... have you seen the Battle of the Bulge on TV?

PIEHLER: Yes.

TARR: That tells you.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: That tells you the story. And I can't wait for you to interview my neighbor.

PIEHLER: No, no, no. We're very much looking forward to that.

KOSAK: Mm uh huh. Yeah.

TARR: Because someone who was actually there. That's the worst part of the war. The Battle of the Bulge—that was the turning point right there.

PIEHLER: Well no, no. Having interviewed several Bulge survivors. I'd...

TARR: Did they have that same feeling?

PIEHLER: Well it's just that it's—it's ...

TARR: Did they say they were cold? That was ...

PIEHLER: Oh, yeah. No, I think that—oh, I interviewed someone—one my first, earliest interviews back in 1994. He almost lost his toes.

TARR: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Yeah, and he was insistent with the surgery. "Don't take 'em off. I ..."

TARR: Yeah.

PIEHLER: "... don't want 'em off."

TARR: And he was okay?

PIEHLER: He was okay, though he still had problems, you know ...

TARR: Yeah.

PIEHLER: ... for the rest of his life ...

TARR: Yeah.

PIEHLER: ... he still had problems from...

TARR: It's amazing to me. This man—what he went through. I mean he's—just like an ordinary citizen, you know. He mows his yard and ... But I—when I was over there, his wife broke her, uh, wrist falling down the steps the day that UT had a ballgame and we had darkness up here. No radio. We couldn't hear—oh, every—I mean TV was off, and we have to hear what was going on the game, so she's in the dark—was wandering around and she knew where the candles were and meanwhile, he goes downstairs to get a radio and leaves the door open, and she falls all the way down the stairs and breaks her wrist. So I went over to see her, and on the wall he's got his ... metals in a frame, and I said, "You've got—you've got four metals," I think. Takes a lot to get those four metals.

KOSAK: I don't have anything else.

PIEHLER: Is there anything we forgot to ask you? That's one of our—usually our last questions.

TARR: I don't—I don't know.

PIEHLER: You—you've told us some great ...

TARR: I can't think of anything. I just want to impress on you how dark it was. (Laughs) And how awful it was. Um ...

PIEHLER: Well we really—we really appreciate it, uh ...

TARR: Well I don't know if it's necessary that you invite—I mean that I think the men who served should be the ones to be interviewed, you know. We did our part, and uh ...

PIEHLER: Well we, you know—one of the things I'd like to do is I'd like to interview your brother if he—about his experiences. ... I'd probably be going up to Rhode Island, which is not too far from Norwich ...

TARR: Okay.

PIEHLER: ... in October/November.

TARR: I'll give you his address.

PIEHLER: That—that would be great, uh ...

TARR: Okay, here's the stewardess picture. I don't know if that's me or not. I think it is. Yeah.

KOSAK: Oh, you guys were snazzy, weren't you. (Laughter)

TARR: Sure, and these were my three friends.

KOSAK: Nice shoes, too.

PIEHLER: You ...

KOSAK: Well I guess they ...

TARR: Ooh.

KOSAK: They weren't very comfortable though. They ...

TARR: Well no ...

KOSAK: ... look nice.

TARR: Well no, they're just plain ...

PIEHLER: These—these three friends—because it would be nice to put them on—on the record. What were their names again?

TARR: Connie ...

PIEHLER: Connie. Do you remember her last name?

TARR: ... and Pat. Connie Flodin ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... and Pat McCarthy.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm. And they—and both of them developed strokes after ...

TARR: Uh, yes they did, and—one has MS ...

PIEHLER: One ...

TARR: ... and the other one died of a stroke.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm. And one was ...

TARR: And the other one that was in our tent, she died right after she got home. It was ...

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: ... kinda sad. And those were the only ones that we really were friendly with ...

PIEHLER: Uh ...

TARR: You know what I mean.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: We were really good, good friends in the tent and ... kind of stayed together. You know ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... your—your group. It's real funny how you ...

PIEHLER: Your...

TARR: You have that many women. The little ...

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

TARR: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Well it also sound like—this also sounds like very much the comradeship men would have ...

TARR: Oh sure.

PIEHLER: ... in the unit.

TARR: Sure, and ... I think we're probably the best looking. (Laughter) I really do. I'm not joking. I think we're probably the best looking group. I think everybody used to tell us that everyday. They said, "You four are some pretty nice looking ladies." In fact, we modeled. We modeled the new uniforms that came out. They were—our first uniform was navy blue ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... and then they got into that olive drab.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: And they ... interviewed us and ...

PIEHLER: Who interviewed you? This was in England?

TARR: No, this was at Fort Devens ...

PIEHLER: Fort Devens.

TARR: ... when we changed. Yeah. The first uniform I had was navy blue, and then this, uh—they were this different kind of cap. But, uh—like a visor. And then this one. (Gestures with hands)

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: And ... they picked us out. So, I guess we were the best looking. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: We—did you prefer the new uniforms over the blue? The earlier—didn't make any difference?

TARR: Never even thought about it. You know, we had pink skirts ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... and the men had pink pants to go with their's. They called it pink, but it wasn't pink—kind of a light gray ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: ... to go with the outfits.

KOSAK: Hmm.

TARR: And you said they had to pay for uniforms? I'd never heard ...

PIEHLER: You didn't ...

TARR: ... of anything like that.

PIEHLER: You don't remember that, and I—I ...

TARR: No. Of course, you know, we didn't get much money anyway.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm. Well your pay initially wasn't equal to ...

TARR: I saved \$3,000 ... from the three years. I guess that's pretty good.

PIEHLER: No, that's very good.

TARR: I mean, I couldn't use it for anything.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: I just had it going to the band.

KOSAK: And you didn't have to have to—your family was doing well, so you didn't have to ...

TARR: Well, I mean no. I like to—mine went into the bank with my name.

KOSAK: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: And, uh, I—I think I kept out fifty dollars—a month, but I saved \$3,000. So, you know, that was a lot of money when I came home.

KOSAK: Mm hmm. Especially when you said your first house was only \$7,500.

TARR: Well, that was his responsibility. (Laughter) Well, we were married, but wasn't that— isn't that something? So, I didn't tell you the end of the story. We went to first—no, it was about the second or third time we'd cross the Atlantic and came back to New York. He said, "Let's get a car and go and see about our old houses in Levittown. So we did, and the first house didn't look so good. He said, "Oh, they didn't take care of it."

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: I mean there was no ...

PIEHLER: Right.

TARR: ... right to do that ...

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: ... because it was a nice corner lot ...

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: ... and we planted roses and everything, and it didn't look very nice. The second lot had a big Cadillac parked in the driveway.

PIEHLER: (Laughs)

TARR: And had—the trees look tremendous, since he planted little saplings, you know, and these were tremendous ...

KOSAK: Yeah.

TARR: ... and he went to the door. He wanted to talk to the people and they weren't home, but he went next door. And he talked to the lady there and she said that, uh, houses sell for \$55,000.

PIEHLER: This was a while ago then.

TARR: It was just about maybe ten years ago, but they're selling. What, we paid, you know, \$10, 000 for, they're getting fifty-five now.

PIEHLER: Oh I—oh I think it's probably more than that now ...

TARR: Maybe more ...

PIEHLER: Oh I think it ...

TARR: ... more than that now?

PIEHLER: Yeah.

STRONG: Because they were nice houses.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

TARR: They had everything you wanted. Wash—washing machine, dishwasher, dryer, you know—everything you needed. They had it.

KOSAK: Hmm.

TARR: So I married a pilot and ended up a Chevrolet dealer. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: And—and we should add this is—that's where your husband is today while we've been doing this interview.

TARR: Sure. Oh he wanted to come.

PIEHLER: Oh. (Laughs)

TARR: He's like a child, and I said, "Now wait a minute. What is the purpose of your coming?" (Laughter) "There's no need for you to come." He told 'em "I'd like to be at ..."—I said, "No. There's no reason for you to be there."

PIEHLER: (Laughs)

TARR: He's heard it all. Actually, he hasn't heard much. That's probably why he wanted to come.

PIEHLER: (Laughs) Well, you'll be the first person that sees this transcript, uh ...

TARR: Okay ...

PIEHLER: Uh, so.

TARR: Yeah, we need to delete, I think, especially the part about, “I heard Baptists down here ...”

PIEHLER: No, it will. (Laughter) You’ll have a chance to look ... at it before we—I mean, even though you signed a release form, we always give a person the transcript before ... as a courtesy.

TARR: And where will you use this now? Will your students go into ...

PIEHLER: Tthe students ...

TARR: ... a little cubby hole and listen to this?

PIEHLER: What—no. What the students will do—the tape then will be in our—deposited in the archives.

TARR: The archives, yeah.

PIEHLER: But what will do is the transcript will be on the internet.

TARR: Oh.

PIEHLER: And so people can read it all around the world. And I also do—well Denise can explain some ...

KOSAK: Right.

PIEHLER: ... of the stuff being ...

KOSAK: He teaches a class where—I’m not in the class right now, but ...

TARR: Yeah.

KOSAK: ... but we actually interview a veteran and we transcribe it ourselves and then we give it to the Center ... along with the tape.

PIEHLER: Well also one of your assignments, you all have to read some ...

KOSAK: Right, and also one of our assignments is ... we read a book about the experience and then we also read interviews and we compare and contrast.

PIEHLER: So ... at some point students will be writing a paper based on your interview.

KOSAK: That's interesting. Uh, have you interviewed a lot of nurses?

PIEHLER: I ...

KOSAK: Oh, he would be the one to ask ...

PIEHLER: ... I've only interviewed one other nurse, so I ...

KOSAK: Where was she?

PIEHLER: She, uh, was a Navy nurse. She was based ...

TARR: Navy? That's interesting, yeah.

PIEHLER: And at Rutgers, I initially only did the Rutgers alumni—the men—and I ...

TARR: Well where was she in—just in the states? She didn't go over?

PIEHLER: She, no, she was in the—she was in England.

TARR: Oh.

PIEHLER: She was in a Naval hospital in England, and she was based out in Norfolk. And that's how she met her husband, actually. He was a chaplain, Navy chaplain.

TARR: Okay.

PIEHLER: So I was very pleased to interview you. I was very excited to interview a ...

TARR: Yeah.

PIEHLER: ... a nurse.

TARR: Yeah, another, uh—yeah. Someone that ...

PIEHLER: Now that ...

KOSAK: You seem to be humble, like, how you say that you don't think their stories should ...

TARR: Well ...

KOSAK: Well not that you don't think that—that how the men that served should be heard more.

TARR: They're the ones that were—that did the work.

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

TARR: And, you know, I've always said heroes are the ones that are in the ground.

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

TARR: They sacrificed their lives, and they didn't want to die.

KOSAK: Right.

TARR: They just—now I talked to this Ben Franklin. He'd be another interesting one ...

PIEHLER: Uh, he's on our list actually, and Ben Franklin has often talked to classes at universities. He's ...

TARR: He also takes them to Normandy all the time.

PIEHLER: Yes. Yes. He's been good.

TARR: He's the one I talk to about ...

PIEHLER: How—how do you know Ben Franklin?

TARR: Well his wife golfs with me.

PIEHLER: Oh really? Oh, okay. Oh, yeah. (Laughter)

TARR: I told you. He was the one who married that German war bride.

PIEHLER: Oh, okay. That's—oh, okay. Yes.

TARR: And he's the one that ...

PIEHLER: Oh, I couldn't ...

TARR: ... that crouched under that cliff.

PIEHLER: Yes, I ...

TARR: Nineteen. He was ...

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: ... scared, and he said, "I just couldn't go out there and help my ..."

PIEHLER: Hmm.

KOSAK: Doesn't he live in Jefferson County?

TARR: Knoxville.

PIEHLER: Knoxville.

KOSAK: Oh ... Knoxville.

PIEHLER: Yeah. Well, I wish had ...

TARR: He would be a character.

PIEHLER: I was going—oh no, he's—he's quite a ... (Laughs)

TARR: He'll be a character.

PIEHLER: Yes. Now I've—yeah, I've ...

TARR: But remember, he was nineteen, and he always said this to me. He came up with Patton. I'm almost sure of that, because he said to me, "If that man ever got close to me, I'd kill that SOB." And he didn't say SOB. He used the real words. They hated him. They hated him because he moved. He moved fast.

KOSAK: Mm hmm.

TARR: And he didn't care how many men were lost. Um, that's what they said, not ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: But I guess if you—if you've got a target, you're going to have to get it. No matter how you do it, you have to get it. But you know, I look at him and I say, "Ben, I mean you know—you should not have this guilt that you're carrying around all these years."

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

TARR: He said, "I can't help it."

KOSAK: Hmm.

TARR: You never forget it.

PIEHLER: Well, one of the things I—because I've heard Benjamin—Ben Franklin—he's never been interviewed, ... but he's talked quite a bit to the class, and I once met him for lunch. And what's surprising me about him—I'm curious your thoughts about this—is I was sort of stunned

because, frankly, he comes off—he has a real sort of—he’s good, but he can almost to standup or ...

TARR: Oh yeah.

PIEHLER: Yeah, and—because he always goes out, like, if you were in the class he would go to you and look at you, and go to Denise and say, “You’re the most beautiful woman out there. Men wouldn’t make war.” (Laughter) And unbearably, the woman goes to—turns bright, beet red in the class, and ...

TARR: Uh, he had an injury. (Gestures with hands) Either the bullet went through, or hit him here, or someplace, but I think his eyes were affected in some way, but he goes to—he takes that group of UT people over to ...

PIEHLER: Yes.

TARR: ... Normandy, but he told me this past spring. He said, “I can’t do it anymore.”

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: He said, “I just can’t do it anymore.”

PIEHLER: But one of the things he’s ... sort of set these—I learned over lunch—that once he left the service that he—he encouraged his wife to go back to work and he sort of took care of the kids. Did you know him then, or ...

TARR: No.

PIEHLER: Oh, okay.

TARR: I just knew ...

PIEHLER: This is more recent. I ...

TARR: Well ...

PIEHLER: I was curious, because I ...

TARR: Well the last—within ten years.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

TARR: Uh ...

PIEHLER: Yeah. This was back—this was a while ago.

TARR: Yes.

PIEHLER: And I've always—one of the reasons I wanted to interview him because it was so uncommon then.

TARR: But I'm looking at him and I'm thinking of him as a nineteen year-old.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

KOSAK: Hmm.

TARR: See. And I can understand why he feels guilty.

PIEHLER: Yeah. Well we really appreciate you giving us ...

TARR: I ...

PIEHLER: ... all this time.

TARR: I just hope I helped you ...

PIEHLER: Oh no, no.

TARR: ... in some way ...

PIEHLER: You have.

TARR: ... 'cause I told Lonas. I said, "I don't know what they want from me."

PIEHLER: Oh no, no, no. Don't worry. We've ...

-----END OF INTERVIEW-----