

Ruth H. 'Heidi' Cole
Narrator

Serena Bumbard (?)
Interviewer

Interviewed on January 22, 2012
At Ruth H. "Heidi" Cole's House
Hudson Falls, New York

S: I am here with Heidi Cole at Heidi's house and it is January 12 2012 and we are going to start off with do you remember where you were on December 7 1941

Heidi: I was in Detroit fellowship for a semester at Cornell University at a special school for studying child development and one of the things that we had to do was entertain and we had these boys from general motors over and we were all sitting in the living room we lives in cooperative houses when Pearl Harbor happened. Of course the boys were all wondering what was going to happen next, but I remember that two of them when I got back to Cornell for the rest of my senior year they up us up from the end of June to June fifth to graduate and the boys lefts the next day.

S: Okay so you were part of the Red Cross, what was your part what did you do

Heidi: Well I went in to the Red Cross and the minute you say Red Cross people think that you were a nurse, but I was a recreation worker went in as a recreation worker and I served overseas in England for eleven months and then during the occupation in Belgium for nine months

S: Now what was the scariest part of it all

Heidi: I worked with army hospitals and saw patients and the one that really set me up was seeing this man that was incased in bandages from head to toe and all you could see were his two eyes, his nose, and his mouth and one time one of the fellas said to me when I was going on rounds was "I don't like you, you make us feel home sick." The next day the bed next to him which was empty he made a hat and said to me "You're ok.

S: On that poster that I brought over for you it said that you used to play games with the

Heidi: Well we had a ski race with pencils and marshmallows, you know you made everything and so drew on the floor great big long lines with some dice. My job as a recreational worker was to have fun, and there were times at new years the officers wanted to come to our receptions because they didn't have fun at theirs

S: Where were you when the war ended?

Heidi: Which war

S: World War two

Heidi: I was in England when the war in Europe ended, but our place wouldn't celebrate because we new we had to go onto japan. We were in an annex to the big British hospital and the patients celebrated they burned mattresses, but our place wouldn't celebrate because we knew we had to go on, and so then I staged for three or four months to know where I had to go next, but then

went back and had to operate the same place as we had been,. But I learned ad I went on I would have been going to the China Burma India Theater. Another experience

S: What was your favorite part of what you did?

Heidi: Well there are two things I think wherever I was I enjoyed seeing the country side and meeting new people and I was trying to have fun

S: Was there ever a moment when you came close to the enemy

Heidi: Well I was standing in the street corner when the bomb fell and a little old English lady said “don’t worry dearie it’s when we can’t hear them that we worry” I remember her I can close my eyes and hear her voice and she said that to me, and then a funny thing happened I was in a dormitory where I was staying in London for another assignment and a bomb fell and I do have an upper plate (dental plate) and I was brushing it and the bomb fell and I lost it down the drain those are the things that you remember the funny things, but little old lady can in and said we’ll get it.

S: What was running through your head when bombs were dropping like that was it a natural thing were you used to it?

Heidi: We just accepted that was going on, and I don’t think it had much time. I was stationed in whales which was an all tent hospital, but we went into London for fun. I remember these three boys took me horseback riding in London, but it was just the way it was.

S: What kind of impact has it made on your life?

Heidi: Well it made me realize what a treasure friendship was, and is I am still in touch with people that I knew in world war two many have sense died, I have been lucky being ninety one. It was an experience and I am glad I had it.

S: Did you decide that you were going to be in the Red Cross or were you placed

Heidi: Actually I was doing personal girl scout work in Syracuse and this lady came and visited and she stayed for a week and she was in the waves, and their uniform was so neat and I decided to apply, but I was turned down, and this is another funny story I didn’t have enough teeth in my mouth. When I was seven, eight, nine years old I had to have teeth extracted, and the commanding officer that was interviewing me he was ready to quit himself because he was so mad but you know it worked for me because I learned from him that he wanted to put me at a job in Washington DC and I wanted to go overseas, so my boss at the time told me to go across the street and sign up for the red cross, and I did and in two weeks’ time I was in the red cross and after training at Washington DC at American University I was sent overseas.

S: How did your family feel about I, were they very supportive?

Heidi: Very. At the time I was taking care of my mother’s finances at the time my father had died and my brother and sister at the time were both married and they said that they could take care of her and to go do what you want

S: Is there any events that stick out clearly in your mind

Heidi: I think of the fun that I had

S: So all pretty good memories

Heidi: Where ever I was I think because of my girl scout experience I did two things I was able to use volunteers I know how to work with them, and I was able to look up girl guides where ever I was

S: So I see you have some things out here what do we have?

Heidi: Well this is the formal picture of me when I went into the Red Cross, and this was in England on top of a hill side and this was in Belgium we had a Christmas carding for the children in town

S: That's cool

Heidi: As I said in the beginning the hospital was an all tent hospital in whales where I ended up it was a big brick modern building that the Germans had built but never occupied, so I went from the country side to the big city. For me it was friendship travel service. I could remember my first boss in professional scouting in Syracuse before the war that service is the rent you pay for the place you occupied on earth.

S: That's interesting

S: So you said that you were in England

Heidi: In England for eleven months

S: Ok and then where were you

Heidi: In Belgium during the occupation

S: Which did you like better England or Belgium

Heidi: I just love to travel. You people ask that question all the time which do you like best and you don't or at least I don't I like everything and I treasured to experience that I have had

S: Do you recall when FDR died do you remember that at all

Heidi: Yes vaguely. I think I was still in England, but I don't remember now much about it sorry

S: no that's ok

S: How did you feel about japan how they were going to go to war with the people in Europe?

Heidi: I don't I had a very good friend from scouting who went in the WACS and I went in the Red Cross and she was on the Missouri the ship where the treaties were sign and it was just another phase we hoped would happen and it did

S: Did you make a lot of friends

Heidi: A lot. A lot of the patients liked it best if you gave them a nickname and this one boy we named him donuts because he always came, and years after he was in our hospital at a motor pool out in the country in either France or Germany and I was there pulled up in an ambulance that was our transportation and out comes this soldier and says hi and I said oh donuts. You never knew when you were going to run into them again. One of the things I did in the hospitals was delivering newspapers so I made that a fun thing and it was a lot of fun because you learned a lot about where they were from. It was an exciting time

S: How do you feel towards the enemy today?

Heidi: I don't think I have taken time to think about that now I have time to read and I didn't have time to do that then when I was your age in college so now I'm reading and just read the book on Jacklyn Kennedy, but now living here in this near development is wonderful and my son who is retired and that makes me realize my age and he comes to fill my pill bottles makes sure I'm taking everything and calls me every day, but I love having him here because he knows so many people from working at Crandall library for almost thirty people, and striking a conversation with people can lead you to so many exciting things

S: So while you were in England or Belgium did know about the things that were going on in the concentration camps at all

Heidi: No not until later when I visited the camps when I went back later through girl scouting and it was the first time I went to one and they showed a movie and it was heart retching, and I have done a lot of reading on them, it's a shame that we had to go through them, but where would we be if we didn't fight, but I think people your age should read these things to, to know what when on and know why people feel like they do.

(Phone Rings)

Heidi: Anything I have been able to do sense graduating college I have attributed to two things growing up in Sunday school and girl scouting they gave me values, gave me many opportunities and experiences to go on and I figured I was very lucky and I know at times girl scouting for seniors is not a popular thing but I was lucky not only did I continue through seniors our senior group was thirteen and our high school had sororities and fraternities it was like college but in high school and our girl scout troop was on the same level as sororities we had to do a service every year and we had our picture in the year book with our uniform on, so I was lucky and I wish the same for girls today, but it certainly gave me a lot and Sunday school

S: Is there anything you want to tell us

Heidi: Well in 1971 I was honored by the BPW as citizen of the year. I'm still a girl scout I attend meetings they come and get me and bring me home and girl scouting has a new organization called pearls Legacy Society and I'm one of the early members of that. Girl scouting and church are still giving me what they gave me.