

Dorothy Karl Hollis
Narrator

Wade Lamb
Interviewer

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DH: I'm Dorothy Karl Hollis and I was brought up in Gloversville, New York. I have two brothers and I went to Loudonville High School and I graduated when I was sixteen-years-old. There was no chance of getting a job, so my mother insisted I go back to school for another year. So I did and then I went to the Business School in Gloversville and got a [unclear] degree in Business. Well, I went for a job and, being only seventeen then, there was nothing I could do. I'd be taking the place of somebody that was fifty or sixty-years-old, so I decided I'd go in training.

DH: My girlfriend was in St. Peter's Hospital in Albany, and she was a year ahead of me. I thought, "Well, I have a friend down there, anyway." When I got down there, I loved it and she didn't. She didn't go near me because she was in another class ahead of me. I graduated in 1935 from St. Peter's Hospital and I worked in Gloversville doing private duty.

DH: My brother was a doctor on Grand Street in Gloversville and at night, they used to have different doctors meet in his apartment and talk. One of them was a public health nurse and I heard all about public health. I thought that would be better for me to do than the private duty because I love to move around, and in private duty you can't – you have one patient to take care of.

DH: The doctors were talking back and forth and public health was very important in those days, and I would probably be moving around in people's houses rather than just sit with one patient.

DH: It was decided that I would go away to Syracuse University and I went for a year and a half and at that time, the girls were all entering the Army and I thought, "I'd love to join the Army." I came back to Gloversville, but I was still doing public health, and I asked my Supervisor if I could be released and she said no, I couldn't. Another girl was with me – she couldn't be released – so I waited a week or so, and I thought, "Gee, the war is on, why can't I go?"

DH: I went out to Johnstown to the District Health Office, and I asked Dr. [unclear] if I could go. He said, "Well, we can't keep anybody with a War on. You can go anytime you want to." I put my name in, and they sent me to Albany to be examined and after that I got another reply from the Army that I would report to Fort Devon, Massachusetts – I think it was March 25th, 1945.

DH: I did my training in Massachusetts and they put me in Lovell North, the big hospital. There was a Lovell South, too, but I was only in North. And I was in charge of one unit, which had twenty-five patients. My duty there at that time was to get their breakfast – the food was brought in, but I had to make the toast and do other things.

DH: Then the doctor, Cornelio, from Connecticut – he was our Health Officer there – he said that we'll do the dressings at such a time in the morning. We had

nine patients on one side and eight on the other, making it seventeen patients in each hall. The patients were very good to take care of; most of them could get up and walk around with injuries that could help them even when they were walking, but there were also a few that weren't. They loved to gamble, and some of those men would get their pay and you'd know that there was a [unclear] in the group that would take the money. We used to beg them not to go and play, but they'd go and lose their money and they'd be out for another month.

DH: From time to time, they'd sometimes go out behind the room and in the back would be a house – or a lot of houses – with a fence and they'd go buy liquor under the fence, come back in and be sick in bed all day. They didn't want to get up and do anything, so sometimes – when I wasn't that busy – they took me off that floor and put me on another floor to take care of somebody that was very bad. I was supposed to stay the day with that person.

DH: For instance, one of the Lieutenants went in the latrine and, instead of flushing the toilet, she kicked it and the hot water pipe broke and she was scalded. I had her to take care of [unclear] and other times, they'd wake us up at night – 3:30, 4:00 in the morning – with the Germans on the floor. I don't know whether they poisoned them or what they did, but it was food poisoning of some sort. We'd have to take care of them and they were really, really sick. And then we relieved other nurses like that – it wasn't too exciting but I enjoyed it.

DH: They had a nice P.S. where you could go in and meet the other soldiers and I met one of the soldiers there and we got married. We were married in the Army and I had my uniform on. When I looked around – there wasn't supposed to be anyone in there but the Priest, my husband and I – and the whole room was filled with my patients who had come to the wedding. We all went in the P.S. and had coffee and all that.

DH: When I got out of the Army, I came home and I worked at a private duty for a year – on and off – in Fonda, Fultonville and all over the County. I went back to Syracuse and got my last year-and-a-half on the G.I. Bill, which was wonderful. Now I could have a better job and as it was, there were two or three girls with me at work and I didn't get the promotion, but that didn't matter. I had two children and I belonged to the Catholic War Vets and, in fact, I'm the only Catholic woman War Vet in Fulton County.

DH: I couldn't go to the meetings as much as I wanted to because the kids were little, but later on I decided I would just do private duty, where I could get off and be home instead of traveling a lot. That's about all I can tell you and I was married thirty-nine years to my husband before he died and my daughter, for thirty-one years, has been at the X-Ray Department at Gloversville High School. My other daughter works for the Governor.

WL: Would you like to share some of your pictures?

DH: Oh. Yeah. This is a picture taken at Lovell General Hospital, and they had the Pepsi Arena here. My husband and I are in the front, at a Coke-a-Cola Concert [shows photo to camera]. This is a picture of me in my regular uniform at Lovell General Hospital in Massachusetts – you don't want to hear about these. This is a picture of my mother out in Idaho. She put my brother's Doctor's

uniform on and the heat was so warm that she couldn't get out of it fast enough. [Shows photograph].

DH: This is a picture of me in my regular uniform, and this is a picture of my youngest brother, Charles Carl, out in Japan. [Shows photograph]. And this is a picture of Dr. Carl with one of his friends and he was in New Caledonia. [Shows photograph]. This is a picture of my husband and I, our wedding picture [Shows photograph]. And this is a picture of me when I was thirty-years-old, wearing my dress uniform. [Shows photograph].

DH: And this is at Fort Devon, at the Coke-a-Cola concert. All these boys were there; my husband is here [points to photograph] with his foot wrapped up from when he got hurt in the Service, and I'm next to him [points to photograph]. This was taken for the Veteran in Gloversville – *Caring Hands*, it's called – with a picture of my husband and I from when we were married. [Shows newspaper article]. And this is another picture of my wedding.

WL: Now when you were at the Army Hospital, what was it like caring for the German prisoners?

DH: Oh, we didn't have too many Germans. They were the workers around the hospital – they'd mow the lawn, that's what their duties were. We occasionally had a few Negro girls that came up from the South and they'd send me over in the morning to look at their feet for – I can't think of the word; what happens to your feet?

WL: Athlete's Foot?

DH: Yes. I'd look for anything like that; I never found any, but I did have to go over about once a week to check them to see. One or two of those Negro girls were lovely to work with, but there were others that weren't.

WL: What was your most memorable time in the Service?

DH: Well, I think the most memorable was the time whatever happened to the German prisoners that we had, in the middle of the night, on the floor. There must have been forty of them, and we were told they must have eaten something, you know? No matter who it was, it was a human being you were feeling sorry for because they really suffered a lot that night and other nights.

WL: How did you happen to meet your husband in the Hospital?

DH: Oh, he was one of the patients. He came off the boat from England, and he came in the middle of the night. We were at Fort Devon, which is only forty miles from Boston, so they brought him in at night and the only place I could put him was in the sunroom that had an extra bed. The next morning I stuck a thermometer in his mouth and he said to me, "Lieutenant, can I take that down by the latrine? It's going to be empty, the fella's leaving." So I said, "Yes, after the fella leaves, you can go down there." After that, he was only about ten feet from my office; he was there quite a lot.

DH: He was a very nice person and we had one fella in the war that was from Gloversville, but I didn't know him. He was a strange fella and he couldn't get along with anybody, so he came up to me one day and said, "I'm getting out of

here.” I said, “Where are you going?” He said, “Utica.” I knew there was a hospital in Utica; I knew he was going to the Mohawk Valley, so I said, “Whereabouts in Mohawk Valley?” He said, “A place you’ve never heard of.” And I said, “Well, where?” He said, “Gloversville.” My husband – who wasn’t my husband at the time – fell right off the carriage he was sitting on. I saw that boy later on in Gloversville about a year ago and he didn’t remember me at all.

WL: Where was your husband originally from?

DH: From Boston. He was from Boston and being down in that area – a lot of my Irish family is down there – so I love being near Boston and its only forty miles to get to Boston. We could get on the train and be there in a very short time.

WL: What types of injuries did you see when you were caring for them?

DH: Three or four fellas were shot in the foot; some of them had been shot in the shoulder or arm. Others had head injuries, but most of them were leg injuries, I would say. Dr. Cornelio was our [unclear] Officer and he was a small person, but he was a really grand man. When I got married, he stood up with us.

WL: You said your brother was a doctor in New Caledonia.

DH: Yes.

WL: What types of –

DH: He was a Major in the Air Force. I’ve got a picture of him here, someplace. Well, this is him here, with somebody else – right there. [Points to photograph].

WL: Now, did you hear from him often?

DH: No, not too often. He had his own family and my brother, Charles, had quite a few children. When he got through, he had eight and the doctor had five. He has a daughter – a doctor – out in Colorado, now. He died at forty-eight of hepatitis.

WL: What do you think was your most important experience?

DH: I feel like if I had stayed home, I would’ve been a home person because my mother wanted me there. By getting out and being with other people and young people – my brother will tell you, my mother said, “Let her stay home. Don’t let her do this, or don’t let her...” They weren’t mean, but they always saw something that they didn’t want me to get into. Anyway, being out with other people and on my own was very important because I was [unclear] years old.

WL: Thank you very much. Your story is very interesting.

DH: No, I don’t think it’s interesting at all.