

**Kate Goodman Frentzos
Veteran**

**[Seeley ?]
Hudson Falls High School, Hudson Falls, NY**

**Interviewed on November 1, 2010
Hudson Falls, New York**

Interesting Pre-interview information:

I lived on a farm when I was growing up and we always had food because we had a garden. We had a cow so we always had milk. Back then everyone was poor it seemed but we did very well during the depression because we had the farm.

Q: When were you born?

KF: September 20, 1912

Q: Where did you grow up?

KF: My first few years I grew up in Johnsbury, New York in Warren County. Johnsbury is the biggest town by area in Warren County. But it was a little village, really a hamlet—a wide place with a road and a few houses, a grocery store, a post office and a cobbler.

Q: Do you have any interesting stories about your childhood?

KF: I had a rather routine childhood. We didn't have electricity in our home until sometime in the 1950's when Roosevelt became president and the Rural Electrification Act was passed. Then we had electricity in the house and finally had a vacuum.

Q: What kind of education did you get when you were younger?

KF: I really had only seven years of grammar school because at the end of the 7th year the teacher asked me if I wanted to take the 8th grade regents. So I took the 8th grade regents and I passed them and went into high school at the end of 7th grade. So I had 4 years of high school and 4 1/2 years of college—a pretty good education.

Q: When did you enter the army?

KF: I entered the army on 20th of February 1941. That was two years and a couple of months before Pearl Harbor, when the United States really got into the war.

Q: What did you do during those first couple of years?

KF: I was stationed in Tullahoma, Tennessee at an army hospital. I was a chief nurse there.

Q: What do you remember about the day you learned about Pearl Harbor?

KF: I had finished my shift and was going back to the barracks when I met some nurses coming on shift. They were crying and I asked them what had happened. They said the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. At that time, I didn't know that Pearl Harbor was an army base in the Pacific.

Q: Where did you end up going after Pearl Harbor was attacked?

KF: I went into the service as a 2nd lieutenant—that is the lowest rank of an officer—and sometime while I was in Tennessee I was promoted to 1st Lieutenant. Before I left Tennessee, I was promoted to Captain and from there I went to Europe on a ship.

My first assignment in Europe was in North Africa where my unit was stationed for thirteen months. We then worked on the island of Corsica for thirteen months. Then we went to Italy and were stationed in Rome and then Naples. We were in Italy for about six months before the war ended in Europe on August 14, 1944. We were concerned we would get called to the Pacific because the war was still going on there but before we left Italy, the war ended in the Pacific when the bomb was dropped on Iwo Jima. That was the end of World War II.

Q: How did you feel about the bombs being dropped on Iwo Jima?

KF: I didn't like that so many people were killed, but as we were told, and it is true, it shortened the war so it saved a lot of lives.

Q: What kind of hours did you work in the service?

KF: I was the chief nurse so I set up a schedule. We worked three shifts: a day shift, an afternoon shift, and a night shift.

Q: Did you ever have to work days on end with many casualties coming in?

KF: No, we didn't because we had an adequate staff for each shift. The nurses wanted to work around the clock but in an effort to keep them from getting sick or too tired out, we kept them to their schedule.

Q: What was it like interacting with the wounded soldiers?

KF: When the soldiers came to us, they had already had first aid and were bandaged and had the immediate care they had needed. It was just like any other hospital. You give them whatever care they need and try to get them healed so they can go back to duty. If we had some that were too ill for us to patch them up to go back to duty, they went on to the general hospital. If they weren't healed at the general hospital, they were sent home.

Q: Did the soldiers tell you stories about how they got wounded or about the front lines or their friends?

KF: Not so much. When they came to us, they were so glad to be away from the line of fire that they really didn't talk much about what happened to them.

Q: What did you do on your days off?

KF: We usually had two days off. We went on trips and saw the scenery. We had recreation, dances and of course there were so many more men than women that we were never without a date.

Q: Do you have any fond memories?

KF: I have one very fond memory. People are always surprised when I tell them this. The colonel that was head of our unit in Naples on the west side of Italy had a visit from a General from the east side of Italy. While the General was having lunch with us, he said to the colonel, "I would like to take you on a trip to Mt. Vesuvius this afternoon. Being the chief nurse, I was asked to go along. He had a B-17 with a plexiglass nose. When we got into the plane, he told me to lie on my stomach in the nose so I could see everything. He flew us

down over Mt. Vesuvius, which was churning and burning. For me, it was like being on a magic carpet ride. That was the highlight of all of the things that I did. After that we flew north of Rome over the popes summer palace, Castel Gandolfo.

There is another memory from when we first arrived in North Africa, at the Port of Oran which was French North Africa on the western side. We couldn't get off the ship that day or the next day, Christmas Day because the French Admiral had been murdered the day before. Since we didn't know what kind of reception we were going to get, we had to wait until the day after Christmas to get off the boat.

Q: Did you ever get homesick?

KF: We didn't get homesick because we were so busy all the time helping injured people. We didn't really have time to think about that but we did write home, of course.

Q: How did your parents feel about your going?

KF: I was an adult so they knew that I was sensible enough to do the best I could. I had a brother in the Navy in the Pacific Theatre at the same time so they had two to worry about..

Q: Did your brother tell you any stories?

KF: He was on a ship and was never in any battles. We did write back and forth but he was quite a bit younger than me.

One interesting thing was in June of 1944 during the Battle of Normandy in France, we got a shipload of soldiers who had been wounded. They were mostly burn cases because they had jumped into the ocean and the ocean was literally on fire. When they came to us they were all wrapped in (strips of medic cloth) [unclear] with just a little bit of their faces showing. They looked like the Michelin Man. They were German soldiers, youngsters, fifteen or sixteen years old, like our little brothers. Their shoes were so thin there were holes in them. Germany was running out of everything. We knew from the Battle of the Bulge several months before that the war was winding down. But the Battle of Normandy was really the end of the war. When the shipload came, we set up a triage point and the ones that were the sickest were taken care of first and then the others. That was when the nurses wanted to work all night no matter what their normal duty was because there was so much to do but we had to make them work just their shift.

Q: Did you treat a lot of German soldiers?

KF: Just when we got that shipload of them.

Q: Did any major things ever go wrong at the hospital?

KF: One time we had a big wind from North Africa and it blew our tents down – tents that we lived in and tents that were wards.

Q: Did you ever get bombed?

KF: No, we had some bomb scares and we thought we were going to but we didn't. We were in Corsica to support the infantry that was on that island. It was a good place to be because it wasn't too far from where the fighting was going on and you could also fly in and out of that island practically every day of the year. You never got stuck or fogged in. It was such a nice climate there.

Q: Did you make friends there that you kept in touch with throughout the years?

KF: I kept in touch with most of my nurses while they were alive but I don't know of any of them that are still alive.

Q: Did you ever see any of the front or see any of the fighting?

KF: No. There were three types of hospitals. There were field hospitals which were sort of like the MASH units, near the front. We were station hospitals and then beyond us were the general hospitals for those who were closer to going home because of their injuries.

Q: What would you say was one of the better places where you worked?

KF: We were always well taken care of. Here are some papers that sum up my experience.

Interviewer reads Kate's written summary of her life:

I was born on High Street in Athol on September 20th, 1912. I went to grammar school at Johnsburg and graduated from North Creek High in 1929. September of 1931 to January 1932, I attended Albany State Teachers College intending to become a teacher. The course that I passed in college was Anatomy and Physiology, so I decided that I'd rather be a nurse. Accordingly I applied to and was accepted at St John's Long Island Hospital School of Nursing. I graduated in September 1935, took and passed my state board examination and became a registered nurse. My nursing career took me from general duty nursing at Polyclinical Hospital in New York City in 1935 to the Albany Visiting Nurse Service from 1937 to 1940.

Q: What was it like working in New York City?

KF: It was just a regular hospital, though it didn't have a maternity ward but we had everything else—medical, surgical.

Interviewer continues reading Kate's written summary of her life:

While attending Teachers College at Columbia University in the fall session 1940 on a New York State scholarship I saw a recruiting poster urging nurses to join the Army Nurse Corps. I was interested so I immediately joined the Red Cross Service which was a prerequisite to joining the ANC. I was requested to make an appointment at 90 Church Street in New York City to take a physical exam. I was a little less than five feet tall but the examining physician wasn't very tall himself so I stood as tall as I could and just barely made it but I passed.

My first assignment was to Camp Peay, Tullahoma, Tennessee. I took my oath of Office on February 21, 1941 and proceeded by train to Tennessee. When I got to Camp Peay, the name had been changed to Camp Forrest. I stayed there for twenty-two months during which time I was promoted to 1st Lieutenant and eventually to Captain. Several months after my promotion to Captain, I received orders in early December to report to Camp Kilmore, New Jersey to join the 500 bed 40th station hospital as chief nurse. Camp Kilmore was the pits. It was the least accommodating, most uncomfortable billet I have ever experience in five years in the service. I joined my unit on December 6th and on December 12th we boarded a troops ship to an unknown to us destination. Throughout the voyage we were required to wear helmets and life preservers and to keep our canteens full of water at all times. We had many life drill boats also. We sailed under strict blackout conditions. We reached Mers-el

Kebir at the Port of Oran in Algeria on December 25th, 1942. We couldn't depart until the next day because French Admiral Francois Darlan had been assassinated in Algiers on Christmas Eve and we weren't sure what kind of reception we would get. We did have a traditional Christmas dinner on board ship on Christmas Day.

We were in Algeria, then in French North Africa for thirteen months. At first we were on a mudflat in St. Cloud and then went in Arzew where we lived in French Foreign Legion barracks. Finally we were moved to the city of Mostaganem about twenty-five miles east of Oran. From Mostaganem, we went by plane to the island of Corsica where we stayed in several locations for another thirteen months.

My most interesting experience on Corsica was the reception of a shipload of D-Day casualties from the invasion of France on June 4, 1944. The casualties were young German foot soldiers with extensive burns from jumping into the sea [unclear] which was literally on fire. All swathed in medics gauze and bandages, they looked like the Michelin Man. The nurses, of course, wanted to work around the clock but in the interest of preventing exhaustion, I made them adhere to their regular eight-hour shifts. We coped very well.

After the Battle of the Bulge, which began December 16, 1944, we were again on the move, this time to Italy outside of Rome. We set up our hospital in Mussolini's glass factory but all personnel were housed in buildings. We did go into Rome and visit the Vatican, and other points of interest like the Trevi Fountain, ["Remember the song Three Coins in a Fountain? Well, that was in the Trevi Fountain in the center of Rome."] [KF speaking] and the Poet Steps [known as the Spanish Steps near the homes of many poets.]

The most memorable personal experience was flying over the Pope's summer home in Castel Gandolfo and seeing the fiery volcano, Mt. Vesuvius, in the cone of a B-17 piloted by an Air Force General who was a friend of our commanding officer. That was like sailing through space on a flying carpet.

German surrendered unconditionally on May 7, 1945 so the war in the European theater was over.

On July of 1945, after nine months in Rome, we moved on to Naples. We did not set up a hospital. Most of our time was spent watching training videos and wondering what was next for us. The plan was that those with the longest length of service would eventually go home first and others would be sent to the Pacific Theatre. However, that didn't happen because on August 14th, the Pacific war was over and everyone was sent home.

On November of 1946, I was promoted to the rank of Major. For overseas duty, the nurses were adequately clothed in government issued duty uniform and outerwear. We always had sheltered living quarters in tents or other buildings. We had toilet facilities were latrines if we lived in tents or regular bathrooms if we lived in buildings. The food was adequate, well-prepared and good. We used the mess kits only when we were breaking camp in our location and preparing to move. The hospital, whatever the setting, was provided with all of the necessary equipment. The welfare of the personnel was a priority from the commanding officer down through the ranks.

My post-war nursing experience was all in teaching and administration. I was married in 1952 to Charles Frentzos whom I met at Columbia University while we were both studying for our degrees, his an MS in teaching history and social studies and mine was a BS in nursing.. What a wonderful boon to education the government Bill of Rights was. We lived in Newport, RI from 1955 to 1990 when Charles died. I stayed there until 1994 before selling my home and moving to Warrensburg to be near to my family.

After we had both retired we traveled because we didn't have any children to put through school. We went twelve times to Europe and we saw most of the famous cathedrals. We lived in Greece on the island of Spetses for a year one time and six months another time. We visited all of the archeological digs. Twice we went to the GI cemetery at Colleville-Sur-Mer, the site of the landings at Omaha Beach. Looking back over the span of almost ninety-three years, I wouldn't have missed any of it.

Q: Was there any tension or drama among the nurses at the hospitals?

KF: No. We were all professionals and we had a job to do and we did it. That was all there was to it.

Q: What was the average age of the nurses?

KF: Some were quite young—just a year out of nursing school. I had six years of nursing experience. There was one girl who, before we got on the ship, decided not to go. We all talked to her and finally she came to me and said, “Miss Goodman, I won't be any more trouble.”

KF: The ship ride over was really an experience in itself. We sailed from a port in New Jersey and about two days out we were off the coast of North Carolina when there was a very bad storm at sea. On the table where we ate, they put rims to keep the dishes and food on the table. Everybody got sick. I think I was the only one of the nurses and doctors who didn't get sick. The chief surgeon said I saved his life. Well, I didn't do anything except tell him to only eat crackers. We had to keep helmets on while we were on the ship and always carry a canteen full of water. We didn't have any lights on at night and we were traveling in a convoy and didn't want to be seen by German ships at sea,

Q: Why did you need to have a canteen of water with you at all times?

KF: In case you had to get on a lifeboat, you had to have water with you.

Q: What was your uniform like?

KF: We wore slacks on the ship but otherwise just a regular uniform.

Q: What was the Christmas dinner like on the ship?

KF: It was a typical Christmas dinner with the turkey and all of the fixings.

Q: How did you get your medals?

KF: Those medals are unit medals given just because I was there. Everyone in the unit got them. I never got individual medals until about six months ago. A friend of mine in the American Legion made the effort to get them for me.

One thing that was interesting was that when we were in other countries, if you were an

enlisted man, you had to salute all officers. When they would see me with a Captain's bar on my hat, they would say "Ma'am, Sir." They would do a double take and then salute. They weren't used to saluting a woman.

Q: Anything else you would like to share?

KF: One thing very interesting to me is that nobody ever asked me anything about my service except soon after I came home, I went to church, and one teenage girl came up to me and asked, "Did you ride in a jeep?"

But times were hard here. Everything was rationed—shoes were rationed, sugar was rationed. We had everything we needed overseas. Here, they had blackouts. When I returned, there was a big tent on our front lawn. People in our community were scheduled to come to our house, stay under the tent and spot planes going over. People here suffered more than my unit suffered. In the Pacific Theatre under General McArthur the soldiers and medical staff had a terrible time. The nurses were treated badly. There was often no place to sleep and they didn't know where the next meal was coming from. *We Band of Angels*, written by nurse in Pacific Theater, tells about the conditions they served under. I had it so good.