

**Florence Leta Griffith, nee: Cornish  
Veteran**

**Marlene Zecca  
Interviewer**

**Interviewed on January 8, 2004  
31 Hillcrest Road  
Elmira, NY**

**MZ:** This is Thursday, January 8, 2004. Today's interview with WWII Veteran Florence Griffith is taking place at her residence located at 31 Hillcrest Road in Elmira, NY. Florence is 86 years old, having been born December 1, 1917. As Florence Cornish, she served in the Army Nurse Corps from September 15, 1943 to February 8, 1946. By the time of her discharge she had achieved the rank of First Lieutenant. My name is Marlene Zecca, and I volunteered to interview Florence as part of the Veterans' History Project. How did you get into the Army? Back in those days men were drafted but women weren't—this was voluntary on your part, I presume.

**FLG:** Well, I was a head nurse at a hospital in Binghamton in the medical surgical unit.

**MZ:** Could I ask what hospital? I'm from Binghamton and I'm just curious.

**FLG:** At that time it was called the City Hospital. Now it's the General Hospital. I would go out on the street and see these big signs of people—well actually there was a soldier, Uncle Sam, saying we need you.

**MZ:** All the advertisements.

**FLG:** I knew my brothers couldn't go because they had families. One day these two gals came to the head of the nurses at the hospital and said they had joined the army and they looked so nice in their uniforms and they really liked it.

**MZ:** Were they official recruiters?

**FLG:** No, they were just home for a visit. They were stationed in Texas. I thought, "Well I'd like to do that—get to see the States." But when I went in, I didn't get to see the States. [Laughs]

**MZ:** How old were you at this time?

**FLG:** I was twenty-three.

**MZ:** Twenty-three right about this time. So, what was your motivation then to want to enlist? You saw the advertisements. WWII was already going on. Can you think back to what your feelings were and your motivation?

**FLG:** I felt that somebody from my family should go. I seemed to be the logical one.

**MZ:** You say your brothers couldn't go.

**FLG:** They had families. I didn't think they should have to go.

**MZ:** And how many brothers did you have at the time?

**FLG:** I had two. And I had a sister and she was married and they all had families.

**MZ:** So none of them joined the military and your brothers weren't drafted and you didn't have to worry about that, but you felt an obligation. I was just interested in your thinking at the time. That's wonderful.

**FLG:** Of course there was a nursing shortage here. I had to go to New York and I got called out of the line because the Director of Nurses had called down there and said that she needed me at home. So they asked me if anybody has forced me to sign up. [Laughs] I said, "No."

**MZ:** So the Director of Nurses from the hospital in Binghamton didn't want to lose you.

**FLG:** Yes. She needed nurses.

**MZ:** But you wanted to serve in some capacity. So, you weren't forced to sign. Where did it go from there?

**FLG:** Then I got my orders to report on September 15<sup>th</sup>, so I did. I had to go to Halloran Hospital in Staten Island. When I got off the bus, there was another gal that was just as strange as I was. We went around to the different buildings where we had to go and when we got to the place where they assigned where you live, they asked if we wanted to room together. We said yes. So we stayed together the whole time. We're still friends.

**MZ:** Wonderful. Where does she live now?

**FLG:** She lives in Pike, New York.

**MZ:** Do you call one another or write letters?

**FLG:** Yes. We try to see each other at least once a year. We used to do it more often.

**MZ:** Was this like basic training--this first stop at Halloran Hospital?

**FLG:** We had some basic training but we worked at the hospital on different assignments. We did have some basic training.

**MZ:** What did the basic training consist of? Can you outline that?

**FLG:** Hiking mostly, but then from there we were sent to Fort Dix and we got our basic training there.

**MZ:** What was that like there at Fort Dix?

**FLG:** That was rougher. [Laughs]

**MZ:** A little more than hiking then?

**FLG:** It was hiking and we had to go down the side of a ship where all those ropes are, those squares... We had to climb down those or climb up them and climb down, which was good because we had to do that when we landed in France.

**MZ:** Did you receive any instruction in how to handle firearms?

**FLG:** No.

**MZ:** So there was some physical activity that was expected of you.

**FLG:** All the exercises.

**MZ:** And this was all women then. Were they all nurses?

**FLG:** Yes, in our group, I guess we were. There might have been some Red Cross people, I'm not sure.

**MZ:** What else took place during this time at Fort Dix? Do you remember how long you were there?

**FLG:** I think we were there six weeks.

**MZ:** So that probably was just a basic. Were you working in a hospital?

**FLG:** No, I don't think we did then.

**MZ:** Probably going through the Army indoctrination part of it.

**FLG:** Yes, right. From there we were transferred to Camp Kilmer in New Jersey and then we got the boat from there.

**MZ:** What did you do in Kilmer? Were you there very long?

**FLG:** We weren't there very long, just getting us together. We boarded the Queen Mary I and there was a band there and they played Pistol Packin' Mama. [Laughs]

**MZ:** Is that because all the women were ...

**FLG:** Well, we had our fatigues on and we looked like...

**MZ:** Were you packing a pistol?

**FLG:** No. Just looked that way. [Laughs]

**MZ:** At this time when you were boarding the boat, were a lot of troops boarding?

**FLG:** Yes.

**MZ:** A lot of troops—men and women?

**FLG:** I think there must have been. I want to say 1200, but maybe more.

**MZ:** How many would you say were women at this point boarding the boat?

**FLG:** Well, in our group we had between eighty and 100.

**MZ:** Eighty to 100 women—all nurses?

**FLG:** Yes.

**MZ:** What was the trip over like—what happened on the boat?

**FLG:** I was sure I wouldn't get seasick. I had a real tough stomach. Nothing ever bothered me. But we weren't out a day and I was sick. I think the boat zig-zagged, and we all got sick.

**MZ:** How long of a journey was it?

**FLG:** It was about six days. We landed in Scotland.

**MZ:** Were you sick the whole time?

**FLG:** No, just the first couple of days. It was bad.

**MZ:** Did you do anything on the boat? Were you able to intermingle with the men in the Army? Were you segregated?

**FLG:** No, we weren't segregated. We could go out on the deck. I can't remember if they had any entertainment or not.

**MZ:** I was going to ask if they showed movies or had any drill routines that you might have to go through on the boat.

**FLG:** Yes, we did. They would ring the bell and you were supposed to get up on deck and get your life jacket on. Well the first time that happened, I thought, "The heck with that, I'm going down with the boat. I'm not going up."

**MZ:** So you didn't go up, or did you?

**FLG:** No, I didn't.

**MZ:** No consequences for not going up?

**FLG:** No, there were a lot of us that couldn't go up. But then the next day I was okay.

**MZ:** You were feeling better. That's when you were sick.

**FLG:** The thing that made us feel good—this Lieutenant Colonel who was training us, giving us all this stuff—he was so sure that only a sissy would get sick and he's one of the ones that got really sick.

**MZ:** You say you landed in Scotland?

**FLG:** They had coffee and doughnuts for us. That was the first time we had any coffee and that was really good.

**MZ:** Oh really? No coffee on board the ship for those six days? Probably because it was something that was just rationed?

**FLG:** I don't know. We didn't worry too much about food there.

**MZ:** So what happened in Scotland then?

**FLG:** We weren't there long. But it was nice while we there—just a few hours really and then we boarded a train and went to Ellesmere in England, which is pretty near Liverpool.

**MZ:** Was that an English base?

**FLG:** No that was our base. It was set up there. The hospital was built really—there were just like little huts. We were assigned huts to live in. There were seven of us lived in the hut, and I don't think any of us had ever been so cold. This was March. It was so cold. We all got sick.

**MZ:** Was this March of 1944 then?

**FLG:** Yes.

**MZ:** No central heating in those places?

**FLG:** We had a little potbelly stove and we could get a pail of coal—one a day.

**MZ:** How long did that last?

**FLG:** Not long enough. [Laughs] For a while we didn't have any patients. We were waiting for the patients to be sent to us. We had to go to class in the mornings. And this same Lieutenant Colonel that drove us at Fort Dix—he had classes for us and of course we were all sick with colds and coughing and he'd get real disgusted and he'd say, "I'm going to stop and let you all cough and then I don't want you to cough until I stop again." That is not easy to do. We were pretty down in the dumps. We didn't get any mail. It was really, really rough.

To get back to the cold—they had a coal pile but they had a guard on it. So two of us would team up and one would distract the guard and the other one would get some coal under her cape.

**MZ:** Managed to get a little extra coal, then?

**FLG:** Yes. We used to dry out the tea bags and use them again.

**MZ:** Because rations were pretty scarce?

**FLG:** And after our hospital got started we were real short of supplies. So we would have to wash the dressings out and dry them and then re-sterilize them and use them again.

**MZ:** Mostly cotton fabric?

**FLG:** Gauze.

**MZ:** How long were you there in Ellesmere?

**FLG:** We got there in March and June 6<sup>th</sup> was D-Day. Of course we had patients come in after a couple of weeks. So then we got our orders to move down to Salisbury.

**MZ:** Before we go there, what other experiences did you have at Ellesmere with the hospital and taking care of the wounded? This would have been your first patients overseas coming in from the battleground. Can you recall any feelings or experiences there that stand out in your mind?

**FLG:** We had a birthday party. One of the girls in our room had a birthday April 1<sup>st</sup>. We went into Liverpool but we couldn't buy anything. Everything was rationed, but we did get a cake. It was beautiful. I don't know if it was a fruit cake or a spice cake and it had this beautiful icing on it. We started to eat it and it was the worst tasting frosting. I think they had used mutton oil or grease and that's what it tasted like.

**MZ:** Was that the only party you had there then?

**FLG:** Probably not. I don't know. We were all pretty depressed at first, but then we got the patients. Then it was good.

**MZ:** As a nurse in particular, what were some of your duties at the hospital?

**FLG:** Well we had to change dressings, and give intravenous and help people. Some of them needed a little help getting up and getting walking so they could get back to their units. We were real busy.

**MZ:** How long were you at Ellesmere?

**FLG:** We got our orders and then they were cancelled and then we got more orders and we went to Salisbury—that must have been in July.

**MZ:** Whereabouts is that?

**FLG:** It's down on the coast. They put us up in a beautiful mansion, but it was old and hadn't been used. After we were there a while, the toilets didn't work. Then we had no hot water or anything, and you had to use cold water to wash with—put it in your helmet.

**MZ:** How was the heat?

**FLG:** The heat was not bad. We were just waiting around for more orders. So one day we went to Plymouth which is not too far from Salisbury and there was a boat. A couple of Sailors were there and they invited us on the boat and gave us apple pie, and that tasted so good.

**MZ:** That was nice. What else did you do in Plymouth that day then?

**FLG:** We shopped. There was not much that you could buy.

**MZ:** Probably didn't have much money either I bet?

**FLG:** I don't remember about the money. They had nothing really. So then we got our orders to get on the boat and go across the Channel.

**MZ:** This is after D-Day?

**FLG:** D-Day was June 6<sup>th</sup> and this was in July. So, we got across the Channel. That was a little scary of course.

**MZ:** Did you get seasick again?

**FLG:** No. That didn't take so long either. But then when we got there we had to go down the ropes and wade in. We were kind of lucky—the nurses—they took us in trucks to where we were going to be. But the poor enlisted men had to walk. I think it was eight miles. We got there and it was a cow pasture.

**MZ:** This was in France?

**FLG:** In France. We had a big tent. They brought in litters for us to sleep on. We were there a couple of weeks, maybe more than that, and we were given a canteen of water a day. That was to drink, clean your teeth, and wash yourself, whatever.

**MZ:** How much would have been in a canteen of water?

**FLG:** I think it's a little over a pint.

**MZ:** Really, that was your allotment?

**FLG:** That was all you got. We lived on C-rations and K-rations. Our shower—twice a week, I think—we were taken to this camp. It was a big room and it had a pipe all the way around where the water came out. So we all got a shower. I often wondered who turned the water on and who turned it off. It was kind of funny seeing all these eighty people in different sizes and shapes.

**MZ:** All eighty of the women would be in this one big room?

**FLG:** Yes, taking the water on and you have to wash... This one time I thought my ears were dirty and I had to wash them. So I got them all soaped up and they turned off the water. I had to wait until the next time to get it rinsed out.

**MZ:** They didn't give you much time then?

**FLG:** No. They didn't waste any water. The latrine was a tarp, and then they dug a trench and you straddled that, and the toilet paper—you were given about 4 or 6 tissues. Little squares, like brown paper bag material. That's what you got daily. [Laughs]

**MZ:** What you wouldn't give for a Montgomery Wards or Sears catalogue I bet. That would have been softer paper.

**FLG:** That was a good experience for us, I guess. Then we moved from there and we went into Paris.

**MZ:** Let me just ask you on the cow pasture now. Was there any kind of hospital facility set up? Did you treat any of the wounded? Were you anywhere near any of the battles that were going on?

**FLG:** No we were just waiting for more orders. We did visit a cemetery and there were soldiers. One of them was a boy that lived on my street when I was growing up, so I wrote to his parents.

**MZ:** Oh, how nice. This was while you were in the cow pasture. It was a visit and you recognized... You wrote to his parents right then and there? That was really nice. Did you ever get a chance to see them afterwards?

**FLG:** I think I did see his sister.

So then we went into Paris and we stayed at a real nice hospital and we worked there. It was not terribly demanding. I met some nice Parisians that worked there too. Then we had days off and there were snipers out so we were only supposed to go in certain areas. We went downtown and shopped and that was fun seeing the women all dressed up.

**MZ:** Were you able to get across the communication barrier with some of the Parisians?

**FLG:** We were walking down the street this one day and asked directions of this man that was coming so we were trying to figure out how to say it, so we did—we asked him and he answered us in English.

**MZ:** He was a Frenchman and he was able to speak some English. Were you well received by the Parisians as American soldiers?

**FLG:** Yes, they were real nice.

**MZ:** In this particular hospital did you have many patients that were coming in from the battleground?

**FLG:** I don't know about that. Where I was working was the Central Supply, getting dressings ready and things like that, so I don't know what kind of patients they had.

**MZ:** So in that instance, you didn't have direct patient contact, you were behind the scenes?

**FLG:** Not there. It was fun doing that. Then we got our orders to go to Liège, Belgium. That was quite a long train ride. So one of the stops we made, the engineer was really nice. I thought it would be a big treat to ride in the engine so he let me ride up there. I don't think I was alone. I think there was somebody else there too. That was fun, being up there, seeing where you were going. But I wasn't thinking. I got all coal dust in my hair and my clothes. But it was an experience. Then we got into Liège and we were to stay at a hotel there. We had a real nice room, three of us in a room, and it seemed good. They had hot water and we were able to take a bath.

**MZ:** Was your friend still with you? Did she and you stay together the whole time pretty much?

**FLG:** Yes, I wrote to my mother one-time, "Shirley is in Belgium." We weren't supposed to say where we were. In the next letter I wrote, I just said, "My bed is still next to Shirley's."



**MZ:** Oh, so that was a way to let her know where you were because you weren't supposed to tell them. Do you know why you weren't supposed to tell—was it because of the war and security?

**FLG:** Yes. Well, the very first night we were there we were sitting in the hotel there and buzz bombs started coming over. We all dived under the table. That was only the beginning. There were a lot of buzz bombs.

**MZ:** That was from the Germans?

**FLG:** Yes.

**MZ:** What were the buzz bombs?

**FLG:** Robot bomb.

**MZ:** Can you explain a little bit further?

**FLG:** Well, I guess they just shoot them, start them out and they just land wherever they run out of steam or something.

**MZ:** Were they being shot from the land or were they coming from planes?

**FLG:** From the land. We had planes, too, but mostly the robots were just sent out. So then the next day they took us to see our hospital. You had to walk two miles and one of those miles was right straight up the hill. Terribly steep hill. And we had to walk that. So we got to our hospital and got it fixed up and started getting patients right away. We had really good experience with the Belgians. They were happy to have us there. In fact when we first got there they were all out on the street looking for us because we were the first American women to get there. We had Belgians working in the hospital so I got to know them pretty well.

**MZ:** Was this their hospital that was up on the top of the hill or a facility we constructed?

**FLG:** No, it was old. So the buzz bombs kept coming along with the patients. One night, I was on night duty and they were coming it seemed like every half hour, but maybe every hour, but they were coming frequently. This enlisted man who was a patient said, "Let me out of here. I want to go back to my foxhole—it's safer there." There was just no place you could go to miss them. Sooner or later you knew it was going to get you. You just felt they couldn't miss.

**MZ:** Did they hit the hospital?

**FLG:** November 24, 1944. That was a day that nobody in the 15<sup>th</sup> General would ever forget.

**MZ:** What happened that day?

**FLG:** Our hospital was bombed.

**MZ:** This was in Liège in Belgium. It was bombed.

**FLG:** Sixteen of our personnel were killed. The hospital was damaged so completely that it couldn't be used.

**MZ:** You had to evacuate?

**FLG:** We had to evacuate all the patients. And a lot of our staff was injured with flying glass. The bomb hit the pharmacy area so all our pharmacists were killed. So then we had to evacuate the patients to other...

**MZ:** You were in the hospital at the time, then?

**FLG:** No I wasn't, I was on night duty then and I left the hospital and the bomb hit about 9:00 in the morning. I just got back to the hotel and I really did not want to go back there. We weren't quite sure if it hit there or not. I did not want to go back because I was too tired to climb that hill. But we did go back and got patients sent to other hospitals.

**MZ:** You had to help with the evacuation and of course you had to see the devastation that was there. I would imagine that you lost people that you knew.

**FLG:** Oh yes. One of them was a boy I was dating.

**MZ:** He was in the Army?

**FLG:** He was a pharmacist.

**MZ:** How long had you been dating before this happened?

**FLG:** Oh, I don't know.

**MZ:** A while?

**FLG:** Probably three or four months. I don't remember that.

**MZ:** Somebody that was very near and dear to you.

**FLG:** We had a band in our hospital group and he played the base fiddle. We used to have dances.

**MZ:** Did you play in the band yourself?

**FLG:** No.

**MZ:** But you would provide a little entertainment for yourselves with the band?

**FLG:** Yes.

**MZ:** So you had to help with the evacuation after that bombing?

**FLG:** Then we were off one day, that day. Then the next day we had to go to the other hospitals. They split us up to go and help with the other hospitals.

**MZ:** Was this still in Liège, Belgium?

**FLG:** Yes.

**MZ:** There were other hospitals?

**FLG:** Well, they were out a little bit, but in that area.

**MZ:** But in that vicinity.

**FLG:** So then we got a new order. We moved to what they called the Citadel. That was a German prison. And the Germans had left in a hurry and outside there were body boxes. We never did look in the boxes. I don't know if there were bodies in there, but there were several boxes.

**MZ:** Coffins?

**FLG:** Yes. They had left—they used them for sheets. Flax—they are just like linen. I rescued a couple of them and we embroidered... I still have this real pretty tablecloth.

**MZ:** This was at the Citadel?

**FLG:** It was so dirty—it was an awful, awful place and we had to clean it up and set it up.

**MZ:** Set it up as a hospital?

**FLG:** Yes, we set it up. It was nice after we got it all done. When I first saw it, it was terrible.

**MZ:** But it had been used as a prison?

**FLG:** Yes. Then they left in a hurry.

**MZ:** Did they leave prisoners behind? Were there Americans or was it all empty?

**FLG:** It was all empty as far as I know.

**MZ:** And this was where you found the linen that you embroidered on. So you got this place up and running as a hospital, then?

**FLG:** We were there quite a while. Then the Battle of the Bulge came. And we had our orders to move back. We were right there and we serviced the injured as a field hospital. Ordinarily we were a general hospital. They get to the field hospital and then get transferred to us. But we were a field hospital because we were getting so many.

**MZ:** So you were seeing them directly off the battlefield then?

**FLG:** They would be treated of course on the battlefield. We would change their dressings and give them IVs or whatever they needed. We would keep them right on their litters. Then they'd be moved, maybe the next day, someplace else.

**MZ:** So they kind of went through pretty quickly.

**FLG:** Yes. We were real busy taking care of them. That was kind of scary because they were so close.

**MZ:** Did you get bombed there too? Did they have those buzz bombs going over?

**FLG:** Oh yes, we were still getting bombed. Christmas Day we had our dinner in this empty building. And the very next day that one got hit with a bomb. It was bad. There were ten of our nurses that had to be sent back.

**MZ:** Why was that?

**FLG:** They were upset and screaming out in the night.

**MZ:** So psychologically they just couldn't handle it?

**FLG:** Yes.

**MZ:** Having a traumatic stress disorder that we so often refer to it now. So they did send them back to the States? But you and Shirley hung it out?

**FLG:** Yes.

**MZ:** It was good you had someone. A friend like that. You could stay together.

**FLG:** Oh, when we moved up to the Citadel, we were assigned to a room. There were nine of us in that room, which was nice. We got along good and were friends. We had a potbelly stove there, too. [Laughs]

**MZ:** Did most of the other women join for the same reasons you did? They felt the need to serve at this time?

**FLG:** I think so.

**MZ:** It would be all voluntary on the part of the women.

**FLG:** And they were asked too if they wanted to serve overseas or in the States. As much as I wanted to see the States, I said it didn't matter.

**MZ:** So you got picked to go overseas.

**FLG:** It's good now. Because there were good times and bad. We got to see London and all the things there.

**MZ:** And Paris too.

**FGL:** Oh, I have to tell you—Paris. We had a three day pass—this was with Frances, another girl. We had a three day pass to go to Paris. Well, then they announced V-E Day. We were on our way. We had to change in Brussels. We were waiting when we heard that it was signed. So then we went into Paris. Wow, everybody was so excited. It was a wonderful time to go. We met these two Air Force officers who had taken a German car. The one had been a German prisoner and he took this German car. There was no roof on it, but there were four seats. We went all over Paris and everybody was so excited. It was just a wonderful time to be there.

**MZ:** What an experience to think that you were there on V-E Day when they announced it.

**FLG:** Yes, that was exciting. I don't think anybody went to bed that night. Out in the streets. It was wonderful. Champagne was flowing.

**MZ:** Up all night, then?

**FLG:** Yes we were, 5:00. That was fun. Then we got back in probably July and we got orders to close the hospital. But then they changed it again. It's still there. Then another gal, Alma, and I went to the Riviera. That was a long train ride but it was fun. We had good company.

**MZ:** Was this on a pass for a little R&R?

**FLG:** Yes, we stayed at this beautiful hotel right on the Mediterranean, good food, and we had dancing every night.

**MZ:** Oh how nice. This was after the war was declared as being over?

**FLG:** We were just waiting for it to be over in Japan. We weren't sure whether we were going to get sent over there or not. So then I think it was in September they announced Japan had signed off.

**MZ:** So after the Riviera and the good time you had on the Riviera, what did you do then?

**FLG:** We were still in Liège. I think we were still getting patients too. I had signed up to go for another trip to Switzerland. I thought, "Well that will be good." But then they said I could go home so I thought, "I guess I better go home. I can see Switzerland some other time." So I got my orders to come home in November around Thanksgiving time.

**MZ:** This brings us into 1945.

**FLG:** Yes. I came back to the States but I still had vacation time. I didn't really get out until February.

**MZ:** Can you recall any other experiences that you had overseas?

**FLG:** Well you were asking about patients and patient care. I was in charge of a chest wounds ward. We must have had twenty to twenty-five patients who had various conditions of chest wounds, which was pretty serious. We had prisoners working in the hospital and this one time this prisoner was talking to another prisoner and he said, "Heil Hitler." Well, that was the wrong thing to say there. So whoever was in charge of him made him scrub the floor with a toothbrush.

**MZ:** There'd be a guard with the prisoners who were probably doing some menial tasks.

**FLG:** Kept them busy. We had prisoners at Halloran Hospital too.

**MZ:** This is back on Staten Island?

**FLG:** Yes.

**MZ:** German prisoners, prisoners of war? They were shipped back to the States?

**FLG:** I don't know why. We had Italian and other troops there that had been injured.

**MZ:** How was the communication back home with the letters? I imagine they were kind of slow.

**FLG:** Well, I noticed in my diary that when we were in England everything was bad. We weren't getting any mail. Our luggage hadn't come. It was really depressing.

**MZ:** Do you have your diary handy?

**FLG:** Yes.

**MZ:** We have your diary here that you kept. This is pretty much through the entire time that you were enlisted, is that correct?

**FLG:** Yes.

**MZ:** I want to read some of your entries. The one that you mentioned before about being at the hospital—that occurred on November 24, 1944, is that correct?

**FLG:** Yes.

**MZ:** It says here, "A day we won't forget—our hospital was destroyed by a robot bomb. Sixteen of our personnel were killed and many seriously injured. Nettie Rubenstein, a dietician, was the only girl in our personnel who was hurt badly, although many of the girls were cut by glass."

I'm just going to move ahead to your birthday which was December 1, 1944. You're saying here, "My birthday. They had a party in Central Supply in the evening. I certainly have wonderful friends. Received perfume, apron and bracelet from them. We had fruitcake, juice and candy, cheese and crackers to eat."

Your entry for December 25, 1944. "Christmas Day, not a very cheery one I must say. Went to church in the morning, sang in the choir, went to the movies at night. I'm beginning to wonder if the bombs will ever stop. We are now in danger of having to move back as the Nazis have started another offensive and are really aiming for this city. They are not far from here. We are being bombed not only by robots but by evening aircraft day and night. We have our bags packed and are ready to leave if necessary."

Thank you for letting me read that. That's what you wrote back then and it's nice to include your words. Are there any other days that you can think of?

**FLG:** I think I told you all about Paris.

**MZ:** Do you have anything else that you would like to add?

**FLG:** No, I can't think of anything.

**MZ:** Having been a woman in the service, do you have any reflections upon that?

**FLG:** Well, there were good times and bad. And I was really glad I did it. It was a wonderful experience. It was nice to be a part of it. Met some nice people.

**MZ:** And, as you say, you still keep in touch with one of your friends.

**FLG:** One of the Belgian gals that I worked with at the hospital. I should tell you this. Eggs were very, very scarce. This one day I was on night duty. I don't know how come I was on night duty so much. I went on duty this one night probably at 9:00 and Lebecine waited for me. She had an egg to give me. A fresh egg. Well, how do you divide a fresh egg among nine people? But we boiled it. That was a real treat. It was so nice of her to do that. Then we corresponded after I came home. The only problem is she wrote in French, and I had trouble trying to interpret it. She sent me a beautiful crystal bell which I still have. We corresponded quite a long time but I had trouble getting to read it so it kind of petered off there.

**MZ:** Do you still have some of her letters?

**FLG:** Yes, I think so.

**MZ:** I have a neighbor who is French, maybe she could help translate sometime for you. I can ask her and see if she would be willing to do that.

**FLG:** It was quite a long time ago—I guess it was her cousin or her niece who called me. I was working. She was going to school, I think, in Massachusetts. It was nice to hear from somebody. I would always like to have gone back to see them, but never made it.

**MZ:** What did you do when you got back to the States?

**FLG:** Well, the Director of Nurses that I had in Binghamton had moved to a hospital in Washington, so she wrote and asked me to come there. She gave me a really good job. I was Supervisor of the Medical Surgical Building. I had five floors and I got a lot of money compared to what I got in Binghamton. So I went there. But, after we got home, got out of the Army, then this Shirley—she had a boyfriend in Pike—they came down to see me in Elmira and then I went up to see her and that's where I met my husband. He had been in the Pacific and he had just gotten home. So then I went to Washington to work. In the meantime, I wanted to see my future husband. So I stayed only about eight months or so down there and came back to Binghamton and I got married.

**MZ:** And your husband to be was working in Binghamton?

**FLG:** No, he was working in Buffalo. He lived up there in Pike.

**MZ:** You had a little correspondence time there before you...?

**FLG:** He'd come to Binghamton on his days off.

**MZ:** Where did you go after you got married? Did you become a housewife?

**FLG:** Well, his mother had died just before he went overseas and his father died while he was overseas so he had a family home in Pike. We lived there for a while.

**MZ:** This was just outside of Buffalo?

**FLG:** Well it's farther. It's probably an hour's ride from Buffalo, I would guess, near Letchworth Park.

**MZ:** It's pretty up there.

**FLG:** He got laid off. He was working for Goodyear or some tire company. They had a strike. He got laid off and so we lived in Pike in that house for a while and then we moved to Buffalo. He went to work up there. I did private duty up there. And then my brother who had a business here in Elmira needed a salesman, so we moved down here.

**MZ:** So that's how you got back to Elmira then. But you are originally from Elmira?

**FLG:** Yes.

**MZ:** And then you ended up working in Binghamton? Where did you train?

**FLG:** I went to Philadelphia Methodist for my nursing school. Then, I went to Syracuse—University Hospital—up there. Every time the head nurse was off, I had to fill in. I kind of wanted to be a head nurse. But you had to have certain courses. So I went to Columbia and took the courses and then there was no vacancy for head nurses in Syracuse. There was one in Binghamton.

**MZ:** So that's what brought you to Binghamton, and then the war broke out. Is there anything else you would like to add? You wanted to show a crystal bell that you received from Belgium. That was from your friend in Belgium. This was the lady who had gotten you that egg. [FLG holds up and rings crystal bell]

The one thing I was really quite interested in is your tablecloth—if you could hold that up. [Holds up white tablecloth with colored embroidery in swirls around the sides and in the middle] Now this is material that you found at that prison—the Citadel it was called. It had been a German prison. This is where you went in and had to clean it up but you found this and you did the embroidery work. Did you do the embroidery then, at that time?

**FLG:** Yes, in my free time. I think some of the Belgians worked on it too.

**MZ:** It was more than just you? It was a joint effort. Why not show that up again? Very good. It's beautiful. Lovely handiwork.

**FLG:** It was used for a bedsheet.