

Anne-Marie Katie Hansel
Veteran

Interviewed by the
Herkimer Fulton County Historical Society

Anne-Marie Katie Hansel: AH
Interview: INT

AH : Hi, I am Mrs. Anne-Marie Katie Hansel. I now live in Johnstown, New York. I am a former Navy Wave. Hospital Corpsmen a long time ago. I didn't finish my high school because I was still working at the factory and I started to do war work. We were testing two pound shells and that is when I decided to go into the Navy. When I went into the Navy, I trained at Hunter college and then from there we went to New York City. We took a train through Chelsea Naval Hospital and that is where I started. I was kind of tired I remember that night I wasn't home sick. I never was home sick, but when they played the cabs eye balls, I was just exhausted. From then on everything was okay.

First, we had our hospital training. From there I was stationed at S.O.Q Med sick officer's headquarters taking care of sick patients and they would always put me where I was needed. Soon after I worked at the Red Cross Hut, I worked on the communications machines and then from there I Master at Arms. I had charge of the navy group, in fact I learned one lady, that is still around, and she was angry because I put her on the same detail all the time. After that I worked at staff personnel for a while until I was discharged. During my time there I met a lot of really nice people. For me it was like going away to school for me. I was very shy, but I found my mouse. When I was Master at Arms my lieutenant, Radeblush (?), she you have got to be firm with the girls. When they have a clean-up detail that is what they have to do.

During my Navy time at the hospital, we really didn't have to go anywhere because we had everything there. We had a swimming pool, bowling alleys, we had dances all the time. In fact we were told to please dance with a patient, a lot of the patients were victims. They made them dress up and go to the functions and we danced with them, they were nice boys.

I tried to get home on the weekends because I still lived in Allen, to visit my mother and father because both my brother's were away. My older brother Carl was in Italy and my younger brother Paul was in Germany.

I still have my Navy hat, the rest of my stuff is gone. It was a long time ago. This was the way I looked when I first went in [shows photo] and this is later on [shows another photo taken at a later date] and this is the way I look now [shows recent photo.] I didn't keep many memorabilia for this occasion, but the main thing is that I did see this lady [shows old newspaper clipping.] She was Helen Keller, she visited the patients. She couldn't hear, see or talk, but she had her helper with her. The fellas were just thrilled.

What was nice about this was being in the service, it helped me later on when I came home to work for a while, but I took care of the G.I. Bill, I took advantage of the G.I. Bill and first I went to the school in New York City for just a little while and then a group of us decided to go to Europe so we caught the boat in American and went to Europe. I was there for a whole year and I met some very nice people there. In fact, during the summer vacation, we had four weeks off. We stored our stuff and we took a bus all the way through France, Spain, Morocco, Casablanca, over to Marrakech, around to Barcelona, over to Palma, Majorca and home. I had a

few days left of school and then I went home on the isle of France, the French ship and I got sea sick. But I enjoyed being home again and then soon after I was home for a while I was transferred with Remington Ran to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in the sales field and I threw them and I did a good job. I was the counting machine division assistant. And I bought a home on my G.I. Bill and I stayed there and I lived there for a while until my mother died. My father died first then I took my mother to Connecticut and then when my mother died I moved back to New York state.

INT: What was your most memorable experience when you were in the service?

AH: Well to me part of it was meeting a lot of wonderful people and I was treated like a lady. I really was and meeting this lady, Helen Keller was great. I still have some friends that came back in the service with me. Some of them passed away.

INT: Do you think that the military experience helped you out in life?

AH: It certainly did because I had no higher education just a high school diploma.

INT: What would you consider your most memorable time in the service?

AH: I guess it was all of them, all of it. Although I do not believe women should be in the service if it isn't a war time.

INT: When you were a pharmacist maid at the naval hospital you actually got to do direct care on the officers?

AH: Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. I did everything the nurse did except give them medicine. In fact, I even watched a couple of operations.

INT: What type of operations?

AH: One was a hand and then one was an appendix. I missed the cardiology, I was on duty at the time.

INT: So did you see quite a bit of traumatic injury?

AH: Well, mostly burns, burn victims.

INT: And that is what the Chelsea Naval Hospital handled most of?

AH: We handled all kinds I believe, I do believe.

INT: So you handled mostly the burn unit?

AH: We had a couple of burn patients were I was, but I didn't take care of patients that long.

INT: How about your experience as a mastered arms? How long were you a mastered arms?

AH: For a few months, I couldn't tell you how long. I guess I never looked back at the end, but I had charge of the move, getting up and marching around the building and then putting them all in detail. We had to clean the house before I went to work in the morning. We had camp inspections every day, I had my own office there. My lieutenant Radeblush (?), I am not sure if she is alive anymore, she was my superior. Also when I was on night duty for a while, I was on the communication machine at the main office. I remember sleeping at the night quarters being on duty during the night.

INT: What would you say was your worst experience in the military?

AH: I guess, maybe, just one thing. When I was on the communications machine in the red cross hut, I had to keep the cash box and I had to sleep with it because when I went to the main office, the day office, to put it in the safe, they couldn't guarantee that it would be there the next day. So I had to sleep with the cash to guarantee that the money would be there the next day. So I went back to the barracks and slept with the cash.

INT: So you went in service from Ilion?

AH: Yes, I signed up in Utica when I went into Utica. I said sign me in and he said well you can go home and think about it and I said that I didn't come all this way up here to think about it in the morning.

INT: That's good. Do you have any other memories that you would like to share?

AH: It was good for me. I don't know if any other women had a bad time, but I was treated very nicely.

INT: Explain to me the job you had before you went into the war when you worked for Remington Rand. You said you were testing military shells?

AH: Two pound shells, yes.

INT: Can You describe that for us?

AH: We had to be completely dressed with a net over our heads and everything around our fingers because the shells were sharp. And we worn slacks and aprons and it took us a while to even get dressed up. We had boxes of shells that would come down this way and this way from the machine that we tested them. We took two of the two pound shells so four pounds and we put them in this machine and weighed them unless they were too high or too wide or something then they were bad and we would discard them or if they were good then we would keep them. We would do that all day. That was a while that I did that and then the war started and I thought to heck with this, I am going into the service. So that is why I went into the service from there.

INT: Thank you.

AH: Thank you.

I wanted to talk just a little more about Helen Keller. When she came to our hospital to visit the patients it was November 30th, 1945. Of course she couldn't hear, see or talk, but she was quite an inspiration to the patients. And I emotional when I think about it because anybody that complains, think about her. These were magazines that I kept from the Chelsea naval hospital, I have two of them left. And I still have my hat and I wear it once in a while. And this was Helen, 23 when I went in. And when I was at Hunter college getting my training. And this is the young lady when I came out.

INT: And How old were you then?

No, this is a little later, I had gone to Europe on my G.I. Bill. And I met a young man. He wanted a picture of me so I had my picture taken. And this is how I look now. Is that enough?