

**Grace J Roznowski  
Veteran**

**Kenneth Hunter  
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Interviewers**

**Interviewed on April 18, 2005  
Stratton VA Medical Center  
Albany, New York**

**June Hunter:** This is Grace Roznowski of Albany, New York, who served in the US Navy as a nurse from 1943 through 1946. This interview is taking place April 18, 2005 at the Stratton VA Medical Center at Albany, New York, at 2:00 p.m. This interview is being conducted by Kenneth and June Hunter. Please tell us your full name and when and where you were born.

**Grace Roznowski:** My name is Grace Roznowski. I was born in Syracuse, New York, and I entered the service from there after graduating from Saint Joe's Hospital School of Nursing [St. Joseph's College of Nursing]. I graduated in September and joined the service in April of 1943. I went to Sampson Training Center, which was a boot camp, and we had very little as far as training. We did have to march, but that didn't last very long, and we really just carried on our nursing duties.

**JH:** Why did you enlist?

**GR:** I had met a friend who had joined the Navy, and the things she told me appealed to me. I knew I was going to join the service, and that was the reason that I did.

**JH:** Once you enlisted, you said you went to Sampson. What was it like there? What did you go through? Any special duties?

**GR:** There were no permanent buildings there; they really were just wooden buildings. Very long halls. I was trying to think of the diseases on the floors that I worked, was mostly what we called "Cat Fever", which is probably what we say is Flu now.

Our duties were very simple. The biggest thing we had to do, really, was to assign the corpsmen. Make sure that they did their work, and then prepare on Fridays to have inspection. We practically worked all week to get ready for Friday's inspection.

When I was at Sampson, I mostly stayed on the same ward all the time I was there. It was mostly young men who came down with these flu-like symptoms, and didn't stay very long; we had turnover very rapidly. We just had to make sure everybody did what they were supposed to do.

I was there a year before my next assignment. They never told us where we were going. We took a train, cross-country, to San Francisco. Then we got on a ship, and again, they would not tell us where we were going. We really, really never knew where we were going. We didn't know we were going across the Pacific until we landed at Pearl Harbor. Of course, it was well past 1941 by then. We were taken to a large hospital called Aiea. It had formerly been a sugar cane patch. It was rather a permanent hospital. The nurses that I was closest to at Sampson all went, so all our friends were with us when we went, and no one was assigned anywhere else. My roommate went with me. There were three of us assigned to a room at Sampson, and one of my roommates contracted scarlet fever, and as a result had a heart complication, so she didn't go with us, but the other one did.

We were there seventeen months, and of course the duty was.... When you saw the young men come back, that was the hard part. I can remember Anderson; why I can remember this young man, I don't know. He had lost the lower part of his arm, and this young man couldn't have been more than eighteen. And then we had Cutler, who had been severely burned. Those are the two that stand out in my mind. The corpsmen are the ones I remember the most, and I guess I just regret not having kept up with them because they were young and they were excellent workers. Other than when you saw the young men coming back and seeing how their lives were going to be changed forever, the duty was not hard.

The worst thing was when some of my classmates from St. Joseph's came through and stopped at the hospital to see us, and had been in the Army, when they saw how we were living. We were so depressed when they left

because they kept saying, “Oh my goodness you have all these facilities,” and they apparently had had very, very bad duty. It took us a couple of days to get over that one, and we were glad to have them go because we felt so bad that we had such great facilities. We had the people from the island doing the cooking, and of course we had the best of food.

We dated a lot because there were few and far between women. You could go out every single night, which we did *not* do. As I said, the duty was not difficult.

**JH:** So did you have a rather new building that was built for you?

**GR:** Yes! It was brand new, and I thought that would last forever and that they would use it. I met a woman, an aide; I must have asked her where she was from and she said the island of Oahu, and I told her I spent time there at the hospital up on the hill, Aiea. She said it was long gone, and I said, “I thought it was permanent!” [Laughs] But I guess, permanent to me was not permanent to everybody else. It was a huge hospital and very well built. I remember we had Admiral Nimitz came, and in fact I have a picture of when he came to the hospital.

After that, you could pick where you wanted to go, and it didn't mean that you were going to get that. I don't know why we picked Chelsea, I don't have the slightest idea, but my roommate and I picked Chelsea, Massachusetts. We went there in the winter, and after Oahu, I want to tell you it was a rude awakening. It was a very old hospital, and very depressing. The wards were very dark, very old.

**JH:** Did you find that affected the patients? In Hawaii they have beautiful weather, and do you feel that the troops recovered better with that type of climate?

**GR:** Oh I think so, yes. I know it affected us. Our problem was we had just come back from such good duty. My roommate and I decided after six months that we really did not want to stay in any longer. We decided three years was enough, and both of us got out.

**JH:** Now in Chelsea, what type of patient problems did they have there?

Was it still a variety?

**GR:** Yes, it was still a variety. Again, they'd come back from several places, and this was just getting them on the road to recovery, and then they would be discharged to home.

**KH:** How big of a patient load did you have while you were stationed there?

**GR:** In Chelsea? Oh it was huge! I just remember that the wards were very, very large. Beds close together. They've taken that down, and now they've turned that into luxury apartments. I just remember that it was so depressing to both of us, and I thought how did we ever choose Chelsea out of all the places in the world we could have chosen? We should have looked into that a little better I think. But, I think we were ready to get out anyway, and that was the main reason, that we found it very depressing. Someone that we had met, a Naval officer, looked us up at Chelsea. How he ever found us, I don't know, but he looked us up and came to see us, which was kind of a joy. I kept in touch with two of my roommates, and they both ended up in Massena, New York, which was really strange. One of them, who was probably my closest friend, just died last month. Now I just have one I keep in touch with, and she's in Massena, New York.

**KH:** When you were stationed in Hawaii, on the island of Oahu, did you have any opportunity to go around and see the damage caused by the Japanese raid?

**GR:** No, we didn't. Isn't that strange? I'm surprised that we didn't. When you look back you think isn't it strange that we didn't? I know we went to the Army hospital, Tripler. One of my roommates' friends from Ogdensburg, New York was in the Army, and he was a patient there, so we went to visit him. But we never even thought to go [look at the damage]. I don't think any of us did.

**JH:** How often did you get time off for relaxation and fun?

**GR:** Well, we rotated, like you do at all hospitals. You work days and nights. There was enough staff so that it wasn't that you felt like you didn't have enough time off.

I remember that five of us went to the big island in Hawaii, and we all had time off together, and we hired a cab for the whole week for eighty dollars. He was there at our beck and call. He was a native, and we would get up in the morning, and he would take us all over. When I think back, that you could have a whole week with a cab at your disposal.....

**JH:** What did you find interesting on the big island of Hawaii?

**GR:** Just the beauty of it. It wasn't as...

**JH:** --commercial?

**GR:** When you think of Oahu now...my husband said, "you'd be disappointed if you went back." Which is true, because there were only two hotels, the Mauna Loa, the large, large pink hotel, and the smaller one, that began with an H; I don't remember the name of it. But, you had the whole beach to yourself!

One of the strangest things that happened to us was some sailors came by—well, we didn't know what they were--but they had a sailboat and asked if we'd like to go out with them. We said, "sure we'd love to go out," but what they didn't bother to tell us was that they did not know how to operate a sailboat. We kept getting dunked into the water and the Coast Guard came by and picked us up once, twice, and the third time they came back they said, "We have other things to do; we are not picking you up again." We were out quite a ways, and I started to swim for shore. I tried to tell them on the shore that I don't think I'm going to make it. I kept putting my hand up, and they thought I was waving, so they're waving back. I got such a bad burn that I practically was hospitalized, that's how bad the burn was. I fell on the shore, and asked why nobody came, and they said, "we thought you were waving; we knew you could swim." So I have to tell you I don't like sailboats; I've never been on a sailboat since! [Laughs]

**JH:** Well that was also part of the beauty of being young...

**GR:** Yes, it was!

**JH:** ...to do fun stuff.

**GR:** That was the thing: Hawaii was less commercial. The fact that we had a native with us, our cab driver, who could take us to all the secluded places and to waterfalls, it was memorable, that's for sure!

**KH:** During that period of time, do you recall if they practiced nighttime curfew type things, lights out, wardens going around checking?

**GR:** No, nothing like that. We were free, free, free. All of us felt that we were very, very lucky, and that we were there to serve, but that duty had been more than we'd expected.

**KH:** Did you have a mix of all the services in the hospital there, or was it strictly Navy?

**GR:** I was on orthopedics, and I loved that. Then we had officers, who for whatever reason were going to be going home in a week, three weeks, a month, and they sent us there [to that floor]. I went to the chief nurse one day, and said, "I didn't join the service to be there for [these men]." There was nothing for me to do--they were well! We just had to check them in and check them out, and I told her, "Please put me on another floor; I can't stand this duty!" [Laughs]

I think that's when I went to orthopedics, and then I was on mild [?] surgery for a while.

I hated that duty. Those places were like Quonset huts because they didn't really need much. I was always begging, "Please get me off this; I don't call this duty!" [Laughs]

**KH:** Were you ever at a stage where you had to prepare for special inspections with politicians because of the wartime footing at that time?

**GR:** No, not really. It was just the commander of the base that was there. The strange part was that it wasn't as bad at Aiea as it was at the boot camp. At the boot camp, the places they checked you just couldn't believe that anybody.... When they talk about white-glove inspection, that's what you

got. Friday mornings were an absolute nightmare for us because you never knew what they were going to come up with. We had an older corpsmen called Fetters, who had been in for years and years and years. He smoked constantly; not on the ward. He was as thin as a rail, and if I needed any help I would say, "Fetters, help us out here! What are we supposed to be doing?" I always remember him as being very special. I think the corpsmen to me were the most special. I could count on them for anything, ask them to do anything, never had anybody who didn't do what they were supposed to do.

I can remember this as if it were yesterday: we had a young man who had gone out and either he drank too much or whatever he drank affected him. I don't know what his reaction was to alcohol before he got in service. We couldn't restrain him. He was in the bed, thrashing. I don't know what they were thinking, but someone thought he was going to lacerate his tongue, and they put a towel [in his mouth], and he ripped the towel to pieces. The next morning he was well over it, and the corpsmen made him come up and apologize to me because of what he had put us through. We were frightened to death! We didn't know what to do, we couldn't restrain him, and he was thrashing so we had put sideboards up on the side of the bed. But the next morning, I can remember, they said you just go up and you have to apologize to that nurse for what you put her through. They were always there to protect you.

**JH:** Did you ever find out if it was a reaction to the alcohol or something else?

**GR:** No, we never knew, because by the next morning, he was perfectly fine, and we certainly didn't want to get him into any trouble. So we thought this is a ward thing, and we'll keep it right here. I had never seen anyone react that way to alcohol. I think that even made me more aware that when those corpsmen went out, they got a little warning, "Did you see what happened? You just be careful where you drink and how much you drink, and I don't want the shore patrol bringing you guys back."

A priest wrote me a letter about his brother. He was a corpsman, Bill Reagan, and I don't remember anybody's first name, but I remember his, I don't know why. He never left on liberty without stopping by, even though

he was on our ward, but got transferred; he never went on liberty without stopping by, and saying, "What are your instructions?" [Laughs] I said, "You know my instructions are! You keep out of trouble, no brawls, I don't want you over-drinking." If I was on duty when he came back, he would check in with me, and say, "See, I'm sober." He must've written to his brother, who was older and was a priest, and he wrote me and said, "Thank you very much for taking care of Bill." He must've known what Bill was like. Bill could not have been more than eighteen, tops. He had a beautiful Irish face.

**KH:** You had mentioned the value of the corpsmen. What kind of training did they get? How long would they stay there? Were they on rotating shifts with you?

**GR:** For all seventeen months, those boys were with us. I remember Climaldi, why would I remember his name? I had him at Sampson, and he came through, and for some reason, whether he had a feeling that he wasn't coming back, he was frightened to death. That young man was frightened to death that he wasn't going to come back. How do you console someone like that? But they stayed with us.

They had crafts you could do if you were off duty and wanted to do them. And I still have this vase and it's about this tall (gestures over a foot tall) and it's made with lauhala leaves, and it's woven, and it's beautiful. I still use it to this day; in the Spring I put pussywillows and forsythia in it. I still have that and I made that probably in 1945. When I was having trouble weaving the lauhala leaves, one of the corpsmen came over and saw I was having trouble, so he helped me finish it. [Laughs]

**JH:** So did you train these corpsmen?

**GR:** No, Virginia Cavanaugh, I think, trained corpsmen, and she was in the Navy. The strange part is, we went out to look at Delmar Place, it's a new assisted living [facility], and we had a tour. As we were walking out, my husband saw her name on a nameplate on one of the apartments, and asked me, "Did't you know a Virginia Cavanaugh?" The only reason I knew her is the *Times Union* did an article on Navy nurses, and she came to our apartment, and we were interviewed, and one of the things she did was she



taught corpsmen. She wasn't there so we didn't get to see her. They [corpsmen] were well trained when they came to us. We never had a slacker, never had anyone that I had difficulty with. They were there to help those poor nurses.

**KH:** There are many people today who think that the military was paid well. Can you remember how much you got paid in those days, and did you have to buy your own nursing uniforms?

**GR:** No, they provided everything for us. We had summer whites and navy blues. You'd think I would have saved them, but I have cousins in Italy, and under the Marshall Plan when you were able to send packages, I took the braid off and sent all my suits and coats and everything to them. They made them into serviceable clothing for themselves. I never saved a thing. At least they were useful to other people.

As far as money, I don't remember how much we made, but I think it was certainly comparable to what we would have made in civilian life. The most positive thing was when I came home I realized I could go to university under the GI Bill. I don't think I would ever have gone to college if it hadn't been for the GI Bill. I know I never would have gone to college. I was grateful for that.

**KH:** What was the quality of the doctors and the staff that they had there, and what kind of specialties did you come into contact with?

**GR:** One physician we had I thought was fairly old to be in the service, but he was very gentle, and he didn't have a specialty, but I do remember on the orthopedic floor that man was an orthopedist. There were two physicians, and one of them had been a professional team physician, but I don't know what team it was. I just remember that was what they said about him, a physician for a professional team. He was outstanding; he was very good at what he did on the orthopedic floor. Those were the two specialties that we had.

**KH:** When you left Sampson to get over to Hawaii, what means of transportation did you have?

**GR:** Train.

**KH:** And then by ship or by plane?

**GR:** Ship.

**KH:** What was your reaction to the trip over on the ship?

**GR:** Well, thank God we had a very, very smooth trip! [Laughs] I can remember one night, I don't know what made us think we could sing, but a group of us got together and entertained the boys on the ship with songs. When I think of it, I think, "My God, weren't you the bold ones!" I felt the food was good. I think the thing that bothered us the most was that we didn't know where we were going. They wouldn't tell us at Sampson, and the captain of the ship wouldn't tell us where we were going.

**JH:** Do you think there was a reason for that?

**GR:** I don't know. I really don't know why they didn't tell us. So until we landed, we had no idea where we were going.

**JH:** Were you relieved when it was Hawaii?

**GR:** I think so. Yeah, please! [Laughs] There was one, Goldberg I think was her name, but we called her Goldie, when they asked for volunteers to go to Guam, and she went. We never heard from her after that. We were always proud of her, that she went. Our little group, we so enjoyed ourselves and enjoyed being together that that was the last thing we wanted to do, go to Guam.

**KH:** When you went over by ship, were you in a convoy or did you proceed solo?

**GR:** No, by ourselves.

**KH:** Was it kind of scary doing that without any protection?

**GR:** You know, sometimes you're such a fool, you don't even think of things

like that. We just knew that we were going someplace that we didn't know. We were so concerned about where we were going.

**JH:** So then when you left to go to Chelsea, Massachusetts, how did you go then?

**GR:** We came back by train.

**JH:** And you went by ship from Hawaii?

**GR:** Yes, and landed in San Francisco, and took the train home. Then we had a month of leave. Between our month of leave and reporting to Chelsea, my roommate got pneumonia, and I had to stay with her. They told me to go on to Chelsea while she was still recuperating, and that she would come later. And she did.

**KH:** What kind of patient mix did you have at the Chelsea Hospital? Was it a lot of casualties from Europe?

**GR:** That ward was so large that there were several nurses, and all I had to do was assign the corpsmen. That was my duty. The corpsmen did the daily care, the nurses did the dressings, and I did the assigning, which of course can also be very boring. [Laughs] This huge ward, and your main duty is to assign the corpsmen! Again, [the patients] were just recuperating, waiting to be discharged.

**JH:** So they were in better shape?

**GR:** Yes, oh certainly! Much better shape.

**JH:** What did you do when you had time off in Chelsea? Did you get the time off like you did in Hawaii or not?

**GR:** No, not really, because it was winter. So you were kind of restricted, and you know how you can't get out. I think we went to the movies; we went to the landmarks of Boston, but that was it. The six months went by fairly fast. It was getting oriented to the hospital, and using your time off to try to forget about how dismal everything was. [Laughs]

**KH:** In your recollections, do you ever think back of what it was like in those days when you had to rely on rationing and the shortage of things? Did you notice it in the Chelsea area?

**GR:** I didn't. See when you were in the service, it was almost like you had the best, and everybody at home was giving up, giving up, giving up. You know, when everyone else couldn't have nylons...we didn't have that difficulty. We never had to be concerned about food. The food was always there. That's probably because we were stationed at permanent places. It wasn't like the Army, where you were under attack. When I see reruns of M\*A\*S\*H\* I think, "My goodness, that certainly could've been like World War II." People going through that. It was not an unpleasant experience in any way at all. I'm glad I went. I'm glad I had the experience that I had.

**KH:** When you had those moments when you were able to go to Boston and elsewhere, what was the general feeling of the people towards you being in the military? Were they friendly?

**GR:** Oh very! Oh my goodness, they couldn't do enough for you! I always felt that when you were in uniform...it wasn't like Vietnam. You really were given special attention, and I never experienced anything where I didn't think people appreciated what you were doing.

**JH:** Did you get a chance to see any special shows or anything like that?

**KH:** Like USO?

**JH:** Or entertainment like that?

**GR:** No, isn't that funny? I don't know why we didn't.

**JH:** They didn't come to the hospitals or anything?

**GR:** They didn't come to the hospital, no.

**JH:** Now, most of your people in Hawaii also were in fairly good condition, waiting to go home, as well?

**GR:** Fairly good. I think the adjustment was realizing, you know, like Anderson who lost a limb. I don't know how many surgeries Cutler was going to have to have because of the burns. An interesting thing, I can remember I was on night duty, and that's when you gave penicillin every four hours, and—again, why I remember these names, I'll never know—but we had two Navy flyers, Chase and Daniels. I went in one night, and they said, “Oh, come on! Sit down and talk to us, now that you woke us up!” As we were talking they asked where I was from, and I said, “I'm really from Solvay, New York, which is a suburb of Syracuse.” And Daniels said to me, “Wait a minute! What year did you graduate?” I told him 1938, and he said, “Did you know Clara Leech?” and I said, “My God, she was in my class!” I don't know where he had gone to school, but he wouldn't have gone to school with her. We didn't have any school reunions until our 50<sup>th</sup>. When I went, I went up to Clara and told her I met Daniels, and she told me he never came back. He recouped, and he was sent back out, and he never came back. She said he took her to the senior prom and that she was the only one without a corsage because he didn't realize he was supposed to give her one! [Laughs]

**KH:** You mentioned the opportunity to take up the GI Bill when you came out. What did you pursue in your studies, and where did you go?

**GR:** I went to Syracuse University, and went on in nursing, got my BS in Nursing.

**JH:** And you also got a masters degree too?

**GR:** Yes, from Russell Sage in Troy.

**JH:** How did the experience affect you, through your life? Did you continue on into nursing?

**GR:** You just felt you were given an opportunity, and you took advantage of it. I just feel that the government was there for us when we got out. You served, and here, we're going to give you... plus paying for your tuition and your books, they gave you \$75 a month. We lived at home, so that was not a problem. That's how I met my husband. We both took the same city bus to

go to Syracuse University, and that's how I met him. We both took advantage of the GI Bill, and we're grateful for that.

**KH:** Did you do any reserve time after you came out of the service? And how did they discharge you?

**GR:** I was discharged in Brooklyn; I'll never forget that. I was to serve in the Korean War and I was pregnant at the time. So I had to go to the obstetrician and have her fill out the form to say yes, this lady is pregnant and she can't serve. So I guess that was a stroke of luck in a way.

**JH:** In Brooklyn--you said you'd never forget that?

**GR:** It was sad in a way, here you'd been in the service for three years, and now you were going to have to face a different world. Now you're going to have to get yourself a wardrobe, which you didn't have to ever think of before. It was a little bit of an adjustment, not much. And then we were going to school. That was the largest enrollment they ever had at Syracuse University because of all the veterans coming back, and they've never surpassed that.

**JH:** What year...?

**GR:** I graduated in 1950.

**JH:** Do you remember what the enrollment was at that time?

**GR:** No. My husband would know, though, because he's good at that kind of stuff.

**JH:** Do you remember what some of the things cost? Did Marshall Street exist then?

**GR:** Oh yes, it did!

**JH:** Tell people what Marshall Street was like.

**GR:** I know there was one little restaurant that was known for the fact that

you got brownies with ice cream on top; it was known for that dessert. And then The Orange where you went to do a little drinking. But see, because we lived home, we really were only on Marshall Street...to get the bus and go home and come back. Very few of the veterans lived on campus. First of all, they didn't have dorms for everybody.

**KH:** Did the Skytop Housing exist when you were there?

**GR:** No, that was after.

**KH:** Because they had a lot of GIs that were housed up in that area later.

**GR:** We had a couple that, the wife was in nursing and the husband was in medical school. They both had been in the service, and they lived in a Quonset hut that they got for the married students. Housing was very tight, and you were grateful that you were able to stay home.

**KH:** How did you adjust to the life on the campus? What was it like for you, having come out of the military with a stricter regimen?

**GR:** I think because nursing was off [campus]—it was done by the veterans' hospital really—we took English on campus and probably history on campus, but the nursing classes were all away. You were only there for certain things, and you were so busy studying and getting papers in that you didn't have time to worry about.... And everyone was in the same boat you were because they were veterans too and they wanted to hurry up and get it done and get out in the real world.

**JH:** Did you find that it was easy to get back into the learning mode?

**GR:** Yes, I didn't have any trouble with that at all. I really enjoyed it. We were eager, we were so glad that we were getting this paid for.

**JH:** Did you have to spend a lot of time studying?

**GR:** Well papers were due every time you turned around, or they had bibliographies as long as your arm, and you had to get reading done and you had to get those papers in.

**JH:** At the same time you were running a household?

**GR:** No, no I wasn't married then. I didn't get married until after I graduated. I graduated in May and got married in August.

**KH:** What was the quality of the professors like? Were they friendly towards those of you who had returned from the service?

**GR:** I found that so. Of course in nursing, you always have very caring people anyway, so that the nursing part of it was fine. I remember one young English professor—I never thought I would ever do this, but I transferred out of his class. I just didn't like his attitude. I thought I'd written a very good paper and received a C--I'd never received a C in my life. I thought, I don't think I'm going to do very well under him. Then I transferred to an English class that had a gal [professor] and did very well.

**JH:** So then, after Syracuse University you must have moved to the Albany area?

**GR:** No. My husband was in geography and his professor was becoming a chairman at the University of Illinois. And he said to any of the young men "If you want to come"—and a lot of them were married—"I'll give you fellowships." So we went to Urbana-Champaign and stayed there for two years.

**JH:** And what brought you back east again?

**GR:** My husband thought State work appealed to him, and that's why we came to Albany because he got a job with the Department of Commerce.

**JH:** And he retired from there?

**GR:** Yes.

**JH:** And you went on to Russell Sage. Did you work in this area?

**GR:** Visiting nurses. I was with them for 17 years.



**JH:** How did you like the visiting nursing as opposed to working in a hospital?

**GR:** I loved it. I absolutely knew that was my cup of tea. I loved it. I can remember when we started on Lark Street, the whole agency had two cars. You walked your beat. You absolutely walked your beat. The director said, the State is offering a three-week course in Rochester if you want to go into supervision. And I came home to my husband and I said, “You know, I’d like to pay for this, because if I don’t like supervision, it they’ve paid for it I can’t say I don’t want to go on.” So I said to the director. “I’d like to do it. It’s \$300, and if I don’t like it I don’t want to continue.” But I loved it, absolutely loved supervision. I never thought I’d like it, but I loved it, I really did. And I still volunteer with the visiting nurses. I have volunteered longer than I worked with them, and they’re very good to me. I wish I’d worn my charm bracelet because they just gave me a charm for my forty years. They figured out how much I’d worked and how much I worked as a volunteer, and it added up to forty years.

**JH:** What do you do as a volunteer?

**GR:** I file. When I retired I decided I was going to volunteer and help the person that had the worst job in the agency, and that was the file clerk. So I file. I’m sure you know the amount of paperwork is beyond, beyond, beyond, it really is. I can’t believe how they can do any nursing whatsoever when you have a 32 page admission form.

**JH:** The computer has not—?

**GR:** No, they don’t have computers. I’ve heard some agencies do, but they don’t. I’m filing mountains of paperwork.

**JH:** At least you can find it.

**GR:** Yes, that’s right. [Laughs]

**JH:** And you can’t worry about the electricity going off!

**GR:** Yes, that's right, that's right.

**KH:** Looking back at your years of employment in the private sector and the military, any regrets? Any special things that stand out?

**GR:** None. None whatsoever. I think we were blessed, because we had good duty, and I was able to get into that part of nursing that I loved. To me, there was nothing like home care. When you were going into people's homes, you had to adapt to that house. And there were some adaptations! Into certain homes, you did not take your nursing bag. You took the things out that you needed--soap, washcloth, paper towels, newspaper--because at that time we had to fold the newspaper so that it made a little bag, and then you put [waste items in] and throw it away. And even in the winter you did not take your coat in because of the fact that you could pick up live things. When I think of it now.... I mean, boards you had to hop over because there was a hole in the boards. Only once did I say "I'm sorry, I cannot do care in this house" because the sink was filled with dirty dishes that you could hardly find a place to turn the faucet on.

**JH:** And that's here in the United States.....

**GR:** The vermin... And there were two young people there who were old enough to take care of it. I said, "If you clean this place up I will come back and give your mother a bath, but there is no way in this world that I can give any kind of care with the place the way it is."

**JH:** That would almost be parent abuse.

**GR:** Yes. I said, "I'm sorry, I can't," but that's the only time in all those years I ever did that. But it was intolerable, it was.... there were things running all over the place.

**JH:** But you had to draw the line.

**GR:** Yes, I did. Because I felt, it would have been different if this patient had been by herself, or had an elderly husband – any of those things I could have handled it. And it was before we had home health aides, and if we had home health aides maybe that could have helped. But I felt those young

people had a responsibility to that mother. The reason why... there were mountains of dishes in that sink, and you could hardly find a place to wash your hands.

**KH:** Have you ever participated in any kind of military fellowship association such as the VFW, American Legion, the Nurses' Association?

**GR:** In Syracuse I was in the American Legion. It was very active before I was married. I think I did it when I started college, and then, because you got so busy in college it kind of went by the wayside. But it was a very active group.

**KH:** Did they treat you like an equal? Or did they want you to do auxiliary work? Today, if a person has served in the military, they're an equal member, just like in a civic organization like the Elks, women have the same opportunities.

**GR:** No. In the group we were all on equal standing, I felt. It was a good group.

**KH:** Have you had any relationships working with the hospitals other than civilian, say the veterans' hospital in Syracuse or in Albany?

**GR:** No, I stayed in home care all the time. But the reason why I decided to come and be part of the day program was the fact that I think Stephanie had an article in the paper that said, "come and visit a veteran." And I thought, My God, why don't I just go? And I love doing the day program, they're kind of fun to be with.

**JH:** Tell us what the day program is.

**KH:** That's here at the Stratton VA Hospital here in Albany.

**GR:** The day program is for veterans who for the most part are well, but who enjoy having someplace to go. I think they can come five days a week if they want to. The two women I talked to, Donna and Harriet, Donna comes three times a week, and Harriet comes less. But I think it's someplace for them to go, and they have activities for them, and on Friday

they look forward to the chaplain coming, so they meet with the chaplain. Or if the chaplain doesn't come, the deacon comes. I think it fills their days, I really do. Most of them--there's only one that I see is on oxygen—but most of them are pretty able-bodied.

**JH:** I know they're happy to have people like you to help. It sounds you have had a really wonderful life that you can be very thankful for, and we appreciate your giving us your time. Thank you.

**GR:** You're welcome.