



THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA



MEMORANDUM FOR UNITED STATES DoD FLIGHT NURSES

SUBJECT: Letter of Appreciation

You, the flight nurses who served during World War II, carved a unique role in history. You met the challenges with skill and determination and served as role models for future nurses. Advances in aeromedical evacuation have greatly improved the timely delivery of quality health care. Be it evacuation of the wounded from the battlefield, or humanitarian airlift of civilian and military personnel, the flight nurse has continued to play a vital role in worldwide aeromedical evacuation.

On the occasion of the 45th year of flight nursing, I am pleased and proud to salute you, the flight nurses of the Army, Navy and Air Force Nurse Corps' for your bravery and expertise. And, on behalf of the men and women of the United States of America, I thank you for your dedicated service and devotion to duty.

Congratulations and best wishes.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Paul C. Carter".

THE UNITED STATES ARMY AIR CORPS (USAAF) INSIGNIA COLLECTORS AND STUDY GROUP

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ARMY AIR FORCES SCHOOL OF AIR EVACUATION



One of the least known and little publicized organizations of World War Two was the Army Air Forces School of Air Evacuation. Established at Bowman Field, Kentucky in December 1942, the mission was to train flight nurses and enlisted medical technicians to care for the sick and wounded being air evacuated from the battle areas to larger hospitals in the European and Pacific theaters as well as to the Continental United States. The first class graduated on 18 February 1943, the first such class that would eventually train roughly 1300 Flight Nurses and many enlisted technicians. The school was relocated to Gunter Field, Alabama, to Randolph Field and finally to Brooks Field, Texas. The school was among the assets transferred to United States Air Force control on 26 July 1947 by the National Security Act of 1947.

A total of 18 Medical Air Evacuation squadrons served overseas with campaign credits and/or unit citations as follows:

801st Squadron - Bismarck Archipelago; Leyte, Luzon, New Guinea, Northern Solomons, Southern Philippines and Western Pacific (ground). Received the Philippine Presidential unit citation for the period 17 October 1944 - 4 July 1945, GO 47-50.

802nd Squadron - Naples-Foggia; Northern Appennines; Po Valley, Rome-Arno; Sicily; Southern France and Tunisia (ground). Received Meritorious Unit Citation for the period 12 March 1943 - 15 May 1945, GO 147, Hq, 12th Air Force, 3 July 1945.

803rd Squadron - China Defensive; India - Burma

804th Squadron - Bismarck Archipelago; Leyte, Luzon, New Guinea; Western Pacific (ground). Received Meritorious Unit Citation for the period 2 Jan - 25 June

1945, GO 1813, Hq, Far East Air Forces, 15 August 1945. Received Philippine Presidential Unit citation for the period 17 October 1944 - 4 July 1945, GO 47-50.

806th Squadron - Central Europe, Normandy, Northern France; Rhineland

807th Squadron - Naples-Foggia; Northern Appennines; Po Valley, Rome-Arno; Southern France. Received Meritorious Unit Citation for the period 6 October 1943 - 15 May 1945, GO 147, Hq, 12th Air Force, 3 July 1945.

810th, 814th and 815th Squadrons - Ardennes-Alsace; Normandy; Northern France; Rhineland.

811th and 813th Squadrons - Ardennes-Alsace; Central Europe; Normandy, Northern France; Rhineland.

816th, 817th and 818th Squadrons - Ardennes-Alsace; Central Europe; Normandy; Rhineland.

819th Squadron - Central Europe; Normandy; Rhineland.

820th Squadron - Leyte; New Guinea; Western Pacific (ground). Received Philippine Presidential Unit Citation for the period 17 October 1944 - 4 July 1945, GO 47-50.

821st Squadron - Central Burma (A, B and D flights, Hq, only); China Offensive (C flight only); India - Burma.

830th Squadron - From all indications this squadron was engaged in long range evacuations and is not credited with any one campaign. Received Meritorious Unit Citation for the period 1 May - 30 June 1945, GO 26, Hq, Air Transport Command, 10 October 1945.

Those of you who had occasion to serve in or be air evacuated from Southeast Asia may be familiar with the insignia of the 9th Air Medical Evacuation Squadron, USAF. While not presently in hand I understand that the beer can type of insignia worn by the members of this unit is practically the same as that once worn by the 801st Medical Air Evacuation Squadron. The latter is a redesignation of the war-time 801st. However the device was modified slightly in that the uniforms worn by Donald Duck and his nephews has been changed from olive drab to jungle green. Donald wears an old style aviator's helmet and Dewey wears a green beret. Depicted on the insignia is Donald with feet raised in air while the three nephews strain to carry he and the litter, all superimposed on a silver colored cloud (original was in white), all on a blue disk with red border.

DISTINCTIVE BADGE

On a dark blue disc two honey bees or and sable, wings argent and bearing stars thereon, carrying a brown litter, all in front of a cloud argent.

Symbolism;

Blue and gold are the Air Corps colors. The honey bees, helmeted and wearing red cross armbands are indicative of the industry displayed by personnel of the organization. The litter is symbolic of evacuation of the sick and wounded, the cloud indicative of the area in which the mission was carried out.

The insignia was designed by Mrs. Don Rider (nee: Carter) of Buechel, Kentucky who was greatly impressed by the work of the Air Evacuation students during the floods in Louisville in 1942. This information came from the Bowman Army Air Field publication "The Falcon" and was furnished by Mrs. Edith Geresale, a former member of the 815th Squadron who recalls the badge being painted on her war-time flight jacket. Mrs. Geresale resides in Satellite Beach, Florida, and is also a member of the World War II Flight Nurses Association.

463 Port Royal Boulevard
Satellite Beach FL 32937
22 June 1988

U.S. Postal Service
Citizen's Stamp Advisory Committee, Room 5800
475 L'Enfant Plaza West, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20260-6352

Subject: Support for suggestion of Eulalia S. Parent regarding commemorative stamp for "military nurses".

The suggestion was presented to those members of World War II Flight Nurses Association who were assembled for a meeting during their reunion in San Antonio, Texas, on May 6, 1988. They were eager to sign a petition to request that a stamp be issued commemorating the role of Flight Nurses. Ms. Parent will be sending that petition on to you soon.

I think I can speak for the nearly 500 former Flight Nurses on our roll who served during World War II in urging that the stamp be issued on the anniversary of the graduation of the first class of flight nurses from the School of Air Evacuation at Bowman Field, Louisville, Kentucky, on February 18, 1943. A few were sent out earlier to perform air evacuation duties and later returned for the formal training.

In Friends (of the USAF Museum, Dayton, Ohio) Bulletin, vol.11,no.1, Spring, 1988, an article by Charles W. Arrington, "Historic Bowman Field, page 14, reads: "This school was the only one the AAF had and had the responsibility of training flight surgeons, medical technicians, and flight nurses. Those attending the school learned how to work in a war zone (the first U.S. military women to be assigned to war zone duty) to treat and evacuate the wounded by air. The curriculum offered nurses more than a dozen different courses, ranging from aircraft identification to oxygen indoctrination. They were taught how to administer emergency medical treatment, classify patients, and load (them) on planes, and treat them in the air. Although medicine and saving lives were their primary goals, flight nurses who would later be in the front lines of the combat zone were also taught how to defend themselves by learning hand-to-hand combat, plus being able to handle and operate firearms." The course, which included classroom instruction, drill field, and bivouac, lasted 6 weeks, extended, in some classes, for additional training.

Quoting from the official program published at the First Anniversary, AAF School of Air Evacuation, Bowman Field, Kentucky, First Troop Carrier Command, Wednesday, 6 October 1943: "100,00 Sick and Wounded Successfully Evacuated By Air Since Pearl Harbor! In the recent Sicilian campaign 15,000 American casualties were evacuated to hospitals far behind the front lines in a period of three weeks.....The unit was organized as the 349th Air Evacuation Group, activated 6 October 1942, Bowman Field, Kentucky.....On February 18, 1943, the first class of Flight Nurses marched from the base chapel after graduating from their specialized course of medical training....October 6, 1943, is celebrated as organization day and as the first anniversary of Air Evacuation".

"Between June 1943 and October 1944, the school at Bowman Field trained... 1079 nurses.... for air evacuation duty....Between October 1944...and September 1945 252 flight nurses..... received training at the School of Aviation Medicine at Randolph Field, Texas", quoting from "Flight Nursing", Air University, USAF School of Aviation Medicine, Gunter Air Force Base, Alabama, where the training school was moved in October 1950. It is presently located at Brooks AFB, San Antonio, Texas.

Sixteen flight nurses lost their lives on duty during WWII. The first casualty was the loss of Second Lieutenant Ruth M. Gardiner on 27 July 1943. Gardiner General Hospital, Chicago, Illinois, was named for her.

One flight nurse in the ETO, Second Lieutenant Reba Whittle, was taken prisoner by the Germans after her plane was shot down. She passed away in 1981, a victim of cancer.

Thirteen nurses of the 807th squadron, stationed in Italy, were assisted by underground after their plane had been downed and avoided capture in Albania in 1943. Because C47 cargo planes were converted for air ambulance use after supplies of materiel were carried from England to the combat zone, the Germans refused to grant the flight nurses the protection afforded by the Geneva Convention rules. They considered them to be crew members of hostile aircraft.

We hope that you will consider honoring World War II Flight Nurses by recommending the issuance of their stamp.

Very truly yours,

Mrs. Anthony G. Cerasale, Chairman
World War II Flight Nurses Assoc.



There has been a mountain of correspondence from all over the world. 'Wish I could share all of it with you. This one, from Leon Croulebois, of Paris, France, is so beautiful, I want you all to be able to appreciate it:

LÉON CROULEBOIS

41, Rue Brancien
75015 PARIS (FRANCE)

Paris February 29 1988

Dear Madame

I see on Air Force Magazine - the last issue -
the date of your big reunion the Mar 5-7 1988 at the
Saint Anthony Hotel in San Antonio Texas. In first, I
hope explain to you my respect and my Profund Admiration for
your courage and courage over the courage of the most
courageous Soldier but it necessary real courage for, during
one battle, go on the battlefield only with his hands....
never weapon, all of this woman poses only on the
battlefield his hands and in... his hearth!!! many
woundeds, I am sure not oblivion, your help. If necessary
you proud, and United States is also necessary is proud.
Next, many of Nurses Military write the Military medical
Story with his blood, many of your comrades is injured
and dead near the wounded Soldiers in the field and at
this moment the hero's bloods is miscellany for ever.

If during your big reunion, is one great foster
I hope all of this wonderful women sign on and is great
honor for me when I receive for my historical documentation
To Jay I write to Lillian Kell, is necessary you
write your general Unit histories 39-45, Korea and Vietnam
in memory of all of your comrades dead in combat for the
life.

God bless and protect you always and for ever.
Your French Friend

P.S. Excuse this bad language... excuse me, I hope you
understand but I wrote with my point hearth!!! God bless
all women at your reunion

FLYING NURSES

A father's tribute to his daughter.*

With reverence, we honor you,
 the flying nurses' corps
 As you soar on wings to the magic realm
 of sacrifice in war.
 With interest keen and bated breath
 we watch this venture new
 Allotted to you, qualified, of whom
 there are but few.
 Who leave your base of quiet
 far removed from battle front
 To fly through hell and carnage
 your casualties to hunt.
 From the shadow of the reaper
 to retrieve the wounded cases
 Tuck them in the plane - to nurse them
 and fly to safety bases.
 Midst sweat and blood and cannon's roar
 and war'-s terrific din
 With nerves of steel and hearts of gold
 is where you enter in.
 To stem the dread infections - transfuse
 if needs must be
 To calm the nerves and rest the soul
 and save the casualty.
 Your mission may be deserts
 or tropic jungles we are told
 Or maybe in the Arctic to brave
 the bitter cold.
 In any clime, tho dark the day
 as your planes land one by one
 To the wounded men who need your care
 you will each be rays of sun.
 A hundred years have passed since eighteen
 hundred twenty-one.
 Nursing instituted then - has greater
 valor won.
 "Angel of Mercy" she was named -
 Miss Florence Nightingale.
 Her dream come true - her proteges
 have wings in all detail.
 As your allegiance oath is carried out
 in the duties you perform
 In song and story, may they sing your glory
 with respect to your uniform.
 Each night as old Sol goes to rest
 with his head on a pillow of fleece
 As we pray for the boys and girls at war
 let us fervently pray for peace.

* J.F. Weisner, father of Phyllis Weisner Choura, 808th
 at her commencement and for all members of the FLYING NURSES.
 February 1943.



WHO KNOWS THESE TWO FLIGHT NURSES ????

The photo is in the Archives of the
440th Troop Carrier Group Association.
It was taken in either 1944 or 1945
somewhere in England or France.

If you know, send names and addresses to:
Donald N. Grcatt, 440th Troop Carrier Gp. Assoc.,
551 South Concord St., Seattle, WA 98109.
(Let A. Fisherty, as editor of newsletter
know also).







Air Evac

"Chief" Grogan

"Teach" Stakeman

"Shelly" Underwood

Joe Greber

200,000 Patient

May 1945





