



On the 17th of January 1944, I was a passenger on the "milk-run" flight from Kunming to the eastern US bases in China. I had flown from Assam, India to Kunming about six weeks earlier (2 December 1943) with five fellow flight nurses from the 803rd Medical Air Evac Squadron- the first US nurses to enter China during WWII. Four of us had been assigned singly to different bases, and two had been assigned to Kweilin. The "milk-run" flight would give me a chance to visit several of them. I took along my little dog, Murgatroyd, that I had acquired shortly after my arrival in China. The plane was piloted by a friend, Capt. David Bruckheimer, and his crew consisted of Sgt. England as engineer and Sgt. Berntsen as radio operator. The sky was overcast.

After an hour and a half delay, we were finally airborne and flew to Kweilin, where we dropped off all the passengers, including one of my pals, Smitty (2Lt. Ruth Smith). During lunch in Kweilin, I visited with my friend Blackie (2Lt. Eula Blackburn). We picked up only one passenger, a Capt. Lezar, whom we dropped off at our next stop, Ling Ling. At Ling Ling, we picked up Sgt. Brossman of the 449th Fighter Squadron, who was going to Kunming to be hospitalized for varicose veins. I had hoped to see another one of my colleagues, Margo (2/Lt. Margaret Miller) at Ling Ling. She drove up in a Jeep just before we boarded our plane for take-off, so our visit was very short.

We then flew on to Hengyang, where we stopped for only a few minutes, taking off for Chihkiang about 1600 hours. However, apparently our radio compass was not working as we flew over the station there and Dave was unable to descend through the clouds to land there. We headed back to Kunming— the crew of three, Sgt. Brossman and myself

I sat in the co-pilot seat for awhile and learned about 1800 hours that we were "lost." Dave was flying through some very rough weather, so Sgt. England came up to sit in the right hand seat and I went to sit at the engineer station, where I could listen in on the radio. Sgt. Berntsen, the radio operator, was counting to help Kunming, I believe, to get a "bearing" and I heard that flares were being shot up for us. We all kept our eyes glued to the windows, hoping to see a flare or a break in the clouds. No such luck!

About two and a half-hours later, I heard Dave say on the radio that we had approximately two hours of fuel left. Then Sgt. England came back to say that we would probably have to "bail out", and he helped fit me into a parachute. Up until that time, I had not been really worried but was optimistic that we would get back on course. I thought, what a great story we would have to tell when we got back to Kunming. "We were lost and almost had to bail out— even had our chutes on." I filled the inside

pockets of my flight suit with items from my purse, including a candy bar, a Boy Scout knife, and a Chinese/ American flag (a "blood chit") that Dave had given me. I hung my purse around my neck by its shoulder strap, inside my winter flying jacket. I had tied a scarf around my head and was wearing woolen mittens along with the boots that had been made for me in Nanning the month before. I was warmly dressed.

During the next hour and a half, I went up to the cockpit only once to talk to Dave and wish him luck. I was growing more and more uneasy, so I lay down on the bucket seats and tried to rest. Mostly I prayed--like I never prayed before. My little dog, Murgy, seemed to know that we were in some kind of trouble, for every time I opened my eyes, I could see him sitting on the floor beside me with a pleading, trusting look in his eyes.

At about 2315 hours, Sgts. England and Berntsen came to the rear of the plane and released the door. As long as I live, I will never forget the feeling and the sound of that cold, wild, frightening wind as the door fell away. We were flying above the overcast at about 16,000 ft., so Dave set the plane in a dive, as the autopilot was not working. Then he joined us at the open door. Holding Murgy under one arm, I went out fourth, just before Dave. I could see the three chutes ahead of me open, before we all descended into the overcast. I was unable to pull the ripcord with one hand, so I pulled hard with both hands. In doing so, I lost my hold on Murgy, and he fell into the darkness. The chute opened; but since it had been made for a man, the chest strap struck me across the eyes, resulting in two great "shiners" for the next week. When I reached up to try to adjust the shoulder straps, I dropped the "ring", which I had intended to keep regardless of any obstacle. Now I was not only nauseated (probably from fear and nervousness) and sad over the loss of Murgy, but disgusted because I had lost the "ring". My fear probably stemmed from the fact that I had no idea where I might land—enemy territory, in a river or lake, a tree?

I floated down through the quiet overcast and never saw the ground below me. I just flattened out softly on what turned out to be the top of a mountain. I was so weak and nervous that I could hardly stand up to unclasp the fastenings of the parachute. When I was finally free, I staggered around for a few feet, trying to decide what to do. It was almost midnight and the fog was so thick that I could see only a few feet around me in each direction. I then cut the shroud lines of the chute and wrapped up in the silk, which was damp from the mist. I wondered if the others had landed safely. I was warm enough; but kept shaking from all my fears, which now included insects and wild animals. However, I was thankful I hadn't landed in water. I'm a lousy swimmer. Despite the hard "bed" and all my fears, I slept or dozed that night more than I expected to sleep out on that quiet, dark mountain.

The next morning I crawled out of the silk at daybreak, but still couldn't see much because of the fog and mist. I thought, "I'll never get out of here. Here I am without a scratch on me or a broken bone, but no one will ever know that I survived". Carrying my chute, I started down the mountain, mostly just sliding and, finally, could see a path along a stream that I began to follow. I called out over and over, but no one answered.

After about two hours, I came to several huts. Inside one of them, some people were sitting around a fire and didn't pay much attention to me—even when I showed them the Chinese/American flag with a message written in Chinese. I went outside on the path again and kept calling out; still, no one answered. I went back to the hut, and a couple of

the men signaled for me to follow them, and off we went. They had slung poles over their shoulders with knapsacks attached to the poles. We walked all afternoon, and at some point were joined by a Chinese soldier who accompanied us. That evening we reached a village, Long Sin; and I was put in the care of two doctors at the local public health hospital—Dr. Lo and Dr. Fu. I was shown into a small room with a bed and was fed an evening meal. Dr. Lo knew a little English, but we communicated mostly by pen and scratchpad—since he didn't understand my "Texas" English and I didn't understand his "Chinese" English. He was kind enough to arrange for me to have a large wooden tub of hot water for a most welcome bath. There were phones in the village and I was put in touch with Kweilin and also with Dave, who had walked into another village. He gave me the news that he and the others had landed safely and that word had been sent back to Kunming that we were all safe. I was much relieved to hear that news.

I spent all of the next day at Long Sin, where, with my blond hair, I was something of a celebrity. I was escorted around the village—even to the local school so that the children could see me. Sgt. England was brought into Long Sin at 1500 hours and Dave and the two others arrived about four hours later. The Chinese had guided them all in the same manner I had been.

The following day, we all slept late; and before departing Long Sin, we were fed a huge meal of fried chicken, scrambled eggs, cabbage, pork, and rice. That afternoon we were again escorted by Chinese guides and a Chinese soldier along mountain paths that followed a stream. I did ride a horse part of the time, but was more comfortable walking. The terrain was quite rugged, the weather still overcast, and the clumps and groves of bamboo magnificent. We spent the night in another village.

The final day we were off about 0830 and walked the entire day although I rode the horse now and then. Finally, about 1730 hours we were guided to a road, where a Major Carr picked us up in a Jeep and drove us into the base at Kweilin—a distance of some twenty miles, I think. Civilization, at last! I stayed that night in the nurses' quarters with my flight nurse pals, Smitty, Blackie and Dunc (2/Lt. Ruth Duncan). I shampooed my hair and took the longest shower of my life.

I flew back to Kunming the next afternoon and landed on a beautiful, clear night—the first time I'd seen the sky in days. I returned to my base at Chengkung the following day by jeep.

A few months later while in Calcutta, I had a formal made for me out of the parachute silk. A few years after that, I used the silk for a skirt for another formal. I still have a good section of it today—56+ years later. I also still have my certificate from the Caterpillar Club and my Caterpillar pin. However, in a move somewhere or other over the years, my China Walker CN note, a monetary note signed by others with similar experiences, disappeared.

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Zij vlogen in C-47's in de Zuid-Pacific, Noord-Afrika en Europa; zij werden beschoten door Japanse Zero's; zij brachten uren door in schuttersputten op Guadalcanal; zij toonden inzet, moed en gaven de gewonden aan boord aandacht en hun glimlach werd niet vergeten:

Engelen aan boord



First Lt Dorothy White een Army Nurse uit Detroit neemt even pauze tijdens een evacuatievlucht met 17 soldaten die minder dan 24 uur voordat deze foto werd genomen gewond zijn geraakt. (foto: Sgt Paul Hunter van Mats in het voorjaar van 1944).

Op Bowman Field, Kentucky werd begin 1942 een school opgericht voor opleiding tot Flight Nurses of Flight Technicians. Veel stewardessen van de Amerikaanse burgerluchtvaartmaatschappijen meldden zich aan. Na hun studie werden de Nurses en Medical Technicians ingedeeld in Medical Air Evacuation Squadrons (MAES). Hun taak was het begeleiden en verzorgen van gewonden, die per vliegtuig geëvacueerd zouden worden. Behalve een uit-

Nurse en één Technician maakten samen een team uit voor een C-47, zij moesten toezien op het in- en uitladen van de patiënten en de medische verzorging onderweg. Er werden 31 MAES opgeleid.

Vanuit de haven van New York vertrokken schepen naar Engeland of Afrika. Aan boord van één van de schepen - onderweg naar Engeland - bevond zich een groot aantal verpleegsters. Op de naburige schepen klonk gefluit en geschreeuw! Zonder problemen kwam het konvooi in Schotland aan en ging de reis per trein verder naar hun bestemming in Zuid-Oost Engeland. Hun huisvesting bestond meestal uit een Quonset- of nissenhut, welke samen met andere Nurses gedeeld werd.

Kerstmis 1943 in Albanië

Op 8 november 1943 bevonden zich 13 Flight Nurses and 13 Medical Technicians aan boord van een C-53D (42-68809) van de 314th Troop Carrier Group. Het toestel steeg op in Catania en was - samen met twee andere C-47's - onderweg voor een vlucht van twee uur naar Bari. Kort nadat het toestel was opgestegen, kwam zij in een zware sneeuwstorm terecht. De radio operator van de 809 kreeg geen contact met Bari en uiteindelijk kwam de vijf-koppige bemanning tot de conclusie dat men verdwaald was. De twee andere kisten waren nergens te ontdekken. Na vier uur vliegen, verbeterde het weer. De piloot ontdekte een vliegveld en maakte zich op voor de landing. Opeens werd het toestel beschoten en moest de piloot een noodlanding (wheels up) maken



Dezelfde Dorothy C. White in 1944 op 24 jarige leeftijd

gebrede medische opleiding, werden brancards in- en uitgeladen; zij gingen op bivak en kregen tekst en uitleg over kaart- en kompas lezen. Er werd ook aandacht geschonken aan eventuele landingen op water. De Flight Nurse controleerde de gewondenlijst en keek toe of alle gewonden veilig vastgesnoerd zaten. Een MAES bestond uit 25 Nurses, 5 doktoren, een administrateur en 70 Technicians. Eén Flight



'Staatsieportret' van het 807th Medical Air Evacuation Squadron voor een C-47 op Bowman Field Kentucky in juli 1943.

Op de eerste rij: Gertrude Dawson, Elna Schuwant, Lois Watson, Ann Maskowitz, Lucia Slopen, Lillian Tacina, Mary Smith, Ann Kopeso, Edith Belden, Chamion Villa. Op de 2e rij: Hoofdverpleegster Grace Stakeman, Wilma Lytle, Pauleen Kanable, Agnes Jenzen, Doris Kirkpatrick, Elizabeth Ruminski, Frances Sale, Ava Maness, Helen Corten, Anna Sheldorf, Linnie Saumer, Helen Welch, Frances Nelson, Dorothy White en Eugina Rutkowski,

in een modderig veld. Hij waarschuwde de passagiers voor een ruwe landing. Het toestel werd vervolgens omringd door een aantal gewapende Partizanen en al gauw bleek dat men zich in Albanië bevond. Gelukkig waren deze Partizanen pro-Amerikaans. Er was haast geboden en men ging op weg om een veilige schuilplaats te vinden. De tocht was ruw en koud, het sneeuwde, het vroom en de Nurses waren hier totaal niet op gekleed. Voedsel was schaars. Men trok over moeilijke paden om de Ballista (pro-Duits) te ontwijken. Men trok van dorp tot dorp en samen met de Partizanen vierden zij kerstmis. Op 27 december 1943 trok men verder. Al gauw kwamen de Duitsers hen op het spoor en de groep werd beschoten. Gelukkig kon men op tijd weggelopen, doch de groep raakte wel gesplitst. Drie verpleegsters raakten achter. In de tussentijd was er door de Partizanen contact opgenomen met de Geallieerden en werden Britse commando's in hun nabijheid gedropt. De gehele groep trok naar de kust, waar zij door de Britse marine geëvacueerd werden. Op 9 januari 1944 kwamen zij in Italië aan, de drie achtergebleven verpleegsters werden door de Partizanen naar Italië gesmokkeld waar zij in maart aankwamen. De eerste evacuatievlucht in Normandië vond plaats op D+4. 's Ochtends werden de vliegers op de hoogte gesteld dat er later op de dag een evacuatievlucht gevlogen zou worden. Eerst werden een Flight Nurse en een Technician opgepikt, vervolgens werd de C-47 volgeladen met munitie, voorraden of de bekende jerrycans met benzine om vervolgens door te vliegen naar een pas veroverde landingsstrip nabij de frontlinies. Veelal zaten de Nurses en Technicians boven op de lading. Vaak vlogen er meerdere toestellen op zo'n vlucht. De toestellen

waren niet voorzien van Rode Kruizen en werden door de Duitsers beschoten. Nadat het toestel geland was, werd de oorlogsvracht uitgeladen. De ambulances met de gewonden stonden al te wachten. In de tussentijd werd het toestel voor het vervoer van gewonden in orde gemaakt. De Nurse had de regie. Lopende patiënten namen plaats op de zittingen aan de zijkant van de cabine en/of gingen op de bodem van het toestel zitten. Voor de zwaarder gewonde patiënten en die per brancard vervoerd moesten worden, werd een 'stellage' aangebracht en werden de brancards boven elkaar 'geladen'. Meestal werden er 21 brancards geladen. Zodra de patiënten aan boord waren gebracht, was het team voor het wel en wee van

Een geallieerde soldaat die minder dan 24 uur van te voren werd gewond wordt vanuit een ambulance in een C-47 gedragen. Op de voorgrond copilot First Lt S.P. Taliaferro



de patiënten verantwoordelijk. Soms waren er 28 brancards aan boord (4 boven elkaar). De bemanning had grote bewondering voor de Nurses. Nadat het toestel opgestegen was, onderzochten de Nurses de patiënten. Zij hielden een praatje, verschoonden het verband of gaven de patiënten te drinken. Soms vlogen er twee Nurses mee.

Gevangen genomen

Luitenant Reba Z. Whittle van de 813th MAES werd op 27 september 1944 door de Duitsers gevangen genomen. Zij was aan boord van een C-47 van de 436th Troop Carrier Group. Het toestel werd beschoten en maakte een noodlanding achter de vijandelijke linies. Lt Whittle had tijdens de ruwe landing verwondingen opgelopen. Desondanks hielp zij mee om gewonde bemanningsleden uit het toestel te krijgen. Opeens verschenen er Duitse militairen en werden zij gevangen genomen. De Duitsers keken toch wel naar op dat één van de gevangenen een vrouw was. De gewonden ontvingen eerste hulp en werden vervolgens naar een gevangenkamp (Stalag 9-C) getransporteerd, waar zij afzonderlijk werd ondergebracht. In het kamp waren geen faciliteiten voor vrouwelijke gevangenen. Reba verzorgde geallieerde gewonden. Zij bracht vier maanden in gevangenschap door en vierde kerstmis 1944 in Duitsland. Door tussenkomst van het Rode Kruis werd zij – samen met andere gevangenen – uitgewisseld. Luitenant Whittle was de enige Amerikaanse vrouw, die door de Duitsers gevangen was genomen.



Captain Willie Hammon en zijn crew van het 96th Sqdn TCGp. De Flight Nurse is 1st Lt Betty Cronquist van 816th MAES.

Kerstmis 1944

De Flight Nurses van de 817th MAES vierden kerstmis 1944 samen met een aantal Franse weeskinderen. Er werd een kerstboom neergezet en uiteraard was er ook een kerstman. Na een uitgebreid diner ontvingen de kinderen cadeaus. Eén van de Nurses was 1Lt Christine A. Gasvoda. Zij kwam op 13 april 1945 om het leven, toen haar C-47 bij Paderborn neerstortte. Zij werd – samen met de bemanning – begraven op de tijdelijke Amerikaanse begraafplaats Margraten in plot/rij/grafnummer GG-5-107. Na de oorlog werd zij op Margraten herbegraven en ligt nu begraven in F-19-4.

Eveneens op Margraten ligt begraven 1Lt Wilma 'Dolly' Vinsant (806th MAES). Wilma was op 20 februari 1917 geboren. Haar vader was arts, haar moeder verpleegster. Wilma volgde haar opleiding tot verpleegster aan het John Sealy Hospital in Galveston. Haar aandacht voor de luchtvaart werd getrokken door Amelia Earhart. Kort daarna solliciteerde zij bij de MAES. Wilma was aan boord van een C-47 van de 436th Troop Carrier Group, die op 14 april

1945 nabij Eisenach neerstortte. Wilma ligt thans begraven op Margraten in B-17-4. Beide graven werden door Nederlanders geadopteerd en tijdens Memorial Day voorzien van een boeket bloemen. Het plaatselijk ziekenhuis in San Benito (Texas) draagt de naam Dolly Vinsant Memorial Hospital. De Dolly Vinsant Trophée wordt jaarlijks aan de meest verdienstelijke Flight Nurse van Amerika uitgereikt.



Het graf van Christine A. Gasvoda op de begraafplaats Margraten in Zuid-Limburg. (foto's: archief Jan Bos)

Louise Anthony (816th MAES) merkte dat één van de zwaargewonde militairen aan boord van haar toestel er erg slecht aan toe was. Zodra de C-47 opgestegen was, ontdekte zij dat de militair overleden was. De andere gewonden hebben hier niets van gemerkt. Tijdens de vlucht gaf Louise de gewonden alle aandacht, ook aan de overledene. Zij schudde zijn hoofdkussen op en praatte tegen hem. Zo voorkwam zij onder de anderen paniek en verwarring. Toen de C-47 in Engeland landde, werd de overledene als laatste uit het vliegtuig gehaald.

Ann M. Krueger (817th MAES) haalde met gevaar voor eigen leven, 27 patiënten uit een brandende C-47. Jeanette Gleason kreeg van de piloot te horen dat de C-47 in moeilijkheden verkeerde. Zij gespte haar parachute om en sprong uit de C-47. Toen zij neerkwam, ontdekte zij dat zij alleen was. Zij sliep in haar parachute en werd de volgende dag door een Chinese familie ontdekt. Na een ontbijt van rijst, werd zij naar de geallieerde linies gebracht.

In totaal sneuvelden er elf Flight Nurses en zes Technicians in Europa. Ondanks alle ellende was er ook nog tijd voor afspraakjes en romantiek. Vaak vlogen de Nurses met dezelfde bemanningen en ontstonden er romances, die resulteerden in huwelijken.

Jan Bos

Subj: English translation of story Flight Nurses Date: 3/15/2003 11:48:45 AM Eastern Standard Time From: circle82@wishmail.net (Jan Bos) To: Dorothyce1920@aol.com

Dear Dorothy,
 well finally, here is the English version of the story about the Flight Nurses which I wrote on behalf of the Dutch Dakota Assn. You have the magazine, only with the Dutch text, hope you like it. Space was limited, I could have written much more

all the best

Jan Bos

Angels
Angles on board.

They flew in C-47s in the south Pacific, North Africa and Europe; they were fired upon by Japanese Zeros; they sheltered in foxholes for hours in Guadalcanal; they were brave and gave attention to the wounded on board the planes; their smiles will never be forgotten.

Early 1942 a school for Flight Nurses and Flight Technicians was founded at Bowman Field, Kentucky. Many stewardesses from American airliners reported for duty. After training they were divided among the Medical Air Evacuation Squadrons (MAES). It was their task to take care of the wounded, who were evacuated by airplane. They had a medical training and education. Stretcher were loaded and unloaded; they went on bivouac and they were instructed in map and compass reading. Attention was paid to ditching on water. The Flight Nurse checked the list of the wounded and noticed that all wounded were securely buckled up. A MAES had 25 Nurses, 5 doctors, one clerk and 70 Technicians. One Flight Nurse and one Technician were one team for a C-47; they had watch loading and unloading of the patients and had to take of the welfare of the patients on board the planes. 31 MAES were activated.

From the harbor of New York the ships left for England or Africa. On board of one of the boats bound for England were many nurses. On the adjacent ships the men whistled and yelled to the women. Without difficulty the convoy reached Scotland and the voyage to Southeastern England was by train. The women were housed in Quonset- or Nissen huts.

Christmas 1943 in Albania.

On 8 November 1943 13 Flight Nurses and 13 Medical Technicians were on board of a C-53 D (42-68809) of the 314th Troop Carrier Group. The plane left Catania together with two other planes and head for Bari, a flight of 2 hours. Shortly after he planes had left Catania, it came into snowstorms. The radio operator on board of this C-53 could not get radio contact with the control tower at Bari. The crew decided that they were lost. No trace of the other two planes. After some four hours flying, the weather cleared. The pilot discovered an airfield and prepared for a landing. Suddenly the plane was fired upon and the pilot had to make a forced landing (wheels up) in a muddy field. The pilot warned the passengers for a rough landing. When the plane came to a halt, armed men surrounded it. These men were partisans and it turned out that the plane had landed in Albania. Luckily the Partisans were pro-American. The men were in a hurry and took the Americans to a safe place. It was cold and over rough terrain, it snowed, it was freezing and the Nurses Nurses were not wearing the proper clothes for this trip. There was hardly any food. They did their best to avoid the Balista, who were pro-German. They traveled from village to village and together with the Partisans Christmas was celebrated. They all moved on 27 December 1943. Soon the Germans were after the group and the group was fired upon. The group could get away, but they were separated. Three nurses

stayed behind. In the meantime the Partisans had contacted the Allies and British commandos were dropped near the group to assist them. The entire group moved in the direction of the coast, where a boat of the Royal Navy waited for the group. The group arrived in Italy on 9 January 1944. The three nurses, who were separated from the group, were smuggled to Italy by the partisans and arrived in Italy in March 1944.

The first evacuation flight out of Normandy took place on D+4. In the morning the pilots were instructed for the mission later that day. First a Flight Nurse and Technician were picked up, then the C-47 was loaded with supplies, ammunition or the well known jerrycans. Then the plane flew on to the airstrips near the frontlines. The Nurses and Technicians sat on top of these supplies. The planes did not have Red Cross markings and often were fired upon by the Germans. After the plane had landed, the supplies were unloaded. The ambulances with the wounded were already waiting. The interiors of the planes were fixed for the transportation of the wounded. Walking wounded took their seats on both sides of the cabin or sat on the floor. For the more severe wounded, who had to be transported by stretcher, special equipment was installed. The stretchers were loaded one above the other and a total of 21 stretchers could be loaded. Sometimes 28 stretchers were loaded. As soon as the wounded were on board, the Nurse and Technician took care of them. The pilots admired the nurses. As soon as the plane took off, the nurses and technicians checked the conditions of the wounded, they talked to the men, cleaned the bandages or gave the men something to drink. Sometimes there were two Nurses on board.

Prisoner-of-war.

Lieutenant Reba Z. Whittle of the 813th MAES was taken prisoner by the Germans on 27 September 1944. She was on board of one of the planes of the 436th Troop Carrier Group. The plane was fired upon by the Germans and was hit. The plane made an emergency landing behind enemy lines. Lt Whittle was injured during the landing. In spite of her injuries she helped the other wounded crewmembers. Suddenly the Germans appeared and all were taken prisoner. The Germans were astonished to see a female among the crewmembers. First aid was given to the wounded and all were taken to Stalag 9-C (prisoncamp). Lt Whittle was separated from the men. There were no facilities for women in the camp. Reba took care of the wounded Allies. She was a prisoner for four months and celebrated Christmas 1944 in Germany. Thanks to the red Cross, she was exchanged. Lt Whittle was the only American woman, who was a POW.

Christmas 1944.

The Flight Nurses of the 817th MAES celebrated Christmas 1944 with French orphans. There was a Christmas tree and there was a Santa Claus. The dinner was extensive and there were presents for the children. One of the Nurses was 1Lt Christine A. Gasvoda. She was killed on 13 April 1945, when the C-47 she was in, crashed near Paderborn. Together with the crewmembers she was buried in the temporary American Military Cemetery at Margraten [Holland] in plot/row/grave number GG-5-107. After the war she was reburied in the permanent American Cemetery at Margraten in F-19-4.

Also buried at Margraten is 1Lt Wilma "Dolly" Vinsant (806th MAES). Wilma was born on 20 February 1917. Her father was a doctor, her mother a nurse. Wilma became a nurse at the John Sealy Hospital at Galveston. Amelia Earhart became her inspiring example for flying airplanes. Wilma joined the MAES. She was on board of a C-47 of the 436th Troop Carrier Group, that crashed near Eisenach on 14 April 1945. Wilma is now buried at Margraten in B-17-4. Dutchmen adopted both graves and during Memorial Day both graves receive flowers. The local hospital at San Benito (Texas) has the name Dolly Vinsant Memorial Hospital. The Dolly Vinsant Trophy will be given yearly to the Flight Nurse, who had done her utmost best.

Louise Anthony (816th MAES) noticed that one of the severely wounded in her plane, was dying. After the plane was in the air, the soldier had died. The other wounded men on board never knew this. Louise gave her

attention to the dead soldier during the flight. She talked to the man and by doing so, she prevented panic among the other men. When the plane landed in England, he was the last man to leave the plane.

Ann M. Krueger (817th MAES) evacuated 27 wounded patients from a burning C-47. She endangered her own life. Jeanette Gleason heard from the pilot that the plane was in trouble and he ordered all to bail out from the plane. She attached her parachute to the harness she was wearing and jumped from the plane. After touch down, she noticed she was all by herself. She slept in her parachute and the following morning she walked to a Chinese family, who gave her a breakfast. She was taken to allied lines.

Eleven Nurses and six Technicians lost their lives during the war in Europe. Besides all sad things, there was also some time for romance. Often the same Nurses flew with the same crews and after duty, they dated and some of the Nurses married their pilots.

----- Headers -----

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 Subject: English translation of story Flight Nurses
 Date: Sat, 15 Mar 2003 17:23:12 +0100
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MORRIS KAPLAN M.D.
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1 December, 1994

Dear Audrey, Randy, Polly, Tex, Essie, Dotty and Pug:

In honor of our fiftieth anniversary (Can that really be true?) I send you my history of our beloved 803. All 25 of you were wonderful, wonderful -- but it was the combination of you seven plus Mac and Georgia and Lou Collins that made me feel very special and largely made us the great big success that we were. You were the super wonderful ones. I loved you all very much and I am eternally grateful to each single one of you.

I do so hope that this book brings back kind memories of our success as a group of people who filled a great mission with great service and great well deserved esteem.

With emotional thanks and warmest regards and good wishes,

Morris


KAPLAN/Flight Surgeons/1

Kaplan/Flight Surgeons/2

FLIGHT SURGEONS AND FLIGHT NURSES

IN

THE CHINA-BURMA-INDIA THEATER OF WORLD WAR II

BY

MORRIS KAPLAN M.D.

COL. U.S.A.F. RET.

MY ADORED WIFE SAUCIL

WHOSE LOVE WAS SO STRONG

AND SO SACRIFICIAL