



Going Overseas as Flight Nurse

Second Lt. Clemetta Spanier Evenson, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Peter Spanier, 5049 N. Damen, has been assigned to the Mediterranean air evacuation transport squadron to go overseas as a flight nurse. She recently graduated as a surgical technician at the school of air evacuation, Bowman field, Ky., where she tied for first place in a class of 94 members. Lt. Evenson, 23, a graduate of Senn high school, received her training at Elizabeth School of Nursing and at Scott field. She is the wife of 1st Lt. Warren L. Evenson, 27, a graduate of the teachers school at LaCrosse, Wis., who was supervisor of the Scott field radio school at the time of their marriage. He is now serving as headquarters staff officer in North Africa.



Angel of Mercy At Home in Sky



An Army nurse aboard an ambulance transport, Lt. M. A. D'Eletto, serves three wounded war veterans being flown to an Army hospital in Temple, Tex., from Charleston, S.C. Top to bottom—Corp. Jack G. White, Pvt. Jesse L. Stojanek and Sgt. Boyet Impson.

[Associated Press Wirephoto.]

Flight C - 814th Med A&T Sq.
Dec. 16, 1943



L→R
FLORENCE FINTAK
KAY DAVIS
EMMA GINGRICH

L→R
BLANCH GARWOOD
ROTH KEVEGER
CLEMENTA EVERTSON

JUST BEFORE EMBARKING VIA QUEEN ELIZABETH



Ahemotta



me MARYANN Mobley BERT KEEGER





OUR QUARTERS @ RAMSBURY





Flight group left to right

Lavergne Chagnard Thomas, June Saunders, Emma Gingrich, Mary Worthington, Rose Farley, Helen West



Front row left to right: Dorothy Brindley, Mary Worthington, LaVergne Chagnard Thomas, Lois Bebout, Rose Farley, Nellie Gurdish, Merle Burns Heintzman

Back row left to right Mary Sue Manning, Helen West, Kathleen Davis, Capt Jane Mobley (our leader) Jennie Vassello, Lola Leddy, June Saunders, Emma Gingrich, Clemetta Evenson, Florence Fintak.

Behind Clemetta is Ruth Krueger



L to R (men unknown) Ruth Krueger, Blanche Garwood, Dorothy Brindley

18 hours ago

Clemetta Evenson - Flight Nurse

The following is the text of 2012 Veteran's Day speech delivered by Clemetta Evenson at the Mercer, WI school:

"Mr. Torkelson, teachers, fellow veterans, armed service members, students, and guests

I think most of you know how persuasive Betty Snyder can be - so after a few years of asking me to reflect about my WW II experience here I am.

□

This will be a walk back in history. I am 92 years old and you can't imagine the changes that have occurred in my lifetime.



[http://3.bp.blogspot.com/-DVQXmwJsP00/UKFbV-VMIKI/AAAAAAAAA/3RN_hbE0eT0/s1600/Clemetta+flight+nurse.jpg]

Clemetta Evenson - Flight Nurse

It was Sunday, Dec 7, 1941 and I was with my boyfriend at his parents house when we heard, via radio, (no TV then) the announcement that Pearl Harbor had been bombed by the Japanese. The next day President Roosevelt declared war on the Japanese. America was mobilized into full war mode with rationing, war bonds, industry, the draft. Everyone was involved in some way.

I received my RN license in September 1941. Three of my classmates and I joined the Army Nurse Corp and took the oath of office as 2nd Lt's on February 20, 1942. In July 1944 the Nurse Corps (per se) was ended and we became regular US Army.

I was assigned to Scott Air Base in Belleville IL (just across the Mississippi from St. Louis) where nursing was not too much different than in civilian practice. We had separate barrack type wards with the capacity for 25 patients each. Each ward was for a designated illness type (upper resp, measles, psych, non specific complaints, etc. and was staffed by a RN and med tech. In the service if you were not fit for active duty you went on sick leave and spent time in some sort of military medical facility.

While at Scott Field I married Lt Warren Evenson in March of 1943. (Warren was a former basketball coach and math teacher here at Mercer School when he was inducted into the army). He was shipped out to North Africa in April.

I signed up for Air Evacuation, was selected, and arrived at the School of Air Evacuation , Bowman Field, KY on October 1 1943. Ours was the seventh class picked to go thru the training as flight nurses. It was a three month intensive course covering advanced first aid skills, survival skills, and mock training on the C-47. This was the two engine prop plane (fitted with straps to carry 18 stretchers) that we would use to transport wounded from the combat area back to a General hospital for further care.



[<http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-mvXeFlmnYQs/UKFntDZVT2I/AAAAAAAAAuQ/FBr6WTw8Abo/s1600/AC-47-1.jpg>]

C47

We finished the course with a 3 day bivouac in November. On the last day we were taken to Fort Knox Kentucky where we went through an obstacle course. For this we had to crawl across an open field on our stomachs under barbed wire with live ammunition being fired over our heads and people calling out "keep your heads down".

We graduated on November 26, 1943 and I received my wings I was assigned to the 814th Medical Air Evacuation Squadron. Each Squadron was composed of a Chief nurse and 24 RN's.

We were given a 2 week leave over Christmas so was able to go home to Chicago. Then back to Bowman Field, we got our blue flight uniforms and new Army greens. Practiced packing and re-packing getting ready to ship out. We had a B-4 bag and bedroll. Everything we needed had to go in these two items. Its amazing what can be packed in a bedroll.

In January 1944 we were shipped to the staging post at Camp Kilmer, NJ It was here that we were prepared for overseas duty - getting shots, extra gear, etc.



[<http://www.ocean-liners.com/ships/images/queenelizabeth1.jpg>]
HMS Queen Elizabeth I

On Feb 2, 1944 we sailed on the Queen Elizabeth I (the luxury liner had been converted for

troop transport). There were 25 women and about 5,000 men on board ship. We were restricted to the upper deck, the dining room and our staterooms. There were 8 of us to a room with 2 sets of 4 tier bunk beds and a bathroom. It was so small we had to take turns getting out of the beds. We had rough seas (February over the north Atlantic can be rough). The favorite and frequent rumors aboard ship were either "that a German sub had been sighted" or "if we listed another 5 degrees we would capsize". The stabilizers had been removed from the ship when it was converted to a troop ship so that we would have more speed.. We were unescorted and German submarines were active in the North Atlantic

Eight days later we arrived in Edinburgh Scotland and from there went by train to England.. We were based with a Troop Carrier Group in Altemaston. We were housed in old RAF building - 12 cots to a room - with a one space heater to a room.



[http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-95lmwAnZjbY/UKFqRvCpoWI/AAAAAAAAAu4/I_CTV0YHNhs/s1600/images.jpg]
Illustration of the CG-4A glider, towed into battle by C47s

During the time before D-Day we were periodically assigned to various Army dispensaries and handled sick call. Most of the time we sat in quarters and waited - we each carried a deck of cards and played a lot of bridge. I did have a chance to go on a couple of practice glider flights. Really a unique experience. The gliders would be used to carry some of the troops to France on D-day.

We did manage a few trips to local cities and London. At that time England was being hit by unmanned motorized bombs called buzz bombs. You could hear the motor and when the motor stopped running they dropped. You just sort of held your breath

In May 1944 my Surg Tech Sgt & I flew one trip from Prestwick Scotland to Boston. The Trans-Atlantic flights were made in C-54's (4 engine planes - manned by civilian ATC crews).



[http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-T-F7381vNKM/UKGZ3_tnfl/AAAAAAAAAyg/Fti0D147DN4/s1600/c54.jpg]
C54

These planes were no frills - no insulation with bucket seats which were folded up to accommodate the stretchers. They carried 18 stretchers and 8-10 ambulatory patients. Very different from the air evac flights over the Atlantic today. All our medical supplies fit in a one foot locker. We had dressings, IV fluids, morphine, anti nausea meds, and penicillin. (by the way the only antibiotics at that time were penicillin and sulfa and penicillin was not available to the civilian population). The flight was 5 hours to Iceland, where because of bad weather we stayed for 2 days - patients were taken to the base hospital during this time. Then 8 hours to Greenland for refueling, and six hours to Boston. About 19 hours of flying time to cross the Atlantic



[<http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-zgP8OKMV3jA/UKFQSiqvJvI/AAAAAAAAArw/uT9-JnQ63KA/s1600/loading+the+plane.jpg>]

Finally June 6, 1944 - D-Day. A couple days before this our base was put on lock down. No one could leave - no phone calls in or out. On the morning of June 6th we heard the planes and gliders taking off and prayed for a safe mission. Luckily all the planes from our field returned safely.

From then on we had to be at the ready for flying by 6 AM every morning

On June 22nd I made my first trip to St. Mere Eglise France for evacuation of the wounded. Each C-47 for Air Evacuation was manned by a flight nurse and a Tech Sgt. Since these planes carried military supplies to the front lines the planes could not be marked with a Red Cross, nor could they be armed as we carried injured soldiers to the rear for medical care. On these flights to France (food, ammo, 5 gal cans of fuel) completely filled all the inside space. We sat on top of the cargo. While cargo was hastily unloaded at forward positions, we set up the litter straps for the patients. The patients had been given emergency medical care at a field hospital before we received them. They were quickly loaded and we flew them back to a General Hospital in England for further treatment.

We followed the army across France and Belgium through the Battle of the Bulge. The planes flew at just above tree top level to avoid being shot at.(one time we returned with hay from a hay stack stuck in the landing gear). We usually landed about 20 miles behind the front lines on pretty primitive landing strips. Wire mesh laid over some farmers field , with, as the pilots said, a roll of toilet paper stretched over each end. to mark the strip. Occasionally we landed between shelling of the field. One time when our plane landed at our home field I experienced what I thought was a rather rough landing. The pilot and co-pilot remained seated and were completely silent - they had forgotten to put the landing gear down. The C-47 was a very reliable plane.

One time we ran into bad weather while crossing the English Channel and had to land at one of the fields on the coast of France. After the weather cleared and at take off our plane did not make the pre-flight check and so we did not take off, but the rest of our formation did take-off. and the navigator was in the lead plane of the formation. Later in the afternoon our plane had been fixed and the pilot was ready to go on. So here was the situation - the co-pilot did not make it to the flight line by take-off time and the navigator was long gone with the rest of the flight. The pilot had me sit in the co-pilots seat with a map and try to figure out where we were and how to get to our destination by looking at the terrain below us. It was also getting late into the afternoon and anything flying after sundown was fair game to be shot down. Before long we had to land someplace and approached a partly finished landing strip. The engineers on the ground shot red flares but the pilot landed anyway. We spent the night on the plane. The next day we found the designated airstrip and dropped off the supplies. There were no patients to be transported so we returned to England empty.

In Feb 1945 I was transferred to Paris where I made 3 southern route trans- Atlantic flights. On this route we had a layover in the Azores, then to Newfoundland and Boston or New York..

In March 1945 6 of us were transferred to Naples, Italy where we flew patients to North Africa on the first leg of their trip to the US. We flew from Naples to Tunis or Algiers for refueling , then to Casablanca,. Stayed over nite then back to Naples with 48 hours off before repeating the cycle again.



[<http://4.bp.blogspot.com/>-

[BSzrUPOAr50/UKFQRI90rdI/AAAAAAAAAArg/RREGP7OAvil/s1600/d'letto+pic.jpg](http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-BSzrUPOAr50/UKFQRI90rdI/AAAAAAAAAArg/RREGP7OAvil/s1600/d'letto+pic.jpg)]

Warren was also in Italy at Foggia (on the Adriatic side) with a B-17 bomber group. After each flight to Africa I would go out to the airfield and get a ride on a B-17 to Foggia where we had a very tiny apartment. Naples and the Isle of Capri were R&R places for the B-17's so the planes were constantly shuttling back & forth across the boot of Italy. At that time any service person at the airfield could hop on the plane - didn't even get our names. My favorite place to sit was in the plastic nosecone. Quite a thrill to see the ground go by under your feet on takeoff. Warren would drive me back to Naples in a jeep in time for my next flight out.

Wednesday May 2nd Stars & Stripes announced that Hitler was dead. Monday, May 7, 1945 was VE day - victory in Europe. What a celebration. But the war in Japan was still being fought.

May 8th was the official VE day when Truman, Churchill and Stalin made the announcement. Norway Germans surrendered but Germans bombed Prague in defiance of their surrender.

July 3, 1945 I was in my way stateside pregnant with our first child and arrived July 17.

Warren was soon deployed stateside and we arrived in Chicago July 28 about 3 hours apart. We both had leave and headed to Mercer via the Chicago & Northwestern. On August 14th while at Craw's Cabin we heard that the war in the Pacific was ended "VJ day". We went into town to celebrate but everything was closed. We ran into Jimmy Klemec (Jimmy' Bar) now Antlers and he went to his tavern and got champagne and we celebrated at Craw's cabins.

By October we both had received honorable discharges.

Between 1942 and 1945 - 18 Med evac Squadrons were formed and transported over 1,172,000 sick and wounded service personnel. These flight nurses were pioneers in the intensive care of patients in flight in Europe, the Pacific, China, and Burma. .

For a kid who never traveled farther than 80 miles from Chicago it was a life changing experience. I believe any service person today would also attest to military experience as being life changing."

For more pictures and stories please go to the flight nurses' web site [<http://www.legendsofflightnurses.org/>] .

Posted 18 hours ago by Woodsperson

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