

Hazel E. Hill Turk

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Other Nominations

My mother, Hazel E. Hill Turk, is the 1st. woman in the Minnesota Veterans of Foreign Wars. She is a disabled WWII Flight Nurse. Flight Nurses in the South-Pacific were among the first American women to serve in combat zones. She was denied membership in the VFW simply because she was a woman,VFW denied women membership for 80yrs.until August 1978 after a barrage of criticism and pressure from women veterans and the US government. After Hazel won her battle to join the VFW, she received a telephone call from then Vice President Walter Mondale, congratulating her.

Addendums:Hazel's hometown is Crosby-Ironton MN.She is the daughter of Finnish immigrants who worked in the iron-ore mines of northern MN. She is a fellow Crosby-Ironton classmate of Judge Miles Lord. Also, when she was a young girl she met Charles Lindbergh,who was flying mail planes for his uncle, the Postmaster in the Crosby postoffice. Finally,in the late 1970s there was political talk about closing or decreasing the size of the MN.VA Hospital...Hazel spoke at the podium, at a public meeting at the VA Hospital about the need for expanded services for veterans. This heartfelt speech helped to promote the building of the new Regional Veterans Hospital in Mpls.

-Debra Turk Olufson, Chamhassen, MN



Star Photo by Jim McTaggart

Hazel 'Butch' Hill Turk with Japanese flag and other World War II memorabilia







HAZEL E
HILL
TURK

1ST LT
USAAF
WORLD WAR II
JUN 8 1919
JUL 30 2011
FLIGHT NURSE
PACIFIC THEATER



ADDENDUM TO REGISTRATION AS CHARTER MEMBER
Women In Military Service For America Memorial Foundation

HAZELE (HILL) TURK (AKA LT. BUTCH HILL)

N-788845 (Service Number)

(Social Security Number)

Sworn into military service as a Second Lieutenant by Municipal Judge Frank Lindbergh (uncle to Charles Lindburgh, famous flyer) in my hometown of Crosby, Minnesota. Sent to Bowman Field, Kentucky, to be trained as an air evacuation (flight) nurse. Sent as a single replacement to the Southwest Pacific Theater on secret orders via Presidio, CA where I boarded a Merchant Marine Cargo Ship. Approximately three weeks later, I was unceremoniously disembarked, alone, by the ship's Captain, at Hollandia, New Guinea. At a rugged landing pier, two G-Is, at my request, took me in a jeep to find an Air Evacuation Squadron. They did not know of any such unit, but, with some difficulty, I found the 820 th Air Evacuation Squadron, located in the jungle. The Commanding Officer, Flight Surgeon Captain Smith, a very decent officer, "adopted" me on temporary duty into the 820th. The T.O. of the 820th was filled, but another flight nurse, Lt. Martha Black, befriended me, and allowed me to share her pup tent in the Hollandia jungle mud until a decision was made as to where I was to be assigned. After several weeks and some air evac flights, I was flown to Biak, Dutch East Indies where I joined the recently arrived (from Espirito Santos) 801 st Medical Air Evacuation Squadron whose T.O. was short one flight nurse. Our living quarters at Biak, on the equator, was a quonset hut-type improvised living quarters made of corrugated tin roof and burlap sides. We named it "Burlap Flats". We would fly in DC 3s (C-47s) which would bring materiel, mail, and other necessities to combat areas and we would fill up the planes with wounded and sick patients to a Station Hospital for definitive care. Our planes were really like "tin cans", made of aluminum, not pressurized, but the pilots, crew chiefs, and our patients thought they were comparable to a magical flying carpet. The G-Is had been in such horrific situations, they truly thought we were "angels of mercy" sent to deliver them to a safer place and give them relief from their physical pain. We carried twenty-four litter patients on a flight. Sometimes we had room for a very few ambulatory patients. Our flights were physically exhausting, but so rewarding because the soldiers appreciated the medical care we administered. None of our flights were without hazard. Uncharted flights over long distances of the ocean and over unknown mountains, with patients who were very seriously injured and sick, made every minute a challenge of courage for all aboard. Not enough medals or citations can be given to those pilots and men who were in charge of flying our air evac planes. Such gentlemen and heroes. Back at Biak and dead-tired after an exhausting flight, I flopped on my cot in my flight suit, too hot and tired to do anything in the night but to fall asleep. I thought I was dreaming because I felt something slithering across my feet. I took my flashlight to see what I was feeling. Here was a deadly coral snake sliding over me! I just lay there, hardly breathing, until it crawled into the dark night. Burlap Flats was up a little slope from the ocean and part of the Great Barrier Reef, which, as you know, is all coral. It is no wonder I had a few encounters with coral snakes. In spite of the heat and the snakes, Biak is my most favorite spot - Paradise in the Pacific! Even at my age of 78 years, and service-disabled, I love to dream about seeing that place again.

From Biak, on to Leyte in the Philippines, where we thought we would see something of civilization. Same jungle stuff, including earthquakes, typhoons, coconuts falling, monkeys, orchids growing in the wild, and lack of pure drinking water. We lived in tents pitched on a wooden platform, four nurses to a tent, bordering a rippling, tempting stream with a rope bridge going over it. Fresh water at last? The stream was infected with the tropical parasite causing the life-threatening schistosomiasis. Just by dangling your feet into that fresh water, the parasite can enter a human's body, riddling the liver with holes, sometimes not completely manifesting itself in the body until twenty years later. Fresh water had to be hauled by water-tank trailers from Duiag about 40 miles away. Our fifty-gallon water-drum showers were filled

with half salt water from the ocean and maybe we were allowed 1/2 to 1/4 fresh water added to the salt water for hair washing and showering up. Where was the sudsy washes? None. Soap and salt do not mix, not even in a shower setting. The ocean was fine swimming, about a block or two away, but jellyfishes (man-of-war) baraccuda, and, I suppose other exotic waterlife such as sharks, maybe? We still swam in the ocean if we had the time and energy after our flights. There were twenty-five flight nurses in a squadron. To my knowledge, five from our 801st did not come back - planes shot down over the ocean by the Japs (our planes could not have the International Red Cross painted on them because they were used to fly war materiel to the combat zones-returning with casualties was only a secondary mission), or lost in flight, or, worse yet, crashed into a rain-soaked mountainside with a planeload of patients. Remember my friend from Hollandia days? Martha Black from the 820th Air Evac Squadron was a flight nurse on a flight returning to Dulag, Philippines air strip. The pilot was attempting to find the airstrip at Dulag, but crashed into a mountain, killing all aboard, of course. The weather was terrible - torrential rain. I still grieve for her and other nurses as well as flight crews on air evac missions just doing their humanitarian jobs of mercy for wounded soldiers.

During my Leyte experience, I became ill with Malaria. It was a terrible experience to be found semi-conscious in a fever-chills state. After a few days of treatment, I was back to work. I don't believe there is a province in the Philippines that I did not fly to - Leyte to Mindanao, Palawan, Cebu, and the list goes on and on.

Oh, yes, I went to Palau in the Peleliu Group. We had taken the island, but Japs were hiding in the hills. Another flight nurse Defanbaugh from another flight, were on an R.O.N. at Palau, sharing a small tent with a floor made of some planks of wood, rising about six inches from the ground. I was almost asleep when Deffie pushed lightly on my shoulder, saying, "Butch, the floor is moving." I had my gun in my shoulder holster and I volunteered to go look. Flashlight in hand, I saw a Jap soldier under our overnight tent! I held my .32 Colt on him. He was afraid, and I waved him on -- to get out and away. As far as I know, he is still running into the sunset! My Flight Nurse days took me up to Morotai, and finally to Naha, Okinawa (the night the Japs surrendered). And on to Nagasaki, Japan (where I picked up some American prisoners of war nearby), and on to Tokyo for more of our war prisoners. All of this was an experience of a lifetime. Even though with permanent disabilities, I am glad, in fact honored, to have had this opportunity to serve with and for the best of the best.

August 14, 1997 Signed,

HAZEL E. HILL TURK, R.N. (Ret.) First LT. WWII



Mrs. Hazel E. Turk
7544 Fifth Avenue, S.
Richfield, MN 55423

WOMEN IN MILITARY SERVICE FOR AMERICA

Hazel Ellen Turk



Character Number: 338,706

HIGHEST RANK: 1LT

SERVICE: USPHS From Jan. 1942 to Jun. 1943
Army Nurse Corps (ANC) From Aug. 25, 1943 to Feb. 15, 1945

WAR / CONFLICTS: WW

BORN: Jun. 8, 1919
BIRTH PLACE: Crosby, MN
Maiden: Hill

HOMETOWN: Freshman, MN

PREVIOUS:
NICKNAME: LT Helen Hill AKA:

SERVICE NAME: LT Hazel Ellen Hill
DECORATIONS: Army Presidential Unit Citation
American Campaign Medal
Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal w/ 4 RSs

MEMORABLE EXPERIENCES:

As a Registered Nurse I enlisted in the Army Air Force as a 1LT and was sent to Bowman Field, KY to the Flight Nurse Training School. We sent on a ship to replacement via troopship to Hollandia, New Guinea and temporary assigned to the 80th Medical Center joined the 80th Medical at Dak, Dutch East Indies. As the war progressed the 80th was moved to Leyte in the Philippines. I had frequent flights to combat areas in the Southwest Pacific to bring wounded GIs to Station Hospitals in the Philippines, while flying in a C-47 troop carrier planes, administered care to 24 Dier patients on each flight. On August 15, 1945 I was present at Naha, Okinawa when the Japanese surrendered and then flew to Tokyo to rescue our POWs. My personal injuries included moderate to severe spinal damage, as well as incurring malaria, jungle rot, snake and sunburn bites and various tropical diseases. We signed the wounded GI's hopes to return home. Flight Nurses were among the first American women to serve in the combat areas of the South Pacific during World War II. We were young women of thousands of miles far from our dear ones.

REGISTERED BY:

HONORED BY: