

**Interview with Mariette Landwehr Lodermeier**

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**Central Minnesota Historical Oral History Collection**

**St. Cloud State University Archives**

**Interviewed by Nancy Baker**

**Baker (00:03):**

The following interview was held on October 19th, 1989 with Mariette Lodermeier from Grand Lake, who was a nurse in World War II. Okay. We'll just start with where you were born.

**Lodermeier (00:24):**

Okay. I'm Mariette Landwehr Lodermeier. I was born in St. Cloud in July of 1917. My father was Adolph Landwehr. My mother's name was Magdalene Mary, and I grew up on the south side of St. Cloud. In fact, I went to kindergarten at what was known as the Normal School.

**Baker (00:45):**

Oh, okay.

**Lodermeier (00:48):**

My father had the [inaudible 00:00:49]. We lived right down there. At any rate, I went to Cathedral High School, and because I couldn't get into a nursing school in the St. Paul area, my parents decided I should go to St. Benedict's until I found what I was looking for. So, I went to St. Benedict's a freshman, as a D student. These were the very early days when they bust students. My recollection is that my father wrote out a \$150 tuition check for the year.

**Baker (01:28):**

For the whole year?

**Lodermeier** ([01:29](#)):

Whole year of college. I was the oldest of seven brothers. My youngest brother is 17 years my junior. I'm inclined to think that I went into nursing possibly because of my maternal instincts having helped take care of my younger brother. At any rate, I then went into the St. Cloud School of Nursing in August of 1935, and I finished my three year nursing school program in the summer of 1939. I worked at the tuberculosis sanitarium out in Glen Lake out of Hopkins, Minnesota for a year. Even then I was restless wanting to come home and wanting to come out to the lake, believe it or not. I've always had a passion for this place. And decided that I didn't want to stand the sanitarium any longer so I came home for the summer, and then I went to the Miller Hospital in St. Paul. The Miller, by the way, is now discontinued, but it was in the neighborhood of St. Joseph's Hospital. It was while I was working at the Miller Hospital in my second year that World War I broke out, in December of '41.

**Baker** ([02:53](#)):

World War II.

**Lodermeier** ([02:54](#)):

World War II. Excuse me. I'm sorry.

**Baker** ([02:56](#)):

Okay. That's--

**Lodermeier** ([02:57](#)):

All right.

**Baker** ([03:02](#)):

There was no drafting of women, is that correct?

**Lodermeier (03:05):**

During the course of the fall, the Red Cross was recruiting for people as standby, and because it seemed like the thing to do, I signed up with the American Red Cross because they were the ones that were recruiting the nurses at that time, as I remember. Well, very shortly after the war was declared, I already received a notice. Was I willing to join the Army Nurse Corps?

**Baker (03:32):**

Now this was from the government?

**Lodermeier (03:35):**

Yes. I think the Red Cross have a thing going, and then you signed up of course into the Army Nurse Corps. I recall going out to Fort Snelling in about January of 1942 for my physical, and being accepted in the service. We had some say in where we would like to be assigned. My orders were for Fort Warren, Wyoming. Cheyenne, Wyoming.

**Baker (04:08):**

Okay.

**Lodermeier (04:10):**

I went out to Cheyenne about the 24th of February, 1942, and my companion was [Eleanor Moore 00:04:21], a girl I had known at the Miller Hospital. Me more or less requested being assigned together. It was traumatic to say goodbye to one's family because I'd always lived in St. Cloud and worked in the Cities. It was that first overwhelming feeling that you were going to be gone for a while. At any rate, we were assigned at Fort Warren. We had apartment quarters. It was a stationary hospital. Fort Warren, Wyoming wasn't just a temporary thing. It was a fort that was a regular army base.

**Baker (05:06):**

Okay.

**Lodermeier (05:08):**

I should be able to specify that a little bit better because I'm fuzzy now, but Fort Warren-- Where's the place in Kansas? There's certain basic camps but then when World War II started, they set up a great many more because of all the recruiting. Believe it or not, my first assignment when I was at Fort Warren was on the [inaudible 00:05:31] because we took care of the soldiers and the officers' wives when they had babies, so here I was in the army taking care of maternity.

**Baker (05:44):**

When you first went into the service, did you have to go through basic training?

**Lodermeier (05:49):**

Not per se. However, later on, while I was still at Fort Warren, they decided that the nurses should have a little more of the military preparedness. We did have a six week session of guerrilla exercises. I distinctly remember that Sergeant York, a women's service person, directed our exercises. And she was a niece of the Sergeant York who had been a hero in World War I, I believe. Sergeant York. At any rate, we weren't very keen on the maneuvers, but we did them. That then was my assignment until the following summer of June of 1943. During the course of this time at Fort Warren, Wyoming, they were seeking out nurse volunteers who were willing to be assigned overseas. My roommate, Eleanor, decided she would go with the ski troops in Colorado. She was very reluctant to be shipped overseas. But I guess I was adventurous enough to think I could try something else. At any rate, I signed up and I was to be sent to Alaska. Over a period of weeks. Seemingly they didn't need so many people up there. So in May of 1943, I received orders to go to the South Pacific. I'm a little fuzzy, and I would have to look at my

diaries about this, but we did take the train ride. I rather expect there were a couple of other people from the Fort Warren setting. Then myself joined up with a group that had had their basic program in Fort Riley, Kansas, I believe. The unit was known as the 116th Station Hospital. I was assigned to the 116th Station Hospital, and as such, we were a group of doctors, nurses, corpsmen, and a variety of other enlisted people who helped keep the hospital running. A station hospital is smaller than a general hospital. The field hospital is the one that's closest to the frontline.

**Baker (08:23):**

Okay. And then the station?

**Lodermeier (08:25):**

The station hospital, and then a general--

**Baker (08:25):**

Hospital.

**Lodermeier (08:27):**

--hospital, which is a larger base unit.

**Baker (08:29):**

Okay.

**Lodermeier (08:31):**

As time went on, we would get patients at Port Moresby, New Guinea. If the assessment was such that that person would require long-term care, he was sent down to Australia to a general hospital. In some cases, these boys were sent back to the United States when they had long-term problems that were not treatable, per se, in the South Pacific.

**Baker (09:03):**

What was your rank? Were you automatically made an officer of some sort?

**Lodermeier (09:04):**

Yes. We were considered-- And I'm having trouble remembering what the title was. We were not real army. We were considered associate lieutenants. I would need to look this up, but it was a relative rank of second lieutenant. The last year that I was in the South Pacific, I received a rank of first lieutenant. So I left the army services a first lieutenant. If I recollect right, during that period of time, they made nurses regular army ranks. This came about I believe because of the Women's Army Corps being established. And so Women's Army Corps had to have rank, both enlisted and in the officer classification. So apparently that was part of the army decision to make the army nurse rank a regular rank, rather than a relative one, whatever they called it. Anyway, as second lieutenant in the Army Nurse Corps, I think our salaries were \$75/month, plus of course our lodging, clothes and food. So that wasn't very much, but of course then when we were shipped overseas. It was a little different when we were in Fort Warren, Wyoming. That wasn't a whole lot of money to spend but understand this was in 1942/43, when a dollar went as far as 20 does now.

**Baker (10:40):**

That's right. That's for sure.

**Lodermeier (10:43):**

While were in the South Pacific, of course there was very little opportunity for cash expenditure so when money didn't [inaudible 00:10:49].

**Baker (10:49):**

Okay. Now, what was the name of the base you were at there?

**Lodermeier** ([10:52](#)):

We left in June-- We went out to Camp Storeman in California, out of San Francisco. We were there for three days. I never really did see San Francisco because we were in these army barracks, and I remember being terribly cold. It was so cold at night. And then we were in full military regalia with helmets on our heads, and our backpacks, and we were marched to the ship. And I do remember having blisters on my heels. It was a long, hard trek. At any rate, when the ship was loaded-- And I imagine this would have been a matter of hours, or even all day. I really can't remember. It was a pretty forlorn feeling to stand onboard that ship and know you wouldn't come back until the war was over, and by that time, you wondered when it was going to be over. Because there was so much activity in the European theater and the South Pacific had a long way to go. At any rate, we were on board ship for 23 days. We did not have a convoy, so our course was a zigzag one, to avoid submarines. I was terribly seasick at first, but more or less conquered it.

**Baker** ([12:09](#)):

Now, how many women would you say were on the ship?

**Lodermeier** ([12:13](#)):

In our unit, there was about 35 with our station hospital.

**Baker** ([12:17](#)):

Okay.

**Lodermeier** ([12:20](#)):

Then, of course, this was a process of getting to know the officers and the corpsmen in our unit.

But more or less, we managed it. I remember not having any freshwater and trying to shampoo

my hair with saltwater. It was gosh awful. Because water was allocated. Or what do you call it when they have to-- Ration it.

**Baker** ([12:44](#)):

Ration, right.

**Lodermeier** ([12:46](#)):

Because there were a lot of troops in this ship. Shortly before we landed in Brisbane, Australia, the rumors started that we might go to India. At that point, I thought, "I can't stand it anymore on this ship." We landed in Brisbane, Australia, which was very exciting. We were sent out to a camp that was located about 20, 30 miles from Brisbane. Now, if it took 23 days, it would have been sometime in July that we landed there. They kept us there as a group. 1942, '43. I can't find [inaudible 00:13:32] of it. My '43 recording. They kept us at Brisbane and then gradually sent us by plane up to Port Moresby, New Guinea. So it was about September the 15th before I was one of the women who got up to Port Moresby. Well, it was most interesting to be in a Pacific Island. It was very warm, and really very beautiful, too. Our hospital-- And I have a picture I'll show you later. Our hospital consisted of screened wards that were possibly 50 feet long and maybe 15 feet wide. At any rate, the cots would be like this so it would have been about maybe 18 feet wide with rows of cots. They were screened because naturally insects are a big problem. But we had a permanent nurses' residence. It was built out of half log boards, and they too were screened. We used to have little lizards running up and down the screens, but these are things one got used to. We wore khaki culottes with stockings, and later we were furnished with slacks. Our uniform requirement was that we had to wear socks over our slacks to avoid mosquito bites-

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**Baker (14:59):**

Bites on--

**Lodermeier (15:00):**

On our ankles. And khaki shirts. We were an ugly looking group of people, let me tell you. And of course it was a problem to-- There was no shopping available so we kind of depend on relatives to send us makeup. They did have a PX. We could get supplies there.

**Baker (15:00):**

Some supplies. Okay.

**Lodermeier (15:24):**

As women, we needed to have Kotex and that sort of thing so they did keep these supplies on hand. As far as shoes went, we walked on gravel rocks between our individual hospital wards up to the nurses' home. Finally, my shoes were wearing out. I bought a pair of men's shoes and cut off the tops and then turned the tongue over and fringed it. They were pretty great. I guess I could wear a man's size seven or seven and a half, and I found it was more comfortable than anything.

**Baker (15:57):**

Probably started a fad too, huh?

**Lodermeier (15:59):**

Yes.

**Baker (16:00):**

Okay. At this hospital now, what kind of patients did you treat? Were these all combat?

**Lodermeier (16:08):**

We would receive the men who had been injured in battle, and probably it would have been two to three days after the initial injury.

**Baker (16:20):**

Okay. So first they would be taken to the field?

**Lodermeier (16:21):**

They would be assessed at the field hospital and if they were seriously wounded, I think they even bypassed us. So when a battle was going on in the northern part of New Guinea-- The fighting in New Guinea was a miserable thing in the jungle. It really was terrible. Once again, if I dug into my stuff, maybe I could have something more specific, but it seems to me that we took care of a lot of medical things as well as the injuries. That would include malaria. What they called jungle rot. We had one whole ward for just skin care. Some of these men had such lousy skin conditions. Fungus and this type of thing, that they finally would have to be shipped back home. We used a variety of products for treating them. One of them called genital violent and one called [inaudible 00:17:20]. Bright, red like your sweater. The doctors themselves hadn't dealt with too much of this stuff so it was kind of hit and miss sometimes wondering what to prescribe, and this was long before we had cortisone.

**Baker (17:30):**

Okay.

**Lodermeier (17:34):**

However, it was while I was in New Guinea that penicillin was first used. That would have been about in 1944. '42, '44. Well, this was a biggie to have a more effective treatment for infections. We also had malarias. We took care of men who had a parasite infestation could schistosomiasis.

**Baker (18:07):**

These were all things that they acquired--

**Lodermeier (18:11):**

Picked up--

**Baker (18:11):**

--in the jungle?

**Lodermeier (18:11):**

In the jungle. That's right.

**Baker (18:12):**

Okay.

**Lodermeier (18:14):**

Not only that, as personnel, we were required to take a medication called Atabrine, which was to prevent us from developing malaria because even though we took precautions and they sprayed around the compounds, we were still subject to mosquito bites. And the mosquitoes in that area carried malaria.

**Baker (18:35):**

How about these other skin diseases? How did you avoid that?

**Lodermeier (18:40):**

Well, as nurses, we were able to shower. We weren't in combat walking around in mud and all of that type of thing.

**Baker (18:47):**

Yeah. I didn't know how contagious they were.

**Lodermeier (18:48):**

We could keep ourselves in pretty good shape, and of course, we had sick call, too. We had an outbreak of food poisoning that was rather traumatic. We had no running water. The orderlies would have to take the bed pans up to the latrine hole. It was something. Somehow or other, we did okay. We did have problems with water shortage for a while, and I'm having a little trouble remembering just how we took care of our laundry. Because we had these wet, tropical rains, sometimes it would take days before one could get something dry.

**Baker (19:33):**

Dry. Yeah, the humidity.

**Lodermeier (19:35):**

Well, anyway. We had a lot of patient care. I think we were becoming more experienced in the care of patients in settings like this. The war was moving on. Things were still pretty grim. Because we were so removed in a way, even though there was radio, the European war was what we'd see in headlines. I do have some Time magazines. These little miniature ones--

**Baker (20:07):**

Oh, okay.

**Lodermeier (20:07):**

--that we used to get. So I've got some things to show you that might be interesting.

**Baker (20:07):**

Okay.

**Lodermeier (20:13):**

I guess the overall thing was we were engrossed in what we were doing. We were living our lives and taking a little time out for socializing. The army officers would have officers' clubs, so we could go out evenings.

**Baker (20:32):**

Okay. That's what I was going to ask about was your social life there.

**Lodermeier (20:36):**

We did a lot of dating, and had fun dancing. I did one time go up into the New Guinea hills with a group. It was interesting to see the natives up there. We'd go down to Port Moresby, per se, the little town. There was a supper club, and there was a native who waited on us. I remember him particularly with huge, bushy hair, and wearing flowers in his hair. Many picturesque things like that.

**Baker (21:11):**

So the people that lived there, the native New Guineans, they basically got along quite well with the army--

**Lodermeier (21:21):**

Yes. It's strictly native society, and they had their own lifestyle. They hired the natives to cut, brush, and weeds, and do yard work on the hospital compound. I particularly remember that. Because they've lived in warm climates all their life, I think they tended to be kind of leisurely and casual and not move as rapidly as we Americans tend to do.

**Baker (21:50):**

Well, there's something to be said for that. How about relations between the staff? The men and the women? They were fine? There was [crosstalk 00:21:59].

**Lodermeier (21:59):**

Yes. We had some very nice doctors and dentists and officers who were in charge of administration. We have kept a newsletter going over all these years, but of course the numbers have diminished now by far. Not only that, some people never really participated in the correspondence. I sort of remember a Dr. Conway who was the administrator for a while. As a group, we managed very well. The girls dated some of the men. A number of the men were married. Older men. One of the romances, it developed into marriage right after the war was [inaudible 00:22:52]. A few friends. Bailey, who married the dentist, [inaudible 00:22:57]. When he went on leave to Australia, he bought a diamond ring for her. They were engaged on New Year's. That type of thing. It was kind of fun. Well, maybe then we should move along to when we went to the Philippines.

**Baker (23:17):**

Okay.

**Lodermeier (23:17):**

That was in October or November of 1944. We landed on Leyte Island in the Philippines on the same beach that MacArthur had come to. And that's a matter of reference to the history of the war, but he had said, "I will return."

**Baker (23:47):**

Right. The famous--

**Lodermeier (23:49):**

At any rate, we left Port Moresby, New Guinea, and we were housed in scuttle ships that once again made us seasick.

**Baker** ([24:00](#)):

I was wondering if you got over that or if you--

**Lodermeier** ([24:02](#)):

No. And furthermore, it seemed like it was even worse because land swells contribute to seasickness, and of course we weren't very far from islands. And so apparently land swells have something to do with sea motion. I do remember one of our nurses being in the infirmary having to be taken off the ship on a stretcher. She was so sick. They had to feed her IV. She couldn't keep any food down. Seasickness is a miserable, debilitating thing. At any rate, we got to the Philippines. Our own hospital staff wasn't all together, and our own supplies weren't available yet. Temporarily, we were assigned to a general hospital. It was gosh awful. Literally we walked in mud. I can remember hanging on to a patient's bed, putting a thermometer in his mouth, because it was so slippery. In those tropical rains, everything just gets gooey. And it seems like this hospital, instead of packing supplies that would be needed on each ward-- Medication, utensils, all of this. They had everything lumped together. They had all these Red Cross blankets in one box, and then maybe the things for some other need were packed away in another box.

**Baker** ([25:33](#)):

No organization.

**Lodermeier** ([25:34](#)):

It was crazy. Yeah. But eventually that sort of took care of itself. As I said, I'm fuzzy without making some reference to my diaries such as they are.

**Baker** ([25:44](#)):

Okay.

**Lodermeier** ([25:45](#)):

But we did have some good learning experiences there. I guess illness-wise, the medical disorders that we treated would have been quite much the same.

**Baker** ([26:02](#)):

The same. Okay.

**Lodermeier** ([26:03](#)):

In the Philippines, the Filipino people were around. So we had the luxury then of having some of these little Filipino women come into our compound. They'd take our laundry, and I guess they would take it down to the river and wash it in the river. But at least we got our laundry done that way. Our quarters in the Philippines were huge tents. About 20 feet long. They were four nurses to a tent. So we had to sleep under mosquito netting because there weren't any screens.

Whenever I hear about a hurricane, I remember the one that we had.

**Baker** ([26:37](#)):

Oh, you had a hurricane yet too.

**Lodermeier** ([26:42](#)):

That was in the Philippines, so that would have been sometime in 1944 or early 1945. I got thrown over to the ground. The tent flew away. I was hanging onto a mirror because I'd bought a mirror in Australia, and everybody would come in and use Mariette's mirror, because hardly anybody had one that large. I had a bruise across my chest from hanging--

**Baker** ([26:42](#)):

From hanging.

**Lodermeier** ([27:05](#)):

From hanging on to the mirror. That always made kind of interesting telling.

**Baker (27:10):**

Yeah.

**Lodermeier (27:14):**

It was primitive medical arrangement for a while but eventually we were doing quite well. Then I remember we got a good deal of hepatitis when we were in the Philippines. Though I am not so sure this should be taped, maybe it does some insight, and that is that the fellows in their army units would be out on maneuvers. They weren't out fighting, they would be out in maneuvers. They didn't know what to do. One day, I admitted 86 or 80 patients with gonorrhoea. Each night after we came off duty, we went to our chief nurse to turn in our daily report. And I don't know if I want this taped or not, but maybe it does mean something.

**Baker (28:10):**

Oh, sure. Go ahead, yeah.

**Lodermeier (28:10):**

I tossed my daily report on that desk and I said, "Just look at this. All these gonorrhoea patients." And she looked at and she said, "Ms. Landwehr, you must have come from a very sheltered community."

**Baker (28:30):**

And you said, "Yes. Stearns County."

**Lodermeier (28:31):**

Yes. She was a very strait-laced woman herself. One of the things when I was going [inaudible 00:28:44]. During the course of those spring and summer months of 1945-- The war was over in '45, wasn't it? Yep. Return. Here's [inaudible 00:29:14] return. So then, yes. We went into Tacloban in Leyte Island in November or December of 1944. We were in the Philippine Islands,

and the atomic bomb took place in August of '45. Six weeks later, because I had a good many points, I was one of the nurses that was able to go home. I had enough points to qualify me to go back to the States. Let me just read this. If you want to shut it off [inaudible 00:30:03].

**Baker (30:05):**

Well, you can just read it and I'll just leave it right on.

**Lodermeier (30:09):**

Reading from my diary. We drove up to 28th Depot, or whatever this is. We had a mighty teary farewell, and poor little [inaudible 00:30:26], one of my nurse roommates wouldn't come out of the tent. I just wish I could have taken them both along. They've been such wonderful roommates. Then we drove up here. At Tacloban, had our papers checked, and we go back to the United States as medical attendants on a ship leaving tomorrow. Oh happy day, I wrote. I arranged my junk. Went to eat at five o'clock and to mass at 5:30 in a nearby chapel. We went to the dock and boarded ship at 11:15. Nine of we girls to a stateroom at the end of the day. Crowded but not too uncomfortable. Who should I see at noon but Ruth Berndt. She was one of the nurses who had been with me in New Guinea. She and another nurse are assigned to care for patients. Corpsmen will take care of the army patients. The nurses will take care of the civilians. So we were assigned this duty on our way home.

**Baker (31:28):**

Okay.

**Lodermeier (31:30):**

This is a large ship. The Everlea. And it has lots of passengers. Now, let me tell you of the civilians. Chinese, American, Filipino, Spanish, mixed blood, youngsters of all ages from 28 days to teenaged. Some of the older girls are gorgeous and there's a beautiful Chinese girl here.

It's 5:40PM now and we think we'll go to the movie later. We sailed at 8:00. At 9:30, we had sick call for the civilians, and treated various minor ailments and some of the children had their typhoid shots. We also passed out some seasick pills and took some ourselves. Mass is at 3:00 daily in the dining room. I had a terrific headache for a while but medication helped that. It's cool and fresh up on deck, but terribly windy. These variety of civilians are interesting. The wealthy Chinese girl is beautiful and appears to look like a doll. I could go on for some time about this but anyway.

**Baker** ([32:45](#)):

Okay. That's fine.

**Lodermeier** ([32:46](#)):

I had forgotten most of this. I especially remember a family who had probably been prisoners of war. I'm not sure. But they had three youngsters, and this woman was pregnant, and she looked so absolutely miserable. In addition to that, when we got to the United States, they were headed for Spain. Can you imagine traveling all that time with three small children and being pregnant?

**Baker** ([33:12](#)):

Pregnant. Woo. Now, back to when you were on these islands, did you ever treat civilians at--  
Not at all?

**Lodermeier** ([33:20](#)):

No. We were all army people.

**Baker** ([33:22](#)):

Just army. Okay. Go ahead.

**Lodermeier** ([33:27](#)):

I guess you asked what you think [inaudible 00:33:31] at this point.

**Baker (33:32):**

Okay. I just kind of wondered, too, while you were overseas on these islands, what was morale like?

**Lodermeier (33:36):**

Well, as nurses, we did okay. We had a lot of male attention. We could take it or leave it as far as dates were concerned. The fellows were congenial. I'm a very strait-laced person. There were so many men and very few women, and sometimes somebody would date me a couple times and wouldn't bother to call back because I guess he decided I wasn't for the taking. I guess maybe it's right to say that.

**Baker (34:13):**

Sure.

**Lodermeier (34:14):**

As I went through these, I realized, "My gosh. I don't even remember those men at all." And yet, some I went with for a while and others I didn't. I remember being highly annoyed because some fellow who was from Minnesota-- We were having a great time talking about things back home. We went out for some time, and then I learned from one of the other persons he was passing cigars at, his wife had had a baby. I was furious, and that was the last date I had with him.

**Baker (34:45):**

That was the last one with him, huh?

**Lodermeier (34:48):**

We had a good enough time, but it was tougher for the enlisted men because they had servicemen's clubs. But at our officer's clubs, if the gals were there, we would dance and socialize and eat. And we had movies. I would like to take a couple minutes to tell you about

some of the USO thing. Jack Benny was at our station hospital in New Guinea. Gary Cooper was at our New Guinea place, as well as General George Marshall. I have pictures of both of them. I also have Gary Cooper's autograph. I remember seeing Oklahoma on stage put on by a troop that was touring. I think one of the highlights was seeing Irving Berlin's This is the Army. After the production, I went up to Irving Berlin, and I have his autograph. Now I'm trying to find a source of selling it because I understand autographs are worth money.

**Baker** ([35:56](#)):

Probably his too.

**Lodermeier** ([35:57](#)):

There was an article in the Times earlier this summer. I wrote and sent Xerox copies. I haven't had any response, and now that Irvin Berlin has died--

**Baker** ([36:06](#)):

Has died. Right.

**Lodermeier** ([36:07](#)):

--chances are it might have more value.

**Baker** ([36:10](#)):

So they did seem like they had quite a few activities to keep you busy.

**Lodermeier** ([36:18](#)):

And then it was a matter of-- We were busy, we were working. Our night shifts were 12 hour shifts. As I went over these diaries, I realize how much mail from home meant. I did a lot of letter writing myself. It just seemed like I was always waiting to hear from my family and from my friends. So mail meant a great deal to all the serviceman--

**Baker (36:39):**

I'm sure it did.

**Lodermeier (36:40):**

It was their tie.

**Baker (36:41):**

How long would it take you to get mail?

**Lodermeier (36:43):**

Oh, sometimes 18 days.

**Baker (36:48):**

Okay. That's not just-

**Lodermeier (36:48):**

Packages would be a lot longer. At Christmastime, I finally got-- After Christmas, because we had moved from New Guinea to the Philippines, it took ages for our mail to come in. And by the time it did, I had 40 letters and Christmas cards. It was so thrilling to sit and read all this. My mother had sent me some bathing suits because we were near the ocean.

**Baker (36:48):**

Ocean, mm-hmm (affirmative).

**Lodermeier (37:14):**

And along with this, she'd sent me some fruit cake. It was all moldy because it had been on the ship for so many weeks and in the damp environment, so it wasn't edible.

**Baker (37:26):**

No, I guess not. If you were to pick something from your experiences, what would you say was the most frustrating for you?

**Lodermeier (37:39):**

The sense of uncertainty was one.

**Baker (37:42):**

Okay.

**Lodermeier (37:43):**

The wondering when and ever you'd get home. Also, more or less putting your life in perspective. I realized once more, in reference to some of these journals I was reading, I sensed that my value picture was different than some of the people that I ran into, and that I was kind of a priss. And that there was a disillusionment, I think, about behaviors sometimes, that was sort of astounding to me. Again, I made reference to [inaudible 00:38:24]. In this day and age of free talk about sex and living together. I did come from a very--

**Baker (38:32):**

Sure.

**Lodermeier (38:34):**

--staid background, and so I think at that point, getting to know people from throughout the country, I was edified by some. I was disillusioned about others. However, the friendships I made among the nurses and the people I worked with, are sustaining me today. I keep in touch with about a half a dozen of them at Christmastime.

**Baker (38:59):**

That's nice to know that.

**Lodermeier (39:01):**

They've done well with their lives. The medical men carried on their practices. The nurses, they've done all right for themselves too. And I'm proud of them.

**Baker (39:17):**

These are all just little questions. What was the most frustrating and whatnot. How about the scariest? You had mentioned earlier about bombers going over.

**Lodermeier (39:33):**

Yes. There was some uneasiness when we went overseas because you never knew if maybe the ship would be hit by something. And there also was a hurricane one night on the ship, and, oh, it was wild.

**Baker (39:51):**

Oh, a hurricane.

**Lodermeier (39:51):**

A storm at sea, I guess one would call it. That was frightening. We kept our life jackets on all the time when were on board the ship. It was a strange sensation when we first landed in the Philippines, in Leyte Island. Japanese recon planes were overhead and every now and then, we'd hear a bomb. That was scary. Then the other episode rather interesting was on our way to the Philippines, we were taken off ship up in northern Australia, at [inaudible 00:40:29] I believe. And they transferred us from this troop ship to a hospital ship, and it was like going from poor to rich. We were on this wonderful hospital ship, and because Thanksgiving was changed from one week to the other by Roosevelt-- I don't remember. We had a Thanksgiving dinner at [inaudible 00:40:54], and that's another episode food poisoning. We all got sick from the turkeys that had been dressed and standing on the counter the day before. So the next morning, we were all meeting each other in the women's latrine and wondering what was the matter. We had food poisoning. It's very debilitating, but we got over it. A week later, after we were on board this hospital ship going to the Philippines, we had a Thanksgiving dinner served to us by Navy

personnel that was A-1. It was such a contrast to the week before. It was simply wonderful.

However, that was only maybe four or five days at the most or less. While we were on the ship, a Japanese plane dropped a bomb near the ship, which is highly irregular. According to Geneva Conference, hospital ships aren't attacked.

**Baker (41:47):**

Okay.

**Lodermeier (41:48):**

But we did have an alert for a short while, and then it went away and that was the end of that.

But I think we received something of a citation for that.

**Baker (41:59):**

Okay. Generally, as far as you were talking about the food, do you feel that everyone was well fed?

**Lodermeier (42:05):**

With the restrictions of what it is not to have refrigeration. One time I came back from a date with some of other gals from the Navy's ship, and I was all excited because I had a few ice cubes in my scarf. It was like heaven to have an ice cube. But the food got to be pretty yucky. It was a lot of the prepared eggs and that type of thing. Of course, we just longed for cold things, and we didn't have too much of that. But it didn't hurt us either. We managed.

**Baker (42:37):**

So then, basically, most of your needs were taken care of.

**Lodermeier (42:37):**

Yes.

**Baker (42:39):**

You mentioned they have a store usually.

**Lodermeier (42:41):**

Yeah.

**Baker (42:42):**

And if not--

**Lodermeier (42:44):**

By and large, that's the way the army runs. I remember-- Going through my books again last night, I was complaining about some of the crazy regulations there are. And that could well have been in reference to the fact I had a cousin whose name was the same as mine. Obviously, he was related. He was a sergeant. He came up from another island in the Philippines, and came over to visit me. Although I didn't know him well, just the idea that he was a relative--

**Baker (42:44):**

Sure.

**Lodermeier (43:12):**

--was special.

**Baker (43:12):**

Oh. I bet you that was nice.

**Lodermeier (43:13):**

I had asked the-- Now, this seems very trivial but it's kind of an example of what army regulation is. I had asked the man who was in charge of the dining room, a lieutenant, if I could bring my cousin to the officer's mess. He said, "Sure." I did, and after he left the next day, the chief nurse

called me into the office and raked me down good for taking an enlisted man into the officer's mess--

**Baker (43:40):**

Oh, boy.

**Lodermeier (43:40):**

--without asking her. That seems very trivial but it does give an example of army regulation, and they are crazy.

**Baker (43:51):**

You were in the Philippines and you were heading back.

**Lodermeier (44:04):**

I headed back on the ship.

**Baker (44:04):**

Back to the United States. Okay.

**Lodermeier (44:05):**

But we landed in-- Seattle and Tacoma are together, aren't they?

**Baker (44:11):**

Right.

**Lodermeier (44:12):**

Okay. We landed there. Our wish for the whole three and a half years we were over in the South Pacific was to have breakfast at the top of the mart in San Francisco. Instead, we landed up in Seattle-Tacoma, and we were at Fort Lewis, Washington. We were about maybe a week or 10 days, and then went to Fort Sheridan in Illinois, in Chicago, and were mustered out. I decided, in retrospect, it might have been wise had I stayed in the army a little longer because I was pretty

loose-ended. I didn't quite know what I wanted to do. I was anxious to see my parents and my family. By that time, we'd all had enough, and most of us decided to just have separation papers.

By the way, I've got that army paper we can take a look at.

**Baker** ([45:02](#)):

Okay. Sure.

**Lodermeier** ([45:06](#)):

So I got home sometime in October.

**Baker** ([45:06](#)):

Okay.

**Lodermeier** ([45:12](#)):

My leave time accumulated until January of '46, which meant that I was in the service-- I was overseas 31 months. I was at Fort Warren, Wyoming from February of '42 until near June of '43. I'm grateful for the experience. I think it helped me mature. It certainly is a once in a lifetime experience, and when you think of men who were killed and maimed in the war, our life was relatively interesting.

**Baker** ([45:50](#)):

Right.

**Lodermeier** ([45:51](#)):

I think the morale of the patients was boosted by having women take care of them. When the WACS were assigned over in the islands, it was nice to have other women around. And then it took some of the heat off of the nurses because men used to say, "Oh, you women shouldn't be over here." Well, we were there. We worked and we did the best job we could. So then at least the WACS added to the women's movement.

**Baker (46:22):**

[crosstalk 00:46:22]

**Lodermeier (46:23):**

Certainly, we still did live in a more chauvinistic period.

**Baker (46:30):**

Oh, sure.

**Lodermeier (46:30):**

Men and women.

**Baker (46:32):**

They didn't feel women should be over there.

**Lodermeier (46:34):**

Yeah. That's right. But there were some dear patients I took care of. I always wish I could remember how this one boy from New Orleans with probably a Hispanic accent-- Mrs. [inaudible 00:46:53]. Well, he didn't say Mrs. [inaudible 00:46:58]. He was very dear. One of the Christmases, I went to the PX and I got different items and made little Christmas stockings for all 30 of my patients and hung them on the foot end of the beds, and they appreciated a lot. That meant a lot to them. Having holidays over there was pretty bleak but we did the best we could.

**Baker (47:20):**

Yeah. Being away from--

**Lodermeier (47:21):**

And, of course, you see, they had movies and entertainment. This was prior to giving a little social aspect for all the troops, because it was tough. I do feel that some of the men were so negative about everything, but my feeling was that, well, here's an opportunity to see another

part of the world. In retrospect, I feel that many servicemen probably never had as much excitement as they did when they were in the service.

**Baker** ([47:52](#)):

That's true. Mm-hmm (affirmative). So once you came back here then, you came back to St. Cloud?

**Lodermeier** ([47:59](#)):

St. Cloud. I worked in a doctor's office for a year. I was very loose-ended. I didn't quite know what I wanted. The following year, Labor Day of September 1946, some of the girls I had been in the service with were here at the lake. They said, "Mariette, we think we're going to go back to school." So on the spur of the moment, I decided, "Why not?" So I called St. Ben's and had my credits transferred from St. Ben's. My credits for my three year nursing were recognized at the U. So I went to University of Minnesota on the G.I Bill. I majored in public health, and after six quarters at the University of Minnesota, I had my bachelor of science with a major in public health.

**Baker** ([48:53](#)):

Great. Now, did you have the same benefits as the men?

**Lodermeier** ([48:57](#)):

Yes.

**Baker** ([48:57](#)):

Okay.

**Lodermeier** ([48:58](#)):

We did.

**Baker (49:00):**

G.I. Bill.

**Lodermeier (49:02):**

Yeah. So I went to school on the G.I. Bill. I was inclined to think I might not have done that if I hadn't had that opportunity. And simply because some of my friends were doing the same thing.

**Baker (49:02):**

Okay.

**Lodermeier (49:17):**

In a sense, that opened new doors for me in the field of nursing, and has given me a broader base of understanding--

**Baker (49:23):**

So then you--

**Lodermeier (49:23):**

--and experience.

**Baker (49:25):**

So then you basically came back here again, and?

**Lodermeier (49:29):**

Then I went to University of Minnesota, and I applied for and was accepted by Hennepin County, which is--

**Baker (49:36):**

Oh, okay.

**Lodermeier (49:36):**

--rural Minneapolis.

**Baker** ([49:37](#)):

Right.

**Lodermeier** ([49:38](#)):

I worked for a Hennepin County nursing service from the spring of 1948, I guess, until '51. And then I was encouraged by a woman nurse I had known at Glen Lake some years back who wanted me to start a public health nursing program in Wright County. Which is Buffalo, the county seat.

**Baker** ([50:04](#)):

Buffalo, right.

**Lodermeier** ([50:05](#)):

So by that time, I was 31, 32 years old. I did a pretty good job setting up a health program there, and then I met my husband in August of 1953. He's a St. Joe boy. And we were married. Since that time, I had felt that I wanted to phase out of nursing, but when the children were four and five years old, I started part-time at St. John's. Then, later on, I accepted the school nurse position at Equestrian. Because of my degree, I was qualified to do that type of work. And I had a good background in public health with county nursing. So I worked for Equestrian nursing service until 1978, 79. So I retired about aged 62.

**Baker** ([51:04](#)):

Okay. So that about covers it. Do you want to add anything else? You're pretty--

**Lodermeier** ([51:08](#)):

Well, not particularly. My daughter has never been interested in nursing and I guess I never pushed her particularly. I have felt like my nursing and my experience has been beneficial to others. You never quite separate yourself from seeing the needs that other people have. I look

back and it was fun, and also with some strange feelings when I realize some of the things that I recorded during the time I was overseas, and I thought, "Gee. I was frivolous." I talked about the officers club we went to. I should have been making great, wonderful, profound statements about the war, but I guess history takes of all those biggies.

**Baker** ([52:05](#)):

Yeah. I guess when you're young and in a position like that, you're probably not thinking about all the profound-

**Lodermeier** ([52:12](#)):

I certainly remember the night that the word came that the atomic bomb had been dropped. I was on night duty and going around giving penicillin shots. And in those days, we gave large, liquid amounts. They weren't little doses. That's the way the medication was made up. I was so excited when I was giving this one man his shot, and we were all in a dither when we heard that it sounded like the war was going to be over. I must have hit the wrong spot, and he says, "Boy, nurse. I'm glad the war isn't over every time you give me a shot." It was kind of cute.

**Baker** ([52:52](#)):

Were the medical supplies fairly easy to get? That was one question I thought of.

**Lodermeier** ([52:55](#)):

We seemed to always have what we needed.

**Baker** ([52:58](#)):

Okay. I was just wondering. You said about penicillin being rather new. I was wondering if it was--

**Lodermeier** ([53:01](#)):

Well, that was because it was new, and it was very expensive.

**Baker** ([53:05](#)):

Okay.

**Lodermeier** ([53:05](#)):

It was very expensive. But that's when penicillin was first started. It's the miracle drug and look at all the things that we've curtailed.

**Baker** ([53:14](#)):

Sure. Okay.

**Lodermeier** ([53:20](#)):

If you've got a little time, I want to show you--

**Baker** ([53:20](#)):

Sure. That's fine.

**Lodermeier** ([53:20](#)):

--some of my pictures because--